

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

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Looking Forward

January 29-February 4: Throughout the year the John C. Campbell Folk School offers week-long and weekend classes in a bewildering array of craft subjects, and they're always coming up with new twists or sometimes whole new subjects. A remarkable example is provided by the series of Dolls & Bears classes, presented more or less one week a month; the week of January 29 is titled "Dolls—Journey into Their World," and others include "Wee Folk," "Wild & Whimsical Wool Figures" and other such. (Is this a new craze? Frankly, we're not sure.)

As always, willing learners have access to a wide range of possibilities, from basketry to chair seats by way of kaleidoscopes and mosaics. 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 5-25: 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. "If you are a woman in a period of transition in your life, or if you wish to clarify your personal strengths and aspirations," says Kim Short, the school's director, NOSW may be for you. The school, which recently produced its 468th graduate, offers career counseling throughout the year and also puts on a number of workshops open to anybody. NOSW was founded by Jane Stephenson and her husband, the late Berea College president John Stephenson, and took its name (plus "new") from an earlier Berea College enterprise; NOSW is not, however, affiliated with Berea College. Write to Kim Short, New Opportunity School, 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403, or phone 859/985-7200.

February 18-19: 3rd 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; or write the sponsoring association at P.O. Box 141099, Cincinnati, Ohio 45250.

March 4-5: "Kentucky Crafted: The Market," 25th annual wholesale-retail show, for the general public and trade buyers (who can come on March 3rd for their own trade day), with more than 300 exhibitors of traditional, folk and

contemporary crafts, two-dimensional visual art, musical recordings, books, videos and food products (food, in fact, will get some extra attention this year), along with live entertainment and craft activities for children 4-12. The show takes place at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center (this year in South Wing B), hard by Louisville International Airport. 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 17-19: 29th annual Appalachian Studies Conference, Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio. This destination city for thousands of mountain migrants during the 20th century should be a busy place this particular weekend, with first-round NCAA men's basketball action also on the schedule; you might want to book your room early. This year's conference theme: "Both Ends of the Road: Making the Appalachian Connection." For full details, contact Mary K. Thomas at Marshall University: 304/696-2904; mthomas@marshall.edu. Or get in touch with one of the conference moguls, Phil Obermiller (solotso@aol.com) or Tom Wagner (Thomas.Wagner@uc.edu).

April 2-7: Spring Dulcimer Week, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Guy George, Patty Looman and Dan Landrum will offer instruction (novice-beginning, intermediate, intermediate/advanced) in the hammered dulcimer; the renowned Betty Smith, Bill Collins and Janita

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Water, Water!

The headwaters of all the major rivers in the eastern United States lie in Appalachia, says a current report prepared by the University of North Carolina Environmental Science Center for the Appalachian Regional Commission, which means that "whatever happens in Appalachian waters has major consequences for the nation as a whole." In other words, if it's bad for the mountains, it's bad for everybody.

This central fact will perhaps draw some new attention to the quaint old Appalachian custom called straight-piping—where sewage goes directly from the source into a creek or a river. It's a problem found particularly in remoter areas, and in general the hard-rock topography of the region makes laying sewer pipes or installing septic systems a difficult and costly endeavor. Even some towns with treat-

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Baker (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 Neal Walters and Drew Smith or on the bowed psaltery from Greg and Tish Westman, who build these unique instruments as well as teaching you how to play them. Every afternoon, participants can enjoy performances by guest artist Bob Shank and resident instructors, and on Friday evening there'll be a big concert. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W. Va. 26241, or phone 304/637-1209; www.augustaheritage.com.

April 27-30: 19th annual MerleFest, Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, N.C. An acoustic jamboree, featuring the Doc Watson guitar championship and the Merle Watson bluegrass banjo and mandolin contests, along with numerous other events, in which everybody seems to be at least a superstar; the list of performers includes Pete Seeger, Emmylou Harris, Bela Fleck, John Prine and an array of other notables, including, to be sure, Doc Watson himself. Details: 800/343-7857; www.merlefest.org.

May 4-6: 16th annual Boxcar Pinion Memorial Bluegrass Festival, Raccoon Mountain Campground (just off I-24), Chattanooga, Tenn. Since this is a campground, you might want to bring your sleeping bag and get in the spirit of the occasion. Festival musicians will perform all three days from midday to ten or eleven o'clock; the lineup includes Tim Graves and Cherokee, the Country Gentlemen,

Cherryholmes, Illrd Tyme Out and other notables; the memorable Dismembered Tennesseans will of course pull themselves together and be on hand. You can get full details from Cindy Pinion at 706/820-2228.

May 12-14: 37th annual Appalachian Festival, Coney Island, Cincinnati, sponsored by the Appalachian Community Development Association. There's a small admission fee: \$7. Along with music, dancing, storytelling and crafts, you'll find a "living history" village. See contact information for February 18-19.

May 20-21: Spring Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. After almost 40 years at Indian Fort Theater near Berea, the fair has now moved permanently, spring and fall, into town. Some 120 guild members will display their work, which will of course be available for purchase. You can get more information from the guild office: 859/986-3192; info@kyguild.org.

May 26-28: 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 will see 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; fiddlersgrove@yadtel.net.

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ment systems don't have the money to operate them properly, leading to a kind of secondary straight-piping.

A few years ago, when a Kentucky state senator introduced a bill to outlaw straight-piping, many of his fellow legislators treated the proposal as a sort of quixotic joke until word of the goings-on reached Rep. Hal Rogers, the uncrowned czar of the mountains, who with one or two terse phone calls whipped the troops in Frankfort into line and got the bill passed, despite behind-the-scenes opposition from mobile-home manufacturers. A powerful proponent of development, the congressman had no time or tolerance for those who thought straight pipes were funny.

The law has since been strengthened. One of its provisions requires homeowners to have septic systems installed before they can receive electric power. The practical effect, says the senator who fathered the act, is to keep a person from plunking a trailer down on a patch of ground and hanging one end over the creek—because that means no electricity, which means no television, and "they've got to have TV."

Geriatric Pushers

A doctor in Eastern Kentucky is doing random drug screenings of her patients, not because she thinks some of the older ones might be forgetting to take their prescription drugs but because she wants to make sure the drugs aren't being sold. According to authorities, illegal dealing in pre-

scription drugs has become a booming trade in Central Appalachia.

"When a person is on Social Security, drawing \$500 a month, and they can sell their pain pills for ten dollars apiece," said one jailer quoted by the Associated Press, "they'll take half of them for themselves and sell the other half to pay their electric bills or buy groceries."

That's why you could find an 87-year-old woman, complete with oxygen tank, sitting quietly in a courtroom, waiting to find out whether she'll receive a five-year sentence or whether the judge will grant shock probation, which would call for only a brief and, presumably, "shocking" stay behind bars.

Such inmates pose a severe problem for the penal system, said the jailer quoted above. Their medical needs are "putting a severe strain" on his deputies. The jailer from a nearby county agreed: senior citizens just aren't adapted to the rigors of imprisonment.

One senior, however, had her own way of avoiding jail time. Maggie Bailey, who died early in December at the age of 101, simply arranged matters so that she would not be convicted, though her alcohol operation was hardly a secret. Renowned, in fact, as the "Queen of the Mountain Bootleggers," Mrs. Bailey made herself almost indispensable to her neighbors in Harlan County, Ky., by helping out with grocery money and buying coal to see them through the winters. As a *Lexington Herald-Leader* reporter noted, juries would just not convict her.

Besides that, said a prominent federal judge who as a young lawyer once represented Mrs. Bailey on six boot-

New Opportunities . . .



In last summer's session, participants in the New Opportunity School at Berea had a variety of new experiences, including throwing pots under the direction of Berea College's Philip Wiggs.

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legging charges on the same day, "she was an expert on the Fourth Amendment. She knew the laws of search and seizure as well as any person I've known." But, in general, she disapproved of crime, according to another lawyer. She would say, "I'm just a good old-fashioned bootlegger."

"There Should Be No Poverty"

One morning in early November, a reporter for the *Appalachian Center Newsletter* got wind of a strange kind of meeting that was supposed to be held that very day at Berea College's luxurious Boone Tavern Hotel. The United Nations was sending an envoy to meet with local scholars to discuss, of all things, local—that is, Appalachian—poverty. Wondering whether this unlikely story had any truth to it, the reporter invaded the hotel but could learn nothing except that no information would be given out about any such meeting.

Resourcefully, the reporter returned a while later, sought out what seemed the probable venue of such a session, and discovered unmistakable evidence that 15 or 16 persons had indeed consumed lunch in that room; they had eaten, talked and moved on. Their stay in Berea had been brief, indeed, but, on the evidence, agreeable.

As later became clear, one of their number had in fact

been a representative of the UN—Arjun K. Sengupta, a scholar, based in Geneva, who works with the UN Commission on Human Rights. Touring the United States to draw up a picture of "extreme poverty" in the country, Sengupta had come to Appalachia in response to an invitation from Rev. John Rausch, director of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, who wanted the visitor to get straight talk from a variety of people. "I don't want to hear any glossy nonsense," Rausch declared.

During his two-day swing, besides his stop in Berea Sengupta visited a homeless shelter, a low-cost medical clinic and the Hindman Settlement School, where he met with local government officials. "This is one country where there should be no poverty," the envoy said, adding, "It's a problem that can be solved." Early this spring he will present his American findings to the UN commission.

EYE on Publications

From Anatolia to Appalachia, edited by Joseph M. Scolnick, Jr., and N. Brent Kennedy (Mercer University Press). In the Spring 2005 issue of the *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, in our review of *Walking Toward the Sunset* by Wayne Winkler, we brought you up to date on the Melungeons, the hard-to-define and, indeed, mysterious people whose American heartland is upper East Tennessee.

As it turns out, we and you may not have been quite up to page 4

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to date. *From Anatolia to Appalachia*, subtitled "A Turkish-American Dialogue" is actually an earlier offering from the same publisher, and it has to do with the possibility of a link between the Turks of the Ottoman Empire and the Melungeons. Turkic people have been migrating to America for many centuries, we are told, but this movement has gone largely unrecognized. The book, the bulk of which consists of interviews with interested Americans and Turks, does not reach conclusions, but such investigation is important for a number of reasons, including medical considerations. Now the Melungeons "stand a chance," says the editor, "that many of the genetic-linked illnesses will be properly diagnosed and treated. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized."

This book is part of the continuing Mercer University Press series, *Melungeons: History, Ethnicity, Culture and Literature*. You'll no doubt be hearing more.

An American Vein: Critical Readings in Appalachian Literature, edited by Danny L. Miller, Sharon Hatfield and Gurney Norman (Ohio University Press). This book grew out of conversations a few years ago between Danny Miller and Gurney Norman in which the two, as they tell us, "lamented the fact that Appalachia as a literary landscape is almost entirely absent from the American literary canon and that Appalachian literature is celebrated almost exclusively only in the region itself." Why not put together a collection—of critical writings, not of stories and poems—that would demonstrate the contributions of Appalachian writers and literary scholars to American literature? When Miller, of Northern Kentucky University, and Norman, of the University of Kentucky, decided to go ahead with the project, they enlisted the aid of the writer Sharon Hatfield, an independent scholar.

The anthology sets the context, not too surprisingly, with a chapter from the book often considered the seminal work of Appalachian literary criticism and historiography, Cratis Williams's *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction*, followed by Jim Wayne Miller's essay of a generation later, "Appalachian Literature at Home in this World." The last of the many pieces in the book comes from a representative of a still-younger generation, Rodger Cunningham, who tells us that in looking at the direction

Appalachian literature might now take, we must be aware that, as the editors say, "postmodern werewolves have arrived and brought with them powerful new metaphors."

Book Note

Building Rural Communities, an annual report, is one of the many publications available from the Housing Assistance Council, which provides loans (to the tune of \$17.7 million in 2004), technical assistance and other help to local rural housing organizations. The council also publishes *Rural Voices*, a quarterly magazine, and a biweekly newsletter, *HAC News*. The council's address is 1025 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 606, Washington, D.C. 20005.



In *Appalachian Heritage* ...

From Editor George Brosi: The Fall 2005 issue celebrates the 100th anniversary of the publication of *The Spirit of the Mountains*, the first comprehensive overview in book form of Southern Appalachian culture. Since its author, Emma Bell Miles, was an artist and a poet, this issue is full of lots of beautiful drawings and fine poems as well as compelling excerpts from Miles's diaries. The magazine also includes fiction, poetry, book reviews and the regular features of any issue.

The Winter 2005 issue of *Appalachian Heritage*, available right at the beginning of the new year, is a special issue celebrating the life of Mary Lee Settle (1918-2005), who died on September 27th. It includes tributes from George Garrett and Brian Rosenberg, both of whom published books of Settle criticism, and material from other leading scholars, including Matthew J. Bruccoli. Patty Tompkins, the widow of Settle's cousin, and other commentators contribute reminiscences. The highlight is a 15-page chapter from Settle's yet unpublished memoir, forthcoming from W. W. Norton. Among the magazine's regular features is poetry by Fred Chappell.

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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