



The Region Record

Vol. XIV No. 3 Summer 2001

New Silers Gate Installed!

By Jim McConkey, Chairman, Sligo Grotto

For most of its almost 30 year history, the Sligo Grotto of the NSS has managed Silers Cave in the West Virginia panhandle near Martinsburg for the non-resident landowner. The property, roughly 15 miles west of Martinsburg, WV, consists of over 100 undeveloped acres, mostly wooded. Silers is a maze cave developed at the exposed junction of the Helderburg and Tonoloway limestone deposits and currently has over 8,200 feet of mapped passages, making it the 2nd largest cave in the panhandle of West Virginia and the longest accessible cave in the panhandle. The cave contains some formations, but is better known for its mud. It is the only known habitat for the cave amphipod *Stygobromus cooperi*, one of the reasons the management agreement has called for us to keep the cave gated. It is a great cave for both beginners and experienced cavers.

For years the gate on Silers has consisted of a chain-mounted manacle at the end of a 55 gallon drum at the bottom of a 15' pit. Vandals have repeatedly attacked the lock and chain using bolt cutters, saws and even a fire. As the suburbs of Martinsburg have grown over the years, so has the vandalism problem. When we reinforced the gate, vandals dug a new entrance. After we sealed the new entrance, the vandals again attacked the main gate, finally completely destroying it. Because of the increasing severity of the

vandalism we decided that it was time for a serious heavy metal gate which should hopefully foil even the most determined vandals for some time to come.

Craig Hindman and myself designed the new gate to simultaneously address several concerns. Security was the most obvious requirement, but we also wanted to make the gate friendlier for cave rescues and we of course wanted to keep it as friendly as possible to our little winged friends who inhabit the cave. We further wanted to keep the land as natural as possible for the landowner.

We had several options for the placement of the new gate, each with their own merits and drawbacks. The old entrance lies at the bottom of a 15' pit that is about 4'x8' at the surface. Just below the surface is a nice solid ring of rock. A wooden ladder is permanently fixed in the pit, leading to the 55 gallon drum entrance at the bottom. The drum was partially set in rock and partially in concrete (before it was removed by vandals). It slopes slightly downward into the cave, and opening the lock was usually an exercise requiring the unlucky

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The Sherpa crew preparing to haul another load of gate steel up the hill to the Silers Cave entrance. The pieces were cut and partially prefabricated prior to bringing them to the cave. Folks quickly found that 3,800 pounds of steel and several hundred pounds of welding equipment was a LOT of material to haul up the hill.

The *Region Record*

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Regional Calendar

July 23-27, 2001 **2001 NSS Convention** in Mt. Vernon, KY

several caves during the day prior to the banquet.

Aug. 1 Deadline for submitting material for the Fall issue of the *Region Record*.

Spring, 2002 **Spring VAR meeting** to be hosted by the WVCC.

Aug 30 - Sep 3 **Old Timers Reunion** near Elkins, WV. You must be a TRA member. See additional information in this issue.

June 24-28, 2002 **2002 NSS convention** in Camden, Maine

Sep. 22 **Trout Rock Conser-Vacation**. Help clean up the NSS-owned Trout Rock caves in West Virginia. See flyer in this issue. (Originally scheduled for Oct. 13).

Aug. 4-8, 2003 **2003 NSS Convention** in Porterville, CA

Sept. 28-30 **Fall VAR meeting** to be hosted by RASS at their field station in Virginia. See flyer and preregistration form in this issue.

Sep 30 A **CCV business meeting** will immediately following the VAR business meeting. There will be a review of the past years happenings and the annual election.

Nov. 10 **WVCC annual banquet** at the Brier Inn in Lewisburg, WV. There will be led trips to

LIST YOUR CLUB EVENTS HERE!

If your club is hosting events of regional interest, send a notice to the *Region Record* editors and have the event added to the next *Record's* calendar. There is no charge for this valuable service.

Silers Cave Gate

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sole to stand on his or her head with snow melt running down their backs. Just on the other end of the barrel, the cave opened up into standing passage. The pit used to be more open, but it was filled many years back with an old car and lots of fill dirt.

Being the smallest opening, the old entrance was the obvious first possible location. It was quickly ruled out because of the difficulty in opening the lock. The size of the barrel had formerly been a limitation because a stretcher would not fit through, but the vandals have conveniently enlarged the opening for us. In addition, the fill at the bottom of the pit is just dirt and has been settling over the years, and will eventually open up ways around the barrel. The solid ring of rock at the top of the pit seemed a good next choice because it would provide both a good anchor and a natural barrier to digging, but it was also eliminated

because the simplest gate would have to be horizontal. Bats can easily fly through a vertical gate, but not through a horizontal gate. It would have been possible to assemble a cupola-type structure over the pit, which would have given the bats vertical walls to fly through, but this would have also been an eyesore and it could be considered an "attractive nuisance." Being on the surface, it would have also allowed easy access for come-alongs and other destructive tools. We finally settled on a vertical gate inside the current entrance. It would have to be a little larger than the other locations, but we had good rock to anchor to, the gate would be vertical for our flying friends, we could make the actual door in the gate as large as we wanted for rescues, and cavers could gather out of the elements while unlocking the gate. The only major disadvantages were the larger size, and that we had to also gate a smaller side passage.

The long awaited new gate at Silers Cave finally went in over the weekend of April 28-29, 2001. It

was a gorgeous weekend for an outdoor project, sunny and mid-70s, and the red buds were in full bloom. Craig and I had met several weeks earlier at the cave to take measurements and finalize the design. Craig purchased the steel wholesale and prefabricated most of the parts at work in his spare time. He hauled the nearly two tons of steel to the cave on a flatbed trailer loaned by his employer. We had 18 cavers from all over VAR show up to help, after appeals to all the local grottos and on the VARlist and Tristate list.

Murphy was with us all weekend. The generator we had been promised died shortly before the weekend and was still in the shop, so we had to rent one. One of our two main welders (people) had just started a new job and had to work the day of the project leaving us shorthanded. The welder (equipment) that was loaned to us turned out to be inadequate, so we had to rent another. The newly rented welder was supplied with the wrong plug to fit our generator (rented from the same place!), so a new plug was "improvised." The oxyacetylene rig we were using for cutting left for home five minutes before we discovered the door in the gate was too big and needed to be modified. Guano happens! We dealt with every twist of fate as it arose and just pressed on with the project.

Most of Saturday morning was spent hauling the equipment and nearly 40 pieces of steel about a ¼ of a mile up the hill to the cave. Most of the steel pieces were small enough to be carried by teams of two, but a few of the larger pieces required four person teams with slings. We broke for lunch, supplied by the project, and then got on with the actual construction. Even though the steel had been hauled up the hill to the cave, it still had to be belayed down into the pit and wrestled through the 1' x 1 ½' entrance. The welders got to work while the steel was taken into the



Craig Hindman, (also known as "Weldo") welding the gate together inside the cave. The longest horizontal rod is over 8 feet long and Craig used about 30 pounds of welding rod to assemble the gate. The spacing between the bars is carefully measured to allow bats to fly through but to stop humans.

cave. By late afternoon, all the steel was in the cave and many of our helpers departed for home. The welders kept at it until well into the evening and the main gate started to actually look like a gate. The Cricket Maze Cave Association graciously hosted several of the helpers for the night at their cabin, which is within walking distance of Silers, and we had dinner for anyone who stayed.

Sunday morning the gate construction resumed with a greatly diminished crew. Almost all of the work was now being done underground, so we did not require surface support. The main gate was completed by early afternoon, and work was begun on the smaller secondary gate. The secondary gate was finished up around 6 PM, and we all started to haul the gear back down the hill. We finally all left the property about 7, but we will had to stop and give the rental equipment to a local caver who we convinced to return the stuff on Monday morning (thanks!). We left the cave with brand new bat- and rescue- and caver-friendly gate to protect it.

We'd like to think that this is the last of our gate troubles at Silers, but we know better! We still expect some digging attempts, and they will be dealt with as they arrive. Most of the possible dig sites in the entrance area would require massive digging to properly seal anyway, so we have decided to let the vandals do the work for us! The gate at Silers has traditionally been an ongoing project, and we fully expect the tradition to continue.

After co-hosting the fall VAR at Friars Hole a couple years back, the Sligo and Baltimore Grottos earmarked the profits for the new Silers gate. The final accounting is not yet complete, but project expenses will total about \$1,200, including all parts, materials, equipment and food. I would like to thank both grottos for throwing their profits into a hole in the ground, and would also like to

encourage other grottos to do the same! I would also like to heartily thank all of the volunteers who helped out! You know who you are.

The long-standing agreement with the landowner limits access to Silers to two trips a month; first come, first served. All trips must be led by competent cavers. Youth groups are permitted with proper leadership, but there is absolutely no access for cave-for-pay operations. Reservations can be made by e-mailing SilersCave@MailAndNews.com. E-mail impaired cavers can call Jim McConkey at 410-526-6224. If you just want to check on the current schedule, send a blank message with the subject "Just checking" for an automatic reply of the current access policy and the latest bookings. For more information on the cave and more photos of the gate project, visit the Sligo Grotto web site at <http://sligogrotto.batcave.net>.

Chairman's Column

If you missed the last VAR held at Cumberland Gap, you missed a lot.

This was a VAR of first's. The first VAR held in a downtown urban area. Camping in the city park, on main street. The entire town turned out for Drunken Sadie's Festival and yard sale. People came from around the tri-state area. This was the first VAR broadcast by a radio station. There cannot be enough good things said about the town, the police and fire departments or the town folks, who welcomed us into their lives for the weekend. It was a job well done by the people of Pine Mountain Grotto, who hosted this meet.

There has been a lot going on in the region, all by volunteers. From the Siler's gating project, Grand Caverns cleanup and formation restoration, cleanups at Bowden,

Island Ford and the Sinkhole From Hell. The amount of hours donated by those who have and will probably continue to volunteer for these and other conservation efforts, is greatly appreciated by the region.

Looking ahead with something to think about: There are more and more Conservancies competing to purchase caves, and asking for funding and at the same time there are caver friendly people competing with these conservancies to purchase the same caves, and there are cavers competing with the above to purchase the same property. Anyone of which would protect the resource, while maintaining access. This may be one time when competition may not be good for all concerned. I understand the need to play the cards close to one's vest while negotiating with the seller. But is this good, in the long run, for all the above, when it's time to fund these purchases?

Craig

WVCC Purchases Lightners Entrance to McClungs Cave

by J. C. Fisher

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC) has purchased the Lightners Entrance to McClungs Cave in Greenbrier County, WV. In February, Conservancy President Ed Swepston announced the entrance; surrounding eleven acres and roadway were purchased on February 20, 2001 after several weeks of negotiations. McClungs Cave is a seventeen plus mile cave system located in Greenbrier County, WV. The cave has been popular with cavers from all over the country for many years

although the Lightners Entrance has been closed for some time. The Lightners Entrance is a vertical pit entrance over 60 feet deep making it accessible to only the skilled and trained vertical caver. The main entrance is the Historic McClungs Entrance, which is horizontal. WVCC has successfully managed the Historic entrance for the landowner for several years. Access through this entrance requires a permit issued by WVCC.

The Lightner's Entrance will be maintained in an "open" condition, and will be freely available to all experienced cavers, regardless of affiliation. WVCC's next step is to build an access road and parking area. This is scheduled for July. An informational Kiosk will be installed to provide visitors with important facts about the cave and surrounding area. Access to the Lightners Entrance is open, no permits or reservations are required. However, thru-trips beginning at either entrance will require a permit. No overnight camping will be allowed at this time. A complete cave management plan as well as membership information for WVCC can be accessed through our website, wvcc.net

WVCC properties leased, managed, or owned include Haynes Cave, Lobelia Saltpeter Cave, Rapps Cave, the Historic Entrance to McClungs Cave, and our newest acquisition Island Ford Cave in Virginia.

WVCC is a non-profit corporation dedicated to "Preserving the cave and karsts resources of West Virginia for future generations" The \$50,000 purchase of the Lightner Entrance was partially funded by donations and through unrestricted funds on hand and loans. WVCC is in need of help to raise the necessary amount to retire this debt. WVCC is a recognized 501(c)(3) corporation making your donation a tax deduction. Membership is open to any

interested party. The "Cave Conservancy of the Virginias" has donated \$10,000 and offered to match an additional \$10,000 in new donations. Donations can be sent to WVCC P.O. Box 243 Frankford, WV. 24938

The following individuals and groups have made specific donations to the Lightner Entrance Purchase:

Pam Tegelman	\$50
Kenneth Huffines	100
Brant & Kammy Johnson	25
John Pearson	500
Tri-State Grotto	500
Mark Stover	20
Walt Pirie	50
Northern New Jersey Grotto	100
J. Kirk Holzapfel	50
Dogwood City Grotto	100
WVASS	100
Chris, Treah & Doug Boyer	100
Michigan Interlakes Grotto	100
Morgan Sanitation, Inc.	1,000
Battlefield Area Troglodyte Society	100
Mark Folsom	50
Michael Manke	25
C. W. Maus	110
Pauline Apling	100
R. Keith Dunlap	100
Delbert & June Dawson	50
Blue Ridge Grotto	350
Monongahela Grotto	50
Dave & Mary Sue Socky	300
Albert Stewart	100
Commander Cody Caving Club	20
Michael Dale	5
Don Anderson	20
New River Valley Grotto	100
Frederick Grotto	150
Shawangunk-Catskill Area Grotto	100
Amos A. Mincin	10
Anonymous	1,000
Bill Balfour	100
Central New Jersey Grotto	120
Carolyn Zangara & Kevin Psarianos	50
VPI Cave Club	2,396

Potomac Speleological Club	500
The Robertson Assoc.	2,805
DC Grotto	350
David Warren	50
Marianne Locke	200
Cave Conservancy of the Virginias	10,000
June 2, 2001 Total	\$22,106

Postscript: As this issue was going to press the WVCC received a letter from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias (CCV) stating that they are offering to match up to \$10,000 in new donations to WVCC for the purchase of the Lightners Entrance. They call this the "CCV Challenge Grant" and it is good until March 2002 or \$10,000 in new donations has been received.

Warren County Survey Update

by Janet Tinkham

Last year, 2000, is when the Front Royal Grotto formally began the Warren County Survey Project. There were a number of motivators that prompted us toward beginning the survey. After being involved in a few local projects such as the Riverside Karst Study and the resurvey of Skyline Caverns, we realized that we should take a closer look at what our county has to offer. Also, VDOT had submitted a proposal for the widening of Route 340 between Front Royal and Luray, VA and we really needed to locate and be aware of what karst features were along this limestone corridor.

We began the project by researching and collecting information that had been previously documented on Warren County caves. Phil Lucas was instrumental in our quest, advising

us of what was on file with the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS). We also looked through any literature that referenced Warren County Caves, which included Caves of Virginia books, *SpeleoDigests* and, most importantly, issues of the *DC Speleograph* and *Potomac Caver* that dated back to the 1950's.

Most of the information that we've collected dates back to the 1950's and 1960's crediting a core group of DC area cavers with the original documentation of many of the Warren County caves. A few of the names that appear most frequently are Marguerite Klein, Paul Damon, and Tom Tucker. Most of the maps that have been drawn were done so in the 1960's and are credited to Tony Marchi, Clarence Cook, Jr., and Bobby Cook, all Warren County residents at the time.

What we've been doing is locating the caves that are known, updating their GPS data and descriptions if necessary, and surveying the ones that haven't been mapped yet. The problem that we ran into in the beginning is having plenty of instrument people, but few sketchers. After Bob Hoke came up last August and conducted an Intro to Sketching class for us, we've had more people willing to give sketching a try.

Many changes have taken place over the last 40 years or so since the first cave discoveries were made in Warren County. Sadly, with the sale of farmland and development moving in, we've found that some of the caves have been filled in. On the brighter side there have been some new discoveries, small, but significant enough for documentation.

Even though documented Warren County caves only total approximately 3 miles of passage and average 213 ft per cave (1998 VSS report), we value every one. I agree with Greg Springer's article

"In Defense of Small Caves", (May 2001, *NSS News*) which states that small caves may have merits far larger than their actual dimensions. In some of the caves, discoveries have been made of important biological, prehistoric and historical significance.

The Warren County Survey has been a fun project to take on. One of the most enjoyable aspects is hearing the stories from the old timers who were around when many of the caves were first discovered. Their childhood memories of exploration, and the historical significance of some of the caves is all part of the information we're collecting in our files. If there are any cavers who explored Warren County in the past, and have pictures or stories to share, we would be grateful. Of particular interest is Rogers Belmont, which has been closed for many, many years. Since it is rumored to be the largest "wild" cave in Warren County, any pictures, trip reports, etc. are of special interest to us. As always, anyone is welcome to take part in the Warren County Survey Project, just give us a call!

Your Grotto Can Do It Too

by O Yellow Hat (Jim West)

Fellow grottos of the VAR, you too can host a Spring or Fall event. It only takes some work, and if all in the grotto pitch in, not much work for any one person. If we can do it out here in Gods country in the western regions of the area, then you too can do it up there in the middle of VAR. Yah, I have heard the word that, "Cumberland Gap, that's west of Detroit City". Well we have hosted two now and have made the grotto a little extra for our treasury to boot. Here are the

particulars from the Spring VAR just completed that might shed some light for you to think about.

For starters here was our pricing for the event. Pre-registration was at \$20.00 for the first of the family, and \$15.00 for the second family member (only one guidebook would then be given to a family). At the door, it was \$25.00 and \$15.00. As some know, we had been in contact with the Cumberland Gap National Park for nine months prior to the event, and had been told that we could hold the event as we had done for Fall VAR 1997. With a couple of differences in now we would have to pay for the camping and the pavilion. But with only one month to go, upon contacting them to set up a time I could meet with their electrician to hook up the breaker box for the vendor power from the bathhouse, we were hit with, "You can't have vendors in the campground". This was unacceptable, if the vendors could not be with the cavers; we couldn't hold it at the Parks campground. We had three options at that point and thanks to the good people (235 residents) of Cumberland Gap, we were able to pull off I think a great little VAR. That was option one, with LMU campus number two and John Taylor's house as number three. As it turned out, I think it was a blessing in disguise, for the town council members and Fire department worked with us to hold the event. The only problem that was not fully overcome was adequate showers, but they were available for those that wanted them. The Fire department had one open to us, and some I guess went over to the Park campground for quick in and out affair. Let's get back to the particulars of the event.

Revenue from the event was as follows: \$3,372 was taken in. Vendors were not charged a fee, but were asked to donate \$5.00 to the fire department for their Crazy Aunt Sadies's yard sale. By the way I want to thank those three

vendors that did show up for the event. Grotto members that attended and worked were also charged just \$10.00 (\$3.00 to VAR and \$7.00 figured for the Saturday meal). The total was from registration and T-shirt sales. Registration was as follows: 116 total were registered, but we had hoped and planned for 200. Of the 116, 19 were grotto members. We had about 50 pre-register for the event.

Expenses were as follows: Guide book--\$580.21, T-shirts--\$835.20 (We ordered 108 total shirts and have 25 left over to sell-also 40 of the 108 had staff on them and grotto members bought 30 of those -- price to all was \$13.00 a shirt), 4 Porte johns--\$240.00, Ice-- \$49.50, Food purchased from Pic-Pac grocery for 200 people--\$618.57 (We had a hamburger bar and fixing menu and got a trailer type grill donated to use for cooking that was gas fired, we ordered food to feed 200 so had plenty for those there to eat.), Pavilion rental--\$350.00 (owner also lets us use the Morrison lot for the camping), Paid VAR 116X 3.00--\$348.00, 3 kegs of beer--\$195.00(one Friday night emptied and two Saturday night at meal and after not drunk up- cavers are slipping for could not empty two kegs. Probably one would have been enough), and Misc.--\$13.50. That totals \$3,229.98. So the bottom line is we still made \$142.02 and have \$325.00 worth of T-shirts to sell. From the 97 VAR we sold those t-shirts to new members that wanted grotto shirts. So we should sell the rest for a profit to the grotto of \$467.00. Now on only 116 people registered that's a great return for the grotto.

So I hope this article will inspire other grottos to line up and put on a VAR, its great fun and when all is done a rewarding feeling for putting one on. My only hope for you that if you do take the opportunity to host an event, have plenty of led cave trips to offer those that attend. Of the 97 cavers

that attended our event 70 were on led trips, 14 Friday and 56 on Saturday. We offered 2 led trips on Friday, and 8 trips on Saturday. Also we had 7 self led trips available, with one on Sunday for those heading back up east. Don't know if any took advantage of the Sunday trip, but it was a nice well decorated cave if they did.

I thank all those that attended and made the Spring VAR 2001 a success and I hope you all had a great time in Cumberland Gap. To all the rest of the grottos of the region, jump in there and reserve your slot for a VAR. For if you don't, we will have to go for another one, and you will have to again travel west of Detroit for another great time in our neck of the woods. And by the way we have traveled your way lots of years on those long 6 to eight hour trips Friday evening to go caving on a led trip in your neck of the woods. If you have comments, questions, and want further advise and ideas or other information email me at oyellowhat@aol.com. See you at Fall VAR hosted by RASS in October is my hope.

Bowden Cave Cleanup Trip - April 7, 2001

by Pauline Apling

Bowden Cave, located about 10 miles east of Elkins, West Virginia, is one of the Region's most visited and abused caves. It is well known easy to locate, and close to the road, so it seems to be a popular destination for the beer party and spray paint crowd. The Region tries to have a grotto sponsor a cleanup trip each quarter to keep the cave looking reasonably presentable.

There was a major cleanup in April, 2000 to prepare the cave for the NSS Convention and it was in good shape after that effort. This

year we wanted to concentrate on the back part of the cave, which was not cleaned before the convention.

We had over 50 people attend the Bowden Cave Cleanup Trip, which was hosted by DC Grotto and Tri-State Grotto. We had two groups of Boy Scouts and a number of cave groups represented including Tri-State, DC Grotto, PSC, Western Maryland Grotto, James River Grotto and the Monongahela Grotto. Thanks also to the Monongahela for scheduling the road cleanup in conjunction with the cave clean up.

Bob Hoke led a large group into the Third entrance and out the Main entrance, cleaning up as they went. They found quite a bit of graffiti and some trash in the cave. J. C. Fisher and Judy Fisher led a group in the Main entrance where they found both graffiti and a full bag of trash, Dusty Gulden led a group in the Third entrance and out the Main entrance cleaning graffiti and trash on the way. Several other groups went in the Main entrance and the Bear Heaven entrance. We had no in cave injuries but I heard someone hurt or separated their shoulder outside the third entrance. Thanks to all the leaders and to everyone who participated and helped to clean one of the more interesting caves in West Virginia.

People who attended: Carrie Baker, Bob Gulden, Dusty Gulden, Irma Gulden, Bob Hoke, Mark Jefferson, Pauline Apling, Arthur Dunworth, Debbie Abt, Kyle Abt, Edgard Bertaut, Doug McCarty, Kevin Frick, Jeff Walaszek, Lloyd Steven, Ian Whibley, Steve Roach, Michael Roach, James Harman, Darren Sheppard, Richard Hartman, Colin Watson, Nehemiah Smith, Will Clark, Justin Crouse, J.C. Fisher, Judy Fisher, Bob Robins, Mary Anne Robins, Ken Robins, Chuck Stanley, Bob Bennett, Doyle Garvin, Doug Brown, Greg Turner, Chuck Waller, Andrew Turner, Joe Flaig, Andy Privee, Mike Kubatz,

Ralph Doc Allen, Cathy Gray, Linda Robinell, Louise Neu, Kentucky Jack, Ed Siliezar, Patricia Whyd, Peggy Bridges, and about 5 others that I missed for the list.

Virginia Area Region or VAR

O Yellow Hat
alias Jim West

VAR for short has probably had the greatest influence, best regional caving, and some of my fondest memories in my twelve years of caving. Somebody in the grotto said we are coming up on our tenth anniversary of Pine Mountain Grotto and this put me to looking over the past twelve years and reflecting on this time spent. Outside of my wonderful marriage and the memories of wife, kids, and family these last twelve years have been the best time of my life. Hey they say "Life begins at 40". But for me life began at 45, for that is when my dear wife, Linda, was going to Union College to finish up her undergraduate degree, and told me about one John C. Taylor and a wilderness outing to a wild cave. That was before she went on to finish a Labor Relations Master and Doctor of Law degree. Ya got it, just one trip and I was hooked for good on that old cave mud. As the bumper sticker says on my van, "I have mud in my blood". For me, I see caving liken to the early explorers, and that need to see what is over yonder hill, or the sea calling you to a lifelong adventure. My ancestors on my Mothers side where sea going men and ship captains from New England. In fact one, a ship captain, held the sailing record around the Cape to San Francisco. It is told the he bet another captain that he could beat him there. And when he won, the other captain said he had a better ship. So he traded ships with this

captain and beat him back to New England. And when you think of it caving is exploring the unknown. Those that have had their greatest experiences would probably tell you of the virgin cave they found, where they had gone where no other human had gone or no other person had stepped. And from what has happened in just this last two years VAR still has these kinds of experiences and adventures. You just got to go out and do it. There are still caves to find in the Virginia's and plenty of Virgin passage to find in those not fully explored.

Let me get back to what VAR has meant to me. Due to the peer pressure of JT, I made my first VAR, and fell in love with these Spring and Fall gatherings of the Virginia Area grottos. What got me was the led cave trips to see caves in one day what took years for someone to explore. The caves and passage that VAR events have shown me, I could not find or explore, if I had another thirty years to do it in. Other events have led trips, but I think over the years VAR events have done it the best, and more consistently better than other events. It was at VAR events that I met some of the best cave mappers of the East, and maybe the NSS community. Fellows like Our Tom, Bill, Phil and others were doing things I wanted to do. And by the way let's hope Tom's health improves, so he can enjoy again his passion for mapping. Tom, you are sorely missed by many others and me. And because of them I found a true passion to map caves.

This leads to the why in the reason that PMG is now hosting and involved with VAR. As I have told some, "That if, at my age, I found and mapped a cave, I didn't want to find out that another had mapped it years ago." And this in fact has become true. JT and I in 1994 were shown a sinkhole in Lee County, that took five years to map, and to date seven years of my life has evolved around Cavin Cave.

Because of the VSS, JT and I knew what we had found was not known by the caving community up to this point. And Cavin has given me my best caving memories. And to think I would have given the greatest portion of my caving life to a project and find another had been there first and already have done it would be devastating. Kentucky, as of this writing has no Official State cave survey, like that of Virginia or West Virginia. This is sad, but true, and I can see why it has not come to be. So, because Phil Lucas and the VSS who worked with me and others of the grotto, we have pushed the grotto to become involved with the VAR region. Also as PMG's only Chair in their ten year existence, I have had some influence. If they don't like it, they have had their chances to put another in the Chair. But like other jobs in the VAR, it seems that you just grow into a job that they don't let you out of, or get rid of you. But I guess if I didn't love it, I could raise a stink, and they would get rid of me. I keep insisting they hold elections, just to give them the chance, but after ten years, if they did I probably would be heart broken to get voted out. Not really, but if you want it, ya got it.

To those who host the future VAR's, lead your fellow cavers to your best caves and show them your wonders, for that is why they come and love you for doing it. And I, like most, will probably never again set foot in the caves you show me. And I thank you for letting me see a portion of your beautiful sites where the Sun don't shine.

I hope in this short article you can feel the passion I have for caving in general, specifically mapping, and what VAR has been to my short twelve years in doing what I could have been doing for forty as some have. I only hope that I have another good twenty years to cave and enjoy the wonders God has made in the underground. And to those who have their significant

other along to enjoy it with them, I envy you both. My wonderful wife is claustrophobic even in elevators and says every bug and bird on earth hates her. So to the Ken and Lisa's, or the Judy and JC's, or the Tim and Anya's, and other couples out there, you are truly blest and envied. As chair of Pine Mountain grotto I sincerely hope you will take full advantage of the cave trips we here offer you. They are some of the best we can offer, and we think will cover all aspects of the caving experiences. Have fun and cave safely and softly is our wish. And, if you see Old Yellow Hat at future VAR's you know he is having a ball and Loving every moment he has left to go under the earth before he is planted down there for good. See ya in a cave!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Subscription Expiring? Check your mailing label

Please check the mailing label on this issue to see if your subscription to the *Region Record* is expiring. If the top lines says "200106" or before, then this will probably be your last issue.

You can either subscribe to the *Record* (for a paltry \$3.00 per year) or attend a VAR meeting. Attending a VAR meeting automatically entitles you to the next four issues at no additional cost.

New Contact for Sinnett-Thorn Cave

by Bob Hoke

Pat Bingham has replaced Duane Thompson as the coordinator for access to the popular Sinnett-Thorn Cave System in Pendleton County, West Virginia. The procedures for getting the combination to the gate remain the same except for the new contact numbers. The following is the current information for Sinnett from the VAR Limited Access Cave list:

Closed 1 Apr - 15 Sep (bats). Contact Sinnett-Thorn Cave Conservancy at stcave@hotmail.com or (540)-752-0684 for access info. Phone ONLY between 9:00 am and 8:00 pm. E-mail is preferred. Waiver is mandatory. DO NOT CONTACT THE OWNER!

Next *Region Record* Deadline is August 1

The deadline for submitting material for the Fall issue of the *Region Record* is August 1, 2001. Please send any material that is of regional interest to the address on page 2.

Old Timers Reunion ♦ OTR 2001 ♦ Informational Update

OTR 2001

The 52nd Old Timers Reunion will be held Thursday, August 30, **12 Noon** – Monday, September 3, 2001 at the TRA/OTR campsite. To attend OTR you must either be a TRA member or a guest of a TRA member.

TRA/OTR Website – www.otr.org

Check the website to stay informed on the upcoming event, including a schedule of work weekends at the site.

2001 Theme – OTR 2001 -FreeDaFun

Wow! Need we say more? It's 2001, folks! Think Cavers! Think *Alien* Cavers – oooooo! Think Star Wars! Think Galactic! Put it all together for the Doo-Dah Parade, the Saturday night party, the campsite decorations! Whatever! Get together with your grotto buddies and share your creativity for all the caving world to see!

TRA Membership

TRA membership costs \$10 for a Lifetime Membership. To join, you must be a caver in good standing, sponsored by a TRA member, or be a family member of a TRA member. For further information, you also have three options -- go to the OTR/TRA website at www.otr.org, contact Tim Brown, TRA Membership Coordinator at his e-mail address, tim@timcoinc.net, or send a SASE by August 1st for information to Tim at: 57051 Marietta Rd., Byesville, OH 43723. NOTE - TRA memberships are not available at OTR. To apply for membership, your completed TRA membership application must be received by Tim no later than August 15th, ... so get cracking.

IMPORTANT!!!! Early Arrivals IMPORTANT!!!!

DON'T!!! Unless you are listed on the official OTR staff or TRA worker list, please plan your arrival at the OTR site for anytime **after 12 Noon on Thursday**. Early arrivers will be advised of other campgrounds or the local Walmart (if it's early Thursday) that they can go to until the official opening of OTR at 12 Noon. We are not prepared to offer accommodation prior to 12 Noon on Thursday. Please respect this timeframe.

Pet Policy

Pets are not permitted at the OTR site during the week of the Old Timers Reunion. Sadly, it is a fact that the few irresponsible pet owners have made it difficult for those pet owners who appropriately care for their pets. With limited space, the campsite has enough animals of the 2-legged homo sapien brand as it is. Check the website for a list of kennels in the area.

2001 OTR Registration Fee Schedule

Arrival Day *	TRA Member		Non-Member	
	ADULT	JUNIOR	CHILD	GUEST
	18+	12-17	3-11	
Thursday	\$25	\$22	\$12	add \$15
(Opens @ 12 Noon)				
Friday	\$23	\$20	\$10	add \$15
Saturday **	\$21	\$17	\$ 7	add \$15
Sunday **	\$15	\$14	\$ 6	add \$15

*Day starts at 4:00 a.m.- there is NO Pre-Registration
Infants (Under 3 Years of Age) are FREE

** Registration closes at 6:00 p.m.-DON'T BE LATE!!

Day Passes

Passes are good for the day purchased until 6:00 p.m. to visit with caving friends. Passes do not permit the bearer to attend the evening OTR party festivities or to camp on the site. If you'd like to stick around past dusk, purchase a regular registration.

OTR Guests

Guests are most welcome at OTR when invited and sponsored *at registration* by a TRA member who then becomes responsible for that guest. TRA members can sponsor up to 2 adult guests. Guests of all ages, except infants, pay the regular registration fee PLUS a \$15 Guest surcharge. Family companions 18 years of age & over are considered guests. TRA members should choose their guests carefully – invite only cavers!

Children of TRA Members

Accompanying children of TRA members up to the age of 17 are not considered guests and thus do not pay the Guest surcharge. As stated above, family companions 18 years of age & over are guests. **To avoid this charge, join The Robertson Association (TRA) before OTR as a lifetime family dependent for \$10.** Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children at Old Timers. If you choose to party hardy yourself, give the kids a break and either leave them at home or bring along a responsible babysitter to watch over them at OTR. Misbehaving children are treated the same as anyone else at OTR and therefore are subject to immediate removal if circumstances warrant.

Registration

18 & Over - BRING YOUR PHOTO ID to Registration.

Registration is open 24 hours from Noon, Thursday until 6:00 p.m. Saturday night, reopening at 8:00 a.m. Sunday and then closing at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday night for OTR 2001.

OTR accepts checks written in U.S. funds and U.S. banks. OTR charges \$15.00 for any returned check. Of course, OTR welcomes good ol' U.S. Andrew Jackson's and Abe Lincoln's any ol' time.

We realize you will have traveled a distance to attend OTR and will be anxious to locate your friends as soon as you arrive. Check the campground map at Registration where, if your buddies remembered to post it, you can locate your grotto campsite. Please be kind to the hard-working, dedicated OTR staff who welcome you. They're cavers – *just like YOU* -- volunteering *their* OTR hours to make *your* registration process and gate entry a bit easier.

If 18 or Over --BRING YOUR PHOTO ID to

Registration. The legal drinking age is 21 in West Virginia. You WILL need to prove your age with a valid photo/age ID when you register, even if you're 76 years young. If you do choose to drink OTR alcoholic beverages, don't share with persons under 21 as you, and the underage drinker, risk being tossed out of OTR.

If you plan to drink OTR alcoholic beverages on Saturday night, you MUST arrive before Registration closes. You will still be charged registration fee from the time of your arrival.

Overflow Camping

The overflow camp area in the SE quadrant is designed to welcome OTR's later arrivals. It opens in three stages that will be clearly marked on the signs at entrances to the camp area. The first area, the lower parameter, opens at 5:00 p.m. Thursday. The interior area opens next, at 12 Noon on Friday. The upper area adjacent to the public road will open at 5:00 p.m. Friday. If you plan to camp in that area, plan your arrival time accordingly.

To Volunteer or To Get Your Questions Answered, Go to the OTR/TRA Website at www.otr.org or Contact: FANG (aka Chris Kramer-Harnage) – 2001 *Galactic Goddess* (er' Chair) at batfang@aol.com or (703) 786-8894-leave message.

Reserving Camp Space - Space cannot be reserved or marked off prior to OTR's official opening. Markings found prior to then will be removed.

-- **OTR 2001** begins at **12 Noon** on **Thursday** --

Be considerate of your future neighbors after OTR commences-- tape off or reserve space sufficient only for your grotto's needs.

OTR Events - Each Old Timers' brings a host of new ideas, although the time-honored Doo-Dah Parade, Speleo-Olympics, Yard Sale, Speleo-Auction and other traditional OTR activities are planned as well. Schedule your arrival on Thursday for the ceremonial offering in celebration of OTR 2001. And don't forget to include the OTR 2001 star trekky-galactic-whatever theme in your campsite party decorations.

Speleo-Olympics - Contests begin on Friday @ 12 Noon and end Sunday @ 12 Noon. Depending on participation, contests will include: Vertical 30m Mechanical and 30m Knots, 10m Youth Mechanical Climb, Ladder Climb, Speleo-Obstacle Course, Beverage Drinking, Cave Quiz, Survey Course, Lamp Assembly, Sleeping Bag, Fun Run & Poster Contests. We'll also have a Grotto Competition Tug-A-War, an Orienteering Course, and a Boot Race 'round the campsite, so get in shape!

Kiddies Activities - TAFO's Julep Lady and Queen of Chili Nite, Kathy Forsythe, has planned a host of activities for the younger set on Friday and Saturday morning in the Party Pavilion. This is NOT a babysitting ruse - parents are actually encouraged to join in the fun!

Entertainment

Thursday night at 8:00 p.m., OTR 2001 will host a spectacular pyro ceremony at the bonfire. Plan your arrival to participate in this galactic event. Provide your own refreshments and visit with friends.

Some great music and dancing will keep the Party Pavilion bouncin' on Friday, Saturday and Sunday into the wee hours. If your ears are tender, ear plugs are supplied at the DJ booth.

There's also a stage setting at the Sauna/Hot Tub area for those who enjoy acoustic entertainment while in the buff. No set times, all musicians welcome!

Yard Sale - Bring along those roller blades you got under the tree four years ago and haven't yet tried on or that undersized pair of caving boots you've been hankering to take to Salvation Army. The proceeds are yours to keep. The fun begins at 9:00 a.m. Sunday morning in the Party Pavilion. You are your own cashier!

Speleo-Auction-Artifacts of all ages and descriptions will be accepted for Saturday's auction. OTR & the consignee share proceeds of all sales.

Vendors & Vendors Row - Space is available *by reservation only* for cave-related vendors along Vendors Row. Wednesday is set-up day for registered vendors. Food concessions are already pre-arranged and must have the appropriate health permits.

Contact Kelley Deem @ 304-725-9812 for information.

Stock up on all your caving needs at Old Timers from the most knowledgeable and equipped speleo vendors in the business. And pray that the weather gods are kind to us this OTR.

Postering the Porta Potties - Whoops! Fair Warning to All! No Can Do! The porta potty vendor says they'll charge us for stain damage done by colored paper and dripping ink, so ... plan accordingly. Post your flyers elsewhere. Take your own reading material into the potty! So sorry, but ALL signs will be removed from potties by the Potty Poster (that's "PP") Patrol.

Volunteers Needed!!!!!! - You've heard it before, but we'll say it again - OTR just doesn't happen without the volunteer hours put in by a whole lot of your fellow cavers. Give a couple of hours at Registration or at the Gate or on Security. Pitch in wherever you're needed. Involve your grotto. We'll all have a safer, smoother party!

Work Weekends - Dig out your hammer. Grab your gloves and some of your caving buddies. And come join the ever evolving crew of volunteers at the upcoming TRA Work Weekends scheduled for the first weekend in May, June, August & October. We'll find something for you to do! Check the website for scheduled work activities. But most important, do let us know you're coming! Contact Kelley Deem at (304) 725-9812 or e-mail kldeem@earthlink.net.

Elections - The TRA Membership elected A.J. Goslin and Don Conover at OTR 2000 to serve two-year terms as Trustees-at-Large. Elections will again be held on Sunday for posts held by outgoing Trustees-at-Large, LeeCee Molina Deem and Paul "P.D." Drennan. If you'd like to contribute to TRA's future, toss your hat (or helmet) into the ring and run for an elected TRA position.

Staff Contacts

Contact info is posted on the website at www.otr.org. If you have questions, feel free to call the responsible party(iers), or contact:

OTR 2001 *Galactic Goddess* 'er Chair - **FANG**
aka Chris Kramer-Harnage
batfang@aol.com
Mud Puddle Gulch
1111 Stuart Road
Herndon, VA 20170-2408
(703) 786-8894 - leave message

MAY 2001

**PLEASE FEEL FREE to COPY &
DISSEMINATE
OTR 2001
Informational Update
Widely Within the
Caving Community!!!**

**A Final Reminder - OTR begins at 12 Noon on Thursday -
PLAN YOUR ARRIVAL AFTER THIS TIME! Thanks!!**

**Remember the R.O.O.T.s (Real Original Old Timers)
Keep OLD TIMERS REUNION A Cavers' Event!**

TROUT ROCK CONSER-VACATION VIII

Saturday, September 22, 2001

The last seven years have seen very successful and popular **Conser-Vacations** at the NSS's Trout Rock caves near Franklin, West Virginia. Everybody who is anybody in the caving community is sure to make an appearance at this major caving event.

Trout, New Trout, and Hamilton Caves are in surprisingly good shape considering that they are some of the most heavily used wild caves in the State. However, all visitors leave marks of their passing. There will be both in-cave and surface work (depending on the weather).

Major activities will include graffiti removal, trash pickup in the caves and along and road, fence and sign repairs along the trail, and assorted other stimulating and challenging activities. No special skills are required and no backbreaking tasks are planned. The organizers promise perfect weather.

Conser-Vacation is suitable for cavers of all experience levels, including novices. There will be at least one graffiti removal trip to the rear reaches of Trout cave and novices are welcome to experience the subtle beauty of Trout Cave on this trip. There may also be trips in Hamilton and/or New Trout if there are enough people (and graffiti) to justify it.

Activities will commence at 10 AM. Novices who need equipment (helmets and lamps) must contact Bob Hoke at (301)725-5877 or bobhoke@erols.com to make sure adequate equipment is available.

For additional information contact Dave West at (410)366-5038 or e-mail d270@bellatlantic.net.

The saga continues ... Be there!



2001 Fall VAR

Hosted by the Richmond Area Speleological Society

You are most cordially invited to attend the 2001 Fall VAR hosted by the Richmond Area Speleological Society.

Dates: September 28 – 30, 2001 starting at noon on Friday.

Location: The RASS Field Station in Bath County, VA (see attached directions). The property consists of 26 acres of meadow and wooded hillside (camping space is plentiful). Since its acquisition, members of the RICHMOND AREA SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY have established vehicular paths, renovated the storage shed, converted the dwelling into a functional bunk house, erected four outhouses and built the bath house and pavilion.

Cost: A pre-registration fee of \$18.00 per registrant (\$23.00 at VAR / children age 5 and under are free) will cover the cost of the VAR Guidebook and the Saturday evening meal of our world renowned Brunswick Stew.

Please pre-register by filling out the form and returning it no later than September 8th, 2001. Registrations may be sent to:

**2001 Fall VAR
c/o Rich Geisler
11501 Greenwood Rd
Glen Allen, VA 23059**

We hope you take the opportunity to visit some of the fine caves of our area and come enjoy your stay with us at the 2001 Fall VAR.

**For further information please see our website at:
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/rass/>**

Directions to the RASS Field Station

The RASS Field Station is located in Bath County, Virginia, on State Route 629, 1/4 mile east of State Route 678 between Millboro Springs, Williamsville, and Deerfield. On a 2000-01 Virginia "Official State Transportation" Map, it is located in the I-3 box. In the DeLorme Virginia Atlas & Gazetteer, it is on page 65, block D-5. The bunk house is shown on the USGS Green Valley, VA quad at approx. N38°04.666', W79°35.868', at the end of the unimproved dirt road. The directions below will get you from just about anywhere in VAR to the entrance gate of the property. **IMPORTANT!!! Our driveway is, err ... rural, to say the least....it's a one-laner.** Be courteous AND cautious! You are NOT alone! Camper trailers and RV's are welcome. However, be forewarned, there are no hook-ups.

1) From points North of Staunton, VA:

Interstate 81 to Exit 225, Route 275 (Woodrow Wilson Parkway). Follow Rt. 275 West to Route 250. Turn right onto to Rt. 250 West. Follow Rt. 250 West to West Augusta, about 16 miles. At West Augusta, turn left onto Route 629 (Deerfield Road). There is a gas station/market on the corner. Follow Rt. 629 for 22 1/2 miles, through Deerfield, then past Hunters Paradise to the entrance of the Field Station on the left. Turn left through the cattle gate into the dirt road entrance. If you get to Rt. 678, you've gone 1/4 mile too far.

1a) From points East of Staunton, VA:

Interstate 64 West to Interstate 81 North (2 exits) and follow directions in 1), above.

2) From points West (way north of I-64):

Rt. 250 East to McDowell, Va. Turn right in McDowell onto Route 678. Follow Rt. 678 through Williamsville. You will break out into Green Valley. After approximately 23 miles (from Rt. 250), turn left onto Rt. 629 (Deerfield Rd.). Cross the bridge, the entrance is on the right, through a cattle gate, and onto the dirt road.

3) From points West (south of Route 250):

Interstate 64 to Exit 29 (Rt. 42). Take Rt. 42 North to Millboro. Turn left at Millboro onto Route 39. Follow Rt. 39 West approximately 1/2 mile to Rt. 678 (Indian Draft Road). Turn right onto Rt. 678, follow it approximately 7 miles to Rt. 629 ON THE RIGHT. (Rt. 629 intersects Rt. 678 from the left about 1 mile from where it cuts off to the right - you want to turn RIGHT onto Rt. 629). Cross the bridge, the entrance is through a cattle gate on the right, about 1/4 mile from the intersection of Rt. 678.

4) From points South:

From Lexington, Va, take Rt. 39 North to Millboro. Approximately 1/2 mile past Millboro, turn right onto Rt. 678 (Indian Draft Road). Follow Rt. 678 approximately 7 miles to Rt. 629 ON THE RIGHT. (Rt. 629 intersects Rt. 678 from the left about 1 mile from where it cuts off to the right - you want to turn RIGHT onto Rt. 629). Cross the bridge, the entrance is through a cattle gate on the right, about 1/4 mile from the intersection of Rt. 678.

OR: Take any route you wish up to I-64, then to Exit 29 (Rt. 42). Follow the directions in 3), above.

IF YOU WIND UP COMPLETELY LOST, FIND A PHONE AND CALL US AT THE FIELD STATION. THE PHONE NUMBER THERE IS 540-996-4188.

2001 Fall VAR Pre-Registration

Primary Registrant _____ NSS# _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ e-mail _____

Phone () _____ Grotto affiliation _____

Secondary Registrants (from same household)

Name _____ NSS# _____

Name _____ NSS# _____

Name _____ NSS# _____

Name _____ NSS# _____

Saturday Evening Meal Will Be Furnished!

** Vegetarian meal for primary or secondary registrants - Number needed _____

Number of registrants _____ X \$18.00 = \$ _____

Children age 5 and under _____ X FREE = \$ 0.00

Pets (Leashed and Controlled at all times - NO EXOTIC PETS) _____ X \$5.00 = \$ _____

Total number of Registrants _____ Amount Due = \$ _____

Please make checks payable to RASS and return with this form by September 8th, 2001 to:

2001 Fall VAR
c/o Rich Geisler
11501 Greenwood Rd
Glen Allen, VA 23059

For further information please see our website at:
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/rass/>

National Speleological Society
10826 Leavells Rd.
Fredericksburg, VA 22407-1261

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Annapolis Jct, MD
Permit #2530

Address Service Requested

Summer 2001 Regional News

If you want to continue receiving the *Region Record*, please read this . . .

Individuals may receive the *Region Record*, the newsletter of the Virginia Region of the NSS, either by regularly attending Spring or Fall VAR (regional meetings) and paying registration fees; or through subscription. Subscriptions are \$3.00 per year and may be prepaid for up to three years. Checks should be made payable to VAR and sent to the circulation manager. You do not have to be an NSS member to receive the *Record*.

Complementary copies are sent to grottos in the Region and to other groups with which the Region exchanges newsletters. In addition, newcomers to the Region will receive one or two complementary copies.

Please copy or send this entire page. The address label contains information we need to expedite processing. Thanks.

____ I want to continue receiving the *Region Record*. Enclosed, to maintain my subscription, are dues in the amount of:
(please circle one) \$3.00 for one year \$6.00 for two years \$9.00 for three years

Name _____ NSS Number _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP (+4) _____

Grotto (or other caving organization that I claim as my primary caving affiliation) _____

Note: Anyone who recently attended a VAR or mailed a membership check to Evelyn Bradshaw but the expiral date is not reflected on the mailing label should check with her about their membership status before making a new payment at this time. Some labels slipped through without that information.

Please make checks payable to VAR and send to:
Evelyn Bradshaw, 10826 Leavells Rd, Fredericksburg, VA 22407-1261