

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER

Loyal Jones – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 19 No. 2

Spring 1990

Looking Forward

July 1-7, 8-14, 15-21 and 22-27: Summer Craft Weeks, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902.

July 19-22: Summer edition of the 42nd annual fair, Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. For more information, address the guild at P.O. Box 9545, Asheville, N.C. 28815.

July 20-21: Third Festival of Appalachian Humor, sponsored by the Berea College Appalachian Center, C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404. Featured performers will be Joe Bly, Bonnie Collins, Bob Hannah, Ramona Jones and Alisa Jones Wall, Paul Lepp and Al White; special speakers John Combs and Michael Nichols will talk on the healing aspects of humor or the humorous aspects of healing, or both. Members of the audience will have the chance to win \$50 prizes for the best jokes, tales, etc.

July 29-August 4, August 5-11, 12-17, 19-25 and 25-31: Craft sessions, John C. Campbell Folk School. Since subjects and instructors vary somewhat from week to week, you may wish to make sure when your particular need will be met.

August 1-4: Ulster-American Heritage Symposium, co-sponsored by Appalachian State University, Western Carolina University, East Tennessee State University and the University of Ulster. Information from the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Box 19180A, ETSU, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614.

August 5-11: 13th annual Appalachian Writers Workshop for aspiring writers, Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, Ky. 41822. The staff, made up of luminaries who have moved far beyond mere aspiration, will include James Still, George Ella Lyon, Ed McClanahan, Robert Morgan, Joe Carson and Barbara Smith. There is also a widespread (and apparently well-founded) belief that Jim Wayne Miller will be on hand.

August 7-12: Great Smokies Song Chase No. 2, presented by Warren Wilson College and Billy Edd Wheeler. A camp for songwriters of all levels, offering individual critiques, on-the-spot feedback and seminars on all phases of the music business by professionals in folk, country, pop and gospel; a special guest will be Sheila Davis, author of the top-selling *The Craft of Lyric Writing*. You can find out more from Holly Gage, Warren Wilson College, 701 Warren Wilson Road, Swannanoa, N.C. 28778.

August 31: Deadline for abstracts from authors who wish to have their papers considered for presentation at the special urban-Appalachian session of the 1991 meeting of the American Sociological Association. Contact Phillip
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“Mountain Masters” Wins Weatherford

When John C. Inscoe decided to write his Ph.D. dissertation on antebellum western North Carolina, he thought he would be examining an isolated area that for the most part had been “unencumbered by the slave labor system it ultimately was forced to defend.”

That, indeed, is what the conventional wisdom has told us, but when Inscoe moved from the secondary literature into primary sources like correspondence and farm records



Berea College Public Relations

The winner (l.) with Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., whose father's career inspired the award.

and voting returns, he began to see a far more complicated picture. In fact, the people of the western Carolina counties appeared as southern in orientation as “any other group of Southerners.”

Inscoe pursued his novel approach not only through the completion of his dissertation but through its revision into a book called *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*, which was published last year by the University of Tennessee Press. Now the book has earned for Inscoe the 20th annual W. D. Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia. The \$500 prize was presented at a luncheon held in Berea on May 24.

As we observed in our earlier note on *Mountain Masters* (APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER, Fall 1989), Inscoe shows that on the eve of the Civil War, western Carolina was not a backward enclave at all but in
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Earl D. Wallace 1898-1990

Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District, in the southeastern part of the state, has some of the worst educational statistics in the country. But in the past few years these figures, particularly those concerning school dropouts, have begun to show improvement. One big reason is the work of a grassroots organization called Forward in the Fifth, which came seemingly out of nowhere to attack the district's problems with rare dedication and energy.

But it wasn't really out of nowhere. Behind the establishment of the organization stood a person who held no official position (except that of "honorary chairman") but who in fact provided the original inspiration and kept things humming with continuing ideas and suggestions. Earl Wallace was a 91-year-old man who, every day, spent most of his time looking forward to the 21st century. What kinds of jobs would Kentuckians have in the new century? What kind of education would they need? How could their lives be made better than those of their parents?

Forward in the Fifth was merely one of many activities to which Wallace devoted himself. A man of rare vigor and stamina and of wide intellectual curiosity, he presided over the resurrection of Shakertown at Pleasant Hill, which rose to become one of the state's leading tourist attractions, and in the process he created the Shakertown Roundtable, a continuing body devoted to the discussion of public issues; he modeled the Roundtable on Columbia University's American Assembly, which meets in a rural setting outside New York City. Not content merely to write a check for this or any other good cause, Wallace displayed remarkable ingenuity as a fundraiser, and in his work for Shakertown he became a



pioneer in historic preservation.

In turning from the business world, in which he had been an oil-company president and a Wall Street investment banker, to philanthropy, this native of Appalachian Kentucky discovered, as he once put it, a world in which everybody didn't spend all his time chasing the dollar.

Anyone associated with Earl Wallace will remember not simply his good works but what enjoyment he found in tackling tough problems and what fun it was to work with him. Characteristically, he took great delight in the fact that Kinko's in Lexington stayed open all night. If he wanted to share a document with a colleague or a friend, as he often did, he wouldn't have to wait till morning to Xerox it.

Echoes from LBJ

A quarter of a century ago, President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed the Great Society—a happy state of affairs that would come about as the result of a frontal assault on America's domestic problems. The United States, said LBJ, could do anything it has "the guts to do and the vision to do and the will to do."

Unfortunately, Johnson at the same time began sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of Vietnam. And in the ensuing years, particularly the past decade, it's been fashionable to look on the Great Society as a costly failure.

But was it? Not necessarily, it seems. Sargent Shriver, the first head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, recently pointed out that programs created in the LBJ era included Head Start, the Job Corps, community action, Foster Grandparents, Upward Bound, community health centers, legal services for the poor, Vista, college work-study programs. And, as Tom Wicker has noted, Johnson pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the high points of the civil-rights movement.

Of course, the egalitarian ideal that flourished for half a century no longer exerts much influence on national policy. Solid figures show that the rich are getting richer, the poor poorer, and even the middle class is suffering a decline. Those in the general public who are aware of

these trends seem to accept them.

Perhaps a few more echoes from the Great Society wouldn't be amiss from time to time.

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Obermiller, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Ky. 41076.

September 15-30: Mountain Heritage Festival, sponsored by Appalshop, Whitesburg, Ky. 41858.

October 5-6: Kingdom Come Swappin' Meetin', a folk-arts festival held at Southeast Community College, Cumberland, Ky. 40823. For more information, get in touch with the Office of Continuing Education at the college (phone number is 606/589-2145, ext. 58).

October 19-21: Fall edition of the 42nd annual fair, Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. See July 19-22 for details.

October 26-28: Seventeenth Annual Celebration of Traditional Music, Berea College, featuring Grandpa, Ramona and Alisa Jones and many others. For more information, contact Loyal Jones at the NEWSLETTER address.

November 6-7: "Appalachian Children," the fifth annual University of Kentucky conference on Appalachia. The sessions will focus on services for children at three specific developmental levels—preschool, middle childhood and adolescence. For further information write the UK Appalachian Center, 641 South Limestone St., University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506, or phone 606/257-4852.

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complexity and diversity equalled any other rural section of the antebellum South, and like the rest of the region it possessed a slaveholding elite.

Founded by Alfred H. Perrin, formerly of Berea and now himself of western North Carolina, the Weatherford Award competition is sponsored by the Berea College Appalachian Center and the Hutchins Library. The award gives annual recognition 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, and through the years has achieved general recognition as the mark of excellence in Appalachian thought and writing.

The award honors the memory of W. D. Weatherford, Sr., a pioneer and leading figure for many years in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations. Dr. Weatherford died in 1970 at the age of 94.

In addition to last year's winner, *Fair and Tender Ladies* by Lee Smith, the list of winning works in recent years includes *Sometimes a Shining Moment* by Eliot Wigginton; *Last One Home* by John Ehle; *Generations* by John Egerton; *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers* by Ron Eller, and the double winners for 1988, *Storming Heaven* by Denise Giardina and *Apples on the Flood* by Rodger Cunningham.

Judges for the Weatherford Award competition are James S. Brown, emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Kentucky; Wilma Dykeman, author and lecturer; Thomas Parrish, writer and editor; John B. Stephenson, president of Berea College; Willis D. Weatherford,



His research made him change his mind completely, Insoe tells Weatherford lunch audience.

Jr., president emeritus of Berea College; and Shirley Williams, staff writer, *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

EYE on Publications

The Appalachian Photographs of Earl Palmer, by Jean Haskell Speer (University Press of Kentucky). For more than fifty years, Earl Palmer, now 85, has been "conjuring" Appalachia (as he puts it), recording with his camera his personal vision of mountain people and their heritage. Everybody knows that books and articles are written by persons with particular points of view and often with specific purposes in mind, but photographs have generally been taken to be unedited reproductions of reality. False as this claim may be, they look *so* real, they seem *so* convincing.

As the author points out here, however, Palmer does not use words like "conjuring" by accident. Like a poet, he has given us an Appalachia shaped according to his world view. Seeing the mountaineer as both "historically real and eternally mythic," he has created a vision of Appalachia's past as he wishes it to be remembered. The methods he uses to further this vision range from selection and arrangement of subjects to darkroom tinkering.

Hence, says Ms. Speer, his approach raises fascinating questions about the nature of truth in visual images—an issue much debated in recent years. Is, for example, beautification as valid as literal truth-telling (whatever that might be)? Palmer's pictures are not documentary in the conventional sense; instead, they represent important cultural statements. They can be enjoyed simply as beautiful objects, but as we go through the book we see how much more there is here than meets the eye.

'Tis the season for reprints. We take note here of four recent offerings we think you'll find, in their differing ways, worthy of your attention.

Rusties and Riddles & Gee-Haw Whimmy Diddles, by James Still; illustrations by Janet McCaffery (University Press of Kentucky). The author, who has lived in Eastern Kentucky since the early 1930s, is noted for the close attention he pays to the speech of his neighbors and the care with which he employs their language in his writing. He takes special delight in colorful and original turns of phrase and in all kinds of oral lore—tales, songs and games.

In 1974 and 1975 he drew on his collection of this material to produce two little books, *Way Down Yonder on Troublesome Creek* and *The Wolfpen Rusties*, which are now combined under a new overall title. Using "rusties" (instead of "pranks" or something similar) in a title is itself a perfect example of Still's fondness for keeping old words and expressions in use. "Riddles and whimsies" would also convey the idea of the book, which is simply to provide entertainment for anyone of any age who loves wordplay. As Still tells us, his home Troublesome Creek area was the place where tadwhackers delighted themselves with zizz wheels. Even if you're no longer a tadwhacker, you can still have fun.

(The University Press of Kentucky continues to have available two of Still's classic works, *River of Earth* and *The Run for the Elbertas*.)

Kinfolks, by Gurney Norman (Gnomon Press, P.O. to page 4

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Box 475, Frankfort, Ky. 40602). This collection of ten stories, showing Wilgus Collier at various stages of his development from a ten-year-old boy to a young man, originally appeared in 1977; the stories were first published in *Mountain Life & Work*, *Mountain Review* and other regional magazines. Though Wilgus is the central character here, he has plenty of company—his parents, grandparents, uncles, in-laws and all the others who make up the large and disputatious Collier family. By the time Wilgus is in college, in fact, he can reflect that he has grown up on “a diet of kinfolks fighting and he didn’t have much appetite for it anymore.” He also realizes that if he tells his college friends about his family in the hills, they probably won’t believe him. But they might if Wilgus could manage to tell them how some of the worst moments are also some of the funniest. As a character in the middle of things, of course, he may not be able to see this poignant truth as clearly as the author enables the reader to see it.

Divine Right’s Trip, by Gurney Norman (Gnomon Press). *The Last Whole Earth Catalog*, which appeared two decades ago, was one of those specialized phenomena that unpredictably enjoy great popular success. Created, as Ed McClanahan says in an afterword, as a “mail-order supermarket of the counterculture,” it offered survivalist gear, Moog synthesizers, geodesic-dome blueprints and an array of other adornments of what was known in those contentious days as the alternative lifestyle. In addition to its goods and services, the *Catalog* gave its readers entertainment in the form of this novel, *Divine Right’s Trip*, which ran throughout, a few paragraphs on every spread. The original idea seems to have been to use the adventures of the central character, D. R. Davenport (a Kentuckian turned California hippie) to plug the products featured in the *Catalog*. As McClanahan neatly observes, this is rather as if *New Yorker* characters were required to stay in Helmsley hotels, wear Countess Mara ties and drink Beefeater’s gin.

But Norman ran away with the idea, and instead of turning out faintly disguised advertising copy, he pro-

duced a book that McClanahan regards as *the* major novel of the hippie experience—the “fictional anthem” of a generation. Its mythic qualities are captured in a literary observation that occurs at the end of the first chapter. “Did you ever read about St. George and the dragon?” asks a hippie hitchhiker. “It’s far-out s—t.”

Well, well. Fortunately for the reputation of the educational system, that character was only of high school age; he hadn’t yet been exposed to college. But if he had been, of course, he probably would have expressed the same thought, and in the same way. That was the vernacular of the time—a few simple, all-purpose phrases, guaranteed to upset the middle class. Was it all really only twenty years ago?

The Last Forest, by Douglas McNeill (Pocahontas Communications Cooperative Corp., Dunmore, W.Va. 24934). Speaking of myth, there’s something of a mythic quality about some of the stories in this unusual collection (note, for instance, “That Hammons Boy”). *The Last Forest* originally appeared in 1940. In these stories the author, a West Virginia high school principal, takes a look back from his vantage point across fifty years of local history, beginning in the 1890s with the primeval forest and ending with the cut-over and burned-out relic left by the invasion of the loggers.

In the final story, as a group of men look across a river basin toward a mountain where, as boys, they had hunted deer, they no longer see great blue waves of spruce and hemlock stretching away mile upon mile. Instead, they behold bare hills “from which fire and erosion had swept every vestige of soil.” One of them men says simply, “What a shame!”

But there’s something of a happy ending here. In the fifty years since those words were written, the “last forest” has made a comeback. It may not be the virgin forest of old, but it’s now the federally protected Cranberry Wilderness Area. One purpose of reprinting this book seems to be to remind readers that what happened once can happen again.

Published by
Appalachian Center/Berea College
C.P.O. Box 2336
Berea, Ky. 40404

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Berea, Ky. 40404
Permit No. 19