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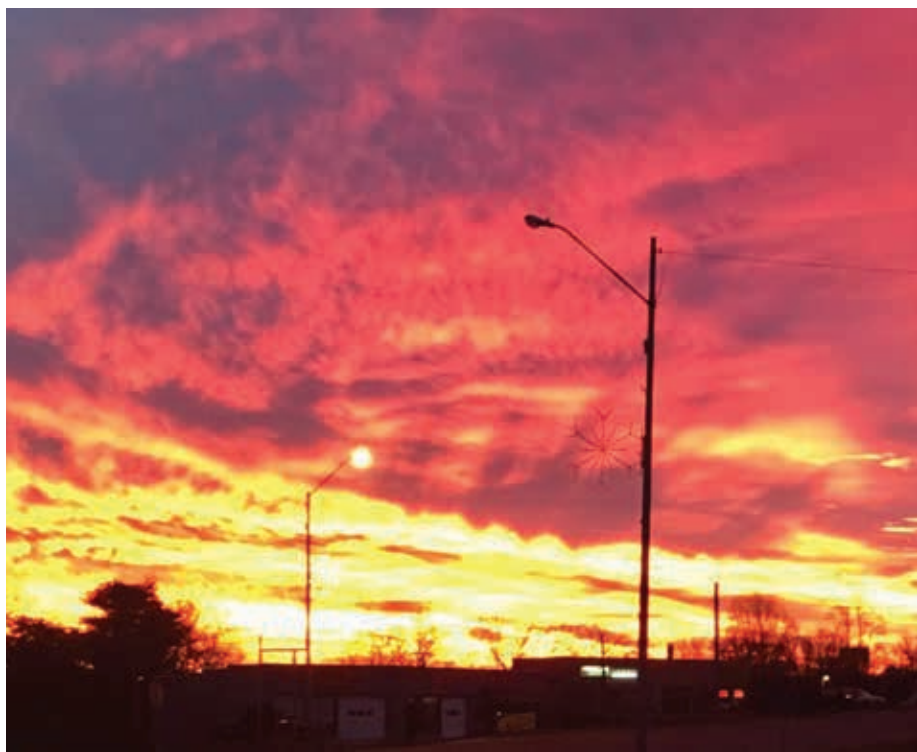
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# Ozarks

M A G A Z I N E

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## ON THE COVER

**Welcome** to our 2022 Ozarks Magazine fall edition.

Now that summer is behind us, we are more than ready to welcome fall, and all the beauty that this time of year brings to north central Arkansas and south central Missouri, and of course the pumpkin spice everything!

Our fall cover features a photograph of a cabin built for A. Starker Leopold to use while he developed a wildlife management plan for the Caney Mtn. Conservation Area located in Gainesville, Mo.

Inside you will find stories highlighting those things that make these Ozarks hills spectacular.

Writer Terri Ivie Smith takes readers on a beautifully guided tour of the Ozark Mill and Finley Farms in Ozark, Mo. The Ozark Mill was originally built in 1833 at the convergence of the Finley River and the Ozark Trace. The mill served as a mail delivery route and served as a place for community functions. Although the mill was destroyed multiple times by fires and damaged by the floodwaters of the river, the community always rebuilt and repaired the landmark operation.

Jeff Brasel introduces us to Hillbilly Slims, a restaurant in Raspberry Bend, Ark. The eatery is the creation of Dwayne "Doc" Hinson who cut his teeth working in the family restaurant in Harrison, Ark. called Master Chef.

Of course everyone remembers the classic tv show, "The Beverly Hillbillies," but how many readers know how close to the Ozarks that story really hits. First time Ozarks Magazine write Danette House tells the story of these iconic characters were born out of this region.

Chris Herbolzheimer takes us along as he explores a trail in the Devil's Backbone Wilderness known as Collins Ridge.

These Ozarks hills are famous for their stories, and with Ozarks Magazine we hope to share a few of them with you.

Thanks for reading!

Jim Holland, publisher

Editor: Chris Herbolzheimer

Writers: Chris Herbolzheimer, Terri Ivie Smith, Jeff Brasel, Linda Masters, Helen Mansfield, and Danette House.

Sales: Sherry Harper, Travis Rhoads, Vicky Rutter, Sheri Underdown





# FINLEY FARMS & THE OZARK MILL

HISTORICAL LANDMARK ON THE FINLEY RIVER HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.



**Fire pits and the sound of the Finley River flowing provide a cozy, relaxing setting.**

By TERRI IVIE SMITH

**O**ZARK, Mo. — Those who visit The Ozark Mill and Finley Farms enjoy the best of what the Ozarks have to offer. Explore the beautiful grounds on walking trails, or visit the river outfitters on site and paddle down the river to see the sights. Take a guided tour through

the farm and see the greenhouse, high tunnels and even a mushroom yard where shiitake mushrooms grow. Resident farmers Liesel McCleary and Brendon Sinclair will explain the practices and standards that ensure guests only get the best on their plates in the restaurants.

A weekly Farmers Market is held during the spring and

**The Riverside Bridge is a unique venue for gatherings that overlooks the Finley River.** STAFF PHOTOS BY TERRI IVIE SMITH




The Ozark Mill was originally built in the 1800s and was rebuilt after being destroyed by fire three times.

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The Ozark Mill was originally built in 1833 at the convergence of the Finley River and the Ozark Trace. The mill served as a mail delivery route and served as a place for community functions. Although the mill was destroyed multiple times by fires and damaged by the floodwaters of the river, the community always rebuilt and repaired the landmark operation. It was the last commercially operating watermill in the state of Missouri when it was retired in 1992. After the mill retired, conservationist and founder of Bass Pro Shops Johnny Morris purchased the mill and began preservation efforts. Morris set about creating a 40-acre gathering place that contains multiple event venues, farm-forward dining, an urban farm and a riverside wedding chapel.

Morris placed his daughter, Megan Stack, in charge of defining the look, feel and purpose of Finley Farms.

Finley Farms currently is home to three dining options.

The Ozark Mill Restaurant is a family friendly dining experience with bar and patio that looks over the natural beauty of the Finley River. The Ozark Mill Restaurant's menu contains pizza, pasta and

seasonal dishes made with ingredients from local, sustainable food source and produce grown on site.

The Workshop is located in a restored industrial garage used in the 1930s. The coffee shop has a patio offering outdoor seating that overlooks the farm. The Workshop offers classes on a wide variety of topics, such as Autumn Floral Arrangements, DIY Macrame Hangers or cooking classes.

The Garrison, the most recent offering of dining options at Finley Farms, is located beneath the Ozark Mill. The establishment was a hideaway operated by Howard Garrison. Originally known as the Riverside Inn, the Garrison sits right on the banks of the Finley River with views of river, dam and the Riverside Bridge. The Riverside Inn was a social center for the community, and Howard Garrison loved to host large crowds in his hideaway. Garrison's artwork lines the walls of the speakeasy-style restaurant.

Finley Farms is a relaxing, picturesque location that is perfect for group events such as corporate gatherings, parties or just spending time with friends.

Venues at Finley Farms can accommodate weddings and ceremonies for groups of all sizes. The Chapel is an open-air structure modeled after other historic



**The Garrison Restaurant was once an old time speakeasy that was tucked away under the Ozark Mill.**

chapels of the area. Couples can cross the Riverside Bridge after the ceremony to receptions. The versatility of the location combined with the creative staff can create an atmosphere for an unforgettable event.

The Workshop is ideal for team meetings and hands on classes and when combined with The Market Shed creates an indoor-outdoor location for just about any event.

The Farm is an ideal venue for those wanting to get up close with Mother Nature. The high-yield urban urban farm supports on-property restaurants with seasonal produce. A buzzing apiary, bloom-filled flower fields and a



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wooded mushroom yard make it ideal for intimate dinners and elopements.

The Riverside Bridge can be booked for private events. The bridge spans the Finley River and features dedicated spaces for live entertainment and a bar.

For groups of up to 100, the Hawkins Room overlooks the Finley River and has the most versatile floor plans.

Groups of up to 150 can be comfortably accommodated by the Riverside Room, the largest of the venues at Finley Farms. The Riverside Room is ideal for large celebrations and corporate retreats.

The Garrison provides a more intimate setting for groups of up to 50 with a beautiful 1800s era bar, round leather booths surrounded by art-filled wood walls.

Finley Farms has a wide variety of informative trade and hobby workshops and classes. Topics ranging from beekeeping to yoga are available. Farm tours are held regularly and the crew at Finley Farms are always thinking of new activities to connect with guests. The latest addition to the event calendar is a “Stargazing and S’mores session scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 12.

The folks at Finley Farms are always coming up with new



**Finley Farms produce, grown, prepared and eaten on site!**

ways for guests to experience the Ozarks. Soon, overnight accommodations will be available for resting after a long day of adventures on the river provided by the outfitters. A brewery to serve craft beverages will be opening on the premises soon as well.

Finley Farms is constantly evolving and adding more activities to the calendar. The staff and crew are focused on providing outstanding customer service. Inquiries are always welcome and encouraged. Visit [finleyfarmsmo.com](http://finleyfarmsmo.com) or call 417-210-6644 to speak to a representative. Finley Farms is located at 802 Finley Farms Lane in Ozark, Missouri. ■





# HEDGES HIKE IS FULL OF HISTORY



**A small graveyard is located just a quarter of a mile into the Hedges Hike. The tombstones have residents that passed in 1888.**

By JEFF BRASEL

**B**OXLEY, Ark. — When visiting the Hedges Hikes nearly Boxley, Ark., visitors will take a trip back in time.

The hike wanders by several points of interest that would be of delight to those who thirst for history.

Hedges Hike gets its name from a couple who were champions for the Buffalo River to become part of the National Park System.

Harold and Margaret Hedges were owners of the land where the present day hike ends. The location of the

trail is in the town of Whiteley, Ark.

Several former things from this community dot the trail and offer history in the four mile round trip hike.

To find the hike, visitors must trail on Highway 21 into the town of Boxley, Ark. Around 1.5 miles from the historic Boxley Baptist Church is a turnoff on the right side of the road. It is the parking for the Buffalo River Trail. That trail begins across Highway 21, but the Hedges Hike stays on the west side of the road.

In the parking area of the hike

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**The old large chimneys still remain at the Hedges' place in the Whiteley community. The family's home was destroyed by fire in the early 1990s.** STAFF PHOTOS BY JEFF BRASEL

there are remnants of four buildings. The first is a cellar that is beside the parking area.

Across the parking lot is the outline of a building. This is the foundation of the Whiteley Church.

After traveling west, two other buildings will come into view. Pass the first building and then look for an old road that has been closed. It will be on the left side of the road.

This road is before the barn and the spring that still provides water to area residents.

When finding the entrance to the hike, visitors should be ready for a climb. Over the next .75 of a mile, there will be a increase in altitude of 350 feet.

It is a gradual climb with stops along the way.

The first will be just a quarter of mile into the climb. There is a cemetery on the right hand side of the road. There are fewer than a dozen graves there with only a pair of the stones still able to be read. One of those markers have a death date of 1888 on it.

A continued hike up the hill brings visitors to an old rock wall. This wall is a good glimpse into history, however, there will be a better wall later in the hike.

When the rock wall comes into view, there is a fork in the path. The hike is the path to the right. The left path takes visitors to get a closer

view of the wall.

When reaching the summit of the hike, there will be a place to turn left or right on an old dirt road. Turning to the left will only take visitors a few steps, but it is to the foundation of the Whiteley School building. The old building has just the foundation left as a fire around the turn of the century destroyed the former educational learning facility.

Going right will lead visitors to the Hedges place.

The walk is pretty easy as it follows the old road.

While following the old road, there is a drop of 250 feet to get to the final destination of the hike, however there is still a mile to go.

About a third of the way, there is a rain-fed creek. The heavy spring rains downed several trees. There are a pair of trees that are covering the path. Paths can be found around these obstacles.

After crossing the dry creek there is a big land slide that makes the hike difficult. The waters have washed out the road and there are some climbs to continue the hike.

After clearing this area, visitors are getting close to the final destination.

Leading into the Hedges place, people are greeted by unbelievable rock walls. These walls are very long in length and are still perfect after having no one live there for 30 years.

The Hedges' home was believed





Some of the out buildings remain around the Hedges' property.

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**Wonderfully designed rock walls line the Hedges' property on the four-mile round trip hike.**

to be burnt by arson. In the three decades since this happened, trees are slowly taking over the foundation and two chimneys that remain.

Outbuildings are still in tact and the family's large mailbox is sitting at the entrance to the property.

Once making it to Hedges, there are still other things to be seen. Just

over a quarter of a mile from the place is the one of the better known swimming holes at the beginning of the Buffalo River.

The hike would be rated moderate as there is a big climb to begin both ends of the walk. The river is beautiful and there is a lot scenery on the walk. ■



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# RIDE THE OZARKS RALLY SET

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## FAMILY FRIENDLY

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By DONNA BRAYMER

**H**ARRISON, Ark. — The Ride the Ozarks Rally will be held Oct. 7-8. Friday and Saturday evenings and will offer free live music beginning at 5 p.m. and feature Saliva at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 8.

The rally registration begins at 1400 Fairgrounds Road in Harrison at 8 a.m. There will be lots of activities including corn hole, guided rides, a poker run, beer garden, vendors, and more.



The event is family friendly and guests do not have to have a motorcycle to participate. There is free parking and admission. Shuttles will be onsite to return guests to the area hotels at the end of the evening. A bike show and poker run will be two of the activities on Saturday. Guided rides will be offered Thursday through Sunday.

For more information visit [RideTheOzarks.com](http://RideTheOzarks.com) or visit the Facebook page. ■





# THREE YEARS OF HITTING IT HARD AT HILLBILLY SLIMS



**Old-fashioned candy can be found in the retail portion of Hillbilly Slims.**

By JEFF BRASEL

**R**ASPBERRY BEND, Ark. — When spending a busy day searching for one of the 15 waterfalls in the Richland Valley of Searcy County, Ark., visitors can get hungry and maybe even hangry.

However, there is a restaurant that can handle those rumbling stomachs with a flair that few establishments can match.

Hillbilly Slims just turned three years-old on Labor Day weekend and the establishment is very busy.

The eatery is the creation of

Dwayne “Doc” Hinson who cut his teeth working in the family restaurant in Harrison, Ark. called Master Chef.

A strong social media presence has helped the restaurant to be successful.

“We have spent no money on advertising,” said Hinson. “Everything has been by word of mouth.”

The restaurant does have an advantage. Outside of a gas station that sells sandwiches, it is the only eating facility within a 30-mile

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**Dwayne (Doc) Hinson started Hillbilly Slims three years ago with the help of his niece Ashley Cooper and his mother Burlene Hinson (left). Cooper and son Taylor Cooper have been a big help to Hinson in driving the restaurant to the success it has seen so far.** STAFF PHOTOS BY JEFF BRASEL



**Dwayne “Doc” Hinson explains the expansion of Hillbilly Slims restaurant. He plans to double the size of the restaurant, but use the new addition for special events.**

stretch in any direction.

One of the draws according to Hinson is the Ozark National Forest.

“People are getting out and discovering what we have known for years about these hills,” he said. “All of these things are in their backyard. We have hiking, camping and biking. We have the best waterfalls in the state as well.”

The restaurant opened on Labor Day Weekend of 2019 and just celebrated its third birthday.

“I thought it would be successful,” started Hinson about the eatery.

“I just thought it would take more time.

“At the time that we put this in, COVID-19 hit,” he continued.

“People had nothing to do so they traveled to see things and they discovered us.”

The restaurant has had struggles with menu issues over the course of the three years. They have tweaked it here and there and think that they have come away with a good selection for patrons.

“Like everyone, we had supply issues,” he said. “There were help issues. The busier that we got, the large amount of menu items became a problem. We just couldn’t give the service that we needed to give. We had people waiting three hours for a table. The people were fine with it, but I wasn’t. It was not fine with me.”

The current menu includes barbecue, steak, ribs, pulled pork, burgers and of course some items from Master Chef.

“Our steaks are Angus from Missouri,” Hinson stated. “We also have 8-, 12- and 16-ounce ribeyes.”

Hinson also admitted to making another mistake.

“We took the Master Chef items off the menu and just featured them as a weekend special once a month,” he started. “That didn’t work. People drove 60 miles one way to eat those items and they weren’t on the menu anymore. We corrected that





**The Fiesta is one of the most popular items at Hillbilly Slims. The homemade salsa and chips complement the entree.**

problem. They will not be taken off the menu.”

When the restaurant started, it had limited operation hours. That affected Hinson’s ever-changing staff. He made a change.

The restaurant is now open Wednesday through Sunday. The employees have full-time jobs and it has stabilized his workforce which helps him put a better product on the table for guests.

“It is a seven days a week sometimes eight days a week job,” he said. “Taking care of people and knowing how to make them happy is my first priority of the restaurant.”

The family that helped run the restaurant in Harrison has helped him get started in Raspberry Bend.

“It is unreal the people that come in asking for Mom,” said Hinson about his mother Burlene. “Also Nicky (his niece Ashley) Cooper

has been a big part of this. She does our social media and when I am gone, she will be carrying on the tradition.”

The restaurant is located on a 113 acre piece of ground owned by Hinson for nearly two decades. He built the building as a shop to manufacture restaurant furniture. He got into building the products when he did it for a remodel of Master Chef. He has sold products to companies in all 48 continental states and Jamaica.

Hinson has plans with Cooper to expand the restaurant. They plan to double the size of the eating area by using some of the shop space used for manufacturing. The expansion should be completed in the fall of 2022.

Hillbilly Slims is not just a restaurant. It is a step back in time with a retail establishment. The likes of



**Hillbilly Slims makes homemade pork rinds which are a favorite at Hillbilly Slims. The restaurant serves a variety of foods and homemade sauces at the Raspberry Bend, Ark. restaurant.**

goat milk soap, old-fashion candy and some essentials that visitors may need on their trip can be purchased in the country motif store.

“We built it with grandparents in mind,” he said. “They can wonder through there and look at all of the retro items. I wanted it to be homey and warm.”

Raspberry Bend is at the top of a mountain in the Ozark Plateau. It is located 9.5 miles west of Witts Spring, Ark. on Highway 16. The compound can also be reached by turning east off of Highway 7 at Sand Gap, Ark. It is 17 miles from this junction.


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Front Row, left to right: Megan Montague, D.O., Larry Kennon, APRN-BC, Robert Causey, M.D., Leanne Finke, M.D., Garry Finke, M.D., Shelly Gingerich, FNP, Kristen White, FNP, and Tara Jackson, D.O. Back Row, left to right: Chelsea Carroll, D.M.D., Travis Shearer, D.D.S., Ashleigh Keyser, D.D.S., Brett Zobell, D.D.S., Joe Hackworth, LCSW, Elizabeth Mahan, LCSW



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## VISITOR CENTER IN BULL SHOALS



By Linda Masters

**B**ULL SHOALS, Ark. — The interpretive staff at Bull Shoals-White River State Park is busy April through October offering programs for the public. A nature-related educational experience for Twin Lakes citizens and area visitors is as close as a drive to the park located on the banks of the White River.

**Free programs include:**

- **Exploration Station:**

**Bears** — Did you know that Arkansas once was called the Bear State? Join a park interpreter for a fascinating program on the history and present habitat of bears in Arkansas. The informative program is full of interesting insights into a bear's life. Meet at the James A. Gaston Visitor Center front entrance for this free program

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expert tracking and investigative skills to determine what happened in a field on a snowy day. Field guides and a park interpreter will be available to help you. Meet at the Trout Dock Amphitheater for this free program

• **Eagle Hike on Big Bluff**

**Trail** — Join the park interpreter for a 1.75-mile hike on the Big Bluff Trail. Along the way, see a variety of habitat types and view an eagle's nest from the overlook of the trail in hopes of viewing the eagles on or near the nest. The Big Bluff Trail is moderately strenuous, so please wear comfortable walking shoes and bring a water bottle. Meet at Big Bluff Trailhead in the campground for this free program

• **Dutch-oven Dessert** —

Discover how food was cooked in the Ozarks in the good old days. Join park staff for a Dutch-oven cooking demonstration and learn how to make an easy Dutch-oven delight. Don't miss this chance to relive a part of history and get a sample of this tasty treat. Meet at the Trout Dock Amphitheater for this free program

• **Dutch-Oven Breakfast** — 9-10 a.m. Discover how food was cooked in the Ozarks in the good old days. Learn how to make an easy Dutch-oven delight. Join park staff for a Dutch-oven cooking demonstration. Don't miss your chance for a

sample of this tasty treat. Meet at the Trout Dock Amphitheater in the campground for this free program

• **Birding Basics** — Arkansas is home to many birds and a flyway for migratory birds. Learn birding basics from a park interpreter and spend time looking for some of our feathered friends. You may even decide to take up birding as a hobby! Make sure to bring your own binoculars if you have them. Meet at the Amphitheater in the campground for the free program

• **Kayaking 101** — Are you considering learning how to kayak or perhaps want to improve your basic kayaking abilities? Meet a park interpreter for a brief introductory session on the different paddling strokes, how to get in and out of the boat correctly, safety tips, some of the necessary gear, and much more. Meet at the Trout Dock in the campground for this free program

• **Fish Feeding** — Gather around the fish tanks to see the feeding habits of native fish. Meet at the fish tanks at the James A. Gaston Visitor Center for the free program

• **Springtime Discovery Hike** on Big Bluff Trail — Join the park interpreter for a 1.75-mile hike on the Big Bluff Trail to look to see what's blooming and what's happening in the forest during the spring season. Bring your water bottle, any field guide books, and wear



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comfortable walking shoes. Meet at Big Bluff Trailhead for this free program

- **Exploration Station: Birds** —

Did you know that over 400 species of birds live or migrate through Arkansas? Learn more about some of the commonly seen birds as a park interpreter discusses their unique characteristics, and get a chance to hear their distinct calls. COVID-19 safety guidelines are in effect for guests and staff. Space may be limited. Meet at the James A. Gaston Visitor Center front entrance for this free program

- **Birding Riverwalk** — Meet at the Gaston's Woodland Hiking Trail (follow signs to Gaston's, drive to the end of the cabins and you will find a park interpreter at the trailhead) for a pleasant walk on one of the best birding trails in the area. Be sure to bring a camera and/or binoculars. For directions, please inquire at the park's visitor center or Gaston's Resort. COVID-19 safety guidelines are in effect for guests and staff. Space may be limited for this free program

- **Skins and Skulls** — Have you ever felt coyote fur or seen beaver teeth? Join a park interpreter for a look at the hides and skulls of some of Arkansas's larger mammals. We will learn why some of these beautiful animals were almost hunted to extinction. Meet at the James

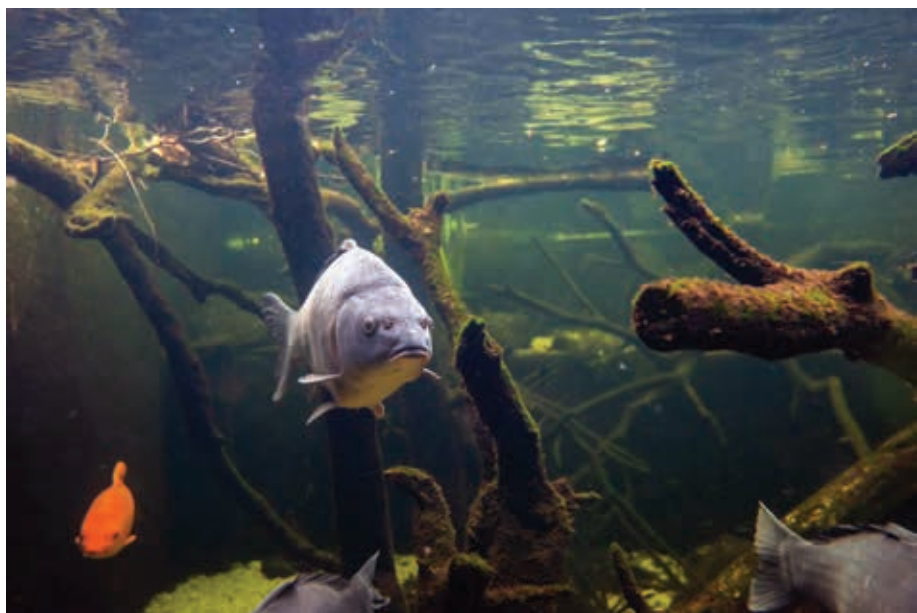


A. Gaston Visitor Center's front entrance in Bull Shoals for this free program

- **Silent Invaders** — The natural resources at Bull Shoals-White River State Park are being threatened by an army of silent invaders. Learn what it is that could potentially impact the park and how you can help protect this beautiful place. Meet at the Campground Amphitheater in Lakeview for this free program

- **Owl Prowl** — Join a park interpreter for a half-mile hike to hear and hopefully spot the nocturnal raptors. Meet at the Big Bluff Trailhead near the campground for the free program

- **Night Sounds** — Join a park interpreter for an illustrated program on the sounds heard at



night. Meet at the Campground Amphitheater for the free program

• **Discovery Hike Along Bull Shoals Lake** — Join a park interpreter for a 1-mile hike on the Lakeside Trail to see what's blooming in the forest. Wear comfortable shoes and take a water bottle. Meet at the Lakeside Trailhead at the east end of the Day-Use area on AR Highway 178 for the free program.

**Programs which include fees include:**

• **Lake Cruise** — Register in advance for a 90-minute cruise on Bull Shoals Lake, where you can learn a little history and enjoy scenic views. Cost is \$15, adults, \$7.50 for children ages 6-12 and free for children younger than 6. Register at James A. Gaston Visitor

Center or call (870) 445-3629. Meet at Bull Shoals Lake Boat Dock for the cruise

• **Kayak Tour on Bull Shoals Lake** — Join a park interpreter for a scenic kayak tour on Bull Shoals Lake to spend time exploring the shoreline and hopefully spot some wildlife. All gear is provided. Wear clothing that can get wet and water shoes or sandals. Take a water bottle, snacks for the trip, and any necessary gear if the weather is hot or cold (sunscreen, hat, fleece jacket). Children younger than age 13 must be in a tandem boat with an adult. Space is limited. Pre-register at the James A. Gaston Visitor Center or call (870) 445-3629. Cost is \$20 for adults and \$10 for children ages 6-12. Meet at the James A. Gaston Visitor Center in Bull Shoals.



Participants will need to shuttle themselves to the lake access point

- **River Cruise** — Join a park interpreter for a guided John boat tour down the White River. Four lucky folks will go on a journey to learn about the history of the river and try to scope out some of native wildlife. River conditions may limit availability. Sign up in advance at the trout dock. Seats are limited. Cost is \$20 per person. Meet at the Campground Trout Dock in Lakeview

- **Snorkeling Adventure** — Sign up in advance for a three-hour snorkeling adventure on Bull Shoals Lake to snorkel along the shoreline looking for fish, rocks, plants and more! Masks and snorkels are provided. Lifejackets are required and provided. Participants must be

in good physical condition and must be able to swim. Wear shoes that will not float off feet, the tour includes deep water at times. Reservations must be made by noon today. Those younger than age 18 must have a parent signature before boarding; children younger than age 13 must be accompanied by an adult. Seats are limited. Minimum snorkeling age is 8. Meet at Bull Shoals Boat Dock for this adventure. Cost: \$20, adults; \$10, children ages 6-12. To register, call (870) 445-3629 or visit James A. Gaston Visitor Center, 123 Overlook Lane.

For times and dates or other information on interpretive programs, making camping reservations or renting any of the park's venues, call James A. Gaston Visitor Center at (870) 445-3629. ■





# LOCAL BOYS DO GOOD

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2010 MHHS GRADUATES FRACEK, THOMAS CREATE INSPIRATIONAL NATURE SHIRTS

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By Helen Mansfield

**G**AMALIEL, Ark. — There are 315 Mountain Home High School graduates that woke up Monday morning realizing perhaps for the first time that they are no longer high schoolers.

While college might be in the cards for some of them come fall, they're probably all going to need to make money — get a job, and maybe even land a career if they're lucky.

Two Mountain Home men — Matt Fracek and Bo Thomas — found themselves in the exact same situation 12 years ago, after they graduated from MHHS in 2010. The two friends traveled on different career paths before they were to meet up again and start a

business creating a line of inspirational nature T-shirts in Fayetteville.

Thomas was born and raised in Gamaliel and after graduation, attended the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville in 2014, and earned a degree in environmental studies, political science and a minor in sociology.

Fracek was born in Jonesboro, then his family immediately moved to Chicago. They have lived in Mountain Home since he was four or five-years-old. He graduated from Arkansas Tech University in 2015 with a double business major.

“I was working in the Bay area in Berkeley, Calif., for a nonprofit called Friends of the Earth,” said Thomas. “I directed their campaigns in the Greater Bay Area and managed their ground-

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**Gamaliel native Bo Thomas is also a co-founder of Nature Backs and is a 2010 graduate of Mountain Home High School. He earned a degree in environmental studies, political science, and a minor in sociology from the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville in 2014.** COURTESY PHOTOS

grassroots-efforts to raise awareness and funds about pollutants impacting bee populations.”

Fracek’s post-college path was a little different.

“I flipped smart phones for a little while in college in an effort to not have to work for someone else,” he said “I would find underpriced smartphones that people were trying to get rid of on Craigslist, or those old yard sale Facebook groups, and flip them on eBay and Amazon.”

That side hustle eventually grew to the point Fracek was buying crates full of 50-100 devices at a time. He said he wasn’t super passionate about phones or electronics, which made him realize that he needed to find something more centered around his passions.

Thomas’ focus was to allow people “to experience the moments that nature brings us.”

“I’ve always had a connection with the natural world; by growing up around lakes, rivers and trails in Arkansas, I’ve always felt that nature can teach us,” he said.

Thomas said the goal of their company, Nature Backs, is to bring people together to feel a connection to the Earth and inspire them to join in the natural harmony that is there.

Fracek believes that in today’s day and age, anyone can support

themselves doing something they love doing.

“I personally love traveling and spending time out in nature,” he said. “Shirts provide a canvas that allows us to take those feelings of awe that nature brings to us and put those feelings into a shirt that radiates those emotions to the wearers and all who see the art.”

Both young men believe they have reached a level of personal success.

When asked if he feels successful, Fracek says yes and no. He said success is always relative and it changes.

“As you grow older, your definition of success alters and becomes more refined and specific to you,” he said. “I would say ‘yes’ to a younger definition of success, and a work-in-progress towards the evolving definition that is built more so on a balance of peace-of-mind, with societal impact.”

Thomas has been humbled and grateful for how Nature Backs has been growing and can believe in its success because he’s always had amazing people working with him to accomplish their goals.

“It’s beautiful when people come together around a specific mission — in our case it’s inspiring others to get outside and curating the community that comes along with that. It brings me all the happiness to witness that and to me that is





**Matt Fracek is a 2010 graduate of Mountain Home High School and co-founder of Nature Backs, a company that creates inspirational nature T-shirts. He earned a double business major at Arkansas Tech University in 2015 with a double business major.**

success,” he said.

Both Fracek and Thomas have a lot of love for the Fayetteville community.

“I love the youthful energy of the area. I also love how close it is to rivers like the Mulberry, Buffalo and Kings,” Fracek said. “It’s an area that truly embodies a lot of the ethos and vibe of the brand, while also being close to family and friends in the state.”

“Fayetteville is a growing city

close to all the natural spaces we love in Arkansas and it’s close to our family and hometowns,” Thomas said.

As for school mentors who helped encourage them, Fracek is grateful to Tom Kennedy, whom he calls “an awesome teacher that really planted a lot of environmental awareness seeds in high school.”

“On top of this, my family has always been hugely supportive in embracing whatever I happen to be

putting my mind on to,” he added.

Thomas says he has an endless list of people he’s thankful for, starting with his parents, Peggy and Bill Thomas, who “gave me a childhood full of happiness and wisdom.”

“I have a partner in life, Morgan O’Neil, who helps me grow into a better person and is a constant source of light and love. I’m beyond thankful for all of the amazing teachers from MHHS and the University of the Ozarks who opened my mind and helped me learn how to express myself,” he said. “I am always overwhelmed by the support and couldn’t be more grateful.”

While the idea of pursuing one’s

goals can be frightening, there are so many examples these days of young people going for it and creating personal success for themselves. Both of the guys say that the risks are worth the rewards.

“Definitely pursue your heart’s calling. There’s so much value in making the leap. You feed the soul,” Fracek said. “Plus, there’s no real risk in doing so — as whatever the outcome — the experience gained is worth far more than you could possibly lose.”

Thomas agrees.

“If you have a passion and love for something, live from that. Honor what brings you life and have that lead you. If you honor that passion

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you'll always be okay," he said. "Focus on the present moment before you and trust in the actions you are taking."

As for the future, Fracek and Thomas say they have learned much and will continue to structure the company accordingly, all while honoring the natural world and hopefully inspiring balance and change.

"We're always focused on joining in with our community and experiencing nature together. Where we go from here is about continuing to find ways to honor our team and community and how we can grow with them," Thomas said. "We will continue to produce inspiring content and meaningful products that

stay true to our purpose. We hope that we can continue to create a feeling that moves people to experience nature."

"From here we would like to actually downsize a small amount to simplify things a bit and allow us to refocus on our core mission and values," Fracek said. "In the future, we plan to build a new HQ on a beautiful piece of land that can allow people another way of experiencing the brand."

For more information on the Nature Backs clothing line, visit its Facebook page @ Nature Backs or to shop their products, visit its website at [shop.naturebacks.com/collections/all-products](http://shop.naturebacks.com/collections/all-products). ■



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The cast of the Avenue Theatre of West Plains, Mo. will present the story of the The Beverly Hillbillies this October.





Photo from *The Liverpool Echo*, Liverpool, UK. The Beverly Hillbillies were so popular in England that the show was taken there to film. COURTESY PHOTOS

# HAPPY 60TH BIRTHDAY, HILLBILLIES!

By Danette House

**W**EST PLAINS, Mo. — **Trivia Questions:** Name the television show that debuted 60 years ago and climbed to number one on the Nielsen ratings chart after airing only three episodes? This tv sitcom ran for 9 years and produced 274 shows that are still seen in syndication. Paul Henning created and produced Petticoat Junction, Green Acres, and what other show? What hillbilly family put the Ozarks region in the national spotlight?

If you answered *The Beverly Hillbillies* to all the questions, you'd be right!

Paul Henning, born in 1911 in Independence, Missouri, started to make a name for himself in radio in the 1930's. He and his Missouri-born wife, Ruth, left Kansas City and moved to California with dreams of making it big by writing and performing in radio broadcasts.

In 1959, Henning was offered a job to create a series for television, an emerging and exciting new industry.

Henning then had to come up with an idea for a thirty-minute sitcom that would appear weekly on the CBS network. In her book, *The First Beverly Hillbilly- The Untold Story of the Creator of Rural TV Comedy*, Ruth Henning stated that Paul became obsessed with the idea of a show featuring people from the past trying to live in the modern world. But it was thought that there would be no way to create the concept unless they went with a science fiction format which Henning did not want.

Ruth shared that sometime after this initial idea, Paul read a news article about pockets of people in the Appalachian and Ozark

Mountains. The story revealed that for these people time had stood still. They had no modern conveniences, no running water or electricity, not even a radio.

Paul had grown up in Missouri and had attended Boy Scout summer camps in the Ozarks. He fondly remembered the “hillbilly” boys he met with their interesting language and ways. The more he thought about it the more he settled on a concept about a “hillbilly family.” But there was a problem. He thought that hillbillies were poor and drab and viewers would quickly tire of them. That’s when his idea of showing people from 100 years ago living in the modern world of the 1960’s





Fall on the Glade Trail. Ruth and Paul Hennings Conversation Area, Branson, Missouri.

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resurfaced. He would have the hill-billy family strike it rich and move to New York City where they would have to learn a whole new lifestyle.

When Hennings told the studio, they suggested that he buy the rights to Ma and Pa Kettle but he said no. He wanted to create his own characters. They did persuade him to change the setting to Beverly Hills (The New York Hillbillies?) to save money on shooting costs. He insisted on writing the pilot himself because he said that most writers were from New York, and they had no experience with hillbillies.

So, the Clampetts were born. Jed and family would live much as their Ozarks ancestors did until becoming millionaires and being moved to California. Does the phrase “Welllll, doggies” bring back memories of Jed? Or memories of his family living in a California mansion that had a moonshine still by the “see-ment pond?” How about Granny cooking “vittles” like “sow belly and hand slung chitlins” and the family dining on a pool table in the “fancy eatin’ parlor” and using pool cues for pot passers? Can you sing the theme song? Lots of people can even 60 years later.

The Hillbillies premiered on September 26, 1962. The critics hated it.

Even Henning’s mother said, “You get paid for that?” But the American

public loved it. It immediately shot up to number one in ratings, beating all other shows on every network.

In 1969, Henning returned to his Missouri roots and the Clampetts were loaded up to visit Don and Mary Herschend’s Silver Dollar City in Branson. At the time, the park consisted of Marvel Cave and a village of artists and crafters from around the Ozarks. The five episodes put the national spotlight on Branson and contributed to the success and growth of the Herschend empire. It is now the largest family-owned entertainment enterprise in the U.S. The third generation of the Herschends now have a billion dollar plus business with 26 different properties across the U.S. including Dollywood in Tennessee.

When the Hennings were in Branson for filming, Paul fell in love with the beauty of the Ozarks again. He and Ruth started buying up all the land they could get in the White River Hills of Taney County. Eventually, they became the owners of Dewey Bald, Roark Creek, and 1,534 acres of steep wooded hills and cedar glades. Wanting to protect the unspoiled splendor of the area they donated the land to the Missouri Conservation Department. A scenic overlook, three different trails, and a beautiful waterfall can be enjoyed in The Ruth and Paul Henning



**Roark Falls. Ruth and Paul Hennings Conservation Area. Branson, Missouri.**

Conservation Area in Branson. It is now a free park open daily for public use.

When the show was cancelled in 1972, its ratings were still high, but CBS had decided to “decountrify” their network. One pundit said that CBS “got rid of any shows that had a tree in them. Even *Lassie*.” They brought in new shows set in urban areas like *All in the Family*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Good Times*, and *Maud*.

The Clampetts would never have imagined the huge impact their story would have around the world. It can still be seen in syndication and on stage in many communities every year. The Avenue Theatre (307 Washington Avenue) in West Plains, Missouri, will be performing

The *Beverly Hillbillies* written in 1968 by David Rogers. Husband and wife duo, Tray (director) and Allie Whitsell (assistant director) and a cast of over 20 talented local actors will bring the Clampetts to life once again in the Ozarks. The historic Avenue Theatre will be the host for the three-act comedy which will run ten dates in October. Weekend evening shows will start at 7:00 p.m. on October 14, 15, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29 and Sunday matinees at 3:00 p.m. on October 16, 23, and 30. Tickets are \$10 and can be bought on the Avenue website [theavenuetheatre.org](http://theavenuetheatre.org) in advance or at the door. Help the Hillbillies celebrate their 60th birthday and join them as they again “move to Beverly . . . Hills that is!” ■







# GREAT HIKES OF THE OZARKS:

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## COLLINS RIDGE IN THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE

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by Chris Herbolsheimer

**W**EST PLAINS, Mo. — With beauty abounding in this neck of the woods, it is possible to take off walking in pretty much any direction, from any starting point, and have an enjoyable hike. With this column, I like to highlight some of my favorite hikes and hopefully turn some of you on to places you've yet to discover. Before setting out on any hike, it is important to be prepared. Proper shoes are crucial. Good hiking shoes start with a thick, slip-resistant sole, and are ideally waterproof. Boots that are tall enough to offer ankle support are also a good idea. Although shorts may be cooler, long pants are a better idea.

Finally, it is always a good idea to have water on the trail, no matter how long or short the intended trek is.

In the last edition of Great Hikes

of the Ozarks, I visited the Tingler Prairie Conservation Area and discovered a very relaxed walk through some beautiful country.

Recently, I hiked a section of the Devil's Backbone Wilderness that I have hiked several times before, but always enjoy tremendously. Collins Ridge is located about 16 miles west of West Plains on KK Highway, and is a moderately rated 2.5 mile hike. The trail is well-maintained and easy to follow.

Walking the trail through the dense woods definitely gives one the sense of isolation in nature. It's easy to feel Mother Nature's embrace in such surroundings. The first mile or so of the trek is fairly level with only minor changes in elevation. The trail weaves nicely through the forest, giving the feeling of a scenic adventure rather than a straight-line death march.

I, of course, being deathly afraid

---

**A beautiful, dry creek bed is just a few miles into the hike.**

STAFF PHOTOS BY CHRIS HERBOLSHEIMER

of snakes always carry a substantial stick with me just in case I need to defend myself against one of those fork-tongued murder worms. However, realistically, I wouldn't even see the snake until it had half of my leg down its throat.

I tried to keep a pace that would elevate my pulse so I could get some cardiovascular benefits from my hike, as well. Even at that pace, I found myself thinking about how lucky we to live here in the Ozarks. We have the escapes of forest hikes and river floats to provide some relief from the confinement that is so common. For those people living in larger metropolitan areas, escapes are much harder to come by.

Eventually, I found myself in the middle of a pine forest. The trees reached high into the sky, and suddenly, I was transported to another place entirely. I felt like I was high in the mountains somewhere, certainly not in Pottersville. My most recent time spent in the mountains was just outside of Tucson, Ariz., a couple of years ago at a place called Mount Lemmon.

Mount Lemmon has an elevation of 9,157 feet and is the southernmost snow-skiing destination in the continental United States.

With a light breeze blowing and a temperature of about 75 degrees, I felt like I was wandering around that mountain once again.



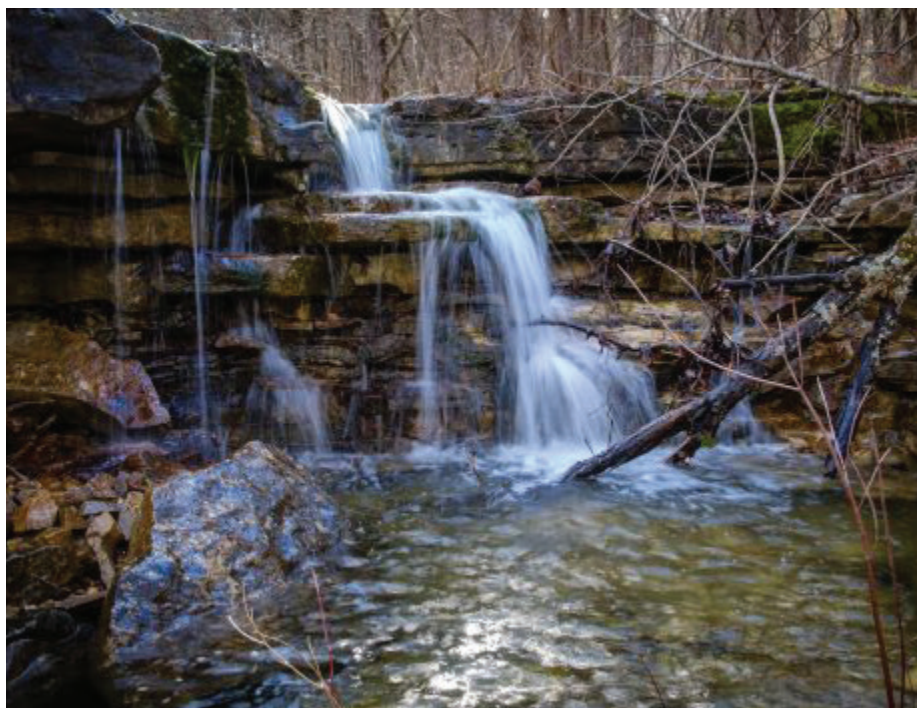
**Collins Ridge offers a great hike through the Devil's Backbone.**

As I made my way farther along the trail, the pine trees became less dominant as I began to descend the steep ridge. The fall in elevation makes for some beautiful scenery, and just off the trail the angle is even more steep, leading to some sheer bluffs near the bottom.

The climb back up the ridge is a workout, but it is definitely worth it. I'm always fascinated by the difference in the things I see walking the opposite direction on the same trail.

There are four trails that wind through the Devil's Backbone Wilderness area, and Collins Ridge is the shortest, but don't be fooled -- it is still a wonderful hike. The other hikes, which I will cover in the days to come, are great, but require a full day of dedication. Collins Ridge is a wonderful place to spend an afternoon appreciating the gifts of Mother Nature.

Remember, the hall closet is no place for hiking shoes. Get them out, lace them up and have a great hike. ■



A small waterfall deep in the heart of the Devil's Backbone.

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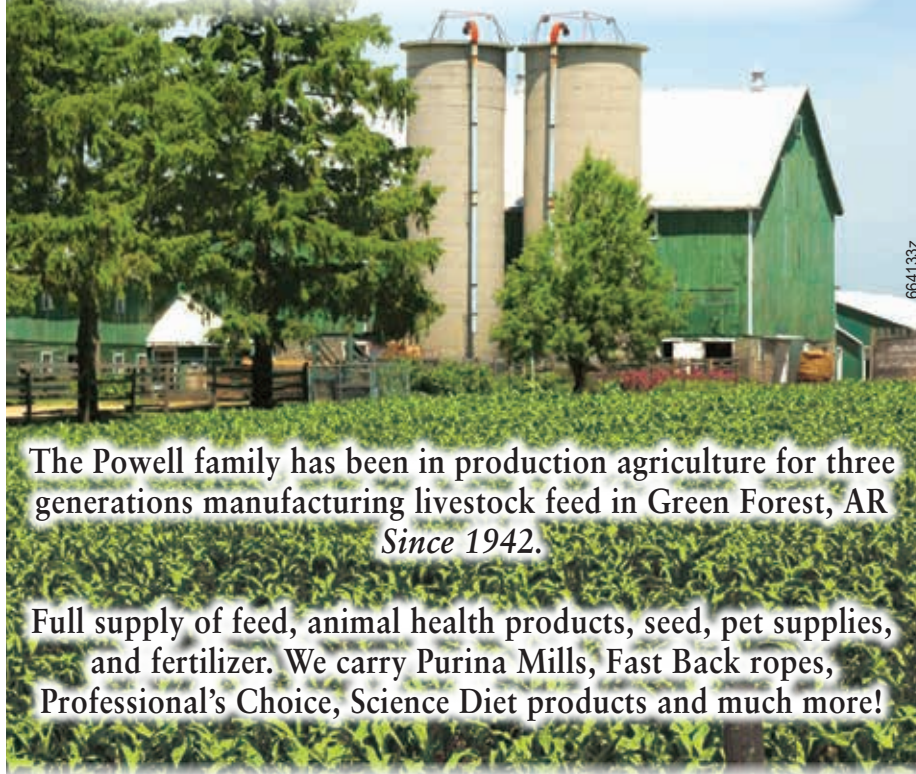
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