



GOD HAS MADE OF ONE BLOOD ALL PEOPLES OF THE EARTH

BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones
APPALACHIAN CENTER
Tradition. Diversity. Change.

Change is the only constant

They say change is the only constant, and we in the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center are gearing up for tremendous change come June 30, when Senior Office Manager Genevieve Reynolds will work her last day at Berea College.



Reynolds

After more than four decades of service to the College and to the Appalachian Center, Genevieve says, "It's time." Why has she decided to stay so many years, I asked her? "I've enjoyed it," she quickly answered. "I'm really going to miss being here, but I know it's time. I really do."

She first came in January 1965 and worked a little more than six years. Then Loyal Jones was starting up the new Appalachian Center in 1970, he called on Genevieve to assist him, and

she agreed. But a year later, she left; spending time with a new baby daughter was important. In September 1973, Loyal asked her if she wouldn't consider returning to the Center full time. She's been here ever since, serving as the Center's only assistant.

Through the years, the Appalachian Center has had many homes. "We started in the Nursing Building, then moved to the Sears Building, then moved from Sears to Edwards Building, and we stayed in Edwards from '75 to '96." She recalled how she and Loyal used to laugh because the Sears Building had no indoor plumbing—not even a restroom. Obviously, the Center has come a long way since then, owing to the beautiful space in Bruce Building it now occupies.

One of the perks of her many years here is meeting so many musicians, writers, and scholars. She fondly remembered Wilma Dykeman, "one of the nicest people I've ever met," she said, "and she didn't have to be. She was an absolute joy to work with."

Thinking for a moment, she said, "I met a lot of people—Bradley Kincaid, John Lair, Grandpa and Ramona Jones. And so many people are gone: Jim Wayne Miller, Cratis Williams. Jim Wayne would come in with a cigarette, of course—he'd get his ashtray—and he'd get on that manual typewriter and start typing till Loyal got ready to walk out the door. And who knows what he was typing—a poem or story? He'd just type away on that thing."

Genevieve has been the repository of institutional memory for each of the four directors. She's also epitomized the professionalism and joy that comes from work well done. "I guess," she said, "I'm most proud of working with all the students and directors." But if one asks Loyal or Helen Lewis or Gordon McKinney or me, each of us would say how the pleasure was all ours for working with her. Go well, Genevieve, and thank you. You may send her your regards at reynoldsg@berea.edu.

—Chad Berry, Director



Winter 2010
Volume 38 • Number 2

LOYAL JONES
APPALACHIAN CENTER STAFF

Dr. Chad Berry, Director, Appalachian Center, and Goode Professor of Appalachian Studies

George Brosi, Editor, *Appalachian Heritage*

David Cooke, Program Coordinator, Entrepreneurship for the Public Good, and Director, Berea College Appalachian Fund

Beth Curlin-Weber, Administrative Assistant, Brushy Fork Institute

Dr. Peter H. Hackbert, Moore Chair in Management and Entrepreneurship, EPG

Jane Higgins, Program Associate, Brushy Fork Institute

Peter Hille, Director, Brushy Fork Institute

bell hooks, Distinguished Professor in Residence in Appalachian Studies

Dr. Daniel Huck, Gruver Chair in Leadership Studies, EPG

Christopher Miller, College Curator and Associate Director, Appalachian Center

Donna Morgan, Associate Director, Brushy Fork Institute

Genevieve Reynolds, Senior Office Manager

Dr. William Turner, NEH Chair in Appalachian Studies

Please address all correspondence to:
Loyal Jones Appalachian Center
Berea College, CPO 2166
Berea, Kentucky 40404
859.985.3140
www.berea.edu/ac

Berea College and the Appalachian Center are committed to the betterment of the peoples of Appalachia. The unique views and perspectives of individual authors in this Newsletter, however, do not necessarily represent the views and policies of Berea College.



"The problem around here is that they don't teach you how to dream."

a parent on Big Ugly Creek, Lincoln County, W. Va.

Making dreams

W. Va. group helps youth to

For 21 years, Step by Step has worked with children and youth to uncover and pursue their dreams. In the 1990s, inspired by a parent on Big Ugly Creek who captured the sense of hopelessness that derails so many low-income children and families, we developed the West Virginia Dreamers program that was later recognized by Pew Partnerships' Wanted: Solutions for America as a national model for community development.



BCAF SPOTLIGHT

Michael T. Tierney

Our premise is simple—communities commit to supporting their children's dreams and fighting dream stealers from early childhood to independent adulthood. We weave together home visiting and playgroups for infants and toddlers, after-school and summer-enrichment programs, and service-learning and civic engagement as young people take responsibility for their community while they prepare for a vocation and college. This work is as old as the tradition of mountain neighbors taking in the stranger and looking out for each other's children and as modern as the complicated dance of blending funding streams and passing the baton to community partners to insure that people don't fall through the cracks.

This past year we have deepened our efforts to work with middle school students by forming the Crossroads Community Corps—a concentrated effort to create havens of enrichment, prevention, and care for children from fifth through eighth grade. At this age the risks of violence, premature sexual activity, and substance abuse increase exponentially in young peoples' lives. Our hope is that each child finds ways to feel of use; discovers a passion in the arts, academics, or community leadership that builds their capacity for expression and joy; and that they begin, early on, to set their eyes on the prize of college and fulfilling work.

The Berea College Appalachian Fund has helped Step by Step build on years of teen leadership programs to engage youth in both the rural coalfield and inner-city Charleston in six weeks of full-time service. Work ranged from home repairs for and outreach to community elders to rebuilding computers for low-income families, to environmental projects including stream monitoring,

a reality

pursue goals



water testing, and building rain barrels to distributing information and materials for home-energy conservation. For 2010, we already have plans for college visits, community gardens, oral history collection, a community mural at the Big Ugly Community Center, the first annual Rock Camp for Girls, and our third annual Appalachian Music Camp.

Several milestones in our 21st year reinforced the sense that we have “come of age” as an organization and as a community of people committed to West Virginia children. First, the participants in our inaugural program at the Big Ugly Community Center in 1995, a pre-kindergarten program for children too geographically isolated to be served by Headstart, graduated from Chapmanville High School. One of those graduates was William, whose mother had to attend our summer program every day his first year for him to overcome his challenges of autism and other developmental disabilities to participate. Students at the Center worked hard to include him, and one teen leader volunteered in his special education class on a daily basis. In ninth grade he went onstage in the crowd scenes for a holiday production of “A Christmas Carol,” and his senior year had a memorable turn as the Coroner in the teens’ cautionary original play about prescription drug abuse.

Second, a college student, who had attended Big Ugly’s after-school and summer programs throughout his grade-school years, returned to the Center with 14 fellow freshmen on a service spring break, part of Earlham College’s Bonner Scholars program.

But our deepest sense of coming full circle is inspired by the eldest daughter of the parent who mused about children and dreams all those years ago. Beth Dingess-Kirkendoll went to the Big Ugly Elementary School, graduated from Harts High—despite facing the challenge of teen pregnancy—and has both an Associate’s Degree and most of her credits for her Bachelor’s. She was an accomplished children’s advocate, who raised over \$10,000 for St. Jude’s hospital, before becoming a VISTA with Step by Step this past fall. She recently turned down a strong job offer to fulfill her commitment to serving her community, where she has already set up a church-funded backpack program providing low-income children with food to take home over the weekends, and she has big plans for a prevention program to help girls and young women in Lincoln County.

Watching these young people grow up has been a gift. Seeing them flourish as young adults is proof that with perseverance, creativity, and an abundance of hope, we can help children grab hold of their dreams with both hands. ❧

Michael T. Tierney is the executive director of Step By Step. To find out more, please visit stepbystepwv.org

Children work with a team leader at Big Ugly Community Center.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the first in a new regular series highlighting work of organizations supported by the Berea College Appalachian Fund (BCAF).



THE VIEW FROM HERE

bell
hooks

Awakening in

Understanding the necessity for a progressive approach to spirituality and healing is the essential learning that must take place if we are to survive on the earth. Our collective well being demands that we recognize the importance of interdependency, that we embrace the values inherent in a culture of belonging over a culture of enterprise, that we choose to resist domination by learning how to love, how to live in community. In *The Raft Is Not the Shore*, Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh contends: "Resistance...must mean more than resistance against war. It is a resistance against all things that are like war. Because living in modern society, one feels that he cannot easily retain integrity, wholeness. So perhaps, first of all, resistance means opposition to being invaded, occupied, assaulted, and destroyed by the system. The purpose of resistance, here, is to seek the healing of yourself in order to be able to see clearly....Communities of resistance should be places where people can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal themselves and recover their wholeness."

My presence here in Berea, at Berea College, is an expression of my personal quest to be whole, to find a place where spirituality and healing matter. Returning to the hills of Kentucky I find the necessary solitude for communion with the landscape of my upbringing. Trees have fallen on the hill at Owsley Fork. Meditating on their brokenness I see mirrored there the damaged places in our souls. We are living in a crisis culture. Significantly focusing on spirituality and healing is the only meaningful response

to this crisis. As our crisis is a crisis of spirit, it can only be addressed by spiritual change and transformation.

True healing does not take place in isolation. We are healed in and through community. The literal meaning of healing is becoming whole. Many of us experienced our first sense of being wounded in dysfunctional families where practices of abuse and violation mirrored the larger culture of domination. Our quest is for healing. We seek to take the broken bits and pieces of our hearts, our damaged selves, our world, and put them together again. Buddha called this practice the cultivation of a spirit of mindful awareness and enlightenment that leads to the development of a new soul. In Buddhist terms, this means committing oneself to a life lived in service to others, a life guided by compassion and loving kindness.

Buddha's insistence on facing the pain in our lives, facing suffering, has had large appeal to folks in the United States seeking a spiritual path. I had read about Buddhist thought in my teen years, but my first direct encounter with a Buddhist practitioner happened when I was an undergraduate at Stanford University studying and writing poetry. Gary Snyder came to campus and read to us with a passion and calm that was awesome. I already knew he was involved with Zen from his work. He invited me to a Buddhist celebration in the mountains, and there I met Buddhist nuns whose presence inspired me to become more engaged with Buddhist thought and practice. Since that time, now more than twenty years ago, I have been engaged in the contemplative

Appalachia

traditions of Buddhism in one way or another.

However, if you asked me to define myself, I would not start with religion, with race, with gender. I would start by stripping down to what fundamentally informs my life being a seeker on a spiritual path. While resisting all forms of domination is a part of that journey, I stand spiritually, steadfastly, on a path of love, that's the ground of my being. Love as an active practice whether Buddhist, Christian, or Islamic requires us to be in love with the universe, to love life. Buddhist teacher Joanna Macy eloquently speaks of this process in *World as Lover, World as Self*. She explains: "Our mission is not to escape our world...but to fall in love with our world. Loneliness is one of the great sufferings of our time; we acknowledge that now and recognize the need to take charge of our lives together. The Dharma wheel, as it turns now, also tells us this. That we don't have to invent or construct our connections. They already exist. We already belong to each other, for that is the nature of life." Thomas Merton, who found in Kentucky a sacred place where the soul can rest also wrote of loving God in these terms. To commit to love is fundamentally to commit to healing. In a culture of domination, love is a threat because it breaks down the barriers that separate us. It offers us a way to heal the wounds inflicted by trauma and abuse, whether that

wounding happens in our families or in the larger world.

Coming back to Kentucky's hills I merge Buddhist spiritual practice with Christian practice. Images of the Buddha sit with the image of a black Christ on the Cross carved in wood in Mexico and the red Judas with green eyes carved in wood that is cracked from the top of the piece to the bottom. We are all working to accept and heal our brokenness; that is the challenge of our time.

Love as a foundation for healing leads us more deeply into practice as action in the world. In the life and work of Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, we find an integration of contemplation, of working to heal oneself and to heal the world. Nhat Hanh's Buddhism does not emerge from a place of privilege, but from a location of deep anguish—the anguish caused by genocidal war, by life in exile. Through the experience of suffering, Thich Nhat Hanh finds his way past duality, finds his way to love, and emphasizes the importance of loving those we have wrongly viewed as enemies. He explains that "Love mediation is not wishful thinking. It is an authentic practice. Looking deeply, you radiate the energy of mindfulness onto the object of your mediation and illuminate it. True seeing always gives rise to true love." ✕

bell hooks is Distinguished Professor in Residence in Appalachian Studies at Berea College.



Would you like to receive the UAC Newsletter electronically? In addition to the printed version, the newsletter is also available as a PDF at www.berea.edu/ac. In the future, the Newsletter may go completely digital. Please send your email address to chad_berry@bera.edu if you would like to start receiving the electronic version now (in addition to the print version).

An inconvenient truth: we still need coal for the future

by J. Steven Gardner

Coal is a part of Kentucky's heritage and still a part of Kentucky's future. Barbara Freese, in *Coal: A Human History*, makes the observation that in "... the United States... coal transformed a virtual wilderness into an industrial superpower with astonishing speed." We need to find alternative sources of energy. Coal is a finite resource. Many argue over exactly how much coal is left, 200, 100, 50 years. The exact figure depends on our energy consumption. Undoubtedly we consume too much. Beyond coal, petroleum, nuclear, and alternative energy, there's another, untapped resource: efficiency, the fifth fuel.

Today, several departments at the University of Kentucky, for example, are leading the country in coal-related research in environmental restoration; safer, more efficient mining systems; coal resources; reforestation; and cleaner coal utilization. An inconvenient reality is this country still needs coal for the future, not just for energy, but as a resource for products used every day.

At the 2009 Governor's Conference on the Environment, Governor Steve Beshear asserted that Kentucky is a coal state and this is a coal nation. Vice Admiral John Grossenbacher, Director of the Idaho National Laboratory, observed that while nuclear power could safely supply the country's electricity, it will take decades to ramp up our needs. In the meantime, coal will still supply a large part of our energy. Dr. Dan Arvizu, Director of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, observed that while renewables will supply significant amounts of energy in the future, coal will be necessary for decades.

I am the first to admit that mining coal caused past problems. However, the debate over mountaintop mining rages with extreme misinformation. Mining methods and land restoration have improved over the decades. Land and ecosystems are restored, in large part due to research efforts at UK. I would suggest listening to those experts for facts instead of fiction offered by others. Environmental performance in air and water has improved tremendously.

Restored mine sites in East Kentucky are among some of the most valuable land there. Lieutenant Governor Dan Mongiardo and House Speaker Greg Stumbo both live on restored mine sites. Dr. Mongiardo practiced medicine in a hospital on a restored mine site. Admittedly, not all mountaintop sites have been developed in the traditional sense, i.e., industrial, commercial, and residential. The 3 percent figure recently quoted in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* is very misleading. Thousands of acres have been developed into recreation areas, wildlife habitats, farms, homesteads, with thousands more creating opportunities for the future. Can we do better? Yes, but great strides have been made.

Miners and those associated with the industry are fiercely proud. Those of us with Appalachian roots are also fiercely independent and guard our individual private property rights. One of the myths that circulates is that mining companies mine people's property without their permission. Nothing is further from the truth. I believe the vast majority of landowners in Kentucky want their land mined and restored as they would. There are those who do not want their property mined, and that is their right. The question is how to mine responsibly without violating others' property.

Typical criticisms of mining include stream loss, flooding, wastelands, no vegetation, killing wildlife, big overweight coal trucks, and slurry impoundments. Mining has shown us how to reconstruct streams, make fills for forests, bring back wildlife, and create new ecosystems. The *Lender* has blamed mining for flooding in East Kentucky. Mining has shown us that mining in most cases actually retards flooding by reducing flooding. The truth is flooding would have occurred regardless. Blasting, dust, and coal trucks are problems. Regulations are in place to handle violators. Unfortunate accidents involving trucks happen on all roads. Some anti-mining regulations to connect slurry impoundments and mountaintop removal. The truth is that only some surface-mined coal requires slurry impoundments, but virtually all underground-mined coal requires slurry impoundments, meaning more slurry impoundments will be required for underground mines. ✕

J. Steven Gardner is the incoming President of the Appalachian Coal Association. He currently is President and CEO of Energy Consulting Services, which focuses on energy, mineral, environmental, health and safety, sensitive land issues, heritage projects. He holds degrees from the University of Kentucky and the University of Tennessee.



Good health demands a future beyond coal

by Elizabeth Crowe

As a mother and 18-year environmental health advocate, I cannot consider the future of coal without considering the health of Appalachians and our future generations, and I believe that if we want a future of good health, there is little future for coal.

There is no denying that coal poses a threat to our health, from its mining to burning for electricity to disposing of toxic coal ash and sludges. Black lung from coal mine dust; respiratory and heart disease from power plant soot and smog-forming chemicals; neurological and developmental problems from mercury in the air, water, and food chain; loss of plant nutrients from acid rain in soil and vegetation are all part of coal's dirty past and our present challenges. In addition, health affects associated with drought, flooding, and rising rates of disease resulting from greenhouse gas emissions from burning coal are impacts that scientists are just beginning to understand. The cause-and-effect relationship between coal and our health is clear: the more coal pollution, the greater our health problems.

These health impacts come with a huge price tag. In October 2009 the National Academy of Sciences estimated that health care costs associated with coal plant pollution are roughly \$62 billion per year. An objective scan of experts' assessment on Appalachia's coal reserves shows that we probably already have reached peak production and can expect rapid declines in the amount of marketable Appalachian coal. That's a grim future even without considering health impacts. If state government and coal companies keep us on our current track, as coal-related job figures continue to drop and after the coal has all been mined, we'll still be left paying for poor health for generations to come.

Fortunately, it is also clear that less pollution from coal means fewer health problems. My

organization subscribes to the Precautionary Principle, which says that *even if* cause-and-effect relationships between an action and environmental or health impact cannot be absolutely proven, we should act in a precautionary manner by considering a range of better options. Applying the Precautionary Principle to the problems related to coal means we don't have to settle for economic disaster when the coal runs out, and we don't have to continue fighting about how to try to manage destruction from coal. We're not powerless (*pun intended*). We can consider a range of options that could provide more healthy energy and economic solutions for the Appalachian region.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy are two precautionary options that would make a future beyond coal that is healthy and profitable. A 2009 study by the Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies shows that for 87 central and eastern Kentucky counties, implementation of new energy efficiency and renewable energy programs could bring more than 8,000 new jobs and more than \$1.7 million in new economic growth over a three-year period. The greater our ability to use energy efficiently and harness the clean power of wind, sun, and water, the less reliant we are on coal, the cleaner our air and water, and the healthier we'll be. The less money that Appalachians will need to spend to subsidize dirty coal, the more we'll have to use to enhance our health and quality of life.

If our health and that of our children is a priority—and I do believe it is—then we must move rapidly toward a future beyond coal. ❖

Elizabeth Crowe is the Executive Director of the Kentucky Environmental Foundation (kyenvironmentalfoundation.org), a 20-year-old environmental health and justice organization based in Berea, Kentucky, which promotes safe, healthy solutions to pollution problems in our state and nation. She lives in Berea with her husband and 13-year-old daughter.

THE FUTURE OF COAL

QUESTION

A new ecology

by Samir Doshi

I first came to Appalachia in the fall. The oaks and hickories barked in colors of red and yellow. The music drew me in—first came bluegrass and then the old-time traditionals. The mountains beckoned to me, pensive and storied more than any other geologic formation on this continent. The people kept me coming back. Central Appalachia is considered a biodiversity hotspot among the temperate regions of the world. Perhaps we can also call it a *cultural hotspot*, comprised of a significantly high level of cultural history through music and art, environmental stewardship, and community.

I never thought that I would return 10 years later as an ecological designer focusing on community development in the coalfields. I never thought I would see an ecologically permanent level of devastation by an industrial process, specifically coal mining, more specifically, mountaintop removal mining. The impact extends from the natural into the social communities. The statistics have been cited and witnessed and need not be referenced again here. We know the outcome of a single, resource-dependent economy based on a commodity that has a limited supply. The anthracite mines in Pennsylvania and gold mines in Nevada have turned to ghost towns and serve as an example for communities that do not transition and diversify their economy. In Appalachia, coal reserves will ultimately become mined out and the mines will dry up. The mining companies themselves say that only 20-25 years of feasibly mined coal is left in Appalachia. Then what? What is the next chapter in the Appalachian story? What will the mountains witness next, provided that they are still there to document our history?

“What do you want Appalachia to be? What is the story you want to pass on to your grandchildren?” These are the questions I ask community members from all over the region. Most people did not know how to answer this, as they have never been asked these questions before.

They weren't consulted when the mountains were blown up, the valleys filled, the water and air poisoned. People say that they want jobs and turbines and clean water. But, that's only the setting, not the story itself. Ecology is defined as the study of relationships between organisms and their environment. It is possible to envision a new ecology for the communities of Appalachia.

The famous holy man of the Oglala Lakota, Black Elk, said that, “a man who has a vision is not able to use the power of it until after he has performed the vision on earth for people to see....” We start with visions but also need action. My job is to gather the visions and encourage a performance, an application. Our work with community organizations and local scientists explores the potential to regenerate mined landscapes into productive ecologies through the development of restored soils, biofuels, biochar, and agroforestry, all with the intent of transferring land ownership back to the communities. Along with other sectors, such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy generation, wildcrafting, foraging, and other practices that use local traditional knowledge, a new industrial ecology can emerge that integrates environmental stewardship, economic productivity, and societal well-being. The performance is underway; numerous organizations are already establishing similar initiatives and enterprises. We need continuous participation and a greater level of civic engagement. What do you want your community to be?

Samir Doshi is a systems ecologist specializing in restorative ecological design for Ocean Arks, International, which was recently awarded the Buckminster Fuller Challenge for a carbon-neutral design for Appalachia. He is pursuing his doctorate in natural resources at the University of Vermont and splits his time between Vermont and rural western Virginia, where he is conducting research on how to restore “reclaimed” mined landscapes and help communities transition toward a sustainable economy.

Eternal relationships

To tell you the truth, we almost missed it. At a first glance, Jenny Collins* trailer seemed to be “too nice for SWAP work.” It was about 12 years old—significantly newer than many homes we work on—and she already had wheelchair ramp and a good roof.

This first impression began to change during our initial visit. We realized that there was quite a bit of work to do—Jenny’s carpet lay in tatters, a hazard for Jenny and her walker, as well as a poor option for Jenny’s housebound dog. The trailer also needed a coat of paint inside, and the wheelchair ramp was in poor shape. More importantly, however, there was a relationship to build.

At first, the relationship seemed like it would be a challenge. Pam,* Jenny’s sister and neighbor, warned us that Jenny was reclusive and struggled with panic attacks, especially when new people were in the home. With Pam’s help, however, our first meeting was a success: a few anxious moments for Jenny gave way to a wonderful conversation with a hospitable lady who showed a great sense of humor.

We knew right then that we would do everything we could to help Jenny.

Volunteers from North Carolina and Illinois teamed up in June, 2009, to repair Jenny’s home. When they were finished, she had a new laminate floor, a safe wheelchair ramp, a deck with access to her back yard, and a bright new coat of interior paint. The project was a great success, and Jenny really enjoyed her volunteer visitors. And that’s often where the story ends.

But in this case, it didn’t. The SWAP experience has allowed her once again to seek relationship and expand her world, an opportunity she hadn’t had for many years. She cooked for her volunteer visitors, shared stories with them, and made them laugh, and Jenny now goes outside with

her dog, which is a big step for her—she rarely left her trailer in the past. During a recent visit for “popcorn and coffee,” she wowed us with her hospitality and by her appearance: she really was taking care of herself, and looked 20 years younger than when we first met! Jenny is now one of our good friends here in Kentucky.

After five years of ministry with SWAP, God continues to show us that what we do is secondary to God’s purpose for SWAP. Yes, we repair the homes, but in the process, God really does teach and heal everyone involved. and while our repairs will help people to be safe, warm, and dry in their homes, God’s “repairs” are indeed eternal.

Sharing with Appalachian People (SWAP) is a home-repair ministry that operates in five Central Appalachian locations, including here in Knott County. SWAP strives to focus on a *servant learning* model for ministry; that is, SWAP volunteers have an opportunity to bless others with their service and are in turn blessed with a transformative experience that reaches them about Appalachia and challenges their faith as well as their attitudes toward those who live in poverty. Finally, SWAP strives to work in partnership with the communities they serve.

SWAP home repair projects focus on making homes “safe, warm, and dry.” Common projects involve roof repair, wheelchair accessibility, flooring, painting, room additions, and siding and are chosen based upon homeowner need and volunteer skill levels. Volunteers should arrive ready for hard work, ready for new friendships, and ready to reflect about the nature of Christian service.

*—“Pam” and “Jenny” are pseudonyms used to protect privacy. ☮

Peter Farquharson has been SWAP Location Coordinator in Knott County since May, 2005. He and his family spend their summers making houses in the area safe, warm, and dry, and their winters building relationships and telling people about ministry opportunities in a beautiful part of North America.

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Peter
Farquharson



The author's family (Peter is in the middle).

Taking the long way home

the story of an Appalachian expat



THE VIEW FROM HERE

Gary
Anderson

There are probably tens of thousands, if not more, of us—the former sons and daughters of Appalachia. We live all over the country and planet. This *View from Here* is, quite literally, a view from the outside: from Old Europe, a place I have called home for nearly 17 years.

In his provocative treatise in praise of small-town and country life, *What are People For?* Wendell Berry wrote that the Boomer Generation, Generation X, and today's Generation Next broke the circle of return, what he called "the local succession of generations." Former Appalachians, like so many of America's small-town and rural children, began choosing exile over country life in the 1960s, and the trend continues to this day. Unlike so many of their parents and grandparents, they left never to return—not even for burial.

No one knows just how many people leave Appalachia temporarily or for good. But without question, some of our best and brightest have left, and their absence is sorely felt in our schools, newspapers, commerce, and politics.

Some live in exile by choice; others by the necessity of work and the ties of marriage and family. Despite their physical absence for the hills that nurtured them, a good many feel a need to interact with their former Appalachian communities. For the many proud alumni of the great Appalachian school of life, we must build a bridge—and soon—that will enable them to join the broken circle and make contributions to our region.

How can we entice exiled Appalachians to return—that is, before retirement and burial?

First, "return" doesn't necessarily mean physical presence. Let's avoid an "out of sight, out of mind" attitude about

Appalachian expatriates. They are not traitors. Many former Appalachians yearn for the opportunity to give back to their communities, even if they cannot return physically to the places where they were born and raised. Community transcends physical presence.

Second, we must keep better records. Like any university alumni organization, our schools and towns should stay in touch with our out-of-area citizens. In the age of the internet, this simply means sending an e-mail from time to time or developing city and county-supported internet platforms that encourage former Appalachians to network.

Third, our chambers of commerce should tap into this "alumni" databank in order to learn new ideas for commercial development. Some of our best minds are helping others to excel economically and otherwise. Why shouldn't we help them to help us?

Finally, invite Appalachian expats to return! Invite them to write the occasional essay for local papers; to speak at high school graduations; or host them as honored guests at chamber of commerce meetings. Getting Appalachian expatriates to "touch base" periodically is essential to maintaining the link and getting them more engaged in their former communities.

Our exiled sons and daughters deserve a chance to give back—"to return"—to their Appalachian homes. Let's help them to return to us their knowledge and ideas. ❖

Dr. Gary Anderson, a native of LaFollette, Tennessee, teaches political science at Zeppelin University in Germany. An alumnus of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, his essays appear frequently in the Knoxville News-Sentinel and the LaFollette Press.

Looking backward, forward in Lynch, Kentucky



THE VIEW FROM HERE

Rutland
Melton

My *View from Here* starts by looking back. A week in my life at age 18 in Lynch, Kentucky, from Sunday to Saturday, would have been like this. Sunday, I would attend Sunday school and church. Sunday night, I would go on my date. Sunday and Wednesday were the regular date nights. At that time, we had drive-in theaters, which we don't have any more. The drive-ins were the best thing at that time because you could take your date there, so you wouldn't have to worry about the younger brothers or sisters meddling. During that time, your date ended exactly at 9:00 p.m. and it started at 7:00 p.m.

Monday through Friday, I attended Southeast Community College in Cumberland. It was a branch of the University of Kentucky. I received the P.T.A. scholarship to attend; otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to go. On Saturdays, everybody went to the pool room and played pool downstairs. Upstairs is where the music was so that you could dance and have a good time. The pool room closed exactly at 11:00 p.m. every Saturday.

At 18, I wanted to go to the big city and see what it was like. I quit college and went to New York for six months. I worked for Chevrolet and Fisher Body the six months that I was there. I worked on the assembly line rightening the bumper and putting the molding on the side. After six months of living in New York, I was drafted into the military. They told me if I would sign up for another year, I wouldn't have to go to Vietnam, but that was the first place that I went after basic and A.I.T. training. I spent three years in the army. After that, I went and stayed in Ohio for a while but eventually moved back home to work in the coal mines. There's no place like home.

At present, I still live in Lynch, and I am very proud to be here. I'm a retired coal miner after working in the mines for 23 years. Lynch used to have quite a few people, but now there are only a few left. A lot of the houses that used to be here have been torn down.

We have two great challenges now in Lynch. First, they are trying to destroy our beautiful mountains with mountaintop removal. It's just a cheap way of mining. Our mountains are our protection. We are trying to prevent mountaintop removal in our city. God created the mountains to admire, not to be destroyed. Second, there are no jobs here for the younger generation. When they finish school here, the majority leave to find a job. A few people that left here when they were young are trying to move back here because they have retired and want to come back home to stay.

The two greatest things about living in Harlan County is that it is peaceful and quiet here and everybody treats each other with respect and like family. This town is a whole lot different and better than it was in the 1960s. Back then, our little town was segregated. Now black and white get along and treat each other with respect.

The thing that matters to me the most is the protection of our mountains. I'm also very active in participating in plays in our community. By getting in these plays, I got a chance to go to California. While there, I had the honor of meeting Danny Glover and Harry Belafonte.

In the future, I look for Lynch to become a town mostly for people that are retired. There is nothing to keep the younger generation here. If we had more jobs, maybe the younger people might stay. We only have one factory here. Without jobs, the future is very bleak for this town, as well as for the other communities surrounding us, but our hopes are as high as the mountains around us. ❧

Rutland Melton is a proud member of the Greater Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, where he sings in the men's choir.



Loyal Jones Appalachian Center
CPO 2166
Berea, KY 40404

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1
LEXINGTON, KY

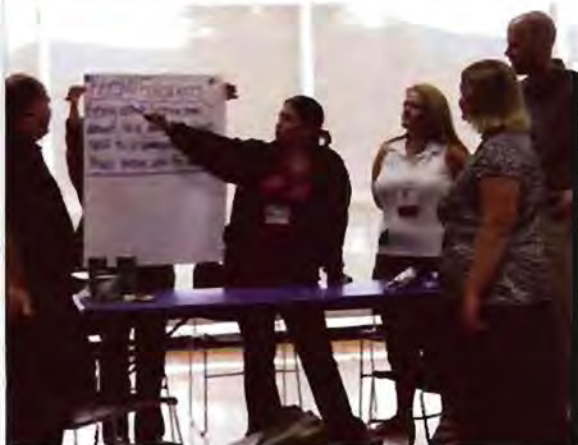
ANNUAL INSTITUTE A SUCCESS



The fifth Brushy Fork Annual Institute was held from September 16-18, 2009, on the campus of Berea College. This year saw record-breaking attendance as more than 200 individuals from organizations and communities throughout central Appalachia took part in informative plenary sessions and intensive, hands-on workshop tracks.



This year's keynote address featured a performance by Carpetbag Theatre that explored the value of building networks as a way for organizations to survive hard times. With a theme of Surviving Hard Times, the Institute included a new, special track for nonprofits in financial crisis due to the economic downturn.



Brushy Fork staff were also pleased to have several community teams at the Annual Institute as part of the program's work with Appalachian Regional Commission Flex-E-Grants in eastern Kentucky. The 2010 Annual Institute is scheduled for September 15-17, 2010, on the campus of Berea College. For more information, visit Brushy Fork's web site at www.brushyfork.org.

