



## Turtleman Visits *Mountain Discoveries'* Office

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**  
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

Ernie Brown, Jr., a.k.a. Turtleman,  
left, and Robert Pyle discuss and  
examine artifact collections.



The familiar greetings that Turtleman fans have enjoyed for two television seasons now have a regional connection. Ernie Lee Brown, Jr., better known as “Turtleman” and television star of Animal Planet’s *Call of the Wildman*, has plans to enhance an exhibit at his hometown museum with the assistance of Bob Pyle, Archaeological advisor to *Mountain Discoveries*. The two friends share similar back-

grounds, interests, and visions regarding the Appalachian culture they are collaborating to preserve.

Ernie and Bob have deep Appalachian roots, Ernie being from central Kentucky and Bob from western Maryland. Observing animals, discovering arrowheads, digging fossils, tending gardens, hunting, and fishing were all part of growing up in a rural area. According to Turtleman, “We

always had chores around the house, including cutting wood and keeping the fire burning. Our family also learned to hunt animals according to the seasons. Hunting for food was important but I also liked hanging out in the woods to watch animals, trying to think like them, and figuring out how to catch them with my bare hands. My parents didn't always agree with my idea of fun and warned me, 'You're going to get killed.'" While Ernie obviously didn't get killed encountering wildlife, his snapping turtle exploits have brought him fame and a nickname.

Bob's western Maryland home in Kitzmiller, Maryland, placed him in the heart of coal country in the upper Potomac River Basin, a rugged but enjoyable landscape for a novice geologist and archaeologist. "Ernie and I quickly became friends because of our common heritage. Our interests in the outdoors began at an early age; so did our collections of artifacts and fossil specimens."

Turtleman's passion for enjoying the outdoors has made him an internationally recognized personality with TV ratings exceeding those of many cable news programs. Approximately one million viewers typically tune in to *Call of the Wildman* to watch Turtleman use bare hand techniques to safely remove animals from unlikely and sometimes dangerous situations. Focusing on a "no kill" method of nuisance animal removal along with entertaining commentary has created a winning combination for the television program and popular acclaim for Ernie. According to Turtleman, "Visitors have come to my hometown from every state in the nation and many foreign countries." One morning he was surprised to find there were 200 people camped on the front yard of his home. Not one to disappoint fans, Turtleman patiently greeted each visitor even though he had

not rested from more than 24 hours of work. Numerous television appearances, including *The Today Show*, *Anderson Cooper's 360*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, *Fox and Friends*, and four times on Jay Leno's *The Tonight Show* have allowed a wider audience to enjoy Ernie's exploits and friendly demeanor.

Bob's early inquiries into the natural world led him to a fulfilling career as an archaeologist and geologist. His studies of pre-Columbian petroglyph sites in southern West Virginia and Manchester, Kentucky and their accompanying

Ogham script has drawn international attention.

Numerous published articles, including authorship of **All That Remains**, highlight his vast collections and wide ranging interests.

The two men's fates recently intertwined through the intercession of a mutual friend who knew that Ernie was traveling through Bob's hometown area of Morgantown, West Virginia. It was suggested that Ernie and Bob meet. Upon arrival in Morgantown, Ernie was energized by Bob's world class collections and knowledge. The initial meeting was followed by conversations and plans focusing on

the expansion of Turtleman's Exhibit at the Marion County Heritage Center located in Lebanon, Kentucky.

Ernie's philosophy of life is reflected in the Turtleman Exhibit that is already established through the efforts of Ernie and friends in Marion County. While additions are forthcoming, all work will be



**Lolly, Ernie's dog, watches everything he does as she is always with the Turtleman. Lolly Dog, as Ernie calls her, is a rescue dog who is now very happy, well mannered, content, and constantly at Ernie's side. Although far apart geographically, when it comes to rescuing animals, Ernie and HART For Animals have a lot in common—their welfare.**



Turtleman and Lolly Dog, visit with author, Dan Whetzel and wife, Annie, at *Mountain Discoveries'* office in Cumberland, MD.



Ernie believes in making people happy and his own joyful character is a testament to that fact. He's a very animated and fun person to be around.

guided by the basic principle of bringing joy to fans. "I believe in making people happy and proud of who they are. When folks visit the museum, I want them to leave happier than when they arrived."

Ernie's ability to create happiness in others is the result of his own joyful character. Being comfortable in his backwoods home has allowed him to celebrate life and pass along a contagious joy to everyone, particularly children. Fans will patiently wait hours for greetings and photographs at rare public appearances.





The Turtleman Exhibit at the Marion County Heritage Museum features a variety of items, including Appalachian artifacts and more recent memorabilia. Arrowheads, personal items, a replica of Turtleman's mobile shelter that he carried to festivals, props from his TV shows, and gifts from fans are part of the collection. Additional items will be forthcoming from Bob's collection of artifacts.

**Left:** Ernie and Kathie Smith, co-owner of *Mountain Discoveries*, with a really large axe head from Ernie's collection.

**Below:** Ernie at AAD-INC.'s office in Cumberland, relating some of his experiences as Turtleman and also discussing his collection to be exhibited at the Marion County Heritage Center in Lebanon, Kentucky.

Ernie credits his grandparents with the advice that grounded his life. "My outlook on life came from my childhood. My Grandmother and Grandfather Brown always said, 'Find a talent,' and I did. I found my talent by being in the woods and figuring out animals; that is what made me happy when I was growing up. Today, when I meet people I can tell they are relieved to see me in a good mood. It makes me feel like a superhero when children and parents become happy after they talk with Turtleman."



One important plan under review features a formal educational component where local educators will collaborate to involve students from the Marion County School system with the museum exhibits. Student access to the museum is important to Turtleman who is planning to coordinate student field trips and provide opportunities for educators. Bob's experience with teacher workshops will be a valuable asset in developing the new programming.

As Turtleman fans enjoy the third season of his show, they can expect to see more exploits of an Appalachian woodsman who remains genuinely committed to carrying out his mission of making people happy. Unlike celebrities that sometimes find themselves fundamentally altered by circumstances, fame has only served to increase Ernie's ability to reach out to others in a positive way; he remains unaffected by media acclaim. The Marion County Heritage Center's Turtleman Exhibit provides a permanent reminder of Ernie Brown's ability to preserve and promote the Appalachian backwoods life that he loves.

For additional information on the Turtleman Exhibit see:

**[www.visitlebanonky.com/the-turtleman](http://www.visitlebanonky.com/the-turtleman) and [turtlemanliveaction.com](http://turtlemanliveaction.com).**

Those interested in viewing some of Bob's artifacts and other cultural aspects of the region may visit the West Virginia Geological Survey Museum, located just east of Morgantown, West Virginia. For additional information see: U.S. Geological Survey Museum: **<http://www.wvgs.wvnet.edu/www/museum/museum.htm>**.

*Mountain Discoveries* magazine is proud to be part of Ernie's and Bob's Appalachian experiences.

**Editor's note: *Mountain Discoveries* does not encourage or suggest digging for arrowheads or artifacts. Everything here was collected for educational purposes to broaden the field of lithics. All artifacts were discovered on private property with permission from the owners.**



**Archaeologist Robert L. Pyle holding the remains of an ancient human skull found in a rock shelter in West Virginia, which is now at the Smithsonian Institution along with documentation of DNA testing.**

**92-Page Book & 23" x 29" Poster Available**

 The image shows the cover of a book titled "ALL THAT REMAINS" by Robert L. Pyle. The cover features a collage of various arrowheads and projectile points. Next to it is a large poster titled "HISTORIC PROJECTILE POINTS FOUND IN WEST VIRGINIA (Eastern United States)". The poster displays numerous black and white photographs of different types of projectile points, some with their names and descriptions.
 

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 A vertical advertisement for Cumberland, Maryland. At the top, the word "Cumberland" is written in a large, white, serif font against a blue sky background. Below the text is a scenic view of the city, featuring a river with a bridge, colorful autumn foliage, and historic buildings. At the bottom, the text "A City for all Seasons." is written in a white, serif font. Below that, in smaller text, it says "Visit. Stay. Become part of our success story." and provides the website "www.ci.cumberland.md.us".
 

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