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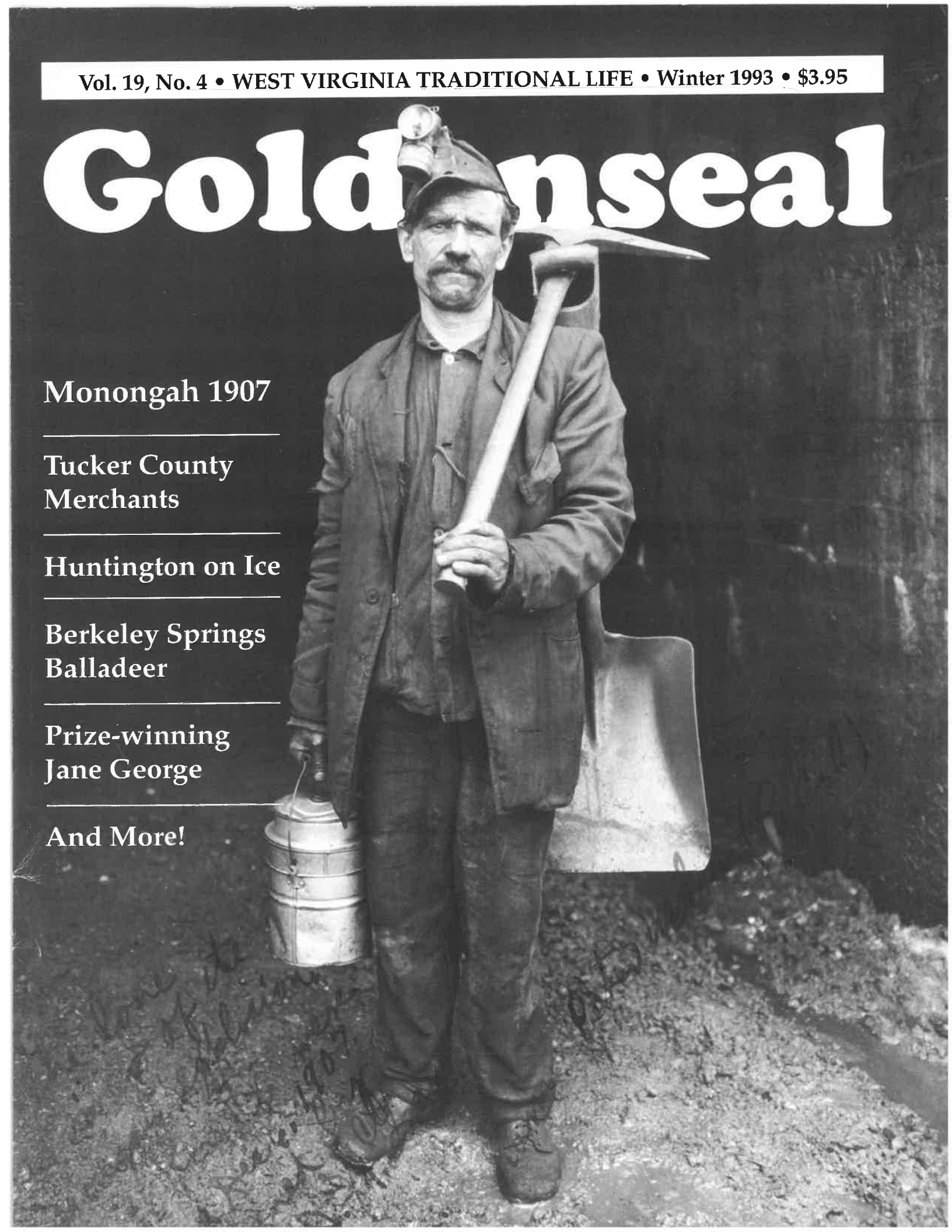
Goldenseal



Monongah 1907

Tucker County Merchants

Huntington on Ice

Berkeley Springs Balladeer

Prize-winning Jane George

And More!

From the Editor: Fundraising & Fieldwork

Let's get the formalities out of the way first thing: A big thanks to all who sent their renewal payments promptly in reply to my subscription reminder letter. And a polite nudge to anyone who hasn't yet. You will be hearing from me again.

For now, I'm guardedly optimistic. Our revenues must run at least five percent better than last year, as you may recall, and so far they are. If reader support holds steady through the end of the fiscal year next June we should be fine.

So thanks again. **And one more favor, please: If you enjoy the magazine well enough to pay for it, won't you put your mouth where your money is? Tell someone about GOLDENSEAL. Most of our new subscriptions come through personal referrals by family and friends, and we will appreciate a good word from you.**

With that said, I want to bring you up to date on fieldwork over the past season. We try diligently to cover the entire state, and the only way I've ever been able to do that is to get out and make the rounds.

Freelancer Bob Beanblossom had been promising me a tour of his native Mingo County for a long time. The second week of last March felt like spring — actually, the big blizzard came the next weekend — and it looked like a good time to collect on Bob's IOU. Mingo reminds me of the coalfields I grew up in, and I always enjoy going there.

Bob dropped by my house first thing on a Monday morning and we got an early start, leaving Charleston by Corridor G, the four-lane precursor to roads that got narrower as the day wore on. That part of the trip was familiar, but things changed once we got to Logan. Instead of heading on down the expressway, Bob routed us up Mud Fork and across into the northeast corner of Mingo. I don't know whether he actually has to slip back into his home county via the back door, or whether his aim was simply to impress me with the Dingess Tunnel.

If the latter, he succeeded. It turns out that the road is built on the 19th-century Norfolk & Western railroad grade, which originally cut across to Twelvepole Creek on its way to the Ohio River. N&W officials later abandoned this route in favor of the easier terrain of the Tug Valley, and at some point the state road people recycled the old roadbed for highway travel.

And that means recycled railroad tunnels, too, Dingess Tunnel in particular. It's close to a mile long, and you want to get right on through it. My notes describe it as "high, narrow, poorly lit, one-lane, brick-lined with shallow, arched nooks at intervals for men to stand in for trains to pass." That pretty well covers it, although I understand the tunnel was once known as a notorious ambush site. Read Huey Perry's book about that — the first one, not the one about stripper Blaze Starr.

I won't say the day was downhill from there on, although the road certainly was for a ways. Eventually we worked our way over to Route 52 and up Tug Fork to Williamson for lunch. We passed Charlie Blevins's Red Robin Inn on the way, and yes, the road builders finally shut him down. I suspect the "danger" sign left by the demolition crew might sometimes have suited the old tavern even when it was open.

We ventured on to Matewan from Williamson. Matewan is the jumping-off point, where you either turn around and go back or cross into Kentucky. We chose the latter, putting ourselves back into the Mountain State by way of the Vulcan bridge as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the bridge builders failed to put a road on our end, so travel up the West Virginia side of the Tug is along the gravel shoulder of the railroad. We bumped our way to Alum Creek, then up to the ghost town of Glen Alum — scene of a frightfully bloody payroll robbery in 1914 — and over the mountain to Beech Fork and down to Gilbert.

Gilbert is Bob's hometown, so our troubles were over. It was getting on toward suppertime. His folks were ready for it, and the trip home was definitely anti-climatic.

The bottom of the page is coming at me, and I see I'm not going to be able to detail all the summer's travels after all. Some highlights, anyway: Photographer Mike Keller and I traveled to Wildcat and nearby points soon after my Mingo trip; I made it to Morgantown a couple of times; had Fayette County ramps, as usual; had lunch twice in Buckhannon, no ramps but much nicer than the speeding ticket I got there last year; and got to travel up the Greenbrier as far as Ronceverte in a log truck. I come from logging people and still think those high-riding trucks are a dandy way to see the countryside. You're not likely to rush past anything before you get a good look at it.

I wound up the season with a three-day stand at the Forest Festival in Elkins in October, thanks to an invitation from Alan Miller at the State Forestry Division. I was reminded that the big Friday night firemen's parade has got to be one of the best West Virginia events all year, and also worked in a visit to Augusta Books downtown.

The main purpose of all this missionary work is to keep in touch and especially to stir up future stories from different parts of the state. We've seen the payoff in recent issues from Eastern Panhandle trips last year and the year before. I want to get back into the Northern Panhandle soon.

In the meantime, our thanks again for reader support for another productive year. Cornelia, Debby and I wish you the best for the holidays, and let me throw in best wishes from the backup crew — Mike, Anne, Greg Clark, Danny Williams, and Chuck and Esther Heitzman—as well. We look forward to working for you in 1994.

— Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

Volume 19, Number 4 Winter 1993

COVER: Peter Urban was the sole survivor of the Monongah mine explosion in 1907. Ironically, he later died of a slate fall in the same mine. Our story begins on page 9. Photo courtesy Everett F. Briggs.

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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.

September 27, 1993
Dickson, Tennessee
Editor:
Your magazine brings back so many precious memories of my days growing up in West Virginia. I was raised on Coal River in the great city of Tornado. We used to work on the farm during the day and go swimming in Coal River at the gravel bar in the late evening. The last time I went by the place it said "Private — Keep Out." It looked so lonely and forsaken I just wanted to go down to the river and stand and remember.

On Friday night our family would shell corn and on Saturday morning put the large sack of corn on our horse. Then I would get on and away we would go to the mill. When we got there the miller would take the sack of corn off and after taking a bucket out grind the corn into meal. Then he would put it on the horse and Old Tops and I would head for home.

I used to go to church on Fall Creek where the men went in one door and women went in the other, the women sat on one side and the men on the other. The young folks sat in the middle. That old country church had the best singing I've ever heard.

The big event on Saturday evening was to go to St. Albans and live it up by walking up and down the street and, if you could afford it, go in the Blossom Dairy and have ice cream — two big dips for five cents.

We were poor but we didn't want anyone to feel sorry for us. When we got a new pair of shoes we couldn't hide our pride, but some smartie would want to know where a store burnt down.
Very truly yours,
Howard B. Smith

The Henlawson Hens

August 25, 1993
Burke, Virginia
Editor:
Susan Craddock Partain's "Logan Rambling" article in the Summer 1993 GOLDENSEAL brings back a lot of memories.

WOODALL STUDIO

Her father, Ernest Craddock, was my grade school principal at West Logan.

My dad Frank Hale is pictured (seated, second from left) in the photo of the Henlawson Hens baseball team. He told me that "Cotton" Craddock was one of the best shortstops around at that time.
David Hale

Clay County Memories

October 12, 1993
Nitro, West Virginia
Editor:
A lot of memories came back when I read the article by Cody Burdette, "Home to Swandale" [Spring 1992]. I attended Clay High School with Cody. My husband worked for Murphy & Company store in Clay and delivered groceries to Swandale and other places in the county. He was also raised in the Widen area.

When my husband and I took our children and grandchildren to see Swandale, we were so shocked that it did not exist anymore. In October we were to meet with my husband's sister and family to picnic at the Pond Ridge fire tower and then visit the cemetery. Again we were shocked, because the fire tower also was gone. All we have now are a few photos and a lot of memories.
Dorothy Davis Taylor

Thanks for writing. You will find another Cody Burdette Clay County feature in this issue. —ed.

Bower's Ridge

October 10, 1993
Eugene, Oregon
Editor:
I'm writing to say how appreciative I am for the last GOLDENSEAL, showing my great-great grandmother's home on Bower's Ridge.

My husband and I made three trips to West Virginia after he retired to locate family records and to see for ourselves if what my grandfather, John A. Belcher, had related was so. My father was born in Pocahontas County and left there for Washington State when only one year old — going by Minnesota — where other family had gone earlier. It was his wish to return someday also, but a coronary took him in 1962.
Sincerely,
Louise Belcher Bown

September 27, 1993
Bluefield, West Virginia
Editor:
As the proud daughter of a World War I veteran, I am writing to inform you that your magazine, GOLDENSEAL, is of great interest always to my entire family.


EASTERN REGIONAL COAL ARCHIVES

Itmann in the 1920's.

My father, Domenic Romano, arrived in America in the summer of

1913 from his hometown of Locri, Italy. He was a lad of 15.

He joined his two brothers, Patsy and Jim, who had arrived at an earlier date in America. They were in the construction business and their company became known as the Patsy Small Construction Company. They worked in Kentucky for two years before moving to Itmann, which brings me to your Fall 1993 issue.

My father recognized the photo of Itmann [in the Bower's Ridge story] and also the house in which he and one of his brothers resided. It is the third house on the right in the top row. Their company excavated the land on which the large, imposing company store was constructed.

The Patsy Small Company opened many mines in West Virginia, and they also built many roads. The three brothers moved to Bluefield when they received a contract to construct a section of the "new" Bluefield-Princeton road. Of course, it is not new at the present time but it is still heavily used.

Dad left from Itmann in April 1918 for the Great War. He was in the American Expeditionary Force 80th Division, which was composed of boys from West Virginia, Virginia and Pennsylvania. He fought in the Meuse-Argonne offensive and at St. Mihiel.

He is so proud to be an American and his large American flag is displayed on every suitable day. He became a citizen after the war.

Every issue that I receive of GOLDENSEAL, I take to him and I read any article in which he seems interested. Dad will be 96 years old on November 28. He is very alert and of sound mind.

Perhaps if you print my letter in your magazine, someone will recognize the company name or my dad. How thrilled he would be if someone who remembers contacts him.

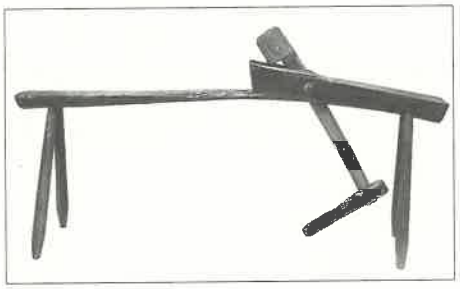
Sincerely,
Alena R. Caldwell

We will be pleased to forward any letters to Mr. Romano. —ed.

Shaving Horse

September 22, 1993
Evans, West Virginia
Editor:

My neighbors, Fred and Mary Nutter, gave me a subscription to GOLDENSEAL for a Christmas gift in 1990. I have not missed an issue since. I am a native West Virginian, raised in Mason County.



MICHAEL KELLER

The article about the shaving horse in the Summer '93 issue was especially interesting. My father made two in the early 1900's. One was for himself and one was for his father. Dad died at the age of 90 and the "horses" were to be sold. The late Shirley Donnelly purchased one for his museum in Oak Hill. The other I donated to the Farm Museum in Point Pleasant.

As a child I enjoyed playing on the shaving horse and was even allowed to use the drawing knife to cut soft wood. Just sitting on the horse and pretending was fun also.

Best regards,
Hazel Sayre

Hunting Memories

August 15, 1993
Sarasota, Florida
Editor:

The picture on page 30 in your Summer issue brought back many memories. As a child growing up in West Virginia, I remember a gun was a "must" in the average family. It was used for protection and also the means of securing food for the household. Every boy looked forward to owning his own gun — much as boys await their first car today.

My father always had one or more guns. He was a great marksman and taught my brothers to shoot when they were quite young. They too became good marksmen.

My father did a lot of hunting. He supplied us with rabbit, squirrel and pheasant and sometimes a fat opossum. My mother baked this "prize" with sweet potatoes — but my father was the only one who ate it.

He attended all the local shooting matches and brought home turkeys and chickens, and other prizes including "over money."
Hilda Painter

The Hollers of Hollywood

October 4, 1993
Los Angeles, California
Editor:

I moved in January '93 from the hollers of Doddridge County to the hollers of Hollywood, and was very pleased to be followed by a bit of home in the form of GOLDENSEAL, which began appearing in my mailbox shortly thereafter. I've always felt that your magazine is a quality effort that I've been proud to show to my new friends here in culture-starved L.A.

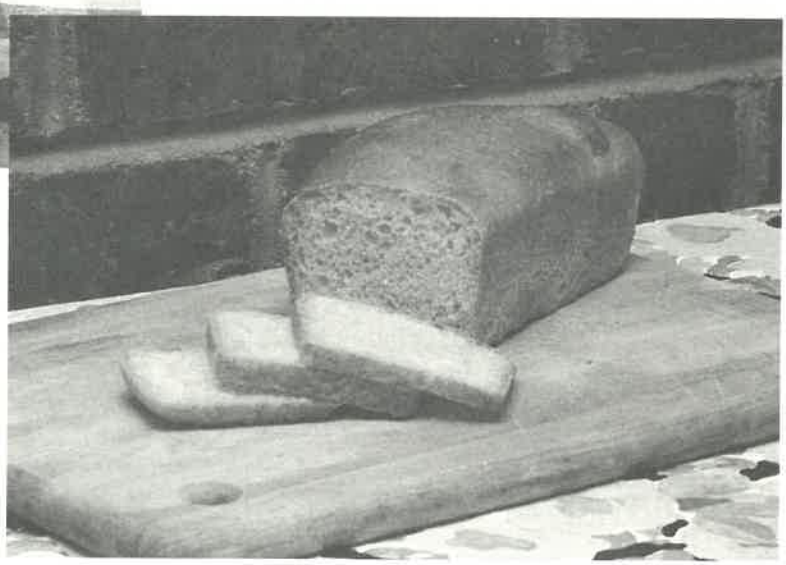
Years back, I became a player of old-time music in the West Virginia mold, and was tickled to discover that L.A. contains quite a contingent of fans of Appalachian music. People here are looking forward to the New Year's visit of Melvin Wine and Gerry Milnes at the California Traditional Music Society Winter Solstice Weekend.

I've come across a few former West Virginians here, which is always a pleasure. Though we may be strangers, we will always find something in common to talk about, even if it's merely the weather. Southern Californians don't understand the concept of talking about the weather.

Adios,
Joe Wack

"The History and Mystery of Salt-Rising Bread"

Here is Mike Keller's original photo of bakery salt-rising (left) and a photo of bona fide homemade salt-rising bread from Raleigh County. Photographer Danny Williams ate the evidence but fondly recalls the homemade bread as tasty and firm in texture. We thank Larna Cavendish for the homemade bread.



Oh boy, we're in trouble now! At least a couple of readers wrote to challenge our salt-rising bread photo from the fall issue. We'll admit right here that they are right, mostly, and give a full confession following the letters:

October 10, 1993
Weston, West Virginia
Editor:

Margaret Barlow's article on salt-rising bread in the Fall 1993 issue was excellent and should recall one of life's more pleasant memories to those who no longer are so privileged to get to eat home-baked salt-rising bread.

However, I must comment on the photograph used to illustrate the article. If that loaf of bread in the photo is salt-rising, I'll eat it! What you have there is plain old yeast-risen white (or light) bread. As the article itself says, the texture of salt-rising "is heavy, with a pound cake consistency..." Salt-rising does not have the mushroom top that your pictured bread has, nor usually any air holes.

I do not claim particular expertise in baking salt-rising bread; perhaps no one can, as every baker I know, including those with decades of experience, have occasional and even frequent failures. But here are my observations. The "smell" of salt-rising bread while being baked or later toasted will vary according to the time the starter fermented; perfect fermentation results in bread with an odor akin to upchucked baby's milk, whether there's milk in the recipe or not. I know that's an unpleasant thought to many people, but at least it's better than being compared to the odors that emanate from an outhouse. Starter that ferments too long "sours" and will give the bread a somewhat unpleasant "off" smell and taste, but the difference may only be recognized by someone who has eaten a lot of salt-rising.

It does not take potatoes in the starter recipe to produce wanted results; there are many recipes that call for cornmeal but no potatoes. I prefer a recipe that uses both. By the way, there must be hundreds of recipes, usually varying by only a little bit. Some call for flour in the starter; some do not. Ditto baking powder. From my experience, all work *some of the time!* And there's the problem. Apparently no scientific study has ever been made to determine just what it is that makes salt-rising work one time and fail another. (Are you listening, WVU Home Ec Department?)

As Ms. Barlow indicates, the temperature needed to get the starter right is less than clear to start with, and difficult to attain and maintain as well. (The very name of the bread, salt-rising, has nothing to do with ingredients. In the "old days," rock salt was heated to provide a warm bed in which to keep the bowl of starter while it worked.) One person's "just warm enough" is too cool to someone else, but too warm for another baker.

However, I have found a product that seems always to produce a starter: it is called a brisker, which is an electrically heated bread box that warms the space inside to almost exactly 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Briskers will be found advertised in many kitchen utensil catalogs. (The original purpose of the

brisker was to keep crackers and like bread products crisp while in household storage.)

My having found a way to always get a starter may lead you to think I am always successful in baking the bread. No such luck, damn it! (Salt-rising bread bakers are perfectly justified in cursing. The task is that frustrating.) I can get a perfect starter and a perfect sponge and still fail to get the bread to rise in the pan. Did I let the dough get too cool or too warm in the kneading? Was there a draft in the kitchen, which many recipes warn you is to be avoided like the plague? Or was it something else that went wrong? Who knows?

Yours sincerely,
Bill Adler

October 23, 1993
Hawaii National Park, Hawaii
Editor:

You have readers in Hawaii. Here, at 4,000 feet above sea level, I took Mother Barlow's Salt-Rising Bread recipe and replicated this tasty West Virginia staple. But you do your loyal readers a disservice by printing a misleading photograph of an ordinary loaf of yeast-risen bread — full of holes and highly rounded. You should have published a picture of the golden crust and smooth-crumbed slice of a true salt-risen loaf.

Salt-rising bread is flat, shaped almost like a pound cake. The flatness conceals delectable fine crumbs that melt on the tongue like cream rather than the chewy crumbs of yeast origin. When sliced and wrapped around homemade meatloaf, it makes a memorable sandwich. When toasted and thinly buttered, its flavor *and* texture are matchless.

Your author, although a fine storyteller, confessed that she had not even attempted the recipe! She should celebrate and savor her memories along with the taste of salt-rising bread. You must go deeper into the history and mystery of salt-rising.

My friend Paul's grandmother, Hazel Lang of Bridgeport, made salt-rising bread that was so good that she was able to sell it for $1 a loaf during the Great Depression. His father, Paul W. Sturm, Sr., often joked that he married Helen Lang because of her mother's bread. After a meatloaf sandwich made with Mother Lang's salt-rising bread, he claimed he was hooked.

Paul Jr. grew up surrounded by salt-rising bread, homemade Parker-house rolls, garden tomatoes, the close comfort of both sets of grandparents, and a great-grandmother. To give him the taste of West Virginia in New York City, I first tried to make salt-rising bread in 1989, even though I was told that "if you haven't grown up making salt-rising bread, your chances of success are pretty slim."

An article from the *West Virginia Hillbilly* [September 20, 1969] summed up my chances: "There's not enough time left at middle age to learn how to make this tricky recipe."

"There's not enough time left at middle age to learn how to make this tricky recipe."

I threw out several sour, foul-smelling doughs, a batch or two of brownish potato and cornmeal mixes, and ate a couple of flat, hard tasteless loaves before I gave up. Not till September 1993, inspired by your article, did I take up the challenge of salt-rising bread again. During the intervening years, I had learned to bake yeast bread, trying to cram a lifetime of baking experience into the space of a few years. I had traveled extensively in the United States and Europe, tasting domestic and foreign breads, and sampling many flours. Finally, I felt prepared to face salt-rising bread.

I had collected several recipes from West Virginia, grilled any old-timers who could help, and consulted various bread cookbooks. According to *The Joy of Cooking*, the activity of a salt-tolerant bacterium causes the rising. Bernard Clayton's new book of breads states that "salt-rising" refers to the practice of keeping the starter nested overnight in a bed of salt, which retains heat nicely.

Whatever the definition of salt-rising, it has nothing to do with the peculiar taste of the bread. The techniques follow a similar pattern. From the atmosphere, you "capture" and grow the bacterium (or wild yeast-bacterium combination) in a friendly starch medium — usually new red potatoes or fresh stone-ground cornmeal mixed with water, sugar and salt. The ingredients must brew overnight for about 10 to 12 hours in a carefully controlled warm environment — approximately 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. After all that, the brew still might not hold the right bacterium / yeast.

If, after the overnight rising, the brew doesn't have a powerful odor and a thick white foam on top, stop and throw it out. Proceed to the next step, mixing the flour with the smelly liquid, *only* with the right salt-rising bacterium. If all is well, the thick batter rises so quickly that it will overflow the bowl in about an hour. After this second rising, continue with Mother Barlow's recipe. This dough hates the cold; if it gets even a little chill it quits rising. Warm all flour, utensils, and working surfaces.

This wonderful West Virginia tradition needs a new generation of cooks. To perpetuate salt-rising bread, your readers need proper encouragement and good information. Please don't doom them to disappointment with untried recipes and misleading images.

Yours truly,
Flora S. H. Ling

All right, folks, here are the facts: While the loaf pictured in the fall GOLDENSEAL is salt-rising bread, it is from Dutchess Bakery in Charleston. Ed Rada, Sr., the second of three generations of bakers in the Dutchess Bakery family, later told me that commercial bakers take certain shortcuts over the homemade method, evidently to avoid just those uncertainties our letter writers mention. These changes presumably account for the difference in texture. It's not homemade and maybe not true salt-rising, but it's good bakery bread. And it made a doggone good photo, didn't it? —ed.

Recalling the Great Depression:
Hard Times on a Hillside Farm

By Cody A. Burdette

I recently visited the cemetery on Oak Hill Ridge, the old Burdette home country where my grandfather and grandmother are buried. As I stood in the graveyard on this warm, sunny summer afternoon, my mind went back to a time my father used to tell me about. It was the 1930's, and the Great Depression was in full swing.

It was a harsh time on this ridge, a time of misery, with no hope for a young man about to leave home to look for a job, for there were no jobs to be had. My father's future must have looked dim to him, and the present was no better. It was a struggle to survive each day.

Sixty years later I talk with him about it, and the memories of this period in his life still haunt him. Sometimes he will joke about those days, but then his face turns serious as he starts to remember how life for him, his mother, father, and five sisters actually was.

Oak Hill Ridge occupies one of the big bends that the Elk River makes as it twists from Clay County into Kanawha. This is out-of-the-way country. The Burdettes could not afford a radio or newspaper, so news was transmitted by word of mouth. A lot of times little jobs would start up but would be finished by the time the word reached the ridge.

My grandfather first found out there was something wrong with the economy in 1926. One day he left home and walked to Nallen in neighboring Fayette County. He thought he might land a job at the large bandmill there.

But he returned home a few days later with the sad news of no job. He said the Wilderness Lumber Company of Nallen was down to two and three days a week, with many men laid off. The Depression had begun in rural West Virginia, although it would be another three or four years before it officially took hold on the rest of the United States.

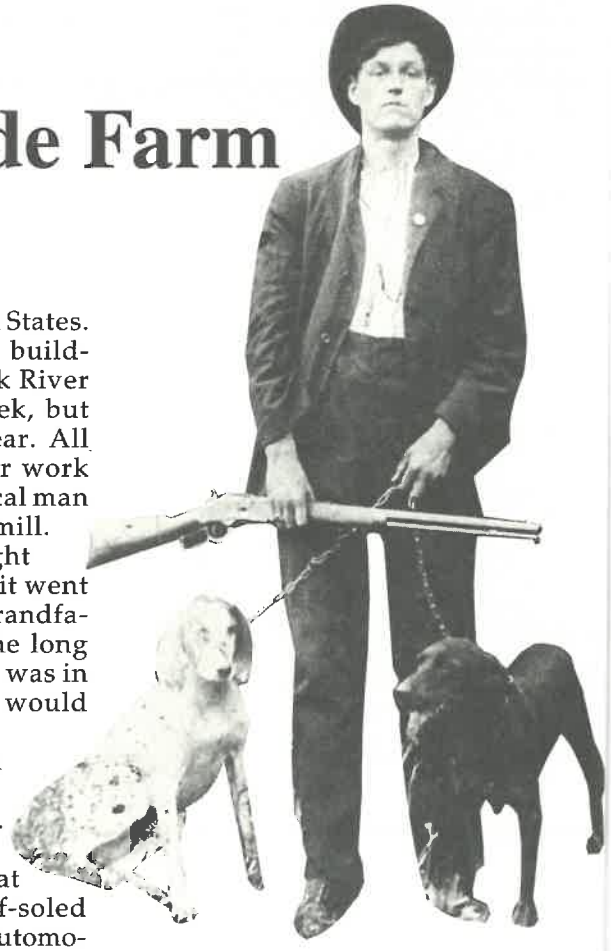
Grandpaw's next job was building the car bridge across Elk River at the mouth of Camp Creek, but this lasted only about a year. All too soon he was looking for work again. He hired on with a local man who owned a portable sawmill. Finally the Depression caught up with this operation, and it went out of business. Now my grandfather was out of work for the long haul, and the whole country was in the grip of hard times that would last for years.

The family was left with a poor farm, a milk cow, and a battered four-room house. They went to bed hungry many nights in the years that lay ahead. Shoes were half-soled from rubber cut from old automobile tires. Clothes were patched on top of patches, and new garments unheard of. Things were passed down from kin people, or from larger children to smaller children. When something was completely worn out, my grandmother would make quilts from the ragged remains. Nothing was wasted.

Mostly they lived from the land. The Burdette place was a hillside farm, but it furnished the family with a garden and room for the cow. There was plenty of timber, so firewood was no problem. My father dug ginseng and yellow root, and worked a trap line. One year he sold enough fur to get his mother a dress, himself a shirt, and other things the family needed.

Everything in those days was done by hard manual labor. Firewood was cut with an axe and a crosscut saw, and dragged to the house by manpower, sometimes through deep snow. Any grain was cut with a hand cradle, meals were prepared on a wood stove, and heat was provided by a stove homemade from an oil drum.

Insulation was unheard of, but they would not have been able to afford it anyway. One of the rooms had no ceiling in it, and that is where my father and grandfather slept. In winter, the wind would sometimes drive the snow into the room, covering the bed where Dad and Grandpaw lay sleeping.



Grandfather L.V. Burdette, here shown as a young man ready for the hunt, is among the Clay County forebears Cody Burdette looks back to. Photographer unknown, early 1900's.

To compound matters, 1930 brought one of the worst droughts in West Virginia history. All of the local creeks went dry that summer, and Elk River could be crossed on the rocks without getting your feet wet. People drove their cattle for miles to the river to water them.

This same drought burned up most of the gardens, so people could not depend on fresh vegetables. That added an unexpected hardship.

Finally, through several trades of guns and a calf, and money from the trap line, my grandfather was able to purchase a small gristmill.

He powered this mill with an old Star car motor my dad had traded for. Grandpaw charged one gallon of corn for each bushel of corn ground. He was able to keep the family in cornmeal now.

On really bad days all they could do was stay inside out of the weather. Sometimes I wonder what people talked about during this awful period in America, sitting around a wood fire or maybe staring out a window at the dismal scene, hungry and cold, with poverty all around them. Parents must have felt so helpless.

One night the wind ripped the front porch roof off and tossed it completely over the house and on top of the cellar house. It seemed even the weather was worse during the Depression, with deep snows and high winds in winter and dry heat in summer.

The mud was axle deep in the automobile road, making travel by car impossible in the wintertime. Horses were used to pull cars through the worst mudholes, when some brave soul thought he could drive to Clendenin or Clay. In the dead of winter one traveled by foot only. When they had money, my father and grandfather would walk to the Camp Creek store and purchase a few groceries, then carry them on their backs up the mountain to their home on the ridge.

Grandmother Burdette had been raised on this mountain farm and played all over it when she was a child. I talked with her about it when she was in her 90's. She told me how she and a playmate used the big flat rocks covered with green moss for their carpet, playing with their homemade dolls for hours, with the tall trees for their roof. Until her death she was against selling the place, warning there might be another depression some day and the old farm would again be a refuge.

All through this period the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad continued to run passenger trains up and down Elk River, as well as freight trains. My dad and some of his friends would always watch these trains at Camp Creek to see who was riding them and what they were hauling.

As the Depression finally began to loosen its hold, my father got a job carrying the U.S. Mail by horseback from Procious in Clay County to Wanego in Roane, a 20-mile round trip in all kinds of weather. It was a trying job for a 16-year-old, but he was glad to have a steady payday coming in.

This was when Dad first came into close contact with the railroad. He had to meet the morning and evening mail trains. He soon learned all the railroad men by their first names and felt he was a part of their world. He longed to be a fireman or locomotive engineer and to travel on these trains to wherever it was they were going. He kept this dream alive, and a few years later he stepped aboard a steam engine as a fireman. Eventually he was promoted to engineer, which he remained until his retirement some 50 years later.

Grandfather Burdette also found work at last. He went to work for the WPA and remained with that until he heard of a job opening on a bandmill at Dixie. He went to work there as a stationary engineer and remained for many years, until he retired. He kept the big steam engine running and in good repair, which he could do easily; except for the Depression, he had spent his entire life around sawmills of all kinds.

These are the things I think of when I go back to the ridge today. Time has changed the place in many ways. There is city water, a paved road replaces the axle-deep mud, and there is electricity and telephone service. New homes have sprung up with new cars in their driveways. Nearby supermarkets have replaced the country stores of my dad's day. The railroad is completely gone now. The old-timers who fought so hard for a railroad up Elk River would never have believed that the day came when it was needed no longer.

Today I can stroll the mountain paths kinfolks once trod, with no thoughts of having to try to wrest a living from hillside land. I pass large rocks covered with moss, wondering if this is the spot where my grandmother used to play. There are large chestnut stumps still visible, and I wonder if Dad and Grandpaw cut those trees during the Depression. Some trees have family initials carved deep into them, living testimony that my people passed this way.

In their retirement my grandparents returned to the mountain and built a new home, where they stayed until Grandpaw died. My grandmother stayed on for many years after his death, but finally bad health forced her to abandon the ridge. With all its hardships, it was still home to her.

Now they are both back here, forever. As I stand in the cemetery and look down upon the headstones, I realize how much they must have loved each other, and how they stuck together when all the odds were against them, and how they finally came through with their will unbroken.

Once a year kinfolks gather on the ridge for a reunion, seeking out the trails that used to lead to relatives' homes. Now the houses are gone, and the land has returned to timber. One can still see the old foundations.

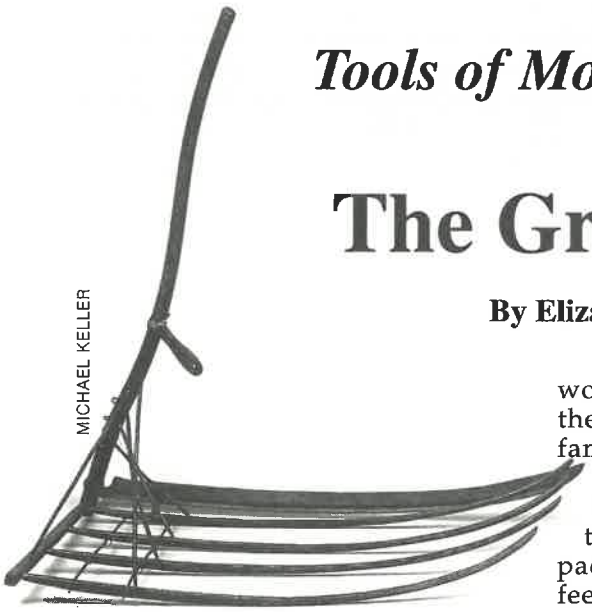
My forebears worked hard to clear this land. They hacked out openings in the forest to build their cabins. They dragged the logs to the cabin site by horse power, cut them to the right length by a crosscut saw and notched them with a double-bit axe. Then several men would start laying the logs up. When they reached the roof a man on the ground would already be riving wooden shingles with a froe. These would be passed up to the men on top, and it would not be long till the roof was complete.

That world seems so far removed from ours that it is hard to imagine what life must have been like. But it is easy to stand on the ridge today in the warm sun with a gentle breeze ruffling the leaves and let my mind take in the peaceful surroundings. I love to sit under the trees among the headstones and look at the blue ridges in the distance. Then time stands still for a while, and my mind leaves the everyday hustle and goes back home.

Tools of Mountain Living:

The Grain Cradle

By Elizabeth Williamson



MICHAEL KELLER

Grain cradle courtesy State Museum.

When I first saw it, I could not believe my eyes. How could anything that looked so cumbersome be of practical use?

But there it was. The man in the picture was using a grain cradle to mow oats. The past seemed as close as the mist rising from Wheeling Creek. We had spent the morning visiting several elderly widowers, descendants of the pioneers who settled the border region at the same time as the Wetzels. Now, we rested on the porch of the timeworn farmhouse. The old man passed around treasured family photographs. A postcard picture, taken around 1920, showed his father using a cradle to mow oats while two little boys watched.

The cradle part, consisting of three to five long tines or fingers which follow the full length of the curved blade, is attached perpendicular to the radically curved handle. The handle — properly called the "snath" — is the same as for a mowing scythe. As the blade cuts the grain, it falls neatly onto the wooden tines. The cut grain is thus cradled as it falls, to be gently dropped in bundles, at the end of the stroke.

A valued piece of equipment, the grain cradle arrived on the Appalachian Plateau with the earliest settlers. Harvest stories among local families attest to its widespread use. It took several gatherers to keep up with one skilled cradler. Typically women and children did much of the gathering, especially on small family farmsteads.

When several cradlers mowed together in synchronized motion, the first to start set the pace. The next one followed several feet behind and a swath to the right. As the mowers progressed around the field, windrows formed to the left of each man. In most crews the fastest mower started first, setting an even steady rhythm. In others, he followed, his blade a constant reminder at the heels of dawdlers.

Mowing was interrupted frequently for refreshment and to whet the scythe blade. The grain cradle remained in use on West Virginia family farms well into this century, and many remember the familiar "click-clack" of whetstone on metal as the cradler stopped in the field to sharpen the blade.

This was a simple task. The tool was turned upside down. The cradle now supported the blade in perfect position to be whetted. The cradler took his long, thin whetstone from his back pocket, and with quick back-to-front motions renewed the edge of the blade. The wavy edge on most old grain cradles is the result of many years of whetting.

The blade used in most grain cradles was so soft that it required constant attention. Although harder steel is used in some modern scythes, they will not sharpen to the fine edge favored by most cradlers. And if, as happens all too often, the blade hits a stone, hard steel tends to be more brittle and is apt to fracture. The softer blade gives way. The dent can be removed by hammering or "peening" the blade. Some cradlers carried a small anvil and peening hammer to the field.

At first, both scythes and grain cradles were made by local craftsmen. This may account for the amazing variations which appeared during the 19th century, including the four-fingered bow cradle, the large turkey wing, and the grapevine snath, to name just a few. During this prosperous agricultural era, the Northern Panhandle and adjoining areas were an important stock producing region. Grain was a basic commodity upon which the area depended, both for stock feed and human consumption, and local shops made the necessary farm tools. According to tradition, one such shop, at the Old Drover's Road watering station at Poplar Springs, Marshall County, served both passing drovers and local stockmen.

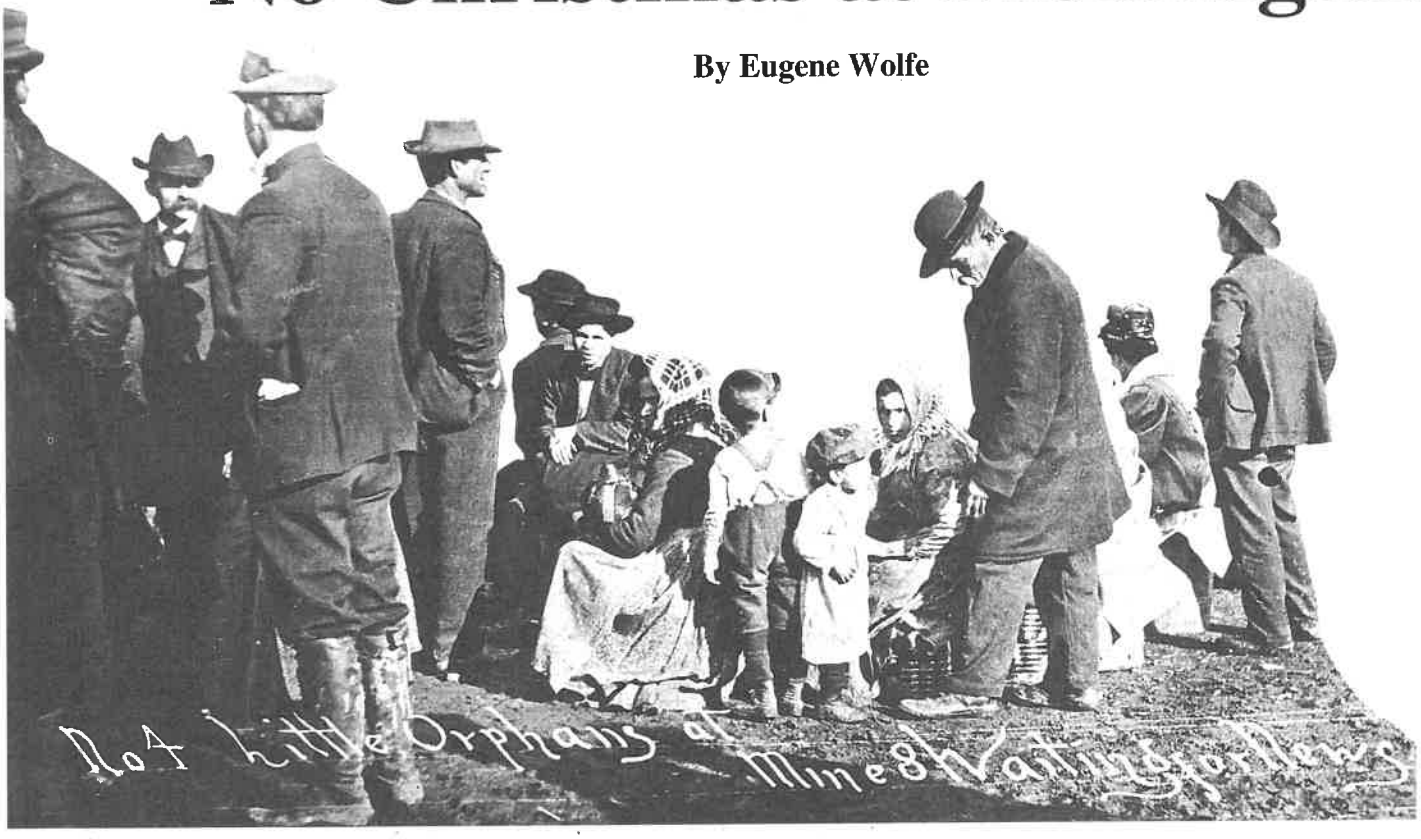
Later in the century the Ohio Valley entered an era of industrial production. Farm tools were manufactured in factories along the river and shipped to farmers all across this country and overseas as well. The Schwob Cradle Factory was located at the very center of the manufacturing and transportation district of Moundsville, at 13th Street and Thompson Avenue. Built in 1879, it reputedly became one of the largest makers of grain cradles in the United States. Schwob closed its doors in 1924.

Manufactured grain cradles were more standardized and are readily distinguished from handcrafted tools. The precut wooden parts were soaked or steamed and bent into shape in great frames. The cradle fingers were made of hickory, the snath of either hickory or willow. The little handhold, called the nib, was usually made of ash. After it dried, the double-curved snath was fitted to a tempered blade. The cradle was then attached and wires added for support.

Little grain is raised in the Panhandle today. It is a rare thing to find a grain cradle, rarer still to find one intact. The cradle proved very fragile, as the wood becomes brittle with age. The size of the grain cradle precludes easy storage or display. These curious old tools never fail to attract attention when offered for sale at farm auctions. A few remain in dusty barns, treasured reminders of another time.

December 6, 1907
No Christmas at Monongah

By Eugene Wolfe



Relatives wait for news at Monongah. Photographer unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

The mines at Monongah, first Number Eight and then interconnected Number Six, blew on the rainy morning of December 6, 1907. Three-hundred-sixty-one men and boys died, according to the official count. It was a tragedy of unprecedented proportions and today remains the worst mine disaster in the history of the United States. For a long time it was the worst in the world.

Certainly it was the biggest thing that ever happened in Monongah. I was born there a decade later, grew up there, and went to high school there. My earliest memories include plenty of talk about "The Explosion." Let me relate the story to you in the context of the broader history of the town and what it meant to the townspeople.

The site of what became Monongah was five miles south of Fairmont, where Booths Creek enters the West Fork River. About 1850, long before the coal mines were opened, an agrarian village was laid out. As the streets were being surveyed, the legend goes, a gawking kibitzer asked what the place would be named. "Pleasantville," he was told. "Well," he allowed, "You ought to call it 'Briertown' because you're sure as heck laying it out in a brier patch."

The wag proved to be prophetic. For years, the village was called "Briertown" or "The Patch." I remember hearing my father, John Wolfe, and his sister, my Aunt Mollie Jones, trying to remember whether the Wolfe family "came to the 'Patch' in '78 or '79."

The main Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which came west through Grafton and on into our area, helped to make northern West Virginia the most populous area in the state. By the 1880's, rich seams of coal beckoned railroad spurs up every river, stream and "holler."

As railroads brought in the coal men, Briertown became Monongah. It was named after industrialist Johnson Camden's Monongahela Coal and Coke Company, although by early this century the mines were operated by Fairmont Coal Company, itself a part of Consolidation Coal. Even so, Monongah was never a 100-percent company-owned town. Coal predominated, but no company ever ruled Monongah with bully-boys and gunfire as sometimes happened in the southern West Virginia coal towns.

As Monongah became a boom town, in came the Italians, Irish, Poles, Hungarians, Austrians and other Europeans. They brought new foreign flavors to the original hill country population stew, mostly old-stock families of British and German origins.

Perhaps most of the immigrants had not the slightest notion of where the recruiters who signed

The scene after the explosion of December 6, 1907. Bystanders view bodies in coffins lined up in the dirt streets of Monongah. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia Collection, WVU.

them on in Europe were sending them. Many thought in some fuzzy way that they would be close to clusters of their countrymen in New York City. All looked forward to a better life. In fact, European miseries often were compounded when immigrants found themselves whisked from New York docks to the rugged West Virginia coalfields.

The foreigners' speech sounded like jabberwocky to the native mountaineers whose forefathers, like my own, had settled the land under the tomahawks of the Delawares and the Ohio tribes. In general, the new-come alien workers kept to themselves. They had a reputation for volatile tempers, but whatever violence there may have been was kept mostly among themselves. These people were to bear the brunt of the coming disaster.

Men and boys of native farm families went "inside," often literally underneath their own homes, although not in great numbers compared to the immigrants. But everyone was touched by the bustling industry around them. On the railroad, the big hoppers of Monongah's rich low-sulphur coal rolled east to Baltimore and west to the Ohio River at all hours. No West Virginian who has heard it will ever forget the crashing sound of coal cars being coupled, or the haunting wail of a steam locomotive's whistle up from the valley on a rainy night. These were the sounds of my youth in Monongah, and they were the sounds which prevailed a generation before.

No West Virginian who has heard it will ever forget the crashing sound of coal cars being coupled, or the wail of a steam locomotive's whistle up from the valley on a rainy night.

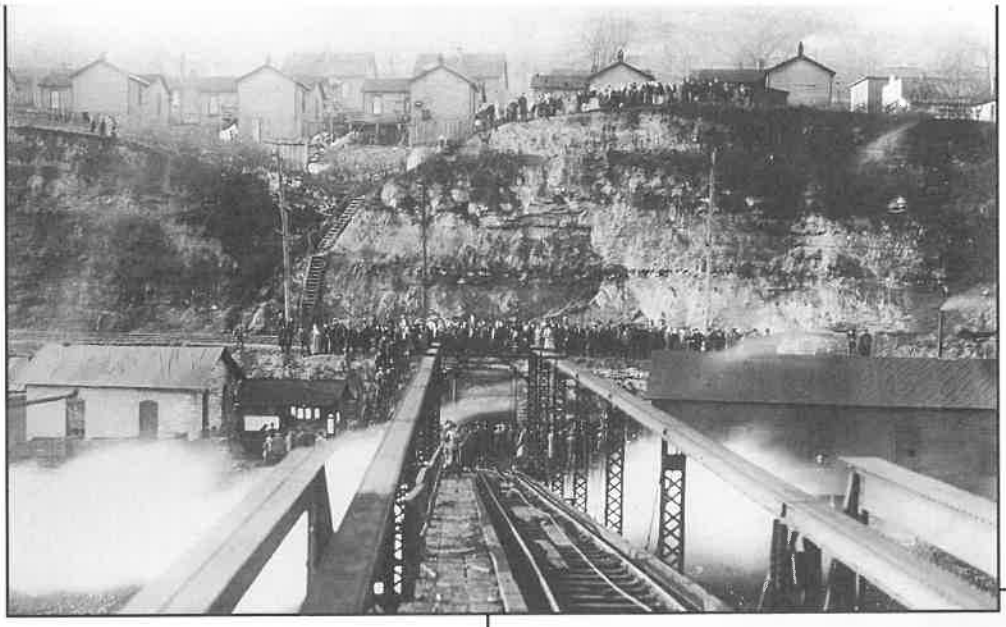
The mines, three on the east side of the West Fork and two on the west side, were modern for the year 1907. Electricity was used, especially for coal cutting machinery, for "motors" to haul out the coal, and for large new ventilating fans. In fact, the Fairmont Coal Company's Monongah mines were acknowledged as models of what was most up-to-date in the mining industry.

But on the Black Friday of December 6, it happened. At 10:20 in the morning, a bombshell mix of coal dust and methane gas which had accumulated in Number Six and Number Eight on the west bank ignited.

The two mines connected underground. Their mouths were about two miles apart and both faced the West Fork, over which bridges took coal cars to the east side of the river to tipples and the railroad. The Monongah explosion made the long mine tunnels into giant cannons. A portion of the fan house in Number Eight and a section of a 22-foot fan were blown 500 feet out of the mine entrance and across the river.

Marion County farmers felt the mine explosion as though it were an earthquake. The rolling, death-dealing thunder inside the hills subsided as quickly as it came, but the social and human aftereffects reverberated for decades.

The shocking fact was that 358 miners had been killed in the blast, mostly residents of one community, many leaving widows and orphans.



Number Six entry showed less external damage than Number Eight. Some thought that a string of coal cars rolling down these rails into the mine sparked the explosion. Photo by Boland, courtesy *United Mine Workers Journal*.

The entry to Monongah Number Eight was badly damaged. This picture shows the disaster scene after spectators had gathered. Photographer unknown, courtesy Reverend Everett F. Briggs.

According to a local chronicler, among those who died were "74 white and colored Americans, 171 Italians, 25 Austrians, 52 Hungarians, 31 Russians and five Turks." In addition, three rescue workers lost their lives, making the final total 361.

Of all who went inside on that unlucky morning shift, one man alone, Pete Urban from Poland, escaped with his life by crawling up an air shaft of Number Six. In an ironic sequel which could only occur in this hard land of coal, Urban himself was killed 18 years later by a slate fall in the same Number Six.

The great force of the explosion did ghastly work. Mine passageways turned into charnel houses. Corpses were found draped around support stanchions, covered with wreckage and debris, pressed into the mine walls, and thrown into trolley wires. Many had clothes burned away and more than a few were charred beyond recognition. It took more than two days for rescue workers to reach those in the farthest rooms, a mile and a half into the mountain.

Newspapers described the condition of many of the recovered bodies as "horrible." Miners were dismembered and crushed and blackened and burned. A pit boss, famous in the area as a great coal miner, was beheaded, and his body could be identified only by its clothing and shoes. Thirteen bodies eventually were buried without benefit of any positive identification.

Concerned miners rushed to Monongah from coal camps throughout the region, including Pennsylvania. Other volunteers, some of whom had never been inside before, comprised the rest of the rescue workers. Twenty-five were struck down by inhaling what was then called "black damp," air which contained a moist gas of coal dust and explosion fumes. One of the effects of black damp was to cause temporary insanity. In one case, according to the *Pittsburgh Post*, it took five men to control a stricken rescue worker. More than three rescuers might have died had not physicians been hurried to the mine entrances.

Even though the rescue work was quickly and efficiently organized by highly motivated professionals, the physical task of bringing bodies out was horrendous. It took hours of tedious, slow, and painstaking work to locate and transport a single body through the wreckage of seemingly endless rooms and passageways.

In a situation which seems odd now, nearly 100 years later, rescue workers found themselves confronted with amounts of cash running into thousands of dollars. Many of the slain miners knew little or no English, often they were illiterate in their own languages, and they had little understanding or trust of banks. Some kept their life savings in their pockets, in cash, even at work in the mines.

When such a miner was blown to bits or completely burned up, his survivors lost not only him but also whatever happened to be the family fortune. If the funds survived intact it was up to the rescuers to deliver them into the right hands. This practice of carrying money was described in the *New York Times* December 10th story on the Monongah explosion. I also recall my father mentioning that some miners kept their money with them, when he talked about the explosion.

Hundreds of people gathered at the mine openings of Number Six and Number Eight. Newspaper accounts told of the wailing and screaming wives and children

whose men were still inside. There were also townspeople both curious and anxious to be of help. Sightseers descended on Monongah from a broad surrounding area.

The 1907 explosion is beyond the recollection of most residents today, but Monongah retains a collective memory of the event. Thomas J. Koon, now president of the Marion County Historical Society, is among those with a personal connection to the explosion. The first husband of his mother was killed in Number Eight. His name was Scott Martin, and his wife, eventually to become Koon's mother, was pregnant with an earlier child at the time. Koon says that she, like other wives, went to Number Eight to wait tearfully for several days. He remembers her saying that she finally received body pieces which the authorities told her were her husband, but that she was never certain. It sometimes bothered her that she had not discouraged Scott Martin from going to work that morning.

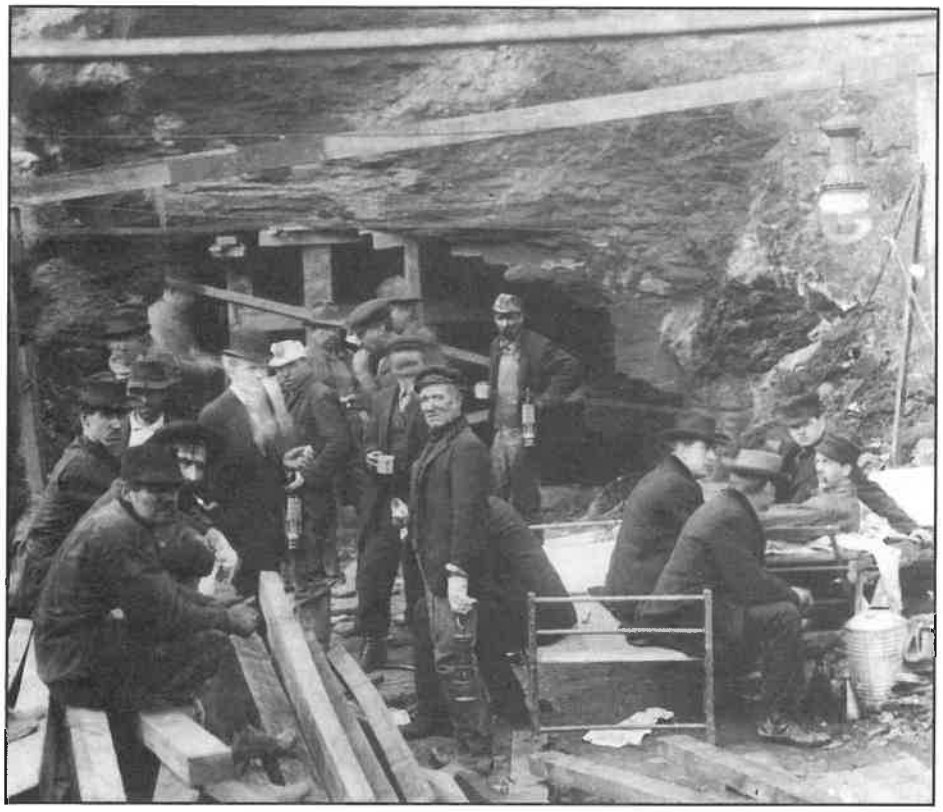
Ever after she remained frightened by anything connected with the coal mines, and Koon says she cautioned him again and again never to go near one. Her father also had been killed underground, by a slate fall in 1895. She didn't want to see a third generation added to the grim family tally.

Each case at Monongah was an awful one. A *New York Times* reporter on December 9th wrote of one woman who stood for more than 34 hours with a bunch of white carnations tied with white ribbon in her hands. But when her husband's body finally was brought out, it was in such a bad state that burial had to be immediate. The new widow tearfully followed the wagon bearing her dead man into town for a coffin, and then on to the cemetery where he was put back into the earth. The whole sad business took little more than an hour.

By Saturday evening after the explosion on Friday morning, only 25 bodies had been brought to the outside. Hundreds remained inside, but no one knew just how many. In fact, there was never a completely accurate count of how many men were in the mines at the time of the blast.

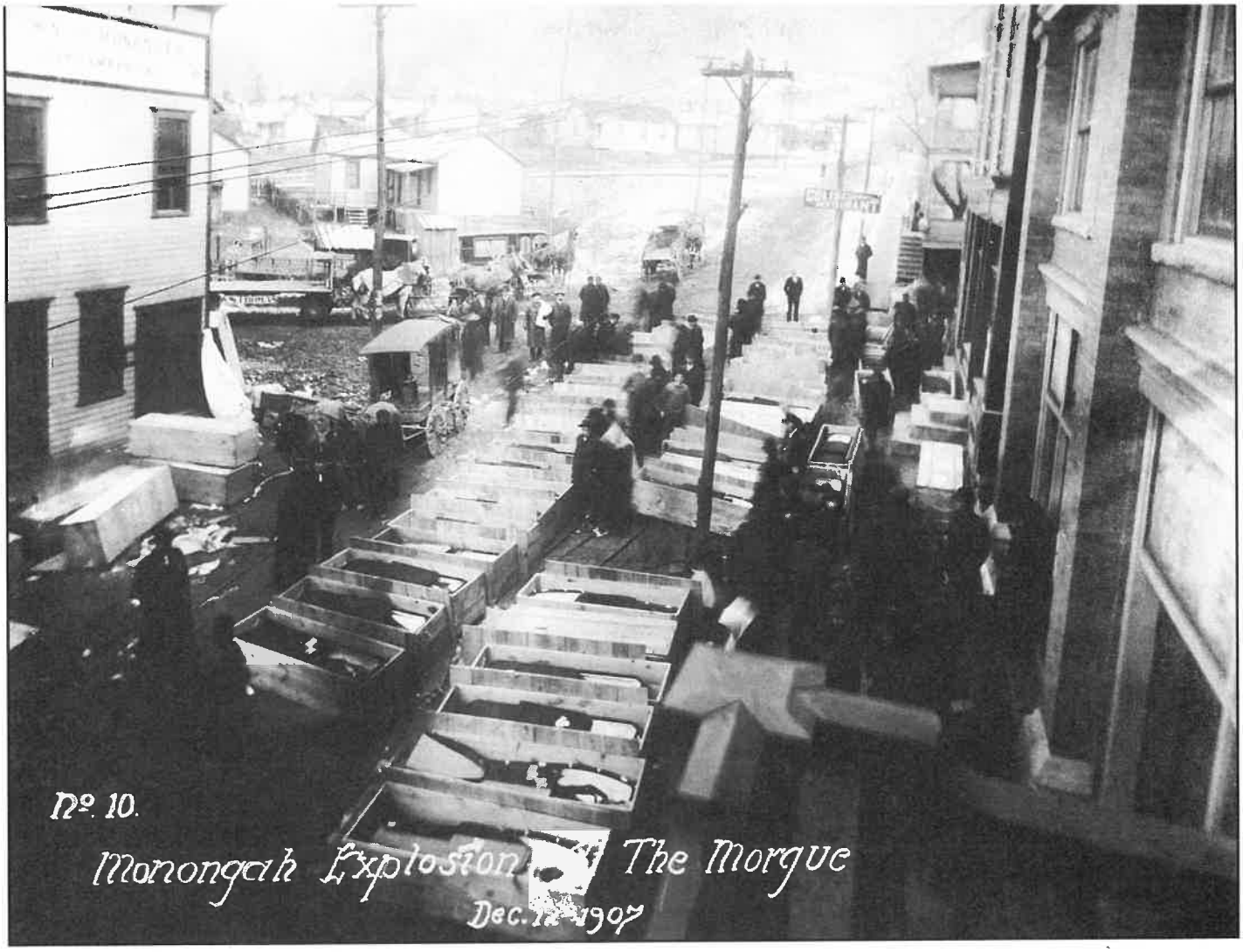
Wreckage of the Number Eight fan and boiler house. Parts of the machinery were thrown hundreds of feet. Photo by Boland, courtesy West Virginia Collection, WVU.

By December 8, workers had the Number Eight portal timbered up and the retrieval of bodies was well underway. Photo by Boland, courtesy West Virginia Collection, WVU.



Each miner who loaded coal had his "checks," round brass tags with his number stamped on them. When he shoveled a car full he put his tag on it so he would get credit for the coal when it reached the outside, at the rate of 50 cents per long ton. From these checks the company determined there were more than 300 coal loaders in the two mines that morning. But the brass tags did not account for workers who sent no coal to the surface, including bosses, young boys, track workers, teamsters, pumpers, and operators of various pieces of mining machinery.

Although Fairmont Coal admitted it had no exact record of the number of men in the two mines,



Corpses were processed assembly-line style and laid before the public for identification. Hearses and the W.S. Thomas express wagon stand by to move coffins. Photo by Boland, courtesy West Virginia Collection, WVU.

newspaper reporters on the scene could not help but notice that the company *did* have a precise count on the number of horses and mules inside at the time. Such stories contribute to the pervasive miner's lore that coal companies cared more for mules than men.

Be that as it may, the immediate reaction of Fairmont Coal Company executive C. W. Watson was a classic in putting the best face on a bad situation. He ignored the possibility of sparks from the many machines in the mine, as well as questions as to whether his company had taken all proper safety measures.

Instead, Watson made a statement worthy of today's best sharpsters. He said that he was "thoroughly convinced that the disaster in the two mines was caused by an explosion of coal dust," but that he "could not account for the ignition of the dust unless it had been through careless use of an open lamp." He ignored the matter of permitting dust to acculuate in the first place.

For a time it was speculated that a runaway mine car caused the explosion. This was described in a *United Mine Workers Journal* 50th anniversary article in 1957. When a string of cars began to roll back to the mine entrance of Number Six, 18-year-old Pat McDonnel dashed to the entrance to throw a switch to cut the power. Just before McDonnel reached the switch, Number Six exploded. He was knocked down and rolled by the blast.

Five railroad carloads of coffins arrived in Monongah the day after the explosion. They were not enough.

McDonnel suffered severe bruises and carried a scar the rest of his life from a cut on the forehead. He eventually became Monongah's Chief of Police. I remember Pat McDonnel well, as a town fixture when I was going to school in Monongah in the 1920's and early 1930's. Mine experts and Fairmont Coal would in time officially declare that the runaway coal cars did not cause the great explosion.

It was rumored that in addition to coal dust and methane gas, mine explosives had added to the force of the detonation. Fairmont Coal, like most mining companies at the time, used dangerous black powder to shoot down the coal. Black powder was cheaper than safer explosives, although cost was a moot point to the company. The miners had to buy their own powder at prices set for profit by the company store. After the disaster, the use of black powder was banned in the Monongah mines, to the company's

credit.

But at the time of the explosion, the Fairmont Coal Company's concern for mine safety at Monongah left much to be desired. The work force was 75 percent foreign-born and non-English speaking, the most for any company operating in West Virginia at the time. To the County Coroner's jury, a company mine superintendent testified that the company had instructed the miners in mine safety. With a straight face he explained that each miner had been given a copy of the West Virginia state mining laws to read!

The anxious and grieving crowds at the mine shafts came dangerously close to the riot stage as hysteria rose. Mine and local officials contained the situation, just short of having to call for the militia.

Five railroad carloads of coffins arrived in Monongah the day after the explosion. They were not enough. As the retrieval of bodies progressed, a morgue was set up in the new and unfinished bank building. Six undertakers with squads of assistants performed their grim tasks nonstop. Scores upon scores of bodies were then lined up in open coffins on Monongah's Main Street.

There, a heart-wrenching and harrowing process began for the families of the dead. Bereft wives, children, parents and friends identified their own as best they could for the official records, then made their personal arrangements.

On Wednesday, five days after the explosion, the scene at Monongah had changed somewhat. Most of the bodies had been recovered. The mobs of idle sightseers had departed. The mine entrances were left to rescue workers and the small number of relatives whose men were still inside. A downpour of cruel winter rain fell steadily.

The new widow tearfully followed the wagon bearing her dead man into town for a coffin, and then on to the cemetery where he was put back into the earth.

A special graveyard, soon filled, was laid out on a bleak hillside at nearby Thoburn community. Company houses flanked the burial ground. The cold rows of open graves in the sodden, half-frozen, rain-drenched and snow-flecked West Virginia soil compounded the grief of those who had fled the warmth of Mediterranean suns for a better life in America.

Later, the town built a recreational area named Traction Park near the disaster graveyard. As a child I saw the Monongah Miners baseball team play teams from other mining towns at Traction Park. Several of our players descended from men killed in the explosion. Their fathers lay to the right of first base.

The 361 casualties of Monongah's coal mine disaster left more than 1,000 widows and children. The Mannington Relief Committee was set up to assist them. The coal company contributed $17,500 to the relief fund and ultimately made an additional small settlement to individual survivors.

At least one party, the Austro-Hungarian consul, thought the Fairmont Coal Company had paid out trifling amounts to the survivors of immigrant miners. An official protest was entered through

A Sad Monongah Memorial

I recall an unofficial, heartbreaking monument to the Monongah explosion from my days growing up there, an ever-growing pile of coal along a fence row at the edge of town. By the 1930's it had reached proportions of 12 to 15 feet high, about 200 feet long, and 25 to 30 feet wide. It contained countless tons of choice bituminous coal.

The colossal mound was built lump by lump by a wife who became deranged upon her husband's death in Number Eight. After the explosion, every day for nearly 40 years she made two or three trips to the mine, nearly a mile each way. Each time she brought back to her cottage four or five hand-picked pieces of coal in a burlap sack.

After her husband was killed, the widow and her sons somehow managed a living. Renzy Fazio of Monongah, whose family lived close by in 1907, remembers hearing that the woman said she was taking the coal because the company had taken her husband. Psychologically, the reasons were probably much more complicated than that.

When I was going to Thoburn Grade School, we students often attended Monongah High School football games at Traction Park. The route from school took us directly past the widow's house. I remember seeing the coal pile many times, and I once saw her bringing a sackful of lumps from Number Eight.

The ever-growing mound of coal would seem sure-fire fare for newspaper feature writers. But for many years, in deference to feelings of the family, the unwritten policy of regional newspapers was not to touch the coal pile. I don't know of any photographs.

Indeed, even at this late date, after all the lady's descendants and relatives have left Monongah, and most of them are no longer alive, I believe there is some slight resentment of questions about the coal pile.

But for most Marion Countians the widow's sad monument is now a forgotten relic of the awful disaster of December 1907. After their mother passed away, the family disposed of the enormous black mountain of Monongah coal. By then the dollar value was more than considerable, and they gave all the coal money to churches and schools.

— Eugene Wolfe

diplomatic channels.

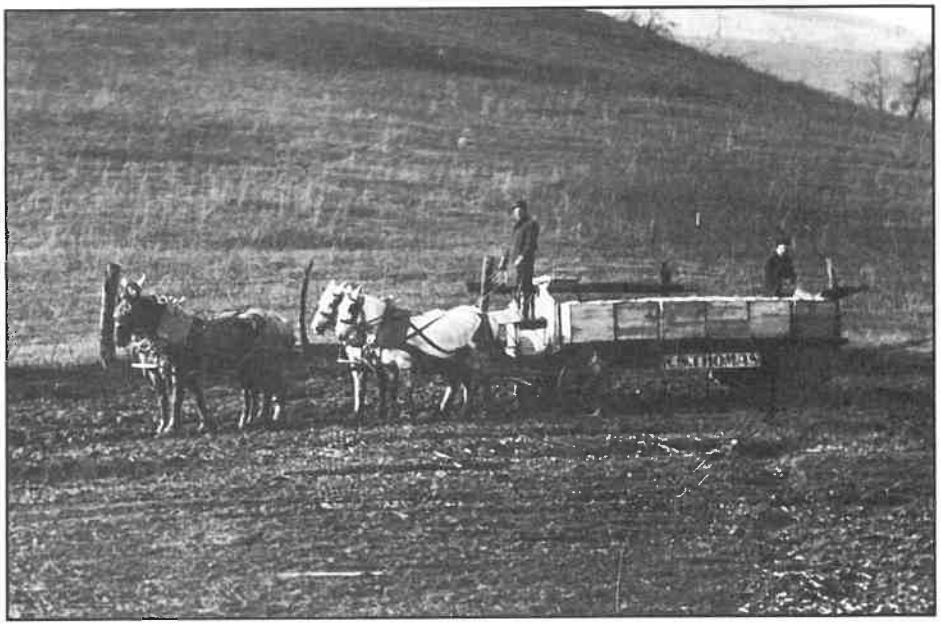
Former Governor A. Brooks Fleming, Fairmont Coal Company lawyer, answered the consul with noticeable coolness, according to John Alexander Williams in his book, *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry*. Fleming carefully noted that the company had given the funds it distributed as "a gratuity or donation," and under no legal obligation. "The Company never for a moment considered it was legally liable," he stated. "I think the $2,000 distributed principally among 41 children and 20 widows would be quite a Christmas present."

Brooks Fleming was a Fairmonter. The Fairmont Coal Company had been founded by his wife's father, J. O. Watson, along with her brother, Clarence "Big Bud" Watson. Fleming was also a close friend to the three most powerful developers of West Virginia's natural resources, Johnson Camden, Gassaway Davis and Stephen B. Elkins.

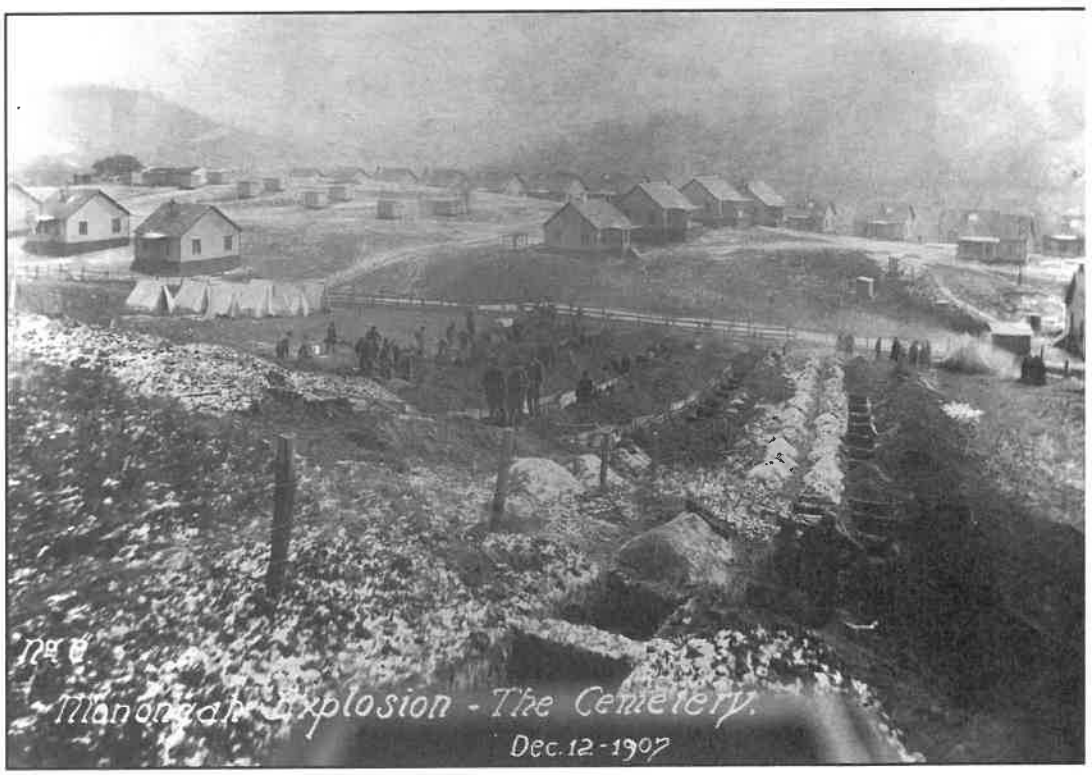
Such men understood that coal production had to go on. Certainly the Monongah mines were too large and too profitable to be stopped by the explosion. In a short time they were cleaned up and reconstructed. A new army of miners reported to work. Coal again streamed out of both black cannon barrels. It would pour out of Number Eight for another 50 years.

The town of Monongah got on with the business of mixing the foreign born and natives into a strong American community. Many of the immigrants eventually quit the mines to become barbers, grocers, tailors or haulers of freight, and they became involved in the civic affairs of our town. In time, a Miss Jones would teach school alongside a Miss Talerico.

The interurban streetcar line connected Monongah with the cities of Clarksburg and Fairmont, and coal towns in between. Fairmont, being the closer, was the place for serious shopping and entertainment when people were in the mood for that. *They Died in the Darkness*, Lacy Dillon's book about West Virginia mine disasters, notes that local stores were decorated for Christmas at the time of the explosion.



The W.S. Thomas flatbed wagon carries a load of bodies for burial. Dozens of graves were quickly opened at nearby Thoburn for Italian and Polish workers, as shown in the picture below. Photos by Boland, courtesy West Virginia Collection, WVU.



But despite Governor Fleming's statement, there was little Christmas spirit at Monongah that year.

Fairmont was also the place where the profits from soft coal and hard lives built outlandish mansions for the owners of the mines.

I don't know how the people inside those showplaces felt. But the butter-and-egg farmers who had owned the land and coal in the first place and the transplanted sons and daughters of the old countries, and all their children and their children's children, never forgot Monongah's big explosion. They haven't yet, some still going to the graves of those who died inside that cold and hostile Allegheny mountainside.

"Good Times Together"
Lucille Hanna Looks Back

By Mary Cobb

Lucille Hanna of Pratt is a sprightly 96-year-old. She lives alone, keeps her house, dresses fashionably, goes to church, and makes occasional trips to Georgia to visit her sister, Julia, 85. Mrs. Hanna was born in Pratt and lived there until she was married at the age of 19. Then she and her husband, James, lived in mining towns on Paint Creek, Campbells Creek, and Coal River.

She returned to Pratt in 1959, following the death of her husband. Her eyes twinkle as she recalls friends and neighbors in the town at the confluence of Paint Creek and the Kanawha River.

Mary Cobb. Tell me about your family.

Lucille Hanna. I was born on July 13, 1897. My mother was Lenora Ault and my papa was Thomas Summers Chapman; he always went by T. S. Chapman. When they incorporated this town, Oscar Veazey was the first mayor, and my daddy was the first recorder.

Papa had a store in Pratt. He sold everything in his store – groceries, dry goods, everything. Mama was from Riverside. Her daddy was the government man when the old dam was from Hansford over to Riverside.

My daddy had some funny experiences in the store. There was a lady who'd come every morning and buy one egg, and then she'd come back in the afternoon and buy another egg. He said, "Well, I guess she thinks she's saving money."

Back then there weren't too many houses in Pratt. There was a boardwalk up in the upper part of town. That's where we'd go for a walk, on the "Boardwalk." There was a lot of cornfields, apple orchards, meadows, and pretty fields of violets in Pratt, and a lot of people had animals.

Honey, when I was a girl, you had to have a cistern, you burnt coal, you had lamps to clean and put kerosene in. We didn't have none of the conveniences, but we were just as happy. When we come from school, my brother, Fred, had to get the coal and kindling in and I cleaned the lamps.

Law, when I was a girl, there weren't any paved streets or sidewalks in town.

When we finished school at Pratt, we went to MPS, Montgomery Preparatory School. It was in the building they now call Old Main at West Virginia Tech. Daddy had to pay for us to go to school in Montgomery. My brother and I both boarded up in the dormitory one winter, and the next year we rode the trains. When school was out, we'd go down to the depot to see if the train was on time. If it was late we'd walk to Handley. When we got to Handley if the train was still late, we'd just walk on home.

When we stayed at school in Montgomery, girls weren't allowed downtown unless a teacher was with them. Every other place was a liquor store. Boys could go over town any time. When we girls wanted something from town, we'd write a note and put it on a rope and let it out the window of our room. The boys would go over town and get what we wanted and tie it to the rope, and we'd pull it back up.

This photograph of Lucille was made before the turn of the century. She was born in July 1897. Photographer unknown.

"There was some right fast girls here in this town. They met all the trains, and they were talked about. Papa didn't want that for me."

My brother and I always went to church. I wore a big round hat with streamers hanging down the back. Papa always give us money to put in the offering. I remember Preacher Holt and Preacher Huddleston. We had church and Sunday school, just like we do now.

Winters were a lot colder back then. We had deep snows. The creek and the river would freeze over and we'd ice skate on them. My mama's mother lived at Riverside and whenever we went there on Sunday, Papa would hitch the horses to the wagon and put us in the wagon and go on the ice down to Riverside.

One time there was a whole gang came into the church. My brother was one. Of course they had to be baptized. The river was froze over, so they just went down and cut a hole in the ice and baptized them all. Not a one of them got sick. I'm not that good a Baptist!

MC. Tell me more about your family.

LH. Well, my papa was strict with me, but he wasn't that way with my sister. She always done what he wanted her to do. I didn't! Papa went the Hardshell way of the Baptists. When he lived at Hurricane, him and his brother, one of them chewed tobacco and one went to the dance, and they put them out of the church. That was the Hardshell Baptists for you. You couldn't do anything.

We lived in the old Baughan house in the upper part of Pratt, and before I opened the gate I had to get permission. Now, think — at 19 years old, I had to ask to go out the gate!

About the only thing my daddy would let me do was ice skate. The lower part of Pratt was all just meadow, and we'd go down around Trimbles' house to the creek in the wintertime to skate. I hated to see summer come because my papa thought we all ought to learn to swim, and him and Mama would take us down to the creek. I'm scared to death of water, and I never did get over it.

Eagerness shines from Lucille Hanna's face at age 96. Those years have been spent at Paint Creek and in the Kanawha Valley. Photo by Michael Keller.

Papa would never let me go to a party, and he wouldn't let me go to a dance. There was some right fast girls here in this town then. They met all the trains, and they were talked about. Papa didn't want that. He knew what he was doing, but I didn't think he did. I couldn't even go over to his store when it was time for a train to run.

My mother wasn't strict like my daddy, but she always stood by him. If he told me I couldn't do something, my mother stood right with him. I got on to that! I'd go to Mama first, and she'd say, "It's all right with me, if it's all right with your daddy." Then I'd go to my daddy and tell him Mama said I could do something. He'd let me then, because he wouldn't go against her, either.

Back then the girls had black patent leather slippers, you know, and they'd wear white stockings with them. Papa got in some white stockings at the store, and I already had the slippers. Now I'm not bragging but I always had pretty legs when I was young, so I said to Mama, "Mama, I wish I had a pair of white stockings to go with my black patent leather slippers." She said, "Well, I'll bring you some from the store," and she did.

One Sunday morning I was ready for Sunday school, and I had a white dress on, and I was coming down the steps about the time Papa came through the hall downstairs. He looked up and said, "Get back up there and get those white stockings off. Them legs draw enough attention without white socks!"

He wouldn't let me wear them. I had to go back and put on those old, black-rib stockings.

MC. Who were some of the people in Pratt when you were growing up?

LH. Some of the old families in Pratt were the Veazeys and Holts. Old Preacher Holt had a long, white beard. Mrs. Holt was a big woman, and she wore big silk underskirts. She always waited 'til church started, and she went clear down to the front pew. Those skirts just

rustled all the way!

John Holt, Preacher Holt's son, and Verna Veazey started going together. Old Mr. Veazey like to had a fit, because [the Veazeys] were Catholics, you know. John and Verna sneaked off and got married, and then they thought they'd better tell it. John, he went up to tell Mr. Veazey that they was married.

Now Mr. Veazey was a little man, about the size of me. John got up there and knocked on the door, and Mr. Veazey come to the door and said, "What do you want, John?" And John said, "Well, I'll go home and write you a letter." Scared to death! Miss Verna, she didn't go to our church, but she always helped.

Back then there weren't many eligible boys in Pratt. There was Earl Burke and Russell Hansford. Earl Burke and I were deeply in love, I'll tell you! Mama and Papa didn't say much about it when Earl talked to me, because he was a nice boy and our mothers and fathers were friends.

Lucille Chapman as a young woman (left), with unidentified friends. She recalls a comfortable upbringing by a strict father. Photographer and date unknown.

Earl's family moved to California, and I thought, "Oh, boy, I'll be an old maid. Just as sure as anything I'm going to be an old maid!" The town was running over with old maids, most of them in their 20's! The morning that Earl and his parents left, Papa let me go to the depot with them, and Earl said, "Lucille, when I get everything fixed out there, I'm coming back after you." Well, I walked on air, you know! We wrote to each other, and he'd send me big boxes of dried fruit from California.

I never did find out who did it, but I always believed it was Louise Dickinson — her mother had the post office — that wrote and told Earl I was going out with someone else. He wrote and said, "Well, your sins will find you out." I soon forgot him.

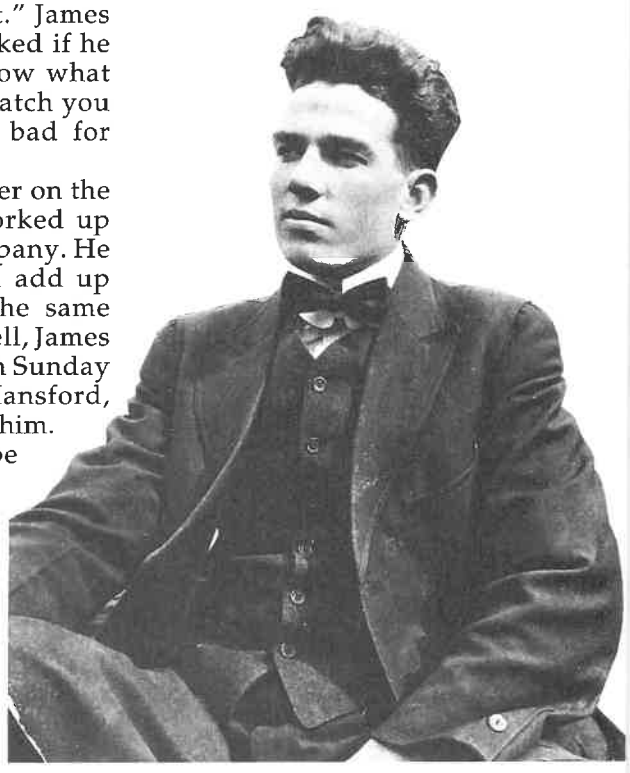
MC. When did you meet your husband?

LH. Well, I soon forgot Earl because it was James I got interested in. When I first knew him, he was staying with his aunt who lived over there across from where the Pratt depot used to be and going to school with us. He sat in the back row, and I had geography in the front row. Somebody kept hitting me with spitwads, and I kept turning around and finally I caught him. I just didn't pay any attention to him.

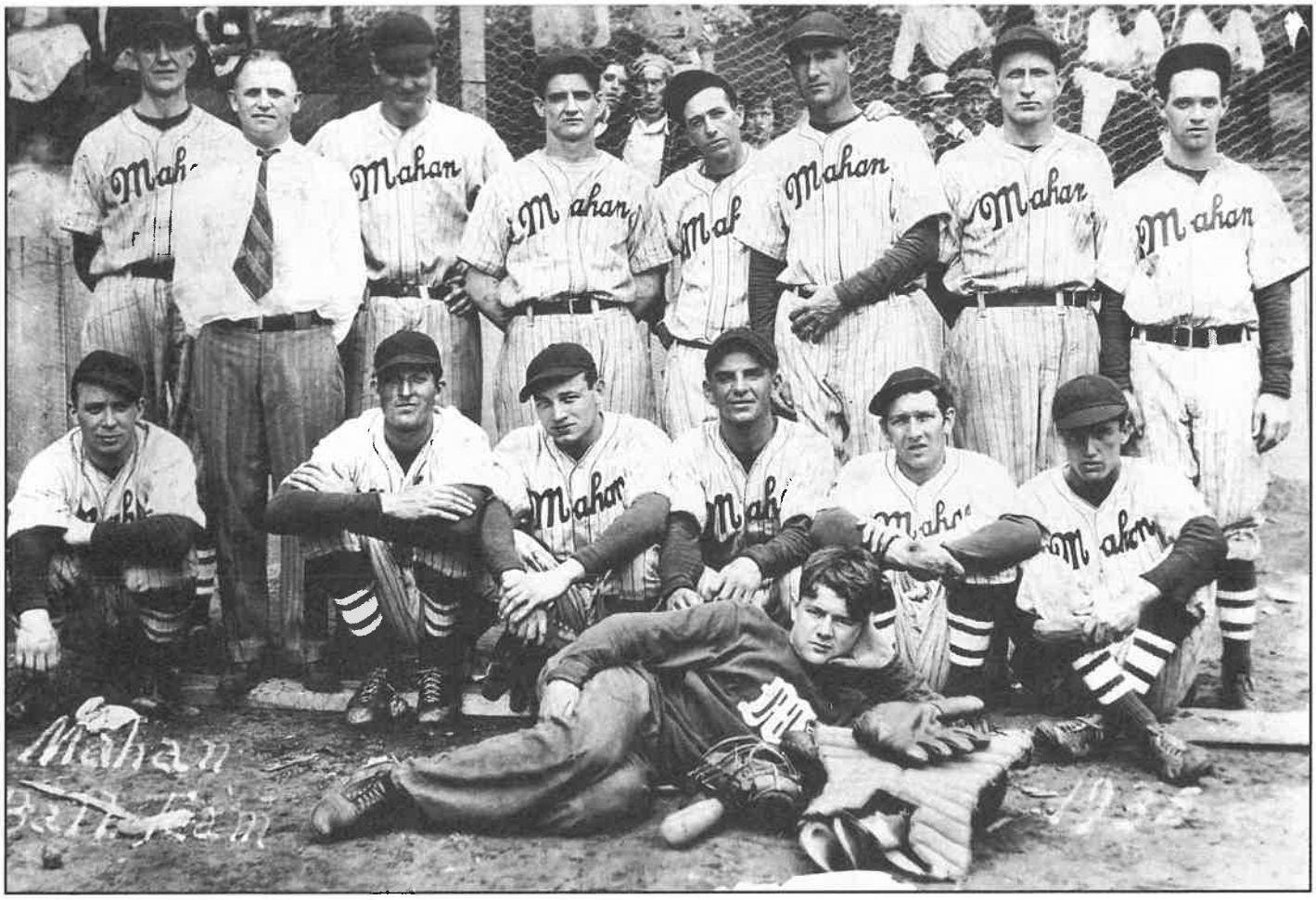
One day Papa come in to the dinner table and he said, "Well, I got a letter today." Mama said, "You did?" He said, "I'll read it." James had wrote to Papa and asked if he could call on me. You know what Papa said? He said, "If I catch you with him, it will be too bad for you!"

James and I went together on the sly for four years. He worked up Paint Creek for a coal company. He did book work. He could add up two lines of figures at the same time. I can't add up one! Well, James would ride the train out on Sunday morning and get off at Hansford, so my daddy wouldn't see him. He'd walk up to Pratt to be in the church when I got there. That's where we did most of our courting, in the old church every Sunday. When I moved back to Pratt after James died, I could go right straight to that pew we'd courted in.

MC. Pratt was such a tiny place. Surely people knew you and James were meeting. Didn't anyone ever



Earl Burke was Lucille's first love. They lost touch when his family moved to California. Photographer and date unknown.



The Hannas spent their early married years at Mahan and remembered it as a good place to live. James Hanna is the ballplayer at left rear. Photographer and date unknown.

tell your daddy?

LH. They were helping us! They knew how strict my daddy was.

Nellie Burke was my best friend and when she got married I played her wedding march. She moved to Tennessee and when she had her first baby, she come home. She wanted me to go back with her. I said, "Papa won't let me," but Nellie said, "Well, I'm going to ask him." And he let me go. I think he was trying to get me away from James.

While I was gone, James had another girlfriend, and she made her brags that she was going to get him. We fought over men then! Men were scarce. The first sheet of music that James ever gave me was "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." It's still in my cedar chest. Every time I'd see James and that girl go by, I'd run to the piano and play, "Let me call you sweetheart, I'm in love with you." James and I used to laugh about that after we got married.

Everything I wanted to do, my daddy wouldn't let me do. I always wanted to be a nurse, but Daddy said, "Indeed you're not going in that hospital, bathing men!"

So I said, "Let me go down to Huntington and take Normal and teach school."

"No, you're not going to teach school."

I said, "Let me go to Charleston and take business."

"No, you're not going to work in an office with men. As long as I can keep you, you're not going to work."

"We sent a telegram telling Mama and Papa we were married. The agent handed it to Russell Hansford to take to Papa. Russell said, 'I'll quit my job before I'll take that up there.'"

Women didn't work back then like they do now, you know. The most that women done was nurse and teach. My daddy wouldn't let me work, so I got married when I was 19!

I'd been helping Papa in the store, and he'd bought me a new winter coat. I said, "Papa, I'll have to go to Charleston to get me a hat to go with my coat." James and I had it made up, you know. Rome Oliver helped us. He was a special on the trains, and he said he'd go with us to Catlettsburg [Kentucky] to get married.

So I went down to Charleston and James met me down there. We got on Number Three to Catlettsburg, and Rome went with us. We went to the place where you get the license. Rome said, "This couple wants a marriage license." And the man said, "Well, if they are old enough," and he said to James, "How old are you?" and James said, "Well, I'm 23." He said, "Lady, how old are you?" I said, "I'm 19," and he said, "I'm sorry, you're too young." Can you imagine how I felt?

"Well," he said, "I'll tell you where you can go. You go up here to the street corner and cross the river and get a streetcar and go to Ironton [Ohio], and you can get a license."

We went down there and got the license, but we couldn't find a

Mary Cobb, our writer, and Lucille took a walking tour of their hometown of Pratt last fall. Photo by Michael Keller.

preacher. We was standing there wondering what to do and this colored man said, "The justice of the peace can marry you." Well, I knew somebody had to marry us! So we went back and a justice of the peace married us, and we took Number Two, that fast train, to where [James's] mother and father lived up close to Virginia.

James's mother was mad, I tell you! Every time one of hers got married she got mad. She said to me, "If I could do it I'd separate every one of my boys from their wives and bring them back home." I said to myself, "You're talking to the wrong woman, lady!" I wasn't about to leave.

We sent a telegram to my mama and papa, telling them we was married, and then I sat down and wrote them a letter. Mr. Campbell was the depot agent in Pratt and when he got our telegram he handed it to Russell Hansford to take up to the store to Papa. Russell said, "I'll quit my job before I'll take that up there."

James and I went around Mount Hope way to get in at Kingston, so we could get down to Whittaker where James was working. We didn't want to come through Pratt.

When Mama and Papa got my letter, Mama wrote me back. She said, "Your Daddy is hurt and he said, 'She can come home, but she can't bring him.'" My mama's sister, the one that was a nurse down at the Sheltering Arms Hospital, was coming up to Mama's for the weekend. Mama said, "Carrie's coming up, and we want you to come, but your Daddy said not to bring James."

I didn't go. If James wasn't welcome, I wasn't welcome. So the next letter I had from Mama, she said, "Papa said to bring James." When we got there, Papa acted like James had been coming there for years. Papa gave us some chickens to take home to raise when we left. That was his way of saying everything was okay.

"Some people thought that miners were nothing but toughs and roughs, but that's not right. There was good people in those towns."

James was a good husband and we had good times together. When I got married I could cook and sew and keep house. My husband just loved to cook, too. In the wintertime when you couldn't get out, he'd say, "Now, 'Cille," he always called me 'Cille, "you fix the dough up and I'll cut out the doughnuts." James loved doughnuts. We'd have one of those old-fashioned platters full, but it was empty when we went to bed!

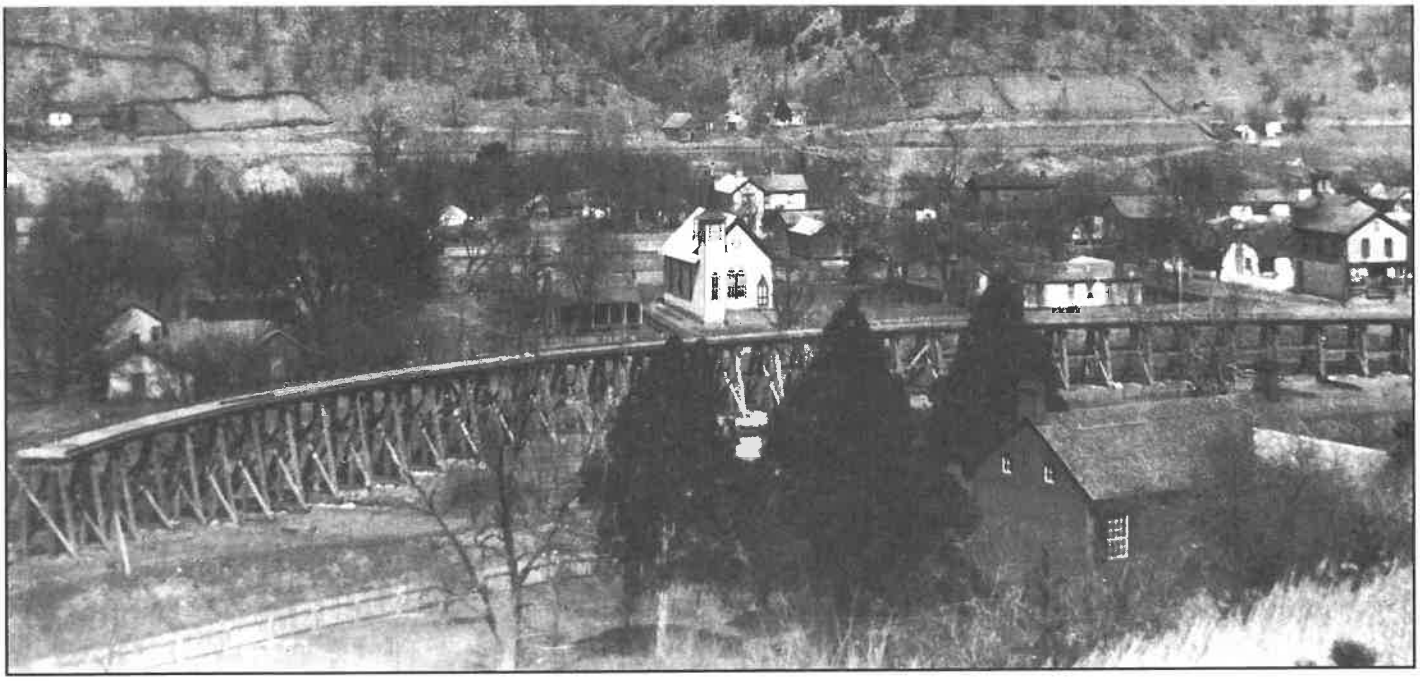
When we got married, we had to stay at the clubhouse until we could find a place to live. The first night we were there, after we ate supper, James said to me, "We'll go to church tonight. They're having a revival over there." We went to church, and when we got there it was all crowded with people I didn't know. The man got up andsaid, "We're sorry but the lady that plays the piano is sick." James jumped up and said, "Oh, my wife plays." I could have killed him! Perfect strangers there and he didn't even give that man time to get through. I played the rest of the revival.

Mr. Wilson was the head man there from Charleston, and he said, "If you all want to go to housekeeping, I have one room you can have." Of course, oh, yes, we wanted to do that! We went down to Woodrums' and bought the most expensive mahogany bed, a great big dresser and chest of drawers, and a rocking chair and we put all that on one side of that room. On the other side we had a big stove and a table to set the water buckets on. We didn't have running water or a bathroom.

That was when oranges came in crates. James fixed a crate in the corner and I fixed a curtain and put over it. That's where I put my dishes. We was just as happy in that one room as we were when we got a house.

Pretty soon after we got married James was transferred to Gallagher. Then we went to Ameagle on Coal River and stayed there a long time. They wanted James up Campbell's Creek, so we moved to Charleston and stayed in Charleston for a good while, and then we came back to Paint Creek, up to Mahan. We lived there till my husband died.

I loved living in Mahan. It was a model place. People named Hogues owned the mines there, and oh, they was the nicest people. They were both Christians and he was careful who he let come in to work. If he got somebody who wasn't desirable, he found a kindly way to get



Above: Pratt as it appeared in early years. The church at the center is the old Kanawha Baptist. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: Lucille's childhood home. Her father was a Pratt merchant and one of the incorporators of the town. Photographer and date unknown.

rid of him.

I never had been around mining towns 'till I married James. Some people thought that miners were nothing but toughs and roughs, but that's not right. They was good people in those towns. In Mahan there wasn't any church. One day one of the men who worked in the mine went to Mr. Hogue, and Mr. Hogue said, "If you all will get together, I'll furnish everything you'll need to build it." That man never went to church after it was built, but he wanted that church for the town.

Every Christmas the Hogues took the name of every family and how many children they had. They made a bag for the children. They put fruit in it and a present and it was delivered to them.

If you wanted to fix your house, Mr. Hogue would furnish the materials and wouldn't charge you nothing for them. You just did the work. We had two bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs and a bedroom, a closed-in back porch and a dining room and a living room downstairs.

The new road was coming through up there and it was going to take our house. Mr. Hogue told James, "If you want to pay to move your house, I'll let you have the house and give you the land I own down below here to put it on," so that's what we done. That was the funniest thing, to see that house being moved. Not a thing was turned over, not even a glass that was standing in the kitchen window.

My experiences in coal mining towns was good. We never had no trouble. We had colored people in one end of town, and we were in the other. Used to be when they were holding revivals, we'd go up there to hear them sing. They were good people, and Mr. Hogue was good to them.

There were Italians who worked in the mines, too. Some of them lived up Banner Hollow. They baked bread in outdoor ovens, and a man named Mr. Perry used to always bring James a loaf of bread. Years later, I saw Mr. Perry and he told me his bread hadn't been any good since they got a stove and started baking bread in the house.

I remember the big flood [of 1932]. Now, we were right close to the creek. A little more and it would have got in our house. We had the garden out on the side of the house, you know. Oh, we had the prettiest

tomatoes and cucumbers. We was fixing to go to church and James went over to pick them, and I said, "Oh, don't pick them. I'll do it in the morning." In the morning there wasn't any there to pick!

That night as we came from church there was the oddest lightning I ever saw in my life. We both remarked about how funny it was. It was a cloudburst, that's what it was. It was awful when the flood came. One of my friends said to her mother, "Mother, we've got to get out of here and go to the hills!" Her mother said, "Well, I'm not a-going till I get my corset on." And she didn't!

When they could get up there, here comes this train with all these soldiers on it. They said to Mr. Hogue, "We've brought clothing and food for you." Mr. Hogue said, "Now that's real nice of you, and I appreciate it, but I take care of my people, and there's those down the creek that need it worse than we do. You take it down there." Mr. Hogue took the names of the families and how many were in each family. He'd give out the food he had to the families so there would be enough for each one until the trains could get up there to deliver.

It was a bad time, but we lived through it.

MC. Tell me about your children.

LH. I had three children. My son, James Summers, died of TB when he was 61 years old. He had been a captain in the service.

Mary Frances, she was 17 years old and in Kingston High School, a senior. She was going with a good, Christian boy from Milburn. One evening she come in before her daddy come in and she said, "Mother," and I said, "What?" and she said, "I got married today." And I said, "Married! Where?" They went over around Page somewhere and sneaked and got the license and got married. And I said, "Boy, now you'll have to tell your daddy when he comes. It's not me going to tell him."

That night James was in the dining room fixing the fire, and Mary Frances was in the living room reading, and I said, "You better go in and tell your daddy." Well, she came in and James had a shovel full of ashes. She said, "Daddy, I got married today." He dropped the ashes and said, "Well, I'll be damned." So I said, "Shut your mouth, we done the same thing." He said, "Well, that was different," and I said, "No, it wasn't any different."

James got over it! When their baby was just a year and a half old, Mary Frances's husband was killed in the mines.

Emma Lou graduated from Kingston High School in May and in September she went down to St. Francis Hospital to go in training for a nurse. She was working at the polio hospital at Milton and she met this man who was working there as a therapist. He was from New York. She come home one weekend and she said, "Mother, Daddy, do you care if I get married?" And I said, "Lands no! I thought you were never going to!" And she said, "Oh, not right away,

Lucille Hanna never ventured far from Pratt and returned there for her later years. She is perfectly at home in the Kanawha River town. Photo by Michael Keller.

he's still got a year at school." So he went back to New York and finished school and they married. She was 28.

MC. To what do you attribute your good health?

LH. Well, my father's people were long livers. I've always had good health. I went to a new doctor when I was in my 70's and he said, "You're not *that* old!" And I said, "Well, I know I am," and he said, "No, you're not," and I said, "I am, and I'm going to live to be 100." And every time I see him, he'll pat me on the back and say, "Don't worry, you're going to make it!" I do what I want to do, and I go where I want to go.

MC. You told me that you were sent to a Presbyterian girls' school but you attended a Baptist church in Pratt. What are you now, Presbyterian or Baptist?

LH. When I went to the Presbyterian girls' school, I went into the Presbyterian Church. When my husband died and I come back to Pratt, I said to this preacher, Randy Carroll, I said, "Will you take my letter for membership?" And he said, "No, Ma'am, you have to be baptized."

Now I'd been sprinkled, you see. And I kept waiting, because, like I told you, I was afraid of water. Earl Scholl, he come from up where we did on Paint Creek, he kept saying, "Oh, Mrs. Hanna, go on and have both of them. Then you'll be sure to be all right!" So I got baptized!

MC. Did you ever think of marrying again?

LH. When I first moved back to Pratt, they were going to have a Valentine's sweetheart dinner at the church. Mrs. Thelma Harris lived here then, and she said, "Lucille, are you going?" I said, "I don't guess so, I don't have a sweetheart." She said, "If I get you one will you go?" And I said, "I'd have to look him over first."

She come over and told me she got Percy Bott who worked in Holt's Store. She said, "Will you go with him?" and I said, "Yes." She said, "Now, he'll come down after you." "Oh, no!" I said, "I'll meet him at the church." And I wouldn't even let him bring me home! I never was so self-conscious, and I'd known Percy Bott all my life. I knew then I'd never get married again.

Civil liberties were suspended during martial law at Paint Creek. Photographer and date unknown.

Remembering the Mine Wars:

"It Was a Bad Time"

Mary Cobb. What do you remember about the Mine Wars?

Lucille Hanna. In the 1912 mine strike, up in Pratt where all those houses are along the railroad, was tents. Soldiers were brought in to try to settle things. Well, my daddy sent me over on Coal River to a Presbyterian girls' school, because there was too many soldiers here. Some of the Huddleston girls, they lived down next to the river, they got husbands out of it.

It was a bad time during that strike. My daddy didn't go with either side. He always said, "If you keep your mouth shut, you don't get in trouble." Papa didn't say a word, and he and Mama like to worked themselves to death. The union fed the miners. The first of every month they give Papa orders, and Papa and Mama would work to 12:00 at night to get them filled. Papa had a team of horses. He'd drive as far as Standard and deliver groceries, and then he'd ship the rest on the local up there.

Oh, the Mine Wars was terrible. They had martial law, you know. Daddy worked late at his store, and he had to have a permit so he could go back and forth. Dr. John H. Hansford had to have a permit, too. The governor signed the permits that allowed them to travel around. I still have my daddy's.

A train went up the creek with a gun on it sweeping back and forth, and it killed a woman up at Holly Grove.* She was fixing to go down in the cellar and it killed her.

One night a young soldier was on guard duty in Pratt and he heard a strange noise. He yelled, "Halt!" but the noise kept coming closer. He yelled, "Halt!" again, but something kept on coming. He shot and when he went to see what it was, he found he'd killed a calf.

Mother Jones was under house arrest in Pratt, you know. She was kept in the big house next to the post office. It was a boardinghouse then. I didn't get to see Mother Jones when she was in Pratt because I was away in the Presbyterian girls' school. I did see her once in Montgomery. It surprised me because she was such a little woman.

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* Actually it was a man, Cesco Estep, who was killed when the "Bull Moose Special" armored train fired on Holly Grove. — ed.

"By God, and Thomas Jefferson!"
Mother Jones on the Creeks

From a Play by Jean Battlo

Mary Harris "Mother" Jones is an enduring figure of West Virginia history and folk lore, shuttling in and out of the state in the decades following the turn of the century as she tried to unionize the miners. She was active throughout the Mine Wars, which are usually considered to have begun on "the Creeks" — Paint and Cabin, in Kanawha and Fayette counties — with the big strike of 1912-13.

The following episode, Act Two, Scene One from Jean Battlo's play, The Creeks, *recounts Mother Jones's arrival at Paint Creek Junction in 1912. Battlo notes that the scene compresses historical incidents that actually occurred on both creeks, as well as at Montgomery and at other places.*

Mother is greeted by a coal miner named Lewis Mayhew, by a coal company guard with less friendly intentions, and others.

Lewis: Welcome back to West Virginia, Mother Jones. We were afraid you'd never come back.
Mother Jones: Not too much reason to come back, now, was there? In the ten years since we started, the UMW is all but dead here.

A guard approaches them.

Lewis: We're starting up again, Mother Jones. 1912 is going to be the year for us.
Mother Jones: I hope so, Lewis. Sadly, I recall that same thing being said here then.
Guard: Hey, old lady, we don't need your kind of baggage around. Best get back on the train and go on back.
Mother Jones: Oh, I think you know enough about me to know better than that.
Guard: We know plenty about you. All that speechifying and talk. Well, you won't speak here.
Mother Jones: Oh, I'm pretty sure I will.
Guard: Don't think so. See, we're law-abiding types and you can't speak here without a permit.
Mother Jones: And don't you know that I just happen to have a permit?
Guard (surprised): But how could you? Who around here would give you a permit to speak?

Music begins: "By God, and Thomas Jefferson."

Mother Jones was not as sweet-tempered as she looks to be in this photograph. Photo by Underwood, date unknown; courtesy University of Michigan Library.

Mother Jones: Well let me see now, there was — Patrick Henry. And John Adams — and God and Thomas Jefferson (sings):

I'll speak by God and Thomas Jefferson.
The "rights of man" are my permission.
I'll fight these medieval conditions,
Yes, West Virginia's slaving days are done.

Miners start gathering.

The only thing that they can kill or maim,
Is this old body, but my soul remains.
I pray they blow me up to smithereens.
I'll just come back to haunt their days and dreams.

Chorus:
Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson,
Old John Adams and Abe Lincoln,
God Almighty and the angels too,
Move! We're coming through.

Pray for the dead, but for the living, fight!
Come on, my boys, and muster up your might.
Your children cry, by God, that's just not right.
If faith moves mountains, we can move this blight.
From Cabin Creek, let bells of freedom ring.
No more their cries, let's make your children sing.
I smell the tea of Boston simmering,
From West Virginia hills, let freedom ring.

Music Fades.

Ivan: God bless you, Mother Jones (takes off his hat). The creeks are in bad need of you.
Miners: Hip hip, hooray, hip hip....
Mother Jones: (holds up arm to silence them; angry) Don't you dare come hipping and hooping and raying me, damn you boys! You've all but lost it and I don't need no parade and this hullabalooing! I thought we had made this Union territory.
Guard: Let me assure you that this here is company territory.
Mother Jones: (ignores him) Back in 1902 the Union was on first legs and growing. Now, in just ten years, it's all gone.
Lewis: We're set back a bit is all. We'll make it, there's a lot of men ready to join now.
Mother Jones: I thought that then.
Fortunato: Some of us got a little company-shy but we're ready. We're learning the hardest way. (pulls a badly wounded boy forward) Look what they did to this child.
Mother Jones: (overcome: holds the boy to her) Dear Lord, I can't believe it. What happened to you, son?
Lewis: Go on and tell her, Jody. This here's Mother Jones. I know your Pa told you about her.
Jody: (looks around, frightened) Yes sir, he sure did. I even heard one man say you were "Jesus Christ come down in the form of an old woman to help us poor devils."
Mother Jones: Who did this to you, Jody-lad?
Jody: (shy, in pain) Gunmen come to our house. They beat me with the butt of their guns. They only come when my pa was away, else they could never have hurt us kids.
Mother Jones: But where is your pa?
Jody: That we don't rightly know, ma'am. He had to go off 'cause he was Union and if he comes around our house they'd find and kill him, sure.
Howie, Jr.: (11 years old) I say we get guns and go get them!

Guards watch in silence.

Jamie, Jr.: (nine years old) You can count me in on that.
Lewis: Just hold on, boys, hold on. (to Mother Jones) Them's JamieJoe and Howie's boys all growed up and chomping at the bits.
Mother Jones: Well, this is a lot for young eyes to see.
Lewis: But they don't mean what they said. (glance at guards) Just boys talking.
Mother Jones: Aie. I never did like the violence of it. Still and all, we have to change this. All these tent colonies in these bleak hills! These grim men and women, ah, I tell you when I get to the other side, I shall tell God Almighty about medieval West Virginia.
Howie, Jr.: Just lead us, Mother Jones, we're ready.
Mother Jones: Ah ha, ready is it? Ha ha, Howie, Jr. If I remember me right, you're Jenny Holcolm's son,

too.

Howie, Jr.: Yes ma'am, I am.

Mother Jones: I can just imagine how peaceful Jenny would take all this gun talk. Why boy, she'd beat your butt for just talking like that.

Howie, Jr.: Yes, ma'am, I really reckon she would.

Mother Jones: And how is Jenny?

Howie, Jr.: Fine, she's fine.

Mother Jones: Good, good, and I know I'll see both your pas at the meeting. And we'll all stay cool. (looks at guard) I know it's hard to do. (to Jody) And where's your ma?

Jody: She's still living. Sort of. Cries mostly. Keeps saying how she wished she wasn't living 'cept for us kids. We're all over in the tents of Holly Grove.

Mother Jones: (stiffly) She needs to quit the crying. (anger rises) And quit the wishing. 'Cause we all know the Prince of this world is right here. Here, clear for us all to see. Time came when Jesus had to look Satan right in the eye.

Jody: (doesn't understand) She can't hardly quit the crying. Can't hardly even stand 'cause of the beating they give her. She's blacker and bluer than me even.

Jody pulls his shirt up to show bruises.

Mother Jones: (gasps) Oh, dear God! What kind of people are these? (to miners) You boys come close and look here at this. This has got to end right now. (talks to miners over Jody's head) I don't like it but I'm guessing you have got guns. Looks like you might have to get them out. And we need to let this country know 'cause this is America, even in West Virginia. And when America finds out what's being done they'll rip these mountains open with righteousness. (goes, says right in a guard's face) And I do mean to tell America about these creeks!

Latest News of Mother

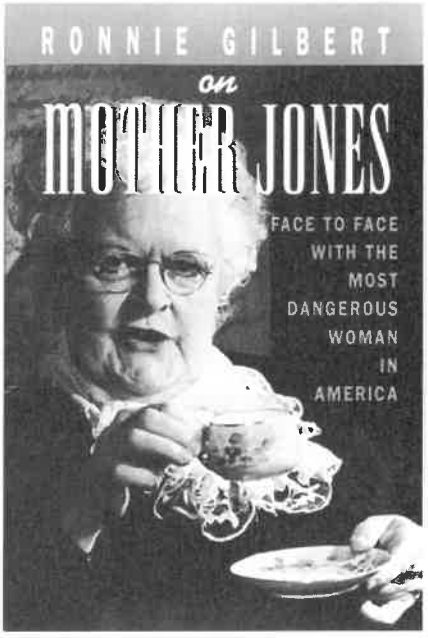
Mother Jones's adversaries were never able to give her the licking they thought she deserved, but maybe her friends will soon be able to. A national petition campaign to have the feisty labor organizer's image put on a U.S. postage stamp has been announced by labor and labor history organizations.

The postage stamp petition drive was launched by the Mother Jones Jubilee, a group based in Mt. Olive, Illinois, where Jones is buried in the local miners' cemetery. Other backers include the Friends of Mother Jones, the Mother Jones Foundation, the Daughters of Mother Jones, and several Midwestern labor councils.

Organizers are circulating petitions which will be presented to the U.S. Postmaster General. You may request copies of the petition by writing to Secretary Jim Goltz, Friends of Mother Jones, 3354 Edwardsville Road, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

Mother Jones books also continue to be a sizable industry, with at least two new titles appearing lately. They are *Ronnie Gilbert on Mother Jones* and Philip S. Foner's *Mother Jones Speaks.*

Folk music fans will recognize Gilbert as one of the members of the 1950's singing group, the Weavers, along with Pete Seeger and others. The heart of her new book is *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America,* a play by Gilbert with songs by protest singer Si Kahn. Gilbert also includes an imaginary interview with Jones, audaciously questioning Mother even about her love life.



Foner's book is an extensive collection of Mother Jones speeches first published in 1983 and reissued earlier this year. The book includes a major introduction by Foner, index and notes, and a handy Jones chronology. *Mother Jones Speaks* makes an excellent companion to WVU professor Edward Steel's two volumes of Mother Jones speeches and letters, published by the University of Pittsburgh in the 1980's.

Ronnie Gilbert on Mother Jones, published by Conari Press of Berkeley, California, sells for $9.95 in paperback. *Mother Jones Speaks,* published by Pathfinder Books of New York, sells for $28.95 paperback and $70 hardback. Both Foner and Gilbert cite GOLDENSEAL prominently, particularly the articles by Lois McLean, now working on her own Mother Jones biography in Beckley.

Merchants of Thomas

Doing Business in Tucker County

Text and Photographs by Carl E. Feather

People who have lived in Thomas for long don't need the yellow-green digital display on the Miners and Merchants Bank to tell them the time of day. If in the morning they see Jim Cooper Jr. walking north on East Avenue toward his men's clothing store, they know it is 7:30 a.m. His return trip home for lunch comes promptly at noon. Thirty minutes later he is back at work. At 5:00 p.m., the door of Cooper's clothing store is locked for the day, and Jim Jr. heads to his home at the south end of the street.

He has followed this schedule religiously for the past 68 years, since opening Cooper's on June 1, 1925. "He goes to lunch at 12:00 o'clock and is back by 12:30," his son, Jim Cooper III, confirmed. "People could set their clocks by Jim Cooper walking down the street."

Jim Jr. is not the only person who can boast of over six decades of doing business in this once booming mining and railroad center, just north of Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley. John DePollo, proprietor of DePollo's Store, is marking 76 years behind the counter and 53 years of ownership. His store, which keeps pretty much the same hours as Cooper's, specializes in general merchandise.

Collectively, these merchants of Thomas have 179 years of Tucker County living between them: Cooper was born December 5, 1902, and DePollo on August 29, 1904. Both proudly display their ages with computer banners tacked to antique showcases which are younger than their owners.

For Cooper and DePollo, storekeeping seems to be both a secret to old age and a reason for living. John DePollo, who lives above his business, said he can tend to his wife of 64 years, Elsie, and still run the store. His stock and trade these days is beer and pop, gum and candy, milk and bread.

"A loaf of bread, a case of beer," John said as he sat in one of the four wooden chairs lined up along a row of shelves. "It ain't a whole lot, but what am I going to do? The boys won't let me close it. It's just a convenience store."

"He has no hobbies except this store," Jim Cooper III said of his own father's reason for staying in business. "He's not willing to give up and retire. He believes that a man needs to continue, to be active. Once he becomes inactive, he soon dies. He's seen a lot of his friends do just that. As long as he is able, physically and mentally, he will be in this store."

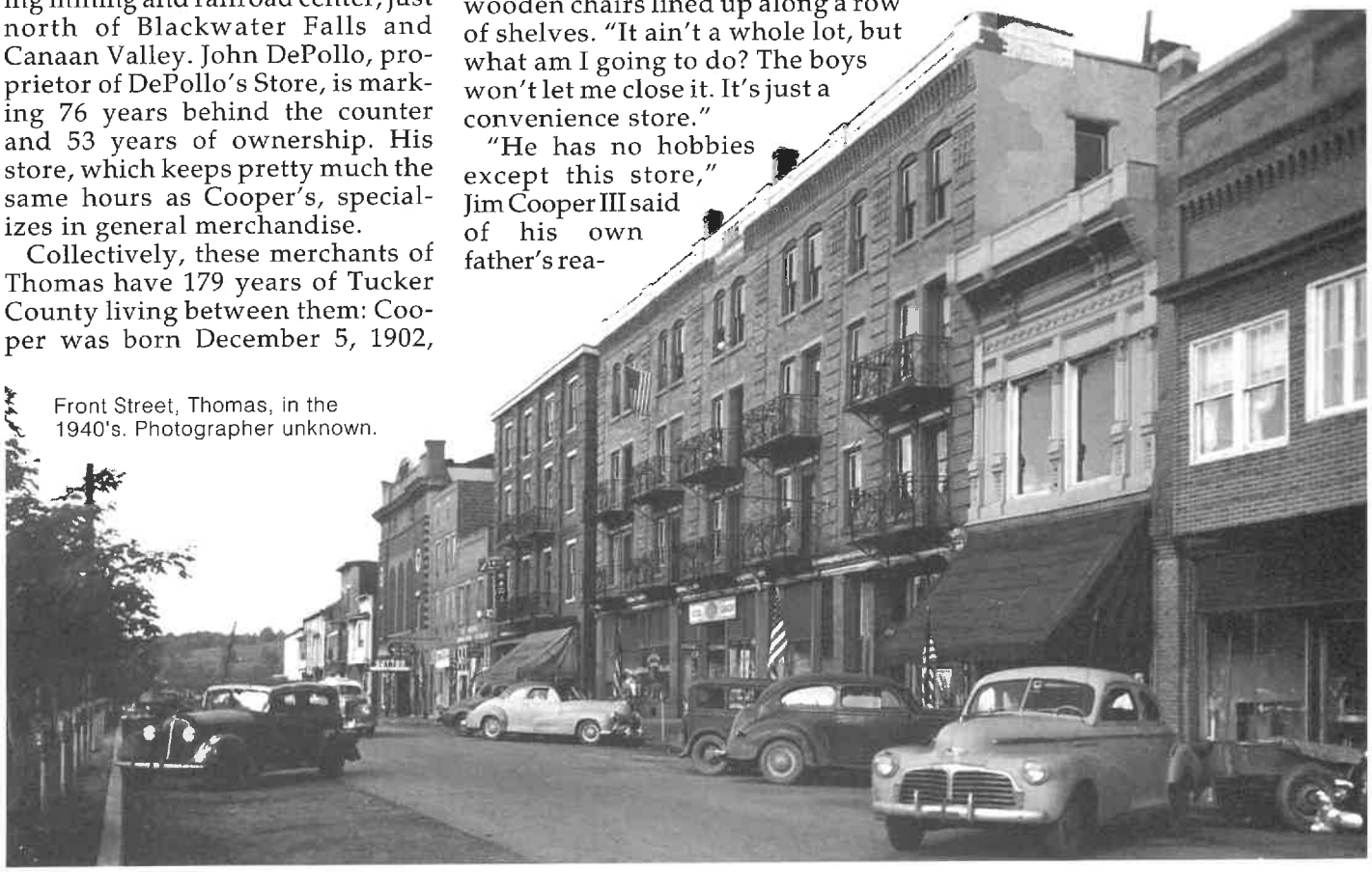
Jim Jr. summed it up in one word.

"Routine," he said, in his soft, gentlemanly voice.

"He is a great believer that you have to get in a repetitive habit of doing things," his son added.

For Jim Cooper Jr. that habit is providing customer satisfaction. You sense it when you walk into the store and he wastes no time coming from the back office to greet you and offer his help. And every customer who leaves the store gets a sincere, "Thanks for stopping in."

A native of Davis, Jim Cooper Jr. got into the business through his father. "Dad had a coal business,



Front Street, Thomas, in the 1940's. Photographer unknown.

but he ran out of coal land," he said. "He had to sell. The superintendent of those big mines wouldn't lease him a little piece of land he needed to get the coal out.

"Then a fellow by the name of Raese came to him and told him he had a clothing store for sale," Jim Jr. continued. "He gave him a hard luck story, said he had been drafted, no one to run his store. He talked my dad into buying it. He said when he got back from the service, he would buy it back.

"But that was all a sweet story. My father later found out he'd been trying to sell it for six months," Jim Jr. said.

Regardless of the circumstances leading to the sale, "business was real good" for the first couple of years. The store was in Davis, and that's where Jim Jr. learned his trade. As an adolescent, he cut his business teeth on the counters of his father's clothing shop.

"I worked in the store in the evenings," he said. "Even during high school, I would come to the store to dust and sweep out. That's when I learned about suits, clothes and so on."

He graduated from high school in June 1920, and went to work in the mines. Two years later, he returned to work in his father's store, but by then the business had taken a severe downturn.

"All during 1919, business went kaput," he recalled. "There was no business. My dad had seven children. When I graduated Dad had gone to work in the mines as a laborer because of the large family and no income."

It was all part of the severe national recession following the war, compounded by the big mine strike of 1919 and labor trouble generally. It was the latter which eventually led to the closing of Davis's tannery, paper and lumber mills and box factory, Jim Jr. believes.

"Davis was a good town until that strike," he said. After that he saw his golden opportunity two miles to the north in Thomas, a prosperous town with a population of 3,000. He noticed that many of the residents were miners who on Saturday night liked to exchange the grimy clothes of the workaday world for tailored suits.

Capitalizing on the opportunity, Jim Jr. rented a former furniture store and set up shop with the cash register from his father's business. "There were three stores like this," he said, but mine was an exclusive men's haberdashery. The other stores were men's clothing stores." He went on to make the distinction clear.

"My appeal was the latest fashions, the latest styles. I appealed to the young men," he said. "There were lots of young men employed in the mines, and they could afford a suit of clothes. In fact, they all wore suits — in the evenings, when they came to the theater, to the store, the clubs, bowling alley, pool room or social events.

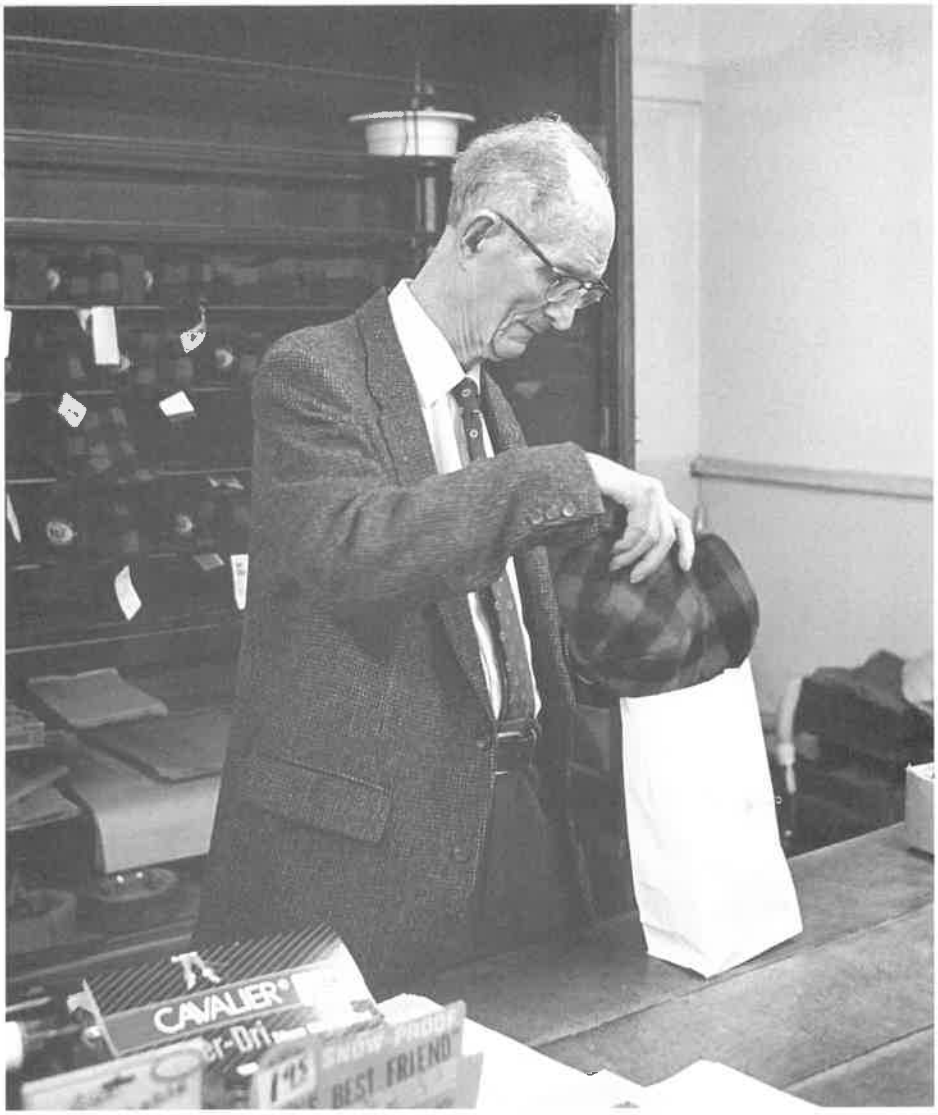
"At that time, they didn't wear dungarees to come to town in," he said. "They wore a suit with a hat, tie and polished shoes. In other words, they came for pleasure and they'd put on their best clothes."

Jim Jr. set a good example by dressing well himself. He still does. You won't see him on the street without his dress hat, and he always has a suit coat on when he's behind the counter or in the office.

Customers never had to wonder how they would look in a new Stetson hat, Bostonian shoes or Hart Schaffner and Marx suit. They saw the merchandise displayed on the proprietor himself. "I wore a suit of clothes, suit and tie. Came to work with a hat and polished shoes," he said. "It was a habit.

"In 1927, I sold 181 suits that year, all kinds, ready-made and tailored," he said. "The sales manager wrote me a letter and said I'd sold so many suits in a small town of 3,000 people, and he wanted to know what method I used." Jim Jr. said his most popular items were

DePollo's Store has been the domain of John DePollo for more than 75 years. Here he talks with Peggy Simons (with purse), Donald Francis and others.



Woolrich hats have replaced Stetsons in the hat rack at Cooper's. Jim Cooper finds them definitely easier to bag.

the tailor-made suits.

Those suits were not cheap by the standards of the day. Jim Jr. said a ready-made suit cost from $25 to $35. A tailored suit cost $35 to $60. He prided himself on delivering the suits just 10 days after the measurements were called in to the International Tailoring Company in New York City. "I had a reputation for fitting people," he added.

While Cooper's cashed in on the miners' vanity, at the south end of the street John DePollo's father, Joe, took a more pragmatic approach to business by opening a general store. The Italian immigrant had come to the United States in 1891 to work in the coal mines. After 12 years of labor in the dark tunnels of danger and dust, he set out on his own with a Front Street shanty store in 1903.

"He said he only had $800 to start the store with, by the time he had bought a horse and wagon," John recently said. "A lot of these wholesale houses carried him. Of course, $800 in those days was big money."

Twelve years later, Joe DePollo built the brick, three-story store on East Avenue. With the exception of the fluorescent light fixtures and the two-tone green paint job on the counters and ceiling, the building has changed little in appearance since 1915.

"At that time, they didn't wear dungarees to come to town," he said. "They wore a suit with a hat, tie and polished shoes."

John said the counters along the south wall originally had bins under them for storing and displaying bulk foods. When the bulk food business fizzled, the display windows were covered over and painted. The ladder which rolls along a track on the ceiling still gives John access to the merchandise on the upper shelves.

He went to work in the store in 1917, right out of seventh grade. There was no shortage of things to do, for the store provided merchandise not only to Thomas, but also all the coal mining towns surrounding it: Pierce, Benbush, Douglas and Kempton, Maryland. Most of the families lacked transportation to town, so they depended upon DePollo's delivery service. John did much of the order-taking and delivery for his father.

"We had a lot of foreign languages here, and I spoke several," he said. "I am Italian, we spoke that in the home. But I picked up Polish, some Slovenian, some Russian-Lithuanian, otherwise."

At first, deliveries were made with a wagon and team of horses. But in 1917, Joe DePollo purchased a chain-drive International truck. "It didn't last long," John said. "My brother would take it out at night. Dad got rid of it. He traded it off for a horse and wagon."

The store handled just about every type of merchandise imaginable, from groceries to dry goods and ready-to-wear clothes. Many of the mining families owned livestock, and DePollo's Store sold the feed for the animals. "Them days, we used to sell two boxcar loads of feed here each week," John said.

Livestock feed wasn't the only commodity to come in by the car load. In the Prohibition years, John's father shipped a boxcar of grapes in from California every autumn.

"Miners used to make their own wine," he said. "They made wine, and a lot of them made home brew. They had to have something to drink."

John's father always made sure that he got his share of the grapes. The 75-year-old wine press Joe DePollo used for making his wine is on display in the store. "Before Dad got this thing, my mom used to get this big tub out and my brother and I got in and stomped the grapes with our feet," John said. "Mother made us wash our feet

good before we started."

Just as Joe DePollo recognized the special needs of the immigrants and met them, his son seized every business opportunity which passed by the store. The building was strategically located near the bridge which the miners had to cross every morning on their way to work. John made sure the store was open when they came by at 5:00 a.m.

"Some of them would want chewing tobacco, some of them would need carbide for their lamps," he said.

Some nights, John stayed in the store as late as midnight to cater to the tired, hungry miners after work. Free cheese and pepperoni snacks wooed patrons into the store, setting them up for the purchase of beverages, more food or work clothing. Sometimes John added salty anchovies to the menu, ensuring an increased sale of beer that night.

In its heyday, the store sold 1,000 cases of beer a month. John said he got tired of keeping his beer on ice in tubs, so in 1946 he purchased a metal cooler-counter unit. It is still in service. Customers wander in, help themselves to a beer from the cooler and pull up a chair next to John. They keep track of their own tabs as well.

"Before Dad got a wine press, my brother and I got in a tub and stomped the grapes with our feet. Mother made us wash our feet good before we started."

"They go and get their own beer," John confirmed as he watched a regular take a cold can for himself. "What's the difference? I know them."

While a cold beer and friendly reminiscing draw people to John's store these days, in the first half of this century the drawing card for any Thomas business was the Cottrill Opera House, later known as the Sutton Theater. Merchants like John DePollo and Jim Cooper, Jr. depended upon the theater to draw the Saturday night crowds downtown where they could enjoy the latest vaudeville or moving picture show.

Above: Founder Joe DePollo in his store. Son Jim, John's brother, stands at left. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: John DePollo's sons want to keep him in the store and active in life, he says. They bring their accordions and make music on his birthday.

"They'd say, 'John, you going to be open after the movies?' And I'd say, 'Yeah.' They'd get out around 9:00, 9:30, and I'd sell them beer," John DePollo said.

Jim Cooper confirmed the importance of downtown social life. "Back when the theater was so busy, there wasn't any radio, TV. The only entertainment was the table games you'd play at your house," Cooper recalled. Before the movie, the young men would kill a few minutes standing around Cooper's, talking about events and town gossip, he added.

"In the 1940's, when the army was maneuvering here in World War II, the Sutton Theater would open up and they would run shows just for the soldiers in the middle of the afternoon," Jim Cooper III said. "That theater held 600, and they did quite a business."

Jim Jr. responded to the wartime rationing and scarcity of some items by diversifying his line of services and goods. He started a dry cleaning business and compensated for the shortage of clothing by selling toys.

"I could get toys during the war," he said. "It was a sideline, but so many kids would come in and bring their parents. The toys were there on the counter where they could pick them up."

Jim Jr.'s practice of stocking toys continues to this day. Bags of plastic soldiers and cowboys and Indians are displayed in the front window. The top of the center aisle is devoted to inexpensive puzzles, balloons, books, playing cards. Sales are slow, but the toys remain as testimony to the marketing acumen of the shop's owner.

After the war, Jim Jr. diversified again, although by accident. His brother, James Stuart Cooper, be-

came an agent for the Lumbermans Mutual Insurance Company. He also worked in a liquor store and was not always available to serve his customers.

"People would come looking for Stuart to buy insurance," said Jim Cooper III. "My dad would say, 'I'll take care of that.' He'd write them up and send in the paperwork for Stuart.

"One day, a field representative from the insurance company observed what was going on. He asked Dad if he had a license, and he didn't. The field representative said, 'Jim, you can't do that. You can't sell insurance without a license. You're going to get us in trouble.' So my dad took the agent's test," Jim III concluded.

Jim Jr. became an insurance agent in 1949 and eventually took over his brother's agency. It was a wise move. By the 1960's, the little mining communities surrounding Thomas were no longer sending hordes of hungry, fashion-conscious miners to town on Saturday night. Mechanization had taken its toll, and the merchants of Thomas, like its miners, would soon feel the bitter effects of unemployment.

In the late 1960's, Jim Jr. closed down his backroom dry cleaning business and moved his insurance office from what is now part of the Miners and Merchants Bank to the rear of the store. Although his son holds the stock majority in the agency, Jim Jr. still maintains his agent's license and writes many of the automobile policies handled by the agency.

But Cooper's, the clothing store, remains the real domain of Jim Jr. It is a vastly changed store from the fashionable haberdashery of the 1920's. "Almost Heaven" T-shirts and insulated jackets hang on the wall which once sported the latest in men's dress clothes. The cherry hat cabinet which once displayed Stetsons now holds red and black plaid Woolrich hats. A few lonely suits hang in the suit case, still awaiting a miner flush with money to parade them down First Street on a Saturday night.

On top of the glass showcases are boxes of shopworn merchandise from the 1970's and 1980's, offered at reduced prices. Hand-lettered signs announce "Shoulder bags, $12.95, now special, $10.95." "Blouses, 65 percent off, now $3.49." "Handkerchiefs, 89 cents." On the rack of men's dress pants, you can still find a pair of white bellbottoms for sale.

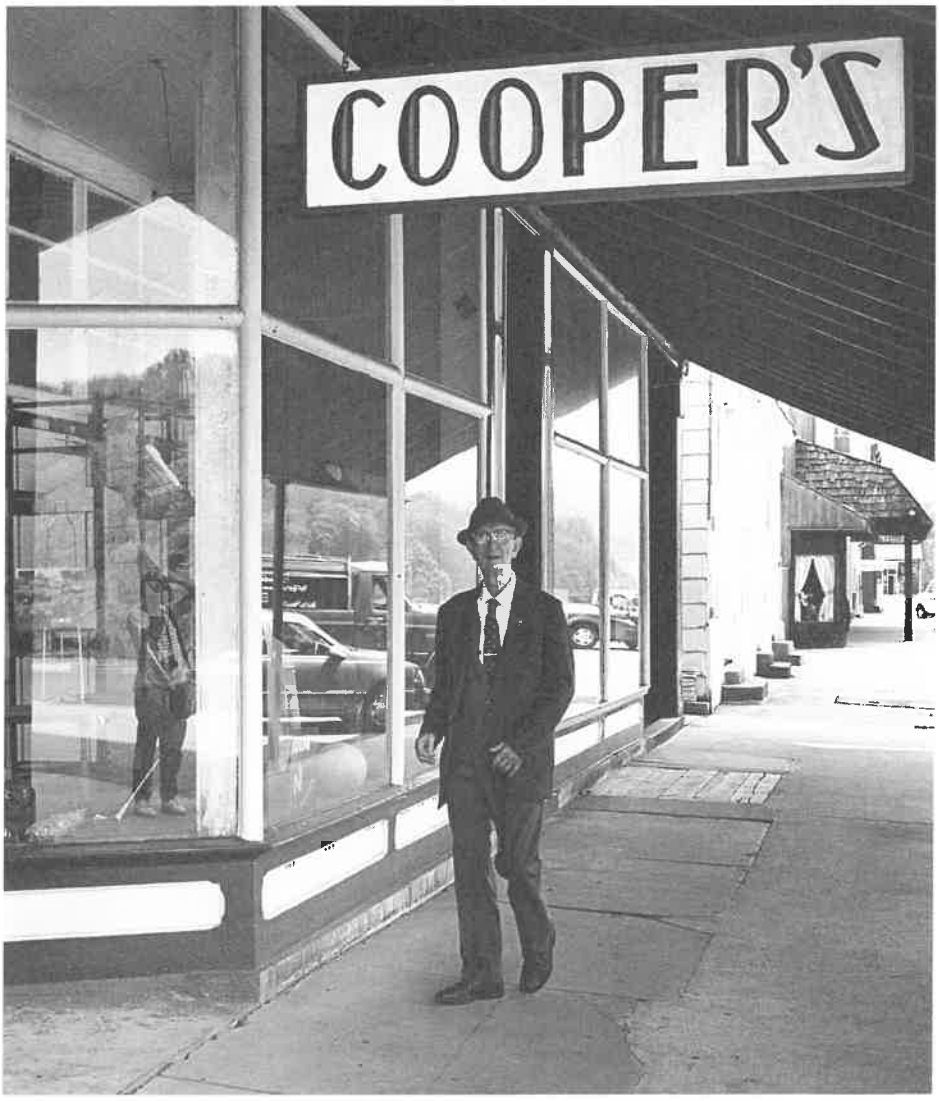
"The business is poor," Jim Jr. confesses. "But I'm in here anyhow." Asked if he has considered retiring, he simply replies, "I haven't thought about it."

John DePollo has thought about it, but his sons, John and Joe, won't let him retire, as he says. They want to keep him in business and active. On his birthday, in what has become an annual event in Thomas, they throw a party for their father in the old store.

"Both of them play the accordion," John said of his sons. "Every time I have a birthday, they bring in a couple kegs of beer and play the accordion."

The rest of the year John tends to business, just like he did 53 years ago when he took over from his father, although nowadays on a smaller scale. The building, with its wood floors, dim interior, and antique fixtures, draws tourists seeking relief from the more commercialized attractions of the area. Some visitors stop in hoping to uncover antique tins, lamps or furniture. What they find is something better.

"You don't see many stores like this anymore," said one of the locals as he pulled another cold one from the cooler. "Or gentlemen like John."



Mr. Cooper returns from lunch at 12:30 sharp. The people of Thomas can set their clocks by his daily schedule.

"Dogs and Birds and Shooting"

George and Kay Evans of Preston County

By Peggy Ross

The Evanses with Manton and Quest at Old Hemlock in Preston County.

George and Kay Evans's lives have been more about bird dogging the ruffed grouse in the Allegheny Mountains than anything else except writing about their hunts. Their names are recognized throughout the world as respected writers and photographers of upland shooting books.

Sitting in the cozy studio at Old Hemlock, the ivy-covered stone house on their sprawling, heavily-wooded acreage near Brandonville, Preston County, the Evanses talk as excitedly about the prospects of the current hunting season as if it were to be their first time out.

It appears that they coordinate their colors. If he is in brown, she is in tan trimmed with brown. There's no question about their being a set.

But George, who "was born with setters," has been hunting since age nine, when his father took him and his brother along to the western slopes of the Pennsylvania mountains where he was, to use his word, "blooded."

Kay Harris Evans always has accompanied her husband on the hunts. She has never killed a grouse but has shot them many times with her cameras. The pictures, both movies and stills, span their years together. Many of them have been edited onto videotapes, which are much in demand by George's readers.

Already a lover of dogs and mountains when they met, Kay had

been born into Dr. Lurth Harris's family at Mill Creek in the Randolph County highlands — on the side of the mountain that is "red in the sunrise," she said.

It was understood from the start that dogs came with the relationship. "I was introduced to Speck as seriously as I was to his parents," Kay recalled. Speck was George's father's Llewellin setter who thought he belonged to George.

Brought up in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, George Bird Evans developed a taste for first-rate woolens and tweeds at the hands of his tailor father, but he failed to become the least bit interested in making his living with a needle. Nor did he much care for the tool and wood shop where his dad and brother whiled away their free time.

George and bird dogs go back a long way. This photograph from 1908 shows him with his first setter.

Hunting is a very large part of George's life. He poses here with dogs, game, and his prized Purdey shotgun. Photo by Kay Evans.

"I think my father was a little disappointed," he said. Yet George was sent off to Carnegie Technical Institute (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburgh to study art, and later on to Chicago to further his education. Kay first noticed him when he played the sax in dance bands at Carnegie Tech, where she, too, studied for awhile. "I don't remember my partners but I remember dancing past the band and seeing George," she recently laughed.

George says they married during the Depression "with a capital D." Kay taught English in New York City private schools while George broke into the world of professional art. He was hired by Hearst Publications to illustrate the stories in *Cosmopolitan* magazine when it was still a top-notch literary publication. He had struggled eight years before that opportunity arose.

Comfortable and easy with writing herself, Kay has been published in her own right several times. *Field and Stream* carried her "I Am Not a Gunning Widow." It is in at least one of George's books and is included on their first audiotape, *An Evening at Old Hemlock.*

Additionally, she has written introductions to several of her husband's works. She wrote for *An Affair with Grouse,* "Early in our life together, we knew that we must live within [the] mountains. Back then, we made do with the trees in Central Park and gazed south at the Manhattan skyline and vowed that those skyscrapers would give us our hemlocks and our mountains.

"We had spent most of the summers in a cabin in southwestern Pennsylvania. The hunting car, an old Hudson coach, was turned over to us and we drove mountain roads in a radius that embraced West Virginia and western Maryland in search of the place of our dreams. By the time our luck broke, we had found this land of ours."

That was in 1938. What they stumbled upon were 240 beautifully-wooded acres where spring is awakened by bright yellow coltsfoot and lovely white trillium; where summer is lushly green and whispery; fall parades brilliantly, if briefly, in shades of red and gold; and winter turns the pines and hemlocks into heavily-burdened white giants.

No road divided the farm then, but Brandonville Pike was cut through later. "From the minute we pulled in this lane, we knew this was it," Kay wrote. She noted that the place "was in terrible condition. There was a stable on one side; pig pens on the other; a caved-in granary, chickens all over the place. The house chimney had caved in."

Today, everything is well maintained. George designed the one-story stone wing that houses studio, kitchen and screened-in porch — where in good weather, the couple dines. The sandstone used to build it came from a barn foundation. He also used some of that sandstone to sculpt a bust of Ruff, one of their setters, back in the '50's.

The old part of the house — built in the 1780's by the Brandons for whom the nearby town was named

— has four rooms and a bath upstairs, all redesigned by the Evanses. One of them has a built-in Dutch-style bed.

Downstairs, there is an unusually large living room and a bath. The "long room," with its massive original fireplace, houses George's custom-made piano. He plays it very well.

Although remodeling got underway in June of 1939, the Evanses lived and worked without electricity for ten years. They have never left Old Hemlock for any length of time except for George's stint as an officer in the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics during World War II. The war kept them away for more than three years.

Domestic life at Old Hemlock. Parts of the big stone house go back two centuries.

Part of the Evanses' dream was to breed their own line of setters — dogs more beautiful and more adept at hunting grouse than any they knew about. Even before remodeling began on their hewn-log house, they acquired Blue, a Ryman setter. Through tightly-controlled breeding, his genes are still with them in the 11th generation of Old Hemlock field dogs. Quest and Manton, a blue and an orange belton (the word means speckled and only setters are beltons), live with the Evanses who are, in truth, more separate parts of a whole than merely a couple.

The study, where George works at a vintage Remington manual typewriter with the bust of Ruff nearby, is lined with large framed family pictures: Briar, Blue, Ruff, Dixie and Shadows, Belton, and Bliss. Some of them are Kay's work. Her photographs have appeared on the covers of several of the magazines which carry George's stories.

Kay is George's alter ego, his sounding board, editor and critic. She is also his most enthusiastic supporter. Kay handles the business end of their life together.

George didn't set out to write about hunting. Even after moving to Preston County, he kept a freelance job with Hearst. He and Kay are voracious readers who had been gobbling up mysteries at a fairly fast clip in their spare time. It wasn't long until they decided that probably they could write as well.

Working as a team, they set about to do so, ultimately turning out six suspense books under the pseudonyms Harris Evans and Brandon Bird. Dodd Meade was the publisher.

"I think our last, *The Pink Carrara*, is our best," George said. The book is unusual in that it is not only about a sculptor but one who falls in love. Most whodunits are not romances.

Hawk Watch, the book just before *The Pink Carrara*, was written about the Berkeley Springs area, although it isn't identified as such.

One day in 1970, Kay suggested that George begin writing about hunting. After all, he had kept a detailed record, a diary, since 1932. In George's diaries were notations of "every grouse or woodcock moved; every flush; every point my dog made; every shot fired, hit or miss, and if I hit, every retrieve my dog made."

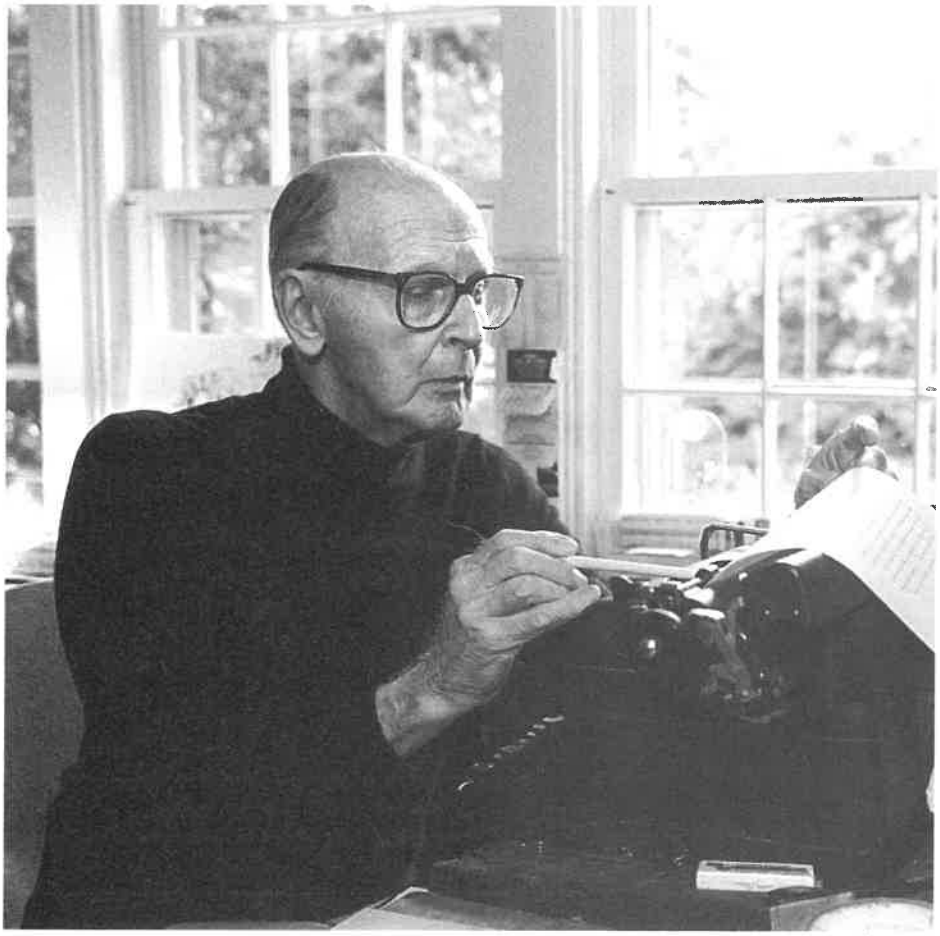
The bottom library shelf in the long room is lined with the diaries, which are still meticulously kept. These are the notes which provide George with the stuff of which his books are created.

But his aren't the usual hunt-and-shoot stories. His diaries, his character and his genteel love of the hunt in the great outdoors lend to his writing a kind of poetry. "The essence of the shot is in how you shoot the bird, not how many," George says of hunting. He approaches writing in the same spirit.

The subject is softened by George's flair for use of the language, and it is made palatable for even the most disinterested reader of hunting lore by the overview garnered through years of experience in the field. And life.

"Yesterday, I looked up into our golden maples, and everything I saw was Heaven," he wrote in *A Gun, a Dog and Time Enough*. "The aching beauty of these mountains that all my life have had me and I, them, from the time when as a boy I loved them without understanding the meaning of love."

George is an economical writer



George's manual typewriter is "not the least bit compatible with computerized typesetting," according to his printer. We doubt that this writer will change his ways.

who weighs every word and punctuation mark. His work is full of local scenes, including such things as the old Briery Mountain tramline, a deserted and overgrown railroad track once used by Caflisch Lumber Company and descending "11 miles down Lick Run to Roaring Creek to Ruth Bell on the Cheat" to the fields of Canaan Valley.

Occasionally, a particular passage grabs Kay so hard she can't get rid of it. One such beautifully-written paragraph is near the end of *The Upland Shooting Life*. Kay loves to read aloud, but her voice, still bearing a hint of childhood years in Virginia, breaks as she reads and the tears begin to roll down her cheeks."I'm sorry," she says as George's arms comfort her. "It happens every time I read it, and I've read it a hundred times."

Despite the fact that the calendar insists that the Evanses have been married for more than 60 years, they are young. George still wears turtlenecks and deck shoes, and Kay — hair pulled tightly back and kept that way with a large bow — adorns her safari-style clothes with understated jewelry. It appears that they coordinate their colors. If he is in brown, she is in tan trimmed with brown. There's no question about their being a set.

Secluded in their comfortable house, where the two big, friendly, slightly-spoiled setters have equal furniture rights with humans, George and Kay live a life considered eccentric by some. Their hours are not the ones kept by their farmer neighbors. George is up early to write a couple of hours before returning to bed. Kay sleeps later. Then they are both up and doing again before George takes his afternoon rest. They have late afternoon tea; their dinner by candlelight oc-

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"George is a meticulous writer — definitely old school as far as style, punctuation, grammar and so forth. I wish more writers were like him."

There is little about the Old Hemlock setters that George Evans doesn't know. The bloodline is now in its 11th generation.

The following excerpt gives the flavor of George Bird Evans's writing about bird hunting in West Virginia. Ed and Less are his hunting companions, and Ruff and Bliss are hunting dogs of the Old Hemlock breeding line. Robert W. Service is a poet best known for his poems of the far north.

GEORGE BIRD EVANS

A George Bird Evans Sampler:

Hunting the Blackwater-Canaan

From *The Upland Shooting Life*

From the crest of Canaan Mountain east of Davis, West Virginia, you look down the far side into a thirty-two-square-mile basin rimmed by spruce-and-rock-topped mountains. This is Canaan (rhymes with *might rain*) Valley, a frost pocket with a floor altitude of 3,200 feet — the headwaters of the Blackwater River. Like most streams in this high region, its clear water is the color of strong tea, from tannin compounds derived from the hemlock and spruce through which it flows, combined with iron oxide. In this water, submerged rocks appear golden but are bone-white when exposed, and trout take on gorgeous color.

A few grazing farms break the big alder flats and the spruce-hemlock swamps in the southern end of the Canaan Valley, but the northern two-thirds is almost entirely tundra and bog, dotted with golden aspen clumps and laced by the Blackwater and its tributaries, which can be traced by beaver ponds and stands of spruce. There is only one place where the water will flow out — at the gap between Brown and Canaan mountains in the northwest corner.

Parts of Canaan Valley and the 4,000-foot plateaus to the east are misplaced Canadian wilderness — a relict flora following the Ice Age. Up to 1890 one of the world's finest climax red spruce forests grew on these mountains and in the Valley. Today, in what look like dry river beds, roots of skeleton tree stumps clutch rocks yards above ground level. These once were giant spruce and hemlocks rooted in moist sphagnum moss up to two feet thick beneath an understory of ten-foot rhododendron so dense a man had to cut his way through. The lumbermen's multimillion-dollar rape from 1890 into the 1920's opened this to sun and wind and when the fires that followed their operations swept over it, the dried humus burned off like peat. But Nature produced a regrowth cover that for forty years offered exceptional shooting for turkey, bear, deer, grouse, and woodcock. Most men hunt this terrain without realizing it was not always like this.

When we say Blackwater-Canaan, those of us who gun it include all of the terrain from Allegheny Front west to Backbone Mountain, most of it within the Monongahela National Forest. Although there are some privately owned tracts within the forest, you could hunt for years and never be on posted land. Beyond this sense of freedom to hunt where you please, there is the feel of wilderness. The country has been, and is, heavily gunned. Yet it is so big it is rare to see other grouse hunters except during the first week or two of the season in certain well-known sections.

One of the most popular is the Dolly Sods — Dolly (Dahle) a family name, Sods to denote the moorlike character of some of it. Accurately, Dolly Sods is a specific area but the name is commonly applied to the entire top of Allegheny Front, from the unpaved Laneville-Petersburg road north to Bear Rocks. The more applicable name for this region is Huckleberry Plains. It is in this high country that the connotation Allegheny Plateau really fits. From Allegheny Front, almost sheer on the east, the land rolls west in highland moors to the peaks of Cabin Mountain, where patches of spruce show like cloud shadows among the pattern of autumn color. This is grouse country but you must jeep or walk long distances to get into it. The overall effect is bigness — big sky, big distances, big mountains showing beyond the edges of the plateau.

A Forest Service road runs north for eight miles like a white chalk line to Bear Rocks before pitching down the steep mountainside on the east. Hunters spot-hunt along this road, which passes through isolated clumps of red spruce distorted by the winds into one-sided signposts pointing east. Occasional grouse move out from these.

The most challenging coverts are in the swamps. Pushing to the inside you come to typical Canadian muskeg with expanses of sphagnum and hair-cap moss, and beaver ponds that give the illusion of being at eye level. There are small red globes of cranberries in the green sphagnum, which holds ice-cold water. This is good cover in mid-November after the birds are bunched. One of my memories is of Ruff on point in one of these cranberry bogs with a brace of grouse pinned — both birds flying low and straight for an arm of spruce cover. Next to a grape-fed grouse I rate a November bird that has fed on cranberries until its flesh has acquired the cranberry tang.

I saw my first snowshoe hare up here, its large slate-blue ears alert, the dark eyes regarding me. It moved slowly at first, showing its white belly under the brindle

saddle, then was off with big hocks flashing.

Never hunt this country without a compass. The east-pointing spruce give you bearings or you can use your watch and the sun — until the fog moves in. One sunny October afternoon we saw a wall of white vapor on the east, writhing up a hundred feet above the brink of Allegheny Front. We were eager to hunt and followed the dogs into the scrub growth to the west. Twenty minutes later the sun was blotted out and the thicket grew indistinct. In a cold fog we groped our way back until we felt the Forest Service road under our boots. It's not nice up there in fog without a compass. These sudden fogs are characteristic of this high country and sometimes hover for days. I have enjoyed sunny shooting in the Canaan Valley with the tops of the surrounding mountains obscured by clouds rolling like a white sea.

In the Valley, pioneer man seemed determined to prove himself unworthy. The virgin spruce forest was not only cut but some of it deliberately burned to clear it for bluegrass, which followed the fires in some sections. The slopes of the surrounding mountains are now largely forested in northern hardwoods — beech, birch, maple — and offspring of the original spruce grow along the Blackwater branches and in bogs. Alders and aspen-dotted tundra stretch for miles. No woodcock gunner needs to be told what this means. Grouse also use the alder thickets and the lower ridges. When hunting in this country, you dress for sudden rains and soaking fogs. Canaan Valley is notorious for snow — 166 inches fell during the winter of '69-'70. If there is any doubt in your mind about its wildness, try hunting the head of the Blackwater.

In November, '65, after a blizzard the previous day, I started with two companions for the upper basin of the Blackwater. We had to leave the Land-Rover at a stream and proceed on foot. The Blackwater in its upper reaches flows through spruce bog. One of our trio thought he knew the area well enough to get across and hunt up the far side to the head of the swamp, where Less and I, who had never hunted in here, would meet him.

After Ed left us we worked up the north margin to what appeared to be the upper end, where Less and I sat down to wait for our friend. Nothing had been said as to what to do if we didn't get together. It was nearly four o'clock when I suggested that I hunt around the upper neck of the swamp to meet Ed and that Less should start back the way we had come and wait for us at the lower end.

The "upper neck" turned out to be a small peninsula of swamp and I found myself going farther and farther. Bliss was working nicely and I kept going, enjoying the sense of exploring an area as untamed as it must have been a century ago. Huge deer tracks emerged from a tunnel-like opening in the dark spruce and I started in, knowing Bliss and I could get through anything a deer as large as that could penetrate. When I came to the main branch of the Blackwater, a mere trout brook here, the path ended but I saw breaks in the thicket on the far side and crossed over. I hadn't gone far before I was in a rhododendron hell over my head. Rather than take the long backtrack, I pushed on, feeling a responsibility not to leave Ed up there. If you look carefully you can usually find a place to crawl through the thickest rhododendron, although it isn't comfortable in deep snow.

Fighting my way over a shoulder, I got out of the main spruce stand and started along what looked like the far side. I had been blowing my dog whistle and calling and I knew by now that I was alone. The thing to do was to hunt down, recross the swamp and join Less and Ed, who were probably waiting for me.

I tried several openings but they led to dead ends or beaver ponds. All the while Bliss was hunting as if we had the day before us, though the sun was down behind Canaan Mountain at my back. The main muskeg along the Blackwater stretched wider the farther downstream I went. I knew I had to either cross here or tramp all the way to the highway in the Canaan Valley. Feeling a little drastic, I started into the frozen swamp. The ice was too thin to hold me but I leaped from one to another of the tussocks of swamp grass and hair-cap moss until I came to the main current, where an accommodating beaver dam gave Bliss and me footing across.

On the far side I came to Ed's tracks, where early in the afternoon he had turned back and had taken an old road out. With Ed off my mind I set out to find Less, whom I pictured sitting on a log smoking and waiting for me in the dusk. Bisecting his probable line of march I came to large bearlike tracks that turned out to be Less's number 14's leading to the log with the ample imprint and his cigarette stubs where he had waited; but he had given me up and moved on. When I overtook him he still had not seen Ed, whom we found back at the Land-Rover.

As grouse hunts go, the day had been less than memorable. But I felt that I had, for a while, been in tune with Robert W. Service and his big country. I had somehow strung my soul to silence, I had heard the challenge, and I had, by God, got back.

Books by George Bird Evans

The Upland Shooting Life, from which this excerpt is taken, is out of print, but several other George Bird Evans books have been reissued. They include *An Affair With Grouse, October Fever* and others.

Evans's books are now printed in limited quantities and all copies are inscribed by the author. The costs range from $30 to nearly $50 each. Individual prices are available at the address below.

The Evanses have also produced two audiotapes of their readings, as well as videotapes showcasing the Old Hemlock setters. The audiotapes sell for $15 each, and the videos are priced $35 to $49, or $165 for the set of four.

You may request further information from George Bird Evans at Old Hemlock, Bruceton Mills, WV 26565. All prices include shipping and handling.

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curs at the time most folks are watching the late news or going to bed.

The kitchen, a small closed-off cove at the end of the study, is placed so that Kay and George may continue to communicate while she prepares food, for Kay is George's alter ego, his sounding board, editor and critic. She is also his most enthusiastic supporter. Kay handles the business end of their life together.

It is touching, the domestic scene in this haven in the forest where dogs lie before a blazing fire and a still much-in-love couple read book excerpts onto tape.

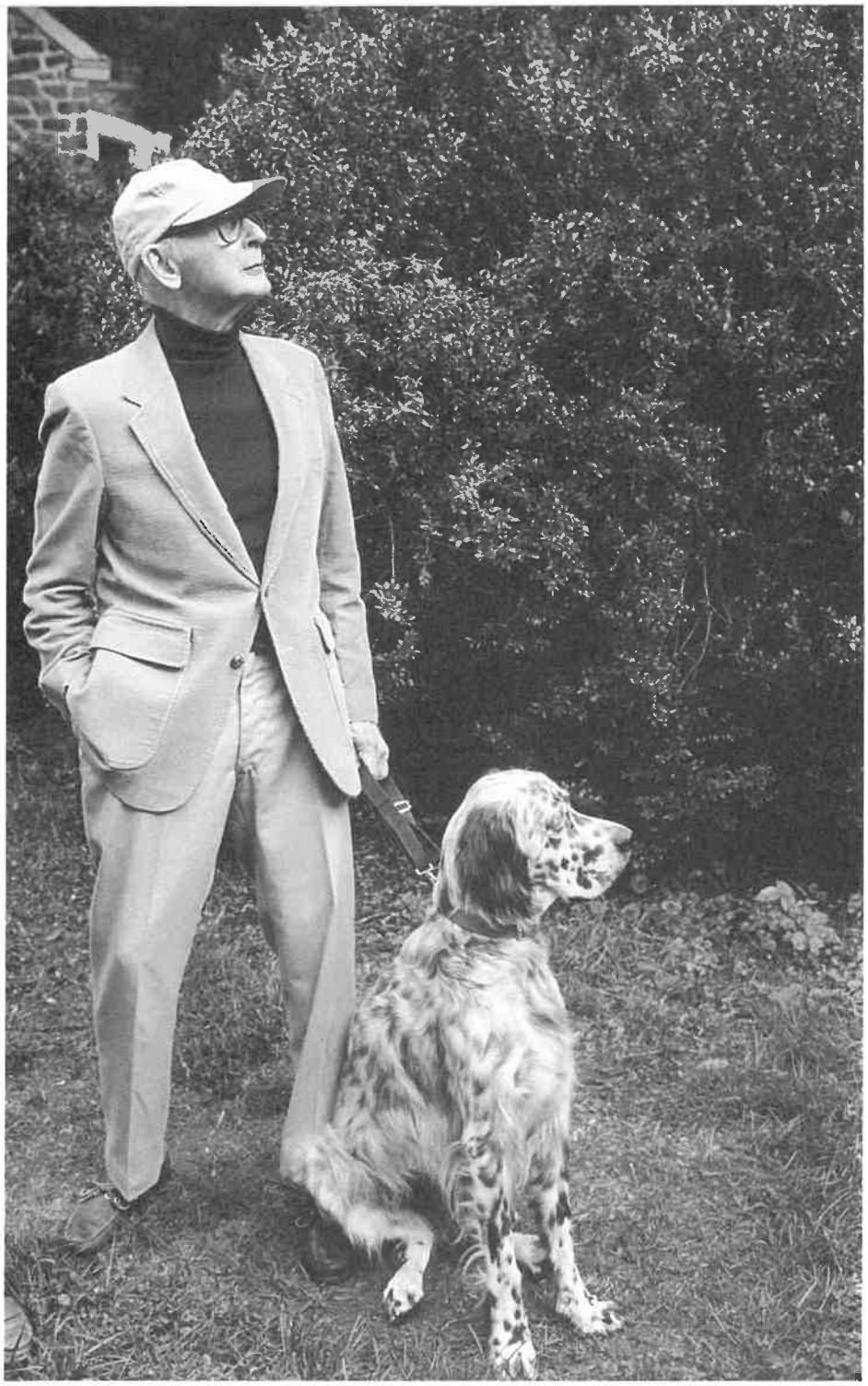
The house clearing is no longer very clear. Tall hemlocks bend in the severe winds, and the boxwoods that, when planted George hoped would someday be as tall as he, tower over approaching guests. In giving directions to a recent visitor George said that a neighbor described the place as "pined in," and the description fits. Evidence of tender care by tree surgeons is everywhere. The entire scene is pretty wild and wildly pretty.

One day (and not too soon, God willing), Old Hemlock will be opened to the public — part of a foundation already established to benefit both the humane society and West Virginia University via medical scholarships. Unlike some museums, the house will be inhabited. The Evanses have chosen their caretakers.

Once a vital part of New York City society, where prior to the Civil War George's great-uncle wrote the showtune, "Dixie," the Evanses haven't returned since they left in the '60's. Today, their social life is confined to a few piano concerts at the University's art center in Morgantown and the frequent visits of admirers, neighbors, and dog aficionados and breeders, who sometimes are disappointed to find no kennel complex on Old Hemlock grounds. The Evanses keep only their two hunting pets, a couple of cats and the occasional strays inevitably dumped along the pike.

Their lives are busy with writing and publishing. Books originally handled by the likes of Alfred Knopf and Winchester Press now are published by the Evanses themselves. Using Pioneer Press in Terra Alta, they enthusiastically praise the owner, Rich Hopkins, and his skill at his trade.

The dog's life at Old Hemlock is about what it ought to be, hunting and loafing. The photo at left shows the Evanses afield, several years ago. At right Quest enjoys a sunbeam on the plank flooring of the old house.



George and Manton don't always scramble through Preston County brier patches. This photo shows them cleaned up and at their leisure.

Hopkins reciprocates. "The reason I like to work with George is that he does have a solid background in magazine and publication design, and he understands the need for accuracy and so forth," he recently said. "We understand each other. He counts characters and stuff like that so that rewriting fits allowed space. He'll spend weeks deciding what typeface to use.

"George is a meticulous writer — definitely old school as far as style, punctuation, grammar and so forth. I wish more writers were like him.

"George actually designs the books himself," Hopkins continued. "They are always done to the highest standards of typesetting and composition."

Most often, George illustrates his books, sometimes with Kay's pictures but more frequently with line drawings from the diaries.

Printing usually takes about three and a half to four months from the first typewritten copy through corrected galley proofs, according to Hopkins. George is not afraid to put his printer to work even while he continues the writing.

"George provides perhaps five chapters to get things underway, and he continues to write as Pioneer Press starts the typesetting," Hopkins explained. "George hangs onto that old Remington, which is not the least bit compatible with computerized printing.

"We do it all," Hopkins concluded. "Rarely do we do it for anyone anymore. We've done eight books for them, and we've reprinted *An Affair with Grouse* three times. Originally, it was published somewhere else."

In view of the fact that many of Evans's books are printed as limited editions, out-of-print books command handsome prices among collectors. This is the first year in several that there will be no new book. That's why a new audiotape, *The Second Evening at Old Hemlock*, is being created — so readers will not be disappointed by not having the usual George Bird Evans gift under this year's Christmas tree. In their unhurried and soothing style, both George and Kay read selections from their own work.

A new book, *Grouse on the Mountain*, will be released in 1994.

Surveying his world by starlight outside the window on a sleepless night after a full day's hunting, George feels the hand of time on him. He wonders how many more hunts there will be.

"There is a larger Time than watch or clock time," he wrote in *October Fever*. "Time is the cloudiness in an old dog's eyes....Time is the ache that takes him from you....To know Time is to know what it would be like to be without it."

But there are miles to go before the Evanses sleep. George is disgruntled by permissive modern grouse-hunting practices and wants to see them changed before the birds disappear entirely. A worrier, he will find enough fretting to do for

Family portrait. Quest and Manton with Kay and George on the grounds of Old Hemlock.

years to come.

The owner of an elegant Purdey 28-gauge shotgun given to him by a beloved friend over 30 years ago, George must be around to record more autumn hunts so he can tell the world about the surprise coverts and the grouse he allowed to fly away for the sheer good feeling of it, the Purdey silent in his hands and dogs idle by his side.

He must remain for Kay, who was given to him (and he to her) as a soulmate by fate, and who has been the chief beauty of his life, he said.

Yet, "There is a time for talk and a time for deep, bone-weary sleep," George Bird Evans knows. He is most aware of time's passing late in the year, "running out like the leaves sifting down around me," he wrote. "It is a season to be lived with the dogs and the birds and the shooting, each day a jewel and no jewel lost."

Getting GOLDENSEAL

Kay Evans tells an unusual tale about an out-of-state couple's persistence in seeking GOLDENSEAL. It seems they were visiting West Virginia and on their way through Bruceton Mills stopped at a likely-looking store to ask for a copy of our favorite magazine. The store didn't have it but the proprietor was thoughtful enough to inquire further, sure that of all the people in the area the Evanses could help. One phone call paid off.

Kay said send them on over. She and George Bird Evans had a stack of back issues. As it turned out, the couple was in search of the Edwight story in the Spring 1993 GOLDENSEAL. Kay had already dissected the issue when she tore out pages at the beginning of the magazine with "Looking Through: Remaking History on the Ohio River" for a riverboat pilot friend in North Carolina. Luckily, Edwight appears more towards the middle so she tore those pages out for her unexpected guests.

Kay reports they were more than happy with their "scraps" of GOLDENSEAL, and is reasonably sure they subscribed as a result of their search. We hope so. GOLDENSEAL can be found in many West Virginia bookstores and on newsstands, and we continue to work on improving our spotty distribution. But the best way to get GOLDENSEAL is to subscribe. Not only will you get home delivery, but you'll get the whole magazine at once.

Roger Christian played for the Hornets and later starred in the Olympics. Photo courtesy Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*.

Huntington on Ice

The Short History of the Hornets

By Clark Haptonstall

At the beginning of 1956, Huntington was a hockey-free environment. Not since the mid-1940's had the city even seen a hockey match. Hockey scores weren't on the radio, highlights weren't on television, and box scores weren't in the paper. Huntington was a Southern town, or pretty close. People didn't understand the rules of this game played mainly by Canadians.

So, how in the world did Huntington get a professional hockey team that fall?

By happenstance, mostly. The team was the Grand Rapids Rockets, and suddenly it was available. The Michigan team had competed in the International Hockey League (IHL) until 1956, when their ice rink was converted into a supermarket. The blue line was replaced by a checkout line.

With the Rockets in trouble, the IHL stepped in and took over, according to reports at the time by sports writer Fred Burns of the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*. The league selected the general manager of the successful Fort Wayne Komets, Ernie Berg, as its official representative, assigned to find a new home for the Rockets.

Although the league owned the Rockets franchise, they gave permission to two Indiana businessmen to operate the team. These partners needed to find a location and supply the management and operating capital. They were to keep whatever money they made, or suffer the losses. The Indiana businessmen were William Van Orman of Evansville and Martin Hilt of Fort Wayne.

It was through their efforts that the Rockets became the Hornets. In July 1956, Berg announced that the IHL had accepted their bid to put

Christian moves the puck (foreground) in this game against the tough Cincinnati Mohawks. Lou Crowdis is at the goal, with Eddie Olson to the right of Christian. Photo courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.

the team in Huntington. At a press conference, he also announced that the Hornets would have a 15-man roster and a 60-game schedule including 30 home dates, with at least two home games a week. Ticket prices would range from a dollar to two dollars. Berg confidently promised that Huntington would make the IHL play-offs. Suddenly there was hockey in Huntington.

What was the reaction?

"It was not city-wide euphoria, but in the right places it was very positive," Ernie Salvatore, former sports editor of the Huntington *Advertiser* said in a recent interview. "There was doubt, but at the highest level of the city it was fine. It was a great chance to bring something else into the Field House. They had the ice, they had public skating, but now they were going to have a hockey team."

And why would investors from Indiana want to locate a hockey team in a town that hadn't seen hockey in over a decade?

"They needed an arena. It was a quick place that they could set up and play," Salvatore said. "The season was coming and they had to move fast. They heard about Huntington and couldn't believe the Field House."

The Field House was the pride of Huntington and still new at the time. When the Marshall basketball team won the NAIB Tournament in 1947, a local politician promised the 15,000 fans that met the team at the train station that Marshall would have a new arena for their basketball games. That promise became a reality in 1950 with the Memorial Field House.

Originally, the Field House was supposed to seat 8,000 people and be oval-shaped. However, after a 119-day steel strike raised construction costs the planners had to make some cutbacks. They narrowed the distance between seats and didn't finish the west balcony, leaving a horseshoe configuration.

After construction, over 6,500 could see a basketball game. With the downstairs bleachers pushed in to make room for the rink, about 4,000 seats were available for hockey fans, including 3,500 fixed seats and 500 bleachers.

The Field House had installed permanent ice for public skating and traveling ice shows. The staff could cover the ice with a portable wooden floor to host high school and college basketball, Golden Gloves, professional boxing, and wrestling.

It was not surprising that one of the first people contacted about bringing hockey to Huntington was Luigi Narcise. Narcise was a member of the Field House board and president of the Jaycees.

"I was approached by Eddie Berg about bringing a hockey team into Huntington. They wanted a team in the East and they heard that we had ice," Narcise said recently. "They came in only wanting a one-year deal to try and balance the league, maybe help it expand. If things went well, maybe they would consider keeping a team in Huntington."

William Van Orman, whose family owned and operated a hotel chain, was the original general manager of the Hornets. Perhaps he was preoccupied with other affairs, for little was done for the Hornets by the beginning of September. Five weeks before the season was set to begin, Van Orman had no formal agreement with the city of Huntington. Finally, he began asking around town for help.

"Marshall is Huntington. They had the town. They had the students. They had the fans. We weren't going to cut in on Marshall."

The name that kept popping up was Bob McDonald, an employee of the International Nickel Company (INCO) in Huntington. He had more hockey experience than anyone else in the city because he had played for Duluth, Minnesota, and Grand Forks, North Dakota, and had been the player-coach of Toledo in the Ohio-Ontario League in 1939-40.

After moving to Huntington, McDonald had headed the Huntington Aces, a semi-professional

Luigi Narcise, Jaycees president and Field House official, was among those fighting to keep the Hornets in Huntington. He became a hockey fan after the team came to town. Photo courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.

Player Moose Lallo (left) looks on while Field House manager Sam Hoffman (on crutches) shakes Olson's hand. Hornets manager Bob McDonald (bow tie) stands with Crowdis. Photo courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.

hockey team made up of INCO employees. They played various teams from Marshall, Ashland, and Charleston in a warehouse-shaped building called the Arena Gardens on First Street and Seventh Avenue. But on Christmas Day, 1945, the Arena Gardens caught fire and burned to the ground. Just like that, hockey had ended in Huntington.

Van Orman asked McDonald to become Hornets general manager exactly one month before the first game. The situation, as reported in the *Advertiser*, was not promising. The Hornets still had no agreement with the city, officially no place to play, no promotions, and no players yet. They didn't even have hockey boards at the time.

McDonald had permission from his employer to run the team after he got off work in the afternoons. Midway through the season, he was able to devote his time completely to the Hornets when INCO went on strike on January 12, 1957.

With 30 home hockey dates plus a practice schedule and Herd basketball, the Field House became a crowded building that winter. The Marshall team was very strong and hadn't had a losing season in over 20 years. Coach Jule Rivlin had just led Marshall basketball to its only Mid-American Conference Championship and a trip to the NCAA Tournament.

"One of the unfortunate things that happened was the time that I was misquoted in one of the papers. It said that I predicted that the Hornets would outdraw Marshall basketball. That was poppycock," McDonald said. "Marshall *is* Huntington. They had the town. They had the students. They had the fans.

The International Hockey League, like Class AA baseball, was two notches below the big time. There was often a nice showcase of talent.

We weren't going to cut in on Marshall."

Huntington was a growing town in the mid-1950's. The population was 85,000 and on the rise. "Huntington was definitely booming. There were five main-line trains, five major hotels, two newspapers, a bus company, three cab companies, Owens Illinois, INCO, American Car, Armstrong Products and Wilson," Salvatore said. "Hell, you couldn't stir them with a stick."

"The league was hoping to spread into the cities that had semi-pro teams, like Charleston and Akron," McDonald said. "They thought that once Huntington joined, the other cities would also."

Although Huntington was on the move, several businesses were struggling that winter. Along with INCO, the Rail Mill was also on strike, and Owens-Illinois was laying people off.

"The biggest problem that season was that the major businesses in Huntington were having some trouble," McDonald said. "People couldn't afford to go to both the Hornets and Marshall games. People had to choose one or the other. Most people chose neither."

There was a total of six teams in the International Hockey League. They were the Cincinnati Mohawks, Indianapolis Chiefs, Toledo Mer-

curys, Fort Wayne Komets, Troy Bruins, and now the Huntington Hornets. Cincinnati was the class of the league, having won the last five IHL championships.

Many of the players were property of National Hockey League teams. The NHL teams would loan their younger players to minor league hockey teams for development. Thus the minor league clubs could stock their teams with up-and-coming stars very cheaply. The NHL team paid the players' salaries, and the local team only had to pay a relatively inexpensive "rental" fee.

The International Hockey League, like Class AA baseball, was two notches below the big time. There was often a nice showcase of talent, young players on the rise and older players on the decline.

One of those rising stars with the Hornets was 19-year-old Roger Christian, the only non-Canadian on the team. "In 1956, I was one of over 100 guys in the Chicago Black Hawks pre-season camp," Christian said in a recent telephone interview. "I survived five or six cuts. I could have played almost anywhere I wanted to, but I chose Huntington. The main reason was because of Eddie Olson."

Olson, a defender in his mid-30's, was the player-coach for the Hornets. He was on the down side of his playing career but still enjoyed the game. He used his experience to help younger players, like Christian, who were on the way up. Olson had peaked with the Cleveland Barons of the American Association, but never made it to the NHL.

"After the season, I was picked up by Fort Wayne. I never played there though," Christian said. "Instead, the next season I toured with the U.S. National Team. I probably would have stayed and played again in Huntington if they hadn't folded. I loved the city."

Roger Christian and his brother Bill went on to lead the USA to a gold medal in the 1960 Olympics. Bill had the goals and Roger the assists on both the tying and winning goals in the 3-2 preliminary triumph over the Soviets. It was the first time that the United States had ever beaten the Soviet Union in hockey.

Then in the gold medal game, Roger tallied four goals in the 9-4, come-from-behind win over Czechoslovakia. Trailing 4-3 after two periods, the United States, sluggish due to the big win over the Soviets the night before and the 8:00 a.m. start time, took advice from Soviet captain Nikolai Sologubox and took some oxygen from a tank. The United States came back with six unanswered goals in the third period, including three by Roger and one by Bill.

There has been a member of the Christian family on every United States medal-winning hockey team since 1956. Roger's nephew and Bill's son, Dave, provided the tying assist against Finland in the "Miracle on Ice" gold medal match in 1980. Currently they all manufacture Christian Brothers hockey sticks to the tune of 4,000 sticks a

Rules of the Game

Professional hockey has grown more over the last five years than any other sport in America, and now has reestablished itself in West Virginia. The East Coast Hockey League started in 1987 with five teams. This season there are 19, including the new Huntington Blizzards. The National Hockey League has also expanded, now including teams in cities like San Jose, Tampa Bay, and Miami that never have seen a frozen pond.

There's a certain language to the game. *Shifts* refer to groups of players who come into the hockey game at the same time. For instance a coach will often replace both wings and possibly the center at the same time, or both defensemen at once. The *blue lines*, located on either side of the center line, are used to determine when teams are offside. No offensive player can cross the blue line before the puck.

The game of hockey is made up of three periods of 20 minutes each. Six players are on the ice at one time for each team. Substitutions are made every three minutes or so to rest players, taking place while play is in progress.

There is one *goalkeeper* whose job is to keep the puck out of the goal. The two *defensemen* guard the other team's wings. On offense, they feed the puck to the *forwards*. The *center* covers the rink from goal to goal. He is responsible for starting the attack at center ice. The two *wings* work with the center on the attack. More often than not, the wings do most of the scoring.

A team scores when a player shoots the puck into the opponent's goal. Each goal is worth one point. Games are usually low-scoring because of both the high skill factor and the physical nature of hockey.

Hockey rinks are 200 feet long and 85 feet wide, some slightly different. Fiberglass walls, called hockey boards, surround the rink from the ice to a height of about 40 inches. Attached above the boards is a nearly unbreakable plexiglass rim to keep the puck from flying into the stands.

— Clark Haptonstall

day in Warroad, Minnesota, a town of 3,000 people with three hockey rinks and a fourth under construction.

There were other stars like Ronnie Sprong, the Hornets' leading scorer, who played on the IHL All-Star team in an exhibition game against the Detroit Red Wings. The next season, he was a member of the Montreal Canadians.

Huntington even fashioned the best player in the league. Lou Crowdis, goalie for the Hornets, was named Most Valuable Player of the IHL in 1956. Crowdis, also in his mid-30's, was the only goalie on the Huntington roster, according to reports in the *Advertiser*.

The season began with a 3-1 win over the Fort Wayne Komets in front of 4,000 fans at the Field House. Throughout the year, even though the Hornets were almost always in next-to-last place, fan support wasn't bad. After 17 home dates, the average paid attendance was 1,200 per game. The biggest crowd after the first game was 2,200 when the Hornets tied the U.S. National team 3-3 at the Field House. That game matched up Eddie Olson against his brother Weldy, who played right wing for the Nationals.

"Once the season got rolling, more people kept coming to the game," Narcise said. "Once people saw how exciting the sport was, they came back."

In attracting fans the Hornets had to overcome rumors about the owners selling or moving the team. The talk began less than two months after the season started. There was no mistaking that Van Orman and Hilt wanted out. They were making threats that they were going to pull the team out of Huntington mid-season and move it to Evansville, Indiana, if they couldn't sell to a local group. The Hornets and Komets had played two exhibition games in front of large crowds in Evansville.

"From game to game and from week to week, we didn't know if we were going to have a hockey team," McDonald said. "Van Orman didn't know anything about how to run a hockey team. He didn't know a blue line from a clothes line."

Technically, Hilt and Van Orman weren't selling the team. That still belonged to the IHL. The two businessmen were attempting to sell the operating rights. Hilt set the price at $35,000 with a deadline of January 2, 1957. Otherwise, the Hornets would move. Salvatore reported in the *Advertiser* that the "ice follies" had now "reached fanciful stage."

Huntington's first attempt to buy the Hornets was headed by local sports promoter Dick Deutsch, a former business manager of the Cleveland Barons of the American Hockey League. Deutsch made most of his money promoting professional wrestling. The first thing he did was to start taking pledges. Anyone could buy a share in the team, but no one person could own more than $5,000 worth of stock.

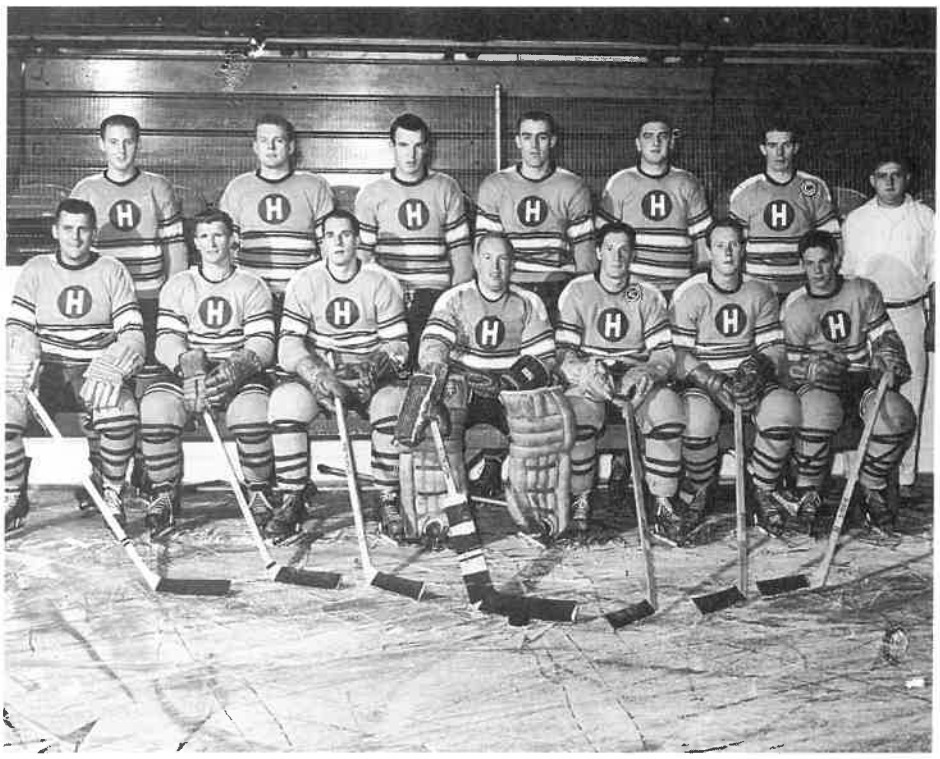
After talking the operators into dropping their asking price to $30,000, Dick Deutsch raised $25,000. Deutsch himself had put in $5,000 and some of his associates came up with another $12,000. The rest of the money was raised from the general public. At the time, Deutsch was very confident that the two sides would be able to reach an agreement.

"Mr. Hilt and Mr. Berg have agreed to sell the Hornets for $30,000 and I have agreed verbally that the Huntington group will purchase it," Deutsch said in a *Herald-Dispatch* interview in early January. "Papers covering the agreement are to be signed Saturday in Huntington and we will be given until February 2 to complete the deal. That extra time is needed because while we have $25,000, it is only in pledges and we'll have to start collecting."

By February 2, 1957, the money hadn't materialized, and Huntington's hockey club was still controlled by Van Orman and Hilt. But the team was not moved to Evansville and there was no indication that it would be.

At about the same time, a second effort to purchase the operating rights was started by Luigi Narcise through the Jaycees. Like many of the Hornet fans, Narcise had not been a hockey supporter when the team first came to town. But through his attendance at the games he grew to love the rowdy sport, especially when it came to razzing the opponents. He still remembers the night that the Bruins coach tried to hit him with a hockey stick after a couple of periods

The Huntington Hornets uniforms were retired after a single season. Goalie Lou Crowdis sits at center in this team portrait. Photo courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.



worth of verbal abuse. Only the quick hands of Hornets coach Eddie Olson saved Narcise's head from doing a puck imitation that evening.

Narcise secured a March 10, 1957, deadline to raise the necessary money to keep the team in Huntington. This time, Van Orman and Hilt lowered their price to $22,000. Narcise hit the street, selling $10 shares to anyone and everyone. Even 11-year-old paperboy Hank Haden bought five shares. When all was said and done, Narcise raised nearly $18,000. He offered Hilt and Van Orman $15,000 for the rights and was going to use the remaining $3,000 for operating fees. They turned it down.

"The fools weren't smart enough to take the early offers. They thought they could squeeze more out of them," Ernie Salvatore said. "It was that procrastinating that turned off the people in the money places."

Two drives to keep the Hornets in Huntington had failed. The season was coming to an end. The only thing to do was to watch and see what would happen.

In the International Hockey League, the top four teams played in the championship series. Huntington was 19-28-3 and five points behind fourth-place Fort Wayne with 10 games remaining. Eddie Olson, desperate to make the playoffs, made some line-up moves and shifts changes, hoping to spark his team.

The Hornets responded by finishing strong, going 7-2-1 in the last 10 games, including a 5-1 must-win over the Troy Bruins on the last day. They finished the season tied for third place, just one point out of second, with a record of 26-30-4.

Unfortunately, the Cincinnati Mohawks, the class of the league, were their first-round opponents in the play-offs. The Mohawks, who had won five consecutive IHL championships, finished the regular season at 50-9-1. They were so dominant that they were the only team in the league with a winning record. In fact, the Hornets had had more success against the Mohawks than anyone else. In the 12 meetings between the two teams, Huntington won three games, including a 2-0 shutout that marked the first time in two seasons that the Mohawks had been blanked.

In the play-offs Cincinnati proceeded to win game one, 5-4, in the best-of-five series. The Mohawks jumped on top after only 27 seconds when Bun Smith's shot beat Crowdis. They moved ahead 2-0 as Warren Hynes scored at 16:25.

Huntington answered with goals by Christian and Sprong in the final minute of the first period. Sprong's goal came with two seconds remaining. After the Hornets took a 3-2 lead in the second period, the Mohawks countered with two power-play goals, one while Huntington had two men in the penalty box. Both teams scored once in the third period, but Huntington couldn't score again in the final seven minutes to tie the game.

The Bruins coach tried to hit him with a hockey stick after a couple of periods worth of verbal abuse. Only the quick hands of the Hornets coach saved Narcise's head from doing a puck imitation.

Game two, played in the Field House, had Huntington "flashing a rip-snorting brand of hockey that would win anywhere," according to Fred Burns in the *Herald-Dispatch*. The Hornets held a 2-1 lead going into the third period when Christian scored after only nine seconds. Joe Ingoldsby later added two goals only 44 seconds apart to give the Hornets a 6-1 triumph in the Mohawks' biggest defeat of the year.

Game three in the Cincinnati Gardens "saw the Hornets fall victim to the Cincinnati jinx as they bowed to the classy Mohawks," reported Burns. After the Mohawks took a 2-0 lead in the first period, the Hornets battled back and tied the score after two periods, thanks to goals from Don Davidson and Len Ronson. But the Mohawks scored twice late in the third period to win 4-2 and take a two-to-one lead in the series.

Game four saw the Mohawks playing some of their best hockey of the year as they hammered the Hornets 6-1 to advance to the finals. "Moose" Lallo tallied the Hornets' only goal, at 14:35 of the third period.

The season was over for the Huntington Hornets. Now was the time to see if there would be another. "On the wings of making the playoffs, they should have sold shares in the club and had them come back a second year," Salvatore said. "A second year would have really taken off."

The league wanted both Huntington and Louisville to have teams. The people of Huntington had until the IHL meetings in mid-May to raise the money to keep the Hornets. But by now, people were tired of hearing the same old story. Some had given and had their money returned, not once but twice.

After Luigi Narcise returned the $18,000 to his contributors in early May, he heard that Hilt and Van Orman had reconsidered and $15,000 was now enough. Narcise simply declined their offer. Hilt never once saw the Hornets play.

On Sunday, May 19, 1957, the league suspended hockey operations in Huntington and moved the team to Louisville, Kentucky. General Manager Bob McDonald closed up shop for the Huntington Hornets on Saturday, May 25.

The INCO strike had just ended and life was about to get back to normal for Huntington's hockey man. It had been an eight-month dream for the city and especially for McDonald. He was able to spend his days with his ideal job, running a professional hockey team. Like all dreams, it had to end. When it did, Bob McDonald woke up and went back to work at the plant the following Monday.

Jane George

Proud To Be a West Virginian

Interview By Danny Williams

Vandalia Award Winner Jane George at home in Roane County. The willow basket is from her collection. Photo by Michael Keller.

For her lifetime achievement as a folk arts educator and organizer, Jane George was selected for the 1993 Vandalia Award. The annual award, sponsored by the Division of Culture and History and presented at the Vandalia Gathering, had gone in the past to older West Virginians who had distinguished themselves in the fields of music, storytelling, and traditional life. In presenting the award to Jane, the selection committee recognized the important role of all those who have spent their professional lives preserving and nurturing West Virginia's cultural heritage.

Early last May, before her selection as the Vandalia honoree, I visited Jane to discuss her life and career. The main focus of our two-hour interview was her work in the late 1950's and early 1960's, that exciting period when West Virginians and other Americans were remembering and returning to their rich legacy of music, crafts, arts, and old-time ways. This article, drawn primarily from that interview, emphasizes that early period and does not attempt to do justice to Jane's more recent work on behalf of West Virginia heritage arts, work which she pursues with vigor in "retirement."

Interviewing Jane George is an easy job. She knows just what she wants to say, and she remembers names and dates readily, with only an occasional reminder from husband Frank. Condensing her interview into a brief article is harder. She often begins several threads of conversation at once, then comes back later to complete each point. The quotations in this article have been edited and rearranged to fit the needs of the magazine. A complete transcript of the interview is on file at the Cultural Center.

Jane Taylor George, daughter of Ray and Beulah Taylor, lives with her husband Frank in Speed, Roane County, six miles south of Spencer. Next door is Jane's childhood home. As she recalls, her lifelong love of education was a family affair.

"I was born November 11, Armistice Day, 1922, not far from here, across the hill there in a place called Possum Hollow. My mother and father were both school teachers, and always pursued some kind of job in the education field. Dad started teaching when he was 18 years old, and my mother was one

Jane speaks from a lifetime of experience in arguing for an organized approach to the promotion of West Virginia heritage. Involvement is important, she believes. Photo by Michael Keller.

of those people who taught on a lifetime certificate. She never did have a day in college; it was normal school certificates, and she taught all the one-room schools anywhere near here.

"Dad was dissatisfied with the teacher here at Speed when I was in second grade, so he pulled us out of school and ordered the Calvert Course of Home Education. And my mother didn't teach anywhere away from home that year; she taught us. I'll bet we're the only ones back a generation who were home-taught.

"Well, I got married right after high school, and I had a scholarship to go to college. I was valedictorian at Spencer High School. I had tuition and fees to Marietta College. I didn't take it. I did a little bit of work. I worked in Spencer at a drugstore, a soda jerk.

"Then we moved to Charleston. I was married to Herman Cox. We had four sons. He worked at Carbide, and we lived various places in the Kanawha Valley. Then we built a house and lived out the Coal River area, on top of a hill out there in a real nice place. We did a lot of outdoorsy things. We raised exotic birds, and we raised a garden and grew roses."

Like so many other rural kids, Jane had become involved in these "outdoorsy things" partially through the influence of 4-H. She also credits 4-H with fostering her interest in folk culture, and with later giving her the opportunity to discover her talent for organizing people and getting things done.

Like so many other rural kids, Jane had become involved in these things partially through the influence of 4-H. She credits 4-H with fostering her interest in folk culture.

I was in 4-H when I was a kid. This county was strong, one of the pioneer counties in the state to get started in Agricultural Extension. That's what it was called then.

"I went to Jackson's Mill early. Everybody in my family was involved in that kind of a movement. I can remember folk dancing and folk songs that I hear the fiddlers play now, 'Sourwood Mountain,' 'Cindy.' What else? 'Down in the Valley,' we always sang that. Some Negro spirituals. I had a lot of experience with that kind of thing early.

"And then in the 1930's, when we were in the Depression, we had a program that they called the community program. I can't give you the exact title, but they hired people to go around in the different communities, at least in this state, and put on programs two nights a week. That got people out of their homes and together, to have some recreation. And there was a man in this county who came twice a week to a little field down here where we played ball and we did folk dancing. They were singing games mostly, because we didn't have any accompaniment. I can remember being crazy about the singing games, and the tunes, too.

"It was in Kanawha County, when my sons were old enough to join [about 1950], that I organized a club. You do it through the county extension agent offices. It was Boone Maxwell and Jackie Hunt at that time. It was a big program down there.

"I got so busy. I did MYF leadership at church. I was taking the kids to swimming lessons, and having to drive. We lived out at Tornado, in Kanawha County, and it was 18 miles to Charleston, and six miles to Saint Albans. We went to church in Saint Albans, and they went to school in Saint Albans, and all this sort of thing.

"I was spending all my time volunteering. And one day it occurred to me, hey, why don't you go look for a job, and get paid for what you're doing? That's really the way it began.

"Then when Jamie started to school — Jamie is my youngest son — I started college. It took me nine years to get my degree, because I was working. I graduated from West Virginia State. It was a wonderful experience, because at that time a few of the old professors were there who were there when it was still a black college, and I had the advantage of their professorship. My degree is sociology and psychology, and health education and recreation; I've got two majors and two minors. And I really learned an awful lot from some of these men. They were quite, quite good. But I was working and going to school, and taking the kids here

and there, and I was so busy I look back now and think, 'How on earth could anybody ever have done all that stuff?'

"I was spending all my time volunteering. And one day it occurred to me, hey, why don't you go look for a job, and get paid for what you're doing?"

"The first job I had that paid money was as the social director at St. Andrew's Church in Saint Albans. I only worked a year, and then I went job hunting and was hired to be program director for the Charleston Parks and Recreation Commission. And at this time things were expanding. I went to national recreation congresses, and they said we're coming into the time of the leisure ethic, instead of the work ethic. And we have. Look around you, you can see it.

"So anyway, I got this job and we expanded. I was program director part time, and went to school, too. Then they organized the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission. That was about 1961, I would say. We were leading into the centennial, and they wanted to broaden it out. So the county recreation commission came into being, and they hired me to be program director for that.

"We did some wonderful stuff. For instance, on the playgrounds one summer, the concluding thing at the end of the summer was called 'Song-o-Ree', and every playground worked up a little song or skit of some kind and came together at one of the public places and did a seasonal program. All this centered around folk stuff. One playground would be one country, one playground would be another country, and it was international music and dancing is what it was, more than anything else. That summer I had such good playground directors.

"The best thing we did, I thought, was Mountaineer Day Camp. We brought kids in for four weeks, a week at a time, from four different sections of Kanawha County. Went and got them, brought them in, fed them, taught them all this stuff. They did archery, they did music, they did crafts, the same thing that you do with any of the camping groups, but it was all geared to West Virginia mountain heritage stuff. And at the end of the week we put it together, you know, as a kind of concluding program. It was really quite fine."

Jane had turned her job into an opportunity to foster and promote Appalachian heritage. She was doing this at a good time. Nationally and across the state, interest was rising in traditional lore — music, crafts, food, history, dance, and early technology.

In West Virginia, this revival of folklore coincided with the state's centennial in 1963, and Jane was deeply involved in the landmark folk events of that year. As a member of the centennial folklore committee, she worked with acclaimed folklorist Dr. Patrick Gainer and others to locate and publicize state crafts and music. And she served as Kanawha Parks and Recreation Commission representative to the centennial committee which founded the Mountain State Art and Craft Fair, the oldest and still the most presti-

Sometimes you have to dress funny to make your point. This is Jane at the Black Walnut Festival in Spencer in 1963. Photographer unknown.

gious fair of its kind in the state.

Jane recalls Dr. Gainer's role in developing her involvement in West Virginia handcrafts.

"I had taken his class in 1962 at the University of Charleston [then Morris Harvey College]. And he said, 'I'm trying to find old people, families, up hollows or someplace, who still make baskets the old way, and cut out their own splits.'

"Well, I had a good friend who was county agent over there, and he visited our house a lot. And he knew a basket maker in Lincoln County. We went to Griffithsville, and turned up Big Sugar Tree from Griffithsville, and then on another creek a little ways to the top of the hill, then you went down Stinson, and then turned up another hill, and got onto something else, and you finally got to Claude Linville's house. And Mr. Linville is a legend in basket making.

"Sonny Hyde [photographer Arnout Hyde, Jr.] was working for the Department of Commerce, and Sonny and I traveled to Mr. Linville's house and took pictures of the whole process that he did. He never would come out of the hollow and go anywhere, but we took his baskets and marketed them at the Art and Craft Fair."

As always, Jane had a particular interest in education, in passing the traditions to the next generation. When the apprenticeship program began, during the second year of the Art and Craft Fair, Jane was on the committee. One of the major problems faced by this committee was the refusal of Linville and several of the master craftspeople to come to the Fair. Jane solved the problem by sending her basketmaking instructor to learn from the old people so that their knowledge

Fieldwork means muddy work at times. Jane and her photographer bogged down (above) on the way to visit Lincoln County basket makers Claude and Emmer Linville, but the results were worth it. The photograph below shows Jane (second from right) with the Linvilles, County Agent John Curry (in checks), Ethel Linville Bias and a mountain of baskets. West Virginia Department of Commerce photos.

Poteen

"The Idea Goes Back to Jane and Frank"

Jane George has seen her projects take on a life of their own, growing and changing far beyond her original plans. A good example is the roundabout career of "Poteen," one of West Virginia's most active and accomplished folk music ensembles.

In 1974, when Jane became the extension agent in Monroe County, one of her priorities was to establish a folk dance group within 4-H. Her husband Frank, a respected folk musician and musical scholar, sat in with the dancers and played his fiddle. They did mostly Appalachian styles at first, then reached back to the Irish and Scottish roots of mountain music and dance. Monroe resident Dennis White was learning banjo from Frank, and became an unofficial assistant to Jane in her work with the dancers.

The band Poteen carries on the work of Jane and Frank George. The members are (left to right) Don Dransfield, Tim Pence, Tim Payton, and Dennis White. Photo by Michael Keller.

Then Jane and Frank left. In 1978, she took the extension position in her native Roane County, leaving a void in the Monroe dance program. The enthusiastic dancers, now led by White, remained, but where would the music come from?

White recalls, "That's the way 'Poteen' got started, out of sheer necessity. We'd already discovered that we couldn't stomach that canned music."

White could play the banjo some by this time. Group alumnus Don Dransfield, then a freshman at Concord College, bought a flea-market fiddle, started sawing on it, and began making the trip back to Union for club meetings and performances. Dancer Tim Pence, a senior at Union High School, learned a little banjo, then took up fiddle. Tim Payton, a year younger, began to strum the guitar.

"It was a struggle there in the beginning," Dransfield says now. "We weren't any good, but we were all they had, so we performed everywhere with the dance team." He especially remembers that Jane brought the group to Roane County several times for a weekend of workshops with her new dance group there. This also gave the Monroe County band, now calling themselves "Clan Erdverkle," a chance to develop their music under Frank's tutelage.

Within a couple of years they were performing regularly. "We started out playing bluegrass, because it was easy," says Payton. "Then we progressed to old-time mountain music. We gradually got more and more into Irish music, and have played that almost exclusively for the last ten years." Along the way they mastered about a dozen instruments among them, and produced two LP recordings.

The band has gone through some personnel changes over the years, as education and careers have forced them apart. The four original members continue to play as often as their personal schedules allow. Now they call themselves "Poteen," for the Irish word for moonshine whiskey. They appear often at the Hobnobbery in Lewisburg, and are regulars at many of the annual festivals around the state. At the Vandalia Gathering every May, they are the house band for any dance group who wants live music.

That is where they started, playing for dancers, and to Dransfield that is what music is all about. "The idea of sitting in a chair while somebody on stage plays a jig, even though it's entertaining, that's new. For me, the whole feeling of the music comes from the dancing, and that idea goes straight back to Jane and Frank."

— Danny Williams

The Clan Erdverkle LP recordings Potatoes and Oatmeal *and* Just Landed: Winter's Coming *may be purchased for $8 each, postpaid. Send orders to Don Dransfield, P.O. Box 426, Union, WV 24983.*

Jane's first dance group took Scottish folk dance to The Greenbrier in 1969. Photographer unknown.

might then be passed on to apprentices.

As the interest in folk crafts began to boom, Jane was able to leave the recreation field and take a job more directly involved in the folk culture.

"In February 1964, I was hired to work as a craft specialist by the [West Virginia] Department of Commerce. Then I began to travel all over the state and find people who were doing different things. People would refer folks to me.

"For instance, Hardy County really had developed a pretty good craft program before the state had one. Annie Shobe was home demonstration agent. She introduced me to the Tusings, who were Swiss, I believe. Lester Tusing made cedar buckets that would hold water. They were beautiful; I still have one of them. And his sisters had a great big old loom that was set up in a weaving room. And those two people grew their own wool, sheared it, carded it, spun it, and wove it. That illustrates how I got leads as to where people were. Our purpose in the program that I worked for was to help people market things, and to improve quality."

While at Commerce, Jane was able to enlist other organizations in the fight for folklore preservation.

"We decided that one way to sleuth out and find the craftsmen would be to get some organization in every community, or most communities in the state, working on this as a state project.

"So I approached the women's clubs, the Federation of Women's Clubs of West Virginia. I went to their state meeting at The Greenbrier and took a display of West Virginia crafts, promoted the program, put across the idea of doing this. And they adopted it as a state promotional program of theirs. Every women's club in the state had a little exhibit of crafts made in their town. We said, 'Don't jury them, just have them. Encourage people, and we'll come to as many of them as we possibly can, and give them information, and we'll work with them.' We were trying to promote it, and to build the quality.

"So they did that, and I worked with that state committee for two years, all the time I was working for the Department of Commerce. And ran all over the state, my Lord."

After two years of juggling job, family, and college, Jane grew impatient with her slow progress toward her degree from West Virginia State, so in late 1965 she left the Department of Commerce to spend one semester as a full-time student. Then she went back to part-time study while she commuted to Huntington to work in recreation for the U.S. Job Corps. Of that experience, Jane says, "I bet you that I learned more in that year and a half than I have in most any part of my life."

Finally, in 1967, Jane finished her college education. At 44 years of age, she was ready to "begin" her career.

"We went to Griffithsville, and turned up Big Sugar Tree and then on another creek a little ways to the top of the hill, then went down Stinson, and then up another hill, and got onto something else."

It is not surprising that she ended up with the Cooperative Extension Service; it had been as a 4-H'er that she had first seen much of her beloved

mountain heritage, and as a 4-H leader that she had begun to teach and organize. Jane was thoroughly familiar with the structure of 4-H, with its network of paid professionals, adult volunteers, and groups of kids in each county in the state, and she had seen some fine examples of Cooperative Extension's possibilities as an advocate for West Virginia traditions. Through her career in Putnam, Mercer, Monroe, and Roane counties, Jane helped bring Extension even more prominently into the folk culture movement, especially in its role as an educational organization.

Of all the activities founded or supported within Cooperative Extension during her time there, Jane cites the Mountain Heritage Program as the most important.

"I was hired by Extension in '67. There was this upsurge of interest. Young people were interested in things from the past. And it came to mind, why don't we gather up a bunch of these people that do things so well and have a program on some weekend, and show a bunch of select kids something about this?

"Charleston area Extension began it, at Hawks Nest in '68. And we didn't take 4-H'ers especially; we took young people through the schools, and Boys' Clubs, and whatever youth groups were recommended. And we recruited our staff simply to expose these kids to things. Frank [musician Frank George, whom Jane had recently married] was there at that one; he played his fiddle and his bagpipes. And we got a teacher from Pittsburgh to come down and dance for us, Highland dancing. You can't teach somebody to do that in a weekend, but you can show them what it's like.

"The kids in Putnam County got interested in it, so I hired this girl down on spring break from school to teach for a week, and we really did take off then. And they've been dancing ever since, somewhere in West Virginia."

These weekends were not all fun and games. A focus of the activities was the fiddlers, dancers, pipers, cooks, gardeners, singers, and craftspeople, but Jane and her co-workers were determined to add a larger dimension to the experience. They recruited the most knowledgeable scholars and writers, so the campers would have an opportunity to consider their heritage in the larger context of ideas. Through lectures and discussion, these presenters made the point that folklore is more than something fun or interesting or quaint.

The names Jane and Frank naturally go together to folks knowledgeable of West Virginia folk arts and mountain heritage. This portrait shows the Georges in 1979. Photographer unknown.

"Oh, wonderful people. For those Heritage weekends we had the best, the very most professional people we could find on the various subjects to talk to the kids at assemblies. We had Dr. Norman Simpkins, who was head of sociology at Marshall. We had Dr. Gainer. We had Dr. Ahmed Williams, who was tremendously good. He was a music professor at West Virginia State. Through him, the kids got a remarkable insight into the black cultural heritage of people in the Appalachian south. He would sit down at the piano and sing, and talk too. And when he got done those kids stood up and cheered. Dr. Alta Schrock was at the Keyser area Heritage weekend, and she was a professor at Frostburg State College. She was keynote speaker for those kids, because she related to them well. We had Louise McNeill, Marie Boette, and Ruth Ann Musick."

The program continued for several years, held six times each year in six areas of the state. Jane especially credits Norman Fagan, then at the Department of Commerce, with finding funds so that the high school students could attend free of charge. Through this program, a generation of West Virginians today are dancing, singing, playing instruments, building crafts, and just enjoying and appreciating their heritage. One of Jane's favorite memories is that one of the first participants wrote in her evaluation of the program, "For the first time in my life, I was proud to be a West Virginian."

By this time, nearly all Jane's efforts were undertaken in partnership with husband Frank, himself the feature of an article in the Spring 1983 GOLDENSEAL. W. Franklin George, originally from Mercer County, set out at an early age to master the instrumental music of the West Virginia-Virginia border area. Along the way, he developed a keen interest in the European roots of Appalachian culture — first the dominant Irish and Scottish influences, and then the lesser-known German, Scandinavian, and Eastern European heritage.

His interests soon spread beyond music and folklore, and into the history, anthropology, religion, and economics of our forebears. As Frank and Jane became more involved in the European beginnings of West Virginia heri-

tage, their next step was probably inevitable.

"We happened onto a group that was taking a trip to Europe. It was a 4-H group from Ohio County, of all places. So I went to the woman and said, 'Do you need some others to go along?' And she said yes, and I recruited a bunch of people. There were 27 of us from Mercer who went, parents and children too. That was the first trip we took abroad. We did Appalachian square dancing. Frank played his dulcimer, his fiddle, and his banjo as demonstration. We put on programs, the dances. And the whole group, all 49, the whole bus-full, sang Appalachian hymns and ballads."

That first European trip lasted a month, and carried West Virginia folk culture into Scotland, England, Holland, Belgium, Germany, France, and Austria. As she had done so often before, Jane took someone else's program and turned it toward West Virginia heritage. She doesn't recall now what the Ohio County group had planned to do in Europe, but what they did was sing, dance, and explore the bridges between their own culture and their hosts'.

In retirement, Jane has slowed little, if any. She still teaches dance to young people, and travels across the state with performing troupes. She and Frank regularly take groups to Europe, to observe firsthand the roots of Appalachian culture and to share West Virginia with others. Jane has more time now to read, mostly about West Virginia and regional history and culture, to enjoy her pleasant Roane County home and her cats, and to spend time with Frank in the Monroe County cabin her family owns.

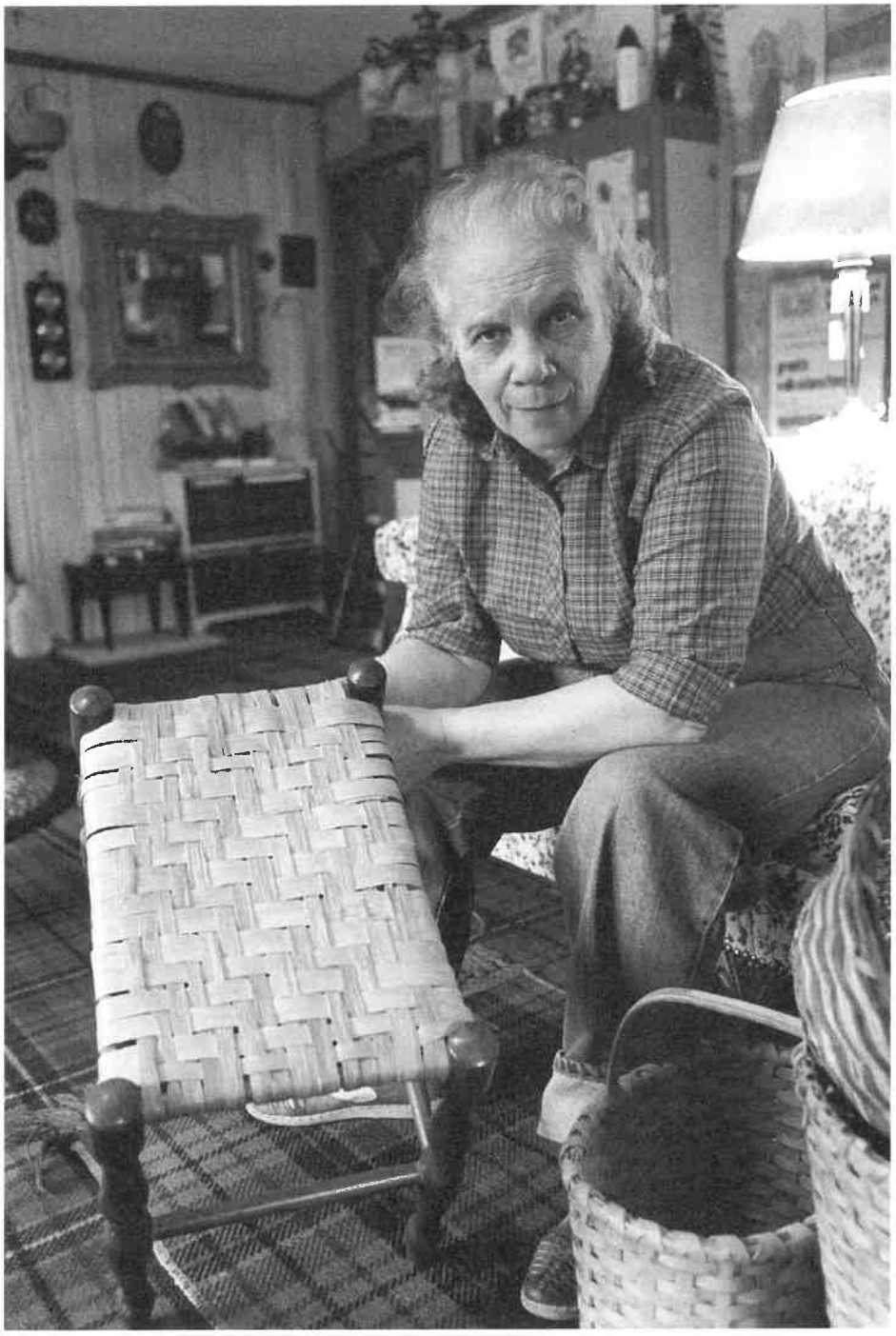
But education, folklore, and action still define Jane George's personality and convictions. Anyone who wants to sit quietly and not do anything or learn anything, and especially anyone who does not want to be drawn into the folk arts, would be well advised to stay away from her.

Her oldest grandson, Jeff, graduated from college last December, and was not able to start work until May. A visit to Jane and Frank's house solved the problem of what to do in the meantime. Jane taught him to weave cane chair seats, just as she had taught dozens of others to do 30 years earlier. Jane says, "You can make some money doing cane seats, because that's a skill very few people do now.

Jeff learned to do it well, and soon had all the business he wanted. Now a graduate student in North Carolina, he has discovered that his grandmother was right; there's plenty of demand for traditional skills, and seat weaving is an important supplement to his income.

Across the state, around the world, or in her own home and family, Jane has always been ready to teach anyone about West Virginia mountain heritage. Those who have listened to her have been enriched.

Jane taught seat weaving to many West Virginians and says she encountered their work at fairs all over the state for years. She wove this stool's seat from old-fashioned thick splits. Photo by Michael Keller.



Home Delivery

Amy Mildred Sharpless, Mountaintop Midwife

By I. Lynn Beckman

Photographs by Michael Keller

A glance at her picture among the dozen seniors in the Kitzi-Hi Yearbook, Class of 1927, reveals that her nickname was "Mig" and that she excelled in running track. One also reads that she was the class valedictorian and planned to be a nurse. "She is the kind of girl who can do the thing when it is necessary," her classmates wrote.

"Necessity" has become a byword for Amy Mildred Sharpless. She has spent her 84 years in Blaine, West Virginia, which is separated from Kitzmiller, Maryland, the town of her alma mater, by the swift-flowing North Branch of the Potomac River. The two little towns are connected by a solitary highway bridge. Both served a once bustling coal mining area, the high plateau occupying both sides of the state line and collectively known as the Mountaintop.

Reviewing her long life from this end makes the words printed by her yearbook picture seem prophetic. Amy Mildred's years are filled with stories of how she did the thing that was necessary, often at a moment's notice. Certainly it was necessity that launched the unplanned career which resulted in home delivery of 784 babies over 31 years in Mineral and Grant counties in West Virginia and Garrett and Allegany counties in Maryland.

It all began in the early morning hours of November 9, 1937, when Mary Elizabeth Clark, who lived along the Western Maryland Railroad tracks in Blaine, was about to give birth to her baby. The doctor in Blaine, R. R. Sisson, was not available. Dr. Sisson was one of only two doctors in the area. The other one had an office in Kitzmiller. He was unavailable at the moment of need too. No one else knew what to do.

Amy Mildred Sharpless (center) delivered a half-dozen babies for Earltine Moore of Mineral County. Johnny Moore was among them.

Trained as a nurse, Amy Mildred became a midwife by happenstance. She sits at right here with fellow nurses at graduation.

Then someone remembered that Amy Mildred Sharpless, the funeral director's daughter who lived a half-dozen houses down the tracks, was a nurse. Racing footsteps approached her front porch, and she was urged to come as quickly as possible. Amy Mildred jumped out of bed, dressed, grabbed whatever few supplies she could think she might need, and raced to the mother's bedside. The baby was already born by the time she got there, but she took care of the situation. Later, Dr. Sisson was able to provide aftercare for the mother and baby.

Because the doctor was not present for the birth, Amy Mildred was required to fill out the baby's birth certificate. It recorded that Patricia Ann Clark had come safely into the world at 3:50 a.m., to proud parents Harry and Mary. News of the event spread up and down the streets, across the ridges, and up the hollows. In small, neighborly places like Blaine and Kitzmiller, something like this is enough to make one remembered in the next emergency.

Amy Mildred had taken her training at the nurse's school at the former Western Maryland Hospital in Cumberland and from Cumberland's Memorial Hospital, where she had graduated in 1930. She had also done postgraduate work at the Western Reserve Hospital's School of Nursing in Cleveland, Ohio. Still, she was only trained as a maternity nurse, not a doctor. Backup facilities were remote. The nearest hospital was located at Keyser, in those days many rugged miles away.

Her neatly kept birth records, several volumes in all, date to the very first delivery she made. The well-preserved books reveal two initial pages of emergency deliveries which occurred prior to Amy Mildred's certification as a licensed midwife.

"I didn't think about insurance or malpractice or any of that in those days, and no one else did either. I went because people needed my help, and I did everything I knew to do."

The second call came over a year after the first one, on January 11, 1938, when a mother in the little coal mining borough of Eddy, not too far from Blaine, went into labor. Again, the doctor was not available. Amy Mildred responded to another frantic knock on her door. This time the birth was troublesome. The baby was premature, only six and a half months into the pregnancy. Margaret Ann Harding was delivered, but died less than a week later.

Still unlicensed, Amy Mildred made her third delivery when she was summoned next door to help her neighbor. A doctor from a clinic in Westernport, Maryland, was supposed to make this delivery, but he could not come, and things were happening fast. Again, the girl who could do the necessary thing did it, and her third emergency brought her first experience with twins. One baby was already born when she arrived. The other one was on the way. Both were attached to the same placenta.

The first baby, a little five pounder named Patricia Ann Weicht, was born at 2:00 o'clock. At 2:10 the second child was delivered, stillborn, another little girl. She had been dead for quite some time, Amy Mildred says. The first

Mountain State Midwifery

Amy Mildred Sharpless performed a much-needed service at a time when many West Virginians depended on home childbirh. Though midwifery became less common later, many rural women are again turning to midwives. There is a professional organization with their interests in mind.

The Midwives' Alliance of West Virginia, formed in 1976, says its purpose is "to encourage the development of a broader range of safe, available and affordable options for the child-bearing family, with special emphasis on our rural population." MAWV promotes self-care, monitored by professionals. It looks at each pregnancy as a childbearing *year*, providing mothers with prenatal education and screening, attending at labor and birth, and supplying postpartum follow up, including home visits.

Midwives' Alliance members are active in the Midwives' Alliance of North America (MANA) and the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM). The group provides educational support to others as well including nursing and medical school classes, EMT classes, and high school health classes. MAWV's members serve on the West Virginia Health Care Delivery and Accessibility Task Force, appointed by Governor Caperton.

Lay midwives encourage home birth, but recognize there are certain conditions when medical consultation is advisable. Continuing education is also important. Alliance members are required to update their skills regularly with at least 16 hours of continuing education each two years.

Other birth professionals in West Virginia include M.D.'s, osteopaths, and certified nurse midwives. The nurse midwives were formally recognized in 1972 with the passage of the Nurse Practice Act, and affiliate with the American College of Nurse Midwives. State chapter chairperson Lisa Dalporto says the group's members offer each other support as most work by themselves in their own communities.

For further information on the Midwives' Alliance of West Virginia contact Donna Spellman at Rt. 1, Box 101, Greenwood, WV 26360.

baby continued to do well.

After her early deliveries Amy Mildred concluded that she was in the baby business and acted accordingly. "I guess it was only logical that I should get my midwife's license, and Dr. Sisson urged me to do that," she says. "So, I did."

She elaborates. "You see, the doctors didn't want to do deliveries. They were too busy to give that much time in those days. It would sometimes take up to two days or so for a delivery, especially if it was a woman's first baby. There were times when I would be out a day and a night or more, and after the baby was born there was a clean-up procedure plus all of the care required to make sure that the mother and child were both doing well before I left.

"That was terribly time consuming for a doctor who had many urgent calls to make in the meantime," Amy Mildred comments. "That's why we had two other midwives in this area, both of them from Kitzmiller. Myrtle Wilson and Edith Pew were licensed midwives during that same period of time.

"In those days," she adds, "we kept the mother in bed ten full days after the delivery. So, I always went back to the home on the third and the seventh days to check the mother and baby and to bathe them. My routine was to take their temperatures, do a blood pressure check, and check the mother's uterus to see that it was contracting properly."

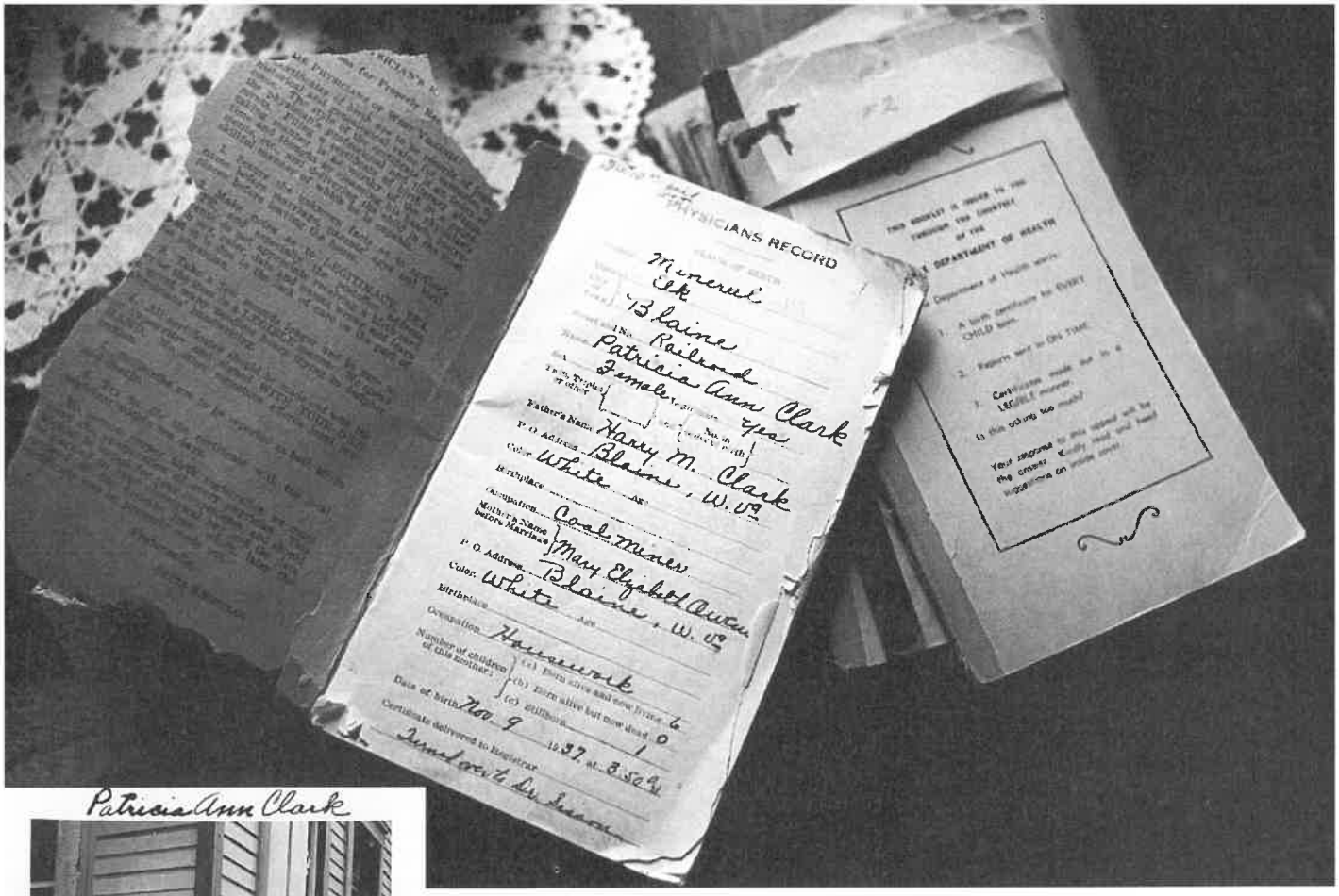
A count by years through her records indicates how her reputation grew as the folks of the Mountaintop placed their confidence in her. Her calls increased beginning in 1938, the year of her licensure, when she delivered eight babies in all. In 1939 she delivered 11, and 13 in 1940. Her busiest year came in 1952, when she delivered 50. Her last delivery came in the early morning hours of March 23, 1968, and produced a baby boy named Harold Eugene Heater. Number 784, Harold was another emergency, coming after her license had expired.

"I didn't think about insurance or malpractice or any of that in those days, and no one else did either. I went because people needed my help, and I did everything I knew to do. People knew there were risks, but they were willing to accept those because they needed the help," she recalls.

"When I would arrive at a home, I would examine the mother and size up the situation. If I thought there were going to be difficulties I could not handle in the home, I would urge them to set out for the hospital at Keyser right away. Most of the time people would take my advice, but sometimes they would not," she reflects.

"I remember one mother who was having a terrible time in labor. I knew as soon as I examined her that the baby was turned crossways, and there was no way she would be able to deliver at home. I told her so, and I told her she needed to get to the hospital right away, but she refused. She had given birth to all of her other babies at home, and she didn't see why this delivery should be any different. What she did not know was that all deliveries are different, and you cannot compare one to another," Amy Mildred says.

"Well, she waited and waited, but the situation didn't get any better. Rather, it got worse. Finally she went to the hospital, and they had to do a cesarean section on her, but



Patricia Ann Clark

Born Nov. 9, 1937

Patricia Ann Clark was Baby Number One. Amy Mildred Sharpless kept careful records (above), but the scrapbook photo of Patricia from a few years later is better evidence of a job well done.

the baby was already dead. I think if she had listened to me in the beginning the baby would have lived."

Often the weather was unfavorable. Travel was dangerous. Many of the roads over the mountains were unpaved and rough. The hours were often tiring and long, and the pay was meager when payment was made; often, as her record books indicate, her services went uncompensated. Sometimes in the early days she got $10. In later years her fee went to $20 and then to $25 for some deliveries.

"Folks knew in real bad weather if they wanted me to come they would have to come and get me. No one ever complained about that," she says. One reason might have been that the scarcity of telephones in this remote and sparsely populated section often made it necessary for a family member, neighbor, or friend to go and notify the midwife in person. It was just as easy to bring her back on the return trip.

"When I went over to Gleason or Harrison, both tiny coal mining communities along the Maryland side of the Potomac," Amy Mildred recalls, "I could drive my car in good weather. But when I got up there, I would have to park my car and walk across a swinging bridge over the river to get to the family I was supposed to see. When I did check-ups there in rough weather, I would ride the train up sometimes."

Compelling telephone calls and urgent knocks on the door came at all hours. In between she kept busy helping her father run the Sharpless Funeral Home and doing cosmetic work on the bodies; making frequent ambulance runs (another series of emergencies with another set of stories to tell); serving ten years as postmaster at Blaine; and serving her church, Mt. Bethel United Methodist at Kitzmiller, where she has been an active member since 1924. Amy Mildred was a busy woman!

Her schedule often made it necessary for her to do double duty. As the postmaster, there were times she would have to interrupt mail deliveries to deliver a baby. The same was true for ambulance emergencies and for funeral services.

"It seems funny in a way now," she says. "I get a small pension from the Postal Service, which is more than I made when I worked in the post office. Back in those days a postmaster's salary was based on the number of stamp cancellations plus three cents for every money order written. In a small post office like Blaine's, one's salary was small. We didn't have rural delivery, so I was in the post office all the time. When there were emergencies, I had

to get someone else to fill in."

Amy Mildred also recalls occasions when funerals and births would occur at the same time.

"There was one time," she says, "when I was called to Gormania for a delivery just before we were supposed to have a funeral service at Hartmansville. I put a change of clothing in my car, and I went to Gormania as fast as I could. I examined the mother and saw that her progress was going to be slow. So, I changed clothes and took off for the church at Hartmansville. My father always wanted me to arrange the flowers and set up for the funeral services, which I did in this case. As soon as I could leave the church, I headed back to Gormania in time to deliver the baby. It all worked out somehow."

Then there was her family's ambulance business to consider, for the Sharpless hearses served also as emergency medical vehicles. "I got my driver's license in 1934," Amy Mildred recalls, "and from that time on if there was an ambulance run, I was on it. Sometimes I drove, but often I served as the attending nurse. I remember one ambulance run when we were supposed to bring a woman patient back home from the hospital, and she insisted I be the one to drive the ambulance. She said she didn't want to ride back with my father as the driver because he drove too fast."

Being a midwife in two states required twice the effort in keeping up with education and licensing. Living in Mineral County, West Virginia, meant Amy Mildred had to travel to the health department offices in Keyser for the required classes. Working also in Garrett County, Maryland, meant she had to travel to Oakland to meet that state's educational requirements.

The work took its toll. "I remember one night," she says with a chuckle, "when I had been on the go all the day before and all through the night, ending up with a delivery that kept me at the patient's home until about 4:00 a.m. I had to drive several miles alone to get back home, and I was really sleepy. I fought all the way to stay awake. I did everything I could do to keep my eyes open. I rolled the windows down. I made noises to myself, everything. The last thing I remember was pulling up in front of the house that morning."

More baby pictures from a midwife's scrapbook. Amy Mildred also receives school portraits, wedding and graduation pictures, and family portraits as her babies progress through life.

She got to the house but never got inside, it seems. "The next thing I remember was a sharp pain across my nose which woke me. My head shifted and caused my glasses to hurt my nose. I had fallen asleep in the car. My neighbor, Mr. Bray, saw me when he came out to go to work, but he didn't wake me. He just let me sleep."

When she talks of incidents like this one, she refers to her abiding faith and the watchful favor of God upon her life. She talks of many miracles, including how God kept her safe and gave her the strength to carry on her vigorous schedule through the years in the midst of adverse and primitive conditions.

In those days, especially in the remote areas of the Mountaintop, refrigeration was not a common household luxury. Sometimes ice was needed to help stop a mother's bleeding, and it wasn't always easy to get.

"I remember one time I had a delivery at Shaw, West Virginia, and the mother hemorrhaged. I needed ice in a hurry. So, I sent someone in the family up to the store at Elk

Amy Mildred has been out of the business for a quarter-century, and her babies are big babies now. Here gas station man Bob Lucas gives her a bashful hug.

Garden to get some. That was the nearest place to get ice," Amy Mildred says. Then, with a smile she adds, "the mother wanted me to deliver her next baby at home too, but I refused. I thought it was too risky after her first episode.

"I had a rule about prenatal care," she says. "If I knew ahead of time that a mother was pregnant and was expecting me to do the delivery, I insisted that she have an examination by a doctor. Most of the ladies did, but some would wait until they were in labor and send for me without having seen a doctor, and that's the first I knew they were expecting."

Amy Mildred tells of going into nearly every type of situation imaginable, and some not so imaginable. She made her own birthing pads from bleached feedsacks, which she baked in her kitchen oven to sterilize. She tells how she lined the feedsacks with newspapers for added absorbency. She rolled them into kits with the other materials she would need for her deliveries. Her system worked well, giving her everything she needed at her fingertips and ready at a moment's notice. She needed only to grab her case.

Amy Mildred Sharpless has driven the winding roads of the Mountaintop region for decades. Nowadays she travels for volunteer work and on errands of her own.

As she looks across the community today, Amy Mildred can see the living evidence of numerous sleepless nights. Leafing through picture albums of the youngsters she delivered triggers story after story. The school portraits and homemade snapshots have come from proud parents and grandparents who remember that she was the one who helped them in their time of need. They know their children are her children too. And, surely, behind each picture are countless prayers of thankfulness for the Mountaintop midwife.

"All of this really became interesting," she says, "when I began to deliver babies from mothers I delivered as babies. I look around, and I am reminded how I have had a lot of birthdays when I see some of the babies now that I delivered." She begins calling names. Then, she sighs as she confesses that she cannot remember nearly all of the names of all the babies she delivered.

"All of this really became interesting when I began to deliver babies from mothers I delivered as babies. I am reminded how I have had a lot of birthdays when I see some of the babies that I delivered."

But they seem to remember her. "I had car trouble a while back and I pulled off the road," she says. "I got out of my car and started to walk around it to check the tires.

"Sure enough, one was flat, but I didn't have to try to change it. A truck driver stopped right away, and he changed it for me. He asked me if I knew him. I said I didn't. I asked him if I should. He said he thought I might since I had delivered him.

"It goes like that quite a lot around here."

"Sleeping Beneath the Sand"

Songwriter John W. Unger of Morgan County

By John S. Newbraugh

and John Douglas

"Friends and comrades struggled to save them from their doom,
But six young men lie sleeping beneath the sand and stone."

Those sad words are from "The Miners' Doom," a song written by Morgan County musician John Unger. They remind us that — as awful as Monongah, Farmington, and other coal mine disasters were — not all West Virginia miners dug coal nor all the state's mine fatalities came in slate falls or methane explosions. Unger's song was written soon after a June 1926 accident at the Berkeley Glass Sand Mine, well out of coal country in a region where silica is quarried for the glassmaking industry.

John Wesley Unger was born on December 6, 1900, in Berkeley Springs. He was partly blind at birth and eventually lost his vision entirely. An accident in 1912 caused the loss of one eye, and the other was taken 13 years later by disease.

Fortunately for Unger, he had learned to play both the piano and the harmonica or mouth harp at an early age. When he was left sightless and could not work at other jobs, he fell back on his musical skills.

It was a good thing. With a wife and children to support, John Unger's only income was a modest pension and whatever revenue he could generate from his music. He played and sang all the way from the Chesapeake Bay to the Ohio River. His repertoire included favorite songs of the day, plus a number of songs that he himself penned.

As a songwriter, Unger was squarely within the ballad tradition, and his originals usually were inspired by real events. This was a popular idea in the 1920's. Disaster sagas were told in words and music, with the finished product put out on phonograph records, sometimes marketed only in the local area where the tragedy occurred.

The disaster that inspired "The Miners' Doom" took place just north of Berkeley Springs on Monday afternoon, June 7, 1926. The scene was a dusty, open-pit mine where men worked hard under primitive conditions.

As with so many industrial accidents, the workers had no warning, no control over the events that claimed their lives. Shortly after 4:30 that cloudy afternoon, the dynamite crew of the Berkeley Glass Sand Company readied for its final shot of the day. They had already used a pneumatic drill to bore holes into the prime Oriskany sandstone that rose for more than 100 feet above them on Warm Springs Ridge.

This was the closest pit to the town limits of Bath, better known as Berkeley Springs. The workers had drilled nine two-inch holes into the mountain, each about 20 feet deep. They had done the "springing" — shooting small explosions to make pockets for bigger loads. In those days, a lot of blasting was required in sand mining, including explosions to make the sandstone rocks small enough to go through the crusher.

After the springing, the men rammed dynamite into each hole. More than 250 sticks were used — about half a ton of 60-percent, high-test dynamite. At least, that's what company officials told the newspapers afterwards. Those who knew the Berkeley mining operation, however, always figured it was the more dangerous black powder.

By 4:45, the workers were tamping the last hole before they attached the wires of the electric battery used for the detonation. Some say a tool struck a stone and caused a spark. Some say the ramming jarred a dynamite cap. Some say there was an electrical storm that day. Whatever the cause, the results were cataclysmic.

Philmore Norris, who was standing nearby, later told friends that the stone face of the quarry abruptly heaved out toward him. He was tossed a man's height into the air and thrown a far distance. He remembered nothing else until he woke up in a hospital with broken ribs.

Norris was lucky to have survived. Six men didn't. Killed immediately were Irvin Henry, 30; Emory Miller, 34; and head driller George Walls, 30. All were married. They had 11 children among them.

Within minutes, hundreds of people congregated at the Berkeley Glass Sand Works office, offering to help any way they could. They set to work clearing rock and rubble to find any of the crew still alive. It was a hard job. Emory Miller's body, for instance, wasn't located for an hour and a half. It was found under six feet of sandstone.

Mine superintendent Ernest Widmyer was so upset that he was overtaken by nervous shock and had to be taken home. Local physicians Newrath, Stigers and Weems doctored at the scene. They were aided by Mrs. Cauthorne, the Morgan County nurse, and by Northern Virginia Power Company employees who had had Red Cross training.

Hospitals in Martinsburg and in Hagerstown, Maryland, dispatched their ambulances, but there was little that could be done for most of the injured. Romanis Dawson, 30, was declared dead at Martinsburg City Hospital and Mildred "Joe" Miller, 23, died in Hagerstown.

Miller, who had been married only three days earlier, was simply a bystander watching the dynamite crew. Monday night, a sixth man — Oliver Moon — died in a Hagerstown hospital. Moon, 30, wasn't normally a member of the crew, but was filling in for one day because one of the regulars was at a funeral.

Oddly, eerily, Moon had had a bothersome dream the night before he worked with the dynamite crew. Viola, his widow, recalled it 54 years later like this: "My husband never believed in dreams, but that morning as he dropped me off at the Interwoven sewing mill, he said, 'You know, I had a dream last night I didn't like. I'll tell you about it tonight.' I've always thought he dreamed about the explosion."

An inquest into the fatal events at the sand mine was conducted that same night by Justice of the Peace N. H. Hobday, who presided over six jurors. They decided that they couldn't determine the cause of the accident.

But the late Robert Byers had no such doubts. Byers for many years was quality control director at Pennsylvania Glass Sand Company, which by 1930 had purchased Berkeley Glass Sand and other small sand mines in Morgan County.

In a 1980 interview, Byers told what he had heard from Ed Edmiston, purchasing agent for Berkeley Glass Sand in 1926. "It was a typical black powder explosion. At that time, nearly all blasting was done with black powder, which was more volatile and cheaper than dynamite. It came loose in cans," said Byers. "When they spoke of dynamite, they could have just been using an all-purpose term.

"In fact, this particular incident was what ended the use of black powder instead of dynamite in this valley," Byers recalled.

The tragic events at the sand mine would have been well-known to John Unger in nearby Berkeley Springs. His song, which may be understood as a sincere memorial to the dead, entered the music market at an auspicious time. The '20's were boom years, when phonographs and radios became common in rural areas.

Radio emphasized live performance in those days, but the phonograph represented a huge market for recorded music. Ballad records were popular. Everything from "The Wreck of Old 97" to the "Sinking of the Titanic" was featured on disc. Since some of these ballads generated great commercial success for record companies, the industry was always seeking new material. That's how John Unger's Morgan County song came to be recorded.

Songwriter John Unger as a man of about 30, with wife Nellie and daughter Gladys. Photographer and date unknown.

After singing "The Miners' Doom" locally for several months, Unger sent the lyrics to the Brunswick Record Company of New York, where the words were set to a tune composed by Andrew Jenkins. Jenkins, a well-known blind musician from Atlanta, had recorded many songs under his own name and under his pseudonym of Blind Andy.

Brunswick gave the finished song to Vernon Dalhart to record early in 1927. Dalhart, one of the most popular singers of the time, was born Marion Try Slaughter on April 6, 1883. He used more than 75 known pseudonyms during his prolific recording career. His usual name, Vernon Dalhart, was taken from two Texas towns, Dalhart and

Vernon, near his childhood home.

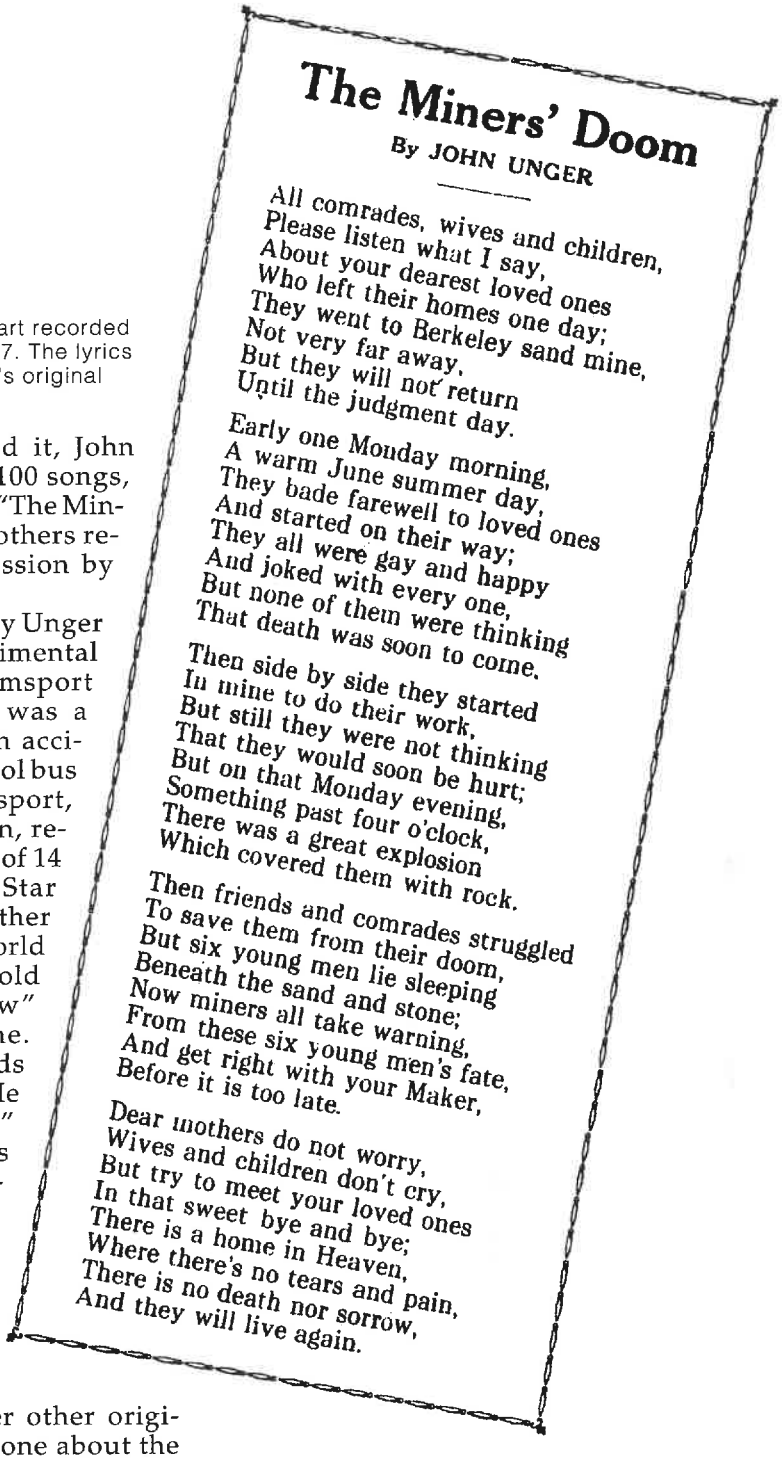
Dalhart started out as a light opera singer, but his real success came when he picked up a pair of "hillbilly" songs and ended up with a multimillion seller of his recording of "The Prisoner's Song" and "Wreck of the Old 97" on the Victor Label. Dalhart's name, which is almost forgotten today except by old record collectors, was revived when he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1980.

John Unger's "The Miners' Doom" became the "B" side of Brunswick Record #139. The "A" side was Dalhart's rendition of "The Return of Mary Vickery." Sales figures are uncertain, but "The Miners' Doom" proved popular enough for Supertone Records to advertise a reissued version in the early 1930's. This was not uncommon since the matrixes from a recording session might often be used in the production of records for various labels. Several Brunswick recordings were reissued on the budget-priced Supertone label, whose records were sold through Sears, Roebuck.

"The Miners' Doom" was far from the only West Virginia song recorded nationally in those days, nor was it the only mine disaster song. Broadway Records #2023 coupled "The Explosion at Eccles, West Virginia" with "The Snow Storm," attributed to singer Henry Whitter from Fries, Virginia. Logan County's Frank Hutchison, known as the "Pride of West Virginia," was beginning his successful recording career at the same time.

John Unger was paid $50 by Brunswick for the lyrics of "The Miners' Doom." It must have seemed a sizable sum to him, and it paid his family's bills for a while. He also was granted exclusive distribution rights in his local area for the Brunswick platter. In addition, Unger had handbills of the lyrics printed at the local newspaper office and sold them when he performed the song during his travels. He abandoned his original melody after the Dalhart record's release, adopting Andrew Jenkins's tune from then on.

Unger's wife, Nellie, whom he married on October 16, 1920, supported her husband's musical efforts. As she recalled it, John authored more than 100 songs, but the words to only "The Miners' Doom" and five others remained in her possession by the early 1980's.



The Miners' Doom

By JOHN UNGER

All comrades, wives and children,
Please listen what I say,
About your dearest loved ones
Who left their homes one day;
They went to Berkeley sand mine,
Not very far away,
But they will not return
Until the judgment day.

Early one Monday morning,
A warm June summer day,
They bade farewell to loved ones
And started on their way;
They all were gay and happy
And joked with every one,
But none of them were thinking
That death was soon to come.

Then side by side they started
In mine to do their work,
But still they were not thinking
That they would soon be hurt;
But on that Monday evening,
Something past four o'clock,
There was a great explosion
Which covered them with rock.

Then friends and comrades struggled
To save them from their doom,
But six young men lie sleeping
Beneath the sand and stone;
Now miners all take warning,
From these six young men's fate,
And get right with your Maker,
Before it is too late.

Dear mothers do not worry,
Wives and children don't cry,
But try to meet your loved ones
In that sweet bye and bye;
There is a home in Heaven,
Where there's no tears and pain,
There is no death nor sorrow,
And they will live again.

Country star Vernon Dalhart recorded John Unger's song in 1927. The lyrics are shown here on Unger's original handbill.

These other songs by Unger were also of a sentimental nature. "The Williamsport School Bus Wreck" was a ballad that told of an accident involving a school bus from nearby Williamsport, Maryland, and a train, resulting in the deaths of 14 students. "A Gold Star Mother" told of a mother who lost her son in World War I. "There Is A Gold Star In My Window" had the same theme. "What God Commands of You" and "Send Me A Letter From Heaven" were both religious numbers. Unger apparently submitted "Gold Star Mother" to the record company, but Brunswick rejected this second offering and he never tried again.

Relatives remember other original songs, including one about the devastating regional flood of 1936 and another about the famous Johnstown Flood, but unfortunately these ballads have not survived. Nor are any recordings of Unger's singing known to exist, although everyone who heard him praised the excellent quality of his voice.

Since he couldn't see to write, Unger would often summon Nellie to jot down the song lyrics that he created. He also knew the local telephone operators well enough to call on them. If a new verse came into his mind and Nellie wasn't around, he would sing the song to the operator who would, in turn, transcribe the lyrics.

By all accounts, John Unger the man did not differ greatly from John Unger the musician. He was a perfectionist who would practice his music over and over again until he had it just the way he wanted it. In his daily life, he showed the same determination. Once this blind man walked from Hancock, Maryland, to Berkeley Springs, a six-mile trip that entails crossing the Potomac

River bridge.

Those who remember him say that Unger did not know the meaning of the word "pity" and rejected with hostility anyone who tried to offer him sympathy, though his life was filled with tragedy. He and Nellie lost two children before they reached age four, and another two were born dead. Only one daughter, Gladys, survived to adulthood.

Today Gladys has many fond memories of her father. She recalls that despite his lack of formal education he was very mathematically-inclined, a talent that he shared with many other musicians. He could compute math problems in his head faster than many people could do them with pencil and paper. He could tell you what day of the week Christmas and other special occasions would fall on for years into the future.

John Unger's mind was also something of a genealogical log. Gladys recalls that her father once joked about her going on a date with her 11th cousin and proceeded to give her a long detailed accounting of their family tree, which, of course, all came purely from the depths of his memory.

He traveled widely to perform, often assisted by two dogs, Pooch and Rags, which he trained himself. To family and friends, these dogs were amiable pets, but they could instill fear in strangers. Family legend has it that both committed suicide shortly after Unger's death. At different times, they are each supposed to have stood in the middle of the road and allowed themselves to be run over by a passing vehicle, yet in their training as leader dogs they knew the dangers of the highway.

Unger's travels as a street musician took him into some rough places. He was said to have been a physically strong man who never backed away from a fight. He had what some called "a death grip" and would not let go of an adversary until he had conquered him.

At the same time, John Unger was a generous man. Gladys recalls that once while he was performing his music on a street corner, she told him that there was another blind man nearby selling pencils. Her father instructed her to take a portion of the money that he had earned that day and donate it to the other man. It was a lesson she never forgot.

John Unger in later years with Pooch and Rags. Photographer unknown, about 1951.

Relatives and friends recall that Unger had other abilities than music. One remembers that he crafted beautiful necklaces, which he also sold. The income from John's music and other enterprises, as well as from his wife's job at a local sewing factory, managed to sustain the family through the Great Depression.

But things were never easy for the Ungers of Berkeley Springs. When asked several years ago about artifacts from John's career, such as correspondence from the Brunswick Company, the contract for "The Miners' Doom," lyrics to other songs and other memorabilia, his widow Nellie replied that they were probably burned in the wood stove. They were worth more as heat in hard times than as pages for posterity.

So today musician John Unger survives mostly in memory. Only a few people can remember only a few titles of the songs that he wrote and sang. Unfortunately, the lyrics to pieces that may have been historically interesting, like his ballad "The Flood of 1936," followed the songwriter to the grave. Many other Unger ballads no doubt met the same fate.

Unger always told people that his musical ability was a God-given talent. While his audiences were not always large and certainly his take was not always high, his tunes were usually appreciated and his life as a musician seems to have been fulfilling. On April 10, 1951, he died at his home in Hancock, Maryland. He is buried in Greenway Cemetery in Berkeley Springs.

Today, 67 years after the fatal explosion, most of the inhabitants of Morgan County have forgotten the 1926 tragedy. The Berkeley Springs sand mines are now part of U.S. Silica, a multinational corporation. But when the trees are bare, you can still spot traces of earlier mines — the Pittsburgh & West Virginia, Speer-White, and nearest to town, Berkeley Glass Sand Company, where the stone bulged out without warning one day and claimed six lives in a terrible dream.

Further Reading

For more information on the Morgan County sand mine industry read "Sand Man: Glass Sand Engineer Earle T. Andrews," by Charles W. Warnock, in the Spring 1986 GOLDENSEAL. Mr. Andrews was an official with the Berkeley Works of the Pennsylvania Glass Sand Company, which bought out the Berkeley Glass Sand Company a few years after the 1926 disaster. You may order copies of that issue by sending $3.95, plus $1 postage, to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

PENNSYLVANIA GLASS SAND CORP

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.

Beginner's History of West Virginia

Historian John Alexander Williams recently authored *West Virginia: A History for Beginners*. The book was published earlier this year by Appalachian Editions of Charleston.

Williams, previously best known for his *West Virginia: A Bicentennial History*, in this new book adapts the state's story for young readers and others just beginning their study of West Virginia history. He begins with the prehistoric era of the Mound Builders and other native people and continues through the Western Virginia period, statehood, industrialization and more recent times. Williams makes a point of including labor history, minority affairs, women's history, and other matters often absent from earlier books of West Virginia history.

The publishers hope to have *West Virginia: A History for Beginners* accepted for use as a junior high textbook but point out that it is intended for general readers as well. An early review in the Charleston *Sunday Gazette-Mail* recommends the book for anyone interested in acquiring a basic knowledge of West Virginia history. The book is thoughtfully designed, with most pages featuring illustrations, sidebars, or locational maps. Topper Sherwood served as editor.

West Virginia: A History for Beginners, a 298-page paperback, may be purchased in bookstores throughout the state for $19.95. Send mail orders to Trans Allegheny Books, 116 Capitol Street, Charleston, WV 25301.

Helen Ellison Scholarship

West Virginia University is honoring the memory of Helen Steele Ellison by establishing a scholarship to provide financial assistance for students in social work.

Helen Ellison, a WVU professor of social work and interim dean, died in April 1992. She and her husband Zack both contributed articles to GOLDENSEAL over the years. Helen's last feature was "Electricity Comes to the Country: Recalling Rural Electrification" in 1989. The Ellisons came from Monroe County and married in 1940 while they were students at WVU. Mrs. Ellison was a member of the National Organization for Women, West Virginia Writers, and professional organizations.

DENNIS TENNANT

Helen Steele Ellison at home in Morgantown, in 1980.

The Helen Steele Ellison Scholarship is to be awarded with preference given to a West Virginia woman. "Helen was very supportive and encouraging to women — some who had formal training and others who did not — who actually were doing social work, " said her sister, Mary Steele Morgan. Gifts in Mrs. Ellison's memory may be sent to the Helen Steele Ellison Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 4533, Morgantown, WV 26504. Make checks payable to the WVU Foundation.

Crafts Map

Residents of West Virginia as well as visitors can learn more about arts and crafts being produced in the Mountain State by requesting a copy of the official West Virginia Crafts Map. The four-color poster size map, produced in honor of the Year of American Craft 1993, locates 127 sites in West Virginia where craftspeople work or have their work on display.

The map includes studios and workshops, galleries, craft shops, art centers, and craft demonstration and education centers. It divides the state into eight regions, describes the crafts, and gives the hours of operation and a phone number for each location.

All those featured on the West Virginia Crafts Map have been juried into the crafts program of the State of West Virginia. The map resulted from a cooperative effort by several state agencies, including the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, the West Virginia Division of Tourism and Parks, the West Virginia Development Office, and the West Virginia Parkways Authority, as well as the Cedar Lakes Crafts Center and the West Virginia Artists' and Craftsmen's Guild.

To receive a free map call 1-800-CALL-WVA, or pick up a copy at rest stops along the West Virginia Turnpike or The Shop at The Cultural Center in Charleston.

Rumsey Radio

The Eastern Panhandle is home to a new radio program of music, comedy and comment. The "Rumsey Radio Hour" is produced at Reynolds Hall on the Shepherd College campus. The two-hour programs are broadcast on radio stations in West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

The radio program is named for favorite son and folk hero James Rumsey, long recognized in Shepherdstown as the true inventor of the steamboat.

The Shepherd College Theater Department is the official sponsor of the continuing series, which pre-

miered in September. Three upcoming shows will combine the talents of local writers, musicians, actors and actresses. On February 13 the Rumsey Radio Hour will travel to Hagerstown Junior College for a Mardi Gras theme show. On April 24 and June 13 Rumsey Radio returns to Shepherd College. The April program features a cappella music by the Derek Walden group.

The shows are taped live on Sunday afternoons from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., and admission is $5 for adults and $2 for children. For specific air times check local schedules for West Virginia stations WCST, Berkeley Springs; WXVA, Charles Town; WVMR, Dunmore; WOTR, Lost Creek; WRNR, Martinsburg; and WSCH in Shepherdstown. The Rumsey Radio Hour is broadcast in Maryland on WTRI in Brunswick and in Pennsylvania on WAYZ, Waynesboro. For more information contact Max Bereuffy at (304)876-6041.

History of Lewis County

In earlier times Lewis County was situated at the juncture of two major turnpikes — the Staunton and Parkersburg and the Weston and Gauley Bridge. The county's history is the subject of a recent publication sponsored by the Hackers Creek Pioneer Descendants, *A Pictorial History of Old Lewis County, The Crossroads of Central West Virginia* by Joy and Charles Gilchrist.

Joy Gregoire Gilchrist is also a GOLDENSEAL contributor, most recently writing of Lewis Countian Bill Lowther, who was "104 years old and counting" when his story appeared in the Summer 1993 magazine.

This pictorial history offers substantial text as well, beginning with Lewis County's first white settlers and bringing the reader up through present times. In his Introduction local historian Bill Adler compares the new history to Edward C. Smith's classic 1920 history of Lewis County. The Gilchrists sorted through more than 4,000 photographs to choose the final 300-plus pictures used in the book.

As the authors note in their Epilogue, "It was impossible to cram 223 years of Lewis County history into the 224 pages allotted for this book." What they accomplished is a detailed summary of the life and times of Lewis Countians. The hardbound book may be ordered for $39.50 plus $4.50 postage and handling from the Hackers Creek Pioneer Descendants, P.O. Box 37, Jane Lew, WV 26378; (304)269-7091. West Virginians must include 6% sales tax.

Doc Williams Music Catalog

MICHAEL KELLER

In 1937, the "Hindenburg" burned and Amelia Earhart disappeared. Joe DiMaggio hit 46 home runs, and Margaret Mitchell won a Pulitzer Prize for *Gone with the Wind*.

But music lovers remember 1937 as the year Doc Williams came to WWVA Radio in Wheeling. Except for brief periods at other stations, Williams has been associated with WWVA and its live radio shows ever since. With his wife and musical partner Chickie, Doc continues to work a limited schedule of concert and show appearances.

Though Doc, Chickie and their "Border Riders" have been best known through broadcast and live performances, they have also produced many country and sacred records over the decades. Now *Doc Williams Country*, the newsletter for fans of the Williamses, has published a catalog of available audio and video recordings. Over 30 items are listed. The catalog also gives the titles of the songs on each album, and usually some more information, like the history of the recording or the names of the musicians who play and sing with Doc.

To receive the free catalog of Doc Williams recordings, or to subscribe to the newsletter, write *Doc Williams Country*, 1004 Main Street, Wheeling, WV 26003-2736.

Old-Time Fans Unite

"Old-Time Music on the Radio" is a new organization for fans of Appalachian folk music, a group largely ignored by those who make programming decisions at radio stations. The organization aims to unite its members in lobbying for more airplay of their favorite music, to work with fans of related musical styles, and to promote information exchange.

The group publishes *OTR Quarterly*, a newsletter for its members. The first issue, mailed this summer, gives a good idea of the concerns and aims of the organization. A radio-station manager sensitive to folk music fans writes about how stations decide what to play. Another column lists some of the available compact discs of old-time music, and calls on readers for more information. There is a calendar of upcoming music events.

The new organization is also planning the First Annual Conference on Old-Time Music and Radio, to be held in North Carolina next May 31 through June 2.

The Augusta Heritage Center's John Lilly is the West Virginia contact for the organization, the newsletter, and the conference. Write him at OTR, c/o John Lilly, P. O. Box 3014, Elkins, WV 26241.

New Norm Julian Book

The desire "to own a piece of wild land and to become intimate with it, to get to know it through the seasons, to live on it and with it," has produced a good life for a good many West Virginians, Norm Julian among them. Julian has taken it one

step further, producing a good book as well. He calls it *Snake Hill*, for the Monongalia County community where his place is located.

In making his book, Julian found inspiration in words recalled from a professor of his at Fairmont State College. It was folklorist Ruth Ann Musick who told the class that "a good writer could find a lifetime of subjects to write about in his back yard." Norm Julian took her words to heart. He writes about country life as lived by a thoughtful countryman, including such everyday subjects as dogs, gardens, Cheat Valley snowfall, and wildfire. He's great on chickens.


Writer Norm Julian.

Snake Hill itself was named for a former resident who raised rattlesnakes there and eventually succumbed to snakebite. Julian began writing about Snake Hill for his column in the *Morgantown Dominion Post* years ago, and the columns make up most of the new book.

The West Virginia Press Association named Norm Julian first-place winner in general column writing in 1992. He is the author of the books *Cheat* and *Mountains and Valleys* and has been a GOLDENSEAL contributor since 1980. *Snake Hill* may be ordered from Trillium Publishing, Rt. 7, Box 222HH, Morgantown, WV 26505, for $12 postpaid.

Helvetia Videotape

In 1869, a small group of Swiss immigrants to America decided that New York City was not the place to begin their new lives. They wanted a home like Switzerland, where they could continue the customs and language of the old country. They bought a remote site in the mountains of Randolph County and founded the village of Helvetia.

Like many places in West Virginia, Helvetia has been passed over by progress and change. The village remains a tiny pocket of Swiss customs, populated by descendants of the few original families. The town and its unique culture are explored in a new videotape by Gerald Milnes of the Augusta Heritage Center, "Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia."

Much of the 60-minute program consists of conversation with older residents, people with names like Balli, Betler, and Burky. They proudly tell the stories of their ancestors, and show their antiques, handicrafts, homes, tools, and farms. The younger generation is represented by Bruce Betler, who has seen the outside world and come home to Swiss ways.

The center of Helvetia life seems to be food. The tape shows cheesemaking from cow to table. The Helvetians show off their homemade sausage, fresh and home-canned garden produce, fresh butter, pastries, and homemade wine. The sound track features Swiss and Appalachian music by Helvetia musicians.

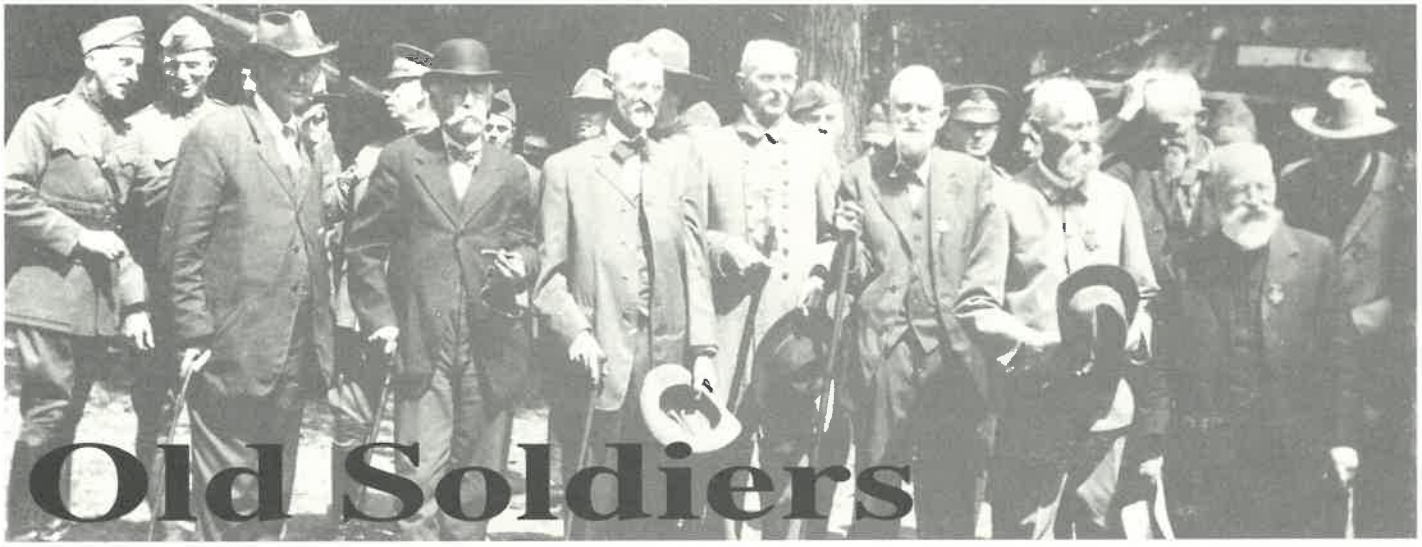
"Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia" may be ordered from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241. The cost is $25, plus $4 for shipping and handling.

State History Journal

The Archives and History section of the Division of Culture and History recently published Volume 52 of *West Virginia History*, the state historical journal. The issue is devoted to labor, and explores the influence of political and social groups outside the mainstream in West Virginia.

The journal begins with a lively exchange between historians Roger Fagge and David Corbin as to the impact of Eugene Debs on radical politics in early 20th century West Virginia. Unions are featured in articles about the International Ladies' Garment Workers attempt to organize the Perfection Garment Company in Martinsburg and the 1923-25 conflict between the United Mine Workers of America and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers over operations at a Boone County coal mine. In the latter case the UMWA found itself challenging the Brotherhood, the union which owned Coal River Collieries and wanted to run it nonunion.

West Virginia History, Volume 52, also includes its regular features, such as book reviews, notes, and recent accessions to the State Archives and other important collections around the state. It is fully indexed and illustrated with historic photographs and drawings. The 238-page softbound book is sold by subscription for $12 per annual copy. Send mail orders to *West Virginia History*, Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305. Make checks or money orders payable to *West Virginia History*.



Old Soldiers

By Reva Reed

Old soldiers gathered to swap tales for decades after the Civil War. These met at Vanmyra Church in Romney. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy State Archives.

In the early part of this century several Civil War veterans lived in our community in Harper District near Spencer, Roane County.

My earliest memory of them is of the times they came to our house to have my father do notary work. The old men sat around the fire and talked. Sometimes laughter rang out as some episode was recalled. I was too young to understand much of the conversation, but I knew they were reciting war experiences.

My sister and I were taught to call them all "Uncle" out of respect, and one was our real uncle. He was Salathial Hickle, Uncle Sase, who married my father's sister, Matilda Conley. At the age of 16 he joined Company C, 9th West Virginia Volunteers, as a drummer boy in the Union Army. We loved Uncle Sase because he gave us so much love and attention. No child forgets that.

The other old soldiers were John Romine, who was one of the leaders in our Mt. Lebanon Church; John Casto, who had a country store; and Benjamin Bailey, our neighbor across the hill, whose land joined ours.

Benjamin Bailey is not included in the list of Civil War soldiers in William Henry Bishop's classic *History of Roane County*. That list was taken from *Hardesty's History*, and Bishop himself admitted it was not complete. I just remember Mr. Bailey being there.

I also knew Uncle Johnse Carpenter, who lived in another community a few miles away. Uncle Johnse had served in the Confederate Army. Also I had a great uncle, my grandfather's brother, Jim Conley, who served in the Confederate Army. Many families were divided in their loyalty. Grandfather himself favored the Union cause.

My grandmother told me stories of the war. She had lived through it. She died in 1920 at the age of 97, still possessing a sound mind. She recalled that often a band of soldiers would stop at a house and order a meal. I have heard her say that she had cooked for them herself. On one occasion someone mistreated the cat. My aunt, a young girl then, was furious.

Groups of soldiers roamed the country, foraging for supplies and commandeering horses and cattle. One such group from the Confederate side came to Grandfather's farm and led away a horse. They proceeded up the road to the home of Stephen Starcher, who had two sons in the Confederate Army. Mr. Starcher was a respected citizen who tried to keep peace in the community.

Recognizing the horse he ordered the soldier in charge to leave it at his place. Laughing, the soldier started to ride away. There was a small creek in front of the house. Stephen Starcher drew his gun and said, "If you cross that creek, you are a dead man." The horse was left with Mr. Starcher and later returned to Grandfather.

On another occasion Grandfather was captured by the Confederates and taken to camp on Poca River. But many there knew him, and friends effected his release. Sometimes it was that kind of war.

After four long years it was over. The surviving soldiers returned home to rebuild their lives and land. Uncle Jim Conley, the family Rebel, did not return. His family assumed he had been killed. After a time his wife, Aunt Sarah, and children returned to Pennsylvania to be near her family. I don't know how long it took, but Uncle Jim did come home. He was ragged and barefoot. He had been held captive somewhere in the South and had walked home.

I do not know all the details, and I wish I had asked more questions. I know that Uncle Jim followed his family to Pennsylvania. His two daughters were playing in the yard as he approached. "Where is your daddy?" he asked. "Oh, he was killed in the war," they replied. They soon learned otherwise, no doubt to their great joy. Uncle Jim's family returned to their farm that joined the farm of his brother, my grandfather.

If there was any discord about his choice of service I never heard of it. Uncle Jim and Aunt Sarah visited us often and we them.

My husband's family was a different story. Their loyalty was with the Confederate cause, except for one son who joined the Union Army. When the war ended he came home. The rumor in the neighborhood was that he was not allowed to enter the house. My father-in-law, his brother, said that was not true, but in any event the young man left and never communicated with his family again. Much later my husband tried to locate him, but was not successful.

I have mentioned Uncle Johnse

The Civil War in West Virginia

Fayette CountianTim McKinney recently published his fifth history in as many years, *Robert E. Lee and the 35th Star*. The new book takes the reader back to 1861 for a fresh look at the campaigns of the Civil War in West Virginia. McKinney accompanies his military text with descriptions of political events that led to West Virginia becoming the 35th state in the Union.

While critical to our history, McKinney notes in his introduction that "military campaigns in eastern Virginia and other theaters of the war eventually cast the West Virginia campaigns into obscurity." His ten chapters are illustrated with historical photos and 21 maps to assist in understanding troop movements and battles. The 152-page softbound book is indexed and contains a bibliography. *Robert E. Lee and the 35th Star* may be ordered for $11.95, plus $3 postage and handling from the publisher, Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 4103 Virginia Avenue S.E., Charleston, WV 25304.

Those interested in the other most prominent Civil War general to serve in West Virginia may want to support the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation. In 1861 U.S. troops under the command of General George B. McClellan routed the Confederates holding the pass over Rich Mountain near Beverly. The victory gave the Union control of much of northwestern Virginia, essential to the creation of the new state. Today Rich Mountain Battlefield is an historic district open to the public. For more information contact the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, P.O. Box 227, Beverly, WV 26253.

Carpenter. My first memory of Uncle Johnse is seeing him ride his horse past our one-room schoolhouse one day. He was going to visit his sister, Mrs. Perry Starcher. He was singing "The Gate Ajar," a hymn which is probably not in any of the modern hymn books:

There is a gate that stands ajar,
And through its portals gleaming,
A radiance from the cross above,
The Savior's love revealing.
O, depths of mercy, can it be,
That gate was left ajar for me?

As the sweet mellow tones floated across the meadow, they were imprinted forever upon my young mind. Uncle Johnse was known for his singing and his understanding of music. He was a first cousin of my husband's father, who could sing also. I knew Uncle Johnse better in later life, when his grandchildren became my best friends. They and my husband formed a quartet that sang in local churches.

While visiting us once Uncle Johnse told me this story of the war: He was with General Lee's army in the Battle of Gettysburg under the command of General Pickett, and took part in the infamous charge up Cemetery Ridge. On the way he stopped to help a fallen comrade who had been mortally wounded and was suffering great agony. The man begged Uncle Johnse to shoot him to release him from the pain. Instead Uncle Johnse gave him water and cut a branch from a nearby tree to shade the sufferer from the hot sun. He then hurried on to join his outfit.

After the close of the war it was still a dangerous time in some places. There were more robberies and violence than usual. One story I have heard repeated many times is about the murder of the Reverend Thomas Ryan. My mother's family was from the same community as the Ryan family. This murder was thought to be a result of the war.

But there were no leftover grudges or feuds in our neighborhood that I ever knew about. Neighbors were still neighbors, friends helped each other in times of need, and our old soldiers got along.

Back Issues Available

If you want to complete your GOLDENSEAL collection or simply get acquainted with earlier issues, some back copies of the magazine are available. The cost is $3.95 per copy, plus $1 for postage and handling for each order. A list of available issues and their cover stories follows. To get your back copies, mark the issue(s) you want and return with a check for the right amount to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

_____Fall 1980/Recalling Mother Jones
_____Fall 1981/Myrtle Auvil of Grafton
_____Winter 1984/Webster County's Mollohan Mill
_____Fall 1985/Dulcimer Maker Ray Epler
_____Winter 1985/Huntington 1913
_____Spring 1986/Blacksmith Jeff Fetty
_____Summer 1986/The Draft Horse Revival
_____Fall 1986/West Virginia Chairmaking
_____Summer 1987/Camden Park History
_____Fall 1988/Craftsman Wilbur Veith
_____Spring 1989/Printer Allen Byrne
_____Summer 1990/Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
_____Winter 1990/Sisters of DeSales Heights
_____Summer 1991/Fiddler Melvin Wine
_____Fall 1991/The Zekanys of Logan County
_____Winter 1991/Meadow River Lumber Company
_____Spring 1992/Home to Swandale
_____Summer 1992/Dance, West Virginia!
_____Fall 1992/Bell Bottoms at Bethany
_____Summer 1993/Fairmont Romance
_____Fall 1993/Twin Falls State Park

You may also order bulk copies of current or past issues of GOLDENSEAL, as quantities permit. The price is $2.50 per copy on orders of ten or more copies of the same issue (plus $3 for postage and handling for each order).

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Goldenseal Index

Volume 19, 1993

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The index for the first three volumes of Goldenseal appeared in the April-September 1978 issue, and the index for Volumes 4 and 5 in the January-March 1980 magazine. The index for each successive volume appears in the final issue of the calendar year (e.g., Volume 18, Number 4).

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We've Lost Weight!

You may have noticed that your GOLDENSEAL is slightly trimmer than usual. This reflects a reduction in the paper weight, from 70-pound to 60-pound stock. While the weight loss per magazine is tiny — .0707 of a pound, to be exact — it adds up to more than a ton for all the copies we mail each time. The postage savings comes to several thousand dollars a year.

The number of pages in your magazine remains the same.

Our Writers and Photographers

JEAN BATTLO, a native West Virginian and professional artist, taught 22 years in the public schools and as an adjunct professor at the college level. She is a playwright who helps to develop community theater groups and conducts playwriting workshops in the schools and for the public. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

I. LYNN BECKMAN was born in West Virginia and grew up in Garrett County, Maryland. A graduate of West Virginia University and the Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia, the Reverend Beckman has been at Burlington United Methodist Family Services since 1988. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

CODY A. BURDETTE describes himself as a railroad man, as were his father and grandfather. He worked for the Elk River Coal & Lumber Company during the 1950's, and also as an auto mechanic. A native West Virginian, he now lives in Tennessee. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1992.

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

MARY COBB, born in Summers County, moved to the Kanawha Valley when just a child. She is an active member of Pratt's Old Town Hall Association and has published articles and photographs in *Blue Ridge Country* and other magazines. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1991.

MARK CRABTREE was born in Brooke County and earned a B.S. in journalism from WVU. Crabtree, who now lives in Morgantown, has worked extensively as a photographer and served as project coordinator for the West Virginia Coal Life's Project photography exhibit. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1992.

JOHN DOUGLAS is an accomplished mystery writer. Originally from Cumberland, Maryland, he now lives in Berkeley Springs where he is news editor at *The Morgan Messenger*. His books *Shawnee Alley Fire, Blind Spring Rambler,* and *Haunts* feature fictionalized Potomac Valley settings. Douglas has been an unofficial advisor to GOLDENSEAL on Panhandle affairs for a long time, but this is his first contribution to the magazine.

CARL E. FEATHER lives in Ohio, but traces his family back to Preston and Tucker counties and visits West Virginia as often as he can. He has been a freelance photographer for 20 years and a freelance writer for eight. He is now lifestyles editor at the *Ashtabula Star-Beacon*. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1987.

CLARK HAPTONSTALL recently received his master's degree in athletic administration from Marshall University. He now works in the sports information office at Marshall. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

JOHN S. NEWBRAUGH, born and raised in Berkeley Springs, earned degrees in education at Shepherd College and Marshall University. He has taught for 24 years, currently at Berkeley Springs High School. A musician, writer, and the owner of Newbraugh Brothers Toys, he was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story in Spring 1983. This is his first contribution to the magazine.

REVA REED is 93 years old. She was born in Roane County and began teaching on an eighth grade education. During her teaching years, she continued her own schooling. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1992.

PEGGY ROSS moved to her husband's 200-year-old family homeplace in Preston County several years back. 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 Summer 1993.

DANNY WILLIAMS is the folk arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON grew up as a "University brat" in Morgantown and later graduated from WVU. She has worked in business, as a teacher, and a librarian in both West Virginia and Pennsylvania. She now lives in a renovated log house built in 1868. She has been published in *Pennsylvania* magazine. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

EUGENE WOLFE was born in Monongah. He is a veteran of Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War, and a retired Navy speech and documentary film writer. He has published a volume of World War II poetry. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1992.

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Inside Goldenseal

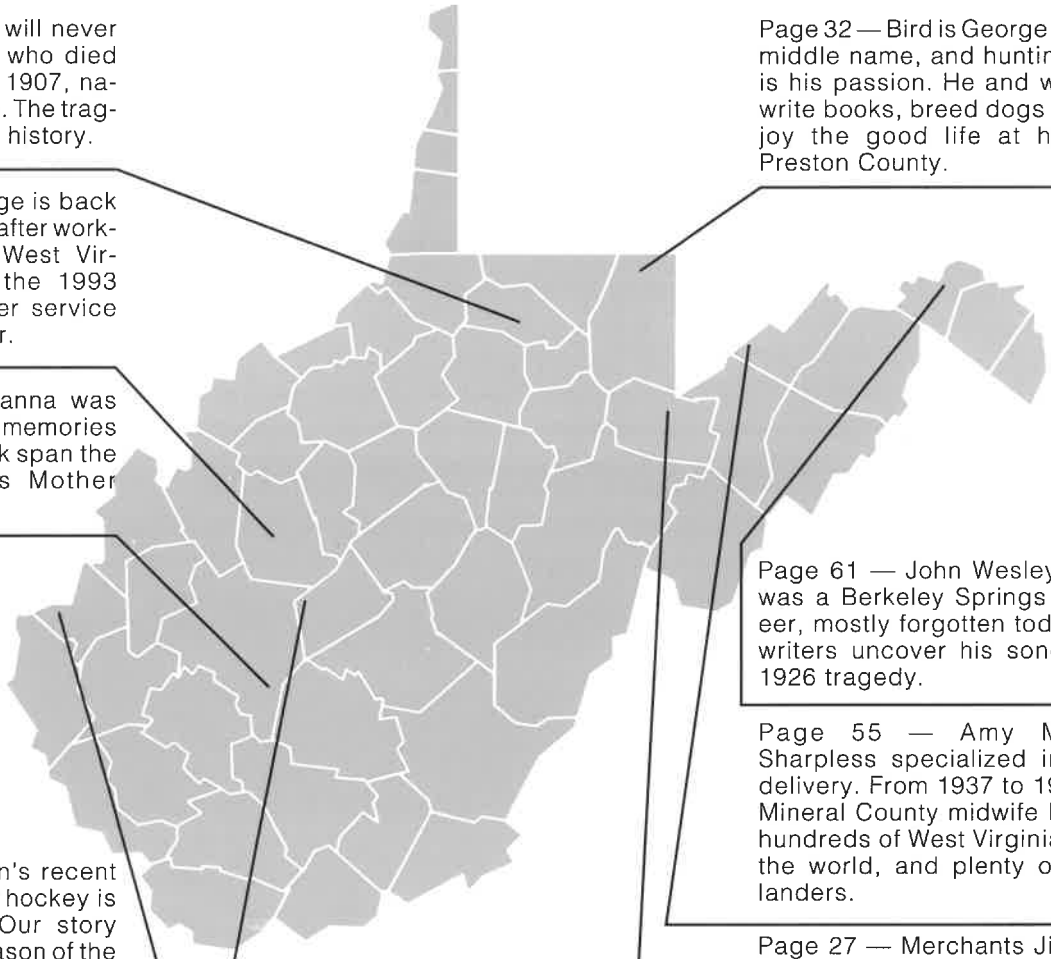
Page 9 — Monongah will never forget the 361 miners who died there on December 6, 1907, native Eugene Wolfe says. The tragedy is the worst in our history.

Page 47 — Jane George is back home in Roane County after working across southern West Virginia. She received the 1993 Vandalia Award for her service as a heritage promoter.

Page 16 — Lucille Hanna was born in 1897 and her memories of Pratt and Paint Creek span the century. She recalls Mother Jones, among others.

Page 41 — Huntington's recent entry into professional hockey is not unprecedented. Our story recalls the 1956-57 season of the Huntington Hornets.

Page 6 — Like many others, Cody Burdette's family suffered hard times in the Great Depression. The memories have been handed down, he says.



Page 32 — Bird is George Evans's middle name, and hunting birds is his passion. He and wife Kay write books, breed dogs and enjoy the good life at home in Preston County.

Page 61 — John Wesley Unger was a Berkeley Springs balladeer, mostly forgotten today. Our writers uncover his song of a 1926 tragedy.

Page 55 — Amy Mildred Sharpless specialized in home delivery. From 1937 to 1968 this Mineral County midwife brought hundreds of West Virginians into the world, and plenty of Marylanders.

Page 27 — Merchants Jim Cooper and John DePollo have more than 179 years of Tucker County living between the two of them. We bet they started storekeeping before you were born.

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