

December 1990

## Intercom, Volume 26, No. 6, November-December 1990

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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Material for the next issue of the INTERCOM is due by March 14, 1991. Send articles, trip reports, photograph negatives and prints, artwork etc. 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  
1-319-642-3151

This number calls out Iowa Grotto rescue personnel.

Cover: An original pen and ink artwork by George Stewart depicting Larry Welch and Scott Dankof in the entrance to The Cascade Passage in Mainstream Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa.



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

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

Volume Twenty-Six

Issue Six

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## IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting November 28, 1990

The meeting was called to order at 7:37 p.m. by Chairman Mike Lace. Eleven members were present. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. No Treasurer's report was given. TRIP REPORTS: Dankof, Cyphert, and Lace took a photo trip in Coldwater Cave on November 3. Marc Ohms reported on a Becker Quarry Cave survey on November 10. Two survey parties netted 752 feet with plenty of passage remaining. Lead checking also took place. Mike Lace reported on another trip in Coldwater Cave, this one on the regular Coldwater weekend and on lead-checking the following Sunday. Jay Wells reported on survey above Grappling Falls in Coldwater Cave with Larry Welch. 1157 feet were picked up and booming, virgin passage continues. The Pig Trough was reported to have lost its mud. Mike Bounk reported on a tourist/recon trip in Coldwater Cave and on leads in a bluff in Allamakee County. Criss Gilbert mentioned a trip to Hunter's Cave. FUTURE TRIPS: An Engelken Cave survey is being planned by Al Jagnow and a Becker Quarry Cave survey is also planned. Mike Bounk is also planning a geological field trip. Coldwater Cave is December 15, Wonder Cave is January 20, and the NCRC rescue seminar is April 6. OLD BUSINESS: A motion was passed to raise dues to \$12 per year and to leave the INTERCOM subscription at \$10. Campaign statements from Barnett, Burkhead, Lace, and Ohms will appear in the HOTLINE. Ballots will be mailed to everyone with the HOTLINE but only votes by NSS members will be counted. The bylaws will be compiled by Lowell Burkhead for discussion at the next meeting. NEW BUSINESS: The December meeting will be the third Wednesday of the month, December 19. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51.

Regular meeting December 19, 1990

The meeting was called to order at 7:42 p.m. by chairman Mike Lace. Twelve members were present. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. The Treasurer's report listed \$137.05 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Marc Ohms updated the progress of the Becker Quarry survey trips. The survey now totals 2085 feet. It was also noted on the last trip that someone had removed some of the survey chips. Mike Lace reported on a survey trip into Glenwood Cave with Larry Welch, Marc Ohms, Stacey Cyphert, and Jay Wells. Most of the lower level has now been surveyed totaling 2836 feet to date. Steve Moon reported on lead checking of some sinks and a trip down into Cassie Cave. They managed to get down approximately 100 feet. Steve also reported on a digging trip with Mike Nelson and Lipo at the end of Monument Passage in Coldwater Cave. He also reported on lead checking and some digging with Stacey Cyphert, Mike Nelson, and Lipo at a lead that Mike knew of. Stacey Cyphert reported on a Coldwater trip with Larry Welch, Mike Lace, and Jay Wells. A new passage was discovered near Holy Cow Crawl. The passage was named Tracy's Passage. FUTURE TRIPS: Coldwater is January 19. Wonder Cave is January 20. Al Jagnow wants to survey Engelken Cave the end of January. Another Becker Quarry Cave trip is being planned. April 6 is the NCRC Rescue Seminar. Mike Bounk is still planning a geological field trip and a survey trip into Glenwood Cave that will take place this spring. OLD BUSINESS: The NSS offers slide shows and Mike Lace may rent some for future grotto meetings. The Karst Catalog is about half way recopied. The retyping and updating of the Cave Index is nearly completed. Bylaws are still being compiled. The grotto needs to purchase more envelopes for INTERCOM mailings. ELECTION RESULTS:

Chairman	Mike Lace
Vice Chairman	Marc Ohms
Sec. Treas.	Jay Wells

NEW BUSINESS: Mike Lace will continue editing the Hotline. The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.



TRIP REPORTS

SURVEY FOR CREDIT

Timmens Cave, Dubuque County, Iowa  
August 11, 1990  
Marc Ohms, Al Jagnow, and Bert Jagnow

by Marc Ohms

The Timmens Cave clean-up/survey project was my project for my karst field study which I attended this summer. We all met at Hardee's as usual and drove out to the area of the cave. The survey went quickly until we exited the second entrance and began to survey the surface back to the other entrance to form a loop. At this time it began to pour down rain. We continued to survey getting drenched and finally taking refuge in the cave. After it let up, we quickly finished the loop and hurried back to our cars. While we were surveying, Mike Lace removed two trash bags of trash found within the cave.

Timmens Cave is an old tourist Cave and was also mined for lead ore. It has one main large passage with no side passages. It does contain some nice calcite speleothems, including stalactites and flowstone. It has two usable entrances and one shaft, making a through trip possible. A map and paper on the cave and its history are in progress and will be done soon. (Ed. This report was received on time for the July-August issue but was held to go with the map. The map still has not arrived for publication so the report is included here before it gets too stale to use.)

HOW MANY ARE THERE IN DUBUQUE ANYWAYS?

Crystal Lake Cave, Glommy Cave, Fatbelly Cave, Crystal Cave, Numerous Cave,  
Preston Mine, Dubuque County, Iowa  
October 6, 1990  
Mike Lace, Marc Ohms, Jay Wells

by Mike Lace

We originally planned on beginning the Becker Quarry Cave survey but Saturday turned out to be too warm and sunny to be stuck on a creeping survey of the main passage in Becker. We quickly came up with several good excuses for bagging the survey and checking a few leads that we hadn't gotten 'round to yet.

Our first stop was at Crystal Lake Cave (one of two commercial caves currently operating in Iowa) and were treated to a personal tour of the recent trail improvements by the owner. Jay had never been in this cave while Marc has seen the route many times when leading tours. I don't think I'll ever get tired of walking through the well-decorated portion of this cave. After we exited the cave, we took a quick look at one of Marc's digging leads nearby that acts as a sinking stream during heavy rain. Jay and I did a bit of digging with Jay moving a very large rock out of the digging path while the rest of us supplied him with moral support. It still looks like a good lead but it needs a few more hands to make progress.

We then stopped at a set of small caves we had read about in some old trip reports: Glommy Cave, Fatbelly Cave (?) and Crystal Cave (not to be confused with Crystal Lake Cave!). Both Glommy and Fatbelly Cave were reached by climbing up the face of an outcrop to the small entrances that led to 60 to 100 feet of not-too-much-bigger passage. They were interesting but incredibly dry and dusty. The real treat came when we reached Crystal Cave which was found at the end of the bluff. The walls and ceiling were lined with 2-3 inch long dog tooth spar.



(calcite crystals) The cave itself is no more than 35 feet long but the decoration more than makes up for the size. We also found some smaller cavities at the base of the same bluff that were even more copiously decorated with spar and although these are not long enough to be considered caves by Iowa standards, they are a rare treat worth preserving. (See maps in this issue)

We took time out for lunch and made a brief search for an entrance to Rising Street Cave but talking with a local resident revealed that some open shafts in the area had been cement capped. We also checked with the owner of Eldorado Cave. He said that the entrance was filled with garbage and that he didn't want anyone in it. We thanked him for his time and were on our way. We later learned that the City is now considering widening the road and tearing down the motel and the neighboring houses in the process. While access to the 300 foot long cave may soon be possible, the cave could also be in danger of being sealed.

We stopped at Numerous Cave which just as well could have been seen from the road since the passage never leaves daylight behind. We eventually returned to Crystal Lake Cave where the owner had mentioned that an open cribbed shaft on an adjacent property could be explored. He had previously arranged permission for us to explore it so the four of us trudged over to an open field where the shaft was found.

We began rigging the 15 foot drop that lands you in ponded water with a plummeted depth of about 10 feet. The rigging itself was worth commenting on. Because of the water obstacle, Jay suggested setting up a three-to-one pulley system that the rappeller could descend on and then be hauled up and out of the shaft after locking off his rappel rack. This sounded pretty good especially to Jay since we had elected him to enter the shaft. It didn't take us long to set it up and re-check it a few times then Jay descended to just above the water level. He found himself in a naturally formed passage that appeared to have a going lead but this was under 4 feet of water. Plans are to temporarily pump out the bottom of the shaft and examine the passage.

Marc manned the safety device on the pully system while Jim Rubel and I hauled Jay out of the shaft in short order. Jim was impressed with the vertical system and the safe way we used it so I guess a little demonstration now and then for a cave owner can't hurt.

The last stop of the day was at the Preston Mine where Marc and I had noticed a side lead that appeared to have potential. After a brief chat with the owners, we entered the mine shaft and squeezed into a belly crawl that led 20 feet to a rock pinch. Digging beyond this point would take a lot of effort with no guarantee of going passage and we have too many leads to be that desperate anyways! Jay dug a little at the end of the main passage and could finally see another 15 feet down a booming 8 inch high passage that clearly drained water and was moving fresh air at the time. Again, this is a digging lead that will probably sit on the back burner for now but it is the most promising lead in the cave.

We briefly showed Jay another digging project nearby. It's a point where a runoff stream disappears into a natural crevice. Previous digging trips led us 10 feet down to an East/West horizontal passage where digging is still in progress.

When we returned to the car to clean up, the owner couldn't help but notice the tattered remains of my coveralls (see cover photo of the July-August issue of the INTERCOM). He couldn't help but laugh and said, "Well, I've got a pair of coveralls that I ran over with the lawn mower and they sure don't look that bad!" Jay had to work on Sunday so he took off while I stayed in Dubuque to supposedly survey the main passage in Becker Quarry Cave the next day.



## COLDWATER SURFACE WORK

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
October 20, 1990

by Mike Lace

Mike Lace, Bryan Bain, Mike Nelson, Marc Ohms, and Doug Schmuecker

The winter before this trip, Bryan Bain, Gary Engh, Stacey Cyphert, Scott Dankof, and I had walked the farmland Northeast of the Coldwater shaft entrance looking for steamholes and sinks that might lie over the Grappling Falls section of the cave. We wound up finding a few holes that needed to be dug open but things were too iced up at the time for us to make any real headway. October seemed like a good time to recheck these leads and after a liesurely morning of wishing the real cavers "good luck", we wandered over to the Easternmost of the fields to be checked that day.

We reexamined a few small unenterable steamholes and on our way to two swallowholes, we got ourselves fairly well lost in the corn. We finally realized our mistake but decided that we should move northward to a series of sinks that were partially open while we still had some daylight left.

The first sinkhole we visited has reportedly been dye traced to Coldwater by Betty Wheeler and on our last trip, Bryan and Stacey had squeezed into a narrow crevice that was clogged with debris. After a half hour of digging, Marc and Bryan had reached the point where Bryan had gotten last winter. There's a lot more rock and logs to be moved and the cramped quarters make things even worse.

We moved to two other sinks that were solidly filled with junk and no entrance to be found. The last two that we reached had small openings in the exposed bedrock and cavities beneath them that looked passable if a little digging was done. Both holes were soon opened enough to get a better look at a narrow crevice that was just tight enough to deny entry. Several solutional spurs of rock wall snagged at clothing and body parts but perhaps a little hammering might permit a slim caver to enter.

Rain started to move in as we packed up and made our way back to the shack. The surface leads we looked at that day look kind of grim but worth keeping an eye on nonetheless.

## COLDWATER CAVE TRIP, AND RELATED MEANDERINGS

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
October 20, 1990

by Steve Moon

Steve Moon, Chris Cooper, Ed Nellis, Ben Keller

After a long absence from the scene, Ed Nellis and I returned to Coldwater. Cassie and I have been living in Washington State for the past year and Ed broke his back in an unexpected and rapid descent down an elevator shaft. Chris was eager for his first wild cave trip and he would not be disappointed. The intended scope of our trip appealed to Ben who joined us for what was to be his first Coldwater Cave trip as well. We entered at about 11:00 a.m. Saturday morning and headed downstream. We were the original "Dead Beat Club". Chris and I took photographs. Ben and I ventured up Cascade Passage for about a hundred feet or so. On downstream, the four of us followed Guardian Fangs and Monument Passages to their present end. After a carbide change and lunch at the entrance to Monument, we headed back upstream. On the way back, I climbed into an upper level passage near Orange and Black Dome. At the shaft, Ed and Ben exited while Chris and I contin-



ued on upstream to about two hundred feet or so beyond the Jumping Off Point. Chris and I exited the cave at about 5:00 p.m. Chris and Ben were both very impressed with the cave. Ben, an experienced Virginia caver, commented that "Virginia cavers would be happy to find a cave like Coldwater". I found the cave to be much more silty than I had remembered, especially just upstream from the shaft about fifty feet or so, where there seemed to be a good six to eight inches of the stuff.

On Sunday, the four of us headed toward the Mississippi, taking in the beauty of the Yellow River valley along the way. We went through a town called Sixteen. Two landowners were visited near Farmersburg and some small sinkholes were checked. One of these in the corner of a cornfield, was new. After a stop at Spook Cave we continued on to Pikes Peak State Park. Due to liability paranoia or whatever, the state has seen fit to obscure much of the natural beauty which has been drawing me to this place for fifteen years or more, by erecting cement and stone overlooks and wooden walkways. The nice little rock outcroppings which formed a natural overlook of the point where the Wisconsin River flows into the Mississippi River and where I used to sip my morning coffee, are now history! I find this to be very disturbing. On the way back to Iowa City we stopped long enough to hike and climb our way along the ridge at Turkey River Mounds State Preserve near Millville. We watched as a lone bald eagle glided, spiraling steadily upward, gaining altitude over a cornfield which was being harvested. The view was magnificent!

### CRITTER PASS AND THE RED DIG

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

October 20, 1990

Larry Welch and Jay Wells

by Larry Welch

Saturday morning brought light rain to the cave shack with the promise of continued precipitation throughout the day. Talk of a Sand Canyon trip evaporated and safer trips were considered. Jay and I decided to mop up some survey downstream near Sand Canyon.

Our first objective was the Sinus Passage. The mainstream air was fresh, allowing us to make easy progress. We made good time to the downstream breakdown. Here, quite a surprise lay in store for us. Near The Brothers Grimm on the east wall of the passage, a space blanket had set for as long as I had been coming to the cave. This was supposedly an artifact left from the SCUBA trips which entered the cave through the resurgence in the late 60's and early 70's. The space blanket had disappeared from its normal spot and was found snagged on a rock well above the stream in the breakdown near Twin Domes. Quite obviously, the large flood in September was the culprit. The magnitude of this flood was sobering indeed. Anyone caught in the cave during this sort of a storm has a low life expectancy.

Remembering that it was raining outside and that the ground was saturated, we were going to be cautious. We checked a couple of high leads then headed for the Sinus. Once there, we stoopwalked back to the start of the crawlway to unload the survey gear. Jay led the way in to the uncomfortable crawlway. We stopped at the first hairpin turn and held a conference. The water was higher than I remembered it being on the last trip and running very swiftly. My gut feeling was to abandon the Sinus until another day, which we did. Jay had lost his monster light on the way in, which we managed to find on the way out.

We shifted our attention to Critter Pass instead. An earlier survey group to Critter Pass had done a portion of the passage but a chip hadn't been left at the end of the survey. We weren't confident that the station markers could still be



found, so decided to survey the whole passage from the beginning. Jay was lead and did rear sightings, I kept the book. The major difficulty we encountered was keeping the survey instruments clean. At the end of the known passage was a dig site that had been characterized as "not very promising" by Steve Moon. Jay thought otherwise and started digging with the only available implement, his helmet. The dig was walled with bright red-orange mud. Jay quickly earned his "Red Badge of Courage" and was completely covered with the red stuff. He was able to make progress on the constriction but never did break through. With some real digging equipment one might be able to enter 15 feet of grim crawl that was visible beyond the dig. At this point the passage turned sharply out of sight. It might go for a ways but Steve's assessment is probably pretty close.

We returned to the main passage to clean the instruments until they were marginally functional, then headed upstream. We stopped at the Mud-Covered Ledge Passage. We had hopes of completely surveying this passage, but after 4 stations the compasses crapped out for good. We set a chip and decided to call it a day. Not far upstream Jay managed to climb into a high lead which ended in a dome. From there we strolled leisurely out of the cave. I kept Jay entertained by continually falling over in an act of unintentional slapstick. The survey footage we had gathered put the cave over 13.5 miles -- and winter is coming.

### A FINE DIGGING TRIP

A sinkhole, Clayton County, Iowa  
November 3, 1990  
Gary Engh and Steve Moon

by Steve Moon

Gary and I headed for the Farmersburg area with the intention of finishing up a dig which I had begun two weeks prior on Coldwater weekend. We drove to within 20 yards of the targeted sinkhole and started digging at around 9:30 a.m. I assumed one of my usual digging positions while Gary checked out other potential dig sites in the same draw. It wasn't too long before I began to realize that I should be on rope to do this one! On either side of where I was standing were fair sized black holes. A rock dropped through either of them bounced off walls for a good three or four seconds and then free-fell for another second or two into what sounded like a big dome. The final sound was a tantalizingly hollow "bong". I hastily pulled Gary out of a nearby sink and we rigged a belay. We alternated digging, building a retaining wall of large rocks pulled from the hole to hold back the mound of dirt which was accumulating. Excitement mounted as the hole expanded and light began to illuminate rock that had remained dark for thousands of years. Eventually, it became a question of just how much dirt and rock needed to be removed in order to leave the steep sides of the entrance stable.

Gazing down into the large crevice which we had just unearthed, I could easily visualize a large crack in a broken Hummel figurine, seen at about 1000 X magnification. It was magnificent! Gary poked in and sized up the situation and found that he was too large for the crevice after descending only two or three feet. I started down. I decided to clear a rather large rock from about the fifteen foot level in order to make more room but didn't want to kick it further in and have to deal with it later. With the help of an old Gold Line rope that I keep handy for such jobs, Gary and I were able to extricate the rock which was at least a fifty pounder or better. At the fifteen foot level again, I encountered a very tight spot. A real ball-crusher! I exited again and stripped off the insulated coveralls I had been wearing and got a little thinner. In I went again, but by this time I was getting a bit fatigued and it was a no go. With the help of a rock hammer it should be possible to penetrate a bit further. The crevice



bells out just beyond the constriction and then bends out of sight. Thus it remains a mystery.

At about 3:30 p.m. we decided to pack it up and make like a baby. After leaving a note for the owner, we continued south through the driving wind and gray drizzle that had been with us all day. We were sore but satisfied. We resolved to return as soon as possible. The area has a lot of potential and a lot of work remains to be done. For one thing, I need to retrieve my rock pick from the bottom of that pit!

## IT HAS BEGUN!

Becker Quarry Cave, Dubuque County, Iowa

by Marc Ohms

On October 7, 1990, Mike Lace, Pat Schenck, and I began surveying in Becker Quarry Cave. We surveyed the main passage while setting chips at the four side passages. We completed the main passage at 739.98 feet

The next trip was on October 14, 1990, and was done by Pat Schenck and myself. We surveyed the first right-hand passage called Eric's Crawl and completed it at 127.36 feet. This passage contains some nice speleothems. We then surveyed the Air Passage being the second right-hand passage off the main passage. We surveyed 160.96 feet and left many leads. This passage contains the room which we named The Church. It is a four foot pit in the floor and the ceiling is about 15 feet high. Two passages lead off the top of this room. We also found a Bible here.

On November 10, 1990, Loren Schutt, Gary Engh, and I surveyed into the first left-hand side passage called the Cephalopod Passage. It has a three foot cephalopod fossil above the passage entrance. We surveyed a total of 264.14 feet and left many leads to survey. At the same time, Mike Lace and Jay Wells were surveying in the Air Passage and finished the entire passage. Their total was 462.26 feet.

On December 8, 1990, Mike Lace and I went back for more. A few days before our trip it snowed 15 inches. As we walked up to the entrance we noticed footprints leading right to the cave. Once inside we found string running every which way. We then went into the Cephalopod Passage and surveyed a few leads. We finished all but one, this one smelled real gamey and contained a lot of droppings. We left this one for later. We then went to the Waterfall Passage which is the second left passage. On the way we found more string and also noticed some survey chips were gone. We only really needed the chip by the Waterfall Passage because we did not start this yet. It was gone!!! After settling down we entered the passage and surveyed some but left it hanging. We now have to backtrack to tie this passage in. If I ever see these cavers (I use this word VERY loosely) I will personally see to it that they know why this is wrong!!

The total surveyed length to date is 2085.96 feet with a lot to go.



## DUBUQUE CAVING

East Lockey Drybone Mine, Crystal Lake Cave, Dubuque County, Iowa  
November 11, 1990  
Marc Ohms and Mike Lace

by Mike Lace

We didn't exactly get an early start after surveying the dusty side passages in Becker Quarry Cave the day before but Sunday morning found us trudging through the brush looking for East and West Lockey Drybone Mine. Both were supposed to be several hundred feet in length but Marc had found no trip report recording an Iowa Grotto visit to either one. The shallow ravine we walked showed ample evidence of past mining activity with numerous shallow pits and tailing piles easily visible without the summer foliage.

We did locate a small crevice that had been reached by a shallow pit but this only extended east for eight feet or so. On our way back toward the car, we decided to follow a small outcrop that bordered a creek that ran through the valley and sure enough, there it was. A large gaping entrance invited us in to what we soon realized was East Lockey Drybone Mine. The 15 foot high cross-shaped passage was dry and dusty. This had to be a Dubuque cave. An old piece of mining equipment (?) was found not too far inside the entrance and below a poorly capped shaft that made us a little nervous walking underneath it. Even though the passage extended a mere 200 feet to a collapsed shaft and never left daylight out of sight, it was an impressive walk through mining history.

We retreated to the opposite side of the valley where West Lockey Drybone Mine was supposed to be and quickly found a partially filled in entrance shaft. Access to the mine was in the past gained by following a steeply sloping dirt pile at the base of the shaft into the main passage. More dirt had obviously collapsed into the shaft, blocking easy entrance to the mine for us but it may not take too much digging to get into it! We also looked at a 25 to 30 foot deep shaft on another side of the same hill that Marc had found earlier but hadn't entered. We decided to leave it for another day and headed over to Crystal Lake Cave.

The tourist season ended a week earlier at Crystal Lake Cave and we had planned on making a trip out the "Air Passage" which is a passage thought to connect with the now closed Muenster Cave. Our goal was to make an assessment of the possibility of digging in the Air Passage. On the way there Marc showed me the results of the recent clean-up of the formations along the tourist route. Much of the algae that had stained some of the formations has now been removed. We took a brief detour to the Flat Room where numerous signatures cover the flat ceiling and then took more than one wrong turn before we finally reached the Air Passage.

Both of us were surprised by the profuse decoration in some of the standing height sections of the passage. Travertine, natural bridges, anthodites and helectites covered the ceiling in some spots. Unfortunately, the passage didn't stay that way for long and we were back to crawling through tacky mud. We soon found areas where the walls and ceiling had obviously been shorn up with rock and old timbers during the mining period of the cave's history. Some of it didn't look particularly stable but we continued to where the nature of the passage dramatically changed to a narrow crevice where you had to crawl on your side and squeeze past constrictions.

Marc was leading at this point - a shrewd bit of strategy on my part! He soon reached a point where the floor sloped downward through a narrow constriction to a place where he was reasonably sure he could stand up and hopefully turn around. I moved up just in case I had to drag him by his feet out of this lovely



passage. In a few minutes, he was through and standing in a near hopeless dead end. The upper half of the crevice was a tight 6-7 inch slot while the lower half consisted of an 8 inch square crawl that might be dug at but where would you put the dirt? You would probably have to dig for a long way before the passage ever opened up again so we turned around and headed out, noting that a little air was indeed moving into the impassable crevice.

### BOGUS DUDE!

Bogus Cave, Jones County, Iowa  
Marc Ohms and Pat Schenck

by Marc Ohms

With a name like Bogus Cave I was expecting to find a cave that was all crawlway and half filled with coon crap. Instead it was quite the opposite.

Our plan was to survey the cave but it turned out to be longer than we expected, and due to time, we could not. I plan on returning to survey the cave in the near future. It is about 250 to 300 feet long. The cave consists of two entrances which both lead to the big room that is 50 feet in diameter and 10 feet high. From this, there are many passages leading off, all are crawlways. The cave contains flowstone, stalactites, and a few large stalagmites. We took many photos of the cave and its speleothems.

So, as it turns out, Bogus Cave was a pleasant and a worthwhile cave to see and a significant Jones County cave.

### THE OLD MAN AND THE ROOKIE

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
November 17, 1990  
Larry Welch and Jay Wells

by Larry Welch

The beautiful fall weather of 1990 had strung itself out into November. A caving idealist might have hoped for much colder weather including a solid freeze, to assure low water levels. However, for this particular weekend the mild weather was coupled with clear skies and virtually zero chance of precipitation. Freeze or no freeze, it was not a weekend to be wasted.

Jay and I had decided a few days beforehand to go to Grappling Falls. We were hoping for a third, but were not terribly disappointed when none materialized. Bryan Bain and I had made the trip with just two in April, so there was no reason to think that Jay and I couldn't do likewise. The bags were loaded to the gills and we had nothing left to do but dress and get in the cave, somewhat early at just past 10:00. The water level was pretty low at 0.61 on the staff gauge and the air was fresh.

We tried to move slowly and steadily, not panting heavily and not taking lengthy rests. The lack of a carbide caver helped with this strategy. The water was very clear, including a green tint in the deeper pools in Cascade. I pointed out to Jay that I was batting .500 for this trip, 3 out of 6 tries. Jay was making his first attempt and determined to see some fresh scenery. We both cached some gear at the Pig Though to lighten our load then set to crawling. I had been telling Jay how the last half of the Pig was the best body surfing spot in the cave. Surprise, surprise! I flipped onto my back and promptly snagged in the surfway. Upon



closer examination I found that all of the mud had disappeared and we were destined to crawl in a more conventional manner. The big September flood had left its calling card. It looked as if a fire hose had been used to scour out the passage.

Once into Wanda's Walkway Jay declared that the Pig Trough, "Wasn't so bad". He was pretty disappointed at missing a surfing opportunity, though. He also took a few jabs at my memory, which has at times proven terribly inaccurate, especially with passage length estimates. Just upstream in Wanda's, a new section of deep sucking mud was found in the crawlway. It was very close to the Pig, but hard to visualize how it could be the mud missing from the surfing section. It's hard to totally discount this occurrence as some pretty bizarre watercourses can exist under flood conditions. Jay had some light problems in Kenny's Ballroom that required minor light surgery. The water level in Wanda's proved to be higher than in April despite lower mainstream levels. This became obvious in the 3 siphons, the last of which became a full side-of-the-face dipper.

Several hundred feet upstream of Snowfall Dome we found a sand bar and changed into our climbing costumes. Once suited up, we charged onward to the falls. Jay was impressed with Mud Canyon, while I was fighting a chill of excitement running down my spine. Gary's Communication Breakdown Room was as impressive as ever. The rope was still hung on the side where Bryan had left it, ready to climb. I went up first in quite sloppy fashion, forcing myself to climb through the heaviest spray. Jay managed in much better fashion, singing Joplin (Janice, not Scott) on the way up.

We scrambled over the rubble to Bryan's Excellent Room, ready to survey. I hadn't caught my breath since climbing the falls and felt rotten. Once we slowed down and started surveying, the feeling passed and I was fine. Jay took lead tape and rear sights, I kept the book and did front sightings. We had considerable trouble getting started in the first low sleazeway and in the incredible pudding mud in the following crawlway. A full foot of mud reduced one to a swimming motion instead of a crawl. The compasses were already hard to read, and we were getting short shots. The stations were mainly set over water and we were chilling rapidly, at least we would finish the sleazy section. We entered virgin cave at Bryan's Dome, and the passage nature change radically. The traverses started stretching to 80-90 feet and the mud consolidated into a more humane surface. The passage trend was in a surprisingly westerly direction.

At one station, I heard a gurgling sound. Just in front of me were two constant streams of bubbles coming out of the mud. I had seen gases released from mud before but this one had gurgled constantly for 3-4 minutes and showed no signs of letting up. No sulfur smell was noticeable. Fearing methane, I gave it a wide berth and didn't dally in the area. If I ever needed justification for using electric light, (I don't) this provided more than enough. I had visions of blue fireballs as had happened in Hicks Cave (see the latest NSS News *AMERICAN CAVING ACCIDENTS* issue).

The passage continued in a northwesterly direction, still straight enough to allow long shots. The ceiling heights had risen to over 3 feet. Eventually, a 30 foot dome was encountered spanning the passage. Past the dome we started to see some formations which were almost totally lacking in the earlier survey. First, a few stalactites hanging in the corners then ceiling cracks lined with small soda straws. Near the end of the survey we started to see some small flowstone cascades running down the walls. The nature of the passage was also changing. We had seen only mud and water initially but now we started seeing breakdown blocks sticking out of the mud. By the end of the survey we were traveling on bare bedrock floor with no mud in sight.



Both Jay and I were slowly drifting into a hypothermic state. My feet were going numb at each station then thawing out when I moved forward to the next station. We finally decided to tie off the survey when the second of our 3 compasses crapped out. We were committed to getting front and back sightings and really needed at least 2 compasses with our team of two. Lacking this, we looked for a spot to set a chip. In the process of taking the final bearing, Jay fell onto a sharp bedrock ledge. I heard him fall over and was not alarmed since this had happened several times before. Besides, Jay didn't swear or scream or anything of the like.

The damage had been done. When I finished sketching, Jay showed me the large gash he had acquired on his palm. We were experiencing a snippet of the worst case scenario -- an injury in virgin passage at the furthest point in the cave from the shaft. Fortunately, it was not a disabling injury. It wasn't bleeding despite being a deep cut. Our hypothermic state was the probable cause and Jay figured it would start bleeding once he started moving again. He bandaged it with a semi-clean rag I'd kept in my helmet and some duct tape from his pack.

Ahead of us lay passage that was 10 feet wide and 4.5 feet high extending past some rapids into virgin cave. We turned and headed for home saving it for the next survey crew. Jay's hand was sore but he was able to crawl with it. We rappelled down Grappling Falls in style then tied the rope to the side. Jay had lost his monster flashlight (again) near where he had put on his vertical gear, so we dredged through all the deep pools until we found it. The slow grind back continued. Both of us felt pretty good until the last stretch of Cascade. We were out by 12:45 a.m. with a pizza waiting courtesy of Mike Lace. Jay cleaned out his wound which was packed full of mud. Hopefully, the "pure" cave water won't cause an infection. Our total survey footage for the trip was 1157 feet.

#### TAKING TIME FOR PYRAMID PASSAGE

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
November 17, 1990  
Mike Nelson, Dave Ecklund and Sue Ecklund

by Mike Nelson

We packed off upstream to make a special effort to push the Pyramid, a side passage just before the Scandawhovian (series of) Sumps. Its name comes from its triangular shape. As the triangle passage sunk into a sump, the ribbon of airspace at its peak narrowed. I had previously pushed far enough into it to view this ribbon widening out beyond a sharp curve to the left.

Too often we had marched past and plodded back past this lead with good intentions. It demanded priority status if it was ever to be pushed so we finally allotted it such. If everything worked to this point, we would also dive the resubmerged Scandawhovian and survey beyond. Early into the trip, Sue felt poorly and bowed out. Pyramid got Dave's and my full attention.

No matter how fit one may be, one must work continually at anything to be truly proficient at it. Not having caved seriously in Coldwater Cave since last winter, Dave and I moved poorly. The bottom, rearranged courtesy of this summer's unreal rains, was no help either.

The one inch drop since last month at the staff gauge (reading 0.60) translated to 2-2½ inches of usable airspace in the Spong Siphon, no diving was needed to access upstream Coldwater Cave. The much lengthier Tuna Sea area had 4-6 inches of airspace and that's how we like it. The less air, the more water equals ease of propulsion; we'd rather float than crawl.



At the Pyramid, I geared up, fracturing my own beliefs and concurring to the demands of the sump. I used a single "Y" valved 30 cubic foot tank for this job. This severely limited the distance I would consider pushing but considering that my previous look indicated the sump may be short, I didn't feel I was taking any unreasonable risks. Also, the passage at its right angle corner would be quite clumsy with dual side mounted tanks.

It felt like 10 feet to this corner. Angling around it I saw the airspace above widen out down the passage. About 12 feet beyond, the passage "T'd". The left was a no go, the right, uncertain, but narrowed yet. Overhead was a generous pool of inverted mercury (surface) shining off my light. Unfortunately, the airspace above it would not take my hand, let alone my head. I backed out, fairly satisfied, picking up my line by hand as the passage size and shape make reeling in more work than it was worth. I untied from the only suitable anchor available (Dave) and we packed up.

A quick look at the Scandawhovian Sumps showed that they may open again this winter. If our mapping of Coldwater Cave is at all accurate, The Pyramid Passage should be angling off toward Coldwater Creek on the surface. The relatively large size of the non cave adapted fish observed in this vicinity would seem to substantiate this logic. I believe the Pyramid to be a fairly direct infeeder from the surface which, using theoretical generalities (conversation with Steve Barnett), could be within 35 feet, at this point.

#### FLORIDA BOUND

Roubidoux Spring and Railroad Cave, Pulaski County, Missouri

November 23-25, 1990

by Mike Nelson

Doug Schmuecker, Dave Ecklund, Sue Ecklund, Mike Nelson, Delores Nelson, Chris June and Ellie the karst hound

Friday night; we limited our first dive to the crest at 275 feet in and 55 feet max depth. Dave and Sue were refining their dual side mounted 80 cu.ft. tank system. I dived with dual side mount 40's, my Iowa sump set up, as I was playing with trim and differences would be more apparent on this system I was intimately familiar with. Doug dove with a "Y" on a 74 cu.ft. standard back mount. Dave, Sue, and I were satisfied with our experimentation.

Saturday morning was killed getting Dave, Sue and Doug's air refilled or topped off. The afternoon was spent dry caving. Chris June, a neighbor of the owners of Railroad Cave guided us to the entrance and gave us a fine tour. This cave passes through a ridge with an entrance on each end. It still possessed some outstanding live speleothems and had only minor vandalism.

We were getting into the spring as the sun set Saturday afternoon. Dave and Sue were diving with cross connected twin single 80 cu.ft. tanks. I was using twin single side mount 80's, one "Y" and one "K". Doug used dual 80's with an Ideal manafold. Our aspirations (no "goal" orientation here) was the bottom of the dropoff at 400 feet penetration. The edge of the drop was at 100 feet depth, the base 135 feet, according to the map. All four of us were diving as a team but sub- (Ed. One line not readable here on copy submitted.)

I led to the edge. The water was very clear, I could see the base this time below me as I hovered. Doug and I signaled our OK to drop to a depth "beyond our training". It's not common to have equalization problems once below 30 feet, but my right ear wouldn't clear. After 3 tries, I signaled Doug "out" and Dave and Sue



proceeded past us, as planned. We awaited them back at the crest, then exited as a team. Doug and I dawdled in the cavern long enough to enhance our safety margin, though our dive was within no decompression limits, then left Dave and Sue to decompress on their own.

I was the only diver using true twin singles and had done the entire dive on my "K" tank, ending with it over half full and my "Y" tank untouched. Doug had another set of dual 80's. Dave and Sue had plenty of air left. So our Sunday morning plan was for Doug and I to reattempt our previous night's aborted dive while Dave and Sue did line reel practices and visited a dome in the initial stretch of tunnel.

Doug and I hit the water and proceeded very smoothly to the base of the drop-off. Doug had been diving here for years before the rest of us and had always wanted to come this last little bit. He had introduced me to Roubidoux. It was satisfying to have made this dive together. We laid on the rocky bottom, shining our lights down the passage that was beyond the sensible reach of more than a few dedicated cave divers. In a minute, we were retracing our fin strokes up and past Dave and Sue and to our decompression stops.

Once surfaced, we were both elated at how well the dive had progressed, and at where we had been and what we had seen. Doug expressed the urge he had to follow the siren's call down further into the darkness. I was very satisfied we had done what we did as safely as possible. Yes, we did dive beyond our training, yes, some of us dived beyond our experience. All the diving, however, was a natural progression with our experience, which has always been a step or two ahead of our training. Ours has not merely been an experience of surviving our dives. We have worked applying all the learning; book, from friends and formal, available to us, and utilizing it in a slow, sensible, thought out approach. Confines of geography and Iowa sump diving conditions warranted this. We have benefitted from years of other's cave diving experience and obviously have adapted it to our uses successfully.

We are now all comfortable with returning to Florida to finish our cave diving schooling, confident that we will be spending our time and resources learning, not practicing.

### A COLD SURVEY

Glenwood Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

December 7, 1990

by Jay Wells

Stacey Cyphert, Mike Lace, Marc Ohms, Larry Welch, and Jay Wells

Stacey and I arrived Saturday morning. Larry, Marc, and Mike had camped out at the entrance the night before. We discussed the trip into the cave. We decided we would go in as one party. At the end of the last survey, we would divide up into two groups. Mike and I would go ahead to the fork and survey up the left side then survey back to the other party. Marc and I had never been in the cave before so it was a pleasant trip in. At the last station we divided up.

Mike and I made good time up to the fork where we got out the survey gear. We surveyed up the left side of the fork which ends in a pool that is fed by a small waterfall and rapids. We spent some time trying to squeeze into the passage that is ahead. After some time, we tried to continue the survey toward the others. We started having trouble with the compasses. We tried to clear them but deciding it was useless, we headed back to the other group. We started switching off on the survey party as everyone was chilling out. We surveyed up to the fork. By then everyone had chilled out too much to continue the survey. We packed up the gear



and headed up the right fork to look at the upper level passage. Larry climbed up it to get a look at a possible anchor for a belay line for the future survey trips.

Once out of the cave we changed very quickly out of our wetsuits. It was Cold! We stood around the fire warming up when a landowner from above the cave entrance stopped by to talk. They had heard about it but had never seen the entrance. We took them down to see it telling them some of the history of the cave. We rounded out the day with pizza at Decorah. The up to date survey now stands at 2836 feet of passage.

## HE HAD TO LOOK

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

December 15, 1990

by Jay Wells

Stacey Cyphert, Mike Lace, Larry Welch, and Jay Wells

Friday night there was a snowstorm and everyone thought they would be the only ones there. Somehow the cabin filled up and everyone settled in for the night. The next morning brought a covering of snow and ice and several stuck trucks. The weather Saturday brought warmer temperatures and sunny skies. It was felt too risky for another trip to Grappling Falls. We decided to go to Frog Junction and survey passages back.

Once dressed and in the cave it was noticed how cold the water was. The air temperature in the cave read 42 degrees but the water sure seemed much colder than usual. We made good time downstream to Cascade Passage. We all felt good heading up the Cascade. We stopped at the usual rest stop at Holy Cow Crawl. Mike started looking at the passage just to the left of Holy Cow. Larry said several people over the years had checked it but no one had gotten in, so we decided to try. We dug wherever it looked possible but each time ran into a rock floor and ceiling. Finally, Stacey thought he would try it. It took him about 15 minutes to crawl the 5 feet past the tight squeeze. I was next. It took me a little longer but I made it in also. Larry made several attempts but to no avail.

Larry and Mike tied into the survey to the chip at Holy Cow to a station I had set in the passage. The passage started out about 2 feet high and 5 feet wide. Larry and Mike headed up to the Bat Room area and poked around at some leads. Then if we got done first, we would meet them. If they got done first, they would come back and check to see if we had gotten out. Stacey had lead tape and I took compass and book. The passage turned a couple of corners and then started tightening down. At about 125 feet, we were in a passage that was 8 inches high and 18 inches wide. We were both cold from the slow progress laying in the water when we got back to the opening and Mike and Larry hadn't gotten back. Stacey squeezed out and I followed.

We had chilled out much more than we had thought so we headed out leaving some of the survey gear in case Mike and Larry found something. They poked around several leads on the way up to the Bat Room until they chilled out. They headed back to check on us. Seeing the note we had left, they picked up the rest of the survey gear and headed out about 45 minutes behind Stacey and I. Although slightly disappointed about chilling out so early, we did survey a virgin passage which was named Tracy's Passage. We did gather about 125 feet of survey so it wasn't a total loss. The night brought pizza at Burr Oak and discussion about future trips.



## ST. PAUL SAND CAVES

Horseshoe Sand Cave/Mine, Hobbit Hole, Echo Sand Cave/Mine, and several unnamed sand caves, Ramsey County, Minnesota

December 24&27, 1990

by Mike Lace

Even though I grew up in the Twin Cities, I had yet to enter any of the caves known to exist inside the city limits. I attribute this neglect to not getting involved in caving until well after I had moved away, but since I was home for the holidays, I decided to visit some of several sand mines along the river. Sand had been mined from numerous outcrops of St. Peter Sandstone that often held natural cave entrances.

I set out on Christmas Eve day in well below zero weather to see if I could locate at least one or two of these old sand workings and was rewarded with several openings that were actively steaming. At first, I thought it might be due to small fires just inside the entrances lit by some of the homeless in the area but found no one in any of the comfortably warm mines visited. Partiers obviously used the caves, leaving too much evidence of their visits but sadly only a single bat was seen.

The first cave found that day was Horseshoe Sand Cave and consisted of a maze-like arrangement of interconnecting passageways within the shape of a horseshoe. The cave has a surveyed length of 510 meters with most of the passage being 15 feet wide by 6-20 feet high. The bases of many of the pillars formed by the mining were brick or rock faced presumably to protect them from damage during mining operations.

A large outcrop downstream of this cave had three separate steam holes, all of which would have to be dug open to access a mine that probably was closed by the collapse of the Glenwood Shale and Platteville Limestone above the sandstone layer. The next outcrop, and perhaps the largest, held a large entrance (30-40 feet high) to a passage with numerous branches with white sandy floors. As with all the mines visited, it had multiple entrances.

The next opening downstream from the large unnamed mine led to yet another extensive set of passageways that were mostly filled with old building materials, rumored to have been dumped there after a local flood in the late sixties.

The last day of my visit, I took a few photos and looked for more mines. Echo Sand Cave is gated in part to protect bat colonies in winter months. The gate itself is an impressive construction of angle iron and appears to be doing its job well. Hobbit Hole is a small man made 38.5 meter loop through a bulge in the bluff and offered the only crawling passage seen that day. The last cave was set back from the river and its entrance found near the top of the bluff. The larger original entrance was bricked off but a smaller stoopway nearby led to a 3 foot wide hole that dropped about 8 feet into a large room on the other side of the brick barrier. I opted to save this one for a future trip when companions and vertical gear will be more abundant.

\*note: All of the background data for this article was taken from a section of the NSS Convention Guidebook (1980) written by Edward J. Zawlocki.



## HOW I SPENT MY NEW YEARS

Mammoth Cave, Kentucky  
December 27 - January 2, 1991

by Marc Ohms

This past summer I joined the Cave Research Foundation (CRF). Membership is simply being active in one of their projects. Being in school makes it hard to go often but I did make it to the New Year expedition at Mammoth Cave.

Breakfast was at 6:00 a.m. and after that I met with my party to discuss our plans. We entered Unknown Cave after removing ice blocks from the entrance. Shortly after we were in, we hit a fork in the passage and took a right which led to a pit. We rigged the pit and dropped in. It was a short, 20 foot drop, but very impressive. It was the middle of a 60 foot dome with a small waterfall. We started surveying at the bottom. This was a dome complex consisting of four large domes with leads going off in every direction. We climbed up into a lead high in a dome with a good-sized waterfall and found yet another large dome. We had been in the cave nine hours and were expected back soon so we packed up and left the cave. Back at Maple Springs, supper was ready, so we ate and then went to bed early.

Again breakfast was at 6:00 a.m. Today I was in a caving party with two ladies and myself. I could get used to that real easy. We entered through the Carmicheal Entrance and walked to the Snowball Dining Room and on to El Ghor, then Sillman's Avenue. Here we found Burley's Way, a side passage in which we were to survey side leads. We surveyed a lot of crawls and passages that looped back to the same passage. We spent 11 hours in the cave. The female cavers were very strong cavers and could run down most men. It was very much fun to cave with them.

The next morning we slept in to 7:00 a.m. Today, three cavers and I planned on going to Bedquilt Cave; they say it is extremely mazy. When we got there, it was under three feet of water. A stream was gushing in, destroying hopes of entry. The area had recieved heavy rains and everything was flooded. We then decided to see what the cave river was like in flood. We entered through a drilled shaft like at Coldwater Cave. This shaft only had metal down to the rock and was bare from there down. Water was gushing in at the bedding planes making it a very wet 80 foot rappel. Once we were all down, we headed for the river. We could hear it rushing 20 minutes before we got to it. Then I saw it! It was 30 feet wide and at least 6 feet deep and all going down a hole which lead to a passage below us. The water was moving so fast and was so loud we could not hear each other even when yelling. It made me respect the cave a lot more. The scarey part is the passage we came in is the overflow. We found foam on the ceiling indicating the water had reached that level. That means the water was at least 9 feet higher than now! This passage was at least 40 feet wide. That is a lot of water. We walked away in awe. After a quick ascent, we were back at Maple Springs for New Years Eve. I was in bed by 12:20 a.m.

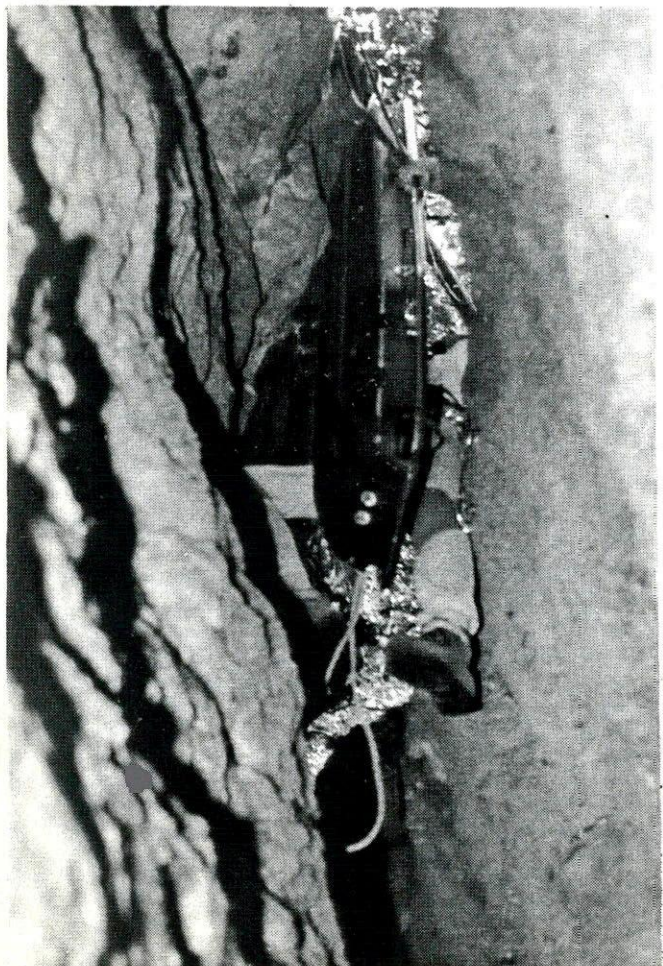
The next morning we all pitched in cleaning the place then all headed for home.





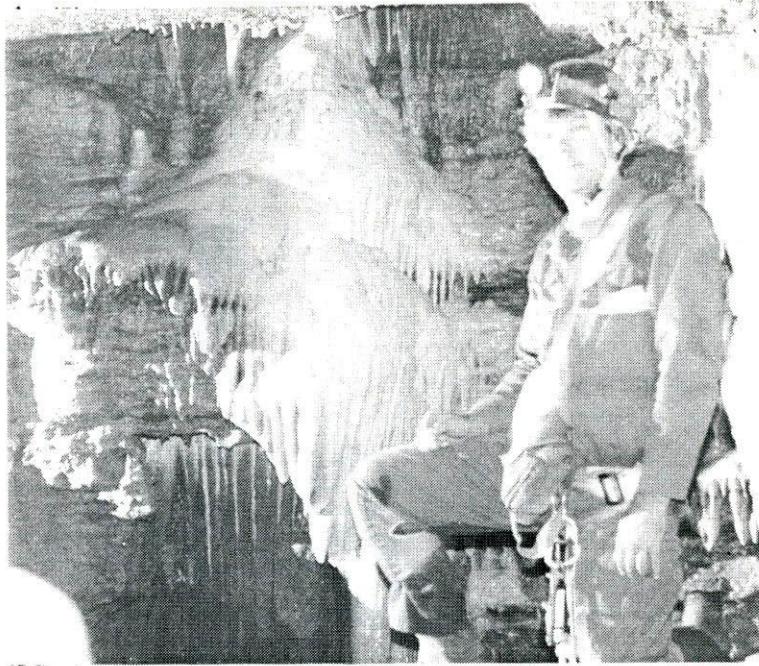
CAVE RESCUE PRACTICE

Marc Ohms and Gary Engh ready the litter and victim to be raised.



Marc Ohms guiding the litter out while being raised from above.



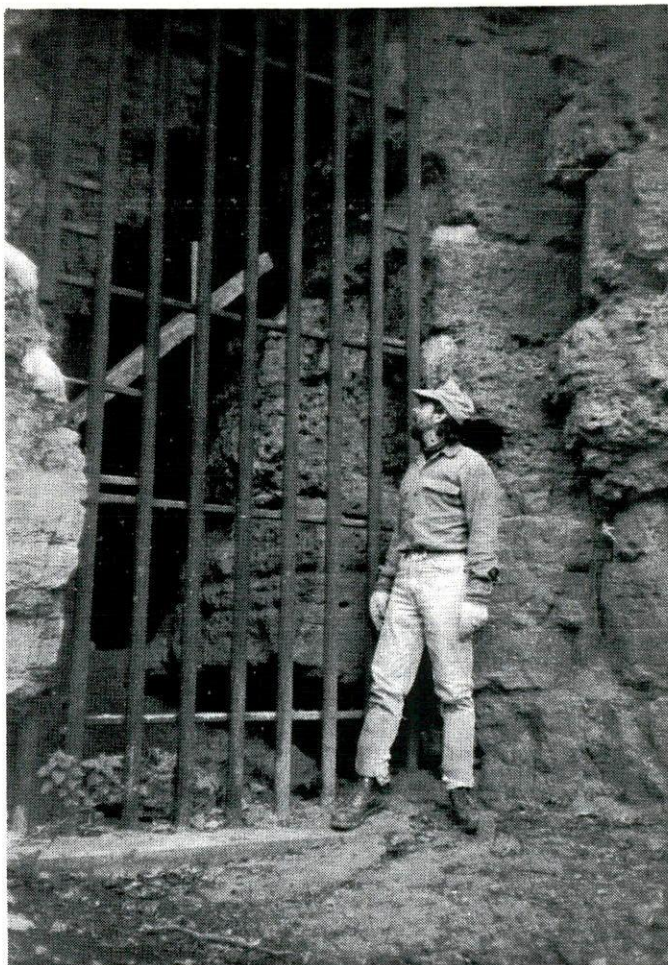
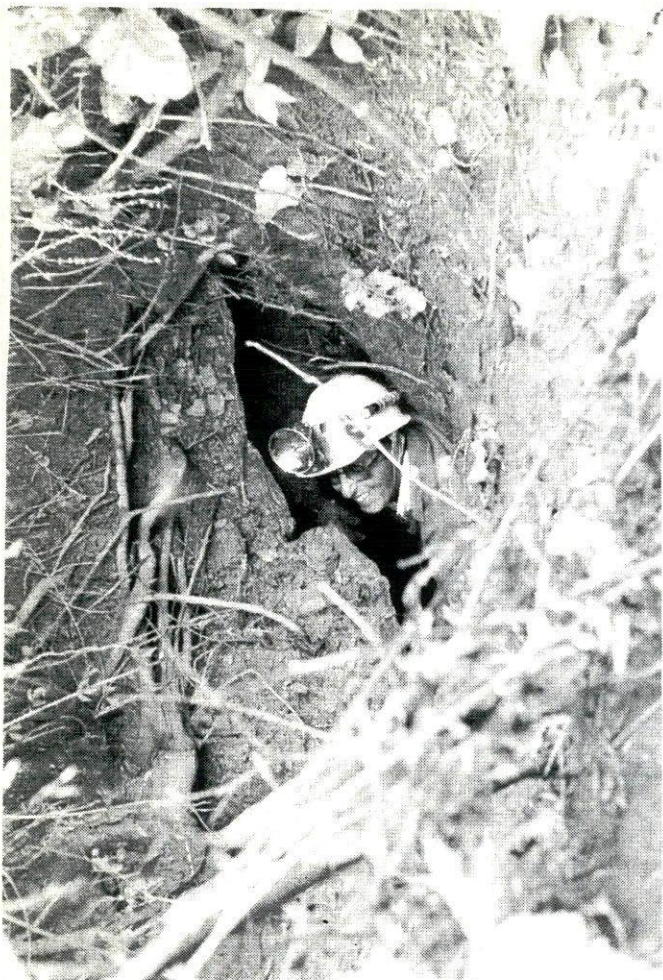


Scott Dankof on the unfamiliar end of the camera  
in Wonder Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa



Mike Nelson at The Curtain in upstream Coldwater  
Cave (The Nelson Section)





Mike Lace at the gated  
entrance to Billboard #1  
Cave in Dubuque, Iowa

Bob Wahlstrom in the  
entrance to Hemp Hole Cave  
in Floyd County, Iowa

Jay Wells in the entrance  
of Wilson Cave in Floyd  
County, Iowa

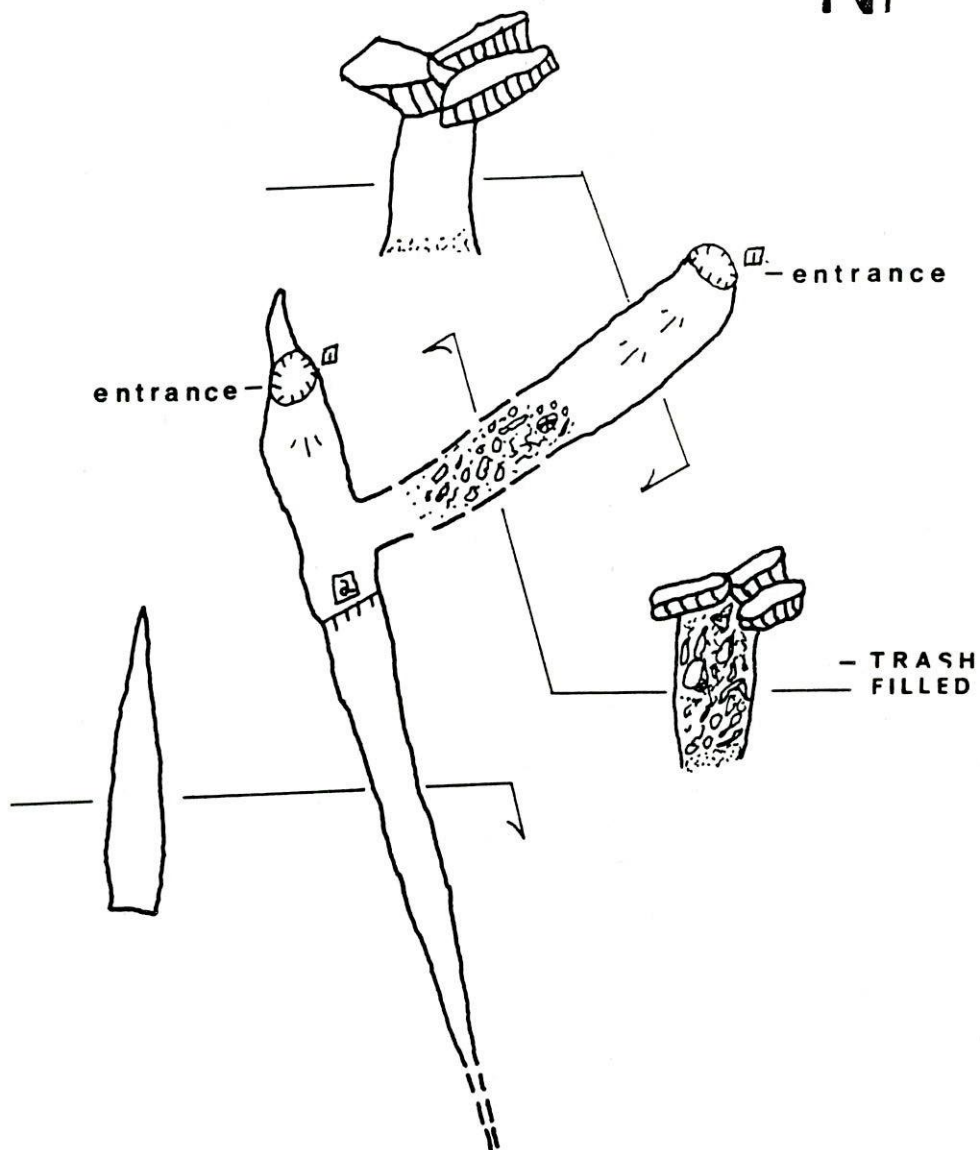
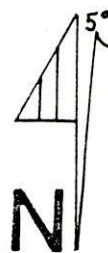
Photos by Marc Ohms, Jay Wells,  
and Stacey Cyphert



# ENTRANCES



MIDDLE ROAD CAVE  
DUBUQUE COUNTY, IOWA  
COMPASS & TAPE SURVEY  
BY OHMS & SCHENCK  
7/19/90



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meters

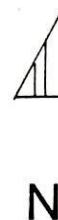
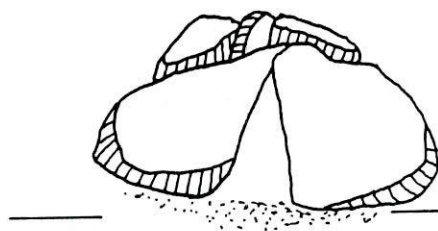
MARC OHMS



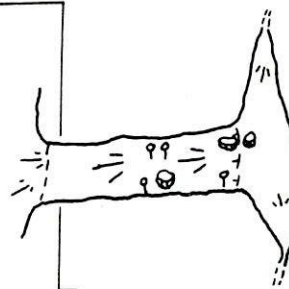




FIRST CAVE  
DUBUQUE COUNTY, IOWA  
COMPASS & TAPE SURVEY  
7/11/90

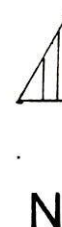
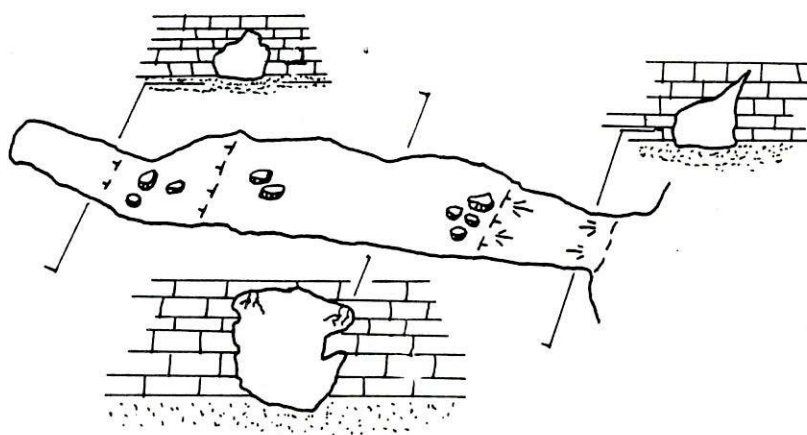


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MARC OHMS

LEYTEM'S CAVE  
DUBUQUE COUNTY  
COMPASS & TAPE  
SURVEY 7/11/90



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MARC OHMS



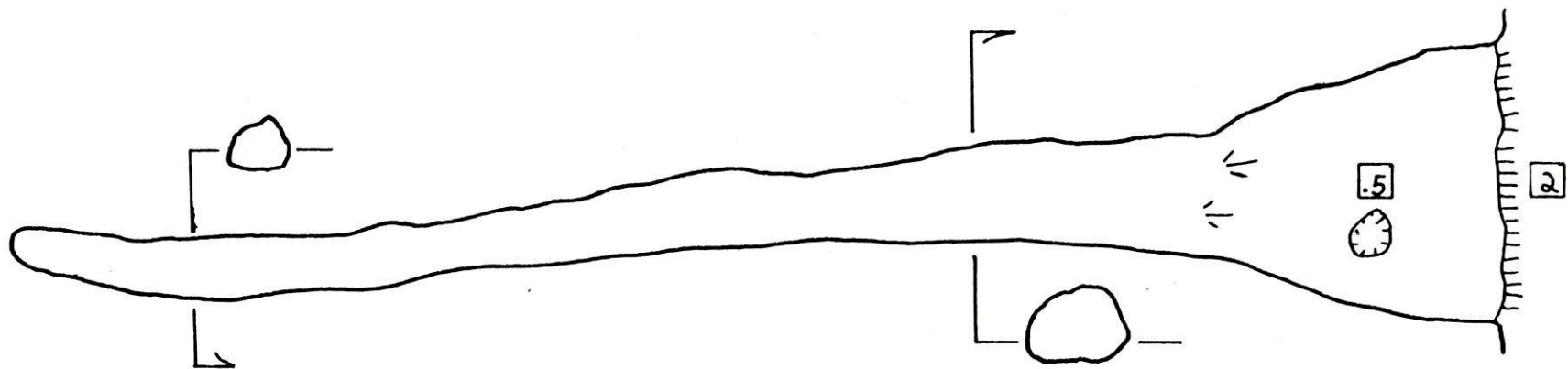
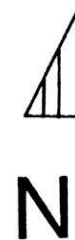




# NUMEROUS CAVE

## DUBUQUE COUNTY, IOWA

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meters



compass and tape survey marc ohms

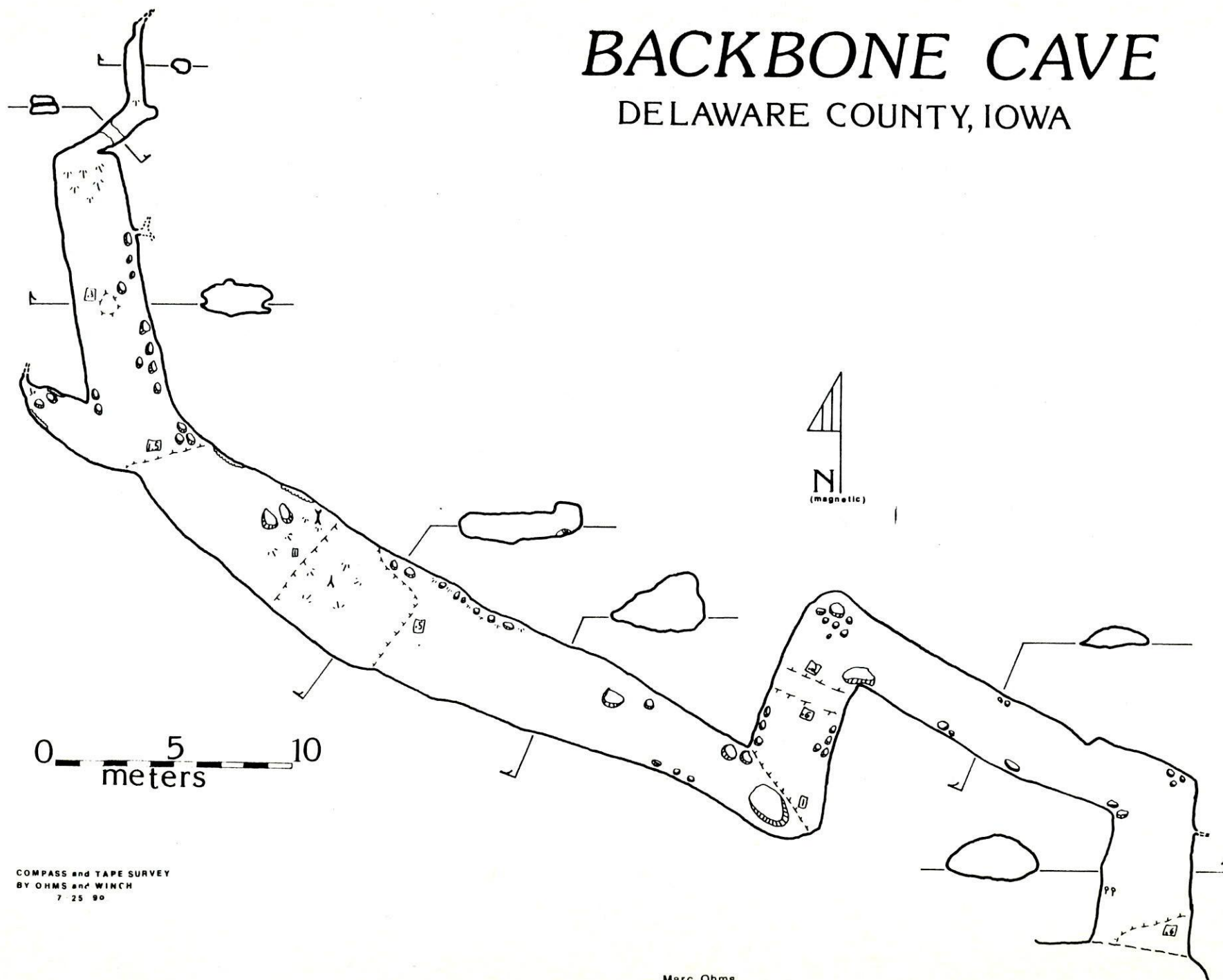






# BACKBONE CAVE

DELAWARE COUNTY, IOWA





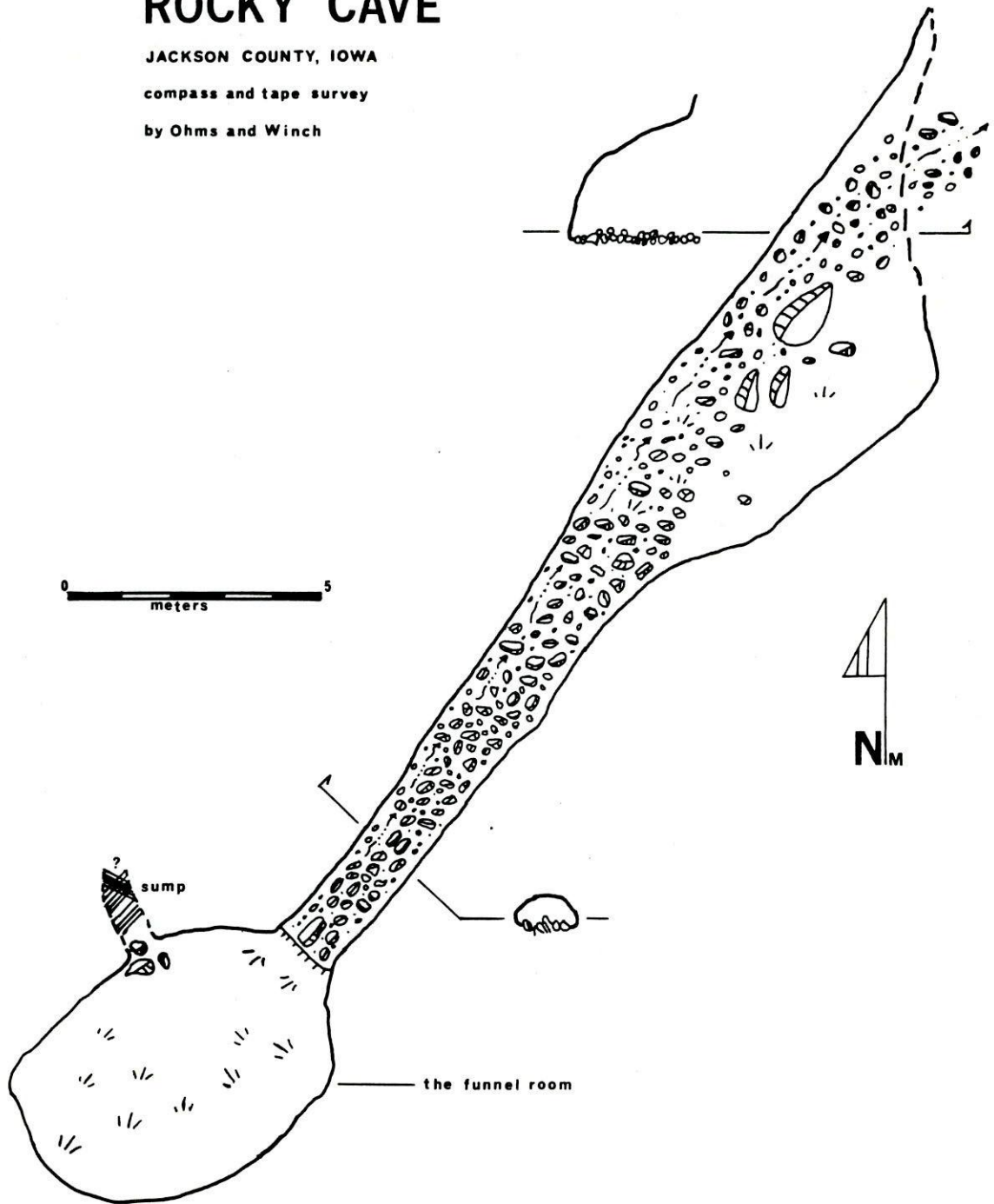


# ROCKY CAVE

JACKSON COUNTY, IOWA

compass and tape survey

by Ohms and Winch



Marc Ohms

