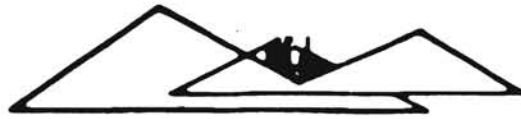


# NEWS

# I LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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## Looking Forward

**July 3-9, 10-16, 17-23 and 24-30:** Summer craft sessions, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Blacksmithing, jewelry techniques, weaving, mold making—whatever your crafty heart desires is here for the taking, depending on the week you pick.

**July 15-17:** Seventh annual Kentucky craft festival, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. Write Box 128, Berea, Ky. 40403.

**July 31-August 6:** Eleventh annual Appalachian writers' workshop, Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, Ky. 41822. What would a workshop be without James Still and the kinetic Jim Wayne Miller? Not to worry—these old reliables will be on hand again this year, and along with them will come Denise Giardina, Ed McClanahan and other stars who will not only talk to you but critique your manuscript if you have it in by July 15.

**July 31-August 6, August 7-13, 14-20 and 21-27, and August 27-September 2:** August craft weeks, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902.

**October 27-30:** Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music. Information from Loyal Jones, C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404.

**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. For details write the Appalachian Center, 641 South Limestone St., University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

## Group Urges New Survey

Speaking at last year's Weatherford Award luncheon, University of Kentucky sociologist Thomas R. Ford, who edited the landmark *Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* of 1962, declared that helping Appalachia remains "a largely unfinished task." The fact that Appalachian economic and educational problems continue means, said Ronald D Eller of the University of Kentucky Appalachian Center, that 30

years after the launching of the original study the time for a new one has arrived.

Now, in early June, a group of some 20 educators and organizational leaders, meeting at Berea, has agreed to pursue a new study. This conference, co-organized by Berea President John B. Stephenson and Eller, stressed the desirability of relating scholarly activities to the expressed needs of community groups, so that the planned study would prove to be the result of a region-wide cooperation in depth.

A special committee will now draw up plans to be presented at a subsequent meeting that will involve a number of participants from all parts of the Appalachian South.

## "Storming," "Apples" Split Weatherford Award

Two West Virginia natives now living in Kentucky divided the 18th annual W. D. Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia. Denise Giardina won for her novel *Storming Heaven* and

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WANDERERS . . . see p. 4

Blue Ridge Heritage Archive—Ferrum College



## "STORMING" from page 1

Rodger Cunningham for *Apples on the Flood*, a study of "the southern mountain experience." The prizes were presented at a luncheon held in Berea on May 13.

*Storming Heaven* is a historical novel telling of the struggle to unionize the coalfields of West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky in the post-World War I era, with its climax coming at the notorious battle of Blair Mountain in 1921. As we noted previously (CENTER NEWSLETTER, Fall 1987), *Storming Heaven*, although a political story, is "told with artistry and—all in all—an admirable restraint." The author creates characters who rise off the pages to command attention. Born in Bluefield, W. Va., she herself grew up in a coal camp.

*Apples on the Flood* won attention in the crowded field of mountain studies because of the novel and detailed way in which it explores the "psychological heredity" of the Appalachian people, going backward in time not merely to the establishment of the "Scotch-Irish" in Ulster but to the neolithic era. The author looks at Appalachian culture and its roots in a context of dominant-vs.-peripheral relationships. Throughout, he says, this group has found itself consigned to a geographical periphery and thus denied full status. Cunningham teaches at Sue Bennett College in London, Ky. As we remarked in the Summer 1987 issue of this NEWSLETTER, "no aspiring Appalachian-studies scholar will want to be found among those who are not

familiar" with the thesis of his book and the way in which it is developed.

The Weatherford Award is jointly sponsored by Berea College's Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library and is given every year to the writer (or writers) of the published work of any length that best illuminates the problems, personalities and unique qualities of the Appalachian South. The award, founded by Alfred H. Perrin of Berea and now administered by Berea College, is a tribute to the memory of W. D. Weatherford, Sr., a pioneer and leading figure for many years in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations.

The list of winning works in recent years includes *The Hawk's Nest Incident*, the story of the greatest occupational health tragedy in American history, by Martin Cherniack; *Sometimes a Shining Moment*, by Eliot Wigginton; *Last One Home*, by John Ehle; *Generations*, by John Egerton; and *Miners, Millhands and Mountaineers*, by Ron Eller.

Judges for the Weatherford Award competition are James S. Brown, emeritus University of Kentucky professor of sociology; Wilma Dykeman, author, lecturer and teacher of Appalachian literature; Thomas Parrish, writer and editor; Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., president emeritus of Berea College; Shirley Williams, staff writer, Louisville *Courier-Journal*; and John B. Stephenson, president of Berea College.

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## A Fresh Problem?

"There is no more important key to increasing Appalachia's competitiveness than encouraging more students in the region to stay in school and graduate," said Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Co-Chairman Winifred A. Pizzano in announcing the award of \$550,000 in grant funds to 37 Appalachian communities in 11 states.

No longer the big spender of 10 and 20 years ago, the commission has been compelled by fiscal necessity to concentrate its efforts in only a few areas; for the past three years dropout-prevention programs have come in for much of its attention. Since 1985 ARC has provided \$3.4 million in support for 150 local programs serving more than 30,000 students; another \$500,000 has gone for technical assistance. These efforts, together with local projects, seem to be yielding results, since the number of dropouts is reported to be declining.

One item bothers us, however. Among the grants made in Kentucky, we note an award to "Berea County." Now one of Kentucky's most serious continuing problems is the existence of a vast number of counties—120 of them, far more than are required to serve any rational public purposes, whatever their historical justification may have been. But among these 120 you won't find any Berea County, or, at least, not yet. Surely ARC has more constructive work to undertake than the creation of still another Kentucky county, with all its clerks and deputy sheriffs and other office holders who will fight to the death to preserve it once it comes into being. Surely 120 is enough. We strongly suggest that ARC abandon this misguided effort and turn its attention from expansion of the number of

counties to consolidation of governments and services. The taxpayers have nothing to lose but their superfluous courthouses.

## June Buchanan 1887-1988

Co-founder of Alice Lloyd College and more than 100 other schools in Eastern Kentucky, June Buchanan died on May 31, just three weeks short of her 101st birthday. A graduate of Wellesley, she joined Alice Geddes Lloyd on Caney Creek in Knott County in 1919. Together the two women started elementary and high schools in the area, a community center and Caney Junior College, which was later renamed to honor Alice Lloyd.

The college emphasizes the need for graduates to contribute to the area and it has helped finance further study for promising graduates. "Miss June," as she was long known, inspired hundreds of students to take the "Purpose Road" of service to their people, and many of the area's elected officials, educators, doctors and lawyers are Alice Lloyd graduates. A colorful person with a distinctive personality, "Miss June" made a strong national impact in two appearances on Ralph Edward's TV program "This is Your Life," which brought donations from thousands of viewers.

"She was all her life a symbol of educational progress," said President John B. Stephenson of Berea College. "She was part of a social movement that brought many well-to-do women, most of whom were educated at prestigious eastern colleges, into Appalachia to start centers," said Mike Mullins, executive director of Hindman Settlement School. "These women were giants."

# Weatherford Award Winners on Appalachian Writing

Berea College



In accepting their Weatherford prizes at the May 13 luncheon, the two winners told their audience something about themselves and their attitudes toward their subjects. Here are some quotes.

## DENISE GIARDINA

"Appalachian writers face the hurdle of discrimination which has also been common to black writers in this country. The plight of the Appalachian writer is the plight of a comic actor who takes on a serious role—the audience is liable to giggle on sight and disbelieve all efforts at profundity, complexity and intelligence.

"Jim Wayne Miller says mountain people, and therefore mountain fictional characters, are seen by outside critics as belonging to two types. There are primitives—crude, violent, unstable, colorful, mentally deficient. And there are the quaint—kindly, uneducated but possessed of a simple folk wisdom, crochety and quilting. The former can be represented by the murderous hillbillies of *Deliverance*, the latter by the shallow, folksy play *Foxfire*.

"This dichotomy leaves the serious Appalachian writer with a dilemma: characters with depth, intelligence, initiative, complex personalities will be seen as aberrations. These characters will not be believed, will not ring true to many readers and critics, will be seen as too good. This is a burden writers should not have to bear. It is difficult enough to create a world out of thin air, to carry the normal burdens of a fiction writer, without having to worry about the misunderstanding of those who condescend and patronize. Yet that burden has shaped my own career and those of other Appalachian writers."

## RODGER CUNNINGHAM

"I was brought up in Kenova, West Virginia, and the first memory I have of exposure to mountain culture is that of being maybe six years old and laughing

uproariously at my mother's and uncle's accounts of some of my country cousins. I was particularly convulsed by the one about the board with a hole in it over the creek. I couldn't believe in my suburb that people lived that way, let alone that I was related to them. At the same time it was this same mother who would go about the house singing bits of ballads while she dusted and who deliberately taught me various expressions that I later found in dictionaries of Medieval Scots. . . .

"I grew up to all appearances in a very suburban way and yet always aware of something behind me and around me, and this was quite literal. Every morning when I woke up I could look out the front window of my bedroom and see, beyond the neat streets of the town, the hill I knew as simply the front wall of something that went south a great distance—a distance whose edges I always loved to visit and whose interior I was fascinated to hear about—something that went back a great distance in time as well, something I had also in some sense come from but about which I was being given a great many conflicting signals by my family, my community and the world at large. . . .

"At Indiana University in the early 70s I did my first reading in Appalachian studies and first considered writing a book on the region. At the same time, living as a normal person in a different part of the United States for the first time, I kept experiencing small cultural collisions which taught me definitely that a middle-class Appalachian is still an Appalachian, and this helped sharpen my own Appalachian identity—and by sharpen I include at times making it rather prickly around the edges. . . .

"In California I tried to work on a novel about Appalachia that I had conceived in 1977, but I found that my mind was blocked for that kind of creation. I could not write a novel about Appalachia in the presence of eucalyptus trees."

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## EYE on Publications

*A Dancing Fox. Collected Poems: 1949-1985*, by Francis Pledger Hulme (Birch Brook Press, Box 293, Otisville, N.Y. 10963). Readers may well remember this poet's *Mountain Measure: A Southern Appalachian Verse Notebook* (Appalachian Consortium Press, 1975). A splendid gentleman with an elegant voice and a keen mind, Hulme taught for most of his life at the State University of New York at

Oswego, although after returning to his native North Carolina he continued to teach for several years at Warren Wilson College; he died in 1986.

Brought out by admirers in New York, these poems come like a bundle of messages from Beyond. Whether the bittersweet love ballads, the poems about western North Carolina or the deft characterizations, they carry strong ideas and images, as these two brief bits demonstrate. From "Ballade of the Dead Dogs": "On sleepless nights they come and go, / Those faithful

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## EYE from page 3

friends of yesterday,/ Whose only pleasure was to know/  
When I would walk and by what way./ Across the years gallant and gay/  
They race in joyous rivalry/  
And bark and turn but cannot stay. . .” And here are comments on two writers: Faulkner—“Here’s Troy burned and Agamemnon’s fits/  
Served up with black-eyed peas, hog jowl, and grits’; and Frost—“He scythes the landscapes with one sure slice/  
To show the hell beneath New England ice.”

*The Untoward Hills*, by Albert Stewart (Yellow Mountain, Box 623, Hindman, Ky. 41822). Here the always interesting founder of *Appalachian Heritage* reprints a collection of poems first published by the Morehead State College Press in 1962. His own lines describe him well: “The loitering light of skies fast fading dim/  
Stirred an excitement there in him/  
And his voice kept budding into song/  
Fresh as the spring-time as he went along.” A man who underplays his many talents, Stewart gives us poems that are honest and true.

In *The Untoward Hills* he speaks of passing from one place to another, from perception to insight. The prologue poem suggests the journeys: “Here to the crystalline order/  
Of the mind’s significant acres/  
I have come through dense leafings/  
And bursts of sudden blue. . .

*Highlander: No Ordinary School, 1932-1962*, by John M. Glen (University Press of Kentucky). Founded in the depths of the Great Depression, the Highlander Folk School despite its name was not created to promote the old dances or preserve the old music. What its purposes were is perhaps harder to say, but essentially the school offered itself to the South as an adult education and training center working for social change. Like many another institution, it truly was its founder writ large. Myles Horton, who with Don West launched Highlander (West soon went his own way), continually believed that education could help the poor people of the South—workers and farmers, blacks and whites—gain a measure of control over their own lives. Thus through the years Highlander served as a training center for southern labor, for Farmer’s Union members and for civil-rights workers.

Such activities were hardly calculated to escape the scrutiny of Tennessee lawmen and legislators (or their counterparts in neighboring states), and in 1962 the civil-rights involvement finally did Highlander in. Typical was the view of a well-named state senator, Barton Dement, who readily persuaded his tractable colleagues that Highlander was “a finishing school for Communists” who advocated “the intermingling of the races.” One witness testified in a hearing that 20 years earlier he had seen Horton’s wife dressed like a Russian peasant woman and that he believed the Horton children had “Russian names.”

Thorough if not sparkling, the book is as much a biography of Horton as it is a history of the school. This was inevitable but also fortunate, since Horton emerges as a person who rewards acquaintance. The remarkable fact about his school was not that know-nothing pressures forced it to close in 1962 but that its founder, because of his combination of firm principle and tactical flexibility, was able to keep it going for 30 embattled years.

Since 1962 the Highlander group has carried on activities under another form of organization, with an increasing focus on Appalachia. In an epilogue the author suggests that the problems of the mountains have presented the present incumbents with a formidable challenge. That’s hardly surprising.

## Wanderers Return

The Texas Troubadours, the Dixie Playboys, Roy Hall and the Blue Ridge Entertainers, the Wanderers of the Wasteland were just a few of the string bands that were heard in southwest Virginia over Roanoke radio thirty and forty years ago. Currently, after a lapse of decades, the Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College is honoring these early country radio celebrities through concerts, records, TV and radio productions and an exhibition of photos (the pictures are on display at the Roanoke Valley History Museum until June 30). The smiling group shown on page 1 was the Wanderers of the Wasteland; the photo dates from about 1946 (from left, Saford Hall, Glen Howell, Woody Mashburn).

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