

NEWS

LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

March 21-23: Ninth annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Center for Continuing Education, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608. This year's theme: "Contemporary Appalachia in Search of a Usable Past." Further details from Carl Ross at the Center for Appalachian Studies, ASU.

April 8-10: 13th annual Southern quilt symposium, Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, Tenn. — an occasion at which "the comradeship provides joy and warmth with which to welcome spring." More information from Bets Ramsey, Box 4146, Chattanooga, Tenn. 37405 (send SASE).

April 10-12: Fifth annual New River symposium, sponsored by the New River Gorge National River of the National Park Service, joined this year by the Wytheville Community College and the West Virginia Department of Culture and History; Wytheville Holiday Inn, Wytheville, Va. This intensive affair will cover everything from fossil fish and rare plants to musicians and newspapers. You can get further information from William E. Cox, P.O. Box 1189, Oak Hill, W.Va. 25901.

April 13-19: Spring craft week, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Stained glass, country woodcraft, rug braiding, woodcarving, watercolor, blacksmithing.

April 27-30: Region VIII conference, Association of Interpretive Naturalists, Pipestem State Park, Pipestem, W.Va. This organization includes naturalists, historians, rangers, curators and others concerned with "man's relationship to the environs of the

past, present and future." For details of registration, call William E. Cox at 304/465-0508.

May 21-June 11: Craft intensive, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. A new program for students who wish to pursue in-depth study in clay, fiber, wood or metal, with several instructors scheduled for each medium.

June 6-8: Annual meeting of the Appalachian Alliance, Union College, Barbourville, Ky. If you wish to participate, write P.O. Box 457, Jacksboro, Tenn. 37757.

June 11-15: Eighth annual convention of the National Women's Studies Association, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. For a brochure, write to the association at the University of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20742.

June 9-27: Course in Appalachian literature, resource materials and music, Berea College (*see story elsewhere in this issue*).

June 15-21: Junefest 1986, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Less usual crafts (e.g., marbling, Damascus steel), plus a recorder school and a mountain singing school.

June 20-22: Fourth annual conference of the Appalachian Writers Association, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va. For information about the meeting or the association, write P.O. Box 528, Berea, Ky. 40403.

June 23-July 4: Appalachian regional school for church leaders, West Virginia University. Designed for ministers and spouses, priests, church executives, lay leaders and program staffers, the school is intended to provide participants with "an ongoing opportunity for improving effectiveness in church and community leadership." Contact the WVU conference office, Room 67, Towers, Morgantown, W.Va. 26506

July 18-20: Cincinnati Appalachian Festival (*see story elsewhere in this issue*).



**WHAT'S
HER
PROBLEM?**
(See
page 3)

How's That, Judge?

Not everybody in the region may have noted the newest wrinkle in mountain justice, federal-court style.

The story really begins two years ago in Pikeville, Ky., when the splendidly named federal judge Wix Unthank sentenced five men to three-year sentences for the bombing of an auger and the burning of a tippie owned by a non-union coal company. One of these

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felons was the millionaire owner of a union mine in the same area. The men were convicted under federal racketeering laws relating to conspiracy and participation in acts of violence.

A few weeks ago lawyers for these men argued in a sentence-reduction hearing that such violence has long been a normal part of life in the Eastern Kentucky coalfields; the men, he said, weren't willfully violating any federal laws. This argument didn't persuade Judge Unthank to reduce the sentences, but it did win from him a promise to recommend leniency to the parole board.

Why? Well, said the judge, federal guidelines for parole don't take regional or environmental differences into account, but "I think they should. There is a difference between our area and other areas of the country." The difference the judge presumably had in mind is that there's been more violence in "our area"; the way to deal with it, he seems to be saying, is to wink at it. This reasoning raises some interesting questions. Since, for instance, Times Square displays profound "environmental differences" from Pikeville, should New York judges deal lightly with pimps who kidnap children into prostitution as soon as they get off the bus from the boondocks? Or when a mobster is shot dead on the street — an event that rarely occurs in Berea — should New Yorkers look on it as just another little "regional" difference at work?

To ask the questions is of course to answer them. Isn't it?

"Party Stories" and Others

At Appalachian State University they say of Cratis Williams that he always found an opportune moment during the day to pass on a story. "Colleagues who met him in a hallway or on a trek across the campus," says Cratis's fellow professor Rogers Whitener, "were drawn to him as hypnotically as the Wedding Guest to the Ancient Mariner."

Now Whitener wishes to collect some of these stories. Since Cratis, who died last May, left behind songs, prose and poetry, but few of his mountain tales, Whitener is eager to hear from persons who remember any of Cratis's stories about his colorful grandfather, the folk tales he told or any of his "party stories" (if you were lucky enough to have heard any of these, you'll know what we mean); he also welcomes reminiscences. He prefers tapes to written versions, he says, because they tend to be livelier. You can write Whitener at the ASU English Department, Boone, N.C. 28608; his phone number is 704/262-2153.

Smaller Slices

In a report titled "Smaller Slices of the Pie," an organization called the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has challenged the prevailing belief that the poor are a distinct group living out their lives in poverty. Instead, says the report as quoted in *Just Economy*

(published by the ecumenical Great Lakes/Appalachian Project on the Economic Crisis), over a 10-year period up to one-fourth of the entire U.S. population is poor at some time. This estimate is related to the report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that of the 5.1 million workers whose jobs disappeared between January 1979 and January 1984, 40 percent either were still unemployed or were out of the labor force in January 1984. Of those working again, half were employed either in part-time or in jobs with lower weekly earnings than before.

Hey, Fellows!

Since 1979, some 100 scholars have benefited from the Appalachian Studies fellowships established by Berea College with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This scholarly process will continue for another four years, since the foundation recently granted funds to continue the fellowships.

One of the main purposes of the fellowships is to enable regional scholars to use the Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection, the Appalachian Center and the museum at Berea, although grantees may use their stipends to work in other research collections or to conduct field research. The awards generally cover the costs of travel, lodging, food, copying, equipment rental or typing and some supplies.

Thus far, Appalachian fellows have produced a variety of books, articles, papers, dissertations and multimedia projects. If you see one of these in your future, write for an application form to Loyal Jones, director, Appalachian Center, C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404.

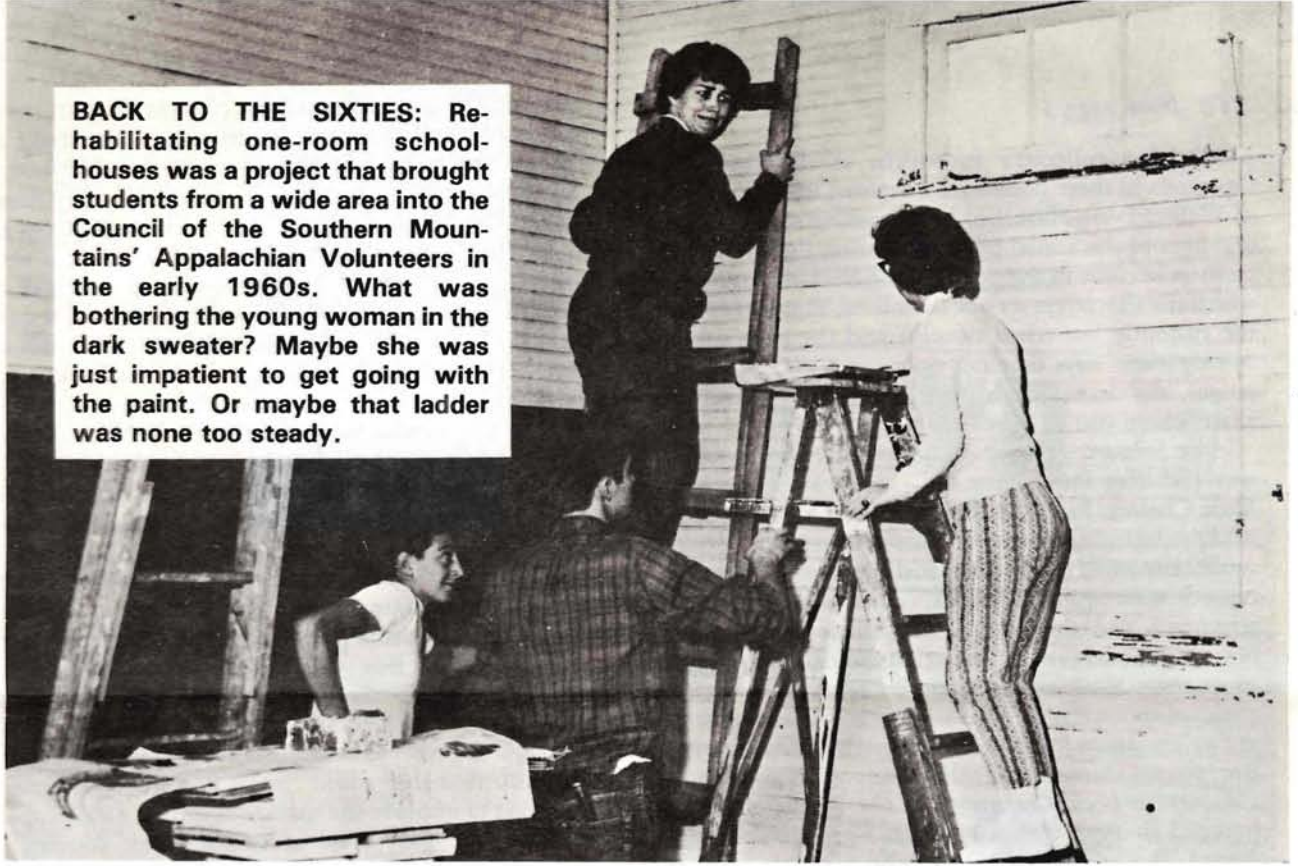
Festival in Cincinnati

Now into its 16th year, the Cincinnati Appalachian Festival has grown into a remarkably flourishing adolescent.

Founded in 1970 by the Junior League of Cincinnati, the festival was later taken over by the Appalachian Community Development Association, which is controlled by a board half of whom are first- and second-generation Queen City residents of Appalachian background, and through the years the show has moved to ever larger quarters, from the Cincinnati Music Hall to the Cincinnati Gardens to the Convention Center, and in 1985 to the broad acres of what was once the Coney Island amusement park, where its music and crafts will again be on display this year (July 18-20). Even with its remarkable rate of growth, the festival will probably have a hard time outgrowing its new home — but no doubt that's what it will try to do.

The Cincinnati Appalachians see their festival in practical terms as a way of helping craftspersons make some needed cash, but beyond that it represents the triumphant flying of Appalachian colors in an area that hasn't always admired them. It's thus the occasion for a measure of pride, too.

BACK TO THE SIXTIES: Rehabilitating one-room schoolhouses was a project that brought students from a wide area into the Council of the Southern Mountains' Appalachian Volunteers in the early 1960s. What was bothering the young woman in the dark sweater? Maybe she was just impatient to get going with the paint. Or maybe that ladder was none too steady.



Summer Special

This summer's offering from the Appalachian Center will have a bit of a new look. As always, the course will include literature, and, as was the case last year, music will also be featured. Literature will be in the hands of Wilma Dykeman, and noted folk singer and composer Jean Ritchie will be on hand to discuss the main Appalachian musical traditions. The new feature is a segment on sources for the study of Appalachian history and culture, to be taught by Gerald F. Roberts, head of the Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection and Southern Appalachian Archives at Berea College.

Wilma Dykeman, one of Appalachia's most eminent writers, will discuss the most influential writers who have used Appalachia as a setting for their works. Besides discussing ballads, folk songs and instrumental music, Jean Ritchie will perform selected music.

The course is designed primarily for teachers who would like to introduce Appalachian studies courses or units into their schools, though other participants are welcome. Three hours' graduate or undergraduate credit is available through the University of Kentucky College of Education.

Course dates are June 9-27. For an application or any further information, write the Appalachian Center, C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404.

Triumph on the Rhine

Almost two years ago (CENTER NEWSLETTER, Spring 1984) we reported to you that the residents of Cincinnati's heavily Appalachian Over the Rhine district were

trying to raise \$175,000 which, with the help of \$50,000 in city funds, they wanted to use to buy a closed school and turn it into a community-controlled center. We suggested that you might wish to contribute to the cause. Well, perhaps some of you did chip in — certainly a good many people did overall — because, in recognition of its successful fund drive, the Peaslee-for-the-People project has recently been awarded the 1985 "creative fund-raising" award by the folks at the Grantsmanship Center, and they ought to know. The Peaslee group in fact succeeded in raising the money to buy the building.

Although delighted with the \$1,000 first prize that came with the award, the Peaslee group is even more pleased at "the national recognition given to the neighborhood group's grassroots fund-raising campaign without the help of 'professionals' and over the expressed opinions of many 'experts' who said that such an effort was too ambitious for a poor community to undertake, let alone lead."

Congratulations!

EYE on Publications

Who Shall Know Them? by Faye Kicknosway (Viking Penguin). The photographs taken by Walker Evans in the 1930's for the New Deal's Farm Security Administration are not only immortal but ubiquitous, turning up as they do in all sorts of contexts. Although, as much as a story, a picture is an edited view of reality, Evans's photos almost seem to shout at us that this is the way it was for millions of farm men and women during the Great Depression. Now a Michigan poet has

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produced a collection in which, as she says, "the characters in these poems are imagined from the photos of Walker Evans, but they have nothing to do with the real lives of the actual people." Losing their fixity, the pictures become in the poet's vision a series of movies in which the characters act out their lives. Elmore Leonard, the currently hot crime novelist and the poet's fellow Michigander, says that not only can Kicknosway write scenes, she draws you in "with language to a familiar place where you've never been."

Alex Stewart: Portrait of a Pioneer, by John Rice Irwin (Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1469 Morstein Road, West Chester, Pa. 19380). The author, whose Museum of Appalachia at Norris, Tenn., is a treasure house of mountain artifacts, has previously produced books concerned with quilts, baskets, guns and musical instruments and the people who made these objects. Now, on the basis of conversations held over a period of more than 20 years, he makes us acquainted with "a national treasure, the likes of which this nation is not apt to see again." Born in 1891, Alex Stewart was to live to see himself on the cover of the *National Geographic* book *Craftsmen of the World* and to be honored in 1983 with a National Heritage Fellowship Award. But to Irwin, Stewart, who died last year, was much more than a craftsman, adept as he was; he was "a man straight from pioneer America." He spent his early life "in a truly pioneer setting where such 'necessities' as window panes, matches, clocks, and store-bought shoes were unknown to him. He was to observe, study, analyze, and finally participate in this primeval culture. And he was to record it in the most minute detail" — that is, preserve it inside his head almost as though waiting for Irwin to come along with his tape recorder. Another friend describes Alex as being "as good a man as ever came down the pike. He is curious as a cat, tough as a pine-knot, independent as a hog on ice, industrious as a honeybee, and as handy as the pocket on your shirt." He was also a masterly maker of churns, tubs, buckets, dough trays, bowls, chairs, whiskey stills and a variety of other useful objects. In-

terestingly, it was after a lapse of some 40 years that he returned to his craftsmanly pursuits, as the result of a request by Irwin, who thus earns credit all around.

Chain Carvers, by Simon J. Bronner (University Press of Kentucky). Not literally an Appalachian book (its subjects live in southern Indiana), this study will nevertheless be of interest to anyone who's concerned with what seems to be called, for want of a snazzier name, material folk culture. The author spent time with four men, retired industrial workers, who had taken up a skill they remembered from childhood — carving chains and similar items from a single block of wood. As the title suggests, Bronner's central concern is the men rather than the objects; he seeks to give us, as the jacket copy drably says, "new insight into the creativity impulse."

Strategy for Survival of Small Farmers . . . International Implications, edited by Thomas T. Williams (Tuskegee Institute Human Resources Development Center, P.O. Box 681, Tuskegee Institute, Ala.). Founded at Tuskegee Institute, the Professional Agricultural Workers Conference has since 1942 brought together agriculturists at the land-grant universities so that they could "meet and share information on ways to improve the quality of life for rural people." During the past year, of course, their concern has become continuing headline news. The present book presents the papers from last year's PAWC; included among them are stories about ten farmers who serve as role models. Some of these farmers, apparently for the first time, attended the conference. The innovation was "warmly received."

Of Coverlets: The Legacies, the Weavers, by Sadye Tune Wilson and Doris Finch Kennedy (Tunstede, 212 Vaughn's Gap Road, Nashville, Tenn. 37205). Not cheap (\$70.00 plus \$4.00 handling charge), this book has been called the most exhaustive work to date on American coverlets and it has won awards from the American Association for State and Local History and the Tennessee Association of Museums. Dealing exclusively with examples from Tennessee, it includes 200 color and 350 black-and-white pictures of the textiles and 200 historic photos of weavers.

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