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## Intercom, Volume 24, No. 4, July-August 1988

Lowell Burkhead

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# **I N T E R C O M**

Published Semi-spasmodically By

THE IOWA GROTTO

*National Speleological Society*



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The Iowa Grotto meets at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month in room 226 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.

Cover: Stacey T. Cyphert in an unnamed cave in Rockcastle County, Kentucky. Photo by Doreen Lopina.



IOWA GROTTO  
National Speleological Society  
P.O. Box 228  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

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Vice-Chairman ..... Larry Welch  
Secretary/Treasurer ..... Mike Lace

Volume 24

Issue 4

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## IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

July 27, 1988

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. with nine members present. The treasurer's report included a current balance of \$244.19.

Trip Reports: Mike Bounk reported on a trip to Rambo Pit, Clayton County, which included Mike Nelson, his family, Larry Welch, and Mike Lace. Mike Lace recounted the June April Cave trip which involved the survey into Nemo Dome by himself, Lowell Burkhead, and Stacey Cyphert. The July 4<sup>th</sup> Coldwater Field Camp drew a sizable crowd from various parts of the country for tours while a resurvey party, led by Sue Ecklund and including Stacey Cyphert, Larry Welch, and Mike Lace, netted almost 6,000 feet. July Coldwater Weekend involved a resurvey of Friday Night Dome by Stacey Cyphert, Larry Welch, and Mike Lace; as well as the beginning of the Toboggan Run resurvey by Mike Lace and Larry Welch. Greg McCarty discussed recent dives into Wild Well by Randy Kwiatkowski and Art Dahms as well as dives into Allamakee County Spring by Mike Nelson and Greg. He also described the discovery of a new pit near Deep Misery Cave while on a recon trip with Lowell Burkhead.

Future Trips: The next April Cave trip is tentatively scheduled for July 30<sup>th</sup>. The MSS Cornfeed and the Grotto Summer Trip to Mystery Cave will take place on August 13<sup>th</sup>.

Old Business: None recorded.

New Business: Art Dahms recently joined the Iowa Grotto. Stacey Cyphert volunteered to prepare the July/August issue of the Intercom. Greg McCarty announced that he is selling a 1/4 inch wetsuit hood for \$12. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

August 24, 1988

The meeting was called to order by chairman Mike Bounk at 7:38 p.m. and a treasurer's report announced a balance of \$280.19. Seven members were present.

Trip Reports: Mike Bounk described a recent trip to Searryl's Cave with Steve Moon and a friend. They noted the presence of fresh flowstone. Loren Schutt reported on a lead-checking trip along the Wapsipinicon River near Massilon with his son Mark. They noted a large amount of exposed limestone, a few small shelter caves, and a sensitive landowner situation. Mike Lace described the Summer Grotto Trip to Mystery Cave. The July trip to April Cave, which included Kris Licursi, Warren Netherton, Lowell Burkhead, Mike Lace, and Stacey Cyphert, saw the discovery of Sprout Dome in the new section and the accumulation of enough survey footage to place the cave over the 1.5 mile mark. The August Coldwater trip involved a mainstream resurvey effort by Larry Welch and Mike Lace which netted approximately 1,100 feet. On the following day, a Glenwood Cave survey trip by Mike Lace and Larry Welch extended the survey another 200 meters to the "T" junction. A Floyd County trip by Stacey Cyphert and Mike Lace resulted in the mapping of Hemp Hole.

Future Trips: The next April Cave trip is scheduled for Labor Day Weekend. The Fall Grotto Trip will take place at Dutton's County Park, near West Union. It may include vertical training and a trip to Gouldsburg Cave. The September Coldwater weekend will include a

dedication ceremony by the Department of the Interior, designating it as a national natural landmark.

Old Business: The recent issue of the Intercom was discussed.

New Business: Mike Mosch (from Hubbard, Iowa) recently joined the Grotto while George Huppert and Betty Wheeler renewed their memberships. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

### **Win a Few, Lose a Few**

#### The Wild Well Project

Clayton County, Iowa

Delores, Aaron, and Mike Nelson,  
Kim, Cody, and Art Dahms,  
Randy Kwiatkowski, Lowell Burkhead,  
and Greg McCarty

July 9, 1988

By Mike Nelson

We all showed up and got the divers, Randy and Art, into the cave by 11:50 a.m. The conditions were somewhat better than the last dive when it was 10 degrees outside. On this nice summer day they were still in a hurry to get into the water, but to cool off, not warm up.

Once they were underway on their planned dive of 5-6 hours, we dropped the women and kids off at the Spook Cave Campground and Greg, Lowell, and I went over to remove the stick jam in Henkes' Lost Creek Cave. There was a little weather to the north of us and Lowell was going to stay on the surface to monitor it while Greg and I got muddy. I had gotten to the bottom of the second drop and Greg was rigging to lower the digging tools when Lowell hollered in that the system was moving our way fast with considerable lightening. Lightening has an affinity for caves and can reach deep into them. We beat a hasty retreat but not before I glanced into the crawlway to check its condition. Half of the passage had filled with a fine loamy soil above the pea soup type mud I had work through the last time. We were faced with either a big dig or waiting until the area experienced a good storm to reach the stick jam 30'-35' down the crawlway. We went back to Spook and killed time 'til the system blew over.

Later Delores and Aaron joined us as we went over to see if Deep Misery Cave was still open. ("It's not the cave that's deep, it's the misery" — Lowell Burkhead) I trespassed on it to see if it was open, in which case we would get official permission to fool around. The opening could not be found amid the refuse and old car bodies, all of which dated to the teen years of the 1900's. I walked up the ravine a ways and called out "Here's the cave, here." Covered with a few boards and fence posts nailed together was a deep, enterable pit cave. Greg and Lowell marveled over this new cave. Then Greg went to get permission to look at it, which he and Lowell did. A report will be filed by Greg (editor's note: see the next report by Lowell) but an interesting note is that this opened up within two months of the last trip there, 12 years ago. I had to head back to the Well, as the 5 hour mark was approaching and I wanted to be there when Randy and Art emerged.

We stopped by Spook and picked up Kim and Cody and got to the site



at 5:00 p.m. All the way there I was hoping they would still be in the cave, as if the trip was the minimum allowed, it would properly indicate either serious problems or the end to relatively easy passage. Rats, when we pulled up they were in the very early stages of doffing gear. They had been out 5 minutes and the dive had lasted 5 hours and 5 minutes.

They had laid another 290' of line through water and traversed about 75'-100' more of air space, bringing the total length to about 1500'. Toward the end, the sumps were short and the air spaces between them likewise. It took a tremendous toll in energy and neoprene to derig themselves, tote gear over muddy breakdown, rerig and dive, then do it all again.

The passage remained in the area of 15' wide and varying but adequate height right up to a room entirely filled with unstable breakdown. The water could be seen around the edges, some holes seen into the pile, but it was not safe to progress.

Randy had lost his pack containing survey gear. It will give him cause to return to Wild Well to look for it, but did in the prospects of any work they had intended to do that day and the following day.

Of course this is viewed as a setback, but this is not the end of the Wild Well Project. The straight-forward exploration has been accomplished. Next will be some equipment recovery. Then the surveying and the serious work of scanning the limits of the cave. Who knows what may be found yet? Then there is the more through search of the 315' long stream passage room. There is much to be optimistic about concerning the Wild Well. Stay tuned.

### **Beyond Deep Misery Cave**

#### Deep Misery Cave

Clayton County, Iowa

Lowell Burkhead, Mike Nelson

Aaron Nelson, and Greg McCarty

July 9, 1988

By Lowell Burkhead

Mike and I waited for what seemed to be too long for Greg to return from his trip to get permission to see the cave. When he did return, Mike had to leave to meet the divers who were due to be out of Wild Well momentarily.

Greg and I pried the cover off the pit with some difficulty and I started down. It was a chimney approximately two feet by four feet wide. Reaching for the fall wall, I stepped for a foothold that turned out to be six feet below my foot. Luckily I had a good handhold and was able to recover my position. I climbed back out and decided to leave chimneying to others until I get my left eye fixed and regain my depth perception. [editor's note: Lowell has successfully undergone surgery]

Greg climbed in and started down. He encountered a wide spot that was hard to get to the bottom of and then a horizontal passage that was almost completely plugged in both directions with junk that had washed in from other sink holes. There were several pieces in this passage that were too large to have come down the passage Greg was in including an intact cast iron pot over four feet in diameter. Greg estimated this

passage to be forty feet below the surface. He moved some junk and was able to see down a bit that the passage and the cave apparently drains into. This pit was estimated to be forty feet deep.

We don't think the position of this pit system is only a few feet from the bottom of Deep Mystery Cave. The pit is the logical place for the surface stream that enters the cave to drain and should be dropped while the surface stream is inactive. Greg reports there are no good rigging points in the cave and there are no good rigging points outside the cave.

Greg had his hands full climbing out. There were tight spots and places too narrow to push up even if footholds could be found. While he was trying, a mouse came out of the pit but Greg was not up far enough to see what the mouse used for footholds. Greg finally made it out after a considerable amount of grunting and straining.

Portions of this report may lack accuracy but Greg's promised report hasn't shown up yet and it's five days past deadline. We decided to name this new cave Beyond Deep Misery Cave. We won't know if this is an accurate name until we explore and map the whole system including Deep Misery and whatever lower levels that pit takes us to. From the amount of water that this cave is capable of taking, this cave could go.

#### More Poking Around in the General Area of Hickory Creek

Allamakee County, Iowa  
Mike and Delores Nelson

July 10, 1988  
By Mike Nelson

One of the lovely valleys that branches off Hickory Creek I call the Valley of Seven Springs (for lack of checking for a real name). Most of these springs are just trickles coming from bedding planes, though some were obviously the result of subsidence over once larger openings. Only one of these had the classic resurgence look, up a little draw and filled with rock fallen from the edifice. The major flow of this spring fed stream system emerged just upstream of this collapse. We walked the stream bed until we ran out of water and springs and then returned to the resurgence.

To my untrained eye, it was plain that "there's the spring but there's the cave." We started moving rocks. Soon there was a pool of water visible below. We worked back into the hill until we hit Mother Earth (solid rock) and then widened things out. We ended up with three rocks too big to move. These rocks covered a rise pool that cleared itself of the minor cloudiness we had caused, despite no evident flow. One leg length down, an opening could be felt heading back into the hill.

The man who gave us permission is "on good terms" with the owner and assured us there would be no problem with us looking around. Now it's time to get a hold of the owner and do things right. A good day's work might open up another divable clear water spring here in Allamakee County.



## July Coldwater Cave Trip and Rambo Pit Exploration

Coldwater Cave, Rambo Pit  
Winnebago and Clayton Counties, Iowa  
Buck Family, Mike Nelson,  
Mike Lase, Larry Welch

July 16-17, 1988  
By Michael Bounk

Saturday morning the family and I drove to Coldwater Cave. I drained the rainfall recorder stilling well and then entered the cave and removed the upper part of the stilling well of the stream-level recorder. I then removed the mud which was interfering with the recorder float, reassembled the stilling well, and exited the cave. When I checked the recorder I found that the stream was at about the normal winter level, which is about 1/2 foot lower than it is at this time of year.

On Sunday my family and I met Mike Nelson, Larry Welch, and Mike Lase in Clayton County. We drove to the house of the owner of Cave Canem near Big Spring. We spoke to the owner's wife about checking a pit which we thought was on her land near a pond. She said she would take us to it. We followed her to near the location of Cave Canem. We explained that we were not interested in seeing this cave at this time but wanted to check a pit about 1/4 mile to the southeast. She told us how to find the owner and left. We got permission and while Mike, Mike, and Larry rigged the pit, I got my equipment together. I then got on rope and started backwards down the weed-covered slope. About eight feet down I reached the lip of the pit. It was about twenty feet down to a ledge, below which was a "black hole." This looked promising. I dropped to the ledge, and then into the second drop. About twenty feet below the ledge, I reached the bottom.

The bottom was about three feet by seven feet. After about ten minutes, I was able to unclog a small, triangular hole. I could see down this hole about two feet but could not enter it because of my size. Rocks tossed into it would bounce and roll for about five seconds. I guess that there is probably at least fifteen more feet of drop before the bottom is reached.

I ascended and reported on the find. In theory, it is probably diggable, but this would probably be very difficult due to the constricted nature of the pit. Larry Welch suggested naming it Rambo Pit.

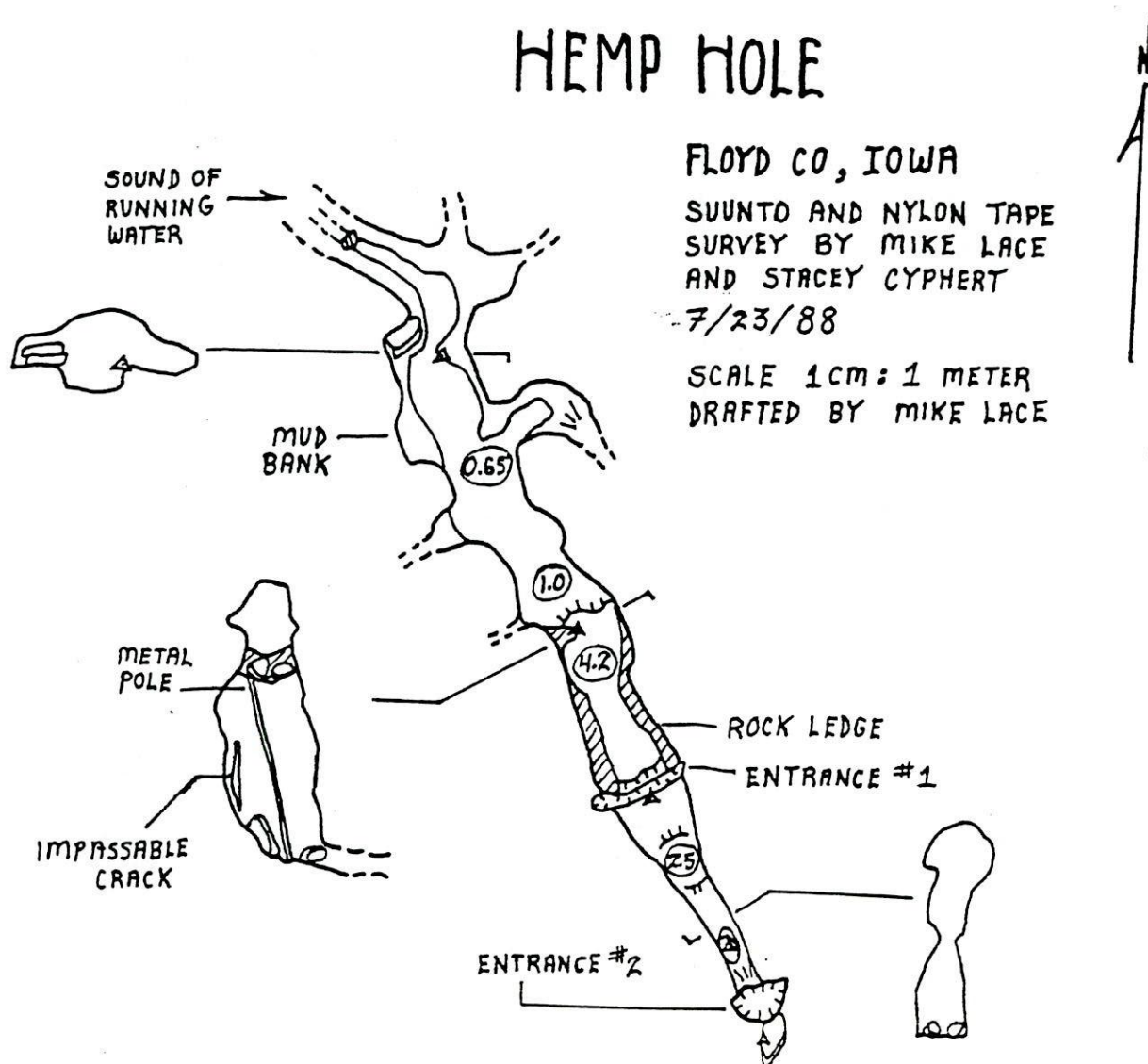
## Coon Highway Closed

Hemp Hole and Coon Highway Cave  
Floyd County, Iowa  
Mike Lace and Stacey Cyphert

July 27, 1988  
By Stacey T. Cyphert

It had been so long since I had been to see the caves on Wilson's Farm that I could not remember the last time I was there. The place had obviously changed. No longer are there trees marking the edges of sink holes; trees that helped me identify cave locations. Sadly, too, not all the caves I remember are there either.

The car body in the bottom of the sink hole that once made entry into Coon Highway Cave so memorable has been moved to one side. For a time, this probably facilitated entry into the cave. Now, however, it has allowed dirt fill to close the entrance. Mike and I had planned to survey the cave during our visit as Mr. Wilson wants to fill the sink hole. Since entry into Coon Highway Cave through Two-Days Digging Cave is currently impossible, we may dig open Coon Highway for a quick survey to preserve the memory. We did survey Hemp Hole (see map below) to bring the number of surveyed caves on the property to three (Jesse James Cave, Wilson Cave, and Hemp Hole).





## Another Way Out?

April Cave

Winnebago County, Iowa

Mike Lace, Lowell Burkhead, Kris Licursi,  
Warren Vetterton, and Stacey Cyphert

July 30, 1988

By Stacey T. Cyphert

It was supposed to be a two-party survey weekend to push April Cave over the 3 km mark. By 10:30 a.m. Saturday morning, however, only Mike, Lowell, and I had arrived. Lowell was under doctor's orders to stay out of the cave which meant that only Mike and I could attempt the task. Since it was a beautiful day, we decided to bag the survey and dig on a promising crevice up the hill that we had been ignoring.

After driving to the sink hole where the crevice is located, Mike belayed me as I squeezed between the rock walls and pounded on the rock and dirt floor below me. To the left of the floor is a small opening which leads to a drop. I was able to enlarge the opening slightly but not sufficiently to enter. A rock is now visible approximately ten feet down the drop but it is not clear if this is the bottom of the pit. While I was working, Warren and Kris arrived. We talked for a while and decided that some April Cave survey in the Nemo Dome section should be done.

Suiting up for the trip brought back memories of the original Nemo Dome discovery trip. On that trip, one of the members of our party forgot his wetsuit boots. It happened again this time (a different member), so the discovery of virgin passage was high on my mind as we entered the cave.

The trip out to Nemo Dome was uneventful except that it should be noted that the cave contained more bats than I have ever seen in it before. Warren mentioned that Mystery Cave has also recently seen an increase in bat activity but that he did not know the reason for it.

When Warren climbed through the flowstone opening, he became only the sixth person ever to see Nemo Dome. He was impressed with the beautiful flowstone and the numerous fossils in the walls that he was able to point out to Kris. I learned later that they noticed some insects in the dome.

Our survey started with the 12 foot waterfall in the small dome off of Nemo Dome. From the floor of the dome it did not appear that there would be going passage above the falls. I climbed to the top with the aid of several shoulders and hands from the other members of the party. Once on top I was in tall, narrow, virgin passage. The ceiling was 20-25 feet above me and the walls were about a foot and a half apart. There were two small pools above the waterfall and then a small, flowing stream. I followed the stream around a tight turn and could hear falling water. Another turn and I was in a dome.

The dome, Sprout Dome (named in honor of those Mike Nelson calls the three sprouts - Mike Lace, Larry Welch, and Stacey Cyphert), is approximately 40 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet long. The floor is covered with small cobble stones. Two waterfalls empty into this dome over a ledge about 30 feet above the floor. Passage can be seen continuing behind one of the waterfalls (the one on the left as you enter the dome) but I could not get a good view of the passage behind

the other waterfall it is directly ahead of you when you enter the cave. The walls are climbable to a point, but reaching the ledge will be tricky and may require a climbing pole. Mike came up and helped me survey this newly discovered dome and passage.

A lone bat was seen residing in the dome. More interesting, however, was a stick found above the 12 foot waterfall. The stick was approximately 18 inches long by 1 inch in diameter. This, plus the insects mentioned earlier, are strong indicators of a surface connection.

Kris, Warren and Mike began the survey down the stoop-walk lead near the 12 foot waterfall while I changed carbide. Shortly after I joined them everyone started to feel cold so we exited the cave. While we only netted about 100 feet of survey, we were all content with what we had accomplished.

### To the Cesspool and Back

Wiedenman's Pit  
Clayton County, Iowa  
Larry Welch, Mike Lace,  
Mike and Delores Nelson

July 30, 1988  
By Mike Lace

We returned to Wiedenman's Pit determined to push the passage at the bottom and hopefully discover where the water was actually draining. Going passage has to be lurking down there somewhere. Wetsuit gear is a must. Larry decided that he would wear his neoprene into and out of the pit while I opted to change at the bottom. Larry entered first and I followed; then Mike lowered the duffel bag with our equipment using the 200 foot belay rope. Mike joined us at the bottom just as I had finished changing into my wetsuit.

Larry and I squeezed under the ledge into the rancid, pooled water that we had affectionately named Wiedenman's Cesspool. We first proceeded to the two domes on the far side of the pool to examine a pancake room leading off of the farthest dome. I entered the two foot high room but did not follow the wall all the way to the other side. Large rocks and logs were wedged here and there but I noticed that there was an obstructed extension to the pancake room about two feet below the right wall. It looked as if a bit of digging would open this room that appeared to roughly follow the crevice that forms the main pit and the two domes.

We returned to the cesspool to search the edge of the water for a possible outlet. Larry began digging at a muddy lead on the left wall of the pool room while I started to dig on a lead at the edge of the water in the main pit area. I opened this crawlway enough to slip in a body length to see that it curved to the left, following the edge of the pit floor. It appeared to be part of the original floor that had been sealed off by dirt and rock falling into the pit. In the meantime, Larry had moved enough mud to allow four feet of entry with the rest of the visible crawlway (10 to 12 feet) requiring excavation.

Mike ascended to rig the gear hauling line while I began to change out of my wet gear and into a dry set of clothes I had packed into the



... It was a bit chilly changing down there but the dry  
... felt good. Larry threatened to snap a few photos of  
... but I promised him that his chances of making it  
... would drastically decrease if his camera flashed. I  
... incident and Larry followed. He found that the  
... was too restrictive both in the rappel and the ascent. We  
... the extension of the pancake room was the most promising  
... at this point. Whether or not this is where the water drains is  
... unclear.

### **MSS Cornfeed / Mystery II Tour**

#### Mystery Cave

Fillmore County, Minnesota

Gene Kramer, Mike Lace, Steve Pilon,

Chris Pilon, and the Chris Martenson Family

August 13, 1988

By Mike Lace

I arrived at the Forestville State Park at 8:30 a.m., just in time  
to sign up for a comfortable tour through a section of Mystery II. Even  
though I am a native Minnesotan, this was my first trip into Mystery  
Cave, and, in fact, my first trip into any Minnesota cave. I soon  
discovered what I had been missing.

It was a busy morning with numerous trips being organized while  
veteran Iowa Grotto caver, Warren Netherton, who's now the park manager  
of the cave, kept close tabs on each groups' intended activities. Gene  
Kramer, from the MSS, was our trip leader for the day and he planned on  
taking us on a tour designed to acquaint new visitors with both the  
commercial trail and some off-trail sections of Mystery II.

We first headed to the Carousel to do a little chimneying and  
crawling. The passageways we encountered were the typical keyhole  
shaped crevices normally found in the Stewartville member. We  
intersected the commercial trail at various points while being careful  
not to disrupt regularly scheduled commercial tours. I noticed that  
many sensitive areas along the trail were flagged with tape to avoid  
inadvertent disturbance by both seasoned cavers and commercial visitors.

We finally worked our way to Mystery Pool, which is a small, water-  
pooled passage that is decorated with some very nice flowstone columns.  
The trip back to the entrance was uneventful but, nevertheless,  
informative and fun. We exited the cave to find ourselves right in the  
middle of a muggy day but the weather was tempered with the sweet corn  
and a slide show on Brazilian caving.

## The Revenge of Wiedenman's Cesspool

Wiedenman's Pit

Clayton County, Iowa

Mike Laca, Larry Welch, Mike Nelson,  
Dave Ecklund, Sue Ecklund, Kathy Ecklund,  
Delores Nelson, and Aaron Nelson

August 14, 1988

By Mike Laca

We assembled at Forestville State Park early that morning and caravanned to Wiedenman's Pit for the third drop of the season. It promised to be another warm day so we tried to rig the rope and ready our gear as quickly as possible upon reaching the pit. Larry and I had the routine fairly well planned so that once we reached the bottom we would immediately call for the gear bag to be lowered and then begin changing into our wetsuits while Sue, Dave, and Mike began their rappel. This was Sue and Dave's first time in Wiedenman's Pit and their first in-cave drop that was this deep. Both of them reached the bottom (and later escaped) successfully and seemed to enjoy the cave.

Larry led the way under the ledge and into our favorite spot in the cave - the Cesspool - with the hope of opening the extension off of the pancake room past the second dome. It seemed as if it took more effort than it should have to reach the pancake room and begin digging; this led me to believe that the CO<sub>2</sub> level was higher than on previous trips. The water level in the Cesspool was also higher than we remembered, confirming reports of rain in the general area the week before.

We quickly opened the pancake extension and slipped down two feet into the two foot high room that measured at least ten to fifteen feet wide. There were large pieces of breakdown littered throughout this room as well as a few sticks that were wedged in cracks and corners. Both the floor and the ceiling were solid pieces of bedrock with pitted surfaces, indicating that the water had obviously flowed through this section at one time. Both sides of the room pinched down to an impassable crack but I squeezed straight ahead to find that even though the ceiling height was about eighteen inches, the room still continued past a breakdown block constriction. Larry took a look at this area and then we headed back to the pool to check on Mike and Dave's progress. They had begun digging on an upper lead just above the beginning of the Cesspool in the main pit area. We attempted a voice connection by shouting into a small lead on the opposite side of the Cesspool but, if they did connect, the crawl was almost completely obstructed.

Larry and I returned to the pancake extension for one last crack at moving rocks that blocked our progress. I tried to push and pry the breakdown out of the way with a pry bar but to no avail and finally resorted to backing down the crawlway to push with my feet; this seemed to work but I was a little too exhausted to completely clear the way. One good push with the feet should do it next time. I could see the room continued for thirty to forty feet with approximately the same dimensions but with no encouraging echo. Larry claims that he felt definite air movement coming through that area but I couldn't say for sure.

We returned to the main pit to change into our dry ascending gear and after sending up two loads of equipment in the gear-hauling bag we



climbed out of the pit. After we had cleared the pit, Delores and Aaron each took a turn at climbing down to the ledge twenty feet below the lip of the pit while on belay. The owner was pleased with the photos we had brought for him and said that he would talk to a couple of his neighbors about sinkholes on their properties and the possibility of letting us examine those that might be open.

### Survey at Glenwood

Glenwood Cave  
Winneshiek County, Iowa  
Mike Lace and Larry Welch

August 21, 1988  
By Mike Lace

Larry and I had just completed 1100 feet worth of mainstream Coldwater Cave resurvey the day before but we were still anxious to get into Glenwood Cave on this beautiful Sunday morning. The last Grotto survey trip to this cave was last winter and, unfortunately, the lack of available cavers and commitments to other projects left a hanging survey approximately 1000 feet in from the entrance. Supposedly, 600 feet remained until one reached the "T" junction so this became our goal for the day.

I had checked the entrance on Friday and found it to be convincingly unsumped. This was my first trip into Glenwood cave and I was curious to see what this historic cave was really like. We slipped into our gear and climbed down a talus slope to the water's edge. We found a weakly inflated inner tube in the entry room and, as I snapped a few photos, Larry searched for the ceiling survey station that marked the beginning of the right-hand side passage. We quickly set a chip farther in this crawlway so it wouldn't be disturbed by visitors.

The first thousand feet are stoop walking to a roomy hands and knees crawl with little in the way of formations but numerous ceiling fractures. We found the previous party's survey chip and began the extension toward the "T". A two-person survey effort leaves both cavers with a lot to do so we barely noticed the time go by as we pushed ahead; Larry taking lead tape and compass while I kept book.

We did notice a couple of in-feeders draining into the main passage but both required digging. The water, at one point, quickly became deeper and within a couple of survey shots we were into the ceiling joint that forms the "T" junction. A definite water flow was observed in this section that had been absent in the pooled mainstream. We decided to tie off the survey for the day. The trip out was unremarkable, with an elapsed time of four hours, but the two hundred additional meters we had accumulated made this a satisfying weekend.

## Unpublished Jewels From the Past

This is a new section starting with this issue that could eventually be a large fraction of the Intercom. These are trip reports that were misplaced and didn't get in the issue in which they belonged. As these reports and articles are found, they will be published in the current issue. If you turned in material that has not been published, send it in again if you kept a copy. If it doesn't get published, it won't be because it got misplaced and I will tell you the reasons why.

Intercom Editor

### St. Olaf Spring

St. Olaf Spring  
Clayton County, Iowa  
Mike Nelson

November 1, 1987  
By Mike Nelson

This spring had the good fortune of being right where the county decided a road should go. It now resurges through a thirty feet long, two feet by two feet wide culvert. I crawled up this slick cement causeway to the small hollow of natural cave and poked my head into the actual resurgence. The cold water took my breath away. With my second breath I pushed into it around a tight corner to the left. I was in it most of a body length and saw enough passage to get my curiosity going. I retreated to get SCUBA gear.

Geared up I pushed into the two feet wide by eighteen inch high opening down into about two feet of water. I had visibility, once around the corner, of ten to twelve feet to the apparent end of the cave. At this point, though, the cave turned even more sharply to the right and dropped into about four feet of water. A joint in the ceiling there had air in it. It was too small to be of any use to me, though it did convince me that there should be more air somewhere along the way. Six to eight feet past the right turn the cave veered to the left again for three or four feet before coming into a small breakdown room. This room was approximately four feet wide, six feet long, and five and a half feet tall, with one foot of air space. The room was almost totally filled by two large breakdown blocks. With the SCUBA gear on, the best I could do was lay out across them and feel around them for continuing passage. None was apparent. I could not have pushed past the blocks anyhow. I left the cave, writing off this lead.

### Coldwater Cave

Coldwater Cave  
Winneshiek County, Iowa  
Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, Doug Schmucker

November 21, 1987  
By Mike Nelson

There were several purposes for this trip: pick up hung survey from the near side of Scandawhovian Bumps to far side of Three Dive Sump; replace the original hand line with a safer, more permanent one;

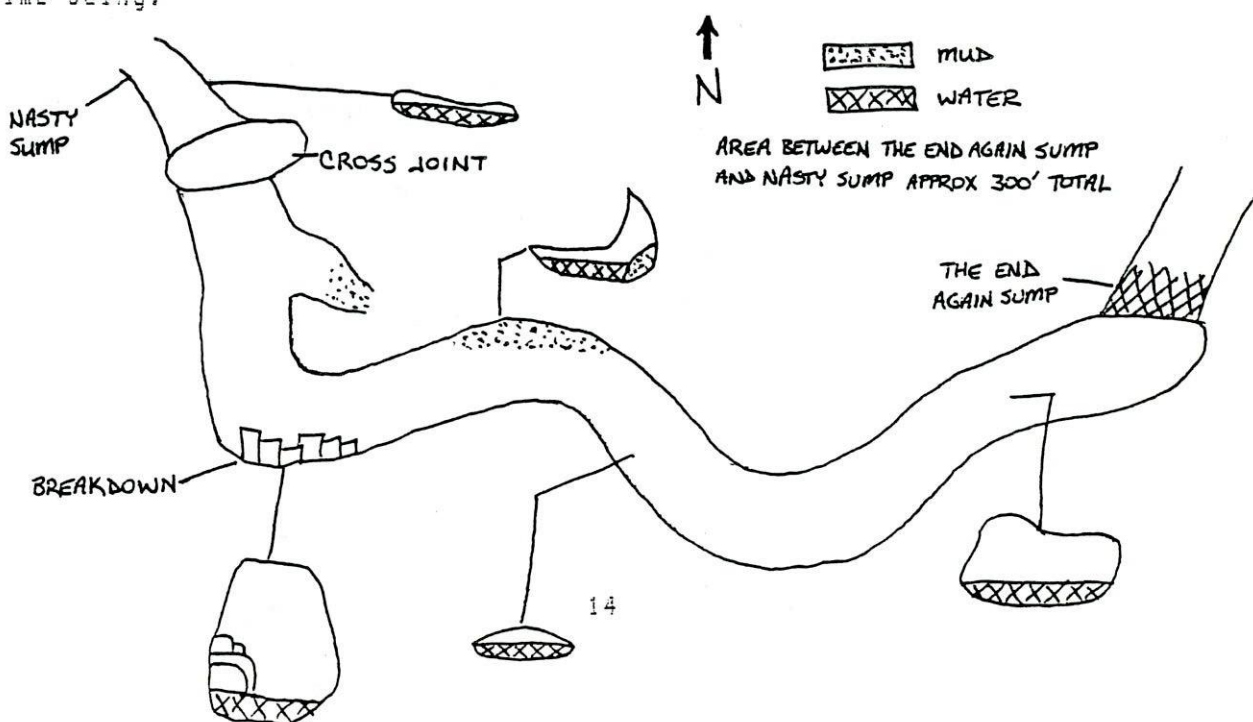


dive The End Again Sump; and, possibly, dive the sump in the Pyramid Passage.

One of the first things we learned about deep cave penetration diving is that one must have the ability to gear up almost instantly or find oneself too cold to perform the duty at hand. As of yet, thanks to taking the Larry Laine sump diving instruction course and securing state of the art equipment, I am the only member of the group working this area with this ability. Equipment specifically designed and set up for this singular activity is essential for the smooth transition from caving to diving without expecting to freeze one's buns off.

The time spent passing around and setting up gear at the site is costing us precious heat as is doing low energy expending chores, such as surveying once beyond the dive. Going into a dive cold is far from ideal and poses real safety hazards. Each of us working this section of the cave must come to grips with this reality if we are to continue to safely and efficiently pursue our goals of pushing out and surveying this challenging area. At present we have three torpedoes for transporting SCUBA gear, and that shall be the limit as to the number of persons on each trip. As more gear is fashioned and becomes available, our teams can grow accordingly. Better a small, comfortable team than a larger one in varying degrees of discomfort.

By the time we had geared up, we were almost too cold to survey. We were too cold to restring the hand line. Only my evidently high tolerances to the cold and wet allowed me to dive The End Again Sump while Bill and Doug did their best to stave off the chill. From the puzzling southward trend of the cave here, it headed back generally west northwest once past the six foot sump. I pushed out about three hundred feet of virgin passage before it turned into sumpish stuff again, stuff that I didn't even like the looks of. Surprisingly, the water level in this part of the cave reflected the lowest levels I had personally ever witnessed in the mainstream. All three sumps to this point had some airspace through them, the one in front of me was most likely experiencing a rare unsumped interval. Still I am writing off this lead in favor of the two going leads up the right hand side passage for the time being.



## Bill Wilson's Caves

Coon Highway, Hemp Hole, Jesse James, Two Days Digging, and Wilson Cave  
Floyd County, Iowa  
November 22, 1987  
By Mike Nelson

We had gotten an early start home from DMC this Sunday morning so I finally got the opportunity to swing by Bill Wilson's and show my brother, Bill, around. We started off by viewing Wilson Cave but did not enter it. Next we did a very thorough tour of Jesse James Cave, taking time to play and climb and such.

Next I took him over to Two Days Digging and dropped into the slot entrance. Getting my usual bit of claustrophobia, I climbed out making chicken noises. Bill, of course, had to belittle me a little. I was ready for him and told him how much better I would feel about it if he went in first so I could worry about him fitting from up here instead of me down there. I didn't really want to tell him to remove his excess layers of clothing as I didn't really want to get in there that bad. I then proceeded to let him get himself stuck pretty awful good in a situation I was certain I could talk him out of. He had his moments and almost did get in, then he had his moments and almost didn't get out! I gave him a few pointers drawn from my previous experience with this poser of an entrance drop and a couple of words on relaxing to get smaller. He had to figure out on his own how to get his back pocket unsnagged from a protrusion behind him, while I pointed out the wisdom of sewing ones back pockets shut or removing them altogether. He made it out not too much the worse for the wear, with a few things to think about. I didn't get in this one 'til my third attempt; he should do better.

Next we looked into Coon Highway Cave. Half the fun has been taken out of this cave as Bill Wilson removed the Ford we used to have to crawl under to enter it. It is much safer now, I must admit.

We walked past Hemp Hole Cave and I pointed out to Bill all the sinks that aren't there anymore. Bill Wilson has done an unbelievable job of restoring what were once monstrous sink holes into nearly farmable land. The place doesn't look the same. But he has left all the cave-bearing sinks as they were. Thank you Bill Wilson.

## Lead Trip to St. Peter, Minn.

Unnamed Caves  
Blue Earth County, Minnesota  
Mike Nelson and Delores Nelson

November 27, 1988  
By Mike Nelson

Well over a year ago while doing some repair work on some of my cave gear, a local cobbler told me of the caves near his home town of Mankato, Minnesota. I expressed surprise that this was an area of exposed limestone. He assured me that not only was there limestone, but that it was a major source of quarried limestone in the Midwest! I made a mental note to follow this lead up if I was ever in the neighborhood.

I load trucks for a living, and one trucker who knew I caved mentioned seeing what appeared to be caves along side of U.S. 169



between Mankato and St. Peter. Now St. Peter is a name that to me was synonymous with sandstone, but the naming of rock strata is such an arcane matter that it didn't necessarily rule out limestone in the area.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday Delores and I decided to drive up and have a look see. Some of the land we traveled upon, on our way there, had to be among the flattest acres in the midwest. The valley of the Minnesota River sliced quite a scar across the land, and to my understanding, exposed rocks of great geologic antiquity farther upstream. As we drove down towards the floor of this valley I soon spotted large areas of exposed rock with visible bedding planes and joints. As soon as we got close to them, it was obvious of their weathering characteristics, that they were sandstone, and that my cobbler friend didn't know bullpucky about the geology of his home town area.

We drove north up U.S. 169 from Mankato to St. Peter and saw nearly a dozen holes into the side of the roadcut. After driving past the exposed area, we did a "UY" and made a road hazard of ourselves, checking the majority of the holes.

The first appeared to be quite large, manmade, with a violated gate, and some sort of cement work rising from the floor. It stunk to high heaven of sewage. My curiosity waned.

Basically, the rest were either small recesses with seep spring basins, or fairly elaborate hobo homes, about ten to twenty feet square. Some showed signs of what must scientifically be referred to as juvenile enlargement.

Two notable exceptions were found in a ravine along the side of the roadcut. The first was a seventy to eighty feet through trip from the ravine back to the ditch by the road. The other was a fine fifteen feet wide, six feet tall cave of about two hundred feet in length. It had many columns to support its roof (there was evidence on the surface of subsidence), a side passage up and over a pile of collapsed roof, several more piles of fallen ceiling in the main passageway, and a dirt-filled ex second entrance. This one obviously wrapped around the smaller cave, deeper in the hill. It was large enough and deep enough to be noticeably warmer than outside. There were moths and other bugs and one good-sized bat, with a light brown belly and dark brown wings and back, hanging by one leg, giving us menacing looks as we passed. There were what we've called "rat holes" (side passages) that were closer to the truth in here than their counterparts in limestone caves.

All of these of any size got to be that way with human assistance. I only spoke to a couple of individuals and did not manage to learn any of the history behind the caves.