

Notes of the President



John Graham

For the past five years the column *Notes from the President* has occupied the front page of this

Friends of State Parks newsletter. Regrettably we must change that tradition for this issue.

During his term as president John Graham has written inspiringly in each issue of his love for North Carolina and its "Naturally Wonderful" parks system but his term of office has been one of much more than mere boosterism of North Carolina's "Best in the Nation" Parks System. This issue coincides with the completion of John's term as president and should have included his final *Notes* column. John, we are sure, is too modest to have listed all his accomplishments and all the advances made by FSP under his leadership. Merely to catalog the achievements - his leadership role in lobbying to bring ranger pay in line with other law enforcement officers, the expansion of the Junior Ranger program, the financial contributions for particular parks' needs and to festivals, the introduction of parks related publications, etc - could certainly fill this page and perhaps this issue.

But above and beyond the specifics of these accomplish-

ments is the sense of purpose John has brought to the office. FSP's profile has been raised by John's initiative and energy. He has driven thousands of miles across the state from Gorges to Hammocks Beach to meet and get to know Parks' personnel and make them aware of the FSP mission of support. John built on the foundation of the FSP state-wide group to add, as chapters, those individual 'Friends' organizations associated with individual parks across the state and thus strengthen bonds and the influence of Parks supporters. He has spent countless hours at the legislature keeping our representatives aware of the importance of parks and, with his unique blend of sincere charm and salesmanship, developed productive relationships with many of them.

John is not able to contribute to this issue. His energies are diverted to battling the cancer which struck so suddenly. The thoughts and prayers of all Friends of State Parks members, of his many friends across the state and of all lovers of the outdoors, go out to him.



Chimney Rock: A Morse Family Legacy Continues

Contributed by Alice Zawadzki

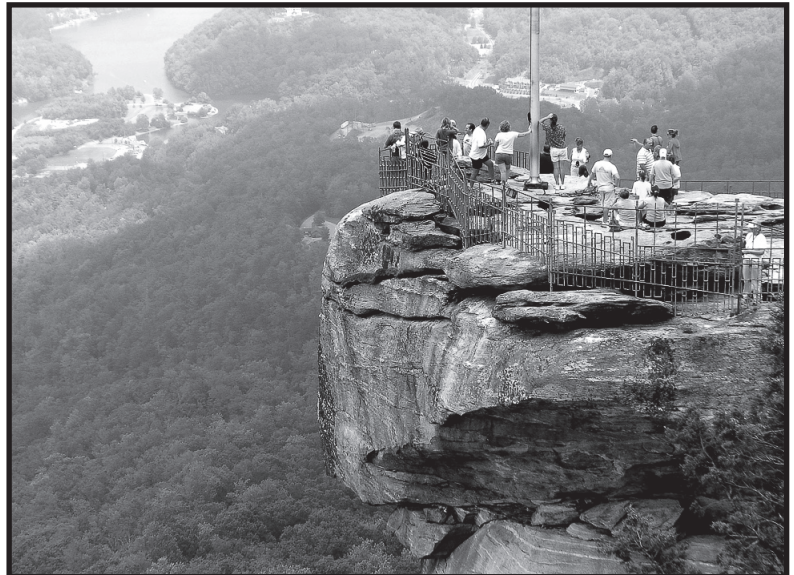
The last time I was with Hugh Morton we were standing next to the Mile-High Bridge at Grandfather Mountain overlooking that beige concrete box, the high-rise condominium on Sugar Mountain that changed the viewscape from Grandfather many years ago. I decided that it was okay for me to gently ask Hugh if that sight hurt him each time he looked at it. "Quite the contrary," he said, "Without that construction, we would never have the Ridge Law for our mountains." I was astonished at his response, but realized what a wise and gracious man he was. When Hugh Morton passed recently, I held that conversation with him very dear.

The last time I was with Todd Morse we were in Raleigh at a "One NC Naturally" gathering. He was more pensive than the first time I met him at the Global Botanical Congress in Asheville in 2000, where he gave a very enthusiastic presentation about his family's stewardship of the global treasure that is Chimney Rock. He said he had just learned that the "Ridge Law" did not protect mountains below 2400 feet, a limit which included the Lake Lure/ Chimney Rock district. His neighborhood, the special place on Earth that his family and neighbors have protected for almost 100 years, was being changed dramatically by others who did not share the same values. At that moment I knew that Todd Morse was set with a challenge. Change had begun in the sheltered place that his family protected for so many years. It was another example of the changes taking place all over this "Goodliest Land" of North Carolina.

It is so hard to understand that people, who are captivated by the beauty of North Carolina, buy land here and then proceed to degrade and re-grade it so that its beauty is lost forever. I began to say my prayers for this special place.

A few months later on my way to the mountains for a native plant weekend, I heard on the radio that Chimney Rock was for sale. In my heart, I knew that Todd Morse wanted to protect this priceless treasure forever, not only for his children, but for everyone. I prayed that this was a careful strategy to establish a fair price for this acreage and a means to gently rattle our quiet cradles so that we and our leaders would mobilize to

protect this heritage. In this day, it is too much to ask one family to be stewards of a global asset. It was so good to hear all the upset voices; I knew the hubbub was exactly what we needed. Thank goodness that the legislature in its wisdom had planned for such potentialities with COPs – Certificates of Participation. I knew that some of our Friends of State Parks members were not supportive of COPS in principle, but I was glad it was in place to the tune of \$50 million so that the legislature could tap into it to protect Chimney Rock and other treasures in the future. For me taking on a mortgage to protect an irreplaceable monument and global masterpiece makes sense. Having the cash set aside under the mattress would be better and cheaper, but politically unlikely.



The partnership *Photo: Bob Sowa*
between State Parks and the continuing Chimney Rock LLC staff that we were privileged to witness at our recent FSP Board meeting felt sacred and terrific.

Two Million Year Old Baleen Whale Discovered in Lake Waccamaw!

**Contributed by: Deborah Kelso, MaEd
Education Coordinator for the Friends of
Lake Waccamaw State Park**

A whale fossil two million years old has been discovered in Lake Waccamaw! The skull and jaw of a baleen whale is described by Vince Schneider, Curator of Paleontology at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, as a rare and significant fossil find. The jawbone alone is 76" in length!

Modern day baleen whales are the largest living creatures. They filter the ocean waters for food and, despite their huge bulk, leap clear of the ocean surface perhaps to attract a mate. Unlike their modern descendants early baleen whales had teeth and were more predatory.

The baleen whale found in Lake Waccamaw is thought to be from the Bear Bluff geological formation and is dated from the late Pliocene and early Pleistocene eras.

How did such a whale fossil discovery occur in Lake Waccamaw? This area of eastern North Carolina was once under the ocean and thus, creating the very unique habitat of the largest Carolina bay lake having a neutral pH. Swimmers, while in the warm waters of the lake, had known of old cypress stumps that tripped them as they walked back to their pier. One afternoon, while swimming and walking around the shallow areas, a swimmer stubbed a toe on what felt like rock became and curious. Wave

action had moved sand from the limestone formation over the last few years to reveal what looked like rock or fossilized wood. While it possessed the color of wood, yet it was shaped strangely. A member of the Friends of Lake Waccamaw State Park came out to snorkel and take underwater pictures, which created great interest.

It was time to find whom to contact about this large discovery. The Lake Waccamaw State Park Superintendent

was contacted and some fragments were taken to the North Carolina Forestry Museum in Whiteville. The NCFM took pictures and sent them to the NC Museum of Natural Sciences via the Internet.

What followed was a great cooperative effort headed by Vince Schneider. The whalebones were carefully excavated by a team of divers from the Under Water Archaeology branch of the North Carolina Cultural Resources assisted by the NCFM, Lake Waccamaw State Park Superintendent & staff and the Friends of LWSP.

The dig has continued throughout summer and it is hoped that the whale will become an adventurous educational display for Lake Waccamaw State Park visitors to enjoy.

Lake Waccamaw is designated by the state of North Carolina as an "Outstanding Resource Waters" due to it's endemic species of fish, mollusks,



Photo: Vince Schneider

snails, good water quality and recreational uses such as swimming, boating and fishing. The whale fossil is not the only important discovery in Lake Waccamaw. Some years ago an ancient dugout canoe was discovered and excavated.

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- Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas @ \$19.95 (\$15) + \$2.50 S+H = \$22.45 each
- North Carolina State Parks: A Niche Guide @ \$14.95 (\$12) + \$2 S&H = \$16.95 each
- Jawbone Trail Cookbook @ \$10 (\$7) + \$2.50 S&H = \$12.50 each

Note: FSP members prices in parenthesis

Name: _____ City & Zip _____
 Address: _____

Haw River Happenings

Haw River State Park is in the early stages of development. Now up to 1200 acres with land acquisition continuing and several recent large purchases, the Master Planning process has begun.

The Friends of Haw River State Park has helped the park:

- by the purchase of native plants to replace plantings at the Summit Environmental Education Center.
- by working with the Native Plant Society on tending gardens.
- by soliciting workers for the first invasive plant workshop and removal day on September 20, 2008
- by planning and staffing for the Park Open House on October 5, 2008.
- and by providing ingredients for the stew to be served at the nearby Reidsville Street Fair. The Conference Center Kitchen Staff make a mean stew!

Great things are under way at Haw River. Check out our website for more information. www.FriendsofHawRiverSP.org

Meetings ...

The next Friends of State Parks board meeting will be our Annual General Meeting, at which the new slate of officers will be elected. It will be held at Jordan Lake, October 25th. Meeting to commence at 11 am. All are welcome.