

# NEWS

# LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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## Looking Forward

**April 6:** Open poetry reading, in which local poets meet and read their work in an informal setting, Laurel Theater, Knoxville, Tenn. Information about this and the following event from Jubilee Community Arts, 1538 Laurel Ave., Knoxville, Tenn. 37916.

**April 7:** Virgil Willard, the Troxell Brothers and other traditional performers gather at the Laurel Theater for an evening of authentic music of the Cumberland plateau.

**April 7-9:** Seventh annual New River symposium, sponsored by the New River Gorge National River of the National Park Service and the New River State Park (N.C.); Holiday Inn, Oak Hill, W.Va. As always, this broad-gauged conference is open to everybody with a serious interest in the New River. Papers will deal with archaeology, folklore, geography and all sorts of other scientific and humanistic concerns. Direct your questions to park headquarters, whose phone number is 304/465-0508.

**April 10-16, 17-23 and 24-30:** Spring craft weekends, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. These sessions include everything from basketry and quilting to photography and blacksmithing, depending on which week you pick. Similar activities continue through the summer.

**April 13-17:** At Shakertown in the Kentucky Bluegrass, the Sonneck Society for American Music presents something of everything—folk, contemporary, popular, jazz, and more. For further information, contact George Foreman, Norton Center for the Arts, Centre College, Danville, Ky. 40422.

**April 30-May 1:** Watauga spring festival, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28607. More than 150 exhibitors take part in this annual shindig, which is a combination of crafts fair and music festival and offers continuous entertainment. Further details from the Center for Appalachian Studies at ASU.

**June 13-July 1:** Course in Appalachian history and literature, Berea College (see separate story).

**June 24-26:** Appalachian Writers Association annual conference, with speakers, seminars, a writing competition and awards to outstanding authors; Berea College. Information from the association, P.O. Box 401, Berea, Ky. 40403.

RICHARD  
CHASE  
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**November 3-5:** "Health Issues in Appalachia," the third annual University of Kentucky conference on Appalachia, sponsored by the university's Appalachian Center joined this year by the Chandler Medical Center. The meeting may still be many months off but the deadline for proposals isn't; they're due by April 30. Write the Appalachian Center, 641 South Limestone St., University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

## "Innovative" . . . "Creative"

The Appalachian Regional Commission has focused much of its recent grant-making activity on the problem of dropouts—specifically, how to lower the appalling rate (65 percent in some counties). Closely allied to the dropout question is that of illiteracy on the part of persons who have already departed from school and therefore are beyond the reach of stay-in-school programs. To reach this group as well as those who are still in the educational system, ARC has signed an agreement with ACTION, the overall federal volunteer agency, to cooperate in an attack on the problem.

One way or another, of course, the problem of illiteracy has been attacked for a long time now, and it has given ground only slowly. Wielding such oneshiny phrases as "innovative programming" and "creative solutions," ARC and ACTION plan to proceed against a target area in Eastern Kentucky. The actual warriors will be members of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and VISTA workers.

Such programs will have to produce at least a  
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## "INNOVATIVE" from page 1

measure of success if many of the inhabitants of the area are to subsist in any way other than by handouts. Current projections of the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate not only that employment in the next ten years will grow fastest in occupations requiring more education and may well decline in those requiring less education, but that the economy will see a surge in jobs requiring at least one year of college—and even a year of bad college puts a person in another world from the one in which people can't read the label on a can of Vienna sausages. The BLS report predicts a sharp decline in the share of jobs "where less than a high school diploma is the prevalent pattern."

Perhaps the volunteers will be wise enough to arrive feeling not only innovative and creative but also patient, since the problem of illiteracy has long since proved itself impervious to the quick fix.

As we've pointed out before, the ARC during the 1980s has demonstrated remarkable powers of survival, and now it obviously is going to outlast the administration that planned in 1981 to do away with it. The commission continues to involve itself in a variety of activities, including a project it calls in its inimitable prose "funding of a special regional initiative to encourage technology transfer." On February 22 the commission voted to allot each of the 13 Appalachian states \$100,000 "to develop projects that will lead to adoption of new technologies by Appalachian industries." In September 1988 the commission will host a regional conference on the subject.

## Taxes, Taxes

The Kentucky legislature has tasted the bullet, rolled it around on its collective tongue, and then spat it out. There'll be no biting of that bullet this year. For many weeks, in newspapers and in public meetings, educators and commentators had argued the cause of education and therefore of increased taxes to pay for more of it. But the new governor, Wallace Wilkinson, came into office waving the very popular banner of no increased taxes, and after considerable talk the legislature bowed to his will.

Friends of education maintained that taxes would have to be raised if Kentucky (and particularly Appalachian Kentucky) was not to fall farther behind in the national educational parade. Raising taxes obviously would call for courage on the part of the lawmakers and for strong support from their constituents. But the folks back home didn't come forward with that support, and the governor exerted his leadership in a different direction.

Had they wished, the legislators could simply have repealed an act known as House Bill 44, which prevents local school districts from raising property taxes. So, by its inaction, the lawmakers shut off that possible avenue of improvement. The belief runs deep that Kentuckians are simply opposed to any more taxes, for any purpose. But perhaps some of this reluctance, at least, comes not from opposition to teaching and learning but from the fear that those who would have charge of the increased

revenue would not use all of it for those high purposes. If the people trusted the politicians, perhaps the picture would change. Is that something for the advocates of education to ponder?

## Stars of Summer

Berea's Appalachian Center will offer a course in Appalachian history and literature, June 13-July 1, in which high school teachers and other participants will have the opportunity to study with some of the region's most knowledgeable writers and teachers.

Richard B. Drake, professor of history at Berea, will present a comprehensive history of Appalachia and discuss current political and economic issues. Novelist and biographer Wilma Dykeman will discuss her own work and that of other influential writers, including Thomas Wolfe, James Agee and James Still. Writer and teacher Gurney Norman will focus on poetry but also examine the growth of all the arts in Appalachia. Alan DeYoung of the University of Kentucky will lecture on culture and achievement.

Although the course is designed primarily for teachers who wish to create Appalachian studies courses or units, other persons will be accepted as space permits. The cost is \$200 for students and educators, \$450 for others. Three hours of graduate or undergraduate credit will be available through the University of Kentucky. For more information, write to the Address on the outside of this NEWSLETTER or call 606/986-9341, ext. 5140.

## EYE on Publications

*Old and New Quilt Patterns in the Southern Tradition*, by Bets Ramsey (Rutledge Hill Press, 513 Third Ave. S., Nashville, Tenn. 37210). "Quilts are a significant part of American history," says the author, "yet they seldom reach the textbooks." They provide a chronicle of one important side of women's work, and in many ways they offer clues to social customs, trade and commerce—and even politics. Co-author of *The Quilts of Tennessee*, which appeared in 1986, Ms. Ramsey has spent 17 years researching her subject and for some years has written a weekly column for the *Chattanooga Times*.

Since 1974 Ms. Ramsey has served as guest curator of quilts at the Hunter museum in Chattanooga, where she presides over an interesting enterprise called the Southern Quilt Symposium, whose annual gathering has just concluded. (This year's meeting took its theme from the museum's exhibition "Country to City: Changing Styles in Afro-American Quilts." These quilts, says Ms. Ramsey in a commentary, "span a hundred years and record the changing lives of women whose grandmothers were slaves." Unfortunately, the exhibition has also just closed.)

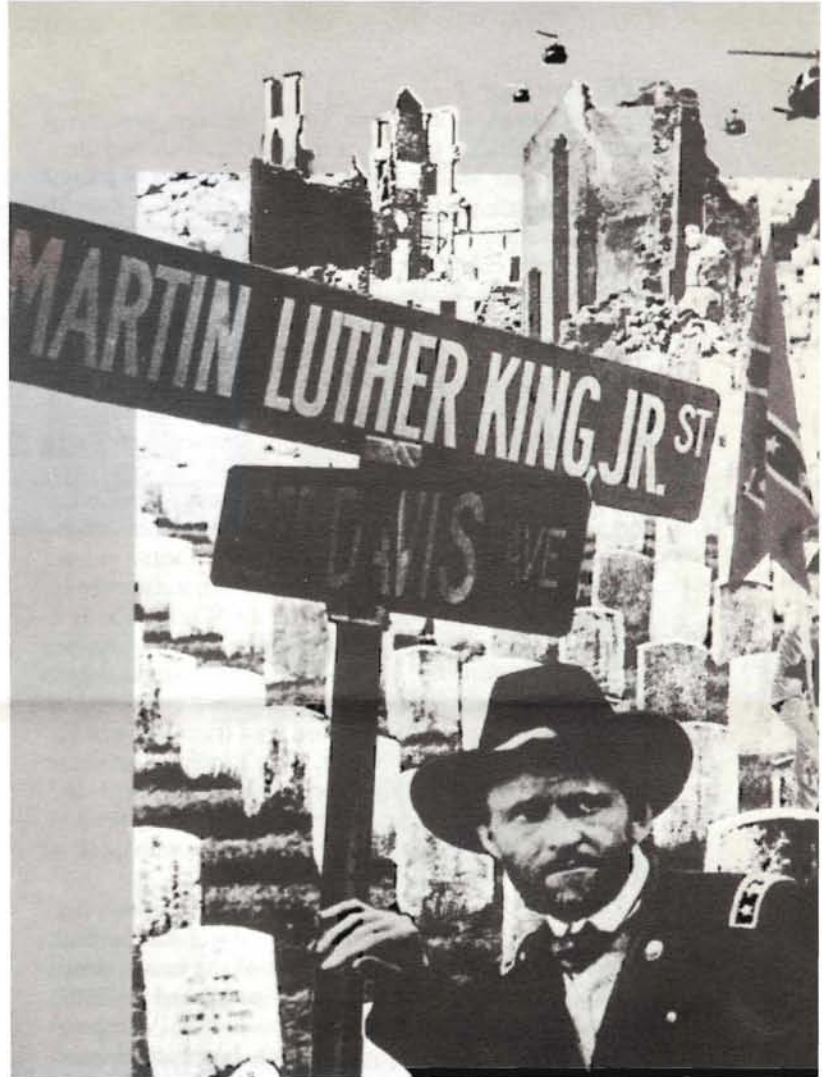
Featuring the fundamentals of making a quilt, making patterns, setting the quilt and caring for it, Ms.

## Civil War's "Long Shadows"

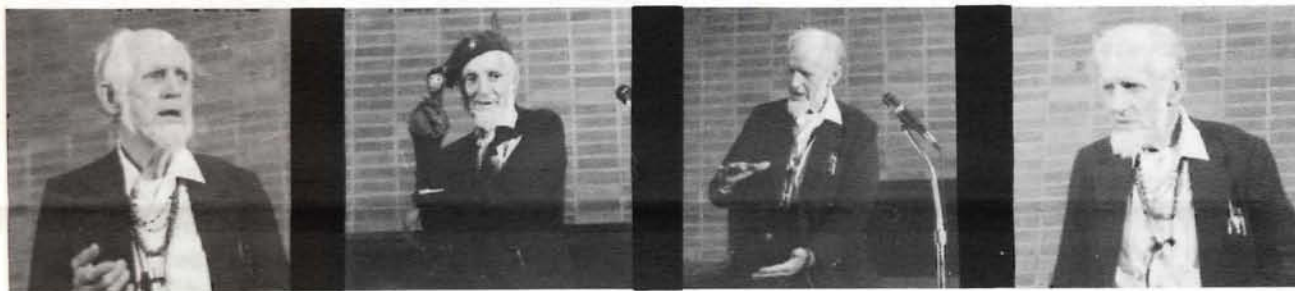
Killing 600,000 people, demolishing cities, scorching many miles of countryside, the Civil War was the most cataclysmic event in American history. "Future years," said Walt Whitman, "will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless scenes and interiors of the Secession War, and it is best they should not."

But despite that last thought, the Civil War occupies so central a place in the national psyche that more than a hundred new books about it appear every year. The battlefield at Gettysburg draws 2 million visitors annually. To thousands upon thousands of people the war represents a consuming avocation and hobby, one driving them to collect memorabilia, reenact battles, tour historic sites and debate battles and strategy in Round Tables across the country.

Now, from the nonprofit James Agee Film Project in Johnson City, Tenn., comes *Long Shadows*, a feature-length documentary on the legacy of the Civil War. Anybody who has seen such earlier works of producer-director Ross Spears and his colleagues as *Agee* and *The Electric Valley* (about TVA) will expect a work at once thoughtful, well crafted and powerful. One reviewer Richard Blaustein, puts it quite simply: "Highly recommended."



## Richard Chase 1907-1988



A pioneer collector of Appalachian folktales, folksongs and playparty games, Richard Chase, died in Huntsville, Ala., February 1. Best known for his folktale collections, *The Jack Tales* and *The Grandfather Tales*, Chase was an Alabama native who dropped out of Harvard to visit the Pine Mountain Settlement School, where he first heard the old ballads and tales, and they excited him so much that he spent the rest of his life collecting, teaching and publishing Appalachian folklore. He worked as an itinerant recreation leader for the Council of the Southern Mountains, teaching folk arts as recreation in schools and communities. He also taught at Berea College's Spring Festival and the Christmas Country Dance School.

Chase collected most of his materials in North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia. In Virginia he had access to the WPA Writers' Project materials, some of

which appeared in his first book, *The Jack Tales*, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1943. *The Grandfather Tales* followed in 1948. Both books have been in print ever since. His other books include *Old Songs and Singing Games*, *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*, *Singing Games and Playparty Games* and *American Folk Tales and Songs*. He was an accomplished storyteller, with renditions available on commercial recordings. Folklorists often took issue with his editing of the traditional tales for publication, especially his combining of several versions into one tale and his rewriting of the material and addition of motifs not in the originals. He maintained that his purpose was different from academic folklorists; it was to promote good stories. He no doubt succeeded, since his books are in most school libraries in the country. ■

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Ramsey's book is a how-to book that also presents a running anecdotal history of its subject. Included are a number of the author's original designs, part of a total of 41 full-scale patterns, from Tennessee Wild Rose to TVA Turbines.

*Kingsport Tennessee: A Planned American City*, by Margaret Ripley Wolfe (University Press of Kentucky). Not only was Kingsport a planned city, it was, Mrs. Wolfe tells us, the "first thoroughly diversified, professionally planned, and privately financed" such city. "Produced by the marriage of New South philosophy and progressivism, born of a passing historical moment when capitalists turned their attention to Southern Appalachia, and nurtured by the Protestant work ethic and an American credo," the town reflects its heritage. Founded in the World War I era by men of some vision, Kingsport has in later years suffered from a shortage of that quality, and in the decades since World War II it has faced such standard phenomena as downtown deterioration and the mushrooming of fast-food strips. Throughout, it has exerted an importance influence on its area, bringing both good and bad from the outside world to upper East Tennessee. Don't look for any easy put-downs in this study; the book will, warns the author, "disappoint enthusiasts of Appalachian Studies who venerate the folk as well as those who seek a denunciation of capitalism."

*The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, by John Fox, Jr. (University Press of Kentucky). A reissue in both hard- and soft-cover versions of one of the most famous of all American novels, originally published in 1903. Wade Hall describes it in the foreword as "the poignant story of a Kentucky mountain boy turned blue-blood who fights to save the Union." Although "its sometimes florid narrative and descriptive style is out of vogue today, the novel is still an engrossing reading experience and deserves a place on the shelf of books that are uniquely American."

*A Southern Family*, by Gail Godwin (Morrow). In eight earlier books—most notably, perhaps, in *A*

*Mother and Two Daughters*—the author has painted her picture of modern southern (actually, western North Carolina) families, with special attention paid to the women who figure in these constellations of kinship. She also manages somehow to have her families include members from two worlds—from an educated world including New York and Europe, and a rawer world of the coves and hills—then has the denizens of these differing social and sexual spheres relate and collide. Ms. Godwin's Mountain City is Thomas Wolfe's Altamont 60 years later, with ranch houses covering the suburban slopes. In this book we meet a family that suffers under "layer upon layer of debilitating resentments and intrigues," as a friend puts it. But this friend also credits the family with "a certain sinister charm." Certainly nobody would call it happy.

*To Teach, To Love*, by Jesse Stuart (Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 391, Ashland, Ky. 41114). The essence of this book is caught in its title; one feels that for Stuart the two verbs were practically synonymous. A collection of previously published pieces about the author's experiences as a student and as an educator, *To Teach, To Love* appeared in 1970, a year still very much a part of the 1960s in spite of the technicalities of chronology. The book expresses Stuart's concern about the way in which that turbulent decade affected teaching and learning; he capsules his thought in one clear sentence that demonstrates his immunity to trendiness: "The teacher teaches, the student studies"—not the most fashionable idea 20 years ago.

But, overall, *To Teach, To Love* is far more than a mere reaction to any particular events or trends. In articles originally written over a period of more than 30 years, Stuart in describing particular teachers and particular students delivers a vision of teaching as a mission having a double purpose, intellectual and moral—to produce literate citizens of impeccable character. There's no reason to believe that his simply expressed and straightforward ideas are any more irrelevant to the 1980s than they were to the 1960s.

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