



Main St. Buckhannon, WV, and the Upshur County Courthouse;

Photo Credits for Buckhannon and WVWC Photos and thanks go to Mayor Robbie Skinner

The author, who will speak in the first person below, has been reading WV county articles in “The WV Lawyer” for many years. Most are focused on the county courthouse and county history. He has been asked to personalize Upshur County from the “perspective of a small-town lawyer.”

He does so as a West Virginia Wesleyan Graduate, who met his wife of 52 years at the “Freshman Mixer” in 1964, and as a lawyer who returned to Buckhannon with two of our four children (two more born here) on July 4, 1976 after service in the USAF JAG Corp. It is a personal description of an adult lifetime career in Upshur County and its surrounds and the academic and cultural influences of this rural WV county and county seat.

If you want a “history” of Upshur County, he urges you to read the article on Upshur County in The WV Encyclopedia authored by local historian and folklorist, Noel Tenney. It is authoritative. [e-WV | Upshur County \(wvencyclopedia.org\)](http://www.wvencyclopedia.org)

For insights into the history of WV Wesleyan College, and its philosophy of teaching, learning, building character, and its approach to technology, he suggests that you peruse the table of contents of the WVWC Catalog: <https://tinyurl.com/y2cpm54z>.



West Virginia Wesleyan College Campus, from the cupola. Wesley Chapel and Admin Bldg. in the Background

When I, Burt, interviewed my old friend, Bob Skinner, retiring Senior Adviser to the President of WVWC, and father of Mayor Robbie Skinner, he quoted from the “history” in the WV Wesleyan on-line catalog, above:

“West Virginia Wesleyan College offers the ... facilities to create an environment suited for teaching and learning. The elegant steeple and classic Georgian design of Wesley Chapel set the architectural style of the campus, while a partnership with Dell ... provide(s) a student purchase computing program...”

WV Wesleyan College, which opened as a college in 1890, is fully accredited and highly regarded in the Eastern Region and among WV institutions of higher learning.



Aerial View of WVWC Campus as the 1964 College Brochure Promised! "Our Home Among the Hills".

Here is the link to the WV Encyclopedia article on Buckhannon, with links to other resources:

[e-WV | Buckhannon \(wvencyclopedia.org\)](http://wvencyclopedia.org/Buckhannon)

I knew nothing of the history of Buckhannon/Upshur in 1963. My knowledge of this area came from several stays at the WV State 4-H Camp, Jackson's Mill, in Jane Lew, Lewis County. But, as my parents drove us into the green hills of Upshur for my college visit, I felt as if I were coming home. Our "tour guide", Peter Weaver, became my fraternity brother and Bishop of the Eastern Region of the United Methodist Church.

I was born in Wheeling, Ohio County, WV, and my wife, the former Nancy Lynne Goodfellow, was born in Fairfield Ct. We chose Wesleyan for similar reasons. We were United Methodist kids who preferred a small college experience in order to get "a liberal education".

Nancy learned of WVWC from her high school guidance counselor. After visiting the WVU and Pitt campuses, I realized that Wesleyan's campus was much closer to my high school small campus at Linsly Military Institute than to those schools. And the college brochure showed a projected view of the campus nearly identical to the photo immediately above.

Nancy and I married in 1969. "Fast forward" three years in Morgantown and law school and four years at Griffiss Air Force Base, Rome NY, and, in 1975, after visiting classmate Bill Garrett in Webster Springs, one of us said the fateful words, "**I wouldn't mind raising our children here.**"!

We drove into town the following July 4th, 1976, during the Bi-Centennial celebration, with Burt as a new associate in the husband-and-wife law firm of Rexroad and Rexroad. David and Lynne remain friends to this day.

We found a very welcoming town; a nice rental house just over The Poe Bridge, our church, and later our church choir of 25 years. The town was small enough that a person could feel he or she was making a difference.

We learned, by being part of it, and by learning what makes a good small-town rural community. The churches, organizing “personal computer fairs”, and “Peoples’ Law Schools” sponsored by the WV State Trial Lawyers, Burt’s 20 years on the Board of WV Bancorp, NA Buckhannon, Nancy’s Buckhannon Junior Women’s Club, The YWCA, The Upshur County Senior Center Board, The Rotary Club, Regional Library Board, United Way Board, Family Resources Network Board, Upshur Arts Alliance, Chamber of Commerce, and our daughter’s music performance. We coached youth soccer for kids who eventually become a powerhouse that won an “unofficial” and 3 “official” state high school championships.

Five years ago, Nancy and “Pop Pop”, and grandson Jack walked around town on a “Festival Friday”, seeing people along the way and speaking to many of them. Finally, Jack asked, “Grandma, does Pop Pop know everyone in town?” Her answer? “Almost everyone Jack.” And so it seemed.

Festival Fridays, sponsored by “Create Buckhannon” are held during warm weather in Jawbone Park. There are food vendors, produce, crafts, friends, and music! Jawbone is part of a complex that includes other parks, flowers everywhere, and The River Walk and Dog Park which blend with the WVWC campus. Nothing is sweeter than a River Walk with the Wesleyan Chimes coming from the steeple of Wesley Chapel.

Most West Virginians have heard of our Annual Strawberry Festival, which we have been celebrating every spring for over 75 years, until this year. Its myriad activities and parade draw over 50,000 people!

The City of Buckhannon, in collaboration with Art26201 and other community groups, has purchased, and is renovating, the former Colonial Theater as an art and music center. We have an active community theater group. Upshur is the home of the WV Wildlife Center, and Audra State Park (Barbour Co.) is “in our backyard”.

As idyllic as Buckhannon can seem on a warm spring or cool summer evening, there are a few “down sides”. A busy family lawyer makes enemies and gets threats. So, growing up, our children would sometimes take guff from children of people I had come up against, as would I, including having our office doors “super-glued” shut on the coldest morning of the year.

And a small, rural, community, with the mineral industry struggling and some businesses closing or moving away, meant that most clients are not “well-heeled”, and many need “that extra mile” when funds run low. These problems have been exacerbated by recent events.

Today, too many rural practitioners are over-worked and heavily dependent on the “court-appointed system”. There is no pretending these crises have not impacted our wonderful county and its people and made us less trusting and friendly.

With the interstate, billboards, the Internet, and television in the larger cities, a personal injury lawyer had better have a pretty good reputation and a willingness to self-promote. There is lots of competition for that work.

Neighbors in this rural county still look out for one another. Driveways are cleared of snow, holiday food dropped off, and calls made when the power goes out or weather gets extreme. Our “Parish House” is a center for food distribution and aid. Churches do their best but are struggling as populations age.

Nevertheless, for those who want a quintessential small-town experience, a visit or move to Buckhannon will not disappoint. You will be welcomed.



Autumn at Homecoming Time



Still Meadow Lane



Glady Fork, Buckhannon, WV