

FMDAC Presidents Report - December 2013

The 2013 Convention took place the last weekend in October in Knoxville, TN. For those of you who did not attend you missed a very fruitful event. The weekend was full of information with a few prizes thrown in. The whole affair went well from start to finish. You know it went well when you have to look for problems. When the biggest complaints were that a room or two got missed by housekeeping one day.

The Smoky Mountain Artifact Research and Treasure Society (SMARTS) were excellent hosts and the facilities and arrangements were top notch. Ralph Waldrop was the main player and JT Schuman took care of the Saturday hunt. Many members of the club assisted to make the weekend a success. We extend a big thank you in that direction and also to the Knoxville visitor's bureau for working with us to make it all happen. We also have to mention the Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett who is a member of the club and the person actually responsible for us going to Knoxville.

Thursday morning started off the events with a meeting involving industry representatives, magazines and hobby organizations. This was a first step in bringing everyone together to work in a coordinated effort to protect the hobby. Groundwork was laid to coordinate efforts. This is something that has been sorely lacking for quite some time. The meeting went well and all in attendance came away with a general understanding and consensus of how to move forward. A number of issues confronting the hobby from both inside and outside were discussed with some general directions and actions to hopefully follow.

On Friday morning a lengthy board meeting was convened. Many issues were taken up by the FMDAC board members to improve the performance of the organization. Many of them will not directly show to the membership as they are internal operational items. Others will become apparent as time goes on and they are put into effect.

Due to suggestions by members we will be working on the website. One very apparent change will be the ability to join and renew online. Details will be put out as soon as available. A recent addition to the site has been our handouts on proper recovery techniques. One more will be added in the near future. You can view them online, print them or download them. Finances were an important topic. Several board members are putting together a national raffle to put some much-needed funds in the treasury. It is difficult to keep the organization running on \$5 a year dues.

One of the biggest changes will be that the Quest has been shelved. It served its purpose well in the past but we must change with the times. It takes a lot of time and resources to put it together. With the internet age it becomes just a rehash of information that is already out there via instant email and forums. We must make better use of resources. The Quest is being replaced by a quarterly report from the president, directors and other board members. Their reports will simply be added to the presidents' report and emailed out. It will be the responsibility of the club contacts to forward them to the club members. For the few independent members who do not have emails we will snail mail those. Something new was tried on Friday evening. Everyone met at the hunt site for some socializing and detector contest. Many tested their skills at pinpointing, target identification, a speed contest and a 3-card team poker hunt. The winners received a small silver prize. All seemed to enjoy it and it was a nice change.

We awoke Saturday morning to temperatures in the mid 20's. Windshields were crusted over and the frost was so heavy on the grass at the hunt site that it looked like a coating of snow. It did start to warm up quickly but the conditions did not deter the hunters. The SMARTS club conducted the hunt for us which began with a cannon shot let loose by a Civil War reenactment group. I spent some time during the hunt talking to a newspaper reporter along with the Knox County Mayor who took part in the hunt.

At the conclusion of the hunt we returned to the hotel to visit the vendor/display area and attend the many seminars throughout the day. Frank Colletti spoke on dug coins. Butch Holcombe talked on writing magazine articles. A geology professor, Travis Paris, talked about gold mining. Dennis Urban from the Civil War Roundtable talked about the Civil War in Knoxville. Eddie Black filled everyone in on his 7-year battle to return metal detecting to the Louisville City parks and it was rounded out with an abbreviated (due to time constraints) talk on legislative issues. Abbreviated as I had asked the mayor to chime in with his views on how to best contact legislators. He talked for 15 minutes on the issue and how the government IS NOT working. As we were running late I concluded it after he finished as it was a great way to end the day. The room was pretty much packed for all the seminars.

In the evening we travelled a short distance to a banquet facility for a great dinner followed by some prizes, a few awards, and a guest speaker. American Digger publisher Butch Holcombe, accompanied by his wife Anita (the other half of the magazine) kept everyone in stitches as he talked about detectorists humorous true happenings from his "*Never Mace A Skunk*" book series.

The two main hunts took place on Sunday with an energetic crowd. Thankfully the temps were a bit warmer than Saturday. A food "trailer" pulled in at lunchtime with some excellent grub. Many went back for seconds and one or two of us might have had thirds! At the conclusion of the second hunt 6 lucky people were called up who had found the top prize tokens. Three were buried in each hunt. Envelopes were drawn to determine the winners.

Bill Petty	First Prize \$750 prize chest	Independent Member - GA
Rick Trout	2nd Prize \$500 prize chest	Independent member - IN
Jerry Laur	Garrett Ace 250	Gold Coast Treasure Club
Cheryl Baker	2 peso gold coin	Roanoke Valley Coin and Relic Club
Bob Meeks	2 peso gold coin	McClellan County Nuggetters
David Scales.	2 peso gold coin	Warrior Basin Treasure Hunters

Raffle winner - Garrett AT Pro - Ron Barnes

I want to thank everyone who helped out especially Ralph Waldrop and the SMARTS club. They were excellent hosts. Southern Region director Art Difilippo put in a lot of time coordinating the event along with the board members who all had a part. We must also thank Mayor Tim Burchett who was responsible for getting us there in the first place.

The location of the next one is not yet determined. We will let you know once we have it set.

Other Issues

I have mentioned the Mayor of Knox County and I want to elaborate. He had asked the visitors bureau to pursue getting us to Knoxville. This guy is an asset to the hobby. You would never know he was the mayor if you met him in public. My initial meeting with him was when Ralph thanked him for being there at the start of the Saturdays hunt. I ask Ralph to point him out to me. He pointed and said the guy in the carharts with the Whites. Need I say more!

Mayor Burchett spent 16 years in the TN state legislature before running for mayor. He is a breath of fresh air. He has nothing good to say about the legislative process and the political games. What did he say as far as the best communication to legislators? A short handwritten letter. No more than $\frac{3}{4}$ page and hitting 3 or 4 points. You can then follow it up with an email and phone call. This came straight from someone who was in the position of receiving those contacts.

We are back in a position of needing someone to take over as the legislative officer. Unfortunately the person who had taken it over had a change in his employment situation. He is no longer able to fulfill the position. If you would like to join the efforts to protect the hobby then this may be the job for you. It requires a bit of searching the internet on a regular basis and then evaluating and researching what you find. Following that with getting the word out to the board, the membership and the hobby. You will not be on your own. I will teach you exactly what you need to do. This is an important position and needs someone who can devote their attention to it. Right now I am doing double duty and it takes away from other responsibilities. Please contact me if you would like to take on an interesting position.

Our Facebook page is growing. If you are a Facebook junkie then look in on it and feel free to post. The moderator Skip Henning is doing a great job with it and he is posting items from the website there too.

There is currently the potential of a metal detecting ban in the county parks in Erie County, NY. I say potential as the parks commissioner said he will propose it to the legislature. The Niagara Frontier Relic Hunters Assoc. has been contacting legislators and the county executive to oppose any attempt at this. We will let you know more when information is available and if we need a national campaign.

We hope you had a good year swinging a detector and that your finds pocket was always full. Or at least "fuller" than the trash side! The snow and cold has hit here and in many areas so I am probably done until spring. After all it is December. If you are in an area where you can hunt all year then you have a big advantage over us northerners.

We are open to any and all suggestions from the membership. And we can always use an extra helping hand.

Mark Schuessler
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