

Robert S. Crowder

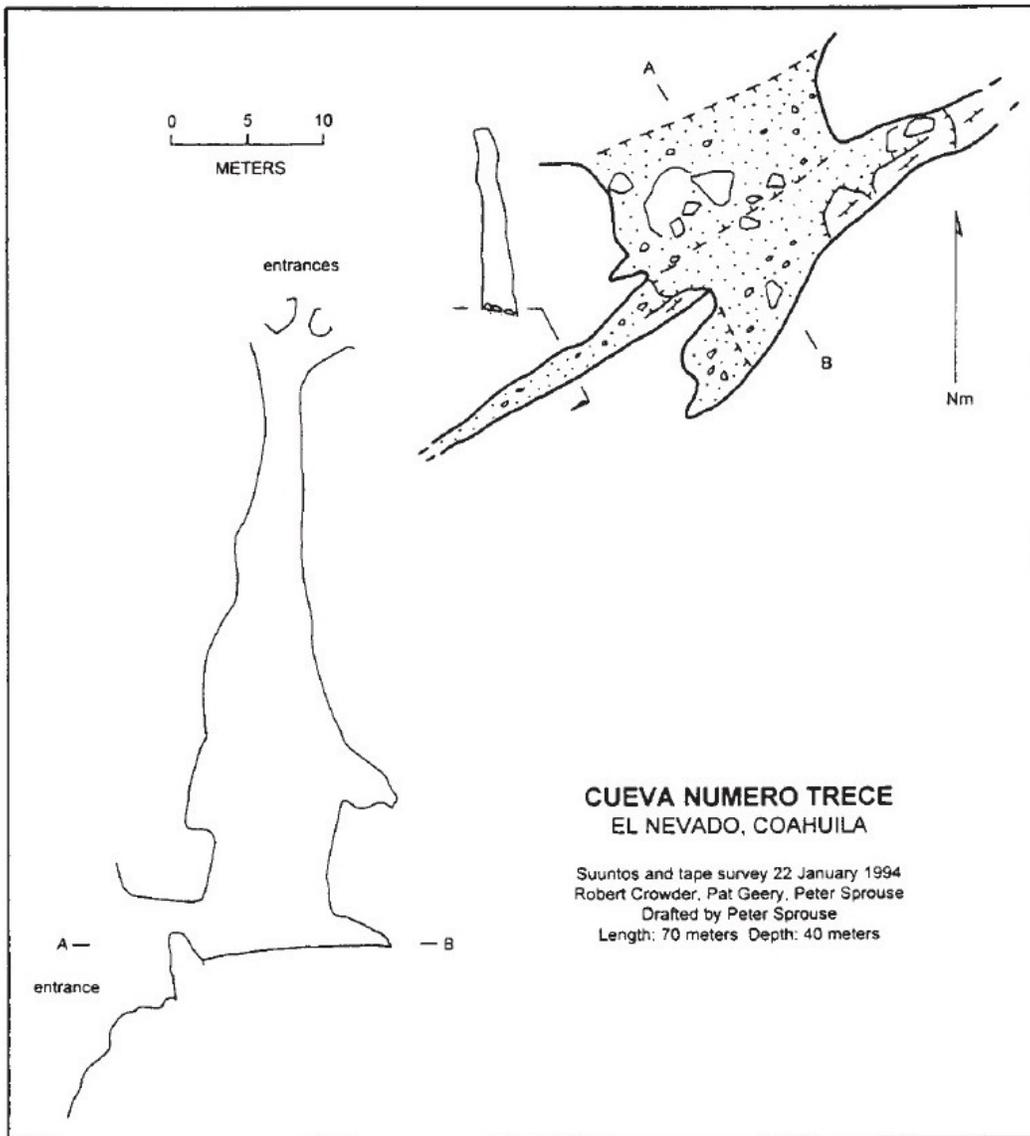
May 1965 – 26 February 1999, 33, UT Grotto

Mexico Maps by Robert S. Crowder *et al.*

From the AMCS map database, William R. Elliott, October 2019

Coahuila, Municipio Acuña, Rancho El Nevado, 1994:

Cueva de Molcajete, Cueva Numero Trece, Cueva el Retiro. Suuntos and tape surveys, 22-23 January 1994. Robert Crowder, Pat Geery, Peter Sprouse. See map below and <http://www.mexicancaves.org/maps/Coah.html>



Eulogy: Letter for a Caving Friend

Jay Jorden

From Lake Georgetown to the Caspian Sea, a 33-year-old Central Texas caver sought his fortune. He began as a Texas Hill Country cave guide and ended up in a former Soviet republic with some caves known from eight centuries ago – and others unexplored.

The day I met Robert Scott Crowder at a Texas Speleological Association convention, it seemed like I had known him all my life. He was that kind of a guy: friendly, direct, sincere. He was eager to learn all about caving. He was a Georgetown native who formerly worked as a guide at Inner Space Cavern, a commercial attraction north of Austin. Through his work, he later met James Jasek and other Waco area cavers and heard about TSA and the National Speleological Society. Most recently, he had worked offshore and in Azerbaijan, continuing a career in the oil business.

Reader's Digest has carried a feature called "My Most Unforgettable Character." For me, Robert has to be in that list. He was slow to anger and quick to forgive. He loved life; his quest was adventure. He had enjoyed taking friends through the off-trail sections of Inner Space, even after his stint as a guide.

The listing in Austin area death notices was too short to cover what Robert accomplished during his life. The two-line notice merely listed the 33-year-old caver's name, with services at a Georgetown funeral chapel.

Robert's death in a February 26 traffic accident along Interstate 35 was shocking enough in its tragic taking of someone with so much left to give, but also because I had just recently heard from him after a long while. In fact, I had received an e-mail from him five days before his death. He was still in the

former Soviet republic at that time.

"... The oil industry has everything to do with my being in Azerbaijan," he wrote. "You mentioned hearing about me being off the coast of Louisiana; so much has happened since then that it really seems like a long time ago, but it wasn't. I've been in Azerbaijan for a year now. I work a schedule of 28 days on and 28 days off. Of course, travel time comes out of my days off so it really turns into



Robert Crowder 1965-1999.

something like 31 and 26. I'm working for a company based in Dallas called Santa Fe International. I initially came over here to help British Petroleum construct a new state of the art semi-submersible drilling rig called the Istiglal (Independence) and am now the assistant captain of the rig.

"We are now in full swing production mode working about 60 miles off the coast of Baku in the Caspian Sea. Anyway, when I first arrived in country, I spent most of my time ashore, working in the ship yard and living about 20 minutes outside of Baku in a camp located at the base of the Caucasus foot hills. These consist primarily of limestone, so when I saw them what do you think was the first thing to cross my mind? Goes

without saying.

"What little time I've had off while here in Azerbaijan, I've spent questing for information on the caves located here and all I can say is the prospects are exciting. I have found the locations of many caves, some of which are known to contain ancient artwork dating back to the 12th century. Not much along the lines of maps or any type of survey information leading one to believe that these caves have been pushed at any length. Combine this information with the fact that Azerbaijan has been isolated from the western world for quite some time; they've only had an airport with a runway long enough to support a commercial liner for a few years, and the war with Armenia has kept tourism to a minimum, its high level of corruption, and devastating pollution and I think there are a lot of good caving adventures in store.

"Currently, I am compiling the last of the information I feel I need to begin caving in earnest.

A friend of mine, Rauf, who is a graduate of the University of Azerbaijan, and acted as my translator for my first six months here, has been kept busy translating some old manuscripts referring to the caves of this area as well as books on local geology and hydrology. With these in hand, and good spring and summer weather, I plan on spending a couple of extra days here every month dedicated only to cave exploration."

Although Robert didn't get the chance to realize that goal, he's now in a better place where there is no suffering. Robert will not soon be forgotten; his accomplishments in this world live on. Our thoughts and prayers go to his wife, Vicky Crowder, and other relatives in their time of grief.