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Goldenseal

From the Editor: A Goldenseal Wedding

Heaven knows we don't think of ourselves as matchmakers.

We confront the usual run of life's major events here, hearing from time to time of the birth of a child or grandchild of someone close to the magazine, or of the death of someone who has appeared in these pages. We run obituary notices occasionally — see our farewell to Jefferson County's Julia Davis in this issue — and could certainly publish more of these than we do.

But weddings — now, that's something different. We don't think of GOLDENSEAL as an old folks' magazine, but no one will be surprised when I say that most of the people we feature are well past marrying age.

Or so we thought, until we recently heard from freelancer Raymond Alvarez of Fairmont. Mr. Alvarez, vice president of Fairmont General Hospital, wrote "Young Nurses Long Ago" in the Winter 1992 GOLDENSEAL, as you may recall. His article dealt with the nurse training program at Cook Hospital, Fairmont General's predecessor, emphasizing the strict discipline the young student nurses lived under in times past. That included a prohibition against marriage, although he cited the secret wedding of student Kathleen Wagner to show that the rules sometimes were mercifully circumvented.

And sometimes they weren't. For Mr. Alvarez wrote his follow-up letter to inform us of one young couple who had broken off their romance and gone their separate ways. And there matters stood until both read the GOLDENSEAL article.

But let me give you the story in Raymond Alvarez's words, in his letter to me of April 9:

"I was surprised at the number of people who wrote letters, called me or made a point to tell me they read the article," he wrote. "The most interesting outcome is that a gentleman in California read the article, and the description of Mrs. Wagner's secret marriage while in nursing school at Cook Hospital triggered a memory.

"His name is Wager Bunner Shumaker, and he dated a student nurse named Ernestine Tucker at Cook in the early 1930's. Miss Tucker was reported and the brief romance was thwarted by the rules of the school of nursing. After she graduated in 1933, Ernestine Tucker went into private duty nursing. Miss Tucker and Mr. Shumaker never saw each other again and eventually both married and raised families."

Never saw each other for the next six decades, that is, for things have now changed and the story gets better. Raymond Alvarez continues:

"Mr. Shumaker relocated to California. After reading GOLDENSEAL, he contacted Ernestine Tucker Shriver and they talked about the article and their romance some 60 years ago.

"Well, to make a long story short, they are planning to be married in Fairmont on May 1st!"

Marry they did, and you can imagine how much that tickled everybody associated with the original story. Mike Keller, our normally gruff photographer, softened up right away and volunteered to drive from Charleston that Saturday morning to take pictures at the wedding. Fairmont General provided free blood testing to the happy couple. ("This seems the least we could do to make amends for Cook Hospital, our forerunner," Mr. Alvarez figured.) Those of us here at the GOLDENSEAL office threw in some flowers and our heartfelt best wishes to the newlyweds.

The big event made the news in Fairmont, appearing on the front page of the *Times-West Virginian* the day of the ceremony. Mike says the church was full, and he understands there was a good crowd at the reception afterwards. I wasn't about to pass up a December-December wedding for my June cover, and you can see the results of his photography there and on this page. I'm sure that Wager and Ernestine made the most charming couple married on May Day in Marion County.

It all adds up to a dandy love story, in my opinion. We'll not divulge the age of bride or groom, but you can rough out the math for yourself: These folks are resuming a courtship they left off about the time Franklin Roosevelt became President of the United States. Their experience says a lot about second chances, the endurance of romance, and the sheer, happy longevity of many West Virginians.

So I sincerely wish them the best, as does everybody I know of who has heard their marvelous story. And I bet there isn't one GOLDENSEAL reader who disagrees.

We congratulate you, Mr. and Mrs. Shumaker, and we wish you well.

—Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

Volume 19, Number 2 Summer 1993

COVER: Ernestine and W. B. Shumaker were brought together by an article in the winter GOLDENSEAL, renewed a 60-year-old romance, and married in Fairmont on May Day. We wish them well. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Barr Studio, Greg Clark, Mike Gioulis, Grubb Photo Service, Joe Herrmann, Michael Keller, Livestock Photo Company, Rich McMahan, Ron Rittenhouse, Underwood and Underwood, Bernard Wills, Woodall Studio

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.

April 7, 1993
Falls Church, Virginia
Editor:
The article "Locking Through" in the Spring issue brought back many childhood memories of life along the Ohio River. I lived two miles upriver from Hogsett, the site of the original dam.

The article omitted important early information on the dam built at Hogsett in 1911-12. In those days there was no heavy duty earth-moving equipment such as bulldozers and diesel scoops. Local farmers rented teams of horses to pull small scoops which held about one-half yard of earth each trip. I overheard laborers discussing the heat and hard work in the coffer dams.

This dam was of the wicket type and provided a constant water level of 15 or 20 feet. In 1937 the original dam was replaced by Dam No. 26 a few hundred yards downstream.

The outer banks of the river basin in this area are very steep, dropping down about 30 feet. Then the basin floor has a gentle slope several feet to the water's edge, and continuing to mid-stream. At a very low flow in 1912, I, as a lad eight years old, waded halfway across the Ohio River.

Dam No. 26 under construction, November 1935. Army Corps of Engineers photo, courtesy State Archives.

During normal flow prior to 1912, the beaches contained clean gravel and sand in most places, and were strewn with mussel shells. Many people lived in shanty boats along the shore. They dredged for mussels, which are about the size of Chesapeake Bay oysters. They may have eaten the meat, but I never knew of local farmers or other residents dredging for or eating them.

A pearl was a bonanza to the dredgers, if they ever found one. I understood at the time that they sold the better grade of shells to button factories. Mussels thrived in the shallow water. The dam of 1912 raised the water level part way up the steep outer banks which may have prevented further mussel growth, and at least made it impossible to dredge for them in this area.
Sincerely,
Vallie R. Weethee

The Smoke Hole

February 4, 1993
Fayetteville, West Virginia
Editor:
Reading the Winter 1992 article on the Smoke Hole brought back many memories of vacationing there during the latter half of the 1930's. My father, Gordon L. Withers, who died in 1992 at age 88, rented a fine cabin on an island in the South Branch in Smoke Hole Canyon.

Billy Withers and Uncle Andy Ayers.

The cabin was owned by a Judge Calhoun. If the water was up we had to carry our provisions across a swinging bridge, but if the water was low we could drive across and then hope that the river didn't rise during the night.

I remember vividly our visits with Uncle Andy Ayers and listening to him tell of his rifle and the Civil War. Enclosed is a picture of Uncle Andy and myself, inscribed by my father as August 1939. I was eight years old at the time.
Most Sincerely,
Reverend Bill Withers

Mill Fall Run

March 27, 1993
Shinnston, West Virginia
Editor:
"Hog Killing Time on Mill Fall Run" author Eugene Wolfe graduated with me in the class of 1936 at Monongah High School. I know where Mill Fall is, as I have passed there many times traveling to Fairmont. I knew Elizabeth Jones very well; as she was my teacher at Bingamon Miller School, and a fine one. Those teachers taught you and wanted you to learn. They were dedicated people.

The killing of hogs happened to me. My father died in November and on Thanksgiving Day we butchered. I had to shoot the hogs and get everything ready. My mother and younger brother and I did the job, as three other brothers and sister were all away. I had never gutted a hog, but I had seen Dad do it many times. I had confidence and I completed the job.

I also enjoyed the POW story. I conversed with several in prison camps while in England, although we weren't supposed to. I wanted to find out what part of Italy they came from, as my parents migrated from St. Johns Infeorie, Italy, and they might have known some of my relatives.
Sincerely Yours,
Frank A. Talerico

Edwight

April 5, 1993
Portage, Indiana
Editor:
I really enjoyed reading Johnny Vergis's story about the coal mining community of Edwight.

I am a former resident of nearby Eunice and am familiar with the names and places he wrote about. West Virginia people never forget their roots, especially if they came from a coal mining community, what was called a coal camp when we were growing up.

My late father Howard W. Short was a union leader all his life and a field worker for the UMWA in the 1940's and '50's, under the leadership of Bill Blizzard at District 17 in Charleston. My late father-in-law William F. Pioch came to West Virginia to Stickney, which is next door to Edwight, and built the town and the longest conveyor for coal in the world at that time. It was 1918 or 1919 when he arrived there. Some of the men he employed lived in tents while the houses were being built.
Sincerely,
Frances Short Pioch

Italian POW's

March 27, 1993
Las Vegas, Nevada
Editor:
I was thrilled to see "The Italian Prisoners at Camp Dawson" in print in the Spring 1993 issue of GOLDENSEAL. Here are a couple of corrections: The prisoners *were* fenced in, with barbed wire on top of the fence, and they were there during the winter of 1944. Today, some of those buildings are still there, with necessary repairs made after the flood. We visit Camp Dawson every year we get back to the hills to reminisce and to see the changes that are being made.

Your article brought back fond memories. With my daddy being the caretaker for 35 years, I lived there for my first 20 years. What a great place! I still think of Camp Dawson being my home. We lived in a lot of different places there, from the old farmhouse up the river from camp, to the stone cottage, and last to the caretaker's cottage, since ruined by the flood and torn down.

Sergeant Ringer at Camp Dawson.

I remember as a child, Daddy told me to turn on the outside lights around the house one evening. As I looked out, I saw one of the prisoners going to our basement where we kept the car. I called to Daddy, who called the security guard, but by the time a head count could be made, the man had gotten back into the compound. I also remember the prisoners playing baseball in the enclosure.

I have several other picture frames, a jewelry box, and a ring the prisoners made. The inlaid wood on the frames and jewelry box is superb. The old Ford tractor Sergeant Ringer is on is the one on which I learned to drive at age 11, while mowing grass at the camp.
Sincerely,
Nancy Ringer Cramer

March 22, 1993
Terra Alta, West Virginia
Editor:
The POW story is one of the most interesting stories we've ever read. And to think this all happened seven miles from Terra Alta and I was unaware of it!

Thank goodness for the Gallinas, Sylvesters, DeBonis, and Nancy Ringer Cramer who shared their photos and stories. The Cramers have been to our local historical society museum, and we've met. They're really enthusiastic, positive people.

I taught my first year at Masontown High School and I can tell you I never met nicer, more generous people than the Italians in Masontown. Lydia Main was a senior. I didn't have her, but I did have her sister Tecla in 11th grade history. It's a small world!

Please accept our congratulations for a grand article by Louis E. Keefer.
Most Sincerely,
Betty White

News from Santa

February 28, 1993
Evans, West Virginia
Editor:
I am writing to thank GOLDENSEAL for the nice story you did on me and our Christmas tree farm — Santa's Forest. Guess I'm slow getting out this letter, but as I told you I go dead for a while after Christmas.

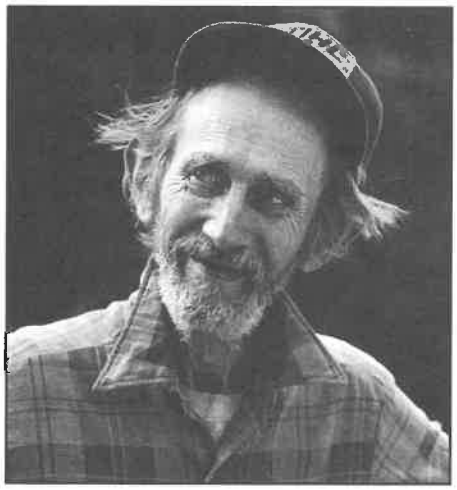
One or two things that I neglected to tell you when you were getting information for the story. My brother Frank has been very important in our operation. He's six years older than I but he provides moral support here at the farm and is at the sales lot in Charleston every day. He sells some trees, is our entire PR staff, and is chief statistician. Also he finds and schedules sales personnel.

Another thing: My daughter, Mary Jane Cole, coyly told me, "Pop, my name was not mentioned in the story anywhere." She and her husband, Richard, and my two beautiful grandchildren, Liana and Evan, live at Pinch. Jane and Richard have helped me for years.
Again thanks,
John Cooper

Remember Elmer Mollohan

January 18, 1993
Grafton, Ohio
Editor:
In the winter of 1984, you wrote an article on Webster County and the Mollohan Mill. It is with my deepest regrets that I tell you that my great-uncle, Elmer A. Mollohan, passed away November 5, 1992, at age 89.

Those who stopped by and toured the family mill will remember E. A. Mollohan. He will be greatly missed by all his family and friends. I will miss sitting around the coal stove listening to his stories of the early days. I will miss him each year when deer season rolls around and will miss him each time I return to Holly River.



Elmer Mollohan, photographed by Michael Keller, 1984.

For those of you who did not know Elmer Mollohan, you missed out on a lot. For those who did know him, never let his memory fade. Each time the sun rises over the ridge you can remember Elmer Mollohan.
Sincerely,
Charlie "J.R." Duke

Feather Crowns

January 29, 1993
St. Albans, West Virginia
Editor:
In the Winter 1992 GOLDENSEAL you showed a picture of a feather crown from the State Museum. I believe this is the one donated by my mother, Lurecy Smith.

It was from the pillow of my uncle Auttie P. Smith, who died on August 8, 1914, at 20 years old. He was the son of Haldridge and Emily Smith.

This is known as an "angel's crown," and as you stated it is believed to be an indication that the person who died was saved by faith. This was a great consolation to my grandparents, who were very religious people.
A faithful reader,
Arthur Plumley, Jr.

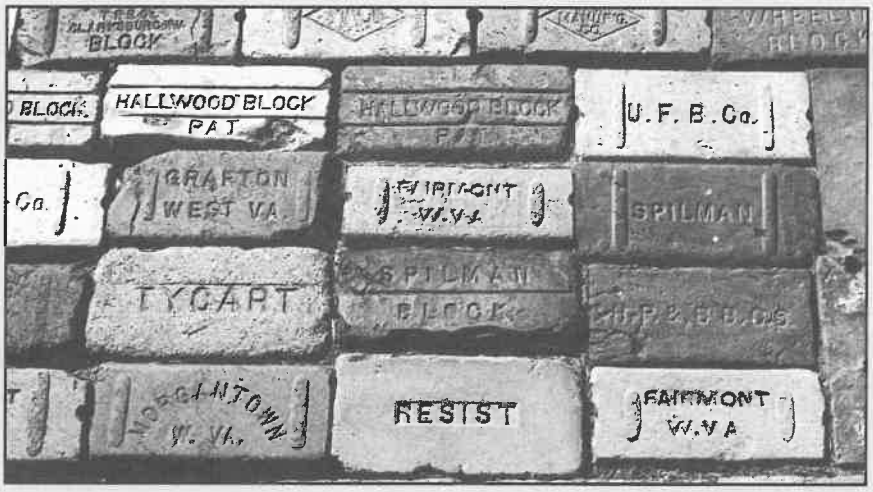
February 9, 1993
Petersburg, West Virginia
Editor:
On page 4 of the Winter 1992 issue

West Virginia Bricks

January 12, 1993
An important part of West Virginia history is being buried almost daily. Those old brick streets and alleys are being hauled away to be buried in landfills. Practically all of the old brick roads have already disappeared.

How many people know that almost every one of those paving bricks have a name embossed on them? No, the name doesn't show. The name is normally on the side where the mortar is placed. Often it is the name of the town or city. The FAIRMONT bricks were made by the Hammond Fire Brick Company. The GRAFTON bricks were made by the Thornton Fire Brick Company at Thornton. And the Suburban Wheeling bricks are self-explanatory. Sometimes it's just the initials of the manufacturer, such as H.P.&B.B.Co. for the Huntington Paving and Building Brick Company.

Those old brick plants are gone now, and records are almost non-existent. Historians have ignored what was a vital item in the progress of our industrial age. We members of the International Brick Collectors Association are trying to save a little bit of that history by collecting bricks with names on them and discovering as much of each brick's history as possible.



Although my wife and I have lived away from West Virginia since World War II, we return at least every two years. We have been able to find 30 different types of West Virginia-made bricks. We have found the sites of six of the old plants. For most of them there is little to indicate that a thriving business was ever at that location. Thirty or 40 years of trees and brush pretty well wipe out all traces.

If any readers are interested in those old "named" bricks, or if they are interested in our non-profit organization, I will be happy to correspond with them. It is about the only hobby in which the collection is not for profit. We exchange bricks and information and never place a price on a brick no matter how rare. I have been told by some old-timers that there was a "PHILIPPI" brick, but all I've ever found at my birthplace are GRAFTON bricks. I sure would like to have a PHILIPPI if they do exist.

The enclosed photo is of pavers and fire bricks; all made in West Virginia. Some of your readers may have worked in the plants that made them.

Bill McDowell
4503 Sierra View Way
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

there is a photograph of a feather crown now in the West Virginia State Museum. As a child I lived in Virginia on a small farm. Each year we would take the wool from our sheep to Cedar Bluff, Virginia, to be sold or exchanged for blankets at that woolen mill.

There was once an item in the *Bristol Herald-Courier* concerning a feather crown in Claypool Hill, Virginia, in a private home. We passed through Claypool Hill on the way to the woolen mill. My two sisters and I got our father to stop and we walked to the top of a hill to a white frame house and in the living room on a table in a glass box was a feather crown. It was found in the feather pillow of a man who had recently died.

All I can tell you is I have seen a feather crown, and your reference is a second one. How common they are I don't know.

Sincerely,
L. R. Littleton, Jr., MD

Greetings from Jerusalem

March 22, 1993
Jerusalem, Israel
Editor:

I am writing to let you know how far your circulation extends. I grew up in Buckhannon and my family still lives there. However, I left West Virginia in 1986 and I am now living in Jerusalem. Each new issue of GOLDENSEAL is sent to me by my parents, and I always look forward to its arrival. I enjoy your mixture of professional journalism with mountain flavor. Thank you for bringing a little West Virginia into my life so far away from home.

Sincerely,
Steve Shingleton

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.

DeSales Heights Videotape

The cover story in the Winter 1990 issue of GOLDENSEAL featured the sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary at Parkersburg's DeSales Heights Academy. We received much response to the story, especially as the institution neared its Christmas 1992 closing.

Two West Virginia filmmakers have made an extra effort to preserve the history of DeSales Heights. Tommie Dell Smith, producer, and Susan Pointon, writer and director, recently released a video documentary "The Silent Heart, 128 Years at DeSales Heights Academy." The sisters came to Parkersburg in 1864, one year after West Virginia became a state. The 60-minute VHS tape presents their history through historical footage and interviews with the sisters and alumni of DeSales Heights Academy. Smith and Pointon spare the viewer no emotion as they show the nuns leaving their DeSales Heights home for the final time.

"The Silent Heart" was made primarily for DeSales Heights alumni and community members. The documentary was funded in part by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History's Arts and Humanities Section, by the Ohio Arts Council, and by private donations. Copies may be ordered for $125 from Tommie Dell Smith, 2084 Chichester Lane, Parkersburg, WV 26101; (304)464-4545.

Dwight Diller Recordings

How much fun could you have with a recording titled "O Death"? Quite a bit, if it's a Dwight Diller tape. The cover states that this 1992 release features songs "expressing loss, loneliness, pain, and other harsh realities of life" — but goes on to note that it contains "squeaky fiddle" which could cause "a grinding down of the molars in many listeners."

On "O Death," as usual, Diller gives his listeners more than he promises, including haunting instrumentals, fact-based murder ballads, pleas and laments, and some surprising tunes and arrangements, all based on his intimate knowledge of the musical tradition of his native Greenbrier Valley.

Diller first became interested in playing the old music in the late '60's, and he soon discovered the Hammons family of Pocahontas County. Burl, Lee, Sherman, and Maggie Hammons inherited the music of one of the most respected families of old-time musicians, and Diller in effect apprenticed himself to them. He later gained extensive first-hand knowledge of several other strains of West Virginia music. Diller's recordings feature these unusual and authentic tunes and arrangements, interpreted through his distinctive banjo, fiddle, and voice.

Previous Diller recordings include "Red Rooster" ("contains no squeaky fiddling"), "Hold On," and (with John Gallagher) "Piney Woods." These recordings are available at stores or directly from Dwight Diller at P.O. Box 148, Hillsboro, WV 24946.

GOLDENSEAL Photo Exhibit

This summer GOLDENSEAL magazine is displaying some of its best photos from 1992 at the Cultural Center in Charleston. "Gathered from GOLDENSEAL" opened Memorial Day Weekend as part of Vandalia Gathering. The show includes 20 large format photographs.

The photos were selected from four issues of GOLDENSEAL magazine by editor Ken Sullivan and photographer Michael Keller. They picked images that represent a good balance of GOLDENSEAL subjects. Visitors to the show will see familiar faces from the pages of the magazine along with scenic shots, historical photos, and landmarks.

The "Gathered from GOLDENSEAL" exhibit includes people and places from many parts of the Mountain State. The photographers in the show include several GOLDENSEAL freelancers such as Doug Chadwick, Andy Yale, Becky Jones, and Mark Crabtree as well as staff photographer Michael Keller. The GOLDENSEAL photos will be on display through September 12 in the lobby and balcony gallery areas of the Cultural Center.

Cass Anniversary Exhibit

A special exhibit at Cass Scenic Railroad, with emphasis on the scenic, is now on display to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Pocahontas County railroad state park.

The show of photographs traces the history of the former West Virginia sawmill town and is sponsored in part by the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association. The documentary exhibit concentrates on vivid scenic photography as well as shots of the railroad, the mill, workers, the company store, depot, maintenance shops, and special events.

The photographs were provided primarily by MSR&LHA members. Many are on display for the first time. The exhibit runs through October 31. Two state agencies assisted with the exhibits — Tourism and Parks and State Archives.

A play, *Cass*, is also slated for the summer season at Cass Scenic Railroad. Set in the early 1900's when Cass was a booming sawmill town, *Cass* was written by Nicolette Maleckar and based on the writings of former Cass novelist W.E. Blackhurst. The 50-minute performances, presented every day of the week except Sunday and Monday, feature characters such as the boarding house owner, a young logger, a school teacher, the town cop, and a village gossip.

For more information contact the Cass Scenic Railroad by calling 1-800-CALL-WVA.

The Art & Craft Fair

The Mountain State Art and Craft Fair begins its fourth decade June 30 - July 4 at Cedar Lakes, near Ripley. The Fair, which began as part of the state centennial celebration in 1963, is a West Virginia classic. Now there are craft fairs all summer from Charles Town to Logan, but the Fourth of July weekend at Cedar Lakes is still special.

The Fair is one of the largest in the state, with over 200 exhibitors from West Virginia and the surrounding region. The variety of works displayed is unsurpassed, and includes modern as well as traditional items. Many of the crafters demonstrate their skills on the grounds. Visitors to Cedar Lakes last year saw weaving, blacksmithing, pottery, chair caning, and pewter spinning. The Fair also sponsors an apprentice program, in which selected master artisans work with students one-on-one for five days.

There's music, too, and all the roast corn, pinto beans and country cooking anyone could want. About a dozen of the state's finest traditional musicians perform in small tents located around the fairgrounds, and a

The state flower, as illustrated in *Flora of West Virginia.*

Flora of West Virginia

One of the great books of West Virginia has been reissued by Seneca Books of Morgantown. *Flora of West Virginia*, by botanists P. D. Strausbaugh and Earl Core, was recently published in a third printing of the revised second edition.

According to the publisher, the classic guidebook represents a combined 40 years of scholarship by professors Strausbaugh and Core, both of West Virginia University. Core, who died in 1984, prepared the first one-volume edition of the massive book following the death of Strausbaugh in 1965. *Flora of West Virginia* had previously been published in three volumes.

The heart of the book consists of detailed descriptions of more than 2,000 plant species found growing wild in the Mountain State. The plants, grouped by family, are identified by the scientific and common names and indexed both ways. Each is described as to size, season of bloom, habitat and other characteristics. There are hundreds of precise line drawings, most by artist William Lunk.

Flora of West Virginia is comprehensive, listing everything from mosses and grasses to the towering trees of the forests. The descriptive sections are preceded by an essay on West Virginia vegetation and an extensive list of plant families found within the state.

The one-volume edition of *Flora of West Virginia* is 1,079 pages long, hardbound, with glossary, index, maps and illustrations. The book sells for $40 in bookstores. Mail orders, including an additional $2, may be sent to Seneca Books, Route 6, Box 81-B, Morgantown, WV 26505.

— Ken Sullivan

larger stage area features dancing and more music.

The Fair's hours are 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and 9:00 to 4:00 on Sunday, July 4. Admission is $4 for adults and $1 for children aged six to 12. Call (304) 372-7860 for information.

General McCausland Biography

Unreconstructed Rebel: The Life of General John McCausland, C.S.A., by Michael J. Pauley, was published in early 1993 by Pictorial Histories of Charleston. The 106-page softbound book looks into the life of a military man whose predicament was to be a West Virginian fighting for the Virginia he believed in — a Confederate in a Union state.

Born in St. Louis in 1836, McCausland moved to Mason County in 1849. After attending the Buffalo Academy in Putnam County, he was accepted at the Virginia Military Institute. He graduated from VMI in 1857 and was commissioned a lieutenant colonel of the Virginia forces in the Kanawha Valley when war began. He organized the 36th Virginia Infantry and in 1862 and 1863 engaged in battles in Virginia and West Virginia. By 1864, McCausland was a brigadier general.

One of his most famous campaigns was also one of the war's most notorious. The burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, was ordered by General Jubal Early who wanted to "open the eyes of the people of the North." He chose McCausland to lead the expedition. Chambersburg catapulted "John McCausland to fame (or infamy, depending on the point of view)," writes Pauley.

McCausland built his home at "Grape Hill" near Point Pleasant in Mason County in 1885. After the close of the war, he devoted his time to farming. In 1980, the McCausland house and immediate grounds were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Pauley's book contains much information on the old home, some of it from interviews William Wintz of St. Albans conducted with McCausland's daughter Charlotte. She lived at Grape Hill until her death in 1971 at the age of 87.

Michael Pauley, an historian for the State of West Virginia and past president of West Virginia Writers, died just before his book was published. Publisher Stan Cohen worked with Pauley's brother Kelly to bring the work into print. *Unreconstructed Rebel* sells for $9.95 at area bookstores. Mail orders may be sent to Trans Allegheny Books, 114 Capitol Street, Charleston, WV 25301. Include $2.50 postage and handling, plus 60 cents sales tax from West Virginians.

Ned Guthrie Biography

West Virginian Ned Guthrie is the subject of a new book by California author Jim Lowe. *Mountain Boys Are Free* traces Guthrie's life from childhood through his years as a professional musician and union leader.

Guthrie, who was profiled in a 1987 GOLDENSEAL cover story, was active for many years in Charleston's music scene. In the 1930's he and his band, the Charlestonians, worked the capital city's after hours clubs. As a committed union man, Ned fought for the local musicians on issues such as fair pay and segregation.

MICHAEL KELLER

He waged war nationally as well, when he fought for years to repeal the Lea Act, 1946 anti-union legislation restricting musicians' ability to bargain with broadcasters. He never gave up, and in 1980 happily saw its repeal. In 1987 Guthrie was inducted into West Virginia's Labor Hall of Honor.

Guthrie owned Guthrie and Beane Music Company in Charleston. There he taught clarinet to students, including basketball star Jerry West. In 1973 he became president of American Federation of Musicians Local 136. Known for his tenacity, Guthrie once carded Elvis Presley. When a TV evangelist told him, "Gospel musicians don't need a union, our dues are paid in Heaven!", Guthrie retorted, "There's no scabs in Heaven."

Mountain Boys Are Free is a 172-page paperback, with photographs, drawings, and an index and notes. The book sells for $13.95 in stores or by calling 1-800-356-9315.

Festival of Appalachian Humor

Berea College of Kentucky will once again present a Festival of Appalachian Humor, hosted by Billy Edd Wheeler and Loyal Jones. This year's event will take place July 16-17 on the college campus, and will feature humor presentations and contests, scholarly looks at regional humor, and folk dancing.

West Virginia's Jim Comstock and George Daugherty are among the seven featured performers, along with Judge Ray Corns, Virginia Kilgore, Marc and Ann Pruett, Roni Stoneman, and Sam Venable. Humor contests, open to all ages, will award modest cash prizes to the top three contestants in the categories of jokes, traditional tales, true humorous stories, humorous routine, and humorous folk or original song.

Humor performances and contests begin at 7:30 Friday and Saturday evenings, with an admission charge

of $6 for adults and $3 for children ages six to 15. Dancing will follow the evening performances. The scholarly presentations will be on Saturday afternoon, and are free.

For more information, contact the Berea College Appalachian Center, College Box 2336, Berea, KY 40404; or call (606)986-9341, ext. 5140.

Roane History Reprinted

GOLDENSEAL recently heard from Roane County's Walton Library concerning an important publishing project. Robert L. Sergent, chairman of the historical reprint committee, wrote to say that his group had reprinted William H. Bishop's classic *History of Roane County, West Virginia, 1797-1927.*

They decided it was time to reprint in 1991, as originals of the book were very scarce and sold for up to $200 each. Sergent reports that the new hardback is a near duplicate of the original, right down to the color of the cover, with more than 700 pages of text and 80 photographs.

The Bishop history includes chapters on the county's early exploration, flora and fauna, industries and communities, war veterans, schools, roads, churches, and more than 300 individual family histories. "It is interesting to note that in addition to historians and genealogists, local title attorneys were among the first to purchase the reprint," Sergent writes.

History of Roane County sells for $43 postpaid, or $40 if picked up at either the Spencer or Walton library. Send mail orders to Robert L. Sergent, Walton Library History Reprint Committee, P.O. Box 11, Walton, WV 25286. Proceeds will be used to establish a trust fund for the Walton Library.

New Coalfields Book

Claude A. Frazier, M.D., the son of a McDowell County coalfields doctor, is the author of *Miners and Medicine: West Virginia Memories.* The North Carolina allergist teamed up with writer F.K. Brown to produce his account of the mining industry's approach to health care from the time of the Civil War through World War II.

Much of the descriptive text is anecdotal, from more than 100 testimonial letters Frazier received from people who lived in the coal camps of yesterday. Frazier relates the demands placed on coalfields physicians through statistics his father kept, noting, for example, that "in 1941 he had 9,196 office calls, 2,316 house calls, 80 deliveries, 15 deaths, 45 accidents, and 327 hospitalizations."

Frazier takes a critical view of social conditions in coal country. "The Appalachian coalfields have bred grinding poverty, appalling tragedies, and violence — the legacy of the capitalist system operating at its worst. There is no pride in King Coal's profits, for they were generated at the expense of the lives and health of thousands of miners," he writes.

Miners and Medicine, published by the University of Oklahoma Press, sells for $19.95 in West Virginia bookstores. The 131-page hardbound book is illustrated with historic photographs and indexed. Stuart McGehee, Bluefield historian and GOLDENSEAL freelancer, wrote the book's foreword. Call the Oklahoma Press office at 1-800-627-7377 for mail orders.

Julia Davis Dies, Dancing

Earlier this year West Virginia writer Julia Davis Adams died in Charles Town. A woman of many words, she was featured in the Fall 1992 issue when GOLDENSEAL freelancer Bill Theriault authored an extensive article on her life and work. Julia Davis published numerous books, beginning with a series of children's novels for E.P. Dutton in the late 1920's. She also wrote *The Shenandoah* for the Rivers of America Series in 1944.

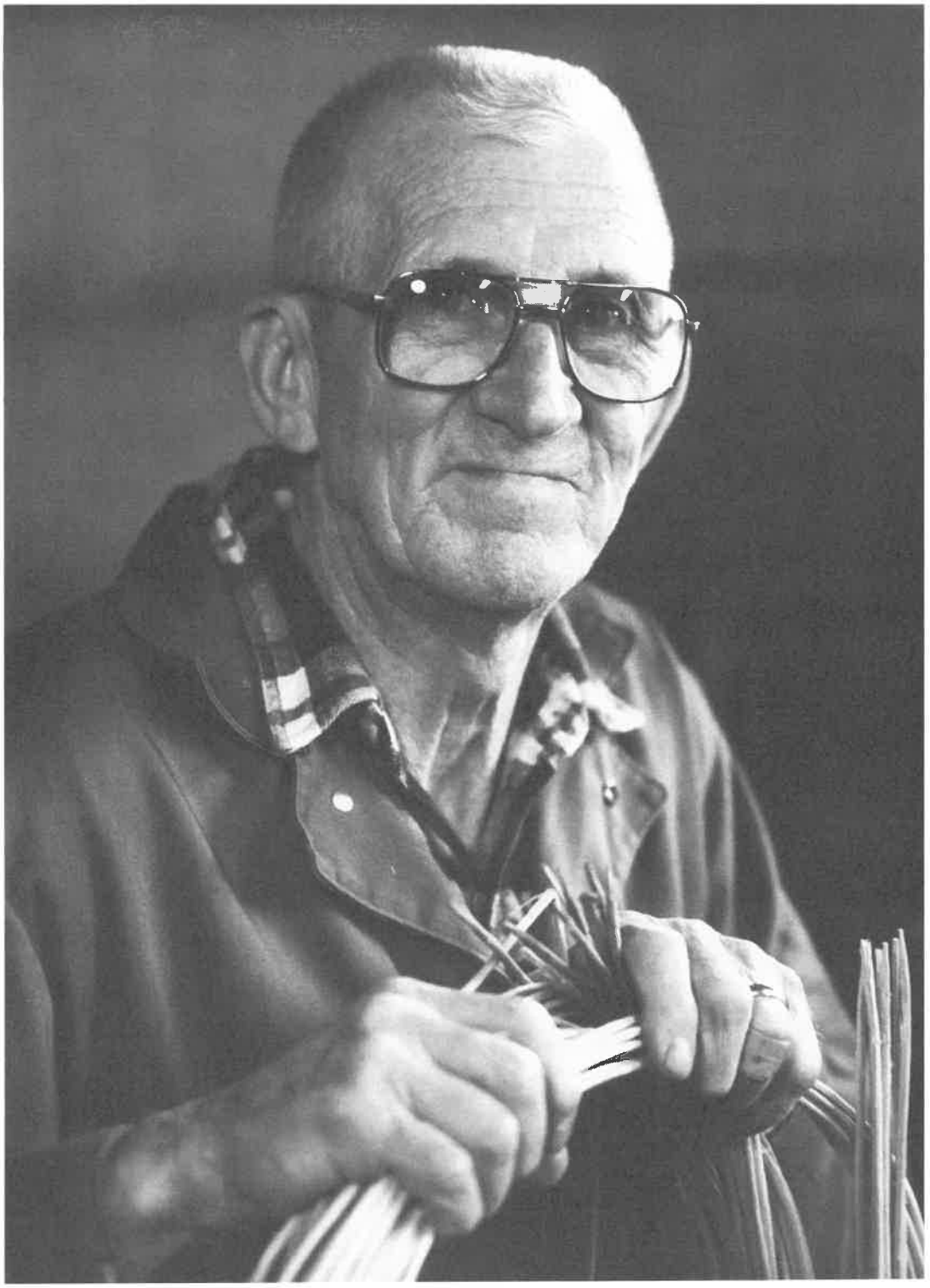
The daughter of Clarksburg lawyer, diplomat, and 1924 Democratic presidential candidate John W. Davis, Julia Davis traveled widely in her youth and during much of her adult life. But as she said in a recent newspaper interview, "Charles Town is my favorite place in the world. The natives are friendly here."


MICHAEL KELLER

Davis returned to Charles Town in the mid-1980's. She was named a Distinguished West Virginian at a reception honoring her recent book, *Harvest*, last year in Charles Town.

Julia Davis was always working. She wrote each and every word in longhand, not wanting to pause long enough to learn another way. "It would take me too long to learn to type or use a computer," she explained.

On January 30th, Julia Davis took a night off to attend a dinner dance celebrating the success of the Old Opera House in Charles Town. It was at this event that the 92-year-old West Virginian died, doing perhaps what she enjoyed the most — dancing!



Basket maker Homer Summers at his home in Kanawha County.

Thank You, Homer

Preserving a Basket Making Tradition

By Gerald Milnes
Photographs by Rich McMahan

Homer Summers doesn't think of himself as anything special, but until recently he could have been described as one in a million, maybe even one in a million and a half. As far as is known, he was the sole practitioner in West Virginia of a style of basket making generally known as rod basketry. This craft goes back to early American history, to the time of German settlement on the Appalachian frontier.

The man Homer learned from, his wife's great uncle Romie Phillips, died in 1991 at the age of 92 after having made baskets for 65 years. Romie provided inspiration, encouragement, and a basket pattern for Homer. He had learned from his own wife's uncle, Ogle Higginbotham. All three of these basket makers live or lived in the Pocatalico River country near the Jackson-Kanawha county line.

Homer was born in 1921 on Frog Creek, just over the hill from his present home on the Allen Fork of Pocatalico. As with most traditional basket makers currently working in our state, Homer has applied himself to his craft in his later years, after a working career in industry or trade. Because of health problems, he was forced to retire in 1975 with over 27 years of service at the True Temper plant, the old Kelly Ax factory in Charleston. His last assignment was polishing hammers at the sprawling plant on the banks of the Kanawha River.

Upon recovering from heart surgery in 1983, Homer went with his wife Juanita to visit Romie Phillips to purchase some baskets as Christmas gifts for their children and grandchildren. While they were there, Romie responded to the inquisitive Homer by describing the technique he

Homer is pleased to carry on the basket making style of the late Romie Phillips. The basket at left above is by Phillips, with Homer's at right. Rod baskets are woven of long oak rounds, resembling wickerwork to the casual observer. The photo at right shows a close-up view of the technique. Most West Virginia basket makers use flat oak splits instead.

used to make the white oak rounds for his baskets. Homer became fascinated, and a creative spark was kindled inside him as he considered the possibility of making baskets himself. Before he left, Romie gave him an old steel hoe blade to make his own die for use in making the round basket weaving material.

The visit to Phillips was in November. Homer remembers that he and Juanita purchased seven baskets for $42. Upon returning home, Homer went "back on the hill" and cut a white oak pole that, following his discussion with Romie, he thought would serve to make basket materials. After dragging this to the house, he set right in to attempt to make the white oak rounds as Romie made them. Getting the hang of that, and using one of Romie's baskets for a pattern, he attempted to weave a basket himself. He now describes that first one as a "disaster."

Not one to give up easily, Homer stayed right with it. Subsequent efforts were more successful. By Christmas, he had made enough respectable baskets that, counting those purchased from Romie, he and

Augusta Apprenticeships

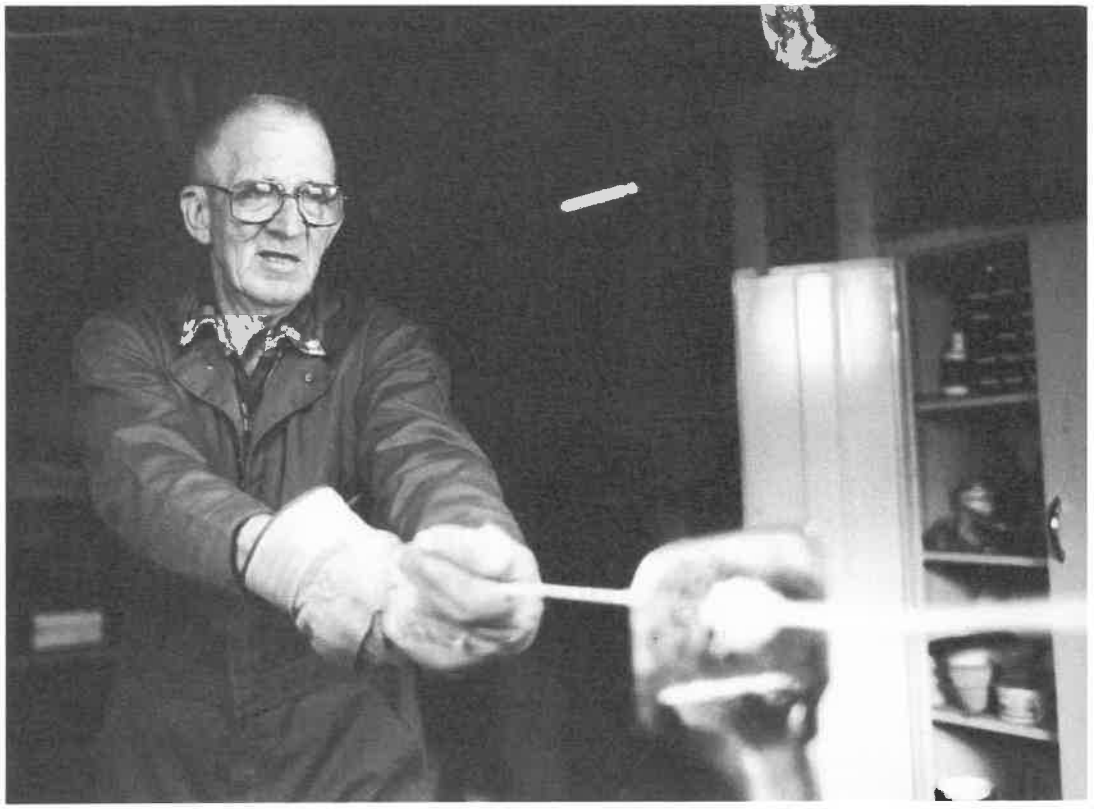
Just as Aaron Yakim learned rod basketry from Homer Summers, other apprentices are now learning more about the traditional arts in West Virginia. Since 1989 the Augusta Heritage Center's Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program has awarded a total of 42 students the opportunity to learn from master artists in the Mountain State.

The program is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. The goal is to identify regional folk art traditions and to revitalize them on a local level.

The current apprentices are learning a variety of crafts in such counties as McDowell, Randolph, Kanawha, Putnam and Fayette. Master artist Bill Mullenix is teaching muzzleloading rifle making to Jim Heck, concentrating on the raised carving that has been the hallmark of fine handmade rifle stocks for centuries. Rug weaver Marcella Cutright, spinner and knitter Mary Hicks, and rug hooker Jocie Armentrout are working with apprentices Bonnie Serrett, Mary Alice White, and Leslie Gordon respectively. Hicks has been spinning for 70 of her 80 years on a wheel made by her grandfather.

Guitarist Carl Rutherford has been paired with Bob Vorel, and old-time fiddler Wilson Douglas with Terry Vaughn. Dulcimer player Walter Miller is working with apprentice Teresa Hamm. Blacksmiths Ken McGaha and Eugene Ratliff have been enlisted to pass their skills on to Jack Posey and Paul Brown. Finally, glass artist Bob Hamon is teaching John Winter the art of mouth-blown glass.

Folk Arts Apprenticeships are available to West Virginia residents through an application process. For more information contact coordinator Gerry Milnes, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241; (304) 636-1903.



The basket rods are made the hard way, by pulling lengths of oak through the hole in a homemade die.

Juanita had two baskets each for the seven children and grandchildren.

Soon what started as a goodwill gesture in making gifts for loved ones grew to a sideline and now has become a passion. Homer says that every time he gets a basket finished he starts envisioning the next one. He has made over 800, and there's no end in sight. Although he has made some double-bulging "egg" baskets and a few square baskets from flat splits, he prefers to make the rod basket style as learned from Romie Phillips.

Homer has also worked to insure that the local basket tradition outlives himself. He was designated as a master artist in the folk arts apprenticeship program administered by the Augusta Heritage Center, and now modestly says that his apprentice, Aaron Yakim of neighboring Jackson County, can make baskets in the rod style that are equal to or better than his own. Aaron had previously proved himself and is recognized as a skillful white oak basket maker in the ribbed basket tradition. He and Homer are now perhaps two in a million in that they are both capable of producing rod baskets in the traditional pattern of the area.

Such traditions go back very far. The folk culture of the early German settlements in southeastern Pennsylvania has had a significant impact on West Virginia and the Appalachian region. Many objects and practices in our West Virginia folk culture may be traced to that area. Mountain dulcimers, mountain rifles, and log house construction traditions are examples of folkways that have found their way from the old country, through Pennsylvania in the early 18th century and then down into the Appalachians. Both German settlers and Scots-Irish and English immigrants followed the "Great Wagon Road" which led from southeastern Pennsylvania, southwestward into the Valley of Virginia, and on to the frontier. Baskets and basket making techniques still evident in 20th-century West Virginia traveled south and west with waves of pioneers from that area.

Today rod baskets turn up in many parts of the country where German people have put down roots. German settlement areas of Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley, eastern West Virginia, North Carolina, and westward into Ohio and Indiana have been fertile ground for basket collectors seeking baskets woven in various styles using the oak rod material.

Through exact ways that will remain obscure, distinct patterns, materials, and techniques that are involved in basket making traditions and which are harbored within an

ethnic group, become regional in nature. As Germans, Scots-Irish, English, and other European people became first Virginians and then West Virginia mountaineers, their crafts absorbed various influences to become Appalachian, more regional than ethnic. Some traditions, such as are found in Homer Summers's rod baskets, have retained enough of their original nature so as to be traceable to their early American roots.

Homer's basket style has survived at least three recent generations with very little change. His baskets have some unique characteristics, but in general they compare similarly to those of some other rod basket makers. They are differentiated most by their solid wood handles and decorative top edge. Most older styles of rod baskets have twisted rod, or "roped handles," whereas Homer's baskets, and those of a few other makers who have been documented, utilize a flat handle fashioned from a solid split of oak. This oak split is woven into the basket design and joins itself on the bottom in a scarf joint.

In our region, baskets woven with flat splits (sometimes called splints) are almost always made from white oak material. Some of the white oak "egg" or "melon" baskets will have smaller rounded ribs woven into the design, but the actual weaving material is a flat thin piece anywhere from three-sixteenths to three-fourths of an inch wide, depending on basket size and pattern. The splitting is done along the annual growth rings and rays of the sapwood, the outer white wood on a white oak tree. Conversely, Homer's baskets use only small, rounded, pliable rods for weaving material and slightly larger flattened material for ribs. These vertical ribs are then fashioned into the sturdy and decorative top edge or border.

Most styles of rod baskets are

Book Review:

Appalachian White Oak Basketmaking: Handing Down the Basket

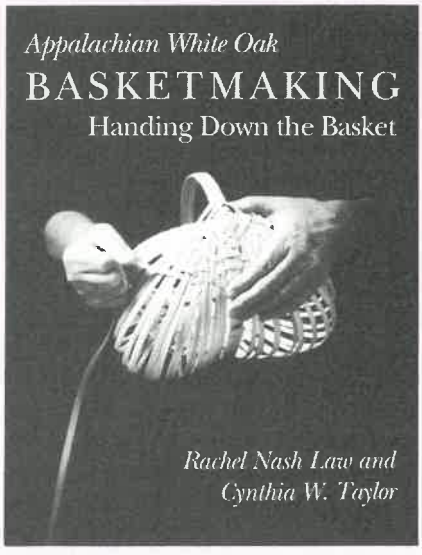
by Rachel Nash Law and Cynthia W. Taylor

As you leaf through the pages of *Appalachian White Oak Basketmaking*, it's apparent that this book was a labor of love. Rachel Nash Law, who was raised in Greenbrier County the daughter of a basket maker, apprenticed to Randolph County basket maker Candice Laird in 1968 and has gone on to become a respected maker, teacher, and exhibitor. Cynthia Taylor, of Marietta, Ohio, is a fiber artist who specializes in teaching and documenting traditional arts.

The authors set out to document regional white oak basket types and designs, to provide a full discussion of technique, to describe and document numerous living practitioners, and to provide a backdrop of information and documentation on outstanding basket makers of the past. Their ambitious quest reaches fruition in this informative and engaging volume.

Numerous West Virginia craftspersons are included in the book's text, which is liberally sprinkled with 179 illustrations, maps, and diagrams, including many pictures in full color. Historical photos include a rare picture of Levi Eye, a famous Pendleton County maker credited with having made over 7,000 baskets; Claude Linville of Lincoln County, who made ribbed baskets; and Currence Dobbins of Gilmer County, who made split baskets. Contemporary West Virginia basket makers considered in the book include Oral Nicholson of Doddridge County as well as Homer Summers.

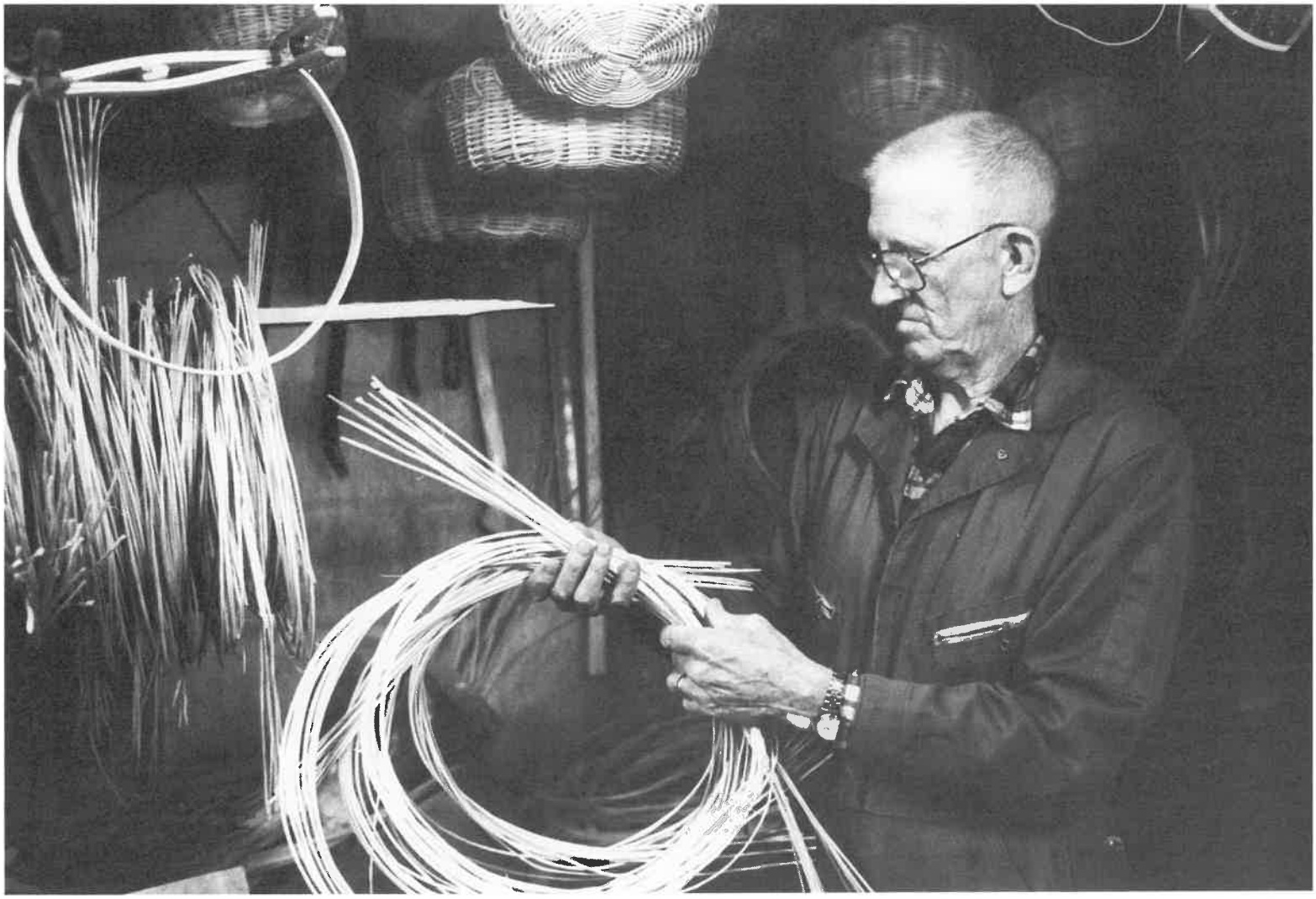
For those who want to try their hand, detailed sketches and pictures take the reader through the intricate steps of weaving and preparation. Many curious designs and shapes of baskets are depicted with the general categories of rib, rod, and split baskets making up the main types. The authors assess traditional methods and propose theories and concepts based on careful attention and study of the white oak basket making traditions and craftspeople of this area. They connect local traditions to more widely dispersed and ethnically influenced styles, designs, and methods.



Law and Taylor have produced the definitive book on the white oak basket making tradition in Appalachia. If you have an interest in the region's folk arts and crafts, or if you're a basket maker or perhaps an enthusiast and basket collector, this book deserves a place on your shelf.

— Gerald Milnes

Appalachian White Oak Basketmaking *is an attractive large-format book of 295 pages, published by the University of Tennessee Press in 1991. The book may be purchased from bookstores or from the publisher (1-800-621-2736) for $18.95 paperback or $37.95 hardbound.*



Homer with baskets and raw materials in his shop. The rods are stored dry and soaked before use.

apparently an adaptation of an older European style of wickerwork normally woven with willow rods. This likeness to the look of wicker is an identifying mark of an oak rod basket. Many older baskets woven in this style are incorrectly identified by the untrained eye as it's very easy to mistake the round oak rods for willow or imported reed. The weaving material must be carefully examined. When magnified, the distinct grain of oak can be discerned and the material will not appear perfectly round. Willow exhibits bud scars, has a distinct pith in the center, and tapers from end to end. Reed, which is actually machined from rattan palm vine, appears to be perfectly round and somewhat porous, darkens with age, and is much lighter in weight.

Durability is another factor in identifying the material used in older rod baskets. White oak rods will wear and outlast the softer willow or reed if given the same care and treatment. With use, the rods acquire a patina only associated with oak.

While other styles of basket making have seen a revival, rod basket makers these days are few and far between. In researching their recent book, basketry authorities Rachel Nash Law and Cynthia Taylor located just a few practitioners in the Appalachian region. For some reason, the flat white oak splits found in ribbed, square, and round baskets became a much more popular weaving material for basket makers. The vast majority of old and new handmade baskets found on the market attest to this. But thanks to Homer's efforts to master the old rod-style tradition, new rod baskets with his signature, date, and sequence number are now gracing West Virginia kitchens, holding garden fare, perhaps containing sewing kits, and may even be receiving a few eggs during daily collections at the henhouse.

Homer's technique begins with newly cut white oak poles which he brings from the woods to the comfortable shop adjacent to his house. He prefers to cut the poles in the fall of the year because he feels that wood cut in warm weather when the sap is up will get brittle after it "airs." Homer first splits the poles in half, then quarters, until after many more divisions the splits, with heartwood removed, are about a quarter-inch thick.

These long and roughly square pieces are then sharpened on one end. Homer starts pulling them through the largest sizes of holes drilled in the old hoe blade which is held in a vise. He subsequently pulls the oak strips through smaller and smaller holes until he reaches the desired diameter. The result is a round, flexible "rod" of wood, usually about six and a half feet long and ranging from one-sixteenth to three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. The flattened splits for the basket's upright ribs are shaped to size with a drawknife and smoothed with a pocketknife. These materials, both ribs and weavers, are allowed to dry and then stored. They are soaked in warm water before use.

Homer makes and stores five dif-

ferent sizes of handles, which then determine the size of the finished baskets. Using various sizes of weavers, beginning with the thinnest rods for the tight curves on the bottom, Homer weaves his baskets in Romie Phillips's pattern. When viewing the work of the two basket makers side by side only very minor differences can be observed.

Homer reckons he has about seven hours of work invested in a medium-sized basket. Usually, only the pliable white sapwood is used, but occasionally Homer finds a tree with heartwood that will split true, resulting in baskets with a darker hue. The hoe blade still used is the one that was given to him by Romie Phillips ten years ago. It has seen untold thousands of feet of oak drawn through its various-sized holes.

Finding a market for his handmade baskets proved difficult at first. A big disappointment for Homer came when his baskets were not accepted for consignment in craft shops, most likely because his material was not recognized as oak and his design not thought to be traditional.

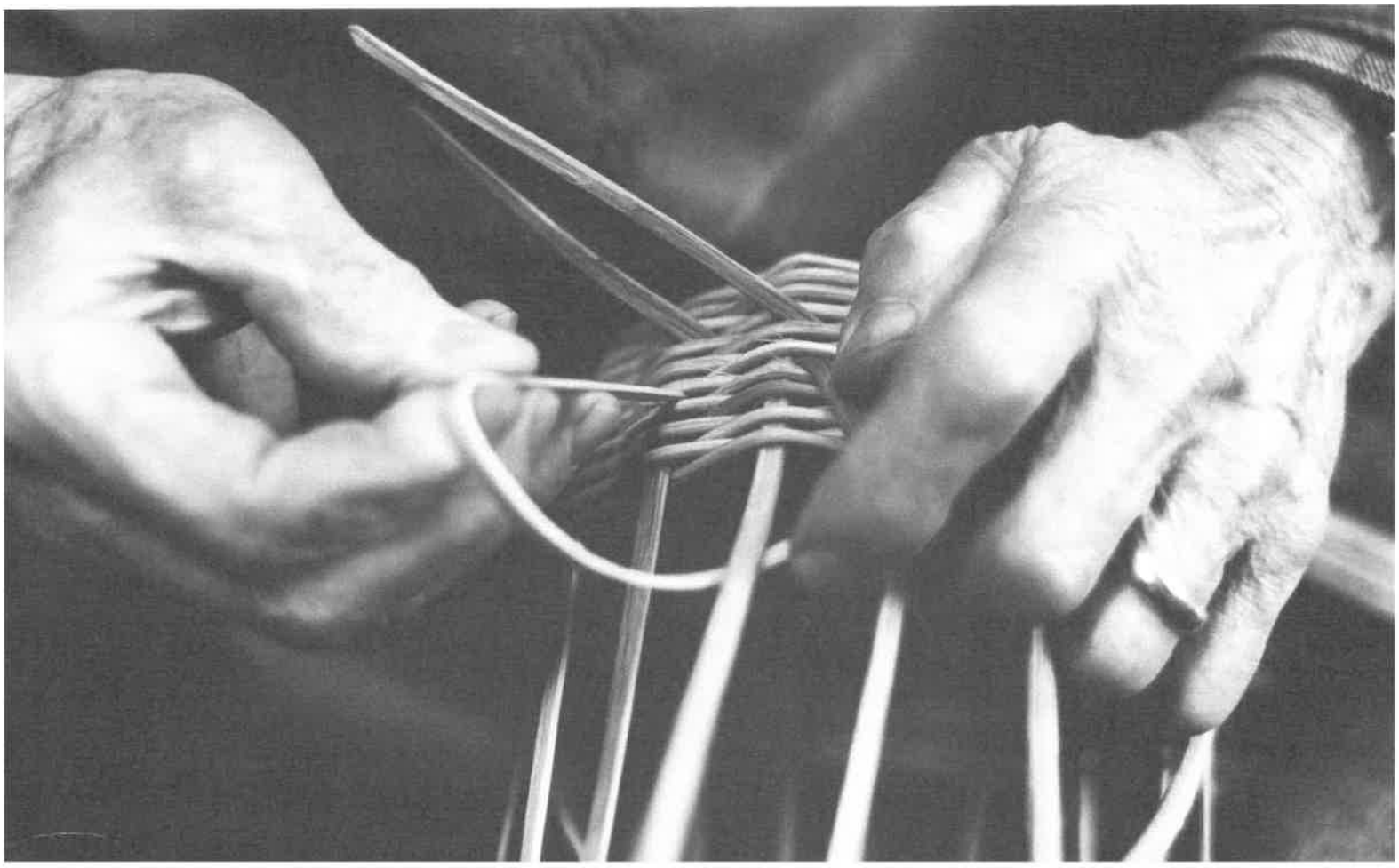
Luckily, Homer's work was noticed by Law and Taylor who were researching baskets and basket makers for their influential book [see the accompanying review]. This recognition gave him a boost. The authors showed great interest, and through their efforts to document his craft they instilled in Homer a sense of pride in his work. Soon after, he was asked to demonstrate at the big Art and Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes near Ripley. He has found an eager market for his baskets there and at the Augusta Festival in Elkins, where his demonstrations of basket weaving and his attractive baskets catch the eyes of collectors and crafts enthusiasts.

What is the motivation that induces basket makers like Homer Summers to take up the practice? Originally baskets were made for practical use as vessels. Today, strictly functional vessels can be had for a lot less investment than seven hours of tedious labor by grabbing up an old coffee can, plastic bucket, or cardboard box. Obviously there's something about a basket, handmade with much care and affection, that goes beyond just its function.

There is the attractive, appealing design that attests to some original conceptual thinking as well as refinement over generations of time. Perhaps just as important is that basket styles are part of who people are, where they came from, and what they're about. I think it is this that accounts for most of the attraction. Materials and processes that have taken generations to develop refuse to die easily even when their intended functions are substantially obsolete. This is especially true when these objects have visual and nostalgic appeal as well.

But for whatever reason, and happily for Homer Summers and other basket makers, high quality work is still in demand and is being appreciated by more and more people who place a particular value on quality art and craft. We almost lost a rod basket making tradition in West Virginia. Because of Homer's quest for a special gift for his children and his devotion to mastering the technique, and because of his willingness to teach an apprentice, the tradition still lives on and his gift is now enjoyed by many. Thank you, Homer!

Like any craft, basket making comes down to skilled hands at work. These belong to Homer Summers, doing what they've done many times before.



Bluefield's Biggest
The Grand West Virginian Hotel

By Stuart McGehee
Photographs from the Eastern Regional Coal Archives

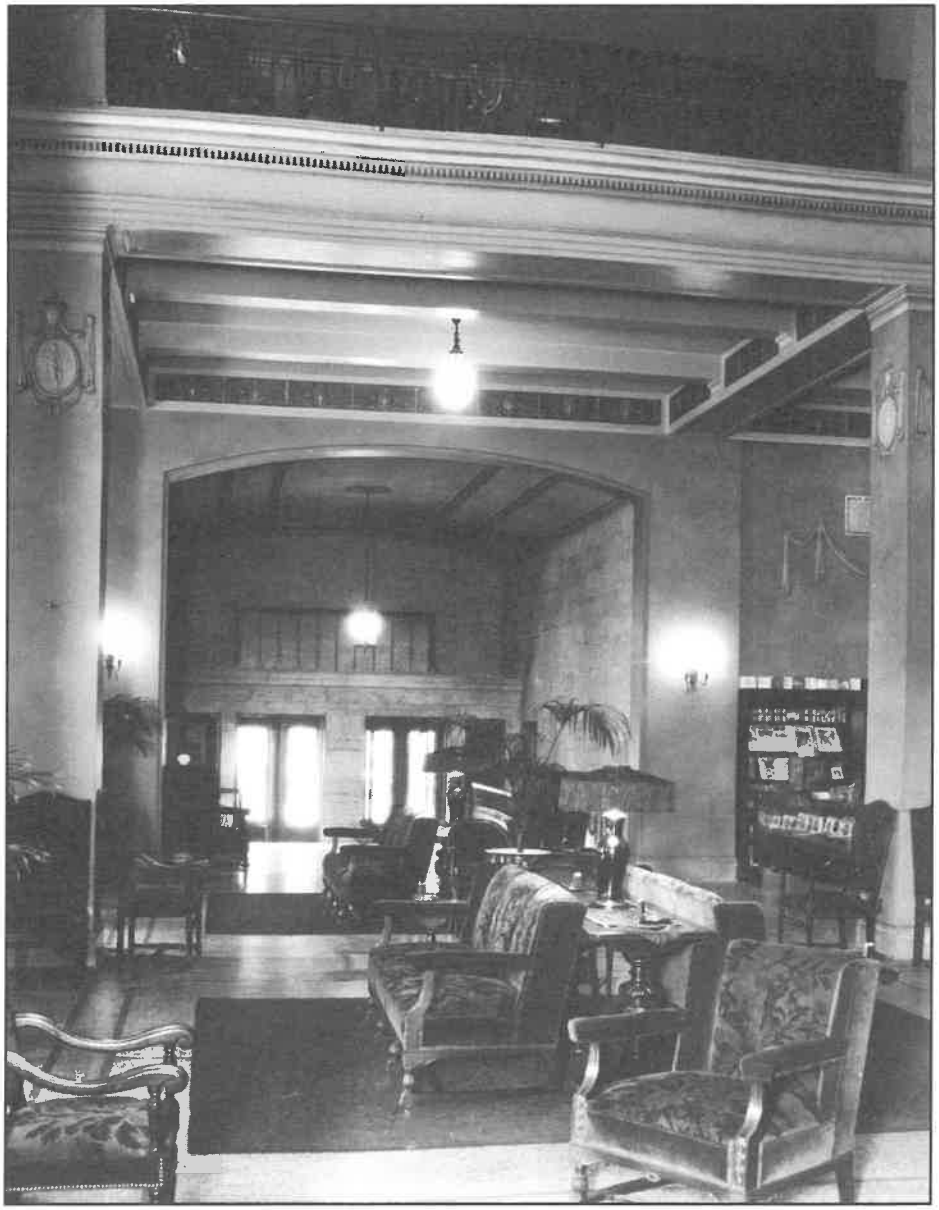
Seventy years after its 1923 construction, Bluefield's West Virginian Hotel is still far and away the tallest building in the state south of the golden dome of the State Capitol. Symbol of the power and the glory of the coalfields of yesteryear, the 12-story structure reflects the history and culture of southern West Virginia.

Bluefield was a sleepy cattle farm before the 1882 arrival of the Norfolk & Western Railway. The railroad chose the valley as the location for the headquarters of its Pocahontas Division, which has hauled the world's finest bituminous coal for well over 100 years through Bluefield's famous natural-gravity switching yard.

The East River Valley soon bustled with the noise and smoke of a thriving railroad town. Bluefield quickly emerged as the financial, administrative, medical and corporate center of the coalfields, whose residents rode the train to Bluefield's "Avenue" for business and pleasure. Full of jostling black draymen, Italian stonemasons, Jewish merchants, Hungarian and Polish immigrant coal miners, denim-clad Virginia-side farmers, and sharp dressing Pennsylvania businessmen, Bluefield was a busy young city.

World War I — the "Great War" to its participants — brought an unprecedented demand for "smokeless" Pocahontas coal. The nation's need for naval fuel and steel for munitions sent tonnage on an upward spiral which continued throughout the 1920's. By 1930 over 40 million tons rumbled annually through Bluefield's massive rail yards. Prosperity beckoned many. Population more than doubled, from 10,000 in 1910 to 23,000 by 1924, and the postwar years witnessed the greatest period of expansion in the city's history. Bluefield grew up in the 1920's. Smartly-built office buildings sprang up on the hill above the N&W yards.

The extraordinary volume of business activity brought a call for suitable accommodations to replace the aging and decidedly blue-collar "railroad hotels" along the Norfolk & Western. The influential Bluefield



The lobby of the West Virginian was finished in imported Italian stone. Photo by Underwood and Underwood, date unknown.

Above: William "Uncle Bill" Cole was the man who got the job done. He and his associates opened the hotel in 1923. Photographer and date unknown.
*Left:*The hotel was Bluefield's biggest and is still the tallest building in southern West Virginia. Photo by Underwood and Underwood, mid-1920's.

Rotary Club investigated the feasibility of erecting a proposed "Hotel Bluefield" to host wealthy businessmen in their accustomed style. Moreover, a first-class convention center might bring even more outside revenue into the community. As the enthusiastic Chamber of Commerce stated, "On account of its altitude of about 2,600 feet Bluefield offers an ideal location for summer gatherings." In 1918, the Rotary appointed William Jacob Cole to head a committee to undertake the development of just such a hotel.

"Uncle Bill" Cole was a perfect choice, and he was the man most responsible for the ambitious project's success. Born in Smythe County, Virginia, in 1883, Cole came to Bluefield in 1913, and by World War I had become a prominent businessman, owner of Cole Baking Company and president of the Virginia-side First National Bank of Graham. He quickly organized the Cole Realty Company and attracted over 500 local stockholders to invest in the hotel project.

The resourceful Cole ultimately persuaded the region's business elite to invest well over one million dollars in the hotel. Financiers and coal operators alike joined the cause. Purchasing 90,000 square feet of prime downtown real estate at the corner of Federal and Scott streets, Cole and his associates retained Alex B. Mahood as architect.

Mahood was the perfect designer to fashion Cole's dream into reality. Born in Lynchburg in 1888 and educated in Paris, Mahood almost single-handedly planned and built modern Bluefield, both residential and commercial, and did much work elsewhere. His best designs are nationally recognized, including the circular Performing Arts Center at West Virginia University in Morgantown, and much of his work is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The massive hotel in Bluefield was to be the most stupendous undertaking of his lengthy career. For Alex Mahood would achieve what Bill Cole had conceived.

Cole envisioned his hotel to be an impressive 12 stories tall, over 160 feet from pediment to cornice. Respecting Bluefield's passion for Renaissance Revival architecture, Mahood fashioned an enormous classical column of ashlar limestone. Projecting balustrades and rectangular cartouches garnished the tower at its tenth floor level, adding carefully-crafted touches of European elegance to the looming structure. Seven arched two-story and multi-paned tripartite windows faced polished cut glass mirrors, framing the three-story lobby. In nominating the hotel for inclusion on the National Register, Braxton County architectural historian Mike Gioulis termed the building "one of the state's grandest hotels." Towering above the city, crowning the southward spread of Bluefield's central business district, there was nothing like the West Virginian Hotel anywhere near Bluefield.

It took nearly two years to construct the grandiose building. Timber supports and concrete footers were driven into the limestone caverns and sinkholes near the railroad yards, and

the skeletal steel girder work could be seen for quite some distance along the railroad. Cole ran out of funds and had to ask his investors to re-subscribe to show their continuing faith in the half-built monster. To please their anxious partners, Cole and Mahood used local contractors and suppliers whenever possible. Bluefield Furniture boasted that it had brought in 27 boxcar loads of interior decorations on the N&W. Ten thousand yards of blue and gold carpet covered the hallways, and seven miles of pipe and conduit were encased behind the light Italian walnut paneling.

It is best to describe the big building from the underground up. The basement contained a seven-chair barbershop, a bakery, a laundry, a ten-table billiard parlor, storerooms and boiler rooms, as well as racially segregated locker rooms for the service staff. While all the waiters in the main dining room were black, white girls staffed the counter in the coffee shop.

Two revolving doors admitted weary travelers from the bustle and coal dust of downtown Bluefield, leading up through wrought-iron-railed vestibules to the registration desk. The main floor, centered around a breathtaking 3,600-square-foot lobby done in soft buff travertine stone imported from Italy, contained the modern kitchen, coffee shop, and cigar stand. Just above, the mezzanine level held meeting rooms, offices, and a private dining room where the local Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary had already pledged to meet weekly. Most impressive, there was a huge grand ballroom with a 28-foot ceiling, three chandeliers, and a stage big enough for the latest East Coast bands to perform.

Two hundred and forty spacious L-shaped rooms, "with two hundred and forty baths," all with "direct light and ventilation" occupied the ten stories above the lobby area. The rooms, which varied in color, trim, decor and furnishings, could be connected to form suites for large groups and business conferences, of which there would be many. Fire protection was of the latest and most modern design.

Cole brought in top-quality service personnel to ensure his hostelry the excellence demanded by his well-heeled customers. Manager John M. Ayres had worked in a supervisory capacity at the famed Homestead in Hot Springs, Virginia. Chef Max Schleusener, with the requisite French training, was lured from The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs. Barber Harry Jones, head waiter Boyd Barber, and bell captain Frank Pettigrew, all black, had experience in large urban hotels on the East Coast.

The place was finally ready to open for business late in 1923. Pearle

The West Virginian's coffee shop was the place for a light meal or cup of coffee. Photo by Underwood and Underwood, date unknown.

Brammer won a contest and named the operation the "West Virginian," a rather self-evident title for the grand hotel. The public and press were invited to an open house on Thursday afternoon, November 24, but Cole wisely scheduled a private showing and grand opening for the directors and the patient stockholders on Wednesday night. Fragrant chrysanthemums, ferns, and an "army of busboys" greeted the 400 wide-eyed investors. The menu for the sumptuous banquet clearly articulated the hotel's proud boosterism: "Bluefield Salad," and "Breast of Chicken, West Virginian." The Meyer-Davis Orchestra from Washington debuted on the ballroom stage, inviting a misty-eyed and satiated crowd to join in the encore, the "West Virginia Hills."

As its creators had surmised, the West Virginian Hotel instantly made Bluefield an attractive convention center. Both the Grand Lodge of Masons of West Virginia and the Baptist General Association of Virginia scheduled their 1924 annual meetings at the hotel, and its reputation spread as the only truly genteel lodgings in the often wild coalfields. The West Virginia Teachers' Roundtable brought 600 people to the "Queen City of the Coalfields." Veterans of Foreign Wars came from four states to sample the hotel's renowned fare in 1940. As president of the West Virginia Hotels Association, Cole arranged for no fewer than 53 annual conventions to meet at the West Virginian one frantic year. The state's most powerful coal operators and railroad executives met there to conduct business and enjoy the Saturday night dinner dances.

Influential local clubs and fraternal organizations such as the all-male University Club and the distaff Quota Club made the hotel popular regionally. Bluefield's Kiwanis met in the private dining room on Mondays at noon, the Rotary on Tuesday, and the Lions on Friday. Annual Chamber of Commerce banquets filled the grand ballroom to capacity. The slogan, "Steel, Concrete, and Service," proudly expressed the West Virginian's philosophy in advertisements in the pages of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. But skeptical *Telegraph* editor Hugh Ike Shott, himself a charter investor, muttered ominously, "Will it pay?"

"Happy to be a West Virginian"

Architect Alex Mahood

Bluefield businessman William Cole envisioned an extravagant hotel when he undertook to build the West Virginian. He turned to architect Alex Mahood to make it happen.

Alex B. Mahood (1888-1970), one of West Virginia's most prominent architects, studied at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, concentrating on the Renaissance Revival and Classical Revival styles of European architecture. "This was a distinguishing factor alone for a West Virginia architect," architectural historian Rodney Collins of the State Historic Preservation Unit says of Mahood's training. "In Bluefield he was a big fish in a small pond."

Architect Alex B. Mahood designed the West Virginian and many other buildings in Bluefield and elsewhere. Photographer and date unknown. Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

Mahood came to Bluefield in 1912. The oldest child of Sallie Lee and John A. Mahood, he was born and raised in Lynchburg, Virginia. Mahood was working with an architect in Roanoke when he came to Bluefield to oversee the construction of Bluefield's Law & Commerce Building. He decided to stay in the young coalfield city and soon established a successful practice. He went on to design numerous buildings in Bluefield and throughout West Virginia over the next half-century.

Mahood soon put his architectural skills to use on a project dearer to his heart. He met Kathleen Sparrow at Hollins College in Virginia and asked her to come to Bluefield. They were married in 1915, and Mahood built a new house for his bride. Alex and Kathleen Sparrow Mahood (1892-1973) raised three children, two of whom went on to pursue livelihoods in Bluefield — Alex, Jr., also an architect, and John J., known as Dr. Jack Mahood to most. Daughter Belva raised a family in Virginia.

Alex Mahood went into business with Fred Van Dusen. Their partnership would endure through the building of the West Virginian Hotel, though it was interrupted for two years by World War I. Alex Mahood rose from private to first lieutenant during the war and was away for two years.

"Bluefield was just opening up and developing. It was an exciting place to be," says Alex Mahood, Jr., adding that his father was interested in the town and the area from the beginning. "He was very happy to be a West Virginian."

Mercer County credits many of its churches, residences, stores, schools, and public buildings to Alex Mahood. Today much of his work is included on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic preservation consultant Michael Gioulis notes that Bluefield probably has the largest concentration of Alex Mahood buildings in the state. A partial list, compiled by Gioulis, shows more than 25 homes alone.

Other Mahood structures include the Bluefield Country Club, Concord College Student Center, the Creative Arts Center and Twin Towers at West Virginia University, Bluefield's Beaver High School, Bluefield College, the U.S. Steel Building in Gary, the Skyway Drive-In Theater in Brush Fork, the Guyan Theater in Logan, and Bluefield's Christian Church, Christ Episcopal Church, Commercial Bank Building and Perry Building. Most of the buildings survive today.

For the Mercer County Courthouse, built in 1931, Mahood drew the plans and specifications and supervised work on the building. The north and south entrances featured friezes with stone carvings depicting the economic and industrial history of Mercer County. The carvings were based on a painting by Mahood's mother, an accomplished artist in her own right.

Following World War II Alex Mahood worked on the renovation of the Jefferson building at the Andrew S. Rowan Memorial Home at Sweet Springs in Monroe County. "It was one of the early historical restorations in this part of world," says Alex Mahood, Jr.

Alex Mahood gave more than architectural elegance to his community. He was a member of the Bland Street Methodist Church, the Bluefield Masonic Lodge, Rotary Club, and Sons of the American Revolution. He served 17 years as president of the Commercial Bank of Bluefield and was chairman of the board of directors following that. He also held membership in the American Institute of Architects.

Alex B. Mahood died in Bluefield on Christmas Day, 1970, at the time of year when the buildings of his city were displayed at their finest.

—Debby Sonis Jackson

One of many fine residences built by Mahood and still standing in Bluefield. Photo by Mike Gioulis, courtesy State Historic Preservation Unit

The West Virginian has played a prominent role in state and community events for nearly three quarters of a century. Every West Virginia governor from William Conley to Arch Moore enjoyed the hospitality of the West Virginian. Scarlet-tressed screen siren Greer Garson hawked war bonds from the north balustrade to a huge throng in September 1942. Barnstorming evangelist Billy Sunday preached to an enthralled crowd on Commerce Street, saving souls in the looming shadow of the hotel. Humorist Will Rogers's name graces the registration book along with that of Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller. Management and labor hammered out a national coal labor agreement in the big hotel where the operators stayed, although John L. Lewis and the other UMWA negotiators preferred the politically correct working-class accommodations at the trackside Hotel Matz.

Pioneer West Virginia radio station WHIS, an early country music landmark, began transmitting in 1929 from the hotel rooftop, but a disastrous 1935 penthouse fire sent the fledgling station two blocks down the street. Bluefield's AAA Club rented space in the hotel lobby for years, where hotel namer Pearle Brammer worked as secretary. Daredevil stuntmen have climbed the hotel's imposing facade, and the distraught and despondent have hurled themselves from its parapet.

The West Virginian Hotel figures prominently in Bluefield's most enduring civic booster scheme, "Nature's Air-Conditioned City." In response to effusive Chamber leader Eddie Steele's 1939 promotional stunt, Cole agreed to provide free hotel rooms on the normally infrequent days when Bluefield's temperature topped 90 degrees. But Uncle Bill miscalculated, Bluefield got hot, and he nearly went broke honoring his ill-advised promise.

Unabashed, the Chamber of Commerce switched its offer from free hotel rooms to free lemonade, and rare hot spells to this day bring out bevies of "Lemonade Lassies" to serve the refreshing beverage. As recently as last year, the gimmick has garnered publicity from as far away as Europe and the Orient. During the

1991 50th anniversary "Lemonad Escapade" festivities, maintenanc supervisor Mike Reed pitched rip lemons from the 12-story hotel roof top for the Bluefield Orioles "Baby Birds" baseball players to field fa below.

There was remarkable continuity in the hotel's staff. There were only five managers in the history of the busi- ness. Abner Davis came to Bluefield in 1925 from The Greenbrier, rising from bellman to superintendent of service — "the only Negro super in the state," the 91-year-old still proud- ly recalls — before his 1968 retire- ment.

"The town was nicely built and there was a lot of work," Davis mused, reflecting on his career at the hotel. "I made money," he laughs, and says he still receives holiday greetings from the "New York big shots" he served while wearing the blue-and- gold shoulder patch, his badge of

Above: Old-time hotel rooms were more substantial and less glitzy than those in today's motels. This is typical of the 240 rooms at the West Virginian, each with a private bath. Photo by Underwood and Underwood, date unknown.
Below: Bluefield at mid-century, with the famous N&W train yards prominent in the center. The West Virginian is the tallest building in town, located at upper right, by the parking garage. Photo by Grubb Photo Service.

authority. Davis, a tireless civic and charity worker, is a community treasure as he nears the century mark.

Veteran journalist and beloved community sage Eddie Steele, at 85 nearly as experienced as Abner Davis, also remembers the heyday of the hotel. "While many of the state's famous buildings have succumbed to the wrecking ball, the West Virginian Hotel still stands as a monument to the glory days of southern West Virginia," he notes. As originator of the lemonade giveaway, Steele played a key role in promoting the hostelry.

Current Bluefield mayor Paul Cole, grandson of the man who built the West Virginian Hotel, can just see its proud capstone from his office as president of Cole Chevrolet-Cadillac on the slopes of East River Mountain. "I grew up in the hotel," he recalls. "Every Saturday I would read the latest comic books at the newsstand. When my brother contracted scarlet fever I even lived there by myself for several weeks. I worked there as a room clerk."

Although the hotel legitimately claimed to be the "Center of Southern West Virginia and Southwestern Virginia: Political, Social, and Business," Hugh Ike Shott's fretting foretold trouble, and Bill Cole himself was forced to assume direct management of the facility for many years. Perhaps the West Virginian was too grand. The family still claims that the hotel never really made money. Bluefield's population crested at about 25,000 around World War II. Since that time, mine mechanization and changes in regional transportation have made the population plummet and rendered such splendid facilities as the West Virginian largely unnecessary and unprofitable. Their era passing, Cole died in 1959 and Mahood in 1970.

Streetside view of the West Virginian Hotel. This photograph was made in the mid-1950's, to judge from the cars in the foreground. Photographer unknown.

Hugh Shott's worst fears finally came true. The hotel — in "horrendously terrible bad shape," according to Paul Cole — was sold at foreclosure in 1969, unable to meet a bond obligation. Reluctantly Bill Cole's heirs sold the building in March 1977 to Federal Associates of Cleveland, Ohio. The new management secured three and a half million dollars of federal funds to renovate the gigantic old hotel into a retirement center for elderly tenants. The resulting "West Virginian Manor" is full of residents, some of whom recall the old days.

As Alex Mahood's clerk, Thelma Motley typed the purchase orders for the hotel's construction in 1922, and ironically returned to stay out her last years there half a century later. The widows of Bramwell millionaires Phillip Goodwill and Thomas Cooper enjoyed the hospitality of the Manor. Maintenance supervisor Mike Reed likes to walk the perilous catwalk along the cornice, pointing out community landmarks from the bird's-eye vantage point.

So seventy years after its construction, the West Virginian Hotel is still the tallest building in southern West Virginia. The memories enshrined in its masonry tell us much about ourselves and the past. Its legacy will always symbolize a proud and bygone era of history, when steel tracks, steam locomotives, and Pocahontas coal fueled the industrialization of America.

Down to his last roll of vintage wrapping paper, shoe man Tom Greco says most customers prefer bags nowadays. It's just one way his business has changed.

Thomas Greco
Shinnston Shoemaker

By Norman Julian
Photographs by Ron Rittenhouse

Put leather in his hands and customers in his shop and Shinnston shoemaker Thomas P. Greco has the ingredients for happiness. Greco, 83, is a master of the well-heeled shoe and benefactor to many a weary sole. He's been working in a shoe shop since he was 11.

Greco is one of a dwindling number of Italian shoe repairmen, or "calzolaio," in Harrison County. The work ethic is as ingrained in them as sheen on fine leather. Half a century ago, almost every small town had a shoe repair shop and the larger towns had several.

"I've been at this spot 58 years," says Greco, a gregarious person who speaks the English language like a graduate of a college, though he never has attended one. "I'm trying to make it 50 more."

"I almost have to work to be happy. I thank God I am able to work."

His Shinnston Shoe Repair Shop is a fixture on Pike Street, which actually is the main street in this town. During slack periods on sunny days, you can find him standing outside, greeting passersby and making small talk with friends.

Greco has seen his town change, and he can tell you all about it. That Pike Street is the main street, for example, takes some explaining. Officially the name Main Street is attached to the road near the West Fork River.

When the town was first settled in 1773, Main Street was a dirt road that fed wagons to a shallow place where they could cross the West Fork River. The settlement was known then as Shinn's Town, after the pioneer Shinn family. The town was chartered in 1852 and incorporated under its present name in 1877.

Travel patterns have changed. The main drag through town now, Pike Street, does double duty as U.S. Route 19, which winds north-south through the county. Businesses along the way present changing faces.

Tom Greco can tell you about that, too. "Harmer's Funeral Home has been here longer than I have," he says. "Vincent Lumber Yard almost as long."

His shop is headquarters to a faithful group of local patrons and some who come from outside Harrison County. They have not abandoned traditional resolable shoes in favor of "tennis shoes" and other modern footgear.

"Many people come in, and they say they like this shop because it reminds them of old times," says Greco. The smell of shoe polish and old leather pervades the place, summoning up memories.

I visited him three times preparing for this article. Some people who come and sit stay for hours. Like them, I like to hang around and listen to Tom talk.

He credits his erudition and college man's sense of vocabulary and syntax to "reading a lot." His official schooling after high school consisted mostly of being an apprentice shoemaker and training as a Navy medic during World War II.

Greco was born in Fairmont, a son of the late Giovanni Greco and Filomena Tiano. Both his parents were born in Italy, and they married there. The family settled in Lumberport, following work in the mines, and Tom worked in Pete Tiano's shoe shop as a boy.

Lumberport is a couple of miles from Shinnston. High schools bearing the names of the two towns were combined into the consolidated Lincoln High, which is positioned between. Perhaps Greco is bemused to find himself in the course of study at the new school. Teacher Karen Morgan, who specializes in Appalachian culture, sometimes brings her students to meet the veteran shoe man. She sees his shop as a vital institution which served to nurture community folkways.

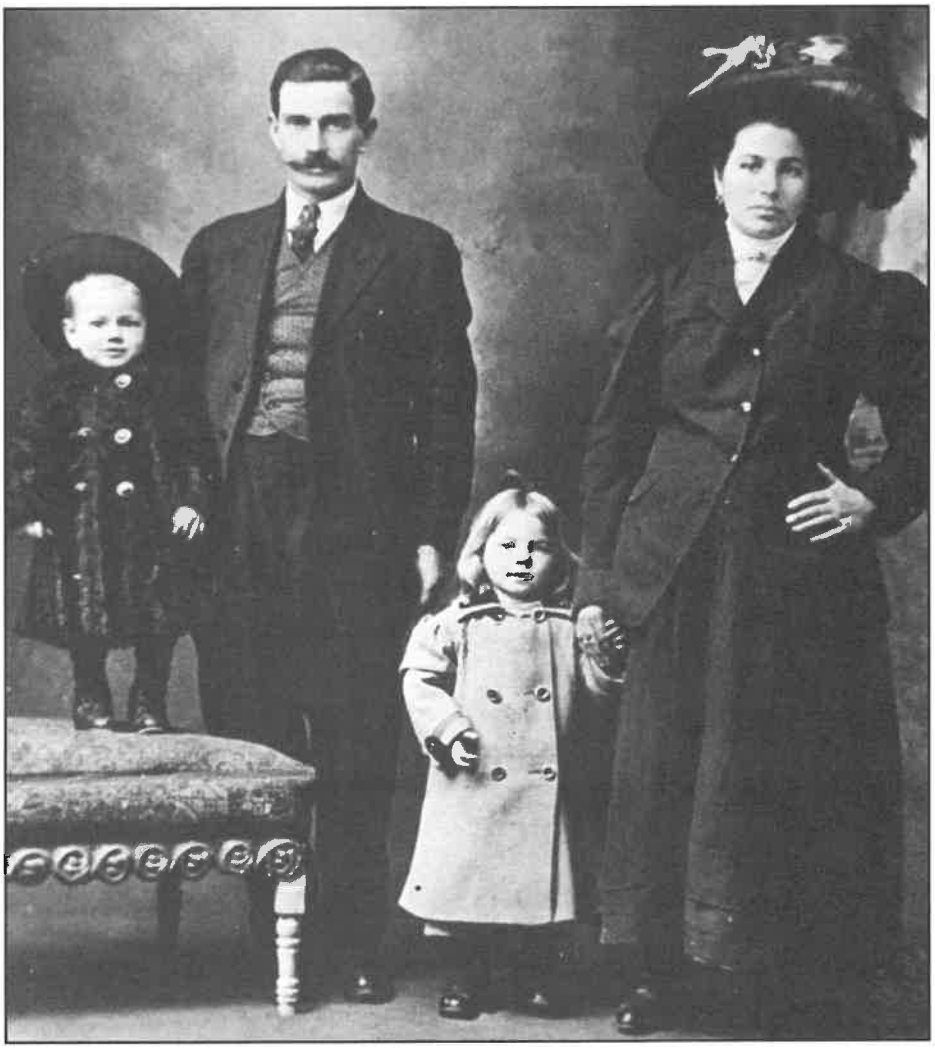
Tom Greco himself graduated from old Lumberport High. Two days later he went to Clarksburg to serve six and a half years as an apprentice at Nu-Way Shoe Rebuilders on Third Street. There he met many of the shoemakers and shoe repairmen whose reputations grew over the years. He recalls that he met some wonderful people not connected with the business, too, and learned how to get along in life.

"My father took me to Clarksburg and got me a place to stay, with Tony and Concetta Biafore," he remembers. "I was paid $1 a day, $6 a week."

It would have been too expensive to commute by streetcar to Shinnston, eight miles away. That cost 35 cents each way to Heywood Junction. To take the branch line from there to Lumberport was an additional seven cents.

"I'd go home late Saturday and go back to the shop early Monday," Greco recalls. He was fond of streetcar travel. "It never polluted anything," he says of the electrified vehicles that followed city streets in town and its own railroad tracks between towns. These special streetcar railways with the overhead power line source were

Most of the work is done on a few old machines now largely maintained by Mr. Greco himself.



Thomas Greco as a young boy (left) with his immigrant parents and sister Julia. Photographer unknown, 1913.

to small towns in the early part of this century what the modern interstate highways are today.

Greco questions the wisdom of changing from one to the other. "The streetcars always ran on time," he says. "You could set your watch by them. But we had to go modern and pollute the atmosphere and clog the highways." In some things, he insists, the old ways are best.

The shop Greco apprenticed in was owned by Louis Costa and Larry Cavallo. Dominic Faris and Louis Daniel were his co-workers.

Originally Faris was Faraccio, and Louis Daniel was Luigi Daniele. It was common in those days for Italian names to be Anglicized. Often this happened in the coal mines, where a mine clerk, himself maybe only semi-literate, would shorten the polysyllabic Italian names to the shortest possible version.

"Who could spell those names in the old days?" asks Greco. The immigrants were struggling to understand the spoken word, let alone words on a page. Many could not write English. Complicating this is the Italian alphabet, which differs from the English. For example, there is no "J" in Italian. "G" suffices.

Other times, the Italians shortened their names purely for business reasons. In the predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture, a swarthy skin and foreign name could handicap a business person. Entry into some occupations and most professions was not easy, if possible at all.

Shoe making and shoe repair, though, had been a proud trade of Italian workmen for centuries. Greco recalls there were eight shoe shops in Clarksburg then, with at least that many in Fairmont, and almost all were owned by Italians.

In the beginning, the young Tommy Greco swept floors, dusted, and cleaned and oiled machinery. Then he started pulling off heels and ripping off soles. Attaching new ones was the next step. "The footwork then was made in the conventional style," Greco says. "Shoes could be resoled or reheeled much better than nowadays."

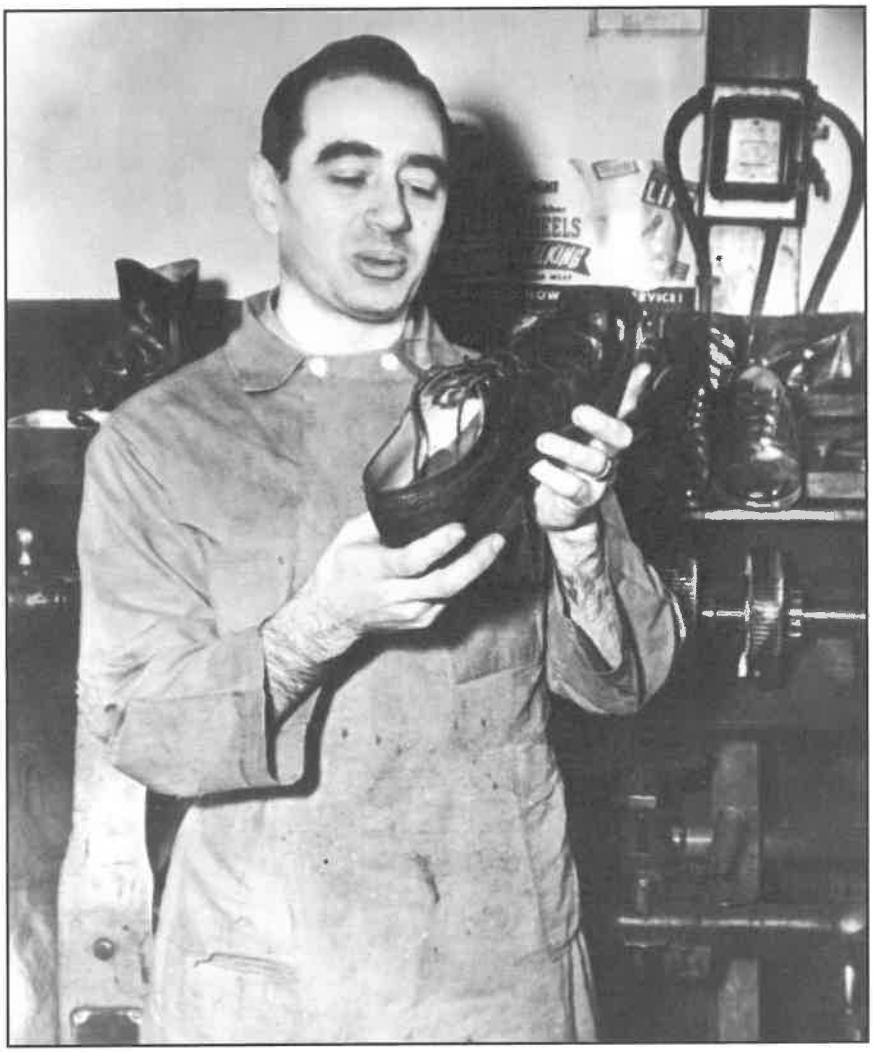
In a little while, he was put to work using the trimming machine. Then he moved into the more complicated work. "After four years, head man Louie Daniel — he was a great shoemaker and repairman — let me use the sole stitcher. That was a tricky thing. A novice couldn't be put on a machine like that and do the work the way it has to be done. You have to hold the shoe firmly and feed it around."

But Greco was to become deft at using all the machines. He learned the lore of the shop. Waiting on customers and ordering materials helped round out his education. "I already knew how to shine shoes," he says. He had learned that in Pete Tiano's shop.

Finally, in 1935, Tom Greco believed he had learned enough. "I was proficient at the work," he says. "I was ready to start on my own."

He recalls that Shinnston customers had sometimes come into the Clarksburg shop and asked, "Why don't you open a shop in Shinnston? That way we won't have to take the streetcar to Clarksburg."

In the predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture, a swarthy skin and foreign name could handicap a business person.



World War II pulled Tom away from his chosen profession, but only temporarily. By 1947 (right) he had settled back into his civilian work. Photographers unknown.

Two older shoe repairmen were about to go out of business in Shinnston. Dominic Caputo, an Italian, then almost 80, and Jake Fine, a Russian Jew, had served the West Fork town for two generations. In those days, the soft sound of canvas shoes on asphalt streets wasn't the dirge it would become to shoemakers everywhere. There were still plenty of leather shoes and boots pounding pavement and a lot of work to go around.

So Greco's business prospered, except for the years he served in World War II. He had volunteered, and when he went to war he shut down his shop. "My wife pulled down the blinds and posted a sign which said, 'Closed for the Duration of the War,'" he recalls. Tom Greco had more important work to do now.

He served as a hospital corpsman in China, Burma and India. "I was in the service ten months here, over two years over there," he says. Though he served in a dangerous arena, he returned unscathed.

When Greco got back, there were thousands of shoes to be repaired, and he was glad of it. He had to pay back rent and support five children. All of them worked in his shop, but none have followed in his footsteps.

Greco says if you were willing to work in those days, there was a way. Today, he says, work is harder to come by and the small family farms and backyard gardens that got people through some tough times are disappearing. A shoemaker's lot is tougher, too, because of the throw-away shoes now being sold.

"If you look at people's feet today, nine of ten will be wearing tennis shoes," he laments. "That cut into my business a lot.

"Now you see unrepairable shoes. Most of the cheap shoes are not worth repairing anyway. Even some of the so-called better-grade shoes don't need to be repaired. The soles will outwear the uppers. I can still repair some of them, though."

Enough, he says, to keep him in business. But he complains that with coal mining off, Shinnston is a depressed area. With the new FBI fingerprinting office coming to Harrison County, he expects things to improve. The facility will be built near the Saltwell exchange of I-79, which supplanted Route 19 as the main north-south thoroughfare. The Saltwell Road runs about six miles from I-79 to Shinnston.

"My shop is basically the way it was when I started," Greco says. It's well-maintained old machines — stitchers, buffers and finishers, run off

Denzil Byrd gets the attention of the proprietor himself. We'll guess that Mr. Greco, at age 83, is West Virginia's oldest shoeshine "boy."

the same shaft and motor. An upright stitcher on a separate drive provides a variety of stitches and thread sizes.

The coddled machines shine from decades of soft cleaning cloths and fine machine oil. Old shoes and new ones vie for your attention on the shelves and in the glass cases.

The proprietor nods at a two-chair shoeshine stand with a real marble base which is the focal point of one end of the shop.

"We have shined a lot of shoes on that stand there," he says. Greco bought it second-hand from Pittsburgh a year after he opened for business here. It disassembles into parts for moving, but it has not moved for 57 years.

That is unlike Greco himself, who is always on the move, though usually in the same familiar haunts. He normally walks to work and back every working day, a half-mile each way.

"Many friends my age have been retired for more than 20 years," he says. "I almost have to work to be happy. I thank God I am able to work. The Lord's been good to me. I've been active all my life. I've never been a sedentary person.

"Lots of people are advised by their doctors to walk. A doctor didn't have to advise me. Walking has been good for me. My dad walked miles to the pit mouth of the mine and then maybe a mile or two to the coal face, and then back. He set an example.

"I walked two miles each way to school. Sometimes I'd run home for lunch. I never was late."

When people walked more, they used to wear out more shoe bottoms, too. That also contributed to Greco's exercise. In the old days, he normally put in a six-day week, sometimes

Other Harrison County Shoemakers

Shinnston shoe repairman Thomas P. Greco knows many of the men who shared his trade in Harrison County during the 20th century. He worked with some of them when he was an apprentice and befriended others.

Most were Italian-Americans. The list includes Joe Aiello, Sam Bordo, Dominic Caputo, August Costa, Louis Costa, Larry Cavallo, Joseph Daniels, Dominic Faris, Jake Fine, Joseph DeLapa, Fred Fortuna, Frank Gallo, Rocco Gallo, James Marino, Frank Mascaro, Patsy Mascaro, Frank Nash, Patsy Nash, Pete Rago, Joseph Signorelli, August Pinti, Benny Pinti, John Pinti, Vincent Pinti and Pete Tiano.

Perhaps the most famous of them was the late Joseph DeLapa. "He was an old-time craftsman from the Old Country," says Greco. "His son-in-law Benny Pinti took up the business, too, but he gave up the repair end of it. He sells footwear."

Joe DeLapa was born December 16, 1894, in Cenadi, Italy. He married his sweetheart (as he referred to her), Josephine Carvel, in 1920. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus and known as a man who helped the needy.

He was recruited by the U.S. Army during World War I, when he also received his citizenship. While in the service, DeLapa shined the shoes of the famous general, John J. Pershing. The general referred to him as "Little Joe" and assigned him to a job repairing shoes for the Army. When he returned to the United States, he named his business the "Overseas Shoe Shop." There is still an engraving of that on a building in the Broadway section of Clarksburg.

DeLapa held office in the Sons of Italy and the American Legion. He attended the St. John's Catholic Church in Clarksburg. He died at the age of 69 on December 30, 1966.

—Norman Julian

more. These days he works just five days a week and sometimes his son-in-law fills in so he can work mornings only. Greco wants to spend as much time as possible with his ailing wife.

A proportion of his income now comes from the sale of new shoes and shoe products. The shoes and boots he sells include Herman Survivors, Red Wing, Lake of the Woods, Dingo and Acme. He handles a variety of saddle soaps, brushes, shoe inserts and shoe polishes. Most of the products come with a story from the man who sells them. Take the shoe polish, for example.

"Kiwi shoe polish is the best," Greco says, recounting an old war tale about that brand. "I was in China. A Marine corporal friend of mine, Jim Kramer, was cleaning his dress shoes. It was a nice pretty day, a Sunday, in the spring of the year. I was outside with not much to do.

"He said, 'Greco, come over here. I want to show you something.' He said, 'Have you ever seen this kind of polish?' I said, 'No.' He knew I was in the shoe business at home.

"Well, he showed me what that polish will do. He dabbed some on his dress oxfords and brushed it off. It was good polish. When I came home the last week of September in 1945, I couldn't find it anywhere, but I put out inquiries. A couple of years later a salesman from Pittsburgh called to say, 'Tommy, we finally got your Kiwi shoe polish.'

"I told him to send me a dozen of each color — normally six colors. These are tan, mid-tan, brown, black, oxblood and cordovan. I've been selling Kiwi shoe polish since 1947 and I wouldn't trade it for anything. It's the best."

Back when the shoe repair business was big, selling shoe repair equipment likewise was profitable for people in that line of trade. Most of Greco's machines were made by the Landis Machinery Company, and he says they kept in touch.

"For many years, until about 17 years ago, the company maintained an expert mechanic on the road all the time," he recalls. "His job was to call on all shoe repair shops in parts of five states — West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Maryland and Pennsylvania. He'd call in here about every six months. He'd ask if anything was wrong. If not, we'd chat a little bit and he'd go on."

Mr. Greco sells products he believes in. This still life shows his favorite Kiwi polish and other trusted products.

"Our numbers are fading out, dwindling, but there will always be a need for a good shoe repairman."

Things are slower than in times past at the corner of Pike and Walnut, but Tom Greco remains ready to do business.

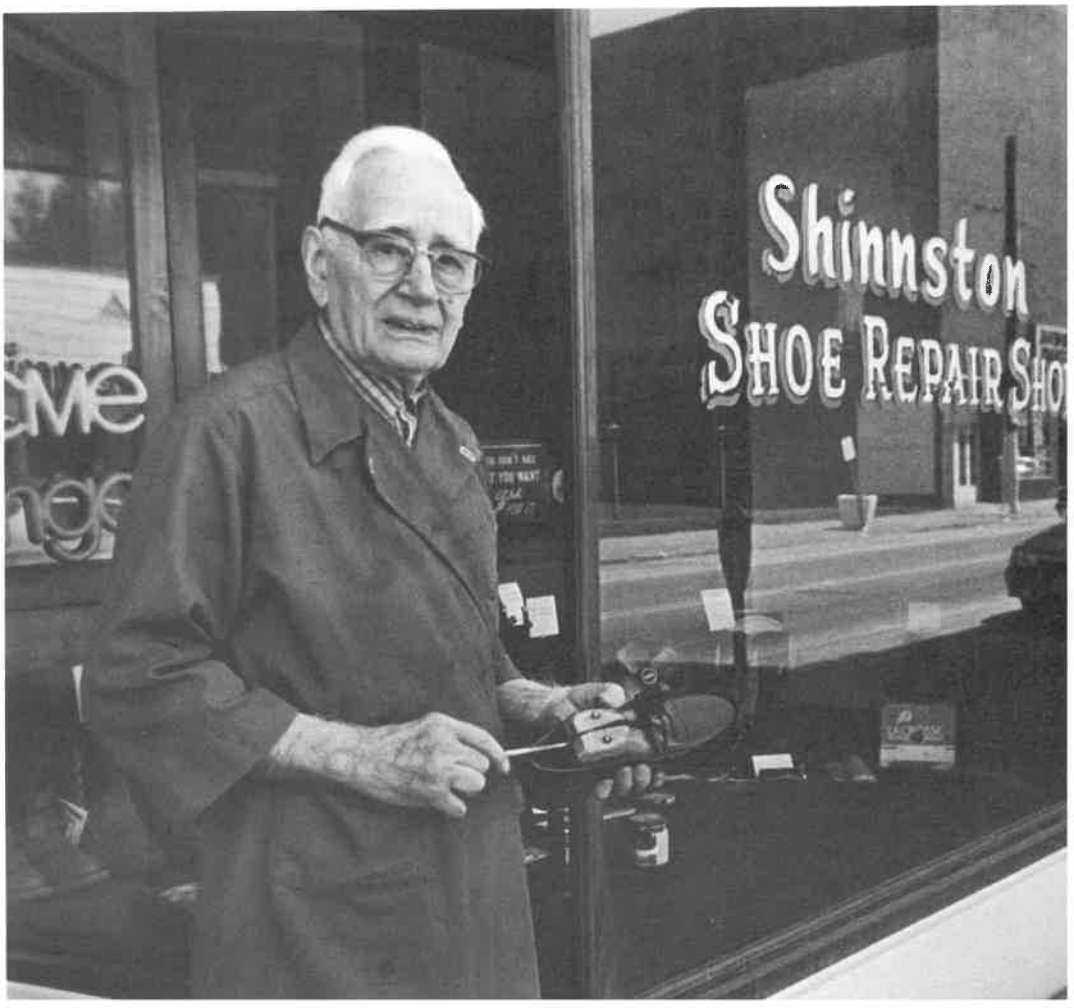
Eventually, Greco began to do more of the maintenance himself. "I'm not a machine mechanic," he says. "I can change minor parts, though. I have never had many major problems."

He sees the phaseout of the machine company's support as symptomatic of the plight of his craft. "Our numbers are fading out, dwindling," he says, "but there will always be a need for a good shoe repairman."

Greco himself plans to ply his trade "as long as the Lord lets me."

The Lord has let him for a long time already, and visitors to the shop hope that Greco's longevity continues for a long time to come. Seeing the old equipment and surroundings they might think they are in a time warp, except for the forward outlook that distinguishes Tom Greco. He keeps up on current events and has few of the hallmarks of advancing age.

One onlooker, privy to the man's work and his work habits, is optimistic. "I expect most of the shoes sold today will wear out before Tom does," he says.



Sometimes there was time just to sit in the oil fields of Clay County. This is Myrtle Coon, our author's mother, and Tommie Graham at their ease in Ovapa. Photographer and date unknown.

Going Home Again: Once More to Ovapa

By Helen Carper

It is natural to want to go back to where we came from. The craving seems to affect mountain people in particular, and there have been plenty of stories on the subject, some in GOLDENSEAL from time to time. We travel back in time as we travel perhaps only a few miles of literal distance. It is a journey of emotional peril as well as reward, as we confront our parents in ourselves and maybe ourselves in our children.

So I wondered: Could I go back to Ovapa, that small community at the head of a Clay County hollow where I lived from babyhood to age 14, to visit old haunts and find the little girl I used to be?

Like a lot of places in West Virginia, Ovapa in its heyday combined both rural and industrial characteristics. "The discovery of oil, around '25 or '26, changed the sleepy area into a boom town," Opal Brown Jarvis recalled before her death last year. Opal was a long-time resident and postmistress during my years in Ovapa. After some thought, she concluded that the first well had been drilled in 1925. "Your dad came when the oil field opened," she said of my father, H. L. Coon.

The first well was on "Aunt Mariah Brown's property," according to Opal, who said it was drilled by the Virginian Gas and Oil Company. It was a good well, and like many others it produced for decades. "They still draw off it today," Opal recalled.

Drilling had been in the minds of prospectors for at least a quarter-century before that first well was sunk. Clay County courthouse records show that on November 27, 1899, landowners Joseph and Lydia Belcher signed a lease with the South Penn Oil Company. On the same day Elihu Brown and his wife J. D. Brown also signed a lease. They were to receive $100 per year for each and every gas well drilled on their property and an eighth part of all oil produced and saved.

According to Opal, there wasn't

Hoyt Coon, Jr., with sister Helen Coon, our author. Photographer unknown, about 1930.

Could I go back to that small community at the head of a Clay County hollow to visit old haunts and find the little girl I used to be?

much going on before the oil boom, but there was a lot of action after. "The '20's seemed like a rough time to me," she said. "All kinds of people came in. There were houses everywhere."

Opal herself married one of the newcomers. Harry Jarvis worked for the South Penn Oil Company. He and Opal were married May 12, 1928, and the following November they went into the grocery business. Their store, containing the post office after 1934, would be the heart of the community for the next half-century and Opal one of its most revered women.

Local people originally got their mail at Valley Fork. The new post office was named *Ovapa* for the dominant companies in the new energy business, taking the "O" from Ohio (Ohio Fuel), the "VA" from Virginia (Virginian Gas and Oil), and the "PA" from Pennsylvania (South Penn).

"It was a good place to live," Opal said, looking back on her years at Ovapa. "There was a lot of hard work done there." I think my folks would have agreed with both sentiments.

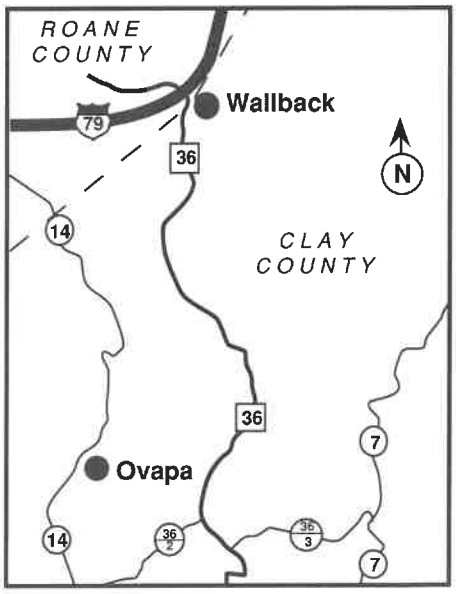
As Opal recalled, it was the oil business that brought us there. We moved to Ovapa when I was less than three years old, and the memories I have of the event are more shadow than substance. The one recording I have of my father's voice deals with this move, but the tape has frustrating lapses in it, and even then — in 1973 — his memory was as faulty as mine.

We went, he said, from Ambler Ridge, where I was born, to the mouth of July Run by wagon. There we switched from the wagon to a truck.

"How many wagon loads?" I asked him.

"We didn't have much stuff," he said, but he could not recall precisely.

He thought the truck went all the way to the house high on a ridge between Grannies Creek and Ovapa. I'm not sure about that truck. I remember a wagon myself, with water flashing beneath the floor boards as we followed a narrow dirt road that wound down into the creek at shallows and out again. Since a later memory is one of teams of oxen straining into their yokes as they hauled equipment for the oil field



Father Hoyt Coon grew up in neighboring Roane County. This shows him (right) as a boy, with hunting buddy Lewis Larch and their hounds. Photographer and date unknown.

past our house, I believe I am right that no truck could have made it to the ridge. I remember, too, walking part of the way and strong arms carrying me when I tired.

The house, built by the oil company my father had worked for since the previous September, was new and painted orange. A boy from the house around the ridge sat on a raw stump nearby, watching with interest as our goods were carried inside. Our supper that night was a hurried meal of pancakes and syrup.

A churn was lost off the vehicle, whether wagon or truck, after we turned up the hollow from the main road, the road that runs along Elk River from Clendenin before leaving the river at Procious to continue on to Clay town. My father's voice is strong and sure as the tale unfolds on the tape. "But we got it back," he recalls. "I went back over the route on the oil company saddle mare to see if I could find it. I met one of Grover Griffin's boys; he had found it and picked it up."

That was Bet Rucker's churn, and it is the only thing I have left from the move. Dad had paid Bet 50 cents for it, and it was the bane of my growing-up years. I spent hours churning, trying to get butter to "make" from milk from the current cow. Now the hated churn has a place of honor on my hearth.

My husband and I made the return trip on a late April day, as mild and sweet and gently breezy as it was then, but little else was the same. We drove over a broad interstate highway to the Wallback exit onto Route 36, then on to the smooth blacktop road that follows Laurel Fork to a meeting with Summers Fork. We were surprised to find a road equally as good as we turned right to go up Summers Fork, joining the route my family had followed that first time.

I exclaimed and reminisced as the miles fell behind us.

"The Will Thomas house isn't there anymore." That was a protest. A modern trailer sits where the Thomas house used to be. "Look! Look! The old cellar house is still there."

On beyond the curve, we wrangle. Is it the Buckland house? I say firmly that it is.

Another half-mile and we see that Cossie Summers has replaced his rambling farmhouse with a compact

Mr. Coon (left) brought his family to Ovapa soon after the first wells were drilled. Here he posed with superintendent Kester Graham. Photographer and date unknown.

I find the names of old friends on the gravestones, and it is a shock to realize that I know more of the inhabitants here than I know in the living community.

brick. Thinking of Cossie's daughter Millie, my quiet childhood friend, I almost miss the White property. But the name is still on the mailbox. Just beyond is the Burley Brown house, recognizable by its lines but sporting new yellow siding.

We pass another trailer and now the Grover Griffin place. It was our place for several years, as we moved our way from house to house down off the ridge and finally out of the hollow. The house is neat and trim. The weatherboarded exterior, which Grover Griffin applied and we did not improve, has been covered with green siding, and it is pleasing. The old barn is the same, and my mother's garden spot. She fed a family of five from that garden during the Depression.

Another half-mile to the Early Brown house. Is it occupied? There's a line of clothes swelling in the breeze, but there is a new house nearby. I recall that Dicy, Early's first wife, was afraid of storms, and when one threatened — whether day or dark of night — she always fled with her large brood to the comfort of my mother's house. I chuckle, remembering, and tell my husband of the night I was awakened by the sound of thunder and found several little Browns being tucked into bed with me.

Past the old Fletcher place — not a trace of the house remains — we find that the Eureka pipeline station house is also gone. Nearby, the Gerald Thompson house is still standing, but abandoned, spreading and sinking. A little farther and we see that the Ret Brown house is boarded up.

At a junction, we turn left and up, meeting a truck that pulls to the side of the road to let us by. Children ride in the open truck bed as we once did. Their faces bear a resemblance to someone I once knew, but who?

We head up the hill and into a lane. At the end I will find the first house we moved to from the ridge. My younger brother was born there. But as we approach I stare unbelievingly — the house is gone. There is a large oil company installation in its place.

We turn and go back to the junction. There, looking up to the promontory that juts out to the road, I see that the white-sided, two-room schoolhouse is also gone. A modern house occupies the space.

On around to the church. It has changed little, I note with relief. The addition of Sunday School rooms at the back has altered the shape, but the sanctuary — itself once our Sunday school as well — is the same.

Up the road, the Harry Jarvis store, which housed the post office, has been replaced by a dwelling. An addition now has the post office sign over its door.

Beyond and over the creek there is a new house, new to us at least, and a meat shop. Then back across the creek, a large, rambling shop, a paving company, has been built.

We leave the main road to circle around in front of the house where the oil company superintendent once lived. Kester Graham was superintendent during my time there, and his wife Tommie the "first lady" of our community. I remember their house as a spacious, comfortable house. In a community where most exteriors were unpainted, weathered gray boards, and toilet facilities some distance from the house, its gleaming white paint and indoor plumbing had made it a fascinating curiosity to young creek dwellers.

We wind on around the narrow road, returning the friendly waves of

"What a Time We Had!"

An Oil Field Love Story

If Opal Jarvis was the heart of Ovapa, then Tommie Graham, wife of superintendent Kester Graham, was our leading lady. Her husband, known to the community as "Kess," was a deep-thinking, slow-talking man, taller than most.

Kester had been wounded in World War I and was in the hospital when the war ended. For a while his parents thought him dead, and Tommie later learned of the family's elation when they knew he lived.

Home from the war, he went to work at Kelly's Creek in Kanawha County. His company, Virginia Gas and Oil, sent him to the new Clay County oil field in 1925 to clean out the first well. "From then on they just drilled one well after the other," said Tommie in a recent interview.

Tressie Richards (Kess nicknamed her "Tommie," and the community picked it up) came to Ovapa in 1926 to visit relatives, Oma and Jim Yoak. She was 17, and her life was about to change.

"I met Kester at church, held in the schoolhouse," she recalled. "The single fellows would line up at the church door. When the girls went out they would ask if they could walk them home. Kester walked me home."

It was a promising start, but the course of true love doesn't always run smooth. Kester didn't know it, but Tommie was already engaged to a fellow back home in Calhoun County.

Kester and Tressie "Tommie" Graham were the first couple of Ovapa. This photo was made on their wedding day, June 1, 1927. Photographer unknown.

Now she was smitten with her new beau. Kester owned a Model T for utility purposes and a classier touring car (a Chevrolet, Tommie said — maybe a '26) for courting. He was tall and good looking, and a war hero.

After an exciting courtship Kester proposed. Tommie said yes, and wrote her other fiance a "Dear John" letter. In the meantime the guy back home was missing her, and now he came after her. "When I opened the door I was shocked to death," said Tommie. She still blushed about it when she recounted the story in 1991.

But things worked out. Tommie and Kester were married June 1, 1927, at her sister's house in Calhoun County. "My dress was beige, trimmed in eggshell satin pleated all around, short in the fashion of the '20's," she recalled.

"We spent our wedding night at my sister's house, then we went to his family's house at Queen Shoals for a week." Kester's brothers were home from a job in Texas, and they helped him build a little three-room house at Ovapa for his bride.

"We went to Robertson-Paris in Clendenin for the furnishings," Tommie recalled. "We had to pick out everything — a stove, table, chairs, and two complete beds, among other things."

Tommie, a pretty woman still, laughs and colors as she remembers those newlywed days. She relates an early failure in the kitchen. "I had done a lot of cooking, but the first cake I baked tore up. I had a copper wash boiler, and I hid that cake in there. Kester found it and ate every bite."

To those of us who grew up at

strangers as we pass the few remaining houses. Our destination is the cemetery.

I passed this cemetery daily as I walked to school, and it was a chilling ordeal for an imaginative grade schooler. I remembered it as being larger, but I can see from the old section, now expanded, that the graveyard I passed with such trepidation was really very small. Here I find the names of old friends on the gravestones, and it is a shock to realize that I now know more of the inhabitants here than I know in the living community. I could be buried here; this is home.

Back at the main road, we wind on up the hill, higher and higher, to the ridge. Here we leave the smoothness of the new road that goes on over to Grannies Creek and turn onto a narrow, dipping, rough, rock-based road. My husband winces as our low car makes contact with the roadbed. He stops, elaborately opens the door, and stoops to peer under the car. He is protesting this part of our trek. But we are almost there. I will not turn back.

The once orange house sits on the same spot; otherwise I would not recognize it. It has aged and is now covered with nondescript siding. The

Ovapa and were interested bystanders, there was never any doubt that Kester and Tommie loved each other truly. Kester became field superintendent at Ovapa and remained in the position until he retired, and the couple settled down as community leaders.

Tommie named families who were in the area before them: Jim Phillips — "he had lots of land" — the Dick Braleys, the Browns, Summerses, Hanshaws, Belchers, and O'Dells, all there before the oil boom. "There were Hardways, Murpheys and surely others," she added.

"The rest of us were people who came in with the oil field — like the Grahams, the Coons, the Dyes, the Yoaks, the Sixes, and others who came later, like Bill Hammack and Lovell Everson and Dewey Spencer." The Jake Carpers and the Maxwell Bayses were also there, and undoubtedly others that Tommie couldn't recall at that moment.

She remembers these people well, their habits and eccentricities: "Uncle Joe Belcher would go to Clay and come back with a coffee sack full of records. We had those old Victrolas that wound up. His second wife, Aunt Julia, was a lot younger than Uncle Joe. His first wife was a Summers.

"Aunt Margaret kept house for Uncle Joe until he married again," Tommie recalls.

"Aunt Margaret believed firmly in witches. She knew there were witches, she said, because they once went to pick huckleberries and this old lady who was supposed to be a witch told them, 'You'll not find any huckleberries.' Aunt Margaret replied that they knew they were there. They had seen them. 'But when we got there, we couldn't see a berry. It was just like a fog or mist. But we sat down and built up a fire. Witches are afraid of fire. In just a little while everything cleared off and we got our berries.'

"I can just see Aunt Margaret sitting there telling that. She looked like a witch herself. Real thin, and she smoked a clay pipe. She had a long black or gray dress on and an apron. She could get around, walked long distances. She was a sassy old thing."

Tommie's memories of those days are vivid. She shudders at the nearly impossible roads. "I can see them old oxen yet, going in that mud. Oh, that mud! It would be up to a man's knees. There would be six oxen in a span. The drivers would stay at the bunkhouse.

She and Kester would take the Model T to Clendenin for supplies, driving mostly through the creek bed even after there was a road dug out of the hills.

"After Kester and me had lived there for a while, we still followed the creek out if the water wasn't too high. Nowadays, a car couldn't get over the big rocks that those high old Fords could get over."

The Grahams had one child, Opal Christine. "When Chris was born we called Dr. Ray and he came up. It stormed that night, terrible, and Dr. Ray couldn't get out of the hollow. In the meantime, another lady in the neighborhood went into labor and he went on to deliver this other baby, Virginia Thomas."

"I remember when Chris was just a little girl," said Tommie. "We went to Clendenin to get ice cream. Think of that — all that way for ice cream! It came a storm before we got back. We got up the hollow as far as the church, and we sat there waiting for the water to run down so we could get home to eat our ice cream. It didn't go down very fast.

"So Kester got out of the car and took the lids off the cans — it was in tin cans then, green and white — Imperial was the brand. He bent the lids to make spoons, and we ate our ice cream and sat there 'til daylight before the water was low enough to drive through.

"What a time we had!"

— Helen Carper

Tommie Graham, recently photographed at her home in Clendenin. Photo by Michael Keller.

He does not remember that strangers aren't always intruders. Sometimes they're entertainment.

porches that stretched the length of the house, back and front, are enclosed, and not well.

There are dogs — one, two, three — clustering about the door and announcing the arrival of a stranger on the hill. They are lineless dogs, a far cry from the sleek coon hounds, Old Drive and Old Abe, that used to stretch out on the open front porch to guard the house.

A boy and a girl exit the door and run to a higher vantage point to observe us.

The U.S. Post Office is a major landmark in Ovapa today. The postmistress says several copies of GOLDENSEAL pass through here. Photo by Michael Keller.

"You're not going to the house?" My husband is dismayed that I would intrude upon strangers. He has never lived in such isolation, so he does not remember, as I do, that strangers aren't always intruders. Sometimes they're entertainment.

The girl, blond and pretty, about ten, I would guess, greets me when I am within the sound of her voice. "Who are you looking for?"

"I'm looking for a little girl," I say as I near her. "A little girl just about your age who once lived in this house."

The mother comes to the door. Her hands are covered with flour and there are traces of dough on them. I apologize for calling her from bread making. She is friendly and gracious.

The dogs, assured of my harmless intent, now try to rub against me, moving reluctantly away only when scolded.

When I have introduced myself and explained my purpose for the visit, the mother invites me in.

I am startled by the smallness of the house. I had remembered large rooms. One corner of the living room has been partitioned off for a bathroom, but the room could not have lived up to my memory even before the remodeling. The girl has the end bedroom next to the enclosed front porch, once my parents' bedroom. Next to it, the room my brother and I shared is small, small. But I am delighted that here there is orange paint on the wall still. This is the parents' bedroom now, and the woman removes beautiful, handmade quilts from a bureau to show me. The children are proud of their mother's handiwork and point out the intricacies of the designs.

The kitchen is off the living room. This is a change. This was our dining room and the small room opening off it, now the boy's bedroom, was our kitchen.

I do not see the enclosed back porch. It is an older son's bedroom. He will be leaving home soon, and the mother will take the space for her workroom. She sells her quilts to supplement the family income.

There is dough in a bowl beside a breadboard on the kitchen table, and the aroma of baking wafts through the house. The mother is making cinnamon rolls for her children on this quiet Sunday afternoon. They invite me to stay and share, but I explain that my husband is waiting.

The mother and children walk with me to the door and out.

"Come back," the children call after me as I leave. "Come back any time."

More Memories of Ovapa

Mountain State Press recently published *This Holler Is My Home* by Alice Faye Bragg, a sentimental look back at Clay County and Ovapa. The book reprints Bragg's newspaper columns celebrating everyday life in rural West Virginia.

Bragg's column first appeared in the *Clay County Free Press* and the *Clay Herald*, and more recently has become one of the most popular features in the *Charleston Gazette*. Her deep kinship to the hills perhaps accounts for her following among West Virginians. "Here, you are known by your father and your grandfather. These roots are very important to us, this continuity with the generations that have gone on before us and the generations coming after. We know who we are because we know who trod the way before us."

She divides her book into four sections, Softly Comes Spring, A Green and Growing Time, A Season of Gold, and When the Wind Comes Whistlin'. Nature, holidays, remedies, family history, and philosophy are mixed in among her writing of the seasons.

This Holler Is My Home is available at area bookstores or from Mountain State Press, University of Charleston, 2300 MacCorkle Avenue S.E., Charleston, WV 25304; (304)357-4767. The 182-page paperback sells for $12.95. Mail orders must include 6% sales tax from West Virginians and $2.50 postage and handling.

Champions with Dirty Knuckles

Marbles in the Mountain State

By Richard Ramella
Photographs by Michael Keller

Taking the past as a guide, there is a better than one-in-five likelihood that a West Virginian will win the boy's division of the National Marbles Tournament in any given year. In the 68 years of the contest, state boys have won 15 times and placed second 14 times. Although girls did not begin to compete regularly until 1948, one West Virginian has won that title.

There has been such a concentration of winners from the southern part of the state it would be easy to believe that youths from that area are genetically predisposed to shooting marbles. And there are plenty of children who aspire to follow in the knuckle prints of past winners.

In part, Mountaineer mibsters have done so well because the state was for years the overwhelming center of U.S. marble manufacturing. There arose a climate that encouraged youngsters to play marbles and become good at it. The path to the top has been clearly marked. Many local school systems cooperate in tournaments that send the best players up the ladder through their classes, schools, counties, districts and state. The state champ then goes to the U.S. tournament in New Jersey.

The story begins in the 1920's, when marble production started in the northern part of West Virginia. Glassmakers had been drawn to the area in the early part of the century by resources that included natural gas, a willing work force, and a good supply of scrap glass. Past GOLDENSEAL stories have covered some of these operations.

At one time there were seven factories accounting for an outpouring of

It takes concentration, as Berry "Marble King" Pink (left) and his unidentified companion would have told you. Pink helped establish West Virginia as a power in the marbles world. Photo from Foto News, 1940.

billions of marbles. Their products went not only to traditional game players but also to collectors of the round gems. And the marble plants turned out orbs for Chinese checkers, reflectors for highway signs, and even an ingenious Depression-era razor sharpener made of two abutted marbles in a metal holder. During World War II the marble makers joined the war effort by producing glass ball bearings.

Of the original manufacturers, three remain in operation. Marble King is located on the banks of the Ohio River in Paden City, Tyler County. Champion Agate and Mid-Atlantic Glass are not more than 25 miles southward as the marble rolls, respectively in the neighboring Ritchie County towns of Pennsboro and Ellenboro.

Several individuals also fostered the good showings made by West Virginia marble shooters. Berry Pink was the first of these, a promotional genius who realized that sponsoring marble tournaments enhanced sales of his product. He was one of the original owners of Marble King.

Roger Howdyshell, who was Pink's hand-picked manager and later bought Marble King, created even more interest in marble tournaments when he granted annual scholarship awards to the American champions starting in 1968. Both boy and girl winners currently receive $2,000 in scholarship funds from Marble King.

George Springer was a Beckley sports editor who elevated marbles from children's pastime to youth sport with his enthusiastic backing.

Of these three men, Berry Pink was assuredly the most flamboyant, Howdyshell the most financially generous, and Springer the most emotionally supportive.

The encouragement of Beckley newspaperman George Springer sent many champs to the national playoffs. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Beckley *Register-Herald.*

The first national marble tournament of record was sponsored in 1922 by a Philadelphia department store. The contest grew into the ultimate championships. The 1922 winner was a Baltimore boy and the runner-up a Newark, New Jersey, girl. Girls were not to be invited back for many years.

Though today's tournament rules are lengthy, the game that decides champions is familiar to most people. It's "ringer," the most popular marble game. Players from ages eight to 14 are eligible for tournaments. The ring is a circle ten feet in diameter. One marble is placed at the center of the ring and 12 more marbles are spaced three inches apart in a cross.

After "lagging" to determine first shot, players take turns shooting from any point on the circle. A player's turn ends with a miss. If one or more marbles are knocked out of the ring on a given shot, they score as points for the shooter. If on a knock-out a player's shooter or "taw" remains within the ring, the player keeps shooting so long as at least one marble is put out of the ring on each shot and the taw "sticks" in the ring.

Adult coaching is important to young West Virginians' success in national tournaments. Here world champion Ray Jarrell makes a point with two Boone County students.

There has been such a concentration of winners from the southern part of the state it would be easy to believe that youths from that area are genetically predisposed to shooting marbles.

The turn ends when the taw rolls outside the ring as the result of a shot, but any marbles removed on this final shot of a turn are scored as points. The winner is the first player to remove seven of the 13 marbles.

Players must shoot from a "knucks down" position, that is with at least one knuckle touching the ground. "Hunching" and "fudging" are not allowed. Both terms refer to thrusting the shooting hand across the line to give greater force to the shot.

In the same year as that first tournament, Berry Pink began to travel around the country, generating a remarkable amount of publicity by sponsoring marble tournaments and by simply showing up with his own marbles at tournaments conducted by others. To lure reporters and photographers hungry for feature material, he needed only a supply of marbles, a gang of kids and interesting stories to tell. He traveled widely and remained active in marble sales for nearly 20 years.

A 1939 article in the entertainment news magazine *Pic* portrayed Pink as a resourceful young man whose clever brainstorm elevated him from poverty. The writer identified him as a New Jersey resident, a former Princeton University athlete, and an ex-sailor and Naval Reserve officer. In 1936, the article noted, Pink had found himself broke. As a child he had been interested in marbles. When he learned that millions of used glass containers were going to waste, he came up with an enriching recycling plan. After "a few days experimenting at home," he approached the Woolworth's chain, offering to supply its stores with marbles that would sell 40 for a dime, rather than the current price of six for a nickel.

The article continued that Pink had long since exhausted his supply of broken glass but was still turning out 3.5 million marbles a day from raw materials.

In the 1930's Pink had been a co-owner of the Lawrence Glass Novelty Company in Paden City but soon left. He would again return to the West Virginia marble scene in 1949. At the time of the magazine article he was a super-salesman for his own brand of marbles which were actually produced by the Peltier Glass Company of Illinois.

Pink is quoted in the *Pic* article as saying he gave away $20,000 worth of marbles a year, which would have averaged out to thousands of marbles a day. Perhaps the reporter erred in this detail, but the greater reality is that Pink was a genial, generous man who took pleasure in sharing his good fortune. A year later he was quoted in another magazine as saying he enjoyed giving away 10,000 special bull's-eye agates a year. It's reported that he often gave lucky tournament players genuine "aggies," highly sought shooters made from a fine-grained quartz in Germany.

Pink claimed a collection of 3,800 unusual marbles — orbs of gold, silver, emerald and jade. There were stone marbles from "the days of cavemen" and a marble supposedly from the tomb of the Egyptian King Tutankhamen.

In his travels, Pink always carried lots of marbles. He would offer children the choice of ten or so from a wide selection held in his cupped hands. In addition to the pleasure he got from making kids happy, this served as market research. By noting types and colors chosen by the true players, he could project factory production. Red marbles were generally favored.

Berry Pink was known by the late 1930's as "The Marble King." His marble activities continued until about the time World War II began. In 1940 he conducted a Marble King Tournament at the site of the New York World's Fair.

It was also in 1940 that the first West Virginian shot his way to a national marbles championship. He was James Music of Huntington. In 1942 there

Roger Howdyshell carried on Berry Pink's patronage of the game. Here Howdyshell presents a Marble King scholarship to Glenn Sigmon of Boone County. Photographer unknown, 1969.

So it was not that southern West Virginia kids were naturally superior at marbles. It was a matter of encouraging youngsters to believe they had the stuff of excellence within them.

was another winner from Huntington, Charles Mott. The tournament was not held during two of the World War II years.

"Marble King" Pink disappeared from the scene for most of that decade. He resurfaced in 1949 at the helm of a West Virginia company. In that year Pink and Sellers H. Peltier bought the Alley Glass Manufacturing Company of St. Marys in Pleasants County and re-named it Marble King.

Pink was said to be an avid player who could shatter a glass milk bottle with a non-fudged shot from six paces. The Marble King appears to have enjoyed true expertise at the game. He is remembered as a grown man who liked to hunker down for a game of ringer, whether with kids or other adults. That and other memories come from Jean Howdyshell, the widow of Roger Howdyshell.

Mrs. Howdyshell says her husband was a recent college graduate in 1949 when he was named by Pink to manage the St. Mary's company. The event was celebrated when Pink invited the young couple to dinner at a fine restaurant.

"He looked like the movie actor George Raft until he took his hat off," Mrs. Howdyshell recalled. At those rare times when Pink's headgear was doffed, his head was shown to be nearly as smooth as the marbles he sold. He claimed to keep a hat on all the time except when sleeping.

Jean Howdyshell noted that Pink did not live in West Virginia. His home base was New Jersey and he continued promotional travels even as owner of the Paden City firm. He was a beneficent boss, remembered by the Howdyshell family for the wonderful Christmas gifts he sent. It is not known what happened to Pink's fabulous marble collection.

Hiring Roger Howdyshell was perhaps the best decision Pink made in the early days of the company. Howdyshell not only stayed with the firm but became its owner in 1983. By then he was acknowledged worldwide as an expert in his field.

Making marbles is an elegantly simple process, but there are secrets to doing it right and to creating the beautiful, colorful designs frozen within the clear glass. Some of these methods have never been revealed by manufacturers.

The essential process is a close combination of specialized machinery and skilled workers. Glass is heated to a 2400-degree molten state. A stream of this lava-like material is dripped through a circular hole and snipped into silver-dollar-sized bits. Before they can cool to hardness, these snips are squeezed between two metal rods and turned 10,000 times. They emerge as hard, smooth balls ranging from three-eighths to one and a half inches in diameter. There is no waste. Culls are thrown back into the molten mass.

Howdyshell literally passed a test by fire in the early days of the Marble King Company. When the St. Marys plant burned in 1958, he managed to get back into production in only 60

If the "Marble King" title passed from Berry Pink to Roger Howdyshell, then surely Jean Howdyshell must be Marble Queen. Here she stands by the company's sign in Paden City.

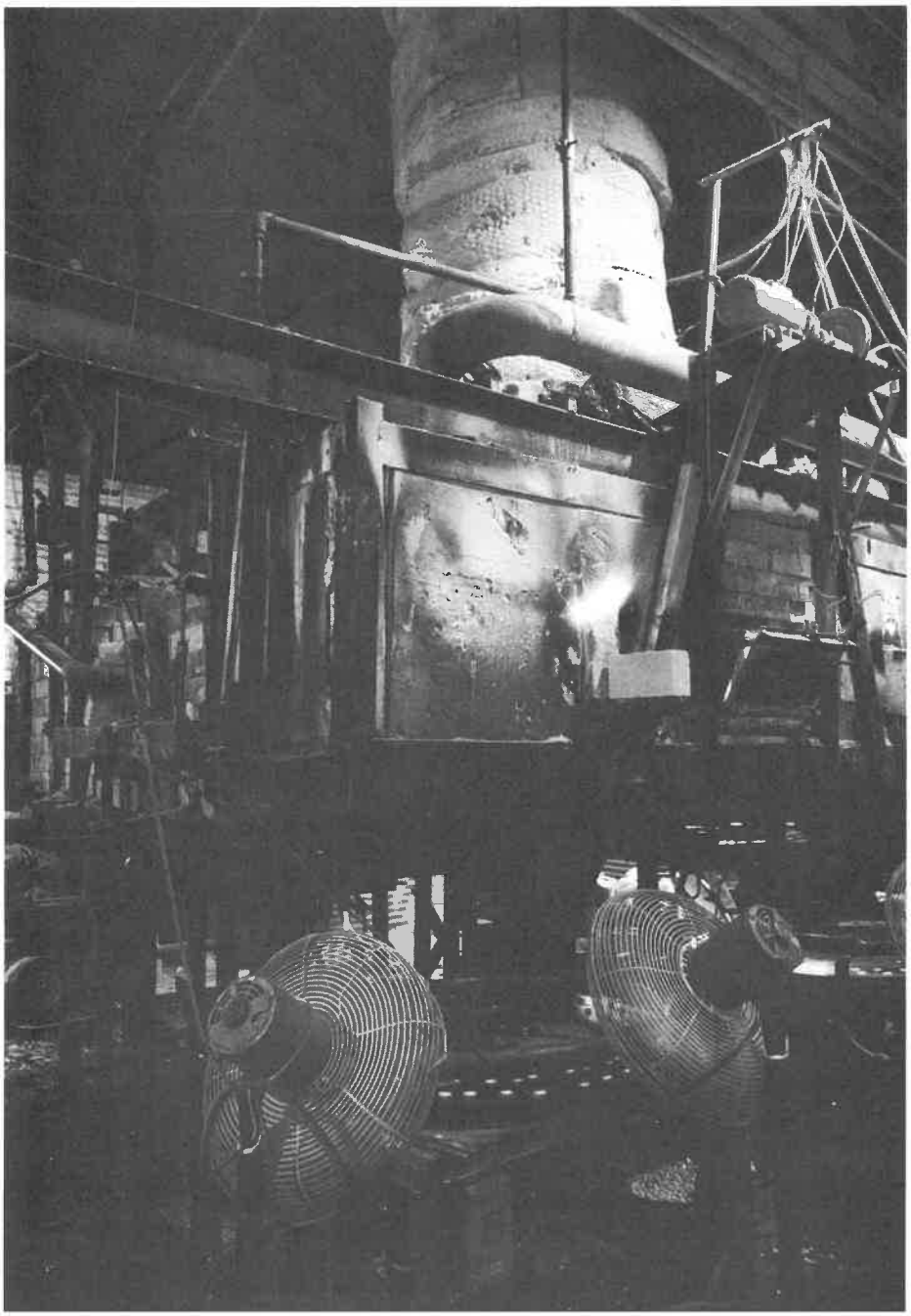
days. This involved a move upriver to Paden City, where the company remains to this day.

Until 1968, the top prize in the U.S. marble tournament was a bicycle. Howdyshell changed that by pledging an annual $2,000 scholarship for both boy and girl winners. Marble King now sponsors the national tournament.

It was not long after Pink and manager Howdyshell got Marble King on line, that *Beckley Post-Herald* sports editor George Springer gave marbles a friendly nudge up in class. The effort was a cooperative one. Springer had contacted Marble King about its work on behalf of the championships, and he entered enthusiastically into the promotion of the game as a healthy sport for youngsters.

Springer's 20-year career at Beckley was marked by a fascination for sports statistics relating to individual and team performances. His statistical methods set the foundation for state high school team rankings. His acumen at figures drew job offers from the *New York Sun* and the Elias Bureau, the official keeper of major league baseball's statistical data. But Springer preferred West Virginia. After 20 years with the *Post-Herald*, he became commissioner of the West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

When George Springer fastened on the idea of marbles as a good youth activity, he became an enthusiastic booster through his columns, reporting and volunteer work. Some years he and his wife shepherded the young state champions to the ultimate annual test in New Jersey. Springer had a true affection for marbles. His stories of the tournaments inspired many children — both girls and boys — to play the game well. The newspaper for which he worked was also enthusiastic in its backing. From the earliest days of the top tournament, newspapers had



Equipment at the Marble King plant makes marbles, decorative glass gems and other items. Fans cool the glass as it hardens into final form.

The best tip from "Windy" Allen's booklet, The Game of Marbles: *Don't shoot hard; roll the taw into the ring moderately so the sense of aim is not lost.*

sponsored marble contests in their circulation areas.

In 1949, a Huntington shooter named George Wentz won the national championship.

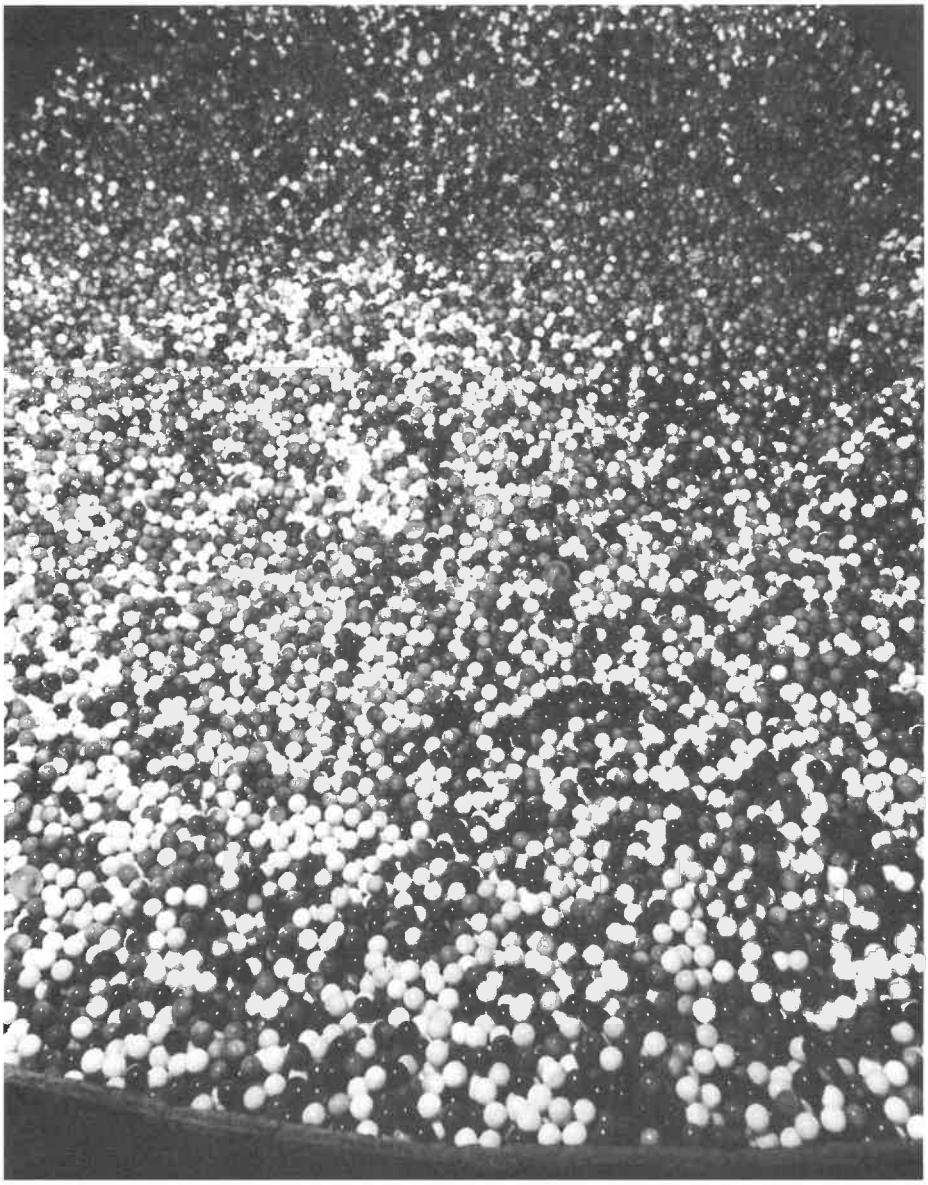
And in 1951, Springer's work was rewarded in a big way. A Raleigh County boy named Shirley "Windy" Allen was sponsored by the *Post-Herald* and prevailed as the best shooter in the state. The newspaper and Springer got him to the finals in New Jersey, and Shirley won the top prize.

Following that win, Springer wrote an "as told to" booklet, *The Game of Marbles,* in which Shirley Allen shared his methods, revealing a great knowledge of practical physics. The booklet told how to choose a taw, theories on knuckling down and putting backspin on a shot. The best tip: Don't shoot hard; roll the taw into the ring moderately so the sense of aim is not lost. It was this rule of accuracy that at times allowed younger players to prevail over older, more powerful shooters.

In the booklet, Allen makes several mentions of adult coaching. Indeed, West Virginians did so well in the national tournaments because they were coached by adults who understood the game and because they practiced consistently.

Through the 1950's there was a statistically lopsided number of national champions from the state: Jerry Roy and Bob Hickman, both of Huntington, in 1953 and 1954; Fred Brown of Beckley in 1956; Stan Herold of Summersville in 1957; and Dennis Kyle of Richwood in 1958.

In the years that followed there were even more winners: Clarence Bower of Mullens, Wyoming County, in 1964; Glenn Sigmon of Wharton,



More marbles than you've ever seen, we bet. This bin of Marble King products awaits shipment in Paden City.

Boone County, in 1969; Ray Jarrell and Doug Hager, both of Whitesville, Boone County, in 1972 and 1973; Sandy Nesmith and Kerry Acord, both of Arnette, Raleigh County, in 1980 and 1983; and Carl Whiteacre of Ridgeley, Mineral County, in 1990. In 1987 Lori Dickel of Ridgeley was the girls' national champion.

The geographical trend reveals just how far-reaching was George Springer's influence on the world of tournament marbles. Except for the two Ridgeley winners, the national champs and runners-up from West Virginia have come exclusively from the southern part of the state. In fact, a map dotted with the hometown locations of the young winners would produce an obvious cluster within the traditional circulation area of the Beckley newspaper. It is an area where the words of George Springer were read as encouragement by thousands of children.

So it was not that the small towns of southern West Virginia were in possession of kids who were naturally superior at the game of marbles. It was even better. It was a matter of encouraging youngsters to believe they had the stuff of excellence within them. As it turned out, many did.

The phenomenon deserves to be called "the Springer Factor."

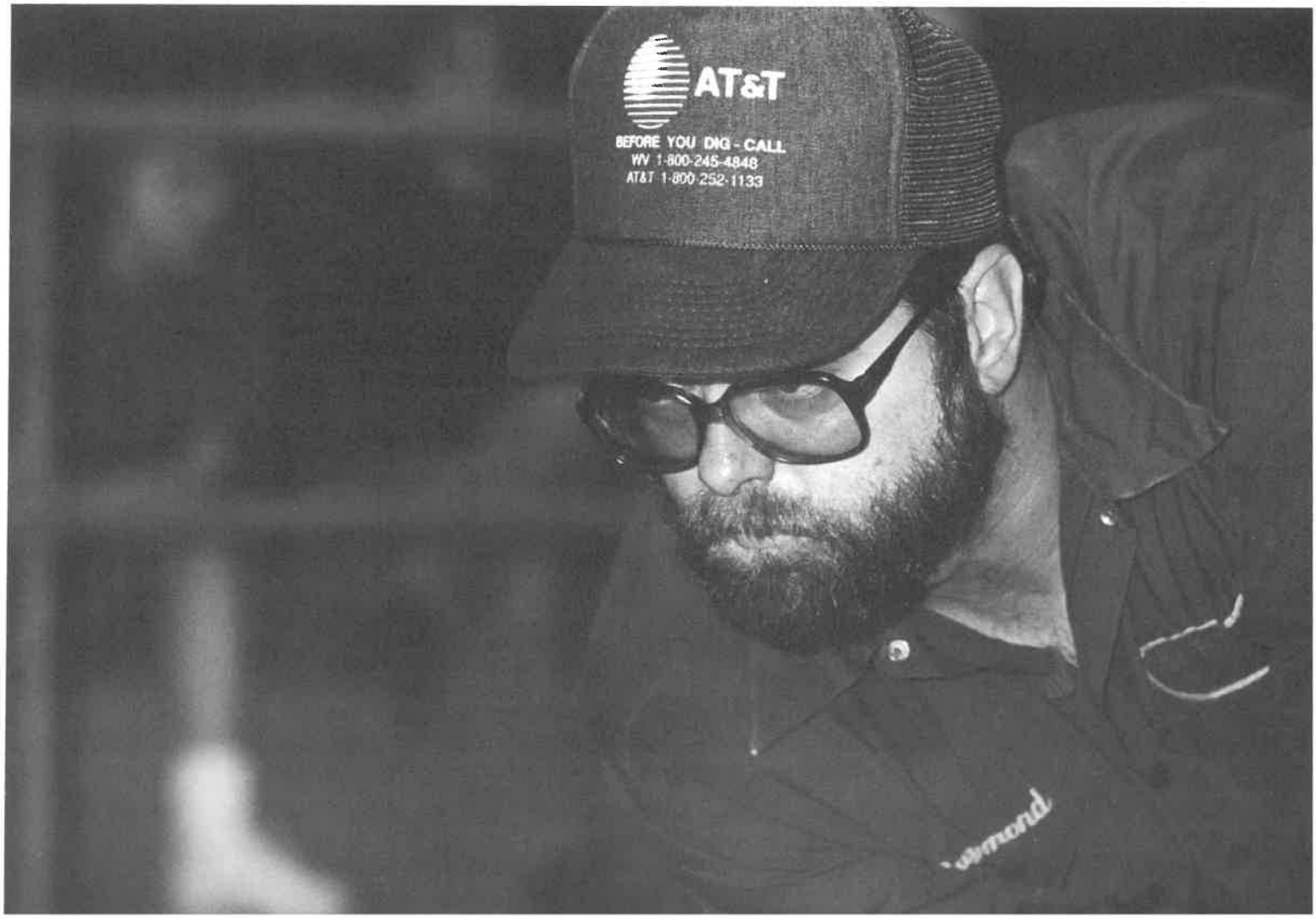
The three men who did so much for young marble players have all now died, Pink in 1962, Springer in 1982, and Howdyshell in 1991. The Marble King Company continues its support of the tournament through the efforts of Howdyshell's wife Jean and daughter Beri Fox, who was named after Berry Pink, though the spelling is different.

Nowadays Beri handles public relations for Marble King. Her work ranges from attending international tournaments to visiting classrooms to interest youngsters for prospective future tournament play. In 1991 she organized a six-member team of adult shooters — all past U.S. champs — who took part in an international tournament in England, and recently she returned there to see West Virginian Ray Jarrell take the World Cup. Her promotional efforts have enhanced the sport. In recent years the champions have appeared on both the *Tonight* show and *David Letterman*.

Beri Fox knows marble production, and she knows the secrets of playing tournament ringer, as she revealed during an interview at her Marble King office. To demonstrate, she took a stance that squared her up with a hypothetical ring. The thumb knuckle of her shooting hand went to the tip of her nose. "The nose is the center of the face," she said. "That's how you align yourself to make a shot."

She lowered her shooting hand straight down to the correct position, assuming the familiar competitive crouch known in schoolyards throughout the world. The lady who knows the champs looked like a champ. Surely her father and her namesake would be proud.

World champ Ray Jarrell takes marbles seriously. He brought the World Cup back from England in April.



Remembering Jack

A Hampshire County Summer

By Ted Olson

I sat there wondering what to do, my legs dangling over the edge of the back porch of the lodge. The assignments had just been distributed. I was to teach "environmental ethics" all summer. The subject was a mystery to me, and I had only the vaguest idea what it meant.

My first day at my first real job — as a counselor at a Hampshire County summer camp — and already I regretted signing up. I had accepted this job mainly to escape the hot air of another Washington summer. I assumed that at most I would be required to work in the darkroom, lead a bird walk or two, and maybe perform some of the banjo tunes I'd learned from records.

I realized that if the camp's director were to find me in this mood, he might put me on the next Greyhound out. Since I didn't want to spend another long sultry summer mowing down weeds and mopping up swimming pools, I jumped off the porch to join the other counselors for the afternoon.

The director had arranged for a get-acquainted picnic to be held on the ridge behind the lodge. When I finally got to the top, I sat by myself on a rotting stump while eating the contents of my lunch bag. I noticed a spreading oak off to the edge of the field. The tree was gnarled and lichen scarred, and it seemed to spread further horizontally than vertically. I knew that it had endured sudden blizzards, slow thaws, too much sun, and pesky bark-borers — but how it had escaped the teeth of the saw, I could only guess. I walked over to climb it.

From 30 feet up, I looked westward into the hollow where the camp had been built. I couldn't locate the lodge, hidden under the trees near the spring, but in the center of the hollow was a huge field, and in the center of the field was a mound of stones — the remains of a mountain cabin's chimney. The logs had long since rotted, and a large black locust was growing where perhaps the bedroom used to be.

From up in that tree, I thought I had found a place where ranch houses and golf courses weren't yet the rule. Then I looked the other way and discovered that this isolated mountain farm really wasn't that isolated. Just beyond the closest ridge to the

This photo of Jack Schaffenaker was made several years ago at the Berkeley Springs Apple Butter Festival. Photographer Joe Herrmann said Jack "smiled with his eyes."

east crept a subdivision, which I speculated was destroying a culture far richer than any developer could dream up. The earth-moving machines were massive, even from my distant perspective. These mountains had been invaded by an infantry of legal aliens, who appeared to be better equipped than the natives for this territorial struggle. Descending from the tree, I ran back to camp to unpack my bags.

Now I was determined to take my assignment seriously, though the best way to teach "environmental ethics" still eluded me. Initially, this was my plan: I would transport the campers in the camp's van, so that we might assess the extent of the region's environmental damage. We would obtain pH readings on creeks below subdivision developments to determine if those waters were still okay for fish; we would survey the sites of a future subdivision for any endangered species; and we would sketch and photograph buildings on the abandoned farmsteads surrounding the camp to document the former lives of the mountain people.

I hadn't yet met a soul from Appalachia, but I sensed they must be suffering deeply. I decided that it was my job to defend the mountain people.

I hadn't yet met a soul from Appalachia, but I sensed they must be suffering deeply. I decided that it was my job at camp to defend the mountain people — especially after it occurred to me that none of the other counselors even knew they existed.

The following day, I mustered up the courage to introduce myself to two local farmers, to ask them about the recent surge of land buying by outside companies. They were respectful, but they talked with an accent that was unfamiliar to me, and they communicated their bitterness in a strange language, using terms like "middle man" and "eminent domain" — words I hadn't learned in high school civics. These farmers were land-rich but cash-poor, directly threatened by rapidly changing national and local economies. With every year, they were paying more in taxes and earning less for crops.

But I foresaw difficulty in interesting the children — if they were as easily distracted as I was at their age — in the farmers' rather abstract predicament. Also, one of them drove a Cadillac. Although I would try to bring the campers to visit the farmers, I decided that they would most benefit from meeting more typical mountain people.

So I planned to locate an Appalachian character who by the grace of time had remembered how to live in these mountains, simply yet successfully, without taking too much; someone who could view his or her mountain culture not as an embarrassment but as a blessing. Surely somewhere, in some dark hollow,

The Schaffenakers, shown here on their Hampshire County porch, had deep roots in the panhandle. Jack is the boy at back, with his father at back right, his mother at left and grandparents Renie and Albert in front. Photographer and date unknown.

Above: Jack's parents, Clyde and Ruth Shanholtz Schaffenaker, on their wedding day. Photo by Barr Studio, 1919.

Right: Dressed as a cowboy, Jack was photographed with his horse Tony at about age 14. Photographer unknown, mid-1930's.

survived an authentic Appalachian mountain person.

The next day, I called all the state and county agencies in the phone book, hoping that somebody could refer me to a real mountain man or woman who might enjoy visiting with my campers. Yet when I telephoned the recommended persons, I discovered that they had never known the way of life I was seeking. The television was often blaring in the background. Once, I heard the theme song to *The Beverly Hillbillies.*

The following day, frustrated by my lack of good leads, I decided to scrap the scientific method and try the back roads. For the next three days I drove down dirt and gravel roads, always sure that in the next "holler" I'd find a real mountain person. But I only found myself lost.

On the morning of the third day — the day the campers were to arrive — I forgot to fill the tank at Whitacre's Grocery while passing through Capon Bridge. Later that afternoon, on some dirt road, the van gasped and stopped. I walked a mile or so, then stumbled upon a Washingtonian's estate where someone sold me a gallon of gas and gave me water free of charge. Driving back to camp, I stopped in Capon Bridge to pick up the camp's supplies and fill up with gas.

When I walked into the store, Mrs. Whitacre looked up from her cash register. She said, "There's a guitar picker named Jack living down toward Cold Stream, who I'm sure'd be happy to have the kids by." The day before, I had asked for her help in locating somebody, and she had said that she would think about it.

I thanked Mrs. Whitacre, then told her that I'd like to meet Jack as soon as possible — preferably the next morning, since the campers would be here by then. So Mrs. Whitacre called one of his relatives, since Jack didn't own a phone, and this party drove over to Jack's house and asked him if I might stop by with some campers the following morning, around nine. Fifteen minutes later, Jack's relative called back with the news that Jack would be expecting us. After getting directions from Mrs. Whitacre, I sped back to camp.

When I got there, the campers had arrived and dinner was being served. During the meal, I discovered that talking with the kids was easier than I had thought it would be. Yet when they began telling jokes about the people they had met that day on their way to West Virginia (one boy mocked a woman's accent), I realized how important my job was.

That night, I couldn't sleep. Even though I was relieved that I would finally meet an authentic mountain man, I didn't know quite what to expect. I had seen *Deliverance,* and to a large degree I had already discounted the harsh stereotype that this movie projects. Instead, I had accepted a

kinder but still romanticized image of the mountain people, developed from reading the *Foxfire* books. I imagined that the next day I would meet a benign backwoods philosopher who would freely share both his wisdom and his jug.

As I discovered the next morning, neither of these images accurately portrayed Jack Schaffenaker. He didn't dwell in some far-off hollow, in some ramshackle log cabin; rather, he lived a five-minute drive from Capon Bridge, just off a paved two-lane road in a cinder-block house he had built himself. We located him by his hand-made sign by the roadside advertising earthworms for sale, one cent each.

I parked the van by the road, and the campers bounced onto the grassy driveway, slamming the doors behind them. Jack strolled out, waving at us. "How you folks doing?" he said. His was a spontaneous, nearly toothless grin.

I was planning to invite Jack to go fishing with us. But before I could even introduce myself, he offered to show us his favorite fishing spot in the Cacapon River, which flowed just across the road from his house. I offered to buy some worms. Jack filled the children's Dixie cups with dirt, then dropped several earthworms in each one. One camper, a girl, stared at him in disbelief. "A penny a worm? Jack, you'll never get rich that way." But he wouldn't accept even a penny from us.

We all got back into the van, with Jack choosing to sit in the back with the campers. They talked about fishing, and I drove. Winding beside the Cacapon, I negotiated a tight turn in the road, after which Jack pointed to the right, toward a grassy bank beside the river.

I parked just off the road, and the children scattered on the riverbank to cast their lines. Meanwhile, I sat by Jack on a fallen sycamore and listened to him finish the fish story he had begun in the van. He was the slowest speaker I had ever heard.

When Jack was done with his story, I asked him about himself. His ancestors had been some of the earliest Europeans to settle near Capon Bridge. Schaffenaker Mountain, one of the most impressive ridges around Capon Bridge, was named after Jack's great-grandfather.

We were suddenly interrupted by a camper's "I got one!" Jack and I ran upstream to join the boy, already reeling in a good-sized catfish. The boy was bent over, ready to grasp his catch. Jack advised him to first wet his hands, lest the fish's slimy coat be removed, which would endanger the fish when back in the water. The boy dipped his hands in the river, then proceeded to unshackle the fish.

Before throwing it back, the boy offered the fish to him. Jack laughed, then shook his head. "You can't eat him and his grandchildren both," he joked. "I'll probably be lots hungrier then than now. Just set him free."

We walked back to the sycamore. Jack continued reminiscing about his past. He said that he had served in World War II, first in the Aleutian Islands then in the Philippines. He spoke in detail about his experiences in the Aleutians but was more silent about the Philippines. Not wanting to pry too deeply, I changed the subject. For most of an hour, we talked about music.

One camper stared at him in disbelief. "A penny a worm? Jack, you'll never get rich that way." But he wouldn't accept even a penny from us.

Then I summoned the campers to return to the van. When we stopped by Jack's house to drop him off, several campers asked me if we could invite him to join us the next morning on our hike along Slonaker's Creek. Without consulting the camp director, I said, "Sure!" Jack immediately agreed to go.

Promising Jack I would return early the next morning, I opened the passenger door. But he wanted to show us something before we left. Not wanting to hurt his feelings, I motioned for all the campers to climb back out of the van. Jack walked up his driveway and entered his house, while the campers and I gathered on the bank of his hand-dug fish pond and watched dragonflies dive-bombing mosquitoes. So that we could sit down, we overturned some of the metal buckets Jack used in his earthworm business.

Soon Jack rejoined us, cradling a guitar. It was, he was proud to declare, a vintage Gibson hollow-body. I was excited, thinking that now I'd hear some traditional Appalachian folk songs played the way they should be played, by a true mountain musician. While in high school, I had checked out books and records from the library, all in an effort to teach myself how to sound like a real folk singer. Now I would finally hear this music come to life.

Jack fiddled with the tuning pegs, then began picking. What came out of that guitar, though, was not folk music — not by my definition anyway. Instead, Jack impressed the children with his rendition of Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode." They responded by banging on the buckets with sticks. Everyone enjoyed themselves, especially Jack.

The next morning, I arrived at Jack's house just after eight. He was ready, with a canteen in one hand and a corduroy jacket in the other. Out by the road, he turned his hand-painted sign over, which now informed passersby that there were "no more wurms for sail."

This was to be a nature hike along Slonaker's Creek through an unspoiled limestone canyon. The campers greeted Jack at the trailhead, and we started down the muddy trail. The forest was like a symphony that morning, with flute-like thrushes answering the kettle-drumming of ruffed grouse.

As we crossed the creek, Jack proceeded to tell the campers a "haint tale" he'd been told by a relative when he was about their age. "We're coming up on a house, just a bit further down, where a real 'haint' lives. And by crackies, it's a mean old haint...."

Somebody asked, "What's a haint?"

"Why, you call them 'ghosts,' but 'haints' is scarier, 'cause you 'haint' never seen one. Anyway, no people have been living there for years. I remember hearing about old man Slonaker getting spooked and leaving like a flash...."

"A man who was visiting heard some chains rattling in the attic. He climbed the staircase, step by step, the chains banging louder and louder...."

"What happened?"

"Well, people say that he was a plumb fool to live there, what with the things that happened there before."

"Like what!"

"Well, they say that, a long time back, a man who was visiting heard some chains rattling in the attic. He climbed the staircase, step by step, the chains banging louder and louder...."

By now, the hikers were interested only in Jack's tale. They listened intently as he described in his mesmerizing cadence the truly neck-wrenching plight of a man trapped by his own fear. That was the way I interpreted it, anyway. One of the boys later retold it to the rest of the campers, and nobody at camp slept much that night.

That summer, I brought group after group of campers to visit Jack at his cinder-block house — or, as he affectionately called it, his "fall-out shelter." Many of the campers wanted to assist Jack in his summer tasks. The boys helped tend his earthworms, and often the girls avoided the boys by working in his vegetable garden.

Amused by this division of labor, Jack nonetheless helped the children overcome it. Some of the boys would willingly harvest tomatoes alongside the girls, and similarly a few of the girls developed a fascination for the life-cycle of the earthworm. Both boys and girls would tease Jack for his habit of talking to worms. And upon learning that Jack fed his worms shredded newspaper, they all agreed that "these are the best-read worms in the world."

The last time I saw Jack was in late August, my last day at camp. The campers had been gone for several days, but I had remained to help clean up the lodge. I was to board a bus the next day, college looming ahead of me like an iceberg. I thought to myself, I would rather spend the fall canoeing with Jack down the Capon, catching bass by day, listening to that legendary guitar at night.

That last day, driving over Schaffenaker Mountain to visit Jack, I saw that the whole county was tinged by drought. His crops were withering in the August heat, and his fish pond had all but disappeared. I'm sure he was sorry to watch the apples perish on the trees he had planted in his yard. Yet Jack was cheerful despite the drought; after all, his house was cool and his well still drew. He wouldn't let it bother him. He liked things plain and simple.

He himself was not plain and simple, though. He had met too many people from too many different backgrounds. He had witnessed too much during his military days to be taken for a simple mountaineer, if there is such a person. Jack didn't think of himself as "Appalachian," just human. Yet, he knew his place on earth as few people do, and he freely shared his heritage. From his example, children became, if only for a part of a day, skilled fishermen, worm farmers, and storytellers.

As I walked up Jack's freshly mowed driveway, I noticed his hand-built wheelbarrow wobbling toward me. Jack had been digging mud out from his fish pond, to insulate his worm cans with mounds of earth before the first frost. As soon as he saw me, he laid his burden down and ambled into his house for his guitar.

"Let me help you with that," I said to Jack, pointing at the wheelbarrow.

"Later," he replied. After placing two small Wheeling Steel trash cans upside-down in the grass, Jack said, "Hey, haven't heard from 'Old Joe

Folk Recordings List

The American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress publishes an annual list of selected recordings of folk music and folklore. The list is short and exclusive; a panel of experts painstakingly narrows the hundreds of recordings issued each year to 20 to 30 albums covering the range of American folk music.

The 1991 list of recommended recordings is now available, and a collection of West Virginia ballads and songs is included. "Folksongs and Ballads, Volume 3," from Augusta Heritage Recordings at Davis and Elkins College, features the singing of Holley Hundley, Wavie Chappell, Homer Sampson, and Hazel Stover, with insert notes by GOLDENSEAL freelancer Gerald Milnes. Other recordings on the 1991 list feature early bluegrass, washboard bands, Cherokee songs, and more.

The Augusta recording is available in stores such as The Shop in the Cultural Center, or by mail from Augusta Heritage Recordings, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241. The price is $10 per cassette, plus $2 for handling. "American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1991: A Selected List" is available for free from the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.

Clark' for awhile!" I began plunking the melody of this traditional mountain tune, one of many he taught me how to play.

Jack had scarcely begun strumming his accompaniment when an overweight man wandered up the driveway, clapping his hands out of time. He was, he said, from Washington, and he wanted to "gamble" his weekend fishing on the Cacapon. He wanted to buy some worms — and to see if Jack would recommend possible hot spots. Jack freely disclosed a couple of his favorite sites.

Anxious to try his luck, the tourist thanked Jack, handing him "ten bucks for the tip and a dozen worms." Jack explained that his price was a penny a worm and that visiting a spell was a pleasure that "don't cost even a penny." The man — after insisting, even arguing that Jack should keep the money — strutted back down the driveway toward his Volvo, as if he'd just donated to the charity of his choice.

Jack was cheerful despite the drought; after all, his house was cool and his well still drew. He wouldn't let it bother him.

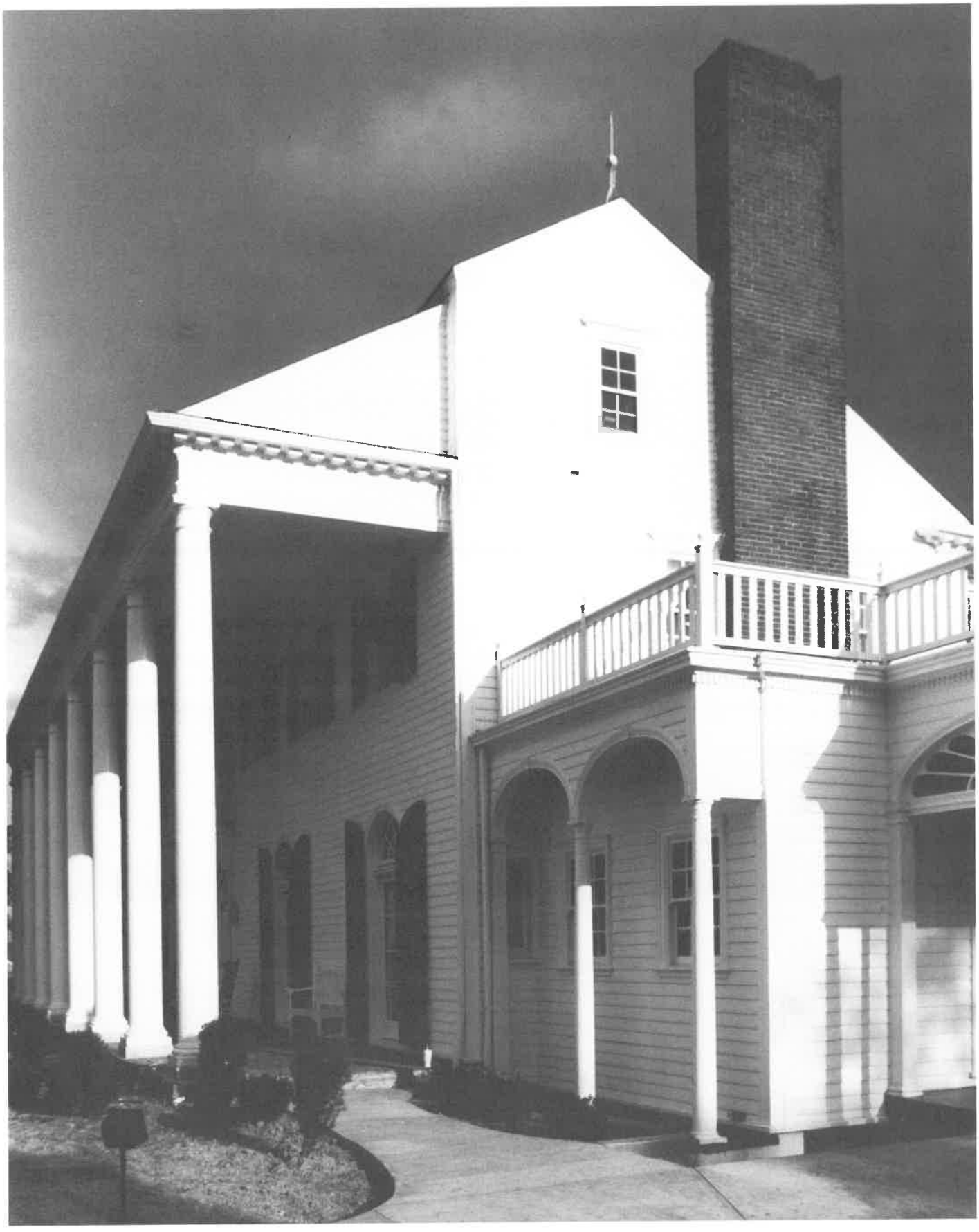
Jack just laughed. "We-ell, it'll always come in handy come tax time."

We proceeded to play two instrumental tunes — "Soldier's Joy" and "Over the Waterfall" — and a few folk songs, including "John Henry" and "John Hardy." Then I had to leave. I had the camp's van, and I had to go by Whitacre's Grocery to pick up the food for the camp's last-night picnic.

I wasn't especially sad that afternoon, because I was sure I would be back. Jack followed me out to the van. Before closing the door and starting the engine, I turned to Jack and thanked him for teaching me all those tunes. Then I told him I looked forward to playing more music with him the following summer.

But Jack didn't live that long. He succumbed to a heart attack the next April, 1987, at age 66, just as spring was bringing life back to Hampshire County. He was the last of the local Schaffenakers, as far as I know, but he leaves us a good-sized mountain to remember him by.

Jack Schaffenaker makes music with Ted Olson, our author. Photographer unknown, mid-1980's.



The Mount Vernon Farm mansion house has stood facing the Kanawha River for most of the century. Photo by Michael Keller.

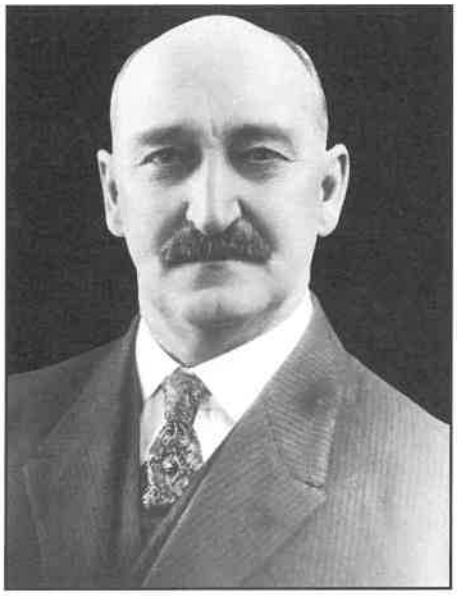
"The Finest in the State"

Harry Shadle's Mount Vernon Farm

By Irene B. Brand

Businessman Harry E. Shadle developed his big Kanawha River farm in the mid-1920's, and by 1929 the *Charleston Gazette* called it "probably the finest in the state." Shadle's love of nature, his appreciation for purebred stock, and his desire to produce quality agricultural products led him to make Mount Vernon Farm that way. And deep pockets didn't hurt.

Shadle was a man of means, having already made his mark in various enterprises. He owned vast acreages of forest land in Nicholas, Kanawha, and adjoining counties, which supplied his Morgan Lumber Company, located along the Elk River in Charleston. From these tremendous holdings of timber, Shadle's company furnished the lumber to build the town of Nitro during World War I. The firm provided many of the materials used in building the Daniel Boone Hotel in Charleston, where Shadle was a major stockholder.

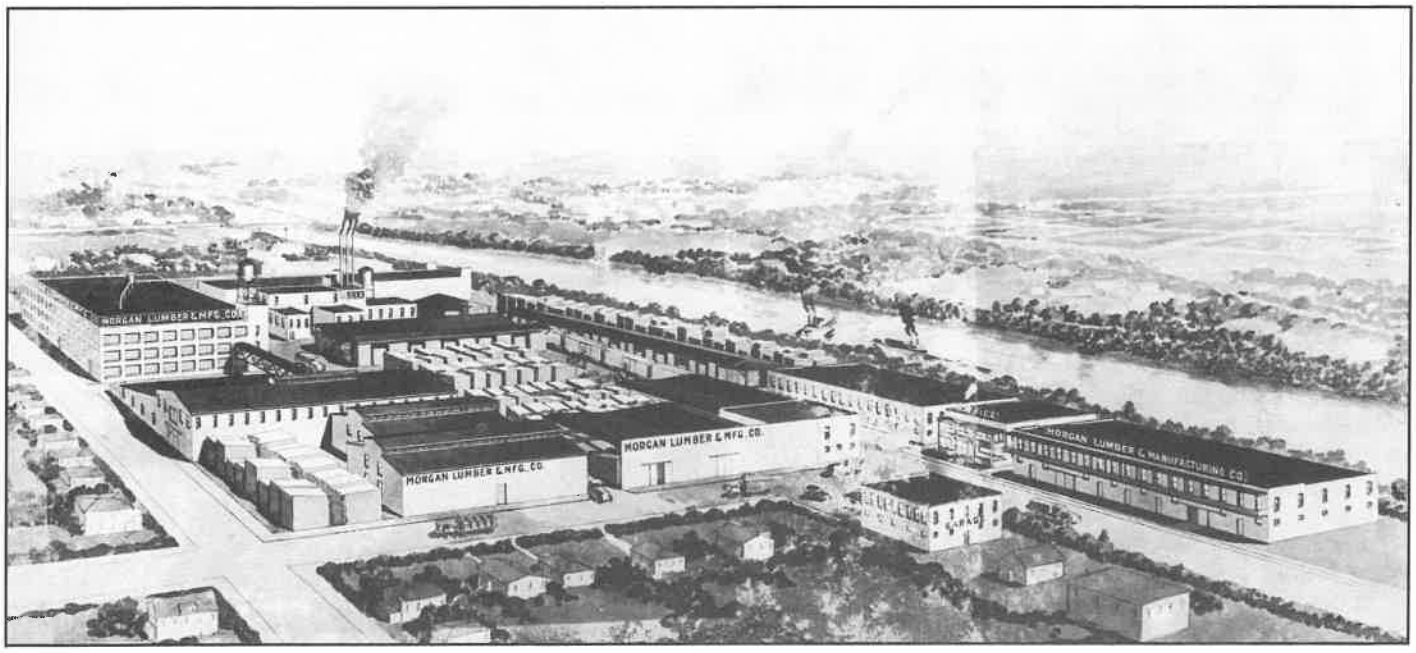


Harry Shadle (above) succeeded in business before establishing his dream farm in Mason County. His Morgan Lumber Company in Charleston supplied the materials and the wherewithal for his pet projects. Photographer and dates unknown.

The Shadles were also active in church-related affairs in the capital city, where Mr. Shadle served on the building committee when the expansive Baptist Temple was built.

In 1924, when Shadle turned his interest to farming, he purchased 900 acres of Mason County land from Sam Parsons, located eight miles above Point Pleasant on the south side of the Kanawha River along present U.S. Route 35. Since the land had once been owned by George Washington and because Shadle was born on February 22, Washington's birthday, the property was named for the first president's Virginia plantation.

Shadle and his wife, Sarah, built an imposing residence that in some ways resembled Washington's famed home. The house was surrounded by 14 acres of spacious lawn, comprising a wide variety of shrubs, flowers, and native trees. The columned, two-story frame structure commanded a broad view of the fertile river bottoms and



gently rolling foothills of the Kanawha Valley. Architect Louis Lott included an earlier house, already on the property when Shadle bought it, in his plans for the new house. The annex became the quarters for the Mount Vernon household staff.

Many distinctive features marked the interior of the big house. The den was an octagonal room with walnut woodwork and English-made Oriental wallpaper. The sun room had twin fireplaces, a fish pond, and a fountain. The paneled dining room featured an arched ceiling.

The splendor of the house and its grounds was unsurpassed in the area, but H. E. Shadle wasn't in it just for appearances. He made his property a model of efficient farming. C. C. Lewis, Jr., of Old Town Farm, Point Pleasant, remembers Mr. Shadle as a "very fine gentleman" and a thoroughly committed gentleman farmer.

"I know that he reached out to get the best possible advice for his farming," Lewis says. "D. R. Dodd, one of the first county agents in the area, had gone to West Virginia University as an Extension man, and then later to Ohio State. Mr. Shadle sought his advice, and Dr. Dodd planned the tiling system on the river land of Mount Vernon Farm."

The tiling was done to improve drainage, and Rusty Crump of Point Pleasant remembers the big job. "The bottom land was tiled by John Coleman of Buffalo. He had a lot of men working for him, and they did all of the work by hand."

Mr. Shadle erected a dozen or more tenant houses, neat poultry buildings and yards, several barns to quarter his dairy herd and purebred horses, and a commissary for his employees. Crump, who in the mid-1920's worked for towboat owner Ben Raike, says, "Mr. Raike hauled most of the supplies used in the buildings from the Morgan Lumber Company. Everything was of high quality material, even for building the henhouses and the barns. We hauled door and window frames, cement, tile, lumber, cinders, and gravel. There was a big building on the riverbank, and the materials were stored in it until they were needed. We also hauled surplus items from a plant in Nitro, left over after World War I."

With a laugh, Crump recalls, "Mr. Raike didn't have any trouble finding people to unload his cargo. He'd pay a man $2 a day, and at that time ordinary laborers were only getting a daily wage of $1."

Sarah Shadle was the lady of the manor. She frequently entertained house guests, according to her cook's recollections. Photographer and date unknown.

Once his buildings were finished, Shadle began to fill them with the finest of livestock. The dairy herd at Mount Vernon Farm consisted of purebred Holsteins, Jerseys, and Brown Swiss. In fact, Shadle is believed to have been the first person to bring Brown Swiss cattle into the Mountain State. Everett Jordan, 92 and now living at Gallipolis Ferry, worked in the Mount Vernon dairy for six years.

"For about three years of that time, I milked the test cows three times a day," he recalls. "I got up at three o'clock in the morning, and finished up late at night. They only tested a few cows at a time, probably not more than 20. I had to keep records on each of the cows — I'd write down their names, the weight of the milk, the weight of the feed. I kept track of everything like that, morning, noon, and night. Each cow was tested for a year."

"We went down to the windmill and got water out of the spigot there. If the wind didn't blow, we didn't get any water."

When Jordan first went to work at the farm in 1928, they didn't have milking machines, but electric milkers had been installed before he left. The dairy herd was housed and milked in scientifically-built Jamesway barns constructed of steel and concrete, providing ample space for each animal, natural light, and exceptional ventilation.

The dairy herd consisted of purebred cows only, selected from an ancestry of outstanding milk and butterfat producers. For years the Shadle stock took high honors at state fairs in Ohio and West Virginia and at other regional cattle shows. In May 1929, a Holstein, Gladi, led the herds of the Tri-County Milk Testing Association by producing 2,247 pounds of milk of 5.2 percent fat, and 116.8 pounds of butterfat.

All of the cows had their names over their stalls. Jordan says that he's forgotten the names, but his daughter, Beulah Bechtle, who lived on the farm as a child, remembers. "There were two twin cows whose names I recall," she says, "Beulah and Eulah. They had little horns that curled down over their brown foreheads."

Mrs. Bechtle also remembers the farm's elegance. "It was a beautiful place, and that field back of the big house was a flower garden. We used to go over there on Sunday evenings and walk around looking at the flowers."

Jordan and his wife have been married for 70 years. Three of their 13 children were born while they lived at Mount Vernon Farm.

"I was too busy cooking and washing for the children to raise much of a garden," Carrie Jordan says, "so it was a good thing Mr. Shadle had a store on the farm where we could buy our groceries." Prices were high in the Mount Vernon store, but in season local farmers provided fresh produce at reasonable cost. One year the Jordans bought apples for 25 cents a bushel.

"I made $50 a month," Mr. Jordan remembers, "and that was pretty good wages then."

"The house we lived in was fairly new," Mrs. Jordan recalls, "but we didn't have any water nor electricity. We heated the house with a fireplace. There was a cistern, and we had a hand pump on the back porch. When the cistern dried up, there were two wells where we could get water."

The children of the family had to carry the water. "We went down to the windmill and got water out of the spigot there," Beulah recalls. "The windmill pumped the water up on the hill to fill the reservoir, and that was used in the dairy barns. If the wind didn't blow, we didn't get any water."

One venture led to another for Harry Shadle. According to C. C. Lewis, Jr., "When Mr. Shadle became dissatisfied with the price he was being paid for his milk, he started the Mount Vernon Dairy in Charleston, which processed and sold the output from his own farm." As business grew, the dairy bought milk from other sources. In Charleston, Shadle continued the Mount Vernon theme, constructing his dairy plant in much the same style as his farm buildings along the Kanawha. Besides milk, other products sold by the plant were cream, chocolate drink, ice cream, poultry, eggs, and sausage.

Along with the dairy herds, the Belgian and Percheron draft horses were a big attraction at the Mason County farm. Shadle had a sizable herd of these large animals for his own farm use, and reportedly Mount Vernon furnished the horses that pulled the delivery wagons for the Diamond Ice Company in Charleston. The stallions were in demand for breeding throughout the area. "We raised many of Mount Vernon's colts," Mr. Lewis says of his Old Town Farm.

Eighty-year-old Harley Hall of Point Pleasant worked at Mount Vernon Farm for about 15 years, but he wouldn't have anything to do with the breeding stock. "I never fooled with them," he says. "I was afraid of those old stud horses."

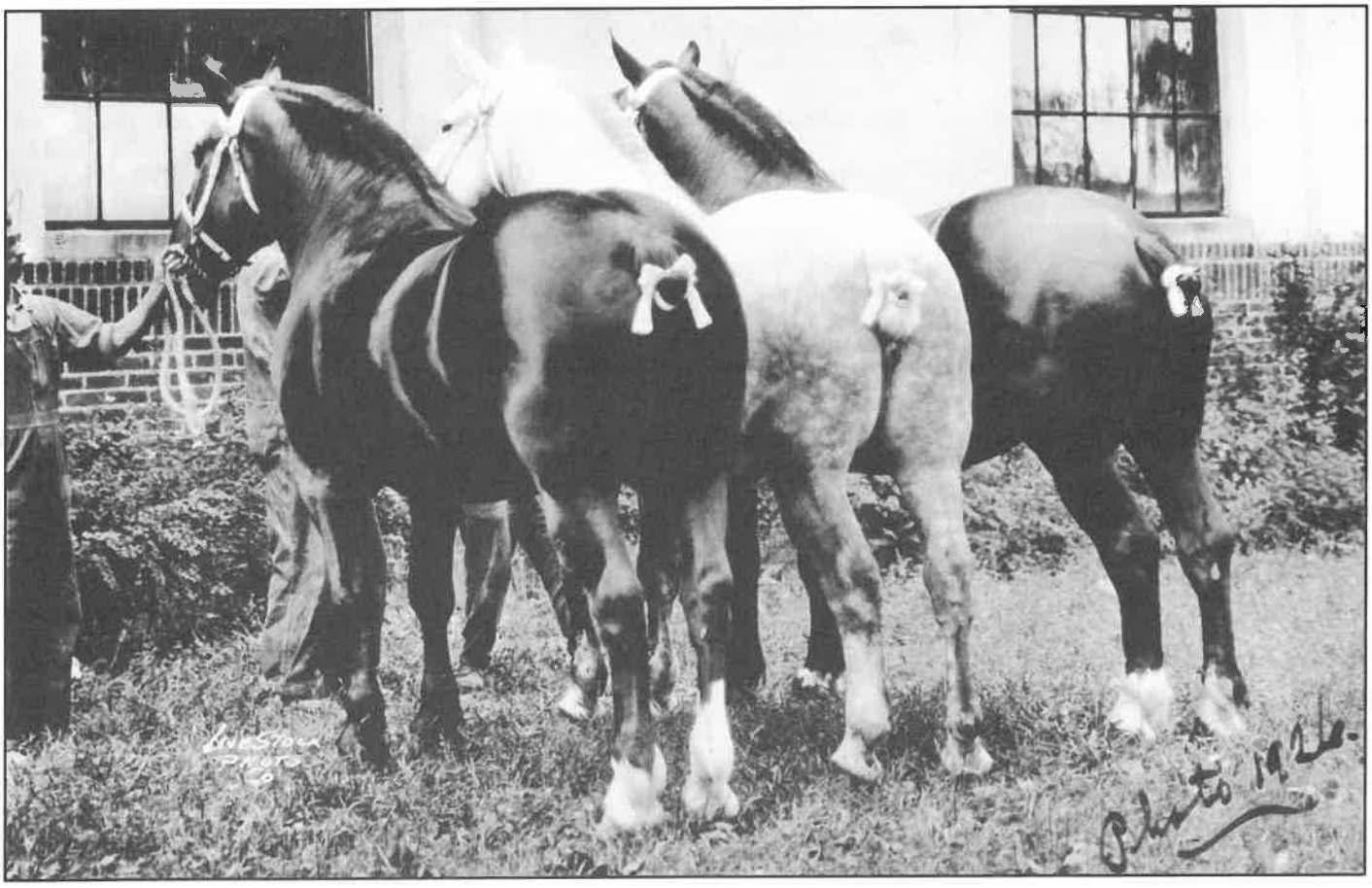
According to Hall, a German named Schmell was in charge of the thoroughbreds. "That's all he did. He spent his whole day feeding, currying, and grooming those horses." Hall remembers the name of the Belgian stud as Mack, and the Percheron stallion's name was Jim. The Holstein bull was named Sailor Boy, and the Brown Swiss bull's name was Cinnamon Boy of Meadow Green.

"There was one old cow that I remember well, for she weighed 1,850 pounds. She had a name over her stall, too — True Blue was her name."

Mr. Hall says, "It was a good place to work. I did common labor, ten hours a day, six days a week, at a dollar per day. We raised about everything we needed on the farm — corn, wheat, barley, oats, and alfalfa. There was a mill house with a mixer that ground up all of the grain for farm use. We didn't grind feed for anybody else, just what we needed on the farm."

When considering the changes since he worked on the farm, Hall says, "The equipment has changed so

Prime livestock was a main interest at Mount Vernon. These Belgian horses were photographed by Livestock Photo Company in 1926.



"Drink Milk" was the philosophy of Mount Vernon Dairy, whose corporate logo (above) was a close copy of the mansion. The barn, shown here in 1965, has since burned. Photo by William C. Blizzard.

much. When I worked there, we loaded everything by hand. Now they've got loaders. I always drove the Belgian horses, for at first they had only one tractor, an old 1530 International. My brother drove it all the time."

The Mount Vernon farm store operated very much like a coalfields company store, Mr. Hall says. "That was the only place nearby to buy groceries. I'd buy tobacco and stuff through the week and put it on my bill until payday, which was the first and 15th days of the month. On payday, if you had anything coming to you, you'd get a check, and if you didn't, you didn't."

Shadle's employees remember him as an easy boss. Everett Jordan recalls the occasion when he left Mount Vernon Farm. Jordan quit his job after a disagreement with his supervisor. When Mr. Shadle learned why he had quit, he told Jordan, "You're working for me, not the supervisor. You go on back to work." Jordan still left, because he knew bad relations with his superior would make for rough working conditions.

Each year the Shadles hosted a Christmas party for all their employees. Virginia Carder of Saint Albans remembers these affairs. "We gathered in the big room and sat on fold-up chairs. Mrs. Shadle played the pipe organ for us. There were treats for everybody." One year when Santa put in his appearance a boy shouted, "Why, Santa Claus has on Mr. Shadle's white boots."

The Shadle farm was touted as a place where "true southern hospitality prevails" in a 1939 Mason County publication. "Truly Mount Vernon perpetuates all that was best in the old southern plantation," the writer gushed. Mount Vernon Farm helped build that reputation on June 12, 1929, when Mr. and Mrs. Shadle hosted a field day and livestock show that for years was the talk of the community.

Thousands of people attended the event, including such prominent guests as Governor and Mrs. William G. Conley, both of West Virginia's U.S. senators, former governor Howard Gore, representatives from the Brown Swiss Cattle Association and the Percheron Society of America, and numerous state officials. These dignitaries were introduced by C. C. Lewis, then president of the Mason County Farm Bureau. The main speaker was Governor Conley.

Highlighting the day's activities was a parade of Shadle's prize livestock, including several well-known animals with established records.

Although lunch was to be an old-fashioned basket dinner affair, food was available for those who hadn't brought their own. John Lewis of Southside remembers that his 4-H Club had a stand in the mill house where they sold ice cream, hot dogs, and lemonade. Refreshments were also served in the Mount Vernon tea room, and by the ladies of the Concord Baptist Church.

Above: Mount Vernon established its hospitable reputation early with a 1929 Mason County field day. This photograph of the day's events currently hangs in grandson Jim Shadle's house. Photographer unknown.
Right: The present owners have taken pains to put Mount Vernon into beautiful condition. This recent photograph shows the main stairway. Photo by Michael Keller.

During the afternoon, a baseball game was arranged between the youth of the South Kanawha community and the Leon junior team.

A band from Leon furnished music throughout the day, and a Charleston orchestra played for the barn dance that evening. Beulah Bechtle says, "I remember hearing the band. They played 'Carolina Moon, Keep on Shining.' It was a new song then, and they played it all day long." She also reminisced about the barn dance. "I was too young to go, but my future husband, Lawrence, did, and he danced with the governor's daughter. She didn't know how to square dance, so he showed her through the steps."

Guests were free to roam the grounds and into the barns. Jabez Beard of Southside was a nine-year-old boy when he attended the field day. "I remember those big barns full of cattle and horses. One barn was full of Holsteins, another one was full of Brown Swiss. I'd never seen a Brown Swiss cow before, and they were the prettiest things you ever saw. I've liked Brown Swiss cows ever since."

Beard was also impressed by the airplane he saw that day. "What I remember was that airplane! I got to

continued on page 56

"A Mansion Inside and Out"

Mount Vernon as the Cook Saw It

Lorissa Cheever was the next thing to family at Mount Vernon farm, going there as household cook in the fall of 1926. The big house impressed her, as it did most everyone who saw it. She observed the Shadles, their servants and guests with interest and offered detailed descriptions of everything she saw in long letters to her daughter. The following excerpts are edited from two letters written soon after her arrival.

September 22, 1926
Dear Daughter:
I am very busy nowadays, cook and kitchen maid at what is called the Mt. Vernon of W. Va. The house is about a mile south of the Kanawha River near Beech Hill station of the N. Y. Central. We crossed the river in a boat, Mr. Shadle and I. His wife and the colored man of all work were there with the car to meet us. Mr. Shadle introduced me to the wife as if I'd been a guest, and she shook hands and "was very glad to meet me."

We had to drive about two miles from the landing. There is a white fence with a big wide double gate, a broad driveway between two great big lawns, and a great big white oak tree beside the road. The lawn is as flat and smooth as a table and the drive is cinders and goes straight toward the house for about a block, then is divided by a circular lawn with a big flower bed in the center. One branch goes around and to the barns, sort of winding, and the other circles [around] to the entrance — and it's some grand entrance!

It's a regular mansion inside and out. The wall paper in the reception hall is landscaped with trees three feet high or more, and the same paper is on the walls of the broad open stairway and in the upper hall. In the library the paper has a different design and has seven coats of lacquer over it — both papers imported from France. The furnishings are all very imposing and I feel very much at home.

Mrs. Shadle sent the colored man to my door the first evening to tell me they would like to see me in the library. He *conducted* me thru the dining room and kitchen of the "annex," thru another hall and thru the service room (which is my dining room), then thru a big dining room, then another wide hall to the library and bowed me in. They asked me to be seated and began to get acquainted, then took me all around the downstairs part and showed me the pipe organ and the very big parlor. It must have five or more settees and couches and davenports in it and the radio and chairs and lamps and tables and some kind of blue-tiled mantle and hearth. I haven't examined it all in detail yet.

It's the country with city conveniences, and I haven't got my camera.

They have had me in there to visit several times in the evening or to sit out on their big porch with them. I never saw so many porches and balconies, and the house grounds are as beautiful at the back as in front.

My room is very big and has a massive dresser, not very high where the drawers are but [with] the biggest mirror I ever saw on a dresser. Then there's a great heavy library table with a silk cover, a big wardrobe (for my few clothes), a big fireplace for a coal fire and a radiator for steam heat. The grounds were laid out by a professional, and I guess the interior was too. They have a built-in Frigidaire and have Delco lights, and their own power house or pump or whatever gives running well water all thru the house, hot and cold. I have a bath and toilet to myself and the colored folks [Rosa and Felix] have theirs, and Mr. and Mrs. Shadle have another. Mine is small but exquisite and theirs is perfection.

I'll not tire you all out trying to get the idea of what this place is like, but it's the country with city conveniences, and I haven't got my camera! They milk 100 cows by machinery and the barns and silos look like they might be as perfect as the house.

They had four women and three men visiting here from Saturday evening till Monday noon. She baked a cake and I did all the rest of the cooking. Rosa and Felix helped with preparing vegetables and with the cleaning up. I fried seven chickens! Had pancakes Sunday morning, biscuits for dinner. Mrs. Shadle worried at first and kept coming out and asking if I needed her to help. Then after I got thru with dinner Sunday she didn't bother any more. I didn't need her help to get the meals, but if she'd offered to clean up the kitchen afterward she would have said something!

Sometimes Mrs. Shadle suggests something to cook and sometimes she doesn't. Then I go on and cook what's handy. Rosa and Felix are great fun. She is 27 and he 29.

Write as often as you can. Love and best wishes. Mom.

October 3, 1926
Dear Daughter:
I received your very welcome letter and will endeavor to answer it though I have a sore thumb, and the writing may not be up to standard.

You can't begin to see this place, especially the grounds. They keep two men on it all the time, and sometimes ten are working on it. I think there are 14 acres of yard. There is a crescent-shaped pond about big enough to drown a kitten.

The work here isn't hard but cooking for grand company in a mansion isn't conducive to peace of mind, not to mention having said grandees coming out and being shown the cook and the *rest* of the kitchen appliances. The last company they had were two men and their wives. While the women were admiring the many cupboards and convenient drawers, the men were admiring the cook and looked as if they were pleasantly surprised.

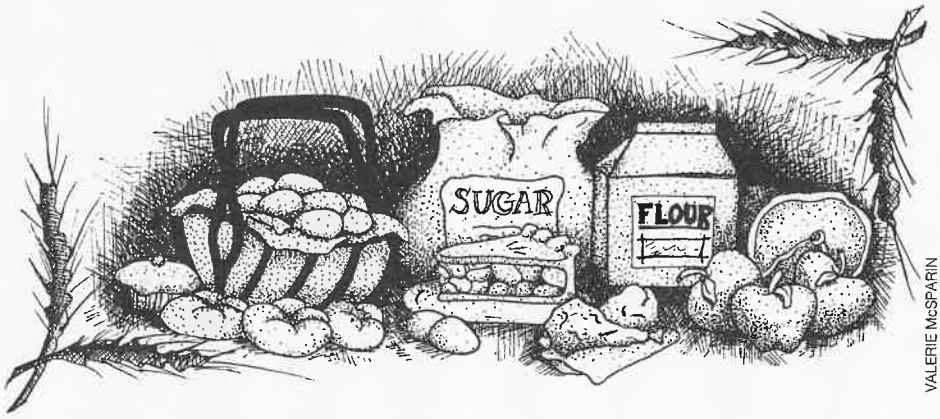
When there isn't company Mrs. Shadle invites me to sit with them in the evenings either in their parlor or on one of the front porches. They think that will keep me from getting lonesome, or maybe *they* get lonesome. And there are books and magazines to read. They don't know that that is my pet dissipation.

Mrs. Shadle went to Charleston with Mr. S. last week — I had to cook for the colored folks. I made muffins, corn bread, corn pancakes and wheat cakes and everything I could think of. We can cook anything we want. If I stay here this winter I'll stay sure enough for the roads are impassable in wet weather. They have one car that Felix drives whenever *we* want to go *out*.

I didn't get the dress yet, as I suppose you sent it to Charleston. I have made over the black silk with long sleeves and high neck, and L. B. gave me another black silk trimmed in wide velvet bands around the skirt part — Lucille gave it to her and it fit me. My brown coat and hat will do very well for this winter, too, for if I stay here I won't go out anyway.

Get yourself clothes that you can wear and be proud of yourself, and don't kid yourself that a cook in a mansion is admired for the clothes she wears — they only see my aprons and the results of my cooking. If I'm clean and the kitchen is clean and the cooking is good they are delighted and say so. I put on the Lucille dress Sunday afternoons, and the long sleeved one when I go out in the car with Shadles or with Felix and Rosa. Otherwise I wear "bunghole" aprons.

I didn't need her help to get the meals, but if she'd offered to clean up the kitchen afterward she would have said something!



VALERIE McSPARIN

So dress yourself and bank your extra hayseed.

I went up to the attic to help Rosa hang her wash up, and when I came down Mr. S. smiled and asked me if I'd been up on the 3rd floor. I said, yes sir. Then I said "Gee, Mr. Shadle, it's a lovely view you have from the window up there." Afterward he was out in the service room where I was working and says, "So you like the view from the 3rd floor window? It is lovely. There's not another place anywhere that's as nice as we have here." He's so proud of it all that only his toes touch the ground. And he's a self-made man, which also makes him proud.

Well, I've got supper and Rosa and I washed dishes and Felix put them away. Then Rosa swept the kitchen while I finished putting things away (the mush in the ice box to chill for breakfast frying, etc.). I made spoon corn bread for supper, fried smoked ham, fried cold boiled potatoes, peas on Mrs. Shadle's meat platter — strutting my stuff — and apple sauce with beaten egg frosting "folded" in and baked in the oven (more strutting), served with thick sauce made with the egg yolks and milk sweetened and flavored and cooked thick. They *think* I can cook!

I am intending to squander the price of some film and get some snaps of myself and the mansion and the bottoms that Mr. Shadle is so proud of, the flat ground between here and the river. Also of Felix and Rosa.

Now don't get foolish and overdo yourself, but get back some of that becoming fat. I was so tickled to get your photos that I even showed them to Rosa, then she wanted Felix to see them. They said you were about 22 or 23 and were awfully pretty. I had showed Rosa the one of you sitting on the pier and Rosa says, "Oh, I see her bare knee!"

Well, tell me if I have answered all your questions. There is no town here except Mr. Shadle's workmen's houses. He has his own store and post office and gas station for cars, electric light, water, sewer, ice, etc. I've been in the store once and visited the cow barns and cooling room. I didn't need to dress as the town is the barn yard, so any more clothes here would be a superfluity.

Write and get well and don't worry. More love and more best wishes. Mom.

Cooking for grand company in a mansion isn't conducive to peace of mind, not to mention having said grandees coming out and being shown the cook and the rest of the kitchen appliances.

"Point Pleasant was full of cars lined up to cross the Kanawha River on Charlie Stone's ferry. So we instead traveled into Ohio on the Ann Bailey, *drove to Huntington, crossed the bridge, and came up Route 2 to get to the farm."*

stand under it, and to watch it take off. It was a little single-engine plane, and it taxied right up to the road. They took people for rides, but it was enough just to be that close to an airplane."

Airplanes were a novelty even to adults in 1929. Governor Conley took his first plane ride when he flew to Mount Vernon Farm in a new Curtis monoplane piloted by Major William D. Tipton, commander of the air corps of the Maryland National Guard. They made the trip from Charleston to the farm in 28 minutes. Two more planes from the Maryland Guard transported other guests to the event. The out-of-state airmen had been visiting Charleston to promote local interest in aviation.

Eugene Sterrett of Point Pleasant remembers that Harold Shadle, son of H.E. Shadle, flew down from Charleston in his own plane. Sterrett's own family had to take a more roundabout journey to reach the Shadle farm.

"Everybody in the county had been invited to the field day," Mr. Sterrett says. "Point Pleasant was full of cars lined up to the north end of town waiting to cross the Kanawha River on Charlie Stone's ferry. So we instead traveled into Ohio on the *Ann Bailey*, drove to Huntington, crossed the bridge, and came up Route 2 to get to the farm. I remember taking a tour of the house and seeing the Wurlitzer pipe organ. We couldn't stay for the barn dance because we had to get across the ferry before it stopped running at dark."

One far-reaching result of the field day was that state officials saw the need for improved transportation in the lower Kanawha Valley, which prompted the upgrading of State Route 17, and the building of the bridge connecting Point Pleasant and Henderson. The bridge was dedicated in 1932 and named for Harry Shadle.

Mount Vernon Farm remained in the family for three generations. After Harry Shadle died, Harold owned the place. Upon Harold's death, the farm passed to his wife, Ethel, and she lived in the mansion until her demise. Harry Shadle's grandson, Jim, sold the property in June 1978. Dr. and Mrs. Breton Morgan now own the house.

"We gave the farm 32 years, " Jim Shadle says. "The time had come to leave." Jim and his wife, Carol, retained five acres of the land and built a residence on the northern edge of the farm.

Jim doesn't recall much about his grandfather. "My grandparents were up in years when my parents, my sister Jean, and I moved from Charleston to the farm. I do remember him as a great showman and a very proud man.

"We were good to the farm, and it was good to us," Jim Shadle says, but he recognizes that a place like Mount Vernon was the product of more than one family's efforts. He and Carol are grateful to the many people who worked for three generations of Shadles — the Laniers, the Bechtles, the Rices, the Halls, and others.

"They were the people who made the farm a success," Jim asserts.

Harry Shadle's old mansion is deeply rooted in the rich farmlands of Mason County. Photo by Michael Keller.

The Farmer's Friend:
The West Virginia *Market Bulletin*

By Peggy Ross

One of the first things John Collins did when he retired from the U.S. Navy and brought his wife back to their 103-acre farm near Bruceton Mills was subscribe to the *Market Bulletin*. John had a hay wagon he wanted to sell, and he got rid of it soon after his ad appeared in the plain, unsophisticated little black-and-white newsletter published by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.

Howard and Madalyn Riffle, who have lived on a farm near Morgantown for 60 years, turned to the *Bulletin* when they wanted to sell their cane mill a few years ago.

"We had run the mill for years but we got elderly and didn't want to raise cane no more," Madalyn says. "Some people over near Hurricane bought it. We had several calls." Madalyn doesn't say so, but "over near Hurricane" is across the state in Putnam County, the better part of 200 miles from the Riffles' Monongalia County home. Their experience shows the way the *Bulletin* helps to keep West Virginia farm families in touch.

Sammi Cottrill of Nutter Fort advertised for plants that would deter snakes from living in her garden. She says she received "six or seven letters, including one from a man who wrote telling me how to handle snakes and make them my friends."

Mary Kerns of Philippi wanted to buy a couple of hundred sharpened locust fence posts, so she placed an ad in the *Bulletin*, too. "I had about five responses," she says. "In fact, one gentleman called me because he thought I had them to sell."

Folks who farm rely on the *Bulletin*. The Riffles have taken it for at least 25 years. During that time, they've both bought and sold through the popular newsletter.

Those who don't farm but like to indulge in countryfied pursuits such as gardening, keeping horses and goats, or breeding dogs rely on it, too. That's how they find rare old seeds or seeds that are especially prolific, locate grain, look for milk pasteurizing equipment, or locate work dogs. Although targeted to the farmer, the *Bulletin* also satisfies the rural-at-heart.

Published monthly under legislative mandate, the *Market Bulletin* has been around in one form or another for most of the century. Chock-full of information ranging from how to deal with the gypsy moth to the whens and wheres of county fair beef sales, it is must reading for those who raise their own food as well as those who raise crops for the market.

Tightened up and downsized under the previous agriculture commissioner, the *Bulletin* has recently been restored to a larger format. Over the years it has seen several sizes. Madalyn Riffle recalls lavish days when it had abundant "pictures and stories and recipes," she says.

Despite the downsizing, the staff tries to run all the ads it gets and continue with a good sampling of other features as well. Last year, 4,877 ads ran. The biggest category was "Equipment Sales" at 720 ads, followed by "Horse Sales" at 667, and "Cattle Sales" a distant third at 450 ads. You can also buy and sell sheep, poultry, hogs and goats through the *Bulletin*. There is a section for plants and a miscellaneous category.

On average, about 156 people call in their classifieds each month. All of them are free, although there was a charge for the "Farm Sales" ads for a while. Former editor David Barker says that real estate agents had begun using the column to such an extent that he, with the approval of the former commissioner of agriculture, Cleve Benedict, decided it was time to start charging for use of the space. Barker cites skyrocking costs and a shoestring budget.

It created quite a stir. In fact, according to Barker, paid farm ads became a campaign issue — one which helped to retire both Benedict

Old Apples Sought

Dr. L. R. Littleton of Petersburg advises us that C. L. Calhoun of North Carolina is searching for old varieties of apples. Calhoun especially seeks types known to be more than 100 years old. He believes there are many abandoned apple trees in West Virginia, according to Littleton, and is looking in particular for the "Buchanan" variety.

To help, contact C. L. Calhoun at Route 5, Box 128, Pittsboro, NC 27312. He will need directions to the tree and promises to take only a few scions for grafting.

The *Market Bulletin* was well into its third decade by 1938, upper left. The other formats are from more recent years. Photo by Michael Keller.

and Barker in the political transition. The "new" commissioner, Gus Douglass (who spent 24 years in the job until 1988), has now returned the free farm ads.

Barker said the *Bulletin* was made smaller in order to save money when postage costs went up again last year. By doing that and bringing the production of the newsletter entirely in-house, he was able to save thousands of dollars per year. The department's director of publications, now Howard Knotts, Barker's successor, also oversees several other magazines and reports for the state.

Every facet, from taking telephone calls to pasting on mailing labels, is done in the *Bulletin* offices. Everyone is involved. There are people entering data and doing layout on the computer, others who write stories and headlines and get everything camera-ready, and there is the print shop itself, where it takes "four and a half to six days to print and collate," according to the staff. The workers also sort the newsletters by zip code and postal routes to get the best break on postage rates.

A bright spot in the mail of about 55,000 Mountaineers who receive it free the first of the month, the *Bulletin* is also sent to 5,000 or so out-of-staters who pay a $5 annual fee. That amount defrays production and mailing costs for the out-of-state subscriptions.

The *Bulletin* is as much a farmer's tool as a tractor or hoe and is meant to serve strictly practical needs. When GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan tried to advertise for a few sections of split rail fence for his Summers County place, the ad was rejected on the grounds that the fencing was ornamental. Upon reflection, Sullivan said he figured he'd have to agree, although he'd seen plenty of the old-style fencing in practical use among his neighbors. "I came away with greater respect for the *Bulletin's* editorial vigilance," he said.

And vigilance is the right word, for the *Bulletin* has strict standards for what may be advertised free of charge to West Virginia farmers. This is not a mail-order flea market. There are no ads for clothing, appliances, furniture, antiques, crafts, power equipment, food processing or preservation items; general woodworking tools or firewood; trucks, cars, vans, campers, backhoes, dozers and other construction equipment; lawn equipment or parts.

Editorial vigilance, too, is exercised to make sure that hog farmers, for example, comply with health regulations. The *Bulletin* stipulates that hogs advertised in its pages have originated from a pseudorabies-monitored herd or have individually tested negative within the past 30 days.

There are no such caveats for horses, sheep, goats, or poultry.

Chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks and guineas are listed, but you won't find ornamental, wild or game birds, or eggs. Only AKC-recognized herding or working dogs are included — no pets, please.

Depending on how many classified ads there are, the *Bulletin's* size ranges from eight to 16 pages. Ads may be called in and recorded anytime, but people must understand that the cut-off date for next month's publication is in the middle of *this* month.

Since all ads are used, the staff

doesn't know until mid-month what size the upcoming publication will be, nor can work really get underway until then. Essentially that means the staff has only two weeks to put everything together, print it and get it in the mail.

And the *Market Bulletin* is not just ads. The agriculture commissioner usually takes the front page to talk about some rural subject of statewide interest. A few of the topics covered during 1992 included the deadly parasites besetting beekeepers, how auctioneers are tested, the cool wet summer, and food fairs featuring West Virginia products.

There is always a section devoted to special events. Unless you subscribe, you may not know there's a Holstein Field Day in Letart, or a Paint Horse Club show in Clarksburg. State veterinarians sometimes take turns writing about animal health and afflictions, offering their best advice.

Recipes still run as space permits and are looked forward to by lots of farm women. "I have many of them among my collection," Madalyn Riffle said.

Maybe you can even find a cook, or at least an all-around handy person. Last summer, the Riffles were looking for a middle-aged or younger lady to do farm chores in exchange for room, board and wages, so they once again turned to the *Bulletin's* classifieds.

That's exactly the kind of work GOLDENSEAL's assistant editor Debby Jackson was looking for one summer during college. She advertised through the *Bulletin* to swap farm labor for room and board, and she received dozens of offers. She recalls that she ended up spending the summer near Waiteville in Monroe County, an educational experience for a Charleston girl and maybe for the family she lived with as well.

Had she been looking for a position of companion, personal caretaker, or professional trainer, though, her ad would not have been accepted.

The *Bulletin* keeps up its standards. But where else could a person locate essentials like a donkey or Tennessee Walker at stud ("Horse Sales"); young Nubian bucks ("Goat Wants"); giant Dewlap Toulouse geese ("Poultry Sales") or registered Polled Dorsets ("Sheep Wants")?

Jack Black, who had a couple of one-seated, rubber-tired Amish buggies he wanted to sell, called his ad in. "It's a pretty popular thing," Jack's father said of the *Market Bulletin*. "Jack sold a buggy through it once before."

There are plenty of other items in the *Bulletin's* pages, too. For instance, Ron Murphy of Spencer advertised a covered wagon; Ovie Knopp of Ripley is selling a 218-bar molasses pan and cane mill (more people appear to be selling than buying these mills); Tom Heine of Fairmont offered wool for spinning, and Kevin Minear of rural route Murraysville has listed an alpaca gelding.

Then there are those interesting and sometimes little-known heirloom vegetables like blue potatoes, trout and bird's eye beans and Blue River squash. In March 1984, GOLDENSEAL wrote about Ruby Morris, a Braxton County woman who regularly combed the *Bulletin* for rare old beans or potatoes. Ruby died a few years ago, but her old vegetable varieties live on, in part because she sold to other preservationists who had read about them in the *Market Bulletin*.

"I've never been disappointed with any plants I've bought through the *Bulletin*," Sammi Cottrill said, calling the publication, "marvelous, typically West Virginia. There are a lot of people who live rurally and they have no other way to communicate. It's important."

Popular as it is, though, not everyone finds what they want in the *Market Bulletin*. Mrs. R. Federer of near Bristol advertised for pawpaws, but no one responded to her ad, she said. Mr. and Mrs. Riffle did get their farm helper, "but actually the *Bulletin* didn't have anything to do with it," Mrs. Riffle chuckled.

And Mary Kerns didn't sell the cow she listed under "Cattle Sales," so she had it bred. But chances are, you will find her advertising a cow and a calf this year.

Subscriptions to the Market Bulletin *are free to people residing in West Virginia. Write to: the* Market Bulletin, *State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd East, Charleston, WV 25305-0170.*

Tasting West Virginia

A Taste of West Virginia, published by the state Department of Agriculture, is a unique catalog devoted to the Mountain State's homegrown foods and handmade goods.

The popular publication, now in its second printing, lists the products of farm families from Circleville to Beaver and Seneca Rocks to Scott Depot. Some are lifelong residents and others are relative newcomers, but they are all proud of the "West Virginia Grown" seal, which guarantees that their products are indeed from West Virginia and meet a high standard of quality. The catalog has photographs and profiles of the producers, as well as ordering information.

A sampling of foods for order includes red raspberries, honey, preservative-free hams, Italian peppers, goat cheese, apples, maple sugar syrup and candies, trout, traditional herbs, soy foods, jams and jellies, buffalo meat, and shiitake mushrooms. Beeswax candles, basketry, wreaths, and 100-percent-wool, two-ply yarn for knitting are among the craft items for sale.

A Taste of West Virginia is available from the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305-0170; (304)558-2210. There is no charge for the 56-page catalog.

"I told them that I wasn't interested in no stripes. I just wanted to help win the war for our side."

"Nobody lives this long," jests William H. Lowther with a twinkle in his 104-year-old eyes. A full thatch of white hair, firm handshake, and muscular body belie the age of this Lewis Countian who was born "in a log cabin between Jailhouse Rock and the Devil's Backbone above the forks of the Little Kanawhy" when Grover Cleveland was president.

"They call it Wildcat now, but it used to be Little Wildcat," continues "Uncle Bill," as he is affectionately known to family and friends. "One morning my grandpa Harrison Lowther was out hunting on Pretty Run when he killed a little wildcat; that afternoon he killed a big wildcat in the next holler. So they started calling the two places Little Wildcat and Big Wildcat.

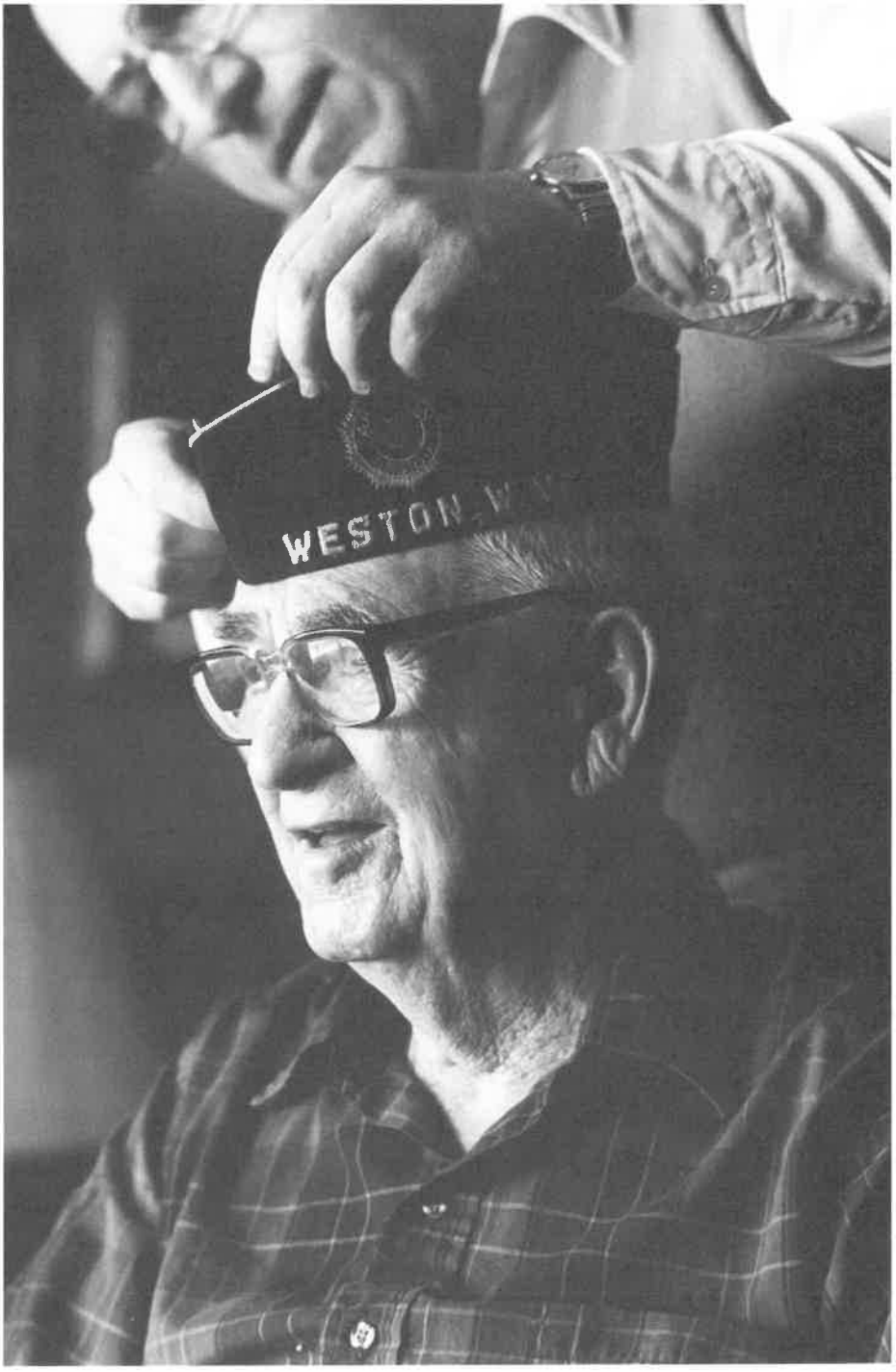
"Those names lasted a long time," he adds. "When they were doing a lot of logging in these parts, there was a post office at Little Wildcat. They later changed the name to just Wildcat. It closed a while back" — in 1960, as I learned elsewhere.

"One time my nephew Glenn Lowther killed a wildcat that his dog had treed. He threw it in the back of his truck and then took his mother, Bonnie, over to Buckhannon.

"A fellow asked him where he got the cat. Glenn said, 'Wildcat.'

"The fellow said, 'Hell, I know it's a wildcat, but where'd you get it?'"

I interviewed Uncle Bill in his room at the Veterans Hospital in Clarksburg where he was recovering from a fall. Until December 1992 he lived by himself in his home between Duffy and Wildcat, where he and his late wife, Madge Furr Lowther, spent their married life. Today, he has recovered from his fall, but he is no longer able to live by himself. He lives at Holbrook on the Hill, a nursing home in Buckhannon.



At age 104, William "Uncle Bill" Lowther is willing to accept a little help with his headgear.

104 and Counting

Bill Lowther of Wildcat, West Virginia

By Joy Gregoire Gilchrist
Photographs by Michael Keller

According to his niece, Hazel Lowther Reeder, Uncle Bill didn't marry until he was 67 and has no children of his own. However, he has three generations of nieces and nephews and is close to all of them. He is proud of his ancestry and quick to point out that he is descended from Colonel William Lowther of frontier warfare fame.

Like his pioneer ancestor, Uncle Bill served in defense of his country. He was in Company D, 320th Infantry, 80th Division, as part of the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. His family didn't expect him to return from France, where Bill says the average life expectancy on the front lines was seven minutes, so they disposed of his personal belongings when he left. When he did come home, they feared he would die any day because he was so emaciated and shell-shocked.

Uncle Bill picks up the story. "I had to fight my way out of here before I could leave," he says. "I'd walked the seven miles to Ireland, where I was to take the train to Weston. I stopped at the store to get me a drink and these three fellows asked me what I thought I could do over there. I showed them. I fought them right there.

"When I got over there, I told them that I wasn't interested in no stripes. I just wanted to help win the war for our side. They made me a gunner in the infantry.

"We was fighting in France and all the first and second gunners in my outfit had been shot off. One day they came to me and said they were going to send me to school. They took me down behind this building and told me that's where the school was. They handed me a machine gun and told me I had to learn to operate it and tear it down and put it together blindfolded. I thought I'd never do it.

"I had a big job, a 125-pound machine gun to carry. It took two boys to carry my ammunition. It'd shoot 500 shots a minute if you could keep the lead to it.

"In France we fought with [on the side of] the English until we got them straight, then we fought with the French until we straightened them out, and then we moved to the Argonne Forest.

"I'll never forget the day it was over," he says as a tear wells in his still-bright dark brown eyes. "It's a good thing it was over, too. I don't think I'd have made it if there'd been another big battle.

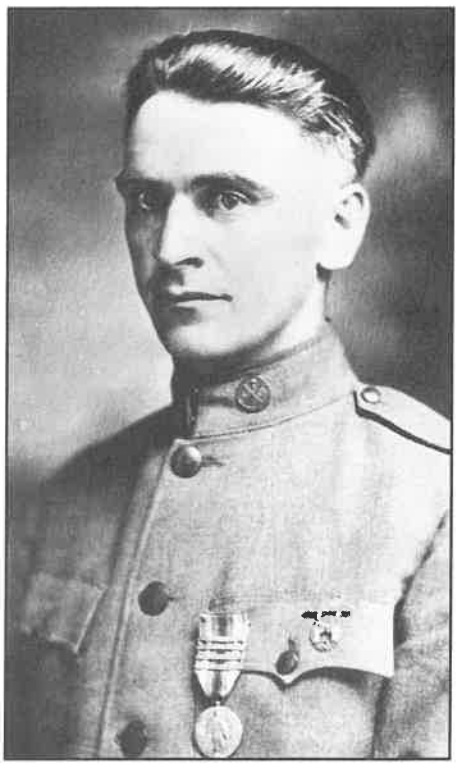
"They'd put me agin a hillside in a hole under a big old pine tree. The hill was steep like those we have around here. It was above a little town. I was there all night. We'd been hearing for almost a month that it was going to be over and it never was. When daylight came, there was a lot of shouting. Everyone started shooting their guns and saying it was over.

"I never thought nothing much about how I felt about the war until I got back to Camp Lee and seen some fellows in awful bad shape, even worse off than I was."

Then, with a touch of the humor

"I knew my eyesight was getting bad. I shot at eight groundhogs in my yard and only got seven."

The road to Wildcat begins at Ireland, West Virginia. There is some beautiful mountain scenery on the way down to Bill Lowther's home country.



Bill was proud to wear a private's uniform in World War I. He didn't want any stripes, he recalls, just "to help win the war for our side." Photographer unknown.

Brothers Bill and Jesse Lowther with dogs, guns and an unlucky fox. Photographer and date unknown.

that is an ever present part of his personality, Uncle Bill says, "One fellow was going to hang a satchel on me. He had me turn around three times, because I was so poorly he couldn't find a place to hang it. I weighed 95 pounds.

"Our food was okay. Sometimes we had what they called 'slumgullion,' made from beef and whatever else they could find to put in it. Up in the front lines, we didn't get nothing but hardtack and quarter rations of water. One day I came upon a stream that had this pretty, clear water in it. I hadn't had a drink for three or four days. I looked at it for a long time, but I didn't drink it. Sometimes they poisoned the streams.

"And, they'd string rusty wire through the woods and turn electricity on it. You know what that'd do to a fellow."

When Bill Lowther returned home in June 1919, he expected to start working for someone in the neighborhood the next day. Instead he visited with folks who came to see him. The second day he went to work for Jim Mick who was cutting timber on Pretty Run and needed a day laborer.

"He gave me $4," Uncle Bill recalls. "I was surprised, because when I left home I was getting 75 cents for a day's work. That was a big raise in just a couple of years."

His military service is important to him. He is a founding father of the Weston Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and is Lewis County's lone survivor of the "Great War." But Uncle Bill's war stories are just a few of the tales in his repertoire. He is always ready — and eager — to share them with any visitor.

When questioned about his earliest memories, he recalls that little boys used to wear dresses. He says his parents, the late Jacob and Sarah Lowther, didn't have much money and couldn't afford to buy him pants. When he was about two, his mother finally made some. She tried to get him to put them on; he refused. She had to spank him before he put them on. About a week later, she tried to get him to take them off so she could wash them. He balked. She had to spank him again. That week she made him another pair.

"I started working in the hayfield when I was five or six," he says. "We worked barefooted because all the kids went barefooted in the summertime. We cut the hay with a scythe and raked it with a hand rake. We let the hay get riper than they do now. We'd cut it in the morning and rake and stack it in the afternoon. The only time we used a horse was to haul the shocks."

"Some farmers salted their hay and it'd turn red," he continues. "The livestock liked it. Nowadays they tell you cattle won't eat it, but that's not true."

"I worked at a little bit of everything," Uncle Bill says. "Before I went to the war, I drove some livestock, timbered some and did construction work." Of his construction jobs, he's especially proud of the work he did in 1909 on Elijah Chapel, a Methodist Episcopal church at Wildcat, and of Duffy School, which he built with his brother, Jesse, a few years later.

The church is still in weekly use, but the school is gone.

"I done most of the 'particular work' on Elijah Chapel," Uncle Bill says. "I helped start it. Then I quit. One day, the boss asked one of the fellows what was wrong. The fellow told him, 'Get those other fellows out of there that keep making mistakes and asking Bill to right it all the time.'

"The boss said, 'You tell him to come back and I'll send the others to the cornfield.' He did, and I came back. I'd laid the foundation and put the top on it, and done lots in between. When we finished, he'd had no pay and neither had I. We had $27 left when we figured it up. We divided it between us. I got $13.50 for building that church."

He went to church not only at Elijah Chapel but "everywhere" — Green Hill, Pleasant Hill, Hackers Valley and Falls Mills — and sometimes to two or three of them in one day. "We walked everywhere we went. There weren't no other way to get there. It was nothing to walk 15 miles to church," he says. "Today you can't get a kid to walk across the street to get a loaf of bread. It shore is different.

"Back in the old days, most com-

munities had a cobbler who made shoes for everyone," remembers Uncle Bill. "Then, Rodney Reger, who walked five miles every day to Walkersville to go to school, ordered hisself a pair from Sears Roebuck. He said they lasted as long again as any other pair he ever had. Pretty soon everyone was ordering shoes by mail."

Uncle Bill takes up another line of thought. "Now education, that's another story. You might not want to hear what I'm going to say, but I'm going to tell you anyway: I didn't like school.

"I started down to Bablin in an old log house where nobody was living, then I went to Pretty Run in an old log house over there, and then I went to a new schoolhouse in Bablin. Last, I went up to Dry Hill, that's over next to Green Hill. That last time, I was 18. I went six weeks and lost 20 pounds. I quit and gained those 20 pounds right back. I said, 'I gained them 20 pounds back, and I'm going to keep them this time. I'm not going back to school.' And I haven't.

"I sometimes wonder where my granddad, Harrison Lowther, got his education," he muses. "He was a preacher, a lawyer, a trader, a surveyor, and a doctor. He wasn't home much, my daddy said. He spent a lot of time in Ohio.

"I remember my daddy telling about Granddad being gone during the War Between the States. Seems he was what they call a Southern sympathizer, but I always think of him as a Democrat. He'd bring food to the family by hanging a deer in a hollow tree above the house.

"He was always hiding from the Union soldiers. One day my grandpa came out to help my daddy shuck corn. Daddy was just a little fellow in them days. And four of them Yankees come up and they shot at my daddy. They shot a hole right through his pants leg, and him just a little boy.

"The Yankees then pulled all the vegetables in my grandmother's garden. They made her get a blanket and tie up what they wanted in it. There was too much for it all to fit. What they didn't take, they burned so no one else could have it. Then they took the family's blind horse and left. My grandparents never forgot that and neither did my daddy.

Bill Lowther finished Elijah Chapel in 1909. Both the builder and the building remain in good working order.

"Daddy swore he'd get even with them. When he growed up, he whipped three of them. He tried to get the other one, but he never did."

Uncle Bill hunted "every inch of land in these parts" and timbered a lot of it too.

"When I was cutting in the '20's, we sent most of it down the Little Kanawhy to Nicolette Lumber in Parkersburg. We'd paint three rings and NLC on them, so's Nicolette would know they were theirs. Below the falls [Falls Mills], they'd make a raft by using special chains with wedges to hold the logs together.

"The rafts would go when there was a flood. Back in them days, we had more floods because there was more open land. Sometimes my dad and brother Jesse would go along to make some extra money. Not me. I didn't want nothing to do with that water.

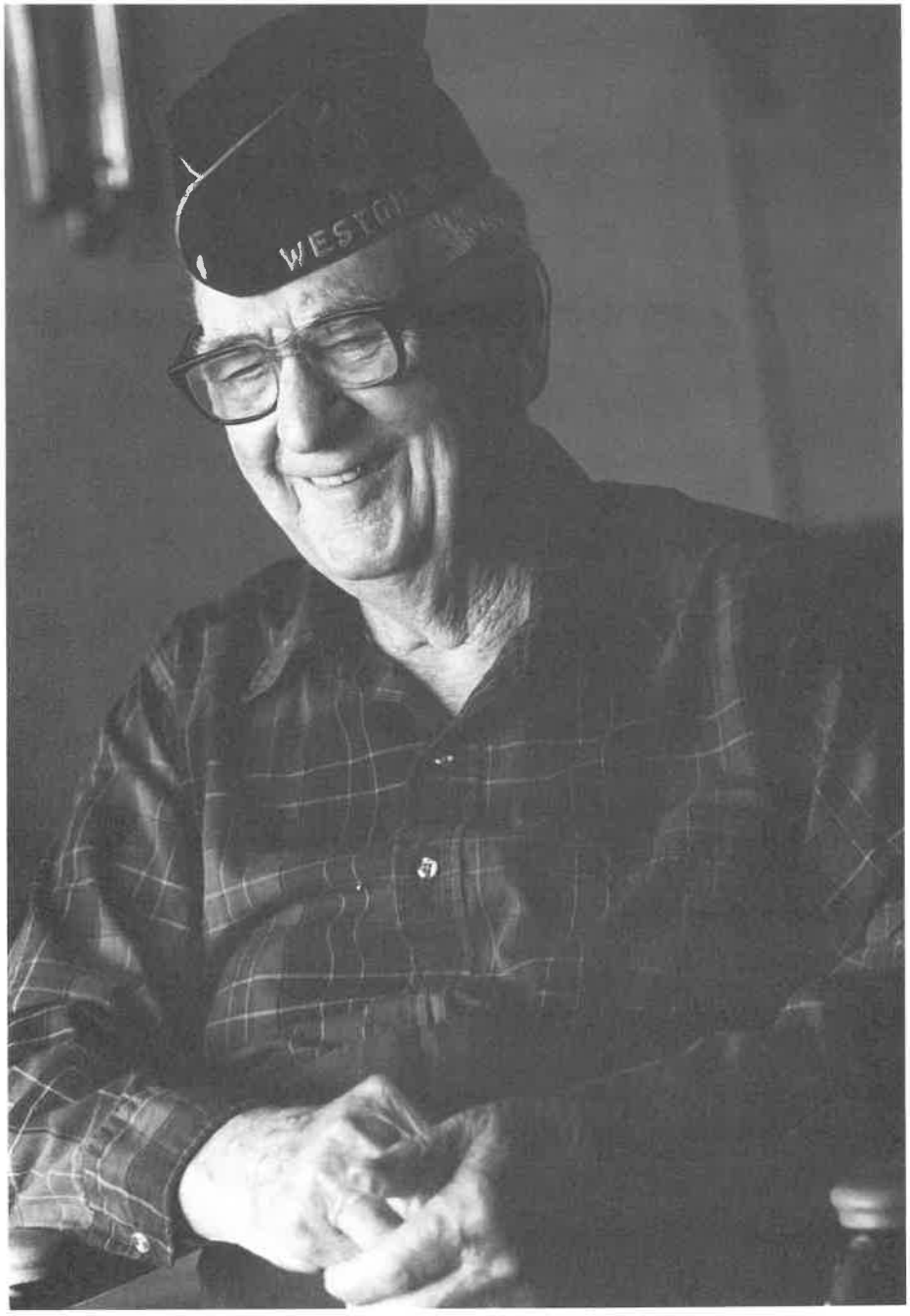
"Years later, fellows would find logs that had been in the river 30 or 40 years. Some oak logs would not swim because they were too heavy. People would take them logs out, dry them out, and cut them up for lumber. They was still good because in the river they didn't get any oxygen and they didn't rot.

"I reckon the biggest log I ever saw was ten feet long and had 1,900 board feet of lumber in it. My nephew, Carl, helped cut it down. We tried everything to cut it up, because the horse couldn't move it. Wedges didn't work. We finally dynamited it to split it. We still got 900 feet out of it.

"You know how to figger how much lumber in a log?"

"No," I reply.

Bill Lowther's formula for figuring board feet: "Take the width of the log at its smallest end, take four inches off for slab, divide by four, multiply by itself times the length of the log. It'll work every time."



Uncle Bill says living right is the key to longevity. We suspect that a good sense of humor has something to do with it, as well.

"Well, I'm going to tell you an old rule. One time the biggest fellow in the Webster County schools [the county superintendent] come to me and wanted to know how much was in this log he had, and I'll tell you just like I told him. Take the width of the log at its smallest end, take four inches off for slab, divide by four, multiply by itself, times the length of the log. It'll work every time. Say you had a log ten feet long and 36 inches wide, take four inches for slab, divide by four, that makes eight, multiply by itself, and that'll make 640 board feet."

"That reminds me," Uncle Bill continues, "if you had 99 eggs and were selling them for 12 cents a dozen, how much would you make?"

When I answer correctly — 99 cents — he asks, "If a tree were 60 feet long and it took a squirrel 60 seconds to stick his head out one end and then run to the other end and stick his head out again, and he kept getting faster, how long before he could stick his head out both ends at the same time?" Uncle Bill chuckles.

"Tell me more about your hunting," I prod.

"Well, I've gotten a deer every year except last year. I've always been pretty lucky. 'Course one year, I only got me a piece of one. There was a deer out by my garden and I shot at him from the porch. I thought I'd missed until I found his tail in the yard.

"The next spring I was sitting out on the porch and here come this deer. It was the same one. He didn't have no tail. Maybe he come looking for it.

"I knew then my eyesight was getting bad," he grins. "Then last summer I knew it for sure. I shot at eight groundhogs in my yard and only got seven."

By now Uncle Bill's voice is getting weak and he is tired. I asked one more question, "How did you live to be your age?"

"By always telling the truth, not smoking, and not hitting anyone that didn't have it coming." Then, with a crinkle around his eyes, he says, "And staying away from women — well, most of the time."

Unable to resist telling one more, he continues, "I'm kind of like the story about the young man who wanted to go to preaching. He got himself in a circuit and got him a church. He decided to have a protracted meeting for two weeks. By the end of the meeting, he had lots of young converts.

"Several people rose to praise the preacher for the job he had done and to offer their thanks to the Lord for what He had done for them. An old man who attended every meeting stood up and said he was thankful that he didn't have an enemy in the world.

"The preacher asked him how that happened to be.

"I outlived them all."

And so has Bill Lowther.

"I've gotten a deer every year except last year. 'Course, one year I only got me a piece of one. I thought I'd missed until I found his tail in the yard."

Our author's trips took her back in time and across Logan County. Here are her father Ernest and his sister June, about 1917. Photographer unknown.

Logan Rambling

By Susan Craddock Partain

"Let's take a walk!"

As girls growing up in Logan County in the 1950's, my sister Emily and I liked nothing better than to hear our father Ernest Craddock say those words, as he often did on pleasant Saturday afternoons. We knew he did not have in mind any tame sidewalk promenade. He meant to take us exploring, some place we could make discoveries just as he had as a boy.

Sometimes Dad chose a spot that would give us a sense of history. Once he drove us to Blair Mountain, the scene of the famous battle between union and non-union forces in 1921. As we walked along the dirt road leading to the fire tower on top of the mountain, he explained that spectacular episode.

Dad remembered the events well, since he was, as he put it, "going on 14" when the Battle of Blair Mountain occurred. It was Mother, however, who gave us her own personal view of Don Chafin, the notorious anti-union politician who was Logan County's sheriff at the time of the fight. As a personal friend of Chafin's daughter, she had glimpsed the home life of the controversial man. "His children joked that he didn't even allow them to wear union suits," Mother told us with a smile.

Other times Dad structured our rambles to teach us something about our family heritage. One memorable occasion found us on the Craddock Fork of Hewett Creek, up near the Boone County line, standing by the graves of family patriarch Thomas Craddock and his wife Lucinda Crews Craddock. The inscription on Thomas's handcarved tombstone made a strong impression on me. It read, "Dad Craddock Bornd in East Virginia, Died in West Virginia."

Quoting his grandfather William J. Craddock, Thomas's son, Dad described the family's migration from Patrick County, Virginia, in the decade before the Civil War. "Granddad was about 13 when he rode with his family through the *Na'rs* in a flatboat on the way to Logan County," my father said, intentionally using his grandfather's pronunciation for the Narrows of New River.

On another Saturday, Dad led us up a mountain path to a hillside cemetery on the Long Fork of Mill Creek, and I still brush away a tear when I remember that visit. In a shaded corner of the fenced-in enclosure, we saw a row of ten small mounds with unmarked stones. These, Dad explained, were the graves of the infant children of William A. M. and Patsie Ann Bias Craddock, his parents and our grandparents. I was astounded to learn that my grandmother had borne an incredible 16 children, only six of whom had survived infancy. I had never known my grandmother,

"His children joked that he didn't even allow them to wear union suits," Mother told us of Sheriff Don Chafin.

whose life was cut short at 53, but seeing those ten tiny graves brought a rush of feeling that nothing else could have done.

But most Saturdays found us ranging closer to our home at Mitchell Heights. Our favorite haunt was a wooded area only a mile up the road — the hills and hollows of Little Buffalo Creek, then the abandoned site of the Merrill coal mines, now Chief Logan State Park.

Dad loved this place. Some of the happiest days of his youth had been spent here. Growing up in nearby Henlawson, he had roamed the trails and explored the ancient hillside hiding places until few of their secrets remained undiscovered. He knew where to look for ginseng, and when the shy, reclusive lady slipper bloomed. Those fleeting hours of boyhood pleasure stood out in Dad's memory, and he wanted us to experience similar joys.

Nearly every clear Saturday saw us headed in that direction. When Dad reached for his old red wool McGregor sport shirt, we knew what to do. Without being told, we would run to find our boots and sweaters, laughing and teasing.

All of our Saturday visits to Little Buffalo Hollow were special, but I remember one day in particular. We girls were especially excited about getting out because the weather had been bad for several days, and Mother had kept us indoors.

Most times Mother accompanied us on these outings, but today she had duties at church. As we trooped out the door behind Dad, she handed us each a hat. We took them, knowing they would soon be cast aside. An earache seemed a trifling price to pay for the feel of the wind in your hair!

As we tumbled into the front seat of Dad's 1955 Ford, our spirits rose even higher. The car was no longer new,

Susan (left) and Emily were young girls at the time these adventures took place. Both looked forward to Saturday rambling after a week in school. Photographers unknown, mid-1950's.

but we still remembered the novelty it had been when Dad first brought it home. The year 1955 marked a turning point in automobile design; cars manufactured that year differed sharply from their predecessors, more playful in style and function. The color alone set ours apart — it was the brilliant turquoise that so characterized the trends of the '50's. For weeks people stared at us wherever we went in that car.

By now, everyone was accustomed to the new '55's. No one stared as we drove up the road that day, but a lot of people waved greetings. Dad never met a stranger, and it seemed to us he was related to most everyone around home. As indeed he was. The Thomas Craddocks who migrated to Logan County in the 1850's were newcomers compared to Dad's Bias, White, Lake, Chambers, Perry, and Neese ancestors.

There was scarcely an old family in the county to which he couldn't claim kinship. He was even related to Mother, a fact my parents didn't discover until after their marriage, when an old-timer said to them, "Don't you two know you are cousins?" They did some checking and found their common ancestor to be John Perry, who settled in the area in the early 1800's, before Logan County was formed.

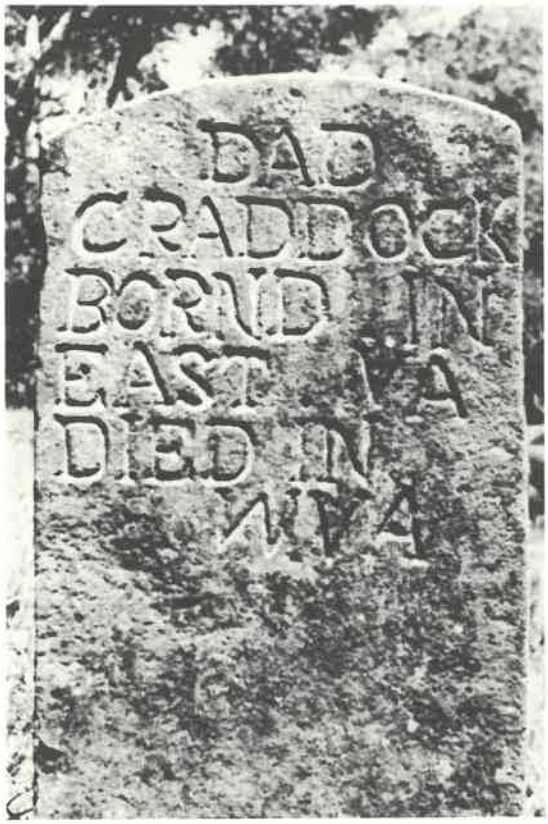
Just before entering Buffalo Hollow, we passed Merrill Park, a small community formerly known as the Merrill coal camp. Most of the houses were privately owned by then, but all had originally been built by the Merrill Coal Company to provide housing for its labor force.

I never tired of hearing how William A. M. Craddock, Dad's father, whom everyone else called "Uncle Milt," was hired as a carpenter by mine owner Charles Wesley Jones to help build the camp in 1918. Milt moved his family to Merrill from Ethel, where he had been similarly employed since 1914.

Our father, who was ten years old in the summer of 1918, loved to tell us his experiences relating to the construction of the coal camp. He had a way of telling things so that no matter how many times you heard them, it always seemed like the first time.

"There was a lumber camp of Jenny Lind houses, with vertical boards, here before the coal camp. It belonged to Henry Lawson and had to be torn down to make way for the coal company buildings," Dad said.

"I worked, too," he continued. "My father gave me the job of 'ginning' after the carpenters. I would fetch and carry for them, or do any other odd jobs they needed. Elza Barrett, Jess



Above: Thomas Craddock was several dads back to Susan and Emily. The family patriarch came from East Virginia, as his stone testifies.

Right: William A.M. Craddock, Ernest's father, was one of the builders of the Merrill coal camp. He stands at left here with two unidentified men. Photographer and date unknown.

Morgan, and Uncle Elzie carpentered here, too."

Our "Uncle Elzie" was Elza Ball, husband of my grandmother's younger sister Hettie. We girls were very fond of Uncle Elzie and Aunt Hettie.

Dad pointed to a rusty structure spanning the Guyandotte River. "Over there behind the camp is the old railroad trestle," he said. "Merrill Coal Company spent $125,000 — an unheard-of-amount in those days — to build it, so they could get their coal across the river to the main railroad line. I remember when it was built."

I had my own special memory of that trestle, but it wasn't something I could share with my father. One of the most frightening experiences of my young life had been crossing that old railroad bridge at age six with my older cousins, who traversed it daily from Henlawson to Merrill Park. Although the trestle was equipped with a pedestrian walkway, it had fallen into disrepair. To get to the other side, it was necessary to walk the tracks, which were open to the water below. I followed my cousins onto the bridge in fear and trembling. Adding to my distress was the worry that a train might come along while we were crossing. My father never learned of this escapade — at least not from me.

My spirits brightened as we left the railroad trestle and turned onto the old mining road in Buffalo Hollow.

Dad continued his recollections. "There was no road to speak of here when Mr. Jones began building the tipple," he said. "Most of the way up, you had to travel in the creek."

As we rounded the first curve in the road, a row of houses came into sight on the right. Dad pointed at these and said, "That is called String Town. Your grandfather helped build those houses, too." He told us he had helped here as well. "I ginned after Dad and the rest of the carpenters in all my spare time."

We passed a few other private residences before coming to the place where the road and the creek divided into two forks. The state park restaurant occupies this spot now, but at that time there was nothing to see but weeds and old mining debris.

Dad stopped the car a moment and said, "I was 14 in the spring of 1922 when I first began to work for Merrill Coal Company. They gave me a job carrying water for the crew that drilled a well right about there," Dad said, pointing to the restaurant. "Water from that well was pumped to a reservoir on top of the hill and then piped into all the homes and offices in the camp. Every house had a bathroom with hot and cold running water, which was unusual for a coal camp in those days."

Dad went on to explain how he'd continued to work for Merrill during summer vacations and, when school was in session, in the evenings on the second shift. "I was called a 'slate picker,' but a big part of my job was unloading sand to put on the tracks inside the mine for traction," he told us.

"And, of course, I played shortstop on the company baseball team, the 'Henlawson Hens,' too." We thought it was a funny name for a ball team, but Dad assured us the Hens meant business. "We had a good team all the years I played, but our best season was in 1929, when we won the Industrial League pennant.

"Every coal company in Logan County had its own team back then,"

The Henlawson Hens were a formidable ball club, according to Ernest Craddock, seated, third from right. They were Industrial League champs in 1929. Photo by Woodall Studio.

he explained. "A league was formed, and we played against each other. The competition was tough. The year the Hens won the pennant, one of the teams had Max Butcher as a pitcher; he got a contract in the big leagues the very next year. For years Max stood alone as Logan County's only contribution to major league baseball."

Dad shifted the Ford into low gear and said, "Well, that's enough about baseball for now. We'll have to get going if we want to finish our walk. Which direction do you girls want to take today?"

Sometimes we walked up the left-hand fork along the old railroad track, which led to the abandoned tipple. There were some lovely wildflowers on paths branching off from the track. But the area around the tumble-down tipple was surrounded by huge piles of burning slag. The sight always reminded me of our minister's descriptions of Hell. It did not take us long to decide on the right-hand fork.

"All right," our father said, letting off the clutch and steering the car to the right.

There had been no mining operations on the right-hand fork of Little Buffalo Creek, and the land was still in pristine condition — just as it must have been when Charles Jones leased it from Lawson Heirs, Incorporated, in 1919. Unlike the water of the left fork, which was oily from the pollutants of coal mining, the stream in the right-hand hollow was clear and sparkling. The little brook seemed to sing as it ran alongside the dirt road.

This road followed the creek to a fishing lake at the head of the hollow. After rounding the first curve, we came to a lodge built by the Jones family. Although constructed of cinder block, the building had a stone chimney and large front porch, which combined to give it a rustic look. That lodge still stands today, although altered by Chief Logan personnel for use as a storage facility.

Approximately a half-mile from the lodge, we stopped in front of a marshy area created by a mound of piled-up dirt. This represented the first attempt at building the fishing lake. For some reason, it did not succeed. Further up, a second effort had resulted in the charming body of water that is one of Chief Logan's main beauty spots today. Dad parked the car, and we girls hopped out.

Reluctantly, we waited for Dad, who always insisted on being in the lead. Dutifully following, we ascended a small slope to a narrow, woodland trail. Near a partially cleared level spot, the path branched off into two directions — one straight up the mountainside and the other around the hill to the left, in the direction of the lake. Those same trails are still used by hikers.

Dad stopped and directed our attention to the level spot. "Here is where the Boy Scout troop sponsored by Merrill Coal Company built a cabin in 1929," he said. We knew all about the troop for which Dad had acted as assistant scoutmaster as a young man, but this was the first we had heard about the cabin.

In a shaded corner, we saw a row of ten small mounds with unmarked stones. I had never known my grandmother, but seeing those tiny graves brought a rush of feeling.

Chances are, father was as eager to get out on Saturday mornings as the girls were. Ernest Craddock is shown here at his desk job. Photographer and date unknown.

"We put it up ourselves to use for our meetings. It was built of logs and had a large stone fireplace. Other troops used it as well. Bob Greever was the scoutmaster. We were the first Boy Scouts in the county — Troop Number 1," Dad said, and the pride in his voice told us how much his experiences in scouting had meant to him.

I ran to the spot and began pushing aside last year's leaves, looking for signs of the cabin. After a few moments' search, I gave up. Not a trace remained. I hurried to catch up with Dad and Emily, who were already on the lake path. Coming up behind Dad, I began to bombard him with questions about the scout cabin. Uncle Red Sennett had dubbed me "Questionbox," and the name fit.

As we walked, Dad patiently answered all my queries, until we came in sight of the fishing lake. Then all else flew out of my head, and I began to run toward the water. I was so excited I forgot to stay behind Dad. Without looking or listening, I burst ahead at full speed.

I had almost reached the lake when I saw something on the path in front of me. At first, I thought it was a fallen limb, but when I saw movement, I knew — it was a snake, and a big one! I stopped just in time to keep from treading on it. The venomous creature lay right at my feet.

I heard Dad say softly, "Don't move, Susan."

That order was unnecessary. I was rigid with fear, rooted to the ground as surely as if I'd been planted.

Dad quickly armed himself with rocks and let fly. The first rock struck the reptile square on its ugly head, and Dad soon took the snake out of commission forever. Using a stick, he tossed its body over a nearby embankment.

My limbs came to life, and I ran, toward my father and away from the spot where the snake had lain. Dad caught me in his arms and smothered me with hugs. Even Emily, not given to affectionate displays toward her big sister, embraced me joyously.

Now that I was safe from the snake, I began to worry about Dad. I deserved a good bawling out, and I knew it.

But Dad did not scold me for running ahead. "I think that scare was punishment enough to remind you to obey the next time," he said. "Now, let's get on with our walk. I see a patch of early wildflowers on the other side of the lake."

We continued our walk, and soon I was again engrossed in the things around me. Then, as now, Little Buffalo Hollow was rich in the beauties of nature. There were lovely bluebells in the wet meadow above the lake, and among the rocks on the hillside we discovered hepatica and early saxifrage. Dad turned a stone over and showed us a salamander.

When he judged it was time to go, Dad looked at his watch and said, "Let's run like the Indians, girls!" With him in the lead, we raced each other back to the car, never guessing we were really obeying a command to leave. Whenever possible, Dad avoided giving us direct orders. He preferred to guide us by other means.

When we arrived at the car, our hats were lying in the front seat just where we'd left them — heedless of Mother's parting reminder. We eyed them guiltily.

Dad said, "It's a little late, girls, but you'd better put them on anyway. Next time, maybe you'll remember better."

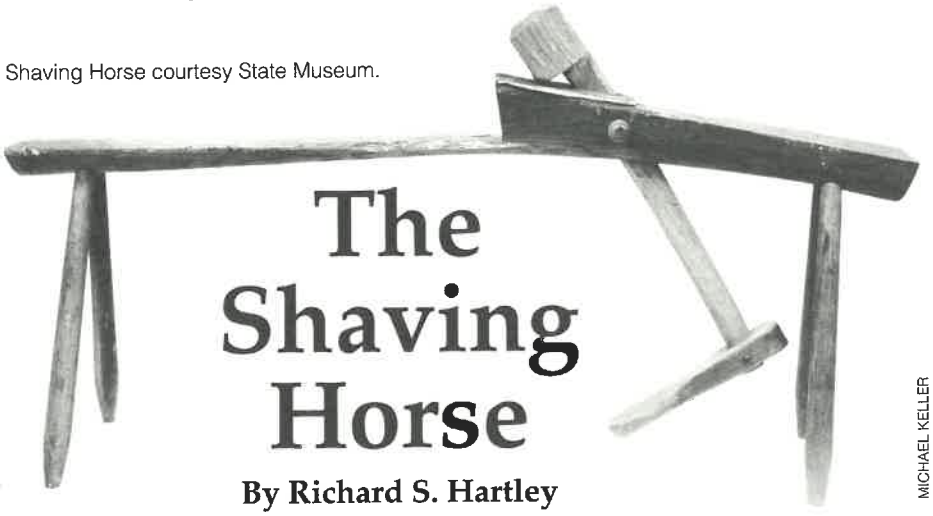
Mother was waiting for us at the door when we got home. As we clambered up the back steps, she beamed with satisfaction. "Well, I see you've got your hats on," she said.

Dad winked at us, and we smiled back. Mother had drawn her own conclusions, and we saw no reason to trouble her with information that could only cause worry.

As Dad had said, "Next time...."

Tools of Mountain Living:

Shaving Horse courtesy State Museum.



MICHAEL KELLER

The Shaving Horse

By Richard S. Hartley

People have always thought that there must be an easier way of doing things — and if you can sit down, all the better. The old-time shaving horse allowed for both.

Think of it as a homemade, stand-up, foot-operated work clamp with seat attached. Convenient pedal operation freed both hands. The clamp held wooden blanks tightly in place, while they were shaped into shingles, tool handles, chair rungs, bucket staves and hoops, basket handles, or wheel spokes. The shaving horse could be found on many early West Virginia farms, as useful to the self-sufficient mountain farmer as to the skilled woodworker.

This low bench, five to six feet long, was supported by four legs, with the operator sitting astride. The piece of wood being shaped was held in place between the upright clamp block (the dumbhead) and the sloping work platform (the riser) by the force of the foot pedal. Taken together, the contraption and its operator might resemble a horse and rider. Hence, no doubt, the name, although the term "horse" was also used with other four-legged work benches.

Holding devices have always been essential to woodworkers. Hand tools for shaving and shaping usually require the use of both hands, especially the two-handled drawknife and the spokeshave. The shaving horse with its seat and foot pedal serves this need well, allowing the craftsman to concentrate on his work from a comfortable position.

The holding of split shingles for dressing was a primary use of the shaving horse in the West Virginia mountains. Shaving and tapering shingles was easier on the horse. A heap of shavings piled up in no time as the shingle maker worked with his drawknife. Its razor-sharp blade removed surplus wood quickly, paring off thin or thick slices as required.

Shingles were first split from riven bolts, which are wooden sections cut from short logs with a froe. [See "The Froe," Spring 1992.] The bolts were cut from the tree center outward, producing a pie-shaped cross section. Shingles were cut the same way from the bolt, and each had to be face dressed after its trimming.

Coopers also used the shaving horse, both to "back" and to hollow out the staves of smaller containers, like churns. A flat drawknife was used to back each stave with the convex outside shape. Flipping the stave over in the clamp, the cooper then used a special curved drawknife to hollow out the inner side. Other shaving tasks followed. The cooper beveled the churn bottom's edge for a snug, tight fit into the groove encircling the upright staves of the churn. He fashioned three wooden hoops to hold the churn together.

The shaving horse was also a favorite of the chairmaker, rakemaker, basket maker, and wheelwright, as they used their own specialized tools. The spokeshave was useful in shaping, smoothing and finishing after the rough work of the drawknife. Its depth of cut could be regulated, allowing more control for precision shaving.

The shaving horse's swinging clamp was easy to use. Pushing down on the foot pedal caused the clamp to hold the wood firmly. Upon releasing the foot pressure, the counterweighted clamp swung free, instantly relinquishing its grip on the work piece.

The four legs needed to be splayed out evenly from each corner of the bench. This accommodated the weight shifts of the user, who was engaged in active, rhythmical work and by no means sitting still. These horses were often made of oak, a wood that's strong and lasting and plentiful in West Virginia. Some were made of maple or even walnut.

Some shaving horses had a seat at both ends, the extra perch providing a vantage point for a craftsman's apprentice. Appropriately, these were called apprentice horses. Occasionally, a three-legged shaving horse can be found.

The Pennsylvania Germans migrating to these Appalachian Mountains called the shaving horse a schnitzelbank, literally a "carving bench." To others, this low workbench was known as a draw horse or a draw bench. The West Virginia State Museum has cataloged the one shown here as a carving horse, referring like all the other names to the bench's main function. At times, the drawknife was called a shaving knife.

The shaving horse, despite its simplicity, was an advancement over earlier holding devices. The cooper fashioning staves of a barrel had held his work by wedging one end in the iron hook of a shaving block while pressing down the other end with his stomach. The hoop maker had used a stout, upright post that leaned away from him, with an iron hook at the top to hold his work piece. The crude tree-fork brake that helped the shingle maker split his material could also hold the shingle for trimming.

The shaving horse rapidly replaced these brakes and holdfasts of earlier days. It was found on frontier farms across the country and continued in use in West Virginia into the 20th century. Craftspeople use it to this day, liking the way it makes their work easier and faster while allowing them to sit down on the job.

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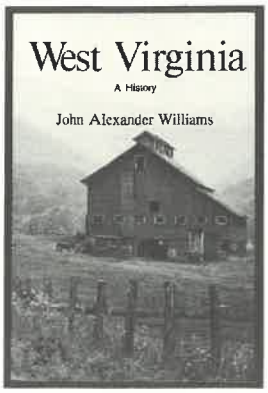

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In This Issue

IRENE B. BRAND, a lifelong resident of Mason County who earned her B.A. and master's degrees at Marshall University, writes Christian romance novels. She is a member of West Virginia Writers and the Romance Writers of America, and taught at Point Pleasant Junior High School for 23 years until her 1989 retirement. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1991.

HELEN CARPER, originally from Roane County, grew up in Ovapa. She earned an education degree from West Virginia State College and an M.A. in journalism from Marshall. Helen serves on Mountain State Press's board of directors and won West Virginia Writers' JUG (Just Uncommonly Good) Award in 1991 for her service to writers. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1988.

GREG CLARK is photo preservation archivist for the Division of Culture and History.

JOY GREGOIRE GILCHRIST of Lewis County is a co-founder of the Hackers Creek Pioneer Descendants and a member of the state Archives and History Commission. The author of six books, most recently *A Pictorial History of Old Lewis County*, she has published articles in many state newspapers. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

RICHARD S. HARTLEY, born and raised in Monongalia County, is now Extension Agent for Ritchie County and a WVU faculty member. His interests include heritage education and colonial crafts, and he demonstrates coopering at Fort New Salem with his son David. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL was "The Froe" in Spring 1992.

NORMAN JULIAN, a Clarksburg native, is a graduate of West Virginia University. He is a Morgantown journalist and the author of a novel about West Virginia, *Cheat*, published in 1984 by Back Fork Books. The West Virginia Press Association named Norman its first-place winner in general column writing for 1992. He has contributed to GOLDENSEAL for years, his last story appearing in Fall 1992.

MICHAEL KELLER is chief of photographic services for the Division of Culture and History.

STUART McGEHEE holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. He is a history professor and chairman of the Division of Social Sciences at Bluefield College, archivist of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives, and a member of the state Archives and History Commission. He is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

RICH McMAHAN was born in Germany and grew up in Parkersburg. He earned a B.A. in communications from Virginia Tech where he worked in instructional TV, a job that sparked an interest in photo journalism. He is now a stringer for the *Parkersburg News*. Rich holds a black belt in karate. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

GERALD MILNES was born in Pennsylvania and now lives in Elkins. He is a fiddler, photographer and staff member at the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College, where he coordinates the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

TED OLSON, originally from Washington, worked summers as a camp counselor in Hampshire County. Ted earned an M.A. from the University of Kentucky and is now working on his Ph.D. at the University of Mississippi. He performs folk music at festivals, schools, camps and coffeehouses. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

SUSAN CRADDOCK PARTAIN, a seventh generation Logan Countian, characterizes herself as a child of the mountains. She graduated with an M.S. in history and education from the University of Pittsburgh. Susan has written for the *Guyandotte Voice*, *Logan Banner* and the old *Logan News*. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

RICHARD RAMELLA was born in Maitland, McDowell County. His first writing job was with the *Welch Daily News* when he was 17. He now lives in California and publishes a computer magazine. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1992.

RON RITTENHOUSE, a Mannington native, is chief photographer for the *Morgantown Dominion Post*. He is a member of the National Press Photographers Association and other professional organizations, and a collector of old cameras and photographs. He is a long-time contributor to GOLDENSEAL, his work last appearing in Spring 1993.

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. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1993.

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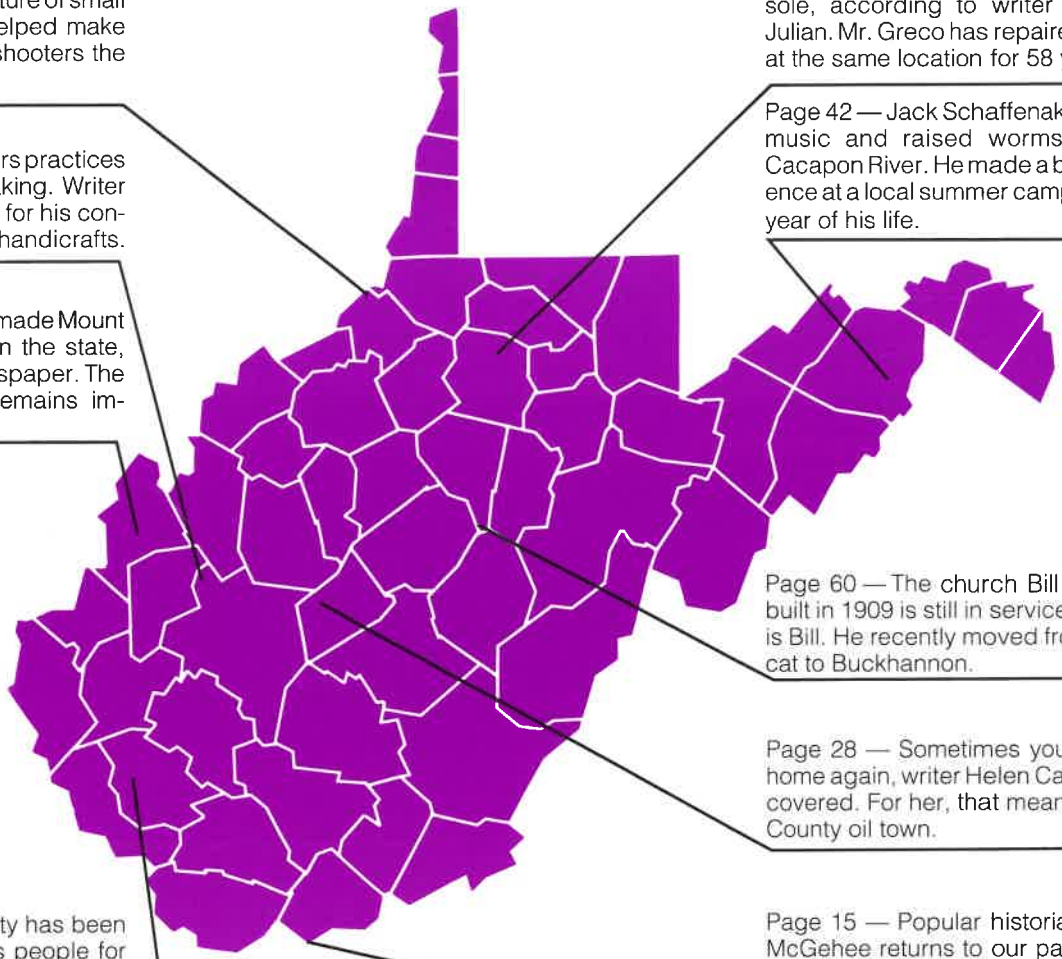

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