

**Noted Author, Susan Freinkel,  
Highlights 3rd West Virginia Chestnut Festival  
October 10, 2010**

Noted author, **Susan Freinkel**, from San Francisco, California, set the tone for the all-day Chestnut Festival on Sunday, October 10, 2010. Her award winning 2007 American Chestnut book, The Life, Death, and Rebirth of a Perfect Tree, was one of the centerpieces of the Festival, as Ms. Freinkel, performed book signings throughout the day's events. Visitors to the Festival were varied, from throughout the State and coming from Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and as far away as California.

The festive day began with a morning **Continental Breakfast** in the River City Café, at which time everyone had a chance to meet and chat with the celebrity California author, **Susan Freinkel**.

**Park Festivities.** Imagine **Perry Como** singing, "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" and you will have an image of this delightful event. For those who like to shop for bargains, there were several vendors displaying numerous small and large furniture items of "wormy chestnut wood," many of them collector's items. One of the largest displays was by **Charles and Randall Wotring**. Those wanting to purchase **chestnut saplings** were not disappointed as **Lynn and Travis Jennings** gave you a choice of American, Hybrids, and Chinese. A special treat by **John and Martha Slawter** were the selling of jars of "chestnuts-in-honey," a tasty treat. Professor **Charles Sypolt**, WV Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, displayed a highly informative booth on the historic American Chestnut Tree, including present research endeavors and Hybrid Chestnut Orchards. At the Park Center Stage, giving excellent performances, were **Barbara Freeman**, nationally recognized storyteller and **Jim Savarino**, guitarist and folk singer.

**Scientific Presentations.** Professor **Mark Double**, Plant Pathologist, and one of WVU's **science wizards**, directed the one-hour professional science and history program, attended by a standing room crowd in a large classroom, across from the Park in the Szilagyi Center. The audience was not disappointed, as Professor **Mark Skousen** reported on the latest and encouraging plantings of American Hybrid Chestnut Saplings and others, on reclaimed surface mine land. Skousen was followed by Emeritus Professor **Ken Carvell**, who relayed what life was like during the grandeur times of the great American Chestnut Tree in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Harttung Nassif presented an updated version of his well-received DVD American Chestnut Documentary.

Another aspect of the educational venture was the youth poetry, on the American Chestnut Tree. These original poems, written by enthusiastic **Rowlesburg Middle School students, supervised by James Davis**, were posted on the auditorium wall, for all to enjoy.

**Banquet Dinner.** The banquet dinner was not to be missed as the very tasty food was prepared by **Maggie DeWeirdt** and the **“Rowlesburg Chefs”** with most of the dishes intermingled with Chestnut flavorings, from chopped nuts to puree, and ended with delicious ice cream, served with a chestnut-carmel topping. **Dr. William MacDonald and Professor Nora MacDonald**, WVU Fashion Designer, were honored as **Mr. and Mrs. Chestnut**, 2010, and were crowned by **Bryan Burhans, President and CEO of The American Chestnut Foundation**, headquartered in Asheville, North Carolina. **Dr. MacDonald** is one of the nation’s leading researchers at WVU on attempts to eliminate the “chestnut blight,” and restore this once mighty American Chestnut Tree to Appalachia Land.

Exciting entertainment was provided by **Barbara Freeman**, professional storyteller, **The Preston High Madrigals**, and **Jim Savarino** on guitar, vocalizing uplifting poetic lyrics on the great American chestnut tree, a premiere. **Susan Freinkel**, the after-dinner speaker, gave a 25 “slide” passionate presentation on the plight of the Great American Chestnut Tree and how all of us can contribute to restoring this mighty giant to its former glory as the **“Redwood of the East.”** Everyone waited until the end of the affair in order to find out who would win the raffle, a “statuesque, four foot tall American Eagle carved in chestnut wood” by Walter Shaver – the lucky and very proud family, was **Michael and Carol Ann Hooton**, from Frederick, MD.

**It would be remiss** not to mention the favorable comments concerning this year’s festival, beginning with **WVU’s Mark Double**: *“The scientific program provided a truly great exchange of information from the speakers to the enthusiastic audience. Maggie and her staff are to be congratulated on their Banquet culinary skills. Susan Freinkel delighted her audience with the story of the chestnut blight, and its effect upon a large segment of farm people. Additionally, several people told me that they had no inkling they could have such a lovely and relaxed time in charming Rowlesburg. Congratulations to RRC on another successful event.”*

In closing, it is only appropriate to add another quote from the **CEO of The American Chestnut Foundation, Bryan Burhans**: *“Set against the backdrop of Rowlesburg’s surrounding, majestic mountains, the Festival celebrates the role of the American Chestnut in our Country’s history: Great Festival, great people, great town, great tree.”*

**Acknowledgements:** *The 2010 Chestnut Festival organizers and volunteers were Shirley Hartley, Co-Chairperson, Kathleen Wolfe, RRC, Inc. Chair, Margaret Schollar, Anna Nassif, Jean Wolfe, Dolores and Paul Riggs, P.L Grimm, George Nassif, Lee Waybright, Maggie De Weirdt, Elma Leaman, Roxanne and Eric Bautista, Helen Jane Cline, Doris Rooks, Dallas Wolfe, II, Helen Edmonds, Bruce Simon, Thomas H. Nassif, Jennifer Goff, Jennifer Loughry, James Davis, and many others. We thank our scientific chestnut professors, our patrons and donors for their generosity and for their support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual WV Chestnut Festival, especially WV Fairs and Festivals, and Morgantown Convention and Visitor’s Bureau,*