

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Loyal Jones – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

March 1-3: Interdisciplinary conference on Southern dance traditions, East Tennessee State University; attention will be given to all kinds of dancing, secular and sacred. Information from Susan Spalding and Jane Woodside, Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Box 19180A, ETSU, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002; telephone, 615/929-5348.

March 9-10: "Economics for Prophets: the Gospel Critique," described as an ecumenical workshop about justice in the marketplace, sponsored jointly by the Kentucky Appalachian Ministry of the Disciples of Christ and Human Economic Ministries, a program of the Catholic Church's Glenmary Society. You can learn more from Ben Poage at 606/623-3140 or John Rausch at 404/892-2907.

March 23-25: Appalachian Studies Association annual conference, Unicoi State Park, Helen, Ga. This year's theme is "Southern Appalachia and the South: A Region Within a Region." As was the case last year, participants will include not only faculty types but the winner of a student paper competition (the deadline for which is January 31). For information about any aspect of the conference, including the student competition, write to the Appalachian Consortium, University Hall, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608, or telephone 704/262-2064.

March 29-30: Spring literary festival, devoted to Robert Morgan; Emory & Henry College, Emory, Va. 24327. Morgan will be on hand to read from his works; admirers will present papers. John Lang (704/944-3121) can tell you more.

April: For some years now, you will have seen in this slot mention of that wonderfully varied enterprise, the annual New River symposium. But we report with regret that for logistical reasons the 1990 session will not be held; the National Park Service assures us, however, that it's only a postponement till 1991, not a cancellation.

April 4-6: Third annual Aquaculture Expo of the Southern Appalachians, Fontana Village Resort, Fontana Dam, N.C. 28733. More information from Mountain Aquaculture Research Center, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C. 28723 (see story, p. 2).

April 18-22: Annual meeting, Sonneck Society for American Music, Toronto, Ont. This year's theme: "The Great Divide? Studies in American and Canadian Music." For details, contact Carl Morey, Dean, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ont. M5S 1A1, Canada.

April 23-29: The Augusta Heritage Center will host its



Larry Burke: A miracle worker? (p. 2)

third annual Spring Dulcimer Week on the campus of Davis & Elkins College. Information from Doug Hill, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; 304/636-1903.

June 24-30: 14th annual Appalachian Celebration, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351-1689. Music and dance, storytelling and poetry, arts and crafts—just the thing, suggest the sponsors, for a summer family outing.

July 31-August 4: Ulster-American heritage symposium, cosponsored by Appalachian State University, Western Carolina University, East Tennessee State University and the University of Ulster. This meeting is a number of months in the future, but the deadline for paper proposals isn't; they're due by January 15, and they should go to Stephanie Smith or Richard Blaustein (we don't know how you decide which one), Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Box 19180A, ETSU, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002.

Not for Babysitting

What part can films, videos and sound recordings play in the classroom?

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How can they benefit students not as undemanding entertainment but as stimuli to critical thinking and effective communication?

Appalshop, the multimedia enterprise headquartered in Whitesburg, Ky., is launching a search for answers to these questions. Associated in the new Appalshop School Initiative are the East Kentucky Teachers Network, the University of Kentucky Appalachian Center, and Forward in the Fifth, the last-named a recently established citizens' group devoted to improving education in the Fifth Congressional District.

In essence, the project will look for ways to use Appalshop productions in the schools, but the sponsors take careful note that the media should not serve as classroom babysitters; integrating film and video into the curriculum is the aim. Linked together by a computer network, teachers taking part in the project will cooperatively develop and test new uses for the media.

Fishy Business

We're often amazed at all the things that go on while we're not looking. The latest instance is the increasing prominence in Appalachia of aquaculture. (This spelling seems to be preferred, in such lofty circles as the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Mountain Aquaculture Research Center in North Carolina), to "aquiculture"; perhaps it's being pushed by the same people who ousted "dyslectic" in favor of "dyslexic"; in any case, when we first heard of growing things in tanks, the whole business was called hydroponics; or maybe "aquiculture" refers to producing plants and "aquaculture" has to do with fish.)

Anyway, the ARC tells us that "with abundant water and topography that supports a variety of fish farming methods, Appalachian states are well suited to play a leading role in meeting the growing demand for seafood." (Maybe, since the sea actually isn't involved, they should say "water food.") "In the U.S. alone," the commission says, "seafood consumption is expected to increase by more than 200 million pounds per year," and there are increasing exports on top of that. Just a few weeks ago the ARC convened a 13-state conference to encourage the growth of aquaculture.

The folks over at the aquaculture center of Western Carolina University don't need much encouragement. "Appalachia has a proven track record in aquacultural production," they point out, "with diverse and expanding interests." Next April they will play hosts at the third annual Aquaculture Expo of the Southern Appalachians (see details in "Looking Forward" column). This Expo "has fast become one of the popular aquaculture events of the Southeast." The theme of the 1990 session will be "Industry Trends and Market Implications," with features on both marketing and technological developments.

New Look in Hiring

In the fall of 1985 the Pike County, Ky., school district employed 42 teacher aides. Just a year later, with school board elections approaching, the number of aides had

swollen to 176, and it kept on growing, finally passing the 200 mark—while the district sank more than \$2 million into the red.

State experts suggested that at least 100 of the jobs could be cut, for a saving of \$600,000. But the superintendent at the time seemed surprised at the idea. "We didn't have too many people," he said. "We just needed some more funds." No politics involved at all—no, sir!

Shenanigans like these are more and more coming to light in Kentucky—and, it must be admitted, particularly in Eastern Kentucky—as people across the state debate the future of the school system, which the state supreme court has ordered redesigned and rebuilt to ensure greater equity between rich and poor districts. Harlan County, for instance, seems to employ more workers like cooks and janitors than it does teachers and administrators, a reversal of the normal situation, in which professionals greatly outnumber the support staff.

How do you get such a job? One good way is to know what to say when you're interviewed. A secretary explained that when she applied for her job, she was asked whether she intended to campaign for a particular school board member. Since she knew that her interviewer opposed that member, she didn't have much of a problem producing the right answer.

Cries of Protest

The fact that in many mountain counties the school system is the largest employer has long put school boards in a position of political and economic dominance, but cries of protest against hiring practices like those in Pike and Harlan counties are coming from the richer Kentucky counties, whose people are not eager to see money flowing into the mountains if it goes not for educational equity but for maintenance of a disguised employment-and-welfare system controlled by political bosses. Already, people in places like Lexington and Louisville are disgruntled enough at the inadequacy of the property-tax system and the reluctance of Eastern Kentucky voters to tax themselves as much as state law allows.

But one county, at least, seems for now to have found a way out of the hiring mess. In Pike County itself, the see-no-evil superintendent of 1985-86 has been succeeded by one Larry Burke, who has performed the astonishing feat of persuading the school board to give up its absolute control over jobs. Retired teachers serve on a board to screen applicants for teaching jobs, and state officials—not local politicians—perform the same task for support workers.

Will Burke's approach last? Who knows? In any case, nobody can disagree with his view that it's the way to "give the people a first-class school system."

Correspondence

The following letter calls for a bit of background explanation. Several months ago the Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader picked up a little story from the Albany (N.Y.) Times-Union, in which a Navy recruiter based in Albany was quoted as saying that for minesweeper duty it's easy to find young men who can shoot a mine at 2,000 yards with an M-14 rifle. We cited this story in the summer issue of this NEWSLETTER because the recruiter, Comdr. Marty Torrey, was supposed to have
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Innovation

in

Appalachia

Just a few weeks ago a group called the Kentucky Science and Technology Council produced a document titled the *Kentucky Innovation Compact*, aimed at creating jobs through science and technology. Among its key points: "This year 80 percent of the wealth created worldwide will be driven by technological innovation."

Does this apply to Appalachia? Indeed it does—or it can—says Ken James, head of Appalachian Computer Services, Inc., of London, Ky. Speaking at the recent conference of the Shakertown Roundtable, held at the restored Shaker village near Lexington, James showed in detail how a determined entrepreneur can create new kinds of jobs in Appalachian areas. His company, a failing data-processing firm when he took it over in 1968, now employs 2,600 people and, in fact, was recently sold for \$45 million. ACS processes credit-card drafts (650,000 a day) for banks throughout the country and also engages in other projects,

such as designing and operating an information system for the Immigration and Naturalization Service and handling Medicaid processing for Blue Cross of western New York.

Employees—"coal miners' daughters," they were called in a state economic-development magazine advertisement—come from towns and rural areas around company offices. Workers hired for entry-level jobs find that the company conducts extensive training all the way up to the rarefied level of supervisors and managers.

Various speakers at the Shakertown Roundtable made the point that in the future economic development will come from taking a particular kind of technology and building a business around it. The people at ACS have succeeded so well that representatives of Barclay's Bank, Ltd., have come from the other London (the one located on the Thames) to see how high-tech information handling is done.

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said that these desirable marksmen are Kentucky kids "who might not be able to walk and chew gum at the same time and they don't like to wear shoes," and so forth. We suggested that some of you might like to let Comdr. Torrey know of any reactions you might have had to this comment.

For his part, Comdr. Torrey in a telephone conversation and in the following letter (slightly condensed) has let us know of his reaction to the little tempest the original story stirred up. We appreciate his writing to us.

TO THE EDITORS:

The quote printed in the *Herald-Leader* and the *Albany Times-Union* omits one very important phrase which led into my discussion of mine destruction. The reporter asked how we destroy mines on the sea's surface. I thought of our Navy marksmanship ranges on ships and ashore and to my best recollection said, "We train ourselves; not like your father may have told you after World War II..." [i.e., when people may have said things like the newspaper quote]. I know that the reporter (who is an honest guy) recalls the quote as printed. The only thing I can say is that with two

or three people talking at once he didn't hear me, or with me going at a mile-a-minute I failed to relate, fully, what I was thinking. Either way, the quote is horrible. For one thing, the people I have met in the Navy from your region are bright and dedicated professionals and I would never insult them. Secondly, I'm not insensitive enough to unfairly insult a whole group of people.

Your discussion about how people from your region are maligned shocked me. I was unaware that there are such wisecracks made and certainly don't have a stereotypical opinion of people in your region. Having heard sad stories of how my Catholic Irish forebears were unfairly treated in New York City 80 years ago, I can only say that if any remark attributed to me (however debatable) hurt the feelings of any one person, I am truly sorry. But since I know the quote does not reflect how I feel (and I will forever believe I discounted it by a lead-in comment), I don't apologize, any more than I would if falsely accused of theft. My friends in the Navy from Kentucky know me well enough to know that the printed quote didn't tell it all.

M. E. TORREY
CDR USN

EYE on Publications

Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina, by John C. Inscoc (University of Tennessee Press). No historical era, conflict, or outlook is immune to revisionism, as scholars have happily known for countless generations, and now western North Carolina in the period leading to the Civil War has come under the microscope of an author who says "the conclusions drawn in this study could hardly differ more from the set of assumptions with which I began it." In the prospectus for the study, which started out as a dissertation at Chapel Hill, Inscoc declared, conventionally enough, that he proposed to examine an isolated area that for the most part had been "unencumbered by the slave labor system it ultimately was forced to defend."

Now, he says, rereading that sentence makes him cringe. Was antebellum Southern Appalachia then not the classless, slaveless region it has long been held to be, full of sturdy freemen who favored the Union? That's what the secondary literature tells us, Inscoc comments, but when he moved into primary sources like correspondence and farm records and voting returns, he quickly saw that the issues dividing North and South were by no means irrelevant to the highlanders—or at least to those of western Carolina, "who reacted to the perceived threats to the South with fully as much interest, concern, and commitment as did any other group of Southerners."

On the eve of the Civil War this area, far from being the backward enclave it was later deemed to have been, possessed a variety of situations and a diversity of population equalling if not surpassing those "of any other rural section of the antebellum South." It did in fact have a slaveholding elite, whom the white majority saw not as a separate class but as advocates of common interests.

The next conference of the Appalachian Studies Association is to be devoted to discussion of the Appalachian South as "a region within a region." Fittingly enough, Inscoc is the program chairman; his book suggests that there is much to talk about.

Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture, edited by W. K. McNeil (UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106). In this anthology of essays about Appalachian folklife, ranging from the "discovery" of the region in 1860 to a 1987 piece on housing, the editor sought not to be exhaustive (as he carefully tells us) but to present a number of writings that were important and influential in their own time. Sifting through long-gone popular magazines as well as scholarly periodicals, he culled articles on log cabins, moonshiners, mountain handicrafts, hog raising, Southern funerals and you-name-it, and he makes the neat observation that folklife and material folk culture, in contrast to folklore, have often been overlooked by those who study Appalachia and its people.

A volume in the American Material Culture and Folklife series, as well as an American Folklore Society Centennial Publication, *Appalachian Images* "should fill a void in folk studies classes," Loyal Jones says in the foreword—classes that are now "forced to glean course material from various articles and books that may or may not deal primarily with folklife."

The author, a native of Canton, N.C., is folklorist at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Ark.

Solidarity Update (United Mine Workers of America, 900 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005). This is actually a collection of photocopied newspaper clippings about the UMWA's strike against the Pittston Company, which began last April. The key issues are Pittston's demands for more flexible work rules and reduced medical benefits. If it doesn't get the concessions, says Pittston President Michael Odom, the company and its employees alike are doomed. "I honestly feel," he says, "that we're trying to save the union down here."

Not surprisingly, the union and its supporters don't agree. The company, says AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, is "a lawless, rotten employer" that has deprived retired miners of medical benefits and is determined to break the union itself. To highlight his point, Kirkland, appearing at a rally in Lebanon, Va., played "Solidarity Forever" on a harmonica. Later he was arrested for taking part in a sitdown at the entrance to the county courthouse.

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