

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Loyal Jones – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

March 26-27: Annual meeting, Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliates, Berea College, with reports on the activities of these varied organizations. The afternoon session on the 26th and the morning session on the 27th are open to the public. Call Judy Stammer, 606/986-9341, ext. 5022.

April 5-10, 12-18, 19-25: Spring craft weeks, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Want to make nonfunctional baskets, Shaker boxes, metal fetishes and any number of other things? Here's your chance, but check with the school to make sure what's being offered during which week.

April 9-10: Appalachian Community Fund workshop, "Surviving the Nineties," Berea College. Kim Klein, former ACF director, will lead the sessions. Information from ACF; phone, 615/523-5783.

April 9-11: New River Symposium, sponsored by the New River Gorge National River and the West Virginia Department of Culture and History, with discussions of all kinds of subjects having to do with this unique river and its valley—natural history, folklore, archaeology, geography and so forth; Beckley (W. Va.) Hilton. For more information, call park headquarters—304/465-0508.

April 9-11: Hillbilly Days, Pikeville, Ky. Some 60,000 people are expected to celebrate Appalachian culture. Call 606/631-1273.

April 30-May 3: American Quilters' Society quilt show, Executive Inn, Paducah, Ky.; more than 400 quilts, \$55,000 in prizes. More information from Lynn Loyd, 502/898-7903.

May 3-8, 10-16, 17-23, 24-30: May craft weeks, John C. Campbell Folk School.

May 15-17: Spring fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky., presenting the work of more than 80 members. To find out more, call Kilali Alailima, 606/986-3192.

May 30-June 5, 7-13, 14-20, 21-27, 28-July 4: Craft weeks, John C. Campbell Folk School; the final session will be Native American week.

June 8-12: Appalachian Family Folk Week, Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, Ky.; traditional music, dance, crafts and storytelling. Write the school at P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822 or phone 606/785-5475.

June 8-26: Course in Appalachian literature and history, Berea College. (See separate story.)

June 22-27: 16th annual Appalachian Celebration, More-

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North Carolina: Advocating the Arts

"The creative act," Arthur Koestler once said, "consists in combining previously unrelated structures in such a way that you get more out of the emergent whole than you have put in."

If this is true of the individual artist, is it also true of society? Do the taxpayers actually benefit from providing federal and state support for the arts? How about in tough recessionary times like today's?

In North Carolina, leading legislators don't seem to have much doubt about the answer. An arts executive reported that people who have labored in behalf of the arts "would have been thoroughly rewarded by the passionate and eloquent speeches made by our many friends in the legislature" when deep budget cuts were threatened. The co-chairman of the house budget committee, Rep. Jim Crawford of Asheville, declared: "I have been accused on many occasions of being an advocate for the arts. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly plead guilty to that charge."

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So much to learn! (See p. 3)



NORTH CAROLINA *from page 1*

Overall, the state arts council took a five-percent hit for 1992, which, as the director declared, "in today's economic climate means victory for the arts." Such victories, in North Carolina and across the country, have to be won over two completely opposed groups of opponents—those who believe artists to be troublemakers who shouldn't have their bills paid by the public and those who think artists aren't important enough to deserve any government support. For that matter, some artists themselves aren't too keen on public funding, fearing that such money might tend to sap their socially subversive tendencies, or that having to deal with politicians simply isn't worth the hassle.

Such victories, however, are applauded by persons like a North Carolina writer who says that "fellowships will always be important for writers like me, who publish short stories, a market where the financial rewards are few." In fact, this young man declares, he was on the point of giving up writing entirely, "and then a wonderful letter comes and tells me to continue, we will pay you to continue, and so I did, and because of it I was able to write some of the best stories I have written yet."

Even in these troubled fiscal times, the state that sends Jesse Helms to Washington manages to make innovative use of arts dollars. Two new programs give small (up to \$500) grants to writers who have sudden opportunities requiring a bit of cash and also provide help for an often-neglected group, writers of literary nonfiction who need aid with a specific project, like a biography. Maybe a writer could take advantage of this support to do a biography of Helms himself. Nobody ever said you can't feed the hand that bites you.

"Troublesome Noises"

During the past two years we've attempted to keep readers (especially those outside of Kentucky) somewhat up to date on the evolution and implementation of the state's landmark Education Reform Act of 1990. Aside from the kinds of financial troubles that are afflicting all 50 states and that threaten to delay the adoption of some of the mandated programs, progress, say education advocates, has been reasonably satisfactory. On the whole, the educational establishment has, with good grace, accepted such possibly threatening ideas as school-based management—although we must regretfully report that in some of the state's Appalachian counties, where education may be the only big business, the school boards have been markedly reluctant to give up their masters-vs.-serfs view of the local citizenry.

The biggest noise—or, at least, the loudest noise—has been made by one John Stephenson (not to be confused with the current president of Berea College), who last November won election to the post of superintendent of public instruction. What's the problem here? Simply that this position still exists only because a constitutional amendment would be required to abolish it. The legislature removed almost all of its powers and conferred them on an appointive official, the commissioner of education.

But, as one newspaper says, Stephenson "began making troublesome noises the day of his inauguration." However,
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head State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351. The usual mix—music, crafts, etc.—and lots of it. The phone number is 606/783-2077.

July 10-12: Berea Craft Festival, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky., featuring the many studios, galleries and shops that help make Berea the official craft capital of Kentucky. Contact Richard and Lila Bellando, 606/986-1585.

July 27-August 2: The Great Smokies Song Chase, directed by songwriter-playwright Billy Edd Wheeler, is back for its third year; Warren Wilson College, Swannanoa, N.C. Nationally recognized staffers will work with songwriters and performers. For a brochure, write Jim Magill, Warren Wilson College, 701 Warren Wilson Road, Swannanoa, N.C. 28778, or call 704/298-5099.

August 3-7: 15th annual Appalachian writers' workshop, Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, Ky. 41822. Phone: 606/785-5475.

ARC: Education Initiative

In a brand-new program called Excellence in Education, the Appalachian Regional Commission will spend more than \$2 million (\$1.6 million of it in new, special funding) to support 17 local projects across the region.

In pledging this money, the ARC is following up on its long-standing interest in "education readiness" (this is the government's phrase, not ours), along with "adult literacy and lifelong learning; math-science education; and dropout prevention and increased graduation rates."

What kinds of projects are involved? They range from the launching of a Georgia county's first preschool program to upgrading training for math and science teachers in Maryland's Appalachian counties to helping with a South Carolina program that will provide literacy training for adult workers at Michelin Corporation factories.

Quick Response

TO THE EDITORS:

Thank you for publishing our "Wish List" in the Fall 1991 issue of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER. Since you published the list, we have received a number of useful materials. One important contribution came from Doug and Mary Kelley of Ann Arbor, Michigan, who sent us a large number of books for our library.

Naturally, we are eager to be added to your mailing list.

JAKE KROGER
Director,
Lower Price Hill
Community School, Inc.

Cincinnati

Dear Jake: We're glad we could help—and glad, too, that the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER has made it onto your now well-known "Wish List." Does anybody else have a list you'd like to send us?—The Editors



Novelist Wilma Dykeman and Berea historian Richard B. Drake have taught in the summer course since its founding in 1973. The photo on



page 1 shows the late Cratis Williams lecturing in an early session while Loyal Jones, holding his head, furiously scribbles notes.

Summer Stars Return

If you're interested in teaching courses or units in Appalachian studies, you may be glad to learn that, after a year's absence, Berea College's summer course in regional studies is returning.

Since 1973, except for the 1991 hiatus, the Berea Appalachian Center has sought to help students and teachers learn how to pay critical attention to Appalachian literature and history. Graduates of the courses have not only created their own units and courses but have developed course materials and produced other writings.

In this year's course, to be held June 8-26, Richard B. Drake, professor of history at Berea, will present a comprehensive history of the region, with special attention to

Appalachian culture and to current political issues.

Novelist Wilma Dykeman will discuss her own work and that of other influential writers who have used the Appalachians as a setting, including Mary N. Murfree, Thomas Wolfe, Jesse Stuart and James Still.

Other lecturers include George Ella Lyon, Jim Wayne Miller and Gurney Norman, all of whom will read from their own works. Alan DeYoung will speak on education and culture, and Ron Eller will discuss developments in the region since the end of World War II.

The total cost (including room and board) is \$275 for educators and students, \$450 for others. Three hours' credit, graduate or undergraduate, is available through the University of Kentucky. For more information, write to the address on the outside of the NEWSLETTER or phone 606/986-9341, ext. 5140.

"TROUBLESOME" from page 2

"the state has too much at stake in reforming and reshaping its public schools to abide even for an unnecessary day the mischief that John Stephenson seems intent on committing." What the seriocomic Mr. Stephenson has done is to refuse to sign off on some equipment leases, a power inexplicably left to the superintendent under the new law. Not only that, he is suing to have all the old duties (and the salary that goes with them) returned to the superintendent.

This behavior seems to answer one of the questions raised at the last election: why would anybody run for the superintendent's post after it had been denuded of its duties? It couldn't have been just for the \$3,000 salary, people thought—apparently correctly. In casting about for nouns and adjectives to apply to the litigious superintendent, the *Lexington Herald-Leader* sputtered this way and that and finally seemed to settle on "buffoon."

In any case, part of the Stephenson story came to an end

in early March, when Gov. Brereton Jones signed a bill removing the superintendent's remaining duties and conferring on him, as a consolation prize, the title of "advocate for education." In addition to this amorphous distinction, of course, Stephenson still has his lawsuit.

What was more encouraging than all these legal doings concerning officeholders was the zeal for learning shown by an Eastern Kentucky student who one day in February phoned the Partnership for Kentucky School Reform to "see what this is all about." The kid is a first-grader.

EYE on Publications

Quilt Pieces: The Quilt Poems, by Jane Wilson Joyce; *Family Knots*, by Meredith Sue Willis (Gnomon Press, P.O. Box 475, Frankfort, Ky. 40602). In this elegant little
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book, two writers explore the significance of quilting from different directions and in different forms.

Joyce, a Latin professor and translator, presents 13 poems showing how women work their thoughts and their lives into the quilts they piece. The quilts thus become symbols of history itself, "Old World/ to New, old/ woman to/ young . . ."

Whereas Joyce gives us the voices of various characters in her poems, Willis's contribution to this book is a short story about a woman to whom quilting is almost all-important as a way of self-expression but whose mother-in-law and other relatives can't understand her preoccupation or appreciate her uniqueness. A native of West Virginia, Willis now lives in New Jersey.

(*The Quilt Poems* was earlier published in limited editions by Jeff Daniel Marion at his Mill Springs Press.)

Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960, by Crandall A. Shifflett (University of Tennessee Press). The freshest breeze that blows through the world of scholarship is the zephyr called revisionism. Sometimes it may be excessive, sometimes merely trendy, sometimes quite wrong, but without it dwellers in the groves of academe would be apt to suffocate.

These comments are by way of saying that in this new book, Crandall Shifflett of Virginia Tech has taken a fresh and bold look at one of the most firmly established ideas in Appalachian scholarship—the belief that in exchanging subsistence farming for life in coal towns, Appalachian coal-mining families were moving from a Jeffersonian Eden into a corporation-created hell.

Who would have thought it? Does Shifflett mean to tell us that even before the coming of the coal companies, people of the Appalachians spent more time stringing beans than dulcimers? Didn't all the miners owe their souls to the company store? Wasn't coal-town life nothing more than a blend of exploitation and deadening paternalism?

Shifflett doesn't offer easy answers. Indeed, his thorough research in coal-company records, oral-history col-

lections and government reports has produced a balanced view of his subject, although he concentrates on only a few of the 500 coal towns that existed during the 80 years covered by his study. But he makes it clear that former miners and their families remember town benefits like indoor plumbing, regular income and sports and other leisure activities and that miners succeeded in creating a new working-class culture. Those who rush to criticize this book as an apology for the coal companies, however, will completely miss the point. It can better be viewed as a cautionary tale, a warning against jumping to easy and ideologically popular general conclusions.

The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia, 1930-1990, by Garry G. Barker (University of Tennessee Press). In 1937 Allen Eaton produced *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, which immediately became, and has ever since remained, the standard work on its subject. But, of course, much has happened in the intervening half-century, and the need for a new comprehensive study has been widely acknowledged.

Some 20 years ago a number of persons, including representatives of Berea College and the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, discussed the idea of updating Eaton's book, but the death of James Bobbitt, the proposed editor, and other problems kept the project at the idea level.

Now Garry Barker, who has worked with a variety of crafts enterprises, has written a new account, a history of the Appalachian crafts world since 1930. "One thing I realized very early in the process," Barker says, "was that I could not cover everything and everybody," though he attempts to discuss the principal events and trends in the region. Because he is a Kentuckian and has spent much of his career with the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and Berea College, the book has a strong Kentucky flavor; in fact, it is in many ways a personal narrative, a sort of autobiography of a crafts executive. Marketing, meetings, politics—these play a large part in the story. If you've ever thought of a craftsperson as somebody who simply makes a product and then turns it over to somebody else to sell, this book will open your eyes.

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