

NEWS LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

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 particulars, contact the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone, 800/-FOLKSCH; www.folkschool.org.

October 7-10: 25th 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, this year with top talent like Rhonda Vincent, Raymond Fairchild (five-time world champion banjo player), Ralph Stanley, Mike Snider, Ramona Jones, Mac Wiseman, Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver and a couple of hundred more. An important part of the experience is the opportunity to see a classic mountain farm in action, with its antique tractors, sawmill, well digger and other implements and devices from two centuries back. You'll find lots of food, too. The museum's address is P.O. Box 1189, Norris, Tenn. 37828; phone 865/494-7680.

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 outside Berea, into town; for its autumn session, the fair is returning 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.

October 8-17: Georgia Mountain Fair Fall Festival, Hiawassee, Ga.—music galore, phone, 706/896-4191.

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. Full information from the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W. Va. 26241; www.augustaheritage.com.

October 19-21: 18th annual Lake Eden Arts Festival, Camp Rockmont, Black Mountain, N.C., with some 50 folk and broad-gauge groups. The "best music, dance and healing arts festival in the world," the sponsors tell us. This event will allow you to immerse yourself in yoga, tai chi, sufi dance and meditation and to experience a weekend of healthful nutrition. Web: www.theleaf.com.

October 21-24: Fall edition of the Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands; Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. Works by more than 200 members of the Southern Highland Craft

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THE ORIGINALS: In February 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy (r.) visited Appalachian Kentucky for a firsthand look at the results of the War on Poverty. Accompanying him was Kentucky Congressman Carl Perkins, chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. (See p. 3.)



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Guild (the biggest number ever) will be on display, and there'll also be demonstrations, hands-on experiences, traditional music and special activities for children. Full information from the guild at 828/298-7928.

October 23: Noccalula Falls Bluegrass Festival, Gadsden, Ala. Note correct phone number: 256/549-4680; reedirc@gadsden.com.

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. You can check the Website—www.zanesville.ohiou.edu/ce/wac—for details, or you may phone 740/588-1401; e-mail, ouzconted@ohio.edu.

October 29-31: 30th-anniversary presentation of the Celebration of Traditional Music, sponsored and produced by the Berea College Appalachian Center. (*See separate story.*)

November 12-13: Marietta Fall Festival, a bluegrass jamboree; Marietta, Ga. Phone, 770/961-5974; jack@JackGrass.com.

December 26-January 1: Christmas Country Dance School, Berea College, directed by Joe Tarter. Devoted to the practice and enjoyment of authentic folk material, this famous school, which goes back to 1938, helps everyone find usable materials for recreation programs, teaching situations or personal benefit. You can participate in a variety of classes, including (but by no means limited to) Appalachian clogging, border morris, Kentucky set running and the latest thing in Toronto, Haxby longsword. If you're interested, act now—registration with deposit is due by November 1. To find out more, call 859/985-3000, ext. 3431; e-mail: ccds@berea.edu.

February 6-26: 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 open to anybody; the school recently produced its 433rd graduate. Though the winter session itself is still months off, **the deadline for applications is December 15**; a high school diploma or GED certificate is required. For full information, write New Opportunity School, 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403, or phone 859/985-7200.

Still Celebrating

The Berea College Appalachian Center Celebration of Traditional Music will appear October 29-31 in its 30th-anniversary incarnation. As we like to remind readers from time to time, the underlying idea of the celebration, as explained by its founder, then-Appalachian Center director Loyal Jones, back in 1974, 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."

Encouragement and preservation haven't proved to be quite as restrictive as these aims might sound—there's been ample freshness and innovation through the years—but in the main programs have indeed stuck to Jones's proclaimed purpose, and in the process the celebration has become an Appalachian regional institution.

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, con-

tact Lori Briscoe at the Appalachian Center; e-mail: lori_briscoe@berea.edu; phone, 859/985-3257.

Undue Burdens?

Mention of Assistant Secretary of Labor Dave Lauriski has been made in these pages on various occasions during the past three or so years, and we must admit that our implications concerning this public servant's actions have not always been favorable to him. Lauriski holds the specific responsibility for administering the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), and in Fall 2002, for instance, we took note of his order for subordinates to identify regulations that create an "undue burden" on small mine operators (though with the proviso that attention be given to developing alternative ways to provide miners with the existing level of protection).

A United Mine Workers safety official warily commented at the time that he feared the agency might either reduce enforcement activities or reduce protective standards. In August 2004 his fear appeared to be anything but groundless. The *New York Times* declared that President George W. Bush had "delivered on a campaign promise" to the coal industry: "MSHA relaxes rules so mine owners can boost production."

Just recently, Lauriski fired back, declaring that the Bush administration has not "callously perfected a time machine to transport coal miners back to the bad old days

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THE RECAP: In a high school gym in Eastern Kentucky, performers Frank Taylor (l.) and John Faust act the parts of Carl Perkins and Bobby Kennedy from the 1968 tour.

RFK: 2004

“He brought us hope,” said Anna Craft, of Whitesburg, Ky., looking back from 2004 to Robert Kennedy’s February 1968 visit to Appalachian Kentucky. Shortly before he announced his candidacy for the presidency, Kennedy, then a senator from New York, came to the mountains to take his own look at the War on Poverty.

“Even to the presumably cynical newsmen who accompanied [him],” reported the magazine *Mountain Life & Work* at the time, “it was obvious that the New York senator—and acting chairman of the Senate subcommittee on employment, manpower and poverty—was sincere in his concern. He hadn’t come just to shake hands.” On concluding his tour, Kennedy promised the people of the area that he would continue working for emergency governmental job programs and special tax credits for businesses that would establish factories in impoverished areas. The existing programs, he saw, had clearly proved inadequate.

Though just four months later, having won the California Democratic presidential primary, Kennedy was murdered, he has remained a continuing presence in Eastern Kentucky. In early September 2004, in an effort to recapture some of the spirit of the War on Poverty era and to “invigorate an active, participatory democracy,” Appalshop—the Whitesburg-based media center that owes its own creation to the poverty program’s Office of Economic Opportunity—produced the Robert F. Kennedy Performance Project, a re-enactment of Kennedy’s 1968 visit, with speeches, a re-enactment of RFK’s Senate subcommittee hearing, a visit to a strip mine, and public discussions. These re-enactments were not new theater; the lines spoken came straight from official transcripts.

Apart from its political and even emotional significance, the two-day production appears to have offered spectators something truly bizarre to gawk at: many of the characters appeared in 1960s-style clothing, with hair to match. Or maybe it wasn’t so strange.

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when hundreds died routinely from explosions and other occupational accidents.” Indeed, Lauriski declared, since the year 2000 mining fatalities have dropped 34 percent, and “enforcement events have increased by 7 percent on our watch.”

What’s going on here with this perceptual dissonance? Is MSHA protecting miners or not? It doesn’t seem easy to tell, and we’d like to hear about the question from our readers. We can’t help wondering, however, at MSHA’s idea of giving operators several days’ warning before inspectors appear to check them out. That’s certainly not the way the health department deals with restaurants.

With respect to a related issue, the Corps of Engineers has just announced its appeal of a federal judge’s ruling severely limiting the use of valley fills for disposal of mining waste. “The president is committed to reliable, afford-

able, domestically available energy,” said the administration’s senior environmental policy adviser at a West Virginia Chamber of Commerce meeting. “He’s laid the backbone [*sic*] of that on coal.”

EYE on Publications

Screaming with the Cannibals, by Lee Maynard (Vandalia Press—West Virginia University). Lee Maynard grew up in the 1950s in the tiny (200 to 300 people) town of Crum, W.Va., which, incredibly enough, actually existed and may even still exist. What’s incredible about that? Well, if you’ve ever read the author’s first novel, *Crum*, published in 1988, you’ll know the answer. Crum appears

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not so much as a town that time forgot as a town so scabrous that time would never have wanted to have much to do with it in the first place. It was located, said the author, "deep in the bowels of the Appalachians, on the bank of the Tug River, the urinary tract of the mountains. Across the flowing urine is Kentucky." That wasn't just a description, it was an attitude.

Indeed, a rumor was once heard to the effect that *Crum* was nominated for the 1988 W. D. Weatherford Award (for the most effective writing about Appalachia) not because anybody thought it might win the prize but simply to expose the award committee to a strong dose of what one friend of the author called "white trash, small town tall taleing at its carnal and comic best." Even that description only faintly suggests the overall tone of the book, which came close to being a true original, palatable to everybody or not.

Anyway, Lee Maynard is back now with a sequel to *Crum*, a story that picks up in 1954 and follows the protagonist, Jesse Stone, out of Crum and into Kentucky and then coastal South Carolina. Well meaning in his fashion, but a Crum-style *Candide*, uninformed and credulous, Jesse finds himself in confrontations with a succession of large, vicious antagonists who specialize in dragging him through gravel, so that after a few encounters he could hardly have had any skin left. He's a slow learner, but he does learn. And, at least, he's out of Crum, and his story has a different tone.

If you're touchy about Appalachian stereotyping, how-

ever, you might do better to find something more directly uplifting to read.

In Appalachian Heritage...

From Editor George Brosi: The Fall 2004 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* will be a truly exciting one. Our featured author will be Sharyn McCrumb; the story she wrote for this issue, "Abide With Me," is a powerful one that will appeal to all readers even as it ties NASCAR racing in with its origins at Appalachian dirt tracks. Sharyn is immersed in car racing at this point of her career because her forthcoming novel, *Saint Dale*, will be released at the Daytona 500 in February. It is modeled after the pilgrimage of *The Canterbury Tales* and focuses on the phenomenon of grass-roots icons, particularly Dale Earnhardt, whose race car number 3 is emblazoned on millions of automobiles around the world. To highlight our Sharyn McCrumb feature, all photographs in this issue will be by Ken Murray, whose work has graced the dramatic covers of each of the novels in her *Ballad Series*. Complementing Sharyn's story will be the completion of "Restless Spirits" by Patty Crow and a moving story unlike any other you have read by Lee Maynard, the author of the cult classic *Crum*. Poets include David Huddle, Irene McKinney, Marc Harshman and Cathryn Hankla. Bo Ball's memoir, our regular features, and reviews of important books complete the package.

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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