

NEWS

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APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

LETTER

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Bull Substrate

The Appalachian Regional Commission's enterprise development division has put some \$58,000 into an upstate New York synthetic-fuel experiment. The idea, tersely put, calls for the efficient production of methane from cow manure, a standard way of obtaining energy in much of the world but one that up till now has not been widely popular in the United States.

The cows' contribution, called "substrate" by the eager scientists, may ultimately furnish enough energy to power an entire dairy farm, including the heating and cooling of buildings; the providing of hot water; the sterilization, pasteurization and preparation of the dairy products; and the refrigeration, processing and storing of the products.

Since agriculture is one of the most energy-intensive and energy-dependent industries in Appalachia, the Appalachian Regional Commission believes that its close attention to "substrate" could lead to results of profound economic significance for the region. If you'd like more information about the whole thing, you can write directly to the experimenters themselves — Young Biomass Associates, 224 Pearl Street, Corning, N.Y. 14830.

Reminders

It's not too early to mark your new 1981 calendars for the second annual Conference on Private Efforts in Appalachia, to be held in Berea June 18-19. The conference will again be jointly sponsored by the Appalachian Fund and the Berea College Appalachian Center. We'll have further information in a subsequent issue of this NEWSLETTER.

The fourth annual Appalachian Studies Conference, sponsored by the organization of the same name, is scheduled for March 20-22, 1981, at the Blue Ridge Assembly, Black Mountain, N.C.

Ritchie Record

Jean Ritchie fans will be interested to hear that this eminent traditional artist has recently recorded an album of religious music called *Sweet Rivers*. It represents her first association with June Appal Recordings of Whites-
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Poetry promoters George Ella Lyon, Gurney Norman

Poets' Network

Poetry, says George Ella Lyon, can heal mountain people whose lives and landscapes have undergone radical change: "A poem recovers something you thought you had lost, and heals you by showing some possibility of maintaining your identity."

Lyon, a poet and parttime English teacher at Centre College (Danville, Ky.), is executive director of the Appalachian Poetry Project of the University of Kentucky's Appalachian Center. Bob Henry Baber, a West Virginia writer, is consulting director and workshop coordinator.

What the project is doing, says Gurney Norman, UK writing teacher, is reviving and fostering a "network of poets and writers who must struggle to overcome the isolation that frequently goes with life in the mountains." The project is now in touch with more than 400 mountain writers.

The means of making contact is the local workshop, held so far in 19 counties, each arranged by a local writer with a \$300 stipend from the project. Anybody who thinks he's (or she's) a poet may attend and have his works read. Some of those who have presided over such workshops say that leading one of the sessions is in itself an exciting and gratifying activity, a voyage of discovery with surprisingly rich results.

RITCHIE from page 1

burg, Ky., only about 30 miles from Jean's birthplace, Viper, Ky. *Sweet Rivers*, a collection of sacred music she learned as a child, includes songs like "Stream of Time," "White Pilgrim" and "Evergreen Shore." The album is scheduled for release in early 1981.

Adult School Days

An Appalachian Pennsylvania school has decided to bring adults out of the evening-class ghetto and mix them with the regular under-18 student body. Admiral Peary Area Vocational Technical School, in Edensburg, Pa., an area hit hard by outmigration and unemployment in the coal industry, has integrated 114 adults, up to the age of 60, into its daytime student body of 800. These adults, selected under a local Comprehensive Employment Training Act program and paid the minimum wage to attend, are enrolled in the full range of vocational courses, from cosmetology to computer programming.

According to the school principal, the benefits don't all run one way. The adults, he says, "are forcing our secondary students to work harder. Adults want to learn more quickly so they can get jobs." The principal, Bryan Fluck, feels that the idea is one that deserves widespread adoption in areas of heavy unemployment. "Vocational education should be open to everyone," he says, "not just secondary students but to all adults who want to earn a living."

As they used to say, Appalachian papers please copy.

Creative and Pedagogical

East Tennessee State University's Institute for Appalachian Affairs and Department of English announce the formation of the Appalachian Writers Association, a "creative and pedagogical collaborative consisting of fiction and nonfiction writers (poets, essayists, novelists, feature writers, historians), publishers, editors, teachers, and others involved in the creation, evaluation, or distribution of literature." The purpose of the organization is, as you might suppose, to develop a "network of communication among these people, for the purpose of discussing and addressing matters of mutual concern." To find out more, write either Jay Robert Reese, Director, Institute for Appalachian Affairs, Box 19180A, ETSU, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614, or Richard Morgan, assistant professor of English, whose box number is 22990A.

A Market for All Seasons

An Asheville-centered farm marketing venture that has fresh produce for sale nine months of the year is swelling the incomes of farmers in Western North Carolina and neighboring counties in Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina. Now in its fourth year, the Western North Carolina Farmers Market drew a half-million visits from buyers and sellers during its third year of operation. The value of goods sold rose from \$1 million in 1977-78 to more than \$12 million last season.

Born as a grassroots idea six years ago through a coalition of Asheville-area farmers and businessmen, the

market has become a hub of agricultural commerce in the southern Appalachians.

Clayton Davis, the market's manager, says that its quick success is due to three factors: possession of a well-planned facility; easy access to producers; easy access to buyers (the market is near the junction of I-40 and I-26, both heavily used by tourists).

Initially funded in 1974 with \$1 million from the North Carolina General Assembly, the market has managed to benefit from the help of various agencies and bureaus, including the Land of Sky Regional Council, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Marketing Research Institute, and the Appalachian Regional Commission, which has kicked in almost \$500,000, which went for an access road and a building used by wholesalers, who buy large amounts of produce from the farmers and sell it to supermarket chains.

EYE on Publications

Power and Powerlessness, by John Gaventa (University of Illinois Press). As the title suggests, this is a work of some theoretical concern and scope. The subtitle, "Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley," tells us the source of the author's empirical data. The specific valley is the Clear Fork, in Tennessee-Kentucky border country near Middlesboro, Ky. What the author discerned when he first went there as an activist student in 1971 was that "though the valley is endowed with land abundant for its several thousand residents, the people are landless: some 75 per cent of the land — some 60,000 acres — is owned and controlled by a single corporate owner, the American Association, Ltd." This is the successor to the similarly titled British enterprise that founded Middlesboro in the 1880s as an industrial center of great expectations. At the time Gaventa first visited the valley, the association was presided over by the superbly named Sir Denys Colquhoun Flowerdew Lowson, a former Lord Mayor of London, whom Gaventa presents as a paradigm of the absentee owner, with attitudes straight out of the Gilded Age. However, what the author is trying to do here is not to serve us up an order of warmed-over 1960s anti-Establishment activism but to study the ways in which "patterns of power and powerlessness can keep issues from arising, grievances from being voiced, and interests from being recognized." What are the "hidden faces of power"? Why do residents of the valley (not simply the poor, but politicians and labor union officials) accept so unsatisfactory a status quo? These are not new questions, of course, but the author approaches them as a political scientist seeking to apply and refine theories concerning the nature of power. An important book.

The Run for the Elbertas, by James Still (University Press of Kentucky). This book and the three following titles constitute an autumnal bonanza from the publisher. *The Run for the Elbertas* includes thirteen short stories, making it the largest collection of Still's short fiction. Six of the stories appear in book form for the first time. Obviously, it's a must book for admirers of the mountain master, whether for pleasure reading or for the compact opportunity it offers for study of Still as a technician.

The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord, by Harry M.
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Mossie and the Strippers

David S. Talbott

**Two moments from the
Billy Edd Wheeler play:
Gid with wife Mossie
(above) and with Ginny
Bingham, a liberated young
newspaper reporter**



Mossie is a mountain woman who begins to get riled up when the activities of strip miners threaten her home. Her husband Gid is an easygoing type, interested only in trout fishing. When a rock from the stripping site crashes into their house, he's sure the company will make it right. Mossie disagrees, and she takes matters into her own hands, first by shooting \$4,000 tires on some mining machinery, later — when the mining persists — by pouring sorghum into gas tanks. When the strippers silt up his favorite fishing hole, killing the big trout he's spent half his life angling for, Gid joins Mossie in her assault on the miners.

These and other adventures of Mossie and Gid appear in *Mossie and the Strippers*, a new play by Billy Edd Wheeler, produced by Theater West Virginia. After opening in October at the Charleston Cultural Center, the play has gone on a tour of civic centers and high schools in West Virginia, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Newspaper reviewers have described it as a "smash hit," a play that "will make you laugh, cry," "solid theater" with a "message for all." Anybody interested in producing *Mossie* should write to Theater Arts of West Virginia, Box 1205, Beckley, W.Va., or Billy Edd Wheeler, Box 7, Swannanoa, N.C. 28778.

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Caudill (University Press of Kentucky). Not jokes, not tales, but real stories about real people — some of them pretty tall, maybe, but all of them having to do with persons with names and faces, whom the author talked with in his law office in Whitesburg, Ky. The author sees himself here as a cultural custodian, demonstrating "how the cultural layers were formed and a people fashioned," before the mountaineer became "a rootless individual cut off from his cultural origins, his beginnings, his heritage." No doubt these stories serve this high purpose, but they'd be fine front-porch entertainment if they aspired to no redeeming social value whatever. There's even a delightful cameo appearance by Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose own memory for people and stories was a matter of legend.

Jefferson Davis Gets His Citizenship Back, by Robert Penn Warren (University Press of Kentucky). When you read this little book, you realize that there is — still — such a thing as a man of letters, and you realize too what a pity it is that there aren't more of them. What is the book about? Jefferson Davis? The Confederacy? Historical paradoxes? The creation of modern America? All of these, as they bubble and blend in the consciousness of the writer, who is stimulated by his trip home to Todd County, Ky., in 1979 for ceremonies honoring Davis, also a native of Todd County. We meet two men here — Davis, one of the most remote of prominent Americans of the past, and Warren, one of the most honored of contemporary writers, once a little boy sitting at the feet of his grandfather, a Civil War veteran. *Jefferson Davis Gets His Citizenship Back* first appeared in the *New Yorker*.

Trees of Heaven, by Jesse Stuart (University Press of Kentucky). A reissue of the author's first novel, which originally appeared in 1940. Louisville critic Wade Hall observes in a foreword that "Jesse Stuart would tighten and strengthen his narrative style in later novels and stories. He would flesh out his characters with finer strokes and greater deftness. He would plot his fiction with more unity. But he would never write any more accurately of the country he had known since birth."

He Sings for Us: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Appalachian Subculture and of Jesse Stuart as a Major American Author, by John Howard Spurlock (University Press of America). Jesse Stuart once told an interviewer that people seem to have trouble deciding whether he is a popular writer or a literary writer. Although not denying that Stuart is popular, the author sets out here to "document Stuart's excellence as a literary artist." As the subtitle suggests, his method is to examine the relationship between Stuart's writings and the Appalachian culture from which they spring, using a series of ten cultural indices as an organizing

principle. The publisher, incidentally, which is described as "established for academics, by academics," is an enterprise that more academics might wish to know about. One would judge from this example that the aim is to produce books that aren't lavish but do an adequate job of getting scholarly work into print. The address is 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20801.

Estes Kefauver, by Charles L. Fontenay (University of Tennessee Press). In many ways Tennessee's Senator Kefauver was the first television politician. As chairman of the Senate's televised investigation of organized crime in 1950-51, Kefauver became an instant national hero, a Galahad battling the underworld represented by Greasy Thumb Guzik and others of his unsavory ilk. Kefauver went on to try for the Presidency and to run on the ticket with Adlai Stevenson in 1956. A native of Appalachian Tennessee, this complex man was a Yale graduate *cum laude* who campaigned in a Davy Crockett cap (a once-fashionable type of headgear). This biography, not seen by us, is by a Tennessee political reporter who knew the Senator well.

Book Note: *Religion in Appalachia*, by John Photiadis, has recently become available in reprint from the West Virginia University Bookstore (\$10.75 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling).

Speaking of unusual publishing ventures, we also wish to point out the appearance on the scene of Mountain State Press, a nonprofit operation formed to publish books by or of special interest to West Virginians. As you might imagine, the *West Virginia Hillbilly's* Jim Comstock has a hand in it, and he shares the burdens of directorship with nine other Mountain Staters, academic and non. So far as we are aware, the press has now published four books: *Tree Full of Stars*, by Davis Grubb (a Christmas story); *Tale of the Elk*, by W.E.R. Byrne (a history of the Elk River area); *As I Remember It*, by Stanley Eskew (remiscences of the author's boyhood); and *Peaceful Patriot*, by Bonni McKeown (the story of a young pacifist, a West Virginia University dropout who went to Vietnam as a medic and become the second conscientious objector in American history to win the Medal of Honor; he was killed in a fire in 1969). The Mountain State Press is looking for members; for information, you can write them at the University of Charleston, Charleston, W.Va. 25304.

(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.)

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