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Scott Dankof

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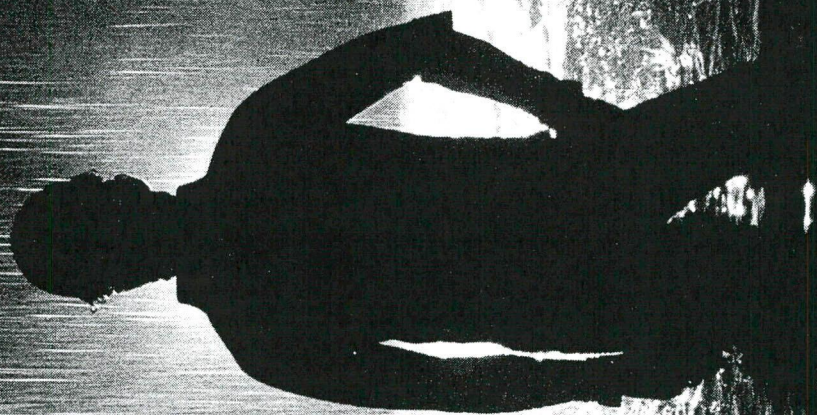
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Editor and Typist: Scott Dankof 515-986-3219
410 Hickory Circle
Grimes Ia. 50111

E-mail sdankof@msn.com

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Iowa Grotto Meetings: are the fourth Wednesday of each month, third Wednesday in 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: Chris Beck at the entrance of Cascade Passage, Coldwater Cave, Ia.
Photo by Scott Dankof

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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

Issue 6

C O N T E N T S

Iowa Grotto Meeting Minutes - - - - -	90
Editors Comment - - - - -	91
Trip reports:	
Wonder Cave - - - - -	91
Goose Pit - - - - -	91
Big Ass - - - - -	92
Jackson County Five - - - - -	94
100 At Last - - - - -	94
One Less Lead - - - - -	95
The Winnishiek Con - - - - -	96
Landmark Falls: The Discovery - - - - -	97
Landmark Falls: Twelve Years After And Lowell Burkhead Dome - - - - -	106
Rescue At Skunk Cave - - - - -	112
Dear Most Competent Caver - - - - -	113
Cave Maps:	
Lost Pine And Pocket Cave - - - - -	114
Goose Pit And Hunts Cave - - - - -	115

IOWA GROTTA MINUTES
November 28, 2001
Regular Meeting

The meeting of the Iowa Grotto was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:28 p.m. There were ten members present. Minutes from the October meeting were read and approved. A treasurer's report was given which showed balances of \$747.67 in the Coldwater fund; \$970.98 in the General fund; and \$103.70 in petty cash. TRIP REPORTS: Bob Walstrom reported that he, Ed Klausner and Elizabeth Miller did some lead checking and digging on the trip to Floyd Co. Ed Klausner reported on a trip to Jackson Co. with Chris Beck and Gary Engh where five caves were surveyed. On another trip to Jones Co., he, Chris Beck, Gary Engh, and Mike Lace surveyed four caves. He then reported that at Coldwater, Mark Jones, Jim Roberts and Larry Welch went to Big Ass Passage and Burr Oak Annie passage for some survey work. He then reported on a Lead checking trip to Clayton Co. with Chris Beck, Gary Engh, Elizabeth Miller and several Amish children. He concluded his report on a trip with Chris Beck and Gary Engh to the Clayton and Delaware Co. area where one cave was surveyed. Mike Lace reported on the trip to Lester's Spring, Winneshiek Co., with Chris Beck, Gary Engh and Elizabeth Miller to continue work toward lowering the water level. FUTURE TRIPS: See the November Hotline and N.S.S. News for details. OLD BUSINESS: Volume III of the Cave Map Book is available for \$25.00. Republished Intercom back issues are available. Contact Phil LaRue for details. Officer nominations for all offices will be taken until the December meeting. New Business: Intercom deadline is January 1st, 2002. Joe Dixon presented information on the Iowa Nature Mapping Program. This statewide program headed by ISU Extension Service, collects data on sightings of various vertebrate animals. They would be interested in reliable information on bat sightings and where the species was observed. Discussion followed regarding how specific the Grotto must be in disclosing the location. Joe thought that a hectore in area might be sufficient, but with very sensitive locations the county where seen might be accepted. He will request more information from the Program director for the Grotto's consideration. With no additional new business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m..

IOWA GROTTA MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
December 17th, 2001

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Chairman Mike Lace with three members present. Minutes from the previous meeting were read and approved while the treasurer's report listed \$747.67 in the Coldwater fund, \$118.72 in Grotto petty cash and \$776.09 in checking. TRIP REPORTS: From Coldwater Cave, Ed Klausner reported on a trip to Landmark Falls to survey with Larry Welch and a leadchecking trip with Chris Beck and Elizabeth Miller in a ceiling crevice of the mainstream passage. Mike Lace described a sump dive by Mike Nelson and Doug Schmucker as well as a survey trip with Larry Welch through the End Again Sump in Coldwater. Ed Klausner reported a mapping to Jackson County where seven small caves were surveyed. FUTURE TRIPS: The Grotto Picnic will be held on the first weekend in August. The 2002 NSS Convention will be held in Maine at the end of June while numerous small Iowa cave mapping trips will continue throughout the upcoming months. OLD BUSINESS: Ed Klausner relayed the progress on the Grotto library catalog, which now holds over 1500 entries. Grotto nominations for Chairman, Vice-chairman, and Secretary-treasurer were finally closed. Mike Lace, Ed Klausner, and Phil LaRue have been nominated to fill the respective offices unopposed. Joe Dixon provided further details on the Nature Mapping Program, which led to the discussion of the programs long-term fate in light of upcoming State budget cuts. The

deadline for materials for the next Intercom is January 1st. In light of no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m..

Editors Comment

I've been in the Iowa Grotto since about 1986, most of you know me, and a few lucky ones have carried my photo gear. Blah, blah, blah. Meet me, your new editor, Scott Dankof.

After Lowell Burkhead passed away, I was asked to fill in as Intercom editor. These will be big muddy boots to fill. Over the years, the Intercom has steadily improved, in no small part to the hard work and dedication of Lowell. I'll continue to put out a publication based on the high standards set by him. (Sounds like I'm running for political office here). A publication is only as good as the quality and quantity of articles submitted. Speaking of which, you can email me with your reports. I'd prefer a Microsoft word file, but will accept anything legible. Any photos that you would like to submit, please mail them to me. I'll scan them and send them back. My mailing and new e-mail address (e-mail address was wrong in last Intercom) are on the inside front cover of this issue.

TRIP REPORTS

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Wonder Cave

Wonder Cave: Winnishiek Co., IA.

By Nick Schmuecker

August, 2001

Nick and Doug Schmuecker, Mark Jones, Jim Roberts,
Chris Beck, John Lovass, and Pat Kambesis

When I arrived at the campground, there wasn't much going on. So my parents gabbed on and on "forever" and I stayed quiet. Once it was time to leave, everyone signed their names on a piece of paper for who was going to Wonder Cave. When we left, almost everyone rode with someone else, I rode with Mark Jones and Jim Roberts. In order to get into the cave, we had to ask permission first and of course, we got the okay. So we went around the house and got dressed. To get into the cave, you had to rappel. This was only my second time to rappel into a cave. It was Jim's first time. I didn't know what to expect and I didn't know that there would be any formations at all. I thought that it was just going to be a dirt or mud cave. You could say I was wrong. Right when I got down from the rappel area, there were formations everywhere. When my dad and I went further into the cave we noticed that Mark, Jim, Chris, and Pat were coming up the rope. Pat was the first up. While my dad talked to Pat, I walked off. During my walk, I came upon John. He was taking pictures of small insects and formations. He showed me that a white formation glows after taking a picture of them with a florescent bulb. After a while everyone went back to the entrance of the cave. Pat gave orders that before we went back to the campground, we had to go to the "Whippy Dip" (which is an ice cream parlor, I got a marshmallow shake). Then we went to Dunning Spring and then we went back to the campground.

(Ed. Note: You know, when I think of Pat, I always think Whippy Dip)

Goose Pit, Harvest Cave, Coyote Cave, Sticks Cave and One More

Goose Pit, Harvest Cave, Coyote Cave, Sticks Cave
Clayton Co. IA.

by Ed Klausner

3 November, 2001

Chris Beck, Gary Engh, Ed Klausner, Mike Lace and Elizabeth Miller

Last June, Mike, Gary, and I had surveyed Wagner Mound Cave in Clayton County. As we were leaving, we chatted with the landowner about other caves in the area. He mentioned that there was an open sinkhole on the edge of his land, but it would be difficult to find in June. We planned on returning when the leaves were off the trees so we would have a better chance of finding it.

Early November isn't usually as warm as it was on the day we decided to find that sinkhole. Temperatures were around 70 degrees, so it was a delightful fall day. The sinkhole described by the landowner was plugged, but Chris found a small hole nearby. He worked on enlarging it to the point that I could get my legs in. I thought it was too narrow to continue down, but didn't want to give up because we saw that there was a sharp left turn in the passage. When we rolled rocks down, we could hear them continue rolling for a while. We both dug on one area of the entrance that was widest so we could manage to get down. When Chris, Elizabeth and I started surveying, we found that the cave was almost 70 feet long and continued to slope down along the entire length. It never got much wider than 1 ½ feet, but ceilings were in the 20-foot range. We found 4 bats, two of which were pipistrelles. We couldn't see the other two well enough to identify the species. We named it Goose Pit. In the mean time, Gary searched the rest of the ridge and found nothing big enough to enter.

Upon our return to the landowner's house, he told us of a neighbor who had some caves on his land. Plans for the rest of the day quickly changed and we were off to talk with the neighbor. Not only were there caves on the land, but the three boys in the family offered to show us the caves. Later, they helped name the caves: one of the hardest parts of surveying.

The first, Harvest Cave, was a short (15 foot) cave that Chris sketched with surveying help from Mike and Elizabeth. The next was a bit longer at 21 feet and it was my turn to sketch. While Mike helped with this cave's survey (Coyote Cave), Chris and Gary continued ridgewalking and found the last cave that we surveyed that day, Sticks Cave. Sticks was described by the three boys whose father had entered it previously. They were all very curious about our activity and really wanted to see this last cave. It was a bit too much for them to chimney down, but with our help and lights, we got them down and so they got to see the cave. This cave was about 50 feet in length. The top section was a mechanical crack with a 15-foot ceiling and 25 feet to the first station. At the bottom was an entrance to a low, wide room full of sticks and raccoon crap. I took lead tape for two shots through the room. I got a headache from the smell and was glad to get out.

It was getting late, but the boys told us there was another hole nearby. Since it was also on the way back to their house, we were off to look at it. Chris was the only one who could chimney down the 12 - 14 foot entrance drop. There was a passage off the bottom, but he said there was a dead deer in the passage. It looked as if the passage continued, but it would be best to wait a few months and bring vertical gear. Hopefully, the landowner will not fill in the sinkhole entrance.

BIG ASS SURVEY

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, IA
17 November, 2001

by Ed Klausner

Mark Jones, Ed Klausner, Jim Roberts, and Larry Welch

Last month's trenching at the upstream sumps of Coldwater Cave, plus the dry fall, presented us with a water level of 0.51. The sumps were very likely to be open and the upstream section just waiting for the side passages to be surveyed. This would be Jim's first trip through, my second, Mark's third and Larry's 12th to 15th.

The sumps were indeed open and the trip through was uneventful (except for the fact that I couldn't stop shivering). Just past the Three Dive Sump, people usually take their hoods off as there are no longer needed. The next section of passage (Last Right Hand Side Passage) is through hideous mud that is about a foot thick. I kept my hood on through the mud and that helped warm me up. Mark discovered that the mud on the right side was a bit less squishy and therefore easier to get through. The Burt Falls area was as impressive as ever and we would still like to find a way past some formation obstructions to the side passage beyond. I had not been further upstream, so everything past Burt Falls was new to me. The passage was comfortable until the Iguana Crawl. Somehow I imagined it to be dry, but it was still the stream passage through a few inches of water. The passage is low and the floor and ceiling have sharp projections that grab your wetsuit. It was named for the motion you use to get through this section. At least our faces were not in the water.

We then entered the Mystery is History section of upstream Coldwater. We went over Mike's Nervous Breakdown one at a time, as it appeared to be somewhat unstable. The next stop was Big Ass Passage, named for the size of this side passage. About 800 feet of this side passage had been surveyed. I believe Mike Lace, Mike Nelson, and Larry Welch were on that trip, but I'm not sure who else helped with the survey. They stopped at a constriction. The plan was to push the constriction and survey more passage.

About 100 or so feet down the start of the passage, a short side passage led to Big Ass Dome. It was a very impressive 40-45 foot high dome formed at the intersection of two joints. There was a large piece of breakdown suspended by two tips about $\frac{1}{2}$ way up the dome. No one wanted to be under it or climb the unstable breakdown pile underneath. Enough sightseeing, we were off towards the end of the known passage. We found the last chip and both Larry and I took a look at the obstruction. For the next 30-40 feet from the chip, the passage just continued to get lower and lower until we couldn't get through. We could see that the passage continued, but it would be a dig all the way. This called for plan two. Between Big Ass Dome and the end of Big Ass Passage, we passed a side passage called Burr Oak Annie. Larry had gone in about 30 or so feet on a previous trip and noted the passage continued. Mark, Larry and I decided to survey this while Jim went back to the Big Ass Dome intersection and waited for us.

We got 102 feet of survey before the passage became too small to continue. Half way through, there was a left turn and at that intersection, a parallel joint that looked as though you could get into it if there weren't so much loose (i.e. unstable) breakdown that you would have to climb. The other end of the joint appeared to join the passage 20 or so feet later, but was constricted and you couldn't see into it.

The last shot had a left dimension of "passage". The only trouble with this passage is that the ceiling is about 2 inches high. You can see some small stalactites in the distance, but the dig looks difficult and long. Some future generation project in the making.

Hopefully, Mark got some nice pictures on the way back to the sumps. We used some of the stashed liquids in the Burt Falls area, as we didn't bring enough along for an 11-hour trip. Those will have to be replaced in the near future. Hopefully it will remain dry so we can continue surveying in this upstream section during the winter.

When we reached the shack, there was pizza waiting for us. That was perfect as we were pretty tired and really didn't want to drive into town. During the day, Mike Nelson used his log splitter and with the help of Doug Schmucker, Elizabeth Miller, Chris Beck, Mike Lace and Scott Dankof, we have enough firewood for a few years.

The next day, Mike Lace, Chris Beck, Elizabeth Miller and I went to Lester Spring to see if the water level was low enough to get in. It wasn't, so we used the

tools we brought to continue with our effort to remove rock and sediment to lower the water level. Just when Elizabeth and I were leaving, Gary Engh arrived and the rest of the group continued trenching. One of these days, we're going to be able to enter the cave that is surely there.

JACKSON COUNTY FIVE

Boundary, Alsoa, Diagonal, Decent and Flow Mound Caves
Jackson County, IA

by Ed Klausner

24 November, 2001

Chris Beck, Ed Klausner, and Mike Lace

The modest goal for the day was to survey two caves and bring our yearly total to 80. We had several spots in Jackson County that we could ridge walk and thought we would likely visit several during the day. As it turned out, we not only met and exceeded our survey goal, but never even finished the first area visited.

The first cave found was Boundary Cave near a property line. It was a 16-foot solutional cavity that Mike sketched and in a moment of weakness, I said I would draft. The next find was Alsoa Cave. Cave names are usually hard to come by, but Chris named this one quickly. It was a 19-foot solutional cave and it was Chris' turn to sketch. While Chris was finishing up, Mike and I continued ridge walking. Mike located a mechanical cave with some solutional features that was 21 feet in length. Chris was on a roll with cave naming and came up with Diagonal Cave due to the direction of the passage from the entrance.

Very close to Diagonal Cave was a phreatic tube that Chris poked around in before declaring that it as a decent cave, thus another cave was named. Decent Cave was nicely decorated and the longest of the day at 57.8 feet in length.

The last cave surveyed on this warm November data was Flow Mound Cave. It was also named by Chris for its flowstone mound near the back of the cave. Also present in this short solutional cave were two columns and lots of small stalactites.

Mike found another phreatic tube along the same stretch of exposed rock, but it was getting late and we put off surveying what would have been the sixth cave of the day. We have more ridge walking in this area and will be back to continue surveying.

100 AT LAST

Flat Iron, Lone Bat, Geometric, Synapse, No Shame, Moine Shelter, Blood Lust, and Bunnacula Caves; Cave of the Ice Queen and McGregor's Pleasure, Fayette County, IA
December 3, 23, 27, 31, 2001

by Ed Klausner

Pat Kambesis, Ed Klausner, Mike Lace, and Elizabeth Miller

On December 8th, Mike Lace and I stopped at a public area in Fayette County because neither of us had been there before and only one cave is listed in the cave file. We were on our way to Coldwater Cave and got there late in the day. We found a few small mechanical caves, but had no time to survey them.

On December 23rd, Elizabeth and I had some time, so we went back to Fayette County to survey a few of those caves. The first on was a twenty-foot mechanical cave named Flat Iron Cave. It had large, flat iron shaped piece of bedrock in the center.

The next cave was a surprise. We found a small solutional tube that went in 10 feet, took a sharp left, and then opened into a room where we could turn around. There were several small stalactites and one hibernating pipistrelle. We named the cave Lone Bat Cave. Just next door was a mechanical cave. It was twenty-one feet long and unremarkable. I couldn't think of anything better than Geometric Cave.

It was cold, windy, and snowing, so we called it a day after surveying three caves. There was plenty more to do in the area.

On December 27th, I returned to the area to continue ridgewalking. Starting at Geometric Cave and staying about 20 feet below the top of the ridge, I continued walking towards the next property line. On the way, I found three more caves. The first, Synapse Cave, was a 16-foot mechanical cave. The second, No Shame Cave, was a 15-foot mechanical cave. The last one of the day was a shelter cave, Moine Shelter Cave, and was 19 feet deep. Of course, there were several caves visible across the property line.

On the way back to the parking area, I found a sinkhole with exposed rock and melted snow around the opening. I was alone, without vertical gear, and the slope was snow and ice covered, so I skipped a closer inspection. I think it was one discovered by Mike Nelson in 1990 and named Bottomless Hole.

We were at 96 surveyed caves for the year, and that simply was unacceptable. Pat came in from Kentucky to save us from our slacking ways and on the last day of the year, she, Elizabeth and I just had to find four more caves. This area in Fayette County seemed to be a good place with 6 caves already surveyed and a lot of ground left to walk. The day was quite cold and it was a bit hard to move with six layers on. At least it was easy to cross the stream, as the ice was quite thick in most places. We finished a section between the parking area and one boundary with no additional caves found. Next, we crossed the stream and started searching the rock. Pat found a talus cave with some blood on the ground from a recent kill. Blood Lust Cave was surveyed to 15.5 feet.

Bunnacula Cave was 26 feet long and also mechanical. Naming had become a problem. Thelma and Louise (AKA Pat and Elizabeth) delighted in giving caves cute names and on other trips had suggested such atrocious names as Cutsie Poo Cave, Bunny Love Cave, etc. just to see the rest of us squirm. Bunnacula Cave (named for a monster rabbit) was marginally acceptable; besides, I had no choice as they found it.

Cave of the Ice Queen was very close by and was so named for its ice stalagmite. The cave was 19.5 feet long. The last cave was unfortunately named McGregor's Pleasure after Mr. McGregor in Peter Rabbit. It could have been worse - they had even suggested McGregor's Love Nest. Since the naming was going downhill fast and we had reached our goal of 100 caves, we found a landmark for picking up the ridgewalking next time and headed for the parking area. On the way, we found another sinkhole not too far from what I thought was Bottomless Hole. This one looked a bit more promising as the opening was bigger and the cave was breathing out. We'll have to return with vertical gear another year.

ONE LESS LEAD

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, IA
15 December, 2001
Chris Beck, Ed Klausner, and Elizabeth Miller

by Ed Klausner

The low water level in Coldwater Cave (0.51 feet at the platform) meant that Mike Lace was going to want to survey up to the Nasty Sump. Larry Welch "volunteered" to help with that survey while Doug Schmuecker accompanied Mike Nelson, who was headed off to dive the last sump upstream to see if there was any additional air passage beyond this sump. Both those trips were very productive. Mike and Larry surveyed over 300 feet and saved any of the rest of us from having to do that nasty survey. Unfortunately, this means that the Nasty and the not so pleasant passage beyond still need to be surveyed. Mike Nelson found no additional air passage beyond 40 or so feet in the last sump. More details will have to come from those who were there.

Meanwhile, those of us not wishing to be frozen out headed downstream walking with sections of the scaling pole. Chris had been curious about a high lead about 150 feet before Cascade Passage. The only way to reach it would be with a scaling pole. The pole is in sections that can be floated downstream using a leash to drag them over breakdown. Elizabeth, Chris and I found the trip was relatively easy due to the low water level and we were soon assembling the pole so it would be 24 feet in length. There are additional sections in the shack, but 24 feet was all that was needed for this lead.

Once assembled and placed in the dome, Chris ascended the rope attached to the end of the pole. Unfortunately, the passage at the top ended quickly and there was not enough passage to survey. Oh well, one more lead crossed off the list. We left the pole in place for future lead checks in the area. There is a high lead in a dome across the mainstream passage, but it will be difficult to reach due to the formations in the vicinity.

THE WINNESHIEK CON

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, IA
December 29, 2001
Mark Jones, Ed Klausner and Larry Welch

by Ed Klausner

The water level had been low in Coldwater Cave and the weather was supposed to be well below freezing, so a trip through the sumps was planned. Not just a trip through the sumps, but a trip to survey the Nasty Sump. I got cold just thinking about it. On Friday evening in the shack, Mike Lace suggested an alternative trip - through the sumps, but to survey the end of the Slot Passage. This seemed too good to be true; miss the Nasty and hope someone else would eventually do it. Thus, the con was set in motion.

It was too good to be true. Mike neglected to tell us that the Slot Passage was pretty nasty itself, to say nothing of the passage leading to a dome discovered in 1995 by Marc Ohms. On that trip, Marc was sent ahead to see where the passage went while Mike Lace finished sketching. Marc estimated that it was 500 feet to a dome and the passage continued beyond the dome.

Mark Jones and I quickly opted for the Slot Passage. Larry had been there once before and remembered that he didn't like it. When Larry doesn't like a passage, it has little to recommend it. Anyway, Mike sent the three of us off unsuspecting of the con.

The sumps were pretty easy, as the water was only 0.49 feet at the platform. Larry even kept his helmet on; something that is difficult when the water level is higher. I discovered that the air space goes from low to nonexistent if you try to get through the Three Dive Sump by going under the ledge on the right wall.

After the Three Dive Sump, we decided to keep our hoods on, as we would need them in the Slot Passage. The Slot has quite a few obstacles that have to be negotiated (some in low air space). Mike neglected to tell us about the low air space section that was about 100 feet long. Much of the rest of the passage is belly crawl. It feels pretty good when you can actually get on your knees to continue crawling. The passage is a few thousand feet long and the last section contains some walking passage.

At Mike's 18th Retirement Dome (named for Mike Nelson) we dropped our packs, as our survey would start in a few hundred feet. A bit after the dome, the passage splits. The right fork goes to Twin Falls (also known as Twin Waterfalls) and the left side was our objective for the day. It appeared to us that the right side was bigger (it was actually walking passage to Twin Falls), so we figured that the left fork was ours to name.

The survey notes for the last station gave the ceiling height at a bit over a foot. When Mike told us about the passage, we all remember that he said the passage was about three feet high. The survey notes were indeed correct and the next 450 or so feet of survey kept the same general height - some rimstone dams, a few deep spots, some formations to get around, but generally, just a long belly crawl. Finally, we entered a dome. It was quite spectacular. Larry estimated the height to be 75 feet. Tom Sawyer Dome seemed to fit the situation as we felt we were doing the whitewashing for Tom that day. In fact, we named the passage The Winnishiek Con Passage.

At the far side of the dome, the passage continued. None of us suggested that we continue surveying. Both Mark and I went down the passage 75 feet or so to see where it went. The passage continued low and we each thought we could hear a dome ahead. The dome that we originally thought we heard was probably Tom Sawyer Dome behind us. Then, as we continued it became quieter. Finally, we thought we could faintly hear another dome. This will have to be investigated by the next survey team. The chip is on a piece of breakdown in the dome ready and waiting for the continuation of the survey.

On the way out, Larry and I took a side trip to Twin Falls along the continuation of the Slot Passage. After a few hundred feet of very easy walking passage, we came to an end of traversable passage. The space above each of the two falls was too small for me to fit through despite what Larry thought. Mike Lace had come to the same conclusion on a previous trip.

Mark and Larry took another side trip, this time to Marathon Dome just off the Slot Passage. Larry spent some time trying to get by a breakdown pile. The rest of the trip out of the Slot was quite fast, as we didn't want to linger.

At Burt Falls, we climbed to the high lead on the opposite side of the stream to look at potential ways past the formation choke. Larry tried climbing a crack on the right side (unsuccessfully). There appear to be ledges on either side that could potentially be a way past the formation choke. The only problem is getting to either ledge. Mike Lace thought the passage would be like the rest of the upper level passages in this section - formation choked.

The trip back through the sumps was led by Mark, his first time leading. I found that holding my pack by the strap offered more flexibility as to where the pack was when going through the narrow parts of the sumps. My dry bag had enough air in it to insure that the pack floated. I'll use this method again as it worked well.

Mike Lace had the cabin warm, a much appreciated nicety considering the outside temperature (about zero). We had purchased some food that morning in Harmony in case we got out late. That proved to be a good idea as we weren't up for the drive to Cresco.

Landmark Falls: The Discovery

Coldwater Cave, IA.
February 17, 1990
Larry Welch

Preface

No, the date is not a typo - this is a report on a trip that took place over a decade ago. Bryan Bain wrote a trip report for this same trip in the **Intercom**, Volume 26, Issue 1. What follows is a more lengthy discussion of that trip, and I hope that this does not represent an unreasonable indulgence, since it was an important trip of discovery and it was also my all-time favorite caving trip. The area discovered on this day took on an air of mystique over time, as for one reason

or another, the area never got revisited during the intervening years. I write this today less than a week after the area was finally seen again, and the report for that trip will hopefully follow directly after this one. This report is being written from some notes I took soon after the completion of the February 1990 trip. The notes were incomplete, so I have been filling in a few things from memory, trying not to be too influenced by the subsequent trip.

Historical Background

Upstream Coldwater has always been a very wet proposition. The original explorers of the cave had been stymied by high water/low airspace in the main passage, and were diverted up the Waterfall Passage instead. In February 1975, soon after the State of Iowa let their lease lapse on the cave entrance, a Minnesota caver by the name of Ron Spong became the first man to penetrate the low airspace beyond the Waterfall Passage junction, using a snorkel and a dive line to accomplish the feat. This low airspace area was thereafter christened the Spong Siphon. It's a long way from the frontier now, but the Spong still commands respect and is never to be trifled with. The boys from the Rock River Speleological Society managed to penetrate the Spong without dive gear in the dry fall of 1976, and they ran the survey traverse over two trips up to the next sumpy area, which they named the Tuna Sea Siphon. The RRSS boys were pretty spooked by the Spong, and shifted their attention elsewhere in the cave after these trips. An Iowa Grotto caver named Mike Tempel pushed the Tuna Sea a little bit further in the November 1979, getting over half the way through to a large room before turning back. He had passed the worst part, but the Tuna Sea remained inviolate.

Everything changed when Mike Nelson entered the scene in the mid 1980's. He was much more adept at caving in low airspace than any other active Coldwater caver, and was physically quite strong. His contributions revolutionized upstream caving in a hurry. Weak partners and poor climate largely limited his early forays upstream. He was trying to push the sumps under conditions where the water level was not particularly low, making it nearly impossible to get through Spong, much less think about the Tuna Sea. When he finally got some strong partners, notably Dave and Sue Ecklund and his brother Bill, things started to happen. Mike broke through the Tuna Sea and discovered a thousand feet of large cave in the Beyond Tuna Sea section before hitting another low airspace, the Scandiwhovian Sump. Mike worked this sump in secret, managing to traverse it entirely by breath-hold diving. None of his partners were up to that. As a result, Mike and his crew took up scuba diving, or as Mike often referred to it, "air-assisted caving." The biggest breakthrough came in June of 1987, when Minnesota caver/diver Larry Laine came to visit Coldwater, and was willing to dive with Mike Nelson despite Mike's lack of cave diving certification. Mike led through the Scandiwhovian Sump, but then they were stymied by another sump beyond. Larry put on his tanks and dove this sump, finally getting through on his third try, leading to it being named the 3-Dive sump. The passage continued on ahead, but Mike was diverted into a significant side passage just beyond the 3-Dive, which he called the Last Right Hand Side Passage. Mike continued onward to pioneer 3000 feet of cave up this passage, over half of which was large walking passage. Larry, like all of us, found himself physically overmatched by the Mike Nelson experience, and missed most of the scoop taking a nap. It rained hard that evening, and few of us on the surface knew about the continuing cave that Mike had seen past the Scandiwhovian on the earlier breath-hold diving trip. When Larry and Mike were not out several hours after their sign-out time, there was a sense of concern on the surface - what could they be doing? They eventually dragged themselves out at 4 am, missing their sign-out time by a mere 10 hours. Despite the rain, the water level hadn't risen greatly in the cave until after they had emerged from the sumps.

During the following winter, Mike and his regular crew dragged tanks up to the sumps and surveyed continuing passage in the Main Stream Passage past the 3-Dive in addition to starting the survey up the Last Right Hand Side Passage. These were epic trips, lugging heavy dive cylinders up to the sumps, and then gearing up in cramped and cold confines. Hypothermia was their constant companion. The winter of 88-89 was a dry one, and it led to a revelation: under very dry conditions one could nose through all of the sumps without dive tanks. It wasn't easy and it scared the pants off of most of the non-divers who tried it, but it sure beat hauling dive gear. We also had things easier than the Rock River crew in

that Mike Nelson freely gave lessons on "Nelson Techniques" that worked well in such low airspace passage. My first trip through the 3-Dive sump took place that winter, and after swamping myself going through on the way in, I was ready to retire from caving. It got easier, but never comfortable. Survey crews poured through the sumps that winter, and the Last Right Hand Side Passage was surveyed all the way up to a low crawl that Mike and Bill Nelson had named the Iguana Crawl. The Main passage was pushed through the End Again Sump before stopping at the aptly named Nasty Sump.

Following another dry year, we were all anticipating hitting it big again in the winter of 89-90. Things started poorly that fall with a disagreement between cavers. I was unfortunately right in the middle of it, and I certainly regret my involvement now, but it happened and I can't go back and change that. After some tense times, everyone cooled down and things got back on track. The cave cooperated by taking off in a big way, and the long successful trips helped us regain our *esprit de corps*. Mike Nelson and crew penetrated the Nasty Sump and took the survey nearly 2000 feet beyond (these notes, unfortunately, have been lost and a resurvey awaits). Mike Lace and I led the survey through and beyond the Iguana Crawl in what we coined the Mystery is History passage, since we were passing Mystery Cave in Minnesota on the long cave list at the time. In December, Stacey Cyphert, Jay Wells and I surveyed nearly 2300 feet of cave up there in a single trip, tying off the survey in virgin walking passage. We had hoped to return in January, but the weather wasn't trustworthy enough to go very far past the sumps. We anticipated one last chance in February, but there was a large snowmelt on the Monday prior to the scheduled weekend for the trip, and things didn't look good. Amazingly, when we got to the cave on Friday night, the water level had dropped back down, and the temperature was forecast to be below freezing. We had our last roll of the dice, and we planned to make the best of it.

The trip

Jay Wells and Stacey Cyphert were ready for the trip. We had completed an awesome trip in December, and we were all confident in one another and toughened up from consecutive trips through the sumps in the prior months. In somewhat of a surprise, Bryan Bain also joined the crew. Bryan hadn't been in the cave for several years, nor had he done any wetsuit caving at all during the intervening time span. Bryan was somewhat of a mentor to me (and also for Stacey), leading many of my early trips into the cave. He had spearheaded my first two trips to Grappling Falls, which were landmark events in my development as a caver. He was also one of the few people that could keep up with Mike Nelson when he was a Coldwater regular, which meant that he had to be a tough cookie. Despite being a bit rusty, we were all pretty confident in his abilities.

Bryan pulled out his wetsuit and began to struggle into it. It was the same suit he had used years before, and even in the best of times he had fought mightily to get into it. Baby powder, Vaseline, -- chemical inducement had always been mandatory for Bryan to get into that suit. As Bryan noted in his report, he was a few pounds heavier than when he had been using the suit regularly, and that proved to be troublesome. Bryan contorted with his suit, trying all of his old tricks. The rest of us were completely geared up and ready to go. I was suffering from my usual impatience, but it was tempered by the optimism I felt for the upcoming trip. The team was strong and fit, and we had a killer lead and virgin passage waiting for us. At a certain point we realized that Bryan's struggle with his wetsuit jacket was not headed toward a happy outcome. Jay saved the day by swapping wetsuit jackets with Bryan. Although my body had little chance of fitting into Bryan's jacket, I remember thinking quite clearly at the time that there was no way I would have been as generous. It should be noted that Jay did fit into Bryan's jacket - barely. He could only put the zipper up six inches and his movement was severely constricted by the iron grip of neoprene. A tolerable situation for some trips, but we were going on a wet trip through 4 sumps and with a ton of crawling to boot. Another factor that we hadn't counted on was that the snowmelt earlier in the week had chilled the cave water, which turned out to be an invigorating 39 degrees that day. In retrospect, it was mind-boggling that Jay would even contemplate taking the trip this way, but this was just one of the little "above and beyond" details that made this trip special.

Once in the cave we established our typical brisk pace heading upstream. We were probably going a bit too fast, but I for one was anxious to get going after having idled for an hour getting someone into Bryan's jacket. Of course, our brisk pace was still slower than a typical Nelson pace, yet it turned out that Bryan wasn't ready for even this pace and we had to slow down to avoid burning him out. As Stacey and I waited for Bryan on the far side of the Spong, I told Stacy that I doubted Bryan would make it to our destination and he agreed. It was early in the trip, and he was already moving very slowly and was getting quite winded. Of course, we now know that Bryan managed the trip, albeit at some degree of discomfort. I have to admire his fortitude, because despite being in poorer physical condition than the rest of us, he was able to make the trip on guts and mental toughness. The slow pace was in hindsight probably a blessing. We were able to save our strength for the survey rather than burning ourselves out going too fast toward our enticing goal.

We were implementing a new supply philosophy on the trip. We were carrying as many cans of pop as possible, stashing them at slightly greater than Hansel and Gretel intervals along the way. We planned to drink them on the way back, crushing the empty cans to minimize the hassle of carrying them out. Each of the previous trips to this area had taxed our liquid supply, and this was our proposed solution. After an initial scare at the Spong, where the group in front of us (Mike Nelson and crew going toward the Nasty Sump) reported higher water levels (only slightly), the sumps were actually a breeze. Bryan had been through the Spong years ago when the airspace was really minimal, so this was no problem for him. Once we got out of the sleazeways into the nice walking of the Last Right Hand Side Passage, Bryan allowed as if this were a nice bit of cave. We had to agree.

Everyone slowed as we reached the long crawling section. As we got into dome-laden areas like the White Nodule Crevice and the Figure 8 passage we started plying Bryan the geologist (he was working on an MS in geology at the time) with questions concerning the stratigraphy above. He was up on West Virginia/Kentucky geology, but didn't remember enough about the Coldwater area to answer our queries. Everyone oohed and aahed at the Stage Curtain area, but we all suffered through the sucking mud in the vicinity. The cave was exceedingly foggy in this sector, which discouraged Jay from taking any photos. Jay was already somewhat famous for his foggy cave photos, so he didn't need any more of them.

When we reached the final survey chip we sat down and rested just short of the ultra-white flowstone pendant that had been occupying a prominent spot in my memory since December. We all ate and drank a bit, splitting the last can of pop that I had mistakenly been carrying. Jay and Stacey were chomping at the bit, and the sight of virgin passage seemed to have perked Bryan up a bit. Thinking back on all of the horrible sleazeways that Bryan had surveyed and the awful digging leads that he had worked on in Coldwater, it was kind of nice to see him have a chance at some nice virgin cave.

I tried to talk Bryan into taking book but he was having none of it and I ended up doing it. He took the honors of assisting me by lighting the passage for sketching and helping with the rear tape. Stacey did route-finding and lead tape. Jay was the compass man. The first sighting brought us past the memorable flowstone cascade, which was being dripped on from a tiny dome above it in the ceiling. Bryan dubbed it the Big White Bitchin' formation, and I duly noted this in the survey book. We went around a corner to the left, and once we did the formations literally leaped out to grab us, as they hadn't since the Stage Curtain area. The next shot stretched 100 feet through a dripstone paradise. In one spot there was a large volcano-shaped stalagmite splash-cup below a 3-foot stalactite. A flowstone smear looking like a remnant lava flow from a past eruption sat upstream of the volcano. Much of the flowstone was pure white. As I sat trying to sketch all of this, Bryan chimed in with, "Don't bother trying to draw all of the formations - there are too many."

Up ahead we could hear Stacey making noises of excitement. He had walked into White Wedding Dome, 15 feet of continuous white flowstone that poured out of the dome to pile up on the floor. As we picked our way around the flowstone I thought it resembled one of the formation domes in Monument Passage, only whiter. Just past the dome, above a mud bank on the right wall, Bryan found a zone on the walls where there was a profusion of raccoon scratch marks. We had seen plenty of footprints in the cave, but this was a solid mass of very forceful marks, almost

like the coon thought it could tunnel through the bedrock. Past the scratch marks was a rubble-strewn spot with flowstone covering some of the blocks. We had to squeeze through the breakdown and proceed along the left wall past a broken drapery. At the far end of this spot there was a very nice flowstone mound on the floor.

As Bryan and I hunched over the survey book here, we overheard Jay and Stacey up ahead talking about reaching a sump. A sump? We hadn't been in water over ankle-deep in hours! Sure enough, the water was coming out of a slot at the base of the left wall. Bryan probed the area and found an opening underwater of about 2 feet wide by 8 inches high. This one was not going to yield to scuba, and we were not going to be following the water in any other manner. Stacey was pulling the tape up a mud slope into a high narrow crevice that was our only other alternative. Losing the water in Coldwater had always been the kiss of death in the past. Still, I was optimistic. The crevice seemed to be a natural continuation of the stream passage, and it was roomy - surely it wouldn't stop on us now.

The crevice rose over a flowstone smear, where finding a safe spot to step was a bit tricky. Very quickly, the crevice took a right-angle turn to the left. The canyon appeared to be chimneyable, but there were no obvious high leads here. We surveyed on under a natural bridge through the narrowing canyon, and were soon snaking our way through rubble that filled most of the canyon. These were not neat stacks of blocks, but an array of blocks wedged at all angles, some of which did not look stable at all. The rock was very snaggy and sharp and it appeared to be munching on our unprotected wetsuits as we crawled onward. Jay spent a long time waiting in an uncomfortable squeeze along the left wall while Stacey scouted ahead for a station. Bryan informed Jay that it was his duty to yell at Stacey for setting a station in such an awful spot by threatening to "kick his ass" if he didn't shape up. I had a good laugh about this because I had been on the receiving end of such a line from Bryan in the Brother's Grimm passage. The tortuous nature of the passage resulted in me not seeing Stacey for minutes at a time - I could just hear him shouting back information but he was always around a corner or behind intervening rubble.

Jay had taken his gloves off to read the compass and somehow one had fallen under the breakdown that we were perched upon. Nothing looked very stable here, yet Bryan slithered down into a crawlspace under the rocks. By pushing a few large boulders with his feet, he exposed the glove and snagged it. Once we got moving again we passed a large white flowstone cascade on the left wall and set a station beside a dome just off the main passage to the left. We rejoined the water here, and upon closer inspection the stream was observed to siphon at the entrance to the dome and was no doubt the same stream we had lost at the previous sump. Bryan, revived by the virgin cave, climbed into the dome to check it out. It was crammed with formations and had two obvious side leads. One was a cut-around back into the canyon a few feet in front of us, while the other one headed back toward the Mystery is History passage.

We continued to survey along the canyon, which was intent upon heading due west. The stream was moving swiftly and the passage, as usual, was littered with breakdown. Route finding was difficult in this area, so Bryan went ahead to help Stacey set stations. At one point the rubble nearly blocked the passage, so we climbed up through a crack and walked on top of the rocks. From this vantage point we could tell how spacious the canyon really was, and Bryan gave out a West Virginia virgin cave whoop or two. The canyon was named the Rift, and it bored onward on a westerly course. We climbed down into the stream again and passed some foam that must have been left over from the rain 5 days before. We had seen other patches of it on the trip (a few on the ceiling!), and it was always spooky to start thinking about what would happen if the snow started melting again. We pressed on through sucking mud and rubble, starting to notice a deep rumbling sound. We passed a large cluster of soda straws and the rumble got louder - obviously something major was ahead. Jay and I loitered about while Stacey and Bryan scurried around trying to figure out where the cave was going. The next station was at a fork, with most of the water and all of the rumbling coming from the left-hand branch. The Rift continued up a flowstone chute where it appeared to dead end in a sizable dome.

Since we could see no leads straight ahead, Stacey grabbed the tape and proceeded into the rumbling fork. There was a lot of rubble that he had to snake

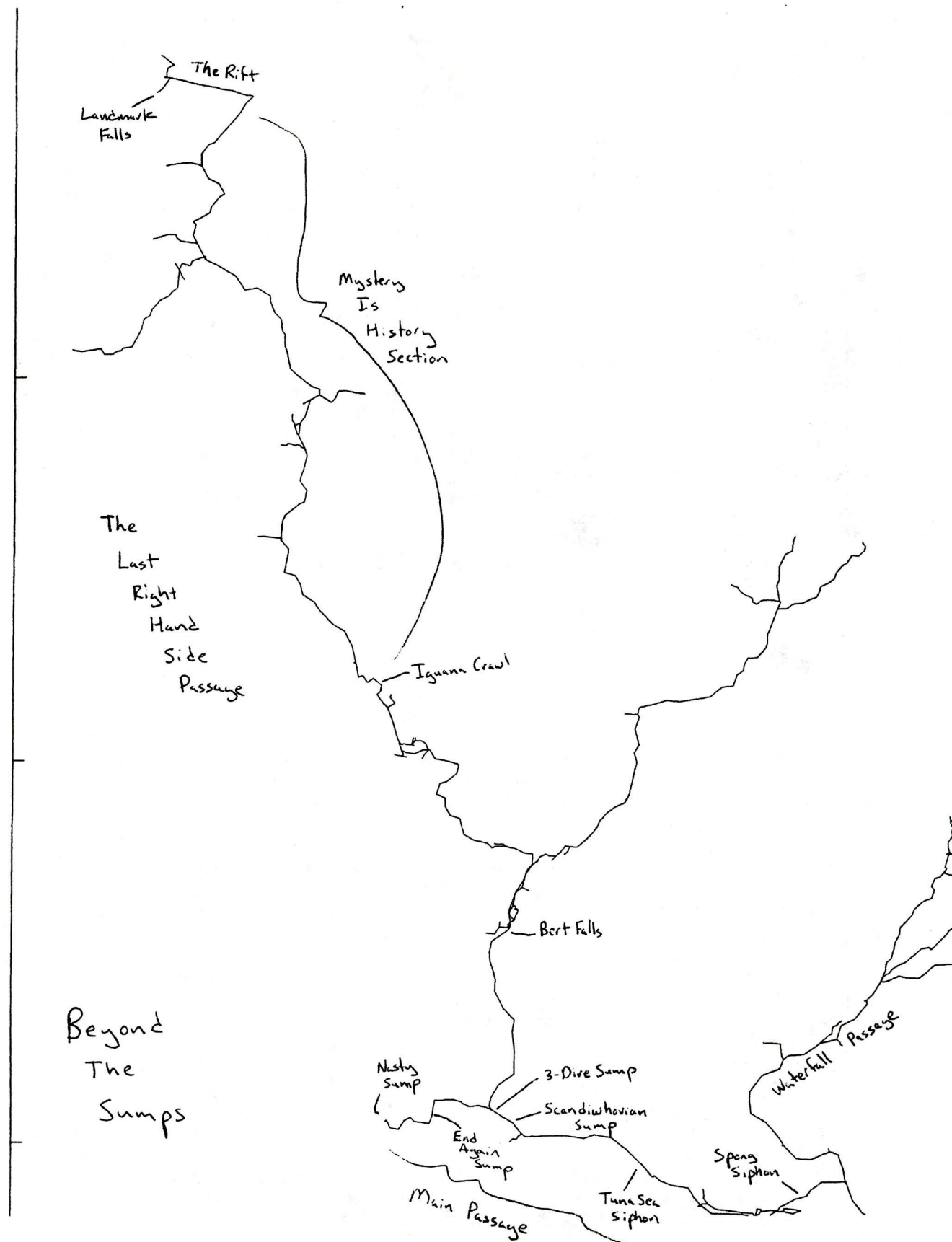
through, then he started to shout about something quite exciting. Indeed it was, as one survey shot had taken him into a large room featuring a roaring 20-foot waterfall. We all sat around and drank in the sight, clearly one of the most magnificent views in the cave. Once the initial impact was past, other smaller details were noted. The water was coming out of a passage that was 5-6 feet high and 4 feet wide that looked pretty darn promising. The climb, however, looked very difficult. The rock in the dome was fairly smooth and the direct route would be an overhanging climb. No obvious crack systems were seen in the wall beneath the falls. If one continued to the far end of the dome it looked as if one could chimney up a ways, but the traverse from there to the falls looked exceedingly nasty.

Being such a notable feature, we thought long and hard about a proper name for the waterfall, discarding an early moniker in favor of Landmark Falls and Landmark Dome, in honor of the upcoming (March 1990) award of National Natural Landmark status to the cave. We left a survey chip in a good spot for some future caver to shoot into the upper level with the survey traverse, and all that remained was to figure out how to do the climb. No easy problem, but one that will challenge any caver audacious enough to consider it. Transportation of the proper equipment will be difficult, and any kind of an accident in this remote setting would be quite serious. Still, the thought of viewing the falls from above is an intoxicating one.

Once we'd surveyed the dome we retreated to the passage fork and surveyed into the dome where the Rift ended. Bryan pointed out a window in this room where it might be possible to shinny up to the top of the canyon to look for leads. It didn't look like much, but we were all hoping for an alternate route to the top of Landmark Falls, and the top of the canyon had to be about the same height. We ran a survey traverse to a point across from the window, then did some scouting work. The window was a flowstone chute that looked easy enough to climb into, but a deep pool of water directly under the chute made it an awkward maneuver. We gave Stacy a boost into the window, then I followed. Jay and Bryan waited behind, making adjustments to their lamps.

Stacey and I scanned the possibilities from our perch. It looked as if there was a passage leading off to the north (right as you entered the dome) at ceiling height if we could get up there somehow. A series of hanging canopies seemed to allow traversal to within a few feet of the top, from which one could at least see into this potential lead. The climb was not difficult, but it was very exposed, and I didn't need a reminder as to what would happen to a disabled caver in this area. After a couple of moves I had to pass some loose rocks, so I stopped to yell down to Bryan and Jay, instructing them to move out of range. Sure enough, once I started up again the rocks went clattering to the floor. At the top of my route the canopies ended in a distinct pothole. From here I could see that there was a very wide opening on a shelf 4-5 feet below the ceiling that was very likely an upper level passage. I couldn't quite reach the shelf from in my pothole, but by climbing onto the knife-edge rim I could get a grip on the shelf. This knife-edge was very exposed, and reversing the move from above would be very dicey. Nevertheless, after a few minutes of considering the situation I climbed onto the knife-edge and hauled myself onto the shelf.

I was completely out of breath, so I rested a moment before doing anything. Then, I was surprised to see a light pop into view on the far left edge of the shelf. Stacey had found another way up! Best of all, it was a much safer way - I was pleased that I wouldn't need to contemplate downclimbing my route. After a few more minutes, I was kicking myself for not having checked all the available options before starting my climb. Fortunately, Stacey had looked around a bit and had found a cleft to the left that appeared to drain the shelf into the window chute and from there into the Rift. The cleft was draining a small amount of water and had some nice flowstone decoration. The upper passage above the shelf was about 30 feet wide and 5 feet high and headed north. There were numerous potholes in the bedrock floor of the passage, suggesting that the stream had once been much larger than the current trickle. One particularly nice pothole right at the top of Stacey's climb had elevated edges, was filled with water, and had cave pearls in the bottom. It was named the Fountain of Youth, and we hoped its magical powers would pep us up.



Stacey and I went up the passage a bit, decided it would go, then went back to get the survey gear. I scrambled down the cleft to fetch the tape and to convince Jay and Bryan that this was a good lead worth pursuing. The climb was a trifle tight, but a much safer way to reach the upper level indeed. Since I fetched the tape, Stacey got to dangle from the upper edge to set a station where

we could follow the upper passage, done by shooting straight upward from the floor of the dome. Stacey's perch was a trifle airy, and I could tell that he wasn't enjoying that spot very much. Jay and Bryan got on top and the next station was set, finally giving Stacey a chance to move onto solid ground. The passage looked very promising, and although we were tired, we agreed to survey ahead for 4-500 feet. After 2 stations we found a dry lead to the right. We searched for a chip, but found that all but one had been left in the lower level, which could have been miles away for us as far as we were concerned; no one had the energy to backtrack and get them. Bryan exercised his carbide capability by smoking a "dot within a triangle" mark on the ceiling as a station. The main passage turned to the west (left), and we were hopeful that this would intersect the water atop Landmark Falls, which we had projected as coming from a passage that would trend northward. One long shot brought us to a pancake-shaped junction room, and we decided to quit at that point. Stacey tied a chip onto a stalactite, and I sketched my way up to his position. Looking around, all of the leads looked pretty grim. Everyone in the group was committed to the "survey as you go" philosophy, but this situation called for a brief investigation of the leads. After all, a group coming all the way out to this point to continue the survey might not appreciate finding all dead ends.

The water was coming down a broad flowstone chute on the north side of the passage. At the top of the chute the flowstone reached very near the ceiling, and it was questionable whether one could fit. I didn't try this one, instead checking two dry leads to the west. The northernmost of the two was fairly narrow, and after 10 feet it pinched into dirt fill. I would consider this one to be pretty hopeless. The other lead was much wider, but after 10 feet of belly crawl the way onward was blocked by wall-to-wall soda straws. One might be able to trench under the formations, but I had neither a trowel nor the energy. This would be a pretty reasonable dig as the width suggested that this branch might have carried a lot of water in previous ages.

At this point it was questionable whether any more surveying could be done in the upper level on a subsequent trip; nothing seemed to go. I decided to check the dry lead at Bryan's smoked station for any sign of going passage. It led eastward, paralleling the Rift as a crawlway. There were a couple of small dry leads heading northward from the crawl, enough that I decided someone could justify bringing a survey crew out there. Bryan and Jay ended up calling the large upper level passage the Blue Balls Passage, and the dome it came out of Blue Balls Dome, capturing our sense of frustration that the big lead had crapped out. After a breather we gathered the gear and climbed back down into the Rift. We had totaled 1106 feet in survey for the day, but it felt like much more than that. Only a couple of the crew had brought their packs to the end of the survey, and dragging one through all of the breakdown squeezes in the Rift was a horror. Those with packs offered monetary incentives to those without, hoping to have their packs carried through this region, but there were no takers. Finding the way out of the Rift was a job in and of itself. I led initially, but missed the spot where we dropped through the breakdown to the lower level and had to cede to someone who could do a better job. The sharp projections once again ripped on our suits, and we were happy to get out of the Rift and make our way back to our packs. Jay lamented that he had left his camera behind in his pack, when we had just passed so much awesome scenery.

The rest of the trip was kind of a blur. Once into the crawlways Bryan slowed down again. We would crawl ahead, then wait for him to catch up to us. As soon as Bryan got his breath back enough to start talking, we would get up and move for another short stretch. Bit by bit, we made progress. The stashed cans of Pepsi were a godsend, and we would each feel a spurt of energy for a while after we would open one up and share its contents. The sumps were just as cold as before, and our bodies had stopped warming themselves efficiently, so we suffered greatly in the cold - especially Jay, who couldn't zip his jacket. When we finally got through the Spong, we all agreed that we would only stop for a brief bit before starting up again, as we were all cold and shivering. Unfortunately, Bryan's carbide lamp clutched up on him at this point, and he couldn't get it started. Frozen and impatient, each of us in turn pulled out a spare electric headlamp and offered it to Bryan. Alas, he had a sense of pride about never having had a complete carbide lamp failure, and he didn't want to lose face in front of a bunch

of electric guys. It took forever for him to fix the light - probably a whole half an hour. It finally sputtered to life after a felt was replaced, and we got to our feet and made a beeline for the shaft. We were so cold we literally flew out of the cave from the Spong, probably the fastest I've ever made the trip. We finally emerged from the cave at 2:00 am after a 15-hour trip.

Epilogue

We came back in a couple of weeks with an eye for making one more trip upstream, but by then the winter was over and the water level had gone back up. Looking back, the glory days of the drought winters of 1988-89 and 1989-90 had made us all a bit cocky. The next couple of winters reinforced how lucky we had been, as we found the discovery torrent drying up and the climate less cooperative. We started to appreciate that getting through the sumps would never be a given in any particular year. The weather must be right, the climate must be right, and the cave team must be right for a successful upstream trip.

Why was this trip so memorable for me? We had discovered more virgin cave before, but never had we seen a stretch that was as spectacular as the Rift. Sure, you had to squeeze in places to traverse it, but it really was a large, well-decorated passage. Landmark Falls was just truly sublime. Visiting places like that is why you become a caver. There was also great fellowship on this trip, and it was just an excellent group to have along on a cave trip.

After Bryan's agonizing trip, one might not have expected to see him at Coldwater again. This would be underestimating the man, for he is made from sterner stuff than that. He returned in 2 months, and we took an even longer and harder trip than this one, going above and beyond Grappling Falls on a 16-hour epic. Fortunately, he had invested in a new wetsuit by that time. We last saw him at Coldwater over Labor Day of 1997, where he scratched one more itch that was bugging him, a push of the legendary Lost Passage off of Sand Canyon in the downstream part of the cave. He was still pushing leads very hard, and that trip ended up with me having to pull on his feet to extract him from a tight crawlway. Bryan continues to be an active caver and geologist in Kansas, and I wouldn't be surprised if he popped in again at Coldwater sometime.

I took a lot of cave trips with Stacey Cyphert over the years, yet I can't recall him ever being better than on this one. He pushed the survey and pursued leads with a great sense of purpose throughout. He was probably the strongest caver in the group that day, and looking back on it he had a very difficult job pioneering the line through the rubble-filled Rift. Stacey caved hard for a couple more years after this trip, then he got married and we didn't see him as often afterwards. When he did materialize at Coldwater, he typically found himself pushing some awful tight squeeze, since he had forgotten to gain weight upon getting married. We haven't seen much of Stacey in the last couple of years, but he still looked to be in remarkably good shape the last time I saw him.

I'm not sure which seemed less likely, that Bryan would complete the trip or that Jay would survive the cold in Bryan's wetsuit jacket. He didn't complain about it, but it clearly hampered him on this trip. That he could persevere for 15 hours in 39-degree water is nothing short of miraculous. Jay followed the Landmark Falls trip with many years of good caving. In fact, he was probably the best caver in Coldwater during the next 5 years. Others may have been better at one aspect of caving or another, but Jay could do everything, and he did it all well. In addition, he was a great companion, even when saddled with a weaker partner. Jay switched jobs a couple of times in the mid-90's, then got tied up working a lot of overtime and his caving time dwindled. He also had a nasty accident at a burning barrel that laid him up for some time. Like Stacey, Jay looks to be in pretty good condition, and I wouldn't rule out seeing him out beyond the sumps again some day.

I've taken more Coldwater trips since February 1990 than the other 3 guys on this one put together, but none have captured my imagination the way this trip did. Landmark Falls burns brightly in my memory, and I can honestly say that it is rare for me to go more than a couple of months without thinking about it. As I got older, I started wondering whether I would ever see Landmark Falls again, and therein lies another story

Landmark Falls Twelve Years After and Lowell Burkhead Dome

Coldwater Cave, IA.
December 8, 2001
Larry Welch

If all goes well, this trip report will be prefaced by another one describing the best caving trip of my life. That trip was one of great discovery in Coldwater Cave, including Landmark Falls and the Rift. Amazingly enough, that trip took place almost 12 years ago, yet no one had ever been back to see these wonders. In the meantime, the area and its potential turned into an obsession for me. With obsession comes a bit of mania, and at some points I started to question my recollections of the Landmark Falls area. Was it really that impressive out there? Were those leads at all worthy? It was getting hard to sort out where the recollections ended and the daydreams began. In any case, I had an incredible desire to return, and I was hoping that everything wouldn't turn out to be smaller and less beautiful than what I recalled from my first impression.

Why had Landmark Falls gone unvisited? Well, its a pretty long and strenuous trip in the first place, and there are a lot of other leads on the way out there that are easier to get to and likely to yield more survey footage. Secondly, getting there required passage through the vaunted upstream sumps, which have always been a hit-and-miss prospect. Entire years have gone by without proper stream conditions for the sumps to open. Even when they are open the widest, the sumps are a scary prospect and not for everyone. Finally, you need to have complete confidence in the weather. The 3-Dive Sump is the limiting factor in any long upstream trip, and it wouldn't take much of an increase in water volume to completely close off this portal. If this happens while you are on the upstream side, you are playing dice with your life. The discovery trip to Landmark Falls had seen us on the far side of the sumps for 10-11 hours, which is a long time during a period of unsettled weather.

The winter of 2000-2001 was a puzzling one at Coldwater. We made several attempts to penetrate the upstream sumps, but were stymied on all but one occasion. What seemed truly odd was the fact that the values we measured for the stream level at the entrance platform told us that the sumps should have been open, but when we actually got up there and rubbed our noses against them, the airspace just wasn't there. One meaningful discovery from this time period was that digging downstream of the Scandiwhovian Sump did seem to impact the water level. At the end of the year, a trenching shovel had been cached nearby for future digging. We had talked all summer about getting a good digging trip early in the fall, and this was to be it - October 20, 2001. Mark Jones brought up a trenching shovel to supplement the one that was already there, then we both attacked the sediment channels with a vengeance. I also used a hammer a bit to chisel off some edges in some of the low airspace channels in the Scandiwhovian. The Scandiwhovian may have been marginally passable on this day, but I doubt the 3-Dive was going to be doable. All of our digging didn't seem to have lowered the water level at the time, but I doubt we would have noticed anything that rapidly anyway. All in all, we felt that the trip was a good investment of time, and that we would have a good chance of penetrating the sumps as fall turned to winter.

As of the regular Coldwater trip on November 17, the water level was even lower, and the sumps were indeed open. We had a trip through to the Big Ass Passage, where we got some survey in a side lead called the Burr Oak Annie Passage. I had felt relatively untaxed by this trip, and it seemed as if maybe it was time to be ambitious and contemplate a trip to the legendary domain of Landmark Falls. We watched the weather and looked for an opening on an off-weekend. Unstable weather put the kibosh on December 1, but December 8 looked like a good one. I had checked the water level on Tuesday on my way to Minnesota for a funeral, and it looked good. There was some rain on Weds - Fri, but ultimately not enough to raise the water level more than temporarily. By Friday night the level looked good, and the forecast was for below freezing all day Saturday. I was kind of surprised that the trip ended up consisting of just Ed Klausner and me. Mike Lace volunteered to be surface support, which was very helpful. Ed would have preferred a threesome,

but ended up deciding to go anyway. I think we both understood that the safety margin wouldn't be as great for a two-man party, but we vowed to not do any risky climbs and to be careful. I was a little bit less concerned, having been on a number of remote trips in two-man groups, and I was also very confident in Ed's conditioning, having seen him caving strongly in November.

We got into the cave at about 11 AM, both weighed down heavily with gear. We had run low on fluids in November, so we both carried more this time. I still hadn't gotten my lighting system for beyond the sumps figured out, and as a result I had more battery weight and more weight in light sources than I really should have been carrying. Ed was carrying the 100-foot tape (as prescribed by me, the eternal optimist), and a disposable camera, hoping to take the first-ever pictures of Landmark Falls. Ed had checked the water Friday night and had thought it was at 0.54 on the gauge, but it sure looked like 0.52 to me upon entering the cave. There wasn't any evidence that the water level was any higher than on our trip 3 weeks prior. There was plenty of evidence that the flow had been up temporarily sometime in between, as there were foam deposits at various rapids throughout the cave. I took this to be a good omen, as the same thing had happened on the Feb 1990 trip to Landmark Falls.

The trip to the Spong was routine. Well, with perhaps one exception. I was so focused on the trip ahead that I walked past the Virgin Mary without making my usual plea for her mercy. Fortunately, Ed was on the ball and caught me before I got too far, and I quickly rushed back and made a peace offering. However, I was still a little bit nervous, and was hoping that we wouldn't suffer from bad karma as a result of my gaffe. We put on our sump gear at the Spong, then got wet. As usual, the Spong was awkward for me, and I had a hard time getting oriented at first. Ed was wearing a Mag-light on his head with a jack-strap through the sumps, and in the middle of the Tuna Sea he thought he had lost it. Since the light was on, we doused all of our other lights and looked for a glow down in the murk, but could see nothing. Loss of lights was not trivial with our small group, so we were greatly relieved to find the mag-lite snagged on the back of Ed's helmet when we surfaced beyond the Tuna Sea. The rest of the sumps went pretty smoothly, and from there we headed up into the Last Right Hand Side Passage. I crawled up into the joint just at the start of the passage while Ed was changing lights, and found the hanging drapery there to be bigger than I had ever noticed before. The joint pinched, however, so we prepared for the mud crawl ahead. Ed stashed a beverage at Bert Falls, where we finally took our hoods off. I rigged up a Petzl Saxo light at this point, having not used it in a cave before. It ran on double A batteries and gave off a bright beam, but was not waterproof. It worked to some degree for a spell, but it started to flicker, then faded badly. There was some sort of contact problem, and I eventually had to abandon it. Ed put on his twinkle ding dong light (actually a Princeton Tec Moonlight), and it served him well. I ended up borrowing Ed's Petzl Tikka, which worked much better than my Saxo. It was a little dim for the larger passage and its angle of illumination made it hard to see the ceiling while stoopwalking, but it was a vast improvement over anything I was carrying, so I was thankful that Ed was willing to let me use it.

We took a brief excursion to the Sand Room, but otherwise made a bee-line for the Iguana Crawl. We both did a little bit of "gardening" of rocks in the Nervous Breakdown Room; it could probably use considerably more of this since there are so many loose rocks in there. The main path through the pile is starting to get stomped down, but when I checked on a phantom lead at the side of the room, I started wallowing through lots of loose stuff. The crawlways ahead seemed to pass rather quickly, and in no time we were stoopwalking beyond the White Nodule Crevice. Ed wanted to stop for some pictures in the Stage Curtain area, but I talked him into taking "snapshots" (the Dankofian term for any photo taken with a disposable camera) on the way back. We had bright flashlights with us, so once we started hitting the high crevices near the NTS Dome we began to snoop around a bit. There were leads, but many were 30-40 feet up, out of reach for all but human spiders. We did manage to spy the downstream lead at NTS Dome. On the original survey trip 2 leads had been noted, but on a subsequent trip the downstream one of the pair had been overlooked. It was easy to see why, as the lead was almost filled with silt at its mouth, and it only could be seen from parallel or slightly downstream. Looking toward it from upstream, nothing at all could be noted.

Once we got to the Big White Bitchin' formation, we sat for a rest. We were about to enter the passage discovered on that fateful trip 12 years before, and I was extremely stoked up - we were going to do it finally! Again, I wondered if it was all going to look so much more mundane on its second viewing, or whether the passage really was as cool as I had remembered. Just past the BWB formation, the passage took a sharp turn to the left, where the passage followed a ceiling crevice in nearly a straight line for several hundred feet. The passage in here was decorated profusely with white flowstone, including the famous Volcano stalagmite and the scintillating White Wedding Dome. Ed was suitably impressed, and was looking like a genius for packing a camera. Just ahead, we had to do consecutive squeezes to avoid the formations, then we plopped out at the point where the stream sumped and the passage intersected the Rift at nearly a right angle. The Rift is unlike anything else in the cave. It runs arrow-straight on a westerly course, 25-30 feet high and 5-10 feet wide. However, you often don't get a sense of the actual size, because most of the space is filled with breakdown blocks. The first 50 feet of the traverse was pretty easy, but then things got sporting. The route at base level was clogged, leaving only a squeezeway along the left wall as a traverse path. Not only was it small, but it went through stacks of wedged and hanging blocks. It was a time to be very careful, and I could see the serious set of Ed's jaw as we approached this one. At the very end was a tight squeeze, one that required removal of packs. Anyone who has caved with me very much knows that I will do almost anything to avoid removing my pack and pushing it ahead of me in a crawlway, so this was a pretty small spot. On the far side of the squeeze, there was a temporary roomy spot where we rested. Both of us were panting and sweating profusely. For some funny reason, the air was stagnant out in the Rift, and we both agreed that the temperature was higher than in the rest of the cave - perhaps as much as 10 degrees by our estimates.

After the rest stop we continued, going past the huge flowstone cascade at Cut-around Dome, then getting back in the stream again. After a bit of walking in the stream, we found ourselves immersed in the rock pile again. There was a brief respite to look at a long tongue-like smear of jet black flowstone ("as black as it gets" was my statement at the time), then we found ourselves passing the packs through another tight spot. More panting followed. Not far from this, we climbed down into the stream again and Blue Balls Dome loomed dead ahead of us, up a 3-4 foot step of brown travertine. The passage carrying the water came from sharply to the left, where some huge breakdown blocks could be seen looming ahead. By this point, the roar of Landmark Falls had started to make our innards vibrate, so we wended our way through the pile, under one huge piece of rock, and then it was visible as a silhouette reflecting back in the distance. I dashed ahead quickly, hooting with delight. Ed was fast on my heels to drink in the glory of Landmark Falls. It comes out of the right wall from about 20 feet up, spraying a large volume of water in a gentle arc to the floor. In fact, the water volume here seemed considerable larger than what was evident in the Rift, and we both pondered whether a portion of the flow was sneaking away somewhere in the Rift. This was not so outrageous, as the view to the floor was usually obstructed by the huge rubble collection that filled the Rift.

By climbing up on the opposite wall, one could see that the falls came out of a rather large opening that was not much more than 10-12 feet overhead. Getting there was not going to be trivial though. The Falls overhung significantly, and the walls were relatively featureless from eons of water polishing. A grappling hook could probably be coaxed into the opening, or perhaps some sort of lariat could snag one of the rock fins flanking the ejection point. Hauling the vertical gear to that point would be a major undertaking in and of itself. Oh yeah, and someone would have to have major brass balls to attempt the climb in such an exotic and remote locale. As well, the last few feet would be fighting the full force of Landmark Falls. Landmark Dome was the only chilly place in the Rift, and we were thankful for the wind kicked up by the waterfall, having yet to cool down from our exertions in the Rift. The waterfall was kind of intimidating. Its force was considerable, and to think that we only had the privilege of seeing it when the cave's water level was at its absolute lowest. Under normal circumstances, the waterfall probably extended itself in an arc out against the far wall and made everything in the room resonate. As it was, there were low frequency rumbles that erupted from the falls every 30 seconds or so, which spooked me whenever it

happened. I would always find myself staring up at the maw, expecting a large boulder to be ejaculated at any time. These thoughts were most prevalent when Ed asked me to pose for photos right at the base of the falls. I don't know if he had enough light to really get a good picture of Landmark Falls, but I am hopeful that some of these might come out.

Once done ogling the waterfall, it was time to think about our survey objective. We made our way back to Blue Balls Dome, then climbed up the ramp into the dome, trying to stay off the profuse calcite deposits. The Dome is a large and comfortable room, with a ceiling 25-30 feet overhead. Ed had been very nervous about the climb with such a small team, but I had assured him that it was a pretty easy climb. The way I originally climbed it was very exposed, but Stacey Cyphert's sensible alternative was by my recollection a pretty safe and reasonable undertaking. I was hoping that my memory would prove correct on that score. The first step was to climb a brown waterspout window on the north wall of the dome. I remembered the spout, but had always envisioned it as being white, so the color surprised me a bit. The climb was only an 8 footer, but it spat me out on my first attempt, bringing on a sense of *deja vu* as I realized that it had taken me several tries to climb it on the original trip too. After dumping my pack and accepting a foothold on Ed's knee (and the concomitant loss of style points), I made it up the spout. Ed passed the packs up, then I gave him a hand getting up the climb. Once at the top, we found a nice knob handhold that I had missed that would have made the climb much easier. My original climb out to the right did not look inviting, so we went left from the spout and squeezed into a very tight, snaggy canyon. At this point we chimneyed about 12 feet up the canyon and popped into the wide passage at roof level. The chimney was not hard, but it demanded respect, and we had to be careful to minimize our impact on the formation-laden canyon.

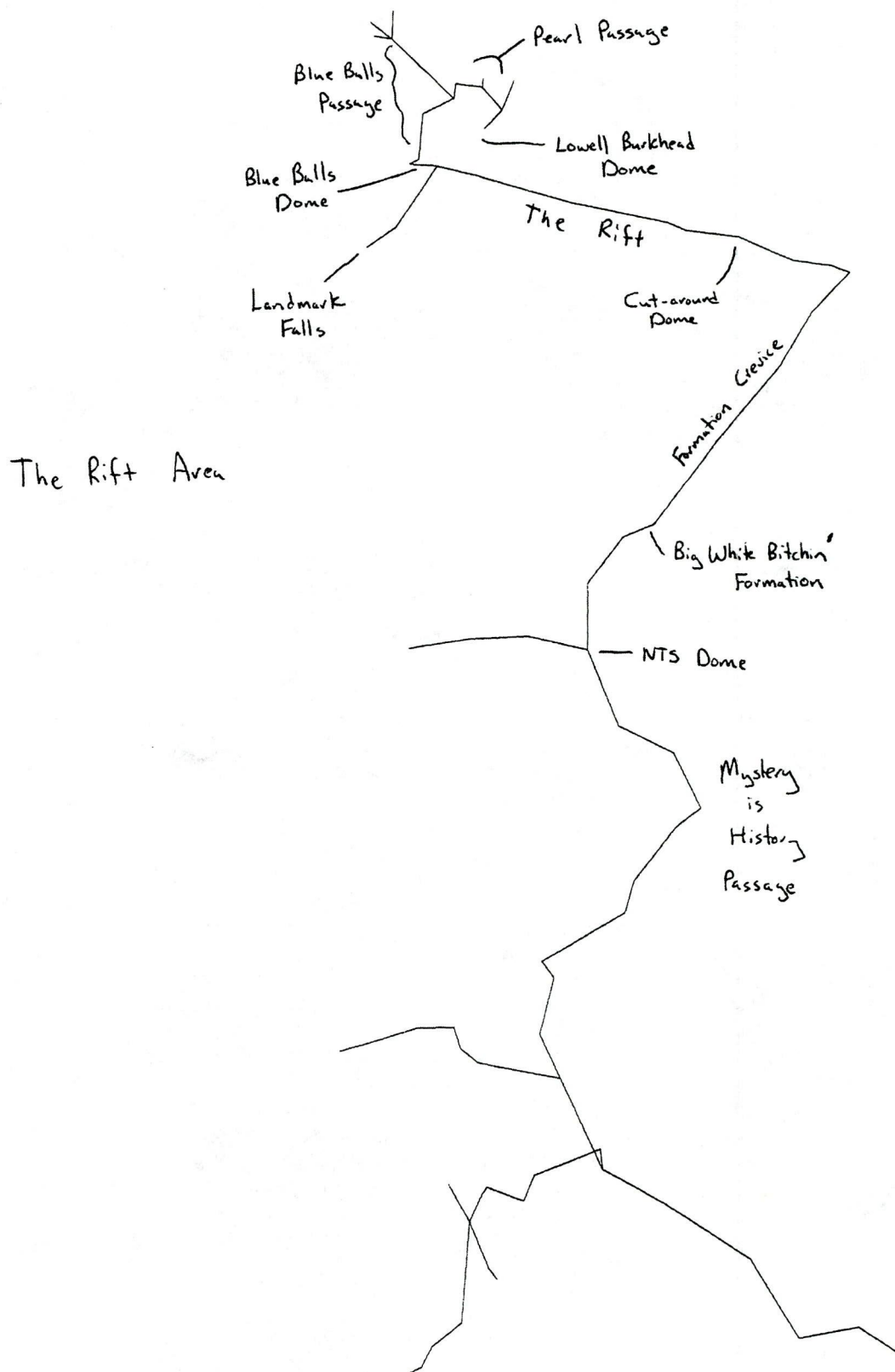
Right at the top of the climb was the spectacular Fountain of Youth. This is a beautiful crystal pool with cave pearls embedded in the walls under the water. This gave me the opportunity to point out to Ed that he was the oldest person to ever see this formation, which he didn't seem to appreciate very much. Not far ahead was more chocolate smearing in the streambed, which might explain the chocolate coloring on both the spout and the access climb into Blue Balls Dome. At this point, the Blue Balls Passage went north in grand fashion, 30 feet wide, and tall enough to stoopwalk in. It was way too good to be true, and on the discovery trip we were convinced that we had hit the big time only to be handed the cruel fate of the passage's demise not 200 feet ahead. There was a lead for us to survey here, and perhaps something that we had overlooked before. The lead went to the right probably 100 feet past the Fountain, so we dumped our gear there and took a look ahead at the end of the Blue Balls passage. This was heady stuff, as I had been obsessing about these leads for years. I had more daydreams about these things than Mike Lace does about coffee in a year and Mark Jones does about nymphomaniac prison chicks in a month. The biggest question at the end was a flowstone chute to the right that was very wide, but impassably low. I crawled ahead to give it a once-over, and indeed didn't see a continuation. I tried an end-run to the left, and once in the vicinity I could see that there was a crevice-space up there that looked positively roomy. As I got closer, I could tell that there was air moving, which was unusual for anywhere along the rift except for right at Landmark Falls. Somewhat before the open space, my chest ground to a halt in the mud, with my back pressed against the ceiling. A little bit of easy digging allowed me to get a bit further, but I still had a few feet to go and my glasses fogged up from the exertion. I backed out and we headed back to the side passage to begin our survey after a brief rest.

We had trouble finding the tie-in station at first. On the Feb 1990 trip, no survey chip had been set here because we wanted to save the only one that we had with us at this same point. Bryan Bain had smoked a carbide marker on the ceiling, but we couldn't seem to find it. Fortunately, I had brought laminated copies of the prior survey notes along with me, and they had managed to survive the trip to help us out. After staring at the sketch, Ed was able to locate the carbide marker, and we were ready to start. I took the book, Ed ran the lead and took compass backsights. Ed started out with the project compass, as he was under strict orders not to let me use it (based on some old wives tale regarding my damaging a compass or two). He couldn't get decent readings from it though, so he had to swap me for my compass, which he used to good effect. I found that the

project compass just needed a good licking, and it was rendered operational for the rest of the trip after that ritual. The side passage was a couple feet high by 8 feet wide, running past a nice row of formations and over a basin full of cave pearls. The name Pearl Passage immediately offered itself, and we stuck with it. Down a bit was a small lead heading off to the left. Ed tried to push into it, but he wasn't able to fit more than a body length. It doesn't look very promising and doesn't move any air. Further ahead the passage dropped down a bit, not carrying any water but we appeared to be traveling paleo downstream. After one more shot the passage formed a T intersection, with passages leading left and right. There was waterfall noise to the right, so it was assumed that it would lead back to some sort of intersection with the Rift. Ed was wowed by the bizarre flowstone patterns in the streambed at the junction, stating that they looked like aerial photographs of a large river delta. What an unusual experience caving with Ed! Most of the Coldwater Cavers through history would have probably been visualizing some female body part here, but Ed was cut from a different type of cloth. We headed right, approaching the noise. Ed reported from the point position that he couldn't continue any further - there was a big hole in the floor that was impassable. Big hole in the floor? I was convinced that the passage went out to a window in the rift so this was a surprise. Sure enough, closer inspection showed that the passage deviated slightly east of south and intersected a crevice-dome at an oblique angle. The passage actually continued on the other side of the crevice, but it could be seen to pinch amid a forest of soda straws. I was convinced it wouldn't be hard to climb down into the crevice, but getting out looked to be tricky. The north end of the crevice definitely ended, and the south end was a tight squeeze. Directly across from where we intersected the crevice was a floor-to-ceiling flowstone cascade in a swirling mixture of colors. It was neat, but we would have to stop there. Ed and I decided to name the spot Lowell Burkhead Dome after our late friend. Keeping with the Burkhead motif, the flowstone monument became The Beast, and the soda straw patch Arlene's Soda Straw Garden.

We tried the other end of the T intersection next, one of the passages I had the highest hopes for as an overflow route that in my fantasies would intersect something big up ahead. Unfortunately, this was another one that pinched pretty quickly. Frustrated, Ed and I bailed out of the Pearl Passage and headed back to Blue Balls Passage. Pushing to the end of this, we picked up more survey scraps at the final room where the 3 passages radiated outward from the final chip. The left-hand lead didn't move any air, and looked pretty hopeless. The middle lead had some slabs blocking the passage, although there was a breeze in this one. Still, moving the slabs is not going to be simple. Ed gave a try at my dig lead going back to the crevice beyond the flowstone chute, but he didn't get through either. It probably wouldn't take too much digging to get to the crevice, which was also moving air. This was probably the best looking of the leads, and probably is worth another look. We retreated down the Blue Balls passage, looking for more survey while we were in the vicinity. There was a lower-level canyon under Blue Balls, but the initial climb-down was not inviting. We chimneyed back down the canyon near the dome, and it did look like we might be able to access this canyon via a greasy climb on nice flowstone. The passage definitely choked up ahead, and we decided it wasn't worth sliming the pretty formations for such a small scrap.

We retreated back down into Blue Balls dome, then started down the Rift again. We found where the crevice from Lowell Burkhead Dome fed into the Rift, but it was much too narrow to enter unless you climbed 20 feet up and went in that way. As before, the Rift was slow going, with us sweating bullets along the way. We managed to avoid the second packs-off squeeze by going over the top of the pile, a stunt that I recall we had done in 1990 as well. When we got back to Cut-around Dome, Ed got out his camera while I checked the dome out for survey potential. Bryan Bain had reported leads going both ways in 1990, and indeed that was the case. Unfortunately, it was a tricky climb to get into the dome, then it was hard to find a stance that was clear of beautiful calcite deposits. The bottom of the dome contained what looked to be a rock coated with white flowstone, looking somewhat like a walrus locomoting over ice. From the looks of things, I would be able to make the climb to the western side of the dome, but it only went a short way before overlooking the Rift. The eastern lead looked somewhat more intriguing, but to climb it meant scaling a 15-foot wall of gray and white calcite. The climb



was doable, but I just couldn't justify damaging the formations so I stepped back over the walrus and back into the Rift.

The breakdown squeezing was no less hairy and unnerving on the way back. As before, I was panting and sweating bullets. When we turned the corner, back into the Mystery is History Passage, we could feel the wind pick up and the temperature drop just like that. What followed was an orgy of photo-taking, as Ed sought to capture some of the great formations in the stretch leading back to the Big White Bitchin' formation. We decided that we still had enough gas in the tank to survey a bit more, setting our sights on the downstream lead at NTS Dome. When we got there, I took off my pack and tied my boot. Unfortunately, my lace broke. I pulled the lace out, equalized the sides, then tied it up again only to break it one more time. Not much remained of the lace. Ed had a little bit of string, but we didn't otherwise have any great repair options (I kept thinking about the wire ties that Jay Wells always carried, thinking that I should carry a few). We were a long way from home, and I was going to need the boot. After digging open our passage, we decided that perhaps the prudent thing to do was to head for home.

Ed wanted to get a few last photos at the Stage Curtains, but otherwise we just needed to stagger back to the shack. I had felt pretty good at NTS dome, but couldn't seem to get my wind on the way back. Ed still seemed very strong, but my pace slowed. Past the Stage Curtains, I realized that I was pretty tired, and that the last bit was going to be a Death March. This was going to be the penalty for my transgression of almost missing the Virgin Mary. I've had a few Death Marches in the past, but it had been a few years. The conversation lagged. My brain turned kind of mushy, and I had a hard time stringing together multiple sentences. Still, we stayed together and made the most of a slow, steady pace with short rest stops. The sumps actually felt pretty good and the adrenaline jolt from the cold water perked me up a bit. Ed had a hard time in the Scandiwhovian getting his pack where he wanted it, and had what looked to be a wrestling match with himself trying to get his gear situated. Nothing remarkable on dry land, but it was very strange looking stuff in low airspace. We made it back to the Spong without losing anything, then had some things to eat and drink, which helped get us out of the cave. I apologized profusely to the Virgin Mary upon passing her, then we staggered out of the cave. Mike was waiting for us topside, where it was a little past midnight upon our exit after more than 13 hours in the cave. Looking back, it was a great and memorable trip. Landmark Falls, the Rift, and the formations at the end of the Mystery is History Passage were indeed just as tremendous as I had remembered. There was no need to revise my exceptional memories down to more modest realities - the whole area is just one superlative after another. Unfortunately, all of those leads that I had dreamed about all of those years didn't seem to pan out. About the only thing worth checking off the Blue Balls Passage is the dig to the crevice passage beyond the flowstone chute. There are high leads in the Rift, but they will require a confident and skilled climber. There is also potential for side leads, as most of the time in the Rift you are in the midst of breakdown piles and you couldn't make out the walls. Of course, the real lead is atop Landmark Falls itself, but it will be a Landmark Event for it to get climbed. In the end, we tallied about 200 feet of survey, and realized that the awesome spectacle of Landmark Falls is not just something for the discovery party, but it will move anyone who has the privilege of standing in its presence. Thanks to Ed Klausner, whose drive and commitment allowed the trip to happen, and to Mike Lace, who sacrificed his own goals to provide us with surface support.

Rescue At Skunk Cave

Skunk Cave , Iowa
October 6th, 2001

by Wanda Flatland

The first I knew of a stuck caver was around 4:20 P.M. Saturday afternoon. Steve Weiner called from the Waterloo Fire Dept. He asked if I could call our cavers out, as there was a caver stuck in Skunk Cave. I immediately called Mike Lace and got his tape recorder, left a message, and went on down my list to Lowell

Burkhead. Lowell was much help, and carried on the calling. I asked him if I should call Greg McCarty, and he thought not, (as per size). Someone had called Mike Nelson and he was the first one there, spent a long time in the cave and became very cold. I soon became the telephone watch person. Phil LaRue called and said he was on his way. The Fire Chief from Cresco became a fairly regular caller, asking when I could expect the cavers, and would they know where to go. I told him they would go right to the cave, as they were very familiar with it and had mapped it. He also requested some hot packs because the stuck caver was getting cold. I called the members of my group. Only one was home and she didn't have hot packs. Cindy Leonhart was very interested and said she would come up and help me. We had a good visit and still had some time to kill until Larry Welch's group arrived. We both thought they should have an ambulance there. Cindy called Carl Homstead. He was in on the last rescue in that very same cave. He gave us some helpful hints. The Fire Chief sent a fireman for the hot packs. By then we knew we didn't have enough to amount to anything, so at Cindy's suggestion we threw in a batch of clean bathtowels, got them real hot, put them in a garbage bag and added a hotwater bottle to the center. That was around 7:00 P.M., and the fireman said that we don't think we can get him out because has given up and was very cold. Larry Welch's group were the only ones I was unable to let know about the situation, and they were on there way for a special class at Coldwater. I called Beth to see if Larry had a cell phone. He didn't, but one of his students did. She called and they got the message after a couple stops. Larry made it in time to help with the rescue. Some of the people were getting quite cold by then and welcomed any extra help. Cindy and I made a 30-cup pot of coffee with cookies and hauled it down to the rescuers after Larry's group arrived. By the time we got down to Skunk Cave we could not believe our eyes. There was Mayo 1, both Cresco and Decorah ambulances, rescue squads, Austin T.V., Flight Dr. and nurses, and Highway Patrol officers. Both County Sheriffs Departments were represented. After much labor, cooperation, and tight squeezing, such a wonderful job was done by all. I was especially pleased with the job done by Doug Schmeucker in directing both medical and cavers. The caver was released around 10:00 P.M. that night. I just knew if the cavers got there they could get him out, but actually didn't realize what a terrible job it was. I guess the condition of my bathtowels told me quite a bit.

Dear Most Competent Caver

Dear Most Competent Caver,

My caving buddies and I are having an argument, perhaps you can help us. We are wondering what caves are actually made out of? **Confused Caver.**

Dear Confused Caver,

What a great question. With your great wit and intelligence, my job will never end. The primary ingredient besides rocks and dirt is Gooberite. This is from the Latin meaning Goober. I'm sure your familiar with this. Next question.

Dear Most Competent Caver,

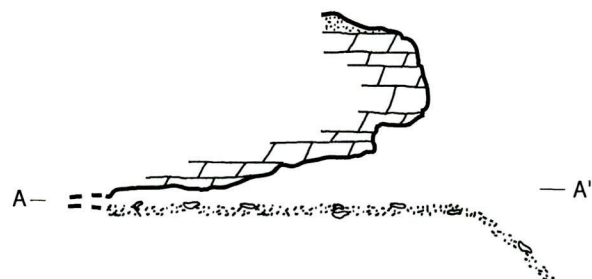
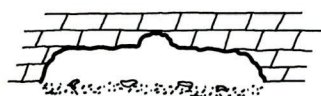
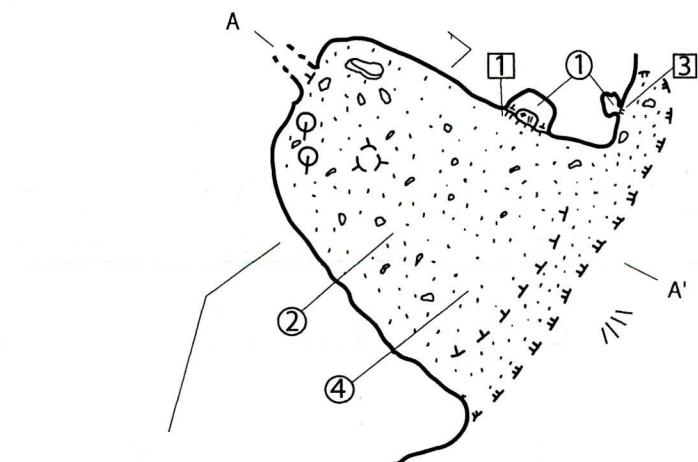
After a long wetsuit trip, I reek. Frankly it's days before the stench wears off. During this time my wife refuses to "exercise" with me. (If you know what I mean). Nudge, nudge. What would you recommend I do to get her in the mood?
Pig-trough Joe.

Dear Pig-trough Joe,

I must say this supprises me, I've never had this trouble with your wife. Maybe after your wetsuit trip you should stay away a few extra days, you know, to ferment a while. When people again start sitting next to you, it will be time to go home. During that time, I'll be glad to check in on her, periodically.

Lost Pine Cave

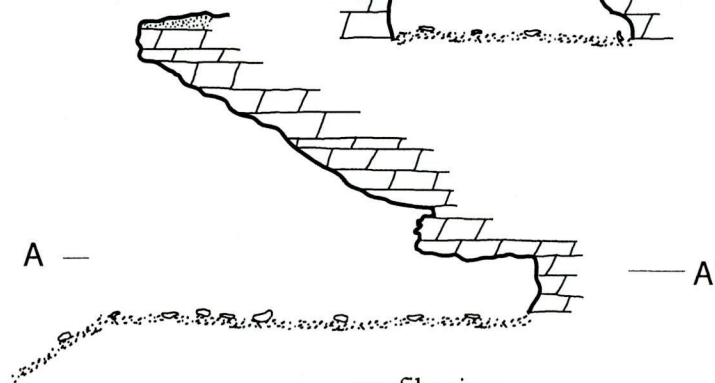
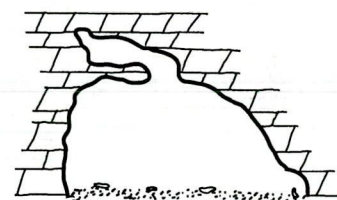
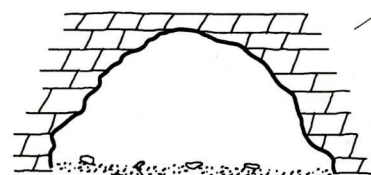
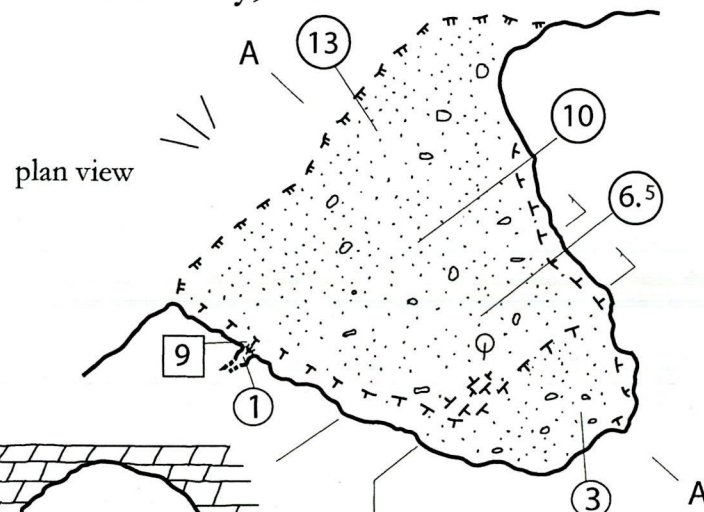
Jackson County, Iowa



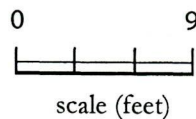
total surveyed length = 16.1 feet (4.9 meters)

Pocket Cave

Jackson County, Iowa



total surveyed length = 19.2 feet (5.9 meters)



Suunto and tape survey
9/23/2001 by
Iowa Grotto Members:
Gary Engh and
Ed Klausner



Klausner 2001

