

EACH YEAR ONE MEMBER FROM EACH TEXAS GROTTO IS PRESENTED THE "CHUCK STUEHM" AWARD FOR BEING RECOGNIZED AS AN OUTSTANDING NEW CAVER. OLD TIMERS WILL ENJOY THE NOSTALGIA, AND NEWBIES GET THE CHANCE TO KNOW...

# JUST WHO WAS CHUCK?

RAYMOND "CHUCK" STUEHM, 52, DIED JANUARY 31, 1980. EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM THE TEXAS CAVER CHUCK STUEHM MEMORIAL ISSUE - APRIL 1980.

## HI, I'M CHUCK

George Veni

Born 52 years ago in Cleveland, Ohio, Chuck came to San Antonio with the Armed Services. He would later joke about his medal for having served during World War II, as the war had ended shortly after he completed basic training.

Time went on and Chuck became active with Red Cross, Civil Defense, the Sierra Club, TSA and maintained a 40 year relationship with the Boy Scouts.

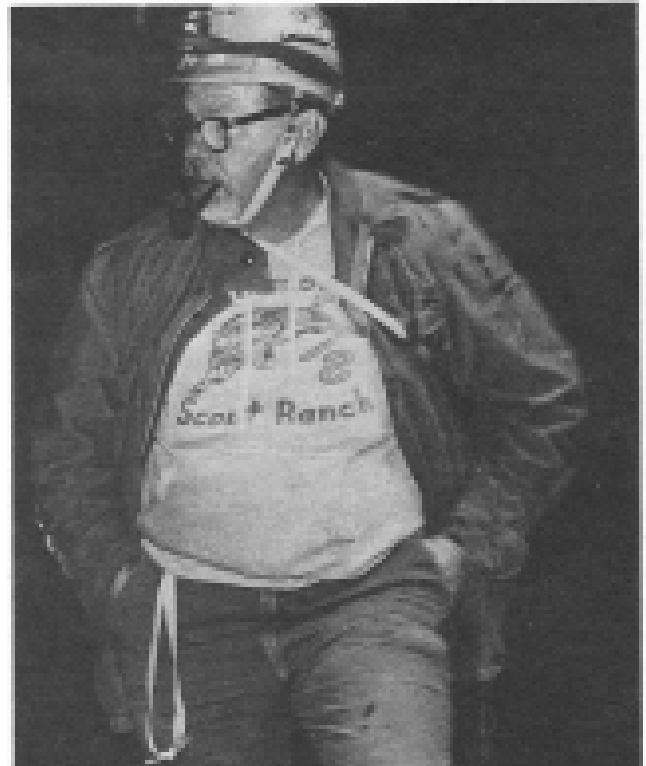
It was just over four years ago when I went to my first caving meeting at the Civil Defense Building in downtown San Antonio. I was early and the few people there were busily stapling together some mad arrangement of printed papers. I was thinking they were too busy to notice me when a large, heavy-set man broke out of formation and strolled over to greet me. He was quite a sight, wearing some strange cap, and a badly chewed up cigar protruded between mustache and beard; his clothing was covered with all sorts of strange insignia and letters - TSA, NSS, ACC - various cave scenes, but I thought to myself that the letters saying ASS seemed most appropriate of all.

Hi, I am Chuck," he said, briefly taking the mangled cigar from his mouth. In 60 seconds he had ascertained I knew nothing about caving, introduced me to everyone in the room - and set me to work stapling caving publications.

## SOME RECOLLECTIONS

Glenn Darilek

Chuck was a leader with the Scouts, and he carried this over into caving. From the start Chuck was outspoken and took the "Bull by the Horns" and got every project off and running.



Even though he would take the lead, he never held office in the TSA. He was asked several times to run, but he always turned it down. He preferred to let those younger than he try their hand at leadership and their small share of the limelight.

I am sure no other caver in the state has initiated more cavers into vertical caving. He was respected as a vertical caving instructor even though he rarely if ever did any vertical caving.

## CHUCK

James Jasek

During the meeting a stranger to the TSA stood up and put in his two-cents worth not just once, but several times during the meeting. People around me were asking each other "Who is he?".

This was Chuck Stuehm. Out-spoken, to-the-point,

and a bit opinionated. He was either a friend or a foe. There didn't seem to be any in-between with him. After the meeting was over, I got to know Chuck. We struck up a friendship that lasted the past eight years.

A number of us got together with Chuck and formed the first organized cave rescue program in Texas. We were all determined not to have so much trouble in organizing another cave rescue. Our goal was to educate every caver in Texas in first-aid and cave rescue. Today as I look back over the entire effort, I would say that all the work Chuck put into this was very successful.

It was a natural for Chuck to be a leader in caving. He immediately organized a practice cave rescue that was held inside a cave. Here we all got first hand experience with first-aid, and actual pit rescue. This turned out to be one of the most successful projects that the TSA pulled off in many years. All this practice really paid off during our first real cave rescue when two young boys were trapped inside Dead Deer Cave in the city limits of San Antonio. Chuck was the first to arrive at the cave with a few cavers to take a look at the situation. He realized this would require a major effort by cavers, so he initiated a major rescue. This was a very successful rescue because of all the training Chuck exposed us to.

## **CHUCK LOVED PEOPLE**

Gary Parsons

Chuck was extremely valuable and served as a catalyst in helping Frank Sodak and I get the Temple Caving Association off the ground and into the caves. I regret not knowing if he knew just how much I and others appreciated everything he had done for us.

He instilled in me the importance of safety, awareness, and confidence in equipment which enabled me and others to approach vertical caving in a confident and informal frame of mind. Chuck was a valuable teacher in addition to his other qualifications.

## **MEMORIES OF CHUCK STUEHM**

Roger Bartholomew

I first encountered Chuck in the basement of the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium during a hurricane which had flooded the Rio Grande Valley.

There sat a man behind a table, with cigar, calm as could be, directing Civil Defense activities.

It is clear that at first Chuck was mainly interested in rope techniques. But at that 25 Nov. 1968 meeting of the old San Antonio Grotto Mr. Erwin Wesp gave a slide show on Bustamante cave (in Mexico) which no doubt had a part in catching Chuck's interest. This may be the reason why my first recorded caving trip for him was Bustamante.

The mention of Bustamante reminds me of several stories. On the Nov. 1969 trip Chuck made an ingenious backpack of an orange crate and some sticks. When we set up camp in the entrance room it turned into a sort of portable kitchen. Another time in his zeal to clean up some paper trash at the bottom of the Great Slope, he made a fire to burn it which created quite a cloud of smoke in that area of the cave.

He was an individual. He could make his own decisions about what was right without being subject to peer pressure or what people might think. I feel that the most important contribution to Texas caving was his undying support for safety and rescue. He never did the deepest pits, the tightest crawls, the hardest climbs, the greatest map, the greatest photo, or the most difficult rescue, but he was present and appreciated all of them and thought of the safety of those who did do these things. His vision was to safeguard and save human life.

## **I REMEMBER CHUCK**

April A. Herzig

He made me feel welcome, introduced me to people who were leading cave trips, suggested that I join the grotto, and vouched for my caving skills when I applied for membership. After my caving accident in August 1975 when I broke my neck, Chuck was at the emergency room seeing that I received the care that I needed since I was living alone in San Antonio. Visitors inspired me to work harder to recover from my injuries, and Chuck was one of the few who continued to come to see me after I went home from the hospital. When I think of Chuck, I remember his old white station wagon, his cigar, and the scar from his encounter with a rattlesnake, but more than that, I think of his part in acquainting me with caving, a sport that has helped to build my confidence in myself, my trust in other cavers, and my ability to meet the challenges of life.