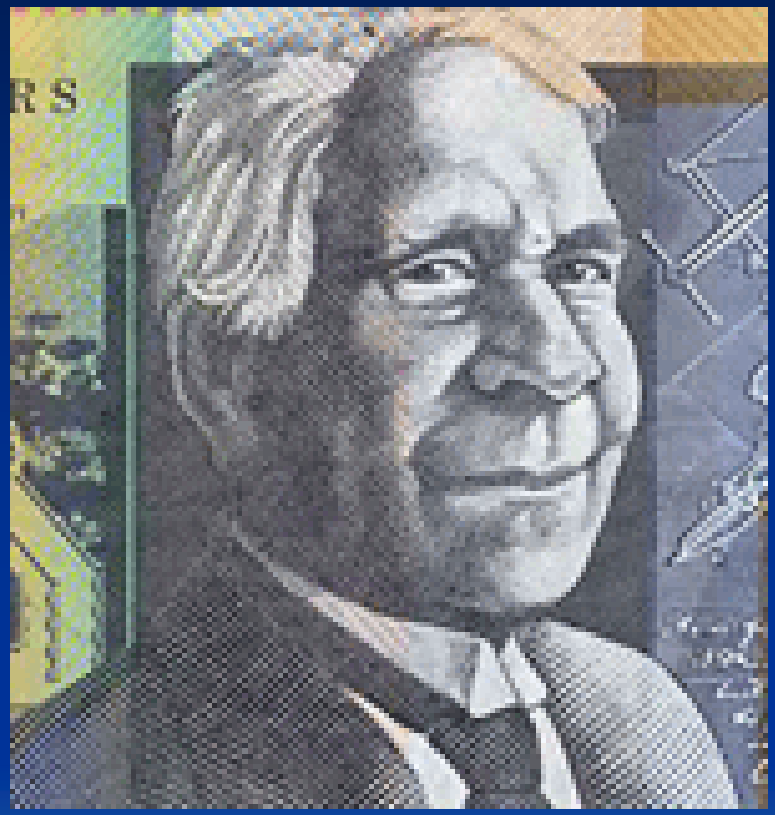
Why Caves?

Or, more specifically, why has my life been so much focused on caves?

- It all started with David Unaipon



When I was about four years old, he said to me:

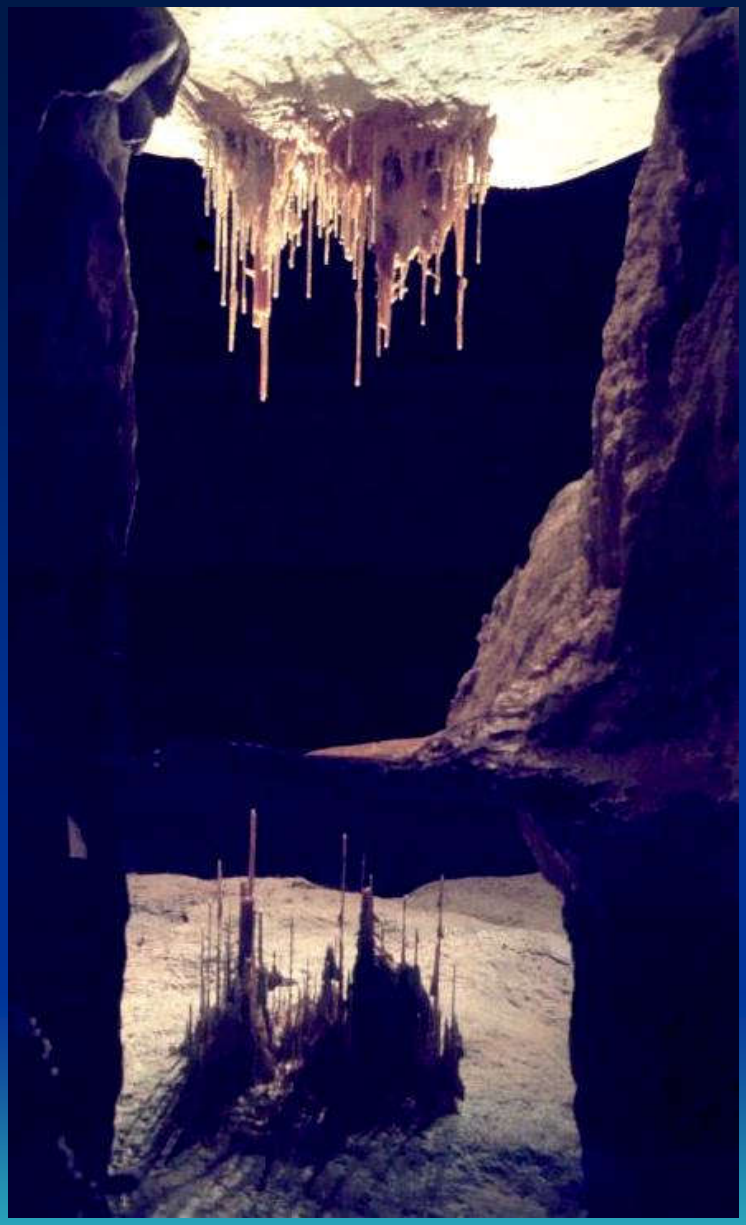
"You must never stop asking questions and you must never stop not quite believing the answers you are given!"

So, I grew up with a remarkable curiosity.

- And I was fortunate enough to have a minimal schooling.
- But my curiosity certainly shaped my relationship to the environment, and led to remarkable travels and challenges

On the 4-6th June, 1954, I went caving for the first time

- We saw so much that made us inquisitive
- And so returned for five consecutive weekends of exploration and inquiry
- I particularly remember the spirituality of sitting alone in the dark
- In turn we went on to other caving areas



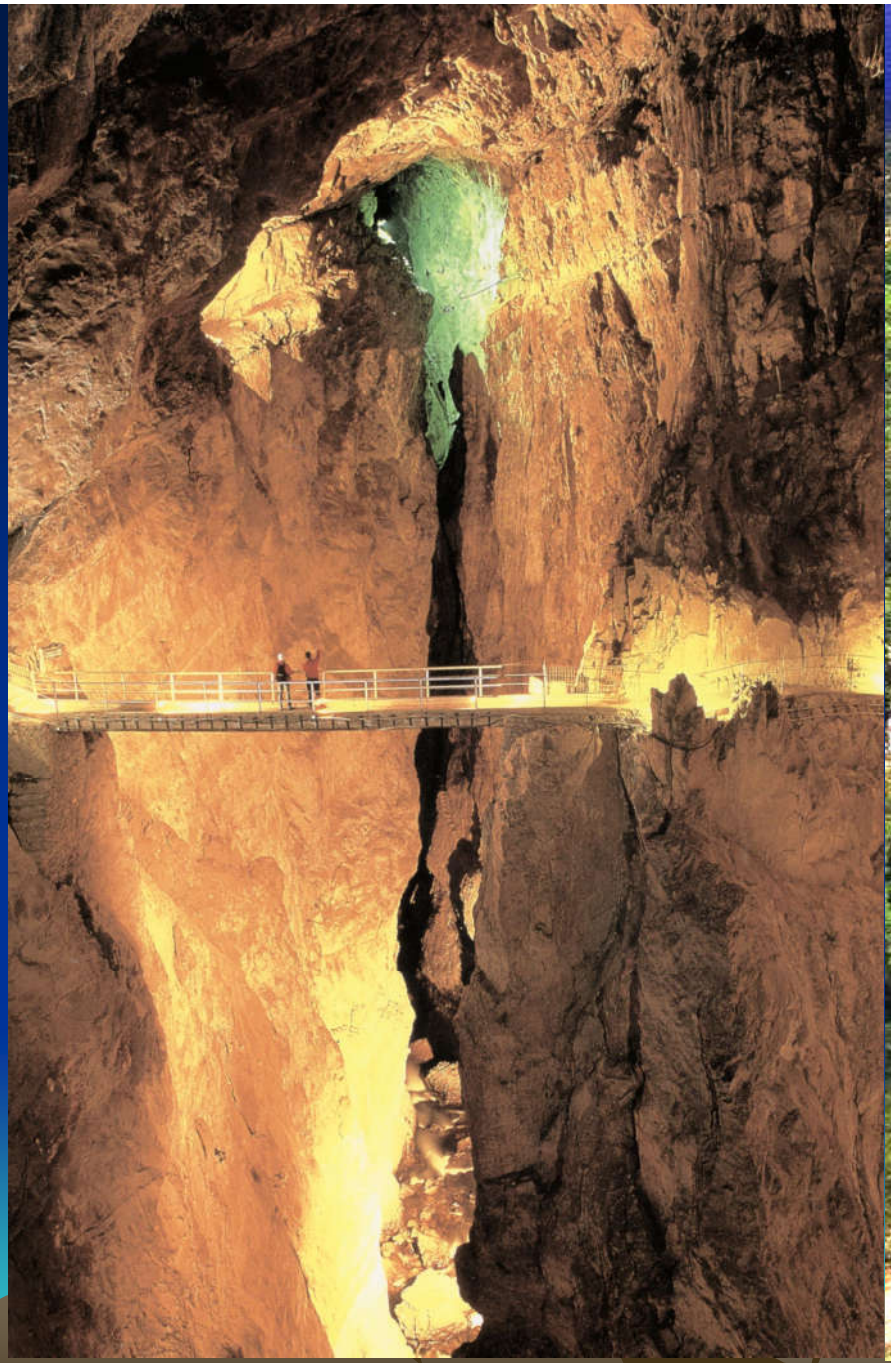
- On our second trip to the Limestone Coast we met Agnes Needham, daughter of William Reddan, first manager of the Naracoorte Caves.

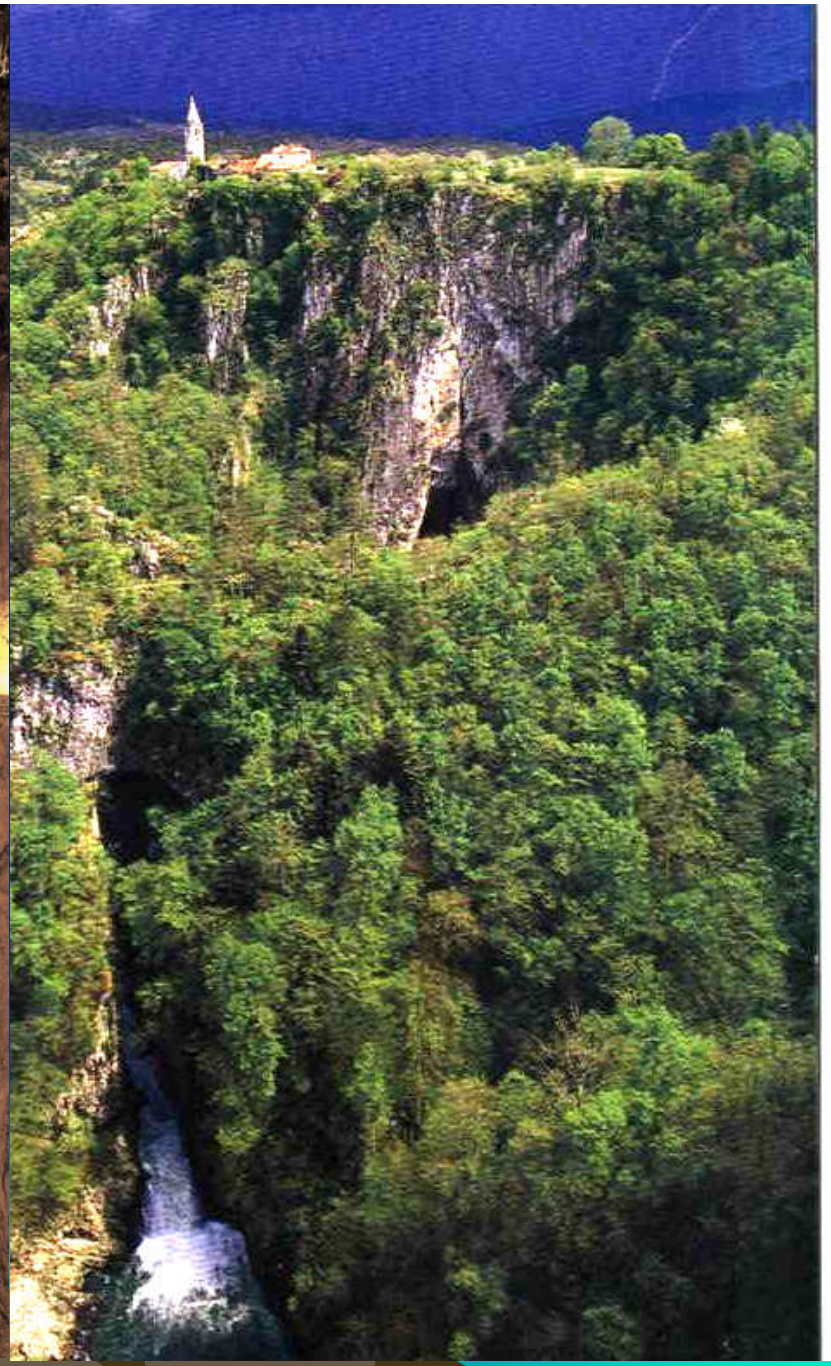
- She introduced us to Father Julian Tenison-Woods wonderful book *Geological Observations in South Australia.*

- By then caves were entered into my very being

- So to CEGSA, ASF, IUS, ACKMA
- Research and teaching
- Travels and visiting caves in some 50 countries

- The IUCN Task Force on caves and karst

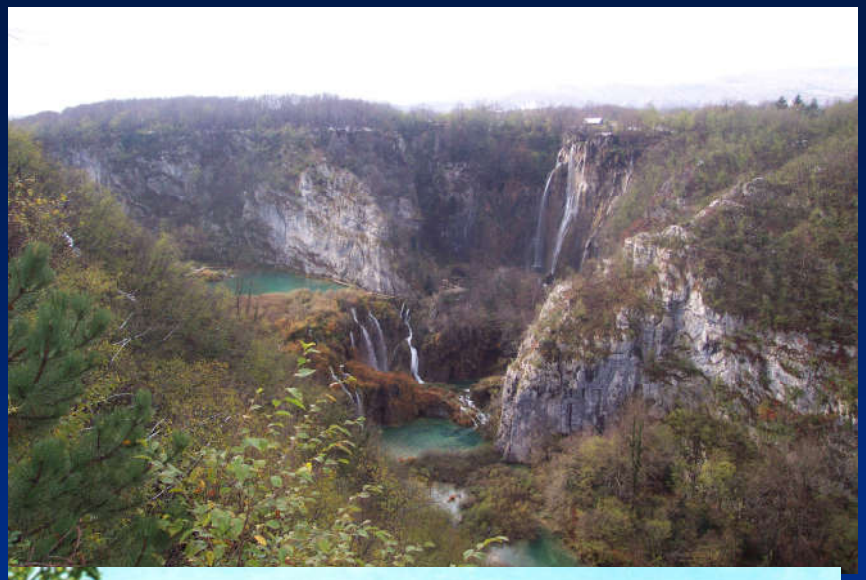




Many friends shaped my thinking

- Alan Hill
- Ben Nurse
- Brian O’Brien
- Joe Jennings
- And many hundreds of others

- A real turning point came with realizing the complexity of karst, then John Hooper (Devon Speleo Society) told me about Plitivice in Croatia



- That pointed me to the importance of adopting a holistic approach
- This meant not only to interdisciplinary work but to a total integration of all aspects of karst – and that is still “Work in Progress”

And so to a flood of new thinking

- The Slovenian Karst Research Institute
- Matsu & Shun-Ichi Ueno (Japan)
- Yuan Daoxian (China)
- Ron Kerbo et al (USA)
- Nico Goldscheider (Switzerland)
- Boris Sket and Tanya Pipan (Slovenia)