



# The Region Record

Vol. XXIII No. 1 Winter 2009-10

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## Spring 2010 VAR/MAR

by J. C. Fisher

Seasons Greetings from the members of Bubble Cave.

As visions of sugar plums and going underground dance through your heads, let us invite you to Spring VAR/MAR instead.

Once again Bubble Cave is hosting Spring VAR. This year we are combining it with Spring MAR. The event will be held at the West Virginia State Fairgrounds in downtown Fairlea, West Virginia. The dates for this event will be later than usual – May 21, 22, and 23rd. We are hoping the caving moratorium will be lifted and lots of cave trips will be offered. But in case this doesn't happen, we have prepared a long list of cave-related activities: not one, but two sinkhole cleanups, climbing clinics, Greenbrier karst tours, commercial cave tours, rappelling into Grapevine Cave, and more. Plus lots of non-caving activities such as biking on the Greenbrier River Trail, canoeing or kayaking on the Greenbrier, hiking, geocaching, antiquing, and more. Saturday night's dinner will be catered by Bob's Big Beef – barbecued beef and pork, fried chicken, and sides, and we haven't forgotten you vegetarians. The always popular VAR business meeting will be held Sunday morning for you speleopoliticians. We'll try to convince Front Royal Grotto to do their wonderful Sunday Breakfast. On Saturday

night there will be a DJ and the traditional caver libations will be available. A Saturday night speaker will also entertain you.

A preregistration form is included with this newsletter. We strongly advise you to use this. Only those preregistered will receive a guidebook. With the generous help of the West Virginia Association for Cave Studies, the guidebook will offer the composite map of Benedicts Cave, the first time this map has been released to the general public. As Lost World Caverns has been such an ardent supporter of the caving community, the guidebook will also provide a map to its wonderful cave. Who knows what other tidbits may be published? By preregistering you also insure we have a meal for you and it makes planning a whole lot easier.

We look forward to seeing you in the spring. More information will be in the Spring *Region Record*. For now – have a wonderful holiday from all of us at Bubble.

## 2009 VAR Outstanding Service Awards

by Meredith Hall Weberg

Thanks to everyone who nominated a number of deserving and hard-working VAR cavers this year! We have a limit of three per year, however. As you can see, nominations come in a variety of length and detail. Be thinking of a deserving VAR caver for next year!

Congratulations to John E. Pearson, Bill Royster, and Bob Thren!!

According to the nomination, **John E. Pearson** has "been heavily involved in conservation projects of all sorts for years, including the construction of numerous cave gates, various sinkhole cleanups, Grand Caverns restorations, and organizing and running various VAR events. John was also instrumental in re-opening Hide-a-bed Cave and has been extremely active in landowner relations."

According to the nomination, **Bill Royster** was a "Past Secretary Treasurer of VAR 1970-1972. Past President of VAR 1972-1973. Instrumental in the mapping of Perkins Cave, now owned and managed by Appalachian Cave Conservancy and Butler Cave of BCCS fame. Oversaw the committee that took the VAR's financials from a moldering \$233.52 and spilt it into a General Fund and a

(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

Mar. 15 **Deadline** for submitting material for the Vermont. Spring issue of the *Region Record*.

Apr. 3-5 **Grand Caverns Easter Restoration Weekend.** Many many projects and great food. Contact Meredith Hall Weberg at merecaver@yahoo.com for info.

May 1 **Deadline** for preregistering for the Spring VAR meeting. You must preregister to get a guidebook.

May 21-23, 2010 **Spring VAR meeting** in Fairlea, West Virginia. (near Lewisburg). See information and registration form in this issue

Aug. 2-6, 2010 **NSS Convention** in Essex Junction,

### 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.

## Awards

(continued from page 1)

Conservation Fund, began enforcement of collection of VAR registration fees (they weren't always collected in the past). Within less than one year, the funds had increased over 50% to \$380.72.

“Bill was also the point man for the controversy of admitting Pittsburgh Grotto into the VAR and the publication of cave surveys. Two major topics of discussion from the early 1970s. By opposing the Pittsburgh motion to join VAR, he prevented the dilution of membership voting outcomes. By being the point man on the VAR opposition to publication of cave surveys, he organized conservation minded cavers to oppose the sale of Surveys to general retail establishments. In other words, you couldn't go and buy a book that gave out cave locations. You had to write to the state for it instead. He also reactivated the Closed Cave Committee and combined it with the Land Owner Relations Committee. Two functions we still utilize today.”

**Bob Thren** has “been around since forever. NSS 3861. He has participated in numerous survey projects that have been published by the Virginia Speleological Survey in *Virginia Cellars*.”

## Annual Easter Restoration Field Camp at Grand Caverns

by Meredith Hall Weberg

Be sure to put the weekend of April 3–5, 2010, on your calendars now. That is the annual Easter Restoration at Grand Caverns. Plan to arrive on Friday night for

some fun and catching up with caver friends. Saturday will find us hauling gravel, scrubbing algae, and whatever else the park needs. Lunch and dinner will be provided by the VAR Conservation Committee.

## Virginia Cave Week 2010

by Meredith Hall Weberg

Mark this on your calendars too: Virginia Cave Week is April 18–24, 2010. Cave Week's goal is to educate people about caves and karst areas, particularly teachers and schoolchildren. See the Web page at [www.vacaveweek.com](http://www.vacaveweek.com), which contains numerous links to cave-related Web pages as well as activities teachers can do with students.

## News Tidbits

by George Dasher

**Norman Cave:** Greg Springer has written to say that someone has knocked over a large pagoda stalagmite in Norman Cave (in Greenbrier County, West Virginia), and has also decapitated a bell-shaped stalagmite with a cylindrical top. The damage was probably done in late October or early November 2009, and may be related to the beer cans found on the entrance slope of the cave. There is a picture at [www.flickr.com/photos/ilikegooglebetter/4092810816/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/ilikegooglebetter/4092810816/).

**Smoke Hole Caverns:** The gift shop at Smoke Hole Caverns (south of Petersburg in Grant County, West Virginia) burned down on the night of November 10th. The building was totally destroyed, but no one was hurt. Evidently the fire started twice, and the local volunteer fire department successfully put out the first blaze.

Both fires are thought to be the result of arson, and a man from Cabins West Virginia, was arrested shortly after the fire. The gift shop was reportedly the largest in West Virginia. The Caverns are still open, and the shop has been moved to another Smoke Hole property 2.5 miles down the road.

## Cave Properties for sale

by Bob Hoke

Got some loose change that you want to spend on a little piece of cave country? Here are two properties that are currently available.

**Property #1:** The DC Grotto recently received a letter from a real estate agent in Staunton, Virginia. Here's the relevant points from the letter:

Please find enclosed information on a 220+ acre property in Highland County, Virginia. The farm is located at the end of Chestnut Ridge, which encompasses Butler Cave, possibly the largest cave in Virginia.

The 3,000+ square foot residence would make a wonderful lodge or gathering point for any club or society. Additionally, there is a large heated shop that could be used for many purposes.

**Price:** \$1,300,000

(The map that accompanied the letter shows that the property is actually at least three miles north of Butler and Breathing Caves).

**Property #2:** George Dasher provided a link to a Web site offering the property containing Sites Cave in Pendleton County, West Virginia. Here's some relevant information from the Web site:

**Acres:** 450

**Recreational Features:** Three Caves on property: Sites Cave, Sites Attic Cave, Cave Rat Cave.

**Other Unique Features:** Sites is a significant cave in that it has the deepest entrance drop (180 feet) of any cave in West Virginia. Cave Rat is a fun sporting cave. Excellent views overlooking Franklin from top of property.

**Price:** \$1,450,000

If you are interested in either property, I'll be glad to point you toward the appropriate agent.

## Fall VAR 2009 Report

by Meredith Hall Weberg

As of Spring VAR, no grotto had volunteered to host Fall VAR. BATS and DINGO Grottos decided to co-host; we're both small grottos and figured we needed each other. And the fun began.

The big problem for us was the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caving moratorium. We needed to offer other noncaving activities. We found a campground in the Shenandoah Valley near Civil War battlefields, wineries, and best of all, commercial caves! It was about the closest VAR ever to the D.C. area and that worried us. We might end up with a lot of attendees. The fact that the campground seemed a little small also worried us. As it turned out, neither of these caused problems.

As most VAR hosts know, the two biggest obstacles are finding a site that is large enough and will accept alcohol and the Saturday night dinner. Our big concern was trying to guess how many cavers might show up. It could have gone either way—the closeness to D.C. could have brought cavers who don't

normally attend VARs, or it could have been a disaster with nearly no cavers showing up to the first-ever VAR that did not offer any caving whatsoever. I was so concerned that I sent out the message that folks needed to try to keep their camps small. I even revisited the site a week before VAR to walk the property again to reassure myself that it was large enough.

As it turned out, the caving moratorium and the threat of constant rain that weekend made our VAR one of the smallest ever, not even 100 attendees. However, I think that everyone had a pretty good time; we got many compliments. We had a variety of activities that included touring local commercial caves (most of which gave VAR attendees good discounts), two cave conservation trips, a bat flight, a class on geocaching, a geology hike, a Via Ferrata trip, and a Civil War battlefield tour. We had a list of wineries within a 25-mile radius and there was lots of local hiking to be done. We also had a wine tasting and a caver bluegrass band, both of which were big hits.

As with any large event (or not-so-large), you must be flexible. I think that was my mantra for the weekend. It started off with the location of the port-a-potties, placed not where I had envisioned them, but where it was most efficient both for use and ease of cleaning. The placement of the large canopies for people to gather under also had to be changed at the last minute. One large canopy didn't even get put up, mostly because I realized what a hassle it would be to take down wet and repack. With the recreation building and one large canopy (thanks, Mark Ziemanski!), we had enough shelter in the party area. We had a large and a small canopy set up at the registration/wine tasting area. With this many roofs, we could generally keep dry once the rains started.

We were constantly making decisions at the last minute, despite

our meticulous planning. For example, the Bat Flight was cancelled; not enough bats were at the site or people signed up to go watch them. The battlefield tour got cancelled too. We had planned to show a cave film from Convention, but that too came with a glitch; we ended up watching several amusing films that Alex Sproul found on the Internet (thanks, Alex!). We had not planned on having a speaker, but Wil Orndorff asked to do a 30-minute presentation on the latest on White-nose Syndrome (thanks, Wil!). Of course he spoke for far longer than 30 minutes, but when I looked around, all I saw were intensely interested cavers hanging on every word. Even the giving out of door prizes did not go as planned, but it went and we got on with the party. The wine tasting lasted longer than expected due to the many participants so the caver band started playing its wonderful bluegrass at one end of the canopy. No one complained.

I would like to thank everyone who helped put on the VAR, mostly Sally Chappel and Yoli Gallego of DINGO and Susi Weston of BATS. The four of us comprised the organizing committee for Fall VAR. The closest any of us live to each other is 40 miles so we did a number of conference calls. Early on, we divided up the major duties between the grottos and among ourselves. It all worked out very well.

I'd also like to thank the following people specifically. I apologize if I have left anyone out.

Jerry Bowen: Geocaching Class

Bob Denton: Geology Hike

John Fox: DJ Music on Saturday night

Mike Frazier: Via Ferrata trip

Mike Hill: Serving as treasurer for this VAR and handling pre-registration

Charles Kahn: Guillotine Trough

Jaime Reep: Caver Bluegrass Band  
(Thanks to all the musicians!!)

Sarah Richards: Wine Tasting

Alex Sproul: Entertainment

Janet Tinkham, Ellie Florance, and Eric Berge: All the work preparing for and making happen the karst trail work at Skyline Caverns

John Walter: Algae clean-up at Crystal Caverns

Front Royal Grotto: Sunday Pancake breakfast

Members of BATS and DINGO: Help whenever asked—thanks so much!

I would also like to thank the Virginia Region for paying BATS back for our losses (see below). We tried our best to be financially frugal, but as all you former VAR hosts know, there are certain things that are required and cannot be skimmed on. I think if the weather had been better, maybe more cavers would have come out, but that is not something you can count on too far in advance. We did our best and provided the Region its Fall meeting. The money came from the profits from the Spring VAR with the approval of the officers and the folks who ran that VAR. Thanks!

### Fall VAR 2009 Expense Report

<b>INCOME</b>	
VAR Registrations (includes 5 under age 17)	\$3,069
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Caterer (had to guess how many might show up; aimed for 150)	\$1,500
Drinks and Snacks (beer, soda, water and brownies, cookies)	241
Campground (includes bathhouse, use of recreation building all weekend, firewood)	725
Latrines (includes one cleaning)	348
Tables and chairs (rental)	246
Tablecloths	13
Signs	97
VAR dues	285
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$3,455</b>
<b>LOSS</b>	
(ended up being paid by VAR)	\$387

### 2009 NSS Members Manual Survey

by Meredith Hall Weberg

By now, most of you NSS members have received your *2009 NSS Members Manual* in the mail. Yes, in mid-December! I'd like to know what you think of the new schedule. Is it useful to get this year's *Members Manual* so late in the year, even though it does contain the most updated officers and Board of Governors members? Would you rather get it in June like we've been doing? This would mean that the information is only current until Convention of that year.

Hopefully next year's *Members Manual* will come out within three months of Convention (two months to put together [ha!]) and one month for printing) as stipulated in the motion that passed at the April BOG meeting.

Also let me know what else you think of it. Do you like the information, the format, the photos? Do you have suggestions for improving the publication? Please e-mail me (MM editor) at [merecaver@yahoo.com](mailto:merecaver@yahoo.com) with the subject line "2009 NSS MM Survey." Thanks!

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

If this page is marked "TIME TO RENEW" it means that your *Region Record* subscription has run out and this is the last issue you will receive. Subscriptions are automatically extended when you attend a Spring or Fall VAR meeting, or you can subscribe to the *Region Record*. The last issue you will receive (Volume-Number) is indicated on the top line of your mailing label. More detailed information about subscriptions is listed in the box on page 2.

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please make checks payable to VAR and send to: **Meredith Hall Weberg, 8061 Kittiwake Ct., Springfield VA 22153**

# Spring 2010 VAR/MAR

## Registration Form

The Spring 2010 VAR/MAR will be held at the West Virginia State Fairgrounds located in Fairlea, W. Va. The Campground is next to Rt 219 in Fairlea W. Va., just south of Lewisburg.

*Guidebooks will only be printed for those who register early.*

Early registration by May 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 - Full = \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
(includes VAR or MAR dues and guidebook) – Please circle VAR or MAR

Early registration by May 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 - under 15 years old = \$23.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
(does NOT include dues or Guidebook)

Early registration by May 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 – Full = \$33.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
(includes both MAR and VAR dues plus guidebook)

On – site registration - Full = \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
(No guidebook)

“ -under 15 = \$28.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to : **Bubble Cave, LLC**

Please fill out a form for each person

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Grotto: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL FORM to Judy Fisher

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