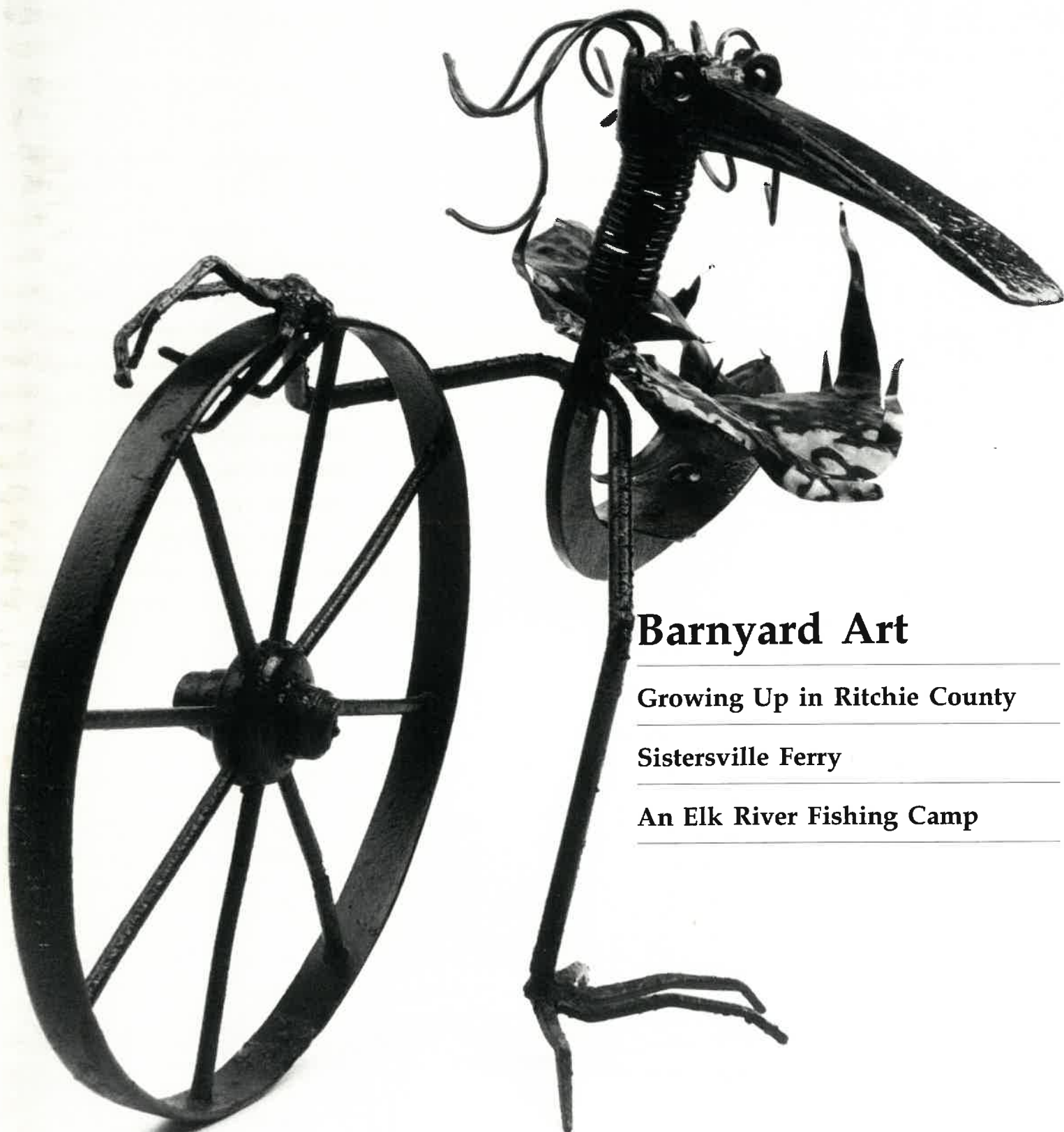


Goldenseal



Barnyard Art

Growing Up in Ritchie County

Sistersville Ferry

An Elk River Fishing Camp

From the Editor: Renewal Time

No use to beat around the bush — I'm here to ask for money. GOLDENSEAL depends on the support of its readers, and it's time to renew that support for another year. That means we need your help.

That won't surprise people who have been with us a few years, as most GOLDENSEAL readers have. The state fiscal year runs from the first of July to the end of June, leaving us officially broke this time of year. We use the fall GOLDENSEAL, the first issue of the new fiscal year, to remind everyone that renewal time has come. Then I send a letter to each reader, asking you to send your voluntary subscription payment right away. I'll use this space to explain why that is important.

But first, let me give you a progress report: We've just finished a good year at GOLDENSEAL, raising about 80 percent of our expenditures for the 12 months ending last June 30. My thanks to everyone who made that possible. It's an all-time record and a figure we're very proud of.

It's not good enough, though, and this year we must do better. West Virginia state government is not getting any richer, as you undoubtedly know, meaning that subsidies we enjoyed in the past are no longer available to us. The Division of Culture and History will continue to support GOLDENSEAL in a lot of important indirect ways — including a place to work, equipment, utilities and so forth — but we must raise our direct costs ourselves.

We must put the magazine on its own feet, in other words. Total self-sufficiency is our goal, and the only thing that will ensure the survival of GOLDENSEAL in the long run. That means 100 percent, not 80 percent or even 90 percent.

In real dollars, we'll have to do about \$50,000 better this year. That's *extra* money, above and beyond our previous record of nearly \$180,000 last year. The fact is, we are rapidly approaching a quarter-million-dollar annual budget. This year we're budgeted for just over \$230,000, and we must ask GOLDENSEAL readers to provide all of it.

That doesn't mean we have thrown up our hands, leaving everything to you. We can't conjure money out of thin air, but we're not helpless, either. We work every day to bring in new readers and new money in a variety of ways. Newsstand sales continue to do well, for example, and we've made notable progress on bulk sales this year. Gift subscription sales are doing better all the time. We're also putting our inventory of back copies on the market, as you can see in the coupon on page 71.

We also make sure to squeeze the most out of every dollar that passes through. It's a sad fact that overall costs seem to creep upward every year, but we try to hold the increase to a minimum. Our designers have agreed to work for last year's pay, and it looks like our per-piece printing costs will actually fall slightly. These will be offset by modest staff salary increases, an overdue raise for our freelance writers and photographers, and the big postal increase expected this winter. All told, our costs will rise five to ten percent.

That gives us a moving target, as we work to raise a bigger percentage of a growing total. We can do it — I'm betting my job on that — but only with the help of readers such as you.

Here's how: As tempting as the alternative is, we will hold the voluntary subscription price at \$12.50 for the fifth year in a row. That's based on the idea that it is better for more people to pay smaller amounts, rather than expecting fewer people to pay more. That concept has worked well in the past — and besides, it's the fair thing to do, holding the magazine to a reasonable price and asking everyone to share the load.

So we will ask GOLDENSEAL subscribers each to contribute \$12.50 for their subscriptions. We take subscription payments any time of the year, but find that the voluntary system works best if we lump our renewal reminders together into one big mailing in the fall.

You will receive my letter soon, asking you to renew your annual subscription to GOLDENSEAL. I will enclose a postpaid return envelope and a pre-labeled coupon for your convenience. I hope you will take a few minutes to fix up a check or money order and send your payment right away.

With that done, we can get on with the important business of producing your magazine. Money considerations aside, it's always a challenge to put a good issue together and get it into your mailbox on time. West Virginia looks like a big state from where I sit, trying to cover everything from both panhandles to the southern coalfields with a staff of three and a loose-knit flock of freelancers. It's possible, but we have to work at it.

Our last four issues, for example, took us to nearly half of the 55 counties, about the best we can manage in a year's work. We made it all the way up to Hancock County — West Virginia's northernmost, for those of you without a map handy — and we had nice features from other far corners of the Mountain State. And our writers and photographers traveled to a bunch of closer places — Pruntytown, Romney, Wilcoe, Wheeling and Marlinton, to name a few — for those of you who live in between.

Those writers and photographers will keep right on working as long as you and I stand behind them. As I mentioned, we recently loosened the purse strings enough to give our freelancers their first raise in many years. I think it was an excellent investment of the few hundred extra dollars it cost us, for without their work there would be precious little in your magazine. They enjoy working for us, but we can't work them for nothing. Likewise with the printer, designers, shippers, and Uncle Sam's post office.

Looks like I've drifted back around to the subject of money again. That's no coincidence, of course, for here's the thought I want to leave with you: If you enjoy GOLDENSEAL, we need your support now. That means your financial support as well as the suggestions, ideas, praise and criticism that are always welcome in this office.

Let's work together to keep GOLDENSEAL going. Thanks.

— Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

Volume 16, Number 3

Fall 1990

COVER: Our cover critter is by Mark Blumenstein, who creates art from junk. Otis Laury owns this piece, "Wheel Stand," and kindly allowed Mike Keller to photograph it. The story begins on page 9.

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PHOTOS: H. E. Bonnett, P. Corbit Brown, J. Buxton, Doug Chadwick, Greg Clark, J. Collier, P. Cox, Gibson Studio, Michael Keller, J. E. Kenna, Rick Lee, W. Moneypeny, H. Postlethwaite, G. Ratliff, T. Screven

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Current Programs • Events • Publications

GOLDENSEAL announcements are published as a service, as space permits. They are not paid advertisements and items are screened according to the likely interests of our readers. We welcome events announcements and review copies of books and records, but cannot guarantee publication.

Old-Time Week at Augusta

The Augusta Heritage Center at Davis and Elkins College will host October Old-Time Week from October 22 to 29. The event coincides with fall foliage time in the Mountain State and offers workshops, dances and concerts for participants.

This year's theme is old-time string band music, with instruction on individual instruments as well as lessons on playing in a band. Classes are offered for beginners and advanced players in old-time Appalachian fiddle, clawhammer banjo, back-up guitar, ensemble playing and vocals. The week ends with a music festival on Friday night and Saturday, open to the public, with dancing, jam sessions, a potluck dinner and cake walk. A special concert will feature Augusta's teaching staff and several of West Virginia's finest old-time master musicians.

Tuition for the week is \$215. Housing is available near the D&E campus. For more information contact Augusta Heritage Center, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241; (304)636-1903.

Civil War Guidebook

More than 230 sites connected with West Virginia's Civil War history are featured in a new publication, *A Pictorial Guide to West Virginia's Civil War Sites*. The book by Stan Cohen addresses both major and little-known locations, from buildings and historic homes to battlefields, cemeteries and monuments.

Although not the scene of the war's bloodiest conflict, West Virginia occupied a strategic position between the Union and Confederate States and saw many smaller engagements. Historian Boyd Stutler contended that West Virginia was the site of 632 encounters during the Civil War, classified as battles, skirmishes, engagements, raids, or actions.

West Virginia's Civil War Sites

presents historic locations in 41 counties, with illustrations and descriptions. There is also a section of out-of-state sites that relate to West Virginia. The 132-page softbound book is heavily illustrated, with over 400 photographs, maps, and drawings. Information on Confederate and Union general officers and Congressional Medal of Honor recipients is also included.

The Civil War guidebook costs \$9.95, plus \$2 shipping, and is available from Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 4103 Virginia Avenue S.E., Charleston, WV 25304; (304)925-7611. It is also sold at some local bookstores.

Mail Order Crafts

The Shop in the Cultural Center, long a favorite shopping place for the best of West Virginia handicrafts, books, periodicals, record albums and cassettes, has now expanded its mail order operations. The staff has published a special color flyer to get the word out. The "Crafts by Mail" flyer features 23 fine Mountain State products by Dick Schnacke, Herman Hayes, Cabin Creek Quilts and others.

The new flyer describes a variety of representative craft items, from American folk toys and collectible folk art to handwoven baskets and stoneware crocks. It has information on handmade hummingbird feeders and

glass paperweights. GOLDENSEAL magazine has also been added to The Shop's West Virginia product line and is featured on the flyer along with such items as wheat weavings, honey products, quilts, music and more.

With holiday shopping right around the corner, The Shop's flyer offers something different for gift ideas. You may order your copy of the new flyer by writing to Crafts by Mail, Marketing, Cultural Center, Charleston, WV 25305, or calling (304) 348-0220.

Hansford Hospital History

The Sheltering Arms Hospital, a book by Otis K. Rice and Wayne E. Williams, tells the story of the miners' hospital founded by the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia. The hospital was located at Hansford, near the mouth of Paint Creek, from 1888 until 1923.

Sheltering Arms was the only hospital on the C&O Railroad between Cincinnati and Richmond when it opened in 1888, and for many years most of the patients arrived by train. As the first "list" hospital in the West Virginia coalfields, much of its income came from patients who participated in prepaid hospitalization plans by paying a monthly fee to their employers. Sheltering Arms prospered for decades, but labor unrest and a decline in coal markets combined with other factors to force its closing in 1923.

The new book provides insight into the social and economic conditions of the Kanawha and New River areas, and offers a close look at hospital officials, staff and patients, along with personal recollections of people familiar with the facility. Roughly 25 historic photographs illustrate the 105-page paperback.

The Sheltering Arms Hospital may be ordered from P.O. Box 63, Fayetteville, WV 25840-0063. The cost is \$5, plus \$1.25 for postage and handling. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax.



Rusties and Riddles

How many cubic feet of dirt are there in a hole six feet square and six feet deep?

If you don't know that the answer to that is "none," you'd better get hold of a copy of *Rusties and Riddles & Gee-Haw Whimmy-Diddles* by James Still of Dead Mare Branch, Kentucky. Still, the dean of Appalachian writers, is the author of several other books of short stories and poetry as well as the outstanding novel, *River of Earth*. The new volume combines two earlier books by Still, *Way Down Yonder on Troublesome Creek* and *The Wolfpen Rusties*, both now out of print.

Rusties and Riddles collects rhymes and riddles of the sort once popular throughout the mountain region. You'll find out how many dead people there are in the graveyard (all of them), which side of a hound dog is the hairiest (the outside, of course), and plenty of other handy lore that is probably about as useful now as it ever was. Janet McCaffery's illustrations and the book's airy design and bright cover make it an attractive gift volume.

Riddles and Rusties & Gee-Haw Whimmy-Diddles is a hardbound book of unnumbered pages. The book may be purchased for \$15 in bookstores or from the publisher, the University Press of Kentucky. You may write to the University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0336.

Gunsmithing Book

James B. Whisker, West Virginia University professor of political science, recently published his seventh book on gunsmithing in America. *The Gunsmiths of Adams, Franklin and Cumberland Counties* is about the folk art of producing fire-arms in three Pennsylvania counties, according to Whisker.

Craftsmen in West Virginia and Pennsylvania made "long rifles," as they were commonly called. Professor Whisker identifies the long rifle as an American invention from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, that dates back to about the 1750's.

Whisker also cites the difference in American and European gunsmiths, noting that formal craft guilds did not

exist in America the way they did in Europe. "Anyone who wanted to make guns could set up shop without formally belonging to a guild," Whisker says. This led to the creation of unique guns with designs carved in the wooden part of the rifle or engraved into the metal.

Professor Whisker discovered that the various styles reflected the regions in which the rifles were made. He presents his data with more than 100 illustrations. The book is available from the publisher for \$35 postpaid. Write Old Bedford Village Press, Box 1976, Bedford, PA. 15522.

Women's History Exhibit Opens

"Traditions and Transitions: West Virginia Women in History" will open at the West Virginia State Museum in Charleston on September 23. The exhibit opening represents the culmination of nearly four years of planning and research into the role of women in the political, economic and social history of West Virginia.

The exhibition, featuring artifacts and photographs documenting women's paid and unpaid work in their homes and communities from 1890 to 1930, will tour the state following the Charleston show. It may be seen at the State Museum through February 17, 1991; at Blennerhassett State Historical Park, Parkersburg, March 1-August 1, 1991; at Oglebay Mansion Museum, Wheeling, August 15-October 31, 1991; and later at the Huntington Museum of Art.

"Traditions and Transitions" is a joint project of the West Virginia Women's Foundation and the West Virginia Women's Commission, with the cooperation of the Division of Culture and History. The exhibition is part of a continuing effort to document women's history in West Virginia, including a smaller traveling exhibit which began touring libraries in November 1989.

In conjunction with the exhibit opening, *West Virginia History* recently published a women's history edition. The annual volume of the state's historical journal may be purchased by sending \$12 to West Virginia History, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305.



Stella Gordon in 1986. Photo by Michael Keller.

Stella Gordon Retires

Stella Gordon, the subject of a 1986 *GOLDENSEAL* article, recently retired from the Newberne post office after nearly 65 years. In 1925 Stella and her husband began working together as store clerk and postmaster in the Gilmer County general store that housed the post office. After L. D. Gordon died in 1967, Stella carried out the duties of

postmaster herself and was officially named to the post in 1968.

Her family has lived in Gilmer County for at least five, maybe six generations, according to the 86-year-old Stella. She watched the world around her change but herself clung to the old ways. "I still hand-stamp the letters. No need for a machine here," Stella said. "We serve maybe 48 or 50 houses, half on the rural route that Janet delivers and half here in the store."

Janet is mail carrier Janet Sheets. She said in our 1986 interview that in 15 years of driving the route, three rural post offices had been taken out — Goffs and Mahone and Burnt House. Stella Gordon's Newberne post office was the last combination general store and post office on Janet's route.

Now that is gone, too. When Stella retired on February 28, the Postal Service retired the Newberne post office as well. On March 17 the store closed. Stella's former customers now take care of their postal needs through Coxs Mills or Smithville.



Give the gift of home —
a subscription to

Goldenseal

See coupon on page 72.

New Banjo Album

Anyone doubting that traditional music is alive and well in West Virginia should pick up a copy of "Banjo Legacy," the new record album from Augusta Heritage Records. The record presents 18 tunes by nine musicians, all young to middle-aged and in their vigorous prime. The result is a nice package of our oldest music, played not by declining old masters but by men at the height of their powers.

"Banjo Legacy" draws primarily from the south-central counties, the heartland of West Virginia's old-time tradition. Frank George, Ron Mullenex, Dwight Diller, and John Blisard are among the musicians represented. They perform such standards as "Sourwood Mountain" and "Liza Jane," as well as "Yew Piney Mountain," "Shelvin' Rock," and other such tunes specific to the Mountain State. The liner notes attribute each performance to musical forebears, crediting Bill Iman, Oscar Wright, Harvey Sampson, and several members of the extended Hammons family, among others.

David O'Dell, in his early 20's and the youngest of the performers, finds his musical inspirations from older colleagues on the album, mentioning George and Jim Costa in particular. This sort of handing down will ensure that West Virginia's musical legacy will survive, even though most of the old-timers who inspired the album are now gone.

"Banjo Legacy" may be purchased for \$9, plus \$1.50 postage and handling, from Augusta Heritage Center, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241. West Virginians must add sales tax.

Catholic History Published

A book about the history of the Catholic Church in rural central West Virginia, particularly Lewis County, was recently published. *The Rock From*

Which You Were Hewn was written by Father Donal O'Donovan, who served as assistant at St. Patrick's Church in Weston during the 1950's and later as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Salem and St. Bridget's in Stonewood.

O'Donovan worked seven years researching and collecting materials that span 140 years of history. He based the book on documents, histories and newspapers. *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn* includes historical photos of parish churches, family farms, congregation members, priests and other religious leaders.

The 224-page book offers an in-depth look at the lives of individual priests and the parishes they served. O'Donovan writes of the Irish and German immigrants who arrived in Lewis County during the late 1830's and early 1840's, and tells how their lives revolved around farming and the oil and gas fields. He also writes of the eventual dwindling of parish populations, offering important insights into the decline of rural Catholicism in West Virginia.

To order the book send \$15, plus \$2 shipping and handling, to St. Patrick School, 224 Center Avenue, Weston, WV 26452. Make checks payable to *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn*. Copies may also be purchased at the St. Patrick School office.

Mine War Books Republished

Two important books dealing with the mine wars of southern West Virginia have recently been republished by major university presses.

Lon Savage's *Thunder in the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War, 1920-21* has been published in a new edition by the University of Pittsburgh Press, and David Alan Corbin's *Life,*

Work, and Rebellion: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922 has been reissued in paperback by the University of Illinois. Savage's work, previously published by Jalamap Publications and Northcross House, is the only book-length account of the 1920 Matewan Massacre and the dramatic events that followed the murder of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers at the Welch courthouse a year later. Corbin deals with the broader context of labor unrest in the southern coalfields.

The bloody episodes of this period were the basis for John Sayles' film *Matewan* and such novels as Mary Lee Settle's *The Killing Ground* and Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven*. Sayles writes the foreword in the Pitt Press edition of *Thunder in the Mountains*, crediting the book as a major inspiration for the movie script. "The story Lon Savage tells is a dramatic and important one, as much a part of our heritage as that of the Alamo or Gettysburg or the winning of the West," Sayles says. "Corbin leads his readers through an especially frightening episode of United States domestic history," according to the *Journal of American Culture*, which said the book was among the finest American labor history ever written.

The new edition of *Thunder in the Mountains* includes 45 historical photographs and is 216 pages long. The cost is \$19.95 hardback and \$9.95 paperback. Contact the University of Pittsburgh Press, c/o CUP Services, Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14850. *Life, Work, and Rebellion*, a 294-page paperback, may be purchased for \$12.95 from Trans-Allegheny Books, Charleston and Parkersburg, or from the University of Illinois Press, 54 E. Gregory Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.



Illustration by Lisa George.

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Published letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

Louisville, Kentucky
May 21, 1990
Editor:

I have been living out of state for the past several years and was delighted when I returned home for a visit to discover that you had been sending my magazines faithfully to my parents' address, thus allowing them to enjoy GOLDENSEAL while I was away. They saved all my magazines and I now have a lovely collection to share with others and to treasure for years to come.

I was privileged to assist my friend, Renie Carlson, with an article which she contributed a few years back about West Virginia's "fierce mountain poet," Muriel Miller Dressler, and hope one day to be able to contribute again to your outstanding publication. Its superb photography and fascinating, well-written articles reflect the dedication and professionalism which go into making GOLDENSEAL well worth its modest subscription/donation cost.

Continued success to you and your staff, without whose leadership and dedication GOLDENSEAL would not be the quality publication that it continues to be. Please don't let it die! A faithful subscriber,
Donna J. Taylor

There's no chance of GOLDENSEAL dying as long as it continues to enjoy the support of you and other readers. See my "Renewal Time" editorial for details. —ed.

Washington, DC
June 21, 1990
Editor:

I've enjoyed your magazine so much that this past year I gave a gift subscription to my family in Spokane, Washington — who are now enjoying it as much as I.

I especially want to thank you for articles such as the ones on Roxy Gore and the Franklins. You excel more than any other publication I know in providing a glimpse of the strength and beauty in people's lives and rev-

ealing that there really is no such thing as an ordinary person. In the process you provide an invaluable record that goes far beyond the superficial view preserved by academic histories of major events and public persons.

My thanks to all of you for enriching my present and saving something of the remarkable people about whom you write for those who come after us. Sincerely,
Karen M. Gray, Ph.D.

Cal Price

Roanoke, Virginia
June 14, 1990
Editor:

I am writing concerning the fine article about Cal Price of the *Pocahontas Times* in the summer 1990 GOLDENSEAL.

I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Price in 1942 when I was a photographer-staff member of the *Daily Athenaeum* at West Virginia University. My enclosed picture shows a dinner meeting of the West Virginia Press Association held at the Hotel Morgan.

From left, we see Cal Price; Max Fullerton, Associated Press, Charleston; three unidentified people; Colonel H. C. Greer, Morgantown publisher; W. R. Keyser, editor of the *Welch Daily News*, and Mrs. Keyser; and two unidentified men at the end.

I regard this photograph as outstanding, not because of the quality of the picture but because it shows several men who contributed greatly to the progress of the press and life in West Virginia.

At the *Athenaeum*, we took the national and world news by telephone from the Pittsburgh Bureau. Didn't have teletypes. Radio journalism was a pioneer and television was just a baby — not mentioned by Dr. P. I. Reed of the School of Journalism. My, how times have changed.

Sincerely,
Tam Park Vannoy

Hard Times?

Chesterfield, Virginia
May 30, 1990
Editor:

Enclosed is my check for a subscription. I don't know exactly what type of book, newspaper, pamphlet or whatever GOLDENSEAL is, but my parents dug the herb called "golden-seal" for family medicinal purposes during the Hoover Hard Times of the early part of my life.

I was reared atop Rocky-Laurel-Huckleberry-Brushy-Droop Mountain in Pocahontas County and did not know that my parents and eight siblings were poor or disadvantaged. I thought we were rich.

We had the best of fresh home-grown fruits and vegetables; had but-



ter on hot biscuits or cornbread from homegrown grain; had plenty of meat from butchering our own beef, hogs, hens, turkeys. The 4th of July was always celebrated with fresh-killed mutton. We stored winter provender for the animals and had a cellar laden with canned, pickled or preserved food for our own use.

I like poke greens, ramps and fried groundhog even yet.

Sincerely,
Anna (Shue) Atkins

Thanks but no thanks on the fried groundhog, but otherwise that Depression fare sounds plenty good. GOLDENSEAL is named for the same herb your parents dug, also known as yellow root. —ed.

Last Public Hanging

New Haven, West Virginia
May 29, 1990
Editor:

A good friend of mine told me about your spring 1990 story about the last public hanging in West Virginia, which took place in Ripley. My father was there. I remember him talking about it when I was a young child. He would show us the place when we would go past there.

My father was Joseph Winter. The article mentioned a Charlie Winter family. Dad had a brother, my Uncle Charley. At that time he could have been living in that area. I know Dad said he knew the people who were murdered.

I like this book — it has a lot of information about West Virginia. I would give as much as \$5 for a copy of this particular issue.

Thanks, Willogene (Winter) Ohlinger

The spring GOLDENSEAL was an early sellout, thanks in part to the hanging story. Since then we've made a practice of printing more extra copies. —ed.

Mary Behner and The Shack

Charleston, West Virginia
April 17, 1990
Editor:

It was rather difficult to read the brief and inaccurate mention of my mother's work as founder of The Shack in Scott's Run, in your spring 1989 issue. The author mentioned



Mary Behner with the first Scott's Run high school graduates. Photo by Gibson Studio, Morgantown, date unknown; courtesy State Archives.

Mary Behner as being a native of Morgantown (it was Xenia, Ohio), beginning a Sunday School at The Shack (it was started at the Stumptown School three years before The Shack), and adding merely an exchange for used clothing before the ministers arrived.

There was a lot more accomplished in my mother's nine years at The Shack during the Great Depression than she was ever given credit for. She brought WVU students, famous missionaries such as Induk Pahk, and *The Christian Science Monitor* to see the work.

The local church wanted her to stick to having Sunday schools (though she added daily activities), but her first act was to start organized recreation with the children at the Stumptown School. A library was quickly added.

One of her philosophies was community control and leadership as well as unusual integration by race in the nursery school. She also encouraged the first high school graduates while she was there, as well as the first college graduate, Ruth Voithofer Newell. Near the end of her nine years, James Shepherd organized a Breezy Heights playground and a hike to Chestnut Ridge resulted in a camp.

The work included adult education, vacation Bible school, athletics, moving pictures, plays, book clubs, Charm School, medical service, relief, credit union, shower baths, fine arts, all carefully documented through photographs, diaries and scrapbooks now at the State Archives.

In her later years, she wondered if the discounting of her work by her replacements was because she had accomplished so much as a lay

woman, not as an ordained man. She remained active in Morgantown community affairs until her illness with cancer. She died March 15, 1988, at the age of 81.

Sincerely,
Bettijane Burger

The excellent Mary Behner Christopher collection came to the State Archives in January 1989, as GOLDENSEAL was going to press, and we were unaware of the material at the time. Thanks for setting us straight on an important career preceding that of the Reverend Franklin Trubee, the main focus of our story. —ed.

Tom Barney Retires

Berkeley Springs, West Virginia
June 30, 1990

Editor:

Readers who recall the article we wrote for the winter 1988 issue, "Tom Barney's First Job," may be interested in the sequel to this account of a man who worked 68 years at the same store and had no plans to retire.

Tom, who had also been Berkeley Springs mayor and police chief at different times, finally stopped working in April, after finishing 70 years with Hunter's Hardware. He enjoyed a fine farewell dinner with many of his friends. A little more than one month later, Tom died.



Tom Barney in 1988. Photo by P. Corbit Brown.

Doctors can always find an explanation for death after it happens, but those who remember Tom's chuckle can almost hear that audible smile when someone points out to him that he did many different things in life but the one thing he couldn't do was retire.

Bea and Cliff Hackett

Another Pence Springs Episode

Clermont, Florida
July 7, 1990
Editor:

I grew up in Alderson in the 1920's and '30's, so your articles on the resort hotel and women's prison at Pence Springs, Summer 1990, were of special interest to me.

There was one brief episode in the history of that grand old building that you did not mention. In the early autumn of 1935, the building and grounds were leased by the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) of Philadelphia. They opened a "Health and Training Institute" for the daughters of coal miners. I got a job there and worked from September 1935 until June 1936. The Institute was closed in the summer of 1936.

I was desperate for a job. The Depression had delayed my plans for college and I not only needed to earn money, I needed something to do. I heard that there was to be a school of some sort at the abandoned luxury hotel at Pence Springs, and I applied for any kind of job. My 4-H experience made me seem most suited to food service, and I was hired as an assistant cook, much to the chagrin of my family.

The opening weeks were chaotic. The hotel had been closed for several years. The pump was gone. There were many problems. I was assistant cook for about three days, until the dietitian quit. Then I was promoted, without qualifications or increase in pay, to dietitian — so the cook quit!

We had about 100 girls. My budget was 28 cents per person per day — and this had to include laundry soap and paper goods. I really earned my \$60 per month plus room and board.

I was supposed to train all the girls to be cooks, waitresses, and to clean and do laundry, to make them employable at the end of the training period. The girls did most of the actual work. In later years, as

I traveled throughout West Virginia, I was most pleased to encounter some of these same girls who had established themselves in jobs or as homemakers.

Mrs. Smith, the Philadelphia Quaker lady who was our director, loved good food. Her favorite was chicken. I think we decimated every home poultry flock in Summers and Monroe counties. Mrs. Smith's favorite chicken was what she called a "Maryland Brawl" (broil). This was breaded and deep-fried.

Mrs. Smith told me many times about her dislike of cooking and her inadequacy in this area. She said, "Sara, I cooked a chicken *once*, and I left the little green thing in and it was terrible!" Then she had tried to make yeast bread and was so thrilled that it was rising — until she discovered that there was a hole in the metal bowl and the water in the pan below was making it rise, or rather float to the top.

I could never have managed

without Mary Totfalucia, a darling little Hungarian girl who was quite willing to wring the chickens' necks for me. I could teach the girls to pluck, dress and cook the chickens, but I could not wring their necks.

One evening the girls had a really good supper. Mrs. Smith had been trying to interest Eleanor Roosevelt in our project, and she had a vague promise that Mrs. Roosevelt would try to stop by Pence Springs on her way flying back to D.C. from MacArthur, West Virginia. There was a small airstrip near us, so it would have been possible.

Mrs. Smith ordered me to *forget* the budget and prepare "Maryland Brawl" with all the trimmings for everyone. So we prepared a real banquet. Mrs. Roosevelt did not make it, but the girls surely enjoyed it. It took me six weeks of Bean Loaf and Scotch Woodcock to make up for that.

Sincerely,
Sara Warren Kidd

Budget Stretchers from Sara Kidd

Scotch Woodcock (Serves 8)

8 hard cooked eggs
2 cups medium white sauce
1 cup soft bread crumbs
Paprika
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 tbsp. butter
Sprigs of fresh parsley
Shell eggs and cut in half lengthwise. Place egg halves in single layer, cut side down, in a flat buttered baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese. Add Worcestershire sauce to white sauce and pour over eggs

and cheese. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and dot with butter. Bake uncovered for about 20 minutes until sauce is bubbly. Garnish with parsley and paprika.

Kidney Bean and Cheese Loaf (Serves 8)

3 cups kidney beans, mashed
2 cups bread crumbs
1 cup grated sharp cheese
1 tbsp. finely minced onion
1/2 tsp. salt
Dash of pepper
2 eggs
Mix all together. Pack into greased loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 40 minutes or until firm. Serve with tomato sauce.

We Never Missed the Bus

By Lorna Chamberlain

Back around 1920, when my brothers and sisters and I were in grade school, we lived on a big 200-acre farm in Ohio County, east of Wheeling near the Pennsylvania line. We had land in both Liberty and Triadelphia districts, which meant we were entitled to go to school in either. We started off in Liberty.

When my older sister was about nine she missed several days of school because the snow was deep and ice-crusted. The Liberty District truant officer came calling, and my father had to pay a fine for Tillie's absence. As he left, the officer himself slipped and fell on the ice and broke his arm. My father would tell that story and chuckle, and from then on everyone in our family went to Oak Grove School in Triadelphia District.

Oak Grove was the only grade school I ever attended. It sat on a hill-top, surrounded by oak trees that held onto their rusty leaves long after the leaves of surrounding trees had fallen. The schoolhouse had one big room. There was a small entrance hallway from which you stepped into a wide, narrow vestibule, the walls lined with hooks. Boys hung their coats on one side, girls on the other. From there you entered the big room, filled with large, small, and medium-sized desks. It had blackboards, a pot-bellied stove, many high windows, and a wooden floor that was always oiled.

To get to Oak Grove we'd leave home and head out over the hills, through the woods or down through a big pasture. At the creek we'd meet up with our neighbors, the Parks children, also on their way to school. For everyone in our family there seemed to be someone in theirs of corresponding age.

One time one of the Parks boys offered to carry my sister across the creek, when it was swollen and the footbridge was submerged. They were about halfway across when my sister squirmed in such a way as to knock off his new glasses. He dropped her then and there and went scurrying

after his spectacles, calling out, "There goes 12 dollars!"

From the creek we hurried up through another woods, around more hillsides and finally over the hill to Oak Grove School. It was a distance of about two miles.

We left school in a more leisurely fashion, in no hurry then. Usually we'd take the road that led past a neighboring farm. Those neighbors were middle-aged, kind and considerate of children. We could help ourselves to anything that grew in their orchard.

We knew everything of interest on the way home from school. There were walnut, hickory, chestnut and butternut trees in abundance. Here and there were fruit trees, as well as persimmon and haw trees.

And then there were the "bear rocks," big and little boulders that covered the field bordering the creek we had to cross. There were hundreds of stones of every size. It was as if at one time the sky had opened up, and instead of sending down rain had dropped a whole field of boulders.

Unmindful of bats and mice and snakes we'd go exploring through the caves made by the bigger rocks coming together. In many places there was ample room to stand up and walk. In other places you had to squeeze your way through or slide down.

New teachers were invited to explore the bear rocks with us. On one huge boulder there were marks like the footprints you'd make if you stepped in soft mud. Supposedly an Indian in the long ago, wearing a moccasin, had made the footprints. It was a reminder of other days, and of a time when the big boulder must have been soft on top. There's a lake through that valley today, known as Bear Rocks Lake.

Schools didn't have PTA meetings back then. It was customary for each pupil to invite the teacher home for an overnight stay at least once during the school year. When our turn came, the

teacher would walk home with us, share the evening meal, and then visit with our parents. We'd be on our very best behavior, mannerly and polite, not daring to pick a fight with anyone while the teacher was there.

The teacher at Oak Grove taught eight grades, and had to do all the janitorial work and tend the stove. The pay was often less than \$50 a month. The teacher would call on older students for help. We were thrilled to be asked to clean blackboards, sweep the floor or bring in coal from the coal shed.

At our house there was never any whining about how hard it was to make that trip to school each day. We had a few schoolmates who were taken to school when the weather was bad, or they'd be picked up in late afternoon. Some rode ponies.

Only two, out of my family of nine children, ever went to a consolidated grade school. They were part way through when Oak Grove School closed. When that happened, the hub of our community was taken away. People lost a gathering place for entertainment, school plays and recitations, box socials and picnics, Thanksgiving and Christmas events. It is true that children rode to the new school in comfort, but I doubt that they had the fun that we had getting back and forth under our own power. We never had a school bus, and we never missed it.

Visit Bear Rocks

"Weathering, erosion and downslope sliding" combined to produce the Bear Rocks, according to geologist Steve McClelland of the West Virginia Geologic and Economic Survey. The area, which remains as scenic today as in Lorna Chamberlain's childhood, now is a public hunting, fishing and recreation area. Bear Rocks is located two miles from the Dallas Pike Exit on Interstate 70.

“Putting Things Together”

Mark Blumenstein Finds the Spirit in Metal

Text and Photographs by Andy Yale

You turn off at the zebra-striped mailbox and follow the driveway, looping along the edge of the hill in a steady climb. It crosses a cattle guard and hooks left, and suddenly you are out of the woods, in a great bowl-like valley near the Greenbrier-Summers county line, surrounded by hills that roll up and away in gentle waves, seeming to mirror the motion of the windblown grass that clothes them. There is the house — low slung, rambling, well kept — and down the hill, on the other side of the garden, an octagonal building of rough sawn lumber that you guess is the studio. You pull the car into the graveled parking area beside the house and cut the engine. In the silence, the May wind whistling softly through the grass brings the distant sound of chimes, like a music just barely heard on the edge of sleep. You get out of the car and look around.

This is a big farm, and a pretty one. The house is flanked by ornamental shrubs and flower beds, the fields grown up in rich stands of grass, the fruit trees carefully protected with cylindrical wire guards. The lettuce in the big garden is thickly clustered, ready for the table, glowing with health as if lit from within. Everything about the place seems neat, orderly, and deliberate — everything except that huge pile of rusting junk sprawling behind the studio building.

But you look again as you get closer and notice that even here there is an order. This is not your typical private junkyard, filled with rusting parts, cars waiting to be cannibalized, old broken washers, bed frames, and everything else you might need someday, maybe.

First of all, the junk is only one layer deep. And that layer is carefully arranged, stacked according to form

Sculptor Mark Blumenstein at the door to his welding studio.



and shape, all the big flywheels here, all the tractor seats hung neatly there, the coil springs in a heap to the left of the cut up sections of old hay rakes. There is a deliberate quality to it all, as if someone had a plan for this stuff, and intended to use it for something soon. Like it had been arranged so neatly because whoever put it there wanted to be able to find it later, without having to perform a major archaeological dig to get it.

That this scrap heap looks deliberate and orderly doesn't surprise you. Because it is the private preserve of Mark Blumenstein, the metal sculptor. It is a working, active scrap heap, across which the powerful force of his imagination is constantly playing, picking out a piece here, holding it up against another, discarding it to try something else in turn. From this junkyard he draws not just the raw

material, but the inspiration for his work, work that is in many major collections, sculptures that are sold all across the country, across the world. This heap of humble scrap is the womb of his art, the place from which new sculptures will be born.

Mark comes around the side of the building now, a burly, friendly looking guy, wearing the rough clothes of a welder, an igniter dangling at his belt. He pushes back his dark goggles and shakes hands, motions you into the studio towards a chair. The radio is tuned to a country and western station, but he snaps it off, grabs the chair across from you and stretches his legs out, sprawling into it. The big room is filled with half finished sculptures, pieces of metal of every description, car parts, welding tanks, vises, hammers — the materials and tools of Blumenstein's trade.

He hasn't always been a welder, nor has this always been his home. A Philadelphia native, the son of a musician, Mark's major interest when he was growing up was agriculture.

"I went to an agricultural high school, in Philly," he recalls. "I always wanted to have my hands in the ground, planting something, digging, being in touch with the earth. After high school, I went off to Penn State for a year. I thought I might become a veterinarian. I took 18 credits in the first year. My graduating class in high school had eight people in it — so it really didn't prepare me for college, particularly a big place like Penn State. After a year I was wondering what I was doing there. It was obvious I wasn't going to get into vet school.

"So I started working for a small photographic store, got a job after a

Blumenstein at work on what looks to us like a post-industrial pterodactyl. The piece is typical of his whimsical work.



few years working for Peerless Photo in Philadelphia, went on to Eastern Color — about two years as a technical rep for this processing plant, and from there to Minox. I got to where I couldn't handle corporate life anymore, so I started to work in wood — did wood sculptures and laminations, played with the wood. I did mall shows and exhibits here and there and took commissions and after that we moved to West Virginia. Made that big transition."

Blumenstein pauses, leans back, studies the ceiling. You wonder how he made the West Virginia connection, what prompted him to choose the Mountain State as the place to live and work and raise a family. As if anticipating your question, he begins to speak again, his words taking up the quick rhythm of someone recalling an exciting part of his past.

"When I was in Penn State, we'd come down here on weekends. We'd go canoeing, we'd go rock climbing and cave exploring," he says.

"I really got into cave exploring. Where can a man go on this earth where he is the first person to see or touch anything? It's very rare. But yet there's a whole unknown world beneath our feet that remains to be explored and found. It's adventure-some, it's beautiful, it's dangerous. I wanted to find out what the inner world was like. I did that for a long time.

"When I was living in Philadelphia and working in the photographic field, there was an organization called the Philadelphia Grotto, which was a chapter of the National Speleological Society. I really became heavily involved with that. We would come to West Virginia at the drop of a hat for a weekend. Leave there after work at five o'clock, get down here at three in the morning, camp out, go caving Saturday and Sunday, jump in the car, get back in time to shower and go to work. Mondays were really rough, but we had a lot of fun on the weekends.

"And then one day it just became obvious that there were a lot of special people who lived here and it was a special land. A place where you could go and grow your own food. And the air was clean. And the people were genuine — so we moved here. Bought a small farm, took a year

to fix it up and then moved down."

"When I bought the place, there were big heaps of old metal around the farm," Mark continues. "There were a lot of old cars and trucks on the place, too, so there was a need to cut them up and carry them off. So I bought a set of torches, rented some tanks, and began the process. And one thing led to another, until instead of cutting up things, I started putting things together, while making many trips to the junkyard for more materials. Instead of taking junk off the place, I ended up bringing more in.

"I just couldn't see discarding pieces of the past that so many hands had been involved with. There was a spirit in the metal, you know, and it was speaking to me. I didn't realize it at the time — that it was going to be so powerful, giving me all the opportunities to explore all these avenues in art that I had never explored before. Then these entities started to appear in the art, the kind of things you see now. And they have carried on for all this time — 17 years."

The whole time Mark has been speaking, you've been half aware of that same faint chiming on the wind that greeted you when you stepped from your car. It's louder now, running under and around his words, mixing with his speech, seeming to add to it, to amplify its meaning. He pauses, and leans back, and then, restless after so much talking, jumps up from his chair.

"Come on," he says, "let's go look at some work."

He leads you across the littered floor of the big studio to a side door. As he opens it the chiming grows louder, more definite and insistent. You step through the doorway and suddenly you're among the sculptures.

There's a whole field of them, and you see that the chiming you heard is caused by the wind moving among them, causing various hanging pieces of metal to ring against each other. Each individual piece has a unique voice: a huge circular blade that once cut saw logs into planking lets out a resonant boom; pieces of old leaf springs ring with a higher note. They all blend into one voice, an oddly delicate sound, one that you would not have expected, nor associated with the rusting parts of old machines. Mark



Blumenstein's creatures are balanced to stand, cling, or hang in the air. This one clutches a bench back. Photo by Michael Keller, courtesy Otis Laury.

moves among them, more animated now, as if his creations were energizing him. He begins to speak again, describing the process through which he creates his playful art.

"Sometimes the materials speak for themselves, and sometimes there's just a need to create and do the work," he says.

"So then the work begins and the piece begins to evolve in the process. It seems to work both ways, but in most cases, it's the energy of the metal itself and the power of the process. Because the process is so intense — using explosive gasses, or electrical welding — it's like electronic explosions that take place in front of you creating this adhesive process that allows you to put these metals together."

"In a way, the materials are the key," Mark continues.

"I get my materials all over. Auctions, junkyards, antique stores, people bring me old metal, tell me I ought to come and get it. Many different



A man in Blumenstein's line of work needs his own junkyard. Durable, striking objects are the ones which find their way into his sculptures.

places. But recently I've even taken to using some new materials because they present such a unique shape. It's nice to incorporate both new and old together — previously it was just found materials.

"I have my own junkyard. It's pretty low right now — I need to restock. And that's really one of the hardest things, finding materials. When I first began, there was an enormous amount of material out there. But I can see such a change in the last 15 years in the availability of older materials. In essence, they've been ground up, they're gone, they're someplace else in another form. You might find them on old farms — sometimes I do. People say, 'Hey, come over and look at what I've got in my barn — maybe we can trade for a piece of art.' And I've done that. Get old hay rakes and things like that that are no longer any use to anyone. They

become pieces of art. That's always fun."

Blumenstein pauses, surrounded by his sculptures, hesitates, shakes his head and begins to speak again.

"Everything is plastic and aluminum these days," he says. "Very little of it is really weldable stuff. It's the very essence of planned obsolescence. And that seems to be taking over everything. It's like that toaster oven I got up at the house. It will never be a piece of art. It's filled with glass and plastic and electrical material and when it breaks it won't be much use to me at all. It's only lasted three or four years and it looks like it's time for a new one. And that's the problem with looking for materials — that the materials that maintain their presence over the decades are now gone or going extremely fast. Because the materials they're making things out of anymore don't last."

He looks around him at his sculptures — all made of durable American metal, all bearing the solidity of objects that will be around a long time. He runs his hands over a weld, leans back to look at it from another angle, then, as if satisfied with what he sees, he begins to speak again.

"You know, I taught myself to weld," he says. "There's a certain amount of control that you need. They teach you in tech school how to make a perfect weld. I'm not so much interested in making a perfect weld as making a bond between the materials that works. It doesn't have to look good. In fact, the less it looks good, the more it adds to the art," Mark continues. "The rougher it is, the more texture it provides. You can use that process in creating texture in the piece. I love the actual process of welding. It's also nice to do because it's a real functional thing in the com-

munity. My neighbor can bring over his plow and I can fix it for him. There's a real need in the neighborhood to have someone who can weld. I don't mind doing it for my neighbors."

He pauses again, as if puzzled, trying to put into words the inner experience that stands behind his art. The wind moves constantly among the sculptures, the high clouds of an hour ago are being driven before it, and the west is spread with a sullen darkness. The sculptures become more animated, as if sensing the approaching storm. They sway and clang and rattle, tossing in the breeze. Surveying the work he has created, Mark Blumenstein shakes his head and smiles; when he speaks, his voice is tinged with a mixture of wistfulness and affection.

"The metal has so many meanings, so many dimensions. It means different things to everyone. I was in a juxtaposition, one time, at Cedar Lakes, at a craft show. I was set up right next to a farm museum. And here were all these guys coming over from the farm machinery museum saying, 'Look at that good old crosscut saw in the bird's wing.'

"In a way it was very strange. I didn't feel guilty about destroying something they really cherished, because where I retrieved those things from they were bound and determined to be something different. They were doomed as what they were — fated to be new railroad tracks or car bodies, or whatever they do with recycled metal. So what I was really doing was preserving these pieces in a different form."

Now the rain comes down, first big, gentle drops, then a steady increasing downpour. We retreat into the studio, and stand at the big window watching gray sheets of water sweep across the valley. A distant look plays across Mark's face, as if he were gazing both out at the rain and inward as well, both recalling the past and imagining the future. When he speaks, his voice is softer, almost a whisper, a voice reserved for speaking about things held close to the heart.

"West Virginia was like a canvas — my canvas. It presented the materials and I just gathered the tools and put it together. And it's still happening. I thought maybe after 17 or 18 years

I'd get tired of it, but now I'm really exploring the depths of it, compared to when it was newer to me. Because I try not to duplicate anything. The essence of art to me is to continually try to explore new ground. And I continue to find that in the metal, but it's

harder and harder. That's why I see so many artists change their medium, and explore new ways to express themselves. But there's something so magnetic and electrifying about this process that it's hard for me to put it down." ❁

It's not quite a helicopter but good enough for a flight of fancy. Mark Blumenstein's sculptures are limited only by his imagination.



For most people, Cedar Lakes, the FFA-FHA Camp and Conference Center nestled in the hills of Jackson County, calls forth memories of hot July days at the famed Mountain State Art and Craft Fair or relaxing family times among the serene lakes and tall cedars that give the place its name. But for Robert Easter nostalgia comes in the form of memories of home, of a living past when the lakes were non-existent and the cedar hills were his own. Where children and adults alike now delight in feeding the scores of geese and ducks inhabiting the grounds, or enjoying paddleboat excursions and fishing, the Easter family once raised corn, hay, cane, and other crops, and their cattle roamed the pasture fields. For Cedar Lakes was a working farm just a generation ago, and it's no trouble at all for Robert to carry us back.

"We made 500 gallon of molasses a year from that cane," Robert, a silver-haired man with a healthy tan and a smile that reaches his green eyes, reminisces. "Never sold any. Used it to make vinegar, used it in the place of sugar, didn't have the money to buy sugar. We'd give away ten to 12 gallon and use the rest."

"We still have some of the jars they used to store it in," Robert's wife, Hazel, a tall, trim, and striking woman reminds her husband.

"Yeah," Robert agrees. "Five-gallon jars, two and three gallon."

"And they'd clean out the jars with sand," Hazel remarks. This reminds me of how my mother used to buy milk in gallon glass jugs from a farmer, and she'd send us out by the porch where the water dripping off the eaves made sandy gravel in the soil. We'd sift some of the fine gravel into the jugs with water and swish it around until the milk residue was gone.

"My grandfather, Joseph Henry Easter, Sr., moved to the farm with his wife, Martha Frances Hill, and their children in 1910 from Boone County," Robert tells us. "I'd say his farm was like a plantation. Up there on Tug Fork the house Grandpa lived in is still standing, but there used to be a covered bridge across to it."

Leaning back in his chair, Robert envisions the old homeplace and takes us on an imaginary journey from the Tug Fork Road down into the area now known as Cedar Lakes where he

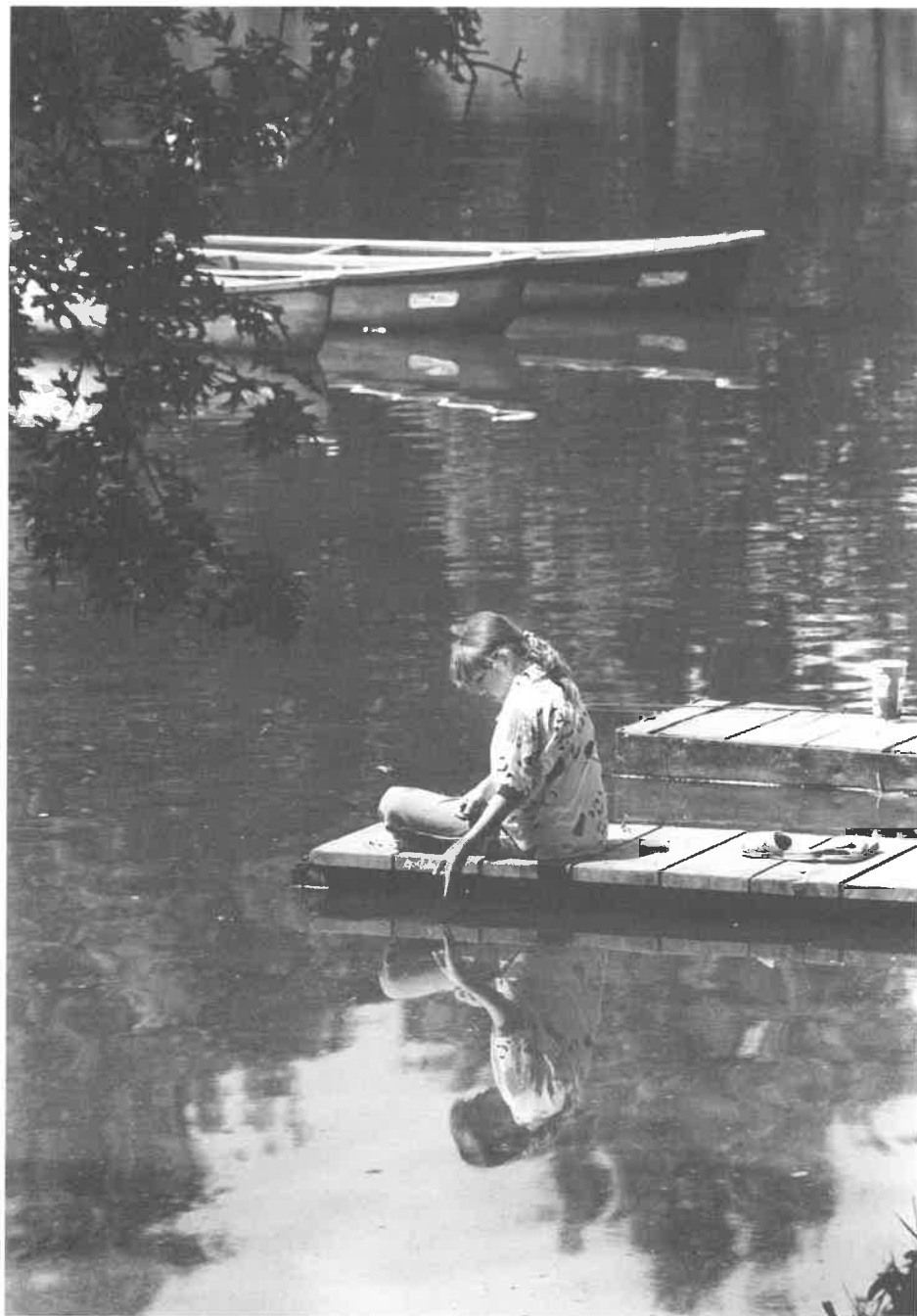
Cedar Lakes

Recalling the Farm Years

By Nancy Merical

Photographs by Michael Keller

Cedar Lakes is a dandy place for fishing and loafing and late summer is the time for it. This is Bethany Price of Jackson County.





Robert Easter still has a proprietary air as he strolls the grounds of the old family farm. He recalls that this field near the Cedar Lakes dining hall once grew corn and cane.

spent his boyhood. "The first thing you came to on the farm was the icehouse, built out of logs," he says. "It was insulated with sawdust. They'd fill that in the wintertime with chunks of ice cut out of Mill Creek and it'd last all summer."

Hazel interrupts our journey with an amusing tale the frozen creek brings to her mind. "When Robert was little, the water came up and froze in the creek, and when it went down the ice kind of sagged. He was just little..."

"...about four or five," Robert guesses.

"...and of course the rest were older. They got a rocking chair..."

"...one my dad made me."

"Yeah. They put Robert in the chair and scooted him down on that ice and played with him until they got tired of it. They left him then, and he couldn't get out."

"I'd try to get up that slope and I'd — SWISH! — slide back!" Robert

laughs. "They finally felt sorry for me and came back and got me out."

"Anyway," he continues his descriptive journey, "on down from the icehouse was the smokehouse, and then the grainery. There was a cellar below that, where you stored apples and plums and everything else in the fruit line from the orchard."

"Let me tell you something interesting about that cellar," Hazel breaks in once more. "You know where the bathrooms are now across from the picnic tables? Well, they were made out of the cellar house that stood on Robert's farm."

"And past the cellar," Robert continues, "was another building where they stored the hives for honeybees. Then you come into the house from a big long porch. The house was a Jenny Lind with five fireplaces, one in each of the two bedrooms upstairs and three downstairs, one in a great big parlor. The kitchen had cupboards clear to the ceiling and a big black

cookstove. A hallway cut the house in two right down the middle and came out on the small front porch."

"Off to the left of the porch was a well house where they done all their washing, shaving, all that. The well house was pretty good-sized. I remember the house had deer hide for carpets. There was a big round-like barn and a scale house to weigh cattle. He generally kept around eight to 12 teams of horses. There was a double set of cribs we kept corn in, and I'm guessing it held 1,000 bushels of corn. And there was a woodshed."

"The house faced Mill Creek and had great big maple trees out front on each end and a big stone in the middle of the yard, at least four feet square and three feet high for mounting horses. Grandpa Joseph used to always mount his horse from that stone. I recall him as a big man, but some disagree with me on that. I always heard they had to build a special casket for him because he was so

tall. Grandpa would ride down our way where we lived by where the Cedar Lakes Greenhouse now is on a big white horse and out into the chipyard where Dad would snake in whole trees from off our property, and he'd tie the horse up and jabber for awhile."

With a gleam in her eye Hazel remembers another story she can tell on her husband. "Sometimes when Robert was small, before they moved to Cedar Lakes," she chuckles, "Okey Knopp used to come through there and stop for buttermilk or banana cream pie or a slab of cornbread or anything he could get to eat."

Robert takes up the story, noting that his mother, Jesse Bosworth Easter, tried to accommodate Mr. Knopp. "My mother always had something around he could eat. He was always wanting to cut my hair!"

"He always liked to aggravate Robert," Hazel confirms, "and one time Robert crawled under the house to hide from him. The house was so low to the ground he got stuck and they had to dig him out."

"Yeah," Robert grins sheepishly. "They dug me out with a grubbing hoe. I don't know why everyone picked on me. I guess it was because I was little."



Joseph Henry Easter, seated center in the photo above, looks every inch the patriarch he was. "I recall him as a big man," says grandson Robert, whose parents are seated at left. The new photograph shows the Easter homeplace as it stands today. This part of the original farm was not taken by the Cedar Lakes complex and is now occupied by Robert's cousin Helen. Photographer unknown for early photo, late 1920's.



"...and the young one," Hazel interjects.

"I remember Preacher Willy Hill, Uncle Willy," Robert says of another visitor. "He'd always come out on Easter, he made it a habit, and he'd always aim to get across the table from me. Now, we had a long table with a bench in behind, between the wall and the table, and chairs around on the sides. Mother'd boil about five or six dozen eggs, and every time I'd break open a boiled egg, Uncle Willy'd start talking about that little chicken that was in there."

"I see the wing of that one there!" he'd say. Well, I'd drop that egg. He'd shut up then, and I'd wait a while till I thought he wasn't paying no attention and I'd get another egg. Same old thing again! I'd wind up not getting one egg to eat."

"They always loved cornbread," Hazel informs us. "They ate it every day. One time the older kids decided that Poppy — that's what they called Robert's dad — had to get flour. They wanted biscuits. But they soon got thoroughly sick of biscuits."

"Junior Elliot went to school one time," Robert recalls, "and told, 'Boy! Them Easters are really hard up. We was over there and all they had for supper was cornbread and milk.' But, of course, that was all we wanted."

"Was it Joe that stepped on the toe of his sock and fell into the fireplace?" Hazel asks, referring to Robert's older brother.

"That was Robert!" Robert laughs.

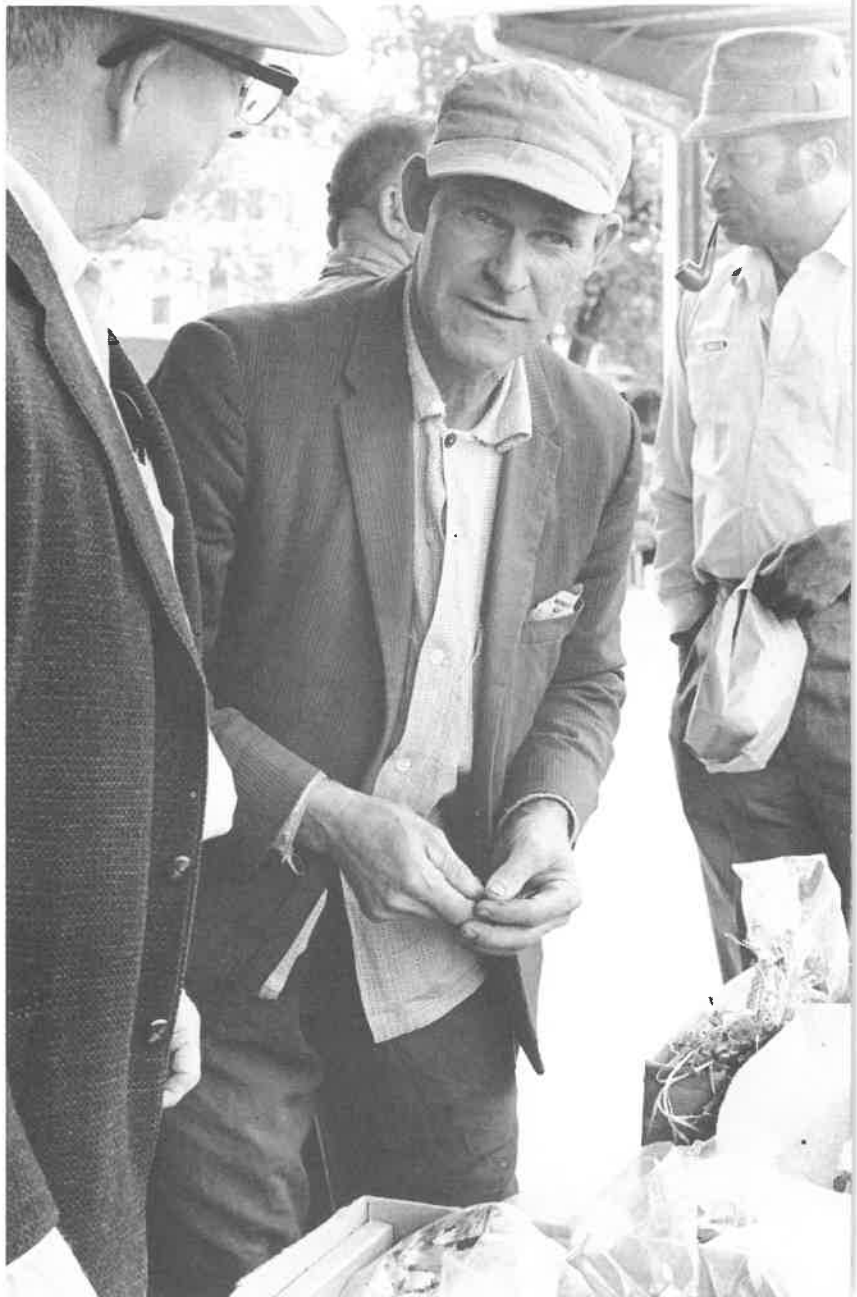
"That was Robert," Hazel remembers.

"I remember it was so cold in the kitchen in the wintertime, ice would freeze in the buttermilk crock," Robert explains. "We would break the ice and get a bowl of buttermilk, crumb cornbread in it and run back to the fireplace in the living room to eat it where it was warm."

"One time I got in a hurry and stepped on the toe of my sock and fell down right on one knee in the fire. Coals burnt that knee clear around. I was just a little feller. My mother checked it out and sent Ralph to the barn, 'as quick as you can go!' she told him, to chase up a cow and catch some fresh cow manure. She covered my whole knee with that fresh manure and bandaged it. On the third day she



At the Fair: The Mountain State Art and Craft Fair, West Virginia's biggest craft event, attracts thousands of visitors to Cedar Lakes in early July each year. The fair was founded in 1963 and was a thriving institution by the time these photos were taken in the early 1970's. The pictures show the late W. G. Eubank of Webster Springs (below, by Jeri Buxton) riving a shingle with mallet and froe; Mason County herb doctor C. F. "Catfish" Gray (below right, by Tom Screven) conferring with visitor; the late Lucy Quarrier (above right, by Gerald Ratliff) at her loom; and the skilled hands of the late Clay County craftsman Jenes Cottrell (above, by Gerald Ratliff). Hundreds of skilled craftspeople have since followed these early demonstrators.





Robert Easter on a recent trip to Cedar Lakes. He sold his part of the original farm in 1950 and made his career outside agriculture.

took that bandage off and my knee was white as snow, completely healed up and no scar, no nothing."

Robert recalls another interesting fact about the old homeplace. "When Grandpa lived, every year they'd have a big family reunion. They'd come down from Boone County on sleds, wagons, or anything they could get there in, into my grandfather's farm. They held it over in the orchard where they'd make seats from slabs. They built those seats every year. They'd have preaching and singing all day long, except when they left off to eat. My mother would make what they called Farmer's Pie — that's apple pie, only they were stacked together about six in a row. I'd say there'd be at least 100 to 150, maybe 200, people there.

"We moved to the farm when Grandpa died," Robert explains. "I was eight years old at the time. The land was divided between the three sons."

The eldest son, James Michael (Mick), Robert's father, inherited the portion of land along Mill Creek and Old Route 21, where the Cedar Lakes bathrooms and picnic shelters now stand, and Robert's Uncle Eb (Daniel Elben) lived on the upper end of the tract where the swimming pool is located today. Uncle Henry (Joseph Henry, Jr.) lived on up the hollow above where the Chase's Mill covered bridge used to be.

Hazel says, "Robert's house stood there before Mill Creek with those

Building Cedar Lakes

The old Easter family farm of the early 1900's evolved into the modern Cedar Lakes Conference Center of today. It has been 40 years since work began on the Jackson County facility. Taking a look at its history, it's apparent that Cedar Lakes resulted from a lot of hard work and determination on the part of many individuals and several organizations.

The idea for a camp and conference center for West Virginia's youth started in the late 1940's. A group of agriculture and home economics teachers went to the State Board of Education with the idea of establishing a site for leadership training programs. Students from across the state would learn and then take their knowledge back home.

The board of education gave the go-ahead and in 1949 the state

legislature passed Senate Bill No. 38, authorizing the development of such a facility by the West Virginia associations of Future Farmers of America and Future Homemakers of America through the Vocational Division of the State Board of Education.

Many sites were proposed, studied and visited. As the field narrowed, four were left in the running — the old Alderson Academy at Alderson, a site in the Monongahela National Forest near Elkins, a county farm in Tucker County near Parsons, a Nicholas County park near Summersville, and the present site near Ripley in Jackson County.

In December of 1949 the Jackson County site was selected and on March 15, 1950, 231 acres of land were officially deeded to the State Board of Education by Oliver

The wildlife committee took the high ground in this 1954 planning tour. The members are Edna Hall, George Briading, L. Cavendish, Mr. VanMeter and James Beach. Photographer unknown.



Kessel, a prominent Ripley citizen, on behalf of the county court and the citizens of Jackson County. The FFA and FHA had a place to begin to build their dream.

By the fall of 1950 work began. The FFA removed fences, demolished old buildings and cleaned stream banks on the site. In 1951 the state legislature appropriated \$237,000 for construction of two dams, utilities, fencing and landscaping, and equipment purchases. In April of that year FFA members from Grantsville, Parkersburg, Point Pleasant, Ravenswood, Ripley, Spencer, Sandyville, Walton, and Winfield and trainees from Clay, Jackson, Mason, Roane, Wood and Wirt counties planted more than 15,000 trees.

Improvements and construction continued for several years. In 1951 construction began on the lakes, situated to reflect the buildings around them. By 1953 the utilities and roads were finished, and the main lodge and FFA cottage were underway. In 1954, \$55,000 was approved to build a bridge at the entrance to the grounds.

The camp opened on January 7, 1955, but it was not until 1957 that the name Cedar Lakes was selected. More than 100 names were suggested. Among the reasons for choosing Cedar Lakes as a name was the fact that the "two predominant physical features of the Conference Center are the two beautiful lakes and the abundance of native cedar trees," according to the April 1957 *FFA News*.

Over the next 30-odd years Cedar Lakes grew into the facility its founders had originally imagined. Other cottages were added to the grounds, named for the groups who paid for them. Today the lodging units are clustered around the lakes with names such as Lions, Marshall, Mason, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Bankers, and Vo-Ag Teachers. The years brought an assembly building, classrooms, an administration building, a dining



Cedar Lakes is an FFA-FHA camp, and members have taken an active role from the first. Here FFA boys from Kanawha County plant a tree in the spring of 1952. Photo by Herman Postlethwaite.

hall, a crafts center, chapel, superintendent's house and a popular swimming pool.

The Cedar Lakes Conference Center is still operated by the West Virginia Department of Education and continues to promote the training of FFA-FHA youth leaders. Other groups, young and old, use the place regularly. Cedar Lakes also provides public recreation in the form of softball, swimming, tennis, fishing, hiking, miniature golf, and canoeing.

Since 1963, Cedar Lakes has been home to the Mountain State Art and Craft Fair, West Virginia's largest outdoor craft event. The many classes offered by the crafts

center provide workshops for artists and craftspeople three times a year.

Plans are in the works for a 50-room motel-style lodge to be built on the grounds, but in the meantime visitors will have plenty of other room to make themselves at home. More than 400 acres of grounds, a variety of lodges and cottages, home-cooked meals, and lots of trees, earth, and sky, make Cedar Lakes Conference Center easy to visit and hard to leave.

— Debby Sonis Jackson

For more information, call (304)372-7000 or write Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, WV 25271.



Easters never left Cedar Lakes just because the place changed hands. Rebecca Easter, Robert's aunt, shown here at left, was head cook until her retirement in 1973. The other women are (left to right) Ada Easter, Flo Pfost, and Mildred Hall. Photographer unknown, summer 1955.

walnut trees in the front yard. You walked down below the covered bridge that's there now and down that little ravine beyond it and up the little raise to his house. It was a nice farm, but there was no access. You had to go down past where the Cedar Lakes Greenhouse is now located and up that road beside it and over the creek, way up around that way."

Robert elaborates. "You could come in either way, across the Chase's Mill Bridge and down through Uncle Henry's, then through Uncle Eb's, and then into my place," he explains, "or you could come across the swinging bridge at Mill Creek. And for a long time there was a boat landing across from the house, a flat, mushy-like shoal where we kept a boat for crossing the creek. We'd bring in groceries that way. Some well drillers who worked across the creek used to pay my mother 50 cents for giving them a ride across in the boat."

The creek provokes yet another family story. "Robert was, I guess, in

his teens," Hazel chuckles, "and one time when it was flooding, he thought it would be fun to drop off the swinging bridge and ride the current down the creek. That was fine until he wanted out."

"I couldn't get out," Robert tells of his plight. "I began to wonder what I was going to do. I turned over on my back and floated for a while, thinking I'd just let the current carry me into the trees. Well, it did, and I grabbed a limb. The current pulled me under twice! A friend, Darrell, had done went across and down the other side with the boat. He looked back and yelled, 'You all right?'"

" 'Yep!' I answered.

" 'What d'ya want?' he yelled back.

" 'I want that boat up here!' I said. That was one time I thought I was a goner.

Robert turns now to a more sober line of thought. "Dad died when I was 14," Robert recollects, "and I quit school and started farming the land."

"Robert was too small at the time to

turn the plow at the end of the row," Hazel comments. "His mother would help him. It took the two of them to get it turned so he could get started back."

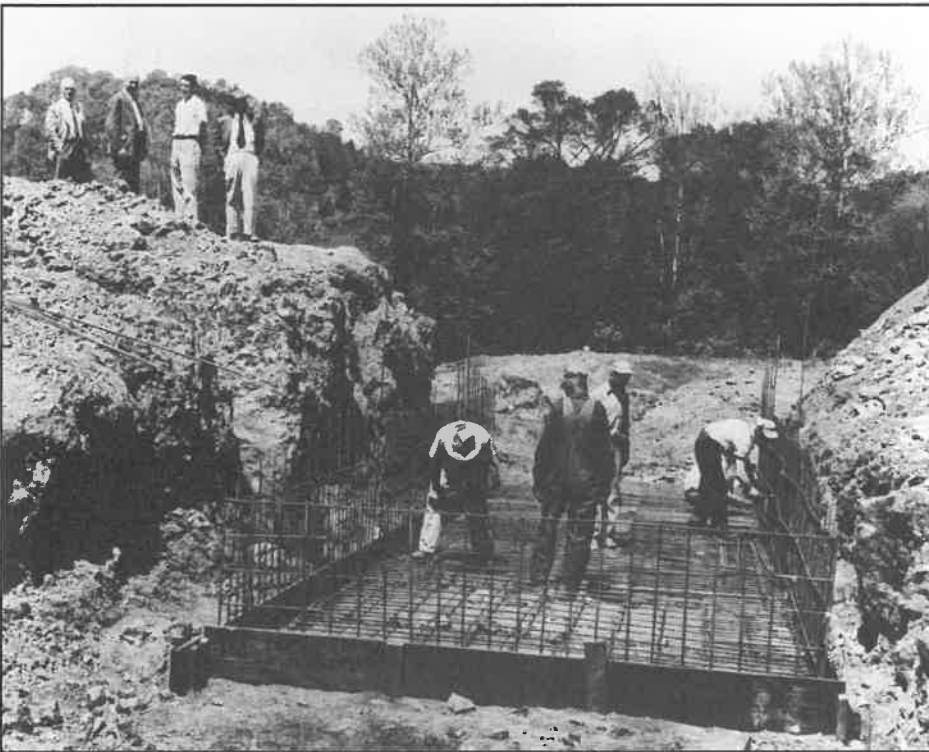
"I've had a rough way to go," Robert agrees, chuckling about it now. "Me and my brother, Joe, were the only two left at home at the time, and before he went into the service we worked together there on the farm for two or three years and at every other little job we could find out. He'd work out one week and I'd stay home and tend the farm, and on Saturday he'd give me money. And if I worked away and he stayed home, I'd give him money.

"We worked for 20 cents an hour," Robert continues. "A man I know had a gun I wanted, and he told me he'd let me have it for \$5, but every time I'd get 50 cents saved up, we'd need the money. I never did get that gun. I saw the man just the other day and told him I had the five dollars now and I wanted my gun," he laughs.



Above: The professionals took over when the Easter family left the farm. The distinguished botanist Earl Core, right, discusses plans with an unidentified associate. Photographer unknown, early 1950's.

Below: Construction proceeded for several years. These men are working on the spillway to the large lake. Photographer unknown, 1952.



"I was the last one home, being the baby. Joe probably would've went on farming the land, but he went in the service and was shipped overseas and killed in '44 landing on the beach. Me and my mother bought the rest of the boys out.

"We had no electricity at first. There was a gas well drilled on our place and we had gas lights. Electricity was put in in '45, '48, and it cost us \$2.10 a month back then. Before electricity we kept milk in the cellar to keep it cool, and during a storm it would sour. Mother lowered the cream for coffee and such into the dug well in a gallon or half-gallon jar to keep it from souring."

"Where the big lake is now was Robert's pasture field," Hazel recalls, "and the meadow was where the five-finger lakes are now. There was a sandy flat along where the cafeteria is now, and the year we were married we picked and canned 56 quarts of dewberries from that flat."

"There was a hanging one night," Robert recalls of a darker episode of local history, "there on the Mount Calvary Hill facing our place. There was a cemetery on the hill, and some of my brothers were out hunting one night and saw a fire up against the hill, so they went to check it out. Here was this man hanging and he was on fire."

"Wire, wasn't it?" Hazel prompts him.

"Hanged with barbed wire," Robert agrees. "They never did find out what happened. He was a colored man.

"And one time my dad and my brother were plowing new ground and they hit a big rock. They uncovered the rock and removed it. There was a print of a feather between that rock and one below it. They removed the other rock and found what looked like human leg and arm bones. They gathered them up and brought them to the house.

"I guess they were still there when the government bought the land," Robert concludes. "That was in April of 1950. We signed the deed on March the 20th when I was 22 years old."

"And we were married March tenth," Hazel adds. "They bought 118 acres from Robert, 80 acres from his Uncle Eb, and around half of the 200-and-some acres his Uncle Henry



Cedar Lakes means more to Robert and Hazel Easter than to most visitors. This lake was once meadow land, says Robert, as his mind continues to roam over the past of this beautiful place.

had. Later on the government bought more acreage from others in the area."

Today Robert and his wife Hazel live in a log house overlooking Route 33 just outside the town of Ripley. Retired from Kaiser Aluminum, Robert keeps busy with his farm and his church, Joes Run Memorial,

where he is trustee. Hazel is known for her beautiful flower arrangements which she and Robert deliver to the sick, and she also is an officer of the Joes Run church. Their home is filled with collectibles and antiques and Hazel's crafts. Their two children live nearby, Robbie and his wife Diane below them, and Judy and her husband Randy

above them. Each of the children have given Robert and Hazel two grandchildren.

Ask anyone in and around the town of Ripley, and if they know Robert Easter they will tell you he is a compassionate and likable man. He and Hazel give a lot of their time to visiting the sick and comforting those who have lost loved ones. Perhaps some of this comes from Robert's early childhood, when he learned what it was to grieve over loved ones lost to war and disease, and what it meant to be a neighbor and friend.

Cedar Lakes today holds many memories for my own family. We've picnicked there, played softball and volleyball in the fields and basketball on the courts; we've fed the fish and fowl, fished the lakes and walked the trails; we've participated in the Art and Craft Fair, band camps and conventions; we've taken our grandchildren on the paddleboats and enjoyed church fellowship under the shelters and weddings of friends on the premises.

But now the place means more than all that. After hearing the Easter family tales of hardship and good times that took place on the land before it became a public facility, I will never again step foot on Cedar Lakes soil without seeing in my mind's eye the crops of cane, hay, and corn, the cattle roaming the hills, and Grandpa Joseph Henry mounting a large white horse from the mounting stone. 🌿



The Friend family — Bryant with young son and wife Hazel, with Grandfather Friend between them — prepare to leave Richwood to work in the 1942 New York harvest. Photo by John Collier, courtesy Library of Congress.

1942 Harvest Query

The federal government recruited citizens from Nicholas and Clay counties to travel to New York State to assist in the 1942 harvest, in a wartime "food for victory" drive. The first group left from Richwood in early September, heading for Rochester in a Farm Security Administration bus. More were to follow by chartered train. We are researching this subject for a future GOLDENSEAL story. We would like to hear from you if you recall the harvest project, or know someone who does. Please write to the Editor, GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305.

The Quinnimont church stands firm after 115 years. Photo by Michael Keller.

I sat in the sanctuary of the small church, remembering the night, over 50 years ago, when I had walked down the aisle to make my "profession of faith" in response to the invitation of the pastor, Brother Bowling. The aisle had seemed very long then, for I was only seven years old. The Sunday afternoon following the close of the revival meeting, I, along with the other converts, had been baptized in the nearby New River, and my name was added to the list of members of the Quinnimont Baptist Church. I returned last September 17, the day of the annual church homecoming at Quinnimont, to renew old memories.

There was another reason for my visit, besides returning to the place where my faith was born. My husband had inherited, through his father, an old tool chest. When we opened it to examine the tools, we found, rolled around a wooden dowel, some drawings on sheets of fine fabric, apparently linen. They proved to be architect's drawings for a church building.

Wrapped inside the drawings, on lined legal-sized writing paper, we found a handwritten contract. This contract, between "C. C. Brown, I. H. Easley, H. I. Messenger, and J. W. Chambers of the first part and the New River Car Company through its General Superintendent of the second part," was for the building of the Quinnimont Church, for "the sum of eight hundred and fifty dollars." The contract called for the work to be finished "in a neat, substantial and workmanlike manner" by March 1, 1875. The document was signed on November 25, 1874, a little over a year after Quinnimont mine operator Joseph L. Beury shipped the first carload of New River coal over the newly completed Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad.

C. C. Brown, one of the builders who had signed the old contract, was my husband's great-grandfather. A pioneer settler in Mount Hope, Brown was a veteran of the Civil War. His great-great-grandson, Ronald Adkins



Quinnimont

Going Back to a New River Town

By Leona G. Brown



Above: Author Leona Brown's family in 1930. Father Leonard Gwinn holds Joel while mother Minnie holds Marshall, with Leona in the middle. Photographer unknown.

of Mabscott, and Ronald's wife JoAnn, had also come to last fall's church reunion, eager to see what recognizable features remained of this ancestor's handiwork.

We had recently learned that most of the town of Quinnimont has been acquired by the National Park Service as part of the New River Gorge National River. Through a telephone call to the Glen Jean office of Andrew Kardos, chief of interpretation for the National River, I was informed that decisions would soon be made about original structures remaining in what was once a busy coal and railroad town. Some buildings would be razed, Kardos said, and some preserved or possibly restored as funds permit.

We could see many changes as we compared the old drawings to the present church building. The win-

dows have been replaced. The front steps and the vestibule are gone. But the steeple, the decorative structures at the corners of the eaves, and the small extension of the building where the pulpit and the present entry are located, appear to be much the same. We learned from another homecoming visitor, a contemporary of mine, that the entire building had been placed on rollers and moved approximately 100 feet up the hill when the present highway was built in the 1930's.

We quickly decided that someone with more training in architecture and historic preservation would have to make the decision about whether to save or destroy the old church. My own feelings about the place were strictly personal. Memories of childhood flooded back as I attended the service prepared in celebration of

Below: The Quinnimont train station as our author recalls it from childhood. Photo by W. Monypeny, 1935; courtesy C&O Historical Society.



homecoming, listened to the special music performed by guests and a group of children, and heard the sermon of the present pastor, Gene Tal-
lent. As a Quinnimont child in the 1930's, I had taken part in many such services.

Quinnimont, named from the Latin words for "five mountains" because of the five peaks visible from the river bottom where it lies, hummed with activity in the early 1930's. The terminus of both the Laurel Creek and Piney branches of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, Quinnimont was the site of a telegraph tower, a ticket office and passenger station, and a busy switching yard. Trains hauling coal from the mines located along the branch lines were switched to the C&O main line here. Freight trains hauling supplies for towns up the branch lines received their orders at Quinnimont, and even the crack

main-line passenger trains like the *Fast Flying Virginian* and the *Sportsman* stopped here. The local trains, numbers 4, 14, and 8 eastbound, and 7 and 13 westbound, provided transportation for the residents of Quinnimont to larger towns for shopping, medical care, and visiting.

Few people in Quinnimont owned a car in those days. Almost every family included one or more railroad employees, who were eligible for passes permitting them and their families to ride free, at least on the local trains. Because of the convenient schedules and the frequency of service, it was possible to board a train in Quinnimont early in the morning, travel to Hinton or Charleston, spend the day shopping or attending to business, and return home that evening.

A little passenger and mail train, affectionately called "Fanny," whose conductor we called Captain Ashley,

made a daily trip up the Piney Branch from Prince to Beckley. I recall one December day when my whole family rode Fanny to Beckley to see the Christmas parade, with Santa and his reindeer live and in person.

My father, a C&O telegraph operator, would occasionally take his children to work with him. It may have been against the railroad rules but was very educational for us. He often worked at the tower in Quinnimont, but sometimes was on the "extra list." Then he commuted by local passenger, freight or coal trains, riding the caboose to other towers up and down the line.

These towers were all similar. Where there were railroad yards, as at Quinnimont, there was a row of switch levers protruding through slots in the floor. These levers were pulled back and forth by hand to move the switches in the tracks in the yards,

The Quinnimont signal tower — QN cabin in railroad parlance — was a local landmark until demolished by the C&O a few years ago. This photo by Doug Chadwick is from the late 1970's.



allowing cars to be moved around as needed and trains to be made up. Sometimes my father let us "pull the switches," with his help, of course.

Messages and train orders were sent by means of a hand-operated telegraph key, in Morse code. Later there were telephones, but operators still practiced to improve their speed and proficiency on the "bug," as the telegraph key was called.

The train orders were written by hand, on yellow paper, placed in a loop at the end of a long wand, and handed up to the engineer in the cab as the train passed the tower. After removing the message, the trainman threw the wand from the window of the cab, to be retrieved and used again. At some of the more remote towers on the branch lines we children were assigned the job of running along the track to retrieve the wand.

My memories of life in Quinnimont are enhanced by my mother's diaries. She faithfully kept a record of her daily activities from 1929 until her death in 1981. On March 1, 1932, along with "sewed and mended," she wrote "Lindbergh baby stolen!" But usually Mother recorded few of what most people would consider important events; she was more interested

in everyday life, mentioning that a neighbor dropped by or that we had gone to see Mrs. Breeden's kittens. Her diaries furnish a good record of the names of the families living in Quinnimont at that time, as she mentions her neighbors and those involved in church activities. Edna Breeden, whose kittens we went to see, was a Sunday school teacher; her granddaughter, with her husband, a missionary to Venezuela, was another of the guests at last year's Quinnimont homecoming.

The social life of the community, as seen through my mother's diaries, seems to have centered around the church. My father taught a young men's Bible class. Hours and hours of his time off the job were spent working on the church building. He organized volunteers to dig a basement and build a foundation under the church, making room for Sunday school classes and a place for prayer meetings. He served as Sunday school superintendent, and on a Hektograph duplicating machine at our home he published a church paper, a sort of newsletter carrying short inspirational articles and announcements of church activities. My brother and I helped distribute this paper from house to house.

Sundays were busy for us. Sunday school began at ten o'clock, followed by preaching at eleven. Sometimes there was a planning meeting or a young people's activity in the afternoon. BYPU (Baptist Young People's Union) met at 6:00 p.m., followed by preaching again at night. There was always prayer meeting on Wednesday night. The Ladies Aid Society met once or twice a month, on a weekday afternoon. Revivals were frequent, with services every night for a week or so.

A commemorative plate, which may have been made in the 1950's, possibly for the 50th anniversary of the Quinnimont Baptist Church, gives some of the history of the congregation. "The Quinnimont Baptist Church was organized by Reverend Dave Richmond, a Missionary Baptist minister, in 1909," according to the legend on the plate's reverse. "The church was formerly used by the Presbyterian and the Christian Church, and was a community church. The church has grown and has been remo-



Howard Brown with some of his great-grandfather's tools. C. C. Brown contracted to build the Quinnimont church in 1874. Photo by Doug Chadwick.

New River Natural History

A Naturalist's View of the New River Gorge National River by Kurt Andrew Buhlman is a nature study of a special place in West Virginia, a 52-mile stretch of the New River from Hinton to Fayette Station.

Buhlman, who spent two summers researching the book, says his purpose is "to acquaint the first-time visitor with the gorge and its flora and fauna." He accomplishes this with understandable text and more than 80 photographs that provide a close look at nature in the gorge.

A Naturalist's View begins with a brief geologic history of the New River Gorge area. It goes on to point out that because this natural habitat is so old, it has provided sta-

bility to the wildlife it supports. The river acts as a natural thoroughfare, allowing plants and animals to move in and survive, while the deep canyon shelters a wide range of ecological niches. Therefore some species normally found in other parts of the country thrive in the New River Gorge. Some are found there and nowhere else.

Buhlman's book outlines the gorge's environment in seven chapters, working his way from the ridgetops down to river level. The 46-page softbound book includes a bibliography and index. It sells for \$8.70 including tax, postage and handling. Send a check or money order payable to Eastern National Park and Monument Association to the National Park Service, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846.



The Alderson Baptist Academy class of 1923, with the school building behind them. Leonard Gwinn, our author's father, stands fifth from right. Photographer unknown.

Alderson Baptist Academy

At least three of the young preachers who held services at our Quinnimont Baptist Church in the late '20's and early '30's were students at the Alderson Baptist Academy. Charles Duling, Leslie Bowling and Charles Ball traveled down the C&O main line to minister to our spiritual needs on Sundays, and attended to their own education on weekdays at Alderson. Thus the academy served a vital function in our lives as well as theirs.

In fact, Alderson and similar schools met a broad public need. Private or church-related academies filled an educational void, for our state was slow in establishing good public secondary schools. According to the Ambler and Summers history of West Virginia, "in 1910 there were only fifty 'so-called high schools' in the entire state." The Alderson Baptist Academy provided the opportunity for further education to many people whose schooling would otherwise have ended with the eighth grade.

Easily accessible by rail from most of southern West Virginia, the academy was primarily a boarding school. Alderson offered sound academic courses, including Latin and French. Work scholarships allowed young people from less

affluent families to pay room, board, and tuition by doing most of the school's maintenance, grounds work, kitchen and dining room chores, and cleaning.

There was a strong religious emphasis in all activities, with Bible study and chapel attendance required, but the Baptist Academy was not solely a training school for the ministry. Brothers Bowling and Duling, after graduating from Alderson, went on for degrees from Crosier Theological Seminary near Philadelphia and continued in the ministry. But other graduates found careers in many fields.

One of the academy's predecessors was Allegheny College, established by Virginia Baptists in 1860 in a former resort hotel at Blue Sulphur Springs, not far from Alderson. The building, paid for with Confederate money, was destroyed by Union troops. For many years heirs of the trustees tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Congress to pass a bill to permit payment of war claims for the destruction of the school, hoping to use the money for the support of the academy at Alderson.

One of these heirs was Emma Cornelia Alderson, great granddaughter of the pioneer Baptist preacher, Elder John Alderson,

who settled in 1777 near the present town. "Miss Emma," as she is still fondly remembered by alumni, devoted her life to the academy, which she served as principal, French teacher, dean of women, and president and president emeritus.

One former student who remembers Miss Emma is Mabel Priestly McCormick, now living in South Charleston. Mrs. McCormick enrolled at Alderson in academic year 1928-29, and was there until the school, which had become a junior college in 1919, merged with Broadbudd College at Philippi to become Alderson-Broadbudd College in 1932. She is one of the organizers of the Alderson reunion, which has met the second Sunday in July since 1969, and is active in the Alumni Council for Alderson-Broadbudd College.

According to Mrs. McCormick, the final merger with Broadbudd College "broke Miss Emma's heart." Miss Emma had hoped that the school's dire financial problems could be solved and that it could remain at Alderson.

Perhaps this disappointment contributed to the solemn tone of Miss Emma's autobiography, written a few years later. In "My Life," written in 1938 and published in the spring 1985 issue of *The Alderson-Broadbudd Magazine*, she wrote: "One third of life is spent in preparation, one third in work, and one third in vain regret at not using it better, or in waiting for the end — a tale that is told. It is given to few of us to know just why we have been given life at all, or how best to use it."

Miss Emma died in 1942. She was buried near the grave of Elder John Alderson, in sight of the building which had housed the school to which she devoted her life. Whatever "vain regrets" she may have had, they should not have extended to her service to the institution which bore her family name and which served critical educational needs while providing preachers to country churches such as ours.

— Leona G. Brown

Fanny's Last Run

Fanny, a Chesapeake & Ohio freight and passenger local that enriched the lives of author Leona Brown and her family, was one of many trains that ran the rails of West Virginia and carried rural residents to nearby towns and places beyond. Fanny made two round trips daily, except Sunday, on the C&O Piney Branch from Quin-nimont to Beckley.

The train's name, according to Raleigh miner Amos Hurd, a contemporary, came from a regular passenger, Fanny Crawford of West Raleigh. She rode the train almost daily and, as Hurd told it, all the boys he knew would say let's go meet Fanny, instead of let's go meet the train. The name stuck.

Fanny's last run took place on December 17, 1949. The final trip down the Piney Gorge was reported by Charles Stafford of the *Raleigh Register* the next day. Since 1903 Fanny had served those along her route from Beckley down to the C&O main line in the New River Gorge, and discontinuance of the service was a major event. Fanny carried a full load of paying passengers on her last run, Stafford noted, many of them old friends. Children who had never ridden a train before were put on board.

Some of the passengers knew Fanny quite well. Retired engineer H. H. Withrow had worked as Fanny's fireman and G. W. Matthews as porter. Withrow hung two funeral wreaths on Fanny's engine as she prepared for the final departure from Beckley. Matthews pointed out with pride that he was the second porter to ever run on Fanny. He started in 1907 and continued until 1918, when porters were taken off local runs. Former conductor C. E. "Captain" Ashley, whom Leona Brown recalls with affection and whose house still stands in Quin-nimont today, was remembered by Stafford as "Mr. Fanny himself."

Beckley Postmaster J. T. Hollands-worth expected to miss the train for

Engineer H. B. Youell sits on the cowcatcher in this photograph of Fanny with crew and friends. This picture was made in 1918 in Quin-nimont. Photographer unknown, courtesy C&O Historical Society.



more than sentimental reasons. "The worst thing that could happen to us at Christmastime was the discontinuance of Fanny," he told the reporter. Hollandsworth went on to explain that with Fanny hauling the mail there was enough room in the train car for it to be sorted on the journey from Prince.

As Fanny waited for conductor B. E. Walker to give engineer A. L. Teubert the highball, a small crowd gathered to see her off. Fanny had been late getting to Beckley that last time because "one of those modern main-line jezebels" was behind schedule, according to Stafford.

As the little train got underway, Teubert backed her down to the nearby town of Raleigh to begin the cold trip down Piney Creek Gorge. Fanny went through Stanaford, never stopping, at 12:05 p.m. and reached McCreery at 12:15, discharged a passenger and then crossed the New River into Prince. Most everyone disembarked there, and Fanny and her crew continued down the tracks to Quin-nimont, their memories the only thing crowding the train now.

Fanny's trip from Beckley to Prince had lasted 42 minutes. The last run ended at about 12:30 p.m. in Quin-nimont. Fanny's locomotive

was soon assigned to other work and her coaches retired to the C&O car pool in Hinton.

In 46 years Fanny had done her part as railroading changed the face of West Virginia, aiding the state's development by expanding mining, timbering and farming operations. West Virginians had a real love affair with the railroad and stories still abound about such trains as *Little Jim*, Pocahontas County's first locomotive, used in the white pine woods near Dunmore in 1885. There were the main-line luxury trains like the *Fast Flying Virginian* and the *Sportsman* — and on the other end of the scale, such locomotives as *Old Slobberface*, a steam engine that hauled coal from Widen.

As dieselization was accomplished, primarily between 1945 and 1955, steam railroading began to fade. Passenger service declined at about the same time. By the 1960's the diesel had almost completely replaced the steam locomotive, but not in the minds of those whose lives had been shaped by them. The old iron work horses and their sturdy passenger and mail cars had opened new horizons for the people of the Mountain State.

—Debby Sonis Jackson

deled by the present pastor, Reverend Donald A. Lowe." The description goes on to note other pastors, including Leslie Bowling and Charles Ball.

The ministers of the church did not live in Quinnimont in the years I recall. I believe most were students from Alderson Baptist Academy, up the railroad line in Greenbrier County. Some of them may have preached at other churches, also. When they were in town, they were guests at our house. We called the young preachers "Brother" instead of Reverend — Brother Ball, Brother Duling, Brother Bowling. Their presence created some tension in the household since we children had to maintain an unnatural silence when they were there, to avoid disturbing them while they prepared their sermons.

The special meals my mother prepared for the visiting ministers provided some compensation for our forced good behavior. I recall that one of them patted my little brother on the head one day and said, "Son, I'll bet you hate to see the preacher come. You have to be so quiet."

"Oh, no!" my brother answered. "We have marshmallows on the sweet potatoes when the preacher comes!"

Our house was one of many company houses along a road that turned off State Route 41 and circled the hill above the church, returning to the main road near the house where Captain Ashley lived. Trees grow now where most of these houses once stood. The Ashley house is still standing. An interesting house with a round tower on front remains on the hill above the church. One of the visitors at last September's homecoming, Wilburn Whitten, told me that this building had once been a school, but was his family's home when he lived in Quinnimont as a young man.

Samuel and Mary Plumley were the very last people to live in Quinnimont. When the National Park Service bought the town for the New River Gorge National River, the Plumleys were living in the Ashley house next door to the church. Mary was the caretaker for the church. When requested to do so, the Plumleys moved, but only a mile or so down the road to Prince. Mary still takes care of the church building, which was not included in the sale. As of the last reunion, people were still returning

from their relocated homes to attend services in the building.

Quinnimont is a special place for them, as it is for me. The town holds memories for many people. Much of the community is gone now, compared to what we remember, but maybe the days of loss and decay

are behind us. Things are changing in the New River Gorge as the National River moves to interpret the natural and human history of that wonderful place. Quinnimont is an important part of the story and its history should be preserved for future generations. 🍁

Captain Ashley's fine two-story house is abandoned today, a fading reminder of good times in the New River Gorge.





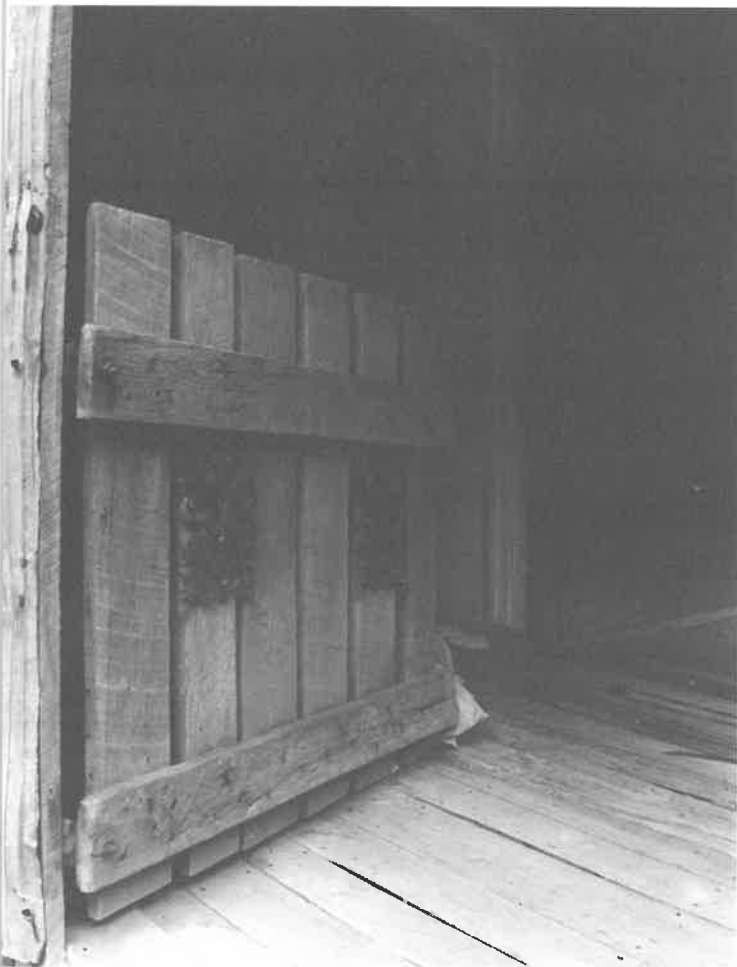
Left: Quinnimont was founded by Colonel Joseph Beury (inset) who shipped the first New River coal in 1873. Local coal operators erected this monument to his memory.

Below Left: This sturdy porch gate still hangs steady amid the general decay around it.

Below Right: The Amtrak station at nearby Prince is the railroad jumping-off point for Quinnimont today. Both towns had busy rail passenger stations in the past.

Quinnimont Today

Photoessay by Michael Keller





Above Left: Quinnimont Lunch is about the busiest place in town. This is proprietor Allen Brown on the porch.

Above Right: Quinnimont is largely a ghost town today, with most property now owned by the National Park Service. The old town is in the middle of the New River Gorge National River.

Below Left: Trains still roll by on the main line night and day, but the Quinnimont rail yard is not the busy place it was. This old C&O coach sits on a siding.

Below Right: Surviving details suggest that Quinnimont was a well-built place, offering solid comfort to inhabitants during the town's century of life.



Greater Clarkburg

new 3rd Edition
W. Bork

Handwritten musical score for the first system of 'Greater Clarkburg'. It consists of five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a continuous melodic line with various note values and rests. Dynamic markings include 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and 'cres' (crescendo). The system concludes with a double bar line and first and second endings marked '1' and '2'.

Handwritten musical score for the second system of 'Greater Clarkburg', labeled 'Trio' at the beginning. It consists of seven staves. The key signature changes to one flat (Bb). The music continues with various rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including 'mf' and 'cres'. The system ends with a double bar line and first and second endings marked '1' and '2'.





Above: This photograph of the original Bork Band was made "when we were young and with rosy outlook for the future," according to Mr. Bork's notes. The musicians' names — Fronczak, Pachuta, Czupryna, Pasternak, and others — reflect Harrison County's rich ethnic heritage. Photographer and date unknown.

Facing Page: The "Greater Clarksburg March" represents part of Virgil Bork's musical legacy to Harrison County, his first American home. This copy, his hand-inked original, is dated May 3, 1918. The lively march, a local favorite, was performed in Clarksburg parks until recent years.

"A New and Wonderful Goal"

Musician Virgil W. Bork

By Eric G. Waggoner

In the prefatory notes for his "Polish Rhapsody," the late composer Virgil Wladyslaw Bork wrote longingly of his native land, describing "a mountainous countryside in Poland. A flock of sheep grazing on the hillside. The tending shepherd stands, with his faithful dog, Shep, at his feet, watching his flock. As he stands there, leaning heavily on his staff, his thoughts seem to be far off in the distance."

It was Christmas Eve, 1941, when Virgil Bork put these nostalgic words on paper. His own thoughts had a long distance to range over by that time. For just under 40 years he had

been away from his native country, building a life and legacy in this one. That legacy was primarily musical, a product of the thousands of hours he spent with bands, with young students, with miners and children of miners, with veterans and with the elderly, instructing them on the fine points of musical performance and music appreciation. The formative years of his American life were spent in West Virginia.

Wilhelm Bork, Virgil's father, was a man of culture who read, spoke and wrote German, Russian and Polish. He and his wife Agnieszka lived in Studzianki, Poland, then under Rus-

sian rule. Of the ten children born to Wilhelm and Agnieszka, only four — all boys — survived childhood. Michael, Jan, Alexander, and Virgil grew up surrounded by plenty of good books and some music, as Virgil later recalled.

While Virgil was still young, brother Michael, 19 years older, became enthralled by stories of America. As he was the eldest son and therefore exempt from service in the Czar's army, Michael packed up and left for the New World. He promised to return when he could.

Michael came home within a year to tell stories beside the family hearth. "I



Virgil Bork at age 62, near the end of his long musical career. Photographer unknown.

still can visualize him sitting in front of the fireplace and talking to us in his newly acquired English, as we sat there with our mouths open in amazement, not understanding a word he was saying," Virgil later recalled. It was apparent to his family that his experience in America had changed Michael's life. Soon it would change theirs.

Father Wilhelm was the next to leave. Even though he managed a large estate in rural Poland, the oppression of the Russian government was becoming harder and harder to withstand. It was decided that Wilhelm, barring arrest or imprisonment, would make his way to America and

find work, after which he would send word to his family. Although frightened at the prospect of attempting an illegal move out of Poland, the Borks were thrilled at the chance to set up a new life in a new country. So one night in 1898 Agnieszka and her children watched as Wilhelm stepped through the door and onto the road, not knowing when — or if — they would see him again.

Two years passed before they heard from Wilhelm. He had established himself in West Virginia and wanted his family around him. All is well, his message said. Now it is time to make the move.

Agnieszka and her sons packed up

a few belongings. Through friends they contacted a nameless man who made a business of smuggling refugees across the border. The Borks walked all of one day and part of the night, carrying their bulky luggage, to meet their guide. That they would be incarcerated if caught was a foregone conclusion, so they spoke very little during their journey.

After nightfall, they reached the man who would see them across the Austrian border. He led them to a farmhouse belonging to his friend. He told the weary family to rest in the barn while he scanned the area for Russian patrols.

The guide returned near midnight to retrieve the Borks, warning them to be quiet and follow him at all times. They trudged through the forest, sometimes crawling, knowing only that the Austrian border was somewhere ahead, enshrouded in the dark. In the distance, spurts of gunfire occasionally broke the silence. If their previous trip across the mountains and fields had been quiet, this one was absolutely mute. They said nothing until their guide told them they were across the line. Then the exhausted refugees stood and celebrated as quietly as they could.

After crossing by ship to the United States, the Borks joined Wilhelm in the mining settlement of Snake Hollow, near Glen Falls in Harrison County. In his two years in West Virginia Wilhelm had made his living as a worker in the coal mines, and it was into these mines that the eight-year-old Virgil now followed his father.

During his mining years young Virgil Bork worked as a mule driver, motor man, machine man, track man, pump man, power house operator, and blacksmith. But none of this was what he wanted to do with his life. "At the time there was something which seemed to keep before me, making mind pictures of a life in another world, in which beautiful music was an inspiration," he later reported. "Here was the inspiration to practice, practice, practice — all my spare time, to reach out to some new and wonderful goal."

Virgil Bork had had no formal education and no music lessons. His brothers were musical, and he had

played with them at a few dances; that was the extent of his training. After meeting a Polish immigrant who played cornet in an army band, Bork decided to study the cornet. By this time the family had moved to Clarksburg, and it was there that Bork met Alfredo Steffano, an Italian band leader who took him on as a student. Steffano spoke no English and it was only through careful listening and intuition that Bork was able to follow his teacher's direction.

Bork was given his first solo in Steffano's band. Steffano was so taken with his talent that he set Bork to work transposing pieces for his other students. Although Bork still regarded music as no more than a hobby, he was getting deeper and deeper into theory and performance. As he became an adult Steffano introduced him to the musical society in and around Clarksburg, and Bork began making a name for himself as a performer and private instructor.

His father, meanwhile, had gone back to Poland, and was to remain there until his death in 1916. Having gone to work at the Phillips Sheet and Tin Plate Company in 1912, Virgil was able to care for his mother and cover the costs of musical instruments while at the same time playing in theaters and at dances.

The Phillips plant employed workers from many lands, drawing Bork farther into the local immigrant community. Though the news may surprise those not from the area, residents of Clarksburg know that their ethnic roots run deep and far back. At the turn of the century northern West Virginia saw its greatest influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, as the coal mines and factories drew refugees with the old dream of a better life in a new land. Most succeeded in this booming industrial era, securing for their families a decent living through hard work and sacrifice.

Bork organized his first band in 1913, recruiting friends from the steel mills, coal mines, and glass and zinc factories. He found no lack of enthusiasm, but one obstacle presented itself immediately — none of his band members knew how to play the instruments they had been assigned. Bork promised to teach them individually if they would loan

him their instruments one at a time, each for one night. On these nights Bork stayed up late, painstakingly transposing scales and practice melodies for each instrument by hand, not knowing that lesson manuals could be secured for each.

Once word got around that an amateur band was forming, the ensemble, now called Bork's Band, was hired by

jogged to catch up. At last Bork's Band made it to the evangelist's tabernacle, sweating, out of breath and out of tune. They refused payment for their first semiprofessional engagement and resolved to schedule extra rehearsals.

The beginning of Bork's professional musical career followed the organization of a local miners' band. The opportunity came to him partly as a



An immigrant family in West Virginia: Mother Agnieszka sits between eldest son Michael and husband Wilhelm Bork, with sons John, Alexander and Virgil behind. Virgil was seriously involved in music by this time. Photographer unknown, about 1910.

a prominent evangelist to parade at the opening of his religious campaign. Bork protested that his band could barely keep together musically at that point, much less march in step at the same time. His worries did not trouble the evangelist, however, and so it was that the band arrived at the designated departure area on the morning of the engagement. Their sheet music propped in front of their faces, Bork's Band struck up a lively march.

Before they had gone a block Bork looked up to see the long-legged tuba player puffing a heartfelt solo a good 25 yards ahead of his fellow musicians. The remaining band members

result of a great industrial tragedy. In 1907 two explosions at the Consolidation Coal Company's mines in Monongah took the lives of all but one of the men inside. Many of the miners killed in the blasts were friends of Bork and his students, and the tragedy shook them all deeply. Organizing the Monongah Miners' Band was one response to the tragedy, and those remembering that era agree that it helped to pull the stricken community together. People who otherwise would have had little or no exposure to music were taken under Bork's wing and transformed into what he called "my best band."

The Monongah Miners' Band

The musical group that Virgil Bork recalled as "my best band" had its origins in part in America's worst mine disaster. Explosions rocked Consolidation Coal Company's interconnected Number 6 and Number 8 mines at Monongah on the afternoon of December 6, 1907, leaving at least 361 men and boys dead and a huge hole in the social fabric of the community. As the Marion County town pulled itself together in following years, one of the institutions to emerge was the Monongah Miners' Band.

The Monongah Miners' Band was a marching band, officially organized in 1915. The band hired Mr. Bork as its director the following year, and he held the post until 1931. The band itself stayed together much longer, playing at United Mine Workers national conferences as late as 1968. The group played locally after that, finally disbanding about 1985, according to former member Alfred Mazurek.

The following excerpt, covering the early years of the Monongah Miners' Band, is taken from an article in the

October-December 1980 issue of *GOLDENSEAL*.

Nearly every family in Monongah, then with a population of 3,000, lost someone in the tragedy that left behind an estimated 250 widows and 1,000 orphans. Many remained in Monongah, and eventually sons, nephews, and cousins filled the empty places left by the victims. An aftermath of the tragedy was an increased community closeness which led the 1912 Coal Commission to call Monongah the model coal town in West Virginia.

To offset the stresses of their work, the Monongah miners turned to baseball and music in their free time. Interest in bands was high in those days, and in 1915 several miner musicians decided to organize their own group. Monongah was an ethnic community — 80% of the miners were foreign born at the time of the explosion —

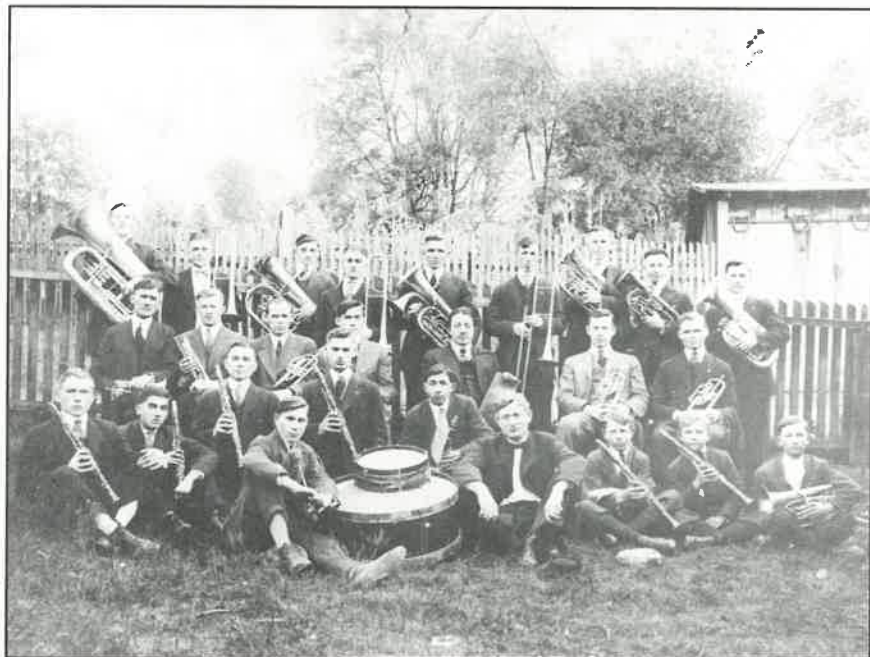
and the town's composition was reflected in its band. Italian, Hungarian, Slovak, Irish, and native miners joined, but the dominant group was Polish. The band became known as the Monongah Miners' Band, for all of its members were miners or relatives of miners.

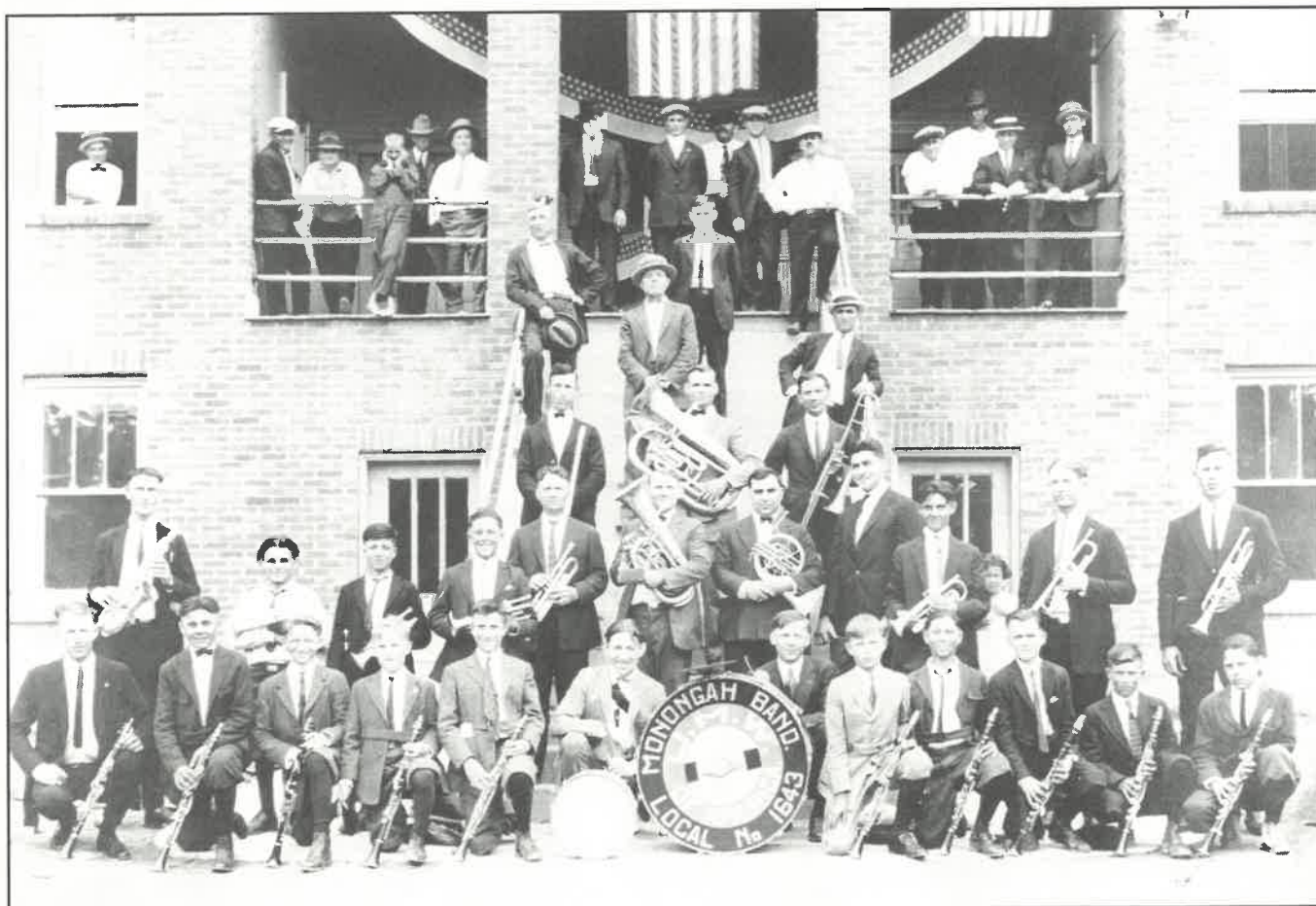
Miner Anthony "Jake" Vingle, whose miner father, John, had come to Monongah in the 1890's, was one of the active organizers and recruiters for the new band. Recruiting was easy for trombonist Jake, who simply went home and started with his younger brothers. First, there was Eddy, who played clarinet and saxophone, next, Frank and his trumpet, and then Stanley with a clarinet. Mother Vingle and sisters Anna and Mary were not invited to join. Father John Vingle and John, Jr., supported but did not join the band.

The first year of the band's organization was somewhat chaotic. Rehearsals were held wherever indoor or outdoor space was offered by tolerant and hospitable families. Three different conductors, a Mr. Snyder, a Mr. Pinichi, and eventually Mr. Virgil Bork, took up the baton. Bork served from 1916 until the early 1930's. By 1916 the band had 26 members with six different instruments and two types of drums. There were no uniforms yet, and knickers distinguished younger members from the older ones.

In 1918, under wartime pressure, the United Mine Workers were permitted to organize the Fairmont Field. [Labor organizer] Mother Jones returned in triumph, this time riding at the head of the 4th of July parade in Clarksburg, with the mayor sharing her carriage. Monongah Local 1634 received its UMW charter on June 11, 1918, and Fairmont Sub-district 4 was chartered in December of the next year. Enthusiasm for bands and the

The Monongah Miners' Band was "my best band," according to Virgil Bork. This early photo shows Bork seated fourth from left, second row. Photographer unknown, 1916





The Miners' Band visits a United Mine Workers union hall. Members went to jail at least once in the union's behalf. Bork stands in the second row, fourth from right. Photographer and date unknown.

union marched apace in West Virginia.

During the wartime boom, many of the band members married and began raising future musicians. By 1922, however, wage reductions were the company orders for the day. Walter Kloc, manager of the band in 1980, remembered his first job offer at the age of five during the resulting strike. Fred Stubbs, a black miner who survived the 1907 disaster because he was home with a sick wife, offered Walter 50 cents if he would carry a sign on the picket line. Walter did, but says he is still waiting for his pay.

The Monongah miners won the strike and went ahead with plans to build their own union hall. In 1925 the band acquired its first uniforms. In 1927, a long strike began, with the miners fighting for their jobs and for the union. When the

strikers were evicted from the company houses, poorly constructed barracks provided by the union became their homes and the new union hall their rallying point. Men, women, and children marched on the picket lines and the Miners' Band accompanied them. One of the songs played was "So Long, Scabs."

The company brought in armed and mounted guards whom the strikers called "yellow legs." Virgil Vingle remembers the night his father and his mother (Anna Urban Vingle, a daughter of explosion survivor Peter Urban) came home from a strikers' meeting a bit shaken. They had almost been ridden down by one of the yellow legs, but had jumped into a ditch. Walter Kloc's memory of the yellow legs was the sight of a mounted guard beating an unarmed striker over the head

as he walked through Traction Park.

In recognition of its loyalty and ability, the Monongah Miners' Band was invited to play at the 1927 national convention of the United Mine Workers. It was a proud moment for the Monongah miners and their band, and it marked the first of many appearances at UMW conventions.

The prestige and popularity of the Miners' Band was so impressive that the ambition of every boy in Monongah was to grow up and become a member. There were plenty of such boys, especially among the Polish families, and the saying in Monongah was that "As soon as the Polish kids were taken off their moms' breasts, they stuck a horn in their mouth."

— Lois C. McLean



Another portrait of Bork's first band, about 1915. The band "was organized and trained back in the good old days when most of its members worked in Phillips Sheet and Tin Plate Company," Bork recalled.

These were active years in the union movement, as the United Mine Workers struggled to expand its foothold in West Virginia. The Monongah Miners' Band was called upon to play at mass meetings, rallies, and even UMW national conventions. Their reception was enthusiastic, and extended to the very top. John L. Lewis said, "Not the least among the ardent workers for our cause was the band of Monongah, West Virginia." The members of the band were serious supporters of the union, and on occasion they found themselves jailed for playing on the picket line.

Sam Ellis, who later made a reputation as a conductor and performer in northern West Virginia, began studying with Bork in 1925. Bork instructed Ellis on the clarinet, making such an impression that Ellis still vividly recalls Bork's method of teaching. "Part of Virgil's authority rested in the fact that he was such a fantastic performer himself. There was no room for doubt on the part of his students, because he would play a certain piece himself and insist there was no reason you couldn't do the same.

"In addition to being an almost infallible player, he was very easy to follow when he conducted," Ellis continued. "The entrances for each instrument were firmly locked in his

head, and when it was your time to play he signaled quickly and crisply; you could almost not look at the sheet music and still know basically what you were doing. In fact, you had to rely on memory a great deal, because he insisted on eye contact with his band members."

The success of the Miners' Band led to the inception of the Bork School of Music in Clarksburg and several small bands around the area, including one at Salem College. At St. Mary's High School the principal pointed out that, although the school orchestra Bork had organized was successful and well respected, the fact remained that the bandmaster himself, now 32 years old, married and the father of six children, was utterly without formal education. The St. Mary's principal suggested that if Bork planned to continue teaching he would do well to earn a high school diploma. With the principal's help, Bork did just that, graduating at age 35. He continued his education at Salem College. The college yearbook lists his credentials: "Mr. Virgil Bork, Director of the College Band, Various High School and Community Bands, Directs Music at Basketball Games, Social Functions, etc."

During his high school and college years Bork occasionally took time off

to study with noted band directors. He made contacts in the Chicago area, which resulted in his being sent to New Jersey in 1931 as a representative of the Holton Instrument Company. There he caught the attention of Dr. John R. Patterson, supervising principal at Roselle, New Jersey. Patterson, who was at that time scouting for a director of instrumental music for Roselle, contacted Bork about the position. Bork's acceptance soon put him in charge of the innovative Union County Band and Orchestra Summer School — or U.C. BOSS, as it was called.

The Roselle job put Bork just where he wanted to be, in the mainstream of music education. It is clear that this man was always first and foremost a teacher. Virgil Bork, Jr., recalls an anecdote that displays his father's uncommon interest in his students. "During the war Pop had a world map in his library," Mr. Bork recalls. "He used to get letters from former students who were serving overseas. He would stick pins in this map showing the places where his students were stationed. He would write back in duplicate; one copy he would save for himself. He had a file cabinet full of these letters." Doubtless childhood memories of crawling through the weeds, listening for gunfire, came

back as Bork read his students' letters.

Bork was able to work directly with returning GI's once World War Two was over. The New Jersey Department of Education and the Veterans Administration jointly founded the Eastern Conservatory of Music and Arts in 1946, with Virgil Bork as director. Bork made sure that the Conservatory kept itself open to all styles of music; a student concentrating on Modern Music, for example, could expect to analyze Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington in addition to Stravinsky and Dvorak. On several occasions when Goodman's swing orchestra played in West Virginia, Bork and his fellow players had joined them for late night jam sessions.

The energetic Bork directed both U.C. BOSS and the Conservatory for the next seven years. But the music man was older now, and beginning to feel the strain. In 1951 he suffered a heart attack and was forced to slow down. Leaving the Eastern Conservatory and U.C. BOSS in the hands of others, Virgil Bork moved to Delaware to "take it easy."

Free from the demands of teaching and daily band directing, Bork pursued other interests in retirement. He and his wife Mary opened a roadside market and did a modest business. All those years of teaching young and old alike had given Bork a naturalness, an easygoing quality which set well in his new hometown. He ran as a Democratic candidate for state representative in 1960, losing by a scant 63 votes.

Bork found time to spend in his library. He would invite a few friends over to sit in his reading room and debate whatever happened to strike their fancy — Plato or Nixon, carpentry or community. Through his life he collected and catalogued approximately 10,000 books, each of which he read entirely — no mean feat for a man who picked up English as an eight-year-old in a mining town.

And of course Virgil Bork found bands to direct again. He conducted the Wesley College Community Band and substituted as band director in three area high schools.

In 1968 Bork was named Rotarian of

the Month for April, but before he could be honored he was hospitalized for a relapse of the heart problems. This time he had a session with the oxygen tent, but upon his release was soon back in his library with his scholarly friends, sharing his thoughts on the upcoming presidential election. Bork remained active until late in 1972, when he was again hospitalized. On December 26 of that year he died in Delaware.

The Eastern Conservatory is now closed, and U.C. BOSS is no more. The market for marching bands is scarcely what it was at the turn of the century, but Harrison County has by no means forgotten its distinguished adopted son. The Monongah Miners' Band was active up until 1985, and former members still recall it with pride. For years Virgil Bork's "The Greater Clarksburg March" was played every summer in the Veterans Administration Park, and there is now a move on to have it reinstated. 🌿

The author thanks Virgil Bork's family and friends for their aid and cooperation.

Like many musicians, Bork supplemented his income by teaching in his home. This photo shows him with a group of students at 537 Caroline Street, Clarksburg. Photographer unknown, mid-1920's.



The downstream end of Hawks Nest tunnel on March 13, 1932. It was in this section that workers encountered the deadly silica rock. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

Hawks Nest Revisited

The New River dominates the view from Hawks Nest State Park, cutting a deep gorge through the Fayette plateau as it winds toward its union with the Gauley River a few miles downstream. As tourists standing on the overlooks follow the twisting course of the canyon, their eyes inevitably come to rest on the New River dam lying hundreds of feet below the park lodge and restaurant. The purpose of this dam is not the impoundment of water and its lake is small, scarcely intruding on the natural splendor around it.

Rather, this dam was built for the purpose of diverting the flow of water. New River takes a crooked course as it travels from here to Gauley Bridge, and it would deliver its power more forcefully if it traveled in a straight line. The business of the dam is to sweep the waters of the New into a tunnel through Gauley Mountain, following the direct line that the natural river ignores. The water emerges three miles away, after passing through the turbines of a private power plant at Gauley Junction.

This complex of dam, tunnel and power plant was the work of the Union Carbide Corporation and its subsidiaries, built to supply hydroelectricity to a company plant at Alloy. It is an engineering marvel which has functioned nearly flawlessly for over half a century.

Unfortunately, the technological accomplishment was overshadowed by the huge human cost of the project, which produced the single greatest occupational health disaster in American history. The tunnel work began in 1930. By the time it ended in 1935 thousands of men had worked there, a large percentage acquiring deadly silicosis from breathing the dust of the tunnel. Eventually, hundreds would die — as many as 764 according to Martin Cherniack, author of a recent book on the subject, with earlier estimates running a few hundred lower. By any count it was a very great tragedy in the history of West Virginia and the nation.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the beginning of work on the Hawks Nest tunnel. To mark the occasion, we publish the recollections of Stanley Cavendish, a young Carbide chemist present during early phases of the project, and Kathleen Jacobs' review essay of the 1941 novel *Hawk's Nest* and related writings.

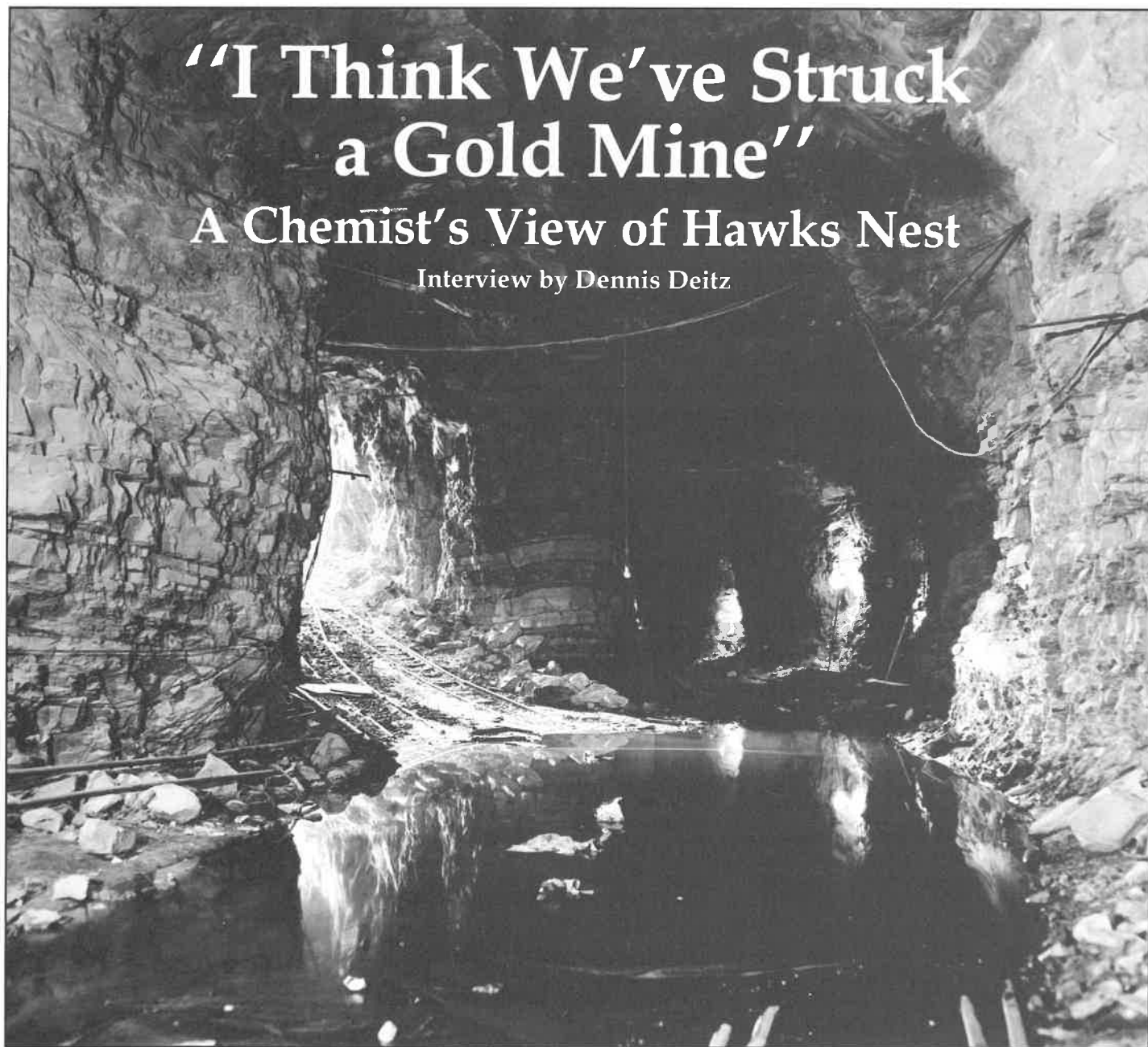




"I Think We've Struck a Gold Mine"

A Chemist's View of Hawks Nest

Interview by Dennis Deitz



Inside the Hawks Nest tunnel on the day after Christmas, 1931. The foreground excavation is about 32 feet in diameter. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

Stanley G. Cavendish was a young chemist when he went to work on the Hawks Nest project in 1930. His job required him to monitor the output from tunnel excavation, taking rock samples as necessary. He visited underground from time to time, putting him in a good position to observe the work in progress. He recalls construction details clearly today, his view generally reflecting the perspective of company management. This article is edited from a larger 1989 interview by Dennis Deitz, supplemented by a 1990 interview by Ken Sullivan.

Stanley Cavendish. I graduated from West Virginia University in 1929 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in chemistry. I graduated June 5th and went to work June 8 in the laboratory of what was, at that time, Carbons and Carbide Chemical Corporation. Later on, I was transferred to Glen Ferris, hometown of what used to be called the Electro-Metallurgical Company, which was at that time getting ready to put a tunnel through the mountains from Hawks Nest down to Gauley Junction. That changed the flow of the

New River through turbines and the electricity was transported over the mountains to Alloy, where they built a plant, a metallurgical plant, to produce ferrosilicon and ferromanganese.

The day that they started breaking the face of the mountain up there at Gauley Junction, the original plan was for the tunnel to be 33 feet in diameter. I was there when they first started to digging the rock, or getting ready to drill the rock, right at the mouth of where the tunnel was.

They core-drilled a lot of that area

[earlier], down 500 feet. Samples were taken, but they were never analyzed. I don't know why. That's a mystery, because they should have known what was underneath the ground. I expect they must have drilled maybe 400 or 500, well, make it 200 different holes all over the area to try to determine the quality of the rock. They had samples that they brought up, but nobody was ever interested in that, except at the time that the tunnel was started.

I took a sample and took it down to the laboratory and found out that the rock was almost pure silica, 99.9 percent, along in there somewhere. Very, very, very valuable sandstone. I reported that and the local authorities called New York and told them the situation, and said, "I think we've struck a gold mine, because this rock is of extraordinary quality."

As I said, the tunnel was originally planned for 33 feet, 32 or 33 feet in diameter, and in order to get the extra amount of silica rock out of there, they increased it to 46 feet. That was only at the entrance of the tunnel. Up at the end of the tunnel at the dam site, that was nothing but pure old shale, it was just absolutely worthless and they had to throw it away. The only [valuable] rock coming out of the tunnel was at the face of the thing, and that's why it was very important that I monitor that stuff. And after it had run out, the rest of the rock was no good whatsoever.

But they had core-drilled from there clear on up to the dam. They drilled that stuff and withdrew the cores, but I don't think they ever had it analyzed. I don't know why they never did. I've always wondered why that when they got ready to build this thing and they cut the first cuttings where the face of the tunnel was, that we found out that it was such good quality of rock. I know up there at that laboratory they had a lot of core drillings about an inch in diameter. But the quality of the rock, they just never did examine it. I never figured out why it was.

Dennis Deitz. Were you in the tunnel when it was actually being built, when the workers were in there?

SC. Yes, I was in the tunnel, but not too many times. Occasionally, I would have to go in to check out a sample or something like that. Other than that,

I didn't normally go in the tunnel. But I was in it several times and I saw the operation that was going on to build the tunnel. It was a lot of workers they had at the face of the tunnel. They had steps down from the top of the tunnel, the face of the tunnel, down to the bottom where their drillers were busy with air drills, drilling holes so that they could put the dynamite in there and shoot.

As a normal rule, the routine was that the workers would come on, I believe, around eight o'clock in the morning and they would continue on through the day, drilling holes and

SC. No, I didn't. I never wore a mask at all. I wasn't in the tunnel long enough. I didn't realize they were in such a bad situation. Matter of fact, I guess I didn't even know anything about silicosis at all. But I don't think I was in the tunnel long enough to do any detrimental effect to my lungs.

DD. How long was it before they began to suspect that it was affecting the workers?

SC. Well, that's hard to say. I really don't know. I began to hear that the people were affected by the dust. I believe they realized to a certain extent that that dust was detrimental, but the



Chemist Stanley Cavendish was present when tunnel construction began in 1930. His work required him to monitor the job. Photo by Michael Keller.

getting the holes ready to put the dynamite in. Then at four o'clock in the afternoon, they would shoot this particular situation and then the night crew would come on. They had an electric shovel in there, something similar to a steam shovel except it was run by electricity. After they found out that this material was good, they would bring dump cars up to the shovel. They would load the rock on there and haul it down to Alloy and dump it.

DD. Did you wear a mask?

contractors, Rinehart and Dennis out of Charlottesville, Virginia, I'm not sure that they had a whole lot of concern about safety. That might be an opinion of mine, but I don't think they did. They did try to put water on these drills, to keep down the dust. But the drills would jam and they couldn't operate them, so they just abandoned that idea after trying it. It didn't work.

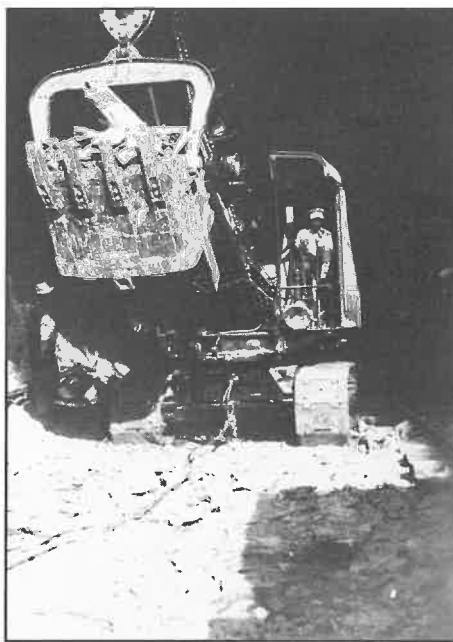
DD. Were you acquainted with many of the workers in the tunnel?

SC. No, I didn't know any of them. They were mostly black people,

Negroes, from South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi. Personally I didn't know any of them at all.

They established a camp up there on what they called the old Tompkins farm above Gauley Bridge. They built barracks up there and those people lived up there.

When people get together in that type of a situation, they like to gamble and do lots of other things that are not cricket, as far as that's concerned. Charlie Connelly was the sheriff at that particular time and he used to raid those people up there in their gambling games and take them to Fayetteville, turn them loose after they had paid the fine. They'd come back and start over again. The next week, it would be the same thing. That was the one source of revenue that Fayette



County got from those people, fining them for playing poker.

DD. And drinking, I guess?

SC. And drinking, too. Of course, that was during Prohibition. There was a certain druggist there in Gauley Bridge that sold canned heat. Canned heat is alcohol dissolved in sort of a jelly. And those people used to buy those cans of canned heat and take them home and squeeze the alcohol out and drink the alcohol. It was cheap. I think a can of canned heat cost about a quarter, and I don't know how many that it would take to get drunk.

DD. Were there deaths at that point?

SC. I don't think there were. But I'll tell you one thing. There was a doctor there in town, the town doctor, his name was Dr. L. R. Harless. He had examined some of those people. He

Above: An electric shovel at work in the tunnel. Mr. Cavendish recalls that silica ore was loaded by such shovels for transport outside. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

Below: A concrete liner will be poured in this section, excavated through soft shale. Dust generated from shale excavation was relatively harmless. Photographer unknown. December 23, 1931; courtesy State Archives.



called me in his office one day and he said, "Look here." He had a human lung displayed in his office. "Look, just look at this lung and feel it." I did and there was a gritty substance on the lungs, similar to the dust that this fellow had breathed.

DD. That was a death from the tunnel?

SC. Yes, I'm sure it was, yeah.

DD. Well, did you begin to hear rumors before it was over, were there rumors around that people were dying?

SC. I think it was long after the completion of the tunnel that they actually took in consideration that people had died.

I left there, I was transferred back down to South Charleston in 1931. After I went to South Charleston, the tunnel work was finished [in 1935]. Of course, there were a lot of lawyers up there. They ran around and tried to find cases. There was a big lawsuit pending against Rinehart and Dennis. Now, I was called as a witness up to Fayetteville to testify, but the trial never came about. Something happened. They compromised and just settled.

The total amount of suits after all these fellows had collected their claims against the company, seems to me they were something like three million dollars. And after compromising, they settled for about \$130,000. I understood, back years ago, that the lawyers got about half of that, \$65,000 they got. That was a lot of money in the 1930's. Now the other people, the people that were suing, they didn't get very much. I know that. I can't remember how many suits there were, but I know those poor people didn't get but a small amount.

DD. The lawyers got the big part.

SC. That's right, the lawyers got the biggest part of it. As I say, I went back to South Charleston. I do know that when those people got through and they were discharged, their jobs were over. The auto dealers around there sold those people a bunch of old automobiles when they started back to their homes. Some of them run and some of them didn't. I've been told that as these things would play out, they'd just leave them. Somebody would have to pick them up later on.

DD. When did the rumors begin to

start about how many had died and where they were buried?

SC. Well, now this is a rumor: I can't corroborate it, but there was an undertaker from Summersville who established a kind of a funeral business at Gauley Bridge and he supposedly took care of these people who had died. He did not bury them in a coffin, he just buried them in a common grave. I heard that, but I'm not sure that's right. I was told that he buried them on his farm.

I would like to say this: As far as Union Carbide is concerned, the

whole total project was in the hands of what they called the New Kanawha Power Company. They were a subsidiary of Union Carbide and they were doing this particular work for Electro-Metallurgical Company who was to be furnished with power, hydroelectric power, to run their furnaces. The amount of silica rock that they took out of that tunnel saved the company millions of dollars.

The tunnel was started at Gauley Junction, that's the face of the thing, they started it first there. And they sunk a shaft about the middle and

The Decision to Widen the Tunnel

The decision to increase the diameter of the tunnel in order to mine the silica rock was a critical point in the Hawks Nest episode, expanding the project and extending the workers' exposure to the deadly dust. As chemist Stanley Cavendish recalls it, the fateful decision was based on his last-minute discovery of the purity of the silica, and not premeditated as critics charged. GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan asked him about it in an interview last June.

Ken Sullivan. Once you made the discovery, how was the decision made to expand the tunnel?

Stanley Cavendish. The people in New York made the decision to go ahead and expand the tunnel and to get this extra amount of silica out that they hadn't planned to do before. I reported my findings to my superior. His name was B. G. Doom, and he was assistant plant manager. He passed it on to the plant manager, and then on up the line, to whoever it was necessary to go to.

KS. Was there any excitement as the decision was made?

SC. No, I don't think so. I don't recall any. It was just a matter of what to do with it, to get all this extra amount of rock. You see, that rock was valuable. They took it out to the [Alloy] plant and stored it down there. I don't know how much they had. They carried it off

for a long, long time.

KS. And it was the key ingredient in the Alloy manufacturing process?

SC. Sure, absolutely.

KS. Where had they got their silica before?

SC. I can't tell you that. I don't know. They'd never made it there before. They had a plant in Niagara Falls that made these alloys. Whether they made any raw silica up there or not, I'm not sure. I think they did.

KS. Did they make ferrosilicon products locally after the discovery of silica at the tunnel?

SC. Oh, sure. That was their intentions. Now you see, when they planned their whole project, I assume that they realized that they were going to have to have silica. There's a place up at Thayer, West Virginia, an outcropping of this whole big layer of sandstone. [There used to be] a quarry up there that mined the stuff, and I assumed that would be a source of their material, the raw material. But when they struck this thing, well, then that was a much better situation.

KS. Do you recall how long it was from the time you had reported the purity of the silica until the decision was made to expand?

SC. Less than a day. Less than that. Maybe the same day, I'm not sure. I know it wasn't very long.

went down and then they started both ways. And they started at the other end, the far end, where the dam was, so they were working four ways to build that tunnel. And when they met, when they first met, the center-line was only off three inches.

The rock that they took out of the tunnel from where they sunk the shaft [in the middle], to the end towards the dam site, that rock there was no good. Absolutely, it was worthless and they had to dispose of it. I guess they hauled it out and dropped it over the hill or whatever, don't remember now exactly. But anyway, that rock was no

good. It was only the rock that they found and dug at the entrance of the tunnel at Gauley Junction, to the next point, [that was valuable.]

The type of rock that they took out of other areas of the tunnel — where they sunk the shaft and went both ways and then at the [end] where the dam was — that type of rock was shale, a lot of it was shale. It was not silica at all, it was a very poor, poor grade of rock. I would say offhand, I'm not sure this is true, but I don't believe that when they drilled it that would affect the fellows. I may be wrong but I would just say I don't

think it would affect them near as much as the first part when they started the face of the tunnel. That silica rock, that silica dust is what affected the lungs.

DD. The silica rock, sand or whatever, you said it was valuable. For what?

SC. To making ferrosilicon. What they did after the plant was finished and the whole project was completed, when they started operation, they made the ferrosilicon by mixing in steel shavings. They brought steel shavings in cars, coal cars, and dumped them there on the site where

The generators of the Gauley Junction powerhouse, shown here during installation, have converted New River's raw power to electricity for decades. Photographer unknown, October 31, 1932; courtesy State Archives.



the plant was, and in the meantime they had dumped this tremendous, tremendous mountain of silica rock there, and they mixed these two together in an electric furnace. And they made the ferrosilicon which they shipped to steel companies to go into various forms of steel, like stainless steel, something like that. In addition to that, they also made ferromanganese there, too. The manganese ore came from Africa.

I was wanting to say this, that I guess Union Carbide or Electro-Metallurgical didn't realize the severity of the conditions that this would cause, in this tunnel — the dust. I don't think they realized it, and they didn't discover it until later on. Now, I don't know whether Carbide ever did anything about it or not, it was all up to the contractor, Rinehart and Dennis. But I'd say Carbide never realized the severity of this particular situation and, to me, the whole damage was upon the shoulders of Rinehart and Dennis.

DD. You were in the middle of local management and you didn't hear any talk of there being a problem?

SC. That's right, until it happened.



Mr. Cavendish believes that local management was largely unaware of the grave health risks to tunnel workers. Photo by Michael Keller.

Hawk's Nest, the Novel

By Kathleen M. Jacobs

Americans of the early 20th century were a confident people, filled with hope and bright expectations for the future. Then overnight, optimism turned sour as the Great Depression swept like a heavy, black cloud over the land. Men accustomed to providing for their families lost their jobs, and saw no signs of being rehired. Without showing their feelings of hopelessness to their families, the lucky ones took whatever local employment they could find. Others left to look for work elsewhere. Even a remote chance of a job would induce men to leave their homes, hoping to send money later so that their families could join them.

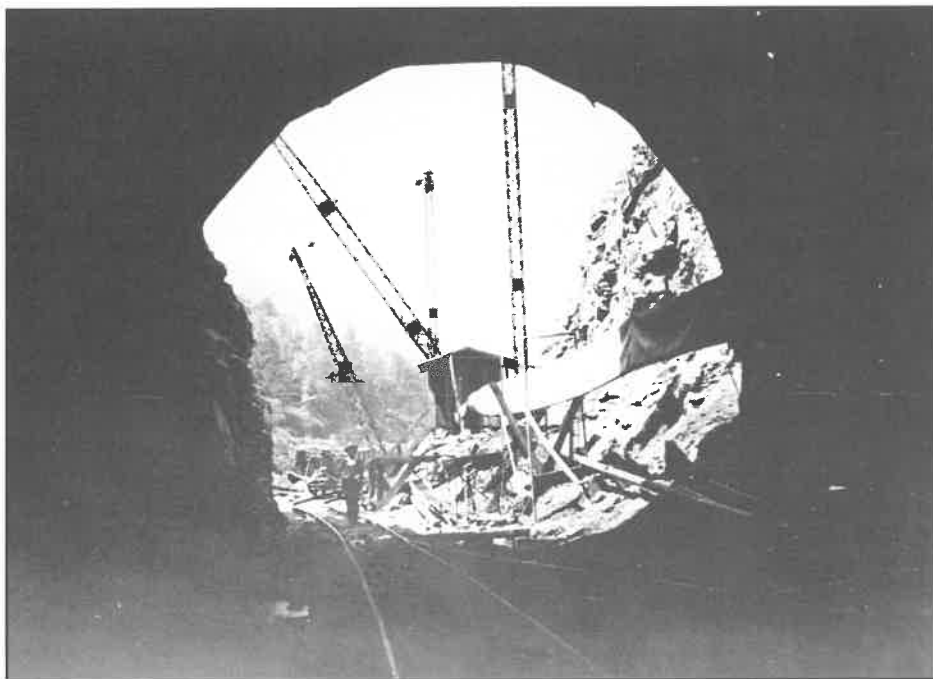
These years hit West Virginia hard,

affecting every segment of industry and striking the deadliest blow to the coalfields. Between 1929 and 1933, coal production fell 40 percent, and the number of mining jobs fell even more rapidly. Many of the unemployed coal miners, as well as hundreds of other kinds of workers, were happy to find jobs building the Hawks Nest tunnel, a big new project in Fayette County. This work brought together three hopeful elements in West Virginia's economy — chemical, primary metals, and electrical power — but it ended up producing one of the nation's worst industrial tragedies.

Although it brought Americans to a new low, the Great Depression produced a significant and talented

group of writers. John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is the novel most commonly associated with the plight of the downtrodden during those years. Another writer who caught the despair and hopelessness of the Depression was Hubert Skidmore, a West Virginian.

Hubert and his brother Hobert, also a writer, were born on April 11, 1909, at Webster Springs, the twin sons of Neil and Corie Skidmore. The twins attended East Bank High School at East Bank, Kanawha County, and Washington Irving High School in Clarksburg, then both went on to the University of Michigan. Hubert Skidmore won almost instant attention in 1941 with *Hawk's Nest*, a gripping



Top: The view from the tunnel, August 24, 1930. This is the downstream portal, nearest Gauley Bridge. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

Bottom: Hand excavation at a tunnel heading. Surviving photographs of men at work in the controversial project are rare. Photographer unknown, August 20, 1930; courtesy State Archives.

account of the events which took place during the construction of the tunnel near Gauley Bridge in the early 1930's.

Skidmore's fiction is based closely on the facts of the tunnel project, a massive undertaking. In his book, *West Virginia: A History*, Otis Rice explains that the tunnel was built "to divert part of the waters of the New

River to a hydroelectric generating station at the Union Carbide Corporation about three miles downstream. The construction of the tunnel was begun in 1930 and completed in 1935." The *West Virginia Review* reported in 1936 that "the passage has a drop of 167 feet, varies from 31 to 46 feet in diameter, and is estimated to hold

more than 11,000,000,000 gallons of water. More than 5,000 men were employed to drive the tunnel through silica rock."

The novel *Hawk's Nest* gives a detailed account of unemployed workers who hear about the building of this tunnel and travel to West Virginia from many states. Among the fictional migrants are Lock and Daisy Mullens, a young married couple who leave their parents' homes so Lock can find work at the tunnel. Their dream is to save enough money to buy a farm. The Reips come to Gauley Bridge for the same reason. Bill Legg, Jim Martin, and Owl are migratory workers who are just hungry. Pete, an unemployed coal miner, comes to Gauley Bridge with his wife, Anna, to get a job at the tunnel. These are ordinary people, but what happens to them and their dreams is not ordinary.

Lock Mullens, Bill Legg, Jim Martin, and Owl are employed by the firm which contracted to build the tunnel. They live in shacks built for the workers and their families. These dwellings consist of two rooms, one per family.

Soon after the work begins, the tunnel workers start coughing and having difficulty breathing. When their shift ends, they are covered from head to toe in a thick blanket of dust. This dust is from the silica rock which they drill. The company keeps a watchman on top of the mountain, and when the mine inspector shows up, the foreman turns on the water on the drills, which should be on all the time to keep the dust down. The men notice how much better they can breathe at such times. But when the mine inspector leaves, the water is turned off.

The men also notice that management personnel wear respirators. When the workers ask whether they, too, can have respirators they are answered emphatically in the negative. The foreman reminds them how fortunate they are to have work and tells them to keep their mouths shut if they want to keep their jobs. Some begin to ask themselves if their jobs are really worth the dangers they must endure.

Eventually, men begin to die and the others discover that the company has a standing contract with a local undertaker. When a black worker dies one day, he is buried in a cornfield at

Summersville before his wife even knows of his death. When she goes to Summersville, she discovers that others have been buried in the same field and that none of the graves have been marked. Again, Skidmore's fiction followed the facts. Drawing upon a U.S. Senate investigation, a major source for Skidmore also, Richwood editor Jim Comstock reports that 476 tunnel workers died from silicosis while digging out the tunnel and 1,500 suffered from the disease. Comstock states that of the 476 who died, 169 were buried in a field at Summersville with "cornstalks as their only grave-stones and with no other means of identification."

William Jay Gold, who reviewed the novel for the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1941, concluded that "it is impossible to read *Hawk's Nest* and remain unmoved." Beatrice Sherman agreed with Gold in her review for the *New York Times*: "It is a story of crass injustice to make the reader's blood boil." Sherman declares that the story

is a "long and moving recital of the company's cruel injustice in its treatment of poverty-stricken people who had no way to fight back."

New Republic magazine acknowledged that Hubert Skidmore was "not a literary giant," but called his book "an indictment, [which] about covers the story, from the desperation of hungry workers to the brutality of a company out to get its tunnel dug cheaply even if it means murder."

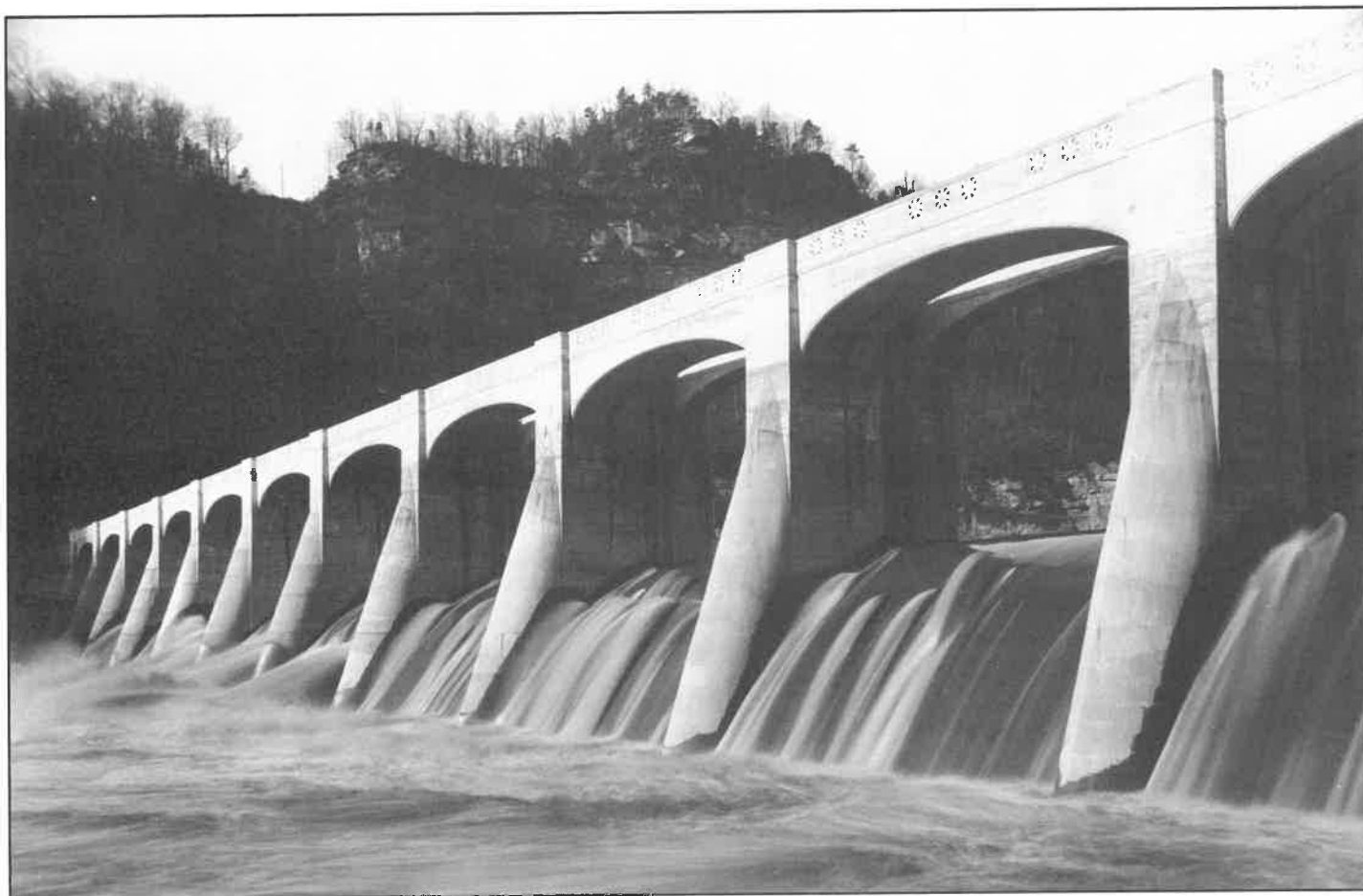
In 1936, a Senate subcommittee was formed to investigate the Hawks Nest tunnel disaster and related questions. West Virginia's Jennings Randolph was a member. The subcommittee maintained "that the whole driving of the tunnel was begun, continued, and completed with grave and inhuman disregard of all consideration for the health, lives, and future of the employees," but very little was accomplished. The report was grimly eloquent in relating its "story of men in the darkest days of the Depression, with work hard to secure, driven by

despair and the stark fear of hunger to work for a mere existence wage under almost intolerable conditions."

When *Hawk's Nest* was published in 1941, "criticisms and threats of lawsuits caused the publisher to withdraw all available copies," according to historian Otis Rice. Nor was state government itself above suppressing the story. *West Virginia: A Guide to the Mountain State*, prepared by the Federal Writers' Project, included a discussion of the Hawks Nest tragedy. Governor Homer Holt declared the discussion "distinctly discreditable to the State and its people" and forced alterations before he approved publication, historian John Alexander Williams maintains in his history of West Virginia. 🌿

The novel Hawk's Nest, withdrawn after publication, is in print now only as part of Jim Comstock's West Virginia Heritage series. The seven-volume set may be purchased for \$42 by writing to P.O. Box 430, Richwood, WV 26261.

Designers of the Hawks Nest dam and tunnel complex produced some of West Virginia's most beautiful industrial engineering, unwitting monuments to tragedy. This December 29, 1932, photograph shows the New River in flood. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.



Gilbert "Dib" Harmon on board the Sistersville ferryboat *Elinor D*. The man and boat represent the end of an era in West Virginia.



The Last of Its Kind

Dib Harmon and the Sistersville Ferry

Text and Photographs by Will Daniel

There is nothing modern about the Sistersville ferry, the diesel towboats that provide its power, or the venerable ferry pilot, Gilbert "Dib" Harmon. The history of this Tyler County operation goes back a long way, and the equipment and ferryman all have stories of their own.

The Virginia General Assembly passed an act in 1818 authorizing the Ohio River ferry service that today transports 100 or more vehicles daily between Sistersville and Fly, Ohio. The boats themselves date back more than 50 years. The *Elinor D* and the barge it tows were built in 1938, and the backup boat *John F III* in 1939. And Dib Harmon? Well, this 44-year veteran Ohio River ferryboat pilot is one uncommon individual — and no spring chicken himself.

At 71, Harmon works 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and scorns retirement as if it were an affliction. His Sistersville ferry is the last on the Ohio River anywhere between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. That makes Dib Harmon the last ferryboat captain in West Virginia, so far as anyone seems to know.

The City of Sistersville has owned the ferry since 1980, and has had difficulty keeping the service afloat in recent years due to problems arising from the age and condition of the boats. The ferry must be self-sustaining, the fares from the vehicles it transports providing its only source of revenue. The city currently just breaks even, and doesn't have the funds to keep up major service on the outdated diesel engines.

Although Harmon performs minor maintenance on the boats and barge, a Wintersville, Ohio, company, Western Branch Diesel, has for years maintained the boats' engines. According to Everett Skinner, Western Branch service manager, the company "patches 'em up and keeps 'em running." The *Elinor D* recently received a minor overhaul, but really needs a new engine, Skinner said. A new engine would cost \$10,000.

Keeping the boats running is a labor of love for Skinner, who admits his company often loses money on service it provides for the ferry. "It means a lot to me because it's the last one. It has historical value," Skinner said. "I hope they are able to continue it."

Dib Harmon, with his slow, deliberate speech and ever-so-slight West Virginia accent, enjoys talking about the river and his work. He's got plenty to say, as you might imagine. Although it normally takes him six to eight minutes to cross, for example, "with a baby case it takes about two and a half minutes." A baby case? "Pregnant women," the pilot



The equipment changes but the idea remains the same. The above photo shows the *Kiwanis*, which served from 1925 to 1956, preparing for a departure from the Sistersville landing. Below, the *Elinor D* heads back from the Ohio side on a recent crossing. Photographer and date unknown for old photo, courtesy Walter McCoy Collection, Tyler County Library.





explained. "I don't waste any time crossing the river with them, and I haven't had a baby born on the ferry yet."

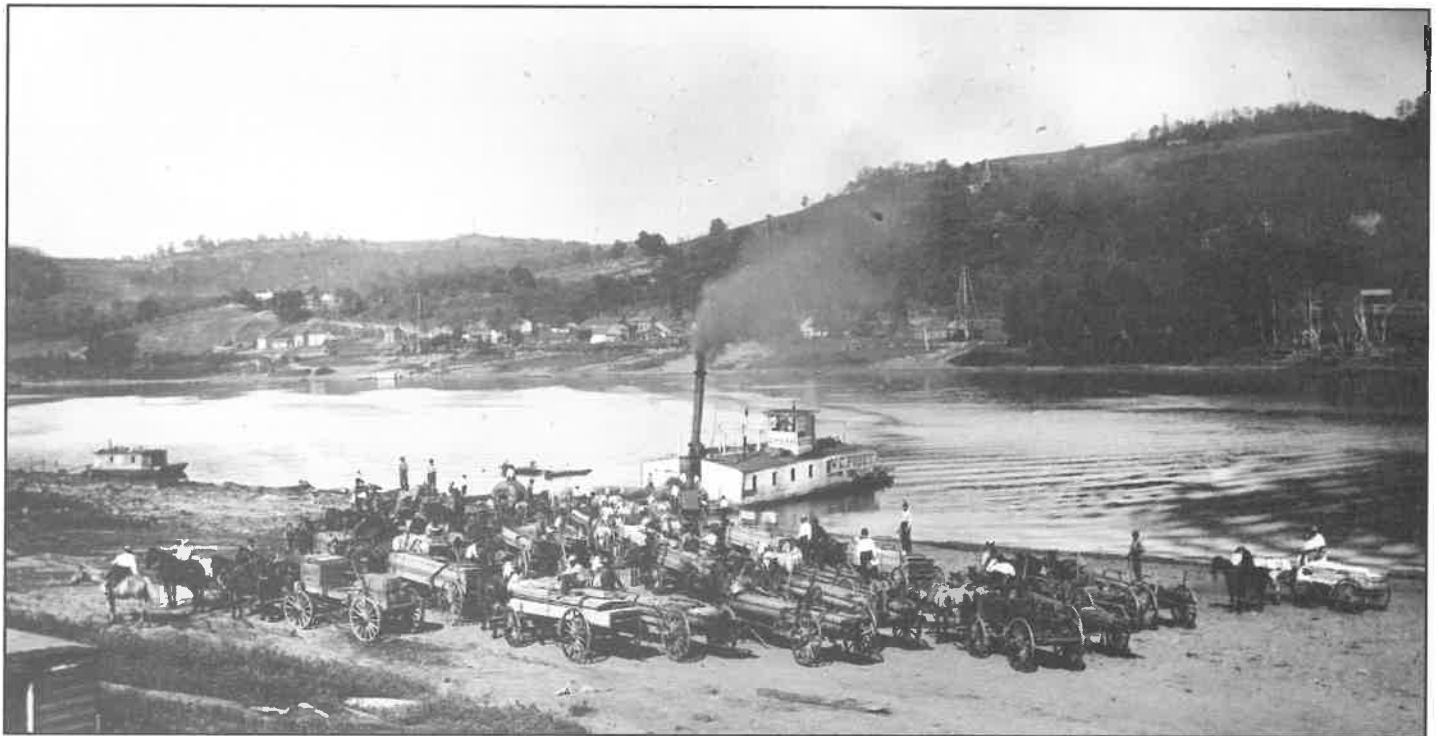
Although the ferry officially operates on a 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily schedule, Harmon accepts baby cases and other emergency calls at any hour. He explained that for many nearby Ohio residents the closest hospital is in West Virginia. When the time comes, expectant fathers on the Ohio side call the Sistersville police, who alert Harmon of the request for emergency service. Usually, he said, he's waiting for the anxious couple when they arrive at the Fly ferry landing. Harmon lives in a mobile home adjacent to the Sistersville landing, and isn't bothered by middle-of-the-night emergencies, he said.

Some of his emergency customers can't pay the \$1.25 fare, but he's never turned one away. Often they will give him something in return for the favor, Harmon said. One such customer two years ago gave him a brand new pair of bib overalls that were large enough for two of him, he recalled. "My fault," he laughed. "I told the man I'd take the largest size he could get."

The ferryman is glad to help out in

Above: Harmon's ferry barge at the Sistersville landing. Cars drive forward onto the barge, then off the other end when the crossing is over.

Below: Ferry traffic was heavier a century ago, during the oil boom. These freight wagons await service by the steam-powered W. C. Pusey, which began operating in 1889. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Walter McCoy Collection, Tyler County Library.



true emergencies, but he knows where to draw the line. He recently had his phone disconnected so he wouldn't have to contend with what he termed "nuisance calls" from less-than-sober patrons on the Ohio side of the river, for example. "They go over there to drink that 'high-test' beer, then call me at 2:00 a.m. to come get 'em," he said. There will be no more of that, unless the drunks also want to route their calls through the Sistersville Police Department.

Harmon has his theories about drinking habits and other affairs in the Buckeye State. The town of Fly was until the turn of the century known as Stringtown, so named because of the way the houses were "strung out" along the river bank, he said. How it became "Fly" is the subject of conflicting local legends, but Harmon likes the one that involves bootleg whiskey. According to this story, two men who owned a tavern in Marietta purchased some illegal spirits in the local area for resale at their place of business. When asked where the whiskey came from one of the tavern owners responded, "a town no bigger than a fly." And so the name stuck, according to Dib Harmon.

Most of Harmon's customers know him by name, and many are second or third generation patrons. It's not unusual for a customer to get out of his car to engage in friendly conversation during the short trip across the river. Some even climb onto the towboat for a closer chat with the pilot.

Some of his customers are in a hurry to cross the river, so Harmon pulls away from the landing as soon as the last vehicle has boarded. "As long as we're moving they don't seem to mind how slow I go — just as long as we're moving," he shrewdly observed. "Everybody's in a big hurry now. I was in a hurry once and got married," he added. Harmon lost his wife to cancer nine years ago, and it's a mark of the man that he can treat her memory with humorous affection.

One customer was so impatient she drove her husband's car into the protective steel railing on the barge, Harmon recalled. Her husband returned later that day to have a word or two with the skipper, only to find that it's not easy matching wits with Dib Harmon.



The *Kiwanis* offered 24 hours service and a roomy passenger cabin. The boat was sunk by a large floating log in 1956. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Walter McCoy Collection, Tyler County Library.

"He told me I should pay for the damage to his car, but I told him he owed me about a quart of paint for the railing," Harmon said. His friendly smile changed to a broad grin, then to a belly laugh as he continued. "He asked me what's that railing for anyway, and I told him it was there to keep his wife from driving his car into the river!"

Harmon once owned the ferry service, but shut it down in 1977. He now operates the ferry as an employee of the City of Sistersville, which reopened it in 1981 with the help of a \$40,000 Governor's Partnership Grant. Mayor William Gilligan calls Harmon "obstreperous and cantankerous," which the ferryboat man knows to take lightly.

In fact, Gilligan and Harmon have been good friends since the early 1960's, when Harmon owned and operated the now defunct New Martinsville ferry up the river in Wetzel County. Nonetheless, the mayor wants Harmon to slow down a little, and train another pilot to keep the service operating whenever he is sick.

Mayor Gilligan quibbles about irregular service, but Harmon counters that his customers understand when he has to shut down for a day. "They just drive around, that's all," he said. But Bill Gilligan frets that many of the customers who are forced to use the bridges at St. Marys or New

Martinsville may not come back to Sistersville.

The mayor and the ferryman keep the banter going, no harm intended. Dib Harmon has a final rejoinder for his boss. "Don't believe nothing Bill Gilligan says about my personal life," he cautioned. "If I had as many lady friends as he says I do, I'd be dead!"

Still, the situation regarding the Sistersville ferry is a serious one. The service has struggled to break even the last few years, with unexpected engine breakdowns eating away at available funds. To hire a second pilot and increase the ferry's operating hours would further erode those funds, Harmon fears.

Another factor that makes hiring a second pilot difficult is the availability of qualified pilots who have passenger-carrying licenses. Riverboating is largely cargo service nowadays, and there simply aren't that many passenger pilots available, Harmon said. Under existing licensing procedures, however, an apprentice pilot may operate the ferry. Harmon had been training his son as a pilot under the apprenticeship procedures, but he had to quit for medical reasons.

Harmon loves being the center of attention, and as the last remaining ferryboat captain in West Virginia he gets a lot of press. But he's just like everybody else, he says — no better and no worse. Money means nothing

to him, the riverman claims. "Millionaires loaf with me here," he said. "Sometimes I have to chase 'em off." Sistersville still has a disproportionate number of millionaires per capita, Harmon maintains, due in part to the 1890's oil boom.

Although heavy north-south barge traffic on the Ohio sometimes causes minor delays for the ferry, the possibility of a collision is remote. Most of the barge captains call Harmon by radio as a precaution. They know him by name, he said. "They'll call and say 'Where you at, Dib?' I'll tell 'em what side of the river I'm on and they look out for me." Even in fog he doesn't worry about barge traffic. They all have radar, he explained, and know about the ferry operation.

Earlier ferrymen had no such conveniences, Harmon knows. He has a good working knowledge of the history of the Sistersville ferry, and his current tenure was handed down directly from earlier operators. The ferry was born January 28, 1818, when the General Assembly of Virginia passed an act granting the ferry franchise to John McCoy. McCoy's wife Sarah assumed ownership when he died, and deeded it to their son Thomas Jefferson McCoy in 1870.

T. J. McCoy died three years later. He had established a trust that would allow the ferry to continue, the revenue it generated to be used for care and support of his children until his youngest came of age.

John Hanford McCoy and George McCoy, presumably T. J. McCoy's children, in 1894 sold the franchise known as the McCoy Ferry to Frank D. and A. S. McCoy, and Ezbia Talbott for \$4,000. Sistersville was then in the midst of the oil boom, the first well having been drilled in 1891 at Polecat Hollow on the Joshua Russell farm. Demands on the ferry are said to have grown by leaps and bounds during the 1890's.

Until 1889, the ferryboats in use had been mostly paddlewheel boats powered by a horse on a treadmill. In that year, the ferry's owners purchased the steam-powered ferryboat, the *W. C. Pusey*. The *Pusey* was built at New Martinsville, and was 85.7 feet long and 18 feet wide.

The *Orion*, built in 1884 at Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania, went into service at the Sistersville ferry in 1886.

Although it was 25 feet longer than the *Pusey* and six feet wider, neither boat was able to keep pace with the ever-increasing traffic. In 1907 a new hull was built at Clarington, Ohio. The superstructure and machinery of the *Orion* were transferred to the new hull, and the boat was named *Daniel*. The *Daniel* ran until 1917, and later was used as a passenger ferry at Parkersburg.

In 1920 the Sistersville Ferry Company reorganized into a stock company under state laws in effect at that time. In 1937 Everett Tuel acquired the stock formerly owned by the descendants of Ezbia Talbott. Tuel sold his interest to Joe Witten in 1955. It was



Generations of travelers have entrusted their Ohio River passage to the watchful eye of Dib Harmon. He expects that to continue.

Witten who bought out the last of the McCoy interests, in 1960, and he who sold the ferry company to Dib Harmon in November 1964.

The *Dora T*, also built at Clarington, went into service in 1917. It was named for the wife of Frank D. McCoy, and was a sternwheeler. Unlike its predecessors, the *Dora T* had a gasoline-burning engine. Its owners were concerned with the fire hazards associated with gasoline, and sure enough, the *Dora T* was in 1925 destroyed by a fire that ignited during refueling on the Ohio side.

The *Dora T* was also used to transport baseball players from town to

town. Every town along the river had its baseball team, according to Harmon, who said, "It was a big thing back then." He also reported that one of the ill-fated *Dora T*'s pilots is known to have frequently piloted the ferry drunk. Sell Dawson on one occasion ran the *Dora T* aground on the Ohio side of the river, colliding with a wooden oil derrick that collapsed atop the ill-fated ferryboat, Harmon said.

The *Kiwanis* was built at Clarington as a replacement for the *Dora T*. It ran until 1956, when a large log floating in the river punctured the side of the boat, causing it to sink. The *Rides*, a boat named after a local family, went into service after the sinking of the *Kiwanis*. The *Rides* operated until 1977, when the ferry temporarily discontinued service.

Ownership has continued to change hands in recent years. After buying the ferry from Joe Witten in 1964, Harmon ran it until 1973, when he sold it to Doris McCoy. In 1975, Harmon bought the ferry back, only to shut it down two years later.

With no ferry service at Sistersville between 1977 and 1981, Harmon went to work as a barge pilot. He retired in 1982, but only for five weeks. He claims he'll never do that again. "I don't like retirement," he declared. "Five weeks of retirement is about all I could stand." He hasn't the slightest idea what he would do if he couldn't pilot the Sistersville ferry 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

Approximately 22 regular customers ride the ferry to and from work every day, accounting for 44 of the average 100 daily fares, according to Harmon. Ridership remains fairly constant except for the summer influx of tourists who pass through Sistersville, he said. He's not making any claims, you understand, but perhaps he and his boat are among the attractions that bring them there. After all, the boat is the last of its kind in West Virginia and Dib Harmon the last of a breed. ♣

The Sistersville ferry operates daily from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and waiting time is minimal. It crosses the Ohio River to connect West Virginia Route 2 with Ohio Route 7. Fares are \$1.25 for passenger autos, 75 cents for motorcycles, 50 cents for walking passengers and \$5 to \$6 for tractor trailers.

I was born February 21, 1906, one mile below Berea, Ritchie County, in a log cabin on the farm of Asa Randolph. Our family were renters at the time, not yet owning a place of our own. We later lived on Sutton Run of Otterslide Creek, then on the Waity Sutton place by the deep ford, just over the hill from where the Seventh-Day Baptist parsonage now stands. Joe Sullivan's place was across from the deep ford, and you crossed here to go up Otterslide before the iron bridge was built.

From there we moved to the Flanagan farm. We occupied an old boardinghouse, built to house the drillers when they were drilling wells on the Flanagan place. Then we moved to the Ireland farm. The early places are fuzzy in my mind, but I know we lived at each for a year or two at a time.

The Ireland farm was where I grew up and where I began to remember things. The first place we moved to on the Ireland farm was across the river from the house of Captain George Ireland. That house still stands, but the Captain George house was torn down years ago. After Captain George moved to Pullman we moved across to his house, a big two-story place with a nice yard and outbuildings. The well was very deep, and at least 20 feet was dug through solid rock.

We lived there nine years. I learned to hunt and fish on the Ireland farm, and will never forget the first rabbit I caught in a trap. I had seen Dad hold rabbits up and pop them in the back of the head. That was the end of Mr. Rabbit. Well, I did that and laid my rabbit down to set the trap again, and up he jumped and scampered off through the woods. I felt very badly going back home without any meat for the table.



Author Clive Sutton's high school buddies were sharp dressers. They are Rufus McDougle, Hugh Stull, Russell Jett and Sutton himself. Photographer unknown, 1925 or 1926.

"We Toiled and Labored and Grew Up"

Looking Back in Ritchie County

By Clive B. Sutton



Above: Clive had all the horsepower he could handle in this early photo. This picture was made near Berea, about 1910. Photographer unknown.

Left: Mr. Sutton today. In this family scene wife Winona checks his tie before a recent outing. Photo by Michael Keller.

Most hunters had a ferret in those days, and how well do I remember my first experience with one. Old Jim, our hunting dog, had holed a rabbit. Dad told me to get down by the lower hole and he would put the ferret in and run him out. Well, when a ferret runs out a rabbit it sounds like a bear is coming out of the hole. I got scared, thinking it was at least a wildcat. I jerked my straw hat off and slapped it down over the hole and held on with both hands. The rabbit came out full power, bursting through my old hat, right into my face. I fell over backwards, the dog saw the rabbit and ran over top of me, and dog and rabbit took off through the woods at a fast pace. I suspect Dad knew just what would happen.

Jim was the best hunting dog I have ever known. Dad worked for Bill Ireland for a dollar a day and hunted and trapped to supplement his small income. Fur brought a good price. Old Jim would bay half a dozen possums and skunks in one night — he didn't like skunks, and when he bayed one his bark would just tremble. We trapped for rabbits, skunks, muskrats, mink, fox or possum. I once caught a

fine mink, and we got \$24 for the pelt.

The Ireland, Prunty and Flanagan farms were all being drilled for oil, and there was much operation going on all around. Some of the wells were pumped with steam, some with gas engines, and a large powerhouse pumped many wells with cables. The wells pumped by steam had steam lines that ran inside a box above the ground. One time Dad sent me to get some seed corn. I was walking the steam box when a covey of quail flew out, scaring me so bad I fell off and spilled the corn.

One of the first cars I can remember came to a party at our place. It was a two-seat roadster with no top and a two cylinder engine that went bang, bang, bang. Clem and Coy Overfield were the drivers. Trucks were beginning to come along about this time. The first one had buggy wheels with spikes in the iron tires. Bill DeBrular was the owner. Later Bruce Jett, who pumped wells, bought a Model T Ford with brass radiator and carbide lights.

My family had old Fanny and the buggy for transportation. Dad built a rumble seat, and two or three of us would ride back there. One time it got

loose and dropped my sister Budge and Hazel Prunty in a mud hole. Old Fanny wouldn't work with another horse, but was a good horse by herself. We would go to Berea to the store and to the Otterslide Seventh-Day Baptist Church.

After the summer work was through Dad would go into the woods and clear about four acres every year, burn the logs and brush the next spring, then plow and plant corn. He would get two crops off the land and then turn it into pasture. This way we had two patches, the old and the new ground, each year. In the spring it was plow and plant the crops and then hoe corn. Then we hit the hay fields, cut and put up hay, and on to the "filth" or brush cutting.

I started to work for Mr. Ireland when I was 12 years old. He paid me a dollar a day, which was a man's wage at that time. I really felt big getting all that money. Farm work went on until I had to start to school in the fall.

We went to the Turtle Run School. It was about two miles through the ice, mud and snow. Pressy Randolph was the teacher the year it was my turn to



Above: Mr. Sutton's parents photographed at their Otterslide home in later years. Photographer unknown, 1940's.

Right: The Otterslide Seventh-Day Baptist Church remains today as it stands in our author's memory, offering a shaded refuge from worldly cares. Photo by Michael Keller.



start. I had heard all these tales about kids getting a licking, and I was just scared stiff. I wouldn't go by myself, so I took Budge along. I was scared so bad I couldn't tell my name.

Pressy had a trap line he tended on the way to school. Sometimes he trapped a skunk, and didn't smell so good when he got near the coal stove. In those days there were no high schools, and some kids went to grade school until they were 18 or 20 years old. Many would take a test then and go right out and teach without even a day of high school.

In the fall we hunted hickory nuts and chestnuts. Mom would crack walnuts and sell them to buy our Christmas presents. We each got an orange, apple, small bag of candy, and one piece of clothing — and thought we were lucky.

Among the other events I remember happening while we lived on the Ireland farm was the roads being plowed every summer. The road plow was pulled by four teams of horses. They were dressed up with brass knobs on the hames and rings of different colors on the harness. My brothers, sister

and I would get up on the fence and watch them go by.

One of our big entertainments was when the peddlers came our way. The Sadie boys, Tim and Joe, would come by once or twice a year with great packs on their backs. The Syrian brothers would stay all night at our place, and in the morning they would place their wares on the bed or floor. What a sight for us kids — mouth organs, Jew's harps, scissors, safety pins, buttons, needles, thread and many other knick-knacks. After two or three years they had saved enough money to buy a horse and wagon. They operated around Pennsboro and West Union, and I later talked with one of them here in Parkersburg. They carried a first reader with them and were always trying to learn to read English. I would help, laughing at the way they pronounced the words.

We had a 40-foot seine for fishing. The men would pull the ends and a couple of us boys would go along and loosen the big net when it got snagged on rocks or limbs. Large bass would sail over the top like flying squirrels, and about all we got was sunfish and suckers.

Captain Ireland had planted a fine orchard behind the house in bygone days, and most years there were plenty of nice apples. He had a grandson who would come over and pick them. We kids would gather up apples on the ground and pelt him out of the tree. He would then chase us, and we would take off in all directions. I jumped over a high bank one time and landed on a rock with my bare feet. I got a bad stone bruise on my heel, which lasted for two months.

We seemed to have much more severe winters in those days. Ice would freeze 12 to 18 inches thick. We skated on the river, the South Fork of Hughes, with 20 or more of us meeting at the Flanagan place. At times we would build a big fire to keep warm. In the spring when the ice would go out you could hear the grinding and crashing for miles.

Judd Riddle was a big timber man back then. Loggers cut timber in the fall and winter, and when the spring floods came they would float the logs down the river. A crew of men followed on both sides. If logs got hung up on the bank they would roll them back into the stream and keep them

The Seventh-Day Baptists

Seventh-Day Baptists take their name from a literal belief in the Biblical command to rest and worship on the seventh day. Saturday worship is the most distinguishing feature of the group's theology, the principal tenet separating them from conventional Baptist doctrines. They are the oldest Protestant Sabbath-keeping denomination in the United States. Like other "Sabbatarians" they have been only a minor part of Christianity, their membership small nationally and worldwide, but their power has been substantial in certain local areas. Their influence was once so pervasive in western Harrison County, for example, that the Salem post office was open Sundays and closed Saturdays.

The first Seventh-Day Baptist congregation appears to have arisen in London in the mid-1600's. They worshipped at the Millyard Seventh-Day Baptist church in Bull Stake Alley. In 1661 on October 19th pastor John James was dragged from his pulpit while preaching the Sabbath service and charged with treason for speaking against the King. He was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. His sentence was soon brutally carried out, but the Millyard church still survives more than 300 years later.

It was in the face of such persecution that many Seventh-Day Baptists left to practice their religious beliefs elsewhere. English members carried the faith to America, where German Sabbatarians added to the tradition. Early American congregations were established in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. The Seventh-Day Baptists spread westward and southward from their East Coast origins in the 18th century.

In 1789 a company of Seventh-

Day Baptists left Monmouth County, New Jersey. Their pastor and leader, Elder Jacob Davis, led the group to western Virginia. The entourage of "15 wagons and 72 souls" traveled 400 miles until they reached Monongalia County's Whiteday Creek.

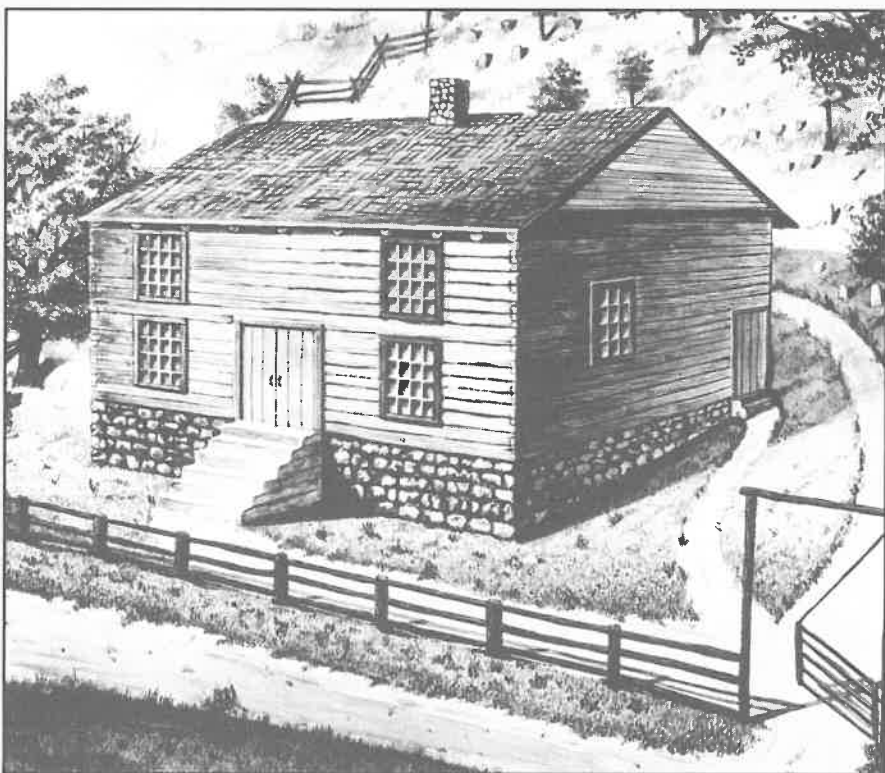
Following the death of their leader, the settlers were persuaded by Samuel Fitz Randolph to relocate some 50 miles away to his holdings along the waters of Ten Mile Creek. Thus the Whiteday Creek congregation sold their Monongalia land and followed Randolph to Harrison County. It was there the Sabbath keepers founded the Village of New Salem, and on May 13, 1792, established the local Seventh-Day Baptist church. The

Salem community and eventually Salem College became a hub of the faith in West Virginia. The Ritchie County churches author Clive Sutton recalls fell within this sphere of influence.

West Virginia's most famous modern Seventh-Day Baptist is former Senator Jennings Randolph. His family has been active in church and college affairs for generations, with Randolph himself joining the Salem College board of trustees while still a student there.

In a 1983 GOLDENSEAL interview, Senator Randolph credited the family religion as a major formative influence. "When I graduated, my mother gave me no suit of clothes, or shirt, or tie," he recalled. "She gave me a Bible."

This artist's rendering shows Salem's first Seventh-Day Baptist church, a sturdy log building constructed in 1801. The present church occupies the same site.



going. I believe they were floated down to Nicholette, on the Little Kanawha near Parkersburg, where they had large sawmills at that time. Uncle Walter Jett was drowned at the mouth of Middle Fork of Hughes River while drifting logs.

Great-grandpa Jonathan C. Lowther and Grandpa William Jett would come and visit us in the summertime, and Grandpa Jett and I would go fishing. His buddies would come to visit and they would all tell Civil War stories. I would stay up and listen, scared out of my wits.

I remember one vacation we had. We got up at four in the morning, went in the buggy to Pullman and caught the P&H train to Pennsboro. We were going to Salem to visit Uncle Leonard F. Jett. When that big B&O train pulled puffing and blowing into Pennsboro I was sure they would never get the thing stopped. But we got on board and had a fine trip to the big city of Salem.

During the First World War a plant was built where gasoline was made. The flu epidemic hit and many died. Dad worked a lot of extra time in the oil field and bought a small farm off Grandpa Jett on Otterslide. We called that our "upper place," for it had no house and we continued to live elsewhere. He asked Mr. Ireland for \$1.25 a day to help feed his growing family. Ireland couldn't afford to pay that much for a hired hand, so Dad decided to move back to the Waity Sutton place by the deep ford near Berea, sometime between 1918 and 1920.

We settled down there to the good life. The cattle and sheep were turned out to pasture. That first spring brought a terrible storm on the ninth of May, and we had nine inches of snow. Dad and I went to the upper place, made a path, and the sheep and lambs followed. We brought them all down and turned them out in the lot around the house. The next day the sun came out and the snow was soon gone. It didn't hurt the fruit trees, and since a good snow is the poor man's fertilizer, the grass was green that season. We had a good year.

Budge and I started to school at Berea in the fall. Amos Brissey was the teacher. He asked me what grade I was in and where I came from. We



The main thoroughfare of Pullman in 1914 and recently. The oil and gas boom is long past, but the community retains much of its old flavor. Old postcard view by H. E. Bonnett, new photo by Michael Keller.



hadn't had grades at Turtle Run, just reading, writing and ciphering. Amos placed me in the third or fourth grade, but after the first general test in the fall he moved me to the fifth. I would go to the upper place and feed the cattle and sheep and then go around the ridge to school, coming off at the old Kildow place then owned by Charlie Batson.

We lived at the Waity farm a couple

of years, and then Dad bought the Grant Hodge place on Sutton Run. This was a nice house for its day, and we settled down in the first home of our own. Dad had paid for the upper place in 18 months at wartime wages, and bought the Hodge farm for the house.

It turned out to be a long struggle. After the war prices came tumbling down, and it was a hard life for old

Dad. Beef and pork sold for four and five cents a pound on the hoof. By and by hard times came knocking at our door, and it took 20 years to recover. Dad would work a full year to pay the interest on borrowed money and \$50 on the principal.

On the farm we toiled and labored and grew up. Those were happy days for us. We raised cattle and sheep and a couple of hogs to butcher in the fall. We cured the hams and shoulders, and in the spring the hams were smoked with hickory and sassafras wood. I can still smell that ham meat. We would make sausage and Mom would cold pack the tenderloin. That was real eating.

We raised a big garden and canned much fruit and vegetables. We had a screen hanging above the stove where we would dry corn, beans, apples and peaches. Many times we would kill a beef in the fall. I remember one time Ed Penniger was staying with us, and we killed a beef. When he went to town someone asked how the beef was. "So tough you couldn't eat it," Ed replied. "You would have to have jaws like a lion and teeth like a bear to chew it!" Ed didn't have a tooth in his head.

One of the big events of the year was thrashing time. The thrashing machine* would come around and usually two or three farmers would go together and thrash. The thrashing machine was run by a steam engine, and they would have to have a big pile of wood and a couple of barrels of water. The engine operator would fire up, and when he got steam up he would blow the whistle and the thrashing began. It was a mighty busy place around there for awhile. Sometimes they would thrash two or three sets in a day, moving from one place to the next. They would tell where they would be for dinner, and two or three of the families would go together and prepare a big feast. I believe Amos Brissey owned the machine, and Dad and Lester Baker ran it for him. They would go all over Ritchie County and thrash.

I remember going to Berea with Dad and seeing the smoldering ashes when the old water mill burned. They

*The thrashing (or threshing) machine separated the grain from the straw and chaff in wheat and similar grains.

Return to Turtle Run

Recently I returned to the scenes of my childhood in Ritchie County. My nephew Larry Brissey, my son Cullen, and I had to take a four-wheel drive vehicle for the trip. We crossed the stream of White Oak, which runs just below the White Oak Church, and took to the hills. After a good climb we started to descend into the valley of Turtle Run. I went to school there more than 75 years ago.

A flood of sadness filled my soul as we descended into this beautiful valley which once had had neat homes and gardens, with laughing, playing children. Now all was changed.

The first home site was where Hallie Harris used to live. The house was gone, and there was little to show that anyone had ever lived there. Farther down there was a house standing, but no signs of anyone having lived there for some time. We came to a forks in the run, and turned up to where Bill Prunty's family had lived. Bill moved to Pullman long ago so his four boys would have the opportunity to go to school.

Just below the forks of Turtle is where Corb Snodgrass's home had stood. Now all that was standing was the old cellar house, the house itself gone. My thoughts drifted back to when I attended my first party at the Snodgrass home.

We continued over very rough roads until we came to where the old Turtle Run School had stood. Nothing was there but a few stones and a metal casing sticking up where a water well had been drilled. The playground was full of trees, but I could almost hear the sound of children's laughter as they played Cat Ball, Ante Over, or a rousing game of Fox and Geese when the snow was on the ground.

We drove onward up the road to the site of Ben and Emma Snodgrass's home. They had had three children, Ural, Ford, and Mildred. Again, all that remained was the cellar house and silence.

We then backtracked and went up over the hill to where Bill and Icy Lowther and their three girls had lived. A gas well has been drilled on the site of their house.

We proceeded over the hill to the ford in the river which led to the Flanagan farm. We crossed the river and passed by the house. Finally there was a house that was still standing and had had some repairs done to it. It was a refreshing sight after seeing all the other places in ruin.

Turning left up a hill, we came to an old cemetery. My great-great-grandmother (Sudna Hughes, wife of Colonel William Lowther) and my great-great-grandmother (Rebecca Coburn, wife of Elias Lowther, Colonel William's son) are buried there in unmarked graves. This cemetery is located on the Flanagan farm. There were only two Flanagan tombstones with lettering which we could read. There had been no upkeep for many years.

When we came back out that road we traveled past the Ellis Prunty farm. The house was still standing, but there had been no repairs. This place brought back memories of when I used to walk to Turtle Run School. Many times I would be half frozen by the time I got to the Pruntys' house. Jane would always take me in and let me get warm.

Next we proceeded to the spot where the house of Captain James Ireland used to stand. Woody Ireland had since built a nice modern house near the site of the old house. We received permission to drive back through the Ireland farm



Author Clive Sutton stands at right, second row, in this 1918 Turtle Run school picture, with brothers Orland and Earl at left in first row, and sister Virgie the taller girl behind them. There are no children at all on Turtle Run today, Mr. Sutton says. Photographer unknown.

and came out at the Middle Fork of the Hughes River. When I was a lad of ten or 12 we would go over that way to visit Festus Kelly, Buckner Zinn, and the Spiker and Shepler families.

We then crossed the river to go to the Middle Fork side. We took a little side trip to visit the old Schraven house, where my family had lived perhaps two years before we moved to the big Captain George house across the river. This was where I became acquainted with Santa Claus. He came in the back window, walked across the bed in his muddy shoes, and left presents for us children under the tree.

When we left there we came out

at the A. G. Kelly place on Otterslide. This is another valley that is now strange to me. At one time there were two schools there. One was on upper Otterslide and the other was on lower Otterslide. There were perhaps 50 students at each school, but now there is not one school age child that lives on the 'Slide.

What has happened to all the people who once lived there? Has a Pied Piper lured these industrious, hard-working folks away? They have left few traces, but not everything is gone yet. Even though all the people have vanished in the mist, their memories will remain as long as I live.

— Clive B. Sutton

built a large new mill powered by a Bessemer natural gas engine, a really fine mill for those days. People raised wheat, oats, corn and buckwheat, taking it all to the mill to be ground into flour, meal and feed. Harl Bee was the miller, and I believe the mill was run in conjunction with the Tom Jackson store. There were always several teams and wagons and buggies around the mill and store.

The new mill itself later burned to the ground, and people quit raising wheat and oats. You could buy Gold Medal flour for 25 cents a bag, so it didn't pay to raise your own wheat.

But people still had to have corn bread, and they had to have their corn ground into meal. Dad found a set of stone burrs somewhere, and he would grind on Friday afternoon. He also got a corn crusher to grind cob and all into feed for cattle and hogs. The grinders were powered by a Fairbanks & Morris gasoline engine. I got so I could operate all the machinery, and if Dad was away I would do the grinding. Dad could make the best cornmeal I ever ate.

Dad also had an ensilage cutter and filled silos all around the country. Later in the fall he took his fodder shredder and cut-off saw around to shred fodder and cut wood for people. One time Dad was sawing a log with a short limb on it and his hand was thrown into the saw and cut very badly. The bone was cut through on one finger, but the doctor at Pullman splinted it. It took a year to heal, and two fingers were permanently immobilized.

After finishing grade school at Berea I went to work at odd jobs, anything I could get. I cut filth for Amos Brissey and Cecil Reed, also on the Blondy Randolph farm, and I worked for Jess Kelly some. I also worked on several pipeline projects. Archie Richards and I worked together on one pipe gang. Eight men carried pipes to the ditch and lined it up, and then the tong crew took over. Another time Guy and Oma Sutton, Archie Richards, Mint Hess and Wardner Hodge and I worked on a line, boarding at John Lowther's on Brushy Fork of Bone Creek.

One job we called the "Big Inch" for its 20-inch pipeline. We started to work the Big Inch near the Fleming farm, crossed Bone Creek at the

mouth of Brushy Fork, over the hills to Otterslide, then across Otterslide just above the Elisha Maxon place to Middle Fork above Jake Spiker's, and came out near the head of Bear Run. We boarded at Oak Jett's on Bear Run. Uncle Leonard F. Jett, Pressy Randolph, Archie Richards, Wardner Hodge, Dad and I were in that crew.

The Jetts had the first rotating table I had ever seen. The food was placed on the table and you didn't have to pass anything; you just rotated the table around to whatever you wanted. We started to work from there one morning and Pressy couldn't find his hat. We looked high and low. Pressy finally said, "I guess somebody just fed it to the hogs!" Uncle Leonard got a laugh out of that. I heard him repeat it many times.

We would stay at home when we could. We would have to get up before daylight, and often carry a lantern. When you got to the top of the hill you could see lanterns heading for the big ditch from far and near.

The pay was \$4.05 a day. That was big money, but you had to work hard. If you lit a cigarette and stood long enough to take three drags, you were fired on the spot. There were other men — "crows," we called them — waiting along the ditch, and the closest one to the man that got fired took his place. The ditch was 30 inches wide and 36 inches deep. There were 75 to 100 men digging. A section was 20 feet. When you got your section finished, you moved on up to the head of the column and started another. Many times you would hit rock, and there was a rock crew to take care of that.

The most rugged work of all was on the pipe crew. It took 20 men to lift and place the big pipe in the ditch. Sometimes a joint would get away on a steep hill, and the men would have to let go and scatter. I was on the stripping crew on that job. We worked up ahead of the diggers. We marked the ditch accurately and stripped the dirt down one inch deep. Some couldn't dig a straight ditch if you didn't outline it for them, and then one section wouldn't line up with the ones the other men were digging.

As a teenager, I worked on the roads in the summertime. We had a crew made up of Joe and Tom Sullivan, John Gary, Wardner Hodge, Dad and



Photographer Perry Cox captured this pipeline crew at work in southeastern Ritchie County. This is from the era of Mr. Sutton's memory, although the date and exact location are unknown.

myself. Wardner drove the Model T Ford truck. We would have to stop many times along the road to clean spark plugs. We carried our tools on the old truck — picks, mattocks, axes, hammers, star drill, and dynamite, caps and fuses for blasting big rocks.

Dad was the shooter, and after we drilled holes in the rock he would load up. One of his specials was the mud pack. If you got a big, loose rock you placed half a stick of dynamite on it and covered it with mud. It went off with a deafening roar, and the rock

was pulverized. We would pick up the small pieces and fill in the chuck holes.

We drilled rock with the star drill, a steel rod with the business end shaped like a cross or four-pointed star. One man turned the drill a quarter turn after each hit with the eight pound sledge hammer. It was frightening at first, because if you missed the drill you could hurt the turner really bad. Usually three men would strike and one turned, and we rotated on the turning. The drill hole was cleaned out by pouring a little water



Mr. Sutton is wise enough to know that you really can go home again. Here he catches up with Berea storekeeper Ray Bonnell, an old friend.
Photo by Michael Keller.

Football 1924

It happens that author Clive Sutton's school years at Pullman coincided with the short coaching career of West Virginia writer Louis Reed. Both men remembered high school football of that day as serious, bone-crushing business. The following excerpt is from Gordon Swartz's summer 1987 GOLDENSEAL article on Reed:

Louis left New York to return to West Virginia in August 1924. He worked as a high school teacher and a football coach at Pullman High School in Ritchie County. High school coaching was a different proposition in 1924 than it is today. Non-students were often used to ensure victory. Louis wanted to be a winner, so he recruited two of his cousins who were college men. One of the two



Louis Reed never looked this good on the football field. Photographer unknown, 1923.

was Donald F. Black, for many years a judge of the circuit court of Wirt and Wood counties, and the other Amos Hale Black, later a professor of mathematics.

The team went to play a game at Cairo, across the county. The college players on the Cairo team recognized the college players on the Pullman team. The fracas which followed turned into a full-scale riot. The entire Pullman team, including Coach Reed, was incarcerated in the local hoosegow. This was done mostly for their own protection, since the Cairo fans were ready to lynch them.

Mr. Sutton played in that game, but as he remembers it "we players got on the old flatbed truck and got out of town as quick as we could." He says he looked up Reed decades later to reminisce about football, fishing and other important matters.

in and swabbing with a swab made by pounding the end of a hickory stick.

We usually came home at night on the road work, but occasionally we would stay away. One night we stayed at Hallie Harris's on Turtle Run. After supper I decided to walk over to Pullman. They showed me where I would sleep, and when I came back to go to bed I had to open the door and go upstairs. I never heard such a commotion! They had filled a box full of old tin cans, rocks, and what have you, set it at the top of the stairs and tied a string to the back of the door. They were supposed to all be laying there awake to have a good laugh, but Joe Sullivan had gone to sleep and never heard a thing. They laughed at both of us the next day.

We all played some kind of a musical instrument when I was growing up, and we could always play music. I played fiddle and banjo; Wardner the guitar; Oma, Guy and Harold Sutton played guitars and mandolin; Port Campbell and Mort Wilson were good fiddlers. I remember a whole bunch of us got together a couple of times and went across the hill to Mort and Bonnie Wilson's. We played music all day, and at noon had a big chicken dinner.

Port Campbell, Wardner Hodge and I played for "literary" at Upper Otterslide schoolhouse at times. Literary, debates and trials were big things, and I still remember some of the plays. One time we had walked to Upper Otterslide to literary and on the way back the moon was shining bright, and someone had stuffed an old suit of underwear with straw and hung it on a rope over the middle of the road. It looked just like someone had been hung, and it sure gave us a good scare.

W. L. Davis, the pastor of the Seventh-Day Baptist church on Otterslide always had a singing school in the summertime, and many times there would be 50 or 60 young people there. People would walk to Pine Low Gap to meetings and all over the country.

Uncle Hollie Sutton had bought the Waity Sutton place and fixed it up, and we had many a good time there. Salt fish was six cents a pound. They are good, fixed properly. We would get Aunt Beulah to soak them a couple of days, and we would have a fish fry. Then we would play music, cards and games until after midnight. I met



Military service brought an end to Clive Sutton's growing-up years. This portrait was made in the Panama Canal Zone in the late 1920's, photographer unknown.

my future wife there. She was visiting at Mable Eheret's and came to a party.

About this time a change came over my situation. My cousin, Russell Jett, who had graduated from Salem College, became a teacher at Pullman High School. He and Hollie Shepler came over and talked me into going to high school. This was about 1924, as I remember. I stayed with Russell in the Loudon Hotel the first year. He helped me. Then Frosty Prunty and I rented a little two-room place and batched there. Frosty wouldn't get up and go to school in the morning, and I believe he dropped out in the second half of the term.

My second partner was Herbert Hardbarger. We were both too old to be in high school, and we were out to get through as soon as possible. We called our place the "Blue Boar Inn" and really had a good time. We played

football, competing against Cairo, Elizabeth, West Milford, Grantsville and others teams. Doc Walton took care of our bruises when we got hurt.

Those were wonderful days — I would walk home to Berea on Friday and back on Sunday afternoon carrying canned food from home, sausage, tenderloin, ham, and jellies.

The third year I told teacher Ward Ashcraft I would be 21 if I graduated in '27, and I would have to make it that year or quit. He let me go ahead and try. I took six subjects the last semester and made better grades than before, but I had to study very hard. Ward was our agriculture teacher. One year he took us up to Morgantown, where he had gone to agricultural school, and we camped out in one of the fields near the big barns. We spent two days there viewing all the activities.

After high school I went with my married sister to Keyser to try to find a job. I first worked at the Washington Bottom farm across the river from Pinto, Maryland, at general farm work, and when the summer was done I went on the mountain and picked apples.

Then I went to work for Dickenson Construction Company in Ridgeley, Mineral County, formerly the Western Maryland Railroad shops. Noah Ellefritz, Sam Parks, Harvey Sommerville and I got on, and I stayed at Harvey's for awhile. We rode in Noah's old car, and later I boarded in Ridgeley near the work. We were rebuilding coal cars, and I worked on an air reamer. They would patch or repair one whole side of a coal car, bolt it in a few places, then the reamer crews would ream the holes out for the riveting crews.

About the first of February 1928, everyone was laid off but the wrecking crew. That was a sad day. I paid up my board for two weeks and visited all the places of employment in the Ridgeley-Cumberland area — no jobs. So, it was go home in defeat to the farm or join the Army. I chose the latter, entering the service on February 28 and staying on to make a career of it. The military took me to Panama, Hawaii, the Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, Korea and other places far from my Ritchie County home, but it never took the memory of home from me. ❁

Grandma's Legacy

By Abbey L. Zink

My great-grandmother, Pauline Sauls, turned 80 the year I was born. By that time, she had lived through two world wars, the Great Depression and the birth of the nuclear age. She would live to see a man walk on the moon, President Nixon resign, and the nation humbled by the Iran hostage crisis.

Yet, it is not what she lived through, but how she lived that made a lasting impression on me.

Grandma was a lady of character, feisty, forthright, and independent. Hidden beneath her printed dresses and worn sweaters was a woman whose strength was unparalleled, a woman who never stopped learning, a woman who never quit giving, a woman who never ceased living even when the years began to take their toll.

She was born in 1887, and died in 1986, six months short of her 100th birthday. She spent almost all of that century in the southern coalfields of West Virginia.

Forced to leave school to help her family, Grandma never went beyond the fourth grade. Yet, she was an avid newspaper reader all of her life, often clipping articles she particularly enjoyed. She realized the importance of education, urging her descendants to go as far as they could with their schooling.

Hers was a life steeped in hard times and hard living. My great-grandfather, Gerald Sauls, worked in the coal mines, for the railroad and for a while as a small store owner. Theirs was not a life of luxury.

From Grandma, I learned that to relinquish an ounce of independence is the gravest sin of all. She lived alone until her death. Rather than move in with one of her three surviving children, she devised ways to make her home comfortable and accessible, even after she was forced to use a walker.

Well into her 90's, Grandma referred to women in their 70's as being "old." In her late 80's, she told my grandfather that she wished she

could work like she did when she was 75. That was Grandma. Retirement wasn't in her vocabulary.

I have read how many Americans never have the opportunity to get to know their grandparents and can't even name their great-grandparents. I find that hard to imagine. Thanks to Grandma, I have a vivid picture of my family's past. I can describe my ancestors through her line to my great-great-grandfather, who was a physician. I know that her family fought for the Union in the Civil War for she had a button from a uniform worn by one of her uncles. And I know that Devil Anse Hatfield, who was married to my great-grandmother's great-aunt, wasn't such a bad guy after all. He stepped in to stop a feud between Grandma's family and the Currys several years after the end of his infamous feud with the McCoys.

During my childhood, Grandma lived in a renovated log cabin over the hill from my grandparents' house, where I stayed while my mother was working. When my world seemed to be falling apart after my parents' divorce, Grandma's house was a refuge, a magical place where the problems of the modern world were left at the door and the simplicities of another time were allowed to thrive.

Grandma was a storyteller. She had funny stories, exciting stories and, at times, sad stories. Being a child when I heard them, the exciting stories naturally stick in my mind more than the others. I would sit for hours mesmerized by tales such as how her Uncle Lincoln's legs were severed when he tried to hop a train in his youth and how she and her cousins took food to Uncle Jim, who was hiding out because he shot a man who made fun of Uncle Lincoln's condition. Who needed television with a family like that?

Grandma seemed to understand nearly everything, including the mixed feelings one has for a younger sibling. The oldest of three, she had

gotten aggravated herself a few times. Told to rock her younger sister to sleep, her frustration got the best of her and she rocked Maggie out onto the floor. Hearing this made life with my younger brother a little easier.

And Grandma had time. When I was five, she began teaching me to sew. I started with a nine-patch block for a quilt. Later, we used her 1903 Singer sewing machine to make a pink dress for one of my dolls. If I close my eyes, I still can see her aged hands guiding my stubby fingers along while she rhythmically peddled the sturdy old machine with her feet.

Even in death, Grandma managed to give me the gift of her blessing. She looked my boyfriend over from her hospital bed and later pronounced a favorable opinion to another relative. As the family matriarch and a shrewd judge of character, she had given her thoughts on nearly everyone's intended marriage partner over the years. If she approved, it was a pretty good sign that the couple would someday celebrate a golden anniversary. She never lived to see our wedding, but the relative told me Grandma's opinion of my fiancé at the funeral. Her encouragement meant a lot to me.

In college, I learned that the qualities I admired in Grandma — independence and stubbornness — are often negatively associated with Appalachia. Many believe mountain folks are too stubborn to change and too independent to fit into mainstream society. I don't agree.

Grandma's life spanned nearly 100 years, a century that witnessed incredible change. She came from hardy stock, mountain people who tamed the hills. Independence and stubbornness were part of her heritage, but they didn't stop her from meshing with the modern world. They gave her the spunk she needed to enjoy the whirlwind changes. These traits worked only to distinguish her from a world that is becoming all too uniform. 🌸



Water Birch

A 1929 Elk River Fishing Camp

By Mary V. Stealey

These Elk River fishermen predate the Camp Water Birch memories of our author, but the attraction remains the same. This is part of an outstanding collection of photographs made by Senator John E. Kenna (1848-93), now owned by the State Archives. Date unknown.

Each summer, back in the 1920's, the Stealey family would travel to Braxton County to vacation at a fishing camp on the Elk River. Getting to Camp Water Birch wasn't easy.

Our journey began with a train ride from Clarksburg to Hyer, a small town just big enough to rate a post office and a train station, and it ended with a ride down the river in a flatboat. I'll never forget our last train ride to Hyer at the beginning of the next-to-last summer we spent at Camp Water Birch.

I was eight that year and thrilled about "going to camp." My anticipation began when Dad hauled the big trunk down from the attic and Mama began filling it with canned food, lamp oil, candles and big farmer matches, bedding, blankets for chilly mountain nights, towels, soap and a first-aid kit. And oh yes, don't forget the toilet paper. All necessary items for our time away from home and civilization as we knew it, for Camp Water Birch was rustic with a capital "R."

As for modern conveniences, there weren't any. No gas or electricity. Light was provided by oil lamps or candles. No plumbing. Water was drawn from a well outside the kitchen door. And the "necessary" was in the little house out behind the melon patch. I don't recall what kind of cook stove we had, but I do remember waking up to the appetizing aroma of bacon frying and Mama making toast in long-handled wire gadgets that held the bread over an open flame.

It sounds primitive now, but this was 1929. Even in town some folks did not have all the niceties that we enjoy today. By tough mountaineer standards, our camp was more than adequate. Dad and his cronies cared only for the fishing, and it was all heaven on earth to us youngsters. If Mama hated the inconveniences she didn't complain.

Everyone wanted to come to Camp Water Birch, not only for the fishing but for the peace and quiet and beauty

of its surroundings. We often had weekend guests from Clarksburg. Our rector, Reverend Carter of the Episcopal Church, brought his choir boys up for camping trips a few times. I remember my brother Jim and cousin Jack would come with them.

It was a sweet time, sandwiched in between two World Wars and just before the Great Depression; a time before telephones, radio or television. We made our own fun, and we made lifelong friends with the people in the area. I still remember local names like Pritchard, Marlowe, Hyer, Green and Gillespie.

On the day we departed Clarksburg we were all up early, before daylight even, with every light in the house burning. It was almost as exciting as Christmas morning. After a hearty breakfast we left for the railroad station, suitcases filled with camp clothes — swimsuits, khaki overalls and sturdy shoes (which were seldom worn). The trunk had gone on ahead and our train was waiting on one of the sidetracks, big engine puffing. We scrambled aboard the dusty passenger coach to choose seats and then hurried back to the caboose to wave goodbye to anyone who might be looking. The engineer blew his whistle and we were off in a cloud of black smoke.

Several things stand out in my mind about the train ride to Hyer: leaning out the open windows to watch the front end of the train snaking around the curves (and trying not to get cinders in our eyes); crossing a sky-high trestle which spanned a weedy meadow far below, dizzying to gaze down upon; and the bathroom with the bottomless commode. We liked to hang over the bowl and watch the tracks fly by beneath us. I was always afraid of getting locked inside the bathroom, which was locked up tight whenever the train pulled into a station.

On arrival at Hyer we transferred all our baggage down a steep embankment to flatboats, for the only way

down to the camp was by water. What a terrifying ride that was for an eight-year-old who hadn't learned to swim. Finally we landed on the sandy beach below the camp and began the precarious climb up the winding stone steps. Camp Water Birch perched on the bluff high above.

We always stopped halfway up to peek into the cellar house, which was a room dug out of the hillside. Milk and butter and eggs kept as fresh there as in the icebox at home, thanks to an underground spring. Then at last we ran up the front steps to the porch which wrapped around two sides of the four-room camp. A mounted fish hung over the front door, as did a big sign with the words "Camp Water Birch" burned in wood. Fastened all around the doorway were fishhooks, lures, and fish heads with eyes that seemed to follow me everywhere.

Inside was the kitchen with a long table and benches on either side, and three rooms for sleeping. The big covered porch with bannisters of criss-crossed logs was our real living quarters, rain or shine. There were swings at either end, hand-crafted wooden tables and chairs, and on the floor were colorful braided rugs, made by local women. These round and oval rugs covered the interior floors also, adding warmth to the sparse furnishings. Mama saved scraps of wool for these ladies and we had fun trying to identify which of the various materials were ours.

Next was a stop at the well for a refreshing sip of ice cold water from the dipper, then a quick trip up the slope behind the camp to see Daddy Pritchard. He was a genial old character who looked after the camp for us, a master fiddler and storyteller, loved by all. He and his wife lived in a big farmhouse above the camp and a family of Greens, relatives perhaps, lived with them. The Greens had several boys and girls who were our summer friends.

I remember one girl especially. She

was about my age, and I believe she was called Edna. Edna had red hair, green eyes and freckles. She was at the camp with me when Mama unpacked the trunk and found the dress I had sneaked in. I hated wearing the long pants which were standard camp wear for us all, boys and girls alike. I didn't like wearing "boy's clothes," and this summer I had taken it upon myself to pack a dress. It was blue and green with white smocking and a green velvet sash, most unsuitable for camp.

Mama held it up in surprise, stared at me, and then saw the wistful look on Edna's face. "Look Edna," she exclaimed, "our Mary has brought you a present. Won't it look nice with your eyes!" When Edna ran home and returned, wearing the dress and holding out to me her prized stocking doll, I was ashamed of my feeling of anger at Mama for giving away my dress. I learned a lesson in vanity and sharing that day — but I still had to wear those hated pants.

Daddy Pritchard kept us well stocked with fresh vegetables. His corn was as sweet as candy, and melons were his specialty. He grew giant watermelons and cantaloupes and also huge pumpkins, great for jack-o-lanterns. He would haul his corn and melons over to Hyer in a horse-drawn sled. My cousin Jack remembers that once he and Jim got off the train at the stop before Hyer, and Daddy Pritchard met them there and brought them the rest of the way in his sled.

Daddy Pritchard also had a hidden peach orchard. It was on the other side of the woods behind the camp, and only he knew exactly where it was. Sometimes he'd guide us to it and we would feast on the biggest, juiciest, most mouth-watering peaches we ever tasted. But he always warned us never to look for the orchard without him or we might get lost in the woods.

My dad had to return to town during the week because of his job. He came back every weekend, often with some of his fishing buddies or an old

family friend known to us as Uncle Bill. The fishing was good on the Elk, especially bass, pike, and muskies. And as Daddy Pritchard might have put it, "a mess of fish, dredged in cornmeal and fried golden brown, with a half-dozen roasting ears drenched in country butter, and a slice of ice-cold melon was eating mighty high on the hog."

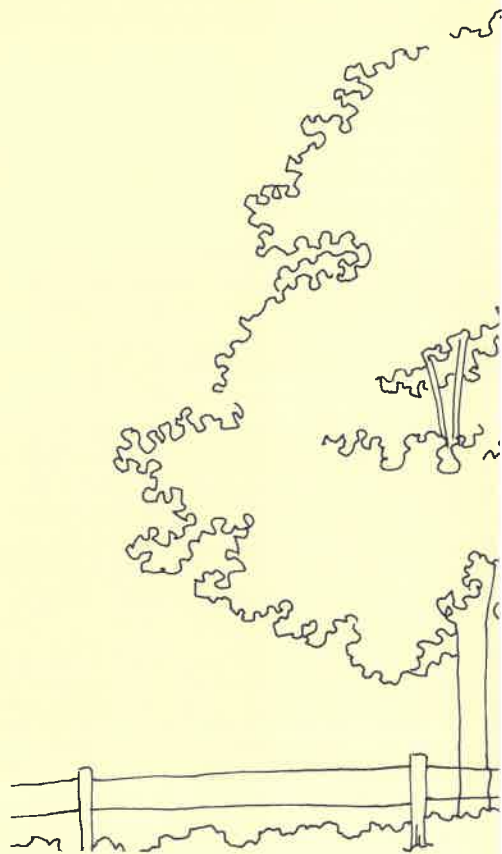
Mama also had guests that summer. Our grandmother and a great-aunt, courageous old ladies from the Deep South, were visiting the wilds of West Virginia for the first time. They were overwhelmed by our mountains. Granmom would throw up her hands and exclaim, "Whooee! It's just up one and down another. I declare, there's no future to 'em." I can still see those two huddled over the portable oil stove they brought with them to take the chill from our fresh mountain air.

Cousin Jack was with us that summer, too. He and Jim were 14 or so and were the ringleaders of our fun. They were just beginning to notice girls and would sit on the porch swiving at night crooning "Girl Of My Dreams." We would drown them out with "She'll Be Coming 'Round The Mountain When She Comes." My older sisters had already discovered boys so there was always a crowd of young people around. A number of families lived in the area, and our camp became their headquarters.

Our days were spent in the boat or swimming or playing on the big flat rocks or the sandbar. Sometimes we'd hike up the beach to the spring. It flowed by a small waterfall before disappearing underground. Rocks had formed a small mirror-like pond, so crystal clear we could see our reflections in it. It was a fairy spot, surrounded by lacy ferns and greenery.

Sometimes Mama would join us on the beach and write in the daily journal she kept. I never saw her in the water, but Dad would don his bathing suit, a strange garment consisting of a tunic over pants that came down to his knees. It was gray and orange striped, rather loud for such a quiet, reserved man.

After dark there were corn roasts and fish fries, or weiner roasts and marshmallows toasted on long sticks over a campfire. There were square dances in the side yard with Daddy



Pritchard doing the calling as he fiddled. I remember one dance where the boys and girls lined up across from each other forming an arch with their arms. Somehow they paired up and danced through the arch to the tune of "Skip To My Lou."

Other nights we'd sit on the porch and watch lightning bugs while the moon came over the mountain across the river. Mama would strum her guitar to the accompaniment of our harmonicas and kazoos. She was an accomplished pianist and organist. One of the ladies in Hyer had a reed organ but couldn't play it. Mama would visit her and play the old hymns she longed to hear, hymns like "Abide With Me" and "In The Garden."

Sometimes Daddy Pritchard would come down with his fiddle and serenade us with "Redwing" or "Red River Valley," or tell tall tales and ghost stories. It was a happy and peaceful time and it came to an end too soon.

Our last weekend we all sat around with long faces. It was raining, and



The West Virginia hills are alive — in the pages of
Goldenseal
See coupon on page 72.



This drawing of Camp Water Birch is adapted from a family picture, about 1920. Illustration by Colleen Anderson.

Daddy wasn't coming until Sunday as he was working on a job. Mama was packing. We were on the porch, trying to keep out of her way, but we had exhausted our supply of rainy day games. Auntie said, "Whooee, what long faces I see. Watch out or you'll step on your lower lips!" And Granmom said, "How would you children like to have a weinee roast?"

"How, Granmom? It's raining. The ground's all wet."

"We have a dry porch and a portable heater, don't we? We can put the weenees in those long-handled toasters and roast them over our heater. And I made a surprise for dessert."

Well, we had our porch weinee roast and Granmom's surprise was strawberry shortcake, made with biscuits and berries that Mama had chilled in the cellar house. We had real cream, too, from Mrs. Green's cow. I had been a bit finicky about drinking that milk when I first saw where it came from. At home ours came in a bottle, but I sure wasn't going to turn down real cream. And then here came

Daddy Pritchard with his best watermelon. Before he left he cautioned Mama to lock up good and tight when we went to bed, for he'd got word that two convicts had escaped from prison and might be headed this way to hide out.

When it got dark we moved inside, locked all the doors and windows and lit the lamps. Mama was reading *Peter Pan* to us while the older kids played cards at the kitchen table when we heard a boat on the river and low voices. It sounded like men talking. Right away we thought, "The convicts!" We doused the lamps and fastened blankets over the windows, then pushed a chest of drawers across the front door. The boys pushed the kitchen table across the back door and piled the benches on top. Granmom and Auntie went to bed and hid under the covers.

Peeping out the front window, Mama said, "I see lights on the river. They're headed this way." Then we heard sounds of oars splashing and men yelling. Surely the escaped convicts wouldn't be making all that

noise. They'd approach quietly, wouldn't they?

By now we could make out a boat coming round the bend and heard rowdy whooping and hollering and raucous singing. "Sixteen men on a dead man's chest. Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum," they sang. Who wouldn't care how much noise they made as they prepared to attack? Pirates, that's who! It was Captain Hook and his river pirates, coming for us!

Trembling, we hung on to Mama and began to cry. "Keep quiet, children," she whispered, "don't make a noise. They don't know we're here and they'll pass on." But they didn't pass on. We heard them land on the beach and start up the stone steps, stumbling and still singing.

Mama put a finger to her lips and peeped through the makeshift curtain. Suddenly she began to laugh and she said, "It's not pirates. It's Daddy and Uncle Bill and I don't know who else. Of all the tomfool tricks, this takes the cake." By now she was mad. "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum, indeed! It sounds to me like they've had more

than one bottle, and it's all inside their bellies."

To everyone's relief, it *was* Daddy and his friends. They had finished their job early and caught the train, but with no phones they couldn't let us know. They had stopped in Hyer for supplies and liquid refreshment and lost track of time. So they had to take the boat to camp after dark with only their lanterns to guide them. It was good news to us that it wasn't Captain Hook and his pirates, and they brought still more good news with them. They'd heard in Hyer that the convicts had been captured and were no longer at large.

That was the last year we rode the train to Hyer. We spent one more vacation at Water Birch, but we traveled by car. Uncle Bill had studied the

maps and insisted he could drive us to camp. What a wild ride that was. He boasted that where there wasn't any road, he'd make one. That's exactly what he did, fording streams, chopping trees, and slipping and sliding on narrow, curvy dirt roads with a mountain on one side and a sheer drop to the river on the other. We got to Flatwoods, then Hyer, and finally roared down through Daddy Pritchard's cornfield, scattering chickens and narrowly missing his melon patch, coming to a stop just behind the outhouse.

Then came the Great Depression and changing times. Sometime in the 1930's Water Birch was sold out of the family. In the late '40's I went back with my sisters to see if the camp was still there. It was, and it had been

nicely renovated. After that the government got it, in the big dam project begun in the 1950's, and all that area is under the waters of Sutton Lake now.

One day years later we drove to Sutton and walked out on the dam. We stood in the middle and looked around, remembering. For old time's sake we sang a chorus or two of "She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain When She Comes" and then we said goodbye forever to Camp Water Birch. But even now, all it takes is a whiff of bacon frying or the sweet sound of a mountain fiddle playing "Redwing" or the lonely wail of a train whistle, and I am instantly transported back in time to that summer when we took our last train ride to Hyer. 🍁

A group of sportsmen sets out. Photograph by John E. Kenna, date unknown. Courtesy State Archives.



"Mountain Stage" Makes a Move

The Cultural Center in Charleston welcomes "Mountain Stage," West Virginia Public Radio's musical variety show, to the State Theater. The popular program moved from the Capitol Plaza Theater in downtown Charleston in July.

"Mountain Stage," broadcast on Sundays from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in West Virginia, is carried on 130 public radio stations across the country. The live program entered national distribution with National Public Radio in 1986, quickly becoming a success. The homegrown radio show recently shifted to the American Public Radio system. On October 28 "Mountain Stage" will present its 200th program.

Larry Groce is the host for "Mountain Stage." He and producer Andy Ridenour developed the formula for the show. "We don't want everything on the show," Groce said in a fall 1988 GOLDENSEAL interview. "It's not appropriate. Some of the things that are ruled out immediately are all the pop music types. Almost anything else is open game for us. That includes all kinds of traditional music and contemporary folk music from all cultures. It includes blues, bluegrass, jazz music of all kinds. It includes ethnic music. It's pretty wide."

While drawing most of their performers from elsewhere, Groce and Ridenour schedule as many mountain musicians as possible. West Virginia musicians who have appeared on the show include Doc and Chickie Williams, French Mitchell, Lefty Shafer, Harvey Sampson and the Big Possum String Band, Franklin George, Larry Rader, and Charlie Winter. Such nationally-known performers as Taj Mahal, David Bromberg, Tom Paxton, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, Odetta, Jerry Jeff Walker, Vassar Clements, and beat poet Allen Ginsberg frequently visit "Mountain Stage."

The "Mountain Stage" band plays a big part in each broadcast. They include the Fabulous Twister Sisters — Deni Bonett and Julie Adams — on fiddle and acoustic guitar, Ron Sowell on harmonica and guitar, bass player

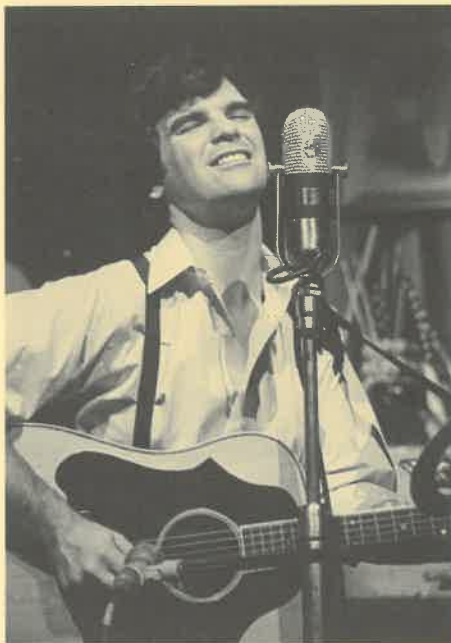
John Kessler, Ammed Solomon on drums, and Steve Burczyk on keyboards.

The move to the Cultural Center means a big change for the "Mountain Stage" players. They are leaving a stately, old theater for a modern setting in the Capitol Complex. The State Theater opened in 1976 and is described by the technical staff as fully rigged and fully functional. The acoustics are considered among the best in the state, with some of the credit going to the West Virginia hardwoods used in its construction.

"Mountain Stage" may be heard on West Virginia FM stations WVEP — 88.9, Martinsburg; WVNP — 89.9, Wheeling; WVPN — 88.5, Charleston; WVWV — 89.9, Huntington; WVPG — 90.3, Parkersburg; WVPB — 91.7, Beckley; WVPW — 88.9, Buckhannon; and WVPM — 90.9, Morgantown. For other parts of the country, check with your local public radio station.

Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$2 for children for those who attend in person. For more information contact West Virginia Public Radio, 600 Capitol Street, Charleston, WV 25301; (304) 348-3000.

"Mountain Stage" host Larry Groce on stage at the Cultural Center. Photo by Rick Lee.



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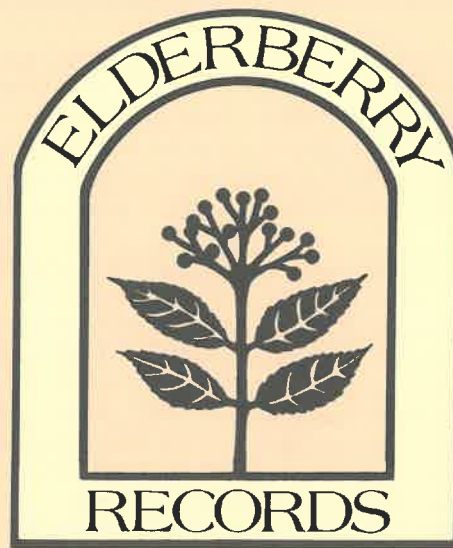
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Elderberry Records, the record label of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, presents some of the state's best traditional music in the form of documentary recordings. It was established to preserve this important part of our folk culture.

The first Elderberry release, the 1979 "All Smiles Tonight," is by Woody Simmons, Randolph County master fiddler. Tunes include the title cut, "I'll Be All Smiles Tonight," "Sugar in the Gourd," and other fiddle standards, as well as previously unrecorded selections such as "Susie's Band," "West Virginia Highway," and others.

French Mitchell's "First Fiddle" came next, in 1983. The longtime West Virginia fiddler was a popular player during the 1930's, '40's and early '50's, the golden age of live country radio. This album is a tribute to the feisty music of that era, offering quirky tunes such as "Sunrise Over the Guinea Farm," little known tunes picked up on the road, and fiddle standards such as "Sally Ann Johnson." Others are by Mitchell himself, who just "made 'em up sitting around the house." French Mitchell died in 1989.

Elderberry Records has a dual pur-

pose in that it records both the music and the recollections of each artist. The oral interviews are published as GOLDENSEAL articles near the time of each record's release, and reprinted as booklets for inclusion in the albums.

The most recent Elderberry release is "The Music Never Dies: A Vandalia Sampler, 1977-87." Vandalia Gathering is the state's official folklife festival, held each year on the Capitol grounds over the Memorial Day Weekend. This double album includes 41 selections performed by more than 65 musicians from Vandalia's first 11 years. The music was taken from more than 100 hours of taped performances. The album is now in its second pressing and is popular with West Virginians and other lovers of traditional music.

The Shop at the Cultural Center is West Virginia's sales outlet for Elderberry Records. All albums are available by mail order. The albums by French Mitchell and Woody Simmons sell for \$7.50 each, with the Vandalia Sampler double record priced at \$12.50 and a cassette version at \$7.50. Contact The Shop, Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305.

In This Issue

LEONA G. BROWN was born at McKendree in Fayette County. After graduating from West Virginia University, she taught school in Monongalia and Pocahontas counties until retiring in 1976. She now lives at Arbovale, and has published articles in the National Radio Astronomy Observatory newsletter, *The Observer*, and other publications. This is her second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

LORNA CHAMBERLAIN, a Wetzel County native, studied English at the College of Steubenville after graduating from Warwood High School near Wheeling. She is a freelance writer whose articles have been used in many publications. Her last GOLDENSEAL article appeared in the spring 1988 issue.

DOUG CHADWICK of Pocahontas County was born in North Carolina and grew up in Maryland. He was educated in Oregon, Washington State, and Rome. Chadwick moved to West Virginia in 1970, has been a photographer for the *Fayette Tribune* and *Raleigh Register*, and now works primarily as a freelance panoramic photographer. He has contributed to GOLDENSEAL since our first year.

GREG CLARK is photo preservation archivist for the Division of Culture and History, Department of Education and the Arts.

WILL DANIEL, originally from Huntington, now lives in Weirton where he is finishing a master's degree in journalism. He works part-time for the Air National Guard as a newspaper editor, and also as a freelance writer and photographer. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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 three more books in the *Mountain Memories* series, as well as *The Flood and The Blood* and *The Search for Emily*. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

KATHLEEN M. JACOBS grew up in western Fayette County and "heard about the Hawks Nest tunnel all my life." She studied history at West Virginia Tech under Dr. Otis Rice and recently completed her M.A. at the College of Graduate Studies. She works as a freelance writer concentrating on essays and critical reviews. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER is the chief of photographic services for the Division of Culture and History, Department of Education and the Arts.

LOIS C. McCLEAN, born in Indianapolis and educated at Purdue, married a West Virginian in Germany and moved to the Mountain State in 1959. Beckley has been her home since 1962 and labor history — especially the Mother Jones story — her avocation since 1963. She has contributed several articles to GOLDENSEAL.

NANCY MERICAL grew up in Kanawha County and now lives at Fairplain near Ripley. She is a member of West Virginia Writers and the Lee Mays Poetry Society, and has published several poems. The mother of four children, she and her family are frequent visitors to Cedar Lakes, the subject of her first published story. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MARY V. STEALEY, a Clarksburg native and current resident of that town, is a retired government secretary. She is a member of Professional Secretaries International, West Virginia Writers, and other organizations. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

CLIVE B. SUTTON, born at Berea in Ritchie County, now lives near Parkersburg. He says he "served the government of the United States for 25 years, three months, and seven days and was never late or absent, having been through two wars." He retired as an Air Force master sergeant in 1953 and then worked for the IRS until his second retirement in the early 1970's. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

ERIC G. WAGGONER is a Charleston native and a third-year student at West Virginia Wesleyan College. He is on the editorial staff of Wesleyan's student literary magazine. In 1987 he received the National Council of Teachers of English Award for Excellence in Writing. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

ANDY YALE, a native of New York City, recently relocated to Sandstone in Summers County. He has published articles and photos in *Rolling Stone*, *Memphis*, and *Natural History* magazines, as well as other publications, and contributes a regular column to *The Nation*. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the summer 1990 issue.

ABBEY L. ZINK, originally from Milton, now lives in Huntington where she is working on a master's degree in English from Marshall University. She has worked at the *Charleston Daily Mail*, the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*, and the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. She now works as a press liaison for the city of Huntington. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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Inside Goldenseal

Page 50 — Dib Harmon is West Virginia's last ferryboat pilot. Passengers get his wit and wisdom free on their \$1.25 ride across the Ohio at Sistersville.

Page 55 — Clive Sutton learned about hard work growing up in Ritchie County in the early 1900's. He gave his all, whether on the family farm or a pipeline job.

Page 14 — The Easter family has been in Jackson County since 1910. Robert Easter recalls the big family farm that became Cedar Lakes, the state FFA-FHA center.

Page 8 — Lorna Chamberlain never rode a school bus and never missed it. She had more fun walking to and from her Ohio County school.

Page 32 — Virgil Wladyslaw Bork came from Poland to Harrison County as a child. He soon traveled from the coal mines to the wide world of music.

Page 66 — Getting to Camp Water Birch wasn't easy, but the Stealey family always found their way. Our author recalls good times at the long-ago Elk River fishing camp.

Page 40 — The Hawks Nest tunnel offered the promise of steady work during hard times but produced a tragic nightmare. Our writers take a long, hard look on the project's 60th anniversary.

Page 9 — Sculptor Mark Blumenstein is a different kind of preservationist. He makes art out of old farm machinery and other items bound for the scrap pile.

Page 23 — Leona Brown was a Quinimont child of the 1930's. She tells of the history and happenings in the New River town named for "five mountains."

