

Fort Stanton Cave Study Project 2011 Newsletter #1

**from
Project Director Steve Peerman**

Hi all!

If you've been following the newsletters from the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project for the past few months, then you are aware that John Corcoran has stepped down as the Project Director. Never fear – John will still be heavily involved with FSCSP – he is still the President of the Board of Directors and he will still be present for the expeditions. However, I'm taking over as Project Director. (We may change that title to Operations Director or Operations Manager to avoid some confusion.)

I know most of you. There are a few of you that I have not met or had a chance to cave with, so let me introduce myself. I was born in Artesia, NM and began caving in SE New Mexico as a kid. My first wild cave was Endless Cave in about 1960. I was hooked. My brother and I spent a good bit of time exploring unnamed gypsum caves east of Artesia. However I didn't get involved with organized caving until 1974, when I joined the NSS and the Mesilla Valley Grotto. My first trip into Fort Stanton Cave was that same year.

In 1978 I married fellow caver Kathy Petry, and we had a son, Luke, in 1980. Both Kathy and I were teachers. I taught Math and Computer Science at Las Cruces High School, and Kathy taught Special Education.

Like many others I was a recreational caver for many years, but started getting into surveying in the mid '80s. My first cave survey was Robinson's Cave in the Black Range. I became involved with many of the surveys of caves in SW New Mexico and was heavily involved with the survey of Chiricahua Crystal Cave in SE Arizona. In order to manage the survey data, I wrote a cave survey computer program for the Apple II computer, which I sold commercially for a time.

In the late '80s, I became involved with the GypKaP project, becoming its director from 1993 through 1997. At the same time, I was one of the central figures in the Big Manhole Dig Project, an involvement that I maintained until very recently.

In all this time, I was involved with Fort Stanton Cave only in a recreational fashion. However, that was to change. In the late '90s, John Corcoran reopened several digging projects at Fort Stanton Cave. I fancied myself as a digger so I made sure I got involved with some of the digs there. I was still working though, and couldn't do as much as I would have liked. An old knee injury and arthritis also prevented me from doing everything I wanted, but I helped where I could.

In 2005, I retired from teaching and was able to get heavily involved, focusing on the DSMH-Mud Turtle dig shaft. I also began to help John with some of the management of the activities, especially as they dealt with the dig shaft. Increasingly, John began to depend on Wayne Walker and myself for additional help in organizing and managing the various activities going on at the cave. We came to be regarded as Assistant Directors.

In early 2010, John, Wayne and I started the process of reorganizing the FSCSP as a 501.C.3 Non-Profit organization. We recognized we would need more help and asked Pete Lindsley and Lynda

Sanchez to come on board as Directors, in addition to ourselves, which they agreed to do. At the same time, John admitted that the responsibilities and demands of managing the FSCSP were beginning to take a toll on his ability to do the things that he really likes to do. We decided to separate the job of Project Director from the overall executive director. The Project Director would be responsible for the management of the expeditions, keeping contact with the participants, and writing the newsletters and reports. The overall executive director (the President of the Board of Directors, a position which John retains) would continue to oversee the project, in terms of goal and direction setting. At the October, 2010 FSCSP board meeting, I was elected by the board to be the new Project Director.

So there's a little bit about myself and how I got to be in this position. As director of the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project for around 45 years, John leaves some HUGE shoes to fill. I can never hope to match the breadth and depth of his knowledge of the cave. I can only hope to come close to his attention to detail over the years. I will do my best.

For you all – the participants in the project – there shouldn't be any huge differences in the way things are done. We will continue to do what we've been doing – trying to understand this fantastic cave system known as Fort Stanton Cave!

This year should be an exciting one. In his last newsletter, John catalogued the accomplishments over the last year. Hopefully this year, we will be able to accomplish even more. In my second newsletter, to follow shortly after this one, I will be discussing recent events, including the FSCSP board of directors meeting on January 5, and some specific objectives for the next few expeditions.