

Rod Goke (Louis Rodney Goke)

6 December 1946 – 5 October 2011, 64

Louis Rodney "Rod" Goke, 64, died at his home in Austin, Texas, on October 5, 2011. Rod was born in Memphis, Tennessee, the son of Louis P. and Blanche Warren Goke. He graduated from Overton High School and Christian Brothers College and obtained his MS and PhD degrees at the University of Florida. Rod was employed by Texas Instruments, Colorado State University and AT&T Lab before accepting employment with Motorola at Austin. He received a Distinguished Innovator Award recognizing his many patent and engineering contributions to the Semiconductor Products Sector of Motorola, and a Scientific and Technical Society award for superior technical accomplishment and outstanding contributions to total technology. He enjoyed kayaking, SCUBA diving and camping but his favorite hobby was caving. He was a long time member of the National Speleological Society and the Texas Speleological Association and he had many friends around Austin and in other areas who shared his interest in caving. He is survived by his parents in Germantown, Tennessee, and by an uncle, an aunt and many cousins residing in several other states. A graveside service was held at Memphis Memorial Park Cemetery on October 29, 2011. Memorial Park Funeral Home, "Behind the stone wall" (Published in The Commercial Appeal on November 6, 2011)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/79953491/louis-rodney-goke>

William R. Elliott—

Rod was witty and fun. I remember joking around with him while we made a little video of a pristine cave opened up by a pipeline trench in South Austin. He was a brilliant computer scientist who worked in computer architecture for Motorola. He collected vintage computer gear. He was a founding member of the Texas Cave Management Association and a good helper at caver events. I was so sorry to hear of his death in his own home, and that he was found long afterwards because he lived alone. The obituary page by TSA is reproduced below. Rod, we miss you man!

From Rod's obituary page at <https://www.cavetexas.org/rodgoke> Rod Goke, 2011. Photo by Rick Bjorn





Dale Barnard: Rod had an amazing and rare baritone voice. The last time I heard him sing was at the NSS Convention in Glenwood Springs, CO in July, 2011 when he and others formed a circle next to the Groad Hollow campfire. He was also a guitar collector and had recently discovered a bargain on a rare Takamine guitar on Craigslist, which turns out to be the exact same model as the one I have. As part of that same purchase, he got an old guitar that needed some work. He was considering getting it repaired and donating it to the Punkin/Deep Cave Preserve field house. I will miss the ever-kind and soft-spoken Rod Goke.

Leslie Bell: Rod was a wonderful guy, very gentle and unassuming. I don't think I ever saw him upset — he was the type of guy that let most anything roll right off his back.

Both Christopher and I have had the honor of working with Rod on different events. Rod was always willing to jump in and help in any way he could, often spending his own money when he saw a piece of equipment that he thought a caving organization or person could use. Linda hit the nail on the head — he was extremely dependable, detailed and precise in everything he did.

He also had a great smile, a wonderful singing voice and loved to play the guitar — he will be greatly missed. The Texas caving community will be a little less for his loss.

Rick Bjorn:

Hi Roger,

I hadn't heard about Rod. Thank you for sharing that information with me. It really came as a shock. Rod was the one caver in our group that didn't seem like he had aged. We had all been joking about it. I'm just thankful that I went to the last NSS convention and spent time with him. When I got there he showed me around, showed me where I could pitch my tent, etc, He was his same ole helpful self. When I was in Austin in the 80's on a layover, he took me to one of the grotto meetings and helped me find out about a Texas caver buddy of mine who had drowned in a cave diving accident. He was always so helpful and fun to be with. I just can't believe this. Here are some photos I took of him at the last convention. Two of them show him setting up for the Terminal Siphons. He spent most of his time checking and making sound and video adjustments for the group. But he always found time to talk with me when I walked by. We will surely miss him. I was sorry to hear about your accident which kept you from going to the convention and seeing Rod. Thanks again for letting me know the sad news. You just don't know when you'll be seeing someone for the last time.



Rod Goke and Friends at the 2011 NSS Convention. Photo by Rick Bjorn.

Butch Fralia: I can't say I really knew Rod though I've seen him around forever! He was always busy but always spoke. My most recent encounter with Rod was at a TSS BOD meeting in Austin this spring. We did talk some about the office computers. I'm glad he was close to the office to make sure the computer were ready for the Walls Seminar. I am surprised to learn he was only seven months younger than me! As Rick Bjorn said, he certainly hadn't aged much or at least didn't look that old. Happy Trails Rod, rest in peace.



Rod Goke in Situ TCR 2006. Photo Keith Heuss

Jay Jordan: Rod was a helluva nice guy who was always giving back. He will be greatly missed in Texas caving circles ... and I hope we can have a moment of silence and/or fitting tribute to him at TCR, where he was scheduled to manage the sound equipment for the Terminal Siphons — as he had done many years for speleomusicians.

Carl Kunath: Rod was certainly one of the most interesting and unusual characters I ever met in the caving world.



This picture sums up how I shall remember him. Rod Goke and his allergy mask. Photo Carl Kunath.



Rod Goke Memorial at TCR 2011. Photo Carl Kunath.

As we were leaving the TSS offices after the January 2011 meeting, Rod donned this interesting headgear. When I paused to stare and get a photo, he quickly explained that it was his method of combating various particles in the air that gave him respiratory distress. We are diminished.

David Locklear: I think I first met Rod in 1985 at TCR. He was one of the first cavers outside of the student grotto that I was in, to ever be sociable towards me. I seem to recall he liked kayaking back then. I would usually only see him 3 times a year, and we mostly only talked briefly. I recall that he always was walking around carrying a fold-up 3-legged stool for sitting. He seemed to always have it slung over his shoulder with a strap.

Rod would often comment on Cavetex postings, and he would occasionally write me about something I posted. His last post was about the fire extinguishers.

RD Milhollin: Happy travels Rod

Roger Moore: Rod, as an electronic engineering graduate student, entered the University of Florida and joined the Florida Speleological Society in 1968, the same year as I did as a Freshman. He was from Tennessee or Alabama, and I do not recall if he had started caving in TAG or elsewhere before coming to UF. He was a mainstay of active cavers in the student grotto, providing transport for many a trip in his robust, but hardly comfortable International Harvester "Scout," a true off-road vehicle of that era. We nearly lost him in 1970, when he had a serious accident and the Scout was totaled. (The Scout was commemorated on the cover of the next issue of the Florida Speleologist.) Rod was a talented guitar-player and singer, and evenings in caving trip camps then were often enhanced by the playing of Rod, Francye Farley, Leland Bruns, and others. His passion for music continued through his life, with Texas cavers enjoying his songs in these last decades. And he contributed to both music and caver gatherings in another way springing from his electronic expertise: by providing sound engineer expertise for many of the concerts of the well-known caver band, the Terminal Syphons. "All the members of the Syphons are in shock," according to Michael Ray Taylor, another former Florida caver and a long-time member of the band. Rod moved to Colorado after completing his EE MS, and became equally active in Colorado caving. He ultimately moved to Austin in the early or mid 1980s, and quickly made many friends among the cavers here (including some of us who were fortunate enough to be renewing old friendships.) Testaments to Rod's generous and kind nature have been plentiful, with people affirming his contributions to the caving community right up to the very end. Texas caver Katie Ahrens wrote that "there wouldn't have been a Walls workshop last weekend if he hadn't led the computer initiative for Texas Speleological Survey. Big heart, big soul — we'll miss you Rod." He made a contribution of clothing, etc., to the Schumacher family, Bastrop, Texas, cavers who lost their home in the terrible wildfire there last month. Rod will be missed by all who knew him, and even those who didn't should honor his memory.

Roger Moore Former Florida caver, 1967-1974 , Greater Houston Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Houston.



Photos by Roger Moore

Rod on the floor of Deadmans Cave, which is simultaneously the longest free-fall drop (about 90 ft) and the largest subaerial/dry cave room in Florida. Photo Roger Moore.



Rod and two other cavers from the Florida Speleological Society, then the student grotto of the University of Florida, Gainesville, are perched in one of the canyon passages of Warren Cave, the longest cave in Florida with 4+ mazy miles of sporting crawls and canyon climbs. The FSS, the oldest grotto in the state, founded around 1950, still exists, though like the UT Grotto, now as a regular grotto.



Rod Goke at another, less significant Florida vertical cave within Florida Caverns State Park, Jackson County, Florida
Photos by Roger Moore

Linda Palit: Sad news indeed. Rod was always great, dependable and precise in whatever he did that I saw. Hope it was gentle for him.

Denise Prendergast: I am an Austin caver who knew Rod through the UT Grotto. He was a great guy, dependable and kind. He will be missed.

Mary Standifer: Rod was one of those ever present cavers you took for granted. I've been out of the caving world for awhile, but when I saw Rod last summer at a party he took up right where we left off, asking about me and my kids. He was someone you could count on, and I'm sorry to hear he's gone.

Andy Zenker: I will miss Rod. We had great conversations about sound engineering and other things. He gave me an I-beam roller for my shop, a front load washer for cave gear and a camp stove. I will always think of him when I use those things. I feel lucky I got to know him. He'll live on in my memory as long as I'm alive.