



*In One Place, the Best of the Mountains*

## THE MEDIA ROOM

December 25, 2008

### News Releases

#### **Chairman of the Board Lucius B. Morse's Statement Regarding the Sale of the Park**

**January 29, 2007**

I had a conversation with Governor Easley several months ago regarding the sale of Chimney Rock Park that was very persuasive and enjoyable. So, as my brother-in-law Yogi Berra said once, "Thank you for making this day necessary."

In 2004, my son Todd and I recognized that the world had discovered Western North Carolina, being one of the finest places in the world. Property values were rising rapidly, causing us to rethink estate problems and our futures.

Todd and I had a meeting with Lewis Ledford, Director of the Division of State Parks and Recreation. Lewis brought maps of Hickory Nut Gorge and shared some of the thinking about this area becoming a State Park. Thus began the discussions leading up to today.

Also, thanks to Dumont Clarke of Moore & Van Allen and David Wiggins, our auditor and partner with Dixon-Hughes. They helped guide us through some very emotional times.

My emotions and feelings run deeply, starting in 1945. As a boy, I remember three rainbows together over the valley, a view from the old Cliff Dwellers Inn. With walking the trails and more, so started my learning and love for here. With a fear of heights, I crawled up the stairs to the Chimney on hands and knees. Later, I rode a construction bucket to the top of the elevator shaft. Same fears, but fun.

My wife Bonnie and I have enjoyed decades here together, the seasons, picking apples and blackberries, walks in the woods, staying in the Lodge out on the back porch, listening to the night bugs of fall, the owls and sights and sounds throughout the seasons. Every trip I have made to CRP, nature always presents me with a surprise.

We loved to be out in the Park, talking to our guests. I am not known for my short stories and assume everyone shares my love and passion for the Park. Thank goodness Bonnie would remind me occasionally that the Sun does go down and the Park does close soon.

Todd and Melinda were married here on top of the Chimney, creating such wonderful memories. Our families have been here along with so many of our dear friends. They all concur how special this place is.

All of this would not have been possible were it not for our exceptional associates through the years and present today. To them, my humble thanks for being so much a part of this and making my life so fulfilled. You are and always will be so very special to me.

Special thanks also to my step-son Steve Mahfood, who was General Manager during the early 1980s and left us with our Interstate Highway Standards Bridge across the Rocky Broad River as well as being helpful during these negotiations.

At our favorite event, our Annual Easter Sunrise Service, a minister mentioned in his sermon that the Morses do not own the Park, God does. The Morses are just stewards of the land. I talked to him later and assured him that our family has always felt this way.

And of course, I would like to acknowledge the contribution my son Todd has made, not only during the two decades of managing the Park, but for such good prior counseling throughout the years. He will be leaving at some point with the best record of stewardship of all.

We are here to announce the changing of the more than a century of stewardship by the Morse family to the fine people of the State of North Carolina. I wish you God's speed in the future stewardship of the Park. It has and will continue to be an awesome, humbling and rewarding responsibility you are entering into. Perhaps there is a touch of divine intervention in all of this.

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