

JOHN & CHAROLETTE SWEET

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News from John:

The main reason we were so pressed at this time last year is that I was in the throes of selling the business. Finally! Negotiations began in September with two interested parties. The deal was closed in December. All of the inventory was moved out, the final truckload leaving on Christmas Eve. The new owners are David and Jennifer Hearn, old friends from the canoe-racing circuit, in Bethesda, MD. I went up and spent the first week of January helping them get set up and started with sales and shipping. We shipped from here until the week before Christmas and they started up right after New Year's so it was a pretty smooth transition. The business is now called Sweet Composites. <http://sweetcomposites.com/>

Char took a long road trip in May and June 2005 to visit relatives in Kansas and Washington. While she was away I built a big section of property-line fence. I put the finishing touches on the new tractor shed, painted the house roof, and began building a large porch around the cabin. The porch project lasted for most of a year, on and off, but is now finished and has been used several times. This year I rebuilt our rail fence, improved several roads on the place, and tore down an old, dilapidated spring house. Of course there was the usual maple syrup making and hay making in season, as well as mowing, brush clearing and wood cutting. I put on a big push to control exotic-invasive plants all over the property. More than anyone could want to know about building our porch and tractor shed can be found at:

<http://johnrsweet.com/personal/porch.html> and <http://johnrsweet.com/personal/shed.html>

Also while Char was gone we became the home for a very small, orange kitten. We have no idea where he came from. Rudy is now grown up but remains quite a handful, racing around the house and chasing his catnip mice. Sadly we lost Clarence to cancer last spring at the age of 12. Cleo is now approaching 14 and is showing her age. Our cattle and horses are thriving despite increasing age. There are several new cat photos at: <http://johnrsweet.com/personal/cats.html>

October 28 was my 50TH anniversary of cave exploring, celebrated with a re-enactment of my first trip, returning to nearby Sinnett Cave with a group of old friends. The entrance is farther up the hill than it was in 1956, the passages are smaller and the climbs steeper. Hmmmm. A trip report with photos and other information can be found at:

<http://johnrsweet.com/personal/Caves/sinnett2006.html>

We are still struggling with the threat of industrialization of our mountain ridges through the installation of wind turbines. The proposed project is now before the State Corporation Commission, awaiting a final decision. Free energy from the wind sounds wonderful until one delves into the unintended consequences and learns that it is far from benign. Industrial turbines are probably safe and effective in some places but they are neither in Highland County. <http://johnrsweet.com/personal/wind/index.html>



Dear Friends and Family,

We were unable to get a letter prepared last Christmas. There are several pretty good reasons for that but before we get into the happenings of the past two years, get out your address book and make note of our **new address**. We have not moved but our post office has eliminated boxes so we now have a normal street address. They will stop delivering to the old address in a few months.

News from Char:

In May, 2005, I decided it had been too long since I'd seen my relatives, so I took a 7,000 mile car trip. Yes, by myself. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made – it was just marvelous! I went to Wichita, Great Bend, and Scott City in Kansas, seeing relatives all the way, inspected (for the first time) St. Francis, where I was born, and Haigler, the very small town where we did what passed for commerce in the depression. Saw the Nebraska sand hills and understood for the first time what that meant -- and what sage brush was really like. I went through Sheridan, Wyoming, where I stopped to see a cousin, then across Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Washington. The Rockies are fairly much like I expected, but driving in them is much easier than I thought it would be. The Appalachians are much more demanding with tighter curves and steeper climbs. Then to Puget Sound, where my sisters live on Orcas Island in the San Juan Islands. I came back following a different highway route [see the photo by Chris McGlenn at Washington Pass in the North Cascades] to Minnetonka, MN (near Minneapolis) where my daughter Stephanie and her family live. I came home following the Mississippi River into Illinois where I stopped in Springfield, to see another cousin, and home across Kentucky and West Virginia. I was gone six weeks and saw country I had never seen or really imagined. And saw people I had not seen for almost 20 years. It was fabulous!

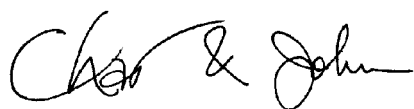
Due to a timely upper respiratory infection I lost 12 pounds last April, and the fact that my granddaughter was having a very fancy wedding in June inspired me to keep it off and lose a little more. I don't really recommend pneumonia for a weight loss program, but so far it's worked for me! Lynne's wedding was a dazzling affair in Lancaster, PA, which featured the whole family staying in the hotel and we had a really great reunion – Harold (Dick's brother) and his wife Evy and their son and his fiancée, plus Stephanie and her family and Kathy. Beverly was a beautiful mother of the bride and Charlie and Doug and Curt were very handsome. You would have been pleased at how well all of us cleaned up!

I joined the Allegheny Highlands Orchestra in Covington in fall 2005. This is a small (about 35 piece) orchestra with an abundance of brass, barely enough winds and a scarcity of strings (which explains why they let me play with them). The music we play isn't much different from (and in some cases is identical to) what we played in high school. I've gotten a kick out of playing with a big group again. Musicians are fun to be around no matter where you find them.

On November 4 I found myself going numb on my right side, which inspired a trip to the hospital in Bath County, and then three days in Roanoke Memorial. While there they gave me every test they could think of and concluded that I had experienced a TIA followed by a small stroke in the thalamus. I'm still a little numb on the right side, but am assured that I will recover completely. The main residual result is fatigue and I assume that will fade away when the brain finishes the remodeling. Our orchestra concert was the November 19TH and I had recovered enough to play, so I am nothing but confident all will be well. I have taken this wake-up call as a sign that I should get rid of some of the stress in my life, so I have resigned from a bunch of responsibilities. What's to hate about that?

Come visit with us, stay in our cabin, enjoy our new porch and the glories of Highland County.

Love to all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Char & John". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.