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Lowell Burkhead

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I N T E R C O M

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National Speleological Society



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The Iowa Grotto meets at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month (third Wed. in Dec.) in room 125 of Trowbridge Hall on the campus of the University Of Iowa.

Air Force Rescue Coordination Center
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Iowa County Emergency Management
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This number calls out Iowa Grotto rescue personnel

Cover: Doug Schmuecker in the entrance to a new cave near Mielke Cave in Clayton County.
Photo by Scott Dankof

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IOWA GROTTO
National Speleological Society
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Vice Chairman - - - - - Marc Ohms
Secretary Treasurer - - Jay Wells

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IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting January 22, 1992

The meeting was called to order at 7:47 p.m. by Chairman Mike Lace. TRIP REPORTS: Marc Ohms reported on his Bahamas Island research and caving trip. He reported five new caves were explored by the group. December Coldwater Cave trips included a survey trip to the IGA Passage by Larry Welch, Chris Beck, Marc Ohms, Mike Lace, and Doug Schmuecker. Several January Coldwater Project trips were reported on. Chris Beck, Mike Lace, and Marc Ohms surveyed to the obstruction of the Toboggan Passage. Stacey Cyphert, Larry Welch, and Jay Wells surveyed to the end of the Grappling Falls Passage. Mike Bounk and Steve Moon scouted around the Hoot Dome area. Scott Dankof, Doug Schmuecker, and Jim Elliott went on a photo trip in the downstream section. A trip led by Mike Nelson to the New Galena Mines in Allamakee County was reported on. Mike Lace reported on a trip to Gary's Crevice near Garnavillo and Yew Ridge Cave near Luxemburg. A good turnout for the Floyd County trip was reported. Several caves were visited including Jesse James, Hemp Hole, Two Day's Digging, and Thorson's Cave with the last being surveyed. Marc Ohms, Chris Beck, and Mike Lace surveyed Blue Boy Cave and Bogus Cave in Jones County. Greg McCarty reported on a lead checking trip near Lansing. He also reported on a trip into Coldwater Cave down to the sump area.

FUTURE TRIPS: A Jackson County trip will be announced. Maze Cave will be February 22. A trip to Des Moines County will be announced. The NCRC Rescue Training and the NSS Convention will be in August as well as the Iowa Grotto summer picnic. OLD BUSINESS: The annual report is completed and mailed to the NSS. Results of the grotto election are: Mike Lace - Chairman, Marc Ohms - Vice Chairman, Jay Wells - Secretary Treasurer. The Iowa Cave Map Book was discussed and prices were voted on. For members: \$15.00 or \$12.00 for prepaid orders. For nonmembers: \$20.00 or \$17.00 for prepaid orders. NEW BUSINESS: Crystal Lake Cave was reported broken into. Several formations were damaged and destroyed. A meeting concerning Searryl's Cave will be held March 10 and 11 at the Wapsipinicon State Park. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Regular meeting February 26, 1992

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 p.m. after a presentation by Ken Christiansen: Caves - Evolutionary Laboratories. No treasurer's report was given. TRIP REPORTS: Greg McCarty reported on a trip with Mike Nelson to the Hike Spring area. They also visited Nelson Cave near St. Olaf. He also reported on a trip with John Fuhrman to a road cut near St. Olaf. Mike Lace reported on a trip with Jay Wells to Eden Valley Park. Several sinkholes were checked. One small cave near the access was found. They then went to Pine Creek State Park where several shelter caves were checked. Marc Ohms reported on a trip with Chris Beck, Gerda Hartman, and Eric Winch. Some leads were checked and Wiggins and Falling Rock Caves were surveyed. Coldwater Project trips included, Marc Ohms and Mike Lace went out to the end of the Cascade Passage and Mike Nelson and Larry Welch finished surveying the Pallus Passage. A survey trip to the New Galena Mines was reported. Three of the mines were surveyed. Marc Ohms reported on a survey trip with Mike Lace, Doug Schmuecker, Chris Beck, and Bert Jagnow to Maze Cave. It was reported that a lot of new passage was found. Marc also reported on a trip to Clayton County where seven different caves were visited. Jay Wells reported on a bat count trip into Minnesota Mystery Cave. FUTURE TRIPS: Jackson County, Maze Cave, Dubuque County, NSS Convention, NCRC training, and the Grotto Picnic. There was no old business brought up. NEW BUSINESS: The state is interested in the Timber Ridge area. A golf course was voted down in Dubuque. The state has started a sinkhole clean-up project. Their goal is to clean the trash from 35 sinkholes next year. The meeting was adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

A CHALLENGE FOR THE SPELEO-HANDICAPPED

From INTERCOM editor, Lowell Burkhead

The INTERCOM has many readers that rarely if ever set foot in a cave. The reason for that sad situation I have dubbed, the "speleo-handicap". They are as varied as wheelchair bound to addicted to TV. Some people are only interested in caves if they don't have to go in them and get cold, wet, muddy, dirty, or otherwise soiled. Just for all of you is included on the rear cover of this issue, A CAVE. It is a stereographic puzzle similar to random-dot stereograms which are produced by a computer program. I call this puzzle a random-letter typogram. It was produced by mental computations and a typewriter. It is without a doubt one of the most difficult stereographic puzzles ever made. So far, 10 people have been able to see the cave and some of them have seen all of it, so it can be done. The challenge is for you non-caver cavers to explore this very difficult cave in the comfort of your easychairs and write a trip report on the experience for the INTERCOM. The best one or ones, if not all of them, will be printed in these pages. This is a chance for us to read the work of a new author or two. Even if you are not a new author or a non-caver, feel free to join in. You don't even have to be an Iowa Grotto member.

I am hoping that this puzzle will spark some interest in stereographic photography. They can be easily taken by taking one photo standing on one foot and shifting your weight to the other foot and taking another, getting about 10 inches difference between the two. The trick for this method is keeping the camera level and duplicating the lighting on the two pictures. If we can get a few good attempts looking back a passage or up or down a pit or at anything with depth, we can try publishing a few in the INTERCOM. Stereographic photos are much easier to free-view than puzzles.

THE CAVE MAP

by Marc Ohms

I am sure that you have seen a cave map before. They can be found in the INTERCOM, NSS News or Digest, and numerous cave books. If you have not noticed, few cartographer's styles are alike. Cave maps are like paintings or sculptures, they are art. They are expressions of the cartographer's imagination and creativity. Of course, the cartographer has guidelines set by the survey data, but how it is presented and what is presented is the cartographer's discretion. There are few set rules in cave cartography. Different grottos, regions, or surveys, may have their own rules for their maps, but no nationwide standards exist.

Cartographers will add detail or information of little general understanding or interest because it has meaning to the survey teams or explorers. Details that others think should be included may not be, and always for good reasons. An attack on a cartographer's map is an attack on his/her drafting style. Some areas contain few cave cartographers and the area cavers should be receptive to any maps they are provided with. Many would-be cartographers as well as seasoned cartographers have been chased away due to unneeded and thoughtless criticism. We do not expect a standing ovation when we finish a map, but simply gratitude for our hours, days, months, or years spent surveying, our hours spent at the drafting table reducing data or drawing, and our numerous expenses with survey and drafting equipment.

Detail on a cave map is typically shown with standard symbols or written information. The standard symbols are just that, they are symbols. They are not meant to be exact models. An example of this is when using a symbol for sodastraws that shows four straws. This may represent 2 to 102 sodastraws but the map reader should get the idea that there are sodastraws there. The amount of detail on a map will vary with cave and passage size and how small or large the final map will be.

Cave maps are used for many different reasons. They aid in exploration by indicating going leads or possible connections. The cave map is the foundation for cave geology and aids in many other sciences. A cave map to a large or mazy cave may be used as a prevention from getting lost or finding a certain location or passage within the cave. Most of all, it is the only way to view the entire cave at once, to see

relationships between passages or other features, and to distinguish one cave from the other.

Cave maps are as accurate as technology allows them to be. I am sure the future will bring new and improved survey instruments and computer software for cave cartographers, but no matter what techniques are used to draft cave maps, they will still contain a lot of the cartographer's personal touches.

EDITORIAL REPLY

by Lowell Burkhead

There have been no attacks on any maps or cartographers that I am aware of. There have been questions and honest differences of opinion. It seems that no matter what the question, a cartographer will take it as a personal attack. I don't know why that is or how to fix it. As editor, the most common question asked me about the maps is "What are these symbols"? I gave Marc a call and he agreed that attack was too strong a word but he couldn't come up with the right one. I couldn't either. Marc agreed to do an article for the next issue that includes the key for the map symbols. That might cut down on the questions and the attacks, real or not.

trip reports

SWIMMING THE MOAT AND VISITING THE PALLUS

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

November 16, 1991

Larry Welch and Jay Wells

by Larry Welch

Anyone who ventures off of the beaten path in Coldwater cannot afford to be whimsical about the weather. Even a month such as November, which has often featured frozen ground and bitter chills, is no sure bet. Jay and I had designs on a Grappling Falls trip but a spate of November rains left the stream levels elevated in the cave. We decided to try the trip regardless but planned to abort the trip if any risks were perceived on the way. In the past, we entered the cave knowing both the current water level at the platform and its immediate past history (I.E. rising, falling, holding steady). Due to the unfortunate removal of the stream level recorder, this latter information can no longer be obtained and caving in Coldwater is riskier than before.

We got into the cave later than we had hoped after a good night's sleep. The packs were heavy and the pace was sensibly moderate. Jay was carrying this monstrosity of a pelican box that was keeping his gear dry albeit at the cost of several extra ounces. The stream current was strong but it was easy to ignore this until the return trip. Whenever we had to stoop or crawl, my stomach muscles screamed from the weight of the pack. Once through the Pig Trough, I was surprised at the water depth and the strength of the current. Normally, a lengthy rest is enjoyed at this point but the current quickly sucked all the heat out of you. Moving on, I started to have doubts about the upcoming siphons. The upstream crawl was tiresome, especially the section just before Frog Junction. We eschewed our neoprene hoods and charged into the siphons. The water level was higher than I'd seen it before in this spot and we were almost glad to see Cramper Dome. I was really doubting the wisdom of what we were doing. Jay went ahead to "check" the third siphon, and I remember him suggesting we go through one at a time.

After awhile, I could only hear gurgling so I slid into the murk. Things were grim; airspace was low enough to force one to adapt to Spong techniques and I really wished I'd gotten a hand light out of my pack. A hood would have been helpful as well. I caught up with Jay. We had a short discussion and did the sensible thing -- turned around. Our safety margin was insufficient to risk spending 7-8 hours on the far side of the siphon unless we knew with certainty that the water level was not rising.

I checked a lead in Cramper Dome on the way back that didn't go anywhere but up. Back in Frog Junction, we were thoroughly chilled, leading to irrational mental behavior. We decided to stash our climbing gear at this point based on the notion that we would try again next month to get through. At the time, this seemed quite sensible. Since our packs were now much lighter, we felt sprightly enough to look for a side lead to survey. One promising lead heading eastward from Kenny's Ballroom quickly pinched out. Jay managed to get stuck here, so we backed out and surveyed the lead.

The next lead was downstream near the Killer Foam Basin. The entry was an unpromising mud squeeze but we had seen some sizeable formations back there through a window slightly upstream. Besides, if Gary Engh decided the lead merited a survey chip, it was not to be trifled with! After seeing that we would fit, we surveyed in. The passage widened out quickly and stayed that way, with ceiling heights varying from 2 to 4 feet. Except for a few puddles, the passage was remarkably dry. Nevertheless, the formations were pretty and extensive, with soda straws up to a foot in length and several large columns. The dryness caused us to get hopelessly muddy, and we eventually tied off the survey with the passage still going. Jay named it the Pallus Passage -- Packs Are Lighter, Let Us Survey. The Pallus Passage is now the longest surveyed side passage off of Wanda's Walkway and its location is very intriguing. We had had it by this point, so headed out of the cave. When we reached the platform, we noted that the water had risen slightly since we had left. This quelled any second thought we might have had about aborting the Grappling Falls trip.

EPILOGUE

On February 15, Mike Nelson and I returned to the Pallus Passage to continue the survey. Naturally, after I had talked Mike into the trip by telling him what a great lead it was, it crapped out. Things got very small after only 2 survey shots, at which point, progress was limited to movement of the exhale and grunt variety. It did not look terribly promising but this ought to be pushed harder by a thin team before it is considered done. In all fairness, I should note that Mike hadn't been wetsuit caving in some time and claimed to be somewhat out of shape. In fact, that fat old grandfather ran my tail into the ground on the return trip. Some things never change.

FRIDAY THE 13th STRIKES AGAIN?

Rimstone River Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
December 13, 1991
John Fuhrman and Greg McCarty

by Greg McCarty

Did the forces of darkness converge to alter the course of this cave trip? Were we unlucky that John's only free day for caving fell on Friday the 13th, or was this just another reminder that in Iowa, you should always plan on having your plans fouled up? Who can say? All I know is that this trip wasn't quite what we had in mind, but it ended up being fun anyway. Our big plan was to tour Rimstone River Cave, measuring its length as we went. This would give us practice for the more difficult measurement of Peterson Cave (if it will only dry out enough for us to get back in there). Rimstone River is certainly longer than Peterson, but the passage is a lot more difficult in the latter. John had never seen Rimstone River and I hadn't actually been to the sump so it seemed like a fun choice for a winter wetsuit trip.

The history of Rimstone River Cave is interesting and trip reports weren't written for my earlier trips so I'll include some background information before continuing with the report. A local story tells that two guys went in there about as far as the Silver Creek valley, possibly during the drought of the 30's. Anyone who's been in there would tell you that to go very far in the cave without a wetsuit would take quite a drought so the likelihood of anyone having seen even the first 1000 feet is very slim. The cave is in a prominent alcove and has a good flow of water from its low entrance.

It is just downstream on a major creek from a spring and small dry cave that were checked out by the Iowa Grotto at the end of the 60's but they had no idea it was there as no one mentioned it locally. Around 1970, Iowa Grotto cavers got a cave lead but could not track it down. The lead was to talk to a person who knew of a cave near Bluffton but the person couldn't be located and the matter was dropped. In the mid 70's, some cavers from Minnesota ventured down into Iowa and became the first cavers to enter the cave. It was just after this that we started work on the razor wire barricade that you now see gracing our northern border. The Minnesota cavers were members of the Minnesota Speleological Survey and I read about their three trips into the cave in Minnesota Speleology. They even had a picture of the entrance on one of the covers. They had named the cave for the prominent rimstone dams in the cave, not because they admired Rimstone River Cave in Perry County, Missouri. I knew the leader of these trips so I gave him a call to find out more about the cave. He was naturally reluctant to give out the exact location of the cave but that was okay as I had no intention of rushing up there to see it. I had enough information to locate it if I ever needed to. Meanwhile, I wasn't sure exactly what they had going in terms of landowner relations and so I didn't want to interfere until I knew more. One thing he told me that was interesting was that he wasn't positive that the cave actually sumped at the end as had been described in the trip report. He said it was a relative novice who had gotten to that point in the cave and came back to him with the bad news before he reached it.

It was probably less than two weeks after this phone conversation that I organized a lead checking trip in the Decorah area with Ed Smith and Mike Bounk. As we were trying different things, we were told to talk to a person who lived west of Decorah. He was supposed to know a hunter who knew where a cave was. A quick conversation with the person gave us the name and location of the hunter. Ed recognized the name as the same one the grotto had been given around 1970 for the cave lead near Bluffton. Ed called him on the phone and we quickly learned that the cave he knew about was Rimstone River. The grotto could have found the cave years ago if this person had been found or we would have found it on this trip if Minnesota hadn't beaten us to the punch by about three months. Close, but not quite.

After locating the farm and talking with the owner, we confirmed that this was the cave the Minnesota cavers had found. Quickly suiting up, we jumped in the cave and soon found the low airspace mentioned in the reports. It was just low enough to be a bother but not real bad. I went through on my back while cradling my carbide lamp on my chest, then called for Mike to follow. He didn't go on his back like I had instructed, so he put out his carbide lamp in the middle of the sump. Following my light and voice, he continued but made a wave and swallowed some water. His struggles aggravated the situation but my yelling for him to hold still finally worked and he regained his composure and airspace. I was afraid I would have to go back into the low passage and conk him in order to get him to safety. Mike learned the valuable lesson of being calm in low airspace, and why it's better to be on your back when a wetsuit can buoy your face up to the ceiling.

Ed decided to not join us, as he felt claustrophobic in the low airspace. He instead started to move rocks in the entrance to lower the water level. I was a little concerned that this would make it easier for locals to enter the cave but I imagine that wasn't much of a real concern. Mike and I decided to go for a quick reconnaissance and leave the big push for a later trip. When we reached the first rimstone dam, I found a baby bottle of carbide in the plunge pool. It had been lost on one of the Minnesota trips. Mike decided to not go beyond the dam on this trip, so I scouted ahead as far as the big dome. It's really neat how the water suddenly deepens to almost five feet just before the flowstone blocks in the bottom of the dome. I picked up Mike on the way out and we exited the cave, making plans to come back on a trip when we could spend more time in the cave.

The three of us returned the following winter with Jim (J.J.) Erickson and Barb

am Ende. This was day one of a two day trip and we were devoting the whole day to Rimstone River. We changed into our wetsuits in one of the farm buildings, thankful that the calf manure was frozen. The owner was having his septic tank pumped out so we were serenaded by an amazingly loud hum all the way to the cave. After getting everyone through the low place, we proceeded to the first rimstone dam. Here, Ed and Barb decided that they would be a whole lot happier if they left the cave. J.J., Mike and I were to proceed to the end of the cave and then meet Ed and Barb at a place to eat in Decorah at a specified time. This plan seemed fine at the time, but naturally, I underestimated how long it would take us to reach the end of the cave.

After Ed and Barb left, the intrepid three continued into the cave, admiring all the big brown bats in the dome, appreciating the soft sandy floor, marveling at the bridges that spanned the passage (forcing you to climb over these slippery entities), enjoying the little speleothems that were common along the passage walls, and probing into the three side passages that were found. The arched ceiling and roomy passage made for a very pleasant cave, with just one peculiarity. Almost the whole cave is knee crawl passage. There is some belly crawl and a little higher passage where you can walk or stoop briefly, but the rest of the cave is knee crawl. The sandy floor comes in very handy.

We were past our turn-around time by a good amount when we finally decided to head back. We had been chugging along pretty hard toward the end, trying to reach the sump but we were a little short. The passage had gotten smaller and a lot muddier so it couldn't have been too much further, but we were going to be well beyond our guaranteed exit time as it was. We started the charge out with Mike in the lead and J.J. bringing up the rear. Mike and I were soon stopped by the sounds of J.J. yelling in pain. The fast pace had caused too much sweating, hence loss of electrolytes. J.J. had leg cramps. At first I thought it was kind of funny, watching him roll around all curled up in a ball, but five minutes later, I got them. Mike was all worried that he was next but he escaped unscathed. After exiting the cave, we changed quickly and headed for Decorah. Temperatures in the teens help you to change faster. When we arrived at the meeting place, Ed and Barb were not there. When they showed up later, we found out they had gone back to the owners so that they would be on hand in case of trouble.

More than a few years have gone by since those early trips but when I called the owner, I was happy to find that he still remembered me. I had been concerned about the weather leading up to the trip as the thawing and light showers in some areas had made things soggy. The owner said that the creek was up but that the spring was unchanged and clear. This later proved to be true but still was not quite the whole story. John drove up to Fayette from Manchester, then we changed into our wetsuits before continuing. Confident from the owner's report, we brought only the gear we would need for the trip into Rimstone River. As we drove north, we crossed one swollen river after another. All of the falleys were flowing and it was not looking good but when we got to the owner's house, he confirmed that the flow from the cave was clear and unchanged. Grabbing the rest of the gear, we trekked up to the entrance and started in. After only one measurement, though, I saw trouble up ahead.

I was using this trip to give a serious field test to a helmet mounted cave diving light I had constructed. It's bright beam showed the airspace dwindling away about 30 feet ahead of me. I had thought that the flow from the entrance was greater than I remembered and this confirmed it. After John joined me, I tried pushing ahead to see if any airspace continued. Unable to find any, I came back out and had John give it a try. Low airspace passage is something you need to practice to be confident, so I didn't want John to miss the opportunity. John found a small ceiling pocket by staying further to the right. I had forgotten it was there until I crawled up to join him and saw it again. It was very drippy and didn't allow us to get any further. Disappointed (but not shocked), we headed back out to the entrance. John was encouraged to

hear that the rest of the cave was more interesting and pleasant than the first 75 feet.

Looking at the rocks in the entrance, we could see that the moss, which grows on damp rocks, was now submerged by several inches. The flow from the cave was much greater than normal. Before leaving, we moved some logs and rocks that had fallen into the stream bed and were causing some water to back up into the cave. A final talk with the owner gave the crucial details on the flow level. He said that the level had been this high since a three inch rainfall that had occurred in October. It wasn't the recent weather that doomed this trip, it had been doomed all along.

John and I changed out of our wetsuits behind his Jeep and contemplated our next move. We were going to be limited by our lack of gear and suitable attire. I had thought about going to a nearby farm to get some more leads from my old high school fishing buddy but the owner of Rimstone River said that he had moved into Decorah. We decided to play it by ear and just figure things out as we went. John put on a pair of tennis shoes while I tore a garbage bag in two and wrapped my feet before putting my wet jungle boots back on. We decided that long hikes in the snow were out but those convictions later fell by the wayside.

We started working our way back to Decorah taking the most interesting routes we could find. We stopped to look at the bluff that Ed Smith and I had climbed once while vainly trying to reach a cave entrance about 80 feet above the road. We hadn't been able to reach the opening but we did succeed in climbing over the top of the bluff without killing ourselves. While John and I stood there watching, a noticeable quantity of rock broke loose from near the top of the bluff and came bouncing down the face. Some intermittent sun had freed some of the frost shattered rock. When your'e working with the Galena Limestone, you always have to be concerned about frost shattering when it gets warm enough for some thawing to take place. As we continued our travels, I got an idea. I had known about a pair of springs in the area since the mid 70's. Dr. Knudson had described them to me as coming out of impassable slots. I had always wanted to take a look at them but never got around to it. It seemed like a good time.

We drove to where the flow from the first spring crosses the road and then backtracked until we reached a farmhouse. A talk with a woman there confirmed that I had the right name for the owner and that he lived about three miles away on another road. She suggested that we first check his trailer that is near the spring to see if he was there. We hiked up the long lane leading to the trailer following some recent(?) truck tracks but no one was there. I suspect that winter isn't the most likely time to find someone in a camper. It started to snow while we were tramping around and the darkness started to approach due to the short days this time of year. Quickly heading down the roads to the owner's, we wrongly chose to take the first driveway. This merely led down an icy slope to some outbuildings. Using four-wheel-drive, we managed to make it back out of there and slid on down the proper driveway. We immediately knew the owner must be distinctive in character as his farmyard certainly was. Slim pole fences made from trees abounded and the whole place had a rustic feel to it. Before we could reach the door, the owner was out welcoming us in and warning us about the icy walk. Friendly conversation followed and we found out that he is a mule skinner (what exactly do you do with all those mule hides anyway?). He uses mules to hunt raccoons. Though amazed that we wanted to tramp through the snow in the dark, he was quite willing to have us visit the springs. He insisted that we come back afterward to meet his wife and tell them what we found.

As we drove back to the area of the springs, the snow had become quite heavy. It was difficult to make out where the road was. It was very quiet walking through the falling snow back to the spring. Only the rushing water broke the silence. It always feels warm out when the snow falls like this. My wet feet never got cold to speak of and John's almost didn't. When we finally reached the spring, we were looking at a most impressive waterfall about ten feet high and eight feet wide. I managed to work

my way up one side in the snow and reach the top of the falls. The flow was a little high and was cloudy. The slot where the water came out was just a foot and a half from the lip of the waterfall. There was about a body length of enterable passage over a slab of breakdown on one side before it became an impassable slot. I carefully worked my way across the slippery lip to the other side of the falls so I could look in that side but found only a very low slot. Below the falls, a side stream came in from a small spring. We found a place where we could cross and found this little spring to be of interest. If you poke your head into the entrance, you can hear the sound of water flowing over a little falls of some kind. This spring has rocks that can be lifted out of the way so that a view could be obtained. A small chance that there would be passage but we'll check into it next time. The large spring needs more careful attention also as the feel of it reminds me so much of Peterson Cave.

We were doing fine up to this juncture, but now as we headed back to the road, we ventured into the land of confusion. The owner had described two springs. One he called Big Spring and one that was smaller. I knew where each of the two springs I was familiar with crossed the road so I didn't think there could be any trouble finding them. All you have to do is follow the streams. John and I both thought that he had said the eastern most spring was Big Spring. After seeing the size of the large spring we had just been to, we were eager to see the "big" one. We walked down the road to where the other stream crossed it. Big Spring was supposed to be only a short distance from the road. We followed the stream well beyond the given distance but finally came to a nice waterfall. Working our way to the top, we found that the water comes out of a slot with a small ceiling channel. You had to lay completely flat above the water and do pushups to look into the channel because of the angle. You could see maybe 15 feet. The only problem was that this spring was not nearly as big as the first one. It was too far from the road and not big enough. How could it be Big Spring? The valley was dry above the spring. We could only assume something was mixed up and continue with our mission. The owner had mentioned a raccoon hole up the valley from Big Spring. We dutifully hiked up the valley, clambering over logs and up little waterfalls. We finally reached a side branch that looked intriguing. Climbing up some more bedrock falls brought us into a neat overhanging alcove produced by a large waterfall. A hole was visible on the right side so I carefully worked my way up the ice and snow slope. Hanging on by my fingernails, I managed to reach the ledge that ran along the base of a little bluff line. There was a body length of passage with raccoon passage after that. About what I expected but you have to check.

Since it was impossible to climb back down the way I came up, I worked my way along the ledge back to the main branch of the valley. Eventually, I came to a place that had some small trees growing on the slope so I could work my way back down to the stream bed without killing myself in the process. We headed back down the valley and double checked the area near the road to make sure we hadn't missed anything. When we reached the car, we found a neighbor waiting for us. He had seen the car and our tracks and wanted to make sure we had permission. The drive back to the owner's was easier now that the snow had stopped. His wife fed us with some very good chile and we talked about what we had found. It turns out that the two springs he directed us to were the first two we checked. When he talked about how far Big Spring was from the road, he meant the long lane that takes you back to the spring. The other spring we had looked at was on state land. We told him we would be back in the spring and he was eager to join us. He even volunteered to take us around to the sinkholes that are above the springs. So even though this trip was vastly different from what we had planned, we still had a good time and were able to get a few things accomplished.

JUST LIKE HEAVEN

San Salvador Island, Bahamas

by Marc Ohms

From December 26th to January 6th, I was in paradise, also known as San Salvador Island located in the Bahamas. It is one of the smaller remote islands with only a few hundred inhabitants. Tourism is virtually non-existent on the island and the natives are extremely friendly. San Salvador is the island that Columbus first landed on, discovering the new world. 1992 marked 500 years since that event, making New Year's Eve quite a celebration.

We stayed at the Bahamian Field Station, which is an old Coast Guard station. It now serves as a base for students doing research on the geology and biology of the island. I was there with Dr. Mylroie and his students from Mississippi State University. Altogether, there were 120 students from all over the U.S. with a male-female ratio of 50-50 making the 10 day stay more pleasurable. Our days consisted of being in the field from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and lecture/slides from 7-9 p.m. and the remainder of the evening spent at the Short Stop, a local bar.

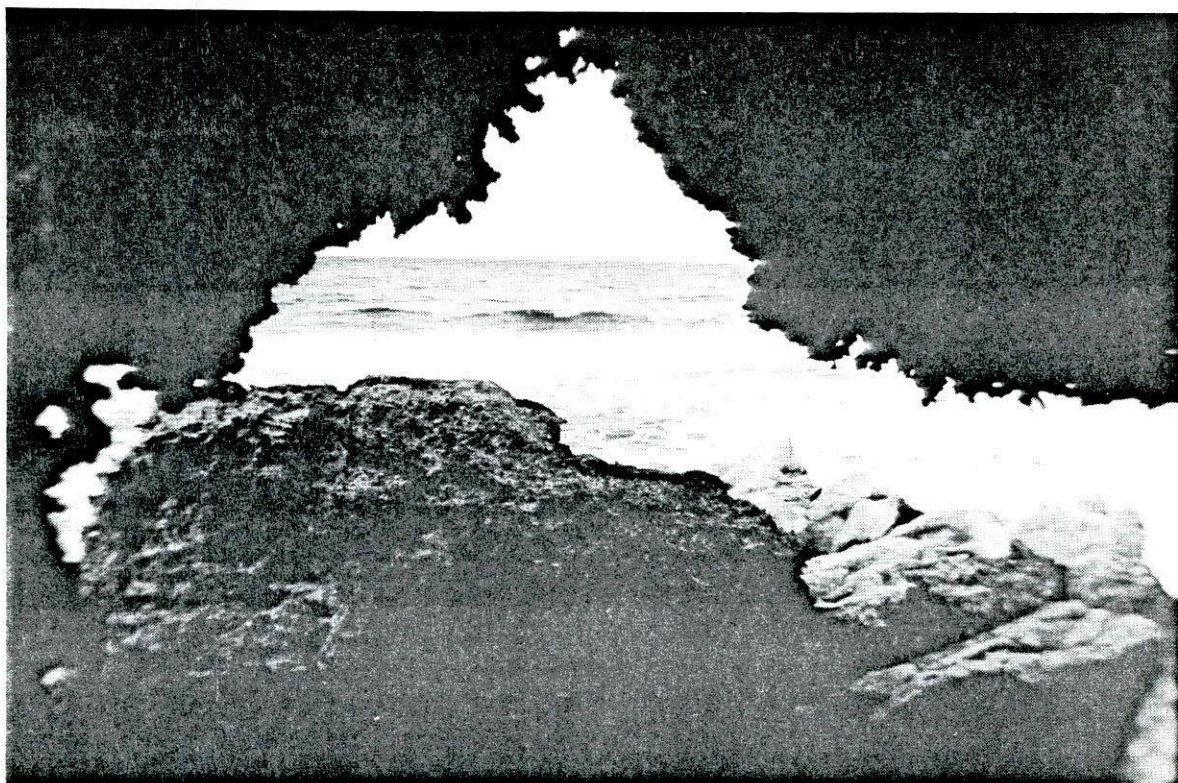
The first few days we did some snorkeling on the reefs. Fish and other creatures were plentiful and the visibility was incredible. The caving was quite incredible. The caves are not large by most standards but are numerous and the island has miles of unsearched ground. There are no native cavers on the island and the only time anyone looks for caves is when Dr. Mylroie is there. We found and explored eight new caves. Most of the caves are dry and very hot.

The longest cave is Lighthouse Cave. It is 2400 feet long and nicely decorated. A lot of the passage contains water varying in depth from inches to swimming. This is all done in shorts and tee-shirts. This cave, as most of them are, is the home to numerous bats and large cockroaches.

An area in the southern part of the island is called Sandy Point and is the home to numerous pits and caves. Owl's Hole is the deepest pit on the island at 40 feet deep and 20 feet across. The ascent and descent are accomplished by climbing a tree that grows out of the pit. There are 80+ pits in the Sandy Point pit area. Most do not have much if any passage. They range in depth from a few feet to 40 feet and are very fun climbing and chimneying in. We found numerous new pits and three new caves in this area. We did some surveying in this area, both in cave and surface. One day we trudged around Stout's Lake, an inland hypersaline lake. There we visited four known caves and found a fifth. There, as anywhere we went in the interior, we had to cut a trail with a machete through the very dense brush. Getting scrapes and scratches from the brush and caves then wading into the hypersaline lake sure put a bounce in your step.

Another lake we visited during the stay was Crescent Lake. Here we discovered two new caves, both of good size and the larger one called Crescent Top Cave, was very well decorated with rows of soda straws. We also went to Reckley Pond where we visited three known caves; one of which was called Garden Cave. It at one time was at least 1000 feet long. It has since lost a lot of passage via collapse of the ceiling. A lot of it still remains as separated pockets, rooms, crawls, and natural bridges and is quite fun to explore. We also found two more new caves in this area. One had a six inch hole for an entrance, but when we looked in, we could see a room with passage leading off. We could not simply walk away, so we started chipping and pounding. Two and a half hours later, we finally broke in and found about 150 feet of passage.

The entire 10 days were filled with nothing but fun and sun. There was not a dull moment and was the experience of a lifetime. I can not think of any words that would describe the beauty of the island and the fun that I had. I took many photos but they do it no justice. I guess you just had to be there.



View from sea cave, San Salvador Island.

photo by Marc Ohms



Damon Chaky in Lighthouse Cave, San Salvador Island.

photo by Marc Ohms

CAVES IN A COUNTY NAMED FLOYD

Jesse James Cave, Hemp Hole, Two Days Digging, Thorson's Cave, Floyd County, Iowa
 Saturday, January 4, 1992 by Mike Lace
 Mike Lace, Jay and Alissa Wells, Mike Nelson and Friends, Doug and Nathan Schmuecker,
 Bob Wahlstrom, Paul Miller, and Ray Houk

Several of the people with us had never visited the Wilson caves before while the rest of us had gone for too long between visits. After chatting a bit with the owner, most of the group headed into Jesse James Cave to poke around. Bob Wahlstrom, Paul Miller, and I walked over to the entrance to Two Days Digging Cave. Now, for those of you who haven't visited this entrance recently, it now consists of a level patch of ground whose only distinguishing feature is a small conical metal grate surrounded by road rock. The sinkhole that used to surround the entrance has been completely filled in to control the ravages of erosion while a culvert was placed over the cave entrance to allow drainage and, hopefully, caver access.

We had seen the erected culvert prior to the sinkhole being filled and from the top, it looked pretty hopeless that anyone could enter the cave again. Bill insisted that he placed the culvert right on the bedrock ledge that rimmed the crevice entrance but we were a bit skeptical. We pried the frozen down grate from the culvert's top and peered at the loose mass of rock 15 feet below. It still looked doubtful. Jay had brought along a cable ladder that we hooked to the tractor rims mounted on top of the culvert and I readed down for a closer look.

The rubble at the bottom was stable enough and after moving a few rocks, it was possible to slip under the culvert wall and sit right above the wide open crack that led down into the cave. The entrance had changed little except for a bit more soil built up on the passage floor below. While Bob and Paul worked on a dig in nearby Hemp Hole, Mike Nelson and a few others arrived to examine the new entrance. Ray Houk descended the ladder to back me up while I slid down into the crevice to make sure the horizontal passage was still open. I really had forgotten how fun it was to slide into it and get wedged when you take a not so deep breath. The passage was clear below and the climb/squeeze out was actually easier with better footholds than before. Bill honestly couldn't have done a better job of maintaining the entrance while controlling the loss of topsoil. It's a great soil and cave conservation model!

Bob and Paul had returned from Hemp Hole with guarded optimism about its potential. We regrouped and sent out a couple of cars to check with neighbors about access to other caves. Bob and Paul checked some nearby sinkholes. The rest of us went to Thorson's Cave to survey the reported 150 feet of passage.

The largest sink entrance to Thorson's intersects the main passage. Mike, Kevin and Alissa began surveying the eastern passage as Jay, Ray, and I headed west. The western part quickly opens up to a large breakdown area lit by a sinkhole skylight. There were numerous ice stalagmites in this section that caught some of the pale light filtering through both shafts.

We continued west until the passage narrowed to an animal run. Two small side leads were then mapped as we found many flowstone formations, lots for a Floyd County cave anyway. The last survey shots were taken in a narrow lower crevice reached through a hole in the breakdown. The passage ceiling consists of breakdown chokes from the passage above so we didn't spend more time than was necessary in there. No passable leads were seen.

We had mapped about 160 feet, completing the western half but had still not heard from Mike's group which supposedly had the shorter passage to deal with. Eventually, Jay joined their crew to help connect a small side lead to another nearby sink and finish the estimated 100 feet of the eastern survey. The total of 260 feet of passage was

more than we had expected but a welcome surprise. The rest of us then started back toward the cars to warm up and wait for the others. It was a grand and productive caving day in this odd and fascinating cave county called "Floyd".

SURVEYING IN THE RAIN

Bogus Cave and Blue Boy Cave, Jones County, Iowa
January 12, 1992
Marc Ohms, Chris Beck, and Mike Lace

by Marc Ohms

It was January and it was raining. It was raining and it was miserable. Inside the dripline of Bogus Cave we shed our rain gear and replaced it with our cave gear. We went into the large room and I took some photos of the room and the speleothems.

We then started the survey which moved along smoothly until we reached a small crawl which led into a small room. Located in the room was a very dead raccoon. It smelled real bad and we surveyed what we could stomach. The dashed line in the last room on the map represents this area. After finishing the survey, we checked a few leads that I had in the same area. The first was actually a cave which we surveyed. It is called Blue Boy Cave and is a whole 15 feet. The second was a dig so Chris grabbed a stick and started digging. After a short time, we realized it was not worth it.
(See the Bogus and Blue Boy maps, this issue)

A MINIATURE CASCADE PASSAGE

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
January 18, 1992
Mike Lace, Chris Beck, Marc Ohms

by Mike Lace

The water temperature was 42 F but it was better than the below zero weather up top. The three of us decided to venture into the Toboggan Ride and complete the survey. It is a side passage off of Dead Coon Passage that leads east. Our goal wasn't very far from the shaft relative to other ongoing survey areas so we readily admitted to being the wimps that we were and damn proud of it.

After briefly helping Scott and his party with a long passage photo near Orange and Black Dome, we crawled into the Dead Coon Passage and on to the Toboggan Ride entrance. The initial few hundred feet are crawling over one rimstone dam after another and though the back part of the passage gets bigger, it offers just as many dams to negotiate. It's almost as if someone carefully made a miniature version of Cascade Passage and called it "The Toboggan Ride".

The thick decoration in this passage is impressive with flowstone draperies covering most of the walls and sometimes large enough to form constrictions where you have to carefully squeeze sideways. There are soda straws but also a few columns and smaller stalactites. One extremely wierd phenomenon was sighted that day. Two thin streams of water were continually forced up 7-8 inches through small openings in a flowstone ledge, creating twin "bubblers" or drinking fountains.

We came to the start of our days survey with one or two grumbles about the near-stoopwalking passage that had been promised. The survey shots stretched 20-30 feet a piece as we eventually did encounter walking height sections but just as it was getting comfortable, the regular storm-sewer shape of the passage changed abruptly to a low, wide, crawlway. We came to an area littered with breakdown slabs with no obvious continuation. We were getting a bit chilled anyway so we tied off the survey at the breakdown and retreated with a respectable 450 feet to be tacked onto the map.

The passage should be revisited even though there were doubts cast by Marc and Chris that they would readily volunteer to return. Old trip reports speak of a dig that was pushed beyond the original survey so the "terminal" breakdown should be checked again. At the time of this report, the new Toboggan Ride data has not been plotted out but it strikes me that with at least 1500 feet worth of passage, it may come very close to the creek bed to the east of the cave. This could account for the rapid change in the passage cross section and the only breakdown seen in the Toboggan Ride.

The only other noteworthy event was when each of us climbed up the shaft, we promptly stuck to the frozen rungs of the ladder and the wall of the well casing. The outside temp. had dropped to well below zero, freezing the first 20 feet of the shaft entrance. Fortunately, no one stuck their tongue on the ladder but Marc is still complaining about the pieces of wetsuit gloves left behind!

CLAYTON COUNTY CREVICES

Smoking Ridge Cave, Deadwood Crevice, and an unnamed crevice, Clayton County, Iowa
January 18, 1992
by Mike Lace
Mike Lace, Marc Ohms, Gary Engh, and Chris Beck

Numerous mechanical crevices can be found in Clayton County and this is a serious understatement. We set out to locate a few more of them in the area surrounding Smoking Ridge Cave. After a brief chat with the owner, we checked out a spring in a small ravine and climbed to the hilltop above it to search for openings. We soon found several soil plugged sinks and two open crevices.

It wasn't cold enough for the caves to steam but you could smell the coon traffic in them at a distance. The deeper of the two required vertical gear that, of course, was down the hill in the trucks so we left it for a future trip. The second crevice could be entered by a controlled slide down a dirt slope to an enlarged part of the crevice; from here you can look down a narrow, impassable slot for several feet.

We crossed the valley and climbed the next hill to the set of three crevices which includes Smoking Ridge Cave and Hollow Hill Hole. The middle crevice had not been entered on the last trip here but we cleared enough debris to safely chimney into a narrow crevice that eventually dropped 50 feet to a blind end. The cave was named "Dead Wood Crevice".

We then checked a smaller nearby valley with rock outcrops that we had seen from the road many times before. Locals in the nearest house described a "cave" that an old-timer had used as a cellar of sorts. There used to be an old frame and door at the entrance but these are long gone. The hollow in the rock appeared to be man-made and only extended three feet into the rock. Not exactly the cave we had hoped to find. Continuing down the valley, we came to another outcrop with a small hole near the top. Chris climbed up to find a crawl-in entrance to a solutional tube known as Shadow Cave.

The cave is only 20 feet long so perhaps the cavers who originally named it barely left their daylight shadow far behind them in this one. We surveyed it quickly, adding one more to the list of mapped caves in Delaware County (and there really aren't that many). (See the Shadow Cave map, this issue.)

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN AND BEYOND

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
January 18, 1992
Larry Welch, Jay Wells, and Stacey Cyphert

by Larry Welch

January was to be a Grappling Falls trip. It seemed that all of the stars were aligned properly to allow it this month. Jay and I had recruited Stacey to come along; the last two trips with a two man party had stretched our carrying capacity to its limit and having a third gave us a definite edge. It was also helpful that, in a moment of absolute optimism, Jay and I had stashed a good portion of our vertical gear at Frog Junction two months previously. With three men to carry, at least the outward leg would be done carrying reasonable pack weights. We were also blessed insofar that the weather had turned chilly in the midst of an otherwise balmy winter. No precipitation or thaw would hamper our proposed trip.

We were in early at about 10:30, despite being delayed while Stacey performed his body-stuffing ritual into what appeared to be a neoprene straitjacket. Water temperature was 42°. The pace was kept moderate; we didn't want to tire early yet also wanted to make steady progress. Stacey had some extra "Carbo Coolers" which he cached at intervals on the outward leg of our journey. I'm convinced that Stacey brings these on his caving trips because he can't get anyone to finish them off at home. Jay and I made a point to retch at the mention of such a drink, naturally, we were begging to suck the last drop out of the bottle on the return trip when we were thirsty. Jay had chosen to carry a huge bottle of Gatorade, which was calculated to keep us hydrated for a good portion of the trip. Unfortunately, the lid did not get anchored after an early refreshment break, and at the next rest stop, Jay found an empty bottle in his pack. Those Carbo Coolers were starting to sound better and better!

At Frog Junction, Jay and I unpacked our gear cache to find it pretty much intact. None of the ascenders had weathered noticeably, although a couple of my carabiners showed traces of rust. We loaded it all into our packs, which weren't so light anymore. The dreaded siphons lay ahead, and both Stacey and Jay were firmly in favor of putting on their hoods beforehand. I loathed the idea of putting my extremely tight hood on, but was persuaded after I was reminded of the last couple of times I'd decided not to wear the infernal thing. I was lucky to have listened, as the water was still fairly high and quite cold. Once through the Roundhouse, the hoods were off in a flash and everyone started to get keyed up for the excitement ahead. We made good progress from this point. We did stop for a look in Snowfall Dome, which is indescribably beautiful. Near the little waterfall, we stopped on a sand bar and put on our vertical gear. Stacey had only a chest harness, so he was going to use my seat harness, slings, and ascenders. His normal rig was similar enough to mine that in theory, he would have no problem adapting to my stuff. Since my gear was climbing twice, I would use it first, undress, then pass it down to Stacey. Meanwhile, Jay, who also had a complete rig, would climb and we would haul up the gear while Stacey got rigged up.

Things didn't work out as planned. Due to the high water level, Grappling Falls was flowing more heavily than on our previous climbs. Gary's Communication Breakdown Room was deafening. My climb went very smoothly, assisted by some rope tension provided by Jay. After shuttling some gear, Jay was also up easily. I could see Stacey struggling into his, then I moved back from the edge to give Jay some room. Time dragged. I was getting chilled from the spray, so moved up the rubble pile a bit to a drier spot. Meanwhile, Jay and Stacey were shouting back and forth at each other. Something was apparently wrong with Stacey's gear, so Jay was sending some of his stuff back down. Two were a crowd perched over the edge, so I went back to trying to stay warm. What was that Warren Netherton thing to stay warm? Curl up with the helmet against the wall? Pacing back and forth was not an option as the whole area was flooded with loose rubble. After another long delay, I went up to see what was going on.

Stacey still hadn't rigged on, and Jay wasn't sure what the problem was. We agreed that if he wasn't on his way up in 5 minutes, we would call the trip. I had been waiting at least 45 minutes atop the falls and was just about chilled to the bone. Fortunately, the next time I turned around, there were two headlamps shining above the falls as Stacey had finally gotten up.

We grabbed the gear and climbed the breakdown pile until we found a spot where the spray and the din were less in evidence. Stacey recounted the gear problems he'd had below the falls. It seemed that he hadn't been able to fit into the harnesses that I had managed to wrap around my svelte, trim body. Hmmm, something didn't sound right about that. The exertion of climbing had warmed Stacey up and he had the wide-eyed look as if someone had slipped some Jolt into his Carbo Cooler. Once we got going again, we made an intelligent route-finding choice to circumvent a squeeze that had tormented us on the last two trips traversing across some blade-like rock fins into a pile of loose slabs on the left wall of the passage. Once we were off of the rockpile, we made better time until we reached the pudding mud beyond Bryan's Excellent Room. This only lasted a couple hundred feet until the floor turned into a much firmer sand bottom. We zipped along quickly until we reached the chip marking the end of our previous survey at the spot where Jay had gashed his hand.

The first shot took us to a corner; from there on was virgin passage. We had gone ahead last time to determine the reason for all of the water noise. At the time, we attributed the sound to some small rapids at this corner, but we were to get a surprise as Stacey stretched the tape. There was a two foot high waterfall coming out of a low, wide lead to the right. A considerable amount of water was coming out of this passage, which meant less water in the main passage and less chance of the dreamed-about walking passage ahead. The ceiling did drop a bit, forcing us to crawl in very rocky passage with many projections sticking up from the floor. After passing several shallow ceiling crevices, Stacey reported that he was standing up (!) in waist deep water with leads on either side of the passage. The lead to the right is rather small but the one to the left was clearly enterable and dumping a fair bit of water down another two foot waterfall. Jay stuck his head into the passage and reported a long, straight stretch of passage followed the first turn. However, the passage did appear to be getting smaller.

Ahead was a fork in the passage. All of the water came from the left branch, and due to the geometry of the passage, this was the easiest fork to survey into. Going ahead to sketch the split, I followed the dry fork until it was obvious the forks rejoined after 20 feet or so. Just ahead was a latticework of low rimstone dams, after which a big stalagmite on the right side of the passage could be seen. The passage widened greatly ahead and more water noise was evident. The water noise was coming from two small waterfalls entering on the left side of the passage. On the far side of the room the passage forked but both branches were rubble filled and no continuation of either was evident. The left lead appeared to be the larger of the two but the blockade was similar to that seen at the collapsed Suicide Dome. Jay probed carefully but could not find a continuation. It appeared that the waterfalls were from the water detouring around the collapse but neither looked big enough to allow passage. The right lead contained many large slabs, and it also refused to yield. The room was named the Disappointment Room.

Everyone seemed pretty depressed by the passage ending. Of course it doesn't really end -- there are several small side leads which might bypass the blockage. Perhaps movement of some rock might open things up. Still, it seems hard to justify another trip without better prospects. I took a brief look down the first side lead on the way back but it quickly shrunk to a snaggy belly crawl, so I bagged it. Everyone was ready to start the long haul back. As usual, by the time we reached Cascade, the trip had become a death march. I had a tough time staying warm for the last two hours, as did everyone else. We marched non-stop up the main passage from Cascade since everyone was so cold. Jay was carrying probably the heaviest pack I'd ever seen in the cave,

and the other two weren't much lighter. We all stumbled out of the cave after 16 hours, bruised and beaten. Thanks to Mike Lace, a pizza was waiting. One final note to all carbide cavers: my Justrite electric lasted the whole trip on a single set of batteries.

FUN IN THE SNOW

Lead checking, Clayton County, Iowa
January 25, 1992
Mike Nelson and Greg McCarty

by Greg McCarty

Leading up to this trip I was concerned that the wet weather we had on Wednesday would foul up our plans but Mike wanted to try it anyway. At the least, it would allow Mike to see some things he hadn't seen. So rather than plan on something dry, we decided to go for it. During the night we received five inches of new snow so everything was nice and white. Unfortunately, underneath that snow was a layer of ice on any slope that faced the wrong way. Our driveway proved to be one of the more interesting places that this condition occurred.

We needed four wheel drive where we were going so Mike came down to Fayette and picked me up. Driving into Clayton County, we headed for the owner of Hike Springs. Mike had a little trouble with the turn into the owner's driveway but I'm happy to report that the mailbox is still standing. Mike immediately noticed the owner's latest addition to his display of hunting conquests. A magnificent elk head jutted out from the wall (from a hunt out west, of course). We talked for a while and learned about the damage that had been caused by the titanic flood the previous summer. They said the water was 18 feet deep along the floodplain. One good piece of news was that the neighbor had finally gotten rid of the pile of dangerous pesticide that was decaying away in a nearby field.

Driving down the snow covered access road and along the valley bottom didn't prove to be a problem. Soon we reached the twin rise pools of Hike Springs. This was far easier than the previous February when John Fuhrman and I had to trudge through deep snow to reach the springs. Unfortunately, the water levels were high and the springs were not very clear at all. I had intended to put on my wetsuit and make a quick preliminary dive to see if they are enterable. With the cloudy water, there would be no way to see. Scrapping those plans, we drove a little further then walked the rest of the way to the overflow. John and I had made good progress digging in here last February but I had little hope the water would be low enough this time to allow digging to take place. When we got there we found it full to the brim with murky water.

After explaining to the owner what happened, we drove to St. Olaf so Mike could see the collapsed bridge on Roberts Creek. It turns out they had fixed it just the month before. Our next stop was Neverending Dig Cave. Mike had planned on spending more time at our first stop and was a little short on gear and the weather is of little consequence. We continued the dig I had started last August making nice progress. After about an hour of digging, a farmer stopped by to see how we were doing. It turns out that he had seen me doing the original digging last August and was curious as to what we were finding. He mentioned that he had a pit on his farm that we should look at sometime. Since we weren't doing anything important, we packed up the gear and followed him back to his farm.

As we bounced down the roads, he lost a hay bail from his pickup but Mike just swung it up on his rack and told him to keep going. The closer we got to the farm, the more suspicious I became. We were getting very close to a cave that I had never seen that had been checked out by Jim Hedges in the late 50's. When we finally pulled

into the lane, I was sure of it. I jumped out and asked him what his last name was and I was right, it was Nelson. He was too young to have been around back then but he remembered his dad telling him about the cavers that went down the hole. We followed him around to another farmstead so that the cave could be approached more easily. This lane led down a good slope and a lot more hay was lost at the bottom of the hill. That spot proved to be a problem going out for Mike's buggy but he got past it on the third try.

Nelson Cave was described as a junk-filled pit about 40 feet deep. I certainly believe the part about the trash. Since we didn't bring a rope, I had trouble working my way down into the sink to see if it was still enterable. I went as far as I dared (some of the pits in this area are too wide to chimney and can be quite deep) but I couldn't tell for sure if you could still get in. There was a hole going around some junk but I don't know if it went all the way through. Checking a couple of nearby sinks proved to be difficult. Not the sinks; it was getting up the icy slope to reach them. Things were pretty darn slick! The one sink needs another look after things thaw. Mr Nelson (the owner) was quite interested in having us come back in the summer and check out the pit. He wants to watch us go down. I just hope there's still something we can go down.

It was starting to get dark by this time and it wasn't long before the temperature would be in the single digits. Mike and I were dressed warmly, though, so that wasn't even the beginning of a problem. We decided to head for Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve. Even though it's only a few miles from Fayette and is a neat place, I had been there only twice before. Once, briefly in high school while trout fishing and one good visit with Deb around 1982 while we were going to school in Iowa City. Mike had stopped by here only once before just after he joined the grotto. He found a fissure lead in a sinkhole so we were here to relocate it and check it out. We tramped through the woods finding a number of sinkholes. It wasn't long before Mike found the one he had seen before. After clearing a few items out of the way and moving some old bottles which we hauled back, Mike slid part way down into the fissure. Climbing back out he said he was reluctant to go further because of a debris chock that he didn't trust. I decided to give it a try and soon figured out what his trouble was. He didn't have coveralls on. This was a wet and muddy slot. I worked my way down to the debris and kicked it loose so it could fall down the fissure. I then could see just a few feet further before it curved. I'm sure it is enterable but now wasn't the time to do it. Besides, I hate fissures!

Since Mike was willing to do some hiking, I decided to take him out to the pinnacle that Deb and I found on our trip here. It's really neat in the daylight but I thought that the precipitous drops would still be entertaining in the dark since they were covered with ice and snow. We checked more sinkholes along the way then worked our way down to the trail that would take us there. Amazingly, someone else had been down that trail earlier in the day. Even more amazing, when we got to the pinnacle, we found that this person had been all over the top of it. There were several places where you have to jump across a deep crevasse while standing on snow covered ice, but this mystery person did them all. We figured we could go anywhere he could so we took the full tour as well. On the long walk back, I spotted a crevice in one of the bluffs. After climbing up to it, it proved to be a pleasant 30 foot long walk through high crevice passage with two entrances. I couldn't place it for sure at the time but the next day I remembered that Deb and I had gone through it on our trip. We didn't set any records on this trip but we enjoyed the snow and had a good time, even if we didn't get too far into any caves.

WHICH WAY TO THE CAVE

Cave Till You Drop, Jackson County, Iowa
February 2, 1992
Mike Lace and Jay Wells

by Jay Wells

The original plan for the day was to meet at Hardees in Dubuque at 9:00. Everyone showed up except Mike. We waited around until it was decided that the others would go on and I would head back down to Iowa City to see if he may have had some car trouble and had turned around. At Iowa City we met and decided the best way to salvage the day was to drive back up to Jackson County and check a lead Doug Schmuecker and I had dug open in Eden Valley Park.

Mike and I found the area of the sinkholes then proceeded to the sink where the lead was. Each of us climbed down in the hole. It is about 10 to 12 feet deep with a crevice going off from there. The crevice appears to be too tight, although a person may be able to dig it open. Another three feet may make it interable. We then started hiking around the area to see if we could find anything else. Near the access where we had parked, we found a small cave that goes through the bluff. We named it "Cave Till You Drop". This name is quite fitting as when you get to the other side, you have a 30 foot drop down the bluff's face.

We then headed to the Pine Creek Park area. We hiked around visiting several shelter caves. We surveyed the last one that we visited. It's a fairly large shelter then a small duck under to a second room. The room had a fair amount of formations and flowstone in it. It was a very nice way of ending the day.

RETURN TO NEVERENDING DIG

February 8, 1992
John Fuhrman and Greg McCarty

by Greg McCarty

John only had time for a short trip due to a dinner engagement, and the weather had been wet and lousy for most caves so we decided to spend the day at Neverending Dig Cave. John had never seen it and because it's dry you can always rely on it. Unfortunately, my caving car was dead, so we had to use up some of our valuable time having John drive up to Fayette to get me and return me to same. This proved to be especially unfortunate since I got car sick on the way over to the cave. I must have had some kind of bug, though, because it took quite a while for me to feel well enough to put on my coveralls. Once I finally was able to join John in the dig, I felt poorly but at least able to do some work. After the trip, I drove John's Jeep back to Fayette and that helped quite a bit but I still felt bad for two more days after the trip.

We were able to dig for a few hours producing a few more feet of passage. The cave must be around 12 feet long now. John had to spend a lot of time chopping away frozen dirt in the entrance while I was battling frozen (though dry and easy to dig) dirt near the ceiling. The dirt is scraped off the top of the roadcut and the cave is very shallow to the surface. It is in the upper part of the Dubuque member of the Galena formation. Evidently the cold was able to work its way down a crack to the cave ceiling. By digging very carefully, the walls of the passage are being preserved. They have a lot of interesting textures and I don't want this cave to look like a mine, even if we are having to dig 100% of the passage. The cave continues, as always, but I have no idea if any air filled passage will be reached. Check with me in a few years.

LOOKING FOR BUGS

Hunter's Cave, Jackson County, Iowa

February 9, 1992

by Marc Ohms

Marc Ohms, Chris Beck, Dr. Ed Lisowski, and Felipe Soto

Chris and I met Ed and Felipe at Maquoketa Caves State Park and drove to Hunter's Cave. They are biologists from Illinois and do research dealing with invertebrate cave fauna. Ed was looking for a type of fly while Felipe was searching for a small white thing that hops. As you can tell, my biology background is not a long one.

After entering the cave, we went to the area of the Paradise Room and began the search. They did some collecting and we proceeded into the Pit Room to continue searching for critters. Chris and I took a break and visited the Canyon Room which is much larger than I remembered.

After completing their collecting, Chris and I took some photos in the Main Room and in the Pit Room. We also removed some trash before leaving. The trash was mostly candles.

RIGHT FOOT II

New Galena Mines, Allamakee County, Iowa

February 16, 1992

by Mike Nelson

Mike Nelson, Mike Lace, Marc Ohms, Chris Beck, Nick and Jared Byrnes

Delores and I got off on the right foot for caving in '92 when we located the New Galena Lead Mines on New Year's Day. We got the lead from another landowner on the only lead checking trip we made last year. We stayed on the right foot by inlisting the curiosity of the Iowa Grotto's most intrepid mappers and managed to map all three mines in about five hours. This was done so quickly due to their skill, our luck (as all the fauna mentioned in the earlier report had vacated), and thanks to some extra help. The landowner's sons, Nick and Jared, gave us quite a bit of assistance in mapping the first two. They helped on the tape and were especially handy in getting some of those pesky, long side wall and floor/ceiling measurements. Nick was even picking some pretty good stations. He was still helping us after Jared left. Soon Jared returned with the four wheeler to fetch him off on an afternoon family ski trip, though he said he'd rather survey.

We started in on the last one, and before we'd really gotten started, Nick showed up again. He'd talked his dad into letting him stay! It was disappointing to tell him after we were all finished how unlikely it was that anyone would be back there again. He is a careful and thoughtful caver and obviously really likes it. So we encouraged him to "lead check" at school. We explained how little time most of us have to devote to caving and that his and his brother's friends probably already have more leads than than we'd ever find. "Find leads and we'll take you with to check them and teach you more about caving". How can one not encourage someone who'd give up skiing to cave? Wouldn't it be great to have more good cavers who actually live in Iowa's cave country.

WE WENT, WE DUG, WE LEFT

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

February 17, 1992

by Marc Ohms

Marc Ohms and Mike Lace

Mike and I went downstream and up into Cascade Passage to work on a few dig leads

we had near the end. The first lead was located near the breakdown area and was a wide, flat passage. I squeezed in 20 feet before realizing it was only a cut around. The next objective was to recheck the end of Cramp'em Up Crawl. We surveyed this passage a few months back but I experienced stomach cramps while doing so. I wanted to determine if I had pushed it out or if my cramps made me wimp out. I crawled and squeezed my way up the passage to where we left off and determined that I had indeed pushed it out. It does continue but has a rock floor and is too tight for my chest to fit. We then went back downstream a little ways to dig at a hole a few feet above the water level. Mike only had to dig for a few minutes before determining it was worthless. Fifty feet further downstream was another dig. I dug for a while and Mike took his turn and we got a few feet into the passage. This one may go but the 3-5 inch mud floor must be removed to be even Mike's size; not real promising.

On the way out through the breakdown area, I found a passage that led into a small chamber with a dig lead. After a half hour of getting completely slimed, Mike managed to pop his head in to determine it ended. Not a real successful trip but we did knock a few leads off the list.

WINTER CAVING(?) IN CLAYTON COUNTY

Meatlocker Cave, Carcass Cave, Coonhunter's Crevice, Stray Dog Cave, Honey Creek Cave, Jimmy's Cave, Morbid Crevice, Clayton County, Iowa
February 22, 1992
Marc Ohms, Pat Schenck, and Mike Lace

by Mike Lace

The fun began that Saturday by driving on gravel/mud roads that were initially frozen but soon thawed into a sloppy goo in the 40 F degree temps. The caves weren't much better, taking the meltwater from the last vestiges of snow. The area we were looking over had several mechanical crevices to look into.

The first one we were shown was later named "Morbid Crevice" after the gelatinous decayed carcass that no longer resembled any known mammal. The cave consisted of an entry chamber that could be chimneyed into and a lower, small room that can also be reached without a safety line. The second crevice was particularly interesting as it had a fairly long, large passage that sloped steeply away to its end 50 feet below. This one was later named Honey Creek Cave (not to be confused with the big cave in Texas that goes by the same name).

Marc cautiously chimneyed into the next nearby crevice (Carcass Cave) that dropped 50 feet to a rubble end and was also coerced into sliding into yet another one (Coonhunter's Crevice) that led to 30 feet of horizontal passage.

Meatlocker Cave consisted of a sink with two crevice openings. Little more than 20 feet of passage was found there. Stray Dog Cave also had a sink entrance with 30 feet of horizontal passage. Jimmy's Cave was found on a nearby hillside and is said to have opened up within the past two years. The entrance is chimneyable to a dirt slope, leading to a 40 foot high passage, a rubble end, and plenty of unstable-looking rock hanging overhead. A grotto field trip to this area several years ago also visited a few other crevices a short drive away but we didn't make it to those on our trip.

MYSTERY CAVE BAT COUNT

Minnesota Mystery Cave, Filmore County, Minnesota
February 23, 1992
Mike Nelson, Warren Netherton, and Konrad Schmidt

by Mike Nelson

The last bat count at Mystery Cave in '89 was somewhat of a fiasco. With 40 cavers on hand, things got out of hand. So for this count, Warren Netherton, the cave manager at Forestville State Park, recruited a handfull of competant individuals. Somehow Delores and I were included with them.

As some areas of Mystery are set aside as hibernaculum, these areas are generally off limits to even scientific study in the winter. However, as long as the bat count was going in, a team gathering water samples and a fish biologist seeking cave specimens were also incorporated.

Warren and the biologist, Konrad Schmidt, dropped down a slot into Formation Creek, a lower level stream passage and Warren instructed me on where to go to count bats. So lucky me, I got to solo off down "The Long Crawl". It's not as bad as it's name implies. It's worse. However, once through it, there was considerable cave of acceptable size passages that went everywhere but where the map indicated. At one junction, I found a first aid kit in a gallon jar and more passage than I could justify from my map. So after two hours and five bats, I debated whether to open the jar in hopes that it contained a clue or going after someone who knew this corner of the cave. Figuring inaccurate data was worse than no data, I "long crawled" back to find Warren.

I stopped for a brief chat with the group who had taken the water samples. Warren had instructed them to wait until he and Konrad had ascended the slot. Then I ventured past to see how they were doing. Ya, you guessed it, cave rescue time again. To keep it short, Warren had to redrop the slot to let Konrad walk on him. I grabbed him from above and told him to exhale, then rippp, cave-rescued. Konrad has a healthy admiration for cavers. He left with the other group and Warren and I went back down "The Long Crawl". Clear back at the first aid kit, we were equally confused. So Warren opened it and found a map with a "you are here" mark, just like in the mall. It oriented us enough to indicate the proper positions for the sighted bats. We found our bearings and searched as much cave as we had allotted time for, but no more bats were found. On the trip back out, Warren was convinced that our working maps were in gross error. One more time through "The Long Crawl" and a mad dash got us out of the cave only a half hour late.

What little info that had been tabulated indicated that the bat numbers were up slightly, but the distribution within the cave was not consistent with the previous study.

THE UNSEEN END OF MAZE CAVE

Maze Cave, Dubuque County, Iowa

February 23, 1992

Marc Ohms, Chris Beck, Mike Lace, Bert Jagnow, and Doug Schmuecker

by Marc Ohms

We entered the cave with high hopes of finishing the survey project. Our last trip into the cave confirmed the "end" was found and only a few hundred feet was left to survey. What a fantasy that was!

Upon reaching the starting point we split into two teams. Chris and I took the shorter right-hand passage and finished it in four shots. We met up with the others and proceeded to the end of the cave with plans to survey back to them and we would be done, HA! The "end" is a small room which is reached through a short crawl which I dug open on the last trip. The room has a short passage at the base which could go if dug. The room also has a high pocket that on the last trip I simply climbed up far enough to see the end. My mistake! Chris climbed up and in to start the survey only to find a passage! He crawled in and said that he had going passage in two directions, so I quickly went back to find Chris just as he was emerging from his lead. He reported that the

passage went 50 feet and got pretty small but could go. We then returned to the going area with big smiles and hearts beating wildly. It was not virgin passage since the miners were there but it was the next best! We got into walking passage and ran into many rooms and found leads running off in every direction. We then decided to go break the news to the others. It did not take long for them to tie off their survey after hearing our stories of walking passage, big rooms, and numerous unchecked leads. We returned to the new area to find the end, which we did not do. We explored at least 1200 feet of new passage and we have two good leads left and some smaller ones to check. Who knows how much more passage will be found through one of these small holes. Meanwhile, the search for the unseen end of Maze Cave continues!!

The cave is now close to 3000 feet long making it one of the longer caves in Iowa, and with its 87 foot entrance pit, it is one of Iowa's most fun caves.

HYPOTHERMIA FOILED BY THE EXPERTS

Clayton County, Iowa

February 29, 1992

by Doug Schmuecker

Mike Lace, Marc Ohms, Jay Wells, Scott Dankof, Stacey Cyphert, and Chris Beck

Plans for the day called for surveying of Mielke and Drahn Caves. We would also check to see if Devil's Throat could be dropped and check other nearby sinks. Mike, Marc, Scott, and Chris rigged two ropes to rappel into Mielke. Jay, Stacey, and I proceeded to Devil's Throat and Drahn. Devil's Throat and the other sinks around it were blocked by logs. Drahn had some water flowing into it. As Jay and Stacey rigged this pit, I went back to the truck for bars and shovels and to check another sink.

Examining the sink south of Mielke, I found a small hole that could be entered. It went about two body lengths before being blocked by loose rock. I moved on to assist with the Drahn survey and reported my findings. The Mielke team called their trip due to cold water showering them and standing water in the small passages. Stacey called the Drahn survey before Jay could enter due to cold water flowing over necessary survey stations.

With mine being the only good news. We returned to the south sink. After moving about 20 rocks, we opened a 20 foot crawl that opens to a pit about 40 feet deep and 10 feet in diameter. The pit is well decorated with possible passages below. Descending waits for the next trip. Is this a new find, maybe??? (See cover photo)

There seems to be a question as to whose farm Drahn Cave is on. For the best interest of landowner relations, it should be considered off limits, for now. The landowner showed interest in having Devil's Throat opened for drainage. He had no previous knowledge of our new find. Further trips are planned.

CAVING IN JOHNSON COUNTY

Indian Cave, Johnson County, Iowa

March 2, 1992

by Mike Lace

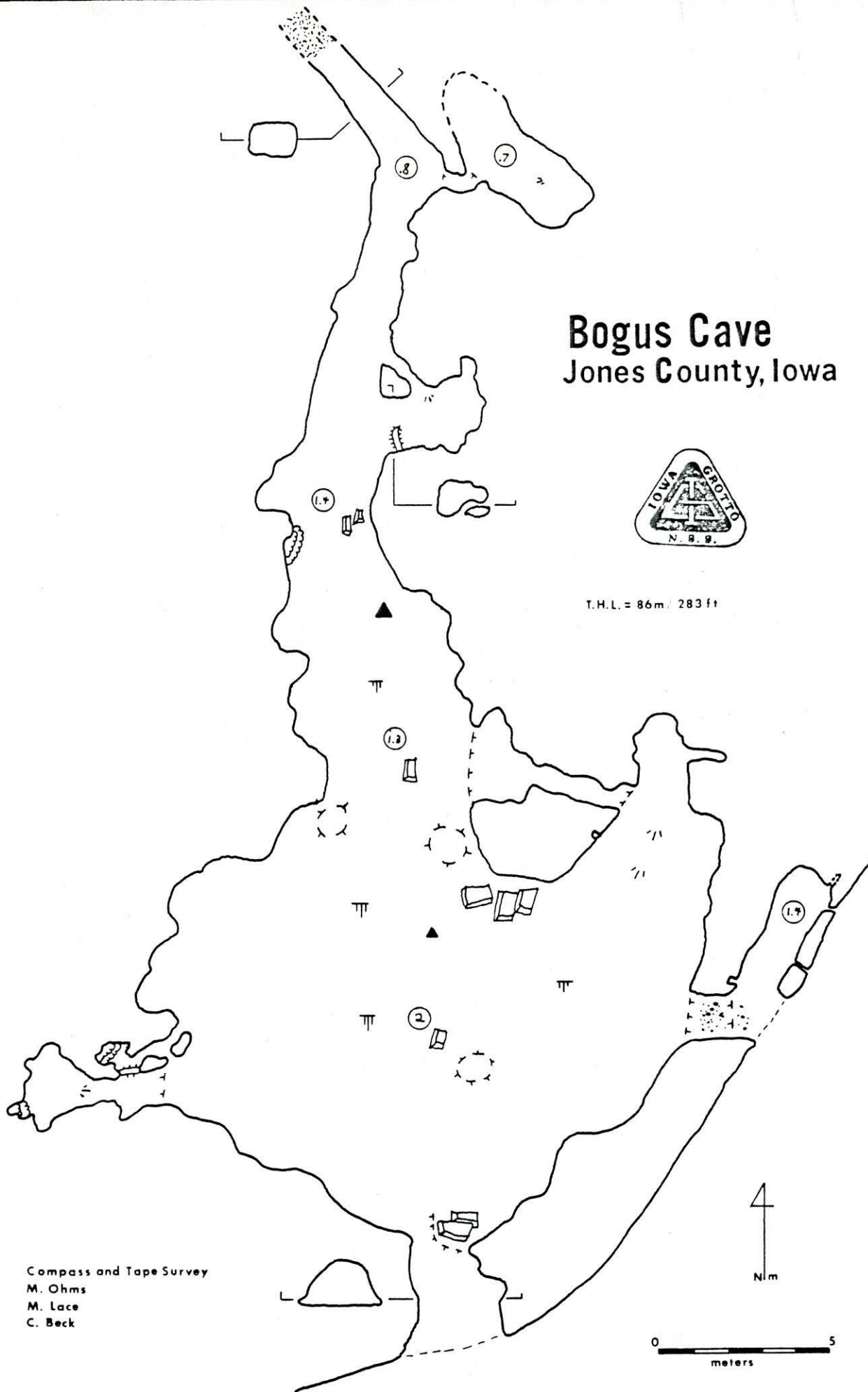
That's right! no typo, I really was caving in Johnson County. The cave I set out to visit is billed as an old "indian cave" occupied over a thousand years ago. The debris pile in front of the entrance suggests that a dig might have been done to verify this. At first glance the cave doesn't seem too impressive but then you remember what near-caveless part of Iowa you're in and that makes it more interesting. The survey went quickly. Coral and snail fossils were noted and even a little flowstone along one wall. The wide shelter entrance lets plenty of daylight in along the whole 19 feet of passage. A quick walk along the same rock outcrop didn't turn up any other caves but plenty of rat holes.

Bogus Cave

Jones County, Iowa



T.H.L. = 86m / 283 ft



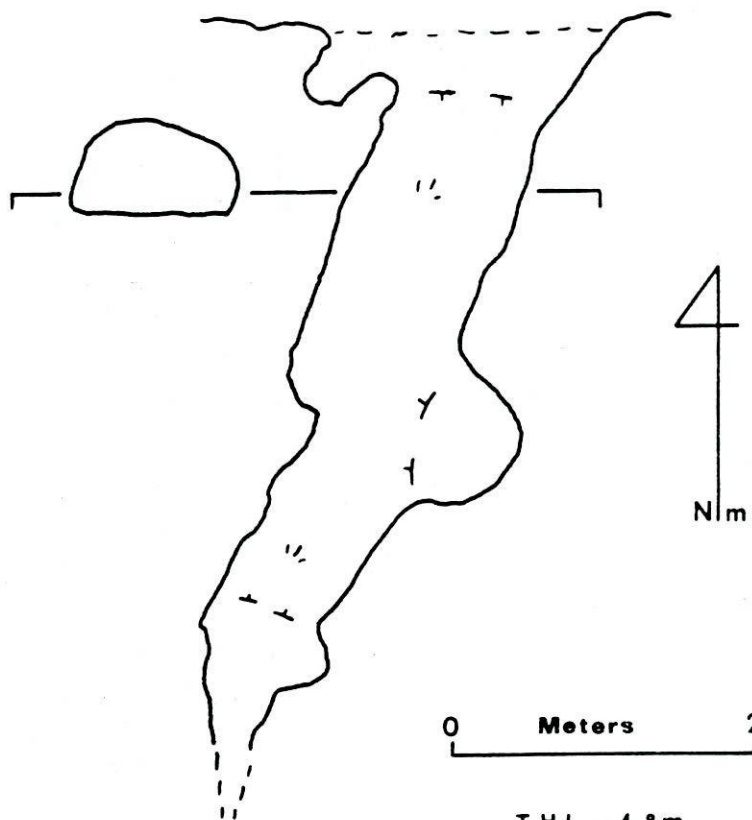
Compass and Tape Survey
M. Ohms
M. Lace
C. Beck

4
N/m

0 5
meters

Ohms

BLUE BOY CAVE
JONES COUNTY, IOWA

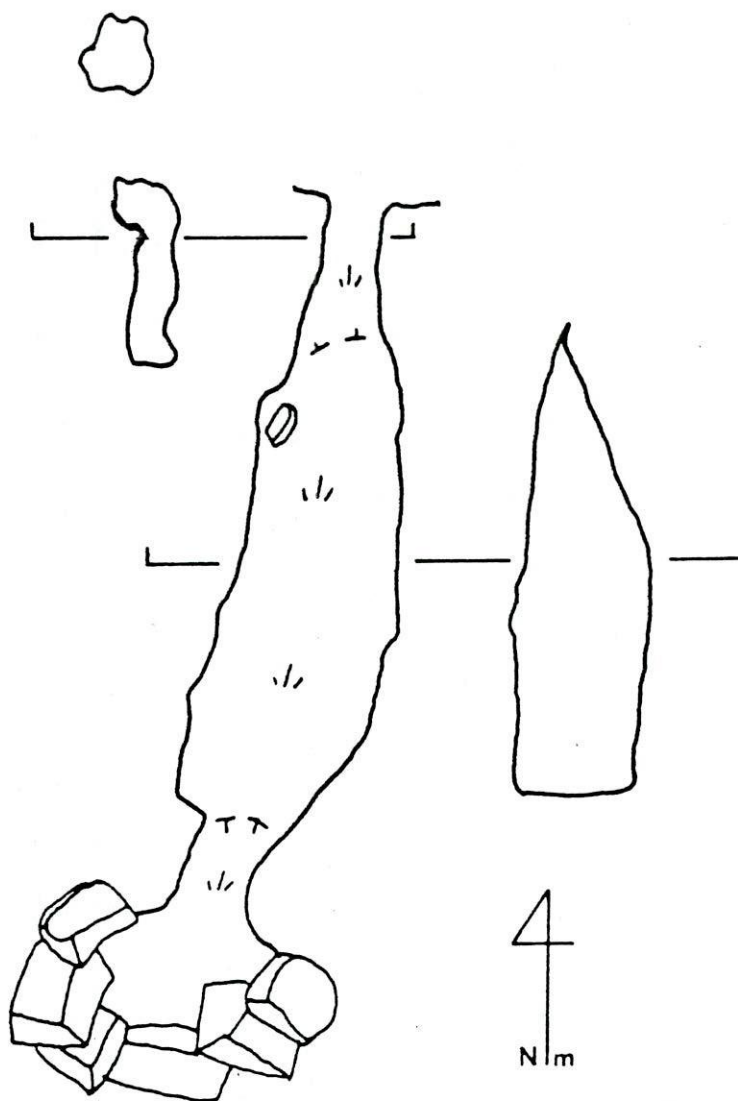


compass and tape survey

Ohms
Beck
Lace

Ohms

WALKING STICK CAVE
DUBUQUE COUNTY, IOWA
compass and tape survey
Ohms



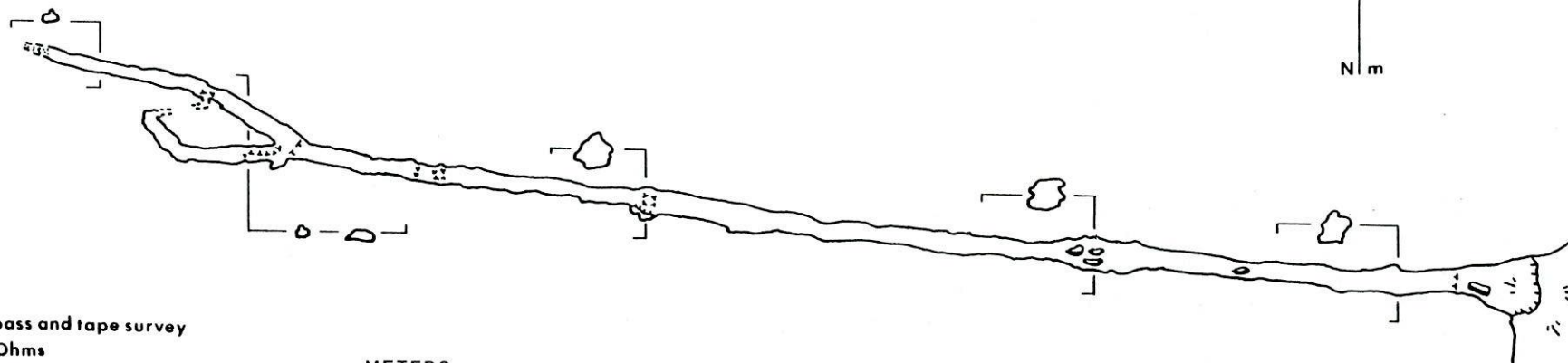
0 Meters 2

T.H.L. - 5.7m

FALLING ROCK CAVE

JACKSON COUNTY, IOWA

T.H.L. - 98m / 321ft



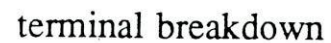
compass and tape survey

M. Ohms
G. Hartman
E. Winch
C. Beck

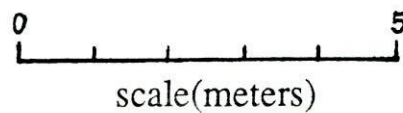
0 METERS 12

MARC OHMS

surveyed length = 11.66 meters / 38.24 feet

$$N_m$$


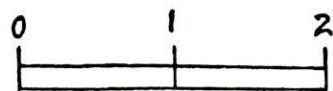
M. Lace 2/92



Shadow Cave, Delaware County, Iowa

surveyed length = 6.20 meters/20.34 feet

voice connected to
a surface crevice



scale/meters

surveyed by:

Chris Beck
Gary Engh
Mike Lace
Marc Ohms

M. Lace 2/92

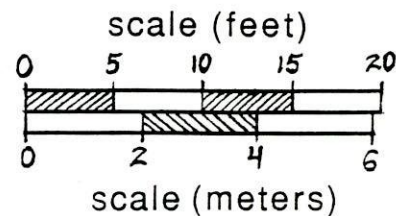
dripline



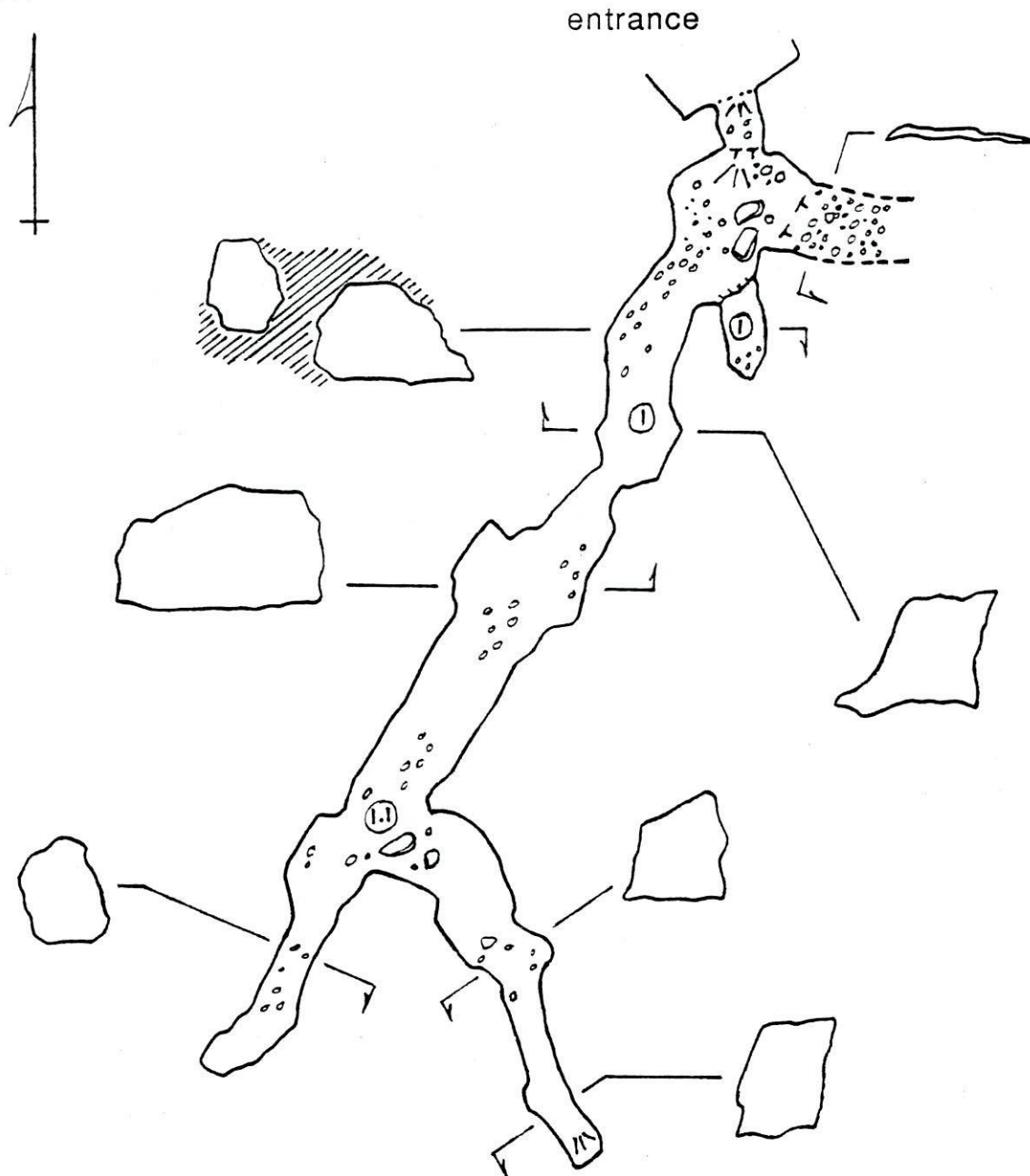
Bone Dry Cave

Dubuque County, Iowa

surveyed length = 98.79 feet (30.12 meters)



N_m



surveyed by:

Stacey Cyphert

Michael Lace

Marc Ohms

Jay Wells

cross sections are 2X scale

cartography by Michael Lace

IOWA GROTTO

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