

June 2001

## Intercom, Volume 37, No. 3, May-June 2001

Lowell Burkhead

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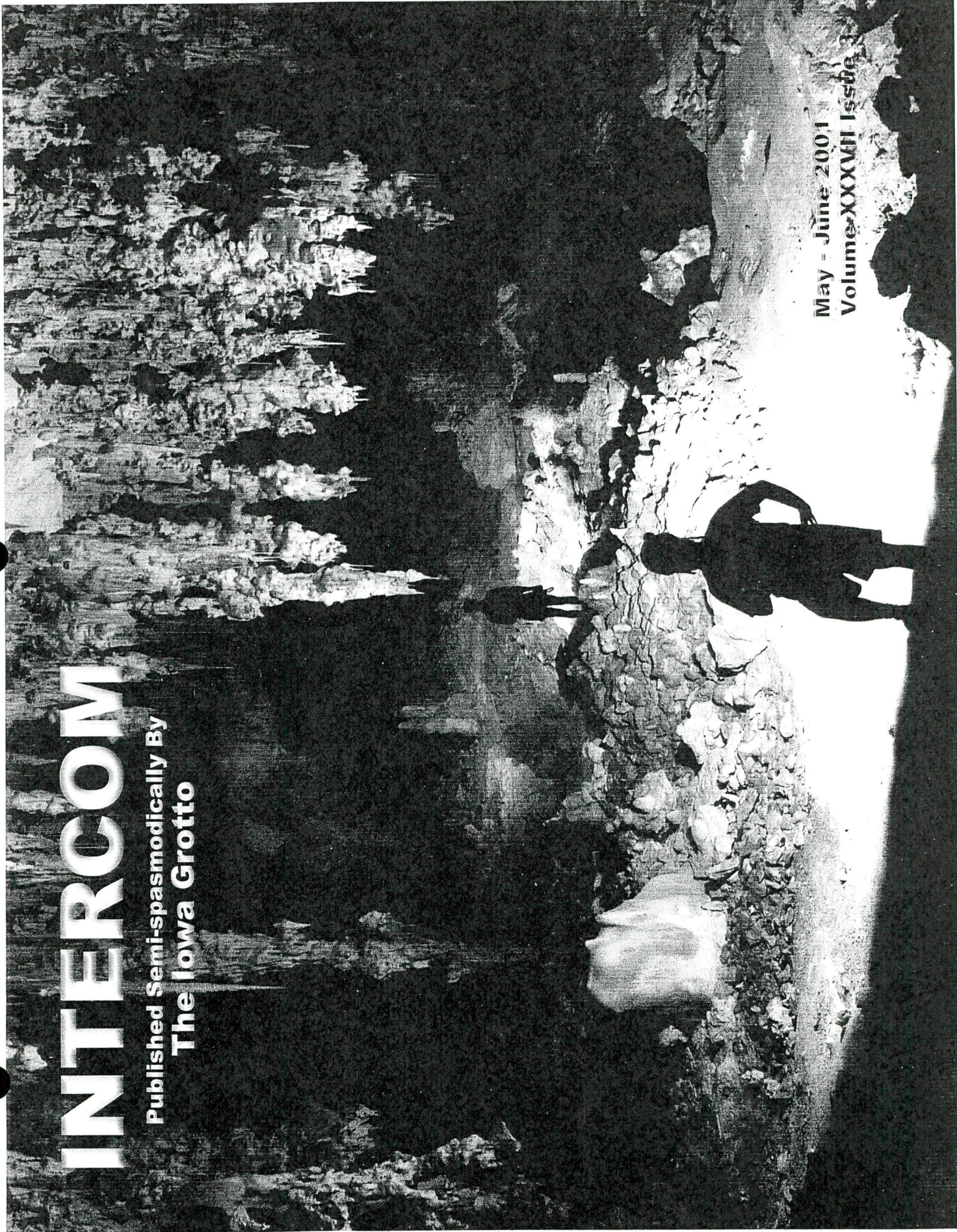


# INTERCOM

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**The Iowa Grotto**

May - June 2001  
Volume XXXVII Issue 3





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

Volume 37, Issue 3

May - June, 2001

**Iowa Grotto**

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**Cave Rescue:** Contact the Kentucky Disaster and Emergency Services Central Dispatch at 502-564-7815 for cave emergencies only in the NCRC Central Region of Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

**Iowa Grotto Meetings:** are the fourth Wednesday of each month, third Wednesday in November and December at 7:30 p.m. in room 125 or thereabouts of Trowbridge Hall on the campus of the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

**Cover Photo:** Cueva de las Casa de Erickson, Isla de Mona, Puerto Rico  
Photo by Mike Lace



**IOWA GROTTO**  
National Speleological Society  
P. O. Box 228  
Iowa City, Iowa 52244

Chairman - - - - - Mike Lace  
Vice Chairman - - Lowell Burkhead  
Secretary Treasurer - Phil LaRue

Volume 37	C O N T E N T S	Issue 3
Iowa Grotto Meeting Minutes - - - - -		26
Trip Reports:		
Three Lazy Bums - - - - -		27
Step One at Backbone State Park - - - - -		28
IMAX Movie - - - - -		30
Mammoth Cave Restoration Weekend - - - - -		30
No More - - - - -		32
Talking Crack - - - - -		33
Restoration Documentation - - - - -		34
Nasal Assault - - - - -		35
Wagner Mound - - - - -		35
Sunday Supervisory Work - - - - -		36
Cave Maps:		
Rocky Star Cave - - - - -		38
No Mas Pit - - - - -		39
Millennium Cave - - - - -		40



## IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting May 23, 2001

The meeting was called to order by Vice-chairman Lowell Burkhead at 7:31 p.m. with seven members present. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as corrected. The Treasurer's report showed balances of \$752.53 in the Coldwater fund, \$761.24 in the general fund, and \$141.00 in petty cash. TRIP REPORTS: Doug Schmuecker reported on the Arkansas trip with Mike Lace, Chris Beck, Gary Engh, Pat Kambesis, Scott Dankof, and Ed Klausner. Ed Klausner reported on a trip to Delaware County with Chris and Pat where three caves were surveyed, a trip to the Clayton/Delaware County border where five caves were surveyed, a trip with Lowell, Arlene, Mike, and Pat to Jackson County where four caves were surveyed, and a Coldwater trip with Mike Lace to do restoration work and photography with Scott, Larry, and John. Doug and Nick Schmuecker and Rachel Dankof also made trips into Coldwater that weekend. Ed's final trip into Coldwater was to lead a short trip for some geology students from Cornell College. A final trip for that weekend was made to Devil's Hole by Chris, Pat, and John Lovaas. FUTURE TRIPS: See the May Hotline and N.S.S. News for details. Doug Schmuecker is planning a fall youth vertical training session. Summer trips are planned for Engelken Cave and lead checking and mapping to Floyd County. OLD BUSINESS: The annual picnic was discussed. Republished INTERCOM back issues are available. Contact Lowell Burkhead for details. NEW BUSINESS: The INTERCOM deadline is July 1. Cave accident articles were discussed. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Regular meeting June 27, 2001

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:50 p.m. after presenting a slide program on caves of various locations. There were eight members present. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer's report listed balances of \$1002.53 in the Coldwater fund, \$802.89 in the club treasury, and \$141.00 in petty cash. TRIP REPORTS: Phil LaRue reported on the trip to Ram's Hollow in Delaware County where Nasal Assault Cave was surveyed with Gary, Chris and Ed. Ed Klausner reported on a trip to Clayton and Delaware Counties where four caves were located and surveyed and on another trip to Clayton County with Gary and Mike where three more caves were surveyed. Lowell Burkhead reported on a lead checking trip to a small cave near Malanaphy Spring with Mike Nelson and Gary. Ed reported on the resurvey in the Waterfall Passage at Coldwater Cave. Greg McCarty reported on lead checking via canoe with Deb on the Volga River in Fayette County. Mike Lace reported on survey work done in The Big Room at Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico, and survey work for the Bureau of Land Management on the nearby Gypsum Flats, both with Pat Kambesis. Endless Cave was also visited to monitor bat usage. FUTURE TRIPS: See the May Hotline and NSS News for details. Doug Schmuecker is planning a fall youth vertical training session. Summer trips are planned for Engelken Cave and Floyd County. OLD BUSINESS: The annual picnic and volume 3 of the Cave Map Book were discussed. Several newly republished INTERCOM back issues are available. All issues are now available. Lowell also reported that a couple of old trip reports were found by him during reorganization of the grotto library (see Three Lazy Bums, this issue). Everyone is invited to visit the grotto library. Contact Lowell. NEW BUSINESS: The INTERCOM deadline is July 1, 2001. The grotto has received the Sarah Carrie Grant from the NSS for the Coldwater Cave Project in the amount of \$250.00. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

TRIP REPORTSTRIP REPORTSTRIP REPORTSTRIP REPORTS

Editor's Note: The following trip report was recently found among library material waiting to be filed. It somehow got misplaced on its way to the INTERCOM! The really strange thing about it is that it had already been edited and was ready to type. That rules out all possibilities about how it could have been misplaced, but anyhow, I suppose, better late than never. Sorry, folks. Having found it makes it somehow more a treasure than just a trip report.



### THREE LAZY BUMS

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
January 29, 2000  
Mike Lace, Ed Klausner, and Mark Jones

by Mark Jones

Ed Klausner, Mike Lace, and I arrived at 10:00 p.m. on Friday night to attempt the upstream sumps. On the previous Sunday, three cavers entered Coldwater to find the sumps open and proceeded to survey a side passage. Without a thaw during the week, we were assured by Mike that the sumps would be passable. Since neither Ed nor I had breached the Scandawhovian, we inquired about the difficulty in these sumps. Laying our fears to rest, we settled in for a good night's sleep. Too good in fact because I woke up at 8:50 a.m. to find the others still sleeping. Mike cursed the whole way to breakfast about being three lazy bums, worthless, etc. (Nothing like receiving a pep talk before the sumps.)

Returning to the compound around 10:00 a.m. we suited up and dropped the ladder at 11:30 a.m. to find the water at .52 feet, the lowest in two years! We scurried upstream in good time to reach the breakdown pavement that signaled the start of The Spong Siphon. Putting on our wetsuit hoods we slipped off the slab at The Jumping Off Point and duck-walked in the neck-deep water for the first 100 feet. Mike was the first to float through the tight spot with ample breathing space, he then shone his light for Ed to follow. With Ed through, I laid on my back and used my fingers to propel myself through with no trouble. Once through the Spong Siphon, we replaced our helmets for the next several hundred feet of crawling, walking, and crouching.

Upon reaching The Scandawhovian Sump, Mike explained the method to work beyond each constriction. Each time, the ceiling offered me plenty of space to keep my face out of the water. Not once through the many siphons did Ed or I swamp or retreat, a real credit to Mike's coaching. Ceiling cracks became our friends, allowing us to navigate further upstream. The final test was a tricky six foot forward followed by a sharp right turn. No troubles were encountered at this time, but later, yes.

Soon after this point we sat on a ledge in a small room with a water chute in the middle. Right when Ed and I are feeling pretty pleased with ourselves, Mike announces that the worst section is ahead! He wasn't too far off as we wallowed in sucking mud on our hands and knees for several hundred feet. A couple of gravel bars along the way offered some relief during the endless crawl. Finally the cave opened up and we were able to walk in the narrow canyon with water at our feet. Climbing over a couple of breakdown piles, we heard the low rumble of Bert Falls, just around the corner. About the same time, we looked up to stare into a black void! The ceiling had opened up for quite a ways revealing another level overhead.

Before we could determine a route to this balcony, Mike called us ahead to Bert Falls (named for the Ecklund's unborn child at the time. They later named the kid John.) We removed our hoods and grabbed a snack and then followed Mike up a dirt mound across from the falls. On our way upstream, Mike had lassoed the safety cache that had washed downstream from this area, planning to place it in a more secure spot. Climbing up the 20 foot high mound, I ducked into a small room that "T"ed into a large cross-joint. In this joint, I walked to the left to find a beautiful fluted drapery eight feet overhead. In the mud floor, splashcups were scattered willy-nilly making for careful footfalls in this area. Here the crossjoint intersected the mainstream passage that we'd just walked under. The floor sloped down to the left abruptly ending at the BIG hole dropping 15 feet to the streambed. To the right, though, the floor angled up 30 feet to a flowstone constriction of exquisite beauty. The cave continues past this point, but caver ethics demands that extreme measures be taken to preserve the formations that would be crossed to explore beyond. Ed and I took numerous photos here, hoping to bring the beauty back to others. Unbelievably, this upper level remains unnamed, a true gem of Coldwater.

Returning to our packs we geared up for some surveying just upstream 100 feet.



Unable to locate the Bert Falls chip, we tied into an upstream chip and worked back to an unsurveyed side passage to the left. Ed set stations, I shot compass and clinometer while Mike took book. Our survey took a 90 degree angle up a steep mudbank into an overhead crossjoint. Just inside the joint, a jagged rock wall in front forced us into a window to our right. Looking up at this point we noticed a hole twelve feet above us that opened up. The window had unstable rocks wedged in the floor that shifted under my weight. Warning Mike of the danger, I began climbing through the window and dislodged a 100 pound rock. Mike easily avoided the avalanche of crumbly rock to continue taking book. This event resulted in the moniker Booby-trap Dome. Inside of the window, the walking passage cut right for a short nine foot survey before choking off in mud and flowstone. To the left it went for 15 feet before narrowing at a beautiful flowstone ledge. Once again the cave continued, but ethics demanded we stop there for now. Peeking around the flowstone, we could see more flowstone curtains that led to the room above the jagged rocks as well as a mud crawlway disappearing ahead of us. Enticing, but uncavable at this time. We did locate an oval crawl at floor level that we surveyed and set a cairn at its tight spot.

We continued our survey back into the mainstream around to Bert Falls where we climbed another mudbank to tie into Booby-trap Dome. While crawling to set stations here, Ed discovered an entire raccoon(??) skeleton in a dried-up streambed, at least the third such found in Coldwater so far. A survey was taken to Bert Falls to better tie in Booby-trap Dome with the new maps. After tying into the cairn, we packed up and began our trip out.

The crawl through the mud seemed even worse this time, although it didn't seem to take as long. Back at the small room before the sumps, I stuffed my helmet in my pack and began floating through the sumps. The first sump caused me problems as my pack pushed against me, forcing me to retreat and try again. Everything went well for the rest of the Scandawhovian and we popped up downstream to rehelmet....only my helmet was GONE! Evidently upstream Coldwater demands tribute in the form of helmets and it was my turn. I attempted to return upstream, but only halfheartedly. Returning to Ed and Mike, I announced that I was offering a large Burr Oak pizza as a reward for the caver that retrieves my helmet from the depths of Coldwater Cave. This offer is good only in Iowa and taxes are the responsibility of the winner. The rest of the trip went as well as can be expected for having lost \$100 worth of gear. We exited the cave at 7:30 p.m. The pizza in Burr Oak was a pick-me-up.

#### STEP ONE AT BACKBONE STATE PARK

Several unnamed caves, Delaware County, Iowa  
 April 19, 2001  
 Deb and Greg McCarty

by Greg McCarty

Deb and I had been planning to hike along all of the likely cave areas in Backbone State Park for some time, but never got around to it. We finally started the effort on this nice spring day and plan to continue having trips here periodically until we have methodically checked the whole park for caves. Since this was to be a simple and relatively short trip we decided to dispense with most of the gear. Anything we found today could be easily gotten to again by trail and we could avoid lugging extra stuff along while we trekked up and down the bluffs to look for holes.

We were starting with The Devil's Backbone itself today. We had played with it some before, but had never hiked along the base of it for any length. We were always coming down from the top to check some little thing that caught our eye while hiking the trail. This time we hiked all the way around The Backbone, covering all of the base and all but a few difficult to reach holes up on the bluffs. If you have never bothered to hike out onto the Devil's Backbone, I would highly recommend it. There is nothing else quite like it in the state. Following some of the side trails that go down over the sides is well worth your while also, including the ones very near the



start of The Backbone. Rugged and beautiful bluffs and craggy features abound and one trail takes you down through a large talus archway.

We started checking along the west side of The Backbone and soon found little shelters and cave-like features. There was an interesting crevice that you could chimney up to the top of the bluff. It probably qualifies as a cave and has three entrances. A swallow's nest can be found in the lower part. I went up half way just to have a peek and could see out the other entrances, then came back down to save my energy for the hike.

As we went farther along the ridge there were signs of solution in various places and one lead that could be dug. There was a possible hole to check up high near the large open top crevice that splits down through The Backbone like a gash. This would be a swell place to practice chimneying and climbing. The rock is very solid and often has holds. The next time Deb and I do some practice climbing, we'll come down here instead of Brush Creek Canyon. More people and farther to drive, but the rock is so much better.

As we followed a zone that was showing some solution, we came to a place where you could climb up onto a large ledge. There was a small solutional cave on this ledge that was the best find yet for the day. It was barely long enough to qualify at around sixteen feet, but it was certainly solutional and cute.

Continuing along the bluffs we found a crevice that would be long enough to be a cave but would be a narrow challenge. It should be enterable by a slim person, though. We were now at the part of The Backbone that features a lot less exposed rock and were ready to start around the hump. We knew from a past trip on top that there would be bluffs again when we reached the middle of the hump and we managed to find a small crevice cave there. While we were climbing around on the split off pinnacles, and climbing up the bluffs, we were serenaded by some very loud geese. We never could see what they were up to, but it didn't involve flying. Later, as we continued toward the lake side of the Backbone. We pushed a pair of deer along until they felt it was safe to double back.

As we came back along the east side of the Backbone we were forced to go up and down the slope with little to show for it. At one point I was working my way through a series of large blocks that had split off and found the way ahead to be an unclimbable drop. My legs were getting a little tired from all the up and down so backtracking wasn't high on my wish list. It was getting later in the day and we wanted to cover the whole ridge before dark so we hurried on. Finally we reached the neat little solutional cave that goes through a pinnacle. We had found this last fall while poking around so this provided a positive landmark that we were near the end. A recent newspaper article from a local paper described a high school field trip to Backbone State Park where the students "climbed down The Devil's Staircase and went into The Devil's Oven". This cave does resemble an oven and has stairs leading to it. I'll try to find out for sure if this is indeed the name of it. There aren't really any other features along The Backbone that would fit that description very well.

We climbed up into this cave and admired the view. I tried again (like I had last fall) to work my way over to a nearby opening that is a severed portion of this cave, but the width of the chimney makes me nervous right now and the likely rewards are very small. A belay would be a good thing if you are really curious to make sure it ends. A neat thing about the cave through the pinnacle is that you can climb up into it and pass through to a ledge that you can follow back around the pinnacle to where you started.

As the light started to wane, we hurried along the last of the bluffs that we wanted to check this day. None of the holes we checked panned out, though there were a couple that we will have to reach from the top some other time in order to make sure. There were one or two tricky ones that I was able to check from the bottom and they convinced me to not get any more carried away with trying to reach the upper ones. When we were almost to our exit point we spotted a hole that looked worth a trip up the



slope to the bluff. I climbed up to it and was pleased to see a nice little solutional cave. A very short but interesting little climb takes you into the entrance where it immediately splits. The right passage is very small and gets smaller up ahead a body length. Straight ahead you crawl back to a little chamber with some other little holes continuing off. The raccoons must love this cave although I saw little in the way of feces. Total passage is over twenty feet and the cave is just very cool looking. A nice way to end our trip. After I had toured the cave I gave Deb a boost up into it. After a quick tour she thought it was okay, but she didn't care for how the bare bedrock at the entrance beats up the knees. After we left this cave it was only a little ways to our route back up to the top and the walk down the road to the car. This was such a nice spring day that the ticks hadn't even shown up yet. A celebratory pizza was in order when we got back to Fayette.

### IMAX MOVIE

Cincinnati Museum

April 24, 2001

Brad Smith and Liz Robinson

by Liz Robinson

I had to go to Cincinnati for a conference. Since it is just at the other end of I-74, I decided to drive so that I would have wheels and since Brad had not left for Watertown (he left on 9 May) I took him with me. We called the Cincinnati Museum to see if "Journey into Amazing Caves" was playing and we found it was available on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 7:00. We decided to go on Tuesday just to make sure that nothing interfered with our plans.

When we got there, the Museum was closed except for the ticket office and the entry room. There were displays in the display cabinets of books on caves, as well as an equipment display loaned by the Greater Cincinnati Grotto. Since we had arrived well in advance of the show we looked at these. Unfortunately the gift shop was closed so we were unable to look at them and I forgot to write down what the books were.

The movie itself was enjoyable. It began with a very short sequence in a dry cave in Arizona. It introduced the cavers on the expedition. It was followed by a trip through an ice cave and some laboratory work. The next two caves included a toxic cave with snottites requiring special equipment and an underwater cave. We enjoyed the caving sequences the best, however we were a bit disappointed that the movie did not have more in-cave scenes.

Overall, we do recommend seeing the movie. It was unquestionably worth our \$6.50 apiece, especially since we are unlikely to visit any of the caves shown in the movie and this is the next best way to visit them.

### MAMMOTH CAVE RESTORATION WORK WEEKEND

Mammoth Cave National Park

May 4-6, 2001

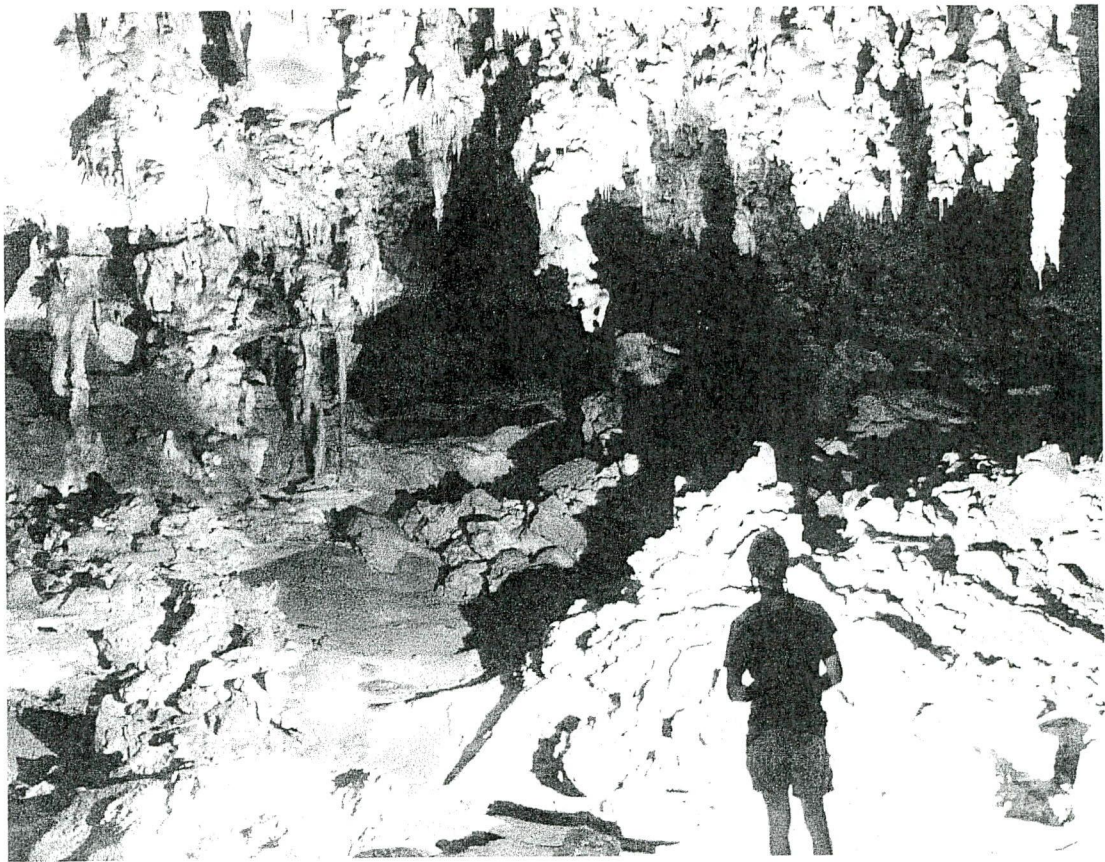
Brad Smith, Liz Robinson and a host of others

by Liz Robinson

Brad and I have been actively participating in this project for some time. When we arranged his schedule for returning to Watertown, we decided to have him leave late enough so that he could participate in the May work weekend. I had 6 hours of compensatory time to use up before the end of this month so it was a perfect way to get going when I did not have the Friday off as a part of my compressed schedule.

We arrived Friday night about 8:00 at the Hickory Villa. We decided to ask how late the Green River Ferry ran and the owner was nice enough to call and verify that it ran until 9:55. So we had time to eat. We arrived at the Ferry before it closed down and got to camp.





**Cueva De Los Pajaros, Mona. Photo by Mike Lace**



**Chris Beck in Cueva Loquetas,  
Mona. Photo by Mike Lace**



The next day we learned that a CNN cameraman, Dan Young, was going to be joining us on the trip documenting the volunteer program. We were told to act natural and to expect him to be coming around with his camera. Apparently the volunteer program at Mammoth Cave between the NSS and the NPS is considered to be one of the more successful programs nationally. The park needs the work done, they lack the staffing to do it and even if they did, it would be hard to find people who do not mind walking in unlighted conditions, in unsafe walkways or irregular surfaces, who love and respect the cave and are willing to do the work the way it is supposed to be done.

Echo river was unusually low that weekend, thus facilitation work in the river. Our assignment this time was to continue to take boards out of the river, take apart the wooden tourist trail, cut the boards into a size where they can be hauled to a staging area and remove some electrical stuff that was buried. We also hauled some feedbags to the men's room side of Vanderbilt Hall. Since there is no electricity in the area where we were working, we used battery powered saws for cutting the boards in halves or thirds depending upon their size and weight. Also the more unstable portions of the wooden walkway had been partially reinforced by the park service to ensure some degree of safety.

On the first day there were more people with wetsuits than we needed. Unfortunately, on Sunday there were insufficient people with wetsuits, so we had to knock off early after freezing out some people who went into the water without wetsuits. I worked at the chop shop. My job included pounding down nails that stuck up, holding bags that we filled at the end of the day with sawdust loaded with creosote, as well as holding down boards as they were sawed. (If the boards are not held down they tend to vibrate and/or jump around on the saw horses.) I also hauled some bags to the Vanderbilt Room. Brad worked further downstream hauling stuff to the chop shop as well as to the tarps where the holding area was. Brad and I stayed in the cave over lunch. We had some energy bards to eat, plenty of water and we were near the bathrooms in Great Relief Hall. I found time for a 15 minute nap. We prefer to stay underground for lunch and they let us do it as long as we agree not to go exploring off the trail or getting in the way of tour groups. We called it a day around 4:30 and we were out of the cave around 5 or so. The CNN reporter individually interviewed several of us including me back at Maple Spring Research Center where we stayed in the bunkhouse.

The next day the reporter came with us and videotaped us entering the cave but did not go with us since he felt that he had sufficient materials. Unfortunately since he was not with us Sunday in the cave, we missed out on a big breakthrough that was made in removal of the wood from the river that made it much easier to do. We continued the work and then removed all of the tools from the cave. Any leftover bags were put back in the Vanderbilt Room and the stuff in the holding area (which included electrical stuff, boards, sawdust and contaminated dirt).

While the grant money from this grant has run out, they are applying for another grant so that they hope they will be able to continue to reimburse expenses after the week-long summer camp. After the summer camp I believe that next work weekend is in the fall.

#### NO MORE

Hunter Pit, No Mas Pit, Griffin Cave, Delaware County, Iowa  
May 5, 2001  
Chris Beck, Pat Kambesis, and Ed Klausner

by Ed Klausner

Gary Engh and I had followed a landowner's directions to a sinkhole with steam coming out last winter. It was too steep and icy to get a closer look, so we returned about a month ago. It was still too wet to attempt entry, but it had been dry lately, so we thought we could survey it and then continue ridgewalking the area. After a considerable amount of housekeeping, we knocked enough loose rock off the sides to descend Hunter Pit. It was disappointingly small with only a short passage off the



bottom of the pit. Total surveyed length was 32'. The walls were close enough together to only need an ascender clipped on to the rope as a safety.

We set off across the top of a ridge dotted with clogged sinkholes. On one of the last sinkholes, we were lucky, or so we thought, when we found it open. There was a 30 foot, steep (45 degree) muddy slope leading to an opening. Once at the opening, we realized that the floor was held up by some old fencing wire and rotten logs and we would have to rappel over one of the logs. It didn't look as if much was holding it up. There was good air movement and it looked as if there was passage off the bottom, so we started a survey. There were some nice formations in this mechanical cave, along with some unstable looking ceilings. We quickly surveyed this 100+ foot cave with a total vertical extent of 63'. The rope and our gear were so muddy that my ascenders kept slipping before they would finally grab the rope. Cleaning gear that night took a considerable amount of time. There was little question that none of us would willingly enter this cave again, and in honor of Cinco de Mayo, we named the cave No Mas Pit. My camera seemed to survive a tumble down to the first level, perhaps because it landed in the mud. It was still able to document the entrance for the cave files.

On the way back to the trucks, we split up to ridgewalk different areas. I ran into Mike Birmingham who said he had just found an opening that might lead to a cave. I followed him to a nice sinkhole and found about 40 feet of cave with walking passage. Pat had my compass and clino, so Mike offered to go back to the truck and tell Pat the location of the cave while I started the sketch. In a few shots we had the cave surveyed and named it Griffin Cave.

#### TALKING CRACK

Barely Legal Cave, Talking Crack Cave, Amanda's Cave, and Rocky Star Cave, Jackson County, Iowa

May 12, 2001

by Ed Klausner

Lowell Burkhead, Arlene Burns, Pat Kambesis, Ed Klausner, and Mike Lace

Last fall, we finished a very productive day in Jackson County without checking all the exposed rock in the area. We had to stop ridgewalking and surveying because it was getting dark, but we were looking forward to a return trip. We finally returned on May 12th. Pat, Mike and I met Lowell and Arlene at the landowner's camp site. I poked into a small opening and thought it was too small to survey. Pat saw a challenge and proceeded to dig it out to its full, glorious length of 15 feet and surveyed it (Barely Legal Cave). In the meantime, I was investigating a tight vertical crack that appeared to lead to a passage with some solutional activity. It was awkward getting in, but the cave turned out to be 24 feet long with some nice flowstone. Pat helped me with tape and instrument. She left the cave and I started the sketch. With words of encouragement from Mike and Pat ("are you asleep", "aren't you done yet", etc.), it sounded like the entrance crack was talking to me, hence the name Talking Crack Cave.

The landowner's property on the opposite side of the river is known to have at least one cave. Wading across was not an option after it was proven to be too deep. We drove across a bridge and stopped at the house of a neighbor to get permission to cross his property and walk to the known cave. As it turned out, the granddaughter who overheard the conversation knew of closer caves and offered to lead us to them. The caves we were led to turned out to be nice solutional openings, but too short to qualify. We did find one mechanical cave that we surveyed and later a solutional cave in the same valley. The mechanical cave, Amanda's Cave was named for the granddaughter. The solutional cave was actually found by Mike about 5 years ago but never surveyed or named. This eliminates one cave from the lead list, but there is still more exposed rock in the valley, so the list isn't actually getting any shorter. The cave was named Rocky Star Cave by the landowner's grandson. The total length was just shy of 35 feet. There is a room about 9 feet in from the entrance where you can stand up. From the center, there are three short passages (about 9 feet each).



We never did get back to our original destination, but with more exposed rock in the area of Rocky Star Cave and the one known and hopefully, many additional caves up river, we'll certainly be back before too long.

# RESTORATION DOCUMENTATION

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

May 18, 2001

Ed Klausner and Mike Lace

by Ed Klausner

Mike and I were supposed to lead a group of Cornell geology students on a tour of Coldwater Cave during the May Coldwater weekend. We found that we could both get off early the Friday before and decided to take an additional trip into Coldwater that Friday afternoon. Our plan was to do some resurvey in Cascade Passage.

When we arrived, Kenny Flatland told us that there had been heavy rains recently where they got 6 or 7 inches of rain. We decided it would be a good idea to have a second option if the water level was too high. Fortunately, I had decided to bring a camera at the last minute and documenting some of the areas that needed restoration seemed like a good second choice for the day.

The water level was 1.26 feet, a little high and turbid, so we left our survey gear on the platform and headed upstream. We took some pictures of recent restoration results (nice clean formations that are now flagged to keep muddy boot and glove prints off). In addition, we took some pictures of other formations with muddy tracks covering them. One nice column had a muddy glove print in the center. This was well off any possible trail and it was disappointing to see this thoughtlessness. These areas need to be cleaned to prevent new flowstone from forming over the mud and permanently defacing the formation.

Next stop was Bertha's Balcony. The area is not visited often, but there was some damage that needs to be cleaned off. Mike and I had cleaned some formations here about two years ago on my first trip into Coldwater. Unfortunately, there isn't a close source of water where we could use the pump and hose to clean off the mud. We will had to fill squirt bottles from the water coming out of Friday Night Dome.

One sheet of flowstone that originally covered some mud that has long since washed away was thin enough to be translucent when we shined a light through it. It would be nice if there was a way to photograph the effect. This flowstone is quite delicate. Fortunately it is an area not often visited so it will hopefully be preserved.

Our last stop was Pothole Country Passage. The passage starts as a narrow canyon with a good volume of water entering the mainstream. This water keeps the flowstone at the entrance clean. The flowstone in the passage is clean, so no restoration will need to be done here.

We were out in time to have pizza with Kenny and back in the compound before the others arrived: Pat Kambesis and Chris Beck, followed by Larry Welch and much later by John Lovaas. In the morning, Mike Nelson, Doug and Nick Schmuecker, and Scott and Rachel Dankof arrived. Gary Engh arrived Saturday evening, but I had to leave for Iowa City that afternoon and missed him. There were various trips on Saturday besides the Cornell students. I'll let others write about those trips. There was also a trip on Sunday to some nearby springs and a survey trip to Devil's Hole.



## NASAL ASSAULT

Nasal Assault Cave, Delaware County, Iowa

June 3, 2001

by Ed Klausner

Chris Beck, Gary Engh, Ed Klausner and Phil LaRue

Last winter, Chris Beck had located a sinkhole that was blowing air in Delaware County. We entered the cave, but found the walls greasy due to the snow melt. The beginning of June seemed like a good time to return and survey the cave, which we estimated to be in the 100 foot range.

Locating caves in the winter is relatively easy. In the summer, it is a different matter. Fortunately, we had marked the entrance on a topo map. After hiking to the general vicinity, we spent 20 or so minutes looking for the entrance. By that time, we thought we might have been on a different part of the ridge. Chris had his GPS and we soon learned that we should be standing on the opening. In a few additional minutes of looking, we found the entrance (we were pretty close all along).

Chris, Phil and I started to survey while Gary ridgewalked. The cave was dry and it was easy to chimney as the walls were close together. The cave, named Nasal Assault Cave, is a mechanical cave with popcorn and a small area of flowstone. The cave turned out to be 57 feet deep with 145 feet of surveyed passage. We observed 13 pipistrelles. The cave was interesting in that breakdown had become wedged in the tight passage and over time, soil had created some false floors. The last station was reached by travelling under the talus pile below the entrance sinkhole. The path to the last station was about 30 feet below what we thought was the floor when we first dropped into the cave.

Chris again demonstrated the usefulness of his GPS by setting the course for our trucks and following a straight line, through the woods. The GPS told us the distance and at 0.0 feet, we were indeed at the trucks.

During the time we were surveying, Gary has relocated one of the sinkholes he found last winter. He estimated it to be in the 70 foot range. Since it is so hard to find cave entrances with all the vegetation, we will probably wait for late fall before we survey Gary's find and continue ridgewalking in the area.

## WAGNER MOUND

Short Parade Cave, Plumb Cave, Wagner Mound Cave, Clayton County, Iowa

June 9, 2001

by Ed Klausner

Gary Engh, Ed Klausner, and Mike Lace

It was time to work on the lead list and I had some new rope pads to try out, so Clayton County seemed the likely choice for a beautiful Saturday in June. The last two times we had visited three steamholes that Gary had found, they couldn't be safely entered as they were either too icy or too wet. After a stop at the landowner's house, we investigated the two open and one mostly blocked sinkholes. The first, a mechanical cave named Short Parade Cave, could easily be chimneyed. Moving laterally was out of the question as it was too tight. It was pretty clear to us that the three sinkholes were connected by the joint below, but they were too far apart to get visual contact (87 feet). The second enterable cave was named Plumb Cave as we only took one shot, a plumb of 26 feet.

The next stop was further east in Clayton County. Mike Lace and Doug Schmuecker has located a sinkhole not far from Earth Day Cave, but had not entered it. Fortunately, the landowner was home and reminded us of the location of the cave entrance. The cave was disappointingly small (18 1/2 feet). We surveyed it and decided to take a look at Earth Day cave as it was so close. Earth Day Cave required a rope (the first cave of the day that did), but no rope pads were needed, so the pads will have to wait for another weekend.



Earth Day Cave is approximately 70 feet long (the map is in the Intercom Vol. XXXVII Issue 2). There is a bit of flowstone in the back and several old bottles near a joint along the main passage. The landowner met us as we were coming off the ridge to see what we had found. He related to us that the ridge was called Wagner Mound because a previous owner named Wagner was bitten by a rattlesnake on the ridge and died. He was buried on the ridge in what the current landowner guessed was in the 1940's. The best part of the conversation was the information that there were additional sinkholes on another section of his land. We will have to return when the vegetation is more cooperative and we can actually find the openings.

#### SUNDAY SUPERVISORY WORK

One Man Cave and Bumblebee Cave, Clayton County, Iowa; Route 3 Cave Remnant and Harebell Cave, Delaware County, Iowa

June ?, 2001

by Elizabeth Miller

Chris Beck, Ed Klausner, and Elizabeth Miller

We had originally planned a trip to survey and open up a cave in Clayton County that had been previously found by Mike Lacey. Mike himself had to work in his lab back in Iowa City on the beautiful June Sunday, so Ed, Chris and I took our working gear up to a meeting place in Edgewood and then headed east into an area of many sinks. We each took our usual caving gear plus vertical gear. In addition, Chris carried a large sledgehammer and a long, heavy chisel. Ed took a smaller hammer, a pry bar and my cast aluminum garden trowel that long ago had been reshaped into a caving implement. I decided to carry a small camera.

The three of us headed across an un-mowed hayfield into the area of sinks that Ed remembered from an earlier trip. I lagged behind, my excuse being that I had to work harder going through the tall grass because I am short. I then enjoyed the beautiful day as Chris and Ed banged away at the narrow opening at the bottom of the collapsed sink. They did a good job and were soon in. Mapping chores fell mostly to Ed, because only one person at a time could enter, hence the name One Man Cave. It was a mechanical cave, 20 feet long. While Ed mapped, Chris and I explored a bit and found another collapsed sink nearby which appeared to be above the same fracture in the underlying rock. This one was about 17 feet. Not wanting to get in the way, I explored some more and then watched a large bumblebee near the entrance while Ed finished. Two other collapsed sinks in the vicinity were too plugged to get in, one by assorted cans, bottles, and bundles of wire, the other by mud and rock.

On our way back to the vehicles, we explored another known sink, which was still too choked to enter and looked at another area which had only clogged sinks and black raspberries. I determined the raspberries were not yet ripe so Chris and Ed didn't need to expend any energy picking them.

We headed back to Route 3 to look at a road cut which was just below the Clayton-Delaware border. This area had once held Route Three Cave, but blasting of rock to widen and straighten the road had destroyed at least part of it. We went to see if anything was left of it. Chris and Ed were doing such good work that I decided I could keep track of them from the car, with the seat back reclined and a hat over my eyes. Chris was able to climb up to a ledge about 20 feet above the road. Ed got a rope and they used it to haul up gear. Chris surveyed that cave and then used the rope as a hand line to help get down from the ledge. Since there was flowstone outside the cave, he felt it was a remnant of a larger cave that had had the previous opening blasted away. While he was completing the survey Ed came back to our jeep to pick up some gear and explore a rocky slope closeby. I decided he could use a little help and did manage to locate an opening and help carry a little gear. This opening in the rocks was blowing very cold air and Ed found several patches of ice within, despite the fact that it was late June and on a south-facing wall. After a while Chris joined us and provided supervision with his hat over his eyes while Ed completed the survey.

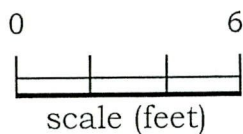
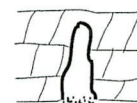
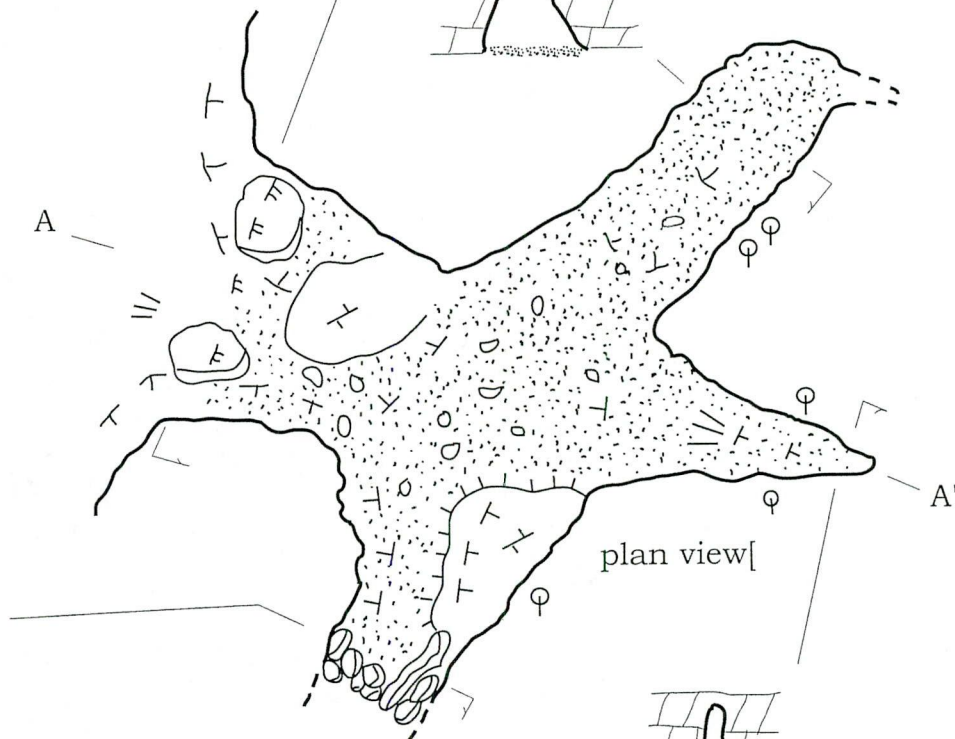
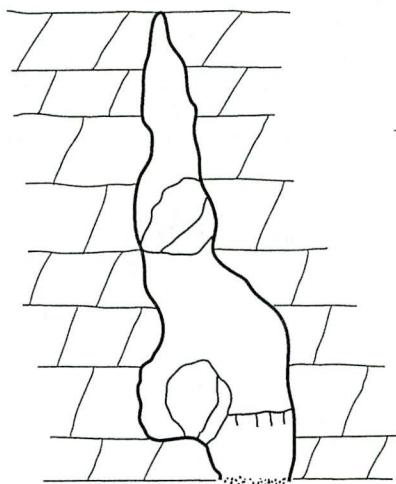
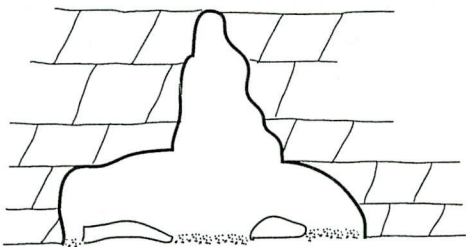


Harebells on the rocky slope below the cave were in full bloom and provided the name. (I was persuaded not to name it Blue Bunny Ice Cream cave.) The cave is probably a talus cave that was created by the same blasting that destroyed Route Three Cave. It was 23 feet long with many leads that were too small to follow. On the trip back, Ed reflected that not only was the day pleasant because we had fine weather and mapped four caves, but we also did not encounter any raccoon droppings. Good working conditions, indeed.

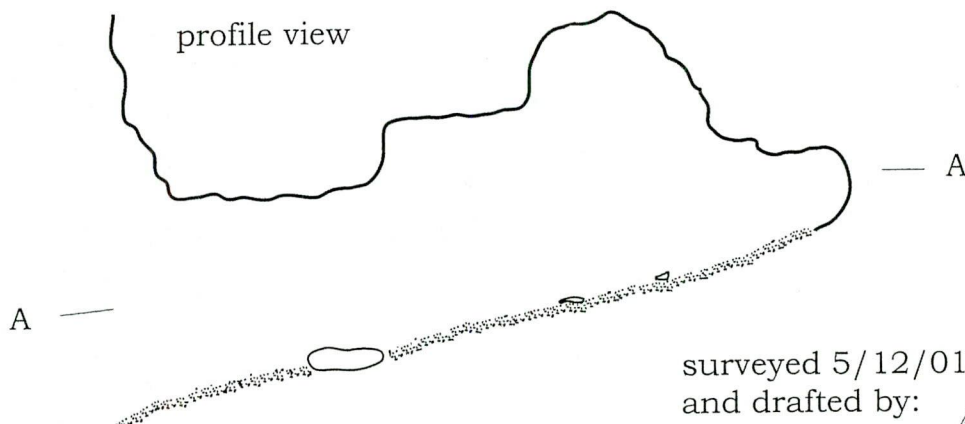


# ROCKY STAR CAVE

Jackson County, Iowa



profile view



surveyed length = 34.9 feet (7.0 meters)

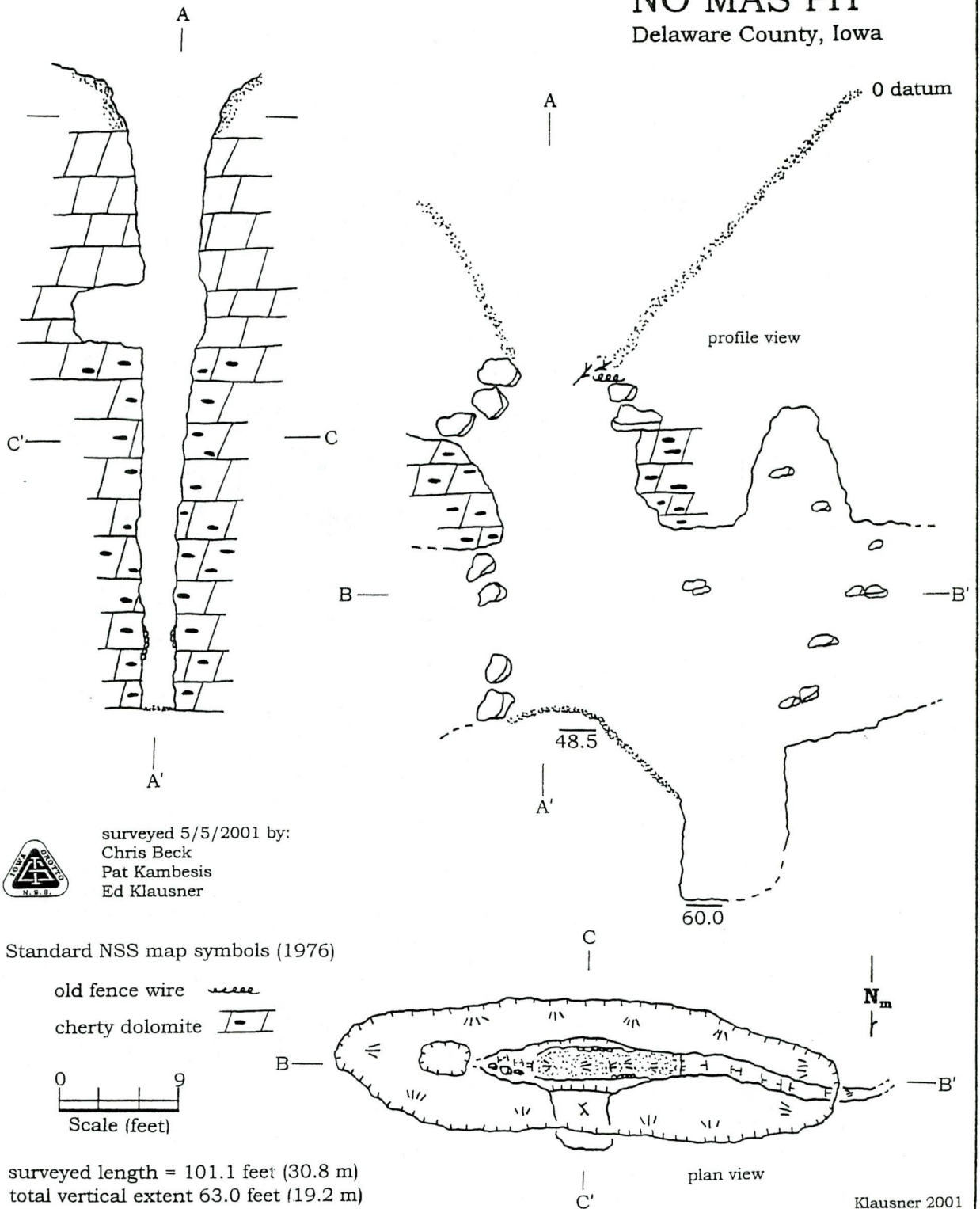
surveyed 5/12/01  
and drafted by:  
Ed Klausner





# NO MAS PIT

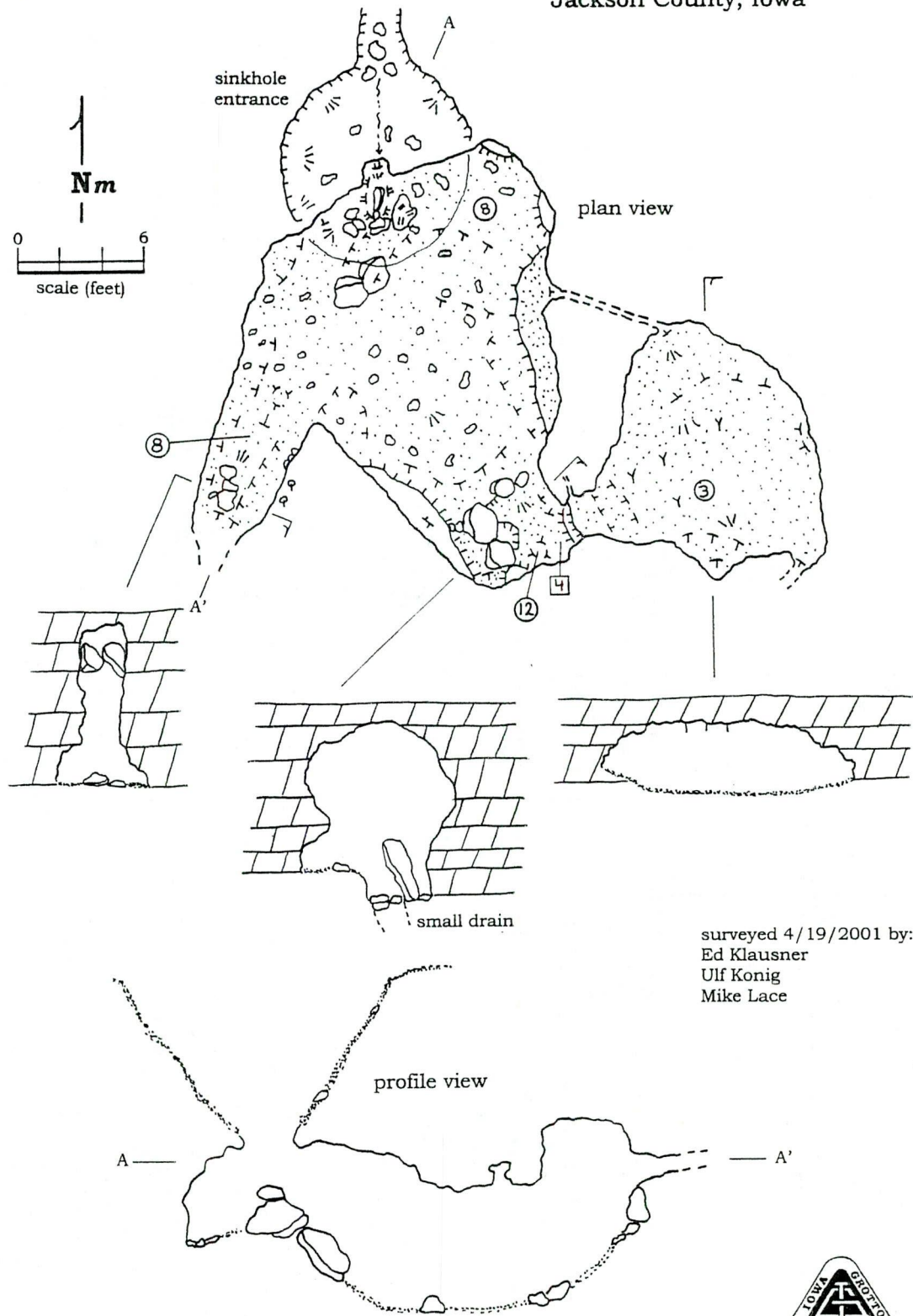
Delaware County, Iowa





# MILLENNIUM CAVE

Jackson County, Iowa



surveyed length = 64.1 feet (19.5 meters)



Klausner 2001