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IOWA GROTTO

INTERCOM



July / August 1987

Vol. 23 No. 4

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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: BEACH PARTY IN COLD WATER CAVE !

From left to right are frolicking Iowa Grotto cavers Brian Bain, Larry Welch, and Mike Lace. Photo by Steve Moon.

This issue was produced by guest editor Larry Welch, who has promised to upgrade his usual shoddy editing job to produce a quality publication in the INTERCOM tradition. Trip reports will supercede editorial indulgences due to space limitations. Just the facts, ma'am.

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IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

July 22, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 by Chairman Mike Bounk, 12 members were present. Minutes were read and approved, followed by a brief Treasurer's report.

Old Business

Bryan Bain has written notes for self-guided tours of several Iowa caves to be viewed during the Hodag Hunt. Included are Decorah Ice, Indian Bluff, and Duttons Cave.

New Business

Warren Netherton brought up the Federal Cave Protection Act, and it was suggested that we barrage our congressman with letters supporting the act.

The U.S. Park Service has contacted Mike Bounk about making Coldwater Cave a National Natural Landmark. We will receive a written copy of the proposal shortly, followed by a 60 day period of public comment. This should not affect caving at Coldwater in theory.

Greg McCarty noted that those interested in the clean-up of Decorah Ice Cave should check the November 1976 issue of the NSS NEWS for restoration tips.

A DES MOINES SUNDAY REGISTER had some ads for caving trips listed. Mentioned in particular was Hunter's Cave. Greg McCarty offered to find who is leading and sponsoring these trips.

Trip Reports

Greg McCarty and Gary Engh checked out some leads in the silurian near Wadena on July 4. A number of crevice caves were located, one sporting a nice Colonial Coral.

Larry Welch and Stacey Cyphert reviewed their trip to Grappling Falls in Coldwater Cave. The waterfall was tied into the Mud Canyon survey and Bryan Bain climbed the falls to find about 600 feet of virgin cave. Mike Bounk reported on upstream work in Coldwater spearheaded by Mike Nelson. About 450 feet of passage was mapped on that trip.

Steve Moon gave details of his trip to Kemling Cave with Rudy Pruszko. Steve was impressed by the formations and the extent of the cave.

Warren Netherton reported on his trip to the mainstream sump in April Cave. Mike Nelson free dove the sump but didn't find airspace. The possibility of lowering the water level at the sump was discussed. Mike Lace and Larry Welch reported on 2 Floyd County trips during the month.

Future Trips

A trip to April Cave is scheduled for August 29.

August 26, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:42 by Chairman Mike Bounk; 10 members were present. Minutes from the previous meeting were read and

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approved. Following this, a treasurer's report was given.

Old Business

The first order of business was to review the upcoming Hodag Hunt. The trip to Yew Ridge is off, and no vertical caving is planned. However, the Grotto's vertical gear will be brought in case it is needed. Trip options will include guided tours in Fayette, Floyd, and Dubuque counties and self-guided tours to Skunk and Decorah Ice Caves. The headquarters of the activity will be at the Spook Cave Campground near McGregor.

No accident report on the Miller's Cave incident has been submitted at present. Chairman Bounk will produce a report and send it to the NSS in the near future.

Some problems have with the grotto mailbox have resulted in it being closed for much of the summer, and some items were returned to sender. The mailbox has been reopened just prior to the meeting, and we will attempt to avoid repeating this unfortunate incident.

New Business

It was mentioned that officer elections will be coming up in the near future. Ballots will be sent out in November and votes will be counted at the December meeting.

Trip Reports

Steve Moon reported on a trip to Exhaustion Crevice in Jackson County, which was shown to him by a local man. A 25 foot drop was negotiated with the help of a cable ladder, from there the cave sloped down to a depth of 50 feet. Past a squeeze there is a small room and some formations.

Mike Lace reported on some Kentucky caving he did with Stacey Cyphert and Bryan Bain. Included were trips to Pine Hill Cave, the Sloans Valley System, Sinks of the Roundstone, and Across the Road Cave.

Larry Welch reported on Coldwater activities, which included placing a dive line through the Spong Siphon and a survey trip to Critter Pass near the Beaver Boneyard.

Mike Lace reported on Floyd County activity, including the survey of Wilson Cave. Loren Schutt described some excavation he and Mike Bounk did in a nearby sinkhole on the same trip. Noted also was an inquiry to the owner of this property from the DEQ concerning his sinkholes.

Future Trips

The trip to April Cave was rescheduled to September 5 to accomodate the plans of more cavers. Meeting adjourned at 9:23.

TRIP REPORTS

Wagon Wheel Cave, Falling Spring Cave, Middlestat Cave, Duttons Cave.
Fayette County, May 9-10, 1987; Mike Nelson, Bryan Bain, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson

Bryan arrived here shortly after noon and we set off almost immediately for Fayette Co. and Dutton's Cave County Park. We set up

camp and had a quick snack, then got down to the serious business of caving.

Leaving Delores and Aaron at Dutton's to entertain themselves, Bryan and I took the short scenic drive to the caves we had been working on. Falling Spring had provided us with adequate challenges in the past, being so tight that under normal conditions the water would build up in front of the caver as he entered, filling the passage and forcing his retreat. In February of '86, the water was low enough that Bryan became the first person to enter in past the fork, squirming in a couple of hundred feet, until he was eventually stopped by a breakdown block in the middle of the stream bed. Venturing back up this left fork again in July of the same year, we removed a few nubs from the floor and over a square foot of "dead rock" an inch thick from the ceiling. This allowed us to detour around the slab and continue another sixty feet upstream. Here the horizontal passage turned into a vertical crevice which ended in a high unstable lead and a low water passage. The high lead ended in a collapse, as if under a small sink. The water lead had a large breakdown slab on the floor and a larger one securely wedged above it. Bryan squeezed between these to where he could see that it might have possibilities, but the attempt would have to be made wearing a minimum of clothing and after hammering out some more nubs. We were driven on by a hydrological experiment of Mike Bounk's. He had once introduced a quantity of corn cobs into Wagon Wheel Cave which were expelled from Falling Spring a short time later. Wagon Wheel had been surveyed downstream about 300' to a sump, which was shown to be within 300' of the entrance to Falling Spring, when laid out on a topo map. We had to be close, so we decided to pursue things upstream this time.

Wagon Wheel was once a growing sinkhole in a ditch. The farmer whose topsoil was running off into it was sharp enough to use it instead of fighting it. He set a culvert vertically on the crevice in the bedrock, the top of which was level with the ditch. Filling in the sink, he then had a natural storm sewer. The old iron wagon wheel placed over the culvert as a grate gave this cave its popular name.

We used Bryan's new ascending gear to enter and exit this shaft, giving us varied experience on the same equipment. We readied the rope and gear while I dug the wheel free of the dirt that had accumulated around its edges over the years.

The 20' drop in was easy enough after getting the hang of using the ascenders in reverse. We lit out downstream through some crawlway, some walking passage, and one eardipper of a low spot, before resuming reasonable hands and knees and belly crawling cave. There were occasional formations of flowstone and stalactites and nicely spaced ceiling joints. The further we went the shakier these ceiling joints looked, there was a lot of clay showing in the cracks. In the last one at the end of the survey, we found an upper level lead, and an unsumped sump. Bryan took the high road and I took the low road. His lead ended within 25' at a heap as the upper one in Falling Spring had. I was in a horizontal slot that I had to scoop a channel in the mud in to proceed. 35' into it I came up against a breakdown slab and just enough room to rise out of the water and peer into the far reaches of Falling Spring Cave! The slot Bryan had squeezed into last July looked bigger and

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certainly more worthwhile pushing from this perspective, but the door to door trip ~~was~~ snagged on the same nubbins that had impeded Bryan on his first peek into this connection area. Cavers coming from each direction could have touched heads, but the real reward in this visually connected system awaits the day that we can do a little wanking with a hammer and/or a little smaller caver comes along. Still, we were pleased as could be.

There is still a lot of opportunity left in this tight, short, challenging system: the door to door trip, the right hand passage of Falling Spring, the survey to tie it all together, and finishing the survey upstream from the entrance of Wagon Wheel. We inspected that portion of the cave before climbing out. Bryan picked up the gear and I replaced and reburied the wheel to look as we had found it.

Back at camp we had supper, after which we hung the rope over a stout tree limb and Bryan gave Aaron a lesson in using the ascenders in the manner which we had used at the cave. We then burned up a great deal of firewood before retiring for the evening.

Sunday we awoke to a warm, clear, beautiful day. We wandered, at our leisure, over to Middlestat Cave. Bryan had not yet seen it and I wanted some pictures of it. This cave is interesting in that it is on the collecting end of the drainage system as opposed to the outlet end that I've more commonly dealt with. Back at Dutton's Cave, we rigged the rope over the cliff above the cave and Bryan and I each took a couple of turns rappelling off of it.

We had whiled away too much time to accomplish anything up to the Brunsvold Caves as we had intended to do. Instead we stopped by an acquaintance of mine in Hawkeye to get details on some cave leads he had once mentioned. He told us of a cave that exists near the cemetery in the nearly nonexistent town of Gouldsberg. We did not manage to find the berg, let alone the cemetery or the cave. We intend to spend more time in this area yet this summer, though, and will search for it again.

April Cave, Winneshiek County

June 27, 1987; Warren Netherton, Gary Engh, Mike Nelson

At 10:00 am Saturday morning, Gary (trip leader), Mike and I entered April Cave to check out the mainstream sump. After arriving at the sump, Mike donned a mask and wetsuit hood. He made several dives, progressing a little further each time while Gary assisted by holding the line or Mike's feet. A little time was spent between dives waiting for sediment, which was stirred up during the process, to settle out.

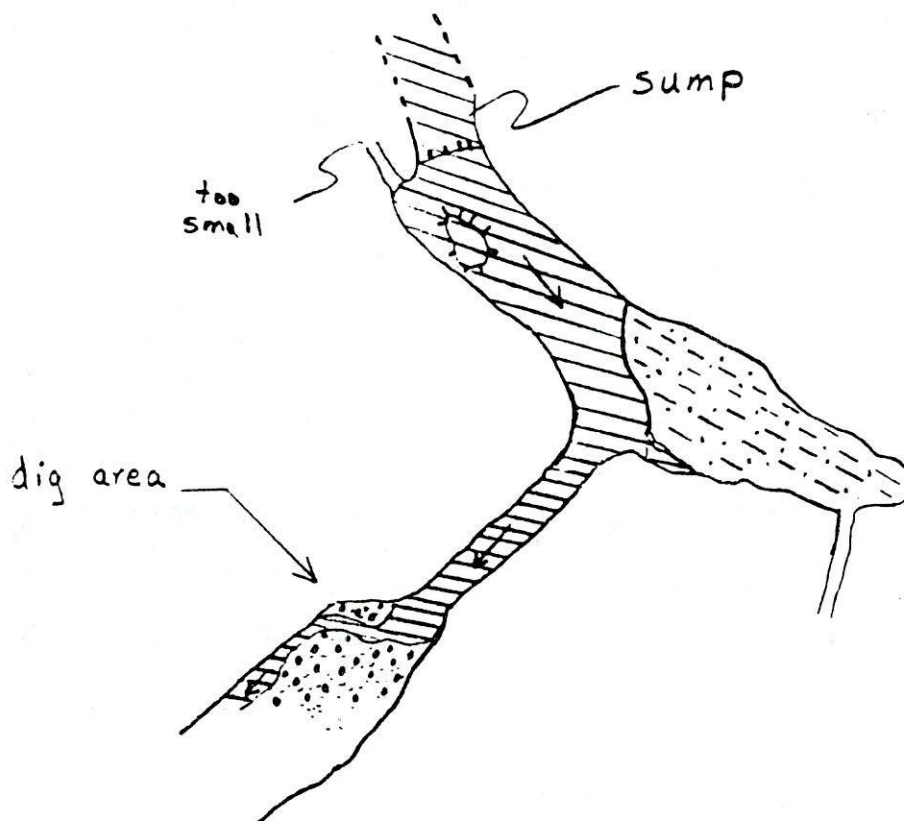
The waterfilled passage is approximately 18" high and perhaps 6 feet wide. During the furthest dive, Mike could see an area about 17 feet beyond the sump ledge. It appeared to be more of the same. In this 17 foot section the passage first seems to gradually slope downward, because a definite 4 to 5 inch ceiling rise further along didn't have air.

I climbed up a dome a few feet downstream from the sump. None of us knew for certain if it had been checked out previously or if it went.

It had and it didn't.

Next we began digging the stream channel deeper at a point about 60 feet downstream from the dive site. Here the stream flows over a gravel bar which backs up water all the way to the sump. The only digging tools we had were the rocks themselves. Although the gravel and cobbles are well packed, they aren't cemented together. I estimate the area we spent most of our time on is trenched down 6"-8" over an 8 foot expanse. This lowered the pool about 3" at the sump. Several of the rocks excavated are rounded chunks of speleothems, presumably stalactites which were once affixed somewhere upstream of the sump.

After the digging project we adjusted our kneepads and exited without incident.



James Cave, Edmonson County (Kentucky)

July 3-4, 1987; Bryan Bain, Esso Grotto members

While the other group entered the man-made Foot Dome Entrance, ours proceeded through the Historic Entrance. There are seven known entrances with the Historic Entrance being the main one. It was a very easy trip to the dig site, following the old commercial trails most of the way. They explained that James Cave is a winter hibernation home to over a quarter million bats including endangered species. At Dyer's Dome, one could hear numerous bats squeaking on the ceiling. I was warned not

to look up as this was a "bat room" for bats and those drops of liquid falling down was not plain water. At the dig site, we organized a bucket brigade, switching as the person digging got tired. Lots of progress was made that afternoon with the digging being relatively easy. Afterwards we toured more of the cave, mostly following the old commercial trails. Several interesting and historical features were pointed out including a small taste of the Left Maze. After departing the cave, we took turns showering, the resort has generously given the cavers access to one room complete with a real bathroom and a shower. A welcome luxury that I'm not used to, but was quick to get spoiled by it. Then we made a pilgrimage to the local Pizza Hut for food and some arm chair caving. Before retiring for the evening, there was a joke-a-thon around the campfire.

Saturday (the 4th) found more cavers returning to dig beyond Dyer's Dome. Instead, I joined Drew Packman and his girlfriend Sandy on a trip to check the results of the shot they placed at the bottom of Big Black Pit the day before. I was a little uneasy about the entrance drop into Foot Dome, a 90 foot free rappel, since I've never made a in-cave drop that long before. Drew was very patient and assured me that I could do it without any problem. It was quite the rush for me as I slid down this impressive dome. We continued on to Big Black Pit and dropped to the bottom of it. This was much shorter but little was free. At the bottom we cleared out some loose rocks and squeezed into a going virgin passage. Damn, after only 15 feet it pinched down to a hopeless rathole drain. Scratch off one more lead. On the way back, I was shown the tyrolean traverse across Premier Pit. I had carefully memorized the route, so when I led us back to the entrance, I made every turn correctly thus saving myself from the embarrassment of getting lost. The 90 foot climb back to the surface seemed to have had grown to about 190 feet, but I made it okay. I did note a few changes that need made to my climbing set-up before I try another long drop, mostly just for comfort.

I had a family reunion on Sunday that I had to attend, so this cut my weekend short. I said goodbye to my fantastic new caving friends who made me promise to return on Labor Day.

Wilson Caves, Floyd County

July 4, 1987; Stacey Cyphert, Mike Lace, Beth Patel, Larry Welch

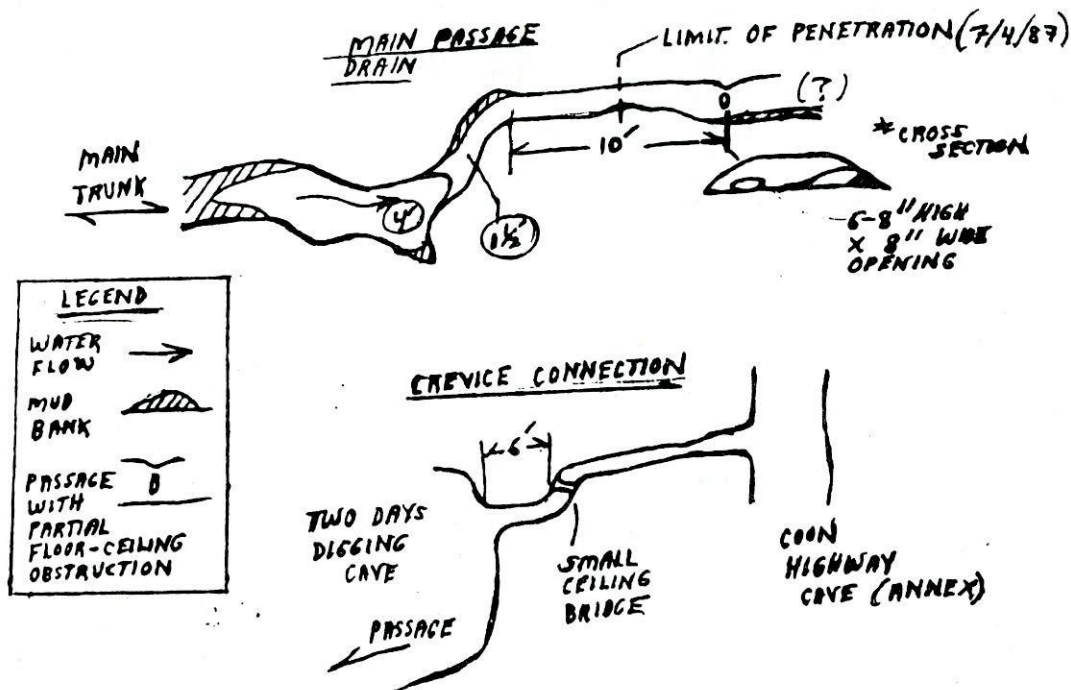
Independence Day was celebrated bravely searching out and exploring caves in Floyd county. The first stop was a legendary sinkhole just east of Charles City that had been visited years ago by Mike Bounk. This sinkhole, located by the side of a local road, is the terminal point of what is now a dry creek bed. The sinkhole was choked with branches and rocks and we could not feel

any air flow so we decided to save its excavation for a later date.

The next stop was Bill Wilson's farm. Bill had been burning some of the long grass in one of his fields and exposed several small sinkholes. Mike and I wanted to show Beth and Larry the boulder-moving digging project we were part of two weeks ago, and since the new sinkholes were on the way, we stopped and did a little digging. We didn't break into anything so after checking out the digging project, Mike, Larry, and I went to push the downstream lead in Two-Days Digging Cave. This lead drains the entire cave (and the Coon Highway annex). Several coffee cans of mud were removed but more work still needs to be done to reach a small drain where the digging potential can be reassessed (see attached map). Mike and Larry briefly attempted to exit the cave through the Coon Highway connection but the passage remains unpenetrated.

Larry and Mike then checked out Mike Nelson's work in Hemp Hole. They moved several rocks in the lead to the left and report that it looks like the floor appears to drop slightly ahead of where they were able to reach. This lead too is worthy of more investigation.

Upon returning to the farm house, Bill Wilson suggested that we check out the new sinkholes again because he planned to remove them next week. A new promising lead was discovered and several hours of hard work was invested in the still smoldering sinkhole. Our lungs are probably black from the soot. Bill helped us remove a huge rock by bringing chains and first a tractor and then later a bulldozer to the dig site. Darkness closed in as the rock was moved to reveal only more rock. Mike and I headed back to Iowa City while Beth and Larry went to Charles City for the fireworks.



Hellhole, Pendleton County (West Virginia)
July 10, 1987; Bryan Bain, Charleston Grotto members

While at the Charleston Grotto's July meeting, I met Rex Elkins. He's very much into the vertical aspect of caving and showed me a slick little modification for my Mitchell ascending set-up. Basically you just add a Kevlar cord to the upper ascender and run it down to your seat harness. Any strong webbing or cord will work but Kevlar, used mostly by rock climbers, is extremely small and light weight with a breaking strength equivalent of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch cable. This extra cord not only gives you a safety line in case of the unlikely event of the upper ascender sling breaking or coming loose, but mainly is used to provide a good resting position for longer climbs. The Mitchell System is very versatile, simple and allows quick on and off rope capabilities. One disadvantage is the lack of a resting position. With Rex's modification, you now can just lean back and let your seat harness take most of the weight, thus resting the legs. I jumped at the offer when asked if I wanted to go on a trip with him this weekend to one of West Virginia's classic vertical caves, Hellhole. The only catch was, that I would have to drive.

I picked up Rex at his place on Friday evening (July 10, 1987), and we proceeded on the long drive to Pendleton County. "You can't get there from here" is the common saying in West Virginia. The drive to the Germany Valley area is no exception, however, the beautiful scenery along the way made up for the four hour drive. By coincidence, that is about the same amount of driving time from Grimes, Iowa to Coldwater Cave. Schoolhouse Cave, another classic, is only about a mile from Hellhole on the same road. Last year's newly discovered Extention in Hellhole is trending that direction, giving some hope to a possible future connection. I was shown the entrance of Schoolhouse but this cave is closed year-round at this time. Hellhole is closed in the winter months due to hibernating endangered species of bats. Hellhole is a popular cave and this weekend was no exception. Three other groups were already camped out in the area. We rigged the middle entrance of this 155 foot drop with our rope being the third line in. By the next day after breakfast, there was a total of seven ropes rigged, most of which went down the smaller center hole. Rex complained that it was a bit crowded with that many ropes, but there wasn't much we could do.

We joined up with three Virginia cavers that Rex knew. They had brought wet suits for the trip into the new Extention. Apparently the big flood of 1985 had opened a silt plug in the passage below Little Hellhole Pit. Over two miles of virgin passages were mapped there last summer, bringing the total length of Hellhole to about 4.5 miles. Rex and I took plastic bags with the idea of stripping out of our clothes at the pool, which is supposed to be about 10 to 15 feet long, then putting our dry clothes back on. I was really regretting not bringing my wet suit along at this point. When my turn to rappel down the entrance came up, I whipped out my Lowell Burkhead Safety Rack, threaded it onto the rope and nervously backed over the

edge. This was my longest rappel ever, but my apprehensions disappeared as the rack responded beautifully and smoothly. The last 2/3's of the drop is totally free, giving one an awesome view of the huge entrance room. Sunbeams shined down from the three sinkhole entrances above, enhancing the already spectacular scene. Once on the bottom, I unhooked from the rope and felt the rack, it was barely warm. I see no problem using the Lowell Burkhead Safety Rack on a 200 foot or more drop. The others were equally impressed and also admired my carbide lamp igniter that Lowell had designed and made. After everyone had reached the bottom, we regrouped and proceeded to Little Hellhole, a 45 foot pit in which we rigged and dropped. By now, this drop was nothing, in fact, I was beginning to really enjoy bouncing down pits. After a short hike then a short crawl, we arrived at the pool. There was only 4 to 6 inches of airspace for about 10 feet then you were out of the water and into huge trunk passage. Rex and I looked at this and decided it was too crazy to do without wet suits. The three Virginia cavers continued on, while Rex and I turned around and went back out. Later, the Virginia cavers admitted that they got cold, even with wet suits and wished they had worn hoods.

While climbing out of Little Hellhole, I got a bit of experience in negotiating an over-hanging lip, but made it without too much trouble. The next major obstacle was the climb from the entrance room to the surface. With my new resting sling set-up, it seemed easier than the 90 foot climb out of James Cave that I had made the week before. One other advantage is that you can remove the upper ascender foot sling and disconnect the main rope from the chest harness, thus easily converting from the Mitchell to the Texas climbing system. This can even be done on-rope in case of a very difficult lip or over-hang that may prove almost impossible with the Mitchell system.

After getting out of our caving gear, we headed to a nearby restaurant to chow down. Then we saw some of the local sights, including Seneca Rocks (rock climbers paradise) and the swimming hole (a deep section of the North Fork South Branch Potomac River). Back at camp we relaxed, spoke to some of the other cavers and tipped a couple of brews. The Virginia cavers got out late and told us tales of huge rooms, booming passages and beautiful crystal formations. Rex and I vowed to return in a few weeks with proper equipment to tour this newest and relatively untouched area. Apparently there are several leads that still need some checking. You can bet your caving boots, I'm going back to Hellhole again.

Two Days Digging Cave, Floyd County
July 12, 1987; Mike Lace, Larry Welch

Larry and I entered Two Days Digging Cave toting wetsuit jackets and a variety of digging implements. We had every intention of opening the drain at the end of the main passage at any reasonable cost. Larry

wore his wet jacket as he squeezed past the initial crevice and into the "pinch" of the entry crawl where he damn near got stuck. I had packaged my jacket in a garbage bag with a bit of rope and pushed the bundle in front of me. We concluded that both methods are annoying and that a canvas bag and a tow line would work well along with a little troweling to open the "pinch". We reached the drain and began taking shifts at digging and filling a coffee can that was passed back and forth. There's barely enough room to pass the one pound can past the body to the person behind but this system seemed to work well. We advanced to the point where an outcrop of cave wall makes it too tight on the right. We concentrated on lowering the floor and removing a large mud bank just inside the crawlway on the left -- this should make future efforts with a wet jacket easier. After three hours of squirming in this lovely hole we decided to exit but we still believe that this is a very promising lead that's worth the effort. After getting ourselves reasonably clean we took a look at a deep sinkhole across the road in one of Bill's fields. It had exposed bedrock and a little rubble on the floor that could easily be moved.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

July 18, 1987; Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund, Sue Ecklund, Bill Nelson, Doug Schmuecker, In: 11:30 AM, Out: 1:15 AM

We returned to the find beyond "Beyond Tuna Sea" and and the Scandawhovan Sumps to survey. We had poor communications through this sump area and have left it hanging for next time. So we all gathered on the far side of 3 Dive Sump and pushed off towards the main stream virgin lead.

Resting and reorganizing in a small finely decorated passage, Sue moved to the front and asked, with big eyes, "is this virgin cave?" Pleased with the affirmative answer, she sat down with the rest of us, popped open a can of pudding, and admitted to one and all that she was giving in to a craving brought on by that condition that has worked quite well all these years for propagating our species. We were quite slow to get her drift, but when we did, laughter filled what we now call the "Pregnant Pause Passage". Dave had been hinting for the whole trip that there were six team members along, and we all felt sooo slow.

Unfortunately our walk down virgin cave was cut short by "The End Again" sump, but not before the cave had surprised us by running through 2 right angle turns. It was headed almost due south at the sump! There was an air space within reach of a probe with my feet, a gut feeling made me put off ducking under though. We had doffed our scuba gear in the room before the "Y" in the passage and I didn't have my mask which I feel is essential for first time breath hold dives, even if they are short. I had felt all along that the potential in this area was for passage running north-north-west, this turn of events though, shows that maybe the cave

will parallel Coldwater Creek's westerly trend on the surface above this point, before heading off in that direction again. Running under the creek or continuing pretty directly west under the ridge are both possibilities. Isn't caving exciting?

We surveyed back from this sump to the room we had left our gear in, then shot one sighting back through the right side of the "Y" and set a station in the little waterfall room in the right hand side passage. 423.4' of survey was added to CWC this trip, I believe we left around 100' hanging in the sumps and rooms upstream of each, to be picked up first thing next trip.

At this point we were cooling off and headed up this as yet unnamed right hand passage to warm up and explore further. As it was though, I got the opportunity to eat humble pie. I had tried so hard to be objective about what I had seen on my first trip in here, I wish Larry Laine, who made that trip possible, had come all the way with me to help me keep a level head. Everyone agreed that my estimate of distance was within reason, but the relative sizes and uniqueness of some of the features was found to be a bit off. The huge rooms, estimated to be 65' tall, and the crevass area both have counterparts in the far eastern reaches of the cave, in the area of the Bat Room.

We were dropping off members of our expedition along the way for one reason or another and again I got to the breakdown that had been the point of deepest penetration on the initial trip alone. Climbing it I realized another observational error. It did not continue on an upper level, but was actually an extensive breakdown room. I climbed the pile carefully, proceeding across what felt under foot like a 12' deep pile of broken chalk boards, and gave great caution to the slabs hanging precariously from the walls. This was a far scarier experience for me than anything I had yet done in sumps. I did not climb down the far side of the room, but the cave did continue on, near its original base level.

Bill was at the other side of the breakdown when I returned. We regathered the rest of the party on the way back, rested some, then made for the surface, too late for pizza.

We learned many a valuable lesson in regard to air assist caving, which is a more appropriate name for what we are doing, than cave diving per se. Mainly to do with the packing and transportation of gear. All of the main elements of cave diving were religiously adhered to. The sumps all have hand lines. Our experience has shown the need for some rerigging, this is at the top of the priority list. We all had either "Y" valves with dual regulators or two independent air sources. The multiple back up lights were nice to have, but mostly for psychological security, they were practically worthless after the first diver passed through each sump. We pushed the 1/3 air rule to the absolute limit, next time we may have to allocate equipment according to individual air consumption unless familiarity with this environment will reduce demands. The Spong Siphon had as much air space as I had seen to date and was excellent for "dry runs"

for the team members who were all as new to this this month as I was a month ago. The hand lines, and knowing that all the sumps are short enough to pass through on a single breath, provide a great deal of confidence, but sitting here typing this up and noting the potential for problems, it certainly gives me the willies. Like cave divers, per se, we are highly dependent upon our equipment, but the ultimate back up is each individuals confidence in their abilities and judgement in any given emergency. In this light I have no doubt whatsoever that this team is capable of safely pushing out Coldwater Cave in this new direction that it is leading us.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

July 18, 1987; Bryan Bain, Larry Welch, Stacey Cyphert

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980's, Gary Engh, Gwenne (Glasser) Hayes, Barry Schuman and others, discovered/explored/surveyed about 1½ miles of passages in Coldwater Cave. This section is sometimes called the "New Cascade" area because it is found off from Cascade Passage. This includes the Pig Trough, Wanda's Walkway and Mud Canyon. A waterfall was discovered at the end of all this with a good lead located at the top. On one trip, Gary tied a knot onto some webbing and managed to wedge it between a couple of rocks at the top with a lucky toss. Aided by this handline, he climbed to the top and observed that the passage continued on over a lot of breakdown. The trip out to this waterfall is extremely physically taxing with one spot in Wanda's Walkway with low airspace that is potentially sump prone during heavy run-off periods. This, in addition to the tricky climb over the rushing waterfall, dampened enthusiasm for return trips. However, Gary was determined to try and overcome these odds. After a few years of stagnation, new blood began pumping life back into the Coldwater Cave Project and interest in pushing beyond the waterfall formed again as Gary recruited some of this "new blood". But first we needed a way to rig a rope. The idea of a grappling hook was tossed around. Lowell Burkehead then designed and built a compact, strong, folding grappling hook for this purpose. A length of Bluewater rope had already been carried to the waterfall on a previous trip, so Gary Engh, Larry Welch and myself set out on a rope hanging mission during the Coldwater Cave weekend in February. On the way we extended the survey to within about 200 feet of the waterfall, then rigged the rope by attaching the grappling hook and throwing it over the falls. The hook lodged securely on the third toss but we had not brought any ascending gear. Another long grueling trip would be necessary. In May of 1987, three months later, we started out again but aborted part way into the trip. Plans were made to go in June instead. During the June weekend, Gary was unable to get away from home plus the threat of rain cancelled our plans.

THE BREAKTHROUGH

The third weekend of July, 1987. Gary was unable to make it to CWC again, but had apparently told Larry to go ahead, if it seemed feasible. I talked to Pete DeVries, Project Coordinator, who also gave us the go ahead. Wishing Gary was leading the trip, but not knowing when we would get another chance,

I decided to try and push the waterfall. I persuaded Larry Welch and Stacey Cyphert into joining me. Our objectives were to set some dye tracing "bugs" on the way for Betty Wheeler, survey at least into the waterfall room, climb to the top of the waterfall, rig the rope better, push the lead and bring the grappling hook back. Somehow we managed to accomplish all of our goals. I even left some virgin passage for Gary since he really should have been with us. We made good time on the way out. It was Stacey's first trip into that area of Coldwater Cave, he appeared to enjoy the numerous formations along the way and was amazed at the frequency of rimstone dams in Cascade Passage. Upstream in Wanda's Walkway we went and observed to our relief that the low spot appeared to have about one inch less water than the last time Larry and I passed this way. We proceeded on to where the survey had left off and broke out the mapping gear. We netted 234.8 feet and surveyed completely into the waterfall room (2 stations are actually inside the room). We decided to name the waterfall, Grappling Falls and the room, Gary's Communication Breakdown Room due to the fact that there is a lot of breakdown and it was hard to communicate over the noise of the waterfall. In addition, Larry had been singing Led Zepplin songs along the way. I attached my ascenders and climbed up the rope. I had climbed the 155 foot entrance drop at Hellhole in West Virginia the weekend before, so I thought this 15 foot climb would be a piece of cake. Wrong, the lip at the top was extremely tricky to negotiate. Once I was finally over, we decided that Larry and Stacey would be better off not climbing it as they had less experience than me. I found the grappling hook set very securely in a crack but the web sling didn't look quite as good. I passed both of them down and rigged the rope onto a large breakdown block farther up the passage. Ideally, a couple of bolts probably should be set at the top if any more trips are planned this way. A piece of breakdown is wedged at the very top of the falls that looks a bit shaky. Maybe this should be knocked out (with nobody standing below) for added safety. I went on a quick recon into the virgin lead beyond the top of Grappling Falls. The passage started out big and tall, almost mainstream size. I had to carefully climb over a whole bunch of breakdown that in places mostly filled the passage. Future explorers beware! Some of the breakdown is unstable. Most of the ceiling appeared solid so I stayed on the largest rocks and as close to the ceiling as possible. After a couple of hundred feet or so, the breakdown thinned out to almost nothing but the passage size was down to about 8 feet wide and between 5 to 6 feet high. It continued in this manner for about another 100 feet until the passage forked.

The right fork was completely filled with breakdown. It looks like a sinkhole collapsed into the passage or something. The left fork continued for about another 100 feet or so, ending in a mud and clay fill. A smaller passage went off to the right with water flowing out of it. Passage size was about 5 foot wide by about 5 foot high. I continued this way for almost another 100 foot until reaching a small breakdown "room". It really is more of an enlargement of the passage with a ceiling of about 8 to 10 foot high. A lot of nice formations were abundant here. The water flowed out of a slot about 4 foot wide by about 2 foot high. Almost half of the passage was filled by water (wall to wall). I did not continue on but the passage did as far as I could see with little change. With that much water and air flow, the passage is bound to open up again. All figures given are very rough estimates. I'm not as good in guessing distances as I would like to be. Possibly it seemed farther to me because of all the breakdown I had to climb over initially, but I'm guessing that I went close to 500 feet of mostly virgin passage. I made my way back to Grappling Falls and found that Larry and Stacey had been inside the small passage that leads from the room. They were checking it out, hoping to find a way around the falls. The passage does go, but there is some obstructions about 50 feet in. I made it back down where I rested and gulped down a good quantity of water. Another note for future trips to this area. Take plenty of water, we were beginning to run quite low by the time we reached the shaft. Larry carried the grappling hook back out which appeared to be a hindrance for a number of reasons, especially in the crawlways. Not far from the Pig Trough, while in Cascade, we saw a bat flying around. I had heard rumors of people seeing a couple roosting up in the Bat Room crevice, but after 30 trips into Coldwater Cave, this was the first one I've had the pleasure of personally seeing. He seemed as surprised to "see" us as we were to see him. We continued to trudge our weary way out. By the time we reached Pothole Country, we were so tired that we looked like zombies moving in slow motion. Upon reaching the platform we discovered that Mike Nelson's upstream diving group had beat us by only a few minutes. They looked as exhausted as I felt. They had also pushed into more virgin and done some surveying. CWC should be over 10 1/2 miles long now with close to another mile of passages still needing to be surveyed. It was 1:00 a.m. as I pulled myself into the shack, climaxing a hard 13 hour trip.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

- Upon reaching home, I did some very rough calculations as to the depth in elevation of the area above Grappling Falls. The floor at the bottom of the shaft is known to be 1056 ft. and using the average gradient of 15 ft. per mile, taking into account the climb up at Cascade Falls, Pig Trough and Grappling Falls. Then the climb over all the breakdown at the top of Grappling Falls, should put us in the ball park of the Stewartville Member contact. This may explain all the breakdown.

Cave Spring Cave, Shannon County (Missouri)

July 22, 1987; Mike Nelson, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson

You can canoe into Cave Spring Cave for about 100', it has a floor visible 'til the last 20', where the bottom drops right out of it. One printed source says it's 155' deep and has been physically connected to Devil's Well and Wallace Well. Devils Well is a vast underground lake entered by a 90' drop through the bottom of a sinkhole. Wallace Well is in a gated cave just downstream from this cave on the Current River. Scott House, an eminent authority with whom I had corresponded in the past, and happened to meet down to Alley Springs a few days later, disputes some of this. Cave Spring drops off 135' to a level where it has been physically connected to Wallace Well and hydrologically to Devil's Well, but he assured me that the state of Missouri probably would not allow an attempt at a physical connection as it would require stage diving.

Scott also informed me that no diving is allowed in this National Scenic River System without a permit. I'll have to remember that next time I'm down there. This time I was curious just to see what it would be like to try and dive against the force of a large magnitude spring. I could not swim down 10' with flippers on! I abandoned them and scaled the wall down for 30'. The exertion of less than 10 minutes of this activity used up a 15.5 cubic foot pony tank of air.

Little Gem Cave, Shannon County (Missouri)

July 22, 1987; Mike Nelson

This was my second visit to this cave that is unbelievably spectacular for its 1100' of passage. Except for a dome, it seems to have it all, classic entrance, gnarly crevass passage, waterfall, abundant formations from soda straws to massive flowstone, and a beautiful lake room. It is also standing up to an unreal amount of foot traffic, as it is located on the Current River, which is the sight of one gigantic floating party every weekend from May to September. It is an "ebb and flow" spring resurgence cave, there is only one other in the U.S.

Jam Up Cave, Shannon County (Missouri)

July 25, 1987; Mike Nelson, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson

Located on the Jack's Fork River, this is not an extensive cave. It makes up for that in sheer size. The entrance is about 70' by 70' and it continues on into the cave like

that for 300' to 400', over massive breakdown. At that point it skinnies down and one must swim a short distance then climb a small waterfall and take some smaller passage to a large room beneath an open sinkhole, which is where we would exit from later. This was our first through trip in a truly wild cave. Beyond this opening was another larger pool, which I swam to the back of. It sumped here and I did not push it, although a third entrance existed there in a sinkhole. A fourth entrance was located in a side passage that led to yet another sinkhole that had a 60' drop requiring vertical gear.

We peeked into many more caves, both gated and ungated, and at many of the largest springs in the state. Missouri is truly a caver's vacation land. There is so much to see and do that it is hard to maintain one's monomania for caving, though. The swimming is as varied as the sites, with fine visibility for snorkling. The canoeing is superb. We had no problems with anyone messing with our gear left in the canoe while caving, but I hear that's the exception, not the rule. We were lucky.

Exhaustion Crevice, Jackson County

August 4, 1987; Stacey Cyphert, Steve Moon, Gary Engh, Dann Cohrs

It was July 19, 1987, the day after I (Stacey Cyphert) had gone on a 13 hour expedition in Cold Water Cave to Grappling Falls, that Mike Lace and Steve Moon dragged me out to Jackson County to do some ridge walking. Steve had discovered a hill that held tremendous potential for yielding a cave and he was eager to share its location. Knowing opportunities like this don't come along every day, I went to see what we could find.

Steve led us to a beautiful ridge which was covered with several sinkholes. He had already established a dig site at the most promising one. Mike and Steve took turns digging there while I fought to stay awake. After both had worn themselves out, we decided to walk the ridge to see what we could find. A couple small cracks were found but nothing very exciting. By this time I was exhausted and started walking back up the ridge to my car. It was on my way back to the car that I discovered Exhaustion Crevice.

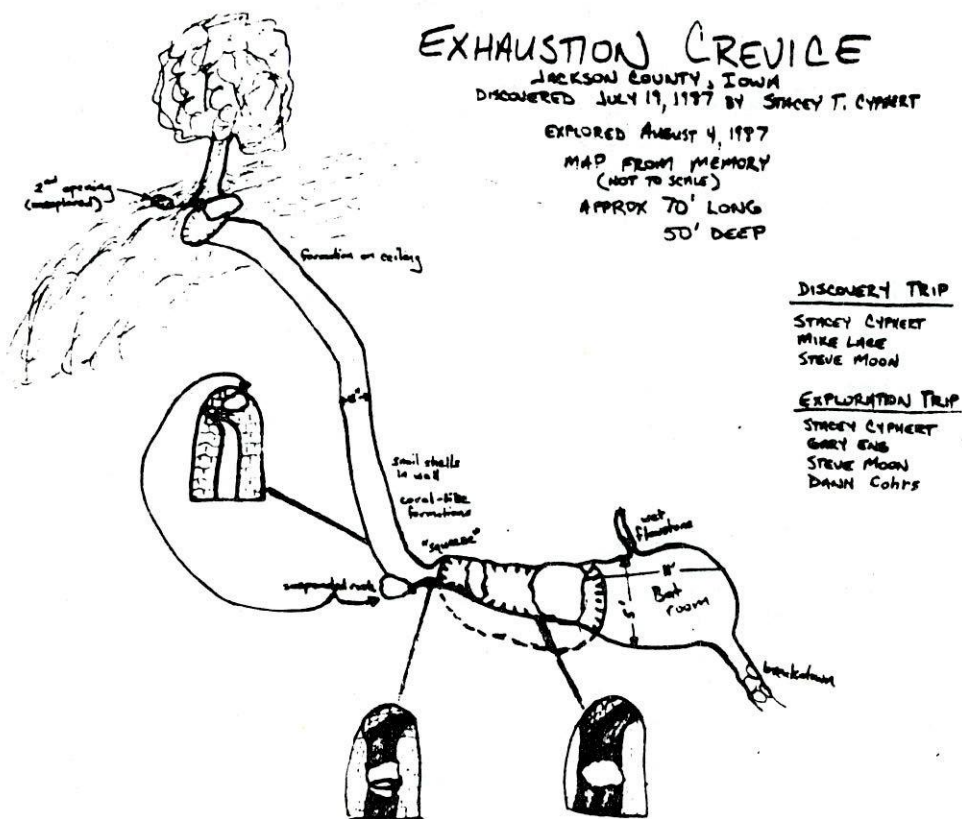
Located by a tall tree near the top of the ridge, Exhaustion Crevice quickly became a large dark hole as rocks were removed from its entrance. Our excitement grew as we could hear falling rocks ricochet several times on their way to the cave floor. A second, smaller entrance into the underworld was also discovered close by. Steve took the first look down into Exhaustion Crevice after being safely belayed. It quickly became obvious that we were going to need more equipment if we were to enter the cave. We left vowing to return with vertical gear as soon as we could.

The exploration of Exhaustion Crevice did not occur until

the evening of August 4, 1987. In addition to me, the exploration party included Gary Eng, Steve Moon, and Dann Cohrs.

A cable ladder and belay rope were used to enter the cave. I went first, followed by Dann Gary and Steve. The first 45 feet or so are 18 to 24 inches wide. Gary had done an excellent job tying the belay rope around me and I had difficulty getting it off in the tight quarters. The cave dropped about 40 feet during this distance and took a sharp turn. It looked like the ceiling was relatively straight so with each step down the ceiling got higher and higher. I waited for the others at a tight squeeze where the cave dropped further and took a sharp left. There were snail shells in the left wall and it was covered with something that looked like coral.

This squeeze proved to be the point which separated our party. Dann could not get through. Gary managed to negotiate the squeeze after several attempts while Steve had only the minor difficulty I encountered. After crawling over (and under) some breakdown the cave opened up into a little room (see map). A crack in the left wall was wet and had some flowstone but was too small to be entered. Several bats occupied this room and one enjoyed flying around taking a closer look at us. We declined to crawl up a large pile of breakdown to see if the cave continued because a second bat was becoming excited and we did not want to further disturb the bat population. A quick look into the second entrance and into a couple of the sinkholes (both worthy of further consideration) concluded our trip.



Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

August 15, 1987; Mike Nelson, Doug Schmuecker, In: 11:30 AM, Out 5:30 PM

Doug and I went on up to the Spong to collect bugs, water samples and the air tanks he had left up there last trip. One more month of picking up these samples yet. His tanks still had plenty of air in them and he wanted to use it up before carrying them back. He had backpacked them in, which was alot of work compared to the waterproof, floatable "torpedoes" the rest of us had used. I hauled my scuba gear in in one of these and Doug brought along an empty one to retrieve his.

As long as we had the equipment and there were no other major trips going on this month, we decided to rerig the handline through the Spong Siphon. We noticed quite a commotion advancing up the cave towards us as we were preparing for this job. Soon we were honored by a sight that is as rare, almost, as an albino blind cave rhinoceros. Dave Ecklund showed up in the company of the CWC landowner, Ken Flatland, and PETE DEVRIES!!! Yikes! In all the two and one half years I had been coming here, I had seen Kenny at least get into a wetsuit once, but seeing our project coordinator here...

Evidently this new find upstream has intrigued him enough to investigate the possibility of attempting to lower the water level and make the Spong a little less intimidating. His appraisal? The only noteworthy drop of water is over a dam created by some breakdown just upstream of the Jumping Off Point. It is not an impossible project, removing this impediment, but it will take more work than I am personally willing to get involved in presently.

Declining the use of our scuba gear to take a look around on the other side of the sump, they abandoned us to our work. Doug had to try nosing through one time to see what it was like, having done it myself as much or more than anyone else, I was going to use the scuba as long as I had it. This veteran of over 2000 hours of diving time was considerably impressed by the challenge, said he was glad to know he could do it, but opted for using scuba for the return trip. We rerigged the line from the far side out, it appears alot tidier, but it was a longer, colder job than expected. The next time through will determine if we did a good safe job. Doug used knots that are adjustable, so we will be able to add or remove slack if need be.

Enough was enough, I had gotten almost as cold doing this task as I had during the initial free dive of the Scandawhovian Sumps. It was a different cold though, more insidious. The cold then was fast in coming, while this one was slow. The other one let you know you were cold, with almost violent shivering, this one robbed us of manual dexterity with bearily a clue. It's scary to all of a sudden

find yourself almost too cold to function with so little warning. We quickly stowed our gear and walked up some heat.

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County

August 15, 1987; Larry Welch, Scott Dankof, Bill Nelson

Lifeguard with a Big Flame

It had rained Friday, with more forecast for Saturday. Water level was pretty low at 9.2 inches, but the wet ground wasn't going to soak up any rain. Motivation was lacking for the most part -- I had taken Beth Patel to see Hoot Dome on Friday night and was a little tired. The CO₂ level was very high upstream; when the shaft was left open and the shed door closed the lamps burned poorly inside.

Bill hadn't gotten any sleep but was anxious to do something. Scott had rented a wetsuit, so naturally wanted to get his money's worth. I did have a new compass I wanted to try, and we had the makings of a survey party. When Bill agreed to keep book, Scott and I decided to survey somewhere. Bill probably figured a book man would eventually be needed upstream since Sue Ecklund is pregnant.

Where to survey? We decided on Critter Pass, since I knew I could find it and it wouldn't flood if we did get a thunderstorm. This also allowed Scott and Bill to see some new cave since they hadn't been very far downstream. We got in the cave at 12:30, carrying bags to pick up some bugs from Cascade Falls for Betty Wheeler and George Huppert.

Going was pretty slow initially, but we started feeling better the further we went. I was a little apprehensive about leading through the swim, but I felt better when I found out Bill was a lifeguard. Bill also kept a "mainstream flame" on his lamp, so I figured I was safe even if I started sinking and lost my light simultaneously. Scott's comment on the swim was, "Surf's up, Big Kahuna!"

At Critter Pass, we unloaded the survey gear. Scott was lead tape and rear compass sightings, I was rear tape and forward sightings, Bill ran the book. Critter Pass was not chipped, so we originated the traverse from the chip at the Beaver Boneyard entrance, chip 807 (?). At the mouth of Critter Pass chip LW1 was set, and the survey of the passage begun. It is an upper level canyon on the west side of mainstream, and very muddy. After 52 feet my compass got too muddy to read, and Scott's was fogged beyond repair. We didn't have a chip to tie off at, but the 5 mark on the dry ceiling should survive. Critter Pass was estimated to extend 120 feet until pinching, so is about half surveyed. We were a bit cold after surveying and cleaning off the accumulated mud, but warmed up once we started moving.

The bugs were retrieved on the way back from the mouth of Cascade, and we were back to the shaft at 7:50.

Kentucky Caves, Pulaski and Rockcastle Counties

August 13-17, 1987; Stacey Cyphert, Mike Lace, Bryan Bain, John Brooks
(Photos have been edited out for space considerations)

Jean's Restaurant was the meeting place of our party. I had arranged for a friend of mine, Greater Cincinnati Grotto member John Brooks, NSS 24470, to serve as tour guide. I had also invited Bryan Bain, NSS 25297, a fellow Iowa Grotto member who recently moved to Huntington, West Virginia, to go along. We had all assembled by 10 a.m. that morning.

Bryan's girlfriend, Niccole, stayed with our cars as the four of us entered the cave. Pine Hill Cave has an impressive entrance in a rock face. Much of the passage is stream bed although there is an upper level. A good deal of the cave is walking passage but there are opportunities to crawl for those who desire to.

Our first destination was Tower Domes. I remembered being very impressed with this section of the cave on previous trips and I was impressed again. Tower Domes is a corridor of domes 80 to 100 feet high. The corridor extends approximately 150 feet. Breakdown at either end of the corridor can be climbed. The walls of the domes are smooth, however, and this made the checking of a high lead I spotted impossible with only the equipment we had. The terminal dome on the southern side contained several formations (see Picture C). It was here that our group spotted the first of two salamanders in the cave.

The next highlight of the cave explored was Skylight Dome (please forgive the pun). This 125 foot dome is reached via a low crawl in upper level passage. Beams of light could be seen bouncing off the far wall. A dead rodent was found at the bottom. More interesting, however, was a large, white crawfish found in a pool off of the small room one enters just before entering the dome. The crawfish can be seen in Picture D. This small room also had several cave crickets crawling around on the ceiling (see Picture E).

From Skylight Dome we went to the Art Room. This room is also on the upper level. Although heavily vandalized, the Art Room contains several large stalagmites. The second salamander we observed was found here and can be seen in Picture F. Snaking through narrow canyon passage and observing the cross-bedding were highlights of this part of the journey.

Hurricane Pit was next on the list of places to visit in Pine Hill Cave. We chimneyed up into higher passage and explored several leads. There is an entrance to the cave here but we did not see it.

The final destination of our group was the waterfall. Only a small amount of water was falling when we arrived due to the dry conditions of this summer. The waterfall is only a few feet high but sits in front of a deep pool of water. We chose to climb along the right wall and swing over a cove to the base of the falls. This maneuver is a little tricky given the absence of good hand holds but it was the second time I had done it and it was no problem. Fear of falling into the deep pool provided an additional incentive to do it right the first time. After we climbed the falls and viewed the domes behind them, we returned

to a point below the falls via an alternative route. Our group then exited the cave.

Sunday, August 16th, was another beautiful day. The neighbors who had yelled at the noisy ones turned out to be cavers from Michigan. After exchanging stories with them we had a quick breakfast at our campsite and then headed off to the Garbage Pit entrance to Sloans Valley Cave. This entrance used to be a garbage pit but had been cleaned up. The owner of the property has constructed a greenhouse near the pit and has built a shaft to provide the greenhouse with the moist cave air (see Picture G). A ladder is there in the pit to facilitate entrance into the cave. Bryan, Mike and I entered the cave while Niccole promised to meet us after going shopping.

Sloans Valley Cave reminded me a lot of Mammoth Cave. The Appalachian Trail is a huge trunk passage similar to those found in Mammoth. We climbed over large pieces of breakdown and sat on top of the largest pile of breakdown I have ever seen, Hogback Breakdown Pile. One could literally touch the ceiling of the trunk passage from this pile. Hogback Breakdown Pile was on the way to the first destination of our exploration, the Big Room, and marked the point where we entered a confusing section of the cave.

We entered the Big Room from the Bedroom, which itself is a decent sized room. The Big Room can probably best be described as a light-eating void. We were unable to see the entire room at once and often had trouble seeing the opposite side wall from where we were. We met up briefly with the Michigan cavers here.

From the Big Room we headed to the Oasis. This is a decorated portion of the cave. Just past the Oasis we met up with a group of cavers from the Miami Valley Grotto. After exchanging pleasantries, we headed off in search of Grand Central Station.

Up until we set off for Grand Central Station, we had been in cave that Bryan had been in before. Now we were in passages of smaller dimensions which were new territory to all of us. We did have a map and a compass and ended up using both to ascertain the location of Grand Central Station. We knew we were in Grand Central Station when we found the bracket in the wall where the cave register used to hang. After locating this room, we decided to exit via Scowling Tom's entrance. Along the way another large, white crawfish was seen. From Scowling Tom's it was only a short walk back to our cars where Niccole was waiting with sandwiches for our hungry crew.

After eating we decided to look at the Post Office entrance to Sloans Valley Cave. This too is a pit entrance which can be free-climbed (with belay) or where ascenders can be used. This entrance is supposedly in a small building behind the post office. The post office was closed when we arrived (it was Sunday) so we did not get to look at it. We then drove to Cumberland Falls State Resort Park.

The sky was clearing by the time we reached Mt. Vernon. We stopped at the laundromat first to dry our caving clothes before heading to Jean's Restaurant to meet Bryan. After a quick breakfast we headed to Sinks of the Roundstone Cave (see attached map). This cave has a good deal of large walking passage and has

been mapped for a little over 2 miles. It contains several tall domes under which water is collecting in large barrels. It also contains a large pit with mud sides where I had some minor difficulty climbing due to the lack of tread on my boots.

We planned to make an entrance to entrance trip in Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. One car was parked by the railroad entrance and the other one was used to transport us to the stream entrance. Here we entered the cave and proceeded to the largest room in the cave. This room is littered with breakdown (and, unfortunately, trash). A little farther on we took a side lead off the main passage and came out on a ledge some 30 to 40 feet over large passage. The ledge was not able to be safely free climbed so we retreated to the big room. We then returned to the stream entrance where we chatted with a local family who were entering the cave. The family was impressed that people from Iowa knew about and came to visit the cave.

After studying the map, we decided to go to the railroad entrance. This we did without any difficulty. Soon we were out in the hot Kentucky afternoon sun.

Since the railroad tunnel is close to the entrance to the cave we decide to walk through it on the way back to the car. Just past the tunnel and before the track intersects with another one we noticed a crack in the hill. Mike was the first to investigate it and he dropped down a hole into a small room. He yelled back that it looked worth exploring and Bryan and I quickly followed. We spent the next 45 minutes or so pushing leads. There were several dry formations in this crawling passage cave. We expect that it connects with Sinks of the Roundstone Cave since it is located between two connecting passages of that cave. A train went by while we were inside and we could feel the walls rumbling so we decided to call this cave Rumbling Railroad Cave.

The last cave we visited on this expedition was Across the Road Cave. As I led the group to the entrance, suggestions were made to the effect that the name should be Across the Road and Through the Jungle Cave. This cave offers a little bit of everything to the hearty explorer.

The cave had not been visited recently as the floor was undisturbed deep mud. I had been in this cave once before and had been telling Bryan and Mike that this cave was like a maze. They quickly agreed with this opinion shortly after we entered the cave. The word "sponge" was also suggested. A typical room had two or three side leads, a lead in the floor, and a lead in the ceiling. I do not know exactly how many different levels there are in this cave. We were careful to mark the path we chose with stone arrows so that we could find our way back out.

Our exploration of this cave did not do it justice. There are numerous leads we did not have a chance to explore. We did locate the pit entrance and the room which appears to be comprised of thin pieces of stacked breakdown. I had heard that there is a third entrance to the cave but I have never seen it and we did not find it on this trip. If I ever return to this cave, finding the third entrance will be one of my goals.

After exiting the cave we decided to have one last dinner together before returning to our respective homes.

Wilson Caves, Floyd County

August 22, 1987; Mike Lace, Larry Welch, Loren Schutt, Mike Bounk, Mike Nelson

We began the day's work by showing Mike B. and Loren the sinkhole we had opened by hoisting boulders. The hole we had exposed was now partially filled with about six inches of soil that had been washed in. Clearly, a method of preventing any further silting in has to be considered. We then started digging at the nearest sinkhole (The one with a disappearing stream during run-off). Mike B. and Loren continued digging while Larry, Mike Nelson, and I moved to Wilson Cave to begin the survey. After a bit of compass trouble we ran the survey into the entry room where Larry was ducking to avoid a very confused bat that was intent on landing on his helmet. The three of us managed to run the survey back to where a low wet crawlway leads to the right. We netted a total of 45 meters with about 14 meters left to survey. We exited the cave without incident except for a run-in with the same bewildered bat; as I exited the rocky entry crawl the bat decided he wanted to go back into the main cave and flew straight into my face. I brushed him away without injuring either one of us.

Mike Nelson had to leave at that point so Larry and I rejoined Mike B. and Loren to give them a tour of the sinkholes and Coon Highway Cave. Bill Wilson had been busy filling those sinkholes without promising leads and after touring Coon Highway Cave we visited one that had been filled with bales of wire. Bill had removed much of the debris in this sinkhole and after a bit of digging we exposed a bedrock wall and a squeeze that could be pushed. Later in the day we mentioned the lead in this sinkhole and he may wait to fill it in. Bill also offered us the use of his canoe to check out the rock faces along the Cedar River. We plan on taking him up on his offer some day. We proceeded to the far southwest sinkhole near the road. Mike B. checked out it, collecting a few more rock samples. Our final stop was at the sinkhole across the road -- perhaps the deepest on Bill's property. We pulled out a few rocks at the lowest point in the sinkhole but extensive digging needs to be done to expose bedrock.



Cartoon by veteran Floyd County caver Bill LaCourse.