

Vol. 18, No. 4 • WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE • Winter 1992 • \$3.95

Goldenseal

**Christmas Tree
Farming**

**Wheeling Steel &
Weirton Steel**

Red Robin Inn

**Preston • Pendleton •
Mingo**

& more!



From the Editor: Thank You

"When my dad was alive my mother used to tell him she wished whiskey would go to \$10 a pint," a reader joked about his Boone County father in a recent letter to me. "He told her he agreed because he felt he never paid what it was worth to him. I feel the same about GOLDENSEAL."

A lot of folks seem to be of the same mind, thank goodness, to judge from response to our fall subscription drive. The checks and money orders started coming the fourth week of September, and for a while there they came in a big way — nearly 1,300 renewals on one memorable day. It's a gratifying feeling after a year of hard work.

We are so close it's tantalizing but we haven't yet reached the magic break-even point, however. We must put ourselves there. I figure we will run about 95 percent self-supporting this year, maybe a little better, but that still leaves us many dollars short. We can't count on finding that money anywhere but from our readers in these lean times, so those who haven't yet paid up will be hearing from me in this regard.

But that's not my business at the moment. Now I want to thank everyone who helped us reach the encouraging level of success we have already attained. It's time to count our blessings and thank our friends. We sincerely appreciate the financial support and also the personal notes that many took the time to slip into their subscription reply envelopes.

Ideas are sometimes as good as money — well nearly, anyway — and we get a lot of ideas with the renewal coupons. Some organizations tell you not to include correspondence when paying bills. Not us. We welcome your comments, which are read by everyone from the volunteers who open the mail on up the line. We take care of address changes and anything of that sort which affects reader service, and reply to everything else that requires action. Inevitably there are some things which end up in a separate pile, often general comments and encouragement, that we don't get around to answering. Please pardon us — and don't think we ignore them. A letter may bear fruit months or even years later in a GOLDENSEAL story. We can't afford to forget good ideas.

So thanks for your renewal checks, and for your advice and good counsel. Thanks even to those who took the opportunity of the free postage to part company with us. We are glad when those who are no longer interested enough to support the magazine simply tell us so. We appreciate the frankness and will happily put those magazines into the hands of other people.

As always, we owe a special note of gratitude to our fundraising volunteers. Chuck and Esther Heitzman were back with us again this year. Esther sorts and separates,

while Chuck opens envelopes and talks. Then the checks and coupons go to Cornelia Alexander for further processing. It is a sizable job on the big days, but we've got a good team. So far they have had no trouble keeping up.

And thanks, finally, to Terri Marion of the Culture and History staff and Stephanie Chafin of state government's central mail operation. They helped us make a smooth transition to an improved system of fundraising mailing. The computer reply card which came with your subscription letter was the proverbial tip of a much bigger iceberg, involving changes in printing and labeling and the opening of our own business reply account at the post office. The reforms promise to save us hundreds of dollars per mailing, maybe more. Money saved is the best kind of money, in my opinion, coming at no cost to us or to you, and it will definitely help to put the magazine in the black.

Having thanked everybody in sight, let me move on with the rest of my report. We continue to wrestle with the finances, as I said, but otherwise we're in great shape. We've got more good manuscripts coming in than ever before, and almost every issue we have to bump stories back to the next time for lack of space. I've been especially pleased to welcome some fine new freelancers over the last year or so, for those are the folks who will help us get into the areas and subjects we haven't yet covered.

And, oh yes — the picture. It's been a while since my notorious tractor-push photo, so we figured it was time for another picture from the

GOLDENSEAL family album.

This one shows the staff, close associates, and a couple of longtime freelancers at our Sewell Mountain planning conference last fall. Those hunkering in front are State Archives photographer Greg Clark and Pocahontas County freelance photographer Doug Chadwick, with designer Nancy Balow beside them. Those of us standing are printer John Trexel; assistant editor Debby Jackson; yours truly, the editor; editorial assistant Cornelia Alexander; photographer Mike Keller, who took the photograph on timer; and freelance writer Jackie Goodwin. If we look a little glummer toward the back, just credit it to the heavy weight of responsibility.

Nothing formal about this bunch, especially when we get out into the good Fayette County country air, but it's a hard-working group I'm proud to be associated with. I think Mike's picture captures the spirit of the GOLDENSEAL gang pretty well, and I hope you will consider it our greeting card to you.

We wish you the best for the holidays and coming year.

—Ken Sullivan



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Goldenseal

Volume 18, Number 4

Winter 1992

COVER: Winter is John Cooper's business and photography his hobby. He combined the two in this picture of the Point Pleasant Battle monument during the late 1970's. Our story on the Christmas tree man begins on page 9.

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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 event announcements and review copies of books and recordings, but cannot guarantee publication.

GOLDENSEAL Good Listening, Too

West Virginia's public librarians know that *GOLDENSEAL* is good reading, and include the magazine in the collections of most state libraries. And they agree that *GOLDENSEAL* is good listening, too, making the magazine part of the West Virginia Library Commission's Radio Reading Service.

The Radio Reading Service provides radio receivers for West Virginians with visual or physical handi-

caps or learning disabilities. Local and national newspapers and magazines are read over the air 24 hours a day. Feature stories from *GOLDENSEAL* are read by volunteers on the "West Virginia Yesterday and Today" program.

GOLDENSEAL magazine is also available on audio cassette for patrons of the Library Commission's service for the blind and physically handicapped. Articles are recorded and shipped statewide as part of the

service's locally produced magazine series. Volunteers are now being sought to assist in producing the tapes.

Those who wish to sign up for these free library services must complete an application. Allow about a week to get started. Contact the Library Commission's Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at the Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305, (304)558-4061 or 1-800-642-8674.

Buffalo Creek Remembered

One-hundred-twenty-five West Virginians died when flood waters from a Pittston Coal Company dam roared down Buffalo Creek two decades ago. Hundreds more were injured, over 500 houses were destroyed, and more than a thousand vehicles were lost. Miles of the narrow Logan County valley were scoured of life as whole communities were swept away.

Carlene Mowery witnessed the aftermath of the February tragedy from the unique perspective of a childbirth bed at the Man Appalachian Regional Hospital at the mouth of Buffalo Creek. She watched in sleepless fascination as victims were evacuated to the medical facility. "Throughout the long hours of waiting for the birth of [my] daughter, my roommate, Vickie Osborne, and I watched the incoming and outgoing flight of helicopters outside our window," she recalls. "As soon as one landed another took off. This continued throughout the night."

That time of birth and death left Mowery with lifelong memories and a resolution to do something to memorialize the awful disaster. "Before I left the hospital, I made a promise to myself that someday I would write a book about it all."

The result of that promise is

Buffalo Creek: Valley of Death, which Carlene Mowery recently co-authored with Dennis Deitz of South Charleston. The new book commemorates Buffalo Creek's 20th anniversary with first-hand accounts from dozens of survivors, supplemented by many photographs and extensive excerpts from the official investigation.

Vickie Osborne, Mowery's hospital roommate and herself six months pregnant, was among the flood victims. "Vickie left in her nightgown and bare feet," Mowery

writes. "Once out of the water, she turned around in time to see the trailer next door being lifted and overturned by the water with their elderly neighbors still inside."

Buffalo Creek: Valley of Death is an oversize, 290-page hardbound book. It may be purchased for \$25 at bookstores or directly from the publisher. Send mail orders, including \$2 for postage and handling, to Mountain Memories Books, 216 Sutherland Drive, South Charleston, WV 25303. West Virginians add 6% sales tax.

The morning after the Buffalo Creek Flood. Photo by Ferrell Friend.





MICHAEL KELLER

Augusta Anniversary Print

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins. Augusta, dedicated to preserving the values, music, and sense of craft of the folk cultures of West Virginia and elsewhere, is best known for its summer classes in the traditional arts.

A special commemorative print was commissioned in honor of Augusta's 20th year. The artwork depicts Braxton County fiddler Melvin Wine playing the fiddle for an attentive child. Augusta says the poster "symbolizes the timeless flow of tradition, from one generation to the next." Elkins artist Jeffrey Barner did the original painting, titled "Passing It On."

The art made its debut this past spring on the cover of Augusta's 1992 summer catalog and was first shown to the public at a concert in Sutton to celebrate Melvin Wine's 83rd birthday. Wine is a 1991 recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellowship, which honors the country's top practitioners of the traditional arts.

Copies of the limited edition prints are available from the Augusta Heritage Center. Each is numbered and signed and sold with its own registration certificate. Copies may be purchased shrink-wrapped and mounted on foamboard for \$50, plus \$5 shipping and handling, or matted and framed for \$75.

For more information contact Augusta, Davis & Elkins College, 100 Sycamore Street, Elkins, WV 26241; (304)636-1903, Ext.209.

Hawks Nest Novel Reprinted

Hubert Skidmore's classic novel *Hawks Nest*, depicting the awful Fayette County industrial tragedy of the 1930's, has been reprinted in a handsome new hardbound edition published earlier this year by Thomas In-Prints of Gauley Bridge.

Hawks Nest is a fictional retelling of the story of the Hawks Nest tunnel project, which left hundreds of men dead of silicosis in the early years of the Great Depression. The Union Carbide project, an engineering marvel upon its completion, brought the water of New River through Gauley Mountain to a power plant at Gauley Bridge. The tunnel and power plant are still in use today.

The original novel, withdrawn soon after its 1941 publication, has previously been available only in very rare used copies and as part of Jim Comstock's multi-volume West Virginia Heritage series. The new edition sells for \$30 in bookstores or directly from the publisher. Mail orders, including \$2 postage and 6% sales tax from West Virginians, should be sent to Thomas In-Prints, 88 Imboden Street, Gauley Bridge, WV 25085.

Thomas In-Prints has reprinted

Back Issues Available

If you want to complete your GOLDENSEAL collection or simply get acquainted with earlier issues, some back copies of the magazine are available. The cost is \$3.95 per copy. A list of available issues and their cover stories follows. To get your back copies, mark the issue(s) you want and return with a check for the right amount to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

- ___ Fall 1980/Recalling Mother Jones
- ___ Fall 1981/Myrtle Auvil of Grafton
- ___ Winter 1984/Webster County's Mollohan Mill
- ___ Fall 1985/Dulcimer Maker Ray Epler
- ___ Spring 1986/Blacksmith Jeff Fetty
- ___ Summer 1986/The Draft Horse Revival
- ___ Fall 1986/West Virginia Chairmaking
- ___ Summer 1987/Camden Park History
- ___ Fall 1988/Craftsman Wilbur Veith
- ___ Spring 1989/Printer Allen Byrne
- ___ Summer 1990/Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
- ___ Winter 1990/Sisters of DeSales Heights
- ___ Summer 1991/Fiddler Melvin Wine
- ___ Fall 1991/The Zekany's of Logan County
- ___ Winter 1991/Meadow River Lumber
- ___ Spring 1992/Home to Swandale
- ___ Summer 1992/Dance, West Virginia, Dance!
- ___ Fall 1992/Bell Bottoms at Bethany

You may also order bulk copies of current or past issues of GOLDENSEAL, as quantities permit. The price is \$2.50 each on orders of ten or more copies of the same issue.

Address Change?

Please enter your old and new addresses below.

OLD

Name _____

Address _____

NEW

Name _____

Address _____

New To GOLDENSEAL?

We're glad to make your acquaintance and hope you want to see more of us. You may do so by returning the coupon below with your subscription check for \$15. You will find a place there for a friend's name as well.

Thanks — and welcome to the GOLDENSEAL family!

Mail to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
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Please add the following name(s) to the GOLDENSEAL mailing list.
I enclose \$15.00 for each subscription. Make checks payable to: Goldenseal.

Name _____	Name _____	_____ New _____ Renewal
Address _____	Address _____	_____ New _____ Renewal

If this is a gift subscription, please indicate the name to be signed on the gift card _____
Please include your own name and address if giving a gift subscription.

several other books of local interest, including a firsthand account of the Civil War in Fayette County and a history of the New River Company. You may request a brochure at the above address.

New River Neighbors

Beginning in January, New River Gorge National River will present the first of eight Sunday afternoon "New River Neighbors" programs where current and former Gorge residents will gather to share their knowledge of the area's history.

Those with historical knowledge of the New River Gorge will meet with the public and National Park Service personnel to relate their experiences in an informal setting. The Sunday programs begin at 2:30 p.m. and include topics ranging from rail-roading history to traditional Appalachian music. The series has been offered for several years and is popular with park visitors and local people alike.

Six programs will take place at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center on U.S. Route 19 north of Fayetteville. One of the remaining two programs will be held at the Raleigh County Public Library in Beckley and the other at the Visitor's Bureau in downtown Hinton. Community and civic organizations co-sponsor the Neighbors Programs. Free refreshments will be provided at the conclusion of each program.

For more information call the Canyon Rim Visitor Center at (304) 574-2115 or write to New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846.

Nongame Wildlife

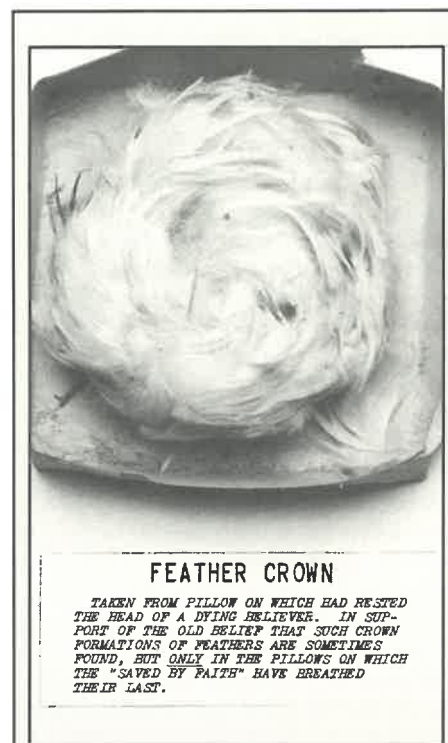
One of West Virginia's most attractive publications is the *Nongame News*, published by the Nongame Wildlife Program of the Division of Natural Resources. The eight-page newsletter is published quarterly.

The *Nongame News* is "dedicated to the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the state's nongame wildlife," according to the masthead. A recent issue included short articles on the eastern woodrat, bat surveys, woodpeckers, and Greenbrier County caves, as well as tips on the treatment



of apparently abandoned baby birds (leave them alone, unless you're sure). Each newsletter typically includes a mix of original articles on West Virginia subjects combined with natural features of wider interest, often excerpted from other publications.

The *Nongame News* is handsomely illustrated, usually with drawings, and often includes surveys and other opportunities for reader participation. Subscriptions are free, although contributions are welcome. Write to: *Nongame News*, P. O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241, or call (304)637-0245.



After reading the feather crown story in the last issue's "Fall Folk Tales" article, curator George Deeming found this one for us in the storage room at the State Museum. The label agrees closely with our tale from Summers County.

Blues Revue

Doddridge County's Bob Vorel knows about the blues. In 1991 he started the *Blues Revue Quarterly*, a tabloid devoted entirely to acoustic and traditional blues. "The world of the blues is many faceted," Vorel says, "encompassing old-time country and work songs to more contemporary and high energy jump blues, with lots of varied musical expression in between."

The former marine surveyor, boat carpenter and woodworker says he started the *Blues Revue* because West Virginia had no hot blues scene of its own. Vorel is intent on bringing blues dollars to the Mountain State, and hopes someday to hold a major blues festival in West Virginia.

The *Blues Revue* is a worldwide publication, according to Vorel. It goes to every state in the country, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and

Taiwan. Vorel changed his publication to an 80-page magazine format beginning in the fall of 1992. In it there are features on "Harmonica" Phil Wiggins and guitar wizard Tampa Red, among other articles. The *Blues Revue* also has a classifieds section and reviews on books, videos, and records.

Subscriptions are \$12 for third class shipping and \$16 for first class. Write to *Blues Revue Quarterly*, Rt. 2, Box 118, West Union, WV 26456.

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Published letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

Frank Androczi's Wine

September 21, 1992
Culloden, West Virginia
Editor:

We really enjoyed your article on Frank Androczi of Buckhannon and his winery. We first experienced Melomel when he gave samples a few years back at a Shitake mushroom growing conference in Glenville, and have made the pilgrimage to Buckhannon several times. There is no wine like Melomel.

We are really lucky that someone who is so nice and has such love for the land settled here.
Jim Kirk & Anita Ray

Mabel Burner and Durbin

September 23, 1992
Waldorf, Maryland
Editor:
Thank you for the September issue of *GOLDENSEAL* about the city of Durbin.

I was born and raised in Durbin, living there until I was 15 years old. The article brought so many fond memories back of my childhood, my school days. Dr. Allen Burner was our family doctor. I remember Mabel Burner. She was a friend of my mother's.

Durbin was a city with two passenger trains coming in, the C&O and Western Maryland. There were stores, restaurants, hotels, and theaters. The streets were busy with people traveling on the trains.

My father Charles L. Curtis, a blacksmith, was kept busy, since this was before cars. Traveling, except for trains, was done by horses, buggies and wagons.

Thank you very much,
Evelyn M. Richmond

October 12, 1992
Morgantown, West Virginia
Editor:

I want to thank you for the article in your Fall 1992 *GOLDENSEAL*, "Durbin was Quite a Big City: Mabel Burner Remembers" by Louise Burner Flegel.

This beautiful story means everything to me. I lived beside Mabel

when I was growing up, and I could write books about her many, many kindnesses to me and all the folks of Durbin. She is one of a kind, a great lady.

Sincerely,
Monna Hiner Martin

October 1, 1992
Bryantown, Maryland
Editor:

I have enjoyed all your stories in every issue of *GOLDENSEAL* for many years, but never was I so happy as when I opened the fall issue of *GOLDENSEAL* and saw the article about Mabel Burner and the pictures of Durbin — my hometown.

She was the nicest, sweetest lady ever, and still is. I have known her all of my life, and I'll soon be 75. Her granddaughter forgot to mention one thing about her and that was the "glitter" in her eyes, or should I say "twinkle." It's always been there and will still be there until she's 100 or more, I'm sure.

Sincerely,
Geraldine K. Lawton

Lincoln County Shootouts

September 25, 1992
Hinckley, Ohio
Editor:

My name is Beverly H. Napier, nee Brumfield. I was born and raised in Harts so I read with much interest your two articles, "The Lincoln County Crew: A Feud Song" (summer



DOUG CHADWICK

of '86) and "Settling Family Differences" (summer of '92).

Charlie Brumfield shot and killed his father, Paris Brumfield, my great-great grandfather. That is quite a story, then Charlie Brumfield was shot and killed in a shootout in Big Harts that would make a western movie look tame. Somewhere there exists an old ballad about it.

Corbett Brumfield, my father, grew up in Harts during that time. He witnessed a lot in his lifetime. Charlie and Caroline Brumfield were his grandparents. Hollene and Caroline Dingess were sisters who married Brumfield brothers. My father spent a lot of time at Hollene's home at the mouth of Harts. Hollene was a woman you would never forget. She carried a .38 in her apron and knew how to use it.

Sincerely,
Beverly H. Napier



MICHAEL KELLER

We appreciate the additional information. Readers will note that we have spelled Hollene as Haline in previous articles.—ed.

Sawing Logs

July 31, 1992
Fayetteville, West Virginia
Editor:

Concerning the comments on saw and carriage speeds in the summer issue of GOLDENSEAL, I have this to add. When I was in my teens I used to help my dad on a sawmill. He always told me that the safe speed on a saw was 10,000 feet per minute on the rim. This converts to 113.636 mph.

As to the carriage speed, it varied as to type of wood and size of log. Most sawyers kept their ears tuned to the engine. As it slowed down they in turn slowed the carriage to keep from stalling the engine, but all the time trying to saw as much lumber as possible.

Sincerely,
John F. Clark

More on Swandale

September 18, 1992
Martinsburg, West Virginia
Editor:

I really enjoyed Cody Burdette's article, "Home to Swandale." I was born and raised in Swandale but left there in 1949. So I did not know Cody Burdette, but he knew my father, Reverend Guy Frame. I also enjoyed the letter Fred Johnson wrote.

We all have good memories of Swandale. There was a big family of us — seven girls and one boy.

My father was a minister. One evening I took his supper to him at the mill. He had a new axe and had it sharpened to cut wood for our fireplace. He told me to lay my finger down and he'd cut it off. He thought I would pull it back — and I didn't expect him to drop the axe! He took me to the company doctor and he took care of it. Of course, it was an accident.

All in all, it was a good place to grow up in. We have been having a Swandale reunion since 1986 and it is always exciting for me to go and see everyone. If you lived in Swandale, make plans to come back on Sunday before Labor Day 1993.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Eva Frame Griffith

Identity Corrected

October 21, 1992
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:

This letter is to correct an error in identification of a photograph on page 48 of your Fall 1992 issue. The photo depicts my father, Hawthorne D. Battle, guiding John Kennedy into the front entrance of the WCHS-TV studios, then in a converted residence at 1111 Virginia Street East, Charleston, for the Humphrey-Kennedy



debate. Harry Brawley, who worked there, or more likely one of the staff photographers at WCHS — remember, portable TV cameras were unknown then — probably took the picture. My father ran the station and I worked as an audio engineer there at the time.

Regards,
Henry W. Battle

Thanks. We apologize for wrongly identifying Hawthorne Battle in the fall GOLDENSEAL.—ed.

Free Magazines

August 4, 1992
Bandera, Texas
Editor:

I have in my possession old issues of GOLDENSEAL that go back several years. I am in my 70's with few remaining ties to West Virginia and feel that others might treasure them more than I.

I cannot send any particular issue to an individual. However, if there is someone that would pay freight or someone traveling in this vicinity (60 easy miles from San Antonio), I would be very happy to make them available to them.

You have a very fine publication.
Sincerely,
George D. Meador, M.D.
(512)796-4658



*Mountaineers make
the most of life!
Join them in*

Goldenseal

See coupon on page 4.

President Roosevelt had become the family hero when Paw received his first Social Security check.

Granny and Paw

By Juliette Auger Fortner

I was born in 1935 and grew up in the Elkview area of Kanawha County. My earliest memories are of Helen and Harry Fain. Granny and Paw — what a pair they were! When my mother's mother became ill the Fains had taken her in and raised her. This made them foster grandparents to me, but I couldn't have loved them more.

Helen was a tall, stately woman with light red hair that reached her hips when she released it from the twisted bun on top of her head. Granny Fain felt that it was a sin for a woman to cut her hair. "A woman's hair is her crowning glory," she said, quoting scripture.

I was 17 when Granny died, and during those years I never knew her to wash her hair with water. Still, she had beautiful hair that glistened and always smelled fresh. Her secret was to rub cornmeal on her scalp and work it through her hair. She would then brush her hair for the longest period of time before once again twisting it into a bun. My mother was more modern and insisted that my sister Virginia and I use plenty of shampoo and water. While screaming about soap in my eyes, I was never able to convince her that Granny had the best method.

Mother had grown up contending with many of Granny's old-time remedies, one of which was a "kakey poke." A kakey poke was made by wrapping a piece of cloth around garlic and other smelly herbs, securing it tightly with a string and wearing it around your neck. Granny believed that a kakey poke warded off the common cold and other communicable diseases.

Mom always said, "No wonder you couldn't catch a cold — who would dare come near you?" But she was a resourceful girl and devised a plan. Placing her kakey poke in a hollowed-out tree stump as she departed for school, she returned the aromatic necklace to her person when returning home. She said that Granny never found out about her secret hiding place. I've always been thankful that she disliked the kakey poke.

But not to be outdone, Mother had several cure-alls of her own. She believed heavily in oils, with castor and cod liver being her favorites, closely followed by the ever horrible enema. I learned that spring cleaning didn't apply only to the house!

Harry Fain was a hard-working man with a kind heart. He would entertain my sister and me for hours by singing old songs. One that I especially enjoyed was about a preacher and a bear.

Years before I was born, he had run a profitable moonshine still until the revenue men carted him off to jail. This was all a big embarrassment to the rest of the family, but not to Paw. He relished talking about the many times he had outsmarted the government. One thing for sure, Paw loved to repeat the story about delivering his moonshine to the governor's mansion during Prohibition.

Also, Paw was a drinker. He would go for months without taking a drink, then suddenly appear at the door in a drunken state. Granny would be furious. "Harry, get in this house! You've been out on the bottle again."

The story goes that Harry was the seventh son of a seventh son and had never seen his father. This gave him

special healing powers, according to some. People would drive for miles so that Paw could work a miracle on infants suffering from "thresh mouth," what we would call thrush today.

Granny would yell, "Harry, you come on out here now and help this baby. These people have come all the way from Parkersburg!" Paw would answer, "No! That's a bunch of foolishness!" Again Granny would yell, "Harry, I mean it. This here baby is real sick!"

Grumbling all the way, Paw would take the baby in his arms, put his mouth over the little lips, and blow his breath into the baby's inflamed throat. As Paw handed the infant back to the pleased parents they would praise and thank him.

Paw didn't believe that he had any special powers and would only go through the ritual so that Granny would stop nagging. Still, letters of gratitude were often received, telling of how quickly the sick babies improved. Of course, I already knew that Harry Fain was a very special man.

Most of his life was spent working in West Virginia's coal mines. Granny told a story about how uneasy she had felt one day while Paw was working underground. Her uneasiness caused her to walk to the drift mouth and yell, "Harry! Harry! Come here!" Paw was joined by three other miners as they came out to see why Granny was yelling. They reassured her that everything was alright below and that she could return home.

When Paw arrived home that evening he thanked Granny for coming to the drift mouth. There had been a roof fall where the men were working, and she had called them away just in time. Years later, I told this story to Elmer Workman, when he was state director of mines. His comment, "We sure could use your granny around here!"

Granny's day started at 4:00 a.m. This was her private time, and she enjoyed it immensely. After dressing she would walk to the hard road and get the morning *Charleston Gazette*. I would usually be awakened by the smell of bacon frying or coffee brewing. Granny would read the paper and eat breakfast alone.

Maybe she needed that time to herself just to get through her day. She was always busy, either cleaning,

*Periodically Paw would go to the train tracks,
get down on his hands and knees, and
lower his ear to the rail and listen.*

washing, stringing beans, mending socks, or peeling and canning fruits and vegetables. Food was never wasted. When the grapes were ready for harvest Granny would make enough grape jelly to last through the year and even managed to use the grape hulls for preserves. I have no memory of her ever using a recipe to bake her cakes, pies or cobblers, but she was a natural in the kitchen.

Granny always used the type of iron that was heated on the stove with a handle that she clamped on when the desired temperature was reached. My mother once decided to make life easier and surprised her with an electric iron. After spending several hours fussing with this new gadget, Granny placed it on the shelf and returned to the "best way" to iron clothes.

She loved to rub snuff and to listen to soap operas while performing her chores. She also loved Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Many times I have listened as the old couple talked about the Great Depression and the difficulties they endured. President

Roosevelt had become the family hero when Paw received his first Social Security check. Granny shopped at Levin Brothers Store on Kanawha Boulevard in Charleston. It was all I could do to keep up with her as she purchased bibbed overalls for Paw and floral-print house dresses for herself, all made possible by FDR.

We grew up nine miles north of Charleston, where Little Sandy Creek flows into the Elk River. Playing in the river or creek was off limits due to — Granny said — "quicksand, leeches, water snakes and whirlpools." Therefore, we would beg to spend a summer day at Rock Lake Pool, which was located on the other side of town, off Route 60 below South Charleston.

Since our parents both worked, we directed our attention to getting Paw to take us there. This meant catching a Greyhound bus to Charleston and then a city bus to Rock Lake. Paw, dressed in his best Levin Brothers overalls, would accompany us to the pool where he would find a shade tree and relax as we spent the day in

total bliss. When I think back on those summer days, I realize that Paw would rather have been working in his garden, but chose instead to chaperon as we took turns using the swings, high-dive boards and water slides at that wonderful place called Rock Lake Pool.

On Saturday evenings we would often meet our parents in Charleston for dinner at the New China Restaurant on Quarrier Street and then go to a movie. Mom and Dad worked at the Diamond Department Store. The last southbound train passed the Little Sandy area about six. There was a small train depot located on Judge Wertz's property, across the highway from our home. This depot was built like a shed, with seating around the interior walls where passengers could take shelter from the wind and rain. During the winter months we would wait in darkness for the train's arrival.

Periodically Paw would go to the train tracks, get down on his hands and knees, and lower his ear to the rail and listen. By doing this he knew when the train would be rounding the bend. As the large headlight came into view Paw would strike a match and light the edges of a newspaper and wave the flame to notify the engineer to stop at the Little Sandy depot. FDR may have been Paw's hero, but Paw was mine!

Paw died on primary election day in 1952. Granny saw it coming. With tears in her eyes, she said, "He has the death rattles!" Whatever that meant, it really scared me, and sure enough, Paw didn't last long.

Granny's life wasn't as happy after Paw died, and ironically she died on the day of the following general election. She called for us to come to her side when she was near death. My sister went to Granny's bedside, but for reasons I still don't understand I just couldn't make myself go to her. I've often wished that I had.

These two good, decent, and charitable mountain people are buried in the family cemetery, near where their garden flourished under Paw's watchful eye and where Granny picked wild greens in the springtime. Years have passed, but I can still hear her yelling. "Girls, come here! Girls, come and help me pick a mess of wild greens. You really do need to learn which greens are best to eat." ❀



Chicken on Sunday

That saying, "chicken every Sunday," was certainly true at Granny's house. I remember the ritual as though it were yesterday.

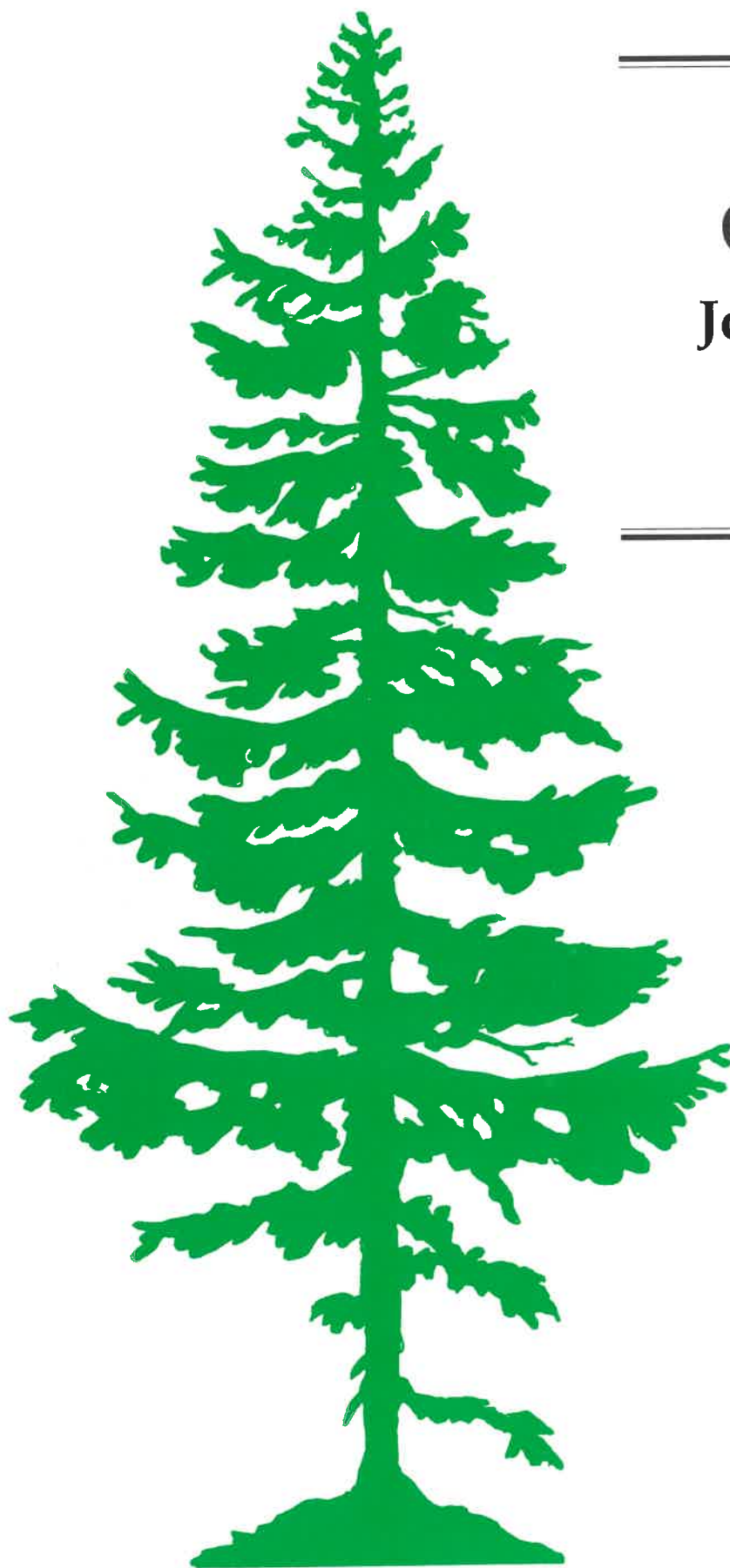
Granny would lure the chickens to her with bread crumbs. She would grab one and swing it in a circle to wring its neck. After placing the chicken on a chopping block, Granny would use a hatchet to cut off its head.

She then placed the chicken under a large washtub to flop around while she went to the kitchen and returned with a pail of scalding water. The chicken feath-

ers came off easily after several submersions in hot water. Granny took the plucked chicken into the kitchen where she ever so carefully removed the intestines, craw and gizzard, and unlaid eggs. Sometimes she would discover a double-yoke egg, which she always brought to our attention since they were a rare find.

"Girls, stay in here and watch me clean and cut up this chicken," she would insist. "Someday you are going to have to know how to do this!" The aroma of chicken frying or stewing still brings back memories of Granny in the kitchen.

—Juliette Fortner



COLLEEN ANDERSON

Growing Christmas

John Cooper and Santa's Forest

By Debby Sonis Jackson

"The day after Christmas, you can't wake me up for a week," says John Cooper. "That's about a fact." And with good reason. Mr. Cooper is the owner of Santa's Forest, a Christmas tree farm on Route 87 in Mason County.

Mr. Cooper has a great appreciation for the land and spent 31 years as a soil conservationist working with others so that they too would treat it with respect. As you drive through the 32 acres of Christmas trees at Santa's Forest, he proudly points out spruces, pines, and Douglas firs that line the hillsides he has nurtured for nearly 20 years.

Born in Gilmer County in 1919, John Cooper attended his first year of grade school at Coxs Mills in a two-room schoolhouse. His family lived on Stonelick Creek "back up in a hollow," he says. The last of four children, Mr. Cooper suspects that his mother didn't want to part with him, so when he started grade school during the late 1920's he was already eight years old. But during his first school term, John Cooper was promoted to fourth grade, due largely to his mother's home teaching.

Mother Lillie Newton Cooper and father Eric J. Cooper made the family's home on a small farm. Eric Cooper was a farmer and a teamster. There was lots of oil and gas drilling in Gilmer, Ritchie, Doddridge and Cal-

John Cooper among his Christmas trees. A tree's shape is the major selling point, he says. Photo by Michael Keller.

houn counties during the 1920's, as John Cooper remembers it, and plenty of work for a man with horses. "My father had a team and a wagon and with nearby neighbors he'd haul oil and gas equipment around to the wells," he says.

Eric Cooper also raised beef cattle and sheep on the farm. "Everybody had hogs and chickens and gardens, and they picked berries and fruits and were pretty well self-sustaining," Mr. Cooper recalls.

Because of family financial problems, the Coopers moved to Glenville. His mother took young John to his new school, though there was only one month remaining in the year, and asked the teacher to put him in fourth grade. He moved on up at the end of the term. So, as Mr. Cooper proudly notes, "I was promoted to the fifth grade the very first year I ever went to school."

He went on to graduate from Glenville High School at age 16, two years younger than normal. Times were tough in Glenville. Eric Cooper worked anywhere he could — as a barber and with the WPA for the grand wage of 25 cents an hour. John Cooper says that in the latter job his father worked at road building and as a garden supervisor where he instructed Gilmer County people on how to raise a garden.

Lillie Cooper "tried to make things go as well as she could," John adds. The family soon rented a larger house in Glenville and Lillie kept boarders from Glenville State College. "She charged \$20 a month room and board," Mr. Cooper says, "and that's where I learned to wash dishes."

In 1940 John Cooper graduated from WVU with a degree in agriculture and went to work for the U.S. Farm Security Administration, the forerunner of the Farmers Home Administration. In 1942 he volunteered for the navy. After he was discharged in 1945, he returned to West Virginia and went to work for the Farmers Home Administration in Beckley.

But soon the FmHA consolidated its county branches, and that left more county supervisors than offices. Per-

sonnel were assigned numerical ratings and put on a retention list, with 18 to be kept on the payroll. John Cooper was designated number 19.

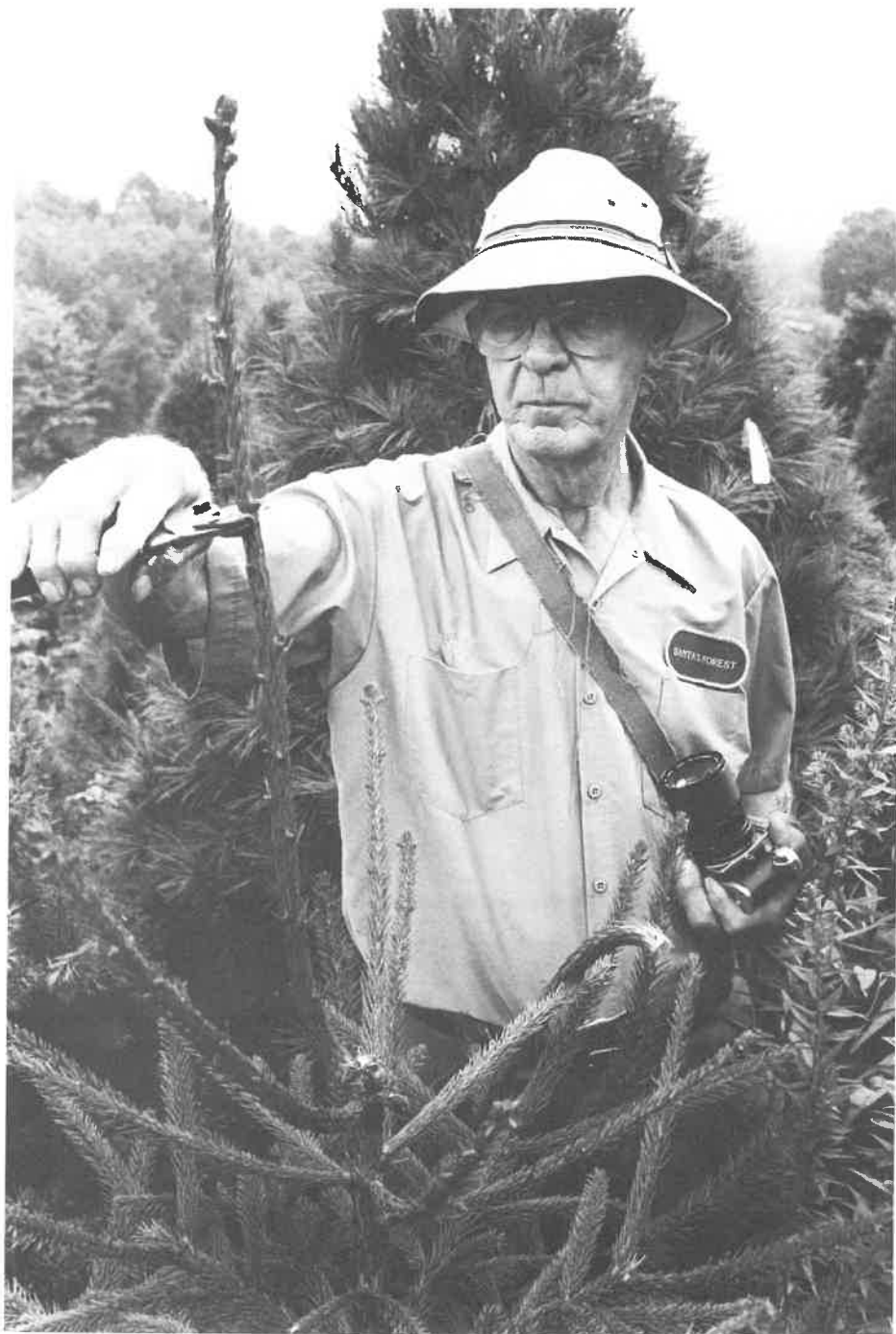
He got married about that time to Mary Louise Farley whom he had met in Beckley, and went to work as an instructor in a federal farm training program for returning service men. "Some counties had eight or 10 instructors, but Raleigh only had one," he notes. John Cooper was the entire training program, and he doubted that there was a future for him.

Mr. Cooper knew that the Soil Conservation Service was expanding, and in 1948 he took a job with them. He transferred to Roane County that

same year and started the soil conservation program there.

He emphasizes that the Soil Conservation Service is a land use program. His business was to tell farmers how to save the land. "There are various methods to do this," Mr. Cooper explains. The method that he now works at full-time is tree planting.

John Cooper encouraged the use of erodible crop land or erodible pasture for growing trees. "Remove the livestock and don't plow it anymore," he'd say. He preached tree planting to anyone who'd listen, and after a while he converted himself. "I became firmly enough convinced that if it was all right for them it was all right for me."





The Coopers had their June wedding in 1947. Like a lot of young men of his era, John was a veteran just settling into his career. Photographer unknown.

Why Christmas trees in particular? Simple economics. They are a good source of income, and as John Cooper explains, "It was a selling point to the farmers."

The Coopers had two children by this time, and John wasn't getting rich working for the government. "I got to studying about ways that I could build up a little capital," he recalls. He got together with a large landowner named Ross Simmons who had a farm about 12 miles below Spencer. Mr. Simmons agreed to furnish the land if John Cooper would furnish the know-how. They first planted trees in 1954 and raised them together for 12 years. Mr. Cooper remembers Simmons as a fine gentleman and says they got along without any written agreements between them.

In 1965 Mr. Cooper transferred to Mason County as a soil conservation agent. He retired in 1979 as district conservationist, the man in charge of the county's Soil Conservation Service office. During his tenure in Mason County, a former employee offered to sell him the place that is now Santa's Forest. Mr. Cooper got permission from his state director to raise and sell trees, and bought the abandoned farm in 1972. He planted the first tree in the spring of 1973.

There was only about two or three acres of open land that didn't have brush on it when he bought the old farm. "You couldn't crawl through it hardly," says John Cooper. The area he cleared for planting was former pasture field, badly grown up. It took bulldozers, chain saws and tractors to clear it, and that first year his crew could only plant four acres.

That amounted to thousands of Christmas trees but nothing compared to what he has now. Today the well-groomed evergreens cover 32 acres of ground at Santa's Forest. When you ask Mr. Cooper how many trees 32 acres can hold, he tells you that as a rule of thumb an acre holds roughly a thousand trees. But there is no real way of knowing. "If you count 'em, we'll both know," he says.

Obviously John Cooper likes what

Children's Christmas Book

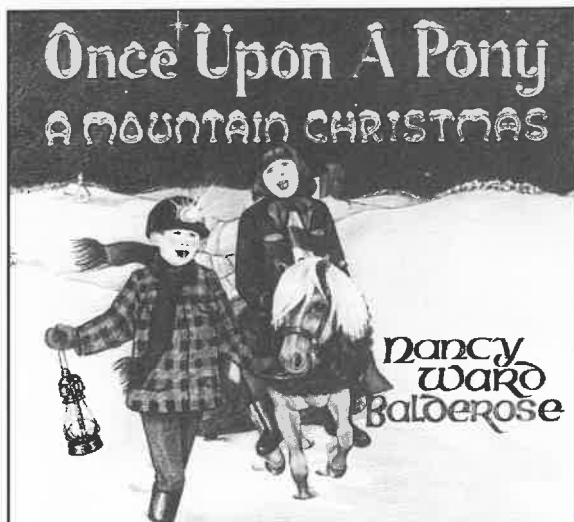
Huntington native Nancy Ward Balderose is the author of a new children's book, *Once Upon a Pony: A Mountain Christmas*. It is the story of the Puckett children, Hannah and Jess, and one snowy Christmas Eve in their Sugar Ridge community.

Balderose did both text and illustrations for the 32-page hard-bound book. The old-fashioned Christmas tale is told through life-like, full-color drawings, and each page of text is bordered by a stitchery design. Balderose dedicates her story to "mountain people everywhere."

Hannah and Jess Puckett set out with the family pony, Chester, to attend a holiday play at the community church. Their mother instructs them to bring a sled load of coal to

heat the church, but the children arrive late and nearly empty-handed. Once their story is told, Sugar Ridge folks learn what Christmas is all about.

Once Upon a Pony: A Mountain Christmas is available through bookstores or directly from the publisher for \$12.95 per copy. Mail orders including \$3.50 postage and handling may be sent to Morehouse Publishing, P.O. Box 1321, Harrisburg, PA 17105, or call 1-800-877-0012.



GREG CLARK



John began preaching the gospel of tree farming as a Soil Conservation Service agent. Here he poses, at right, with the staff of the Roane County office in Spencer. Photo by Neil Hedrick, U.S.D.A., 1962.

he's doing, but he admits there is plenty of work in it. He says that tree farming versus other forms of farming involves much more labor per acre. Santa's Forest is 57 acres total, small by farm standards. But in addition to Mr. Cooper, right-hand man Boyd Stover works full-time in the business. He has worked there about nine years. Boyd's wife, Phyllis, is employed part-time, along with Billy Perry and one or two other workers as needed.

Contrasting his place with neighbor Melvin Donohew's livestock farm, Mr. Cooper says more machinery and labor are required at the Christmas tree farm. His neighbor's chief labor is putting up hay and clipping the pastures, and of course the daily tending of livestock. Mr. Donohew does most of the work himself and still holds a full-time job elsewhere, according to Cooper.

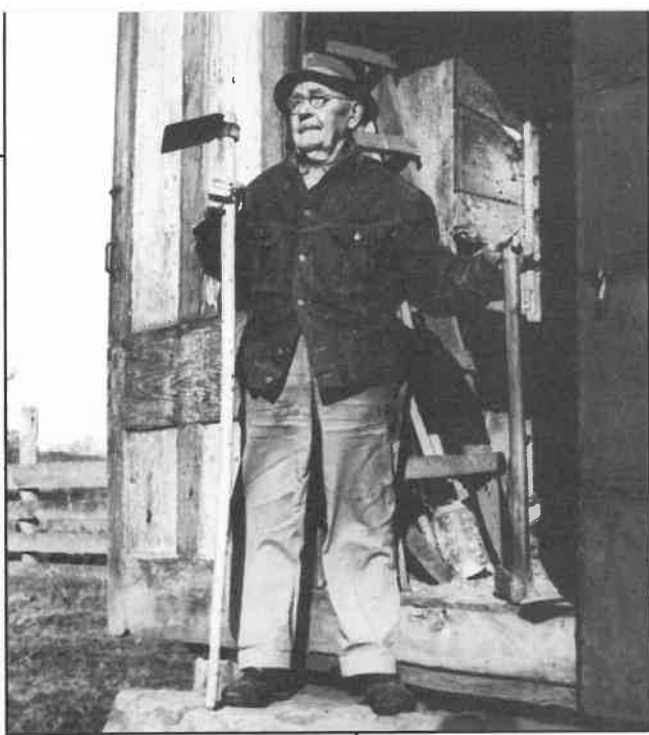
At Santa's Forest trees are planted six to seven feet apart in rows, and the trees within a row are five to six feet apart, depending on the species. To culture a tree from a seedling perhaps 10 inches tall to a harvestable tree six to nine feet tall can take up to 10 years. A 10-inch seedling will be outgrown by volunteer grass, weeds or hardwoods, left unassisted. Mowing with a walk-behind tractor is the number one method of weed control.

Herbicides are also sprayed to control unwanted competition around the seedlings and even two- or three-year-old trees. A Kubota four-wheel-drive riding tractor is used for mowing and also to pull trailers and sprayers. Herbicide treatments occur twice a year, in the spring and in late summer or early fall. Backpack mist blowers are used to spray the trees with insecticides, as well as a coloring agent called Greenzit for some trees.

For routine farm maintenance Santa's Forest relies on the Kubota tractor, two Jari walk-behinds, a



Santa's Forest grows wildflowers as well as Christmas trees on its Mason county hillsides. Photo by Michael Keller.

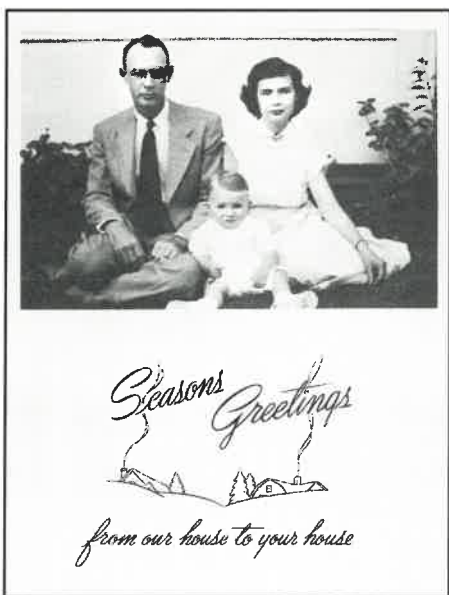


John Cooper's old farmers.

Although officially a soil conservationist and tree man, John Cooper is a fine amateur photographer as well. He combined business and pleasure in the 1970's, producing a newspaper series on some of the octogenarian farmers among his clients. The articles, published in the *Point Pleasant Register*, were accompanied by Mr. Cooper's photographs.

We have reproduced three of our favorites here, all from Mason County. The first (above) shows Alfred Hussell of Sand Hill Road, fetching tools from his outbuilding. The second, showing Mr. and Mrs. Roy Jividen (right) at hearthside, suggests the special restfulness of winter on the farm. The third (below) shows Ed Durst feeding stock at his place on Red Mud Ridge.





The family Christmas card, early 1950's. This is John, Mary, and young John.

Gravely, and three motorized mist blowers. They also work with three pump-type backpack sprayers, a garden tiller, a drill press in the shop, and various saws, including five chain saws used entirely for cutting trees.

But the most important job is done with equipment that is as simple as can be imagined. A Christmas tree's shape is its most important selling point, and trees are shaped by hand shearing. It is an astonishing feat of physical skill. The shearer, wearing thick leather shin guards and other protective gear, wields a razor-sharp, long-bladed knife in each hand. He takes a distinct wide-legged stance, belly to the tree to minimize exposure to his own knives, and begins slashing with both hands. "A person who isn't adept at shearing can ruin a tree in a minute," John Cooper says, "and one who is adept can make me five or ten bucks in a minute if he does it properly."

After the trees are harvested, baling begins. A tree baler, of the sort sometimes seen at Christmas tree lots, is a specialized piece of machinery. The baler has a cable with a pulley and a line that hooks on to a tree and pulls it through. A canister inside turns the tree round and round. As it does so it tightens the string and compresses the tree.

Mr. Cooper hires a hay truck with a

Christmas Year-Round The Annual Cycle at the Tree Farm

"January and February are two months that we don't have to do much around here," John Cooper explains of his Mason County Christmas tree business. It's a well-deserved rest from the demands of the holidays, lasting until the end of February when it's time to clean up trash from the previous cutting season and trim last year's stumps to ground level.

From early March into April, the Santa's Forest crew plants five to seven thousand seedlings 10 to 12 inches tall. Mr. Cooper grows his own seedlings in a nursery bed for about two years before putting them in the ground. He supplements his planting with seedlings from the state tree nursery or from a commercial nursery when necessary.

Early spring is also the time for insect control. He sprays for white pine borers and aerofite mites, "a sophisticated name for a little critter that sucks the juice of the tree," says John Cooper. Herbicide treatments get underway, too. The ground around the trees is sprayed with atrazine and simazine to control grass and weeds up through the summer.

In late April and early May things slow down somewhat, but by mid-May weed control and mowing are in full swing. The tree rows are planted six feet apart, and it takes close to a month to mow 32 acres using walk-behind tractors. Assistant Boyd Stover has stepped it off. Multiplying steps into feet and feet into miles, Boyd figures he walks 14 to 15 miles a day when he's mowing.

By mid-June the shearing and shaping of the trees begins, the men working freehand with long sharp knives. "It is the most critical single operation," John Cooper says. He does all the basic training on this. At 73 years old, Mr. Cooper admits he has backed off a lot on

the work of the farm, but shearing is a job he works at every day at the start of summer. He goes out in the morning, and after a short rest following lunch goes back and stays with it for the remainder of the day. The rest of the crew works the whole day.

Shearing and shaping take four full-time people and sometimes an extra part-time worker a full month. Following the shearing there's a down period of about two weeks. Then a second mowing between the tree rows takes place to eliminate competition from grass, weeds and interloping hardwoods.

Then two people begin vining. Phyllis and a helper remove plants like morning glory, honeysuckle, poison ivy and Virginia creeper, cutting the vines underneath the trees and pulling them out.

By the first of September it's time for a second herbicide treatment and the coloring of those trees which require it. A material called Greenzit is used to mist the many Scotch pines on the farm. Mr. Cooper says this usually takes two fellows a little more than a week, and it's worth the time and expense. With Scotch pines especially, needles turn yellow after a hard freeze. "With the Greenzit they don't do that," says Mr. Cooper, "and they're more appealing to the eye at Christmastime."

And of course there's always the vital business of selling trees. Along about this time Mr. Cooper begins working with wholesale buyers and retailers. During October there's not much urgent farm business at hand. Around the last of October and into early November some trees may be dug for use in Mr. Cooper's landscaping business, a sideline he says keeps both mind and body sharp.

November is the month to cut trees and to dig ball-and-burlap trees for the live Christmas tree

market. Trees must be before the public by the Saturday and Sunday following Thanksgiving. "It's a wee bit early in my judgment," John Cooper says, "but if we have wholesale buyers, we have to accommodate them." Mr. Cooper himself must be set up to sell trees at the Charleston Farmer's Market by the Friday after Thanksgiving. And in the latter part of November everybody at Santa's Forest must take time off to deer hunt, of course, the boss included.

So when Christmas comes to the Mountain State John Cooper is ready for it. Maybe there's less time for him to sit back and enjoy the holidays with his grandchildren, but there is always the January lull to look forward to. Meanwhile John Cooper has the satisfaction of bringing Christmas to other families as he puts a little of Santa's Forest in thousands of West Virginia homes.

—Debby Sonis Jackson

The trees are trimmed in the heat of summer. Boyd Stover is an expert, too fast for the camera to follow. Photo by Michael Keller.



24-foot bed and a rack over the cab to haul his trees to market. It takes all day to load the truck with 300 to 400 baled trees. A person can walk on a load of baled trees without breaking any branches and twice as many baled trees can be hauled, Mr. Cooper says. The normal height for a Christmas tree is about seven feet. But at Santa's Forest they come in all sizes, up to 12 to 15 feet.

Mr. Cooper sells trees wholesale and retail. His main sales outlet is at the Farmer's Market in Charleston where he competes with about nine other tree vendors. Farmer's Market Christmas trees have to be grown in West Virginia, and all tree vendors must be bona fide growers, according to the State Department of Agriculture.

John Cooper believes in these rules, but he is not pleased about the way lots are assigned to the growers. In the past, lot locations were based on seniority. More recently the lots at the Farmer's Market have been auctioned off to growers. "Participants should have a larger say-so on how it's operated rather than be dictated to," Mr. Cooper says, noting that he has raised the question with the agricultural commissioner.

He has seen many changes in his industry. When he was a kid folks would go out somewhere and chop a Virginia pine, bring it in and call it a Christmas tree, he says. By the early 1940's most of the commercial Christmas trees in West Virginia came from Maine or Canada. Mr. Cooper says they were harvested wild trees such as balsam firs. Before World War II only a few people in West Virginia were in the business of raising Christmas trees, but after the war the number increased considerably.

Mr. Cooper recalls some of the Mountain State's early Christmas tree pioneers such as Noel Cochran in New Martinsville, Lawrence Fleak of Parkersburg, Dr. Fix in the Eastern Panhandle, and Dr. Dan Hale of Princeton. Santa's Forest was the second Christmas tree farm in Mason County. "There was one kind of fading out down in behind Apple Grove," Mr. Cooper says of the first one. Now there are a dozen or more.

Santa's Forest enjoys a good rela-



John Cooper has given a lot of thought to his farm and his industry. It is a good business but not to be entered lightly, he says. Photo by Michael Keller.

like more. He welcomes that kind of community involvement.

Meat processors boast that they can use everything about a hog but the squeal, and Santa's Forest does about as well with Christmas trees. Boyd and Phyllis make wreaths, roping, and boughs from trimmings and unmarketable trees. They also sell tree stands and tree disposal bags during the Christmas season. Boyd assembles the stands and Phyllis makes the wreaths during their spare time at the farm or when they are not busy on the lot. They sometimes stay at Santa's Forest until 10, 11 or 12 o'clock at night. "December is a busy time," Boyd says, but the work suits him. He now grows 3,000 to 4,000 trees on his own place, and he'll be selling some of them at a lot in Wood County for the first time this year.

Boyd says growing trees is work you must have a feel for and care a great deal about all at the same time. "You bring them up from a little fellow. When you accidentally cut a nice looking three-year-old, it makes you sad," he says. Boyd tells about making a slip on a tree while mowing during his first year and initially hiding it from his boss. "It bothered me," Boyd says, "but I told him about it on a water break." John Cooper started laughing, as Boyd tells it. "I just hid one from you," Cooper confessed to his assistant.

From about Thanksgiving on, they're hard at it, Mr. Cooper says. He goes from 7 a.m. to 11:30 at night doing something. The work is not all physical. There's also the book end of the business. Santa's Forest is licensed as a nursery since it sells live trees for Christmas and for landscaping. The nursery license is renewed every year, and there is a state franchise store license to keep up with, too.

And John Cooper busies himself in his industry as well. He is former president of the West Virginia Tree Growers Association and also served as the state representative for the National Christmas Tree Growers Association. He has put trees in two governor's offices and the Governor's Mansion.

tionship with the people of Mason County, and Mr. Cooper calls for assistance from the county agent when he needs it. When Boyd Stover has problems with any of the 15 motors for the tree farm's various machines, he turns to Donnie Barr of nearby Gunville Ridge for help. Lester Keefer, another ridge resident, helps Mr. Cooper with the carpentry work at Santa's Forest. Many neighbors though, Mr. Cooper thinks, still consider him an outsider. "I don't live here a hundred percent of the time, don't go to church here, don't have any kids in school. They respect me, but they don't consider me one of them."

So John Cooper is quick to neighbor with those around him. He and Boyd helped the Farm Museum in Point Pleasant rebuild a log house and an old log church originally built in 1817. He has several groups of children through the farm yearly, and would

Cutting Your Own

Although Santa's Forest isn't set up for it, there are about 40 other farms in the Mountain State where people are invited to choose and cut their own Christmas trees.

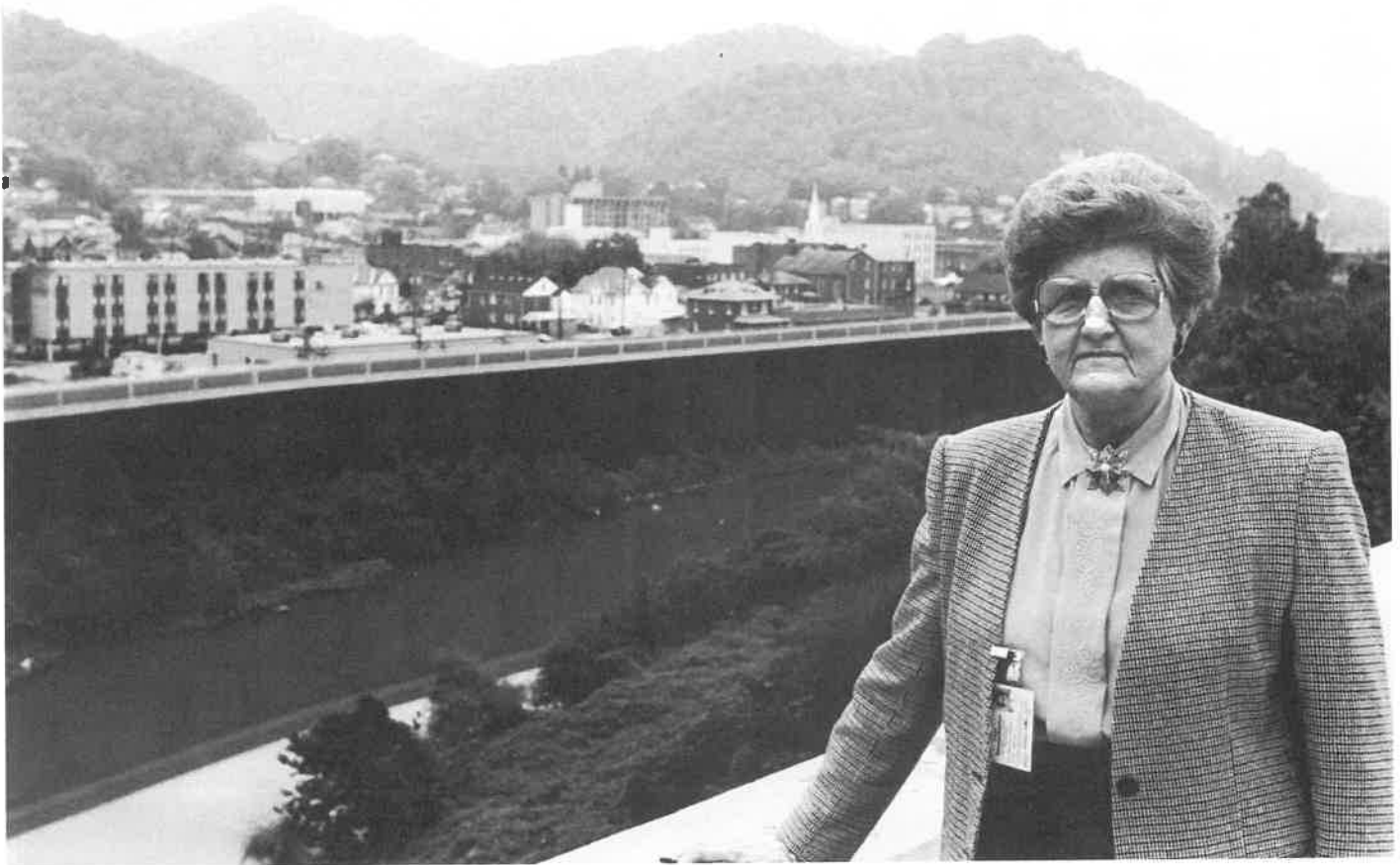
A free publication of the Division of Forestry, titled *Choose and Cut Christmas Tree Farms*, is available for those who are interested in picking their tree while it's still in the ground. Contact the West Virginia Division of Forestry, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305; (304) 558-2788.

He is a man proud of his accomplishments, that's plain, but he has cautions for those who would follow in his footsteps. "We've taught too many people how to raise trees. There's been a glut of trees in West Virginia recently. Many people have come into the picture. There's a lot of ins and outs and ups and downs to the thing," he says.

Growers also face competition from artificial trees, Mr. Cooper warns. Now the same number of artificial trees are used in homes at Christmas as live trees, about 34 million each by his count. "They have their organizations, too, and promote the artificial trees," he says.

And there is plenty of live tree competition from elsewhere in the country. Santa's Forest is laid out on rough terrain where most labor is done by hand. In more level areas like Michigan and some parts of North Carolina and Pennsylvania, the land is smoother and they do much more with equipment. In the long run those trees are raised a little cheaper.

But too many trees, stiff competition, hard labor and higher costs don't seem to worry the Santa's Forest proprietor too much. The 73-year-old grower mostly ignores such distractions and keeps his mind on the basic essentials of his business. By now he's got it down to one simple statement. "We grow trees out here on the hill," John Cooper says, and leaves it at that. ❀



Williamson is Charlotte Sanders' beat. She stands here on the Kentucky side of Tug Fork.

Writing is Second Nature

Mingo Reporter Charlotte Sanders

Interview by Robert Beanblossom

Photographs by Michael Keller

Charlotte Sanders. I was born in Williamson 71 years ago, and I'm proud of it. My parents were merchants. They operated a grocery store for many years. I graduated from Williamson High School at 17, and I got several jobs through the local employment office.

I guess you might say World War II turned my life around. All the men, or most of the young men in Williamson anyway, were called to military service, and there was a shortage of reporters at the *Williamson Daily News*. My dad happened to be a

friend of the publisher, H. G. "Champ" Clark, and he heard the publisher trying to entice two of the women at a local bank to come to work for him. My dad said, "Well, Mr. Clark, I have a daughter, why don't you give her a chance?" Mr. Clark came to the store where I was working for my dad and wanted me to work on a trial basis. We shook hands that I would try it for one week.

I can't say that I took to it right away. Sometimes I'd tell my mother, "I don't believe I'll go back. I just

don't think I was cut out for newspaper business." That was over 49 years ago. I went to work for the *Daily News* on January 26, 1943.

Robert Beanblossom. Tell me about that first day on the job.

CS. I came to work at eight o'clock at the old *Daily News* plant, which was a split level affair. As I came in the front door, I saw no one at first. Then a young man, Blake Phillips, came out of the press in the back, looked at me and said, "Who are you?"

I said, "I'm Charlotte Oliver. (I was



Charlotte was a hunter and outdoors person as a young woman. She is 18 or 19 in this family snapshot.

single at the time.) I'm supposed to report here to begin work."

He said, "Well, why don't you get on upstairs," so I went upstairs and found a woman editor on the desk. That was Virginia Shewey Flanagan, who stayed about a week to see if I'd work out. Apparently I was good enough for her to leave. I ended up becoming a cub reporter.

The late O. H. "Boots" Booten was covering court. He sort of took me under his wing. He was an excellent writer. I learned a lot from him, and also from the late Bill Garrett, who later went with the *Charleston Daily Mail*, and from the late W. F. "Dutch" Tolbert, who came here in 1927 and was with the *Daily News* until he died around 1971. Garrett won a national Pall Mall Award once for solving a local murder case. I guess it was just

Dad was on one side trying to make a tomboy out of me, and Mother was on the other side trying to make a lady out of me. I don't know whether either one succeeded.

something I was made for. Writing is second nature to me.

I was born in a very violent time, in 1921. We still had the trial going on of the persons involved in the Matewan Massacre the previous year in union troubles. About seven years before that was the Glen Alum mine robbery. I got interested in things of a historical nature through my dad, who would sit and tell me stories about these things.

RB. You once told me that you used to hunt with your father.

CS. Oh yes. I guess I was about 11 years old the first time my dad took me hunting. We went to the top of Sycamore Mountain near Williamson. Dad had a 12-gauge shotgun. I remember the first time I fired it I almost fell to the ground from the recoil of the gun, but I developed a liking for going out into the woods. Dad would take me now and then, letting me do a little shooting. I became a real good shot in my teens.

I was an only child and Dad called me "Bud," treating me like a boy. He was on one side trying to make a tomboy out of me, and Mother was on the other side trying to make a lady out of me. I don't know whether either one succeeded.

But anyway, through the years we hunted a great deal. In my late teens I frequently went hunting by myself — something that a woman would not even think of doing now. But I used to go by myself, maybe take a dog and rabbit hunt, killing a couple of rabbits in the afternoon.

The last time I went squirrel hunting with my dad, I shot four times and I got three squirrels. I was real proud about that. Dad didn't even see any that day, much less kill any, so I told him he could carry my squirrels. Needless to say, he took a lot of kidding from his hunting buddies.

We had a lot of fun in those days. I

and a friend of mine, Esther Hatfield Ellis, used to get on the train at four o'clock in the morning and ride to Iaeger. Her brother-in-law would meet the train and drive us up Horse Creek where he and her sister lived. That was during World War II when a lot of service men were riding the trains. They thought it was so funny that two women would get on the train at Williamson, one with a big shotgun, going hunting.

We'd go to Horse Creek where friends and relatives of Esther's would come down for a little shooting. We would have target practice, and they would let me shoot a high-powered rifle. I really enjoyed that. We hunted, too, while we were up there. I don't recall ever getting any squirrels there, but I know we had a lot of fun. Mostly, I hunted in Mingo County. The hills have changed so much in recent years with all the mining and the forest fires that we have had. It's not the beautiful forest I knew when I was young.

RB. What about your later life, your family and all?

CS. I was married to James "Doc" Sanders for 38 years; he died five years ago. I have two sons, Jim and Terry, and also four grandchildren. I spend a good deal of time in Lexington, Kentucky, with my son Jim and his family. Through the years, I've lived in Williamson and never had any desire but to spend my life here. My son Terry is clerk of Mingo County Magistrate Court.

RB. Speaking of Williamson, as I recall both the *Daily News* and you personally were affected by the big flood. Tell me about that.

CS. The *Daily News* office was half filled with water, which destroyed all of our old records. We refer to it as the "Great Flood of 1977." It was a year before I was able to move back in my house. It was completely inundated.



The 1977 flood devastated the Tug Valley. Charlotte says this much of her roof rose above the water.

All of our furniture, my personal possessions, everything my husband and I had worked for was under water. We finally coaxed HUD into moving a trailer onto our land so we could live there and see to the restoration of our home.

My dog died about six months after we were moved into the trailer. We started being invaded by rats as big as cats. I'd get up at night, interrupted by the noise, and take a broom and chase after them in the HUD trailer. Finally, I bought some large traps and set them. We caught 18 rats before eventually moving back into our house. Everybody in our neighborhood was plagued by rats. The flood water had sent all of them to where we were living. It was terrible. One morning, I awakened and felt something throbbing in my pillow. Don't you know there was a little mouse in there, and it had probably slept with me all night.

My husband and I waded water waist deep from our home to the residence then occupied by my oldest son and his family in Sunset. Their house was above flood level. Eventually 13 relatives were staying there. We had no extra clothing until we

drove to Huntington and used a Red Cross clothing order at the Penneys store.

The weather was extremely cold and, with the disruption of electric power and water service, we were forced to live rather primitively for a few days. My son Jim used cinder blocks and an old grill to construct an outdoor cooking place, and that's where we cooked most of our food until power was restored. We learned to bake biscuits in a cast iron skillet over the open fire.

My son Terry was living in Huntington at the time and had to wait for floodwaters to subside before he could drive to Williamson with food and other necessary items to help our family. About two weeks after the flood, my husband and I camped inside the family room of our house after we had made it habitable. We slept on folding cots, using shovels to prop our doors shut and a pistol under the pillow to guard against looters. We ate at the West Williamson grade school, which had been converted into an eating center by a group of Mennonites.

It was just several hundred yards from my son's home to the head of

Sunset where water would flow out of that watershed before it hit the drains. One of the men who lived in Fairview Addition, Eugene King, then a retired manager of the Appalachian Power Company, went up there, took some pipe and fixed it so water was coming out into a big washtub. We were able to go up there and get water for sanitary purposes, to wash and so on. The National Guard would come by with big trucks containing drinking water. But the water out of that watershed was just like spring water. We'd take a child's wagon, my daughter-in-law and I, and haul water down to the house.

RB. Tell me about some of the people you have met in your work as a reporter.

CS. I've interviewed people with hard luck stories that would make tears come to your eyes, you just wanted to help them so. I've interviewed people in jail, they always make interesting copy.

In the earlier years of my *Daily News* career, I became acquainted with a man who was born blind and had disfiguring facial marks. Journalists and others wrote often of "Blind Billy" Adair, a reference I



Charlotte checks the police records at the Mingo County Courthouse as part of her daily rounds.

*One morning, I awakened
and felt something
throbbing in my pillow.
Don't you know there
was a little mouse in
there, and it had probably
slept with me all night.*

never liked. Underneath his seeming helplessness was a will of iron.

Billy Adair was viewed by many as a master or patriarch of politics. He served on the Mingo County Board of Education in the 1950's. He had a soft side, as I learned sitting across from him at the board's conference table during his tenure in office. He often inquired about my children, then small, and even offered to help me find a sitter when I was between sitters.

Perhaps one reason Adair had such influence was his habit of underwriting bank loans for persons wishing to attend college to get teaching degrees. The late Roy M. Taylor, who was twice mayor of Williamson and a bank vice president, told me once that he knew Billy Adair well through bank dealings "and I trusted him." At one time, Taylor remembered there being 39 such loans.

For years, Adair and the late veteran editor W. F. "Dutch" Tolbert were adversaries. The latter had written editorials in which Adair figures through his political activities. Not long before his death, Tolbert met

Adair at the courthouse one day and they more or less buried the hatchet, a source once told me.

As a cub reporter in the 1940's, I learned much about the ins and outs of politics. My eyes opened widely when I heard of a man whose main job was to collect political campaign contributions from employees in the county school system.

The late "Champ" Clark and Tolbert used me frequently for undercover investigations in connection with stories they were writing. Clark, who delved into politics and even served on the county court for a time, was once run out of the Democratic party in Mingo County, if such a feat were possible. He was a linguist with one of the greatest vocabularies of any person I have ever known. He taught me much about covering the news in the early years of my career.

Through the years I have covered the police beat, circuit court, school board, city and county government, and done features. I also have written sports on various occasions. I'm doing some of these things now, although I am semi-retired. A typical

day for me now is little different than when I was working regularly. I leave home at approximately eight o'clock, go to the city police station to see if they have any news, get accident reports, news of arrests, and then go to the courthouse, winding up in the basement where the jail office is located. I check what's on the docket, who has been arrested, the charges and all, and then I go upstairs to the sheriff's office to see if he has anything to talk about. I usually wind up in the court reporter's office for the circuit court. I go to the circuit court clerk's office, the county clerk's office, and just make the rounds to pick up any news that I can.

Then I come into the *Daily News* about nine o'clock to begin writing these items for the local beat, and I handle different stories that are assigned to me during the day. I'll write until about 3:30 in the afternoon unless I just work a half day. Lately, I've been having to work full days. We have a lot of news to write for a small newspaper.

RB. Tell me about some of these special editions that you have done.

Janet Bowling (left) and Wally Warden help Charlotte celebrate a special occasion in January 1986. Warden, the late editor of the *Daily News*, brought Charlotte back from retirement. Photographer unknown.

CS. It seems as though I fell into the role of historian for the *Daily News* through the years. We've put out special editions on different occasions, like in 1976, when the nation was observing its Bicentennial.

In 1982, I was assigned the task of getting a special edition together on the Hatfield and McCoy feud. I traveled hundreds of miles in our county, the neighboring county of Logan, and parts of Pike County, Kentucky, getting information for what turned out to be a 40-page edition.

In 1989, which was the 100th anniversary of the feud, we decided to put out another one. Again, I was assigned the task of getting this together. Now, keep in mind I had retired several years earlier. In 1989, our edition was 80 pages. Besides what the 1982 edition contained, we had many additional stories and pictures acquired from very kind citizens through the county — many photos being "one of a kind." Estil Hatfield, of Beech Creek, had some most unusual pictures he kindly loaned to us. Henry D. Hatfield, at Sarah Ann in Logan County, a grandson of the famed Anderson "Devil Anse" Hatfield, provided additional pictures. I would say the 1989 edition was probably my greatest accomplishment for the *Daily News*.

RB. How would you like to see Mingo County in the future?

CS. I'd like to see Mingo County become a county where politics doesn't dictate everything that happens. Despite all of the arrests, convictions and imprisonments, I think that politics is very much alive and still governs what goes on in our county. Sometimes I think people let the fact they are going to run next year govern many of their actions now. I'm not speaking of anyone specifically. I'd like to see the time when our citizens would begin to pull together and try to get something done constructively. You know, we have a lot of people who can't get together to discuss something with-



out about 50 percent pulling one way and 50 percent pulling the other.

Some of our neighboring counties, particularly those in Kentucky, seem to get so many things done. It's the same old story in Mingo County, but I

do think we have people working to change that now. Our Chamber of Commerce, our merchants, some public officials, really are working to improve our county.

I'm glad to see that our streams are

I've interviewed people with hard luck stories that would make tears come to your eyes, you just wanted to help them so.



Charlotte Sanders is proud to contribute to the *Williamson Daily News*. She's been at it for nearly 50 years.

*As a cub reporter in the 1940's,
I learned much about the ins and outs of politics.
My eyes opened wide.*

returning to the conditions that I knew as a child. The streams are clearer now. When I was a child I can remember going swimming in our river; I wouldn't think of swimming in Tug River right now. In later years, as I grew to womanhood and went picnicking and swimming with friends, we'd find pieces of coal in the bottom of the river. Our rivers became polluted and in floods you could see all of the bleach bottles floating down the middle. Our county campaign against litter has helped a lot. I'm really concerned right now about what we're going to do for a landfill.

RB. When did you retire?

CS. I retired when I was 66, which would have been in 1987. My husband became terminally ill. Several months after my husband's death, Wally Warden, our editor (who is now deceased), called to say he and our publisher, Lou Harvath, had decided I should come back to work, at least on a part-time basis. So I did.

Many times now on the phone and on the street people will say to me, "Well Charlotte, I thought you retired several years ago. Why don't you quit and let some of these young people have it?"

The only thing I could answer to that is first of all, it's my business if I want to work; second, they asked me, I didn't come back on my hands and knees begging to be taken back; third, I think I help out here a lot because we have a young staff now in the editorial department. It's sort of a blending of old and new, and it's worked out very well. And finally, I can use the money.

Working has been a great help to me since I lost my husband. It has kept me from becoming sorry for myself. I think it is why I am as active today at 71 as I am. My mind is still functioning 100 percent, and running over to the courthouse, up and down the steps, helps keep me younger.

I go to the East Williamson Baptist Church, which I grew up in. To me, it's a very important part of my life. I bowl once a week, I walk when it isn't too hot. I ride the bike some, watch the Braves on television, swim in summer and read.

I enjoy life. People say, "Don't you mind getting old?" Well, I say the alternative doesn't bear thinking about. ❀

One of the best-known night spots in southern West Virginia will soon be a memory. The Red Robin Inn, located at Borderland in Mingo County, will fall victim to a modern four-lane highway. The rustic tavern stands in the right-of-way of

Farewell to a Mingo Landmark

Kennedy came through with a motorcade in 1960.

The Red Robin also has banjos, dulcimers and other vintage musical instruments. Blevins plays the banjo and performs his own original and unique brand of mountain music.

The Last Days of the Red Robin Inn

By Kyle Lovern

the federally funded Corridor G highway project.

Charlie Blevins has owned and operated the establishment for almost 38 years [GOLDENSEAL, Winter 1982, pp. 35-42]. When talk of the new road first hit the Tug River in the early 1960's, Blevins led a petition drive to block the super highway.

Now he has accepted the situation and is ready to close his doors for the last time. "I'm just waiting till the road comes through," Charlie said in his low, deep voice.

If you drive by the two-story, cinder block building, you'll see the sign "Mingo's Little Museum" out front. The nickname reflects the fact that the Red Robin is filled with memorabilia. Charlie, who has a love of mountain heritage and culture, has collected various antiques and coal mining equipment over the years.

The 66-year-old Blevins is a navy veteran of World War II. He served on the famous *USS Alabama* and recently attended a 50-year reunion with his shipmates. Thus many of his antiques are war memorabilia. And among his collection is an original campaign poster of President John F. Kennedy.

*The white-bearded
amateur historian visits
local schools each year to
discuss our heritage and
play mountain ballads.
He sings about his life
and his experiences
growing up during hard
times in the Tug River
country.*

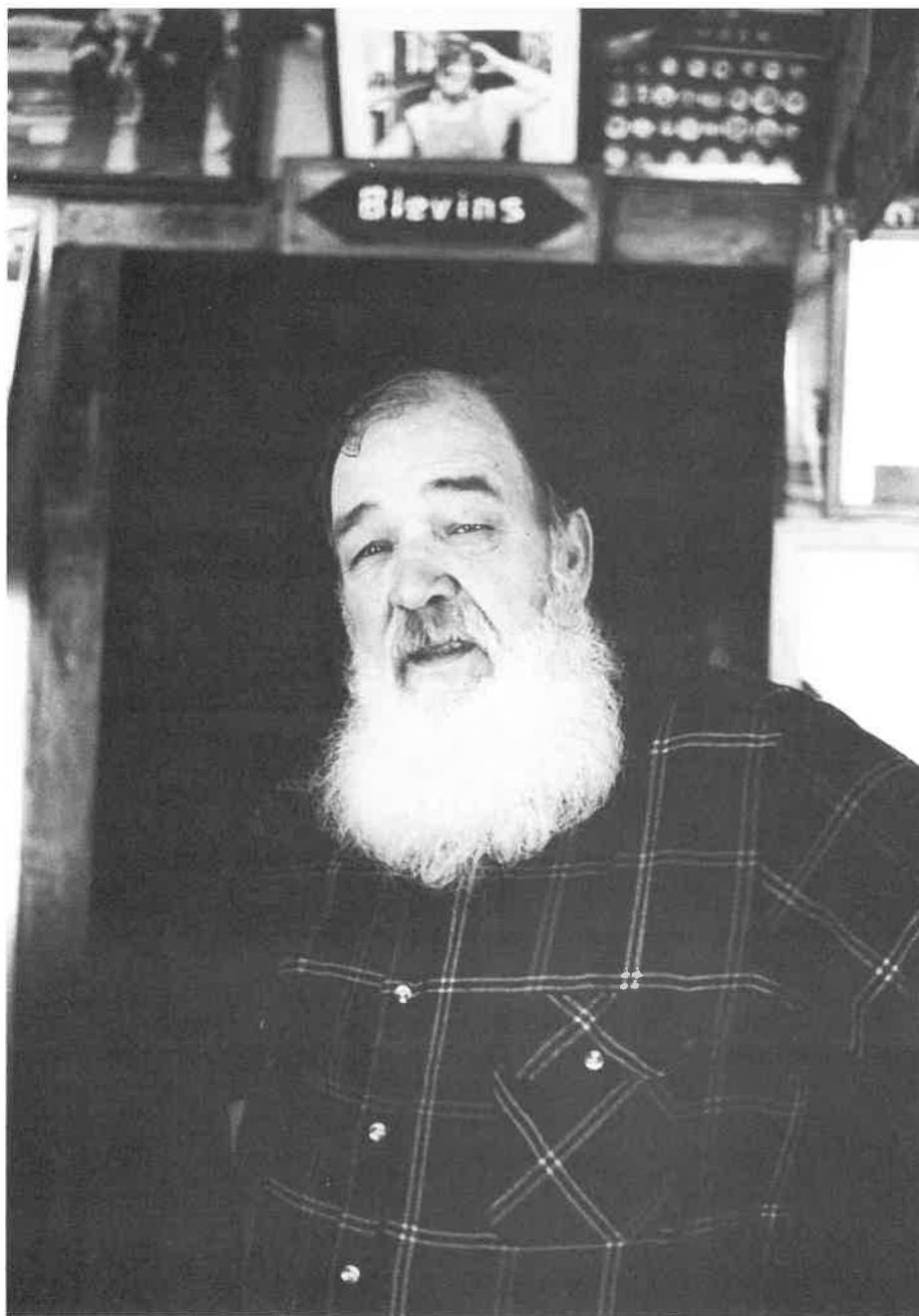
The tavern has had a reputation of a roughhouse beer joint. Charlie defends the honor of his establishment, but he has tales to tell weary travelers who stop by for a hamburger and cold beer. One of his favorites concerns the time he psyched out a would-be opponent.

As Charlie tells it, "This big feller came in one night and said he had heard I was pretty tough. I just told him I only took care of my business place, and didn't fight for just any reason."

Nonetheless, the rowdy customer insisted on taking the fracas outside, Charlie recalls. "I said to him, 'If you don't mind, I'd like to say a prayer before we fight.'"

"Oh Lord, I promised you the last time I killed a man with my bare hands, I would never do it again," he prayed. "You see what I'm faced with here. Please have mercy on me."

When he looked back up, the challenger was out the door and headed down the road, never to be seen again. "It was a good thing, he was a head taller than me," Charlie said with a sly grin. "Sometimes you have



Charlie Blevins is spending his last days at the Red Robin Inn. Photo by Michael Keller.

*"Oh Lord, I promised you
the last time I killed a
man with my bare hands,
I would never do it again.
But you see what I'm
faced with here."*

They entertain customers, who are welcome to join in on the vocals. Persons stopping by the popular watering hole can hear banjos, mandolins, guitars and sometimes even the hammered dulcimer.

The charming and vocal mountaineer performs at regional festivals, such as the King Coal Festival held each September in nearby Williamson. Charlie has been featured in several newspapers and has been the subject of television interviews over the years. News of the impending closing of the Red Robin has brought attention from newspapers across West Virginia, and even from the *New York Times*.

Charlie still rides a bicycle bright and early every morning. He peddles about 10 miles rain or shine. He keeps in shape by lifting weights. "You either use it or lose it," he figures.

He and his late father built the Red Robin Inn by hand in 1955. Charlie is one of 12 children, seven boys and five girls. A strong family man, he and his wife Laura Belle are proud of their three daughters. Two of them are teachers, and the other a nurse.

Although he gave up his battle to block the highway because he feels it is time for progress, Charlie Blevins doesn't plan to sit idle. He has built a new house on land he owns just across the river in Kentucky. It's dry country over there, so he plans to retire from the tavern business. Instead he will open an antique shop and continue to promote the rich Appalachian heritage he loves. We'll miss him on this side of the river. ❖

to use your brain instead of your body."

Charlie, who did some boxing in his younger years, still takes care of any trouble that might arise at the Red Robin. Several years ago, when the local honky-tonks were crowded almost every weekend, he accidentally got shot in the leg. He grins when he raises his pants leg to show the small scar he carries from the ruckus.

A former coal miner, Charlie remains a strong union man. He helped organize some of the early United Mine Workers of America locals in the area.

He is an expert on the history of the mountains, especially southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky. He

loves to talk about the famous Hatfield-McCoy feud that occurred about 25 miles from his home.

The white-bearded amateur historian visits local schools each year to discuss our heritage and play mountain ballads. He sings about his life and his experiences growing up during hard times in the Tug River country.

His songs range from love stories to coal mining ballads. "Coal Miner's Strawberries" pokes fun at having to eat pinto beans three times a day while growing up with 11 brothers and sisters. In other songs Charlie sings about the mine wars, the feud, and hunting groundhogs.

Local musicians drop in on a regular basis to pick with Charlie.

The View from Brandywine

Looking Back with Lester Hoover

Text and Photographs by Joan Ashley

At 100, Lester Hoover looks 60 and remembers like a man of 30.

His memories span two world wars, all the presidents of this century, two wives, and the demise of ten siblings. He's the only one left in his immediate family.

"They all smoked and drank," he says, settling back in an old swing hanging on the shady front porch of his family's farm across the South Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River near Brandywine. "Your body is a machine. You have to feed it right. You can't put poison in it and expect it to keep going for you."

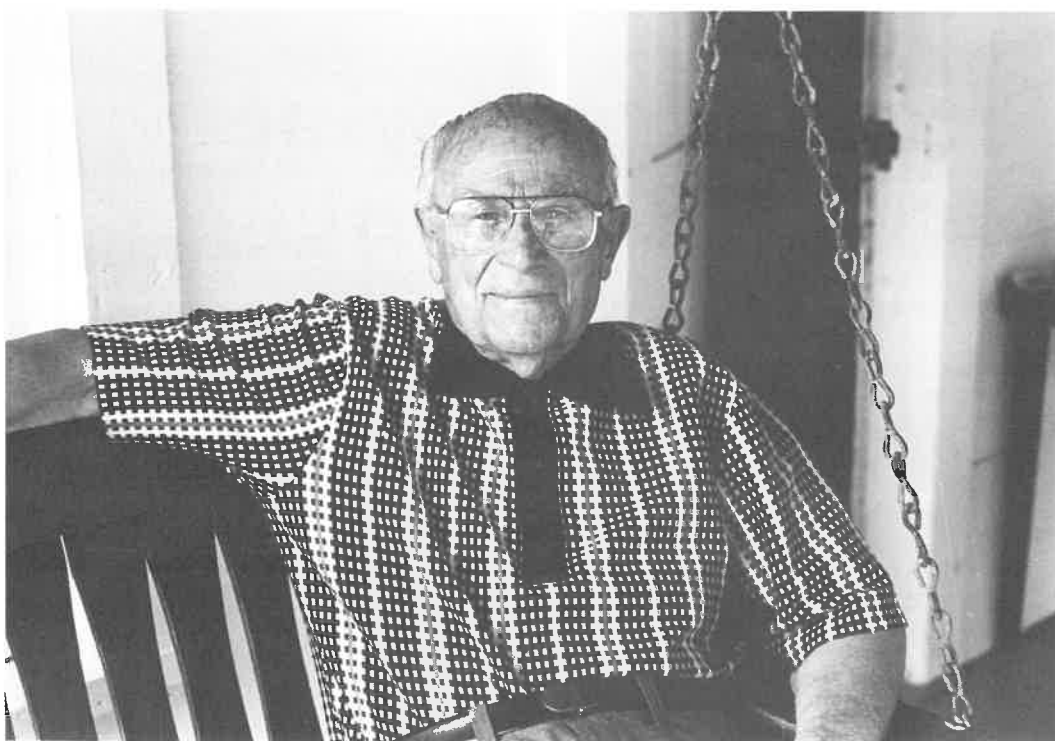
Hoover was born October 25, 1892, into a hard-scrabble West Virginia farm family that worked hard to feed itself. "Mother had a big garden and canned 800 quarts every year. She was feeding 11 kids — Annie, Myrtle, Charlie, Bill, George, Ella, Ona, Virgil, Irma, Raymond and me."

Mother Hoover sold eggs for ten cents a dozen and chickens for a quarter each to the huckster wagon that came through once or twice a week. "It was a big old wagon that had a little bit of everything to sell, like pots and pans and material," Hoover explains. "We'd look forward to it coming so we could bide the time of day and hear the news from around the countryside. Sometimes he'd deliver things from one farm to another on his route. He had big barrels and sacks of things that we couldn't raise, like salt and coffee."

But mostly the Hoovers made their own living. "Dad butchered eight hogs and one beef every fall," Hoover explains. "When the weather turned cold and stayed cold around November, we'd start butchering hogs, going



The old Hoover Mill is a Pendleton County landmark.



Lester Hoover at 99. He has a clear view back over the 20th century from the porch of his Brandywine homeplace.

from one family farm to the next. Certain people would be expert in one way or another. Some would kill the hogs, hang them up by the hamstrings to let the blood drain, gut them and carve off the hams and bacon. Usually one person was known for the best sausage 'receipt,'" he says, using the old term for recipe. "Another would mix the salt, brown sugar and pepper for wrapping and preserving the hams.

"We kids usually got to cut up the fat for rendering lard. The pieces were boiled in an iron pot, then put through a lard press. One of the by-products that we all looked forward to was the cracklin's. But you didn't dare eat too many, because you'd be sorry the next day!

"Each year Dad also butchered a beef, tanned the beef hide and took it to Dan Snyder in Brandywine who

made the family's yearly supply of shoes," Hoover continues.

"Snyder made each pair using wooden pegs to hold the sole on. There was not one nail in the entire pair. Each of us kids got a new pair in the fall before school started. The rest of the time we went barefoot.

"Those shoes never wore out. We'd pass them down when we outgrew them," Hoover states. "We'd be real proud to have two pair of shoes, one for good and one for school."

Old Brandywine was located more south of the current town, around Arthur Propst's store. It had a wood-working company that made barrels and chicken coops to carry fowl to market and a factory that produced barrels of tanning acid from tanbark, according to Johnny Arvin Dahmer, a local historian.

Nestled near the foot of the Shen-

andoah Mountain, Brandywine is the first town that greets you when you cross the mountain on Route 33 from Virginia. The road forks in a tee at Brandywine — one branch leading south to Sugar Grove, one northwest to Franklin where the road further branches north to Petersburg, west to the North Fork towns of Circleville, Seneca Rocks and Riverton. Brandywine always has had a school, a store, a filling station, post office, eating place and saloon, plus a few houses.

The Hoovers' main source of income came from applejack, a homemade fermented apple brandy. "Dad was the only licensed liquor refiner over here before Prohibition. He had license number two," Hoover recalls. "He owned a great still, set up in a log house lined with big barrels on each side of a stone furnace enclosing a covered copper cooker."

The furnace was constructed of river stone. It surrounded three-quarters of the copper cooking pot, which stood on a bedrock platform to prevent the flames from reaching the copper and scorching the contents. Logs eight to ten feet long were fed gradually into the firebox below the platform to maintain a constant heat. Space was left behind the platform to allow passage of the heat around the sides of the copper still.

"The still and liquor operation was inspected monthly in the early 1900's by a government agent named George Davis. He'd tap a barrel, put a liquor sample into a glass vial and check it for its color and alcohol content. When he left, he always put a couple of bottles of Daddy's applejack in his saddle bags," Hoover remembers with a big grin.

Everybody for miles around brought their apples to Hoover's dad, who crushed the fruit in a mill. "He put the residue in a big barrel and left it there until he could squeeze it in his hand and it would disintegrate," Hoover says. "Then it was carried in big buckets and poured into the copper kettle, which had an air-tight lid with a copper pipe leading outside the building where it coiled in a worm shape through a barrel of cold water. The alcohol-laden steam turned to liquid as it ran out through the worm in the water barrel and came out as liquor," Hoover explains.

"Dad always took the first run of

"The still and liquor operation was inspected monthly in the early 1900's by a government agent. When he left, he always put a couple of bottles of Daddy's applejack in his saddle bags."

liquor and put it back into the still with the apple mash, reprocessed it and turned out 86 proof for sale.

"He loaded 50-gallon barrels on a big horse-drawn wagon and took them around to sell to the logging companies and saloons in Brandywine, Franklin, and once in a while over the mountain to Harrisonburg," Hoover said. "They'd buy by the barrel. Friends would come to the house and get a gallon jug every now and then."

William Hoover had to quit making liquor during Prohibition. One night his wife heard the dogs barking around the old still house when everyone else had gone to town. "She was afraid to come out," Hoover recalls. "Someone stole that cooper still to make moonshine." Later his brother, a sheriff's assistant, saw what was left of the family still, which had been cut up during a government raid on a moonshine operation in the Smoke Hole.

"People worked in those days," Hoover emphasizes again. His great uncle Ike rebuilt the road over the Shenandoah Mountain. "He made \$5,000 to build that road. It was all dirt; he had wagons and horses with scrapers. The men were paid 50 cents a day. He moved the road over on the other side of the hollow so that the sun would shine on it and melt the snow better in the winter time."

"That road was made with a lot of hand labor," Dahmer adds. "Sometimes they would take a horse and plow to make the first cuts."

And the women had plenty of hard work of their own. Hoover's mother cooked on a wood stove. She baked eight loaves of bread every Saturday and enough pie and cake to last the week. "We never went to the table that it wasn't loaded," Hoover said.

Using a 200-year-old loom given to her by her mother, she fashioned all of her family's clothing. "She had a few sheep and spun the wool to make socks and sweaters. She made us underwear and stuff out of white flour sacks. She used the flowered ones for dresses, aprons, pillow slips and sheets. She'd make us kids clothes out of Dad's cast-off overalls and shirts. She even made carpet by cutting the final rags into strips and weaving rugs," Hoover said.

Times were tough. "We never got

"When Mother blew the dinner horn, those mules would stop dead in the middle of the field. You could have killed them and they wouldn't go."

presents or toys unless we made them," Hoover recalls. "At Christmas we all hung socks along the wall. In the morning we'd find peanuts, chestnuts, maybe some candy, and once in a while we'd get an orange. For birthdays, Mother would cook us a big meal of our favorite food. I don't remember us getting any presents then. There weren't many stores, just the huckster wagons."

Everyone worked on the farm. They raised wheat, corn and oats, which they ground in a five-story gristmill owned and run by the family. "My great-granddaddy built it with hand-hewn chestnut logs that are over 200

years old now," Lester says. The family dug a race, a chute bringing water from the river to the mill. The mill race also ran a sawmill and cooled the worm at the still house.

Several years ago Hoover had a millwright come to make some repairs. "He took out the old rollers that used to grind the corn. He took them to Baltimore to be sharpened and brought them back and laid them on the mill floor. 'I'll be back in the next couple of days to put them back in,'" Hoover recalls him saying. "He dropped dead and they're still lying there. No one knows now how to put them back in."

Young Lester sat on a box for this portrait at age five. He recalls that the photograph was made in the family parlor. Photographer unknown, late 1890's.







Left: Lester Hoover's brothers—Raymond, George and Virgil—pose with unidentified man (at right) by the family mill. Photographer and date unknown.

Above: The Hoovers made a good living by a variety of enterprises. This photo shows the old still house at right and the sawmill to its left.

The gristmill is closed and locked now. "It would make a nice museum if I could find someone to take it on," Hoover says.

"We split our own rails to make fence. We had two work horses and a team of mules named Nell and Bett. We'd be over across the river, and I'd be plowing. When Mother blew the dinner horn, those mules would stop dead in the middle of the field. You could have killed them and they wouldn't go. You'd just have to unhook them, bring them home and feed them," he says.

Hoover recalls making hay at Valentine "Pheldi" Swadley's house. "We'd put a grapevine around the shock and pull it with a horse to the hay stack made by Bill and Lee Swadley. They took real pride in building a symmetrical cone that would shed the weather," Hoover said.

Lester Hoover left home at 15 to

make his fortune. "Daddy gave me \$50 to go to Charlotte, North Carolina, to learn to repair automobiles which were just coming in then. I got all greasy and decided that this was not for me. I got on a train for Atlanta, Georgia. I was ashamed to ask for any

"They raised the price of feed, but not the price of chickens, so we couldn't make a living."

more money from home so I went hungry until I found work. I was determined not to go back home until I made big money," Hoover says.

He sold insurance; moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he drove an ice wagon; homesteaded in Montana;

was drafted into the army in 1917 and served at Fort Lewis; went to Tacoma and then on to Seattle, Washington, where he sold jewelry.

His second wife went into the real estate business, and he started buying real estate. "I bought houses and now have one of the nicest apartment houses in Seattle. I've got my big income. But my heart was always back here," he says.

"We tried to come back during World War II when the government wanted us to raise chickens for the war effort. We built chicken houses. Seemed like they raised the price of feed, but not the price of chickens, so we couldn't make a living. My wife didn't like the country, either. Once she went to feed the chickens, and an old bird came up behind her and goosed her leg up under her dress. She was startled and fell into the chicken house where the hungry chickens even pecked off her nail

"I bought houses and now have one of the nicest apartment houses in Seattle. I've got my big income. But my heart was always back here."

polish while grabbing the scattered feed. She decided that she had had enough of those chickens and the country, so we went back to Seattle."

Hoover visits the family home, which he now owns, for two weeks every summer without his wife. He is a local favorite. "He is a giver and a lover," his friend Rose Sisk teases. He gave good deals on jewelry to a lot of county residents who remember him fondly and display the engagement rings or specialty items proudly. One man recalls Hoover carrying a large uncut diamond in his pocket, pulling it out while he was talking and studying where to make the cuts to facet the stone. "One day he sat down at the kitchen table and cut that stone," he said.

The farm land is rented out, and nephew John Bowers, Jr., watches the place. "I don't know what to do with the farm," Hoover admits. "I would like it all to be used as a museum when I'm gone, but I haven't been able to arrange that yet."

Hoover has voted in every election since he reached voting age. He chooses the man, not the party. He voted for Franklin Roosevelt four times. "Truman was a good president," he states. "Ike and Johnson were no good at all. Kennedy was pretty good, but Nixon got himself in trouble. If he had told the truth, he'd have been all right, but he chose to lie."

"We don't have smart men like we used to that are all for the good of the country. The legislature raises their own salaries, and we have kids starving and with no place to live. The government sends money and food to foreign countries while some of our kids need food."

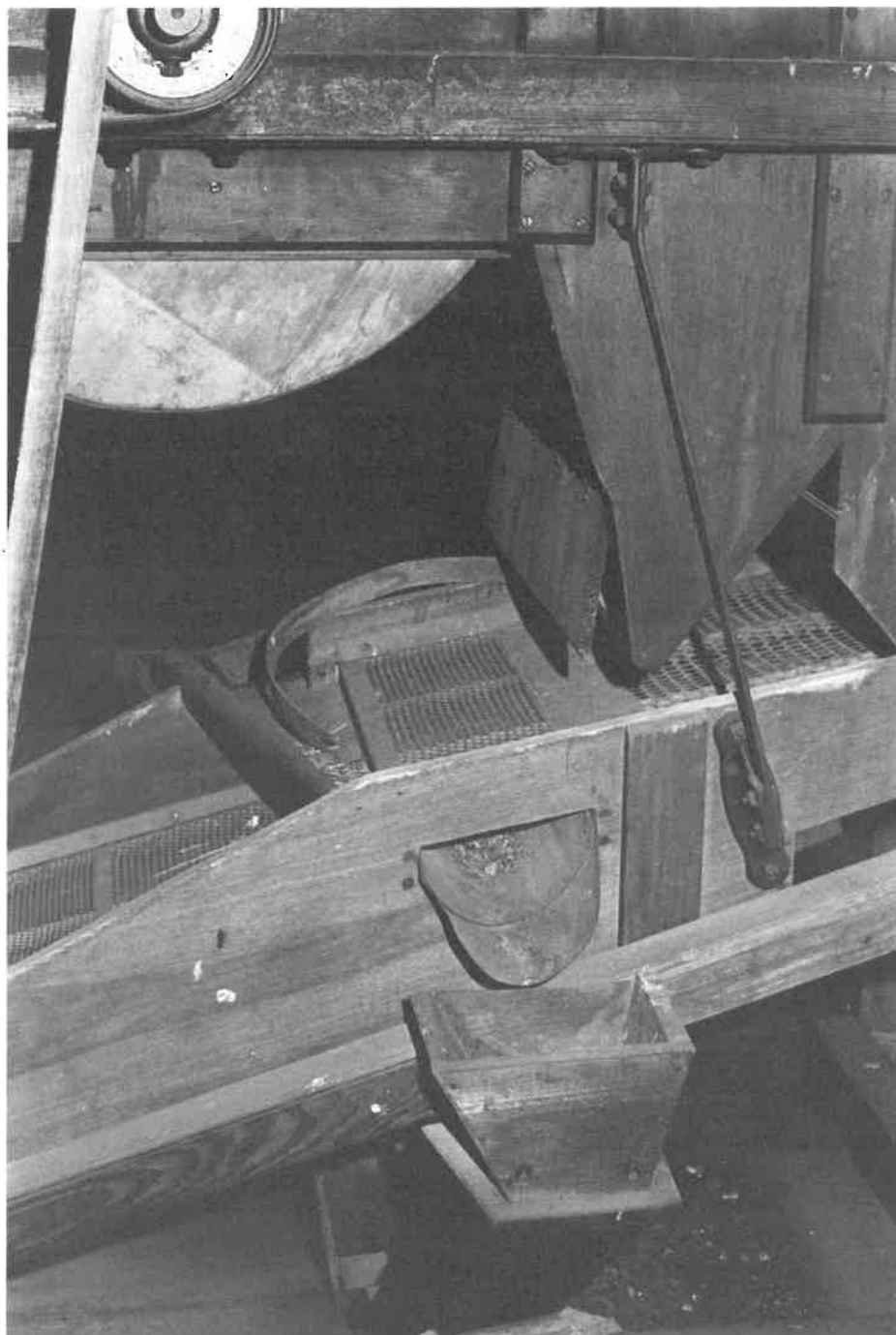
"We need a president who will take care of the people in the United States instead of sending millions to other countries. When we feed our own people first, then we'll have a good country," Hoover figures.

Hoover was baptized in the old Propst Church and belongs to the

local Lutheran Church. "I don't know about heaven. There must be something after death. It never bothers me at all. When He calls me, I'm ready to go. I've had a good life and a clean life. The Lord has been good to me. I've never been sick."

He was in a car accident two years ago and broke a leg and two ribs. He

This grain cleaner is part of the machinery at Hoover Mill. It represents the ingenious technology of a simpler time.



told the ambulance driver that he was 98 years old. "The ambulance driver said I was out of my head," he chuckles.

"When I was healed and ready to leave the hospital, the doctor came in and said, 'Mr. Hoover, your X-rays indicate that your leg and ribs are healed. Now you can tell us the real truth about your age.'"

"They wouldn't believe me!" Hoover says. "They took blood out of my arm to run research to see how I stay so young. I can tell them," this centenarian croons softly. "Leave whiskey, cigars and dope alone, if you want your life to be your own!" ❖

Andy Ayers and Ed Alt were residents of the Smoke Hole. Photographer unknown, possibly 1930's.

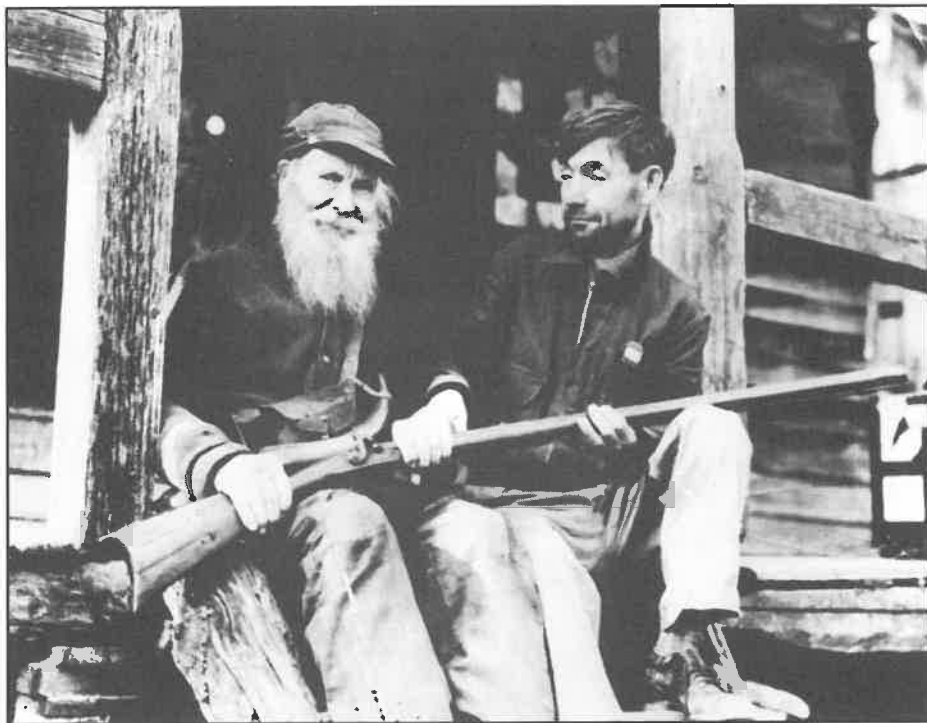
The Smoke Hole

The Smoke Hole is a special place, a spectacular canyon gouged out by the South Branch of the Potomac as it makes its way from Pendleton toward Grant County. The area was inaccessible historically and remains largely so today. It developed the reputation as a place of refuge, sometimes a sanctuary for those living a little outside the law and for others who simply didn't want to be bothered.

Local people often add an "s" to the name, referring to the "Smoke Holes." Singular or plural, it is an out of the way locality. "You had to walk in or take a horse," says Estyl Shreve, who was born and raised there and is currently doing research on a book about the Smoke Hole. "That way you could be spotted. It was just as hard getting out!"

The Smoke Hole was a popular moonshine area. Moonshiners could set up a still in a cave and cover the entrance. They could use a ravine and cover the still with a roof of branches or pull living saplings over and tie them down. The little trees would continue to grow and the living roof would blend with the landscape. Others would hide their stills in the center of a thick laurel grove, under the branches of a large spruce tree or under a fallen tree over a gully. These camouflages also worked well in later years when planes were used by the federal revenuers looking for the tax-evading liquor.

Instead of a more permanent stone furnace around a copper pot, Smoke Hole moonshiners sometimes used a



plain copper kettle set in an iron tripod. A wooden barrel would be fitted into the copper kettle, leaving space for steam. "A lead-out pipe went from that barrel to a copper worm inside another wooden barrel that had cold water circulating inside it [and around the worm] to turn the steam into liquid," Shreve says. "The coil would extend outside the second barrel, allowing the liquid to be caught in jugs. All the pipes and kettles had to be copper so that the drinker would not get sick from the liquor.

"The clever thing about this type of still is that once it was broken down and disassembled, the parts were innocent — just a copper kettle like you'd use to make apple butter and some common old barrels," Shreve says.

Smoke was a problem until the fire grew hot enough to give off just waves of heat. Most moonshiners would start the fire just before dawn so that by daylight the smoke was not visible. "Most folks in the Smoke Hole had smoke houses to treat their meat, so smoke was a common occurrence there," Shreve says.

"When they were making a batch of liquor someone with a sheep [bell] or small cowbell would stand guard on a hill to watch for intruders. If they saw someone coming, they would gently

ring the bell like a cow would do if it were moving and grazing. That way, the moonshiners would get away even though the revenuers might find and break up the still. I've seen flowers growing in yards up there in what was left of the big copper still kettles," local historian Johnny Arvin Dahmer says.

"The moonshiners could be dangerous. This was their livelihood, and they were willing to fight," he adds. "One time a federal agent caught some moonshiners in the act. 'Did anyone see you come in?' they asked. 'No,' he said. 'Well, nobody is going to see you come out!' It scared him so bad that he left and didn't do anything to them," Dahmer says.

"There's a story about a revenue officer who found liquor in a bottle in a house and arrested the husband. His wife got the bottle, poured out the moonshine and replaced it with the contents of her chamber pot. This was discovered during court and the judge got mad at the revenue officer. 'Aren't you in the habit of tasting what you bring in for evidence?' the judge is supposed to have asked the embarrassed revenue officer.

"I wonder how they found out it wasn't the original moonshine," Johnny Dahmer inquires with a laugh.

—Joan Ashley



"In Steel and Song"

The Wheeling Steel Radio Show

By John Cuthbert

The Steele Sisters — Lois Mae Nolte, Harriet Drake, and Lucille Bell — went on the road after their debut on the Steel Show. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.



The group photo shows a publicist's idea of how singing steelmakers might have gathered for rehearsal, lunch boxes, thermoses and all. Harrison Frey appears in the old photograph, with sandwich, and in the recent portrait.



The blast of the Wheeling Steel mill whistle was a pervasive sound in the upper Ohio Valley during the late 1930's and early 1940's. Its call punctuated each working day, summoning thousands of employees to the workplace and marking time for everyone within earshot.

The whistle had an entirely different meaning to those living beyond the confines of the valley. To millions of radio fans across America the whistle's call was a summons to entertainment, a shrill prelude to one of the nation's most popular radio programs: "It's Wheeling Steel, Featuring the Musical Steelmakers."

Billed as the "original employee family broadcast," the program began as an experiment in commercial advertising and employee relations. About 1930, Wheeling Steel's advertising director, John L. Grimes, speculated that it would be cheaper for the company to produce a weekly half-hour radio program for a month than to take a single back cover advertisement in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Grimes was not the first corporate executive to recognize the advertising

potential of radio. Corporate sponsorship of popular programs was firmly established by the 1930's. Many large corporations sponsored national half-hour shows like "Stop Me If You've Heard This One," with Milton Berle (Quaker Oats); "The Jello Program," starring Jack Benny (General Foods); and "Town Hall Tonight," with Fred Allen, Portland Hoffa, and Peter Van Steedan's Orchestra (Bristol Myers).

Smaller companies and organizations sponsored programs which aired locally in cities throughout the country. In Wheeling, the Stogie Makers Union sponsored a musical program which was broadcast for 13 weeks over WWVA in 1932. The program ran an additional 13 weeks under the sponsorship of the Marsh Tobacco Company.

But the program that Grimes had in mind had one fundamental difference from other corporate broadcasts. Instead of merely financing performances by professional entertainers, Grimes proposed to feature the company from start to finish. Wheeling Steel would provide not just the sponsorship of the musical variety show, but the talent as well. Central to

his idea was the participation of the company's huge "family" of employees and their relations in providing low-cost amateur entertainment.

Grimes's plan initially met with skepticism. Several company officials questioned the effectiveness of radio in advertising products other than home consumables like toothpaste and oatmeal. Others had no desire to see Wheeling Steel go into show business. The tremendous growth of radio during the 1930's and the popularity of musical performances that Grimes incorporated in other company advertising activities eventually changed their minds.

Grimes finally received approval for his plan during the summer of 1936. A contract was signed to broadcast the show over Wheeling's WWVA which was already well known for its "Jamboree" country music program.

Aided by WWVA program director Pat Patterson, Grimes's first job was to assemble an orchestra. Affiliation with Wheeling Steel was not initially required of orchestra members, though like the majority of Wheeling area residents, most local musicians

John Grimes, Wheeling Steel's advertising director, was the man behind the radio show. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy West Virginia and Regional History Collection.

had at least one relative who worked for the company.

John Grimes simply sought to engage the best talent available. His pool of applicants included mature musicians who had worked in theater and movie house orchestras before the introduction of the talkies, as well as a younger generation of dance band performers. After a lengthy series of auditions a group of 16 was selected, including several veterans of the earlier stogie shows.

As the orchestra rehearsed, the search was begun for employee "headliners" — soloists and ensembles — who would provide the amateur and family flavor to the show. Employees "flocked in by the hundreds" to audition, according to a later article in the *New York Times*. Among the first "stars" to emerge were "The Musketeers" (a mixed quartet comprised of tin mill worker Walter Shane, pipe mill clerk William Griffiths, and employee relatives Alice Foulk and Ethel Cheek), and a "singing stenographer" named Sarah Rehm.

"It's Wheeling Steel" made its debut at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 8, 1936, from WWVA's studio on the top floor of the Hawley Building. With the cooperation of WPAY in Portsmouth, Ohio, the program reached listeners up and down the Ohio Valley. The show's content consisted primarily of standard light classics, popular songs and show tunes, all performed from published arrangements, as well as advertising often presented in the form of anecdotes about the people, history and contributions of the Wheeling Steel Company. WWVA's Pat Patter-

son served as the program's first master of ceremonies.

As Grimes had predicted, "It's Wheeling Steel" caught on quickly with local listeners, especially with the Wheeling Steel family. Employees began to refer to the program as "our

show." Even listeners who were not affiliated with Wheeling Steel felt a kinship to the program due to its local origins and its homey nature. Grimes responded by placing an even greater emphasis on the show's family slant as time passed.



Steel Show Recordings

When "It's Wheeling Steel" was discontinued in 1944 disk recordings of program rehearsals and broadcasts were placed in storage in a company warehouse. Over time, the location and even the existence of this collection were gradually forgotten by all but a few former cast members.

Due primarily to the efforts of ex-performers Baird Kloss and Harrison Frey, and Mr. Frey's son James, and with the assistance of John Sneddon, manager of operations of Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel, the recordings have now been recovered. They were donated to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection at West Virginia University in 1991.

The old disks were made of glass or aluminum cores covered by what appears to be an acetate

emulsion. Upon initial examination, university curators discovered that time and nature have taken their toll on the fragile recordings.

They found problems with the core which supports the recording and problems with the emulsion into which the recording is engraved. Core problems include warping, cracking and, in a few cases, breakage. Emulsion problems are generally more prevalent. They include flaking or crazing of the emulsion, both presumably resulting from a loss of adherence to the core. All of the recordings are in need of cleaning.

An extensive job lays ahead for West Virginia Collection staff who plan not only to preserve but also to disseminate this fascinating episode in West Virginia's broadcast history.

— John Cuthbert

The program was broadcast from the WWVA studio for only the first year. In search of a larger facility, with better acoustics and a live audience, the show moved first to the Scottish Rite Cathedral and later to the Market Auditorium, before finding a permanent home at the Capitol Theater in 1939.

During the show's second season, "It's Wheeling Steel" was billed as an all-employee broadcast for the first time. The role of company headliners was augmented, and arranger Maury Longfellow was engaged to prepare original music. Grimes also sought to

notable were a trio of high school girls billed as the "Steele Sisters," and a quartet of "Singing Millmen." Also introduced was a series of "capsule classics" which familiarized listeners with the great works of classical music through two-minute condensed versions arranged by Maury Longfellow.

Family connections aside, most orchestra members were unionized professionals. According to *Time* magazine each received a weekly salary of \$38 by 1939. The salary rose eventually to \$65. All other performers were considered amateurs, though

bigger challenges. Persuading the company to purchase a half-hour test slot on the Mutual Broadcasting System, Grimes groomed his production for coast-to-coast fame. On January 2, 1938, the sound of the Musical Steelmakers was heard from Maine to California.

The results of the national debut exceeded even Grimes's expectations. The program became an overnight sensation. Within days *Life* magazine dispatched photographer Alfred Eisenstadt to Wheeling to capture the essence of the new phenomenon in a pictorial feature juxtaposing photos of



Over 3,000 members of the "Wheeling Steel family" auditioned annually for amateur appearances on the show. This group was photographed about 1938. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia and Regional History Collection.

firm up the employee connections of the orchestra. Musicians with no link to the company either found or were assigned one. A harpist recruited in Iowa received a position in the advertising department along with her invitation to join the show, as did the program's second singing stenographer, Regina Colbert, who signed on in 1938. The season premiere on September 12, 1937, featured saxophonist Verdi Howells who Pat Patterson noted was "employed in the machine shop of the Yorkville works."

In ensuing weeks a succession of talented amateur headliners appeared. Several came back again and again by popular demand. Especially

they did receive modest payment for their participation. Headliners like the Singing Millmen generally received \$10 to \$20 per week over their regular wage, with no time off for rehearsals. The Steele Sisters received approximately \$5 to \$10 per broadcast. The result was a most economical program. *Time* noted that while other half-hour network musical shows cost as much as \$15,000 per week, "It's Wheeling Steel" ran about \$3,500, \$2,500 of which was spent on purchasing air time.

The show's popularity grew steadily as the second season progressed. By December, with the local listeners in his pocket, Grimes was ready for

cast members in the mill and on the stage. Reviews soon appeared in *Radio Guide*, *Billboard*, and *Variety*. And in the months that followed, "It's Wheeling Steel" became a fixture on MBS. As its fame and popularity grew, so did the quality of the show's performances.

During the 1938-39 season arranger Lew Davies joined the show. A native of Ashland, Kentucky, Davies was a graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Having worked with the Tommy Tucker Band, Davies brought the Steelmakers Orchestra to the cutting edge of the big band sound. Band leaders like Tucker, Glenn Miller and others placed their

The Steel Show broadcast from the WVU field house on May 9, 1943, in a special wartime fund-raiser. As the ad said (far right) the idea was for Monongalia County to buy a bomber. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia and Regional History Collection.

original arrangements, and sometimes their singers, at the show's disposal. Paul Whiteman and Henry Busse offered their services as guest conductors. Robert Shaw dropped by to coach the chorus.

In addition to an ever-changing slate of employee headliners who sang, whistled or accordioned their way to fame each week, a number of new "stars" emerged during the 1938-39 season. Among the most talented were soprano soloists Dorothy Anne Crow and Margaret Ellen Smith, tenor Arden White, and Regina Colbert, who later teamed up with Harrison Frey, Paul Jones and Russell Howard to form the quartet "Jean and Her Boyfriends." During the spring of 1939 the Evans Sisters — Betty Jane, Margaret June, and Janet — replaced the Steele Sisters, who were invited on an extended tour with Horace Heidt and his Brigadiers.

Another 1938-39 addition was 62-year-old payroll manager John Wincholl, who was introduced to listeners as an "old-timer of pure Scottish strain." Wincholl replaced Pat Patterson as master of ceremonies and before long "The Old-Timer's"



crisp burr became one of the most recognized voices in America.

The show's following on the Mutual network continued to grow. *Radio Guide* noted that the program's network carriers had increased to 23 stations in October 1938. *Time* magazine placed the number at 27 nine months later.

The *Time* article was prompted by a momentous event in the early history of the show, a season finale broadcast

live from the Court of Peace at the New York World's Fair on Sunday, June 25, 1939. Dedicated to West Virginia Day at the fair which had occurred on June 20th, the performance drew a record live audience of over 26,000. The cast was officially welcomed to the city by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, and hailed as the pride of the Mountain State by West Virginia Governor Homer A. Holt.

Several weeks later, in honor of the

West Virginia Again Broadcasting Nationally

More than a half-century after the Mutual Network carried the Wheeling Steel program to Americans coast to coast, West Virginia has another hit national radio show. Each week "Mountain Stage" is broadcast by 115 stations across the United States from Alaska to Florida.

The two-hour weekly program, distributed by American Public Radio, originates at the Cultural Center in Charleston where it is recorded live before an audience. It showcases both established performers and innovative new artists. Host Larry Groce, a singer-song-writer, acts also as artistic director and co-producer. "We don't want everything on the show," he

says. "Some of the things that are ruled out immediately are all the pop music types."

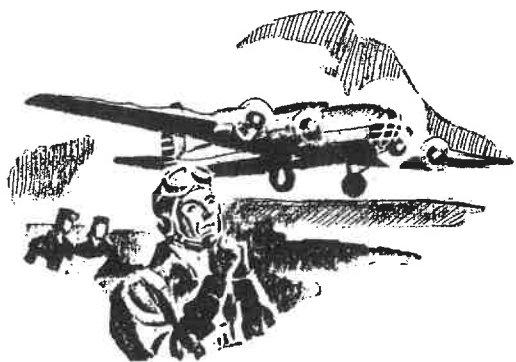
What is included are all kinds of traditional music and the contemporary folk music of various cultures. Listeners are treated to blues, ethnic, old-time, bluegrass, country, folk, jazz, alternative, and international music. West Virginia musicians are featured from time to time.

Groce credits executive producer Andy Ridenour with dreaming up the concept. "We did a pilot in 1981 but we didn't actually start producing shows until December of 1983," he says. "Mountain Stage" went statewide in 1984 and national in 1986.

The Mountain Stage Band and the Fabulous Twister Sisters (violinist Deni Bonet and vocalist Julie Adams) back up the show's weekly guests and provide theme and transitional music throughout each broadcast. The band members are bassist John Kessler, pianist Bob Thompson, percussionist Ammed Solomon, and guitarists Ron Sowell and Michael Lipton.

The Cultural Center doors open at 1:00 p.m. Sundays and the theater opens at 2:30 p.m. when Ridenour begins warming up the live radio audience. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$3 for children under 12. Advance tickets are available at TicketMaster locations or by calling (304)342-5757.

WILL YOU HELP MONONGALIA COUNTY BUY A BOMBER?



**\$300,000
WILL DO IT!**

*Let's Show Our Boys That We
Are Behind Them 100%... That
We Are Fighting With Them!*

approached its summit, the company's need to promote its wares was virtually eliminated. On Sunday, December 7, 1941, "It's Wheeling Steel" was broadcast as usual from the Capitol Theater in Wheeling. Only at the conclusion of the show did the cast and audience learn that the broadcast had been pre-empted nationally by news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

For the next several years Wheeling Steel had an open contract with the United States government to manufacture essential items for the war, including steel mats for landing strips, fins and carrier bands for bombs, and all manner of its famous "Red Label" pails, tubs and garbage cans.

High level discussions within the company debated the future of "It's Wheeling Steel." Some executives favored cancellation or at least suspension of the program. Others, with a greater appreciation of the broad esteem that the company had gained through the show, felt an obligation to continue the program and dedicate it to supporting the war.

The latter camp won, and for the next several years the Musical Steelmakers projected a patriotic image of productive workers contributing to the war effort "in steel and song." Company advertisements were suspended and the Old-Timer

radio program's many triumphs, Wheeling Mayor John J. Mathison declared September 12, 1939, "It's Wheeling Steel" Day in Wheeling. According to one reporter, "the entire town turned out" to fete the Steel-makers with parades, exhibitions and various awards honoring the recognition that they had brought to the city.

After two more seasons as one of the most successful programs on the

Mutual network, "It's Wheeling Steel" jumped to the larger NBC Blue Network in October 1941. The show's carriers increased to over 50 stations and its audience swelled into the millions. Grimes's most ambitious predictions had come true. Company morale soared and Wheeling Steel had become "public pals" with America.

Ironically, however, just as the program's advertising potential

"Mountain Stage" may be heard throughout West Virginia and neighboring states. In Virginia it airs on Sundays at 2:00 p.m. on WVTU Charlottesville, 89.3, WVTR Marion, 91.9, and WVTF Roanoke, 89.1. WYEP Pittsburgh, 91.3, airs the show Sundays at 3:00. "Mountain Stage" is heard on West Virginia FM radio stations WVPB Beckley, 91.7; WVPW Buckhannon, 88.9; WVPN Charleston 88.5; WVWV Huntington, 89.9; WVEP Martinsburg, 88.9; WVPM Morgantown, 90.9; WVPG Parkersburg, 90.3, and WVNP Wheeling, 89.9, at 3:00 p.m. on Sundays. Rebroadcasts of earlier shows are aired Saturday nights at 6:00 p.m. In Pocahontas County WVMR-AM Dunmore, 1370, carries "Mountain Stage" at 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays.



Steve Berlin of the band Los Lobos plays the keyboard with host Larry Groce at the microphone at a recent "Mountain Stage." Photo by David Fattaleh.



Violinist Earl Summers, vocalist Harrison Frey, and trumpeter Baird Kloss are among "It's Wheeling Steel" alumni still residing in the Wheeling area. Photo by Michael Keller.

began to plug war bonds instead. The show went on tour, broadcasting live before crowds of servicemen and performing special bond benefit programs.

A series of "Buy a Bomber" shows were broadcast nationally from selected West Virginia cities during the spring of 1943. Host communities were challenged to buy enough bonds to purchase a medium bomber at \$175,000, or better yet, a Flying Fortress at \$300,000. The planes would go into battle bearing the benefactor city's name. Programs in Parkersburg, Clarksburg, and Fairmont all handily exceeded their goals. The final program of the series, broadcast live from the West Virginia University field house in Morgantown, generated an amazing \$663,000.

By mid-1943 "It's Wheeling Steel" had risen in popularity to fifth among all of the shows of the NBC lineup. In addition to airing over 84 American radio stations, the show was beamed overseas and into the trenches by shortwave.

Letters addressed to the Old-Timer poured in from grateful servicemen around the globe. One G.I. pondered, "I wonder if all of you know how it made a lonesome man feel, somewhere in the Pacific, when he heard

the Steelmakers come over the air Sunday night?" Another writer, a Wheeling native, marveled at the proliferation of Wheeling Steel products he encountered daily: "Can't get away from that old Red Label. They have several pails and G.I. cans right here in camp. When I tell them that I'm from Wheeling they invariably say, 'Oh yes, that's where that radio program comes from.'"

When "It's Wheeling Steel" entered its eighth season on September 26, 1943, over a 97-station network, the show was at the height of its popularity. The eighth season, however, was to be its last. Surviving cast members offer various explanations, but all agree that a major factor was the decline in health of John Grimes, always the driving force behind the show. The final program, the 326th "original family broadcast," aired on June 18, 1944.

The show left its mark on popular entertainment. A considerable number of Musical Steelmakers went on to significant careers in music and broadcasting. Lew Davies found employment writing arrangements for Perry Como's "Chesterfield Hour," which was broadcast live from New York's famous Chesterfield Club. When the club closed Davies

was hired by bandleader and recording industry mogul Enoch Light to help launch Command Records, the first high-quality stereo record label to hit the market. Davies wrote arrangements for Command stars Tony Mattola, Doc Severinson and many others.

During the early 1950's Lawrence Welk asked Davies to assist him in developing a music variety program for television. Steel Show alumni contend that the Welk show's format and family orientation were directly descended from "It's Wheeling Steel."

Many more Steelmakers found positions with big bands and symphony orchestras. Drummer Eddie Johnston joined the Henry Busse band. Tenor saxophonist John Olszowy signed on with Tommy Tucker. Ernie Mauro played lead alto sax for Benny Goodman. Trombonist Mal Stevens performed successively with Ted Fiorito, Franky Masters and Fred Waring. Violinist Earl Summers formed a band of his own (which included several other former Steelmakers) and later held first violin and concert master chairs with the region's leading symphonic orchestras, including the Wheeling and Columbus symphonies and the Pittsburgh Ballet and Light Opera.

Other cast members had relatively brief but significant engagements which transcended the show. Regina Colbert and Sarah Rehm made brief appearances on network programs, in New York and Chicago, respectively. Child star Carolyn Lee went to Hollywood and starred in a movie with Fred MacMurray and Madeline Carroll. Most if not all of the steelmakers performed locally on an occasional or regular basis for many years.

Looking back, it's clear that "It's Wheeling Steel" was an experiment, not only in corporate relations and industrial advertising but in commercial broadcasting and popular music programming as well. Contemporary critics and broadcasters were impressed by the results. "Accepted chain commercial broadcasting practice was upset...and industrial advertising history was made," wrote radio pioneer George W. Smith, "when men of steel became men of entertainment for 30 minutes each Sunday afternoon." ❀

Of Steel and Stock:

Taking Over at Weirton

One Worker's Perspective

By Jack Welch

Photographs by Michael Keller

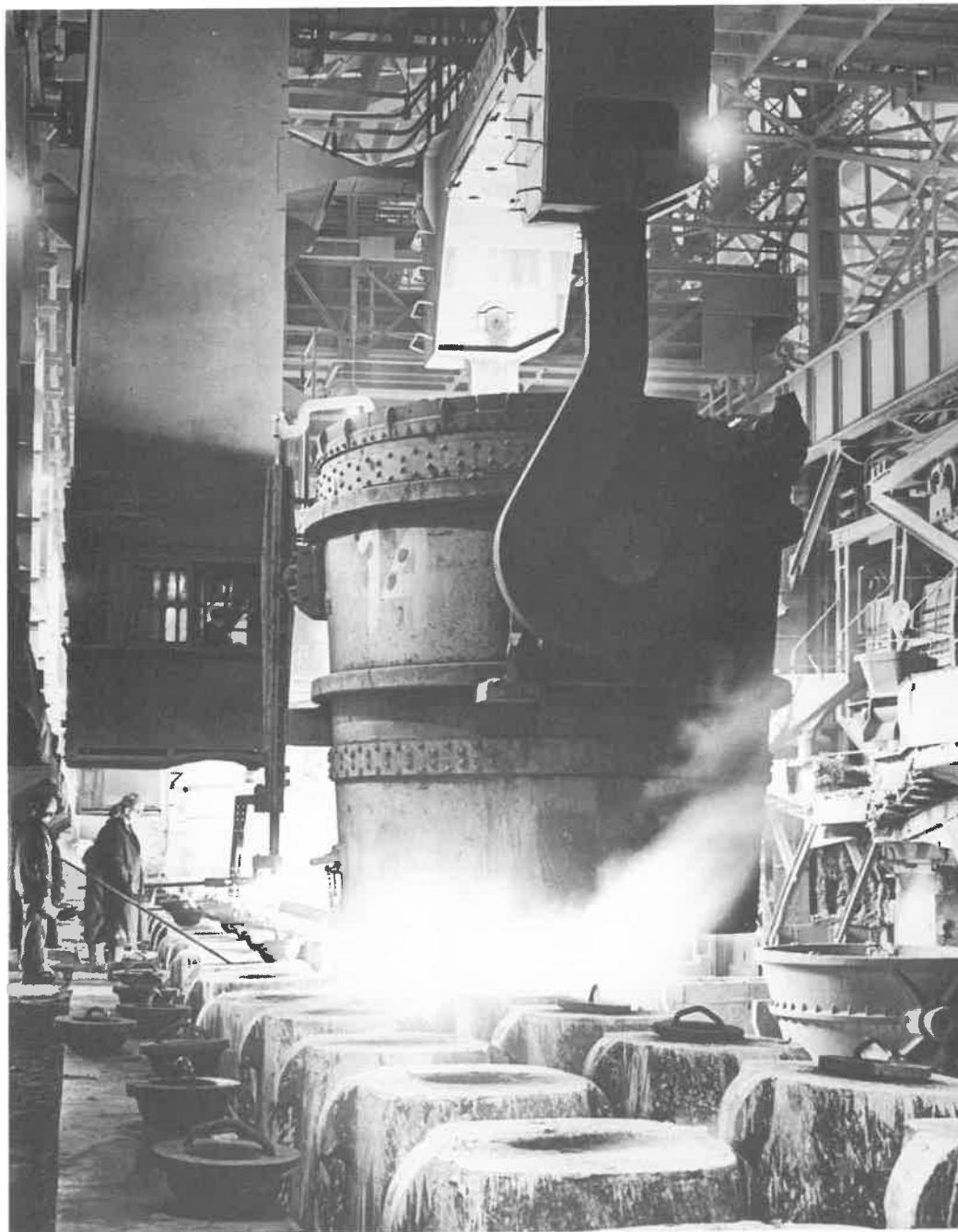
While Wheeling Steel, now Wheeling-Pittsburgh, continued in the old tradition of workers working, bosses bossing, and stockholders owning the place, something different happened at the neighboring steelmaker to the north. Weirton Steel Company's parent corporation announced on March 2, 1982, that it was no longer willing to sink money into the Northern Panhandle plant. The workers at the mill and the residents of the town of Weirton were stunned.

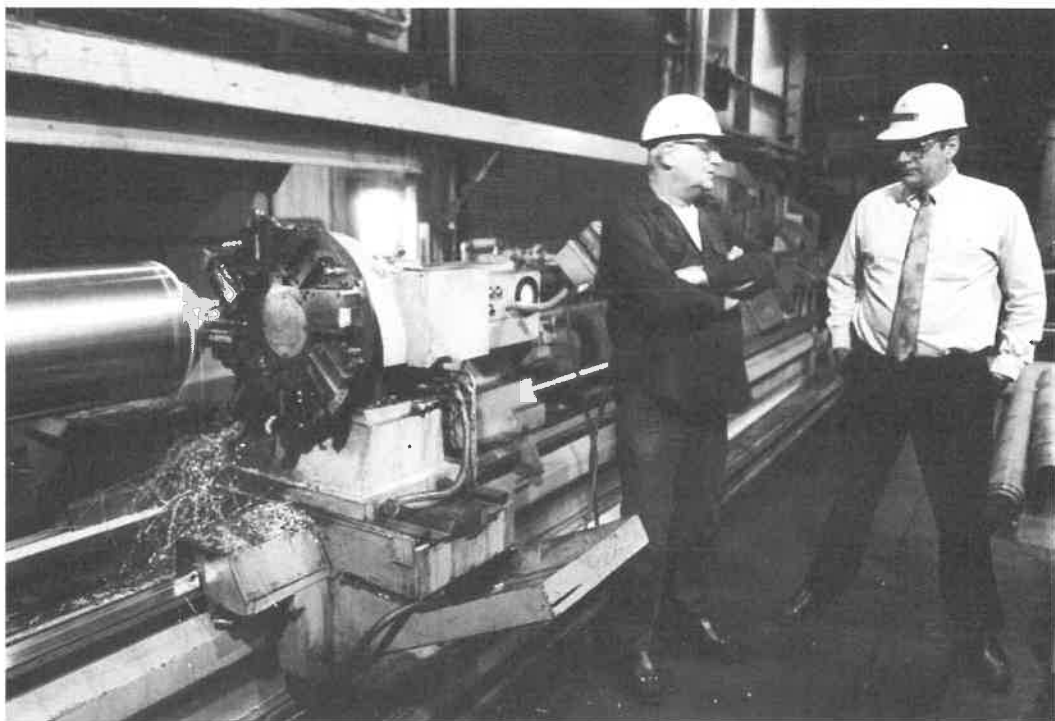
Jack Harris, who began working for Weirton Steel in 1967 and whose father and two grandfathers also had worked for the company, reacted like the others. "I was scared and nervous," he says, "afraid of losing house, car, and job." Jack had worked in the cold mill, in tandem mill production, and in the central machine shop, and felt he had a big stake in the company.

The steel industry in the nation was undergoing a major downturn and the chances of Weirton Steel being bought by another company were low. The workers' only hope was to buy the company themselves. If their plan was successful, it would be the largest employee buy-out in the country.

"The union and some management people put together a long list of requirements," Jack remembers. "Most of these cut into my paycheck — a per-hour pay cut, loss of over half of our holidays, loss of extended vacations." The date of September 23,

Heavy metal is Weirton Steel's business. This photograph from the mid-1970's shows workers pouring steel from the overhead ladle to the molds below. Photographer unknown, courtesy Weirton Steel.





Jack Harris (right) returns to the machine shop, his former workplace at the plant. Lucian Anderson is milling the large roller at left.

1983, was set for the workers to vote on ESOP — the Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

Cash had to be raised to pay for consultants and for the team of lawyers who were to draw up the agreements. "The workers and the community united as never before," Jack recalls. "I wore a green ribbon to symbolize my support for the buy-out, and I still have it." Parades were held and fundraising activities occurred. "One of the things they had was the food festival," Jack remembers. This was so popular that it has continued as the annual International Food Festival, with many ethnic groups participating each summer.

Many in Weirton will remember the first telethon on February 20, 1983. Twenty-two thousand families participated, and the goal of \$100,000 was exceeded by more than \$25,000. Then there was the "We Can Do It" parade of July 4, 1983. Jack was mayor of New Cumberland, the Hancock County seat just north of Weirton on the Ohio River, and his town as well as many other Weirton Steel communities sent units for the parade.

Life inside the plant began to change. Television sets appeared all over the mill with short broadcasts entitled "News and Views," Jack

recalls. "They interviewed different people to explain stock options or how ESOP would work. This news program is still in operation in the mill, and I still stop and watch it."

He remembers that most people had a positive attitude toward the buy-out, but that some were doubtful. "The nay sayers said we never would have control."

"I was scared and nervous," he says, "afraid of losing house, car, and job."

Jack and thousands of other employees voted on September 23, while the community anxiously watched and the international media stood by. Would these workers who represented generations of men and women who mainly took orders from above in exchange for good wages choose to reduce their wages and holidays and take charge themselves? The answer was yes, by a margin of seven to one.

Under the plan, workers at Weirton Steel received stock allocated in their

name and based on wages and length of service. This stock was not to be sold for five years. A profit-sharing rate of 33 percent was to be implemented when the corporation reached a net worth of \$150,000,000. When \$250,000,000 is reached, the profit sharing will be 50 percent. However, the profit-sharing plan did not provide enough capital for modernization, so 20 percent of one stock was offered publicly and more than \$500,000,000 was borrowed. A second round of ESOP stock was issued so that the new workers could also own a portion of the plant.

Once the buy-out was complete, important changes began. "The president of ESOP," Jack recalls, "had to open up a line of communications with the working man." He means that literally. Every worker at Weirton Steel has access to a telephone which will put him in touch with the company president. "The hot line is for a major complaint," Jack says. "This complaint must be answered by the president."

Moreover, the white-collar managers now come into the mill and talk to workers on the job. Most visits are informal, but formal in-plant meetings are scheduled months in advance for individual areas such as the machine shop. "The manager usually begins with a ten-minute speech," Jack says. "The workers' questions follow. I've asked questions, and there are always good answers."

The heart of the new system, from Jack's point of view, is participation. "When we first went to ESOP we started several programs of participating-style management," he says. If a problem is perceived, a "change team" is organized to make suggestions for its solution. A follow-up evaluation will determine whether or not the problem has been solved.

"As time passed, more and more participated," Jack recalls, "and this worked well. But, no one likes to change. Routines have to change. Not everybody likes this, but there is a lot of change at Weirton Steel, and we will see a lot more."

The new Weirton Steel Corporation is focusing on quality. "We're competing with other people in the industry," Jack says, thinking like a businessman, "and the name of the game is quality. If we don't produce

the best quality, we will not have customers."

When asked what he would say to his father and grandfathers concerning working conditions in the new Weirton Steel, Jack says, "I'd tell them that work habits change — a job is not just a place to go to work. You have to

"You don't just go and put in time. You have to do more than that. You own the mill."

be a part of the mill. You help make decisions. The management that you used to dislike, now you help them and create and participate in the decision-making process."

But suppose his hard-working ancestors were to say that participatory management is too much trouble?

Jack responds, "If you think this is trouble, you probably don't have a future in the new Weirton Steel. You don't just go and put in time. You have to do more than that. You own the mill. You can't take advantage of anything any more. It's your pocket-book."

Eight consecutive quarters of profits were reached by December 31, 1985. Profits in 1985 were \$61 million on sales of \$1.2 billion. The first profit-sharing checks were distributed March 14, 1986, with employees sharing about \$20 million. The average check was for \$2,500. The Weirton Steel Corporation began trading on the New York Stock Exchange on June 14, 1989, at an opening price of \$14.50 per share. It

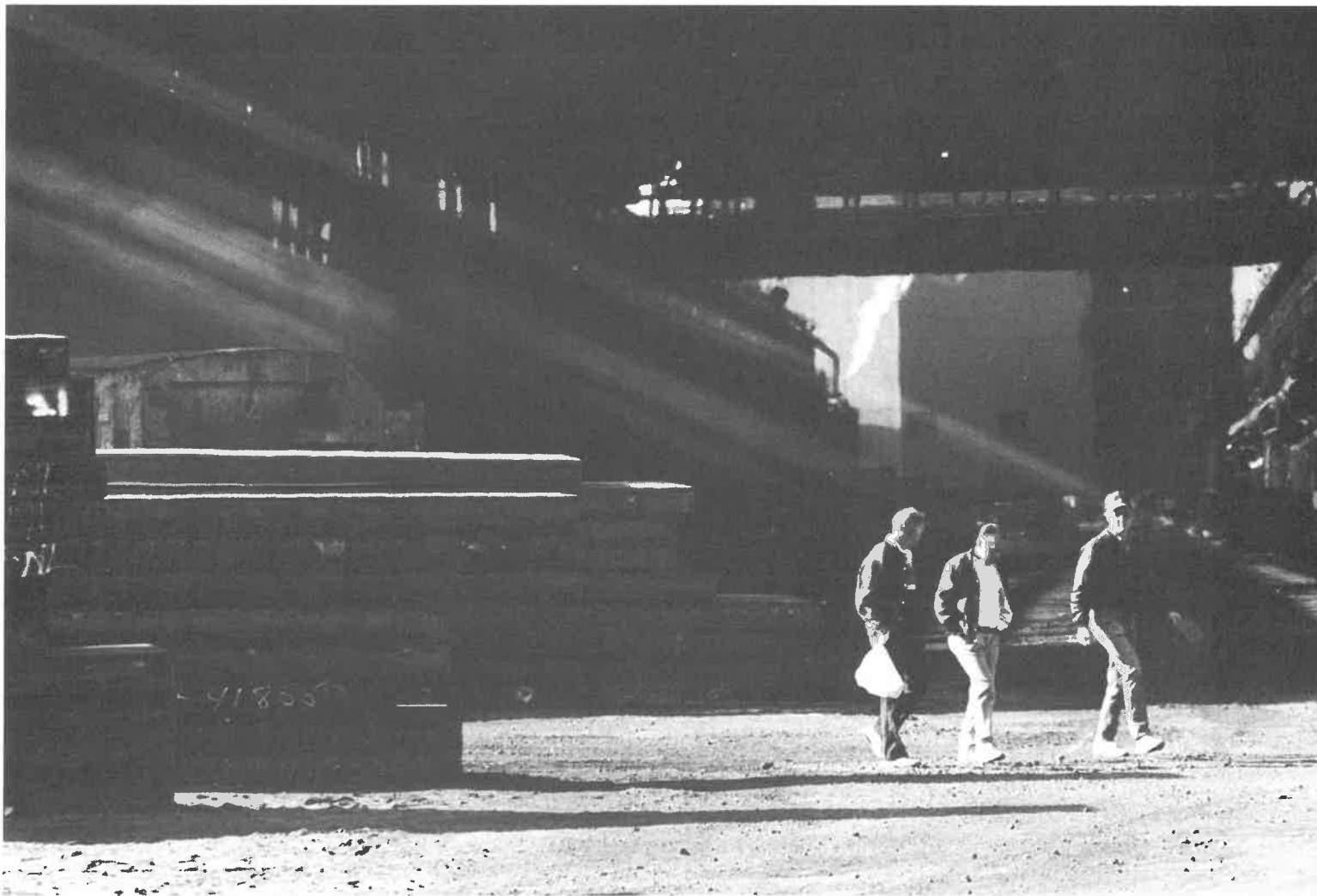
closed the day above \$15, with nearly 1.3 million shares changing hands.

But the struggle is far from over. Stock of the nation's 10th-largest steel producer fell substantially in 1991, making it difficult to generate equity to finance improvements. This drop was due to overcapacity in the world's steel market, which pushed prices down.

Jack Harris and the others at Weirton Steel have watched these recent developments with the old concern of workers and the new concern of owners. Which feeling predominates?

Jack is candid about this. When he tops the hill on West Virginia Route 2 and looks down into the vast, clanging mill, "I still don't have a sense of ownership, but I do feel that I am participating in how it's run," he says. "We understand that it's a big struggle." ❖

They own the place today, but Weirton Steel's workers will still tell you it's a hard day's work.



"It was a dirty, rotten job, and most people didn't look favorably upon females going out on their own to learn anything."

Young Nurses Long Ago

Fairmont's Cook Hospital Training School

By Raymond Alvarez
Photographs by Michael Keller

When Dr. John Cook founded his Fairmont hospital at the turn of the century, one of his ambitions was to educate nurses to serve the community. The first class enrolled in 1900 and the Cook Hospital and Training School Company graduated its first nurses in 1902.

Among the women to pass through the program within a few years were two daughters of the Baker family from Pullman, a rural hamlet near Pennsboro in Ritchie County. The first family graduate was Loutricia Baker in 1915. Sister Draxie completed her training in 1923.

After graduating from Pullman High School, niece Wanieta Wyke came to Cook in 1931. Wanieta completed her nursing education in 1934.

As student nurses, Draxie and Loutricia were assigned all types of hospital duties and menial labor, including scrubbing floors and working in the laundry. They worked 12 hours, seven days a week, with a few hours off each day. Wanieta's experiences were similar to those of her aunts, although the menial tasks had lessened somewhat by the '30's.

Draxie's daughter Connie Caravasos, herself a nurse at Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, recently reflected on the careers of her mother and her Aunt Loutricia.

"My mother told me about her student nursing days," Mrs. Caravasos said. "The students were required to do all sorts of hard work. I know that Mom scrubbed floors and cooked specialty diets. When they

were in the operating room, they had to go in at 4:30 in the morning and build fires to get the pressure up in the autoclaves. They hand washed the linen from the OR before it went to the laundry."

Draxie and Loutricia wore floor-length starched uniforms, Mrs. Caravasos said. "They wore long sleeves summer and winter. Loutricia made their uniforms out of cotton. My mother's job was to wash, starch and iron them." The nursing students were issued official hospital cuff links to be worn at all times.

Nursing was not a respected occupation during this period, according to Mrs. Caravasos. "Nursing was something where you went to live in a dorm with others and were trained on the job. It was a dirty, rotten job, and most people didn't look favorably upon females going out on their own to learn anything," she stated. Since the costs of the training were low, with room and board provided, nursing appealed to women who wanted career training but could not afford college.

Loutricia and Draxie found there were few opportunities for long-term employment once out of school. At the time, most RN's were faced with "private duty" nursing as a means of livelihood. Hospitals did not provide the extensive nursing care we know today. Private duty nurses worked directly for the patient, in the hospital or at home. The availability of cheap student nurses lessened the need to employ nurses in hospitals.

Private duty had its drawbacks, Mrs. Caravasos said. "When you did private duty nursing and lived with a family, you had to cook and do other chores for the family if they were all sick." In some cases, the in-home nursing could last for many months. Hospital private duty lasted as long as the patient was hospitalized.

Loutricia was a founding member and officer of the Cook Hospital Alumnae Association, which organized the year she completed training. Later married, Loutricia Baker Hall moved to Clarksburg when Cook Hospital closed. She continued her career in Harrison County for many years.

While Draxie completed her training in 1923, a nursing supervisor held up her board approval for several years in order to keep Draxie working as a student. The nursing licensing program had been established in West Virginia in 1907, but the examination process was decentralized. Part of the nursing board exams were administered at the training program by the nursing instructors.

"One nurse supervisor at Cook Hospital flunked her," Connie Caravasos said. "People from your own training school graded the tests. This nurse knew if Mom passed her boards, she would leave and go into private duty. To prevent her from doing this, she flunked her each time. She had to stay on as a graduate nurse for two years at \$30 a month. She couldn't work anywhere else.

"The supervisor did this to keep her



Josie Haddix and Kathleen Vincent were the entire graduating class in 1929. Photographer unknown.

in the OR. This meant they had someone to scrub the floors and do the routine work. There were only four students in the junior class and three in the beginning group. That wasn't enough and they needed the extra help," Mrs. Caravasos noted, explaining that it wasn't because her mother could not pass the tests.

Draxie didn't have much choice but to stay. She passed the boards in 1925, when doctors at the hospital intervened on her behalf with the OR supervisor.

The family tried to keep her spirits up in the meantime. In 1923, Draxie's mother wrote her a letter from Pullman which began, "Well, dear Draxie, I do hope you are a free girl by now and will be able to do your work good and able to pass the state board slick as a whistle." Mrs. Baker hoped her daughter could relocate closer to home. The same letter included a note about Loutricia, who was in private duty at the time: "Pansy said Sis went to Mannington but did not say what kind of a case; hope she will have a nice case."

The following year, Mrs. Baker's sister Flo wrote to her about Draxie's situation: "I reckon Draxie will be riding on her high horse pretty soon. Well I'm surely glad for her for she has had a hard time. Is she going to pass the State Board?"

Flo's letter also asked Mrs. Baker to get some medical information from Loutricia: "[The doctor] said the womb was undergoing a fibroid change whatever that means and said if it was not turned and scraped pretty soon that in a year or two the womb and all would have to be taken. Won't you please ask Loutricia if she knows what 'undergoing a fibroid change' means?"

After Draxie passed her boards, she married and moved to Little Falls, south of Morgantown. She worked in private duty throughout Monongalia County the rest of her life. Daughter Connie followed her mother's career and entered the Monongalia General School of Nursing in 1958.

Wanieta said that things had changed only a little by the time she became a student nurse in the 1930's. "My aunts were Cook graduates so I decided to come here," she explained. "I paid \$25 tuition for the whole three years. I got \$10, then \$12 and then \$14

COOK HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL COMPANY



FAIRMONT, WEST VIRGINIA

This Certifies, that Loutricia Baker has completed the required term of a three years course in training as a nurse at the Cook Hospital and Training Company and that she has passed a satisfactory examination before the Lecture Faculty and Superintendent of the School and is entitled to this

DIPLOMA

In Testimony whereof, we have hereunto appended our names at Fairmont W. Va. this tenth day of June 1915.



[Signatures of the Lecture Faculty and Superintendent]

The old Cook Hospital building, shown here on Loutricia Baker's 1915 diploma and in the recent photograph at right, remains an imposing structure in downtown Fairmont. The building serves the Marion County Board of Education today.

per month each year of my training. This wasn't bad for the Depression.

"We also wore starched uniforms, black shoes and hose until our senior year when we got our white shoes from a local shoemaker." The nursing caps were also white but a black stripe was added the senior year. Upon graduation, nurses received a signet ring, a school pin and a nursing pin.

"Our student uniforms were blue with white collars and cuffs. My uniform was a blue chambray with a white starched stiff apron and bib.

That was what our \$25 was for. The bibs were starched just as stiff as can be. The collars used to make our necks sore, so we'd take soap and rub on them. The collars and cuffs came off. Our senior year we wore white uniforms.

"You had to be single," she added. "They didn't take married nurses then."

Wanieta, unlike Draxie and Loutricia, resided in the newer brick nurses' dormitory behind Cook Hospital. "We had a classroom in the hospital and attended lectures each

day. We got two hours off to rest, and then we worked 12 hours a day besides going to the classes," she said. The nurses worked seven days a week but were given time off on Sunday to attend church. Christmas was given off if the student wasn't assigned duty.

The director of nursing, various nurses and doctors all participated in the teaching. Six or seven textbooks were used throughout the three years. "I don't think we bought any books," Wanieta recalled. "The school had them."

By the '30's, the schooling hadn't changed much from the original format. Students were assigned to work various shifts, and "they had us doing everything," Wanieta recalled. "We got a lot of coal miners. If they were hurt, they were brought to a patient room, and we took care of

The nurses worked seven days a week but were given time off on Sunday to attend church. Christmas was given off if the student wasn't assigned duty.

them there until the doctors came."

Wanieta's class had three weeks of vacation, and the students were able to go home for a respite. After graduation, she was hired for general duty at Cook Hospital and stayed until the hospital closed. "I got paid \$55 a month and worked five days a week in 1935," she recalled.

Wanieta got married in 1938 and ended her nursing career in Fairmont. "My future husband worked at the Rivesville power plant and I was doing private duty for a friend of his. He met me and asked for a date. Later he got a job at the DuPont plant in Morgantown, and we moved." She then worked private duty in Morgantown at St. Vincent Palotti Hospital and Monongalia General.

Today, Wanieta lives in Madison House, a retirement home in the building which formerly housed Monongalia General Hospital. She worked as Mon General's evening supervisor for 22 years before retiring in 1974.

Wanieta remarked on the changes she saw during her career in nursing. "We had to take care of everything when doctors weren't in the building," she recalled of the early days. "There were no emergency departments back then. Funeral homes operated ambulances then and brought the people to us."

Many of the surgeons brought their own equipment, as a hospital only had basic equipment. Calls were often made to the local hardware stores for items the doctors needed, according to Wanieta.

There was a lot of paperwork, though different than today's nursing documentation. "We had to write all kinds of orders, write all the charges, stock the supplies and get the medicine. There were no pharmacists on duty so you had to call the private pharmacists in town if you had a question."

Wanieta reflected on her 40-year nursing career and Cook Hospital. "I enjoyed my work as a nurse," she said. "Two of my five children were born at Cook Hospital. I still think that if you don't want to be a nurse, you'd better not go into it."

Kathleen Vincent Wagner came to Cook after the Baker sisters and a few years before Wanieta. "I was born in 1909 and grew up in Monongah," she

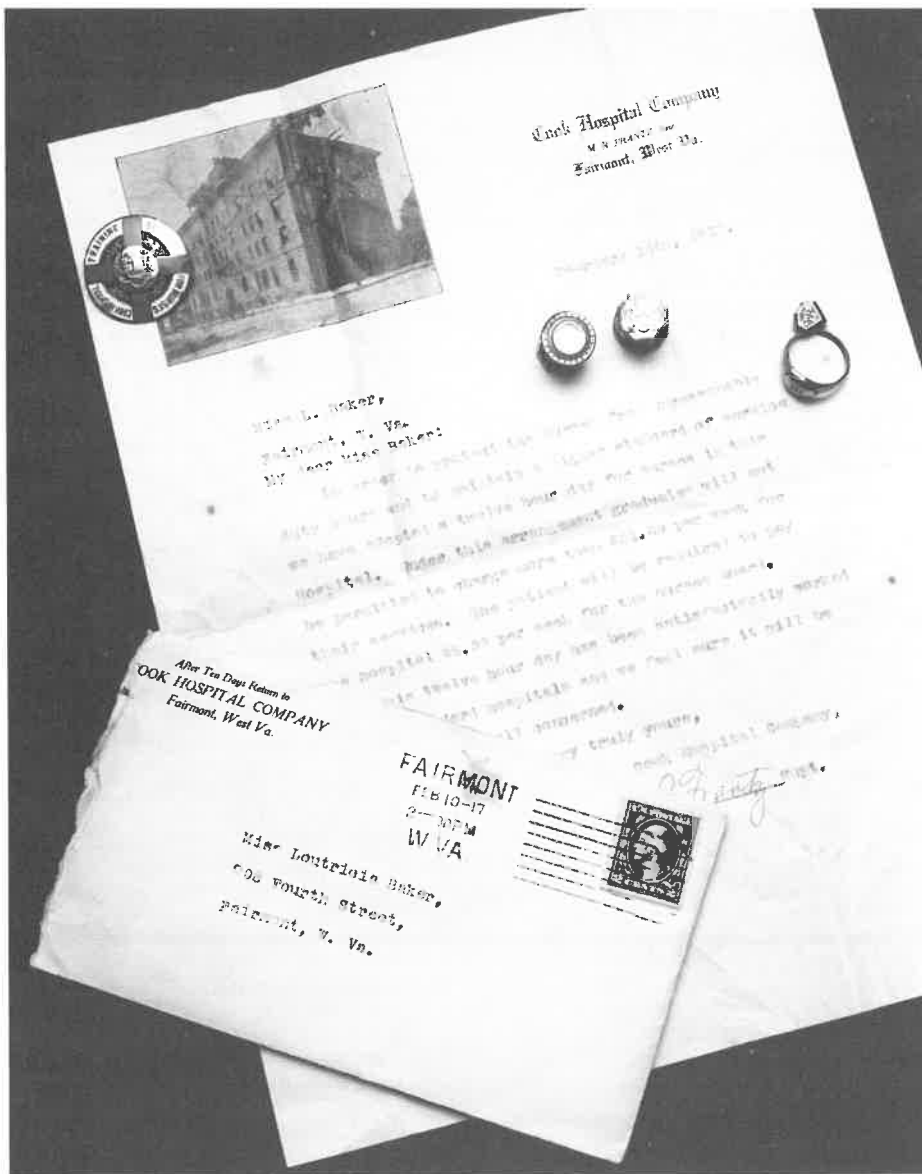
"I started October 2, 1926, with 18 other girls, but hardly any of them finished. I was determined to stay because I wanted very much to nurse. I loved it."

recalls. "My father died when I was about eight years old. He was a boiler worker at the tippie. My mother had five children. A polio epidemic swept Monongah when I was young and I remember the temporary hospital set up in Traction Park for all the sick children. It was a terrible situation. My sister got polio. I saw all this as a child and while growing up during World War I. I knew then I wanted to help people through nursing."

One could enter nursing education without a high school diploma, Mrs. Wagner says. "I didn't graduate from high school, but I took chemistry at Fairmont Senior and psychology at Fairmont Normal [now Fairmont State College].

"I was secretly married in my last term of nursing school," Mrs. Wagner admitted. "My nursing director never asked me. If she had asked me I would have told her. You were not





Above: Superintendent M.R. Frantz's 1917 letter to Loutricia explains that private duty nurses could charge patients no more than \$21 a week at Cook. "We have adopted a twelve hour day for Nurses," he says.
Below: Nurses prepare a patient for surgery at Cook Hospital sometime after 1903. Photographer unknown.



allowed to be married, like teachers.

"We were taught classes at the hospital. The doctors gave us lectures and we had instructors from the head nurses. Dr. Carter, Dr. Morgan and Dr. Norris lectured often. We had to have our own instruments, bandage scissors and hypodermics. And we had to keep track of them," she stated.

"I started October 2, 1926, with 18 other girls, but hardly any of them finished. We had a TB scare; somebody was a carrier and all of the girls were afraid. One by one, their mothers took them out of the class. I was determined to stay because I wanted very much to nurse. I loved it."

Only two members of the original class finished in 1929. Josie Haddix, a student from Philippi, and Kathleen were photographed together in their uniforms holding their diplomas. "We couldn't afford to have two pairs of white shoes, so we both wore our dress shoes for the picture," Kathleen remembered.

With only two students in the class, the work was long and hard. "I got an allowance of \$8 a month the first year, \$10 the second year and \$12 the third year for 'pin money.' We paid for our laundry." There was no tuition other than paying \$20 to have student uniforms made and for textbooks used.

As a student, Mrs. Wagner worked

12 hours a day with two hours off for rest. The new nurses' dormitory was being constructed while she was in training. Today, this building houses the Marion County Health Department. During construction, nursing students were temporarily housed in dormitories on the Fairmont Normal School campus, then located across the street from the hospital. Kathleen stayed in the college dorm even after secretly marrying in the latter part of her final year.

Once Mrs. Wagner started working as a nurse, she earned \$5 a day. The graduate nurses found that the majority of employment opportunities were for private duty. The physicians had their favorites, and these would be called in to care for patients during their stay in the hospital.

"The doctors always wanted to sponsor you for work if they were pleased with your performance as a student," Mrs. Wagner recalled.

"Even though it was the Depression, I had plenty of opportunities for work."

She has a fee schedule from 1949, as established by the Susan Cook District Number 5 of the West Virginia State Nurses Association. By this time private duty for eight hours in a hospital or home was \$10. Private duty for 12 hours in a home paid \$15. Charges for contagious diseases were higher. For smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever and poliomyelitis, the

The Founder

John R. Cook was born on a Virginia farm on January 24, 1863, descended from English colonists who came to America in the 1600's. Growing up after the great Civil War may have inspired him to a career administering medical care to those in need.

Cook completed a course in medicine and surgery from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1884, at the age of 21, and joined another physician in a practice in Virginia. In 1886, Dr. Cook moved to Rivesville, West Virginia, with his wife, Susan Olivia Watts, and baby daughter. He later became the company doctor for the Montana mines, located across the Monongahela River from Rivesville. While continuing his private practice, he also served as company doctor for the New England mines, later the Watson mines. Eventually, he recruited two other physicians to join him, Dr. James Durrant and Dr. E. W. Howard, and his practice grew.

Dr. Cook moved his family to nearby Fairmont and built a substantial house on 8th Street and Fairmont Avenue. The place included a large garden, a carriage house and a barn accommodating five horses and a cow. Daughter Louise would often accompany her father on his calls to miners' homes and area farms. She would sit in the buggy to hold the horses while he tended the ill. Dr. Cook was known to help those in need, no matter the time of day and

regardless of whether he would be paid for the visit.

Prior to the turn of the century, Dr. Cook and associates realized the need for a hospital in Fairmont. They equipped four rooms on the second floor of a house on Walnut Avenue, sublet by the owner who continued to occupy the first floor. This 'hospital' offered one room for male patients, one for females, one for surgical procedures and one for typhoid patients.

By 1901, Cook purchased the J. Walter Barnes property on Gaston Avenue and 2nd Street. This stately Victorian structure could accommodate up to 30 patients. Approximately seven physicians were now using Dr. Cook's facility. By 1903, he had the Barnes house moved to the rear of the property so that a 100-bed, four-story brick hospital could be constructed. This edifice still stands and currently houses the Marion County Board of Education.

While proprietary hospitals were located in Fairmont after the turn of the century as well as the state-owned Miner's Hospital on Guffey Street, Dr. Cook had the foresight to build the new Cook Hospital as a community hospital with a board of directors. The annual meeting was held each January, and the 18-member board met the second Friday of each month to conduct business. A hospital superintendent was appointed "for the proper administration of the business of



Dr. John Cook was proud of his new hospital. Photographer and date unknown.

the hospital," according to the by-laws of the organization. Cook Hospital remained in operation until 1940, when it was replaced by Fairmont General.

Unfortunately, Dr. Cook's life was shorter than that of his namesake. In September 1908, while performing an operation on a patient, John Cook got an infection which later developed into blood poisoning. Although medical specialists from Baltimore and Philadelphia were consulted, his condition worsened. He died at the age of 45 on November 8, 1908, only five years after his new hospital opened.

— Raymond Alvarez



Above: The nurses lounge at Cook. Nurses relaxed here during their long hard days. Photographer unknown, before 1915.
Below: Christmas dinner, 1914. The superintendent presides over a table of surprisingly solemn nursing students. Loutricia Baker is the sixth person back on the left side. Photographer unknown.



charges were \$11 and \$15 respectively. The latter fees also applied to alcoholics and mental patients. A 15 percent discount was given nurses and doctors who needed private duty services themselves.

Later Kathleen began working at Fairmont General Hospital. She retired in August 1975, after a career that spanned 44 years.

Kathleen Wagner and Wanieta Wyke share memories of training that differ vastly from today's nursing education. The emphasis prior to the 1940's was on practical, on-the-job training, combined with myriad menial chores often not related directly to nursing. The pay was minimal for the work performed. There was no guarantee of steady employment after completion of the training.

"I enjoyed my work as a nurse. I still think that if you don't want to be a nurse, you'd better not go into it."

Cook Hospital was replaced by Fairmont General in 1940. By 1943, the Fairmont General Nursing School affiliated with Fairmont State College for instruction in basic sciences. In 1966, Fairmont General ended its diploma nursing program, and Fairmont State initiated its own associate degree. The college now offers a baccalaureate degree in nursing as well.

But the memories of Cook Hospital and its nurse training school linger on at Fairmont General. Connie Caravasos has donated many of Draxie and Loutricia's school items for a permanent display in the hospital lobby. The exhibit includes their diplomas, a nursing cap from 1915, a nursing license, textbooks, and photographs, as well as medical equipment they used. Hospital visitors enjoy the display and reading about the young nurses long ago, recalling the profession from a totally different era. ❧



Above: Draxie Baker's daughter Connie Caravasos confers with Wanieta Wyke, right, the niece of the Baker sisters. All four women practiced nursing, which seems to run in the family. Below: Kathleen Vincent Wagner visits Fairmont General, the modern successor of Cook Hospital. Hospital administrator Raymond Alvarez, our author, stands by.



*Eggs were selling for 42 cents a dozen,
steak for 43 cents a pound and potatoes were up to 79 cents a
peck and "doomed to go higher."*



Bill Watson, at left, received his greetings from home while serving in Germany. He and his buddies were photographed in 1945. Photographer unknown.

The West Virginia WWII Home Front: **"Dear GI"** **Preston Soldiers Get Letters from Home**

By Peggy Ross

When Reedsville postmaster Warren W. Smith decided to write the boys overseas, he did it in a big way. Starting in early 1944 he began compiling hometown greetings into a newsletter for local service personnel. He called it *A Letter from Home* and continued the weekly publication until the end of World War II.

It was the little things — like learning that on June 8 Dennis Menear scraped frost from his windshield — that made Smith's *Letter From Home* important to people in uniform. Some of them had been gone more than three years, and they relished the news of normal life at home. Walter Galusky wrote that getting the letter was "just like getting a furlough."

It may be that no one else in the entire country undertook such a project. When soldiers, sailors, marines, seabees, coast guardsmen and merchant marines from Preston County's Valley District shared the newsletters with their comrades, they reported that the other boys were also greedy for news from home — *anybody's* home. Junior Padovini said that he was "the envy of all the fellows in his outfit."

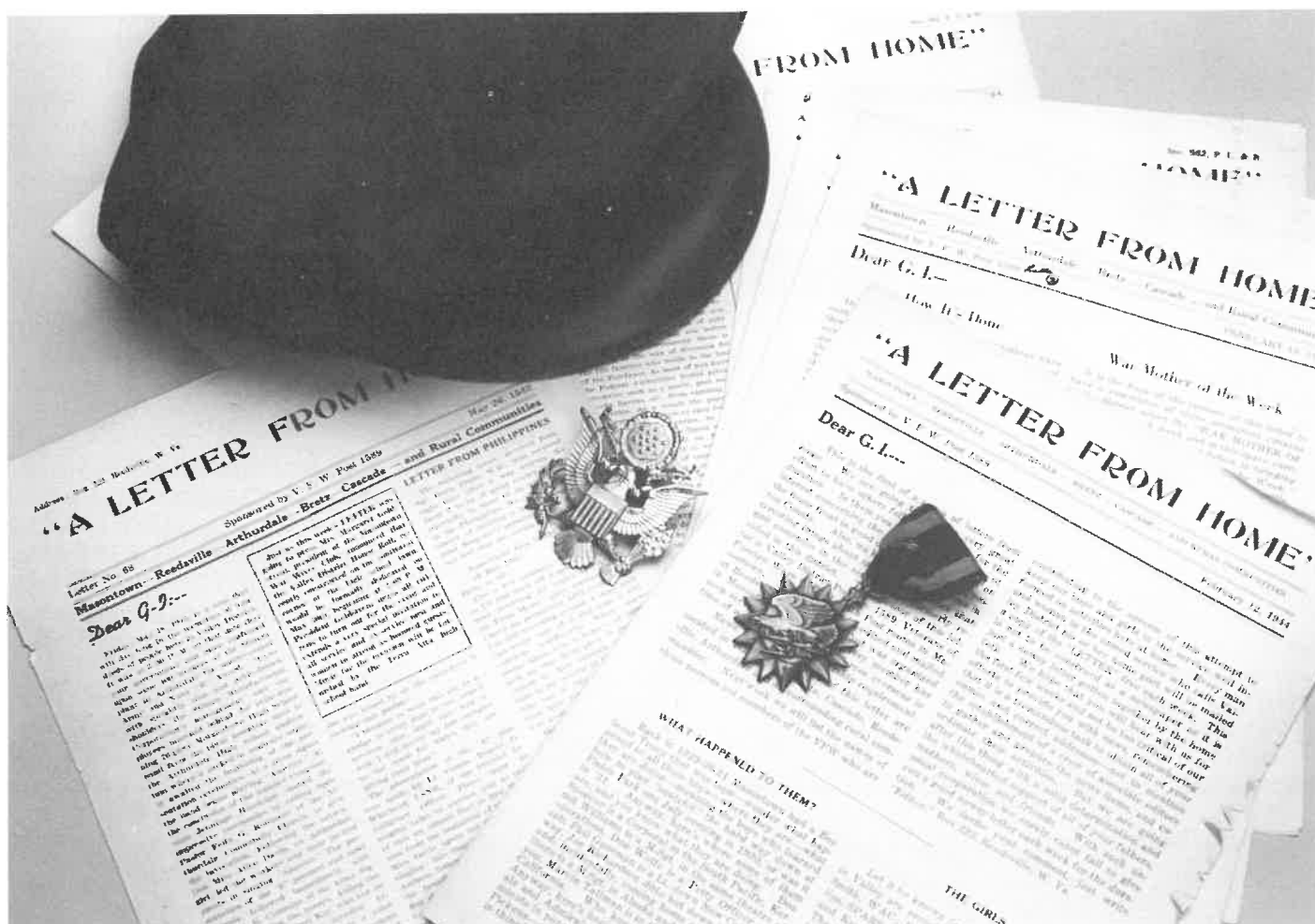
Himself a World War I veteran, Smith realized how much correspondence meant to a soldier. He began writing the weekly *Letters* on February 12, 1944; he mailed the last issue on May 26, 1945. By then, many of the 600-plus active military personnel from Masontown, Reedsville, Arthurdale, Bretz, Cascade and all the rural communities in between were heading home.

Smith didn't attempt to handle the newsletter alone. There were a passel of people behind the effort — just about everyone who was touched by the conflict, which was just about everyone. Masontown's VFW Post No. 1589 bore most of the out-of-pocket expense involved, \$35 to \$50 a week for printing and postage. The publication went to service people free of charge, with everyone else paying a dollar a year.

The newsletter was never intended to usurp the place of the handwritten letters from the folks, but rather to fill in the gaps. Everything was covered, from who was doing what to who was the latest youngster (or in some cases, oldster) to be drafted. Not much escaped the eager pens of the folks who gathered, often at Edith



Reedsville postmaster Warren Smith, shown here as a young man in his World War I uniform, knew what news from home meant to a soldier. His daughter Lucille Myers kept a complete set of his newsletters, recently photographed (below) by Michael Keller.



WWII Veterans Survey

The years 1991-95 mark the 50th anniversary of World War II. GOLD-ENSEAL has begun a series of "West Virginia Home Front" articles which we expect to continue through the semicentennial period.

The U.S. Army Military History Institute has helped with several of those articles and now has asked that we bring an important project of theirs to our readers' attention. The Institute, headquartered at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, is undertaking a comprehensive survey of World War II army veterans.

The Institute urges West Virginia army veterans to request a copy of its survey form. The detailed questionnaire seeks information ranging from the minutia of daily life during the war through assessment of the enemy and relations with allied personnel. There's plenty of room to sound off about equipment and clothing, discipline and leadership — but no mention of the chow.

You may write to the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5008, or call Major Dan Nettling at (717) 245-4113. Request a copy of the World War II Army Service Experiences Questionnaire.

Shay's house in Bretz, to jot down information.

And it wasn't just boys going into the service of the country. "Let it be known far and wide that we are proud beyond words of Nora Smith, WAC; Doris Ennis, WAC; Betty Phillips, SPARS; Ethel (Mrs. Jno.) Dunn, WAVES and Kannyth (Mrs. Jno.) Shank of the ANC. The latter two are Lts.," one issue boasted of local women serving the cause.

Smith attempted to keep readers up to date in a regular column called "Dots and Dashes." It included who got married and who had new babies. It said who was in college and who had been ill. "Bob Brandt is home on furlough," one issue reported, adding that Bob was awaiting assignment. "His wife, Thelma, is taking his place at the office of Greer Limestone."

Another column, "At Random," talked about area businesses and how they were doing in wartime. "Hoosier Aircraft has changed its name to Ballard Aircraft Company. It occupies all three buildings across the railroad tracks at Reedsville and at present they make bomber seats and ground Link training planes for the Navy.

"Louie the shoemaker Bellmaggio has bought the old company store building in Masontown and says he is going to renovate it."

"War Mother of the Week" honored a different mom each issue, beginning with Frankie Cale, "the only bona fide

resident of the district who is a GOLD STAR MOTHER." That was February 19, 1944.

Other bits and pieces, like the fact that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt had agreed again to be Arthurdale High School's commencement speaker, were included in the newsletter.

In "The Home Town — Saturday Night," Smith journalized about his

*"I will never forget
that boy's face when he
read what his Pappy had
written. I cried a little
myself."*

jaunts through the various business sectors: "Better stop at Brownie's Garage [in Reedsville] to see if everything's under control. Yes, there's Lester, no different than he was five, ten or 15 years ago. His right-hand man, however, is not brother Truman, as he is an AMM-2c with a Fleet P.O. address, but son Kermit, who is rapidly becoming an adult.

"Here comes a young fellow driving a horse hitched to an old-time homemade sled — don't envy him a bit in this zero blizzard."

Smith went into the grocery stores to describe what was on the shelves, who was behind the counter, and what could be had for the right number of ration stamps.

"Well, what you do know! Jimmy [Cammeresi] not only has beef in the cooler but candy in the showcase, yessir, right where everyone can see — that's sumpin in these parts. Guess we better buy a pound — take it down to Mtown for the boys and gals to see."

Smith gave a "doff of the fedora" to a "chap in Masontown who, despite the fact that he has four children, went to the dentist to have his teeth repaired and to the eye specialist for a checkup so he wouldn't be turned down when his draft number finally comes up."

Not only could one GI write to another by gleaning his address from the pages of the *Letter*, but more than one learned that a friend from home was assigned within traveling distance. Sometimes they visited. They even learned, with the people at home, how to write to prisoners of war.

And they weren't bashful about correcting their editor, as Smith joked from time to time. "We know at least 9,000 read this...for no less than that number have apprized (sic) us of the fact that we had Glen Taylor married to the wrong girl," he once wrote. "Then, too we are now fully aware that Chuck Menear wasn't the first boy from the district to be awarded the Order of the Purple Heart. It was a young man named Nichols whose dad and mom live at Bretz."

Further commenting on reader responses, Smith said, "Boy, are we being hauled over the coals for mentioning beer parlors in our letters. Some remarks are downright caustic."

Local ball scores were duly reported, right alongside church and school news and what the American Red Cross was up to. And the *Letter* was not above bragging about the local service record. "There are more persons in the service from Valley District who hold the rank of Sergeant than any other equal area, per capita, in the world," one issue opined.

The weekly news must sometimes have been bittersweet to those serving

far from home. "Spring, beautiful spring, now is a reality," issue nine exulted in April 1944. "Remember how, during the first day or two of spring weather, Mom would get out in the yard with a rake, sometimes a broom? Dad sometimes helped out by lighting the match to burn the trash....That scene is being enacted today."

Meanwhile, the old chicken house in Arthurdale had been renovated to look like a "three-story tenement flat" which was used as a training site for welders and machinists. The education was free and so was the transportation. A third-grade class gave \$5 to help out with *Letter* expenses; they got the money from selling seeds. Several families were still "butchering porkers" despite warmer weather, and some people had chicken pox.

The "Here and There" column reported that the Dunaway boys, Edward and Richard, had been promoted. Sergeant Doris Ennis wrote from the Philippines to describe what living in a dirt-floor tent in Luzon was like and her fear of the "little yellow man."

By mid-April, the staff was giving thanks to the Bethlehem PTA for "the sack full of dimes." Captain Jerald B. Fortney also received thanks for his gracious letter and check. Fortney had been a Morgantown newspaperman but currently was working to improve army morale. His mother "is our nearest neighbor on the south," Smith wrote.

Property sales, news of grandparents, pleas for assistance in news gathering, and apologies for oversights filled subsequent *Letters* alongside the regular features. "S2c Paul Dezbor writes a swellegant letter from an LST boat," one issue reported. "Miss Margaret Brown [said] that her brother Wayne 'Bumps' is in North Africa and her baby brother, 1st Lt. Robert L. Brown is now on the 'Big Drink.'"

Their addresses were right there. There were poems from both GI's and the home folks.

Two Easters came and went during the life of the *Letter*. With the second spring, there was a new silver star hanging in a window in Plainview. Joe Collins was still taking his eggs to town every Friday; Uncle John Ziegler killed three rattlesnakes and a

"I'd Read Them by Moonlight" Veterans Remember the *Letters*

Former WAC Sergeant Doris Ennis, now Doris Ennis Boylan and living in Masontown, served in the Philippines and saw plenty of action during World War II. Like others, she remembers receiving Warren Smith's *A Letter from Home*. "I was in five active campaigns," she recalls. "Those *Letters* meant a lot. We lived in dirt-floor tents. Lots of times, I'd go out and read them by moonlight."

The little things seemed to mean most to those serving far from home. "The *Letters* described things that normally you would see," one Morgantown veteran recalls. "I remember once Mr. Smith said, 'two birds flew by.' He'd walk down the street and say who said hello and who we wouldn't recognize because he'd grown a moustache, things like that."

"As far as I know, we were the

only ones to get something like that.

"I learned that one of my friends [from home] was stationed not too far away. I had a weekend pass and hitchhiked to the air base where he was housed in a barn. We had a wonderful time."

People recall receiving the *Letters* with enthusiasm, although nowadays some of them have to scratch their heads and think a moment to recall specifics. "Being homesick causes depression," says Carl "Duck" Born, a farmer who lives near Reedsville, "and the *Letters* brought me out of that. They made me happy. I got my first letter in Adelaide, Australia."

Born learned that his hometown friend, Bob Brandt, was in a hospital on Leyte Island in the Philippines by reading the *Letter*. He went to see the sick and homesick young man. They have remained fast friends through the years, partly because of that.

Brandt, who had first come to Preston County's Valley District through the Civilian Conservation Corps and later married a local girl, said the *Letters* "really meant a lot because they gave me news about people from home. We were just ecstatic to get them. We'd read them over and over." Mr. Brandt now lives in Kingwood.

Bill Watson, who was in Patton's Third Army in Europe and who has spent all the rest of his life in Reedsville, said he got the *Letters* just about every week, although sometimes he'd get two or three at a time because his unit moved so rapidly.

"It was wonderful," he said, "I was about the only one in my unit who got anything like that."

— Peggy Ross

The *Letters* meant a lot to a WAC living in a tent overseas, Doris Ennis Boylan says. Photograph by Becky Jones.





Doris Ennis, photographed in Massachusetts after basic training, later served as a WAC sergeant in the Philippines. Photographer unknown, 1943.

copperhead with his cane; and Jack Brown was plowing. Jim Durr was preparing to enter the army and Duane Cole the navy. Bill Watson was home on leave. The *Letter* reported that eggs were selling for 42 cents a dozen, steak for 43 cents a pound and potatoes were up to 79 cents a peck and "doomed to go higher."

Signs reminding DON'T FORGET TO BUY BONDS! appeared in business windows, but Smith wondered why he no longer saw the I AM PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN signs which had heavily dotted the countryside in 1942.

Private Edward C. Mundell was killed in action in the Southwest Pacific sometime in August. He had been employed at the Richmond mine before he became a Marine in 1942.

That fall, Herring citizens "subscribed upward of \$500 cash" to put the church in good repair before winter, and the Ted Gidleys named their new daughter Linda Lou. The Masontown High School football field was being turned into a memorial and renamed for former coach Max Stemple, who fell in Normandy. Seaman Glenn K. Born was in Europe and sent his friends back home 50 francs each as souvenirs. Sergeant James McMillen had been severely wounded in action and was hospitalized in England.

E. Zinn of Browns Mill, commonly called "Dogtown" or "Puppytown" in the *Letter*, raised the largest sweet potato in the county. It weighed four pounds and one ounce. Wartime rationing continued to hamper farm-

ing, but some orders were getting through. Joney Bolyard "has a swell barn now since he got his steel roofing. He ordered it five years ago."

"The sage of Dogtown," store owner Charlie Riley, died, leaving the community bereft of its most renowned character. Previously, men had gone to Charlie's to "get a haircut, a sack of feed, the gas tank or pantry larder filled, a pair of new shoes and a thousand and one other commodities." They could even make music there on Saturday nights.

Warren Smith held "autograph signing" parties during the summer of 1944. Hundreds of people came to sign their names for the ones away from home.

In early December, Seaman Earl Stalnaker of the *USS Indiana* was

home on leave, and Robert G. Arnold, hospitalized in Italy, had received the Purple Heart. Grant S. Deahl and Jack Taylor spent their 21st birthdays in France and the Pacific, respectively. It was Jack's "third anniversary in uniform for the 'famous Fighting 4th Marines.'"

Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan and Tinian were names that would live for eternity, the *Letter* said, because they "represent four of the toughest battles in which American troops have been engaged." Pfc James Kelly had the bars to prove it.

There were 342 local people serving in Europe, the Pacific and the Atlantic by fall 1944, "plus 13 miscellaneous all over the world." By January, "The Other Fellow" column reported, "there are almost 425 lads and lassies from Valley District in foreign lands and hostile waters. It is a very safe bet that near 300 of you are in actual combat."



Above: Preston Gil's relaxed as the war wound down. Bill Watson took the window seat in Austria, 1945. Photographer unknown.

Below: Masontown was often abbreviated to "M'town" in the *Letter from Home*. Today it is a quiet rural community. Photograph by Becky Jones.



Letters from Mother

On Mother's Day 1944 a special issue of the Letter offered Preston County mothers the chance to send personal greetings to sons and daughters serving in the armed forces. The following sample was chosen from messages from scores of mothers, and one father.

To my son, Harold Rhodes: This is the second Mother's Day since you enlisted in the Army Air Corps, and I pray it will be the last before victory comes. May all your missions over enemy territory be as successful as the first eleven. Mother.

Dearest Squeaky and Douglas: Although you are far away, Mother's Day brings you very near to us at home. We all hope next year will see you safe at home with us who love you. Mother Carper.

Dear Son: On this day, dedicated to millions like myself, I should be really happy. Your absence prevents it. I'm proud of you and I know you will do your best to keep our nation free. Your Mother, Emma Zuccolotto.

To Jimmy Pell: Remember a Sunday when you were around

five, and you and Bobby Richardson went down into the woods, and when you came back you brought me a bunch of violets, dry leaves, roots and all? It was Mother's Day. I was amused and pleased then. Now I know that is the nicest bouquet that I have ever had handed to me. This year on my Day, I am sending greetings to you. Mother.

Since their Mother is no longer here, Pappy Edd Born wishes to tell his three Mt. Vernon Yanks that he is raising a lot of juicy steaks and hams, 100 acres of crops, and 21 young calves to help feed his sons, Harry E., in New York; Glen K., in Virginia; and Carl M. in Australia.

Home Front News for Sale

A full set of Postmaster Warren Smith's *Letters from Home* has been bound for sale to the public as a special fund-raising project of the Arthurdale Heritage Foundation. The World War II newsletters cover the final climatic period of the war, from February 1944 through May 1945.

The publication reported hometown news from the Valley District of Preston County, including Reedsville, Arthurdale, Bretz and other communities. The weekly newsletters were rich in the details of home front life in rural West Virginia and in the complex interaction between the men and women serving overseas and the civilians behind them. They offer an unusually close glimpse into an exciting era, as told firsthand by the people involved.

Each volume sells for \$25, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling. Orders may be sent to Lucille Myers, P.O. Box 680, Arthurdale, WV 26520. For more information call (304)864-6712.

Of the 77 males graduating at Masontown High School from 1941 to 1944, 66 were in the service. "No wonder the streets are empty," Postmaster Smith wrote.

Sergeant Orion J. Taylor stole a few minutes to write to the editor to say how much he "liked the LETTER because it tells me everything I want to know — the bad news along with the good." Taylor was living in a former Gestapo headquarters and everything was "strictly Jerry," he reported.

Taylor was correct in saying the news wasn't always positive. Smith wasn't above taking people he considered to be shirkers to task. He commented on draft dodgers, hoarders, and people like the "fellow who refuses to buy a single bond or war savings stamp. Also, there's the guy who could buy a \$75 bond every week but instead, as a weak, face-saving gesture, he buys an \$18.75 bond about three times a year. Then, too, there is the hair-brained [sic] idiot who publically [sic] makes unprintable remarks about your commander-in-chief and the war effort."

Life went on in Preston County, if not the same as before the war, and the guys and girls out fighting remained hungry for news of each other and of home.

Occasionally, there were letters

from strangers in foreign countries. One came from Edith Lewis in Sydney, Australia.

"I feel it my duty to...let you know how your paper gets around," she wrote. "We have visiting our house a very nice lad named Carl Born of Reedsville (who has been coming to see us for about six months). His best issue was the Mother's Day Letter. I will never forget that boy's face when he read what his Pappy had written....I cried a little myself when I read it.

"I think the Borns must be a very nice family by the way Carl behaves," Lewis continued. "I think the *Letter from Home* is an absolute Godsend to all your boys....Reedsville must be a swell town," she concluded. "Chin up and cheerio."

A tornado hit the Valley District, the Democrats won another election, and a group of people began trying to oust Dr. Charles E. Lawall from his post as WVU president. The federal Office of Price Administration put a 15 cents per quart ceiling on milk, but "by extenuating circumstances...people have been forced to plunk down 23 cents," the *Letter* reported. The Silman Company in Arthurdale presented the Red Cross with a check for nearly \$5,000, half of it coming from the employees.

Sergeant Lee Davis was discharged

from the hospital and now driving a tank in Germany. Mrs. M. Harold Taylor was critically ill; the family had been called in. Sergeant Ted Field was back home after seven years, three spent as a Japanese prisoner. He had survived the Bataan death march and been imprisoned without clothes and with very little food. He weighed 98 pounds when released. Pfc Claude M. Casseday was killed in action on April 3, 1945, in Germany. Carl Born came home. He had been the first from the district to be called by the draft.

The news became increasingly good as the war wound down. Smith once fretted at his inability to put "into a word picture the exact emotions [of] your Dads, Mothers, Wives and Sweethearts here at home this Sabbath morn...as glad tidings of victories all over the globe reach us." But, he reflected soberly, "we remind ourselves that the last shot of battle may produce a fatality as easily as the first."

And, finally, the war in Europe was over, and it was clearly just a matter of time in the Pacific. *Letter* No. 80, the last, was written during a rainstorm complete with 50 mph winds. The last few *Letters* went only to GIs, full of business news intended to ease their transition back into the civilian economy. The new Masontown drugstore in the old company store building was to be a fact, one reported, and "a million-dollar Cleveland concern is dickering for a plant in the district."

The growing lists of people who were home or on their way back were punctuated by the names of those who popped into Smith's post office to say "howdy." Food was back on the shelves, the *Letter* reported, and everyone was thrilled "over being able to drive up to the gas pump and say, 'Fill her up.'" Life was returning to normal in the Valley District.

And the publishing job of Warren Smith and his crew of loyal helpers was done. The last line was printed, the last name scrawled on an envelope, the last stamp licked. *Letter* No. 80 offered the usual best regards, now combined with the Valley District's heartfelt wishes for "a speedy return to the USA." And naturally it was signed, "Cordially, THE FOLKS." ❀

Of the 77 males graduating at Masontown High School from 1941 to 1944, 66 were in the service. "No wonder the streets are empty," Postmaster Smith wrote.

Carl Born, recently photographed at home in Reedsville. The banner with kangaroo, koala and ostrich is a souvenir from his service in Australia. Photograph by Becky Jones.



A man could come in and they would accept him because he was male and he was supposed to be there. A woman had to prove every inch.

“Busy About the Lord’s Business”

Rita Emerson, Woman Preacher

Interview by Susan Leffler

Rita Emerson of Gilmer County, now 84 years old, began pastoring a string of rural Methodist churches in the early 1950’s. That was highly unusual at the time. In this interview, the Reverend Emerson discusses how she came to be a preacher, and the challenges she faced as a woman doing the Lord’s work.

Susan Leffler. When did you decide to be a Methodist minister?

Rita Emerson. Well, I was really called to preach when I was 17 years old, but women didn’t preach then. Women could teach the children, or they could sing. But there was no way at that time that I could have started out to preach.

SL. When you say you were “called,” what do you mean?

RE. Well, I’d say I was called to be busy about the Lord’s business. I had that urge. In spite of being female, I held all the offices in the church. I started out at 12 years old as teacher of the junior Sunday school class, kids my own age.

SL. Was that unusual?

RE. Yes. I don’t know how come they put me in to teach them. But then I held every office.

SL. Were you the only girl or woman who did that?

RE. There were very few of us. I was the youngest person that ever did, but there were a few women who taught Sunday school classes and things like that. But [as for taking part in] the business of the church, no, they didn’t. I went on and worked in

the church all the time, and all the time there was this other urge.

When I was 40 years old, I had a real serious operation. Maybe you might laugh at this, but I died under the operation. And I felt myself being pulled, and I heard this voice say “No! She has work to do for me.” I knew whose voice was talking. I knew it was Jesus. I saw this bright light that people talk about. I saw a bright light at the end of the tunnel. That’s where the voice came from.

The doctors worked with me, did everything, then they started to wheel me out of the operating room, they told me so themselves, to tell my husband I was dead and to call the undertaker. Then I started breathing, and I knew what I had to do.

When I got so I could talk and knew anything — they used ether and it takes you forever to come out from under it — my father was standing on one side of the bed and my husband was standing on the other. They were asking me how I was feeling.

I said, “I have to preach.” And they responded, “Now, that’s all right, that’s all right.” They thought I was out of my mind. They didn’t think I’d come out from under the ether enough to talk sensible.

I just let it go, and when the time came I thought it would have the most effect, I told them. My father being a preacher understood more, because he had fought it too.

SL. Was he a full-time preacher?

RE. Yes, after he retired from the post office and from the Hope Gas Company. He had just gone around and preached here, there and yonder, you know, until then. But he took a charge and preached on the charge [after retiring].

He went with me the first time I went away from Coks Mills to preach. I can’t forget it. I took a text, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” I went on from there to say, “We are called Christians. Are we Christians?” And preached along that line.

Coming home, he said, “Where did you get that sermon you preached tonight?”

I said, “Out of the Bible. Where else would I get it?”

He said, “I’ve got a book of sermons and you preached almost exactly what was in that book tonight. Have you read that book?”

I said, “No, I didn’t even know you had a book of sermons.” So when we got home he got the book out and showed me. He just could not believe that I could do that. But he backed me, in everything.

SL. He didn’t think that it was odd since you were a woman?

RE. No. Now, my mother would have. Because she was raised by a Hard-shell Baptist, and women kept silent in that church. In what they called an experience meeting, where everybody got up and told their experiences, they were allowed to

Rita Emerson has retired from preaching, but she can still praise the Lord. Here she participates in the gospel song service at last summer's Glenville festival. Photo by Susan Leffler.

stand up and say I'm a Christian, pray for me. That was it. So it was hard for her.

SL. Did she try to talk you out of it?

RE. Oh, no. No, she wouldn't have done that. She would say, "Well, I wasn't taught that way." But then she went to reading her Bible and she said, "Yeah, I can see." And she said, "Remember when Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden when He rose from the dead, He said, 'Go, tell my disciples.'"

I said, "Yes, Mama. That was one of the things that gave me a lot of strength. He told a woman first to go tell."

So she accepted it then. She was ready for me to go a little bit farther. She always encouraged us children. We just couldn't learn enough. She had been sick about all of her life, and she wasn't able to attend school like she wanted to. She went to summer schools in order to get the education that was possible then. And we just couldn't get enough education to satisfy her. Of course, my dad was a whole lot like that, too.

When I think of the opportunities that the young people have for education these days and I think how hard we worked to get our education, I can't understand their thought: "Oh, can't wait until school's out." I never felt that any time I went to school.

SL. You liked school?

RE. Oh, I loved it.

SL. What was your favorite subject?

RE. Literature. English and literature. All this reading in literature, you know. They'd bring in extra books for you to read when you had finished what books you had. Like Shakespeare — the teachers didn't have to do Shakespeare, but they did.

SL. Did you have to study when you decided to become a minister?

RE. Yes. I took a correspondence course from a college in Tennessee. They don't do it anymore, but at that time they were giving correspondence courses. I had six years of this work.



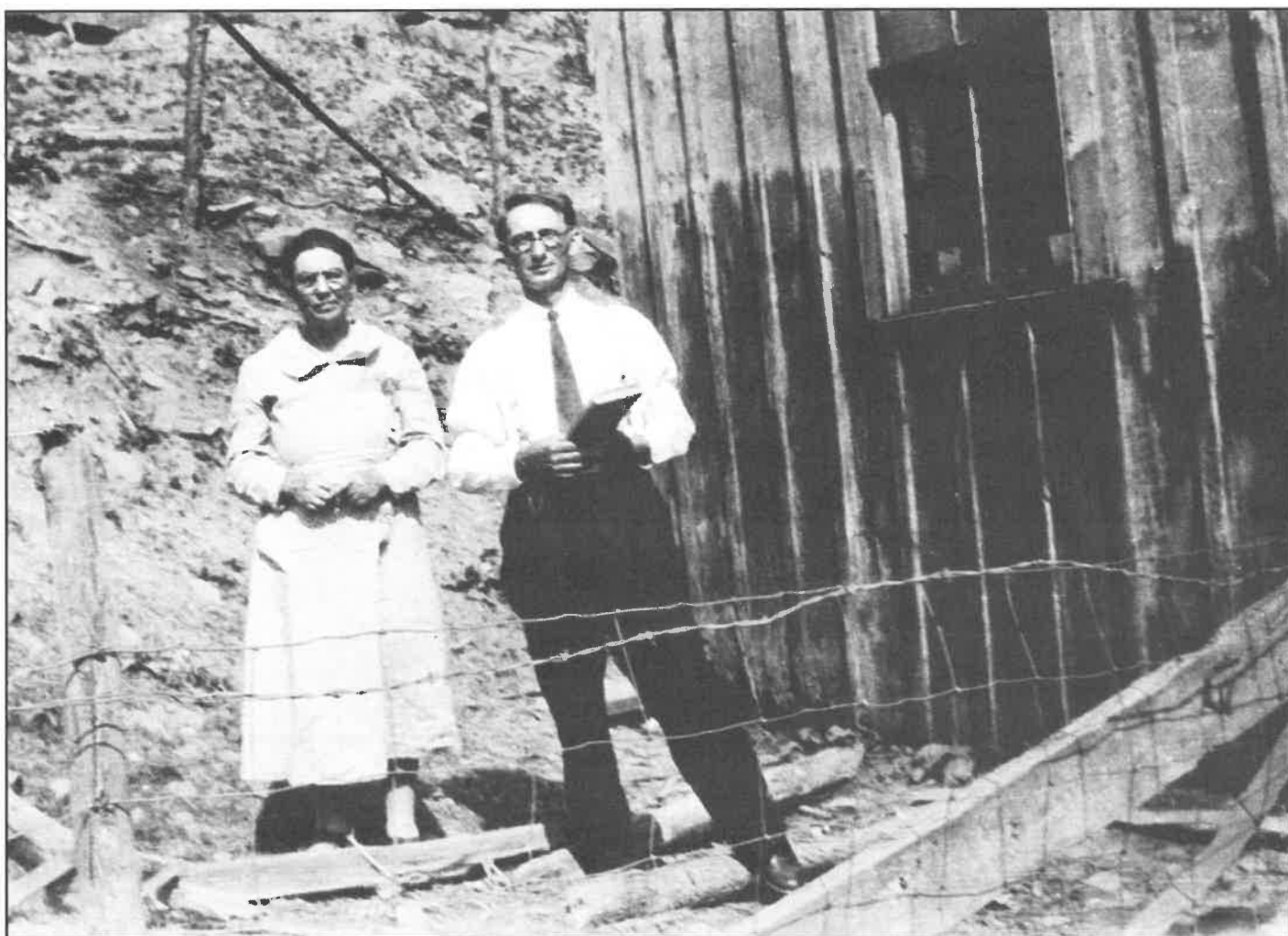
SL. And you could do that while you were preaching?

RE. Yes. The worst trouble about correspondence work is you don't know the professors. You'd send your answers out and one of them would say, you don't need to be so specific. The next time you'd send it out another professor would grade it. He

would say it was good, but you need to be a little more specific. So that was the hard part. You never knew who your grader was going to be.

SL. Did you have any trouble getting accepted into the course because you were female?

RE. No, that didn't matter at all. The hard part about being female was



James Langford, Rita's father, was a preacher as well as a postmaster. Here he and wife Myrtle stand by his post office. Photographer and date unknown.

that they didn't give you any leeway. A man could come in and they would accept him, because he was male and he was supposed to be there. A woman had to prove every inch. You just had to show them you could do it. And you had to show them that you were doing it because you were called to do it. Then they would accept you better, if you made it clear that it was a calling from God. They would accept you enough then that they would listen to you.

When I applied for my license to preach, I had to appear before a cabinet. This one preacher said, "Do you realize what you're into?"

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you know that most people don't believe in women preachers?"

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you think you can take it?"

I said, "Yes, I know I can. I've got God on my side. I can take it."

He said, "Well, I believe you can, but I want to tell you one thing, it's going to be hard." And he began to tell me what all I was going to meet up with. He said, "It's hard for a man,

*I couldn't have done it
without my husband.
He backed me every inch
of the way. He was quiet
where I was loud.*

but you are going to have to go out there and prove yourself in every way."

So I went on out and preached all over the country and then got a

charge of my own. At his retirement I thanked him for warning me about what was going to happen. He looked at me a little bit and he said, "You know, you're the only person to ever come back and thank me for telling them how things were going to be."

I said, "Well, I appreciated it because I met all these things. I was forewarned. I was ready for them."

I couldn't have done it without [God's help], and I couldn't have done it without my husband. Because he backed me every inch of the way. The people loved him as much as they did me. He was quiet where I was loud. He would just be out with the people, you know, just being himself. They loved him. He'd joke with them, and they thought he was something wonderful. And he was.

I had one fellow tell me after I had been on charge two years, he said, "I didn't want you. I voted against you

every time I got an opportunity for about two years. And then all at once I thought, 'Well, she's doing better than a lot of the men.'"

SL. Now what is it to be "on charge?" What does that mean?

RE. You have a church or churches that you alone are responsible for. I had five churches that I served.

SL. And he was on the board or something?

RE. Yes. And he said I had preached one sermon about Job, where I said Job was self-righteous. I told them, "Now, you remember this scripture and go home and read it. And if you don't agree with it, come and tell me and we'll work it out together."

He said, "I went home and I read the whole Book of Job two or three times. All at once [I realized], yes, Job was self-righteous. He thought he could go pray for his children no matter what they did and they'd be forgiven because he prayed for them. He was self-righteous."

And I thought to myself, "Old boy, you'd better be listening a little bit closer."

He was one of the best friends I had after that. This was just an example. The women were harder to convince than the men.

SL. Really?

RE. Yes. The men would accept you after you'd preach a few times and they would hear you. The women, they just couldn't accept it, hardly. One time this woman said to her husband, and my husband heard it, said, "Come on, we're going home. I'm not going to listen to that old rip get up there and preach."

Well, my husband told me about it, you know. And it wasn't very long until the preacher there at that church asked me to preach for him. I said, "Now listen, you may not want me to. Because I have to make it plain that it doesn't matter to me what people say, I am not answering a call from any person."

He said, "You go ahead and preach it."

Well, it happened that this couple was late. When they walked in I was already in the pulpit, and I guess she didn't have nerve enough to turn around and walk out. She sat there and listened. First she squirmed and she looked, and all at once she began to pay attention to what I was saying.

When I dismissed she didn't wait until I got back to the door, she came running up in front. She said, "That's the best sermon I ever heard. That was really good. I'm going to come every time you preach if I can get here at all."

SL. Isn't that something? What do you think it was that struck that chord with her?

RE. I don't know. I don't have any idea what it was.

SL. Were you talking particularly about being a woman and doing what you thought you needed to do in spite of that fact that you were a woman?

RE. Yes. That must have been what did it. I made it plain, I said there was a curse placed on woman. She was the first to sin. There was a curse placed on woman until the day that Jesus Christ burst out of the tomb and set woman free from the curse.

SL. Were there any other women ministers in West Virginia at that time?

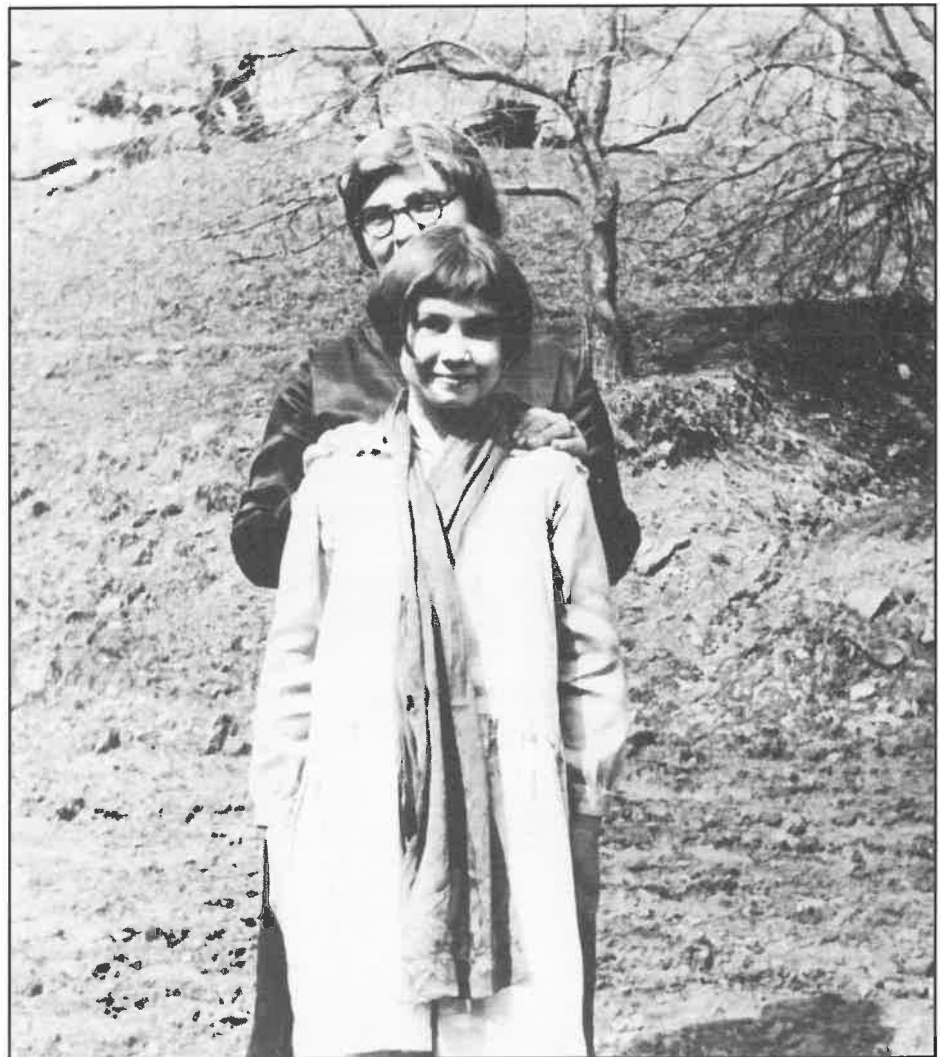
RE. There had been one before that in our section, and there was one Methodist then and one United Brethren. There were several [denominations] that wouldn't allow women. It took a long time. The Presbyterians began to allow women to talk, not really preach, but do some of the work from the pulpit. That sort of thing.

I don't know what your religion is. That doesn't matter to me, because I'm Christian and that's it. I had a Catholic woman say to me one time, "Do you really feel that you should be up there doing that?"

I said, "Wait a minute. You folks started it."

She said, "What? We don't have any women preachers."

Rita was a veteran Sunday school teacher by age 18. Here she stands behind one of her students. Photographer and date unknown.





Above: Sisters and brothers posed with Rita for this family snapshot. They are (left to right) Archie, Rita, Stanley, Gertrude, Freda and Lily. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: The fellowship of country churches spills over into the annual gospel sing at Glenville. Rita is an enthusiastic participant. Photo by Susan Leffler.



I said, "Who had the most influence on your Christian life, the nuns who taught you or the priest who preached to you?"

"Why," she said, "the nuns, of course."

I said, "See, you folks started it."

And I told her, "You know, Jesus Christ is over all. The church is his body in this world. He took the curse away from women. He took it away from man, but he took it away from women more so, because the curse that was placed on women was much harder than the one that was placed on man." Then I said, "Can you have any doubts that you are set free from that curse?"

"No. I can't."

"Well," I said, "All right then. Go out there and serve the Lord. Anyway you can."

SL. Could you do everything that a male minister could do? You could give communion, you could marry people, everything was the same?

RE. Yes, everything the men could do, I could do.

SL. What was the hardest thing that you ran up against?

RE. Oh, I don't know that there was

anything that was harder than another. It just seems that everything that had been said against a woman in the church, I had to overcome it. It was all the same thing as far as I was concerned. There were some different attitudes about a woman in church, of being in a leading position, but to sum it all up it was all the same thing. They had not given God the acknowledgement that they should have. It wasn't me, it was God they were working against, not me. So that way I could overcome it.

I had settled it with God, and I didn't feel that I had to answer to mankind. I just had to do what God expected me to do. And I did not allow mankind to change what God had done. We're all human beings. We're all alike, and we're all different. But to let them interfere with what God had determined, it couldn't be. And when I would meet with one of those things, I would always feel that certain power and it would work itself out. I would just put it in God's hands.

SL. Did you feel like you were being tested personally?

RE. Oh, yes, lots of times. Yes. I am

an emotional person and lots of times I ran up against that. But you just love people and let them know. And they begin to accept you and love you. My goodness, they just turn 180 degrees.

SL. Once they realized what you were up against, it probably gave them extra respect.

RE. I think so. And I think the women were harder to get through to because [of what] they had always been taught. Maybe at one time they would have liked to have done something but they felt, no, I can't because I am a woman. They saw that I could do it, then they were sort of set free to do more of what they wanted to do in the church. I noticed that they began to call on them. At one time you didn't call on a woman to pray out loud in the church. Then it got so that if you would say, I feel there is somebody that wants to pray, and here's your opportunity, they would pray out loud in church.

SL. It sounds like you probably had a big effect on people.

RE. Well, I hope so. My life would count for nothing if I didn't have some effect after the Lord gave me the opportunity. ✠

Rita Emerson frolics with great-granddaughters Emma and Tiffany. She has nurtured a large family as well as her religious flock. Photo by Susan Leffler.



Hog Killing Time on Mill Fall Run

By Eugene Wolfe

I was raised by Aunt Molly Jones on a farm on Mill Fall Run, just outside of Monongah in Marion County. The farm had been successful in its day, with all the livestock, barns, orchards and hayfields that went with that.

But in 1928, my aunt's husband, Newton Jones, died. Shortly after that, two sons and a daughter married and left, leaving only Aunt Molly, another daughter, and Grandfather and me on the place. The farm as a going business was no more. Farm machinery, harnesses, wagons, plows, much of the stock, and other things were sold off.

Most of the farming life was let go of, but not quite all. It so happened that Aunt Molly, who for so many years had been an active participant in the farm, could not make a complete break. She insisted upon keeping a cow or two, some chickens, one horse, and two hogs.

Thus it came about that in November 1945 when I came home from the Navy and the war in the Pacific, I was just in time for hog butchering on Mill Fall Run. As a child and teenager I had seen many butchering days, but never before had been really involved in the work.

The man who always took charge of the scalding, scraping, hanging and cutting was Tom Watkins, who lived in Monongah. Tom was a silver haired old-timer, a family friend who had occasionally worked and share cropped the farm with Uncle Newton. In the early days, Tom had been a true horseman, a professional teamster whose pride was a noble pair of dappled Percherons. Succumbing to modern pressures, he switched to a one-ton Chevy truck in the late 1920's, and continued to make a living hauling this and that for an assorted local clientele. Tom didn't talk much, but he knew all there was to know

about farming. He had butchered hogs scores of times.

One day in early December that year Tom came to the farm and set up the oil drum for hot water, positioning it against a wooden sled at the proper angle to allow entry and exit of the guest of honor. "Eugene," he said, "the first morning there's a good hard freeze I'll be over and start the fire." A really cold day is required for butchering, so that the meat will quickly cool and "set."

Of course, for me that good hard freeze turned out to be on the morning after some late-night festivities with war veteran chums. My sensitive head had hardly hit the pillow when, in the queasy glint of first light, Aunt Molly was saying, "Tom's here."

Soon I was at the sled, complete in Navy dungarees and wearing my engine-room CPO cap in honor of the occasion. Tom had an energetic fire going under the drum. He said, "Charlie will be here later on." He meant Charlie Hughes, an expert at the tricky business of gutting hogs. Charlie lived farther up Mill Fall Run.

The fire roared, the frost melted, and the cold West Virginia December air invigorated me. I looked at Tom's small Stevens .22 caliber rifle on the sled. I remembered having seen it years before at butchering time, and that cousins Robert or Raymond had always shot the hogs.

When Tom saw the water in the drum begin to boil, he said, "Well, I guess we can kill the hogs."

Okay, I thought, do it.

When Tom did not pick up the rifle, I figured he wanted the water to get a little hotter, so my thoughts drifted off to other climes.

A few minutes later Tom said, "Eugene, it's time to kill the hogs."

He still made no move to do it, and he was looking at me kind of funny.

Then I began to understand what had never even occurred to me. Taciturn, white-mustached, snuff-rubbing, wonderful old Tom Watkins had never shot a hog in his life!

Neither had I, for that matter. But there I stood, the salty warrior returned from many far combats. It could not be more clear that I had been elected.

I picked up the rifle, checked the load and went to the nearby pig pen. The hog closest to the door was idly curious. The very spirit of cooperation, he stood quietly, looking up at me. Fortunately, I remembered Cousin Raymond saying you drew imaginary lines from the hog's ears to its eyes and shot where the lines crossed. He was right. It was a perfect kill.

I instinctively knew the thing about Tom and the gunning down of hogs was an anecdote that would stay with me forever, but I had no time to savor it just then. Tom immediately stuck and bled the animal, and I remembered that he had always been the expert at that task. I thought I even remembered his old butcher knife which over the years had been honed down to a quarter-inch stiletto. The skill required is in quickly finding the jugular under several inches of fat jowl.

Next came the backbreaking job of moving 250 porcine pounds onto the sled and into the boiling water. With pulling, pushing and appropriate grunting we got the porker onto the sled and finally into the drum. After two or three good sloshings, and a pause to reheat the water, the hog was pulled out. The hair was softened by the heat, and now we began to scrape the carcass clean.

Finally that was accomplished. The hog was hung by its hind legs on an ancient tripod, ready for its entrails to be tumbled and the serious cutting of hams and shoulders to begin. Then it was back to the second animal to do the whole thing over again.

We got it all done and had ample reward to show for it — pork to eat fresh and to share and plenty more to put away. But mostly what I gained from that cold day's work was a warm memory. It is always with a chuckle that I look back on butchering day on Mill Fall with Tom Watkins presiding. ❖

Book Review:

The Unquiet Earth by Denise Giardina

For those who haven't read Denise Giardina's previous coal country novel, her new book will still offer a rich, absorbing read. But returning readers will have the added satisfaction of deepening their relationships with several families, as well as the pleasure of watching a talented writer claim a more mature and powerful voice.

The Unquiet Earth, published in May by W. W. Norton and Company, continues the story of intertwined lives in the fictional coal mining counties of Justice and Paine, on the West Virginia-Kentucky border. The novel, spanning the period from 1930 to 1990, takes up where Giardina's last book, *Storming Heaven*, ended. It is told in the voice of several narrators, some of whom are the children of characters in the earlier book.

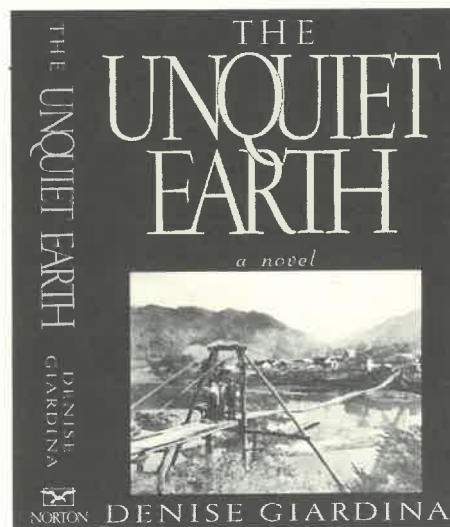
A West Virginian raised in the coalfields, Giardina has lost none of her anger over the exploitation of her homeplace. And her book leaves no doubt about why the earth is unquiet; it has been riddled and robbed, then stripped and scarred by the greed of outsiders. Concluding as it does in contemporary times, *The Unquiet Earth* is perhaps an even stronger indictment of corporate greed and government neglect than was *Storming Heaven*, a story of the West Virginia Mine Wars.

The novelist has sharpened her powers both as a storyteller and an observer of humanity. Her characters are (and sometimes simultaneously) wise, funny, damaged, petty, stubborn, generous, real people.

The Unquiet Earth does not have a hero; there is no character whose virtues place him or her above all the others, no impossibly good human being. Dillon Freeman, Rachel Honaker, Rachel's daughter Jackie, Hassel Day, Tom Kolwiecki, Arthur Lee Sizemore, and their neighbors are sometimes blinded by their own frailties. They can and do make tragic mistakes, hurt one another, get on each other's nerves, get drunk, go crazy, go to jail. Like real people, they also save each other's lives, share grief and

love, seek the spiritual, forgive the fallen, endure the insurmountable.

The book is divided into four sections and unfolds a saga of two generations. Much of "Book One," the first section covering more than 30 years, is narrated by Rachel Honaker and Dillon Freeman, first cousins whose illicit but undeniable love for one another weaves their two lives into a knotted tapestry. At the end of this section the reader is introduced to young Jackie, who will figure in the



other compelling love story of the novel, and whose passion will echo and enlarge the stories of both Dillon and Rachel.

The pace of history slows and the story settles into its full richness in the following three sections of the novel. Book Two introduces a fourth narrator. In Hassel Day, the unofficial mayor of a coal company town called Number Thirteen, Giardina has fashioned a character who brings to mind the best creations of novelist Eudora Welty. Combining wry comedy with compassion of epic proportions, Hassel nurtures and worries over his community in a simple voice that captures the spirit of the mountains.

The character of Hassel is also a counterpoint to that of Tom Kolwiecki, who makes his first appearance in Book Three. Both are on a

spiritual quest; it's just that Hassel's quest, like his mayorship, is personal and unceremonious. If he experiences an epiphany in a pilgrimage to see a pair of dressed fleas, he is still as wise a seeker as contemporary literature offers us.

In the characters of Tom Kolwiecki and Arthur Lee Sizemore, Giardina deals with outsiders of two different types, and with the issue of fear. Tom, a VISTA volunteer, is an outsider by birth; ironically, it is his Justice County neighbors who extend to him a sense of community and a love unconditional enough to conquer his fear. Arthur Lee, in an effort to escape the poverty of his youth, has separated himself from his own people by allying himself with the coal company.

The novel brims with other memorable community members, laugh-aloud stories, and heartbreaking losses. The most important character, however, is not a human, but the earth itself. Again and again, in lyrical metaphors of blood and bone, fire and flood, Giardina sounds the central theme: the earth is somehow aware, it lives and breathes, feels pain, holds memories, and avenges wrong. Its fate and that of its inhabitants, like the lives played out in *Number Thirteen*, are inextricably bound together.

Giardina speaks of this through the voice of narrator Dillon Freeman: "...they are not just piles of rock, they are ancient spirits. The old ones believed that way, my people used to say, and so do the Indians in this country. I knew it myself when I worked in the mine. I could hear the mountain above me groan and cry out, mourning its losses, screaming with pain when we cut away its bones. I knew when the roof fell and took a man it was no accident but the mountain lashing out like a wounded animal."

— Colleen Anderson

The Unquiet Earth is a 367-page hardback. It sells for \$27.95 in bookstores nationwide.

School Days at Davis Creek

By Reva Reed

In 1917 I went to Kanawha County to teach my first term of school. I was a 17-year-old Roane County farm girl. I held a brand-new teaching certificate, acquired by examination. A college degree was not required then.

My new school was at Davis Creek, just south of Charleston. My father went with me by train to the capital city. We had to stay all night in Spencer and catch the six o'clock train to Ravenswood, then change to one for Point Pleasant. After several hours at Point Pleasant we transferred to a train to Charleston, getting there about dark. The alternative was to drive to Elkview, a day's journey by horse and buggy and go from there to Charleston by train. Now the whole trip takes an hour by car.

In Charleston we stayed overnight with Papa's niece, Elsie Steinbeck. She had a daughter about my age who often visited in our home.

Sometime during this stopover I

called my friend, Orville Reed, who was a clerk at the Kanawha Hotel, then the best hotel in the city. We had been corresponding for years, and he knew about my plans to teach at Davis Creek. I had no idea where the school was located. He told me that he would see me the next day, which was Sunday. He came in a rented horse and buggy. He loaded my trunk, and we set out on the four-mile journey to my school.

We crossed the Kanawha River, passed the C&O depot, and went up the steep grade that led over the mountain. The South Hills had many lovely homes and colonial-style mansions.

It was the fall of the year, when nature uses her colors to the best advantage. Huge oak and maple trees lined the streets. The poplar trees were bright yellow and stood out from the red maples like candles in a dark room. Soon we passed into the countryside. Ochre-colored broom-sedge covered the stony hillsides. That is nature's way to conserve the soil and keep it from washing away.

We talked of our plans for the future as we drove along. No words of love had ever been spoken between us, yet there was a deep understanding. A strong bond of friendship had existed for a long time. Four years later, after World War I, friendship developed into love and marriage.

My first impression of Davis Creek when we dropped down the hill was how clean and pure the water looked as it flowed over the rocks and gravel. The creek bed could be seen through the crystal clear water.

We passed the schoolhouse, a frame building with a porch. A little farther and a sharp turn in the road brought

us in sight of the house where I was to stay. It was a two-story frame and concrete house that had not been built for very long. This was the home of Grover Riling and his wife Ada and baby Lawrence. Grover's father and stepmother, and her grandchild Clama Dunlap, also made their home with them. I was to make the seventh member of that household.

Orville and I said our good-byes. He promised to come again. That was to happen only once while I was there. He joined the Army.

The next morning a sea of faces met me in the schoolroom. All the grades were represented. I knew the subject matter very well, but how was I to impart that knowledge to these pupils? I had no training in teaching. I must learn by trial and error. I could only go by the examples of my own teachers. After making a list of the pupils' names and ages, I wrote a program on the blackboard and assigned lessons for each class. I was determined to make it a busy day.

The beginners did very well. They competed with gusto when I made games to recognize words. I used such devices as drawing a ladder on the board and putting words where the rungs were supposed to be. The object was to see who could climb the ladder without falling off. Another blackboard game was to catch fish in a pond. Each fish had a word inside the drawing.

Harry Stover was a bright pupil in the eighth grade. He could write very good compositions. I remember one that he wrote and illustrated about the American Indians that I wish I had kept. He was also good in math. He and his sister, Ruby, would bring their homework down to the Riling home and I would assist them during the long winter evenings. Clama and I shared a room. Harry and Ruby could come and go without disturbing the family.



Eustice Hoffman was among Reva Reed's students. His collie survived a run-in with a traveling stranger. Photographer and date unknown.

Discipline was not a big problem, and a very good thing that was, too. I was not mature enough to know how to handle trouble. The worst problem was that the children soon made a game of wanting to leave the room. I got pretty rigid about that, until I found that one little boy had wet his pants.

Another difficulty was that some of the children came to school with dirty faces and grimy hands. I wrote to my mother that I might have to take them to the creek and wash their ears. A letter came back with definite advice not to do such a thing.

Many of my pupils were poor. They lived in shacks perched on the hill-sides. One boy told me that his family had potatoes roasted in the fireplace for breakfast. There was not much that I could do to remedy the situation. There was no relief nor Social Security in that day. Some of the residents gathered ginseng and yellow root to sell. They dug sassafras root, peeled the bark and sold that on the streets of Charleston.

One boy in such a family had a lovely collie dog that came to school and, like Mary's little lamb, waited outside for him. One day a stranger walked down the abandoned railway. That was unusual, for very few peo-

ple passed that way. The tall stranger wore a long black coat and carried a strong stick. For some reason the dog attacked. The traveler defended himself with his big stick and knocked the collie senseless. Eustice cradled his dog in his arms crying bitterly, "He killed my dog." But as we gathered around the grief-stricken boy, the collie revived to the delight of teacher and pupils.

I was fortunate to have a home with the Rilings. Grover was a prosperous farmer, respected not only in his own community but in Charleston also. His brother, Oscar, had a dairy farm nearby. There was always an abundance of food. Grover and Ada served as temporary parents to me.

The winter of 1917 and 1918 was one of the longest and coldest on record. Snow lay on the ground for weeks. We were isolated from the rest of the world. I had never been away from home for any length of time. I was homesick for a familiar face. I missed my family and the music and books at home. Often I could hear the trains four miles away. It was a sweet and melancholy sound. I wished that I could be on my way home. There was no person of my age with whom to associate. Clama was my only companion, and she was about 12.

One snowy morning we were on our way to school. Two other pupils had joined us. As we rounded the turn in the road I came face to face with my father. I was speechless for a moment. Dropping my lunch in the snow, I ran to his open arms. My emotions overcame me and I could only cry. It was some time before I could straighten my face.

"Now," said Papa, "if I had known you wanted to see me that bad, I would have come sooner."

He went on to school with me that morning. We divided my lunch. He stayed with the Rilings several days and went to school with me each day. As an old teacher himself, he took charge of some of the classes, drilling the students in the right expression and articulation in their reading.

The winter finally passed. It had been a long seven months. I was free to go home. I hope I left something worthwhile with these children. I had tried to give them encouragement and a belief that they could accomplish life's goals despite obstacles.

I had received \$65 a month salary and paid \$4 a week board. I had saved about \$300 by the end of the school term, and I really felt quite affluent. There was not much chance to spend my money at Davis Creek. ❧

Schoolhouse Games

Cannon Graphics of Charleston recently published *One Room School Games: Children's Games of Yesteryear*, a collection of the traditional games of schoolchildren. The book was written by Maxine Sewell Scarbro, who recalls many of the games from her early days in Fayette County.

Scarbro's book opens with a section of jump-rope rhymes and continues with dozens of indoor and outdoor games. All the familiar playground favorites — Ante Over, London Bridge, Fox and Goose, and others — are included, as well as many other games and activities. Each game has a short description, many of them accompanied by pen-and-ink drawings by Dianna Zendigan Thomas.



Drawing by D.Z. Thomas, from *One Room School Games*.

One Room School Games is a 64-page paperback. The book may be purchased for \$9.95 in bookstores or ordered from the publisher. Mail orders, including \$2 postage and

handling, should be sent to Cannon Graphics, 418 Lehigh Terrace, Charleston, WV 25302; phone (304)346-7602. West Virginians please add 6% sales tax.

Films on West Virginia and Appalachia

Steve Fesenmaier, director of the West Virginia Library Commission's Film Services unit, provided GOLDENSEAL with the following list of recently acquired films and videos about West Virginia and the Appalachian region. Film Services has the largest collection of mountain movies and tapes anywhere in the country. They may be borrowed at public libraries throughout the state.

American Patchwork: Appalachian Journey

60 min. (VHS) 1992 PBS
Traces the growth of southern mountain music from the primitive mouth bow to red-hot bluegrass bands. Includes Davy Crockett, moonshiners, Kentucky coal miners, and the original ballad of Tom Dooley. There's plenty of expert banjo, fiddle, and guitar music.

Beautiful River: Rediscovering the Ohio

59 min. (VHS) 1992 TV Image
Based on the 1991 "Always a River" floating museum tour from Pittsburgh to Cairo, Illinois, in celebration of the Ohio River. This movie shows how river towns are rediscovering the waterway as a cultural and economic force. Narrated by TV host Nick Clooney.

Belinda

40 min. (VHS) 1992 Appalshop
Belinda Mason described herself as "a small-town journalist, a young mother and a reliable Tupperware party guest" until she became infected with the HIV virus in 1987. She decided to spend the rest of her life as a crusader for human rights and AIDS prevention, education, and treatment.

The Betrayal of Democracy

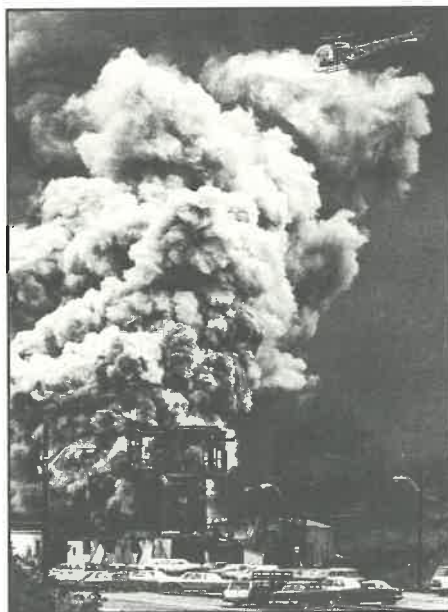
120 min. (VHS) 1992 PBS
This "Frontline" special combines investigative reporting, historical analysis, and interviews to explain the deepening divide between citizens and unresponsive government. William Greider, political analyst for *Rolling Stone* magazine, hosts the program. It highlights two West Virginia events — the 1968 Farmington mine disaster and the more recent MIC leak at the Union Carbide plant in Institute — as cases in point.

Cape Fear

105 min. (VHS) 1962 Facets
127 min. (VHS) 1992 Facets
Max Cady is a fictional Charleston native whose horrific adventures in this movie take place elsewhere. Robert Mitchum played the demented Cady in the 1962 original and Robert DeNiro in the 1992 remake. Rough language and violence.

The Disaster Chronicles

30 min. (VHS) 1991 A&E Network
Seventy-eight miners lost their lives in the Farmington mine explosion of November 20, 1968. This documentary investigates the tragedy



The Farmington disaster, 1968.

through interviews with former Congressman Ken Hechler, who led the battle to change federal mine safety regulations, and J. Davitt McAteer, head of the Occupational Health and Safety Center.

Fast Food Women

28 min. (VHS) 1992 Appalshop
Looks at the lives of women who fry chicken, make pizzas, and flip burgers at four different fast food restaurants in the Kentucky mountains. The mostly middle-age women are raising children and often the sole income source for their families. They work for pay barely above minimum wage, are without health care and other benefits, and have trouble getting full-time hours.

Fire on the Water: Ohio River Steamboats

29 min. (VHS) 1992 TV Image
The story of the steamboat on the Ohio and Mississippi from the first 1811 voyage to its current popularity as an anachronistic tourist attraction. Surviving steamboats, historic film footage, and the history of transportation and commerce are featured. John Briley, manager of the Ohio River Museum, narrates.

Fixin' To Tell About Jack

25 min. (16 mm & VHS) 1974 Appalshop
There's a lot more to Jack than just the beanstalk, and Ray Hicks is the man to tell you about it. Hicks is a hill farmer with a genius for telling the "Jack Tales," as handed down in his family from generation to generation. Elizabeth Barret directed the film, shot in the mountains of North Carolina.

From the Back Porch: Rae McKee

38 min. (VHS) 1992 WSWP-TV

Teacher of the Year Rae McKee of Romney discusses her views on education in West Virginia, teaching techniques, public attitudes, teachers, politics and today's youth.

Goodbye, Miss 4th of July

90 min. (VHS) 1988 Disney
Based on Christopher Janus's 1985 novel *Miss 4th of July*, *Goodbye*, excerpted in the Summer 1992 GOLDENSEAL. The book and movie tell of Janus's immigrant family's struggle to establish themselves in Fayette County, from his sister Nikki's viewpoint. Two West Virginians, Chris Sarandon and Conchata Ferrell, have starring roles, along with Louis Gossett Jr. The Disney Channel has shown this film each 4th of July since 1988.

Hands On

28 min. (VHS) 1992 Appalshop
Teacher Linda Oxendine-Brown is shown in her eastern Kentucky classroom using the Foxfire hands-on teaching method. Her 24 second-graders produce a weekly radio program; write, edit and publish a collection of short stories and non-fiction; plant tomatoes; visit a classmate's farm; and enjoy a mountain music performance.

The Holy Ghost People

52 min. (VHS) 1968 McGraw Hill
Surveys the major beliefs of a Pentecostal church, with candid shots of the congregation during a snake-handling service in West Virginia. Closes on a dramatic note when the leader is bitten by a rattlesnake.

The Hurting Church

60 min. (VHS) 1991 WNPB-TV
From the "States of Mind" series, a collaboration between seven American public television stations and the BBC. In this program residents of a rural West Virginia community are bound together by their tiny fundamentalist church. Their unflinching faith in God helps them battle unemployment, sickness, sexual abuse and poverty.

The Jolo Serpent-Handlers

28 min. (VHS & 16 mm) 1977 Karen Kramer
Focuses on a small, snake-handling church in McDowell County. Includes rare documentation of an all-night prayer vigil held for a rattlesnake bite victim and interviews with believers inside the relaxed settings of their homes.

Locked Out: Voices from Ravenswood

30 min. (VHS) 1992 Barbara Kopple
Oscar winning director Barbara Kopple, known for her documentary film "Harlan County USA," takes the viewer to Ravenswood, a town until recently devastated by a bitter lockout and the hiring of scab workers at Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation. Union members saw it coming when barbed wire went up, windows were boarded, and tractor trailers filled with their replacements came onto the job, but they were unprepared for the hard months that followed.

New River Gorge: A Climbing Expose

44 min. (VHS) 1991 Steve Cater
Rock climbing in West Virginia's New River Gorge, the hottest climbing area of the eastern U.S., is treated here for the first time on video. Forty-four minutes of nonstop action.

The Night of the Hunter

94 min. (VHS) 1955 MGM/UA
West Virginian Davis Grubb wrote the famous novel, turned into a film masterpiece by director Charles Laughton. This original version of the film stars Robert Mitchum as a psychopathic preacher in relentless pursuit of two children who possess their dead father's stolen fortune. This movie is considered an American classic.

Mountain Vision

28 min. (VHS) 1991 Appalshop
Examines five innovative and sometimes idiosyncratic examples of homegrown Appalachian television. Shades of Wayne's World!

Open Windows

28 min. (VHS) 1991 Appalshop
Documents the multicultural American Festival, which took place in eastern Kentucky and southwest Virginia in 1988. Includes diverse African, Jewish, and Chicano performances, as well as the Appalachian folk culture as portrayed by Appalshop's Roadside Theater.

Out of Darkness: The Mine Workers' Story

100 min. (VHS) 1990 UMWA
Documentary by Barbara Kopple and award-winning video director and editor Bill Davis. Historical film footage and photographs are integrated with firsthand accounts of the mine workers' history and the recent battle with the Pittston Coal Company.

Pare Lorentz

15 min. (VHS) 1991 WVLC
Steve Fesenmaier and Bill Drennen pay homage to filmmaker Pare Lorentz. He was born in Clarksburg in 1905 and died in March 1992. After attending various West Virginia colleges, he became a New York City film critic and eventually a government filmmaker during the Roosevelt Administration. In the latter capacity, he produced two of the greatest documentaries ever made — "The Plow That Broke the Plains" and "The River."

Project Education

63 min. (VHS) 1991 WNPB-TV
President Bush endorsed six basic goals for American education to be achieved by the year 2000. This shows how West Virginia is working to achieve these goals.

River Calling: Flatboat to Towboat

59 min. (VHS) 1992 TV Image
Traces the traditions of the working river from flatboats to modern diesel towboats. The captain and crew from the towboat *William F. Plettner* are featured, along with historic steamboats such as *Klondike*, *Island Queen* and *Kate Adams*. Interviews with Captain Fred Way and others.

Included with "River Calling" is a five minute piece on Bela Berty piloting the reproduction flatboat, *Spirit of the Kanawha*, down the Kanawha and Ohio rivers from April to October 1988.

Roving Pickets

28 min. (VHS) 1991 Appalshop
Miners roamed the coalfields in the early 1960's, shutting down mines to protest dislocations in their industry. This film looks at the consequences of automation in eastern Kentucky — severely reduced wages, chronic unemployment, threatened loss of union health benefits, and out-migration.

Shelter in Place

13 min. (VHS) 1991 NICS
The National Institute for Chemical Studies deals with the frightening subject of chemical leaks. This program shows a family how to protect themselves at home, given a proper warning, and what supplies are needed to seal doors and windows.

So Was Einstein

29 min. (VHS) 1988 Appalshop
Focuses on four elementary and high school students with dyslexia, a learning disorder. Children and their families describe the guilt, frustration and misunderstanding which often accompany dyslexia, as well as the hope and increased self-esteem that come through hard work and good remedial programs.

Step Back Cindy

28 min. (VHS) 1991 Appalshop
Presents traditional dance in the mountains, as seen in southwest Virginia. Dances include square dancing without callers, flatfoot, and cack walks. Appropriate for classes in dance, folklore, anthropology and rural sociology.

They Shall Take Up Serpents

24 min. (VHS) 1973 Films Inc.
Follows the fundamental religions in rural areas of the country, especially Appalachia and the snake-handlers in the Holiness movement.

To Render a Life

88 min. (16 mm & VHS) 1992 Agee Film Project
Ross Spears directed this award-winning film in honor of the 50th anniversary of one of

America's most influential nonfiction books, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, by Walker Evans and James Agee. Psychologist Robert Coles leads both his Harvard class and the viewer through the famous book.

Thunder Road

76 min. (16 mm & VHS) 1953 Films Inc.
Robert Mitchum stars as a Korean War veteran who must prove to everyone that he's as good at driving moonshine from the mountains to Memphis as he was before the war. Great black and white images, jazz singers and hillbillies. The new print of the film classic was specially made for West Virginia Film Services.

Trains That Passed in the Night

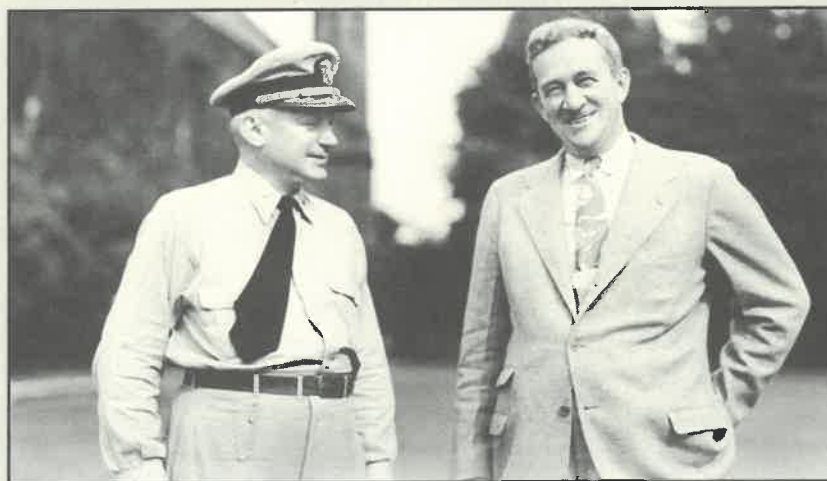
55 min. (VHS) 1992 PBS
O. Winston Link, America's great photographer of the steam engine, made his reputation photographing N&W trains in Virginia and southern West Virginia. Link took his first N&W night photograph in 1955 and continued creating images of steam trains until they died out in the 1960's. This documentary, part of which was filmed in West Virginia, travels the old tracks, revisiting the scenes of Link's photographs and meeting people he captured on film over 30 years ago.

Wanda

105 min. (VHS) 1971 Bravo
A touching, original drama about an Appalachian woman who leaves her Pennsylvania home and takes up with a two-bit thief. The film was written, produced, directed and starred Barbara Loden.

War, Taxes and the Almighty Dollar

30 min. (VHS) 1988 Appalshop
A look at the relationship of defense spending to the budget deficit, the volatile dollar and other problems. Interviews with unemployed factory workers, bankrupt farmers, economists and Pentagon insiders unravel the complicated relationship between the defense industry and the larger economy.



Correction: The naval officer shown here, mistakenly identified in the Fall 1992 GOLDENSEAL, actually is Lieutenant G. J. Longley. Lieutenant Longley was the V-12 commanding officer at Bethany College after July 1944.

Goldenseal Index

Volume 18, 1992

Articles which appeared in Volume 18 are indexed below, under the categories of Subject, Author, Photographer, and Location.

In the Subject category, articles are listed under their main topic, with many articles cross-referenced under alternate Subject headings. When more than one article appears under a heading, the order is alphabetical by first word of title. Each entry is followed by the seasonal designation of the issue, issue volume and number, and page number. Short notices, such as appear in the regular column, "Current Programs, Events, Publications," are not included in the index.

The index for the first three volumes of Goldenseal appeared in the April-September 1978 issue, and the index for Volumes 4 and 5 in the January-March 1980 magazine. The index for each successive volume appears in the final issue of the calendar year (e.g., Volume 17, Number 4).

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- Wall of China: Recalling the Greatest Dump in the World Spring;18:1;p52

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We thank the Friends of West Virginia Culture and History for their support of the recent GOLDENSEAL planning conference. To join the Friends, call (304) 558-0220.

In This Issue

RAYMOND ALVAREZ, a native of Marion County with graduate and undergraduate degrees from WVU, is vice president of ancillary services at Fairmont General Hospital. He has published several articles in health journals. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

COLLEEN ANDERSON is one of GOLDENSEAL's graphic designers.

JOAN ASHLEY, born in Charleston, has deep family ties to Pendleton County and now lives there on Sugar Run Farm. She has written for the *Elkins Inter-Mountain* and other publications. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

ROBERT BEANBLOSSOM is a Mingo County native, and a district administrator for the Division of Tourism and Parks. He oversees 15 state parks, mostly in southern West Virginia. He worked as a forest fire tower observer while in college, and began his career with the state's forestry division in 1973. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1991.

GREG CLARK, photo preservation archivist for the State Archives, is the man behind the magic of GOLDENSEAL's old photographs.

JOHN CUTHBERT, curator of special collections for West Virginia University Libraries, now heads the West Virginia and Regional History Collection at WVU. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DAVID FATTALEH is a photographer for the West Virginia Division of Tourism and Parks.

JULIETTE AUGER FORTNER, born in Kanawha County and educated at Western Reserve University in Ohio, has worked 26 years for the State of West Virginia. She knits, reads, and exercises and says she is a "white-knuckle sailor" on her husband's sailboat. The article in this GOLDENSEAL is her first published writing.

BECKY JONES, born in Charleston, now lives at Terra Alta. She has made photographs for 30 years, but only recently started her own photography business. She previously worked as a teacher, the fifth generation in her family to do so. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER, chief of photographic services for the Division of Culture and History, has published more photographs in GOLDENSEAL than anyone.

SUSAN LEFFLER is the former folk arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History.

KYLE LOVERN is a staff writer for the *Williamson Daily News* and also works as a freelance writer and photographer. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

REVA REED, born in Roane County, began teaching on an eighth grade education. After her first term at the Davis Creek school, she taught for another ten years while continuing her own schooling. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

PEGGY ROSS moved to her husband's 200-year-old family homeplace in Preston County about four years ago. She spent most of her life in Cincinnati, where she worked for the *Cincinnati Post*, and has worked in public relations and advertising. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JACK WELCH, a Hancock County native and a former professor at Bethany College and WVU, now teaches English at Abilene Christian University in Texas. Welch researched the Homer Laughlin China Company exhibit at the Cultural Center and wrote an article on the company's history for GOLDENSEAL in Spring 1985.

EUGENE WOLFE was born in Monongah in 1917. He enjoyed a long career with the navy as a writer and war press officer until his retirement in 1976. He continues to write and has completed two books, yet to be published. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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Inside Goldenseal

Page 42 — Nurses educated at Fairmont's old Cook Hospital served throughout north-central West Virginia. Writer Raymond Alvarez introduces us to several of them.

Page 58 — Preaching is hard for a man and harder for a woman, Rita Emerson says. The octogenarian was ordained as a Methodist minister in the 1950's.

Page 9 — Nobody gives Christmas to John Cooper of Mason County. He works hard at the tree business year 'round.

Page 39 — When the workers bought Weirton Steel, things changed, including some generations-old practices. Jack Harris remembers before and after.

Page 32 — The Wheeling Steel mill whistle called people to the radio as well as to work. The company's popular program was broadcast nationwide during the 1930's and 1940's.

Page 25 — Lester Hoover was born in Brandywine a century ago. He still owns the family farm and grist mill.

Page 50 — The Valley District of Preston County sent its GI's overseas and then sent them weekly greetings. The World War II newsletter continued until 1945.

Page 7 — The Elk River valley was home to the Fortner sisters and their grandparents were a big part of it. Juliette remembers the lessons today.

Page 17 — Charlotte Sanders wasn't sure she was cut out for journalism, but she is still at the *Williamson Daily News* after 49 years.

