



JOHN & CHAROLETTE SWEET

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Dear Friends and Family,

We finally got a little snow, just last Friday, the 21ST. We were about to use spring flowers for our main photo since we simply have not had any winter weather and it did not seem fair to go back and get one from a previous year. It

was less than an inch but it was pretty while it lasted. Vicious winds came up overnight and blew it all into drifts, leaving the ground nearly bare.

Last year we reported on buying a new 50-acre tract of land. This year immense effort has been spent on bringing it into some sort of order, removing dense stands of autumn olive and other exotic-invasive plants. Good progress has been made but this work will continue thru the next year or two. There is a map of the property on our 2011 News page, <http://johnrsweet.com/personal/2011.html> For more on this year's news than we can cram into this letter, please see <http://johnrsweet.com/personal/2012.html>



We had a great wind storm, called a *derecho*, at the end of June that blew down a lot of trees and caused the power to be out for five days. This happened just as the family was gathering for the Fourth of July holiday, so it was particularly inconvenient to be without electricity. To make matters worse, our generator quit after the first night; we were fortunate to be able to share a generator with a neighbor and preserve the contents of our freezers.

John and his best friend from college, Bill Gordon, went on a railfan trip in early August. The Norfolk Southern was running an employee-appreciation excursion out of Williamson, WV, so we went to take photos and movies. Bill and John both spent time in this area over 50 years ago when the N&W (now part of NS) was still using steam power in regular service. For this trip they were running a 2-8-4 from the Nickel Plate Road and it put on a fine show. See the small photo above and several more on our web site.

Char had a bit of a setback health-wise last spring. She had a couple of TIAs (minor strokes) and ended up in the hospital for a couple of days. She recovered and is now doing



much better. She has continued her violin lessons this year and is shown (photo at the bottom of page one) playing a duet with her instructor at the winter recital on 8 December. She is planning to attend the chamber-music retreat at Garth Newel Music Center in March.

John bought a movie camera last February and has enjoyed shooting scenes around here as well as trains and caves and, most recently, the winter recital. Now a new computer is in the works, since none of our current machines is modern enough to be able to edit high-definition movies. It takes a lot of processing power and also a lot of disk space to store the raw files and finished movies, which run about 100 MB per minute.

We got off to a late start on maple season this year but had a pretty good yield despite a shortened run. Hay season also went well. We got enough from first cutting that we let a neighbor make the second cutting. Chris and John built a new footbridge across the spring run and a large set of storage shelves in the attic of the warehouse, as well as spending much time cleaning up after the *derecho*. We are well stocked with firewood for the next five years or so.

John's closest approach to caving this year came during the BCCS spring digging weekend in March, when he ventured 50 feet or so into Owl Cave with his new movie camera to shoot the digging operation there and a similar distance into a new cave near McDowell. He also visited the Deike's place in Cass, WV, to work on the new back entrance to Cass Cave. No big pushes into virgin cave this year.

We had a number of visitors in 2012, some we see often, like the Irwins from Pennsylvania, but several were much rarer sightings in this area. Bill Nelson was one of my caving buddies at the University of Virginia. John Harshbarger attended VPI at the same time and we got together for a number of trips. Both stopped by to visit this year. We were also pleased to meet Joe and Linda Crisp, from Artesia Wells, TX, who came by on an eastern trip. Joe's father bought some property 50 years ago that John had inherited thru the Sweet family. We had never met so it was interesting to show them around here and to hear about things in Texas. New developments there may give us another story to tell in next year's letter.

We hope more of you will come to see us in 2013. Our cabin is just waiting for you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris & John". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.