

OBITUARIES



In Memory of Roger James Sperka, 74, NSS 8463 RE

November 25, 1940-February 2, 2015

Roger James Sperka, of El Paso, Texas, was a cave explorer, cave surveyor, and cave scientist. Roger was born at Crivitz in northeast Wisconsin, the only child of Frank and Marie Sperka. He died from complications of a stroke he suffered in 2002. Burial was March 24, 2015, at Memorial Pine Cemetery, Sunland Park, New Mexico. He received his undergraduate degree at a college in Wisconsin and a Master of Science in Geology and Hydrology at Purdue University, Indiana. He started caving while at Purdue where he participated in the survey of King and Queen Blair Caves as well as Sullivan Cave. He changed fields and pursued a PhD in Zoology under the direction of Dr. Tom Barr at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. Roger collected extensive notes on the *Darlingtonia* cave beetle in caves throughout the eastern interior states.

Roger was an active member of the Blue Grass Grotto and took many cave trips to southeast Kentucky. His longer term projects included the Sloan's Valley Survey, Triple-S, and Redmond Creek Caves. On one trip with the Cave Research Foundation in Proctor Cave, Mammoth Cave National Park, he and Tom Brucker surveyed close to a mile of cave in the upper Proctor trunk. Roger was a good sketcher. Roger was also a computer programmer and when cavers went to visit him Roger was always hard at work on his computer. Don Pollock, Jeff Vansant, and Dave Beiter were some of his regular caving companions. Perhaps one of Roger's greatest caving accomplishments was publishing a Mapped Caves of Kentucky in 1973. This tabulation was with the cooperation of Dr. Barr and Angelo George, and other Lexington and Louisville cavers.

Roger and his wife left Kentucky and he secured a job in El Paso for the city as a

hydrologist. He soon divorced and concentrated on his job, and a few hobbies: rock collecting, visiting old mines, star watching, and shooting, but he did very little caving.

In 2004 Jim Currens started a search for Roger because he had not been heard from in years and the Kentucky Speleological Survey, KSS, wondered if Roger would like to become active in the group. His telephone number and address were still listed in the NSS member's manual! A call reached Roger almost immediately but it also revealed that his residence was a long term care facility. As Currens talked to Roger it soon became apparent that Roger had a stroke at some point in the past. Currens secured permission to use the materials that the KSS had possession of, including a print-out of the location of hundreds of Kentucky caves. Roger also made it clear that he had a lot more cave-related documents that he had

protected for many years that he wanted someone from the KSS to come and get. In 2005 Preston and Shari Forsythe visited Roger in El Paso. After a good visit they returned to Kentucky with several boxes and tubes of maps and records of Kentucky caves to deliver to the KSS.

Roger's generosity was even larger than giving the KSS his maps and notes. He named the NSS as the primary beneficiary of his estate. The NSS will receive a large bequest, one of the largest gifts our Society has ever received.

Thank you Roger Sperka for your contribution to the growth of the National Speleological Society.

Cave On,

Preston Forsythe,
NSS 14161, Browder, KY
Jim Currens,
NSS 13110, Versailles, KY



McLane Peak in the Nightingale Mountains, Pershing County, Nevada. Photographer: Jack Hursh, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology. Reprinted by permission.

Nevada Peak Named for Alvin McLane

On February 11, 2016, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names honored Alvin Ray McLane by approving the name "McLane Peak" for a previously unnamed peak in the Nightingale Mountains, 52 mi. NE of Reno overlooking Winnemucca Lake; Sec 2, T26N, R24E, Mount Diablo Meridian, on the Tohakum Peak NE 7.5-minute quadrangle. The official description of McLane Peak is on the U.S. Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) website [geonames.usgs.gov]. Alvin Ray McLane passed away October 18, 2006 at age 71.

Alvin wrote *Silent Cordilleras: The Mountain Ranges of Nevada* in 1978 which for the first time identified 314 separate mountain ranges in the state, more than in any other state. He also authored or co-authored 13 publications dealing with caves, archaeology, and the mountains of Nevada.

People traveling through the Reno area might consider visiting the peak before or after convention. The Convention Guidebook will feature a longer tribute to Alvin and his accomplishments in caving and other fields, but this image wasn't included.