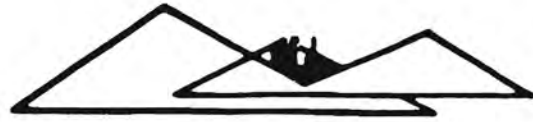


# NEWS

# I



# LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER  
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Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Ledfords of all generations came for the award ceremony, which honored a family as well as a book and its author. John Egerton stands in the center.

## “Generations” Cops Weatherford Award

“I wrote the book to make people who pick it up think, not necessarily about the details of the Ledfords’ lives, but to think about their own family histories, their own backgrounds and who and what they are. If the book makes people think back to their own grandparents, then I feel it’s been worthwhile.”

So said John Egerton, author of the book *Generations*, in accepting the 14th annual W. D. Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia. The presentation was made before an overflow crowd at the annual luncheon, held in Berea on May 21.

Published by the University Press of Kentucky and now in its fourth printing, *Generations* is the story of a family whose history Egerton felt reflects the typical American experience. The family is that of Burnam and Addie Ledford, who grew up in Harlan County but spent most of their adult lives in Garrard County, Ky. Mr. Ledford died last year at 107; Mrs. Ledford is now 99.

The author set out to find a family that he “could present to readers as a metaphor for America,” which meant that there had to be some elders whose personal memories went back to the 19th century. After some searching he was led—happily—to the home of the Ledfords.

The Weatherford Award is jointly sponsored by Berea College’s Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library and is given every year to the writer of the published work of any kind or length that best illuminates the problems, personalities and unique qualities of the Appalachian South. The \$500 prize is donated by Alfred H. Perrin of Berea in memory of the late W. D. Weatherford, Sr., a pioneer and leading figure for many years in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations in the South.

It is traditional at the luncheon to have a talk about some of the qualities of W. D. Weatherford, Sr. This

to page 2





**TALK:** Some talk was for the record, as in the winning author's interview above. Others at the ceremony did some talking too; right above, Cratis Williams, Loyal Jones and Richard Drake.

"GENERATIONS" from page 1

year's speaker was Wilma Dykeman, author of *Prophet of Plenty*, a biography of Dr. Weatherford. Since this is the retirement year for Dr. Weatherford's son, Berea College President Willis Weatherford, Ms. Dykeman spoke about the many years in which Weatherfords have been associated with Berea, beginning with the early days of W. D. Weatherford's service as a trustee.

A graduate of the University of Kentucky, Egerton lives in Nashville, and he has been a full-time freelance writer since 1971. His books include *A Mind to Stay Here* and *The Americanization of Dixie*.

## Looking Forward

**July 8-21:** Summer Craft I, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Courses through the alphabet, from copper sculpture to woodcarving.

**July 22-August 4:** Summer Craft II, same name and address.

**August 5-11:** Appalachian Writers Workshop, Hindman Settlement School, featuring such veterans as James Still, Harriette Arnow, Gurney Norman, Jim Wayne Miller and Jeff Daniel Marion. The school's address is Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, Ky. 41822.

**September 20-23:** National conference of the Oral History Association, Marriott Hotel, Lexington, Ky.; papers, workshops, panel discussions, media presentations. John Egerton, winner of the Weatherford Award for his book *Generations* (see previous story) will be one of the speakers. To receive material, write Anne Campbell, Appalachian Collection, King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

**October 10-16:** Dance and Music Week, John C. Campbell Folk School (see address above).

## The War After 20 Years

In the nearly four decades that have elapsed since the Japanese signed the instrument of surrender aboard the



battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, the United States has engaged in exactly one formal war. It began on January 8, 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed that "this Administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America... We will launch a special effort in the chronically distressed areas of Appalachia."

Twenty years after this declaration, the people at the Commission on Religion in Appalachia decided that it was time to ask some questions about this war. The struggle was lost long ago, they felt, although nobody ever signed an instrument of surrender; it was simply "doomed from the start by a lack of national resolve, resources, or even national understanding."

But should we try again? Should the War on Poverty be redeclared? What can be learned from the first conflict that would be useful today? These and other such questions formed the basis of discussion and working sessions held during a conference in late May at East Tennessee State University. "Task groups" attempted to come up with answers that would contribute to the development of a common strategy, taking into account various dimensions of each issue: racism, sexism, the roles of federal and state governments, the role of business, and the role of local community leadership.

The meeting was keynoted by the Rev. Jack Weller, author 20 years ago of the renowned study *Yesterday's People*, a book that itself has suffered some battle scars as the result of changing fashions in Appalachian thought. In the current national climate, Weller said, much that was won in past years is now being lost as the War on Poverty is transformed into the War on the Poor. But it is no time for unconditional surrender. The development of local leadership and the discovery of the power inherent in community organization were important victories that can never be taken away. They constitute the true positive legacy of the war.

## Help for Over the Rhine

Peaslee School is a symbol to the residents of Cincinnati's heavily Appalachian Over the Rhine district. If they can raise \$175,000 to go along with a \$50,000 grant from the city, they can buy the now-closed school and turn it into a neighborhood learning center. Want to help? Send your contribution to the Urban Appalachian Council, 2115 West Eighth St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45204.





## "Electric Valley" Shines

Some subjects seem to be inherently controversial. The basis of controversy may change, black may become white and white black, but controversy of some kind goes on.

The Tennessee Valley Authority presents such a phenomenon—at its birth, adored by liberals and excoriated by conservatives; latterly, hated by the descendants of those same liberals as power mad in every sense and an environmental polluter of epic proportions, while cozied up to by coal barons.

In the unlikely event that you are unfamiliar with this aspect of the TVA story, you will understand it and a great deal more after seeing *The Electric Valley*, a very important, very detailed (running time is 1½ hr.) film from an enterprise called the James Agee Film Project, headquartered at 316½ East Main St., Johnson City, Tenn. 37601 (Agee was not only an East Tennessean and a film critic himself, he wrote exhaustively about TVA in its early days for *Fortune* magazine).

*The Electric Valley*, in the best documentary fashion, moves between the big national picture, as seen by President Roosevelt and other makers of TVA, and the world from the viewpoint of individual residents of the Tennessee Valley, and producer-director Ross Spears does an exceptional job of mingling new interview footage with similar scenes from old 1930s black-and-white documentaries. Some of the same characters, like the man who is now the newspaper publisher in Decatur, Ala., appear in both. This is true of some of the national figures too—for instance, David Lilienthal, one of the original board members.

For a while, as the film unreels, you'd think it a puff

**LIT UP:** TVA's mightiest dam was Fontana, in North Carolina, the highest dam east of the Rockies. During World War II construction was pushed day and night, as is shown in the striking photo above.

for TVA as you hear about the idealism of the creators like Senator George W. Norris and Arthur Morgan as well as Roosevelt. But then comes the split in the board of directors, and there comes also the testimony of people dispossessed by TVA land purchases. And there are lightening touches of comedy, as when the power tycoon Wendell Willkie appears, talking in those far-off days of the horrors of socialism or whatever he professes to believe TVA to be, scaring nobody.

In some ways the bulk of the movie seems to be essentially a background for the last segment, the current debate over nuclear power, with the point being made that in the 1980s some \$2 billion in projects have been closed down (though demand had declined anyway). Overall, it's an absolutely first-rate movie technically, if at times a bit slow-paced. If you want to know what TVA was all about when it started and how it got where it is today, this is the hour-and-a-half that will tell you.

One bit of carping: The same old weary fiddle opens this film as opens practically all Appalachian/southern movies and TV documentaries, except those where an equally sad harmonica is pressed into service. Oh for a southern documentary that starts off with trumpets or piccolos!

## EYE on Publications

*White Trash* (New South Company, P.O. Box 24918, Los Angeles, Calif.). A paperback version of an anthology of contemporary southern poetry first published in 1976. In spite of the sameness of contemporary mass-media-led America, say the editors, Nancy Stone and Robert Grey, there is "an authentic kind of writing that can be said to belong to the Southern region and no other," and poets from Betty Adcock and James Applewhite to Jonathan Williams and Charles Wright make their case.

*Harvest From the Hills* (Seven Buffaloes Press, P.O. to page 4



"EYE" from page 3

Box 249, Big Timber, Mont.). More poetry (and some prose), this time collected and edited by Art Cuelho, who's a long way indeed from Appalachia; his poets, however, are such familiar figures as George Ella Lyon and Jim Wayne Miller, together with others who appear equally Appalachian if not all as well known.

*Fire on the Mountain*, by Garry Barker (Kentucke Imprints, Berea, Ky. 40403). A collection of short stories in which the author sets out to "record memories [and] try to adapt the Appalachian stoicism and humor to fiction." Analogously, the stories show mountain people adapting to contemporary urbanized society.

*A People and Their Quilts*, by John Rice Irwin (Schiffer Publishing Ltd., Box E, Exton, Pa. 19341). The idea was a good one—not just to do a quilt book but to show these creations as the work of breathing, dreaming persons and the possessions of present-day inheritors or owners who cherish them—and the plan has been beautifully realized, in handsome and well-produced photographs and an informative accompanying text. The creator is the eminent Tennessee museum developer and antiquarian; the result of his effort here is a book that ought to be absolutely irresistible to people who love quilts. The pictures are by one Robin Hood, who is director of photographic services for the state of Tennessee.

*Appalachia and America*, edited by Allen Batteau (University Press of Kentucky). The first thing to say about this book is that, as we discovered when we wished to check a particular point, it lacks an index (we were so surprised that we looked three times, just to make sure we weren't somehow failing to find it); unfortunately, therefore, we can't make the observation we intended to make. Instead, we'll tell you that the book, subtitled "Autonomy and Regional Dependence," is made up chiefly of papers presented at a 1979 symposium on Appalachian studies held at the annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Association. What these papers do, says the editor, is to examine "the creation of an Appalachia that is increasingly defined in terms of its 'need' for educational, health, and social services." They accomplish this by

looking at "the interplay between community values and structure, the focus of attention on the region by outside groups, and the conflicts and antagonistic relationships that derive from the professionalized efforts to 'help Appalachians.'" The enemy here, in other words, is not Harry Caudill's rapacious moguls but, instead, the great bureaucracies with their impersonal regulations and their pervasive "professionalism." For many of the authors the technique of choice for understanding this phenomenon appears to be class analysis, as in the account—very interesting—of the Kanawha County, W.Va., textbook controversy of 1974, but the pieces are too disparate to sum up with any great accuracy; however, one historian who commented on the book overall expressed his concern at the general view of "service professionals and educators associated with established public and private institutions...as unknowing (and knowing) tools of Corporate America." He seems to think that this represents one-sided scholarship.

*Mountain Fiction from Abernethy to Zugsmith* may not have aspirations to best-sellerdom, but for Appalachian scholars it is an important publication nonetheless. This new list of 1480 mountain fiction books now on the shelves of the Weatherford-Hammond Appalachian Collection at Berea College represents the fifth revision and expansion of the list that began in 1970 with 760 titles, its aim being to serve as a guide to what has been called "perhaps the most unusual regional fiction collection in America." These lists, compiled and made available by the Friends of the Berea College Library, have become a benchmark and buying guide for other Appalachian fiction collections.

The 1480 works of fiction are only a part of the overall Weatherford-Hammond collection of 10,000 books and more than 600 linear feet of Appalachian archives. The collection serves as a major source of information for visiting Appalachian scholars. If you would like a copy of the fiction guide for your institution, write Friends of the Library, Hutchins Library, Berea, Ky. 40404.

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