

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*.

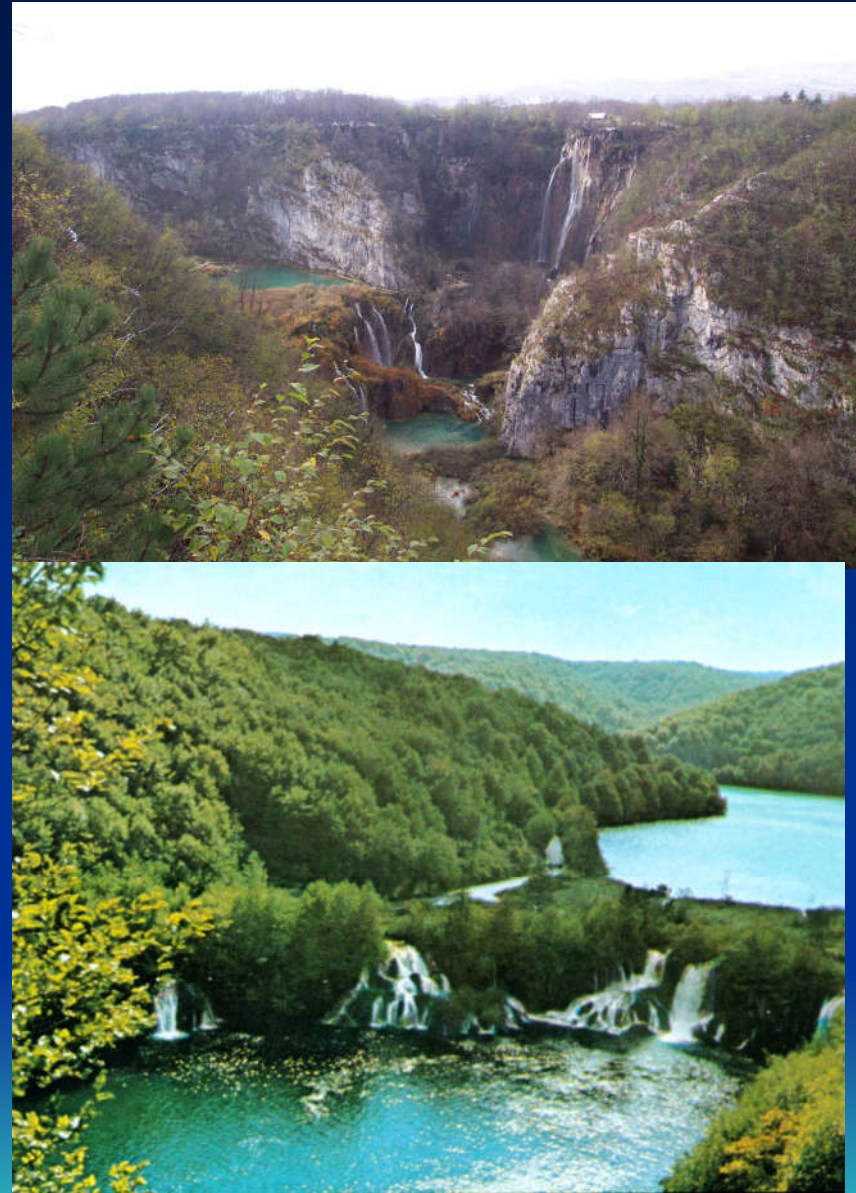


Many friends shaped my thinking

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

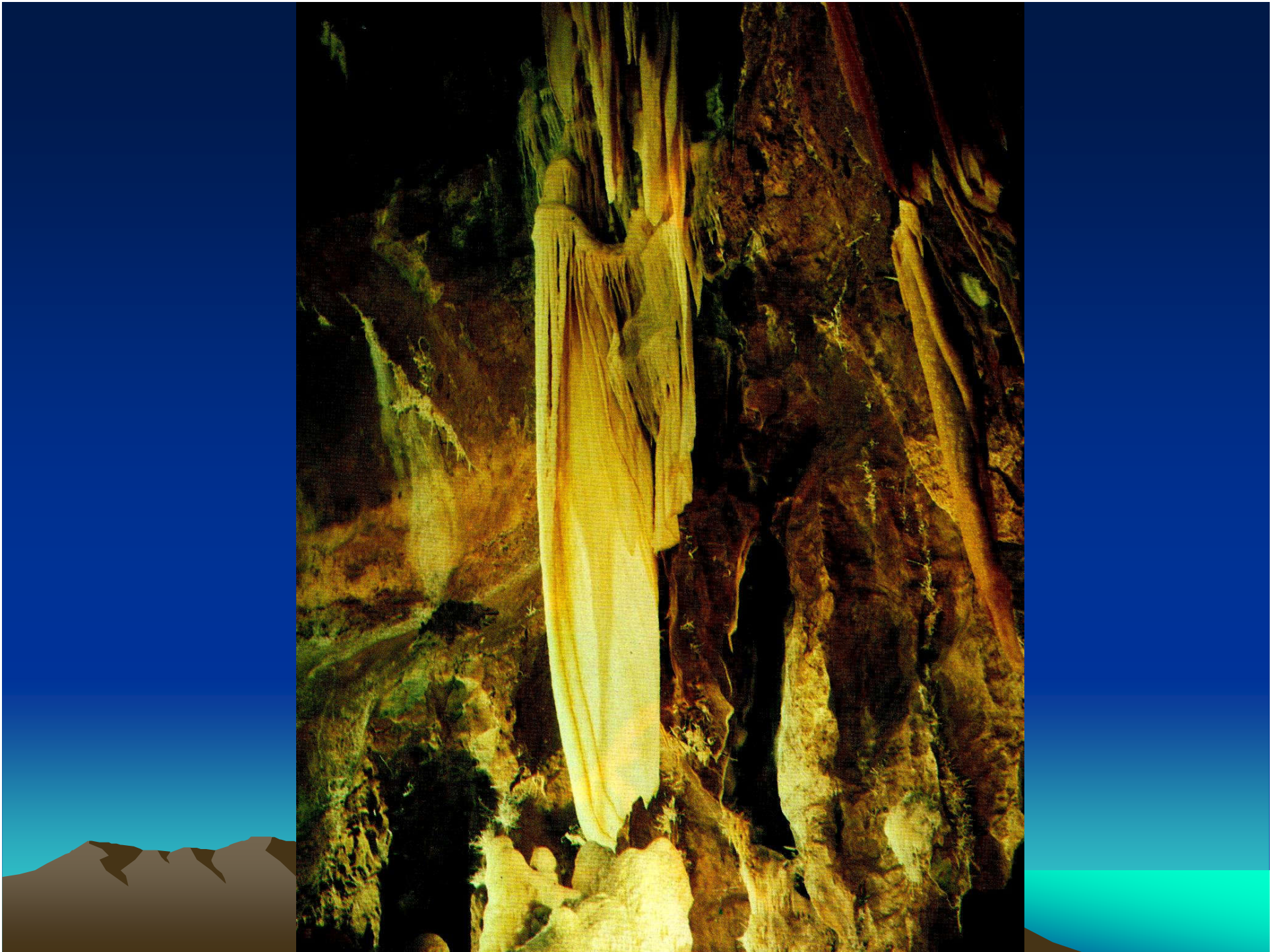


- A real turning point came with realizing the complexity of karst, then John Hooper (Devon Speleo Society) told me about Plitvice in Croatia



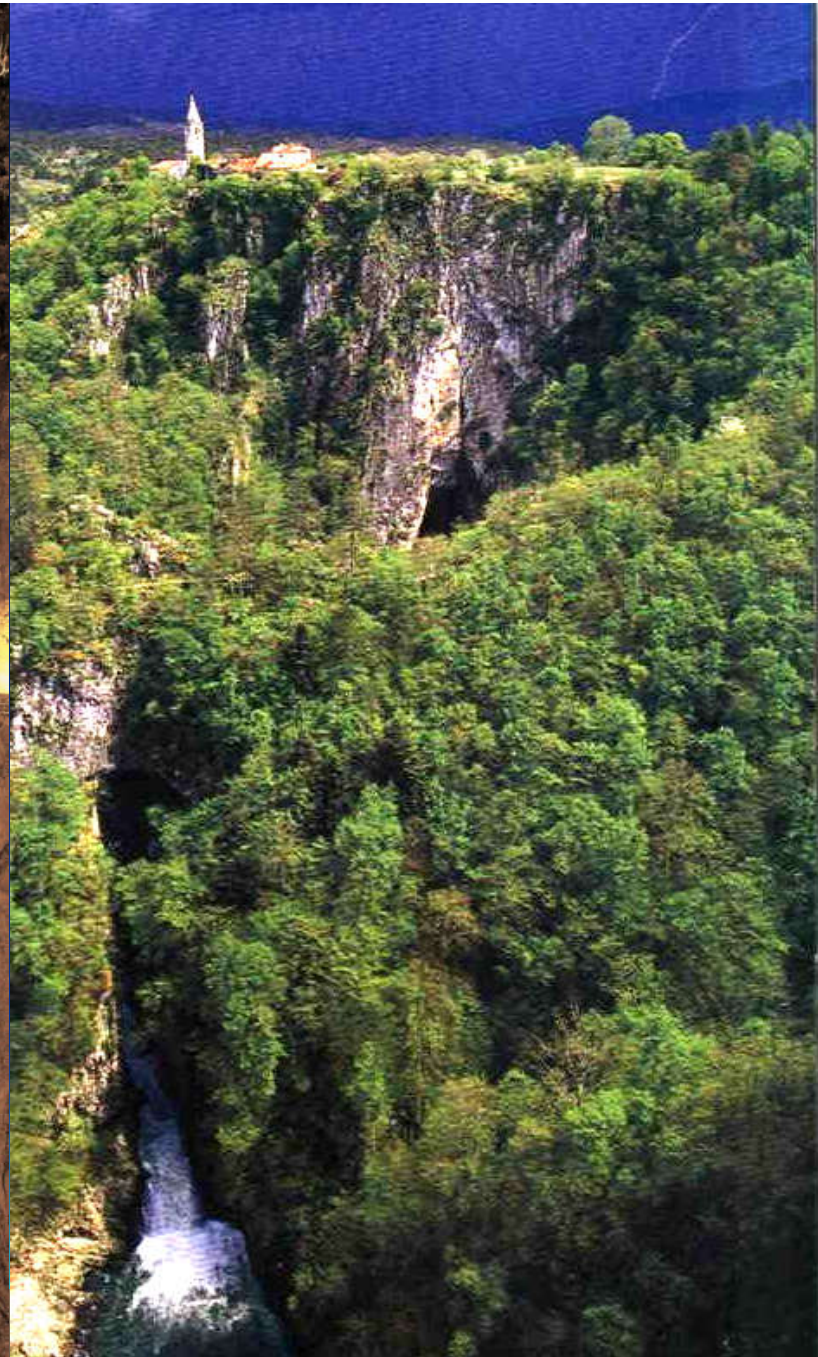
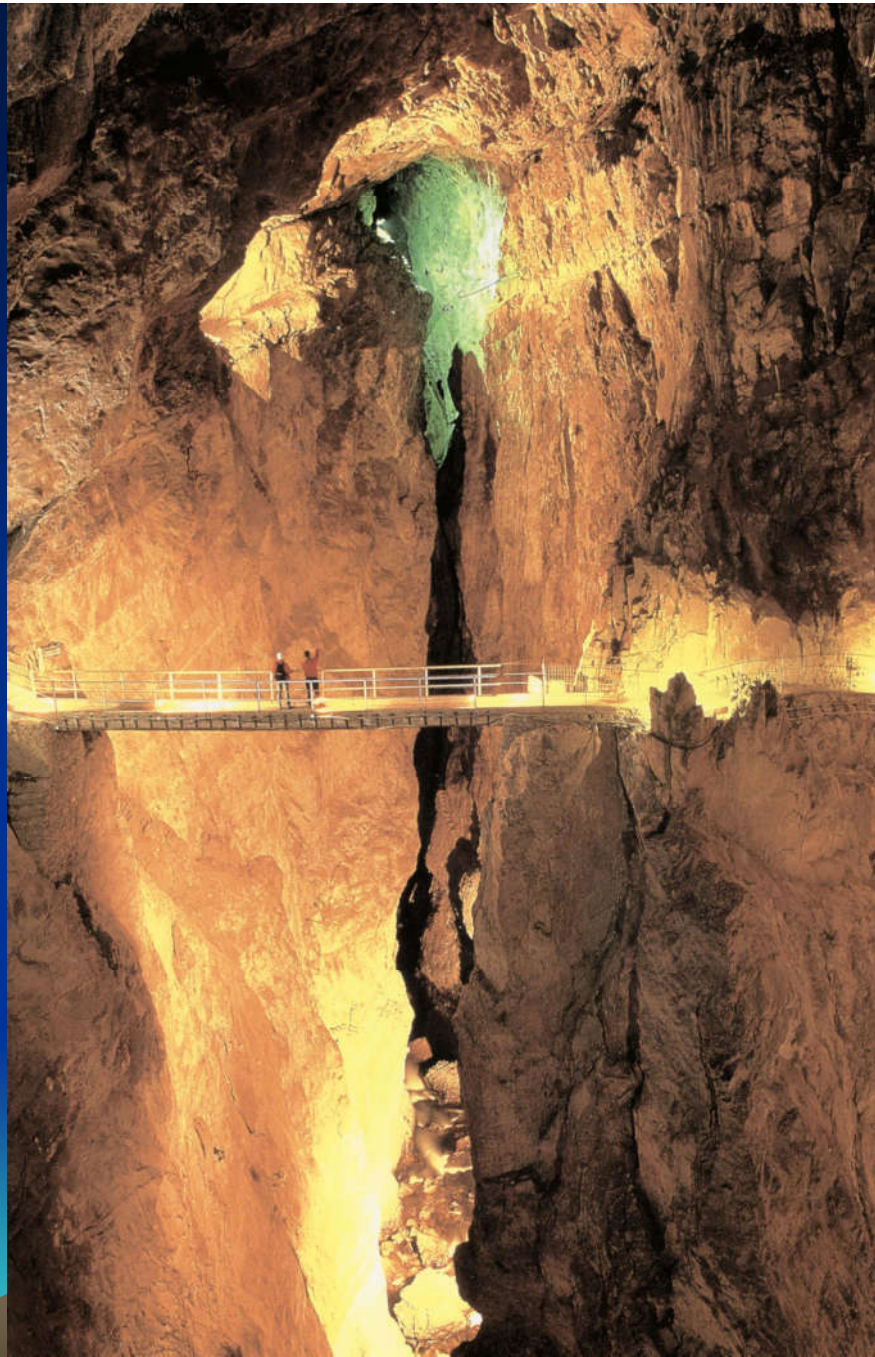
- That pointed me to the importance of adopting a holistic approach
- This meant not only interdisciplinary work but a total integration of all aspects of karst – and that is still “Work in Progress”





- By then caves were entered into my very being
- So to CEGSA, ASF, IUS, ACKMA
- Research and teaching
- Travel and visiting caves in some 50 countries
- The IUCN Task Force on caves and karst





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)



Looking Ahead . . .

- We will have to face a lot of difficult issues over the next few years.
- Some of them will be to escape from outmoded models of park management, e.g. cadastral boundaries instead of real boundaries, legalism, “command and control”, reliance on the market place and commercial operators



- Madness in governance, including the worst effects of neo-liberalism and the way in which pseudo-accountability, all in the name, of risk management gets in the way of competence and good quality performance
- Escaping from the rigor of cartesian thinking in research, and recovering the spiritual wonder and beauty of nature

