Abner J. Totty, III

11 November 1944 – 4 September 1960, 15

An explorer scout, Abner was struck on the head by the large rock to which his cable ladder was anchored at Devil’s Sinkhole, Edwards County. There was no belay rope and he fell to his death. This was the first known cave-related death in Texas history. This was an awful but avoidable tragedy.


S. A. Scout Falls to Death

A San Antonio explorer scout fell 120 feet to his death in the treacherous Devil’s sink hole near Rocksprings Sunday when a huge boulder dislodged and fell on him.

Killed was Abner Jefferson Totty III, a son of Sgt. and Mrs. Abner J. Totty, all Sprucewood.

DAD WITH GROUP
The boy’s father, a retired air force sergeant, was with the climbing party when the fatal fall took place.

The boy was a member of Explorer Post 304, sponsored by St. Stephen’s Methodist church. A group of 19 scouts and four adult leaders, including the senior, Totty, had been camping at the sink hole since Friday.

The party returned to San Antonio following the tragedy.

The Totty youth had entered scouting as a cub in 1952. He had become a life scout and officials said he was just one merit badge away from becoming an eagle scout.

BEGIN DESCENT
The accident occurred as the scouts began a descent into the 180-foot crater Sunday.

They had hauled a steel cable ladder to a rock formation near the top. Totty had descended about 60 feet when the boulder was dislodged and struck him.

Larry Higgins, assistant explorer adviser, was lowered to Totty and tried in vain to revive him with mouth to mouth respiration.

TREATED FOR SHOCK
Higgins later collapsed and was treated at a Rocksprings hospital for shock.

Also with the party were Erwin Ward Jr., explorer adviser, and Mike Clifford, another adult leader.

A. J. TOTTY III
Killed in fall.


Compiled by William R. Elliott and Frances Fehribach, 24 January 2020