

Jonathan O. Davis

1948-1990, 52



Jonathan O. Davis and friend.

Jonathan O. Davis is remembered as a colleague, a friend, a good field partner, and most of all as an instigator. He made major contributions to archaeology, geology and paleoenvironmental studies in the Great Basin, focusing much of his attention on the Humboldt River basin. His output was prodigious for a career so short: 46 scientific papers published, 31 technical reports prepared, and 14 papers presented at professional meetings. We remember him as much, perhaps more, for being a self-declared gadfly—an instigator of new projects to explore new ideas. He pushed his colleagues to stay abreast of the latest re-search technology. The breadth of his interests is shown by his own list of research, scholarly or creative effort in progress at the time of his death:

. . . applications of remote sensing in archaeology; use of Thematic Mapper data to map proportions of pinyon and juniper, and . . . [of] distinctive lithic raw materials on the ground.

Continuing research at Summer Lake, Oregon, into stratigraphy, tephro-chronology, and global climate change, with collaborators in geophysics, structure and tectonics, and paleontology.

Response of natural aerosol levels to local and global climate change; role of aerosol deposition in desert depositional systems.

Geologic mapping of Quaternary sediments ... [in Humboldt and Washoe Counties]; investigation of timing and amount of tectonic deformation through Quaternary time.

Geology and archaeology of latest Pleistocene and early Holocene environments in the Black Rock Desert . . . Thermoluminescence dating of mid-Pleistocene tephra from pluvial lake beds in Oregon and Nevada . . .

Like many of us, Jonathan was happiest doing field work. I like to remember flying in a small plane over stretches of the Humboldt River, loading film, while Jonathan leaned out the side of the plane to take roll after roll of color slides. There was never enough: crews could never move enough dirt, backhoe trenches were never long enough or deep enough. And when a day's work was done, he was good company. We miss him very much.

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His extensive bibliography may be seen at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3dh5500c>

Texas and Mexico cavers remember Jonathan Davis as a good caver and son of E. Mott Davis, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas. I remember talking with him about caves, geology and archaeology while I was a student at UT. He was good in all those fields. Here is a photo of him among the young heroes at Sótano de San Agustín, Huautla de Jiménez, Oaxaca. Most unfortunately, he was killed in a motorcycle accident.



Participants in the April 1967 expedition to **Sótano de San Agustín**. From left, standing: Dave Brison, John Fish, Robert Thren, Runi Burnett, Ed Alexander, Orion Knox. Seated: Terry Raines, Laurie Cameron, Tom Tracy, Bill Bell, Jonathan Davis, Tommy McGarrigle. Terry Raines.

William R. Elliott, 11 October 2019, revised 4 November 2019