

## Obituary:

### Edward A. Lane 1921 – 2017

*John Dunkley*

*assisted by Susan and Harley Lane*

The founding co-editor of *Helictite* journal, Edward Arthur Lane, died on 9th July 2017.

Born in Brisbane in 1921, Ted's family moved to Dover Heights, NSW, where he attended Sydney Grammar School. At times he worked with his father who was Director of Advertising and Publicity for Greater Union Theatres, and later J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd, and sometimes on the totes at the race tracks on Friday nights. He became a cadet journalist, the *Sydney Morning Herald* paying for his studies at Sydney University. There he joined the Sydney University Regiment, leading to a call-up for World War 2 as a gunnery officer and cypher specialist, escorting convoys from Darwin to Thursday Island on the 'Cootamundra', later posted as liaison officer with the US Navy in the South Pacific. He married Dorothy in 1944, returned to journalism with the *Herald*, *Telegraph* and *Bulletin*, later becoming Press Secretary to Senator Spooner, Minister for Natural Resources. His family says he commuted from Sydney while Parliament was sitting and never lived in Canberra. Perhaps he bunked with friends during this period as he was a foundation member of Canberra Speleological Society, exploring White Fish Cave (Cooleman), Cheatmore and Krawaree (The Big Hole). He attended the foundation meeting of the Australian Speleological Federation in Adelaide in 1956, at which discussion took place about coordination of current research projects in Australian speleology and the desirability of producing a high standard publication, and he participated in the renowned Nullarbor expedition immediately afterwards.

In 1961 he transferred to the Atomic Energy Commission, retiring in 1985 as Director of Information Services.

A high quality publication was not economically viable at the time, but after a spell as Secretary of ASF in 1960-61 Ted began canvassing the concept of an Australian Cave Research Association (ACRA) with Dr Aola M. Richards, University of New South Wales. While ACRA did not proceed, a short while later Ted and Aola decided to launch *Helictite* as a non-profit publication providing a reliable news service and collection of speleological papers for those interested in any of its disciplines.



*Ted Lane caving in White Fish Cave, Cooleman Plains, NSW.*

The journal aimed to encompass the scientific study of caves and their contents, the history of caves and cave areas, and technical aspects of cave study and exploration, and was to cover Australia, New Zealand, the near Pacific Islands, New Guinea and surrounding areas, Indonesia and Borneo. Reflecting the Editors' strengths, the first



*At Atomic Energy Commission, 1963*

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issue covered cave animals and their environment, and a historical review of Julian Edmund Woods' *Observations on Caves, particularly those of South Australia* (1862). Ted & Aola together published a number of valuable studies, e.g. a 53-page comprehensive report on the Discovery, Exploration and Scientific Investigation of the Wellington Caves, New South Wales; Aboriginal Hand Stencils from Caves on the Nullarbor Plain, Southern Australia; *Burramus parvus* living fossil; and Exotic Collembola from Jenolan Caves.

For most of the following years *Helictite* appeared quarterly but in 1976 ownership of it transferred to the Speleological Research Council Ltd and in 1998 the Australian Speleological Federation Inc acquired all its assets and the *Helictite* title. Ted and Aola remained as Founding Editors.

In commemoration of Edie Smith, a pioneer of Australian speleology, in 1972 the Australian Speleological Federation instituted its first ever awards. Now ranking equally as the highest award given by ASF, the inaugural Edie Smith Award was presented to Ted Lane and Dr Aola M Richards, joint editors of *Helictite*, at the ASF Ninth Biennial Conference in Sydney. The citation read "For

*being a leader in many early cave exploration expeditions, a speleo-author, co-founder and co-editor of Australia's first speleologically-based scientific journal, Helictite".* In 1967 his colleague Dr Richards was appointed a Fellow of the National Speleological Society (USA). In June 1975 a whole issue of *Australian Natural History* was devoted to Australian caves, Ted leading with an article on Lime, Limestone and the First Caves.

In retirement Ted and his wife Dorothy travelled widely.

In summary, the remarkable initiative by Ted and Aola to begin a serious speleological journal only 6 years after ASF was formed was a remarkable achievement. Only 6 or 7 such peer-reviewed journals world-wide have survived the distance; at the time *Helictite* was one of only three in the English-speaking world. It remains the sole peer-reviewed speleological journal from the Southern Hemisphere.

For 54 years *Helictite* has been fortunate to have only three key teams of Editors until a fourth (Greg Middleton, Tim Moulds and Kevin Kiernan) was appointed in 2016. Ted and Aola remain as great pioneers of Australian speleology.



Ted and Dorothy Lane, on cruise ship, 1992.

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Photo: E. A. LANE.

The Sydney Speleological Society's fifty-foot scaling pole being used to investigate a hole in the roof of the Grand Arch, Jenolan Caves, New South Wales.

*One of Ted's photos graced the cover of the October 1966 issue of Helictite.*