

NEWS

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BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

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Looking Forward

January 10-16: You can start the New Year off by learning a really rare skill: making your own padlock (and a key to go with it), during the first of three advanced-level weeks at the John C. Campbell Folk School. In addition to blacksmithing, this week will see advanced classes in a variety of other crafts and skills—raku, marbling, spinning and woodturning—and Sharyn McCrumb will teach advanced writing to people who are serious about it. You can get details from the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902-9603; phone 800/FOLK SCH.

January 17-23: What do rushes, grease and wax have in common? asks the John C. Campbell Folk School. Well, they were all sources of light in the preindustrial home; now you can learn to make the pre-1850 lighting devices that employed such materials. During this same week, if you've had some experience binding books, you can improve your technique. Or, concentrating on jewelry, you can learn how to make solder your friend. There are plenty of other choices, too, of course.

January 24-30: During the third of the John C. Campbell School's advanced-classes weeks, you can master the beaded basket or make a hand-woven vest (one that might be mild but, we are told, *could* be wild) or acquire another special skill. For all courses, see contact information for January 10-16.

January 31-February 20: Winter session, New Opportunity School for Women. This popular program is designed for low-income middle-aged (30-55) women "in transition"; high school diploma or GED certificate is required. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) spend three weeks learning about jobs and how to get them. *Note:* The school is now accepting applications for the summer session, which begins on June 6; application deadline is April 15. For full information about the school, contact Caroline Francis at 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403; phone, 606/985-7200.

February 25-26: 18th annual GROW Conference for (mostly Kentucky) women researchers. You're likely to encounter just about anything here, because the field's wide open: participants may be faculty members, students or even persons untainted by academe, and the original study may have been conducted in any subject-matter area. For more information, write Michelle Gibson, University of Cincinnati, P.O. Box 0205, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221.

March 1: Deadline for submissions to the fiction contest conducted by *Now & Then*, the Appalachian magazine published by East Tennessee State University. If you're a

short-story writer, you may enter your work (no more than two stories), provided that it pertains to Appalachia and has never previously been published. Final judging will
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Appalachian Colleges: Educational Edge?

Appalachian colleges and universities are "uniquely positioned to take a nationwide leadership role in post-secondary education in the 21st century," Judi Jennings, director of the Kentucky Foundation for Women, told those attending a September 25-26 symposium at Berea College.

What gives Appalachian schools this new edge over others? Pointing to a Ford Foundation study highlighting the increasing importance to education of demographic, cultural and social changes, Jennings observed that Appalachian educational institutions have always had to take such changes into account. "With the increasing national awareness of the importance of a holistic approach to improving post-secondary education," she said, "Appalachian colleges and universities can transform their hard-won survival skills into models of leadership for integrating student needs, community concerns, educational content, pedagogical practices and institutional mission."

The symposium, titled "Issues on Higher Education in Appalachia," drew some 40 administrators and teachers to the Berea campus. Jack Russell, external affairs director of the Appalachian Regional Commission, keynoted the conference with his address "Appalachia's Colleges and the Region's future: What Roles and Services Does the Region Need Colleges to Play and Provide?"

In keeping with Jennings's point about the rising importance of holistic education, several speakers stressed service learning. One presenter, David Sawyer, president of ManageMentor and former director of Students for Appalachia at Berea College, noted that Berea has recently produced a mission statement calling for the development of "service-oriented leaders for Appalachia and beyond."

Other speakers were Timothy Collins, Appalachia Educational Laboratory; Sally Maggard, editor of the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*; Wayne Meisel, executive director of the Bonner Foundation, Princeton, N.J. (and described by Sawyer as the man who coined the term "AmeriCorps"); and Oakley Winters, dean of the School of Continuing Education, Western Carolina University.

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be in the hands of Robert Morgan, professor of English at Cornell but a North Carolinian at heart, and winning works will appear in the Summer 1999 issue of *Now & Then*. (There are some nice cash prizes, too.) For full information, write to Appalachian Fiction Competition, CASS-ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614; phone, 423/439-6173.

March 19-21: 22nd annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Southwest Higher Education Center, Abingdon, Va. Theme: "The Power of Place and Struggles for Justice: Appalachia at Century's Turn." For full details, write to the Appalachian Studies Association, P.O. Box 6825, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W.Va. 26506; phone, 304/293-8541.

April 15-17: The much-to-be-welcomed New River Symposium returns for its biennial visit. In keeping with President Clinton's recent designation of the entire 250-mile length of the river as an American Heritage River (one of 14), participants will present papers reflecting the cultural and natural heritage of the river—which means that, as is traditional with this remarkable symposium, papers and media presentations may deal with everything from cultural history, folklore and archaeology to geography, geology and botany. Presenters will include a variety of persons with professional or avocational interest in the river; student papers are strongly encouraged. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Express in Boone, N.C., near the headwaters of the New River.

Note: Since "sustainable" is prominent among today's

buzzwords in various fields, you may want to keep up with things by attending a conference wrap-up session titled "Sustainable Communities Training Workshop: The New River Headwaters."

For any further information about the symposium, contact the Chief of Interpretation, National Park Service, New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, W.Va. 25846, or phone 304/465-6509. The symposium is sponsored jointly by the New River Gorge National River and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

April 18-24: Spring dulcimer week, Augusta Heritage Center. Instructors will include Ken Lewis, Ken Kolodner, Sam Moffat, Patty Noonan, Molly Friebert, Karen Mueller, David Schnauffer and Keith Young, teaching hammered and mountain dulcimer at carefully calibrated beginning and advanced levels. For full information, write the center at Davis & Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, West Va. 26241, or phone 304/637-1209.

April 21-22: Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliates Conference; Alumni Building, Berea College. Representatives of all the organizations helped by the fund will give progress reports; members of the public are especially invited to attend. If you would like more information, call Brenda Harris at the fund office: 606/986-9341, ext. 5023.

May 8-9: Annual meeting, Middle Atlantic Folklife Association; somewhere, we are told, in northern Delaware. This year's theme is "Geography, Landscape and Folk Culture," focusing on the traditional life of those who live by the water. For details, phone Michael Miller at 302/739-4413.

Families Growing

Stacy Lyon dropped out of her Eastern Kentucky high school before finishing her freshman year. Her reasoning was simple: "I didn't have anyone at home to take care of my daughter."

A year and a half ago, she made a reverse decision, enrolling in the Christian Appalachian Project's (CAP) encouragingly named Families Growing Together program. She could make this move because parents and children attend the program together. The parents work toward the GED and also learn what the program calls family, life and job skills. (CAP has offices at 322 Crab Orchard St., Lancaster, Ky. 40446.)

Families Growing Together is the subject of a study by Stephan Wilson, a University of Kentucky researcher, who reports that the evidence is encouraging but doesn't minimize the effects of all the familiar historic difficulties—lack of money, poor housing, inadequate child care, and troubled family and business relationships.

Even so, Wilson reports, after one year most of the participants "had made significant progress [toward] their educational goals; they had improved family relationships; they were eliminating barriers; and they were developing a social network that was broader than before."

"I've already talked to my little girl and explained that it's harder to get an education afterward if you leave school," Stacy Lyon said. "It's much easier if you just stay in and finish it."

EYE on Publications

An Appalachian New Deal: West Virginia in the Great Depression, by Jerry Bruce Thomas (University Press of Kentucky). People across much of Appalachia still remember Franklin D. Roosevelt as the president who was unique because he was their friend. Yet, as this new book and an earlier study, Paul Salstrom's *Appalachia's Path to Dependency* (1994), make clear, not everybody saw FDR that way—and certainly not everybody in West Virginia.

Indeed, despite the desperate conditions prevailing in the state even before the stock market crashed in October 1929, two subsequent governors, though Democrats, looked on the New Deal primarily as an outside force that threatened state sovereignty. This resistance, says Thomas, confirms the distracting influence of local issues and economic interests and shows how hard it was to persuade state politicians to look for national help even in the grimmest days of the Hoover administration. (Interestingly, it was a Republican governor, William Conley, who sought increases in state and federal spending for relief.)

During the 1930s, the two Democratic governors, though restricted by a state constitutional amendment limiting spending, made little use of the possibilities offered by the availability of federal matching funds. These governors, for example, bitterly denounced efforts by educators to get more money for schools, which, along with other parts of the state's infrastructure, deteriorated

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As the last surviving son of 10 children, Still has a large extended family. On his latest birthday he

sits among some of the relatives who came to Wolfpen Creek to celebrate with him.

Birthday No. 92 for James Still

One day last July more than 200 relatives and friends showed up at James Still's home on Wolfpen Creek in Knott County, Ky., for the 92nd birthday of the iconic Appalachian novelist, story writer, poet and scholar.

Still, who once referred to his home as a spot "of earth more loved than any earth," was characterized some years ago by James Dickey as "the truest and most remarkable poet that the mountain culture has produced." Part of his

greatness, said his friend the late Jim Wayne Miller, comes from "his having avoided the superficiality and sensationalism of local colorists and propagandists." Instead of following either trend, Miller observed, Still puts the speakers of his poems and the narrators of his novels at the center of the action and thus speaks from the inside out.

The arrival of Still's latest book, *An Appalachian Mother Goose*, is noted below.

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badly through the unending Depression decade.

Unlike Salstrom, who for complex reasons (different, however, from those of the local politicians) sees the New Deal as harmful to Appalachia, Thomas gives FDR's efforts high marks in several areas. Most directly important, certainly, was the fact that New Deal relief and unemployment programs literally saved the lives of many West Virginians (and many of their children) who had neither jobs nor sustenance from the land.

Overall, Thomas, who teaches history at Shepherd College, has produced a stimulating study of political egotism and dogmatism in collision with far mightier and even more baleful forces.

An Appalachian Mother Goose, by James Still; illustrations by Paul Brett Johnson (University Press of Kentucky). This book, which could have been called something like "Jack and Jill on Troublesome Creek," was a natural for Still, a writer who loves the mountains, games and children (not that this book won't find many older as well as younger readers).

The author slyly concludes his version of "Jack and Jill" with a bit of local cultural interpretation: "Jill came to life, became Jack's wife./ And soon they had a daughter;/ Jack spent his days in several ways./ The womenfolk fetched the water."

As for the central figure in a famous catastrophe:
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"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,/ And if he'd managed not to fall,/ Teeter or totter, clung to the last,/ We'd have had an egg to break our fast."

In this little book the "most revered of Appalachian writers," as Lee Smith calls him, has produced a generous measure of fun for all comers.



Book Notes

Work done for and at the Ohio Arts Council's well-known summer creative-writing institute, called The Experience of Writing, has been collected in a new book, *Teaching Writing from a Writer's Point of View*. The book includes essays and creative writing from students, teachers who have taken part in the institutes, and professional writers, such as Ron Carlson and Scott Russell Sanders, who taught at an institute.

If you're looking for practical and exciting ways to re-invigorate your classroom, or you think you might find the book useful in various other ways, request a copy (or

copies) from Bob Fox at the Ohio Arts Council, 727 East Main St., Columbus, Ohio 43205.

Another book for teachers comes from the people down at Foxfire. *Considering Assessment and Evaluation: A Foxfire Teacher Reader* addresses its troublesome subject head-on, as one commentator said, by assembling the best articles and relating them to learner-centered practice—the famed Foxfire Approach. You may order the book (\$24.95 plus \$3.00 s/h) from Foxfire, P.O. Box 541, Mountain City, Ga. 30562.

Film /Video Note

Appalshop is now taking orders for its forthcoming 60-minute video *Down to Earth: The Ralph Stanley Story*. In picturing the career of this southwest Virginia native through more than 50 years, the production tells the story of bluegrass from its early days. To reserve a copy (it will be available in spring 1999), contact Appalshop Marketing & Sales, 91 Madison Ave., Whitesburg, Ky. 41858 or phone 800/545-7467.

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