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Lowell Burkhead

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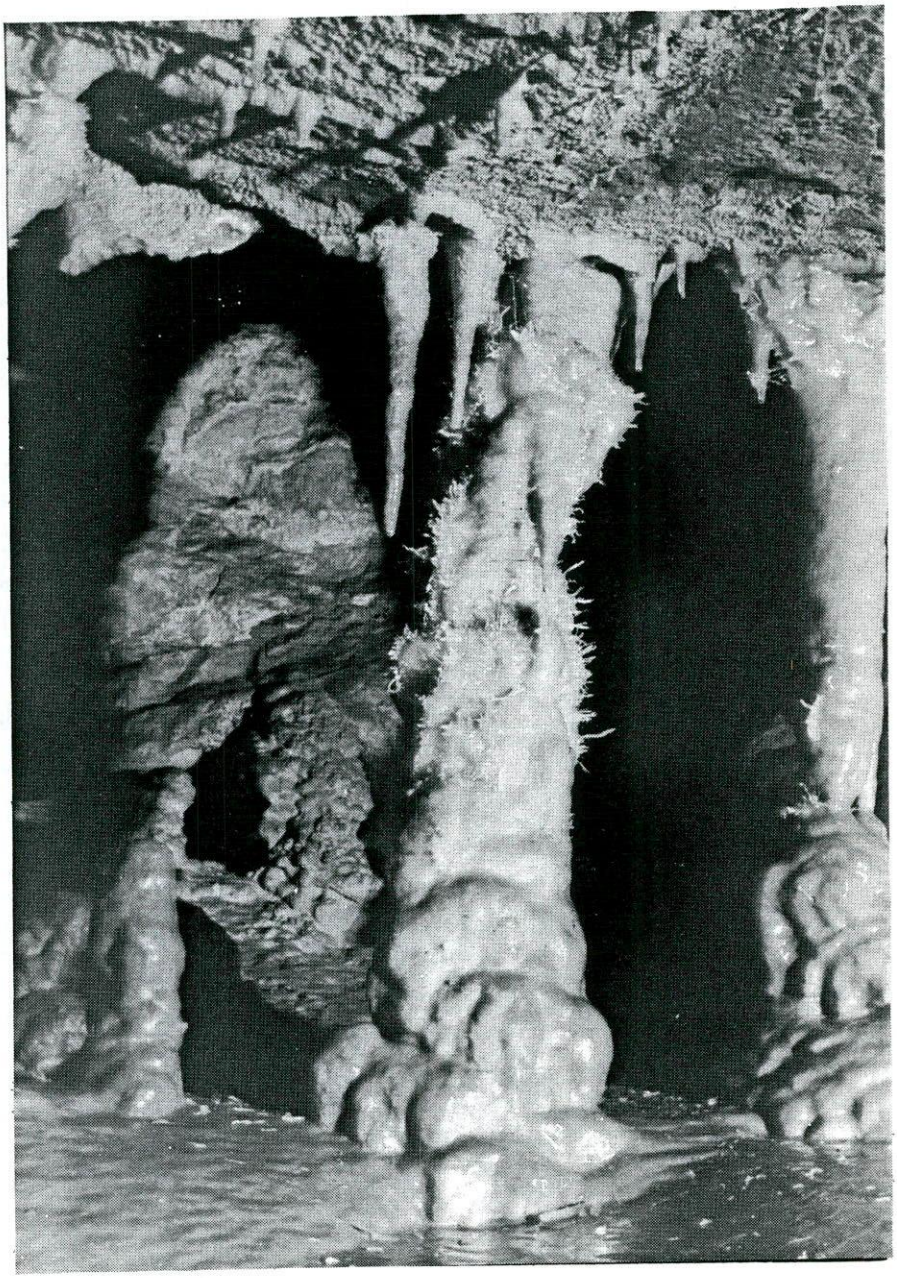
THE IOWA GROTTO

National Speleological Society



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members are encouraged to join our parent organization, The National Speleological Soc.

Material for the next issue of the INTERCOM is due in the hands of the editor by November 1, 1992 with a few days grace for those later trips. This should include material covering September and October, 1992. Send articles, trip reports, photographic negatives, prints, or slides, artwork, cartoons, etc. for publication to:

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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, Iowa City.

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Cover Photo: Formations in Cedar Ridge Crystal Cave, Tennessee. Photo by Scott Dankof

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

Volume 28 Issue 4

C O N T E N T S

IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular meeting July 22, 1992

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by chairman Mike Lace with sixteen people present. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read. *TRIP REPORTS*: Lowell Burkhead reported on a trip to survey Partition Cave with Loren Schutt and Mike Lace. Marc Ohms reported on a trip to the Ozark Spring area in Jackson County. Alex Sewer and Block And Tackle Caves were visited. Mike Lace reported on a survey trip with Marc Ohms and Chris Beck to Eldorado Cave in Dubuque. The survey netted 230 feet of cave. Chris Beck reported on a survey trip to Smoking Ridge Cave. About 120 feet was surveyed. Mike Lace reported on a survey trip to the Sinus Passage in Coldwater Cave with Larry Welch. Mike also reported on a trip to former commercial Wonder Cave in Decorah. A long restoration project is being planned to remove the decaying steps and lighting system. Greg McCarty reported on digging in a road cut near Fayette. Scott Dankof reported on a Tennessee trip in which several caves were visited. Mike Lace reported on a trip that led to digging open Spiral Cave. *FUTURE TRIPS*: Surveying trips are planned to Maze and Spiral Caves. The Des Moines County trip will go if there is enough interest. A beginner's trip is planned to Becker Quarry Cave for August 2. Other up coming events include The Iowa Grotto Picnic, The NSS Convention, the MSS Cornfeed, and the fall MVOR in Crawford County, Missouri on Sept. 25. *OLD BUSINESS*: Auction items are needed for the picnic. INTERCOM back issues to be delivered at the picnic will need to be ordered in advance. The state sinkhole restoration project has invited the grotto to observe the project. There was no new business. The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Regular meeting August 26, 1992

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m. by Chairman Mike Lace. Twelve members were present. There was no minutes or Treasurer's report available. *TRIP REPORTS*: Marc Ohms and Chris Beck reported on the NSS Convention in Indiana. Marc also shared his experiences on a trip to Pine Valley Cave in Jackson County. Mike Lace reported on 200 feet of survey in the Guardian Fangs Passage of Coldwater Cave with Larry Welch and Stacey Cyphert. They also dug on a promising lead in the area. Scott Dankof reviewed his photo and video trips in Coldwater and Wonder Caves. Mike Lace mentioned the clean-up activities that also took place at Wonder Cave. Various caves were visited during the Grotto Picnic including Wonder, Skunk, Decorah Ice Cave, Niagria, and Stafford's Sandstone Caves. Bob Wahlstrom mentioned the lead checking he did during the picnic. Greg McCarty reported on his trips to quarries and crevices and on his tour of springs trip from the picnic. Mike Lace reported on a tourist trip to Becker Quarry Cave. *FUTURE TRIPS*: A trip to Maze and Spiral Caves is planned for early September. The fall MVOR is in late September. A Dubuque rescue training session and a trip to Jones County are being planned. *OLD BUSINESS*: The Iowa Cave Map Book has been completed and copies are for sale. The price is now $15 for grotto members and $20 for non-members. Material for the July-August issue of the INTERCOM is due September 1. *NEW BUSINESS*: The Sara Corrie fund of the NSS has money available for cave-related projects. The attending members voted to revoke the membership offer recently extended to an individual who has been in contact with the grotto. This action was taken based on safety and landowner relations concerns. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. Following the meeting, Greg McCarty and Marc Ohms presented slide programs.

THE VERSATILE VERTICAL SYSTEM

by Mike Nelson

In my vertical training, I was exposed to most of the current, accepted modes of ascending rope. When I got around to assembling my own gear, I realized that none of the systems I had been exposed to quite covered my needs and expectations. So I picked out the characteristics of various systems that appealed to me and cobbled together something that works well within the regional demands and conditions of our Iowa caves. Enough people have commented on its originality and efficency that I have succumbed to suggestions to write up an article explaining it.

Every system is designed to transfer from rappel to ascend. There are numerous obvious reasons for this. I also wanted my system to accommodate ascend to rappel. As there are a lot of times when it would be nice to have one foot free to fend off menacing walls or assist in climbing, I also desired this ability.

The Versatile System incorporates three points of contact with the rope. Forget the debates about how many points are needed for safety. Three points are what this system needs to do what I expect of it. The redundancy is just an added blessing. I use two locking links on my seat harness. The one nearest my body is strictly for rappelling. The other "outside" one is for my seat ascender and safety. The safety ascender is on a piece of webbing just long enough to reach the standing line above the rappel rack while in use.

On my feet, I have webbing stirrups that are just large enough to slip on my boots then push up through the chicken loops, a separate one for each foot, of course. These are attached to the foot ascender via plain oval carabiners. One may debate the safety of suspending body weight on something that doesn't lock. I justify this on several counts. One, I already have two points of attachment at the seat harness. Two, there are two carabiners providing redundancy at the foot attachment. Three, the ease of getting your foot or both feet free rapidly is one of the beauties of the setup. The foot ascender is connected to the seat ascender by a bungie cord.

Climbing is a cross between a modified inch worm, a bastardized Texas, and a mutated frog system. The safety ascender rides above the seat ascender of its own accord. The seat ascender is not physically raised by the arm. You merely hold it stationary in relation to your trunk while standing up in the ascenders, stretching the bungie to its extremes. Then, sitting in the seat harness, you lift your feet and allow the bungie to retract, raising the lower ascender. (I have found most bungie cords to be too stiff taking too much energy to stretch. I recommend sergical tubing which comes in many different sizes including one to match your system and strength. Avalable at Apache Hose and Rubber in Cedar Rapids. Ed.)

Should you be climbing a standing line that is free, you can efficiently climb with both legs. Should you be against a wall or up against a steeply angled section, you can rapidly unclip one foot carabiner and fold it over the chicken loop and snap it onto the stirrup, securing it. Then that foot can be utilized as needed while maintaining rope tension by transferring weight back and forth from seat to foot ascender.

When encountering a lip, you can gain leverage over the rope by attaching a locking link on a chest harness to the top hole of the seat ascender. This temporarily robs the automatic action of the bungie on the lower ascender and it may have to be raised manually. Standing up in the stirrups, you can lift the rope off the lip with the chest attachment using the strength of your legs, sliding up either or both safety and seat ascender.

If you encounter knots or rebelays, you simply pass over them one ascender at a time, always maintaining at least two points of contact on the rope.

Transferring from ascend to rappel requires minor choreography. You put your seat harness weight on the safety and detach the main seat ascender from the rope leaving you with two points on the rope. Do not open the locking link as the safety is also on it. The rack is threaded on just as high on the standing line as possible, just below the safety ascender. Here, you stand on the foot ascender and remove the safety ascender from above the rack. The friction for the rack is provided by the foot ascender. (This is one point that may stir up controversy and in the interest of safety, I invite it.) As soon as the safety device is secured, you transfer the control of the rope from feet to hand, releasing the foot ascender from the rope with the other hand. Depending on the urgency of one's situation, the foot ascender may be allowed to dangle or be stowed properly. You are in rappel mode at this point.

Switching from rappel back to ascending is easy enough. At any desired point, stop and, while maintaining rope control with one hand, slip the seat ascender onto its locking link, the one that already has the safety attached to it. (I have also found it handy to put a pinching wrap of rope back on the rack and tying an overhand knot in the standing line at the appropriate distance to clip it into a carabiner slipped through the seat harness. I have rappelled down onto this arrangement to assure its stopping ability and to ascertain the convenience of recovering from this position and found no problems with it.) Clip the safety on the standing line and rappel down onto it. Attach the bungie to the lower ascender and climb or, without the bungie, manually down climb over a knot or rebelay and transfer back to rappel as previously described.

Of course, I did omit considerable points on finesse and nuances, like being sure the 'biners of the foot ascenders are latched on in a manner so that they do not accidently ensnare the standing line, the trial and error of getting the bungie just the right length for the most efficient stride and other aspects relating to ones physical dimemsions.

I have used this system extensively, from minor drops, to 100 foot + drops in Iowa, to 200 feet in a New Mexico cave and have not found it wanting. It is easy to get into, attaches to the rope quickly and easily, and meets a variety of needs and conditions and feels safe to me. Critiquing is invited on the basis of overall safety.

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trip reports

THE OPENING OF SPIRAL

Spiral Cave, Dubuque County, Iowa
June 7, 1992 by Chris Beck
Mike Lace, Marc Ohms, and Chris Beck

The plan for the day had been another survey trip into Maze Cave, but arriving at the parking area, I found Mike and Marc trying to decide if they wanted to do it. We then discussed our options and decided that we would try to open Spiral instead. Mike went to rig a line at the cave while Marc and I went for tools. We stopped first at Marc's house and then the nearest hardware store for bars and hammers.

We then returned to the cave where Mike had already started to work on removing the blockage. He worked with the bars a while longer and then called for the sledge and an operator. I then took his place in the pit. With some pounding and prying, the blockage gave way. We were soon all in the cave and trying to decide which way to go. We chose left first which ended shortly in a low crawl. Then we went right and found this the main cave. It immediately started to drop, branch, and turn, making it apparent why it was called Spiral Cave. We spent about four hours pushing all the passages with all their loops and crawls. We finally decided we had seen all the cave and estimated there to be close to 1,000 feet. The effort it would take to survey made us wonder if it should be called Spiral Cave or "Little Maze Cave".

CARLSBAD RESTORATION

Carlsbad Caverns, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico
June 22-26, 1992 by Mike Nelson
Mike and Delores Nelson and others

This was Delores' and my fourth Carlsbad restoration. The work was typical of that described in past reports of this NSS/CRF/NPS fieldcamp. This year, however, my duties were atypical. Funds were received by the Cave Research Foundation from the National Parks Service for much needed new equipment and to produce a restoration video. As the videographer had two camcorders and could only use one at a time, I was instructed in the use of the extra unit and assigned specific chores. My specialty was the experimental shooting of time lapse sequences. So for most of the week, I was aware of every passing second of each day.

As always, I try to learn something from my experiences. In manual taping (as opposed to editing) time lapse, it is the length of the actual exposure that counts. Very consistent two second exposures create an image that is readily grasped by the mind upon viewing the work in progress in the final product. The "lapse" time is inconsequential as the actual physical process,in this case, being recorded seldom moved at any consistant pace. If any of what I captured was usable, one might view 30 or 40 seconds of the work I did that week in the finished 20 minute video.

At one point, someone thought it would be swell to have some video of the video being shot. So I set up well above the main cameraman, Scott, who was on belay on a ledge halfway down a pit that a crew was cleaning. As Scott is also doing all the editing, he said it is quite unlikely that he will make the final cut. Luckily, I was in a perfect position to capture the crew as they ascended over the lip of the pit in full vertical gear and hopfully, this can be edited into the footage Scott was shooting to provide more continuity than could have been attained with just one camera.

Another different aspect this year was local interest. An area TV station sent a reporter and photographer to do a story on the project. As the light I was using was superior to theirs, they had me donate some light to aid in the little introductory clip typically used to lead into the feature. As they were spending a lot of time in the general area I was working in, I gleened a lot out of watching "the pros" at work. The "newsman" had a bit of free time to wander around while the cameraman set up. Observing him, I discovered the best kept secret of a TV newsman's deepest fears. With a nonchalance born of years on the job, he deftly checked to be sure his fly was securely up at least once every 30 to 40 seconds.

As my time lapse task was very boring, I was using a remote switch so that I could do double duty. Fielding questions from the visitors to the cave is a constant requirement during restoration and doing this made my days pass a bit quicker. What with four years experience, I had developed a fairly good spiel and delivery. So I was just off trail explaining to a group of visitors just exactly what it was we were doing off trail (when they had been exhorted to stay on the trails) when the TV duo flashed by in a flourish. Six steps down the trail it hit them, the relevence of explaining restoration to the visitors, and what fine camera fodder it might make. The next thing I know, the reporter is making small talk with me to put me in a comfortable frame of mind before putting me in front of their camera and to take some of the edge off the fact that his hands were inside of my clothes bugging me for sound. I summoned up the distracted concentration I used on my first trip through the Spong Syphon when there was only about an inch and a half of airspace and delivered my rap and answered questions with the aplomb of an old pro (or Dan Quayle, at least.) If I made the channel 13 evening news, I'll see that a copy shows up at a grotto meeting so that a few laughs may be had.

From what I observed of it, the restoration video that was shot should score high from an informational aspect. Visitors who come through Carlsbad on the other 51 weeks of the year should get a good glimpse of restoration from it. I can't see that

what was filmed could be edited into an overview, let alone a comprehensive instruction of the "how to" aspect of restoration.

Some of what we do can be figured out by anyone performing restoration at any site in any cave. What works (and doesn't work) on a given challenge (rimstone dams, pool popcorn, popcorn of a non-contiguous type, flowstone cleaning and detailing, etc) was not covered well. One exception was a remarkably detailed segment on the meticulous restoration of broken stalagmites and stalactites. As a whole, though, I don't think the "nuts & bolts" of restoration will emerge for a guide to restoration work.

Of course, the real highlights of the week are the two off-trail trips we get to take in the evenings. Our leader to the Hall of the White Giants was Gavin Corcoran, the son of one of the team members who discovered that area, John Corcoran. Though Gavin is under the accepted age for the trip leaders, he got a special dispensation from the Pope due to his many years of experience in Carlsbad. Gavin led us through the complex first 20 feet of passageway with minimal second thoughts. He is an exceptional young caver with a fantastic amount of lore learned from the rote of caving with his dad. All the ladies on the trip gushed on about him becoming a "hunk" since they saw him last year.

The Hall of the White Giants is one of those places that words can't discribe and photos can't do justice to. We spent a great deal of time in the area in complete silence. It was like what going to church should be and later each of us allowed to how it had been a holy experience. No one broke the spell with any levity or other tacky verbiage. In unison almost, we began to rumage through our gear and prepare for the trip out.

As I have precious little experience in a cave one could lose their way in, I asked if I could lead out. The way was too plainly obvious and one needed only trust their senses along the more well trodden trails in Carlsbad. I did inconvenience those behind me by exhuming some particularly ripe effluent gas in Mattlock's Pinch, a tight spot in a section of passage that dropped below the level of that on either side of it and by losing my way in that complex entrance area.

Our second off-trail trip was to the right-hand fork of the left-hand tunnel. As I had been there before, I was assigned leadership status to gain experience. There was a more experienced person along as a backup in case I wasn't up to snuff yet. After a cautious ledge walk too wide to chimney, we came to a spot where on our initial trip here, we had another ledge walk that was chimneyable. There was one place where we had to skirt around a beautiful white drapery but otherwise it was quite easy and safe. Here, the backup man indicated that the accepted route was up a flowstone slope, through some columns and down a flowstone face to the ledge again. He led through the section and I held back to attend Delores in the climb down.

Early in my caving experience, I had learned the value of positioning myself to aid a climber where I could help break a minor fall. (Don't do this where a falling caver could also injure you, and a minor safety pitch here will keep the climber, no matter what their experience level, from thinking that you simply don't trust their abilities.) I was in a position from which I could act instantly but was not interfering in a manner that would undermine her confidence. Her feet were well planted on the flowstone and she had a firm grip with one hand while searching for a hold for the other. Some subtile weight shift caused her feet to slide out from under her and I leaned in and pinned her to the flowstone mass. She dropped only slightly further than the reach of her secured arm. Just enough, we would later find out, to put a nasty tear in her deltoid. With a team effort, we got her and her pain back up the climb and back across the tricky ledge traverse. The backup man felt compelled to accompany her out and insisted I finish leading the trip if I was comfortable doing so.

The rest of the trip went without incident. I do feel that there is a point to be made though. The lower path I had originally learned was secure, though we were about four feet above a pool that might have been six feet deep. The entire traverse was on

a single level. One beautiful but not too delicate formation had to be dealt with. The "accepted route" required a climb up, over, through and down a lovely formation area. At the bottom of this, the continuation of the ledge, void,and pool still had to be negotiated. Safety and the fact that less formation area would be traveled upon should have strongly influenced the selection of the single level route over the "accepted route", in my opinion.

As a relative newcomer at Carlsbad, I felt no inclination to debate this phylosophy with the more experienced individual before the fall. I felt like a guest in Carlsbad and felt obliged to "stay on the path", so to speak. I commented to the back-up man that maybe shorter people like my wife would be better off using the alternate route. He responded almost defensively that "the hand holds are there, you just gotta find them". Had I not been spotting her, she would not just have ripped her deltoid, she would have slid down the rest of the flowstone probably on her chin and quite possibely, slide past the minor footing space I had occupied and dropped the four feet into the pool below. I climb a lot for fun, practice, and challenge, but I feel that no one should have to climb if an alternative is available and they'd be more comfortable with it.

She was able to participate in the last day of restoration work and help drive home, but had not regained full use of her right arm by August 1st.

THE ILLINOIS STATE FLOWER
(or encounters with orange traffic cones)

Scott Dankof, Chris Beck, and Katrina Byrun
June 22-25. 1992

by Scott Dankof

On Monday, June 22, Chris and I took a caving vacation to Tennessee. After a 12½ hour driving marathon, we pulled into Falling Creek State Park. Tuesday morning arrived and we drove south to a point near Sewannee Tenn. We were meeting Katrina Byrun of the Chattanooga Grotto. I had contacted her a few months prior about a trip into Cedar Ridge Crystal Cave.

At 10:00 a.m., we met at the parking area next to the entrance, opened the gate, and entered. The cave was discovered during construction of the nearby interstate. If you look carefully at the hillside around the entrance, you can still see remnents of old cave formations. Inside the entrance is a small standing height room. To the right is what's left of an abandoned gate. We crawled through this and into a walking passage. This led to a large circular room with beautiful formations, large columns, flowstone, soda straws and helectites everywhere. Katrina led us to the back of the room where we unpacked the camera gear. With so many pristine formations, it was hard to choose what to take a picture of first. Of course, I overcame this challenge and soon, flashes were going off regularly.

Along the perimeter of the room were several low crawls. Katrina led us through one of them into a small room and pointed to a hole in the floor. She told us how once she was climbing back up through this hole and came face to face with a very big spider. I looked around to make sure nothing was crawling nearby, backed down into the hole and promptly got my chest stuck. Then Chris tried it and slipped right through into the Lower Room. The camera was passed down and he took a few pictures of some nice white stalactites. We worked our way back into the large main room and took our last pictures of a crevice which had translucent soda straws throughout.

Chris and I said goodbye to Katrina and headed south of Sewannee to Buggytop Cave. It's located in a wooded State natural area. A two mile trail leads to the top of a 150 foot bluff directly over the cave entrance. A steep path led down the side of the bluff to one of the most picturesque entrances I've ever seen. The opening measured approximately 120 feet wide by 60 feet high and had a large stream cascading out. We spent about an hour poking around and just enjoying the area. On the way back to camp, we stopped at Sewannee Natural Bridge which featured a thirty foot high arch.

Large trunk passage in Camps Gulf Cave, Tennessee. Multiple flash photo by Scott Dankof. Chris Beck on flash

Small portion of large room in Camps Gulf Cave, Tennessee. Photo by Scott Dankof. Chris Beck on flash.

Mike Nelson, Wet Reebok Cave, photo by Marc Ohms

Mike Lace, Langford's Cave, Indiana, photo by Ohms

Camp's Gulf Cave, Spencer Tennessee
June 24, 1992 by Chris Beck
Scott Dankof and Chris Beck

The final cave on a fantastic, but way too short of a trip, was anticipated to be a big ending. It proved to be much bigger than we could have ever imagined. After spending the morning visiting several of the many beautiful waterfalls in the park where we were camped, we headed for the cave about 11:00 a.m. The large sinkhole entrance to the cave was easy to find with its 40 by 100 foot opening. We quickly put on our gear and entered the cave to find that it was even larger inside the cave.

After quickly covering the few hundred yards of the first part of the cave, we found ourselves at a large breakdown pile. The guidebook had said to go up the pile to the left where you would emerge in a stadium sized room. The room was so big even our electric lights would not reach the farthest wall. We immediately set up for a picture with Scott at the camera and me shooting off the flash bulbs. We only took two pictures as it took at least eight bulbs to illuminate just our corner of the room.

We then made our way across the jumbled breakdown covered floor to the far side of the room. There we found the cave register and a smaller passage that led to the next room of the cave. This room was a little smaller than the last but with a large river on the far side. We took several more multi-flash bulb pictures before heading out, following the flagging tape we had placed on the way in. This was a big help finding our way. This cave is too large for words and must be seen to be appreciated.

WONDERING THROUGH THE RUBBLE

Wonder Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
July 18, 1992 by Mike Lace
Marc Ohms and Mike Lace

Marc and I met with the owner of Wonder Cave and headed down to the first set of rotted wooden stairs. We carefully rigged our rope along the railing and an intact portion of the stairway above the site where a significant rockfall had crushed part of the stairs; this is where the trail takes its first sharp left. Several tons of rock had left a 12 foot drop below the landing and no way to safely freeclimb the distance. We were interested in seeing what other damage might have taken place as the cave continues to reclaim the path that thousands of tourists had walked when the cave was open. The owner remarked that no one had ever fallen and hurt themselves along the trail and its many steps and he attributed this to the death grip that many of the tourists often had on the handrail during their underground "adventure".

The trail beyond the collapse hasn't changed much except for the addition of three coon carcasses, two of which are almost completely liquified. The cave has been known to take on a little water during heavy rains and recent weather had caused one of the left-hand side leads to drain a steady trickle over the brick wall that prevents silt from washing onto the trail. The trail itself becomes ankle deep in a few spots but the formations along the route are worth the wet feet. In some spots, calcite has begun to form on the concrete trail in thin rimstone dams.

We turned around at the entrance to the domepit and climbed back up to the steps above the collapse after knocking down a few dangling timbers from the landing. We later talked with the owner about the condition of the trail and his plans for the cave. He has given us the go-ahead to remove the rotting steps, rusting handrails and corroded conduit that would only become more hazardous with each passing year. We'll need help in this lengthy restoration project so look for upcoming scheduled trips to Wonder Cave for this purpose.

TAKING IT EASY

Shannon, Carter, and Reynolds Counties, Missouri
July 18-26, 1992 by Mike Nelson
Mike and Delores Nelson and Brett Swanson

Most of our vacations in the last few years had been much too fast paced. So this week of introducing Brett (a friend of ours who's showed us good times in Minnesota) to the Ozarks was to be very non-structured and easy going. Though our main focus was to relax, sightsee, and overeat, we did manage to get in a little canoeing, snorkling and caving. We visited most of the major springs in this area, all have been written about in past trip reports.

We finally got around to touring the neat little cave above Little Blue Spring. We revisited Little Gem Cave and Blue Pearl Cave along the Current River in Shannon County, and I took another dive into Warner Bay Spring in Reynolds County. On my only previous dive into Warner Bay, it contained a fishing rod and reel and a lot of line strewn about. I deemed it to not be prudent to invert myself so that I could poke my head into the actual conduit while thrashing my feet about in a cluster of monofiliment line in 35 feet of water in a basin with jagged walls. So that amounted to just a recon' dive.

On this trip, I made an initial dive to scope out impediments such as previously encountered. While there was still copious quantities of fishing tackle in the spring basin, it was all neatly adhered to the jagged walls. I retracted my hastily layed line and restrung it, running it in directly overhead of the vent before dropping down to the base in a straight line. I tied it off directly behind where I would be working so that if worse came to worse, I could make a sweep with my arm to recover it and find my way out.

The material I was digging out was peculiar in that it was not breakdown or any other form of loose detritus that generally collects in this sort of feature. In various places along the wall projections, was a calcification upon the wall that was evidently denser than the limestone beneath. At some point when the majority of the limestone supporting the projections had worn away, the remaining limestone and calcified deposit would break off and fall into the spring basin. Some pieces were large enough that they would have been quite clumsy to extricate from the throat of the vent had it not been for the gracious assistance of the spring flow.

Although Warner Bay is very clean by any standards I'm used to dealing with, there were accumulated deposits below the chunks I wrestled out. Upon release, this material would blossom out, never completely wiping out the visibility, but the different coarsnesses would take awhile to sort themselves out. The fines would blow right on out on the surge, the heaviest would fall back toward the vent and roll along like marbles racing for but never quite reaching the drop off at the restriction and every size in between would hang indecisively until gravity or the water flow proved stronger. As I have my gear tailored for diving without a bouyancy compensation device down to 30 feet and there were many sharp edges that could render mine ineffective, I took advantage of these silt storms to exit the spring for a moment to doff mine. Upon returning, I found things cleared up again and the work much easier without it.

I cleared more directly inside the restriction and some from the conduit, the actual cave, per se, that I was hoping to access. By now, I was low enough on air that I couldn't have safely pushed much if I did manage a breakthrough. There were only two large pieces remaining which obstructed both physical entrance and any view of what might lay beyond. It seemed like a gook place to quit. There won't be that much to do to open it up, and if someone else happens across Warner Bay Spring and beats me to the "bootie" I've worked for, it'll be painfully obvious.

Retreating from the spring, I found grit in an infinite variety of shapes and sizes in all my gear, from the least consequential, like in my boots and under my weight belt buckles, to the most potentially inconvenient, inside my regulators. Once

the final blockages are removed, it would be a prudent diver that would make a surface break to inspect every vital piece of gear before attempting to push further. We have fairly concrete plans to return on Labor Day weekend to mount a full scale assault on the cave from which Warner Bay Spring eminates.

On our lackadaisical drive back toward home, we took in the tour of Onondaga Cave. At $6.00 each, I thought the entry fee rather steep and the tour quite short at about an hour. But where many commercial caves dabble in whimsy and elaboration attempting to entertain and drag out a tour to the point that the tourist feels they didn't get ripped off too badly, Onondaga was a surprize. There really was a lot more to see than the guide was taking time to point out and we drug our feet something fierce. One exceedingly large section of the cave perched on a high mound of clay, had developed so much mass of flowstones and dripstones that it separated, settled 4 to 6 inches and started to re-heal in many places. I'm not talking just one feature here, but a darn good sized room and an extensive reach of the entrance and exit passages.

Onondaga is famous for its lily pad rooms, which were impressive. The guide, however, never pointed out some fine feature we had to pass to get to them and back, a series of stalagmites that had formed below a ceiling joint had grown together into a long, thin latticed wall. There was flowstone forming on the original abandoned concrete steps. Decending by a different path from the lily pad rooms, we saw a large jutting rock which had developed extensive draperies hanging from it. At a later point of its history it broke loose and one end tilted down several degrees and it had an abundant growth of newer stalagmites growing upright upon it. The real eye-catcher though was the cascade of brilliantly white flowstone that had filled the gap between it and its original anchor point. The slab was totally recemented by this formation, which had flowed well beyond the immediate wound area. I would heartily recommend this tour, especially in the middle of an oppressively hot Missouri summer day.

We stopped at Graham Cave State Park later on to cook dinner. It is the site of a most impressive sandstone arch shelter cave. Archeology has uncovered evidence of long habitation there. From Graham Cave, we dawdled on home.

N.S.S. CONVENTION 1992

Salem, Indiana
August 1-8, 1992 by Marc Ohms
Marc Ohms and Chris Beck

Chris and I attended the 1992 NSS Convention held in Salem, Indiana. We arrived on Saturday the 1st and left on Saturday the 8th. The facilities included Delaney Park and the Salem Middle School.

Sunday, while eating breakfast, we picked a cave out of the guidebook that did not require much crawling or use of a wetsuit (we can do that in Iowa). Our choice was Suicide Cave. It is entered via a sinkhole 100 feet off the road. A damp crawl led off into larger passage and to the main cave. The cave was 4,500 feet long and very much fun to do. We roamed around for a few hours and took several photos of the passages and speleothems.

After cleaning up a bit, we went to Endless Cave. This cave is located in a valley that contains several caves but we only had time for one. Endless Cave is 6,900 feet long and features large passage throughout most of the cave. A small stream flows throughout the cave but does not get over knee deep.

The evening was spent prowling the vendors, looking at all the goodies and acting like a kid in a toy store.

Monday, after breakfast, we attended the opening ceremony and afterward we drove to the school. We visited the NSS Bookstore and Speleobooks where we purchased some needed items. At 1:00 p.m. we had a photo workshop which turned out to be a waste of time. The Howdy Party started at 6:30 p.m. and chicken and ribs were served until everyone was full.

Tuesday, we spent the day at the school attending the U.S. Exploration session where we heard many interesting talks on caves from all over the U.S.

Wednesday, the day began with breakfast and digging through the guidebook for a cave to visit. Salts Cave was our first choice. It was entered via a large sinkhole and featured large passage from the start. The cave was 4,600 feet long and most of the length is in the canyon passage. This passage kept going and going until it finally ended in a wet crawl to a sump. In the last pool, there were a couple of blind cave fish.

McCart's Pit was our next stop. It had a large collapse sinkhole for an entrance. We downclimbed to a small slot which led to the top of our pit. Chris went down first and reported that it belled out nicely and then I went down. At the bottom, we looked around and went back up and out. The drop was 76 feet and mostly free once out of the tight top section.

The photo salon was held that evening at the school. It lasted about 2 hours and many nice slides were shown.

Thursday, we spent the day at the school attending the international exploration session. Many talks were given from people from many different countries.

That evening, the Mr. Kaver contest was held at the campground. It was quite entertaining, to say the least.

Friday, we planned on going caving but the night before was a bit hard on us and the most strenuous thing we managed to do was take a nap. That afternoon, we went to view the winning movies in the video salon.

The banquit was held in a large circus tent at the campground. The awards were given and the new president was introduced and the convention came to an end.

Saturday, we were awoken around 4:00 a.m. by rain pouring into the tent and soaking us. We waited for it to let up and we dashed for the banquet tent. We stayed there until daylight and packed up and headed home. The roads were flooded in many places and the interstate was worse. It was ditch to ditch water for miles. Later I learned that we had nine inches of rain!

N.S.S. CONVENTION TRIP REPORT

August 1-8. 1992 by Liz Robinson

Many of you were at the convention this year, so I am just passing on a report on my Mammoth Cave trip and some general thoughts about the convention.

I was on a Mammoth Cave trip with 13 other people which was led by Kevin Downs of the Cave Research Foundation and a park ranger with a crew of Brad Smith and about 10 other people. Our trip went out on Monday, August 3, after meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the Visitor's Center.

It was raining hard when we went into the Carmichael Entrance so we had to dress in the vehicles. After entering, we walked to the Snowball Diningroom where we had a chance to get water for the carbide lamps and discuss the trip routing. After leaving the diningroom, we followed more tourist passage then went into a side lead that was mostly narrow canyons (El Gor). Interestingly, this was old tourist trails from back when the average cave tourist was a lot more like modern-day cavers, only the women wore skirts and the men wore business suits. Most of the passage was dry and narrow with varying parts of walking, duck walking, walking to the side and crawling. It continued in this vein for about three miles, I judge. These passages were filled with gypsum formations-- big flowers several inches across, cave cotten, needles, and hair. We saw gypsum that seemed to be extruding from plain dry limestone. On one rock, we saw a large pile of gypsum hair that closely resembled a dead animal in the advanced stages of decay. It was really a nice trip. After exiting the canyons, we reached the contemporary Lantern Trail at the Giant's Coffin and followed this trail to the Violet City Exit. The total trip was 5½ hours.

The Geology Field Trip was quite interesting. Brad and I were on the first bus of which Art and Peg Palmer were the geologist tour guides. Paul Rubin and John Milroie were also on the same bus as was Thom Engel.

It was like being in the middle of a Mini NRO. The big talk of NRO is the new cave that was opened up the end of May in Brown's Depression. The cave is muddy and wet with mostly walking passage after getting through a few tight spots in the entry passages. So far, nearly two miles have been mapped and the end is not in sight. The new cave seems to be tied in with the drainages around Doc Shaul's Spring. So far, it is the 8th longest cave in New York. Breaking into it was a real mess. Aside from all of the usual mud and gravel, the sinkhole had a lot of trash dumped into it, even big stuff like major appliances. So it took several months of work to get in.

The geology trip was interesting also. We visited a limestone quarry. The quarry has delivered stone all over the country and even to England. They explained how they quarry both above and below ground. We also visited some of the Lost River swallowholes and the Orageville Rise, some cave entrances on public lands. Having several geologists onboard the buss made for a rather lively session.

The community really welcomed us with open arms. One caver told me that a poor family with 16 kids "adopted her" for about 2½ hours. They took her home, fed her, and insisted upon giving her a large bundle of produce from their garden. When you came into town, there were "welcome cavers" signs all over, on businesses, on the highway signs, and on the lawns, there were bat signs that said "hi cavers" or "welcome to Washington County". Nobody there could remember any time the NSS convention had been welcomed with open arms like this. The people we met in the stores and local businesses seemed friendly also. The local cattlemen's pork and lamb raisers association put on BBQ's at the campground, instead of having a meal plan. For lunch, we had a choice of a minibus that took people to the various restaurants in town, or a local organization that provided meals at $4.00 each in the school cafeteria. This was most convenient. The only bad things I can say were that the buses were not running regularly (there were some last minute cancellations on buses due to mechanical and insurance problems, as I understood) and that the school insisted that we had to be out by 5:00 each day.

There was also some confusion with CRF on the cave trips. We had been notified that some trips would be very hard core and rigorous and others were to be moderate. The confusion was that the trip leaders did not know which trips were supposed to be which. Where the problem arose, I do not know. My concern was that as far as the mosquitos are concerned, I was the menu on the banquet. I was really chewed up. The bats did their best but they couldn't get every mosquito.

Friday night it rained pretty hard. The hottub area was under two feet of water and parts of the campground had prople flooded out in their tents. We got caught in it going back to the motorhome. We were going to stop off at Bluespring Caverns on our way home, as it was on the way, however, it was closed due to high water. They did let us go look at the entrance, as long as we did not go in. "The Darkness Becons..." The water level must have been pretty high, as it was making quite a lot of noise.

The one other notable thing that needs to be mentioned was the Shrine of Sister Winkie. This was a large structure?! set up near the Whittenburg University campsite, consisting of firewood, candles, 2 corn stalks apparently from some local field, miscellaneous items donated by cavers, and kept getting bigger and more elaborate each night. Sister Winkie was described to me as a "minor Arkansas woods diety" which I gather was a piece of driftwood that someone had picked up. Thursday night, "Brother Otis" appeared in the form of a stump which was also decorated. I gather that Brother Otis had some relationship to Oztotl. Friday night, the shrine and Brother Otis were burned. So if in your cave travels, you hear some references to Sister Winkie and Brother Otis, you will have some idea who they are. I suspect that they will be resurrected at OTR or some other convention.

We are uncertain if we will be able to get to the '93 convention but we do plan to attend the '94 convention in Texas about 100 miles west of San Antonio.

THE BAD WITH THE GOOD

Indian Bluff Cave, Jones County, Iowa
August 9, 1992 by Mike Nelson
Mike and Delores Nelson, Ellie the Cave Pooch, Eric Maasen, Doug and Nate Schmuecker and Cecilia Carey and Tom

We broke Eric into vertical training a few weeks ago in a tree in a park near home. He was ready to pitch himself over a cliff. As we were discussing options, He mentioned this particular weekend as being out of the question as he had to go to a wedding in Monticello on 8-8-92. I told him of the fine drop at Pictured Rock County Park and of how I had been looking for any shabby excuse to go there again. We had our opportunity to finish his above ground training.

We left Saturday afternoon and I wasn't feeling good. I got worse as we went along until I had visited the restroom in the city park in every third town between Fertile and Delhi. Just north of Hopkinton, I had one of those cosmic connections between my concious and subconscious levels out an open truck door at 45 mph on a curve. I started to improve shortly thereafter.

At the park, we drove down to the cliff and found Illinois rock climbers utilizing the face. I won't bring judgement down on the bolts they placed for protection on a lead climb (though one on an overhang had to lack the strength of those on the sheer face) though I can't see why a lead type climb was attempted. A belay was possible for the entire climb and defacing the face wouldn't have been necessary.

After the lead climb, a top belay was rigged for subsequent climbs. Now this was rigged on two anchors bolted in up high, and these were not needed. There were plenty of anchor points for some webbing and 'biners for a top belay. Mike Eviston, who was an Iowa Grotto member a while back was among the climbers. Later on, we visited extensively but I stayed away from a philosophical debate on the subject.

I was still a bit queasy by the time Eric got out from the reception and we visited for a while and crashed. I awoke at 6:00 a.m. on the rebound, and Ellie and I reconnoitered the drops and their anchor points. We returned and woke Eric and had the first drop rigged and were on rope by 7:00.

After several trips up and down the rope with some minor exercises and a few photo stops, we rerigged a longer, freer drop. This second drop had a more challenging lip and learning to negotiate a difficult lip is a major skill to develop. Several trips up and down this one with a few more exercises and Eric was obviously cave ready. About this time Doug and Nate showed up and we switched to some free climbing, utilizing the Illinois belay points, as long as they were so handy and already there. We concentrated on being sure Nate had a good time. He sure tried hard and did well. What he lacked in reach, he made up for because his smaller hands and feet had more available holds.

It was getting hot and humid so Doug took Nate into Indian Bluff Cave to cool off after his climb. Then Eric and I took a turn each on the face, both "popping off" about 1/3 of the way up. We then rigged a slightly less challenging climb and I belayed Eric up it. Delores came down the road with her cousin Cecilia and her friend Tom. We geared up and got into the cave as Doug and Nate came out. It was so hot by then that I caved in a tee shirt and was never uncomfortable. This was Cecilia and Tom's first cave and they found it fascinating. Everybody always gets a kick out of Ellie the cave hound with her light around her neck. She led most of the trip. Anyone who's been there knows there's not a lot to write about Indian Bluff. So... back on the surface...

It was hot. We did a little more climbing, derigged and stowed our gear. I was pretty scummy from climbing on the damp rock and sweating, so I hit the Maquoketa River. It was only a little less humid than the air, about the same temp and only slightly dirtier than me, not the least bit refreshing. We said our goodbyes to Doug and Nate and the rest of us had a picnic in town. It was great and stayed down.

HALF A TRIP

Unnamed leads and Glenwood Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa
August 12, 1992 by Greg McCarty

I was supposed to meet up with two former grotto members (who shall remain nameless) to assist with a dig, but things didn't quite work out. Seeing that I was going to have to be at least four hours late, I attempted to contact them early in the morning. Finding that they had left much earlier than I expected, I failed to make contact. When I showed up at the cave in the afternoon, I found that they had failed to advance much and had headed back home to facilitate a move out of state by one member of the party.

Needing new plans, I dug out my maps and decided to look for some new caves. Heading for a part of Winneshiek County I haven't worked much, I took the opportunity to check out a little park I hadn't seen before. I also took a look at a pretty little spring along side the road that I believe I've seen before but hadn't photographed. In a quarry, I found some interesting solutional openings high on the walls, most of which were filled, and a high crevice lead with a large opening. I couldn't safely climb up to the crevice, but it looked like it might be possible to reach it from the top. In leaving the quarry and walking up the road cut to try and reach the top, I managed to find another crevice opening. This one was tight at the beginning but opened up just ahead. Since my tools were in the car, I pulled rocks out by hand and stabilized the ceiling. Pounding with rocks, I pulled off enough loose wall rubble to just barely allow entry. This was after being stopped in earlier attempts to squeeze in. Even though it now seemed just possible to fit, I decided to forgo the effort until I had someone with me. After all, it's just a stupid crevice.

After climbing to the top of the quarry, I found that there indeed was a way to chimney down into the first crevice from the top but only at the risk of being smashed to pieces by loose boulders. I skipped that opportunity as well. After leaving the quarry, I drove around and looked at some new scenery and road cuts until it got dark. On the way home, I stopped at Glenwood Cave and found it to be wide open. That was going to be enough for this night, because I had to drive into Minnesota at 4:00 a.m.

GROTTO PICNIC '92

Odessa Spring, Rimstone River Cave and unnamed leads
August 22, 1992 by Greg McCarty
Lowell Burkhead and Greg McCarty

To set up the spring tour I was to lead at the picnic, I did some preliminary work during the week and a half leading up to it. On 8/3, I had to take Deb up to Rochester, Minnesota, so she could fly down to see her parents in Florida. The early morning flight combined with the previous day's cave trip and a night spent working on my animals, meant I got only ten minutes sleep. Still, I wanted to take advantage of being up there and check some things out. I took a scenic route back although the fog obscured any far away detail. I looked at the sinkholes and road cuts as I drove along and even stopped to look at a couple of quarries. I wanted to see what any solutional openings would be like but I didn't have much luck. I finally worked my way down to Forestville State Park and pulled in for a quick look. I quickly discovered you need a park sticker to even drive around in the park, except for the county road, so I picked up a pamphlet and headed back on the road. No use buying a sticker if you're too tired to stay.

Driving down to Mystery Cave, which is now part of the Forestville Park, I found things closed down. The Mystery II entrance drive was gated and no one was around. I decided to see if I could locate the Mystery I entrance. I had been there only briefly during the two day crawling tour of the cave I took in '74 after the convention. When I found the drive leading back into the woods, I saw no trace of the signs warning about the need for a sticker. Driving on in, I went across a new bridge over the Root River and stopped at a picnic area. I could see someone in caving attire heading for the

entrance to the cave. After conversing for a minute while some distance apart, I found out it was Warren Netherton. He invited me to come on in and see the work they were doing so I grabbed my camera and penlight and headed in.

The state removed all the old trails and associated lights and debris. The new trails and lighting are really sharp. Warren and another park employee were installing the last few lights and getting things ready for their opening the following week. They gave me instructions on where to head and how to operate the various light control boxes then off I went. The dim lighting between features gives you that "cavey" feeling, and I like the grating bridges that allow you to see down the pits. All the side passages are highlighted also so it really is a nice experience. My camera's hot-shoe had a plate come loose which prevented me from mounting the flash but I managed to get some good pictures anyway by using the bulb setting and tripping the flash manually. The fee to take the tour is $4.00 for adults, and you will need a $4.00 park sticker to drive in. I would recommend that cavers go up and give it a look. It's really quite nice. While you have the park sticker, have a look at the rest of the park too.

On 8/19, I went back to Rochester to pick up Deb from her return flight. On the way back, we stopped to talk to landowners of privately owned springs I wanted to use for the spring tour. We couldn't catch everyone at home, though, so I ended up having to telephone. The owner of Odessa Spring did mention that the cave at the spring was "chiseled" out by someone in the 30's trying to make a back entrance to Niagara Cave. This seemed unlikely but I found out more on that during the picnic when I spoke to a gentleman in Kendallville who used to live near the spring. He said that someone did indeed blast out the thirty feet of cave that is present, following the slot that the water pours out of. It always did seem strange but I didn't know it was artificial.

On picnic day, I trundled on up to the picnic and found that there was a definite lack of customers for my spring tour trip. The cave trips had just gone out about fifteen minutes before my arrival, so Lowell and I were the only ones. While we talked, two novices arrived, Larry Cohon and someone who's name I didn't catch. It was decided that they would benefit most by going into Skunk Cave so I quickly led them out to the cave so they could link up with the group heading in. When we got there, I found that the group had already entered but Bob Wahlstrom soon came back when he heard the voices. I gave him some instructions on how to deal with the obstacles in the cave then added the novices to the group with some advice about staying out of the floor slot in the first crevice passage. The one novice was wearing only a T-shirt so I sold him a wool shirt so he wouldn't freeze to death.

Rejoining Lowell at the park, we settled on taking both vehicles so Lowell wouldn't have to reshuffle a bunch of stuff. Since Lowell didn't feel like a terrible amount of hiking, we modified the tour. Also, he didn't need to visit any springs he had seen before. We started off with the largest spring in the Devonian Age rock I know of in Iowa. It forms a trout stream just into Howard County. We didn't bother to walk up the valley to the outlet itself, it's nothing special, but instead just looked at the volume of the flow in the stream. It's no small spring. As we headed for Minnesota, I checked some small solutional openings in road cuts but nothing of great interest was found.

When we arrived at Odessa Spring, we had to gear up for a walk. The lane we followed at first could have been driven but the tall grass hid that fact from us until we had walked it out. We headed down into the woods a little early as I wasn't quite sure where to do it and didn't want to go past the spring. In '76 when I was here, we walked down to from the NW instead of from the NE. We found the spring almost as soon as we reached the Upper Iowa River and were sutably impressed by its size. Most of the flow comes out of the cave with at least two additional springs adding to the stream. I had been there twice before, once when the flow was enormous due to snow melt and once during a dry summer so I didn't have a very good feel for what the normal flow is. After taking pictures, we wandered along the bluffs and looked into an overflow that I had poked at in '76. Further down, we found some interesting solutional

holes that should be looked at further. Some even had air flow but that could well be due to the fractured rock with possible crevices to the surface.

We found a much easier route back up out of the river valley following a dear trail and were soon within sight of the cars again. Just then, Lowell spotted a very large garter snake in one of the tire tracks. It took off into the tall grass at high speed when I tried to nab it though. We made a quick stop at Niagara Cave so I could pick up some brochures and see their pictures of the cave. As we headed back into Iowa, I spotted a hole in a road cut that looked interesting. I called Lowell over to have a look and he thought we should spend some time poking at it then skip the rest of the springs. Grabbing my tools, we took turns enlarging the opening and working our way in. When we quit, we could see some continuing passage but I couldn't fit yet. It needs more work so we'll be back.

I needed to get a sample of twigs and leaves from a willow tree near Coldwater Spring so we drove down there. It is the largest willow in the state according to a friend of mine from Des Moines. I took him up there during the winter and he spotted the tree. He needed the samples to determine the exact species. We measured all the parameters on that winter trip and I can tell you it's a big tree. Since we were in the area, we made one last stop at Rimstone River Cave. I had invited the owner to the picnic and wanted to tell him what part of the campground we would be in. He said he might be out haying all evening, though, and that seemed to be the case. Since I had gotten permission to see the cave entrance as part of the spring tour, I headed up there to get some pictures. On the way back, a very assertive cow came jumping across the stream and ran right up to me. I was able to pet it some, and get a picture of its eye from a foot away as it tried to lick my camera case but its horn scratched my wrist when I got near the ears. As the supper hour was fast approaching and Lowell had the chili in his car, we called it an afternoon and headed back to the picnic.

SURVEY FUN

August 23, 1992 by Mike Nelson
Ellie, Delores, and Mike Nelson, Marc Ohms, Nick Byrnes, and Al and Bert Jagnow

Delores and I rolled into the county park at Kendallville in the middle of Saturday afternoon. It was devoid of cavers and the corner that had been staked out for the grotto picnic was pleasantly quiet. Slowly cavers began to trickle in and things changed. Doug Schmuecker's gear table drew a lot of attention until the briquettes got glowing good. A few full bellies later, the auction got underway. There was some groovy and some goofy stuff. Most of it sold. The rest of the evening was spent growing lies.

Sunday morning found Delores, Ellie, Al, Bert, Marc, and me off to resurvey New Galina Mine A. Somehow, one branch of this mined cave ended up suspended out over the valley on the first mapping try. As Marc could not verify the standard NSS map symbol for this type of passage, we opted to resurvey it. It wasn't as much fun as the first time. The water had dried up and we didn't have to do the upper levels as Marc was able to relocate a vital survey station. Nick, the owner's son, joined us for some of the work but had a family picnic to attend. Having hopefully returned the passage to the hillside where it belonged, we headed for the really fun stuff.

The survey of Stafford's Sandstone Cave was literally rather straightforward. Most of the five or six shots it took to map it were within 3 degrees of each other. The cross sections are what will make this map interesting. Delores dug a little at the pinched out rear end of the cave. Animal tracks are evident disappearing under breakdown there.

Marc got a series of pictures of both select wall stains on the white sandstone and of the general size and shape of the cave. Fingers are crossed that they will come out good so we can share them with the landowners and not have to drag his camera back into that sandtrap again. This will be the last trip here 'til late winter when we check to

see if it is a bat hibernaculum. The nature of that kind of trip demands minimum impact. Sometime next spring, we will lead a trip to maintain the entrance. It will be announced ahead of time and two or three cavers will be welcome to come along. Please do not bother the landowners. They requested that I facilitate our club trips. Let's not lose this one again for another twenty years. OK? OK!

The team split up here and Delores and I pursued a lead. It led us to Lawson Cave. I chimneyed the first 25 foot drop. The second drop, 40 feet, looked to be a little choked. I didn't feel confident to do it solo, so... It's a nice clean pit, as per the description in the cave files. There are a few precariously perched breakdown slabs of considerable size and a great deal of the ceiling joint was comprised of small vuggy pieces of limestone cemented in topsoil.

Lawson Cave is in a funny place. It is atop a very isolated ridge. The Yellow River has entrenched itself to the north and east and Williams Creek has done the same to the south. The topography lowers to form a saddle between this ridge and the extensive high ground to the west. Berns Spring emerges from the northwest of this ridge but its owner claims the spring reacts to drainage from the west! Don't ask me what any of this means. I find it very peculiar and interesting but have no idea what to make of it. The new owner of Lawson did a bit of flashlight caving in his teens and believes he may have a few leads on stuff we are unaware of. I hope to follow up on these directly.

The file states that there is a potential dig at the bottom of this pit. I would assist anyone willing to pursue this. The new owner does not discourage outdoor activities but requests liability releases on future visits.

SHORT, BUSY WEEKEND

August 29, 30, 1992 by Mike Nelson
Mike and Delores Nelson

We got off to a late start this Saturday not arriving in Cave Country until about 4:30 in the afternoon. The owner of Lawson Cave, who had proffered a couple of leads, was not at home, so Delores and I went over to A.J. Spring Cave and cleaned out some of the rocks that the cliff had shed and the rise pool had hoarded for the last year. With this little chore accomplished, we retraced our steps and caught the fellow with the leads at home.

Lead #1 took us to Brainard Cave, which has been pretty well documented. We were very glad to get the chance to inspect it. It's got to be one of the neatest caves in Iowa under 100 feet long. The steeply incized, sinuous, vadose canyon passage was dramatic to descend. It led to a great vaulted dome room with a floor that was half a muddy mess and the rest, dirty water. The "bathtub ring" that started six feet up on the walls and ran consistantly to the present water level, attested to the sluggish drainage out of the pit. The owner said that it used to take most of the runoff from the ground it drains but that smaller sinks to the west have captured most of the water as of late.

Lead #2 took us to the mysterious Van Garder Cave. There was nothing in the file on the cave to give any indication at all to its location except the landowner's name, Ray Van Garder. A peek in the area phone book had turned up a Ray Van Gorder. It seemed it would be worth giving him a call sometime. Before I ever got around to it, this lead pointed me right at his house and gave me a very close general idea of where the cave was. Imagine my surprize to find I had literally, dozens of times, driven by the well marked mailbox. Now the good news is that a precise location has been obtained for the file. The bad news is that after losing a calf into it in 1977, the cave entrance was filled with all the rolls of old fence that Ray could find, then bulldozed shut. There's an inobtrusive little rut where the entrance once was. Ray gave us a couple of good leads and sent us on our way.

Delores and I then made our way back to A.J. Spring Cave. I wanted to start setting a mappable permanent line through the underwater passage. The difficulty of the task I had set for myself became readily obvious. I had once started to do this using 3 pound weights to hold the line. This allowed me to set the line discretely out of the way and to adjust it around so as the line was not deflected around the wall or any protrusions. This would, however, create an underwater surveyer's nightmare, with many short shots and distances. It seemed to me that it should be possible to get long shots by putting the line down the middle of the cave, making the job easier but placing the line in a position in which it would have to be treated with much more caution to avoid entanglements. The problem with this was that it was impossible to see the last station behind me in deteriorating visibility and the dearth of good natural tie off points for the line. So there I was, unable to do the chore I had wanted to do and, with less than 200 feet of line on the reel, unable to attempt to reach and push the air filled joint at the end of the cave. I called the dive after 20 minutes.

Directly into the second sump, there was a rock I called the alligator rock. Entering that sump, the passage made a 90 degree turn to the right. This rock was in the middle of the passage in that corner. It was one of only two spots in the cave that accumulated mud. I had to wend my way over it both entering and exiting. Upon exiting, it was a readily recognizable, comforting landmark. The pointed "alligator" shout of this rock was where I had hoped to make my first tie off. However, the "minor geological event" that occurred during the major flood in that area a year ago in June, had pushed this rock that was bigger than me, around in a direction that made it unusable. It did open up the passage considerably. The mud in this area was gone but a new layer of fresh fluffy silt was amassing on the rocks, floor, and ledges. The weights I had left in there had been blown off the ledges but were on the floor within a foot or two of where I had set them. I'll probably have to resume my original plan for the mappable line as this sets the stations close enough together that I could verify the trueness of the line.

Next, we went to check our dig at Livinggood Spring Annex. We had checked it late last summer and the water in the passage at the base of our eight foot dig was not clear. Over the winter and this summer, it has started to refill with frost shatter rocks and the water was covered again. We'll have to give it an hour or two's work to reopen the conduit we had encountered, then wait patiently for the water to clear to ascertain if the conduit is of sufficient size to warrent more digging. Digging to a cave dive - what a demented concept.

Lastly, we went to Adam's Pit, a 50 foot straight drop into the dirt. Anyhow, that's what I remembered it as back on 9-5-87 when I belayed Gary Engh into it while Mike Lace slapped mosquitos off of my person so that I wouldn't inadvertently drop Gary while doing so myself. There was rock at the bottom but we were just shy enough of rope that Gary couldn't inspect close enough to scope things out thoroughly, and he was not inclined to untie himself from the rope to do so.

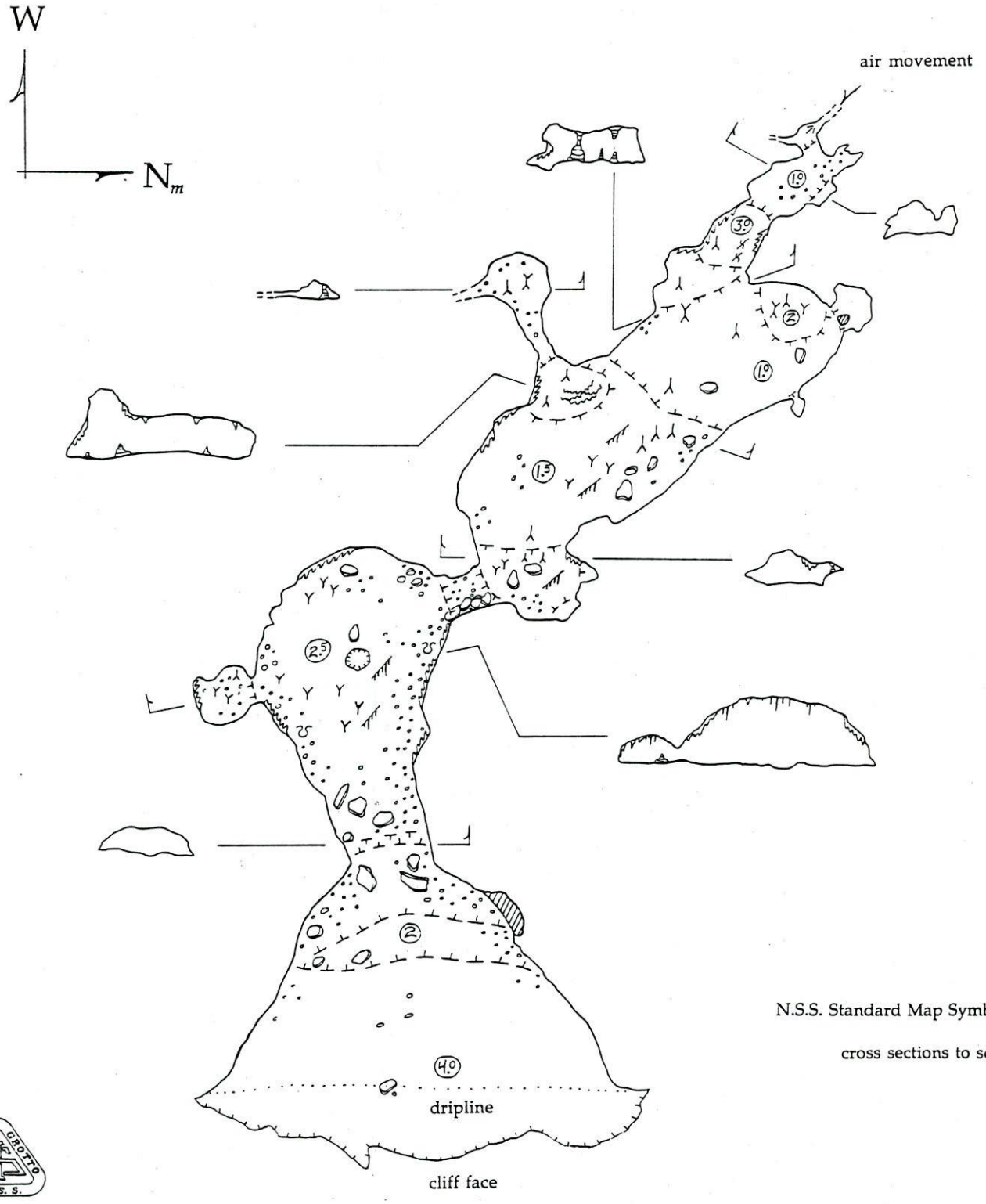
On this trip it was difficult to find the hole, as the owner had removed the forest from the general vicinity of the pit and placed it over the pit so that no one could happen into it accidently. There was an exposed edge of it under a basswood tree that was pushed over but still had roots in the ground. I used an oak a ways off for my primary tie off and the basswood as a secondary and dropped 40 feet to the pit's floor.

The 10 feet of fill in the bottom of the pit came from the "dirt" walls, which were now showing a lot more limestone and from the collapse of dirt in a joint alignment on the north side of the hole. A few more years of this and there will only be a depression here to concern the owner. I free climbed out with a self belay on the standing line.

We had ourselves an enjoyable time this weekend, but clearly pointed out that caving is a hobby and easy to get sidetracked. Things like Adam's Pit should be exploited fully at the initial stage while any hope of a breakthrough is most likely. More longterm projects like our Livinggood Annex dig can't be allowed to lapse for extended periods. Unfortunately, some things like the filling of Van Gorder Cave are inevitable and working a project as demanding as mapping an underwater cave, require a trial and error approach.

Sullivan's Cave, Jackson County

surveyed length = 199.84 feet / 60.93 meters



N.S.S. Standard Map Symbols

cross sections to scale

0 2 4 6 8 10

scale (meters)

IOWA GROTTO N.S.S.

surveyed by: Chris Beck
3/11/92 Gary Engh
Mike Lace
Marc Ohms

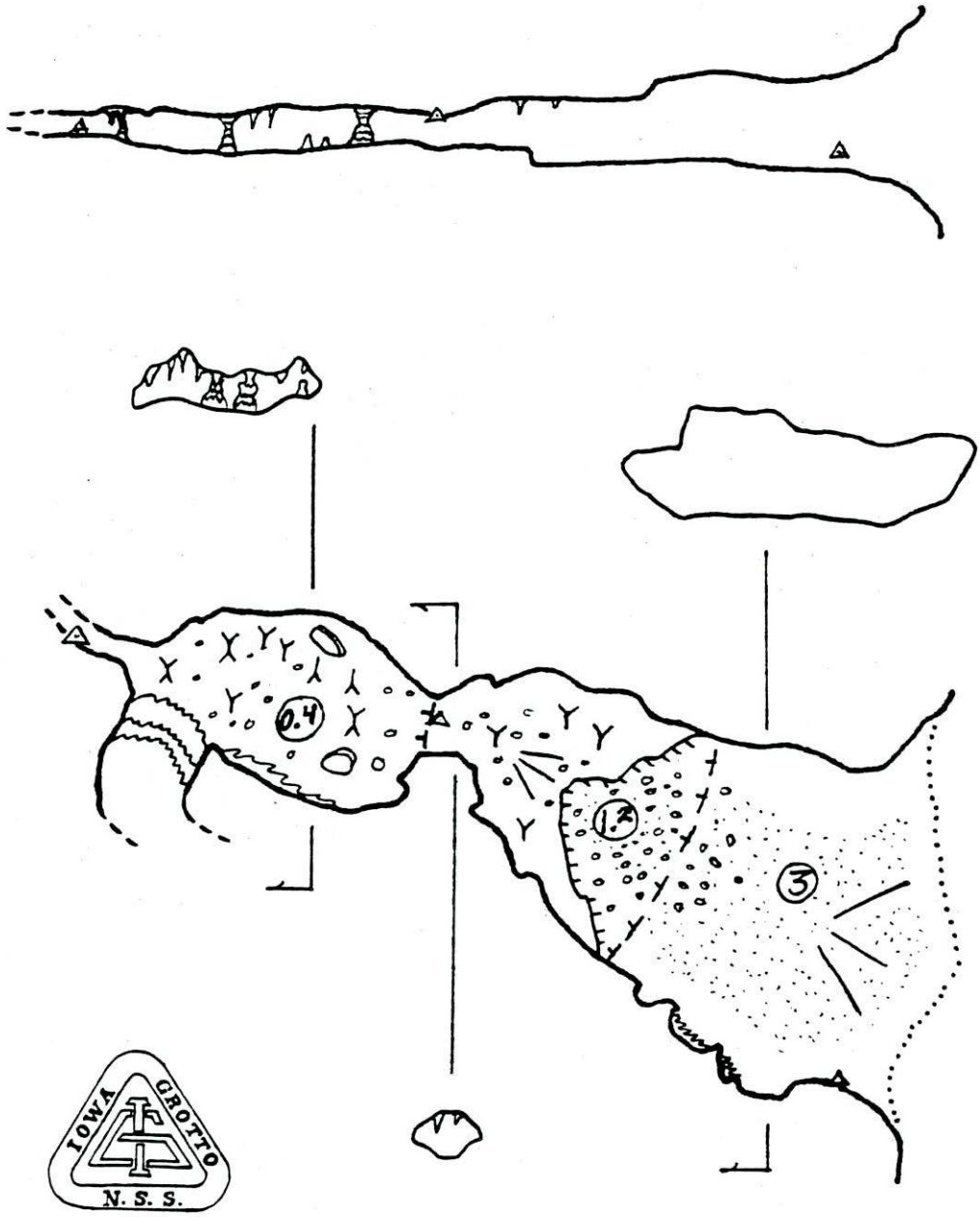
cartography by M. Lace

Number Two Cave, Jackson County

surveyed length = 13.48 meters

surveyed by Gary Engh & Mike Lace

N_m



0 1 2 3

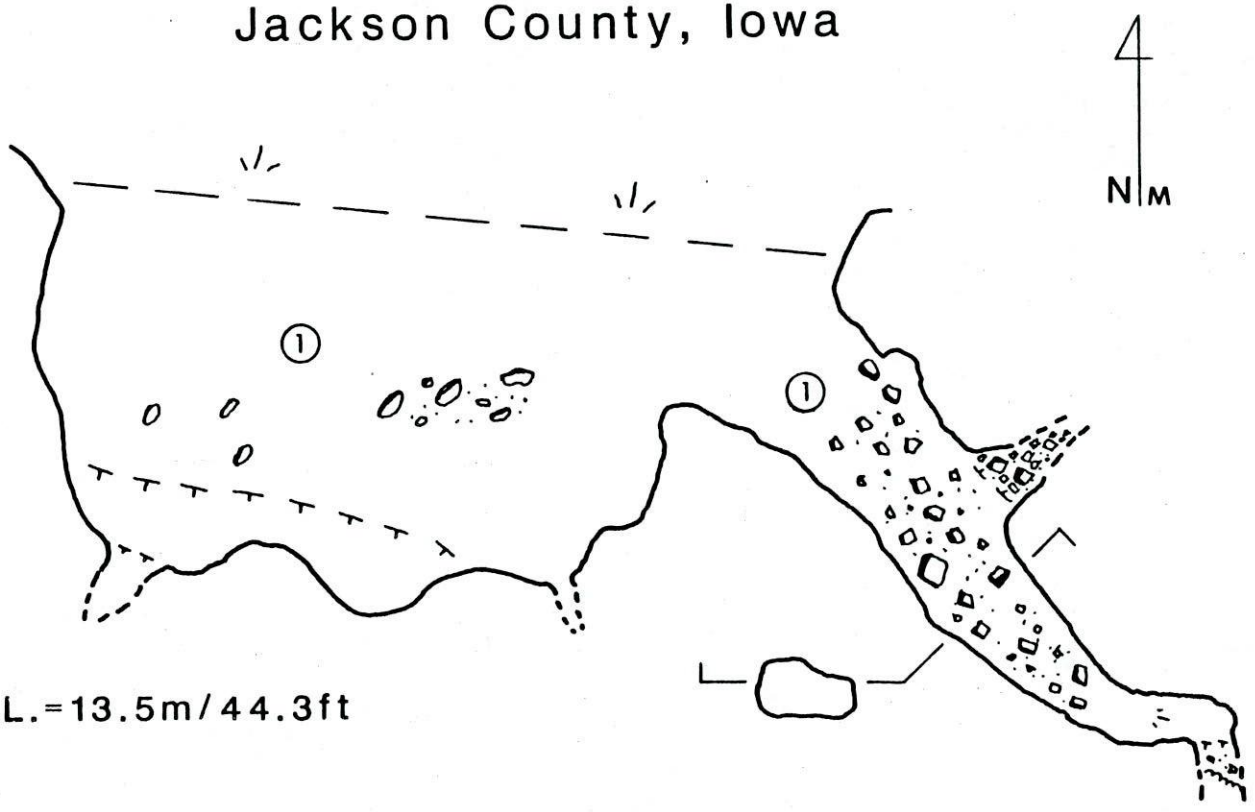
scale(meters)

cross sections to scale
N.S.S. Standard Map Symbols

cartography by M. Lace 3/92

Coral Cave

Jackson County, Iowa



T.H.L.=13.5m/44.3ft

0 3
meters

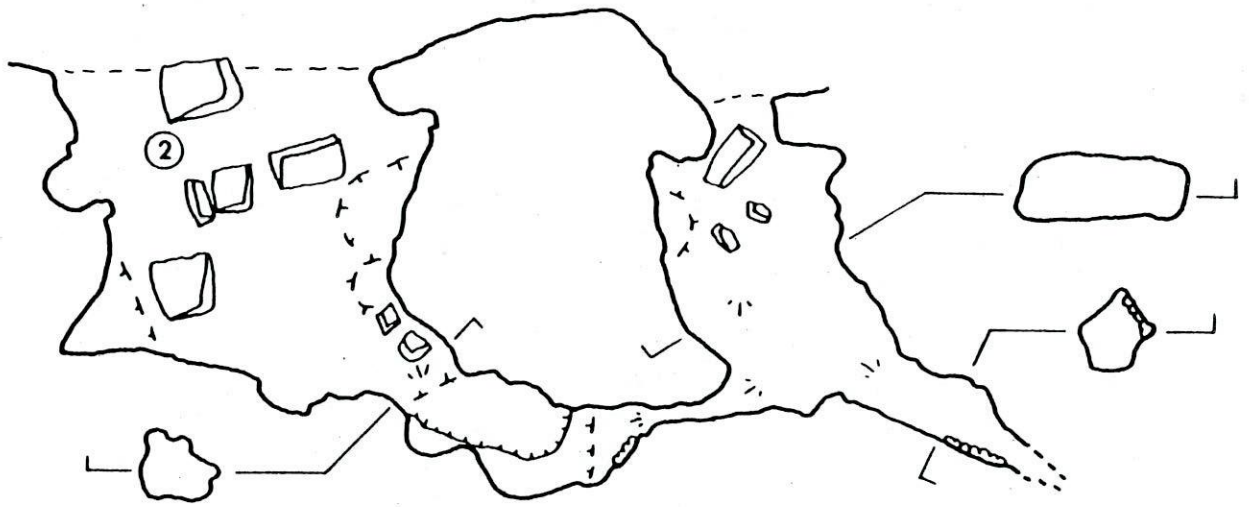
compass and tape survey
by Ohms and Beck

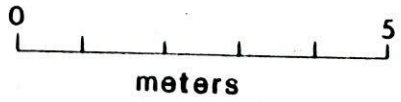
MARC OHMS

Skull Cave

Jackson County, Iowa

T.H.L.=54.2ft/16.51m

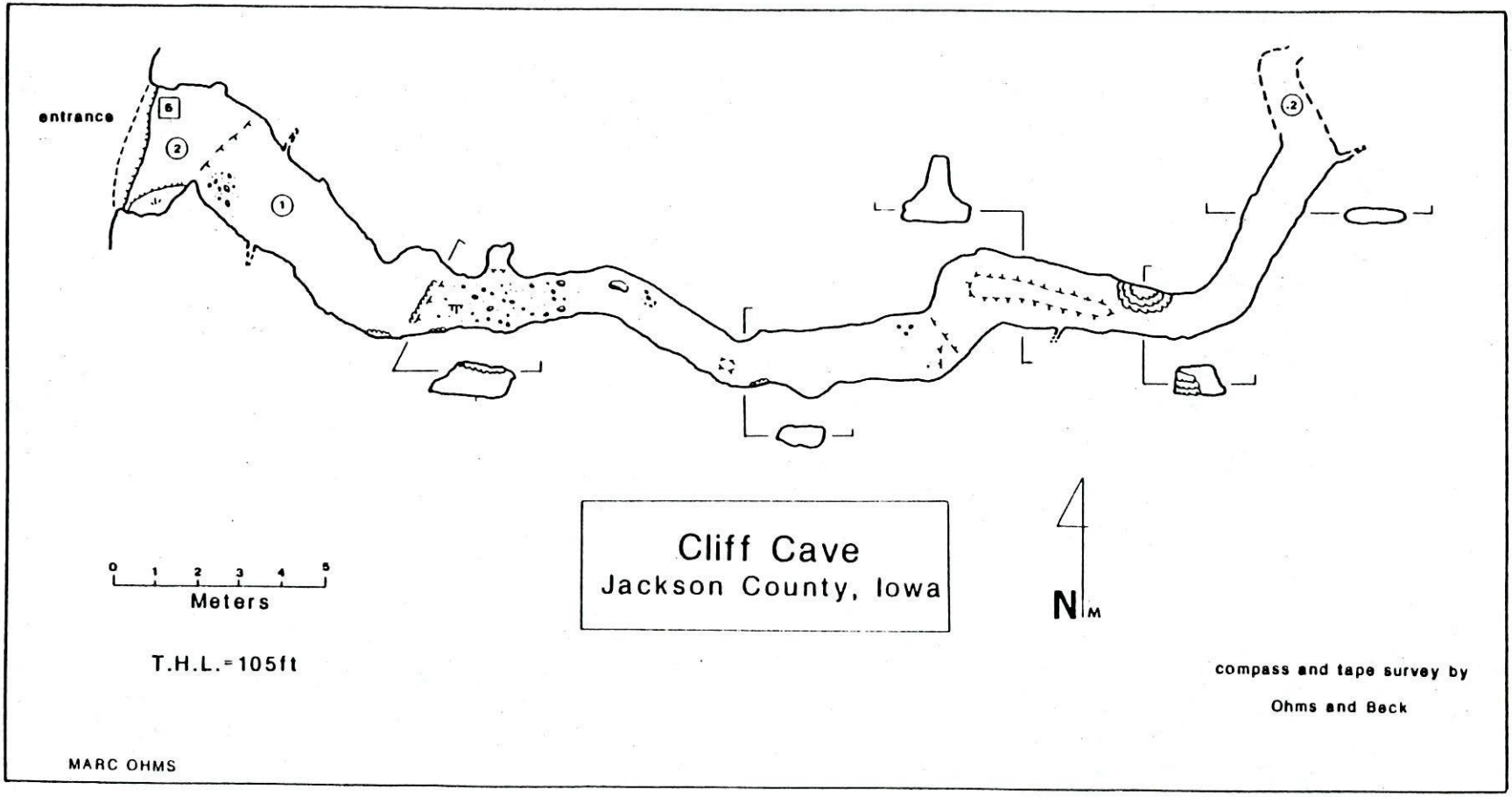




compass and tape survey

by Ohms and Beck

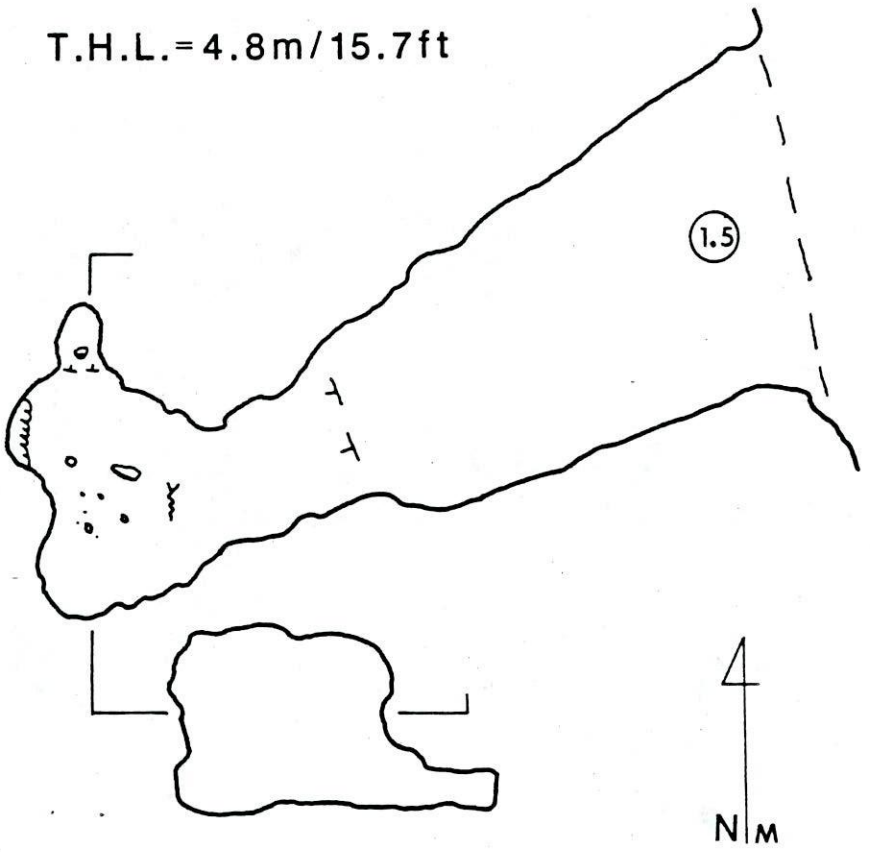
MARC OHMS


entrance
6
2
1
-2
0 1 2 3 4 5
Meters
T.H.L.=105ft
Cliff Cave
Jackson County, Iowa
N M
compass and tape survey by
Ohms and Beck
MARC OHMS

Spider Cave

Jackson County, Iowa

T.H.L.= 4.8m/15.7ft



0 2

meters

compass and tape survey

by Ohms and Beck

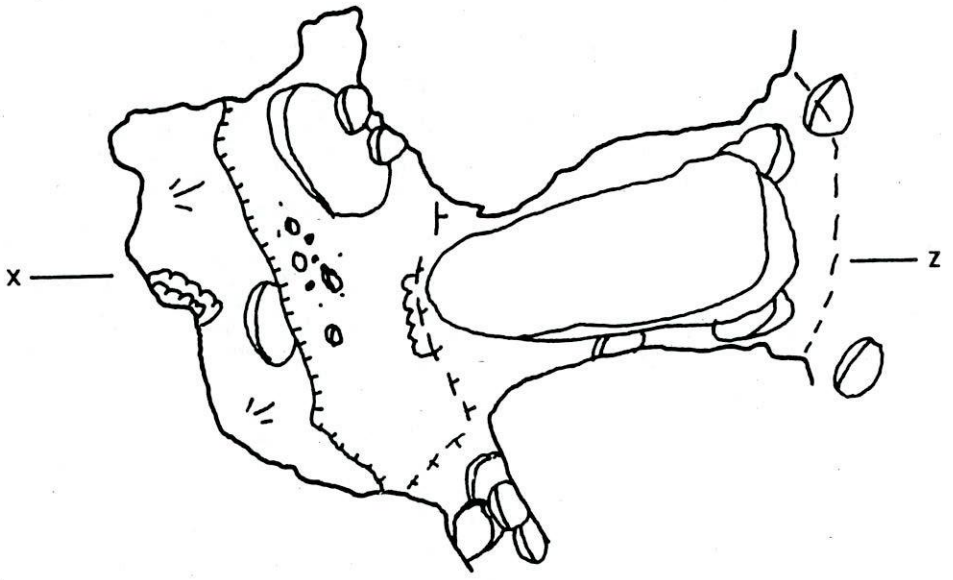
Marc Ohms

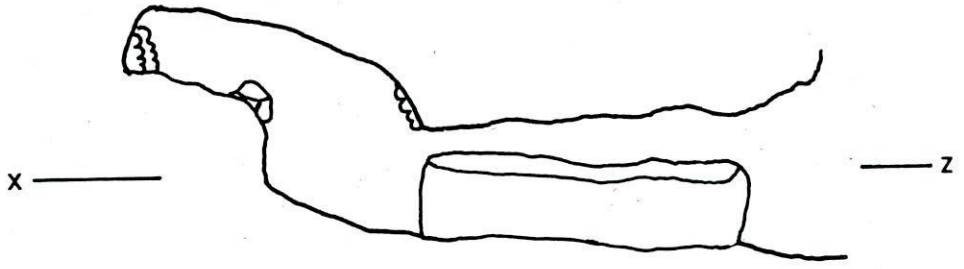
ITSA CAVE

JACKSON COUNTY, IOWA

IOWA GROTTO N.S.S.

N m





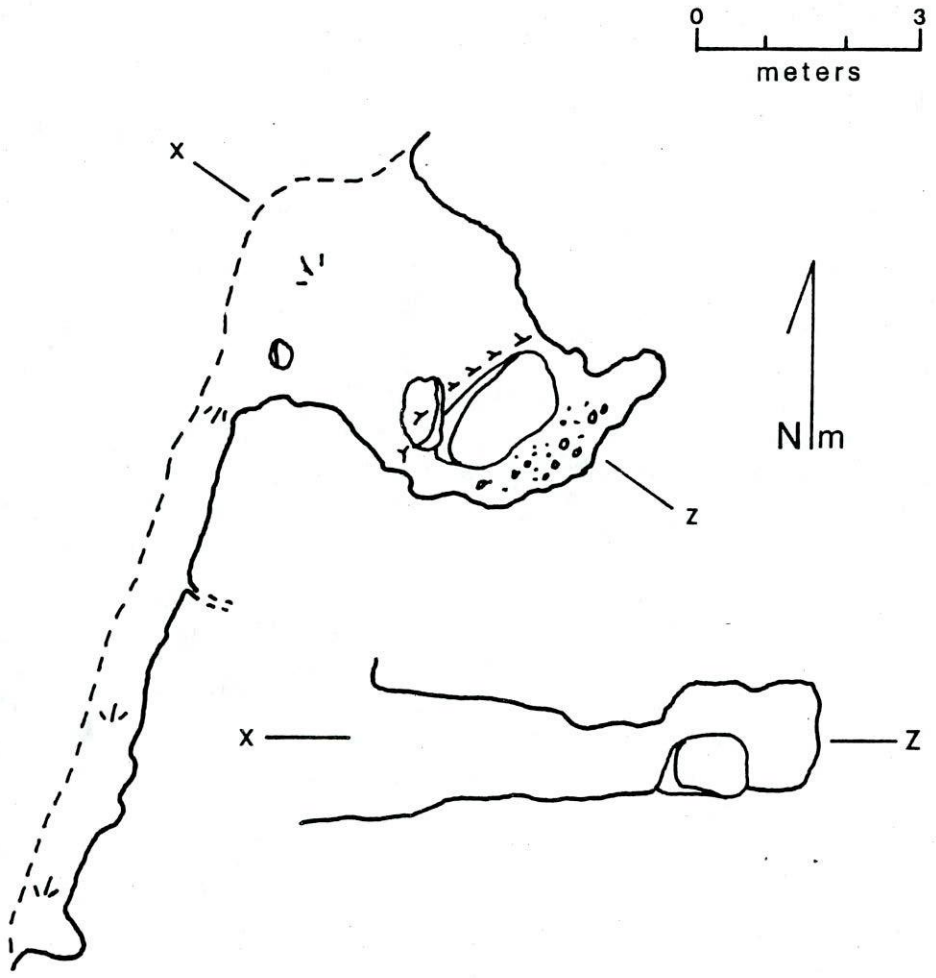
0 3

meters

compass and tape survey

8/13/92 Ohms

T.S.L. - 7.25m



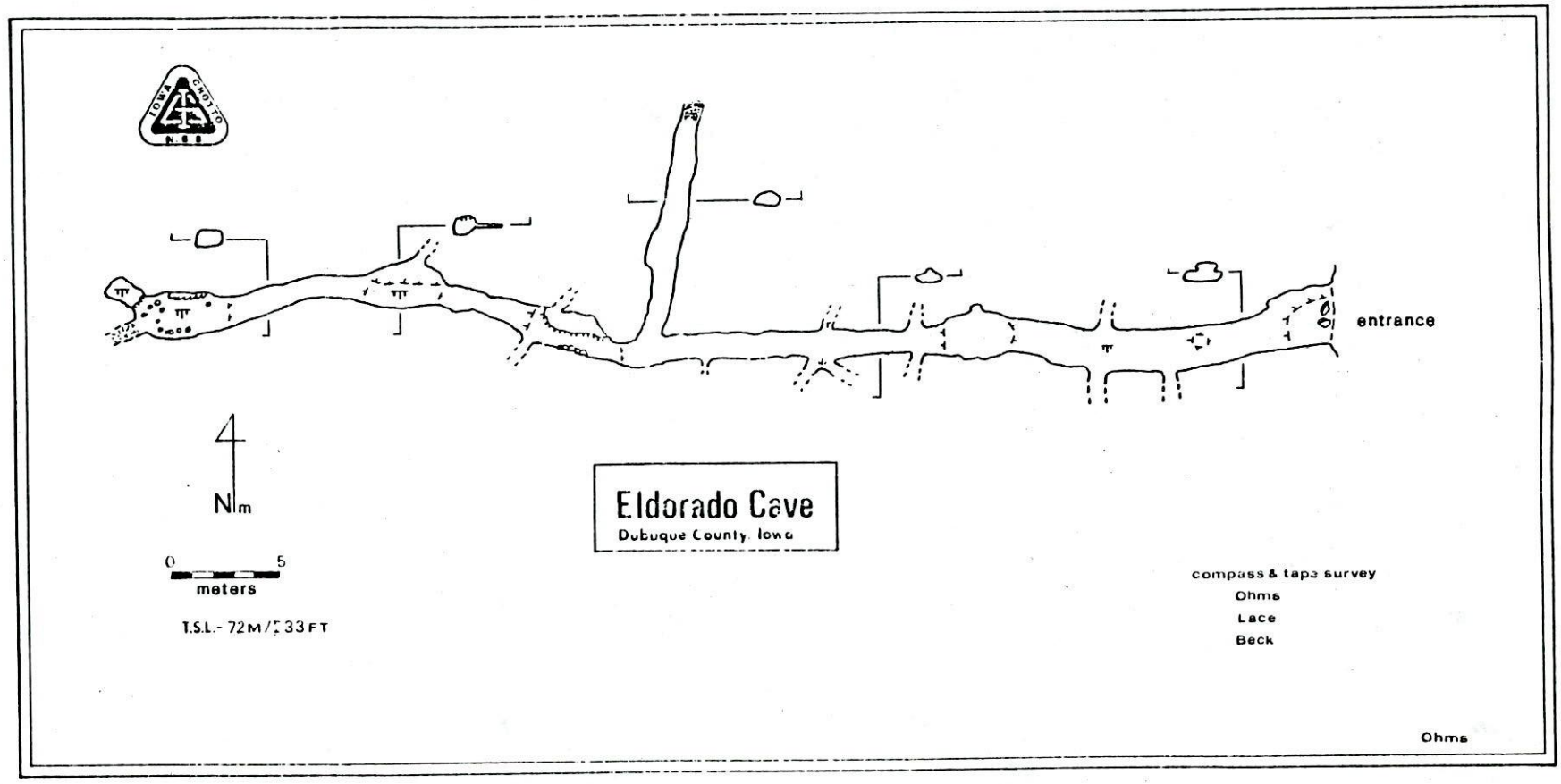
Gumdinger Cave

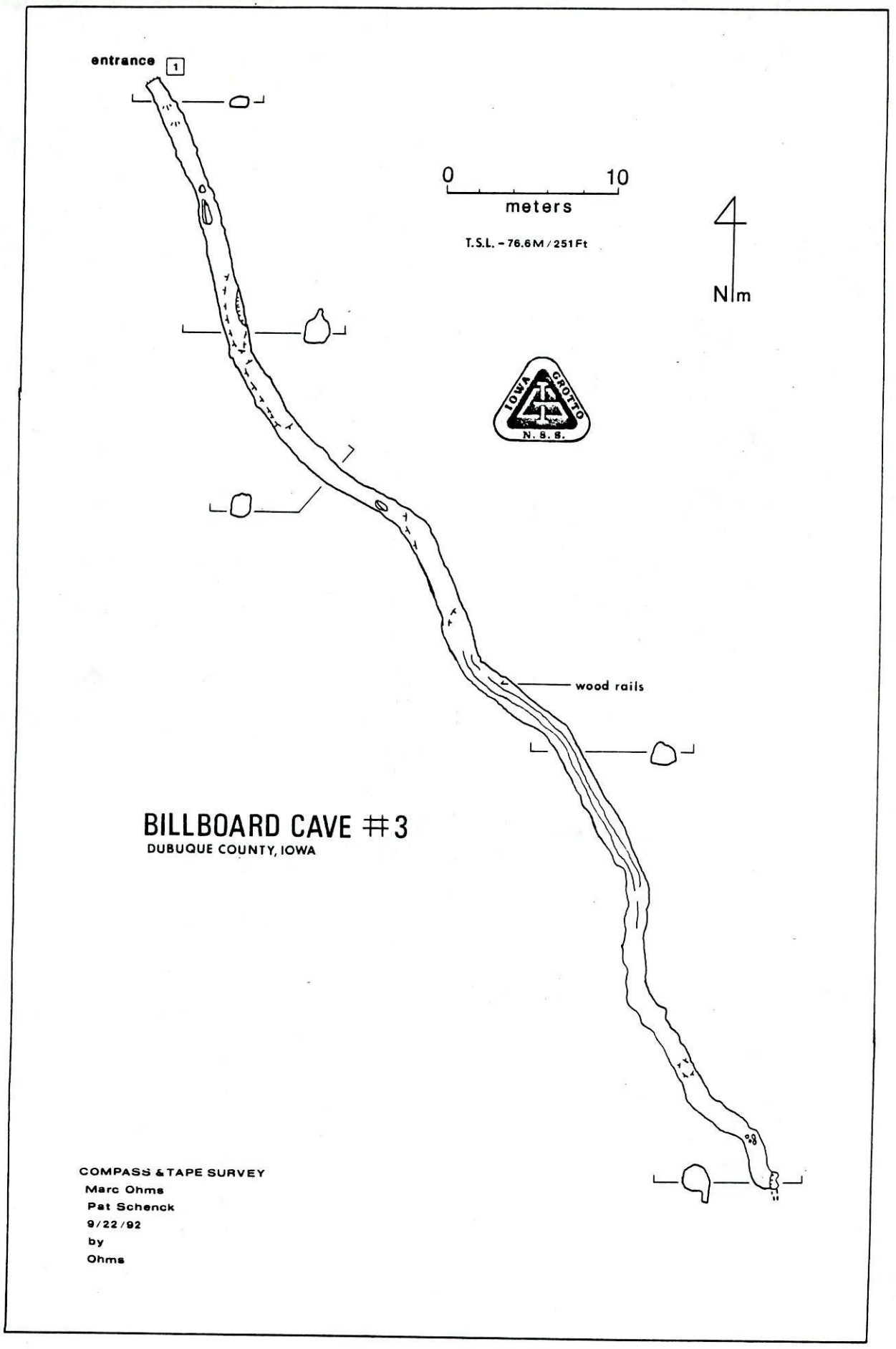
Jackson County, Iowa

T.S.L. - 6m

compass and tape survey

8/17/92 Ohms


IOWA GROTTO
entrance
N m
0
5
meters
T.S.L. - 72M / 233FT
Eldorado Cave
Dubuque County, Iowa
compass & tape survey
Ohms
Lace
Beck
Ohms



BILLBOARD CAVE #3

DUBUQUE COUNTY, IOWA

COMPASS & TAPE SURVEY
Marc Ohms
Pat Schenck
9/22/92
by
Ohms