

The Coot & Holler Gazette

Vol. 21 #1 Thursday
September 1, 2022

Progressive News of the Old Timers Reunion



Welcome

Beloved Friends, fellow TRA Members, OTR attendees, and OTR Virgins:

We have all experienced unprecedented and unexpected events since we last met together in 2019 for the 70th Annual Old Timers Reunion. When we said our “good-byes” after OTR 2019, no one would have guessed that it would be three years before we were able to gather again at our cherished event. Certainly no one would have predicted that OTR would have been cancelled in 2020 for the first time since we began to gather in 1950. We were all shocked when OTR was cancelled in 2021 just a few days before we were set to open the gate for OTR.

It is with great honor and excitement that I welcome you to the 71st Annual OTR! We have all been anxiously waiting for the moment when we could gather again and share in our love for caving and cave conservation. More importantly, we have all been waiting for the time when we could once again gather as friends to spend time in fellowship with one another during our annual “Family Reunion”. We now again have the chance to share stories around campsites, the bonfire, while enjoying a beverage at Cooters, during a relaxing afternoon in the river, while soaking in the new hot tub, or while waiting to hear one of the amazing musicians at OTR this year.

If this is not your first OTR, I’m glad that you have returned for another exciting event. I hope that you get quickly reunited with your old friends while reaching out to make new ones. If this is your first OTR, you are in for the experience of a life-time. First time attendees should make it a point to pick up an OTR Virgin Guide on Thursday at the Bonfire lighting, from myself, from Ben (OTR Vice-Chairman), or at Cooterville (campsite right behind Cooters Pub). Everyone should take some time to talk with some of our true “Old Timers” at the event and hear stories about our history and heritage.

Again, welcome to the 71st OTR!!! We are sure to have an incredible weekend celebrating our Family Reunion together during a weekend of friendship, fellowship, and fun.

Cheers,

Shack, Chairman OTR 2022



Thursday	6pm – 7:30pm, Opening Ceremony/Memorial Tribute, Memorial Garden
Noon, OTR opens and welcomes all cavers in celebration of our 71 st Reunion	8pm, Welcoming of OTR Virgins, Bonfire
Noon – 1am, Registration Open	8:30pm, Lighting of the Bonfire
Noon, Cooters Pub opens the taps for OTR 2021	Dusk (around 8:30pm OTR time), Movie, Crawl-In Theater
Noon – 4pm, OTR Museum Open	9pm – midnight, Grateful Gary performs, Pavilion
Noon, Sauna Opens	9:30pm, OTR Virgin & Sponsor Reception, Event Tent
Noon, OTR Survey Contest, Poster Contest, Scavenger Hunt, and OTR Trivia & Cave Quiz Contests begins, forms can be picked up at Registration	2am, Last Call at Cooters Pub (may close earlier)

The COVID-19 Committee encourages attendees to be proactive and take appropriate preventative measures.

- If you haven’t done so, please get vaccinated.
- If you feel sick before the event, please stay home. We’ll see you next year.
- If you feel sick at the event, please quarantine in your tent and keep it to yourself. Do **NOT** come to First Aid; we are not equipped to care for infectious disease. Do **NOT** go to the sauna or hot tub! Do **NOT** go into town. If you continue to feel ill, please consider leaving the site and going home.

In Memorium

Please join us in the Memorial Garden for at 6pm our opening ceremony and Memorial Tribute to TRA family and friends who have passed since our last Reunion.

- 2020**
Ralph E. Doerzbacher, Jr
Maurice Smith
Jeff Cain
Gordon Brace
Kimmee Byers Cunningham
Marieangeles Cervantes Williams
David Ray Tavener
Donnie Weaver

- Barry C. Baumgardner
Phil Okunewick
Dee Snell Whichard
Robert Elron
Jeff Burk
- 2021**
George Carroll
Sarah Daugherty
Charles A. Plantz

- Edward Ricketts
- 2022**
Cliff Lindsay
Robert E. Whittemore
Tom Lamp
Thomas Pollock
Lorriane Dahmer Burke|
Ed Taylor
Beth “Izzy” Acosta

What is OTR?

The Old Timers Reunion (OTR) is the largest gathering of cavers in the world. We meet annually over Labor Day weekend right here in our campground in Dailey to recount old friendships, develop new relationships with other cavers and to explore new boundaries of social life outside of the cave.

OTR started in 1950 and have met every year since, except during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021. Attendance has grown as high as 2,400 people for our 50th reunion in 1999. We now average around 1,500 members and guests.

The first ‘O’ficial’ Old Timers Reunion was held on Labor Day, 1950, at the Worden Hotel in Davis, West Virginia. Besides providing the opportunity for caving in the area, the event was organized to honor Felix Robinson. Forty-five cavers were in attendance and history had them visit eight caves over the weekend.

More to come in tomorrow’s Coot and Holler!

Welcoming of Virgins

At OTR 2011, we established a fun way to introduce our OTR Virgins to us as well as this event known as OTR to our OTR Virgins. The “Virgin Guide” was born and has become a tradition. Before the Bonfire lighting, at 8:00 pm, gather all of your Virgins and present them to the masses where they will be welcomed and issued their very own “Virgin Guide” that will have an overview of what we call OTR and some fun activities to complete and people to meet. After the Bonfire lighting there is a Meet and Greet at the Event Tent at 9:30 too!

Bonfire Lighting

After we welcome the Virgins, the first Bonfire Lighting of the 71st OTR will be lit with much fanfare. Gather round this fire and meet and greet your fellow cavers who we have not seen since OTR 2019. Hang out in the Pavilion and listen to some music, have a beer at Cooters or have a soak in the new hot tub before you head back to camp with a smile on your face that OTR 2022 has been kicked off!

ROOTs & TOOTs Social

Are you a ROOT (40 OTRs) or a TOOT (60 OTRs)? Hosted by the ROOTs & TOOTs Committee, the 5th ‘Almost-Annual’ ROOTs & TOOTs Meet & Greet is a gathering that offers fellowship in a pleasant central setting where we can tell tall tales of OTRs long past. If you are a ROOT or a TOOT, or just curious or appreciative to find out who is, join the celebration at Cooters Pub on Friday, starting at 1pm.

The Road Home

On December 30, 1970, twenty-eight year old John Denver got a five minute standing ovation at *The Cellar Door* in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington DC for the first performance of *Take Me Home, Country Roads*. Denver, Bill Danoff, and Taffy Nivert recorded it in January and on August 18 it was certified Gold. Since 1972 it has been played at every WVU home game and is one of the state’s official anthems. “The radio reminds me of my home far away” references the *Saturday Night Jamboree* on WWVA out of Wheeling, one of the few non-preacher, late night AM stations that late night travelers could hear back in the day. And in 1971, along with a couple of hundred cavers, the song took over McCoy’s Mill.

It was as close to a religious experience as the Old Timers Reunion had ever seen. Everyone knew the words, and we sang with tears in our eyes. Over and over again. It was so unifying and so moving that there had to be more. It was the dawn of the 70’s, and in the smoke and mirrors of the best caver party of the year all things were possible. We would write to John Denver and tell him about OTR. Surely he would come to the Mill. He would love to get high and party with so many kindred spirits. We had no idea that the song had originally been inspired by a drive through Maryland, or that early drafts had been about Massachusetts. That was irrelevant. We realized that Denver had created an anthem just for cavers, a sound track for the rest our lives. Fifty years later, driving down these country roads to OTR remains almost heaven.

Jim Kramer, 2022

Editor’s Note: It was a mere 21 years ago today, September 1, 2001, that Bill Danoff appeared on the Pavilion Stage with the Carpenter Ants for the 52nd OTR .

It was Twenty Years Ago Today

Madame Chairma'am
Coaxed her friends to play
To look back at what had come before
In preparation for the next reunion in store

The Lutz Rock had been set in place
To remember cavers who had left their trace
Tug-A-Rope-A-Ramas provided FUN
Root beer floats when day was done

Swell swill contestants vied for the prize
While Real Men of Adventure told their lies
Good Neighbors came to say hello
And limbo lines stole the evening's show

The Feast of the Mau Mau stretched river-wide
Until the setting sun left us all fried
It was a Moaning Lisa Fabulette time

Until the 12 Noon Monday chime
When Batman, Ackie, DJ Johnny and all the rest
Packed to leave until the next OTR fest



Jody, it is ok for you to have sex in my RV. #neverforget2004
Congratulations to Jared Embree on his COOT Year! He's been looking forward to it for the past two years and been very sad each time OTR was canceled. Here's to 20 years! ~Megan Gaskin

Happy Birthday Ray! ~Your 'Cooterville' friends

Join the National Speleological Society or pay your dues at the Speleobooks tent on vendors row.

Everybody's a winner...Glen T

Locked out of your car? Find Jim Perkins, Sauna Guy, for help

We are very sad to miss this years OTR due to some health issues We have attended over 50 from Franklin on.
~Phil Bikle' 11069 NSSL

Home Brewers Forum - The annual gathering of OTR home brewers will take place at the TAFO Grotto camp on Saturday beginning at 4:00 PM. ~ Bill Ridgely

It's Not too Late to get your Raffle Tickets. Stop by the Gate and sign up for a time slot to get your tickets for a chance to win OTR Swag and other Awesome Prizes.

Custom router work at the FART corral on Saturday 1:00 pm
~TRAWWG