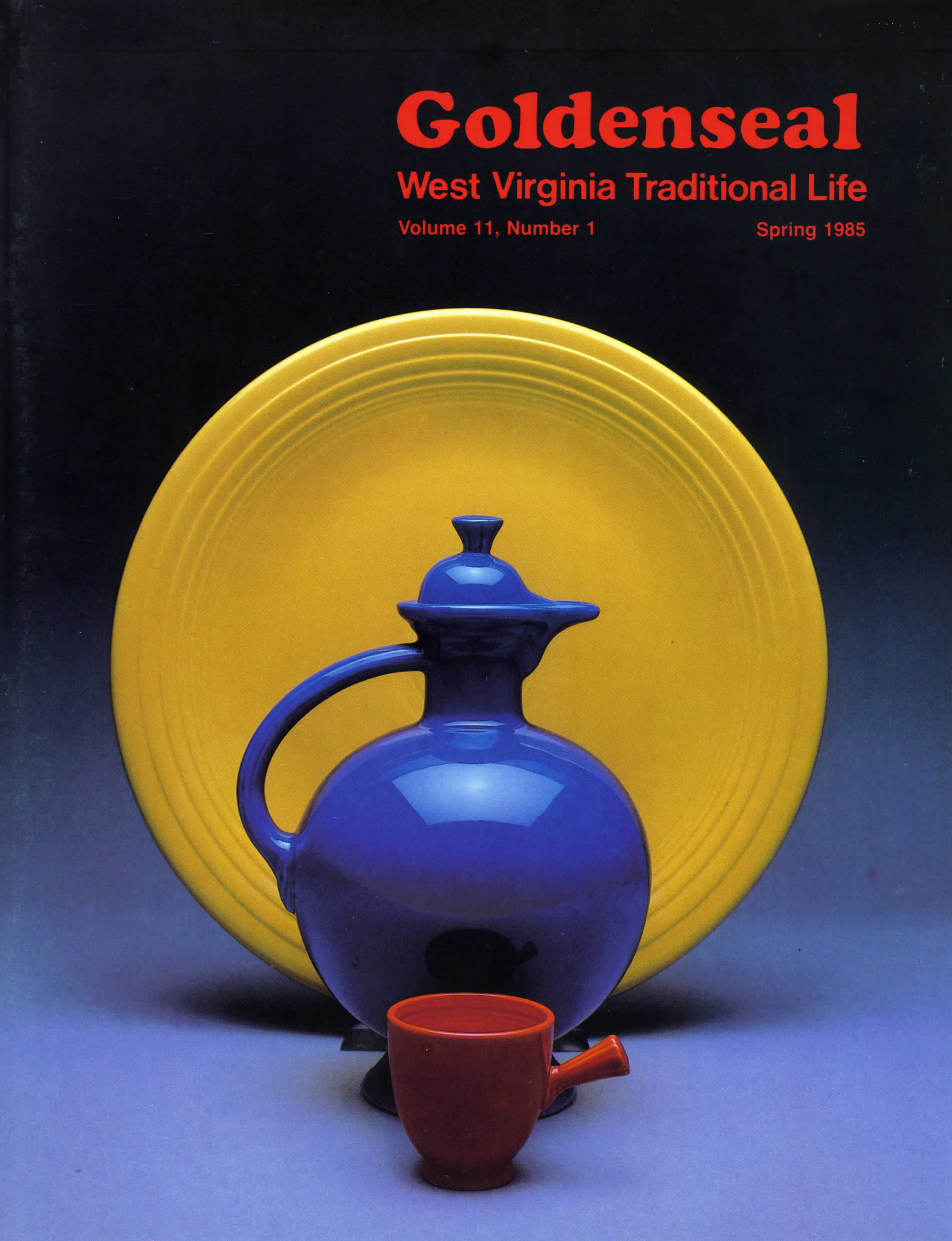
Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Volume 11, Number 1 Spring 1985



Folklife • Fairs • Festivals

GOLDENSEAL's "Folklife Fairs Festivals" calendar is prepared three to six months in advance of publication. The information was accurate as far as we could determine at the time the magazine went to press. However, it is advisable to check with the organization or event to make certain that dates or locations have not been changed. The phone numbers given are all within the West Virginia (304) area code.

April 1-3 Cairo (348-2754)
North Bend Spring Senior Citizen Fling
April 5-7 Wheeling (242-3000)
Good Egg Treasure Hunt (Oglebay Children's Zoo)
April 6 Richwood (846-6798)
Feast of the Ramson (Richwood High School)
April 8-10 Cairo (348-2754)
North Bend Spring Senior Citizen Fling
April 14 Clay (587-4226)
Clay County Ramp Dinner
(Clay County High School)
April 19-20 Ripley (372-2011)
Jackson County Quilt Show and Sale
(Epworth United Methodist Church)
April 20-21 Gassaway (364-2340)
Braxton County Arts and Crafts Show
(National Guard Armory)
April 22-24 Pipestem (348-2754)
Pipestem Spring Senior Citizen Fling
April 25-28 Huntington (696-5949)
Dogwood Festival (Huntington Civic Center)
May 3-5 Mullens (294-7484)
Dogwood Festival
May 4 Mingo (339-6079)
Allegheny Mountain Wool Fair
(Allegheny Mountain Crafts)
May 4 Point Pleasant (675-5737)
Antique Steam and Gas Engine Show
(State Farm Museum)
May 9-12 Davis (348-2754)
Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage
(Blackwater Falls State Park)
May 10-12 Harpers Ferry (535-6968)
Blue Ridge Quilt Show (KOA Kampgrounds)
May 11-12 Huntington (529-2701)
Benefit Antiques Show and Sale
(Huntington Galleries)
May 17-19 Cass (456-4300)
Rail Fan Weekend (Cass Scenic Railroad)
May 18 Fairmont (363-3030)
Traditional Music Day (Pricketts Fort)
May 18 Cairo (348-2754)
Youth Conservation Day
(North Bend State Park)
May 19 Huntington (529-2701)
Heritage Open House (Huntington Galleries)
May 19 Shepherdstown (876-2551)
Bavarian Inn's Mayfest
May 22-26 Buckhannon (472-5674)
Strawberry Festival
May 24-26 Webster Springs (847-2454)
Woodchopping Festival (Baker Island Pavillion)
May 24-26 Charleston (348-0220)
Vandalia Gathering (State Capitol)
May 24-27 Wheeling (242-7700)
Folk Dance Camp (Oglebay Park)
May 29-June 2 Parkersburg (229-8087)
Arts and Crafts Show (Grand Central Mall)
May 30-June 1 Grantsville (354-7705)
Calhoun County Wood Festival
June 1 Union (772-3081)
Farmers Day
June 2 Charleston (348-5830)
Rhododendron State Outdoor Arts and
Crafts Fair (State Capitol)
June 7-9 Charles Town (725-2055)
Mountain Heritage Arts and Crafts Festival
(large tents off Rt. 340E)
June 13-15 Ronceverte (645-6500)
Skyline Bluegrass Festival
June 14 Vienna (295-5652)
Vienna Fire Department Ice Cream Social
(Spencer Park)
June 14-16 Hazelton (983-2220)
Locust Grove Bluegrass Festival (I-48, Exit 29)
June 22-23 Glenville (462-7361)
State Folk Festival (Glenville State College)
June 21-July 21 Huntington (329-8738)
Tri-State Fair and Regatta
June 22 Cairo (643-2931)
Hunter/Woodsmen Competition
(North Bend State Park)
June 22-23 Fairmont (363-8538)
West Virginia Birthday Party
(Cross Roads 4-H Club Community Center)
June 22-23 Point Pleasant (375-2834)
Pioneer Days and Wheat Harvest
(State Farm Museum)
June 23 Hillsboro (653-4430)
Pearl S. Buck Birthday Celebration
(Birthplace Museum)
June 28-30 Summersville (872-3145)
Summersville Bluegrass-Country Music Festival
(Summersville Music Park)
July 1-4 Fayetteville (574-0105)
July Jamboree (Fayetteville Town Park)
July 3-7 Ripley (756-2738)
Mountain State Arts and Crafts Fair
(Cedar Lakes Conference Center)
July 3-7 New Martinsville (455-5060)
New Martinsville Regatta
July 3-27 Fairmont (363-3030)
"Pricketts Fort: An American Frontier Musical"
(Pricketts Fort)
July 4-7 Weirton (797-2306)
International Food and Art Festival
(Three Springs Drive Exit, Rt. 22)
July 5-7 Marlinton (799-6569)
Pioneer Days
July 6 Ripley (768-3498)
Scottish Highland Games and Clan Gathering
(Cedar Lakes Conference Center)
July 11 Wheeling (232-5315)
Hymn Sing in the Park (Wheeling Park Bandstand)
July 13-14 Fairmont (363-3030)
Local Crafts Weekend (Pricketts Fort)
July 14-16 Elkins (636-1903)
Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop
(Davis and Elkins College)
July 19-21 Moundsville (845-3109)
Moundsville Open Horseshoe Tournament
(Moundsville Riverside Park)
July 22-27 Mineral Wells (489-2940)
4-H and Wood County Fair
(4-H Camp at Butchers Bend)
July 26-27 Thorpe (448-2840)
Bluefield Oldtime and Bluegrass Fiddlers
Convention (New Glenwood Park)
July 26-28 Wheeling (233-2575)
Upper Ohio Valley Italian Festival (Market Street)

(continued inside back cover)

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Goldenseal

Volume 11, Number 1 Spring 1985

COVER: "Fiesta" dishes, a West Virginia product now collected nationally, highlight the new Cultural Center dinnerware exhibit. Our coverage of the exhibit and Hancock County's Homer Laughlin China Company begins on page 7. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Robert T. Johnson, Norman Julian, Michael Keller, Rick Lee, Maggard Studio, Thomas Mitchell, Charles W. Warnock, Andy Yale

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

Lakeland, Florida
January 7, 1985
Editor:
I lived 22 years in West Virginia having been born in Tucker County in 1918. My father, Everett B. Jones's house burned down and he started share cropping because he couldn't afford to build again. We lived on the Phillips' place in Tucker County and several other places in Barbour, Preston, and Tucker. Those old farmhouses were oh, so cold. But I love West Virginia and if I hear people in a group talking about hillbillies I go over and say, "Watch your mouth." Nobody is going to run my home state down.

My father was a good blacksmith and people came for miles around because he did a good job. They'd cheat him and say, "I'll send you the money." There were 12 children, and poor. Mother would get mad and mount a horse and go collect after so many owed us. She'd tell them not to come back without the money for horseshoes and labor.

Mom and Dad were both raised in Tucker County. When their funerals were at Pifer Methodist Church, the church was full because they knew so many people.

I live here in Florida now because my health can't stand the cold weather. My husband and I left West Virginia and went to Ohio. He helped build the Ravenna Arsenal during the second world war. I later worked 19 and a half years at Packard Electric Division of General Motors in Warren, Ohio, and he worked for Republic Steel there. But I can't stay away. I visit West Virginia every summer. We have our Jones Reunion near a mountain top in Barbour County and we have from 75 to 100 people every year.

My son Victor Shaffer gets GOLDENSEAL and I went nutty reading his old ones. I just love reading about my home state, the dearest place on earth to me.
Gratefully yours,
Mrs. Goldie Shaffer

Minot, North Dakota
December 28, 1984
Editor:
For the second year, we are to enjoy your state's GOLDENSEAL, thanks to our son-in-law, Steve McNew of Parkersburg.

As I've done each time GOLDENSEAL arrives, I opted last night to sit down with your very well done publication. As before, I surely *learned* some fascinating facts. Because our daughter Gail (Steve's wife) has spent many hours at various West Virginia festivals and enjoys fiddling, I was drawn to the Lefty Shafer article. Alta Durst Miller's "Initial Chapters" at her age fascinated me; at 72, I have somewhat similar plans. Same goes for "A Gift of the Past."

In fact, there wasn't an article I didn't enjoy. "Letters from Readers" were especially good, particularly the one referring to teacher Opal Minor. That brought a bit of nostalgia into my life.

I've made four trips, all by air, into Parkersburg. Your state is absolutely breathtakingly beautiful no matter the season. Though our daughter's roots are here in North Dakota, she loves her adopted state and I can understand. She is a teacher by profession.

I am enclosing a copy of our state's publication. Thought you might enjoy reading our *Horizons*. We are very proud of it.

In closing, my congratulations on GOLDENSEAL. You do a very real and important job informing as well as entertaining anyone fortunate enough to lay hands on it.
Sincerely,
Arlene L. Saugstad

The Henson Family

Annandale, Virginia
January 16, 1985
Editor:
My cousin, Mrs. L. D. Price, recently sent me the Winter 1984 issue of GOLDENSEAL as it had an article by her niece, Ellen Henson Brinkley, about our aunt Helen Henson ("A Gift of the Past: Writing Family History"). I enjoyed the article and magazine. The magazine format, pictures, and paper are great.

Nyde Henson (center) with brothers and nephew.

I am enclosing my voluntary subscription and would like to receive the magazine.

I was born in Charleston and attended Charleston High but graduated in Alabama. I always enjoy my visits to my native state. Like my dad, the Nyde in the picture in the article, I love those West Virginia hills.
Yours truly,
Paralee Henson Bethany

More on Glen Jean

Cool Ridge, WV
Editor:
I'm sending in my contribution to GOLDENSEAL, one of the best magazines I've ever turned the pages in.

In the Fall '83 issue, I read a letter written to GOLDENSEAL by a W. W. Westmoreland, under the heading "Glen Jean." I only vaguely remember W. W. but I do remember his fam-

ily. You see, I was born at Glen Jean February 23, 1910. W. W.'s brother Tracy and I were of close age, and played together a lot.

One of the two boys W. W. spoke of so clearly was my first cousin Lewis Grant. Lewis too was born at Glen Jean, in 1918. I remember Benny Vento also, and the Vento family. Incidently, in case W. W. still subscribes to GOLDENSEAL, Benny passed away a year ago and Lewis passed away this past August.

In the original Fall 1982 article on Glen Jean, W. W. speaks of coal operator Bill McKell. Bill McKell was a very liberal man with his ball club members but very stern in other matters. I remember Bill McKell as a very erect, square-shouldered man with a voice of command.

Sorry about my bungles. I only got a fifth-grade education and this is my very first letter publicly but I love history and GOLDENSEAL is chock full of it. Speaking of history there is a catalog full of other stories in and around Oak Hill, Glen Jean and Mount Hope.
Glenn V. Kelly

Oldtime Music

Guyandotte, WV
January 8, 1985
Editor:
Enclosed is my contribution for another year of GOLDENSEAL. I love reading the stories, especially the ones about the oldtime musicians. Quite a few of them I've enjoyed playing with at one place or another.

I remember playing with fiddler Clark Kessinger. He used to really play the "Chinese Breakdown."

I remember the old Jubilee Ranch at Ona, and several musicians from there. There were Natchee the Apache, Radio Dot and Smokey, Jack Taylor, Slim Clere, Tex Tyler, Cowboy Copas and my brother-in-law Lew Knight — "Luke the Duke." I was mostly with Lonnie Lucas, and let's not forget Harold "Hawkshaw" Hawkins.

I sure do enjoy reading about those guys and all the others in West Virginia and some who are away. I like everything in your magazine. Keep up the good work.
Charles "Tommy" Crawford

Showboating

Dunbar, WV
Editor:
A lady friend gave me a 1983 GOLDENSEAL, and there is a story all about the "Majestic" showboat. How well I remember in my earlier years, my sisters and I running to the river bank, watching it being pushed into Winfield. That calliope was music to our ears. Then daddy would row a boat across the river that night from Red House for us to see the show, so entertaining in those days.

Seems to me the "Attaboy" towboat would also push a "junk boat" up the river, and would trade you the most beautiful dishes for iron and old rags; we would almost take the clothes off our backs to get something. I wish today I had some of those prize dishes for my flea market.

In later years, one of my girlfriends married one of the Reynolds boys, but later divorced. In the article, Mrs. Reynolds talks about coming back home to Point Pleasant to the Park. I'm a distant cousin to the Stones who always had boats, and somewhere along the line I had a great-great-great-relative that lived in the log cabin at the Park.

My family certainly enjoyed GOLDENSEAL, so here's my $10.00.
Hallie McIntyre

Alta Durst Miller

Charleston, WV
Editor:
I saw a copy of GOLDENSEAL and really enjoyed it very much. It was the one on my Aunt Alta Miller. I am the oldest daughter of her sister Minnie. They married brothers.

I remember my Grandfather Hezekiah Durst giving out food to the miners when they were out of work and he never kept any for himself, for there was always plenty to eat in the cellar and the pantry. One never went by my grandfather's house that he wasn't invited in to eat. When we had a family get-together he would kill one of his sheep and some of my cousins would scare me silly with its head. I guess I was sort of special to my grandparents because some of the cousins called me their baby. Thanks for putting them in your magazine. I really enjoyed it all.
Sincerely,
Freda Saunders

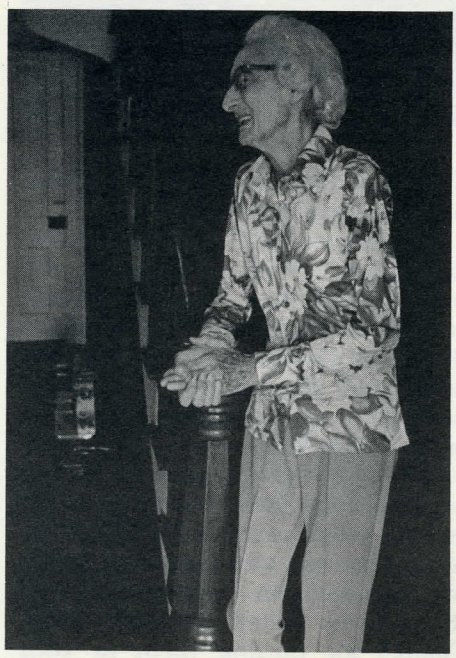
Boulder Rook Games

Albuquerque, New Mexico
December 21, 1984
Editor:
"Just head north from Buckhannon . . ., turn at Volga . . ., and head toward Audra State Park." Drinking "pop" and playing Rook. The article "What a Community Is All About" really made me homesick!

I graduated from Wesleyan in Buckhannon 17 and a half years ago, then headed west for more school and a job. I never thought I'd be gone from home so long. What once was everyday life and common place to me now counts as precious — glimpses of people and places that GOLDENSEAL brings me in an honest and authentic manner. Thanks!
Yours kindly,
David E. Stuart, Ph.D.
Consulting Anthropologist

Miss Autumn Amos

Indialantic, Florida
October 24, 1984
Editor:
In the delightful 1983 interview with Miss Autumn Amos of Braxton County, Maureen Crockett asked her whether she would like to slide down the bannister at age 82 as she had done at 3. Miss Amos declined.



Miss Amos seems to be descended from West Virginia McNeels, and I wonder whether they are related to the Jemimah McNeal who married George Clendenin in 1779 and lived in what is now Charleston. My grandmother, May Clendenin Meigs, of Washington, D.C., was a great-great-granddaughter of George and Jemimah, raised in the home of lawyers on Capitol Hill from her birth in 1869. She became a tomboy and was always called "Topsy." When she finally decided to marry Henry Olds, son of an Episcopalian minister, she was afraid her fun days were over. As the assembled guests waited for the ceremony to begin, Topsy hopped onto the stair rail and slid to the bottom as she always did. Her shocked father said, "Topsy, you go back up those stairs, put on your wedding dress, and come down the stairs like a lady." She replied, "This *is* my wedding dress, and if I go back up those stairs, I might change my mind and not come down at all." The ceremony proceeded.

On my own wedding day in 1947, in Silver Spring, Maryland, I was telling this story to my husband-to-be, and 78-year-old Grandma Topsy confirmed it. Someone called from the front door, "Grandma, the florist is here." She said, "Whoops, gotta go," and jumped on our stair rail and slid to the bottom, calling back up to us, "That's how I did it in 1891." She died in her 100th year.

There is a legend that George's daughter, Parthenia Clendenin, resented her father's choice of a husband for her, and threw her ring into the river announcing, "This is *my* declaration of independence. I'm going to marry John Meigs, instead," and she did, on the Fourth of July, 1797. I wish I could prove *that* story.
Margaret Benedict MacNeil

New River

Arbovale, WV
December 17, 1984
Editor:
My uncle, Frank Ray, born in 1899 and now a resident of Denmar Hospital, has told me how his family crossed New River at Sandstone Falls in a covered wagon about 1901, on their way from Wyoming County, where they paused on the long trek from North Carolina to settle at Friar's Hill in Greenbrier County. He has also told me of his experiences as a cook for the "wood hicks" in Pocahontas County in the early logging days. That is why I would like his gift subscription enclosed to begin with the Winter 1984 issue.

Once, when Uncle Frank was a guest in my home, we spent the morning sharing memories. (Unfortunately, at that time I had not read Ellen Henson Brinkley's article in the current issue, and did not have my tape recorder going.) When we sat down to lunch, Uncle Frank bowed his head, as is his custom, and said, "Lord, we thank you for letting us live our lives over again."

I think this is another reason for the growing popularity of GOLDENSEAL. It does enable us to relive the experiences we had in another time, another place.

My article, "Round Bottom: Home of the New River Gwinns," in the Spring 1984 issue of GOLDENSEAL, awakened memories of early Cabell, Wayne, and Kanawha counties for a ninety-year-old resident of Florida, who wrote to me in care of the magazine. We have been carrying on a lively correspondence since then, and I have talked to her on the telephone. It has been a rich experience for me, and I would like so much to record her memories and write them for GOLDENSEAL. I'm not sure I'll be able to do this, time, distance and money being as they are, but if I can you'll hear from me again.

GOLDENSEAL is performing an important service. Best wishes for another good year!
Sincerely,
Leona G. Brown

Cattle Drive

Morgantown, WV
Editor:
The article "Cattle Drive," by Kathleen Hensley Browning, GOLDENSEAL, Summer 1984, reminded me of other cattle drives — taking cattle from my father's farm on Hans Creek in Monroe County 18 dusty, muddy miles to the C&O Railroad at Lowell in Summers County, past Ellis' Corner near Cook's Fort, up Indian Draft, through Wayside, Creamery, and past the John Hinchman farm, then down to the Greenbrier River. At the river the cattle drank, then were brought up to the road along the railroad track, following it about two miles through the town of Lowell to the railroad loading chutes for shipment to the eastern markets. The trick was to get the cattle into the pens along the railroad tracks before a train came along to frighten the cattle. One such time a train came while the cattle were in the town. It blew the whistle for the crossing, causing the cattle to stampede. They broke down a white picket fence into a yard where the family wash was spread to dry. Tramping sheets and clothes into the ground they went on to the woods behind, where many hours were spent trying to round them up.

About 50 two-year-old cattle filled a railroad car, and that number comprised our usual drives.
Very truly yours,
J. Z. Ellison

Current Programs • Events • Publications

Lutheran Mountain Churches

A series of short church histories has been prepared by B. B. Maurer of Morgantown. The Reverend Maurer, Ph.D., a Professor Emeritus of West Virginia University, is a retired pastor of the Lutheran Church in America.

Maurer's histories are of Lutheran congregations founded in the mid- to late-19th century, and mostly located in the north-central part of West Virginia. Included are St. Johannes of St. Clara, Holy Trinity of Newburg, St. Paul's of Grafton, and St. John's of Davis, as well as Lake Lynn Chapel of Lake Lynn, Pennsylvania. Maurer notes that the books include photographs and membership lists.

The church histories run from 21 to 48 pages, and cost from $2.75 to $3 each. Ordering information for each is available from B. B. Maurer, 369 Crawford Avenue, Morgantown 26505. Dr. Maurer is also the editor of *Mission in the Mountain State,* available for $5.30 postpaid from the West Virginia Council of Churches (1608 Virginia Street, East, Charleston 25311), and the well-known *Mountain Heritage,* for sale for $10 at the WVU bookstore.

The New *Appalachian Journal*

The *Appalachian Journal,* an old friend of those interested in the serious study of West Virginia and the rest of the mountain region, recently began publishing in what the editor calls "a new, slicker format." The new look was introduced in the Fall 1984 magazine, the first issue of Volume 12 of the *Journal.*

Regular readers of the *Journal* will be pleased to note that the stylish new design has not affected the traditionally eclectic contents. The Fall issue includes an interview with writer Gurney Norman and a preview chapter from his current novel-in-progress, and articles by Appalachian scholar Loyal Jones, Barry O'Connell, and others. West Virginia poets Bob Henry Baber and Victor Depta are also featured.

The Winter *Appalachian Journal* should have been published by the time this GOLDENSEAL reaches you. It will include a behind-the-scenes account of the filming of the current hit movie, *The River,* with candid photographs of the film in production. Other subjects include the illegal sport of cockfighting and the fiction of West Virginia-born novelist Mary Lee Settle. The Appalachian elections of 1984 are analysed, with the successful campaign of Senator Jay Rockefeller taken as a case in point.

The *Appalachian Journal* is published four times a year at $6.50 annually, or $12 for two years. Subscriptions should be sent to *Appalachian Journal,* University Hall, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina 28608. Back issues are available back to the first issue, published in 1972.

Allegheny Mountain Crafts

Allegheny Mountain Crafts, located at Mingo in southern Randolph County, advertises itself as "an outlet for West Virginia artists and craftsmen." A recent brochure offers quilts, pottery, toys, basketry, and stained glass, among many other types of art and craft work for sale at the shop.

"If you're shopping for an heirloom or an unusual and beautifully crafted gift, we cordially invite you to drop by, enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat around the fire," say proprietors Paul and Martha Rimel. They note that there is a natural foods bakery on the premises, in case you need something to accompany that cup of coffee. Allegheny Mountain Crafts also sells local honey, apple butter, jams, jelly, and maple syrup in season.

The Rimels particularly invite visitors for Sunday afternoons, when local musicians drop by for a free jam session beginning at 2:00 PM. Seasonal events include Christmas Open House, an annual Wild Flowers Pilgrimage, and the Allegheny Mountain Wool Fair, with this year's dates and times available upon request.

Allegheny Mountain Crafts is located in the old Mingo General Store and Post Office building, on Route 219 seven miles north of the entrances for the Snowshoe and Silver Mountain ski resorts. The shop is open from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM daily, and may be called at (304) 339-6079.

More Music by Hazel Dickens

Mercer County native Hazel Dickens is receiving rave reviews these days, most recently from *High Fidelity* magazine, which called her recent "By the Sweat of My Brow" record "American folk music at its finest." It is unlikely that anyone interested in contemporary mountain music will disagree after hearing the album, released by Rounder Records in 1984.

"By the Sweat of My Brow" includes the title tune; the beautiful "Beyond the River Bend," which opens the album; "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow"; "Only the Lonely"; and other numbers. Old fans will not be surprised that many of the songs have a sharp political edge, including "Are They Going to Make Us Outlaws Again?" Dickens also includes a couple of love ballads, and, as always, her distinctive singing is the main attraction throughout the new album.

Hazel Dickens enjoys a growing following at home and abroad, and has performed concerts across the United States and overseas. She has also appeared at major festivals, including Vandalia Gathering in Charleston and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. She contributed several songs to the soundtrack of the Oscar-winning film, "Harlan County, U.S.A.," and performed at the White House during the Carter years.

"By the Sweat of My Brow" and Dickens' other Rounder solo album, "Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People," may be purchased in record stores or ordered directly. The mail order address is Rounder Records, One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140.

King Coal

Pictorial Histories Publishing Company of Charleston has recently published *King Coal: A Pictorial Heritage of West Virginia Coal Mining*. The new book, by Stan Cohen, was introduced last November at the West Virginia Labor History Association coal history seminar in Beckley.

Cohen, a Charleston native, is well known for his previous histories of West Virginia and regional subjects. Those familiar with his earlier work will not be surprised that the heart of *King Coal* is a large collection of coalfields photographs. The book has hundreds of black-and-white illustrations, including some photographs rarely seen before in print. The pictures cover almost all aspects of early West Virginia mining life, above ground and below. The illustrations in each chapter are supported by a brief text, with the chapters themselves devoted to labor history, company towns, mining methods and other subjects.

Cohen notes that the first edition of *King Coal* was a holidays sell-out, and that a revised second edition is being issued. The book may be ordered for $9.95, plus $1.50 postage and handling, from Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 4103 Virginia Avenue, S.E., Charleston 25304. *King Coal*, a large format paperback of 146 pages, is also widely available in West Virginia bookstores.

Bound GOLDENSEAL Volumes

A limited number of bound volumes of GOLDENSEAL will again be offered for sale this year. The special hardback edition of Volume 10 includes all the issues published last year, topped off with the 1984 index from the Winter magazine.

Volume 10 matches the bound GOLDENSEAL volumes issued each year since 1980, with the same golden fabric and red lettering. The fine library-quality binding was done by Mount Pleasant Bookbinding of Hampshire County, as in past years.

The price for the 1984 bound GOLDENSEAL remains at $25, with the book for sale at the Cultural Center Shop or by mail. Mail orders should be addressed to the Cultural Center Shop, Capitol Complex, Charleston 25305, and include $1.25 sales tax for West Virginia residents and $2.00 postage and handling. A few volumes from previous years are still available, at the same price.

Public History at WVU

"Public historian" is the popular new term for non-teaching history professionals. Such historians have been around for a long time, working in government, business and other institutions, and have become increasingly common in recent years. A growing need has brought forth specialized training programs at colleges and universities across the country, with West Virginia University being one of the leaders of the new movement.

The Public History Option at the WVU history department is a Master's Degree program, with a public history certificate offered for historians already holding the MA. Courses include an introduction to the field, as well as historic site interpretation, archival management and historical editing, rounded out by other history department courses chosen by the student. A practical internship completes each student's work. Public history courses are taught by regular faculty of the university, including Barbara Howe, Emory Kemp, George Parkinson, and Rosemarie Zagarri.

Candidates for admission to the Public History Option should have a strong undergraduate history background. Application information is available from Dr. Robert Maxon, Chairperson, Department of History, West Virginia University, Morgantown 26506; phone (304) 293-2421.

New River Symposium Returns

The annual New River Symposium returns to West Virginia this spring, with the meeting scheduled for April 11-13 at Pipestem State Park near Hinton. The Symposium, unusual among major conferences in taking a great river and its valley for its focus, was founded in 1982 by the Department of Culture and History and the New River Gorge National River unit of the National Park Service. Since then it has rotated among the three New River states of West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina.

The object of the multi-disciplinary Symposium is to bring together a wide variety of people with an amateur or professional interest in the New River and its watershed area. In past years, historians, geologists, folklorists, biologists, archaeologists, geographers, botanists, rafters and fishermen have all participated, among many others. The oral presentations made at each Symposium are published annually, with the bound *Proceedings* for 1982, 1983, and 1984 still available for purchase.

The 1985 New River Symposium is co-sponsored by the New River Gorge National River and the West Virginia Department of Culture and History. Those desiring further information should contact William E. Cox, New River Gorge National River, 137½ Main Street, Oak Hill 25901; phone (304) 465-0508.

Mountain Music Record Survey

If you have some favorite mountain music to promote, now is your chance. FOOTMAD (Friends of Old-Time Music and Dance) is seeking information on such records, which will be compiled into a comprehensive list for distribution to the people most interested in the music.

Information on old-time music, bluegrass, and our British Isles "roots" music will all be welcome, from GOLDENSEAL readers in West Virginia and elsewhere. Be sure to include the name of the album and musicians, price, and full buying or ordering details. The records should be in print and available for immediate purchase. The list will be published in an upcoming issue of *Footprint*, the FOOTMAD newsletter.

The information should be sent to Nancy Buckingham, Kanawha Valley FOOTMAD, P.O. Box 1684, Charleston 25326. FOOTMAD, a major sponsor of music and dance events, also welcomes new memberships. The annual dues of $10 may be sent to the same address.

Below Right: The exhibit features one-of-a-kind pieces as well as mass production wares. This striking Laughlin coffee pitcher was an award winner at the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia. Photo by Michael Keller.

Bottom: Artist's rendering of the entryway to The Homer Laughlin China Company exhibit, under construction as GOLDENSEAL went to press. The historic company logo depicts the American eagle subduing the British lion. Illustration by Mack Miles.

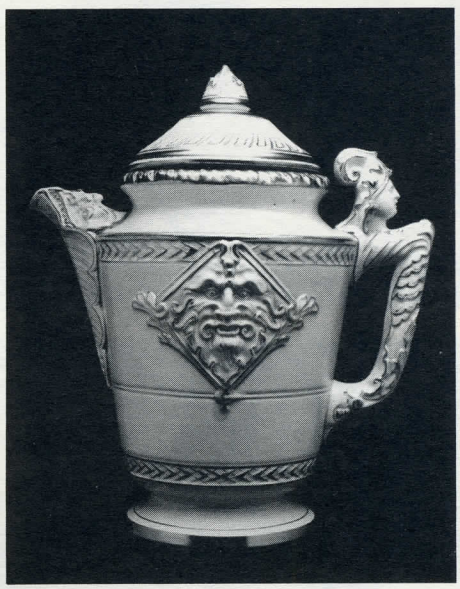
Fiesta at the Cultural Center
The Homer Laughlin China Exhibit

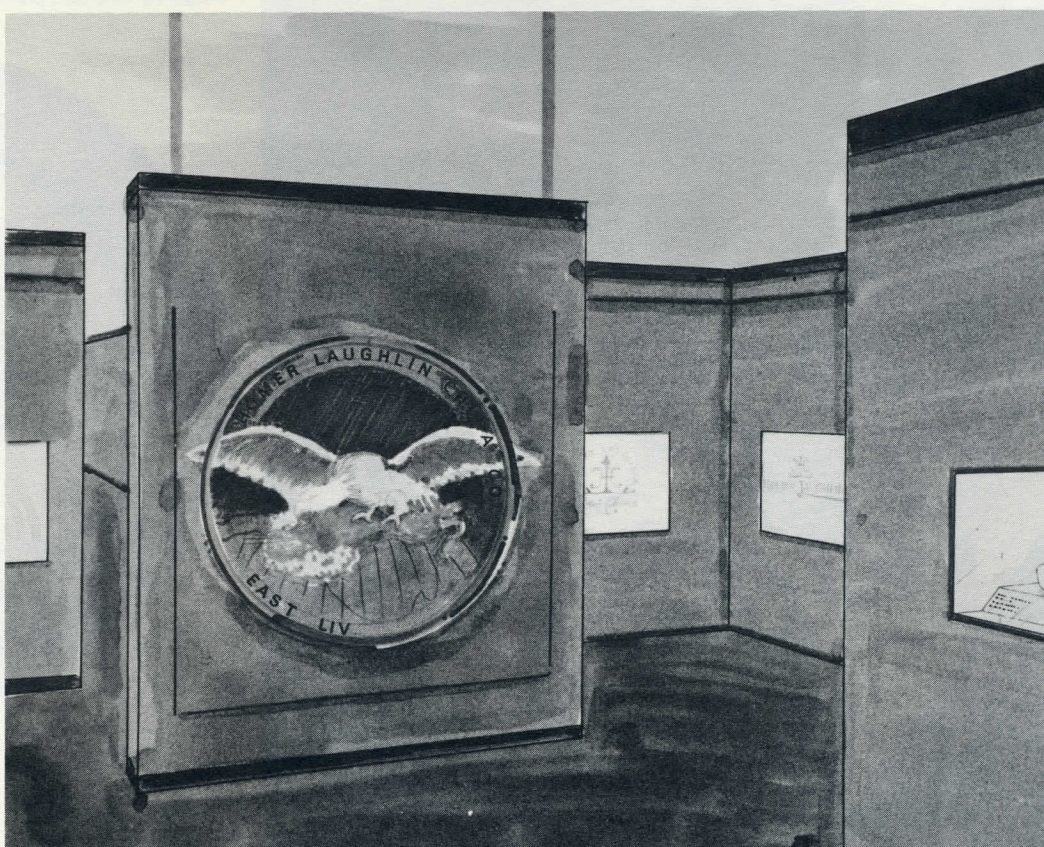
Those who like their history and culture in three dimensions and big as life should plan a trip to the new chinaware exhibit at the Cultural Center in Charleston. "The Homer Laughlin China Company: A Fiesta of American Dinnerware" opened at the State Museum on March 9, and will continue through early 1987.

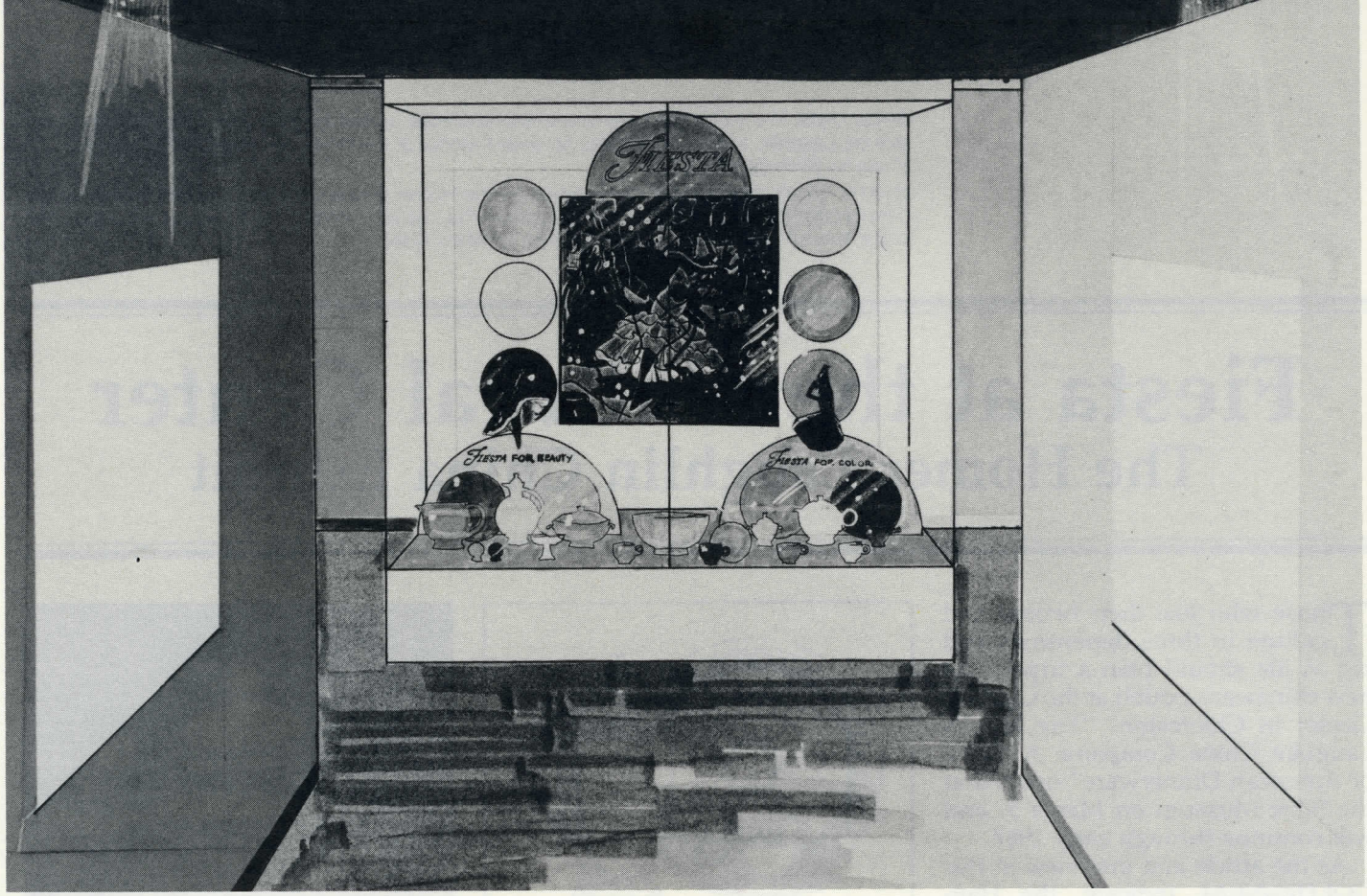
As the article and interview in this GOLDENSEAL indicate, the Hancock County chinaware company has been a very important factor in the international history of its industry. Founded in 1872 in East Liverpool, Ohio, and moved across the river to West Virginia early in this century, Homer Laughlin has for most of its years been the largest producer in the world. It is estimated that 33 percent of all dinnerware ever made in this country has come from the company's kilns.

The story of the Homer Laughlin China Company lies not only in its long history and vast output, but also in its tradition of innovative design. The exhibit particularly emphasizes the artistic creativity of the company, from its earliest days down to the present. A special section is devoted entirely to Fiesta, the bright, inexpensive dishes introduced during the Depression and avidly collected today.

"The Homer Laughlin China Company" is an interpretative history, with hundreds of items on display. The exhibit was produced by the West Virginia Department of Culture and History, with the cooperation of the Homer Laughlin China Company. Like all events at the Cultural Center, this exhibit is open to the public at no charge.

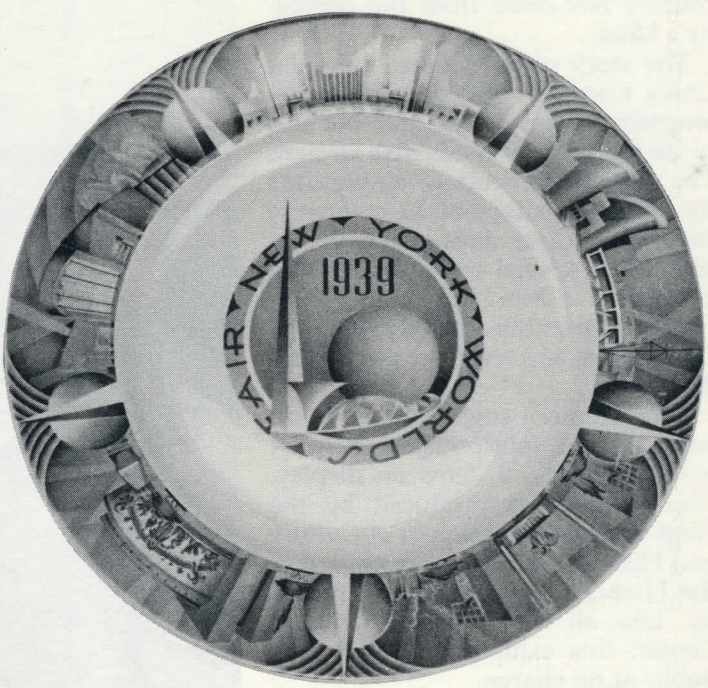






Above: Fiesta gets its own section within the exhibit. This display recreates a sales arrangement. Illustration by Mack Miles.
Left: Collectors will be interested in this large table of Fiesta ware being readied for the exhibit. Photo by Michael Keller.

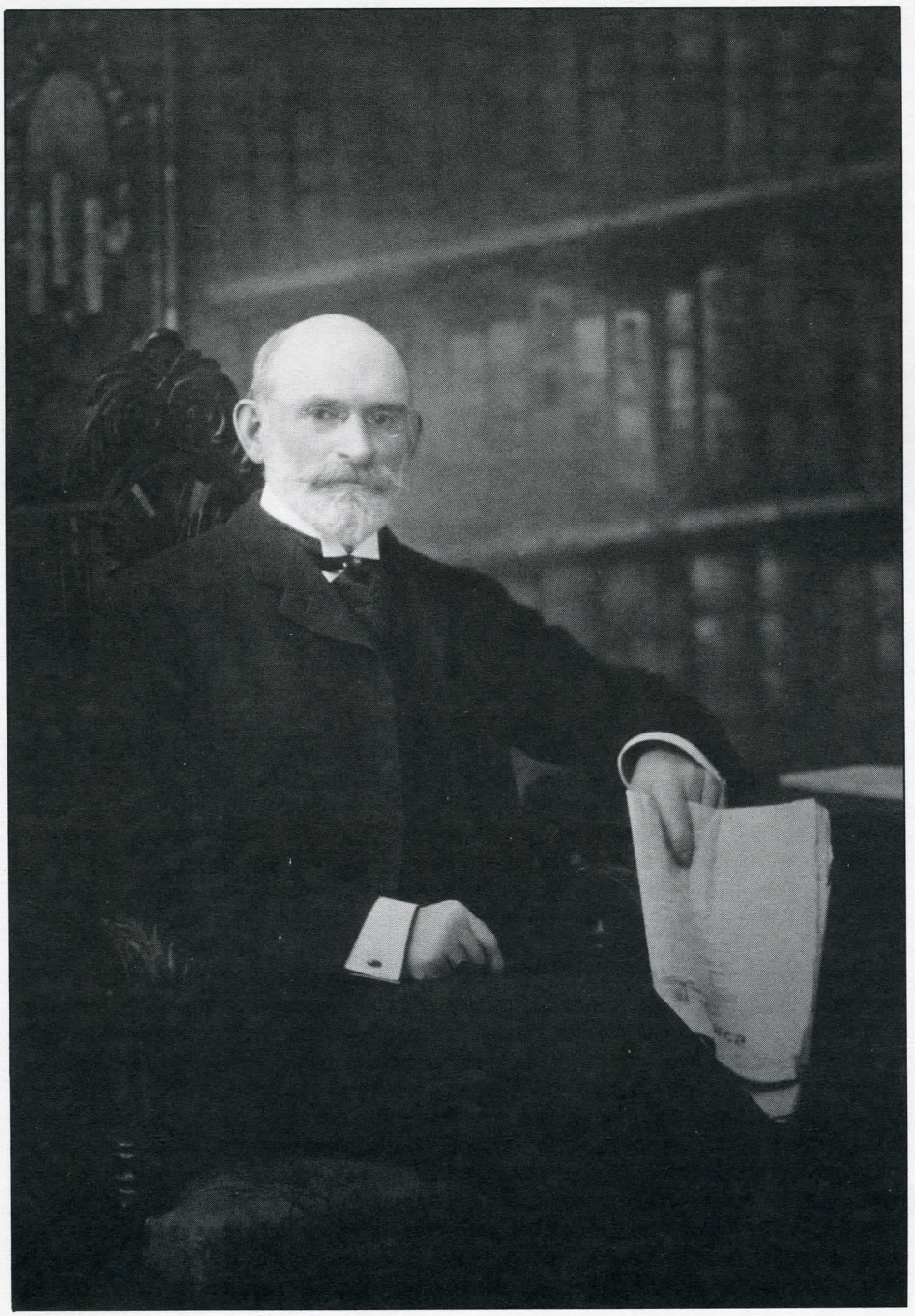
Below: Homer Laughlin's 1939 World's Fair Commemorative plate is an elegantly futuristic piece. Photo by Michael Keller.



The Homer Laughlin China Company

By Jack Welch

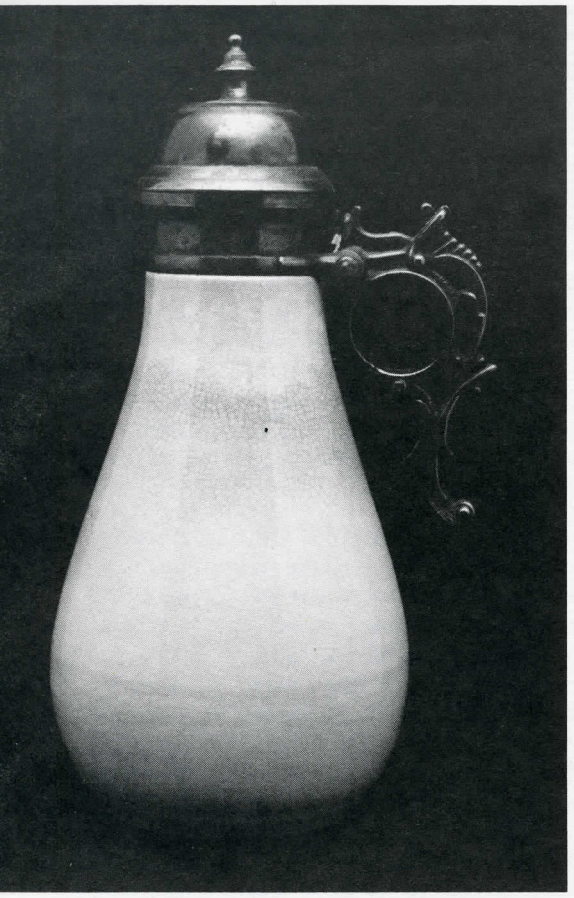
The mature Homer Laughlin as a successful businessman. He sold his company in 1897.



Stretching for more than a mile along Hancock County's Ohio River at Newell is the Homer Laughlin China Company, the world's largest manufacturer of dinnerware. Most West Virginians have never heard of the company, but many have used Fiesta, its most famous line of dishes. Moreover, if West Virginians were to examine the dishes in their cupboards, they would likely discover that they own several other pieces of this company's wares. Laughlin's claims to have manufactured about one-third of all dinnerware that has ever been sold in the United States.

The Homer Laughlin China Company might never have come into existence had not the City Council in East Liverpool, across the river in Ohio, decided in 1872 that the production of yellow ware in the city's dozen or more potteries was doomed. The future in ceramics seemed to them not to be in the continued manufacture of dishes from local clay which produced, when fired in a kiln, a bright yellow, but in ware which fired to a stark white. The white ware looked sanitary and bright, and it harmonized with all colors of decoration. The Council offered $5,000, a huge sum at the time, to anyone who would start a four-kiln factory for the manufacture of white ware.

The winners of this competition were two brothers, Homer and Shakespeare Laughlin. They were born on Little Beaver Creek, a few miles from East Liverpool and the Ohio River. Homer, the elder, had served in the Civil War and emerged, with the rest of the North, ready to go into business in a big way. He tried "jobbing" yellow ware, marketing the pottery which had been made in East Liverpool to shops and department stores around the country. He invested some money in oil wells; with his brother he tried selling china imported from Europe; and he even tried operating a small pottery in East Liverpool with a partner. Thus the Laughlin brothers learned something about the ceramics business, something about its markets, and something about the European competition. They accepted the Council's offer on September 1, 1873, broke



Top: This syrup pitcher, made by the original Laughlin Brothers partnership, is one of the earliest surviving pieces of Laughlin ware. The hinged lid is pewter. Photo by Michael Keller.
Above: This early logo symbolizes Laughlin's determination to represent the American industry against foreign competition, especially English dinnerware.

ground on October 1, and opened their factory on September 1, 1874.

Adversity confronted the business at first. The little factory on the shore of the Ohio had only two kilns (despite the contest stipulations) and a few dozen workers, and it lacked the technical know-how to make flawless dishes. The first batches of cups from the tall bottle kilns were said to have handles which dropped off when exposed to cool air. The Laughlin brothers persevered, though, calling their factory "The Ohio Valley Pottery" as well as "Laughlin Brothers Pottery." By 1876 their persistence paid off, when a medal and certificate were awarded them for the best white ware at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. This honor certified their reputation for quality white ware.

Shakespeare Laughlin was bought out of the business in 1877 and went on to pursue other goals in the industry, until his death in 1881 in Philadelphia. Homer remained in East Liverpool to develop the company. One of his first problems was foreign competition. The American public preferred European wares, especially those manufactured in England. Some American pottery manufacturers went so far as to disguise their product by calling it "royal" or by using the English royal lion on their company's stamp. Laughlin, after much discussion with local artists, created a logo which showed the American eagle subduing the British lion. The eagle is on top, and the lion struggles weakly on his back. This logo symbolizes the fight which Homer Laughlin intended to wage against the cheaper and sometimes superior wares from abroad. He intended to prevail in both price and quality.

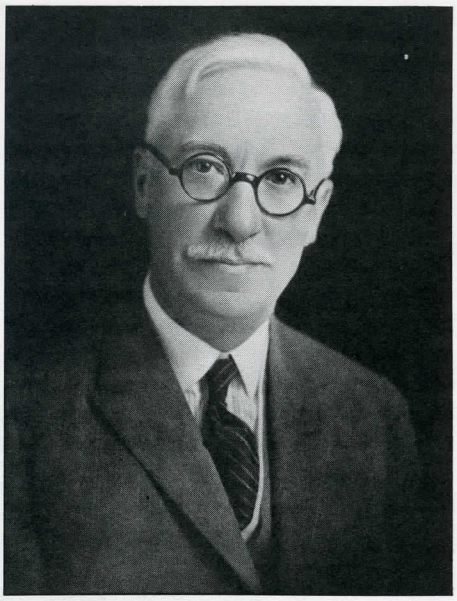
During the decade of the 1880's, Homer Laughlin produced a variety of tableware. His basic stock was an inexpensive line of white dishes which could be used in hotels and other public places. He also produced one-of-a-kind art wares. Some of his surviving vases show hand-painted flowers, reflecting the work of important artisans. A porcelain basket and flowers showed highly skilled clay modeling. Other items included large planters which were decorated with decals, sprayed-on colors, and fanciful gold highlights.

Laughlin's workers were paid wages that exceeded those in Europe and Asia, but they seem grossly underpaid by today's standards. In 1877 a skilled pottery worker earned $2.33 per day, an unskilled male $1.29. Boys earned 82¢ per day, and both women and girls earned 75¢. Little was known about industrial safety, and the workers were exposed to the hazards of a dusty environment, but overall Homer Laughlin was known as a beneficent employer. In 1880 he took 300 employees and their families in a chartered train to Pittsburgh to see an exposition in the afternoon and an opera in the evening. Laughlin was also known everywhere as an innovator, and he hired the first female secretary in the area in 1888.

One of Laughlin's major ceramic achievements occurred in 1886 with the development of genuine American china. In his office Laughlin demonstrated his accomplishment to Jere Simms, editor of the *East Liverpool Tribune.* He showed Simms one of his vases and asked him to hold it to the light. The editor was amazed that shadows of light filtered through the sides of the vase, demonstrating translucency, an important characteristic of true china. Laughlin then order his bookkeeper to break the vase with a poker from a nearby stove. The bookkeeper smeared soot from the stove onto the edges of the pieces. China is by definition vitreous, meaning that it will not absorb water or dirt. If the vase had been anything less, the soot would have permanently stained the broken edges. But the bookkeeper next washed the pieces with soap and water, and every trace of soot was rinsed away. It was clear that Laughlin's company had created genuine china of the highest caliber. Simms, amazed and exuberant, expressed his delight the next day in his newspaper. "It is no longer a question of doubt that the finest, thinnest, and most translucent of china can be produced here in America," he reported.

The dinnerware which Laughlin's company manufactured was elaborate, formal, elegant. His most extreme design was American Beauty, and it may well be the most ornate ware ever produced for mass markets. The shape had a total of 95 different pieces for sale. The covered vegetable dish would have seemed quite at home on the table of Louis XIV, but it was available for purchase by ordinary, middle-class Americans. Homer Laughlin had lofty ideas for his own life, and he encouraged his customers to be similarly inclined.

At the end of the 1880's, Laughlin hired a new bookkeeper named W. E. Wells, the man destined to become



W. E. Wells became one of the principal owners of the company after Homer Laughlin's departure.

the general manager of the company. Wells was born in Brooke County, but graduated from high school in Steubenville, Ohio. He had worked as a bookkeeper in a Steubenville bank and in a wholesale drug business. When he came to work for Laughlin he knew nothing about the pottery business, but during the following decade, while following instructions to care for the factory during Laughlin's long travel absences, he mastered every detail.

By 1897 Homer Laughlin was ready to remove himself from the business which had made him a wealthy man. He had invested in real estate in Los Angeles and wanted to spend his last years developing that great city. W. E. Wells purchased an interest in the Homer Laughlin China Company, and another interest was secured by Louis T. Aaron and his two sons, Marcus and Charles I. Aaron. This executive team decided to expand their company, but even these venturesome businessmen probably did not realize how successful their operation would become.

In 1899, two years after purchasing the company, the new management built a second factory a few thousand feet east of the original plant in the area called East End. Two years later they built another manufacturing unit beside the new plant. Still not satisfied, the company traded the original Laughlin factory by the river for another pottery in East End. These three plants were then known as Plant 1 (the original plant and its later replacement), Plant 2 (the first expansion in East End), and Plant 3 (the second expansion in East End). The company, which had grown from the original two kilns in 1874 to four kilns at the time of the sale in 1897, increased to 32 kilns after the expansions and trading.

This growth, remarkable as it was, did not satisfy the management. Customers wanted the Laughlin wares, and if the company could expand further it could do an even greater business. Land in East Liverpool and East End was unavailable, and the company chose to build Plant 4 across the Ohio River in what is now Newell, West Virginia.

The proposed site was farm land, owned by the Newell family. The Newells were in the mood to sell and had commissioned a Pittsburgh agent to deal for them. The company purchased a tract of land about three miles in length, lying about 50 to 100 feet above the Ohio River. The location had access to a railroad, abundant fuel, and improving river navigation. In order to develop the land into a usable industrial site, the Laughlin company created the North American Manufacturing Company to undertake such tasks as building a water system, laying out streets, and selling lots. In 1901 the only way to cross from East Liverpool to Newell was by ferry, but in June 1904 work began on a new metal expansion bridge. On July 4, 1905, the first traffic used the bridge, and to this day the company's toll bridge serves the people on both sides of the river. The population of Newell grew rapidly. In 1906 there were only a few houses there, but 130 houses had been built by December 1907.

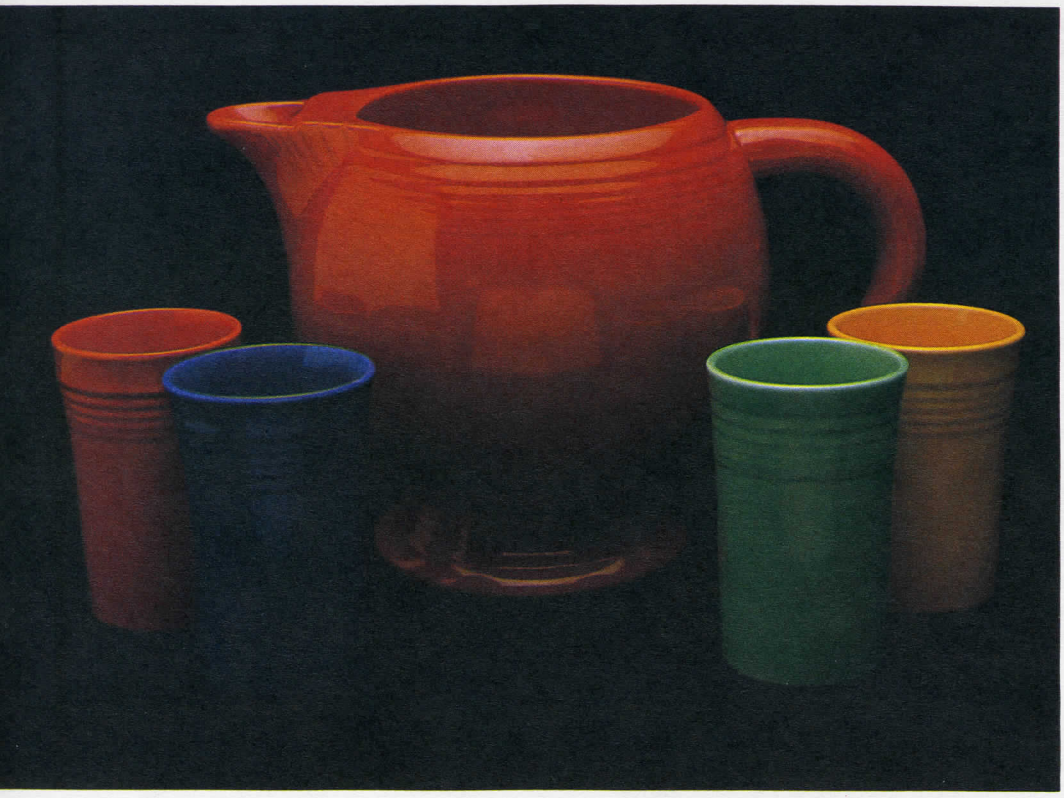
On the Newell site was built Laughlin's Plant 4, "the largest pottery plant ever constructed," in the words of the company's 1907 catalogue. The plant covered 10 acres of ground and extended for 700 feet along the Ohio River. The building had five stories and a total floor space of 15 acres. It was an unprecedented pottery, but it was not the last record the company was to set.

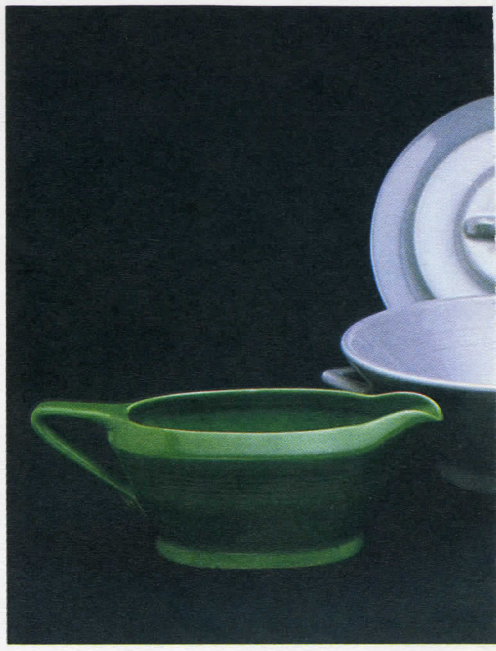
Connected with Plant 4 was a 100-acre recreational park. It was situated in the valley just south of the plant and included a springfed brook, a lake, a zoo, a formal garden, and an outdoor theater where vaudeville players appeared and silent movies were shown. This park was the conception of George Washington Clarke, perhaps the greatest salesman in the history of dinnerware. His work in the Middle West was largely responsible for the expansion of the company, and he devoted much of his income to beautifying the company's park. Tragically, he did not live long after the park was built, succumbing to an apparent heart attack in 1911. Although the park is now grown over and nearly forgotten, the nearby Wells School has an athletic field named after the great salesman.

In 1908 the catalogue of the Homer Laughlin Company almost crowed over its own expansion, boasting that it was now "twice over the largest producer of pottery in the world." Since the addition on January 1, 1907, of Plant 4, the company operated 62 kilns and 48 decorating kilns, which were capable of producing 300,000 pieces of finished pottery each day. This was a total of 10 percent of the dishes purchased in the United States, and more was to come.

In spite of the death of George Washington Clarke, the company's sales continued to grow and in 1914 management again decided to expand. That year Plant 5 was built just north of Plant 4, adding 16 more kilns. But within five years, the company was again unable to meet the demand for its wares. Another expansion was planned, but the pottery industry was on the verge of great change.

By the 1920's, modern technology was affecting the age-old ways that pottery was produced, and management saw the necessity of bringing trained scientists into the company on a full-time basis. The scientist who brought the latest technology to the Laughlin factory was Albert Victor Bleininger. Born in Polling, Bavaria, Dr. Bleininger had had a distinguished career in ceramics at Ohio State University, the University of Illinois, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Bureau of Standards. By the time he came to the Homer Laughlin China Company in 1920, he

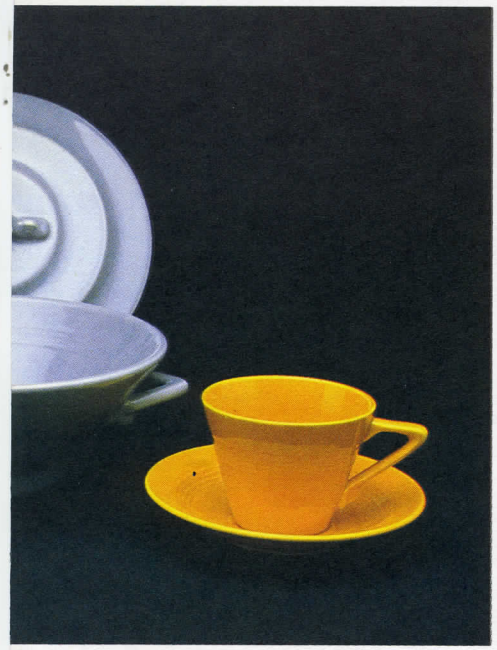




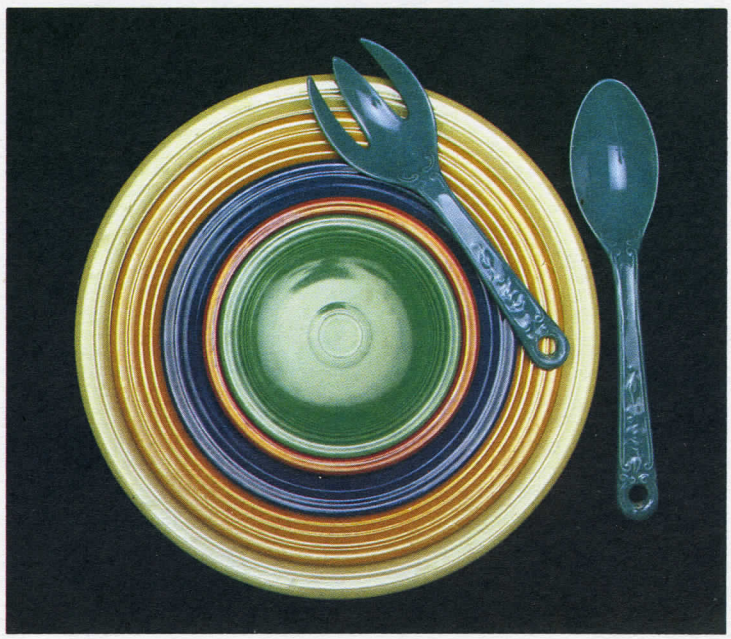
Left: The early Fiesta colors included red, blue, green, and yellow.

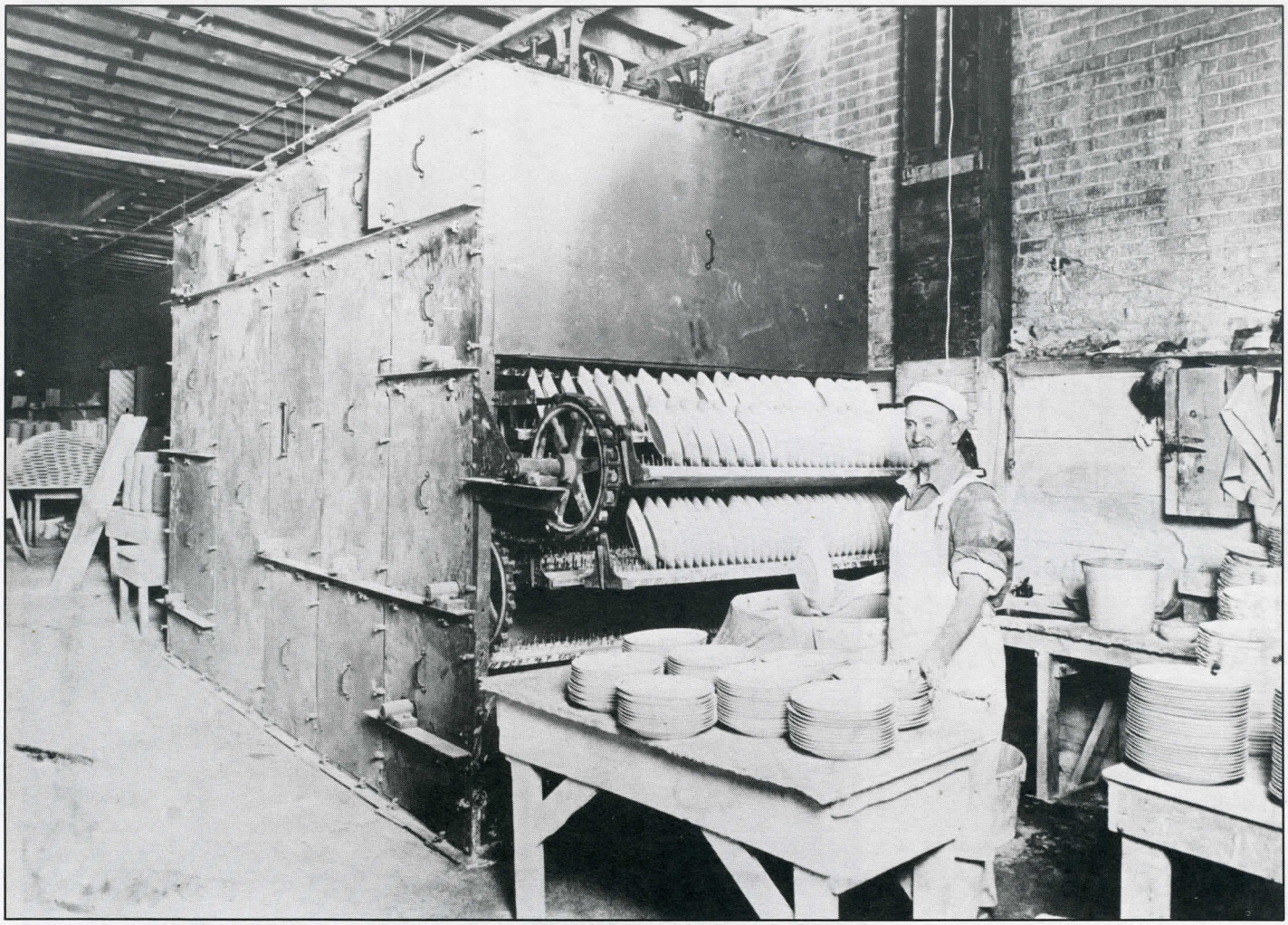
China Colors

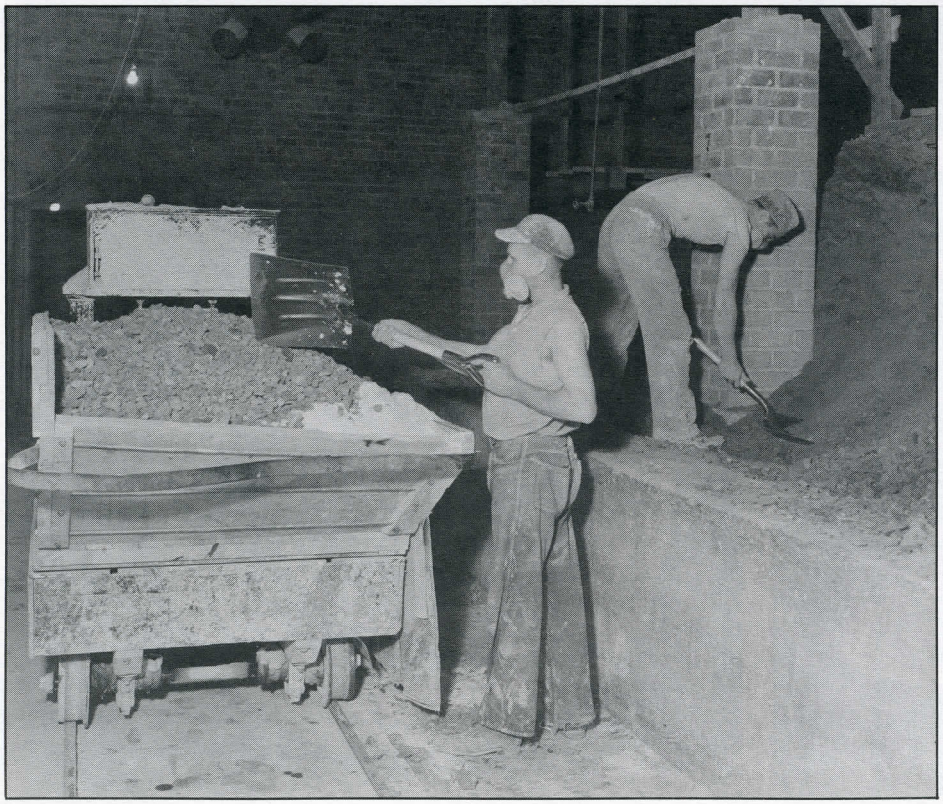
Photo Portfolio by Michael Keller



Above: Harlequin, also by Fiesta designer Frederick Rhead, had its own bright colors. Introduced in 1939, it was sold exclusively by Woolworth's, and reissued for their 1979 Centennial.
Right: Elegant modern hotel dinnerware, with decorative decals on white. The restaurant trade has always been an important part of company business, and remains so today.
Below: Orbit was a streamlined design of the 1960's, in avocado, brown and other colors of that period. The stick butter dish was a concession to changing times.
Below Left: Epicure was a highly sculptured product of the 1950's. The dishes were glazed in blue, dawn pink, and white, among other colors.
Below Right: A rainbow of Fiesta colors were developed over the years. Several are featured here, accented by Fiesta Kitchen Kraft salad servers.







Above: This photograph shows a worker loading drying racks, about 1914. Photographer unknown.
Below: Workers of a somewhat later period loading ingredients at the clay shop. Date and photographer unknown.

had written a book on hydraulic cement, translated the works of the distinguished German ceramist H. A. Seger, helped to found the American Ceramic Society, and was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He remained at the company until his death in 1946, and throughout these years this gentle person had extraordinary influence over the technology of the company. His first task was the construction of Plant 6.

This new West Virginia plant, located just across the valley south of Plant 4, was not only the largest pottery plant ever constructed but was also to steer the worldwide manufacture of ceramics in an entirely new direction. A major innovation was the construction of four tunnel kilns. Up

to this time, pottery had generally been fired in brick, bottle-shaped kilns. These kilns, 40 or more feet tall, had openings in the bottom which allowed workers to carry the unfired clay pieces (protected by ceramic containers called saggers) inside. The opening was then bricked up and coal or wood used to heat the kiln. After the proper time, the kiln was allowed to cool slowly, and the bricked entrances were knocked open to allow workers to remove the saggers containing the ware. The kiln was then ready to be loaded for the next firing.

The disadvantages of the bottle kiln were that it had long periods during which it was not in use while being loaded or cooled and that much of the heat escaped with the smoke out the top. In contrast, the new tunnel kiln was continuously used. It was a long, low brick tunnel with openings at each end. The first car was loaded, pushed by hand into the kiln, and then attached to a hydraulic metal pusher which moved the car along its metal tracks at about 14 inches per hour. At a certain point, the pusher retracted and another car could be added behind the first. The pusher then moved both cars forward. In the kiln, the ware passed through progressively hotter sections until it reached its hottest level (about 2,000 degrees Farenheit), then on through cooler sections until it reached the exit at the far end. The firing process in the tunnel kiln lasted about 55 hours. In addition, the heat efficiency of the new kiln was 500% greater than that of the bottle kiln. The fuel in the new tunnel kilns was natural gas, but they were constructed so that heating oil could be substituted. Each tunnel kiln in Plant 6 could accommodate 52 carloads for a total production capacity of 84,000 pieces of ware daily.

Plant 6 had other scientific and technical advantages. In the basement the powdery clay, flint, and feldspar in proper proportions were dumped into a large tank called a "blunger," where electric paddles mixed the composition with water until it was a thick, flowing liquid called "slip." The slip passed through vibrating frames covered with silk which strained out all foreign matter. A chute then took the slip into contact with powerful electromagnets which drew away even minute particles of metal. The slip was next forced under high pressure into iron filter presses which left the clay in large discs weighing about 40 pounds each. This refined clay was then ready to go to craftsmen who used machines of various sorts for the actual manufacture of the dishes.

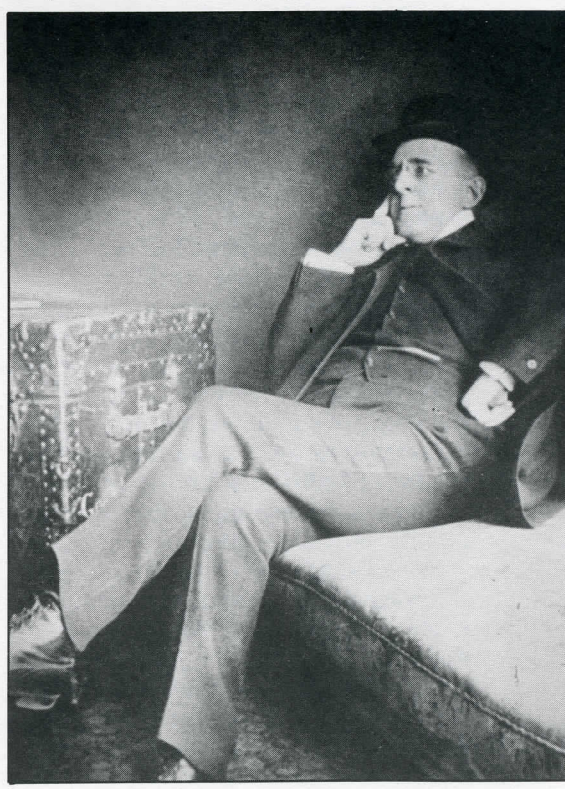
The statistics for Plant 6 are staggering, even today. It was 290 feet wide by 800 feet long, with a basement 80 feet by 800 feet. Into this building went 6,000 cubic yards of concrete, 600,000 bricks for the walls, and 1,000,000 board feet of lumber.

Technical innovation at Laughlin's continued at a rapid rate. In 1927, Plant 7 was constructed beside Plant 6. Simultaneously, tunnel kilns were constructed to replace the bottle kilns in Plants 4 and 5, thus dooming the three older plants in East End to obsolescence. By 1929 the three oldest plants were abandoned. To replace them the last of Laughlin's great potteries, Plant 8, had been built the preceding year just south of Plant 6, stretching out even farther along the Ohio River. This new plant was 1200 feet by 300 feet, employed 900 people, and had a production equal to the combined output of Plant 6 and 7. Of course it was the largest pottery plant in the world, and its addition to the Homer Laughlin China Company multiplied its lead over all other potteries. The most workers in the history of the company was recored at this time, with 3,500 people working in the five Newell plants. Laughlin's became an exclusively West Virginia firm with the abandonment of the three early plants, and its impact in the upper Panhandle was tremendous.

As expansion progressed, management's attention turned to artistic development. An early indicator of this concern was the sumptuous new display room, opened in 1921 on the third floor adjoining the main office in Plant 4. Newspapers visiting the vast room called it a "bower of delights," and their praise even now seems an apt description of the Rococo room. The metal and plaster ceiling is festooned with flowers, the walls lined with wood panels, and the floor constructed of narrow hardwood boards. Heavy leather chairs and couches remind one of an exclusive gentlemen's club. Homer Laughlin dishes are arranged on broad walnut shelves around the room. A company monogram has been worked into a coat of arms for each end of the room. The main purpose of the display room was to provide an elegant background for the company's wares so that visiting buyers would see the product in the most favorable setting. In effect, this room was to replace the salesmen's trunk, as more and more department stores and chain stores were sending out their own buyers rather than waiting for the pottery salesman to call on them.

In 1927 the company hired one of the world's most distinguished ceramists, Frederick Hurten Rhead. At age 47 Rhead had spent his life in the field of ceramics. He had trained at various government art schools in Staffordshire, England, where his father and grandfather had designed and decorated procelain. In 1902 Rhead left a position as art director in a pottery in Stoke-on-Trent to further his career in the United States. He worked with the most distinguished American ceramists, including those at the University City Pottery in St.

George Washington Clarke was Laughlin's great salesman. Here he sits by his trunk of samples. Date and photographer unknown.



The lavish 1921 company sales room still remains a show place for Homer Laughlin china. Photo by Michael Keller.

Louis. He and others in this group won the Grand Prize at the International Exposition of 1911 in Turin, Italy, thus proclaiming the St. Louis school as the leading artistic ceramics group in the world. Rhead opened his own studio in Santa Barbara, California, wrote a book entitled *Studio Pottery*, and worked for various commercial potteries before coming to Laughlin's. Here, though, his wanderings ceased, because he found at the company a commitment to artistic excellence, an outstanding ceramic studio, a brilliant scientific laboratory, and a management that wanted quality as well as quantity.

Rhead's first job was to improve the ware in the company's catalogue. Most of the current shapes, such as Republic and Hudson, had been in production for decades, although Yellowstone, the newest, was introduced in 1926. Yellowstone had, ironically, a cream, light-yellow body, which the company's catalogue bragged about: "Even without decoration it possesses a warmth of tone that appeals to many persons of good taste more strongly than the dead white body that has ruled the market for so many years." How amazed Homer Laughlin would have been to see the disparagement of the color that had originally launched Laughlin's in the 1872 East Liverpool competition.

Rhead began conservatively to develop the artistic quality of the company's wares. The first dinnerware shape for which he was responsible was called Newell, later slightly modified as Liberty. The leading feature of this new ware was its "gadroon edge," a kind of fluting around the perimter of all pieces. Newell was not a spectacular success although it sold modestly for more than a decade.

In contrast, a new ware entitled Virginia Rose (named after W. E. Wells' granddaughter) was a phenomenal success. It was basically an oval shape with an ivory body, and featured a rose worked into the edge of the ware. When decorated with flowered decals, the favored decorating device of the period, Virginia Rose produced a homey, cheerful ceramic object. It was the main line produced in Plant 8, and sold especially to Woolworth's. It sold well for decades, with 625,701 dozen pieces produced in 1933 and 643,056 dozen in 1951.

The culmination of Rhead's experiments in shapes and glazes was the creation in 1935 of Fiesta, the most famous and most collected line of ware in the history of the Homer Laughlin China Company. Basically the ware is in the tradition now known as Art Deco, a term originating at the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes of 1925. Art Deco objects are stream-

lined and show a particularly high level of craftsmanship. Art Deco may also be found in architecture of the period, as well as in electrical appliances, furniture, elevators, hotel lobbies, balconies, carpets, and ceramics. The Empire State Building was built in Art Deco style, as were some West Virginia landmarks, including the courthouse in Clarksburg.

The most striking characteristics of Fiesta is its color. Originally the ware appeared with brilliant red, bright yellow, dark blue, and medium green glaze on a white talc body. The dishes received a matte finish so that they lacked flashing highlights, but the colors themselves were enough to capture any buyer's attention. The red color was revolutionary in part because it was made from uranium and the resulting glaze was harmlessly radioactive. When the government started the atomic bomb project during World War II Homer Laughlin's uranium was confiscated, thus ending the production of the red color for the time being.

Almost as striking as the color was the molding of Fiesta's shape. Frederick Rhead was an experienced studio potter, and he decided that this line of ware should look handcrafted as well as streamlined in the tradition of Art Deco. The cups have concentric circles inside and out, as though they had been handthrown on the potter's wheel. Similarly, the bowls and plates have concentric circles on the inside and out, as though someone had etched them while they were spinning on the wheel. The ware invites the viewer to touch it, to feel the quality of the ridges, and the ridges themselves gather and hold varying amounts of the colored glaze so that color is delicately shaded at the contours.

Unusual accessories were developed with Fiesta. Two sizes of compotes were available, Tom and Jerry mugs (to serve a drink which was popular in the 1930's), tumblers, flower vases in three sizes, two shapes of candleholders and a fruit juice disc jug with five-ounce tumblers. About 1939 a set of wares in Fiesta colors was developed to be used for the preparation of meals. This line was called Fiesta Kitchen Kraft and included a cake server, cake plates, pie plates, covered jars, covered casseroles, serving spoons and forks, mixing bowls, refrigerator sets, as well as two sizes of plates. In 1959 the original Fiesta was modified into Fiesta Ironstone. The new colors were mango red (a nonradioactive reproduction of the original red), turf green, and antique gold.

The brilliant Frederick Rhead (with pencil) designed Fiesta and other successful styles. Here he and others introduce a new line at Pittsburgh's William Penn Hotel. Date and photographer unknown.

Fiesta Ironstone was discontinued on January 1, 1973, and no authorized production of the ware has taken place since then. In an autobiographical note written three years before his death in 1939, designer Frederick Rhead called Fiesta "the most successful table ware line ever made in any factory anywhere . . ." This is a bold description of a product which had been in production for only three years at the time of the writing, but time has proven Rhead correct. Fiesta sold by the millions of pieces annually for 37 years, and its popularity among collectors has increased steadily since then. It was the company's biggest hit.

As important as Fiesta was, it was not Rhead's only new product for the company. Harlequin was an angular ware which also featured bright glazes. It turned out to be the all-time best seller for the Woolworth Company and was reissued in 1979 to celebrate the centennial of the company. A square plate with rounded edges and circular interior was developed for the Century shape. Many different decorations were used on this ware, including Mexican motifs, cartoon characters, and floral decals. A colored glaze version of Century was marketed as Riviera.

During World War II, the Homer Laughlin China Company developed a line of fine dinnerware called Eggshell. It came in decorations known as Georgian, Nautilus, Swing, and Theme and sold very well as a replacement for the fine European china that could not be transported across the Atlantic under wartime conditions.

The peak production year for the company was 1948, when 10,129,449 dozen dishes were manufactured. Don Schreckengost was then art director, and his wares have a sculptural quality about them. Jubilee was one shape which he designed, and its main characteristic is its severe simplicity which is capped off with gracefully looped handles. Schreckengost helped to develop a line of fine china, too. The name of the line was Triumph, and it also had a streamlined, modern shape with no roundness at all. The basic shape for Triumph was the *V*. Even the salt and pepper shakers were truncated, inverted cones.

Several shapes of restaurant ware were introduced for manufacture in

1959. Plant 6 was adapted for this production of heavy, vitreous ware. Hundreds of restaurants across the nation now use Laughlin ware, including those at Marriott hotels.

Since 1960, several art directors have served the company. Vincent Broomhall is remembered for his abstract yet organic designs and Dennis Newbury for developing International, which has sold successfully in numerous decorations and glazes. Jonathan Parry, the company's art director, has a background in jewelry design which shows in the elegance of his ideas for future lines.

The special achievement of Homer Laughlin China Company has been its ability for over a century to mass-produce wares not only inexpensive enough for almost every family in the nation, but often with outstanding artistic value as well. For the workers, managers, artists and scientists laboring together in the huge Hancock County plants have brought art and production together in a spectacular way. Moreover, they've made the combination a profitable one, building in the process a company unparalleled in the worldwide history of the industry. Homer Laughlin, who left two bottle kilns on the banks of the Ohio, would never recognize the place today, but it's unlikely he would be anything but proud. ♣

Above: The continuous-firing tunnel kiln, an innovation by Laughlin scientist A. V. Bleininger, revolutionized the manufacture of chinaware. This recent picture shows a worker removing a load of ware. Photo by Michael Keller.
Left: Dinnerware remains a labor intensive industry. Here, handles are being readied for attaching to cups. Photo by Rick Lee.

"There's Something about Dinnerware"

Ed Carson of the Homer Laughlin China Company

Interview by Jack Welch
Photographs by Michael Keller

Ed Carson, with the sales staff at the Laughlin sales outlet.

Jack Welch. Let's go back a long way, Ed, to growing up in Newell. You were born here, is that right?

Ed Carson. I was born in Newell, in the lower end, which would be where the present Plants 6, 7, and 8 are located. That portion of town.

JW I notice that the house that you grew up in is right beside Plant 8. Is that the house you were born in?

EC That's the house I was born in. My parents built that house, as near as I know, in 1912. I was born in '17.

Both of my parents worked at Homer Laughlin — my mother before she was married and for some time after. She was a ware dresser. She took the pen marks off pieces of ware, and also selected them.

My father was always in the warehouse. He was warehouse foreman of Plants 4 and 5 and just prior to his death he was warehouse superintendent for the five plants. That would be for the entire operation from the glost kiln* until it is shipped. That would take care of the ware dressing, selecting, order running, packing, and actually I think shipping would have been in there at that time.

JW So that was a big responsibility, I expect, for him, especially when his role increased to include the whole company?

EC Yes, and the company was quite active at that time and were much busier than we are today. Father passed away in '41, so that would have been the middle '30's, perhaps.

JW All right, so he was responsible for shipping millions of pieces of ware, wasn't he?

EC Yes.

JW I'm interested in his attitude toward the company. Did he like working for Homer Laughlin? He worked for it for many years, didn't he?

EC Surely, 30-some years at least. I think he felt perhaps the same as we do today, that it was home. He'd always worked in the pottery, from the time he arrived in Newell until his death. It was a small community. Everybody in Newell worked in the pottery, or some member of their family. And it was just an institution with us. Still is.

JW Your father moved here from

*A glost kiln, also known as a decorator kiln, is the heating unit used to develop the glaze on a piece of ware.

A Newell street scene a few years before Ed Carson's birth there. The Hancock County pottery town is near the northernmost tip of West Virginia.

someplace else in West Virginia, is that right?

EC Father moved here from Ripley, West Virginia, and mother came to Newell from where Pennsboro and Middleborne are. The Tyler and Ritchie County area.

JW And you grew up right beside the factory. Did it seem polluting or dirty or anything like that? Do you remember how you felt toward the factory as you were growing up?

EC I don't think pollution was even mentioned or thought of at that time. Pottery actually is a very clean industry. The only pollution we ever had at that time was from the smoke stack, the one at the central steam heating plant. I don't think there was ever even a thought about pollution.

JW When did you first get started coming into the pottery?

EC Well, I think all of the young boys in Newell at that time would have summer jobs, any odd job that we could get around the pottery. In fact, some of the young fellows would work here even in the winter. They'd go to school and after school go down and work in the pottery, perhaps the clay shop, maybe until 6 or 7 o'clock at night. They'd do that year-round.

The first association that I had in the pottery was working with my father at night. We would come in and write out what were called carbacks at that time. We would list orders from stores that would be loaded into one railroad car. We'd have to make a content sheet for all. This car would, as an example, go to St. Louis to be unloaded and maybe 10 or 12 stores would be supplied from that. Then a car would go on to Kansas City and the same thing would happen there. We used to come down at night and make those out because there was just too much for him to do in the daytime. He would do this after hours just to keep his work up.

That, of course, for me was nonpaying. That was just helping my father at night. After that I got smart. Every other job I've had around the pottery was for good pay. My first real job was working on the railroad, at the plant rail siding. But the earliest paycheck that I have been able to find is for 1937, and that was when I was in the warehouse. Prior to that, I had also worked on the laboring gang installing equipment at Number 8, working on the kilns.

JW You mentioned to me once that you also sold magazines in the pottery.

EC Yes, while in school my brother and I used to sell the *Ladies Home Journal, Country Gentlemen, Grit* and *Saturday Evening Post* all through the plants. We knew practically everybody in the plant because it was a hometown business. We'd come once a week and go through the plants, and then at quitting time we'd be there as the people came out, a different entrance each night. I think it would be the same as a newsboy today delivering to a community. We'd go through the plant and stop at George and Bill and so forth. And then at night you'd get on the door and try to hustle up a little more business.

As we'd go through, of course, everybody would kid us, tease us

and so forth. You had to learn to give it back a little bit, either that or run. I was always too fat to run.

In 1939 my father decided he was going to retire, so he and I pooled our assets of about $200 and started a roadside ware stand on Route 30 in Chester. During those years, prior to going into the service, I would work nine months at the ware stand and three months at the plant. Every year since '37 I've worked in the plant at least a portion of the year. In 1941 I went into the service, into the infantry for a year, and then three and a half years in the Air Force, being discharged in '45.

JW Tell me about the ware stand. Was it located right outside of Chester?

EC It was on the top of the Chester hill on Route 30. When we moved out there, only Hilltop Tavern and our place was there. Our place was called The Pines; it had been a beer joint. We bought it, remodeled it, turned it into a ware stand.

JW So when you went overseas and were dreaming and planning about coming back to the United States, did you think about coming back to the company to work?

EC Let me correct that. I didn't win the war, and I didn't get overseas. In the infantry I was fortunate enough to get transferred to the Air Force, and in the Air Force I trained as a combat crew member on B-17's. All bombardiers, which I happened to be, were pulled off when they went to Europe and made instructors. We instructed for some time, then they decided we would go to Japan. So they put us on B-29's. Same thing happened on that; they pulled the bombardiers off, evidently didn't need them, and we became instructors. Then of course the war was over. So I just rode around this country.

JW I see. Well anyhow, when you were riding around this country and you thought about life after the war, did you think about coming back to the pottery?

EC I don't know that I can answer that. You see, we still had the ware stand. Father died, and mother and I were trying to carry it on. We'd been renting it out as a dwelling during my service, so I came back to that. From there on I just really don't know what my plans were. I applied for work at perhaps a half dozen places, had interviews, considered them all. I don't know that they would have hired me. But I also put in an application here. When they called, I ran.

JW You felt comfortable here, where you had grown up?

EC It's home.

JW What was your first job here after the war?

EC My first job, September 1, 1950, I was employed in the IBM as a card puller. In other words, you picked up the cards for each different item, run them through the computer, and it printed the orders and the invoices.

JW Homer Laughlin had one of the early computers in this area, I guess?

EC I feel sure they did. They've always told me they had it in the 30's. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. To my knowledge they've always had a computer.

JW How long did you work at that?

EC Just about a year. At that time they asked me if I would go in and work in sales. I was put on as an assistant to the sales manager. His name was Don Thompson. After some time the office manager retired and I was automatically moved into that job, retaining sales at the same time.

JW Now, sales at Homer Laughlin meant selling ware to the wholesale dealer, right?

EC Right. At that time we had distributors all over the country. They would stock the ware. We would sell large quantities to them. They, in turn, would work the territory, with their individual salesmen.

JW I see. Did you sell any at all to the Sears, Roebuck Company or Montgomery Ward? Did you sell it to them straight, or did you have them go through the distributors?

EC We have always sold to Sears, Montgomery Ward, Aldens, people like that, direct. Sears and Wards both have been with us for many, many years. I have no idea how long. And one of our biggest customers over the years was Quaker Oats. Remember the Mothers Oats packages that had the dinnerware? We made

Jubilee, introduced in 1948 to commemorate the company's 75th anniversary, was a steady seller during Carson's early years in the sales department.

This red brick building has been headquarters to the Homer Laughlin China Company since early in the century, and to Ed Carson personally for most of his working life. "It's home," he says.

all or most of it over the years. We used to ship solid carloads of it.

The other large customer, maybe the largest at that time, would have been F. W. Woolworth. When they first started here, it's my understanding that Mr. Lyle Funner, Mr. Wells and the Woolworth executives got together and worked with each other. That's one reason we have these large plants today, is because of Woolworth.

JW Harlequin was an important shape of ware bought by the Woolworth Company, is that right?

EC That's right. Exclusively.

JW So Homer Laughlin and Woolworth Company kind of grew up together?

EC Right. In fact, Plant 8 was built exclusively, to my knowledge, to take care of Woolworth business, and it was the world's largest plant when it was built.

JW You have been with Laughlin's for many years, had a chance to see the company grow in certain ways. What do you think are some of the important contributions of the company, to the industry?

EC Well, I think they have always been a leader in research and development of new items, new processes. They've always manufactured a very fine quality product, and it has always been priced for the common people — for the working class. Probably everybody in the country at one time had at least one piece of Homer Laughlin.

The company has supplied all the income for our community, practically maintained it, supported this community and their families — the schools, water system, sewage, everything for this whole community.

JW You're talking about Newell, now, the community of Newell?

EC Yes.

JW And, also, to some extent the people who come over here from East Liverpool to work?

EC Very much so. In fact that's the reason they built the bridge, to get the people over here.

JW One of the nice things about collecting Homer Laughlin ware — and I have been doing a good bit of that lately — is that it is so available. Every little second-hand store will have some Homer Laughlin.

EC Everybody has it.

JW You're going to be retiring, maybe, in a year or two or three?

EC That sounds good.

JW What do you think you'll miss most about the company?

EC Well, I think the association with the people. You build up quite a companionship, a comradship, whatever you call it. And there's something about dinnerware, once you become interested in it. You take a little bit of clay and mix it up with water and fire it and make something out of it — there's a romance to that. It just gets in your blood.

Ralph Hamrick was photographed with himself in this trick publicity picture. He played the Uncle Zeke comedy figure for years. Date unknown, photo by Maggard Studios, Charleston.

Back in 1977, I wrote a GOLDENSEAL article entitled "West Virginia Country Music During the Golden Age of Radio." Tom Screven, editor at the time, inserted "An Appeal to Readers" box, hoping to open up new avenues of communications between me and significant oldtime radio musicians whose careers had been inadequately researched. One of the people who interested me the most was Ralph Hamrick, whom I knew to have been important as a traditional fiddler, comedian, song writer and half of the influential Hamrick Brothers duet. I hoped the "Appeal" would bring word of Mr. Hamrick, but it turned out I'd have to wait awhile.

Over the next six years, I encountered numerous key figures from West Virginia's first generation of commercial country music, or "hillbilly" music as it was called at the time. Slim Clere, Bill Jones, Lee Moore, John Bava, French Mitchell, and Willie Buskirk were among them. No one could produce a significant lead on either of the Hamrick Brothers, although their names came up in many conversations. Friends and relatives of deceased or infirm greats of the past helped me piece together biographical information on forgotten stars like David Miller, Cowboy Loye, and John McGhee, and even obscurities like John B. Evans and the Jackson County Barn Owls. Still Ralph and Bert Hamrick eluded me.

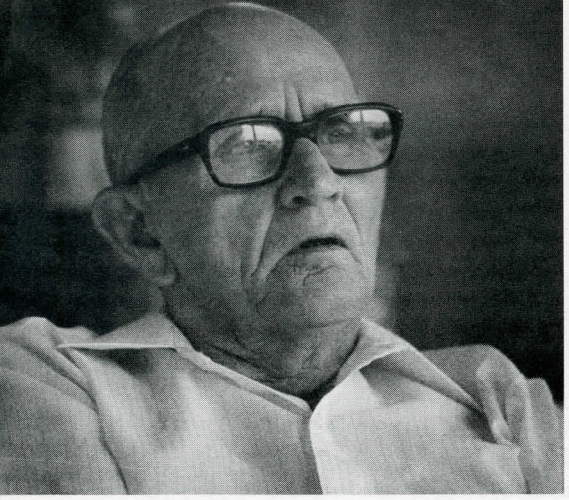
Finally, Mountaineer Jamboree, *the lengthy book manuscript that evolved from my brief original article, went to the editorial offices of the University Press of Kentucky, came back for revision, went off again, came back for final touches, and then returned to Lexington for typesetting. Then, and only then, did I receive a modest letter from Ralph Hamrick, who had just belatedly read the "Appeal" that Tom and I had framed some seven years*

All-Around Musicians

Ralph Hamrick and Early Country Music

By Ivan M. Tribe

Photographs by Michael Keller



Today Ralph recalls hard times establishing himself as a musician in the Depression years.

before. He had been in Ravenswood all the time, quite unaware that I had been engaged in a fruitless search for him. His story was worth the wait, however, for it turned out to be every bit as interesting as I had always suspected it would be.

Thomas Ralph Hamrick was born in Roane County on December 18, 1909. Parents Howard and Dora Hamrick, a farm couple who eventually had 10 children, lived near the community of Gandeeville several miles south of the county seat of Spencer. The elder Hamrick was an oldtime fiddler and his wife sang, so the youngsters received an early exposure to music in the home and they all became musicians. However, only the three boys ever played professionally, and brother Curt but briefly. Ralph himself came to exhibit considerable versatility playing fiddle, guitar and harmonica, in addition to singing. He later developed a flair for stage and radio comedy and even did some dramatic work.

About 1930, Ralph at the urging of a friend went to Detroit to enter the world of show business. By then he had already been to Charleston two or three times to do guest spots as a radio musician. While there, he used to stop by the boiler room of the old Ruffner Hotel to pick a little with Billy Cox, Charleston's first significant hillbilly radio and record vocal star. In the Motor City Hamrick found other musicians to suit his tastes, first joining Charlie Jones' band, the Kentucky Korn Krackers. The group did a 30-minute daily radio broadcast sponsored by a local clothing store. Ralph remembers that the store owner took pride in his band, paying them a small salary and displaying a life-size photo of the Korn Krackers in his establishment.

The musicians mostly did their radio show, but Ralph recalls a few personal appearances as well. The most memorable was when they went out to Dearborn to share billing with Henry Ford's Old Time Dance Orchestra. Ralph remembers shaking hands with the famous auto magnate. Inexpensive Fords were changing the traditional American way of life, rushing the country into the future, but oddly enough the great technological innovator himself had a nostalgic preference for provincial rural culture. Thus the millionaire Ford could admire the talents of rustic West Virginia musicians like Ralph Hamrick (and also Jackson County ballad singer Frank Dudgeon).

Ralph got ample radio exposure in the two years he stayed in Detroit. The Korn Krackers also played occasionally in the sponsor's store, and for several months Ralph had his own program. Eventually, however, he grew homesick for West Virginia and returned to the village of Fairplain in Jackson County, where his parents had settled.

After being back home for awhile, Ralph Hamrick again was restless for the entertainment world. This time he applied for a job with a vaudeville act, Jack and Rita LaPearl's Arkansas Home Folks. Ralph received word that he had been accepted, and in May 1932 joined the company in Oswego, New York. The outfit worked its way southward through the Empire State, then into Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and eventually Indiana, playing theaters all the way. But by this time vaudeville had about run its course, and the Great Depression was finishing off what remained — including the small segment Hamrick had associated himself with. The LaPearl troupe broke up in Indiana and again Ralph returned to his West Virginia home.

His third entry into entertainment did not take him so far afield. On July 12, 1935, radio station WPAR went on the air in Parkersburg. Ralph and his neighbor, Cecil Dale Roseberry, an aspiring radio performer born near Ripley in 1913, decided to go to Parkersburg and get themselves a program. Ralph recalls they first earned $7.50 cutting brush, which was enough to get them to the river city and installed in a boarding house. They obtained a show easily enough, and took the name Korn Crackers for themselves. From time to time the band acquired other musicians, including Ralph's younger brothers Curtis Clifton and Bert Clifford and Dale Roseberry's younger brother Lovell. A five-string banjo picker named Bill Miller worked with them for a time, and fortunately had the foresight to preserve one of their songbooks. The band also added a female vocalist named Kathleen Strong, but she and Curt Hamrick eventually married and left the Crackers.

The Korn Crackers shared honors with the Buskirk Family as Parkersburg's first hillbilly radio stars. Later on, two younger groups affiliated with the station, Bob Wright's Juvenile Jug Blowers (who evolved into Bobby Cook's Texas Saddle Pals) and the Burroughs Trio. However, in the hard time of the late '30's local stardom did not always bring wealth or even financial security. According to Ralph, his Korn Crackers did not have an automobile and could schedule personal appearances only when a Roseberry relative was available to transport them. Nonetheless, they drew lots of mail and attracted thousands of fans in two states, many of whom unfortunately were equally short of cash. Mainly the band survived on hope.

Naturally, hope sometimes had to be reinforced by calories. Ralph recalls one such time, a morning when he woke up broke and hungry. He says that he borrowed a penny from his landlady to pay the pedestrian bridge toll to cross the Little Kanawha. There, he went door to door, selling soap he had previously obtained on commission. Returning to the city, he repaid his landlady, paid for the soap, and finally bought breakfast for "Smilin' Dale" Roseberry and himself. Then they went to WPAR to do their daily program. It was through such humble income supplements and hopes for better times to come that those who paved the way for the country superstars of today made it through the Depression.

By the beginning of 1937, things were looking better for the Korn

Crackers. They were able to buy a car and had a sizable songbook to sell to their radio listeners. However, newlyweds Curt and Kathleen left the group at this time, as did Bill Miller, who was needed at home. Somewhat reluctantly, Ralph Hamrick and Dale Roseberry decided to disband the Crackers and try something else.

Bill Miller's copy of *54 Favorite Songs Sung by Ralph Hamrick and His Korn Crackers Over WPAR* offers a good indication of what the radio listeners heard from the group just before the breakup. As might be expected, they "covered" some of the hillbilly favorites of the day, such as Karl and Hardy's "Here To Get My Baby Out of Jail," the Delmore Brothers' "Time for the Whipporwhil to Sing," and Bill and Charlie Monroe's "What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?". Yet there were some surprises as well, such as McGhee and Welling's West Virginia Prohibition parody, "Sweet Adeline at the Still," Bill Cox's "Dear Old Mother," and "Advice to Boys and Girls," an original composition that apparently parodies Cap, Andy and Flip material. Other originals include a Roseberry talking blues number filled with double-entendre sarcasm and called "Wish I Had My Dollar Back Again." Ralph also contributed several originals. "My Old Ford," a humorous tribute to the Model T, may be the best of these.

The Hamrick Brothers as well-dressed young performers. Maggard Studios, date unknown.

With their band scattered, Ralph and Dale next decided that comedy might just be their ticket to success. Ralph had been developing his interest in comedy since his brief fling in vaudeville and Smilin' Dale was by all accounts an excellent announcer, but only an average musician. So the duo went to another new station, WBLK Clarksburg, that had begun broadcasting in April 1937. There they became "Zeke and Zeb." Hamrick played the rube character Zeke, while Roseberry was Zeb the straight man. The act survived for about two months at WBLK, although the Zeke character remained with Ralph for the rest of his career.

In the meantime, Ralph Hamrick and Dale Roseberry went on to WCHS Charleston to become the Two Musketeers, a country vocal duo. Financially they were struggling when the Buskirk Family hired Dale to become their announcer at WMMN Fairmont. Ralph himself accepted an offer to join forces with Al Hendershot and his Dixie Ramblers. Bert Hamrick also came into the group and the Hamrick Brothers now developed a classic brother duet somewhat similar in style to that of Alton and Rabon Delmore. Hendershot's son and daughter, Hank and Lilly Bell, rounded out the group.

Al Hendershot, a portly Calhoun County native who did a few songs himself and announced for and promoted the others, led his journeymen Ramblers across the country from 1934 to the 1940's, with numerous stops in West Virginia. Hendershot's group, which once included the Willis Brothers of later Grand Ole Opry fame, had its ups and downs, but 1938 was an "up" year. Ralph recalls that for the first time the Hamrick Brothers did not just survive, they actually made some money. A Dixie Ramblers handbill from this period suggests that Ralph's Zeke character was an especially popular figure with the fans, and received feature billing.

When Hendershot moved on to a station in Chattanooga, the Hamricks split off to join with the Holden Brothers, Georgians who had worked earlier with the Ramblers and were actually not brothers at all. The Hamrick-Holden combination did well through the winter of 1938-39 and decided to move south to WHIS Bluefield for the spring. Ralph now recalls that their cold weather prosperity was fortunate, for he says they were in Bluefield for four months before they made a dime. A coal strike that spring derailed the plans of the musicians, as it did those of many others across West Virginia.

By summer, however, the Moun-

tain State began to recover. The Hamricks again made money, with Ralph reporting that for about a year their gross income from pictures and songbooks averaged about $40 a day, plus an additional $10 for personal appearances. Compared with the days of surviving on nickels and dimes in Parkersburg, better times had finally arrived. By mid-1939 Ralph felt he could afford to get married, and did so that July. He also found a publishing outlet for some of the best songs he had composed over the years.

At about this time several noted West Virginia country musicians made connections with the Rialto Music Company of New York. About a dozen of Ralph's compositions made it into songbooks published by Rialto and its later subsidiary, Dixie Music. None ever became a gigantic hit but "Why Not Confess?" attained lasting status, with recordings of this gospel song spreading the name of Ralph Hamrick far and wide. The Blue Sky Boys, possibly the smoothest harmony duo ever recorded, first did the song for Bluebird Records in October 1940. A decade and a half later, the Louvin Brothers recorded it for Capitol. Other renditions have been done by Jim and Jesse on Epic, Bashful Brother Oswald on Starday, and the Dixie Gentlemen on Old Homestead, as well as a second recording by the Blue Sky Boys. Unlike some early country writers who never received any money for their songs, Ralph Hamrick has collected some royalties.

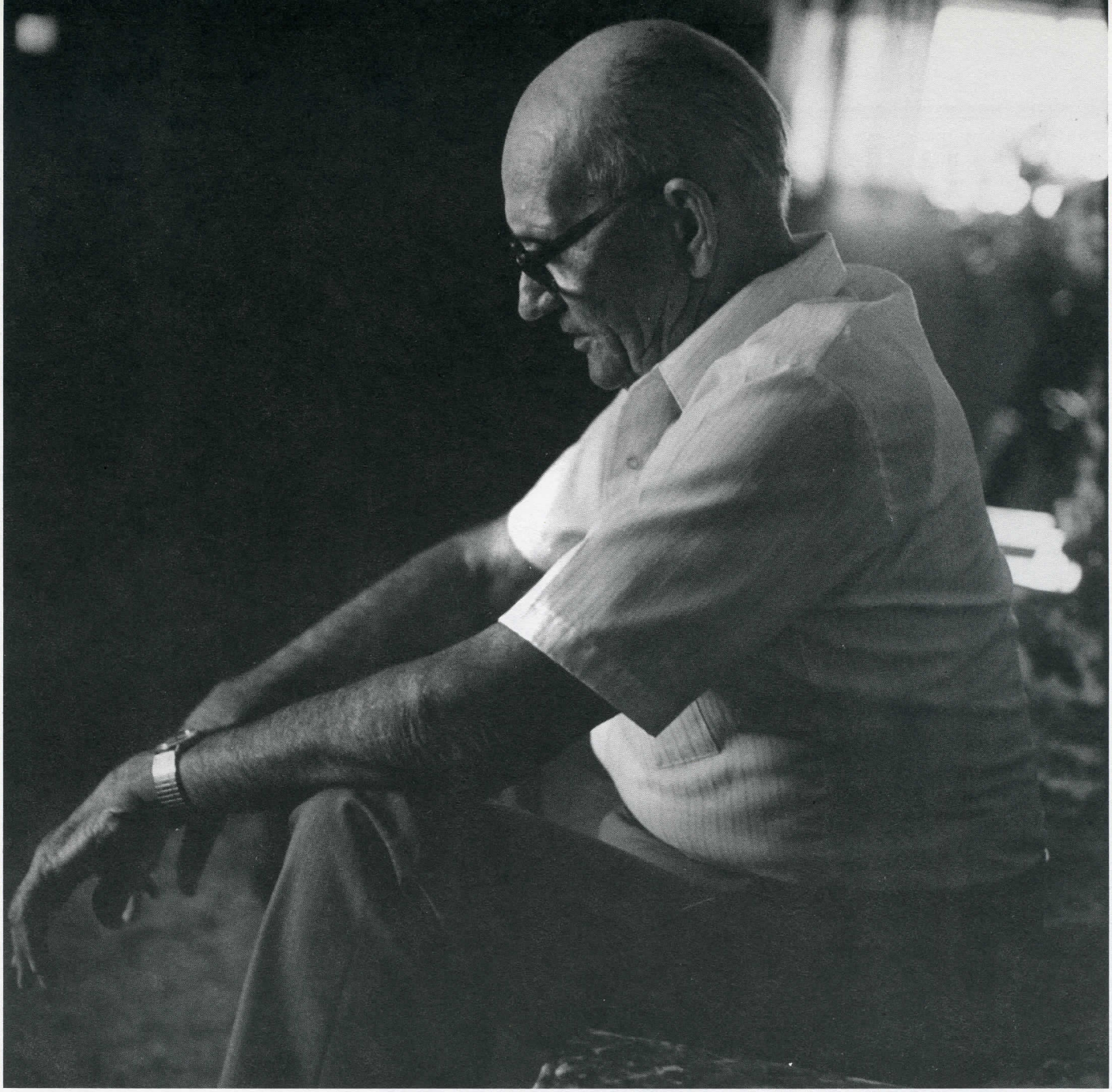
While no other Hamrick original matches "Why Not Confess?" another has been recorded at least three times. Holden Brothers fiddler Curly Parker brought Ralph's "Sweetheart Mountain Rose" (sometimes erroneously credited to Juanita Moore) to the attention of the Blue Sky Boys, who sang it from the early '40's onward. They did not record the song until 1962 when they did it twice, once with their own accompaniment for County Records and once with studio musicians for Starday. The Holden Brothers did it as early as the mid-'40's, but their record remained relatively obscure. Hamrick's other 10 published songs include "Brother Quit Drinking," "Riding the Range," and "Old Red Barn." While apparently never recorded, it is likely they were performed on radio by other artists than the Hamricks.

Ralph also continued to befriend the pioneer Charleston performer Billy Cox. By the late '30's the "Dixie Songbird" no longer performed regularly on WCHS, although Cox and Cliff Hobbs continued to do record sessions through 1940. Billy lived in a houseboat on the Kanawha River, where he still fraternized with fellow musicians and allegedly bootlegged a bit. Ralph recalls that he once persuaded him to come down to WHIS and do a guest spot on the Bluefield station. Like Slim Clere, Buddy Starcher and other radio performers of that era, Ralph greatly regrets that Billy's reckless lifestyle prevented him from achieving the stardom that his talents merited.

The Hamrick Brothers remained at WHIS through most of 1940. Eventually they returned to Charleston's WCHS for a few months, and then dropped out of show business. The coming of World War II was bringing numerous changes to West Virginia. For many musicians not in the service, the stability of wartime industrial jobs seemed attractive, especially as youthful enthusiasm waned with the passing of time. Ralph Hamrick took up carpentry work in Roane County and brother Bert became a painter in the Dunbar-Charleston area. From time to time they performed a bit, with Ralph recalling a few shows with WCHS personality Frank "Uncle Si" Welling in the 1940's. Mostly, however, they got together now and then to play for friends and for their own pleasure. In 1975, the brothers recorded a single on the Marbone label, reviving Ralph's "Sweet Mountain Rose" and adding his new "Puppet Doll."

Ravenswood enjoyed a boom when Kaiser Aluminum opened its Jackson County plant in the mid-'50's. Ralph Hamrick moved there and local home construction kept him busy. Except for a season spent

The Hamrick brothers don't play together these days, but a few guitar notes show Bert hasn't lost the touch. He'd come up to visit Ralph on this day last fall.



Ralph Hamrick looks back on his music career with satisfaction, but doesn't miss the spotlight of publicity. "I had all of that I wanted years ago," he recently told a friend.

in Florida, Ravenswood has been home since that time. Bill Miller, former Korn Crackers banjo picker, lives in the area, too.

Other early associates have scattered or are now dead. Curt and Kathleen Hamrick are retired from the grocery business in Ohio, while Bert is a retired painter in Dunbar. Dale Roseberry formed his own band, the Camp Fire Boys, and was successful at Bluefield's WHIS and at station WBTM in Danville, Virginia. Smilin' Dale was killed in a car crash in September 1941, with the newspaper account saying he seemed destined for bigger things. Bob Roseberry carried on in radio for a time with Lee Moore, then with his own band, and finally with Ralph and Ruth Blankenship. Later he moved to Columbus, Ohio, and died there in the spring of 1981. The Holden Brothers both live in Georgia, but Ralph has had no contact with them for many years. He last saw Al Hendershot more than 30 years ago.

Ralph himself, described in publicity photos of the 1930's as "the all around musician," now lives with his wife in peaceful retirement on the outskirts of Ravenswood. He has a handful of photographs, song sheets, some tape recordings, and other mementos from the decade that he and his brother spent in radio and on stage. Surprisingly, he had never heard any of the numerous commercial recordings of "Why Not Confess?" or "Sweetheart Mountain Rose" until I took them over in January 1984. I was glad to do it, for these songs and the praise of such contemporaries as Bob Roseberry ("excellent musicians and singers") and Al Hendershot ("two swell boys and good fellows to work with") now pretty much comprise the legacy of Ralph Hamrick and brother Bert to the cultural heritage of their native Mountain State. ♣

"It Was Rough At Times"

The Memories of P. L. Johnston

By Robert Spence

P. L. Johnston now has plenty of time for reflection on a long and productive life. Photo by Thomas Mitchell.

Nearly every day, Pierce Lee Johnston walks down the hill (with the help of his well-used cane) to the Logan County courthouse to spend the morning talking politics with his old friends or joining in any other conversation that is going on.

Most of the folks who know him call Johnston by his initials, P. L., and recognize that he is a gifted raconteur who looks back on 93 years of a varied and useful life. Anyone younger than P. L. can enjoy the flow of embellished tales, rare insights, and clear memories that he has stored away through his long life. His memories are especially valuable to those who want to understand at least two of the more neglected subjects in the history of southern West Virginia. Those subjects are the boom days of the area's oil and gas fields and the construction of the coal towns.

When he was young, P. L. went to work as a teamster hauling oil and gas drilling rigs in Kanawha, Lincoln, and Wayne counties. He later moved to Logan County in time to see coal towns built on Buffalo Creek and Rum Creek and he went to work there as an independent contractor who plastered many of the coal company houses.

P. L.'s recollections include more than the stories of his working days. Sitting near his house on Central Hill last fall, dressed in a suit with a hat shading his weak eyes, P. L. said that this part of his history really began in Wyoming County just before the Civil War.

The Johnston and the Peyton families lived near each other in the vicinity of Coal Mountain near the town of Oceana in the late 1850's. George Johnston and his wife, Amy Willis Johnston, were a quiet pair with a son named Oscar who took after his parents. George was a school teacher, and one of his pupils was Sarah

Peyton. Her father, Rowzy Peyton, was Johnston's temperamental opposite.

Rowzy had come to Oceana from East Virginia and always was interested in the sporting life, which in southern West Virginia then meant that he was interested in horse racing. "They've always told me I was a right smart like my Grandpa Peyton," P. L. said. "He was always a good horseman. He kept race horses and would bet on them all around here.

"They used to race a lot more around here than they do now," he added. "That was because they had a race track here in Logan on Midelburg Island and there were other tracks in Hamlin and down at Barboursville. Grandpa Peyton's people lived over in Virginia and raised horses. He'd go back and get some horses and bring them over here to race them. It wouldn't be long until he was broke and he'd go back and get them lined up again."

P. L.'s other grandfather, George Johnston, was about as well-educated as Rowzy Peyton, but was more interested in learning than he was in social life. George encouraged his son, Oscar, to get as much formal education as he could, and it is possible Oscar would have gone in that direction if the Civil War had not disrupted the region's way of living.

"Pa told me a lot about the war," P. L. recalls of Oscar Johnston. "He joined up with the Confederates in Oceana. I believe that was the county seat when he went in. I've heard him tell about it a thousand times. They formed a company that was all volunteers and I figure it was a company of about 100 men. They went in, but there wasn't too many of them got back."

The Confederates from Wyoming County, most likely, were put in a troop of irregulars that was led by John Willliam Straton, a Logan County political figure and shopkeeper who organized men and sent them to the regular army for the Virginia government in Richmond. "My father fought under Straton for a while," P. L. said.

"Once they were over around Richmond when the Union soldiers came around here somewhere close. Major Straton's wife had a young baby, just two weeks old, and he detailed Pa to come over here with about six other fellows and take Mrs. Straton and her baby back to Richmond.

"So Pa rode with Mrs. Straton, and the guards stayed out in front and back behind to keep them from getting into any unit of the Union soldiers. And he took them back over to Richmond. Major Straton must have thought a good deal of Pa to have him do that for him."

Yet Oscar Johnston and the other men from Oceana soon were in a more serious campaign. P. L. remembers that his father stayed in the army until Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox and that Oscar's most vivid memories of the war came from the decisive battle at Gettysburg.

"Pa was a sergeant by then and he told me that he went through several campaigns, but that Gettysburg was the worst. He said they fought all day. He said he laid back on the mountain and waited for two days. They were holding his outfit in reserve. Then they went in the third

Below: Johnston as a young man. He also drove ox teams in the southern West Virginia oil and gas fields. Date and photographer unknown.

Right: Johnston learned construction work while in the service during World War I. He married in 1918, and is shown here with his new wife, Lura. Photographer unknown.

"I have had a pretty hard life," Mr. Johnston says today. "Always worked hard and tried to do a good job." Photo by Thomas Mitchell.

day. Said they fought from daylight 'til dark and they never moved, neither side. They held their ground."

It is likely that the struggle Oscar Johnston described took place between Little Round Top and Devil's Den, judging from the description that Oscar gave his son. "Pa said there was a big valley there between them. He said they would advance when they got new troops in and drive the Union side back. And then the other side would get its new troops and drive the Confederates back. He said they fought all day thataway. That night you could walk across that battlefield — I think a mile or two long — and walk on dead men and dead horses."

In his later life, Oscar Johnston liked to reminisce about the war with his close friends and P. L. would listen to the men recalling those times. "Old soldiers would come and stay all night with him, and they would sit up and talk all night."

When the war was over, Oscar, who married Sarah Peyton in 1866 or 1867, was ready to settle down. The young couple did not stay in Wyoming County, however, because another unexpected event changed their lives.

Rowzy Peyton had not survived the war. Because Peyton had a reputation for betting on horse races, rumors started that he always carried a lot of cash with him. A group of Wyoming County bushwhackers took advantage of the confusion of the times to kill Peyton for his money. "But he only had $5 with him when they killed him," P. L. said.

After the war, Peyton's widow, P. L.'s grandmother, decided to go west with her parents. The party passed through Logan County on their way down the Guyandotte River to the town of Guyandotte, where they expected to get passage on one of the steamboats. They got as far as the Lincoln County town of West Hamlin, where Mrs. Peyton became seriously ill. It was this incident that kept P. L.'s parents from remaining in Wyoming County.

"My mother got a letter that said her mother was sick in West Hamlin," he related. "So she just bundled up her clothes and started out to go there. Pa said, 'Well, if she's going, I'm a-going with her.' They took their horse and stayed down at West Hamlin until my grandmother died. Then they rented a farm from old man J. B. McComas and later moved down to Salt Rock."

Oscar and Sarah Johnston began their family of eight daughters and four sons in Salt Rock in Cabell County, where P. L. was born on June 23, 1891. His earliest memory is about the family moving to a 200-acre farm on Mud River, five miles above Hamlin, in 1895.

"We had a pretty good-sized farm," he said. "The county road ran through it, but it was just a mountain farm. We lived there until 1921, when my sisters all moved to Logan to take jobs teaching school and my parents moved with them."

The Johnston place was typical of southern West Virginia farms in that time when the region was caught between the disappearing agricultural life and the coming industrial days. "It was awful rocky land, some of it," P. L. recalled.

"We would clear a lot of land with those big horses that weighed about 1,200 or 1,400 pounds. We'd get what they called a root cutter plow. They made those out of good solid wood and put an iron plate on top and bottom with a hole cut through the iron and wood.

"Then we'd slip a cutter through there. That was a bar about so long and one end of it was sharpened. When that was ready you'd go with the plow and just hear those roots cracking and popping.

"A lot of people in Lincoln County grew tobacco then, but we never did. Later on, my sisters started teaching school and kept a hired man year 'round to do the work. When they drilled a gas well in 1906 we leased the farm and took in rental money off it."

In that way, Johnston suggests how Lincoln County was changing during the years he was growing up. Like almost all young people, he was concerned mainly with farm chores and going to school, but the arrival of the oil and gas interests was opening new ideas to the area's youngsters. The county's towns were changing and P. L. remembers what that was like.

"They were building quite a few houses then," he said. "They were all frame houses and ceiled. There were a lot of people living in Hamlin — at one time I think there were 7,000 people. There were four or five grocery stores, but it wasn't like today with places to buy just groceries and just clothes. They had everything. They also built some nice houses in Hamlin. Old man Lou Sweetland built a home that would cost $200,000 now to build one like it."

Lou Sweetland, who Johnston knew rather well, was one of the key figures in Lincoln County's development as an oil and gas region. Sweetland was the banker who encouraged investment in the county's resources, though his story is one that has never been written.

"He was a millionaire before they ever came in there to drill a gas well," P. L. recalled. "His father was an old settler there in Hamlin. Mr. Sweetland had come there when he was a right young boy and he had a big farm where Hamlin sets. He lived there and his son Lou grew up there."

Johnston remembers that Lou Sweetland was quiet, but was very interested in local politics and also in education. P. L. said when his sisters grew up and began teaching in the Lincoln school system it was his responsibility to take the school checks to Sweetland's bank to be cashed. In that way, Johnston became better acquainted with the banker.

"When I'd go in there," he said, "I'd take $200 or $300 out in cash for the teachers. That was a lot of money.

That was as much as $2,000 or $3,000 would be now. And I don't think I was over 10 years old at the time.

"Lou always stayed in the bank. He told my Pa once that I was too young a boy to send for the money. And Pa said, 'Now, he'll take care of it. He ain't afraid to get the money from you.' Lou would take me behind the cage and pin the money up in my pocket and say, 'Now don't you let anybody know that you've got this.' And I'd tell him I wouldn't and assured him it would be alright."

Much later, when P. L. applied for membership in the Masons, Sweetland took the lead in making sure his membership was approved. That took place, however, when Johnston had grown and gone to work as a teamster when the oil and gas business expanded just after 1910.

Thus P. L. Johnston grew up friends with the town banker, but he remembers that his politics were shaped by the fiery populist campaigns of William Jennings Bryan, the champion of farmers and the enemy of bankers everywhere. Bryan is remembered today mainly as a three-time presidential candidate, and likewise as the loser in the famous "Monkey Trial" that in 1925 established evolutionary theory as legal in the public schools. But Bryan in his younger days had a powerfully magnetic appeal to the common people of the country. The evangelistic nature of his campaigns of 1896 and 1900 made a profound impression on the working men and women of West Virginia, then seriously disturbed by the growing tensions of the state's industrialization.

Johnston, for one, never got over the "Great Commoner." Bryan has remained a political ideal for 76 years, since P. L. was 17 years old. He claims that his father was an even stronger Bryan man. But the Johnston family has always been politically inclined, and when the time came P. L. named one of his own sons William Jennings Johnston.

"My father," he went on, "was the strongest Democrat I ever knew. One time a son-in-law of his ran as a Republican for the sheriff of Cabell County and Pa got out and electioneered against him. Beat him, too. Now that's a strong Democrat.

"But the thing I remember most about politics from those years was when I went to hear William Jennings Bryan make a speech in Huntington," Johnston added. "That was the last speech Bryan ever made there and I heard it.

"That must have been in the election of 1908, when I was 17 years old. My sister was going to school down there at Marshall College. I ran into her down there and we went to hear the speech. I thought he was an awful able speaker. Everybody thought he was a smart man. That is, the Democrats did. The Republicans didn't like him much."

They certainly did not, and one of the important factors that fostered the industrialization of West Virginia was the Republican tariff that was passed during McKinley's administration after Bryan was defeated in 1896 and 1900. That tariff made it possible for the oil and gas industry to expand and offer low-paying jobs to men like P. L. Johnston.

In 1906 oil was struck in Griffithsville and the Ohio Fuel Company sent a superintendent named John Horne from Kentucky to Lincoln County. That same year another oil and gas field was hit just below the Cabell town of Milton and still more wells were drilled soon after that around Branchland, in Lincoln County. "It was good oil and lasted well," Johnston said. "I guess it was about 15 or 20 years when they were getting oil and gas out."

During those years the young men of the area had opportunities to work in oil and gas, and P. L. made the most of the chance. "I went to work for Mr. Horne in 1911," he recalled. "That was when I was 20 years old.

"I never drilled any wells. I drove a company team of oxen. They had big teams to move the tools, you know. So I got a job driving a team and I worked at that for the next six years. At one time the company had 500 men on the payroll in Lincoln County. And sometimes they would have 50 teams a-working. There was no pipeline in here then and they were drilling wells and moving the tools and rigs everywhere."

Johnston remembers that it was difficult work. "It would take them 30 or 40 days to drill a new well. And then they would tear it down and move it on again. Of course, they'd have to replace a lot of the lumber when they moved a rig, but I was one of the ones who moved them."

He added that the rigs and other

Johnston has frequented the Logan County Courthouse for years. Here he sits (left) with buddy W. G. "Wib" Whited in 1968. Photo by Robert T. Johnson.

supplies for the burgeoning industry were supplied by the Curtly General Company that had its office in Hurricane. "They were heavy to drag over the mountains," he said. "They weighed about 5,000 or 6,000 pounds, but I never did get hurt on all the work I did there, which was a wonder."

When Johnston began working as a teamster, Ohio Fuel and other companies paid about $50 a month. In a few years he was promoted to team foreman, which paid up to $65 a month, though foremen paid their own room and board. P. L. worked for Ohio Fuel (which became United Fuel Gas Company) for six years. He then moved on to the Sovereign Gas Company, which also operated in Lincoln and Putnam Counties.

P. L. said the field took in a wide area. "I worked all over Wayne and Mason counties and some in Cabell and Boone, besides the work in Kanawha, Putnam, and Lincoln," he commented. "Later another fellow and I worked as a team in Mingo County.

"It was dangerous work, too," Johnston said. "I knew a lot of fellows who got hurt and two or three who got killed working in the oil fields. Something could fall off a rig and kill a man — a plunging tool or a casing tool could do that. I knew of one fellow who got killed up on Cabin Creek hauling a bailer up to the top of a rig. Pulled it up there and broke the line and the bailer fell back and killed the driller."

Yet if the work was dangerous and the pay low, the oil and gas field workers were an independent lot. About 1914 P. L. got in an argument with a bookkeeper and a superintendent when he was accused of losing a set of tools. When the two men refused to hunt for the tools, Johnston found them himself and quit on the spot. "I was so worked up about it I quit right then," he recalled.

Another oil company was starting operations in Hurricane and he took a job as team foreman under Wade Curry, an independent contractor. "They never did say a harsh word to me, none of them," P. L. said. "All they would do is tell me what they wanted done and say, 'The rest of it's left to you.' I got $70 a month, so that was a good job and I worked there until the First World War came on, and then I went into the army."

It was that war that began an important transition for P. L. that was finished when he moved to Logan County in 1923. The army gave him his first experience in construction when Johnston was put in a unit that did mechanical and carpentry work. "I thought it would kill me," he said. "I was big and fat and weighed 180-something when I went in. But in five weeks I weighed 140."

The army sent his unit to Richmond, trained them in infantry and rifle drill, but kept some of them working building barracks. Johnston stayed there until the war was over, returned to West Virginia, and went back to work for an oil company contractor.

"His name was Lonnie McComas and he was the best man I ever worked for," he said. "He had 380 teams at one time. He had them in Kentucky, in Mingo County, in Lincoln and Putnam counties, and all over. I worked a lot for him on Cabin Creek from 1918 until 1923, and I never missed a day's pay."

In the meantime, on March 14, 1918, P. L. married Lura Young Johnston and the couple soon had four sons: Raleigh, Warren, William J., and Robert. A second important change came in his life in 1921, when his parents moved to Logan to be with their daughters who were teaching school there. "All of them asked us to move up to be with them," he said. "So we did, to please them."

There were not many opportunities to work in oil and gas in the city of Logan when P. L. arrived in 1923. But there was a lot going on. In the 25 years that followed his arrival Logan became the best place to live it ever would be — and the worst it ever was. More than anything else it was vital and busy. "Oh man, it was working alive," Johnston said.

"They were running buses up all these hollers and the buses would be full all the time. The mines were working. And downtown it would be crowded on payday. I've seen it so crowded that you couldn't get up and down the sidewalk at all. On payday night and especially on weekends — Friday and Saturday evenings — you couldn't get up and down that street."

Of course, Logan was no paradise. The community was still undercut with bitterness resulting from the attempts of the coal miners to win decent pay and safety conditions and the coal operators' intransigent resolve to keep the United Mine Workers out of the field. Yet with his talents for practical work and partly because of his political outlook, Johnston had little trouble in Logan.

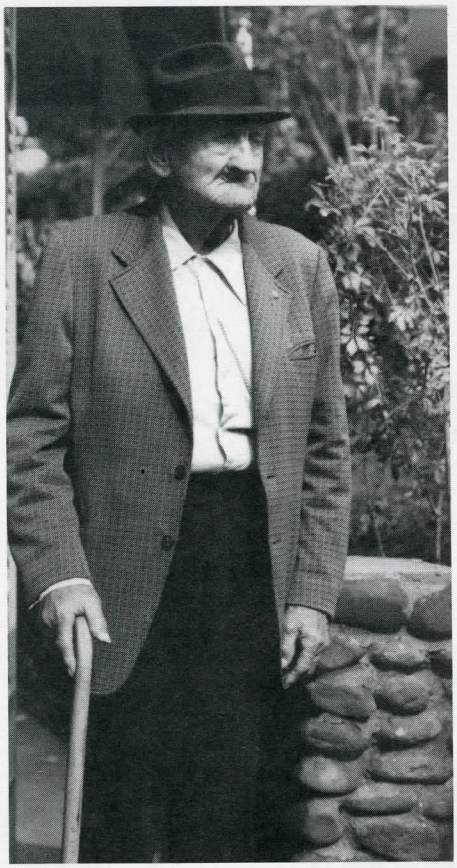
"I was walking up the street one morning," he said, "and someone hollered over at me, 'Hello, Johnston. I know you.' But I didn't think he knew me from a soldier." That was Don Chafin, the controversial and complicated sheriff of the county who had turned back the miners' 1921 Armed March on Logan. Chafin had met P. L.'s sisters and parents, knew they were Democrats, and had made friends with them.

P. L. remembers the stories of the Armed March and his sympathies always have been with the workers. But he also saw the other side of Chafin. "Don Chafin's got an awful name," he said. "But he wasn't half as bad as people let on like he was.

"He was the sheriff when I came here. And I'd bet a dollar that he gave a million dollars away in cash right here in Logan. Just hand it to fellows wanting money. He never turned them down. Some few would pay it back. One time a fellow handed him maybe $10 or $20 and said, 'Here, Don. Here's what I owe you.' And Don said, 'Do you owe me?' The fellow said, 'Yeah, I owe you. You take it.' And Don took it and thanked him. He was thataway."

Logan's politics usually have received most of the attention that the community gets. The county's main work, however, has been coal mining, which receives little attention except when there is a mine disaster or other trouble.

When P. L. Johnston moved to the county, the mining companies and the people were in a generally optimistic mood about the future of their only industry. Buffalo Creek and Rum Creek in particular were busy, with mines opening at places like Slagle and Dehue. Johnston claims the most important thing that has changed since he came to Logan has been the mine mechanization that



At 93, Mr. Johnston still gets around as long as the weather is good. Here he sets out from home, perhaps for the courthouse. Photo by Thomas Mitchell.

took away most of the county's population and much of its vitality.

"Holden had 10,000 miners at one time on the payroll," P. L. said. "They don't have 800 now. It just doesn't take men now to run a mine like it used to. They've got all that machinery. Back then they were shooting the coal down and loading it by hand. They didn't have motors or cutting machines like they've got now."

In this active and industrious locality, Johnston found his niche in the building construction trade. "I started doing plastering work," he said. "It was funny how that happened.

"There was a company came in and worked on this house that I'm living in now. And one of their laborers quit. They needed someone to go to work for them and I said, 'Well, you don't have to go very far. I'll carry a hod for you.'

"They said, 'Can you carry it?' I said, 'Well, yes, I can carry it.' They said. 'Did you ever carry one?' I said, 'Yes.' But I hadn't ever seen one 'til that morning. But I knew I could carry it."

Johnston went to work keeping the construction men supplied with "mud" while they plastered the rooms of his house. When they were finished and ready to move on to another job they asked if P. L. wanted to go with them. He did.

"At first," he commented, "I didn't know what they were going to pay. But we worked two days on a three-story building downtown. At the end of that job, I asked about the money and they said, 'Well, we will give you $6 a day.' That was awful big money then. There were men who worked running machines in the mines only making that much money.

"So I went to work for them and I worked hard. I earned enough to buy me a set of tools and a trowel and kept working. It wasn't long until one day one of them — he was an Englishman — asked me if I wanted to learn how to plaster. I said that I did, because it was a good trade. He taught me how to do it and it wasn't but two or three months until I was going out on jobs. It paid about $10 a day then. There were four or five building contractors in Logan and they all had a bunch of men working. So I'd go out on a job on contract and that's how I got started."

Johnston's two best customers were the coal companies (especially Island Creek) and the county school system, which was on a building spree in the 1920's. He claims he plastered 15 or 20 coal company houses at a time, worked for the school board, and seldom was at a loss for work during that decade. Worse times were coming.

There were three very bad periods in his life, Johnston recalls. The Great Depression in the early 1930's practically destroyed the building industry in the county and it would be difficult to overstate the human misery of those years. In the bitter winter of 1932-33, Logan County's business ground to a halt. P. L. remembers it well.

"I went for six months here when I didn't hit a lick," he said. "I couldn't get a job at nothing. And I'd have gone to work at anything, any time of the day or night. I didn't have any money then. Didn't have nothing. I don't hardly know how people got by. They didn't have Social Security or anything like that. No welfare. The counties had to pay for that and this county didn't have nothing. I reckon they did feed some of them. Bound to, or they'd have starved."

During the Depression years P. L. taught his four sons how to plaster and work on construction jobs. As the local economy began to improve toward the late 1930's and then mobilized for World War II, Johnston found work again as miners went back on their jobs and new federal funds became available for repair work on schools. "I never did have to take any welfare," he says proudly.

The other bad times in Johnston's life resulted from accidents on the job. "I got hurt twice and lost about six months each time, so I had trouble staying out of debt," P. L. said. "Both times I got hurt some lime fell off the trowel when I was working. In 1925, the lime got in my left eye and before I could get it washed out it burnt the eye out. In 1936 I got lime in the other eye and had to go around blind for a month or two before a little sight came back."

There are no figures available to show how common accidents like those were among plasterers, but it is an index of Johnston's independence that he returned to work after mishaps which would have ended the careers of many persons. "I had a pretty hard life," he said. "Always worked pretty hard, both in the oil and gas industry and at my plastering. It was awful rough at times."

P. L. continued working full time until 1958, when he turned over his tools and his reputation for doing first class work to his son, Warren. He said he continued to go out on jobs when his help was needed until 1967. He was 75 then and finally quit for good. "I always tried to do a good job and make it look good," P. L. said.

Finishing that late afternoon on Central Hill, he put on his coat and hat. He walked out to sit on the stone fence that surrounds the house he has lived in for 61 years and looked out at the town where he has done so much work. He smiled when he was thanked for his time and willingness to talk. "Not at all," P. L. said. "Glad to give it to you. I enjoy talking over old times."

Hard Work and Independence

The Showwalters of Eagle's Nest Ranch

Photographs and Text by Norman Julian

Many West Virginia women talk about independence and the rural life but a Tucker County mother and daughter have been doing something about it all their lives. Mildred and Judy Showwalter live at their Eagle's Nest Ranch high on the plateau of Shaffer's Mountain, surrounded by the Monongahela National Forest, smack dab in the middle of bear country. Their nearest full-time human neighbor lives four miles away. The nearest store is eight.

Although their ranch house is at 2800 feet elevation, nearby peaks reach much higher. The highest point around is Green Mountain, at 3700 feet, and nearly as high is Mozark Mountain, which separates the Showwalters from a view of Canaan Valley.

As the crow flies, Eagle's Nest Ranch is about 10 miles from Parsons and 20 miles from Elkins. But those can be long miles on the ground, depending on conditions. "It only takes us about a half-hour to drive to Parsons if the water is down on the Dry Fork River and we can cross at the ford," says Mildred. "But if the water is up and we have to go around [by a circuitous way of dirt roads and paved Route 72] it takes us about an hour."

And when it snows, sometimes you can forget it.

The Showwalter family has lived at Eagle's Nest since 1960, and Mr. Showwalter lived all his prior life on an adjoining farm. The women have lived alone on the mountain since the man of the family, William Showwalter, died in 1972. "When Bill was alive, he kept cattle and worked in the National Forest cutting timber," widow Mildred says. "When he died, folks asked us what we were going to do and we said, 'Stay right here.' Most of them didn't believe us but a dozen years later we're still here."

Left: At 2800 feet elevation, Eagle's Nest Ranch is sheltered by much higher Mozark Mountain. Canaan Valley is on the other side. *Right:* Inner strength and the willingness to work are the secrets to the independence of the Showwalters of Tucker County.

"The peace and quiet is what we like," says daughter Judy. "None of our neighbors bother us," she adds with a chuckle and the inference of their absence.

Mildred says, "We also have a special feeling for the terrain. My husband's ancestors were the first pioneers to live here. They cleared the forest and made farm land by burning what trees they could and cutting out the rest of the trees the hard way — with a grubbing hoe. That's like a mattock on one side and an axe on the other.

"At first, we raised sheep," Mildred says of the women's coexistence together in one of the most remote parts of the Mountain State. "We had over 100 head. But the bear finally beat us out."

Eagle's Nest Ranch could jokingly be called a dude ranch for bears. In the summer, the Showwalters often drink morning coffee from their front porch on the slope of one mountain and view the bears on a clearing of the hillside opposite.

'The bear [a lone marauder, apparently] that year killed 10 lambs and five old ones," Mildred remembers of 1972. "When that bear was finally killed, it weighed 350 pounds with its entrails out. The state at that time didn't pay compensation for sheep killed by bears. And so the bears just drove us out of the sheep business."

The bears sometimes come in close. Judy recounts what happened in April two years ago: "We were getting ready to go to Elkins that day. I got up, I believe, around 6:30 or 7 and I heard the dog bark and I went to see if somebody was coming. I went to the kitchen and looked out and here comes this baby bear no bigger than a cat."

Mildred says, "I didn't believe her. When I saw what it was I went to get Pete," referring to Pete Straub, who has a summer place near here. "We called the Department of Natural Resources. . . ."

Judy breaks in, "That may have been a mistake."

Mildred continues, "Well, they came and put a collar on it — so they could track it with radio signals. Then they took it to where they thought the mother was, so maybe she would come back and claim it. But the next day it had gone a mile and a half and was by itself, so they took it to the French Creek Game Farm and it died a few days later. A little bear like that — I doubt it weighed more than three pounds — needed nursing every three or four hours. It was just too weak to live. But the DNR thinks it's best to try every way to allow them to live in their natural habitat."

Judy says that, "When the apples and berries get ripe sometimes we see a bear over on the hillside every day. Mostly they come in the evening on wet days."

Troubled but undaunted by bears, the women abandoned sheep and supported themselves by concentrating on raising cattle and did so until 1984. They grazed them and grew and cut hay on fields cleared by the Showwalter family in the 18th and 19th centuries. A barn built in 1892 by William's uncle was used until last year. It still is structurally sound.

The Amish who live on farms in nearby Maryland sometimes come and help the Showwalters bring in the hay but mostly the women fare for themselves. The apprenticeship for "taking care of survival business" started early for Judy.

"Instead of playing with doll babies when I was a girl, I was out skidding logs with Dad," she says. "I drove a team of horses when I was 10. When I got to be 12 or 13 I learned to drive a tractor." Mr. Showwalter mostly harvested trees in the National Forest marked for cutting by the Forest Service and took them to a pulpwood mill at Parsons for sale. Judy helped at many stages of the process.

Some of the years when the women live at their ranch alone, long periods go by when they see no other human beings. "We didn't get off the mountain and nobody visited" during the worst of the winters, Judy recalls. "In 1975-76, we were up here

The front porch is the observation post at Eagle's Nest. Judy (left) comes here first thing on warm mornings, to check for wildlife roundabout.

from December 14 until March 28 without going out. The snow was too deep to get off the mountain and after that there was ice."

She adds that, "Usually we go out almost every day in the summer but in the winter maybe we only get out once every two weeks. The postal service doesn't come up the mountain but we pick it up at Gladwin, two miles away."

Although the Showwalters have no year-round neighbors, except for bears, deer and assorted other wild animals, visitors come and camp at odd times during the year. By October, though, it gets tricky.

"Pete and George Straub, friends of ours, came up from Morgantown one Sunday and were going to hunt bear. It started to snow and next morning they were in a hurry to get out of here. They put chains on and left and were lucky to get out."

The most snow the Showwalters recall since they've lived on "The Mountain" was in their first winter after Bill's death, 1972. "We had 41 inches of snow from Saturday morning to Sunday evening — and then it started blowing," Mildred remembers of one storm. "A helicopter brought a dozer in to fix the roads."

Judy expands upon the effects of an earlier storm: "That year the Island Creek Coal Company was exploring in the Otter Creek Wilderness area. They built a barn on our property and let us have it when they left. They brought their equipment up and dismantled it and then took it on pack horses up the mountain to where they were drilling. They had built another barn up there for their horses.

"When the coal company men weren't around, Daddy and I would take our horses and go up there and feed the animals for them. But the snow got so deep we thought the horses would stumble so we had to take our feet out of the stirrups so if the horses fell downhill we could fall uphill. We made it but it was really hard."

The Showwalters always raise a large garden, which feeds them first- or second-hand many months of the year. "We can hundreds and hundreds of quarts of food," Judy says. "You name it and we can it."

Mildred says, "We never run out of food in the winter because you learn what you're going to need and you get it beforehand." Their store of food includes ample quantities of venison, killed on their farm, as well as beef. "Until last year we canned a quarter of one of our beeves every year," Mildred says. "From year to year we have learned how much to put up."

The Showwalters do their canning on a bottle gas stove, one innovation their pioneer ancestors didn't have. The women do cook on a woodstove sometimes and during the winter bake their own bread.

"We use about five 25-pound sacks of flour over a winter," Judy says. She remembers that last Christmas "I baked 12 or 13 kinds of cookies and gave them away to our friends."

In the winter, a concern is whether one of them should become ill. But Judy says, "Although we don't have a telephone, we have many friends we call on the Citizens Band radio and they could be here in an hour." The radio is powered by a generator. The rapid putt-putt intermittently breaks the stillness of the mountain air.

"We could use the radio to get medical advice if we needed it. Or if we couldn't get out and needed help, there is a Life-Flight helicopter at Elkins that could get us," Mildred says. "It might sound silly but getting sick is the least of our worries," Judy adds. "Our main one is keeping warm."

The Showwalters go through six or seven cords of wood each year. They cut some themselves, but most of it, Mildred says, "comes from friends who like to hunt up here. We tell them they can hunt on our land if they'll cut us a load of wood."

Of the long winter months spent mostly indoors, Judy admits that "Once in a while it gets routine. But it could be that way anywhere."

She describes a typical day this way: "Get up at about 7 to 8, get a cup of coffee and, if it's summer, go out on the porch and see if I can see any animals. Then I get breakfast and I spend the day doing the chores — mostly cleaning and washing. The garden is mostly Mom's."

"I come by gardening natural," says Mildred. "When we were kids, soon as we were old enough to walk we went into the garden. There

would be six or eight of us strung out in a row across the garden."

Another innovation several years ago was a television set. It is also powered by the generator and is used sparingly.

Mildred notes that, "Once a month our friends Lawrence and Karen Rhodes invite us for the weekend. In 1983 we went there on Christmas Eve and it got down to 22 below and stayed there. They asked us to stay over and I was glad for the extra night." The Rhodes couple work at Canaan State Park.

Mildred taught grade school for nine years, seven and a half of those at Gladwin Grade School. She received an emergency certificate during World War II, "and then I went to Davis and Elkins College [a round trip of 70 miles — not as the crow flies] each summer to renew it. I earned about 40 hours altogether."

"I taught eight grades," she recalls. "One year I had eight students and they were all in different grades. I walked over a mile one way each day to school and was janitor and kept the stove. The school was one room. It had a potbellied stove. The state furnished coal and wood for it and when it was cold — the room had high ceilings — we all huddled around the stove to keep warm and did our lessons. There was no free lunch progam and the students brought their lunch in a sack."

Mildred's teaching days were numbered. As she explains, "When Judy came, I quit."

Mildred recalls that up on Shaffer's Mountain, on which part of Eagle's Nest Ranch is spread, "a full-blown community once existed. It had a church and a grade school. Forty-some children once went to the school there. Most of the people made their living by farming and timbering.

"When the Depression came the people started moving out to get work. The farms were sold to the government for a little bit of nothing. They're now a part of the National Forest. You go back through the forest road and you can still see areas that are clearer than others, with some old apple trees that the bears like when the fruit sets on. If you look close, you can still find remains of old chimneys. Each chimney and orchard marks where a homestead once was. People lived there and worked in the woods and hunted and made most of the things they used or wore. It was a good but hard life, one that required a lot of work. Independence has a lot to do with work."

Mildred adds that their independent way of life "can be rewarding. You are your own boss up here and you can do as you please. There's nobody in sight."

"We could practically raise everything we need if we needed to," Judy says. "But you can't be lazy and live like we do. One year we even tapped the maple trees and made our own sugar. You can't afford to do that on a gas stove. But when we had the sugar water on there we got enough. It sure was delicious."

Mildred says, "I never have lived in the big city. In June [during a heat wave in 1984] I went to Charleston and stayed a week. That'll do me."

When the Showwalters first lived at the present site, it was in a house built in the 1880's, which had subsequently been torn down or built up and remodeled several times. It was due for a remodeling again but Mildred decided a change was in order.

"I traded 100 acres for the house in 1975. Now that land would bring 10 times that. But I needed the house and the guys who built the house said they would furnish all the materials and labor."

There is, though, another modern intruder into the neighborhood, one that is much louder than the putt-putting generator, one that the pioneers never heard. This interloper brings evidence that this is the later half of the 20th century and that the Showwalters, though they may live much like their ancestors, inhabit another era.

"Fighter jets. They've been coming for the last 10 or 12 years," Mildred says, as one rumbles by before the eye can trace its path. "Sometimes when you see them coming up the river lower than the trees you wonder whether they'll miss you. I've heard that they come from North Carolina, and Virginia, or Pittsburgh, but I don't really know. I understand they use this area for training because it has the least air traffic of anywhere in the Eastern United States."

The Showwalters, surrounded by relics of early mountain life at the original homestead. Nowadays, they survive by relying on a mixture of the old and the new.

Doing Time on Kennison Mountain

Pocahontas County's Forgotten Prison

By Maureen Crockett

If you turn left down the Scenic Highway near the Cranberry Visitor Center in Pocahontas County, the spectacular view includes vast stands of spruce trees. Prison inmates planted 22,000 of them 40 years ago. For here on this mountain there was once a federal prison with no locks, a place where inmates kept their dignity and humanity, where prisoners and guards had respect for each other. But Mill Point Federal Prison Camp, a success story in a field where success stories are too few, has been closed now for 25 years.

The prison began in September 1938, 17 miles southwest of Marlinton. This wild area is part of the Monongahela National Forest, which had no road between Mill Point and Richwood until the prisoners came to build one for the Federal Bureau of Public Roads. Once Route 39, the road is now part of the Highland Trace.

While the inmates and officers lived in tents at an elevation of 3,500 feet and slowly built the road, the federal government decided to turn the temporary camp into a permanent minimum security prison. Leaving those tents for permanent quarters was a happy move because winters are hard in Pocahontas County, with heavy doses of rain, snow, sleet, dense fog, and high winds. One of the early superintendents, Mylton Kennedy, wrote, "We're on the Arctic island in West Virginia." In the winter of 1944 almost five feet of snow fell. Even with a snow plow, the prison was marooned sometimes for days until the roads were cleared.

The little valley near the Cranberry Glades soon filled, with a dining hall, three dormitories, a warehouse, boiler plant, school, administration building, infirmary, sawmill, and craft shop. Nine houses for employees and a community building came next, up the hill at the edge of the forest.

This prison in the woods would have no fences, no walls, and minimum supervision. Inmates knew to stay inside the white posts spaced every 40 feet around their legal perimeter. Each had a "Keep Inside" sign, and that was enough. In winter the posts were covered with snow, so the inmates used their judgment. The clientele here were obviously not fiends, murderers, and world-class drug dealers. Most were essentially good people who somehow had run afoul of federal law.

Charles C. Farmer, known as Chester by his friends, retired now and living at the bottom of Kennison Mountain in Hillsboro with wife Virginia, came to Mill Point after World War II. His New Martinsville family are proud descendants of West Virginia's first white settler, Morgan Morgan, "if you strain a lot," as Chester says. Because he was a veteran, Chester got preference in housing and moved Virginia and their two daughters, Anne, 8, and Edith, 6, to the prison at war's end in 1945.

Mill Point, built for 300 inmates, almost always ran full. Thirty employees ran the prison and costs back then were low; during World War II the annual budget was $134,569. Most inmates stayed only a short time, six to 18 months, and the government also used Mill Point as a half-way house for prisoners from high security prisons like Atlanta or Lewisburg who were almost ready for parole. Mill Point, an honor camp, was a good place to deinstitutionalize long-term prisoners, and offered men more responsibility. Escape was as easy as strolling into the nearby woods, so the staff took a head count every few hours. Over the years, there were only 20 escapes.

Officers would ask newcomers, "Do you think you can make it here, or do you think you might run?" Sometimes a man would spend a few days thinking the question over, then come back to the administration building. "I can't make it. Send me back." He couldn't handle the relative freedom. Inmates knew that almost all escapees were caught and then given a stiff additional sentence. Mill Point was not for everyone.

Normal routine had prisoners rising at 6 a.m., dressing, eating, and then working from 8 to 4:30 p.m. After work they could rest or enjoy outdoor activities. After supper they had to be indoors, either in the dorm, taking classes, making crafts, visiting the library or writing home.

After 10:30, the guard on night shift found he had more time than other employees, so he inspected the inmates' mail. No letter was cut up or blacked out, but if an incoming message concerned home problems that might cause grief or anger the parole officer got to see the letter so he could discuss the problem with the inmate. No letter was destroyed but there was political censorship and that caused trouble during the Second World War, especially with Jehovah's Witnesses who opposed being forced to fight by the United States government.

Grade B prison movies may show riots where inmates tear up the dining hall because of bad food, but there was never a food riot at Mill Point. Staff and inmates ate the same food. My father, Walter Fitzpatrick, was Mill Point's parole officer in the mid-1950's, so our family had housing at the prison. As a special treat, Dad would take my brother and me down the hill to the dining hall for dinner. The chief cook was our next door neighbor, James Coe. I loved eating there — a full course meal I

did not have to cook or clean up after.

Mill Point inmates had their minds fed, too. If the staff found a prisoner who could not read or write, he had compulsory schooling four nights a week, for one hour each night. If a newcomer could not pass a fifth grade competency test he had to enroll in the school. Usually, a third of the population was taking classes.

The prison's moonshiners, many of them old enough to be fathers and grandfathers, were a large portion of these students; one did not have to know how to read or write to make strong drink from corn. Except for that little difference of opinion with the federal government over their lightning-loaded Mason jars, many were trusthworthy, honorable men whose word was accepted by guards and inmates alike.

The illiterates in the population were often found by the conscientious objectors. In fact, the CO's frequently taught the reading courses. The general attitude at the prison was one of cooperation. Prisoners or staff, whoever could teach a course, did so. On the following evening, the reading teacher might be one of the students in the motor mechanics class. Other classes were in electricity, welding, carpentry, and cabinet making.

Inside of prison or out, everyone in Pocahontas County fought forest fires. Houston Simmons, retired from the federal prison service and now one of the three Pocahontas County Commissioners, remembers bad mountain fires when he was growing up in Marlinton. As a boy, he would spend Saturday afternoon at the town theater with his friends. If a fire started the projector was shut down and men took the young movie-goers out to the fire line. If a blaze started on a weekday, school closed and the boys went. Prisoners did likewise. In the 20 years Mill Point was open, inmates left whatever job they were doing to help out when the woods were burning. In a heavily forested county, fire is a serious business.

When the prison began, most entered Mill Point for stealing or making moonshine, but by 1944, 85 percent were there for reasons of conscience. Many were opponents to World War II. "A new philosophy became necessary for this type of inmate," wrote Mylt Kennedy in an annual report. "They were people who believed in general moral goodness, who possessed a feeling of obligation to do right. Prisoners with such concepts presented problems contrary to past experience."

At Mill Point most of the conscientious objectors got along fairly well

Mill Point Federal Prison Camp in its heyday. The four matching buildings are dormitories, with the administrative building (rear) and the dining hall (foreground) closing the quadrangle. Staff housing is at the left rear. Nothing remains today. Photographer unknown, mid-1940's.

with the other prisoners. Each group kept quiet because fighting cost them privileges and "good time" credit toward early release. Inmates at other prisons hit the CO's, but the pacifists did not strike back. They came to Mill Point for safety. The Jehovah's Witnesses who were there for conscientious objection sometimes refused to take parole. They had decided to stay in prison until the war ended, because, on the outside, any job they performed might help the war effort they opposed so vehemently.

These Jehovah's Witnesses were a serious group who had a worship service each week, plus group studies for an hour each day after supper. For other religious inmates, local Protestant ministers or a Catholic priest would drive to the prison to hold services. Once, surprisingly, one of the inmates was a preacher. He kept in touch with his calling, Mylt Kennedy remembers, by running a very popular Sunday school class.

Almost half the prison population worked in the woods. Half their salary went to dependents at home, 30 percent went into savings accounts, and the remainder was theirs to spend as they wished. By 1950, inmates earned 20¢ an hour.

Logging, the main prison industry, was supervisor Houston Simmons' responsibility. Houston and his wife, Mary White, today live in a gracious hilltop home, in Seebert, overlooking long views of the Greenbrier River. When Doug Chadwick, a Pocahontas photographer, and I visited them, months of drought had reduced the river to rocks and stagnant pools. "This drought is so bad," Houston joked as he led us into their house, "the river runs only three days a week."

Superintendent Mylton Kennedy guided Mill Point through the troubled World War II period, when the camp was flooded with war resisters. The calendar indicates this picture was made in April 1945, photographer unknown.

In the 13 years Houston worked on Kennison Mountain with inmates, none of them ever walked off his work crews, in spite of ample opportunity. Prisoners often worked alone, spread throughout the woods. If they were accidentally left behind when the detail of 40 men moved on, they ran behind the truck to catch up. Besides trucks, they used horses and Caterpillars for the logging.

Lumbering was hard, physical work that the CO's did well. Houston chose them over the Jehovah's Witnesses, who objected to any work that might help the war effort. At lunch time, Houston would let out a loud whoop, and men would suddenly appear out of the foliage from all directions for a hot meal served outdoors in the middle of the woods.

Inmate drivers took the timber, on the honor system, via Route 39 to Richwood or Seebert. Usually no prison officers went along. The drivers sometimes picked up hitchhikers, who were no doubt surprised to hear where their benefactors spent the night. If a lumber truck broke down on the way, the driver pulled over to the side of the highway until another prison truck came by to help.

Driving these heavily-laden trucks down Kennison Mountain was a popular job. The officers checked out the eager volunteers carefully, because the mountain was steep and had sharp turns.

One time the prison camp was extremely short of good drivers. An inmate stepped forward, saying he had a lot of experience. Two trucks headed down the mountain for Seebert, the new driver in back with a partial load. The second driver, instead of pumping his brakes on the steep hill, hit them long and hard. They failed as he went into a tight turn and he hurtled down the grade, picking up speed and closing in on the driver ahead.

The careening truck just missed a passenger car coming up the mountain, then hit the lead truck, sending it 60 feet down the mountain to the right, through the undergrowth to a gentle stop against saplings. Hitting his buddy in front slowed the second truck enough so the driver could safely ram into the side of the mountain at his left. Both men survived.

In spite of the dangers, there was always a waiting list for the timber jobs. When a logging man went home, he usually took $300-500 along from his outdoor work. Without a paying job, a released man got new clothes, a bus ticket, and a little pocket money.

Although as careful as possible about job classification, sometimes officers had to make changes. Mylt Kennedy recalled an inmate from the early '40's: "One man was something of a problem on a road detail, because he found that his calling as a

naturalist was stronger than his calling for breaking rock." Officers switched him to inside work, and encouraged him to continue his nature studies in his spare time. His work on birds, animals, and plants of the Cranberry Glades won him recognition at West Virginia University and the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh.

Sometimes inmates' special skills directly helped the prison population. A dentist from the University of Pittsburgh kept his fingers nimble during a prison term by fixing fellow inmates' teeth and giving them regular check-ups.

Another outside job involving the trucks was garbage removal. Although long hauls sometimes needed an accompanying guard, short ones did not. Officers would routinely question each driver as he left with a load of refuse, "Are you coming back?" The inmate would just as routinely reply, "Yes, sir," and later return the truck to the prison garage. If escape was on his mind, he would try it on foot, later on.

Dad's career had taken our family to many prisons in the United States, including some with much higher security. Of the inmates at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, he commented, "These fellows are not here for saying their prayers too loudly in church." The last prison Dad ran before he retired was in Manhattan; it held organized crime figures whose sons, some of them graduates of fine Ivy League law schools, kept a battery of federal lawyers in court. That was the job that turned his hair white. He looks back at his Pocahontas County clientele with affection.

Dad's best memory of these men concerned one of the tricky lumbering jobs. A moonshiner was driving the Caterpillar, felling trees, then skidding them out to the road. Although he was told only to haul the logs, he tried to make his job easier by nudging leaning saplings out of the path of his tractor.

He ran up on one of the young trees and the Cat flipped over, crushing him to death. The man, who died on his birthday, had been very popular among inmates and staff. As the news quickly spread, a pall fell over the prison. Everyone who knew him was depressed. Will Anderson, Camp Superintendent in the

"A Common Sense Viewpoint"

The Superintendent and the Draft Dodgers

World War II was a generally popular war, but still there were Americans who opposed it for religious or other reasons. If the opponents were draft-age men who refused to participate in the Selective Service System, they soon found themselves in jail. Many ended up at Mill Point Federal Prison Camp, where they were fortunate to have a superintendent as compassionate as Mylt Kennedy. As the following excerpt from his official report for fiscal year 1944 indicates, Kennedy took a common sense approach to what was surely a major problem for him.

This period of time has been different from any other in the history of this camp. It was necessary to develop a new philosophy to work with the people sent in by the courts for violating the selective service act. Always before, prisoners were concrete in their violations — they stole from interstate shipments, they transported untaxpaid liquor, they operated unregistered stills, they were bumrapped. But for some time, 85% of our commitments have been violators of the abstract, following the dictates of their consciences; people who believe in general moral goodness and who possess a feeling of obligation to do right. Prisoners with such concepts certainly presented problems contrary to past experience. If the camp at Mill Point has had any special function, it has been to carry on the normal activities of the camp by developing treatment methods in working with Jehovah's Witnesses and Conscientious Objectors who did not fit into the slots of ordinary camp routine as it had been established in past years.

That we have contributed to the war effort in our camp activities need not be denied, nor should it be stressed. Our farm, our national forest road, our sawmill, our pulpwood project — all are definitely national defense activities. By requesting cooperation and by showing a sincere attitude of appreciation of work accomplished, we overcame a labor crisis; we have never used subterfuge, nor have we sought publicity for our contribution to the war effort. We talked a common sense viewpoint and we obtained a justifying response. Needless to say, if progress has been made, every man, officer and inmate, is a partner in the advance.

One of the first things we had to struggle against was the overuse and misapplication of the pronoun 'they,' particularly in reference to Jehovah's Witnesses. "They won't work, they don't show enough respect, they always want something, they won't volunteer for extra duty," were common expressions. To overcome this tendency toward ambiguity, we held discussions on what was happening. We found that we were building an esprit de corps based on a complete negative approach. We found that we were not giving credit to [one inmate], a most competent boiler-room, power plant attendant and general 'fix-it' man who worked at any and all hours; to [one] who had given efficient and willing service for over 18 months on one assignment; to [another] for continuous willing work and a cooperative spirit; to [an inmate] for going beyond what was expected of him in assisting on any task which advanced camp welfare; and to many others who were making the best of their time here by constructive efforts.

mid-1950's, was also upset by the death because he felt responsibility for the lives of all who lived and worked there.

My father suggested getting a preacher from Hillsboro for a memorial service. The inmates, forming an impromptu choir, sang songs they had learned in their home churches. They had a comforting service, and must have felt that Dad was responsible for it; as they filed out of the chapel, all the men paused to shake his hand.

Just east of the present Cranberry Glades boardwalk was the prison farm. The five-acre "victory garden" of 1944 became a 35-acre farm when the U.S. Forest Service alloted extra land to the prison. Mylt Kennedy noted at the time: "The land was covered with rocks, dead trees, and stumps. The men had to deal with a flock of ground hogs, a herd of cattle, an army of grasshoppers, and nightly visits by deer. There was a killing frost on June 8, then the drought came. In spite of it all," the optimistic Superintendent continued, "we are expecting a crop."

The dining hall workers cooked leftover food, then put it into big cans for their hogs. Amish inmates, sentenced for opposing the draft, were forbidden by religion to use anything mechanical like a truck, so they walked in pairs up to the farm, with the heavy cans swinging on a long pole between them.

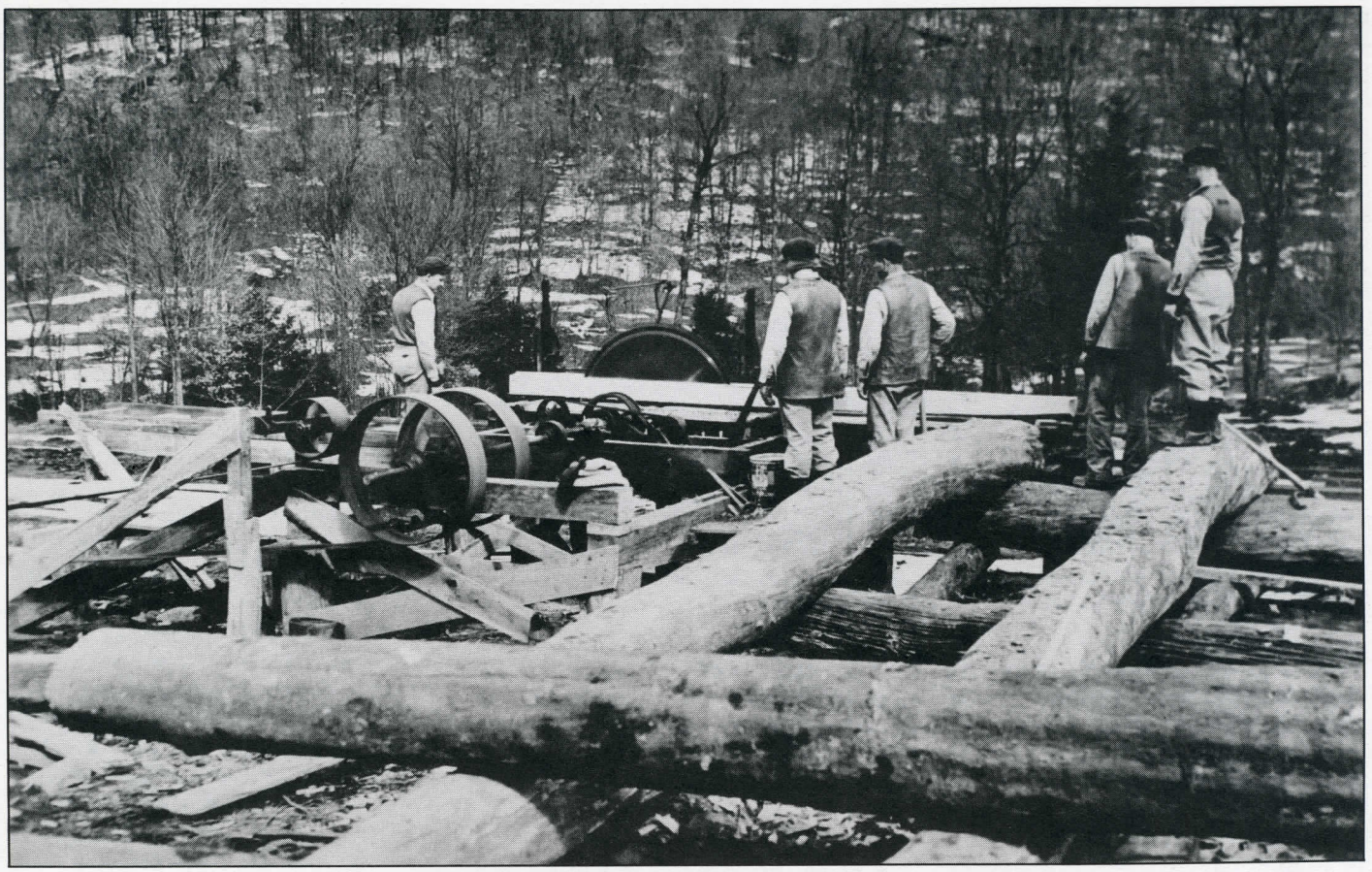
Chester Farmer's Hillsboro home stands where the old prison corn fields had been. Kennison Mountain was too high to grow vegetables successfully, so prisoners went down to Hillsboro's wide valley and longer growing season to make gardens on leased land.

Chester remembers the day Joe Kramer, the farm manager, had 15 men working there in the corn field. The day darkened steadily, then a heavy summer rain began. Kramer loaded his men quickly into the trucks and drove off without making a head count. When he got back up the mountain, he found he only had 14 men.

He turned them loose, then walked dolefully to the administration building to tell Ken Thieman of the trouble. Kramer apologized profusely to Thieman, superintendent at the time, who listened in silence. Thieman, who had a fine sense of humor, let the sad story continue. Finally, as Kramer wound down, he said, "Just before you came in the door, Ed Sheets called from Hillsboro to say there was a man standing on his front porch. He says, 'Please call the prison to come get me, 'cause I didn't escape.'"

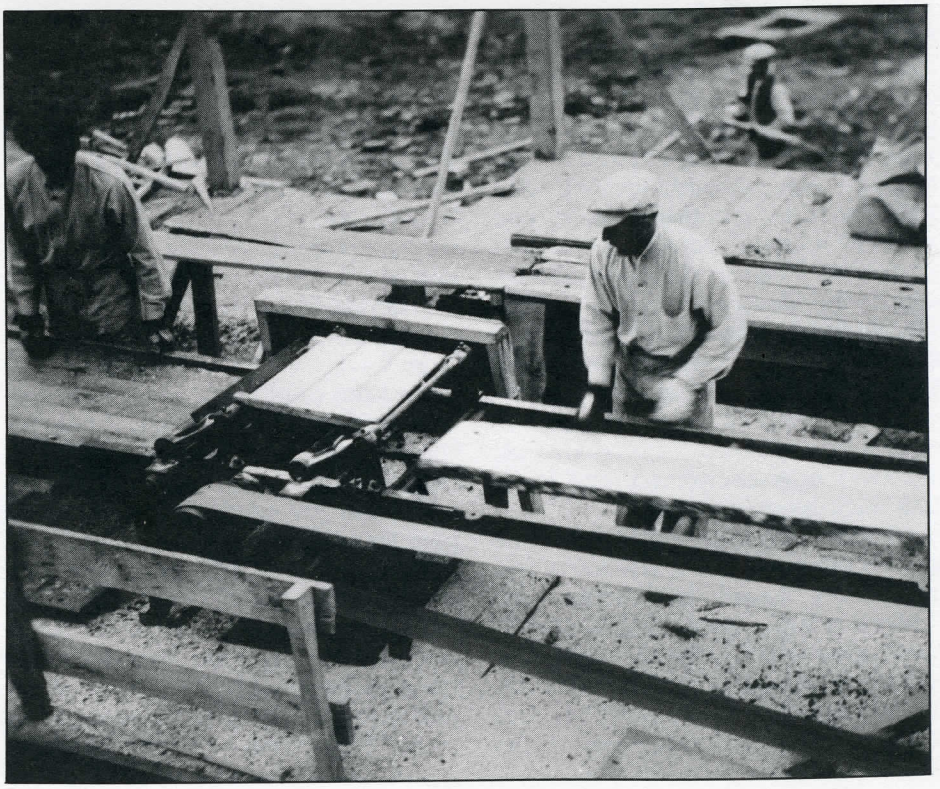
Mill Point may have enjoyed the cream of federal prisoners, but there were still problems. The camp's Inmate Advisory Council handled many themselves. In 1944 the Council made 75 good proposals to the administration, who accepted the ideas because they developed trust and respect between inmate and officer.

Road building is classic convicts' work and what brought federal inmates to Pocahontas County in the first place. These prisoners are loading crushed stone in the summer of 1942. Photographer unknown.



Above: Lumbering was always important at Mill Point. These inmates are sawing logs with a portable rig. Photographer unknown, early 1940's.

Below: Sawn boards were finished in the planer, again operated by inmates. Photographer unknown, early 1940's.



The men elected their own council, which took care of petty squabbles.

More serious cases got the attention of the administration. Violations rarely occurred during work hours, and Mylt Kennedy noted that when trouble happened between two men, both were blacks or both whites. When the Jehovah's Witnesses and CO's came, though, violations increased among the politically mixed population.

How did an inmate get into trouble? By refusing to work, making moonshine, fighting, malingering, extreme cursing, stealing, bringing a snake into the dorm, or smoking in bed after lights out. Punishments included being excluded from the weekly movie, or being forbidden to write anyone except his mother. If an inmate stayed outside prison boundaries, he lost the privilege of Sunday hikes in the back country with the prison group. However, rule infringement was never a serious problem at Mill Point; in the first six years, there were only 150 violations in a population of 250 men. Alcatraz it wasn't.

In the early 1950's, Lieutenant

The construction of a sawmill/power plant was an important job in the summer of 1944. Prisoners did the work from start to finish. Photographer unknown.

Large held disciplinary hearings for inmates who had broken prison rules. The lieutenant had a mule statue standing on his desk which he could manipulate, unseen by the prisoner, with his knee. He would start by asking "What's the story?" If the inmate's answer was obviously a lie, Large would reply, "Let's ask the mule." Then he would make the mule shake his head 'no.' If the story sounded factual, he'd say, "Is it the truth?" and the mule would nod.

One inmate of that era got into frequent difficulty with his chronic lying. He was not vicious, just a fanciful person who enjoyed exaggerating. He was harmless but irritating. When he successfully applied for parole, he was jubilant, excited, and told everyone. Another inmate, one with a warped sense of humor, worked as a prison clerk and had access to the blue parole board papers. He gleefully typed out a fake message — "Dear Jamison, we have taken back the parole you got because you're such a liar." That message almost caused a one-man riot, the clerk was disciplined, and Jamison went home on time.

Others got into trouble outside prison grounds. Those trained to use machinery heard instructors say, "When using a truck with a winch, don't ever winch yourself out across the road." One morning when an inmate was driving on Route 39, he lost control of the truck and went off the road into a limestone sinkhole.

After much futile maneuvering, he was still badly stuck, so he decided to winch himself out by tying a cable to the nearest tree. That happened to be on the other side of the road. A travelling salesman in a new Pontiac came along at the speed limit and hit the cable; he lost the top of his car and was unhappy, loudly and at length.

On weekends there were no work crews. Visitors came, some bringing contraband; moonshiners' families might stash bottles up in the woods before they checked in. For those with no Sunday visitors, Kennedy organized the popular hikes.

One of the favorite weekend activities was work in the craft shop. Scrap from the timbering became nut bowls, picture frames, desks, gun cases, spinning wheels, chess sets, and jewely boxes — many of superb workmanship. For special inlaid pieces, inmates ordered exotic woods from foreign countries. Most projects were from original designs, so when they left Mill Point inmates entered the working world as accomplished carpenters or craftsmen. Prisoners could sell the pieces they made, or give them to relatives and friends.

Whether working, relaxing, or learning, the men lived close to animals in a national forest. A city man, out on a logging crew, found a fawn lying in the woods. He picked it up and brought it over to the rest of the crew, "Look what I found!" Rural inmates knew the mother would not take the fawn back covered with human scent, so they took it to the prison. They cut up a rubber glove to fashion a nipple, then tied it to a pop bottle filled with milk. The fawn, now called Lady, approved. Later they added coffee. Lady liked that also. Still later, they fed her chewing tobacco, which she liked even more.

Lady had free run of the prison, except in hunting season when they penned her up for her own safety. Mylt Kennedy wrote in one of his reports, "Lady, our pet doe, is roaming around the camp freely, with occasional visits to the mess hall and the office." She ate from people's hands. When Lieutenant Large walked from dorm to dorm to take the count, Lady came also, right into the long rooms.

Newcomers to the prison in the woods often did not realize what a progressive place it was, and other inmates did not always help them find out. The prison well, dug up the hill above the dorms, had a white picket fence around it. When new inmates asked what the fence was for, they were told, "That's our graveyard. If you die, you still do your time. They put you up there until your time is up."

In spite of good conditions at Mill Point, every inmate preferred home, but they usually controlled themselves. One of the few exceptions was a 45 year old fellow who had married a girl of 16 just a month before he was sent to Mill Point for moonshining. His pals back home thought it would be a good joke to write letters saying his young bride was not going to wait for him.

The anxious groom did not think they were joking, so one night he impetuously headed for his southern Virginia home. He got away from Pocahontas County in spite of numerous road blocks manned by sheriffs and the FBI. He was a fine woodsman who never had to be near a road to get his bearings.

A canny deputy sheriff, though, just went to the fellow's home, sat on the front porch swing, and waited. Three days later the escapee stepped out from the edge of his clearing. He had already served 45 days of a 90-day sentence; now he faced a long, additional sentence for escaping. Seeing the result of their joke, his friends drove to Mill Point and told

the administration what they had done. "We're awful sorry," they apologized. "Didn't know he'd take it seriously."

Chester Farmer remembers two young men who were also prone to trouble. They were poor, naive, Kentucky men with the IQ of 10-year-olds. Both in their 20's, they had failed Selective Service due to illiteracy. They landed at Mill Point for setting fire to a national forest.

One lazy summer afternoon they had been fishing on a Kentucky riverbank when one of them saw a black snake and decided to kill it. Disagreeing with the plan, the snake quickly slithered into a field of tall grass, which the boys set afire so the snake would crawl out. When a sudden wind blew up, the fire spread out of control. The forest ranger zoomed in, and soon the boys were in court. As the judge sentenced them to 90 days, the older one ran across the courtroom and dived headlong out the second floor window, making a temporary escape.

When this tale made the Mill Point rounds, the boys were teased so much they ran off. Down the mountain at night in the fog, they came to a small community to be greeted by barking dogs, cackling chickens, squealing pigs. When they ran away from the turmoil toward the road, Homer Workman, a prison employee, caught them.

By the time our family came to Mill Point in the early 1950's, the moonshiners were in the majority. These men, experts in casks and copper tubing, were people Dad enjoyed. He remembers a conversation he had with one of them:

"Mr. Fritz, do you ever take a drink?"

"Yes," Dad replied, "in the cool of evening and if provoked."

"Do you drink red liquor store-boughten, or 'shine?"

"Red liquor store-boughten," said my dad. The old moonshiner shook his head. "That store-boughten'll kill you. It's full of chemicals."

"You're just trying to promote home industry," Dad shot back.

Nine employees and their families lived on the hill above the camp. James Coe came to Mill Point with his mother and father in 1947, when he was 10. His father, James, Sr., was chief cook. Two years later, Anne and Edith Farmer arrived. They were girls, but tomboy types, so James had playmates. When Anne passed through that phase, he saw her in a new light. Now they are married and raising two teenagers in Arbovale, near Greenbank's National Radio Astronomy Observatory where James works as an engineer.

There was a wide age gap among the children, but school activities were an hour away down in Hillsboro, so they enjoyed each other's company, rode bikes, and didn't feel deprived. Anne's school friends often told her, "I'd never live up there on the mountain. What if a prisoner escaped?" Anne recently laughed, remembering those conversations 30 years before. "Any prisoner who escaped ran down the mountain, and got caught."

The nine wives enjoyed the area's beauty, and for the most part, did not yearn for the bright lights of town. Virginia Farmer made the trip through the mountains to Richwood every two weeks, and each week the women made grocery trips to Marlinton. Mylt Kennedy's diary records some of his wife's treks: "Pat got her monthly sojourn away from our mountain hermitage. November - Ronceverte, December - Marlinton, January - Lewisburg. A lady of travels."

As ideal as it seemed for inmates and prison personnel, the prison was closed in 1959, and the area is now part of the Cranberry Wilderness. The prison and the Forest Service personnel had managed the area well, keeping the roads clear and the timber healthy with selective cutting. Some of them disapprove of the wilderness management practices used there now, Houston Simmons says. The old roads are covered with sumac and young trees. Campers and backpackers trudge in and out leaving garbage, he says, but no one can get a truck in to haul it away. "People leave all kinds of junk in there," Houston observes sadly.

At the old prison itself, all the buildings have been torn down, even the foundations are gone now. I walked the spectacularly beautiful valley last fall with Doug Chadwick. The only sounds were our infrequent voices, the wind in the spruces, and the caw of distant crows. One cement step, a row of iris descended from those Sally Thieman planted 35 years ago, a gravel road grown up with goldenrod and ironweed — not much remains of the bustling area. Doug bounded through golden, knee-high grasses, searching for elusive bits of metal or concrete. Now the backpackers walk by to Cranberry trail heads and never dream that just 25 years ago this wide, empty valley was the site of a thriving federal prison.

Another day begins at Mill Point, as inmates line up in the early morning sun for assignment to work details. Photographer unknown, 1944.

Water Witching

By Jacqueline G. Goodwin

Photographs by Michael Keller

If there's water, Goodloe will find it," one person told me. "With a name like Goodloe, he should be able to find water," another said. "He's a darn good one. He found me water when everyone said there wasn't any," still another testified.

These comments, made by rural Wirt Countians concerning the talents of William Goodloe Monroe, were what first sparked my interest in water witching. I read up on the subject, learning that it's been done since ancient times and usually involves finding underground water with a forked stick or similar instrument. Then I set out to find dowser Monroe, to see and hear for myself how he carried on the old practice.

I found the 71-year-old retired trucker and former county school bus driver sitting in the Emergency Medical Technician Building in Elizabeth. For the past several years he has volunteered his time there and served as chairman of the EMT board of directors.

Well known in the region as one of the best dowsers, a man who can find water when almost no one else can, Goodloe's roots go far back in Wirt County history. Many of his ancestors were water witchers themselves, he told me. He is the son of Guy and Francis Cain Monroe, and has lived all of his life in the Spring Creek district of the county. "Never got out of sight of home," he volunteered.

We got right around to the subject of my interest. "I have been water witching for years. If I told you how long, I'd be too darn old," he said. "The first time I witched a well was years back. My cousin Bartel Monroe and I were digging out a spring vein that the craw crabs had turned away from the watering trough. My cousin said, 'Why don't you get yourself a forked stick and see where we need to dig?' I laughed at him and said that I didn't think there was anything to that. I said, 'Why don't you do it?' He said, 'I can't but maybe you can.'"

Goodloe went on. "My cousin found me a stick and brought it to me. I still didn't know how to hold it,

Snow was deep on the ground when our photographer caught up with dowser Goodloe Monroe in late winter. He says it doesn't affect witching for water underground.

Monroe and Linda Board decline to get into a water witching contest, but are glad to compare notes on their unusual talent.

so Bartel showed me. His grandfather was an excellent water witch, if you can call it such. I tried — and believe you me, it worked! The tip of the stick pointed downward. It actually moved. I was surprised. That was my first experience."

A rotund, barrel-chested man, Goodloe Monroe still has vivid memories of his early dowsing experiences. "After the first time, the word got out too fast," he says. "Soon people began calling and asking me to find water. Years ago, a good friend of mine was going to build a new house and he said to me, 'I want you to come down and locate me a vein so I can drill a well.' I located a good vein of water and he drilled it. That was about 1936, and it is still producing good."

Although Goodloe feels his rate for finding water is above average, he hasn't always succeeded. "No, I wouldn't say I have always found water," he admits. "But the only ones I know I have missed have been when drillers have offset or missed the vein. There's been two or three times that I've felt the flow has been very low and weak. At these times I questioned whether they should drill. But I guess my overall rate of success has been pretty good. I have always wished that I had kept a record of the dozens of wells I witched, spotted, and located."

One of the wells Goodloe "missed" belonged to Wayne and Sandy Wright, residents of Trap Run Hill. However, the Wrights do not blame the water witcher, but think the drillers were at fault. "Goodloe witched our well in the spring of 1975," Sandy Wright commented. "I don't think he was wrong. The drillers made an open statement that they didn't believe in water witching before they drilled. As a result, it was no surprise that we didn't find water. We finally gave up and developed a cistern from a spring over the hill."

Controversy over the "power" as it is sometimes called, is as old as the divining rod itself. Locating a reliable source of good water is of extreme importance in rural areas beyond the reach of municipal water systems, and everyone seems to have an interest in the subject. I found that skeptics abound in Wirt County. Some people say there is water everywhere, or that a water witch can't miss if the driller goes deep enough. Others contend that the stick turns downward due to twitching muscles. Goodloe Monroe himself said, "A lot of people believe if you throw your hat out in the yard and drill where it lands, you will have as good of a chance finding water."

One well driller who steadfastly dismisses water witching as useless is Bill Whited. Owner of Whited Drilling Company and now a resident of Wood County, Bill is not a dowsing advocate. "I do not believe water witchers can find water by employing a forked stick," he declares. "I have drilled too many dry holes that water witchers have located. They just do not find water on a regular basis. Some water witchers have a knack in finding crevices and others couldn't find water if they were standing in a washtub full." Bill thinks that water witching is about as reliable as a roulette wheel. "There is only one way to locate water for sure, and that is by drilling a hole," he added.

This former Wirt Countian believes his success rate for finding water rivals or tops that of any water witcher in the area. "I look at the lay of the land, look at formations, and consider creek locations before drilling," Bill Whited says. "Around 90 percent of the time I hit water.

"One time I averaged up all the wells I drilled and figured out I hit water on 91 percent of the ones I had located. The ones that were witched out of the same period of years had a 45 to 46 percent rate."

Russ Cline, an Elizabeth businessman, wholeheartedly agrees with the pragmatic well driller. "No, it doesn't work," Cline says of water witching. "The first well at my house was not witched. After I began having problems with it I decided to drill another and had it witched. The second one was about eight feet away from the original. However, I had it drilled to 125 feet and it was bone dry. I think the whole witching business is just luck."

In contrast, 88-year-old Charity Ash definitely believes there is something to water witching. "My old grandpa George Nutter had the pow-

er. He witched his own well down there on Flint Run. I guess the first spot he found some water, but the second spot he found turned out to be really good.

"It used to be lots of people witched their wells," she continued. "I don't know about now. I guess people still do it. I've tried it myself and it worked for me. I was about 13 or 14 years old and I'd seen other people do it. Back then there was no money involved, they'd just do it. Kind of like a neighborly favor. Well, anyway, when I tried as soon as I would get to a certain spot I couldn't hold on to that peach stick. It would move downward at that same place all of the time. I'm sure there was water there, but I never knew for certain since no one ever drilled it to my knowledge."

By this point, I figured I needed to see a water witcher in action for myself. After inquiring around I learned that Linda Board, a 31-year-old resident of Two Runs community, would be witching a well for Ronnie and Mary Somerville some time the following Saturday. I decided to call them and all agreed I could observe. I was told to be there around 2:30 in the afternoon.

I arrived a little later than planned and found the witching had already begun. A small crowd of spectators had formed.

Linda, her face taut with concentration, walked with a slow, steady pace. She held the forked stick in front of her, while at the same time employing the classic palms-up grip used by most water witchers. Suddenly, the stick's tip, which was pointed skyward, began to quiver and then turn downward. "I'd drill at this spot," Linda instructed.

I asked Linda to repeat the demonstration and sure enough, as though powered by a magical force, the end wrenched earthward at the same location as before. Impressed, I then asked, "Do you have to concentrate?" Linda replied, "No, it takes no intelligence whatsoever."

Using this as my cue, I decided to try my hand at the ancient art. However, after walking the same course as Linda, nothing happened. Then Carolyn Somerville, one of the several onlookers present, tried. Nothing. Linda tried again. The forked stick pointed downward at the same spot.

Did Linda Board cause the reaction by loosening her grip even slightly? Not so, according to the Wirt County dowser. "You hold the ends real loose in your hands like this. I have crooked arms and that helps. You can see my fingers. Now I'm holding this stick tight. Sometimes I have gripped it so hard I get skinned fingers. See it quiver on the end? I'm getting closer to that same spot. Right now I can feel a tingling vibration, maybe an electrical vibration through my hands. Something is starting to tug at the end of the stick. Right now I can feel something pulling the end down."

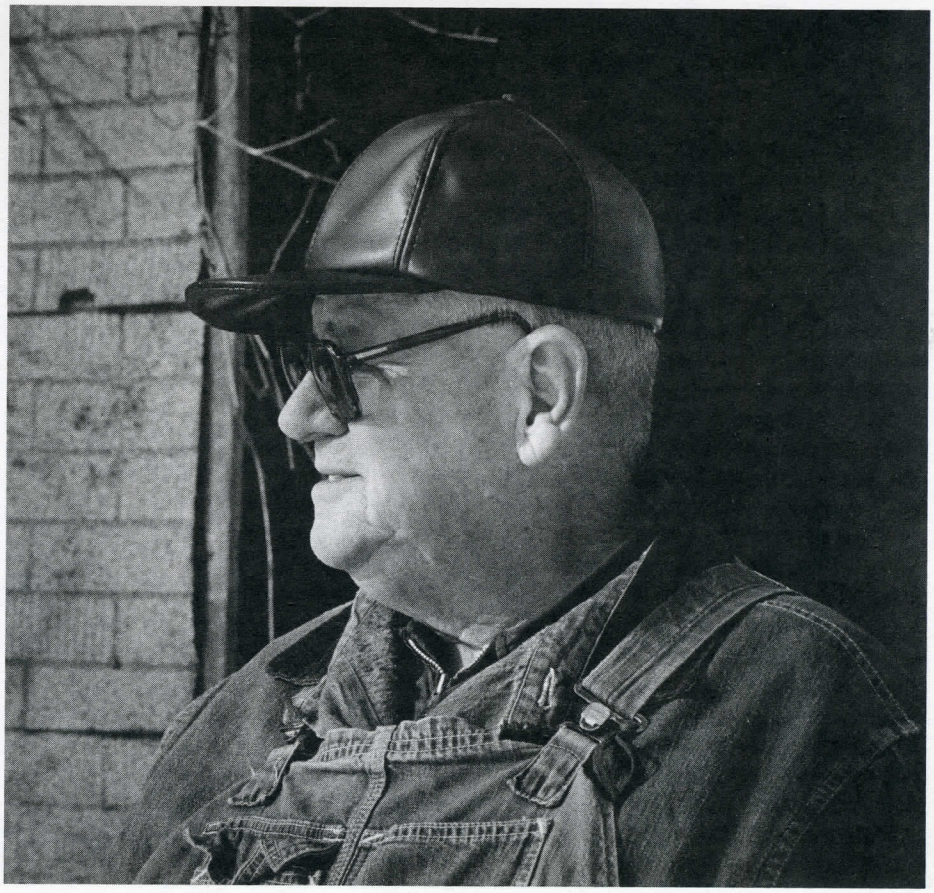
Was Linda successful in locating water for the Somervilles? "You better believe she was," Ronnie Somerville later reported. "The man who drilled the well tried to talk us out of drilling where Linda advised. He said, if it was him he wouldn't drill there. However, I made sure he drilled in the spot Linda found. He hit water at about 80 feet."

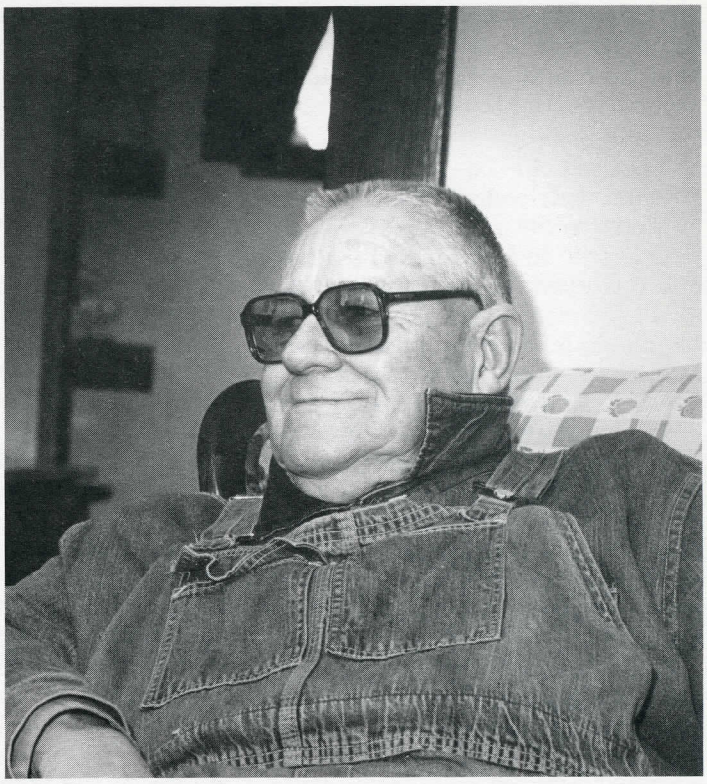
Ronnie's brother Randy, who owns land adjacent to his younger sibling added, "Yeah, the driller tried the same trick with us when Linda witched our well. He also wanted to drill in another place. If I had let him do what he wanted then we probably wouldn't have hit water at 80 feet and be able to draw 1700 gallons an hour."

The two brothers feel they share the same vein of water since when one well becomes muddy so does the other. Both Somerville households enjoy plentiful water, which they use freely. Both families raise gardens which regularly yield big beautiful vegetables rivaling the best in the county. "During a dry spell I can water my garden whenever I want," brother Randy said. "In fact, our well can't be bailed dry."

As with Goodloe Monroe, Linda started her career witching for family and friends. "The first well I witched was Mom and Dad's. Like the Somerville's they can't run their well dry. They run their trailer, the garage, grandma's trailer, and everything else." After her reputation and rate of

Monroe traces his water finding ability back to an accidental discovery of childhood. He's been practicing his skill for better than half a century now.





Does Dowsing Work?

The attempt to find water by the use of a divining rod, most commonly referred to as "water witching" in West Virginia and as "dowsing" in other places, goes back into early human history. Scholars trace the practice through Biblical times, and French archaeologists have discovered 8,000-year-old African cave paintings depicting a dowser surrounded by on-lookers. Credit for popularizing the forked stick in more recent times goes to a French baron and his wife, who published a book on the subject in 1640. Unfortunately, they paid dearly for their belief, since both died in jail awaiting trial for sorcery. The practice itself survived, however, and evidently came to America as part of the cultural lore of Dutch and English settlers.

Although the forked stick has become the classic tool, a wide variety of other dowsing instruments have been used over the ages. Even a German sausage is on record as having been pressed into service on one desperate occasion. Today, V-rods and metal angle irons are favored by some since they are smoother to hold. Most West Virginia water witchers seem to agree with Goodloe Monroe and Linda Board in preferring the forked stick.

As with Monroe and Board, in most cases the art is not practiced as a livelihood. For the typical water witch, his or her talent is strictly an avocation — to use when a neighbor or friend is in need. There may be a payment but it is likely to be a small fee, usually averaging $20 or less.

Water witchers come up with various explanations for their talents. The most frequent belief seems to be that the "power" is a "gift" and that it is inherited. Just how is an open question, with some thinking it passes from father to son and others from grandmother to granddaughter.

There is even less agreement over exactly what happens. From the water witcher's point of view, the stick moves downward of its own accord and this automatic motion is one of the mysteries surrounding the practice. Some see supernatural overtones. Like magic, water witching has an immediate goal, and like magic, it is practiced by those who have the power. Skeptical well drillers are apt to regard the whole business with derision, and the fact that dowsers are called witches hasn't helped their credibility.

Still, dowsers do find water in a lot of cases. Is it luck, or coincidence? Or, as some say, is there in fact water nearly everywhere in our abundantly endowed state? Or, on the other hand, does dowsing have a rational explanation? Again, there is disagreement. Water witchers themselves tend to side with Joseph Baum, author of *The Beginner's Handbook of Dowsing*. "Just because science doesn't have the answer doesn't mean it can't work," Baum says.

Actually, science is not necessarily hostile and some scientists believe they do have the answer. Through research some water witchers have been found to be unconsciously sensitive to small

Neither Board nor Monroe worries about those who scoff at finding water with a forked branch. Mr. Monroe says he has been drinking "willow water" at his house for years.

success became known, Linda then began witching for people other than family and close friends. "Buzz Sims had a dry well and he asked me to come over. I witched one within 10 feet of the dry hole and when they drilled it water came in *both* of them. He got an extra deal on that one." Linda boasts a 100 percent success rate. "I've never had a dry well so far."

Does she charge for her services? "No. I never ask for any money. I'll say 'If you get a good well and you want to give me something that is all right, and if you don't then that is all right.' I've had as much as $20 given to me and as little as zero. I feel I just can't charge."

Similarily, Goodloe never charges for his services and feels his power is a gift. "I've never taken a penny from anyone. One person went off and left me a flashlight in my car and I didn't know how to get it back to him. No, I haven't taken a penny. It's been all free. I've drove hundreds of miles to find water with no regrets. I have located veins in several counties besides Wirt and in at least two other states besides West Virginia."

For many years the forked twig or stick has been the diviner's trademark. Asked if he had a preference for a certain type of stick Goodloe replied, "Yes, one of three kinds — dogwood, willow, or peach. A lot of people say peach is the best, but it is extremely hard to find a good peach tree limb that is limber enough to give. I find willow does a real fine job. For several years I have found a willow somewhere in the woods. Dogwood? I look for that occasionally, but I am drinking willow water back home and it's all right."

In like manner, Linda prefers a stick that is limber enough to "give"; however, her first choice is peach. "Peach limbs are more flexible. They give a little more. If you get a stick that is too stiff it'll tear your hands off, especially if the vein is real strong."

Although neither can explain their mysterious powers, to Linda Board and Goodloe Monroe water witching is a way to help neighbors find water they might not otherwise find. People regard the two with mixed feelings. There's considerable curiousity, but also gratitude that they have located successful wells for so many.

"Are water witchers all wet?" I jokingly asked each in conclusion. "There are, I suppose, more people who make fun of water witching than there are those who believe in it, but it doesn't bother me in the least," Goodloe replied. Linda agreed. "I know I have the power and I enjoy using it," she said. "If people don't believe, then that is their right. I just don't worry about what people think."

disturbances in the earth's magnetic field — such as may be caused by underground reservoirs. These disturbances may trigger a reaction in the dowser's nervous system, with this subconscious perception causing muscles to twitch and the stick to point downward. In their book, *Folklore From The Working Folk of America*, Tristram P. Coffin and Hennig Cohen assert that "the human being is an electrical machine, the most delicate ever devised, and some people are good receivers of the minute amounts of electricity set up by the friction of running water. The successful water locater is the person sensitive enough to pick up the electrical field and to interpret the feeling received."

Ultimately, you'll have to decide for yourself about the truth of water witching. If you have a well to drill, talk the driller into standing by while a dowser goes over the property with the classic forked stick. It can't hurt, won't cost you much, and will give you further insights into a part of our West Virginia folklore.

— Jacqueline G. Goodwin

Water witching calls for steady hands, full concentration and, some say, an inherited "power."

"Satisfied to Stay Here"

Nellie Fulk Hill of Sunnyside Farm

Photographs and Text by Charles W. Warnock

The Jefferson County mailbox reads "Mrs. Hugh Hill." Her name is Nellie Fulk Hill, and she is 82 this year. Hugh passed away in 1973. Mrs. Hill lives in the nine-room ranch house that she had built on the same rise of ground on which stands the large brick farmhouse that was her home from childhood. This is important to Nellie because she has been able all her life to look out her windows and see both the Alleghenies and the Blue Ridge, the natural borders of her beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

This petite lady's roots go deep into the rich limestone base that nurtures the soil of her beloved valley. They also reach up into Pennsylvania and to the Delaware River, near the city of Philadelphia, where in 1737 her forebear, Jacob Fulk, arrived aboard a sailing ship.

One of his decendents, William Andrew Fulk, married Mary Elizabeth Entler, whose ancestors were well established in the Shepherdstown area as blacksmiths and woodworkers since 1737 and as probable gunsmiths through the American Revolution. These two were the parents of Nellie Fulk Hill. Both had been born in Jefferson County in 1864.

For the first two years of their marriage, Mrs. Hill's parents lived in the home of her paternal grandparents. In that time William Fulk went to a gypsy camping ground and found a blind horse they had left behind. He led the horse home and fed her all winter. In the spring, he traded to a local black man for a sow and 10 pigs. When the pigs were old enough, he traded them for two heifer calves. From that beginning, he decided he wanted to farm for himself, so he moved onto 46 acres which belonged to his father.

In 1891, Mrs. Hill's parents again moved — this time to the farm known as "Sunnyside." In the course of time the farm was enlarged to its present 220 acres. It was located just a short distance from the farm of William's father, on what is now State Route 1. Nearby are the old farms of Revolutionary Generals Horatio Gates and Charles Lee. General Adam Stephen, the founder of Martinsburg, had his hunting lodge in the neighborhood.

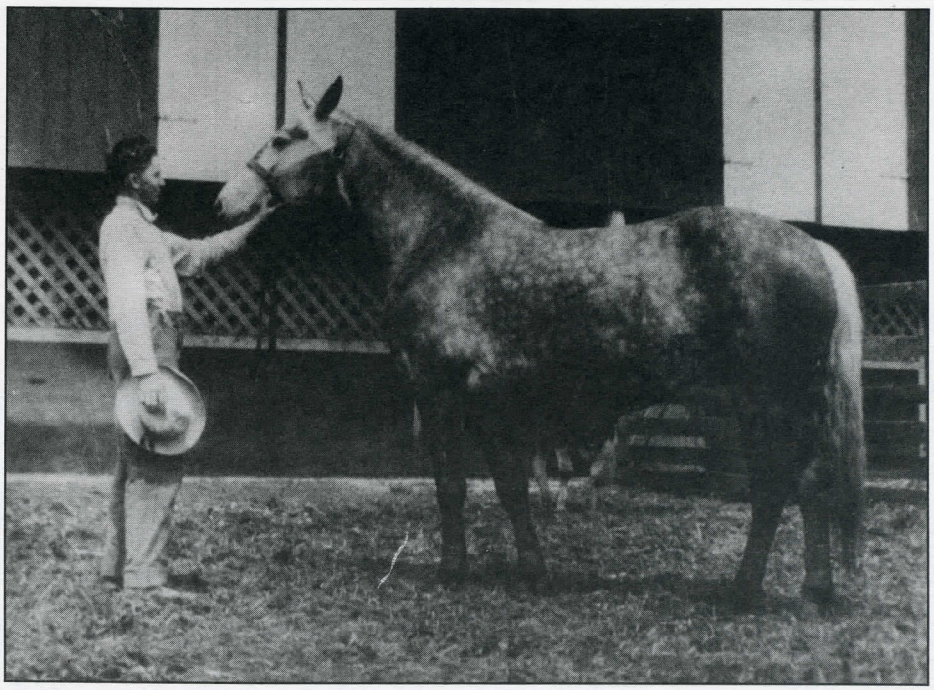
Nellie started her education at the Woodberry School. It was a mile walk when it was nice. In bad weather she and brother Charlie rode a horse named Coalie as far as possible, to a fence stile. They would pull up to that and turn around, so Nellie could get off. After Charlie got off, he would tie the reins up and send Coalie home by herself. If the weather was still bad in the evening, an old cousin that lived with them would bring Coalie.

After the school at Leetown was built, they drove a horse and buggy there. Charlie had only one year of school left, then Nellie was on her own. This meant getting up early in

Left: Nellie Fulk Hill is a lady who has earned some rest on the porch.

Right: Brother Charlie at a young age. The horse is Dixie, rather than the Coalie who carried the brother and sister to school. Date and photographer unknown.

Below: Nellie's second grade class at Leetown School. She stands, fourth from the left, in the third row. Date and photographer unknown.



the morning to curry, feed and harness the horse and hook her up to the buggy. Nellie put corn and hay in the back of the buggy to take to school. At lunch time she went out to feed her horse.

The touchy little mare had been on the race track. "She was a blooded horse, but she was spavined. Boy, she could go. Don't you think she couldn't," Nellie explained. "She was the devil to get up there in the morning, but she'd bring you home in the evening. She sounded like a pacer because she sort of drug that fourth leg."

Upon getting home from school, there were chickens to feed and wood to get in. Then she helped her dad with the hogs or whatever else had to be done. She never got around to doing homework till after supper.

The family shopping was done by her mother, who would take the horse and buggy to town. The children got to go only at Christmas to see the decorations.

In the spring Nellie's mother would purchase new shoes after measuring the length and width of her daughter's feet. "Laws," Nellie says now, "I've had trouble ever since I was 15 years old. The very first doctor I ever went to said, 'My Lord, you've got on shoes a mile too big for you.' I had to have both feet operated on in 1970."

When asked about entertainment, Nellie spoke of the summer she was 16 and had finished her first year of high school. There were, she recalled, 13 or 14 in her class and they had parties, little picnic-like affairs, almost every night that summer. They would go first to one house and then the other. At that time, Nellie's dad had a farm rented up near the creek. The barn there had a hardwood floor. The young people had an old "Ambrolla" that played music recorded on cylinders, and would go up there and dance every night till 10:30 or so. She reported they had to be home by 11:00 o'clock, and that there was no staying out. Brother Charlie and his girlfriend were their chaperones.

"That was the most fun I had. But boy, I met Hugh that fall, and that ended all the dancing. He didn't go to dances, and he didn't want me to go to any more dances."

Nellie started to college. She went the first two days, Thursday and Friday, and then to her doctor on Saturday. He informed her that she should not continue, because her eyes could not stand it. He also warned that if she were to insist upon college, he would not doctor her because he felt it would cause her to lose her sight.

Her problem had begun when she had the measles. She knew nothing about having to protect sensitive eyes while she had them. Instead, she worked at her books faithfully so she wouldn't get behind. She was nine years old at the time, and ended up with glasses before she was 12. She has never been rid of them since.

An early view of the farm. Like the prudent farmer he was, father William Andrew Fulk built the substantial barn before erecting the fine house for his family in 1914. Date and photographer unknown.

College was out, on doctor's orders, but Nellie was eligible for another year of high school. First she went to work at an orchard across the road, since her cautious parents decided to keep her out of school that fall. She recalls picking apples for three or four cents a bushel to earn Christmas money.

About the middle of December Nellie returned to Leetown School. Taking an extra month to complete all assignments, she was able to graduate with the class. She took part in the regular commencement exercises at the Baptist Church, "just as nice as you please."

Nellie finished school in 1919. At once, she went to work on the farm. She worked hard, she says, "right along with Daddy." She and Hugh Hill were not married until 1925. He was taking care of his mother and establishing his hauling business.

One day on a trip to Charles Town, after they were married, Nellie overheard some of the boys talking about trucks and the hauling of marl (clay and calcium carbonate used as fertilizer for soils deficient in lime). When she returned home, she suggested Hugh go over and put in his application. He found that the company would be glad to put him on. Nellie said he sometimes worked till one o'clock in the morning trying to keep up. That was where the money came from to buy the farm, she often told her daughter Elizabeth. "Your daddy worked over that hole to dig out the marl, and he always wanted you to have half interest in the farm."

Hugh kept busy hauling marl for the next eight to 10 years. It got to the place, however, where local farms were getting too much marl on them. Finally they had to switch to artificial fertilizer. Hugh had already developed emphysema. The fertilizer was too strong on his lungs, and he had to stop.

When the State built Route 51 from Middleway to Inwood, Hugh put another truck on and worked on the road full time. Nellie herself hauled the farm's milk and cream from then on. Elizabeth was a baby, still in her basket. Nellie would get up in the morning and feed her, then leave her by the window where she could watch the leaves on the trees until she went back to sleep. She would still be asleep when Nellie got back off the route.

She hauled milk every morning, and on Tuesdays and Fridays she also had to haul cream. On those days she would come back, unload the milk cans, put on the empty cream cans, go gather up the cream and get back home in time for midday dinner. She would eat a little, feed Elizabeth and fix her for the playpen. She felt Elizabeth was just as satisfied in that playpen as anyplace else. There wasn't anything around that could hurt her, and it made it easier for Nellie's mother to look out after Elizabeth while she was gone.

After dinner she took the cream across the Virginia line to Winchester. She had two hauling customers between Middleway and Summit Point, and had to stop for their cream. Nellie emphasized that 10-gallon cans of cream were pretty heavy coming up out of a cellar. She

continued to haul milk and cream until the war, when rationing made tires hard to come by.

Nellie was already into farming in a big way then. She remembers being in the hospital following an operation when Hugh brought the news that her father had purchased two horses for her. She wanted to know why. "To start farming," Hugh answered. "He says he's not farming any longer than the first of April. You got to take over." That was November 1938. Nellie started operating the farm in 1939.

"That was the kind of life I had," Nellie said. "There wasn't any kind of work on the farm that I didn't have to do. I always had to take the lead. I even had to get the cows in. My hired man refused to go to the field in the morning. I'd be out in the field right at four o'clock. No lights out there then. My big bull weighed 2200 pounds and something. He'd follow me into the barn every morning. Sometimes he'd be late catching up, but I'd hear him coming a-running behind me."

Tom, the hired man, would get the milkers ready and put the feed in while she got the cows in, but he wouldn't come out. Nellie and Tom had most of the milking to do, unless she had a family in the farm tenant's house. They were supposed to help, but most never stayed very long. They apparently didn't like the idea of getting up every morning to help with the milking.

Nellie remembers lots of trouble with her tenants. She recalls one who was an old farmer. That year there had been a very dry summer with no pasture for the cows, but there was plenty of timothy hay in the barn. She got into a disagreement with the tenant over feeding timothy to the cows. "Whoever heard tell of feeding a cow timothy hay?" he wanted to know.

"Well, I'm going to feed them timothy hay because I'm not going to have them lose weight," Nellie answered. "It won't make milk, but it'll hold their weight up."

"Well, he sat there on the stool," she recalled, "and watched me go up into that mow and throw down that hay every evening. In the morning after we'd get through milking, I'd have to come to the house to get breakfast. After Tom had put up the feed to the cows and finished rinsing the milkers, he'd throw the hay down. But that tenant man wouldn't throw down one forkful of that timothy hay morning or night. When that year was up, I told him I didn't need him any longer and he moved out."

One tenant family that stayed with Mrs. Hill for four years once went off for the day without letting her know they would be gone. "He went off that Sunday, and nobody said a word," Nellie said. "It was the first Sunday in May. You know when cows are first turned out to pasture how tight their sacks will get — just full of milk all the time. And among 'em all, I had six fresh cows. They were standing around bawling to get in to their calves."

While she took care of letting the cows in and feeding them, Hugh went over to Kearneysville to get a couple of young men to help. Nellie ran the milkers while the boys carried milk, and Hugh fed hay. After she was finished with her work in the barn, she went to the house and fixed supper for all of them. "It was near to nine o'clock that evening when they finished up," she recalled.

The next morning the tenant said, "when I went down to get the cows last night, I saw you had done all the milking." She told him, "I don't blame you for wanting to visit your sick mother, but it was business for you to tell me that you were not going to be here to milk." When spring came, she gave him his month's notice that she wanted the house. "But boy," Nellie said, "I got a scorching letter from his wife about milking them cows for four years. She didn't sign her name. I knew exactly who had sent it because I knew her handwriting, and I knew nobody else had milked them cows for four years."

On one occasion she had been in the Winchester Hospital where she had four operations. After she came home, Mrs. Chapman, who had been there a month taking care of things, had to leave. On Monday morning, one week out of the hospital, Nellie went down to the kitchen. She was getting breakfast when she saw Tom carrying milk up. Nellie asked the whereabouts of the tenant. Tom said he didn't know but that he thought

The old barn, still in fine repair, figures prominently in many of Mrs. Hill's recollections.

The 1914 house still stands as a family monument but Mrs. Hill built this comfortable ranch house for herself. She once made hay on this hill.

they were getting ready to leave. "They've been down there hammering and packing up all night," he added. "Well, for mercy's sake," Nellie replied.

That Sunday evening she had walked down to see the cows. That was the first time she had been to the barn. Coming back, she had met her tenant, who informed her that he was going to move. He had a lot of hospital bills with his wife's illness, and had found a better job. But he said he would not leave before Wednesday or Thursday, because the trucks would be tied up Monday and Tuesday with the stock sale over at the yards. But now, on Monday morning, the tenant was on his way.

Nellie recalled that after Tom told her there was nobody at the barn, she turned the stove off, put her jacket on and went to the barn. Nellie thought she got along all right at the time, but she knows now she did herself an injury because she didn't give her body a chance to heal properly. She reports having trouble ever since.

"I was going from the barn to the house to get Tom's breakfast," Nellie continued. "We had finished the milking, and didn't that truck come in the gate and pass me going up the hill, to go back and take that man out. He moved out on Monday. Never waited. That man came back three different times trying to get me to take him back."

When asked about how things were in winter, she recalled how sometimes it was so icy they stretched a heavy rope from the milk house down the lane and over to the barn, to keep from falling. Often they would go in to do the milking and come out two hours later to find they had to shovel their way back. The snow would be that deep. "The work went on, weather or no," she said.

At one point Nellie had 38 cows in her dairy herd, but in 1961 she decided to make a big sale. A young man just starting out wanted the cows, so they had them appraised and the bank let him have the money. "He bought all but five cows," Nellie said. "We kept those. They were nice cows, but they were three teaters, and one would kick."

Nellie had trouble getting out of the milk business, however. Soon Hugh made a deal with a buyer who agreed to take delivery every other day if they would keep the milk in the cooler. It wasn't long until the buyer wanted more milk. Hugh went out and purchased two new cows. Nellie reported that the seller told Hugh that they were good cows, but warned him that they were not used to women.

He agreed to come over every morning and night for about a week, until the cows got used to her being around the barn. One evening, he didn't come and Tom put the milkers on. Another time, Nellie got tired of waiting on Tom, so she started on Jessie herself. When he got there, he wanted to know who had put the milkers on. She told him she had.

"Did she kick you?" he asked.

"No she didn't," Nellie replied. "If she had I couldn't go any further than that concrete wall. Besides, Jessie's used to me now. I talked to her in the barnyard. We're good friends."

Some time later, Nellie bought two more cows. Her milk buyer wanted more milk, and besides she thought they were the prettiest heifers she ever looked at. They were delivered the next day. Everything went along fine. "They just milked grand," Nellie said. "However, the one called Gladys couldn't take the concrete. She'd get mastitis," an inflammation of the udders.

"We decided to milk her first and turn her out right away, to see if that would stop it," she continued. "Sure enough, it did. We'd put her in, feed her, and milk her first. When she got through eating, we'd turn her out on the barnyard. We'd put her hay in the manger out there. She was off to herself and she was all right."

Finally there was the day of the last sale, when Nellie got out of dairying altogether. A man from Maryland came for five cows. He loaded four into his truck. Then he came up to the milk house to report that there was one he couldn't take unless the $250 price was cut. Nellie suggested they go down to the barn. As she had suspected, it was Gladys, standing there in the concrete stall.

He repeated that he couldn't pay full price since the cow had mastitis. Nellie explained why the problem had flared up, but refused to cut her price. "Just leave Gladys right here," she told him. "She's good enough to stay in my barn." After everybody quieted down, she milked Gladys out, and fed the milk to the hogs. They doctored her and the next morning she was fine.

Hugh milked Gladys from that time on and continued to feed the milk to the hogs. She was the only cow they had left, but according to Nellie they had two fine hogs that fall. That made 400 pounds and something apiece. Gladys was sold when she went dry the next winter, "and she brought us $270," Nellie recalled.

We next talked of the house Nellie had built. She spoke proudly of the skilled craftsmen who had done such a beautiful job in building exactly as she had planned over the years. She told of digging the basement in a field full of limestone formations and not hitting a single rock. Her 187-foot well, just eight feet from the house, was drilled through solid limestone all the way.

Nellie remembered making many loads of hay on this field. She told of pulling loads of hay with a tractor that had no brakes. The two men who were loading always refused to ride down the hill which is now her front yard. "From that time on I always loved that hill," she confided.

Nellie told how she put herself in the hospital as a result of disking plowed ground on this same hill. There were such big clods that the rock weights fell off her disk harrow. In replacing them she strained herself. As she explained it, she knew she wasn't doing herself any good. She reported telling Hugh, "Well, I'm going to pay up for this, sure enough."

When Nellie's father was on his deathbed, he called her in to tell her not to let the farm get her down. He warned that his own condition was due to hard work. He told her that if she ever felt that she couldn't handle it she should go up on the hill she liked so well, build herself a house, and stay there.

Nellie agreed, but it was 20 years before she managed it. Her plan for the new house had begun with 10 head of Herefords, non-dairy cows for a change. She and her father had purchased them together. After he died she took his share off her mother's hands at what he paid for them.

She saved the money from those calves and added the interest to it to build the house. About every third year she raised the heifers to enlarge her herd. She started with 10, and when she quit she sold 63 at one time. The Hereford money never went into anything else. "That's what I built this house with," she said.

Mrs. Hill makes a fuss over Tiffany the poodle, held here by daughter Elizabeth.

Butchering was important at Sunnyside farm. The 10th of December was the day traditionally set aside for it. They always butchered in the backyard, where they had lights that ran out from the house. She recalls her father killing as many as 15 to 16 big hogs in a year. Some might belong to neighbors, and perhaps he was going to sell a couple. A cousin used to buy a carcass off the poles and then work it up to suit himself. As a rule, they put away about 10 hogs for their own use. This was also true later, when Nellie had charge of "putting down" fresh meat.

As the meat was cut up it was taken to the meat house to be salted down. The salt curing continued for about six weeks before the meat was hung. Two kettles of pudding and two kettles of pon haus were made at each butchering.* It was customary, also, to butcher a sheep at threshing time to feed the hands. Although Mr. Fulk never butchered beef, Nellie did in later years.

When asked if there were any photographs of this activity, Nellie replied, "You never thought about taking pictures with all the work that had to be done that day. Maybe cook for about 20 people, and 'give me a pan for this,' and 'give me a pan for that;' or 'we've got to have something to put the brains in,' and all that, you know. Mercy's sake, there was no time to take pictures."

She said that they always had horses on the farm, but that her father had sold from 12 down to six as he cut back on his farming. He had worked a lot of rented land. She was living in the new house by the time she sold Flora, her last horse. Beauty had died, and by then she had a tractor. The tractor now used at Sunnyside was bought in 1960. They had one before that, which was sold not long ago. Hugh also had one that he did custom work with.

Nellie explained that custom work was outside work, for hire. "He did anything the farmers wanted done. He bailed their hay for years. He had a grand big New Holland bailer," she said.

Hugh enjoyed such machinery, but Nellie herself loved horses. She reports, in fact, that she was raised on

*People in other parts of West Virginia may know pudding and pon haus as headcheese and scrapple. Both are made from the boiled head of the hog, the pudding getting the larger meat scraps while pon haus is the jellied remaining broth, mixed with corn meal.

mare's milk for six weeks as a child. She had the whooping cough and was about to choke to death. Some old woman told her mother, "If you've got a horse that's got a colt, give that child a pint of her milk of a morning. It'll cut the phlegm, and she won't have any more trouble."

Every morning they would milk a pint of milk from Mr. Fulk's old mare, Mabel. Mrs. Fulk would strain it and put it into a bottle, and Nellie didn't get any other milk till she finished that pint of horse's milk. She got over the whooping cough, but admits that she has had a fiery temper ever since. Her mother used to say, "Oh, that's the horse showing up in her."

Looking back, it is clear that Nellie's lot in life has been to accept challenges and lead the way. Nothing has changed in that regard. She just operates differently now. She no longer does the physical work she once did, but the farm is still being managed by the same lady who took over from her daddy and carried on. She knows every field, every crop, the condition of every structure, and the state of every fence line and every piece of equipment. The actual farming of her land is now done by a man who worked for her as a boy, and who respects Sunnyside and Mrs. Nellie Fulk Hill as no stranger could.

Since Nellie moved out, the original brick farmhouse has been rented to responsible families who take care of it. It has been kept in top condition. She evidently is determined to pass everything on to daughter Elizabeth in even better shape than she found it. That is part of being a leader.

In her older years she stays active in the community. Grandfather Cato Moore Entler was a Virginia infantryman, and Nellie is now proud to take part in the Daughters of the Confederacy. She is also a 60-year member of the Vanclesville Home Extension Club. She has the longest membership there and the honor and responsibility of leading the ladies to dinner after the business meeting. She traditionally hosts their festive fifth-year dinners, and her new house was built with a special parlor with just that in mind. She is looking forward to hosting the 65th anniversary dinner for the ladies of the club this year.

Mrs. Hill is not afraid to review her life, or of facing the future. "It's been a tough road, but I lived through it," she says. "I don't regret it. I went back to the doctor recently. He said that the spell I had last May was a heart attack. I can't go out now without carrying my digitalis or nitroglycerin with me, and I'm on three kinds of heart medicine.

"But I knew the heart was bad," she continues. "I knew that two years ago, but that's all right. I told Mrs. Shackelford, 'I'm not afraid to die. If I die today, it don't make no difference to me. I've lived my life. And I've lived a full life, but I never have run around like other people because I always had too much to do on the farm.' I don't regret it. I've enjoyed being on the farm. It was home. I love my home, and I'm satisfied to stay here."

Hot weather will bring haying season to Sunnyside Farm, as it has for many years before. Sunnyside hay now goes under contract to Charles Town Race Track.

Mickey Mouse stands by while Leland Feamster works the switches. The central board controls all the machines in his store.

One Piece at a Time

The Small World of Leland Feamster

Photographs and Text by Andy Yale

In the darkened front room of a rambling building on a hill above Alderson, a sturdy man in shirt sleeves sits behind a console bearing rows of neatly labeled rocker switches. The gray light from a half-curtained window slants across his face, leaving it partly obscured by shadow. Beneath the broad brim of his cap, his eyes glint and flash. Suddenly, with a practiced movement of both hands, he throws the console switches in quick succession, like a mad pianist playing a bluegrass fugue in double time. For a brief moment nothing happens, a split second in which the room seems to hold its breath. Then with a wild surge of power, the space explodes in a rush of sound and motion. Rows of colored lights wink on and off, servo-motors whine, and the air is filled with the clash of strange high-pitched voices. As more and more machinery comes awake, the energy level in the room spirals dizzily upward and the sound rises to a cacophonic peak. The man steps out from behind his console, smiling.

Leland Feamster doesn't work for NASA. He's not a research scientist building electric environments, and he's not a mad genius with a backyard atom smasher. Feamster is a rare representative of that endangered species, the tinkerer and practical dreamer. His dreams take form in the shape of machines — machines that light up, move, make noise. Machines with no practical use at all. Machines with no purpose, except to entertain. Machines built just for fun.

In this day of talking cars and "user friendly" home computers, Leland's machines are unique. Unlike the gadgets that divert us by transmitting entertainment and music — our stereos, radios, and TV's — these machines entertain just by being machines. *Leland has captured the essential appeal of motors, gears and flashing lights and used it as a foundation for a personal art form. His machinery revives in us the wonder we felt when we encountered our first carnival merry-go-round. As technology moves even further from its traditional role as "man's servant," producing new cars impossible to fix without an array of special tools and consumer goods designed to be thrown out when they malfunction, machines no longer evoke in us the wonder and affec-*

Left: Feamster's work requires a drill press, a good band saw and lots of other tools. Every creation begins in his basement shop.

Below: Even the simpler machines are complicated. This small carousel has eight motors, many lights and yards of wiring.

tion we once felt for them. But Leland has raised a banner to remind us of the human dimensions of machinery. After seeing his creations, one remembers that these gears and motors, relays and springs, are expressing the vision of a human intelligence and that our many complicated gadgets only borrow their life from that deeply human place in us from which all creativity flows.

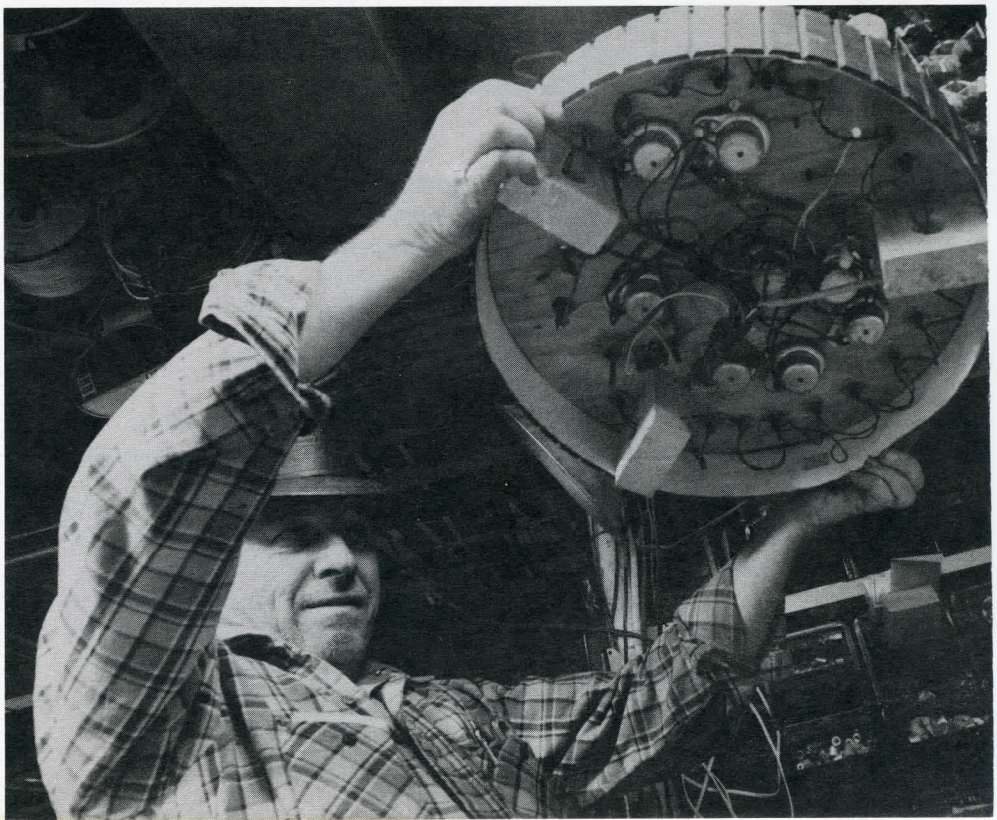
Leland himself doesn't make any such high sounding claims. But his personal museum of mechanical art, known as Leland's Small World, holds different messages for different people. The sign above the door tells the story well: "Entertainment for All Ages." But those curious to know more about the man behind the machines, and what makes him run, will want to hear Mr. Feamster's story in his own words.

Leland Feamster. Well, far as I know, what got me started, I had a lot of car taillights laying around here. I started playing around with these taillights, and tried to make a round plate to put them on. I tried to make it go around — got the idea off these carnival rides. I worked on it for a couple of months. The whole time I was working I kept getting new ideas about what I could do. Well, I completed that. That's my first one over there. Then I started this carousel about 36 inches in diameter. I had to go places to look for things I could use to make it. Took me two or three months to find everything I needed.

Well, for almost three years, I just kept on building them, one at a time — the more I built, the more I thought about it. It was interesting to me to see what I could make them do. Finally, I got so many of them built, I didn't have anywhere to put them. I decided — after selling some at state fairs and all, and the people liked them so good — I decided to set up here in this building. So I moved on in here. It's been eight years now I've been building them and I've got about 150, all different.

When I first started, I never even thought of music. But after I built that carousel and set it up and looked at it awhile, something come to me one day it should have some sound to it. I had my boy go to the library in Charleston, and he go some records of this carousel music and recorded some of it onto eight-track tapes for me. And after that, why, I got more interested in the sound. The machine moving first looked pretty good, but then I added lights to it, made it look lots better. Then I added sound to it, that made it twice as good as it was before. That's why I add lots of music to them.

If it's anything mechanical, I can just kind of figure it out on my own. Motors and making them do what I want — that wasn't no hard job for me, especially after I built two or three of them. I had to figure out how fast these motors had to turn. When I first put one together, it might have turned too fast, didn't look right and I'd have to use a different motor and



slow it down someways. After that, I could almost know what speed it ought to go to look right.

I learned something by trying, putting something part way together and letting that part work and see if everything was OK. When one part's ready to run, I'll let it run for days, to see if it's going to work and *last*. And it is ain't going to last, or don't look like the right speed, I'll change it — do it over to where it will work and last and not wear out. Some of these machines running in here have never been touched since they were finished, and some of them are six or eight years old. I might have replaced a light bulb or something like that, nothing major. I haven't even cleaned them. The biggest trouble I have is these eight-track tape recorders with the tape breaking or the players quitting. I have much more trouble with them than with anything.

I got a workshop in the basement of my house where I live. I got my materials in there and my tools. I build all this stuff up there, except one or two pieces were too big, too tall, so I built them down here. But almost every piece of it was built up there, one piece at a time.

I spend anywhere from a month to three months on one. Depends on how complicated it is and what all it has in it. Some of the bigger machines have more motors, more lights. Almost all the machines have several motors on them, and one back here has 90 electric motors. Better to use one motor and make one thing move than it is to use one motor and make a lot of things move. That's the way you eliminate your trouble — use one motor for each item. Don't get all those gears and everything moving and wearing out.

Every machine has got its own plug-in and its own switches to make each item on that machine work. That's so I can take each one of these machines anywhere and plug it in and operate it with the switches on it. When they're set up here, though, all the switches on the machines are turned on permanently and they're all worked from my master control board.

I really enjoy the mechanic part of it, seeing it come alive, building it, making it work, seeing if I can do it. That's the challenge of it and I think that's why I like it. And that's why I don't try to build another one like one I've got. Each one works different, does different things.

Like this Elvis Presley jukebox. There's lots of motors in it — different size motors and different speed motors. The main thing is that it's got a motorized timer in it. And this motorized timer has got 18 switches on it. It makes every one of these 18 switches work every five minutes. And each one of these switches makes that machine do something — the stage changes on it every five minutes, from one show to another, it turns different lights on, it makes different music play at the right time.

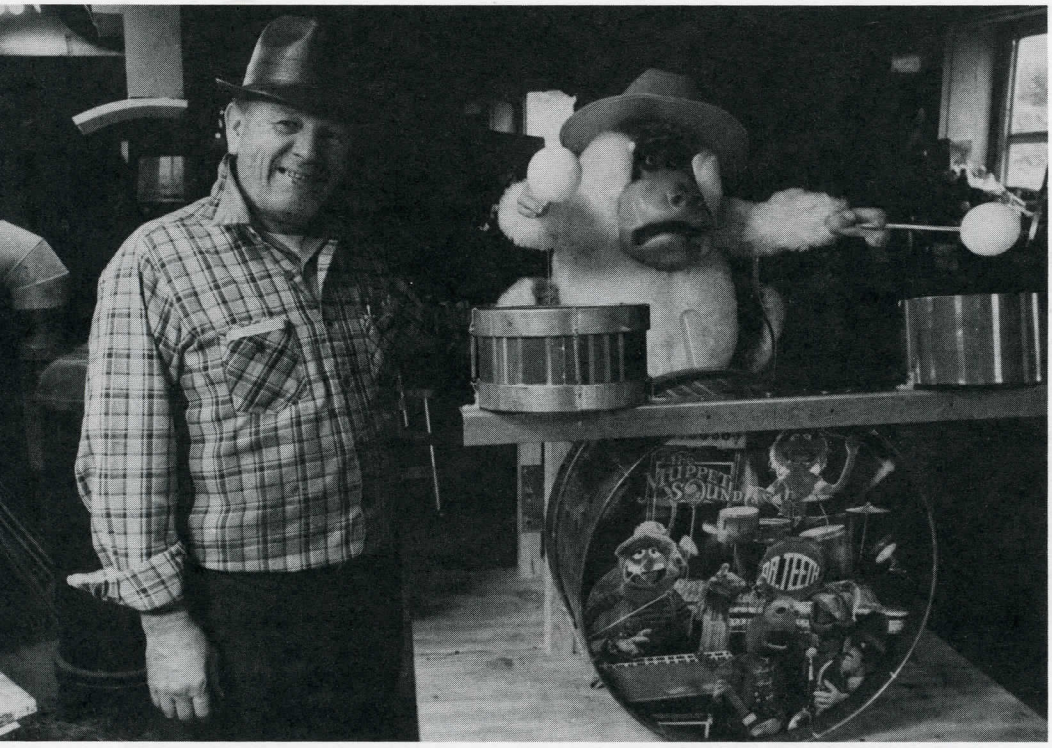
When I started this machine, I'd bought this old jukebox and I just thought I could make something out of it. So I tore everything out of it, just kept the bottom. I built the top, built everything in it. And I didn't know right when I started that I would need this 18-switch timer. I found out I'd need it after I knew what I was really going to do with the machine.

Now these timers that I'm talking about, there are some that I pick up from a salvage company. The first timers I used were similar to them, but I made them all up myself. I used a little electric motor and I made cams for it, a shaft with cams on it, and these cams would work these microswitches at the correct time. It's the

You really have to see the colors to appreciate Feamster's work. This is the Elvis Presley jukebox.

same thing I'm using on this jukebox now, except this timer was made by a factory.

All my supplies, except my motors, I just pick up at junkyards and flea markets, and hobby shops and record stores. Just anywhere I can get something I think I want. Christmas time I buy a *lot* of things I think I might need. People must think I'm going to put up the biggest Christmas tree in the world. In the last few years, I've got so if I see something I think I might need, I'll buy it and put it away. Then I'll have it. But sometimes I build a machine and I don't have anything to suit it. Then I go out looking, or use something to make it look like what it ought to look like.



Mr. Feamster with a work-in-progress. He says he has far more ideas than he'll ever be able to use.

Ideas for machines come to me by the hundreds. The thing about it is, I forget some of them, you know, and probably some will never come back to me. But I pick one, when I get ready to build a machine. My ideas come easy.

I might see something riding in my car and think to build a machine from it. I got no real way of telling you where they come from, but they come and they're no trouble. I got more ideas than I could ever get around to.

Like the car outside. I had the '64 Comet, a car that I bought off an insurance company. It had turned over and mashed the top of it. But it was mechanically good. I cut the top clean off it. And I had this '59 Cadillac sitting here for years and years, thinking that someday I was going to put those Cadillac fins onto some kind of car. So one day I was looking at this '64 Comet, thinking what I could do to it, and I thought about those '59 Cadillac fins. After I had cut the fins off the Cadillac and got them welded to this car, then I had to do other things to the car to make it look right like it should. Put a different kind of top on it, and different bumpers on the front and rear. I used part of a Cadillac in front and part of a Cadillac behind, and I got part of a '67 Falcon top, and the windshield. I kept putting things there and seeing if they looked right, and that's the way it was done.

For the interior, I built a center panel in there, put a lot of switches that work lights, motors and things that I got on the car. Then I added a lot of little instruments on the dash and around. Since on the outside it looked a little bit like a space car, I made the inside compare with that. To make it look like there was a lot of gadgets in there. Then, when it was finished, I had a tape made of Johnny Cash singing that Cadillac song, where he got it one piece at a time. And I play that over the loudspeaker on the car, when I take it to parades.

I was actually born in Huntington, but right here where I'm at is where I've been all my life, since I was one year old. This was our homeplace right here where we are now. The house was out back. I still own all this land here. I bought it from my uncle — my dad and all his brothers, they inherited it.

My day was a jewelry man and a watchmaker all his life. He had a jewelry store, first one was in Alderson, then he moved from there to Lewisburg and from there to Covington, Virginia. But he originally was from right here, and he still lives here, right up the road from me about three miles. He enjoys this place. Comes in real often and looks at it, brings other people in. He didn't help me build any of it, but he was watching me and looking when I was building some of it. And of course he would suggest things, and I always listen to people's suggestions, because a lot of times I'm going to use what they say.

My dad started teaching me when I was about 10 years old. And I did watch repair until I was 18. I was drafted to the service, and after I came out of the army I went back into the watch repair business for two or three years. And I got interested in the automobile business, cars and so forth, so I started an automobile dealership, used-car dealership and auto parts. I was in that for about 20 years or more.

I started building these machines because I like to tinker and I wanted to see what I could do with some little things moving, going round and lighting up. When I was working in the jewelry store years before that, I thought it would be nice if we could have somebody furnish us displays that lighted up and moved. Wasn't much of that around then. I might have got my ideas from that. But I never built any until eight years ago.

It started as a hobby, but I turned it into a business because I had lots of time and quite a bit of money in it. So I said I'd make it into a business so I

could get some return. Every now and then I'll sell one of these carousels, maybe one or two a year. Mostly to people from other states, passing through.

I don't keep this place open in the winter. I close it in September, and don't open it until about April. And in the summer, we're only open about one day a week, and then holidays, like the 4th of July. But other than that, we just open on Sunday. I don't like to run it when there's nobody here to look, so I set it up for one day a week and keep a pretty good crowd of people all day long. All the people around here know about it, and they know to bring friends in on Sunday.

We have all the counties around here bring their school kids. Make an appointment for a certain day, certain time, and it will be open for them. They bring 'em in by the busload. Big greyhound buses with older people on tour stop here, have a good time. And the people that run the Camp Greenbrier down here, bring their camp boys during the summer. We open for any group like that by appointment.

If it comes to the point where I'm running out of room for the machines, if I thought it was worthwhile I could extend the building, make another room back there. However, I don't know if that will happen. If business ever got big enough to get profitable, I would. Otherwise, I expect I would just kind of push them all together. Until something happens different. 'Course, if I took the notion to build one, I'd probably build it whether I had anywhere to put it or not.

I dressed the building up myself, did all the flashing around these posts, all the molding, built the shelves. Why I even built the building years ago, when I had it for my parts store. I'm a carpenter, a welder, and a bodyman, a painter, and a watchmaker. I can do anything you mention, almost. I did my own wiring when I built my house, my own plumbing, part of my brick laying, all by lumberwork, inside finish. Car mechanics I can do. Anything mechanical I don't have any trouble doing it if I want to.

People come in here. Most of them that's never been here before come in

Feamster got his car one piece at a time, he says. It's part '64 Comet, part '59 Cadillac, part '67 Falcon and all imagination.

mostly for wondering, I think, what it is. And then after they go through it, most of 'em come back to me, and tell me how wonderful and how nice it is, all kinds of things. They really appreciate it. Kids like it as a toy or as something to look at. Older people enjoy it in a different way. Older people look at the machines and what it took to do it. All ages, seems like, appreciate it.

I never had anybody to tell me they didn't like it and I never seen anybody *act* like they didn't. I've taken it lots of places, shown it at fairs and little carnivals, and it just looks like everybody enjoys it. I just don't see nobody that don't. When I first started showing it, I was a little unsure, I thought maybe the kids might like to look at it. I didn't even think about the older people liking it too much. But I found out I was wrong — the older people are the ones that really liked it.

I've had some people in here that *said* that they were artists. And they told me that *I* was an artist. I didn't *know* that. I consider myself just kind of a mechanical man. 'Course I do enjoy — after the mechanics — I do try to dress them up too, make them look attractive. Really, that's one of my main purposes too, to make it really catch the eye. But the mechanics is the real thing that you might say I was already capable of doing and this other stuff — it just came to me.

Maple Sugar Time

By Dennis Deitz

The original grove of maple trees must have been a magnificent sight to see. The trees had been left from a virgin forest, and covered several level acres on top of the mountain. They stood up to 120 feet tall and were four to five feet in diameter near the ground. Smaller trees had been cleared away and there was not much underbrush, leaving the area under the maples looking like nature's cathedral, daring man to match the beauty. The shaded area made a cool paradise for farm animals on a hot summer day.

When autumn came, the maple leaves turned by the millions from green to a deep scarlet, brilliant yellow or burnt orange. When the leaves fell there were layers on the ground several inches thick and no Indian who ever lived could have slipped through without making a sound. In winter the rotting leaves joined others that had fallen for uncounted years before. A great floor of springy, peat-like soil was formed.

In the deep snows of winter the maples were like giant cadavers, with leafless limbs stiff in the cold winds. There were no signs of animal or human life, and their shadows fell tangled on the snow. On a bright sunny day the top of the snow might melt a little and then freeze again at night. If a bright sun shone on it the next day the ground glistened as though covered with an unbroken sheet of shining crystal glass.

There were only a few small maple groves remaining when I was growing up, but my family still had sugar trees on the magnificent hilltop. I have helped to boil down maple sap to make maple syrup or maple sugar, using almost the same method the pioneers used. This was on my grandfather's farm at Russellville, on the Greenbrier-Nicholas county line.

Making maple syrup and sugar was a difficult task, for the time was limited when the sap was running and a year's supply of sugar had to be made in a hurry. Much labor was needed, in those days before mechanization.

A spout, called a spile, was driven about two inches into the tree, to conduct the sap into a bucket below. These spiles were handmade from branches with soft cores, likely to be red sumac. Hundreds were made during the winter months, one side of the tapered end whittled flat to catch the sap. Wooden buckets, each holding about a gallon, had to be emptied and replaced often and the trees watched constantly. If the temperature fell, the sap flow slowed.

Nowadays, the spiles are bought. After boring a hole into the tree the spile is inserted to allow the sap to drain into plastic tubing and flow into metal vats. From there it flows by gravity into a gas or electric still in the still house. No one has to lift a finger to carry the sap in buckets to the sugar camp, where in times past a fire had to be kept going day and night as long as sugar was being made.

Excess sap can be diverted into other stills, with the water from the sap boiling off until maple syrup remains. Approximately 50 gallons of sap will make one gallon of syrup, or 100 gallons of sap will make a gallon of maple sugar. These ratios, at least, remain unchanged.

In my grandfather's time, the preparations for sugar making started in late fall or early winter with spile whittling and bucket making. Sometimes buckets were supplemented with cruder containers. Green blocks of wood about 10 to 12 inches across were split in half and hollowed into small troughs. A vast amount of firewood had to be cut before the snow got too deep.

In late winter and early spring the sap began to rise during the warm spells. This was maple sugar time. The trees were bored with augurs, and the spiles tapped into place. The wooden vessels were placed under the open end of the spiles, and boiling off soon began. Teams of horses pulled the homemade sleds carrying the open-topped barrels into which the sap containers were emptied. The wooden barrels in turn were emptied into the metal vats at the sugar camp.

This was a day-and-night operation, barring changes in the weather. If the temperatures dropped much below freezing the sap would stop running until the next warm spell. That gave the workers a chance to catch up.

Most of the sap was made into easily-stored maple sugar cakes, since enough jars were never available for syrup. Grandfather often spoke of one room of the house which had shelves to the ceiling for maple syrup and sugar. The sugar cakes could be converted back to syrup by adding an equal amount of water and reboiling.

I have since wondered where all the hand labor came from, but I never was curious about this when Grandfather could have told me. Neighbors with sugar groves of their own would have been equally busy at the same time, but maybe some people did not have maple trees. There may have been orphan children to help with the work, since children whose parents had died were customarily "taken in" by others in those days, even by non-relatives. And a family's own children could be almost as much help as adults in most phases of sugar making.

I never asked Grandfather that question, but he talked fondly of just about everything else to do with the sugar camp. He remembered that bears, venturing out of their dens in late winter, would be enticed or "tolled" in by the smell of the sweet maple sugar. He also told of strange neighbors, coming from only a few miles away but made odd by their different speech or habits in those days of isolation. Fortunately, the bears were scared off by the sight of the fire. That left plenty of time to get to know the human characters — not to mention one's self — in the long nights when a cold snap stopped the outdoor work but the fires still had to be kept going at the sugar camp.

Vandalia Gathering

Vandalia Gathering, the statewide folklife festival sponsored by the Department of Culture and History, has become a Memorial Day homecoming tradition in the Mountain State. This year will be no exception. The Ninth Vandalia gets underway Friday evening, May 24, and all West Virginians, former West Virginians and friends of West Virginia are invited to come to Charleston to attend.

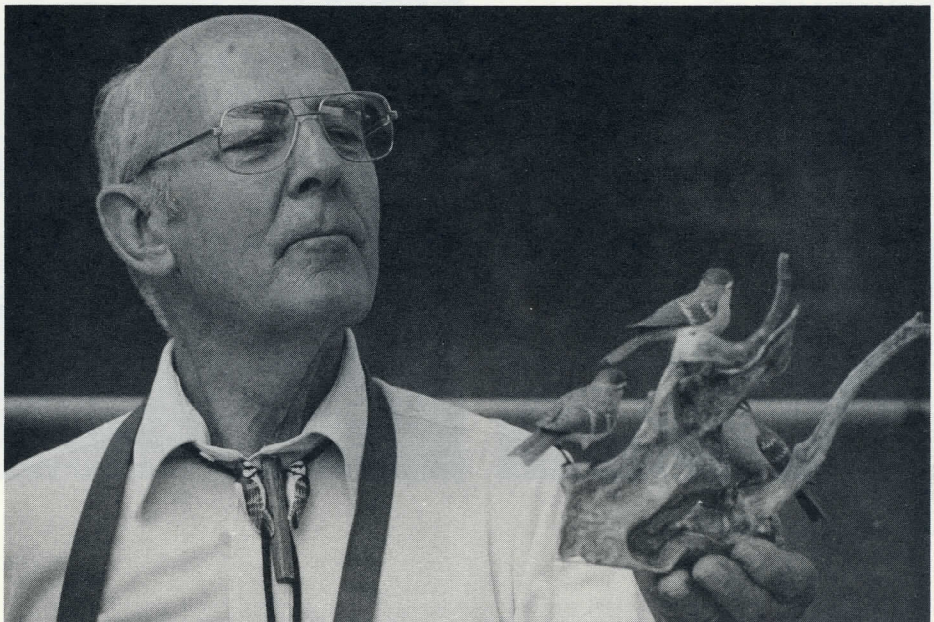
After the opening-night concert at the Cultural Center theater, Vandalia will continue through Saturday and Sunday, May 25-26. Daytime events will take place inside and outside the Cultural Center, and on the adjacent grounds of the State Capitol. Vandalia 1985 will conclude with the closing awards concert, held in the theater late Sunday afternoon.

As always, Vandalia Gathering will highlight West Virginia's traditional mountain culture, as well as our black and ethnic heritage. Musicians, craftspeople and other participants will be invited from all across the state. Scheduled events include the popular fiddle and banjo contests on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, clogging and other traditional and ethnic dance, and craft demonstrations of many kinds. Lively jam sessions will occur wherever there is room enough for a group of musicians to get together. The Vandalia Liar's Contest, a storytelling competition, will return for the third year, preceded by professional storytellers both afternoons. Regional and ethnic food will again be sold by civic and church groups.

Make your plans now to come join us in celebrating the best of West Virginia. Vandalia is free to the public, with many of the events open to participation.

Above: Vandalia brings out the best of the mountain spirit. This youngster found an isolated spot to fiddle, with the Capitol dome behind. Photo by Rick Lee.

Below: The carved birds of Claude Kemper were a hit at Vandalia '84. Mr. Kemper demonstrated his craft on Saturday and Sunday. Photo by Michael Keller.



Above: Erdverkle is a group of young West Virginians specializing in the music of the British Isles. Here they perform in the great hall of the Cultural Center. Photo by Michael Keller.

Right: Storytelling came to the Vandalia concert stage for the second year in 1984. This is Joe McHugh on opening night. Photo by Michael Keller.

Below: Bill Wellington, a fine Pendleton County fiddler, is a study in concentration. Photo by Rick Lee.

Big Snow, Outhouses, and Good Growing Ground

The Champion Liars From Vandalia 1984

Judges George Daugherty, Joe McHugh, and Bonnie Collins had the unenviable task of picking the best — or worst, depending upon how you look at it — of West Virginia's liars last year. For the two afternoons of Vandalia weekend, our finest prevaricators flocked to the contest stage in the shadow of the State Capitol, while the officials and a large crowd stood by to hear their whoppers. Observers agreed that the competition was hotter than ever before, but the judges finally settled on the stories below as the best of the lot.

The Liar's Contest is really a storytelling competition, designed to entice amateurs to join the professional yarn spinners on the Vandalia storytelling stage. Dozens did so last year. Their tales again tended to be humorous, overwhelmingly rural, and sometimes a bit on the coarse side. The stories were popular with the audience, and are probably representative of traditional country humor.

The 1984 winning liars (respectively, West Virginia's official Big, Bigger and Biggest Liar until Vandalia 1985) were Princeton blues singer Nat Reese; Alan Klein, a Ritchie County storyteller specializing in New England tall tales; and Beckley businessman Murray Shuff. Teenager Eric Waggoner won the special youth prize. We print their stories here in order that the judges ranked them, beginning with first-place winner Murray Shuff.

Murray Shuff. I stayed in the service after the war for quite a few years and about 1947 came home on leave. My little brother decided he was going to take me out for some West Virginia night life. So we get a couple of beautiful West Virginia belles and we go up to Mt. Hope, and from Mt. Hope we go up a little dirt road to a place called Mill Creek Tavern. When we get into Mill Creek Tavern there's a whole bunch of booths around the wall, a little dance floor in the center, and up in the front there's a bar.

We were all having a few beers and enjoying the evening and there was a drunk at the bar. He was just a Public Nuisance Number One. He'd drink a little while and then he'd go around and visit every booth. He'd talk to you, just enough to irritate you. He'd stagger back up to the bar again and he'd drink awhile, and oh Lord, here he'd come again, on another round. He was a sort of lonesome kind of fellow. After awhile, when we were just about ready to leave, he staggered out the door. So we said, "Oh boy, he's gone. Now we can set here and have a little friendly beer drinking without that mess."

Well, a few minutes went by, a half-hour I guess, when all at once we heard this blood-curdling yell. Someone said, "You suppose that drunk got out there along the road and got hit?" We thought he may have, so some of us got our flashlights out of the car and the bartender running the place had a couple of flashlights. We went along the drainage ditches along each side of the highway, and couldn't find him. About the time we were ready to give up we heard this blood-curdling yell again. One fellow right next to me said, "I believe that come from that outside toilet over there."

We went over, and sure enough there he was. What he had done, instead of sitting down on the seat he had sat down on a mop pail. Every time that he aimed to get up his foot would hit the peddle and the rollers would go shut! And in excruciating pain, he'd flop back down and the rollers would open back up. We saw what the problem was and it took two of us to pick him up off of that thing, because he resisted getting up. Not only that, but once we got him up he disappeared into the night.

I've been looking in Fayette and Raleigh counties for the last 40 years

Murray Shuff tells his first-place story about an unfortunate drunk. Photo by Michael Keller.

Richard Cobb
A Return Visit by the 1983 Champ

Richard Cobb, named West Virginia's Biggest Liar at the 1983 Vandalia Liar's Contest, was back in 1984 to defend his crown. His new tale scored highly, but not quite well enough to put him among the winners. His story of the 1946 Kanawah County rabies scare was popular with the crowd, however, and we're reproducing it here for GOLDENSEAL readers who may have missed the live performance.

Richard Cobb. Folks, I am here to set West Virginia history correct. I don't know if any of you remember the 1946 rabies scare that occurred in Kanawha County. Until this day I have been unable to come forward and tell the truth about that epidemic. My father made me pledge on my family honor that I would not relate this story until 10 years after his death, and this is the first time that I'm going to be able to tell the story. I'm telling it now so that he can rest in peace. If any of you lived around Kanawha County during that time, you'll recall that we had a tremendous rabies scare. And here's how it came about . . .

I was born up at Ward, West Virginia, which is up Kelly's Creek right outside of Cedar Grove. My dad was a coal miner. Every time the mines went out he didn't have any way to make any money. So he figured he was going to get smart and make sure that the next time the mines went out on strike he would have some way to make some income to buy groceries for the five kids and the wife. He came up with the idea of going to the company store and buying $29 worth of chicken wire and some pine planks to build a chicken coop, and then talking the old chicken farmer who lived several miles from our house into selling him 20 of his prize sitting hens.

Well, he spent about two weeks on this chicken coop, and it was a beautiful thing. I mean it was a state-of-the-art chicken coop, it was gorgeous. Had it sitting right outside the house, about 20 feet away. He was proud of it. He paid $3 apiece for the 20 sitting hens, and he taught me and my brother Will how to candle the eggs. You know how you take a flashlight and you hold up each egg so you can see if they're bad or not. So every week we had to candle eggs and we'd case them up.

November, if you recall, of 1946 when this all occurred, was *cold*. And this particular morning old Smiley, our hound dog, was laying out on the porch. Along about sunrise we heard the most God-awful commotion you've ever heard in your life. My dad looked out through the shutters and out there was a West Virginia red fox running around that chicken house. There were feathers flying all over the place and it was absolutely chaos out there. First thing my dad did was grab his 20-gauge shotgun, put two shells in her, and rush out on that porch still in his nightshirt. He went right by Smiley and ran out there trying to find that fox.

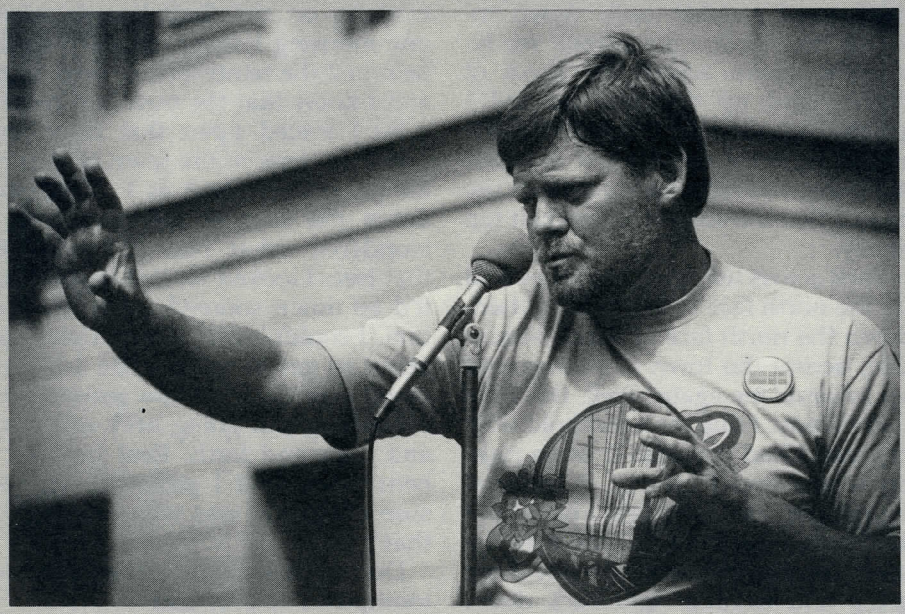
His nightshirt sort of hitched up as he went out the door, and just about the time he was trying to get a bead on that fox, old Smiley stuck his cold nose on my dad's naked behind. That shotgun went off, and when the smoke cleared there were 20 chicken carcasses, 20 feet of chicken wire disintegrated, and that pine plank was splintered all to pieces. Dad immediately turned around and was going to take a butt stroke at Smiley. Smiley knew better than to stay there and he split through the cornfield and ran off through the woods. Well, we looked all over for the fox but he had split, too — figured he was in more trouble than Smiley.

Well, my dad was brokenhearted to say the least. He was determined to kill both of them, the dog and the fox. We searched all that day, and along about two o'clock in the afternoon way up in the

trying to find that man and I never have.

Alan Klein. I come from Down East, up in Maine. And I recall the winter of '78 up there. I still have the bumper sticker, as a matter of fact, on my car that says "I Survived The Winter of '78." But I just survived it by the skin of my teeth, 'cause up to Maine we just have two seasons. We don't have spring and fall, like you folks do here in West Virginia. We only have the two seasons. We've got the eight months of winter and the four months of pretty bad sledding.

This one particular winter I was living up in a cabin up in Putney, Maine. Putney is a little small town, it's located in a little valley between South Mountain to the south and North Mountain to the north. They get creative up there. I was living in that cabin that winter, just a one-room little cabin. I had me a little wood burning stove to keep it warm. And I woke up one morning, in the dead of of winter, and it was *dead*. I thought someone had killed Mother Nature. There was not a sound to be heard. Not a rustle of the breeze, not a bird or squirrel scraping on the rooftop. It was just silent. I went to the window and I opened 'er up and I was faced with just a white wall of snow, out that window. Tried to open the door — that door opened out and I couldn't budge it. The snow was just piled up too high.



Richard Cobb of Huntington, the 1983 champion liar, was back with more in '84. Photo by Michael Keller.

north cornfield under a great big white oak tree, we saw these two shadows. As we walked closer, sure enough, there was Smiley and that fox — stone dead. Both of them. Smiley was laying there, we could see him. He had this great big grin on his face. We figured he was just smiling as he always did. I had an old broomstick with me and I turned that fox over. Great time of day — I couldn't believe it! The fox had that same snarl grin-like look on his face. We immediately said, "Hey, hydrophobia. We got rabies in Ward, West Virginia!"

My dad sent me right on down the road to Dr. Snodgrass, who was a medical doctor but took care of animals, too. There was some question as to which ones he took care of better, people or animals. But anyway, he brought up a couple of burlap bags with him and he sort of checked Smiley out there and he checked the fox out and he said, "We better put these in burlap bags and take them back down to the office." We did, and he was in there for about an hour and a half doing autopsies.

He came back out and he said, "There's nothing wrong with those two animals. There's absolutely nothing wrong with them." But I said, "Doctor, I don't understand this, the fox has got this snarl on him and the dog's got this snarl on his face. It's got to be rabies." He said, "No, the only thing I can determine is that both of them laughed themselves to death." My dad said, "Laughed themselves to death?!" And the doctor said, "Yeah, it just looks like they laughed themselves to death."

Well, my dad grabbed me by the ear real quick and took me out on the porch and said, "If you breathe a word of this to anybody and embarrass me I am going to kick your can. Don't you dare tell anybody this story."

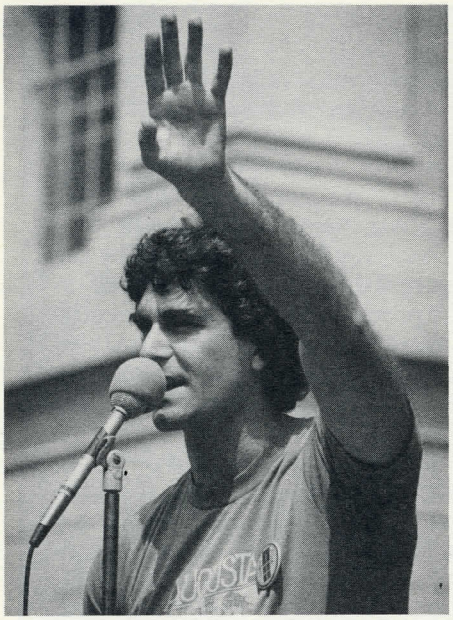
That sounds like a bad day in itself, but we'd been going all day in the woods trying to find the fox and the dog, and on the way home my dad needed to go to the bathroom. He really needed to go bad, and we were about six miles from home. He's really having trouble, and he just decides that he can't go any further.

Miss Hawkins had an outhouse right across this picket fence and about 20 yards down the hill and Dad said "Son, you go ahead. I can't wait any longer." So he hurdled the fence, shot down the hill — and unbeknownst to him halfway down the hill Miss Hawkins had put up a new clothes line. That clothes line was about neck-high on my dad, and when he hit that thing he spun around three times and landed flat on his back. Miss Hawkins came running out of the house and said, "Charles, I'm so sorry." Dad said, "Hell, Miss Hawkins, don't worry about it. I probably wouldn't have made it anyway."

Folks, if I'm lying, I'm dying. That's a true story.

Well, I had me plenty of provisions, so I decided to wait out that snow until it thawed out. I had some wood to burn inside, and I waited. And I waited, and I waited. About a month later I was starting to run low on supplies, and I had run out of firewood. I thought I'd better do something about it, and I started to ponder me a way out of that cabin. Well, I pondered all morning and I pondered all afternoon. And finally I figured out what to do.

I went to that woodburning stove. I let the flame die out, don't you know, so it wouldn't be too hot to touch. Took the stove pipe off, took the chimney stone out, and looked up and sure enough just over the roof of that cabin was a nice funnel shape where that fire had kept the snow melted, just big enough for me to get out of. So I took my hatchet and figured I'd go out and find some firewood. I clumb up the top of that stove, hoisted myself up on the top of the roof, and started chiseling away at that snow — it was packed solid — to make some handholds and footholds, and I climbed up 30 or 40 feet before I got on top of that snow. All stretched around me was nothing but white, there was not a building, not a tree. Nothing. That town of Putney, it looked like a set of doodlebug holes; everybody was in the same straits I was, their chimneys had made little funnel-shaped holes in the snow.



Alan Klein of Ritchie County tells a cold story on a hot day. He got a second-place prize for his trouble. Photo by Michael Keller.

Well, I started up the face of North Mountain to find some firewood, and hopefully some provisions. Right up at the top of North Mountain there was a big oak tree, the biggest oak tree in the place, the only tree sticking up out of the snow. I looked up there in that oak tree, and all them branches were just covered with raccoons. Them coons had come from tree to tree as the snow piled up and they all come to that one tree to find high ground and they'd all frozen to death. So I shook that tree, and shook it until all them coons fell down. I tied them all together by their tails and put them aside and I started chopping away at that tree. Took me most of the rest of the afternoon, but I finally chopped it right down. I started trimming it, and I carefully piled up them branches. I didn't want to lose nothing, I wanted that kindling. I put the kindling next to that pile of coon as I was just getting to that last branch.

I chopped at that last branch and it fell away, and that tree trunk had nothing to support it. All of a sudden it just started teetering and before I could stop it it started right down the slope of North Mountain. And it picked up speed, smoke was coming out from behind it. It headed down across the town of Putney, up the face of South Mountain. It teetered there at the top of South Mountain, and I thought I was going to lose her right over the top. But it stopped there, and headed back down towards me. Well, I got myself ready. It came down across the town of Putney and up towards me and I grabbed a hold of it. I thought I had it and it teetered there for a moment but it just slid right back on down the face of that mountain. It was just too heavy.

Back across the town of Putney and up the north face of South Mountain, down the north face of South Mountain, across the town of Putney and up towards me again. Well, this time I was ready. I dug me a foothold with my axe. I had it ready. It came right up to me and I swung. It teetered right there, and I thought I had it but at the last moment it was just too much for me. It tore the axe out of my grasp and headed right back down the south face of North Mountain, across the town of Putney and up the north face of South Mountain.

Well, since I couldn't catch it I thought I'd watch it for awhile. It kept on building up speed, coming down the mountains and across the town and it was making a nice rut in the snow there, just going back and forth, back and forth. I got tired of that after awhile and I figured I had me them coons and that kindling.

So I took that kindling and them coons and I brought them back down my hole there, put the chimney stone back in and the stove pipe back up and I ate raccoon for quite a good while. I had burned all that kindling after awhile, I'd eaten all that raccoon. I was living on grease and potatoes. I had burned the bedstead, and I had burned the chair, and I was working on the floor boards when one morning I woke up and I could hear just the faintest drip, drip, drip, and I knew that the melt had come.

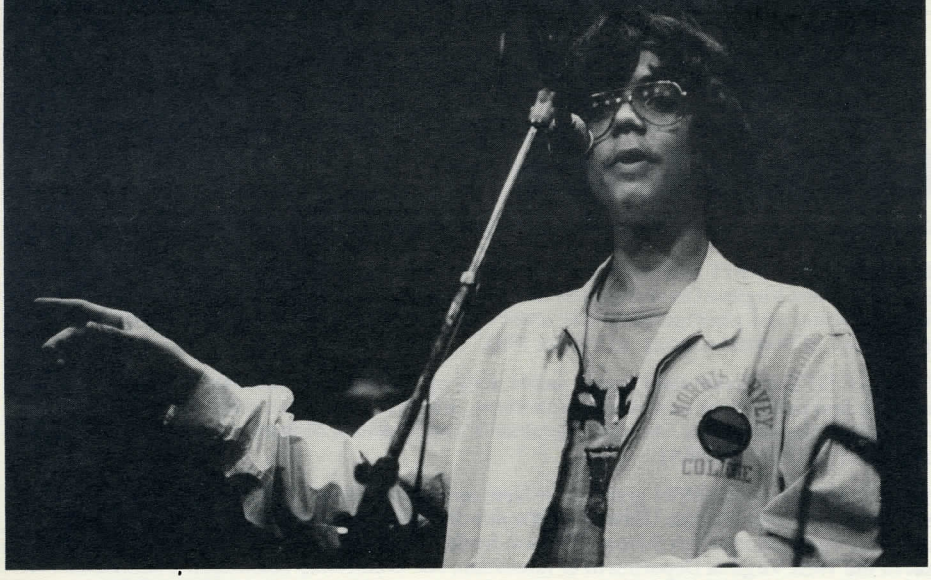
So I forced open that door and made my way to the town of Putney for provisions. And as I was going down the side of the mountain, I wondered what had happened to that tree. I looked for it, I figured out it'd be down somewhere at the bottom. I couldn't find it, and I was just about to get to town when I looked down and there on the ground was something just going back and forth and back and forth. Real fast-like. I bent down and I picked it up and sure enough it was what was left of that tree.

Don't you know, it's been the best toothpick I've ever had.

Nat Reese. I'll tell you about my Uncle Ketchup. He lived in Selma, Alabama. That's where all my people come from. They come up here to shake the money tree in the coal mines and make a lot of money. So when I was 10 years old they took me back to see my Uncle Ketchup. He had a farm there, and that farm was kind of rough. He got it in Reconstruction days, 40 acres and a mule. Twenty acres of it was poor and 20 acres was rich. Now, that poor side, you couldn't raise a fuss on that. But on that rich side you could throw a grain of corn in a place, and before you could cover it up it was about two foot high. It was *growing*.

I'll tell you what happened one

Nat Reese (center) awaits his turn to lie. His tale of his Uncle Ketchup and Aunt Tomato won third place. Photo by Michael Keller.



Eric Waggoner repeats his story at the Sunday evening awards concert. He was the special youth category winner. Photo by Rick Lee.

morning. My Aunt Tomato, my Uncle Ketchup's wife, got up one morning about five o'clock and she came out, washing and humming on that washboard. She hung up her clothes and she went back and got some more and she come back. When she got back and she couldn't find the others. See, this was that *rich* land. When she came out that last time them first clothes she hung up had gone about three miles down the road. She'd missed the clothes line and hung them on a pumpkin vine!

Don't you know they had to put roller skates on the big pumpkins to keep them from dragging the little pumpkins to death?

Eric Waggoner. This story starts up back in a holler. First of all, does anybody out there know what a *holler* is? OK. You ask these people from Up North what a holler is and they'll give a scream. No, it's not that kind of holler.

Anyway, there was an old man and his grandson had a mule and the mule's name was Hiney. They're taking him to sell him at the market place. So they take their mule named Hiney and they're walking along and there's these two old men playing checkers up on the side, on the porch there. One of them says, "Well, isn't that about the dumbest thing you ever seen in your life? There is a strong mule being led by two men, one of them could at least get up on it and save himself some trouble." Well, they didn't want to be thought of as stupid so the grandfather gets up on top of Hiney.

They're walking along and pass the church, and the women's meeting was just breaking up. One of them comes out there and sees the old grandfather and she says, "My, my! There is a man who is making his poor grandson walk on the ground beside of him. He's lived a long life, he ought to be able to walk himself." So he gets off the mule and has his grandson get up there.

They're walking by the bridge. A man comes by and says, "That's one of the most disgraceful things I've ever seen in my life. There's a grandson making his poor old grandfather walk beside of him. He could just as easily get down and show some respect for his elders." So they both get up there. They pass the veterinarian's office and he says, "Now, look at that. They're making that poor old beast of burden suffer, both of them people riding on top of him. That's disgraceful." So both of them get down, and hoist Hiney up on their shoulders — they should have known they was in trouble when they got their Hiney up past their shoulders.

Anyway, they walk along the gorge and there's crowds of people laughing at seeing that mule trying to get off the two folks. The mule gets so doggone scared that he jumps right down the thousand foot drop into the gorge where he was killed dead.

Now, there's a moral to that story. You try to please everybody and you wind up losing your Hiney.

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In This Issue

MAUREEN CROCKETT was born in Plattsburg, New York, and educated at City University of New York, West Virginia University, and other institutions. She lives in St. Albans and works as a freelance writer and photographer. Her latest GOLDENSEAL article was the story on Miss Autumn Amos of Braxton County, in Winter 1983.

DENNIS DEITZ, a Greenbrier County native, took up writing upon retirement from Union Carbide. His first publication was *Mountain Memories*, which he edited and published in behalf of his late brother. He later wrote *Mountain Memories II*, and *Mountain Memories III*. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

JACQUELINE G. GOODWIN grew up in New Jersey, but earned her undergraduate and master's degrees at West Virginia University. She now lives in Wirt County and works as publications adviser at Parkersburg High School. She also freelances, and has written for *State Ed*, a publication of the West Virginia Department of Education; she is currently finishing her first novel. Her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL was the cover story on scarecrows in Winter 1983.

NORMAN JULIAN, a Clarksburg native, is a WVU graduate. He was founding editor of *Panorama*, the Sunday magazine of the *Morgantown Dominion Post*, and has been editorial page editor of that paper. Norman's most recent work for GOLDENSEAL was the Winter 1984 articles on logging, and his novel *Cheat* was published in 1984 by Back Fork Books.

MICHAEL KELLER and REBECCA LUIGART-STAYNER are staff photographers for the Department of Culture and History.

THOMAS B. MITCHELL, a Welch native, holds a B.A. from West Virginia State College. He is Media Services Officer at the West Virginia Rehabilitation Center. His photographs have appeared in *The Communicator*, various other publications, and slide presentations. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

BOB SPENCE was born and raised in Logan, and his people have lived there since 1790. He graduated from Marshall University in 1974 with a B.A. in journalism. He worked for the *Logan News* for 11 years, and for newspapers in Weirton and Welch, and now makes his living as a freelance writer. In 1976 Bob wrote *The Land of the Guyandotte*, a 600-page history of Logan County, and has contributed several articles to GOLDENSEAL over the years.

IVAN M. TRIBE attended Ohio University and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Toledo. He has published many articles on old-time and early country music and recently authored the book, *Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia*. Dr. Tribe teaches at Rio Grande College in Ohio and is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

CHARLES W. WARNOCK, an Ohio native, is a graduate of Berea College with graduate work at Frostburg College and the University of Maryland. He retired from school teaching in 1981 and has lived in Morgan County since that time. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JACK WELCH, a native of Hancock County and formerly a WVU professor, now teaches at Abilene Christian University in Texas. He researched the history of the Homer Laughlin China Company for the current exhibit at the Cultural Center, producing a book-length manuscript on the Company's history. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL was "A Heritage of Regional Landscapes: Appalachian Baptistry Paintings," in April-June 1980.

ANDY YALE is a New York writer and photographer, with a special interest in southeast West Virginia and folklife subjects generally. He has published articles and photos in *The Village Voice*, *Memphis* magazine, and other publications. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was the Richmond Ferry article in Winter 1984.

July 29-August 3 Cottageville (372-2034)
Jackson County Junior Fair
(Jackson County Fairgrounds)

August 1-4 Harrisville
Hughes River Holiday (Courthouse Lawn)

August 5-10 Richwood (846-6790)
Cherry River Festival

August 8-10 Spanishburg (425-1429)
Bluestone Valley Fair (Spanishburg High School)

August 9-11 Logan (752-1324)
Logan County Arts and Crafts Fair
(Logan Memorial Fieldhouse)

August 9-11 Ravenswood (273-2259)
Ohio River Festival (Riverside Park)

August 10 Snowshoe (572-1000)
Hillbilly Chili Cookoff (Snowshoe Mountain Resort)

August 12-18 New Martinsville (455-2928)
Town and Country Days
(Wetzel County 4-H Grounds)

August 16-18 Hazelton (983-2220)
Locust Grove Bluegrass Festival (I-48, Exit 29)

August 16-18 Summersville (872-3145)
Gospel Sing (Summersville Music Park)

August 16-18 Elkins (636-1903)
Augusta Heritage Arts Festival
(Davis and Elkins College)

August 16-24 Fairlea (645-1090)
State Fair of West Virginia

August 17-18 Fairmont (363-3030)
Wool Crafts Weekend (Pricketts Fort)

August 18 Hamlin (824-7223)
Tobacco Festival (Lions Club Field)

August 20-25 Cottageville (273-9992)
Jackson County Gospel Singing Convention

August 23-24 Walker (489-2280)
West Virginia Bluegrass Festival (Cox's Field)

August 23-25 Beckley (252-1798)
Appalachian Arts and Crafts Festival
(Raleigh County Armory Civic Center)

August 24 Richwood (865-2139)
8th Annual Civilian Conservation Corps
Reunion (Camp Woodbine)

August 25-September 2 Charleston (348-6425)
15th Annual Charleston Sternwheel Regatta

August 26-31 Philippi (457-3254)
Barbour County Fair (Barbour County Fairgrounds)

August 30-September 1 Clarksburg (622-1986)
West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival

August 30-31 Pennsboro (659-2926)
Country Roads Festival

August 30-September 1 Weston (269-1863)
Stonewall Jackson Heritage Arts and
Crafts Fair (Jackson's Mill State 4-H Camp)

August 31-September 1 Huntington (529-2701)
Hilltop Festival (Huntington Galleries)

September 8 Winfield (586-3155)
Putnam County Homecoming (Courthouse Lawn)

September 11-14 Shinnston (592-1030)
Shinnston Frontier Days

September 12-15 Sistersville
West Virginia Oil and Gas Festival
(Sistersville City Park)

September 13-15 Grafton (265-1957)
West Virginia Railroad Heritage Festival (Main Street)

September 14 Summersville (872-3024)
Nicholas County Potato Festival (Courthouse Lawn)

September 14-15 Helvetia (924-5467)
Community Fair

September 15 Shepherdstown (876-2551)
Bavarian Inn's Octoberfest

September 15-21 Williamson (235-5560)
King Coal Festival

September 19-22 Franklin (358-2275)
Treasure Mountain Festival

September 20-22 Craigsville
Craigsville Fall Festival (Craigsville Grade School)

September 21 Hillsboro (653-4430)
Fall Festival (Pearl S. Buck Birthplace)

September 21 Richwood (846-6790)
Spencer Mountain Whistle Toot
(Fenwick Mountain Spencer Farm)

September 21-22 Alderson (445-7730)
Arts and Crafts Fall Festival
(Alderson Junior High School)

September 21-22 Ansted (658-5393)
Country Roads Festival (Hawks Nest State Park)

September 21-22 Fairmont (363-3030)
Molasses Weekend (Pricketts Fort)

September 26-28 Arnoldsburg (655-7216)
West Virginia Molasses Festival

September 26-29 Kingwood (329-0021)
Preston County Buckwheat Festival

September 27-29 Gandeeville
FOOTMAD Festival (Camp Sheppard)

September 27-29 Charles Town (725-2055)
Fall Mountain Heritage Arts and
Crafts Festival (Rt. 340E)

September 28 Poca (755-4677)
Poca Area Heritage Day (Main Street)

September 28-29 Rupert (392-5525)
Rupert Country Fling

September 28-29 Moorefield (538-6560)
Hardy County Heritage Weekend

September 28-29 Parkersburg (428-8117)
West Virginia Honey Festival (City Park)

September 29-October 6 Elkins (636-1824)
Mountain State Forest Festival

October 2-4 Mullens (348-2754)
Twin Falls Senior Citizen Autumn Fling
(Twin Falls State Park)

October 5 Union (772-3003)
Autumn Harvest Festival (Willow Bend Farm)

October 5-6 Burlington (289-3511)
Old Fashioned Apple Harvest Festival
(Burlington United Methodist Church)

October 5-6 Point Pleasant (675-5737)
Country Festival (State Farm Museum)

October 10-13 Spencer (927-1640)
Black Walnut Festival

October 11-13 Wellsburg (737-3380)
Applefest Days

October 12 Fayetteville (465-5617)
New River Bridge Day

October 12-13 Berkeley Springs (258-3738)
Apple Butter Festival (State Park)

October 12-13 Fairmont (363-3030)
Apple Butter Weekend (Pricketts Fort)

October 12-13 Hazelton (983-2220)
Locust Grove Pumpkin Festival

October 16-20 Parkersburg
Arts and Crafts Show (Grand Central Mall)

October 18-20 Mullens (263-2500)
Lumber Jackin-Bluegrassin Jamboree
(Twin Falls State Park)

October 18-20 Martinsburg (263-2500)
Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
(West Virginia Air National Guard)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 1986 "Folklife Fairs and Festivals," please send us information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address and phone number, if possible. We must have this information in by January 15, 1986, in order to meet our printing deadline.

GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in the listing.

Department of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

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