

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

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, which was founded in 1987 by Jane B. Stephenson and now has produced 373 graduates, offers career counseling throughout the year and also puts on a number of workshops that are open to anybody. *Note:* The school is now accepting applications for the summer session, which begins on June 1; *the deadline for applications is April 25*; 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.

March 1-2: "Kentucky Crafted: The Market," 22nd annual wholesale-retail show, for the general public and trade buyers, with more than 300 exhibitors of traditional, folk and contemporary crafts, two-dimensional visual art, musical recordings, books, videos and food products, along with entertainment and craft activities for children 4-12; new this year is a one-of-a-kind gallery section; Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, Louisville. Sponsored by the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program, a state agency, the market serves as a major sales outlet for Kentucky businesses, generating \$2 million to \$3 million in annual sales. For more information, consult the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program: 888/592-7238; www.kycraft.org; kycraft@mail.state.ky.us.

March 28-30: 26th annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Ky. This year's theme: "Building a Healthy Region: Environment, Culture and Community." For full details, contact Mary Kay Thomas at Marshall University: 304/696-2904; mthomas@marshall.edu. Web site is www.appalachianstudies.org.

April 6-11: Spring Dulcimer Week, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Jody Marshall, Ken Kolodner, Patty Looman and Rick Fogel will offer instruction in the hammered dulcimer; Anne Lough, Heidi Cerrigione, Lee Rowe and Lorraine Lee Hammond will teach mountain dulcimer. (Instruments will be available for loan or rental.) You can also receive tutelage on the autoharp from Les Gustafson-Zook. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241, or phone 304/637-1209; www.augustaheritage.com.

April 9-10: Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliates Conference; Alumni Building, Berea College. Representa-

tives of all the organizations helped by the fund will report on their activities, and members of the public are especially invited to attend. For more information, phone 859/985-3023.

April 11-13: Appalachian Women's Alliance tenth-anniversary celebration; Abingdon, Va.; 540/745-5345 or AWA@swva.net.

April 24-27: 16th annual MerleFest, Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, N.C. A jamboree in which everybody seems to be a headliner; the list of performers includes Emmylou Harris, Ricky Skaggs and Thunder, Ralph Stanley
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Houses for Appalachia

For almost 25 years, Appalachia Habitat for Humanity (AHH) and its building partner, the Scott-Morgan Community Development Corporation (SMCDC), have been putting up new houses and rehabilitating existing houses in their East Tennessee counties. Recognized as one of the top 20 producers among the 1,900 international Habitat for Humanity affiliates, AHH, together with SMCDC, has over the years produced more than 120 new single-family residences and has rehabbed or rebuilt more than 2,000 existing houses.

One important reason for the success of AHH has been its association with the Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises (FAHE), which provides technical assistance, mortgage financing and funding know-how, and leadership and training to local programs. AHH was one of the founding members of FAHE, which was formed 22 years ago by several small housing organizations.

Currently the federation includes 33 housing providers in Central Appalachia—Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Altogether, these programs have built some 6,000 houses, owner-occupied and rental, and have rehabbed more than 30,000 homes. In the process FAHE and its member groups have become a big business, with total assets exceeding \$215 million. During the past fiscal year alone, FAHE lent more than \$5 million and leveraged another \$17 million.

Now, to honor the 21-year service of President David Lollis, who was feted at a retirement dinner in January, FAHE is establishing a "Voice for Appalachia" Endowment to support advocacy, particularly in relation to affordable housing, for Central Appalachia.

Information about FAHE is available from P.O. Box 908, Berea, Ky. 40403; 859/986-2321. ■

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and a clutch of other notables. For details, phone 800/343-7857.

May 1-3: 13th annual Boxcar Pinion Memorial Bluegrass Festival, Raccoon Mountain Campground (just off I-24), Chattanooga, Tenn. Among the performers on hand will be David Parmley and Continental Divide, Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, Charlie Waller and the Country Gentlemen, Mountain Heart, the James King Band, IIIrd Tyme Out and David Peterson and the 1946 Band. You can get full details from Cindy Pinion at 706/820-2228.

May 9-11: 34th annual Appalachian Festival, Coney Island, Cincinnati, sponsored by the Appalachian Community Development Association. There's a small admission fee: \$7. ACDA's mailing address is P.O. Box 996, Cincinnati, Ohio 45201; phone 513/251-3378. The organization's Web address: www.appalachianfestival.org.

May 23-25: Old-Time Fiddlers and Bluegrass Festival, Fiddlers Grove Compound, Union Grove, N.C. Held every year during Memorial Day weekend, this truly old-time event has not missed a beat since its founding in 1924. There'll be the usual competition, and this year's special guests, Doc Watson and his grandson Richard Watson, will give a concert on Saturday evening, May 24. Also appearing during the festival will be the Cockman Family, the Trantham Family, Laura Boosinger, Hal Beaver & Bluegrass, Wicker & Jones and the Cane Creek Cloggers, as well as J. P. Fraley and Robin Warren. Information: 704/539-4417; www.fiddlersgrove.com; fiddlersgrove@yadtel.net.

May 16-18: Spring fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. Some 120 guild members will display their work, which will of course be available for purchase. More information can be obtained from the guild office: 859/986-3192.

May 30: "Forestry Issues and Needs in Kentucky," a one-evening public forum sponsored by the Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission; Student Center, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. The American Southeast yields more timber than any other country in the world; the forum will address issues related to this high level of production. Information from the commission at 14 Reilly Road, Frankfort, Ky. 40601; www.kyeqc.net; EQC@mail.state.ky.us.

Environmental General

When Kentucky Governor Paul Patton appointed James Bickford secretary of the state Natural Resources and Environmental Cabinet in 1995, the new secretary quickly showed that he was serious about the job. A retired brigadier general and native of Harlan County in Appalachian Kentucky, Bickford began intensive campaigns against straight sewer pipes and illegal dumps, he oversaw the collection and disposal of millions of old tires littering the landscape, he worked to regulate large confined-animal operations and he fostered legislation to improve logging operations in the state.

Bickford set teams to work identifying illegal dumpers and forced these miscreants to collect smashed toys, rotted tires, defunct appliances and ill-assorted household garbage from mountains of waste. (APPALACHIAN CEN-

TER NEWSLETTER, Fall 1999.) "Once you pick up several tons of trash, including dirty diapers and other unpleasant items," the general declared with admirable understatement, "you won't dispose of your garbage illegally again."

Operating in a realm in which credit is often hard to come by, Bickford earned praise from environmentalists. "His record of accomplishments shows that he took his role as protector of the environment seriously," said one. Said another: "He just wanted to make Kentucky a cleaner, safer and healthier place for all Kentuckians."

General Bickford died on October 25.

Veteran Volunteer

In 1960, Julia Stammer succeeded her late husband, Raymond Drukker, as executive director of the Appalachian Fund, an endowment created in 1950 by Herbert Faber of Cincinnati and taken over by Berea College in 1987. The fund has served for the past half-century as a provider of practical aid in health and other fields. (Among its beneficiaries has been this newsletter.)

Judy, as she was always known, also served as a fundraiser for Berea College; in both of these positions she worked as an unpaid volunteer, and these were only two of her many such activities. She held leadership posts in the Berea College Alumni Association (she belonged to the class of 1930), the Girl Scouts, the United Way, the Red Cross and numerous other organizations.

The first woman to receive the Berea College President's Medallion, Mrs. Stammer received the Award of Spirit and a Special Merit Award from the alumni association.

Mrs. Stammer died at her home on November 19.

Endangered Molecules

Waterways, coal lands—nowadays something always seems to be going on at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The current talk is that the EPA is about to issue rules exempting more than one-third of U.S. waterways from protection under the Clean Water Act. If that happens, as far as the feds are concerned isolated wetlands and streams that sometimes go dry will have to shift for themselves; states, of course, can continue to regulate the waterways.

Big farmers (like those represented by the American Farm Bureau Federation) and developers have expressed restrained pleasure at the prospect of dealing with state rather than federal authorities. Overtly thrilled is the president of the Kentucky Coal Association, who seems to regard persons concerned with the environment as fanatics who seek to protect "any place where two water molecules come together."

The change would indeed be a great favor to the coal industry, noted the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, because it would "legitimize its practice of burying small, wet-weather streams under mountains of rock and debris."

This federal move would come despite a just-released U.S. Geological Survey study which shows that smaller streams connect more to larger waterways than has been

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From the Past ...



Settlement Institutions of Appalachia Photoarchives/Berea College Hutchins Library Special Collections

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thought. If pollution is allowed to enter the smaller streams, said the hydrologist who conducted the study, it will flow into larger rivers.

The U.S. Forest Service appears to be getting into the same kind of act. It will swap two tracts in the Daniel Boone National Forest, in southeastern Kentucky, for a parcel of land adjacent to the forest. The move appears to be logical, except for the unfortunate fact that the coal company that is acquiring the tracts intends to mine this mountaintop, which is only a mile upstream from already-troubled Buckhorn Lake.

Safety for Small Mines?

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, fatal accidents occur at small coal mines (those with five or fewer employees) twice as often as at larger mines. Accordingly, said Dave Lauriski, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health, the Mine Safety and Health Administration has established a new office to look for answers. "This new division," Lauriski said, "will enable us to better focus our resources on reducing these accident and injury rates."

The office will develop training materials specifically designed for small mines and will help them comply with federal safety regulations. Sound good? Yes, of course, but the agency added a point. The new office is supposed to identify regulations that create an "undue burden" on small operators and develop alternative ways to provide miners with the same level of protection.

That idea seemed to worry Joe Main, a safety official of the United Mine Workers. "I would hope," he said, "they wouldn't be setting up an agency that would be aimed at

reducing enforcement activities there or reducing the standards that miners have."

We hope not, too, Joe.

Less Distress?

Optimism marked the mood of officials of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) as they went into the current fiscal year. The number of counties classified as "economically distressed" will drop by about 25 percent, officials said, by the end of the next fiscal year.

The "Appalachia" spoken of here is, of course, congressional Appalachia, a much larger region than any of the traditional Appalachias—it includes 410 counties in 13 states from New York to Mississippi. Projections show that in fiscal year 2004, beginning next October 1, the number of distressed counties will decline to 91, a net reduction of 30 from the current figure.

Some of the inhabitants in the cited counties seem to be less than happy about the change. For one thing, if a county drops off the distressed list, it loses eligibility for some federal funding, since the law requires that half of all ARC dollars must go to distressed areas. This year that meant that the 118 distressed counties received \$33 million from the \$66 million appropriated, while the other 292 Appalachian counties had to scarp for pieces of the remaining \$33 million.

Besides, favorable-seeming statistics don't always correlate with desirable change. In the past few years Cherokee County, N.C., has lost two clothing factories and a furniture plant, yet it's losing its distressed label. The county's economic-development director flatly says, "Things have

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definitely gotten worse." A commission spokesman agrees that problems continue to exist in the reclassified counties, but points to overall progress. Cherokee, however, seems to miss its factories.

EYE on Publications

Black Days, Black Dust: Memories of an African American Coal Miner, by Robert Armstead, as told to S. L. Gardner (University of Tennessee Press). Described as "the first published memoir by an African American coal miner," this book tells the story of forty years spent digging under the hills of West Virginia.

It's a family story, since Armstead's father worked in the mines as a horse driver. Despite the spectacle presented by his father's fight to support his family, the author found himself fascinated by coal mining. He went into the mines in 1947. "With few exceptions," he said, "I enjoyed every day of my work life."

"Although this book is more about a West Virginia miner than it is about a black West Virginia miner," one reviewer noted, "Armstead keeps the reader aware of the fact that racial bias was very much a part of the scenario. While black and white miners worked side by side thousands of feet underground, once they were on the surface, segregation was in evidence."

Unfortunately, Armstead did not live to see his book appear. He died of black lung, 11 years after he retired from the mines.

Book Notes

In the 2002 edition (Volume 13) of the *Appalachian Women's Journal*, 45 women and girls "share their

thoughts and dreams, their sorrows and joys." The book is available for \$10 from the Appalachian Women's Alliance, P.O. Box 688, Floyd, Va. 24091.

In *Real Country Humor: Jokes From Country Music Personalities*, songwriter and joke collector Billy Edd Wheeler presents the results of his researches among recording artists and writers—Dolly Parton, Vince Gill, Charley Pride and a host of others. The publisher is August House, P.O. Box 3223, Little Rock, Ark. 72203.



In *Appalachian Heritage* ...

From Editor George Brosi: The Winter 2003 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* is a winner! The featured author is none other than Lee Smith, whose most recent novel, *The Last Girls*, has been on several best-seller lists. The issue includes previously unpublished fiction by her and articles about her by the young novelist Silas House and Smith's editor at Algonquin, Shannon Ravenel, as well as a strong piece of literary criticism by Carmen Rueda, an American literature scholar who has lived her whole life in Barcelona, Spain. Complementing this focus on Lee Smith, a Buckhannon County, Va., native, is the memoir by another native of that county, Bo Ball, author of *Appalachian Patterns*, and poetry by Lisa Parker, whose mother hailed from there. The issue also includes a previously unpublished "lost chapter" by Lee Maynard of *Crum*, the West Virginia novel that Tamarack rejected as being too scatological. Lots more poetry, fiction and nine book reviews finish out the Winter 2003 *Appalachian Heritage*, all made more alluring by striking photography.

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