

# NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER  
BEREA COLLEGE



# LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

Vol. 33 No. 2 Spring 2004

## Looking Forward

**July 4-31:** Swannanoa Gathering, a series of week-long workshops held on the campus of Warren Wilson College, outside Asheville, N.C. The gathering actually begins with Cherokee Heritage Weekend (June 18-20), and the series progresses through dulcimers, swing, Celtic music and other delights, ending with guitars. "The worst part about the gathering," one student complained, "is that there are only 24 hours in the day and three of them are wasted sleeping"; [www.swangathering.org](http://www.swangathering.org).

**July 9-11:** 27th annual Uncle Dave Macon Days Old-Time Music and Dance Festival, Cannonsburgh Pioneer Village, Murfreesboro, Tenn. 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'll also be a blues harmonica competition honoring DeFord Bailey, the first African-American to appear on the Grand Ole Opry. 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 or 800/716-7560. [www.uncledavemacondays.com](http://www.uncledavemacondays.com)

**July 11-August 15:** Music, crafts, dance and folklore, spread out over five theme weeks—guitar and Cajun/Creole; blues and swing; Irish, Cape Breton and more; family, Bluegrass and teen; dance, old-time and vocal; Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Aside from the music and dance, you can choose to involve yourself in blacksmithing, writing, quilting, printing or some other pursuit in the arts and crafts realm. You may pick your week and pick your pursuit. The summer will be capped by the three-day Augusta Festival (August 13-15). For full details, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; [www.augustaheritage.com](http://www.augustaheritage.com); 304/637-1209.

**July 15-17:** 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 and now carried on by dedicated local volunteers. This year, the festival's 11th, visitors will encounter the usual mix of classical and varied popular

styles. Classical performers—the noted Ahn Trio—open matters on Thursday evening, to be followed on Friday and Saturday by groups of every sort and kind: Sexton and Slone; Bonespring; Darrell Scott, John Cowan and Pete Flynn ("newgrass") and many others—with everything from "regional original rock" to black gospel to Delta blues to Celtic. For details, phone 888/FUNJULY or write Master Musicians Festival, P.O. Box 1212, Somerset, Ky. 42502; e-mail: [mmfest@juno.com](mailto:mmfest@juno.com); [mastermusiciansfestival.com](http://mastermusiciansfestival.com).

**July 15-18:** 18th annual Scopes Trial Play and Festival, Dayton, Tenn. The famous 1925 "monkey trial" confrontation between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow will be reenacted in a series of performances in the original courthouse (still in use) Thursday through Sunday. The production is sponsored by the local chamber of commerce and Bryan College; 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 15-18:** Summer edition of the 57th annual fairs, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, *to page 2*

## On Coal Patrol

### Decapitation

In late March, officials of the always embattled federal Office of Surface Mining found their ears assailed by vivid accounts of floods and flattened mountains and houses swept away by rivers of ooze. Appearing at hearings held from Washington to Harriman, Tenn., miners, preachers, coalfield residents and environmentalists of various stripes urged the Bush administration not to abolish a long-standing rule that established buffer zones to protect streams from mountaintop-removal mining.

"I'm out here now trying to save my home," said Mary Miller of Sylvester, W.Va. Mining operations, she said, had lowered the value of her property from \$144,000 to about \$12,000. And these operations also were destroying the local water supply.

Confronting officials, Chelana McCoy of Sumerco, W.Va., called on them to look into their hearts and ask themselves, "Is this right?" She summed matters up: "A job ain't going to replace a life and the souls here on this earth."

*to page 2*

### LOOKING from page 1

N.C. (The fall edition will come out October 21-24.) You can find out more from Lindsay Hearn at 828/298-7928; [www.southernhighlandguild.org](http://www.southernhighlandguild.org).

**July 18-24:** Once again, 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. You can get details on these and all other activities from the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone, 800/FOLKSCH; [www.folkschool.org](http://www.folkschool.org).

**July 25-30:** 27th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. The list of mentors for this summer's renewal of the yearly jamboree includes the customary mixture of rising stars and veteran luminaries, including Lee Smith and Sheila Kay Smith (short story), Silas House and Sharyn McCrumb (novel), Frank X. Walker and Richard Hague (poetry), Hal Crowther (nonfiction), Linda Scott DeRosier (memoirs) and Paul Brett Johnson and George Ella Lyon (children's fiction). For full details, 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 5-11:** Scottish Heritage Week, John C. Campbell Folk School, with a sharp focus on the subject; participating experts in this new feature of the school will include the authentically Scottish Norman Kennedy, folksinger and master weaver. The week will end with participation in the Appalachian Highland Games at Recreation Park in nearby Andrews, N.C. See contact information for July 18-24.

**October 1-3:** 21st annual Sorghum Makin', John R. Simon's Family Farm, 8721 Pond Creek/Carey's Run Road, Portsmouth, Ohio 45663. "Lots of good music," says the proprietor, and, of course, lots of sorghum: "Bring your lawn chair and stay all day." The number to call is 740/259-6337.

**October 2-3:** Annual Fall Festival, John C. Campbell Folk School, featuring more than 150 crafts creators. Besides the exhibits and demonstrations, the sponsors promise continuous live music and good food. Who could stay away? For details, see contact information for July 18-24.

**October 8-10:** Annual Fall Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Indian Fort Theater, Berea, Ky. The spring fair saw the artists and craftsmen moving from the fair's original site, at Indian Fort Theater a few miles out-

side Berea, into town; for its autumn session, the fair will probably return to its original home. The work of more than 120 artisans will be on display. For more details, phone 859/986-3192; e-mail, [info@kyguild.org](mailto:info@kyguild.org).

**October 17-24:** Old-Time Week over in West Virginia with the "unique and heartwarming" Fiddlers' Reunion folded into the closing weekend—an autumn standby put on by the busy bees over at Davis & Elkins. On Saturday the reunion features a concert stage with performances by an array of old-time fiddlers and pickers; in a mid-afternoon dance contest, cloggers and flatfooters will vie for cash prizes. During the week a lineup of experienced teachers and guest master artists will be on hand to guide workshop participants toward mastery or at least progress in old-time fiddle, guitar and mountain dulcimer. See contact information for July 11-August 15.

**October 23:** 31st annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, billed, as always, as "the largest celebration of authentic folkways in Virginia." A must for old-car buffs (with at least 200, and probably more, on display), the festival will not neglect earlier sources of power; workhorses and mules will pull and plow and there'll even be a mule jumping contest. Further information from Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; phone, 540/365-2121.

**October 28-29:** Sixth annual national conference: "The Women of Appalachia: Their Heritage and Accomplishments," sponsored by Ohio University, Zanesville. Topics of papers include everything from foodways to empowerment, with stops at churches and religion and many other spots. The Website—[www.zanesville.ohiou.edu/ce/wac](http://www.zanesville.ohiou.edu/ce/wac)—will keep you up to date as the time comes closer. Or you may phone 740/588-1401; e-mail, [ouzconted@ohio.edu](mailto:ouzconted@ohio.edu).

**October 29-31:** 30th-anniversary presentation of the Celebration of Traditional Music, sponsored and produced by the Berea College Appalachian Center. Sticking with the theme of change in the midst of continuity, the celebration managers are once again presenting an array of performers appearing on the local stage for the first time. The event opens on Friday evening with a jam session for all comers. On Saturday morning there's a choice of instrumental workshops, followed in the afternoon by a symposium on shape-note singing; square dancing will follow. The big Saturday night concert will feature Earl White, the Blue Creek Ramblers, Jim Mullins and Ken Childress, Jim McGee and Carl Rutherford, John Bealle and others. 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](mailto:lori_briscoe@berea.edu).

---

### COAL from page 1

In question was a rule that prohibits disturbing of land within 100 feet of a stream unless a company can prove that such activity will not affect the amount and quality of the water. The proposed new "clarification" merely requires operators to minimize damage "to the extent possible." That's a much better idea, said Bradford Frisby, a lawyer for the National Mining Association. It would be better still, he said, if the rule were "deleted entirely."

The reason behind the change appears to be that in the

conflict between mountaintop mining and preservation of the buffer zones, the OSM does not put itself on the side of the angels. The rule can't be enforced; therefore, it must go—because mountaintop decapitation outranks all other considerations.

But "the proposed changes will legalize the illegal," noted Patty Wallace of Louisa, Ky. "Filling an entire stream with waste is a violation of [the federal surface mining] law. When you fill a stream full of this debris, you don't

*to page 3*

**Cincinnati's Lower Price Hill Community School, which serves the city's Appalachian migrant families, recently graduated its 605th GED student. One reason behind this success is the school's child-care program, which takes care of about 70 children a year—lively kids, as you can see.**



**COAL** from page 2  
have a stream left." You simply have destruction.

#### **Demotion vs. Bonus**

As regular NEWSLETTER readers know, we've kept an eye on the developments and controversies that followed the great October 11, 2000, slurry spill in Martin County, Ky.—a disaster described by various experts as one of the greatest in the history of the southeastern U.S.

As part of the fallout, one of the government's investigators—Jack Spadaro, then superintendent of the Mine Safety and Health Administration's training academy—resigned when he decided that MSHA was covering up the part it had played in winking at violations at the fatally weak impoundment. The agency ended up (at least at this point) by shuffling this whistleblower into an innocuous desk job in Pittsburgh (though the procedure in being investigated as a possible violation of federal law protecting whistleblowers).

The offending company, known as the Martin County Coal Co., was a subsidiary of A. T. Massey Coal, Inc. (now rebaptized Massey Energy Co.). Massey hasn't made money since that catastrophe, but such problems needn't worry top executives, including President Don Blankenship. At the recent stockholders' meeting, more than 70 percent of the votes were cast in favor of a proposal that would limit bonuses for company brass. Nevertheless, the president's \$1 million salary and bonuses continue, because company bylaws require a supermajority of more than 80 percent in order to bring about any change.

Blankenship expressed satisfaction at this outcome. "It's a matter of principle," he said. "Taking everything to the stockholders wouldn't be practical."

#### **Saving Land**

Nobler news on the land-and-people front comes from Tennessee, where Alcoa has agreed to preserve 10,000 acres of undeveloped land bordered by the Great Smoky

Mountains National Park, the Cherokee National Forest and two other wilderness areas. The deal was worked out between the company, federal regulators, and a group of environmental organizations. The quid pro quo for Alcoa? Renewal of its license to operate four hydroelectric dams in Tennessee and North Carolina—dams of great importance to the company because they're the source of energy for the great aluminum smelting plant in Alcoa, Tenn. Something, in other words, for everybody.

## **EYE on Publications**

*To Save the Land and People*, by Chad Montrie (University of North Carolina Press). The subtitle makes the subject of this book perfectly clear: "A History of Opposition of Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia." A recast dissertation, the book follows a simple and logical organization as it follows opposition to strip mining (as it's generally known, augers or no augers) from its early post-World War II days through the ensuing decades. The author covers the whole Appalachian coal-mining region, from Pennsylvania to Alabama.

One of the most interesting aspects of the movement against strip mining was its membership—not so much the usual ecologically oriented academic and suburban suspects as farmers fighting to save their land, helped by working-people allies. One chapter is tellingly titled: "Liberty in a Wasteland is Meaningless." The book, says Ron Eller of the University of Kentucky, is "an excellent and timely study of resistance, courage, and disappointment." Certainly this is not an area in which happy endings are easy to come by.

*Ghost Riders*, by Sharyn McCrumb (Dutton). In 1861 a married couple, Malinda and Keith Blaylock, turn themselves into Union guerrillas in the North Carolina mountains (with Malinda dressed as a man), fighting back against

to page 4

**EYE** from page 3

Confederate raiders); Keith and Malinda did plenty of raiding of their own, to be sure. It was the familiar border and mountain Civil War picture, with friends and foes almost inextricably mixed together.

But this is a Sharyn McCrumb novel, and so there's more to the story than that. We also get a present-day dimension to set off against the past. Those characters from the past, by the way, were real. She put much effort into her research, McCrumb says, but still she acknowledges that "some people's greatest joy in reading is to try to find mistakes in the text and to argue with the author about it." Yep: And make *people's* into *reviewers'* and you've really got a home truth.

**Book Note**

Success story: John Sparks, a hospital lab technician in Martin, Ky., spent some ten years researching and writing a history of the Primitive Baptist Church in the Appalachian South. When he finished the manuscript, he thought, he would send it off to a vanity press, put up the necessary cash, and that would be that.

But then he showed his work to old Appalachia hand Loyal Jones, who encouraged him to forget the vanity publisher and send it to the University Press of Kentucky, whose editors agreed with Jones's evaluation. The book appeared as *The Roots of Appalachian Christianity: The Life and Legacy of Elder Shubal Stearns*, and on June 3 Sparks was presented with the \$500 Lillie D. Chaffin Cel-

ebration of Appalachian Writings award in a ceremony at the Kentucky Folk Art Center at Morehead State University. So he not only got a respectable publisher, he made money on the deal.

**In Appalachian Heritage ...**

From Editor George Brosi: The featured author for the Summer 2004 issue is Robert Morgan, and this feature is edited by Patrick Bizzaro. It will highlight several of Morgan's recent previously unpublished poems as well as a tribute poem from Maggie Anderson. Morgan studied at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro under Fred Chappell, who contributes a critical piece for this feature. The issue will also include fiction by R. T. Smith, the editor of *Shenandoah*, and excerpts from Chuck Kinder's forthcoming book, *Last Mountain Dancer: Hard-earning Lessons in Love, Loss and Honky-tonk Outlaw Life*. It will be illustrated with photographs by Tim Barnwell, whom the *Village Voice* called "the most gifted documentary photographer to come out of Appalachia since the depression." The books that won the fiction and the nonfiction Weatherford awards, *The Midwife's Tale* by Gretchen Laskas and *Slavery in the American Mountain South* by Wilma A. Dunaway, will both be reviewed.

*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.

Address Service Requested

Published by  
Appalachian Center/Berea College  
C.P.O. Box 2166  
Berea, Ky. 40404-2166

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Berea, Ky. 40404  
Permit No. 19