

# NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE



# LETTER

Loyal Jones – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 22 No. 2 Spring 1993

## Looking Forward

**July 1-3:** Old Joe Clark Bluegrass Festival, Renfro Valley, Ky. Call 800/765-7464.

**July 4-10, 11-17, 18-24, 25-31:** Craft courses, John C. Campbell Folk School. Clay and lace, quilting and weaving, broom making and basketry are highlighted—and that's just the first week (which has other courses too). To find out specifically what's happening during which week, contact the school at Route 1, Box 14A, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone 1/800-FOLK SCH.

**July 9-11:** Appalachian Writers Association conference, Radford University. To participate, or to acquire other information, get in touch with Clyde Kessler, P.O. Box 3612, Radford, Va. 24143.

**July 9-11:** Berea Craft Festival, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. Information from Berea Tourism Commission; phone 606/986-2540.

**July 11-August 13:** Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W.Va. 26241. This series of week-long classes has been with us for 21 years now; to get in touch with the sponsors, write the college or phone 304/636-1903.

**July 16-17:** Fourth Festival of Appalachian Humor, Berea College, hosted by Billy Edd Wheeler and Loyal Jones. Scheduled participants include Roni Stoneman, Jim Comstock, Virginia Kilgore, Ray Corns, George Daugherty, Sam Venable and Marc and Anita Pruett. Members of the audience also get to take part—there will be contests for the best story, song, etc. For more information, phone Jones at 606/986-9341, ext. 5140, or write him at C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404.

**July 25-31:** Elderhostel on Scottish History and Culture Through Music, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C. 28723. Information from the Division of Continuing Education and Summer School at the university; you may phone 704/227-7397.

**July 27-August 2:** The Great Smokies Song Chase, directed by songwriter-playwright Billy Edd Wheeler, is back for its fourth year, this time as part of the Swannanoa Gathering. Write Jim Magill, Warren Wilson College, 701 Warren Wilson Road, Swannanoa, N.C. 28778, or call 704/298-5099.

**August 1-7:** Appalachian Writers Workshop, Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, Ky. 41822. This year's collection of luminaries includes old hands like James Still and Jim Wayne Miller together with such newer lights as Chris Offutt and Lisa Koger. Write the school at P.O. Box 844 or phone 606/785-5475.

**August 1-7, 8-14, 15-20, 22-28, 29-September 3:**

More weeks of craft instruction at the John C. Campbell Folk School.

**September 3-5:** Labor Day Dance and Music Weekend, John C. Campbell Folk School, followed by a month of further craft weeks.

**September 22-24:** Thirteenth annual National Rural Families Conference, Kansas State University. The theme: "Growing Our Future: Initiatives to Strengthen Children and Families," a subject expected to interest educators, health workers, community leaders, therapists, lawyers and just about everybody else you can think of. Full information from the conference office, 141 College Court Building, KSU, Manhattan, Kansas 66506; phone 1/800/432-8222.

**October 29-31:** Celebration of Traditional Music at Berea College. More information in the next issue of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER, but if you just can't wait, phone 606/986-9341, ext. 5140.

**November 1-3:** Eighth annual University of Kentucky conference on Appalachia; this year participants will gather not on the Lexington campus but at Southeast Community College in Cumberland, Ky. The theme: "Civic Leadership in Appalachia." Information from Sharon Turner, UK Appalachian Center, 641 South Limestone St., Lexington, Ky. 40506; phone, 606/257-4852.

**December 9-12:** Fourth annual Labor-Activist Conference and first Community Strategic Training Initiative, Brown Summit Conference Center, Greensboro, N.C., produced by Grassroots Leadership. The theme: "Economic Development: What is it, who's it for, and how do you do it?" For more information, contact Tema Okun at Grassroots Leadership; the phone number is 919/688-7781.

## Giardina Wins Second Weatherford

The 1987 Berea College W. D. Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia went to Denise Giardina, author of *Storming Heaven*, a vivid novel about the early days of union organizing in the West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky coal fields.

In 1992 Giardina published *The Unquiet Earth*, a sequel in which she carried the story of struggling miners forward from the 1930s to the present day. Though both books are written with anger, as the author has put it, they are also the

to page 2



## GIARDINA from page 1

products of thorough research involving old newspapers, interviews, oral histories and transcripts of Congressional hearings. This background, combined with the author's memories of her own childhood in a West Virginia coal camp, produced the kind of impact and authenticity that not only won the 1987 award for Giardina but has just given her a second Weatherford Award. The \$500 prize for 1992 was presented on June 1 at a luncheon in Berea. (For a discussion of *The Unquiet Earth*, see the review on page 3.)

Besides comments by the winning author, the luncheon program included remarks by John Egerton about the career of the late W. D. Weatherford, Sr., whose career in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations inspired the creation of the Weatherford Award in 1971. Egerton, who won the award for 1983 for his book *Generations*, is currently engaged in research on Southern social activism in the 1930s.

The Weatherford Award was established, and supported for 17 years, by A. H. Perrin, retired publications director of Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati. It is now sponsored by the Berea College Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library. The judges are charged with choosing the work published anywhere in the United States that best illuminates the problems, personalities and unique qualities of the Appalachian South.

Previous winners, in addition to Giardina and Egerton, include Lee Smith for *Fair and Tender Ladies*; Gurney Norman for *Kinfolks*; John Insoe for *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*; Crandall Shifflett for *Coal Towns*; and John Ehle for *Last One Home*.

Judges for the Weatherford Award competition are Wilma Dykeman, author and lecturer; Thomas Parrish, writer and editor; John B. Stephenson, president of Berea College; Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., president emeritus of Berea College; and Shirley Williams, staff writer, Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

## The \$20 Water Bill

Do you know about the \$20 water bill? It's a story told by Ron Crouch, director of the Kentucky State Data Center at the University of Louisville. Crouch is a dedicated fellow who spends most of his time with his computers, but occasionally he likes to come up for air, especially when he has the chance to demolish a popular myth.

Crouch recently surfaced in the pages of *In Context*, a publication of the Center for Economic Development at Eastern Kentucky University. It seems, Crouch tells us, that there was a young couple with expenses of \$1000 a month—house payment of \$300, car payment of \$200, electric bill of \$100, water bill of \$20. Their other expenses consumed the remaining \$380.

Unfortunately, however, the income of the couple was only \$800 a month. What should they do to handle this deficit? After long thought they came up with a solution—they'd simply cut that damn \$20 water bill.

This, says Crouch, is exactly the way many people are thinking when they propose cuts in welfare costs as the solution to the federal budget deficit. Actually, of total

federal expenditures of about \$1.5 trillion (for 1992), AFDC—the program for poor families and their children—accounts for 1 percent, or \$15.1 billion; food-assistance programs add 2.3 percent, or \$33.6 billion; housing assistance accounts for another 1.3 percent, or \$19.4 billion; employment and training programs add further 0.4 percent, or \$5.8 billion; and social services account for 0.8 percent, or \$12.2 billion. All of these programs combined amount to only 5.8 percent of the federal budget—and just 11.1 percent of human-resource expenditures.

## The Diaper Generation

Most of the federal human-resource dollars, Crouch observes, go to middle-class entitlement programs (Social Security, Medicare, etc.), but that isn't what the popular myth tells us. This myth insists that if we cut the \$20 water bill, we can thereby get the federal deficit under control. But the fact is, according to Crouch, that "an increasingly aging society with high retirement and medical costs is, in fact, controlling the federal and state budgets." Medicare and Medicaid are growing because of rapid increases in the costs of medical care, "not for the poor but for the aged and disabled who frequently need expensive nursing-home care and who have disproportionately large medical bills."

Meanwhile, if we look at the national poverty picture, we see that more and more of the poor are children: "poverty today wears a diaper, not a hearing aid." But, plainly, the dollars that go for diapers are not the ones that cause the deficit—any more than the \$20 water bill forced that young couple into bankruptcy.

## "Teacher-Scholar" Winners

Two Tennessee teachers are among the 35 national winners of 1992 "Teacher-Scholar" grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. These grants, which provide a stipend of as much as \$30,000, are designed to enable a teacher to devote a year, full-time, to an intensive research project on a topic in the humanities.

It's a striking fact that of the whole national group of winners two—Mark Banker of Knoxville and Rebecca Mobbs of Copperhill—are from Tennessee. It's perhaps an even more striking fact that both of these winners have attended the Berea College Appalachian Center's summer course in Appalachian literature and history.

## Habitat: Into the Hills—Slowly

Habitat for Humanity, with which former President Jimmy Carter is strongly identified, is much admired and widely popular. But, like many another enterprise and organization, it has discovered that a blueprint that seems to work well in most areas doesn't necessarily fit the situation in Appalachia.





**WEATHERFORD WINNER:** Denise Giardina, author of "The Unquiet Earth," talks with (from l.) Loyal Jones, director of the Berea College Appalachian Center; John Egerton, a previous Weatherford Award winner who spoke at the award luncheon; and Tom Kirk, director of Berea's Hutchins Library.

### HABITAT *from page 2*

"It takes a while to get mountain folks to trust you," says a Habitat official, thus—knowingly or unknowingly—repeating a line uttered down through the years by persons who have undertaken projects in various parts of Appalachia. But, as this official, Ben Woodard, says, mountain people have "heard all kinds of groups say 'we're going to do this for you.'"

To counter the lack of enthusiasm that greeted Habitat's overtures in Appalachia, Woodard took the lead in creating a "rural initiative." Part of the problem was simply that people had never heard of Habitat. Besides, as another Habitat official puts it, in many of these areas "there often is not a strong working middle class that has the leisure time to get involved in starting an affiliate."

But Woodard had found that Habitat's sweat-equity requirement and self-help approach appeal to the strong local sense of independence. "When I told them 'this is not my program; you're going to do it,' they got interested."

Enough so, it seems, that in Eastern Kentucky five counties are currently in the process of organizing Habitat affiliates.

## EYE on Publications

*The Unquiet Earth*, by Denise Giardina (Norton). No one could accuse Denise Giardina of writing with clinical detachment. A native of West Virginia coal country, she has been arrested more than once for sitting in front of coal trucks attempting to cross picket lines, and the anger that produces this kind of activism comes through red-hot in her

two Weatherford Award-winning novels—*Storming Heaven* (1987) and *The Unquiet Earth*, which has just been recognized by the Weatherford judges as the most effective book about Appalachia published in 1992.

The new book, a sequel to *Storming Heaven*, takes us back to Blackberry Creek, West Virginia, where the generations continue their struggle against poverty and oppression. The principal fighters this time are Dillon Freeman, who's involved in a hopeless love tangle with his cousin Rachel Honaker, and Rachel's daughter Jackie, who grows up to be a crusading journalist and thus seems to speak with something of an auctorial voice. Against them stands the American Coal Company, which bears more than a casual resemblance to the nonfictional Pittston Company, responsible for some of the blackest pages in West Virginia's dark history.

"Denise Giardina's choice of fiction to explore issues of power and suffering is exactly right," says Clyde Edgerton. In *The Unquiet Earth*, says Lee Smith, Giardina shows how fiction can "make a more powerful statement than bare fact ever can."

*The Mountains Won't Remember Us*, by Robert Morgan (Peachtree Publishers). When is a collection of stories more than a collection of stories? When it's *The Mountains Won't Remember Us*, a book in which eleven independent stories combine to create a chronicle of Appalachian life from Revolutionary days to our own era, with Indian camps, Confederate prisons, trailer parks and BMWs.

These generations of characters all live, work and struggle in the North Carolina Blue Ridge, the area in which Robert Morgan was born. In bringing the area to life in stories of love, death, generosity and crookedness, frustra-



**EYE** from page 3

tion and reward, the author weaves a 200-year-long tapestry of social history. But he does it unobtrusively, never straining to be impressive, in plain and direct language.

*Songs of the River*, by Billy C. Clark (Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 391, Ashland, Ky. 41114). The busy people over at the Stuart foundation just keep the books coming. The latest offering to show up on our desk is this tale of an old man, a body of water and a large and wily fish. Sounds familiar, of course, and it's true that Ernest Hemingway's notorious *Old Man and the Sea* appeared 40 years ago. But—and it's quite a notable *but*—Billy C. Clark's story was written a decade earlier, in 1942, when the author was only 14 years old.

In the preface, Gurney Norman comments that "the phenomenon of a young boy displaying such power of language and metaphor, character construction and plot development, not to mention a very sharp analysis of the social world, and, above all, a profound knowledge of nature and a man's work in nature, is surely unprecedented in American literature." Certainly this book qualifies as one of the most unusual entries in an American tradition that goes back at least to Herman Melville. The fish in question here, incidentally, is named Scrapiron Jack.

*Fighting Back in Appalachia*, edited by Stephen L. Fisher (Temple University Press). This book, the editor tells us, is the product of frustration—his own frustration "over the portrayal of Appalachians as passive victims, the dearth of material documenting the extent and nature of dissent in the Appalachian mountains, and the lack of Appalachian voices and examples in national discussions of community organizing strategies."

In the 1980s, says Fisher, scholarly research began presenting a new view of Appalachia, explaining "damaging and misleading" stereotypes and tracing the origin of

widespread economic problems not to a lack of economic development but to "the type of modernization that has occurred there." This new diagnosis suggests the need for new remedies. One thing that has certainly been neglected, Fisher says, is the study of dissent and resistance in the region. *Fighting Back in Appalachia* addresses itself to this gap, and it also gives some prescriptions of its own, while pointing out that there are no easy answers. Contributors include a variety of scholars and activists, many of the latter offering accounts of the work of their own organizations.

*Miners and Medicine: West Virginia Memories*, by Claude A. Frazier, with F. K. Brown (University of Oklahoma Press). We may as well admit right off that many of the books of personal reminiscence we see don't inspire us. We find them poorly written, ineptly edited, and concerned with telling us what we already know or what we have little interest in knowing. They're nice for the authors, and of course they're required reading for spouses and children, and that's about as far as it goes.

At first glance, *Miners and Medicine*—particularly with its unfortunate subtitle—might appear to be one of those forgettable personal chronicles. But as soon as we looked into it, we began to realize that it's something quite different indeed—a careful and detailed study of a neglected strand of American history and of a neglected figure, the coal-camp doctor. Himself the son of a West Virginia coal-camp doctor, Dr. Frazier draws not merely on family memories but on contributions from scores of miners and their relatives, who sent him letters, clippings and photographs describing the work and the importance of coal-camp doctors in their lives.

Although this is a study, it offers plenty of anecdotes, all of which have points to make—even the one about the desperate midnight search for the man with the prolapsed hemorrhoid.

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