

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

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 a dash of 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 5-6: 23rd 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. The Saturday headliners will be the group Too Much Sylvania, and on Sunday you can listen to Mel McDaniel. You'll also find adult games (log sawing), children's games and magic. To learn more, phone 704/636-2089.

October 5-6: 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 615/385-1904.

October 10-13: 23rd 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." Selected by the American Bus Association as one of the top 100 events in North America, the homecoming will feature the long-established bountiful serving of art, crafts and entertainment, with performers Doc Watson, Ralph Stanley, Kenny Baker, Will Keys, Rhonda Vincent, Raymond Fairchild (five-time world champion banjo player), Mac Wiseman, the Hammer Sisters, the Dismembered Tennesseans and a couple of hundred more. Sidebar events include such goings-on as antique-tractor parades and demonstrations of sheep herding with dogs; crafts galore, too, of course. The museum's address is P.O. Box 1189, Norris, Tenn. 37828; phone 865/494-7680.

October 11-13: Annual Fall Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. For details, phone 859/986-3192.

October 17-20: Fall edition of the Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands; Asheville, N.C. Full information from the Southern Highland Craft Guild at 828/298-7928.

October 20-27: Old-Time Week with Fiddlers' Reunion

folded into it—an item in the continuing entertainment offered 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
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Still Celebrating, Still Traditional

Launched back in 1974, the Berea College Appalachian Center Celebration of Traditional Music returns October 25-27 in its 28th appearance, with its customary array of star performers.

The underlying idea of the celebration, its founder, Loyal Jones, said in the beginning, was to "feature strictly old-time traditional music." Bluegrass and other newer forms were fine, Jones said, but "we feel that the old styles traditional to the mountains are not heard so much any more, and so we want to encourage them." Whether you think of it as encouragement or preservation, the celebration has through the years stuck close to the essence of Jones's proclaimed purpose and in the process has become an Appalachian regional institution.

Seeking to explore the possibilities of change in the midst of continuity, the celebration managers are offering a provocative lineup for this year's jamboree: 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 Tri-City Messengers; Art Stamper; and Paula Nelson.

These performers will appear in concert on Friday and Saturday evenings, beginning at 7:30. Each of these gala sessions will be followed by square dancing.

The daylight hours of Saturday will be devoted to instrumental workshops and informal performances, highlighted at two o'clock by a workshop: "Knott County Banjo: History, Tales, Tunes and Traditions," presented by George R. Gibson. If you survive all the activity, you can take part in a Sunday-morning hymn sing with festival musicians.

For full information, contact Lori Briscoe, Berea College, C.P.O. Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404; 859/985-3140; www.berea.edu/ApCenter. ■

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Hall. Those who don't pluck or otherwise play can choose between classes in basketry and Appalachian folk culture. For full information, contact the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; 800/624-3157 or 304/-637-1209; www.augustaheritage.com.

October 24-26: Fourth annual national conference, "The Women of Appalachia: Their Heritage and Accomplishments," sponsored by Ohio University Zanesville. As you might imagine, the papers and discussions in these sessions will cover a wide variety of areas and topics, from labor relations to children's literature to migration patterns and social networks. Call 740/588-1401, or e-mail ouzconted@ohio.edu.

October 25-27: 28th annual Celebration of Traditional Music, presented by the Berea College Appalachian Center. (See separate story.)

October 26: 29th annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival. (See separate story.) A related show, "Hometown Stars," will run through March of 2003. Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; phone, 540/365-2121.

November 2: Annual meeting, Tennessee Folklore Society; Laurel Theater, 1538 Laurel Ave., Knoxville. Described as "newly resurgent and refurbished," the society is also

promoting a concert for the Friday evening preceding this Saturday gathering. Information from Brent Cantrell (CantrellB@netstarcomm.net) or Charles Wolfe (cwolfe@frank.mtsu.edu).

December 26-January 1: Christmas Country Dance School, Berea College, directed by Joe Tarter. Participants may participate in a variety of classes, including (but not limited to) English clog, country and morris dance, beginning and advanced rapper dance, percussive dance, Appalachian clogging and square dance, and contra. Act now—the deadline for early registration is November 1. To find out more, call 859/985-3000, ext. 3431 or 3789.

February 2-22: 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, and also about themselves and what they can do. The school offers career counseling throughout the year and also puts on a number of workshops that are open to anybody. Though the winter session itself is still months off, the deadline for applications is December 18; a high school diploma or GED certificate is required. For full information, contact Kim Short at 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403; phone 859/985-7200.

Letter: For Ray Hicks

TO THE EDITORS:

To those that haven't had the pleasure of hearing Ray Hicks tell stories, let me say that he opens his heart and his mouth and out pours the drama and humor of life. He is a beacon in the storytelling world and his wisdom, generosity and uniqueness have been a gift to the world. [Faithful readers of the APPALACHIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER will recall our review, in the Winter 1997 issue, of Robert Isbell's book *The Last Chivaree*, about the Hicks family and the revival of traditional storytelling.—Editors.]

As some of you know, Ray was diagnosed with advanced cancer last year. But even as his body is wearing out, he is still very much engaged in life. The hospice folks are doing a good job helping him keep his pain down. And his wife Rosa continues to tend to him with great love and devotion.

The Hickses have always lived a simple mountain life, living mostly off the land. Their main source of cash income has been collecting ginseng and telling stories locally six to eight times a year. Since his health problems arose, Ray hasn't been able to get out and that has been a hardship financially. A special fund has been started, and if you would like to contribute, please send donations with checks made out to: The Ray and Rosa Hicks Fund, c/o International Storytelling Center, 116 W. Main Street, Jonesborough, TN 37659. All money will go to help Ray and Rosa in any way possible.

Also, please keep the Hicks family in your loving thoughts. There is still room for a little miracle and Ray just might be meant to live another few decades and tell to a few more thousand listeners! Thanks so much.

CONNIE REGAN-BLAKE
Asheville, N.C.

Pollutants

Among not-to-be-missed current items and trends, we note the discovery that Appalachia not only receives air pollutants from other areas but produces them itself. The result of a study by the Southern Appalachian Mountains Initiative, this finding ends something of a long-standing debate, and is perhaps best summed up in the comment of Virginia's "air pollution director" (despite the title, he's presumably opposed to pollution) that it's "a pretty good summary and a pretty good basis" for action.

Nor should readers miss (if anyone has) the news that CBS is planning a new TV comedy, in which a family from "mountainous, rural areas" will move from their cabin to the splendors of a mansion in Beverly Hills and learn about opulent urban life. But hasn't that already happened, and a long time ago, too? Yes, it has, but those were actors pretending to be Beverly Hillbillies. Now, as the *Washington Post* nicely puts it, "they'll be real-live rubes from the South."

The *Lexington Herald-Leader* editorially suggested that, reciprocally, the CBS executives be plopped down in 40 acres with a mule and a hog, while we watch to see how well (or whether) they survive the first year. The winners would then receive a moonshine still to help them through the second year. To which we can only add: the executives should be required to drink the product of the still. That'll show 'em!

Star Kids

This year's Blue Ridge Folklife Festival at Ferrum College will feature the "Children of the Stars" music stage. Among
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The Last Old Man Band will be on stage at Berea's Celebration of Traditional Music.

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the starring musicians will be Roni Stoneman, the "First Lady of Banjo" and daughter of Grayson County's Ernest "Pop" Stoneman, playing in her unmatched style and talking about the family's recording career, which began in 1924. Janette Carter, daughter of A. P. and Sara Carter, will sing Carter Family favorites and recount tales of her Scott County family's rise to national radio and recording stardom. Now in its 29th year, Virginia's largest celebration of regional folkways will take place Saturday, October 26, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Known for its presentation of authentic traditions, the Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, say the sponsors, covers the Ferrum College campus with the tastes, smells and sounds of western Virginia folkways. More than 20 old-time foods—from fried apple pies to black-pot chicken—are prepared by local community groups. And, of course, there will be craftspeople and plenty of music. Three stages will offer string-band music, gospel, blues, balladry, and early bluegrass throughout the day. The Mountain Comforts Quilt Show presents 100 of the region's finest quilts. Coon dog and draft horse contests highlight the abilities of working animals, while the vintage car, street rod, race car and antique tractor displays tell of the Blue Ridge's mechanical history. Children can find fun in the petting zoo and old-time games area.

The Blue Ridge Folklife Festival has twice been selected as a top-20 event by the Southeast Tourism Society. For more information, contact the Blue Ridge Institute & Museum at 540-365-4416 or by e-mail at bri@ferrum.edu. Additional information and directions to Ferrum are available at www.blueridgeinstitute.org.

"The Best Chance"

"Many people who meet me wonder why I do this work," says Evelyn Dortsch of Charleston. "I tell them proudly that I myself was once a welfare mother."

Just what is this work? As reported in *Ironweed*, published by the Appalachian Women's Alliance, Evelyn Dortsch formed the Direct Action Welfare Group to "fight for the right of people living in poverty to be heard." Having left an abusive husband, she went to college, supporting herself on welfare—a plan that worked until, after welfare reform went into effect in her senior year, she was told that if she wanted to continue receiving assistance she should quit school and go to work at McDonald's.

Refusing to bow to this indignity, she went off welfare but managed to finish her courses at West Virginia State College, graduating magna cum laude with a bachelor's in social work. "It was a struggle," she said, "but in the end it was worth it."

Through her group, she is now working to help others caught in the same kind of bind, seeking to ensure that people receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) will have "the best chance possible to improve their lives."

EYE on Publications

Ebbing and Flowing Springs, by Jeff Daniel Marion (Celtic Cat Publishing, Knoxville, Tenn.). Subtitled "New
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and *Selected Poems and Prose, 1976-2000*," this collection can make the reader pretty well acquainted with the career of this poet—as Marion is primarily—who not only writes about Appalachia but has devoted a great deal of effort to helping other writers in the region. Something of a contemporary pioneer, he received the first literary fellowship awarded by the Tennessee Arts Commission (1978) and has been honored in a literary festival (Emory & Henry).

Thinking back to the carpentry skills of his great-grandfather, Marion comments: "As a worker in words whose gift comes partly from that-long ago worker in wood, I offer these writings, testimonies to a place and time deep in the heart's core." And an important element of that place is the Holston River, its waters and its flats—elements that turn up in much of the verse. Sometimes the point is as simply put as this: "I have come to this house/ on the Holston, drawn by waters/ I cannot fathom." Or:

In the mountains

—one sees

human-heartedness.

In water, wisdom.

Bluegrass Odyssey, by Carl Fleischhauer and Neil Rosenberg (University of Illinois Press). A "documentary in pictures and words, 1966-86"—the pictures being more than 200 of Fleischhauer's photographs of "festival stages, taverns, grassy hillsides, country music halls, upscale clubs, barbershops, hillbilly storefront bars, and parking-lot jam sessions where bluegrass thrives"—and the words giving us Rosenberg's commentary.

Starting out as Ohio college boys at the beginning of the 1960s, the two discovered bluegrass, the "music of Appalachian emigrants and other working-class people" heard on "weekend nights in hillbilly bars, on Sunday morning gospel broadcasts from tiny radio stations, and at country music parks on Sunday afternoons." As they moved up the academic ladder, these chaps kept close to bluegrass, and they never looked back. Today Rosenberg

teaches folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland (and is the author of *Bluegrass: A History*) and Fleischhauer performs complex media duties at the Library of Congress.

Now they have produced this big family—perhaps, community—album, showing places, people and relationships. The chapter titles suggest the book's progression: intensity, destination, transaction, community, family, the Monroe myth. Monroe *myth*? Well, not myth in the sense of a made-up story, the author of the text hastens to tell us. He's using *myth* in the contemporary and rather vague sense as denoting a way of organizing personal or even general experience. "Through his music," Rosenberg says, Monroe "narrated his own life: rural past, seasons, love won and lost, family, religion, home." In doing so, of course, he managed to invent a genre—not something that happens every day. "He took the old music," Jean Ritchie is quoted as saying, "and made it new."

■
In Appalachian Heritage ...

The summer issue of *Appalachian Heritage* is chock-full of good reading: essays, fiction—including a new Wilgus tale from Gurney Norman—nearly a score of new poems from throughout the region, and reviews of recent literature, including Connie Brosi's discussion of Chris Holbrook's controversial *No Heroes*. This summer's issue of Appalachia's literary journal is the last under the editorship of James Gage, who is returning full-time to his duties as professor of English and theater at Berea College. George Brosi, teacher, bookman and long-time student of Appalachian life and culture, has been named the new editor of *Appalachian Heritage*.

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