

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER

Helen M. Lewis – Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

January 29-February 18: Winter session, New Opportunity School for Women, Berea College. During a three-week period, the lucky participants (women age 30-55) will explore educational and career possibilities. Write to the school at College P.O. Box 2276, Berea, Ky. 40404.

February 16-19: Seventh Annual Conference, North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance, Red Lion Lloyd Center, Portland, Ore. An array of practical programs, exhibits and workshops, all designed to accentuate the theme "Building Community" and to help the practitioner get ahead. More information from Folk Alliance 1995 Conference, P.O. Box 5010, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.

March 8-11: National Service Learning Conference, Philadelphia, Pa. Participants will engage in a what is billed as a frank dialogue on "Service Learning: Integrating Schools and Community for Learning." For detailed information, contact Lorraine Parrillo at the Pennsylvania Institute for Service Learning, 215/951-0344.

March 17-19: 18th annual Appalachian Studies Conference, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W.Va. This year's theme: "City, Town and Countryside: Appalachian Community in Change." Humanists, social scientists and natural scientists will all deal with the theme in their various ways, and you may also encounter papers and discussions concerning other topics. You can get more information from Ken Sullivan, Division of Culture and History, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, W.Va. 25305.

March 28-29: 1995 Assembly, Coalition for Appalachian Ministry, Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, N.C. Theme: "Money and Ministry in the Mountains: Understanding, Hope and Help for Local Ministry." For details, get in touch with Judy Barker, Box 10208, Knoxville, Tenn. 37939; phone, 615/584-6133.

March 31-April 1: "The Forest Commons: A Demonstration Conference," Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Ky. This event is sponsored by Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest, which is seeking cosponsors. Conference information from Mary Davis, 502/868-9074.

April 7-8: New River Symposium, sponsored by the New River Gorge National River (a unit of the National Park System) and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History; Glade Springs Resort, Daniels, W.Va. If you're a regular reader of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWS-LETTER, you will know that we welcome the return of this remarkable symposium, which offers discussions of all kinds of subjects having to do with the unique river that

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A painter's strange vision...see page 3

Got Spectrophotometer Problems?

Say you're a chemistry or physics professor at a small college in Appalachian Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee or North Carolina and one day your spectrophotometer breaks down. Or it might be your gas chromatograph or part of your X ray diffraction equipment. How do you get it fixed?

Up until now, you've very often been out of luck. Governments and other funding sources have handed out grants enabling schools to buy sophisticated scientific equipment, but these sources haven't sweetened the package with money for repairs. "Even if you have service contracts," says one Appalachian scientist, "you may wait twelve months for a scheduled visit or a part." And such contracts usually cost about \$5,000 a year.

Next summer, however, this unsatisfactory picture will

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John B. Stephenson 1937-1994



John B. Stephenson, president of Berea College from 1984 until this past summer, died on December 6, following a series of illnesses.

Stephenson came to Berea from the University of Kentucky, where he had taught sociology and served as undergraduate dean, director of graduate sociology studies and founding director of the university's Appalachian Center. A native of Staunton, Va., Stephenson was a graduate of William and Mary; he received master's and doctor's degrees from the University of North Carolina.

Both at the University of Kentucky and at Berea, Stephenson played a leading part in the Appalachian-studies movement and exerted a strong influence on regional thought and developments. At Berea he introduced and supported such programs as the Brushy Fork Institute and others designed to give a practical cast to the college's renowned Appalachian commitment.

Aside from his achievements, Stephenson will be remembered for his charm and for the humor with which he could enliven serious situations. Overall, said Wilma Dykeman, "he knew the poetry and the poverty, the possibilities and the politics of Appalachia, and he helped each to be stronger and better."

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forms its subject—natural history, folklore, archaeology, geography and much else. For more information, contact park headquarters at 304/465-0508.

April 23-28: Spring Dulcimer Week, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W. Va. 26241.

June 11-30: "Multicultural Heritage of Appalachia," an institute for teachers with workshops on teaching about Appalachian diversity, Berea College. (This institute replaces the long-established summer course in Appalachian history and literature.) To find out more, as the program develops, get in touch with the Appalachian Center at College P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404 or phone 606/986-9341, ext. 5140.

GOT SPECTRO *from page 1*

be changing. In a new program funded by a \$334,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, the University of Kentucky College of Engineering will offer a repair service to 27 schools belonging to the Appalachian College Association. As matters stand now, a single repair bill can run as high as \$10,000, but the new program can provide service at a fraction of that cost. A full-time electronics technician will do the work at the Lexington campus whenever possible, but the size of many of the machines means that after you call for help, you will probably see the project's new van rolling up to your door.

The new UK program joins a similar service operated by Georgia Tech that serves the southern portion of Appalachia. The proposal, which came originally from the Appalachian College Association, met ready acceptance at UK. As the university's engineering dean, Thomas W. Lester, commented, "Students throughout Appalachia

deserve a science education as complete as that received by students at larger, more urban institutions."

Sign of the Times

In September 1916, in the midst of World War I and its accompanying coal boom, mining companies in Harlan County, Ky., got together to create a formidable organization—the Harlan County Coal Operators Association. The group and its members were to see good times and bad through the next 78 years. Undoubtedly the lowest point came during the violent coal wars of the 1930s, when the operators and local law-enforcement officers collaborated to put down striking miners and "Bloody Harlan" became a national byword.

Now, in a different world, the association has announced that it is going out of business. The decrease in the number of working mines in Harlan County, it seems, has removed the reason for the group's existence.

ARC: A Moment for More Optimism?

During the 1980s, as we regularly reported to you, the Reagan administration made continuing efforts to do away with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). But, just as continually, Appalachian stalwarts in Congress managed to beat back these attempts, though the level of funding declined from that of earlier years.

Now the Republican little-government wave is washing
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“THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE RULES THE WORLD”: This painting by Carlos Cortez Coyle, a self-taught artist of Kentucky origins, appeared in a recent show, curated by Bradley Marcus, of works from the Berea College collection. Little is known about Coyle, who lived for a

time in San Francisco, aside from the knowledge to be gleaned from the 84 extraordinary paintings and drawings he shipped to the Berea College art department in 1942, along with a record of his thoughts and descriptions of the works. The painting on page 1 is titled “In Sunny California.”

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over Capitol Hill just as a new ARC executive director is, so to speak, getting his sea legs in the job. The new director, Thomas M. Hunter, succeeds Francis E. Moravitz, who—obviously a marked optimist—agreed to take the tiller in Reagan’s first year and had held it ever since.

A Tennessee native, Hunter comes to the ARC from the TVA, with which he had worked since 1975, with most of his attention being given to programs concerned with economic development in rural areas of TVA country. Hence,

though he has changed addresses, he in many ways will wear a familiar hat.

For the current fiscal year Congress last August gave the commission a \$282 million appropriation—a sum representing a \$33 million increase over the fiscal 1994 funding. From now on, however, all bets would seem to be off.

The new director is described as a dedicated baseball fan. He thus may belong beside Francis Moravitz in the ranks of the dedicated optimists. Perhaps, despite the present political omens, he will enjoy similar success.

EYE on Publications

Jordon’s Showdown, by Frank C. Strunk (Walker). If you read Strunk’s previous novel, *Jordon’s Wager* (reviewed in the Summer 1991 APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER), you’ll recall that Berkley Jordon, the eponymous protagonist of this historical (1930s) tale, was soundly defeated in his campaign for sheriff of the fictional Stanton County in Eastern Kentucky. Undaunted, Jordon, gambler as well as lawman, now turns to operating a roadhouse card game, but he finds himself being drawn into the struggle between coal miners and mine owners. As the

drama heightens, the cast of characters expands to include such notables as union czar John L. Lewis and Happy Chandler, then Kentucky’s lieutenant governor. Berea writer Garry Barker, a Jordon fan, observes that while “there’s more sex and violence in *Jordon’s Showdown* than in *Jordon’s Wager*,” the author “still excels at capturing the feel of 1930s Eastern Kentucky and in maintaining the colorful lead character.”

Death and Dying in Appalachia, by James K. Crissman (University of Illinois Press). Until 70 or 80 years ago, death was a recognized part of everyday American exist-

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tence. Diseases like tuberculosis, pneumonia, typhoid fever and diphtheria took the lives of family members. Epidemics and industrial accidents struck with lethal force. Women and infants died in childbirth.

Since those days, the revolutionary advances in medical knowledge and technology, together with the development of safety standards in the workplace, have changed the face of dying. And when the inevitable deaths do occur, they usually happen in a hospital or a long-term care establishment instead of, as in the old days, an upstairs bedroom at home, with the family gathered around; family members are most likely scattered from coast to coast and receive the sad news by phone.

Along with this remoteness of death from the ordinary person's daily life (except for graphic depictions of it on TV) have come euphemisms to be used when the subject can't be avoided. "Passed away," "no longer with us" and, the author tells us, 65 other expressions are commonly substituted for "dead."

As a young man, the author, a native of southwest Virginia, found himself fascinated by burial customs that were on the way out in Appalachia and had long since disappeared elsewhere. This book is the product of his decision to focus on his ancestors and what dealing with death had been like for them. It has sections on the death watch, preparation of the body, choosing or making the coffin, digging the grave, putting on the wake, conducting the funeral itself.

Though concerned with the specific region of Central Appalachia, *Death and Dying* has broader meaning, since it shows the kinds of customs that once prevailed in other older cultures. Now, even in Appalachia, front doors rarely bear the somber wreaths that used to confirm the presence of death and mourners spend little time in black.

Old Wounds, New Words, edited by Bob Henry Baber, George Ella Lyon and Gurney Norman (Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 391, Ashland, Ky. 41114). As Jim Wayne Miller says in the preface to this collection—which bears the subtitle "Poems from the Appalachian Poetry Project"—the book is to some extent a time capsule, since it was assembled from poems generated by 19 workshops held in 1980 across Appalachia by the writers whose names now

appear as the book's editors.

What happened between then and now is a tale of frustration and disappointment as various presses turned the book down and the two publishers who seemed likely to make good successively changed their minds and abandoned ship. During the 1980s, as Miller says, the collection circulated as a kind of Appalachian *samizdat* and the introduction (by Lyon) was used in various Appalachian-literature courses.

Finally, the Jesse Stuart Foundation has come riding to the rescue, with the result that we now have, in mint condition, an anthology containing work produced in the 1970s and early 1980s by 90 different poets and thus giving us a tour of a landscape half a generation removed from our own—though the names of many of the contributors are probably more familiar to us today than they were in 1980.

Book Notes

•You may be surprised, as we were, to hear that the University of Tennessee is celebrating its bicentennial (what kind of place was it, we wonder, in 1794?). Anyway, if you're interested in UT, you can learn more from *Tennessee 200*, a photo-and-text history of the school available (\$24) from UTBook, Knoxville News-Sentinel, Box 59038, Knoxville, Tenn. 37950-9038.

•Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat for Humanity International, has produced what is at least his fifth book, *The Theology of the Hammer*; 160 pages, with photos, it presents the principles underlying Habitat's worldwide roll-up-the-sleeves activities. It's available at \$9.95 (plus \$2.00 postage) from Habitat at 121 Habitat St., Americus, Ga. 31709.

•In view of the current wave of rural school closings and the consequent anger produced in many local citizens, we point to a timely book: *The Life and Death of a Rural American High School: Farewell, Little Kanawha*, by Alan DeYoung of the University of Kentucky (Garland Publishers). The author used newspapers, oral histories and other detailed sources in this account of the rise, decline and demise of a West Virginia high school between 1920 and 1990.

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