

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

February 1-21: 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; the school has now produced 408 graduates. *Note:* The school is now accepting applications for the summer session, which begins on June 6; a high school diploma or GED certificate is required. *The deadline for applications is April 21.* For full information, contact Amy Harmon, executive director of the school, at 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403, or phone 859/985-7200.

February 21-22: 1st Annual Appalachian Culture Festival, Cincinnati; co-sponsored by the Appalachian Community Development Association and the Cincinnati Museum Center: crafts, music, storytelling, dance and traditional arts. This event will take place in the Union Terminal, 1301 Western Avenue, a building whose Art Deco splendors make it richly worth visiting even when it's not housing a culture festival. To participate, or just to find out more, contact Allison Raisor, festival coordinator, at 513/251-3378; e-mail: festival@cinci.rr.com.

February 28-29: "Kentucky Crafted: The Market: 2004," 23rd annual wholesale-retail show, for the general public and trade buyers (retailers get access on the 26th and 27th), with more than 300 exhibitors of traditional, folk and contemporary crafts, two-dimensional visual art, musical recordings, books, videos and food products, along with live entertainment and craft activities for children 4-12; the one-of-a-kind gallery section features items of special interest to galleries, designers and such; 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: www.kycraft.org; kycraft@mail.state.ky.us; 888/592-7238.

March 14-19: As always, the John C. Campbell Folk School is offering learners a range of possibilities, from storytelling to stone sculpture. As a matter of fact, you might want to try Bruce Everly's course in animal sculpture, but if March is too early for you you can wait until May (16-22) and learn how to make concrete garden ornaments under the direction of Sherri Warner Hunter. 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.

March 26-28: 27th annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Cherokee High School, Cherokee, N.C., co-hosted by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee and Mars Hill College. This year's conference carries forward the theme introduced last year: "Building a Healthy Region," with the focus now on "From Historical Trauma to Hope and Healing"—from "the Trail of Tears through the cutting of the forests; the building of TVA lakes; and the taking of land for parks, forests and tourism." For full details, contact Mary Kay Thomas at Marshall University: 304/696-2904; mthomas@marshall.edu. Web site is www.appalachianstudies.org.

April 7-8: Berea College Appalachian Fund Affiliates Conference; Alumni Building, Berea College. Representatives of all the varied organizations helped by the fund will re-

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"I Know a Guy"

If you know the right guy in the right car in the right parking lot, it seems, you can make a very simple deal: hand him \$50 and receive in exchange a fake MRI report enabling you to claim that you have the kind of injury that should be treated with painkillers.

That's just one of the many innovative developments in the Appalachian drug problem. The severity of the problem is suggested by the results of one survey, which showed that over the past four years, in parts of six counties in Eastern Kentucky, drugstores, hospitals and other dispensing agencies received more narcotics per person than anywhere else in the country.

In trying to deal with the problem, says Al Greene, a professor emeritus at Appalachian State, professionals should be aware that the region's culture and history create special conditions. Pointing to the historic isolation of much of the area, Greene observes that the strong reliance on self and family can mean that people delay seeking outside help and hence are sicker when they finally turn to the doctors. Therefore, says Greene, treatment must be oriented toward families and not simply the patient.

A regional history of heavy reliance on prescription drugs, Greene notes, a legacy stemming partly from working in physically demanding and dangerous industries like

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port on their activities, and members of the public are especially invited to attend. For more information, phone 859/985-3023.

April 18-24: Spring Dulcimer Week, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Guy George, Patty Looman and Timothy Seaman will offer instruction in the hammered dulcimer; Heidi Cerrigione, Aubrey Atwater Donnelly, Tull Glazener and Jon Kay will teach mountain dulcimer. (Instruments will be available for loan or rental.) You can also receive tutelage on the autoharp from John Cerrigione and Drew Smith. Every afternoon, participants can enjoy performances by guest artists and resident instructors, and on April 22 there'll be a big evening show. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241, or phone 304/637-1209; www.augustaheritage.com.

April 29-May 2: 17th annual MerleFest, Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, N.C. A jamboree in which everybody seems to be at least a superstar; the list of performers includes Vince Gill, Rosanne Cash, Earl Scruggs with Family and Friends, Patty Loveless and a clutch of other notables. For details, phone 800/343-7857; Website: www.merlefest.org.

April 29-May 2: 14th 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, the James King Band, IIIrd Tyme Out, J. D. Crowe and the New South, Ronnie Bowman, Rarely Heard, David Davis and Warrior River Boys and the host band, the Dismembered

Tennesseans. You can get full details from Cindy Pinion at 706/820-2228.

May 7-9: 35th annual Appalachian Festival, Coney Island, Cincinnati, sponsored by the Appalachian Community Development Association. There's a small admission fee: \$7 (\$3 for seniors, \$1 for kids). Along with music, dancing, storytelling and crafts, you'll find a "living history" section. The ACDA's mailing address is P.O. Box 996, Cincinnati, Ohio 45201; phone 513/251-3378. Web address: www.appalachianfestival.org.

May 14-16: Spring fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. After more than three decades at Indian Fort Theater near Berea, the fair is now moving to town, to Memorial Park on West Jefferson St. Some 120 guild members will display their work, which will of course be available for purchase. A highlight this year will be the international pavilion, featuring four artists from Japan. You can get more information from the guild office: 859/986-3192. (If you'd like to take a crack at winning a "Year of Jewelry," click on the guild's Website: www.kyguild.org.)

May 28-30: Old-Time Fiddlers and Bluegrass Festival, Fiddler's Grove Campground, Union Grove, N.C. Held every year during Memorial Day weekend, the festival is the oldest event of the kind in North America; it will celebrate its 80th birthday this spring. There'll be the usual competition, involving more than 50 bands, and in the grand finale, artists will vie for the title "Fiddler of the Festival." More than that, past winners of the title will be on hand. If you show up a day early, you'll find jam sessions already going on. Information: www.fiddlersgrove.com; fiddlersgrove@yadtel.net; 704/539-4417.

Blowing the Whistle

We're still following the unending trail of events that began with the great October 2000 slurry spill in Martin County, Ky. (*Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Fall 2000 and later issues).

As we noted in the Spring 2003 issue, Jack Spadaro, superintendent of the Mine Safety and Health Administration's training academy in Beckley, W.Va., had been forced to take "administrative leave"—a development that came after he criticized the agency's investigation of the spill. A true whistleblower, Spadaro asserted that investigators were leaving "unexamined serious deficiencies" in the agency's review and approval process regarding the impoundment that had collapsed. Well, there were indeed a few problems, said the agency inspector general, but no coverup.

We suggested that Spadaro might be about to lose a lot more than his whistle. Certainly the bosses at MSHA seemed to find him a much more dangerous enemy than any coal company executives or employees whose ineptitude or worse had contributed to the disaster. After accusing Spadaro of credit-card abuse, MSHA had to drop the charge when he proved that he had reimbursed the agency for all personal billing—unlike a number of other employees who had run up bills of more than \$82,000, which were never made good but which led to no punishment. In Octo-

ber, moving on to real hardball, the agency then proceeded to solve its problem by firing Spadaro.

MSHA put it a bit differently, producing a litany of bureaucratized. Spadaro, said the complaint, was guilty of abuse of authority, failure to follow appropriate procedures, failure to follow supervisory instructions, et cetera, et cetera.

Did Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao have anything to do with Spadaro's dismissal. Certainly not, said the department's PR director; "standard personnel procedures" had been followed.

"As far as we can tell," said Vivian Stockman of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, based in Huntington, W.Va., "he's being persecuted for doing his job well."

In December, Congress dealt itself in when three Democratic representatives asked Secretary Chao to look into Spadaro's allegations. We'll see how that goes.

"I KNOW" *from page 1*

logging and mining, has created an atmosphere of acceptance of pills. "You're not a dope fiend," he says. "You're taking medicine."

By implication, a Kentucky official, Mac Bell, likened drug trafficking in the mountains to moonshining. Many people who sell drugs in the region, he said, do it to feed their families, not out of greed. Another Kentucky official, Mike Townsend, said that the Appalachian states want



NOSTALGIA SCENE NO. 3: A visit from a health professional.

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the federal government to recognize the region as a unique cultural area that requires special treatment funds.

Dr. Steven D. Passik of the University of Kentucky has noted that the prescription drug abuse problem represents “the remarkable coming together of distinct forces at a particular time and place. The medical revolution in diagnosing and treating chronic pain converged simultaneously ... with the arrival of more effective pain medications.”

Besides that, Passik notes, the illegal drugs that characterize the problem in cities are not readily available in the mountains. Hence OxyContin. (By the way, a psychiatrist, Dr. Lon Hays, reports that the average OxyContin addict has a habit that costs him about \$60,000 a year.)

But we need to use care here, says the doctor. We shouldn’t allow paranoia to “curb the tremendous gains and progress we have made in the ongoing pain-treatment revolution.”

EYE on Publications: Particulars from Ordinary Lives

The Journals of Tommie L. Hubbard, edited by Deborah Hubbard Nelson-Campbell (Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 669, Ashland, Ky. 41105).

Songs of Life and Grace, by Linda Scott DeRosier (University Press of Kentucky).

Even though Madison County, Ky., is the home of Berea College, and even though the mapmakers in the U.S. Congress decided years ago to fold Madison County into Appalachia, it isn’t really a mountain county. For one fairly important thing, it lacks mountains (the ridge on which the town of Berea sits hardly counts). Nevertheless, Madison is a transitional area from the Bluegrass to the mountain region and a work and shopping center for people from

mountain counties, and so its history is intimately related to mountain history.

That, at any rate, is our excuse for telling you about Tommie L. Hubbard and her journals. The subtitle of the book is “Life in Madison County, Kentucky, 1898-1900,” and the life talked about here is not an extraordinary and well remembered kind of existence but the most ordinary imaginable—life on a farm near a small town (here, Richmond), life lived with churchgoing (but not necessarily religion) as its leading diversion, life lived by people who worked, really worked, people who injured themselves in many a small accident, people (generally the ladies) who often had to take to their beds with “sick headaches.”

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This, of course, was the era just before the appearance of aspirin. A doctor decided to treat his own headache by impregnating a handkerchief with chloroform, lying down, and holding the handkerchief to his nose. But while he slept his hand stayed in place instead of falling away, as he had presumed it would, and friends found him dead.

In another approach to indisposition, Tommie Hubbard noted that "Papa got me some whiskey yesterday and put some [asafetida] in it for me to take for my nerves. It is horrible tasting stuff." Horrible, no doubt, and administering that cocktail was probably not one of Papa's best ideas, but at that it couldn't rival the OxyContin that would come along a century later to take care of nerves and much else.

People of all kinds moved along the road in front of the farm, people in buggies and carriages, on horseback, and simply walking. Many an "agent" (salesman) came by with eyeglasses, perfume, or anything else you might think of, including washing machines. Since these machines required time, patience and physical strength, they could not fairly be called labor-saving devices. Tommie's family preferred a more effective labor saver, a girl employed to do the laundry. Indeed, every household seems to have been a kind of small business enterprise, staffed by a combination of family members and hired help that came and went.

The editor, Tommie's granddaughter, provides a long contextual introduction. The result of her labors is a book that tells us a great deal about nonspectacular daily life a century ago. With all its detail it can serve as a great resource for anybody who's writing about the period.

Though a professionally written book rather than a found manuscript never intended for publication, Linda Scott DeRosier's *Songs of Life and Grace* presents important similarities to the Hubbard journals. Taking place more or less a half-century later, *Songs* likewise anatomizes the lives of ordinary people in a rural community.

Several years ago DeRosier told her personal story in a memoir titled *Creeker*, subtitled "A Woman's Journey"—a journey that took her, physically, from her grandparents' log house deep in Appalachia to Idaho and Montana and intellectually from holler culture to a college professorship. (She notes the striking fact that she had never spoken to a stranger until she was eleven or twelve.) The force

of her narrative came from the tension between her continuing loyalty to her background and her drive to follow her own different path. Not a new problem, of course, but the author presented it effectively and with a good measure of humor.

But it didn't seem to be enough. After *Creeker* appeared, she tells us, she received a number of letters from readers who wanted to hear more about her parents and other persons who appeared in the book. Others asked for a "more comprehensive and historical view of our people."

After a little work, however, DeRosier decided that as far as this project was concerned, formal historical research was out. "I have served my academic time," she told herself, "and I am through with that." So she concentrated on her parents' and grandparents' generations. In doing so, she discovered how many versions the truth comes in; there was always, it seemed, another story to take into account, like it or not.

The overall story isn't spectacular, and it lacks the novelistic charm of *Creeker*. But its particulars are important, like those in the Hubbard journals. Beyond that, the presentation in *Songs* of that familiar old Appalachian topic, place, is unusually sophisticated: Chicken or egg? Geography or extended family? Either way, an inescapable pull, as DeRosier makes inescapably clear.

In Appalachian Heritage ...

From Editor George Brosi: The featured author for the Winter 2004 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* will be Lisa Alther, best known for her 1976 best-seller, *Kinflicks*, set in her home town, Kingsport, Tenn.; she is also the author of four subsequent novels. The issue will include an original, never-before-published short story by Alther and a story by Chris Holbrook, one of Eastern Kentucky's most distinguished contemporary writers. Poets will include Ron Rash of western North Carolina. Perhaps the best-known review of the cult classic *Crum* by Lee Maynard is the one by Meredith Sue Willis, who will review Maynard's new novel, *Screaming with the Cannibals*, for this issue.

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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