

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER



Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

July 3-7: Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, W.Va. Phone 304/372-7860.

July 7-12: Cajun/Creole Week at Augusta; crafts as well as music; Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241-3996; phone 304/637-1209. In the following four weeks, blues and swing, Irish music, Bluegrass and dance and old-time music will be featured.

July 7-13: Celtic Week at Warren Wilson College; the staff will explore Irish, Scottish and other Celtic traditions in the realms of fiddle, harp, guitar, tinwhistle and other instruments. More information from the Swannanoa Gathering, Warren Wilson College, P.O. Box 9000, Asheville, N.C. 28815-9000.

July 12-14: Uncle Dave Macon Days, Cannonsburgh Pioneer Village, Murfreesboro, Tenn. Named after the first person to be featured on the Grand Ole Opry as an individual performer, this jamboree is the home of three national championships—old-time banjo, old-time buckdancing and old-time clogging. There's lots more, too. Get in touch with Wendy S. Bryant, P.O. Box 2995, Murfreesboro, Tenn. 37133-1995; phone 615/896-3799.

July 12-14: Kudzu basketry (What's that again? Yes, it's kudzu basketry—what in the world will they think of next?), plus blacksmithing, rebotoming chairs and stools, inkle loom weaving (that's on a very narrow loom indeed), making clay whistles—take your pick from these and other weekend crafts offerings at the John C. Campbell Folk School, Route 1, Box 14A, Brasstown, N.C. 28902-9603; phone 1/800/FOLK SCH. You can also find out about the great variety of week-long classes.

July 13: A very special occasion indeed—the celebration of James Still's 90th birthday anniversary at Hindman Settlement School (P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822). Festivities in honor of the eminent novelist, short-story writer and poet begin at 1:00; Jim Wayne Miller (who else?) and Carol Boggess will give an overview of Still's career. Phone 606/785-5475.

July 14-20: Right on the heels of Celtic Week at Warren Wilson comes a pair of programs, Dulcimer Week and Dance Week; other musical weeks follow.

July 28-August 3: 19th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. Among the usual suspects guiding aspiring writers will be Jim Wayne Miller, James Still and Lee Smith.

August 1-4: Seventh annual Appalachian String Band
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"The Book" Wins Weatherford Prize

Berea religion professor John Wallhausser told the audience at the 24th annual W. D. Weatherford Award ceremony that he fully recognized the importance of Deborah Vansau McCauley's *Appalachian Mountain Religion* when he heard his students referring to it simply as "the book."

McCauley received the award, given for the outstanding



Warren Brunner

Prizewinner Deborah McCauley

work on Appalachia produced in 1995, at a luncheon in Berea on May 31. "This is the Academy Award of books on Appalachia," she had earlier told an interviewer. "It's kind of a vindication"—vindication because the book, which details the history of local, independent mountain churches while throwing no bouquets at denominations like the Presbyterians and the Methodists, has ruffled a good many religious feathers. Her critics, says McCauley, say the book "demonizes mainstream Protestant religion."

An independent scholar, McCauley holds a master's degree from the Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. in American religious history from Columbia. She wrote the book, she says, to show the nature of mountain religion, to
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"The ARC Measures Up"

In our Fall 1995 issue we published a letter from Stuart Faber, a longtime Council of the Southern Mountains board member, who commented on our Summer 1995 article taking note of the death of John Whisman, a central figure in the development of the Appalachian Regional Commission. The following letter came in reply to our request for more memories about the conception and gestation of the ARC. The writer, once director of the Appalachian Volunteers, is West Virginia executive director of the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund. If you have memories to add, let us hear from you.—EDITORS

TO THE EDITORS:

In about 1953 the Council of the Southern Mountains resolved at its annual conference that the unique and common needs of the mountain areas cried out for cooperation among the Appalachian states in addressing deep-seated problems of flooding, transportation and chronic economic depression. Roads and streams did not conform to state boundaries, and the economic problems were common to all—and getting worse. The CSM's resolution was transmitted to Kentucky Governor Lawrence Wetherby, but nothing of substance resulted. However, after Bert Combs became governor in 1959, he lent his support, at the urging of John Whisman, to the creation of the Eastern Kentucky Regional Planning Commission, with John as its director. John and I worked together on a number of initiatives, and at the next annual conference of the CSM a resolution similar to the one that had been passed in 1953 was adopted and sent to the seven governors of Central Appalachian states.

Bert Combs was prepared to convene the first Conference of Appalachian Governors. Since at that time there was certainly no unanimous agreement that working together would help, John Whisman and I agreed to visit as many of the governors as would give us an audience. I cannot

remember which governors John Whisman met, but I do recall that I saw Cecil Underwood of Virginia and Buford Ellington of Tennessee. Each expressed interest and said he would think about it. I was particularly impressed by Underwood. He raised good questions and throughout the discussion posed possible responses. I do recall that he attended the first meeting of Appalachian governors in Annapolis, Maryland.

Jumping the Gun

Bert Combs of Kentucky intended to host the other Appalachian governors for the first conference, but Millard Tawes, governor of Maryland, got the jump on him and, with no warning to Combs, convened the first conference in the beautiful old statehouse in Annapolis. I spoke at that meeting and said little of substance, but I was well received.

It was during that trip to Annapolis that I had my first experience with a slot machine. There in the old statehouse, near the entrance, was a nickel slot machine. I watched for some time as a gentleman put nickels in, one at a time. He finally left and I fumbled in my pocket and, sure enough, great noise as nickels poured out of the machine. During the rest of the conference I, wearing a very lightweight summer suit, hauled around about two pounds of nickels.

Incidentally, the first conference recognized seven Appalachian states, the "Appalachian South," for participation. The conference was later expanded to include 12 or 13 states, from New York to Mississippi, on the theory that federal legislation would be easier to pass with 26 senators than with 14.

Programs come and go, but the ARC has survived more than 30 years. Today we occasionally see a health center as we drive on a four-lane road, sometimes to nowhere, that resulted from the initiatives of the Appalachian Regional Commission. As public and private efforts go, the ARC measures up pretty well.

MILTON OGLE
Hurricane, W.Va.

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Music Festival, Camp Washington-Carver, Clifftop, W.Va. Fiddle, banjo and string-band contests, and dancing competitions too, with prizes up to \$700; it's all presented by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Find out more from the camp: 304/438-3005.

August 9-11: Augusta Festival at Elkins City Park; concerts, a juried craft fair, activities for children, dancing, food, storytelling and just about anything else imaginable; see contact information above.

August 16-18: Bookbinding, food folklore, fly tying, Ukrainian egg painting; where else but at a John C. Campbell Folk School weekend? See July 12-14 for address and phone number.

August 22-25: 32nd Appalachian Arts and Crafts Festival, Beckley, W.Va. Phone 304/252-7328.

August 24: Union Grove Music Fest, a one-day affair at Union Grove, N.C.; phone 704/539-4417.

September 1: Deadline for papers for the 1997 annual conference of the Sonneck Society for American Music,

which will be held in Seattle. Though papers and performances will involve all aspects of North American/Caribbean music, the sponsors invite prospective participants to give thought to the conference's host area, the Pacific Northwest. If you intend to submit a proposal, the society encourages you to do it as early as possible. All materials (written or cassette) should go to Rae Linda Brown, University of California—Irvine, School of the Arts—Music, Irvine, Calif. 92717.

September 6-8: Hilltop Festival, Huntington Museum of Art, Huntington, W.Va.; phone 304/529-2701.

October 20-27: October Old-Time Week, Augusta Heritage Center, incorporating the October 25-27 fiddlers' reunion; Davis & Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241-3996; phone 304/637-1209.

October 25-27: 23rd annual Celebration of Traditional Music, sponsored by the Berea College Appalachian Center and featuring a variety of top performers. For details write to College P.O. Box 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404 or phone 606/986-9341, ext. 5140.

Winner's Circle

Weatherford Award winner Deborah McCauley talks with Loyal Jones (l.), retired director of the Berea Appalachian Center, and Thomas R. Ford, University of Kentucky professor emeritus of sociology. Ford spoke to the group about his work with W. D. Weatherford, Sr., on the famous 1962 survey of the Appalachian region.



Warren Brunner

"THE BOOK" from page 1

chronicle its development and describe its differentiation from the dominant American religious culture. Fueling her drive was her view that mainline groups have mistakenly looked on the religious beliefs and practices of mountain people as nothing more than the products of powerlessness and alienation.

The winning book was illustrated with photos by Warren Brunner, a Berea-based photographer who has devoted much of his time for three decades to preserving Appalachia in pictures.

Sponsored by the Berea College Appalachian Center

and Hutchins Library, the Weatherford Award honors the work published anywhere that in its year best illuminates the problems, personalities and unique qualities of the Appalachian South. Established, and supported for 17 years, by the late Alfred Perrin, retired publications director of Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati, the award commemorates the life and achievements of W. D. Weatherford, Sr., a pioneer and leading figure for many years in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations.

During the program Loyal Jones, retired director of the Appalachian Center, spoke in memory of Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., Berea president emeritus, who died on May 22.

EYE on Publications

African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia, by Cecelia Conway (University of Tennessee Press). Across the Appalachian South, the banjo has long stood as the symbol of the white mountain people. Once upon a time, the story goes, a white minstrel invented the five-string banjo, subsequently acclaimed as "America's only original folk instrument." This particular development, the author of this book tells us, actually took place not back in the mists of history but some time around 1840, the inventor wasn't yet a minstrel, and behind his creation stretched a history going back to Africa. The first report of a banjo performance in North Carolina appears in 1787 in the journal of a dinner guest whose host provided as entertainment "a dance of Negroes to the Banjo in his yard."

Thus begins this "study of folk traditions," as it is subtitled, a volume in the new series of publications of the American Folklore Society—and a notable work of scholarship it is. Using much information from interviews with elderly black banjo players from the Piedmont—interviews that are truly warm and personal encounters in depth—the author (who teaches English at Appalachian State University) shows the similarity of pre-blues black banjo lyric patterns and playing styles to the characteristics of traditional West African music performances. By the mid-19th century both blacks and whites were making banjo music, with the whites spreading it in good part through minstrel shows. But, in an interesting historical shift, the blacks by 1900 had mostly switched their affec-

tions to the guitar (which seemed to lend itself more readily to assertive commentary) and left the banjo and its associations to the whites.

This fascinating adventure in history, says Wilma Dykeman, opens "areas of 'folk traditions' and kinship of spirits that are important for us to know as we seek understanding of this region and its people." At the risk of being a bit indiscreet, we might add that the book was a finalist for the W. D. Weatherford Award for 1995.

Come Go Home With Me, by Sheila Kay Adams (University of North Carolina Press). When the famous Cecil Sharp was collecting ballads back in the early 1900s, he decided after a stay in Madison County, N.C., that the people there sang as easily as they talked. Now Sheila Kay Adams, a seventh-generation Madison County ballad singer whose relatives have included figures like Dellie Chandler Norton and Byard Ray, shows us in these stories that she writes as easily as she sings—that is, her artistry enables her to give the appearance of such free-flowing ease.

These stories, vignettes, fragments of memoir, what-you-will take us back to a place called Sodom, which, the author says, "exists only in my memory. The people I write about have, for the most part, retired to the graveyards that dot the hillsides there in my childhood home." The star of the stories is Adams's great-aunt "Granny," Dellie Norton, whom she calls "the most exciting person I have ever known and the best teacher I would ever have." But we meet plenty

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of other characters as well, young and old, in cameo adventures serious and comic.

Revealingly, the author tells us how she went from her local high school to college at Western Carolina but, feeling out of place, lasted only a month before returning home and then entering cozier Mars Hill. Reading this bit of memoir, you may wish for her sake that she had stuck it out. But, of course, if she had she might never have developed the miniaturist charm that characterizes these stories.

Courageous Paths, by Jane B. Stephenson (New Opportunity School for Women, College P.O. Box 2276, Berea, Ky. 40404). If you've felt a bit sorry for yourself lately, or maybe you've just wondered what real life is like sometimes, this is the book for you. Presented free of frills and special effects, the "courageous paths" followed here by nine Appalachian women will almost certainly lead you to inspiration, by way of unqualified admiration.

Jane Stephenson, who assembled and produced this book, is the founder and director of the New Opportunity School for Women ("new" because years ago Berea had another outreach program called the Opportunity School). Baldly stated, the school, which has now become well known in the region and has more than 200 graduates, has the mission of serving ill-educated, middle-aged Appalachian women who need jobs but have no idea how to get them or how to get the training they need to hold jobs. Less baldly stated, the school is, in its necessarily limited way, a weapon of cultural and economic revolution. In just three weeks' time, women who arrive on campus full of self-doubt and fear turn into persons who have run up a 70 percent success rate, measuring success just by the proportion who hold jobs or are attending college or trade school.

As Gurney Norman, who participates in the school as a writing teacher, says in his introduction to the book, "It isn't easy to put into words the awesome experience of strug-

gling for simple survival in circumstances of such palpable insecurity that the struggling person can see no way out. The sense of being in quicksand is almost impossible to convey to people standing on dry land." Yet that's the situation of most of the students who come to the school.

The nine stories in the book are not catalogues of complaint and self-pity but straightforward narratives that take us, not always to happy endings, but to endings that show us persons of self-awareness, ready to do the next thing that needs to be done. No doubt all this sounds like the usual oversimplified puffery with which reporters and commentators like to describe and inflate well-intentioned projects. But if you think so, just read the book for yourself—and if you ever have the chance, talk to some of the school's graduates. They're even more real than the stories.

Book Note

The HEAD—Human/Economic Appalachian Development—Corporation has published *We Never Started to Quit*, an account of the corporation's 20 years' work in such problem areas as housing, crafts marketing, job development and capital formation; Ben Poage is the editor. You can get the book for \$12 (postpaid) from the HEAD Corporation, P.O. Box 504, Berea, Ky. 40403.



In Appalachian Heritage ...

Highlights of the Spring 1996 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* include a report on the political background of the mine-safety issue by an attorney for the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund and a picture story on old-time logging in the mountains.

You can obtain the magazine (\$6.00 a copy, \$18.00 for a year's subscription) from *Appalachian Heritage*, Hutchins Library, Berea, Kentucky 40404.

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