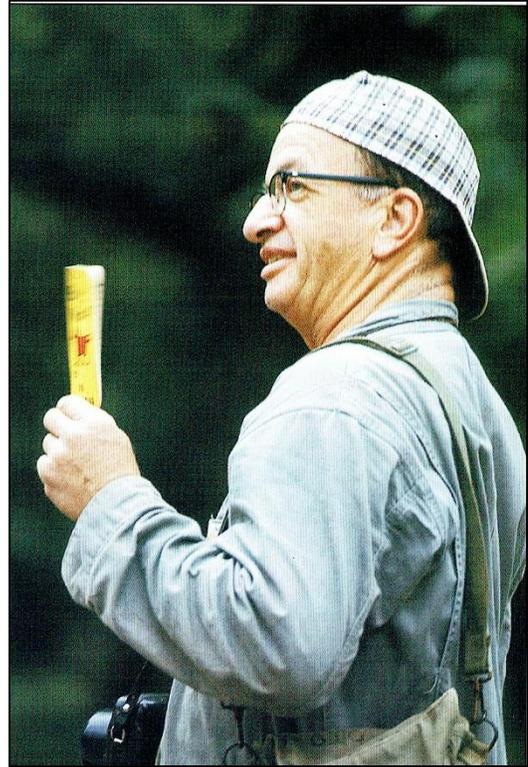


# Thomas B. Warden

1917 – September 1982, 65, NSS 6869

**Tom Warden** at the September 1967  
Kimble County Project. Carl Kunath.



The 1997 map database of the Texas Speleological Survey lists these cave surveys by Tom Warden:

COUNTY	NAME	MAPYEAR	SOURCE
Burnet	Beaver Creek Bat Cave	196?	T. Warden et al. (sketch map)
Morris	Sand Crawl Cave	196?	T. Warden, B. Dillon, G. Caller
Shelby	Gunnel's Cave	1971	T. Warden
Williamson	Four Corners Cave	1962	M. Turner, T. Warden, T. Raines

Carl Kunath's *50 Years of Texas Caving*, 2007, looks back at Tom Warden's caving career on pages 194-195, written by Jerry Atkinson:

After the decline of the Texarkana Cavers in the late 1960s, their past chairman and organizer, Tom Warden, still had energy for organizing yet another caving group in Texas. Tom had received letters from several east Texas locals expressing an interest in caving after his February 1971 article appeared in the NSS News. Thus motivated, Tom conceived the idea of a new NSS grotto (**ALTO**) that would include cavers from Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas (NE), and the Oklahoma region. It was certainly his most

audacious and ambitious effort to date. Having been the organizer of three previous caving organizations in Texas (revival of the **Balcones Grotto** in 1963, the **Rio Grande Valley Caving Club** in 1966, and the **Texarkana Cavers** in 1967), one might think that Tom would have either burned out or learned his lesson; neither of which was the case.

The formation of ALTO was not without its birthing pains. In early 1971, Tom wrote the NSS regarding the potential establishment of a new NSS grotto with membership from several different geographic areas. This concept was not supported by Bill Mixon of the NSS's Internal Organization Committee as grottos were supposed to have a centralized area of membership, not a regional one. Tom later inquired about the possibility of creating a new NSS section and was again not supported by Mixon. Mixon suggested either a Survey or Study Group status for ALTO if a proper grotto designation was not possible or desired. Tom finally decided to form a Survey in order to preserve both the regional nature of the ALTO membership, and still remain an official internal organization of the NSS. It took nearly a year and a half for Tom to organize the interested parties, write a constitution and submit it with the required signatures to the NSS. He received a great deal of encouragement during this time from A. Richard Smith, the editor of the Texas Speleological Survey. ALTO became an of NSS Survey on 18 July 1973. Their stated purpose was to be a cave research and survey organization for the caves of Arkansas, Louisiana, East Texas, and southeast Oklahoma. As regular meetings were not practical due to their scattered membership, yearly meetings were held in conjunction with the NSS Convention. The group published the **ALTO Newsletter** from 1971 to 1975. The newsletter included mostly organizational information and had little caving content. ALTO actually accomplished very little due to few members and a general lack of interest. It would have died early on if not for the efforts of Warden to maintain some level of activity. In 1976, Tom was in strong disagreement with both the Texas Caver editor and TSA leadership, and broke off all further association with the TSA. From that point on, the ALTO group was essentially never heard from again, though they maintained their NSS Survey status until 1979. By that time Tom's health was starting to fail. He died in 1982 at the age of 65.

### **Early Members of the ALTO Survey, 1971**

Douglas E. Barnett (9399)  
Roger V. Bartholomew (9349)  
Donald N. Cournoyer (850)  
Mark Ellis  
David Foster (12476)  
William R. Halliday (812)  
Paul Kirkpatrick  
Billy McMillan  
Donna Mroczkowski (11806),  
Patricia J. Reese (12597)  
A. Richard (Dick) Smith (3708)  
Thomas B. Warden, Jr. (6869)  
Bob Wells, Jr.  
Don E. Williams (1309)

*Compiled by William R. Elliott, 1 March 2020.*