



The

Region Record

Vol. XVII No. 3 Summer 2004

Chairman's Column

Thank you, Tri-State, for putting on a wonderful spring meet at Grand Caverns. There were items to do for everyone. There were led trips to many caves in the area & clean up trips too.

Activities that were started on the annual restoration weekend two weeks before were continued and/or completed during the VAR meet. The steps to Fountain Cave have been cleaned from side to side down to the entrance and for about 75 feet into the cave. Old electrical wire and panels were removed from Grand Caverns, along with many broken light bulbs. Approximately a ton of material, including old lead wiring was removed from the cave. Also mud and gravel was removed from formations and algae was attacked with a mild bleach solution. Thanks go to Andy Reeder for coordinating these projects.

Outside Grand Caverns 50 foot of fence and 250 feet of cable were hoisted to the top of the cliff face and bolted to the top of the rock face. This will serve as a stop and deflection barrier to help stop any further rock slides from endangering the area around the cave entrance and the steps leading to the gift shop. Thanks go to Bob, Kevin, and Brandon (better known as the "erection crew") and to the many people who served as ground support. The handrail that had been removed by the rock fall was reinstalled and secured into the cement steps. Lots of steel was

unloaded for the new steps and porch for a new entrance into the gift shop. (This project is about half done and should finish in the next trip or two.)

On Sunday, after the meeting, folks who were able to stay around saw the short dedication of the new museum at the cave (the official grand opening) and thanks being given to the Cave Conservancies of the Virginias for the donation of the cave display, which was followed by a performance by a bluegrass band and dancing on the field.

Cyndi Miller, park manager, wishes to thank all the volunteers going back 20 years, for help, contributions and the partnership formed between the cavers and the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority and she pledges to keep the partnership going another 20 years.

There is a lot to be said for the members of the VAR who, as individuals or in groups, get things done and help to foster relationships with landowners.

Craig

Region History, Part II, Finally Finished

by Meredith Hall Johnson

The *History of the Virginia Region, Part II: 1971-2000*, which has been in preparation for years, has now been sent to the printer and should

be ready for distribution in early July. Initial data gathering for the book was done by Tom Spina and much additional work to finish it was done by Meredith Hall Johnson and Mary Sue Socky. The 384-page book is intended as a follow-on to Part I, which covered the history of the Region through 1970. It includes many photos and even a few cave maps. Chapters in Part II include:

- **People (a.k.a. Cavers):** Questions and answers from more than 100 prominent VAR cavers who were active during the years covered in the book.
- **Stories and Trip Reports:** Just what it sounds like.
- **Cave Rescues:** Many exciting and to-be-learned-from reports on famous and not-so-famous cave rescues. Includes a list of rescues within the Virginia Region.
- **Project SIMMER:** A separate chapter on this very important VAR project, one of the last of its kind anywhere and certainly the last huge project hosted by the Region.
- **Grottos/IOs/Organizations:** Histories of most of the Region's grottos and groups. Includes a full list of all grottos ever in the Region during this time period.
- **Three other chapters too!**

(continued on page 3)

The *Region Record*

The *Region Record* is the quarterly publication of the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society. Any articles, announcements, or other materials of general interest to cavers in the Region are welcome. **Send all material to Bob Hoke (6304 Kaybro St., Laurel, MD 20707 (301) 725-5877, e-mail editor@varegion.org).** Electronic submissions (e-mail or disk) are encouraged, but any form of input is welcome. Non-copyrighted material contained in the *Region Record* may be reprinted by organizations that are affiliated with the VAR or the NSS, provided that proper credit is given to the *Record* and the author. The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the VAR, the NSS, or their internal organizations.

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Region Record Subscriptions

- New NSS members in the Region receive two complimentary copies of the *Region Record*.
- Current NSS members moving into the Region from elsewhere receive two complimentary copies. Current NSS members who move within the Region get no freebies.
- When a subscription is going to expire the last issue will be stamped "Time to Renew." No renewal notice is sent.
- When a person attends a VAR meeting he/she is automatically added to the list to receive the next four issues. If he/she is already on the list, four additional issues are added to the subscription.
- When multiple people live at the same address only one copy of each issue will be sent to the address unless a box requesting individual issues is checked on the VAR registration form or a request is sent to the Circulation Manager.

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Regional Calendar

- | | |
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| June 30 Deadline for getting the pre-publication price on the <i>History of the Virginia Region, Part II: 1971-2000</i>. See article and ordering information in this issue | Oct. 2 Island Ford Cave Clean-up. See article in this issue for more info. |
| July 12-16 2004 NSS convention in Marquette, Michigan. See www.nss2004.com for more info. | Nov. 2 "Conser-Vacation" cleanup day at the NSS-owned Trout Rock caves in Pendleton County, WV. Contact Dave West at d270@bellatlantic.net for info. |
| Aug. 15 Deadline for submitting material for the Fall issue of <i>The Region Record</i>. | Nov. 6 West Virginia Cave Conservancy annual banquet. More info later. |
| Sept. 2-6 Old Timers Reunion. Join about 2,000 other cavers for a big party and maybe some caving. See information sheet in this issue. | |
| Sept. 24-26 Fall VAR meeting. at Camp Kidd, near Parsons, WV. Hosted by Mongongahela Grotto. See article and preregistration form in this issue. | |

List Your Event Here

If you have a caving event that is of regional interest please send information to the Editors listed above so it can be included in the calendar.

Region History

(continued from page 1)

Copies of the book can be ordered through June 30 at the pre-publication price of \$15 per copy, plus \$5 per copy if the book is to be mailed. After June 30 the price is \$20 per copy (plus \$5 for mailing). Arrangements can be made for free delivery at many Region events and the NSS Convention. Contact Meredith or Mary Sue to arrange for delivery.

See the order form in this issue, or send a check, payable to Meredith Hall Johnson, to her at 8061 Kittiwake Court, Springfield, VA 22153. Include your mailing address if you want it mailed, or a note as to where you'd like to meet either her or Mary Sue for hand delivery.

Cave Hill Surface Survey

by Jim McConkey

With Grand Caverns stealing all the glory of the VAR survey, many cavers don't even realize that Cave Hill, which contains Grand Caverns, contains over a dozen other caves. When we started the survey project, the hill contained 13 known caves. I was put in charge of surveying all of them that needed surveys and connecting them all together with a surface survey. Easy enough, I thought! When I talked to the ranger, she only knew of six of the caves, and no one seemed to know where the others were. After many months of detective work and vertical ridge-walking, most of them have been found, along with several new ones. One cave is still missing, so the surface survey will probably wait until the fall, after we find it

and after the vegetation has died off.

The missing cave, Fire Cave, has been confounding us. We have a rough location for it, and we have found a cave in that approximate location. Fire Cave was historically described as a long phreatic crawlway, but the cave we found was a straight rectangular 5' high by 4' wide passage. It was obviously blasted, as witnessed by numerous 1" drill holes along the walls, but there is evidence of a previous vertical fissure. Was the original cave subsequently "enlarged" or is this a different cave? I have talked to a number of older cavers who were involved in the 1980s survey of the Hill, but none of them remembered any cave like the one we have found. I've gotten only the sketchiest details of where to find the real Fire Cave, but they do not point to the location we found. Our "new" cave has been dubbed False Alarm Cave unless something can convince me it is actually Fire Cave. If anyone in VAR knows anything about Fire Cave or a blasted cave on Cave Hill, please contact me!

A couple other new caves have been found as well. An employee of the Grand Caverns Regional Park gave me a tip about another possible cave on the back side of the hill. I was able to locate it on a solo snow hike in February, and it turned out to be a previously-undescribed cave. We mapped it in May. Another tiny cave was discovered very close to the current Grand Caverns entrance on another trip. It still needs to be surveyed.

The current scorecard: 16 caves on Cave Hill, up from 13 when we started. Six of the caves have existing maps of reasonable quality. A rockfall has sealed one of the caves, and unfortunately there is no known map or survey of the cave. It is right on the nature trail, so the park does not want the cave

reopened for safety reasons. Five more caves have been surveyed, and the maps are in-progress. Two other caves will be surveyed as soon as skinny surveyors become available. Fire Cave has not been found yet, and we are patiently waiting for the final cave's large inhabitant to decide to nap elsewhere on our survey weekends!

I want to give a hearty round of thanks to all the volunteers who have spent endless hours trudging up and down Cave Hill with me, enduring near vertical slopes, heat, rain, bugs, plants and the occasional large cave-inhabiting animal!

A Proposal for the Establishment of the Virginia Karst Trail

by Andy Reeder

Proposal:

That the officers and members of the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society endorse the concept of a Virginia Karst Trail at their regular Fall 2004 Business Meeting. In addition, and subsequent to the successful endorsement of this motion, that the Virginia Region establish a committee (composed of the Vice-Chair, Conservation Chair, and three members at-large) to draft a Virginia Karst Trail Action Plan detailing the site selection process, design criteria, cost analysis, potential partnerships, funding sources, and an implementation strategy. Finally, that the committee submit the action plan for review in the *Region Record* and seek endorsement of the action plan (and possible match funding) by the Virginia Region during its Spring 2005 Business Meeting.

Background:

Cavers have continually struggled with the question of how to

balance the need for public karst education with the sensitive resource management goals of cave and landowner protection. Only through a controlled, thoughtful, and measured presentation could the complexities and importance of culturally significant historic sites, groundwater, springs, sinkholes, caves, and their associated biotic organisms be made clear to the general public. Commercial cavern operators do a fine job of illustrating the underground beauty of caves, but cannot by themselves provide a comprehensive understanding of karst ecosystems. The sticking point, with cavers, has always been how to bring focus to the intricate complexities of karst without adding to the burdensome exploitation of those same systems by unintentionally increasing casual cave visitation. This proposal addresses those concerns by utilizing a combination of existing commercial caverns, National Speleological Society owned or managed preserves, and government controlled lands to increase the awareness of the fragile and important nature of karst systems in an appropriate environment.

Details:

Establish a series of interpretive, self-guided, above-ground trails for the use of the general public at selected karst sites throughout the state. While not physically connected, each site would share common interpretive thematic characteristics and be part of a marketed comprehensive educational outreach program. Trail sites could include commercial caverns, state or federally owned or managed properties, or other appropriate sites. No privately owned or sensitive karst landforms would be part of this system. Each location would contain an educational display kiosk (including a site map), clearly defined trail system, and interpretive signage. The emphasis would be on above-ground features, spatially distributed throughout the karst-laden

geographic regions of the state. Ancillary educational materials would include a comprehensive Virginia Karst Trail brochure as well as individual site brochures that support the mission of the Virginia Karst Trail. Unique site interpretation would reinforce Standards of Learning (SOLs) and nurture further study through individualized lesson plans already part of Project Underground.

Difficulties:

Site selection will be one of the most important factors in determining a successful outcome to this proposal. Sensitive sites, or those that may unintentionally lead causal users to sensitive caves or karst features, should be avoided. Some commercial cavern operators may see this program as a threat to their industry; however, the Virginia Karst Trail merely supplements the existing educational opportunities offered by these facilities and does not supplant them (indeed, it is hoped that the trail would increase commercial cavern attendance and/or be utilized by them as an secondary offering). Funding, while a challenge, would not be insurmountable as many grant opportunities exist that may be applicable to this project. Liability and risk management must be considered at every site as well as access, surrounding land-use, and site security. The potential for vandalism of infrastructure and karst features must be fully explored. The importance of local political and commercial support should be cultivated and acknowledged.

Conclusion:

The establishment of the Virginia Karst Trail could benefit the state through increased educational, commercial, and tourism opportunities. By focusing on above-ground karst features, this trail system will improve the public's

ability to appreciate the complexity of karst landforms, help negate cave vandalism and karst landform destruction, and offer the interested public a measured and appropriate avenue to further explore karst without impacting the in-cave community.

[Comments on this proposal should be sent to Andy Reeder. His phone number is (434)392-7452 home or (434)847-1640 work. His e-mail address is conservation@varegion.org. Ed.]

Problems with Some Caves Being "Over-used"?

by Barbara Moss
Chairman, Virginia Cave Board

This is a follow-up from a presentation at the Spring VAR Business Meeting held at Grand Caverns, Virginia.

The Virginia Cave Board (VCB) is beginning a study of the problem of caves that are heavily visited by non-organized (non-NSS and non-grotto) cavers. We would like to know:

- Which caves are being over-used in your area?
- Are there landowner problems with this visitation?
- Are there vandalism problems?
- Are grottos actively involved in cleanups, etc. in these caves?
- What groups are going into caves (such as Boy Scouts)?
- Are there problems with "Cave for Pay" groups?

Mail (or e-mail) responses to:
Dr. David Culver, Chair, VCB
"Overused Caves" Committee
427 Foxridge Dr.

Leesburg VA 22844
dculver@american.edu

Thanks.

Fall VAR Meeting September 24-26

by Doug McCarty

The Monongahela Grotto will be hosting Fall VAR and celebrating its 40th Anniversary on the weekend of September 24-26 at Camp Kidd near Parsons, in Tucker County, West Virginia. We will be aided and abetted by the West Virginia University Student Grotto. Although things are still in the planning stages, we don't have a lot of VARs in this area, so we are hoping to make this a VAR to remember.

The centerpiece will be the anniversary party, which will feature a live band, some surprises, liquid refreshment and some of Monongahela Grotto's former or inactive members as the guests of honor. We are hoping to get a Saturday night program that will focus on the early days of cave survey in Tucker County—although that is still up in the air. Other features of the VAR will be a Tucker County specific guidebook featuring information on Tucker County caves, geology, surveying history and areas of interest—hopefully with some cave maps you probably have never seen. There will also be information in there on the Shavers Mountain area, which extends into Randolph County.

There will be led trips to various Tucker County caves, of course, but we also plan to have some special trips. For example, we hope to do a caving hike into the Otter Creek Wilderness, which will feature visits to two or three

different caves. We hope to have trips to caves not often visited such as Suicide Sump, Lukes Cave, and Fanchlers Pit. We are also hoping to offer people an opportunity to do the first ever through-trip at Alpena. There will also be a few one-day surveying and ridgewalking opportunities for those who are so-inclined.

For people who would rather take a break from caving, there will be at least one (or more, depending on interest) led mountain bike trips. Kayakers may want to bring their kayaks and enjoy a leisurely day in what are usually class II and III rapids on the Dry Fork and Cheat Narrows. Visit one of the three state parks in the area - Blackwater Falls, Canaan Valley, and Cathedral. If it is a clear day, climb Olsen Fire Tower on Backbone Mountain and see how far you can see. Hike up the Blackwater Canyon, and try to find a few of its many small caves and interesting karst features.

Camp Kidd is on Horseshoe Bend in the Cheat River. The coordinates are 170615369E and 4334066N (NAD 83). The road to Camp Kidd is on the east side of Rt. 72, four or so miles north of Parsons and two or so miles south of St. George. You can check on the latest Fall VAR information at <http://var.karstsports.com>. If you have any questions you can contact Doug McCarty at (304) 363-0922 or mongrotto@caves.org.

New Directions for Persinger Cave Access

by John Pearson

A Greenbrier County landowner has requested that no one use the current road to the Persingers Cave Preserve. *There is a chain across*

the lane to prevent though traffic. This is NOT due to any cavers upsetting the owner. It is in response to construction equipment using his road and tearing it up, just like the problem we had at the Lightners Cave Preserve.

To now travel to the Persingers Entrance, please turn east onto Benedict Lane from U.S. Route 219. This is the road located just north of the Little General Service Station, which is in turn located about one mile north of the Lewisburg bowling alley. Follow Benedict Lane 2.9 miles to Chesters Garage and turn right. Go one mile and turn right on a gravel road into a new subdivision. Go down this lane for 0.6 miles. You will pass the ruins of an old house and a pond on the left, and you will see the WVCC kiosk in the field on the right near the cave entrance. Turn right onto the gravel lane leading down to the Persingers property. Let's all pitch in and drive the couple of extra miles to go to Persingers.

VAR (More than you ever wanted to know)

by J. C. Fisher

At the last VAR Business Meeting a motion was made and passed to strongly urge Hosting Grottos to submit a report of their VAR. Many years ago The Triangle Trogs hosted a VAR at Seneca Rocks and Bill Bussey wrote a detailed report with tips on hosting VARs. This is our attempt to do the same. Tri-State has hosted (5), co-hosted (1), and assisted (1) in 7 of the last 32 VARs. Judy and I have been in charge of six of these. We are constantly looking for comments – both good and bad for ways to improve the next VAR.

Why host a VAR? You could do it to be a nice guy, or to increase your grotto bank account. Most go for the latter. If you hosted a MAR or the NSS Convention, all profits go to the parent organization, not the host. What happens if you lose money? And this has happened! I know of no commitment from VAR to bail you out. Tri-State has made money on most of its VARs, but we sweat all of them out. Tri-State gives away a lot of money to Cave Conservancies in addition to Cave Bucks, buys equipment for cave related research, and donates to VAR. Tri-State also holds other fundraisers during the year.

Budget. How much to charge to maximize attendance and not lose money. How many people are going to come? You are going to base everything on how many people you guess are going to attend! Guess too high and lose money, guess too low and be overcrowded, run out of food, but you probably won't lose money. We prefer the latter. Spring VAR attendance is usually larger than fall. Spring will average 200 to 250. A couple of times it has been 300. Fall seems to come in around 180 to 200. Location, cost, weather, and date are all factors. Some Grottos have a larger following – DC, PSC, and RASS seem to get a great turnout. We also worried about the increasing cost of gasoline this year. We feel pre-registration is a must. Not only does it give you some cash to cover your deposits, but also more important you get some idea of how many are coming. For a Spring VAR pre-registration forms need to be in to the *Region Record* by mid-December. We also contact Cavers Digest, *NSS News*, individual Grottos, and list serves. All this means you have to commit location, food, date, and cost about five months out. Our goal was to keep costs near 25 dollars per person. You will hear from people who fondly recall paying less than 10 dollars per person.

Location. We started to look for a campsite two years ago. Do you use a field or commercial campground? Several recent VARs have been in fields, which keeps costs down, but does mean renting toilets and hauling in water. We always get asked about flushers and hot showers. We went the commercial route.

Some of the Criteria used: Our first choice was a central location in the Region with easy access, close to an Interstate with I-81 the best in mid-Virginia. Our second choice was I-64 in or near Greenbrier County. Some of the sites we checked; Mountaineer –for sale, didn't know if they would be open, Greenbrier State Forest – field site only, no alcohol, and not cheap, Buckhorn – not enough space. Natural Chimney was a nice site where we had earlier successful VARs.

Last summer we thought we had an agreement on date and price. In December we were ready to send out flyers for Natural Chimneys. I made one last check to verify things and found the only problem was price, instead of 2,000 plus, we were 6,000 plus. Our budget just jumped to over 40 dollars per person. I called Bob Hoke to stop printing *the Region Record* and find a new location in the next 24 hours. We had had a similar problem two years earlier when we assisted WVCC with their VAR.

Once again we called Grand Caverns for a bailout. Grand Caverns came through again. They agreed to a lump sum fixed price and we added two porta pottys and offered to buy two hot water heaters. We were back in business. Some campgrounds insist on a price per person, others have a sliding scale based on number of people and others have a fixed price. Use of pavilions is sometimes extra, as well as electricity. Some of the little items we use to promote goodwill and hopefully

hold the cost of extras are to invite the manager to dinner and stay for a beer. Offer to do security (man the entrance gate), keep the noise down, keep the camp clean, invite everyone in the campground (non-VAR campers) to hear the guest speaker. VAR has been helping Grand Caverns with projects for years, which keeps us special, but you can always offer to do a conservation project anywhere.

Food. The first decision is do you prepare or get a caterer? If you fix your own, you can hold down costs. But before you go this route remember it is a lot of work and requires a lot of labor! Or you hire a caterer. They do the work, cost is fixed, and no dishes to do. We like the latter. You can go one of two ways with a caterer.

One method is to contact a local civic group, fire department, or church. Make sure they have experience and know what they are doing. Expect to pay at least Seven dollars and up per person and you will probably have to travel to their location.

The second option is to hire a professional caterer who will come to you. Expect to pay at least Seven dollars and up, plus travel. A caterer will have a selection of menus and prices to chose from. We have contracted with Bob's Big Beef out of Berkeley Springs for four of our last VARs. They have excellent food and we don't get complaints. A caterer will need a final count about a week out. If you order 200 meals they will expect you to pay for two hundred meals, even if only 100 people show up. If you order 200 meals and 205 people show up they will run out of food, they don't bring extra! Make sure you tell your caterer that cavers are big eaters. Most will bring some extra filler. Ours brings extra chicken. For this last VAR, we ordered 250 meals. We had four no shows, several who didn't get back from their

trips in time and we sold 257 seven meals. This included eight vegetarians. We buy a separate vegetarian entree and have the caterer cook it. We buy Vegetable Lasagna. The caterer gives us no discount for this because he still furnishes plates and silverware, they eat his side dishes and he cooks it.

The biggest complaints we have heard over the years are about running out of food. People have paid their fee and don't want to hear "take small portions or we're out of food". We stopped charging full fee for attendees when we get to the number of meals we knew we could serve. Late arrivals don't like to find out there is no food, but people who have paid for food expect to be fed.

Beverages are another decision – cans or kegs? Kegs are cheaper but more complicated. Deposits are required, returning the empty tubs and kegs, and taps, cleaning up the cups are all reasons to use cans. Tougher law enforcement, the fact we're getting older on average, means we don't drink as much. Spring VARs will average about nine cases per night. In addition you'll need about a 14 cases of assorted soft drinks.

Guidebooks are always nice, but are expensive. Jerry Bowen and team prepared ours. Jerry works for a printing business and got lots of discounts; vendors brought advertising space. It still cost over a dollar per person. What makes a successful guidebook? Maps and directions to caves are what people want. Don't forget to get permission before you print anything.

Final results: Overall we didn't have too many problems. The largest was entertainment. We had gotten a request to host a performance by the "Terminal Siphons" Band. Unfortunately both the band and we were not dealing directly. It wasn't until one week before VAR that Bill Stone and I talked to each other. We corrected

several misunderstandings, but it was too late to pull it together. If future hosts are interested in having them play please contact Bill directly. They would like to play at a VAR. We had several late arrivals that had not pre-registered. We had filled our numbers on food, so we gave them a reduced rate. Several people requested discounts on different items (one night of camping, or no dinner, or no beverages). We couldn't do this. Not only would this have been a bookkeeping nightmare, but also most of our costs were fixed.

Finally some good news. Included in our budget was 500 dollars for purchasing new hot water heaters as part of our campground rent. One of the local cavers working on the Grand Cavern Survey was able to repair the existing heaters at no charge. This gave us a windfall profit of 500 dollars. Tri-State has made a donation of 500 dollars to VAR.

**Financial Report for the
Spring 2004 VAR**

Income:	
Pre-Registration: Adult	\$3,472
Child	325
On-Site registration: Adult	3,663
Child	180
Registration w/o dinner	207
Total Registration (263)	\$7,847
VAR Dues (1)	3
Advertising	80
Total Income	\$7,930
Expenses	
Camping	\$1,960
Food	2,634
VAR Dues	738
Guidebooks, name tags & holders, Beverages	1,286
VAR Donation (from windfall)	500
Total expenses	\$7,118
Tri-State Profit	\$812

**Island Ford Cleanup
Scheduled
for October 2**

by John Pearson

Folks, mark your calendar for October 2, 2004 for the Fall cleanup of Island Ford. Members of James River Grotto and Bubble Cave will be doing the annual cleanup that day. As the trash has been less and less with the installation of the WVCC kiosk, it is anticipated that it will not take much time. Plan on meeting at 9 a.m. at the cave. Trash bags will be supplied, so bring your gear and gloves for this conservation project. If you need directions or further information, contact John Pearson at 304-497-3803 or email him at jpearson@rcc.com.

**The Virginia Region
of the NSS
Treasurer's Report
May 2004**

(this is an update to the report given at the Spring 2004 VAR Business Meeting).

Income:

Fall Meeting	570.00
Spring Meeting	738.00
Bank Interest	5.07
Independent Dues	173.00
Patch Sales	129.15
VAR History	500.00
Total Income	\$ 2,244.37

Expenses:

Grants	1,000.00
Printing	409.64
VAR Award	0.00
Conservation	460.00
Membership	50.00
VAR Project	80.00
Miscellaneous	59.69
Total Expenses	\$ 2,084.33

Assets:

Checkbook Balance	\$4,680.66
Certificate of Deposit	1,368.76
NSS Foundation	3,143.85
Total Assets	\$ 9,193.27

Respectively Submitter,
John Fox
Treasurer

Note:

1. Tri-State contributed \$500 towards the printing of the VAR History. The VAR voted to spend up to \$2,000 towards the first printing of its History.
2. The VAR has membership in the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

Request for Nominations for VAR Outstanding Member Recognition Award

by Meredith Hall Johnson

If you know of a VAR caver who has significantly contributed to the region in any way over the years, why don't you nominate him/her for the annual VAR Outstanding Member Recognition Award? Send a supporting paragraph or two to me at merecaver@wildmail.com by the end of July. See the VAR Web site for details.

Please Write Neatly on VAR Registration Forms!!

by Meredith Hall Johnson

When you attend a VAR, please write neatly so I can read your writing. This information is collected so that you can receive this *Region Record* in the mail four times a year. If I cannot read your writing (and I'm a fine one to talk!), then I cannot add or update your information on the VAR Mailing List. Also, include a Zip Code. Thanks!

How to Continue Receiving the *Region Record*

Anyone who attends a VAR meeting automatically gets the next four issues of the *Region Record*. If an NSS member moves into the Region he/she is normally sent two free issues. Anyone may subscribe for the paltry price of \$3.00 per year (see the form on the back page).

The easiest way to continue receiving issues is to attend a VAR meeting at least once a year.

Next *Region Record* Deadline is August 15

The deadline for submitting material for the Summer issue of the *Region Record* is August 15. Please send any material that is of regional interest to the address on page 2.

Fall VAR 2004

September 24-26

At Camp Kidd in Tucker County, WV

Featuring:

- Monongahela Grotto's 40th Anniversary party
- Live music and cold refreshments
- Plenty of camping space and hot showers
- Lots of led trips to some of the many nearby caves.
- One day caving projects
- For those so inclined: Hiking in the Otter Creek Wilderness, Blackwater Canyon or Dolly Sods. Mountain biking (bring your own bike). Kayaking in the Dry Fork and Cheat (bring your own kayak). Sightseeing at Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley State Park, Cathedral State Park—a 133 acre stand of virgin cedar.
- An interesting speaker or two on Saturday night
- SpeleoVenders
- A guidebook that will feature Tucker County caves and caving information
- VAR business meeting (9am Sunday morning)

For directions and more info go to <http://var.karstsports.com>

Pre-registration Form

(Please Print)

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Vegetarian Meal? Yes/No

If registering multiple people, please list their names on a separate sheet with meal preference indicated.

VAR Pre-registration fees (good through September 13, 2004):

Adults (17 and older): \$25 x _____ = \$ _____

Kids (5-16 without guidebook): \$15 x _____ = \$ _____

Kids (5-16 with guidebook): \$19 x _____ = \$ _____

If you're 4 or under you get in free

Total enclosed= \$ _____

After 9/13/04 add \$5 per person

Make check payable to Monongahela Grotto and send to: Fall VAR 2004

c/o Bob Griffith

106 Forest Drive

Morgantown WV 26505

Old Timers Reunion 2004

Information Update

The 55th annual Old Timers Reunion will be held starting at NOON, Thursday September 2, 2004 till Monday September 6, 2004 at the TRA/OTR site in Dailey, W. Va. To attend OTR you must be a TRA member or the guest of a TRA member.

TRA/OTR website: www.otr.org

Check out the website often to stay up to date on upcoming events, including work weekends at the site.

2004 Theme: OTR 55-Keeping CAVING and THE PARTY alive. This is similar to last years , where we keep doing what we've always done at OTR, have FUN.

TRA Membership:

TRA membership cost \$10 for a lifetime membership. To join you must be 18 or over and a CAVER in good standing and be sponsored by a TRA member. For further information go to the OTR website, or contact Tim Brown (TRA membership coordinator) at his email, tim@timcoinc.net or send a SASE to Tim at 57051 Marietta Rd, Byesville, Ohio 43723. You must submit the necessary forms by July 31, 2004. TRA memberships are NOT available at OTR.

Important!!!! Early Arrival Policy

Unless you are on the list of workers, you will NOT be allowed to enter the OTR site till NOON, Thursday Sept. 2, 2004. This rule will be enforced.

Pet Policy

NO pets of any kind at OTR period! NO exceptions.

INSURANCE SURCHARGE

As a direct result of the effects of the events of 9/11/01 on the insurance industry, our insurance rates for OTR have tripled since last year. This is from \$6,400, for OTR 54, to over \$18,000, for this years OTR. We can't and won't operate without insurance, so we must institute an insurance surcharge. This year it will be \$9.11 to relate it to the cause. This will make the fee for a Thursday arrival \$36. This takes into account the amount already in the OTR budget for insurance.

2004 OTR Registration Fee Schedule

	Adult	Junior	Child	Guest
Arrival Day*	18+	12-17	3-11	
Thursday	\$36	\$33	\$23	add \$15
Friday	\$34	\$31	\$21	add \$15
Saturday	\$32	\$27	\$17	add \$15
Sunday	\$26	\$25	\$16	add \$15

*Arrival day starts at 4 am, Sat and Sun have reduced staff on duty after 6 pm, please arrive before 6 pm, infants under 3 are free. **The insurance surcharge has already been added to these prices.**

Day Passes

Passes are good for the day purchased till 6 pm to visit with caving friends. Passes do NOT permit the bearer to attend the evening OTR party or to camp on site. If you'd like to stick around past dusk, purchase a regular registration.

Guests

Guests are welcome at OTR, when invited and sponsored by a TRA regular member, who then becomes responsible for the guests conduct at OTR. TRA regular members can sponsor up to 2 adult guests. Guests of all ages (except infants) pay the regular registration fee plus a \$15 guest charge. Family companions 18 and over are considered guests. TRA members should choose their guests carefully, inviting 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 surcharge. Caving children may apply for junior membership(\$10). Parents are RESPONSIBLE for their children's behavior at OTR. If you choose to party hearty at OTR, give the kids a break and leave them home, or bring a responsible adult to watch over them at OTR. Misbehaving children at OTR are treated the same as anyone else at OTR, and therefore are subject to immediate removal from OTR if circumstances warrant.

Family companions----avoid the surcharge—join TRA before OTR.

Registration---18 and over---bring a photo ID.

Registration is open 24 hrs from noon Thursday, with reduced staffing after 6 pm Saturday night, reopening 8 am Sunday, then closing 6 pm on Sunday night for OTR 2004.

OTR accepts checks written in US funds and on US banks. OTR charges \$15 on returned checks.

We realize you 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 marked it, you will find your grotto campsite. Please be kind to staff, they are cavers just like you, volunteering to make OTR better.

The legal beer drinking age in W. Va. Is 21—a valid photo ID must be presented when you register, even if you are older than dirt. If you choose to drink OTR alcoholic beverages, don't share with persons under 21 - you and the person under 21 could be tossed out of OTR.

Overflow Camping

The overflow camping area in the SE quadrant is designed to welcome OTR's later arrivals. It opens in three stages that will be clearly marked on signs at the entrances to the camping areas. The lower perimeter opens at 5 pm Thursday. The interior opens next, at noon Friday, and the upper area next to the public road, opens last at 5 pm Friday. If you want to camp in these areas, plan your arrival times accordingly.

NO Reserved Camping Space

Space cannot be reserved or marked off at OTR. Markings and tape will be removed.

OTR Events

Each OTR brings a host of new ideas, although the time honored Doo Dah Parade, SpeleoOlympics, Yard Sale, SpeleoAuction, and other traditional OTR activities are planned as well. Schedule your arrival on Thursday for a gathering of ROOTS and COOTS at the bonfire area to meet and greet each other, tell some tall tales, and maybe win some prizes.

Speleo-Olympics

Contests begin Friday at Noon and end Sunday at Noon. Depending on participation, contests will include: Vertical 30m Mechanical, and 30m Knots, 10m youth mechanical climb, ladder climb, SpeleoObstacle course, Beer and beverage Drinking contest, Sleeping Bag, Cave Quiz, Survey Course, Lamp Assembly, Fun Run, Poster Contests and Orienteering Course. We'll also have the 4th Annual Bob Lutz Tug-A-Rope-A-Rama.

Kiddie Activities

A host of activities for the younger set are planned for Friday and Saturday mornings. This is NOT a babysitting service, parents are encouraged to join the fun.

Entertainment

There will be the traditional movie night Thursday night at the pavilion. This year we will show: Caveman (with Ringo Starr), Young Frankenstein, and of course Rocky Horror Picture Show at midnight There will be bands on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. And of course DJs after the bands on Sunday night. The theme for Friday night's festivities will be "a trip to the Islands" with VOODOO KATZ playing for your enjoyment. So bring your tropical attire. Saturday we will continue the tradition of dressing up or in costume for the party, with JEZEBEL playing good old Rock and Roll for your enjoyment. Sunday we will enjoy BUZZ CITY before the awards and TYNE & FASTLYNE after the awards.

There is a stage in the Sauna area for those who enjoy acoustic entertainment. No set times just bring your instruments and come on over.

Yard Sale

Time to get rid of your old or unused caving/camping gear? Bring them to the yard sale. It starts 9 am Sunday in the pavilion. Whatever you make is all yours to keep.

Speleo-Auction

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

Vendors and Vendors Row

Space is available by reservation only for cave related vendors along vendors row. Wednesday is setup day for registered vendors. Food Concessions are already prearranged and must have proper health dept permits. Contact Kelley Deem at 304-725-9812 for information.

Postering of Porta-Potties

Don't do it!!! Post your posters on the bulletin board. They do a good job of cleaning the porta-Potties and we don't want to make them mad. Also NO bottles or cans in the potties.

Volunteers Needed

OTR doesn't run by itself---it takes lots of volunteers to put it all together. Do your part!

Volunteer a few hours of your time to help. It's your OTR, give back a little for all the FUN you get. Get your Grotto involved and have FUN.

Work Weekends

Dig out your hammer, get your buddies and come down to the site to help get it ready for OTR. We need volunteers to do lots of things. The remaining work weekends for this year are:

June 19/20, July 24/25, and after OTR on Sept25/26.

Check the website or call Kelley Deem at 304-725-9812 for more information, or email at kldeem@earthlink.net

Elections

Elections will be held for two TRA members at large positions on the TRA Board. Have your views heard—vote for the candidate of your choice, or run for office yourself. Elections will be held on Sunday in the pavilion. Please come over and vote.

Staff Contacts

Contact information is posted on the website at www.otr.org, or you may contact the chairman for 2004, Mike Oatney at moatney@columbus.rr.com or call him at 740-746-8337. Leave a message and he'll get back to you ASAP.

Help keep OTR a caver's event---bring only guests who are cavers.

Please support our sponsors--- buy PMI ropes.

Please disseminate this information at your grotto meetings.

SEE YOU AT OTR!!!

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Summer 2004 Regional News

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Please make checks payable to VAR and send to:
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