

On Sunday, July 7, Louis A. Hippenmeier, a University of Florida student, was fatally injured in a cave west of Gainesville, Florida.

The accident occurred while he and four others, Bud Johnson, Jim Quigg, Mike Sheridan and Frank Tiberi, were engaged in a routine cave exploration trip. Hippenmeier, a long-time member of the Florida Speleological Society and of the National Speleological Society, was an experienced spelunker.

After spending a couple of hours looking for new caves, the party stopped at a cave known locally as Dead Man's Drop. The entrance to the cave is a 4 by 6 foot hole at the bottom of a funnel-shaped sink approximately 40 feet in diameter and 25 feet deep. The opening leads directly into the ceiling of a chamber about 55 feet in depth.

Two large logs are securely wedged across the opening and to these the group attached 60 feet of flexible steel cable ladder. Four people entered the cave while Hippenmeier, who had seen the cave on previous occasions, remained on the surface and belayed the others as they descended the ladder. Employing recognized safety practices, he situated himself in a secure position at the top of the sink where he could control the safety line tied to each person climbing down the ladder.

After spending about an hour in the cave, the exploring party returned to a point directly under the entrance and called to Hippenmeier to lower the safety line so that he could belay them out of the cave. Hippenmeier had come down the slope of the sink and was sitting on the logs over the entrance awaiting their return. As he was getting up and going for the safety line he apparently lost his footing and fell into the cave.

Johnson, who is Safety Chairman of the F.S.S. and Leader of the F.S.S. Search and Rescue Unit, immediately initiated the necessary first aid

treatment. Sheridan undertook the hazardous task of climbing up the ladder without a safety line and went to notify the authorities. First to arrive was an ambulance followed by the Sheriff's Department Emergency Rescue Truck. Hippenmeier was fastened into a Stoke's litter, raised out of the cave, and rushed to the University Medical Center where he died a short time later.