





e x p l o r e r s

In April of 1994, Sheck Exley, one of the world's greatest modern day explorers, failed to return from a deep cave dive in Del Monte cavern located in northeastern Mexico.

Sheck was an explorer's explorer, with the instincts of an artist, whose inherent passion was to go where no one has gone. Our planet's last unmeasured frontier—the earth's depths—is the realm he chose to conquer. For nearly three decades Sheck's untiring efforts led the way in the exploration, surveying, and mapping the world's extensive aquifer systems.

Since his first open-water dive in a shallow spring cave at the age of 16, he has logged more cave dives (over 4,000), dived deeper (881 feet), and on a single dive penetrated cave passages farther (over two miles) than all others. In the same period his ability to innovate, teach and lead by example took cave diving from a foolhardy endeavor to a disciplined, structured and purposeful activity.

His bold accomplishments were repeatedly honored. Distinctions included fellowships in the National Speleological Society and Explorers Club and the Lew Bicking Award as America's top cave explorer. Records and honors only begin to tell his story, however. Although proud of his achievements, they were never the force behind the vision.

He lived to push frontiers. Ever-evolving strategies on how to safely go deeper and penetrate water-filled caves farther were his mind's steadfast companion. When limits using compressed air were reached, he embraced mixed gas; when their further effectiveness required complicated formulas, he turned to computers, and worked on a Doctorate in Computer Science. Because of an amazing self-confidence he never became a self-promoter. He sacrificed money and support for a personal agenda that promised complete control. This course led to the most amazing string of underwater exploits ever accomplished.

He was not a daredevil; he was the forerunner who spent his life preparing himself mentally and physically for underwater challenges.

He was simply the best and most experienced diver that we had.

The greatest happiness is the fulfillment of one's uniqueness. Such fulfillment Sheck Exley achieved.

—Ned DeLoach, Jacksonville, FL

eagles fly alone