

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Gordon B. McKinney • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

February 6-12: As always, the John C. Campbell Folk School is offering willing learners a wide range of possibilities, from basketry to woodturning by way of kaleidoscopes and marbling. Let's say that rugs are your passion. You can tackle rag rugs (Christie Rogers) during the week listed here, or you might wait for Becky Walker's "wild and woolly workout" during the following week or the class in American flatwoven carpets (Nanette Davidson) the next week—and so on. You can get details of all these and other activities from the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone, 800/FOLKSCH; www.folkschool.org.

February 6-26: Winter session, New Opportunity School for Women. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) to this famous (and free) 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 has now produced 433 graduates. *Note:* The school is now accepting applications for the summer session, which begins on June 5; a high school diploma or GED certificate is required (or, at least, serious work toward a GED). *The deadline for applications is April 15.* For full information, write New Opportunity School, 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403, or phone 859/985-7200; www.nosw.org.

February 19-20: 2nd Annual Appalachian Culture Fest, 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, call 513/251-3378; e-mail: festival@cinci.rr.com.

March 3-6: "Kentucky Crafted: The Market," 24th 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 live entertainment and craft activities for children 4-12. Special for this year: the sponsors are seeking Kentucky authors and publishers; the wrinkle here is that, though already published books are not eligible for juried selection, you may exhibit at the market if you took part in the November Kentucky Book Fair. The show takes place at

the 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. Call Charla Reed at 1/888/592-7238; www.kycraft.org; e-mail: charla.reed@ky.gov.

March 18-20: 28th annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Radford University, Radford, Va. This year's theme: "Vital Words and Vital Actions: Partnerships to Build a Healthy Place." For full details, contact Mary K. Thomas at Marshall University: mthomas@marshall.edu; 304/696-2904; Web site: www.appalachianstudies.org.

April 17-22: Spring Dulcimer Week, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Heidi Cerrigione, Patty Looman and Mark Wade will offer instruction (beginning, intermediate, intermediate/advanced) in the hammered dulcimer; Bob Webb, Heidi Muller and Larry Conger (novice/beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate/advanced) will teach mountain dulcimer. (Instruments will be available for loan or rental.) You can also receive tutelage on the autoharp from John Cerrigione and Karen Muller. Every afternoon, participants can enjoy performances by guest artists and resident instructors, and on April 21 there'll be a big evening concert. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; www.augustaheritage.com; phone, 304/637-1209.

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Out of the Pits

During the past three years and more, we've made frequent mention of Dave Lauriski, who came from Utah to Washington in 2001 to take on what became a hotly contentious job—head of the Mine Safety and Health Administration. The position has always had its tough aspects, of course, but the Bush administration and the United Mine Workers were uniquely unsuited to develop a warm relationship.

Beyond that, Lauriski arrived in town just a few months after the great slurry spill in Martin County, Ky., had set the stage for a public battle between the agency and a whistleblower, Jack Spadaro, who asserted that his bosses were not demanding an adequate investigation of the disaster. As we noted earlier (Fall 2003), MSHA executives seemed to regard Spadaro's whistle as a much bigger problem than the mine muck oozing into the Big Sandy River.

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April 28–May 1: 18th annual MerleFest, Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, N.C. An acoustic jamboree featuring the Doc Watson guitar championship and the Merle Watson bluegrass banjo contest, along with numerous other events in which everybody seems to be at least a superstar; the list of performers includes Bela Fleck, Loretta Lynn, Earl Scruggs and an array of other notables. For details, phone 800/343-7857; www.merlefest.org.

May 4-7: 15th annual Boxcar Pinion Memorial Bluegrass Festival, Raccoon Mountain Campground (just off I-24), Chattanooga, Tenn. Opening on Wednesday evening with a jamming-under-the-tent session with the James King Band, the festival will move on for the rest of the week with J. D. Crowe, Ronnie Reno, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, the Lonesome River Band and other worthies. You can get full details from Cindy Pinion at 706/820-2228.

May 6-8: 36th annual Appalachian Festival, Coney Island, Cincinnati, sponsored by the Appalachian Community Development Association; there's a small admission fee. Along with music, dancing, storytelling and crafts, you'll find a "living history" village. The ACDA's mailing address is P.O. Box 996, Cincinnati, Ohio 45201; phone

513/251-3378. Web address: www.appalachianfestival.org.

May 21-22: Spring fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. After more than three decades at Indian Fort Theater near Berea, the fair is now moving permanently, spring and fall, into 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 again this year will be the Japanese pavilion, featuring several artists from Japan. You can get more information from the guild office: 859/986-3192.

May 27-29: Old-Time Fiddlers and Bluegrass Festival, Fiddler's Grove Campground, Union Grove, N.C. Held every year during Memorial Day weekend, the festival, which dates back to the 1920s, is the oldest event of the kind in North America. It's also a colossal affair, bringing together some 80 old-time and bluegrass bands; this year's special guest will be instrumentalist/folklorist David Holt of PBS fame. There'll be the usual competitions, involving more than 50 old-time bands, and in the grand finale, artists will vie for the title "Fiddler of the Festival." If you show up a day early, you'll find jam sessions already going on. Information: 704/539-4417; Website: www.fiddlersgrove.com; e-mail: fiddlersgrove@yadtel.net.

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Lauriski, an engineer, corporate safety officer and company executive and consultant, became assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health in May 2001. He previously had been president of Lauriski and Associates, a Utah consulting firm, and he had wide experience in the metal/nonmetal field, as it's called—stone, aggregates, chemical elements—as well as in coal mining. (People sometimes forget that coal is not the only resource that is dug from the ground.)

"Sweetheart Deals"?

The constantly embattled assistant secretary has strongly disputed claims by United Mine Workers of America President Cecil Roberts that the Bush administration has not done enough to improve mine safety. A study commissioned by the MSHA didn't help by asserting that mine inspectors spend too much time on "nit-picky" citations and not enough on larger safety concerns; the agency posted this report only after the *Charleston Gazette* filed a Freedom of Information Act request for it.

Earlier, however, the safety director of an aggregates corporation offered a strong endorsement, declaring "I love what Dave Lauriski is saying and doing. I'm encouraged by the spirit of cooperation between the agency and the industry."

The *Lexington Herald-Leader* took a sharply different view of this cooperative spirit, speaking of Lauriski's "sweetheart deals and self-interested attempts to roll back protections for miners."

But some extractive-industry figures have even put forward the view that MSHA's role has been insignificant in cutting deaths and injuries, paling in comparison with the role of technological innovation and changing attitudes toward risk. They affirm that regulation discourages inno-

vation, inspection creates "moral hazards" and enforcement constrains cooperation, with the end result being that mines might not as safe as they could be.

The existence of such an outlook seems to presage continuing bitter conflict between the MSHA and miners. But Lauriski will not be around to take part in the fight; in November he announced his resignation. "Due to personal circumstances, I am heading home at the end of my shift at MSHA to devote more time to my family in Colorado," he told reporters. It was hardly an original exit line, but it may have held more truth than this familiar thought usually carries.

Matching Dreams

Jake Kroger, director of Cincinnati's Lower Price Hill Community School, likes to talk about persons like a student named Lisa and her aunt, Eve.

Eve came to this Appalachian-oriented school in the early 1980s—a high school dropout, a single mother with only the barest income. She won her GED, took some college courses at the school, and went on to become a Licensed Social Worker and begin a career that has now lasted two decades. She had a dream, Kroger says, and also had the determination and perseverance to reach it.

Kroger, of course, is quite a dreamer himself, as the success of the Lower Price Hill school suggests. He now points to Eve's niece, Lisa, who is following in her aunt's footsteps with the same "determination and perseverance" to make a better life for toddlers Heather and Dominick.

We take note that dreams sometimes need money in order to flourish. Right now, Price Hill has \$10,250 in challenge grants. "Every dollar we receive from individuals up

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For some time now, the tracking of personal genealogy has been enjoying boom times across the country. But perhaps none of this research has yielded more striking results than the pursuit of ancestors behind the show titled "Tributaries: A Collaborative Search for Family History" which appeared this fall at the Morlan Gallery of Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky.

Truly a family affair, the show resulted from the collaboration of the artist Robert Morgan, his sister Mary Morgan and her daughter, Morgan Adams. The two women worked their way through courthouses and other sources of documents, to a mountaintop cemetery in Breathitt

"Tributaries ..."

Not your usual ancestor? Detail from "The Barnett Girls," one of the six "family effigies" in "Tributaries." For more information about the show: you_rang@alltel.net.

County, Ky. and to Ireland, the original home of several of their forebears.

Working in mixed media, Robert Morgan produced fantasy portraits of a number of their ancestors—portraits like none you see hanging over the living room mantel in the old home place. The artist speaks of these pieces as "six family effigies, six ancestral totems."

Why "Tributaries"? The show's creators see the concept of "family" as a river, always changing and experiencing renewal. They expressed their strong hope that their approach might inspire others to investigate their family pasts in new ways.

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to this amount," Kroger says, "meets the criteria for a dollar-for-dollar match."

The school's address is 2104 St. Michael Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45204.

EYE on Publications

Slavery in the American Mountain South, by Wilma A. Dunaway (Cambridge University Press). Winner of the 1996 W. D. Weatherford Award for her book *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860*, Dunaway, who is of Cherokee and Irish descent, noted that she had conducted her research for that book with a special awareness of various Southern Appalachian groups "without history."

She has gone on to further study of these groups; her work blends slavery studies, Native American studies and general Appalachian studies, with her new book taking a specialized look at slave experiences on small plantations

(farms) in the Upper South. Though slave life in that region differed considerably from slavery in the South generally, the author maintains that the low black population and the small size of the holdings did not shelter the area from the general effects of slavery. And, of course, the book dramatizes the point that the mountain South was not simply white and for the Union.

The author teaches sociology at VPI.

Ecotourism in Appalachia: Marketing the Mountains, by Al Fritsch and Kristin Johannsen (University Press of Kentucky). Looked at closely, almost any field of human endeavor turns out to be far more mysterious than it seemed previously. The idea of tourism, for instance, looks simple enough—but that's of course from the tourist point of view. Looked at from the host's viewpoint, the whole business not only entails hard round-the-clock labor but presents an array of conceptual complexities—which the authors of this book admirably sum up in the early pages.

But make the concept more specific, by adding *eco* to it, and you've produced a simple idea, haven't you? No, say the authors, anything but. One textbook, they tell us, of-

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fers 15 more-or-less respectable definitions, and at the other extreme the Texas authorities content themselves with defining ecotourism as "travel to natural areas"—which, of course, you can do equipped with a snowmobile or an elephant gun.

The International Ecotourism Society rather generally calls ecotourism "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." The latter point differentiates approved ecotourism from "green" tourism, which may be low impact and educational but does not necessarily bring any benefits to the area; for instance, a nature tour that requires no local merchandise and employs no local people.

Horror at High Impact

Now it's not hard from this framework to see what kind of tourism Appalachia needs and what kind it should work hard to avoid. The point about the horrors of high-impact tourism is made clear in a searing discussion of off-road vehicles (ORVs)—dirt bikes, snowmobiles and, perhaps the most nightmarish, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). These debased forms of "nature" tourism play no favorites, as they tear up the land, pollute the air, foul watercourses, terrify landowners, threaten wildlife with extinction, and destroy the peace and quiet of all parties for miles around. The bad eggs among sportsmen and -women are those who fail to see that the right to use recreational resources inescapably carries with it the responsibility to do so with care. It's a simple enough idea, but it's a simplicity much ignored by weekend libertarians.

Fritsch, who is the founder of Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest, and Johannsen, an environmental writer, are not, however, giving us a diatribe. The book is, indeed, an argument for taking advantage of the possibilities of-

fered by tourism to invigorate the economy of Appalachia and preserve the unrivaled environment. But the mountains must be marketed to the right customers, those who will help build rather than destroy. Will it happen? That's hard to say, though we cannot help noting that a widely accepted notion of the common good will be hard to come by.

We note, as well, that the book has special value as an overall introduction to the general subject of tourism and its varied implications. Your favorite luxury hotel may never again look the same to you.



In *Appalachian Heritage* ...

From Editor George Brosi: The featured author for the Winter 2005 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* will be Chris Offutt, a native of Rowan County, Ky., who is now on the faculty at the prestigious University of Iowa graduate program in creative writing. Two highlights of the issue will be a short story by Offutt and a dialogue between Offutt and Silas House, two Eastern Kentucky writers who are often thought of as opposites in terms of such crucial issues as whether to stay in the region and stereotyping. The issue will also feature an article by Ron Rash, who recently served as a judge for the NEA creative writing fellowships in poetry, on the poetic language in Offutt's prose. Poets will include Jeannette Cabanis-Brewin of Cullowhee, N.C., and the Offutt story will be complemented by additional original stories by other outstanding writers. The regular features on regional books, authors and events will round out the 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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