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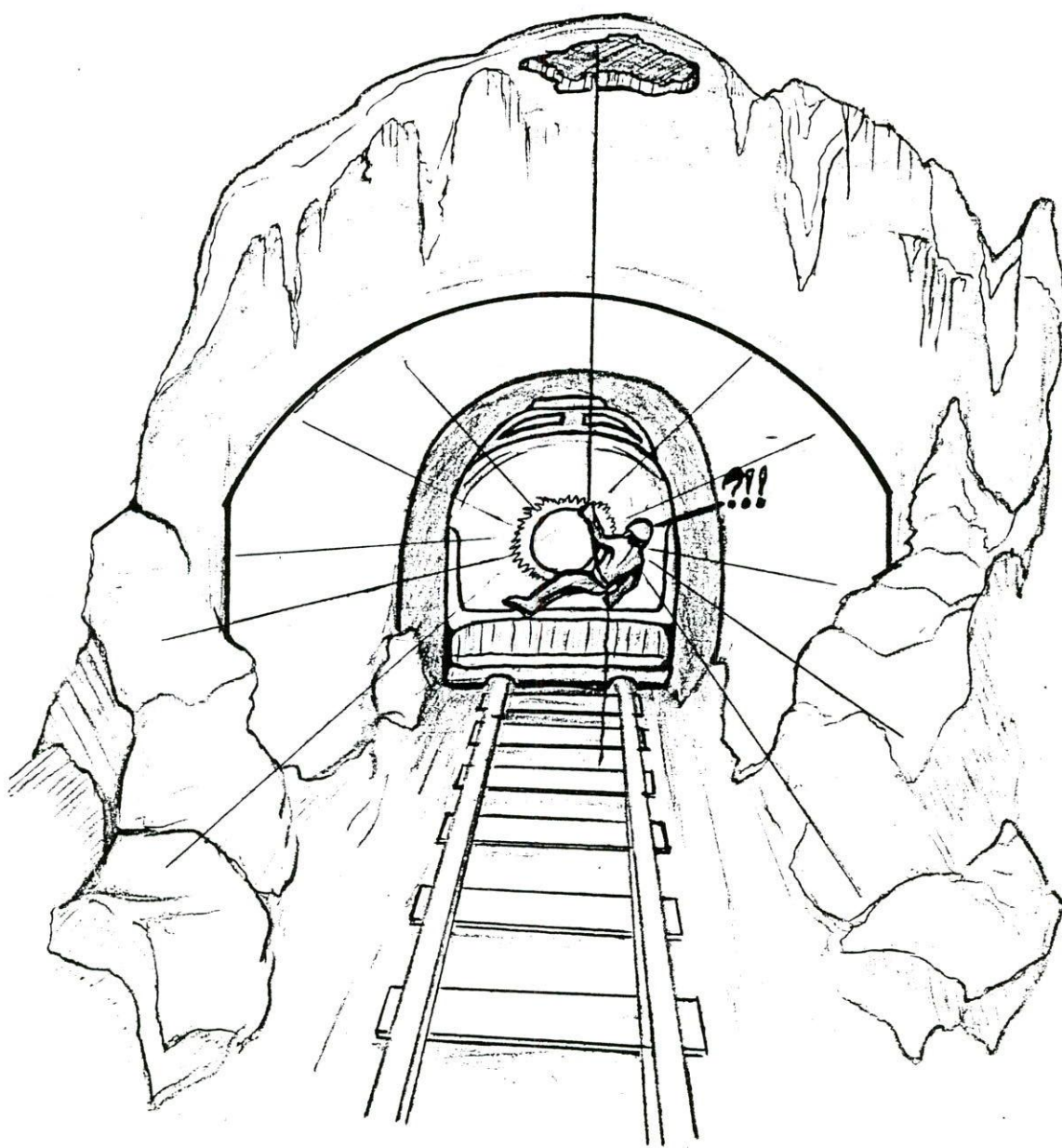
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IOWA GROTTO

INTERCOM



VOL 23 NO 5 & 6

Sept./Oct./Nov./Dec. 1987

September/October Issue

Vol. 23 No. 5

The INTERCOM is published semi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto, P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. The Iowa Grotto is dedicated to the exploration and study of caves, and is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, Inc., 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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Chairman.....Mike Bounk

Vice Chairman.....Larry Welch

Secretary-Treasurer.....Mike Lace

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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Iowa Grotto Meeting Minutes

September 23, 1987 by Larry Welch

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 by Chairman Mike Bounk; 12 members were present. Minutes were read and approved and a treasurer's report given.

Old Business

The Hodaq Hunt was a success for all involved. 4 new grotto members were enlisted, and Iowan Margaret Kerndt found the Hodaq. Thanks to all who helped.

New Business

A possible grotto activity for the fall was suggested, which could be combined with a vertical training session.

Stacey Cyphert mentioned that a "touch the earth" group at the U of Iowa will be taking cave trips this fall. If someone is interested a grotto member could help out and keep them out of trouble and perhaps recruit a few warm bodies. A little conservation message might be beneficial as well.

Trip Reports

Greg McCarty reported on some Fayette County caving he and Mike Nelson did on Sept. 9. Included was the discovery of a 700 foot crevice cave.

Larry Welch reported on Coldwater activity designed to lower the Spong Siphon water level by liberal sledgehammer application. Mike Bounk also gave a tour for some Decorah folks, followed by a trip to Wet Cave with son Ben.

Steve McDonald updated everyone on caving activity around Dubuque. Kemling Cave is an active project, and there has been recent access to Muenster Cave. He also described the situation whereby a quarry may be opened near Crystal Lake Cave.

Mike Bounk reviewed the tours given at Hodaq Hunt, which included Skunk, Soward's, Kemling and other caves.

Mike Lace reported on the trip to April Cave, including the discovery of Nemo Dome. A survey party also extended the mapping into the Lake Passage.

Loren Schutt gave details on a survey trip to Bailey House Cave. Nearly the whole cave was surveyed on this trip.

Future Trips

A trip to April Cave was scheduled for October 10, and a survey trip to Glenwood Cave was planned for September 26. Meeting adjourned at 9:45.

Iowa Grotto Meeting Minutes

October 28, 1987

by Larry Welch

The meeting was called to order at 7:42 by chairman Mike Bounk; 12 members were present. Minutes of the September meeting were read and approved, followed by a report on the treasury.

Old Business

The grotto received a check for \$66 from the WSS for our participation in the Hodag Hunt. We had not been promised any funds, so this was quite nice of the WSS. An update on the condition of grotto member Bruce Bain was given, his health is improving after his accident.

New Business

Ed Smith has donated some equipment and publications to the grotto, which will be greatly appreciated. A brief review of the equipment was made, and it was decided that most of it would be put in the custody of Mike Bounk. The publications will be organized and sent to the grotto library.

Lowell Burkhead gave a report on recent improvements on the library, most of which are due to effort on his part. Materials were bound into volumes and then placed in filing cabinets. Lowell stated that another filing cabinet or two could be used immediately. Lowell also reported on materials that are overdue for return to the library, including Quint Cities Grotto material which has been checked out for 10 years. Any maps or survey data donations to the library will be appreciated.

A lengthy discussion of grotto finances and publications followed, and it was agreed to postpone any decisions until the next meeting. Nominations for 1988 Grotto Officers followed, and the nominees are:

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Sec-Treasurer

Mike Bounk
Steve Moon, Larry Welch
Mike Lace

Future Trips

A vertical training session was planned for Nov. 22 at the Pictured Rocks Park near Monticello. Dave Schwendinger is in charge.

Trip Reports

Greg McCarty relayed the information that he had found 18 new caves in five trips near Fayette this month. Larry Welch reported on the trip beyond Nemo Dome at April Cave, and Gary Engh reported on the sump trip in April. Lowell Burkhead took a look at the old resurgence of April Cave and was able to penetrate 3 body lengths. Larry Welch reported on Coldwater activity past the Spong Siphon and also on a trip to Floyd County. Meeting adjourned at 9:27.

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TRIP REPORTS:

September 5, 1987; APRIL CAVE

Winneshiek County: Mike Nelson, Gary Engh, Warren Netherton

IN: 11:00 AM

OUT: 2:45 PM

BY MIKE NELSON

We surveyed in the Lake Room at the end of the passage that branches left at Lester Falls. Warren kept book and took front sights, Gary got the rear sighting and tape reading, while I took lead tape. We got over 36 meters in just four stations before becoming too cold to continue.

Warren ventured a short ways down a mud filled lead on the right while I pushed down the main passage a bit. The water level was still higher than average and I didn't get too far. Warren believed that with a little dig and effort, that his lead would go further than the few body lengths he had pushed.

September 11-13, 1987; HODAG HUNT, SPOOK CAVE

BY MICHAEL BOUNK

Friday evening, Norma, Ben, Joseph and I drove to Spook Cave for the Hodag Hunt, which for the first time in it's history was being held outside of Wisconsin.

After the next morning's usual excellent breakfast, I led a trip to Soward's Cave, near West Union. Margaret Kerndt found the hodag on a ledge near the ceiling of the entrance level. When we reached the back end of this level, at this point I described the lower and upper levels to the group. A number of people decided to climb the upper level loop. After they reached the upper level, about four of us headed back to the mouth of the tight sideways crawl, which joins the loop to the main level. Everything went well until they reached the upper level room from which this crawl is entered. They got into the room just fine, but could not find the crawl out. I could see their lights through a shaft connecting the levels. I tried a second time to explain where the crawl was located, but then decided to sent my eight year old son Ben, up through the crawl to show them the way. After exiting, we returned to Spook Cave. After dinner, Rudy Prusko gave a talk on the Dubuque Mine-Caves.

Before leaving on Sunday, we had the Fall North Country Region meeting.

September 19, 1987; COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County: Michael Bounk, Bill Nixon, John and Linn Kjone

BY MICHAEL BOUNK

We entered the cave on a tourist trip in the afternoon.

First, we headed downstream to just beyond Big Birtha. We then went upstream for a short distance beyond the North Snake Passage. At that point, we exited the cave.

September 20, 1987; WET CAVE

Fayette County: Michael Bounk, Ben Eiler
BY MICHAEL BOUNK

On the way home from Coldwater Cave, Ben and I visited Wet Cave. We Parked near Falling Spring and walked up the valley to Wet Cave. After quickly looking at the dry section, we entered the wet section. The passage starts as stoop-walk with about ankle deep water. The ceiling gradually drops to crawling height. Finally, the ceiling rises again and the passage becomes narrow. At this point, we chimneyed above the stream and climbed into a breakdown room. Also at this point, I described the continuing breakdown passage and it's unstable nature to Ben. We then exited the cave and headed home.

October 10, 1987; APRIL CAVE

Winneshiek County: Mike Lace, Larry Welch, Kris Licursi
BY MIKE LACE

Larry, Kris, and I entered the cave at 12:30 PM with the "sump-busting" crew (Warren Netherton, Gary Engh, Doug Schmuecker, and Mike Nelson) following. The trip to the Black Slime Sewer entrance was uneventful. This was Kris' first trip into April Cave so we took our time pursuing the numerous formations along the way. We slipped on our hoods and headed toward Nemo Dome once we reached the sewer. Neither Larry or Kris had seen Nemo Dome or the passages leading into and out of it, so I led the way. The near sumps proved to be negotiable; no silting had clogged the crawlway so all it took was a little coaching to make near sumps completely comfortable.

Larry and Kris were suitably impressed with the size and decoration of Nemo Dome. Even I had forgotten just how beautiful the milky white flowstone section really is. We started the hanging survey at the entrance to the dome and ran it into the stoop-walking lead at the opposite end while chipping the upper window that still hasn't been pushed. We surveyed only 21 meters total - a disappointing amount but none of us felt too much like surveying that day. We decided to at least push the stoop-walking lead as far as we could. Unfortunately, the walking portion of the passage quickly turned to winding crawlway just past the point where Stacey and I had left our initials after the first push. We followed the crawlway for another 400 feet to where it started to get low with about 5 inches of airspace. We all noticed the distant sound of water "gurgling" over rocks ahead of us but decided to turn around and head out due to the vigorous crawl already behind us. Larry had been at the front of our party at that point and said that the crawl ahead was definite-

ly passable---perhaps another dome lies ahead? We found out later that while we were examing the crawlway in the new section, Warren, Mike, and Gary were at the mainstream sump. Warren swears by the fact that he heard the scuffling noises of people crawling behind the right wall. There is a small right side lead at the sump that hasn't been pushed. But, due to the initial compass bearings and insufficient length of the crawlway, it seems unlikely that it is anywhere near the sump. But, it's still a possibility that needs to be resolved. We exited the cave without injury or incident but noticed a total of 11 bats and 5 frogs in the cave.

October 22, 1987; WILSON CAVES

Floyd County: Larry Welch, Dave Mead, Bill LaCourse, Brian Wels
BY LARRY WELCH

Some of my co-workers had the itch to do some real caving, so we took a day to initiate them. It was in the 50's and windy as per usual; not bad for October. We went to Jesse James first, where most nervous fears were calmed and everyone got the hang of chimneying. Only two bats were seen, but it was noted that the water level was very low.

After seeing most of Jesse James, we went to the Hemp Hole and dropped into it. The second entrance to this cave looked as if someone or something had enlarged it to about body size.

Next was Coon Highway Cave after which I showed everyone the entrance to 2 Days Digging Cave and had no takers. There were at least 6 bats in Coon Highway, all looking as if they were settled down for the winter. The squeeze into the high room posed some difficulties, but with some coaching we all made it through.

After seeing all the easy caves, it was time for a challenge. I made the slide into Wilson Cave, then tried to talk everyone else through the entry squeeze. Dave made it through, but no luck for the others. So Dave and I toured the cave thoroughly. Dave looked relieved after we squeezed out of the cave. After checking a few sinkholes, we headed back to Ames.

INTERCOM 7

APRIL CAVE
WINNESHIEK CO. IA.

Mike Nelson
Gary Engh
Warren Netherton

10-10-87
IN: 12:20 pm
OUT: 7:35 pm

The four of us, toting two fiberglass "torpedoes" full of scuba gear, a large line reel and our personal caving gear, pushed towards our goal at the end of the cave with such vigor that we twice caught up with the first team in. This always provides me with great joy, to show these youngsters the potential that still lays before them as they mature into caving. This first party, consisting of Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Kris Licursi, were headed for the Mud Slime Sewer, the sight of a surveying project and a new find of virgin cave.

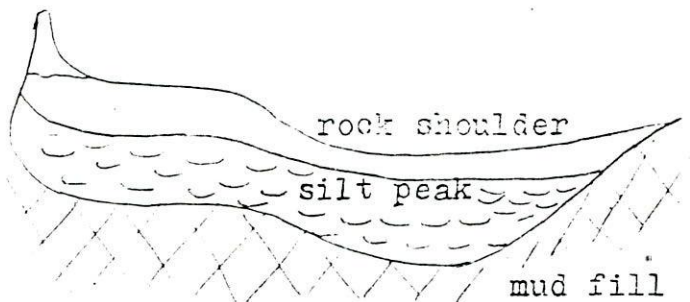
Unfortunately, our pace soon did Doug in. He had been battling a cold for so long that he is beginning to believe it is more than likely a sinus or allergy condition instead. With assurances that he and his five backup flashlights would be OK, he had, for the second time, to leave April Cave after seeing little more of it than the magnificent 1000' entrance crawlway.

Handing off the torpedoes from time to time allowed at least one of us to rest slightly. I personally found these waterproof containers that more often than not were floated, to be little more work than just carrying my own carcass through the cave. When near the end, we rested, so as to reach the sump warmed from the 50' belly crawl to the room before it, but not to tired. Shortly we were there.

Wasting no time, I shucked my coveralls, and assembled the scuba gear. Warren tied the line to my leg for what the British refer to as a "base fed" line, evidently quite commonly used "over there". Knowing this gave me more confidence in using this method. I am still very green at this and it seemed to me that until the sump shows itself to be complicated or cluttered, that having no reel to contend with is a distinct advantage. As it turned out, this sump was not to be like the simple straight line duck unders that I had experienced to date. It is the perfect next step to be exposed to after the afore mentioned variety, and will give me the opportunity to become accustomed to using the reel on the next push dive.

Entering the sump on my back, "flywalking" on the ceiling, I soon realized that it was not the simple mud filled trough that I had perceived it to be during my previous free dive here. I didn't have a lot of time then for a thorough look around, so that is understandable. I will give all bearings as though I were moving head first on my stomach, to

keep directions understandable. A little sketch at this point might also be helpful.



Cross section at peak.

Pushing in about 25' was easy enough and the way out was no trick despite the zero visibility in my wake. The way ahead remained perfectly clear. I had found myself stopped by a peaked silt pile, not at all what I had imagined to find in a larger area beyond a restriction. On the other side this pile dropped off abruptly into what would be stoop passage in dry cave. This makes me think that the water itself is dropping as it enters this spot, keeping this low area open and dropping its load of fine silt prior to exiting the closer spaces I was negotiating. The sump continued around a gentle curve to the left, I could see about 30' past my position into crystal clear waters made iridescent by my powerful dive light. This is one of the truly beautiful most personal experiences to be beheld in this sport.

Now, how to get there? I was certain I did not want to make the curve on a base fed line, if I could force my way over the pile I would be looking for a very small access on the return trip, with my belayers instructed to pull out slack as it developed. As this slack would be created while rounding the curve, an undesirable situation would be in the making. The pile did not yield to my shoulders, but to the right side the passage dropped below a shoulder of rock and may have more room than was available to push over the peak than my present spot. Dropping to that level I knew I was in at least 4' of water as I felt the need to "pressurize" in my sinuses and ears, if I was to go any lower. There was not enough room to bully my way through the pile here either. From this lower area the way out was not so obvious, but after probing to the walls on either side, the process of elimination indicated the way back up to the entrance level and the way out. I had been in the sump about 3 minutes.

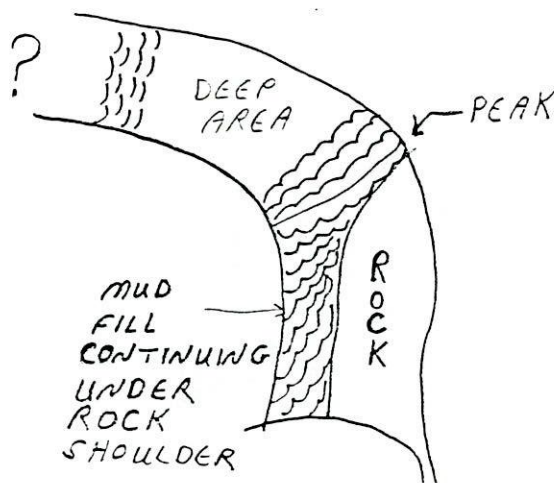
The 15.5 cubic foot pony tank still had sufficient air for another dive, so I opted to go in on my belly with the hope of doing some effective digging. This maneuver simply managed to force mud into the backup regulators and make

them physically inaccessible to me in an emergency. After wallowing around for a short spell, I again backed out. I had spent another 2 minutes in the sump and the air was too low in the pony tank to consider another dive with it.

While discussing the situation with Warren and Gary, and pondering another dive on a fresh tank, Warren became rather excited. He swore he could hear voices and thrashing about in the small crevass lead opposite the sump in this little room we were in. With my cold water hood on I could barely hear Gary and Warren. Much hollering and assorted noise making down that lead drew no response, but later the other crew noted turning back when the passage they were pushing got to where it would require a dig to continue in a miserable belly crawl.

By this time I was having my doubts about pushing this sump out today. I had to go back in one more time to do some digging in the hopes that the next time in I could slip right over this pile and move through the curve with the use of the line reel. Donning the 40 cubic foot tank I entered the sump on my back again, moved up to the pile and began digging. Reaching over my head on my back was not a natural position to be digging from, but after a little while, I tried to push myself through. The route is not yet completely open, the digging blacked out the entire sump. That was enough schooling for today. I retreated. This last dive had taken about 3 minutes. Outside the sump again I once more considered one more dive, but knowing I wouldn't have enough visibility to even assess the dig, I had to pass.

Short as they were, each dive had given me the experience and confidence I needed for the next dive. Although the cave was not extended much, the dives and the project were still a success. A challenge and its reward still await.



Though we were more than a little weary, we decided that as long as the water level was pretty low, we should push out the Lake Room up the side passage from Lester Falls, on the way out. Once into the Lake Room there is plenty of water to float in and the going is very easy, kicking, laying on ones back. Moving out ahead I was soon into close airspace stuff and left the rest of the party to wait. The way was long and low and not pleasant. Winding around considerably, I finally found myself in a short piece of crevass passage with enough room to stand up. It degenerated right back into close low going with very minor crevass slots in the ceiling, allowing for slightly more airspace. In a few feet, one of these slots was all that was left of the airspace. A couple of feet into this and the cave was pushed out as far this way as it will probably ever go. The passage I felt with my feet seemed to be less than 16" vertically and about 2' wide, making it even too small to use scuba.

On the way out I guesstimated the distance by body lengths where I had enough clearance and half lengths where there was less than enough. We tallied up in the area of 440' of cave beyond the last survey station, of which over 300' had between 4" and 1 1/2" of air. In some places the water was up to 3' deep, but mostly it was less than 2'. I am not looking forward to even a quick and dirty survey to finish up this part of the cave.

Much later, while contemplating the next dive at this site, it occurred to me that I had passed up an option. If I had made one last dive, entering feet first, I could have kicked a hole big enough for three cavers through the pile in a very short time. Then, on the next attempt, I should have had relatively open passage and the opportunity to maintain decent visibility once past the restricted area.

Trip Report

Coldwater Cave Oct 17, 1987

INTERCOM 11
Larry Welch
Mike Nelson
Doug Schmuecker

Water level 8.7 in shack
7.50 on platform

The water level was very conducive to hard-core caving, and I was certainly chomping at the bit. However, a friday night rain shower and an overcast saturday morning left everyone in a more conservative frame of mind.

It did seem to be an ideal time to go through the Spong Siphon for the first time, and Mike and Doug seemed to think that the big rooms between the Spong and Tuna Sea hadn't been checked thoroughly. SCUBA gear was packed into torpedo tubes and hauled despite the low water.

Scott Dankof went with the group to just past Pete's Pipe, then headed back downstream taking photos. I was able to stay ahead of speedburner Nelson through the stoopwalking section, but of course he and Doug were hauling a full load of SCUBA gear and I was unencumbered. When we reached the Waterfall Passage we unloaded the gear, and prepared for the Spong.

I wasn't real keen on the SCUBA gear, and decided I would try to nose through since the water was so low. Mike also opted for the nasal approach, but Doug used his tank. Once we were ready Mike led the way, and I was safely tucked between the old pros. The 120 foot approach to the Spong was an unpleasant crawl with about 6 inches of airspace, but Mike blasted right through.

We paused at the brink of the Spong and Mike demonstrated: lie on your back relaxed (hah!) and float against the ceiling, go feet first and look for that comforting light that Mike is aiming your way. Of course Mike didn't have the luxury of a target light, but this didn't hinder him as he zipped through gloating about the incredibly low water.

My turn, and I'm a bit queasy about the whole affair. My lights don't seem to help much, but between Doug and Mike the whole passage was lit up pretty well. Once I got started I relaxed a bit and I could move a little faster. A little water in the mouth at the lowest spot, but even my eyes were above water for the most part. Suddenly I had reached Mike and he told me I was through, and there was again a whole 6 inches of air. He stayed to light Doug's way while I hightailed it for a ceiling crack where I could stand up and shiver.

Once everyone was through, we took a look around the first room. There was a dry crawlway headed back downstream, but it didn't go anywhere but loop back around to where we entered. A couple hundred feet of easy survey for some later date, but no Spong bypass. The big room didn't look so big until one got down amongst all the big breakdown blocks. It would really look big if the room were empty. We found a passage leading out of the room, but it just connected with the next room. After this room was another wet crawlway, but it didn't seem so bad after the Spong. It led to another nice room, which also had no side leads. The Tuna Sea Siphon lay just beyond this room, and I was itching to go through since I didn't expect to be up this way very often. However, we had left word on the surface that we wouldn't do the Tuna Sea, so we didn't. Mike found the survey tape he had lost on his June trip in this final room, then we headed back.

The Spong was a little less imposing on the way back, but no warmer and I was again shivering once through the nasty stuff. We packed up and set off for pizza, secure in the knowledge that I had survived so I could loathe the Spong from a much safer distance.

FALCON SPRINGS
WINNESHIEK CO. IA.Mike Nelson
Larry Welch
Jamie Casey

10-18-87

Jamie, who lives in the vicinity of the spring and who is intimately familiar with the environs, was more than happy to lead us to it on a slightly longer but more convenient route than from the county's entrance. He was aware of another small spring and some outstanding scenery that we doubtlessly would not have come across on our own, also. Upon viewing it, then taking a short walk up one side, over the top, then back down the other side of the ridge that the spring issues from, it seemed like a good idea to take a closer look. I had read Greg McCarty's published article on the history of cave diving in Iowa, but in the light of the more promising leads, had forgotten about the two sentences devoted to Falcon, and how its leads were too small. Looking back, I'm glad of that.

It was no big deal for the three of us to carry the gear in the half mile or so to the spring. I suited up and did a short free dive recon. The water was deeper then it appeared, about 5', with a passage about 2' under the surface. There seemed to be 2 possible ways to go. (The article mentioned 3.) Backing out and getting another breath, I went in for better look. These low leads did not look promising, but I still felt I should gear up and investigate further. While thinking this, I rolled over on my back and peered up. The rock in front of me at this point continued up for several feet, too many feet it occurred to me as I was in less than 3' of water. Closer scrutiny revealed what my mind had already deduced, reflection from the bottom of the water's surface created the same illusion from below as it does from above. It looked inviting enough to just pop up into, but I slid out and strapped on the tanks. It was tighter than it appeared from below, but in a body length from the resurgence, was a slot that allowed access to a room about 6' by 6' by 6'. Standing atop a pile of breakdown I scanned around but the only lead was an unenterable crack, the hoped for continuation of which did not exist below the surface. I was mildly surprized to spot a trout while snooping about with my head in the water, looking around this breakdown pile. Pushing deeper in a direction that invited it, opened a chance of more passage, but progress would have required me to stir up considerable silt. Although it did not happen, the reality of how easily one could get disorientated even in such small passage, occurred to me. This, with the knowledge that I was really "alone" in this situation today, cautioned me to back out. Once familiar with the exit and

on the outside again, I felt like such a wimp for not having done more, as I always do. Just having someone capable on the surface would make me feel so much better about diving alone, knowing someone could come and check on me if I took too much time. Also, just the repetition of entering and exiting a passage instantly builds confidence. In this sport, I feel that "learn and live" is a more apt saying than its standard converse form.

While discussing this dive with McCarty at a later date, he expressed surprise at the air filled room indicating that no one, to his knowledge, had done this on the previous dives. Either the breakdown room has occurred since that time, 15 or so years ago, or those divers did not look up, or doing so did not recognize surface. I have to imagine that they skirted around the pile and the passages I looked at were the same ones that they had probed, but all in all, I think that one of these days I'll return and take at least one more look at Falcon Spring.

UPDATED: I had conversations with Greg later on that clarified matters. It was determined that this room was indeed entered before.

The INTERCOM is published semi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto (I.G.), P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. The I.G. is dedicated to the exploration and study of caves, and is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, Inc., (NSS), Cave Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama 35810. Subscription rate is \$10 per year. The I.G. will exchange journals with NSS affiliated grottos. Reproduction in whole or in part of any material appearing in the INTERCOM must be authorized in writing by the editors.

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Grotto Officers: Chairman - Michael Bounk
Vice Chairman - Steve Moon
Secretary/Treasurer - Larry Welch

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

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Answers to Cave Questions

- (1) In Chilas, Pakistan, 6,600 meters up the Rakhiot Peak of Nanga Parbat.
- (2) Reseau Jean Bernard in France. It is 1,535 meters deep.
- (3) Sarawak Chamber in Lubang Nasib Bagus, Sarawak. Volume is 15.0 million cubic meters.
- (4) Mammoth Cave System in the United States. It is 530,000 meters long. (Hang your head in shame if you answered this incorrectly).

This issue was prepared for publication by Stacey T. Cyphert.

IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

November 25, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:53 p.m. by chairman Mike Bounk. Seven members were present. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved and a Treasurer's report was given.

Old Business

A lengthy discussion of grotto finances took place, using an outline prepared by chairman Mike Bounk to calculate finances for 1988. A motion was made and passed to discontinue free carbide dissemination to members. The grotto will buy carbide in bulk and offer it for sale to members at grotto meetings and major functions. A motion was also made and passed to raise the yearly dues to \$12 but another motion made and passed set the 1988 dues at \$10 for a single membership and \$15 for a family membership.

The INTERCOM was once again the source of debate, with discussion aimed at producing a standard format for this periodical as well as standardizing the trip report format. The editors expressed a desire for assistance putting out the INTERCOM, especially for typists.

New Business

The format for election ballots was reviewed to make certain it would follow the grotto constitution. A motion was made and passed that Mike Bounk would look into having Iowa Grotto decals produced and sold.

Future Trips

The idea of seasonal grotto trips was brought up as a means of broadening membership participation in grotto activities. Each trip will be planned in advance and scheduled in the HOTLINE calendar.

Trip Reports

Larry Welch and Warren Netherton reported on activity at Cold Water Cave, including their trip downstream Wanda's Walkway. Larry also described recent Floyd County activity and the Rimstone River trip. Lowell Burkhead gave details on the SCUBA activities at Wild Well and of some surface checking in the vicinity. The meeting was then adjourned.

IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES (CONTINUED)

December 16, 1987

The meeting was called to order at 7:52 p.m. by chairman Mike Bounk. Seven members were present. The old minutes were approved as read and a Treasurer's report was given.

Old and New Business

The INTERCOM was again a topic of discussion. Also discussed was obtaining a filing cabinet for the grotto library. A motion was passed to have Larry Welch investigate the matter further. Secrecy surrounding cave activities and cave locations was also debated.

Trip Reports and Future Trips

Mike Bounk reported on some caves in Massillon State Park. He mentioned three pits were dropped. Steve Moon mentioned some "sponge caves" he visited in Sherman Park. Mike Lace told about his taking his nieces and nephews to Wilson Cave. A future trip to Glenwood Cave was announced.

TRIP REPORTS

Rimstone River Cave, Winneshiek County

November 7, 1987; Larry Welch, Mike Nelson (TL), Gary Engh

The grotto hadn't been in this cave since 1977, and Greg McCarty described the cave as "very pleasant". Enough to make me suspicious, but not enough to keep me out of the cave. The water level was low, but the current weather was somewhat questionable. The scheduled party of seven had dwindled for one reason or another, and only Mike and Gary were at the meeting point near the St. Agnes Church when Beth dropped me off.

Mike had brought a heater and a big tent to pitch outside the cave for changing clothes, but since it was going to be "warm" (in the 40's or high 30's), we decided not to waste time setting up the tent. I only agreed to this after Mike agreed to let me change in his Scout if I was cold. There was a slight drizzle, but no heavy rain forecast. Still, to be sure we agreed to turn around and head back at 3 p.m.

We got into the cave about 12:25 p.m. The entrance is a relatively nice hands and knees crawl. I am a very poor judge of distance, but I'll give it a stab. The first 50 feet was pretty nice but then it became belly crawl. Most of the time there was

enough water to kind of float along, pulling with the arms. Another 50 feet brought you into siphon area, which had 4-5 inches of airspace as long as you stayed out of the corners. The real nasty stuff lasted about 50 feet, but my ear was in the water for at least another 100 feet. After this it was about 150 feet of belly crawl to reach the first rimstone dam, where we could finally sit up. There were a couple of frogs near the dam and there was also signs of raccoon activity on a sand bar just behind.

After the dam was a relatively nice hands and knees stretch with a few ceiling cracks and an odd formation or two. This lasted about 500 feet to rimstone dam number seven, which required one to squeeze between the dam and ceiling and grunt your way through. On the other side lay more belly crawl in six inches of water. After about 300 feet of this, I was wondering if Greg was pulling a Pete DeVries memory lapse on us (grossly overestimating passage size and underestimating length). He had said almost the whole cave was hands and knees crawl, and we were still worming through the water. He had also said it was 700 feet to the first dome, yet we still hadn't come close to standing. After a bit, the passage was back to hands and knees size. Four hundred feet of this led to a deep spot where one could finally stand, with water at neck level. The last little bit of crawl was through a triangular passage with a lot of formations.

The walk lasted 20 feet, but the dome was just afterward. This I remembered Greg describing, so we started believing him again. To get into the dome, you have to climb up on some breakdown, which served as a nice table for Gary and Mike to recarbide. It was great to get out of the water, and I was pretty chilly considering we had been moving with only very short rests. The dome was 20-25 feet high, and contained a very large bat colony.

Apparently I wasn't the only one who was cold, because even warm-blooded Mike was putting his wetsuit hood on. Gary put on his painter's hood, and I of course put on my hood. We hopped down into the water again to do some more crawling at 1:55 p.m. The triangular shape continued awhile, then the passage widened without getting any higher. The floor was very soft sand, easy on the knees, and the formations were pretty nice. I noticed a number of shelves that looked as if they had been deposited on mud and the mud bank had later washed away. The going was a lot better back here, so we really smoked along.

About 1000 feet past the dome was a pretty nice looking side passage to the left. We only had a limited amount of time until turnaround, so we left it for another day. Just after this were a series of shelves that completely spanned the passage, which one had to get out of the water and slither over to cross. After this, more crawling to do. There were several other spots where trickles of water entered from the side, and the stream was getting smaller. After another 800 feet there was a small dome that has a gorgeous white flowstone cascade dribbling down like

syrup on a stack of pancakes.

It was 2:45 p.m. and I was starting to get tired from the high-speed crawling, but we only had fifteen minutes to go so on we went. Not long past the dome it was belly crawl time again. Right away there was some rubble, then a ceiling crack that belled out above into a reasonable dome. The passage continued, getting smaller and smaller -- the cave was coming to an end. I finally stopped in a ceiling crack, exhausted. It was 2:55 p.m. Mike had the urge to dump his pack and sprint for five minutes. I was in no mood to stop him, and in no condition to join him. Gary decided that he could use a break as well, so Mike sprinted on alone. He never got out of earshot, but we couldn't understand what he was saying.

About 70 feet ahead Mike had hit the siphon region described by the Minnesota cavers. The passage split into 2 branches, one with 3 inches of airspace and the other with 4-5 inches. Neither was very large or very promising according to Mike. He said that he would like to look at the siphons again, but SCUBA was out. I had enough trouble getting my body that far in such a hurry, and it was a long way back. We discussed how return trips were always "uneventful", so we had to disprove such a notion.

First of all, Gary and Mike had a light-dunking contest. I think Mike won 3-2. Next we had a thorough check-out by the bats, which had been dormant to this point. Whenever we stopped to rest, one would go zippering past. Several of them were large brown bats, which had a longer wingspan than the ones I was used to seeing. We stopped frequently to rest, but I couldn't rest very long without getting cold. It didn't make sense that I could be so cold considering the pace we were keeping. Back at the dome everyone changed carbide while the awakened bats screeched at us. After this we left the dome and hit the splashway. In here I was really getting cold, and couldn't stop for more than a minute or two.

By the time we reached the first rimstone dam, I had decided to flip on my back and do a Mike Nelson to go through the low stuff. For some reason, it always looks easier when Mike does it. I wasn't watching where I was very well, and pinned myself under a ledge. Naturally, I panicked and thrashed about, swallowing a couple of swigs of refreshing cave water (people pay good money for bottled spring water don't they?) before getting under control again. Mike calmly inquired as to my condition and suggested I look where I was going. This made sense, so I stayed out of trouble and slithered out of the cave.

It was nearly dark, and none too warm. I had trouble standing up outside the cave; apparently my legs had forgotten how. We scrambled up the hill and changed quickly. We stopped to talk to the landowner, noting it had rained but not a considerable amount. Gary and Mike didn't have coats on, but I was shivering in my parka and insulated coveralls. Beth showed up right on time, and I had her turn the car heater on full blast. Still, I didn't feel comfortable until Calmar on the ride back. It was a pretty strenuous trip, but thanks to Gary and

Mike we managed to accomplish the goal of getting a good look at the cave. My distances may not add up right, but we estimated the main passage at about 4000 feet.

Wild Well Cave, Clayton County

November 15, 1987; Doug Schmuecher, Aaron and Mike Nelson (TL), and Lowell Burkhead

We met Sunday morning and spoke to the landowners. Mike had obtained prior permission. We decided on short, solo, check-out dives to look for old lines and other hazards. Our dives were to be limited to one reel length, about 300 feet.

Mike wanted me to dive first. I've looked forward to a dive like this in Iowa for years. We each had Y value tanks with an extra tank and regulator. I carried three lights, an extra mask, and a reel, the proper set-up for a solo dive of this type. The set-up I used has worked well in the past, in caves, shipwrecks, and under ice.

A twenty minute dive was planned. After a couple of minutes I came up in an airfilled joint. From this point I went left, as the chamber appeared to turn here. I saw what appeared to be the end of the old line and came up into another air-filled joint. The water was 8-10 feet deep and about 20-25 feet wide.

Things were going great - the water was clear and was not getting stirred up. I was only five minutes into the dive and was confident that I'd be to the end of the reel shortly. But all this changed as my back tank worked loose and fell. The line wrapped around the regulator. To use this tank I had to change my long hose and drop to the bottom. This created an unavoidable silting problem. After several minutes, I decided to tie off the reel and leave, following the line out with the tank under my arm. I considered coming up in an air chamber and waiting for Mike but I felt that self-rescue was better.

I surfaced after thirty-five minutes, long past the planned twenty minutes. Mike and Lowell were concerned, and Mike was going to come in and see what my problem was. This break-down would have been serious even in open water.

Mike waited about an hour for the water to clear, but with no flow, he found visibility near zero and wisely decided to abort his dive. The four of us then took a hike down the valley. Lowell showed us some interesting places.

We talked over future diving plans and all feel future trips are needed. In looking back at the dive problem, if you follow all safety rules, you can take care of a major problem and end up with only your feelings hurt.

Cold Water Cave, Winneshiek County

November 21, 1987; Larry Welch (TL), Scott Dankof, and Warren Netherton

It was a crisp November day, with little chance of bad weather. The water level per the shack recorder was 8.5 inches, very low. I was anxious to visit downstream Wanda's Walkway, and there were still some dye bugs left at the Pig Trough from the July dye trace that needed to be collected.

We got into the cave at 11:40 a.m., bringing our wetsuit hoods and a full load of food and water. Neither Scott nor Warren had been to the Pig Trough, so I led the way. One had to be quite vigilant when traversing Cascade, because you have to keep looking up to avoid bashing stalactites, yet you have to be looking down to avoid shin-bashing on the rimstone dams. The trip to the Pig Trough was uneventful, with a food break improving my somewhat dragging body. At the entrance to the Pig we bagged the two bugs from Cascade and then donned our wetsuit hoods.

As usual the Pig smelled rancid, and after balking at the first junction, I figured out the proper course to Chester White Dome. The lengthy backslide down the sleazy chute brought us to Wanda's Walkway, where we bagged the other two dye bugs. Our next job was to locate Gary Soule's Dome, which is one of the few places in the area that does not completely flood. Since we are planning to pass this way again, it seemed logical to locate this safe haven. The best way to get there is to squeeze over a couple of large breakdown blocks downstream, and then follow a ceiling crack away from the stream to a dry room. From here one can climb up a muddy chute (some assistance may be needed) into the dome, which has an excellent set of fossils embedded in its walls.

Scott was having some problems with his hood, so he decided to head back through the Pig. Warren and I made a quick recon downstream for 300-400 feet before heading back. Scott had made a wrong turn in the Pig Trough and we met him emerging from a side lead by Chester White Dome. This is one of the few spots in the cave where one can get really turned around, and I should have been a better tour guide on the first pass.

When we reached Cascade I took a stroll up to the Bat Room while Scott was recarbiding, but I didn't locate a single bat. We got moving again at 5:00 p.m., and the return trip through Cascade was a lot more pleasant than the trips when I had been all the way to Grappling Falls and back. Still, we were pretty tired by the time we got to the shaft. We got out around 8:15 p.m., in time to treat ourselves to a pizza.

Picture Rocks Park, Jones County

November 22, 1987; Mike Bounk (TL), Lowell Burkhead, Steve McDonald, Warren Netherton, Brad Olson, Mike Evanston, Mike Evanston (yes, there were two), Ben Eiler, Dave Schwendinger, and Eric ???

Ben and I arrived at Picture Rocks Park at about 9 a.m. and I rigged our usual 63 foot drop. Later, when the others arrived, Lowell and I ran a rappelling and ascending training session. This continued until about 2:00 p.m. when Ben and I had to leave. Lowell continued for a short time after this. Some of the cavers also rigged a belayed rock climb.

Cold Water Cave, Winneshiek County

December 5, 1987; Mike Nelson (TL), Bryan Bain, Gary Engh, and Larry Welch

Larry set up this off-weekend trip when he found out that Bryan and his friend Nicole would be back in the state for a short time. Bryan wanted to survey to tie in Holy Cow Crawl to the Cascade Passage. He is currently working on a map for an upcoming article about Cold Water Cave for the NSS News. Larry wanted to push out downstream Wanda's Walkway. Luckily, both of these areas are in the same neighborhood.

Larry wasn't feeling his best but suited up and wandered down to Guardian Fangs with us before deciding he shouldn't continue. He soloed out as we headed up Cascade.

After tying in the Holy Cow Crawl, Gary, too, didn't think he should go on. He also soloed out as Bryan and I pushed on up Cascade to the Pig Trough and over to Wanda's Walkway.

Once through the breakdown, we crawled on our hands and knees to the end of the survey and then began to belly crawl. We passed the estimated 300 feet that was last pushed by Gwenne Glasser Hayes years ago and pushed out somewhere between 300 and 400 feet more of this chin dippin' virgin cave.

The belly crawl showed no signs of letting up, so to speak, and when we reached a small rimstone dam we deemed it a suitable enough landmark to denote our turnaround point and did just that. Amid a rash of cramps suffered by Bryan, carbide lamp failures shared by both of us, and a light bulb failure of mine, we attempted to dash back to where we could both stand again. It turned out to be one hardcore piece of flashlight caving.

Personally, I'd feel better about pushing this out if the water to air ratio was reversed. I found out in April Cave's Lake Room that I could make better time floating long distances with my nose glued to the ceiling than I could with my chin plowing grit. I'll leave downstream Wanda's Walkway for the young and determined, and continue to concentrate on upstream for a while longer.

Cold Water Cave, Winneshiek County

December 12, 1987; Mike Nelson (TL), Dave Ecklund, Bill Nelson

At long last, this was the trip we had all been waiting for. The mainstream section of the new find had been surveyed back from The End Again Sump. With a shot into The Last Righthand Side Passage we'd picked up the hung portion of the survey through the Scandawhovian and Three Dives Sumps. Now it was time for survey that we could just run with until we were either too cold or too tired (and then push virgin cave).

So, why when I hit the platform did I find myself dreading this trip? One look down the steps made matters worse yet, in one week the water had gone from as low as I had personally ever seen it to the high side of the average level. Stepping into the water to get the actual level reading off the leg of the platform gave me another shock, the water was darned cold! The thermometer described it more accurately as 41 degrees. This is 5-6 degrees below normal, and the Spong Siphon and beyond is always colder.

The prospect of having to also SCUBA dive the Spong, besides the mandatory dives upstream, was more than I could face in light of the initial gut feelings I experienced, moments before, for the first time in my caving career.

I don't believe I feared as much for our personal safety as much as I doubted our ability to achieve our goals. When an alternative trip was proposed, I realized that I just didn't want to be in the cave that day. My grateful thanks go out to both Dave and Bill for their understanding in this matter. Next time guys. OK? OK!

Cave Trip, Cedar and Clinton Counties

December 12, 1987; Michael Bounk (TL), Steve Moon, Ben Eiler

Ben and I drove from our house to Massillon in northeast Cedar county. We then walked back to the Massillon Park caves. After about twenty minutes, we located the pit entrances. There are three caves with pit entrances about twenty feet deep. There are varying amounts of passage at the bottom. One of these has several feet of passage leading out the nearby bluff. This one has not been mapped but the other two have.

Steve, Ben and I each dropped and ascended the first pit. This was Ben's first vertical cave trip. Steve and I did the second pit and then tried the third. My chest box jammed in the entrance, which was constricted. I tried twice and decided if I got through I would have trouble getting back out. I hooked my upper Jumar so I could rest and, after working on the problem for a few minutes, had Steve pull me out. Steve then looked at the pit and decided that it was too small. After he removed a big rock and a few small ones, he and I both did the pit.

After lunch, we drove to a site near Big Rock in Clinton county. Steve showed us three small crawlway caves. In one of

these, we crawled in at the base of the bluff and exited through an entrance about five feet higher. The longest of these three caves is about 40 feet. After exploring these caves, we went home.

Cold Water Cave, Winneshiek County

December 19, 1987 Michael Bounk, Randy Kwiatkowski (TL), Art Dahms, and Tom Kerndt

We entered the cave at about 1:00 p.m. and headed downstream. We planned a tourist trip, one where we could see as much of the downstream main passage as possible before returning to the surface. We said we would be out by 8:00 p.m.

We reached Monument Passage at about 2:30 p.m. While I changed carbide and met with Doug Schmuecker and two of his friends, the others inspected this passage. After a break, my group continued downstream while Doug and his friends went upstream. I planned to suggest that we turn around at 4:00 p.m. and thus have three hours to go downstream and four hours to get back out.

We reached The Swim and started through it clinging to the right hand wall, as usual. At this point I asked the time and was told it was 4:00 p.m. Everyone wanted to continue through The Swim, so we did, before heading back upstream. On the way back I took a number of pictures. We exited at about 6:00 p.m., two hours early. (Note: between the Windmill Passage and The Swim I counted seven wall-to-wall breakdown masses.

Cold Water Cave, Winneshiek County

December 19, 1987; Stacey Cyphert, Mike Lace, Larry Welch (TL)

The purpose of this trip was twofold: to complete the survey of The Brother's Grimm and to test the use of cyalumes as the light source for survey compasses. Unfortunately, only one of these purposes was completely accomplished.

The trip downstream to The Brother's Grimm was uneventful. Larry led the way back to the start of the survey as neither Mike nor I were familiar with this passage. For those of you who don't know, this passage eats coveralls with a passion. Soon we were all sitting in the large dome where we prepared for the survey.

The first problem we encountered was attaching the cyalume to the compasses. Our tape refused to stick to anything once we were underground. A couple of rubber bands from Mike's pack did the trick and we were ready to go. I would recommend rubber bands to others in the future.

The first few shots went relatively quickly. Soon, however, we were belly crawling through the stream and this slowed things down. We did manage to pick up 151 feet before cold feet and fogged compasses forced us to abandon the survey. A couple more

shots should be all that is necessary to tie in with the Wisconsin Avenue survey done earlier this year. We left a chip to mark where we stopped.

A final comment on the cyalumes is in order. While they worked well on the compasses, they are less than desirable as your only source of light (as one of our party found out for a few minutes).



Mike Lace in the Gallery Section of Cold Water Cave

So You Think You Know A Little About Caves

- (1) Where is the highest cave in the world?
- (2) What is the deepest cave in the world?
- (3) What is the largest cave chamber?
- (4) What is the longest cave? (gift question)

See back of cover for answers.

