

## Chairman's Welcome Message

On behalf of a large team of very passionate TRA and OTR volunteer Staff Members, it is my distinct pleasure to bid you welcome to the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Old Timers Reunion! Like most of you, I have been looking forward to this weekend ever since I said my “goodbyes” to my friends after last year's OTR.

If this is not your first OTR, welcome back!!! If this is your first OTR, welcome to our community of cavers. I'm very excited to announce that there are lots of wonderful activities for attendees of all ages and abilities to enjoy over the next four days.

Planning for OTR 2019 began even before OTR 2018 had started. The volunteer Staff Members have been very hard at work to make sure that we have an awesome OTR this year.

Please make sure that you read through your OTR Guidebook to see all of the events and activities that have been made available to you this year.

OTR would not happen without a group of very dedicated TRA and OTR volunteers. This is not an event that can be planned and executed by one person alone. While recognizing the dozens of volunteers, I would like to personally thank a few people that have been very important to me over the past year. They have kept me grounded, been my sounding board, my advisors, and my dear friends. An omission of a name here should not be taken personally and I apologize if I left it out in error.

I could not have properly fulfilled the duty as your OTR Chairman without the support and guidance of Ben Mirable, OTR Vice-Chairman and TRA Operations Vice-President; the past OTR Chairs that offered their support, guidance, and hugs; Tim Brown, TRA President; John Vitella, TRA Administrative Vice-President; Sarah Mosberg (and Stephen), dear friends and past OTR Chair; Ruth Williams, dear friend and OTR Social Media Liaison; Charlie “Weasel” Williams, my very dear friend and past OTR Chairman; finally and certainly not least, Noel Joy Shackelford, my daughter. She has been by my side for the past three years and has been an incredible source of support, advice, and advisement. She has been involved with TRA as a volunteer for many, many years and I couldn't be more proud of her willingness to get involved with such an amazing group of cavers.

On that note, put on your best disco outfit, strut around the site, and have a great Old Timer's Reunion!

On behalf of the TRA / OTR volunteers, I welcome you to the 70<sup>th</sup> OTR!!!

Shack,  
Chairman, OTR 2019

### Gong Show

The OTR Gong Show will be on Friday evening at 8:00 PM before the band takes the stage. Acts can be of any type, singing, comedy, magic, musical, etc. Right now, there are only 6 slots available for inclusion in the Gong Show. Prizes will be awarded for both Solo and Group categories. On-line signups have closed. If you would like to be included as a performer either as a group or solo act, please make sure that you find Shack, OTR Chairman, to get signed up for your moment in the spotlight. Just find any Staff Member with a radio and they will be able to locate Shack so you can get signed up.

### OTR Military Tribute

Please make sure to attend the OTR Military Tribute on Saturday night in the Main Pavilion at 9:30PM. This will be a very special time when we can celebrate and thank the OTR attendees that have served in the military. This will be a wonderful opportunity to recognize our veterans / active military personnel as they receive a small token of gratitude and our show of appreciation for the sacrifices that they endured.

### Home Brewers Forum

The annual gathering of OTR home brewers will take place at the TAFO Grotto camp on Saturday beginning at 4:00 PM. All interested brewers are welcome to attend. This will be an informal gathering to share and discuss beer (as well as cider and mead) made at home. Bring a container (bottle, growler, or keg) of your best brew (or two). Light snacks will be available, but other food contributions will be welcome. TAFO Grotto is located on Karst Lane near Vendor's Row. Look for the Jolly Roger flag marking the camp.

### The New Gravel Area

Perhaps, you've noticed the sea of gravel to your left on the way in to the OTR campgrounds this year, or maybe you were directed on to it for overflow reasons at registration. This newly laid limestone, like every other project at OTR, was the product of group thinking to rectify a persistent problem.

According to electrician, and jack-of- all-trades, Bill Bradwell, a TRA trustee, Overflow Road was sinking, and something had to be done to rescue it. The work crew cut out the hillside above it and moved tons of earth to fill it in. It was then graded and covered with thick road cloth which was trucked in in 12 foot by 300-foot rolls. After that the new gravel was applied and smoothed. Tim Brown, Operations Vice-president, says that we recovered 2 or 3 acres of space that was previously unusable.

This area is also used for trailer parking by the volunteers who leave their campers on site all year so that they will be here for work weekends. Norma Peacock, work weekend coordinator, wants everyone to know that campers cannot be left anywhere on the grounds, because of the flooding problem and Bill says it's hard to mow with them scattered around.

People who leave their campers in the overflow parking area must sign a contract and pay a \$100 fee for the convenience.

**WTF? Where's The Fun?** One enterprising hijacker attempted to steal the fun, but it still flows freely from everyone. #WTF\_Where'sTheFun, #NoIndianGiver

**The Contest Connection** - Today's column will introduce you to our newest Contest Judge: Sterling “Awesome” Dawson. He is the new Krewe Leader for the Obstacle Course. He brings not only youth and enthusiasm, but a contestant's perspective. He has lots of creative ideas to make the obstacle Course memorable. He plans to run the course Friday from 9 AM to 6 PM, then Saturday from 9 AM to 6 PM. Closed on Sunday. Ask about his elimination brackets or lend him a hand. You will find him in the Contest Area. Welcome and thanks!

**MAR 2019** will be sponsored by the York Grotto in Newville, PA, September 20-22. Go to [yorkgrotto.org](http://yorkgrotto.org) for more information.



### Virgins and Sponsors Reception to be Held

2019 OTR Virgins and their Sponsors: Please join us Thursday evening at 9:30 for a Virgin Reception at The Event Tent located at the far end of Vendor's Row. We promise that there will be no Virgin Sacrifice! We simply want to welcome you to the annual Old Timers Reunion! Meet and greet some of OTR's core staff and resources and get some signatures for your virgin booklet! There is so much to do at OTR and we plan some informational poster displays and quick talks to help guide your way. We will have refreshments available.

### The Mentoring Moment by Sharon Brinkman-Windle

Look around you. You will see a lot of gray or white hair/beards in key positions making OTR happen. While our energy may be waning, our commitment to the organization hasn't. Many of the trade guilds welcome apprentices. Each day we will feature an essential OTR task and how you can help. Tom Keith has been our licensed electrician for decades. He is in failing health. Andy Selmer and Bill Bradwell have stepped up to take his place, but we need more help in the future. Andy is looking for a female over 21, who is willing to learn the trade. This is a great way to introduce yourself to the work weekends. Contact Laylin Brown at Scum Ridge or the Wild Side if you are interested. If you are interested in being a mentor, contact Sharon. If you want to be an apprentice or need a mentor, find Laylin. Together we can keep OTR going well into the future.

### What's up? by Joel Jacobs

The full Sturgeon Moon took place on Sunday, August 26th. Observers should be able to discern that the moon will be waning, losing light and diminishing in size, during the entire OTR weekend. The Harvest Moon, which gives farmers a good excuse to work late, and is the full moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox, will be on September 24th.

**The TRA Grotto** Did you know that there is a TRA Grotto, and, that as a member of the TRA you are automatically a member of it? Most of us are members of a grotto and many of us belong to more than one. If you want to really support OTR you can designate the TRA Grotto as your home grotto online at the NSS site ([caves.org](http://caves.org)). This would help swell the numbers of what is probably the second most populous Internal Organization behind #1, the Cave Diving Section.

**Attention Winemakers!** The wine contest has changed format this year. We will have an informal judging amongst ourselves. You are invited to bring one grape wine and one non-grape wine for tasting and feedback. We will be meeting 11AM Sunday morning at Carl & Annette's camp across from the Event Tent on Vendors Row. Please bring chairs. Some snacks will be provided. Other snacks are welcome.

**Silent Auction:** Hand sewn OTR T-Shirt quilt with cotton batting donated by Wilma Perkins. All proceeds benefit Sauna Rebuild Project. Opening bid of \$3,000.00 has been posted by Anonymous #1. Minimum increase bid \$100. Donors wishing to remain anonymous register with Cooter's staff. Bidding will end Sunday evening and the quilt presented during Awards Ceremony.

**The Fartists are back.** Come to the bonfire area. Select your wood to have branded. Open nightly, with some daytime hours to serve your needs. The selection of brandable wood is in short supply. Do not wait and miss out. Hours of operation depend on weather and sobriety.



Pete Strickland (L) and tub at the 2014 Texas Cavers Reunion

Pete had increased the diameter and added an inflatable cool tub. After the steel rusted through he built an external wood fired heater. For 40 years he personally maintained, transported, refined, and set-up the tub for Texas events. The OTR hot tub is based on his original design; but Peter is gone now, and the OTR tub has ruptured. The long house steamer is out of commission. Hard times.

OTR spa users are concerned. As we’ve seen from a long line of dedicated and overworked sauna masters, even the mightiest get burned out. One Pete Strickland cannot sustain it. Pay to play has evolved from stream rocks and shovels, so OTR and the Robertsons have plans for extensive re-engineering. Let’s work together for a new generation of high heat, bare-assed fellowship, not a sanitized attraction. Otherwise, forty-seven years of OTR evolution might just go up in smoke.

Let Someone Know Before You Go (Caving that is)!

Everyone should let someone know when and where they are going caving. To make it easier, the Eastern Region NCRC, in cooperation with the Battlefield Area Troglodyte Society (BATS) have developed a Caver Information Sheet. It can be filled out and left with an Emergency Contact before leaving on a CAVE TRIP. The Emergency Contact should be someone reliable who is not going on the cave trip. Once exiting the cave, contact the Emergency Contact so that they know that all is well. The emergency contact should know that if you do not return or communicate (call, text, email, smoke signals, etc.) with them by the time you have listed on this sheet that they should call to report you overdue from a cave trip. **During the Old Timers Reunion (OTR), your emergency contact may ask anyone on Security to contact the ER NCRC, Sub-Region Coordinator (SRC) for Randolph County to get help. The SRC/Deputy SRC for Randolph County or their representative is generally on the OTR site.** Caver Information Sheets maybe found at the Activities Board, on the camp ground bulletin boards where you pick up your daily edition of the Coot ‘N’ Holler, and at First Aid, Registration and Gate. A Fillable PDF Version may be found on the ER, NCRC Website at [https://caves.org/commission/ncrc/ncrc-er/Caver\\_Information%20\\_Sheet.pdf](https://caves.org/commission/ncrc/ncrc-er/Caver_Information%20_Sheet.pdf).

The Bat by Joel Jacobs

Chapter 1 - Soon

They gather annually, beginning the week before, and then during the whole Labor Day weekend; a rowdy crowd of hundreds of people interested in caving, partying in the Tygart, dancing under a huge pavilion, creating music on stages erected for the affair and singing around fire circles. Their vehicles are constantly driving in and out of the campsite as caravans head for and then return from expeditions to various holes in the ground. Except for a few silent hours amidst the darkest part of the night, a cacophony of aggravating sounds flows out and over the surrounding countryside imbued with the smoke from a gigantic bon fire and hundreds of individual cooking events.

His farmstead was close enough to hear and smell it. It was not a bad thing. In fact, it was the best thing that could happen to an elderly blood sucker; a congregation of young bodies through which the staff of his life flowed, pints and quarts of human blood. Enough to fill a good sized lake, if you could squeeze it all out of them and somehow collect it. The thought of that brought a smile to his pallid face.

He had already collected eight ounces from a hapless man who fell asleep on a lounge chair outside his tent on Tuesday night. The best, however, was coming soon, and he was prepared for it, a throng of mostly healthy specimens carrying the rich fluid that would succor him for another 12 months. The storage tanks in his barn were nearly empty. Soon they would be full.

This year the revelers would be celebrating under the ink dark skies of a new moon, the only radiance emanating from the heavens, the twinkling and the shining of the stars and planets. A few streetlights and random individual handhelds and headlamps provided some illumination, but darkness would prevail.

His vehicle was a Vampire bat drone that he designed and assembled. It had gauze-like Kevlar wings stretched over a titanium skeleton, rotating propeller blades below the forearms, smaller ones below each third finger, scanning, infrared eyes, a telescoping, hypodermic needle in the tail which lead to a contoured storage balloon within the body, above which was a suction pump to draw fluid into the bladder or squeeze it out. Tiny cameras on the exterior enabled him to observe on screens in his laboratory a 360 degree view of the environment through which it flew.

Soon, instead of flying there himself, he would send his creation to harvest the sweet, scarlet bounty.

To be continued . . .

**Proposed textile sauna area update.** The 2018 petition to add a textile sauna area to OTR received over 250 signatures. Nearly one in six OTR attendees signed the petition. This shows that there is substantial support for adding a separately located and separately governed textile sauna area to OTR. **Brad Smith.**

**OTR Auction Item drop off** on Thursday or Friday from 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm at the Auction Collection Point behind Cooter’s on Vendors Row. This year’s auction proceeds will be distributed by mail after OTR. Eighty percent sill go to seller and twenty percent to TRA.

**Attention Crew Chiefs:** Please double check your Staff T-Shirt order. A few mistakes were made while sorting. Bring the ones up if received by accident for exchanges to .357 Karst Lane. **Jennifer**

**Northeastern Cave Conservancy** dues may be dropped off at the Speleobooks tent.

**Large collection** of gently used caver shirts cheap at Speleobooks.

Up in Smoke? By A. James Kramer

The speleo sauna is a cautionary tale of a management plan that occurred spontaneously in ’73 when a few of us built an Indian steam bath on the bank of Thorn Creek. Bent saplings and plastic sheets made the structure, while stream rocks got red hot in a fire. When the rocks were ready, we’d use a shovel to move them inside, then as many bodies as would fit crammed in and the door was sealed. Since the heat was limited, everyone stayed as long as possible. Superheated, we plunged laughing and gasping into the dammed creek. Already, the next crew was putting the rocks back and stoking the fire. You payed to play, and soon the sceptics went to work on firewood, dam construction, and operations. Over a hundred cavers became sauna aficionados. Each year after saw unstructured improvements: tongs and welder’s gloves, chunks of train rail to heat, innovative saunas, and higher dams. Aficionados like Barry Baumgardner, Chuck Hempel, and Tony Ryan led by example until others came along. The sauna was a big deal at NSS conventions and OTR, but only after years did it evolve into such a sprawling production. The sauna has depended on innovative volunteers since before most ROOTS were OTR virgins.

At the New Braunfels NSS Convention in ’78, Peter Strickland and friends debuted a portable hot tub. Powered by a welded steel pipe, “in tub” wood-fired heater, it was eight feet across with a wire screen to keep people from touching the firebox. For the International Congress in Bowling Green in ’81, I believe,

**Anyone interested in joining the “staff”** volunteer team? We need someone to take over the compiling, organizing and sorting of Staff T-shirts. Please contact Jennifer, Shack, Ben M., or John V.

**Come and see the truncated,** one frequency icosahedron near registration. This is a much smaller and simpler dome than is the magnificent four frequency icosahedron across the bridge from the bon fire. This small dome, designed to be the frame for a solar sauna, is the focal point for textile sauna advocacy. Come by and visit. See pictures of the hot tub used at the most recent Missouri NSS convention.

**Brad Smith.**  
**Have professional lock out kit;** see Jim at sauna staff if needed. 513-236-2082.

**TRA elections.** Want to help make decisions for TRA? Run for TRA Trustee! To submit your name, please see Bill Jackson at the Coot & Holler Gazette newsroom to have your picture taken and officially sign up. Then start campaigning. Voting is on Sunday at the pavilion.

Coots and Roots



The Coot & Holler Gazette is published four times annually, on consecutive days, with occasional special editions, during the annual gathering of the Robertson Association members. This gathering is known as The Old Timers Reunion. The views and opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editor. Circulation is limited to 350 copies each issue, so hang on to these priceless limited edition copies, and watch their value increase. Editor, Carol S. Jackson, photographer Bill Jackson. Reporters A. James Kramer and Joel Jacobs. Published by Carol’s Carriage, North Field. Contributions are welcome, and may be submitted at collection boxes located at the Carol’s Carriage office, in the registration building, or at “COOTers, located on Vendors row. Deadline for submissions is 7pm each evening.