

# NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE

# LETTER



Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 29 No. 3 Summer 2000

## Looking Forward

**September 17-19:** "Tools for Entrepreneurship" conference, sponsored by the Appalachian Regional Commission and numerous businesses; Holiday Inn Eastgate Conference Center, Batavia, Ohio. Participants will focus on questions involved in building new economies in rural America—e.g., what tools are being developed across the country to encourage more home-grown businesses and what are the investment opportunities available for private, philanthropic and public-sectors partners. The speakers' list includes Jesse L. White, ARC federal co-chairman; Cecil H. Underwood, West Virginia governor and ARC states' co-chairman; Aida Alvarez, administrator, Small Business Administration; Douglas K. Mellinger, chairman, National Commission on Entrepreneurship; and Thomas V. Thornton, managing partner of divine interVentures, a for-profit investor in Internet businesses. For information, phone 202/884/7770.

**October 1-2:** Ninth annual Ohio Appalachian Conference, sponsored by Ohio State University Extension; Canter's Cave 4-H Camp Lodge, Jackson, Ohio. The theme "Reflections and Renewal: Ohio Appalachia in the 21st Century" will be addressed by two veteran mountain hands familiar to readers of the *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Garry Barker of Morehead State University and Phil Obermiller of the University of Cincinnati and the University of Kentucky Appalachian Center; among the other speakers will be Richard Greenlee of Ohio University and John Lily of the West Virginia Center of Culture and History. For more information, contact Deanna L. Tribe at 740/286-2177.

**October 2-3:** 21st annual Autumn Jubilee, Dan Nicholas Park, Salisbury, N.C., with more than 125 craftspersons from around the Southeast; as usual, the clogging barn will have two days of Appalachian freestyle, precision and line dancing. You'll also find adult games (log sawing), children's games and magic. To learn more, phone 704/636-2089.

**October 4-7:** 5th annual Stringbean Music and Folklife Festival, Jackson County, Ky. Dedicated to the memory of David "Stringbean" Akemon, the festival this year has added the folklife side of things but will still present the usual variety of musicians, including III Tyme Out, Lou Reid and Carolina, Larry Sigmon and a raft of others. Phone 859/287-0600.

**October 6-8:** 19th annual Sorghum Makin', John R.  
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## Varsity Drive

Seeking to raise the number of Appalachian high school graduates who go on to college, West Virginia Governor Cecil Underwood—the current states' co-chairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission—has recruited Willie Rose, one of the now-famous "rocket boys" of fiction and movie fame, to help in the effort. Rose, who clearly and colorfully exemplifies the benefits conferred by learning, has paid visits to schools to talk up the importance of a college education.

This activity is part of the background of a new ARC initiative aimed at creating the Appalachian Higher Education Network, which will target students throughout the region, north and south. Two state programs have shown the way—the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education, at Shawnee State University, in Portsmouth, and the North Central Appalachian Center for Higher Education at Bluefield State College, in Bluefield, W.Va.

Already, say officials, these two programs have encouraged hundreds of students to enroll in colleges, technical schools and other institutions. Wirt County High School, in West Virginia, has raised its college enrollment rate by more than 50 percent. And Tuscarawas County, Ohio (county seat: New Philadelphia), though more Congressional than hard-core Appalachia, reports an attention-getting rise in one high school—from 30 percent of graduates continuing on to college to 80 percent.

Under its new initiative, ARC intends to provide four  
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Looking up? See page 3



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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. Write for more information to the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902, or phone 800/FOLKSCHOOL.

**October 7-8:** Celebration of Fine Crafts, Chattanooga, produced by the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists. Some 100 craftspersons will display their work in Coolidge Park, just across the river from the arts section of town, and there'll be activities to beguile any children you may bring along; food, too. Call 615/665-0502.

**October 12-15:** 21st annual Tennessee Fall Homecoming, sponsored by and held at John Rice Irwin's Museum of Appalachia, which has been accurately described as "the most authentic and complete replica of pioneer Appalachian life in the world." The event will feature the long-established bountiful serving of art, crafts and entertainment, with performers Earl Scruggs, John Hartford, Ralph Stanley, Doyle Lawson, Mac Wiseman and a couple of hundred more. You can even watch members of the Tennessee Volunteer Infantry load and fire their cannon and chat with them about the "war for southern independence." The museum's address is P.O. Box 1189, Norris, Tenn. 37828; phone 865/494-7680.

**October 13-14:** Foxfire National Conference, "Connecting Community, Classrooms and Curriculum"; Wyndham Hotel, Atlanta, Ga. Keynoter will be Jack Shelton, director of the Program for Rural Services and Research, which he founded at the University of Alabama in 1979; among other speakers will be Dixie Goswami, coordinator of the Breadloaf Rural Teachers Network, and Bobby Ann Starnes, president of the Foxfire Fund, Inc. For more information, phone 706/746-5828 or write the Foxfire Fund, P.O. Box 541, Mountain City, Ga. 30562.

**October 13-15:** Annual Fall Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. As a theme, the directors will be enjoying you to "Color Your World, Color Your Home." You'll encounter live entertainment, hands-on children's projects, craft demonstrations and, of course, food. For details, phone 859/986-3192.

**October 19-21:** 35th anniversary celebration of CORA (Commission on Religion in Appalachia); Blue Ridge Assembly, Black Mountain, N.C. You can get more information from CORA at P.O. Box 52910, Knoxville, Tenn. 37950; phone, 865/584-6133.

**October 19-22:** Fall 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. Details from the guild at 828/298-7928.

**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?). 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](mailto:augusta@augustaheritage.com).

**October 28:** 27th annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, billed as "the largest celebration of authentic folkways in Virginia"; it's one of the top 20 October events in the Southeast, say the event raters at the Southeast Tourism Society. Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; phone 540/365-2121.

**November 4-5:** 2nd Blue Ridge Symposium, sponsored by Explore Park and supported by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy; Explore Park, Roanoke, Va. This year's theme, "Between Friends: Culture, Classroom and Museum," will be approached in a variety of ways by a variety of speakers, beginning with the keynoter, Grace Toney Edwards, head of Appalachian studies at Radford University. Museum workers, college faculty members, public school teachers, students and others will discuss such regional-research topics as music, religion, folk tales, coal mining and folk medicine, with a view to making the best use of this research in classrooms. For answers to any questions you may have, phone Shannon Brooks at 540/427-1800.

**November 14:** "Challenges for the Next Century" will be the theme of the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center's seventh annual conference, which will take place at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center in Covington. A variety of panelists will discuss issues involved in the conference theme; participants will include Paul Chellgren, CEO of Ashland, Inc.; Martha Layne Collins, former governor; Wendell Ford, former senator and governor; Sylvia Lovely, executive director of the Kentucky League of Cities; and Jane Stephenson, founder of Berea's New Opportunity School for Women; a notable visiting speaker will be C. Eugene Steurle, Washington, D.C., who chairs the technical panel advising Social Security. More information is available from the center at 800/853-2851.

**December 26-January 1:** Winter Dance Week, John C. Campbell Folk School, with American contras and squares, English country dancing, couple dances, shaped-note singing, jam sessions and still more, plus a New Year's Eve party. See contact data for October 7-8.

**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, contra. Act now—the *deadline for early registration is December 1*. To find out more, call 859/985-3142.

**January 28-February 17:** Winter session, New Opportunity School for Women. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) to this popular program for low-income women 30-55 spend three weeks learning about jobs and how to get them. Though the session itself is still months off, *the deadline for applications is November 25*; a high school diploma or GED certificate is required. For full information, contact Caroline Francis at 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403; phone 606/985-7200.

## School Days in Cincinnati

The kids come along when parents work on the GED or college studies (through Cincinnati State) at the Lower Price Hill Community School, an educational beacon for Appalachians in the city. In the school year just past, 36 students completed the GED. The school's address is 2104 St. Michael St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45201.



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challenge grants to help other state organize efforts like those in Ohio and West Virginia. (For information, phone 202/884-7770.)

Underwood puts much faith in the personal approach. "It's critically important," he says, "that we identify role models from the Appalachian Region who can motivate students to think more positively about college." That's where the rocket boys come in.

## Road to the Diner?

Appalachian Ohio seems to have discovered what mountain areas to the south have long known: When you're talking about industrial development, many companies won't listen to you if you can't offer them an expanse of flat land together with water and sewer systems. "A lot of infrastructure has to be in place to make a development," notes a consultant. "The highway is just the first piece."

The highway that provoked this particular discussion is the 170-mile road called the Appalachian Highway, stretching east from the Cincinnati suburbs across the hilly southern tier of the state. Conceived in the 1960s as a developmental highway to bring freight and money to Ohio's Appalachian sector, it has received millions of dollars from the Appalachian Regional Commission but has also acquired the nickname the "road to nowhere." (Kentucky's Mountain Parkway, conceived for similar purposes, likewise earned this designation, and from no less a figure than two-time Governor Happy Chandler, who thereby irritated thousands of Eastern Kentuckians.)

But Ohio officials point out that the existence of the highway played a part in landing a Ford transmission plant for Clermont County—which, however, is near Cincinnati and not out in the boondocks. Anyway, the road may be headed for bigger things: plans have been developed to extend it through Cincinnati itself and hook it on to the interstate highways that meet there.

As it is, though, the Appalachian Highway has provoked an economist at Ohio University in Athens to say:

"I don't know why they even have a speed limit on it. There's hardly any traffic on it." Except, that is, for the professor himself, who confesses, "I use it myself to go to Cincinnati and get a good meal."

## Yesterday's Author?

A native of upstate New York, Jack Weller came to Appalachia as a Presbyterian minister, serving in West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky as a pastor and a missionary to churches. He was a fine person in every respect, but what he's most remembered for, of course, is his book *Yesterday's People*, published in 1965 by the University of Kentucky Press in collaboration with the Council of the Southern Mountains.

As a guide to the Appalachian *mentalité*, the book found immediate and wide acceptance for the training of Vista workers and other participants in the programs of the 1960s, and it won praise from such scholars as Rupert Vance of the University of North Carolina, regarded at the time as the leading southern social scientist, and from Harry Caudill, whose writings had brought Appalachia to national attention and who said of Weller's work that it was "likely to take its place as an analytical work comparable to *The Mind of the South* by W. J. Cash."

Such judgments did not save Weller from the disfavor that always awaits pioneers as academic trends and dogmas change, and he even found himself doing penance at various conferences for supposedly having paid insufficient attention to the iniquities of the coal companies (a charge that could hardly be made against Caudill, who in fact discusses the subject in the foreword to Weller's book).

In any case, *Yesterday's People*, like any other work, was a product of its time, and it remains one of the best-known and most important books ever written about Appalachia—a claim that its author, a man of pronounced modesty, would never have dreamt of making.

Jack Weller died last January 20, at the age of 77. ■

## Fresh Air Underground?

Black lung eliminated within 15 years? Is it possible?

That's hard to say, of course, but at least the federal government has finally produced a sensible plan for cleaning up the dust in coal mines. The key point possesses profound simplicity: government inspectors and not mine operators will now have the responsibility for air sampling. Final procedural rules are scheduled to be adopted by the end of the year.

The disease, formally known as coal miner's pneumoconiosis, kills more than a thousand miners and retired miners annually, with more than 200 new cases being reported every year.

## EYE on Publications

*Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, by Durwood Dunn (University of Tennessee Press). For more than a hundred years, historians have tried to analyze the sources of East Tennessee's distinctiveness, most marked in the area's continued efforts to separate from the rest of the state. These attempts, which began with the lost state of Franklin in the 18th century before Tennessee became a state, included a strong separatist movement in the 1840s and secessionist votes in two conventions at the beginning of the Civil War. After the war this separatism found expression through the decades in the maintenance of a solid Republican majority.

How much did this distinctiveness have to do with opposition to slavery? That was the question that interested the author of this book, and when he began discovering the letters of one Ezekiel Birdseye (who could well receive billing as the co-author of the book, since the letters make up one section of it), he began to find some answers.

A native of Connecticut, Birdseye moved around the South for some 20 years before taking up residence in East Tennessee in 1838. As a well-traveled businessman who believed that slavery had nothing going for it, economi-

cally or morally, Birdseye expressed his opposition to the "peculiar institution" in letters published in antislavery newspapers such as the *Emancipator* and the *Friend of Man*.

The greatest value of the letters, says Dunn, comes from the "hidden world of private opinions about slavery expressed to him by prominent southerners in confidential conversations. This distillation of public opinion, particularly the outrage expressed over murders of slaves or cruel treatment of them, is the nearest approach documentary evidence offers to the real mind of the community." What Birdseye saw was an East Tennessee public opinion that "discountenances cruelty to the poor slave."

Dunn, who chairs the Department of History at Tennessee Wesleyan, is also the author of *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937*.

### Book Note

We often comment on the enterprise and industry of the people at the Jesse Stuart Foundation, over in Ashland, Ky. Well, we can tell you that their latest offering is a reprint of a 1982 collection, *The Best-loved Stories of Jesse Stuart*, which contains 34 stories selected from the author's total of 460 by H. Edward Richardson, professor of English at the University of Louisville; the editor provides an introductory commentary for each story.

You may order the book (cover price: \$24.00) from the publisher at P.O. Box 391, Ashland, Ky. 41114.

### In *Appalachian Heritage* ...

This summer's *Appalachian Heritage* is a travel issue—featuring poems, stories and essays that go on the road to look at life and recreation in the upland South. There are also reviews of recent literature, Robert Rennick's observations on the study of place names in the region and an article by Gordon McKinney on cultural and ethnic diversity in Appalachia.

You can obtain *Appalachian Heritage* (\$6.00 a copy, \$18.00 for a year's subscription) by writing to C.P.O. Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404-2166.

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

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