

Logan Dale McNatt
August 5, 1950 – June 3, 2026

By Eric McNatt and William R. (Bill) Elliott

Edits by George Veni, Marni Francell, Jay Jorden, and Jim Kennedy

Logan Dale McNatt, NSS 11274F, was a renowned caver, archaeologist, author, collector, storyteller, and proud Texan whose lifelong passion for exploration, discovery, and environmental preservation left an enduring legacy across Texas archaeology, speleology, and Maya cave archaeology.

Over a career spanning more than five decades, Logan explored hundreds of caves, contributed to groundbreaking archaeological research, participated in scientific expeditions and documentary films, and helped preserve some of the most significant cultural and natural resources in Texas and Belize.

Born in Abilene, Texas, on August 5, 1950, Logan was the younger son of Ernie Glen McNatt and Helen Hartwig Kothmann McNatt. He grew up in a close-knit family alongside his older brother, Randy, who was seven years his senior. One of Logan's earliest memories was a family vacation to New Mexico in 1953, when a loose chimpanzee at a roadside zoo bit his hand before his father rescued him—a story he delighted in retelling throughout his life.

In 1957, the family moved to Brownwood, Texas, where his father opened a new Social Security office. As a boy, Logan developed a fascination with dinosaurs and dreamed of becoming a paleontologist. He eagerly devoured every issue of National Geographic and spent countless hours in Brownwood's Carnegie Library. Following in his brother's footsteps, he excelled academically, played saxophone in the school band, and competed on the tennis team. In 1967, he won the Texas AAA State Tennis Championship and graduated third in his class from Brownwood High School in 1968.



Childhood summers and family reunions exposed Logan to the rich traditions of both the McNatt and Kothmann families. Visits to ranches along the Llano River and throughout Central Texas instilled in him a deep appreciation for Texas history, wildlife, and the outdoors. These

experiences helped shape the curiosity and adventurous spirit that would define the rest of his life.

Logan attended Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) in San Marcos beginning in 1968. There, he joined the Southwest Texas University Student Grotto that his brother had helped establish and quickly discovered a lifelong passion. His first venture into the bat-filled, water-soaked depths of River Styx Cave sparked a lifelong devotion to speleology. He soon began exploring caves throughout Texas and Mexico, participating in expeditions to map and investigate previously unexplored cave systems.

In January 1972, Logan and fellow caver Craig Bittinger were part of the original group of cavers to discover and descend El Sótano del Barro in Mexico. At the time, its 1,345-foot (410-meter) vertical drop made it the deepest known pit on Earth. The achievement became one of the defining accomplishments of his caving career.

That same year, Logan began his first archaeological work with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at Hueco Tanks near El Paso. Although he had originally dreamed of becoming a paleontologist, archaeology proved to be a natural fit. He worked on excavations and preservation projects at historic Texas sites, including Fort Lancaster, Fort McKavett, and Misión Rosario. He later earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1976.

Logan first traveled to Belize, then known as British Honduras, in 1973. The country's extensive cave systems, Maya archaeological sites, and natural beauty captivated him immediately. Over the next two decades, Belize became his second home. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer and later worked with Belize's Department of Archaeology, contributing significantly to the exploration, documentation, and preservation of Maya cave sites.

Throughout his career, Logan explored at least 338 caves: 74 in Texas, one in New Mexico, one in Alabama, 30 in Mexico, and 232 in Belize. His work advanced the understanding of Maya ritual cave use and helped document previously unexplored cave systems. He participated in numerous archaeological expeditions, collaborated on wildlife and documentary film productions for organizations including the BBC and ABC, and worked alongside researchers conducting pioneering studies of karst landscapes and cave environments. Several projects received support from National Geographic, a fitting achievement for someone who had spent his childhood inspired by its pages.

In Belize, Logan also worked as a guide, educator, and ambassador for the region's cultural and natural heritage. Known affectionately there as "Logan Mon!," he shared his knowledge generously with visitors, researchers, and local communities alike. His enthusiasm, expertise, and sense of humor made him a beloved figure throughout the country.

In 1996, after two decades of research, Logan wrote what would become the defining academic comprehensive paper of his career, "Cave Archaeology of Belize," which stands as an important

paper in Mesoamerican speleoarchaeology, detailing the ceremonial, ritual, and functional uses of the region's subterranean ecosystems.

In 1993, Logan returned to Texas to be closer to his parents. He later joined the Archaeological Survey Team of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, where he spent more than 15 years documenting and protecting archaeological resources throughout the state. His work took him across Texas, including extensive projects at Hueco Tanks, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Devils River State Natural Area, and many other significant sites. He retired in 2012 after a distinguished career dedicated to preserving Texas history.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Logan was an avid collector and dealer of rare books, a prolific letter writer, an engaging conversationalist, and a gifted storyteller. Friends and family knew him as a walking encyclopedia whose knowledge ranged from archaeology and natural history to Texas folklore, genealogy, and literature. He possessed a remarkable memory, a sharp wit, and an endless supply of puns. Whether sharing stories around a campfire, corresponding with friends around the world, or recounting adventures from decades earlier, Logan brought joy, laughter, and insight to those around him.

Known to family and friends as "LowGun," Logan cultivated deep and lasting friendships wherever he traveled. He remained active in the caving community throughout his life and was respected by generations of explorers, archaeologists, and conservationists. His lifelong dedication to caves, archaeology, and environmental stewardship helped preserve important cultural and natural resources for future generations.

Logan's legacy lives on through the caves he explored, the archaeological papers he authored, the research he advanced, the stories he shared, and the many lives he touched. His brother, Randy McNatt, preceded him in death in February 2024. He is survived by his nephew, Eric McNatt; his cousins, Beverly Bormuth, Dawn Manzo, and Crystal Kothmann Kinney; and by a wide circle of friends, colleagues, and fellow explorers who will cherish his memory for years to come.

We are diminished.

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Photo above: Logan McNatt ready to rappel into El Sótano del Barro. Photo by Terry Raines.

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Celebration of Life

Logan McNatt's Celebration of Life is scheduled on Saturday, August 8, 2026, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. CDT at:

Festival Beach Metro Park
Fiesta Gardens Building
2101 Jesse E. Segovia St.
Austin, TX 78702

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/jkroB1ieGQcLKBME7>

Please join us in honoring and remembering Logan McNatt with stories, laughter, and shared memories.

This will be a casual, secular gathering to celebrate the joy LowGun brought into our lives.

We invite you to come wearing your favorite crazy hat or a Halloween costume, and to bring your favorite memory or photo to share. Snacks and drinks will be provided, Masks are optional and will be provided if requested.

Love,
Crystal Kinney and Eric McNatt

Additional photos



Helen, Glen, Randy, and Logan McNatt, 1953

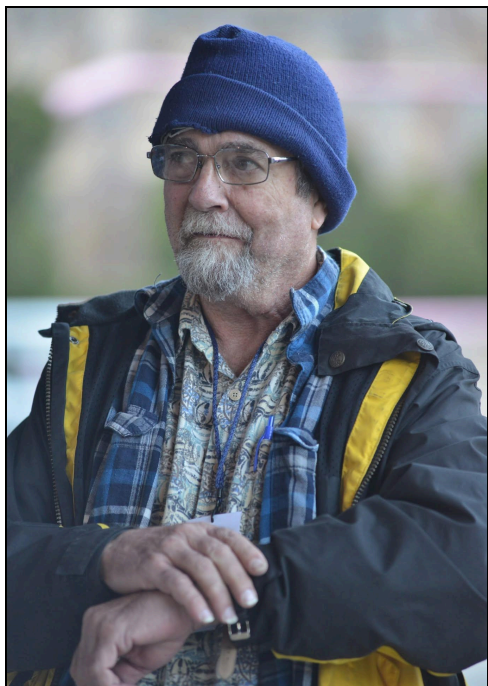


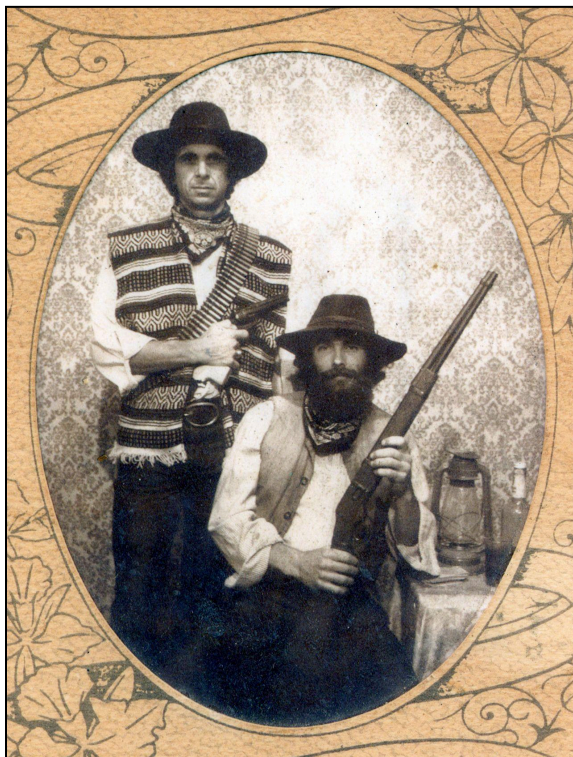
Photo from Marco Helu



Logan McNatt with George Veni, May 24, 2023



El Sotano pit descent crew with Logan at upper left



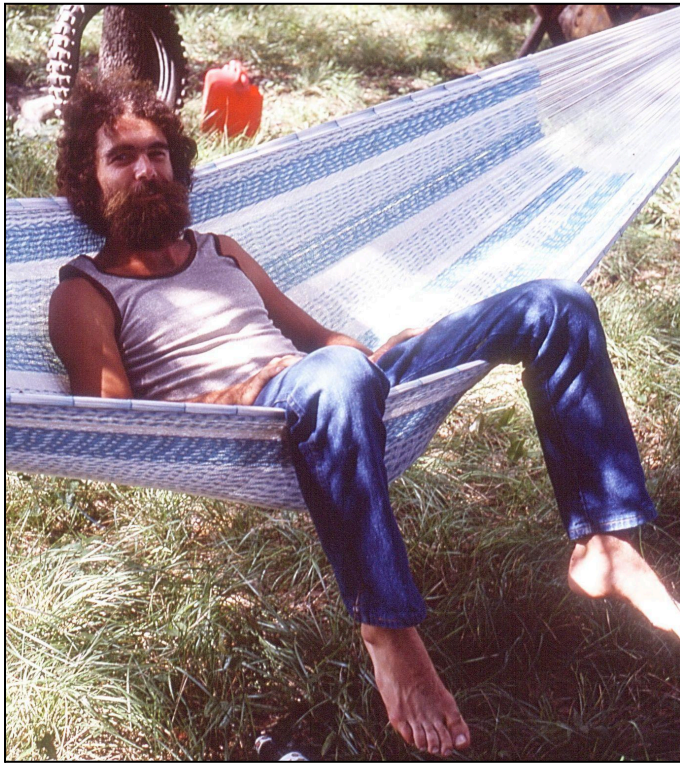
Randy and Logan McNatt, 1981, Arizona



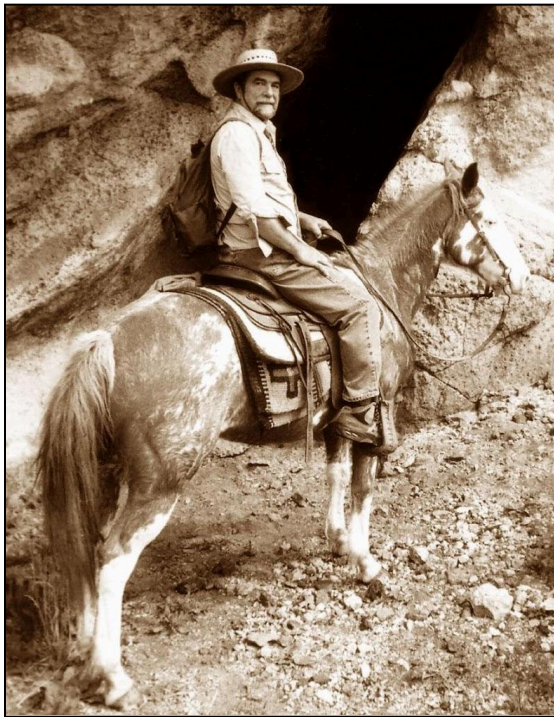
Logan on Kothman Family Ranch sofa, July 23, 2023, under a favorite tree at his residence. Eric McNatt photo.



Logan at Arden Court memory care center on Friday, July 11, 2025. Photo by Crystal Kinney.



Logan McNatt in Christoval, Texas, 1975. Photo by William R. (Bill) Elliott.



"Low-Gun" McNatt astride Cara Queso at Cueva de la Bruja, Big Bend Ranch State Park, February 2005. Tim Roberts photo for April 2005 *Texas Caver* cover.



Logan McNatt at El Sotano. Marco Helu photo.



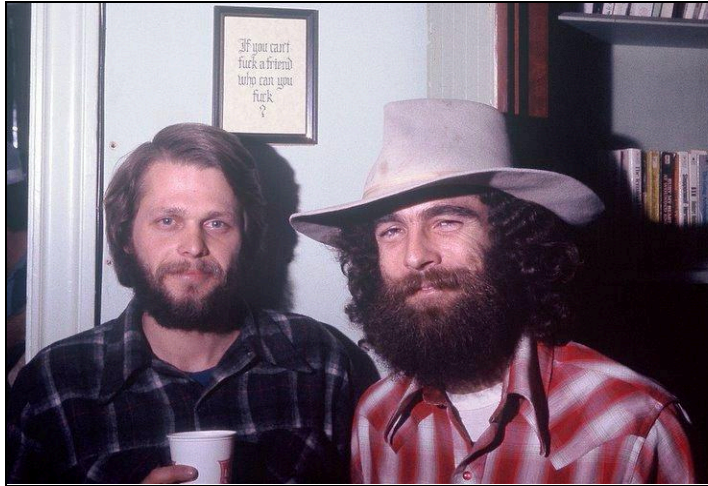
Logan, a double-fisted drinker, at Mexican caving conference. Marco Helu photo.



Pam Lynn (L) with Logan McNatt and Barbara Wolf, October 2019 - Pam Lynn photo.



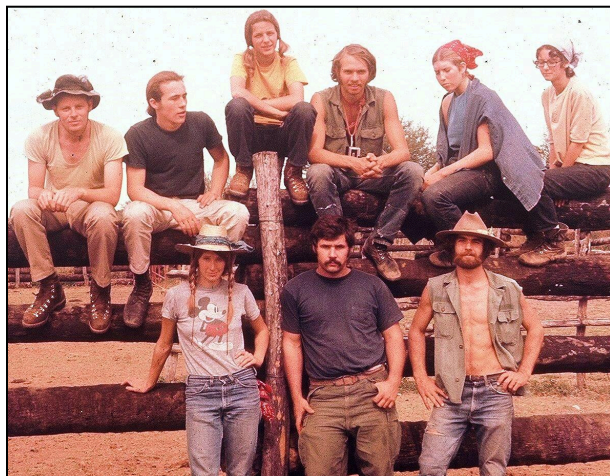
Joe Sumbera (front, L) with Logan McNatt, (middle L) Ed Fomby, Jim Jarl, (back L) Brian Peterson. Sótano de Matapalma, November 1969. Mike Walsh and Joe Sumbera photo.



Bill Steele (L) with Logan



Blake Harrison (L) with Logan McNatt and Andy Grubbs. Ernie Garza photo.



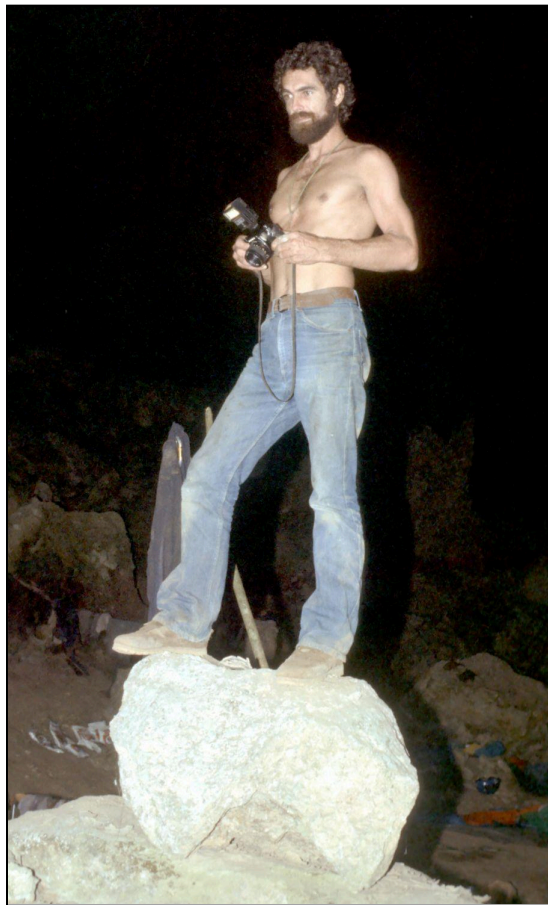
Texas cavers in Mexico: Dino Lowrey (bottom L), Steve Zeman, Logan McNatt. (Unknown caver, top L), Dave Hutchings, Cindy Cain, Peter Sprouse, Ivy Atherton, and Julie (?).



Logan's leap over Grand Canyon, Arizona in 2007: Photographer Hans van de Vorst captured Logan's death-defying jump across a 900-meter deep rift between two pinnacles, wearing just jeans, T-shirt, and thong sandals and carrying camera equipment and a tripod, after the sun set below the canyon's horizon as a crowd watched.



Susan Chelf with Logan McNatt, Halloween 2007



Inside Chiquibul chamber, 1984