

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Helen M. Lewis – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 22 No. 3 Summer 1993

Looking Forward

October 6-10: 14th annual Tennessee Fall Homecoming, sponsored by and held at John Rice Irwin's Museum of Appalachia, which has been validly described as "the most authentic and complete replica of pioneer Appalachian life in the world." The event will feature more than 175 varied activities, with artists and stars in all fields. The museum's address is P.O. Box 0318, Norris, Tenn. 37828.

October 8-10: Annual fall fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen; Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. Phone 606/986-3192.

October 13-15: 18th annual Kentucky Governor's Conference on the Environment; Drawbridge Inn, Fort Mitchell, Ky. For full information, contact Cindy Schafer, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet, 4th Floor, Capitol Plaza Tower, Frankfort, Ky. 40601; phone, 502/564-5525.

October 16-20: Fall Colors Mission Encounter, Red Bird Mission, Beverly, Ky. Call 606/598-5915.

October 23: Ferrum College Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, Ferrum, Va. For details, call 703/365-4415.

October 24-26 and 26-28: Leadership and Management Program, Appalachian Regional Commission; Roanoke, Va. Designed for governmental, educational, industrial and other directors, executives, managers et al., who "will return home energized." For information, phone 202/673-7874. It's late, but maybe they'll squeeze you in.

October 29-31: Celebration of Traditional Music, Berea College. (See separate story.)

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.

November 1-4: Introduction to Appalachian Ministry—Central Appalachia; Bluestone Conference Center, Hinton, W. Va. Sponsored by the Coalition for Appalachian Ministry, P.O. Box 10208, Knoxville, Tenn. 37939.

November 12-13: Appalachian Symposium honoring Loyal Jones. Contact Tom Kirk, Hutchins Library, Berea College, Berea, Ky. 40404.

November 12-13: 1993 Prichard Committee Education Conference, Holiday Inn Hurstbourne, Louisville, Ky.; theme: "Making a Difference: Achieving Results in the Classroom." Information from Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, 800/928-2111.

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New Hand at Center Helm

After serving 23 years as the founding director of the Berea College Appalachian Center, Loyal Jones retired at the end of the 1993 summer term (see page 2). The new director is the widely known Appalachian sociologist Helen M. Lewis, who has accepted a two-year appointment as interim director. A permanent director will be named by the successor to Berea President John B. Stephenson, who is retiring in 1994.

Lewis comes to Berea from the Highlander Research and Education Center. She previously taught at Clinch



Tee A. Corinne

NEW DIRECTOR: Sociologist Helen Lewis succeeds Loyal Jones as director of the Appalachian Center.

Valley College, Appalachian State and East Tennessee State. A graduate of Georgia State College for Women, she holds an M.A. from the University of Virginia and a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky and has written many articles on Appalachian issues.

Regular readers of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER will recall that Lewis was coauthor of the book *Remembering Our Past, Building Our Future*, which won the 1990 Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia. She has received numerous other honors as well, including the Mars Hill College Appalachian Leadership Award and the Distinguished Alumna Award of the sociology department of the University of Kentucky.

Loyal Jones and the Appalachian Center

The end of the 1993 summer term at Berea College marked the retirement of Loyal Jones, director of the Appalachian Center since its founding in 1970. During this period, Loyal—as administrator, teacher, performer and (for want of a better word) facilitator of regional communication and scholarship—exerted a strong and widely observed influence on Appalachian thought and action, receiving such honors as Morehead State University's designation as an "Appalachian Treasure." A special two-day symposium in November (12-13) will celebrate Loyal's achievements and his service to the Appalachian South. Highlights from this celebration will appear in the Fall 1993 issue of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER.

Meanwhile, since this is the first NEWSLETTER issue to appear since Loyal's retirement, we're taking the opportunity to present some brief thoughts about his tenure at the Appalachian Center and about the center itself. These comments come from John B. Stephenson, president of Berea College, and Helen M. Lewis, the new director of the center (see separate story). As for us, we can simply say that editing the NEWSLETTER in company with Loyal has allowed us through these years to work with a great friend and an incomparable colleague.—T.P.

"Giving Himself Away"

In Appalachian Studies circles, Loyal Jones is very well known for some crucial "firsts," such as becoming the first director of the first Appalachian Center anywhere, 23 years ago. Quite beyond the campus of Berea College, and for much longer than the past 23 years, Loyal has been identified as the person who most clearly and completely symbolizes commitment to the Southern mountains. He has kept Appalachia on our agenda when it would have been easy to drift away, and when I say "our agenda" I mean more than just Berea—I mean all of us academic and activist types who at one time or another have declared our personal commitment to the region.

How has Loyal Jones been able to have this incredible effect on so many people? He's quiet, modest, generous with his time and ideas, one of the most giving individuals

I've ever known. He's a model scholar, writer, teacher, mentor, editor, critic, family man, churchman, friend, and the best dang tale-teller this side of the Pecos.

Where are we going to grow the Loyal Joneses of the future? Are you out there? I am compelled (by my own needs) to believe that the answer is yes, but I don't have to worry about it yet. Loyal is still Loyal and he's still right here and still giving himself away. What we're marking now is not a farewell, but the celebration of a change, a transition in an important life.—JOHN B. STEPHENSON

"Slew-footed or Pigeon-toed?"

It is an honor and a joy to follow in Loyal Jones's footsteps at the Appalachian Center. But I am having some trouble trying to figure out whether to walk slew-footed or pigeon-toed—he moved in so many directions. He has left a tradition of excellence in teaching, of deep understanding of Appalachian culture and of a sense of humor that has allowed us to see and laugh at some of the characters and contradictions in that culture. The Appalachian Center has encouraged and added to scholarly research on the region and has provided music and laughter to go with it. Obviously no one can be another Loyal Jones, and I wouldn't even try. But I come to the center with great respect for the work he has done.

Many changes are occurring in Appalachia and in Berea College. It is my hope that in my two-year stay at the center I can help facilitate some dialogue and planning with people at the college and throughout the region about the role of Appalachian Studies and the role of the Appalachian Center itself in the life of Berea and of the region. There are strong programs associated with the center; I am excited about working together with the Brushy Fork Institute, Students for Appalachia and the New Opportunity School for Women. Those of us involved in these programs represent a part of Berea's fulfillment of a commitment to the Appalachian communities to which we all belong. We will join together to learn more about being a good neighbor and about working with the communities and the families from which our students come.—HELEN M. LEWIS

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December 5-7: 51st annual Professional Agricultural Workers Conference, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Ala. 36088. The theme this year: "Reorganization of USDA: The Impact on the Rural Disadvantaged and the Land-Grant System." More information from Ntam Baharanyi (205/727-8454) or Robert Zabawa (205/727-8114).

December 9-21: 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?" Contact Tema Okun at Grassroots Leadership; phone, 919/688-7781.

January 30-February 19: Winter session, Berea College New Opportunity School for Women. The time to send in your application is *now*. Write to Jane Stephenson,

C.P.O. Box 2276, Berea College, Berea, Ky. 40404; phone, 606/986-9341, ext. 6676.

"Old Styles": Still on Track

Back in 1974, when it made its first appearance, the Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music was devoted to one clear aim. "We feel," said Appalachian Center Director Loyal Jones, "that the old styles traditional to the mountains are not heard so much any more, and we want to encourage them."

This encouragement has continued ever since, and the good news for tradition lovers is that, despite his retirement

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New and Helpful Appalachians



Early in this century a misguided sportsman stocked his North Carolina hunting preserve with wild pigs from Europe. Now, many years later, the descendants of these voracious rooters pose a serious threat to the survival of the mountaintop meadows of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, because their ceaseless digging created seedbeds that invite briars and saplings to take root. As one countermeasure, the U.S. Forest Service (working with the improbably named De

La Garza Institute of Goat Research) early last year brought in Alpine and Angora goats to eat their fill on 40 overgrown acres. (The full story, told by Rudy Abramson, appears in the Fall 1992 Issue of *Appalachian Heritage* magazine.) A key point: Not wishing to create a fresh ecological disaster through the introduction to the area of still another alien species that would produce offspring, government workers are employing only male goats.

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as Appalachian Center director, Jones will once again be in charge when the 20th annual celebration opens at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, October 29, with a concert by festival musicians.

As usual, a stellar group of performers will be on hand for this year's run, including Jean Ritchie, the Yodeling Ramblers, the Northern Kentucky Brotherhood, Oscar "Red" Wilson and Bruce Green, Dewey Shepherd, Philip Kazee, Carol Elizabeth Jones and the Midnight Mockingbirds, Phoebe Parsons, and Walter Miller. Saturday evening will see another gala session with all the headliners. Both evening concerts will be followed by folk dancing.

The daylight hours of Saturday will be devoted to instrumental workshops, informal concerts and a symposium, "The Fretted Dulcimer in West Virginia," conducted by Gerald Milnes, folk arts coordinator of the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College, with the help of Walter Miller.

EYE on Publications

Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers, by Bill C. Malone (University of Georgia Press). The author's previous books, *Country Music, USA*, and *Southern Music! American Music*, established him in the front rank of students of his subject—and, more than that, they played an important part in establishing the subject as one deserving

serious study. In this new book, subtitled "Southern Culture and the Roots of Country Music," Malone (who teaches history at Tulane) traces the evolution of commercial country music, demonstrating that the "discovery" and exploitation of "hillbilly" music paralleled other important developments in the evolution of Southern folk culture.

The phenomenon Malone deals with is highly complex. Contrary to the romantic dreams of the purists, he shows us, rural Southern music was a stew of German, French, Caribbean, African-derived and other contributions, as well as the cherished Celtic and Anglo-Saxon elements. Nor did the early country-music entertainers, as is often said, resist Northern producers and publicists who created a mythical Southern homeland for them. Instead, poor or working-class people themselves, they readily identified with the general urge to escape into an unsullied past exemplified by cowboys and mountaineers. Cowboys? Yes, indeed. Cowboys, said one scholar quoted by Malone, represented an ideal, whereas mountain clothing was merely comic. Who, after all, wanted to grow up to be a hillbilly?

In any case, one of the unhappiest groups of all consisted of academics and concert folk-song singers, who saw the radio performers as a money-grubbing lot having nothing to do with the true mountain music world represented by the Child ballads.

Full of information and insight but written in a refresh-
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ingly unacademic style—nothing eidetic or oneiric here—*Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers* is a book that will likely appeal to you even if you're not sure who came first, the Kingston Trio or Buell Kazee, or never wondered why folks up there on stage in Nashville, Tennessee, dress like tasteless Western range riders who've just struck it rich.

The Last of the 'Waltz across Texas' and Other Stories, by Jo Carson (Gnomon Press, P.O. Box 475, Frankfort, Ky. 40602). If you ever encountered any of Jo Carson's "People Pieces" on National Public Radio, you'll readily recognize the dry, seriocomic voice that speaks in these stories; in fact, you may pretty soon begin to think that the printed words are literally talking to you in that distinctive tone.

Although the author has written several children's books and a number of plays, this is her first work of adult fiction, and it isn't like any other book that comes to mind. True, the stories deal with all the staples made familiar by generations of Appalachian writers—courting, marriage and drinking, rage, divorce and death—but they present these themes in a special understated fashion. They are serious matters, of course, but yet . . . well, damned if there's not something droll about them, too. Sometimes this comes in an epigrammatic summation of a situation or an action, as when a character, after settling scores with her common-law husband by shooting him, observes that "Harry is not the kind of man who comes up with regret by himself." In the same story ("Maybe") the husband's new wife pays a special tribute to the avenging cast-off common-law spouse: "I think it was awful nice of her not to shoot me too." And what, in this context, is marriage? "Marrying is not having to sit with your back to the wall anymore."

Marriage is also not a state to be entered upon lightly, as we see in another story ("Big Yellow Onions"). When a gossipy lady asks a young woman when she and her

boyfriend are going to get married, the answer comes with its own kind of precision: "'He said he'd ask me when I let him take my bra off,' said Raynell, 'but I've not let him do that yet, so we've not set no date.'"

It's Jo Carson live, in print.

His First, Best Country, by Jim Wayne Miller (Gnomon Press, P.O. Box 475, Frankfort, Ky. 40602). If all of us can manage to hang around for a while, we're going to get to know Robert Jennings Wells better than we know our closest relatives. The central character in a short story that appeared several years ago, Jennings (as he is usually known) was the protagonist of the author's juvenile novel *Newfound*, of a 1992 play and now of this novel—and, given the unflagging energy of his creator, we can be pretty sure of meeting him again in future chronicles.

A middle-aged professor and author when we encounter him in this portion of his life, Jennings has decided to return to his native North Carolina, ostensibly to do some writing in the quiet of the old surroundings, more deeply to test the possibility of staying there for good. Hence he faces the question posed many times, in many ways, in many books, since the appearance more than half a century ago of Thomas Wolfe's posthumous novel *You Can't Go Home Again*. Did Wolfe speak the truth?

Without giving you a condensed version of the story (one of the greatest public nuisances a reviewer or a critic can commit), one can say that Jennings does indeed find his reintroduction to this Appalachian community a far more complex affair than he had anticipated. And, you will not be surprised to hear, he learns a great deal about himself.

This isn't just a book about Appalachia, of course. As one reviewer commented, "It is written with charm and wit and a poet's feel for language, and its central message—about commitment to place and caring enough about where you live to stand up for it—reaches far beyond the Appalachian Mountains."

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