

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

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Looking Forward

May 17: Third annual Kinship Dinner, Cincinnati. An important occasion on which a community leader will receive the Urban Appalachian Council Kinship Award, emblematic of a life marked by such values as "loyalty, generosity, social equality, responsibility and modesty." Previous winners were Stuart Faber and Ernie Mynatt. The phone number of the sponsoring council is 513/251-0202.

May 20-22: Annual Spring Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. To find out more, call Ann Reiss, 606/986-3192.

May 21: Spring picnic, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, Carr Fork Lake, Knott County, Ky. Call 606/633-5998.

May 26-28: Ralph Stanley's 25th annual Bluegrass Memorial Festival, featuring among its attractions not only Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys but Bill Monroe and Doc Watson (on the 27th) and Doc Watson again on the 28th; Hills of Home Park, Old Home Place on Smith Ridge between Coeburn and McClure, Va.

May 27-28: 1890s Day Jamboree, with crafts, clogging, fiddlers; Ringgold, Ga., sponsored by the Catoosa County Area Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 52, Ringgold, Ga. 30736.

May 29-June 18: New Opportunity School for Women, Berea College. A three-week chance for career exploration for 14 participants—and it's free! Phone Jane Stephenson at 606/986-9341, ext. 6676.

May 31-June 2: Old-Time Music and Radio Conference, Mt. Airy, N.C. Contact John Lilly, P.O. Box 3014, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; phone 304/636-1903.

June 2-5: "Seedtime on the Cumberland," a festival of traditional mountain arts, Whitesburg, Ky.; phone 606/633-0108.

June 4-5: Sixth annual Big Stone Gap Country Fair, Big Stone Gap, Va. 24219. As an added attraction, this event takes place during the local Summer Break Festival. Information from the Country Fair Committee at P.O. Box 1231.

June 5-11: Classes in South American basketry, blacksmithing, Bolivian pick-up weaving, autoharp and other pursuits, John C. Campbell Folk School, Route 1, Box 14A, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Throughout the summer you'll find instruction in quilting wall hangings, making brooms, playing the mountain dulcimer and anything else you can think of. For a calendar of classes, contact the school.

June 12-18: 17th annual Appalachian Family Folk Week, Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek,

Hindman, Ky. 41822. Jean Ritchie, Loyal Jones, Betty Smith and other luminaries will make up the staff of this week-long immersion in music, dance and other aspects of mountain culture. For more information by phone, call 606/785-5475.

June 13-July 1: "Tradition and Change in Appalachia"—a course in Appalachian studies; Berea College. (*See separate story.*)

June 19-25: 18th annual Appalachian Celebration, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky.; the June 25 crafts show will feature more than 100 exhibitors. For more information, phone 606/783-2077.

June 20-July 1: Kentucky Institute for Arts in Education, sponsored by the Kentucky Center for the Arts in collaboration with Eastern Kentucky University. A professional-development seminar involving teachers, administrators and even parents in creative writing, dance, drama, music and visual arts. Write to Richard Deane, Eastern Kentucky University, Campbell 309, Richmond, Ky. 40475; phone 606/622-2163.

June 30: Deadline for submitting abstract of your paper if you wish to take part in the University of Kentucky graduate-student conference called "Textual Regions and Regional Texts"; the conference itself will take place November 18-19 and will be concerned with such Hamlet-like questions as What is Region? What is Text? Contact Sydney Darby or Caren Mulford, University of Kentucky English Department, 1215 Patterson Office Tower, Lexington, Ky. 40506-0027.

July-August: Augusta Heritage Workshops and, in mid-August, the Augusta Festival, Elkins, W.Va. The workshops are week-long classes, in everything from fiddling to log-house construction, conducted by master artists. The festival, which has been going since 1973, has everything you'd expect—music, crafts, dancing, the whole Appalachian works. For detailed information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, Box GB, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; phone 304/636-1903.

July 31-August 6: 17th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, Ky. 41822. The veterans on hand will include James Still, Jim Wayne Miller, George Ella Lyon and other stars too numerous to mention. The school's phone number is 606/785-5475.

September 8-10: 11th annual Old-Fashioned Trading Days, Williamsburg, Ky. Vegetable judging, fingerprinting and, of course, arts and crafts are among the attractions in this celebration of Appalachian culture. To find out more, phone 606/549-2285.

Tradition and Change

For more than 20 years now, the Berea College Appalachian Center has presented summer courses in Appalachian history and literature with the primary aim of helping high school teachers create courses in Appalachian studies. These summer courses have thus through the years played a part in the growth of Appalachian cultural self-awareness, as the teachers have taken what they've learned back to their home schools and passed it on.

Now, almost a generation after that first 1973 course, the 1994 summer course (June 13-July 1) will focus on tradition and change together—on Denise Giardina as well as on Emma Bell Miles, in literature, and on the dramatic changes that have come to the region in the intervening years, such as the growth of global economic involvement and the big change in the coal industry.

Novelist and biographer Wilma Dykeman, who taught in the first course and has been a regular in the years since, will lead the course in Appalachian literature. Loyal Jones, recently retired director of the Appalachian Center and founder of the summer courses, will lead discussions of Appalachian religion and music. Ron Eller, director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky, will be in charge of the classes in history. Other authorities who will appear include Alan DeYoung, lecturer on education and culture; Gurney Norman, writer in residence at the University of Kentucky; George Ella Lyon, poet and author of children's books; Jim Wayne Miller, tireless poet, essayist and critic; and Helen M. Lewis, sociologist and interim director of the Berea Appalachian Center.

If you're an educator or a student (graduate or undergraduate), you will receive a partial scholarship, which means that your total cost, including room and board and tuition, will be \$550. If you want more information, write to the Appalachian Center, Berea College, C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404.

Sustainable Democracy?

Nowadays all right-thinking persons concerned about economic questions endorse the concept of *sustainable development* for communities and for the country as a whole. But just what is this idea? Is it more than merely a trendy buzzword, something that will enjoy its transitory moment of popularity, like "quality time" or "self-esteem" (which seems to be fading fast), and then move along to make room for a newer notion?

The more than 200 persons who attended Berea's April 12-13 symposium on sustainable development would certainly hope that "sustainable development" doesn't become battered into a cliché before it has the chance to make a real impact on economic and social thought from grassroots to top levels. As explained in advance by director Helen M. Lewis, the aim of the symposium was "to involve classes, community groups and policy makers in dialogue about how to plan a sustainable future for rural communities."

That aim, of course, involved some definition. The symposium's keynote speaker, David Brooks of the International Development Centre in Ottawa, Canada, summed

up sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The corollary of this, he said, is that sustainable *growth* is a nonidea, a contradiction in terms. Sustainable development thus becomes "an alternative economics, not an alternative to economics." A key aspect is the integration of conservation and development.

Deeper Dimensions

It was clear that the idea had deeper dimensions as well. Brooks spoke of equity and social justice, and in offering a response at the end of the symposium, John Gaventa of the University of Tennessee declared he had heard "more passion and more effort" devoted to the idea of sustainable *democracy*. The most important consideration, he concluded, was "having people's participation and people's organization and people's knowledge at the heart of whatever kind of development we have." Thus sustainability requires the building of grassroots organizations.

With reference to the declaration by Fran Moravitz, executive director of the Appalachian Regional Commission, that the commission is looking toward more community-based development, Gaventa, while applauding the comment, advocated the involvement of people "in the process of spending the ARC money." At bottom, he said, the most "unsustainable force" to be faced is the continuing inequality of wealth and power in Appalachian communities.

A Berea student panel recommended that colleges and universities serve the cause of sustainable development by working with communities and also by including materials on the subject in the curriculum. From now on, they said, development cannot properly be discussed apart from the idea of sustainability.

EYE on Publications

The Airwaves of Zion: Radio and Religion in Appalachia, by Howard Dorgan (University of Tennessee Press). On a more-or-less fateful Sunday morning in 1971, soon after coming to Boone, N.C., to teach at Appalachian State, Howard Dorgan decided to check on the area's local electronic culture by scanning the AM radio band. Pretty soon he had picked up the "Morning Star Gospel Program," featuring the Reverend Roscoe Greene, with hymns sung by the Morning Star Trio.

Just 20 years later, the "Morning Star" program signed off for the last time, and when this curtain came down, Dorgan was right there in the studio, concluding the fieldwork that has now resulted in *The Airwaves of Zion*. In the meantime, the author, who teaches communications, had produced two well-known studies of Appalachian religion and its practitioners: *Giving Glory to God in Appalachia* and *The Old Regular Baptists of Central Appalachia*.

Through those two decades, however, he had continued to listen to the locally produced live religious programs to which he gives the generic name "airwaves of Zion"—programs featuring preaching, singing, testifying, praising and glorifying, "all colored with a heavily provin-

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FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE HILLS: On an April visit to Berea College from his home in exile at Dharmasala in the mountains of northwestern India, the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of Tibetan Buddhists, met with President John B. Stephenson and Tibetan students on campus. Though the 130,000 Tibetan exiles hope to return to their homeland, the Dalai Lama dismissed violence as a way to end the Chinese occupation.

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cial, fundamentalist, usually millenarian, ‘Come to Jesus’ evangelism.” These programs came not from mainline churches but from individuals and groups belonging to denominations and sects like the Assemblies of God and the Freewill Baptists and wholly autonomous churches identifying themselves by such titles as “Full Gospel.”

You may call his book “descriptive ethnography” or anything else you like, Dorgan assures us. With his non-theoretical approach, he says, he has simply tried to capture, as vividly as he could, the mountain religious experiences he witnessed. What he has ended up with is an overview, through four case studies, of that very familiar phenomenon, radio evangelism in Appalachia. As these programs increasingly fade from the airwaves, one can be glad that Dorgan caught them in time to preserve their essence.

Finding Her Voice: The Saga of Women in Country Music, by Mary A. Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann (Crown). From Sara and Maybelle Carter to Wynonna Judd and Mary-Chapin Carpenter, this large, heavily illustrated book does just what the subtitle says it does. Inasmuch as a saga, properly speaking, is a thoroughly detailed account containing elements of heroism, the term fits very well a history that involves struggles against poverty, ignorance, sexual barriers, drug and alcohol problems and financial exploitation.

Actually, the first heroine of *Finding Her Voice* is Emma Bell Miles, whose 1905 book *The Spirit of the Mountains*, known by every student of Appalachian literature, contains, as Bufwack and Oermann point out, “the first appreciation of mountain music written by a literary figure.” Emma Miles comes through as a tragic as well as

prescient figure, as the demands of mountain life bring her to tuberculosis and then death at the age of only 39.

From then on, through the birth of recording, through Depression and war, the book moves from the Carters to Kitty Wells to the Nashville sound—with Patsy Cline as its focal figure—to Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette and, really, everybody else you’ve ever heard of. Jean Ritchie, of course, appears early and often. Complete? Well, on turning from page 211 to 212, one reader, at least, was shocked to see staring back at him the blindingly mascaraed face of Tammy Faye Bakker. She is described as “the aptheosis of the charismatic music star.” And, of course, it’s nice to see the thoroughly expected Judds—sometime residents of Crescent Drive in Berea.

Finding Her Voice aspires to be more than simply a chronicle, as befits a collaborative effort in which one of the partners is a cultural anthropologist specializing in women’s studies. But, nevertheless, it’s an easy read—the stories come first.

Serpent-Handling Believers, by Thomas Burton (University of Tennessee Press). The author, an English teacher and documentary-film producer at East Tennessee State, first visited a serpent-handling church in 1971, in connection with a class he was teaching in the techniques of collecting regional traditions. His reaction is candidly stated: “I had never seen anything like it before.” Then, as time progressed, he worked first on a movie and then on the present book, trying simply to understand both the practice of handling “serpents” and the people who engage in the practice.

It is hard, the author concludes, for an outsider to

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experience this "unusual religious and cultural expression" without seeing the participants as a group of freaks. But they are rational human beings, he assures us, for whom the handling of poisonous snakes and the drinking of strychnine and other deadly substances evoke a "power" that works for them. Snake-handling, he says, should be approached "respectfully and sensitively." Perhaps he should have said "carefully" as well. In any case, Burton displays a genuine desire to understand without judging, but he is unlikely to make many converts.

West Virginia: A History, by Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown (University Press of Kentucky). The second edition of a solid 1985 history of the wild-and-wonderful state, this version brings the story into the 1990s. Has anything striking, we asked ourselves, happened to West Virginia in the years since the book first appeared? Well, we found, the answer is, actually, no. We had wondered, for instance, whether W. W. Barron, the imaginatively free-booting governor of the early '60s, had perhaps returned to action and produced some new sensations. Alas, there were more scandals, but the central figure this time was Arch Moore, a three-time governor and no piker himself in the scandal department, who operated an "underground campaign" for political purposes (buying votes, for example) and looked after his personal purposes as well (to the tune, in one transaction, of more than half a million dollars from a coal company which, in return, received a refund of \$2.3 million in black-lung payments).

In 1988, before his misconduct became public knowledge, Moore lost his bid for a fourth term, being defeated by a deceptively bland insurance millionaire named Gaston

Caperton, who within a few weeks of taking office declared that despite his no-new-taxes promises, the state simply had to have more revenue. Wisely, he at least had not asked the people to read his lips. But these fiscal goings-on paled in the public mind when compared with events in the governor's once-but-no-longer-private life. Soon after moving into the executive mansion, Caperton split with his wife, Dee, a one-time beauty queen, who later accused him of cheating her out of \$12 million in the stock of the family business; the governor ended up paying \$10 million. Undaunted, he proceeded to marry the conductor of the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra.

Thus politics as a painful form of entertainment has continued to flourish in West Virginia. Of course, as up-to-date historians, the authors, both of them affiliated with West Virginia Tech, by no means confine themselves to political matters. Education, agriculture and other aspects of life receive attention. Literature gets a chapter, but one looks in vain in the index for one of West Virginia's greatest contributions to the world of the arts, the celebrated diva Phyllis Curtin. Perhaps in subsequent editions an overall cultural subchapter might be added to the discussion of literature.

In dismissing 19th-century West Virginians who set out to write history as mere amateurs in a time when historical writing was "still considered a branch of literature," the authors have perhaps spoken too sweepingly. Most of those 19th-century efforts were, indeed, probably little more than exercises in antiquarianism. But to reach the glum general conclusion that sound history cannot—should not—aspire to the condition of literature is surely to surrender too readily to the claims of contemporary scientism.

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