

December 1989

## Intercom, Volume 25, No. 6, November-December 1989

Lowell Burkhead

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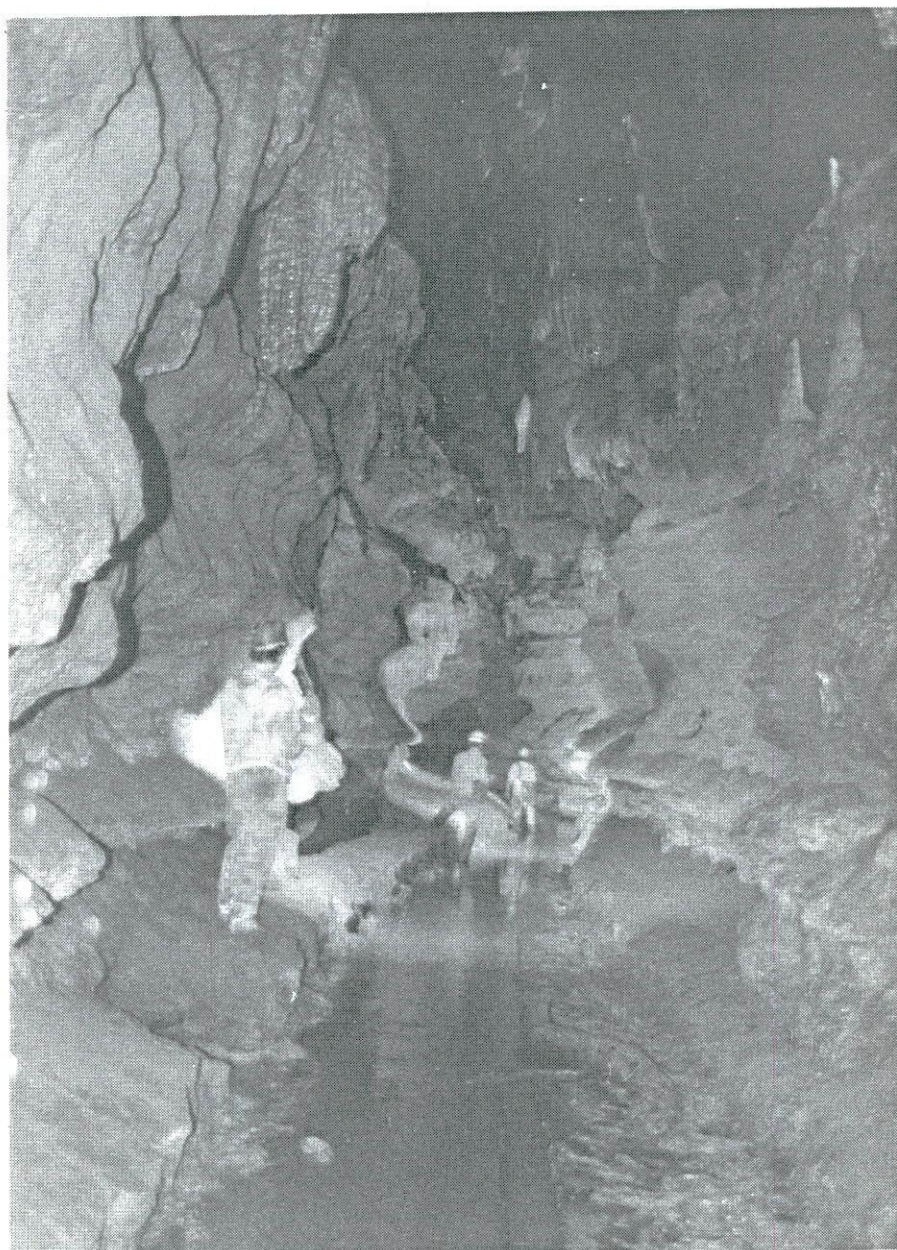
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Published Semi-spasmodically By

THE IOWA GROTTO

*National Speleological Society*

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Volume XXV

Issue 6

November - December 1989



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Volume 25 No 6

The INTERCOM is published simi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto, P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. 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. Subscriptions to the INTERCOM are \$10.00 per year. Reproduction of material appearing in the INTERCOM by other caving organizations is encouraged as long as credit is given the author and the INTERCOM and a copy of the publication is sent to the Iowa Grotto. Material for the next issue of the INTERCOM is due by March 14, 1990. Send articles and 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.

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Cover: Steve Thompson, Larry Welch, and Mike Lace in the Main Passage of Mushroom Cave, Howell County, Missouri. Photo by Scott Dankof

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

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Secretary-Treasurer - Larry Welch

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## IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting November 22, 1989

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:30 p.m. in room 125 of Trowbridge Hall. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as edited by the INTERCOM editor. The Treasurer's report listed \$121.70 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Jay Wells reported on a survey trip in Coldwater Cave that reached the terminus of the mainstream passage. Stacey Cyphert reported on another Coldwater survey trip that took place in the Last Right-Hand Side Passage. Mike Bounk reported on a tour group he led into Coldwater. An extended discussion followed regarding a reasearch group at the University of Iowa that wants to do some speleothem dating in Coldwater Cave. Mike Bounk detailed the research plan which involved removing 3 "fist-sized" formations from their point of attachment. Some members objected to the destructive nature of the research, and a motion was made which stated that the Iowa Grotto opposes the collection of live samples from this group in the manner that was described to the grotto, namely the breaking off of formations. Limited collection of broken formations was suggested as an alternative. A vote transpired and the motion passed, 11 to 1. It should be noted that the ultimate decision on this matter will be made by the landowners. Mike Lace reported on a surface survey trip to April Cave to orient the cave survey with the surface topography. Mike Lace reported on a tour he led to Hunter's and Worden's Caves with a group from Grinnell College. Bob Wahlstrom reported on ramblings in Maquoketa Caves Park including the Steel Gate Passage, the Bat Passage, and Tourist's Delight Cave. FUTURE TRIPS: Lowell Burkhead is planning a trip to Tourist's Delight Cave. OLD BUSINESS: The NSS library provided the grotto with a number of NSS NEWS issues that were missing from the grotto library. They also requested that we send them 4 copies of our publications in the future rather than the current number of 2. Lowell updated the back issue situation of the INTERCOM, with 32 issues still unpublished. When Lowell took the job of editor, the number was 66. \$50 was donated by an anonymous donor to publish more INTERCOM back issues. Mike Lace updated the position of the DNR on preservation of Tourist's Delight Cave. NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Mike Lace has drafted a letter to the DNR stating the grotto's concern about Kemling Cave. A letter was received from Bryan Bain; he is moving to Kansas and getting married. A discussion ensued concerning the INTERCOM. Concern was expressed over material laden with opinions and "editorial" views unrelated to the report. The members present came to a consinsus recommending that authors should eliminate this type of material from trip reports to ease the editing burden on the editor. If expression of personal opinions is desired, a guest editorial may be submitted to the INTERCOM stating point of view in lieu of including such statememts in a trip report. The INTERCOM editor has the final word on any published material, and he will probably clarify this matter in the near future. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Regular meeting December 20, 1989

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:45 p.m. in room 20 of Trowbridge Hall. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. No Treasurer's report was given. There were 15 people in attendance. TRIP REPORTS: Jay Wells reported on the trip to Maquoketa Caves. They went to Sager's Cave and checked out the small spring below it. They also looked at Tourist's Delight Cave and took pictures of spray-painted vandalism. Mike Lace displayed a copy of the recently completed map of Tourist's Delight Cave. A copy of this map has been shared with the DNR and Maquoketa Caves management. Steve Moon reported on visiting the Gallery and Spong in Coldwater Cave with Mike Bounk and Dan Brass. Jay Wells gave a second hand report on Mike Nelson's trip in Coldwater Cave. They went up the First Right-Hand Side Passage to climb the dome originally discovered by Steve Barnett but the powerfull dive lights revealed no going leads off it. They



pushed 400 feet of low airspace passage upstream of the dome in passage that had always been sumped before. Larry Welch reported on his trip with Jay Wells and Stacey Cyphert in the Nelson Section of Coldwater Cave. They surveyed 2270 feet of virgin passage and discovered numerous side passages. They turned around with no end in sight. The Sunday after Coldwater, Mike Bounk dropped a newly opened 43 foot pit in a sinkhole with Steve Moon's assistance. FUTURE TRIPS: Paul Miller and Eric Winch plan to visit Searryl's Cave and Hatfield Cave on December 24. The Sunday after Coldwater, Mike Bounk wants to check a sinkhole lead north of Ludlow Township. OLD BUSINESS: Lowell Burkhead brought in a tablefull of back issues of the INTERCOM, some newly published and some newly released from storage by Tom Hruska. A letter from the NSS assured the membership that the NSS headquarters was still there after the tornado. A letter from the DNR noted that they do not plan to acquire Kemling Cave. Dr. Gonzolas and his two graduate students, Durrell and Blocker, presented specifics of the research proposal that Mike Bounk had introduced at the previous meeting. They are seeking an endorsement from the Iowa Grotto. Three objectives of the study were identified: to study speleogenesis and speleochemistry, to study water-rock interactions, and to study climatic evolution of the mid-continent and its correlation to tropical areas. Collection of active samples is necessary for this reasearch and Dr. Gonzolas wants samples from at least three Iowa caves. He plans to use pliers to break off small samples and a gasoline powered drill to core stalagmites. Grotto guides would be along. The membership decided to table the discussion of the matter until the next meeting. NEW BUSINESS: Lowell Burkhead relayed business to the meeting from Greg McCarty. He reported an error in the December HOTLINE concerning the survey work in the First Right-Hand Side Passage. He also reported that the Winter '89 issue of "Iowa Heritage" magazine contains an article about farmers attitudes toward the connection between groundwater quality and farm runoff into sinkholes. A new sinkhole has formed in Clayton County in a road ditch and Greg McCarty is working with the county to keep it open. Lowell also brought to the meeting a joint publication of the Iowa Grotto and the Quint Cities Grotto and both of the Iowa Grotto charters, all of which had been recently recovered from Tom Hruska's safe keeping. The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

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#### CORRECTIONS

In the previous issue: The correct orientation of the cover photo is 90° clockwise. The rear cover photo is by Beth Welch and is of the stoopwalk area of Wet Cave. Pages 89 and 90 were incorrectly assembled before printing causing the margins to be wrong. The page can be reversed to get the pictures out of the binding making the page numbers 88, 90, 89 and 91.

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#### EDITORIAL

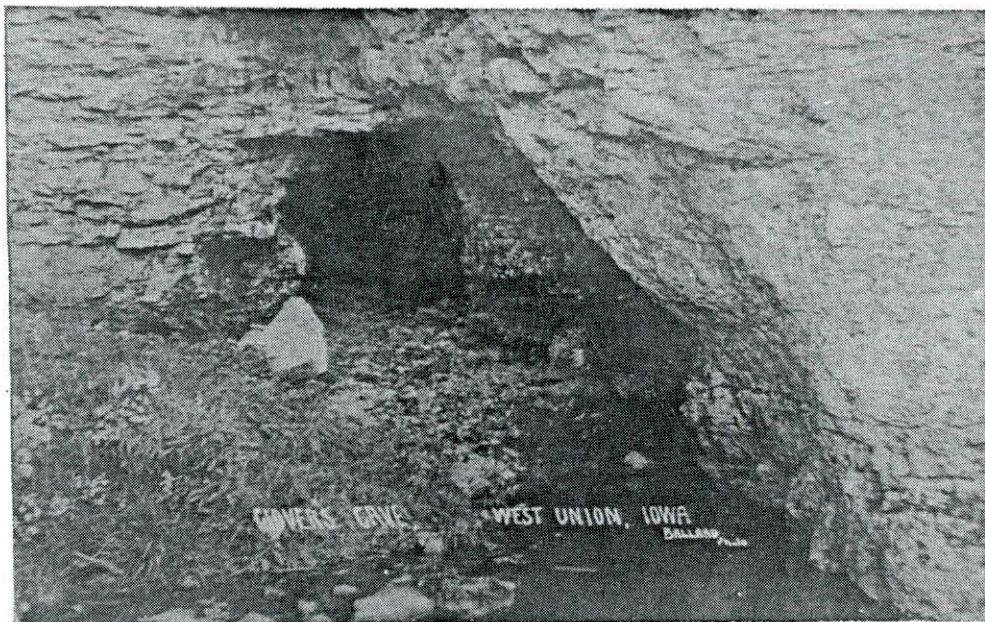
by INTERCOM Editor, Lowell Burkhead

I must apologize to the membership and to Larry Welch for the editorial error in the last issue of the INTERCOM. It came to my attention while typing the issue that I was missing a trip report on October Coldwater. I called Larry to see if he would write one. He had already written one but wasn't planning to turn it in because he wrote it while he was peeved about goings on at Coldwater before he had a chance to talk things over with the people involved and get differences resolved. I told him to turn it in anyway and I would edit it. In my rush to get



the issue done in time to pass it out at Coldwater, the report didn't get edited and several people got their feelings hurt. Larry was unduely blamed for the editorial content of the report and five pages of editorial replies were sent to the editor for this issue. The issue was taken to the January grotto meeting with the five pages of editorial replies included. Those issues that hadn't already been resolved were thouroughly arugued by the principals with the editor trying to arbitrate. It was evident that two members have differences that will not be resolved and publishing the five pages of editorial replies would not have served any useful purpose. I am, therefore, removing them and putting in my editorial to give some guidelines for what is acceptable material for publication in the INTERCOM.

All future editorials in the INTERCOM will be written by the editor. If any member sees the need for an editorial, he may present his ideas to the editor who will write an editorial when the need for one is deemed evident by the editor. There is, however, a fine line between opinion and editorial and there is nothing wrong with expressing an opinion in a trip report if: 1. It goes along with the text of the report. 2. It's not at someone elses expense. 3. It's not too lengthy. Opinions in our publication is how the grotto sets policies and how new members learn what is acceptable by the group and what's not. If you don't find your style of caving in the reports in the INTERCOM, then it's either not part of everyday caving in the Iowa Grotto or you and your caving buddies aren't turning in trip reports. I have seen examples of both lately. I have also seen examples of the above three listed unacceptables. A whole page of perfectly acceptable opinion was deleted from one of Mike Nelson's reports last summer because it was too lengthy. Editorials in trip reports will be omitted by the editor but I would rather that they be omitted by the author. I like to include all the material submitted so, please, let's lighten up a little and I'll try to do the same. After all, caving is supposed to be fun. Let's make it sound like fun in the INTERCOM and work out our differences out of print and face to face. A few of our members may need some help with this so let's give them some support. If we can get these people to cave together, they may find that their differences really don't amount to that much after all.



A penny postcard with a 1909 postmark of the entrance to Glover's Cave along Glover's Creek upstream of Echo Valley State Park near West Union. The card belongs to new member, Jim Vavricka. Thanks Jim



NO GO AT GLENWOOD

Glenwood Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
November 5, 1989  
Mike Nelson, Jack Decker and Julie Whitfield

by Mike Nelson

There are a few cave diving sites that have remained on the back burner for one reason or another. Glenwood's downstream sump was on it simply because it was a downstream sump, or a siphon in standard cave diving parlance. The cave is entered through a 1600 foot long "lake" passage that comprises the base of a "T", and is actually an overflow passage. The top of the "T" is the stream passage. Moving toward the downstream sump, one cannot help but obliterate the visibility ahead of himself. This, of course, does not make for an optimum diving situation.

On my only previous visit here, one soon found that the passage was entirely water filled with a floor of soft mud that did not give support, and which would not willingly return limbs stuck into it. I rolled onto my back and let the wet-suit do the work as I floated myself in the direction of the sump until I ran out of usable airspace between the surface and the ceiling.

As the drought extended into its second year here and in-cave water level drops of 6 inches had been observed, it seemed as though this would be as good a time as any to look into Glenwood again. My experience, to this point, with "in-cave" sumps here in Iowa, has been that they are generally sumped to a very shallow extent and short in length. We were feeling good about the possibility of nosing through a newly opened sump or two and experiencing a breakthrough to big virgin cave.

No such luck. The drought had opened many sumped areas to non divers in the last two years, but here it did something entirely different. What little rain we have had has been enough to bring mud into this cave but not flush it through. The downstream portion of Glenwood was filled with mud to within 6 inches of the ceiling except for the area in which the stream still actively flowed. There was enough room here for me to squeeze through for 40 to 50 feet, but much digging would have been required to get near enough to the sump to evaluate the situation. It looks like Glenwood will not yield its secrets, drought or no drought. We toured the rest of the lower level of the cave upstream.

ONE MORE SUMP, COLDWATER CAVE

Winneshiek County, Iowa  
November 18, 1989  
Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund and Jay Wells

by Mike Nelson

We wasted precious little time in getting up to the end of last month's survey and got to surveying the virgin cave that was pushed on that trip. We surveyed under the breakdown in that large room. The highlight of this area was the station under a huge slab that bridged almost 8 feet. The main support on the side we approached from consisted of a column of breakdown blocks leaning against other breakdown, each block in the column being smaller than that above it.

The rest of the survey was cut and dry. Well, not really. Cut and wet is what it was. But we were not down in the water as much as we were while survey-



ing the Nasty Sump last month. When we got to the split of the mainstream and the overflow passage, we knew we could finish up the survey in this portion of Coldwater Cave on this trip.

Every sump of upstream CWC to this point had been punctuated by cross joint airspaces or a simple duck-under. Hoping for more of the same, I had brought one torpedo with minimal gear to safely access more dry cave beyond this sump. As we were 1.45 miles from the shaft entrance, I didn't really want to tote in more than was needed and considered the two 10cf mini-ponies sufficient for a short push. Caves, however, make a point of doing what they want. I geared up, slid into the sump and viewed fairly straight, airless cave for a full 35 to 40 feet that my dive light penetrated "One More" mainstream sump.

Of course, anyone who would commit himself to that sort of dive with that gear should be committed. So we bagged (or torpedoed, if you wish) the dive and finished surveying the overflow passage to its sump. This sump was not a simple, shallow bedding plane affair like all those before it. Although it appears that it might flatten out and open up in 5 to 6 feet of water, it basically ends in an ever narrowing joint.

"One More" Sump is on a back burner while I ponder "is the potential reward worth the actual effort"? The dive looks safe enough, good vis going in, none coming out, and enough room to turn around in, so backing out won't be a problem. It's pure flat out unobstructed bedding plane with little in the way of line traps. The mud floor does rise to meet rock, then into a slot on one side of the passage above the water level in the ceiling. This opens two considerations; one being the possibility of destabilizing the bank during the dive, the other that a dive might not be needed. Maybe the slot can be dug out to dry cave.

Whether diving or digging, either option will require considerable effort. Is it worth it with such little water flow coming out of 3 to 4 foot diameter passage in what appears to be the final branches in this section of a dendritic cave? Someday the water levels will rise back to normal, making this area virtually inaccessible. If this generation of cavers doesn't decide, the next generation might have a formidable task if they suffer the relentless effects of curiosity.

#### NOVEMBER COLDWATER CAVE ORIENTATION TRIP

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
November 18, 1989

by Michael Bunk  
Jeff Dorale, Paul Miller, Orrin Plocher Bob Wahlstrom, and Michal Bunk

We entered the cave at 11:45 a.m. and headed upstream to the Jumping Off Point. This trip had two purposes: to introduce Jeff, Paul, and Bob to the cave, and to give Orrin and Jeff a chance to assess the potential of the cave for research projects which they plan to propose.

I found on the way upstream that I was becoming rapidly winded and having to move more slowly and carefully than usual. This was probably due to a cold which I had thought was almost over.

When we reached the North Snake Passage, Orrin and Jeff went up it a short distance while Bob and Paul took pictures and I rested. We then continued upstream to the Jumping Off Point. After Jeff, Paul, Orrin, and Bob went about 30 feet further upstream, to see what the ongoing passage was like, I showed them the fault



which is responsible for the high ceilinged passage just downstream of the Jumping Off Point. We then headed downstream. On the way back to the platform, we noted that the stream is about 6 to 8 inches below the normal level for this time of year.

When we continued downstream to the Gallery section, we again noticed that the water level is well below normal. After seeing the Gallery and the area just downstream of it, we headed out, exiting at 2:50 p.m.

#### DAVE'S PROPHECY

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
November 18, 1989  
Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Stacey Cyphert

by Larry Welch

Dave Ecklund predicted that the Coldwater Survey total would exceed 12 miles by the end of 1989. Dave tends to be an optimist on this subject and I for one doubted it would happen that quickly. Two survey parties were organized on this day, and our group consisted of Mike Lace, Stacey Cyphert and I. We were hoping to get into the cave very early, but we were slowed a bit by a Luther College tour group. Still, our 10:30 entrance was pretty early by the usual standards.

Scott Dankof accompanied our group up to the Spong Siphon toting his camera gear. We weren't moving very quickly, although it helped to abandon my coveralls near the Waterfall Passage and go bare-wetsuit like the others. Scott took a few Holiday snaps of the three of us as we approached the Spong in what promised to be a multi-flash delight. Our photos didn't turn out, but the other upstream survey party struck a better pose so it wasn't a total loss.

Water levels were very low throughout the siphon region, and we went through easier than ever. The group finally got in stride in the Last Right-Hand Side Passage and made good time. I kicked myself for not bringing the camera when we stopped to admire the "Neapolitan Formation" and its multiple colors. We unloaded our packs at the Indiana Jones Passage and pulled out the survey gear. Mike got out his special note-taking gloves, I pulled out both compasses, and Iron Man Stacey decided to haul his pack along.

We had left the last survey chip a couple of hundred feet into the Iguana Crawl in a snaggy crawlway. (Iguana Claws? Ed) The first 4-5 shots were not pleasant at all, lying on the bedrock in the middle of the stream, scraping against the ceiling. All of us were getting very chilled and things looked grim. However, the ceiling rose a bit and Stacey was able to set some dry stations that allowed us to maintain some body heat. A gradual rise in the ceiling followed, and the winding nature of the passage changed to allow some long survey shots. A few side leads were passed, and we made a conscious effort to chip them all. Stacey liked the looks of a small stream inlet to the right, and some other drier passages joined on the left.

The passage grew to stoopwalk height, with a few crevice/domes along the way. Mike slowed down a bit through this area as there was plenty to sketch. One particular crevice, "The White Nodule Crevice", was very well decorated with the peculiar aforementioned items as well as a standard flowstone cascade. Once past the breakdown in this crevice, the passage was very quiet as there was very little water flow. There was a nice knee-deep pool of water as well as nice symmetrical mud banks on either side. Height was stoopwalking for the most part, and quite a



few stalactites graced the ceiling. The passage didn't appear to flood on a regular basis.

A couple more leads on the left were passed and chipped. One is a narrow stoopwalking crevice that carried a small stream. The other was another dry passage that looked like an overflow conduit. "Rembrandt" Lace was getting numb fingers so we set a chip in nice passage; ahead lay what looked to be a long shot, with a smattering of white stalactites hanging over the stream. It was all virgin cave, which we could push into and warm up quickly as our pace quickened. No one was particularly tired.

Despite this enticement, we turned around and headed back. We all held the belief that the "survey as you go" philosophy reflected proper caving ethics. The next crew will be able to get out the tape and survey right into virgin cave. The passage was about 4.5 feet high and 15 feet wide at this point. We had surveyed 1452 feet for the day.

Everyone felt bouyed by the day's events, and we sailed back at a quick pace. We encountered Dave Ecklund, Mike Nelson, and Jay Wells just past the Tuna Sea Siphon, finding that they had surveyed the mainstream to its bitter end in the form of impassable sumps. They had surveyed a considerable amount, causing the survey total to leap over 12 miles. Dave had fulfilled his own prophecy -- I will believe him next time.

#### ONE MORE LOOK

Tourist's Delight and Sager's Caves, Maquoketa Caves State Park, Iowa  
November 22, 1989 by Jay Wells  
Lowell Burkhead, Paul Miller, Marc Ohms, Doug Schmuecker, Bob Wahlstrom, Jay Wells

We all met at Maquoketa Caves State Park. We discussed what the plans for the day would be and it was decided to check out a lead that Lowell knew about and to look around the park before heading into Tourist's Delight. Lowell said that there was another cave down the valley with a small spring near it that needed to be checked for a possible entrance that could be dug open. On the way, we took the time to check several small possible leads along the bluffs. From one of the upper leads, I dropped my flashlight. It fell quite a ways before coming to rest in the middle of the creek. After retrieving it (it still worked), we moved on. We came to the spring; it has a fair amount of flow coming out. We looked around for a while for a possible entrance. We then took turns going into the nearby cave. Sager's Cave is a small crawlway of 125 to 200 feet in length. It looked as if someone has done some digging in it at some time. After all of us had seen it, we continued back to Tourist's Delight.

Tourist's Delight is a very decorated cave. Most of it is a fairly easy crawl and stoopwalk, but it has it's share of tight places. We noticed a lot of the vandalism that we had heard about. We photographed several broken formations and some spray painting. It is hard to believe that someone would take the time and effort to carry spray paint all the way to the back of a cave just so they could spray paint their initials. After exiting the cave, we discussed the vandalism and what needs to be done to limit it. Something needs to be done and soon.

(Paul Miller has dropped by since and reports that the entrance is now flooded to within 4 inches of the ceiling. Ed.)



## MISSOURI TRIP

Onyx Cave and Stalactite Caves, Howell County, Missouri

November 25, 1989

by Scott Dankof

Scott Dankof, Mike Lace, Larry and Beth Welch and Steve Thompson

Early Saturday morning, Mike Lace and I headed south to West Plains, Missouri. We had visited this area last year and we were planning another few days of fun and frivolity. Larry and Beth Welch were supposed to meet us in West Plains around 6:00 p.m. Mike and I arrived a few hours early, which gave us some time to run out to Stalactite Cave.

We arrived at the cave at about 3:30 p.m. and parked near the entrance sink. The cave is mostly vertical in nature with a short amount of horizontal passage in the upper and lower level. Mike climbed down to the entrance at the bottom of the sink and posed as I snapped a few pictures. We then descended into the 5 foot high by 10 foot wide entrance. The main passage continues down over a series of climbable drops to a large circular room with many large columns and stalactites. We poked around a while and took some pictures in the upper level and headed back to town.

We arrived at Steves house and waited for Larry and Beth. Around 6:00 p.m., they pulled into the drive. After all the preliminary greetings, we all piled into a couple of vehicles and drove about 20 miles northeast of West Plains to Onyx Cave. We parked above the cave in the owner's driveway. After a short conversation with the owner, we climbed down the steep, rock-strewn hillside toward the cave entrance. We had trouble finding the entrance in the dark so we split up to look for it. A yell from Steve told me that he had found it.

We gathered in the 10 foot high by 15 foot wide entrance and carefully made our way down a sloping passage into the first large room. This room has a large 15 foot high flowstone column in the middle of the passage as you enter. Larry, Beth, and Steve explored a side passage while Mike and I set up for a few pictures. When the others returned, we all entered a dry, dusty crawlway that leads to the second large room in the cave. This room has varying ceiling heights from 8 feet to as much as 25 feet, and what used to be some nice formations. Steve told me that he thought this cave had once been mined for the Onyx, which explained some marks in the formations that looked like they had been drilled for blasting. Past this room is more crawls and small rooms that lead back to a gate blocking the way into a sleazy looking little crawl. We spent some time checking out all the muddy holes we could fit into then headed for the entrance. Total time in the cave, about 4 hours.

Porter Cave, Howell County, Missouri

November 26, 1989

by Mike Lace

Steve Thompson and Friends, Scott Dankof, Mike Lace, Larry and Beth Welch

The day was scheduled to begin with a trip to Porter Cave, a dry cave (I had almost forgotten what one looked like!) of indeterminate length. Steve led us to a large and surprisingly deep sinkhole with a cave entrance of stoopwalking height which led to a steeply sloping talus pile.

The entry room forked into two branches; the left looked as if it reached a drain or other passage that had been buried in the rubble while the right fork led to a muddy crawlway that took numerous twists and turns. Scott and Larry decided to take photos in the entry room while the rest of us worked our way through the crawlway to the rooms in the back that Steve had visited once before.



The crawlway frequently intersected a small flowing stream that would teasingly disappear underneath a ledge on its way to some borehole drainage route, I'm sure. Plenty of bats (mostly Small Brown and Pipistrelle) could be found dangling from the ceiling but very little in the way of formations was seen.

The rooms at the back of the cave were floored with chaotic jumbles of unstable breakdown. The mechanical accumulation of the rubble mounds in these rooms was clearly on going. We browsed about the rooms a bit before returning to the entrance and the next cave on the day's agenda.

Blanchard Springs Cavern, Arkansas

November 27, 1989

by Scott Dankof

Scott Dankof, Mike Lace, Beth and Larry Welch

Monday morning arrived warm and sunny with highs predicted in the mid 70's. Pretty nice for the end of November. We decided to take a drive down into Arkansas to see Blanchard Springs Caverns, a commercial cave about a 1½ hour drive from West Plains. After filling up on something called breakfast at McDonalds, we headed south. My stomach was turning upside down after 40 miles worth of curves and hills. I won't go into the disgusting details, but I left my mark on the side of a lonely, deserted highway. We finally reached the cave only to find it closed on Mondays and Tuesdays during the winter season. There is a spring entrance and a shelter cave in the park. We went to look at the spring entrance first.

A trail leads up a wooded valley toward the sound of rushing water. A nice sized entrance about 12 feet high by 8 feet wide was encountered with a torrent of cold water falling about 10 feet to the valley floor. We climbed as close as possible to get a good look. Formations were seen immediately inside the entrance. After taking some pictures, we headed back to the Jeep. Larry spotted a dark hole up above us on the bluff. I joined him as we climbed up toward it. The closer we got, the more it looked like we had really found something. When we reached the entrance, we felt the cool breeze of the cave hit our faces. The large circular entrance was at least 20 feet high and about 25 feet wide. It led to a large breakdown pile at the edge of daylight with a wide, 10 foot high passage continuing back into the bluff. We went to get Beth and Mike, then came back to follow the passage for another 100 feet to where it became stoopwalking then crawling. Mike and Larry went through the last 20 feet of crawl to emerge into a standing height room. This was the end of the cave. We exited taking pictures of the few formations that there were.

Next, we drove to the shelter cave. I'm not great on measurements, but I'd say it was a 75 foot wide by 20 foot high entrance. The bluff above the cave was at least 150 to 200 feet high. A nice rappel. We climbed around the cliffs and passed the time enjoying the beautiful sunny skies and 75° weather.

#### CAVING BY DAYLIGHT

Grand Gulf State Park, Howell County, Missouri

November 27, 1989

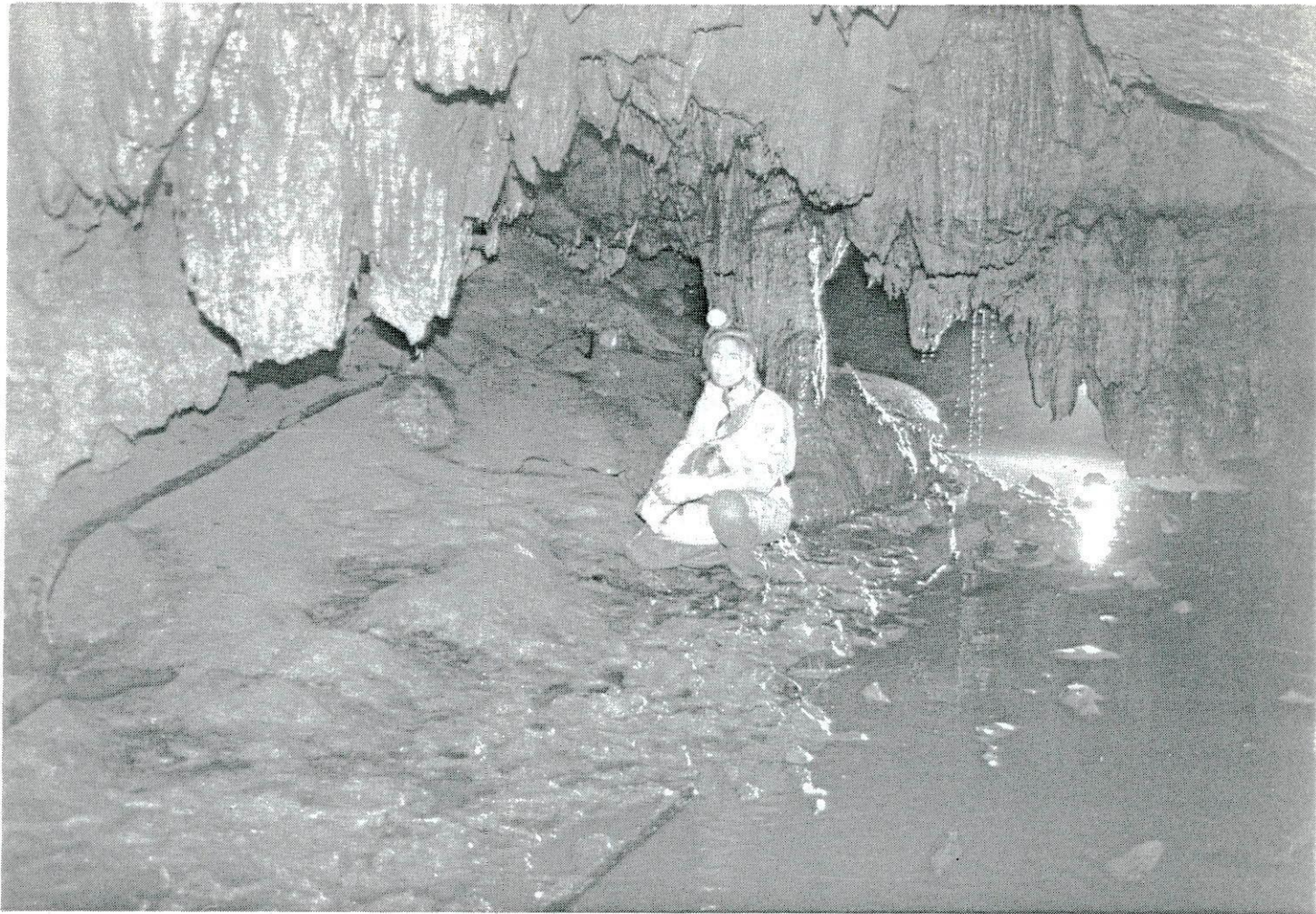
by Mike Lace

Scott Dankof, Mike Lace, Larry and Beth Welch

After a brief foray into Arkansas earlier in the day, we barely had enough daylight left to visit Grand Gulf. The park consists of an ancient collapsed cave of immense size with almost a mile of conyon, a natural bridge and walls reaching 120 feet high.

While navigating our way down to the canyon floor, Scott decided to slide head-





Beth Welch in Mushroom Cave, Howell County, Missouri. Photo by Scott Dankof  
(No trip report turned in by Larry Welch)

long down to and over a large boulder in the mud path with a camera in one hand and a flash unit in the other. We were all impressed and asked him which "Wrestlemania" episode he learned that move from.

We followed the stream bed to the longest intact cave in the park which was about 200 feet long. Old reports tell of explorers taking boats along the cave stream to a large lake containing "eyeless fish". Unfortunately, a flood in 1921 washed literally tons of mud and logs into a choke point not far inside the entrance; this prevented comfortable access to the back portions of the cave and also results in frequent pooling of water in the entry section during heavy rains. The State has recently been excavating the floor of the cave, removing the washed-in debris so that the cave drains properly. The stream in the cave supposedly drains to Mammoth Spring (Arkansas) approximately seven miles away.

The passage is large (about 40 feet wide by 25 feet high) with an uninviting, muddy, wet, crawlway which must lead to the lake described. In Iowa, this would be a booming lead, but we were in Missouri, land of big, dry, passage, so we left it for more intrepid visitors.

We exited the cave and continued to follow the dry stream bed under the 200 foot natural bridge to a set of small caves, one of which drained water during heavy rain according to Scott. By this time, we had just about used up our daylight so we returned to West Plains for an adventurous dinner at Captain D's House of Seafood Horrors and an evening of WWF wrestling on the VCR (honest! they made me watch!).



## JUST AN EXCUSE

November 26, 1989

by Mike Nelson

Mike and Delores Nelson

Julie and Wes Whitfield

It was a particularly nice day for this time of year, lacking only sunshine to have made it exceptional. We threw our caving stuff in the vehicle, but it was only an excuse we used for simply being out and about.

First we followed up on a vague but obscure lead that Lowell Burkhead had come across in the grotto library. It was a page from the Iowa Cave File referring to a small solutionally enlarged joint passage. Enough information was gleaned from the folks who live around the 7 acre lake in which this lead now resides to find the landowners. Initial contact has been made, though little haste in pursuing the matter. This quarry has not been readily available for scuba diving and I'm gonna have to ponder over my approach to see about scuba diving to check on a cave lead. The most interesting aspect of this lead is that it is in Worth County, a mere 17 miles from home.

Next, we ventured on up to Mitchell County and walked for some distance down the east bank of the Cedar River, below Otrano. There were caves rumored to exist upstream of the Feldt Property Caves. We didn't spot anything on the section we walked, but that made the walk no less enjoyable.

Further downstream on the Cedar, near Osage, we walked a portion of the bank below a steep limestone bluff. From a road some distance across the river, there appeared to be some sort of recess in the cliff face. Nothing of the sort was apparent from below.

On down into Floyd County, we wandered out to Hemp Hole and Two Days Digging Cave at Bill Wilson's. Hemp Hole is still in existence and seems fairly stable. Two Days Digging is still tight. Julie and Wes were somewhat relieved to find it nowhere near as bad as I had advertised it to be. They can thank their diminutive proportions for that. They were ready to "go for it", but, in all honesty, I truly don't like tight. They were easily enough persuaded to wait until we had one more experienced caver along, for my confidence, if not theirs.

The sinkhole around Two Days Digging Cave is still growing to the southeast and Bill is still going strong on his stabilization/reclamation projects. He has the intention of installing a vertical culvert, ala Coldwater, to maintain access. He had a 2 foot standpipe in mind, but I indicated something closer to 3 feet may be needed. Interested parties should get some input to Bill before spring. You also know how much he'd like to hear from some of you who have done so much work up there in the past.

We finished up with a trip into neighboring Thorson Cave. They don't mind people using the cave, but feel that ignorance of our presense helps insulate them in case of liability. I reached the compromise of me stopping by to let them know "we're not here" before parking elsewhere and walking in.

Walking back in the pitch black of a late autumn afternoon had us whining about the biggest bumner of nice days this time of year, it was still nice out, but our day was over before it was even 6 p.m. We were just glad we had an excuse to get out.

CREDABILITY QUESTIONED

Coldwater Cave

December 16, 1989

Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund, Doug Schmuecker

Dear Dave and Doug:

Gee, it sure was fun hauling those two torpedos full of climbing and dive gear down to the First Right-Hand Side Passage, wasn't it? I'm almost sorry we didn't need any of that stuff for anything. Just lucky for me that it was you two who considered the climb into Barnett's Unclimbed Dome to be too risky for the potential rewards. The burden of not using that torpedo full of gear is on your shoulders. But Dave, you just had to be tickled pink that your primary dive light had made the trip down there so safe and sound tucked in with that gear. Without it, we never could have illuminated the immensity of that gigantic double dome complex. The sheer rise of its walls to those neck cranking heights was as impressive a sight as there is in CWC. I'd still like to find a safe way up to its balcony, with a bunch of balloons, a tank of helium and 200 feet of monofilament line. I am really curious as to just how tall it is.

As for the other torpedo with the two mini-pony tanks and dive gear, well, you know that I just don't feel like I'm caving without one of them around. Why we didn't need them to finish that last 40 feet of survey through minimal airspace into the dome, I still can't figure. The water on the back side of that dammed up section of floor was only inches lower than the dam itself. How there could be 8 inches more airspace than on the last trip down there is beyond me! You two casting aspersions on my judgement was nearly the death blow to my otherwise semi-illustrious cave career. Dammit, when we were there just 3 short months ago, there was less than 2 inches for the last 40 feet. I have reliable witnesses, well Larry Welch and Jack Decker, anyhow. What happened to the water? Maybe the rock is so dry it's sucking it back up via capillary action, maybe it's running back the other way, maybe it evaporated!

I didn't ridicule you, did I Doug, when you pushed past the dome through 400 to 500 feet of virgin passage before erroneously concluding that Nelson had lied to you again? I gave you the benefit of the doubt. It was little wonder that you couldn't just feel that you were in virgin passage. You probably couldn't feel much of anything after 400 to 500 feet, round trip, in 46 degree water with 4 to 5 inches of airspace. I couldn't get 25 feet down that passage before running out of usable airspace on that last trip. You lucky son-of-a-gun anyhow, pushing out that much of my favorite kind of virgin passage.

Anyhow, I'll probably get over the momentary self doubt you caused me. The skin on my back, where you two were on it for our return trip, is starting to heal nicely, thank you, it's much thicker now. But if either of you wound my credibility like that again, someday, I'll sucker you into a similar trip again.

'til then,  
sincerely,  
The Old Man of  
the Cave



## ANOTHER COLDWATER CAVE ORIENTATION TRIP

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
 December 16, 1989  
 Dan Brass, Steve Moon, and Michael Bounk

by Michael Bounk

We entered the cave at about noon and headed downstream to the Gallery to show it to Dan. Then we went upstream through the Spong Siphon. The water level in the Spong was low enough that we could go through by putting one ear in the water rather than on our backs. After Steve and I changed carbide, we continued upstream to the Tuna Sea. We also went up the Waterfall Passage to the first dome. The water in this passage is extremely low. We finally exited the cave at about 6:00 p.m.

Later that evening, Steve and I reentered the cave to check on the condition of the stream level recorder and stilling well. I was concerned that it may not be working properly because although the water level is lower than I can remember it, the recorder shows it to be slightly higher by about .2 feet than normal for this time of year. We found that everything is working properly. I will check my stream level records to see if I can find where the recorder may have been put out of adjustment.

THE BIG ONE

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
 December 16, 1989  
 Larry Welch, Jay Wells, and Stacey Cyphert

by Larry Welch

Choosing a destination for our trip posed no problems on this particular weekend. Mike Lace, Stacey, and I had surveyed through the Iguana Crawl in November to find larger going passage on the far side. The Iguana Crawl lurks at the upstream end of the Last Right-Hand Side Passage, threatening to pinch off this majestic boulevard. However, after several hundred feet of belly-snagging bedrock crawl, the nature of the passage changes near a chapel-like dome known as The Little Brown Church in the Mud. The ceiling gradually rises until it is stoopwalk height, and white speleothems become more common and one begins to get the impression that the passage never floods. It could be conjectured that there are major water inlets near Mike's Nervous Breakdown Room that are active in wet weather, but none in the new "Mystery Is History" passage, as it was named by Mike Lace.

At the end of the November survey we made a conscious decision to abstain from pushing the passage based on ethical considerations. We agreed to return the following month and start surveying in virgin passage. Jay had planned to join us in November but had instead helped out a shorthanded crew; this month he would join us for sure. Unfortunately, our foursome shrank to a threesome when Mike Lace got sick at breakfast. The Iguana Crawl is no place for a sick caver, so Mike told us to go without him. I felt badly that Mike couldn't go because he had contributed so much on all of the previous survey trips and he had really wanted to go on this one.

We were in the cave at 11:15, all sans coveralls. I started off setting the pace, figuring (correctly) that I would be the slowest and weakest of our trio. Jay had spent most of the night working at an accident scene rather than sleeping, but if it affected him, I sure couldn't tell. Stacey had a look of quiet confidence and appeared more than up for the trip.

The trip upstream went quickly, The lanyard on my Tekna light broke in the 2nd Big Room past the Spong, but I was fortunate enough to hear it plop in the mud and



recover it. Jay and I almost caught a fish in the Tuna Sea. It was dark colored, about a foot long, and kind of oval in cross section like some sort of sucker. The air in the Nelson Section was foul-smelling. Each of us got slightly dizzy going through the Scandawhovian and Three Dive Sumps, and the "Cedar Rapids" air could have been to blame.

The trip out the Last Right-Hand Side Passage went smoothly. After a bit of crawling, we found our survey chip and went to work. I got the dubious honor of taking book, Stacey took lead tape, and Jay read the compass. The passage at the chip was slightly smaller than I had remembered, but was still quite roomy. Jay struggled with my compasses for a bit before we got moving in earnest. After 3 stations, we encountered leads on either side of the passage. Another 2 shots brought us to a parallel side passage that rejoined twice later on to form kind of a figure 8. The side lead eventually diverged from the MIH passage; Jay was peering into the lead and yelled, "Hey! Footprints!" Stacey and I freaked out, thinking he meant human footprints, but they were probably coon prints.

After a few more stations through continuing stoopwalk, we encountered a major side lead to the right from which a lot of water noise was emanating. Jay checked out the passage while I sketched feverishly. The dry passage was just a tube over the top of a flowstone shelf, underneath which a stream was flowing. Jay found a small waterfall causing all of the noise and went back about 150 feet to a breakdown room before turning around. We mulled over surveying into "Jay's Washeteria" because of its major water flow. However, the MIH Passage was 5.5 feet high and showed no sign of quitting so we stuck with it.

Four or five shots further, we entered a profusely decorated area that caught us all off guard. On every shot, Stacey would move ahead going, "Wow! Great! Awesome!" as he paid out the tape. There were two spots where formations were packed wall-to-wall, the first being a crevice containing several large stalactites and a drapery, the second being "Stage Curtains" of translucent flowstone. Just past this was "The Claw", a gnarly four-fingered stalactite. Just upstream of this was a five foot stalactite and a row of white draperies. Oh, for the love of a camera!

The formations continued, but never as spectacular as the "Stage Curtain" area. The passage was still five feet high and showing no signs of quitting. Sucking mud became more common and was generally deeper than the stream that snaked through the passage. After 24 stations were completed, I called for a lunch stop. I was mentally exhausted from trying to capture all of the passage details on paper, and we were all a bit cold. After some gorp and Gatorade, we felt better and went back to work.

Just after restarting, we started finding side leads; five in a row were to the left: 3x3, 4x6, 4x10, 2x3, and 3x1 feet in size at their entrances. The last had a dome at its mouth and contained a pool full of colorless worm-like creatures. We finally found a lead to the right, which Stacey named the Ohio Passage due to its shape rather than the song by CSNY.

Past these leads, the character of the passage changed again. We started to encounter sections of comfortable, walking-height, canyon passage. Crevices and domes were common, and there were ceiling scallops suggesting high energy water flow at one time. The stream past Jay's Washeteria had been just a mere trickle and the passage very quiet, showing few signs of recent flooding. Perhaps the former scalloping stream had been pirated away into another passage paralleling this one. The domes in this area contained chert, which means nothing to me, but according to Mike Bounk, is an indicator of which rock strata we were (or weren't)



in. The domes culminated in "Niagara Type Shit" Dome (paraphrased from Stacey's original description) which towered more than fifty feet overhead. Two small leads went off to the left near the dome, and there was also what looked to be manganese stained flowstone deposited on the right just before the dome.

We had set a goal of surveying 2000 feet on the day. At the big dome, we decided we were safely past our goal. We kept on going, but soon encountered another problem: I had almost filled the survey book. There was no cure for this one, so we tied off at chip Q5 a couple of shots past the dome. The passage was 4 feet high, 12 feet wide, and a large white flowstone cascade was visible 30 feet ahead. Just as we had in November, we turned around and left virgin passage waiting for the next survey crew. We took a short rest on a mud bank. Packing up the gear, Stacey had a strap break on his pack that normally kept it cinched shut. We made sure the survey book was in another pack, ate and drank all of his consumables, then sealed the pack with Jay's repair kit.

The return trip was a killer. I quickly assumed a position at the rear of the column, where I stayed for the duration of the return trip, begging for a rest stop as often as possible. The sucking mud was really quite bad in the Mystery is History Passage, something we hadn't noticed as much while moving at slow survey pace.

Near the Tuna Sea, I really started to slow down. Jay had to change batteries in the Norwegian Rock Dancing Room, so a quick nap was taken. I took off my borrowed hood past the Spong, then managed to leave it behind (sorry Sue). The last stretch wasn't too bad and we managed to get out in time for pizza in Decorah.

We had surveyed 2278.3 feet of well decorated and comfortable stoopwalk passage, all of it virgin cave. To put things in perspective, this is over twice as long as a Minnesota cave that is referred to as The Big One, and longer than all but a handful of Iowa caves. To give credit where credit is due, the continuing upstream discoveries were made possible by all of the wet and nasty work done by Dave and Sue Ecklund and Mike Nelson back in pre-drought days. In particular, Mike's incredible free dive of the Scandawhovian Sump turned what was a grim lead that was easy to ignore into an excellent lead that could not and will not be ignored.

#### GARM'S CAVE PIT EXPLORATION TRIP

Garm's Cave, Big Spring Basin, Clayton County, Iowa

December 17, 1989

by Michael Bounk

Dan Brass, Mike Lace, Steve Moon, Stacey Cyphert, Larry Welch, and Michael Bounk

After breakfast, we drove to a sinkhole a short distance northeast of Farmersburg. After Steve rigged his rope from the back of my truck, I dropped it down the pit. It made a promising sounding boom when it hit the bottom. I then rigged on and rappelled in. At about 30 feet, I reached a steep dirt slope which continued to the bottom of the pit at 43 feet. There is an impassable passage at the bottom, which goes through a vertical slot and into a horizontal rathole. At the top of the slope, I found a crawlway which goes about 20 feet to the south to the base of a plugged sink. I then exited the pit.

The landowner then showed up a number of sizable, plugged sinks on his property which take a lot of drainage. We will recheck this area in the spring.

## THE CAVE ANSWER MAN

Ever wonder why things are the way they are in caves? What you should do in certain situations? Well, fear not fellow cavers, the Cave Answer Man has the answers! The Cave Answer Man has been asked many questions over the years, and has decided to compile the answers together in this one list so that all may benefit from his wisdom. If you do not find the answer you are seeking in this list, then just give your question to Greg McCarty and he will see that I get it. Remember, the Cave Answer Man has all the answers. There are so many of them that they couldn't possibly all fit in one issue so every time there is a trip report left unwritten, there will be room for another installment.

### Iowa Caving

- Q. You have done little caving in Dubuque over the years, why is that?  
 A. I only went on eight trips to Dubuque because I was lead to believe that all the caves there were miner caves. I was also troubled because I didn't know if I could call the caves mine ore not.
- Q. I've always wondered about the names of the caving groups in the NSS. Why is our group called the Iowa Grotto?  
 A. Because we work with the caves in Iowa, and our club is based there.
- Q. Why are there no caves near Iowa City where the Iowa Grotto is based?  
 A. Just bad luck. The group had to form first, before they could go out and see where the caves are. Once they found out they had made a mistake, it was too late.
- Q. Have you seen all the known caves in Iowa?  
 A. No, only the ones I've been in.
- Q. How do Iowa caves compare with Kentucky caves?  
 A. Iowa caves are much farther north, conveniently locating them nearer to where we live.
- Q. Why are most Iowa caves so small?  
 A. Because of the poor farm economy, the state could only afford a few big ones.
- Q. Where is the largest cave in the state?  
 A. The largest discovered cave in the state is in Iowa.
- Q. Where is the largest undiscovered cave in the state, then?  
 A. I'm not sure, it may be in Iowa also.
- Q. What do you have to do to find a big cave in Iowa?  
 A. Locate one with a lot of passage.
- Q. Do pits in Iowa ever go anywhere?  
 A. Yes, they always go down.
- Q. Do deep pits ever lead to big caves in Iowa?  
 A. I don't know. We can never fit through the tiny holes at the bottom to find out.
- Q. Why is it so difficult to push into big passage in Iowa Caves?  
 A. Iowa caves are corn fed from all the fields eroding into the sinkholes. This makes them stronger so they can resist the efforts of cavers to penetrate their virgin passages.
- Q. Is cave flooding a big problem here in Iowa?  
 A. Yes, because the caves here seldom have flood insurance.

### Cave Life

- Q. Should I worry about poison ivy and stinging nettles on a cave trip?  
 A. No, they are never a problem. The caves are too dark for plants to grow.
- Q. Should I worry if a cow comes up to a sinkhole where I'm working?  
 A. Only if it backs up to it.
- Q. Are bats in caves always friendly?  
 A. I, personally, have never seen any of them fighting.
- Q. Why do bats hang upside down?  
 Tune in next time for the never-before-known answer, but only if there is room.

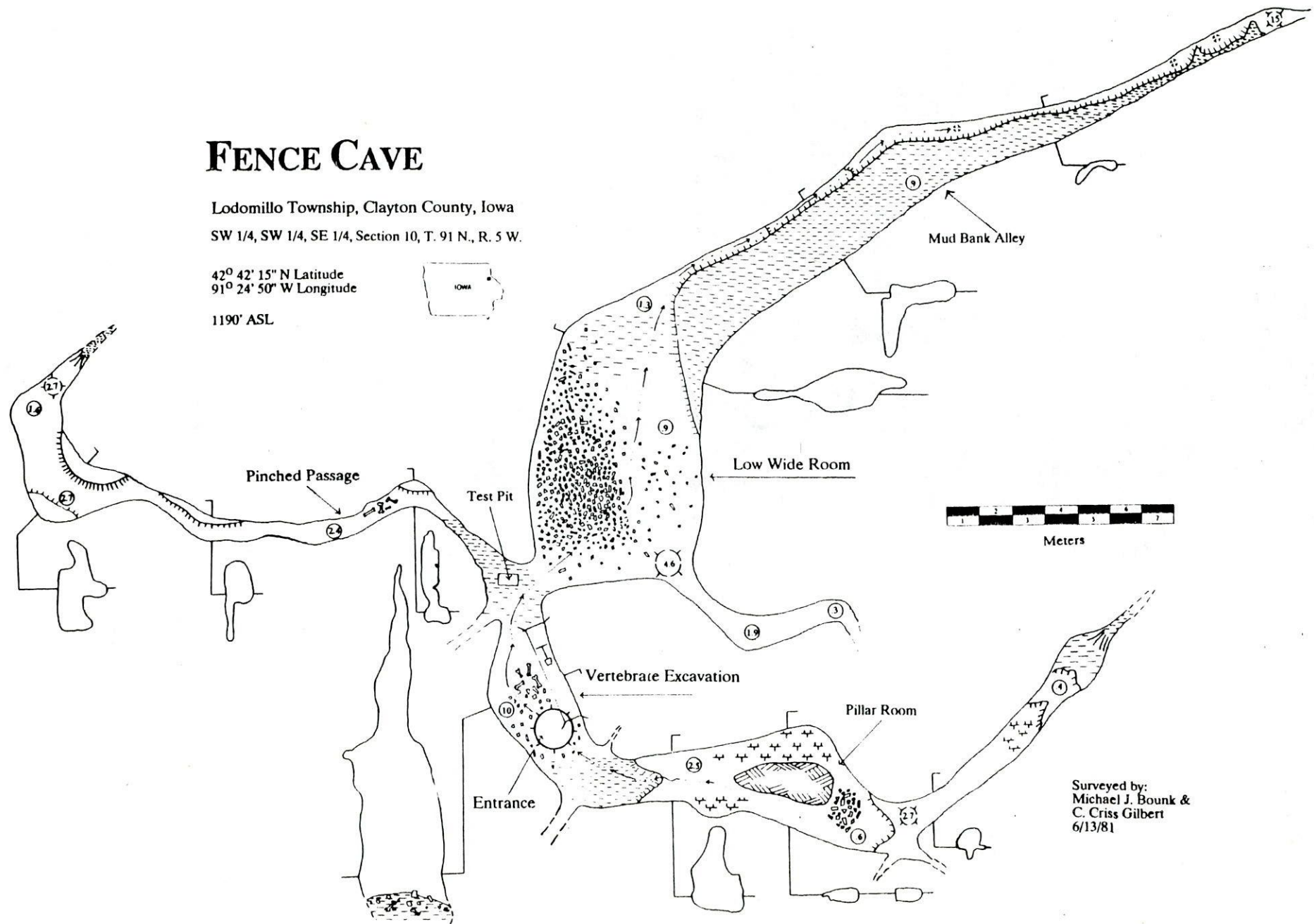


# FENCE CAVE

Lodomillo Township, Clayton County, Iowa  
SW 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 10, T. 91 N., R. 5 W.

42° 42' 15" N Latitude  
91° 24' 50" W Longitude

1190' ASL



Surveyed by:  
Michael J. Bounk &  
C. Criss Gilbert  
6/13/81