

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

Chad Berry, Director • Thomas Parrish, Editor

Vol. 35 No. 3

Summer 2006

Looking Forward

September 21: The first of four musical heritage programs and workshops presented by the National Park Service, National Council for Traditional Arts and Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway; Blue Ridge Music Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway, milepost 212.5 (near the Virginia/North Carolina state line). Other dates are the next three Sundays; just show up at 1:00 p.m. "Of Interest to All!" declare the proud sponsors.

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 6-15: Georgia Mountain Fair Fall Festival, Hiawassee, Ga.—"ten great days" of music galore, and there's an unusual bonus indeed: real lions and tigers will pay a visit from their Florida sanctuary, where they have found refuge from abuse and neglect. Phone, 706/896-4191; e-mail: gamtfair@alltel.net.

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 12-15: 27th annual Tennessee Fall Homecoming, sponsored by and held at John Rice Irwin's Museum of Appalachia, renowned as "the most authentic and complete replica of pioneer Appalachian life in the world." Continuing to hold its place among the top 100 events in North America, as selected by the American Bus Association, the homecoming will feature the long-established bountiful serving of art, crafts and entertainment, offered by a few dozen persons you may have heard of—Ricky Skaggs, Charlie Acuff, Mac Wiseman, Sparky and Rhonda Rucker, the Dismembered Tennesseans (who still seem to be holding together) and Jennifer Rose among them. Sidebar events include such goings-on as antique-tractor parades and demonstrations of weaving with dog hair; crafts galore, too, of course. The museum's address is P.O. Box 1189, Norris, Tenn. 37828; phone 865/494-7680; museumappalachia@bellsouth.net.

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 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 19-22: Fall edition of the 59th annual fairs, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. (The summer edition took place in July.) These exhibitions present the best work of some 200 of the organization's 900 members, accompanied by demonstrations, music and entertainment for adults and
to page 2

Celebration!

Launched back in 1974, the Berea College Appalachian Center Celebration of Traditional Music returns October 26-29 in its 32nd appearance, with its customary array of star performers.

"We feel that the old styles traditional to the mountains are not heard so much any more," said the Celebration's founder, Loyal Jones, in launching the series, "and so we want to encourage them." This year's organizer is Deborah Thompson, a project specialist in the Appalachian Center. "Along with celebrating older styles of homemade music," she explains, "the 'traditional' part of the Celebration also highlights the value of passing on older traditions for new generations to reinterpret." Whether you think of it as encouragement or preservation, the Celebration clearly achieved its aim through the early decades, and in doing so actually became a tradition itself. We also like to talk in these pages about how from year to year the celebration mixes continuity and change in ever fresh and interesting ways, and this year's offering should continue this complementary tradition.

Make 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. The symposium speaker, Fred J. Hay, librarian at Appalachian State University's William

to page 2

LOOKING *from page 1*

youngsters. You can find out more by calling 828/298-7928; www.southern@craftguild.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 give you the latest information. 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 full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W. Va. 26241 or phone 304/637-1209; e-mail: augusta@augustaheritage.com; www.augustaheritage.com.

October 26-29: 32nd annual presentation of the Celebration of Traditional Music, sponsored and produced by the Berea College Appalachian Center. (*See separate story.*)

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.

November 14: 13th annual conference, Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center; Lexington Convention Center. Various officials and scholars, all of them top level, will gaze into a big crystal ball as they seek to discern "trends affecting Kentucky's future"; the formal title is "Measures and Milestones 2006." The economy, health, aging population, broadband and technology, education, environment and energy, immigration and demographics (as hot a topic here as it is most other places), agriculture, leadership and civic engagement—there's not much left out. Full information from the sponsors at 800/853-2851; e-mail: info@kltprc.net.

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, and has continued to produce fresh generations of young teachers. You can participate in a variety of classes, including Appalachian square dancing, taught this year by Berea alumnus Peter Rogers, and Irish set dancing. This year's special visiting attraction is Scottish pianist and fiddler Aidan Broadbridge. If you're

interested, act now—registration with deposit is due by November 1. To find out more, call 859/985-3431; e-mail: ccds@berea.edu.

February 4-24: Winter session, New Opportunity School for Women. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) to this popular program for low-income women aged 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, Nows may be for you—or, we suggest, for someone you know. The school, which recently produced its 487th graduate, offers career counseling throughout the year and also puts on a number of workshops open to anybody. Though the winter session itself is still months off, **the deadline for applications is November 30**; a high school diploma or GED certificate is required. For full information, write to Kim Short, New Opportunity School, 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403, or phone 859/985-7200; e-mail: kshort@nosw.org.

CELEBRATION *from page 1*

R. Eury Appalachian Collection and guest editor of *Black Music Research Journal's* special issue "Black Music in Appalachia," will talk about "Affrilachian Music: Black Musicians and Black/White Musical Exchange in Appalachia," including examples of the music.

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 Stidham will be calling dances. On Sunday morning you can join in the traditional hymn sing.

If you need any more details, you can contact the Appalachian Center at 859/985-3140; e-mail: Deborah_Thompson@berea.edu.

Safety Quirk

The West Virginia and Kentucky coal-mine tragedies earlier this year (see *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, Winter 2006 and Spring 2006) brought calls on all sides for safety reform: new laws, new procedures, new equipment. There was nothing new about that—for many decades such a chorus has swelled after every mining disaster, albeit with varying results.

This year the need for greater availability of air supplies for trapped miners has claimed much of the attention on the technical side. Should emergency air packs be stored along every escape route? Or should they be placed in caches with airlocks at each end that miners could open from parallel escape routes, or in hardened rooms with ventilation bore holes to the surface?

to page 3

Up a Creek...

SERVICE LEARNING:
Berea College student Megan Bay works hard in a Creek Cleanup Day. It's part of a service-learning collaboration between a Berea College Women's Studies course and the Madison County (Ky.) Action Team.



SAFETY QUIRK *from page 2*

And, beyond these questions involving both technical factors and money, a specific problem is demonstrating just how complex the whole safety issue can be. A series of recent tests has shown that air packs carried by West Virginia safety inspectors had serious flaws that would render them essentially useless. What's the problem? Very likely, it seems, the culprit is heat; the inspectors tend to leave their packs in their cars, and in summer that means exposure to extreme heat. The question has now become: How many packs in general use lack heat-damage indicators? And what heat sources must be guarded against?

Questioned on these points, a safety expert noted that, as in most other fields, products vary in merit. Companies and miners should insist on having the best.

View from Non-Appalachia

Deep poverty is the name bureaucrats and scholars give to the condition of people who make less than half the official \$19,350 (for a family of four) poverty line. The number of such people is growing nationally, we're told, even though productivity is up. Indeed, wages and salaries, according to the *New York Times*, now make up the lowest proportion of the economy since record-keepers began keeping track of them some 60 years ago; on the other hand, corporate profits have reached their highest percentage of the economy since the troubled but booming 1960s (a time when, for example, just about anybody, male or female, could go to Detroit and get a factory job for as long or short a time as desired).

Overall, however you read today's economy, it's striking that the poverty rate continues well above the 2001 level, and, of course, there was nothing satisfactory about that figure.

At the beginning of the year, moving into his second term, New York's Mayor Michael Bloomberg took official note of the continuing, seemingly ineradicable poverty in the city (twice the national level) by forming a commission to draw up a model for attacking the problem; the effort, he said, would constitute the key goal of his new term.

Toward Triage

Poverty, to be sure, has been the target of many wars and campaigns and it has never yet allowed itself to undergo eradication, but nevertheless the mayor's panel has produced some interesting specific ideas. A business-oriented group (hardly surprising, given the mayor's background as a business tycoon), the majority, at least, of the members appear to have favored a more "results-oriented" approach than the broader efforts mounted in the past, which depended heavily on federal subsidies and entitlement programs. Part of the reason here is the need to make the best use of the relatively limited authority of the city government.

Seeking a "powerful impact" instead of looking to across-the-board efforts, the panel calls for a kind of economic triage focusing on three groups: children younger than six, people 18 to 24 and the working poor. This approach makes sense to Merryl Tisch, chairwoman of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, since "you can't do everything in one fell swoop." Others worry about the fate of the long-term unemployed and welfare recipients. But the issue that would seem to call for debate is the central idea of selectivity: Worth trying or not?

The question can be asked anywhere, and people far from New York might need to note that Bloomberg's strategy at least deserves a look—especially since his approach has achieved success in one of the toughest of all areas, the public schools and their constituencies. ■

Black Diamonds Glows

A must-see new documentary film explores West Virginia surface mining and mountaintop-removal practices and how they affect the land and people. Called by one viewer the *Harlan County USA* of the 21st century, *Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice*, a grim 70-minute portrait, includes testimony from Julia Bonds, West Virginia citizen turned activist who received the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2003; Ken Hechler, former West Virginia secretary of state; and William Maxey, former director of the West Virginia Division of Forestry. Many other West Virginia citizens also join in to share their experiences and expertise.

The film was written, directed and produced by West Virginia natives Catherine Pancake and Ann Pancake. For information about this "searing documentary," as a Baltimore reviewer described the film, go to www.blackdiamondsmovie.com. (Readers in the Berea area will have the opportunity to see *Black Diamonds* on December 1 at Phelps Stokes Chapel [7:30 p.m.]; Catherine Pancake and an activist featured in the film will be on hand for discussion. For more information, contact Chad Berry at 859/985-3727; chad_berry@berea.edu.)

EYE on Publications

Tragedy on Greasy Ridge, by Danny Fulks (Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 669, Ashland, Ky. 41105). Back in the early 20th century, says the author of this book, a southeastern Ohio native, Northern Appalachia was as Appalachian in nature as anything to the south of it. And you certainly don't have to read very far in the book before you encounter some familiar characteristics. "Pinto beans, smoked hams, potatoes,

eggs, sausage, and a variety of home-grown vegetables," Danny Fulks notes, "were turned into fine meals by our mothers who were, in fact, folk artists who made the bland sublime. Later, traveling in the south, I found the same dishes on menus in mom-and-pop restaurants."

Not one for euphemistic talk, Fulks tells about elections stolen, losers in school-board contests burning down schoolhouses, teaching jobs going to the highest bidders. In some ways life was even tougher in Appalachian Ohio than farther south, because the climate was harsher. "The conflict with nature never let up," Fulks reflects. "Long, dreary winters began in November and continued through March."

The author gives us lighter stories, too. Basketball, as popular in his home area as across the river in Kentucky, provided the adventures of the remarkable Waterloo Wonders, twice state champions in the mid-1930s, and the spectacular Bevo Francis, epic scorer of the 1950s.

Subtitled "true stories from Appalachian Ohio," the book is indeed a varied collection of tales and memories somber and humorous and thoroughly genuine.

In Appalachian Heritage...

The Fall 2006 issue features West Virginia author Meredith Sue Willis and Ohio Valley artist Philip van Voorst. WVU President David C. Hardesty, Jr., supplies commentary on Willis, along with novelist Keith Maillard and Phyllis Wilson Moore. This issue's short fiction writers are all newcomers: Neva Hamilton, Brittany Hampton and Jeff Kerr. The book review section, in contrast, features Fred Chappell on Charles Wright criticism, John Lang on Kathryn Stripling Byer and Randall Wilhelm on Ron Rash. Our poets are Loyal Jones, Charles Wright, Rita Sims Quillen, Charles Swanson, Melanie Jordan, Tim Poland, Jane Sasser, Kathleen Ernst, Scott DuVal and J. D. Schraffenberger. Truman Fields and Sidney Saylor Farr contribute memoirs.

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 1
Lexington, KY

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