

# NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE



# LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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## Looking Forward

**June 20-August 2:** Swannanoa Gathering, a series of weekend workshops held on the campus of Warren Wilson College, outside Asheville, N.C. Beginning with Cherokee Heritage Weekend, the series progresses through dulcimers, swing and other delights, ending with guitars; phone, 828/298-3434; e-mail: [gathering@warren-wilson.edu](mailto:gathering@warren-wilson.edu); Website: [www.swangathering.com](http://www.swangathering.com).

**July 6-August 10:** Music, crafts, dance and folklore, capped by the three-day Augusta Festival (August 8-10), Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. You may pick your week and pick your pursuit: Irish culture (July 20-25), rhythm guitar, hula dance, Cajun cooking, blues and bluegrass—just to mention a very few of the varied offerings. The Balkans? Cape Breton? These traditions are represented, too. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; [www.augustaheritage.com](http://www.augustaheritage.com); phone, 304/637-1209.

**July 11-13:** 26th annual Uncle Dave Macon Days Old-Time Music and Dance Festival, Cannonsburgh Pioneer Village, Murfreesboro, Tenn. Recently picked by tourism specialists as one of the best 100 events in North America (just two per state), while maintaining its status 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 a lot 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 17-19:** Master Musicians Festival, Somerset, Ky. During this Thursday-Saturday weekend, this town 75 miles south of Lexington will again be the scene of the flourishing extravaganza founded by Somerset native Gabrielle Gray. This year the festival celebrates its 10th anniversary with its usual mix of classical and varied popular styles. Cellist Petra Tabor leads off on Thursday evening, to be followed on Friday and Saturday by groups with every kind of name you've ever heard of: Doctor's Orders, Nine Ball, Black Coffee, the John Cowan Band with Vassar Clements, Bad Joke, Kettleheads, the Goose Creek Symphony, and on and on. For details, phone 888/FUN JULY or write Master Musicians Festival, P.O. Box 1212, Somerset, Ky. 42502; Website: [mastermusiciansfestival.com](http://mastermusiciansfestival.com); e-mail:

[mmfest@juno.com](mailto:mmfest@juno.com).

**July 17-20:** 17th annual Scopes Trial Play and Festival, Dayton, Tenn. In this production, which is sponsored by the local chamber of commerce and Bryan College, the famous 1925 "monkey trial" confrontation between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow will be reenacted in five performances in the original courthouse (still in use) Thursday through Sunday and will be accompanied by various other kinds of entertainment. You can also take a tour featuring spots associated with participants in the trial and with the national figures (e.g., H. L. Mencken) who came to town to cover the story, which ended tragically with the death of Bryan. More details from the chamber of commerce at 423/775-0361.

**July 17-20:** Summer edition of the 56th annual fairs, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. The sponsors chose this year's theme, "Traditions

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## Coal Wars

A while back (Fall 2002) we reported on an interesting development in the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). David Lauriski, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health, had just announced the establishment of an office charged with investigating the disturbing rate of fatal accidents in small mines (those with five or fewer employees). Somewhat disconcertingly, Lauriski had added that in the course of its work the new office would also identify regulations that created an "undue burden" on small operators.

Now Lauriski has taken concrete action with a proposal to permit the quadrupling of dust levels in underground mines if miners wear respirators. It seems that the secretary had originally offered the idea back in 1997, when he was general manager of a Utah coal company. Though Lauriski is apparently free of a technical conflict of interest, since he's been off the company payroll for more than a year, West Virginia Congressman Nick Rahall decided that he didn't like the smell of the whole thing and asked the Labor Department inspector general to look into it.

It's not as if the inspector general didn't have anything to do. Indeed, trouble seems to keep swirling through the offices of the agency. Just recently, Jack Spadaro, superintendent of the MSHA's training academy in Beckley, W.Va., found himself forced into taking "administrative leave"—a development that came after he criticized the

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agency's investigation of the great October 2000 slurry spill in Martin County, Ky. (*Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Fall 2000 and later issues). A true whistle-blower who appears to be suffering the usual fate of whistle-blowers, Spadaro asserted that investigators were leaving "unexamined serious deficiencies" in the agency's review and approval process regarding the impoundment that had collapsed. Meanwhile, his administrative leave seems to be turning into a pink slip.

We had also earlier reported on the U.S. Forest Service's intention to swap two tracts in the Daniel Boone National Forest for a parcel of land adjacent to the forest. Now an ad hoc coalition of environmental groups has sued to prevent the exchange, which it believes would lead to the decapitation of a coal-bearing mountain. Decades of strip mining, culminating in mountain-top removal, declared the poet-ecologist Wendell Berry, have "gone far toward the destruction of a whole region." And beyond that, he noted, "we cannot immunize the continents and the oceans against our contempt for small places and small streams. Small destructions add up."

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and Innovations," as a backdrop for their creation of a new permanent-collection gallery, which is now under construction; visitors will see the work of some 170 contemporary craft makers in a historical context. (The fall edition comes out October 16-19.) Find out more from Paige Johnson at 828/298-7928; paige@craftguild.org. Website: www.southernhighlandguild.org. You may write the guild at P.O. Box 9545, Asheville, N.C. 28815.

**July 20-26:** It's intergenerational week at the John C. Campbell Folk School, with space and staff attention reserved for parents and grandparents with youngsters aged 12 to 17. The idea is for the young person and the adult to work side by side "in a place of calm amidst a hectic world." The classes offer the school's customary range of possibilities, from basketry and blacksmithing to weaving and woodworking. If you have a child or a grandchild of the appropriate age, the two of you can even build a 15-foot boat during this week (the sponsors suggest that before you start you plan a way to get your boat home). You can get details on these and all other activities from the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone, 800/FOLKSCHOOL; www.folkschool.org.

**July 27-August 1:** 26th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. The list of mentors for this summer's renewal of the yearly jamboree includes a mixture of rising stars and veteran luminaries—among them, George Ella Lyon, Silas House, Ron Rash, Leatha Kendrick, Pamela Duncan, Chris Holbrook, Marie Bradby and Anne Shelby. For full details, write the school at P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822, or call 606/785-5475; e-mail: jss@tgtel.com.

**October 10-12:** Annual Fall Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky., boasting an iconoclastic theme: "It's Not the Same Old Fair!" Living up to its rating by the Kentucky Tourism Council as a Top Ten Festival, the fair will present more than 40 new artisans along with its veteran members. For more details, phone 859/986-3192; e-mail, info@kyguild.org.

**October 23-25:** Fifth annual national conference: "The Women of Appalachia: Their Heritage and Accomplishments," sponsored by Ohio University Zanesville. Participants will talk about three realms—cultural, socioeconomic and, more specifically, Appalachian communities. Attendance is limited to 200, not all of whom, we are told, have to be female. If you would like to submit a paper, note that the deadline for proposals is July 11; check the Website for suggested topics: www.zanesville.ohiou.edu/ce/wac/appalwomen.htm. For further information, write to the Office of Conferences, Ohio University Zanesville, 1425 Newark Road, Zanesville, Ohio 43701; phone, 740/588-1401; e-mail, ouzconted@ohio.edu.

**October 25:** 30th annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, billed, as always, as "the largest celebration of authentic folkways in Virginia." Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; phone, 540/365-2121.

**October 25-26:** 29th 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 the usual lively lineup, but this year there's a difference in the schedule; the Friday-evening opening concert has been eliminated. The celebration will begin on Saturday morning with instrumental workshops, followed in the afternoon by a symposium on dance led by Phil Jamison, with a follow-up dance workshop. The evening concert will feature the Berea College String Band, Arthur Johnson, the Reeltime Travelers and Jake Krack. On Sunday morning participants can join in the traditional hymn sing. For further details, contact Lori Briscoe at the Appalachian Center, 859/985-3257; e-mail, lori\_briscoe@berea.edu.

## **Stumping the Bureaucrats**

In February officials of the West Virginia Workers' Compensation Board discovered that a company called Skyco Trucking owed the state \$1.9 million in unpaid workers' comp bills. But the state so far has had to whistle for its money—the company and its presumed assets seemed to have vanished from the map.

Looking into the matter, officials discovered some interesting details about Skyco. Its officers—Allen Stump, president; Robert Stump, vice president, secretary and treasurer; and Edward Stump, director—proved to be old hands at this game. In 1995 Meador Energy, Inc., a coal company based in Kentucky and controlled by the same family, had defaulted on a \$2 million bill in West Virginia. In 2000 the Stumps and their Big Hickory Mining Co., Inc., had left the state with an unpaid workers' comp bill for \$3.1 million. Still another Stump enterprise, Pine Mountain Resources, Inc., closed after running up \$1.7 million in workers' comp debt.

Wasn't anybody watching? Well, yes, the state does have a system that's supposed to check on the histories of companies and their officers, but the mechanism has sometimes proved easy to stump—for instance, when a coal company acquires a new workers' comp classifica-

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**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO: Neighbors gather to build a fence.**

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tion simply by turning itself into a construction business.

Indeed, the system is not absolutely foolproof, concedes the division's chief financial officer, the enticingly named Melinda Ashworth-Kiss, but "things are much more refined than they were even a few years ago."

On the other hand, commented a construction official in an impressive understatement, "the division has to do more to stop this, and the costs should not be shifted onto other rate payers or workers."

All of which raises a provocative question: Where are the Stumps today and just what business are they engaged in?

## **EYE on Publications**

*Appalachia: A History*, by John Alexander Williams (University of North Carolina Press). For years now, writers of various ilk have argued a question that would surely puzzle most of their fellow citizens: Is Appalachia actually a place or was it merely a creation of other writers—something, as the historian Henry Shapiro once put it, "on our mind"? The author of the present book leaves us in little doubt about his answer. He has clearly written his 398 pages in the belief that he is telling us the story of a piece of physical reality, whatever its boundaries may be. But he also observes that Appalachia is a "territory of the imagination" and that today we need to be aware of both the real and the imagined regions.

Williams, who teaches history at Appalachian State, succeeded so well at his task that this past March, at the annual conference of the Appalachian Studies Association at Eastern Kentucky University, he received the W. D. Weatherford Award for the most effective book about Appalachia published in 2002. Originally administered jointly by the Berea College Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library (and now by the Appalachian Studies

Association in association with the Appalachian Center), the award was established, and supported for 17 years, by the late Alfred H. Perrin of Berea.

The award is named for W. D. Weatherford, a pioneer in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations, and since 1997 has also honored the memory of his son, Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., president of Berea College from 1967 to 1984.

Williams takes his Appalachian story back to its beginnings in the age of exploration and the colonial era, and he does not neglect the native inhabitants of the region. As he shows the development of a "farm and forest" society in the 18th and 19th centuries and recounts the wounds inflicted by the Civil War, the colossal changes brought by the arrival of industrialization (including mining, of course), and the curious deindustrialization during the 20th century, he continually gives his readers nuggets of information and insight.

Washington Irving, for instance, suggested that the young republic might adopt a name based on "Appalachia," so as not to appear arrogant in Latin eyes by preempting "America" for itself.

Coal mining is not simply just another industry. As a "distinctive branch of a distinctive industry," it gave rise to "an extraordinary volume of occupational lore and music," a culture that continued even though the business changed in almost every way.

The pervasive effect of the New Deal could be seen in a 1941 strike at U.S. Steel's Gary, W. Va., mine, when Gov. Matthew Neely intervened to discipline state policemen involved in violence at a picket line rather than putting the pickets in jail, as would have happened just a few years earlier.

Cades Cove in Tennessee became part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park because Knoxville promoters wanted a picturesque feature to balance the tourist appeal of the Cherokees in North Carolina.

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√In preparing to move the inhabitants of a village that would be flooded by the creation of Fontana Lake, TVA officials reported that "feuds have practically disappeared." But feuds had never been a feature of life in this part of Appalachia.

√"Tuftland," which everybody drives through on Interstate 75 in north Georgia, came into being after World War II when local tinkers around Dalton devised a way of applying mechanical tufting to the manufacture of carpets, just as "soft flooring" was beginning to boom.

√Credit for the national rediscovery of Appalachia 40 years ago goes largely to sociologists like James Brown and writers like Harry Caudill and Harriette Arnow, yet the negative picture they presented of migrant life overlooked the fact that most emigrés from the region adjusted well to life in destination communities, with no significant differences between their living standards and those of natives of the industrial areas.

√In turning Homer Hickam's coal-town memoir *Rocket Boys* into the movie *October Sky*, the producers carefully avoided using unionized West Virginia as a location and filmed the story in nonunion Tennessee.

And we could go on citing examples, major and minor. The book is entertaining—a genuine pleasure to read—and, of course, it offers its solemnities, notably the author's final declaration that "the mountaineer reminds us of what we will lose if the consumer culture of advanced industrial capitalism is allowed to wreak its unchecked havoc on the special places of the earth." In the spirit of Wendell Berry, Williams affirms that "to be truly civilized, people must live in nature, not against it." Small destructions add up, and so, indeed, do big ones.

*Salt*, by Isabel Zuber (Picador USA/St. Martin's Press). Baldly summarized, this novel sounds like a hundred others—the tracing, as the publishers put it, of "the joys and the sorrows of a passionate but troubled marriage in Appalachia at the turn of the century"—that is, the years

leading up to and following 1900. The scene is western North Carolina.

The wife, Anna, first appears as a bright and imaginative child and grows up to marry a "hard-driven" hill farmer, John Bayley. What happens in this difficult and sometimes almost explosive union forms the substance of the book. But this is, indeed, only the bald summary. Zuber, who has published two books of poetry, weaves this familiar material into something that Lee Smith has justly called "almost indefinable." The author has succeeded in producing a book that has something of the quality of poetry without being self-consciously poetic. Thus the familiar once again becomes new.



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

From Editor George Brosi: The featured author for the Summer 2003 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* will be Fred Chappell, the North Carolina poet laureate and one of the most critically acclaimed contemporary Appalachian writers. Two of his new poems and a previously unpublished story will be complemented by articles about him and his work. The guest editor of this section is Rita Quillen of Mountain Empire Community College in Abingdon, Va. This issue of the magazine will be illustrated exclusively with stunning photographs by Judith Victoria Hensley all taken at The Hensley Settlement. This is an isolated early-20th-century mountain-top farming community founded by our photographer's great-great-grandfather and located in the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. The issue will be rounded out by stories and poems and reviews and regular features all designed to keep readers abreast of the best of Appalachian literature.

*Appalachian Heritage* is available (\$6 a copy, \$18 for one year, \$34 for two years, \$50 for three years) from the Appalachian Center, C.P.O. Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404.

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