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Like wow! Let's go lead checking!

IOWA GROTTO

INTERCOM

Vol. 23 No. 2

March /April 1987

The INTERCOM is published semi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto, P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. The I.G. is dedicated to the exploration and study of caves, and is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, Inc., Cave Ave., Huntsville, AL 35810. Subscription rate is \$10.00 per year. The I.G. will exchange journals with NSS affiliated grottos. Reproduction in whole or part of any material appearing in the INTERCOM must be authorized in writing by the editors.

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Vice Chairman: Steve Moon
Secretary Treasurer: Larry Welch

The Iowa Grotto meets at 7:30 PM on every fourth Wednesday of each month in room 236 of Trowbridge Hall on the campus of the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa. The Iowa Grotto was founded in 1949 and is the third oldest grotto west of the Mississippi.

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Cover: Maynard G. Krebs, from the "Dobey Gillis Show".
By Moon.

IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

March 25, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 by vice-chairman Steve Moon, pinch-hitting for the ill chairman. No previous minutes were read, but a brief treasurer's report was given. 17 members were present.

Old Business

A brief discussion of Intercom costs occurred, with a target of \$30-40 per issue. Ideas include alternating Hotline and Intercom, reducing the number of photos and removing non-paying members from the mailing list. Steve is also working on attaining non-profit status for the grotto.

New Business

Rudy Prusko and Greg McCarty were both present and a very thorough discussion of the Miller's Cave accident ensued. Important topics covered were why the accident happened and how a similar situation could be avoided. A tape of this discussion was made and will be placed in the Grotto library.

Vertical training was scheduled for May 30-31 at the Pictured Rocks Park in Jones County. Saturday will be the main day for vertical work, but other activities will span the weekend.

Rudy Prusko gave a report on caving activity around Dubuque. A lost mile of passage in Kemling Cave was recently rediscovered, giving 3 miles total. Status of the Atkinson Mine is uncertain; Charlie Winterwood was recently refused entry. Entry to Level Crevice Cave may be granted in the future. Many digging projects are available to those who want to dig open some old caves, including Weber and Mueuster.

Trip Reports

Greg McCarty and John Fuhrman went to Conrad Cave on Feb. 9 to retrieve John's wedding ring. Threetrips to Floyd County during the month involved survey work in Jesse James Cave. Stacey Cyphert, Beth Patel, Mike Lace, and Larry Welch helped survey with Mike Nelson doing some digging and wetsuiting on some of the trips. Larry Welch and Greg McCarty also made a trip to the area to scout the local sinkholes for promising leads.

Mike Lace made a trip to Pictured Rocks park to continue the digging lead started by Steve Moon. It extends about 18 feet at present. Gary Engh, Steve Moon, and Greg McCarty made a trip to check on some Crevice Caves near Garnavillo. One turned out to be nearly 250 feet long.

Mike Lace reported on his trip at Coldwater with Steve Moon, Stacey Cyphert, and Larry Welch. The group toured to the downstream sump. Mike was able to climb into an upper level lead near Orange and Black Dome, but it was too small to push with his wetsuit jacket on.

Dave Schwendinger reported on a digging trip in the area past Gietkowski's Grotto in Indian Bluff Cave with Mike Bounk. Dave was also involved in a pipe-pounding project near Monticello to search for echoes from a "Hollow Hill". Mike Gerald and Lowell Burkhead were also involved.

The meeting was adjourned and Rudy Prusko gave a slide program on bats he had obtained from Bats International.

April 22, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:47 by Chairman Mike Bounk. Nine grotto members were present. Minutes from the March meeting were read and approved. The treasurer's report was given.

Old Business

Preparations for the Hodag Hunt were discussed. Lowell Burkhead will be in charge of Andregg Cave which has not been surveyed. Everyone agreed it would be difficult to survey, but it would be nice to have a map for the guidebook. The possibility of establishing a permanent rigging for the main pit was mentioned.

Steve Moon will lead trips to Yew Ridge Cave, which has only a crude map available if anything. Rudy Prusko will lead a trip near Dubuque, probably to Kemling Cave. Mike Bounk will lead a geological tour of Fayette County, probably including Dutton's, Soward's, and the Wet Cave area.

There is a new ranger at Maquoketa Caves State Park and Mike Bounk has contacted him. He seemed receptive to grotto activity within the park. Vertical training was brought up and details reviewed. There was also disagreement as to the existence and duties of the Grotto Safety Coordinator.

New Business

Another lengthy discussion on grotto finances took place. Costs of publishing have risen dramatically since the Intercom was published regularly. The possibility of raising dues for 1988 was suggested. Other methods for cutting costs were reviewed, including putting advertisements in the Intercom and alternatives to photo copying.

Trip Reports

Larry Welch reported that he, Beth Patel, and Mike Lace ventured to near Spong Siphon and leads off Pete's Pipe in Coldwater Cave. Also in Coldwater, Stacey Cyphert took some novices on the Monument-Well Pipe tour as well as taking a trip up the North Snake with Bryan Bain, Mike Nelson, and Scott Dankof.

Lowell Burkhead discussed a trip to see The Ultimate Sand Pile with Dave Schwendinger. Lowell was not impressed, so they went to Doll Cave instead.

Three survey trips to Floyd County were made to finish up the Jessie James survey work.

Future Trips

Loren Schutt expressed interest in going to Soward's Annex or to Hatfield Cave.

Publications

An article in the Windy City Grotto newsletter had an inaccurate account of the Miller's Cave incident.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20.

TRIP REPORTS

Bixby, Cool and Backbone Caves

Jan. 17, 1981 ??? Rudy Prusko, Doug Snowbarger

We picked a cold Saturday morning to go on a cave hunting trip.

We confirmed that Rt. 3 Cave was no longer enterable due to the reconstruction of Rt. 3. The cave still exists but would take extensive work to open up the entrance for human passage.

We then proceeded to Bixby State Park and visited Bixby Cave which was iced over toward the back. The jacks were still in place. Also Cool Cave was investigated and traces of gypsum were found. The cave was a narrow crevice which could only be pushed for about 20 feet.

Next we went to Backbone State Park to Backbone Cave which is a well travelled cave. There was about 125 feet of passage with no speleothems to speak of. We did find a couple of Pipistrel bats in the cave.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

January 17, 1987; Dave Ecklund, Sue Ecklund, Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson. In: 12:30pm, Out: 7:00pm. Water 7.60"

The Spong, though always formidable and dangerous, is becoming familiar enough to me that I believe that in the future I may be able to do it without a light, though I will always have at least two lit lights in my hand. Not having to actually use them allows me to concentrate on safe movements and read the ceiling ahead of me with my toes to determine the best route. Braille caving?

Sue and I both bashed a leg in the open area immediately beyond the siphon. Nothing too serious.

Bill did some "Norwegian Rock Dancing" at the climb down in the 3rd large room before the Tuna Sea. This area, though not really tricky, requires more caution and watching each other than we have given it in the past.

We gave the Tuna Sea a thorough looking over this time thru. There were two leads on the left side (entering), one of which was checked out on the survey trip. The second we dug out on our return and found "Sue's Dome", really more of a fissure that corresponds to the ceiling joint below it, heading back out over M.S.P. * about 12' above it. Dave climbed this a ways but opted to save it for a future trip when he had his coveralls along.

There is a dig, between these two, on the right side. It will take a bit more effort, but will be done on a future trip.

We marched on through "Beyond Tuna Sea", stopping for a moment to ponder and admire the dome. Stopping at the gravel bank opposite Pyramid Passage, we dropped our gear, reviewed our signals and prepared to dive the "Scandawhavian Sump".

Bill and I slipped into the first cross joint, re-reviewed our signals, tied a rope to my leg and off I went. It took a few moments to determine the looks of "surface" from the rock, but it was there, within a body length. I returned for breath, told Bill what was up and slid through to a cross joint bigger than the first. Voice contact was still possible through an air space on the left side of the passage (entering). I got enough slack to try another dive and found air space within a short distance again. Returning to cross joint #2, I had Bill call Sue into #1 and turn the rope over to her and then join me in #2. Then I slipped into #3, and

found we still had voice contact. A dive wasn't necessary to get into #4, although I viewed it from underwater first, I saw that it should connect with #3 and found enough air space on the left to slide through.

Still within voice contact, I found out that I was just about to "the end of my rope". Sue and Bill had a couple of feet of rope each with a little slack between each of us. I decided to try to see if there was a #5 within reach.

Popping under the rock I felt disappointment at first, more imagined than real, since the spacing of joints had been more than one could hope for, and another within reach of my abilities and length of rope left seemed too much to hope for. There was no surface within the beam of my light, but I scootched to the right side of the passage, and there was surface. Returning to #4 I caught my breath and told Bill I was going for one more. I was shivering profusely by now, not violently. Thanks to my trip into Dutton's sans wetsuit, I was aware of my tolerance to the cold, and when I was getting close to my limit.

A few deep breaths and another duck under and I was in another air space as far as I could hope to go on this expedition.

The feeling of looking around and finding I was in a passage instead of a cross joint was tempered by my previous experience of finding the Scandawhovian Sump at the end of Beyond Tuna Sea and the rope on my leg. I could see 60-80 feet of very plain passage with 4' of airspace curving gently to the right (north?!).

We all returned to Beyond Tuna Sea to shiver and talk of how we had each gotten so cold we were about ready to call things off. Glad we didn't.

Before I go on, I should insert here a fact I discovered about "sumping". I was aware and confident of my ability to swim underwater a given distance at neutral or slightly negative buoyancy. Positive buoyancy is a different deal. Pushing yourself off the ceiling and sliding along is very similar to negotiating a belly crawl where one must lift oneself up on fingers and toes, move as far as one can, re-position, and do it again. Efficient movement will come with practice but speed will never come.

Still shivering, we had a birthday party for Sue, ate cake, and discussed our plan of attack. In the offing is a $\frac{1}{2}$ "^{and} secured by dirt screws (doggie style yard stakes) and face masks for all. I believe it would be prudent to survey during the push trip too, probably after determining the extent of cave to give us the opportunity to warm back up. A compass shot and measuring of the sump itself should be attempted at a minimum.

On the return trip, I photographed the Beyond Tuna Sea area. In retro-spect I should have gotten a couple of shots of the "Scandawhovian Sump" area and Pyramid Passage. Oh well, next time. I took a couple of pictures in the first big room by the Spong and a couple of after shots on the M.S.P. side of the Spong.

All in all, a very satisfying cave trip. We lied to all but a few about our find, partly because of the virgin cave fever that gripped so many people after the initial discovery of Beyond Tuna Sea and also because of learning not to get my hopes too high concerning the extent of the find.

I did mention this to Bryan Bain, as I wouldn't want to keep a secret from him any more than I would want him to keep one from me.

An off week trip is in the works with a back up team already volunteering it's services.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

January 17, 1987; Mike Lace ???, Larry Welch, Stacey Cyphert

Larry, Stacey and I journeyed downstream to the dome upstream from Twin Domes. We met Bryan Bain and a group of Wis. cavers at the Well Pipe Passage and they accompanied us to the dome. A joint cutting roughly perpendicular to the main passage contains a crawlway on the left (facing downstream) and a ceiling crevice (on Right) which led to a large, decorated dome. The crawlway is accessed by crawling up a mud and rock embankment which contains several rimstone dams. A constant water flow exits this side passage, indicating a promising lead. Bryan Bain and Norb Kox examined the crawlway while I attempted to enter the dome. The first attempt at climbing approx. 10' up to a pinched area in the crevice was unsuccessful, the pinch was too tight. Larry and Stacy decided to go downstream to Twin Domes while I rested at the crevice. When they returned from Twin Domes I removed my wet jacket and, with a boost, managed to squeeze past the constriction and into the dome. The room at the base of the dome measured approx. 5' wide and 7' from the back wall to where the floor opened to the crevice. Most of the floor near the walls of the dome was covered with flowstone and small stalagmites (2"-6" high). The dome is approx. 22 m high. A narrowing of the dome walls (about 4' wide) is located 12' up from the floor but a mass of flowstone makes free climbing extremely difficult without damaging the decorative wall. Beyond the narrowing of the dome walls the dome widens to approx. 8' but no high leads were spotted.

We stopped at the end of Monument Passage on the way back upstream. Larry and Stacey did a little trowelling in the wet, muddy crawlway in an attempt to open it up. Bryan, Norb, and Chuck Larsen joined us and continued the digging while Larry, Stacey and I returned to the shaft and exited the cave. When the three of us left the end of Monument, Larry said that by advancing another 15' one could enter a portion of the crawlway that has a ceiling height of about 2½'.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

Jan. 17, 1987; Norbert H. Kox, Bryan Bain

It was a busy weekend. With the college groups that went down, we had 40 people in the cave. Chuck Larsen led part of our group downstream. Bryan Bain and I followed about a ½ hr. later, catching up at the Monument Passage. We checked out Well Pipe Passage where a well pipe actually enters the cave. Continuing downstream, Bryan and I turned off at the next left hand side lead while the others continued.

The passage we followed was almost virgin. Only two others had ever followed it, and that was many years ago. They told Bryan about it and said that at the end of the nasty crawl there was a high dome with an upper level lead that they could

not reach. This was the virgin lead we were looking for.

The long, wet, muddy crawl with various squeezes was extremely reminiscent of Tecumseh Cave at Horseshoe Bay, WI. The passage intersected two nice domes about 50 ft. high, similar to those in the Mississippi River section of Tecumseh.

We reached the last dome and assessed the situation, then made plans for a future trip.

On the way out we went down Monument Pass. to dig where Bryan had left off in Oct. We found several others digging away. I took a turn but was soon discouraged. Then Bryan pushed through and was able to enter for a couple of body lengths further. More digging is necessary, but the passage continues and Bryan feels that it may open up into something big.

Hunters Cave, Jackson County

Feb. 8, 1981 ; Rudy Prusko, Dr. Curtis Wright, Jean Hauber, Paul Willging, Paul Ward, Steve Brainerd, TJ Stickrod, Jon Kunz

I took the University of Dubuque's geology professor and some members of his class on a trip to Hunters Cave. The group was well enthused and did very well in the cave. We covered 80% of the cave. The cave was quite dry as compared to a trip last fall.

The students were interested in doing more caving in which I promoted the Iowa Grotto. Also the instructor was interested in a possible future trip for additional members of his classes. He will also inform me of any mines or caves he comes across in his travels.

Jesse James and Coon Highway Caves, Floyd County

February 14, 1987; Larry Welch, Beth Patel

Beth and I traveled to Floyd County on Sat. Beth was eager to see newly discovered Coon Highway Cave and I wanted to finish a couple of survey loops in Jesse James Cave.

The entrance to Jesse James resembled an ice slide and was somewhat tricky to negotiate. The goal for the day's survey work was to shoot the final 2 loops of the "triple bypass" on the right hand side of the cave. The survey went without a hitch, so most of the right hand branch has now been surveyed.

After closing the survey book we scrambled out of Jesse James and walked to Coon Highway Cave. The wind was very chilling, but fortunately we had stayed fairly dry. We slid into Coon Highway Cave and found it much drier than the previous weekend. The tour went smoothly, with both Beth and I able to squeeze into the final room. This room splits into 3 levels at its end, with the upper level very promising. It will be a little tricky to push

because a slip might result in the caver being wedged in a crevice. On the way out we noticed a side lead that could be easily opened with some digging near the entrance. We left the caves at around 7:30.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

February 21, 1987; Larry Welch, Gary Engh, Bryan Bain

Gary Engh had barely stepped out of the MJB F-100 Battel Cruiser before he was being requested to lead out through the Pig Trough to Wanda's Walkway. No arm-twisting was needed to motivate Gary. Bryan and I were eager to go and were not needed topside since Mike Nelson and Mike Bounk were graciously handling the tourist trade.

We waited for the crowd to thin out before gearing up, getting underground at about 12:15. We headed downstream to Cascade Falls after deciding against bypassing part of Cascade via Dead Coon Passage. Cascade provided the caver with plenty of practice at hurdling rimstone dams and ducking to avoid countless low hanging stalactites. The Pig Trough is a high lead on the right side of Cascade, somewhat near the Bat Room.

The first stretch of the Pig Trough had a solid rock floor; belly crawling was somewhat uncomfortable here. After a couple hundred feet of this one passes Chester White Dome and drops into a mud sleazeway. This stretch was also belly crawl, but Gary demonstrated an interesting method of sliding along on your back through this area.

At the end of the Pig Trough we entered Wanda's Walkway, which was far from walking height at this point. Downstream of the junction was a considerable amount of breakdown. We headed upstream for a fairly long stretch of hands and knees crawl. The first stretch was low and undecorated, but the passage gradually got larger and more formations were seen.

Kenny's Ballroom is the first place to stand in quite a while. This region of passage had a lot of rubble and breakdown piled throughout. After stretching out a few muscles we were stooping and crawling again. I was having problems with my pack; it wouldn't stay strapped shut. After examination, Bryan determined that I didn't have the straps threaded through the buckles properly. After this was adjusted it worked very well the rest of the trip.

After Frog Junction there are 3 very low stretches where the water was up to my chin as I crawled. After the first 2 we got out of the water at Cramper Dome, and Gary said he thought we were through the worst part. His memory was quickly refreshed, because the last low part was the longest and had the least air-space of the 3. The ceiling rose gradually, and we reached the roomy confines of the Roundhouse.

Gary and Bryan changed carbide here, then we headed upstream again. The passage started as a stoopwalk, but gradually got higher until we were walking in a comfortable 12 foot high passage. Formations were profuse in this walking passage. Many of the speleothems were also fairly large in size, including some stal-

actites with a very large circumference. We raced along quickly in such large passage, slowing only to view the scenery. Bryan and Gary were both acquainted with the survey in this area, so we were able to ascertain when we had reached the final survey chip. I was a little chilly, but everyone (including me) wanted to get some survey completed. Bryan had lugged the tape with him the whole way, so he really wanted to survey.

So, we started to survey, Bryan reading both forward and rear sightings since he and I could not concur on our readings. Gary kept book reluctantly, and I set the stations. Once we got started we moved rather quickly--it was a treat to survey in Coldwater in a decidedly non-sleazy section. However, after a while I was getting very cold. Bryan and Gary surveyed on by themselves for another 4 or 5 shots while I paced back and forth to warm up. I pulled a somewhat damp stocking cap out of my pack and that helped too. The survey was tied off to a stubby little stalactite on the left wall and the gear put away. We had surveyed 592 feet and were still not to the waterfall.

The rumble of the waterfall could be heard, and it was only a couple hundred feet to the waterfall room. This was the largest room I had ever seen in the cave, being about 60 feet from entrance to waterfall, 40 feet wide, and 60 feet high. The waterfall dropped about 15 feet, but by standing on some rocks only about 12 feet was needed to ascend. The flow was tremendous and the roar was impressive. A strong breeze came from the top of it where large breakdown blocks and a high ceiling could be seen, extending out of sight.

The cord Gary had used previously to scale the waterfall was still hanging there and held weight. Never-the-less, the rope stashed in the room was taken out and Lowell Burkhead's grappling hook attached (Gary had carried the heavy hook on his belt). Gary was unsuccessful in three tosses to get the hook stuck; the third was a changeup that tested Bryan's dodging reflexes. I was cowering bravely around the corner. Bryan tried tossing the hook and got it stuck on his first try.

Using a loop tied into the rope, Bryan tried to climb the waterfall. It was impossible to avoid the water flow while climbing. Bryan got near the top when his numbed hands were loosened by the waterfall and he fell. Fortunately, he landed with his feet on a flat surface and was not hurt other than a sore ankle. The fall lowered enthusiasm for the climb and no one else was game to give it a go. The next party will probably bring vertical gear.

The trip back saw the water level an inch or so higher in the low spots, but that did nothing more than make things a bit more uncomfortable. It was warm for Feb. and snow melt during the day was causing stream level increases to nearly 11 inches in the main-stream. Morning lows were around 9 inches.

We finally emerged from the cave at about 2 am, minus the grappling hook (still hanging from the waterfall). It had snowed and was looking more like February outside.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

Feb. 21, 1987

Norbert H. Kox, Scott Dankof, Don Smith, Randy Kwiatkowski

Coldwater Virgins...

Scott, Don, Randy and I left at 11:45 am and headed downstream, directly for the upper virgin lead in the dome room. We were equipped with a special self-hanging ladder, designed and modified using the basic thought of Austrian Peter Ludwig, in his plans for "the Unique Self-Climbing Ladder" (Speleonia 4, vol. 1, no. 4, Winter-Spring '85-'86: p. 4-5). He used nylon, while we used cable. Our rungs were fit with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch EMT couplings, and our hook was made from an S-tine from a farmers drag. The hook is secured to the ladder by a caribiner, then plugged into the top rung. Each successive rung is plugged into the next, until the proper height is reached. Once hooked onto the ledge above, just pull down, and presto, the ladder is hung.

It worked like a charm. Randy raised the pole; Don and Scott guided it with nylon cords from each side. After Randy had hung the ladder--and I had photographed the process--we made the climb.

Randy, Don and I reached the lead, 16 ft. up, but when Scott tried to climb a rock fell on his helmet and put out his light. He was having trouble getting it going again, so he stayed down. We were soon jumping with excitement at our discovery: a forty foot high canyon passage. It ranged from 1-2 ft. wide, and even 3 ft. in places. The narrow straight passage reminded me of the Stewartville Crevices in Mystery Cave, MN.

Our canyon was in two levels. After the first 50 ft. it looked like it pinched out with flowstone, but Don noticed a squeeze about 8 feet above the floor. I pushed through and found another 20 feet of passage with a 25 ft. high ceiling. This finally choked off completely with flowstone.

We surveyed it before leaving, and Randy dubbed it Wisconsin Avenue. Looking from the passage back toward the dome room, the canyon continued partway into the roof above it, with a nice display of flowstone. I snapped a picture. Then, from the balcony, Don took a photo looking down into the room.

We made it back toward the main stream passage. All four of us had our overalls ripped to shreds in the treacherous crawl. We would like to see it called Tecumseh Passage because it is so much like our own Tecumseh Cave, but traditionally the surveyors name the passages at Coldwater, so maybe we will have to go back and survey it.

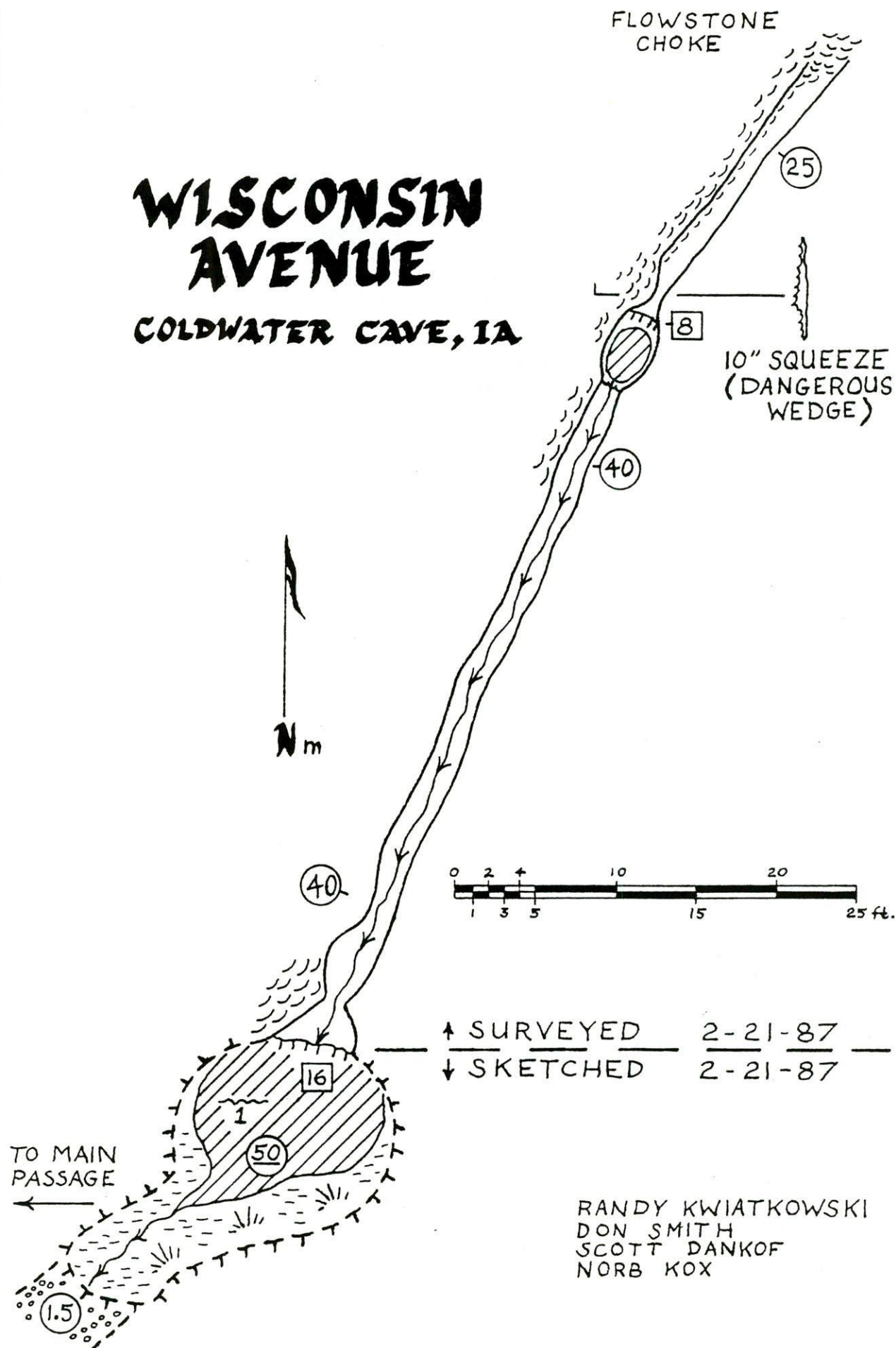
On the way back upstream we checked a lead about 12 feet up the wall, by Orange and Black Dome. It looked like it went but was tight. We did not push it. Perhaps a smaller caver would give it a go.

We found broken bottles, pieces of wood, and Black walnuts in the "Tecumseh" passage. The debris had to come in from a surface sink. Bryan located several sinks in the approximate vicinity. If a black walnut tree is near one of them, we can assume it is the one.

I thought we were done with that upper lead, but now I

WISCONSIN AVENUE

COLDWATER CAVE, IA



want to go back. I would like to get on the balcony and have someone belay me up into the ceiling chamber, so I can climb up and see if there is an opening hidden someplace beyond the flowstone. Bryan says the Wisconsin Avenue discovery is the only passage of this tall narrow canyon type in the entire Coldwater Cave.

We climbed ou the 97 ft. entrance shaft at 9pm, tired but happy. We had once again conquered the unknown.

Wilson Caves, Floyd County

March 11, 1987; Larry Welch, Greg McCarty

We got started at about 11:30 on a gorgeous 40 plus degree day with almost no wind. Due to the nice weather, we decided to do some surface work. We looked at the sinkholes on Bill's property west of the highway, most of which were either dirt-filled or debris-filled. Several near the railroad tracks were being filled with rock by Bill to try and limit their expansion. One sinkhole showed some bedrock, but had a lot of rock fill in its bottom. It could yield a cave, but would be an ambitious project.

On the other side of the road another promising sinkhole on the northeast corner of Bill's property was partially excavated. A sledgehammer could be used here. Another sinkhole on the south edge of the farm would benefit from a sledgehammer as well.

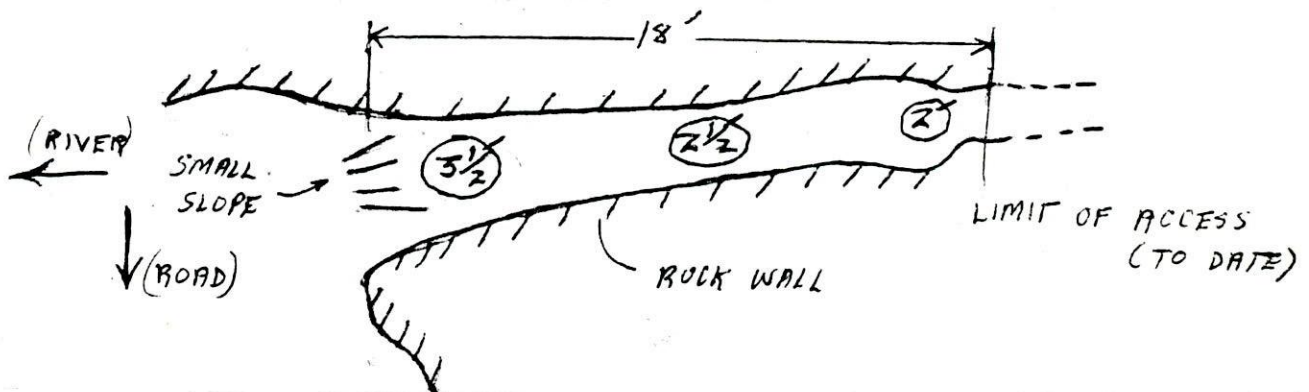
The most promising sinkhole seen was one just south of the Coon Highway sinkhole. The raccoon sized hole at the bottom of the sinkhole had been observed previously, but digging enthusiasm had been tempered by the strong skunk odor in the hole. The skunk smell didn't seem as strong this time and Greg thought it to be promising, so we dug. A large amount of rock was removed with the help of a rock hammer and a large prybar. The dig eventually opened downward to a small drain in the bedrock. The drain was filled with dirt loosened by our digging, but it appears that the drain might be enterable if the dirt were removed.

We took a look at the Kemp Hole next to see what Mike Nelson had been up to. A lot of rock was removed from the crawlway and tossed into the lower level. Nothing looked very promising in the crawlway, but a good bit of unreachable cave was visible through a low slot. The slot looked to be of pretty solid rock, and we didn't push it. Water noises could be heard ahead as well.

To finish things off, we went into Coon Highway Cave. In the high room at the end of the cave the window at the end of the lower canyon was seen to have passage beyond. The rocks forming the window were attacked and found to be fairly loose. With some troweling, one could advance another 5 feet of belly crawl. Here the passage goes left through a keyhole and continues for at least a few feet. More digging will be necessary to get through this keyhole. On the way back I tried to push the side canyon where the cave drains. About 8 feet was covered before I had seen enough. The cave beyond appears larger and a significant breeze was coming from ahead. We left the cave around 7:30 pm and decided to call it a day.

Horsethief Cave/Indian Bluff Area
March 17, 1987;

I began digging in a small crawlway spotted by Steve Moon some weeks earlier. Expanding on Steve's work, I managed to extend the dry passage another 2-3 ft. and clear out the passage end by removing some tree roots and lowering the floor a few inches. The digging was easy since the fill consisted of soft dirt and a little sand. The passage (to date) measures about 18 ft. in length, 3 ft. wide and $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high (at the entrance) and 2 ft. wide by 2 ft. high at the end. One can see about 4 ft. into a 4 inch airspace at the top of this triangular shaped passage end. No floor has been reached at this point and clearly the passage continues but most of it will have to be excavated.



After examining a few animal runs near the Horsethief Cave entrance I entered the cave. No bats were spotted but numerous spiders with ripe egg sacks along the ceiling were evident. I didn't see any leads in the main cave but I did see an interesting possibility in an animal run located near the cut-around passage at the top of the rock outcrop, above the cave shelter. This animal run is body-sized at the entrance but pinches down to a 10 inch ceiling height. One can see about ten feet into a 5 ft. wide animal run with a mud floor that seems to slope downward at the back. The run heads into the hill but a good deal of digging would be required in order to squeeze into it.

Jessie James Cave, Skunk Cave, Duttons Cave

March 28 & 29; 1987; Mike Nelson, Aaron Nelson, Brett Swanson, Kevin Swanson, Mike Ebsen

Tourist Weekend

We made the acquaintance of Brett, Kevin and Mike, all from New Brighton, Minnesota, back in June of '85, while spending a weekend at Taylor Falls, Minnesota, jumping from the basalt cliffs into the St. Croix River. We had maintained correspondence, and during a trip up to visit them in the summer of '86, they had taken Delores and me to the "caves" that were formed by the mining of sandstone for the manufacture of glass. They showed no little ability or enthusiasm in these somewhat risky man made caves, that provided a labyrinth of

large "trunk passages", climbs and crawlways. We talked of getting together to cave in some real cave, but it took another year before these guys could all manage to get away from their jobs and schooling at the same time.

We got an early start on the 28th, so as to get a look at Jessy James Cave and be out of the way before Larry Welch and Mike Lace got there to work on the survey. They enjoyed this, their first cave, immensely, and being intelligent and sensible conservation minded types, needed very little in the way of "dos and don'ts".

We then rolled off towards Skunk Cave and I intended to walk out and check on the status of Blazzer Sink, on the way. Water in the stream bed at the bridge indicated that the walk would not be necessary.

At Skunk, we readied ourselves quickly and entered. None of them balked at the key hole, tho it took several tries to convince Kevin that he could indeed fit. He had just returned, sun burned, from a few days in Texas, and transferred a few layers of skin to the inner surface of his clothes while negotiating this tight spot. We took our time, and all enjoyed the diversity of this cave.

Next on our agenda was the resurgence of CWC. They were awed by the sheer vertical drop there, and the second and third hand stories of the discovery of Iowa's largest and most challenging cave.

Supper at the Deluxe, in Decorah, offered a surprize. They've revamped the menu, many of the standard offerings have been replaced with equally tempting dishes. In particular, the Saturday evening special is no longer ribeye steak. It's been replaced by an 8 oz. surloin, for \$5.75, with the usual trimmings, that will satisfy the average famished caver. The sauteed mushrooms are now unavailable. They still have them deepfried in batter, but the originals shall be missed. Unfortunately, I had to drop the cafe's rating to 3 star when they failed to have any Burgundy on hand at such an early hour of the evening, unexcusable!

After our repast, we visited Dunning Spring, where we were all startled by what at first appeared to be a pterodactyl with a 25' wing span, but turned out to be a pidgeon. I hate it when that happens.

We were too full and complacent to do more than just stick our noses into the ice cave.

Heading south near dusk, we were planning on camping at Dutton's Cave county park. However the weather turned rotten, and as the rain got worse, we opted to get a cheap motel room. Hagglng with the proprietor for a room we could afford seemed a bit odd. We ended up with a dry roof over our heads and one double bed between the five of us for \$25.00, and room to spread our sleeping bags on the floor. It turned out to be a true bargain when the light snow in the forecast turned out to be a spring blizzard.

In the morning, we piled our sleeping bags into the truck, post-haste, and made tracks for Dutton's Cave. With me being the only member of our party with adequate foot wear for the change in weather, our roamings were severely limited. This, along with the fact that changing into day old cave clothes is unsavory even under the best conditions, inclined us more towards sightseeing than the activities we had planned.

The road into Dutton's, surprisingly, was open and navigable. Descending thru the trees with their rich wet black bark silhouetted beneath the fresh coating of white was strikingly beautiful. Circling the parking lot once, we wheeled over to Falling Spring. There we were greeted by freshly stretched fence decorated with "no hunting- no tres-

passing" signs. We stayed clear of there, and will continue to do so until it is determined if the Iowa Grotto's open permission to work and explore in this area has also been revoked.

Thus daunted, we picked out the most scenic route available, and departed thru the blowing snow for home.

I gave them the address of the MSS and hope that their interest and this taste of caving will someday lead them deeper into the realm.

lead trip, Mitchell County
April 4, 1987, Mike Nelson

I finally got into the most promising set of sink holes in the vicinity of the town of Mitchell. This was the largest, deepest series in the area, but there was not so much as a sliver of bedrock, one obvious drain, or any sign of an animal run. Two of them did have beautifully hand crafted native limestone retainer walls, built to retard erosion, that did give me a minor start.

Picture Rock Park dig and Doll Cave, Jones County
April 5, 1987; Lowell Burkhead, Dave Schwendenger and Babe the Three Legged Dog

Dave, Babe the three legged dog and I went to work on Steve Moon's dig in Picture Rock Park. After looking it over for a while, we all three decided it wasn't worth digging in. It is a remnant of an old cave that formed along a joint that is now the right wall of the ravine that the road follows into the valley. There is at most 50 ft. of passage to where it comes out of the other side of the rock it goes through. Then just uphill from there, the joint is solutioned out all the way to the surface and a large rock has collapsed into the cave. If any of the cave remains, it would be farther uphill yet and it would require a major vertical dig to get down to the entrance. There's a good chance that there's a cave there worth digging open, but not where the present dig is.

Next we ate some lunch while Babe jumped into the river and went looking for something else to do. While on the way we passed a sign that said antiques we had to stop. The antique seller said that the only cave he knew of was over yonder beyond those evergreens, so we went to have a look. We found a creek with a bluff line and Babe jumped into the water. After a quick look into the many cave entrances we found, we went back to the car for the caving gear. We fired up the lamps and looked around for a while. Dave explored the rest of the cave while I recovered from a low blood sugar attack. While doing this, the cave looked more and more familiar until I was sure it was Doll Cave. I hadn't recognized the entrance because we walked in from the wrong direction and at the wrong time of the year.

It was a good trip though because we found this great "new" cave and Dave had never seen it before. What better use could a beautiful spring day be put to? A picture perfect day with bats, caves and everything.

Jessie James Cave, Wilson Cave, Floyd County
 April 4, 1987; Mike Nelson, Larry Welch, Beth Patel

Larry finally got some real help out of me on his survey project. Mike Lace and Stacey Cyphert who had aided him thus far had commitments at school. He had a few loose ends to tie up, so I took lead tape, Larry brought up the other end and took the compass and clinometer readings, and Beth did the book. We shot out the entrance sink, then out the small opening in what was once the second entrance. We tied these together outside, then plotted across to Wilson Cave. This was to determine the relationship of the terminus of Wilson Cave. We're also sure we'll be glad we did set a station at the entrance to Wilson in the event that we ever survey it.

Having tried and failed many times in the past to squeeze into Wilson Cave, I had to give it another go, as long as we were right there. On my back, it was impossible. Even in a position on my side, that I had never tried before, I got wedged firmly at the hips. Not ready to give up yet, squirming around, and in a series of moves that only gained me fractions of an inch each, I found that I had gotten my tightest part thru the caves boulder choked entrance, it's tightest part. Then like the fool that I am, I told Larry what I had done. RATS! Now I know that I'll be expected to try to get the rest of me thru sooner or later.

I had to leave earlier than Larry and Beth, who returned to Jessie James Cave to work on some of the cross section drawings. There were a few details that Larry wanted to recheck, but I believe that this pretty much ended the field work and now he must assemble his data into a map. The hopes and best wishes of all who participated in this endeavor go out to you Larry, and we want you to know that there's "even" money on whether it's finished and in by the end of the semester!

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County
 April 18, 1987; Stacey Cyphert, Bryan Bain, Mike Nelson, Scot Dankof, Doug Schmuecker

Plans for lead checking in upstream passages were quickly changed when the need to head a tourist trip arose. Four friends of a grotto member who was not able to attend required a guided tour. Doug and I took the group on a three hour round trip picture taking tour down to the Pillar-of-Light-Arising-from-the-Lake-of-Divine-Reasoning. Doug and the group then safely exited the cave and I was joined by Bryan, Mike and Scott.

The four of us proceeded upstream to North Snake Passage where we crawled until we encountered a tight squeeze over some breakdown. There appeared to be a tight lead to the left at this point which we did not pursue. Bryan, Mike, and I negotiated our way through the squeeze and proceeded toward Bowman's Dome. To our amazement, in the middle of the tight passage, was a pile of human fecal material partially covered with a glove. The fecal material was providing nourishment to several mushrooms. One can only imagine the struggles someone underwent to remove a wet-suit in these tight quarters. This obstacle too was successfully overcome and we reached Bowman's Dome. A possible lead

above a waterfall was observed but not pursued at this time. Bryan then joined Mike Lace and Larry Welch in Pete's Pipe, Mike and Scott continued on collecting water samples, and I exited the cave.

Jessie James Cave, Wilson Cave, Floyd County
April 30, 1987; Mike Nelson, Larry Welch

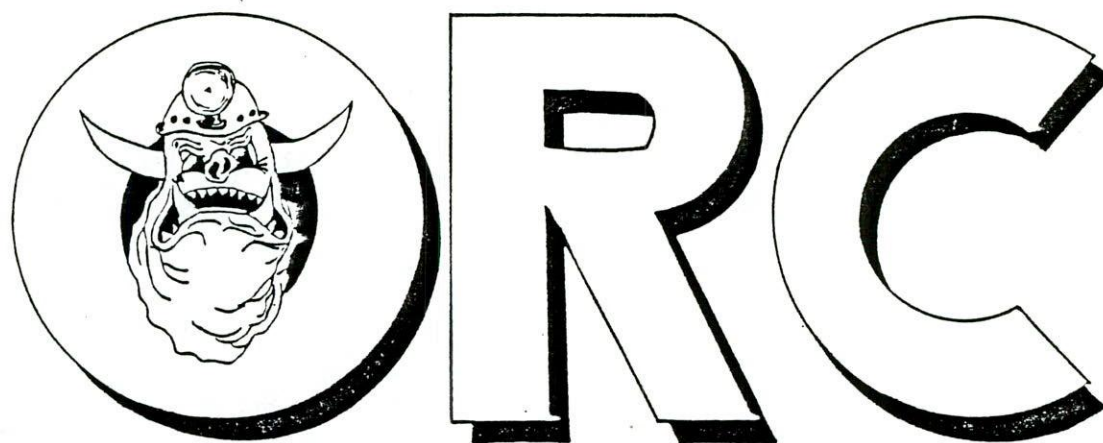
Larry and I spent about 3 hours in Jessie James Cave taking care of another batch of loose ends. A ceiling height here and there, rechecking some shots, plotting into the low water filled passage...Climbing to the balcony at the Junction Room to get a ceiling measurement, I noticed a little passage above it.. I got down this to where we could get the tape to the very top of the Junction Room, over 6.5m above the station. Larry has over 600' mapped and another 50-60 ft. wouldn't be too difficult to pick up.

With the work out of the way we went to Wilson Cave to play. Larry, 10-15 lbs. lighter and a couple of inches shorter than me, asked who should try squeezing thru the boulder choked entrance first. Pointing out this difference in our anatomy and asking how he would feel about being inside with me stuck in amongst the boulders answered that question. I tried the angle that felt promising on my last attempt, but couldn't bend enough to follow the passage. Moving a couple rocks for some elbow room, I made several more attempts with no real luck. When Larry tried everything I had and a few improvisations of his own and didn't get in, we were forced to either take it as a personal challenge or lose hope. After considering a little of the latter, we opted for the former. A number of subsequent tries by each of us was finally rewarded as Larry disappeared into the boulders head first, leaving me to stare as his feet vanished and wonder how he could reverse those moves to get out. After a quick look at the entrance area, he surprised me by exiting the cave in the position I had deemed most promising for me to enter in. So thus inspired, I gave it another go. Summoning up a rag doll state of mind, I forced thru the rocky entrance and bunched up accordian style until completely in, then unfolded around the right angle turn into the cave proper. Taking a little look around, I shortly popped back out of this imposing poser of a sink hole entrance. It had been a sufficient challenge for us and we left further exploration for the day that we have adequate back up that may also be interested in surveying.

We wandered around to some of the other sinks on Bill's farm to see how they looked with all the ice and snow gone. There are some good leads worthy of digging that await any ambitious group.

Ozark Region Cavers Speleofest, Kisse Mills, MO
(Beaver Creek Cave, Jones Cave)
April 25 & 26, 1987; Bryan Bain, Bruce Bain

The first annual Ozark Region Cavers Speleofest (ORCS) was held on the last weekend of April near Kisse Mills, MO. My brother Bruce and I made the 8 hr. drive to the beautiful heart of the Ozarks. Several led trips were offered plus self-guided trips for the more



ORCS

adventurous types that enjoy getting lost. Special trips to Marvel Cave, a nearby show cave, had been coordinated. Also featured were field trips to the Ozark Underground Laboratory, which included a surface tour and a trip into Tumbling Creek Cave. Bruce and I did some sightseeing, then checked out Beaver Creek Cave, which was close to the campgrounds. This cave is reported as having over 1000 ft. of passages. Next we joined up with a work trip to Jones Cave, located not far from the Arkansas-Missouri border. Everyone was issued a garbage bag to pick up trash as we went. Another group had already carried out countless beer cans and bottles but there was still plenty hiding in little nooks and crannies for us to find. There was actually a nice cave there once the massive amounts of trash got removed. All this activity worked up a hunger so it was off to the all-you-can-eat banquet. Following the meal was a presentation on cave restoration then a roaring "white man's" bonfire. I heard a couple of complaints about noise but I felt this was mostly unjustified. They are hoping for a second event in June of 1988.

.....What the Heck.....

---The answer to the quiz on the back of the Jan./Feb. 1987 Intercom is Cyclocrinites dasyclad a green, calcareous fossil algae from the Silurian strata of Iowa. In Iowa, this fossil is found only in the Cyclocrinides beds. This unit which is about 30 feet thick is a major cave bearing unit in the Iowa Silurian. Among the caves found in this strata are Hunters, Wordens, Dancehall, and Indian Bluff.

