

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Thomas Parrish, Editor

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Looking Forward

July 9-August 12: Swannanoa Gathering, a series of week-long workshops (now expanded to five weeks) held on the campus of Warren Wilson College, outside Asheville, N.C. Guided by a gigantic and varied staff, this jamboree begins with dulcimer and sing and swing weeks (July 9-15), proceeds through Celtic music (July 16-22), old-time music and dance (July 23-29), guitar and contemporary folk (July 30-August 5) and fiddle (August 6-12). Also, Eric Garrison will again conduct a performance lab—the kind of thing that educators might term “professional development” (July 23-29). “The worst part about the gathering,” a student once complained, “is that there are only 24 hours in the day and three of them are wasted sleeping”; gathering@warren-wilson.edu; www.swangathering.org.

July 9-August 13: Music, crafts, dance and folklore, spread out over five theme weeks—guitar and Cajun/Creole; blues and swing; Irish, Bluegrass; dance, old-time and vocal; Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Aside from the “theme weeks” workshops, you can take individual classes, including such offerings as accordion repair, Celtic design and lettering and gourd banjo construction. There’ll also be such standards as blacksmithing and basketry. You may pick your week and pick your pursuit (from the more than 300 possibilities). The summer will be capped by the three-day Augusta Festival (August 11-13), with dancing, family-style festivities and a full-bore concert on Saturday evening. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241; www.augustaheritage.com; phone, 304/637-1209.

July 14-16: 19th annual Scopes Trial Play and Festival, Dayton, Tenn. This reenactment of the famous 1925 “monkey trial” confrontation between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow is right up there with today’s headlines; the production, which is sponsored by the local chamber of commerce and Bryan College, will be accompanied by various other kinds of entertainment. You can get details from the Dayton chamber of commerce at 423/775-0361.

July 20-23: Summer edition of the 59th annual fair, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. (The fall edition will come out October 19-22.) These exhibitions present the best of the work of the organization’s 900 members, who offer demonstrations in all media. You can find out more by calling 828/298-7928; www.southern@craftguild.org.

July 30-August 4: 29th annual Appalachian Writers’ Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. You always find the best on tap here, as this year’s collection of luminaries proves once again. You can listen to, talk with and learn from such Appalachian figures as Lisa Alther, Crystal Wilkinson, Silas House and George Ella Lyon. To find out more, write the school at P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822, or call 606/785-5475; e-mail: info@hindmansettlement.org; www.hindmansettlement.org.

October 6-8: 23rd annual Sorghum Makin’, John R. Simon’s Family Farm, 8721 Pond Creek/Carey’s Run Road, Portsmouth, Ohio 45663. “Lots of good music,” Simon says, and lots of apple butter and, to be sure, sorghum; also soap making, butter churning and corn pickling, plus dancing and hayrides. The number to call is 740/754-3407.

October 7-8: Fall Festival, John C. Campbell Folk School. If you attend, you can join some 200 craftspersons in celebrating “the rich heritage of the Appalachians.” The crafts will be backed by continuous live music and dance on two stages. Contact the school at One Folk School Road, Brasstown, N.C. 28902; phone, 800/FOLKSCH; www.folkschool.org.

October 13-14: Annual Fall Fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, Berea, Ky. Those of you who’ve been coming to this popular fair for years may need to be
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Again, the Mines

Over and over, we’re told that coal mining is an inherently dangerous business. With explosion, fire, asphyxiation and collapse as constant looming presences, no doubt it is. But 2006 is proving particularly rough.

The two January tragedies in West Virginia and other accidents in Kentucky (see *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Winter 2006) have now been followed by a May 20 blast at Darby in Harlan County, Ky., in which five miners died. That brought the total for the first five months of this year to 33, which compares dismally with the figure of 22 for all of 2005.

As is usual and natural, various interested parties have offered criticisms of the existing order and suggestions for change. But one point in the Darby disaster seems particularly important: the only survivor of the blast is alive
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reminded that it has left Indian Fort Theater in the Berea woods to take up permanent residence at the city's Memorial Park in town (West Jefferson St.). More than 100 artists and artisans will display their work, and members of the Kentucky Storytellers Association will participate; also Nick Lawrence of University of Kentucky station WUKY will be on hand to tape his show "State of the Arts." For more details, phone 859/986-3192; e-mail: info@kyguild.org.

October 20-21: Eighth annual national conference: "The Women of Appalachia: Their Heritage and Accomplishments," sponsored by Ohio University—Zanesville. Topics of papers include everything imaginable, from the domestic to the global. The Website—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.

October 22-29: Old-Time Week in West Virginia—a "highly personal week of friendship and sharing"—put on every autumn by the active Augustans over at Davis & Elkins. The days are filled with intensive small-group instruction, workshops with guest master artists and, in the evenings, square dancing, shape-note singing, flatfooting and other such fun. The whole affair ends with the "unique and heartwarming" weekend Fiddlers' Reunion, which lures musicians from all over the U.S. and Canada. For specific details, see contact information for July 9-August 13.

October 26-29: 32nd annual presentation of the Celebration of Traditional Music, sponsored and produced by the Berea College Appalachian Center. Everybody knows by now how

from year to year the celebration mixes continuity and change in ever fresh and interesting ways, and this year's offering seems likely to continue the tradition. Take special note that the curtain will rise a day earlier than usual, with a Thursday evening free concert of songs and strings by John McCutcheon and Malcolm Dalglish on hammered dulcimer. The next two days will present the familiar and popular mixture of jam sessions, workshops, the Saturday symposium and, of course, concerts and dancing. Musicians taking part include Nat Reese, Lewis and Donna Lamb, Jake Krack and the Whoopin-Hollar String Band, the Berea College Bluegrass Ensemble, Sue Masek, Greg and Emily Beasley and (speaking of change) a local Latino band; Charlie Whitaker and Erin Cokonougher will be calling dances. On Sunday morning you can join in the traditional hymn sing. For further details, contact the Appalachian Center at 859/985-3140, or e-mail the coordinator: Deborah_Thompson@berea.edu.

October 28: 33rd annual Blue Ridge Folklife Festival, billed, as always, as "the largest celebration of authentic folkways in Virginia" and twice named one of the "Top Twenty Events in the Southeast" by the Southeast Tourism Society. A must for old-car buffs (with at least 200, and probably more, on display), "Virginia's largest showcase of regional traditions" will not neglect earlier sources of power; workhorses and mules will pull and plow. And nobody should miss the Virginia coon-mule jumping championship and the coon-dog water races. There's also a major quilt show. Further information from Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; phone, 540/365-2121.

Prizes

As the organizers of the 29th annual Appalachian Studies Conference pointed out in their advance description of the meeting, "roads of all kinds connect Appalachians with each other. Back roads crisscross counties, 'big roads' run from one town to another, and Interstates lace the region." In reflecting on the economic, cultural and social roles played by these mountain roads, the sponsors chose to highlight two, in view of the choice of Dayton, Ohio, as the site of the conference. The city was a destination for thousands of mountain migrants during the 20th century and, as an urban center, offers opportunities to explore both the white and the black Appalachian urban experiences.

The conference, which took place March 17-19, hence had as its theme "Both Ends of the Road: Making the Appalachian Connection," which was highlighted by keynote speaker Bill Turner, of the University of Kentucky.

In another highlight of the conference, Darnell Arnoult and Sharon Hatfield received W. D. Weatherford Awards for the most effective books about Appalachia published in 2005. Originally administered jointly by the Berea College Appalachian Center and Hutchins Library, and now by the Appalachian Studies Association in association with the Appalachian Center, the award,

originally a single prize, was established, and supported for 17 years, by the late Alfred H. Perrin of Berea.

The award is named for W. D. Weatherford, a pioneer in Appalachian development, youth work and race relations, and since 1997 has also honored the memory of his son, Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., president of Berea College from 1967 to 1984.

Until 2004 the prize was given for either fiction or nonfiction. Now, however, nonfiction and fiction-and-poetry each gets its own recognition.

Arnoult won for *What Travels With Us*, a kind of inexplicit Virginia mountains version of *Spoon River Anthology*—a collection of poems about Appalachian people who earlier had migrated a short way, from the hills to the foothills, to work in a textile mill. This description, however, hardly does justice to these graceful and lyrical poems, which paint uncluttered individual pictures. "Plainspoken yet eloquent," comments Lee Smith, "Arnoult captures the moments that define whole lives." The book is published by Louisiana State University Press.

The nonfiction Weatherford prize went to Sharon Hatfield, author of *Never Seen the Moon* (University of Illinois Press). Who was it who had never seen the moon? A young woman named Edith Maxwell, according to

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national newspaper reporters who flocked to Pound, Virginia, in the fall of 1935 ostensibly to cover Edith's trial for the murder of her father. The idea was a fantasy, of course, spun by journalistic fabulists who told readers that all young women in the mountains lived under an inflexible nine o'clock curfew. That and other tales were fed to the public, notably by the Hearst press, which traditionally regarded journalism as simply a daily form of fiction.

Edith Maxwell had the misfortune to come into conflict with the legal system in a year in which daily journalism had reached perhaps its peak of irresponsibility in the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the accused—and convicted—killer of the baby son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh. Fresh from trashing this trial, which took place in New Jersey, the pack was delighted to turn to a promising case down in the hills in John Fox, Jr., country. The governor of New Jersey had complained that Hauptmann had not received a fair trial—and old newsreels prove it—but nobody paid any attention to him.

In *Never Seen the Moon*, you can follow Edith's legal adventures in detail. Fair trial? The debate involved not only the lawyers but national feminists, writers like James Thurber, and even Eleanor Roosevelt. The author pays full attention to the sociological implications of the whole business; nevertheless, it's a story for true-crime fans, too.

For information about any aspect of the Appalachian Studies Association, get in touch with Mary K. Thomas at Marshall University: 304/696-2904; mthomas@marshall.edu.

Little Shepherd of Letcher County

As suggested in the preceding article, the national reporters who came to Pound, Va., to cover the trial of Edith Maxwell looked on the area as John Fox, Jr., territory—the “Land of the Lonesome Pine,” after the famous 1908 novel *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*.

Fox, a Kentuckian who lived in Virginia, had an earlier best seller about this Kentucky-Virginia border area, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (after Kingdom Come creek in Letcher County, Ky.). Though the book is fiction, its great popularity led to the development of a 14-mile Little Shepherd nature trail along the top of Pine Mountain.

Nothing unusual about such a development, of course—all kinds of localities capitalize on literature and literary characters. But one recent day something strange happened: a work crew turned up and began spreading blacktop on the dirt-and-gravel scenic way. Before anybody knew it, asphalt covered six miles of the trail. Startled locals then rushed off to Frankfort to protest to Gov. Ernie Fletcher's chief of staff.

Not everybody had objections, however. A local state representative, Howard Cornett, had, in fact, pushed for some years to get that asphalt on the top of Pine Mountain. He appeared to believe that blacktopping the trail would

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New Hand at Center Helm

Chad Berry, current president of the Appalachian Studies Association, has become the fourth director of the Berea College Appalachian Center.

Established in 1970 as the first Appalachian center anywhere, as the late Berea President John B. Stephenson



Chad Berry, the Appalachian Center's new director, comes to Berea from Maryville College.

noted, the center was headed for 23 years by Loyal Jones, who came to be, Stephenson said, “the person who most clearly and completely symbolized commitment to the Southern mountains.”

In 1993, when Jones retired, the widely known sociologist Helen M. Lewis agreed to come to Berea for a two-year appointment as interim director of the center, which, as she commented, had through the years encouraged and added to scholarly research on the region and had “provided music and laughter to go with it.”

Gordon McKinney, the Appalachian historian and author, then became the permanent director of the center, remaining in the position until last year, when he moved over to the Berea history department to teach full-time.

Berry, a scholar of Appalachian studies, American history and South African studies, comes to Berea from Maryville College, where he has taught since 1995. He has also lectured at the University of Cape Town and has served as an editorial assistant on the *Journal of American History*. He holds degrees from Notre Dame, Western Kentucky and Indiana universities.

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today because a response team reached him quickly, while he still had oxygen. That contrasted sharply with the situation at the Sago mine in January, when rescuers did not enter the mine for 11 hours and found one man dead from the explosion but 11 others dead from asphyxiation.

Promising news comes from a pair of manufacturers specializing, respectively, in mining equipment and chemical-warfare shelters. Their new product is designed to shelter as many as 18 miners with a four-day supply of oxygen and, say the companies, can be set up in just two minutes. The shelter meets the standards of the West Virginia Mine Safety Technology Task Force.

Until recently, the *Harlan Daily Enterprise* observed, members of the Bush administration were “trumpeting their safety record” because of the relatively low toll in 2005, but these boasters now appear “to have been just lucky then and reckless now,” with cuts in staff, failure to collect fines and general leniency with violators of regulations.

“It's time to start erring on the side of caution if there are questions about safety,” said the *Enterprise*. “and that starts at the top with enforcement of current and future regulations.” ■

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attract tourists. And his opponents were therefore the deepest-dyed villains. Who were these opponents, these protesters? Appalshop, cried Cornett—Appalshop, the documentary-film enterprise founded back in the 1960s. That's it, declared Cornett in the *Harlan Daily Enterprise*. "They're a bunch of old hippies, and they're the worst plague that's ever been in Eastern Kentucky."

Gee whiz! That would be some plague. Are they really that bad? Well, actually, it turns out that Appalshop wasn't involved in the protests at all. Members of an entirely different organization, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, were the culprits. No matter, said Cornett, unperturbed by the facts—they're all the same. He seems to espouse the thesis that all nonprofit organizations have some sort of mission to perpetuate a negative image of Appalachia so that they can continue to win government grants. Why else would anybody object to the blacktopping of a mountain?

EYE on Publications

When Miners March, by William C. Blizzard (Appalachian Community Services, Gay, W.Va. 25244). The 1921 battle of Blair Mountain pitted thousands of West Virginia coal miners against state and local authorities, with the "Redneck Army" hoping to bring the United Mine Workers Union to Logan and Mingo counties and the lawmen determined to stop them. This confrontation has been chronicled in books and film, notably by David Alan Corbin in *The West Virginia Mine Wars*, but not from the perspective provided by *When Miners March*. The story presented here was written for the newspaper *Labor's Daily* in 1952 and 1953 and, having long lain neglected, appears now in book form for the first time.

The author's father, Bill Blizzard, provided the generalship for the army and subsequently went on trial as the lead defendant for his actions. "Coal operators," we are told, "sought to hang some 200 miners and literally

pronounce a death sentence on both the UMWA and the labor movement across our nation."

Though Blair Mountain represented a defeat in the field, it proved to be a battle lost, not a war. Bill Blizzard did not swing from a gibbet, and the MWA succeeded in organizing the coal fields. But those were raw days, indeed.

In Appalachian Heritage...

From Editor George Brosi: For the summer issue of *Appalachian Heritage*, Jeff Mann is the featured author. Our section on Mann includes a speech and a sequence of seven dulcimer poems, one for each of that instrument's modes, plus literary criticism from Michael Shannon Friedman, literary biography from Cynthia Burack and anecdotal pieces from Edwina Pendarvis and Kevin Oderman. Recently a minor literary sensation was created by the J. T. LeRoy hoax, and an article by a native of the state he is supposedly from, West Virginia, looks at this sham from a distinctive regional perspective. An article by Libby Falk Jones highlights the career of Helen Lewis, for whom the Appalachian Studies Association's Service Award is named, and Dexter Collett provides the second in his two-part series on the Musicians of the Mine Wars. The short stories come from one of the region's most established writers, R. T. Smith, the editor of *Shenandoah*, and from Bill Weinberg, an important figure in politics in Knott County, Ky., and beyond, and a first-time story-writer. Our poets, in addition to Jeff Mann, are Robert Morgan, Marianne Worthington, Wendell Berry, Charles Wright, Sarah Anne Loudin Thomas, Ron Rash, Edward Francisco, Jane Hicks, Parks Lanier and Kenneth D. Haynes. Book reviews are R. H. W. Dillard's treatment of Pulitzer Prize poet Henry Taylor's *Crooked Run*, mostly set in Loudoun County, Va., where he grew up, and Thomas E. Douglass's take on Jeff Biggers's *The United States of Appalachia*. The issue is rounded out by Sidney Saylor Farr's recipes and recollections, news, events, an editorial and write-ups of 60 new regional books!

Appalachian Heritage is available (\$6 a copy, \$18 for one year, \$34 for two years, \$50 for three years) from the Appalachian Center, CPO Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404.

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