

NEWS

LETTER



APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

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Hospital Turnaround

For years now, everyone has thought of the Appalachian Regional Hospitals as a financial disaster area or congenital basket case. They were doing some good, no doubt, but they always seemed just to be hanging on by their fingernails, having to be rescued at the ultimate moment by a grant from somebody or other. (If all these metaphors don't convince you that the situation was chronically bad, we can at least say we tried.) Now, however, there is word that the ARH has not solved its problems, certainly, but perhaps turned the corner. The figures for the last fiscal year show a \$2.1 million surplus. The turnaround seems to be due primarily to greatly improved organization and management, with much of the credit going to new president Robert L. Johnson, former president of the National Center for Health Education and onetime vice president of the University of Kentucky.

The fact that improved management can produce such striking results is of special significance because it was long thought and often said that the ARH had taken on such a great burden — the providing of basic medical care throughout Central Appalachia — that it would inevitably be overwhelmed by its problems. It should be pointed out, as well, that the system's improving finances are the result of many specific changes in procedure and not, it seems, from any denial of previously available services.

What Rural Education?

In a world in which we have statistics about everything, even if we don't know what they mean, a surprising gap has been pointed out by the authors of a recent report — a gap that should be of particular interest in Appalachia. The report, by Gail Parks and Jonathan Sher, lists all the things that the federal government doesn't know, and apparently doesn't want to know, about the smallest rural school systems. For instance:

a) The federal effort to coordinate educational data often excludes information on schools with fewer than 300 students and school districts with fewer than 1,000 students.

b) The two annual publications of the National Center on Education Statistics have no category for rural students.

c) The data collected by the Census Bureau are published by counties, causing obvious problems when

you try to relate them to figures published by school districts gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics.

What is needed, the authors say, is a new federal clearinghouse concerned with information on rural education. Meanwhile, rural school districts could help themselves by compiling their own information. The report, called *Imaginary Gardens? Real Problems*, is available from National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc. 813 Airport Blvd., Austin, Tex. 78702.

Appalachian Studies: Regional Report — II

In the last issue of the CENTER NEWSLETTER (Summer 1979) we reported on our survey of Appalachian studies programs at area colleges and universities. At the time eight schools had responded to our questionnaire, and, as we said, their answers tended to "confirm the feeling we had that Appalachian studies is a field that is continuing to grow; it is spreading to more and more schools, and it is taking on increasing importance in schools at which it is already established."

Now we have replies from three more schools — Appalachian State, Concord and Davis and Elkins. And we also include here information about the state of Appalachian studies at Berea. (Several well-known and unmistakably Appalachian institutions are still to be heard from. As our old first grade teacher used to say to lag-gards and nonfeasants, you know who you are, and we won't embarrass you before your peers; but let us hear from you.)

Of the four schools we report on here, Davis and Elkins offers a major in Appalachian studies, and Berea and Appalachian State give the student the opportunity to design his own major; ASU also offers a master's degree program in Appalachian studies. Concord offers an undergraduate minor.

Among the courses that are by now beginning to sound standard (Appalachian Culture, Appalachian Literature and so on) we discern some with more exotic titles: Coal Mining Music, Health and Well-being in Appalachia, both from Davis and Elkins, and Folk Arts as a Cultural Expression (Berea). Appalachian State offers an array of courses, graduate and undergraduate, in various departments; all the currently reporting schools, in fact, offer a number of specifically Appalachian

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courses. Concord also has what it calls minicourses (Folk Music, Folk Dancing).

Among summer programs, Berea's two offerings are outstanding — the Workshop in Appalachian Studies (history and culture, literature and related arts, for 6 hours of graduate credit) and the Short Course in Appalachian Literature. Concord offers a summer program, The Appalachian Experience.

Special programs include Appalachian State's oral history project (sometimes it seems as though the 1970s may one day be viewed as the era when everybody fell in love with oral history), Concord's Appalachian Heritage Week, and Berea's annual Celebration of Traditional Music and its Students for Appalachia, a community-service program for students.

The most eminent publication is probably *Appalachian Journal*, published at ASU. We would not, however, wish to overlook the quarterly newsletter you're reading at this very moment. ASU also produces the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*. Among archives and collections is Berea's famous Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection; Appalachian State counters with the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection. Berea and ASU are also involved in the production of sound and videotapes.

Among the outreach activities, one planned program is particularly unusual. Davis and Elkins is developing a homestead, or small-scale farming, operation aimed at providing technical help to persons undertaking subsistence-agriculture projects. Further information is not yet available.

What seems to have become increasingly clear is that Appalachian studies, as a defined area, has become as standard a part of the curricula of regional institutions as English or chemistry, as recognized in the small college as in the large university.

Good-bye, Sulfur!

The current cry from those concerned about energy seems to be more coal and less pollution — with the details to be somehow worked out by people who know about such things. Among those people appear to be the engineers who have developed what is called the atmospheric fluidized bed combustion (AFBC) boiler, which has been undergoing testing in West Virginia for the past two years. The boiler will burn wood, manure and various kinds of wastes — but, most notably, it can remove 95 percent of coal's sulfur content while producing only a negligible amount of nitrogen oxide. It thus looks as if it could be the answer to the pollution problems presented by high-sulfur coal. It has done so well at this in West Virginia, in fact, that the designer was recently given the first \$10,000 Award of Honor by the American Consulting Engineers Council.

Follow-up research is being funded by the U.S. Department of Energy in Shamokin, Pa., and at the Kentucky Energy Research Center in Lexington. The Tennessee Valley Authority is also involved. Industries should be heartened by the fact that the AFBC process eliminates the need for scrubbers, about which many companies fuss and moan, though supplementary devices are needed to remove fly ash — or "particulate emissions," as the technicians say.

EYE on Publications

Appalachia: A Self-Portrait, edited by Wendy Ewald; photographs by Lyn Adams, Shelby Adams, Robert Cooper, Earl Dotter, Will Endres, Wendy Ewald and Linda Mansberger; text by Loyal Jones (Gnomon Press/Appalshop). The photographers listed here constitute the Mountain Photography Workshop, which in 1976 received a National Endowment for the Arts grant to document the mountain regions of Kentucky and West Virginia. The approach agreed upon was a series of individual studies of individual people and places rather than an overall, broad-brush treatment. The result is in every sense personal, not sociological, not abstract. This is even truer of the text, which is a memory and a reflection by Loyal Jones, who has been known to write a thing or two about Appalachia. What we learn, says Robert Coles in the foreword, is that "others, different in many ways, are fellow human beings, struggling as all of us do with life's uncertainties, complexities, assorted hurdles and fateful circumstances."

Southern Music, American Music, by Bill C. Malone (University Press of Kentucky). For many years now, the most popular American music — ragtime, jazz, country, rock — has been basically southern. As the author says, "music has been one of the great natural resources of the South and one of its most valuable exports." He explores the varieties of this southern music and shows what happened to them as they went national. He includes a great deal of information about individual performers, from the mid-19th century on. Malone, who teaches history at Tulane, is well known as the author of *Country Music U.S.A.*

Tennessee; photography by Edward Schell, text by Wilma Dykeman (Charles H. Belding/Graphic Arts Publishing Co., Portland, Oreg.). A photographic interpretation of the Land of the Western Waters, as the resident Indians called it, by a self-styled nature enthusiast who is a physicist as well as a photographer. This elegant volume includes a long essay by Wilma Dykeman on people, places and the rhythms of Tennessee history.

Appalachia's Children, by David H. Loeff (University Press of Kentucky). This winner of Berea College's W. D. Weatherford Award for 1971 has now been issued as a quality paperback. "What I attempt to do here," says the author in the Preface, "is to organize and draw conclusions from the impressions I have gained as a clinical child psychiatrist engaged in fieldwork in Eastern Kentucky over a six-year period, impressions both of child development in the area and of the results of that development — the mental health or mental disorder of the children themselves."

A Vein of Riches, by John Knowles (Atlantic-Little, Brown). The author of the much-admired novel *A Separate Peace* turns here to his native state, West Virginia, as a fictional setting. The characters are members of a family dynasty created by the great coal boom in the early years of the century. According to Gore Vidal, the novel displays a "positively Dreiserian grasp of the real American world of money and the making of things." A "gripping chronicle," says Willie Morris.

Women in Kentucky, by Helen Deiss Irvin (University Press of Kentucky) *to page 4*

"By Water and the Word"

In October 1979 members and friends of the Little Dove Old Regular Baptist Church, in Knott County, Ky., gather for a baptizing service. Three elders — I. D. Back, John Preece and Ivan Amburgey — officiate. The white garments and head coverings are traditional.



Loyal Jones



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ty Press of Kentucky). One of the by-now innumerable volumes in the Kentucky Bicentennial Bookshelf. The Preface is remarkably succinct: "Why a book about women in Kentucky? Because their past has been largely ignored. My thesis is simple: women were there, their lives are worth looking at, and often they contributed more than they are given credit for." The suffragist leader Madeline Breckinridge once put it in a slightly different way (in a letter to the governor of the time): "Kentucky women are not idiots — even though they are closely related to Kentucky men."

Southeastern Indians Since the Removal Era, edited by Walter L. Williams (University of Georgia Press). Today, many persons will probably be surprised to learn, more than 75,000 American Indians live in the southeastern states. The purpose of this anthology is to give a thorough history of each Indian group remaining in the area. All the essays here are new, done especially for this book. The editor makes the point that much has been written about southeastern Indians up to the 1830s — the era of expulsion — but little since. Besides, he says, a lot what has been written isn't very good anyway.

A Clear and Imminent Danger (The Tug Valley Recovery Center). The Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River forms the boundary between Kentucky and West Virginia. The thesis of this book is that its watershed is "unsuitable for strip mining." An array of charts, graphs and fact-studded analysis is presented to support the argument. You will have to take it all on faith, however, since the creators of *A Clear and Imminent Danger* are an extraordinarily modest bunch. No human being is mentioned anywhere in connection with the writing, editing or publishing of the book, nor is any address given for the Tug Valley Recovery Center.

Three Memorial Poems, by Wendell Berry (Sand Dollar Books, Berkeley, Calif.). "Elegy," "Requiem," "Rising" are the three:

*There is a kinship of the fields
that gives to the living the breath
of the dead.*

What My Heart Wants to Tell, by Verna Mae Slone (New Republic Books). What the author wanted to do in this intimate family history, she says, was to "preserve the memory of a way of life soon to be forgotten." Besides, "I loved my father so much I was not willing for him to die." The father, "Kitteneye" Slone, is the hero of this slice of yesteryear Appalachiana.

Cumberland Homesteads, by Patricia B. Kirkemide (Brookhart Press, Crossville, Tenn.). In Cumberland County, Tenn., early in 1934, construction was begun on the first of 251 experimental farm units called the

Cumberland Homesteads, and in July of that year this quintessentially New Deal project was visited by Eleanor Roosevelt. These and subsequent developments were recorded in local newspapers of the time, and from them Ms. Kirkemide has compiled a history of the project. What emerges, strongly and strikingly, is a picture of great local initiative, involvement and optimism. In those days, it appears, Washington was able to nourish its babies without suffocating them.

(NOTE: The Appalachian Center does not sell books. However, if you encounter any difficulty in obtaining a title, you may order it from the Council of the Southern Mountains Bookstore, C.P.O. Box 2160, Berea, Ky. 40404. The bookstore also distributes an extensive bibliography on the Appalachian South.)

Berea Recognizes Service

On December 6 Berea College honored three persons who have given long service to the Appalachian region: Helen E. Browne, former director of Kentucky's famous Frontier Nursing Service, for her contributions as nurse-midwife, hospital administrator and executive; William Worthington — miner, union organizer and volunteer activist — for his leadership in securing benefits for black lung victims; and Denver B. Robinson, chairman of agricultural extension programs in western North Carolina, for his work to improve farm income and thus strengthen families and communities. These new service awards, equivalent to honorary degrees, have been created to honor persons who have excelled in promoting some of the aims of Berea College — Christian work, liberal education, interracial brotherhood, Appalachian service and the dignity of work. As many as three awards will be made each year; nominations are invited.

New Research Fellowships

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded Berea College a \$100,000 grant, to be expended over a five-year period, to provide financial assistance to scholars engaged in Appalachian research. The fellowships will cover such expenses as travel, lodging, meals and supplies. Recipients will have full access to the Berea College Library's extensive Weatherford-Hammond Mountain Collection and various other campus resources. Particularly sought are projects that might produce results worthy of publication. To find out more, contact Loyal Jones, C.P.O. 2336, Berea, Ky. 40404.

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