

Robert W. Carroll, Jr.  
obituary by Chuck Porter  
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The Northeast lost a legendary caver with the sudden passing of Bob Carroll on April 10. He had been suffering from pain and difficulty walking for some time but avoided seeking medical attention until early this year. Bob had prostate cancer which then spread to his bones. He leaves a brother in Connecticut.

A memorial service was held in Potsdam, NY on April 22 with a number of cavers attending. Bob's unique caving gear (which has been bequeathed to the Northeastern Regional Organization), notebooks, drawings and photos were on display and his co-workers prepared a PowerPoint presentation of his life. It was most moving to realize what a true family of friends Bob had in Potsdam.

Clarkson University received 70% of his estate, with 60% going for aid to North Country students and 10% for medical research. Clarkson also received Bob's autobiography which his friends hope to publish.

Bob was a true giant among cavers and a most unique individual. Those who looked beyond his oddball personality quirks found a warm, intelligent, caring person who would go to great lengths to help his many friends.

He was a dedicated and reliable mainstay of northeastern caving and found and documented well over a thousand caves in remote areas of the Northern Forest. Bob wrote 132 articles for *The Northeastern Caver* since 1969, most of them on significant new finds.

Peter Quick, author of *Vermont Caves*, considers Bob "the most important figure in the exploration and chronicling of Vermont's caves." Bob found and was first to bottom Red Mountain Pit, a 50-meter deep marble shaft and the deepest in the Northeast. He also found and mapped Bruised Rib Cave, pushed Purgatory Pit and reached -185 feet in Hunter Cave. He greatly extended the length of Cow Hill (fracture) Cave and was fascinated by the Mount Horrid talus systems.

In New Hampshire, Bob spearheaded major progress on mapping the MBDATHS and Franconia Notch talus mazes and pushed Dixville Ice Pit. He investigated Maine talus mazes at Saddleback Mountain, Baxter State Park and on Mount Desert Island. The majority of cave mapping in both states was done by Bob.

Bob's main area of interest lay in northern New York and he started with limestone mazes in the Watertown area such as Mangy Maze (which he discovered) and SCAG and linked up previously separate caves. His investigations extended to marble caves both in the Northwest Lowlands as well as remote marble caves he found in the Cedar River - Hudson Gorge area of the central Adirondacks, and elsewhere. Bob's digs and mapping extended tectonic caves such as those at Chimney and W mountains, and he mapped four kilometers in the TSOD talus maze in the Adirondack High Peaks. Later collaboration with others resulted in the "H97" survey standards which greatly reduced the former lengths of some of these talus monsters.

Finally, Bob's interest in pseudokarst led to mapping and exploration of snow tubes on Mount Washington, ice-rime cones on Lake Ontario, and ice-shelf caves caused by changing water levels.

Born May 7, 1941, Bob as a youth went on long raft and hiking trips. His first cave trip was to the Glen Park system near Watertown, NY in 1963 and by 1965 he had decided to concentrate on caving. He was especially fond of long-distance hiking--along roads, trails, bushwhacks and on ice-covered lakes--and covered 50,000 miles during his life. He hiked from Lake Ontario to Maine, crossing Lake Champlain on the ice. Bob once walked 54 miles in a long Adirondack day.

A physics major at Clarkson University, Bob graduated in 1963. He began graduate study at the University of New Hampshire but withdrew and had several jobs until he found a position as a computer programmer at Clarkson in 1969. He continued there until his death.

Bob's small apartment on a quiet side street was like a monk's cell, according to his boss. One room held caving and hiking gear, the other his desk and bed, with a single chair between the two and a large hole worn in the rug under it. Bob had no refrigerator, radio, TV, computer or telephone. Contact with cavers was only by mail and he was a prolific correspondent.

Bob was NSS #13433 and became a Fellow in 1980. After publishing a controversial article on polar shift as revealed by speleothem orientation, the resulting criticism and what Bob perceived as a lack of interest in his findings caused him to withdraw from the Society in 1986.

Bob kept meticulous records. Fortunately his brother and co-workers have turned over this material to me. I plan to digitally duplicate his stack of spiral-bound notebooks and photo print albums and distribute the data to interested cavers. Bob wrote in a tiny script on both sides of each page. He drew hundreds of detailed maps in several colors showing both cave passages and surface features. Eventually this treasure should be archived in a library.

Some of the caves Bob found in remote forested regions might never have been known but for his persistent searching. He once hiked 23 miles and found only a 10-foot talus cave. Bob was especially concerned that his work be continued. His recent letters were full of suggestions for which caves to continue investigating and by whom.

We have lost a giant in the northeastern caving community. It's hard to imagine how he could ever be replaced, but his work will live on.