

THIS & THAT

FROM STAFF & AP REPORTS

Vicksburg cave life to be featured in re-enactment

The Siege of Vicksburg ended July 4, 1863. But the campaign, the siege and cave life in Vicksburg will be re-enacted Nov. 5-6 at the Raymond battlefield.

The Vicksburg Campaign Re-enactment is sponsored by Friends of Raymond and Stanford's Mississippi Battery of Civil War re-enactors.

The caves are replicas of the ones that civilians carved into Vicksburg's loess bluffs in the spring and summer of 1863 to protect themselves from Union artillery shells.

The caves, which will be inhabited much as they were in 1863, are at McPherson Ridge on the Raymond battlefield.

A firsthand account of cave life is described in the diary of Mary Loughborough, wife of a Confederate officer at Vicksburg. In 1864 she published "My Cave Life in Vicksburg."

For information on the re-enactment, e-mail Brig. Gen. Parker Hills at parker@battlefocus.com.

Civil War show tells of available booths

The Bend of the River Civil War Expo is Oct. 15 from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Oct. 16 from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Vicksburg Convention Center, 1600 Mulberry St.

Three hundred tables of Civil War items — including relics, uniforms, swords, knives, books, prints, educational displays and pre-1898 antique arms — will be featured. Civil War documentaries will also be shown.

Booth spaces are available for \$55 before Sept. 15 and \$60 after for trade tables. Display tables are \$45. Dealer set-up times are Oct. 14 from noon-8 p.m. and Oct. 15 from 7-9 a.m.

Mail checks and reservations to Collectors and Shooters Club, LLC, P.O. Box 241282, Montgomery, AL 36124-1282.

For information, call 334-279-9895 or e-mail cascishows@aol.com.

Port Gibson native pens book of poems

Kimberly Howard of Port Gibson has self-published her first book, "For the Love of Poetry," by Authorhouse.

The book includes poems about love, laughter, inspiration, hope and mystery.

Howard, a senior at Alcorn State University, is the daughter of Lee and Gladys Howard. She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer networking. Howard graduated from Port Gibson High School in 2001.

"For the Love of Poetry," can be purchased online at authorhouse.com, barnesandnoble.com or amazon.com.

It can also be bought by calling Barnes & Noble at 800-THE-BOOK.

Southern Garden Symposium planned

The 18th annual Southern Garden Symposium is Oct. 7-8 in St. Francisville, La.

The event will kick off with gardening demonstrations, lectures and tours. Refreshments will be served at workshop sites followed by a gourmet lunch in the Ruins Gardens of Afton Villa.

The second day of the symposium will include lectures, lunch and an afternoon tea in Hemingbough, south of St. Francisville on U.S. 61 South.

The title of the symposium is "Exploring Southern Gardens."

The workshops are \$60 each day. An Oct. 7 speaker's gala is \$35. Students can attend the symposium Oct. 8 for \$35.

For information or to register, call Lucie Cassity at 225-635-3738.

More items on E2.

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JOHN HOWARD DENNIS



CRAIG TUCKER



DAVID BATTAGLIA



CARL REID



BARRY GRAHAM



DANIEL GILBERT

THE CHILL

'Weekend warrior band' still going strong after 20 years

FACTS ABOUT THE CHILL

- Members of The Chill named their band after the movie, "The Big Chill," because they were already playing songs that ended up forming the soundtrack for the film before it was released.
- The band doesn't rehearse because they've been playing together for so long.
- The band used to play in an old caboose in downtown Vicksburg.
- Lead singer Barry Graham considers "Green Grass," one of the many songs the group sings, as the band's theme song.
- John Howard Dennis was in a band called Mystic Night in high school.
- Several original members of The Chill were in a 1970s Vicksburg band called Fatback.
- The Chill has played for every Run Thru History in Vicksburg and all but one Riverfest.
- Tommy Raines, a member of Meet the Press, played with Dennis in Fatback.
- The pre-Chill was asked to play at the 1984 World's Fair in New Orleans.
- The first out-of-town show The Chill played was in Natchez.
- The band played at the opening and closing nights of The Dock on the Reservoir.
- The Chill will perform Oct. 29 from 8 p.m. until midnight in Jackson at Shuckers.

ONLINE

Learn more about The Chill at www.chillband.com.

INSIDE

Photos from The Chill through the years • E6

By Lauchlin Fields
lfields@vicksburgpost.com

Some call it a phenomenon, others just a rockin' good time, but there's no doubt the Vicksburg-born band The Chill has stirred up audiences all over the Southeast.

For 20 years, its members have kept a momentum that rivals bands that are household names.

The Chill, named for the 1983 blockbuster "The Big Chill," is indeed a household name — especially in Vicksburg, where The Chill Burger is featured on the menu at The Purple Ladder, 1311 Washington St.

"I'm glad to know it was liked enough that it sustained itself," said Mark Prewitt, who created the band. "There are not many local weekend warrior bands that can stay around for 20 years."

Prewitt, who is a lawyer, stayed with the band for 10 years. His final performance was in 1995 at Riverfest in downtown Vicksburg.

"I got to my peak, where we were getting 100 calls a week," Prewitt said.

But he's convinced the group has peaked again since he left.

"What's that the BeeGee's said? 'If you stay together long enough, you get rediscovered,'" he said.

The original band was born after a series of high school and post-high school bands that "fizzled," Prewitt said.

The first members of what would later become The Chill were Prewitt, who played guitar, drummer Daniel Gilbert, bassist and vocalist John Howard Dennis, saxophonist Mike Andrews, trumpet-player Beaver Myers and keyboardist Jeffrey Morgan.

"Dec. 31, 1985, was our first official gig — and the rest is

history," Prewitt said. "For some strange reason — it was like dominoes — everyone was all of a sudden available. Explain that mystic."

The same story is true for people who have joined the band since. When one person would leave, another would magically appear. Today, The Chill has six members, including Gilbert and Dennis, the band's backbone.

Trumbonist and keyboardist Craig Tucker joined the band 13 years ago, and Carl Reid replaced Prewitt on guitar in 1995. Saxophonist David Battaglia and vocalist Barry Graham came on board during the last five years.

Although members have come and gone, the music has stayed the same. It reflects the era during which the band began. It's a formula that works, Dennis said.

"We've worked by being consistent and playing good dance music," he said. "I don't care what age group — we've done it for years, and people like it."

Reid agreed: "We played for 700 Sub Deb children, and they were children — ages 16 or 17 — at the Trade Mart in Jackson. When they unloaded the bus and those kids came in, they danced from the very beginning to the end," he said. "They know this stuff — everybody knows this stuff."

The Chill sticks to the classics. In one night, they play anything from "My Girl" by the Temptations to "Wild Nights" by Lou Reed. But a performance isn't complete without the Van Morrison classic, "Brown Eyed Girl."

"You have to play it," Tucker said.

Graham added, "If we don't play it, people will request it."

For the 35- to 58-year-old age bracket, the urge comes

to get up and dance as they recall days gone by.

"It reminds me of high school. It brings back a lot of memories," said Daria Nosser Hood, a classmate of original band member Dennis. Hood graduated from H.V. Cooper High in 1970.

Wilson McClain, also a member of the Cooper class of '70, played in a band called Peepuls Choyz with Dennis and Prewitt. McClain, who plays the trombone, played with The Chill on Aug. 6 at his 35th class reunion.

"For me, it's a double reunion — to get to perform a little bit," he said.

The Chill takes Susie Harmon Hays back to those first performances at the Upper End at the Magnolia Hotel and Restaurant and at Walnut Hills.

"I am The Chill," she said. "I asked John Howard tonight if I can be an alumna member of the band."

After all these years, Dennis and the other band members don't take themselves too seriously. After all, they call their fans — who come in all shapes, sizes and ages — "Chill Bumps."

"The Chill's raised a lot of yunguns," Prewitt said.

What made The Chill "gel" back then is a mystery, he said, but today the band's image is all about a name people can't forget.

"What they do, they do well — it's one of those magical things," Prewitt said. "It's the name more than the individuals that carry it. You just got to keep it good."

The current members have no intention of letting the good times die. In fact, they hope The Chill survives another 20 years.

"As long as I'm breathing, I'll play," Dennis said. "But I hope someone will keep it going and continue to do something with it."

CURRENT MEMBERS

- **John Howard Dennis** — 1985; bass guitar and vocals; Vicksburg native; local technician
- **Daniel Gilbert** — 1985; drums and vocals; Jackson native; psychology professor in Clinton
- **Craig Tucker** — 1992; keyboards and trombone; Jackson native; band director in Byram
- **Carl Reid** — 1997; lead guitar and vocals; Vicksburg native; business owner in Flowood
- **David Battaglia** — 2001; saxophone; Jackson native; performs with several bands out of Jackson
- **Barry Graham** — 2001; lead vocals; Birmingham native; works for City of Vicksburg

PAST MEMBERS

- **Mark Prewitt** — 1985-1995; guitar and vocals; original member; attorney in Vicksburg
- **Bill Bradley** — 1985; keyboard; original member
- **Beaver Myers** — 1985-1995; trumpet; original member; plays with Krackerjacks
- **Mike Andrews** — 1985-2001; saxophone; original member; deceased
- **Jeffrey Morgan** — 1985-1990; keyboard; original member; lawyer with the Attorney General's Office
- **Johnny Crocker** — 1990-1992; guitar and vocals; performs solo as Johnny Crocker Band in Jackson
- **Lee H. Abraham** — 1995-2001; lead vocals; performs and writes original music and owns and operates Plaza Hair Care Center in Vicksburg
- **Don Woods** — Played with the group before it was The Chill; drums; performed with the Gants

THE CHILL: THROUGH THE YEARS



SUBMITTED TO THE VICKSBURG POST

Lee H. Abraham, former lead singer of The Chill, is backed by original members Daniel Gilbert on drums, John Howard Dennis on bass, keyboardist Craig Tucker and original member Mike Andrews on sax as the band performs at Riverfest.



ABOVE: Mike Andrews, Johnny Crocker, Mark Prewitt, Daniel Gilbert, Beaver Myers and John Howard Dennis (bottom center) in a publicity photo from the early '90s.

RIGHT: John Howard Dennis, Mark Prewitt, Beaver Myers and Mike Andrews take a break during a Riverfest performance.

BELOW LEFT: The Chill in the late '90s were (standing) Mike Andrews, Carl Reid; bottom, from left, Craig Tucker, John Howard Dennis, Daniel Gilbert and Lee H. Abraham.

BELOW RIGHT: Craig Tucker, Beaver Myers and Mike Andrews make up the Chill's horn section in this early '90s picture taken in downtown Vicksburg.



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