PRESTON A. McMICHAEAL
(Photo by Blair Pittmann)
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BY REX SHEPPERD

Many people knew Preston McMichael as a caver, however, few people knew of the many other facets of his personality.

Preston was born May 4, 1938, in Corrigan, Texas and moved to Houston when he was two. He took an early interest in music and art and studied under Lowell Collins, a well-known teacher at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.

His first place award in the sketch division of the 1964 NSS Salon was a well-known fact, but few knew of his golden key award for wood carving and later awards in art. All of us who knew him, marveled at the infinite patience and precision shown in his sketches, some of which have appeared on the covers of the TEXAS CAVER, the NSS NEWS, and the SPELEONEWS.

When Preston was twelve his mother took him through Longhorn Caverns and a spark was born that burned bright throughout the rest of his life. As soon as he was old enough he began to travel and he developed a driving desire to know what was over the next hill. He once made a trip to Mexico entering from Texas, traveling all the way through the Dos Bocas area and returning through Arizona. He was one of the first white men to see the Immense Baranca de Cobre and to explore the bottom of part of that great canyon.

Preston first ventured to the Carta Valley area in 1959 where he established a lasting friendship with Loyd Newman. Mr. Newman showed him Punkin Cave and the location of what appeared to be another small cave. After removing debris from the entrance, Preston crawled through the hole and became the first person to enter Deep Cave. Contrary to popular opinion, Preston also had the distinction of being the first man to enter Blowhole Cave. On later trips, he uncovered many other small caves on the Newman and surrounding ranches.

It is difficult to express in mere words the true character of this man and perhaps it can only be seen in his accomplishments and remembered by those who knew him.

One concrete example of his accomplishments may be seen in his contributions to rancher relations. In no place that Preston pioneered have there been subsequent difficulties in attaining permission to explore the property. His devotion to these relations are again seen in the fact that he taught himself to speak Spanish fluently in order that he might have better relations in Mexico. He was also an ardent supporter of conservation.

There were many other aspects to his personality. His ability at speleo-fiction was well known.

Preston was highly respected for his skill in the martial arts including Karate, Judo, and Akido.

Perhaps one of his most unique abilities was his skill with the guitar. Completely self-taught, his skill in flamenco astounded even experts. His music tended to alternately bring one close to tears and then fill one with the pure joy of life.

And yet, even with all of this, we miss the true depths of his per-
sonality. Perhaps it is best seen in his fight with hepatitis. He was forced to spend many long months flat on his back without so much as a telephone call. His doctors at one time gave him only two weeks to live, but through sheer will power, for he did not have enough liver function to keep a man alive, he fought his way back to apparent health. Even while bed-ridden he constantly wrote, studied Spanish, practiced the guitar, drew and read widely. However, the massive damage done by the early stages of the hepatitis finally took its toll.

Any attempt at a summation of this man's life falls miserably short of his actual accomplishments. His ability to grasp the full and true meaning of life with all its problems and to live it as fully as he did is an example we should all attempt to follow and his passing leaves a void that will be hard to fill.

NATURE

CAVE "SPIDERS" BY THE MILLIONS

Daddy Longlegs, or harvestmen, as they are sometimes called, are of the Order Opiliones (Phalangids), and are the familiar long legged arachnids that all cavers see at one time or another just inside cave entrances, or at night on the surface near caves. Harvestmen, like bats, are nocturnal feeders, and if you happened to be present at the Deep Cave Project in September of 1965, you probably witnessed millions of these creatures in the entrance room of that cave.

There are many species of Opiliones, but the particular species found in caves of the Edwards Plateau country prefer the humidity of Texas caves. The average body length averages around 7 or 8 millimeters, exclusive of legs. Their bodies are rather elliptical in shape caused by the prosoma (front segment) broadly joined to the abdomen (hind segment), with no constriction between the two divisions. In the cen-