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CaveTalk

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL CAVES ASSOCIATION

National Caves Association

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September 2004

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

NEW PARTNERSHIP FORGED WITH TIA

Thanks to some great work by Brad Wuest, your NCA Vice President, a new partnership has been developed with the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA). Until December 31 of this year, this partnership allows any NCA member to become a new member of TIA and the National Council of Attractions and save the \$350 new member initiation fee. In addition, the first year dues cover membership until December 31, 2005! For example, joining TIA by October 1 brings you 15 months of membership and a savings of the \$350 initiation fee. HUGE BENEFITS!

The NCA has been a long standing member of TIA as have Howe Caverns, Natural Bridge Caverns and many other NCA members. I can tell you with certainty that TIA is the most valuable tourism organization we belong to and the best expenditure of any of the membership dues we pay. TIA is the most up-to-date and responsive organization we belong to and they provide more resources than any other national (or local) tourism organization. Only one example is that we at Howe Caverns have had more than 20 news articles published nationally and internationally as a result of leads we have received from TIA. In my opinion, TIA is the most thorough, accurate and reliable source of travel and tourism information in the world.

I urge you all to dig out and review the information from Brad Wuest dated July 7, 2004 and then join TIA now to receive maximum benefit from this new partnership.

If you have misplaced Brad's letter and the TIA membership information, call Brad at 210-651-6101 or e-mail him at bwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com or call NCA Coordinator Susan Berdeaux at 866-552-2837 or e-mail her at susan@cavern.com.

Applications and information will also be available at the 2004 convention at Put in Bay. See you at the convention.

John D. Sagendorf
NCA President

CONVENTION 2004

Plans are just about completed for our annual meeting hosted by Perry's Cave in Put-in-Bay, Ohio. Mike, Didi, Pinky and their staff will be putting out one more mailing, detailing golf cart rentals, other island activities and pre- and post convention trips. If you are interested in visiting Seneca Caverns, please plan to visit the weekend of Oct. 9-10, as Dick and Denise Bell will be

closed for the season the following weekend. Eric Evans and the rest of the crew at Ohio Caverns have extended invitations to the membership for either weekend. Olentangy Indian Caverns will also be open both weekends. Attendees are asked to bring a sample of your "hot" gift shop merchandise for the gift shop forum. If you have not received your registration packet, please let Mike or Didi know at 419-285-4855. Please remember to send your forms and fees directly to Perry's Cave, NOT the NCA office. Hope to see everyone there!

WELCOME

NCA welcomes Sequoyah Caverns, Valley Head, AL as our newest member. Roy and John Jones, owners/operators, have recently celebrated their first year anniversary since retaking control of the cave. Hopefully we will see them both at this year's meeting in Ohio.

SUMMER 2004

Informal conversations with a number of members over the last few weeks indicated a lackluster season for a lot of us. Anyone wondering if gas prices had anything to do with it are probably correct – according to Parade Magazine, July 18, 04, half of us are changing their summer plans because of high prices at the pump. Some of the findings: 29% plan to spend more time on the Internet/computer, 28% said they would call family and friends rather than visit them, 28% will watch more movies and TV at home rather than going out, 19% will vacation closer to home and 10% will fly instead of drive.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The NCA has received two donations of \$25 each from the James River Grotto and the Blue Ridge Grotto at the request of Connie Browning, Dixie Caverns VA. In exchange for helping Dixie Caverns with a weeklong Halloween event, Dixie made donations to both grottoes and asked that they make a contribution to NCA. Our thanks to Connie and both Grottoes.

PASSING OF THE TORCH

After 50 years, H.T.N. "Ted" Graves, Luray Caverns VA has retired. Ted is one of the founding members of the NCA. Son Rod Graves said his dad is in good health but it was time to pass the torch – daughter Rebecca is now the president of the company. We wish Ted well in his retirement years.

OPENINGS

Mystery Cave MN opened it's new \$1.5 million visitor center on April 12, 2004. The new visitor center features a large exhibit room, classroom, gift shop and offices.

MILESTONES

Cosmic Caverns AR welcomed its 500,000 visitor on March 29 when the Farnsworth family from St Paul MN stopped by for a tour. Each family member was given a free Cosmic Caverns t-shirt.

PROJECTS

Mammoth Cave National Park will begin a renovation of the cave electrical and lighting systems later this year. Road construction has been underway most of the summer season.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Indiana Caves have gotten together and started a passport program and website (www.indianacaves.com). The cooperative effort between Marengo Cave, Wyandotte Cave, Bluespring Caverns and Squire Boone Caverns has been a long time in the making and is now off the ground and running.

Five Kentucky caves have teamed up to promote multiple cave tours and encourage visitors to extend their stay in the Cavelands region. Diamond Caverns, Lost River Cave,



Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky Caverns and Hidden River Cave are cross-selling their cave tour tickets and discounting an average of \$2 per ticket. Press releases were sent out and picked up by a number of local newspapers.

Fantastic Caverns MO has begun a roadside advertising partnership with some area caves. Bridal Cave, Talking Rocks and Fantastic Caverns will be constructing billboards on highways between the attractions.

CELEBRATIONS

Lost River Cave KY hosted a benefit event on Saturday evening, August 14. Rho Lansden and her staff have made many improvements on the property this last year – chiefly a valley-spanning bridge to the entrance of the cave and a newly constructed butterfly house. They offered free tours of both the cave and butterfly house during the evening, along with dinner and dancing.

Luray Caverns VA celebrated their 126th Day of Discovery on August 14. All day music was featured along with great food, candlelight tours and a fireworks display to top off the evening.

IN PRINT

Meramec Caverns MO received the best cave award from Rural Missouri magazine. April 2004. In second place was Marvel Cave and Bridal Cave took third.



May 2004 edition of Souvenirs, Gifts and Novelties as a participant in the Kentucky Crafted program. The craft industry in Kentucky contributes over \$250 million dollars in annual sales and Kentucky is recognized as a model state for its craft programs. The program then placed a full-page ad in the May issue of Kentucky Monthly, detailing the participants with a photo of the DC property.



Mammoth Cave National Park was the featured cover story in the Fall edition of Experience Kentucky magazine. The feature article focused on the Park's wild cave tour. Photography for the article was by Gary Berdeaux.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In honor of this past season, today's final thoughts are related to rest and relaxation.

"During these periods of relaxation after concentrated intellectual activity, the intuitive mind seems to take over and can produce the sudden clarifying insights which give so much joy and delight".

Fritjof Capra, physicist

"He enjoys true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate".

Henry David Thoreau

"If a man insisted always on being serious, and never allowed himself a bit of fun and realization, he would go mad or become unstable without knowing it".

Herodotus (484 B.C. – 430 B.C.)

"Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop".

Ovid (43 B.C. – 17 A.D.)

See everyone in Ohio!