



University of South Florida

Digital Commons @ University of South Florida

Cave Talk

Newsletters and Periodicals

July 2007

Cave Talk

Cave Association National

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cave_talk

Recommended Citation

National, Cave Association, "Cave Talk" (2007). *Cave Talk*. 36.
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cave_talk/36

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Newsletters and Periodicals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cave Talk by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

OFFICERS:

President: Brad Wuest

Natural Bridge Caverns, TX 210-651-6101
bwuest@naturalbridgecaverns.com

Vice President: Steve Thompson

Fantastic Caverns, MO 417-833-2010
sthompson@fantasticcaverns.com

Secretary Treasurer: Eric Evans

Ohio Caverns, OH 937-465-4017
ercave@ctcn.net

Coordinating Director: Susan Berdeaux

Diamond Caverns, KY 866-552-2837
susan@cavern.com

Past President: John Sagendorf

518-376-3096
johns@unyta.com

REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Region One:

(CT, DE, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)

Greg Beckler Natural Stone Bridge & Caves
518-494-2283 gbeckler@frontiernet.net

Region Two: (MD, VA, WV, KY)

Gary Berdeaux - Diamond Caverns, KY
270-749-2233 gary@diamondcaverns.com

Region Three: (IL, IN, MI, OH)

Claudia Yundt - Squire Boone Caverns, IN
812-732-4382 claudia@squireboone.com

Region Four: (IA, KS, MO, NE)

David Thompson - Bridal Cave, MO
573-346-2676 info@bridalcave.com

Region Five: (MN, MT, ND, SD, WI)

Joe Klimczak - Cave of the Mounds, WI
608-437-3038 joe@caveofthemounds.com

Region Six: (CA, ID, NV, OR, WA)

Steve Fairchild - Moaning Cavern, CA
209-736-0330 steve@cavernstours.com

Region Seven: (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY)

Steve Runkle - Cave of the Winds, CO
719-685-5444 rsr@caveofthewinds.com

Region Eight: (AR, LA, OK, TX)

Michelle Devaney - Longhorn Caverns, TX
830-598-CAVE michelle@vtrc.com

Region Nine: (AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN,)

Allen Mathis - DeSoto Caverns, AL
256-378-7252 al@desotocavernspark.com

Region Ten: (AK, HI, Bermuda, International)

Jeanne Gurnee - Goodlettsville, TN
615-264-0019 jgurneeNSS@aol.com



CaveTalk

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL CAVES ASSOCIATION

National Caves Association - Susan Berdeaux, Coordinating Director
P.O. Box 280, Park City, KY 42160 susan@cavern.com 270-749-2228

CAVETALK SUMMER 2007

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Summer has finally arrived as indicated by the rising temperatures on our thermometers here in Texas! But along with that rise in temperature is a welcome rise in attendance at show caves across the nation. Kids are out of school and families are traveling. And to serve the increased number of guests requires an increase in staff. Here at Natural Bridge Caverns our staff more than doubles with seasonal employees coming on board. Of course, many familiar faces but many new ones too. In early summer we held our employee orientation to re-familiarize experienced staff and introduce our new staff to our family & management team, tell our Caves story and introduce them to our service standards. For us that's: Safety, Courtesy, Experience and Efficiency. No we didn't invent these service standards ourselves, we borrowed them from Disney and modified them to fit us! Why re-invent the wheel?

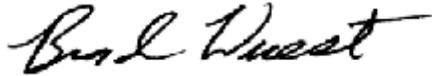
Drafting this message and thinking of our company's service standards has caused me to reflect on all that we have received and are learning from being NCA members that applies to each of our service standards. We place top priority on the safety of not only our guests & employees but also that of our cavern resource and business. The NCA's Cave Radiation Management Plan is an excellent example of a benefit that supports this standard as well as is the NCA's Group Insurance Program. The 2nd most important thing to us is Courtesy. A smile, "hello" and "thank you," can make such a difference in a guest's experience! You bet we've learned from our friends in the NCA how to do an even better job of showing courtesy to our guests. What are we selling as show caves? Experience!! You know it's more than just that cavern tour. The experience begins when they make the conscious decision to visit us with anticipation & expectations building. Maybe they found us on the NCA's website in the cave directory then followed the link to our website or maybe it was a brochure, however they found out about us they are building expectations of the experience which I hope we can live up to. That experience continues through their visit to the time they drive away from our property. Were the restrooms clean? Was the tour guide friendly and knowledgeable? How was their shopping experience in the gift shop? Did

they find plenty of fun things for the kids to do like panning for gems at a sluice? Did we meet or exceed their expectations? All of that is a part of Experience and builds memories which drives future attendance. We learn so much through the NCA on ways to create a better experience for our guests, like adding that gem panning sluice, and where to stock up on the latest best sellers for the gift shop and snack bar. It was other members of our NCA family that inspired us to try digital photography which increased our total income more than 8% last year. Thanks NCA! And finally Efficiency. We've learned how to create & sell packages, find the right POS system, implement successful pricing strategies and the list goes on and on. Being active in the

NCA, willing to share and open to learn has helped Natural Bridge Caverns improve all our Service Standards and become a much more successful business.

I hope each of you takes advantage of the opportunities NCA membership provides to make YOUR business even more successful. I look forward to seeing all of you in Texas for Convention '07! In the meantime, I wish each of our member caves a prosperous summer season selling a wonderful experience to your guests. Enjoy this informative issue of Cave Talk. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please let me know. Or if there is anything the NCA or I can do to assist you just give me a call or send me an e-mail.

God bless,



Brad Wuest, President
National Caves Association

2007/2008 NCA GROUP INSURANCE RENEWAL

We would like to thank everyone that completed their renewal applications on time for this year's renewal. Also, we thank the Committee Members for their assistance in completion of a very successful renewal. You will be receiving your quotes around the first week of September. If you have any questions after you receive your quote, contact your Committee representative or Mike Woytowicz at AJ Gallagher, 1-630-694-5318.

Your Insurance Committee is working with AJ Gallagher on simplifying next year's renewal application process. We are trying to improve YOUR insurance program; any suggestions or comments would be appreciated and should be given to your Committee Representative.

INFO ON CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

All individuals or entities who, from August 26, 1994 through December 31, 2005 engaged the services of any one of more than 50 different Brokers, including Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, Inc., with the purchase of insurance or renewal of insurance or reinsurance may be entitled to receive a monetary settlement. You may have already received a Notice about this in the mail. It requires that you complete a form with information regarding (1) Insurance Company Name; (2) Policy Number; (3) Year (Date of Inception/Renewal) and (4) Premium \$ Paid, for the period listed above.

The deadline for submitting this claim is no later than November 16, 2007. If you have any questions, you can call 1-866-459-3650,
Or email: gallagheradmin@completeclaimssolutions.com

Steve Runkle
Vice Chair-Insurance Committee

ISCA DIRECTORS MEET IN GENGA, ITALY

The Board of Director's of the International Show Caves Association held its second meeting under the current administration at its world headquarters in Genga, Italy, on 31st May 2007. The first Board meeting had been held on 27th October 2006 in Bermuda immediately following after the 5th Congress.

All members of the Board were able to attend apart from Brad Wuest of the U.S.A. and Hein Gertsner of South Africa, who were both prevented from attending by business at home. Hein was traveling across South Africa on that day and was unavailable. NCA President Brad was, however, "catchable" and this international cadre roped him into a video conference.

Adjustments were made to the timing of the meeting in Italy to take into account Brad's coming to, in Texas and the time difference. Does anyone really know what time Brad gets up in the morning? Aside from that, the ISCA Board now truly knows what he looks like when he first gets up – coffee mug and all! The meeting went on for four hours and we all had the opportunity to examine what he had for breakfast and even lunch!

The meeting had a full agenda and was most productive despite having Brad's face on the computer screen at the table. Brad's image was also projected onto a large television screen at the end of the room. The ISCA Directors sure know what it is like having big brother watching!

The only disruption came when Brad was disconnected. The meeting started to speculate the President Bush's administration was also in on the call and disconnected Brad each time the French delegate started to speak!

Perhaps the resolution of that meeting that has the greatest impact on the NCA is the planning of the ISCA Conference in October 2008 in the South of France with the theme of Prehistoric Art in Caves. Great efforts are being made to ensure that there is no conflict between the NCA Convention 2008 and the ISCA Conference. It is hoped to have a least a week between these two events.

The South of France is rich with prehistoric art in caves and the Conference will be a wonderful opportunity to visit a number of caves with this art.

An ISCA Conference promises to be a pleasurable experience as it will be void of all the requirements to complete the formal components included in the four yearly Congresses. It is tentatively planned to hold a few meetings in the mornings and then head off on excursions after lunch. There will be more information about this conference at the NCA Convention 07 in San Antonio. See you all in San Antonio.

Submitted by: David Summers

MERCHANDISING?

According to the dictionary merchandising is, "To buy and sell goods". That sounds pretty simple but for those of us that operate a gift shop, we know it is a difficult task. A gift shop buyer spends hours and hours looking through catalogs and going to gift shows to pick out the perfect items to sell in their gift shop. All this time and effort that we put in, you would think that every single item that we choose to sell will just fly out the door. Well that just does not happen. Sometimes it does not matter how well the item is displayed it just will not sell.

What do you do with those items that have set on the shelves for months and just will not move out the door? First of all make sure the item is displayed properly and is clean. It's amazing how much better a clean and neatly displayed item will sell over a dirty and thrown into a basket item. Even after the item has had a second chance it still will not sell. What do you do? You do not want to pay inventory tax on it and you do not want to pack it away until next year.

Here are a few ideas.

Do not wait until the end of the season to discover what your slow selling items are. A lot of larger merchandise stores pinpoint their slow sellers by mid season. These items are then discounted 10%. They will let a few weeks pass and if the item still is not selling they will raise the discount to 20 or 25% off. Remember do not cover up the original pricing sticker. Seeing how much they are saving helps sell the item. Many gift shops that are desperate to get rid of that item that they ordered a ton of would do a buy one get one free. Okay, you have discounted and the items are still setting. Now what?

Use these items for door prizes or promotional items. We all get requests for door prizes for a church auction or a school fundraiser. Donate the items that just will not sell. Do you go to local functions and speak? Take your brochures and flyers but do not forget to take a little something extra for them to take home. That little something extra can be one of those items that just will not get out your shop door.

Another idea is to do grab bags. Go to Wal-Mart and buy plain brown paper lunch bags. Put one or two of the non-selling items in the bag and mark them for a girl or boy and the price. Make sure it's fairly cheap or the grab bags will not move either. You will need a large container of some sort to put the grab bags in. You also want this container to be in a very visible location in the gift shop. An oversized basket works well.

For you creative gift shop merchandisers, try combining a few non-selling items to make a unique gift. For example, we had some wooden trays that use to hold sand for the zin gardens. We also had some dull stones

that would not sell and a few candleholders that were made out of rock. So we put the rock candleholder on the wooden tray, filled in the empty space with the non-selling stones and it made a gift for someone's desk. We sold four of these on the first day they were displayed. Do not be afraid to mix and match items. Who knows they might sell!!

That is just a few tips to send your way from the merchandise committee. We all hope everyone is having a great 2007 season.

Submitted by: Claudia Yundt – Squire Boone Caverns, IN.

MISSOURI BILLBOARD REGULATION UPDATE

For several years we have discussed the issue of I-70 being rebuilt and its impact on outdoor advertising structures. We have recently learned that the chairmen of both transportation committees intend to file and push legislation in the next session authorizing MoDOT to begin major upgrades to both I-70 and I-44.

MOAA and its members have supported numerous changes to Missouri's outdoor advertising regulations. As a result, most existing signs are nonconforming and under the federal HBA cannot be relocated. I would guess probably 95% of existing signs are nonconforming for one reason or another. If nonconforming signs are removed, less than one of every three existing signs could be rebuilt under the current rules. MoDOT is quite concerned about the huge cost difference between relocating and condemning most of the signs along the state's two major interstates. MoDOT has tried to get FHWA approval of a pilot program to allow nonconforming signs to be relocated. Both MoDOT and OAAA believe that is not likely to happen.

If we wish to address this problem for the benefit of the outdoor industry and the taxpayer, we should make it a priority to start work with MoDOT and the Missouri legislature to draft a solution to this problem. All of the solutions I have been able to come up with so far would require legislative action. Each of these possible options has its downside or risks.

ALTERNATIVE A: CHANGE SPACING - We could include language in the legislation authorizing these two highway projects that would temporarily change the minimum spacing back to 500 feet on the two highways during construction. We could include a sunset clause that would automatically change the spacing back to 1400 feet upon completion of the construction. This would make many of the existing signs conforming again. We would add language that authorized MoDOT to pay for relocation rather than condemnation when the sign can be relocated on the same premises. We would also prohibit local governments from preventing these relocations.

The downside to this approach: Prior to the latest changes in the regulations, approximately 25% of existing signs were already nonconforming. Under this approach, the following signs would still be nonconforming:

1. Stacked signs.
2. Signs more than 800 square feet.
3. Signs not within 650 feet of a commercial business.
4. Signs based on businesses which no longer exist.
5. Signs on property zoned other than commercial or industrial.

I would estimate approximately 30% of existing signs would still be nonconforming and could not be relocated. This approach could allow the erection of some new signs which could not be built now unless we agreed to a moratorium on new interstate signs while the spacing is 500 feet.

ALTERNATIVE B: CHANGE STATE DEFINITION OF NONCONFORMING SIGNS - We could add language that specifically provides that signs which met the state requirements and regulations prior to the changes in 1998 and 2001 would still be considered conforming under Missouri law. This approach would allow the relocation of more existing signs. Most of the signs that would still be nonconforming would be older signs built prior to the 1968 rules adoption. We would include language authorizing MoDOT to relocate conforming signs when the sign owner agreed to do so and prohibiting local governments from preventing the relocations.

The downside to this approach: The FHWA might choose to ignore the new definition of nonconforming signs and argue that under federal regulations, these signs are still nonconforming. MoDOT could be penalized 10% of their federal highway funds. I think MoDOT could win this argument if all the signs deemed conforming still met the requirements of the original federal/state agreement.

ALTERNATIVE C: ALLOW THE RELOCATION OF NONCONFORMING SIGNS - We push legislation that allows all existing signs to be relocated on a voluntary basis, prohibits local governments from preventing the relocation and directs MoDOT to adopt regulations authorizing the relocation in exchange for paying relocation costs rather than condemnation costs. (Keep in mind that some signs cannot be physically relocated on the same premises or the landowner won't agree to a relocation.)

The downside to this approach: This approach is openly defiant of the FHWA and is less defensible with regard to possible federal penalties. Because of congressional assistance, no state has actually been penalized since the 1970's. In addition, the federal penalties are probably far smaller than the difference in cost between relocating and condemning what is possibly thousand of existing signs. MoDOT is pragmatic enough that if it would cost fifty to one hundred million more to comply with the federal regulations than to ignore them, they might choose the more economical approach.

Our failure to reach a consensus among ourselves and with MoDOT on this issue could have a substantial detrimental impact on your business. Please give some serious thought to how you feel we should try to address this issue. If you have ideas I haven't discussed, we would love to hear them.

MOAA will be scheduling a board of directors conference call in the next two weeks or so to discuss this issue. All members will be provided information on how to call in and participate in the discussion. I hope we can reach a consensus during that meeting so I can begin further talks with MoDOT and key legislators. MoDOT may also have other suggestions, but we have reason to believe they support changing the spacing back to 500 feet during construction.

Please don't hesitate to contact me prior to the conference call should you have questions.

Regards,
Bill May

This MO billboard update was provided by Steve Thompson.

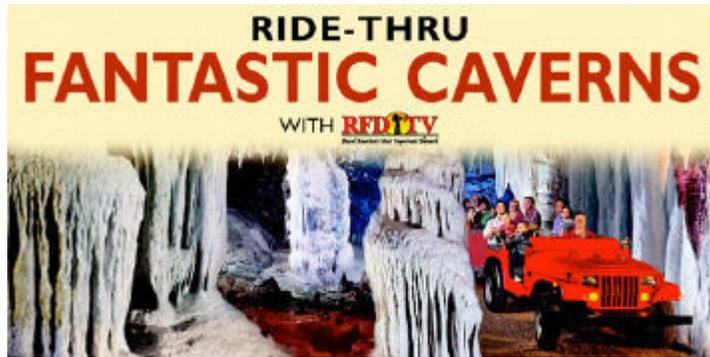
NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The President has appointed this years nominating committee. Members appointed to the committee are: Joe Klimczak (Committee Chair) *NCA Region 5 Director* from Cave of the Mounds, Eric Evans *NCA Secretary / Treasurer* from Ohio Caverns, and Les Turilli *Member* from Meramec Caverns. Each of these individuals represents a great deal of experience and knowledge of what it takes to serve as a leader in our association at all levels. Thanks to Joe, Eric and Les for agreeing to serve!

Officers and Directors will be elected by the membership at the annual business meeting this October in San Antonio. Officers serve 2-year terms and directors serve 1-year terms.

Please contact the committee if you are interested in finding out more about what it takes to serve as an NCA officer or director. For your ease we have set up a special group e-mail address for the nominating committee nominating@cavern.com or feel free to contact them individually, their e-mail addresses and phone numbers are provided below.

Joe Klimczak, joe@caveofthemounds.com, (608) 437-3038
Eric Evans, crcave@ctcn.net, (937) 465-4017
Les Turilli, rhinoman@fidnet.com, (573) 468-2283



MISSOURI CAVE BILLBOARDS

Here is a layout for a billboard for the Missouri Caves Association (MCA). This is a joint venture between MCA, Missouri Caves & Karst Conservancy (MCKC) and Lamar Outdoor Advertising. A dozen of these billboards are going up across Missouri in efforts to spur sales of the Official Missouri "The Cave State" license plates. In the partnership MCA is providing its website for contact info, MCKC is paying for the banners and Lamar is providing the sign space for FREE!!! How cool is that. Thought this might be a good article on Cooperative Marketing for association members. Good things happen when people work TOGETHER!!!

Fantastic Caverns is proud to have a new billboard sponsor, RFD TV!

Steve Thompson, Vice-President

NCA CONVENTION UPDATE

NCA Convention '07, hosted by Natural Bridge Caverns in San Antonio, Texas, is coming at us Fast! We hope that you all are as excited about going to Texas as us Texans are that you are coming. In fact, we are so excited about it that we decided to give you the opportunity to attend the Texas Convention and save some money at the same time! Early bird registration starts NOW and ends on August 1, 2007. Complete your registration form and send in your fees by August 1st and you will receive \$25.00 off the cost of each Convention registration in your group. Find the Convention Registration form and information at www.ncaconvention.com, or call (210) 651-6101 to request information by mail if you do not have e-mail. Thank you for using e-mail communications as much as possible in order to keep Convention costs lower and save your NCA organization communications expense.

The Agenda for the Convention continues to get better and better as we get closer to show time. One of the latest additions, due to popular demand, is the addition of an optional field trip to see the bat flight at Bracken Bat Cave. The trip will be by motor coach, with interpretation will be provided by Bat Conservation International. Witnessing the emergence of the largest bat colony in the world is a spectacle you will not want to miss. However, participation is limited to the first 75 people who register for this event and send in their fees. This is one of three optional field trips being offered in conjunction with the NCA '07 Convention. All of the field trips leave from the Convention Headquarters, the Gunter Hotel, in downtown San Antonio, and return there at the end of the same day.

There is an additional fee for participating in each of these optional field trips, and it is important for participants to register for these trips and pay the fees at the time they register for the rest of the Convention. You will find the latest version of the Convention Agenda, the Registration Form, Hotel Information and Link to Room Reservations, Travel Tips as well as information on these Optional Field Trips on the NCA Convention website at www.ncaconvention.com.

Submitted by: Joye Wuest

INCLUDE YOUR CAVE IN THE NEW "Gurnee Guide to American Show Caves"

The new edition of "Gurnee Guide to American Show Caves" is nearing the production stage. The book is devoting a page to each show cave in the United States, and includes text and a full-color photo. We are still checking on the following NCA caves that we have not been able to reach: Sequoyah Caverns, AL; Crystal Ice Cave, ID; and Crystal Cave, WI.

We've telephoned the following caves and are awaiting material from: Rickwood Caverns State Park, AL; Grand Canyon Caverns, AZ; Mercer Caverns, CA; Cave of the Winds, CO; Bridal Cave, MO, Jacob's Cave, MO, Ice Caves, NM; Crystal Cave (Heineman Winery), OH; Olentangy Indian Caverns, OH; Perry's Cave, OH; Indian Echo Caverns, PA, Lost River Caverns, PA; Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns, SD; Endless Caverns, VA. Hope to hear from you soon!

If any show cave would like another surface mailing containing questionnaire so that we can have current information for the book's text, please contact: Jeanne Gurnee, 720 Flat Ridge Road, Goodlettsville, TN 37072. Telephone: 615-264-0019.

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION, July 23 - July 27, 2007

The National Speleological Society annual convention will be held in Marengo, Indiana (home of Marengo Cave and a number of show caves nearby) from July 23 - 27, 2007. There will be planning meetings for the 2009 International Congress of Speleology, long-term planning meetings, cave trips, and sessions of interest to show cave owners and managers. In addition to the National Caves Association, there are a number of show caves that are members of the National Speleological Society: Alabaster Caverns, Rushmore Cave, Cave of the Winds, Colossal Cave, Crystal Caverns at Hupp's Hill, Indian Echo Caverns, Ka'eleku Caverns, Kartchner Caverns, Mercer Caverns, and Seneca Caverns. The Convention should provide an interesting trip, with lots of new information as well as the possibility to visit the show caves in the area.

"DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS" The final chapter and end of a successful journey!

On June 15th 2007 Texas Governor Rick Perry signed into law both the house and senate versions of the bills amending the Texas Cavern Protection Act of 1979. This amendment among other things increases the penalty for vandalizing any cave in the state of Texas.

Texas show caves banded together in response to the vandalism of the famous "Butterfly" formation in the Caverns of Sonora and teamed up with Comal County District Attorney (now District Judge) Dib Waldrip to draft amendments to the Act. Judge Waldrip helped us at every stage of the game from drafting, to working with legislators to author, co-author and file the bills, lobbying and testifying at house and senate committee hearings. Without Dib's support we would not have been successful, hats off to Dib!

And thanks to our Texas caves. Seco & Ed Mayfield (Sonora), Tom Summers (Cave w/out a Name), Lance Clawson (Inner Space), Shawn & Michelle Devaney (Longhorn) and Travis Wuest (Natural Bridge) for going to committee hearings, testifying and all the e-mails & phone calls. It made a difference!

It was an educational process for all of us and has given us a great deal of respect and appreciation for the long hours and commitment of our Texas Legislators and their dedicated staff. Thanks to Senator Wentworth for authoring the senate bill and thanks to Representative Hilderbran for authoring the House bill, and Representatives Macias, Gattis & Gallego for co-authoring.

New Braunfels Texas Herald-Zeitung newspaper article link:

<http://www.herald-zeitung.com/story.lasso?ewcd=ec4d2f45538ed611>

It's great to see how Texas caves pulled together to bring a new meaning to the slogan, "Don't Mess with Texas"!

Brad Wuest, NCA President

ELECTRONIC MEDIA COMMITTEE UPDATE

The electronic media and technology committee has been hard at work to bring some new features to the NCA's websites. Most notably, the public visitors site has been given facelift, and it's nicer now than ever before. We've added a photo gallery section where we show off the beautiful caves in the NCA. We'd love to have all our member caves featured in this gallery and so I'm issuing a call to all of you to submit up to 3 cave photos.

The best way to get your photos into the gallery is to email them to me at webmaster@cavern.com. If you're still behind the digital age, you can mail photos to my home address.

SPAM REMINDER: Some of our members are not receiving our official NCA e-mails with links to CaveTalk and many other important member announcements. If you have not been receiving our e-mails, please let Susan, Brandon or Gary know. You can also help by placing cavern.com in your "friends" folder. It is also a good idea to ask your ISP (internet service provider) to allow e-mails from cavern.com into your in box as well.

Brandon Mathis
201 Arbor Ct.
Sterrett, AL 35147

If you have any questions, or just need some help, you can feel free to email me, and I'll do my best to help out.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the convention,

Brandon Mathis, Webmaster