

The Speleograph

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Kiesewetter Cave

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AS A CAVER YOU SHOULD DO THE SAME

by Dwight Weaver

What the hell is wrong with Missouri cavers?
Are we losing the PR war with the non-caving public?
Are we losing our hard earned caving legacy?

As a speleo-historian and life-long Missouri caver I am really worried because I see a trend that suggests too many of our Missouri cavers are blind, deaf and dumb to the forces that think cavers are crazy and that caves are not important natural resources and that everything we have learned about caves since 1956 when the MSS was established can be ignored and scrapped! On top of that too many cavers don't consider what will happen to their caving materials and records once they die. In most cases you can't depend on someone else to do it for you and the chances are your family members who are not cavers will be the least dependable. You should not wait to the last minute to consider and act on such issues.

In recent years and as recent as yesterday cavers who have been important to Missouri caving in one way or another have passed away, some of them sudden and unexpectedly, and the list includes Tex Yokum, Curtis Scott, Kate Johnson, Paul Johnson (no relation to Kate Johnson), Kerry Rowland, Oz Hawksley, Jerry Vineyard and Bill Pfantz and they are just the ones I have been most familiar with because I have known them for many years and caved with most of them. I generally don't know the circumstance surrounding most other cavers of the past many years outside of my arena of activity. Beyond their interest in caves, cavers are often difficult to get to know on a personal family level.

With each of these individuals we were losers and with the passing of several of them really, really big losers. And whose fault was it besides the grim reaper? In their passing we lost valuable publications, documents and other materials vital to our historic achievements. It is time for all Missouri cavers, especially those closely associated with the MSS, to take the time to figure out who among the cavers you know who have made contributions to Missouri caving and who might have materials in their possession that should be preserved. And so should your own personal letters, documents and caving history. Caving is hard work. We have worked diligently to locate, record, explore and study our caves and we are too complacent about who has what and who knows what. Cavers alive today must not let the trend continue.

I knew **Tex Yokum** a long time. He was an early caving companion of mine before he got involved in the Perry County work. When he and I went to Washington D.C. in 1985 to receive the Volunteer Action Award from the president in behalf of Missouri cavers for all the cave mapping and research that had been done in Missouri for decades Tex and I were together every minute of much of that week. I spent a lot of time trying to get Tex to plan for the safe keeping of all his records and mapping work and he just kept saying he didn't have the time to focus on it then. He said he was too busy and that he'd "let Sandy take care of that." Well, when he died suddenly we probably lost a lot of valuable materials and who was at fault – Tex of course but his family cleaned out his belongings and obviously threw a lot of his stuff away before a reliable caver was consulted.

Curtis Scott was a caver that did most of his cave work at locating and surveying caves in central Missouri and was a member of Lake Ozark Grotto (LOG). He had a filing cabinet full of his caving records as well as materials on Morgan County created by several conscientious younger cavers in LOG. They had given him the materials to be submitted to the MSS but Curtis died before he got that material turned in. When he died I attended the visitation and I pleaded with his daughter and others to be sure and give Curtis's records to members of LOG. What happened? As best as I can tell all of his files were lost. His family probably trashed the materials.

Kate Johnson was a hard working contributor to the MCKC for several years when the Conservancy was publishing the MCKC Digest. When she died I had hoped to attend her funeral but was then informed that her family didn't want cavers to attend. I had talked with Kate several times enough to know that her family did not care for her caving interests and cavers in general. My conversations with her husband who pre-deceased her were not favorable. That was sad but at least we didn't lose valuable documents that the MSS should have had.

The Speleograph

Oz Hawksley was very instrumental in the creation of the MSS and left us with numerous publications he was responsible for. His biological and paleo contributions were many. I caved with him in the early days of the MSS. In the twilight years of his life he went down slow and painfully with memory loss and by the time he was awarded a major conservation award by the MDC he couldn't even remember who I was at the ceremony. When I talked to him and tried to jog his memory he looked at me vacantly as if to ask Who Are You? Do I know you? And then his son moved him out west where I understand he vegetated in a special home until he died with total memory loss. We should have gotten him to write his caving recollections early on. He should have been interviewed at length. He did, years ago, turn over his early correspondence to the MSS cave files. I wrote an obit for Oz that was published in the NSS News but that was surface dressing, not the nitty gritty from the man himself. I felt a real loss when he passed.

Jerry Vineyard died only recently and we saw his death coming. I had begun more than two decades ago when his mind was sharp to get him to write about his caving years and to start organizing his cave contributions. Jerry kept telling me in emails "well I'm thinking about it" but I never saw anything in writing even though we were very close on many occasions. He was one of my caving mentors. His wife is a wonderful lady and Rosie and I continue to stay in touch with her but so far she has been unresponsive as to what Jerry might have recorded about his cave work. He also made very significant contributions to the state of Missouri in water resources and geology. When he got seriously ill with Parkinson's disease I had a couple of non-cavers who knew him from his state work ask me about him and said they were planning to go down to Ozark to interview him. At the time I told them "you'd better hurry because he is fading fast." As far as I know that interview did not take place. It got to where Jerry was in such bad shape that it hurt me too much to try to even visit with him. I don't do well emotionally under such circumstances. I made promises to Jerry a few months before he died to preserve certain cave records for posterity and he was thinking less about himself and more about others. That is how he lived his life. I wrote an obit for him that was published in the NSS News. But that was just highlights, not good solid memoir material. A caver needs to speak for their self and Jerry would have had much valuable insight to share with us. What a terrible loss!

Paul Johnson was a long-time central Missouri caver and as most cavers know he and I were very close associates and published a variety of cave books together. I could never get Paul to sit down and write his earlier caving memories. When he died suddenly his sister was in charge of his house and belongings because Anne, his caving wife, had pre-deceased him. Paul had no children. Paul had tons of stuff and I got lucky because she contacted me about some of the things she found in his house and didn't know what to do with. At least the Jefferson City set of the cave files he was caretaker for were removed from his house several years before he died. But Paul had so much stuff even he didn't know what he had in stacks and stacks of boxes. I couldn't remember all of his cave-related stuff and couldn't tell his sister all of the things she needed to watch for. As she went through the boxes she at least got in touch with the Zumwalts and someone in the Cole County Historical Society because Paul was an authority on the cemeteries of northern Missouri. As a consequence that material probably got saved. But she tossed a bunch of stuff related to our cave book publishing he and I had done before she ever got ahold of me and I really hated that. At least I got his cave photograph collection and it will be preserved. As far as a person's personal possessions go, family members who are not close to the deceased person usually don't know what should be saved and often don't know how to get ahold of the right people before they toss the materials out. Often this is because the deceased caver did not prepare well enough for their eventual demise. If divorces, death of loved ones or family conflicts are present in a person's life those things can have a very damaging impact on a caver's legacy. I wrote Paul's obit for the NSS News but obits always leave a lot to be desired.

Kerry Rowland was widely known and a wide variety of opinions about him circulate among cavers, but Kerry was genuine. I didn't always agree with his way of doing things but I liked Kerry and I think he liked me even though he and I lived and caved in two different kinds of reality. Yes, I caved with him many times and in caving he was a great companion. He was an active member of LOG for many years and more or less grew up caving with LOG. He was one of the founding board members of the MCKC. I cite him because his passing was a loss for the caving community, for LOG, and particularly those who enjoy vertical caving and caving below the southern border, but he was divorced and left a grieving daughter to whom he was very close, a young lady that all the cavers of LOG grew very fond of even if she may not have realized it.

The Speleograph

And now I come to **William "Bill" Pfantz** whom so many cavers in the MSS have had contact with. I spent hundreds of hours with Bill out on Lake of the Ozarks and the Osage River in his boat from the Kansas Line to the Missouri River in the early 2000s gathering photographic and historic material for my lake history and Osage River work. Like Ron Lather said to me "Bill would give you the shirt off his back if he thought you needed it." And Ron was correct. Yes, Bill was eccentric, meaning unconventional, and it was hard to get to know who the "the real Bill Pfantz" was deep down but he was genuine. He wasn't perfect but then nobody is. There are always two sides to every story. Yes he was interested in strange signs and marks he found in caves and on the faces of bluffs and dabbled in theories of early America that lots of conventional people considered crackpot thinking but that should not be an excuse to dismiss him and his accomplishments. Yet his family considered him "mentally ill" and went into his house and tossed away everything they didn't want or like, labeled him troubled, and this time the MSS lost thousands of dollars because Bill was the care taker of MOSPELEO issues and they were trashed. It took a heroic effort by some KC cavers and Don Dunham to save at least a portion of the back issues of MOSPELEO. Bill obviously did not anticipate what would happen to the things in his house after his demise and a family member stepped in.

So I'm preaching to you and pleading with you to care about your caving legacy and that of other cavers. You may not care about what happens to your caving legacy and materials but I can guarantee you that many of your caving companions do care. Please don't let the grim reaper catch you unprepared. Plan ahead and please help put a stop to this loss of Missouri's caving materials. So, am I taking my own advice? Well, I am along in years and don't know how much time I have left but what I wish done with my caving materials is recorded in my will and I am working hard with what time I have left to organize everything so the family that survives me will know what to do with the tons of material, caving and otherwise, that I have accumulated over the past 60 plus years. You should do the same!



Kerry Rowland Ennis Cave 2005



Kerry Rowland Ennis Cave 2005



Bill Pfantz Carroll Cave



Bill Pfantz, 4th from left at a LOG Christmas Party

I first met Bill at the Kansas City Area Grotto (KCAG) in 1988 or 1989. He had an old Ford 1/2 ton pick-up (very worn out) that he painted with Walmart "rattle can" spray paint in a baby blue color. Then he put a very large camper in the bed that was for a 3/4 ton truck. The KCAG put on the Fall 1990 MVOR in Arkansas. On Thursday evening of the MVOR here comes the baby blue Phantz special wobbling from side to side rolling across the pasture towards the KCAG camp. Getting close we noticed the passenger door starting to open and when Bill finally stopped, the door swung open and the new cover in the front seat sprang out falling to the ground and kissing it saying he was so glad to be alive. Within the last 2 hours of the drive from KC he knew he was dead at least 10-12 times. Arkansas roads leading to the MVOR were very curvy and Bill's camper would start to sway and swerve. Bill would have to crank the steering wheel back and forth and try to get it back under control all the while the truck is going all over both sides of the road. Upon getting up from the ground the guy looks over to us and shouts "Will someone please give me a ride back to KC as I will never ride with that crazy S.O.B. again." With Bill's classic chuckle and smile his comment upon getting out was "We got here didn't we?"

Four of us from KCAG went to Arkansas to cave at Ennis and Alexander caves. After caving for a while in Alexander we were taking a break. I was looking around and saw a small shelf area so I climbed up and found a pair of reading glasses. I stuck them in my pocket to throw in the trash later. A couple weeks later at the grotto meeting, I was giving our trip reports and mentioned I found glasses in Alexander. Bill pipes up and says those are my glasses I lost there a couple of months ago. The next grotto meeting I returned the glasses to Bill. Of course they were still covered in cave mud.

Bill was fun and exciting to share a house with as you always knew you could get long in-depth discussions on most any topic but especially on what inscriptions he was working on at the time. Or I could just exchange a few words and go to my room. When I lived with him in 93-94 he was delivering pizzas in Raytown (KC suburb), while still working his full time job, so there was always pizza in the fridge. He said he enjoyed meeting the different people and being a part of their life but for just a moment as he delivered their pizza. I know he delivered pizza for many years. Other cavers from KCAG found shelter at Bill's "Home for Wayward Cavers" over the years as Bart Rapp was the first, then me and finally Bob Parks.

Bill was a meat cutter by trade and a really good one. Of course, his bosses at work did not know what they were doing so he just did his job well and stayed out of their way. Saying Bill was eccentric was an understatement. Bill was truly a great man with the joy and hope of a child's new discovery when dealing with his archaeological work and research. Finding writings and inscriptions in and around caves or many other areas where you or I may or may not see some slight depressions in the rock. Bill would see these depressions saying they could be Sumerian inscriptions, look and photograph them from every possible angle and then some more so he could research them deeper upon his return home. He was a very intelligent man who had very strong beliefs and commitments. He would also listen to your ideas and thoughts and discuss them openly with you. He would give you the shirt off his back if you were only to ask.

I was honored to have him call me a friend. I loved the man as a brother and will deeply mourn

his passing. Bill would not have wanted us to mourn him but to celebrate his joy of life, his enthusiasm

for his archaeological inscriptions, his sense of exploration and discovery, his love of caves and the earth

along with the joy he brought to each of us that knew him as a friend.

We will truly miss you old friend... for it takes a life time to grow an old friend.

Ron Lather



What's in a name?

During the past weeks, I have been going through lots of drawers and boxes of stuff that has accumulated over the years. I came upon an article from summer 2015 in the *Missouri Resources* publication that read "Rock Matters" and went on to talk about barite. Anyone that has ever been to a LOG Christmas party and played the "Cave-O" game, should be familiar with the word 'barite.'" Whenever I have read the word at the party, I can tell by the look on Dwight Weaver's face if I have pronounced it correctly or not.

What is barite? The name comes from the Greek word *barus*, which means heavy. It is a non-metallic mineral which can be colorless, transparent to translucent, or white with light shades of blue, yellow and red. It can be stained with red iron oxide. It has been used as a paint pigment and extender, and filler in rubber, paper, linoleum, plastic, leather, etc.

Barite mining in Missouri began around 1850, mostly from open pits. Being heavy, it is used as an aggregate in the preparation of heavy cement and in the medical field. Since the 1920s, 80-95 percent of the barite mined around the world has been consumed in the drilling of oil and gas wells. Ground barite has been used in the tires of tractors, heavy construction equipment and in bowling balls. It also has many more uses.

Missouri used to be the leading barite producer in the U.S. with most of it coming from Washington County and the Blackwell Pit, a dark reddish color due to iron in the soil. It was also produced in small deposits in a central district of counties – Morgan, Moniteau, Cole, Miller and Camden – cream white to colorless crystals. The Lamb Mine at Gravois Mills was a big producer. Barite and galena were the minerals which Jacob Cray Craft was prospecting for when he discovered Jacob's Cave.

Common names for barite are Barytes, Tiff, and Heavy Spar. We have an old tiff mine on our farm. I remember as a little girl, going outside after a rain and looking for tiff on the ground. I haven't done that for a very long time. Maybe I should go look.....—Alberta Zumwalt



BEATING THE BUZZARD: A MEMOIR

By H. Dwight Weaver

Sixty years is a long time to try to remember the events of a caving trip accurately but I will give it my best shot. This comes from the shadows of June 26, 1960 when cavers from Chouteau Grotto in Columbia and cavers from MMV in St. Louis teamed up to conquer Missouri's second deepest cave, Buzzard Cave, which happens to be in Wright County. I am assuming it is still ranked as Missouri second deepest cave at 320+ feet because in my non-caving old age I no longer have the latest information readily available and my memory isn't as good as it used to be. Marvel Cave in Stone County has long been ranked as Missouri's deepest at around 400+ feet.

The late great Gregory "Tex" Yokum was the first team member to arrive early Friday afternoon in the wooded area of the Martin Oetting farm adjacent to the Christy farm upon which Buzzard Cave was located. This was about three-and-a-half miles east of Mansfield. I was the second to arrive, all revved up because this was hyped up in correspondence to be a very exciting cave trip. At that moment neither Tex nor I had any idea just how exciting this trip was going to be but it would turn out to be a doozy. We had no idea how deep the cave was, which was why the team was going to have 1,000 feet of rope, several cable ladders as well as field telephones available. Nor did we know it would be one of the most dangerous caves we'd ever explore.

I had met Tex before in the muddy innards of Carroll Cave. In fact he helped pull me out of a quagmire in Carroll River Passage on one of our early trips into that notorious cave. I found Tex sitting by his campfire playing his guitar and joined him and we began telling each other lies. If you remember Tex you'll recall that he was so full of energy he often couldn't sit still for very long and presently he said "Hey! Let's go down in the cave and set an expansion-bolt above that 60-foot drop because we'll have to tie in there tomorrow. It'll give us a head start."

I was game. It was still several hours before dark and it beat telling far-fetched stories. I had not been in the cave before but Tex had. He in fact called it "Little Bit Pit" because the opening to the cave had been sniffed out on April 3, 1960 by his dog Little Bit the day the cave was "uncovered." The entrance hole was full of land clearing debris and rocks and the discovery group were digging in the wrong place. They were simply trusting the land owner that a cave entrance was there and it was according to Little Bit, a hole barely large enough to crawl through. The occasion of its discovery by cavers was during a field trip to nearby China Pig Hole Cave.

Little Bit was not along on this trip. He didn't have vertical caving experience. Tex and I headed up the wide valley to the cave. Tex said no rope was needed to get us to where we would set the bolt. He neglected to tell me we had a harrowing straddle canyon (a fracture in the lingo of the late wise man Jerry Vineyard) descent of nearly 90 feet. The jagged walls and ledges were

The Speleograph

covered with loose chert. At that point we had a vertical drop of 10 feet or so to a wide sloping ledge of bedrock that slanted down to the edge of the 60-foot (some say 65-foot drop). Beyond that point it was virgin cave.

At the base of the 10-foot drop, which had barely enough places to grip to climb up or down, we began our labors using a star drill and a hammer Tex had brought along. It was no easy chore to drill the hole with Tex's primitive gear, hit-and-turn the drill, hit-and turn drill until the hard dolomite rock got tired of us beating it to death and let us punch a hole in it deep enough to set the bolt. We managed to get back to camp just as it was getting dark and others were arriving.

By Saturday morning we had our team consisting of Barbara McLeod, Lang Brod, Louise and Don Wessling, Earl Neller, Steven L. Sabo Jr. and of course Tex, all from Mid-Mississippi Valley Grotto (MMV). There was Jerry Vineyard from Western Missouri Grotto (WMO) and Steve Barnholtz, Bob Hopson, and Dwight Weaver from Chouteau Grotto.

I wound up being the one to work belay and tied in to the expansion bolt Tex and I had embedded the day before. It was about 15 feet from me to the jagged edge or lip of the drop. Two cable ladders tied together were rigged over the edge where there was a notch with a small waterfall (just enough to thoroughly soak anyone using the cable ladder). Together they didn't quite reach the pile of rock at the bottom of the drop.

The slope was littered with rock from pea size to boulder size and an effort was made to run the rappel rope over the edge free of any loose rock. Holding the belay line I was staring at the bright reflector of the caver getting set to rappel down and had a problem determining just who it was I was belaying. I thought it was Don Wessling but Jerry Vineyard left some information that says it was Steve Sabo. So be it, Steve was also taking the telephone with him. He kicked off and dropped like a rock, jumping off the wall several times on the way down. He had just landed when a sizable rock (over a foot in diameter) fell off the ledge and immediately Tex Yokum screamed "ROCK!"

All was silent. No one talked. Cavers crouched along the limestone ledge on either side of me. Each was waiting to hear Steve's reply. Tex's yell had been a screech and sounded awful in the cave darkness. We heard the rock ricochet several times and then land with a crash that scared us all.

"MY GOD!" Tex cried. "RING HIM! RING HIM!" The caver holding the telephone topside laid the phone on the ledge floor and cranked hard. There was no immediate reply. After agonizingly long seconds the caver rang Steve again. Had the rock hit Steve? It was clear that as Sabo sailed downward the rope had skidded along the edge and contacted the loose boulder. After several more attempts to ring Steve, Steve finally answered, his voice so rattled he could barely talk. While the rock had grazed him, he was unhurt, just frightened and momentarily speechless. He would be rattled throughout the remainder of the expedition. All that had saved him was when the rock began to fall he flattened himself against the cave wall.

The Speleograph

I don't remember how many of the others rappelled down to the talus pile but I worked the belay until several had come back up by using the cable ladder and then two of the younger cavers who had returned took over the belay line and I went down.

Steve still had the will power to make the final descent down another 100-foot deep pitch to the bottom of the cave – a muddy plunge basin with only a very small drain hole. He was the caver among us with the most skill and experience in vertical caving.

When it was my turn to climb the cable ladders I was half way up at the connection of the two ladders when the small waterfall put out my carbide light. I yelled up at the guys belaying me to hold for a few seconds but they misunderstood me and both of them started hauling me up so fast I couldn't keep my feet well placed on the ladder rungs. At the top they got me wedged in the small notch and I had to struggle to get out of it.

On the return up the straddle canyon we didn't give enough time for the climbers to reach the top and as a consequence small rocks kept falling on those of us below. They would hit our hard hats and sound like rifle fire. Two of our cavers had their helmets knocked completely off their head, thus they became members of the Turtle Club for cavers whose life has been save by their hard hat.

It was a trip to remember. I had no desire to ever enter the cave again. I presume the expansion bolt that Tex and I placed is still there, evidence that somebody was foolish enough to challenge the cave's hazards. On Sunday the following day Jerry Vineyard, surprisingly, got enough volunteers to return to the cave to help him map it. It is one vengeful hole in the bowels of Wright County, but we beat the Buzzard.

Goodwin Update 4/20/20



Work being done at Goodwin Sink.

Above photo is work being done at the cave entrance.

Left photo is the waterfall area.

Goodwin Meeting – January 5th, 2020

Klaus Leidenfrost had called a meeting at Goodwin to discuss work plans for this year. In attendance with Klaus were: Ken Long, Scott Doyle, Jean Knoll, Gary & Alberta Zumwalt. It was a nice day but still a little cool so a small fire was built. The grounds around the pavilion were in good shape – looked like a park. Klaus was hoping to have enough funding to bring in heavy equipment again soon. Using the machines to work farther back into the cave will probably not be a possibility for a long time. According to Klaus, the last time machines worked in the cave was December 2017. Plans are to adjust the location of the road down into the sink. Klaus had an idea to put a pipe in to drain the cave so it would not have to continue to be pumped. He even drew up a diagram. But he said we would have to get into the cave to see if that was a possibility. We all walked down into the sinkhole, noticing that there had been more trash exposed in the bank across from the waterfall area. Klaus, Ken, Gary & Jean went all the way down to the cave entrance. Scott and I went halfway. The trail down is a lot better than it used to be but it is still tricky. Since Scott is a heavy equipment operator, his knowledge was very helpful during this meeting. There was talk of diverting the water away from the waterfall. Jean had brought rolls. Ken brought crackers, sausage & cheese. Some of us took advantage of a snack..... Ken was the first to leave, had things to do at home. We left right after Ken. Klaus had a list of things to do after the meeting but we just wanted to go home. It was a good meeting. I think we would all agree that having Scott there was invaluable. –Alberta Zumwalt



Left to right
Gary Z., Ken L., and Scott D.

Left to right
Ken L., Scott D.,
Klaus L., and
Jean K.



Ken and
Gary talking
about a
plan



Cave entrance



All of us in the cave entrance



Klaus explaining
what needs to
be done



More trash
below the
waterfall

The Speleograph

Goodwin Rain
4/23/20

Earlier in the week, I was out there with a excavator with a breaker. We did a few things getting the site ready, so that we could finish cleaning out the sinkhole once conditions are favorable again. I was doing some seeding and mulching at the sinkhole on April 22, 2020. The water had receded enough in the cave and along with a drop in the water table, the conditions were favorable to pump out the cave again. However, the sinkhole had approximately 1.5 inches of rain that night. I went out there to see how it looked.



In this picture you can tell how high (red arrow) the water got during the early morning hours.

I estimated that the water level rose about 16 feet from what it was the previous day. By the time, I got there at 07:00 the water level had already receded about 10 feet in a few hours. I have never seen the water level recede this fast before. That means, that all the work we have been doing is paying off. I just hope that conditions allow us to try to remove the tire obstruction again. Besides the weather we also will need some volunteers to help. Because of the rock at the base of the sinkhole, any water leaving the waterfall was forced to the side where the dirt was. However as the water flowed over the dirt, the dirt would slowly erode, leading to more sediment in the cave.



Note: The yellow arrows are pointing to the same rock.



The Speleograph



After the loose rocks were removed at the base of the hill, the water could flow smoothly.



Looking down the waterfall.



The Lancaster Road Dry Auglaize Creek ford was impassable that morning.

Story submitted by
Klaus L.