



Loyal Jones
APPALACHIAN CENTER
Tradition. Diversity. Change.

Listening is the path to learning

We asked the writers of this issue to write about “what they’ve learned.” They were given no other guidelines at all, so the subject was wide open for them. However, all the pieces are connected by the fact that all of their lessons were learned by listening.

When I took the job as Interim Director of the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center a couple months ago, I knew that the only way to figure out this new role was to listen, too. Luckily, I have two of the best people talking to me: Dr. Chad Berry, who held this position before me (and left to become our Dean and Academic Vice President), and Loyal Jones, one of Appalachia’s fiercest preservationists and our Center’s namesake.

When Chad and Loyal talk, I listen.

It’s my great honor to be associated with both of them. Chad has established himself as one of the most active and devoted people in the field of Appalachian Studies today. Needless to say, Loyal is one of the reasons Appalachian Studies exists and continues to bloom.

I would venture to say that Chad and Loyal have found their way by listening as well. There are lessons to be learned by listening to the writers in this issue of our newsletter, so I hope you’ll be able to be still, sit back, and listen to them awhile, giving us their stories and the lessons they’ve learned about this enigmatic country we call Appalachia. I’m certain you’ll learn something, too. ✕

—*Silas House, Interim Director*



Fall 2011
Volume 40 • Number 1

LOYAL JONES
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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.



Absolutely nothing is impossible

When I attended Swarthmore College, following my high school graduation in 1931, I went from a high school rank of salutatorian in a 30 member class to a struggling student among very smart classmates. This added to an inferiority complex which was only cured by the Chairman of the Political Science Department, Professor Robert C. Brooks who once remarked that I was a “diamond in the rough” and only needed polishing...which he proceeded to do. Professor Brooks invited me to his home on the weekends, taught me how to study and get better grades and restored my self-confidence. His inspiration led me to become a teacher, and taught me to encourage those of my students who seemed to be less intelligent than their brilliant colleagues. I discovered that when I could see the successful results of inspiring less talented students it was the route to campus popularity.

At Swarthmore I learned about Civil Rights and Women’s Rights. I learned to appraise problems with a spirit of independence, downplaying political and economic pressures and “conventional wisdom.” The Quaker influence at Swarthmore included opening the Friends’ Meeting House every morning for a class-free half-hour, a time for students to get their priorities in order with silent contemplation. Swarthmore taught me to fight extra hard for the exploited. I learned that anything is worth trying and absolutely nothing is impossible.

In my teaching at Columbia and Princeton, back in the day when all my classes were male, middle and upper-class, I brought many black lawyers, judges and politicians to my classes so my students would understand that not all blacks were in inferior occupations. In Congress, I learned to get along very well with members of the Republican Party, which enhanced my ability to get bills enacted.

When I joined President Truman’s White House staff in 1949, he explained: “The rich and powerful people in this country have their own lawyers, their own accountants, and their own publicity staff. It’s the job of the President and every public official to stand up and fight for all those who have no representation.”

Also, unlike many politicians, Truman never took a poll, and never paid any attention to any polls or issues before making decisions on issues. He used to tell us: “Polls are a temporary snapshot of possibly misinformed public opinion. But they don’t tell you the difference between right and wrong, justice and injustice.” That word “justice” was Truman’s moral compass.”

I also learned from Truman that whenever anybody downgrades you, just go out and work three times as hard to prove that they are wrong! ❖

Ken Hechler was a U.S. Congressman for 18 years and has taught at Princeton, Columbia and Barnard. He served four terms as West Virginia Secretary of State.



WHAT I’VE LEARNED

Ken Hechler





WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Larry D.
Shinn

Appalachian lessons

When I first assumed my new position as president of Berea College in July of 1994, my wife Nancy and I decided that we wanted to travel to some part of Central Appalachia from which Berea's students come. Loyal Jones and Helen Lewis helped organize the trip for us and even met us at several places along the way. From Hindman, Hyden, and Whitesburg in Kentucky to the Highlander Center and Sneedville in Tennessee to Ivanhoe and Wise in Virginia, we traveled 902 miles in eight days.

We sat around Mike and Frieda Mullins' picnic tables in Hindman with Appalachian authors Al Stewart and James Still along with Grady Stumbo, the Chairman of the Democratic Party in Kentucky. In Whitesburg, we were hosted in the Court House Café by Josephine Richardson to meet local officials and then were given a tour of Appalshop by its founder, Bill Richardson. These two Easterners came to Kentucky in the 1960s and adopted Whitesburg as their home. I was given a tour of Whitesburg by the county Judge Executive, Carroll Smith, a Republican who was also a leader in the UMW union. In Ivanhoe, Maxine Waller talked about "out-migration" and what she and her friends were trying to do to make Ivanhoe a place where young people could learn their local history. In Wise we were hosted by Jay and Marcia Lemons, the presidential couple at the recently re-named University of Virginia at Wise (formerly Clinch Valley College) where we had lunch with an African American family whose son was coming to Berea College that fall.

During the past 17 years at Berea, I have traveled thousands of miles in the small towns and cities and the mountains and hollers of West Virginia, Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee, Southeastern Virginia, Western North and South Carolinas. In all

of those travels I have confirmed what my first trip in 1994 impressed upon me, *there is not one Appalachia, but many; and there is not one group of people you can call Appalachian, but many.* Yes, it is true what Loyal Jones says in his book, *Appalachian Values*, that there are common threads that in some sense distinguish the mountain culture we call "Appalachia." The loyalty to place, family, and local religion is strong in the mountains. And the language, music, dance and material culture from the British Isles and Europe have indeed helped create the "culture of the mountains." But so too have the songs and stories of the African American spiritual and slave traditions shaped this land. Last century's heyday of coal mining in the mountains created one new coal town after another and the vibrant black communities in Lynch and Benham, Kentucky are contemporary reminders of a day when racially diverse communities were common throughout the region. Likewise, the writings of the Affralachian poet, Frank X Walker, or of our own academic colleague, Bill Turner, make clear their claim on the mountains as "my home." And who can deny the Cherokee's insistence upon the mountains as their land too?

So, while I have learned many lessons over the years about Appalachia, none is more salient than the appreciation of the diversity of people, language, race, topography, and material culture that we so often give one name, "Appalachian." ❧

With roots on both sides of his family in West Virginia, Larry Shinn grew up on a small farm in Ohio and has taught and studied in the Middle East and India. After 14 years as a professor at Oberlin College and 10 years as a Dean and Academic Vice President at Bucknell University, Dr. Shinn has been president of Berea College for the past 17 years.



WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Jeanne Marie
Hibberd

Lessons from a 'giraffe-maker'

While a student at Berea College, I had occasion to have lunch with my mom and two of my sisters at a Denny's Restaurant in Louisville. The waitress gave my youngest sister, who was born while I was away at college, a kiddie menu. The menu included a cardboard giraffe that you could punch-out and assemble.

I had recently announced to my parents that I was changing my major from home economics to philosophy. They seemed a bit concerned about how I would find employment with a degree in philosophy and that was a recurring theme of our conversation that day.

My sister, Crissy, who was in high school at the time, tried first to assemble the giraffe, to no avail. Then mom tried for a while. Finally, after some frustration, the task was turned over to me, with the comment, "You're in college, let's see if you can figure it out!" When I finished and handed the giraffe to my smiling little sister, mom jokingly exclaimed, "Now I know what you can do with your philosophy degree, you can be a giraffe-maker!"

This story has been repeated through the years by my parents as a way of describing my journey from college to productive adulthood. The liberal arts education I received at Berea College has been tremendously useful in honing my giraffe-making skills. Since graduating I have worked in the nonprofit and social change sectors, work that could aptly be described as giraffe-making. We are presented with complex issues or projects and have to craft a path forward with no clear instructions. As Miles Horton would say, we make the road by walking.

This year I turned 50 and have become more reflective about the journey than usual. What have I learned from my career as a giraffe-maker? While not exactly epiphanies, the following lessons are the ones that I have internalized:

- I learn more from people who disagree with me than from those who agree. When honest and civil, disagreements can bring about greater consciousness.
- Social change takes time. Don't give up, don't become cynical and don't assume you can do it alone.
- I have learned far more from my mistakes than from my successes. Practice and reflection are the best paths to understanding.
- We can't change others, only ourselves. But others may respond differently to the changes we make in ourselves.
- I am responsible for my own happiness. I may not be able to change a situation but I can change how I respond to it.
- As the aboriginal creation myth asserts, we "sing the world into existence." Our perceptions, choices and actions affect reality in significant and often irreversible ways. We bear incredible responsibility to act wisely.
- Ceding control and letting go can open up many possibilities. But knowing when and how is difficult.
- Never underestimate the importance of humility, humor and kindness. As Kurt Vonnegut advises, "Damn it, you've got to be kind." ❧

Jeanne Marie Hibberd received her BA in Philosophy in 1984. She currently serves as director of development and communications at Hindman Settlement School.

To know and to appreciate Appalachia



WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Ivan Titaley

As an international student, the term “Appalachia” did not mean anything to me until I came to Berea. When people mention America, the typical picture that always appeared in my head was New York or Los Angeles. Rarely, if ever, would an area like Appalachia come to mind.

This past summer I interned at a small environmental organization in West Virginia, which turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, not only because I learned so much about the organization’s work and increased my skills, but more importantly because of what I encountered. Over the course of about two months, I was exposed to the rich culture of Appalachia, particularly of West Virginia.

I went to the Appalachian String Band Music Festival, better known as Clifftop. This week-long music and dance celebration was a new concept for me. It was amazing to see people from all over the world converge in this one place to play bluegrass and old time tunes until dawn, dancing all night long. In this era of individualism and hard times, people gathering together, laughing, and having a good time was a sight for sore eyes.

I was also able to go hiking in a peaceful and calming forest, untouched by civilization. In that small corner of West Virginia, far from the sounds of machines and daily routine, I felt tranquil and in touch with the inhabitants of the forest.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect was getting to interact with the truly kind people there.

They always said “Good morning” and asked me how I was doing. We chatted about where we came from, talked about great ideas, studied the leaves, exchanged some jokes, and even cut wood together, all of which made me feel less alienated and more welcome.

My brief, yet wonderful summer experience in West Virginia has increased my eagerness to learn more about the region. It is the people’s hospitality and warmth that has made me develop a greater appreciation for the richness of Appalachian culture.

Overall, I equate getting acquainted with Appalachian culture to familiarizing myself with my home. Being a student of Berea College means being an Appalachian resident; hence this is where I call “home.” I want my experience at Berea College not only to be about taking classes and working, but also about learning and appreciating the region I live in.

Taking care of Appalachia is like taking care of my home. The one and only way to do that is by exposing myself to the culture, understanding, appreciating its history, and really taking in the vast richness of it all into my college education. St. Ambrose once said, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” For me, it is not just *do* as the Appalachians do, but also *experience, appreciate, and care* about the Appalachian culture. ❖

Ivan Titaley is a sophomore at Berea College, with plans to major in chemistry with a focus on environmental studies and renewable energy.

The Loyal Jones Appalachian



206

Berea College Students who had an encounter with artifacts from the Appalachian Studies Teaching Collection in a course during the 2010-2011 academic year.



38

Consecutive years of the Celebration of Traditional Music.

\$16.4 MILLION

Total funding distributed to nonprofits by the Berea College Appalachian Fund since 1954.

\$320,912

Federal funds distributed to economically distressed counties in Appalachia by ARC's Flex-E-Grant program, administered by Brushy Fork.

18

Printings of LJC Director Silas House's first novel, *Clay's Quilt*.

2



Number of Pushcart Prize nominations from *Appalachian Heritage*.

6



Low-income residents of Eastern Kentucky who received a scholarship to join Leadership East Kentucky from ARC Flex-E-Grants.



190

Berea College students who completed an APS or APS-cross-listed course in 2010-2011.

9

Dinners on the Grounds in 2010-2011.



4,148

Number of times an artifact from the Appalachian Studies Teaching Collection has been used in courses since September 2000.

1

1,113 Number of Facebook friends for *Appalachian Heritage*.



613,891

2010 page views on web site of *Appalachian Heritage*.



365

Number of days in 2010 an article from *Appalachian Heritage* was accessed on Project Muse.

75

Preschool children screened for dental treatment in Knox County, Kentucky, through an ARC Flex-E-Grant.



Center: By the Numbers



185

Participants across Central Appalachia who attended 2010 Brushy Fork Annual Institute.



28

Berea College students in CSC/TEC 186P in Spring 2011 who learned about community development and created a web site for Brushy Fork.

220



Families assisted by Grow Appalachia to produce and preserve their own food.

\$63,000

ARC Funds distributed to EPG to support "bridge and gap funding" for Berea College EPG students between Summer I and Summer II internships.



120,000

Pounds of food raised by Grow Appalachia in its first year.



750

Multi-unit homes and municipal building energy audits conducted by EPG student intern in preparation to start his commercial enterprise.

7

Eastern Kentucky nascent entrepreneurs coached by EPG students in EPG Summer Institute.



46

Number of hillbilly stereotype artifacts collected since 2004.

8

Proposals submitted by Appalachian colleges and universities for the Appalachian IDEAS Showcase Network, led by EPG.

275

facebook

Community Partner "fans" on EPG Facebook page.



14

Frets on the Homer Ledford Dulcimer in the Appalachian Studies Teaching Collection.

Communities of

Norman's moving address a reminder

Editor's Note: *The following Commencement Address was given by Gurney Norman, one of the region's most beloved and respected writers. He is the author of Kinfolks and Divine Right's Trip, as well as being a celebrated teacher and mentor. On May 8, 2011, Norman received an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Berea College.*

by Gurney Norman
Special to the LJAC Newsletter

When I was a boy, my sister Gwynne and I and our older brother Jerry lived with our grandparents on their small hillside farm in southwestern Virginia.

This was in the World War II years, a time of great upheaval all over the world.

Granddad was a coal miner most of his working life but he knew farming too. So did Grandma, a strong, energetic woman with many skills who sometimes bottomed chairs with tree bark while she was resting. Neither of my grandparents had much formal education, but both of them were intelligent, generous, highly moral people who worked hard all their lives, raising eight children and then taking in three grandchildren to care for during the war and for several years beyond.

memory

about what is truly important

In the summers, Grandma and Granddad always raised a big garden, working long days to keep the weeds cut back and then to harvest the food and preserve it by canning or drying, or in the case of the potatoes, burying them in a hole in the ground and covering the hole with a fodder shock to shed the rain. They raised corn, beans, tomatoes, beets, turnips and cabbage from which Grandma made kraut and chow chow.

Blackberries grew in abundance in the pasture. Even small kids could help with blackberry picking. There were several varieties of very productive apple trees on the farm. The peach trees in the new ground were not as reliable as the apples, but every few years they would produce enough peaches to make peach butter in the huge iron pot that stood over an open fire outside the house. Grandma made lye soap in the same pot and on wash days heated water for use in her old wringer washing machine. They always kept a cow, sometimes two, taking turns milking them twice a day. They collected the cream from the milk for several days and then churned it by hand into butter. Children could help with that work too. I remember with pleasure and pride raising the dasher up and down, up and down, gradually feeling the butter form inside the churn. They raised one or two hogs every year, killed them in early December and dressed them out with their own hands. They kept chickens that produced eggs and meat for the family. Every Saturday, Grandma would wring the necks of two fryers, skin them and have them ready to fry for Sunday dinner when we all got home from church.

Because our family lived such a basic, no-frills life, please do not think that we were

without high-tech amenities. Like many rural families in the early 1940s, we had no car, refrigerator or indoor bathroom, but I am proud to say that we did have a floor-model radio and a party-line telephone. In the evenings after supper and all the chores were done, we gathered around the radio as it brought us the news of the world as well as entertainment that enlivened our imaginations. I especially loved radio dramas for their power to create pictures in the listener's mind. The spoken words coming through the airways sparked our own imaginations so that, in a sense, those in the audience were co-creators of the story. I did not see television as a regular thing until I was eighteen. I have often thought that the radio stories, and stories the family members told to each other as part of daily conversation, had something to do with my strong memory and my early interest in fiction writing.

I mentioned that our telephone was on a party line. Most rural people who had phones in the early 1940s were on a party line, where four or five families would share one line and take turns using the phone. There was a different ring for each home. I think ours was one long and two short rings. One of the most exciting things that could happen in those days was to get a long-distance telephone call. When you answered the phone and learned that it was a long-distance call, your heart skipped a beat. Often your first thought was: someone has died. A long-distance call was a serious thing. It took time to place a long-distance call. Granddad had two sisters who lived in Texas, in the Houston area. To call them you would give the local phone operator the name and number and town and state, then hang up and wait to be patched through to Texas. From Kentucky a local phone operator might connect you to a phone company in, say, Louisville. The Louisville operator would forward your call on to Nashville, then Memphis, then Little Rock, then

turn to page 10

Communities of memory

continued from page 9

Houston and finally on out to the rural county where the sisters lived. Sometimes an hour or even two hours would go by while all the land-line connections were made. No communications satellites orbited the earth in those days. Finally the local operator would call you back to tell you that you were connected to your party. Needless to say, you

did not make long-distance calls for frivolous reasons, or linger on the phone for casual conversation. You had to be rich to do that.

Long distance telephoning in the early 1940s probably sounds as remote in time to young people today as the year 2011 seemed to us in 1944. We didn't think anything about having to wait two hours for a telephone operator to call us back.

Today we are frustrated when there is a delay of a minute or two in our electronic communications. It has become a cliché to say that we live in an increasingly wired, global society where instantaneous communication is the norm. Enormous sums of money are moved instantly around the world with the click of a mouse. A new global

economy is developing in the online world as creative people invent new businesses. New cultures and even languages are developing, new vocabularies. It has been hard for me, but at last I have accepted that the word "friend" is now a verb. I trust that my young and very great nephews, Steven and David Gadd of Berea, will be impressed that I know what a hashtag is.

Texting, tweeting, blogs, iPhones, BlackBerries, YouTube, Facebook, Skype, all the forms of social media: a brave new world is coming into being. Indeed, it is already here. A watershed moment in the history of

human communication is unfolding around us at a pace too fast to comprehend. It is an exotic new world we live in. Online communities of like-minded people who have never met develop genuine fondness for one another. Many individuals send and receive hundreds of messages a day. The spectacle of hordes of people on the streets and campuses walking along, studying their hand-held devices, sending and receiving pictures, videos and text messages, is now commonplace.

Instead of going to the local bookstore, you can order a book from Amazon and have it delivered to your door the next day. Bookstore owners might feel that such online commerce is one of the downsides of the digital revolution. How could there not be downsides to such a powerful force as digital media? Every time we browse the web we leave information about ourselves on permanent record. Large institutions build information files on citizens and sell them as a commodity. Identity theft has become a major global problem. The gradual loss of a sense of local community is surely part of the reason that individuals look to online communities for meaning and comfort. We all want to belong to a family or community that will recognize us and listen to us and care about us. But there seems to be something in contemporary American society that leaves many people feeling excluded, isolated and alone.

In his 1985 book *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah distinguishes between what he calls "communities of memory" and "communities of lifestyle." A community of lifestyle is an intentional community that comes into being in a relatively short time and attracts people with common interests. A retirement community built around a golf course might be called a community based on lifestyle, and a good way of living it is for many people. Communities of memory evolve over slow time, in a local place where people hold in common memories and stories of shared experiences of life. Local people feel

"We all want to belong to a... community that will recognize [and listen to] us...but there seems to be something in contemporary American society that leaves many people feeling excluded, isolated and alone."

Gurney Norman, addressing
May 2011 Berea graduates

that they are members of what Wendell Berry calls "the beloved community" where, in the words of Bill Best, "older values of neighborliness, honesty, trust, and compassion" might prevail.

Bill, as many of you know, is a former Berea College student and teacher who for many years has been a dedicated gardener and leader in the movement to maintain the traditional genetic heritage of vegetables and fruits by preserving heirloom seeds. I thought of Bill recently after reading an article about a company that produces hybrid vegetable seeds that can't reproduce themselves. The seeds will give a farmer one crop, but any resulting new seeds will be sterile, obliging the farmer to pay money for the hybrid seed every year instead of allowing the original seeds to regenerate themselves in the natural way. I can't help but see this practice as a metaphor for many of the things that ail our society, which seems increasingly to regard every human enterprise as something that must produce a cash fit. The idea that members of a community might hold some things in common is not as strong as it used to be. Relentless individualism is the doctrine of the day, which challenges the older belief that a shared public commons is one of the cornerstones of American life.

The effort to protect original seeds is an excellent metaphor for fixing that which is broken, healing what has been torn. The answers to many of mankind's problems lie before us like fertile seeds if one has eyes to see them. Technologies come and go but human nature doesn't change. Humans seem to make the same mistakes over and over again. The knowledge and the wisdom to correct mistakes exists but it keeps getting lost amid the general man-made clutter.

We live in a time of drastic information overload. We "wired" citizens are so busy sending and receiving messages and processing the torrent of information, we forget that not everyone has a computer, or the education to function well in the digital universe. We know there is no end of information, but can we find wisdom there? As far as I know, no one has yet looked for wisdom in our electronic machines. That could be a good project for you new Berea College graduates. A



Stephanie Browner, left, and Chad Berry, right, assist Gurney Norman as he prepares to deliver the May, 2011 Commencement Address to graduating Berea College seniors.

search might show that the greatest wisdom is to be found among the unwired and marginally educated common people.

I have always thought that my grandparents had wisdom, although Granddad would probably prefer that I call it common sense.

I think of Berea College as a beloved community of memory that does know where to look for wisdom. The College is unique for its balanced curriculum, which includes daily labor at a job. It is special in that its outstanding academic program has always been accompanied by a focus on hand-craft and the folk arts such as music, dancing, storytelling, weaving, and wood-working. More than any other school, Berea College has not separated itself from the regular, working people in the nearby region. It is their sons and daughters who have found opportunity here.

To you students who are graduating today: your diploma certifies that you are prepared to take your place in the competitive world of the twenty-first century, with every chance of succeeding at high levels in your chosen profession. Your diploma also means that you now are a member of one of the most distinguished groups of American citizens, the alumni of Berea College. I congratulate you.

Let me conclude by quoting some words my grandmother said to me. She was well into her eighties when she spoke: "I don't know why God lets me stay on here, unless there might be some little young'un that needs me."



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Let it grow, let it grow, let it grow!

Grow Appalachia is a Berea College program devoted to teaching and supporting the people of Appalachia in addressing the tragedy of hunger in the region by learning to grow their own food.

Left: a proud Harlan County family in their garden (photo: David Cooke). **Above:** Passing on knowledge and tradition in Clairborne County, Tennessee (photo: Freda Williams).