

The Gift of Conservation and Tradition

As 2014 comes to a close with the joy-filled holiday season, I cannot help but think, this year has been good to me. As with most folks, I will be visiting family this holiday season, traveling around so that the grandparents can spoil the grandkids. What has become a tradition, I make copies of pictures that highlight what our family has done in the last year. The pictures include special events in our lives like birthdays, anniversaries, graduation, and so forth. I also include pictures of things we do and the places we go as a family. It is meant to keep alive the tradition of sharing pictures throughout our lives, with the proliferation of digital connectivity (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), I still believe in holding onto the idea of sharing pictures.

This year was no different, there were birthday parties, lost teeth, home improvements, and family trips. The one thing that caught my attention was just how many places we visited in Kentucky. To be specific, we visited at least 15 Kentucky State Parks in 2014, even more if you count the ones my wife and I visited without the kids or the few I visited by myself.

Kentucky State Parks are special to our family for many reasons. Their beauty is definitely one of those reasons, and I was reminded of that as I copied photo files. The photos I perused were filled with amazing landscapes; places like Cumberland Falls, Natural Bridge, Breaks Interstate, Pennyroyal Forest, Kenlake, and many more. We have also shared so many experiences as we visited the parks. Our photo of our family with Eagle Falls in the background reminded me of the family hike we took on a warm afternoon. Every one of us was tired of traversing up and down the trail, until Eagle Falls appeared before us. What a magnificent wonder Kentucky has in our backyard. Another photo of the kids peeking into one of the many cool places inside Cascade Cave made me smile, as I encourage my kids to have a sense of wonder and exploration. One thing I did not expect was to see how my kids, my wife, and I changed through the year. You could see it in the selfies we take by the main state park sign. My pretty young teenager grew into an adult, the younger one grew several inches, my wife grew prettier with age, and a few more wrinkles adorned my face.

What I realized as I finished copying various photo files is that Kentucky State Parks have meant a lot to my family this year and in years past. I am proud to say my kids are growing up with the tradition of going to Kentucky State Parks and exploring all the beautiful things Kentucky has to offer. I am also proud to say that I do what I can to support these wonderful resources in Kentucky. I am honored to be a member of the Kentucky State Parks Foundation, a non-profit organization with the mission of assisting in the preservation of some of Kentucky natural, historical, and cultural assets.

This is an honor I believe others should have as well. To start this holiday season off with a good step toward conservation and creating new traditions, I am gifting several Kentucky State Parks Foundation supporter memberships to a handful of friends. It is a simple gesture of friendship and caring, to my friends and the state parks we love to visit. If you are like I am and enjoy exploring all that Kentucky is, I encourage you to visit Kentucky's State Parks and become a member of the Kentucky State Park Foundation. It is a tradition I am proud to pass along to my friends and family. I wish you the happiest of holiday season and a wonderful new year to come.

Sincerely,
Michael Bradley