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Lowell Burkhead

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I N T E R C O M

Published Semi-spasmodically By

THE IOWA GROTTO

National Speleological Society



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The INTERCOM is published semi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto, P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. The Iowa Grotto is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35810, and is dedicated to the exploration and study of caves. We will exchange publications with other organizations with the same dedication. Subscriptions to the INTERCOM are \$10.00 per year. Reproduction of material appearing in the INTERCOM by other caving organizations is encouraged as long as credit is given the author and the INTERCOM and a copy of the publication is sent to the Iowa Grotto. Material for the next issue of the INTERCOM is due by July 14, 1990. Send articles and trip reports for publication to:

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The Iowa Grotto meets at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month in room 125 of Trowbridge Hall on the campus of the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa.

Air Force Rescue Coordination Center
NCRC
1-800-851-3051

Iowa County Emergency Management
24 hour number
1-319-642-3151

This number calls out Iowa Grotto rescue personnel.

Cover: Formation along ceiling crack, upstream main passage, Coldwater Cave,
Winneskie County, Iowa, November 1989. Photo by Scott Dankof



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

Chairman - - - - - Mike Lace
Vice Chairman - - Lowell Burkhead
Secretary-Treas. - Stacey Cyphert

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IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting March 28, 1990

The meeting was called to order at 7:42 p.m. by chairman, Mike Lace in room 27 of Trowbridge Hall. Twelve members were present by the end of the night. The minutes for both January and February were approved as read and a balance of approximately \$500 was reported in the treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Marc Ohms and Eric Winch went to Indian Bluff Cave. Mike Lace reported on a trip to check leads in Dubuque with Cyphert, Ohms, and Winch. Contact was not established with the owners of Kemling Cave but it was believed that permission was obtained to enter Weber's Cave and perhaps to open Muenster Cave. Big Bat Cave was explored. Mike Bounk reported on the National Natural Landmark presentation at Coldwater Cave. 105 people attended. Bounk commented on the stream-level recorder and noted that Jay Wells took a photo trip in Coldwater with his boss. Mike Lace reported on lead checking after Coldwater with Cyphert, Engh, and Welch. Some possible digs were found and the Postville Ice Cave was explored. Lester Teslow also participated on some of the lead checking. Lace and Cyphert stopped at Osborne to look at the cave display on the way home. Cyphert reported on Milke, Drahn, and Woodchuck Caves. Steve Barnett noted that Woodchuck Cave is probably Devil's Throat Cave. Wiedenman's Pit was also visited. FUTURE TRIPS: The Friends of Karst Meeting is April 5 through 7 in Decorah. Coldwater Cave is April 21 and the MVOR is April 27-29. Several summer trips to Dubuque are being planned. Beginner cave trips are planned for April 14 (Worden's Cave) and June 2 (Indian Bluff, Hatfield, Doll, Worden's Caves). An introduction to surveying is planned for May 26 at Hatfield Cave. The summer picnic will be August 4 at a site yet to be named. OLD BUSINESS: The costs of sending out back issues to exchanges will be computed to determine if a mailing will be done now or at a later date. The Grotto is looking into non-profit status which will greatly help reduce mailing costs. The application fee for non-profit status is \$150 and a motion was passed for the Grotto to seek this status. Printing costs per member now exceed dues with the recent increase in printing costs. Back issue price increases were discussed but no action was taken at this time. The price of '74 NSS Convention Guidebooks was raised to \$10 each. A statement will be put in the HOTLINE to remind people of the format for trip reports. Copies of the Quint Cities Grotto publications will be donated to the Grotto library. NEW BUSINESS: An old NSS rule says that people can't be kept on the Grotto membership list for over a year unless they join the NSS. There are no plans to enforce this policy. Several people have recently joined the Grotto including: Ray Houk, Darin Harper, Eric Zierke, Pat Witzke, Curt Hancock, and Tom Gustafson. Warren Netherton has informed the Grotto that there is a group at UNI interested in caving. The Grotto address has been given to this group. The DNR is reported to want farmers to close their sinkholes. A notice about this will appear in the HOTLINE. Sarah Corrie grants are available to grottos and Stacey Cyphert will develop a proposal for survey equipment. Doug Schmuecker is restocking the emergency kit in Coldwater Cave and will put a new kit near Bert Falls. NSS programs will be investigated for presentation at Grotto meetings. A fold-out map of Tourist's Delight Cave will be included in a future issue of the INTERCOM.

Regular meeting April 25, 1990

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m. by chairman, Mike Lace in room 27 of Trowbridge Hall. Thirteen members were present. The March minutes were approved as read. The treasurer reported a balance of \$514.74 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Mike Bounk visited the area around Hunter's Cave. There is a sign saying keep out but Bounk believes Grotto members may be granted permission to enter. Worden's Cave was also visited. Bob Wahlstrom and friends checked out a cave with Indian drawings. They visited this cave twice, in addition to trips to Hunt's Cave, Glenwood Cave, and Hoot Dome in Coldwater Cave.

Bounk reported on Coldwater Cave tours for the Friends of Karst meeting. Doug Schmuecker and Warren Netherton also led tours. Schmuecker reported on an off-weekend photo trip in Coldwater Cave. No pictures came out since the cameras got wet. Lowell Burkhead had a vertical training session in his garage. He also reported on finding a spring with a possible collapse entrance on the Volga River ½ mile upstream of Littleport while on a canoeing trip. Mike Lace reported on a bust trip to Dubuque. Permission to enter Weber's Cave was denied but Timmons Cave was photographed and a digging lead in the Dubuque area was found. Marc Ohms reported on several sinkholes he checked. He also has a digging project near Crystal Lake Cave. Larry Welch and Bryan Bain went up Grappling Falls in Coldwater Cave and surveyed 500 feet. The passage is said to still continue. Lace also reported on lead-checking in four counties on his way to Coldwater Cave.

FUTURE TRIPS: A beginner survey trip will be held May 26. Mike Bounk may also lead a trip to check out a sinkhole in May. June 2, there will be a beginner cave trip. Party Month at Coldwater Cave is this June 16. August 4 will be the annual Grotto picnic. OLD BUSINESS: It was decided that the picnic will be held in Fountain Spring Park. A description and directions will be printed in the HOTLINE. A \$4 price per person will be charged to offset food costs. An auction and the selling of back issues are planned for the picnic in addition to eating and caveing. Steve Thompson's Deep Six Dive Shop and the Speleoshop will be added to the list of equipment suppliers. NEW BUSINESS: Lowell Burkhead will donate a subscription of the Nylon Highway to the Grotto Library. The Grotto decided to check out the Iowa Environmental Network to see if it is worth getting listed in their conservation directory next year. Material for the INTERCOM is due May 14. The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

LETTERS

SUMP DIVING

From Mike Nelson

Any members of the grotto with SCUBA certification and their own personal gear, who may have an interest in sump diving may contact me. I will give open water orientation on theory, technique and gear. This is not to encourage this sort of misguided behaviour, but to advance safe caving practices. Professional instruction is not only suggested, but required, before I will introduce anyone to the overhead environment in Iowa. Only those who wish to pursue serious exploration and underwater mapping need apply. Recreationalists need not apply. Contact Mike Nelson, RR#1 Box 52A, Fertile, Iowa 50434. Phone:(515) 582-3157, 7-8 a.m., (515) 421-3457, 3:30-11:00 p.m., weekdays.

Mike Lace
411 2nd Ave Pl. #24
Coralville, Iowa 52241

April 12, 1990, From Mike Nelson

Dear Mike;

Last Tuesday morning, I spent a little time on the phone with Paul Johnson. Mr. Johnson is a farmer from Decorah who just finished up his last session in the Iowa legislature representing his district. "It's someone else's turn, now" he related, but admits he will remain interested, informed and maintain contacts from that experience.

I contacted him as I was informed that he is quite knowledgeable on groundwater resources. According to him, the lore that we had been hearing and reading, concerning point introduction of farm chemicals to the aquifer, via sinkholes, is not entirely correct. While the majority of the tainting does occur through the

leaching of chemicals through broadcast application, atrazine does remain as a high profile culprit of point introduction.

The state guidelines have steadily dwindled the recommended dose of atrazine, especially in karstified areas, from 4lbs. per acre to 1½ lbs. per acre. This can be halved again by "banding", or placing the atrazine only in the narrow line of the seedrow and mechanically cultivating the area between seedrows. This has been practiced with acceptable weed control being obtained.

Intelligent management, in his view, was the avenue to pursue in protecting our groundwater resources. The filling of sinkholes in relation to this end he saw as utterly impractical. He was not aware of the pressure, nor the source of the pressure being applied to farmers to do so. We will have to follow up on this, speaking to the individual landowners to find out who is behind this, and proceed from there. I intend to visit with Mike Bentien in the near future. Please forward any pertinent info you have that will allow me to contact others expressing the same concerns held by Mr. Bentien.

Mr. Johnson did readily admit that with the emphasis on groundwater pollution, ground has been lost regarding erosion. (Pun intended.) The horizontal cave passage that has been lost in the recorded history of the Iowa Grotto pales before the reality of the loss of Iowa topsoil, which is now estimated to be forty tons per acre per year. A loaded semitractor-trailer weighs forty tons and hauls a net load of twenty-five tons, in case one needs something for comparison.

Sincerely,
Mike Nelson

A MATTER OF LOCAL INTEREST

Since most Iowa Grotto vertical cavers use a Burkhead "Safety Rack", the following letter from NSS Vertical Section Secretary/Treasurer, Bill Bussey is copied. An Iowa Grotto member has pronounced the Safety Rack as unsafe after 17 years of production and use. He has advised other Grotto members to not use their Safety Racks. In answer to this action, I have sent off a Safety Rack to Bill Bussey and the following is his reply. When he generates an article for NYLON HIGHWAY, it will be copied in the INTERCOM.

April 23, 1990

Dear Lowell,

What a surprise to get your package and letter in the mail this past Saturday! Thank you so much for sending one of your "Safety Racks" for testing and generation of an article for NYLON HIGHWAY. I pleasantly recall that evening of July 3rd when we rappelled and climbed the entrance shaft of Coldwater Cave. We certainly had a lot of fun. It was the perfect ending to a very nice day of caving in beautiful and challenging Coldwater Cave.

Admittedly I had just about forgotten about your "Safety Rack" that we used in descent of the shaft. However, once I saw it in the box, I quickly recalled how much I thought of it at Coldwater. Recalled how I immediately fell in love with it. Guess I've fallen in love with it all over again. Look forward to using it again this weekend when I teach a Vertical Techniques course at a tower nearby. After some in-cave or pit use, I will write an article about the device. Would like to try it in some TAG pits up to 200 feet, if trial on lower drops warrant it. Hope to make it back over to TAG this June for the SERA Cave Carnival.

Tell your metallurgist friend that human body weight of 160-200 pounds is very minor on the grand scheme of things. It would take a fatal amount of force for a human weight to subject this rack to anywhere near these levels. Your testing shows that it starts to bend at the weld at 1300 pounds. That doesn't sound like catastrophic failure to me. Even if the weld were severely defective, or not there at all, the device would be viable. He should look at a regular rack, which are used regu-

larly for rescue operations involving two or more people on the device, thereby subjecting it to loads approaching maybe 600 pounds. I think he would see the same, if not more "points of possible failure." Also, tell him to physically examine a Petzl Bobbin or Stop Bobbin. These are made of a thinner sheet metal which are subject to easier deformation than stainless steel rod and aluminum brake bars. These devices have been used by European cavers for many years without device failure.

Don't get me wrong. I'm no metallurgist. But I do know what forces are put on devices when rappelling and climbing rope. One would have to let the device catch a fall of such a severe nature that in all likelihood, the rope would fail or nearly fail in order to even approach 1000 pounds of force on the eye or bars.

The only minus that I can see, and that is before any actual trial, is that the bottom bar is immobile and the other bars are connected to the rack on both sides. These, of course, are design characteristics of the rack, giving it the "Safety" feature. Most racks are controlled by sliding up and down or even removal of the bottom bar. With the Safety Rack, this is not possible. However, as it was not designed for drops of over 150 feet, this is probably not necessary. It will be interesting to see how much control there will be using movement of the middle bars.

I really like the way the Safety Rack is constructed. Its "fit and finish" are superb. It looks and feels great in the hand. It almost looks too good to use! You really put a lot of time and effort into the construction as well as selection of materials of the rack. I am really impressed and, no doubt, others will be too.

Will definitely plan on using your write up in an article. You give a great explanation on materials and construction used. Will probably try and write something for the November 1990 NYLON HIGHWAY.

The way I see it, this device competes with the Figure 8, Petzl Bobbin and Stop Bobbin. All of these devices are generally used on drops of the 0 - 150 foot range. From the sounds of it, the Safety Rack should allow more control of descent than any of these devices. It should also be safer as well, and thus give the Stop a run for its money. The cost is competitive with the Stop as well. Can't wait to see how it performs in a cave!

Thanks Lowell. I will definitely use your Safety Rack and write something up for the NYLON HIGHWAY. Am really looking forward to putting it through its paces. Thanks again. Hope you get underground as often as you like this summer.

Happy Holes,
Bill Bussey

EDITORIAL

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the contributors to the INTERCOM and say well done, folks. We now have a publication that is said to be one of the best in the country. We did it with good material that was turned in on time. The problem is that we may be doing so well that we may have intimidated a few of our newer members with our excessive literacy. When asked if they might turn in a trip report? The response was "I can't write good enough for the INTERCOM. They were surprised to hear that we only have three contributors who can. Some of the trip reports are mostly red marks from my editing pen by the time they get to this typewriter. I correct the sentence structure, the spelling, the grammar, the cave names and the readability. I even cover my own reports with red marks. So please turn in a report at least for those important trips. We want to hear from everyone at least once or now and then. I'd rather fix 'em than never see 'em.

BASIC CAVER ETIQUETTE

With the influx of new cavers into our grotto, there are a couple of items that I believe should not be taken for granted. One, the landowner, and two, the inherent intelligence of each of the new individuals out there caving. These are inexorably linked.

The landowner is the most precious resource to the caver, and unlike the cave, is a resource that can be exhausted. Over use is even harder on people than caves. Cavers working in a particular area would be considered very intelligent and considerate, by both owners and the club, if they organized their efforts enough that there aren't umpteen separate parties calling on each owner on a regular basis.

With high use caves, it would be best to have either the initial, or a particularly tactful individual serve as a liason. This person would handle all the arrangements and be the sole face that the landowner would have to deal with, giving confidence to the landowner and status to the liason. Status should not go to ones head. The obligations may prove to be a pain, but this is the best policy that I can see for the long term relationships that will be required to keep caves open to us.

I do not mean to demean the average caver in my reference to inherent intelligence, but it only takes one dodo to screw things up. Be perceptive when dealing with the owner. If it appears you're being a pain, ask if you might drop back at a later date. Show them your seriousness by returning off and on, but don't hound them. Never, but never, pester a landowner after dark or with alcohol on ones breath. Never in too big a party. These are proven mechanisms for getting a cave shut down.

We are 99.99% dependent on the good will of the landowner to participate in caving in Iowa. If we wish to avoid the pitfalls that are common in areas with a lot of caves and cavers, we must use a lot of common sense in this period of growth that the grotto is experiencing. Caving has received much notoriety in the last few years. I believe this to be the source of the rising interest. Landowner relations and access to caves cannot be sacrificed to meet the desires of a spate of possibly short term involvements.

Mike Nelson

EXPLORATION BEYOND TUNA SEA

Coldwater Cave

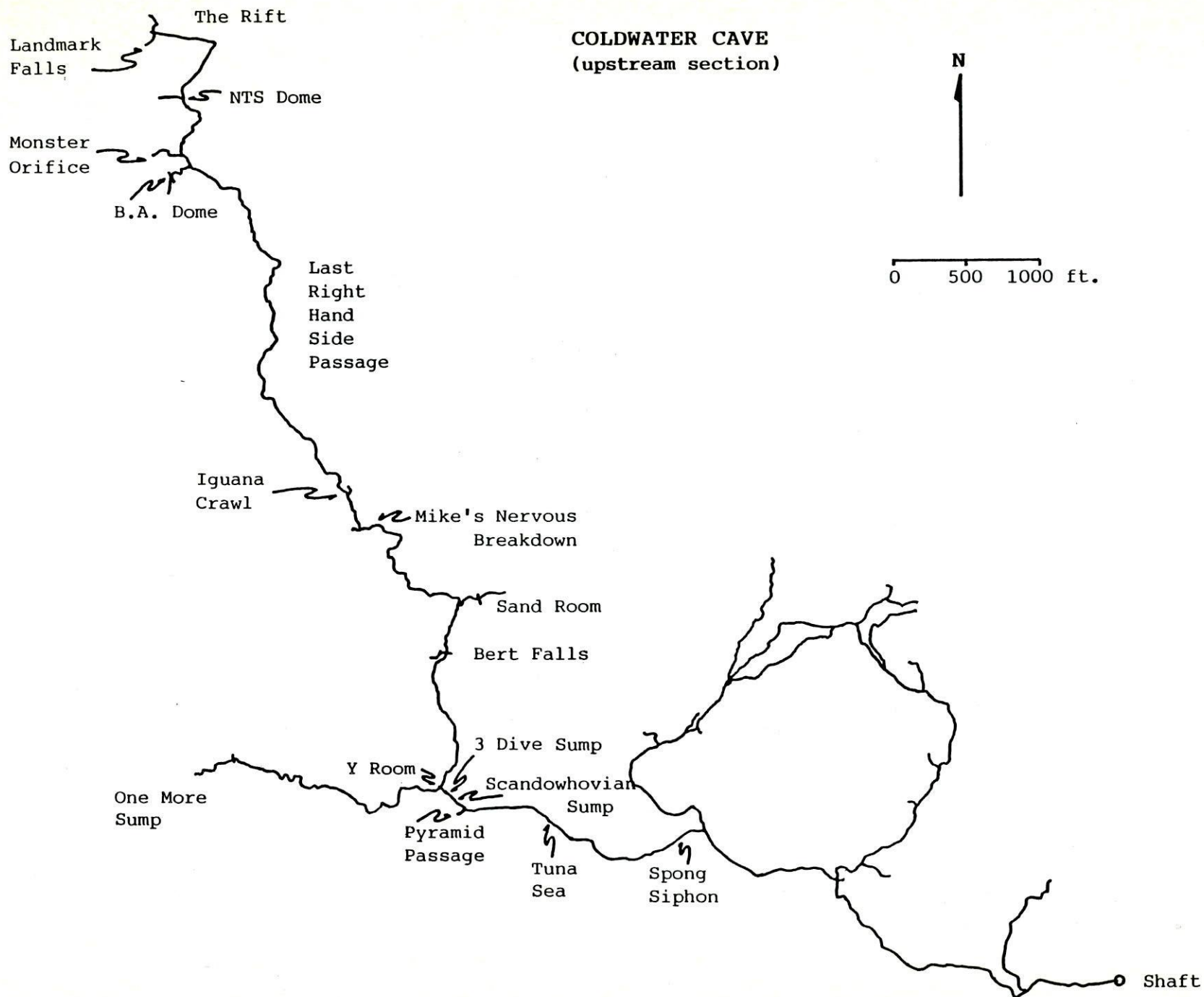
Summarized by Bryan Bain

January 1986: Mike Nelson nosed his way through Spong Siphon and Tuna Sea to discover virgin passage beyond.

February 1986: Mike Nelson returned with Steve Barnett, Gary Engh, Dave Ecklund, Bryan Bain, Randy Runyon, and Mike Bounk. The passage was pushed and surveyed over 900 feet to Scandawhovian Sump.

January 1987: Mike Nelson reconned Scandawhovian Sump by doing a belayed free dive and found going passage on the other side.

June 1987: The big breakthrough! Mike Nelson and Larry Laine used SCUBA gear to dive Scandawhovian Sump only to find another sump. It took Larry three attempts to emerge into the cave beyond, hence the name, Three Dive Sump. The passage forked



with what was believed to be the mainstream going to the left. The duo went to the right instead, into Last Right-Hand Side Passage. While Laine waited, Nelson pushed into over a half mile of virgin territory before stopping at a large breakdown section. Long overdue, they exited the cave after 16 hours, much to the relief of those on the surface.

July 1987: A survey team consisting of Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, Doug Schmuecker, Dave Ecklund, and a pregnant Sue Ecklund, mapped over 400 feet into the virgin left fork up to The End Again Sump. They also checked out the right fork and determined that the passage continued past the breakdown area before they headed back to the shaft.

November 1987: With a support team of Bill Nelson and Doug Schmuecker, Mike Nelson returned to dive The End Again Sump. Once past the sump, Mike pushed about 300 feet only to be confronted by Nasty Sump. Additionally, Scandawhovian Sump and Three Dive Sump were surveyed.

January 1988: Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, and Dave Ecklund surveyed over 100 feet into Last Right-Hand Side Passage. After the compass failed at Bert Falls, they pushed a couple of side passages, then Mike and Bill pushed past the breakdown area into Iguana Crawl. They discovered that the passage split then rejoined, but was very low and snaggy. They turned around and headed out, thinking the passage was crapping out.

December 1988: Just before reaching Scandawhovian Sump, there is a side lead called Pyramid Passage. Assisted by Larry Welch and Dave Ecklund, Mike Nelson made an unsuccessful attempt to dive the terminal sump of that passage. (Although the Pyramid Passage Sump is still a viable lead, it has been placed on the back burner for now.) Also on this trip, they checked out a digging lead in the Tuna Sea and discovered that the drought had opened up Scandawhovian Sump and Three Dive Sump.

January 1989: Low water conditions allowed Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Mike Nelson to buzz through the now open sumps. They picked up the survey at Bert Falls and mapped over 1100 feet of walking passage before putting the survey gear away.

January 1989: Seven cavers headed upstream and split into two groups once past Three Dive Sump. The Nelson Brothers, Randy Kwiatkowski, and Jay Wells made a bee-line down the left fork. They surveyed from The End Again Sump to Nasty Sump. Mike Nelson pushed about 50 feet into Nasty Sump before being forced to retreat. They went back to the right fork and surveyed Sand Room Passage. Randy found a lead and Bill pushed about 300 feet into Randy's Slot Passage. Meanwhile, farther upstream in Last Right-Hand Side Passage, Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Stacey Cyphert surveyed up to Mike's Nervous Breakdown Room. Here, Stacey discovered Eagle Eye Dome containing nice white flowstone. They also checked out the Indiana Jones Passage, named due to a large suspended rock. The two parties regrouped and evacuated, each having surveyed about 600 feet.

February 1989: Again, two groups headed upstream and parted company at the Y room. The Nelson boys, along with Sue Ecklund, headed up the mainstream to Nasty Sump. Mike pushed this sump, which proved to be a long one, to a breakdown room. The other group took the right fork and headed north to Bert Falls. At that point, Larry Welch, Scott Dankof, Jay Wells, and Mike Lace surveyed a side lead. Then, they forged ahead and surveyed partway into Iguana Crawl for a total of about 500 feet for the day.

October 1989: Three groups braved the sumps this time. The first group made up of Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund, and Jack Decker went to work surveying through

Nasty Sump to the breakdown room. They mapped a little over 500 feet but beyond they found One More Sump. Up Last Right-Hand Side Passage, the second group consisting of Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Dick Ames dug in a side lead. Meanwhile, the third group of Doug Schmuecker, Randy Kwiatkowski, and Jay Wells crawled through Iguana Crawl and pushed several hundred feet of virgin passage. Beyond the crawl, the passage became larger and still continued on.

November 1989: Jay Wells, Dave Ecklund, and Mike Nelson surveyed the remaining mainstream section up to One More Sump. Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Stacey Cyphert continued surveying in Last Right-Hand Side Passage. They finished the obnoxious Iguana Crawl and then some, passing a couple of leads that headed west. When quitting time rolled around, they had netted over 1450 feet. Coldwater Cave was now over 12 miles long.

December 1989: Eager surveyors headed back north to map more virgin passage. Larry Welch, Jay Wells, and Stacey Cyphert proceeded to reel off nearly 2300 feet of well decorated passage. They noted several side leads and finally stopped with going passage still looming ahead.

January 1990: An off-weekend trip included Larry Welch, Mike Nelson, Jay Wells, and Mike Lace. They surveyed over 800 feet in three side passages: Monster Orifice, B.A. Passage, and Niagara Type Shit Dome Passage.

February 1990: A crew of Randy Kwiatkowski, Mike Nelson, and Bill Nelson were unsuccessful in diving One More Sump, so instead, they proceeded to the Sand Room and surveyed about 500 feet into Randy's Slot Passage. At the same time, Larry Welch, Jay Wells, Stacey Cyphert, and Bryan Bain surveyed about 1100 feet into the northern-most area of Coldwater Cave. The passage abruptly turned west and dramatically changed to a narrow, but very high, canyon, subsequently named The Rift. They noted several upper-level leads and discovered Landmark Falls. A going passage with flowing water exists at the top of the 20 foot waterfall. It will require a tricky climb to reach the lead.

The Future: For the intrepid Coldwater Cavers, there are still sumps to dive, side passages to push, and high leads to climb. This story is not finished yet.

TRIP REPORTS

ARTAZINE ALLEY

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
March 3, 1990
Mike Lace, Larry Welch, Jay Wells

by Mike Lace

We had planned this off-weekend trip for one last push into the upstream section, specifically, the side passages along the "Mystery Is History Passage". The weather over the past several weeks had become erratic with spring-like thaws and intermittent precipitation, sending pulses of meltwater into the cave stream. We had become anxious to make at least one more trip before the upstream sumps closed for the season or even longer.

The weather, unfortunately, hadn't cooperated in the two days prior to our trip. Two consecutive pulses raised the stream level at the recorder by one foot; each time returning to a level six inches above the "low" water level we

had enjoyed all winter. This meant that the sumps would be dicey at best, so we let common sense prevail and opted to survey a side lead downstream in Beaver Boneyard. The lead was a decorated crawlway that we knew stretched at least 100 feet past the end of the known survey; it seemed a reasonably safe place to be if high water became a problem.

Reaching the platform, we found the stream to be brown and turbulent. A single step into the stream made it redundant to read the thermometer on the platform - we all knew the feel of 39°F cold water. The farther downstream we went that day, the more we found a strong odor of silage - yet another indicator that surface run-off was active.

We were only a short distance downstream of the platform when we stopped at a large piece of flowstone in the middle of the stream. We all swore that it hadn't been there before. It was plain to see the place along the east wall of the passage where it had fallen from. The section of drapery must be about 4 feet wide by 2 feet high. It's not from a clean white flowstone area of the Gallery but in a darkly stained section where you first get to a waist deep dip in the stream.

Fracturing in the drapery had formed this neatly excised mass of flowstone and other fracture lines can be seen in the rest of the intact formations. Perhaps the recent drought with the loss of normal drainage had contributed to the drying and eventual breaking away of this formation. We hadn't been downstream recently so were surprised to see that portions of Big Bertha were dry as well, making sections more vulnerable to muddy hand prints. Moving past Big BIRTHA should always be done cautiously but even more so now.

The trip to the downstream breakdown section was uneventful until we reached the beginning of the foam - that's right! blobs of white suds and it wasn't coming from Mr. Bubble in the stream. The foam banks became thickest near choke points in the stream flow and just as we passed The Swim, and nearly froze out, we encountered the largest mass of foam any of us had ever seen or heard of. At 77.4 feet long (we had our tape measure), 11.6 feet wide and 6 feet above the water line, it filled the passage and I was enlisted to break trail through this herbicidal adventure. Larry mentioned that Atrazine (a commercial herbicide) is known to foam in water - and all of us wondered just how good for our health it was to be waltzing through it.

We survived the "white out", however, and continued to the Beaver Boneyard. The trip back to the side passage, containing the lead warmed everyone up a bit but the trip through the narrow crevice to our objective let us really build up some heat. Chimneying and squeezing led to a fork in the passage where a low crawlway led on to even lower crawlway while the left fork led along a hands-and-knees crawlway to the last known survey station.

Jay wanted to try his hand at keeping the survey book while Larry took the compass and I the survey tape. I can't even remember the last time I had the privilege of being lead tape. The crawlway snaked along with one "S"-turn after another until we were squirming through places you couldn't turn around in and coming up with less than 4 foot shots. We tied off the survey soon after this with approximately 200 feet of passage surveyed.

It was a productive day. A lead was pushed and surveyed and is still going. Perhaps we were a bit spoiled by the big survey days in the upstream Nelson Section but knew that we probably would have frozen out going through the sumps even if we could have squeezed through.

Returning upstream against a stiff current was hard on the legs but we managed, trudging along with a thin trail of foam behind us and the whisper of "pizza time" in our ears. The next morning we cleaned the shed a little more for the upcoming National Natural Landmark dedication ceremony and headed for home.

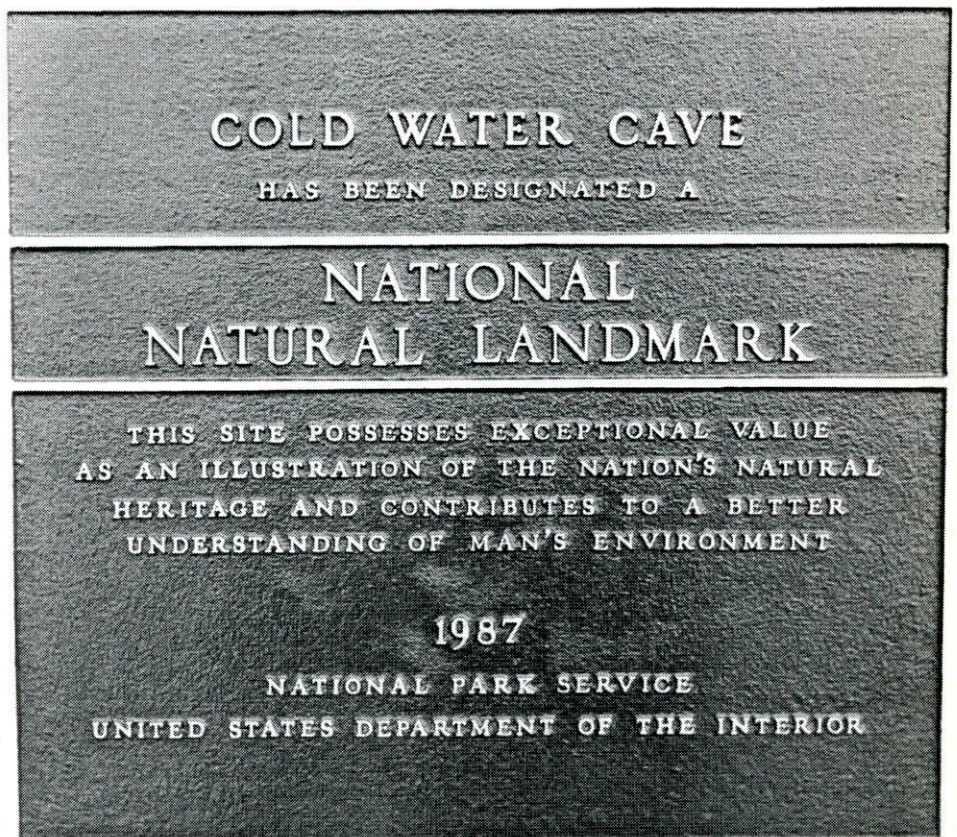
COLDWATER CAVE DEDICATED NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARK

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
March 17, 1990

by Lowell Burkhead
Mike Lace, Lowell Burkhead, Scott Dankof, Bob Wahlstrom, the Bounks, the Ecklunds, the Nelsons, Stacey Cyphert, Gary Engh, Jay Wells, the Welches, the Schmueckers, people I've forgotten, Rock River folks, friends and neighbors totaling 105 people

Bob and I arrived mid-morning and there was already a crowd there despite the cold and wind and spitting snow. As more and more people arrived, the shed gradually packed full. A National Park Service person in a suit packed in at the front of the room. He presented Kenny and Wanda Flatland with a bronze plaque and made a short speech. Coldwater Cave is the 14th National Natural Landmark in Iowa. Video cameras and flashes were going all over the room. Kenny Flatland made a speech and Pete DeVries made a speech. When that was over, the tremendously rich refreshment table was open for consumption. Kenny gave each attendee a suitable for framing 8 by 10 glossy color photograph of Big Bertha as they made their way toward the door. The traffic jam around the refreshment table was unbelievable.

Later, after everyone had shaken Kenny's hand and gotten a closeup look at the bronze plaque, several short trips were taken into the cave. Bob and I went down on the platform for a while to get the feel of a National Natural Landmark on its dedication day. It seemed little changed, still the same awe inspiring wonder as always except the water was a little clearer than usual. After a little more visiting, we headed home before dark.



The Plaque

photo by S. Dankof



Kenny and Wanda Flatland and the National Park Service representative
photo by Scott Dankof

ALL IN MARCH

Elwood's Drop, Winneshiek County, Iowa

by Mike Nelson
March 18, 1990

We took a second look at this pit that I first dropped with Mike Lace and Larry Welch back on November 20, 1988.

Dave and Sue Ecklund and I went to take a look to evaluate its potential for a dig. The pit appears to be a dome that has reached the surface and may be a possible entrance to the Sewer Spring System. This being the second largest spring in the state, any lead that might get us access to its conduit is worth considerable consideration. The base of the dome/pit is filled with the talus that came down with the event of its opening and from frost fracture since that time. A hardcore digging effort would be required to reach the horizontal watercourse that would be associated with this kind of feature in a cave. An optimistic appraisal gives a one-in-ten chance of encountering enterable passage.

There are more than a few caving loose ends I must tie up before I can commit to an extended project like this. Anyone who would wish to spend their time on a longshot gamble is more than welcome to help. When the planning stages begin, there will be notice given.

This cave has been on the files as Flowstone Pot. There is a tale, too lengthy to relate here, as to the origin of that name and why the landowners prefer the name

that was bestowed on that 11-20-88 trip (before we were aware that it had already been visited and named by Iowa Grotto members). Hence, as always, the landowner's wishes prevail, anyone keeping records or files should take note.

There is great room here for a philosophical debate to erupt. The best course to steer to, to prevent such, is to be sure one is dealing with the actual landowner. Not with renters or neighbors who say "go ahead and take a look, I know they won't mind", etc. Then be sure to file a trip report and a cave file index sheet to a responsible central repository. A copy of both sent to the landowners would also be a thoughtful touch and demonstrate the professionalism of ones organization to them.

The article, "A Question of Digology", elsewhere in this issue, contains Dave Ecklund's assesment of the dig potential of Elwood's Drop.

Fiet Cave, Allamakee County, Iowa

Did the footwork to set up future trips.

Livinggood Spring Annex, Allamakee County, Iowa

The abandoned spring resurgence upstream of the present spring looked like a good dig site. We got names and numbers to persue it.

Livinggood Spring Annex, Allamakee County, Iowa

March 25, 1990

With permission from the landowner and a liability release in his possession, Delores and I undertook an extensive dig. Subsequently I found that it had been done before, though I believe we made a little more headway. We covered the hole with tree limbs to prevent cattle from getting hurt there and contacted the landowner regarding our progress (this was before hearing of the previous dig). We had intended to leave things as they were, pending a significant gullywasher to disturb the limbs and prove or disprove my theory that this is still an active overflow passage to Livinggood Spring. In light to the knowledge of the previous efforts, however, we have decided to give it one last ditch effort at the first opportunity and refill the hole if unsuccessful.

Fiet Cave

Through a minor typographical error on the cave index file, we "discovered" an unknown cave that turned out to be Fiet. It seems I have already done the preliminary work to the dive trip I had been planning.

Devil's Den, Allamakee County, Iowa

Another "new" old cave, discovered through lead checking. We listened to the stories and took a look at the cave, but were not prepared to enter it. The landowner told us a tale of large rooms within the cave and expressed a desire to go in sometime. I told them I would check the records and maybe do a trip to ascertain their needs for exploring the cave. The records indicate that the cave stays very low for 45 to 50 feet then gets lower. It seems to share more than a few characteristics with Penny Spring which is not too far off.

It has been so long since anyone has been in there, it might not hurt to take another look. It most likely needs mapped. That would be a simple enough project if our information is reliable.

A QUESTION OF DIGOLOGY

The question is to dig or not to dig. This weekend a M.A.N. took me to a pit and asked the question. Well, here is my answer. First keep in mind that I like to dig and any excuse is a good one to start digging. I think that there is a one in ten chance that we can dig to the bottom of the shaft in a two year period but I think that the drain will be man size if it is reached. Prior to a final decision we should look for a sink in the stream, check topographic maps for cave potential, and look at the soil survey of the area for sinks. In conclusion, if we could get five cavers to be committed to this project, I think it is worth the time and effort to dig for cave.

D.H. Ecklund

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK

Drahn, Mielke, and Devil's Throat Caves, Clayton County, Iowa
 March 25, 1990
 Mike Lace, Doug Schmuecker, Jay Wells, and Stacey Cyphert

by Stacey Cyphert

We met at Mike's place in Coralville early on a beautiful Sunday morning. Except for the wind chill, it was a perfect day. There was not a cloud in the sky and we knew flash flooding was not going to present a problem for the pit caves we planned to enter. This time of year, it pays to be very cognizant of the weather. Jay, Mike and I sat back as Air Schmuecker delivered us to our destination.

Upon arrival we found the field with the caves was unplanted and relatively dry so we drove in. A quick scouting trip on the numerous sinks on the property was made before we began rigging the first pit. This scouting trip identified two sinks worthy of additional investigation, the first sink on the right as you enter the field and a sink behind Devil's Throat Cave which is currently filled with old appliances.

Drahn Cave was the first cave we actually entered. This pit cave had a tree growing at the top of the sink which offered an anchor point that allowed us to easily rig on and off of the rope only a few feet from the mouth of the pit. The rock slope leading into the pit was covered with a thick sheet of ice. Jay was given the honor of dropping first. Mike and I then followed while Doug did surface duty until one of us could relieve him.

A small ledge is encountered after dropping about six feet in Drahn Cave. Beyond the ledge it is an easy drop to the floor. The entire drop is 47 feet. A small room is at the bottom of the pit and dry stream passage leads into the cave. For a good portion of the stream passage, the ceiling is quite high, sometimes in excess of thirty feet. Forty feet from the bottom of the entrance pit, a second pit twelve feet in depth, is encountered. This pit encompasses the width of the passage and is surrounded by slippery mud. By rigging a second rope through a window that separates the first room from the stream passage and by using the first rope as a backup anchor, we were able to attempt a descent into this pit. Since this was the first time any of us had rigged a rope inside a cave, Jay and I decided to let Mike try it. Everything worked as expected. Unfortunately, this pit has no going leads at the bottom. A possible lead exists on the other side of the pit but we did not check it on this trip.

Devil's Throat Cave was the second "pit" visited this day. This was the first pit I got to rig so Jay kept a watchful eye. After doing what was surely an excel-

lent job, I prepared to drop the rope down the shaft. The only problem was there was no shaft. I moved a few big sticks and a couple of rocks in the bottom of the sink to discover horizontal passage. After exploring a bit, I yelled back for Jay and Mike to follow, which they did. Doug wisely remained on the surface. The passage was mostly stoop-walking size in scalloped rock. After negotiating a few turns, the "throat" is encountered. Here the horizontal passage ends at the top of a pit. It appeared to be a 30 foot drop but may have been deeper. Since there were no obvious rig points and since the rope was on the surface anyway, I turned around to exit.

It should have been a simple matter to exit the cave. As I got closer to Jay and Mike, however, I began to sense there was a problem. Apparently there was a wild animal between us and the entrance. A trapped wild animal. An angry, trapped wild animal with large, clicking teeth to be more exact. And he was trapped in the crawling section of the cave.

Neither Jay nor I noticed any animals when we entered the cave. Mike didn't notice any either until he leaned against the woodchuck. This act disturbed both the woodchuck and Mike. It seems a rock had fallen on the rear legs of the woodchuck, trapping him on his back. The woodchuck was not pleased about this situation and was clicking his teeth. Before we knew he was trapped, we threw a few rocks to encourage the woodchuck to leave. This only served to agitate him more. We were now faced with starving to death in the cave while Doug laughed or crawling over an agitated woodchuck. We chose the latter. By placing several large branches over the woodchuck and keeping pressure on them, we were able to crawl over the woodchuck to safety. Once safely out, we removed the branches and freed the woodchuck.

Mielke Cave was the third and final cave we entered this day. My rigging was not wasted this time as the huge open crevice was obvious. Mike, Jay and I each rappelled the 65 foot drop and then explored the passages at the bottom. No wild animals were encountered.

A quick dinner and stop at Weidenman's pit rounded out the day. On the way home, Air Schmuecker proved the recommended safe speed on turns could be doubled and the turn still negotiated. In the end though, a state employee stopped us to talk about flying so low. All in all, we were feeling pretty good after a fun day of caving and fighting off killer woodchucks.

THIESEN CAVE AND SINKS

Dubuque County, Iowa
April, 1990

by Marc Ohms

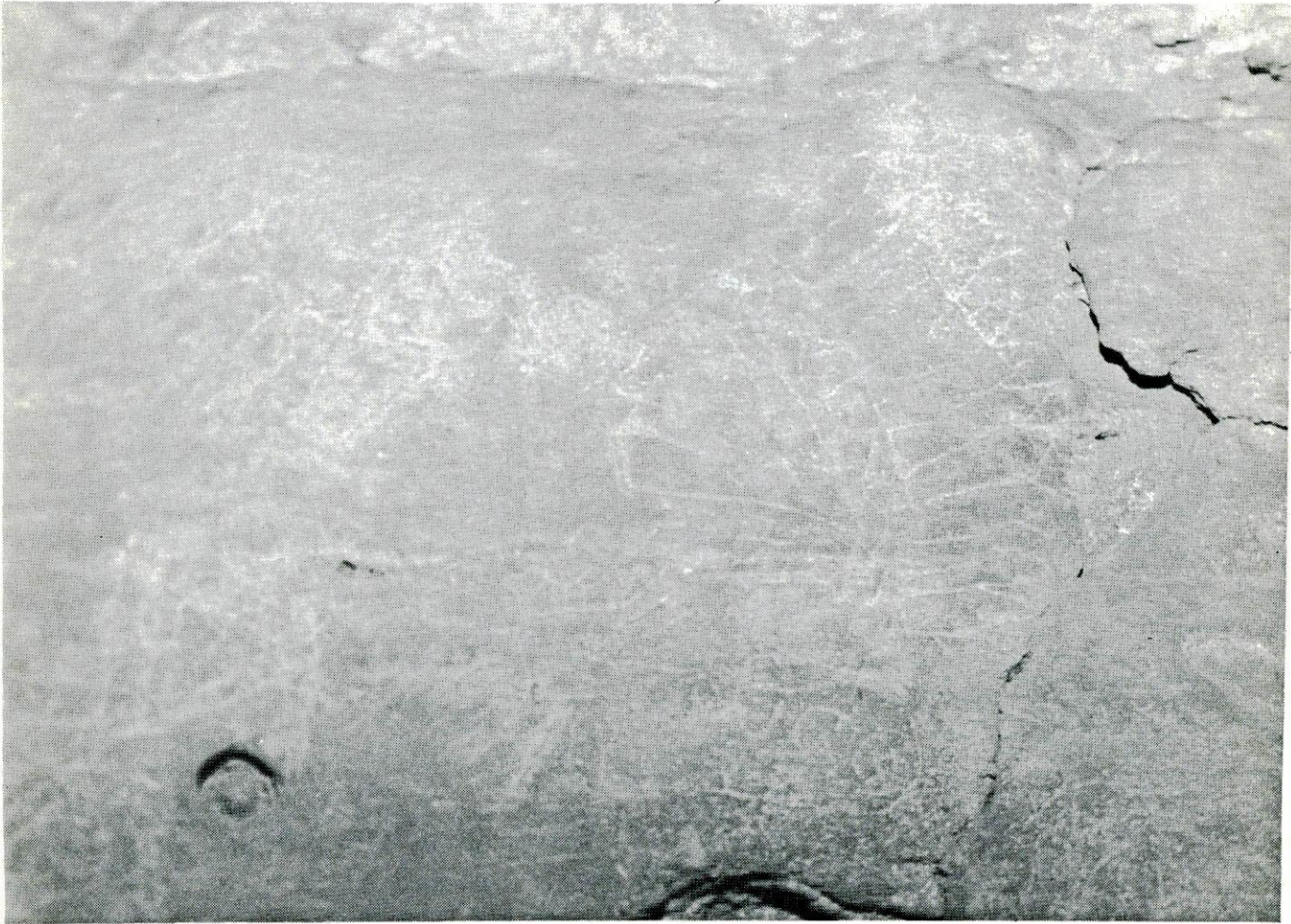
Last fall while driving to my trout fishing hole in northern Dubuque County, I noticed a few sinkholes in a field. This spring I finally got around to investigate. The landowner's name is Thiesen. He says he has a lot of sinks on his land, but only one with a hole.

I walked into the fields and sure enough, he has a lot of sinkholes in a relatively small field. I checked four. Three have exposed rock and debris filled holes where a lot of water drains. It appears the entire field drains into these sinks. The one open hole he directed me to is not actually in a sinkhole but in the side of a hill. The entrance is an eight foot drop which is easily chimneyed. The passage continues downward at an angle. I stopped after approxi-

mately 80 feet with no end found. At this point it did not head in the direction of any of the sinkholes.

I plan on returning as soon as time permits to finish exploring this cave and to start digging at the sinkholes. I named the cave Thiesen Cave after the landowner.

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Indian artwork in the upper Buck Creek Indian Cave

Photo by Paul Miller

CAVING THE BUCK CREEK AREA

Buck Creek Indian Caves, Hunt's Cave, Delaware County, Iowa

April 1 and 7, 1990

by Paul Miller

Bob Wahlstrom, Lowell Burkhead, Babe the tripeded speleohound and Paul Miller

Bob found out from a landowner in the Buck Creek area that he had a cave on his property that supposedly contained Indian drawings, so Bob, Lowell, and I went up to check it out. This turned out to be a two part trip, due to a nasty thunderstorm that hit about two hours after we arrived on April 1st. We checked out a few holes in the cliff face directly to the north of where we parked, found nothing significant and proceeded to the cave talked about by the owner.

There are two caves in the cliff face at this spot, one at the base of the cliff and another about ten feet down from the top. The bottom cave is about 120 feet long. It has a large entrance with a large enough sheltered area to have possibly been used by the Indians. The passage is of stoopwalking size to a short person to within 30 feet of the end. We found no Indian drawings in this cave. Access to the upper cave was gained by negotiating a ledge 1 to 2 feet wide that made its way down to the cave entrance from the top of the 55 foot high cliff. This cave is about 30 feet long, dry, is hands and knees at the entrance and belly crawl 15 feet in. We found Indian drawings, or at least a drawing of an Indian in a headdress on the wall. There were two other figures that couldn't be made out. The owner only found out about the existence of the cave because of archeological interest in the cave as it is hard to see from below.

We took some pictures of the drawings in this cave, then started to do some more exploring of the valley, but had to call it quits when it started raining with no sign of letting up in sight. We returned the following Saturday, and checked out all the holes we could find in the eastern cliff face. With the exception of one hole, which we didn't check because of the type of climb to get into it, no caves were found. We went back to the cave with the drawings in it, took more pictures, and then packed up and headed over to see nearby Hunt's Cave.

After a short conversation with Bill Hunt, we went over to the cave which is a short drive out into a field, and a couple hundred yards walk down into a ravine. Hunt's Cave consists of a 100 foot entrance passage, mostly belly crawl, that ends in a small room about four feet high. Out of this room go four other passages. The first left-hand passage is crawlway. The second left-hand passage is a walking passage, with a 15 foot high section and some rimstone dams. This is the longest passage of the four. The first right-hand passage is a low, wide crawlway, about 30 feet long that ends in a small two foot high room. This was the muddiest passage in an otherwise pretty dry cave. The second right-hand passage is a crawlway. We were not in the mood for a lot of belly crawl, so we didn't push this or the first left-hand passage very far. A rough estimate of the cave's length, would be about 300 feet. After a rest in the main room, and a refueling of Bob's carbide lamp, we exited the cave. We finished out the day with some fishing in Buck Creek and then headed home.

FARTHER UPSTREAM

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

April 21, 1990

by Paul Miller

Bob Wahlstrom, Linda Wahlstrom, Jerry Thompson, and Paul Miller

Bob and I, for some time, had wanted to take another trip down into Coldwater Cave and push a bit farther upstream than the Jumping Off Point, so we finally set April 21 as the date. Bob's wife Linda expressed interest in going down in the cave too, so the three of us headed up to the cave Saturday morning. We arrived at the shack about 9:30 a.m., and talked for a while with Larry Welch about what we could expect upstream of the Jumping Off Point. We then decided to make Hoot Dome and Spong Siphon the upstream limits of our trip. We started to get into our gear, and about this time, a gentleman we later learned was Jerry Thompson from Decorah showed up and asked who was in charge. We directed him to Larry, and a bit later, Larry came over and asked if Jerry could go down with us. We agreed.

We started down the ladder at 10:00 a.m. Having never been the first one down into the cave, the first thing I noticed when I reached the platform was the water clarity. For a while, anyway, I would be able to see what I was walking on. We made our way upstream to the breakdown block with the fossils, and stopped there for a few minutes so Jerry and Linda could look over the fossils, and take a few pictures. We continued on until we encountered the side passage to the right that makes a circle back to the main passage, and took this till we found the passage into Hoot Dome. I crawled up this passage about 100 feet, and then decided to come back out. Jerry went up the passage we were in a little farther, then came back and we all returned to the main passage.

We continued upstream for a while and encountered some ceiling cracks with nice formations in them so we stopped and took pictures. One of these cracks also had a dome off to the left of it about 40 feet high. At this point we were all a little tired, but I wanted to go find Spong Siphon so Bob and I went up the passage for a while till Bob decided he didn't want to continue and stopped. I continued until the ceiling got so low I could not stoopwalk anymore, but had to crawl on my hands and knees. At this point I heard Bob yell something about going back, so I went back downstream and rejoined the others.

We decided we had done enough stoopwalking for the day, so we went back downstream to the platform. After a trip down to the gallery section so Jerry and Linda could take some pictures, we exited the cave at 3:06 p.m.

BEYOND GRAPPLING FALLS AND THE AGONY OF THE FEET

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
April 21, 1990
Bryan Bain and Larry Welch

by Bryan Bain

Larry and I were fired up to tackle Grappling Falls. Both of us had just recently purchased newer wetsuits and were eager to put them to the test. I had lost a few pounds since the Landmark Falls discovery trip two months ago and felt as if I were in better physical shape. In fact, both of us were lean, mean, caving machines. We proudly charged into the cave like men, but 15½ hours later, crawled back out like snails.

Larry and I entered the cave accompanied by Richard Ames, Dean Zimmerman, and his friend Greg. We headed downstream at a good pace then turned up Cascade Passage. Richard tripped over one of the many rimstone dams and landed with a loud belly flop. I gave him a 6.5 rating for the dive until he moaned and said that he had banged his family jewels. I quickly changed the score to a 7.5 rating. We parted company at the Pig Trough and after chanting "let's do it" plus a high five, Larry and I proceeded to our objective alone. The others headed back toward the shaft.

We wallowed through the Pig Trough, then headed upstream at Wanda's Walkway. A hungry isopod mistook Larry for food, but Larry gently persuaded him to look elsewhere for its meal. Continuing on, we stashed some cans of Pepsi at strategic places in order to have liquid refreshment for the return trip. Throughout the duration of the trip, we periodically debated the carbide vs. electric issue. Larry scored a few points when I had to unclog my lamp's dripper, then again when I had to clean the tip and replace a wet felt. I scored big when his electric light went out for no apparent reason. Unable to get it going again, he had to go to his backup system. The issue was never really settled, and I finally conceded that there were pros and cons to both set-ups.

About halfway through Mud Canyon, we stopped and put on our vertical harnesses. Larry took out his camera and snapped pictures up to and including Grappling Falls. I rigged in and carefully climbed the falls, inspecting the rope as I went. I gained the top of the falls and checked the knots at the rig point. Considering that the rope had been in place for almost three years, it was still in pretty good shape. Larry made his ascent and we broke out the survey gear. We mapped and climbed steadily through the abundant breakdown. Larry was plagued by a small flying insect that insisted on buzzing around his head. (Add 1 for carbide. Ed.)

The breakdown thinned out and we surveyed past what looked like a collapsed dome. If we could find a corresponding surface sinkhole, it would be a very good dig site. We also noticed sprouts trying to grow plus other surface debris along the way. We quit surveying at a small crevice room that contained breakdown and lots of caramel colored formations. Here I detected a slight breeze. Almost three years ago I had first discovered this area, now Larry was the second person to witness the scene.

Virgin cave extended beyond in the form of a muddy, wet, low passage. We decided to do a quick recon in order to determine if a future trip would be necessary. We went about a hundred feet and stopped at a dome that was about 30 feet high. The passage continued on as a comfortable hands and knees crawlway that was approximately five feet wide. The passage carried water and looked similar to Wanda's Walkway near the Pig Trough. It is a very good lead that could go and go, but we headed back out, leaving virgin passage for the next survey team.

Returning to the top of Grappling Falls, Larry showed off his vertical technique by doing a smooth controlled rappel. He dropped four feet like a rock, stopped with a jolt, and swung part-way into the falls. Knowing that I could not repeat such a performance, I descended in a more traditional manner. What followed was the long and weary trudge back to the shaft. We saw a fish in the mainstream, a first for me.

Toward the end, it was a supreme effort for me just to put one foot in front of the other. Somewhere in Pothole Country, Larry asked if I wanted to rest. I told him no. I wasn't sure if I could get going again if we stopped. A couple of times I stepped into a pothole and had to physically lift my leg up with my hands. I was one tired puppy. A feeling of pure relief washed over me when the shaft platform loomed into view. After about a dozen rest stops, I was finally able to reach the top of the ladder. Larry and I warmed up some soup and then crashed. I don't even remember my head hitting the pillow. I'm beginning to believe that I'm getting too old for these hard-core trips.

ON A COLDWATER WEEKEND

Livinggood Spring, Fiet Cave and Devil's Den, Allamakee County, Iowa

April 21&22, 1990

by Mike Nelson

Mike Nelson, Delores Nelson, Aaron Nelson, Chad Gentz, and on Sunday, Greg McCarty

This weekend was the fifth anniversary of my first cave trip into Coldwater Cave with Dave and Sue Ecklund. It was the first regular CWC weekend I had ever missed that wasn't due to work or vacation considerations. It felt odd. However, the Ecklunds and we were working on a project with sensitive landowner relations on a sensitive cave. We wanted to follow through, keep the ball rolling, strike while the iron was hot. You get the drift. So we opted to skip Coldwater to pursue another worthwhile endeavor.

Dave got sick and Sue was shot from a trip to visit her mom who was ailing in California. The trip fell through.

Delores has been most understanding and supportive of my involvement in caving. She didn't want to hang around at CWC on such a lovely weekend while I took in an anticipated arduous trip to Grappling Falls. As I had already opted to go Cold-waterless in our initial plans, it was not too difficult to acquiesce to her whims.

Hence, we found ourselves at Livinggood Spring's Annex and continuing our dig. We enlarged the base of the excavation and got a couple of feet deeper, but left off when it became obvious that to go any deeper would require enlarging the whole hole from the surface down. We are now soliciting help, as much as possible, for one last ditch effort. It will take a concentrated effort to enlarge the hole and continue down. We have not reached a horizontal bedding plane in the first 8 feet of digging. This is surprising, as every open spring or flooded cave I have poked my head into in Iowa so far, has been quite shallow. The deeper we go, though, before hitting any speculative bedding plane passage, the better the chance of staying below the talus burden in a cleft that runs parallel to the cliff face and about 20 to 25 feet behind the dig.

The owner of this property has expressed an interest in restoring the original waterflow, that was lost to the fall of a massive slab upon the risepool to Livinggood Spring proper. I will be checking into the details of blasting the 4' by 6' by 20' breakdown slab into pieces that can be manhandled a short way off without doing further damage to the spring. If it is feasible, the owner will pay for the explosives job if we supply the manpower to restore the spring area. This will take no small commitment. There once was a cavernous area over the risepool. There is no information on the nature of the rise, whether open or through talus. We may contribute a great deal of time and effort and not come up with a viable lead. We will certainly perform a worthwhile service that may have a rippling effect far into the future. With caving coming of age, we have the chance, here in Iowa, of getting off on the right foot and not only avoiding pitfalls that cavers have created for themselves in other states, but to actually portray the caver in a very positive light. If we develop a reputation as not just conscientious users, but also willing partners in site preservation and restoration, we may reap the benefits of an ever more litigation concerned landowner's enlightenment and trust.

If you are a conscientious caver who wishes to do "for" a cave instead of just "doing a cave", please contact me about either of the projects at Livinggood Spring. 515-582-3157, 7-8am or 515-421-3457 3:30 -11pm

After adequately obscuring the dig mainly for the protection of newborn calves, not from human detection, we went over to Dutton's Cave for more rope practice and a good place to camp. For the fifth time in as many weeks, we combined vertical practice with family fun. Aaron is getting rather proficient in the basics, Delores is advancing nicely and I feel competent in my abilities and chosen vertical setup. If newer cavers in the grotto cannot make planned grotto vertical sessions, I will gladly provide some initial training. I will provide subsequent training to any who's interest is shown by acquiring a basic amount of gear and self education. I will provide no one with a continuous program of entertainment at the expense of my time and rope.

Sunday morning brought Greg McCarty into camp so close to the appointed time that no one could quibble. We headed over to Fiet Cave for the long (much longer in Greg's case) awaited peek into it's sump. Using a minimum of gear, I first just stuck in my head and then reported my observations to Greg. With a belay line on my ankle, I then slid a body length into the sump.

It is as inviting a sump as I have seen since the Scandawhovian series in Coldwater Cave, despite the uninviting last little bit of passage leading to it. I always just look at a sump before I ever dive it. I ponder over it a while for several reasons. One, I am taking in a vast variety of information in a relatively short time. It takes a while to process it all. Two, the results of my ponderings provide invaluable time to make judgements on the best approach. Every sump is an individual and should be treated as such. Three, this judgemental approach deems the safest, most direct, execution of the dive and the gear required. Four, the gear required and the needs of getting it safely to the site are paramount in planning a dive with any chance of successfully attaining a goal.

The goal in Fiet Cave was somewhat more elusive than Greg had hoped in his years of contemplation, alas. it would be no simple duck under. The passage is about 6 to 8 feet wide, 6 to 8 feet under the overhead rock, 24" to 32" of vertical relief, and with the exception of an apparent airbell about 14 to 18 feet in, continued with a long, easy veer to the left beyond the 30 to 35 foot reach of my dive light. The material that percolated off the ceiling was minor. After this short look, I got right down into the water and felt all around with my feet. I got out of the water to rig an artificial tie-off rigging. I was amazed to find the water little disturbed by my sloshing around in it. The light still cut a healthy beam through where I had envisioned that I had left a batch of pea soup. This is, of course, very encouraging, knowing that the mud is so densely packed that it would take more than a casual effort to bring it off of the floor and into suspension. Now if the dive turns out to be short and the dry cave beyond, extensive, who could ask for more. I can dream, for now, can't I.

We repacked the gear and took our sweet time to leave this neat little cave, stopping a few times for the sake of conversation and Greg's unpadded knees. Awaiting us was a gorgeously warm spring day, a stir-fried meal from the Svea and the beautiful backdrop of Bull Hollow with two teenage boys tossing frisbies from the bluff tops out into a gentle breeze, to ride to great distances before drifting to the valley floor.

After our scrumptious lunch, we wandered up to Devil's Den. Other than the symetrically formed frost shattered dome (that Greg, in his broader range of exposure, assures me as being almost unique in Iowa) at its entrance, the cave is not something to write home about. We pushed up the wet, left-hand passage, sans wetsuits, to a small room with 3 small waterfalls issuing from 3 small passages. The one to the right might be pushable, but one would be bellycrawling foolish to try without a wetsuit. We didn't venture into the dry, right-hand lead. The apparent total length of the cave was around 50 feet. It'll make a cute little map.

POSTVILLE ICE CAVE & LEAD-CHECK

Postville Ice Cave, Allamakee County, Iowa

March 19, 1990 (NOTE, this report is included out of order)

by Mike Lace

Mike Lace, Lester Teslow, Larry and Beth Welch, Stacey Cyphert and Gary Engh

It wasn't a particularly nice day to be walking about in the fields looking for caves, but that had rarely stopped us before. There were several leads in the area that we had heard of. The first was an ice cave near Postville that several locals had described as being enterable and cool enough to store everything from beer and ice cream in. Ede Teslow said that her grandfather used to take her down into the cave in the summer months to see the ice and escape the heat.

We drove and walked up and down an old blacktop road for some time before we finally found an inconspicuous hole in the bottom of the ditch that led into an ice covered chamber. The entrance had a makeshift shelter of old wooden planks, dirt and gravel to prevent a slumping in that would probably seal the cave below. Years ago, the county was supposed to have closed the cave but the passage beyond had obviously been reopened. Stacey slipped down into the entrance and soon called back that the passage beyond was of walking height but that it soon ended with a perpendicular crevice with no going leads.

Larry also took a look and recalled that the 1974 NSS Convention Guidebook mentioned a "Postville Ice Cave" that fit the description of what we had found and that it indeed was one of Iowa's true glaciers. The total length of the cave is about fifty feet and could be easily surveyed in half an hour or so. We plan to return soon and complete this task if for no other reason than that the cave has a great deal of local historical value.

Beth and Larry had to start the long haul back to Galesburg, the land without caves, while the rest of us drove up to a set of sinkholes that supposedly had been used by a local creamery to dispose of waste products. Some stories tell of a spring that is hydrologically connected to the creamery sinkhole and that long ago, locals became alarmed when ducks swimming at the resurgence "turned brown"! Needless to say, the hole that had swallowed all of this garbage wasn't pushed when the creamery was in operation but the dumping has since stopped, making it a good lead.

Lester, Gary, Stacey and I arranged permission to take a look at the sinks and subsequently found a pair of bedrock lined holes that obviously take surface runoff. You could even see the old clay pipe that had carried the creamery waste. Several bails of rusted wire were jammed into the bottom of the first hole along with an assortment of rotted logs; the wire bails actually served to keep the drainage route open by preventing excess debris from washing in and plugging the hole. After a bit of digging, Stacey was able to squeeze a body length into the ice covered crawlway to see at least another body length of crawlway ahead of him and a steeply dropping passage beyond. He decided to wait until the ice floor had a chance to melt a little before coming back to push the crawl.

The second sinkhole was more vertical than the first but had just as much wire in it. We removed enough debris to see that the crevice dropped at least twenty feet and was still passable at that point. Some wire cutters and some more log hauling would easily open this one up.

We tried to check one more lead, but finding no one at home, called it a day. Stacey and I made one more stop on the way home at the Osborne Nature Center (Osborne, on Hwy. 13 in Clayton County Iowa) to see Doug Schmucker and Jay Wells' cave display. It's title reads, "Under the Cornfield", and offers several 8x10 inch photos of all types of caving as well as brief explanations of cave conservation, safety, surveying, speleogenesis and describes the Iowa Grotto. If you're ever driving by, stop in and check it out.

