

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER



Helen M. Lewis – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Spring/Summer 1994

Looking Forward

October 5-9: 15th annual Tennessee Fall Homecoming, sponsored by and held at John Rice Irwin's Museum of Appalachia, which has been truly described as "the most authentic and complete replica of pioneer Appalachian life in the world." The event will feature the usual enormous array of art, craft and entertainment. The museum's address is P.O. Box 0318, Norris, Tenn. 37828.

October 7-8: Appalachian Development Projects Coalition (ADPC) Assembly: "Act: Appalachians Changing Tomorrow." ADPC, an arm of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia, is the sponsor of this gathering, which will be held at the Cedar Lakes Conference Center in Ripley, W.Va., from noon to noon. After taking a look at the diversity of Appalachian experience, those at the conference will take part in workshops. Information from CORA, P.O. Box 52910, Knoxville, Tenn. 37950-2910.

October 7-9: Annual fall fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen; Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. Phone 606/986-3192.

October 7-9: 56th National Folk Festival, being held this year in Chattanooga, at the Tivoli Theater and along the Tennessee Riverwalk—sponsored by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. If you go, you can expect to hear Afro-Cuban *bembé* drummer Florencio Baro, zydeco accordionist Boozoo Chavis, *jarocho* performers Los Pregoneros del Puerto and a variety of other musicians you don't run across every day. You can also see the Hunter Museum of Arts' "Dixie Frets," which is not a show about things that irritate Southerners but presents the work of more than 30 makers of acoustic fretted instruments. To find out more, call 615/756-2787; there's also an 800 number: 800/322-3344.

October 9-15: Classes in functional and nonfunctional basketry, calligraphy, clay decoration, vest quilting and other interesting pursuits; John C. Campbell Folk School, Route 1, Box 14A, Brasstown, N.C. 28902. Throughout the fall you'll find instruction in traditional dyeing, woodcarving, fundamentals of blacksmithing and just about anything else you can think of. For a calendar of classes, get in touch with the school. If you want to telephone, try punching out 800/FOLK SCH. It should work.

October 22-23 and 29-30: 26th annual Fall Color Cruise and Folk Festival, Shellmound Recreation Area, Jasper, Tenn. More information from 615/238-4626 or 615/867-3092.

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Celebration: Even More Special

Most people seem to look on the Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music as a special annual event, but this year's 21st installment may even be more special than the usual show.

For one thing, even though it's listed for October 28-30, the Celebration will actually run over parts of four days, because on Thursday afternoon, October 27, singer James "Sparky" Rucker will perform for a Berea College convocation open to the public. Besides producing music, Rucker, a former teacher, has achieved recognition as a historian and folklore specialist and is a leading commentator on African-American folk culture, all of it garnished with a lively sense of humor. As popular with youngsters as with parents, he's still at home in classrooms as well as concert halls and coffee houses.

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IN CELEBRATION: Mary Jane Queen



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October 27: Singer and folklorist Sparky Rucker performs at Berea College (3:00 p.m.).

October 28-30: Celebration of Traditional Music, Berea College. (See separate story.)

November 3-4: Jeff Daniel Marion Literary Festival, Emory & Henry College, Emory, Va. 24327-0947; four papers will be presented. For more information, write to John Lang at the college or phone him at 703/944-4121.

November 3-5: Ninth annual University of Kentucky Conference on Appalachia. Participants in this year's gathering will discuss Women in Appalachia. For more information write to the Appalachian Center, 641 South Limestone St., Lexington, Ky. 40506 or phone 606/257-4852.

January 29-February 18: New Opportunity School for Women, Berea College. This free three-week chance to explore educational and career possibilities (for women 30-55) is taking applications for the winter session. Contact the New Opportunity School for Women, College P.O. Box 2276, Berea, Ky. 40404.

March 17-19: Appalachian Studies Conference, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W.Va. Although the conference may be a long way off, temporally speaking, the deadline for student papers is not so far away—it's January 15. The competition involves two levels, a) middle and high school and b) undergraduate and graduate. This conference will be devoted to the theme "City, Town and Countryside: Appalachian Community in Change." Your paper, or questions concerning it, should go to Ken Sullivan, Division of Culture and History, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, W.Va. 25305-0300.

April 7-8: Even further off than the Appalachian Studies Conference is the much-to-be-welcomed 1995 return of the New River Symposium, which, as is traditional with this unique enterprise, will feature papers on any kind of subject having to do with the river-cultural history, folklore, archaeology, geography, geology, you name it. The deadline for proposals isn't far off at all—December 1. Proposals should go to the Chief of Interpretation, National Park Service, New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, W.Va. 25846. The 1995 symposium will be held at the Glade Springs Resort in Daniels, W.Va.

Quiet Evolution—but Fast

As a reader of things Appalachian, you have no doubt come across Altina Waller's book about the Hatfields and the McCoys, *The Feud*. And John Hevener's study of labor strife in the coal mines, *Which Side Are You On?* (winner of a Weatherford Award). And Crandall Shifflett's *Coal Towns* (winner of another Weatherford Award). And Sidney Farr's popular cookbook, *More Than Moonshine*. And many more titles too numerous to mention. A discography. Tapes. Articles. Chapters in books. More books.

All these works are, in part, products of a scholarly Appalachian development that might not be a revolution but has certainly come close. You can at least call it a rapid and change-producing evolution, one that began in 1979 when the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation handed Berea College \$100,000 to support Appalachian scholarship through awarding small fellowships for research; in 1985

the foundation renewed the grant with a second \$100,000. The program is administered by the Appalachian Center together with Hutchins Library. Though you can't say that extending a helping hand is the same thing as providing complete support, you also can't overlook the fact that sometimes a few hundred dollars (awards have gone as high as \$1,500) can make the difference between an outstanding piece of work and one that's less so. And sometimes between one that's carried out in a reasonable time and one that lags and stalls. The basic idea has simply been to cover the kinds of out-of-pocket spending incurred in taking a research trip.

The projects of this year's recipients suggest the variety of scholarly work these Mellon grants have supported.

Phillis Alvic: *The Weavers of the Southern Highlands*;

Sandra Barney: *Women as Conductors of Modern Health-Care Standards*;

John Bolin: *William Morris and Appalachia: Cultural and Economic Models for Self-Reliance*;

William Hartsock: *Appalachian Women of Color for a Historical Musical Play*;

John Sherwood Lewis: *The Market Revolution in Southern Appalachia, 1840-1890*.

"I know of no other program," says Helen Lewis, acting director of the Appalachian Center, "that has funded this diversity of researchers—university professors, graduate students, fiction writers, filmmakers, craftspersons, writers, poets and musicians. The result has been support for exciting and creative books, papers, articles, videos, plays, novels and dissertations."

Not too bad a return for taking care of some out-of-pocket expenses. We'd like to tell you to get in touch with us if you have a promising project and need a little help. Instead, however, we can only suggest that you keep your fingers crossed in the hope that this fellowship program will succeed in attracting much-needed new funds. When that happens, we'll certainly let you know.

Eastern Kentucky: Decade in Reverse

For Eastern Kentucky—in many ways Appalachia's most hard-core region—the 1980s turned out to be a decade in reverse. A report, *Kentucky's Distressed Communities*, prepared under the direction of Ron Eller of the University of Kentucky's Appalachian Center tells the grim story.

For a time, matters had looked promising for the area. During the 1960s and 1970s per capita income rose to 67 percent of the national average and, by 1980, 80 percent of the state average. But then came the backward trend. By 1990, according to Eller's figures, Appalachian Kentucky's per capita income had fallen to 60 percent of the national number and 76 percent of the Kentucky average.

The county-by-county figures point up a provocative situation. In the middle of Eastern Kentucky, between the coal counties on the east and the counties bordering Interstate 75 (the main artery from Michigan to Florida), lies an almost totally rural distressed area with worse figures than

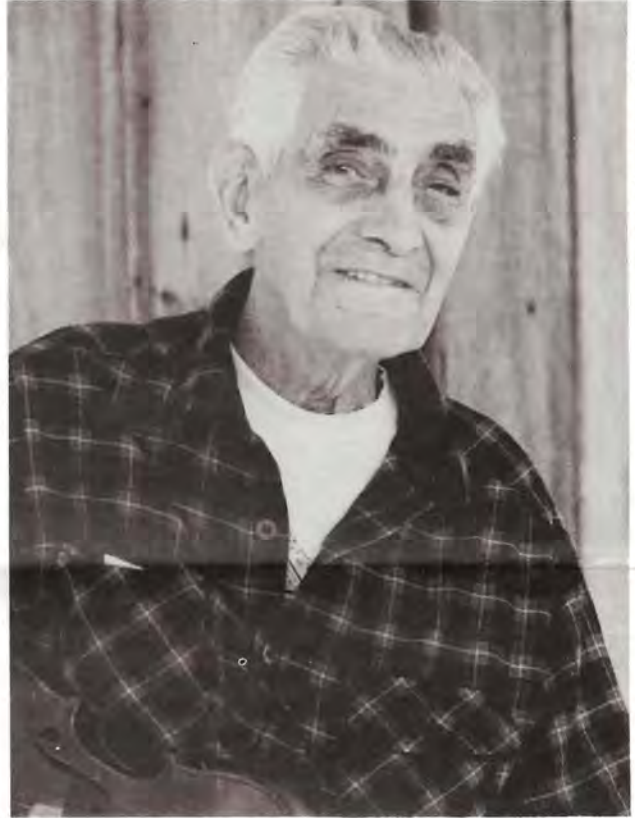
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Van Meade



Sparky Rucker

Augusta Heritage Center



Melvin Wine

October Celebrators...

Cari Norris

Chris Bischoff



CELEBRATION from page 1

For Thing No. 2, the Celebration usually ends on Sunday morning with a religious concert and hymn sing with audience and festival participants. This year, however, the festival weekend will close from 2:00 to 4:00 on Sunday afternoon with a concert by the living bluegrass legend, Ralph Stanley, and the Clinch Mountain Boys. Having made music since his boyhood in the 1930s, Stanley has produced more than 150 albums. (See page five of this issue for a review of *Traveling the High Way Home, a biography of Ralph Stanley.*)

Array of Stars

Aside from these outstanding opening and closing events, the Celebration will present its usual array of stellar performers when the curtain goes up at 7:30 on Friday evening, with a repeat on Saturday evening. Those on hand this year will include Mary Jane Queen, ballad singer and banjo picker (and winner of the 1993 Folk Heritage Award) from Jackson County, N.C.; the Cumberland Rangers, a Kentucky string band; Melvin Wine, a popular fiddler from West Virginia; the New Southern Ramblers, with Ralph Blizard, Phil Jamison, John Lilly and John Herrmann; Cari Norris, singer and banjo, guitar and dulcimer player from Nicholasville, Ky.; J. Odus Maggard and Lois Fuller (Kingsport, Tenn.), banjo and guitar; and Elaine Purkey, singer and songwriter from Chapmanville, W.Va. Sparky Rucker will also appear on both evening programs.

The daylight hours of Saturday will, as usual, be devoted to instrumental workshops, informal performances and a symposium, this year's session being presented by Sparky Rucker on Civil War music and its impact in different parts of the United States, as seen through the eyes of persons who lived in the war era. ■

EASTERN KENTUCKY from page 2

its neighbors on either side. These 10 counties, says the report, "share poverty rates of 38 percent, or three times the national average" and with a per capita income of \$6,472 per year they "contain some of the highest concentrations of America's persistently poor."

Recognize the Pattern

Despite their plight, these counties have received less support from the Appalachian Regional Commission than have better-off counties—perhaps because they have few towns that could be considered to fit the commission's definition of growth centers. Those working to improve the overall situation in Eastern Kentucky, says Eller, must recognize the emergence of this two-tier pattern.

Eller himself is in an enhanced position to make a difference here. He recently succeeded John B. Stephenson, the retired Berea College president, as chairman of the Kentucky Appalachian Task Force. Formed not quite a year ago, the task force is charged with assessing existing community programs in Kentucky's 49-county Appalachian region and producing specific recommendations for improving services in the area. The group is scheduled to complete a report by December, following a series of public hearings throughout the Appalachian counties.

Nationally, observes Eller, the push for Appalachian development "has lost a lot of enthusiasm and energy" during recent years. The task force hopes that its work will help "re-energize" communities in Eastern Kentucky.

(In the new book *An American Challenge*, sponsored by the Commission on Religion in Appalachia, Richard A. Couto produces an analysis similar to Eller's for all of Appalachia. In the Fall 1994 issue of the *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, we'll take a look at this important book.)

New Course for Summer Courses

After two decades of Berea summer courses in Appalachian history and literature, a change is coming. Part of the need for it may simply be the result of success. Since the courses began in 1973, 439 persons have come to the Berea campus to study their heritage and how to use it back home in units and courses. Other colleges have come along with similar activities. Hence fewer persons today seem to need this kind of jump-start into the creation of Appalachian studies programs. There are now lots of them around.

What participants do express a need for, however, is study and discussion of Appalachia's diversity and its multicultural heritage (not surprising, perhaps—these ideas are currently popular in a variety of other contexts as well). As Wilma Dykeman expressed it, next year's program could well focus on the theme of Unity Through Diversity, emphasizing the ways different groups have influenced each other in the development of Appalachian culture instead of looking at the separateness of each group. A logical outgrowth of this thought was the idea that the Black Cultural Center join in sponsoring the 1995 summer course.

The 1994 course took as its theme Tradition and Change.

A logical follow-up for 1995 is Multicultural Heritage of Appalachia—an institute with workshops for teachers emphasizing teaching methods and resources.

EYE on Publications

Pennsylvania Mining Families, by Barry P. Michrina (University Press of Kentucky). Although the Pennsylvania coal fields don't lie in the Appalachian South, coal companies tend to act like coal companies and coal miners tend to respond like coal miners, wherever they may find themselves. That, at least, is what this book strongly suggests.

Even so, miners have at different times and in different places differed strongly in the degree to which they have resisted manipulation and pressure by their employers. Though he comes from a Pennsylvania coal-mining background himself, the author of *Pennsylvania Mining Families*—which is subtitled "The Search for Dignity in the Coalfields"—seems to have been somewhat surprised to learn that, in the past, his people didn't really conform to the stereotype of the angry, rebellious miner. Focusing on the period during and after the great coal strike of 1927, Michrina concludes that instead of seeking group identity in common militant action against the companies, the miners, even in this desperate time, sought meaning in social relationships, with family members and friends.

Having roamed far from the Pennsylvania coal towns both geographically (to Colorado) and professionally (he teaches anthropology), the author approaches his subject as what he calls a "situated thinker, actor and interactor." He constantly moves out of his account to remind us, by citations of authorities and by what, for some reason, he calls "reflexions," that he is practicing anthropology; thus his methodological points, instead of appearing in a special chapter, pop up all through the book. How well you will like this continual elbow joggling will probably depend on the degree to which you like to regard yourself as a scientific thinker or reader.

Common Whites, by Bill Cecil-Fronsman (University Press of Kentucky). In this book the author, who teaches history at Washburn University in Topeka, describes the situation of the largest category of Southerners at the time
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In Memoriam: Ralph C. Rinzler

Ralph Rinzler, 59, a leading figure in the field of folk culture as the founder of the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife, died during July. An assistant secretary of the Smithsonian, he served as director of its folk-life programs. In 1987 Rinzler led the institution to acquire Folkways Records, a collection of some 2,200 recordings of folk and tribal music together with documentary readings.

No mere theoretician, Rinzler, a graduate of Swarthmore, was a performer of bluegrass music, playing the banjo and the mandolin and touring and recording with the Greenbriar Boys.

Bluegrass great Ralph Stanley, who's appearing in the October 28-30 Celebration of Traditional Music, is the subject of a new biography, "Traveling the High Way Home," which is reviewed below.



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of the Civil War—those who did not own slaves.

Subtitled (as we say more about below, subtitles carry a heavy burden in the scholarly world) "Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina," the book takes a thorough look at the "common whites" who, despite their numbers, make up the least-studied group in the Old South, and it tackles an interesting and important question: Why, since the slave system worked to their disadvantage, did these whites accept it? Instead of opposing it, they abetted it by serving on slave patrols and in militias guarding against disruptive slaves. They voted for state officials who produced laws protecting slaveholders in their need for control. They supported federal officials who, as the author puts it, "vigorously defended the rights of slaveholders to take their chattel into new territories." And finally, of course, they went to war to try to save the slaveholders. The answers are not simple, as the book makes plain.

This book, says Paul Escott of Wake Forest, "extends far beyond anything now in print."

Traveling the High Way Home, by John Wright (University of Illinois Press). Nowadays it's usually the subtitle that tells you what a book is about, and that's certainly the case here. This present book, which might have been the memoirs of a mountain climber or an astronaut, bears the identifying description "Ralph Stanley and the World of Traditional Bluegrass Music." It certainly delivers the goods as promised, presenting a full-length portrait of the performer whom the author calls a national treasure and who was described in the *New York Times* as "a teacher and living legend to the many sidemen who have gone through 'bluegrass boot camp' under his direction" (and who, we might add, is scheduled to appear in concert on October 30, during Berea's Celebration of Traditional Music). *Traveling the High Way Home* also tells us a great deal about many

of the persons with whom Stanley has made music through the years.

Even so, the book is not a biography as such books are generally thought of; instead, it consists chiefly of a series of oral-history interviews and monologues from persons who have known Ralph Stanley in various ways. Most of the contributors are musicians, as you might expect, and in talking about themselves as well as about the subject of the book they help build up an overall history of bluegrass music. Nonmusician contributors include persons like a festival vendor who describes, as the author says, "the almost religious experience that put Stanley's old-time music at the center of his life," and a Michigan housewife who organizes fan clubs and "reveals almost against her will the all-consuming emotional obsession that the music can become to those who love it."

Though the author's approach, with only a brief narrative biographical sketch, gives us a seemingly unvarnished, close-up picture, it does leave room for a gap or two—at least for a reader who's not steeped in the subject and its lore. In particular, one could wish for more details about Ralph's brother Carter, a pivotal figure who disappears from the story in the 1960s. Specifically, what were the circumstances of his death?

The author himself has an interesting background. Like many another student and fan of bluegrass and other such music, he does not come from the region that produces it, but unlike almost all other fans, he is a classical scholar. Specifically, he is a professor of Latin at Northwestern; indeed, not only does he teach classics, he even holds an endowed chair. Thus can the earthy sound of bluegrass reach to empyrean realms.

Appalachian Values, by Loyal Jones, with photography by Warren Brunner (Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 391, to page 6



BIG DONATION: Paul Wells (left), director of the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University, takes a look at materials from the Goldstein collection of American Song Broad-sides. With Wells is Kenneth S. Goldstein, who has donated this major collection of music history to MTSU.

EYE from page 5

Ashland, Ky. 41114). For some years now, rumors have circulated that Loyal Jones and Warren Brunner were talking about or planning or actually working on a picture-and-text book about Appalachia—Jones being the retired director of the Berea College Appalachian Center and Brunner being the Berea photographer who for the past 30 years has spent as much time as he could wandering in the hills with camera in hand, or at least nearby.

Well, it seems that unlike many rumors in Berea and other places, this one has turned out to be perfectly true, and the result is the present book, which, if it had to be characterized by just one adjective, might well be termed *pleasing*. It's quietly attractive, with text and layout working in harmony, and the pictures are not only well chosen but well produced. Of the thousands of photos reputedly stored in the Brunner vaults, these are surely some of the best.

Each picture has its matching bit of text, a kind of mini-essay, on the subject of values, about which Jones has written a great deal through the years. Countering the frequent negative images of the region—images held, to be sure, by many of the region's children—Jones talks about such values as freedom, independence, self-reliance, neighborliness and a host of others.

"Appalachian culture," says Jones, "is real and functioning." The book is, indeed, nice proof of that truth.

From 5-7 on Friday evening, October 28 (during the Celebration of Traditional Music), the authors will be at the Berea College bookstore to sign copies of Appalachian Values.

None Rang True Enough

Speaking of books, we presume that many of you have noticed that this year the Berea College Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library did not honor any writer with the Weatherford Award. (This happened once before, in 1974.) The judges report that they simply did not find any work published in 1993 that made what they regarded as a sufficiently effective statement about Appalachia—in the words of the original donor, Alfred H. Perrin, a work that "rings true and says it best in that year for Appalachia."

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