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IOWA GROTTTO

INTERCOM



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IOWA GROTCO MEETING MINUTES, MAY 27, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm by Chairman Mike Bounk, with 7 members present. No minutes were read, but a treasurers report was given and approved.

OLD BUSINESS: Details concerning the upcoming spring picnic were reviewed. All the grotto ropes and vertical hardware will be present, and Rudy Pruszek will bring equipment to sell from his store. Mike Bounk and Lowell Burkhead will also take orders for various cave gear. A wetsuit is probably not needed, but caving and camping gear will be a plus.

Larry Welch gave a report on the Jesse James mapping project. The map is finished and the grotto library has a copy if you would like to have a Xerox made. Smaller copies of the map will be available soon.

Mike Bounk reported on the liability concerns of Decorah Ice Cave. He and Steve Moon made an official inspection of the cave for the Decorah Parks Dept. "Spelunking" in the cave will be by permit only; spelunking meaning climbing, chimneying, etc. Routine visits will still be allowed as before. Contact Steve Wyatt of the Decorah Parks Dept. for permits.

Chairman Bounk also suggested a new emergency phone procedure for life or death situations only. The caller will let the phone ring 12-15 times, hang up, then dial again. The second and subsequent calls will be allowed to ring just 3 times before hanging up and redialing. Three symbolizes a distress signal, and hopefully this sort of call will not be ignored.

NEW BUSINESS: none

TRIP REPORTS: Larry Welch reported on a trip he and Mike Nelson took to Jesse James Cave to wrap up the survey work. Mike Lace reported on a trip to Dell Cave with Stacey Cyphert on May 14. They also visited another cave in the same hillside containing a very tight S-turn. They also visited Worden's Cave and did some ridgewalking on the farm.

Mike Lace detailed another trip with Stacey on May 16 in Coldwater Cave. They dug some more at a dig from the previous month near the mouth of Pete's Pipe. Mike Bounk reported on trekking to the first downstream breakdown with Doug Schmucker and his friend Mike. Larry Welch detailed a survey trip with Gary Engh, and Bryan Bain to a passage called The Brother's Grimm. About 200 feet was surveyed to a large dome.

Mike Lace reported on a trip to Floyd County with Stacey Cyphert, Mike Nelson, and Aaron Nelson. A couple of sinkholes were dug, one of which opened up to a small alcove. They also opened up the entrance to Wilson Cave and looked the cave over.

Mike Bounk reported on a trip the Sunday after Coldwater with Gary Engh and Brian Bain. They tried to push into St. Olaf Spring with Brian managing to force his way in through a culvert before reaching a sump.

FUTURE TRIPS: A trip to April Cave was planned for June 27 to extend the survey; Mike Bounk is in charge. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52, and Mike Bounk showed some of his cave slides.

June 24, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:38 pm by Chairman Mike Bounk. Thirteen members were present. May meeting minutes were read and approved followed by a treasurer's report.

OLD BUSINESS: Brief mention was made of the upcoming Hodag Hunt. The guide book will be written soon, so descriptions of Iowa Caves to be included should be completed and mailed promptly. New members Warren Netherton and Kris Licursi were introduced.

NEW BUSINESS: Greg McCarty outlined a letter he received from a NSS conser-

vation organization. They would like us to inform them of any recent cave conservation activities the grotto has accomplished. This duty fell to the chairman by default.

TRIP REPORTS: Larry Welch reported on Floyd County activity that resulted in visual connection between 2 Days Digging and Coon Highway Caves. No physical connection was made, but removal of a rock arch will allow this. Attempts to voice-connect Jesse James and Wilson Caves were unsuccessful. Mike Lace reported on a second Floyd County trip which saw excavation on the Two Days Digging Drain to allow further penetration. Lowell Burkhead and associates managed to move two massive boulders from a crawlway at the bottom of a sinkhole. The resultant crawlway was constricted after a body length, but very breezy. Other cavers taking part included: Bob Wahlstrom, Mike Nelson, Aaron Nelson, Delores Nelson, Stacey Cyphert, and Greg McCarty.

It was party month at Coldwater and a number of tourist trips were the order of the day. One notable exception was a scuba push of the upstream sump by Mike Nelson and Larry Laine of Minnesota. Mike Bounk gave a brief history of activity in this area followed by a synopsis of Mike and Larry's trip. Nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of virgin cave was discovered, much of it walking passage. The possibility of lowering or bypassing the Spong Siphon was also discussed.

Greg McCarty mentioned some work he and Deb did near the Volga River. Several small caves were located, the largest of which was 35 feet long.

FUTURE TRIPS: The meeting time for the upcoming April Cave trip was discussed. A trip to Decorah Ice Cave to remove graffiti is also in the works.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55.

TRIP REPORTS:

May 2, 1987; CAVE CREEK

Winneshiek County: Mike Nelson, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson

On our way to Highlandville to seek permission to document the caves of Cave Creek, we stopped by the home of John Matter, owner of Wonder Cave, an ex-commercial cave. I was curious to see if he might be open to a visit by qualified cavers. He was obviously uneasy about it, his experience in owning this cave seemed to mirror the view his insurance company held towards it, an "attractive nuisance". John's reluctance seems fairly evenly balanced by his pride in the cave, tho, and he is considering the visit. I mentioned the Wisconsin Speleological Society's Hodag Hunt being held in this area, and he was not averse to the idea of making Wonder Cave available for it. This would provide an exciting opportunity for this event that the Iowa Grotto will be co-hosting this year. He did state that a reconnaissance should be taken first to determine the suitability of the cave and its fixtures for any future visit. We'll be staying in touch. John also expressed a desire to see Coldwater Cave, so I told him about our regular get-together on the 3rd weekend of each month, and invited him to get ahold of me prior to one of these so that a wetsuit could be lined up.

Proceeding to Highlandville, we scouted around a bit and ended up at the farm of Wilbur Stoen, beneath who's property the largest of the Cave Creek caves was located. Wilbur seemed quite pleased about having these caves documented and gave me a little background on them. Historically, they are known as the Brunsvold Caves, after a family that lived near them. They have provided much enjoyment for the Girl

Scout Camp located nearby, and the big one was once pictured in their official calendar. Tho that one was the only one on his land, he assured us that there would be no problem with inspecting the rest of them.

The long one was a real pleasant surprize, and I have no doubt that it will survey out between five and six hundred feet, placing it in with the average length of Iowa's caves. Tho vandalism of speleothems was apparent, it was obviously far enough in the past that some regeneration was noticable. Only the largest specimens were involved. The more delicate features, roof areas full of helectites, rimstone dams, ceiling pockets with popcorn formations, columns, occasional ribbons, had been spared. There were massive deposits of flowstone on the floors, especially considering the shallow depth of the cave in the bedrock. I penetrated this one to the point where compressing and squeezing (or a little digging) would be needed to continue, but continue it did.

The cave next to this one, and the only other one on this side of the valley, was equally surprizing. It went in around 50' before the passage became filled with a good deal of water and the roof started to drop. Just my kind of cave, I'll be prepared for it on a future trip. One of the caves on the other side of the valley has a similar passage. The rest of them on that side consist mainly of large deep shelters that have occasional passages.

This should be a fun project and we hope to get started on it next weekend, tho it will most likely take several weekends to complete.

May 16, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County: Larry Welch, Brian Bain, Gary Engh

Option B

The first thing I did at the shack was to check the stream level-- 9.5 inches (7.70 at the platform). The sky was clear with no rain in sight. Gary Engh showed up this month and it was Bryan's last trip before moving to West Virginia. This could only mean one thing: upstream Wanda's Walk (Mud Canyon) to the waterfall.

Noble intentions, but a good idea? No one else was up for the trip, and of the three of us only Bryan seemed 100% sure of being ready for the trip. Personally, I was tired from finals week events, but was willing to give it a go.

We were in the cave at 12:15 and headed downstream. A stop at Guardian Fangs provided a chance to pow-wow and Gary and I both decided we weren't up for the Waterfall trip. Bryan took the news well, and we discussed what to do. It seemed a shame to waste a reasonably strong party on sightseeing. however, none of us had brought a trowel or any other digging implement. This is no doubt a great testimonial for the promise of the Waterfall lead.

Pushing any non-remote leads without a trowel seemed out of the question. We did have a full survey kit, so decided to use it. A likely candidate was the passage just upstream of Twin Domes. In February Norb Ko and the Wisconsin Boys had scaled a dome at the end of the passage and surveyed an upper lead. The main passage had not been surveyed, so we set to work on it. According to Gary, the passage had been named The Brothers Grimm on a previous trip by Gwenne Hayes, John Moses, and Barry Schumann.

I took lead tape and compass back sighting position, Bryan read compass,

and Gary kept book. The first 100 feet was a relatively comfortable crawl except for a couple of natural bridge arches one has to squeeze through. The ceiling drops down, but then opens to a fault where one can stand amid the breakdown. The crawlway continues in a semi-circle and once one slides through 12 feet of chin-chilling sleazeway the first dome is reached.

The passage continues on the other side of the dome, but we were pretty cold so decided to tie off the survey on a chert knob in the dome. The dome ceiling varied from 45-60 feet by my best estimate. The survey footage for the day was somewhere around 200 feet, so option B turned out to be more productive than option A probably would have been.

May 16, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County: Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, Aaron Nelson, Chris Nelson

Bill and I got in the cave about 12:30 pm. Misreading the stream level tape, we embarked on what was intended to be a savage attack on the Scandawhovian Sump. The Spong Syphon, tho, was impassable. This turned out to be just another trip to pick up bugs and water samples for a project of Betty Wheeler's that I had volunteered the leg work for. We did crawl up so Bill could gawk at the Obstruction. We back tracked to the platform by 4:40pm, and Bill climbed up to help his son Chris, and mine, Aaron, prepare for a short trip.

Once they were all back in, we carried the boys upstream past the places where the water was too deep for them to walk. These were surprisingly few, however, as they could utilize some of the mud banks that are impossible for us adults. In this manner we got them clear to the Jumping Off Point and back. We climbed and crawled into Shower Dome to add a little variety to this, Chris' first cave trip. I'm sure the main stream added a little variety to Aaron's trip, as most of his caving had previously been in the small, close fitting cave. We got out about 7:00pm.

May 16 & 17, 1987; WILSON CAVE, DUTTON'S CAVE, a cave in Gouldsberg Park and lead checking

Floyd County: Mike Nelson, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson, Mike Lace, Stacy Cyphert
Fayette Co.

We got the weekend off on the right foot by meeting Stacy and Mike over at Bill Wilson's for a digging session. We poked around in one steep sided sink enough to see bedrock, but nothing in the way of a lead. The next one we hit had plenty of exposed bedrock and several directions from which to approach it, none of which panned out. The third sink proved worthy of a full frontal attack when the crowbar that Stacy was wielding virtually disappeared into its depths with a minimum of effort. With considerably more effort we had hammered and scooped our way into 6' of passage that had a small room at its end. There was an animal run to the right, in this room, and a crevice to the left. This left hand lead is probably going to get dug into one of these days. With the room's length at 5', tho, this find came up short, by 4', of Iowa's 15' requirement to be a legitimate cave.

After all this time spent dinking around in its boulder choked entrance, we figured it was finally time to have a look at Wilson Cave. Pushing thru the pile into the actual entrance, I had to remove a slug of rocks to get into the cave proper. A short belly crawl put us into walking passage, which most of this cave's 150' consisted of. Its characteristics and general trend make it appear to be an extension of the right hand passage of Jessy James Cave. Wilson Cave even ended similarly, with a large mud filled room and a near perpendicular

ular, smaller passage branching off to the right. This smaller passage, however, was much larger than its counterpart in JJC. It was crawlable for about 40', and ended with a high mudded in animal run and a low enticing crevice that seemed to open up beyond reach.

Leaving Floyd County and Mike and Stacy behind, we set out on an errand and to do some lead checking in Fayette County. The errand was to contact the owner of Falling Spring to find out if the newly posted "NO HUNTING, NO TRESPASSING" signs included us. He said that the signs had been placed by the individual to whom he had given exclusive hunting and trapping privileges, and that he could not foresee anything that would bar use of this area by the Iowa Grotto. We are still not only welcome, but encouraged to continue our work here. I gave him a copy the the trip report from when Bryan Bain and I made the visual connection between Falling Spring and Wagon Wheel Cave. He seemed quite pleased by this developement, and pointed out to me that there are several large sinks up the draw from Wagon Wheel, reminding me that the condition of these are subject to change without notice. I believe I'll look into them the next time I am in the area. This trip thru I just took the time to admire the spring itself and pine for someone to back me up for a trip into the connection area to do a little hammering and try for the much coveted door to door push. It was getting late, tho, so we retired to our favorite camp in this neck of the woods, Dutton's Cave County Park.

Sunday morning I climbed into a ceiling crevice in the entrance to Dutton's to photograph the series of rimstone dams that descend steeply from out of sight around a curve at its top to the breakdown slab wedged at its base. Then, we pursued the lead I had gotten on a cave in the Gouldsberg area. Talking to some folks, I learned that Gouldsberg was simply the name of the park here and that there never was a town there. The area around the cemetery had once been known as Smoke Town, tho. They said that they had heard of cave in the steep wooded knoll between the cemetery and the park, among the cedars. Aaron and I combed the most obscure parts of this hillside before finding the cave on the only obvious open path we had come across. It was a nasty little crevice cave about 15' deep. The rock seemed to be leaning away from the speleogens in every direction, with large chunks of limestone hanging way out their slots in the bedding plane everywhere. There was a column of limestone in the center tilted at an awful angle with pieces sticking out of it also. It looked as tho any careless kick might have brought the whole place down around your ears. It had evidently been used for some time, and I felt that our efforts to hide the entrance were in vain even as we were covering it up. I left a message for the county conservation officer who resided in the park that further work to close this cave might be advisable, and hope that I never hear any tragic reports from this place in the future.

I had hoped to follow up a lead in Winneshiek County also this weekend, but my contact failed to get off work. This intriguing story of "the hole" on the farm located on what was once her grandfather's property must wait for another day to be verified. It is purported to have taken garbage and occasional pigs and cows for years, and its depth was great but unknown!

May 16, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Schmuecker

Winneshiek County: Michael Bounk, Doug , Mike , Gary Engh,
Brian Bain, Mike Nelson

Friday evening I rode up to Coldwater with Gary Engh in his new 4WD pickup truck with topper. We were pleasantly surprised to find Pete DeVries there with his entire family in a motor home.

On Saturday, Doug, a friend of his Mike, and I decided to take a leasurly trip downstream. This was for three reasons. First, since Doug is considering diving in downstream Coldwater, this would acquaint him with the passage through which equipment would have to be transported. Second, it had been a while since I had been beyond the Wellpipe Passage and thus it would refamiliarize me with this part of the cave. Third was to show Mike part of the cave. We entered the cave at about 11 am and leasurly headed downstream, giving Doug and Mike plenty of time to sight see. We were expecting to be overtaken at any moment by Gary Engh and a group heading for Cascade Passage.

At the Monument (downstream) Passage, we stopped to rest, eat and in my case refuel. Mike and Doug were both using electric headlamps, while I was using an Autolite with a 6V supplemental electrical lamp. I relaxed while they touristed in the Monument Passage.

When they returned, we headed downstream again. We stopped to rest at the downstream end of the first breakdown area downstream of the Wellpipe Passage. At this point Mike was somewhat tired and since he had to be at work 7 am the next morning, we decided to exit the cave. We turned around and slowly headed out while I took pictures. When we were starting this trip I had told them that we would go downstream only as far as everyone wanted.

When we reached the mouth of the first passage downstream of the Wellpipe Passage we met Gary, Brian and his group. They had decided to survey in this passage rather than going up Cascade.

We finally exited at about 4:00 pm.

May 17, 1987; Lead checking

Winneshiek County : Michael Bounk, Gary Engh, Mike Nelson, Aaron Nelson,
Clayton County Bill Nelson, Chris Nelson, Larry Welch, Steve Moon,
Lowell Burkhead, Brian Bain.

At mid-morning we left the Coldwater Cave shed for Cafe Deluxe in Decorah. Brian stayed behind at the shed in case anyone wanted to see Coldwater Cave on Sunday morning. We planned to meet him later at St. Olaf.

Lowell wanted to check Fateon Spring near Bluffton, so after breakfast we tried to head there and got lost. By the time we found it, it was time for Gary and I to go to St. Olaf. We explained the situation to Lowell and left.

We arrived at St. Olaf about 30 seconds before Brian. We met about 300 feet east of town on the county pavement. At this point, there is a stream of water flowing from a 2' X 2' box culvert. I attempted to get in without a wetsuit. The water was about 4 inches deep and rushed out at a high rate of speed. In four attempts, I managed only to get cold and wet.

Brian then put on a wetsuit and tried. He finally exited the culvert on the upstream end into a cave passage big enough to sit up in. The passage at this point turns right and sumps. After he exited, we changed clothes and headed home.

May 30 & 31; Iowa Grotto Spring Picnic and INDIAN BLUFF CAVE

by Michael Bounk. Steve Moon, Gary Engh, Doug ~~Smucker~~, Mike Nelson, Larry Welch, Mike Lace, Beth Patel, Loren Schutt, Lowell Burkhead, Aaron Nelson, Delores Nelson, Rudy Prusko, Greg McCarty, Deb McCarty, Norma Eiler-Bounk, Ben Eiler, Joseph Bounk, Michael Bounk and others.

Norma, Ben, Joseph (8 weeks old) and I arrived at Picture Rocks Park at about 9 am. Steve and Gary were already there and were practicing vertical techniques on a rope which Steve had rigged. Mike (Lace), Larry, and Beth, and Mike (Nelson) arrived within a few minutes. We loaded my vertical equipment into Mike Nelson's vehicle and headed up to the rappel site. The two Mikes, Beth, and Larry carried some odds and ends of equipment while I ascended up Steve's new rope. I rigged my Bluewater III on the north edge of the segment of bluff where we were practicing. I then descended Steve's rope with the end of a rope while Gary held it. He measured this drop as being 67½ feet. I then explained descending and ascending using single rope techniques to a number of people who then tried it. The practice went well.

During the latter part of this practice Steve Moon and I taught Ben (8 years old) how to rappel. He enjoys it.

On Sunday, Mike, Ben and I went into Indian Bluff Cave. We proceeded to Gietkowski's Grotto. Mike quickly checked the passage beyond this room and then we picked up some litter before exiting. Ben and Mike both enjoyed this cave.

June 6, 1987; WILSON CAVES

Floyd County: Mike Lace, Larry Welch, Lowell Burkhead, Beth Patel, Mike Nelson, Aaron Nelson.

Beth, Larry and I managed to squeeze into Two Days Digging Cave while Mike, Aaron, and Lowell headed to Hemp Hole to do a little digging. We were impressed by the size and decoration of the main passage. The general shape of the passageways is very different from those in the other caves on the Wilson property. The main trunk is a narrow (2' ^{wide} 4' ^{high} x 10'-15') crevice that runs roughly NW from the entrance and ends in a small room containing a low wet crawlway that continues past an S-turn; this crawlway can be pushed by removing mud and loose rock from the floor. Evidently, a fair amount of water drains through the end of the main passage since the cave floor and base of the walls were free of mud in most places (perhaps due to the scouring effect of drainage). Since the floor is lower than any of the other caves, it may well be a drain to a larger underlying system in this field. Very little water was found flowing in the cave due to a recent dry spell but previous reports claim that the end crawlway of the main passage has been nearly sumped.

A pushable low side passage was found off of the walking passage that runs under the entry crawl but it was not pushed. A large left hand side passage appears to drain water into the main trunk. We followed this passage past an 18 foot dome and a 5 foot high room to a small end room containing a narrow crevice that blew a steady stream of air. As soon as we saw the crevi

it reminded us of a similar side lead in Coon Highway Cave. Larry and Beth then exited Two Days Digging and entered Coon Highway to attempt a voice connection. I squeezed sideways into the crevice to where it makes a sharp S-turn and placed my headlamp an arms length ahead of me. I could hear a distant flurry of thuds so I began yelling, thinking that it must be the others trying to make contact, but it was just Larry entering Coon Highway some 80 feet down the main passage. Larry, Lowell, and Beth finally reached the crevice and could see my light shining through the connection. It also sounded as if they were right around the corner. By removing a small bridge of rock from the Two Days Digging side, one could physically connect the two caves, making it a 450 foot plus system.

We continued to Wilson and Jesse James Caves to try a voice connection between the two. We met Mike and Aaron at Hemp Hole where they had been digging. Mike had rolled a couple of rocks into the upper left and right hand leads and both produced a loud booming echo when they hit bottom. The upper right lead was pushed a body length but more digging needs to be done. Larry and Beth entered Wilson Cave while Mike, Aaron and I entered Jesse James Cave. The voice connection, however, was unsuccessful.

June 13, 1987; WILSON CAVES, TWO DAYS DIGGING CAVE, COON HIGHWAY CAVE, JESSE JAMES CAVE

Floyd County: Mike Nelson, Lowell Burkhead, Greg McCarty, Bob Wahlstrom, Dave Wahlstrom, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson, Mike Lace Stacey Cyphert

As the personnel list above indicates, there was a good turnout for the main event at Bill's this weekend, which was a dig in a sink-hole that has been observed to exude copious quantities of air. It appeared to possess some small, going passage, but there were these two greeaat big rocks that wouldn't let one get a good gander at it to see just what it did do. Aside from hijacking one of the bulldozers that seem to show up at Bill's from time to time, we were at a bit of a loss to do anything about said rocks. Then Lowell made a trip to this area that is actually rather remote for most Iowa cavers, last weekend. This weekend he brought his heavy duty toys, a 1 ton chain fall, chains, and such, and with no little effort we removed said rocks. We were a little too hot to jump right into the digging at this point on the record high day that we were experiencing, so we retired to the sanctuary of the caves to cool off.

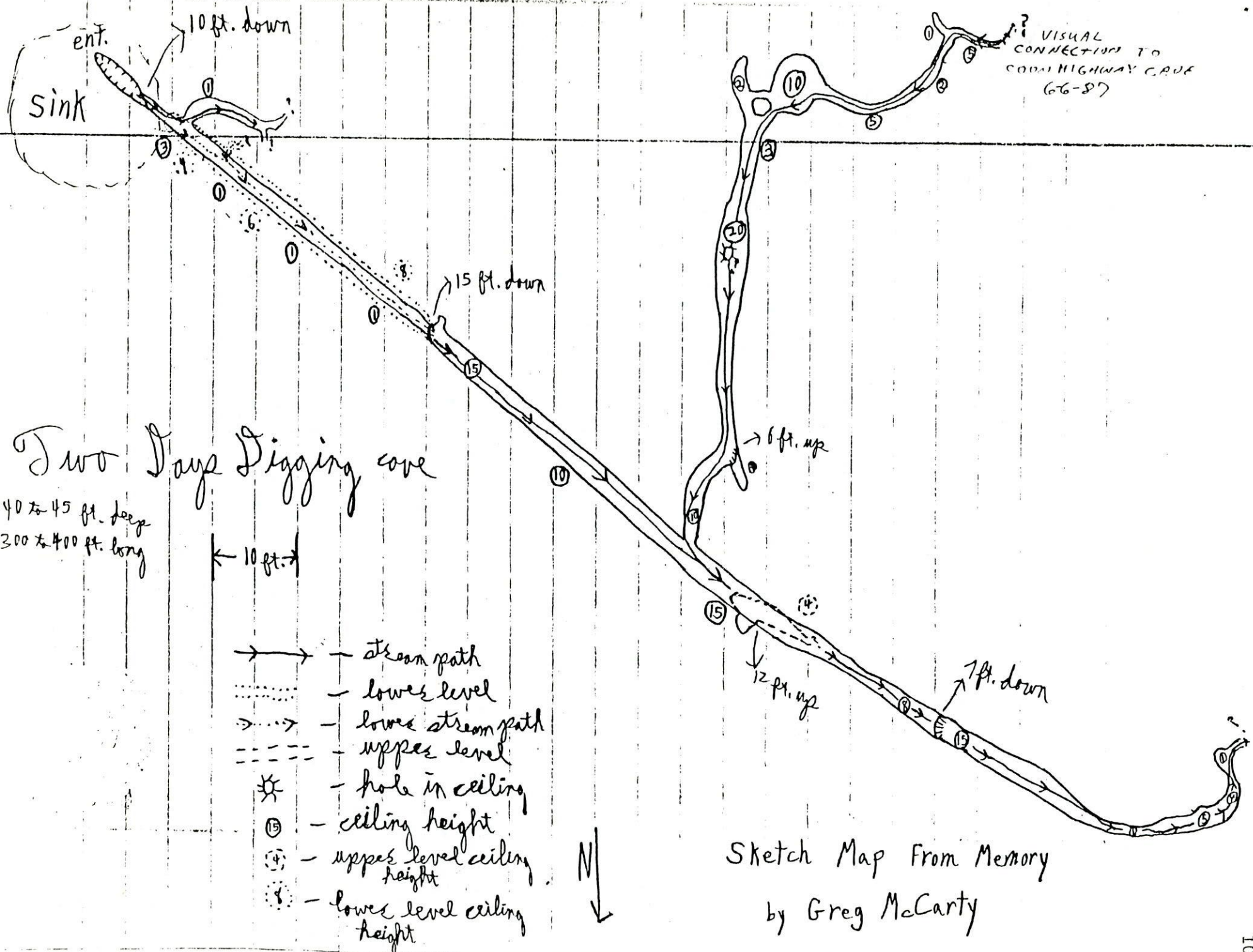
Bob, who had produced the sketch map of Jessy James Cave for the '74 convention handbook, had already taken his son Dave, and my son Aaron, into that cave to relive some old times. Now we all headed for Two Days Dig Cave. Thanks to a little effort by Mike Lace, Larry Welch and Beth Latel, who removed a couple more inches of mud in a critical spot on their way out last week, I was able to get in and get a look at this, the only known cave on these grounds that I had yet to see. Some members of our party who opted not to accept the formidable challenges of the entrance to TDD cave went into Coon Hiway to the connection area to holler thru at us. So Stacy squeezed down the squeeze and reached around the curve as far as he could with my camera held at arms length, while Bob in CHC, directed him in aiming it. Hopefully we got a photographic connection, but must wait to get the film developed to see.

The most fun we had in TDD Cave was making disparaging remarks about Mike Lacey while he was in a snug stream level lead. After he told us what a barrel of laughs we were, it inspired us to release a barrage of punch lines from well known jokes on him. As he was laughing already, it wasn't hard to keep him going. We got the greatest satisfaction out of this, knowing that he didn't have the room to hold on to his sides, even if he wanted to.

This cave is somewhat different than the others on the property, in that it is composed of tall crevassy passage. There is one room with a fairly large flat level ceiling that may pose a hazard to tractors passing over it. This is the next cave in line to be surveyed, and when that is done, we can mark this area out on the surface for Bill to be aware of. TDD Cave possessed a few sporadic nice unvandalized sets of speleothems.

I'd like to toot Delores' and Aaron's horn for them, for their performance in this tough little cave. The slot entrance from the sinkhole could scare off most folks. The 25' of ever tightening belly crawl, requiring snake-like motions to negotiate, could weed out a few more. The abrupt 10' drop from the belly crawl was no piece of cake. It was challenging enough for those of us who'd been exposed to these sorts of obstacles more gradually than they had. Good work, you two.

Cooled off, we got back over to the dig to find that Greg McCarty had shown up, and that the excavating was well under way. A great deal of cobble filled mud was removed, but the passage was very small. However, Lowell has another plan in the offing...(to be continued, someday!)



June 20, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County: Mike Nelson, Larry Lane (in:12:07pm/out:4:20am)

I had been aching to get back and free dive past the Scandawho-vian Sumps since the day I had first laid eyes on what had appeared to be such big passage beyond it. I got to party weekend, though, with the realization that I would probably take my wife, Delores, for a tour upstream and just pick up water samples and bugs again. The rest of the original team members who had supported and made that first penetration possible would not be coming. Dave and Sue Ecklund were participating in the restoration at Carlsbad Caverns and my brother Bill had to work. You could not imagine the elation I experienced when almost first thing upon arriving, Mike Bounk, our Iowa Gotto's president and one of the CWC project coordinators, approached me with the most unexpected news. Larry Laine, of the MSS and Tyson's Spring diving fame, was here and wanted to speak to me about a trip up that way.

I told Larry of how I had recently acquired my own cave worthy dive gear and had developed proficiency with it in open water, that I had studied the NSS Cave Diving Handbook in depth, and of my experience free diving sumps. If that was enough for him to trust in my abilities, then I was certainly ready to trust in his. After a terse conversation on what was required for the dive and what could be expected of the trip, Larry demonstrated his set up for the gear and its transport. We then patiently readied our equipment as the rest of the excellent turnout at this year's open house at CWC filed through the bottleneck in the shaft room.

The last few cavers were lingering at the shaft, waiting their turn to enter, as we hauled in our gear and ourselves. Shortly they were in and we set to work. Larry's arrangement for transport dropped nicely down the 94' shaft, on the rescue rope, and in no time at all we were headed purposefully upstream. The stream level gauge, reading 7.8" at the platform, indicated that the Spong Syphon would indeed demand scuba gear to pass through. There was less than 3/4" of air space, half of what was needed for safe access through this 40' long "psychological" restriction. The air and water temperature were both 50 degrees, 3 to 4 degrees above normal. This would give us an extra margin of comfort and, hence, safety.

We came across Dave Richardson and his guest while on our way, and they joined us for the last leg up to the Spong. I thank them both very much for carrying the water samples and bugs that I had collected for Betty Wheeler, back to the platform for me upon their return. After 3 months in the water, some of these bugs are deteriorating where they are partially stuck in the stream bed. Betty informed me that there is to be another dye trace in July, so I may be relieved of my volunteer duty of fetching these for the full 6 month period I had anticipated. (The intent of this endeavour is to see if background florescence is cumulative.)

Preparing the gear at the Spong, I was calmly excited. Contrary terms, I know, like the detached concentration that had gotten me through the Spong so many times before.

I became more certain of our combined ability to succeed in the objectives of our push trip as Larry asked me constantly for my advice and opinion on those aspects of our project that I was obviously the most keenly aware of, due to my previous experience in this area. It was also very rewarding that some of my thoughts on variations of some

of the procedures were accepted by him quite readily. He never considered otherwise, that this was my lead and I was trip leader, despite his supplying the technology and expertise. There were too many other things to pack along on an expedition of this sort, and little room for any extras, like an ego. Larry had left his back at home in Minnesota. This was the single most important thing I had learned from Larry to this point in the schooling I had been picking up from him. Now though, it was time for us to go to school together.

Larry went in to check out the Spong and reported that the water wasn't as murky as I had thought it might be, judging by the mainstream. I liked the idea of entering the near sump feet first, face up, as I was accustomed to, and Larry coming immediately behind me in the standard head first, face down scuba diving posture. We could then move through the sump "inch worm" style, with me moving a little, waiting for Larry to move up 'til we bumped heads, and repeating until we were both through. From the safety viewpoint it made the most sense to go in side by side so that we both had clear water and access to each other for communications and to better share gear in an emergency. We opted for the latter. All was progressing smoothly until we were over half way through and Larry gave me a tug. In an incredibly short span of time, about equal to which it took for a total silt out to develop, I examined the properties of panic and the sheer futility of any such notion. He didn't indicate a need for shared air. It only took the briefest part of another second to comprehend that he had signaled a need to back out, which we then did, without problem. I had passed the "trail by silt". Larry had simply gotten off to the right side of the passage too far and become wedged. We then tried traversing the Spong in the manner I preferred. This went very smoothly and became the accepted mode of travel in non-virgin sumps.

Repacking the gear on the other side, Larry told me that this had been his longest dive to date. Pushing on relentlessly to our goal, we were both becoming caught up in the cave. Traveling through the Tuna Sea, a 300' long passage similar to the Spong, but with 3" to 6" of air space, we were both aware that we were caving first class and on the edge. Larry was incredulous, though, when I pointed out a dig that we had carried out in a cross joint in this region. "Beyond Tuna Sea" with its lofty Hotdog Dome and indiscribably decorated Whaaggoozzer Dome were treats to behold. None too soon we had come to the Scandawhovian Sumps, and the prospects of virgin cave beyond.

After securing the dirt screw of the hand line to be permanently installed, we nosed through to the first cross joint. I then freedived the first sump and held the rope taught for Larry to use to follow. We used this procedure for the next two sumps in this series. When I was not able to penetrate the last one due to the turbidity of the water obscuring any sign of the surface, we donned our gear right there in the cross joint and dived through into virgin cave. (In retrospect, it would have been much wiser to have used scuba for all of these sumps, but as yet we had no idea how much more demand might be placed on our air supply.) We had used more of the hand line to secure itself than I had figured and it did not reach clear through this series of sumps. We had to stake out the loose end in the sump and proceed using Larry's jump reel.

First impressions can sometimes be deceptive, and my first sight of the passage on the far side of the Scandawhovian Sumps must have been enhanced by my imagination or distorted by my near hypothermic state. Everything was about half the dimension that I had first observed it. Worse yet, where I had thought that the passage had curved gently to the right, well it did, right into another sump! Probing with our feet didn't reveal any cross joints, the water was too turbid

for the free diving that first opened up this area. Larry was into his forte, first penetration virgin cave diving. It took three tries before he disappeared for what seemed like one real long period of time. When he emerged on the other side we had voice contact, but muffled. He returned to tell me of another room and passage on the order of the Tuna Sea leading away from it. We dived "Three Dive Sump" in the head bumping manner and found ourselves in a realm that boggles my senses and intrigues my imagination.

A short ways into the close water filled passage was a "Y", the mainstream going to the left and a side passage, itself of impressive size, with the sound of water falling, to the right. There are too many reasons to mention here that led to my gut decision to pursue the lesser of the two passages first, but among them were the mainstream's tendency to sump up this way, and my personal hunch that the right hand branch was more apt to send us in a northerly direction. Surface topographical maps showed that the cave was almost into a ridge to the north that extended many miles, up into Minnesota and towards a large sinkhole complex southwest of the town of Harmony. Passage in this direction would seem to hold a greater long term prospect of "going".

A tight horizontal squeeze into the right side of this very wide "Y" passage put us in a room where the water dropped less than a foot, creating the enticing sound that helped lure me this way. Past this room was easy back kicking and hands and knees crawlway that soon gave way to stoop walking passage. Larry was a little more that disappointed that we weren't into "bore hole", but allowed me my whim of continuing. When he tired, he encouraged me to go on and take my time. I imagine that he figured it would peter out quickly and we could go on to the big stuff of mainstream.

I didn't go all that far before the cave turned to walking passage, but I was out of earshot of Larry and driven on by the ever increasing size of the cave. Formations were spaced sporadically along the way, but the most impressive encounters were two rooms of a magnitude unlike anything else in CWC. For fear of blowing things out of proportion, I won't even hazard a guess at their size. We'll have to wait until they're surveyed to pass that info along. There is a possibility of upper level leads in these rooms. I came across a fracture zone, also unlike anything I have yet seen in CWC. There was a side passage, obscured by breakdown, with a waterfall spilling down several feet from it, not to forget a couple real freaky breakdown areas. There was a right hand side passage of walking size, off of this right hand passage, that I pushed just far enough to be sure it wasn't an illusion. I intended to walk 'til I came to any formidable feature that would be an unmistakable landmark on a subsequent trip. I was tired of walking by the time I reached a waterfall pouring through a breakdown pile from 10' or 12' above the level I was in. I started to climb it, but my better judgement got the better of me and I turned to walk out.

Having previously been subjected to flights of fancy in determining the extent of a find, I went at things only somewhat more scientifically this time. 500 paces averaging 32" brought me back to the right hand side passage, 300 more got me back to the stoop walk. Here I picked up Larry and informed him as to the extent of the find so far, while counting off 100 equal paces. 276 "paces" of 14" got us back through the crawlway and into the little waterfall room, which was about 30' long. A 12' squeeze put us in line with the mainstream passage, which I then pushed far enough to get out of the Tuna Sea type conditions to see that it "went" stoop walking. I counted 27-6' body lengths back from here to the room before Three Dive Sump. This room was approximately 30' and the sump around 10', the Deceptive Room

was about 40' long. This translates to 3006' of virgin cave, not counting the right hand lead that I didn't step off or the previously penetrated Scandawhovian Sumps, which are over 50' through. There are 3 going leads, and if the mainstream grows in proportion the the right hand branch that was pushed, we may really be into something!

Being long overdue on the surface demanded that we retreat. The trip back was uneventful, except for the numerous rest stops to catch a few quick zzzs before a chill would push us on. It was with a great sigh of relief that we finally cleared the Spong Syphon, and were "home free". A lot of trudging later we were at the shaft. 16 hours and 13 minutes after entering this demanding wetsuit cave, of which well over 10 hours were spent almost totally immersed, two zombies reentered the land of the living. (Much to the relief of the people on the surface who had not been informed as to the existence of passage beyond the Scandawhovian Sumps.)

Larry said that this was by far the most technical caving he had ever done, including his experience in multi-drop pits. It was easily more technical than the original diving that led to the discovery of CWC, as Jagnow and Barnett were using common sense, guess work and guts. They didn't have access to the knowledge and state of the art scuba gear we now have, thanks to pioneering efforts like theirs.

The next logical step is to attempt a dig in a pinched out passage paralleling the Spong Syphon in the hopes of bypassing it, now that we know that such a project will be worth the effort. It might be possible to lower the stream level through digging also. All of the sumps discovered so far beyond it, now have permanent hand lines installed. Though this area will still be inaccessible to the faint of heart or those with any phobias about water, anyone dedicated enough to do a few intense breath hold dives will be able to assist in surveying and pushing the more than promising leads in this, Iowa's biggest and still growing cave.

We had missed the feast put on by Kenny and Wanda Flatland, the landowners of CWC, regularly each June. We had missed the North County Region's summer meeting, held here, where I was elected editor of its quarterly publication, in my absence. We had missed a lot of sleep. However I would not have missed the opportunity to push out this lead for anything. The wait for the water to drop far enough to allow us in were very trying on the patience. I can't begin to thank Larry enough for the things I learned from him and for his trust and faith in my belief in my ability to take on this trip without formal cave diving training. Some will say that this trip was full of needless risks, maybe. Almost all aspects, though, were carried out "according to the book". If a novice had never been allowed to attempt anything like this in the first place, there would only be dry cavers today, and a lot of cave left undiscovered.

June 20, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshek County: Larry Welch, Beth Patel, Dick Ames

It was party month, so a lot of folks were looking for a tour guide. Neither Dick nor Beth had been downstream past the Gallery, so the Monument-Wellpipe tour was given. A couple of tour variations were involved. One was a dig about 100 feet into Guardian Fangs Passage. This just turned out to be a little grotto of the passage cut off by a mud bank that reached the ceiling. I also took the group to the end of Monument Passage. Bryan Bain has placed his initials at the far point of penetration for any "sprouts"

to shoot at.

We finished the tour by following the Windmill (Wellpipe) passage to Cascade, then going upstream via Dead Coon Passage. Along the way everyone visited Mud Cone Dome. After rejoining the main passage we made a beeline for the shaft.

June 20, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County: Warren Netherton, Brian Bain, Kris Licursi

Kris and I were all fired up to get into Coldwater. I well remembered the beautiful slide show I had seen about 10 years before on Iowa's finest. Finally the time had arrived. As newcomers to the grotto, I had called up Chairman Bounk a couple weeks earlier and asked about the meetings and caving in the area. He told me that June was an excellent month for an introduction to Coldwater and gave me directions to the cave. Thus, Friday evening Kris and I were hunched over my scrawled directions while parked at the intersection of a couple gravel roads trying to figure out whether to turn right or left. A little while later Brian was greeting us at the encampment.

The next morning we geared up and entered the cave with Brian as our leader. It was an ideal trip for us. Lots of time to look around and ask questions about the cave. We went downstream through the Gallery, past the Guardian Fangs Passage, up the Wellpipe Passage and looped back around to the mainstream and out. At one point Brian took us back in the Monument Passage to dig for a short while. Brian went under the ledge, dug a while and then Kris checked it out. I assumed a comfortable position on the mud bank and observed.

A real nice trip, this one. It was, as Mike Bounk said, a good introduction to Coldwater and also provided the opportunity to meet many cavers in the area. Kris and I left looking forward to our next return visit.

June 27, 1987; APRIL CAVE

Winneshiek County: Beth Patel, Doug Schmuecker, Dave Richardson

We entered the cave about 10AM....quite refreshing! Dave headed the party, carbide lamp burning bright. With all the water splashing, it soon was extinguished. We backed out toward the entrance to an area we could stand in, while he relit his lamp. Then Doug lead us in. (Dave's light went out again and he opted to use an electric one for a while)

Everyone enjoyed the water passage-we were able to float through part of it. There were plenty of "rest areas", too. The crawling passage finally gave way to stoop-walking, which quickly became upright-walking passage. And then began the pretty part of the cave.

Larry Welch, Mike Lace and Mike Bounk were within voice distance behind us. We passed the 'Bishop's Toilet' and continued past 'Lester's Falls'. Larry caught up with us about 'Eddy's Falls'. He delivered my lost stocking cap that had floated downstream. The number of cave formations were on the increase.

We continued toward the 'Boom Room'. Mike Nelson, Gary Engh and Warren Netherton were ahead of us a way. We explored the 'Boom Room' and headed upstream 15 minutes further, dodging forests of gorgeous stalactites, soda straws,... WOW!

After we caught up with Gary Engh's group, we turned around and headed out of the cave, taking time to break for a rest in the 'Boom Room'. Dave explored a muddy lead and then we left.

We passed Larry, Mike L. and Mike B. on the way out. Exit time from the cave was about 1PM.

June 27, 1987; APRIL CAVE

Winneshiek County: Mike Lace, Mike Bounk, Larry Welch

Mike, Larry and I entered the cave at approximately 9:30 am. intending to survey the Lake Passage which starts at the end of Lester Falls Passage. After we entered Lester Falls Passage and advanced 100-150', we realized that the water level was 3-4" above normal, leaving only 5" or less of air-space to survey in. The stream was moving fast and taking a good share of our body heat with it. Luckily, Larry and I had put our wet hoods on before entering the crawlway, but even that could not keep us from getting chilled. We turned around before reaching the T (where the Lake Passage begins) and exited Lester Falls.

We then continued upstream to the Boom Room where Mike Bounk decided to wait while Larry and I went to the Black Slime Sewer Passage to take a better look at an upper chimney we had spotted on a previous trip. Larry and I each took a turn climbing the chimney, but could only advance 9-10' before being stopped by the mud-covered walls and a steep mud slope above us. We could see a small room above the mud slope and a large dead flow-stone column. We decided that we could climb into it (with difficulty) but a controlled descent would be unlikely. Perhaps a rope slung around the column could be used. Larry quickly checked the back portion of the sewer and concluded that a small crawlway on the right probably leads to a dome and that the corner at the end of the Sewer needs to be pushed--active water noises could be heard beyond the low sharp turn. We returned to the Boom Room and the three of us exited the cave.

At the end of the day a group of us examined a sinkhole in the field above the cave. A dry wash leads into a narrow crevice that winds sharply downward and one can hear a rock drop and roll an undefined distance. I declined Lowell Burkhead's offer to tamp me into the crevice with a fence-post if I happened to get stuck. No one made a serious effort to enter the crevice so we decided to save it for the next trip which is tentatively scheduled for the first weekend of September.



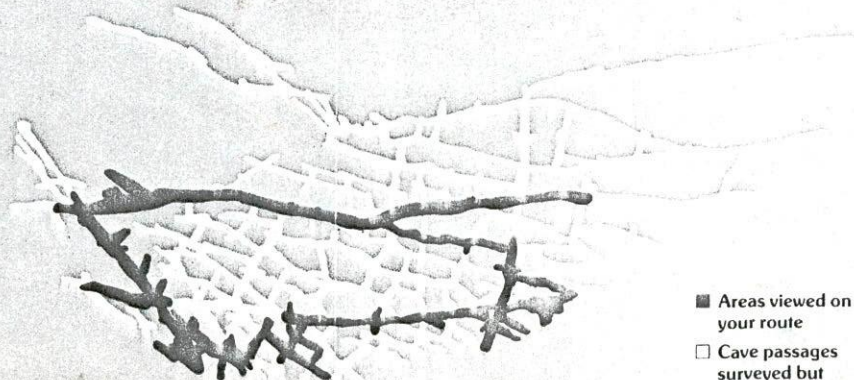
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The Spring
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Injun Joe's Canoe
McDowel Chamber
Submarine



- Areas viewed on your route
- Cave passages surveyed but not toured

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