

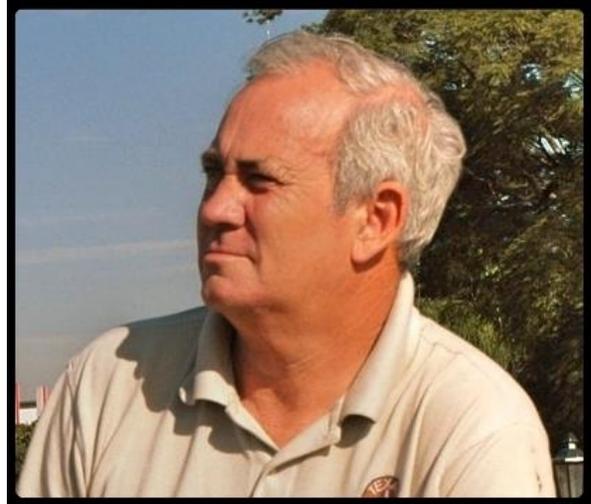
John Michael “Mike” Walsh
October 8, 1947 - February 28, 2026

Compiled by Jay Jorden

Mike Walsh, NSS 11077FE, of Austin, who leaves a sizeable legacy of accomplishments to the Texas and Mexico caving community over 60+ years, died on Feb. 28, 2026. He was 78.

Mike was one of three organizers of the Texas Cavers' Reunion almost 50 years ago and the principal founder of two cave conservation organizations in the state – along with extensive Mexican cave explorations and adventures.

Before his death, Mike and wife Lynda Beck had just returned from a trip to Chile, and Mike was planning a series of caving and sightseeing programs near Puebla, Mexico, where they maintained a residence. He suffered a massive heart attack on Feb. 26 while at a library, planning a return trip to Mexico, and was rushed to a hospital where he was pronounced dead two days later.



Mike's family also includes his son, Jeff; wife, Jessica; and their two sons. The family seeks privacy and time to grieve before planning and scheduling a celebration of life for a later date. More information will also be available on the [Hall of Texas and Mexico Cavers](#).

Born on Oct. 8, 1947 in Stamford, Texas, Mike's earliest memory was being carried by his father into Mammoth Cave, Ky., when he was 18 months old. His family continued taking him into commercial caves throughout the Central and Eastern United States: Mammoth Cave in 1949; Howe's Cave, 1950; Civil War Cave, 1956; Carlsbad Caverns, 1958; Cave of the Winds, 1960; and Caverns of Sonora, two weeks after it opened in 1960.

San Marcos caving - and south of the border

As a new student at Southwest Texas State University, Mike was looking for a fraternity to join - but found the grotto instead when Joe Sumbera was showing Mexican cave slides at the Student Union. He started caving in September 1967 after attending his first caving club meeting, in Science Room 4. Mike joined 30+ cavers on a trip to Gruta del Palmito near Bustamante, Mexico. Then came Ezell's Cave and others, including trips to Mexico.

“This opened a new world for me,” Mike recalled. “It only took me nine years to graduate from Southwest Texas. My life was caving. I would go to Mexico on some weekends and holidays. I would go caving in West Texas on weekends, whenever possible. Every weekend that I was stuck in San Marcos was spent in Hays County looking for caves.”

He stopped counting at 100 Hays County caves, most of them small. Mike's influence in the grotto grew, and soon he was training new cavers, including Steve Fleming, Dale Pate, Logan McNatt and Sandi Moerbe. Mike became trip chairman in 1968, research chairman in 1970, and publication chairman in 1971, editing the grotto's 146-page "Mexican Caving" guidebook in 1972. (In 2001, the guidebook was updated, including new information on the Aquismon, Mexico area, adding more pages and road logs.)

Two years before that, in 1970, Mike had joined the National Speleological Society as the SWTG continued training more than 300 new cavers with his help. Grotto members found, explored and mapped a number of long free-drop pits in Mexico, including Sotano de los Lobos, Sotano de Aguila, Sotano de la Selva, Sotanito del Ahuacatlan, and Sotano del Barro. Other long or deep caves found by the club were Cueva de la Puente, Puente de Dios, Cueva del Rio Jalpan, La Cueva Linda, Cueva del Rancho Aquamarga, and Sotano del Macho Rey.

Caving across the Lone Star State

Mike's grandfather, John Lovic Hill, had taken him to meet a number of ranchers when he was young, and this served him well in getting access to caves on ranchland – and visiting dozens of Central and West Texas caves. They included: The Devil's Sinkhole, Rambie's Cave, Diablo Cave, Longhorn Caverns, Fawcett's Cave, Langtry Lead Cave, Fairy Cave, Powell's Cave, Langtry Quarry Cave, Fern Cave, Quigg Sinkhole, Harrison's Cave, Caverns of Sonora, Felton Cave, Indian Creek Cave, and TSC Cave.

Others were Cave of the Lakes, Avery Ranch Cave, River Styx Cave, Cave Without a Name, Deep Cave, Punkin Pit, Blowhole Cave, Wonder Cave (surveyed in 1970), Langtry Gypsum Cave, Langtry East Gypsum Cave, Beck Ranch Cave, McCarty's Cave, Fischer's Pit, Wheat Cave, Terlingua Sink, Dunbar Cave, Cascade Cave, Palace Cave, Neal's Cave, Midnight Cave, MFP, Marigold Cave, H.T. Mier's Cave, Kickapoo Cave, Amazing Maze, Chivo Cave, Honey Creek Cave, Inner Space Caverns, Litter Barrel Cave, Montgomery Gypsum Cave, Valdina Farms Sinkhole, Turkey Pen Cave, Webb Cave, Wyatt Cave, and Fountain Cave.

In 1971, Mike was elected vice-president of the Texas Speleological Association and organized the spring convention in New Braunfels. He began scouting sites for future conventions and found locations for the 1978 and 1994 NSS Conventions. He also attended his first NSS Convention in Blacksburg, Va. In March of that year, while hiking alone near Cueva de Rio Jalpan, he brushed up against some mala mujer, a poisonous plant that leaves painful skin burns. Mike applied water from a bottle that contained used carbide and found that the pain subsided. He published his findings in the NSS News, saving at least one life of a caver who had fallen face-first into the plant.

Mike moved to San Antonio the following year and started caving with members of the Alamo Area NSS Chapter. He got a job with Coca-Cola and then Dr Pepper. Later, he sold cookies, working for himself. He was elected Alamo Area Chapter chairman in 1973 (but never joined because of loyalty to SWTG). Mike was chairman of the Bustamante Cave Project on Labor Day

- and chaired the Huasteca Canyon project near Monterrey, Mexico the following year, when he was also elected TSA vice chairman and organized the TSA Convention in New Braunfels' Cypress Bend Park - complete with a live band (Hill Country Bacon).

Family life, more conventions, reunions, and publications

Mike married Linda Lea Gardner and their son, Jeffery Michael Walsh, was born in November 1976 (The proud father carried Jeff through Mammoth Cave two years later, as his father had done). Also in 1976, Mike started working in River Styx Cave north of Abilene and, after several years of photographing, mapping and collecting data, published the River Styx cave publication with John Graves for a new Texas Cave Report Series.

In 1978, Mike moved to the national stage by co-chairing the NSS Convention with Ronnie Fieseler. It was Texas' second national convention - and the first to attract 1,000 cavers. By design, the New Braunfels event featured elements that make a caving convention successful: caves, good camping with shade, swimming ... and a low registration fee. Mike was named an NSS Fellow at that convention for his caving activities. (Besides exploration, Mike relished the opportunity to find sites for conventions and other organized caving activities.)

Following the NSS Convention, Mike founded the Texas Oldtimers' Reunion with Gill Ediger and Carl Ponebshek. Although the TSA had been organizing Labor Day caving projects for a number of years, interest in these had waned. The successful NSS Convention reignited the Texas region. The TOTR, as it was called then, was first held at Luckenbach, Texas with about 50 cavers in attendance. It was later renamed as the Texas Cavers' Reunion, attracting hundreds of people each year, with Mike locating 12 or more sites for the event. (Gill died in January while Carl died in 2009.)

More caving publications followed in 1980 and 1983, with a collection of cartoons called "Texas Cave Humor" that featured work from Bill Helmer and others dating to 1955 along with "My Daddy Was a Caver" with Charlie Loving's drawings. A companion book, "My Mommy Was a Caver," followed - all published by Mike.

Cave conservation efforts galore!

Mike holds the distinction of having been principal founder of the state's only cave conservation organizations: The Texas Cave Management Association and the Texas Cave Conservancy. The TCMA, as the surviving organization, today owns or manages more than a dozen cave preserves across the state and has hundreds of members.

The founding of TCMA occurred as Texas cavers were reaching out to state government leaders to protect the state's caves. On May 5, 1985, Mike met with Mike Warton, who was in the business of cave gating, and with Robert Green on the concept of a cave management organization. Ten days later, a TSA Committee was created at the TSA Convention in Georgetown, Texas to investigate the possibility of working with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) on the protection of caves in the State of Texas. TCMA's name was chosen on June 22, while driving through Tennessee en route to the 1985 NSS Convention in Kentucky.

Mike Walsh was confirmed as chairman of the TSA Liaison Committee on Sept. 18, 1985.

The following year, the TCMA worked with Mike Herring of TPWD to identify some of the best caves in Texas for future acquisition. These included Kickapoo Cave, Green Cave, Fawcett's Cave, and the Devil's Sinkhole. The Gorman Falls Cave property was also later purchased by the TPWD. TCMA was chartered and incorporated with the Secretary of State on April 7, 1986. Initial directors were Mike Walsh and Mike Warton along with Robert Green. That year, the TCMA and City of Austin hosted a Regional Conference on Caves and Land Development, with Mike and Lea Stone of the City of Austin as project directors. Several TCMA members drafted a State of Texas Cave Protection Bill. The TCMA received a \$2,500 grant for a Texas bat publication from the Richmond Area Speleological Society on Dec. 12, 1986.

In 1987, Mike moved his TPWD liaison duties from TSA to TCMA, and the TCMA-TPWD Cave Task Force was created, with Mike heading the committee. The following year, TCMA acquired nonprofit status with the IRS. Mike Warton and George Veni completed the first Central Texas karst invertebrate site study to support the Endangered Species Act, and TCMA began working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Austin office.

The TCMA developed and Mike published *A Proposed Cave Management Plan for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department* in 1989. On April 1-2, TCMA and TSA volunteers removed tons of trash from the caves and sinkholes during the Longhorn State Park Project. Also, Whirlpool Cave in South Austin came under TCMA management and a gate was installed on May 22. Mike was program chairman when TCMA hosted the 1989 National Cave Management Symposium in New Braunfels On October 3-7 (Then-Governor Bill Clements had signed the Texas Sportsman's Law in June of that year, adding "cave exploration.")

In 1990, Whirlpool Cave in South Austin was transferred, along with 4.5 acres, to TCMA for its first owned preserve following payment of \$1,200 in back taxes. The next year, the Wray Trust of Houston donated \$1,000 to TCMA to develop the preserve. With Mike as editor and publisher, TCMA produced *Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area & Kickapoo Caverns State Park*.

The TCMA in 1992 assisted James Loftin in the gating of Wurzbach Bat Cave in San Antonio, which had been acquired by the De Luna family to protect the bats. TCMA also discussed with SWCA management of five endangered species caves, with Marigold the largest. The Edwards Underground Water District also opened discussion with the TCMA on management of three San Antonio caves. TCMA testified before the Austin City Council concerning the value of caves, and the city requested an agreement to manage and monitor city-owned caves. The TCMA Board of Directors voted to attempt to secure Lost Oasis Cave in Travis County. Lost Oasis was donated to TCMA in 1993, along with 3.5 acres. SWCA and Lumberman's Investment Corporation signed a contract for the TCMA to manage Marigold and four other endangered species caves.

In 1994, Mike resigned his TCMA membership to form a new Texas Cave Conservancy that would pivot more to a business model for public education and cave protection. With Mike as

president, the TCC was born on Oct. 13 in New Braunfels. The following year, TCC hosted the TSA meeting at Camp Wood, Texas, where a Memorandum of Agreement was signed with the Nueces Canyon Chamber of Commerce. Later that same year, the TCC designed and built the Oak Brook Karst Preserve in Williamson County for its first management contract. In 1996, TCC established a cave preserve at Webb Cave at Alamo Village. The preserve was later dedicated as the Webb-Shahan Cave Preserve. As TCC grew to more than 75 associates, it hosted West Texas cave trips and obtained access to Harrison Cave in Sutton County, unsuccessfully negotiating for its purchase.

At one point, TCC claimed 45+ cave preserves containing 125+ caves. The TCC signed an agreement in 2001 with Lumberman's Investment Corporation and the City of Cedar Park to manage 32 Westside Preserve caves, including Buttercup Creek Cave and Marigold. In 2002, TCC contracted to manage the Hidden Glen Cave Preserves in Round Rock, creating trails and signage - plus trails at Westside.

In 2003, TCC moved into its headquarters in Cedar Park, Texas: a house located along with three small caves and 4.25 acres. This property was later acquired by TCMA when TCC was dissolved. But before that, TCC got a contract to manage the 109-acre Discovery Well track in Cedar Park and was hired to conduct fire ant control at the Big Tree Cave Preserve and the Chaos Cave Preserve.

After TCMA purchased the Punkin & Deep Cave property in Edwards County, in 2004, TCC contributed to paying the note off and the two organizations worked together on other projects. TCC hosted Austin's first Cave Day on April 16, 2004. More than 250 people attended the event where TCC introduced the characters Ricky & Rebecca Rhadine (beetle) to educate young children in Austin about the importance of saving precious cave resources. Mike helped secure four grants in 2005, supporting plans to develop Avery Ranch Cave and Dies Ranch Treasure Cave into educational show caves, developing promotional materials for Cave Day, designing and installing preserve signs, and building shower facilities at TCC headquarters. TCC was also asked by the City of Austin to design a cave preserve at the Buzz's Old Gold Cave site.

In 2006, Mike was hired as TCC president / executive director. On March 3, Avery Ranch Cave the Texas Cave Conservancy's first owned cave preserve. On May 16, Dies Ranch Treasure Cave was donated to TCC. Management started at B.A.B.E. Pit and five other caves in the Deer Creek Development in Cedar Park. Mike presented a poster on the Texas System for Urban Cave Management at the 2007 National Cave Management Symposium in St. Louis, Mo. In January 2008, management of the multimillion-dollar, 104-acre Discovery Well Cave Preserve property was transferred to the City of Cedar Park and TCC negotiated to manage the preserve. Mike remained active in state conservation liaison, assisting TCMA in testimony to the Texas Water Commission in Hondo concerning caves and water protection on Feb. 12, 2007.

In the January 2009 *NSS News*, Mike's list of cave counties nationally that are threatened by development was published. It identified 93 counties where developers have acquired land with caves. In February, Mike ran an NSS Karst Partnership Forum table at the National

Groundwater Karst Conference at Safety Harbor, Fla. He presented a talk: "Management of cave-related features in the Westside Cave Preserve, Cedar Park, Texas." That year, TCC also hosted a "hospitality suite" for cavers en route to the International Congress of Speleology in Kerrville.

Another busy year came in 2010, with the TCC website going online, presentation of the Discovery Well Cave Preserve Report to the Texas Department of Transportation and the USFWS, and hosting of the spring TSA Convention on March 26-28. More than 200 cavers attended, and TCMA raised \$3,000+ in its auction and breakfast. Educational signs were installed at the Highlands Horizons subdivision in Round Rock, to be a model for a cave-related trail system. Also, TCC won a contract to manage the Williamson County Preserves with 20+ caves. And perhaps the biggest news: Mike was married to Lynda Beck at TCC Headquarters on Sept. 5, with ~100 people in attendance. In lieu of gifts, donations were made toward the purchase of two flash heaters showers for the headquarters. The Cave Day a week and a half later featured visits to a new room at Dies Ranch Treasure Cave as well as the Discovery Well Cave Preserve and other caves.

In 2012, a new observation deck was installed in Avery Ranch Cave for 800+ Cave Day visitors, with welding assistance from Spencer Woods. The TCC Winter Conference on February 24-26 featured caving, camping, a cave digging workshop, a Saturday night party with a meal and guest speakers. Logan McNatt and Mike Walsh presented on the old Southwest Texas University Grotto. The April Cave Day saw 1,000+ visitors entering Avery Ranch Cave and Dies Ranch Treasure Cave. For National Groundwater Week (w/o March 13), Austin area TV and newspaper reporters came to Avery Ranch Cave and Mike was interviewed inside the cave at the urging of the City of Austin Watershed Department. A month later, 1,800+ people visited Avery Ranch Cave, with 600+ in Dies Ranch Cave.

Partly as a consequence of TCC's work, the Jollyville Plateau Salamander became a candidate for USFWS listing as an endangered species. TCC worked on a monitoring plan that will help identify, monitor, and mitigate potential contamination situations concerning the Buttercup Creek Watershed.

Starting in 2013, changes were occurring at TCC - partly due to questions relating to the organization's nonprofit status. The headquarters building was relinquished to the titleholder, and TCC began downsizing. The former [TCC website](#) designed by Mike and improved by others had registered 1M+ hits by July 2013. That figure had reached 2M+ by the time the TCC was dissolved, 21 years after its formation, on Oct. 3, 2015. As a postscript, the Avery Ranch Treasure Cave was then acquired by TCMA - along with TCC's former headquarters.

Casa Aquismon

Purchasing land in Aquismon, Mexico in 2002, Mike built a four-level house that became the staging area for trips to nearby Golondrinas, Hoya de las Guagas, and other caves. He owned Casa Aquismon for a number of years, leasing it out during holidays for cavers to stay while

rappelling the deep pits of the area. He later sold the property to a caver. During his ownership, he had been working on a new Mexican caving guide that was published in 2001:

Aquismon – Discovery – Re-Discovery.

Another NSS Convention – and Texas-style Howdy Party!

The year 1994 was also significant for Mike, since he had helped two years earlier to secure the site for the third NSS Convention in Texas: Fort Clark Springs in Brackettville. Mike also served as committee head for the Howdy Party, which is the seminal event to kick off any convention. For Brackettville, Mike pulled out all the stops to create a memorable party for cavers. He negotiated with “Happy” Shahan for the venue at Alamo Village, just outside Brackettville, and the site of the movie set for John Wayne’s movie on the Alamo. Food and drink were served along the main street of the movie set: Tex-Mex and barbecue were offered. For entertainment, caver “gunslingers” reenacted a shootout at the “bank” and along Main Street. A band also played amid the dusty streets of the movie set.

That evening, cavers had an even bigger spectacle to enjoy: a reenactment of the Battle of the Alamo, complete with pyrotechnics, a cannon, and other large-caliber weaponry (firing blanks, of course!) A good time was had by all, and no one was killed or caught. Among all the NSS Conventions, this Howdy Party was among the most elaborate and entertaining.

The author, who co-chaired the 1994 NSS Convention with Ron Ralph (1942-2025), had accompanied Mike to Alamo Village pre-convention to negotiate the venue with Happy. We were told to find him in the saloon along the dusty main street. Inside the swinging doors, Happy looked up from his plate of migas and tipped his Stetson, motioning us to join him at the table. It was one of my most memorable experiences. He drawled, “What can I do for you boys?” We got down to “bidness.”

Postscript: My experiences with Mike over many years either started out as - or turned into - adventures just like this. He was a very good friend and traveling companion. We are diminished by his passing. Vaya con Dios, amigo.

Tributes

“Mike was such a wonderful guy, I have fond memories of collaborating with him and the TCC long ago. I’m so sad to hear this news. My deepest condolences to his wife and family.” - *Melanie Alspaugh*

“He was such an icon of caving and such a nice guy. He will be missed.” - *Myrna Attaway*

“I’m really sad to hear this. He was a good friend and was always very helpful in any way he could be. I still remember the tiny carbide lights he turned us onto. I wish I could find mine. R.I.P., friend.” - *Thor Bahrman*

“Really enjoyed caving in the early 80s with Mike.” - *Blake Barr*

"Very sad news. I stayed at his place in Mexico Dec. 2003-Jan. 2004 and he drove us around sightseeing on the days we were resting between big pits. He was a hell of a nice guy. The type of guy that would give you the shirt off his back." - *Steve Bennett*

"A man of vision." - *Bill Bentley*

"(Broken-heart emoji)." - *Susan Chelf*

"Oh, I am so sorry to hear this. Thank you for sharing ... Fond memories of good times!" - *Martha Connell*

"Megabummer! Goodbye, Mike! As they say, OFF ROPE!" - *Joel Despain*

"Aw man! Mike and I ran into each other in a casino in Vegas once. Had a nice chat. He will be missed." - *Jean DeVries*

"Very sad news. I always enjoyed my conversations with him. ... In my early days of big caving, I got into a lot of caves because of Mike and the TCC." - *Galen Falgout*

"Our blessings and prayers for peace to the Walsh family." - *Robert Green*

"Sad news indeed. Remembering Mike brings a smile to my heart." - *Jim Goodbar*

"Rest in peace, Mike 🙏❤️ Sad day for all cavers." - *Keith Andy Harris*

"I really hate to hear this. Praying for his family. Such a nice guy." - *Jeanne Clutts Hill*

"Very sad news indeed." - *Russell Hill*

"So very, very sad. He was such a warm, caring, and just plain wonderful human being." - *Ellen Hofler*

"Sad news. Mike could be a hoot on trips. He was one of the first people I went to Mexico with. I didn't know you had to open the lid on a can of soup before setting it in a fire to heat up. The can blew up, spraying Walsh, Albert Ogden, and Wild Bill with Campbell's Chunky Soup. Mike took the can and mounted it on a wooden plaque. He presented it to me at a TCR years later. Travel well, Mike." - *Kira Holt*

"Loved Mike. He organized the food at the Brackettville NSS Convention. Mesquite smoked corn on the cob. He didn't want the standard convention fare. I always enjoyed visiting with Mike. As I recall, he helped manage a cave preserve." - *Brian Houha*

"Sad news. I had not heard (of Mike) in a long time." - *Wallace Hughes*

“So sorry for this loss! We are losing too many of our Texas Old Timers 😞 RIP Mike, and pull up a chair to that heavenly campfire to join many friends ❤️🙏.” - *Mimi Jasek*

“He will be missed. I always enjoyed visiting with him. Enjoyed my time with him in Mexico, too.”
- *Sharon Jones*

“I met Mike on a cave trip that I led in Coldwater Cave, Iowa, for visiting cavers from Texas. The cave is a 45F wetsuit cave, and the Texans didn't bring any. But we did the trip anyway, me also sans wetsuit. Mike asked why I was giving up the comfort of the wetsuit - I said so I'd know firsthand how uncomfortable and cold they would be! We had a great trip, and every time I saw Mike after that, he always brought up that trip, which gave us both a good laugh!” - *Patricia Kambesis*

“Mike and I go way back to the mid-70s. We did a lot of caving together, and he helped me on occasion with my PhD Hill Country cave research. We hung out at most NSS Conventions since then. I stayed with him and Lynda at their home for a day following the Texas Caver Reunion a few years ago, reminiscing about our exploits. Sad to see another legend in Texas caving pass. But I am so thankful for knowing him and our friendship. R.I.P. Mike! 👍 – *Ernst Kastning*

“This makes me very sad... Mike and I have been friends for a long time. He was one of my first friends in Texas. We recently worked together on the crazy tawny ants project. He will be missed. My love and thoughts to Linda and the family.” - *Cat Kennedy*

“The last time I saw Mike (a few months ago), he looked perfectly fine. Old timers need to stop dying, we don't have that many left.” - *Jim “Crash” Kennedy*

“ ... And hopefully they go to a doctor at least once a year or so.” - *Kara Dittmar Savvas*

“This hits hard. He was an awfully good to friend to me when I needed one. He took me to Mexico for about a month when my first wife passed. We spent a lot of that time on buses and in "economical" motels looking at Olmec heads, jewelry makers, and eating at his favorite restaurants. It gave me a bit of an adventure that allowed me to focus elsewhere. Later, Mike planned and officiated my wedding at the Hotel Taninul. He put together a fine wedding for my second wife and I. He was a good man, and I will miss knowing that he's not out there still planning some something. LoL.” - *William Larsen*

“Mike was an influential mentor to me. ... Mike helped me in life. When I first started caving, I had little access to cavers and books about caving. Somehow, I got my hands on the book about Mexican caving which Mike Walsh helped publish. .. First saw that book, maybe around 1988. But I read it and referred to it. ... One crazy day in the spring of 1987, ... I caught a plane to Austin, and then a bus to the end of the southern route, and then hitchhiked to where cavers were camping out for the TSA Spring Convention. This was a small spot of land owned by a caver ... building a house. I got there at 2 a.m., and I think Mike Walsh was sitting around the

campfire with another caver. I knew him only briefly, meeting at two TCRs and two previous spring conventions. ... When the TSA Winter Meeting was held at Friday Mountain Ranch around 1986, Mike Walsh and Mike Warton announced the formation of a new caving organization called TCMA. I was there. ... Sometime around 2008, the TCC had a campout on their property, and my family attended that. Mike seemed to be ramrodding things. ... Around 1995, I would get an e-mail from Mike about once or twice a year about a variety of topics ... About 15 years ago, I was trying to host a large caver gathering on the outskirts of Brenham, Texas. Mike was there and seemed to enjoy it. At a NSS convention a few years ago, in Cookeville, Tenn., I caught a ... ride to the convention, and Mike put me up one night in his hotel room. ... He talked to me to death about his newfound hobby, exploring the Civil War heritage of his great-great-grandfather. I hitchhiked back to Houston. - *David Locklear, NSS27639L (A.S.S., DFW, GHG, TSA).*

"RIP, and prayers for the survivors!" - *Lawrence Loveless*

"Wow - very sorry to hear this." - *Emily G. McGowan*

"So sorry to hear this ... He will be missed." - *Dorothy T. Mladenka*

"Jay, Thank you for posting this most sad news of our longtime friend's passing. Carol and I have so many fond memories and fun times with Mike. This caught us completely by surprise and we would like to express our condolences and prayers to Jeff and his whole family. This cuts deep for us. He may be gone, but his friendship won't be forgotten by us. ...

"Very sad news for Carol and I. Mike was our friend from start to finish. He made a difference and organized Texas caving. I first met Mike at a TCR weekend before Carolyn and I were married. He handed me a handful of his cookies. Never a dull moment on her caving adventures with Mike. He genuinely was concerned with cave conservation! Mike, you're still in our hearts wherever you are, and I'm sure we'll meet again." - *Kenny McGee*

"That is indeed sad. I hope his family finds comfort in all his accomplishments. Thank you for letting us know, Jay." - *Evelynn Roth Mitchell*

"My first cave trips were to ones managed by TCC." - *Ryan Monjaras*

"Mike was a great guy, always enjoyed talking to him." - *Vickie Cothren Nixon*

"So long, old friend. Thanks for the attention given to a new caver. It changed my life and my world. I remember those caving days with very fond memories." - *Dale Pate*

"He was such a nice guy. He will be missed at convention." - *Kathy Peerman*

"Thank you for letting us know, Jay. I know you were close." - *Ethan Perrine*

"My sincerest condolences go out to the entire Walsh family for their loss. If you liked caves, cavers and caving, you knew Mike Walsh! You are missed ... God's speed from an SWTSU / GH Grotto caver!" - *David Persha*

"Off Rope Mike. Cave softly." - *Terry Plett*

"Big caver hug ... I'm sorry to read that. Rest in peace." - *Mónica Ponce*

"Mike was one of the founders of TCMA. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his passion. That passion often got the best of Mike. To know him was a conflict of emotions. Sending condolences to his family and friends. May his family find comfort and he be at peace." - *Joe Ranzau*

"I am sorry for the loss of such a great person and caver. May he rest in peace, and my condolences to his family." - *O Oliver Robertson*

"My friend and longtime traveling companion." - *Will Rupley*

"Oh no! Sorry to hear this, Will. He is part of my TCR memories as well as his place in north Austin where we attended a few gatherings. RIP Mike." - *Mandy Holt Sherwin*

"I'm sorry for the loss of your friend. I bet you have some way wonderful memories and travel stories from your friendship. RIP, Mike." - *Vikki Bevers*

"Sad to hear it. Hope he's caving with everyone in the great borehole beyond." - *Kara Dittmer Savvas*

"Awww nooooo! Geez. Missing all the amazing caver souls!!!" - *Carol Schumacher*

"Such a loss. Peace to all who knew him. ... He will be missed." - *Patricia Seiser*

"I met Mike back in 1983. He was such a fun guy with an interesting way of life back then. Quite the adventurer and would sell anything!" - *Carolina Payne Shrewsbury*

"Very sad. I enjoyed speaking with him." - *James Smith*

"Thanks for sharing, Jay. Mike was a true powerhouse for Tex/Mex caving and a really thoughtful, nice guy." - *Alex Sproul*

"Wow. Just met with Mike earlier in the week. No signs of illness at all ... Rest in peace, Mike." - *Terri Sprouse*

"Very sad to hear this. My dear friend Sonya Erickson had spent some time recently with Mike and his wife visiting Mexico City, and she did a Yucatan trip with him. I fondly remember Mike at UT Grotto meetings in Painter 2.148." - *Tim Stich*

"Mike was very special to me. I visited him every year in Mexico, except last year. I feel so bad I didn't make it in 2025. He was always up for an adventure and had lots of stories to tell. I am so glad I got to know him." - *Sonya Erickson*

"I remember some great conversations about cave history at conventions. He knew much more about the closest cave to my Arkansas home than I did." - *Michael Taylor*

"More sad news. An early SWTSU caver." - *Chris Thibodaux*

"RIP Mike. I'm sorry, Will (Rupley)." - *Karen Veni*

"Mike was a good friend for many years and he will be missed." - *Phil Winkler*

"This is a sad loss. I'm glad I got to see him at the Montana Convention. Wish I'd gotten to spend more time with him." - *Claire Snider Wunderlin*

[Please view photos on following 12 pages]

Photos



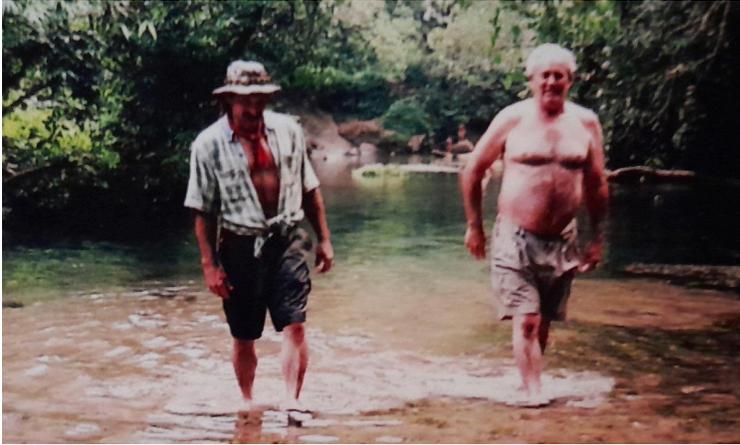
Mike at Cave of the Winds, Manitou Springs, Colo., on Aug. 1, 1960 (boy next to tall man)



Jay Jordan (L), Terry Raines, and Mike Walsh at 2025 Texas Cavers' Reunion - J. Jordan photo



Mike Walsh at 2024 Texas Cavers' Reunion - Jay Jordan photo



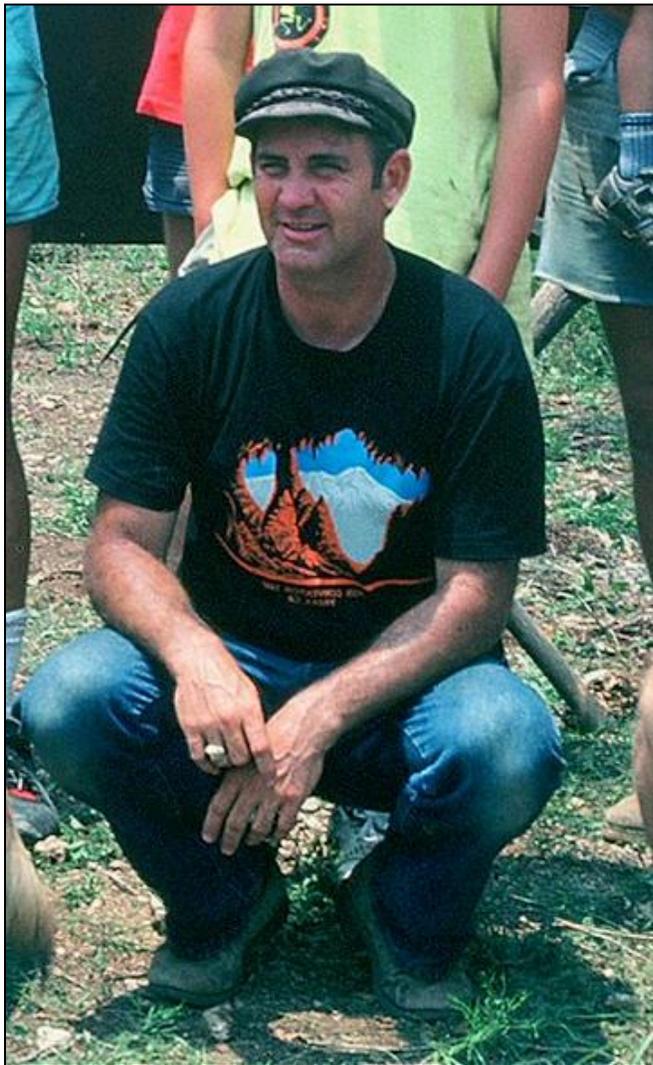
Bill Larsen and Mike Walsh in Mexico - Bill Larsen photo



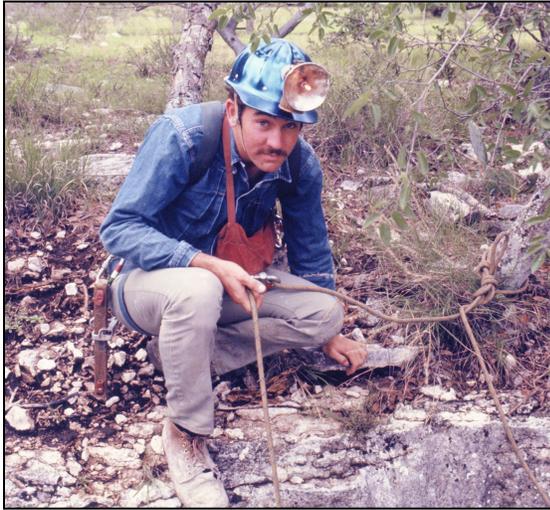
Lynda Beck with Mike at an artificial cave (built by Gill Ediger), Flat Creek Ranch, TCR



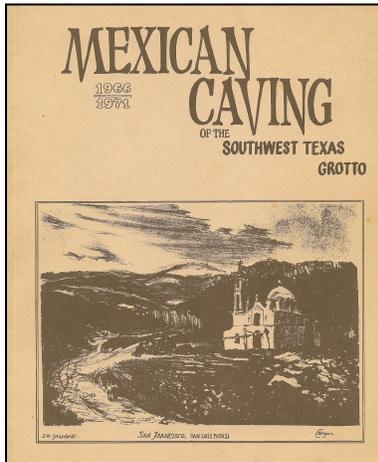
Logan McNatt (L), Mike Walsh, and Joe Sumbera



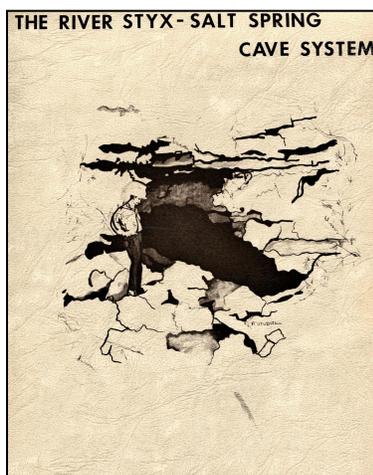
Mike at Whirlpool Cave Preserve, Austin



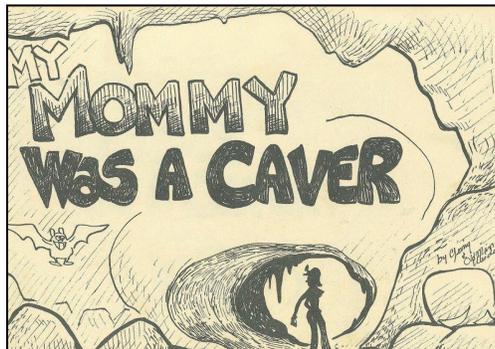
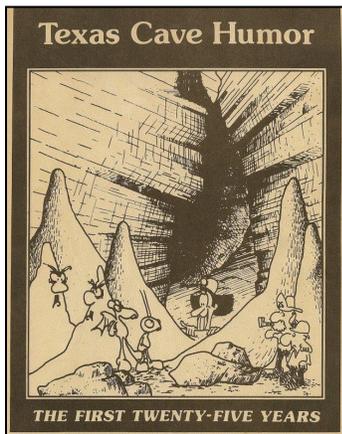
Mike in San Saba



Mike published the 146-page "Mexican Caving" for SWTG in 1972



With John Graves, Mike published a Texas Cave Report series on River Styx



1980 cartoon collection featured Bill Helmer. 1983: Charlie Loving's cartoons, published by Mike



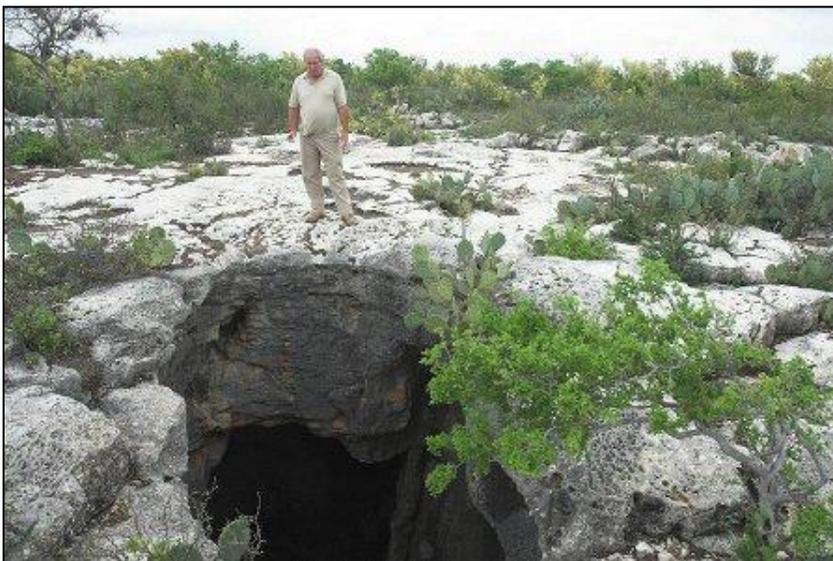
Cavers at TCMA's Whirlpool Cave Preserve, with Mike Walsh in front row, center. Other cavers include: (From top left) (?), James Savage, Jay Jordan, Jack Ralph (?), Jeff Walsh, Peter Strickland and son Colin (?), Andy Grubbs, Corky Corcoran, and Dave "Cave" McCung. (Front row from left) Rafal Kedzierski, Alex Villagomez, (?), Mike, Rob Bisset (?), and Orion Knox (?)



Marigold Cave



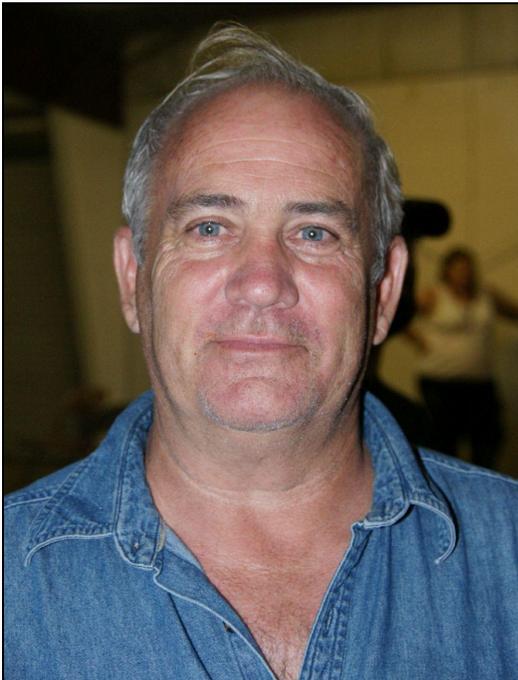
Oak Brook Karst Preserve



Mike at Webb Cave, Alamo Village



Harrison Cave



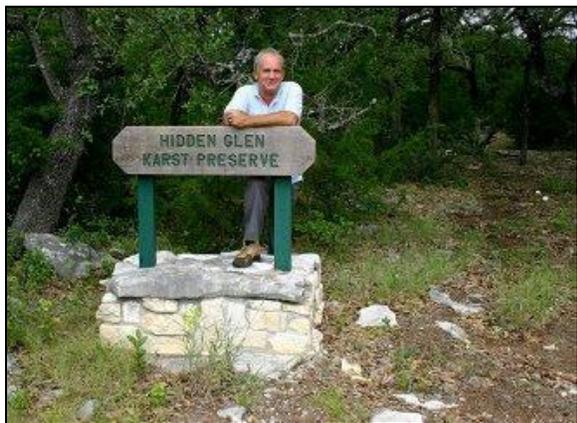
Mike in 2005 - Brian Houha photo



Mike's house in Aquismon, Mexico



Another shot of Mike - Brian Houha photo



Hidden Glen Karst Preserve



Mike Walsh hosted Lebanese cavers at TCC after 2009 International Congress of Speleology



Mike at national groundwater/karst conference, Florida, 2009



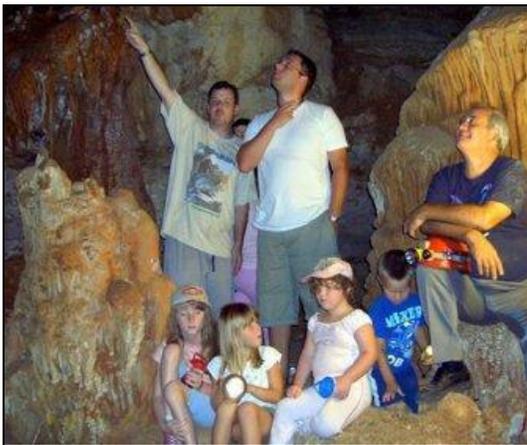
Booth at American Planning Association convention, Las Vegas, 2008



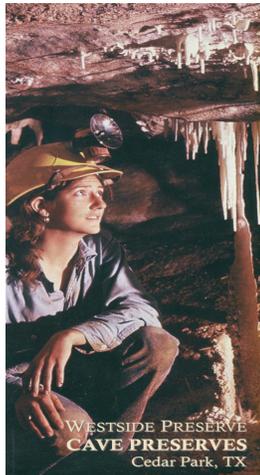
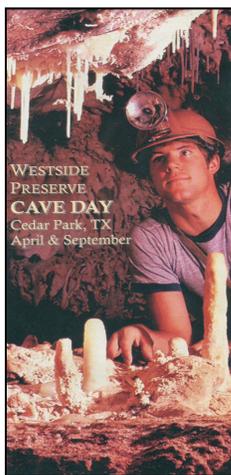
Aggie Speleological Society covers at TCC campground, 2007



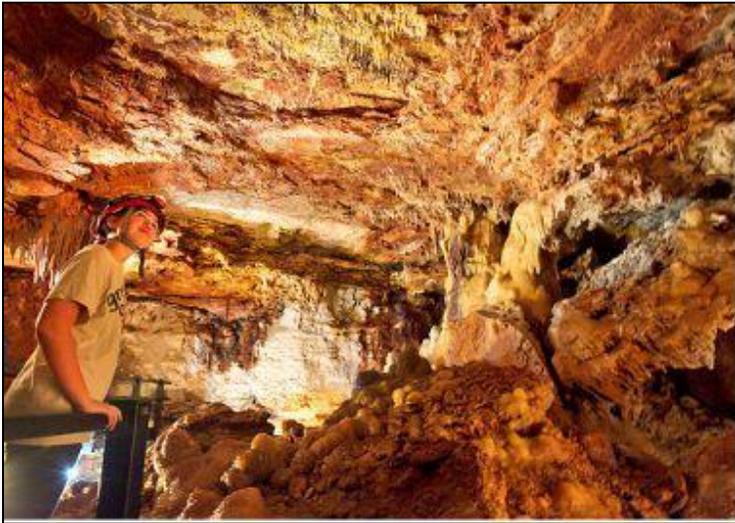
TCC receives NSS Cave Management Section's Group Cave Conservation–Cave Management Award at the NSS Convention Banquet, Aug. 11, 2006, in Bellingham, Wash. (From left) NSS President Gordon Birkhimer, Donna Mosesmann, Mike Walsh, Cat Kennedy, and Gary Napper.



Avery Ranch Cave



Brochures and posters for biennial TCC Cave Day



Young visitor to Avery Ranch Cave



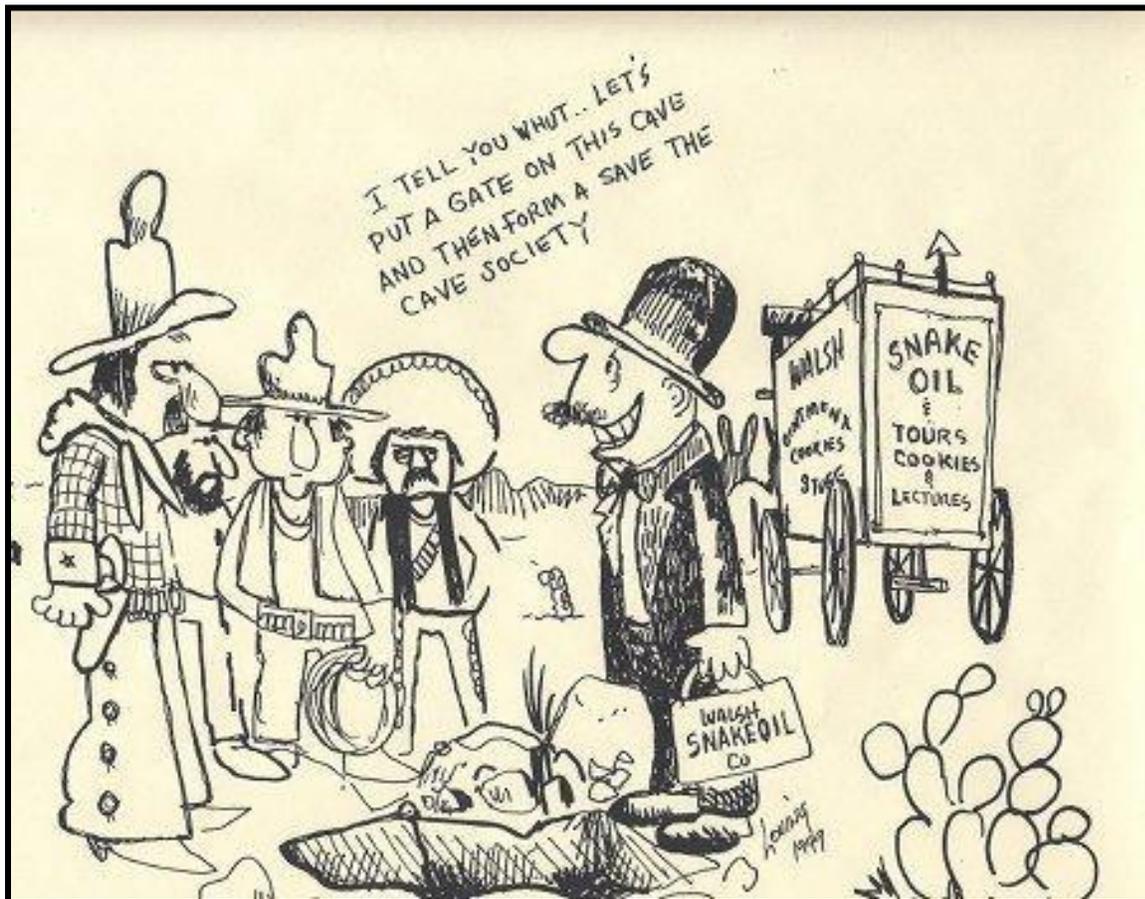
Austin area TV reporters arrive at Avery Ranch Cave entrance



TSA Convention at TCC Headquarters



Jollyville salamander



Mike's sense of humor - and that of his friends - was legendary. A (mostly) tongue-in-cheek cartoon was penned by friend and cave cartoonist Charlie Loving in honor of Mike.