John Preston Brooks
21 October 1957 – 9 September 2023
Tribute by Jerry Atkinson, with photos from memorial and life

One of Texas' stalwart cavers has passed. John Brooks died suddenly early in the morning of 9 September 2023 at his home. The medics think that he may have had a sudden cardio attack or an aneurysm, but no one is sure at this time. Please respect the family’s privacy at this moment of grief and shock. More information will be forthcoming.

John began his caving career as a student at Texas A&M University at College Station in 1976. He was active in both Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico caving, surveying and producing some of the best cave maps of the time. He was also known for his beautiful cave artwork which was displayed on several caving publication covers including the Texas Caver.

After college, his career path turned to architecture where he designed schools, sports stadiums, and libraries, both in the US and abroad. He maintained his interest in caving throughout the 1980s and 1990s as a very active member of the Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto. During this time, as a consequence of his ridgewalking efforts in the Guadalupe Mountains, he developed Brooks' First Law of Bum Leads: Generally, the bigger the entrance, the bigger the burn. This was followed by Brooks' Second Law of Bum Leads: Bum leads are always mother hikes.

In 2006, John was the Chairman of the Texas Speleological Association. a position he maintained for 3 consecutive years. During this time, John was active in the Porcupine Grotto, surveying both new and old caves in the Carta Valley area, notably in Blowhole, Deep, and Punkin caves. In 2011, he was elected to the Board of the Texas Cave Management Association, which was followed by his election to the position of President of the TCMA in 2013, an office he held for four years. He again served as a Board member of the TCMA from 2019 until his death.

On a personal note, John was a close friend I’d known since his college days. We caved off and on together from the Hugh Guads to the depths of Carta Valley. We were both best man at each other's weddings, and I've watched him struggle bravely through some significant health issues in the past few years. He was active until his death, having recently traveled to Alaska and France, and was planning a river trip in the Rio Grande in November. I miss my friend.

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CELEBRATION OF LIFE: September 24, 2023
Jill Buffington Brooks
Others eulogizing John Brooks at his celebration of life:

Jerry Atkinson

Kevin Blackwell

Woodrow Thomas

Greg Mooty
Friends of John Brooks at celebration of life

Troy Shelton

More friends of John Brooks at his celebration of life
Even more friends of John Brooks at celebration of life-long

PHOTOS from a life well-lived