A EULOGY
by Bob Oakley

Cavers,

If you have not heard, we lost one of our number early in August. A good one. Jon Everage took his own life. The burden had become too heavy.

[70s]
I first met Jon in the early sixties. Life was less complicated then. We were in our early 20’s and full of life and devilment. I was a new caver attending Sul Ross and Jon was printing, drinking, and caving out of Houston. One week-end, a group from Alpine decided to go to an area new to most of us — Carta Valley. I found a harsh country, beautiful caves, and was brushed by a loud, half-loaded, unfriendly caver named Everage. The next encounter was in Sanderson, late on a Sunday afternoon. Jon’s van was suffering with a sick alternater. You could hear him cussing it for two city blocks. My offer of help received the same treatment. To hell with that guy!

Who needs the likes of him? Time mellowed my relationship with both the Carta Valley group and Everage. I was eventually accepted as a subservient member of the group and as an amigo by Jon Everage.

Jon married for the second time and shortly moved to the hill-country north of San Antonio, along with his boss and good friend, Jimmy Jones. They sought some room to breathe, better working conditions, and Jon was closer to a lot more of his caver friends, though sad to leave many in Houston.

Jon found himself a new niche within the caving community. For a few years, he was the loudest, drunkest, and best caver cook to be found. He ate more smoke, cooked more briskets and hamburgers, and cursed more strangers that any cook before or since. I will never forget the NSS Convention in New Braunfels in 1978, when we finally got all the meat transported to the hall, and then spent 30 minutes or so slicing it in front of hundreds of starving cavers. Jon boomed out at the top of his voice “Come and get it, you Mutha-F__ers!” I thought Mike Walsh was going to wet his pants. Jon did not help serve that meal. He got a cold six-pack and berated each person that came through the line, especially the strangers.

I last saw Jon about 3 days prior to his demise. He had allowed that his situation was less than ideal. A recent promotion at work had temporarily boosted his morale, but his other problems obviously prevailed.

A poet-songwriter once wrote, “They tore down paradise and replaced it with a parking lot.” Jon Everage was torn down and there exists in his stead — just a void. Nothing can replace the friendship that Jon offered those around him. Beneath a gruff exterior there lurked a friend who asked very little, but who returned a whole lot.

Since Jon’s death, I have gone down to our favorite swimming hole here on the Nueces River. It just ain’t the same. I come home with a big lump in my throat. This afternoon, I saw that same lump in the throats of lots of mutual friends who attended Jon’s memorial service. I am sure to see lots of the same friends in mid-September at the Texas Old-Timers. They will be easy to recognize. As darkness comes and the stories and the beer begins to flow, we will be the folks with lumps in our throats.

Adios Amigo

Jon Russell Everage
BORN
March 3, 1944
Houston, Texas
DIED
August 10, 1987
New Braunfels, Texas

The Texas Caver
August 1987
Jon Everage, 1944-1987
by Bob Lloyd

Oldtimer Jon Everage, one of the characters of Texas caving, died suddenly this month in New Braunfels. He was 43.

Jon began caving in the early 1970s in Texas, when he lived in Houston. He was a member then of the Rice Speleological Society. The grotto later broke away to form the Greater Houston Grotto.

Jon was a printer by trade and produced The Texas Caver for many years. He visited a number of Mexican caves, including those in the El Abra area. He also caved in the Carta Valley area of South Texas for many years, with one of his significant achievements the construction of a gate on Midnight Cave.

Everage and the author were co-discoverers of a significant section of Fitton Cave in Arkansas, Lloyd’s Low Lead.

His travels took him to the Guadalupe Mountains in New Mexico for many years. Jon was a longtime volunteer for the Texas Old Timers Reunion and other Texas caving functions, supplying the manpower for barbecuing and other cook’s chores.

He competed in many events at Old Timers, and was known as a formidable opponent.

Jon was a charter member of the Carta Valley Society for Underground Caving, Karstology and Speleology. He joined in early 1970.

Jon is greatly missed by many Texas cavers. Many of those present at the funeral services were Carta Valley members. Many said it was the only funeral they had ever been to and that Everage was deserving of the highest tribute.

The dozens of cavers present at the funeral worked hard to make it, under the circumstances, an upbeat affair, as they believed Jon would have wanted it. He loved merriment, frivolity and life. Many a tale of Everage's exploits was told and retold.

He is survived by his wife, Janice of New Braunfels, and a daughter, Colleen, of Houston.

Those present at the funeral from the Dallas-Fort Worth area were the author, Karen Lindsley, Bob Obele and others. Also attending were many cavers from the San Antonio-Austin area, including Terry Sayther, Ronnie Fieseler and others.

Jon Everage
In Memoriam
by Janice Everage

Jon Everage's family wishes to express their sincerest appreciation for all the care and support which has been demonstrated by the cavers during this difficult time and to share with you a portion of the memorial which took place as Jon was laid to rest.

JON IS HOME

I am now at home, good friends,
I am happy and I'm free;
The Texas flag is flying –
All is just as it should be.
All my pain and grief are over,

Jon Everage at TOJTR last year. Photo by Jay Jordan.
Every restless tossing passed;  
I am now at peace forever –  
I'm content and home at last.

Did you wonder why it happened –  
Look for reasons or a rhyme?  
Sometimes there’s no simple answers,  
Let’s just say it was my time.

When you all came out to greet me  
On my way to where I’ll be  
Showing all the care you carried,  
I was happy to be me.

So you must not grieve unduly,  
You still have your lives to fill;  
You must look on to tomorrow  
To the new and distant hill.

There is life still waiting for you,  
And you must not be so sad;  
Give comfort to each other –  
Knowing in this I’ll be glad.

When that life is all completed,  
And there’s no more space to roam;  
Just remember I’ll be waiting  
To meet you when you’re home.

I thank you all for your caring  
I was blessed with many friends,  
And I hope you stay together  
So we can meet here in the end.

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**Well Rescue**

by Jay Jorden

Bill Bentley, a member of the Permian Basin Speleological Association, said he was the first person at the scene of the rescue of an 18-month-old West Texas girl with any caving or ropework experience.

Bentley, with Times-Mirror Cable Television, was called to the scene of the rescue of Jessica McClure from an abandoned well about one hour after the girl fell down the shaft. Just outside of town was a rathole drilling rig capable of cutting a 36-inch hole, and it was called into service. Bentley approached Fire Chief Roberts and told him he had vertical caving experience. That bought him first position going down. He went down the manmade shaft and started to chisel across to the well, at a depth of about 22 feet. Bentley also helped locate the position of underground cables near the drilling activity.

Bentley hooked a loop of Bluewater with a carabiner and Jumar into a winch line at the rathole rig and went down with his Wheat lamp. "If it had not been for cavers with their harnesses, and climbers with rope and vertical hardware, and Wheat lamps and chargers, the operation would have been paralyzed or took at least 10 hours more," he said.

"I was awake a total of 62 hours," said Bentley. "In fact, you come down off the excitement of a rescue like this and I haven’t really yet. It will probably take weeks."

Bentley, 28, said Jerry Atkinson, another Midland caver, appeared at the scene about eight hours after the workers began drilling the shaft. He supervised the rigging of ropes and seat harnesses. Another caver, Mike Perrin, in the Midland area aided in ropework. He showed up with carabiners, seat harnesses, Gibbs and other climbing devices. Pat, Terry and Tom Hill, all brothers and members of PBSS, and the club president, Pat Kambeis, were present at the rescue at the abandoned well.

"Jerry and Pat were there more than 20 hours," said Bentley. "The cavers, at the very start, were pitching in to help. Then, later, there were hundreds and hundreds of volunteers working there, and they were bringing in miners and others."

Bentley said he got his first taste of claustrophobia in the rathole.

"I was a little shaky when I first went in," he said. "I was afraid of a cave-in at first. I had no idea of how solid the rocks were until I saw we were in caliche that turned into a stuff called aggregate."

Bentley used a pneumatic chisel. Jackhammers from 30 to 90 pounds were first used, then rescue workers switched to rotary star drills in cutting the parallel shaft and then digging a horizontal tunnel to Jessica.

He said the difficult angle in which to work, in cramped quarters, made the rock hard to chisel. Later, he said, the workers began using a high-pressure hydraulic drill.

"For the most part, the cavers were really instrumental in starting the rescue operation, for the lack of others being available who knew anything," said Bentley.

About 58 hours after the rescue effort began, the toddler was pulled from the shaft. She remained in a Midland hospital but doctors said her condition was improving.

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**NSS Convention**

by Jay Jorden

While the Metroplex sweltered in temperatures hovering around the century mark, about 500 cavers converged on the green shores of Lakes Superior and Michigan for the annual NSS Convention. The gathering featured a one-day train tour through Canada, a visit to the longest cave in Michigan and a boat trip to Mackinac Island, along with the usual round of conferences, speeches, vertical contests and speloeolmpics.

The hot tub from Texas traveled the 1,000-plus miles to the convention, along with a dozen or so cavers from the Lone Star State. They included Sheila Knight and Jay Jorden from DFW Grotto; Mike and Jeff Walsh of New Braunfels; Peter Strickland, Bill Mixon, Terry Raines, Terri Tracey and others of Austin; and Bill
Jon Everage

3 March 1944 – 10 August 1987, 43

Jon Everage by Carl Kunath

From: David Locklear, 10 December 2003

…In the spring of 87, I was hitch-hiking from College Station to the TSA Spring Convention, and a stranger picked me up in New Braunfels on a dark section of highway 46. I immediately got in the truck and said "Hi Mr. Everage, how are you?" He had had a few drinks, and I believe he said it was his birthday. However, he seemed quite annoyed that this strange hitch-hiker knew his name. I tried to convince him that was a caver, but he just did not believe me. After a while of telling my stories, he finally believed me and invited me to his home. He offered me a place to sleep on his living room floor.

The next morning we went to the TSA Spring Convention or maybe it was the Winter BOG. Anyways, afterwards I went back to his house and we shared more caving stories. I remember him talking about the Carrizal accident.

As I was about to leave, he offered to give me his entire caving book collection. I wish I had had a car at that moment, but all I had was a backpack that was pretty much full of camping gear. I stuffed several books in my backpack and told him that I would be back very soon for the rest. I then hitch-hiked back to A&M with about a 100 lbs on my shoulder. Little did I know that on that long journey home, that I would never see him again.
My new found friend passed away just a few months later. He was the first caving friend I knew to pass away. I was told he died at home.

I don't know what became of all those books, but his wife later gave me many of his magazines, which I still have. A year or 2 later, a TSA function was held in Uvalde. There is a small boulder on the Nueces River near a swimming hole that he was fond of. There is a small plaque there in memory of him.

It seems that he had two teenage children, but I can't remember now. His wife continued to attend TSA functions and I think she had a real indian tepee. I believe I saw her again at Midnight cave in the late 80's.

I am sure that many of you have more stories than I do.

David Locklear

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From: Ron Miller, 30 July 2004

The brass engraved remembrance plaque on the boulder in the Nueces River installed by Bob Oakley was pried off by some camper. Oakley just happened to find it thrown on the ground. Oakley stuck it to the front of his house with a hunting knife. The Texas Caver article by Oakley is worth reading.

Janice Everage lives near her daughter Amanda on their farm at Bedias, Texas off FM-1696. Amanda has three children. The Everage home off highway 46 burnt down after it was rented several years later.

Yes there certainly is many stories that can be told about Mr Everage from many old time cavers. I was introduced to the Everage's at their home by Dallas caver Bob Lloyd in the 70's. Jon introduced me to Bob Oakley at his ranch. I had the pleasure of traveling with Jon on several occasions. A trip through the Yucatan of Mexico and another to Copper Canyon were memorable trips. Jon took great pride in being a gruff person but easy to get along with once you know him. One could not miss Jon's laughter or voice at caving convention hot tubs. I spent many weekends with Jon and Janice going antique shopping in the Hill Country.

Ron Miller

https://www.cavetexas.org/rmiller/Everage.html