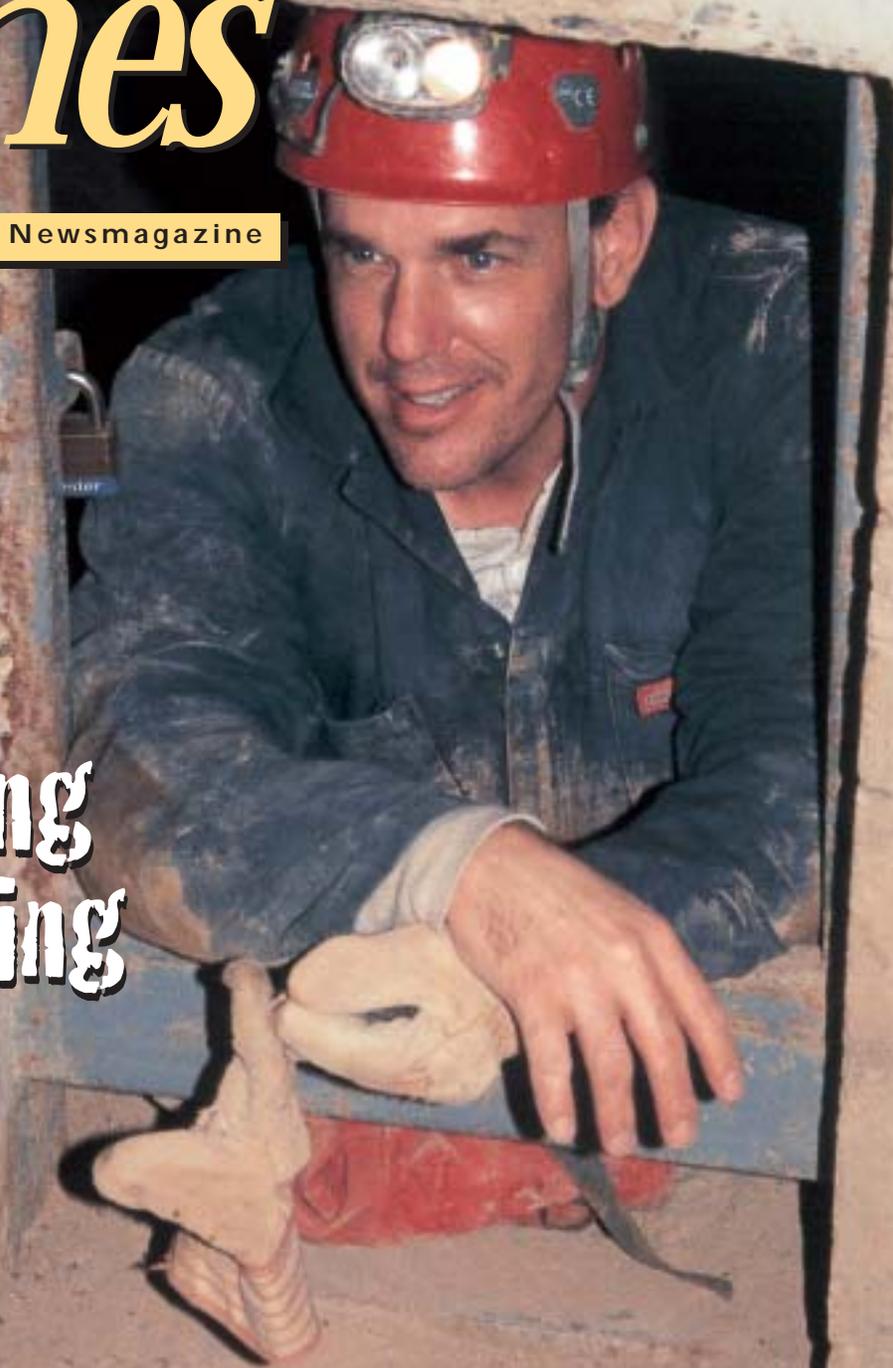


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Penn *Lines*

Your Cooperative Newsmagazine

**A Craving
for Caving**



PennLines

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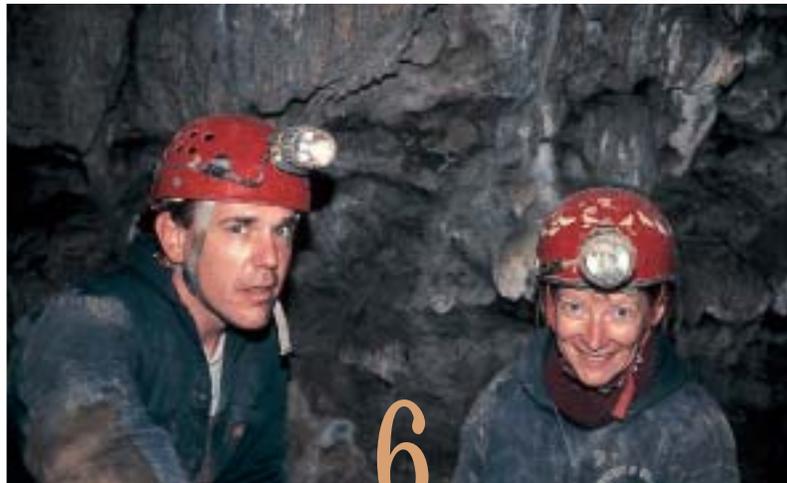


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Wriggling through sticky clay and unlighted crevices, this spelunking couple adventures underground for a glimpse of history

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Underground Paradise

For those who don't want to contort themselves into pretzels to explore uncharted, underworld passageways, electric cooperative service territories also feature several commercial show caves



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ABOUT THE COVER: Getting an up-close look at formations no other human has seen before makes caving exciting, contends electric cooperative consumer George Bange. Photo by Adam Heggenstaller, PREA.

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COMMENTARY

Playing Hydropower Politics

by Frank M. Betley

President & CEO

Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA)
and Continental Cooperative Services (CCS)



Achieving stable and affordable wholesale power rates for local electric distribution cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey has

been one of the primary objectives of Allegheny Electric Cooperative (Allegheny) since 1945, a role that has increased in importance with the advent of electricity deregulation.

To help cooperatives gear up for electric utility customer choice, Allegheny in recent years has reorganized and cut overhead costs by 50 percent, reduced power rates significantly and formed a strategic alliance last year with Soyland Power Cooperative (Soyland), a fellow generation and transmission cooperative from Illinois. The name of this new alliance is Continental Cooperative Services (CCS).

One of the very important power supply benefits CCS-member Allegheny provides to Pennsylvania's electric cooperative consumers is purchasing power generated by federal hydroelectric projects located along the Niagara and St. Lawrence rivers in upstate New York. Both are operated by the New York Power Authority (NYPA).

Since CCS-member Allegheny began buying it in 1966, this so called "NYPA power" has saved electric distribution cooperatives in Pennsylvania more than \$270 million compared to the cost of buying the same power from other sources. In 2000, for example, NYPA accounted for approximately 10 percent of cooperative energy needs, but only 5 percent of cooperative power costs.

Electric cooperatives and other utilities in Pennsylvania are able to get a share of NYPA power because Congress has recognized both the St. Lawrence and Niagara hydro projects as regional facilities. The federal license for St. Lawrence, in fact, provides that a "reasonable portion" of its output must be made available to neighboring states, with the amount negotiated (presently set at 8.5 percent).

Niagara power is actually governed by a federal law, the Niagara Redevelopment Act. That statute entitles not-for-profit electric cooperatives and legitimate municipal electric systems — within economic transmission distance — to first right, or preference, to 10 percent of Niagara generation. CCS-member Allegheny has rights to Niagara power through October 31, 2003.

As things stand now, Pennsylvania receives an allocation of 47.9 megawatts (MW) from the Niagara Power Project and 20.3 MW from the St. Lawrence Power Project. Out of this, CCS-member Allegheny and its member electric cooperatives in the Commonwealth receive nearly 42 MW (41 MW from Niagara and 1 MW from St. Lawrence). Most of the St. Lawrence portion goes to three private power companies (GPU Energy, PECO Energy and PPL Electric Utilities) with the remaining Niagara power delivered to 10 municipal electric systems — Berlin, Elwood City, Ephrata, Grove City, Hooversville, Kutztown, Lansdale, Lehigh, Schuylkill Haven and Weatherly. Incidentally, CCS-member Allegheny handles all contract negotiations, billing and transmission arrangements for Pennsylvania utilities that receive NYPA power in our role as NYPA Bargaining Agent for the state.

However, because 50-year operating licenses for St. Lawrence and Niagara are coming up for renewal (in 2003 and 2007, respectively), New York state legislators and congressmen have launched a campaign to eliminate out-of-state NYPA power shipments. The

reason for this action is simple — pure economics. In the competitive electric generation marketplace today, NYPA hydropower can be produced and delivered at relatively low cost. New York, naturally, wants to keep more of the power within its borders. Feeling political heat, the NYPA Board of Trustees is currently studying the issue.

In our battle to maintain the Keystone State's share of NYPA power, CCS-member Allegheny and electric cooperatives are fortunate to have the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) assume a leading role. Over the past 60 years, PREA has proven itself time and again as a political force to be reckoned with.

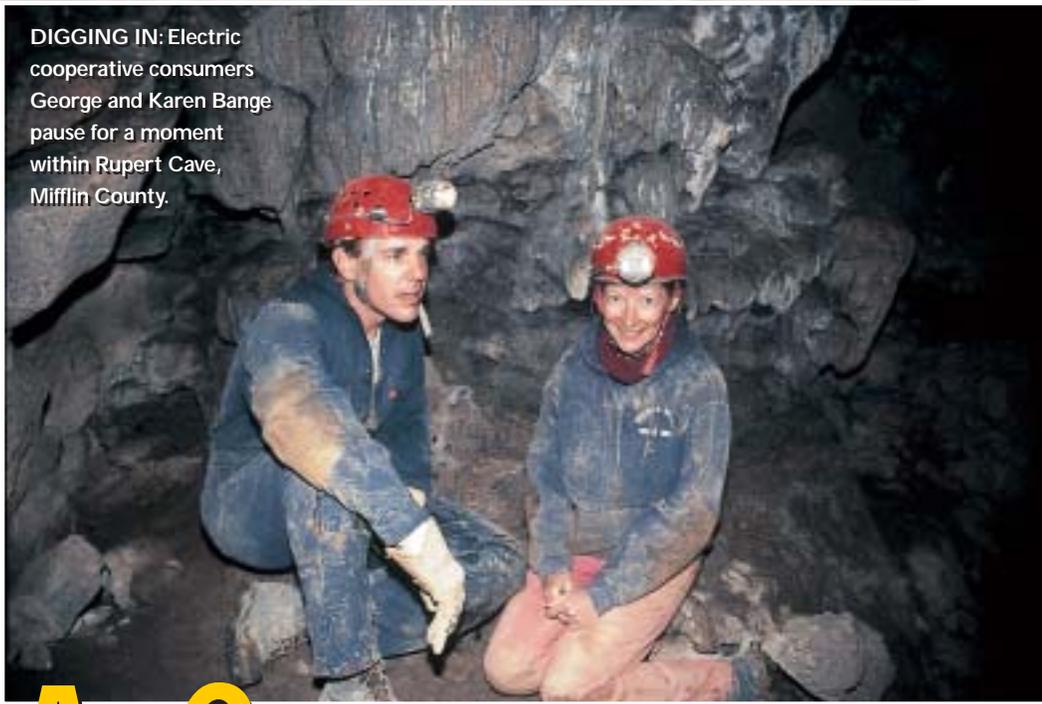
On NYPA, PREA has gone on the political offensive in a big way, securing signatures from Pennsylvania U.S. Sens. Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, as well as 18 of the Commonwealth's 21 U.S. representatives, to a state congressional delegation letter. Copies were sent to NYPA officials, the Pennsylvania Governor's office and parties from six other states that also receive NYPA hydropower. In short, the letter urges the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to keep NYPA power deliveries at current levels, effectively putting both NYPA and FERC on "political notice" — changes are unacceptable.

Preserving Pennsylvania's NYPA allocation is as much about politics as power supply. But for electric cooperative consumers, the bottom line is the same — millions of dollars annually.

The economic impact of a NYPA power "shut off" would almost certainly hit rural areas of Pennsylvania the hardest — something PREA will be emphasizing in our follow-up discussions with Congress. *Penn Lines* will keep you apprised as this issue moves forward. 💡

Betley has served as president & CEO of PREA and CCS since 1997. PREA is the statewide service arm of electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey; CCS is the not-for-profit power supply organization created last year from the strategic alliance of Allegheny Electric Cooperative, which serves Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and Illinois' Soyland Power Cooperative.

DIGGING IN: Electric cooperative consumers George and Karen Bange pause for a moment within Rupert Cave, Mifflin County.



A CRAVING FOR CAVING

Putting themselves literally “between a rock and a hard place,” two spelunking enthusiasts adventure underground for a glimpse of history

by Adam Heggenstaller
Assistant Editor

Wriggling on her stomach through sticky clay, Huntingdon, Pa.-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative consumer Karen Bange forces her way into a narrow corridor in Rupert Cave, Mifflin County. Disregarding tinges of claustrophobia, Bange uses her toes to push her body deep inside the two-foot fissure, her headlamp cutting a thin beam through the subterranean darkness.

With pink coveralls soaked in red-brown mud, Bange emerges from the constricted passage and enters a

kitchen-sized room, training her light on dozens of thousand-year-old stalactites and stalagmites that sparkle like large icicles in the light.

“Welcome to the Earth Room,” says Bange as she unfurls from the prone position. “It’s a little tight getting in here, but the formations are just too beautiful to pass up.”

Mud in the Blood

For nearly 20 years, Bange and her husband George have literally put themselves between a rock and a hard place to explore the underground world. After friends introduced them to organized caving, the Banges have made squeezing

into holes in the ground their passion.

“Several aspects make caving unique,” affirms George. “There’s the biology, the mineralogy, the geology. But even more is just the wonder of it all. Getting an up-close look at something that took millions of years to form is what excites me.”

In 1996, the Banges purchased the property surrounding Rupert Cave and now spend much of their time at the site, making improvements and locating new passageways. Since Rupert Cave was first discovered sometime in the late 1800s (etchings on the walls date back to the

1890s), several sections have been heavily vandalized. Wanting to preserve the natural resource, the couple has worked to scrub off spray paint and repair broken stalactites and stalagmites.

“It’s a labor of love,” admits Karen. “We’ve got mud in our blood. Every time we go into the cave we find something we hadn’t noticed before.”

This year on Earth Day, that “something” turned out to be a never-before explored room full of pristine formations. A few weeks before while guiding a Boy Scout troop through the cave, George noticed a small passageway jammed with clay. Returning later with digging tools and curiosity, he excavated the corridor and discovered the appropriately named Earth Room.

“There were formations everywhere,” remembers George. “I couldn’t put my hand down without it falling on one. I was in awe just thinking I was the first person to see this.”

Protecting a Piece of the Past

The Banges point out that the majority of Rupert Cave’s 7,000-foot span once looked like the Earth Room, filled with speleothems (see sidebar, page 8) hanging from the ceiling and rising from the floor. But a century of exploration left

(continues on page 8)

Strolling Through an Underground Paradise

For most folks, commercial “show caves” offer the perfect introduction to subterranean exploration. Unlike the wild, relatively primitive corridors preferred by grotto members like the Banges, commercial caves are lighted and expanded to allow visitors easy passage.

While show caves are popular among all age groups, they can still be rocky and rough so sturdy footwear, like work or hiking boots with aggressive treads, is recommended. Because the year-round temperature of Pennsylvania caves remains in the 50s, a light jacket is also a good idea. And of course, anyone venturing underground should take a flashlight.

Nine show caves in Pennsylvania are open to the public, with three tunneling through electric cooperative service territories. Indian Caverns and Lincoln Caverns, located in Huntingdon County, and Coral Caverns, Bedford County, are steeped in geologic, natural and local history.

Harold “Bear” Wertz has been through “every square inch” of Indian Caverns, located near Spruce Creek, since he began guiding tours 63 years ago. Wertz’s parents opened the cave to the public in 1929, leading to a lifetime learning about its history.

“The Algonquin and the Mohawk Indians used the caverns as a winter shelter and a council chamber 400 years ago,” explains Wertz. “We found the grave and remains of a Mohawk inside the caverns along with about 500 artifacts.”

Wertz also notes that local 19th century outlaw David “Robber” Lewis used Indian Caverns as a hideout and on his deathbed admitted to stashing more than \$20,000 in gold somewhere within its passages. Numerous treasure hunters have searched Indian Caverns for Lewis’ stash, but the gold remains unfound.

Along with the local legends surrounding Indian Caverns, several natural aspects appeal to spelunkers. Among the hundreds of

speleothems filling the caverns is the largest flowstone formation in Pennsylvania. In other rooms, minerals luminesce in the underground darkness and a smooth formation juts from the wall emitting a musical tone when rapped with the fist.

Just south in Huntingdon, Ann Molosky operates Lincoln Caverns, discovered in 1930 during the construction of U.S. Route 22. While Indian Caverns gives cavers a lesson in history, Molosky uses Lincoln Caverns to educate visitors on scientific and environmental issues.

“Almost everything we do at Lincoln Caverns is centered on education,” she stresses. “One of our goals is to teach people to respect and protect caves.”

Tours of Lincoln Caverns focus on geology, supported by the thousands of intact speleothems that continue to form. Working with several Boy and Girl Scout troops throughout the northeastern U.S., Molosky has developed geology merit badge programs to help young spelunkers understand the cave environment.

“Our cave has a relatively short history and we don’t have any legends to tell about it,” she notes. “But because we have such a wide range of formations that are so well preserved, we can give visitors a really good lesson in speleology.”

Preservation is the key factor that draws visitors to Coral Caverns, discovered in 1928 in Manns Choice. This cave is the only one in the world containing a fossilized coral reef.

“We offer a very good example of the Devonian period of science study,” explains owner Bill VanDeventer, “which dates back 400 million years ago when Pennsylvania was still under the sea.”

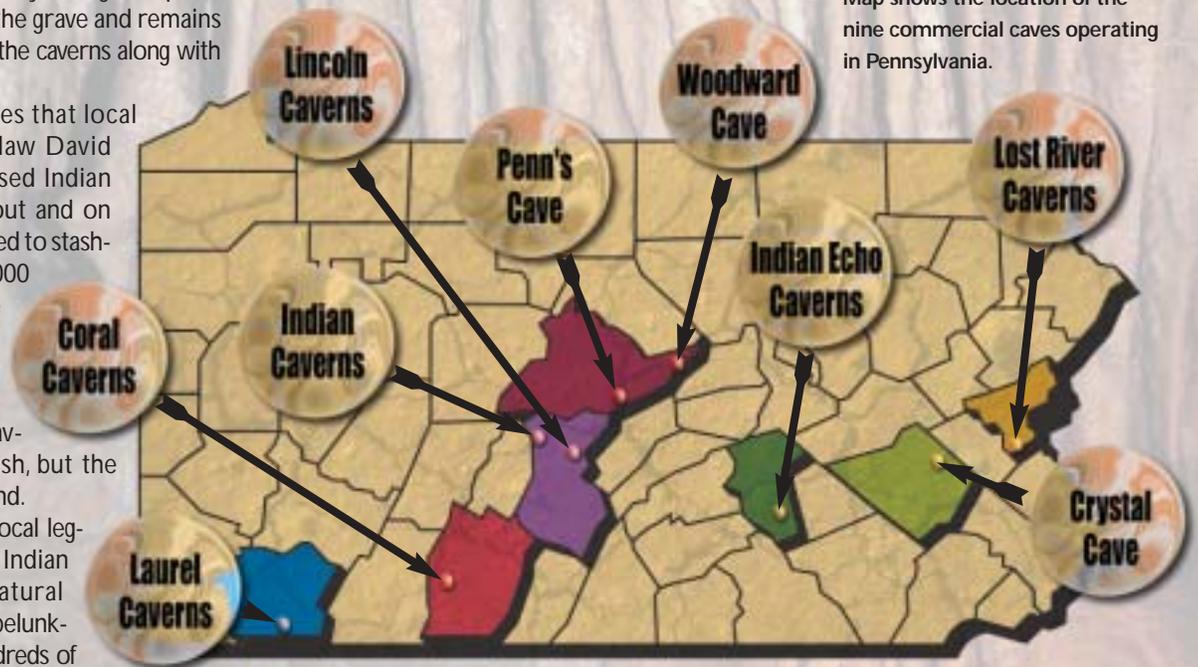
The natural history surrounding Coral Caverns has prompted several colleges and universities to include the cave in geology curriculums. A popular destination for photographers, Coral Caverns’ visual appeal was recently included in a commercial promoting Pennsylvania tourism.

“Coral Caverns is a very special cave,” concludes VanDeventer. “But every cave is unique in its own way. You really have to visit them to appreciate their beauty and significance.”

For more information on Indian Caverns, call 814/632-7578 or visit www.indiancaverns.com. For Lincoln Caverns, call 814/643-0268 or visit www.lincolncaverns.com. You can reach Coral Caverns at 814/623-6882 or via www.coralcaverns.com.

— Adam Hegginstaller

Map shows the location of the nine commercial caves operating in Pennsylvania.



(continued from page 6)

many delicate formations, ones that took the earth's groundwater eons to build, in ruin.

The couple now focuses on preservation efforts and keeps the cave's entrance locked. Only a limited number of groups are now allowed to explore the underground passageways, particularly the nearly untouched section discovered in 1987 that constitutes the majority of the cave.

Along with several local National Speleological Society caving clubs, called grottos, the Banges are working to spread the message of cave preservation to the public. Part of this effort includes contacting landowners who are often reluctant to allow caving on their property.

"Many times landowners think that if they open their caves up they will have problems with people coming around at all hours, or someone will get hurt and then file a lawsuit," explains George. "Grottos cooperate with landowners to eliminate these problems and make it easy for them to keep a cave open."

He points out that grotto members have lobbied to amend the Pennsylvania Landowner Liability Act to protect landowners from lawsuits that may result from cave exploration. Grottos also respect landowners' rights to restrict access to a cave on their property.

"Cooperating landowners can make any rules regarding cave access they want, like opening the cave only during the day on weekends, and grotto members will adhere to and enforce these rules," maintains George.

He adds that grotto members, at a landowner's request, will often gate the entrance to a private cave to enforce restriction. Many times private caves have been used as dumping sites and members will remove garbage in exchange for the chance to explore.

"Grottos are always looking for new caves and want landowners to know that cooperation results in a win-win situation," says Karen.

How To Get Involved

Joining a grotto is the best way to begin caving, advise the Banges. Caving is a sport with some inherent danger and grotto members can teach beginners

important skills necessary for a safe and fun trip.

Many times specialized equipment is needed to enter and explore a cave. Grotto members are willing to share this gear with new members. In addition, grottos have access to caves not open to the public and organize trips to these locations almost weekly.

For more information on caving in your area, or if you are a landowner who would like to open your cave to explorers, write to the National Speleological Society, 2813 Cave Ave., Huntsville, AL 35810. You can also reach them by phone at 256/852-1300 or check out their Web site, www.caves.org. 

Soda Straws, Bacon Rinds and Popcorn



Soda Straws (stalactites)

generally form in pairs and when they grow together the resulting formation is called a column.

Sometimes water will flow down only one side of a stalactite, depositing crystals in a thin, drapery-like formation known as a "bacon rind." Bacon rinds, common in Pennsylvania caves, are usually transparent.

When mineral-laden water deposits calcite down a cave wall or across a floor, the result is a "flowstone." Growing to magnificent sizes, flowstones can resemble icy waterfalls and are often referred to as "frozen Niagaras."

The true beauty of any cave depends on its "speleothems," or formations. The creation of speleothems actually begins above the ground, as rainfall trickles through grass, leaf litter, soil and surrounding carbonate (limestone) bedrock. Minerals are slowly dissolved by the percolating water, seeping through holes and cracks until deposited in crystalline form on the walls and ceiling of the cave.

The formation of speleothems is a slow process, affected by temperature, humidity and the amount of minerals and acid dissolved in the rainwater. Speleologists (those who study cave formations) agree that it takes about 120 years for a speleothem to "grow" one cubic inch. Most of speleothems you see in a cave are thousands of years old.

Speleothems are surprisingly delicate — responsible cavers are generally careful not to touch them. (Skin oils are detrimental to the formation process, as water will not deposit particles on an oily surface.)

The most common speleothems are stalactites and stalagmites. Stalactites form as water carrying calcium carbonate leaves a ring of calcite on a cave's ceiling. Calcite is deposited drop-by-drop, forming a hollow tube called a "soda straw."

Eventually, the tube becomes plugged. Water then flows down the outside of the soda straw, forming a stalactite. Stalactites commonly grow up to 10 feet.

Stalagmites are formed when water dripping from the ceiling deposits calcite crystals on the floor. More rounded than stalactites, stalagmites often have a splash cup at their tip. Stalagmites and stalactites



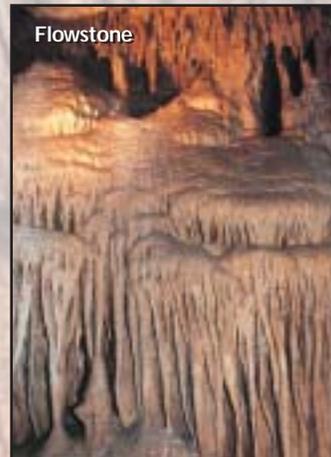
Cave Popcorn



Bacon Rind

Water trickling into a cave is sometimes so saturated with calcite that the crystal simply falls out of the solution. In a process similar to the making of rock candy, "cave popcorn" then forms. Cave popcorn grows in clusters and is sometimes called "cave coral."

— Adam Heggstaller



Flowstone



Building A Better Bathroom

by James Dulley
Contributing Columnist

Next to kitchens, bathrooms (especially master baths) consume the most energy and water in a home. However, by making simple design improvements and selecting the right products, you can make your bathroom much more energy efficient. Luckily, many of the newest, most efficient products on the market also provide the best comfort.

When remodeling a bathroom, the first item to consider is how you will heat it. This is somewhat complicated because bathrooms are used most heavily early in the morning and right before bedtime, and only sporadically during other times.

Because of this, consider a combination of radiant heating devices — wall and ceiling heating panels, cove and electric floor warming units. Radiant heat is gentle, quiet, comfortable and, most importantly on a cold morning, quick.

A wall or ceiling radiant panel provides heat without chilly breezes — it is just like walking into the sunshine. Because the panels operate only when needed, you can keep the bathroom cooler other times, which results in energy savings. (It is difficult to accomplish the same effect with forced-air heating units.)

Electric floor warming radiant heat provides the ultimate comfort when you step out of a shower. It is ideal for use under decorative ceramic tile which tends to hold heat for slow, continuous release.

Since a radiant floor does not provide rapid heat like wall or ceiling panels, consider putting these systems on a timer. Have them turn on only during

normal high use times in the morning and at night.

Towel Warmers, Showerheads, Vents and Toilets

If you have ever considered installing a towel warmer, there are many attractive home-size models available that plug into a standard wall outlet. (If you are tearing out the walls during your remodeling, you can hard-wire them in.)

Towel warmers come in brass, real oak and chrome and are designed to mount on a wall or on door hinges to save space. Using one lets you lower the bathroom air temperature without feeling chilly.

Many folks add a whirlpool or hydro-massaging, multihead shower when remodeling. Some five-head showers use a small pump that recirculates warm water to reduce the energy needed to heat it. If you will use a single showerhead, select a low-flow model. Most new special filtering heads that remove chlorine with a KDF element also save water.

Also make sure to select a super-quiet combination vent fan/light. If you tend to forget to switch the vent

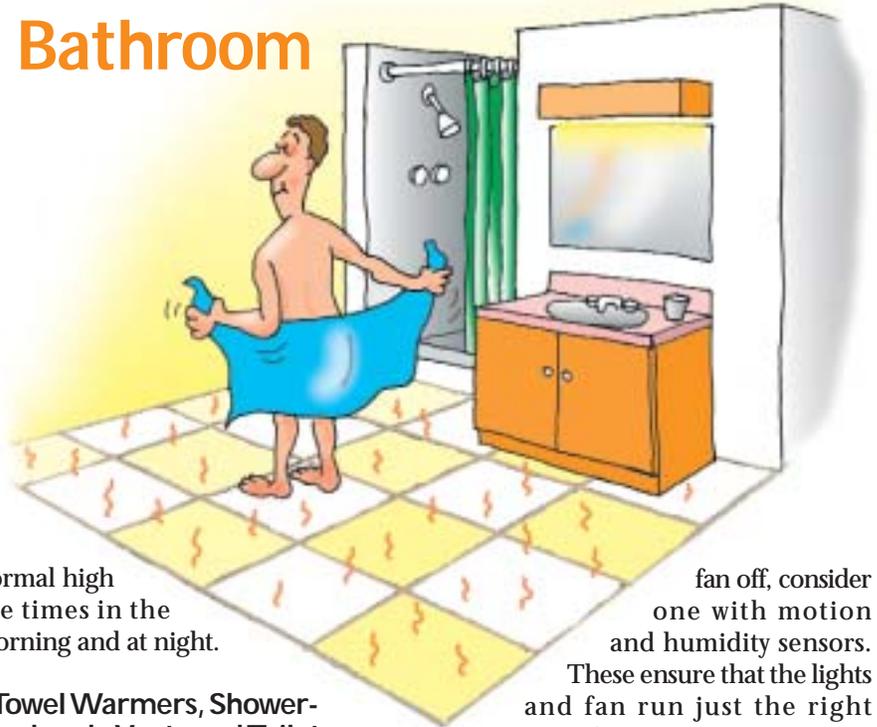
fan off, consider one with motion and humidity sensors.

These ensure that the lights and fan run just the right amount of time.

If you get up often at night, consider a vent fan that also has a built-in night light. Many new models even use decorative and ornate beveled glass to complement the fanciest decor.

In addition to using water, a toilet can consume energy in the winter. Each time you flush, incoming cold water draws heat from the bathroom. Newer toilets, which use very little water, help curb this heat loss. 

For more information on this subject, request Dulley's "Utility Bills Update No. 910," which includes a buyer's guide of 14 manufacturers of efficient/comfort bathroom products, such as radiant heating, towel warmers, unique showers, whirlpools, toilets, quiet vent fans and ceramic tile. Send your request to: James Dulley, c/o Penn Lines magazine, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244. Please include \$3 and a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope. Or for quicker turnaround, check out www.dulley.com via the World Wide Web.





A Twist on Tradition

by Kitty Halke
Contributing Columnist

If you want to break out of the Thanksgiving dinner "rut" without trampling on time-honored traditions, a few simple ingredients found in your kitchen can give side dishes like sweet potatoes and cranberries fresh appeal.

Fancy Sweet Potatoes, packing a cream cheese surprise, will please any palate while the tangy, sweet Orange-Cranberry Relish not only tastes great but looks spectacular when served in a dark green, deep blue or charcoal-black bowl.

Root Vegetables from the farmer's market or your garden provide a delicious alternative to traditional corn or green beans — a perfect accompaniment to roast turkey or any meal served on a blustery late autumn day.

Kitty Halke is a cooking professional and freelance writer from rural Pennsylvania. Send recipes and comments to her in care of: Penn Lines, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266.

ORANGE-CRANBERRY RELISH

- 2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries (no need to thaw)
- grated rind of 1 large fresh orange
- 1/4 cup orange juice

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard (Coleman's) dissolved in 1 teaspoon cold water
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar

Place cranberries, orange rind, orange juice and sugar in a heavy saucepan. Bring just to boiling, then reduce heat and simmer gently for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in dissolved mustard and vinegar. Cool completely, then refrigerate for at least 24 hours before serving. (This can be prepared up to two weeks ahead, covered and refrigerated.) Makes about 1-1/2 cups relish.



ROOT VEGETABLES

- 4 medium (2 cups) carrots, cut into julienne strips
- 2 medium (2 cups) turnips, cut into julienne strips
- 1 medium onion, sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1 medium rutabaga (2 cups), cut into julienne strips
- 1 small acorn or butternut squash, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 can (10.5 oz.) condensed beef broth
- 2 teaspoons firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh or equal amount dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- salt and pepper to taste

Place all vegetables in greased casserole dish or roasting pan. In a small bowl, combine broth, brown sugar, parsley, rosemary, salt and pepper; pour over vegetables. Bake in 350 degree oven for 1-1/2 to 2 hours, or until vegetables are fork-tender. May be prepared early in day and refrigerated before cooking. Makes eight generous servings.



FANCY SWEET POTATOES

- 40-oz. can sweet potatoes, drained and mashed
- 16-oz. can pumpkin
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1-1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 8-oz. package cream cheese, cubed
- 3 egg whites
- 7-oz. jar marshmallow crème

In large saucepan, combine sweet potatoes, pumpkin, orange juice, margarine or butter, cinnamon, salt and cloves. Heat thoroughly, stirring frequently. Stir in cream cheese, then spoon mixture into lightly greased 2-quart casserole dish. Bake in 350-degree oven for 20 minutes. Beat egg whites until soft peaks form; gradually add marshmallow crème, beating until stiff peaks form. Spread over potato mixture with spatula. Bake an additional 12 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Serves 12.





RURAL REFLECTIONS

Penny Yoder
Harleysville, Pa.
Sullivan County REC

Blue Moon Rising

This year, November is capped off by a “blue moon” — the second full moon of the month — which occurs on the 30th. What do blue moons have in common with our 2001 “Rural Reflections” contest? For starters, if you want to be eligible for one of our five \$50 year-end prizes this year, don’t wait until the next blue moon. That won’t take place until July 2004.

To be entered, send your snapshots by November 16 to: *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, please include your name, address, phone number and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

Nathan Scott Thompson
Seward, Pa.
REA Energy

John Price
Everett, Pa.
Bedford REC



Mrs. Charles Vanzile
Westfield, Pa.
Tri-County Rural Electric

