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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

National Speleological Society



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The INTERCOM is published semi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto, P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52336. The Iowa Grotto is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35810, and is dedicated to the exploration and study of caves. We will exchange publications with other organizations with the same dedication. Subscription rate is \$10.00 per year. Reproduction of material appearing in the INTERCOM by other caving organizations is encouraged as long as credit is given the INTERCOM and a copy of the pub is sent to the Iowa Grotto. Material for the next issue of the INTERCOM is due by January 14, 1990. Send articles and trip trip reports for publication to:

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The Iowa Grotto meets at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month in room 125 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 its 40th anniversary this year and is the third oldest grotto west of the Mississippi.

Please send exchange publications to the grotto post office box.

Air Force Rescue Coordination Center
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Iowa County Emergency Management
24 hour number
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This number calls out Iowa Grotto rescue personnel.

Cover: Mike Lace in Tourist's Delight?
Photo by Larry Welch

Rear cover photo: by Larry Welch

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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

Volume Twenty-Five

Issue Five

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IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting September 27, 1989

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:36 p.m. in room 125 of Trowbridge Hall. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. The Treasurer's report listed \$241.84 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Mike Lace reported on a trip to April Cave that included attempting to climb a high lead in Sprout Dome and some survey in a sleazy side passage. Lowell Burkhead reported on a concurrent dig at a nearby resurgence lead. Mike Lace reported on further events of the weekend that included enlisting local guides to locate Fiet Cave and others. Larry Welch detailed the completion of the Tourist's Delight Cave survey and gave a vandalism update. A discussion of the general status of the cave ensued. Greg McCarty discussed checking on some small caves near Fayette and visiting some tourist sites in Indiana on their recent trip east to visit inlaws. Larry Welch gave details on the extension of the First Right-Hand Side Passage survey at Coldwater Cave and exploration of a nearby cave. FUTURE TRIPS: Doug Schmuecker will lead a vertical rescue training session at Marengo on October 14-15. Grinnell College has requested assistance from the grotto to help lead a novice trip. Mike Bounk is interested in a dry caving trip early in October. OLD BUSINESS: A discussion of grotto exchange publications brought a consensus view that a few more quality exchanges will be sought. A discussion of the lost Quint Cities Grotto publications owned by the grotto followed. The next topic was the Iowa Grotto Cave Index. The current cave index residing in the grotto library is a very old and incomplete document. Most updates made within the past 15 years have been entrusted to Greg McCarty, who volunteered several years ago to update the index. When asked to report on the project, Greg shed some light on his indolent work habits that have resulted in little presentable progress during the past five years. He is attempting to write his own software for an outdated computer despite the fact that similar software can be easily obtained for a modern machine. He claims he will be loading data by spring. But since that could be spring of 2006, the grotto is attempting to update its cave index, following the rekindled tradition of the INTERCOM. Information can be submitted to the grotto library, where the present official index resides. NEW BUSINESS: Greg McCarty reported on filtering sinkholes, bat houses, and some informational brochures. Stacey Cyphert asked for a review of the grotto officer election process to clarify the procedure. The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m. There was no program.

Regular meeting October 25, 1989

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:37 p.m. in room 125 of Trowbridge hall with seven members present. There was no minutes or Treasurer's report. TRIP REPORTS: It was a productive weekend at Coldwater. Mike Bounk worked on the stream-level recorder and rain gauge. He reports that the float hasn't been bottoming out in mud and the records of late should be good. Nelson, Ecklund and Decker went upstream and did some surveying. They report enough footage that Coldwater has passed Ellison's on the long caves list. They also found the biggest room to date in the upstream section and found more walking passage. A possible final mainstream sump was encountered. According to Mike Nelson, it may be too small to dive as we seem to be running out of cave. Welch, Lace and Ames did some exploration near Bert Falls and some digging on another lead near there. Schmuecker, Kwiatkowski and Wells also went upstream to and through the Iguana Crawl and pushed into virgin passage. They came to a "T" and more water and crawled 600 feet to walking passage. They noticed that the domes in the area are wet despite the drought and suspect it is under a surface stream. They did not find the end of the passage.

There was a good turnout for Doug Schmuecker's vertical rescue training session at Marengo Oct. 14. The lessons were put to the test the next day on the cliffs of Indian Bluffs Nature Preserve as a dummy was rescued in a Stokes Litter. On Oct. 8, Mike Bounk, Ben Eiler, and Jim and Leslie Sinning visited Hunters Cave and carried out the refuse that was encountered. Sunday after Coldwater, Wonder Cave, a former commercial cave near Decorah was visited by Lace, the Welches, Ames, Engh and Cyphert. Ropes were used as safety lines on the rotting wooden stairs. The cave is mainly dry and well decorated. The big pit was rappelled into from the tourist platform. FUTURE TRIPS: Mike Bounk will lead a tourist trip into Coldwater in November. The second weekend in November, Mike Lace will be taking some Grinnell students and grotto people into Hunters and Worden's Caves. OLD BUSINESS: Nominations were opened for grotto officers. There were none received by mail. Stacey Cyphert was nominated for Secretary-Treasurer, Lowell Burkhead for Vice-Chairman and Mike Lace for Chairman. Since there were no other nominations, these will be the new officers effective January 1, 1990. An INTERCOM exchange list has been produced by Mike Lace and will be published in the INTERCOM. The display being produced by Doug Schmuecker will go up next week. NEW BUSINESS: The NSS Library sent us an inventory of INTERCOMs they have and Lowell Burkhead sent them all the published issues they are missing along with a list of missing issues of the NSS News in our library. Assuming our other exchange publications are missing the same issues as the NSS, if they were exchanges for those years, Lowell will send them out and we will be caught up. Lowell expects this to cost less than \$10.00 in postage using library rate. There has been no movement by the state to purchase Kemling Cave. Mike Lace broke most traffic speed postings to attend a meeting of State Park management people at Maquoketa Caves State Park. They plan to spend 3/4 of a million dollars to renovate the park. Mike found that there is no state policy regarding cave vandalism. He showed the photos of the damage to Tourists Delight Cave and gave them copies. There was much concern voiced and Mike thinks that something will come of it. The rocks blocking the entrance to the cave are still in place. Lowell Burkhead mentioned a March, 1987 letter from the Meramec Valley Grotto that was in with the stuff left by Steve Moon. They thought that our requiring written permission to reproduce INTERCOM material was a sad note. That policy was reversed as long as it is a caving pub, credit is given the INTERCOM, and a copy is sent to the Iowa Grotto. The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

LETTERS

Oct. 11, 1989 from Jim Hedges

Dear Lowell Burkhead,

Greg's article on winter caving, in the latest INTERCOM is exactly to the point. The main differences between his technique and mine arise from the fact that I did most of my caving in relatively dry caves. I could camp in caves, and I didn't need a wet suit, and so on. He has tackled much more demanding caves in winter than I did at any time of year.

I stand by my opinion of weather reports. If you want to keep track of the exact location and rate of movement of storms, then yes, you do need the weather radio. But if you are looking out the window Friday afternoon wondering whether or not to go caving Saturday morning, never mind. Anyone with a barometer and a basic knowledge of clouds can make as good a 24-hour forecast as "they" can.

Again, I didn't go to wet caves in winter. If it snowed or turned cold, my life was not in danger.

The last time I was out, there was a recently constructed and extremely effective water gate at the entrance to Tourists Delight. The ranger at that time had built it, himself. I couldn't find the plug to uncork it! There are times when the stream in the cave changes course and runs over to Dancehall Cave or vice-versa. Perhaps there is now such a leak, so the gate won't fill with water.

The trip report was written but never published. I've spent the last 3 years starting up the recycling program in this county and have not done much caving, or writing. The county has now taken over the recycling program, I think (some details yet to be worked out). Perhaps I'll have time to get back to caving.

Speleologically, Jim

INTERCOM - The water gate dam has been removed and the water diverted to always flow out Dancehall's lower entrance.

March 20, 1987 The Meramec Valley Grotto, Earl A. Hancock, Editor
Dear Fellow Cavers,

It's been a long time! Our library records show that we haven't heard from you since 1980. We're glad to see you alive and, by the looks of your newsletter, doing well.

If you are desirous of once again exchanging publications we would be pleased to do so. I will add you now to our mailing list.

Your publication staff have reason to be proud. The INTERCOM is well written, professionally formatted, and nicely decorated with line drawings and PHOTOGRAPHS! I'm impressed and envious. I wish we could do so well.

There is only one sad note in the INTERCOM and that is your policy of requiring written permission to reproduce any of your material. Most grottos require only that the Grotto/Author be given proper credit and a copy sent to them. Often there are articles of interest to the general caving community unpublished due to the time and effort required to obtain permission.

Anyway, it's good to hear from you again. And let me extend to you an invitation to join us any time you are in our neighborhood, for some CAVIN'.

Earl A. Hancock, Editor: The Meramec Caver

INTERCOM - Thanks for your letter which has finally come to our attention. We feel that you were correct and have changed our policy to that of "most grottos" in your letter. Letters now get quicker attention than they did in 1987.

CURRENT INTERCOM EXCHANGE LIST

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter.....	Birmingham Grotto, Birmingham, AL
Bloomington Indiana Grotto Newsletter....	Bloomington Grotto, Bloomington IN
Massachusetts Caver.....	Boston Grotto, Cambridge, MA
Cleve-O-Grotto News.....	Cleveland Grotto, Westlake, OH
D.C. Speleograph.....	D.C. Grotto, Alexandria, VA
Georgia Underground.....	Dogwood City Grotto, Atlanta, GA
Huntsville Grotto Newsletter.....	Huntsville Grotto, Huntsville AL
Meramec Caver.....	Meramec Valley Grotto, University City, MO
MSS Monthly.....	Minnesota Speleological Survey, St. Paul, MN
Speleonews.....	Nashville Grotto, Nashville, TN
NSS News.....	National Speleological Soc., Huntington, WV
Speleograph.....	Oregon Grotto, Vancouver, WA
Rock River Irregular.....	Rock River Speleological Society, Rockford, IL

Texas Caver.....Texas Speleological Society, Dallas, TX
Windy City Speleonews.....Windy City Grotto, Chicago, IL
Wisconsin Caver.....Wisconsin Speleological Society, Denmark, WI
Pholeos.....Whittenburg University Speleological Society,
Springfield, OH
York Grotto Newsletter.....York Grotto, York, PA

DARK WALLS, COLD FEET

April Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

September 2, 1989

by Mike Lace

Mike Lace, Stacey Cyphert, Larry Welch and Beth Welch

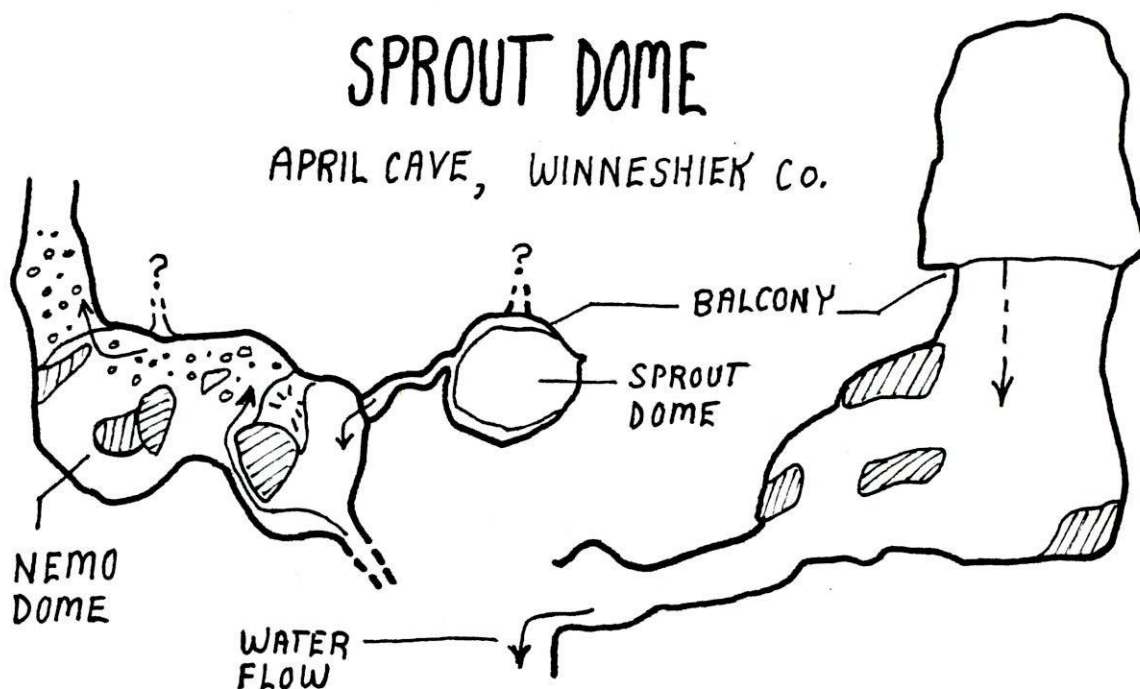
It had been more than a year since Stacey and I had first entered Sprout Dome - an upper level lead off of Nemo Dome - but the tantalizing balcony approximately twenty feet off the floor of Sprout Dome with its steady trickle of incoming water and the potential for more passage had remained a high priority lead-check. The four of us planned to enter the dome and, at the very least, thoroughly examine the climb and the ledge above. The difficulty would involve getting all four of us up and into the small entry passage that leads to Sprout Dome. Hopefully, the tubular webbing etrier (a crude ladder) and the assorted hardware to rig it would suffice.

The entry passage into Sprout Dome begins as a small body-sized hole twelve feet above the floor of Nemo Dome, part of the new section discovered in September of 1986, and had always produced a small waterfall during normal water level but this had recently been reduced to a thin trickle. The passage above the waterfall is a narrow crevice that snakes its way into the thirty foot high Sprout Dome. The dome is about eight feet in diameter at its base with some flowstone on its walls and a very prominent balcony from which the water originates. The wall behind the balcony recedes far enough from the lip to obscure any view of what's really up there.

The walls of the dome are typical, with some fragile chert outcrops and very gnarled scoured surface whose small sandy knobs crumble easily, making wall climbing difficult as it usually is in domes. There are two cracks on opposite faces of the dome, one in front of you as you enter and one behind; both are potential routes to the leads above. I had brought some webbing slings and carabiners with the hope of evaluating the climb and possibly making an attempt.

The crack opposite the dome entrance was wide enough to permit pitons but was too mud-filled to allow hand and boot wedging in a free climb. The crack stretching above the entrance to the dome looked a little friendlier with a prominent piece of wedged breakdown that could be used to rig a sling of webbing from. Unfortunately, the slab of breakdown was resting on a small keystone the size of your fist so placing what little weight I had on this precariously wedged boulder brought unpleasant possibilities to mind.

It was disappointing, after all the effort to get up into this dome, to realize that we would have to abandon the attempt and return with better equipment (i.e. a bolt kit and a length of dynamic rope) for a safe climb. Evacuating even a mildly injured caver from the dome would be extremely difficult if at all possible.



We collected ourselves and our gear and exited Sprout Dome and the new section on our way toward the entrance of the cave. Since we had brought survey equipment, we decided to extend the survey in the side passage at chip #15 which Larry likes to call the "Unimpressive Passage".

Beth and Stacey handled the survey tape, Larry handled the compass sightings, while I took the survey book as usual. The passage is just downstream of the Mud Room and was rumored to be a small muddy crawl that hadn't been pushed to its end yet. We found the small and muddy description to be more than accurate while the passage pinched down to a mud-clogged constriction that could be pushed with trowels but we decided to save it for another day.

We exited the cave close to sunset, checked on the progress made by the digging party (Lowell Burkhead, Bob Wahlstrom and Greg McCarty) at a nearby overflow lead, and headed into Decorah for pizza.

On this trip, Larry noticed another climbing lead just inside the entrance to Nemo Dome. A small crawlway can be found on the left wall approximately fifteen feet off the floor that drained a small amount of water. It looks as if a person can climb to the opening and squeeze into it but no passage could be seen leading away from the opening.

IT WAS A DIG, NOW IT'S A CAVE

Watchdog Hole Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

September 2, 1989

by Lowell Burkhead

Lowell Burkhead, Greg McCarty, Bob Wahlstrom, and Babe the watchdog

It was one of those best days of the summer as I arrived at April Cave and Lester was down at the pond with a line in the water. We visited for a while and made sure we had permission to dig at the entrance I've been calling the old resurgence. Bob hadn't been there before so I gave him a quick tour and moved the car down to the end of the grass and only a couple hundred feet from where we planned to spend the day digging. Greg showed up after not too long and it took two trips to carry the tools to the dig site. We were satisfied that we were prepared for the job at hand.

Bob and I started lowering the floor at the entrance and Greg crawled in and started on the floor a body length in. Babe took a position on the path 70 feet away to guard our backs. She gave us plenty of advance notice when Lester came over to have a look. We continued in those positions most of the day. Greg passed dirt and rocks out to Bob and Bob passed that along to me along with what he was removing from the floor and I heaved it down the hill and kept the entrance as low as the rest of the dig.

As we dug, what looked like a room became visible through a small ceiling channel and the closer we got, the more promising it looked. We could see into the room but it had a mound of dirt and rock that we couldn't see over to see if it continued beyond there. Getting up into the room was a problem because we were digging from the bottom of a pile of rocks that blocked the way in. Progress slowed to almost a stop. Finally, I took a turn at the rocks and got most of the loose stuff out which left a steep dirt slope up into the room. It was still way too small to get through so Greg took the lead again with the digging. After considerable effort and rubble removed, Greg finally got far enough up in to see over the mound. He reported that it didn't look good. He came out and I went to have a look. I removed a few more rocks but still couldn't get up the slope due to the strange bend and lack of traction. Greg came and gave me a foot hold and I pushed up and in. The passage beyond the room was completely filled with loose rock and the ceiling was a mess of sagging 600 pound slabs sitting on the walls that were more sagging slabs sitting on the dirt floor that would have to be removed to make enough room to work.

There seems to be no safe way to continue which still leaves options. One is to continue unsafely. Another is to get smarter and better equipped and the one I favor is to wait for a two inch rain and see what a little water pressure will do now that we've cleared the way. Water will certainly do something but it could take years to get a substantial rain if the past two summers are any indication. It's about 25 feet to the back of the room from the drip-line.

As the different people came out of April Cave, they came over to check on out progress. Each time, Babe gave us ample warning of the impending danger so we were never caught off guard. As it got dark, her job got more difficult. The path became invisible and people came from every direction but she shifted positions a few times and stayed right on top of it. The only unwarned attack of the day was not from our backside but from within the cave right in my face from a very large killer jumping spider that took exception to being poked with an index finger. He came at me with the speed of lightning and we scattered for our very lives. Luckily, none of us were fatally bitten and dragged off and wrapped in web and sucked dry.

TWO OF MIKE NELSON'S SHORT "GET CAUGHT UP" TRIP REPORTS

A.J. Spring Cave, Allamakee County, Iowa
September 3, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Randy Kwiatkowski and I dived A.J. in the worst visibility I've ever seen there, about 8 feet at best. We moved rapidly through 90 feet of line. It was previously laid out, run through anchored placements (weights with snap clips cast into them) and natural tie offs. These form the stations that will some day be used to survey A.J. With the poor viz, it wasn't possible to lay more in properly, but we set a few more down at crucial junctures up to the minor restriction, then went for the ceiling crack with the air in it. And for the second dive aimed at seriously pushing a promising sump this summer, I got disorientated. I couldn't find the ceiling slot that had air in it. We retreated as zero vis roiled in on us, ending our search for the airspace.

Dutton's Cave, Fayette County, Iowa
September 4, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Randy and I hauled two torpedoes each, each with a 40 cubic foot tank and other dive paraphernalia, the 400 feet in to the first sump. It felt like a thousand, through that man eating mud, with weight belts and all. The sump was like an old time discription of the Missouri River, "too thin to plow, too thick to drink". It made no sense to dive with no visibility, so back we went. Thank goodness for the available water to clean our gear and save us having to cart a ton of mud back home with us.

COMPLETING THE SURVEY AT TOURIST'S DELIGHT

Tourist's Delight Cave, Jackson County, Iowa
September 10, 1989

by Larry Welch

Larry Welch, Beth Welch and Mike Lace

This was to be the weekend of the NCRC Rescue Seminar up at Mystery Cave, but upon its cancellation, Mike felt it was imperative that we go caving some-where. The obvious choice for a trip was to finish work at Tourist's Delight so we could work on the map this winter. There was also more than the usual urgency due to the access situation at the cave. Despite the opinions of the park rangers, Tourist's Delight has been protected by a sump or near-sump at its entrance for most of the past thirty years. This statistic comes from reviewing the INTERCOM and its predecessor, THE IOWA CAVE BOOK. On occasions during very dry spells and during the winter, access was possible, if not still difficult.

All of this changed this summer when the park rangers rerouted the stream that travels through Dancehall Cave. Their idea was that it makes Dancehall more attractive when the cave stream flows through it. I agree that this helps the appearance of Dancehall, but unfortunately there were side effects of this process. The water hadn't been flowing through Dancehall because it was sneaking out a hole in the wall and was being rerouted through the entry room of Tourist's Delight. Thus, the low entry crawl into Tourist's Delight has been sumped as long as the stream is flowing.

The unfortunate offshoot of the missing sump is that access to Tourist's Delight is relatively easy now. There are a few squeezes that will discourage those of larger stature, but the lean and hungry don't even have to get very wet to enter now. During the last month since the cave has been open, we have

been trying to finish the survey of the cave. Every time we go back, the damage due to vandalism has been worse. This cave probably still is the most-decorated and pristine of the caves in the silurian strata which contains many of Iowa's caves, and thus seems worthy of preservation. Legend has it that at one time, all of the caves at Maquoketa and Hunter's Cave were very well decorated. Countless visitations later, only a few remnants of formations remain.

We have spent some time politicking with the Head Ranger, but he seemed to think that there was little he could do. He had the mistaken impression that the cave had been open for 75 years, so thought it wouldn't make sense to close or limit access now. We are hoping to get something done to protect the cave; if nothing else, just sealing the entrance until more enlightened times would be better than shrugging our shoulders and facing the inevitable. If the cave was going to be sealed, we did want to have it well documented with photos and a complete map, so we were anxious to finish the survey before it was too late.

This was another Sunday trip, which seemed to work out well for everyone's schedules. Gary Engh couldn't make it this time, but was present in spirit since he had been such a large part of the project. He had been the only person to be on every survey trip into the cave prior to this day. Despite the prolonged rainy weather the past two weeks, the cave was actually dryer than ever seen. So, once we saw that the entry wasn't sumped, we geared up and headed for the back of the cave.

The entry crawlway is always a bit on the unpleasant side, but this is enhanced greatly by having to crawl through all of the broken formations that now litter the floor. The nice muddy floor we once crawled on is now the consistency of Grape Nuts. Gum wrappers and cigarettes were crawled over as well; all that was missing was a beer can or two. We made a beeline for the back of the cave, which probably still took a half an hour. No one will break any speed records in this cave.

When we got to the end of the survey we got some interesting information. First of all, the slimy squeeze that had been a puddle before was dried up. Second, someone had taken our survey chip past the squeeze and tied it on a chip left in the previous room. We were at least a hundred feet past the room where Greg McCarty had stated, "...surely no local ever made it this far into the cave". A caver ought to know better than to move a survey chip. Nevertheless, someone had been back here in the two weeks since we set the chip. Fortunately, I was able to pinpoint the spot where the chip belonged and we all squeezed through the tight spot to start surveying.

We started off with a few longer shots than the 10 foot norm in this cave, through comfortable crawlway spiced with a few tighter spots. There was an obvious stream channel that was now dry which had mud stained black and numerous cobbles. We were pleasantly surprised to find the formations in a generally pristine condition and plentiful as well. One room was truly spectacular, about 50-70 feet into our survey. The vandals must have turned back before this point. The passage got low and became almost exclusively belly-crawl from this point, although it was fairly wide. The mud floor was also getting damper, and it had a definite chilling effect on me as I read the compass. Beth was handling lead tape, and announced finally that we had reached the end. It was a wonderful place to end the survey — actually a comfortable little room where we could all rest while Mike sketched his way into the room. There is a pinch that is definitely impassable and half full of water on the far side of the room. It looked as if about 8 feet of trenching would get a person past the dig into what might be passable belly-crawl on the far side.

Mike gave it a good look with a big flashlight and decided it could be done, but it didn't rank very highly on his list.

The cold survey group made its way back to the lower level and surveyed down the pit. On the way to the pit, we removed all of our survey chips except the one at the very back of the cave. We didn't leave a chip in the lower level, but if anyone wants to continue the survey years from now, there are two places to tie in. One is the "shark's tooth" formation hanging over the pit. The other is in the middle of the obvious pothole at the very base of the pit. We surveyed as far as the passage went, ending at a natural bridge obstruction, one of 5 natural bridges in the cave. With some hammering, one might be able to get past the obstruction, but it is a very wet and sleazy place. Besides, pounding on a nice natural bridge is reminiscent of pounding on flowstone, distasteful and to be avoided.

We looked at the upper level on the way back. It didn't amount to much and will be sketched into the map. After a final rest in the breakdown room, Beth led the way out of the cave. It felt good to be done with the survey, but it is sad to consider the probable future of this cave. At the very least, we hope to see the entrance blocked until some sort of a preservation plan can be put into operation. I would like to discourage cavers from visiting the cave until a management plan is adopted. It is nearly impossible to visit the cave without attracting quite a fuss and alerting the general populace to the location of the cave. This is one of the major reasons we were intent on finishing the survey work without needing another trip. If you have to see the cave, do it on a weekday or at night. There is still hope for this cave if some immediate action is taken. With a gate and a management plan, this cave can be enjoyed by generations to come.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES PUBLIC MEETING

Maquoketa Caves State Park, Tourist's Delight Cave

by Mike Lace

The DNR recently convened a public meeting to outline the status and future plans for the redevelopment of Maquoketa Caves State Park on Tuesday, October 24 in Maquoketa. Extensive improvements of the park were discussed; for example, repavement of roads, aquisition of the nearby Sager's Museum, trail rebuilding, ect. I attended the meeting and voiced concern over the recent vandalism observed in Tourist's Delight Cave and the DNR policy for preventing such abuse.

Currently, no state park policy exists for effectively dealing with cave vandalism with the exception of not publicizing the existence of this cave, which has proven to be woefully inadequate. DNR officials stated that they are very interested in protecting this delicate cave and are currently deciding on how this can be done. It may sound like political stalling, but photos of the cave and the damage to formations made a big impression on the DNR officials, state park employees and the locals who attended the meeting. So much so that they asked if they could take the photos back to the DNR DesMoines office to show to their superiors.

I think Grotto involvement at the meeting acheived two important things. One, attention was brought to the urgency and seriousness of the situation at Tourist's Delight and two, that the DNR and those working in the park know who we are and how to contact us! They also know that we are willing to actively participate in the preservation of Iowa caves.

As a follow-up to the meeting, a copy of the Tourist's Delight map will be sent to the DNR Des Moines office and the state park to further illustrate the significance of this cave. We will also be contacting DNR officials soon to check on their progress. As always, if anyone has any ideas regarding Tourist's Delight or knows of any other instances of cave vandalism, please contact any Iowa Grotto officer or just drop us a note.

(Reprinted from the November, 1989 HOT LINE)

Mike Lace

NSS 27245

HUNTER'S CAVE TRIP

Hunter's Cave, Jackson County, Iowa

October 8, 1989

by Michael Bounk

Michael Bounk, Ben Eiler, Jim Sinning and Leslie Sinning

We met at about 9:00 a.m. at my house near Cedar Bluff and drove in the Sinning's vehicle to Hunter's Cave. After entering the cave, we proceeded to the Pit Room and looked into some of the adjacent passages. We then started checking passages in an attempt to reach the Skull Room. It had been several years since I was last in the cave, so I did not remember the route.

After taking turns checking out side passages, we found the way. There is now a passage which bypasses Rupture Rock. Ben (age 10) got some climbing and chimneying experience entering and leaving the Canyon Room. During the trip we picked up a number of beer cans and other litter which we removed. We returned to Cedar Bluff in early evening.

COLDWATER CAVE

September 16, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Jack Decker, Larry Welch and I returned to the First Right-Hand Side Passage. We had been hoping to get Lowell Burkhead's collapsible grappeling hook to attempt accessing the balcony, but all the right connections weren't made. We ended up surveying everything we could, except the last nasty 30-40 feet that will probably require dive masks and pony tanks to do safely. There is an offset to the passage that will add a bit of a challenge to surveying through the 1½ inches of available airspace. (Editor- See Larry Welches report on this trip later in this issue. Yes, you may have noticed that the trip reports in this issue are not in order due to when they arrived.)

Wild Well

Wild Well Cave, Clayton County, Iowa

September 17, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Randy Kwiatkowski, Mike Nelson and Art Dahms

This was purely a recreational dive, with Randy leading. We dived in real Florida style, staying close to the line, but not utilizing it. He was taking pictures with a fairly elaborate underwater setup. I, the rank amateur of the group, followed, with fair vis in most places in Randy's wake. Art Dahms brought up the rear with conditions in which he was probably used to exiting in, in my wake.

At one point we had to deal with some slack from a tieoff that had come undone. Of course, my method of dealing with it is to first get all the slack wound around essential gear, then undo it and proceed. Thanks for the assistance with freeing my flipper, Art.

We dived just over 500 linear feet to the Big Room, not bothering to surface in the many air filled cross joints. Only while sitting atop an extremely slippery, mud covered, breakdown block in this room could I even start to appreciate the effort these two guys had put into pushing this difficult cave out to over 1500 feet. It may actually have been easier had it all been submerged; such was the pain involved in getting oneself and ones gear through the "dry" areas.

On the way out, Art attempted to tie a large knot in the portion of the line that was slack. From my position on the line ahead of him, the line felt like it had snapped apart when he tested the knot and it failed. I waited a tense moment until he caught up again. The slack remains in that section of line.

VERTICAL RESCUE TRAINING

Marengo Fire Station

October 14, 1989

by Mike Lace

Doug Schmuecker, Jay Wells, Mike Lace, Delores Nelson and Mike Nelson

We all gathered at the Marengo Fire Station for a vertical rescue workshop organized by Doug Schmuecker, the Iowa Grotto Safety Coordinator. We joined a few of the people who work with Doug to observe a few rescue videos and practice setting up and implementing rope systems designed to rescue an injured caver/climber when a vertical evacuation is necessary.

A trap door on the second floor of the station served as a convenient spot to rig the ropes and haul a Stokes Basket (a litter designed for rescue) complete with a 150 lb. dummy called "Larry" to serve as our victim. Larry got a good workout as we rotated the jobs of rigging the pulley systems, loading him into the basket, and hauling him up and down. I felt that I at least had a handle on how to set one up and use it. There's no substitute for practice, however, and I definitely want to become more familiar with these rescue rigs.

During our break for lunch, we got a chance to see the cave display that Doug and Jay have been building for the Osbourne Nature Center in Clayton County. It really looks sharp! The photos and blurbs on cave safety, conservation and the Iowa Grotto make it a real eye-catcher. Both Doug and Jay should be congratulated for the fine work they've done. Thanks Guys!

After an afternoon of hauling Larry up and down the rope, I called it a day and headed back to Iowa City to do a bit of lab work before meeting everyone in Monticello the next morning.

Indian Bluffs Nature Preserve, Jones County, Iowa

October 15, 1989

We unpacked the equipment at Indian Bluffs and carried it into this beautiful public area to practice our rescue techniques on a nearby cliff. It wasn't too hard to find one as the valley is lined with sheer rock walls and a few small caves. "Larry" couldn't make it that day but he sent his younger sister, "Jennifer", to take his place in the Stokes Basket. She weighed a lot less than her brother, making it a bit easier to haul her around.

Doug found us a sloping cliff with plenty of brush to work through for our rescue site and placed the victim about half way up, presumably as a result of a fall from the cliff edge. The ropes were rigged and Mike and Delores rappelled down to the victim to secure her in the basket. Jay and I eventually set up an efficient "two-to-one" advantage pulley system that raised the basket to the victim and then lowered her to safety.

Eventually, we switched positions with Jay belaying me as I was lowered with the basket to the valley floor. It was a curious sensation going down without a rappel rack but being clipped into the rope that lowered the basket and belayed by a second line made it quite safe. Doug emphasized safety as everyone working on or near the cliff was securely attached to an anchor line of one kind or another.

The entire weekend left me with a profound appreciation for the complexity and time involved in getting up and participating in a rescue. I hope that Doug will offer another such training session in the future as the information is invaluable to anyone who might be faced with a cave-related or vertical rescue where time and the ability for self rescue are critical.

COLDWATER CAVE

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
October 21, 1989
Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund and Jack Decker

by Mike Nelson

Dry weather and low water opened up the option of working upstream early this year. We were one of three three man parties to venture up that way. The other two parties headed out the Last Right-Hand Side Passage and will file their own reports. We picked up the survey at the beginning of the temporarily opened "Nasty Sump"

By the time we were too cold to get more than another sighting or two, we were up out of the low stuff. We were very lucky in that this was a very straight piece of cave and we got good long shots. Once out of the water we surveyed to the breakdown room in no time flat. The dive line that I had laid in on my solo trip last year was extended from the rock used to anchor it, up to a point where it was somewhat better secured by pushing the remaining line and the slat that held it deep into a high, dry mud bank. Pray there is never any cause to use it for diving. We're a long way back in the cave and would be pushing the limits of air that we could carry.

At 518 feet we wrapped up the survey at the edge of virgin cave. The breakdown room was a good 60 feet long, 30 feet wide and 25 feet high. It ran crossways to the direction of the cave. The mud covering everything was old, dry and pocked with drip holes in many places. We found a way under the breakdown to facilitate extending the survey and avoid unnecessary climbing. The continuation of the cave was low and the mud on the floor soft and deep. High, narrow, chert encrusted domes hinted that we may have passed under Coldwater Creek on the surface; we were optimistic. Eventually the passage split, with the greater flow of water coming from the right. That passage was circular, 3 to 4 feet in diameter and sumped abruptly in a short distance. The sump appeared to be typical to those in this part of the cave, shallow, most likely a short affair. An attempt to push it will probably be on the agenda for the next trip this way.

The left-hand passage was devoid of flow. There were several small gravel

dams that pooled standing water behind them. There was a long dry shoal and there were small breakdown rooms. The passage varied from crawl to walking and back. It gave a distinct feel of being a loop headed back for the streamway. It didn't.

This left-hand branch terminated in a high, right-hand crevice lead that pinched out, and a crevice sump that went deep and appeared to have very sharp jagged edges underwater. Not too inviting and definitely atypical of sumps in Coldwater. It will hopefully be better evaluated on the next trip, but appears to be the end of the cave in this direction, for this generation, at least.

There is an estimated 3/8 mile of cave to survey up this lead as of yet, and only that one diving lead that I am personally interested in pursuing. Rats, it seems as though we have done it upstream in Coldwater Cave.

A.J. SPRING CAVE

Allamakee County, Iowa
October 22, 1989
Mike Nelson and Randy Kwiatkowski

By Mike Nelson

In most sump diving sites in Iowa, I must use a considerable amount of line as "lead in" from a tie off point to the water. I have been using 1/8 inch line at the behest of past support divers. This required stuffing the reel to have an optimum amount of line for diving. Not normally a problem, except in A.J. where we tied off within a few feet of the sump. I always brought out the last 15-20 feet in my hands, as it was difficult to rewind it all tightly.

I had an accurate distance measurement from a previous dive, so I alleviated the excess, leaving just enough to tie on and a little extra for the far side.

Randy and I dived using flippers this time. I managed to leave things clear enough for him to get a look at the cave this time. That was due to finer tuned bouyancy though, the flippers providing no real advantage.

Things went slow and easy through the restriction near the known end of A.J., where I observed that what appeared to be a sand plug on the first dive in here actually had a small joint alined opening running up one side of it. At the top of it was a slot that I had seen the air in on that previous dive. I headed for it and ran out of line with between 8 and 10 feet to go. I can't say if it was poor planning on my part or proper line tending by the second diver. Randy had made several ties at "naturals" to keep the line secure and tidy. Either way, I figured that there would be too much confusion involved in going to a second reel to push the airspace, especially if it didn't go. Backing down and retrieving the primary reel in zero vis was not a chore I had practised enough to be comfortable with. I called the dive.

Returning, I came across an interesting line trap, the first one I'd come across in A.J. We had laid the line in on a shelf above an undercut. On the way out, I was below the shelf level. I found myself unable to reel further and upon feeling around, found the line to go back up over my shoulder. It had slid off the shelf and around a projection before hauling me up short. After a minor back-track, I was on my way out.

Discussing the dive later, Randy stated that he had to back through the restriction on our last dive here. He had not gotten into the larger area beyond. Obviously, my disorientation on that dive was due to too much effort spent looking

for tie-offs and not enough of it keeping track of the cave. I had veered to the left too soon, looking for the slot.

As both of us are comfortable with 1/16 inch line, we'll be returning to that when diving resumes, next year.

WONDER CAVE REVISITED

Wonder Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
October 22, 1989

by Mike Lace

Mike Lace, Larry Welch, Beth Welch, Dick Ames, Stacey Cyphert and Gary Engh

Wonder Cave is a former commercial cave that was closed to the public in the early seventies. During its active period, however, the cave drew its share of visitors, enticing them with descriptions of ornate flowstone draperies and a deep pit at its end with a seventy foot high flowstone column.

Iowa Grotto members last visited the cave in the early eighties as described in Volume 16, issues 3 and 4 of the INTERCOM. Contact with the owner deteriorated over the years until Mike Nelson approached him with the possibility of letting experienced cavers visit the cave. Subsequent contact with the owner resulted in the trip described in this report.

A small group of us gathered at the cave and, after signing liability releases, made our way down the overgrown trail to the mouth of the cave. The entrance looked just like the picture in the old postcards I had seen. The gate was opened and we followed the trail down to the first set of stairs. The owner recommended rigging a hand line down these wooden steps since the years and moisture in the cave had rotted the steps and rusted the metal handrails.

The stairs were in fairly good condition, considering what they'd been through, and only a few of them were unsafe to trust. Level passage from this point led on with an increasing number of flowstone formations. Many of them had been damaged long ago but a surprising number were still intact. We soon reached a pool of water along the right side of the passage that had obviously been used as a wishing well since a few corroded pennies lined its edge. A large flowstone mass dipped into this pool while two small crevices led away from it.

Stacey slid into the larger of the two crevices only to find a brick wall blocking his progress. The owner had mentioned that the side passages had been sealed to prevent silt from washing into the main passage. We continued down the trail, all the while noticing that the animal droppings dotting the trail were increasing in number and the odor was growing thicker. As we approached the dome-pit, Dick noticed pairs of beady little eyes retreating down the last set of stairs. We had chased a set of three well-fed coons down the passage ahead of us. Two of them had gone to the bottom of the stairs while the third had slipped through a missing step to the relative safety of a cubbyhole underneath.

The trail had brought us to an opening two thirds of the way up the dome. The steep set of stairs led to a concrete platform some forty feet above the dome floor. This set of wooden stairs, unlike the last we had seen, was a jumble of crumbling planks and altogether missing steps. The railings and the metal frame seemed sturdy enough so after we rigged another rope, I slowly worked my way down walking on the outside edges of the steps and grabbing both hand rails while staying clipped into the rope. The owner had said that during the commercial years, treated lumber wasn't available so these steps in particular had to be frequently replaced.

The platform at the bottom was stable so I derigged and the others descended. A short crevice led back from the platform to a beautiful flowstone drapery. The other two coons had disappeared down this passage no doubt through a crack that only a coon could follow. A railing with chain-linked fence ran across the edge of the platform, keeping visitors from taking the express to the bottom of the pit. This was the end of the tourist's trail but a very rickety aluminum extension ladder led from a nearby ledge to the floor below. It must have been used by the owner and possibly by local teenagers who had broken into the cave, the owner had mentioned. You couldn't pay me to climb down that thing!

The flowstone column was indeed there, stained brown after the drilling of a small access shaft for platform construction materials. The estimate of seventy feet seemed accurate and the staining of the once white column didn't diminish the impressive look of this flowstone "wonder".

We decided to send Larry to the bottom of the pit to examine the drain that had been described to us. Gary and I rigged the rope from the platform and Larry descended. The exit for the water that dripped into the dome was not sumped but Larry said that it wasn't large enough to enter. Rumor has it that the cave has been dyetraced to Dunning Spring so it's probably worth a try at digging it open. The total depth we had traversed to this point must make Wonder Cave one of the deepest in Winneshiek County but accurately surveying the cave may be difficult due to all the rusted rails and defunct electrical wiring.

After Larry rejoined, we exited the cave to a warm, windy day with a long drive ahead for all of us. The longest trip was for Dick who had to return to Wahpeton (your guess is as good as mine where that is), North Dakota. We chatted briefly with the owner's father who described trapping skunk in the cave. He explained to us that a skunk will never spray in its own den and that snaring the animal and lifting it off its feet prevents it from spraying. It sounds intriguing to me but I think I'll pass on field-testing this theory. I checked in with the owner and described what we had found and the general condition of the cave. He was pleased with the report and assured me that we were welcome back anytime.

CLANDESTINE CAVE

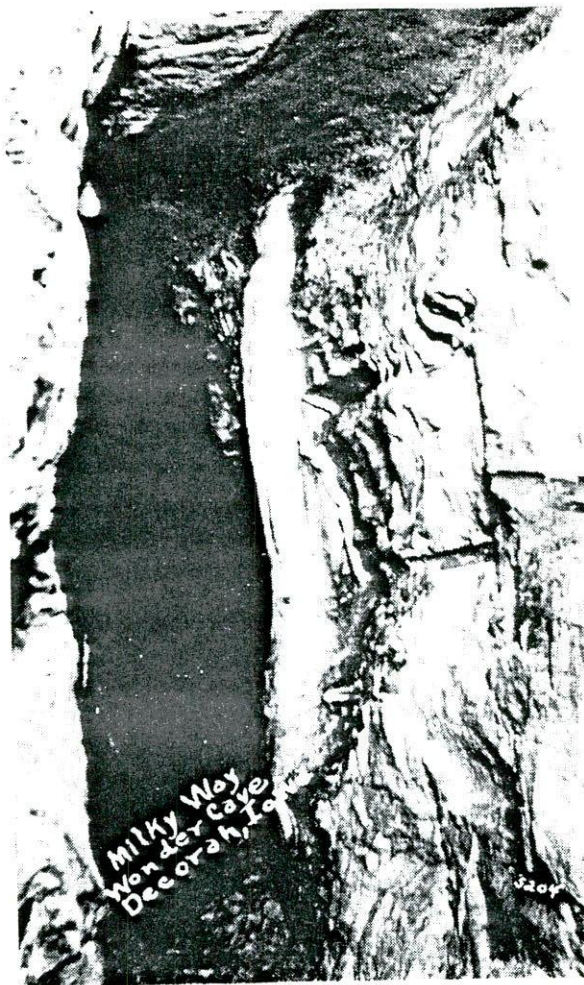
Worth County, Iowa
June 13, 1989

by ~~MIKE MEYER~~

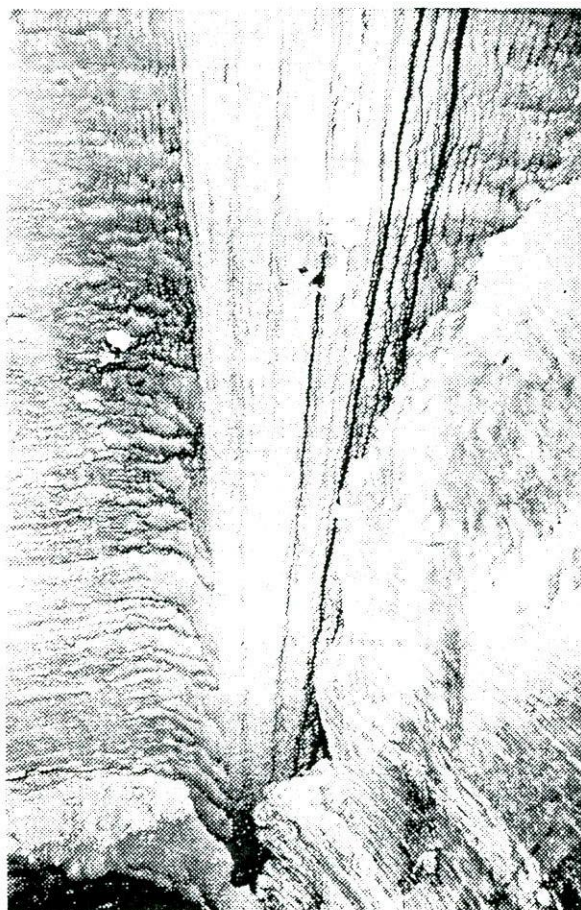
I'm not at liberty to relate too many facts concerning this cvve, as its name suggests. I'm pursuing legitimate access, but because of worry that the cave might be sealed or destroyed prompted me to take this rash action. Evidence at the scene suggested that doing the wrong thing might have been the right thing to do

Basically, we have a chamber that was accessed through blasting. It is approximately 12 feet wide by 16 feet long. About one fourth of it was filled with blast rubble, creating a slope that made reaching the floor fairly safe and easy. The height averaged 7-8 feet. There was about 20 feet of cap rock over the cave.

This chamber was breached high on one wall. The rubble that filled it may easily have also filled a void in the opposite direction. There was breakdown from the blast freshly deposited on the floor. The remaining ceiling still appeared quite stable. Many small crystalline vugs were noted in the walls along with a feature resembling small scale boxwork. Although there were dripping areas, there was no indication of flowstone forming. Much of one wall was composed of clay, causing some speculation about more cave existing.



Greatest cave discovery in 1940.

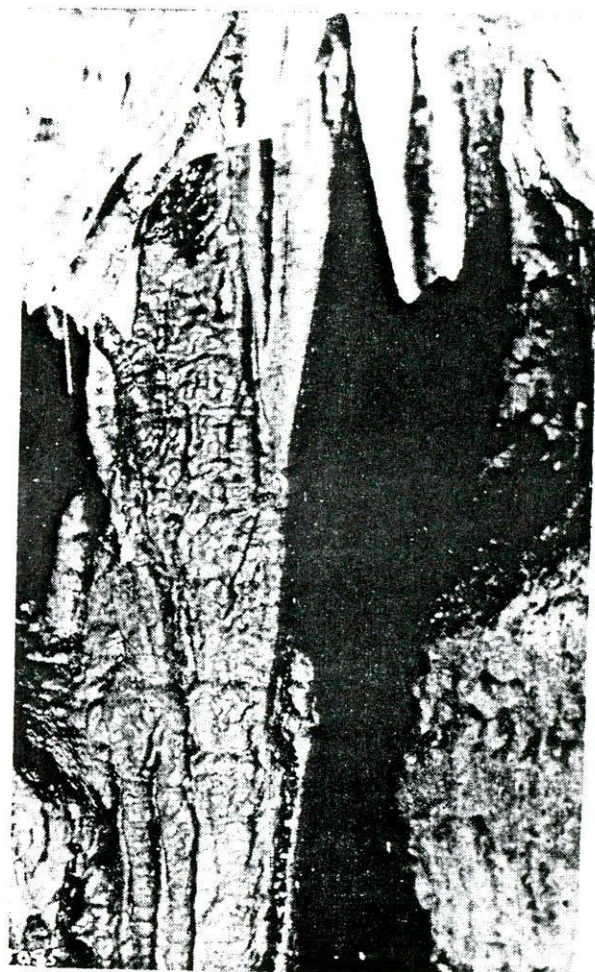
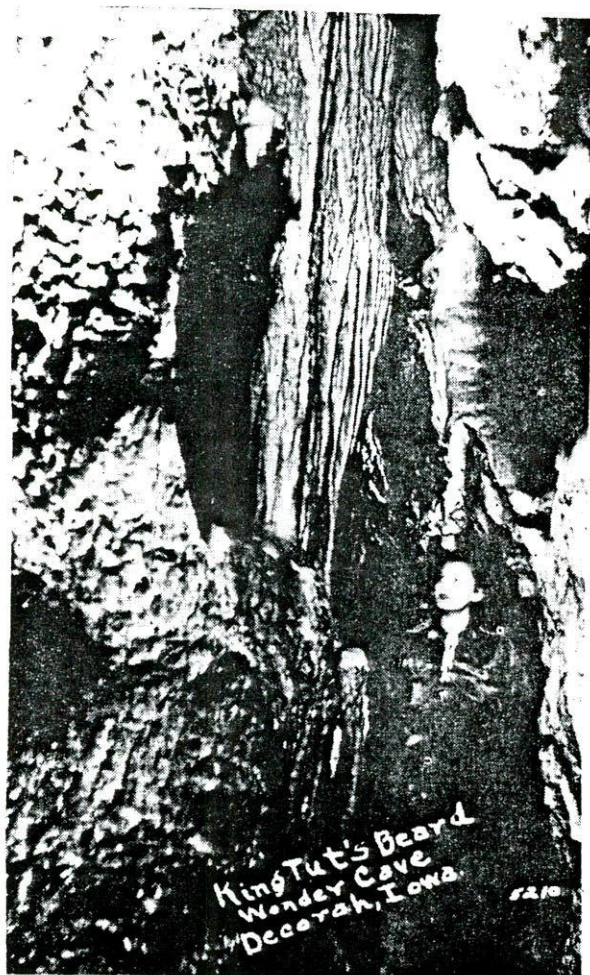
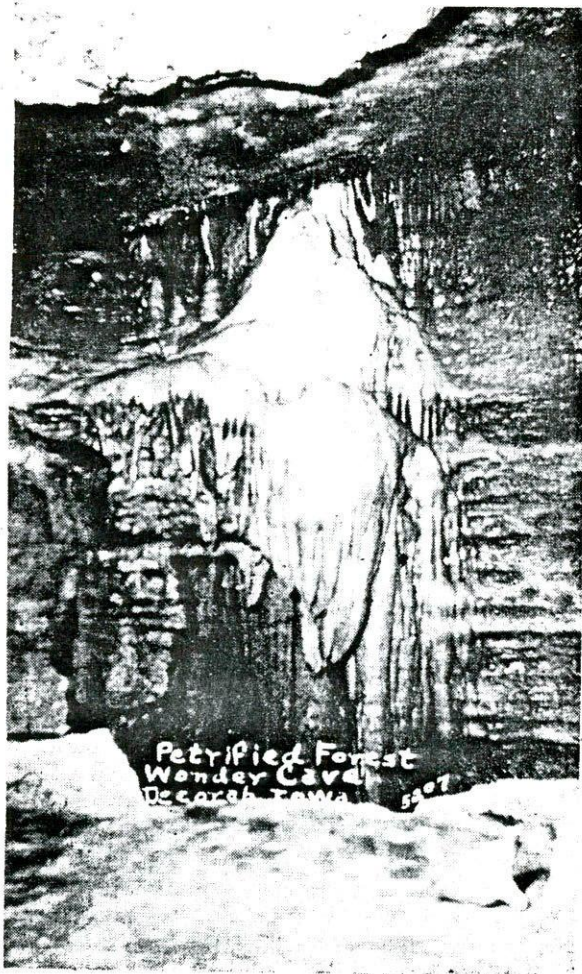


Giant Pillar, Wonder Cave, Decorah, Iowa.



Rock of Ages, Wonder Cave, Decorah, Iowa.

Antique picture postcards of Wonder Cave belonging to Mike Lace



A lower lead also existed. Most of this area was cut from clay with rock showing only here and there. A second small chamber, looking to be entirely clay, was lined with a red oxide. A very small stream, originating under the large room, flowed through this lower extension.

This was of necessity a rushed and inadequate inspection. If granted proper permission, a more in depth information and survey data gathering trip will be taken. Upon checking back into this lead at a later date, I found that the quarry had been allowed to refill with water, making me glad I had trespassed. This is now the only cave diving site in north central Iowa.

Anonymous Caver

CARLSBAD CAVERNS RESTORATION FIELDTRIP

June 19-23, 1989

by Mike Nelson

I've come away from my first experience of this nature with very mixed emotions. The fact that I've already signed up for next year's fieldtrip must indicate that I feel the effort is worthwhile.

The work itself is like anything labeled "work", it's not particularly fun. The constant repetition of answering the same questions by park visitors is tiring also. The average visitor who comes through is not able to appreciate the difference in what is being done. The reward is in that handful of people who got to see restoration in progress and understand the actual damage that was done to this magnificent cave, and looking at the finished product. There were aspects of restoration in which it appeared that more harm than good might be being done and only by taking in "the big picture" could one justify the little transgressions.

These frustrating aspects were generally related to damage that occurred beneath the old trails, which in most areas were literally everywhere. Vast areas of the floors were leveled so the visitors could walk right up to and touch anything they liked. When digging through the trail material and discovering destroyed delicate formations that were indistinguishable from fill material, before realizing that one had dug too deep, was truly contrary to everything a good caver believes in. The fill material itself consisted of everything from flowstone to formations to clays, blasted from the cave, making distinctions between fill and natural formations, many of which were crushed by foot traffic on those trails, difficult at best.

Other folks were lucky enough to be in areas where such judgement was not necessary, and reexposing dry pools, popcorn and other such features was more instantly gratifying, though no less taxing on one's determination and skills. Most of what was refound had been buried for 50 years. Also, camouflaging the wiring for the lighting seemed to generate a lot of self-satisfaction.

One of the big problems in Carlsbad today is lint from polyesters. Lint from cottons and other natural fibers degrades, but modern fibers built up an ugly dust on formations near the trail. This is the area of restoration I intend to major in, in the future, which will allow me to operate in a theater of less doubt about my personal contribution.

One lucky break was being sent into a pit to remove rubble. I attacked it like a Wisconsiner digging for new cave and was rewarded with a small opening that was sucking air. Upon clearing more material, an unenterable hole, with a 15 to 20 foot drop into a crevice passage was uncovered. I calmly commented that I had

a lead and the ensuing ripples grew rapidly, until everyone in the general vicinity had come over to check it out. The work was stopped and the lead reserved for a future CRF (Cave Research Foundation) work trip.

There were thirty of us on the project and we moved 13 tons of old trail materials back to the hole from whence it had come.

COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County, Iowa
July 15, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Julie Whitfield, Tim Hornady (Central Indiana Grotto) and I took a tour downstream to give Tim a tour of Iowa's grand cave and to test Julie's caving stamina. She failed, pesky knees again. Our primary goal was to check the First Right-Hand Side Passage to see if it was opened by the drought but we didn't make it that far.

The highlight of this trip was when Julie experienced a serious problem with cold hands. I slapped some circulation back into them and placed them, one at a time, into my wetsuit, under my arms to revive them. This was a truly magnanimous gesture and you owe me, Whitfield, and don't you forget it. Luckily, it wasn't Tim that had this problem. We might have come up short on volunteers.

I loaned her my neoprene gloves and used her poly-pros for the rest of the trip. We traipsed through Beaver Boneyard to warm ourselves up thoroughly before heading back and encountering Julie's recurring knee malady. Tim later observed that we should have carried her out; "We'd have made better time". Sessions at the YWCA on a Nautilus leg extension machine are supposed to be helping Ms. Whitfield with this problem. We'll give her another try.

DEVIL'S CAVE

Clayton County, Iowa
July 16, 1989

(Suttle Creek)

by Mike Nelson

My wife, Delores, son, Aaron, Julie and Wes Whitfield and I took the pleasant little climb up to this serene little cave just for the fun of it. We were quite surprised to discover that it's rise pool had dropped almost 2½ feet. We'll have to keep an eye on this one as winter comes on. We moved a few rocks at the spring down the valley a ways. Who knows?

OUR MISSOURI CAVIN' VACATION

July 26, 1989

by Mike Nelson

While in Missouri on a family vacation, I checked in with some very active map makers, Mick Sutton and Sue Hagen, to see if there was any work "of substance" that might need being done. They gave me a couple of leads on topo maps that there was no general information on and sent me out to recon.

Carter Spring Cave, Reynolds County, Missouri

July 26, 1989

We followed the topo map way-the-hell-and-be-gone back on what passes for roads in some portions of Missouri past the imaginary line that reduced it to a jeep trail and out to Carter Spring. There was no hint of this being a cave on the map, only a rumor Mick had heard. There existed a couple hundred feet of low but varied cave passage with the substantial flow of the mainstream coming from

behind an equally substantial pile of breakdown. A crude sketch map was turned over to the map makers in thanks for the days entertaining and hopefully worthwhile activities.

Cave (no name) Reynolds County, Missouri

July 26, 1989

Marked simply "cave" on the topo map, we had no idea what to expect. Much of the cave mapping inventory that these folks are putting together of Reynolds County Caves are impressive maps of rather unimpressive caves. Letting the land owner know we were doing foot work for people doing serious surveying work helped get us in the door of this one. Extending Mick and Sue's offer of a map upon completion of the survey didn't hurt any either. Again, courtesy and the right approach had gotten us into cave that isn't generally entered with permission. It was well worth it.

Our reward for this recon mission was 800-1000 feet of meandering stream passage with some minor upper level passage. I even managed to get myself turned around once. (Not hard to do, you say?) It was rather different to be caving in this type of cave without a wetsuit. I stayed quite comfortable with just coveralls over a swimsuit and poly-pro gloves under protective gloves and, of course, wet suit socks in my boots.

This cave was much too intricate for a rough sketch and Mick and Sue were pleasantly surprised to hear of its relatively good size. They placed it high on their priority list. Later conversation with them had revealed that other area cavers were familiar with this cave. I believe he said it is locally known as Thompson's Creek Cave.

They also took us to one of their pet projects, one of the many "Cave Hollow" caves. This is a place they survey whenever they happen to have the time or get some silly volunteers like ourselves. We picked up some survey footage that I didn't bother to remember and several tons of mud on our clothes and gear that I shant soon forget. Us Iowa cavers also learned a lesson about balancing the need for liquids on the surface of Missouri on a hot summer day with the lack thereof while down under. Consumption of liquids needs finer monitoring down there, or you'll end up looking like a damned amateur caver, like we did.

We really want to thank Mick and Sue for providing us with productive entertainment on our vacation and all the hospitality they offered and non-caving recommendations that provided us with a well rounded good time.

Also while down there we walked into two little caves while on a canoe trip on the Current River. One of them was Courthouse Cave, the other wasn't.

I dived along a certain section of the river looking for what may have been spring vents, according to the fellow who gave me the lead. They were only rocks.

I also scuba dived in to Little Blue Spring's cavern area. It appeared to be a dive that would best be done with side mounted tanks and bouyancy control. Having only had two practice dives with such a setup, I opted not to pursue it. I also figured it would be wise to see if any work had been done there; no use for a redundant effort if the apparent conduit that leveled off in about 45 feet of water had been checked out. All these sites were in Shannon County, Missouri.

COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County, Iowa
August 19, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Jack Decker and I went down to make that check on the First Right-Hand Side Passage to see if it had unsumped during the drought. Though a couple items of Jack's gear lacked fine tuning to the cave, I decided to take advantage of his subtle remarks indicating his confidence in his level of fitness. It's generally considered 3 hours each way, down and back to the FRHSP. We got down there, pushed through the unsumped section to become the second and third people into Steve Barnett's Unclimbed Dome, spent more than a little time in awe and speculation and made the return trip in a total of 5 hours and 50 minutes. Upon our return, Jack promptly took a short nap.

Barnett's Unclimbed Dome, how it had intrigued me over the years. First, all the second hand stories about a subway sized lead outside of the reach of Steve's formidable talents. Then the tales from the horse's mouth on a trip to find Barnett's Lost Passage (Sand Canyon). All the thinking about logistics of rediving the sump. Whether to haul gear that far downstream and back or considering the haul to the resurgence, violating the gate and repeating the original daring dives. Thank God for the drought, it made things easy.

On Steve and Larry Fattig's early dive, they had very poor lighting. All they could see was the gaping vastness of pure black empty 18-20 feet over their heads. They had no way of knowing that they were looking into the base of an extremely large dome, or possibly double dome complex. Jack's fairly powerful backup quality dive light barely reached the upper recesses. My judgements of heights is legendarily poor, so I won't even relate a guess. I don't give it much of a chance of having any continuing passage, but I have to get up to that balcony while this window of opportunity is open.

AQUATIC ADVENTURE

Coldwater Cave, Winnesheik County, Iowa
September 16, 1989
Larry Welch, Mike Nelson and Jack Decker

by Larry Welch

Low water conditions are opening up new avenues of exploration to those who have been waiting patiently. A year prior to this trip, I had found airspace in the sump at the end of the First Right-Hand Side Passage. Not very much, but airspace nevertheless. The previous month, Jack and Mike had investigated and found that the sump was now passable, and had continued all the way to Steve Barnett's legendary dome, with no discernible ceiling and subway-sized lead.

Climbing to the lead was desired this month, but the proper equipment was lacking. When I asked Mike if we could extend the survey, he noted that the airspace was "roomy" and this would be an ideal time to give it a try. So we set off, packing hoods. Mike Lace was kind enough to let me borrow his, as mine is still out Cascade somewhere.

A Nelson pace was established moving downstream, but eventually this was attenuated to a more reasonable level to minimize hyperventilating on my part. Jack was surprised to find out that not everyone was a speed demon in the cave. It must have taken us all of 2.5 hours to reach the First Right-Hand Side Passage. Here we dumped all but the essential survey gear, donned our "Captain Nemo" hoods, and set off out the passage.

Mike Nelson and Bryan Bain had surveyed the last stretch of the passage to the point where it starts getting low, leaving a chip in a small ceiling joint. There wasn't enough of a mud bank to cache gear on in this spot, so we went ahead to the next room to unload the survey materials. Somehow there had been a miscommunication and the compasses had been left in Jack's pack at the mouth of the passage. Mike sprinted back to get them while Jack and I crammed ourselves into a dry crevice in the Rest Room in an attempt to stay warm. When he arrived back, we sloshed back to the crevice and started surveying at chip 881.

Mike took lead, Jack read the compass, and I was left with the book. I was cold by the time we started, but we just had to grit our teeth and press ahead. We knew that as long as we could find comfortable station sites we would be OK, but as soon as we were putting stations in low airspace, we would chill in a hurry. Everyone knew what we were getting into, so did their best. Mike picked some excellent station locations and Jack read the compass as quickly as possible.

Eight inches of airspace existed between the chip and the RestRoom. On the far side, the ceiling lowered to yield 5 inches of airspace. Two shots put us through here into another comfortable room. On the far side of this room, things got down to 2.5 inches or so. This was the point where I had stopped on my previous trip out this way with Richard Ames. The water had been slightly higher then, perhaps an inch or so. Despite the lower level, reading a compass and taking book were not going to be possible. Fortunately, Mike found a small crevice in which to place the next station, and a small dome for the one after. I had stayed behind in the previous room to take notes and sketch, with Jack and Mike relaying the data back as it was taken. A chip was placed in the dome and the survey terminated as there were no more spots to set a comfortable station ahead. Surveying this last bit into the dome may require scuba gear.

They waited for me in the dome as I packed up the book and came forward to join them. I was shaking from the cold, but still hopeful of seeing the dome. However, I kept getting wedged under a ledge in the passage ahead of the room, and could not see where I was going. Since Jack and Mike were two stations ahead of me, I didn't have the luxury of using their lights to orient myself in unfamiliar passage. So I backed out, then tried again with the same results. I yelled at them to either go ahead or come back and assist me through. They came back, but everyone was pretty cold and we decided to bag the passage for the day.

We picked up some heat crawling back to the mainstream, then luxuriated in some food and water. I had done my homework, and suggested padding our survey total by picking up some scraps on the return trip. Both Jack and Mike were open to such a suggestion, so we went upstream to Sand Canyon. Near the end of this passage, a Y junction is encountered. Going right will lead one through various atrocities to the legendary "lost passage" of Steve Barnett's discovery and rediscovery. The left is a short cobble crawl to a nice dome loaded with fossils. There were a couple of passages leading out of the dome that hadn't been surveyed. Both ended in mud fill, but one (left) had some water movement and enough formations to suggest some digging might be worthwhile. We surveyed both of these small passages to the point of impassability, then quit for good. Total footage just exceeded 200 feet.

After starting ominously at the right-hand lead, we came to our senses and headed back to the mainstream. Once there, we set off at a true Nelson Pace toward the shaft. I got very nauseated on the trip upstream and was completely dead by the time we arrived back at the shaft. After a good night's sleep I felt much better, and our survey in the FRHSP didn't seem so wet any more.

THE PROJECT CAVER

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
October 24, 1989
Larry Welch, Mike Lace and Richard Ames

by Larry Welch

For the past 14 years the Coldwater Cave Project has been one of the most active projects in the region. We have the Rock River Speleological Society to thank for initializing the project. It would seem that the Iowa Grotto was in an ideal position to establish a project upon the cave's reopening, but at the time the Iowa group was lacking in two areas that Rock River incorporated as cornerstones of the project. First of all, establish a positive relationship with the cave owner. The Rock River group did everything right in this regard, and the good will gained here can never be underestimated. The Iowa Grotto managed to antagonize the cave owners after the cave was reopened, and it was not a big surprise that the Rock River group was given stewardship of the project instead.

Secondly, the RRSS established a team project that emphasized group goals over individual pleasures. Trip reports were given that could be published in journals and referenced by future cavers. On the contrary, one infamous Iowa Grotto member has openly admitted writing reports with "omissions (sic) and misleading statements" to insure himself of a future selfcentered caving experience. Surveying the cave using accurate instruments was (and still is) the most important goal of the Coldwater Cave Project. Trips were organized around survey goals rather than around individuals seeking to establish a big reputation by finding virgin cave. If the Rock River cavers had an attitude like some of those seen at Coldwater recently, all that would be known about the upstream loop would be that, "I walked 200 paces through virgin cave to a dome, where a stream came in which I then followed..." etc. If you are in Coldwater for recreation, the cave is little more than just another baseball diamond or basketball court; an arena for self-gratification rather than a natural wonder that is to be treated with respect.

Let me congratulate Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund, and Jack Decker for their fine team effort this month. Our group suffered under less fortunate circumstances, and came back empty-handed. The same can be said for all groups in the cave except the aforementioned trio. I can report that Richard Ames performed well in our trip to the Last Right-Hand Side Passage, and we hope to see him come down from North Dakota more often to join us. We tried to open Bert Falls to allow safe and easy entry, but were stymied by some large stones that would not move. A pry-bar might help a bit here. The passage can be entered at present with difficulty and only by worming through loose rocks. The passage ahead was wide and low with a strong current. Progress was possible when the helmet was removed, but surveying this will be unsavory. We dug in a couple of spots and looked for better survey possibilities nearby, but to no avail.

In the Sand Room we located the other end of the stream seen at Bert Falls. However, we were unsure how to tie this passage into the survey traverse since we had not been prepared to survey in this spot. The level of frustration sapped us of much further motivation at this point. We had the survey equipment and we knew where we could have put it to good use, but were going to be left doing mop-up work for those more committed to recreation than the Coldwater Cave Project. The exit beckoned. We returned to civilization to find a remnant of a beautiful fall day, humoring us for the winter to come.

NOSTALGIC REMINISCING AND OTHER RAMBLINGS

by Bryan Bain

I received my July-August issue of the INTERCOM today and read it cover to cover. Every word. Although this is not uncommon for me since I moved to West Virginia 2½ years ago, however, this time I was overcome by a "blast from the past". I began reminiscing about Iowa caving and became a bit homesick for the "good ole days". Many of you newer members probably have never met me, while some of the others have forgotten me, and there may be a few that wish they could forget me. But, hopefully there are some that share the same fond memories of our trips together. I joined the grotto in 1984 and still remember my first grotto outing with Ed Smith and Mike Bounk. We toured Dutton's Cave, Wet Cave, Soward's Cave, and looked at Falling Spring Cave.

I still remember my first Coldwater Cave trip, which incidentally was Dave and Sue Ecklund's first CWC trip. I went back into Coldwater 30 more times during the next four years. I remember a tall and lanky novice who joined a year later. What he lacked in experience, he made up in enthusiasm. Mike Nelson quickly graduated from being a pupil to making astonishing caving achievements.

Ah yes, there was Glenwood Cave on a winter trip and surveying in April Cave. Mike Nelson and I pushed into virgin passage at Falling Spring Cave, then later connected it with Wagon Wheel Pit Cave. Of course, there was many survey and push trips into the nasty far reaches of Coldwater, some areas of which most likely have not been visited since.

I remember when Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Stacey Cyphert were the "new young sprouts" of the grotto. Now they too are "old pros". Gary Engh took Larry and me on the famous Grappling Falls trip where we used Lowell Burkhead's collapsible grappling hook invention to rig a rope. Who could forget when Mike Nelson came back from beyond the Tuna Sea Siphon, excited about his big virgin breakthrough. Or the nail-biting wait on that rainy night when Mike Nelson and Larry Laine made that first scuba dive past Three Dive Sump. They were several hours overdue and we were almost ready to send in a rescue team.

The memories continue to rush by. I remember when Babe was still a four-legged wonder dog. And of course, waiting for Greg McCarty who showed up late, then went into the Cafe Delux while wearing his wet suit. Let's not forget when Scott Dankof was "wiped out" by Mike (Big Ka-who-na) Nelson while we were body surfing in Holy Cow Crawl or Larry Welch's favorite wimping out place. I still can't believe Mike and I went to Skunk Cave and Jesse James Cave during the worst blizzard of the year. I was barely able to drive back home.

More recently, I breezed through the Coldwater camp one evening a couple of months ago and met a couple of the new generation of Iowa cavers. When I was introduced to Julie Whitfield, she exclaimed, "Oh, THE Bryan Bain?" I don't really know if that was bad or good, but it gave me a nice feeling. I must have made some sort of impression in Iowa caving history. You folks are the greatest and as the old song goes, "thanks for the memories..."

TRIP DOWN MEMORY'S MAINSTREAM

Gwenne Hayes, Brian Davis and Tom Sinot (Tidewater Grotto, Virginia)
Coldwater Cave

by Gwenne Hayes

As we had been awakened at 5:30 a.m. by a small but raucus twittering of magnificent variety and length, carrying forth from an oak in the compound; we decided to go for an early start on a tourist trip of Coldwater.

I hadn't been in since the new platform so I looked forward to showing Brian and Tom the sights. We took our combined 125 years into Monument to check out the old dig at the end, wandered slowly down past the First Right-Hand Side Passage where the air becomes stale and the floor, sucking mud, and poked into Cascade up to the seventeenth or eighteenth rimstone dam past Dead Coon. At various points we spotted coon tracks, and amphipods (several of which Tom took back to Virginia for identification).

This took us nine hours wherein I was reminded that once in a while, when splashing along the mainstream to a survey point, there's a lot of pleasure to be gained by observing at length the familiar landmarks, mudbanks and curves of Coldwater Cave.

