

Cave Talk

Newsletters and Periodicals

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April 2007

## Cave Talk

Cave Association National

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# CaveTalk

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL CAVES ASSOCIATION

National Caves Association - Susan Berdeaux, Coordinating Director  
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## Message from the President

Happy Spring to everyone! I know it comes sooner to those of us down south and many of you are still experiencing winter conditions. I hope those of you who are open now are having good visitation. I am sitting down to write my message to you just after taking a tour through Natural Bridge Caverns. And it was an exciting tour because as I write this we are blessed with great Spring Break visitation and challenged at the same time due to rains causing our aquifer to rise over our walkway in the lower portion of the Caverns. Today we are utilizing, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time, our (not quite completed) developed upper level passage which bypasses the submerged walkway. Having this passage operational will have a huge impact on our bottom line this week. All that development time and money is finally paying off! All of you will get to see this new passage during the San Antonio Convention this October. Y'all still have plenty of time to get those boots polished!

This years Mid-Winter Insurance Committee and Board Meetings were held out in Tucson during the Rock & Mineral Show. What an incredible show and merchandise buying opportunity. There is so much going on with the NCA that we barely fit all of our agenda items into 2 ½ days of meeting! The board spent significant time providing Steve Rawlings, Bylaws Committee Chair, with input for the Amended Bylaws. Steve is working on a draft for the Board to review. Once approved by the Board, copies will be sent to Members for review and comments. Members will vote on the Amended Bylaws at the Annual meeting this October. Another big task was reviewing a proposed new dues structure. Our Treasurer and his Finance Committee have worked hard to come up with a structure that will meet the NCA's growing needs and be fair to members. We reviewed progress on the website and speaking of, check out what's new

from your last visit, update your Caves photo and info so it looks and sounds awesome to those visiting our site. If they like what they see you may be selling them a ticket soon! Go on the member's only side and update your personal contact info in the directory for other members (not the public) to use. We talked about Cave Radiation Plans and critiqued the easy to use template, membership recruiting, Convention '07, insurance, marketing opportunities for members, communications and that's just a part of it! Hats off to our Directors and Committees for their volunteered time, dedication and commitment to the NCA. Members, they are working hard for you so thank them when you get a chance. They will appreciate it!

As I begin to wrap my message up, let me delve into the definition of what your NCA is all about. When discussing Bylaws amendments, the Board came to the associations "Purpose" and after consideration, felt that is still "what we are all about". Upon reflection of what the NCA now does, I feel we are right on the mark for accomplishing that purpose. Let me know if you agree and what we can do better. Below in Cave Talk you will see our Purpose listed.

This issue of Cave Talk is packed full of information and should get you up to speed with issues effecting us and what is going on in your NCA and the industry. You will read about the passing of friends whose families our hearts go out to. There are some things "we (the NCA) are all about" that you just can't put into words. If you have any questions, ideas or input please let us know. If there is anything the NCA can do or I can do to help you, we are just a phone call or e-mail away. My best wishes to all of you for a prosperous Spring Season!

God bless and Happy Easter,



Brad Wuest  
NCA President

### **NCA INSURANCE RENEWAL TIME**

It is time to prepare for the 2007-2008 NCA Insurance renewal. In the following you will find a schedule listing important dates that are critical to completing the renewals for everyone that is part of the NCA Insurance Program.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Week of April 9 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> | Renewal packet sent to individual members.  |
| April 16 <sup>th</sup> - May 11 <sup>th</sup>   | Insurance Committee will be contacting caves multiple times to offer assistance & confirm status. |

**IF ANYONE NEEDS ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR ASSIGNED COMMITTEE MEMBER NO LATER THAN APRIL 30<sup>TH</sup> – May 4<sup>TH</sup> SO THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO COMPLETE YOUR RENEWAL APPLICATION.**

***Anyone needing help can also contact:***

**Steve Runkle** Office: 719-634-2888, Cell: 751-651-4633, [rsr@caveofthewinds.com](mailto:rsr@caveofthewinds.com)  
**Brad Wuest** Office: 210-651-6101, Cell: 210-833-2525, [bwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com](mailto:bwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Week of May 7 <sup>th</sup> – May 11 <sup>th</sup> | Reminder notice will be sent to any renewal applications still outstanding.               |
| May 18 <sup>th</sup>                               | All member Renewal Applications must be postmarked and sent to AJ Gallagher by this date. |

**MAY 21<sup>TH</sup>** **MEMBER RENEWAL APPLICATIONS DUE!!!!**  
Any late members will be given a **3-day grace period**. On May 25<sup>th</sup> any applications not received by AJG will be sent a notice of non renewing brokerage services and a non-renewal of insurance from Markel will follow.  
**THIS WILL BE NON-NEGOTIABLE!!!!!!**

**Steve Runkle**  
Vice Chair-Insurance Committee

## NCA Convention 2007

Sheraton Gunter Hotel, San Antonio, Texas, October 21-25, 2007

Convention planning always involves some surprises, and this year is no exception. Due to a glitch with our host hotel regarding access to the vendor show facility, we will not be able to offer gift shop merchandise vendors enough dedicated show time to make participation in a show worth their while. Therefore, there will not be a Merchandise Vendor Show in 2007. The good news is that we will be having a Show Cave Industry Trade Show instead. The format will be new for the NCA and offer some exciting opportunities for attendees to familiarize themselves with providers of various products and services of interest to cave owners and managers. Examples of the types of exhibitors that will be there are brochure distribution services, brochure printing, multi-media advertising, outdoor advertising, point-of-sale systems, high-traction trail surfacing, innovative cave development materials, cave lighting design specialists and climbing wall & zip line contractors. If you know of a provider of goods or services that you would like to see as an exhibitor or one that would be interested in reaching the national and international show caves market, please send me their contact information or have them contact me via email at [jwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com](mailto:jwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com). We would like to make this Trade Show a valuable benefit of attending the annual NCA Convention.

Those of you who want to pick up good ideas for improving your gift shop bottom line, do not despair. The Retail Products Committee will be creating a display of top selling merchandise and how you can order it in your area. This display will be available for you to browse at your leisure throughout the entire conference. The hard-working members of the Retail Products Committee are also planning a repeating break-out session on one of the gift shop related topics that has frequently come up in past Cracker Barrels. As this session and others come together, you will be updated on the specific topics via a Convention Newsletter and Agenda Update on the NCA Website.

Coming soon to the NCA Website will be a complete NCA Convention 2007 information section to keep you informed and help with your planning for your trip to Texas this coming October. October is typically a wonderful time to travel in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, so prepare yourself for great weather and beautiful scenery.

We are looking for hosts for Convention 2010 and beyond. If you are interested in hosting a future Convention, please contact me, or any member of the NCA Convention Committee. You can find us listed with our contact information in the Members section of the NCA website.

### Joye Wuest

Chair, Convention Committee

### WHAT THE NCA IS ALL ABOUT – OUR PURPOSE

Section 2. Its Objectives and Purposes shall be -

- A. To promote interest in and attendance at Member Caves.
- B. To promote and maintain a national organization of persons or corporations who own, manage or operate recognized caves and caverns.
- C. To promote conservation and preservation of all caves, and to promote the safety of visitors or guests in the use and enjoyment thereof.
- D. To compile, preserve and publish cooperative data, technical and promotional, for member caves.
- E. To cooperate in securing rational legislation for the advancement, promotion, and protection of cave operators – to protect owners and users thereof against unjust or unreasonable legislation.
- F. To promote and encourage the development of a spirit of cooperation and courtesy among cave operators.
- G. Generally to maintain the rights and privileges of all persons who own or are operators of publicly visited, established show caves.

## NEW PRODUCTS UPDATE

There's a show on TV called "Criminal Minds". It's about these very smart FBI Agents called profilers. Profilers can describe the traits and significant features of criminals. They've done their research and are very successful in solving crimes.

There are ways to help gift shops be successful as well. Surveys and studies have been done to tell us why people buy the things they do. In the last newsletter, Denise gave a list of magazines and books that are easily accessible to show caves.

One thing I have found to improve my gift shop is to listen and learn from my peers in the NCA. At every convention, I always get new ideas and contacts. Sometimes I find out things I'm doing wrong. What's important is that in the future I can do a better job. For all my friends in the NCA, I say "THANK YOU" for putting up with me asking questions like "Where did you buy that?".

Attending gift trade shows is also important. You get to see new merchandise to keep your gift shop engaging and relevant. That's why a list of shows is given in the newsletter. Maybe sooner or later, there will be one close to your area or at a convenient time.

In January, Lester graciously drove me to Tucson to attend the Rock and Mineral Show (he deserves a medal). It had been at least ten years since we had attended. We shopped for four days and only saw three of the five sites. It has grown tremendously with over 400 mineral and fossil dealers from around the world. Registration was NOT required. They had free shuttles to all locations and free parking. Lodging needs to be reserved WELL in advance. We happily took home a truckload of rocks, minerals, and fossils, and we made several new contacts. It was expensive to go there; however, we combined business with a mini vacation.

The New Products Committee Members welcome your questions, suggestions, and comments.

Best Wishes for a successful and profitable second quarter.

## Judy Turilli

Chair, New Products Committee

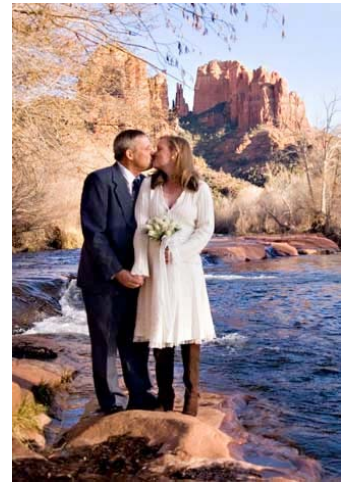
### UPCOMING GIFT SHOWS

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| May 1-3, 2007    | <b>Atlanta Spring Show</b><br>Americas Mart (800)ATL-MART <a href="http://www.americasmart.com">www.americasmart.com</a>  |
| May 9-11, 2007   | <b>West Coast Souvenir &amp; Gift Expo</b><br>Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA  |
| June 1-5, 2007   | <b>Kansas City Gift Market</b><br>Gift Mart, Overland Park, KS (800) 950-MART <a href="http://www.kcgiftmart.com">www.kcgiftmart.com</a>  |
| June 2-4, 2007   | <b>Gatlingburg Apparel &amp; Jewelry Market</b><br><b>Norton's Gatlingburg Gift &amp; Variety Show</b><br>Gatlingburg Convention Center (865) 436-6151 <a href="http://www.nortonshows.com">www.nortonshows.com</a> |
| June 22-25, 2007 | <b>International New Age Trade Show West</b><br>Denver Merchandise Mart (800) 710-8859 <a href="http://www.inats.com">www.inats.com</a>   |
| June 23-25, 2007 | <b>Charlotte Gift Show</b><br>Charlotte Merchandise Mart (704) 377-5881 <a href="http://www.charlottегiftshow.com">www.charlottегiftshow.com</a>  |



## **EVENTS**

NCA Vice president Steve Thompson and Diane Wilde were married in Sedona, AZ on February 4, 2007. They decided to take the plunge after the midwinter board meeting in Tucson. Doesn't everyone get married after a business meeting?!?! Congratulations and best wishes to Steve and Diane.



## **FAX LINE REINSTATED**

During the board meeting at last fall's meeting, as a cost saving measure, the board decided to have the fax line disconnected. It was not very well used. In the six months it has been disabled, it has proved to be more of an inconvenience than previously thought. Therefore, the fax line has been reconnected. Fortunately, we were able to keep the same number of 270-749-2428.

## **2007 DIRECTORIES**

The 2007 edition of our cavern directory is now available. If you need directories, please let the office know. They come packed 700 to a case and are available in any quantity. Let your CVB's and chamber offices know they are available for the asking.

## **NEW VICE-CHAIR ON ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Committee chair, Gary Berdeaux has requested the committee's vice-chair take over his duties for a while so that he may catch up a backlog of work at Diamond Caverns. Gary was off work due to recent back surgery and travel related to deaths in his family. Brandon Mathis was the committee vice-chair prior to becoming our webmaster. Travis Wuest has agreed to take on the vice-chair position (Thank you Travis!). Travis is hard at work with the committee and is off to a great start.

## **ALPHA RADIATION UPDATE FROM STEVE THOMPSON, NCA VP**

At the Mid winter meeting President Wuest ask me to Chair the Alpha Radiation Committee. Thanks to John Sagendorf for his years of service as Chair and thanks to John for staying on board as Vice-Chair.

I am happy to report that the following caves have had their Alpha Radiation Compliance Monitoring Program certified: Cave of the Winds, DeSoto Caverns Park, Diamond Caverns, Fantastic Caverns, Lake Shasta Caverns, Mystic Caverns, Natural Bridge Caverns, Natural Stone Bridge & Caves, Ohio Caverns, Sequoyah Caverns, Squire Boone Caverns, War Eagle Cavern on Beaver Lake, Bluespring Caverns, Bristol Caverns, Lost River Cave and Cave of the Mounds.

Of those who have completed the certification process, members are telling us the process runs from 20 minutes to 90 minutes depending on the size of your attraction. If you need any help completing the certification process, your Regional Directors or I are available to assist you. Just a reminder, all caves must be certified to be in compliance with OSHA standards. Timely completion of your program is required by OSHA and greatly appreciated by the committee.

## **NCA BUSINESS SURVEY – TRAVIS WUEST**

Work is ongoing to improve the NCA business survey. Several major changes are going to happen. In the past the survey has been sent out just prior to the convention, now we are targeting early May, results in June. It's our hopes to have all the data in by May and have published results before the convention. Another major change will be that only Caves who participate in the survey and respond will be shown the results. As before participants will remain anonymous. Results will be reported by Cave attendance category and as a whole. This will allow operations of like sizes to better compare themselves to others. We are trying to make it less complicated, better define terms, and make the survey as easy to complete as possible. We also hope to produce the survey online, allowing members to submit results with the click of a button after filling in the necessary info. We feel this survey has the potential to be a very valuable tool for all member caves. It will allow participants to bench mark themselves against industry averages, see highs and lows, and hopefully show you ways to improve your bottom line.

## NEW ADVERTISING

*“Look up in the sky! It’s a bird, it’s a plane.....”*  
*“No, it’s Ohio Caverns!”*

These lines may soon be heard all across Ohio and surrounding states as Ohio Caverns literally launches a new advertising campaign. A unique hot air balloon is being constructed by Lindstrand Balloons, USA in Illinois. Completion is scheduled for June of this year. The 105,000 cubic foot balloon will stand over 80 feet tall by 60 feet wide. The balloon will replicate the familiar yellow and red cavern logo.

The pilot in command will be Tim Grissom, manager of Ohio Caverns. Tim is currently completing his pilot training and will be certified by this summer. “Our plan is to reach new audiences as well as remind those whom have visited us before,” Tim said. “Ballooning is similar to show caves; both are wholesome family fun led by a group of energetic, fun individuals.”



The balloon is scheduled to make its inaugural appearance at the Champaign County (Ohio) Balloon Festival followed by several appearances this summer throughout Ohio, Northeastern Indiana, and Southern Michigan. Flights as well as static tethered displays are planned either at or in close proximity to major events.

With the word ‘OHIO’ being 14 feet tall, readability of the logo should be close to one mile. Eric Evans, owner of Ohio Caverns added, “How many attractions have thousands of people stop and take photos and videos of their billboards? We expect this to be the norm with our balloon.” Readers of *Cave Talk* are promised more details about this program throughout the campaign.

## TEXAS CAVERN PROTECTION ACT

Texans have teamed together to amend their Cavern Protection Act. The Act has been in place since 1979 when Cave owners teamed together and worked with their legislators to draft the original bill and made it a law. The need for amendments became apparent after the senseless damage and theft of the Caverns of Sonora’s famous butterfly formation and the need to strengthen the penalty for such a violation (currently a Class A misdemeanor, amended to a state jail felony 1<sup>st</sup> offence). The amendment bill was filed in the Senate by Senator Wentworth (Natural Bridge Caverns district) and a “mirror” bill in the House by Representative Hilderbran (Caverns of Sonora’s district). The Texas Cave owners are working hard with their legislators, District and County Attorneys to drum up support. The Texas Travel Industry Association has pitched in its support as well. A special thanks to Comal County District Attorney Dib Waldrip who advised, drafted the amendment and spent several days at the Texas Capital lobbying on behalf of the Caves. The bills would not have been filed without his help. Let’s just say the Waldrip family is always welcome at one of our Texas show caves!

Joye Wuest states, “Working to get these bills filed reminds us how important it is for our elected officials, legislators and their staff to know who we are. If it were not for previously established relationships both in the Senate and House, these amendments would not have been sponsored and filed by the deadline.”

Go to [www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=80R&Bill=SB1524](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=80R&Bill=SB1524) to see information about the Bills and to keep track of their progress through the legislative process. To download a copy of the Bills follow the link, click on Text and then select which format you would like to view the bill in. If you would like to know more about what the Texans are doing you can contact Ed Mayfield at [edmayfield@mac.com](mailto:edmayfield@mac.com) or Brad Wuest at [bwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com](mailto:bwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com).

In addition to the Cavern Protection Act there are many bills filed this legislative session in Texas which could have a significant impact on show cave businesses. This fact is not exclusive to Texas so all NCA members are advised to keep track of legislation in their respective states.

## “Don’t Mess with Texas”

Texans operate on more than a Wing and a Prayer about Cave Protection Laws

The subject of Cave Protection is one that each and every state’s Caves should examine to make sure laws exist and are adequate to protect and prevent vandalism to our cave systems. Texan’s are doing just that. Read on to see how the slogan “Don’t Mess with Texas” applies to Texas Caves...

The House Bill to amend the Texas Cavern Protection Act was referred to the Cultural, Historical & Tourism Committee and placed on their April 3<sup>rd</sup> agenda for public testimony. Testifiers from every NCA Texas cave showed up at the state capital in support of their bill! The committee meeting was scheduled to begin at 2pm but due to hot issues on the House floor did not begin until 8pm! And of course the Cavern Protection Bill ended up last on the agenda. Tom Summers (Cave w/out a Name), Seco Mayfield (Sonora), Travis & Brad Wuest (Natural Bridge) and Dib Waldrip (Comal Co. DA) all testified. Written support from Lance Clawson (Inner Space), Shawn & Michelle Devaney (Longhorn) was read into the public record by the committee chair.

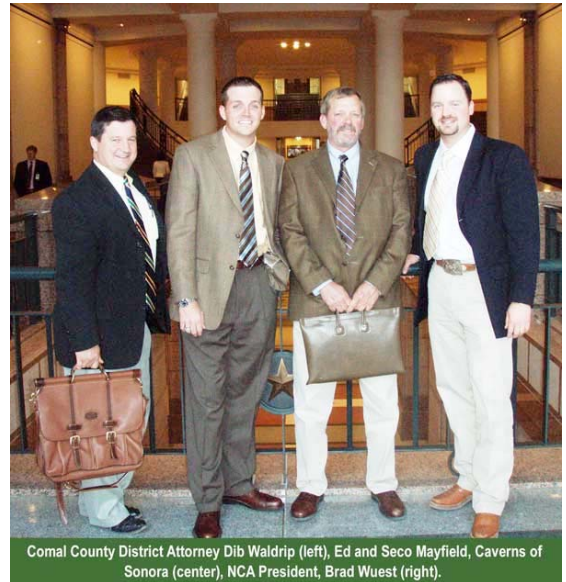
There was no opposition to the bill. Committee Chairman Hilderbran (who filed the bill) spoke very highly of the need to preserve and protect caves. The committee meeting adjourned about 10pm. The bill was voted out of committee favorably on April 10<sup>th</sup> and placed on the local & consent calendar (basically meaning it is uncontested and highly supported) and will soon go to the House floor for a vote. April 12<sup>th</sup> was another successful day at the Capital! The Senates Cavern Protection bill (identical to the House bill called a “companion”) was assigned to the Senates Natural Resources Committee. The meeting scheduled for 1 pm started late at 4:30 pm. Senator Wentworth (who filed the bill) was there to introduce his bill and speak on its importance. This was great because he has a lot of seniority and basically told the committee he was in a hurry so they moved our bill up on their very long agenda! Dib, Seco and Brad testified. Seco presented a letter to the committee from the Department of Interior endorsing the bill in support of Texas National Natural Landmark caves. Ed Mayfield (Sonora) was also there and, when asked if he also wanted to testify, told the committee that his Dad said all that needed to be said! The committee agreed since the bill was uncontested and appreciated Ed’s humor! His support was documented for the record as well as the support of the Texas Travel Industry Association. The bill is anticipated to be voted out of committee very soon.

Now it’s a race to see which bill, SB or HB, is voted off its respective floor first. It doesn’t really matter which because Texas Caves win both ways!

To see if your state has Cave Protection laws and what they are go to:

<http://www.scci.org/preserves/law/statecavelaws.html>

By: Michelle Devaney, NCA Region 8 Director & Brad Wuest, NCA President



Comal County District Attorney Dib Waldrip (left), Ed and Seco Mayfield, Caverns of Sonora (center), NCA President, Brad Wuest (right).

## ARRIVALS

Welcome, Meagan Catherine Thompson, daughter of Region Four director David Thompson and girlfriend, Lindsey. Meagan joined us the evening of March 19, weighing in at 7#. Vice-president Steve Thompson is now a doting grandfather. No doubt the poor baby will have her first pair of coveralls and boots before she’s a year old! Congratulations to David and Lindsey!



## OAAA NEWS

The Outdoor Advertising Association of America is hosting their National Convention and Trade Show in San Diego on May 6-8, 2007. Call 202-833-5566 for information or go to [www.oaaa.org](http://www.oaaa.org) and register.

## GUEST SURVEY INFO

Travis Wuest, Natural Bridge Caverns TX, reports that according to NBC's guest survey, visitors say that having visited another cavern was a strong influence on their decision to visit Natural Bridge. This was within the top five reasons. Yet another way we can all help each other – if visitors have good experiences at one cave, it seems they are more likely to visit another when the opportunity presents itself.

## HOWE CAVERNS UPDATE

When John Sagendorf was in KY for the ACCA board meeting at the end of March, I took the opportunity to get an update on the Howe Caverns situation. As you all know, John announced at our convention last fall that he and his wife Susan have been working to purchase Howe Caverns for about 3 years. As a corporation, they have over 200 stockholders. John said Howe has experienced challenges under its current ownership structure and business model. There are obstacles to progress and rapid changes in order to enhance the overall business and gear it to the needs and wants of today's travelers. They believed that the only way to change the structure and business model was to take the business private.



The Board of Directors (and John is both a director and officer) had worked hard to ensure fairness for the stockholders and for the business. In that regard, it was necessary for the board to solicit other proposals. After narrowing down proposals to two, the Sagendorf's and one other, the board decided to recommend the other proposal (Wight-Galasso) to the shareholders. For a copy of the press release click: <http://members.cavern.com/go/pdf-howe-03-07> The other partner in the venture of Wight-Galasso is the President and principal owner of Cobleskill Stone Products, a local quarry operator who currently operates two existing limestone quarries in this county and has recently purchased the quarry which borders the Howe Caverns property. The quarry owner as a potential buyer has created some concern for the protection of the cave among stockholders, the community and the caving community.

John mentioned that the two reasons the Board decided to recommend the Wight-Galasso proposal were: While prices were essentially equal, 1) the Wight-Galasso offer is based on immediately available cash where John & Susan's is based on financing, and 2) the other proposal offers significant immediate investment in the business (which it needs) whereas John & Susan's offer is very tight financially and cannot dedicate as much to immediate investment. Therefore the Board's decision is that the other proposal offers the best advantage to the stockholders and to the immediate needs of the business. John said he cannot disagree although they are certainly most disappointed.

The Sagendorf family has been attached to Howe for 205 years since the property was first deeded in 1802. John's grandfather sold land to the new company in 1927 so the cave could be conditioned for public viewing. John said his grandfather and great uncle raised most of the money to fund the corporation and development and both served as original directors and officers of the company. Since the formation of the company, there has always been a Sagendorf serving as a director with John proudly carrying on that tradition.

John stated that if the shareholders vote to accept the merger proposal (and ONLY the shareholders can make that final decision), then from what he knows of the plans, new owners will make the necessary investment to greatly improve this business.

A special meeting of the Howe Caverns shareholders will be held April 19<sup>th</sup> where the shareholders decision will be announced. John will be retiring on April 19<sup>th</sup>. John assures us he is going to remain involved in many of the organizations he is currently in, including NCA. However, Susan's fifteen-year-old "honey-do" list may affect that! John will be very industrious on that list so Susan will not have to worry about having him underfoot all the time! We know you all join us in wishing the Sagendorfs' the best.

Howe Cavers is an icon in the show cave industry, and a founder in the NCA. We also wish the best for Howe Caverns and their continued involvement in the NCA.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

### *Members,*

As busy seasons approach and before everyone's time and energy are spent attending to business and customer needs, I'd like to open dialogue concerning the topic of membership dues. The current dues amounts have been in effect for 5 years and the dues categories (A, B & C) for much longer. Although the current dues structure allowed leadership to maintain member benefits by keeping routine expenditures to a minimum, it did not prevent the necessity of using a large portion of the cash reserve to help fund the Alpha Radiation Program. The reality of the situation is that the cost of doing business, hosting conventions and running the organization has increased. This is due in part to inflation, but there is also the added cost of new benefits to members, like the new website and the initial certification of each member's Alpha Radiation Management Plan. It was the Boards decision in Bermuda to fund this significant benefit for members out of reserve funds. The cash reserve needs to be restored and the organization needs to be able to keep pace with inflation while improving the benefits for all the members.

In Bermuda, the Board of Directors charged the Executive Committee and Finance Committee with the task of developing a new dues structure. Over the winter these committees worked on, and developed a structure that would, in our opinion, be fair to all categories of membership. New categories were created to better balance the financial impact on individual Caves. The proposed dues will have minimal impact on smaller **A** and **B** operations and place a heavier financial commitment on larger operations. Under the proposed dues structure, the annual dues payment would also cover the member's web link fee (currently billed separately) and Alpha Radiation Plan re-certification fees (our plans must be re-certified in 3 years, then every 5 years). It should be noted that Photo Participation will not be included and would continue as an additional billing. When the Executive Committee presented the proposed dues structure at the mid-winter meeting in Tucson, it received unanimous support from the Board of Directors. The Board is recommending the proposed dues structure to membership for consideration and approval at our annual Convention in San Antonio Texas, October 2007. For clarification I've attached both current dues and proposed dues in the charts below:

#### Current Dues

Category	Current Dues	Members
<b>A 0 – 40,000</b>	<b>\$350.00</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>B 40,001 – 100,000</b>	<b>\$600.00</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>C Over 100,000</b>	<b>\$700.00</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Affiliate</b>	<b>\$300.00</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Proposed Dues

Category	Proposed Dues	Estimated Members
<b>A 0 – 40,000</b>	<b>\$400.00</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>B 40,001 – 70,000</b>	<b>\$700.00</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>B+ 70,001 – 100,000</b>	<b>\$900.00</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>C 100,001 – 200,000</b>	<b>\$1200.00</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>C+ above 200,000</b>	<b>\$2000.00</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Affiliate</b>	<b>\$300.00</b>	<b>4</b>

In these economic times, the Executive Committee and Board certainly understand the financial burdens placed on individual Caves. However, it's our desire to provide legitimate value to your membership and to provide you with the necessary resources to support your business. Please contact your Regional Director or

Executive Committee with input and suggestions. Every attempt will be made to communicate information on this issue through **CaveTalk** and your regional directors between now and Convention.

Thank-you,

**Eric Evans**

Sec/Treasurer NCA

## **ISCA MOBILIZES**

Following the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Show Caves Association, much of the activity of the association has been behind the scenes.

In January 2007 President David Summers traveled with NCA President Brad Wuest to Puerto Rico to visit Rio Camuy with the objective of encouraging them to join ISCA and NCA. (See separate report in this issue of Cave Talk).

The second meeting of the Board of Director's is scheduled to be held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007 at ISCA headquarters in Genga, Italy. From all reports this should be a very well attended meeting with only the South African Director sending his regrets so far.

Much work has been done in creating membership application packages and President David Summers warns that a number of NCA members will be receiving these Membership Application Packs.

ISCA is now scouring the world for potential members. The goal being to bring all of the world's show caves under one umbrella. John Sagendorf passed a news article about the opening of the Al Hoota Cave in Oman on to David. This has enabled a communication to be sent to Oman. If any NCA members come across news about an international show cave they are encouraged to pass it on to President David ([dsummers@bcec.bm](mailto:dsummers@bcec.bm)).

A Regional Meeting of ISCA will be held in Sweden in August 2007 in conjunction with the Baltic Speleological Congress 2007. This will be held in Visby, Gotland, Sweden 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007. Any members of the NCA who may be interested in attending this meeting should contact Brad Wuest or David Summers.

## **RUBY FALLS WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT**

During a recent vacation trip to Florida, Gordon and Judy Smith paid a visit to Movita Steiner. Movita invited the Smiths to stay for a reception at Ruby Falls for their new President, Hugh Marrow, Jr. on March 8th. Hugh is looking forward to meeting other NCA members at this years' Convention in Texas.



Hu Longmire, Movita Steiner, Hugh Marrow, Jr.

## **LOSSES**

We are saddened to inform you of the deaths of three of our members. Skip Duggan, Perry's Cave OH, died January 18. Even though they were just about brand-new members of NCA, Skip, his family and their staff hosted one of the more memorable conventions we have ever had. He had been ill for several months and while saddened by his loss, we are relieved for the family that he is no longer suffering.

Jack Steiner Sr., Ruby Falls TN, died on February 13. Jack was a giant in every sense of the word in our industry and organization. Up until his health became an issue, he was still leading the charge as our representative in Outdoor Advertising. He leaves shoes too large to fill.

Joe Maierhauser, Colossal Cave AZ, passed away March 7. He had operated Colossal Cave since 1956 and took the park from 495 acres to over 2,000. Parks were his passion.

Virgil "Sonny" Berdeaux, Jr., Endless Caverns, VA passed away on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Sonny reopened Endless Caverns after being closed for over 9 years. During the 9-year closure, Endless had lapsed into a state of great disrepair. Sonny and family spent one and a half years restoring the property for operation. Few realize



the monumental amount of repairs and improvements the Berdeaux family made to the caverns. Endless Caverns sold one year ago to the Silver Group.

*Our most sincere condolences to all of the families.*

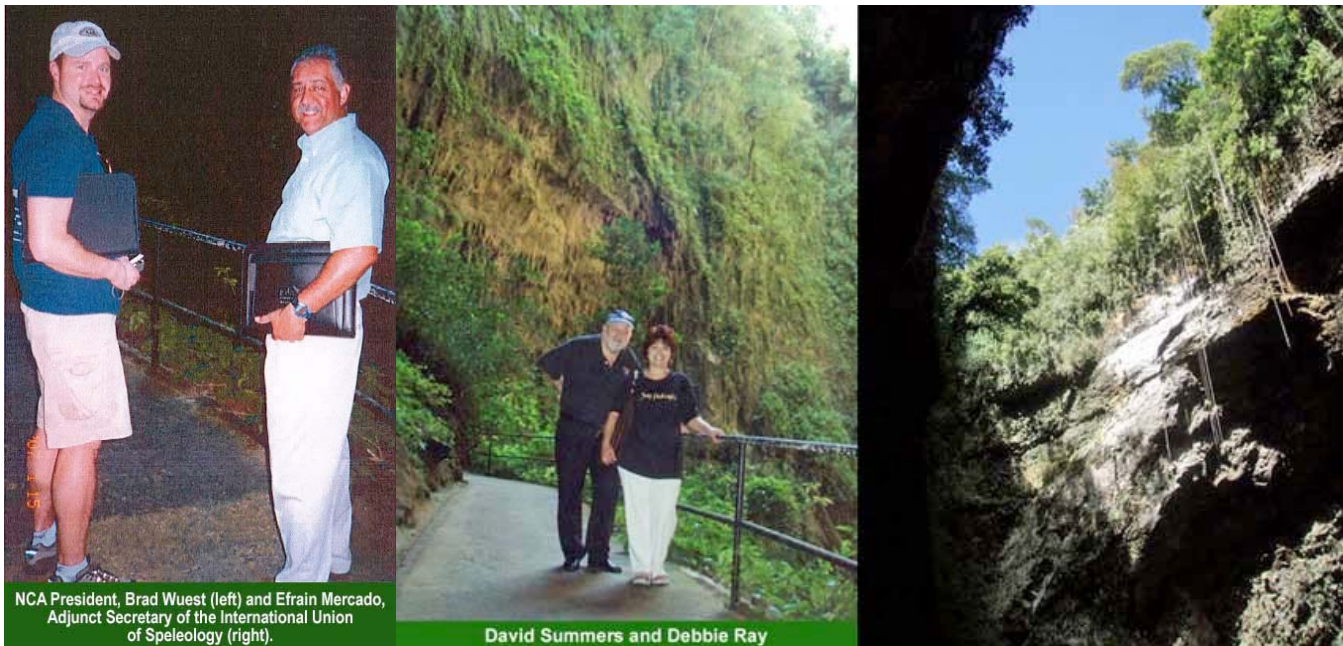
## **PRESIDENT BRAD GOES SOUTH WITH SUCCESS**

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2007 President Brad accompanied ISCA President David Summers on a visit to the Caverns of Rio Camuy in Puerto Rico. The purpose of the two Presidents making this trip was to visit and have a good look at the Caverns of Rio Camuy and in the case of President Brad to bring them back into the fold of the NCA and in the case of President David to have them join ISCA.

The reports of our intrepid pair of Presidents are sketchy, but we do believe that they were both successful in avoiding that deadly tropical menace, the pina colada!

Our pair received wonderful assistance from Efrain Mercado, one of the eight Adjunct Secretaries of the International Union of Speleology (UIS) in the world, and Abel Vale, an extremely well known personality in the international caving world.

With the help of Efrain and Abel, Brad and David had a great meeting with Angel López, the coordinator of Parques de las Cavernas del Rio Camuy and his assistant Elizabeth Rivera on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007, followed by a tour of the cavern. All reports led to a feeling that this was a highly successful visit.



NCA President, Brad Wuest (left) and Efrain Mercado, Adjunct Secretary of the International Union of Speleology (right).

David Summers and Debbie Ray

The following day our pair donned jackets and ties and headed for San Juan where they had the privilege of meeting with the Executive Director of the National Parks of Puerto Rico, Ramón L. Nieves Vázquez, and Director Olga Magaly Rodriguez. This meeting was also highly successful and ended with the Executive Director confirming that Puerto Rico would join both organizations.

Many members of the NCA will remember that the Caverns of Rio Camuy was previously a member, but faded away in the mid 1990's. Jeanee Gurney was particularly enthused as she recalled the NCA Convention held in Puerto Rico soon after she and Russ completed the development of Rio Camuy. A number of other NCA members were also involved in the development of this cave.

Having a NCA President hit the road and visit a former member is possibly a precedent. One where the NCA reaches out to potential members and goes knocking on their doors. We are all looking forward to the Caverns of Rio Camuy rejoining the NCA and we are all looking forward to welcoming them to San Antonio in October.



In addition to being President of the NCA, Brad was also elected one of the Directors of ISCA at their Congress in Bermuda in 2006. Brad has been given the task of heading up the ISCA recruitment drive in North and South America, simply a huge area.

To help Brad in this task, Steve Fairchild has responded to ISCA President David Summers' request and Steve will be helping Brad cover this impressive area of the globe. Steve unfortunately could not make the visit to Rio Camuy.

## NATIONAL UNDERGROUND JEWELS

By Heather Germaine  
Regional National Natural Landmarks Coordinator  
March 2007

There are many outstanding caves within our country's National Parks; however it is less widely known that the National Park Service (NPS) also works with public and private landowners to encourage protection of caves, and other outstanding natural resources through the National Natural Landmarks (NNL) Program. The NNL Program was established in 1962 to identify, recognize and encourage the preservation of sites containing the best remaining examples of the biological and geological features that illustrate our Nation's natural history. Potential sites go through a rigorous evaluation process, including a comparative analysis done by qualified scientists. If a site is determined to be nationally significant, it may be recommended to the Secretary of the Interior for designation as a NNL.

Landmark designation is not a land withdrawal, it does not change the ownership of the site, and does not dictate use or activity. It is a way to provide recognition to the site, highlighting the presence and importance of significant natural resources. This designation creates a partnership between the landowner and the National Park Service, where upon request, the NPS can assist in the landowner's voluntary efforts to preserve the significant resources.

There are currently 581 NNL sites across the United States and four American Territories. Of these sites, 48 are designated because of their significant cave resources or features related to karst topography. These sites are under a variety of landownership including Federal, State, local and private. NNL designation does not require public access; however, many of the cave sites offer public tours and others may offer scheduled trips into the cave either through a local caving grotto or coordination with the land manager.



Bladed helictites at Caverns of Sonora NNL, TX—NPS Photo

Similar to above-ground natural systems, there is great importance for the preservation of these underground worlds and the resources they contain. Caves tell biological stories of a wide variety of highly adapted organisms, geological stories of their formation, paleontological stories of extinct fauna, and archeological stories of past civilizations and land use. Portions of these stories are represented through the significant features contained within NNL caves.

Stalactites, stalagmites, soda straws, and cave bacon are the cave features familiar to most, and are what provide such beauty and uniqueness to these underground worlds. There are many gloriously decorated caves across the country, and several NNL cave sites are significant for their unusual dripstone features, including the unique "fried egg" speleothems at Natural Bridge Caverns, TX, and the gravity-defying, nearly translucent helictites at Caverns of

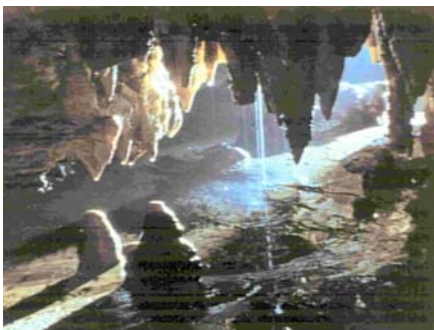
Sonora, TX. In addition to calcite, aragonite, another mineral found in caves, is nicely illustrated as clusters of intricate needles at the Lost Sea (Craighead Caverns) in Tennessee.

Caves provide habitat for bats and birds and large and small mammals; however, caves can also be inhabited by a rich and typically unseen world of smaller cave fauna. Blind salamanders, and crayfish, amphipods (cave shrimp), beetles and millipedes are some of the unusual animals that spend their entire lives within the total darkness of cave systems. Shelta Cave, AL, significant for its outstanding underground ecosystem, is the type locality for several species of cave life, including some that are known to exist only in this cave. Ezell's Cave, in Texas is known to house 36 species of cave fauna, including six endemic aquatic species and one major order of small crustaceans formerly thought to have been restricted to the Mediterranean Sea.



Blind Texas Salamander at Ezell's Cave NNL, TX—NPS

In addition to unusual cave fauna and formations, some caves are particularly illustrative of the different processes of cave formation. Neffs Canyon Cave, UT, a mostly vertical cave, provides an excellent example of a cave formed by the capture of a surface stream. Solution of cave passageways by “vadose” water flowing above and “phreatic” groundwater flowing below the water table are both nicely illustrated at Cave of the Mounds, WI. The potholes, solution domes, channels and pits contained within Longhorn Cavern, TX are features resulting from the “phreatic” phase of cave development.



Cave of the Mounds NNL, WI—NPS

Water, the main agent in development of solution caves, while still present in many caves, may actually be in the form of lakes or streams. Cold Water Cave in Iowa, contains an unusually large, active, meandering underground stream that traverses along most of the 7.5 miles of cave passageways. And Lost Sea (Craighead Caverns), TN includes the largest known underground lake in the country.

Several NNL caves also tell paleontological and archeological stories. The discoveries of giant ground sloth bones and bones of an herbivore about the size of a bear are some of the significant features at Big Bone Cave, TN. The importance of caves from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century through the Civil War as sources for nitrate salts, an essential ingredient of gun powder, is an

important component in interpreting the features and the history at Organ Cave System and Greenville Saltpeter Cave in West Virginia as well as at Big Bone Cave.

Finally, several NNL caves are significant for their quality representation of different cave types. Conley Hole, TN is one of the most spectacular and outstanding examples of a pit cave in the United States and Devil's Sink Hole in Texas is one of the best examples of a collapsed sink. Some of the largest, most extensive and unusual sea caves are found within the Mona and Monita Islands in Puerto Rico.

As evidenced by the unique features described in just some of the NNLs, the importance of cave resources can not be understated. Designation of caves through the National Natural Landmarks Program is just one way to provide recognition and promote the conservation of these significant features.

Actual on-the-ground protection of these resources, however, is dependent on the voluntary efforts made by landowners and the actions of each and every cave visitor. We are all responsible for ensuring the long-term protection of our Nation's underground jewels.



Evidence of past saltpeter mining at Organ Cave System NNL, WV—NPS

More information on the National Natural Landmarks Program can be found at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/nnl/>.