CAVE COUNTRY

CAVE CITY, BARREN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

THE MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS • 2002 • THE 27TH YEAR

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BARREN COUNTY AND SOUTH-CENTRAL
KENTUCKY. THANKS FOR LETTING US
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The 2002 Mountain Workshops
BARREN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

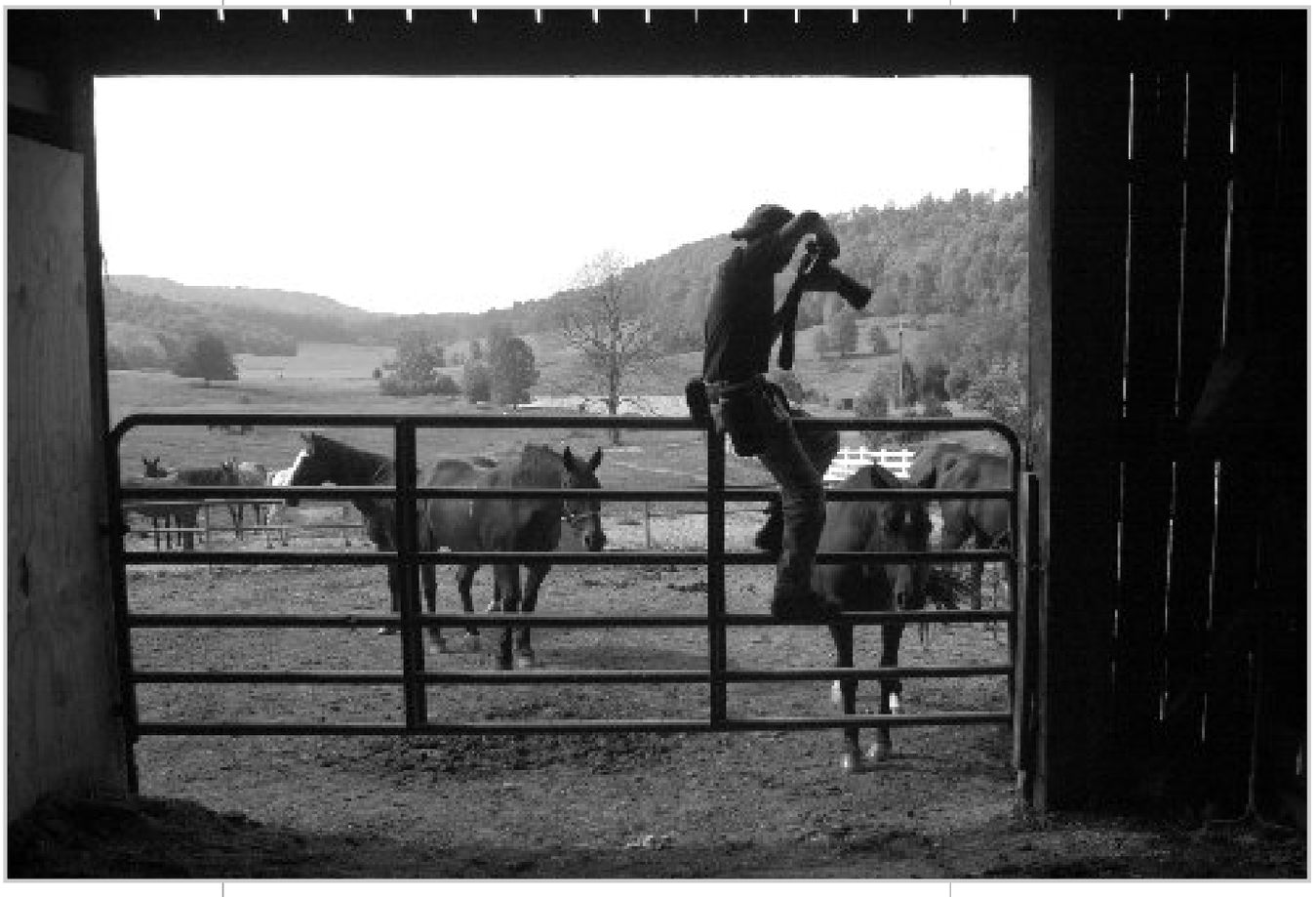

PHOTO BY ROBIN BUCKSON

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Cave Country

Getting back to life's basics.

Photo, this page • Cave City has two faces – a traditional farming community and a commercial area off Interstate 65, with its many gas stations and fast-food restaurants. Occasionally, the two collide, as seen here on Route 65.

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BENEDICT

Cover photo • Seven-year-old John William Pennington II responds to teasing from friends at Carpenter's Cafe and Pool Room before heading out for a day of fishing with his grandfather.

PHOTO BY KYLENE LLOYD

Back cover photo • Ripples of fog-draped pasture and ranks of trees emerge from darkness as dawn breaks magenta and gold over Barren County.

PHOTO BY AMANDA ODESKI

They call it Cave Country, and for the small Kentucky towns that dot the map around the entrances to Mammoth Cave National Park, it's more than just a title. It's a way of life.

Motorists on I-65 will know when they've arrived. The names – Horse Cave, Cave City and Park City – remind travelers that they are on top of a natural wonder.

Many stop. Each year, about two million people visit the park. Some tour the cave system, which has about 350 miles of underground passageways. Above ground, the 53,000-acre park offers nature walks, scenic boat rides, canoeing, camping, biking and horseback riding.

The creation of the park in 1926 created an economic boom, and it was further fueled by the construction of I-65 in the 1960s. Nowadays, the three towns, which have a combined population of less than 5,000, boast a half-dozen golf courses, a professional theater, several museums and a handful of small amusement parks.

Most of this entertainment is aimed at the tourist trade, not at the townspeople. This can lend a kind of Jekyll and Hyde image to a town. Take Cave City for example.

On the west side, where Exit 53 funnels travelers into Cave City just four miles from the entrance to the park, billboards beckon visitors to fast-food joints, chain motels and gas stations. Nearby are local attractions such as Guntown Mountain, Onyx Cave and the Hillbilly Hound Fun Park. Scores of Restaurants and gift shops compete for the tourist dollar. If the town's 1,000 motel rooms were to fill up, the population of Cave City would double.

Just a short ride to the east, however, is a different world. Down Cave City covers a couple of blocks of old brick and stone buildings, surrounded by quiet streets dotted with big Victorian homes, a few parks, and a church here and there. Farther out are smaller homes, brick and frame, with tricycles, trampolines, and plastic swimming pools in their yards.

Antique shops, specialty stores and restaurants have taken the space once occupied by banks, hotels, and saloons. Small businesses attend to the needs of the community and the surrounding farms. Businesses like Square Deal Lumber, Davis Auto Parts and the Monroe Brothers Sweet Feed Mill have been here forever, passed down from generation to generation.

Just a short walk from workshop headquarters at the Cave City Convention Center, an old gray tobacco barn stands in the shadow of a sky-high McDonalds sign. Bundles of golden burley hang drying over a white horse carriage that stands waiting for tourists. Here the two worlds of Cave Country meet in a single image that newcomers find strangely disquieting.

But for the people who live and work here, the mix is as natural as fried chicken and chess pie. More than 100 years before I-65 was built, tourists arrived by train and took stagecoaches to the cave entrance, and buyers would ride in to inspect the harvest at the local tobacco warehouse.

Those who live here are bound by family ties and friendships. This is what some 120 journalists found in October 2002 when they spent nearly a week documenting Cave Country for the Western Kentucky University Mountain Workshops. It's a theme they found at every turn: at the sweet feed mill, where 73-year-old J.Y. Monroe can rest easy because his family is "keeping it alive;" at the Fashionette hair salon, where steady customer Canesa Watkins says she can always find "good conversation and good company;" and on a rural postal route, where mail carrier Kathy Garrett has developed close bonds with people who have become "truly an extended family."

Dr. James Crews knows that extended family well. "I have kids who I delivered who are now patients of mine; and I'm now seeing their children and some of their grandchildren.

"Family is everything we've got," he adds. "What else is there? Family and friends - and tractors."

• David Adams-Smith
Chicago Tribune (Retired)

PHOTOS BY: FIRST COLUMN, TOP TO BOTTOM: AARON THOMPSON, JOHN LOK, AMANDA MAUER, MAT THORNE
SECOND COLUMN, TOP TO BOTTOM: MATTHEW LEVINE, KRISTY RALSTON, JOHN LOK
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Cave City Portfolio

Slip streaming

Cave City businessman and farmer James Myers III heads home with his dog Bandit in his 1965 Army Jeep.

PHOTO BY SHANNON GUTHRIE

Hardware central

Customers gather at Square Deal Lumber Co., the oldest existing business in Cave City.

PHOTO BY JODI HILTON

Cave City Portfolio

He's never fully dressed without a smile

Bob Hunt prepares for another busy day as the multi-tasking mayor of Cave City.

PHOTO BY YULI WU

Harvest of greens

Fall in Kentucky means harvest time. Rev. William Dice, in overalls, waits for his wife Marjorie, left, to finish cleaning turnip and mustard greens with her friend, Alice Esters. Esters planted the greens in her backyard in Horse Cave, Ky.

PHOTO BY MATT STAMEY

Craddock relaxes before he "tunes up" for Friday night. His pool hall opens a few hours before show time and Craddock enjoys watching regulars shooting a game of pool. "Pool players come early and leave late," he says.

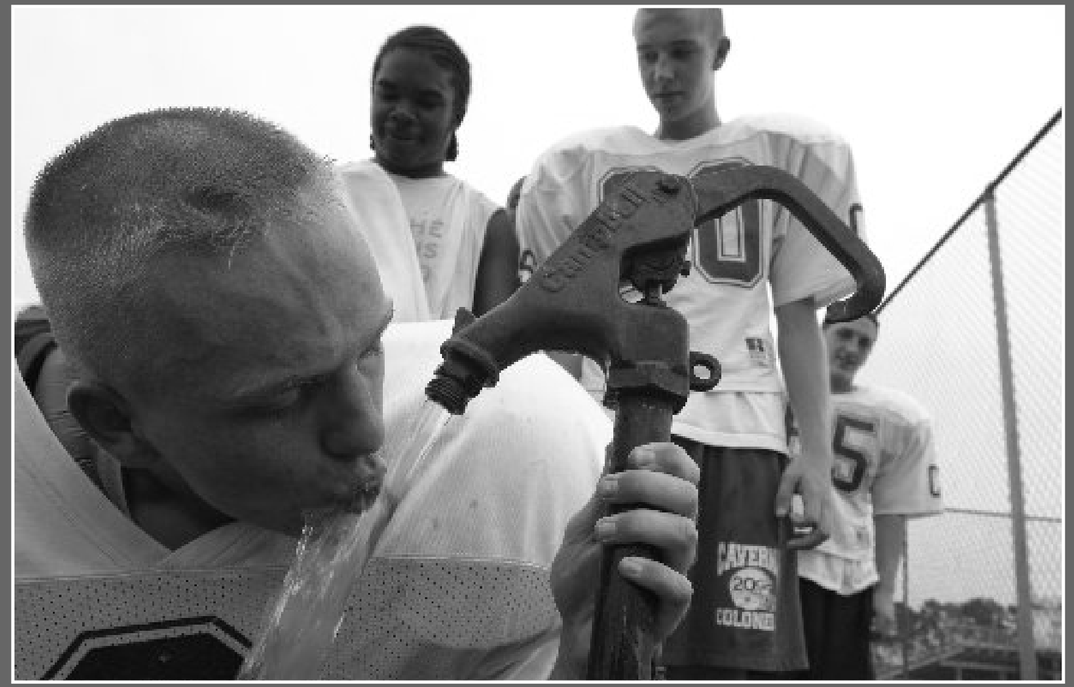
PHOTO BY KENNEITHA LONDON

Retired Kentucky State Trooper Jim Page offers his granddaughter a ride across a soggy Cave City street.

PHOTO BY CARISSA DALE HORNER

Cave City Portfolio

Football thirst, sweet coolness



Charlie Orr gets a drink as other members of the Caverna High School football team wait their turn. Coach Randy Richardson says Kentucky "is abasketball state and it is a struggle for football teams."

PHOTO BY AARON THOMPSON

The power of trust

Mitchell Bunnell has his own way with horses. “A lot of people are rough with horses . . . mean to them, beat them, I don’t do that. I let [the horse] get used to me, and get confidence with me that I’m not gonna hurt it, and usually you come out pretty good that way.”

PHOTO BY JAMES BRANAMAN

Henry Haire comforts his cousin, Helen Hale, at his father's funeral at Horse Cave cemetery. James Haire died of natural causes at age 87. He was a retired farmer and an Army veteran.

PHOTO BY LISA FERNANDEZ

Young members of the Owens Chapel Baptist Church of Cave City, Ky. wait to meet for Bible study Wednesday evening, October 2, 2002. Pastor Duke said that although the rolls of his parish number in the hundreds, he can count on only 60 or 70 faithful on Sundays and sees 15 to 20 on Wednesday evenings for Bible study.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN IDE

Quarter horses graze as early morning fog lifts off a pasture at the Jesse James Riding Stables.

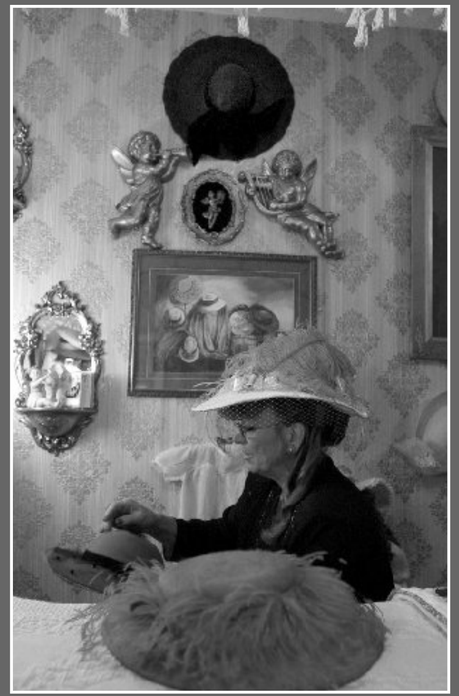
PHOTO BY RICK SMITH

Cave City residents, left to right, Micheal Huff, Sherman Gossett, and Joe and April Madigan show their contempt when a wrestling manager produces a "court order" preventing the handcuffing of managers during a professional wrestling match in Cave City. The managers were supposed to be handcuffed to prevent "illegal blows" when their wrestlers were in the ring at The Factory Music Center.

PHOTO BY DAVID ALBERS

Dolores Nunn waits for her hair to dry during her weekly visit to Linda's Beauty Salon in Hardyville. Owner Linda Richardson's husband's horseshoe pitching trophies are on the shelf.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN RUMBACH



Well known for her flare and wild hats, a vivacious Magaline Meredith, 53, gently lifts one such hat from her collection of 400 hats.

PHOTO BY KAREN LOBERG

Rollin "Oscar" Sullivan practices a speech he's written at his recording studio. His goal: To receive a state grant money to make repairs on his RV campground park, Singing Hills. Instead of mailing the usual registration form to the grant committee, Oscar is making a recording of his voice asking for the money.

PHOTO BY GINGER JOHNSON

Cave City Portfolio

A working man's hands

"I got nice hands," says machinist Chuck Davis, showing the daily build-up of oil and grime that comes from working on automobile engines. Chuck is the youngest son of Paul Davis, who opened the Davis Auto Parts and Machine Shop in Cave City 37 years ago.

PHOTO BY DAVID ALBERS

Praying for a friend's healing

Members of Free Bethel General Baptist Church in Cave City, KY, support Lewis Druin of Cave City as they pray for improved health of Lewis Wednesday night. Lewis had recently received a bad medical report from his doctor.

PHOTO BY HENRIK EDSENIUS

Cave City Portfolio

Honeysuckle for their hair

Caitlan Laird, 8, left, and her cousin, Megan Lewis, 7, decorate their hair with honeysuckle flowers they found while out with their family cutting sugar cane to make molasses.

PHOTO BY JODI HILTON

Time out for pool

David Bell's store, "Tienda David," is many things to its Hispanic customers – a place to purchase imported food, to chit-chat and to have fun.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY C. BAKER

Nathaniel Gossett, 6, rides with his grandparents, Beverly and Robert Gossett on the way home from one of Robert's tobacco fields. Nathaniel spends most of his free time with his grandparents who have their hands full helping his mother care for him.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY C. BAKER

Joseph Davidson, 4, peers into the kitchen area of the Hickory Villa Restaurant Friday morning as his mother Emma Kersey, a waitress at the restaurant, prepares the salad bar. Davidson and his sister Brandy Kersey, 9, (not in photo) have been spending their mornings at the restaurant.

PHOTO BY JAMISON BAZINET

ABOVE •
A house stands out against the sunset along South Toohey Ridge Road near Cave City.

PHOTO BY JOSHUA BROWN

THE MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS

The Mountain Workshops are a 28-year labor of love on the part of the WKU faculty and an all-volunteer army of professional visual journalists with a passion for pictures and a willingness to give back to their profession. more than 200 of the world's best visual journalists, editors and managers have offered their expertise to more than 1,000 members of the visual journalism community.

The workshops began in 1976 with a field trip by the faculty and students of the newly formed photojournalism program at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green. David Sutherland and I led the students' efforts to document the last 11 one-room schoolhouses in Kentucky and Tennessee. It was a chance to do live photojournalism with people from an unfamiliar vanishing culture.

Jack Corn joined Western's faculty in 1977 and conducted the Main Street Project, in which a group of Western photojournalism students documented a low-income area of Bowling Green and produced an audio-visual show. The next year, the workshop became more formal, with photo editors from Kentucky newspapers volunteering their time and expertise to coach participants at a workshop at Land Between the Lakes.

As the workshop evolved, working professionals were invited to participate, shooting side by side with students. The workshop grew steadily. More students resulted in a need for more faculty, equipment and industry support. In 1997, the John S. And James L. Knight Foundation gave the photojournalism program a grant to buy equipment so a picture editing division could be added.

The workshops' faculty and staff include the top visual journalists in the world. This year, 50 shooters and 8 picture editors participated in the workshop. They were guided by 15 piqure editing, writing and shooting coaches; a professional support staff of 20 multimedia, sound and writing professionals; several manufacturers' representatives, and a student assistant crew of more than 25. In all, more than 100 students and professionals came together to share experiences, ideas, skills and understanding of what the profession can be at its best.

The workshop process is simple. We go to a rural town in South-Central Kentucky or North-Central Tennessee, set up a network of digital equipment, and document the lives and culture of a cross-section of residents.

The purpose of the five-day visit is educational. Participants get to know the county's residents, and with the help of shooting, picture editing and writing coaches expand their visual storytelling abilities while producing a book, an exhibit, a multimedia show and a web site about them.

Technological change is transforming our industry, but this workshop remains committed to the documentary photojournalism tradition as the best way of bringing the stories and lives of our subjects to light, whether it be through the printed page or new media.

• Michael R. Morse
The Workshop Director

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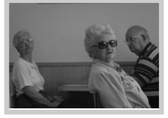

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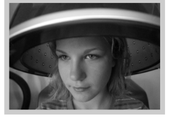

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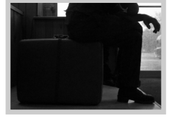

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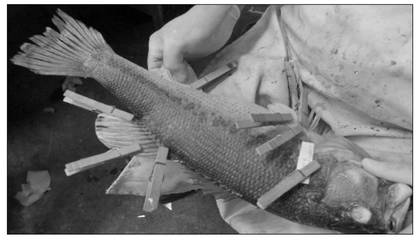
A life of fur, feathers, fins

Part naturalist, part biologist, part artist, all taxidermist

Photography by HENRIK EDSENIUS
Editing by JENNIFER POGGI



Ed Rigdon has stuffed cats, hamsters, parakeets, even a prize bull. But he says his most unusual critter came from Maine. “It is not like we have a lot of lobster around here,” he said. “That made it weird.” He has customers from Cave City as well as far-away places such as Texas and New York. There’s a one-year wait for people who want Ed to immortalize that trophy buck, monster bass or family pet.

Ed started taxidermy as a hobby 36 years ago. It became a part-time job while he supported himself in the construction business. Then it became his job. Now it’s his life.

“An old man told me when I first started that you have to be a naturalist, a biologist, a sculptor, an artist, and a decorator in order to depict what you work on,” he said. “ ... You look at it ... you study it. You look at the muscles, you look at the legs, and you look at how the jaws are, and then you try to put it back to the way it was before you took it apart.”

“A piece of me goes out the door with every specimen I do, and that is the reason why I am still in this business today.”

TOP • After covering the fins of a bass with glue and clear vinyl, Ed Rigdon immobilizes them with clothes pins.

RIGHT • Ed Rigdon puts a finishing touch to a Canada goose before giving it to its proud owner.

LEFT • Ed and regular customer Alex Miller of Metcalfe County share a laugh as Miller leaves Ed's workshop. "I bring my stuff over here any time I kill something," Alex said.

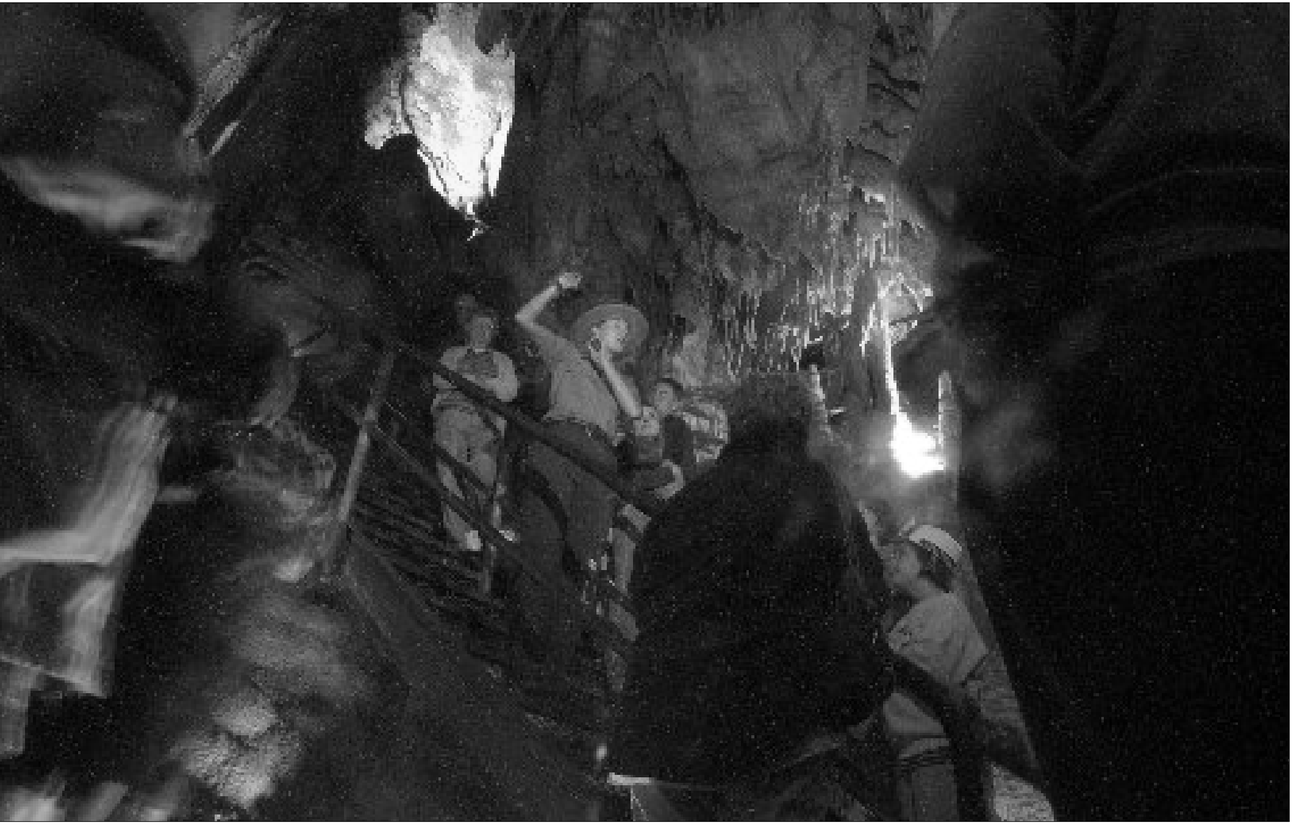
ABOVE • "This is the happiest day of my life," said Andy Lambirth, who shot this 246-pound white tail deer three years ago. "I have been hunting for 17 years, and it took me 15 years to kill the trophy that I want."

RIGHT • Ed takes in the view as he waits for a friend to unload logs from a trailer. The logs are cut into backboards for the animals he mounts.

Seeing in the dark

Discovering Mammoth Cave

Photography by SHANNON O'BRIEN
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

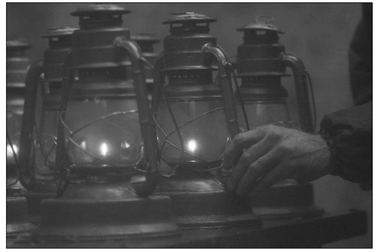


It's a tourist attraction that's been under construction for more than ten million years. Every year a half million people come to Mammoth Cave National Park to explore the world's longest cave. Some tour by lantern flame; others rely on electricity. Some are eager to belly-crawl through tiny crevices; others cringe at the idea and limit their spelunking to the largest spaces.

Nearly all first steps are cautious as visitors make their way down a slick metal ramp that leads them into the dimly-lit cavern. Calls of "Watch your step!" are soon replaced by "Look at that!" Squeals often accompany the first sighting of a cave cricket, or the splash of an blind and colorless fish swishing through a dark pool. Most visitors will see just a fraction of the 350-mile-long system; undiscovered wonders may still lie beyond the passages and chambers mapped so far.

Park Service guide Joe Duvall reports that the two questions most frequently asked about the cave are, "Is all of Mammoth Cave underground?" and "How many miles of unexplored cave do you have in the system?" Though his sly smile points up the obviousness of the answers, all the guides respond courteously to visitors—and they're remarkably well-versed in the details of their (literally) mammoth domain.

OPPOSITE PAGE • Guide Stephanie Elmore points out features of the "Drapery Room" during the Mammoth Cave "Travertine Tour." The "Drapery Room" and the "Great Onyx Cave" are two areas that have stalactite and stalagmite formations accessible to the public.



LEFT • Only the flickering flames of lanterns illuminate the vast spaces of Mammoth Cave for visitors who take the Violet City Lantern Tour.

BELOW • Cool air wafts from the natural entrances to Mammoth Cave. The air gets even more chill as visitors descend into the chambers, where temperatures hold steady at around 55¡F year round.

A family of friends

Elderly find a second home at the Cave City Senior Citizens Center

Photography by DANNY GAWLOWSKI
Editing by RODNEY CURTIS

• Jesse Sea, 78, of New Hope, keeps other seniors dry as they board the center's van in a rain shower. Sea, a volunteer at the center, also helps deliver food to shut-ins.

When it sits empty, the Cave City Senior Citizens Center has a sterile, institutional feel, with white walls and rows of gray folding tables and stackable chairs. At about 10 in the morning, though, the center whirs to life as a handful of rollicking seniors arrive for their daily dose of games, gossip, and soap operas. Checkers are kinged, game tiles are sorted, cards are dealt, and lunch is served in Styrofoam trays.

"It is a family," said Peggy Howell, director of the center. "In some cases, we are more their family than their own family."

The center serves lunch to 15 people a day at its Duke Street location, asking a dollar donation but not requiring it from anyone over 60. But food is not the main attraction.

"I love to have someone to talk to," said Violet Logsdon. "My tongue is never still." Since her husband's death a few years ago, her only companion at home has been a television set. "That's why I come here," she said.

Without the center, many of Cave City's senior citizens would be forced to stay home alone all day. A van picks them up every weekday morning for a three-hour escape.

"It beats being home all day," said Louise Brown. "I'd be bored."

The center is operated by Community Action of Southern Kentucky, a non-profit group funded primarily by the federal and state governments. In addition to providing lunch and good company, the center delivers meals to shut-ins and helps seniors order prescriptions, pick up groceries and get to the doctor.

Strong friendships are formed at the senior citizens center, but they inevitably end in sorrow. Death is a frequent visitor, a fact that members seem to take for granted.

"People are dying like popcorn popping," Logsdon said. "I miss them."

LEFT • Regulars at the Cave City Senior Citizens Center settle in for their daily dose of soap opera. The center, located on Duke Street, is a second home to its eight regular members.

• Nell Bowles (from left), Anne Meyers and Earl Bowles wait for the next number to be called during a game of bingo at the Cave City McDonald's. The restaurant offers food coupons as prizes at a weekly bingo game.

A simple, quiet place

Mobile home park is a community within the community

Photography by JIM WINN
Editing by JENNIFER C. CHRISTIANSEN

On U.S. Highway 31W, not too far from the Wigwam Village motel, sits a community of 28 mobile homes.

It has no name, but it is a soup of humanity – migrant workers, high school dropouts, senior citizens, children.

Life is simple there, and many of the residents like it that way, no matter that a few street lights are broken and some of the trailers are rusting.

Everyone knows everyone else. And everyone seems to know everyone else's business: Who said what to whom, who got a new car, who's dating, and who's not.

Some people say life in the trailer park is too quiet.

"It's boring as hell," said Junior Finn, whose family lives in the park. "There're some people here who are cool and have parties and drink and pass out.... But mostly it's boring."

TOP • Kelly Davis, 7, gets ready to take a spin around the block.

RIGHT • Sharing a border with the Wigwam Village Hotel, 28 mobile homes sit alongside highway 31W.

TOP • "I've been smoking for years," said Linda Jewell, lighting up to the video beat of rapper P. Diddy. "My husband always hollers at me to quit smoking, but I just can't do it."

BOTTOM • Excited about an upcoming Cave City wrestling match, Jeremy Cooper puts 7-year-old Kelly Davis in a headlock. Professional wrestling events have become a big attraction at The Factory Music Center.

TOP • Kelly Davis drinks his water with great gusto while spending the afternoon with his grandma, a resident of the trailer park.

BOTTOM • Martha Compton, who has lived in the trailer park for 18 years, goes out to check her mail. Only one other resident has lived in the park longer than Martha.

The accidental captain

Banter leads to career in law enforcement

Photography by FRANK Di PIAZZA
Editing by ROBYN LARSEN

• Danny Coomer investigates a reported fire at Rocky Turner's house. Turner fell asleep while dinner was cooking.

RIGHT • Coomer, who has raised three boys of his own, teases Daniel Lyons. Daniel is the stepson of Officer Ron Lafferty.
BELOW • In the evenings, Danny enjoys his big-screen TV. "'Making It Grow' is my favorite program," he said.

Ten years ago, while joking with friend and assistant chief of the Horse Cave Police Department Phillip Walden, Danny Coomer said he wanted a job like the chief's, "where I could just sit around all day." Two days later Walden dropped off an application. Danny filled it out and in another two days Walden asked when Danny would like to start. He began work two weeks later and is now a captain in the six-man department.

His first night on patrol was memorable. He was called to Henrytown, where two men were fighting.

"Nicest guys you ever met," Danny said. "If they were sober."

When Danny arrived, one of the men was pointing a shotgun at the other.

"So I go to smooth this thing out and get them out of there and keep everybody from getting killed ... but I wound up having to arrest the two of them because they turned on me ... had to fight em. That was my initiation."

Danny, 49, was born in Glasgow. His dad, Lawrence, owned and operated a dairy farm.

"When I started farming I was 9 years old and we farmed with mules," Danny said. "We never had a tractor 'til I was about 15." Danny attended schools in Gradyville and Sparksville and graduated from Adair County High School. He has three sons from his first marriage and is stepfather to his second wife's son and daughter.

On weekends Danny rides his horses Angel and Maude. Angel is an adopted mustang from Wyoming. He said it takes two years of hard riding to truly break a horse, but Angel will probably never be. According to Danny she will always be "full of spirits."

At home, Danny generally relaxes by sitting in his recliner and watching TV. His favorite program is "Making It Grow."

Danny accepts his life with grace.

"Well, I've been better, been worse," he told a friend. "So I guess I'm doing pretty good."

He's got milk

Photography by FIELDER WILLIAMS STRAIN
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

Kevin Williams' alarm clock goes off at 3:30 a.m. "I hit the floor and throw my clothes on and out the door I am," the 36-year-old co-owner of Williams Dairy said. By 4 a.m. Kevin and milk hand Lewis Poynter have begun the first of two daily milkings. With speed (and a little bit of luck) 190 cows will be milked and back on the feed lot by daybreak. At 3:30 each afternoon the drill begins again.

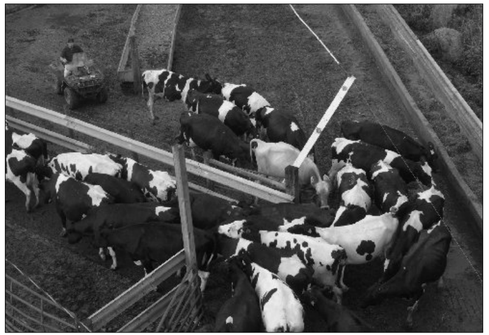
And so it goes, Wednesdays and Sundays, birthdays and holidays. Dairy cows don't seem to have gotten the memo about the five-day workweek. In spring and fall each currently-producing cow may give as much as ten gallons of milk. In summer the yield drops to about seven gallons per animal. "They say [the price of milk] is going back up," Kevin said. "We can only hope."

Kevin and Lewis alternate Saturdays off, with Kevin's 12-year-old son Devin, and his uncle (and business partner) Harry Williams filling in. "Yes, you're tied down," Kevin acknowledged. "You have to be there twice a day, but you also have a whole lot of freedom too." At liberty from midmorning to midafternoon Kevin may go home, or go visiting, or play a round of golf with his wife, Cindy. Kevin says he's just not cut out for a desk-bound nine-to-five life: "I just couldn't do it. I've got to be outside fooling with the cows."?

• Kevin Williams replaces the canister of iodine before beginning the morning's milking. Williams' Dairy uses approximately 60 gallons of iodine a month to keep the machinery sanitary and prevent infections on the cows.

I know every cow... where they came from and what we gave for them..."

KEVIN WILLIAMS



ABOVE • Kevin Williams begins herding the cows out of the feed lot and back to the fields after the morning milking. The cows feed for five hours around milking times twice a day.

LEFT • Tempting a dry cow – one not presently producing milk, – Williams offers a handful of feed.

A Taste for Fun

Joe's Diner

Photography by GENEVIEVE RUSSELL
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

• Coming in for breakfast or lunch every day, Joe Zaffuto, owner of Joe's Diner, checks out the quality and service of his business.

Walking through the door of Joe's Diner, you're not worried about weight management, sodium grams, or breaking news on CNN. You're dreaming of cheese fries and a vanilla milk shake with a cherry on top. You want Patsy Cline and Elvis on the jukebox, swiveling stools at the counter. You're ready for a little retro. You're hungry for fun.

Owner Joe Zaffuto (facing page) visits his neon-decked restaurant for breakfast or lunch every day, keeping a sharp eye on food quality and customer service even when the operation down shifts into off-season gear. Many of Joe's employees—including diner cook Robert Modrzejewski—came to him through Camp America, an international work-abroad program. Robert earned a degree in restaurant management at home in Krakow, Poland, and has worked at the diner for four years. Joe calls his multinational staff energetic and dependable.

Perched on a hillside overlooking Mammoth Cave Road, Joe's clean, inexpensive diner seems a sensible choice for many families eagerly exploring Cave City's maze of attractions and amusements. But it's the details, from the checkerboard tile floor to the quilted glass pepper shakers, that make a meal at Joe's a classic American diner experience. It's fun enough to make even a grumpy grownup feel like a kid again.

The Hottest Spot in Town

Salon offers more than up-do's, shampoos and perms

Photography by LISA FERNANDEZ
Editing by JOHN R. MCCUTCHEN

• Janice Vincent, the owner of Fashionette Beauty Salon, gives Linda Martinez of Cave City a spiral perm. The shop has served area residents for 22 years.

The smell of peroxide and the sound of laughter go hand in hand at the Fashionette Beauty Salon.

Owner Janice Vincent and workers Elsie Meredith, Connie Druen and Sandra Doyel welcome customers in with smiles and hellos. Dubbed the "Steel Magnolias of Kentucky" by the former superintendent of nearby Mammoth Cave National Park, their salon is no mere hair cutting place.

The tiny shop on Broadway in Cave City doesn't look like much from the outside, but inside is a room full of down-home women who care about their customers.

"My customers are my family," Elsie said.

Generations of families have come to the Fashionette for more than up-do's, shampoos and perms -- they come for the local news and gossip.

Conversations about who is ill and who is having a baby fill the room Monday through Saturday.

"We just talk about what's going on in town," said Sandra Doyel, a cosmetologist at the Fashionette.

Canesa Watkins, who lives in neighboring Hart County, drives 45 minutes to get to the Fashionette to have her hair done.

"I've gone to a place...because it's 15 minutes from my house and I've hated it," she said. "So I come back here because there's always good conversation and good company."

ABOVE • Eleven-year-old Jenny Mahoney of Cave City waits for her hair gel to set.

LEFT • A beauty magazine offers inspiration to Linda Martinez of Cave City as she anticipates her own transformation.

RIGHT • Lavawn Cross of Cave City gets her eyebrows waxed at the Fashionette Beauty Salon on Broadway.

BELOW • Cora Jessie,left, waits for her hair to dry as Connie Druen works on Jean Devore's hair. Kelly Mahoney, 9, watches the action.

RIGHT • Louise Craine of Cave City covers her newly coiffed hair before stepping out into a windy, rainy day.

No home, no car, no suitcase

A life on the road and the 'patience to walk alone'

Photography by NINA GREIPEL
Editing by ROBYN LARSEN

• Micaela Pablo Sanchez is a hard worker. "She's dependable," said Ruben Bautista, her contractor. "You see people come and go ... she stays." Farm workers get paid $50-$70 for workdays that sometimes last 12 hours.

Among the sweating bodies of Mexican migrants picking tobacco stands Micaela Pablo Sanchez. She is a small women, no more than 5 feet tall, but she works harder than many of her male co-workers.

Micaela, 45, came to the United States with her husband 3 1/2 years ago, but she has since divorced. She is from Oaxaca, Mexico, one of that country's most impoverished regions. Her third-grade education is typical for the daughter of a subsistence farmer in Oaxaca. It takes her 15 minutes to write several sentences that anyone with a high school education could write within a minute. But what she lacks in education she makes up in hard work.

Micaela has picked pumpkins in North Carolina and harvested corn in Indiana. In early October she was working on tobacco farms in Barren County on her way to orange groves in Florida.

Even though she misses her family, she said she likes Kentucky and its people.

"Kentucky is like Mexico, only the roads are better," she said.

She has no home, no car, no suitcase. She stays in houses provided by the farmers. She catches rides with fellow crew members to go from place to place. She stores her meager belongings in plastic bags.

She can make up to $300 a week, says Ruben Bautista, the Mexican responsible for arranging work between farmers and laborers. Most of her money goes to her three boys and six girls back home in Oaxaca.

To support them, Micaela endures fatigue, deprivation and loneliness.

"You have to carry on with your strength and you have to have ability and patience to walk alone," she said.

translation help by Matt Levine

LEFT • "They have told me I am too old to work, but I think while God keeps lending me strength and gives me life to work, I am going to continue to work a little bit more and go to Mexico," Micaela said.

BELOW • Micaela packed her belongings in plastic bags, threw them into the back of a pickup truck and moved from Cave City to Scottsville in less than a day. She says moving gives her a chance to see different places and meet new people.

ABOVE • Micaela and co-worker Prudencio Hernandez get comfortable in a farm workers' house in Scottsville. She knows there are better houses to stay in, but she likes the men she will be living with. "They respect me and take care of me," she said. "Nobody takes advantage of me here."

LEFT • Micaela and the crew of workers in Scottsville work quickly to bring the tobacco stalks in the barn for stripping. Rain was forecasted for the next day.

"They have told me I am too old to work, but I think while God keeps lending me strength and gives me life to work, I am going to continue to work a little bit more and go to Mexico."

MICAELA PABLO

More than just a boat ride

Green River ferries link rural communities

Photography by JASON HUNT
Editing by RODNEY CURTIS

• Ferrymen make an afternoon run across the Green River with one car aboard. The passenger, Johana Love, was commuting from her job to her house north of Mammoth Cave National Park.

The ferry trip across the Green River takes less time than it takes to smoke a cigarette. But it's a pretty ride.

Surrounded by the lush forests of Mammoth Cave National Park, passengers may catch a glimpse of the white-tailed deer and wild turkey that feed along the banks of the winding river..

Folks wanting to travel a north-south route through the park, whether they are going to work or just sight-seeing, can save about an hour of driving by taking the ferry. The little boats carry only three cars at a time, but the men who pilot them know they have a big job. Lives and property may depend on their vigilance.

"It's kind of like flying a jet airplane," said Ken Logsdon a ferry captain for 23 years. "As long as you're going along level, everything is fine, but there are a lot of things happening that are not visible to the eye."

Ken said an 18 to 20 foot rise in the water level is not uncommon, and that completely changes the character of the river.

At times of high water, logs and other debris can be a real hazard, according to ferry pilot David Hatcher.

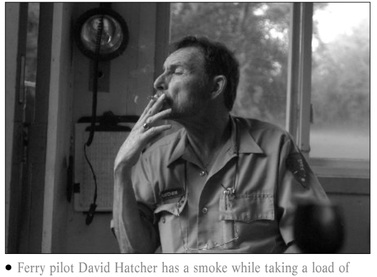
"I've seen all kinds of things floating down this river," Dave said, "from stoves and refrigerators to dead cattle. I counted seven basketballs in one day."

The park operates two of only a handful of rural ferries in the nation. On average 300 cars ride the ferries every day, heading from home to work or from the park to the rest of the world.

"We get people having babies, broken arms, legs, and heart attacks," said Ken, who pilots the Green River Ferry near the park's visitor center. "This is the shortest route to the doctors' offices and the hospitals."

The ferry may be a quaint attraction for tourists, but it's a daily necessity for area residents.

"You have heard the saying that the mail must go through," Ken said. "Well, we have to be here before the mail can go through."



• Ferry pilot David Hatcher has a smoke while taking a load of cars across the river. He'll finish the ride before he finishes his cigarette. The ferry provides a shortcut to the park's north entrance.

• After his eight-hour shift, ferryman David Hatcher paddles to his car on the north side of the river. Dave leaves the ferry on the south bank to make life easier for the pilot on the morning shift, who lives south of the park. The ferry runs from 6 a.m. to 9:55 p.m.

Main men on a mission

Leaks harder to find when elusive water seeps into caves

Photography by JAMES W. PRICHARD
Editing by ANDREAS FUHRMANN

• Mike Coomer rests on the bed of a pickup truck waiting for the natural gas company to arrive and locate their lines before breaking ground on a water main leak. The guys spent the previous couple days listening for line leaks late into the night and early morning as the company is losing significant amounts of water(90 gallons per minute in Horse Cave). J.R. Coffey and Merrell Saltsman, L to R in the background, talk with foreman Rodney Mills, rearview mirror.

ABOVE • Merrell Saltsman moves the backhoe into place to install a meter on a new house. He's been with the company nine years.

LEFT • Johnny Adwell works to get down to a service line leak in the Windy Hill subdivision early in the morning. Adwell has bee with the Green River Valley Water District for four months.

Silence surrounds them. Outfitted with orange headphones and long metal wands, the men wander the streets of Horse Cave listening not for music, but for water.

They are on a mission. Nearly 4 million gallons of water went missing last month. Is it several small leaks, or one big one disappearing into a deep cave? That's what they are trying to find out.

The next morning, they find and fix a leak that was contributing 20 gallons to the system's 90 gallon-per-minute loss.

The leak-busting team for the Green River Valley Water District is based in Cave City, but their real "offices" are the deep, muddy holes that pop up periodically in parts of five counties.

"I'm an outside person. I'd be a pain in the ass if I were inside," J.R. Coffey said with a chuckle. His muddy co-workers laugh, some nodding in agreement. "I used to work in a restaurant and I said 'no more.'"

Water main leaks in most towns are pretty easy to find: Look for the standing water. In this region, home to the world's largest network of caves, hundreds or even millions of gallons of leaking water can simply disappear underground.

As the mud from the morning's job begins to dry, they are off to fix another leak. The crew is also responsible for installing meters and tending 900 miles of water lines.

"I like the whole maintenance part," Coffey said. "It's easier to fool with. You take this leak. You dig it up, fix it and you're done. You hardly do the same thing day in and day out. You're always in a different place ... It's good job security because everyone needs water."

Farming Au Naturel

Couple raises organic vegetables year-round

Photography by DOUGLAS BENEDICT
Editing by JENNIFER C. CHRISTIANSEN

"The farm is us
and we are the farm,"

ALISON WIEDIGER

Paul and Alison Wiediger married on the front lawn of their 84-acre farm outside Park City. The soil has sustained their love and their livelihood.

"We're one of those couples who could literally spend 24 hours a day together, forever," said Paul, who gave up his corporate job with a ceramics company to pursue his love of organic farming. "This farm... is our life. We don't take vacations."

The couple raises 50 varieties of vegetables—including turnips, spinach and tomatoes—year-round in greenhouses, offering fresh food to customers even in winter. "The good news is you can grow 52 weeks a year. The bad news is you can grow 52 weeks a year," Alison said. "It's really tough to get away."

In the spring and summer, the Wiedigers sell vegetables at a farmer's market in nearby Bowling Green. During the winter, they hand-deliver produce to 125 homes.

"We have a different kind of relationship with our customers," Alison said. "They don't see themselves as customers. They are our friends."

The couple met at an organic farming conference in 1995. They married a year later and moved onto Alison's land, called Au Naturel Farm. Both have a passion for organic farming, and Alison gets excited about things like worms and the way moist soil squeezes between her toes when she works.

"The farm is us," she said, "and we are the farm."

FACING PAGE • Alison loves the feel of dirt between her toes. "The soil is alive," said Alison, who didn't wear shoes on her wedding day.

THIS PAGE • Alison closes the greenhouse windows at the end of the day to keep out wild animals looking for a midnight snack.

ABOVE • Alison shows off her latest crop—freshly-pulled radishes. During the winter, the Wiedigers deliver fresh vegetables to 125 customers.

TOP RIGHT • Alison works in one of four greenhouses at Au Naturel Farm. The Wiedigers are the first farmers in Kentucky to grow organic vegetables in unheated greenhouses year-round.

RIGHT • Alison puts away the tractor after tilling a field.

RIGHT • Alison pauses while planting spinach in the greenhouse. The Wiedigers grow 50 varieties of vegetables.

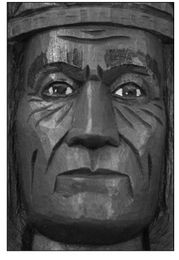
BELOW • Paul plants tidy rows of tat soi in the greenhouse. The Chinese vegetable is commonly used in stir-fry.

BELOW • Alison and Paul take a break while planting kale. "We're one of those couples who could literally spend 24 hours a day together forever," said Paul.

Sweet dream catchers

Concrete teepees captivate generations of tourists

Photography by LYDELLE ABBOTT
Editing by ROBYN LARSEN



RIGHT • This wooden carving watches over the beaded jewelry, belts, postcards and other trinkets in the gift shop at the Wigwam village, a motel in Cave City.

BELOW • Nathan Jernigan and his wife, Jeannie, have visited the Wigwam village for years. Now they bring their daughter, Michaela, and a group of friends from their church in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

For the past seven years former chemical engineer Ivan John has been taking care of a "piece of Americana that needs to be preserved."

"If there is no respect, this place isn't going to last," he said. "This place" is the cluster of 18 concrete teepees that has stood beside Highway 31W just north of Cave City since 1937. The Cave City Wigwam village was the second of seven built across America. The first was built in neighboring Horse Cave. The only other Wigwam motel that has survived is in Holbrook, Ariz.

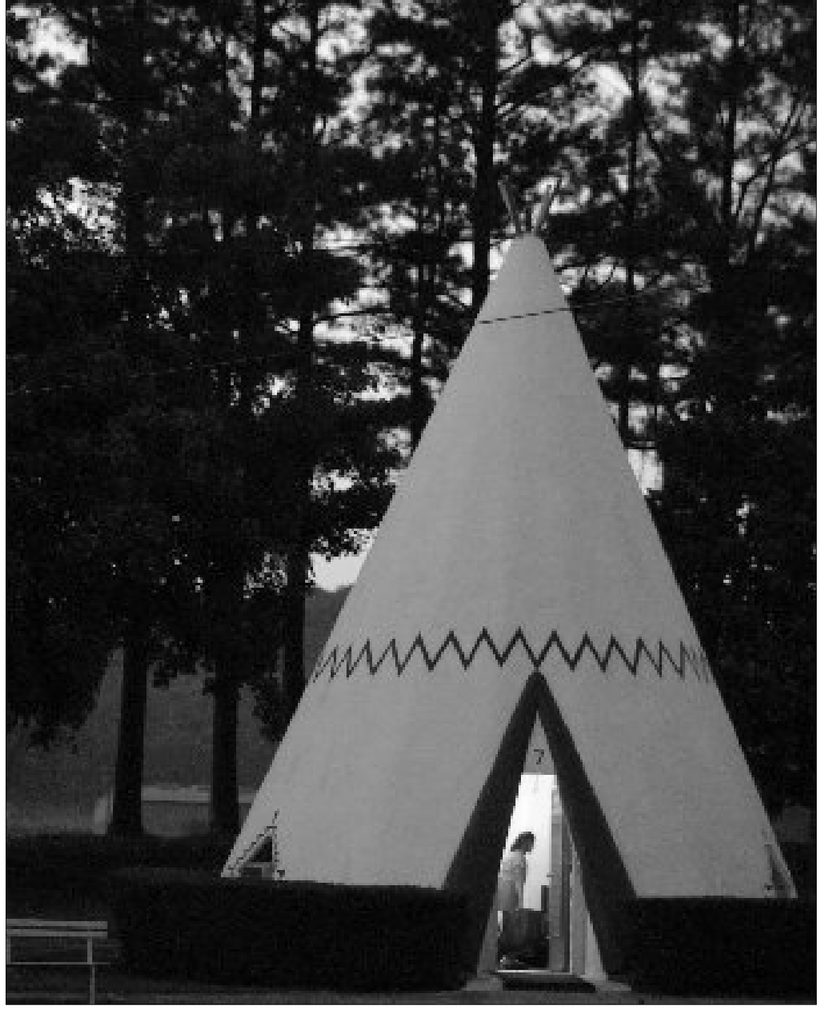
The Wigwam village has been the site of weddings, honeymoons and anniversaries.

"Someone was here for their 50th this past summer," Ivan recalled. During one week in early autumn, the guests included a family from Radcliff enjoying a "mini-vacation," a church group and two women who stopped while driving to visit friends in Tennessee.

The largest teepee houses the village gift shop, which offers postcards, beaded jewelry, belts, worry stones, dream catchers and miniature replicas of the teepees. The 15 guest teepees no longer have vibrating beds and coin-operated radios, but each has a private bath, air-conditioning, and cable TV. Teepees with two double beds cost $50 a night, and those with one bed are $40. The smallest two teepees were the men's and women's bathrooms, but they are now closed.

A group of families from the Stones River Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, Tenn., rented the whole village one night.

"At first we came because it's novel and quaint," said Nathan Jernigan of Murfreesboro. "But now we come because the kids absolutely love it."



ABOVE • Nathan played with his daughter Michaela and her friends late on an October night. "The kids absolutely love it," he said.

LEFT • After checking into the Wigwam Village with her family, Ann Soppeland checks out the concrete teepee that will be her home for the next two nights.

Living within the Budget Inn

A motel room is home to a family down on its luck

Photography by SHANNON GUTHRIE
Editing by RODNEY CURTIS

Home is a room with three beds, each just a foot from the other. The kitchen is a hot plate, and the dirty dishes are stacked in the bathroom sink. The playground is a black-asphalt parking lot.

This is Martha Liffick's home — the Cave City Budget Inn. But this home is not where her heart is.

"The motel is okay for adults, but not the kids," Liffick said. "It feels like we've been here for years."

Liffick, 24, is a mother of three with another child on the way. She lives at the Budget Inn with three generations of her family — seven people in all — ranging in age from 3 to 52. There is little privacy here, but plenty of hugs.

"It's like elbow to elbow," said Liffick's uncle, Lonnie Staples. "I like the way these kids have kept together. When they stick together, they have more strength." Staples, 47, also has a room in the motel.

After living in Georgia for several years, Liffick returned to her Cave City roots with her children, mother, brother and her brother's girlfriend. Low on money, able members of the family are looking for jobs. Liffick's highest priority right now is getting the kids enrolled in local schools.

Never far from their thoughts, though, is the dream of finding a new home. The family is looking for a house or trailer where adults can have their privacy and the kids can have a yard.

"It doesn't have to be a big yard, just a yard where T.J. can run," Liffick said, referring to her 3-year-old son. "He really likes to run."

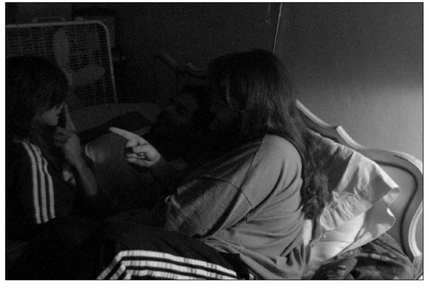
LEFT • Martha Liffick's children make the best of life in a cramped room in the Budget Inn Motel. Liffick says the worst thing about motel living is that her children have no place safe to play.

LEFT • A wet windshield becomes a slide for Megan Liffick, 6, and C.J. Bush, 5, at the Budget Inn Motel. The asphalt parking lot is Megan's playground since she moved into the motel with her family.

ABOVE • Martha Liffick and two of her children catch up on life in Cartoon Network. Liffick complained that the kids had nowhere to play.

LEFT • The door of Lonnie Staples' room stays open on mild-weathered evenings when his nieces and nephew play outside. His sister, Darlene Kinner, watches old movies with her brother often while also keeping an eye and ear on her grandchildren.

• T.J. Kruszynski, 3, gets a lift from family friend David Bush. T.J. can say "mom", "dad", and "duck." His mother said T.J.'s doctor suspects he could be mildly autistic. Although T.J. is surrounded by family, he often chooses to play by himself.



ABOVE • David Bush, a long-time family friend, gets Lonnie Staple's car ready for the road. "He's the best mechanic," Lonnie said. Three strokes and diabetes have forced Staples to depend on others to get things done.

FAR LEFT • Ameris Liffick gets a scolding from her uncle Aaron Allen, 22, and his girlfriend Bridgett Ludwig, 19. A sleep disorder keeps 9-year-old Ameris awake at night, and she was rowdy enough to wake her family in the next room.

LEFT • Megan Liffick, 6, discovers the last raindrops trickling off the roof of the Budget Inn. "It stopped, except for right there," Megan said after a romp in the rain.

A tradition in wood

Photography by B CORBIN
Editing by JENNIFER POGGI

Robert Stinson, a 71-year-old craftsman, is happiest in his work shed. Wood has been a part of Stinson's life for as long as he can remember. Woods surrounded his childhood home; Stinson can remember gathering firewood with his sister Willie Frances back when he was seven years old. He dropped out of school when he was in fourth grade to help fulfill the family needs. At the age of 15 and being the second oldest child in a family of 14 siblings, he worked as a moonshiner at night and was a logger for his dad during the day.

"From when I was 12 until 17 I was scared all the time watching for the law," Stinson said. "I felt that I had to provide for the family and having two jobs helped put food on the table."

For 31 years, Stinson worked along side his father and brother as a logger. Stinson asked his son, Ronnie, to take co-ownership in 1977 when his brother was killed by a falling limb.

TOP LEFT • Pat Matney, left, and Rober Stinson, right, say grace before they enjoy a home-cooked meal at their Park City home. This hutch is a family heirloom; it's been in Stinson's family for at least 100 years.

ABOVE • Stinson delicately sands in between the grooves of a cabinet at his workshop in Park City. He's been selling handmade furniture like this since 1992.

LEFT • Stinson recently spent several hours sanding this cabinet.

• Stinson proudly stands behind first rocking chair he ever built by hand, which he completed in 1992. The carved scene depicts Daniel Boone shaking hands with a Native American.

A post office on wheels

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN LOK
EDITING BY ANDREAS FUHRMANN

Kathy Garrett reached back and grabbed a package for her next delivery. From the rattle, she knew what was inside: important medicine for a senior citizen. For the past eight years, she has delivered the mail to families and businesses along a 60-mile route near Cave City.

Five days a week, she guides her right-hand-drive Saturn down the narrow, winding roads of Barren and parts of Hart and Edmonson counties. It's not unusual for goats or wild turkey to wander in front of her car, or for an excited dog to give chase.

Known as a "post office on wheels," rural carriers such as Garrett provide many of the services found in a post office. Her customers can buy stamps and money orders right from her car.

Garrett, 38, was raised near Cave City and her job has strengthened her relationship with the community.

"You build a bond with these people," she said. "They're truly an extended family. I like those close bonds."

Because many of her customers are in remote locations, they depend on her for important deliveries. "For some of them, we're the only people they get to see," she said. Garrett says that she finds comfort in knowing that people watch out for each other in rural areas.

"When you get in the country, you really have to rely on the kindness of others," Garrett said.

People at many homes, farms and businesses invite her in for lunch, a cool drink or conversation.

"She's great," said Judith Dennison, who was struggling with a broken foot. "Every time I get a package, she brings it inside for me. She's been good."

Though humble, Garrett recognizes that her job is special.

"A lot of people think what we do is drive around all day," she said. "But it's hard work. It's a lot of community service."

FACING PAGE • Weather is often a challenge for mail carrier Kathy Garrett. During the summer, she said, she gets a "mail carriers tan," where only one side of her body is exposed because of the hours she spends in her delivery car.

LEFT•Kathy Garrett makes deliveries in a right-hand drive Saturn, and must take care when reaching for the right bundle for her next stop.

BELOW • Oma Ray, 75, right, shares a laugh with Kathy Garrett during a package delivery to Ray's mobile home in Cave City.

ABOVE • A dog races to keep up with mail carrier Kathy Garrett's car on a stretch of rural road near Cave City. Garrett's 60-mile-long route covers Barren and parts of Hart and Edmonson counties.

"You build a bond with these people. They're truly an extended family. I like those close bonds."

KATHY GARRETT

ABOVE • Bervin Doyle, 71, greets mail carrier Kathy Garrett as she stops at his home in Cave City. Garrett, of Alvaton, Ky., says customers often wait outside for her to arrive with their daily mail.

LEFT • Postal carrier Kathy Garrett, center, stops to chat with customers toward the end of her 60-mile route near Cave City. Garrett said she enjoys the friendly relationship she has with many of her customers.

Enduring Love

Decades pass, illness strikes, but the spark is still there

Photography by SHANNON SAVAGE
Editing by JENNIFER C. CHRISTIANSEN

Elmo and Lucille Johnson met in 1946, and both say their love remains as strong as it was then. They have never fought, Elmo said, but their relationship has seen difficult times.Two years ago, Elmo was diagnosed with facial bone cancer. Surgery to remove the tumor disfigured his face. Throughout the ordeal, Lucille remained a loyal, loving wife.

Lucille, 75, said she has spoiled Elmo, 77. He doesn't mind.

"I love having Lucille and all those young nurses fussing over me," Elmo said with a laugh.

This is Elmo's second battle with cancer. About 26 years ago, he was diagnosed with leukemia and was told he had less than a year to live. His father died of the disease at age 66, but Elmo fought and survived.

Lucille said the cancers have been a learning experience.

"I should have been a doctor," she said. "We would have saved a lot of money."

The couple have kept their spirits high, despite the adversity.

On a trip to Louisville, for a check-up with doctors, their joking spirit was evident.

"Do you got your cane?" Lucille asked Elmo.

"No," he quickly replied.

"You forgot it?"

"You forgot to remind me."

ABOVE • Lucille cherishes a photo of her and Elmo taken in 1947, just before their second date. Both say it was love at first sight. They were engaged two months later.

RIGHT • During a visit to a Louisville clinic, Lucille told Elmo she was glad that his bandages could be removed.

TOP LEFT • Lucille holds up Elmo's pants as they begin falling down on his way to the doctor's office.

TOP RIGHT • Elmo prepares for a CAT scan at a Louisville clinic.

LEFT • Lucille steadies Elmo as they return to their car after a hospital visit. Elmo had a CAT scan after lumps were found in his neck earlier in the week.

Treating the town

Doctor's two-year stay turned into the practice of a lifetime

Photography by NATHANIEL CORN
Editing by ANDREAS FUHRMANN

ABOVE • William "Billy" Cassady waits while Dr. James Crews fills out paperwork. Cassady has been coming to Dr. Crews for 20 years from Park City.

RIGHT • Joe Jewell, a patient of Dr. James Crews for about ten years, gets a "Popsicle" exam. "There used to be an old cheese plant herein Cave City that he worked at for forty years," said Crews.

James Crews is a family practitioner with a big family: the people of Cave City. James is the only doctor in town, but his patients also come from Glasgow, Horse Cave and the surrounding countryside. They range in age from infants to a 100-year-old. James grew up poor in Tompkinsville and was the only member of his family to graduate from high school.

"I've been on my own since I was 11," he said. "Long ago I realized the only way out for me was education."

Working as many as three jobs, James paid his way through Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green. It was even tougher raising money for medical school. The easy part was convincing officials at Tulane University in New Orleans that he deserved to be there.

After his internship, a friend who was retiring from practice in Cave City persuaded him to take it over. James planned to stay about two years and move on. That was 31 years ago.

James said the key to being a good family doctor is providing patients with good service and being honest with them.

"I have kids who I delivered who are now patients of mine and I'm now seeing their children and some of their grandchildren," he said.

"Helping people to do better is the real reward. It's not the monetary gain."

James said his greatest accomplishment is his work as the chief of staff at Caverna Hospital, where he directed a major renovation that allowed for more outpatient services.

"I feel this is a gratifying thing for the elderly and for people not to have to go out of the county for medical care," he said. "I feel like I've contributed tremendously to the medical community."

(Still) Life On 'Concrete Alley'

'Who would buy an alien on Christmas Eve?'

Photography by COLLEEN CARROLL
Editing by JENNIFER POGGI

Cave City resident Chris Holder has a few nicknames for his creations: Lawn decor, garden art, ornamental lawn art, garden statuary ... even redneck art. One of Holder's gems is standing right outside his business on the 31-W Bypass: a 14-foot tall concrete rooster that slows some drivers to gawking speed.

Holder owns Coffey's Concrete Products, one of three businesses in Cave City that produce and sell "concrete critters," those friendly, rock-solid animal statues that reside in many a Cave City front lawn. All three companies -- Coffey's, Gracie's Trading Post and Alvata's Concrete Kriters Inc. – are within a one-half mile radius.

Local folk call it "Concrete Alley." The shop owners call it good business: Combined, they sell to clients in more than a dozen states and in Canada.

"Chris makes 800-pound Christ statues and life-sized deer, so I send customers over there," explained Alvata Woosley, owner of Alvata's Concrete Kriters, a wholesale concrete business just across the street. "We're kind of a magnet for each other. You come here for what you need, and then go on to Coffey's or Gracie's."

Coffey's Concrete Products has been in business for 25 years. The company produces items ranging from a redbird that sells for $6 to religious icons selling for over $1,000. Mr. Rooster goes for $1,800.

"I took a small family business and made it big," Holder explained. "Before there was I-65, we used to take 31-W from Bowling Green as a kid. I'd look out the window and always see the same view of statues and gift shops. I thought, whose going to buy these?"

Now Holder knows: Tourists.

"It's a novelty," he said, grinning. "You have to be original to be competitive to survive 'Concrete Alley.' Last year, we had a handful of aliens we painted a peculiar green, but it was Christmas Eve. Who would buy an alien on Christmas eve? So I went to the dollar store, bought some needle, thread, and red hats. I strung them up and everybody came by and said, 'How much for the Grinches?' I sold 13 for $75 each."

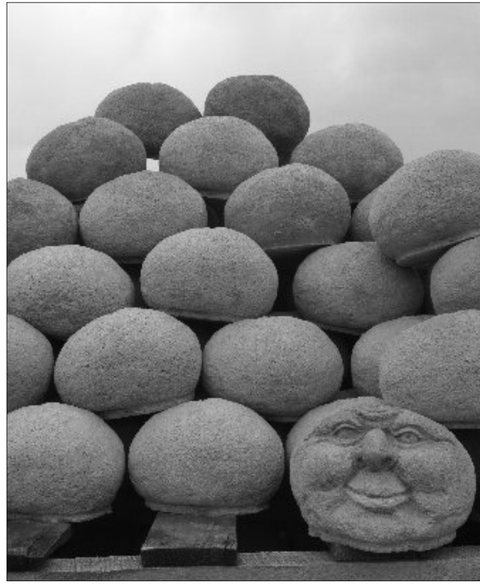
Making a concrete "critter" is hard work. (Everybody in this business pretty much "dies young," Holder joked.) Holder likens it to farming. He works seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day. His staff of up to 20 makes molds, mixes concrete, pours molds, paints and sells the statues.

Too expensive to buy, most of the molds are made on site – Holder will come up with an idea and hire a professional sculptor to create a statue, often gaining inspiration from popular culture.

Molds take a week to build and last about two years. After that, they start to lose their detail.

The peak sales season in Concrete Alley is Mother's Day to Labor Day. Things can get a little hectic inside Coffey's ... and a little wacky outside.

"We've almost had wrecks out there by the rooster," Holder said.



LEFT• Two sisters share secrets at Coffey's Concrete Products. This "Whispering Kids" statue sells for $35.

BELOW • "The smiling face sculpture is a hit and miss," says Alvata Woosley, owner of Alvata's Concrete Kriter's Inc.,"but the little squirrels do real well."

OPPOSITE PAGE • Katelyn, a popular "concrete critter" on the lot of Alvata's Concrete Kriter's, Inc., sits with Spanky, a living critter. "He's kind of a momma's dog," says Alvata Woosley.

The Heart of a Family

Peggy, John, and Reanna Nicole Poynter

Photography by ROB MATTSON
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

• Doting mother Peggy Poynter (at left) playfully wrestles daughter Reanna away from water dripping from the roof of City Hall, as firefighter Chris Adwell (second from right) shows off his Mustang to Peggy's husband, John Poynter, in front of the Cave City fire department building. "Everyone always asks, 'When are you going have another one?' I'd rather have one and give her some of what she wants, but all of what she needs," Peggy says.

"I love you too, Mommy." Every day those words—or their bouncing, wriggling, giggling preschool equivalents—transform the world for Peggy Poynter. Peggy is a firefighter and emergency medical technician with the Cave City fire department. She was named Rookie of the Year in 1995, then Firefighter of the Year in 1996. Peggy's husband John is also an award-winning firefighter: He brought home the Firefighter of the Year trophy in '97 and '98. Then the couple's first child arrived, and their universe began to revolve in a whole new way.

Reanna Nicole Poynter is only four years old, but she seems to fill every waking hour with a chatty, charming determination to grow up just like her mama. "She's got a wild imagination," Peggy said, "and she'll play 6:30 a.m. to midnight." That stamina comes naturally in the daughter of two such hard-working parents, but the gift of mimicry may be pure Reanna. When her mom or dad gets sick, the little girl goes into rescue mode: "She's the nurse," Peggy reports. "She'll come running down the hall screaming, 'Doctor! Doctor! I need my "*steficope*"! I need my medicine!"

Not all the affectionate moments in the Poynter household are so boisterous, however. The bond between mother and child may be strongest in the whispered moments of bedtime devotions. Kneeling at the family couch, Reanna begins the prayers. Together, mother and daughter quietly pray for John, working a week-long shift as an EMT in nearby Glasgow. Friends and other family members, especially Peggy's father, who passed away in January 0f 2000, are remembered. At last the two yield to weariness, and sleep. But both of the fireball Poynter women—the grownup and the growing girl—blaze with renewed zest come morning.

ABOVE • Peggy Poynter, left, drops off daughter Reanna with her baby sitter Margie Wilson before going on to work at Mammoth Cave.

LEFT • Four-year-old Reanna Poynter (left)kneels to pray with mother Peggy Poynter. Religion plays a large part in Reanna's life, even though her parents can't make it to church every Sunday. The family prays together often. "We try every night," Peggy says. "Sometimes, she'll start without us."

A delicate balance

Long separations hard on children, relationships

Photography by STEPHANIE OBERLANDER
Editing by ANDREAS FUHRMANN

Beth Kitchens' life is a juggling act. She has three children under the age of 5, a full-time job and a husband whose job as an electrician takes him away from home as long as five weeks at a time.

Beth has an associate's degree in banking and a bachelor's degree in general studies with a business emphasis. She is an assistant manager at Taco Bell in Cave City.

"Two college degrees and I'm working in fast food," she joked. But she said she enjoys the work because it is fast-paced and something different happens every day.

"If I didn't, I wouldn't do it," she said.

Beth lives in Glasgow, where she was born. She has moved all over the South with her husband, but they recently came back home to give their children a more stable environment. She wanted them to grow up around family and not just see their grandparents during the summer and on holidays.

While Beth works, her mother babysits 4-year-old Tabetha and a sitter cares for Zachary, 2, and Angel, who is 9 months old.

"It's hard on a marriage," Beth said. It's also hard on their children. Kitchens said Tabetha, who goes by "Tabby," doesn't like her mother to go to work, because she's afraid she'll be gone for a long time, like her father.

Beth said she hopes that someday her husband can find a good local job. Until then, she said, "I have to take it one day at a time."

FAR LEFT • Beth gives last-minute instructions to husband J.D., holding son Zachary, before the two head home after a lunch visit during her shift at Taco Bell. J.D. had just returned for the weekend after a five-week job in Shreveport, La.

LEFT • "I'm tired" Beth said as she paused near the end of the week.

BELOW • Beth has little time with son Zachary and Angel, 9 months, before she takes them to their babysitter.

From crowns to cattle

Retired dentist returns to roots

Photography by AMY C. ROSSETTI
Editing by LINDA L. RATHKE

A white Chevy pickup rumbles down the gravel path toward the main barn at Whitney Woods Farm. The door cranks open, and 64-year-old Sherman Ballou steps out ready for his daily chores, beginning with the counting of the cows.

Originally from Columbia, Ky., Ballou grew up on his father's farm with five siblings. Eager to set his own course, Ballou studied dentistry at the University of Louisville. He also met his future wife there. Sharon was studying to be an x-ray technician at the old general hospital. The couple married in 1961. Conducted by a justice of the peace, their wedding cost fifteen dollars.

In 1967 Ballou opened his first dental clinic. "We came to Cave City because we were looking for a place to practice dentistry and this little town didn't have anybody," Ballou said. With Sharon by his side, Ballou was busy immediately.

"In those days we charged four dollars to extract a tooth and seven dollars for a filling," he remembered. Five years later, Ballou purchased his first bit of farm land – 50 acres – and stocked it with a few head of cattle. "I just couldn't get away from it," Ballou said. "Farming came back to me. I retained my love for it."

Ballou retired from dentistry in the summer of 2002. Son Sheldon Ballou and son-in-law Jason Coomer have taken over his practice with help from daughters – and dental hygienists – Sally and Sara.

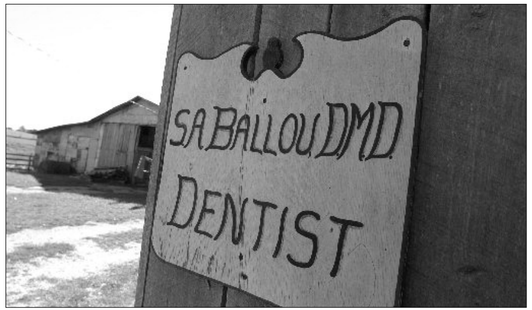
The retired dentist has become an even more active farmer. "I like it!" he declared. "I didn't want to sit down and do nothing."

But family remains at the center of Ballou's life. "Family's everything we've got," he said. "What else is there? Family – and friends and tractors," he added with a smile.

ABOVE • Dr. Ballou's son-in-law, dentist Jason Coomer, performs a mouth check on Dr. Ballou's granddaughter Sydney Hyatt, 7. Dr. Ballou opened his first dental clinic in 1967. His four children have followed him into medicine. "Makes me feel good," he said. "I never pushed them in that direction; they chose it on their own."

LEFT • Dr. Ballou was raised on the farm depicted in this oil painting by his wife, Sharon.

• Dr. Ballou removes a dead calf from his herd. "That calf got too big before he was born – probably suffocated during birth," the retired dentist-turned-cattle farmer says. "It can't be all good."



ABOVE LEFT • Sitting on the couch in their family room after dinner Sherman, left, and Sharon talk with their daughter Sally Hyatt, 34, while grandson Garrett Hyatt, 2, colors. "Families everything we got, what else is there? Family, friends and tractors," says Ballou.

ABOVE RIGHT • Hanging on the side of a barn is Ballou's first sign from his dentistry practice that his wife Sharon made.

AT RIGHT • Ballou's son-in-law, dentist Jason Coomer, performs a quick mouth check on Ballou's granddaughter Sydney Hyatt, 7. Dr. Sherman A. Ballou came to Cave City to open his first dental clinic in 1967. All of Dr. Ballou's four children have followed him into medicine. "Makes me feel good. I never pushed them in that direction, they chose it on their own."

FACING PAGE • "I don't think there's any better people than these old farm people," says Sherman Ballou, right. "Rural America is honest." Neighbor Otis Sturgeon, left, has been farming since he was seven years old. "He's the salt of the earth," Ballou says, "as good as gold."

Need direction?

Retired ranger still a guide on the road of life

Photography by JOSHUA BROWN
Editing by ANDREAS FUHRMANN

RIGHT • "They need my strong back," Coy Hanson says as he lifts heavy boxes of food into a truck.

Each morning, Coy Hanson wakes up at precisely 4. He reads the Bible, drinks a little coffee and has breakfast with his wife, Anna Katherine. He is usually out the door before 6 for his daily two-mile walk down Highway 70. Hanson makes the same journey every day. He passes the home of Tammy Eaton, whom he picks up for choir practice every Wednesday night. He passes houses he helped build and neighbors who wave hello. As the sun rises, he waves at each passing car and is usually greeted by a friendly tap of the horn.

He walks quickly because he is a man with places to go, people to help.

Hanson, 80, has had many titles in his life. He worked for more than 30 years as a national park ranger and tour guide, retiring in 1982 as head ranger at nearby Mammoth Cave National Park. But the titles that matter most to him are husband, brother, volunteer, World War II veteran, grandfather, church member, neighbor and friend.

Many people depend on Hanson. Each Friday, he baby-sits his two great-grandchildren. Once a month, he loads heavy boxes of food into a truck to be donated to families in need. Even when he plays golf each Tuesday and Thursday, he helps his regular partner, Bob King, who recently had a stroke, walk up to the green.

Hanson does many odd jobs for friends, but he refuses offers of pay.

"We live comfortably, and I don't need the money," he said. "I just don't believe in charging friends and neighbors for things I can help them with.

When asked to describe himself, he is predictably humble: "I'm like an old car: Everything makes noise but the horn."

Hanson said he looks to God for direction and derives joy from things as simple as seeing his grandson smile.

"I'll go where you want me to go dear Lord, I'll do what

LEFT • "I thought she was the diamond of the world when I met her," Coy Hanson said of his wife, Anna Katherine. After an all-too-common trip to the funeral parlor, they went to the local Dairy Queen for ice cream to lift their spirits.

BELOW • As Coy Hanson ends his weekly visit, he walks down the stairs with his great-grandson Peyton Mills, 2, in his arms. Peyton doesn't know many words yet, but he says "no go" over and over.

The Daily Grind

Monroe Brothers Sweet Feed Mill

Photography by BITA HONARVAR
Editing by LINDA L. RATHKE

It will take a moment for your eyes to adjust to the dim light as you walk into the Monroe Brothers Sweet Feed Mill in Cave City. The sweet aromas of molasses and ground grain hit you first, but once you can look around, the first thing you're likely to notice is J.Y. Monroe, one of two brothers who own the 47-year-old mill. He'll probably be sitting on top of a stack of 50-pound bags of custom-blended feed, or maybe taking it easy in the seat of his forklift, holding his stainless steel coffee mug.

Monroe will be surrounded by the clatter and buzz of machinery as his family and employees grind, mix and sort bags of feed for a steady flow of customers.

You'll also see Sandy Rogers, Monroe's daughter, who will one day take over the mill where she's been working for 18 years. She can be found bustling from one side of the work-room to the other as she measures precise amounts of oats, corn, soy husks and molasses, mixing everything to exactly the right texture and consistency – and doing it fast.

There's lots of lifting of heavy sacks and walking and pushing and carrying going on, all in a bulding that lacks air conditioning. It can be stifling, even in fall. A layer of dust from the grinding and mixing of grains covers everything, including the people, and floating dust fills the air.

At 73, J.Y. Monroe finds that his strength sometimes fails him.

"I can't do what I used to," he said. "I keep wanting to get up to do something, but I can't. So I gotta just turn around, walk away and grit my teeth."

Monroe credits his daughter and wife for much of the mill's success. Without them, it would be gone, he said. "They're keeping it alive."

• Dawn breaks over the Monroe Brothers Sweet Feed Mill in Cave City as employee Eldon Jennings arrives.

ABOVE • J. Y. Monroe hangs out in the office as his wife, Carolyn Monroe, 70, writes up an order for a customer. Because of his health, J.Y. can't do the all the labor-intensive work necessary to run a mill, so he supervises and works the forklift from time to time. "I can't do what I used to," Monroe says. "I keep wanting to get up to do something, but I can't. So I gotta just turn around, walk away and grit my teeth."

LEFT • Monroe, 73, operates a forklift while mill employee Carl Colston, center, helps Fowler Branstetter, left, load a supply of feed for Branstetter's dairy farm in Edmonton, Ky.

RIGHT • Sandy Rogers, 46, daughter of one of the mill owners, checks mixed feed at the Monroe Brothers Sweet Feed Mill for proper texture, and to make sure no lumps of molasses remain.

ABOVE • Eldon Jennings, an eight-year veteran of the Monroe Brothers Sweet Feed Mill, pushes corn through a trap door in a wagon and into a grinder. The corn will be mixed with other grains and minerals for animal feed.

RIGHT • Old parts and a chair seem frozen in time as they sit covered in cobwebs and grain dust in a loft above the grinders and mixers.

FACING PAGE • Monroe bends down to greet his cat, Tom, as he returns home from work.

Diversity by the busload

World travelers pause at Greyhound station

Photography by AMANDA ODESKI
Editing by LINDA L. RATHKE

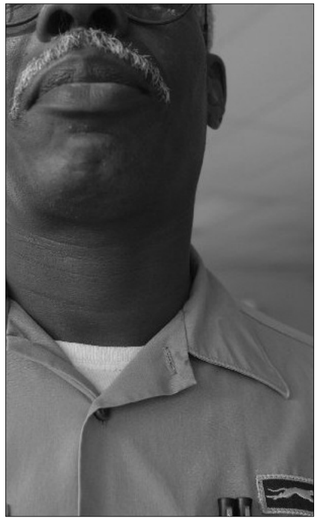
"I love it. I love the people. Sometimes you get one that's a little undesirable, but that's OK. It takes all kinds."

OPAL ROBERTSON

On one rainy October day two Amish families, a Chinese man, a Mexican couple, and a Romanian tourist have all gathered at the Greyhound Bus station on North Dixie Highway.

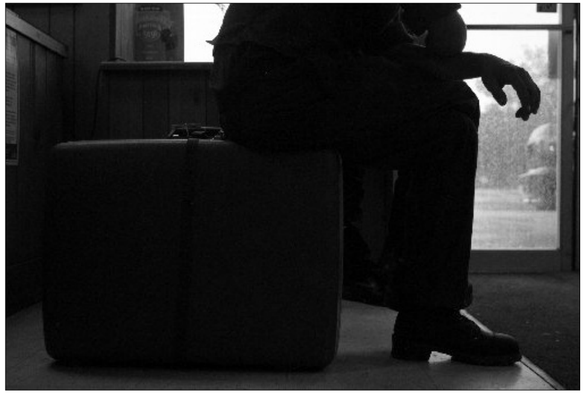
Retired Cave City resident Billy Paul Logsdon often eat his lunch at the station, then lingers through the afternoon, chatting with ticket agent Opal Robertson and whoever might be waiting for a bus. "You've got some characters getting on the bus, and you've got some characters getting off the bus," Billy Paul said. The station is open only until 2 p.m., but buses come and go at all hours, picking up passengers waiting outside. Billy Paul's "characters" come in all forms, from farmworkers to world travelers on a mission to see the famous Mammoth Cave – on a budget.

"I love it. I love the people," Opal said. "Sometimes you get one that's a little undesirable, but that's okay. It takes all kinds." Opal is the sole employee at the Cave City station. Dedicated to a job she's held for almost 14 years, she is undaunted by the commute from Tennessee and the six-day work week. But Opal says she doesn't mind: "It would be [a chore] if you don't like what you are doing, but I do."



ABOVE RIGHT • Driver Ricardo Crooke, a native of Atlanta, transports Greyhound bus passengers through Cave City.

RIGHT • Alejandro Batasav, Bar Tolo, Jose Hernandes, and Jose Ortiz (left to right) wait for the 6:55 p.m. bus at the Cave City Greyhound bus station. Originally from Mexico, the men now work on Kentucky tobacco farms.



ABOVE • Opal Robertson, center, a 14-year veteran of the Greyhound ticket counter, talks with two Amish men, John Yoder, left, and Emanuel Hostetler, right, while they wait for their bus.

LEFT • Emanuel Hostetler rests on his suitcase as he waits with his wife and daughter for their bus to arrive at the Cave City Greyhound bus station. The family was traveling to Louisville.

1976 / ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS
1977 / MAIN STREET
1978 / LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES, KY.
1979 / CLAIRFIELD, TENN.
1980 / BURKESVILLE, KY
1981 / BURKESVILLE, KY.
1982 / TOMPKINSVILLE, KY.
1983 / MORGANTOWN, KY
1984 / CELINA, TENN.
1985 / EDMONTON, KY.
1986 / SCOTTSVILLE, KY.
1987 / LIBERTY, KY.
1988 / RUSSELL SPRINGS, KY.
1989 / ALBANY, KY.
1990 / MONTICELLO, KY.
1991 / LAFAYETTE, TENN.
1992 / COLUMBIA, KY.
1993 / JAMESTOWN, TENN.
1994 / GLASGOW, KY.
1995 / SMITHVILLE, TENN.
1996 / CAMPBELLSVILLE, KY.
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1998 / FRANKLIN, KY.
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2000 / BOWLING GREEN, KY.
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PHOTO BY
ROBIN BUCKSON

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- **Josh McCoy**
- **Kelly O'Bryan**
- **Tyler Pelan**
- **Megan Resch**
- **Sam Simpkins**
- **Chet White**
- **Joe Wilkinson**

WEB SITE

www.mountainworkshops.org

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THESE PUBLICATIONS, WHICH ALLOWED THEIR STAFF MEMBERS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUTURE OF VISUAL JOURNALISM:

- ***The Chicago Tribune***
- ***The Columbus Dispatch***
- ***The Detroit News***
- ***The Durham Herald Sun***
- ***The Flint Journal***
- ***Handheld Magazine***
- ***The Idaho Statesman***
- ***The Lexington Herald-Leader***
- ***The Louisville Courier-Journal***
- ***The Knoxville News-Sentinel***
- ***The Rocky Mountain News***
- ***The Meridian Star***
- ***MotionPoint***
- ***Naples Daily News***
- ***National Geographic Society***
- ***The New York Times***
- ***The Palm Beach Post***
- ***Patuxent Publishing Co.***
- ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***
- ***The Portland Oregonian***
- ***The Providence Journal***
- ***The Seattle Times***
- ***The Spokesman-Review***
- ***Time Magazine***
- ***The St. Petersburg Times***
- ***The Washington Post***

PHOTO BY JUSTIN IDE

CAVE CITY, FOUNDED IN 1853 AS A TOURIST RESORT, is accustomed to having strangers roam its streets. So it was no surprise that the town's 1,880 residents welcomed The Mountain Workshops with wide arms, heaps of hospitality and bottomless cups of coffee.

About 120 photographers, picture editors, web editors, lab technicians and writing coaches spent the first week of October 2002 chronicling life in this town nestled along Interstate 65. Everyone learned quickly that there was much more to Cave City than tourist stops selling wooden toothpick holders and concrete yard statues. There were everyday people, in everyday situations, waiting to be captured with the click of a shutter.

Workshop Director Mike Morse told students they had a common goal: "We've all come together here to do one thing -- learn."

Karen Quincy Loberg, a photographer from California, did just that -- and she made a friend along the way.

Karen arrived in town a day before the workshop began, and she stopped at Magaline's Antique Mall downtown to look for old cameras, which she collects. The next day, when Karen drew her assignment from veteran photojournalist Dave Labelle's hat, the slip of paper had Magaline Meredith's name on it. It was destiny, Karen said.

Karen, like the like other photographers, spent five days with her subject, shooting the 450 frames allotted to each student.

By the week's end, photographers had taken about 22,500 images – some memorable, others not.

The Cave City Convention Center, temporarily transformed into a publishing house with the latest computer and photo equipment, was headquarters for the week. Each night, students gathered in the dark to see their images projected onto a cinema-sized screen, then critiqued.

After having used film since the program began in 1976, in 2002 the workshop was completely digital. That prompted grumbles from a few photographers, who had technical troubles with their cameras. But, in the end, the images were there -- and it was content that counted, even if it did take while to hit a groove.

Fielder Strain, of Tullahoma, Tenn., had two stories fall through the first day, both on local day care centers. The first center was closed. At the second, Fielder was ordered to leave the building or, the co-owner said, he would call the cops. Fielder didn't quibble. He left.

His third assignment, on a local dairy farm, was the charm. By the week's end, Fielder had solid images and his photo coach, Jonathan Newton, praised him for his work.

"I'm feeling pretty good," Fielder said, smiling.

• Chris Poynter
The Courier-Journal, Louisville, Ky.

PEOPLE
50 shooting participants
8 picture editor participants
and 45 workshop staffers

MILEAGE
Faculty and staff traveled 53,113.45 miles round trip to participate in the workshop, the equivalent of going twice around the world.
Source: MapQuest

FOOD
Almost 1600 cans of soda consumed
150 pounds of candy consumed

PHOTOGRAPHS
23,574 digital photos shot

935 images were toned for slide shows, nightly critiques and the book
Over 1200 photos published on the workshop's 2000 page web site
(www.mountainworkshops.org)

Over 20 hours of audio interviews were recorded and 12 hours of video made

More than 250 large digital high quality color prints were produced; and a gallery exhibit of 50 framed prints was completed.

HARDWARE
Approximately 85 Macintosh computers were used during the workshop.

1/4 mile of ethernet cable

Over 750 yards of duct tape used to control cables.

INTERNET
Published 50 stories (in two days) on the website, plus 8 major multi-media interactive stories (to include photos and audio interviews).

The web room had over 600 gigabytes of memory available. The final night of presentations required over 57 gigs of data -- that included students' work and an extensive multi-media presentation of several of the students' stories, audio interviews and video of the workshop week's activities.

“. . . It ain’t much of town
but it has a damn nice basement . . .”

THE MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS • 2002 • THE 27TH YEAR