

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER



Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 29 No. 2 Spring 2000

Looking Forward

June—September: Appalachian Sampler Festival, held the third weekend of every month at Plum Nelly Campground, three miles south of Ellijay in the North Georgia mountains; arts, crafts and the rest of the usual aspects. For details, write Carlie Hammond at Box 1468, Blue Ridge, Ga. 30513 or call her at 706/492-3819

June 17: 10th annual Mountain Arts Festival, Valley of the Winds Art Gallery, Eolia, Ky., with music, storytelling, poetry reading and even food; the artwork is by Sharman, Jeff and Evan Chapman-Crane. For more information call 606/633-8652.

June 23-25: 11th annual Paul Pyle Dulcimer Daze, Tullahoma, Tenn. For information, phone 931/455-6800.

July 9-August 13: Summer session, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, with intensive dance instruction—Cajun/Creole, clogging, swing and others—jam sessions, public dances and concerts. There are other things going during this time as well. For full information, write the center at Davis & Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241, or phone 304/637-1209; e-mail, augusta@augustaheritage.com.

July 10-12: 23rd annual Uncle Dave Macon Days Old-Time Music and Dance Festival, 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 family-oriented jamboree—named for the first person to be featured on the Grand Ole Opry as an individual performer—is expected to draw more than 40,000 people and offers \$5,400 in prizes; it's the home of three national championships—old-time banjo, old-time buckdancing and old-time clogging. There's lots more, too. If you're interested, get in touch with Wendy S. Bryant, P.O. Box 5016, Murfreesboro, Tenn. 37133; phone, 615/893-2371; the 800 number is 716-7560.

July 20-22: Master Musicians Festival, Somerset, Ky. During this Thursday-Saturday weekend, this town 75 miles south of Lexington will be the scene of one of the most ambitious and diversified of festivals. You can hear traditional mountain music (Doc Watson will be on hand), rock, blues, a jug band, bluegrass pickers and, it seems, countless other types, and Thursday evening will be devoted to classical music performed by world-class musicians—violinist Rachel Barton (a festival favorite) and pianist Jeffrey Janner with the Louisville Orchestra. For details, phone 888/FUN JULY or write Master Musicians Festival, P.O.

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All in the family: Anne Weatherford and son Will came to Berea for the award presentations.



Loyal Jones Wins Weatherford Award

Loyal Jones is the latest winner of Berea College's Weatherford Award for outstanding writing about Appalachia with his book *Faith and Meaning in the Southern Uplands*, chosen by the judges as the book that "said it best" for Appalachia in 1999. The award was presented on May 23 at a luncheon in Berea.

Receiving special awards for lifetime achievement in Appalachian editing and publishing were two retiring journal editors, Sidney Saylor Farr of Berea College, editor of *Appalachian Heritage* for 15 years, and Jerry W. Williamson of Appalachian State, editor of the *Appalachian Journal* since its founding 28 years ago.

As we commented in our review of *Faith and Meaning in the Southern Uplands* (Winter 1999), Jones, the retired director of the Appalachian Center, leaves us in no doubt about his purpose. He is writing, he tells us, out of his "unhappiness with the many articles and books that have been critical of Upland people and their religious beliefs and practices." You don't exactly have to read between the lines to feel the strong resentment the author built up over the years in reaction to the incursions of "missionaries seek-

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Box 1212, Somerset, Ky. 42502.

July 20-23: Summer edition of the 53rd annual Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands, showcasing work by members of the Southern Highland Craft Guild; Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. Instead of focusing this year on a particular medium, the directors have decided to emphasize education, with craftspersons showing what they do and how they do it. Most remarkable demonstrator, perhaps, will be Lidia de Lopez, a guest weaver from Guatemala, who carries hundreds of years of patterns in her brain and uses a backstrap loom; you won't see this show very often, folks. Details from the guild at 828/298-7928.

July 22: Annual Blue Ridge Draft Horse and Mule Show, Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; a showcase of old-time draft animals and a demonstration of the skills involved in working them. For details, call 540/365-4416.

July 30-August 4: 23rd annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. As always, this summer sweat-and-frolic session will be guided by a staff of matchless writing mentors, headed by James Still and this year including Hal Crowther, Chris Holbrook, George Ella Lyon, Lee Smith and many other notables. To find out more about this long-established institution, check the contact information for June 11-17.

August 11-13: Augusta Festival, Elkins, W. Va., sponsored by the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. This celebration, which draws thousands of people, is the capstone of the summer's varied activities having to do with crafts, music, dance and folklore. See contact information for July 9.

August 25-September 2: Woodworking special, John C. Campbell Folk School. Learn to construct a traditional red oak mountain rocker; the class will emphasize post and rung construction and wet and dry joinery with mortise and tenon—previous experience is recommended. If all goes well, you'll take home a chair and a footstool. If you're not interested in chairs, the school can find plenty of other things for you to do during the summer. You can get full details on all activities from the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone 800/FOLKSCHOOL.

September 9: Annual conference, Appalachian Teachers' Network and the Southwest Virginia Association for

Multicultural Education. This event, say the sponsors, is "created for any educator, K-college, in any discipline, interested in incorporating Appalachian studies or other cultural topics into his or her classroom." Edward Cabbell, co-editor of *Blacks in Appalachia*, will be at the keynote lectern. For details, contact Jim Minick, Box 6935, Radford University, Radford, Va. 24142; 540/831-5366; jminick@runet.edu.

October 6-8: 19th annual Sorghum Makin', John R. Simon's Family Farm, 8721 Pond Creek/Carey's Run Road, Portsmouth, Ohio 45663. If you've ever wanted to play around with a sorghum evaporator or you maybe have a yen for apple butter, this could be the place for you to spend the weekend. All the eating (or, no doubt, eatin') will be accompanied by acoustical music, while butter gets churned and soap gets made. The number to call is 740/259-6337.

October 7-8: 27th annual Fall Festival, John C. Campbell Folk School, with music, dance, food, crafts—to be sure—and special activities for children. See contact information for August 25.

October 13-15: Annual Fall Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. As a theme, the directors will be enjoining you to "Color Your World, Color Your Home." For details, phone 859/986-3192.

October 19-22: Fall edition of the Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands; Asheville, N.C. See contact information for July 20-23.

October 22-29: Old-Time Week and Fiddlers' Reunion, another production by the busy bunch over at Davis & Elkins. As usual, a lineup of experienced teachers and guest master artists will be on hand to guide participants toward mastery or at least progress in old-time fiddle, banjo, guitar and hammered dulcimer. Instructors include Dwight Diller, Dave Bing, Betty Vornbrock and Chris Haddox. There'll also be an Elderhostel class on Appalachian folk culture and dance (who would have guessed?). See contact information for July 9.

October 28: 27th annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, billed as "the largest celebration of authentic folkways in Virginia." Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va. Phone 540/365-2121.

Sleigh Ride?

As is well known, Kentucky's Governor Paul Patton is a practical fellow. One of the latest proofs of the governor's hands-on engineering approach to problems came when Natural Resources Secretary James E. Bickford led Patton and other dignitaries in the symbolic cleanup of a hillside dump. (For more on the dumping problem, see the *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Winter 2000.)

As the governor contemplated the bulging garbage bags, discarded refrigerators and miscellaneous rusted-out items lying at the bottom of the ravine, he immediately saw the need for a specialized tool to haul such detritus from the depths up to the roadside. And before long, a team of state

engineers had come up with the design for the "Patton sled." After several field tests and subsequent tinkering, the agency has produced two models, large and small. Each is lightweight and can fit into the back of a pickup truck, yet is sturdy enough to handle a refrigerator. Removable side panels allow users to load and unload large items.

Officials say the new sleds are great "step savers," and they no doubt make life on the job a bit less unsavory as well. Without them, said one, "if you have a bag of trash, you have to throw and climb."

Less dumping, of course, would be nice, too, but in its 2000 session the state legislature showed little interest in doing anything about the problem. Perhaps the governor could pique the lawmakers' interest by inviting them to take a free sleigh ride down a selected garbage mountain.

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ing converts, journalists looking for strange and peculiar ways, or scholars who viewed Appalachian religion as a response or adaptation to deprived lives.”

Indeed, Jones declares, these scholars have tended to dismiss mountain religion as nothing more than “a substitute for recreation, a rationalization of poverty, or an outgrowth of ignorance.” But the central fact for the author, which he demonstrates in discussion and in copious excerpts from a variety of interviews with church members, is that Upland religion (Appalachia, the Piedmont, the Ozarks) is in truth a complex and seriously held system of beliefs that supplies as much meaning for Uplanders as Episcopalianism and Presbyterianism offer sophisticated urbanites.

In presenting the award, Appalachian Center Director Gordon McKinney commented that “letting members speak for themselves is what distinguishes Jones’s book from others on the subject. Most scholars speak in place of the believers.”

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 Alfred H. Perrin, retired publications director of Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati, the award originally commemorated 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, and since 1997 has also honored Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., longtime president of Berea.

Weatherford winners in recent years have included



Weatherford honorees show off their awards at the Berea luncheon. Seated are Sidney Farr and Loyal Jones; standing at left is Jerry Williamson. At right is Appalachian Center director Gordon McKinney, who presented the certificates to the winners.

Homer Hickam for *Rocket Boys*; Charles Frazier for *Cold Mountain*; Wilma Dunaway for *The First American Frontier*; Deborah Vansau McCauley for *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for *Colored People*; Denise Giardina for *The Unquiet Earth* (her second win) and Crandall Shifflett for *Coal Towns*.

Three Passings

•Joe Begley used to say that if he hadn’t met his wife, he would never have done much in life. “I don’t believe that,” Gaynell Begley would respond. “I think he would have raised hell, no matter what.”

The particular kind of hell Joe Begley, along with others, ended up raising led to laws controlling strip mining and to an amendment to the Kentucky constitution loosening the grip of the old broad-form deed on land containing strippable coal (previously, owners of surface property had no way to block strip mining of their land).

As prominent mountain activists, the Begleys became nationally known and were on hand in the White House when President Jimmy Carter signed the first federal strip-mining law. Joe Begley died in March at the age of 81.

•March also saw the death of another Appalachian activist, Milton Ogle, probably best known as the director of the Appalachian Volunteers in the 1960s. A 1955 Berea graduate, Ogle earlier served as community development counselor on the staff of the Council of the Southern Mountains and helped organize the Appalachian Governors’ Conference, which led to the establishment of the Appalachian Regional Commission. He was involved in the design of the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund (known as

Appalred) and served as its executive director from 1975 until his retirement for health reasons in 1998. “I think Milton Ogle had a great deal of courage and took on a lot of issues that made him very unpopular,” said Loyal Jones, a former colleague at the Council of the Southern Mountains. Ogle was 66.

•In giving a Heritage Fellowship to Doug Wallin of Crane Branch, N.C., in 1990, the representatives of the National Endowment of the Arts called him “quite simply the finest living singer of unaccompanied British ballads in southern Appalachia.” Just the year before, the North Carolina Arts Council had honored him with a Folk Heritage Award for his “natural artistry and his “reverence for the meaning and heritage of the old songs.” This remarkable performer died on March 15; he was 80.

EYE on Publications

Grandfather Mountain: A Profile, by Miles Tager (Parkway Publishers, P.O. Box 3678, Boone, N.C. 28607). South of Banner Elk, N.C., Highway 184 runs smack into the base of Grandfather Mountain, which rises at its high-
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est peak to just a few feet under 6,000. It's not only the highest, it's also considered the oldest mountain in the Blue Ridge range, and Miles Tager, a newspaperman in Boone, N.C., has now told its story.

The book traces the history of this venerable landmark from its formation nearly a billion years ago throughout its special natural history to the events of the present day. It has evoked the interest of leading naturalists through the years—William Bartram, André Micheaux and Asa Gray, for instance—and of a high school student, Worth Hamilton Weller, who gave his name to the “golden beauty” *Plethodon welleri*, also known as Weller's salamander.

In modern times the mountain has also drawn the interest of tourists and developers and thus has become a leading symbol of the tension between growth and preservation in fragile natural areas in the region—areas that for years had no zoning or subdivision regulations and did not even require building permits. Some 20 years ago, locals and state legislators were shocked into defensive action when a neighboring peak, Sugar Mountain, sprouted a 10-story condo (called, probably inevitably, Sugartop) on its summit. Now, fortunately, such blemishes on the mountain landscape are banned.

Grandfather Mountain, to be sure, is a survivor. As a visitor wrote half a century ago, “He is a sovereign at ease in a splendid court, his serenity matched only by his supremacy.”

Book Notes

A bit of northern Appalachia: Among the items available from the Center for Arts and Folklife at Mansfield University, located in a very rural Pennsylvania county on the New York border, is *Headwaters and Hardwoods: The Folklore, Cultural History, and Traditional Arts of the Pennsylvania Northern Tier*. Published in 1997, this 198-page paperback is for sale at \$15.00 plus .90 tax. Order from the center at 220 Pinecrest, Mansfield University, Mansfield, Pa. 16933.

Affrilachia, a collection of poems by Frank X Walker, has just been published by the Old Cove Press, P.O. Box

22886, Lexington, Ky. 40522, at \$12.50 plus \$3.00 s/h; Kentucky residents need to add .75 for sales tax. “The poems in *Affrilachia*,” says Gurney Norman, are “funny and sad, tragic and beautiful, angry and determined, and as filled with generosity and love as poetry by an American writer in a generation.”

Video Note

In *Cratis Williams: Living the Divided Life*, the late Appalachian scholar and inimitable speaker weaves personal recollections, research and his understanding of folk culture into a memorable rendering of the modern Appalachian experience. You may order this cassette from Media Working Group, 525 West Fifth St., Suite 321, Covington, Ky. 41011. Price: \$35.00.

In Appalachian Heritage ...

In the Spring 2000 issue of *Appalachian Heritage*, linguist Michael Montgomery questions the persistent notion that isolation has accounted for most of the dialect features among Appalachian speech communities, and he challenges scholars to develop more rigorous and systematic inquiries. Chad Sharber and Alan Mills document in a photo-essay Anglin Falls, a lovely forest in Rockcastle County, Ky., spared from logging in memory of late Berea College president John B. Stephenson. In this suite of essays and poetry concerning Appalachia's forests, Carl Kilbourne advocates Appalachian farmers learning to manage their forest lands so they might both conserve and profit from Appalachia's hardwoods.

Also in this Spring 2000 *Appalachian Heritage* are an essay concerning lost innocence, by Catherine Morgan; short stories by Regina Villiers, Jeanne Bryner and William Richardson; poetry by Shirley Valencia, Marilyn Gabriel, Nancy King, David Alan Payne, Walter Lane, Deborah Byrne and Ruth Latta; reviews of new Appalachian books; and the winners of the 1999 Denny C. Plattner *Appalachian Heritage* Awards for poetry, fiction and non-fiction prose.

Published by
Appalachian Center/Berea College
C.P.O. Box 2166
Berea, Ky. 40404-2166

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Berea, Ky. 40404
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