

Solveig Astrid Turpin

31 August 1936 – 17 July, 2020, 83

Obituary from Porter Loring Mortuary North, 2102 North Loop 1604 East, San Antonio, TX 78232

<http://porterloring.tributes.com/obituary/show/Solveig-Astrid-Turpin-108490907>

Solveig Astrid Turpin (nee Skramstad), 83, born in Waseca, Minnesota on August 31, 1936, passed away in San Antonio, Texas on July 17, 2020. She is preceded in death by her parents, Olaf and Magnhild Skramstad; brother, Odin Skramstad, and sister, Ingrid Henry.

Solveig was married to William Francis Turpin [dec.] in 1955 and they were both active in MENSA. They shared a son, William Eugene Turpin [dec.], from his first marriage. Solveig will be lovingly remembered by her children: Jeffrey Peter Turpin (Lisa Middleton); Rachel Lesley Smith (Larry Smith), Jennifer Ellen Turpin (Robert Elias) and Anthony David Turpin (Amicia Turpin), her grandchildren: Madeleine Rachel Elias; Conner Anthony Turpin; Jack Anders Elias; Sidney Patricia Turpin; Bjorn Harper Turpin; Erik William Turpin; Sawyer Mathew Turpin; Matthew Curtis; and Emma Mae Turpin; her sister Marie Skramstad DeForest (Felix DeForest); her extended family of in-laws, cousins, nieces and nephews; her partner in adventure, Dr. Herbert H. Eling, Jr.; her close friends, and her dog, Barbie.

Solveig and family lived in Minneapolis and Chicago before moving to San Antonio. She began her undergraduate studies at St. Olaf's College, but her formal intellectual pursuits were subsumed by her family until 1974, when she divorced and moved to Austin. She still had three of her children at home, and, on a graduate student salary, raised them while completing her B.A., followed by a PhD in Anthropology at the University of Texas.

Her interest in Native American petroglyphs (rock carvings) and pictographs (rock paintings) was sparked during her doctoral studies under Dr. James A. Neely at Seminole Canyon in the West Texas desert. Solveig also worked with the archeologist David S. Dibble, Director of the Texas Archeological Survey (TAS) at the University of Texas, where she served as Associate Director. Solveig employed dozens of student archeologists and opened and extended research at seminal archeological sites including Seminole Canyon, Bonfire Shelter, and Skyline Shelter, also conducting research at Lewis Canyon funded by the Rock Art Foundation. She went on to become Director of TAS, then Associate Director of Texas Archaeological Research Labs (TARL), and ultimately director of Borderlands Archaeological Research Unit under the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas, until her retirement in 1994, bringing in millions of dollars in research grants to the university over the years. After retiring she founded Turpin and Sons, Inc., a cultural resource management firm, where her son Jeff currently serves as President.

She spent decades finding and recording rock art in the Texas and northern Mexico deserts with her partner Herbert Eling, her son Jeff, and many graduate students and avocational archeologists. Her research has been published in hundreds of articles and bilingual and color-plated books, including *The Rock Art of Coahuila*, and presented at international and regional conferences. Her many awards included recognition by the International Rock Art Congress in Oaxaca, Mexico (2016) and the Texas Historical Commission and University Lands (2017) for her seminal contributions to archaeology.



Solveig was a strict, energetic, and disciplined researcher, whose trips into deserts, canyons, hills and mountains in west Texas and Mexico with Dr. Eling (in his various ancient Land Rovers) can only be described as legendary. These trips also piqued her interest in an early twentieth century Mexican scandal, about which she wrote the biography, *The Hillcoat Murders*. Her legacy will live on in her foundational, ground-breaking research and in the hearts and minds of her colleagues.

Deeply engaged in the lives of her children and grandchildren, she supported their educations and their diverse interests. She traveled the world, exploring her Norwegian heritage and her interests in other cultures. She was a voracious reader, especially of mystery novels. She had a prodigious memory for events and places, plots and characters in books she read or films she had seen, decades earlier. Solveig was a gifted and humorous storyteller, making frequent observations about the absurdities of life and of people. She loved to garden, and especially loved her dogs. She was the matriarch and center of her family, a force of nature with a lasting impact on the lives of her family and friends. We will miss her greatly.

Given COVID concerns, there are no current plans for a memorial service. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Family Violence Prevention Services, <https://fvps.org/donate-2/>

Post Script by William R. Elliott

I knew Solveig in the 1980s and 1990s. She often worked with cavers and rockart researchers. I saw her at work in Bonfire Shelter in 1982, and I worked with her in Seminole Sink in 1984, showing her team how to collect cave bugs as they dug up a pit burial. I visited her and Lee Bement at TARL to see the Seminole Sink bone material and points. She did decades of important work on cave/rockshelter archaeology and rock art, in Texas and Mexico. She published at least 61 papers, most of which are on ResearchGate. She was a brainy woman with a good sense of humor. She is missed by many archaeologists, cavers, and folklorists.

Her best general paper for Texas cavers is, “**Lower Pecos Prehistory: The View from the Caves,**” a chapter in the 1994 NSS Convention Guidebook, edited by William R. Elliott and George Veni. It is available on this site and at <https://texasspeleologicalsurvey.org/PDF/Prehistorychapter.pdf>



Bonfire Shelter, the famous PaleoIndian bison-kill site, Val Verde County, Texas. Solveig Turpin, project leader, is at the bottom in the hole, talking with visiting cavers on top. *William R. Elliott, 1982.*



Solveig Turpin seated next to the talus cone/pit burial that yielded remains of 21 people from 6,000 to 7,000 years ago (Early Archaic period). Seminole Sink, Seminole Canyon State Historical Park, Val Verde County, Texas. Ed Alexander on the left, Tom Byrd and colleague on the right. *William R. Elliott, 1984.*