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Lowell Burkhead

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I N T E R C O M

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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 celebrating our 40th anniversary this year and is the third oldest grotto west of the Mississippi.

Air Force Rescue Coordination Center
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This number calls out Iowa Grotto rescue personnel.

Cover: Mike Lace plunges into Flowstone Pot, Winneshiek County Iowa, Nov. 1988.
Photo by Larry Welch

Rear Cover: Preparing to enter Muenster Cave in Dubuque, November 6, 1960.
See cover Volume 24, Issue 5. Photo by Ed Smith

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

Chairman - - - - - Mike Lace
Vice-Chairman - - Lowell Burkhead
Secretary-Treasurer - Larry Welch

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IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting January 25, 1989

The meeting was called to order by new chairman Mike Lace at 7:47 p.m. in room 267 of Trowbridge Hall. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. The treasurer's report listed \$323.00 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Mike Lace reported on a survey trip to the Nelson Section in Coldwater Cave which netted 1165 feet of new survey footage. The survey covered large walking passage and a number of leads remain. Larry Welch reported on a second trip to the Nelson Section by a group of 7 cavers. Almost 1200 feet was surveyed and several hundred feet of virgin passage was explored. Mike Bounk reported on his trip to the Spong Siphon in Coldwater. He also reported on a trip by Steve Moon in Coldwater to the Spong and Hoot Dome. Mike Bounk continued with an account of exploration in Hershberger Pit, which saw penetration to a depth of 60 feet. Loose rocks hampered further progress. FUTURE TRIPS: There may be a NCRC orientation trip this spring at Mystery Cave, Minn. Also at Mystery, a bat count will take place on Feb. 4. The MSS also sponsors trips to Wind Cave; for info contact new IG member, Gene Kremer. Various trip possibilities for February Coldwater weekend were mentioned. The possibility of an "old-fashioned" grotto picnic was brought up. Mid-May was proposed as a good time and Dutton's Cave County Park suggested as a good place. Memorial Day weekend, May 27-29, will most likely begin the caving season at April Cave. Beyond Deep Misery Cave may be visited in the near future. It starts with a 40 foot chimney to the top of a virgin 40 foot pit with possible passage off the bottom. Contact Lowell Burkhead if interested. OLD BUSINESS: Lowell Burkhead reported on his persistent attempts to retrieve back issues of the INTERCOM, some of which have not been fully distributed. The plan is to sell them to the newer members which will retrieve some of that old grotto wealth to put toward the printing cost of the unpublished back issues. The annual report has been completed and sent to the NSS. NEW BUSINESS: Ed Smith has donated \$50 toward the production of INTERCOM back issues. There was much rejoicing. Dues are starting to arrive with 7 members paying within the last week. There was more rejoicing. A membership update will come out in May. Lowell Burkhead has prepared leaflets describing the activities of the Iowa Grotto which can be distributed to potential new members. Membership lists from 1970 to 1986 have been compiled by Lowell Burkhead to aid in the distribution of INTERCOM back issues. Tom Hruska's familiar tattered briefcase has been passed along to the new secretary-treasurer. Tom donated it along with its contents to the grotto. The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m. After the meeting, Mike Bounk presented a slide program that featured caving and pit-plunging in Alabama, The land of deep pits.

Regular meeting February 23, 1989

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:36 p.m. in room 267 of Trowbridge Hall. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. The Treasurer's report listed \$333.00 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Mike Bounk reported on a photo trip through the Spong Siphon to Beyond Tuna Sea with some Rock River cavers at Coldwater Cave. Larry Welch summarized efforts of a survey party including Jay Wells, Mike Lace, and Scott Dankof that extended the Nelson Section survey of Coldwater Cave into the Iguana Crawl Passage. Mike Lace recounted his Coldwater tour of the mainstream with several journalists from the Dubuque Telegraph-Herald. A no-holds-barred expose is planned. FUTURE TRIPS: A trip to Beyond Deep Misery is a possibility for late March. Lowell Burkhead is in charge. OLD BUSINESS: Two more back issues of the INTERCOM will be available soon, both from 1981. A discussion on the economics of publishing ensued.

There was also a discussion on tourism at Coldwater Cave. Safety concerns were voiced as visitors appear to be underequipped in the helmet and light department and overequipped in the ski pole department. NEW BUSINESS: Lowell Burkhead suggested a potential revenue producing idea that entails members purchasing INTERCOM subscriptions for their parents and other concerned relatives. His parents are the first to be enrolled in the program. A cut-off date for members who are delinquent in their dues payment was discussed. Mike Bounk announced a geochemistry seminar slated for March 2, 1989. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m. After the meeting, Charlie Winterwood entertained everyone with is excellent slide show on Wind Cave which featured many close-up photos of delicate speleothems. Mike Bounk also showed slides from upstream Coldwater in the "mist"erious area beyond the Spong Siphon. Mikes program was of never before photographed areas in the sumps and associated rooms including subjects partially to completely obscured by cave fog.

COLDWATER CAVE

January 14, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Mike Nelson, Larry Welch and Mike Lace

Between work commitments and just plain rotten icy weather, it began to look as if our planned, off weekend, trip was not to be. Finally, one weekend before the next regular Coldwater weekend, the three of us who could just went for it. The water was still ultra low and our spirits high. I got into the cave at 11:15 a.m. and untied the torpedos as Mike and Larry lowered them down the shaft to the platform. We took two pony tanks and two regulators for "peace of mind". I also had enough gear to push mainstream sumps if the opportunity presented itself. We had everything and everyone down and were on our way by 11:40 a.m.

Our pace was deliberately casual and we took the time to enjoy Coldwater Cave's beauty. The Spong Siphon was wide open and a real cake walk. Mike and Larry took the overland route to the Big Room while I took both torpedos through the regularly sumped passage between the two. (I believe that Dave Ecklund's and my trip through here last month was the first time this passage had been traversed.) This saved us the most awkward part of getting the torpedos into the Big Room. The Tuna Sea and Beyond soon fell behind us as the opened Scandawhovian and Three Dive Sumps welcomed the first team of nondivers with equally open arms. Larry snarfed a little water at one point but instinctively crammed his nose to the ceiling. He didn't need the Mikes on either side of him calmly advising him to relax. We worked our way into the Last Righthand Side Passage, stashed our unneeded gear and boogied up to Bert Falls. We were surveying by 3:45 p.m., 3 hours and 5 minutes after leaving the platform. Darned good, considering Mike and Larry's minimal experience at minimal airspace caving.

We surveyed for 2 hours even, and the only time anyone was horizontal was once when it was convenient for me to lay down on a comfy mud bank to put my light over a survey station. Two hours of surveying while either on our feet or sitting was hard to take, but we faced it like men. We got approximately 1139 feet in 21 shots. That's roughly 54.238095 feet per shot, but who's counting? We stopped within earshot of Mike's Nervous Breakdown Room.

We were all in fine shape and still plenty warm, and I personally would have loved to have seen the rest of the main passageway mopped up. The fact that we were "really caving" was constantly our primary thought, working beyond eight

potential sumps is not to be taken lightly. When the word to leave was first uttered, we took two more shots to find a good tie-off point, and left. Not the sound of the water gurgling through the breakdown down the passage, not the side passage that had only a cursory inspection, nor the unclimbed mud banks leading up to unexplored domes was the least bit tempting to Mike or Larry. We regathered our backup gear, packed odds and ends into the torpedos and vamoosed. The combined sigh of relief those two let out could have been heard on the surface, that's how happy they were to be back on the downstream side of Three Dive and the Scandawhovian Sumps. As Larry paraphrased a popular journalist, "I did not want to survey beyond the sumps, I wanted to have surveyed beyond the sumps".

Another three hours later and we were cleaning up at the shaft; by 8:05 p.m. all the gear and the last man was out of Coldwater Cave.

I imagine that we were 500 to 800 feet from Mike's Nervous Breakdown Room. It seems like I saw at least 200 feet of cave up the only major branch of this side passage. There's better than 300 feet betwixt The End Again and Nasty Sumps. So there's still a minimum of 1000 feet of relatively easy survey awaiting the tape and compass up in the Nelson Section of Coldwater Cave.

The Pyramid Passage downstream of the Scandawhovians needs diving. The mainstream Nasty Sump needs pushing. The breakdown at Bert Falls needs moving to see if the Bert Falls Passage exists. The Sand Room Passage needs a thorough look see and the Iguana Crawl at the upstream end of the Last Righthand Side Passage lingers. The cave beckons. demands, and begrudgingly grows.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE IT

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
January 21, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, Randy Kwiatkowski, Jay Wells, Mike Lace, Larry Welch and Stacey Cyphert.

This was the second trip through the temporarily opened series of sumps into the Nelson Section of Coldwater Cave. Bill Nelson, Randy Kwiatkowski, Jay Wells and I surveyed from The End Again Sump to the Nasty Sump. Then I pushed into the also opened Nasty for 50 feet but turned back due to inadequate lighting and the fact that Jay, on his first "hardcore" trip was cooling off in this particularly cold section of the cave. The sump was quite close ahead and I had the feeling that it was going to be a long one.

We made our way back to the Y Room and up the Last Right-Hand Side Passage (LRHSP) to the Sand Room Passage, surveyed it and set a station in the middle of the room, before fanning out to ascertain which direction to survey toward next. I checked to the right side where the overflow wash was, while Jay went to the left fringes. Randy had made a bee line right over the top of the sand pile to the obvious farthest reaches of the room and found ongoing but small passage. (All virgin, of course.) We surveyed the dimensions of the room before working our way into Randy's Slot Passage and setting a chip just before a horizontal water squeeze. An attached report by Bill covers his push beyond that point.

We were soon joined by the other three cavers on the list above, who had finished the survey of LRHSP down to Mike's Nervous Breakdown Room and on down toward the Iguana Crawl. They had found a virgin dome; Eagle Eye Dome after Stacey's obvious talent in spotting it. After rehashing our respective

accomplishments, we took a relaxed, self-satisfied stroll on out of those parts. Following this work crew back down LRHSP, I thought of the day I walked these halls alone and the times with a prepared few. Neither of those times was as rewarding as watching these hard-caving people who came up here to do the real work of documenting the extent of this challenging challenging cave. Exclusivity was alright in its time, and I never thought I'd see the day that this many non-divers would be up here. But I'm glad I did and glad it was possible.

There's always a particular source of levity on every trip. On this one it was Bill's loosing his hardhat at the Spong Syphon. Upon returning there, it was discovered placed neatly on the breakdown where we had readied ourselves for this little treat of a passageway. Of course, he doubted his sanity, and we continued to let him, knowing that it had to actually have been recovered by other cavers also in the area that day. (The Hat Story, to be continued.) We surveyed over 1000 feet; Larry will provide the detail someday, he got the book.

7 UP "UPSTREAM"

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

January 21, 1989

by Bill Nelson

Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, Randy Kwiatkowski, Jay Wells, Mike Lacey, Larry Welch, and Stacey Cyphert.

After a very quick and efficient trip upstream to the Last Right-Hand Side Passage, we split our group of seven. Mike, Randy, Jay and I took off to survey beyond The End Again Sump (the Nasty Sump area). The water level was unbelievably low. After finishing that, we moved back to a side passage off the Last Right-Hand Side Passage in the Nelson Section. After some surveying of the passage, we measured the Sand Room.

I was trying to double check what I thought was a somewhat waterproof survey book (SORRY LARRY). Anyway, Randy was looking around and discovered a slot at the back of the room. After convincing everyone, we took a survey reading up the passage to see what direction it was heading. Then after Randy and I connected the chip, I asked Randy if he wanted to look around up farther. After replying that he wasn't sure he could make it past the tight squeeze in the passage just ahead, I got the OK to finally push some Army crawl and hands and knee VIRGIN PASSAGE.

The squeeze was tight against my chest as I went through with my head plowing silt off the bottom. After about ten feet it opened up enough that I could turn over to my stomach. I was crawling along and noticed that the current in the stream was quite fast. This made me wonder what was going on above ground, which is something that is always on my mind while in the Nelson Section. Then I came across a small room off to the right side of the passage that had a few small formations in it. Knowing that I had told Mike I'd be back in ten minutes or so, I thought I should find something distinctive. Needless to say, my pace was very vigorous. I came across a wide spot, but my curiosity forced me onward. Finally, I came to a spot where the basic tube shape of the passage had a distinctive drop in the ceiling height with what appeared to be a gate of stalagmites that hung from a crack in the ceiling. Sizing up the passage as far as I could see with my light, I decided I could make it under the gate without damaging anything. The water in this part seemed quite close to the ceiling, but I nosed on upstream

MAY
SUMP ?

(1.2)



STALACTITE
GATE

(1.9)



BASIC TUBE

WIDE
SPOT

The feeling I had when I got back to the Sand Room was so incredible I can't believe it. I would like to thank all of the people that made this trip safe and successful.

I would like to thank Randy for letting me push this virgin passage. Attached is a memory sketch of Randy's Slot Passage.

Memory sketch of
RANDY'S SLOT
PASSAGE

by Bill Nelson

(1.1) or less

(3.0)

TIGHT



(1.0)

(1.8)



CHIP C-385
ON CEILING

TIGHT
SLOT

SAND BAR

40 or 50 feet, maybe more; it is hard to keep track when you're kissing the ceiling! I came to the conclusion that this area MAY SUMP OR MAY NOT?

Only a trip back to the north end of Coldwater Cave during this extremely low water period will yield the answer to this. As I hurried back, I counted out steps and as I approached my patiently waiting brother on the other side of the squeeze, I rattled off calculations and decided I had gone about three hundred feet.

NORTH TO THE POLE!

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
January 21, 1989
Larry Welch, Mike Lace and Stacey Cyphert

by Larry Welch

The January 21 Coldwater trip was actually led by Mike Nelson who will be filing a separate trip report. Since the group split into two survey parties, this report will add a few details on the activities of our group that Mike might have missed.

First of all, a few words about water levels. We have been observing the water levels in two places, on the leg of the platform below the shaft, and on the stream level recorder upstairs in the shack. Whereas the platform measurement is a bit more inconvenient unless you are on your way into the cave, it is also a much more informative value. During the fall of 1988, the stream level recorder became nonfunctional, and was restored to operation by Mike Bounk. Part of the restoration involved dredging mud from underneath the float. The result of this is that although the recorder is operational again, the water depth under the float has changed considerably. Any water level values measured now cannot be compared meaningfully to any values from before this fall.

The stream level recorder read 11.7 inches during the December trip that discovered that the Scandawhonian and Three Dive Sumps were passable without SCUBA. The platform level was 7.36 inches. We knew that the water was very low, but these sumps had not been observed open since their discovery, so the significance of the water level reading was unnoticed at the time of reading. During the January 14 trip, the stream level recorder read 11.3 inches and the platform level was still 7.36 inches.

The week between the two January trips had seen unseasonably warm temperatures, and upon reaching the cave shack, the recorder was scanned, and indeed there were some melting pulses being recorded. Two days during the week had seen a half inch rise in the stream level, although the level had started declining each night. On Friday evening following a cooler day, the level was about 11.5 inches. Crests during the week had approached 12 inches. The crests appeared to be occurring at around 8:00 in the evening at the shaft.

The temperature on Saturday was predicted to reach the 40's, so some melting could be expected. It is difficult to extrapolate the melting crest data at the shaft to obtain the time that a crest would appear in the upstream sumps, but it seemed reasonable to expect that it would occur before 8:00 p.m. A trip through the upstream sumps was planned to continue the survey of the Last Right-Hand Side Passage. Mike Nelson wanted to survey the mainstream past the End Again Sump. We felt that these trips were reasonable even with the predicted 40 degree temperatures. However, to minimize the chances of any problems, we decided to get into the cave as early as possible, get our work done, then to get on our horses and be through the sumps by 6:00 p.m. Making good speed on the upstream trip also would encourage a speedy trip, so I made an effort to push the pace a bit whenever possible.

Water level at the platform was observed to be 7.38 inches when we entered the cave, which jived with observed melting pulses, but wasn't enough of a rise to cause any worry. We made very good time, reaching the Last Right-Hand Side Passage in less than two hours. We made arrangements to rejoin the other group in a few hours, then set off up the Last Right-Hand Side Passage.

Stacey was doing fine despite never having been through even the Spong, and we set off doing the backslide popularized in the Pig Trough Passage. In no time we were to the napping spot, then into big passage. My glasses weren't as dirty as on the previous trip up here, so I looked around a lot, as did the others. We took a look at the Bert Falls lead, and Mike decided he could probably fit through the breakdown without moving any of the stones. We decided to get some survey footage first, then check leads on the way back. The 1100 feet that we surveyed the previous weekend seemed to stretch forever -- probably due to the bottomless sucking mud that was lurking in this area.

At our tie-off point from last weekend, we found a nice mud bank, unloaded the survey gear and indulged in a snack. Stacey was lead tape, I read the compass, and Mike kept book. Mike's book from the previous trip was one of the best ever in CWC, ranking up there with the Beaver Boneyard survey book. Although it was pretty easy traveling, the LRHSP was difficult to depict on paper due to all of the breakdown and formations scattered about; even Mike had his hands full with the sketching. The passage meandered more as we surveyed, and we didn't get any 100 foot shots. The sucking mud was still present, and it inflicted its first casualty as it completely sucked the bottom of Mike's boot off. I realize that Mike's boots had almost as many miles on them as Mike Bounk's truck and they looked it, but this was uncalled for. The sole could not be located in the slop, so Mike was to be Long John Silver for the day. Fortunately, he was wearing wet-suit booties that had a good sole left on them.

The section sported eight foot ceilings and ankle deep water. Breakdown was still common, and formations were plentiful and showed fewer effects of past flooding than those further downstream. An abandoned streamway dropped sharply down the right wall after a couple hundred feet, and it could be seen to come from a crevice lead. Mike Nelson had not said anything about this, which may not turn out to be much. We thought about climbing up to the crevice, but considerable loose rock would have to be traversed and we bagged it in favor of continuing the survey.

Soon afterward was the awesome Mike's Nervous Breakdown Room, which was very large, and very full of loose rock. Stacey led into the room, and when he climbed up and out of sight, I knew this would be quite a room. Once we sighted into the room, Stacey tried to determine where the passage went. I came up to help, checking out the right side of the room, which turned out to be just a hollow between the actual room wall and the edge of the breakdown pile. Stacey went straight ahead, and found that the passage continued after a climb down the back of the pile. He also pointed out a small lead high on the left wall. I was doubtful about this lead, but since Mike was still sketching, I scrambled up to look.

There was a lot of loose stuff to climb over, but most of it was much smaller than the boulders in the midst of the pile where we were surveying. At the top of the slope, I peered in and realized that Stacey had indeed found something, and bellied into Eagle Eye Dome. The dome was a crevice that roughly paralleled the LRHSP, about 50 feet high at its apex. The most rewarding aspect was the fine decoration with cascades of white flowstone, no doubt the finest formations that side of Whagoozer Dome. Particularly nice was a white "tongue" drapery that hung 20 feet over our heads. We ran the survey into the dome and surveyed to both ends of the crevice. A small side lead led off the dome, but it appeared to peter out. We tied the dome back into the main traverse, then shot off the back of the pile onto the stable ground once more.

To the right of this station was another high lead, so Stacey chipped the station while I took a gander at the lead. There were footprints leading into the crevice, but overhanging rocks guarded the entrance. Mike shined his bright skipper into the lead, which went up quite a ways. Thus inspired, we climbed up and in, finding the rocks to be somewhat stable. There was a short platform that was fairly level, then the crevice continued up a 30 degree slope festooned with large boulders. We continued up until a side lead to the left was located. Stacey took a look in this lead and found both a high lead and a low lead. As I was continuing up the main crevice, there was a tremendous crash, followed by 2 or 3 tremors. Stacey casually remarked that the rock was pretty loose where he was at, and we had no argument. Mike also slipped into the side crevice as he was having visions of me playing Indiana Jones with a huge boulder above me on the slope. The nature of the passage deemed, that should gravity get its grips on the boulder, that there was no way anyone in the crevice could avoid it. Even if we had avoided it, if loosened, it had a good chance of wedging where we had entered the crevice. Very carefully, I went up and over it. The crevice continued, but a suspended boulder blocked the path, which would require either a squirm under (No Way!) or a hairy chimney over. My nerves were shot, so I retreated. Mike and Stacey thought the side leads were promising, but we were all tired of loose rock and longed for a helping of sucking mud. The crevice was very high, perhaps 60-70 feet over the water, and we scanned the ceiling for leads or bats but found none.

Reaching the LRHSP again found me very wrung out after the ordeal of the crevice, and we decided to abandon the survey at the chip Stacey had set. We sat down for a rest, and I remember finding a spot out of range of any projectiles coming from the crevice. After the rest, we hiked over the breakdown pile, one at a time to minimize rockfall risk, and journeyed back to where we had left our packs. We packed up the survey gear and headed back to the walking side lead just upstream of Bert Falls. From the gear littered about the mud bank, we could tell that the other group was inside surveying. We waited for a bit at the entrance and could hear voices, but they were not on the way out, so we wandered down the passage and found them in the massive Sand Room, which is certainly one of the biggest rooms in Coldwater Cave.

From there we evacuated, making pretty good time overall. Bill was having problems with the dive torpedo he was carrying, so we stopped to examine it just downstream of the Spong and found it was full of water. We eventually returned to civilization at the back of the pack, yet still in time for supper. Each group tallied close to 600 feet, and when plotted, we could see that we had established a new northern point on the map, surpassing the end of the Flash Passage. What's more, we had finally finished surveying what Mike Nelson had discovered on his June, 1987, extravaganza. His original estimate of the length of his discovery proved to be remarkably close to what we actually measured, and I am fairly certain that if it had been me doing the guessing, I would have overestimated by at least 4000 feet. Of course it is pretty dark up there



A SUMP DIVER'S THOUGHTS ON
CAVERN AND BASIC CAVE
DIVING CLASSES

Ginnie Springs, Florida
January 6-9, 1989

by Mike Nelson

First off, I'd like to comment on the high caliber of our teachers, Jay Bromenschenkel for Cavern and Marc Eyring for Basic Cave. On the dives we did on the weekend previous to the class, and the classroom situations we observed at other locations, we were exposed to some shoddy practices and what I'd call uncomfortable teaching techniques. These were your basic "stern" "this is serious business" approach. I'm glad to say that our teachers got this across in a flat out, matter of fact manner. As a matter of fact, that sums up their style of total delivery. The classes were not only effective, but enjoyable.

Second, I'd like to say that I personally was not happy with my overall performance in the Basic Cave class. I'd brought poor habits into both classes from sump diving. These I believe I managed to get a handle on. I was so in awe of what we were doing and where we were doing it (in Peacock 1) that I made several gaffs concerning following instructions. I was informed beforehand that Marc did not suffer rectal/cranial inversions on the part of his students very well. I must assume that my blunders were minor enough that I didn't receive the chewing I thought I had coming, despite my buddy, Sue Ecklund's firm belief that she heard him cussing through his regulator. I'm certainly harder on myself than Marc would have been. Having made this particular type of error and realizing its implications on a "for real" cave dive, the lesson was learned deeply.

If there was a particular weakness that we brought into the classes, it was unhoneed open water skills. Doug Schmuecker, who was the only one among us who was more of a diver than a caver, was the only one not to suffer from this in some way. Dave Ecklund, his wife Sue and I all had poor propulsion techniques and Sue and I were terrible air wolfers.

Now the big question, will what we learned aid us in sump diving? Florida style cave diving is a science. Experience and accident analysis have proven that there is an optimum manner in which to operate and once learned, can be readily applied to most situations. I don't believe anyone exposed to only this type of cave diving can appreciate diving in 42-46 degree water that quickly becomes chocolate milk. Also, every single sump I have ever dived had been different. Each had to be approached and dealt with on an individual basis. So a great deal of what we learned was not transferable to what we do. The single most transferable aspect was gear management, which is even more vital to sumpers than cave divers. It is the exception when we are not in something close. Having things tidy and handy is important, and the entire effort of getting to Florida and taking these classes was worth it for this alone.

Learning that we were doing everything as safely as possible was comforting and encouraging. Adhere to the basics, training, guideline, air rules, depth (not yet a problem in Iowa) and lights, and if you perish, you've invented the sixth major fatal error or violated one of the established five leading causes of cave diving deaths.

The little things, established means on tying in a guide line in different settings, following and holding of the line, good orientation habits, are not the sort of things that would naturally just come to one. I feel that in any endeavour,

the accumulation of subtleties and finesse is the key to long term safe enjoyment.

Here's a big one, buddy training. Training to work as a team has shown me that many of the dives I thought demanded solo work did not. A lot of the dives I've put on a back burner will be reevaluated in light of this. It also showed me that solo is still the only way to approach some sites. In sump diving, though, it is still best for each member to be geared up for the moments when one is effectively diving solo in the course of a "buddy" dive.

Lastly, total overall experience is inspiring. I feel safe in saying that in the course of these classes we all spent more time in the overhead environment than we had previously accumulated. Personally, it gave me a faith in my equipment that I had heretofore lacked. It fostered the faith in me that riding my motorcycle was still the riskiest activity in my life, the one enjoyment in which I am the least in control of circumstances.

Did we learn anything usable? More than I can really say. The first rule of cave diving is to be trained. I started my caving, and sump diving, both fully book trained. Book training is not as thorough as "hands on" training in the hands of someone who's "been there". I'm fully looking forward to my Full Cave training with much wondering about what I will learn even though it will not teach me specifics for sump diving.

Mike Nelson
NSS # 27176

PHOTOGRAPHIC TRIP TO BEYOND TUNA SEA SUMP

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
February 18, 1989

by Michael Bounk

Matt Kramar, Joe Janakin, Jim Elliot, and Michael Bounk

We entered the cave at about 12:15 p.m. and headed upstream to Spong Siphon. Matt, Joe and I then went through the Spong which had about 5½ inches of air in it. At the first room where we could climb out of the water, we did so and removed our hoods and put on our hard hats. I took two pictures in this room. After the second one, my camera jammed and would not wind the film. (Automatic camera) In the next room, I was able to unjam it by rinsing it with water. This was necessary about three times this trip. I took photographs in all five rooms before the Tuna Sea. We went through Tuna Sea which had about 7 inches of air and I continued taking pictures. We finally turned around at the cross ceiling crevice just before the first of the Scandawhovian Sumps. A few minutes later on our way downstream, the camera jammed again. I could not unjam it, thus the end of my picture taking for that day.

We returned downstream to the shaft and went to the Gallery Section to show it to Matt who was in the cave for the first time. He took some pictures of it. He had taken relatively few beyond Spong. We exited at about 8:00 p.m.



THE HAT STORY CONTINUED

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
February 18, 1989
Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson and Sue Ecklund

by Mike Nelson

The hat and Bill's presence of mind were the main topics of conversation each time our crew caught up with the other crew, consisting of Larry Welch, Mike Lace, Jay Wells and Scott Dankof. We were on our way to push the Nasty Sump and they to survey into the dreaded Iguana Crawl.

We split at the Y Room. We continued up the mainstream and the others up the Last Right-Hand Side Passage. (LRHSP) Because of the very low, wet nature from the Scandawhavian Sumps, past 3 Dive Sump to The End Again Sump, and on to The Nasty Sump, it is right near impossible to show up at this site anything but chilled. I let Sue and Bill warm up on a combination mud bank - gravel bar while I went on ahead to find a place to secure a dive line. I felt the sump would be a long one due to the fact that we had to be getting under the surface portion of Coldwater Creek.

Having found a good anchor, I went back to Sue and Bill and slipped on two pany tanks, just in case I should be required to stop and collect my thoughts anywhere along the line.

250 feet of line was layed out through very close to marginally open passage, to a small breakdown room. There were occassional ceiling crevices along this span. Having exhausted the large dive reel and not found a suitable tie-off, I cut the line and tied in a smaller reel with 100 feet on it, and left the other reel to be retrieved on exit. The last 100 feet got me through passage with generally enough room to have my head out of the water. The line ran out just short of a good tie-off at a point where the passage had a higher mud crawl next to the continuing watercourse.

I abandoned the reel for the time being and opted for the mud crawl that paralleled the waterway for 40 feet before getting back into the water and threaded my way through minor breakdown in stoop passage. The cave gave the feeling of wanting to turn into something walkable to a good sized primate, but just short of doing that, it opened right up to a breakdown room. This room was about 20 feet high, a little wider, and of as yet undetermined length. I observed that the watercourse continued to the right side of the room, but did not ascertain if it pinched in rubble or rounded a turn. I took one step up out of the water to peer over the pile, which consisted of massive pieces of breakdown. All I could see was that there appeared to be mud even on the highest points. Climbing with two pony tanks on was out of the question. Bill and Sue weren't getting any warmer. It was time to leave.

Here I must sadly note that although I can now trust my measurements and observations to be accurate, the heady feeling of virgin cave is now less intoxicating. I felt like the drunk who learned to handle his booze, the first sip of wine always being more memorable than the last binge.

This was proven when I thought to look around for a rock to use to anchor the end of the rope. Finding a suitable one, not too heavy to carry back but big enough for the job, I retraced the 250-300 feet back to the reel. I secured the line to the rock and shoved it into the mud on the inside of the bend in the passage. It would be in the weakest part of the current should this place flood

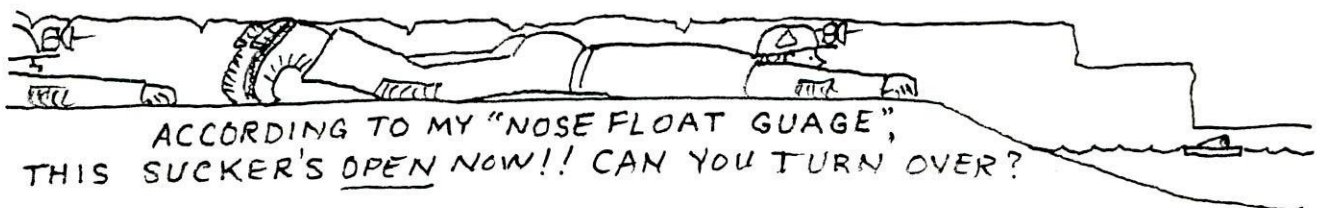
before we are able to return. At average water levels, over 1/4 of the roped passage would be a dive, 1/4 would be extremely close, 1/2 would be moderate. In that event, I pray that the line stays right where it's at; it would make diving this deep in CWC a possibility. Having to lay line through it in normal conditions would be slow and risky. All this newly pushed area was exceedingly devoid of speleothems.

I had been gone about 35-40 minutes. Upon my return, all Sue and Bill wanted to do was beat-feet on up the LRHSP to build up some heat reserves before our planned second stage of this trip. We were to push and survey into Randy's Slot Passage leading off the back end of The Sand Room. Bill was going to lead tape while I did compass as Sue took book. Sue took one look at the passage and one look at the non-waterproof book and balked, "If you can't read the data when you're done, it ain't worth getting." We poked around the edges of the Sand Room for a while. Bill connected the waterflow from the slot to the overflow wash and said the flow followed a small passage veering to the left. We were intending to rendezvous with the other team here, but reached the condition that we just had to leave.

We did stop to push one of the higher joint aligned leads near Bert Falls, for about 70 feet. The water from Bert Falls was not noticeably filthy today. The reason for this is not clear. The majority of the water from Randy's Slot is funneling into an impenetrable crack. The remainder is presumably taking the path Bill had ventured into. Maybe there wasn't that much mud in there or maybe he wasn't in there long enough to stir things up good.

From here on out, we did not dawdle, and it wasn't until we were almost to the Spong again that Bill realized he was again sans hardhat. It occurred to him that the last time he had seen it was while it was slung around his arm while negotiating the low airspaces of the 3 Dive and Scandawhonian Sumps. It was a cheap-assed hardhat, but it did have a Mini-mag light strapped to it. He had mixed emotions about hoping the other crew would find it on the way out. They did. Larry cursed him for losing it and making him have to carry it out. When it happens the next time, whoever finds it is advised to pocket the Maglight and bury the hat. That'll force him to buy a decent hat and save face all in one shot. Upon having his hat returned to him, we also returned a small portion of his sanity, by fessing up that someone else had found and placed his hardhat in the spot he found it in last month. He was relieved to know he didn't just walk off and forget it, but he is still considering returning to fishing as a source of diversion.

Hopefully, the winter will stay with us one more month, and the water stays low. The cave, where we left off, is mainstream more in characteristics than actual observable amounts of water being carried, in comparison to the LRHSP. I still don't feel we've cleared the low area of Coldwater Creek above yet. That's why I love caving, we'll just have to go and find out what's in store for us next.



LARRY, SCOTT, MIKE, AND JAY'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

February 18, 1989

by Mike Lace

Larry Welch, Scott Dankof, Jay Wells, and Mike Lace

Water level = 7.42 inches Water temperature = 43 degrees F

February Coldwater Weekend drew a massive crowd of veteran cavers and novices alike with most planning on comfortable tourist trips, but continued low water levels meant that a small band of us must once again venture through the near-sumps upstream of the Spong Siphon to the Nelson Section beyond. Similar trips the month before had netted approximately 2000 feet of survey while reaching the northernmost point of the cave. Larry, Scott, Jay, and I planned on going to the crawlway which snaked its way beyond the northernmost surveyed point; the crawlway that carried a nasty reputation for punishing wetsuits and knees, the "Iguana Crawl", named after the bodily contortion used to initially explore it.

Larry, Jay and I had been through the low airspace sections before but Scott was a newcomer to this part of the cave. He had volunteered his skills and equipment in air-tight 30 caliber metal ammunition cans and although they had been tested in the kitchen sink, they had yet to be dragged through any sumps. I volunteered to carry one of the ammo cans, a decision that my body would later regret, while Scott toted the other.

Stepping off of the platform at the bottom of the entrance shaft, we were greeted with bootfulls of 43 F water, noticeably colder than the month before. We had also noticed that the water level had risen slightly since the last trip, no doubt due to the recent warm weather. We agreed that the Spong and Tuna Sea Siphons would not be too difficult to traverse but the Scandawhovian Sump would determine whether or not we could get into the Last Right-Hand Side Passage beyond and to our goal.

We made good time on our way to the Spong. After slipping on our hoods, we joyfully immersed ourselves in that frigid water and began the sump-busting. The camera gear appeared to float well but Scott warned me that if I heard a sudden "GLUG GLUG" noise coming from the box, that I should raise it out of the water immediately. Both the gear and the members of our party managed to pass through the siphons without making any such noises...at least on the way in.

The water level in the Spong seemed to be up slightly from last month but then again it could have been my imagination. Anyway, there was enough air in this first siphon to build a little confidence for what lay ahead. We reached a dry crawlway that bypasses a short sump but as soon as we made it to the breakdown on the other side of it we were met with a foul smelling ankle deep pool of backwater. It smelled as if we were face down in a feed lot and we had no other choice but to cross it. Each of us hurried across this mini-cesspool, trying not to look at the cigar shaped objects we were stirring up. We eventually caught a breath of halfway decent air and sped through the Tuna Sea Siphon.

We eventually reached the ceiling crevice just downstream of the first of the four segments of the Scandawhovian Sump. Larry opted to lead while I entered last. One caver would traverse a segment, turn around, and guide the next person through with his light; this sequential routine quickly brought us to the passage leading to the last sump, the Three Dive Sump. By this time, Sue Ecklund and the Macho (Nelson) brothers had caught up with us. Once past Three Dive Sump, our

party crawled to where we made a sharp right into the Last Right-Hand Side Passage while the other crew continued in the wet passage to continue the exploration of the passage beyond the Nasty Sump.

We pushed ahead in the mostly dry hands-and-knees crawlway until it eventually opened to a stoopwalk and finally to the walking passage we had been waiting for. While taking a break at Bert Falls, Larry and Jay did a little poking around on the top of a mud slope opposite the falls and soon called Scott and I to join them in a dry walking passage. The crevice passage seemed to parallel the stream passage at first but soon took a sharp turn away from it while opening to a wide forty foot high crevice that was profusely decorated. The passage also reconnected with the Last Right-Hand Side Passage via a fifteen foot drop which we had noticed on previous trips.

The passage continued as a mud-covered flowstone slope to a narrow point that was choked with a large stalagmite and draperies on each side. The passage appeared to continue up above but none of us wanted to trash the flowstone in front of us so we decided to survey our way back to Bert Falls while Scott took several pictures of this pleasant little side passage. After 170 feet we reached the falls, repacked our gear and started upstream again. No more than a hundred feet upstream of the falls, Larry, Jay, and I climbed up a side lead on the right and into a dry crevice that was choked with mud but Jay used his light to peer into a large void on the other side. Since we hadn't brought a trowel with us to dig into this dome(?), we exited to the mainstream and continued toward Mike's (Nelson) Nervous Breakdown Room and the Iguana Crawl that lay beyond.

Scott and I were worn out from carrying the @%&*#@! ammo cans when we reached the start of the Iguana Crawl survey. Scott decided to relax in the breakdown room and take some pictures as we continued the survey. The stoopway that led us upstream of the breakdown room quickly turned into a wide, hands-and-knees crawl, just as it had been described, and after approximately 200 feet, we reached a fork in the passage. Jay led the survey tape down the right fork and into the most brutal, coverall-snagging crawlway I had ever seen in Coldwater; we had to be in the right place. The crawlway wasn't necessarily constrictive but the pitted bedrock floor managed to gouge its way through my denim coveralls, knee pads, and 1/4 inch wetsuit right to the knees. We noted at least two side passages leading off of this fork but after 100 feet or so we set a survey chip and returned to the fork in the passage.

We continued the survey up the left hand of the fork which carried most of the water in this passage and it proved to be infinitely more comfortable. We only surveyed approximately 100 feet of this fork before calling it a day but we had reached our goal of one tenth of a mile of mapped passage. We found Scott comfortably resting in the chaotic breakdown room and while we were repacking our gear, Larry checked a lead in the nearby Indiana Jones Passage; this towering crevice contained a small side lead we had noticed on a previous trip. Larry squeezed himself into it and popped into a round breakdown room 20 feet in diameter and 3 feet high that carried no discernable echo. He decided not to check the perimeter of the room for leads and quickly returned to the Nervous Breakdown Room.

The long march back to Bert Falls was uneventful and tiring for everyone. Even though it is walking passage, the occasional sucking mud makes progress a little difficult; I still haven't found the sole of my left boot lost in this section on the last trip. We made it to the entrance of the side passage that Mike, Bill, and Sue had planned to survey in after they had finished with the

Nasty Sump, but found no sign that they were in there so we continued to Bert Falls for a rest and a few more photos.

The first three sumps encountered on the trip out were, as per usual, easier than when we came in. By the time we reached the Spong, however, Larry's glasses had become opaque with fog and cave grime, making it difficult for him to navigate. The vision impairment caused Larry to do his famous Aqualung imitation and after hacking up a mouthful of cave water, he decided to let someone else lead the way out. This was the one trip where Larry had forgotten to treat his glasses with his anti-fog cream. We were all pretty beat by the time we climbed out of the shaft and after a ten hour trip I don't think any one of us had any trouble sleeping that night.

COLDWATER CAVE IN THE NEWS!

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

February 19, 1989

by Mike Lace

Mike Lace, Joe Mishka, Mark _____, and Mike Day

I had been contacted by Joe, a reporter from the Dubuque Telegraph - Herald, a few weeks before the February Coldwater trip. He was interested in doing an article on cave exploration in Iowa and I could think of no better example than Coldwater Cave. The crew was to include two other staff members of the Telegraph - Herald to photograph the more accessible sections of the cave. I agreed to arrange the necessary caving equipment and to give them a brief tour.

We met early Sunday morning in Decorah for a bit of breakfast and a little background information on the cave and the ongoing projects. By the time we got to the shack, most of the cavers had already packed up and headed for home except for Pete DeVries and the kids. All four of us struggled into our wetsuits and made it down the shaft to the platform without too much trouble. Since two of them had never been caving before, we decided to limit the tour to the upstream Jumping Off Point and the downstream end of the Gallery.

The trip through the upstream breakdown section went well with several photos taken of bacon rind and a flowstone shroud characteristic of this section. The waltz across dry breakdown and through ankle deep water had lulled them into a false sense of security and left them unprepared for the abrupt and chilling dip in the waist deep section just downstream of the platform. Even though it's a short walk through 43 degree water, I think it made a lasting impression of what caving in an Iowa stream cave is all about. They were also unprepared for the majestic Gallery with its massive walls of white flowstone. The beauty of this section never ceases to amaze me and it's always nice to see that same sense of wonder on a newcomer's face.

We continued past the Gallery for a couple hundred feet until the passage changed to an extended wade through water. We decided to turn around at this point and take a few photos of the Gallery including, of course, the obligatory shot of Big Bertha.

The trip out was uneventful but overall, I think everyone had a good time. They were all enthusiastic and I made it clear that they were all welcome to come back for a more extensive tour of the cave. As for the article, I only asked that

a few key points be stressed. Firstly, that any trip that the grotto takes into Coldwater, or any other cave for that matter, requires that all trip members have the proper training and equipment - safety comes first and this should apply to anyone entering a cave. Secondly, but just as important, the cave is a delicate, irreplaceable environment and should be treated as such. Lastly, that credit should go where credit is due - without the generosity and support of Ken and Wanda Flatland, there would be no Coldwater Cave Project. As per Grotto guidelines, the location of the cave will not be described.

I received a call from Joe a couple of weeks later. Apparently, the shot of Big Bertha, which was to be the centerpiece of the article, had not turned out as well as they had hoped so I agreed to take them into Coldwater during the March trip to take another crack at it. Coldwater has a reputation for eating the light needed for cave photos and the February trip was no exception. The article is now scheduled to appear in the Sunday section of the Telegraph - Herald in early April

UNKNOWN CAVE

February 26, 1989

by Michael Bounk

Steve Moon, Gary Engh, and Michael Bounk

After about an hour's worth of driving around and talking to landowners, we finally located the cave owner. We spent several minutes discussing our organization and caves and pinpointing the location of Unknown Cave on his map. We then drove through the fields to the entrance sinkhole.

We found the entrance after a few minutes of searching. It was still partly open but obstructed by sticks and a log. While we were pulling away the small stuff, the owner showed up and offered to get his chainsaw. We agreed, however, by the time he came back, Steve had broken the log out of the way. Beyond this was a stick about 4 inches in diameter which would not be reachable by the chainsaw. It was cut out by Gary's cable saw. After several more minutes of knocking breakdown out of the way, we were finally able to get through the entrance belly crawl. Beyond this, the cave increases in height to walking passage, and then down again to crawlway. Portions of the cave are well decorated with small brown stalactites. The walls and ceiling are very vuggy.

After an estimated 200 feet, we reached a pit in the floor about 4 feet deep. Gary crawled through the 15 foot long, very tight crawl at the base of this pit to the lip of a drop. We decided not to rig and descend the drop at this time. However, a trip by grotto members several years ago demonstrated that this drop is 12 feet high. After about 20 feet of passage, there is a 25 foot drop to deep water. This will have to be pushed on a later trip. We exited the cave at about 3 p.m. after about three hours underground.



DON'T TOUCH THE CEILING, THERE'S A LOT OF ROTTEN, LOOSE STUFF UP THERE.

