

## Cave Diving Accident im Golf von Mexico

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By Cristy Loftis

When Richard "Rick" Anderson learned there was a search for his longtime friend Jim Cummins, he didn't assume the worst.

Cummins, 40, had disappeared during a scuba diving trip in the Gulf of Mexico near Homosassa on Sunday afternoon. Anderson knew his friend was a survivor. "I figured he'd end up on someone's dock," Anderson said.

But Monday morning **rescue divers found Cummins in a cave about 90 feet below the water's surface**, Citrus County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Eddie Lane said.

Cummins lived in Crystal River and was a well-known Inverness attorney. He was a **dive instructor** [also *KEIN Cave Diving Instructor!*] and ran Crystal River's Offshore Adventure Dive Center.

On Sunday, Cummins took Harold Arnold, 37, of Crystal River, and Donald Albritton, 26, a local Army recruiter, to a **cave** about 3.5 to 4 miles from Riverhaven Marina on the Homosassa River. Cummins was **helping the men to get their advanced open water diver certification**.

**While none of the men were certified cave divers, they entered a crack in the Gulf's floor, which leads into caves,** Lane said.

**At one point, Cummins instructed the divers to stop. Next, Cummins turned around, stirring up silt and making the water cloudy.**

That was the last time they saw Cummins, Lane said.

The **men waited about 25 minutes** for him to reappear, then returned to the surface and reported the incident to authorities.

Authorities from the sheriff's office, U.S. Coast Guard and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission searched for Cummins on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning. It was a certified cave diver from Birds Under Water helping in the search who finally found Cummins.

Lane said they believe Cummins **became disoriented and eventually ran out of air. He was found in a cave off of the main cavern.**

Cummins was **not attached to a safety line** [*ist damit gemeint, keine Mainlin?*], which is normal protocol for cave divers, Lane said. "Obviously, it was a fatal mistake," Lane said.

Cummins' **air tank** [*Monoflasche?*] **was also caught in a rock in the cave.** Lane said they couldn't tell if Cummins had gotten stuck before or after he died.

He was found at about 9:30 a.m. Monday and brought to a medical examiner official, who was waiting at the Riverhaven Marina where many of Cummins' friends had gathered.

Anderson, who worked for Cummins as an investigator in his law office, met with others who knew Cummins at the marina.

"That's all he ever talked about was diving, diving, diving," Anderson said.

While his friend of more than 20 years liked risks, Cummins was typically a careful person, Anderson said.

Cummins was the father of five children with ages ranging from elementary to college aged.

This is the **third person who has died in a cave in Citrus County in the past three years**, Lane said. The **last was in July 2006 when a swimmer ventured into an underwater cave in the Chassahowitzka River and died.**