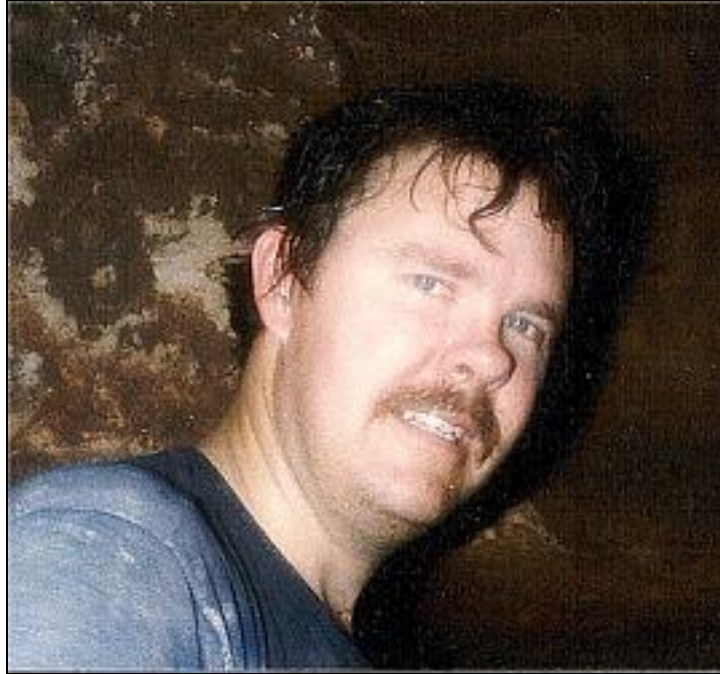


William D. Greenlee

14 August 1957 – 29 July 1995, 37



From: Bill Bentley, 4 May 2002

This was an obituary I wrote as the editor of the PBSS's "The Hole News" in July 1995.

We lose a friend!

William D. (Wild Bill) Greenlee entered life August 14, 1957 in Andrews, Texas. He passed away June 29th, 1995 in El Paso, Texas after a brief illness. Wild Bill as we called him was at one time a member and officer of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. During the mid 80's he served as newsletter editor of the PBSS "Spylunk" when he resided in Andrews, Texas. He later moved to Midland with a transfer from Exxon. In 1987, Bill moved to Carlsbad and went to work for Westinghouse as an engineer for the Waste Isolation Pilot Project site (WIPP).

I caved with Bill for several years and have to admit that those were some of the best caving years of my life. I have many fond memories of those times. Bill was always the life of the party and will be sorely missed by all who knew him. I remember once a trip to Christmas Tree Cave in Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico in which several of us had been in there for hours and I wanted to leave and so did the rest of the group, but not Bill! He wanted to stay and he did. Bill returned from the cave several hours later and had got his fill of this cave. He truly loved caves and caving.

Bill will always be remembered for the strange things he did, like he never owned a television set, he said he didn't have the time for it and the infamous "Pea Cannons" that he started by putting a can of peas in the campfire and watching the forthcoming explosions. At the last SWR regional meeting I saw Bill and didn't know that this would be the last time I would get to talk to him, but I'm glad I did and he told me the story about the "Pea

Cannons” and how each time the can of peas would get bigger until he finally ended up with a large institutional size can and he told of how he tossed it in the fire. After an hour or two the ends of the can began to swell. Then after everyone went to bed. In one loud bang the can exploded in a blast with such a force that it blew the fire out and scattered burning embers all over the place including on tents and camping equipment. Lots of people were mad at him over that. That was the way Bill was. I asked him what happened to the peas and he said that they were turned into pea plasma and vaporized any evidence of his shenanigans.

During the “Bat Cave Blow Out” several years ago, Wild Bill help concoct the very first “Skipper Water” (a 110 proof punch!), as well as he helped Tony Grieco at the first “Skipper Roast.”

Bill was a friend to all he met and was a good caver. He preached safety to all the newcomers and was always ready to make the next trip. I lost touch with Bill over the last few years and was glad to have known him. Now my life will be richer. So, Bill I bid you farewell as you go caving for the last time.

Bill Bentley
Midland, Texas
PBSS Past President

Edited by William R. Elliott from Ron Miller's In Memory of Texas Cavers, 31 January 2020