



Compared to many, I'm relatively new to caving, having started only in late 2014. Since then, caving has become my greatest passion in life. Having such a late start at age 32, I trained relentlessly in SRT and rigging, both with the help of grotto members and on my own in every free moment I had; and I was able to join expedition caving trips with CRF-West by early 2015.

While I was researching how to become involved with caving, I came across an article published in *The Atlantic* ("Dark Passage," July 1998). In that article, there was a quote by Carol Vesely: "...I was a social outsider. I don't think I know any cavers who were ever in the in-crowd. A lot of cavers, when they finally find caving, feel that they finally fit in." It struck a deep chord with me, and still does. It's hard to describe the experience of having finally found something you'd been looking for all your life without even knowing it; but that quote summed it up better than anything I'd ever seen, and it mirrored my own experience.

Since then, I've become a trustee and trip leader for several caves in Sequoia National Park, become an expedition leader for CRF-West, and joined expeditions to the Yucatan and the 2019 PESH expedition to Sistema Huautla.

I've continued to be one of the most active trip and expedition leaders in the region, recruiting and training new cavers wherever possible, and I think of myself less than half-jokingly as a 'speleo-evangelist.'

For me, this has all been nothing short of a lifelong dream come true. Of all these things I've had the opportunity to do, not a *single one* of them would have been possible without the NSS existing to maintain and organize grottos to be available train new people. For that, the organization and its membership has my undying gratitude. Finding caving was nothing short of life-changing for me, as I'm sure it is for many members, and it will be for many more who are yet to join.

As important as caving and the caving community are to me, it is even *more* important that the NSS *continue* to exist and to thrive. Maintaining grottos that actively work with and train new members and are accessible to *all* is key. It is of paramount importance that they exist to serve in training the next generation of cavers not only in safety and technical skills, but also in terms of the importance of conservation. Without both of those pieces, future generations will not have the same opportunity we enjoy today. To me, that isn't an acceptable outcome.

Additionally, something I've found to be fairly widespread outside of the caving community is that cave conservation is often poorly understood or ignored entirely. In my experience, it's all too often that people do not *know*. People simply cannot care about what they do not know about; and as people who care enough about caves to dedicate the time and energy that we do, it's up to us to understand how to make that happen.

My priorities will be sustaining and maintaining this organization so that others can have the opportunity that I've had. People who are fascinated by caves but don't know where to start, who have never heard of the NSS, as I hadn't till age 32. My focus would be on membership, grottos, conservation, and outreach that can serve to point people toward the NSS.

Beyond my passion for caving, I bring nearly two decades of project management and professional organizational skills to assist in the endeavor. Outside of work, I've put these skills to use in organizing and leading expeditions; and I will bring the same skills and enthusiasm to working toward my stated goals.

In summary, I hope to serve a role in the NSS that will assist in making the organization, and by extension caving, as sustainable, accessible, and inclusive as it can possibly be.