



## **JOHN & CHAROLETTE SWEET**

**8562 Jackson River Road  
Mustoe, VA 24468-2150**

**Phone: 540-468-2222**

**E-mail: [char@johnrsweet.com](mailto:char@johnrsweet.com)  
[jrs@johnrsweet.com](mailto:jrs@johnrsweet.com)**

**December 2008**

» Fall colors in early October.

Dear Friends and Family,

Two things dominated the Sweet family news for 2008. For most of the year the story was remodeling our house but things took a sudden turn in October when Char had another stroke. She is recovering nicely now and will write about that experience below. Meanwhile, the house project. The complete story is on our web site, <http://johnrsweet.com/Personal/house2008a.html> This link takes you to January 2008 with links from there to earlier and later episodes. Last year we reported on our new bath and laundry rooms, which were pretty well completed by the end of 2007. In January this year we installed our hot-water heating system, which works off our wood stove, then in March we added solar collectors so we will have year-round hot water. Also in March we began the big project of renovating our kitchen and dining room. This was a major undertaking but I won't go into it here since it is all documented on the web.

### **News from John:**

I continued with frequent caving trips through January, by which time we had pretty well wrapped up the exploration and surveying of the Subway section of Water Sinks Cave. The photo (below right) by Phil Lucas was taken while we were surveying a few loose ends in the Sweet Dreams passage. This is one of the most interesting caves I have seen. Details can be found on our web site: <http://johnrsweet.com/Personal/Caves/index.html> .

By February we were into sugar season and as that wound down in March the house remodeling started up again. I took a house break in late May for the 50<sup>TH</sup> anniversary celebration of the discovery of Butler Cave and the 40<sup>TH</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Butler Cave Conservation Society. My earliest explorations in Butler date to just a few months after its discovery but I have been a member of the BCCS for only ten years or so. Most of the intervening years were spent whitewater canoeing, with only an occasional cave trip thrown in.

A couple of cave trips in the summer and a return trip to the slalom Nationals in Maryland at the end of August concluded my activities for the year. I attended the



canoeing event only as a spectator and to visit with old friends. I haven't raced for about 15 years and haven't even been on a river for at least ten. Sometimes when the water is up I get the old urge but I'm not sure I'm in shape for it.

### **News from Char:**

2008 left a lot to be desired. I dragged through the spring and summer watching John and Art Applegate and Shane Wiseman first tear the house apart and then put it together again. I had vertigo and was tired all the time. I was taking Coumadin (otherwise known as rat poison) for the previous stroke and then I began to realize that I was having a harder and harder time reading and putting a coherent sentence together. On October 2<sup>ND</sup> I lost the ability to talk. That got our attention and we went to the Medical Center. The upshot was I ended up in Roanoke Memorial Hospital. A gaggle of doctors agreed that I was having a stroke and the CT scan showed I'd had a cerebral hemorrhage. The Coumadin? Probably. After the stroke I felt better than I had for months. And the good news is I was taken off Coumadin and I'm back to having wine with dinner! (Wine and rat poison don't mix.)

Oddly, I was not at all affected physically. The hemorrhage was in my left brain in the language center so it took several days for me to make any sense. But I immediately felt better, and I was up and walking around the third day. By and large, it was an enjoyable experience (though I don't recommend it). I was relaxed and took life as it came and understood very little for several weeks. I improved literally every day and quickly regained my physical abilities and my speech made strides. Kathy, bless her heart, took care of me, from talking to the doctors to doing my laundry. She took me home four evenings a week and fed me nutritious, tasty meals and I stayed with her while I was an outpatient. And my other girls dropped everything and came to see me and give Kathy a hand. It seems like everyone who knows me sent me a card. I have been surrounded with good thoughts and best wishes – how can I fail to recover completely? Rest is the prescribed cure along with therapy. I have discovered the joys of the three-hour nap and I find I don't have any trouble doing nothing but my rehab exercises!

Our spirits were buoyed by the election results so we eagerly await the end of the Bush years and look forward to 2009 with renewed hope for our country, despite the current economic woes. And my personal hope is for renewed strength and vigor in the New Year.

Love to all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Char & John". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Love to all,".