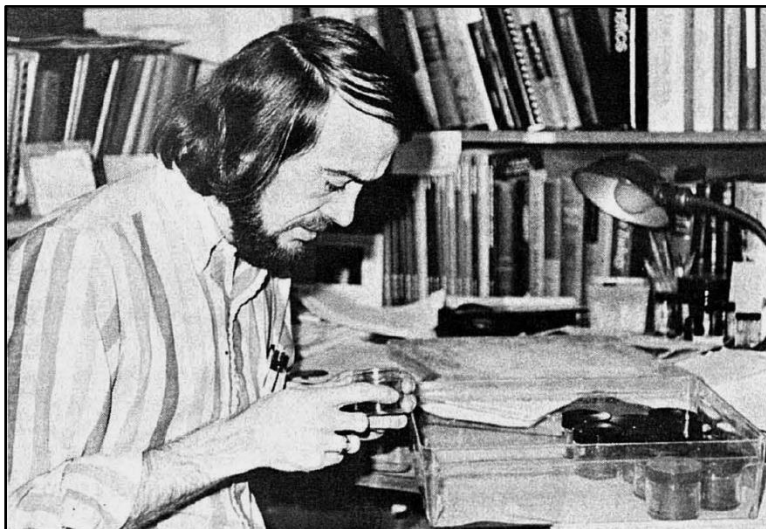


Jerry William Cooke

20 November 1936 – 7 April 1975, 38

By William R. Elliott and Susan Beaty Hardcastle, 12 January 2020



Jerry Cooke, hopefully waiting for his ricinuleids to mate. William R. Elliott.

Biologist and caver, Jerry W. Cooke, died in Houston on 7 April 1975. Reportedly he was stabbed to death in his apartment by a resident of the apartment building in some sort of dispute. At Texas Tech I was told by a professor that Jerry knew the perpetrator, who was trying to get money. Jerry's body was found in his kitchen. An autopsy revealed a stab wound to the neck and three wounds to the left and right chest. I have not been able to find a news report about the case, but I believe the attacker was arrested and prosecuted.

Jerry was a native of Clarion, Iowa. He graduated from high school in 1955, and from Grinnell College, Iowa, in 1959. He taught biology at Sigourney, Iowa, then joined the U.S. Army from 1961–1967. The latter part of his service probably was in the reserves or national guard. On 27 December 1966 he married Fay Henning, a Wisconsin native who met Jerry when he taught biology and she taught Spanish at Sudlow Jr. High School, Davenport, Iowa.

Jerry and Fay moved to Lubbock in 1969. I knew the couple in graduate school at Texas Tech University, where Jerry and I worked under Dr. Robert W. Mitchell. He earned his MS degree in 1971, then began work on his PhD. Jerry and Fay divorced in October 1971.

Jerry worked with us for years in many caves in the El Abra Region of Mexico. He liked arachnids, and he became interested in the habits of ricinuleids, a rare order of arachnid that is abundant in some Mexican caves. He completed his MS thesis on the mating habits of *Cryptocellus* [or *Pseudocellus*] *pelaezi*, the first time this was adequately studied in ricinuleids. Their anatomy and behavior are unusual, and Jerry's studies broke new ground. He also participated in our *Astyanax* cavefish research, both in the field and in statistical analysis of the data. We took a memorable trip to **Sotano del Caballo Moro, Tamaulipas**, on 3 January 1970. Robert W. Mitchell led Jerry W. Cooke, William R. Elliott, William Russell, John George, Perihan Şadoglu, Suzanne Wiley, Virginia Tipton, Richard E. Smith and Russell Harmon. We began mapping the lake room, but could not continue because of a lack of adequate flotation gear. This was the first collection of eyed and eyeless fish from this recently discovered cave (Elliott, 2018).

We also worked in **La Cueva Chica**, San Luis Potosí, an important cavefish site. It was originally mapped by Breder in 1940, but somewhat inaccurately. The cave was resurveyed in January 1970, March and May 1971, and May 1974 by William R. Elliott, Mel Brownfield, Jerry W. Cooke, William Russell, Russell Harmon, Suzanne Wiley, and Carmen Soileau.

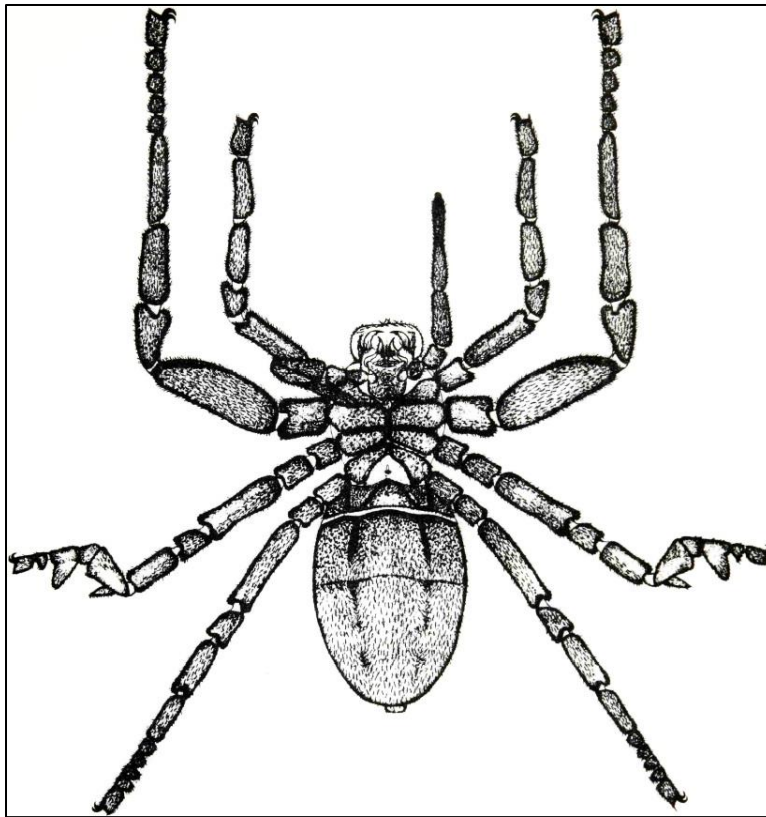
Jerry later quit grad school and moved to Houston in 1974 to teach high school biology. We who knew him were shocked by his murder. His body was sent to Clarion, Iowa, where he was buried on 11 April, 1975. I have compiled some photos and a bibliography by and about Jerry, below.



Suzanne Wiley, Jerry Cooke and Bill Russell at Cueva de la Capilla, Sierra de Guatemala, Mexico, 1971. By Francis Abernethy.



Robert W. Mitchell's research group from Texas Tech University at Rancho del Cielo, Sierra de Guatemala, 1 January 1971. Left to right: Masaharu Kawakatsu (Fuji Women's College), Suzanne Wiley, Mel Brownfield, Jerry Cooke, Robert W. Mitchell, William H. Russell, James R. Reddell, Virginia Tipton, William R. Elliott, and Ann Sturdivant. By Robert W. Mitchell



Male ricinuleid *Pseudocellus pelaezi*, ventral view with mating structure on third legs. About 5-8 mm.

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Wright County Monitor, Clarion, Iowa. 1966. Fay Henning weds Jerry W. Cooke. 29 December 1966.