

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 26 No. 1 Winter 1997

Looking Forward

April 5: 21st annual Peach Blossom Bluegrass Festival; Marietta, Ga. For information, phone 770/957-1710.

April 6-12: Dulcimer week at the John C. Campbell Folk School (mountain—Betty Smith; hammered—Ann Lough). Call 800/FOLK SCH.

April 10-12: 61st annual Spring Mountain Folk Festival, Berea College; the accent is on youth and dance. For details, call Kim Hahn at 606/986-9341, ext. 5430.

April 11-12: New River Symposium, sponsored jointly by the New River Gorge National River and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. (*See separate story.*)

April 13-19: Spring Dulcimer Week, sponsored by the Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W.Va. 26241. Instruction will be given at all levels, and there'll even be a craft class in which you can learn to carve decorative motifs on your dulcimer. Among those on hand will be Betty Smith and Keith Young (mountain) and Patty Looman and Saverio Minicucci (hammered). You may write to the center at the address given here, or phone 304/637-1209.

April 19: Living Legends Workshop and Performance, presented by Jamboree Productions; Floyd Junior College, Rome, Ga. The list of participants includes Byron Berline, Dan Crary, Missy Raines, Frank Wakefield and others. Details from the sponsors at 706/602-2544.

April 24-27: 10th annual Merle Watson Homecoming Show; Wilkesboro, N.C. A very big affair featuring Doc Watson and guests. For details, phone 910/838-6292.

April 30-May 1: Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliates Conference; Berea College. Representatives of all the organizations helped by the fund will give progress reports; members of the public are especially invited to attend. The sessions begin at 2:00 p.m. in the activities room of the Alumni Building on campus. If you would like more information, call the fund office at 606/986-9341, ext. 5022.

May 29-June 1: Seedtime on the Cumberland Festival of Mountain Arts, Whitesburg, Ky. Sponsored by Appalshop, the festival will celebrate cultural diversity in the mountains, with an emphasis on African American Appalachians. Appalshop's address is 306 Madison St., Whitesburg, Ky. 41858.

June 8-14: 20th annual Appalachian Family Folk Week, Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, Ky. 41822. It's a full-time immersion in music, dance and other aspects of mountain culture. For more in-

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Not for the Faint-Hearted

Civil War lawlessness, the ranging habits of wild turkeys, ghosts in folk tales, the history of lead mines—where can you hear about all of these, and more, in one sitting—or, at least, one meeting?

For some years now, we have watched the fortunes of a remarkable Appalachian event that is truly not for the intellectually faint-hearted, rejoicing when it appeared on the regional schedule, sighing with regret when it failed to receive the needed funding for that particular year.

We're speaking, of course, of the New River Symposium, sponsored jointly by the New River Gorge National River (a unit of the National Park System) and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Among the symposium's many appealing qualities—apart from the fundamental fact that it concerns itself with one of America's most notable natural phenomena—are its lack of trendiness and its belief that specialized knowledge can be of interest to persons outside that field of specialization.

Suspended last year for lack of money, the symposium returns this spring (April 11-12) in all its marvelous variety. The meeting will be held at the Glade Springs Resort, Daniels, W.Va., with the first session beginning at nine o'clock Friday morning. To register, or to get more information, phone 304/465-0508 or write to P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, W.Va. 25846.

Appalachia: Così fan tutte

Anybody who's ever read much about Appalachian history and problems will have encountered, over and over, one defining word: *exploitation*. For some years, says Gordon McKinney, director of the Berea College Appalachian Center, "exploitation was understood to be an economic relationship in which one segment of the population of the mountain South was powerless to resist the economic demands of outside forces."

During the past two decades, however, students of Appalachian society have become "much better informed and more sophisticated," with the result that race, gender, age and ethnicity have received scholarly attention as "excuses to exploit persons and groups in Appalachia in addition to the exploitation of the entire region."

This year's Berea Summer Appalachian Seminar, to be held June 16–July 3, will focus on these varied forms of

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formation, write the school at P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822 or call 606/785-5475.

June 8-28: Summer session, New Opportunity School for Women; the school is now affiliated with the Mountain Association for Community and Economic Development (MACED), headquartered in Berea. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) to this popular program spend three weeks learning about jobs and how to get them. For full information, contact Jane Stephenson at 213 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403; phone 606/985-7200.

June 16-July 3: Berea College Appalachian Center Summer Seminar. (See separate story.)

July 6-11: Crafts, dance, folklore and music characterize this first of the five weeks of the Augusta summer schedule. During the following weeks areas and themes will vary, from bead embroidery to Celtic stone carving and from Cajun to Irish bluegrass. Information from Davis & Elkins College at the address and number given above.

July 11-13: Uncle Dave Macon Days, Cannonsburgh Pioneer Village, Murfreesboro, Tenn. Heralded by the people who devise such ratings as one of the top 20 July events in the Southeast, this jamboree—named for the first person to be featured on the Grand Ole Opry as an individual performer—offers \$5,400 in prizes and is the home of three national championships—old-time banjo, old-time buckdancing and old-time clogging. If you're interested, get in touch with Wendy S. Bryant, P.O. Box 5016, Murfreesboro, Tenn. 37133; phone, 615/896-3799.

July 27-August 2: 20th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. This year's anniversary session is dedicated to the memory of one of the workshop's longtime mainstays, Jim Wayne Miller. The cast of mentors will include James Still, Lee Smith, Sharyn McCrumb, Robert Morgan, George Ella Lyon and Sidney Farr. To find out more about this established institution, see the contact information above.

August 8-10: Augusta Festival, Elkins, W.Va., still another activity of the Augusta Heritage Center. Billed as a "Celebration of Traditional Music, Dance, Folklife & Crafts," this jamboree has something for just about everybody. See contact information above, and there's also an 800 number: 624-3157.

October 3-5: 15th Annual Sorghum Makin', John R. Simon's Family Farm, 8721 Pond Creek/Carey's Run Road, Portsmouth, Ohio 45663. If you have a yen for sorghum suckers and popcorn balls and apple butter, this may be the place for you to spend the weekend. All the eating (or, perhaps, eatin') will be accompanied by acoustical music, while butter gets churned and soap gets made. The number to call is 614/259-6337.

October 5-6: Sixth Annual Ohio Appalachian Conference, sponsored by Ohio State University Extension; Canter's Cave 4-H Camp Lodge, Jackson, Ohio. For more information, contact Deanna L. Tribe at 614/286-2177.

December 26-January 1: Christmas Country Dance School, Berea College, directed by Susan Spalding, Berea's coordinator of dance. Participants may participate in a variety of classes—English clog, country and Morris dance, Rapper, Danish, Appalachian clogging and square dance, and contra. There's also singing, and would it be Berea without crafts? Deadline for early registration is December 1. To find out more, call 606/986-9341, ext. 5565.

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exploitation, studying them in their historical contexts. Attention will go not only to speculators and corporations—the traditional black hats of the story—but also to racial stereotyping, policies based on beliefs about gender, and the intended and unintended effects of governmental policies at all levels. The title of the seminar sums it up: "the exploitation of the people of the region by social groups, governments and economic powers."

The seminar, keynoted by Wilma Dykeman, will be the 25th installment of a series established by Loyal Jones in 1973, focusing on Appalachian history and culture with the primary aim of helping teachers create courses in Appalachian studies. In recent years directors Helen Lewis and McKinney have emphasized a single theme.

Participants in addition to Wilma Dykeman will include Wilma Dunaway, Steve Fisher, John Inscoc, Crandall Shiflett and Jerry Williamson.

Total cost, including room and board, is \$560, but a generous scholarship arrangement makes it important for you to apply as soon as you know you would like to attend. For an additional fee, you can get academic credit from the University of Kentucky College of Education. For more information about any aspect of the seminar, write to the Appalachian Center at C.P.O. Box 2336, Berea College Berea, Ky. 40404. Deadline for applications is May 30.

Marker, Museum for Bill Monroe

Bill Monroe, who died last September at 84, was born in a village in western Kentucky and won renown in Nashville, but the music he created is known to the world as bluegrass.

"My first experience with Bill Monroe was when I was had an old victrola, and I got up and looked inside to see where that beautiful music was coming from," said one practitioner of this art form. "I remember that like it was yesterday." Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys affected a lot of people that way. As mainstays on the Grand Ole Opry and stars of world tours, they exerted a potent influence on the country, rock and folk music of the last half-century.

In recognition of his achievements, Rosine, Monroe's birthplace, is working on plans for a monument, a museum and a walking trail all named in his memory. "It's a shame something hasn't been done for Bill sooner," said the proprietor of the local grocery store. "It should have been done twenty years ago."

Minimum Wage Minimal

"A mother with two kids cannot make it on a minimum-wage job," says Ron Crouch, director of the Kentucky State Data Center at the University of Louisville. Crouch made this comment in analyzing a study sponsored by the Kentucky Youth Advocates showing that a family in the Lou-

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Mountain Folk Festival

Every April, as many as 200 middle and high school students from states across the South and the Midwest come to Berea for dance, dance and more dance. This year may see record numbers.



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isville area needs a full-time worker earning \$12.07 an hour to have a minimal standard of living without outside assistance.

As reported by *balancing the scales*, the publication of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, the study included the cost of health insurance but not the expense of telephone service or maintaining a car in arriving at the \$12.07 figure. Including health insurance provided by an employer or the government lowers the "living wage" to \$9.65 an hour.

The study holds obvious implications for federal policies aimed at moving people from welfare into the workforce. Taking a relatively optimistic view of the situation, an official of the Kentucky Department for Employment Services has described the mandated changes as "the opportunity for Kentuckians to create a program to take care of Kentuckians' needs." State officials, he says, have been working since 1988 to help welfare recipients prepare for and seek jobs.

Declaring that "now is the time for Eastern Kentuckians to learn to deal with the 'real' world," Shirley Caudill of London, Ky., adds that while there are many single mothers who will feel the bite of welfare reform, "all children have a father somewhere and some of them are experts at shirking their responsibility."

So the debate goes on. But, as Debra Miller of the Kentucky Youth Advocates points out, moving people from the welfare poor to the working poor hardly constitutes a praiseworthy goal. "We need," she says, "to look at moving folks from welfare to some degree of financial independence."

To all readers!

We wish we didn't have to bring this up, but new—and very formidable—postal regulations require us to ask each NEWSLETTER subscriber to send us your current address complete with house number and street name, or post office box number, or rural route number, and NINE-digit ZIP code. Even if you're a college or other institution, we still must have a street address or box number. We hope you can take the time to do this, so that you'll keep receiving the NEWSLETTER.

EYE on Publications

Trailers, with photographs by Carol Burch-Brown and text by David Rigsbee (University Press of Virginia). "It is a common joke in our region," says Carol Burch-Brown, "that the best views of the mountains are from trailers." Yet, in contrast to decaying shacks and cabins, trailers enjoy very little emotional standing "as emblems of a struggling but noble humanity," and "their campiness is oddly resistant to nostalgic idealization."

What, then, are trailers? They're such "condensed and bluntly practical dwellings" that they convey their own special messages, a home space so connected to the individual that it can move when that individual moves—at least, in theory. Actually, of course, trailers sprout porches and patios and additional rooms until the original shape disappears behind the add-ons.

What got the photographer started on this project, some ten years ago, was curiosity about one specific trailer park, in the middle of Blacksburg, Va., and its inhabitants—people who did not enjoy the ironic glamour of living in cabins and shacks. Not long after she took her photos, she says, the trailers were eradicated, replaced by apartment buildings housing more prosperous people. The ease with which the trailers and people disappeared, however, was unsettling. What kind of emotional identity can you have in such a world?

To such thoughts, David Rigsbee adds a text concerned with the photographs and also his own family's relationship to trailers—a relationship Burch-Brown terms "quietly bizarre." The authors, says Margaret Olin of the Art Institute of Chicago by way of commendation, "do not view the people who live in these trailers as damaged or suggest that their condition might be improved; they treat trailer life primarily as a choice."

The Last Chivaree, by Robert Isbell (University of North Carolina Press). A chivaree, as all students of 19th-century American literature know, was a wildly uproarious wedding celebration that sometimes got completely out of hand,

with tragic results. But, rather strangely, this book's last shivaree is described as a mild affair.

The book presents an unsparing but certainly not unsympathetic portrait of mountain life in the first half of this century, through the author's acquaintance with the Hicks family of Beech Mountain, North Carolina, and twining around and through all the talk are the twin themes of music and storytelling, Ray Hicks having been a central figure in the contemporary revival of traditional storytelling.

"A refreshing feature of this book," says Wilma Dykeman, "is that first and foremost it is the chronicle of a friendship—we meet the members of the Hicks family not in genealogical order but in the chronology of their acquaintance with the author. One thing we learn—or perhaps learn again—is how unrelentingly hard people of a naturally unforgiving area like Beech Creek worked to produce only a scratched-out living. "Stanley Hicks," says Isbell, "has known life to be onerous, but he does not admit to poverty." Hicks himself said, "It's been a tough life, but it's a gift of God."

Book Note

As we're fond of saying, the people at the Jesse Stuart Foundation (P.O. Box 391, Ashland, Ky. 41114) are an extraordinarily industrious lot. Their latest offering is a fresh edition of Stuart's novel *Hie to the Hunters*, redesigned and re-illustrated through a grant from Harry M. Zachem, Stuart's nephew. You can get a copy for \$22.00 (hardcover) or \$12.00 (softcover) plus \$3.00 s/h.



In *Appalachian Heritage*...

Highlights of the Winter 1997 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* include "No Hands for Picking Beans," an analysis of some probable effects of the new federal welfare mandates, by Michael Miskowiec of West Virginia, and the announcement of the winners of the Denny C. Plattner/*Appalachian Heritage* Awards for 1996, for the best articles, fiction and poetry appearing in the magazine.

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