

Remembering Kerry Rowland (KR)

1957 – December 2019

By Randal Rose, June 2020

“Hey KR, when you going to get the fryer going,” someone would ask. “As soon as I get this wet caving gear off,” he would reply. KR loved to cave and he loved to entertain his fellow cavers. He had a knack for making people laugh and even those not prone to a good laugh could not resist a chuckle at the words that would come from KR. Whether it was in his younger years at Carroll Cave, his many trips to the pits in Mexico, or caves in southeast Asia, or at one of his favorite places, Ennis Cave, KR was always surrounded by friends. KR had that personality that drew people to him and in conversation.



“I’m not a fan of the system,” KR would tell you, “but I respect the system and the constitution.” KR deeply believed in his first and second amendment rights and exercised them every day. Whether he was at the gun range, caving, or at a brew house, KR was full of life and ready to share his plethora of knowledge he learned from the school of hard knocks (and maybe a few rocks).

KR cherished his daughter Kira. They were best of friends and went everywhere together. KR knew Kira was going to be a great caver and took her on her first trip when she was 4 days old at Ennis Cave. They went to Mexico and southeast Asia caving almost every winter, but you knew where they

would be Memorial Day weekend and the weekend before Thanksgiving – at Ennis Cave.



KR started caving at a young age joining the Lake of the Ozark Grotto in the early 1970s and was a major part of the early trips down Thunder River in Carroll. On one trip with Tim McClain and Steve Atteberry, the trio spent several days camped near the T-Junction while exploring leads down river, and were eventually forced to leave when Atteberry blew out his caving boots and basically walked barefoot 4 miles to the entrance with Kerry at his side. KR loved his cave brothers and you knew he would always be there for you if needed.



I remember on one trip to Carroll with KR in 1975, Randy Rose said, we were in the cave several days and had just returned to camp wore out and

ready to crash and KR said hey, look what I found and pulled out a can of beer out of his camp bag. I was waiting for the right moment to drink this beer and he opened the beer and passed it to me. We shared that beer which I don't remember what kind it was, but it was the best beer I ever had!



KR loved his friends, and he had many, from all walks of life and all points on this earth. KR was well respected in the caving and shooting communities volunteering much of his free time supporting training and education to many people. Safety and knowledge of the sport was his priority and he expected you to have both or be willing to learn if you were going to join him on an expedition. KR loved to have fun but the safety of those around him was very important and was an instructor with a nationwide shooting group and was verified with the NRA.



KR was part of the 1992 National Geographic trip into Lechuguilla Cave in New Mexico serving as a Sherpa transporting equipment and supplies. KR said it was one of the most physically demanding

trips he ever did but one of the most memorable. KR's last cave trip was to Ennis Cave in November 2019 for the 34th annual November gathering where the entire group went to the Chandelier Room and Tim McClain lite up the 72 candles on the chandelier and lifted it to the ceiling.



KR was born in 1957 in St Louis, Missouri and passed away in December 2019 from complications of a stroke at his home after returning from a bird hunting trip. KR is survived by his ex-wife Zulema, mother Joyce, and daughter Kira. A celebration of life is planned at Ennis Cave in November and all of KR's friends are welcome to come and enjoy the incredible life of Kerry Rowland.



Additional notes by William R. Elliott

Although a digital search for Kerry Rowland did not find him in the AMCS Activities Newsletters, his name appeared in seven issues of *The Texas Caver* from 1986 to 1995, with trips to Texas, Oklahoma, and Mexico.

1985: Trip to Manley's Water Hole, Palo Pinto County, Texas, November 3, 1985. Terry Holsinger, Joey Robertson, Kerry Rowland, Steve Hertzog, Darren ?, Jay Jorden. *TC*, February 1986, p. 22.

Thanksgiving weekend, trip to Gruta del Palmito and Bustamante Canyon, Bustamante, Nuevo León, México. Jerrald Saulsberry, Bobby Moore, Kerry Rowland, Sharon?, Julie ?, Brian Burton, John Brooks, Mike Cagle, Steve ?, Dave Grizzle, Andy Grubbs. *TC*, October 1986, pp. 118-119.

1988: Ridgewalking: King County [Oklahoma], by Pat Helton. Bob Nunn, Jean A. Harlow, Chuck Clifford, Sharon Fleming, Marty Griffin, Valin Schwegler, Bob Reynolds, Elisabeth Lipinski, Steve Howe, Earl Hancock, Deb Dumont and Kerry Rowland, all of Missouri and Meramac Valley Grotto; Richard Van Arsdel and Jim and Betty Sherrell, all of Illinois and MVG; Andy G. Grubbs, University of Texas Grotto, Hill Country Cavers; Bobby Moore and Jay Jorden, Dallas/Fort Worth Grotto; and Brenda Younger and Dave Grizzle, Tulsa, Okla. *TC*, June 1988, p. 62.

1990: The inside cover of *The Texas Caver*, February 1991, Vol. 36, No. 1, has a sketch by John Brooks with a bird's eye view of Kerry Rowland (Missouri) on rope rappelling into Sótano de las Golondrinas on **November 23, 1990**. During this Thanksgiving trip, 10 cavers from Texas, Missouri, and Illinois made the trip into the abyss using two ropes.



1991: ... We left the hotel fairly early for the Cafe Don Juan for breakfast where we met Kerry Rowland and the rest of the Missouri bunch. Most of their group had already left for Missouri, including Kerry's mother. The remaining cavers were going to a cave on a ranch, another result of Kerry's successful Mexico land owner relationship efforts.

Kerry said that he and his group were accosted in Xilitla by local cavers, who were looking for British cavers. He did not think they were specifically mad at the current group of British cavers, but evidently some group of Europeans had been running around all pompous assed (and some accusations about removing artifacts were even made) and had pissed off the local caving community. Kerry was concerned that they were giving all cavers, including American cavers, a bad name. There also were some very derogatory comments about American cavers written in the log book at Don Juan's which were penned by some Brits...

The Texas Caver, June 1992, pp. 54-58. Troy Shelton, Search for the lost ranch of the valley.

1994: Jay Jorden reported on a Christmas-New Year's trip by Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto members to Mexico. Over eight days, they teamed up with a group of Missouri cavers, including Kerry Rowland

and Lisa Fricke, to visit some area attractions such as Hoya de las Guaguas near Sótano de la Golondrinas, San Luis Potosí. At that cave, they were accompanied by six cavers from Central Mexico. Most of them were on rope for the first time on the cave's almost-500-foot low side. *TC*, March 1995, p. 29.