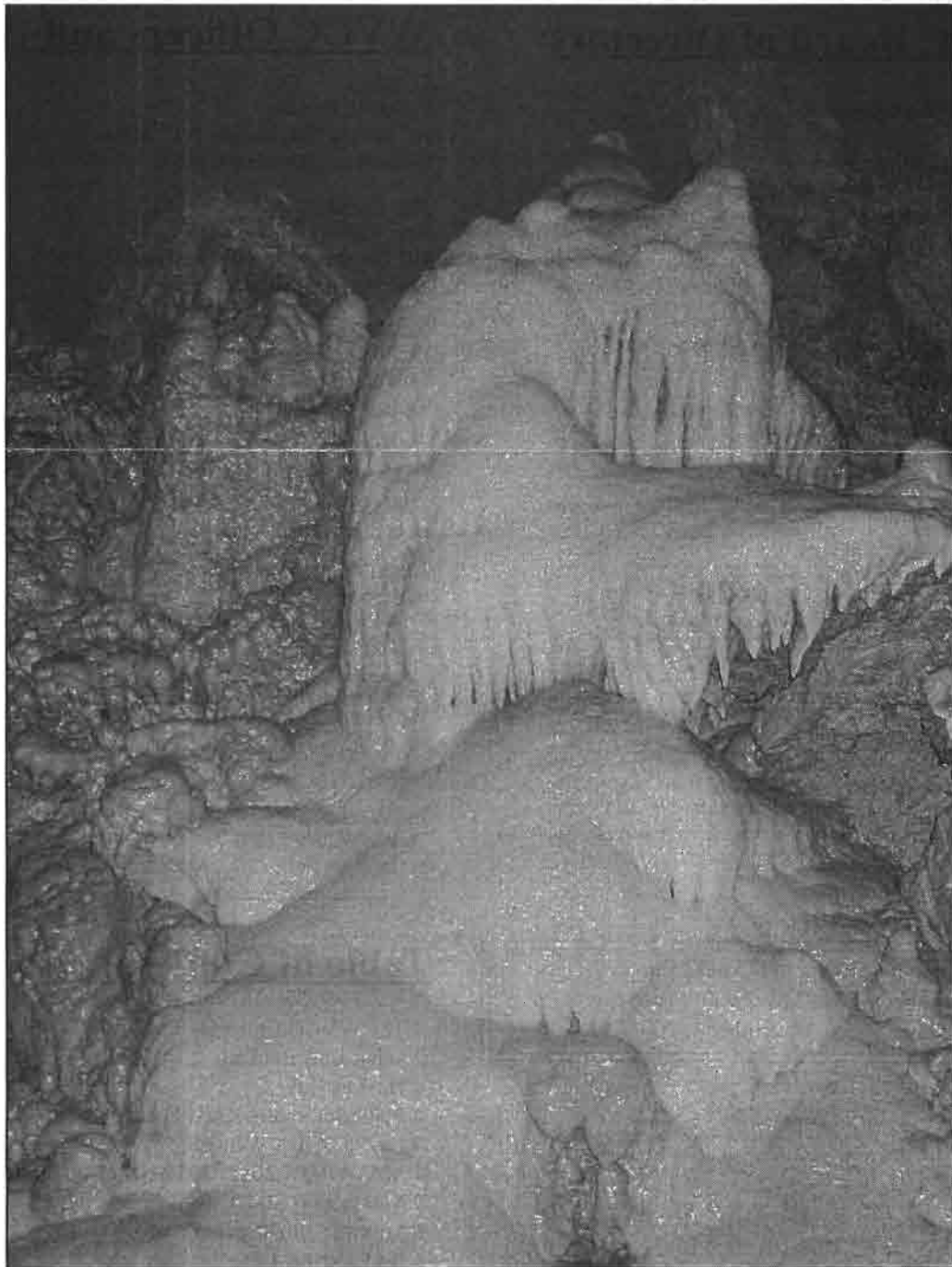


# The Open Cave

The Newsletter of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy

Number 16

Fall 2009



# WEST VIRGINIA CAVE CONSERVANCY

*"Preserving the cave and karst resources of West Virginia for future generations"*

Number 16

Fall 2009

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. All contributions to the Conservancy are tax-deductible. Please send all contributions and dues to: WVCC, Inc., PO Box 243, Frankford, WV 24938. For more information on membership, visit our Web site at [www.wvcc.net](http://www.wvcc.net). Please send all contributions to the newsletter to the newsletter editor. Any internal organization of the NSS has permission to reprint materials in this newsletter with proper recognition given to the author and *The Open Cave*.

## WVCC Board of Directors

Frank Abbato (See Right Column)

Pauline Apling (See Right Column)

Jeff Bray (304.645.5359)  
PO Box 1396, Lewisburg, WV 24901  
[wvhodag@earthlink.net](mailto:wvhodag@earthlink.net)

Fred Grady  
2440-D S. Walter Reed Dr., Arlington, VA 22206  
[grady.fred@nmnh.si.edu](mailto:grady.fred@nmnh.si.edu)

Robert H. Handley (See Right Column)

Cliff Lindsay  
Rt. 1, Box 11, Frankford, WV 24938

Alex Sproul  
5715 Lee-Jackson HWY, Greenville, VA 24440  
[imocaves@comcast.net](mailto:imocaves@comcast.net)

Ed Swepston  
Rt. 2, Box 384, Ronceverte, WV 24970

Meredith Hall Weberg (See Right Column)

**Note to Members:** Annual memberships expire on anniversary date of initial membership. Be sure to check your address label for anniversary date.

Web Site

[www.wvcc.net](http://www.wvcc.net)

Cover Art: Somewhere along the Omega Loop  
Trail in Scott Hollow Cave: Photo  
by Dave Socky, November 4, 2004.



*The Open Cave* © August 2009 by WVCC

## WVCC Officers and Departments

### President

Robert H. Handley  
HC 67-Box 508, Renick, WV 24966  
[leatherwing@frontiernet.net](mailto:leatherwing@frontiernet.net)

### Vice President

Susi Weston (703.901.9667)  
102 Governors Dr. SW, Leesburg, VA 20175  
[susiweston@gmail.com](mailto:susiweston@gmail.com)

### Membership Secretary

Pauline Apling  
6304 Kaybro St., Laurel, MD 20707  
[papling@verizon.net](mailto:papling@verizon.net)

### Secretary

Frank Abbato (301.706.4711)  
15009 Good Meadow Ct., North Potomac, MD 20878  
[fabbato@hotmail.com](mailto:fabbato@hotmail.com)

### Treasurer

Bob Hoke  
6304 Kaybro St., Laurel, MD 20707  
[bob@rhoke.net](mailto:bob@rhoke.net)

### Newsletter Editor Submissions Welcome!!

Meredith Hall Weberg (703.451.3637)  
8061 Kittiwake Ct., Springfield, VA 22153  
[merecaver@yahoo.com](mailto:merecaver@yahoo.com)

### Web Master

Charlie Williams (703.724.1433)  
21118 Deep Furrow Ct., Ashburn, VA 20147  
[ctw@ashburn-online.com](mailto:ctw@ashburn-online.com)

## Table of Contents

- 3 The WVCC Calendar
- 3 What Lies Beneath
- 4 Haynes Cave
- 4 Some Interesting Karst Facts
- 4 Layout Artist Wanted
- 5 MAYACON 2012: 2012 NSS Convention Logo Contest
- 5 Maxwelton Sink Cave Preserve Update
- 6 Maxwelton Donation
- 6 It's Election Time
- 6 Annual Banquet
- 7 WVCC Banquet Flyer

## The WVCC Calendar

September 3-7, 2009. Old Timers Reunion in Dailey, West Virginia. Come by and visit us at our booth. WVCC Wine and Cheese Member Appreciation party on Friday evening at 6 in front of the WVCC booth.

September 4, 2009: Pink Helictite Cave Entrance Sinkhole Clean-up, hosted by Mountain State Grotto. Meet at the OTR gate at 9; lunch provided.

September 19-20, 2009: Work weekend at Maxwellton Sink Cave. See article elsewhere in this newsletter.

September 25-27, 2009: Fall VAR, Battle of Cedar Creek Campground, Middletown, Virginia. Hosted by BATS and DINGO grottos. Pre-registration ends on September 8, 2009. Watch for more info on the VAR Web site.

November 14, 2009. 12th annual Member Appreciation Banquet. Brier Inn, Lewisburg, West Virginia. Details elsewhere in *The Open Cave*.

November 15, 2009. WVCC Board of Directors meeting to be held at Lost World Caverns, Lewisburg, West Virginia. 9:30 a.m. Members are welcome.

Mid-March 2010. The Third National Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum. Lewisburg, West Virginia. Details to come.

May 21-23, 2010: Spring VAR, Hosted by Bubble Cave, LLC at the WV State Fairgrounds in Fairlea, West Virginia (near Lewisburg) in cave-rich Greenbrier County, site of the 2012 NSS Convention.

---

*Re-printed with permission of the Herald-Mail Company. Thanks to Jerry Bowen for sharing this article with us.*

### Lifestyle

## WHAT LIES BENEATH

### Touring a cave with local caving enthusiasts

By TIFFANY ARNOLD

October 12, 2008

tiffany@herald-mail.com

HEDGESVILLE, W.Va. — At times, Jerry Bowen led the tour of Donaldson Cave like a human-size worm.

After you've exited what is believed to be the largest cave room in the Eastern Panhandle, you encounter sections that could only be reached head first along the ground. Getting to other parts felt like climbing a tree with a broad trunk.

But after spending some time inside this hole in the earth, you begin to understand why Bowen has averaged 60 visits to this cave and others per year since 2002.

You begin to understand the appeal of caving.

"There are beautiful spots in caves. Each is different," said Bowen, 57, of Hagerstown. "Sometimes we'll go two or three miles just to get to the pretty spot."

Bowen is the former president of the Tri-State Grotto, a local club of cave enthusiasts. Tri-State Grotto is part of the National Speleological Society, which boasts more than 12,000 members. When

he's not scouting out caves or touring them for fun, Bowen is leading caving trips, showing others why he's so passionate about spelunking.

Bowen talked about slinking down knotted ropes along cave waterfalls. He spoke of a cave in southern West Virginia so big there is a white-water stream inside, and people camp inside it for days.

He also talked about the dangers of caving and why he "chickened out" when a group of cavers he was with went sump diving.

Sump diving is underwater swimming in a cave from one air pocket to another. Divers go underwater in a pool of water in one part of a cave and then swim upstream or downstream to get to an air pocket in another part of the same cave. If it's a long trip to the other air pocket, it's harder to escape and get help during an emergency.

"When you start doing scuba diving in caves, it's probably more dangerous than parachuting," Bowen said.

Bowen led a Herald-Mail photographer, videographer and reporter through Donaldson Cave in Berkeley County, W.Va. We were joined by Bernie Wootten, the current president of Tri-State Grotto.

Donaldson Cave is regarded in the caving community as an ideal place for first-timers.

According to the West Virginia Cave Conservancy, Donaldson Cave was surveyed at a depth of 45 feet and a length of 761 feet. At times, pools of water fill certain areas of the cave, making some parts hard to get through.

There was no water during The Herald-Mail's tour, except for the water droplets that collected on the cave's walls. The water drops were sparkly, like gold-leaf, when our helmet lights touched them. They looked more like stars in darker parts of the cave.

During the tour, Bowen pointed out formations that looked like white "ribbons"

and another formation cavers call "cave bacon."

Cave bacon is a formation of brownish and white strips that hang from the ceiling and resemble bacon.

Wootten said she and her husband took their baby girl into Donaldson Cave when she was 8 days old. They have four children. Wootten said joined Tri-State Grotto a few years ago after she and her husband stumbled on a cave off the C&O Canal during a hiking trip.

"It was filled with crickets and bugs and everything gross," said Wootten, 28. "We got in there and thought it was totally awesome. So we started caving and looking for stuff in Maryland - quickly found out that you can't find very much unless you belong to a grotto."

Bowen said he started caving when he was a boy growing up in Wheaton, Md. He said he was around 10 when his father

started taking him on caving trips. At the time, it made him think of Tom Sawyer and Becky getting lost in a cave looking for treasure.

And when he couldn't find a cave, he used storm drains as a substitute.

"I'd take some candles and a magazine or two. I'd drink a soda or something," Bowen said. "It's cool down there. It's like a cave. It's dark, nobody knows where you are. You think you're in a secret clubhouse or something."

Today, Bowen said it's hard to be like Tom Sawyer and Becky. As communities grow and more housing developments pop up, land owners are beginning to see caves as a liability. They're covering their entrances with gates and steel plates to keep people out. Access is often limited to people who are affiliated with caving groups, Bowen said.

Bowen is one of the few people with the

combination to the lock that secures the gate to Donaldson Cave, which is managed by the West Virginia Cave Conservancy.

Tri-State Grotto and other caving groups removed a considerable amount of broken glass and trash from the cave in 2003. There's also evidence of broken rock formations, according to the conservancy.

Some of graffiti on the cave's walls dates back to the Civil War era. Other markings were made by what looked like spray paint.

The grotto has helped preserve other caves in the area, Bowen said. Part of what keeps him interested in caving is the camaraderie among cavers.

"You can trust your life with another (caver)," Bowen said. "If you get hurt, you know that he's going to break his heinie to get help for you."

---

## Haynes Cave

As the owner of Haynes Cave, I requested that it be opened to all providing that proper sanitary procedures are followed. Haynes contains only a few bats and was found to be free of White-nose Syndrome by a team, including a competent biologist.

—Fred Grady

---

## Some Interesting Karst Facts

By Bob Handley

Thousands of caves have been found in the karst areas that occur in the shared border regions of West Virginia and Virginia. Caves, sinkholes, and disappearing streams are all natural features in a karst landscape, the same as trees, rivers, and mountains.

There are hundreds of miles of cave passages and some enormous rooms (some rooms are millions of cubic feet in size). This seems to be an exaggeration, but consider Brian Masney's exceptional photo of the Big Room in Cass Cave on the February 2009 cover of the West Virginia Caver. According to George Dasher, "This room is 900 feet long, between 75 and 90 feet wide, and between 180 and 200 feet high." Do the math—its volume is between 12 and 16 million cubic feet. I have no dimensions for the Monster Cavern in the

Friars Hole System and the Huge Room in the lower end of Culverson Creek Cave.

Surface features prompt me to predict that thousands of caves are yet to be found. Finding most of these caves will require serious digging, but digging techniques have been developed in the last decade to the point that very little stops us now. The primary stoppers are time and money. The big question remaining is "Where to dig?" This, though, is the subject of another story.

Virginia is a little ahead of West Virginia in the number of reported caves: 4,465 for Virginia (per Mike Futrell), and 4,402 for West Virginia (per Bill Balfour) [at the time of writing]. Virginia should remain ahead in this count with 200 +/- more miles of limestone west of Bluefield.

Omega Cave may turn out to be the longest cave east of Mammoth unless West Virginia gets busy and connects a few of its big caves—like McClungs to The Hole (this would be a 50+ mile system).

---

## Layout Artist Wanted

Have you ever wanted to do layout for a newsletter? Now is your chance! I am looking for help with *The Open Cave*. I still want to edit the articles, but I just don't have the time it takes to do the layout. And, you have to admit, the newsletter could use some snazzing up. Send me an e-mail if you are interested. Include any experience in layout and a sample if you like.

Thanks,  
Meredith Hall Weberg  
*The Open Cave* Editor  
mercaver@yahoo.com

# MAYACON 2012: 2012 NSS Convention Logo Contest

The 2012 NSS Convention needs a logo, and we want you to help!

Here's what you need to know:

- 1) The 2012 NSS Convention will be held on June 25-29, 2012, in the Greenbrier Valley of West Virginia.
- 2) The logo will be the official symbolic device for the convention and will be used on shirts, patches, pins, and other items.
- 3) The winning artist agrees to surrender rights to the Mayacon 2012 Planning Committee, but will be given full credit along with other potential prizes. The artist will also retain any awards received from any contests in which the artwork is displayed (like the NSS Salons).
- 4) The successful logo will contain (full color if desired) accurate elements

of some or all of the following themes: Maya Civilization, Maya Architecture, Maya Calendar, West Virginia, theories about events in 2012, or caves and karst.

- 5) The successful logo will have some or all of the following texts: MAYACON 2012

The 2012 NSS Convention Greenbrier Valley, West Virginia

- 6) The successful logo will have space for a slogan yet to be determined (you may add your own applicable slogan if you like, which we may choose to use, or use "The Final NSS Convention Ever...?").

- 7) Contest started on April 24, 2009, and concludes at midnight on December 21, 2009. All entries sent by snail mail must be postmarked by December 21, 2009.

- 8) Logos can be submitted electronically to Jeff Bray at [vwodag@earthlink.net](mailto:vwodag@earthlink.net) or via snail mail to PO Box 1396, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Include all relevant biography and contact information.

- 9) All entries received by the deadline will be judged by existing Mayacon 2012 Staff by February 28, 2010.

Winner will be announced on March 21, 2010 (The Mayan New Year), and will be notified by mail. Staff reserves the right to choose a runner-up as well!

Read up on 2012! Learn more about the Maya! A perfect excuse to plan that vacation to the Yucatan to get ideas and be "inspired"! Then create and see if it becomes the official logo for MAYACON 2012!!! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jeff Bray (e-mail above) or John Pearson at [jpearson@rcc.com](mailto:jpearson@rcc.com).

## Maxwelton Sink Cave Preserve Update

By Jeff Bray

The most recent acquisition by the WVCC was the Scott Entrance to Maxwelton Sink Cave back in October 2008. As many WVCC members know, we've had a relationship with this cave for several years, dating back to about 1998. The wonderful relationship we had with the owners who sold the cave to us helped us concentrate efforts on regaining a permanent entrance to the cave outside the floodplain, which had been the main roadblock to continuous access for many years. Thanks to some great survey work, good science, and a ton of volunteer time, effort, and blood, we were able to gain access to the cave once again, and immediately started to resurvey the cave and make some conservation-minded trails in the cave.

We raised a lot of money (and still need more to help finish paying off our debt), and we made a lot of promises (all of which are being kept). In February and April 2009, the Maxwelton Sink Management Committee continued its work toward fulfilling these promises.

Over the weekend of September 19-20, 2009, we will be having a major work

weekend at the cave property to complete a large portion of the final phase of the entrance and cave stabilization project. We need your help!! We hope to see many take this opportunity to help us prepare the cave for more exploration as soon as the cave is re-opened (it is currently closed out of respect for the White-nose Syndrome (WNS) issue at hand and the closure is being revisited prior to every scheduled WVCC meeting).

Some of the expected upcoming improvements we plan to make at this work weekend include: the installation of the promised ladder, the clearing away of loose shale near the entrance and on the cliff, filling in holes with rock at the cliff base, placing the secure lid on the pipe, and making the pipe more friendly for getting in and out of the cave.

We also still intend to acknowledge not only the ladder/hatch fundraiser donors as promised (whose help we could not have been without), but to acknowledge those who gave up so many weekends, weekdays, and the aforementioned blood, sweat, and tears to get access to this

cave re-established. We definitely would not even be talking about this cave if it were not for those individuals who put nearly all other caving activities aside for anywhere from six months to two years, depending on when the person became involved. It was really an amazing sight to see so many folks gathering on a regular basis for such an unselfish activity like this, which became known as the "world's largest cave dig."

We designed this entrance to last for hundreds of years. Our philosophy was that if you build something to last, and do it right and not rush into it, then you will save money and effort in the future. We feel we have done this so far, and plan to continue to do so as we complete the major work.

But it will also be up to those who visit the cave to keep it in top shape. As you would in any other cave, please respect the unique and delicate formations as you come across them. Please stay on marked trails, and if you encounter something that you feel should be marked to help keep people from harming it (or themselves), please mark it temporarily and then

communicate this to any member of the management committee (contact info can be found on the WVCC Web site for the Maxwellton Sink Cave Project).

Current WNS government recommendations aside, we expect this cave to be open to vertically competent cavers. The entrance ladder will be a bit of an illusion—the cave is still a vertical cave! Even with the ladder, there will still be a cable ladder drop within a couple hundred feet of the entrance, and if you plan to continue deeper in the cave than a couple thousand feet, you will have to negotiate another drop. WVCC asks that you be on belay when using the ladder. Beyond that, there're miles of cave to explore!

And it's a gem! I hope that everyone who has an interest will take time to enjoy and appreciate this cave. The reason this cave was re-opened with such devotion to the project was because this cave was special to many folks back when it was open in the 1970s. The owners who sold us the cave respected this property to a high

level, and one of them is a caver who had been in the cave in the 1970s. He recognized the uniqueness of this cave and felt that it was important to regain access, if for no other reason than to study it and enjoy it. Now, thanks to his help in so many ways, and to those mentioned above, the entire community should be able to appreciate this resource for generations to come!

Please keep in mind, that once caving resumes in the Virginias, that this cave does have a lock, so you need to plan your trips to Maxwellton Sink Cave. Please see the Web site for any contact numbers, and please plan ahead! Often times one cannot simply expect to reach anyone on the contact list the day of or just before a trip! We're cavers too, ya know!! So plan ahead, and in the meantime, while we are asked to stay above ground to help our bats, consider taking part in a conservation project with the WVCC, VAR, or your local grotto! This is a great opportunity to give something back to our community through some volunteerism!

## IT'S ELECTION TIME!

By Alex Sproul

The WVCC Board of Directors is made up of nine directors elected by the membership, and three directors appointed by the Board. The term of office for elected directors is 9 years, and these terms are staggered for the sake of continuity. Rather than elect one new director every year, we elect three every three years. So this is one of those years when significant change will occur in WVCC leadership!

The outgoing directors are Frank Abbato (who will stand for reelection), Jeff Bray, and Meredith Weberg. We thank them all for their service and dedication.

The Nominating Committee is composed of the three directors who are most senior but not standing for reelection. This year's Committee is Pauline Apling, Fred Grady, and Alex Sproul.

The committee has secured nine confirmed nominees who will compete for the three

vacating seats: Frank Abbato, Carroll Bassett, Jerry Bowen, Rich Geisler, Mike Oatney, George Phillips, Ed Saugstad, Bob Thren, and John Tudek.

The election timeline is being moved slightly earlier this year, so that the new directors can be announced and welcomed at the November WVCC Banquet, and observe the November Board meeting before taking office in January. The candidates' platforms and ballot materials will be mailed in late September or early October, and must be received by the Committee by late October or early November. A specific ballot deadline will be included in the packet, and will provide a minimum voting period of 30 days.

So watch for your ballot in the mail and be sure to vote in this election. These new directors will be guiding our Conservancy through the year 2018!

## Maxwelton Donation

Juliet Rundle donated a 1970 Karmann Ghia to WVCC and Mark Manor was able to raise \$1550 for the Maxwellton Sink Cave Acquisition Fund by selling it for us. Juliet is the mother of Juliet Balfour. The car was a maroon hard-top that needed a transmission and some body work. The buyer, Lonnie Fernatt, purchased the car to restore for his wife. We want to thank Juliet for the generous donation and Mark for arranging the sale for the Conservancy.

—JEP

## Annual Banquet Saturday, November 14, 2009

The Brier Inn, Lewisburg, West Virginia

Happy Hour (cash bar) starts at 6:30 PM, dinner is at 7:30 PM

### MENU

#### Main Course

Chicken Breast Marsala  
Prime Rib at a carving station  
Vegetable Lasagna

#### Vegetables

Roasted Red Potatoes  
Vegetable Medley  
Garlic Mashed Potatoes

#### Choice of two salads

Garden and Pasta

#### Dessert

Cheesecake and  
Chocolate Mousse

#### Beverages

Coffee, Iced Tea, Water, and Sodas

### DIRECTIONS

Take I-64 to Exit 169 (U.S. 219 and Lewisburg).

Head south toward Lewisburg.

Turn left at the first traffic light at Shoney's.

The Brier Inn is on the right after one block.

# West Virginia Cave Conservancy

# Annual Banquet

Saturday, November 14, 2009

at

The Brier Inn, Lewisburg, West Virginia

Happy Hour (cash bar) starts at 6:30 PM,  
dinner is at 7:30 PM



The menu will be Chicken Breast Marsala, Prime Rib at a carving station, and Vegetable Lasagna. Vegetables will be Roasted Red Potatoes, Vegetable Medley and Garlic Mashed Potatoes. Choice of two salads, Garden and Pasta. For dessert: Cheesecake and Chocolate Mousse. Beverages will be coffee, ice tea, water and sodas.

Directions: Take I-64 to Exit 169 (US 219 and Lewisburg). Head south toward Lewisburg and turn left at the first traffic light at Shoney's. The Brier Inn is on the right after one block.

-----

Yes, I will attend the West Virginia Cave Conservancy's Annual Banquet on November 15:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Number of meals @ \$25 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

- Sorry, WVCC no longer accepts credit cards (they became too expensive).
- The \$25 price is valid through November 5. After that the price is \$30. Reservations are required so we know how much food to order
- Make checks payable to **WVCC** and mail to:

**WVCC Banquet**  
c/o Bob Hoke  
6304 Kaybro St.  
Laurel, MD 20707

# The Open Cave

c/o WVCC  
Bob Hoke, Circulation Manager  
6304 Kaybro St.  
Laurel, MD 20707-2621

Address Service Requested



## West Virginia Cave Conservancy Membership Application Mail to address above.

New Membership  Renewal

- Regular Membership (\$15.00 per year)
- Family Membership (\$25.00 per year)
- Institutional Membership (\$50.00 per year)
- Lifetime Membership (\$250.00 one time fee)
- Sustaining Membership (See below\*\*)

\*\*Sustaining Membership is \$65 per year for 5 years.  
Upon completing this, you will be a Lifetime Member.

In addition to dues, I would like to make the following donation to support the work of WVCC.

**Amount** \_\_\_\_\_

- \$20.00
- \$50.00
- \$100.00
- Other Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of Payment**

- Cash
- Check

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Caving Affiliations: \_\_\_\_\_ NSS Number if member: \_\_\_\_\_