



Andrew James Flurkey

October 9, 1950 - September 14, 2022

Dr. Andrew James Flurkey, fondly known as “Andy”, 71, of Richmond, Texas passed away on September 14, 2022 at his home surrounded by his family. He was born on October 9, 1950 in Evanston, Illinois to Andrew Julius Flurkey and Anita LaPointe Flurkey. He was raised Catholic. Andy held a PhD in Geology. Some of his accomplishments include being the Scientific Editor of the National Speleological Society’s Bulletin for 10 years. He explored and mapped caves all over the United States and Mexico. He was a member of Windy City, Vedavoo Student, Colorado, and Greater Houston Grottos. A room he discovered in Wind Cave National Park was named after him – Andy’s Ice Box. He was an honorary owner of ‘The Great Hall’ in the Great X (Great Expectations) Cave Preserve.

Andy was an avid reader, hiker, camper, biker and caver. He loved history, travel, and was a Boy Scout. Though he did not like heights, he climbed Devil’s tower and repelled into caves to pursue what he loved – caving. He was passionate about geology, astronomy, nature and his family. He worked primarily for the Colorado Department of Transportation and for British Petroleum. Andy earned double bachelor’s degrees in geology and biology from the University of Illinois Chicago. He went on to earn his Masters in geology from Northern Illinois University, and a PhD in geology at University of Wyoming.

Andy enriched many lives over the years. He will be remembered for his love of his family and nature.

In addition to his parents, Andy is preceded in death by a sister, Jeanne.

Survivors include his wife of 32 years, Mary; son, Michael; grandson, Jayden; sister, Barbara; 9 nieces and nephews; 12 great nieces and nephews; along with extended family and friends.

Details for a service in Chicago will be forthcoming.

For those wishing, please consider making a donation to C.A.R.E., Northern Illinois University Chicago or Colorado Libraries.

Tributes and words of condolence may be left for the family at www.davisgreenlawnfh.com.

Arrangements are under the direction of Davis-Greenlawn Funeral Home, 3900 B.F. Terry Blvd. (Hwy 59 South @ FM 2218), Rosenberg, Texas 77471, Phone: 281-341-8800.

Andy Flurkey

NSS 12662 Fellow 1950-2022

Andy passed away on Wednesday September 14th, 2022 after a long battle with Parkinson's and other related illnesses.

I first met Andy at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle as an undergraduate. I was an engineering student but in the fall of 1970 I decided to take some geology courses as electives. It was through the university's geology club that I met Andy. As a caver with the Windy City Grotto, Andy and I quickly became friends.

Andy soon joined the Grotto and we were off frequently on the weekend to go caving in southern Indiana, Missouri and other nearby states. In August of 1971 I was organizing and leading the second major exploration and mapping trip to Wind Cave National Park. Andy quickly signed on and soon we were pushing the far reaches of Wind Cave.

On Tuesday August 24th he was on an exploration trip led by Chris Hill and accompanied by team member Bob Reinstatler when they discovered Half Mile Hall (Haul), the largest room in Wind Cave. All day long they were making 100 ft shots into the vast darkness totaling over 2,800 ft of survey (a half mile haul) for the day.

Andy was an integral member of the explorations in Wind Cave for over 20 years. He also led the surface survey team during the early 1970's to make a large-scale topographic map overlying Wind Cave. In 1971 they surveyed over a square mile at a scale of 1" = 50' the old fashioned way -- with plane table and alidade.

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I believe it was over Christmas break in 1971 that Andy, Mark Stock and I spent about 10 days at Wind Cave. Back then the park was closed to the public, so we literally had the whole park to ourselves. Beautifully winter quiet and serene. Our mission was a total resurvey of the approximately 1½-mile public tour route using a Gurley mining transit. It was very enjoyable work, being free from interruption by thousands of visitors on tour.

John Shelters & Andy Flurkey Bill Weiner, Andy Flurkey & Joe Wolf

Andy went on to Northern Illinois University to gain his masters and then onto the University of Wyoming to achieve his Doctorate.

Over the years we continued to get together and cave in many parts of the country. It was always great to have Andy on a trip. His geological knowledge of the United States was remarkable. Always happy to explain the local geology wherever we traveled. And he did it so eloquently, translating complex geological phenomenon into simple four letter words that we non-geologists could understand – like rock, dirt, sand ...

Flowstone in Wind Cave Andy as an undergraduate @ 1971

In the early days of caving it seemed like so many cave trips were an adventure more than the caves. My vehicle broke down in remote locations. On one incident Andy, Mark Stock and I were exploring lava tubes around the Bend, Oregon part of the country. We were up some four-wheel-drive trail

near Broken Top Mtn. when the clutch went out on the pickup. Now for fun mechanics. We had to take the transmission out of the truck to get at the failed clutch plate. With the floor boards in the truck removed, Mark Stock rigged a sling around his back and straddled the open hole inside the truck to act as a human crane while Andy and I laid underneath to remove (and later reassemble) the transmission.

When traveling, we would often stop for breakfast at a local café. Andy loved pancakes. On one such occasion we met up with some other cavers in Driggs, ID for breakfast before a trip to Fossil Mt. Ice Cave. They had just finished their breakfast but Andy noted one of the cavers had not finished their pancakes. Andy said he was hungry and the caver offered his unfinished pancake breakfast to Andy. The other cavers were leaving and would meet us up on the mountain. Andy gobbled up the remaining pancakes. When our waitress came Andy decided to order a whole stack of pancakes. The waitress asked him 'are you sure?'. 'Absolutely' Andy responded. Andy did not realize that a whole stack was 12" in diameter and 12" high. He made a valiant attempt.

On Labor Day weekend 1978 Andy lured Dave Springhetti and me over to the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming for a 'recreational' weekend of caving. Dave and I had been working really hard in many long, hard survey trips into Wind Cave. So, for a change in venue, we accepted. He said 'oh, by the way, the area we are going to has a small cave we got into the year before. We should survey it while we are in the area. It's small and shouldn't take more than a couple of hours to survey'. We said 'OK. What's the name of the cave?' Andy said, 'Great Expectations - Great 'X' for short.'

Andy Flurkey, Dave Springhetti & John Scheltens in the Great Hall of Great X Cave, WY

On September 2, 1978, Andy led a survey team consisting of Eric Liebes and Wayne Sutherland. They started at the entrance and surveyed in. Dave, his wife Carole, my wife Pat and I formed the 2nd survey team. Andy said just follow the stream to the back of the cave where it sumps and survey out toward us. It shouldn't take too long. Well, we never made it to the sump. I found a high lead along the route. Dave and I checked it out and, in a few minutes, we popped into the "Great Hall" as our lights gazed into the massive borehole. This 'little cave', less than two years later, set the US Depth record and is now an NSS Cave Preserve.

Andy's fault.

Throughout the late 70's and early 1980's we made many survey trips into Wind Cave, making it one of the largest caves in the world. There is a passage in Wind Cave beyond Half Mile Hall called Andy's Ice Box, named for Andy's discovery of the massive display of fine aragonite crystals. The area looks like you are in a giant freezer.

Aragonite Frostwork in Andy's Ice Box in Wind Cave

Andy has been an active participant in the NSS for many decades, belonging to several grottos in his journeys to include Windy City, Vedavoo Student, Colorado, and Greater Houston Grottos.

For 9 years, 1978 – 1996, he was the editor of the NSS Bulletin. Andy was honored and named a Fellow of the NSS.

It has been a privilege and an honor to know and share a friendship with Andy Flurkey as we explored some of the largest and deepest caves in the United

States. He will be dearly missed by all who knew him.

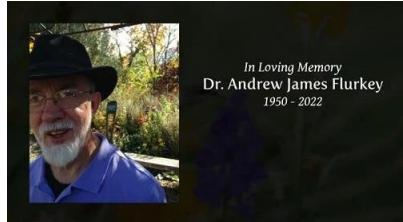
John Scheltens

Andy Flurkey and John Scheltens
(In Andy's Ice Box in Wind Cave)

Tribute Wall



“ *Davis Greenlawn Funeral Chapel and Cemeteries created a Tribute Video in memory of Andrew James Flurkey*



Davis Greenlawn Funeral Chapel and Cemeteries - September 27, 2022 at 11:46 AM

NR

When Andy came to Houston with BP, he was part of my group. He was smart, capable, and a good person to be with.

Norman C Rosen - September 29, 2022 at 08:26 AM

MF

Thank you Norm.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:06 PM

EL

“ *Dear Mary*
We were sad to hear about Andy and send our condolences to you and your family. I will remember the trips to Wind Cave with Andy - a place he loved.
Ed LaRock and Mary Jo Stark

Ed LaRock - November 09, 2022 at 06:34 PM

SF

“ *Mary & Family, our deepest condolences for Andy’s loss. He was an amazing man in many ways.*

We enjoyed the times we spent together with Mary & Andy. Great meals, laughs & playing different board games. Andy had a big heart & a wonderful sense of humor. He Had a huge garden in Colorado & we enjoyed the fruits of his labor. Andy is dearly missed.
Bob & Shelly Fitzgerald

Shelly & Bob Fitzgerald - October 02, 2022 at 07:52 PM

EL

“ *Mary and Family, Andy remains in my heart as a great friend, colleague and caving partner. I hope your family can remember the great times with Andy. He was a great guy.- Eric Liebes*



ERIC LIEBES - September 29, 2022 at 03:15 PM

MF

Hi 'Ernie!' 'What's doin Ernie?' Eric, Andy always remembered you fondly. Thank you.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:01 PM

MF

Eric, One of Andy's favorite things about Halloween was always putting the Jack-o-Lantern you made for him on the porch by the front door. I just put it out and will continue the tradition. :) Mary

Mary Flurkey - October 04, 2022 at 03:19 PM

DB

“ *Very sorry for your loss, I remember Andy from our days in the SOHIO Gulf Coast Division in Houston, TX in the early 1980's. Always a fun guy, and full of life, a real 'Character". My condolences to Mary and the family. Regards, Dirk Bodnar.*

Dirk Bodnar - September 29, 2022 at 09:16 AM

MF

We both had fond memories with you. Hope you are well.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:10 PM

WG

“ *Mary and Family,
I was saddened to hear of Andy's passing. During that brief time that our paths crossed at Sohio/BP Houston I enjoyed my chats with Andy especially our talks about caving. My prayers and thoughts are with you.*

William Green

William Green - September 28, 2022 at 10:31 AM

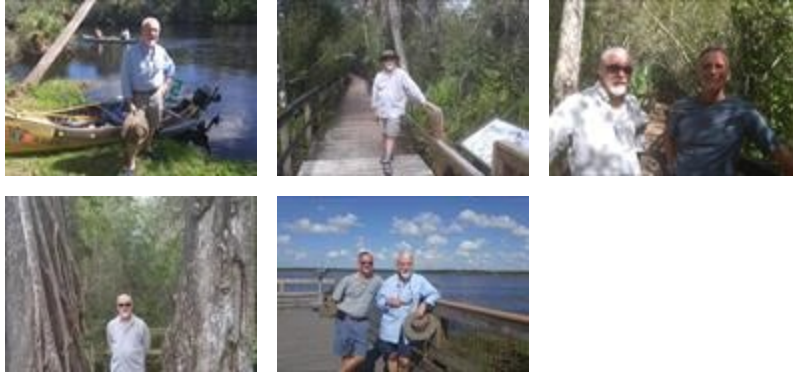
MF

Thank you Bill.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:11 PM

BT

“ We had a great time together in Florida. He will be missed. Brian & Gerri



Brian Tinetti - September 24, 2022 at 07:47 PM

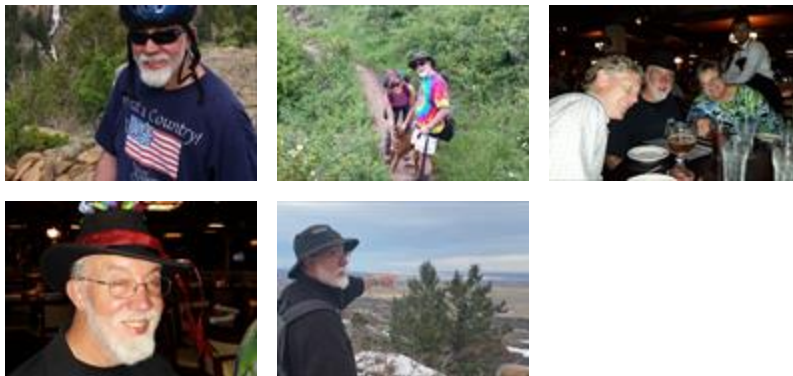
MF

That trip to Tampa with you meant a lot to Andy, as has our long friendship with both you and Gerri.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:14 PM

RM

“ 19 files added to the album Andy Flurkey



Rachael Mays - September 24, 2022 at 02:51 PM

MF

Words cannot express how much you and Phil have meant to Andy and me for the last 40 years. You have truly been like family. I know I've become a pain in the rear as he and I travelled through this rugged, 8-year journey. Thank you for always hanging in there. We both love you and always will.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:23 PM

RM

We are so grateful to have met you and Andy so long ago and for your generous and enduring friendship over these many years. I was always impressed with Andy's love of nature and his avid willingness to hike, bike, climb, cave or study rocks. Andy was a very frequent, fun and supportive trail companion to Phil and me and to our two, now grown daughters, Cameron and Roslynn. He taught us so much! We will forever cherish the memory of Andy and of our two families getting together, playing games, and sharing meals. We love you too and appreciate you and Andy for making our lives richer and happier.

Rachael H Mays - October 19, 2022 at 05:31 PM

PK

Andy always knew where he was, whether in a cave, on a hike, or just hanging out with friends and family. We have never known anyone with a better sense of his place on earth. He was a rock and so dependable, regardless of the circumstances. Andy made all the people around him so much better. It was a privilege to be Andy's friend and we will miss him wherever we go.

Philip King - October 19, 2022 at 05:56 PM

MD

“*Dear Mary, I feel your pain, I don't have the right words to ease the pain you are going through. you and your family will be in my thoughts. ❤️🌹 marisa*

marisa almo d - September 24, 2022 at 12:55 AM

JL

“ 25 files added to the tribute wall



Jennifer Leuellen - September 23, 2022 at 10:19 PM

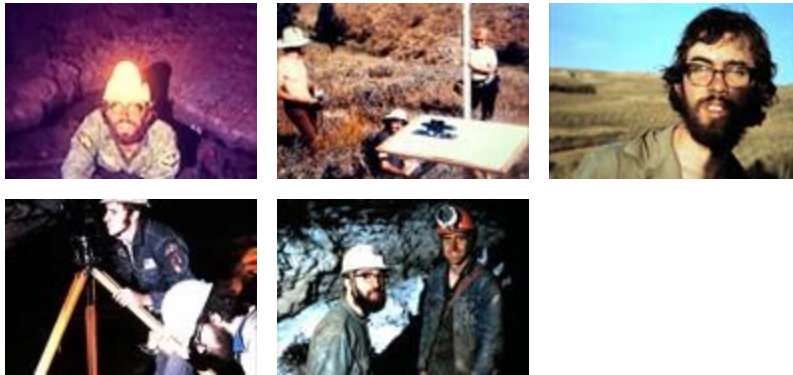
MF

Thank you Jennifer. We love you.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:26 PM

JS

“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



John Scheltens - September 22, 2022 at 01:15 PM

MF

John, you have been such a huge part of Andy's life. Thank you for adding to his obituary and pictures here and writing one for the NSS Newsletter. I knew he was someone special in many ways all along, but I keep finding there were even more wonderful things I didn't know. He was never one to boast. Thank you for your generous insight. All my best to you and Pat. See you in Chicago for the celebration of his life in October.

Mary Flurkey - September 29, 2022 at 05:40 PM