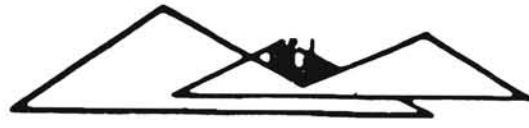


# NEWS

# LETTER

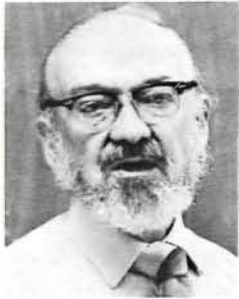


APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Faces...

see page 3

## Looking Forward

**June 24-29:** Ninth annual Appalachian Celebration, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351. Music, dance, food and crafts; includes Jesse Stuart symposium; June 24-26. For complete information, contact the Appalachian Development Center at MSU.

**June 27-28:** Sixth annual conference on Appalachian children and families, Morehead State University. Contact Alban Wheeler, MSU, UPO 1323, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351.

**June 28-30:** Third annual conference and workshop of the Appalachian Writers Association, Morehead State University. Visiting editors, publishers and authors are expected to be on hand. Details from Garry Barker, UPO 907, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351.

**July 7-13:** Appalachian family week, Pine Mountain Settlement School, Pine Mountain, Ky. 40810. All sorts of activities for ages 5-adult, with folksinger Betty Smith as the star attraction.

**July 13-14:** Eighth annual Baber Mountain "poultry reading, ramp feed and swarp," on Baber Mountain in Richwood, W.Va. If you wish to participate in a weekend that "promises to be 'broke out' with readings," get in touch with Jim Webb at 606/633-7474 or Bob Henry Baber at 304/846-2715.

**August 4-10:** Eighth annual Appalachian writers workshop, Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, Ky. 41822. Such standard luminaries as James Still and Jim Wayne Miller will be joined this year by John Egerton, winner of the 1983 Weatherford Award for *Generations*.

**August 11-18:** Vocal week at the Augusta Heritage arts workshop, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W.Va.  
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## Novelist John Ehle Wins Weatherford Award

*Last One Home*, by the versatile North Carolina writer John Ehle, has become the first novel to win the W.D. Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia. The presentation of the 15th annual award was made to Ehle at a luncheon held in Berea on May 9.

At the same ceremony, special recognition was given to Albert Stewart, the founding and recently retired editor of *Appalachian Heritage*, the quarterly magazine of "Southern Appalachian Life & Culture" which is now published by Berea College.

John Ehle's prizewinning novel is a story of Appalachian North Carolina (see CENTER NEWSLETTER, Winter 1985). It examines the growth and change of a family of rural origins as the father becomes an innovative and successful businessman in Asheville. As we observed in our earlier notice, it's similar to the kind of family-and-business saga that John O'Hara used to write—although it should be added that stylistic resemblances are few, O'Hara's concentration on the conversation of his mostly urban eastern characters producing different kinds of effects from Ehle's broader  
to page 2

### Winner John Ehle speaks



## LOOKING FORWARD *from page 1*

26241. Hazel Dickens, John McCutcheon, Sparky Rucker, Carol Elizabeth Jones and many others.

**August 25-31:** Folk music week, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Betty Smith (see July 7-13) will be here too.

**August 30-September 2:** Tenth annual old-time country music contest & pioneer exposition. Although it's a few miles outside the bounds of Appalachia—the site is the Pottawattamie County Fairgrounds in Avoca, Iowa—this festival bills itself as “mid-America's number one traditional music event,” with \$15,000 in prizes and attendance in 1984 of 30,000; guest performers come from the U.S., Canada and Europe. Information from the National Traditional Country Music Association, Inc., 106 Navajo, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501.

**September 9-11:** Fiftieth anniversary conference, Blue Ridge Parkway; University Center, Appalachian State University. An across-the-board affair, expected to tackle everything from folklore to land management. Write Barry Buxton, Appalachian Consortium, University Hall, ASU, Boone, N.C. 28608.

## NOVELIST *from page 1*

relationship to his people. At the luncheon the winning author spoke of his dealings with his characters and the importance of allowing them to work out their own fates.

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.

Ehle, who lives chiefly in Winston-Salem, is the author of six other novels about mountain people, three further novels and four works of nonfiction. He has also been of service to the region by means other than his writing, having taught at the University of North

**Award donor A. H. Perrin, winner John Ehle, Berea College President John Stephenson**



Carolina, acted as a special adviser to former Gov. Terry Sanford, and served as a program officer with the Ford Foundation.

## Al Smith to Congress: Save Rural Programs

“Despite the complaints against the ARC, with which this committee is familiar, I did not find a county judge, mayor, school superintendent, health nurse, or coal miner willing to turn back one mile of road, one foot of pipe, or surrender a single classroom or clinic to the bureaucrats and congressmen and governors who put them there....

“In reviewing the arguments of the present administration against the ARC...I realize that the larger argument is for reducing economic development programs for rural America, or shifting much of the responsibility back to the states, and that a still larger philosophical objective is to dismantle many federal programs, period, that the administration's ax is aimed at urban aid as well as rural. Obviously, my bias is in behalf of those investments of tax dollars that stimulate creation of jobs, in all areas of our country.

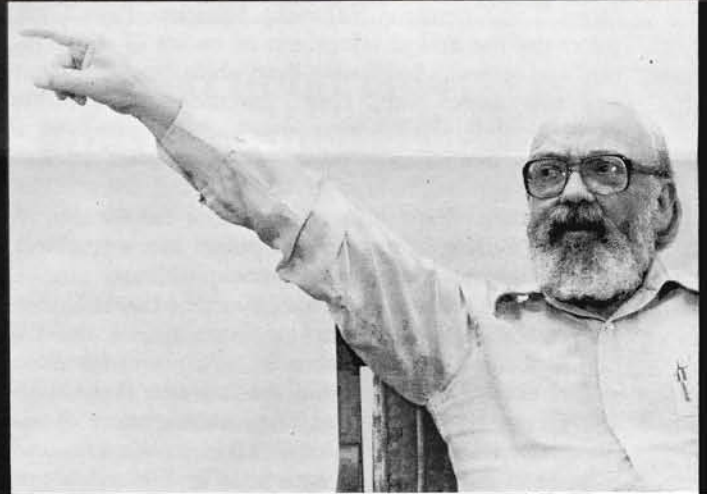
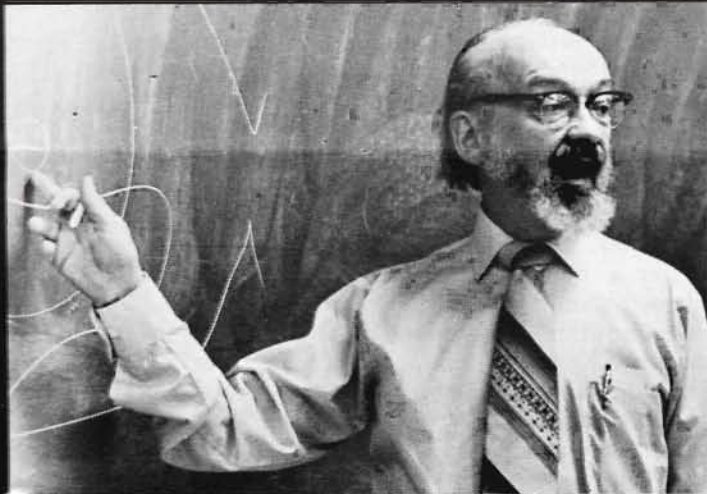
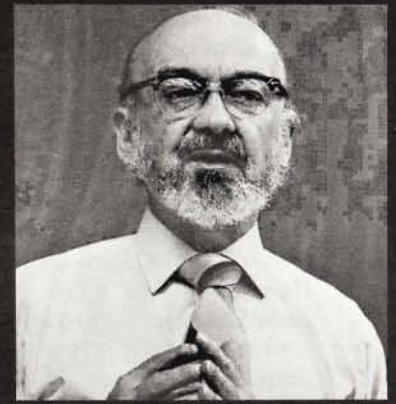
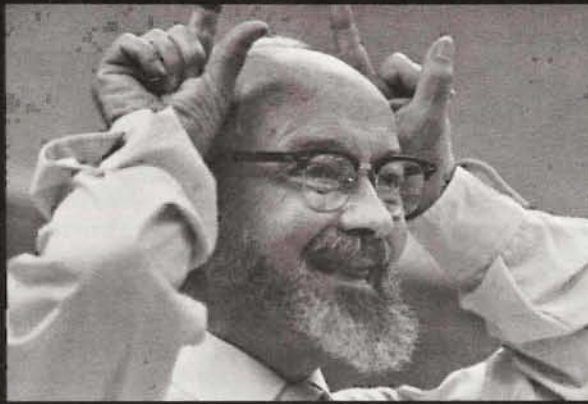
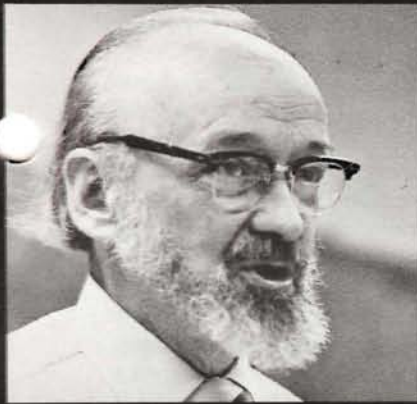
“I am persuaded that the present commitment to increasing the defense budget—which, whatever our military needs, is also a job-making enterprise in which Appalachia has little share—has produced before this committee testimony against the ARC that misrepresents the unmet needs of the people in the region and the goals and processes of the program.

“I respectfully urge you to restrain the administration's attack on all rural programs” and to test “the rhetoric that now claims Washington's work is done in assisting the one-fourth of our population who do not live in cities.”

*—From Congressional testimony by former  
Appalachian Regional Commission  
Chairman Al Smith, March 1985*

We note in passing that among those testifying to Congress in favor of the abolition of the Appalachian Regional Commission was Al Smith's Reagan-appointed successor as federal co-chairman, Winifred Pizzano, who therefore may be presumed to agree that ARC has done its work. Yet, in late June, ARC under Pizzano is sponsoring a regional workshop on school dropouts, with the aim of finding ways to reduce the rate of school defections which, in southern Appalachia, ranges from 25 to 60 percent higher than the national average.

“Appalachia's social and economic health,” says Pizzano, “is threatened by the large numbers of children who, by dropping out of high school, are disqualifying themselves for meaningful jobs in today's job market.” But if Pizzano has her way, the ARC will not be around much longer to tackle this threat to “Appalachia's social and economic health.” What ARC is doing, however, is awarding \$1 million to the private-sector Appalachian Foundation to support community anti-dropout efforts. For information, write the foundation at Suite 204, 1238 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20007.



Morehead State University

## Faces...of Cratis Williams (1911-1985)

For years you could mention the name of Cratis Williams to those who knew him, and the immediate response you would get would be an appreciative smile, or perhaps a grin. Although we like to say that everyone is unique, we can describe most people by saying they are "like" so-and-so. Not so with Cratis. He was not like anybody else, and, furthermore, we know of nobody who can carry on his very special work in the world. No one else can explain the Appalachian character as he did, or reflect on or sing a ballad in his distinctive way. And speaking: whether his subject was Appalachian speech, folklore, cultural history, material folk culture or whatever, he was a lecturer without peer, with a precision and vividness of language and facial expressiveness that both amused and fascinated listeners.

Already we're thinking that we shall never again hear such good stories in the night, told in that careful but sparkling and Chaucerian way. We don't look forward to attending the Appalachian Studies Conference with the scholarly tedium unrelieved by late-evening sessions with Cratis and his clusters of admirers.

Cratis published his first regional essay when he was 17; called "Why a Mountain Boy Should Be Proud," it appeared in the *Louisiana (Ky.) Louisian* on December 12, 1927. Many other works were to follow: a master's thesis on folksongs of Eastern Kentucky; his New York University doctoral dissertation (1,650 pages), *The*

*Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction*, the definitive work on the subject of Appalachian literature to 1960 (once, showing this imposing work to a friend, Cratis remarked: "I just wanted you to admire the magnitude of the SOB"); a series of insightful and colorful essays on Appalachian speech; and numerous articles on a variety of Appalachian subjects.

Although most of us knew him as a writer and lecturer or speaker at some notable event, to a great many others he was a teacher and administrator. He began his educational career in a one-room school in Lawrence County, Ky., following two years as a student at Cumberland College. After receiving an A.B. from the University of Kentucky, he became a high school science and English teacher. Later, after earning higher degrees, he joined Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., where in a long career he taught English, dramatics and folklore and served as dean of the graduate school (now named for him), acting chancellor and special assistant to the chancellor.

To us, Cratis was an ideal man, representing the essence of Appalachian culture combined with the best in the tradition of liberal learning. He was both erudite and earthy, at once profound, entertaining and delightfully honest in thought and language. We wish we could have just a few more of his insights and a few more stories in the night. ■

## EYE on Publications

*The Greening of the South*, by Thomas D. Clark (University Press of Kentucky). When the first Europeans arrived in the South, most of the area was covered by a great primeval forest. This phenomenal treasure remained largely intact through many years, until the removal in 1876 of the restrictions of the Southern Homestead Act, when lumbermen and speculators rushed in to acquire and lay waste to the great stands of timber. Within 50 years this frantic harvesting had despoiled thousands of square miles, leaving fragile soils exposed to quick destruction by the elements. But in this book, subtitled "the recovery of land and forest," the eminent Kentucky historian Tom Clark traces the rise and development of an era of conservation and renewal, beginning even while the destruction was still under way. This "greening"—a genuine phenomenon, unlike its homonym celebrated in a notorious and trendy book of some years back—includes the beginnings of the national forests, the development of scientific forestry, and the coming of new wood-using industries that put as much emphasis on maintenance as on immediate exploitation.

*Sergeant York: An American Hero*, by David D. Lee (University Press of Kentucky). One day just about a month before the Armistice in 1918, an American soldier came marching out of the Argonne Forest with 132 German prisoners and a spectacular story of individual heroism. The facts of Alvin York's life, and some of its myths, are of course familiar to everybody of any generation through the 1941 movie and its repeated showings on TV. The author of this book, a historian at Western Kentucky University, sets out to remove some of the myths—the facts are pretty good just by themselves—and to study, in a more general way, how heroes are chosen and publicized. He also has a further point: heroes in their turn can manipulate the process that creates them, and York provides an excellent example of this skill at work—using his fame in an effort to bring roads, schools and industrial development to his corner of Appalachia. Interestingly, in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, York had a second turn as a national symbol, before the new war produced heroes of its own; he also enjoyed fictional life as the basis of two Robert Penn Warren characters, Private Porsum in *At Heaven's Gate* and Jack Herrick in *The Cave*. All in

all, it was quite a life for a man who entered the Army as a conscientious objector.

*Growing Up Hard in Harlan County*, by G. C. Jones (University Press of Kentucky). To quote from the foreword by the late Cratis Williams: "Most attempts at autobiography by native Appalachian folk, even retired schoolteachers with college degrees, fail to arouse reader interest. The writer, too often doubting the value of his own story, seeks protection in moral posturing and treats the reader to platitudes and commonplaces, or dilutes the account with generous servings of imitative 'fine writing' that alienate the reader after a few pages. Rarely does one come upon a native writer with both a talent for telling a story and a genius for investing it with power. G. C. Jones is such a writer." The story Jones tells is one of being disowned by the man he believed to be his father and thrust out into the tough world of Harlan County in the 1920s, developing his own small hauling business, working as an under-cover UMW organizer, even serving in the Navy. It was indeed a hard life, but the author always proved to be resourceful enough to handle it.

FOR SALE: Edith Roberts has given the Appalachian Center a number of copies of her late husband Leonard's landmark study, *The Sang Branch Settlers*, a collection of the folksongs and tales of the Couch family of Eastern Kentucky. Produced by the Pikeville College Press, this is a hard-cover facsimile edition of the book originally published for the American Folklore Society by the University of Texas Press; it is 401 pages, with notes on the songs and tales, an excellent bibliography and an index. If you move fast, you can get a copy from the Appalachian Center—\$12.95, postpaid.

On its own, the Center has produced *A Selected and Annotated Discography of Southern Appalachian Mountain Music*, by William H. Tallmadge of Berea College. All traditional southern mountain musical styles are included and all significant Appalachian artists represented. The purpose of the book, says the author, is simply "to assist those desiring to purchase recorded examples of Appalachian music. A further purpose is to enable such purchasers to avoid those frustrating experiences which have befallen others in the past who have attempted to order recordings listed in discographies." The book is nothing fancy—softcover, 8½x11, stapled—but for \$3.00 postpaid, it's a good value, nevertheless.

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