

# NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE



# LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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## Looking Forward

**June 23:** 13th annual Paul Pyle Dulcimer Festival; South Jackson Civic Center, Tullahoma, Tenn.; an afternoon (1-5 p.m.) of jamming and fun. For details, phone 931/455-6800.

**June 24-29:** Cowan Creek Mountain Music School, sponsored by Appalshop. a variety of performers (John Harrod, Rich Kirby, Christine Balfa and many others) will serve as teachers to anybody aged 11 or older who wants to learn; scholarship assistance is available for local students. Get full information from Beverly May, Appalshop, 91 Madison Ave., Whitesburg, Ky. 41858.

**June 29-July 26:** Kellogg Institute for the training and certification of developmental educators, sponsored by the National Center for Developmental Education, Appalachian State University. Established in 1979 under a grant from those well-known folks up in Battle Creek, Mich., the institute offers advanced training for developmental educators and learning-skills specialists. Though all this may sound a bit on the abstract side, and skeptics on campus like to accuse participants of learning to make cornflakes, those who take this training describe it as a vital and even profound educational and social experience. If you'd like to look into the program, contact the Coordinator, Kellogg Institute, ASU Box 32098, Boone, N.C. 28608; phone, 828/262-2128.

**July 7-14:** "Clay," a week-plus-weekend class taught by Darrell Adams, will feature the special excitement of firing a kiln with wood. This happens, of course, at the John C. Campbell Folk School, where you can learn things like making your own glazes by grinding rocks in a ball mill. If you prefer wood to clay, you'll find that in this same week they're teaching people how to make chairs from absolute scratch. You can get details on all activities from the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone, 800/FOLKSCHOOL; [www.folkschool.org](http://www.folkschool.org).

**July 7-August 11:** Music, crafts, dance and folklore, capped by a weekend festival, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, featuring a big Saturday-night concert (August 10). You may pick your week and pick your pursuit: swing dancing, woods lore, marquetry, Cape Breton dance, Cajun cooking—just to mention a very few possibilities. For full details, contact the center at 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W. Va/ 26241; phone, 304/637-1209 or 800/624-3157; [augusta@augustaheritage.com](mailto:augusta@augustaheritage.com).

**July 12-14:** 25th-anniversary 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 45,000 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, notably including a reunion of previous title winners. If you want overall details, get in touch with Wendy S. Bryant, P.O. Box 5016, Murfreesboro, Tenn. 37133; phone, 615/893-6565; the 800 number is 716-7560.

**July 14-20:** Sing Swing & String Week, Warren Wilson College, Asheville, N.C. Participants in the college's month-long Swannanoa Gathering told the sponsors that they wanted more chances to sing, and that's what they're getting in this particular week, created and led by Elise Witt. Other sessions during the gathering, which runs from July

*to page 3*

## Indexing the States

Way back in the 1970s, Walter Mondale, senator and vice president, proposed that Congress enact legislation creating an annual index of national social health, sort of an analogue to the long-established index of leading economic indicators. That idea was blown away by the Reagan revolution of 1980, but it's being revived and refined by Marc L. Miringoff, who directs the Institute for Innovation in Social Policy at Fordham.

As reported by the *New York Times*, Miringoff's state-by-state analyses produce some interesting comparisons. The child-abuse rate in Montana, for example, is more than 10 times that of Pennsylvania. Teenage suicide is nine times more common in Alaska than in New Jersey.

Overall, Miringoff follows and charts 16 measures of social health: child poverty, average weekly wage, homicide rates, degree of health insurance coverage, alcohol-related traffic deaths, and other close-to-the-bone social factors. He characterizes three of these indicators as the prime markers of the overall social health of a state: child poverty, rate of completion of high school, and health insurance. "A state does not do well without doing well in these three indicators," he notes, "and a state doesn't do badly without performing poorly in these areas."

Some of the bad news is that 18 of the 20 states with the lowest social-health scores turn out to be in the South, Southwest and West; 18 of the 20 with the highest scores

*to page 2*

## INDEXING *from page 1*

are in the Northeast and the Midwest. Though he disclaims any partisan political intentions, Miringoff acknowledges an inescapable fact: the first 18 all went for President Bush in the 2000 election. But aren't the Democrats supposed to be the ones with whom the worst-off people identify? That's the conventional wisdom, no doubt, but those 18 states didn't seem to share it.

A possible useful outcome of this approach would be the development of a concept of "social recession" on the analogy of an economic recession. It might thus serve as an incentive for remedial action while bypassing the danger of party politicking.

Some years ago the magazine *Mountain Life & Work* produced a political analysis of the Appalachian South by combining all the mountain counties into one hypothetical state. A similar approach in the social field should produce very interesting reading today.

## Hands Across the Virtual River

Virtual colleges and universities seem to make virtual good neighbors. Under a brand-new agreement, West Virginia students will now be able to attend community college in Kentucky without leaving home. The courses—some 30 of them—will be administered by the Kentucky Virtual University, which has grown at a rapid rate since its founding just a few years ago.

Students will do the course work online, and if they need to look something up, they can take a virtual book out of the virtual library. Residents of the wild-and-wonderful state will pay a bit more than Kentuckians (about 20 percent), but education executives on both sides believe that the whole deal is good news for virtually everybody.

"The Kentucky Community and Technical College System and the Kentucky Virtual University are fast becoming national leaders in distance learning," observed Michael McCall, president of the Kentucky system. "This agreement further cements our leadership role."

## Backward in the Fifth?

In the mid-1980s a group of Eastern Kentuckians marshaled into action by a native of the region, Lexington financier and philanthropist Earl Wallace, created Forward in the Fifth, a nonpartisan organization designed to cut the high school dropout rate in the Fifth Congressional District, which had been singled out by *U.S. News and World Report* as educationally the lowest ranking of all 435 congressional districts. Only 37 percent of the work force had diplomas.

In the following years the new organization obtained funding enabling it to go into every county in the district with a grassroots program aimed at improving school attendance and rewarding dedicated teachers, with combating the dropout problem as the focus. It conducts training for teachers and workshops for parents and aids schools

in such ways as acquiring grant money to improve libraries.

But these are proving to be tough times for organizations and programs that depend on grant money, government or private. Forward in the Fifth has failed to win several grants that would probably have come through in normal times, says the executive director, Ginny Eager, who has been forced to impose severe cuts in staff.

All is not lost for this pioneering organization, however, says Eager, who reports that two major applications are pending at the U.S. Department of Education and several others are in the works with various sources. Not only that, but the public is demonstrating its faith through individual contributions. These won't save the organization but they certainly offer encouragement.

Even though the news isn't good, Eager, who professes optimism, notes that Forward in the Fifth has survived tough times before and she expects to win out again.

## EYE on Publications

*W. R. Trivett, Appalachian Pictureman*, by Ralph E. Lentz II (McFarland & Co., Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, N.C. 28640). Long before Doris Ulmann and other sophisticates discovered Appalachia as the home of photographic subjects, mountain people were sitting for their portraits by roaming indigenous and self-taught "picturemen." The work of the picturemen "was perhaps no less contrived than that of outside photographers who came to the mountains," observes the author of this book, "but with the picturemen it was the mountain people who were in control of the contriving."

One such contriver was W. R. Trivett, who was born in Watauga County, N.C., in 1884 and spent his adult life, primarily as a farmer, in neighboring Avery County. In his early 20s he began supplementing his income by making portraits of his neighbors, a pursuit he kept up for some 40 years. The author, who teaches history at Appalachian State University, acquired Trivett's negatives and a number of the original prints through his grandmother, who married into the Trivett family.

Of the 460 photos found in Trivett's collection, 425 are portraits. That stands to reason, says Lenz, since, surrounded by landscapes they could look at free of charge, people would hardly pay for pictures of it. Makes sense, we guess.

The discovery in recent years of the work of picturemen, the author points out, has given us a rival perspective to the one we're accustomed to from outside photographers who "contrived their photos to conform to stereotypes and traditions attributed to the mountaineers." The majority of the people in Trivett's pictures appear to have identified themselves with other Americans of their time. What emerges is, perhaps, a new kind of Appalachian essence. Well, why not?

*John B. Stephenson, Appalachian Humanist*, compiled and edited by Thomas R. Ford; biographical sketch by J. Randolph Osborne (Jesse Stuart Foundation). John Stephenson, as many readers of the *Newsletter* will know, was president of Berea College during the latter 1980s and

*to page 4*

**LOOKING** from page 1

7 to August 3, will offer you such rare opportunities as the chance to master the uilleann pipes or to pick up a few muckle songs or to receive some expert criticism on that tune you can't seem to get quite right. To get full details, call 828/298-3434; e-mail: [gathering@warren-wilson.edu](mailto:gathering@warren-wilson.edu). The college's address is P.O. Box 9000, Asheville, N.C. 28815.

**July 18–20:** Master Musicians Festival, Somerset, Ky. During this Thursday-Saturday weekend, this town 75 miles south of Lexington will be the scene of the ambitious and now well-established festival founded by Somerset native Gabrielle Gray. Dedicated to the memory of the late Piedmont blues master John Jackson, this year's gathering will offer themes of every kind—bluegrass, Latin, jazz—by performers from all points, from Texas to Lexington to London, Ontario. (Devotees of the Muhlenberg style might wish to note that Eddie Pennington is scheduled to appear at 5:00 on Friday.) For details, phone 888/FUN JULY or write Master Musicians Festival, P.O. Box 1212, Somerset, Ky. 42502; e-mail: [mmfest@juno.com](mailto:mmfest@juno.com).

**July 18–21:** Summer fair, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. The emphasis this year is on Scottish crafts and those who practice them. (The fall fair will be held October 17–20.) For details: [shcg@buncombe.main.nc.us](mailto:shcg@buncombe.main.nc.us); 828/298-7928.

We remind you to keep an eye out for "Celebrating Scotland's Crafts," a traveling exhibition organized by the National Museums of Scotland and sponsored by the Southern Highland Craft Guild, which will be turning up here and there till September 29.

**July 28–August 2:** 25th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. This summer's session, which celebrates the 25th anniversary of this influential enterprise, will honor the memory of Albert Stewart and James Still (see *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Spring 2001). The list of mentors includes George Ella Lyon, Lee Smith, Robert Morgan, Katherine Stripling Byer, Silas House, Hal Crowther and numerous others. To find out more, write the school at P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822, or call 606/785-5475; e-mail: [jss@tgtel.com](mailto:jss@tgtel.com).

**September 14:** Annual conference, Appalachian Teachers' Network. This event, going back 11 years, was, say the sponsors, "created for any educator, K-college, in any discipline, interested in incorporating Appalachian studies or other cultural topics into his or her classroom." This year's discussions will focus on the theme, both metaphorical and literal, "Reflections on the River." For details or a presentation proposal form, contact Jim Minick, Box 6935, Radford University, Radford, Va. 24142; 540/831-5366; [jminick@runet.edu](mailto:jminick@runet.edu).

**October 4–6:** 20th 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 11–13:** Annual fall fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. For details, phone 859/986-3192.



**Alex Torres y Orquesta Los Reyes Latinos will be featured at the July 18–20 Master Musicians Festival.**

**October 20–27:** Old-Time Week with Fiddlers' Reunion folded into it—another production by the busy bees over at Davis & Elkins. With the music of West Virginia serving as the theme, 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, guitar and mountain dulcimer, and the reunion will bring together such veterans as Lester McCumbers, Melvin Wine, Woody Simmons and Leland Hall. Those who don't pluck or otherwise play can choose between classes in basketry and Appalachian folk culture. See contact information for July 7–August 11.

**October 25–27:** 28th annual Celebration of Traditional Music, presented by the Berea College Appalachian Center. Dedicated to change in the midst of continuity, the celebration managers are offering a provocative lineup: Berea College's Blue Mountain String Band, led by Al White; Bruce Molsky; Rhonda and Sparky Rucker; Carl Rutherford; the Last Old Man Band; the Tricity Messengers; Art Stamper; and Paula Nelson. This year's symposium: "Knott County Banjo: History, Tales, Tunes and Traditions," will be presented by George R. Gibson. Full information from Lori Briscoe, Berea College, C.P.O. Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404; 859/985-3257; [www.berea.edu/ApCenter](http://www.berea.edu/ApCenter).

**October 26:** 29th annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, billed, as always, as "the largest celebration of authentic folkways in Virginia," will feature a concert/workshop, sponsored by the Virginia Commission for the Arts, on early recording artists. A related show, "Hometown Stars," will run through March of 2003. Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; phone, 540/365-2121. ■

**EYE** from page 2

early 1990s, until illness drove him into early retirement and then untimely death. This book collects some of his speeches, scholarly writings and other works of various kinds and adds a personal portrait by Randy Osborne, who served as personal assistant during Stephenson's presidency.

Tom Ford, who edited the famous *Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*, and Stephenson were fellow sociologists on the faculty of the University of Kentucky; Ford was chairman of the department at the time Stephenson came to Lexington, and the two developed a relationship that, said Ford, gave him "a sort of avuncular pride." He saw his younger colleague as highly promising, both as scholar and as teacher.

What led Stephenson to take up the study of sociology? "The peculiar characteristics of human behavior were reason enough," says Ford; he "became a sociologist because the discipline offered rational methods for studying society." But at heart, Ford believes, Stephenson was much more a social anthropologist, an observer of society, than a quantitative assessor in the current sociological mode.

Indeed, anyone who knew Stephenson would be more inclined to call him a participant than an observer. And when he became a college president, at least one friend wondered whether his sense of humor might prove a handicap amid the solemnities of the higher education executive suite. Apparently it did not. Perhaps this was because, as a keen observer of social behavior, Stephenson understood college faculties. "Faculties," he was heard to say, "are people who think otherwise."



**Book Note**

Ever industrious, the gang over at the Jesse Stuart Foundation reminds us that they offer for sale books by George Ella Lyon. Titles currently billboarded include *Mama Is a Miner*, *Here and Then*, *A Traveling Cat* and *A Sign*. Fiction, time travel, a touch of autobiography—it's all here.

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**John B. Stephenson, 1984**

As both publisher and bookseller, the foundation has a great many other offerings as well. You can check the Web site—[jsfbooks.com](http://jsfbooks.com)—or write to P.O. Box 669, Ashland, Ky. 41105.



**In *Appalachian Heritage* ...**

The Spring 2002 *Appalachian Heritage* features original poetry by Jeanne Bryner, Llewellyn McKernan, Linda Marion, Edwina Pendarvis and Lynne Powell, as well as essays by Joyce Compton Brown, Gina Herring and Marianne Worthington exploring the works of these five Appalachian poets. There are also new short stories, personal essays, reviews of new literature and the announcement of the Plattner Award winners for 2001.

*Appalachian Heritage* is available (\$6 a copy, \$18 for a year's subscription) from the Appalachian Center, C.P.O. Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404.

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