

NEWS

LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Traditional Festival

Coming up October 29-November 1 is the eighth annual installment of one of Appalachia's leading musical events—the Celebration of Traditional Music presented by the Berea College Appalachian Center.

Invited performers include David Morris, Edna Ritchie Baker, Tommy Hunter and Carroll Best, the Eller Brothers, John and Mary Lozier, the Mountain Women's Cooperative String Band, James ("Sparky") Rucker, Razor Wolfenbarger, Dee and Delta Hicks, the Vernon Payne Band, Carol Jones and Gay Kay, and J.P. and Annadeene Fraley.

The festivities begin on Thursday, October 29, with a 3:00 p.m. performance by Sparky Rucker, singer and guitarist; in the evening there's a street dance. On Friday and Saturday evenings the plenary sessions will be held. The daylight hours on Saturday will be devoted to workshops and a symposium "Music and Change in the Region: Focus—Doc Watson and Bill Monroe," led by Ralph Rinzler, director of the Office of Folklife Programs of the Smithsonian Institution. Those who recover from dancing late into Saturday night will join Edna Ritchie Baker in a hymn sing on Sunday morning at 9:00.

If you need to know any more than this, contact the Appalachian Center at the address on the outside of the NEWSLETTER.

Artists, Craftsmen

The fall fair of the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen is being held a week earlier this year than usual—September 25-27 instead of the first weekend in October. Interested persons might remind their friends of this change. Hours (10 to 6) and location (Indian Fort Theater, outside Berea) remain the same.

The fall fair of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild will take place on October 15-17 at the Asheville Civic Center. The "featured medium" is to be clay in all its uses and sculptural forms.

Appalachian artists have a new chance to display their work in downtown Washington, where well-heeled bureaucrats abound. Space equal to two large rooms is available in the offices of the Appalachian Community Service Network; work will be displayed about six weeks. Artists, craftsmen, photographers should get in



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touch with Ann Bray, ACSN, 1200 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Housing: Finally, an Answer?

In 1973 Rev. M. Dwayne Yost, a mission director for the Church of the Brethren, took a leave from his post to see what might be done about the housing situation in his area of Eastern Kentucky. With the backing of his and other churches and of members of the community, the Kentucky Mountain Housing Development Corporation was formed, with Yost as executive director.

The housing situation in the area, Clay and Jackson counties, was tight. A resurgence in population, escalating construction costs, and the impossibility of obtaining conventional financing combined to make the affordable (under-\$25,000) house only a dream. Families lived in makeshift shelters, sometimes 12 and 14 to a room.

Within five years Kentucky Mountain had become the second-largest producer of new homes in Eastern Kentucky; by early 1981 it had completed 110 new houses. Not stopping there, the project has made major

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DISCUSSION

Appalachian Windup

In the Winter 1981 and Spring 1981 issues of the CENTER NEWSLETTER, we ran comments by various Appalachian figures on the question: "The Appalachian Regional Commission: Would We Miss It?" The answers our respondents gave us were yesses and noes in various degrees. As we point out elsewhere in this issue, ARC has survived, for the time being at least. We therefore conclude our discussion—also for the time being—with a more general comment on the current budgetary thinking in Washington. These remarks are taken from a speech delivered to a rally of an ad hoc group called Kentucky Action for Human Needs; the speaker is Kentucky State Representative William R. Weinberg, who represents an Appalachian district.

“The great danger of the Reagan budget is not just the money no longer available to our programs, for if we persist we can nurture many of them without it. The great danger is the attitude that such a budget implies and fosters—an attitude of noblesse oblige, of “let them eat cake,” of we are not our brother’s keeper. We must not let the budget cuts of today become the nation’s philosophy of tomorrow, for to do so would be to turn our heads and hearts from the ideals that have sustained American democracy.

The Reagan budget is not wrong and doomed to failure because it cuts government spending. Most of us would like to see that done. It is wrong because it is in truth a sort of Robin Hood in reverse. It robs from the poor and needy to give to the rich.

There is more money in the Reagan budget for

Chrysler, but less money for day care centers.

There is more money in the Reagan budget for the rulers of El Salvador, but less money for health care in Appalachia.

There is more money in the Reagan budget for nuclear weapons which threaten the very existence of mankind, but no money for student loans which might educate our children to avoid such genocide.

There is more money in the Reagan budget for jelly beans, but less money for food stamps.

And where are our political leaders during this crisis in the cause of human justice? They are absent. They are mute. They are dumb. Many rush to embrace what they think is the current political fad. If New Deal liberalism is dead, it has been sacrificed on the altar of political opportunism.

We must persist in what we believe is right. We must make clear that a reduction in government control over our lives does not require, or allow, a reduction in our commitment to human rights and human freedom. We must protest a commitment to guns over butter when many of our citizens have no bread. We must be mindful of the past but not bound to it. We must devise new solutions based on old principles. The shortcomings of New Deal liberalism were ones of solutions, not principles.

We stand today in the minority, but our cause will prevail. It is just. It is right. It is true. Political parties may change their name or their philosophy but the heartfelt needs of men and women remain the same—food, shelter, companionship, freedom. No political party or movement in a democratic society can long succeed which does not guarantee its citizens that these needs will be satisfied. Our nation is no exception.”

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repairs on 85 other houses and lesser repairs on 500 more. Church volunteers do the small-scale jobs; skilled carpenters and semiskilled trainees carry out major tasks. Some 30 of the trainees have found outside jobs. Yost has also pushed the development of special construction techniques and has worked for the adoption of appropriate construction standards. Groups in other states have followed his lead.

Yost’s success has not gone without recognition. He has been named one of two 1981 winners of \$10,000 Winthrop Rockefeller Awards for Distinguished Rural Service, sponsored by the National Rural Center in Washington. The award is given for projects that deal with an important national or regional problem and that are adaptable to other rural areas. Innovation is also important. Yost’s project qualifies handsomely on all counts.

If you’d like more information on KMHDC, write Rev. Dwayne Yost, Executive Director, KMHDC, P.O. Box 431, Manchester, Ky. 40962.

Papers, Papers

For its national meeting at the Galt House, Louisville, April 14-18, 1982, the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association has issued a call for papers or presentations on Appalachian history, poli-

tics, economics, music, folk literature, writers, crafts and so on. Proposals, with 150-word abstracts or descriptions, should be sent (by November 1) to Fran Helphinstine, U.P.O. 1244, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351.

The Oral History Association will hold its 17th national colloquium at the St. Anthony Hotel, San Antonio, Tex., October 8-10, 1982, and it invites proposals for papers, thematic sessions and media presentations. If you’ve got something suitable, send an abstract or a proposal, together with a brief resume, to John J. Fox, Chairman, OHA Program Committee, Department of History, Salem State College, Salem, Mass. 01970.

EYE on Publications

Recollected Essays 1965-1980, by Wendell Berry (North Point Press, San Francisco). Ten essays, chosen from five previous collections of the author’s work, trace what he describes as a “desire to make myself responsibly at home in this world and in my native and chosen place.” The book is rounded off by a 1980 piece, “The Making of a Marginal Farm.”

Wouldn’t Take Nothin’ for My Journey Now, by Jock Lauterer (University of North Carolina Press). More talk with older Appalachian people, this time in
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Rebirth at Red Bird

Saturday, September 5, was a notable day in the little community of Beverly, Ky. Less than four months earlier, fire had roared through the wooden building housing the Red Bird School, consuming it and then destroying the nearby school gymnasium as well. The symbol for more than 55 years of a religious commitment to education in southeastern Kentucky had been wiped out.

The United Methodist Church's Red Bird Mission had no thought of abandoning, even temporarily, its teaching purposes. With the cooperation of the Kentucky Department of Education and of neighboring schools, arrangements were made to proceed with the 1981-82 school year.

Now, on the first Saturday in September, ground was broken for a three-unit concrete-block complex, with concrete and stone facing, with a projected cost of \$2.7 million. The middle unit will house administrative offices, the gymnasium, the cafeteria and utility areas. The elementary school will occupy another unit, the high school the third. Completion is expected a year from now.

As reported in the Spring issue of the NEWS-LETTER, the Red Bird Library was lost in the fire. The school welcomes gifts of replacement books, especially reference works and Appalachian-related books.



Above and below, left: May 19, 1981; page 1 and below, right: September 5, 1981



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Rutherford County, N.C. The author, a newspaper editor, seeks through his interviews with these 35 persons to show "what it was like to be alive in the early 1900s....I believe that their wisdom and values matter to us 'moderns...'" The text is accompanied by the author's photos.

Tell Me Who I Am, by Mark A. Doty (Louisiana State University Press). When James Agee was six years old, his father was killed in a car accident, and soon afterward he was forbidden to see his mother. These events underlie this study, which is accordingly titled "James Agee's Search for Selfhood," a search that took Agee on a spiritual odyssey through *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), *The Morning Watch* (1957) and *A Death in the Family* (1957). The book includes some previously unpublished correspondence between Agee and Walker Evans, as well as a number of interviews conducted by the author with Father Flye and others.

Singing Family of the Cumberlands, by Jean Ritchie (Geordie Music Publishing; distributed by Music Sales Corp., New York). A reissue of the notable 1955 book, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak. The story of the Ritchies is accompanied by words and music for 42 songs.

Working Lives, edited by Marc S. Miller (Pantheon). A history, by many hands, of labor in the South; most of the articles come from *Southern Exposure*, the magazine published by the activist Institute for Southern Studies. "Privilege and inequality have clearly taken a different course in the south than (*sic*) elsewhere..." says Herbert Gutman in the introduction. "How, then, has the Southern worker responded to the pressures of this environment? And what have we still to learn from the separate experience of its labor history?"

On the Big Wind, by David Madden (Holt, Rinehart and Winston). The book is billed as being "SEVEN COMIC EPISODES IN THE FITFUL RISE OF BIG BOB TRAVIS FROM DISC JOCKEY IN AN EASTERN KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN TOWN TO NETWORK-TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER." Comic, all right, it amusingly and sometimes starkly contrasts the frivolity of network chatter with the eloquent reality of a region still bogged in the poverty of the 1970s.

Wide Neighborhoods, by Mary Breckinridge (University Press of Kentucky). The autobiography of the remarkable woman who in 1925 established the Frontier Nursing Service in Leslie County, Ky., then one of the most inaccessible parts of the United States, and thereby began a widely influential tradition of family health care. This new edition of the 1952 book includes an introductory sketch of Mary Breckinridge by her cousin, photographer and journalist Marvin

Breckinridge Patterson, and a selection of photos (not as many of them as one would hope, however, from the camera of Mrs. Patterson, who recorded the activities of the FNS in the 1930s).

Poets of Darkness, by James B. Goode (University Press of Mississippi). "I would have been a third-generation coal miner," says the author, "had I not gone to college and become a teacher." This collection of poems chronicles the career he did not follow "in hills of sound/Underground."

Tom Ashley, Sam McGee, Bukka White, edited by Thomas G. Burton (University of Tennessee Press). *Omnia Tennessea in tres partes divisa est*—and each part has a characteristic kind of traditional music associated with it. Each of the three singers profiled in this book is identified with one of the traditions—Tom Ashley with the Anglo-American folksong of East Tennessee, Sam McGee with Middle Tennessee's country music, Bukka White with the Memphis blues of West Tennessee. Through interviews and tape recordings the contributing authors look at the three men and their music. The book includes technical analyses, bibliographies and discographies.

Original Sins, by Lisa Alther (Knopf). In *Kinflicks*, Lisa Alther gave us Ginny Babcock on a guided tour that began in a northeastern Tennessee high school and stopped at all the landmarks of the 1960s. Now we're back again in Tri-Cities Airport country, starting off for the sixties and the seventies, this time with five protagonists who among them are going to go North, get married, stay *macho*, become involved in civil-rights activism, and learn about being Southerners. And once again, happily, we begin as beneficiaries of the author's dead-on-target insights into high school dating life.

Long Steel Rail, by Norm Cohen (University of Illinois Press). The subtitle tells it all: The Railroad in American Folksong. The heart of the book is a discussion of 85 songs, including music and text transcriptions, with an elaborate bibliography and discography for each. The author, a chemist by trade, is a leading scholar in the folksong field; he is executive secretary of the John Edwards Memorial Foundation, a UCLA-based archive and research facility, and edits the *JEMF Quarterly*.

(NOTE: The Appalachian Center does not sell books. However, if you encounter any difficulty in obtaining a title, you may order it from the Council of the Southern Mountains Bookstore, C.P.O. Box 2160, Berea, Ky. 40404. The bookstore currently has in preparation a comprehensive catalogue of Appalachian literature and music, fully annotated and with accompanying essays. It can be ordered—\$2.00 before October 9—from the above address.)

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