

NEWS

LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Summer 1987

Looking Forward

October 3-4: Fall festival, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Food, crafts, demonstrations, musical performances; autumnal scenery is also rumored to be an attraction.

October 8-9: Symposium on Appalachia, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351. A major event, featuring a variety of approaches to its theme—"sense of place in Appalachia"; speakers will include historians, geographers, journalists, poets, an artist, others. You can find out more from S. Mont Whitson, Department of Sociology, MSU.

October 9-11: Annual fall fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. 40403.

October 14-17: Southeast annual conference, American Craft Council, Gatlinburg, Tenn., on the general topic "craft in the 80s: the medium and the market." You can get additional information from Sandra Blain, Arrowmont School, P.O. Box 567, Gatlinburg, Tenn. 37738.

October 15-31: *Mountain Sweet Talk*, a two-act play written and performed by Barbara Freeman and Connie Regan-Blake ("the Folk-tellers"), Folk Art Center Theater, Asheville, N.C. Contact the Folk-tellers at P.O. Box 2898, Asheville, N.C. 28802.

October 16-18: Annual fall fair, Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. The guild's address is P.O. Box 9545, Asheville, N.C. 28815.

October 23-24: Second annual conference on Appalachia, University of Kentucky; the subject will be education in Appalachia. For more information write the Appalachian Center, 641 South Limestone St., University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

October 29-November 1: Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music (see following story).

November 21-22: Workshop on love-hate-indifference, in which psychotherapist Marty Groder will share his new dodecahedron, "a dynamic model for understanding and managing loving partnerships between powerful developing people." For more information about this and other such enterprises, write the Southeast Institute, 103 Edwards Ridge, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.

March 18-20: Appalachian Studies conference, Rad-

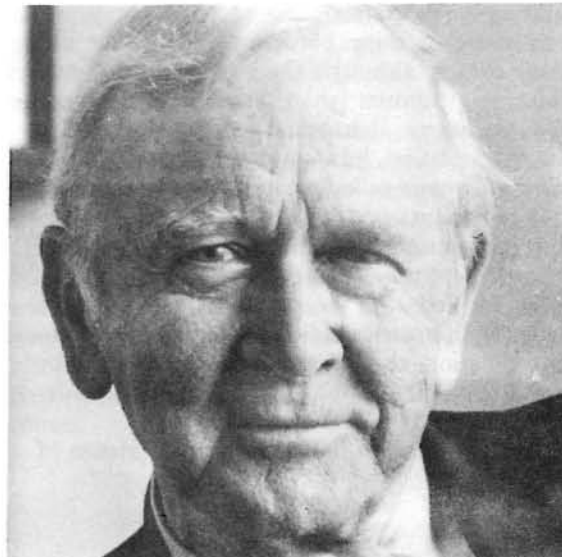
ford University. It may be a bit early to call your attention to the meeting itself, but there's not much time at all if you want to submit a proposal; the deadline for abstracts is October 15, and they should go to Parks Lanier, Box 5917 RU, Radford University, Radford, Va. 24142. The theme is "mountains of experience: interdisciplinary, intercultural, international."

May 27-28: Fifth annual country music conference, held in conjunction with the Jimmie Rodgers Memorial Festival, Meridian, Miss. The conference may be a long way off, but the deadline for proposals isn't—they're due by November 4 and should be sent to the conference at Box 5042, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tenn. 38505.

Celebration!

The Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music is now old enough to be regarded as a regional tradition in its own right, and through the years since its first run in 1974 it has remained devoted to the original aim proclaimed by Appalachian Center Director Loyal Jones—simply to feature "old-time traditional music." Bluegrass and other newer forms are perfectly fine,
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"DIVIDE AND DISSENT": Veteran Louisville newsman John Ed Pearce sheds light on Kentucky's troubled politics (see page 3)



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Jones said, but the purpose of this festival is to encourage the "old styles" that aren't heard so much any more. One measure of the Celebration's success is the fact that thanks in good part to its programs and instrumental workshops, those old styles have become increasingly prominent sounds in the region.

Now it's time for more of these sounds, as the Celebration returns October 29-November 1 for its 14th annual incarnation. Early arrivals can join in a street dance on Thursday evening, October 29, and then will come the big, old-time, multi-performer sessions on Friday and Saturday evenings beginning at 7:30. These festive sessions will be followed by square dancing led by John M. Ramsay, with music by the Bottom of the Barrel Bunch.

The daylight hours on Saturday will be devoted to instrumental workshops and concerts, and at 2:00 W. K. McNeil, of the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Ark., will lead a symposium: "Relationship Between Ozark and Appalachian Music: Similarities and Differences."

And those who don't frolic too late into the night on Saturday will join festival musicians at 9:00 Sunday morning in a concert of hymns.

The festival will present its usual mix of performers new to the local stage and those who are established favorites, all of them, of course, loaded with star quality. In addition to those already mentioned, the participants will include the globe-trotting McLain Family Band, Homer "Pappy" Sherrill and Dewitt "Snuffy" Jenkins, Phyllis Marks, Wade and Julia Mainer, Clyde Davenport and Bobby Fulcher, the Queen Family Band, Ernie Carpenter and Gerald Milnes, and Frank Proffitt, Jr.

If you need any further information, contact the Appalachian Center at the address on page 4 of the NEWSLETTER. The telephone number is 606/986-9341, extension 5140.

"Good Faith" Mining?

According to the late and eminent German sociologist Max Weber, bureaucracy is an inescapable element of modern life. This dictum suggests, therefore, that if an agency called the U.S. Office of Surface Mining exists (as it in fact does), then there dwell within it people identifiable as bureaucrats.

Recently some of these particular bureaucrats did some funny things, although the explanation offered the public was funnier than any of the things themselves. It seems that when a coal operator is charged with a violation, he and representatives of OSM get together in what's called a conference, a session in which the operator presents what he regards as mitigating circumstances and describes his "good faith" efforts to comply with the law. Fair enough—everyone is entitled to a hearing. If the conference officer believes that the operator is quickly moving to correct the violation, the officer can reduce the fine by as much as 50 percent (the maximum penalty per violation is \$5,000).

But it recently came to light that when a House of

Representatives subcommittee began looking into the manner in which fines were being reduced, bureaucrats in at least 11 cases altered their records before they were examined. Bribery? Kickbacks? No, apparently not. One of the OSM bosses says "they got scared because they knew someone was going to look at their files, and they wanted to beef them up."

A congressional staff member had suspected that the conference officers were being a little too big-hearted, and the OSM boss acknowledged that his staff people had been confused about what constituted a good-faith effort. Additional training (in the meaning of words, perhaps) is said to have dispelled this confusion.

But the main solution to the problem is admirably simple. You can't alter old reports; if you want to add information, you must now send in a new form.

One thing about bribery and kickbacks: they made sense.

Once in a Lifetime

Hordes of specialists and researchers are about to descend on Perry County, located in Eastern Kentucky's coal country. The big attraction is a 17,000-acre tract of strip-mined land whose owner, the Cyprus Coal Co., has contracted with the University of Kentucky to see whether the property can be turned into a level community of homes, stores, and industries.

First, the Kentucky Geological Survey will study the land-related needs in the area and will propose ways to make the best use of the land. Then researchers will look at surface and ground-water resources, slope stabilization, and methods of configuring the huge amounts of soil and rock that are removed during mining.

Then will come specialists who will conduct socioeconomic studies, assessing the impact the development would have on the region. Industrial-planning experts will decide the best ways to make the property attractive to business and industry. Researchers from the College of Agriculture will study cattle grazing, vegetation, and questions relating to wildlife. The whole development is a long-range project that, if successful at all, will continue into the next century.

The local extension agent is excited by the prospect of 17,000 flat acres that would not lie in the floodplain. Without such a project, he says, "there is no way we could attract a company the size of Toyota" (this company is now building a large plant in Central Kentucky). Besides, the agent points out, the lack of good home sites in Perry County has pushed the price of even modest houses higher than those in larger cities outside the mountains: "This may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have a major impact on life in this area."

ACF: Progress Report

As we noted in a previous issue of the NEWSLETTER (Winter 1987), the Appalachian Community Fund was established last year to support organizations run for

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WHO'S LAUGHING? This summer's Berea Festival of Appalachian Humor was no somber occasion, as photo shows. Among laugh producers was Dr. Tim Stivers, Louisville podiatrist and humorist.

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and by low- and moderate-income Appalachian people and also organizations concerned with the underlying causes of social problems. The states served are Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

By way of giving you a progress report, we note that as the result of contributions from some 60 donors the ACF in 1986 raised more than \$20,000 to distribute in grants in 1987. Much more money could be used, since the fund received 63 proposals requesting more than \$140,000.

What problems did local groups wish to tackle? The most common categories were toxic dumping, education, health care, community organizing, civil rights, advocacy for victims of domestic violence and economic development.

Not surprisingly, the ACF welcomes donations—but not only of cash; they would like some of your time, too. To make arrangements concerning either kind of contribution, write the ACF at 517 Union Ave., Suite 206, Knoxville, Tenn. 37902.

EYE on Publications

Divide and Dissent: Kentucky Politics, 1930-1963, by John Ed Pearce (University Press of Kentucky). It may as well be said at the outset that this is an outstanding book—thoughtful, full of insights, highly readable. Every state should find a John Ed Pearce to tell it what makes it tick and why it doesn't tick better.

Unlike many writers nowadays, who in looking at politics see no black or white hats but only grays, Pearce tells a story with a hero and—if not exactly a villain—a buffoon of almost legendary proportions. His man with the white hat (actually, the white raincoat) is Bert T. Combs, governor from 1959 to 1963, a man from Appalachian Kentucky who “tried his best to drag Kentucky into the modern era, with modern roads, modern

education, modern parks, modern welfare services,” and enjoyed a great measure of success, although he could not succeed in inducing conservative and suspicious Kentuckians to cast off the state's antiquated constitution, nor could he foster a permanent belief that sensible taxation is necessary for progress.

Wearing the black hat—albeit, a black hat festooned with colored streamers bearing funny sayings of all kinds—is A. B. (“Happy”) Chandler, governor 1935-39 and 1955-59, a man whose ability to rebound from setbacks was explained by “his ability to rationalize his own conduct and to condemn with great indignation others engaging in the same conduct; his habit of interpreting as sin actions which, committed by him, became virtue; and his willingness to state as fact things that the record showed were made up out of whole cloth.”

The third figure in the three-sided story Pearce tells is Earle C. Clements, who was governor 1947-50 and later became a power in Washington as assistant Senate majority leader, only to end his career ignominiously when, as Combs's highway commissioner, he became involved in a minor scandal involving the leasing of a group of dump trucks. His pride wounded by Combs's canceling of this “truck deal,” Clements, a great political intellect, deserted his protege Combs to make common—and unsuccessful—cause with his old and bitter rival Chandler.

The narrative ends with the exciting story of the campaign of 1963, with Combs's anointed candidate, Ned Breathitt (Kentucky governors cannot succeed themselves), pitted in the Democratic primary against Happy Chandler crying a last hurrah. Combs has built his administration on the state sales tax; if Happy wins, the sales tax will probably go, and so will progress for the state. As governor, Combs has allowed nothing to turn him away from the preservation of the tax, Kentucky's only hope; he sees Breathitt and the tax as the state's future.

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How does it turn out? If you don't know, you'll abundantly enjoy finding out.

His First, Best Country, by Jim Wayne Miller (Gnomon Press, P.O. Box 106, Frankfort, Ky. 40602). A handsomely done chapbook containing a long story by the unflaggingly industrious Appalachian poet, critic and professor of German—about a writer, critic and German scholar who has returned to the hills of his origins for the exotic purpose of translating the works of an Austrian poet. Like all stories, it should be read, not summarized; we'll only say that this litterateur doesn't stick to his translating.

Black Coal Miners in America, by Ronald L. Lewis (University Press of Kentucky). From the early days of mining in colonial America until World War II, blacks were an important part of the coal industry's labor force, but the part they played has generally been overlooked. In this study, weightily subtitled "Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780-1980," the author attempts to make up for this oversight. No matter what one's point of view, the story of the coal industry is unlovely; Lewis, a professor of history at West Virginia University, is interested not in social history but in analyzing the various "systems" by which employers controlled black miners in juxtaposition with whites.

Taken for Granted: How Grant Thornton's Business Climate Index Leads States Astray (Corporation for Economic Development, 1725 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20006). We cannot recommend this book, since we haven't seen it; we merely point it out as an item of possible interest to persons involved in development activities. The price is \$10.00.

Apples on the Flood: The Southern Mountain Experience, by Rodger Cunningham (University of Tennessee Press). What, you say, another book bearing a ponderous subtitle like "the southern mountain experience"? Just how many weighty analyses does this one make? Who needs it? But wait—this one is dif-

ferent, really different. It's not the outcry of some tender soul wounded by his encounter with an indifferent or hostile external world, nor is it a mere arid academic exercise.

Instead, it represents an exploration of the "psychological heredity" of the Appalachian people backward in time—not merely to the establishment of the "Scotch-Irish" in Ulster but to the neolithic era. In this ambitious book the author argues that Appalachian culture cannot be understood within the conventional limits in which it is placed; hence he studies it in a context of dominant-vs.-peripheral relationships that stretches deeper into the past than the beginning of Anglo-Celtic history.

Acknowledging that the popular literature about the Celts is "one of the world's most fertile fields of nonsense," Cunningham nevertheless gives us one more study. But unlike other authors, he neither heaps praise on the Celts nor weeps with them in their sufferings. He does not claim for them any ethnic purity but instead views them as a collection of ethnic groups and his focus is on the culture and language that evolved. Like present-day Appalachians, he says, these ancestors were looked down upon by a dominant core region, consigned to a geographical periphery and labeled "barbarian" or "savage."

What is the relationship between those who become dominant and those who dwell on the periphery of this dominant culture? How do the people of the periphery maintain a sense of identity and worth? These are the sorts of questions—not simple drumbeating for the noble Celts—that engage the author. His book will surely provoke a great deal of discussion. No aspiring Appalachian-studies scholar will want to be found among those who are not familiar with its thesis and the way in which it is developed.

Apples on the Flood, says Archie Green, "will long serve hill teacher, public servant and regional activist. All who have pondered the interplay of national power and personal identity will benefit from Cunningham's pathbreaking exploration."

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