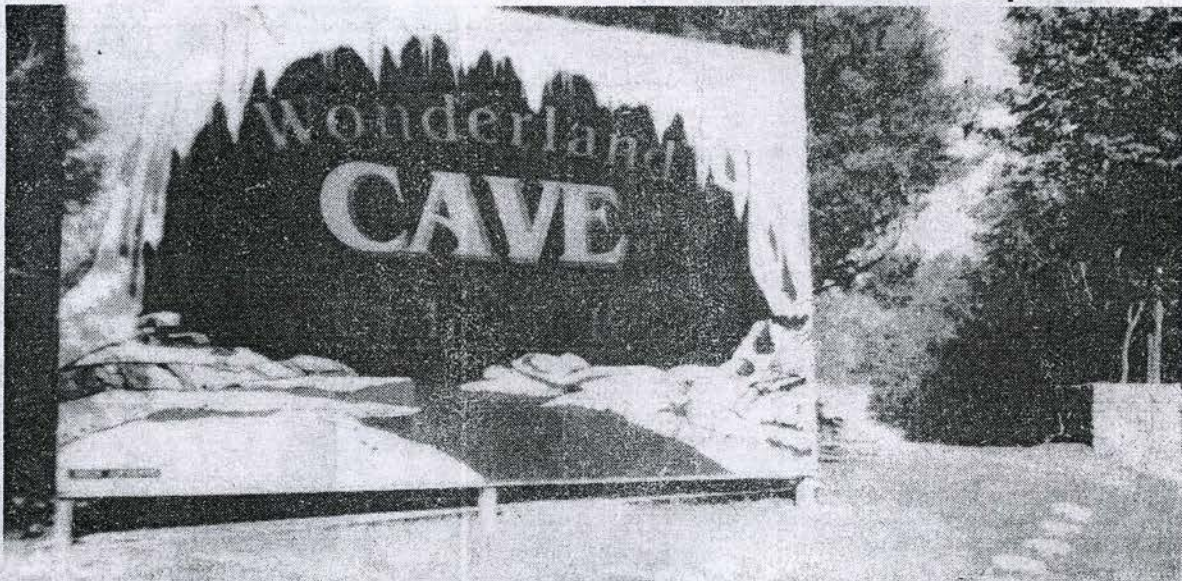


Dancing under the ...ground



1930s Wonderland Cave poster



A florescent sign announces Wonderland Cave and Club's new facelift.

Wonderland Cave reopens music, memories of the past

By CATHY DALTON
Daily Democrat Staff

BELLA VISTA — Wonderland Cave, resort nightclub attraction of the early days of Bella Vista, will again open its doors to late night rev-

elers on Thursday.

Wonderland Cave, which provided an unusual setting for dancing and a night out, was one of the Linebarger Brothers' drawing cards during the

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summer getaways to old Bella Vista. Prior to the cave's opening, dances were held at the old dance pavilion on Lake Bella Vista and a platform was built out over the lake for dancing as well.

With the advance of the Depression and World War II, resort vacations and dancing days waned, and Wonderland Cave became the target for vandals who frequented Blowing Springs and the area around Lake Bella Vista. As late as last year, a steel door sealing trespassers off the property was torn off the cave entrance. Wonderland Cave's popularity as a meeting place hasn't changed.

A preview night at the cave Thursday will be for press reviewers, business representatives, and Chamber of Commerce members.

Wonderland Cave and Club will be officially open to members and guests Friday, July 29. Owners Jim Fielding and Tracy Milton say they have sold more than 1,000 memberships to the club, "and we haven't started to solicit them, yet," Fielding said.

A 15-piece orchestra will be on hand during preview night and tours will be held during day hours.

Wonderland Cave and Club will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m. weekdays. Fridays and Saturdays the cave will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 a.m.

Milton said staying open until 5 a.m. is a direct service to members and guests.

New city and county ordinances in Washington County, Rogers, Springdale and Fayetteville have prevented clubs from remaining open past 2 a.m. "Those were city ordinances though, and this is

county," Fielding said. "If we have to change our hours though, we'll be compromising."

Dress is casual at the cave, with live bands playing every Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Specials will be publicly announced.

Milton said the entire cave has not undergone renovation, but the dance floor was repaired and the bar was rebuilt.

Fielding and Milton, two young entrepreneurs currently living in Bentonville and Rogers respectively, said that purchasing and renovating the cave was just something they thought about after seeing the cave. "We worked at it, decided what we wanted and did it," Milton said.

The renovation and reopening of Wonderland Cave was announced April 19 but Milton said work on cleaning the cave began around March. Construction was initiated May 1.

"Vandals aren't a concern now," Milton says. "Everyone has been supportive and stood behind us on this venture."

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