

In the recent past you may have noticed the announcement of the death of James Estes. There was a somewhat lengthy obituary associated with that announcement but it fails to note most of the real reasons his passing should be mourned by Texas cavers.

In 1960, the Texas Region of the NSS was faltering. The *Texas Caver* had been produced by a loose coalition of Austin Cavers and only two issues (24 pages) had been accomplished for the entire year. Worse, the NSS had discontinued the internal structure wherein Texas cavers were recognized as the Texas Region of the NSS. In some ways, organized Texas caving was in trouble. In November 1961, Texas cavers met in convention at Uvalde and formed the Texas Speleological Association (TSA) as you know it today. The first officers were Arthur Carroll, Dudley Roberts, and James Estes who served two terms (1961-1962) as Secretary –Treasurer.

That's not the most important part. James also offered to resurrect the *Texas Caver* and serve as Editor. James produced an on-time monthly newsletter every month for the next four years. Forty-eight issues! Six hundred and one pages! On time, spelled correctly, and nicely formatted. All this was done with a typewriter and with only minimal assistance from his fellow cavers in Abilene, Texas.

Texas caving was rejuvenated. Compared to the sometimes dismal performance of *Caver* Editors in later years, this is an almost unbelievable performance.

Beyond all this, James was a worker in other ways. He assisted with many TSA conventions and projects and was always a willing worker when needed. He was the Chairman of the 1964 NSS Convention in New Braunfels and an important part of the 1965 Project at Deep Cave. Moreover, his following report summarized the event.

James was an early member of the Abilene Grotto. Here's how that happened. He was browsing the public library and came across an issue of the *NSS News* that contained Bart Crisman's story about an adventure at Ogle Cave. He noted that Bart was a resident of Abilene and was soon knocking on his door. The Abilene cavers were a close group but James refused to leave Bart's home until he was accepted into the Abilene Grotto. He remained a staunch member of that group for as long as it existed.

James drifted away from caving in later years, but he stands as a shining example of the sort of leadership and dedication that every successful organization hopes to be blessed with.

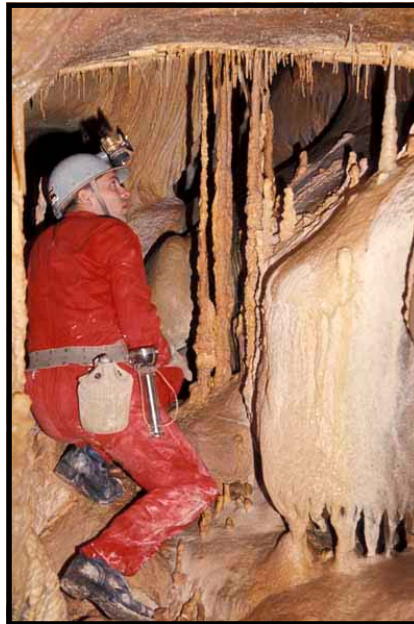
It was my good fortune to count James as my friend for more than 50 years and to have been caving with him a few times. His passing leaves a gap that will not be filled.

We are diminished.

===Carl Kunath



The honorary pall bearers for the funeral of Bart Crisman, February 17, 2009. L-R: Robert Hales, Carl Kunath, Bryant Lilly and James Estes. Lilly and Estes having passed, Hales is one of the few surviving members of the Original Abilene Grotto. Photo: Carl Kunath collection.



James Estes in the Forest Of Columns area of Deep Cave, January 1965. Carl Kunath photo.



James Estes is seen here prepping for his very **first** caving trip with the Abilene Grotto. Destination: Across the "ledge" to the back portions of what became known as Caverns Of Sonora. Photographer unknown.