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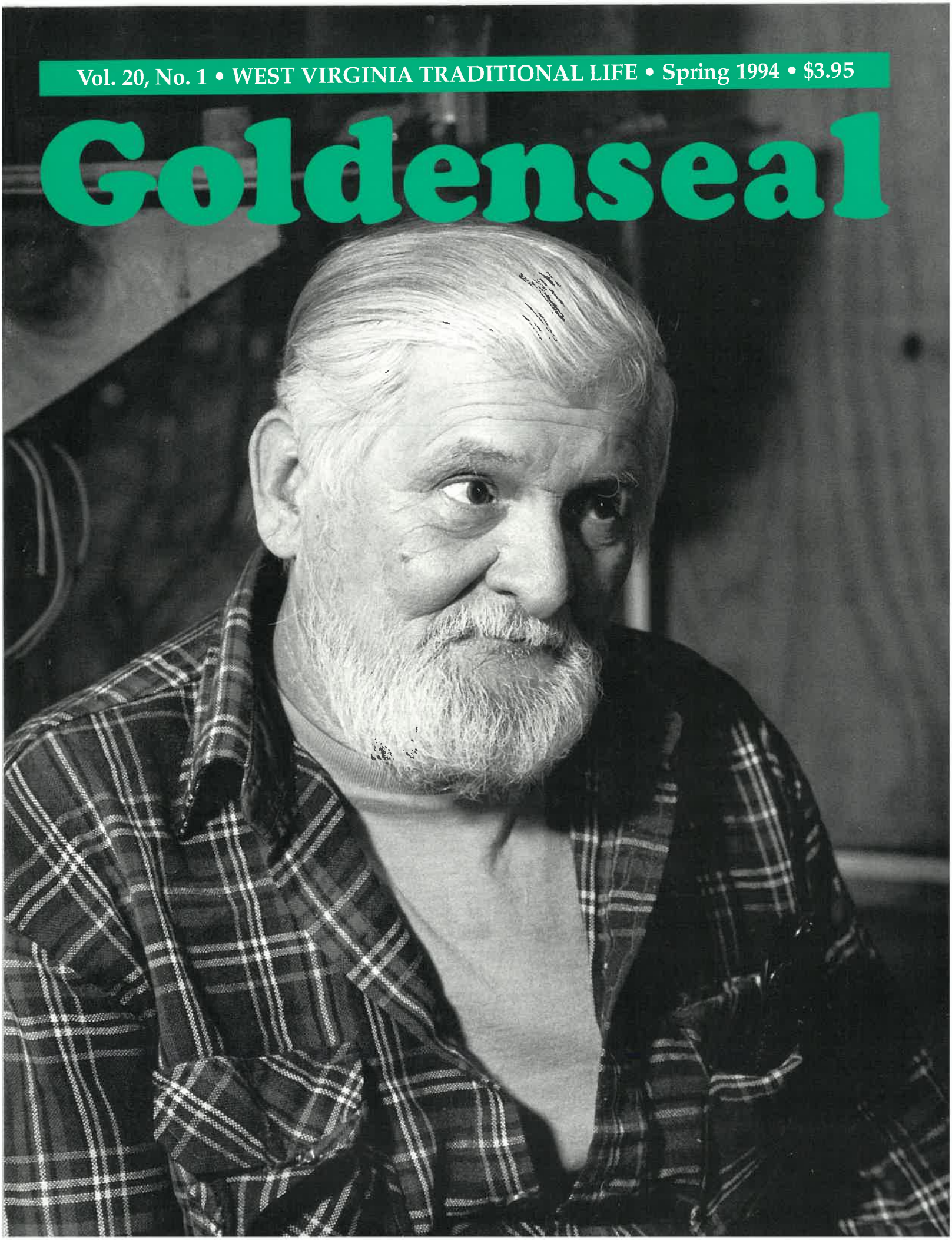
Goldenseal



Folklife*Fairs*Festivals

GOLDENSEAL's "Folklife Fairs Festivals" calendar is prepared three to six months in advance of publication. The information was accurate as far as we could determine at the time the magazine went to press. However, it is advisable to *check with the organization or event to make certain that dates or locations have not been changed*. The phone numbers given are all within the West Virginia (304) area code. Information for events at West Virginia State Parks and major festivals is also available by calling 1-800-CALL WVA.

April 16 Richwood (846-6790)
Feast of the Ramson
April 16 Sutton (636-1903)
Melvin Wine Birthday Concert (Landmark Studio)
April 16-17 Gassaway (364-2340)
Braxton County Arts & Crafts Show
April 22-24 Elkins (636-1903)
International Ramp and Augusta Dulcimer Festival
April 23 Salem (782-5245)
Green Tree Folk Fair (Fort New Salem)
April 24 Clay (587-4274)
22nd Clay County Ramp Dinner
April 27-May 1 Mullens (732-8000)
Dogwood Festival
April 29-May 1 Huntington (696-5990)
Dogwood Festival
May 4-8 Parkersburg (428-3000)
Rendezvous on the River (Blennerhassett)
May 8 Grafton (265-1589)
Mother's Day Celebration
May 12-15 Davis (558-3370)
33rd Wildflower Pilgrimage (Blackwater Falls)
May 18-22 Buckhannon (472-9036)
West Virginia Strawberry Festival
May 19 Matewan (426-4239)
Battle of Matewan Commemoration
May 21 Mingo (339-2249)
Allegheny Mountain Wool Fair
May 21-29 Webster Springs (847-7666)
Webster County Woodchopping Festival
May 26-29 Bluefield (327-7184)
Mountain Festival
May 27-29 Charleston (558-0220)
Vandalia Gathering
May 27-30 Wheeling (242-7700)
Spring Folk Dance Camp (Oglebay Park)
May 27-29 White Sulphur Springs (1-800-284-9440)
Dandelion Festival
May 28-30 Fairmont (366-7986)
Head-of-the-Mon Horseshoe Tournament
June 2-4 Crum (393-4187)
Bobby's Riverbend Bluegrass Festival
June 2-5 Philippi (457-3701)
Blue & Gray Reunion
June 3-5 New Martinsville (455-4215)
River Heritage Festival
June 4 Martinsburg (267-4434)
8th General Adam Stephen Day
June 4-5 Capon Bridge (822-4326)
Confederate Memorial Ceremony (Capon Chapel)
June 6-12 Camden-on-Gauley (226-5611)
Lane's Bottom Days
June 9-12 St. Marys (684-2848)
West Virginia Bass Festival
June 10-12 Ronceverte (645-7911)
Ronceverte River Festival
June 10-12 Morgantown (599-3407)
Mountaineer Country Glass Festival
June 10-12 Charles Town (725-2055)
Spring Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
June 16-19 Glenville (462-7361)
West Virginia State Folk Festival
June 18 Terra Alta (789-2411)
West Virginia Day
June 18-19 Greenville (832-6775)
5th Old Mill Spring Festival
June 20 Wheeling (238-1300)
West Virginia Day (Independence Hall)
June 22-26 Summersville (872-3145)
Bluegrass-Country Music Festival
June 25 Hillsboro (799-4048)
Pearl S. Buck Birthday Celebration
June 27-August 5 Salem (782-5245)
Fort New Salem Heritage Workshops
June 30-July 4 Ripley (372-7866)
Mountain State Art & Craft Fair (Cedar Lakes)
July 1-4 Weirton (748-7212)
International Food & Arts Festival
July 2-3 New Manchester (564-3561)
Mid-Summer Music Festival (Tomlinson Run)
July 8-10 Marlinton (799-4315)
Pioneer Days in Pocahontas County
July 9 Caretta (875-3418)
Mountain Music Festival
July 9-10 Point Pleasant (675-5737)
Pioneer Days & Wheat Harvest (Farm Museum)
July 10-August 12 Elkins (636-1903)
Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops
July 17-23 Mineral Wells (489-1301)
West Virginia Interstate Fair
July 22-24 Wheeling (233-1090)
Upper Ohio Valley Italian Festival
July 24-30 Cowen (226-3939)
Cowen Historical Railroad Festival
July 24-30 Moundsville (845-3980)
Marshall County Fair
July 25-30 Moorefield (538-2725)
West Virginia Poultry Convention
July 27-29 Wayne (523-6214)
Wayne County Fair (Police Farm)
July 29-31 Mt. Nebo (476-3466)
44th State Gospel Sing
August 1-6 Bramwell (248-8227)
Bramwell Street Fair
August 2-6 Petersburg (538-2278)
Tri-County Cooperative Fair
August 3-7 Hinton (466-5400)
State Water Festival
August 4-7 Clifftop (438-6429)
Appalachian String Band Festival (Camp Washington Carver)
August 4-7 Spanishburg (425-1429)
Bluestone Valley Fair
August 5-7 Gauley Bridge (632-2645)
Civil War Days Town Celebration
August 5-7 Wheeling (243-4001)
West Virginia Glass Festival (Oglebay Park)
August 6-7 Harrisville (659-2755)
Hughes River Holiday & Horseshoe Tourney
August 7-13 Richwood (846-6790)
Cherry River Festival
August 8-13 Middlebourne (758-2511)
Tyler County Fair
August 8-13 Matewan (426-4239)
Magnolia Fair
August 10-13 Elizabeth (275-4517)
Wirt County Fair
August 11-14 Danville (369-2291)
Boone County Fair
August 12-14 Logan (752-1324)
Logan County Arts & Crafts Fair

(continued on inside back cover)

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William M. Drennen, Jr.
Commissioner

Ken Sullivan
Editor

Debby Sonis Jackson
Assistant Editor

Cornelia Crews Alexander
Editorial Assistant

Anne H. Crozier
Graphic Design

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Goldenseal

Volume 20, Number 1 Spring 1994

COVER: Connard Wolfe's sculpture has found a place in the Governor's Mansion, the State Museum, out-of-state art galleries — and on remote Kanawha County hillsides. Our article begins on page 9. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Eugene Burner, Greg Clark, Bob Connor, Harold S. Fawcett, Norton Lewis Gusky, Michael Keller, S. W. Kuhnert, Russell Lee, Gerald S. Ratliff, Dennis Tennant, Danny Williams

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.

December 15, 1993
Clendenin, West Virginia
Editor:
Cody Burdette's excellent article, "Recalling the Great Depression: Hard Times on a Hillside Farm" (Winter 1993), reminded me of similar difficult times endured by my family during the Great Depression in the same area.

When I was five years old in 1930, my father was so severely injured in a slate fall at a Montcoal, Raleigh County, coal mine that he could no longer work in the mines. Our family was destitute when my paternal grandfather was kind enough to let Dad clear and farm the hilltop portion of his farm at Barren Creek, near Clendenin. Dad cut down trees and made a small two-room cabin from the logs. We had no electricity, natural gas, phone or running water.

We had a small, four-lid, cast-iron cookstove in the kitchen and a homemade heating stove made from an oil drum in the other room. Coal was very expensive and we bought only four or five bushels each year from a nearby privately-owned mine. A lump or two now and then in the cookstove hastened the preparation of meals, but we never used coal in the oil drum heater since the intense heat would soon burn through the thin walls of the drum. Even burning wood the oil drum stove had to be replaced each year.

One winter when I was six or seven years old our house caught on fire from the oil drum heater. Dad was gone to town, and it was very cold. Mom put so much wood in the stove that the stove pipe glowed red and caught the ceiling on fire. Mom was recovering from a near-fatal case of typhoid fever and was too weak to hurl buckets full of water to the ceiling, and as the oldest child I was too little to be of much help.

There were two active gas wells on Grandpa's farm near our house. As luck would have it, a gas field worker had walked by our house when the fire started. My mother had seen him go by and sent me racing after him for help. He was able to extinguish the fire with water pumped from an outside dug well. Fortunately, the hand pump wasn't frozen.
Sincerely,
Ottis L. Dilworth

More Marbles Memories

November 4, 1993
Santa Maria, California
Editor:
My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed the story, "Marbles in the Mountain State," in the Summer 1993 issue. My brother-in-law, Homer Adkins, was a participant in the 1941 and 1942 national tournaments in Wildwood, New Jersey. Homer, an Elkview boy, represented Charleston in the 1941 and 1942 tournaments, winning more games in 1942 (46 of 48) than the eventual champion, Charles Mott of Huntington. Homer won the 1942 *Daily Mail* tournament for Charleston by winning 26 of 26 games.

Champion Homer Adkins waves good-bye to friends and family, including George Daugherty (right). Photographer unknown.

Homer has allowed me to make some copies of scrapbook pictures taken during his tournament days. I am enclosing one such picture showing Homer waving good-bye to family and friends after winning the right to represent Charleston in the 1941 national tournament in Wildwood. Homer's mother and dad (now deceased) are shown in the photo, as is the boy in the hat on the far right, George Daugherty, a well-known Charleston attorney.

I thought you might enjoy hearing of one more West Virginia champion, Homer Adkins!
Richard J. Hall

And we know George as the Earl of Elkview and a long-time judge in the West Virginia State Liars' Contest. Thanks for writing. —ed.

Schnitzelbank or Schnide Bank?

November 19, 1993
Exchange, West Virginia
Editor:
In your summer issue you ran an article on the shave horse edited by a WVU professor. In it he stated the Pennsylvania Dutch called it a schnitzelbank.

Being a Pennsylvania Dutchman of 81 years, as well as a descendent of a woodworking family, I want to correct that phrase.

The designation is Schnide Bank. The term "Schnitzle Bank" refers to loose or bombastic talk, akin to our bull or bunk.
Yours truly,
Earl Zettle

We're contrary enough not to want to look outside the Mountain State for anything in the way of intellectual enlightenment, but we figured we'd better go back to the Pennsylvania Dutch home country to resolve this one. Consequently, we called on our good friend and occasional freelance writer, Dr. Louis Athey, a professor emeritus at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He writes in part as follows:

It may very well be the case that in a localized dialect the term "Schnide Bank" is used by a group of Pennsylvania Dutch to designate a cutting bench or "shave horse." I

have not, however, been able to find the term in use by Pennsylvania Dutch in Lancaster County.

The word "schnitzel" is from the Indo-European root "sneit," meaning to cut. In Old German the verb "to cut" was "snitan," in Middle Dutch "sniden." The world "Schnitz," meaning "slice," evolved from the verb form "sniz" in Middle High German.

The diminutive formed by adding "el" to Schnitz changes cuts to cutlets and permits the definition of Schnitzel as cuttings, shavings, or small slices. That is precisely what German craftsmen, then Pennsylvania Dutch craftsmen, did on their schnitzelbanks while making shingles or other wood pieces.

We thank Mr. Zettle for raising the question. —ed.

An Old Soldier Remembered

Benjamin F. Bailey, with wife Nancy. Photographer and date unknown.

December 28, 1993
Wheat Ridge, Colorado
Editor:
I have been a reader of GOLDENSEAL for several years. In the "Old Soldiers" article in the winter issue, Reva Reed stated: "Benjamin Bailey, our neighbor across the hill, is not included in the list of Civil War soldiers in William Henry Bishop's classic history of Roane County...I just remember Mr. Bailey being there."

Benjamin F. Bailey was indeed a Civil War veteran. He was born July 8, 1844, entered service with the North while living in Fairfax County, Virginia, was wounded, discharged and is believed to have migrated to Roane County around 1875. He obtained a quarter-section of land, built a typical two-story house 'just over the hill' from Reva Reed's home. The post office address was Zona, about eight miles from Spencer.

Benjamin raised 12 children, the last of whom was born in 1898. His descendants are scattered throughout the United States; however, many are in West Virginia. I know these facts firsthand; Benjamin was my grandfather. When he died in 1921, the farm was passed down to my father, Dennis Bailey. I was born there and lived there for 19 years until entering the service in World War II.

I received all my elementary schooling at Zona, a one-room school. Reva Reed was one of my better teachers. It was she, along with other dedicated teachers such as Ross Conley and Mark Hershman, who gave me much of the foundation and inspiration to later pursue a lengthy career in education.
Sincerely,
Joseph K. Bailey

Another Thomas Merchant

December 28, 1993
Lakeside, Ohio
Editor:
The "Merchants of Thomas" article in the Winter '93 issue of GOLDENSEAL brought to mind the years when my uncle, Tracey A. Curry, was the pharmacist in Thomas. The drugstore was owned by a medical doctor whose name I do not remember. With its counter stools and ice cream tables and chairs, the drugstore was something of a town gathering place. In the late 1920's and 1930's, it was one of the pleasures of my childhood to be treated to all the concoctions available at the soda fountain.

When I visited Uncle "Doc" and his wife, Virginia Witten Curry, they also arranged for me to have unlimited admissions to the Sutton Theater. By the 1940's, they had moved from a house to space over the theater that had once been a lodge hall.

Aunt Virginia taught school in Thomas for many years. During the Depression, she was employed by one of the New Deal agencies to teach homemaking classes designed to help women prepare nutritious meals and maintain their homes as economically as possible. For a few years, she managed a little hotel in Davis.

When we visited Thomas, we would go to see Blackwater Falls, long before the lodge and other park facilities were even on the drawing board.
Best regards,
Sally Sue Witten

Mountain Midwives

January 4, 1994
Mt. Storm, West Virginia
Editor:
First, I'd like to wish for you and your staff a happy, prosperous new year. Your winter issue has two articles about friends in it. The first is "Dogs and Birds and Shooting." George and Kay Evans hunted many years on our Maple Croft Farm with their beautiful dogs. Kay may have some photos taken on our farm.

The other article, "Home Delivery," truly brings back memories. Amy Mildred Sharpless delivered our younger son, David, who now carries on the oldest purebred Angus herd in West Virginia on the Maple Croft Farm. I've often said

DENNIS TENNANT

This 1983 GOLDENSEAL photo of David Davis (right) looks like another job well done by midwife Amy Sharpless.

he was the most costly of our home delivered babies.

Myrtle Wilson, also a midwife mentioned in the article, helped deliver our first three children and

herself delivered two of our six, next to David. These midwives no doubt saved many babies back when country doctors were too busy to get to the "far apart" rural homes. We mothers need to thank God for these faithful midwives who loved and cared for us in those difficult times.
Sincerely yours,
Cora Hanlin Davis

It is very good to hear from Mrs. Davis, our old friend and former freelancer. —ed.

Salt Risin' Bread

January 8, 1994
Huntington, West Virginia
Editor:
Those articles on "Salt Rising" were very interesting. However, I never heard it called salt rising. It was always called "Salt Risin'." I felt that should have been mentioned.

I remember the importance of the starter. When the barometer dropped, a storm was brewing and the milk in the spring house got "blinky." Also, the salt risin' soured. Then I was sent to a neighbor's home for starter.
Sincerely,
Mrs. Charles C. Czompo

Feeling left out of the discussion? If you want to know more about past articles mentioned in the "Letters" section, we'll be happy to oblige. Most back copies discussed here are available for purchase. Use the coupon on page 71, and we'll get the magazines out to you right away.

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.

Kanawha Salt Book

Shepherd College professor John Stealey recently published *The Antebellum Kanawha Salt Business & Western Markets*, the first major study of an important chapter in West Virginia's economic history.

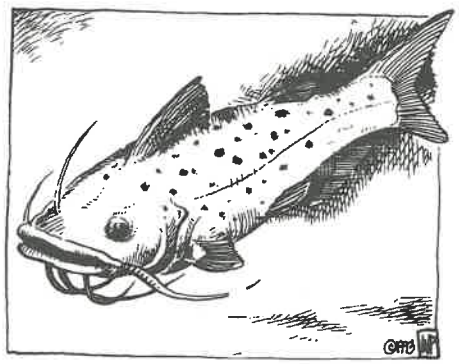
The Kanawha Valley's abundant salt resources have been known since prehistoric times, particularly the big lick at Malden. The commercial salt business was born just after 1800, when the Ruffners and others drilled the first brine wells on the banks of the river. The industry was important as a precursor to the chemical industry, in pioneering well-drilling techniques later used in the oil and gas industries, and for its role in establishing several leading local families.

Professor Stealey is especially interested in the legal and organizational history of Kanawha salt manufacturing, seeing the industry as an early model of the price-fixing and consolidation trends which were later to dominate the 19th-century American economy. He places his story within the larger history of an expanding West, whose citizens and business enterprises — Ohio Valley pork packers in particular — provided a growing market for local salt makers.

The Antebellum Kanawha Salt Business was published by the University Press of Kentucky. The 261-page hardbound book sells for $36.

Skip Johnson's Woods & Waters

Skip Johnson would probably deny it, but when he retired from the Charleston *Gazette* in 1992 he was widely considered the dean of West Virginia's outdoors writers. By then, he had written the paper's popular "Woods & Waters" hunting and fishing column for more than 30 years.



Catfish by Bill Pitzer, from *Woods & Waters*.

The experience left him with plenty of material, and a dandy title for his latest book. He calls it *Woods & Waters*, of course, subtitled *A Collection of Outdoor Stories from West Virginia and Beyond*. "Beyond" is sometimes way beyond, including Johnson's beloved Canadian North Woods fishing country, Montana, and other places.

Mostly, however, he writes of West Virginia and of matters of interest to West Virginians, whether they hunt and fish or not. "Henry the turtle, age 40, passed away quietly at his home in Elkins," one light-hearted chapter begins, while others take up matters as weighty as pollution and the state of wildlife in the Mountain State. There are profiles of memorable animals and humans, from French Creek Jack, the bear, to outdoorsman Bill Gillispie.

Woods & Waters, a 206-page paperback with illustrations by Bill Pitzer, sells for $9.95. You may purchase it in bookstores or directly from *Woods & Waters*, P.O. Box 561, Sutton, WV 26601. Mail orders please add $1.95 postage and handling, plus 60 cents sales tax from West Virginia residents.

Living History Newsletter

Those interested in the daily details of early rural life should check out *Living History*, a quarterly newsletter published in the Hudson Valley of New York.

A recent issue had an article on craftsman Jack Leadley, who makes

chairs and woven pack baskets, a short feature on a wheelwright and another on black ash as a craft material, and a discussion of scythes and similar tools, among other articles. Advertisements tout the services of blacksmiths, cobblers, harnessmakers, and buggy shops, and offer heirloom seed potatoes for sale. The subject matter is drawn mostly from Upstate New York and neighboring areas but will be readily understood by country people anywhere.

Subscriptions may be purchased for $15 yearly, by writing to *Living History*, Box 202, West Hurley, NY 12491. Editor Peter Sinclair also publishes occasional "barn trip" research reports, documenting traditional barns visited by himself and fellow enthusiasts.

Great Kanawha History

William D. Wintz recently completed his fifth book. *Annals of the Great Kanawha* is an attractive large-format publication from Pictorial Histories Publishing Company. Wintz provides a detailed account of Kanawha Valley history in the making, drawing upon diaries, journals, letters and manuscripts, and other firsthand sources of the day.

The book opens with a chapter on the activities of the English, French and Iroquois. George Washington and the Kanawha Valley follows, with subsequent chapters treating first settlers; pioneering and homesteading; the advent of the landed gentry; river fortunes and misfortunes; shoals and ferries; and natural disturbances. Wintz closes with "the worst man-made calamities ever visited on the Kanawha Valley," slavery and the Civil War. An epilogue of personal reminiscences brings the reader up to recent times with discussion of such activities as frog gigging and the annual Sternwheel Regatta in Charleston.

Wintz, one of West Virginia's most active local historians, was honored in 1979 by a national commendation from the American Association for State and Local History. His *Annals of the Great Kanawha* is a 128-page hardbound volume, heavily illustrated and fully indexed. It is available at West Virginia bookstores for $19.95.

Holly River History

Like several other West Virginia state parks, Holly River originated in the make-work programs of the Great Depression era. The idea was to put the unemployed back to work while pursuing worthwhile public goals. In Holly River's case the Federal Resettlement Administration resolved to move families from the Webster County back country and turn the area into a public recreational facility. Holly River later passed under state control, its 8,000 acres eventually sold to West Virginia for $1.

The original project area was wedged between the headwaters of the Elk and Little Kanawha rivers, and federal planners dubbed it the Kanawha Head Project. Now a new book by the same name chronicles

State Police Anniversary

West Virginia's finest are 75 years old this year. The West Virginia State Police force was created in an extraordinary session of the state legislature in 1919, largely in response to widespread labor conflict in coal and other industries. Governor John Cornwell appointed Colonel Jackson Arnold as the first superintendent of the new Department of Public Safety. Arnold enlisted Sam Taylor as West Virginia's first state trooper on July 24, 1919.

The State Police will celebrate their 75th anniversary by participating in parades, festivals and other activities throughout the state this year. They have asked for public assistance in collecting memorabilia concerning the history of the organization or of individual troopers. Old newspaper articles, photographs, old uniforms or parts of uniforms, equipment used by troopers, and pay stubs, orders, and other paperwork are among the items of interest.

Anyone wishing to contribute items may contact Sergeant Sharon G. Deitz, State Police Headquarters, 725 Jefferson Road, South Charleston, WV 25309; phone (304)746-2282. Sergeant Deitz can also provide further information about commemorative activities.

Convertible cruiser of the type used in the late 1930's and early '40's. Courtesy West Virginia State Police.

the Holly River story. Stanley Anderson's *The Kanawha Head Project: A History of Holly River State Park*, follows the project from its beginnings in the early 1930's. The book includes interview excerpts from people who recall the project, many of them as workers.

Anderson is an experienced local historian, careful to document his sources. His book is a 139-page paperback, with index, maps, and photographs. You may purchase *The Kanawha Head Project* for $12, plus $2 postage and handling, by writing to Stanley Anderson, Route 20, Box 16, Cleveland, WV 26215.

Hardy County Memoir

Margaret P. Allen of Moorefield is the author of *No Road Maps*, an entertaining account of her life set mostly in the Eastern Panhandle town she has called home for 47 years. "I've been on the road a long time," the 94-year-old says in her opening chapter, adding that she hasn't found any road maps yet. "Sometimes you'll be misdirected and have to backtrack. But sometimes you'll find those who know the way."

MICHAEL KELLER

The restored Ingleside.

Mrs. Allen was the subject of a Summer 1987 GOLDENSEAL story by longtime contributor Arthur Prichard. She grew up in Massachusetts and came to her new home following marriage to West Virginian Carl Beaty Allen. The couple met while working at a New York newspaper. "In a day when women mostly did 'women's stuff,' I was fortunate enough to be assigned to covering news," Mrs. Allen told Mr. Prichard. Her husband was a renowned aviation writer and covered Lindbergh's take-off to Paris, the Hindenberg disaster, and Amelia Earhart's last flight.

Margaret Allen says she and her husband always shared their writing and criticized one another's work. In *No Road Maps* she writes of their life together. The Allens restored two family homes in the Eastern Panhandle — first The Willows, Carl's boyhood home, and later Ingleside, which had been home to Allen's grandfather Judge James F.W. Allen.

The 135-page hardbound book, illustrated with historic photographs, sells for $11.95 and is available in bookstores or from Christopher Publishing House, 24 Rockland Street, Hanover, MA 02339; (617)826-7474.

Radio Religion

Professor Howard Dorgan, an authority on fundamentalist religion as practiced in the southern mountains, recently published *The Airwaves of Zion: Radio and Religion in Appalachia*. The new book discusses the radio preaching and singing ministries which are common throughout the mountain region.

Two of the four case studies presented by Dorgan are from southern West Virginia. These are Sister Brenda Blankenship's broadcast over WELC, Welch, and Rex and Eleanor Parker's "Songs of Salvation" on Princeton station WAEY. The Parkers are well known for their long career in country music and country gospel.

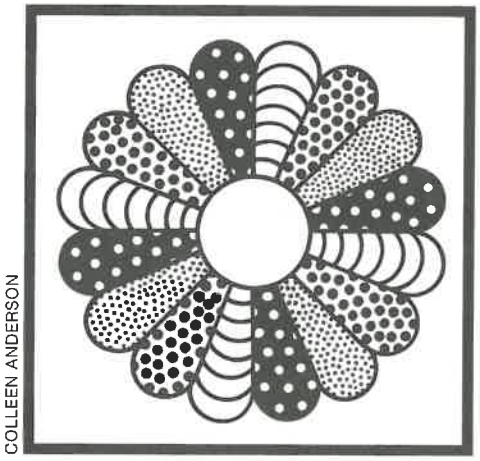
Dorgan, who has written previously of the Primitive and Old Regular Baptists, studies religion through interviews with principal figures and attendance at services. His role is that of respectful nonparticipant, although in conversation he recalls times — notably at a Baptist footwashing — when he was nearly drawn into worship.

The Airwaves of Zion, 226 pages with photographs, sells for $18.95 paperbound and $31.95 hardbound, from the University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, TN 37996-0325. You may hear Sister Blankenship's broadcast at 12:30 p.m. Sundays, WELC-AM, and "Songs of Salvation" over WAEY-AM at 8:00 a.m. Sundays.

Huntington Quilt Show

Creative Quilters of Huntington is hosting its fifth quilt show this spring at the Huntington Civic Center, in conjunction with the Dogwood Arts & Crafts Festival. "For the Love of Quilts" will be on display from April 29 through May 1.

The quilting group will exhibit quilts, wall hangings, miniatures, antique quilts, wearable art, and small quilts. Cash prizes and ribbons will be awarded to exhibitors.



COLLEEN ANDERSON

Anyone who is interested in entering a quilt must have it at the Huntington Civic Center before 9 a.m. on April 28th. Judges Margaret Meador of Princeton and Betsy Keene of Charleston will select quilts for the show. Works may include a first quilt; a group quilt; pieced, applique or whole cloth quilts; and machine quilted quilts. There is a $6 entry fee, plus $2 for each additional work submitted. However, no exhibitor will be charged more than $10.

Creative Quilters was founded in the early 1980's and grew from a class of quilting enthusiasts who shared an appreciation of the traditional art. Members will be demonstrating quilting techniques during the show. Admission is $2 per person. Children under one year old are admitted free. For more information contact Georgina Doss at 1113 Scenic Drive, Milton, WV 25541; (304)743-6420.

Traditional Cooking

Barbara Beury McCallum is the author of a new cookbook devoted to traditional West Virginia cooking. *More Than Beans and Cornbread* is drawn from some 25 years of collecting recipes. McCallum explains that the diversity of the Mountain State, both ethnically and geographically, contributed to her choices.

From fried parsnips to old-fashioned ammonia cookies, green tomato pie and pickle slaw, *More Than Beans and Cornbread* has 190 pages of recipes. "Fresh Corn Soup" follows:

Fresh Corn Soup

6 ears sweet corn (2 cups raw pulp)
1 t. salt
1/8 t. white pepper
1 t. sugar
2 cups milk or cream, heated
1 T. butter
1 t. flour

Grate corn. Cover the cobs with cold water, and boil 30 minutes, then strain. To 1 pint of this corn liquid add the raw corn pulp and cook 15 minutes. Add the seasonings and hot milk. Heat the butter, add the flour and gradually add the corn mixture. Cook 5 minutes longer. 4-6 servings.

The spiral-bound softcover cookbook contains sections on soups and stews, meats and entrees, vegetables and side dishes, breads, desserts, wild foods, beverages and condiments. *More Than Beans and Cornbread* sells for $12.95 at area bookstores. Mail orders may be sent to Trans Allegheny Books, 118 Capitol Street, Charleston, WV 25301. Shipping is $3 and West Virginians must add $.78 sales tax.

Heritage Broadcasts

West Virginia Public Radio recently announced a new series of Cultural Heritage Programming. The short broadcasts combine live recordings of festivals and concerts with studio recordings and interviews to showcase Mountain State folk artists. Performers and craftspeople from West Virginia's ethnic communities as well as traditional Appalachian talent will be featured.

The Cultural Heritage segments are interspersed throughout Public Radio's regular broadcast week, as part of state newscasts and such locally produced programs as "In the Pocket" and "Music From the Mountains." The segments are produced by Susan Leffler, a veteran radio journalist and the former folk arts specialist for the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Leffler has published several articles in GOLDENSEAL, most recently in the Winter 1992 issue.

West Virginia Public Radio's FM broadcasts may be heard on 88.5 Charleston, 91.7 Beckley, 90.9 Morgantown, 89.9 Huntington and Wheeling, 88.9 Martinsburg and Buckhannon-Weston, 90.3 Parkersburg, 88.5 Elkins, and 107.3 Clarksburg. The Cultural Heritage Programming is supported by major funding from the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Crafts at Cedar Lakes

Cedar Lakes Crafts Center, a heritage retreat in the hills of Jackson County, offers an expanding program of handicraft instruction. Upcoming crafts workshops will run from March through October.

Crafts Center workshops feature all common crafts and some not so common. The 1994 program includes classes in chair making, twig furniture, weaving, pottery, polymer clay, leaded stained glass, knifemaking, and several styles of basketry. The instructors include Roane County blacksmith Jeff Fetty, Glenville basketmaker Carol Ross, Upshur County chair maker Tom Lynch, and many other master craftspeople.

The workshops typically run for a weekend or for five consecutive weekdays. The Crafts Center also offers special quilting retreats in March and May, and a series of week-long Elderhostel sessions from March through November. The workshops are supported by financial assistance from the Arts and Humanities Section of the Division of Culture and History.

Cedar Lakes offers a variety of lodging arrangements. Workshop prices depend in part on whether students participate as commuters, or prefer dormitory, semiprivate or private sleeping rooms. Roughly speaking, 1994 prices range from as low as $50 to nearly $400, depending also on length, materials, and other factors. Elderhostel typically costs $280 per week, including room and board.

Cedar Lakes, home each summer to the huge Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, is West Virginia's FFA-FHA camp. The facility is located off Interstate 77 near Ripley. You may call (304)372-7873 for further information concerning this year's craft workshops.

Dulcimer Week at Augusta

The Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins welcomes the coming of Spring with its annual Dulcimer Week. The event takes place April 17 through 22 on the campus of Davis & Elkins College. Instruction is offered in both hammered and mountain dulcimer, in beginning, advanced beginning, and intermediate advanced categories.

The dulcimer instructors are Madeline MacNeil, who has taught at Augusta since 1982, Jerry Rockwell, Patty Looman of Mannington, Carrie Crompton and Walt Michael. Keith Young will teach a class in mountain or lap dulcimer construction. For the first time an evening "mini-class" in beginning mountain dulcimer is being offered, and Augusta evenings also include plenty of concerts, square dances, singing, and jamming.

The week concludes with the Spring Dulcimer Festival and International Ramp Cook-Off on April 22 through 24. The cost, which includes admission to all events during Spring Dulcimer Week and the weekend Spring Dulcimer Festival, is $265. For more information on lodging, tuition and classes contact the Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241; (304)636-1903.

Tools of Mountain Living: The Knot Maul

By Carl Dodrill

I was born at Bergoo, Webster County, in 1919. There in the heart of Appalachia my grandfather had hewed out a hillside farm. I thought he was the smartest man in the world. Later on I came to conclude that he was indeed a smart man, but in a common-sense sort of way.

Grandfather was from that old breed of men and women who believed in doing with what you had. He would say, "If you don't have it and can't buy it, then look around you. Use your hands and the mind God has given you and make what you need."

If anything, he was practical to a fault. I had written a poem of just three lines, but they rhymed and made sense. Grandfather read this childish attempt at poetry and remarked, "Son you have to be careful about what you do. People will overlook this writing because you're a child, but when you grow up they will frown upon such foolishness.

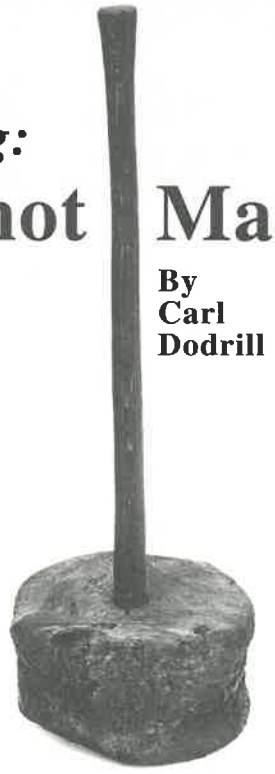
"Now, a woman can do anything and get by. But a man has to be careful that whatever he creates is something which he needs and can use."

He meant to teach me to do useful things. When I was seven years old he took me to the woods with him one day. The leaves were beginning to fall. As we walked slowly in the warm noon sun I crammed my pockets with chestnuts. Grandfather kept looking up at the trees. He finally stopped by an oak, told me to stay back, and went to work. He used a double-bitted axe to cut a deep notch at the lower side of the tree. Then he used a one-man saw to cut into the oak on the opposite side of the notch.

Finally the big oak went crashing down the hillside. We walked to the downed tree and Grandfather pointed to a huge out-growth about 20 feet up the trunk.

"Look at that knot, son," he said. "That's going to be a useful knot maul by spring or my name ain't Henry Moore Dodrill." He took his time with axe and saw removing the knot.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KELLER



Knot maul courtesy Jimmy Costa.

A knot maul was used to drive wooden fence posts into the ground. Grandfather had originally built worm fences. These were made from rails he had split by hand from the straight chestnut trees that were plentiful on the farm. All this was many years before a blight hit the chestnut trees and killed them out.

Now the age of wire fences had begun, and Grandfather needed fence posts. They were cut from locust trees, which were tough and not subject to rot like other woods.

Winter came. Grandfather brought the oak knot in and placed it on the hearthstone in front of the fireplace. Then with hammer and chisel he went to work, chipping at the knot until it was round and smooth. This took several nights while he worked by firelight.

When he had the knot just the way he wanted it he began the laborious task of burning a hole for the handle. The hole was made by heating the heavy iron poker in the open fireplace until it was red hot. The hot poker would burn slowly into the hard oak knot. When the poker cooled the process was repeated until the hole had been burned all the way through. Grandfather smoothed the inside of the hole with a rat-tail file.

Now the knot was ready for the handle. Grandfather had gone to the woods and found a straight young hickory about two inches in diameter. Out of this tree he cut a four-foot length and removed the bark. This rough handle had been laid on the barn rafters and allowed to season.

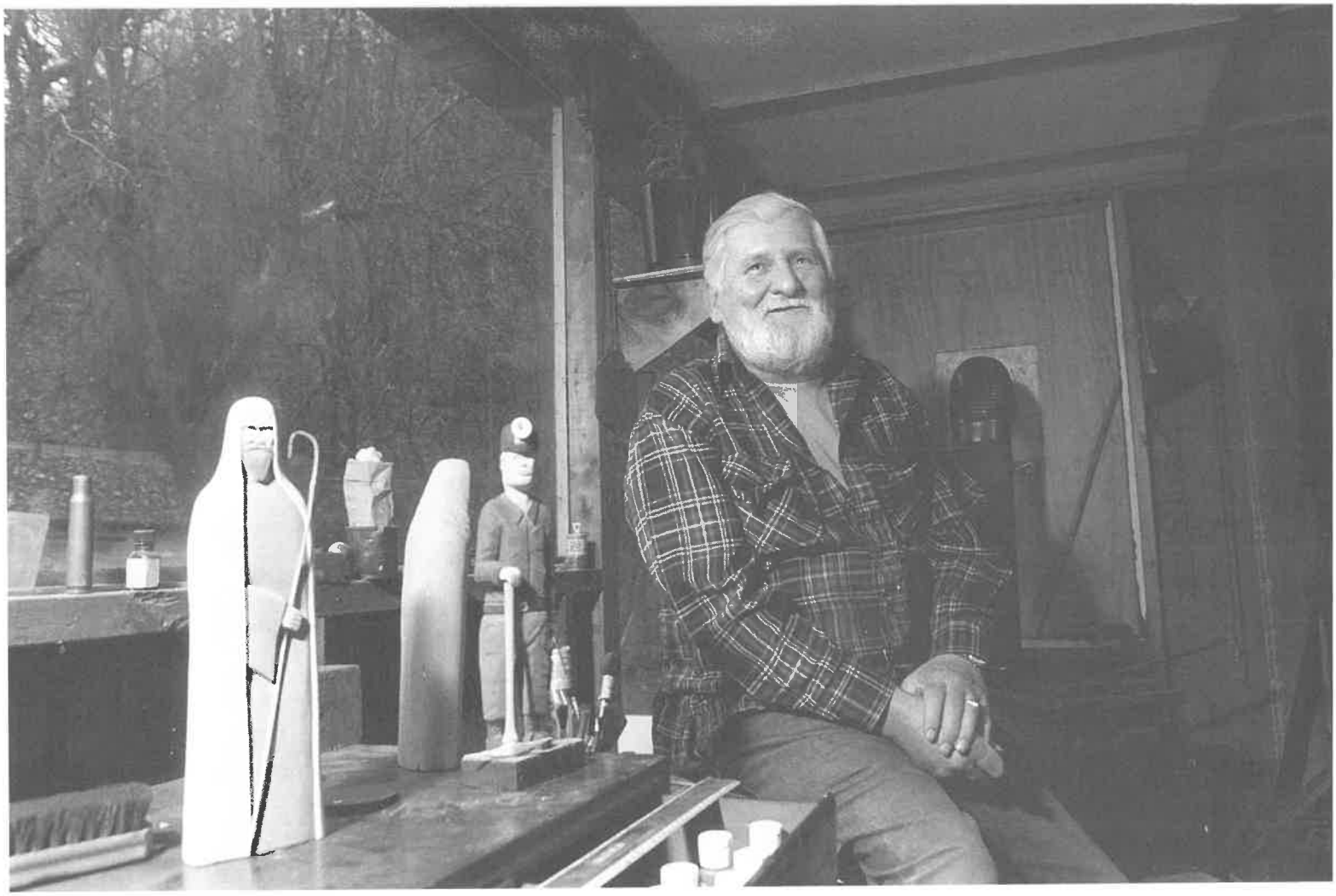
Grandfather sat in front of the fireplace and used his knife to whittle the handle down to the proper thickness. Then with a piece of windowpane glass he scraped the handle until it was smooth. He kept trying the handle in the hole until it would just barely go through.

Next he took his hammer and hit the handle, driving it tight. He cut off the few inches sticking out beyond the knot. He drove in a small iron wedge he had made at his own blacksmith shop. The wedge spread the hickory handle until it couldn't come out. The last operation was to try the new knot maul and cut off the excess handle. This left a three-foot handle which he rounded off on the end until it was smooth to the hands that would use it. When all was finished, Grandfather took a few practice swings and set his knot maul aside.

One day he was asked by a neighbor why he had spent nearly a year fooling his spare time away, making a knot maul. I'll never forget Grandfather's answer. "Nothing is wasted when a man does something that he receives joy from doing. I will be remembered by this knot maul. Long after I'm gone, men who use this knot maul will remember that I made it."

He was right. Many years later, I had occasion to use the knot maul to drive a post. Before I was through I recalled how Grandfather had spent a long winter making it. Indeed, I think I remember him more vividly for making that knot maul than for anything else.

I recall those winter evenings watching Grandfather work and listening to him talk. I learned that a man is remembered by what he has done and by the way he expresses himself — and that sometimes what he does is his best way of expressing himself. True expression is found in a well-built stack of hay, a neat, thrifty garden, or a newly shingled barn roof. And certainly it is found in writing poetry, though Grandfather and I disagreed on that.



Folk art figurines come and go on the workbench of Connard Wolfe. Here Mr. Wolfe visits with recent carvings.

Alive and Working

Folk Sculptor Connard Wolfe

By Danny Williams

Photographs by Michael Keller

I started camping back there, and right down below our camp rock was a big poplar that big around. Yellow poplar. It was as straight as a pin. Me and this old boy, we'd camp out and hunt, we'd stay there and ginseng. And I got to looking at that poplar, and there was, right in front of it, two big roots running out on the ground.

"I sat there and figured out something. I went home and got my little axe. I made me a mallet and took one of these old Case knives and cut it off real short, and made me a chisel out of it.

"I went down there and I whittled that thing out, and I carved a big old naked woman out, you know. I took that little axe and done away with the rough stuff, and when I got down to her feet at them roots, I cut her feet and her toes out.

"When I got everything down to where I wanted to dress it all up real good, I took that mallet and Case knife and started trimming it up. Then I went to my pocket knife and finished it up. I went over there and got some of that dark-looking clay, and darkened the background all up, and made the body stand out. "You could look down that hollow and it looked like a wild girl coming up there."

That was nearly 40 years ago, but Connard Wolfe still laughs at the memory of one of his first sculptures. Wolfe's art has taken a lot of turns since then. He has carved stone and wood at some of the most prestigious national folk festivals, and his works are prized by collectors.

The old Poplar Woman, though, still says about all there is to say about Wolfe's work and his attitude toward art. His imagination sees the possibilities hidden in a piece of wood or stone, as if the material itself tells him what it wants to be carved into. He is a self-educated master of tools and techniques, with a careful attention

Wolfe as a young man with his Tree Christ. The large figure, since destroyed, was sculpted into the wood of a living gum tree. Photo by Bob Connor, date unknown.

to detail. Not all his work has been as startling as the nude forest girl, but he always enjoys surprising people.

And like the lady in the tree, all his work was created first of all for his own enjoyment.

George Connard Wolfe lives near Standard, Kanawha County, about two miles from his childhood home at Glen Huddy. His father had come from Kentucky to work in the mines which once lined the Paint Creek valley. Wolfe and his eight brothers and sisters went to schools at Livingston and Pratt, Connard quitting after the eighth grade. He tried factory work in Ohio a couple of times, and served his time in the Army, but he always came back.

Wolfe has hiked, camped, and gathered ginseng in these hills for most of his 60 years, and he knows every hollow, stream, and home. He is an expert on local history — largely the history of coal mining — and enjoys sharing his old stories, facts, and photographs.

It was the mining companies which first brought stonecutters to Paint Creek valley. Wolfe had grown up surrounded by the legacy of the Italian immigrant masons who built the foundations, portals, retaining walls, and roads for the coal industry.

He didn't get the stonecutting fever right away, but the fascination with the process was a lasting one. When he was drafted and sent to Germany in 1953, he saw the Germans cutting stone to support a road bed. They would cut short stone columns, stand them on end, and drive pegs between them. Then tar was poured on as a sealer. Using hand tools, these stonecutters were building a road that could carry the heaviest artillery.

Wolfe was fascinated by the strength and versatility of stone in the hands of a skilled worker, and recalls, "I'd set there all day in that hot sun and watch them do that."

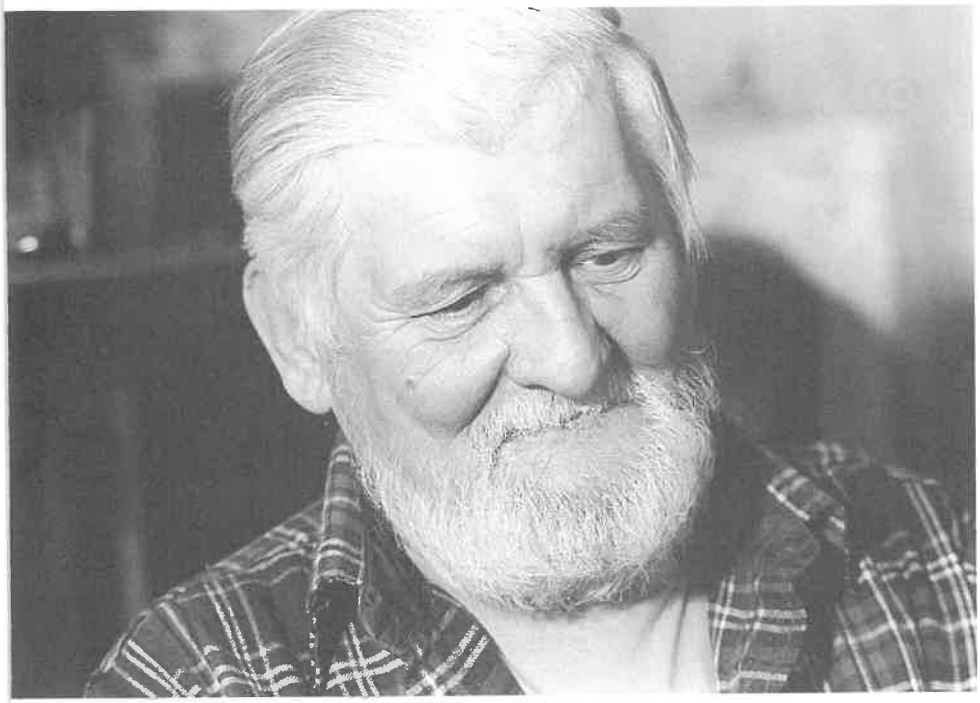
After his two years in the Army, Wolfe moved back to his home territory. The West Virginia Turnpike had taken the mountaintop homeplace, though, and his mother had moved down the hill to Standard, where two old coal company houses stood. Wolfe moved in with his mother, and worked an assortment of odd jobs up and down the creek.

The coal companies were the only source of steady work, but Wolfe managed to stay above ground. "I didn't work in the mines," he explains. "I worked two or three different places up there, but the only thing I ever did do was put in fans and build up supply or dynamite sheds for them. That's pretty good. But going inside that mine, they ain't no way. You won't catch me. I seen my dad working in one of them places all his life. He told me, 'Son, don't you never go in if you can keep from it,' and I ain't about to."

Wolfe also left the area a few times for factory work, but he always came home. When he decided that some improvements to the house and property would make his aging mother more comfortable, his experience with tools and machinery came in handy. He studded and insulated one of the Jenny Lind houses, cleared brush off the property, built walkways, installed doors and windows.

In digging around on the property, Wolfe was again brought into contact with stonework. "Before these houses was built, there was a refinery set in here. Under this house here, there is nothing but a solid bed of stone. It's cut stone; the Italians cut it. You talk about level! I put a stake down out here and a stake out here and put a line on it, and it comes out level." Wolfe shakes his head in admiration of the workmen who could cut and fit stone so precisely.

When he needed a low retaining wall along the road front, it was just natural that he make cutting



As a student of local history and customs, Wolfe carves figures representing the kinds of people he has known. The woodchopper (below), carved from poplar and painted, is typical of recent carvings.

tools, hew the stone, and build the wall himself.

The sight of a man out in front of his house splitting stone drew attention. The man from whom he had bought the property was one of those who began to notice Wolfe's growing skill with stone. Wolfe recalls, "I had two pieces of stone sitting out there in front of the house, and he asked me one day, 'Do you think that you could make a monument out of that?' to go over here to his sister's grave. I said, 'I don't know. I'll try it.'

"Well, I carved that headstone out, and eventually everybody came in wanting stones. Just one thing right after another. Then I started from that and started carvings on them. That led on in, you know, to deeper stuff."

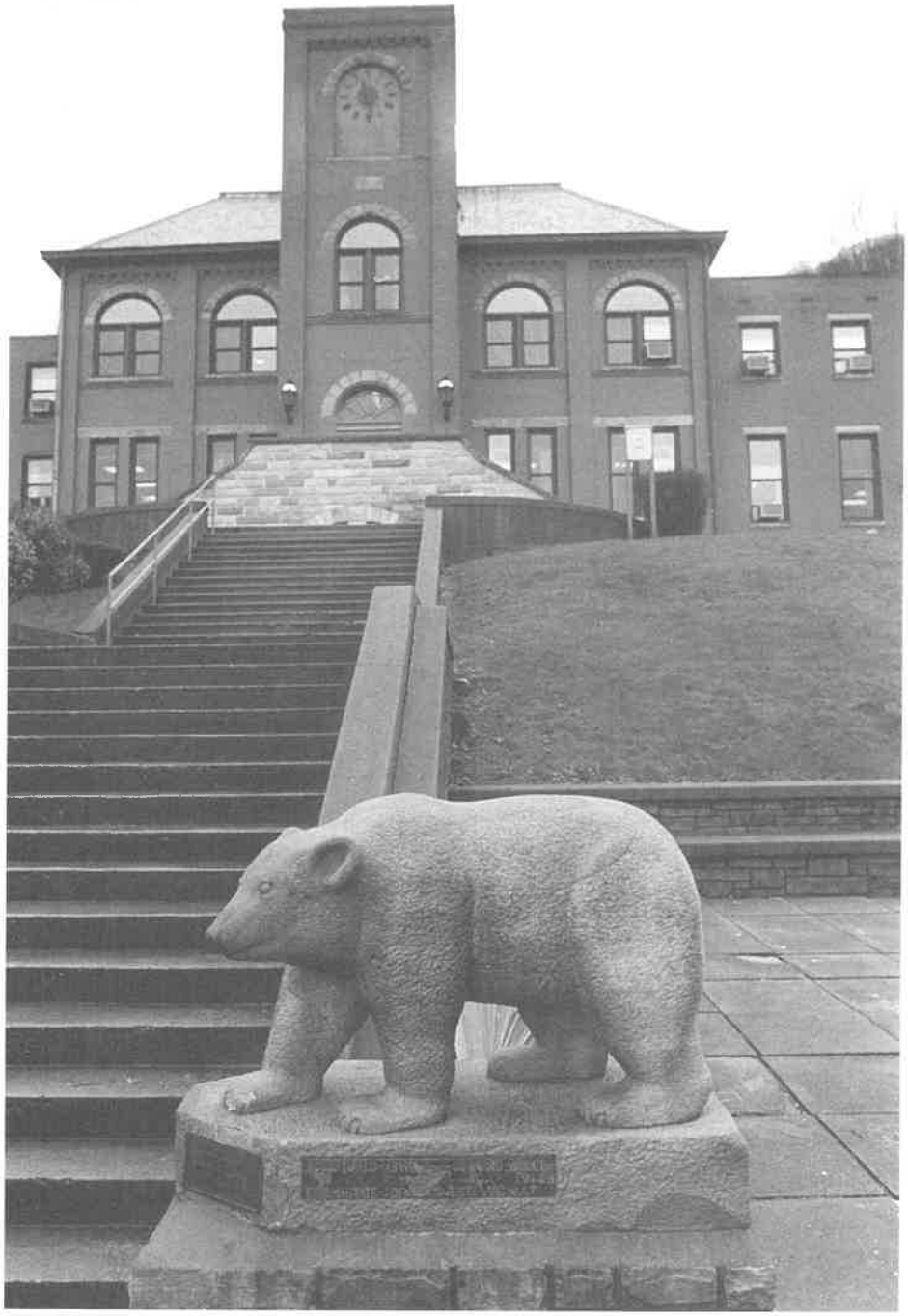
That is an understatement. Wolfe rapidly moved from unadorned tombstones to relief carvings to three-dimensional figures. He also began carving in wood, and almost from the start he was producing dozens of sculptures each year.

While Wolfe's skills were developing, so was the "folk revival" of the late '50's and '60's. It was a time of increased appreciation for craftwork, for old knowledge and bygone ways. Craft fairs, folk festivals, museums, galleries, and retail shops celebrated and promoted American folklore and handiwork. And while fiddlers and basket makers by the hundreds were being discovered or created, very few artists in the country were carving anything like Connard Wolfe's work, and fewer still were carving anything from stone. By the early '60's, Wolfe and his work were well known in folk arts circles.

Two early works, especially, brought Wolfe his first attention. In his hikes around the area, he had often noticed a large sandstone boulder near an old logging road on Four Mile Hollow. He later told a *Charleston Daily Mail* reporter that in the winter of 1958, "I got to thinking about it, that that rock ought to have somebody on it, being so near the road as it is." He made some tools — he shapes automobile leaf springs into flat tools and grinds automobile engine valves into pointed ones — and carried them and his hammers the mile or so up the hollow. About three weeks later, a nude woman had emerged from the stone, reclining on her side with her left arm trailing down toward the brush.

In another spot near his home, Wolfe carved and painted a large Christ in a living gum tree. Christ stood in a deep niche about three feet off the ground, his hands folded into his flowing blue and white robe, his detailed feet carved far back into the tree.

Though Wolfe had never carved anything like them before, these were not the work of a beginner. They showed a fine ability to evaluate the possibilities of a particular piece of wood or stone, and to orga-



If anyone doubts that West Virginia Tech is home of the Golden Bears, Wolfe's beast is there to remind them. The sandstone bear was sculpted in 1963 and placed in front of Old Main by alumni supporters.

nize the available space. They were skillfully executed, with command of contrasting textures. Even though the works were very different, there was already something about the Wolfe style that made it obvious the same artist had carved both.

They were also early examples of another aspect of Wolfe's approach to his work: He is not in it primarily for money or recognition. He has sold plenty of his work, and has enjoyed the attention it has brought, but his attitude toward his carving is not that of a businessman. The Poplar Woman was in the woods where no one but Wolfe and his fellow hikers and ginseng hunters were likely to ever see it. The Rock Lady and Tree Christ weren't exactly secrets, but Wolfe never tried to publicize them. None of them were movable, and they weren't even on Wolfe's property; he probably couldn't have sold one of them if he had wanted to.

Nor could he protect them. The Christ tree was soon destroyed by vandals, and the Poplar Woman was removed by a logging company. The Rock Lady is heavily damaged, but still lies in her overgrown nook beside the untraveled road.

Still, news of Wolfe's art and skill spread by word of mouth around Paint Creek. Then local newspapers picked up the story. Soon professional arts people, administrators and promoters, noticed Wolfe, and introduced him to the growing world of commercial folk arts.

One of the first to become aware of Connard Wolfe was Bob Connor, who in 1962 wrote a piece on Wolfe's work for the Appalachian magazine *Mountain Life & Work*. Connor hired Wolfe to work at Skyland Corporation, a folk arts venture on East River Mountain near Bluefield. Wolfe was night watchman and handyman, and drove a miniature locomotive around the grounds. This job left time for carving, and also brought him into contact with the blossoming arts and crafts movement. Soon Wolfe was regularly demonstrating his art at fairs and festivals across West Virginia and the region.

It was during this time at Skyland that Wolfe created two of his most visible pieces, the West Virginia Tech bear and the Bluefield High School beaver.

In 1963 Wolfe started carving a life-size sandstone black bear outside his Paint Creek home. When the bear was near completion, he loaded it onto a truck and took it to Cedar Lakes near Ripley, to the first Mountain State Art and Craft Fair. During the fair he put on the finishing touches. From there, the bear went on display at Skyland, and began attracting attention. A group of West Virginia Tech alumni bought the bear for their alma mater, home of the Golden Bears. Today, 30 years later, the statue is one of the chief landmarks of the Montgomery campus.

It was also during the Skyland days that a group of Bluefield High School students asked Wolfe to carve a statue of their mascot, the beaver. Wolfe had never seen a beaver, so he went to the Concord College library and made sketches from books.

Then he went to Tazewell, Vir-

ginia, to buy a 700-pound block of marble from a monument company. One block in the monument company's yard was cracked in one end, so Wolfe examined it further.

He explains, "I can take a tool or a hammer and sound out a piece of stone and tell you if there is a crack in it anywhere or not." Wolfe's hammer and his trained ear told him that this piece was not damaged too deeply, so he bought the marble, had it hauled to Skyland, and produced one of his best-known works. Today the beaver is displayed behind glass, in a place of honor at Bluefield High.

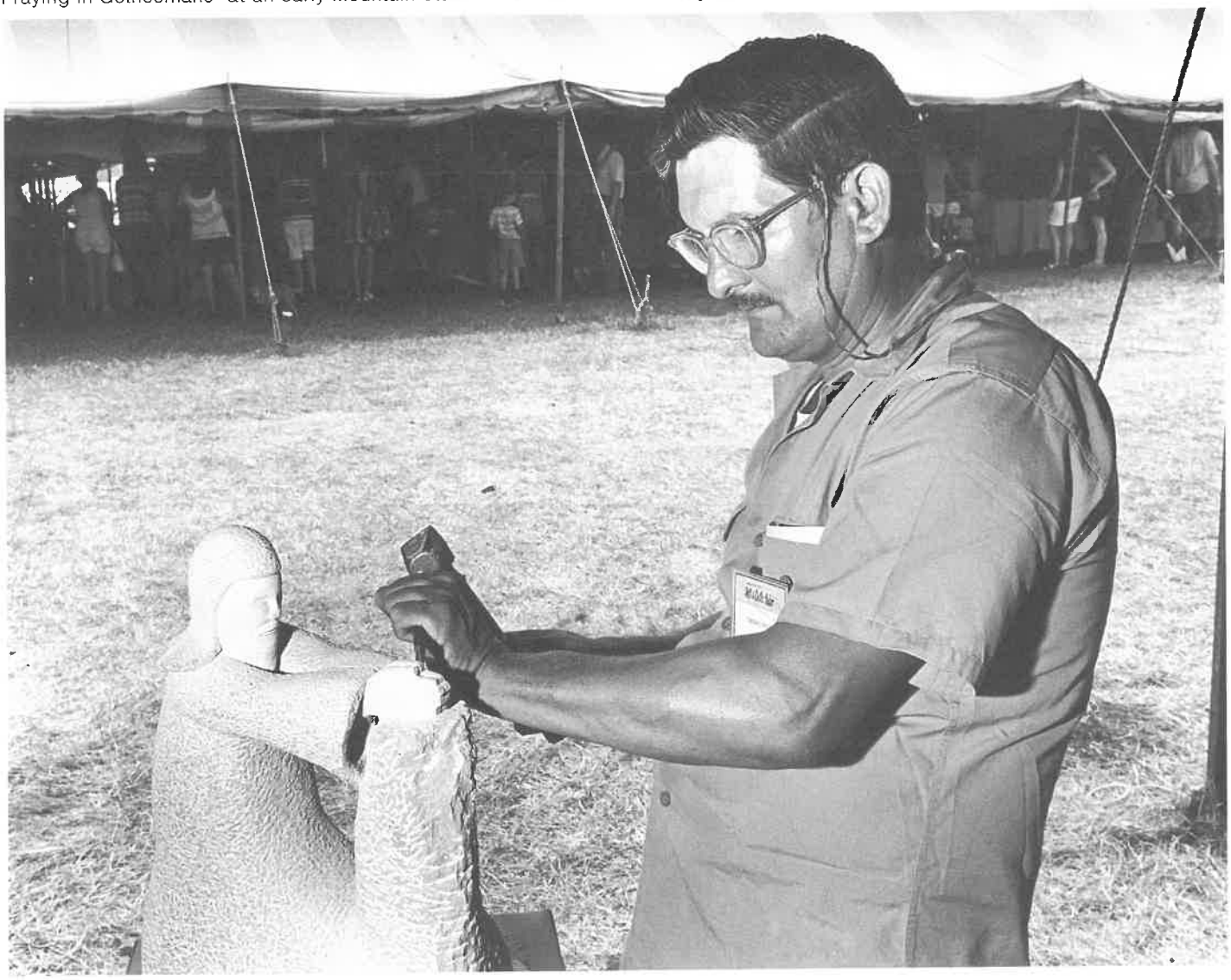
Soon, Wolfe was getting all the work and attention he could handle. He continued to exhibit at Cedar Lakes, at least through 1974. Among the stone carvings Wolfe produced at this fair was "Jesus Praying in Gethsemane," which was bought by the state and now sits in the governor's inner office. Wolfe's work was regularly accepted for the biennial Appalachian Corridors exhibition at Sunrise Museums in Charleston. It was for the fourth of these exhibitions, in 1974, that Wolfe carved "The Kiss," which now graces the governor's mansion.

Still, Connard Wolfe did not develop a real hunger for publicity or "success" in his art. He doesn't use a car or a phone, and makes very little effort to market his skills. Don Page, former director of arts and crafts development for the state Department of Commerce, encouraged Wolfe to create, and helped line up buyers and exhibitors for the carvings. Wolfe today credits Page for promoting his work, and also remembers Page as a friend.

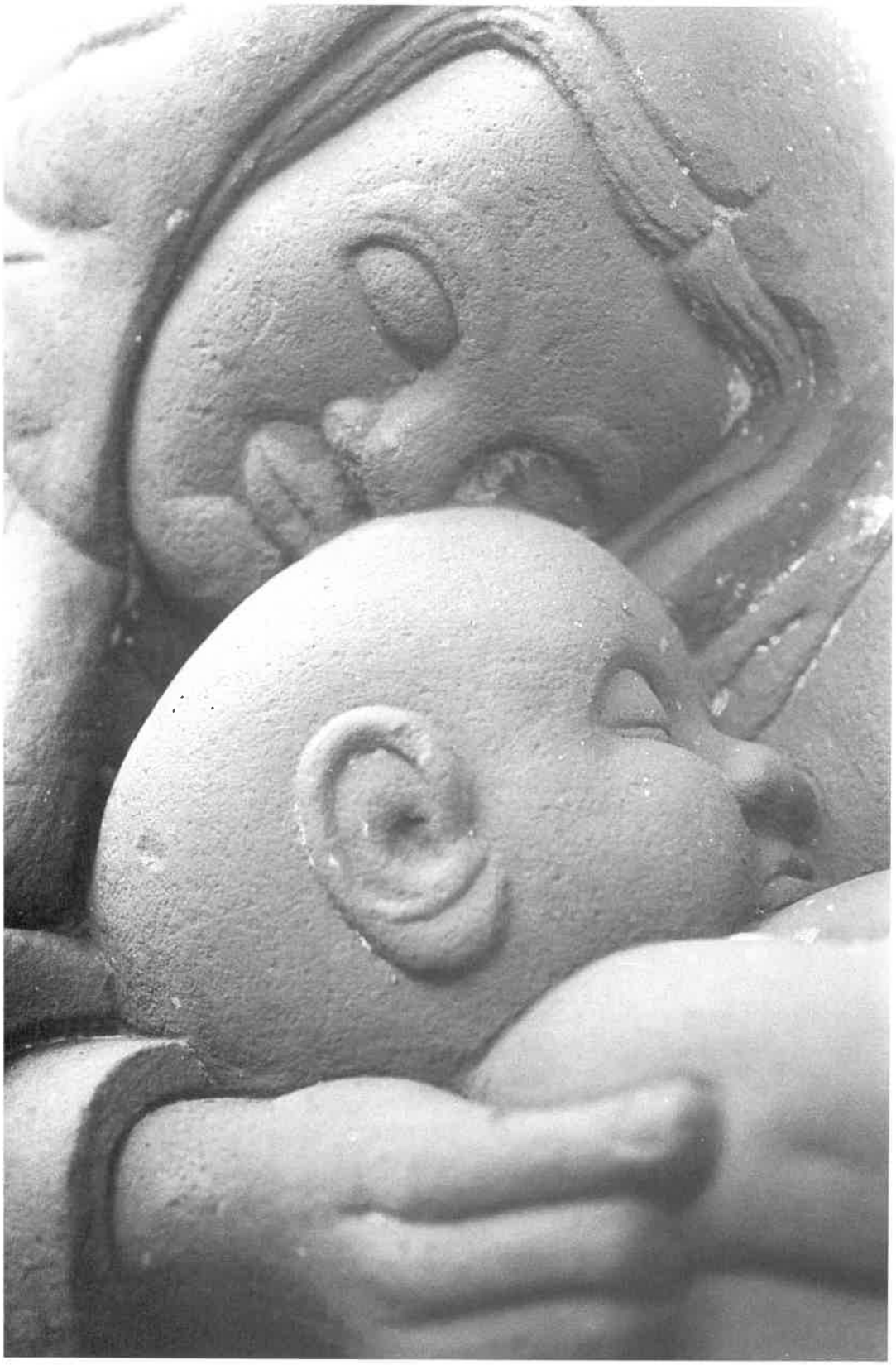
While Page was working in West Virginia to develop and market Wolfe's work, Ralph Rinzler was working with Wolfe on a national level. Rinzler, one of the premier figures of the folklore revival of the '60's and '70's, often made the trip from Washington to Paint Creek to visit Wolfe and urge him on. Sometimes Wolfe accompanied Rinzler on collecting trips, trips which provided memories Wolfe still loves to re-tell.

Through Rinzler's efforts, Wolfe appeared at the legendary Newport Folk Festival in 1967. Wolfe recalls that he traveled to Rhode Island by bus, with a partially finished stone carving — an elk — in his luggage. Wolfe remembers that an English-

Wolfe was a regular on the festival circuit during the folk art revival of the 1960's and later. Here he works on the stone "Jesus Praying in Gethsemane" at an early Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. Photo by Gerald S. Ratliff.



This Madonna and Child now belongs to a Kanawha Valley church. The stone sculpture was painted some time after its creation.



man bought the elk when it was completed, but as usual, he didn't get the buyer's name and address.

The following year Wolfe was the only West Virginia craftsman at the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife, which Rinzler directed. Wolfe appeared in several more Smithsonian events. He later gave the chairman of the Smithsonian a statue of Ralph Rinzler, an anti-smoking crusader, puffing on a cigar.

Rinzler had Wolfe back to the Smithsonian for the big Bicentennial festival in 1976. Wolfe remembers that Rinzler failed to make hotel reservations in time that year, so he arranged for Wolfe to stay with folk singer Judy Collins in her home. Wolfe recalls, "She was a nice lady, but she gets up in the morning and cooks up scrambled eggs with all kinds of garlic in them. That doesn't do much for me, so I'd leave out of there pretty early."

Like so many artists, Wolfe lost count of his works during his most productive period. It is safe to say that he carved and sold several dozen stone statues, and many more wooden ones.

From his earliest works to his latest, a distinctive style is apparent; anyone who has seen a few of his creations can probably recognize Wolfe's art anywhere.

By the early '70's, though, the initial enthusiasm of the folk movement had begun to wear thin. The shrinking arts and crafts market was becoming a field for those with the desire and ability to promote themselves, and Wolfe was not one of these. From the early days of the Poplar Woman, the Tree Christ, and the Rock Lady, Wolfe had carved because he had the urge to do so. He enjoyed the attention his work brought, but he would have done the work anyway.

As the folk arts revival wound down, so did Wolfe's "career." Some of the festivals he had attended were discontinued, and several of the shops which had sold his work went out of business. State and federal agencies spent less money helping artists market themselves. Wolfe, who has never even compiled his own resume, was unable to compete with accomplished self-promoters. By the early '80's,

Wolfe was nearly invisible in the art world.

His disappearance was so complete that, in early 1993, when some of his work was exhibited at the governor's mansion, the brochure called him "the late G. Connard Wolfe." The Spring 1993 GOLDENSEAL, in publicizing the exhibit, repeated the phrase, and went on to mention some of the carvings Wolfe had completed "before his death."

In fact, Wolfe was in his house on Paint Creek, alive and well, living his quiet life in his own way, just as he had been before his "discovery" in the late '50's. His reaction to the reports of his death is typical: He laughs about it, and enjoys the ribbing he gets from his friends.

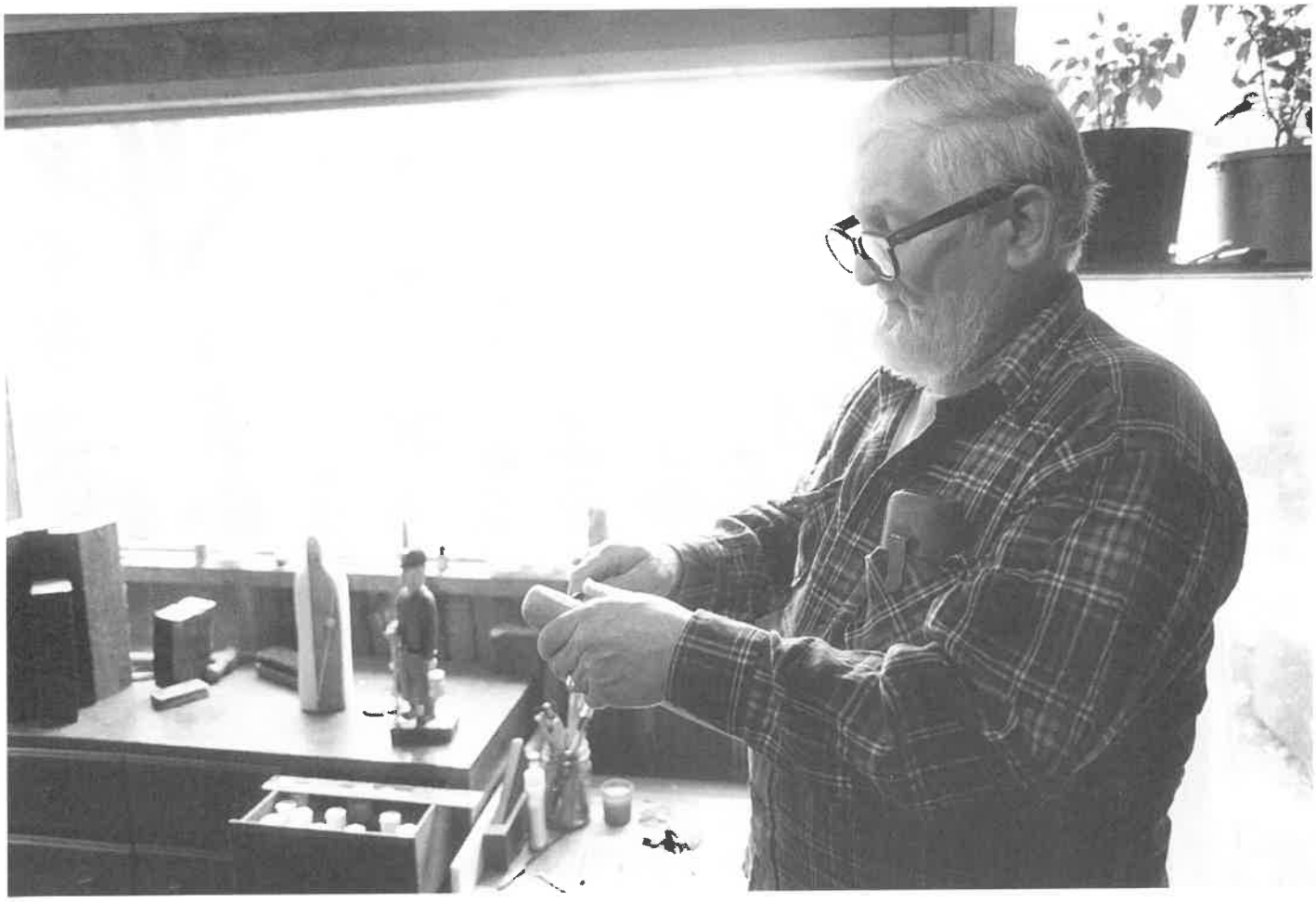
And perhaps something good will come of that mistake. Originally assigned to find out for sure if Wolfe was dead or alive, I have been drawn to the man's art and his personality. Partly at my urging, he is carving again, and may be willing to make his art available to the public for the first time in over a decade.

So far, Wolfe has carved ten new figures in wood, and is working on more. Most of them are poplar, carved from the thick beams of the abandoned coal-camp houses so plentiful in the area.

These carvings are about a foot high, and they show the characteristic Wolfe eye for detail: Overall pockets bulge with imagined contents. A weary worker leans on his shovel. A woman's craggy face peeks out from beneath her shawl. A nun gazes severely. A crippled man slumps on his crutch, his bad foot askew. A miner, lunch bucket in hand, is missing two coat buttons. A man with a whiskey bottle has his face screwed up into a comical expression. Men peer from under low-drawn hat brims. Each figure is an individual, a personality.

Sometimes art is nothing more than whimsy. This playful birdhouse recently occupied a spot near Wolfe's home. Photo by Danny Williams.

Wolfe at work in his Paint Creek studio, carving the wooden figures which occupy most of his creative time at present.



Most of these carvings, like Wolfe's earlier work, depict the characters Wolfe has known — coal miners, gardeners, hunters, old people, woodsmen, and drunks. Their clothes and hairstyles are old-fashioned, their hands are big and rough, and their shoes are battered. Wolfe has taken the people he likes best and translated them into wood.

Wolfe also plans to begin working in stone again. He has his eye on a sandstone boulder not far from his house, and believes he can square up one end of it, then get a friend with a wrecker to haul it to his house. "I won't know what to make out of it until I get it stood up out here and look at it a while," he says. As always, he will tailor his design to the possibilities of his material.

Maybe Wolfe will be "discovered" again now, and start creating and selling, demonstrating and exhibiting. If that happens, he will be glad to make a little money and some new friends through the art he enjoys. If that does not happen, though, it won't bother him much. He won't start filling out applications, making calls, and mailing resumes.

Connard Wolfe's life centers on his home and his friends, which have proven more constant than artistic fame.

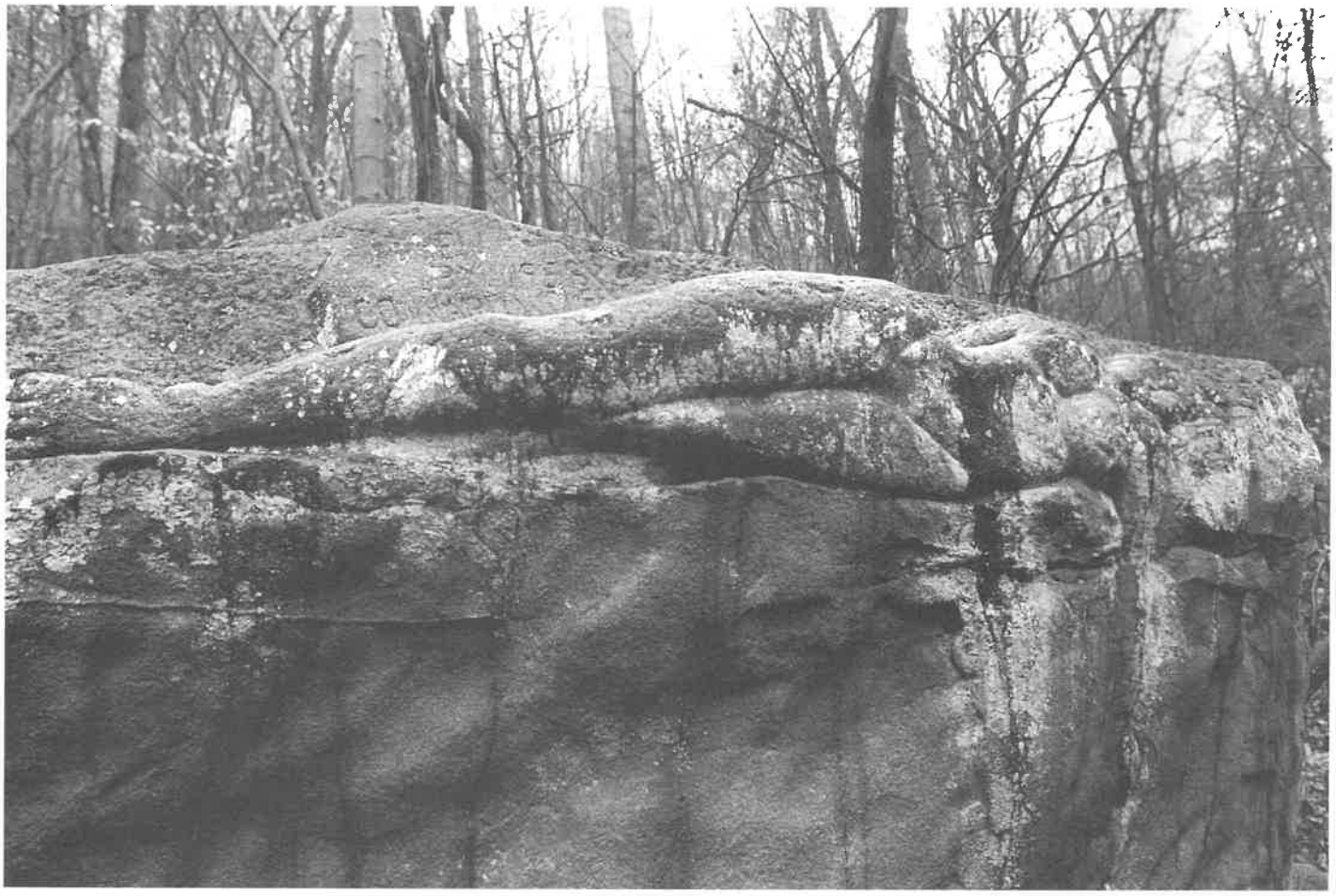
In first searching for Wolfe's house, I discovered that every long-term resident of the valley knows him. They mention his art with pride, and many of them own and treasure his works. Wolfe is also well known as a community historian, with a vast knowledge of the families and coal companies which settled along Paint Creek.

Wolfe's neighbors know him as an honest man and a pleasant companion, and as a devoted son who stayed home and cared for his aged mother until her death a few years ago.

Most of all, they know Connard Wolfe as one of them, one who has remained on Paint Creek despite the loss of jobs, schools, and communities. This loyalty to his home is Wolfe's most important value, and if it has interfered with his art career, he does not feel that he has lost anything.

When the two of us traveled to Montgomery last summer, a group of men gathered around Wolfe. The old hotel had burned, and the local men needed Wolfe to look at the stonework left in the rubble. He identified some good granite from Virginia, because he had worked a piece of stone from the same seam years before. Slabs of what appeared to be marble, Wolfe said, were actually made of thin marble fitted around a wooden core. As Wolfe pointed out this and that piece which might be worth saving for some purpose or other, one of the men told me, "He's a real artist, you know."

The stark figure of the Rock Lady, carved into a remote boulder on a Kanawha County mountainside, suggests that Connard Wolfe made art wherever the mood struck him. The lifesize nude, now badly weathered, was sculpted in 1958.



The Wolfe Style

This shepherd is carved of unpainted poplar. The staff is a separate, removable piece.

Anyone who has looked at a few of Connard Wolfe's carvings will probably recognize the Wolfe touch. In trying to describe his style, though, we need to talk about wood and stone carvings separately.

Don Page, a former crafts professional with the state Department of Commerce, was one of the first to work with Wolfe. He says that the distinctive thing about Wolfe's wood carvings is that "he is carving people he knows."

The subjects of Wolfe's wood carvings are fully-formed, individual characters. Their faces, postures, clothes, gestures—everything about these carvings shows that the artist has a clear mental picture of just who he is portraying.

The wood carvings are also distinctive in that they represent a fleeting instant. These people are not posing. They are doing something, and Wolfe has caught them right in the middle of it.

A coal miner has two buttons missing from his jacket. A man with a whiskey bottle screws up his face, possibly in a post-swig grimace. A heavy-set woman has lost a button from the front of her dress, and dances with her belly showing. Workmen lean on axes, shovels, or farm tools in obvious exhaustion. Hats aren't just placed on heads, they are set at expressive angles.

Wolfe paints some of his wood carvings, but leaves most of them bare. Poplar, cut from the joists of abandoned coal-company houses, is his favorite material these days, but his older carvings are in a variety of woods.

Wolfe carves these figures one at a time with pocketknives. Sometimes he sands the wood smooth, and sometimes he leaves the tiny knife cuts visible. Often he contrasts the two textures on a single piece, perhaps by smoothing the clothes and leaving the face craggy.

Another favorite Wolfe technique is piecing wood, or combining wood with other materials. One coal miner has sewing-thread laces on his boots. Another carries a wooden lunch bucket by a wire bail and leans on a separate pick with a removable head. A poplar shepherd holds a reed staff. A woodsman puffs a tiny separate pipe.

The most elaborate Connard Wolfe assembly I've seen is a six-piece carving of a woman washing clothes. Her tub and bucket rest on a bench, and her scrub board fits into the tub at a working angle. Her broad-brimmed hat is removable.

Wolfe gets a lot of laughs from this world, and puts a lot of them into his wood carvings. Drinkers

Wolfe works mostly with a pocketknife to carve his wooden pieces.

The stone figures are more formal, typically featuring both smooth and dimpled textures in the same piece. "The Kiss" now occupies a place in the Governor's Mansion.

especially amuse him, possibly because his own father was a moonshiner. In the carvings, men with bottles stagger or pass out. A grinning corpse has a jug in his coffin. Wolfe also likes to make fun of bald men and smokers.

Wolfe's stone carvings, on the other hand, could generally be described as static. These people bear typical, composed expressions, and pose in settled stances. The contrast between the wood and stone carvings is the difference between candid action snapshots and formally posed portraits.

In a striking "Madonna and Child," Mary curls protectively around her fat baby. Another stone mother holds her baby solidly on her shoulder. A sandstone woman

Below: Wolfe makes his own stonecarving tools from scrap steel, grinding pointed chisels for the dimpled work and flat chisels for smooth work.

walks with a book, but there is no real sense of motion, as there is with the wooden figures. Jesus kneels in Gethsemane, his arms supported by a tree trunk, and prays with a settled, mournful expression.

Wolfe enjoys carving religious works in both stone and wood. The wooden Christ mentioned in the adjoining article was one of his first works, and since then he has made many Christs, shepherds, Bibles, worshippers, and Madonnas.

One of the works Wolfe has produced since his "rediscovery" by GOLDENSEAL is a unique wooden crucifix. Christ's body, head, and arms are carved from a single tree limb which forks upward into three branches. Wolfe says that often his material suggests what it wants to be made into.

Most of Wolfe's stone carvings are from the sandstone native to his home area. It's a tough stone to work, he says, requiring many hours of tool sharpening. Wolfe has also worked sandstone from Webster County, where his family owned a cabin, and he says those rocks are even harder.

The easiest stone to carve is marble, Wolfe says, "but there you're getting down into your pocketbook." The initial expense of marble could probably be offset by the ease of carving it, but Wolfe rarely has had the money to lay out at the beginning of a project.

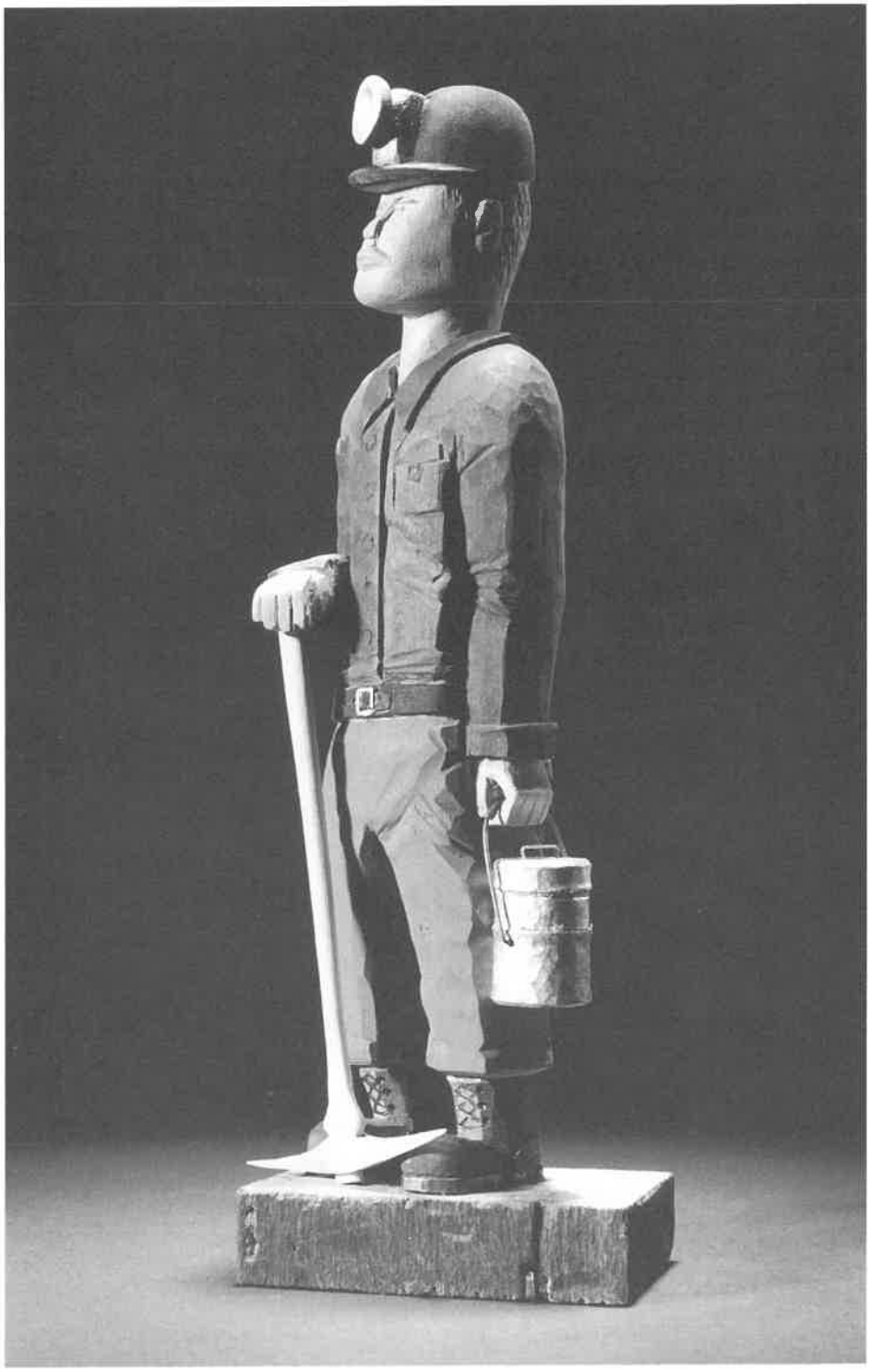
Though not a formally educated man, Wolfe enjoys study and learning. His readings in stone carving led him to master two separate techniques, which he calls "point tool" and "flat tool." In the point technique, which Wolfe says comes from the Egyptians, a pointed, sharpened tool is driven against the stone with a hammer, chipping away the stone and leaving a dimpled effect. In the flat-tool method, a chisel-like blade is used, creating a smooth or streaked surface. Wolfe makes his own cutting tools.

As with the sanded and rough techniques in wood, the point tools and flat tools are often used to create contrasting textures in a single work in stone. One fine example is "The Kiss," a rare double carving. A man and woman, cut from one piece of sandstone, embrace and pucker. Her dress and his hair and overalls are in the dense, wrinkled texture of the point tool. Their faces, her hair, and his shirt, shoes, and hat are finished more smoothly with the flat tool.

Though "The Kiss" is static and posed like most of Wolfe's stone work, it shows the humor which is more common in his wood carvings. It's not hilariously funny, and the humor is difficult to describe, but the kissing couple just seem to invite a smile.

— Danny Williams

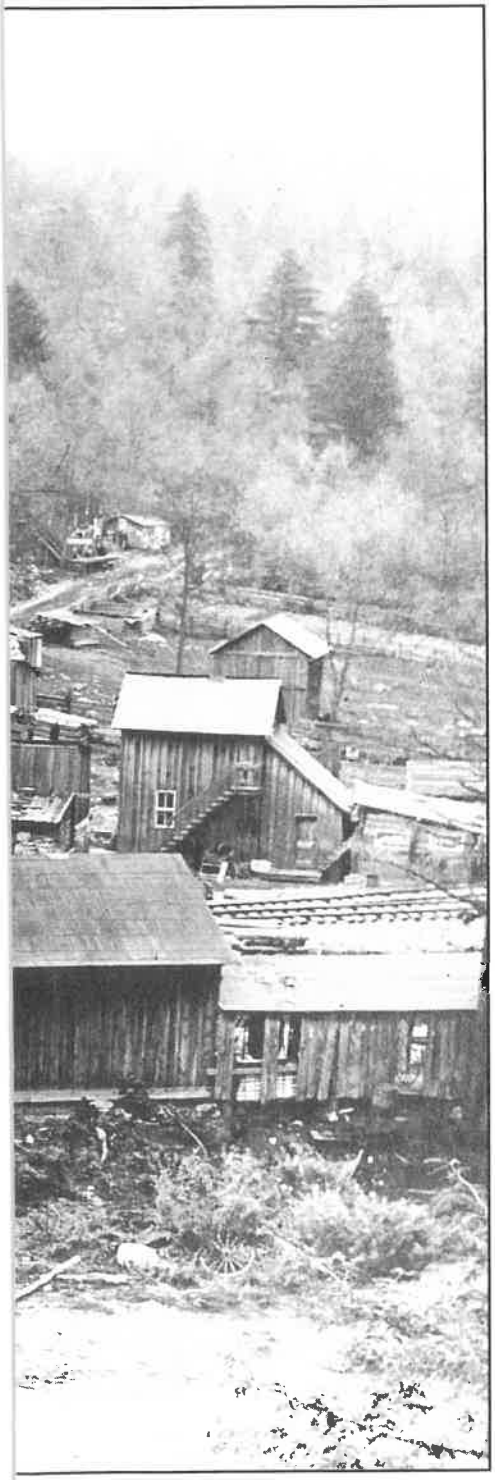
This small coal miner, carved from the poplar timber of an old coal company house, is intricate in its detailing. The lunch bucket has a wire bail, the pick is removable from the miner — and the pick head is removable from its handle.



Death in Durbin

New Questions About an Old Case

By Elaine Prater Hodges



The west end of Durbin, the general area of the 1900 shoot-out. Photographer unknown, about 1904, courtesy Eugene Burner.

Whenever I drive down Durbin's Main Street, really U.S. Route 250, and pass the old turn-of-the-century storefronts that line one side of the road, my thoughts drift backward. Instead of parking meters, I see horses hitched to railings, the asphalt road turns into dust, and across the way, arriving on the last remaining set of railroad tracks, I see billowing smoke and hear the whistle of the noontime train as it screeches to a halt at the little yellow depot. I can feel the excitement as merchants and customers rush out onto the wooden sidewalks to see who is getting off the train. Sometimes I visualize gunfights in the dusty street.

A vivid imagination you say? Until recently I might have agreed. But that was before I learned about a shoot-out that took place in Durbin that equals any out of the Wild, Wild West.

It happened on July 6, 1900. At the time Durbin was nothing more than a few wooden buildings along the banks of the Greenbrier River at the foot of Back Allegheny and Shaver mountains, an area now commonly referred to as Durbin's West End. The logging boom that was soon to turn Durbin into a bustling town was still a few years away, since the C&O and Western Maryland railroads had yet to arrive at the headwaters of the Greenbrier.

But everyone knew the railroads were coming, and logging camps were springing up in the virgin forests that lined the East and West forks of the Greenbrier River. In fact, at that time Durbin was not even off the beaten path. Throughout most of the 1800's what is now Route 250, the old Staunton-to-Parkersburg Turnpike, was a major route west through the Alleghenies.

By 1900, Durbin boasted a post office, with Napoleon Arbogast as postmaster; a country store owned and operated by R. B. Kerr; a shooting gallery; and a saloon where Charlie Slavin sold liquor to the "wood hicks." Needless to say, as the logging operations multiplied, so did the loggers, and after weeks in the woods they headed for the nearest town to let off steam. One thing Durbin did not have was a police force. If any trouble arose, they had to send for C. L. "Bud" Burner or one of the other constables serving the Green Bank District of Pocahontas County.

Pocahontas County was still a wild Eden at the turn of the century. And with the surrounding forests teeming with bear, deer, turkey and other game, the shooting skills passed down by pioneering forefathers were still very much in evidence. Jefferson "Jeff" Houchin was said to be the best rifle shot in the county, a man who could shoot "without taking sight," according to the *Pocahontas Times*.

Houchin lived with his wife and seven children in a two-story log house on the East Fork of the Greenbrier River, an area then known as Travelers Repose but now a part of Bartow. Houchin did not own much land — just enough to raise some vegetables and a few sheep, so he supported his family by trading salted deer hams, sugar cakes and maple syrup for necessary essentials at the market in Staunton. By all accounts, Houchin was considered a decent sort of fellow, except when he was "in liquor," and then all hell could break loose. And, on the evening of July 6, all hell broke loose.

"One of us will eat breakfast in hell before morning!" Houchin said as he picked up his rifle and went out the door.

"I saw Mr. Houchin come riding down the road with his gun lying on his saddle before him. He got off at Durbin, hitched his horse and started on down the road by the store with his gun pointed as [if] he was looking for someone," recalled Napoleon Arbogast.

According to witnesses, Jeff Houchin had been in Durbin earlier in the day on July 6, "intoxicated and threatening various per-

sons with violence." W. E. Poage reported that he saw Houchin outside the livery stable and that Houchin "rode up to a lamp and smashed it with his knucks." The stable's owner, J. A. Simmons, said that "Houchin came in...and announced that he had come [to town] for trouble." Simmons also said that Houchin "had a pair of brass knucks on and as he left he struck the stable several times with them."

It happened that Constable Burner was in town that day, and, according to Blake Wolfe, Houchin and Burner had been at the livery stable "having a racket." Wolfe added that "Mr. Burner [did] have a pistol but he did not show or make any attempt to shoot Houchin." Working nearby in his garden, G. C. Sutton said he "also heard some noise at the livery stable in the way of loud talk between J. L. Houchin and C. L. Burner."

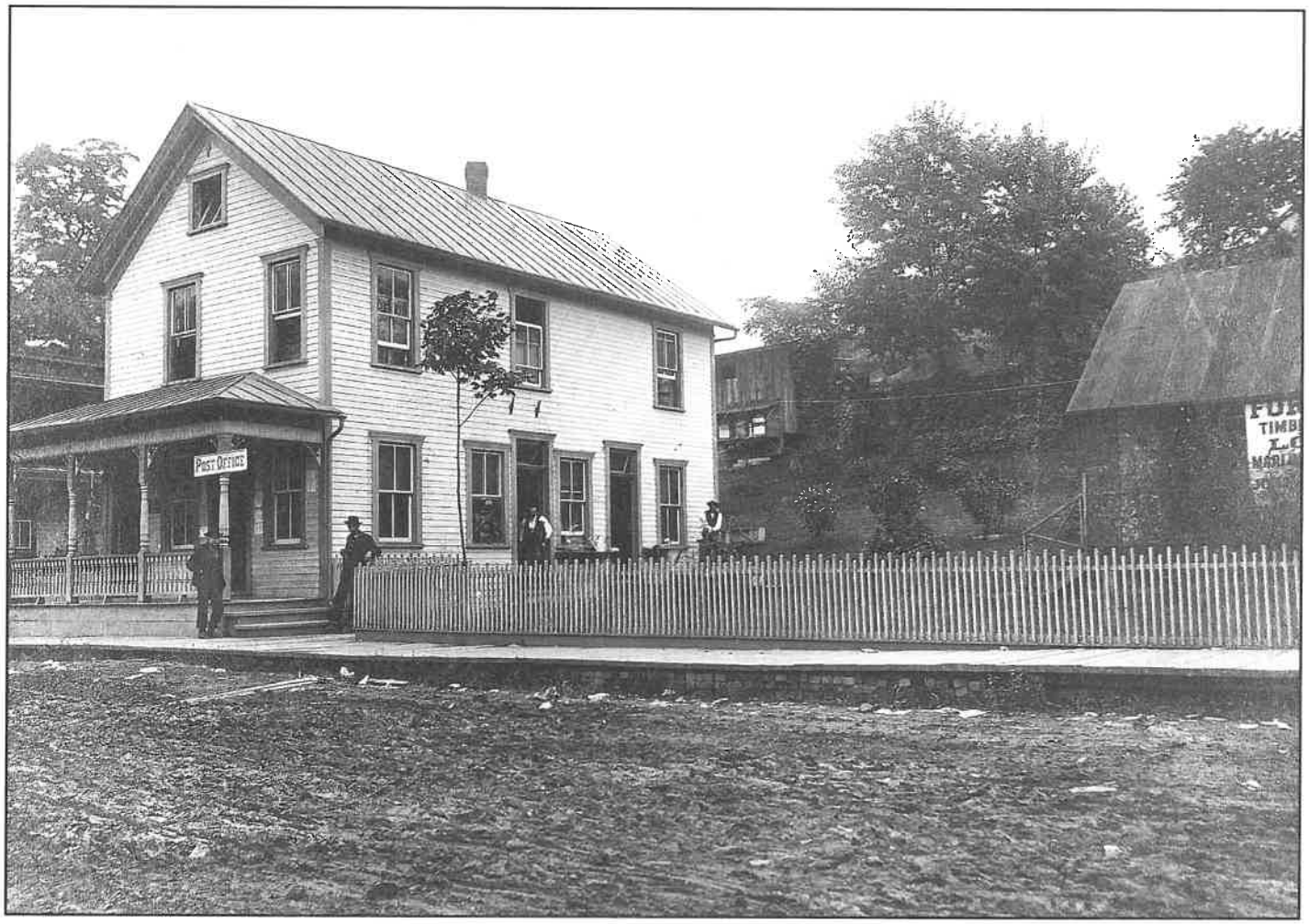
There were various reports that Burner was bullying Houchin and that he had told Houchin if he didn't get out of town he was going to arrest him, but store owner R. B. Kerr said, "C. L. Burner was acting in his official capacity trying to pacify Mr. Houchin, and was not trying to do Mr. Houchin any willful violence, or injury."

This is not what Jeff Houchin told John Townsend when he met up with him a little later. According to Townsend, Jeff Houchin told him, "there's a man down there who drew a gun on me and I am going home for my 45-90 and if Bud Burner shows up one of us will die before morning." Townsend said that Houchin "held up his hand on which he had a pair of brass knucks and said, 'This is the kind of medicine I carry,' and then he rode off quickly down the road."

Apparently this was not the first time that Jeff Houchin and Bud Burner had clashed. In fact, there are rumors that the men had been nursing grudges against one another for a long time. Whatever their grievance was, it was soon to be settled in a volley of gunfire that would leave one of them dead on the night of July 6, 1900.

The six- or seven-mile ride over the old turnpike from Durbin to Travelers Repose was not enough to cool Jeff Houchin's blood, and after brooding through supper, he told his wife, Molly, that he was going back into town to get Burner. Molly, who was kin to the Burners, did everything she could to stop him. With tears streaming down her face, she begged her husband not to go, but Jeff could not be swayed. "One of us will eat breakfast in hell before morning!" he reportedly told her as he picked up his rifle and went out the door.

The Durbin post office, showing postmaster Napoleon Arbogast in the doorway at right. Arbogast testified concerning the shooting. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Eugene Burner.



Charlie Slavin looks very much like the boom town saloon keeper in this portrait. Was he also the killer of Jeff Houchin? Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Eugene Burner.

Ninety-three years is a long time, but there are still a few people around Durbin who remember hearing stories about the Burner-Houchin shoot-out. Ninety-year-old Ollie Elza of Thornwood wasn't born until 1903, but she can remember her parents talking about how it happened. She grew up playing with the Houchin children, but says they were all "very close-lipped about it."

Peggy Townsend, a cashier at the One-Stop Shop in Bartow, quoted Jeff Houchin's comment to Molly about breakfast in hell. Peggy said she had also heard that "the moon was behind a cloud," the night Jeff came looking for Bud, "and when the moon came out from behind the cloud, that's when the shooting began."

"They were riflemen then, I'm kidding you not, they were riflemen," 62-year-old Edward "Coon" Hise says as he snaps the top off of a big, red strawberry and drops it into the large bowl on the table in front of him. "That's what I was myself before I had to get glasses. I could take a pheasant out of the air a-flying just like a man could with a shotgun." Coon shakes his head wistfully and then adds, "that was afore I had to go to scope and get these durn glasses."

Coon's house, on the East Fork of the Greenbrier near Bartow, is very close to where Jeff Houchin and his family lived back in 1900. "I've heard that story," Coon says when I asked him about the shoot-out, "and I thought there was nothing to it [but] I found out later that it did happen." I asked Coon if he had ever heard of a Winchester 45-90 rifle. "Oh yeah, it was a long tom, about like a 30-30 rifle. Shot about the same amount of powder you know, only a bigger bullet is what it was. Didn't shoot as far as a 30-30 though, didn't have the range."

Since Jeff Houchin had the reputation of being the finest rifle shot in the county, there was naturally much anxiety as word spread through the community that he was on his way into town to get Burner. According to a July 12 report in the *Pocahontas Times*, Houchin first stopped at the home of P. D. Yeager and inquired after Burner. He then went to another house, where Bud may have been boarding at the time. Not finding him, Houchin rode on into Durbin.

Thus did the finest shot in Pocahontas County die on the night of July 6, 1900, at the hand of Constable Bud Burner. Or did he?

"About dark or a little after dusk, Mr. Houchin came down the road in front of the store and [it] looked like he had a gun in his hand," testified witness Warwick Lambert.

By the time Jeff Houchin arrived in Durbin that July night, Bud Burner was well-warned of his coming. In fact, Burner had already concealed himself in the shadows on the porch of R. B. Kerr's store. Bud knew he was no match for Jeff Houchin as a gunman, so he intended to take advantage of all the surprise he could get.

Whether the moon was peeping in and out of the clouds is not known. The only clue we have as to what the weather might have been the night of July 6, 1900, is found in the *Pocahontas Times* for July 5. In that issue, under a column headed "Durbin," the *Times* reports: "We are having plenty of rain and big water." The article then goes on to say that "Dan O'Connel is driving the rest of [his] logs, he has two large arks being built at the Chub Hole." This tells us that the river must have been up pretty high, which usually isn't the case in July. If the first week of July in 1900 was wet and damp, the nights were probably also misty and cool due to Durbin's high elevation.

So, while Bud Burner stood in the shadows of R. B. Kerr's porch waiting for Jeff Houchin to come riding into town that night, he may have been anxious, nervous and cold, and worried that the night mist might obstruct his view of the road. Fortunately, Bud did not have to wait long, because around nine o'clock Jeff came riding into Durbin.

Apparently everyone else in Durbin was waiting for Houchin's arrival as well. Blake Wolfe was standing across the bridge on the west side of the river when he saw Houchin come riding into town about dark. "I saw him have what...appeared to me to be a gun....I started across the bridge, and when I got across, I heard shots."

"All I know is I heard two shots," said Mr. E. B. Ferguson, who said that when he saw who "[I] thought was Houchin, come riding into town, I ran into the house."

Postmaster Arbogast said "when [Houchin] passed around the store out of my sight, I heard three shots fired, but I do not know who fired them."

Burner was on the corner of the

Another Lumber Boom Murder:

The Death of Bascom McFall

In 1918 Bascom McFall left home for the first time, to go to work in the lumber mills on Cheat Mountain in Pocahontas County. McFall, age 20 and from Greenbrier County, was my uncle.

After working six months, McFall drew his $500 pay and headed home for Christmas on December 19, 1918. After getting off the train at Cass, he went to the hotel restaurant to eat. A friend remained at the depot and kept McFall's suitcase with him to wait for the train home. When the train came, McFall had not returned, so his friend pushed his bag under the bench and boarded.

Bascom McFall was never again seen alive. Four months later, his body was found by a barking dog in a laurel thicket a few hundred yards from Cass. His throat had been cut.

The corpse was taken into Marlinton, where identification was established and the cause of death determined. Family members still recall that due to the cold winter McFall's body was not badly decomposed, although animals had eaten away his hands and part of his face. The killer or killers had placed stones on his feet to cover up the white socks he was wearing.

When he failed to reappear, detectives hired by the lumber company had searched for clues to his disappearance. The men last seen with him were questioned, but due to lack of evidence there were no arrests.

Gradually the facts emerged. A man staying at the hotel had heard strange sounds coming from the room next door. He looked through a crack in the door and heard the murderers saying if anybody saw them they would give the same thing to them. Scared for his life, he saw three men carry what appeared to be the body of a man about six feet tall wrapped in a sheet out of the hotel. He did not ask any questions that night, but after finding hotel employees cleaning the room the next morning, especially the floor, he asked what had happened. He was told the lady who ran the hotel had hemorrhaged the night before.

Bascom McFall was never again seen alive. Four months later, his body was found by a barking dog in a laurel thicket.

After about four years, witnesses who were in Cass on the night of the murder made certain disclosures that resulted in indictments in March of 1923. Murder charges were brought against William Dudley, Samuel Davis, and Charles "Jellyroll" James, who was already serving time for the murder of a woman in Cass the morning after the murder of McFall. It was brought out in the trial that these three men had asked McFall for his money, and he refused. Davis and James held his feet and hands while Dudley slit his throat. They then carried him into the laurel thicket. After returning to Cass, the killers proceeded to the train depot and went through McFall's suitcase looking for more money.

Young Bascom McFall of Greenbrier County died a premature death at the hands of assailants. Photographer and date unknown.

Dudley was convicted on a first degree murder charge and sentenced to life imprisonment. Samuel Davis and Charles James were also convicted and sentenced. None served more than a few years, but fate caught up with all of them eventually. Charles James was declared insane and confined to an asylum. The other men were both killed, one in a mining accident and the other from the kick of a horse.

The remains of Bascom McFall were returned to his home in the Lewisburg area. During the night of his wake his little dog lay by the casket, whimpering and crying until the body was removed for burial to the Clifton Church cemetery at Maxwelton. McFall's mother never recovered from the shock of the loss of her oldest son. Her health declining, she died five years later and was laid to rest by his side.

— Virginia S. Hylton

store. The next edition of the county newspaper said, "Houchin came on with his gun held ready for shooting, crouching as he walked. He came to a place where he was on the point of discovering Burner and...Burner fired!"

Thus did Jeff Houchin, the finest shot in Pocahontas County, die on the night of July 6, 1900, apparently without even firing his gun, at the hand of Constable Bud Burner.

Or did he?

At the inquest called the next day, July 7, by Amos S. Gillispie, justice of the peace for Green Bank District, ten witnesses were heard. Of the ten, eight testified that they did not actually see the shooting.

"I was close to the shooting but Burner was between me and Houchin and I could not see the firing," said John P. Townsend. "Mr. Bud Burner was the nearest man to him [Houchin] that I saw," said Warwick Lambert. However, Mr. Lambert does not testify that he actually saw Burner fire the shots that killed Houchin. Only one witness, Dr. J. L. Lambert, testified that he actually saw Burner fire the three shots at Houchin. "Burner fired at him three shots," the doctor stated. "Houchin fell quick the third shot."

Dr. Lambert, who also conducted the post mortem, said one of the shots hit Houchin "to the right of the nipple on the right side, another between the 5th and 6th ribs of the right side...and the third through the right hand just behind the knuckles." Dr. Lambert went on to state that either of the first two shots would have been fatal.

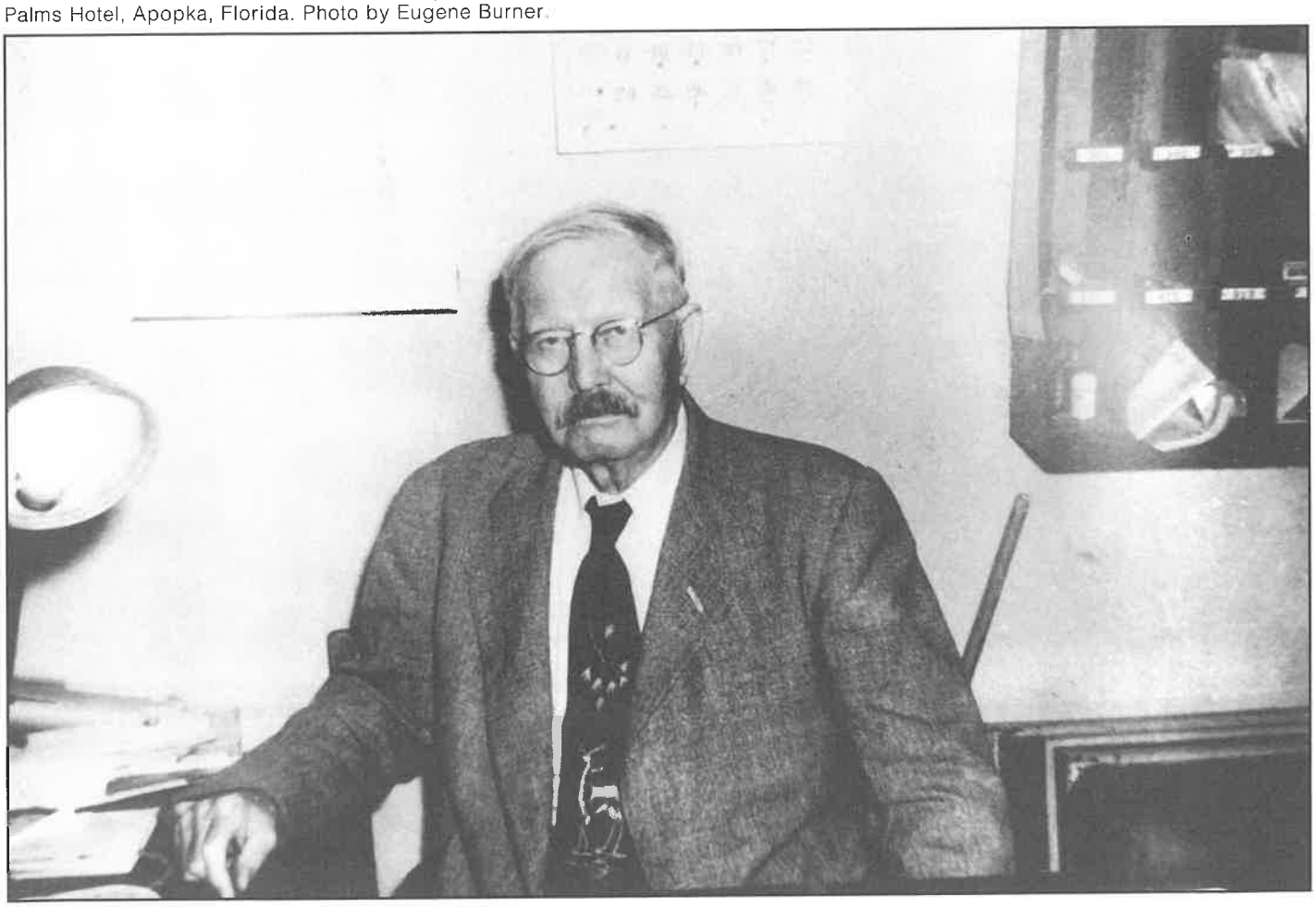
Upon hearing all the testimony, Justice Gillispie polled the jurors who had been "sworn to inquire how, and by what means J. L. Houchin came to his death." Then the "jurors under oath did say": "We the jurors find the deceased J. L. Houchin came to his death at Durbin, Pocahontas County, W. Va. on July 6, 1900, by three gun shot wounds from the hand of C. L. Burner."

If Burner himself ever testified, it is not revealed in Justice Gillispie's records. In fact the records do not even state if Burner was cleared of all charges. However, an article appeared in the *Pocahontas Times* the following week with the caption: "JEFF HOUCHIN KILLED: Constable Burner Shoots Him through the Heart with a Winchester." The very last paragraph of the article states that "the inquest held by Justice Gillispie exonerated Burner."

But in the same issue of this paper, under a column headed "Dunmore," is another interesting note: "Undertaker Swecker spent Sunday night attending the burial of Jeff Houchin. We understand he was shot with the same gun that killed Ham Collins, a 45:90 Winchester. He leaves a wife and seven children."

Did that mean Jeff Houchin was

Did former constable Bud Burner live to a ripe old age courtesy of an ex-convict's bullet in 1900? He poses here in 1952 at The Palms Hotel, Apopka, Florida. Photo by Eugene Burner.



not the first person that Constable Burner had killed with the same gun? Or something else?

A search of the record confirmed that Ham Collins was indeed killed on Cheat Mountain on the night of March 3, 1895, by a bullet from a Winchester rifle. But, the rifle in question was not in the hands of Constable Burner but those of one Charles Slavin. Moreover, it turns out that this Charles Slavin who was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to 11 years for killing Ham Collins was none other than the same Charles "Charlie" Slavin who owned the saloon in Durbin at the time of the Burner-Houchin shooting. In fact, Charlie Slavin's saloon was next door to R. B. Kerr's store.

Was the article in the newspaper then implying that it was Charlie Slavin and not Bud Burner who killed Jeff Houchin? According to Bartow resident Jessie Beard Powell that is exactly what happened.

"I did not know what really happened until a couple of years ago," Mrs. Powell told me as we sat sipping cool drinks in her kitchen one evening. "And Theodore Slavin, Charlie's nephew, to whom he left his house and all of his land, told me this story. He said, 'Uncle Charlie on his deathbed kept wanting to tell me something' and Theodore said this is what Charlie told him. He said that Bud Burner did not kill Jeff Houchin — that he did!

"Uncle Charlie on his deathbed kept wanting to tell me something," Theodore said, and this is what Charlie told him.

"You see, they were all related. Charlie's mother, Isabelle, was a Burner before she married, so I guess Charlie and Bud were first cousins. Anyway, Charlie had evidently heard of the threat that Jeff Houchin had made about killing Bud and he told Theodore that he knew sure as anything that Jeff would kill Bud. Theodore said that Uncle Charlie hid himself in an outbuilding, and when he saw Jeff come riding through town with his gun on his lap he pointed his gun out the window and shot him — he killed him!"

So perhaps whoever wrote the Dunmore column for the *Pocahontas*

Like all of us, the townspeople of Durbin struggled with good and bad and worked things out the best they could. Their July 4, 1895, portrait includes Bud Burner (seated far right), Napoleon Arbogast (on crutches) and perhaps other actors in the later tragedy.

Times on July 12, 1900, not only knew that Jeff Houchin was killed with the same gun that had killed Ham Collins but also knew that Houchin was killed by the same man — and that man was not Bud Burner.

"Charlie Slavin was a bad boy and so was his brother Gratz," Mrs. Powell continued. "They both ran saloons — Charlie in Durbin and Gratz in Cass — and they were always in and out of trouble." Then Mrs. Powell added, "Theodore Slavin has since died, but he wouldn't be somebody to fabricate a story like that. [Theodore] came and took care of Uncle Charlie in his last days, and he said Uncle Charlie told him this story on his deathbed."

"Hold on a minute," came the voice of the records clerk at Moundsville. "Yep, here he is, prisoner #2899, age 32, 5'9."

It has taken 93 years for the truth to surface, but now the story of the Burner-Houchin shoot-out in Durbin is finally closed. Or is it?

Didn't the records say Charlie Slavin was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to serve 11 years at the West Virginia State Prison in Moundsville in 1895? If so, he couldn't possibly have been in Durbin on the night of July 6, 1900, could he?

"Hold on a minute," came the voice of the records clerk at Moundsville over the phone as she checked the name Charles Slavin for me. "Yep, here he is, prisoner #2899, age 32, 5'9", blue eyes, dark hair, scars on nose, left eyebrow and three on the back of his head. Says he entered prison on November 1, 1895."

"When did he leave?" I asked, taking a deep breath and holding the phone tightly.

"Let's see...," then the voice from the state penitentiary said, "Hmmmmm? Looks like he just served a little over two years. He got out on March 4, 1897 — must have gotten lucky with the parole board."

Epilogue

As far as is known, Bud Burner never told anyone that it was Charlie and not he who killed Jeff Houchin. Jessie Powell wondered if Bud, who later moved to Florida, might have decided to leave Pocahontas County for that reason. But Eugene Burner, Bud's nephew, said that the reason "Uncle Bud left was probably for health reasons and not anything to do with killing Houchin."

Eugene added that "Bud had actually shot or killed other men." In fact, Bud had moved on to Cass where, along with his brothers, Elmer and Allen, he served as a special policeman hired by the town to control the drinking problems that were wreaking havoc on the booming sawmill town. Even the Burners' sister Emma, who was Cass's first schoolteacher, assisted in the liquor raids. In his book *On Beyond Leatherbark: The Cass Saga*, Roy B. Clarkson wrote that Emma would dress up like a man, go into a saloon, buy some liquor illegally and then swear out a warrant so her brothers could raid the place. Clarkson mentions one raid that took place in Cass in 1904 in which Gratz Slavin was arrested, although the arresting officer wasn't Bud Burner or any of his brothers.

Charlie Slavin continued his unruly ways and in 1911 he was again arrested, this time for the murder of Luther Rollins of Durbin. He was indicted by the grand jury on June 8, 1911, but there was a change of venue and the case was sent to Summers County for the trial. Apparently Charlie's luck was still holding, as there is no record in Moundsville of his ever serving time for this murder.

Jeff Houchin was buried in an old cemetery near the Burner settlement in the forest above Thornwood. However, according to Eugene Burner, the cemetery was later "plowed up and all the stones are now gone." Molly Houchin stayed in the two-story log house and raised her children. She never married again.

Now when I drive past the old buildings in Durbin, I think about Bud and Charlie and Jeff and Molly, and I wonder how many more stories there are to tell about this little mountain town that saw its fortunes rise and fall with the felling of the trees.

Greenbrier River Trail Guide

The C&O's Greenbrier Division, which carried lumber from Durbin, Cass, and other towns, is gone now, but the old roadbed remains. It has been converted to the Greenbrier River Trail, which runs from near Lewisburg to the northern end of Pocahontas County.

The Greenbrier River Trail, a handy guidebook to the trail, was recently published. Author Jim Hudson says that his earliest memories include trapping minnows and crawfish from the river near Anthony. His guidebook grew out of "several lifetimes of hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, canoeing and having a good time along the Greenbrier" — the collective experience of himself and like-minded friends and relatives.

Hudson's book follows the most developed part of the old railroad grade, from Cass to North Caldwell. He breaks the 77 miles down into manageable sections, averaging about ten miles each. The text is keyed mostly to the original railroad mileposts, listing camp sites, picnic areas, access points, nearby stores, and so forth.

The new guidebook is 74 pages long, with maps, in a convenient backpocket size. The softbound book may be ordered for $7.95, plus $1 shipping, from Thomas In-Prints, P. O. Box 101, Gauley Bridge, WV 25085.

Bärg Käss

Cheesemaking Among the West Virginia Swiss

By Bruce Betler

Photographs by Michael Keller

Every region of Switzerland has its own unique cheese. Emm Valley factories produce the large-holed Emmentaler; huge cheese houses in Appenzell make the odoriferous Appenzeller; and from around the castle Gruyère come the golden wheels of Gruyère. These are the most famous varieties of Swiss cheese, and they are produced year round. But these popular cheeses are only part of the story.

Every spring when the snow melts from the high Alpine pastures an ancient Swiss ritual begins. In hundreds of villages the farmers strap bronze bells to their cows and goats and parade them through town on their way up to the alp. (And technically an alp is not a mountain, but a set of summer pastures in the mountains which includes a *Hütte* or herder's cottage.) All summer long the cows are tended by a *Senn* who milks twice daily, churns butter, and every morning makes the highly prized *Bärg Käss*, Swiss-German for "mountain cheese". Every cluster of villages has its own type of *Bärg Käss*.

And so does West Virginia. Far into the Allegheny Highlands of southern Randolph County lies the Swiss village of Helvetia, named for the Latin word for Switzerland. Among its many crafts and traditions brought from the fatherland in the late 1800's is the making of *Bärg Käss*. Since the Swiss name each variety of cheese for the place which produces it, West Virginia's *Bärg Käss* is called *Helvetia Käss*, or Helvetia cheese.

In the 1800's Switzerland was one of the world's poorest countries. Its agrarian economy, growing population, and scarcity of farmland prompted an exodus to the New World which lasted most of the century.

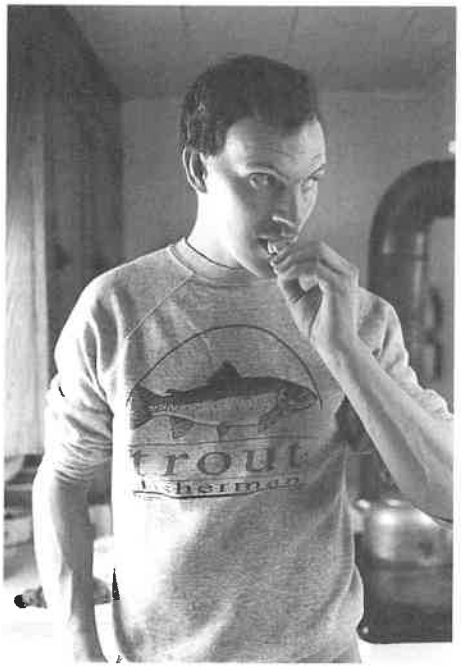
Poor but industrious Swiss immigrants settled over most of the United States and Canada. West Virginia was no exception. Randolph County alone once had three Swiss communities, Adolph, Alpina, and Helvetia, as well as a thick smearing of Swiss among the general population. These communities functioned as cultural centers for the county's Swiss well into the 20th century, even as the original immigrants and their descendants assimilated into the mainstream American culture.

Helvetia, the most isolated of Randolph County's three Swiss colonies, still carries on the Swiss traditions brought over by its forebears. The pre-Lenten Fasnacht, a sort of Mardi Gras costume ball held the Saturday before Ash Wednesday; the Community Fair with its parade commemorating the procession of cows down from the alps at the summer's end; and the Helvetia Folkdancers all exemplify Swiss cultural influence. Swiss foods, songs, furniture, and proverbs are found around many a table. But the most characteristic sign of Swiss influence is the *Bärg Käss* produced in Helvetia and on the Balli farm in neighboring Webster County.

Although the first settlers arrived in 1869, the making of Helvetia cheese did not begin until the arrival of the first cow in 1871. At first the settlers made the cheese only on their farms, and the cheeses were a handy item for barter. Eleanor Fahrner Mailloux recalls, "My family, the Fahrners, didn't make cheese, but we always had it around. We had bees, and my folks would trade the honey for cheese."

Cheese was also a valuable commodity to sell to passers-through and to men working in the nearby timber industry. It was in order to capitalize on this market that John Teüscher and John Bürky built the first cheese house in Helvetia in the 1880's. This little enterprise produced large wheels of cheese which were then cured in a special cellar dug out of the mountainside.

When a railroad was built to nearby Pickens in 1893, Christian Zumbach began producing cheeses which were shipped all over the United States. In the early 1900's a third cheese house was built, this one above the village on Ernest Bürky's farm. It too produced large wheels until the 1930's. It still stands, a tribute to the Swiss craftsmanship that built it, but the farm's cheeses are now made on the kitchen stove by Ernest's grandson, Alvin Burky.



Alvin Burky checks the goods. His people have made cheese since ancestor John Bürky's day.

Throughout the 1900's cheese continued to be made on many farms, but another cheese house was not attempted until 1973 when Dolores Baggerly and Eleanor Fahrner

Mailloux opened the Cheese Haus in the village. These enterprising women had an eye for decor as well as for practicality. They designed their facility such that spectators could view the cheesemaking process from a quaint lobby through a bank of windows. This small factory produced cheese until 1986 when Delbert Betler, the local dairy farmer, retired, and the milk supply dried up. Delbert had impressed the Cheese Haus employees by the grace with which he handled those heavy milk cans, swinging them from left to right as he walked them across the floor.

Soon after, in 1990, a Helvetia native, Leslie Betler White, who had moved away several years earlier, returned with husband and children to establish a cheesemaking business on her grandparents' old farm. Desiring to gradually expand their cheese output from just ten pounds per day to several times that, the Whites, with the aid of Charles Chandler, a local engineer, designed and built an efficient and versatile facility in the ideal atmosphere of the house's old cellar. Unfortunately, just as production was picking up, a tragic fire burned the house down. The family lost everything, including two sons. Since then there have been no attempts to produce Helvetia cheese on a large scale. David Sutton's book, *One's Own Hearth is Like Gold: The History of Helvetia, West Virginia,* discusses the various local attempts at commercial cheese production.

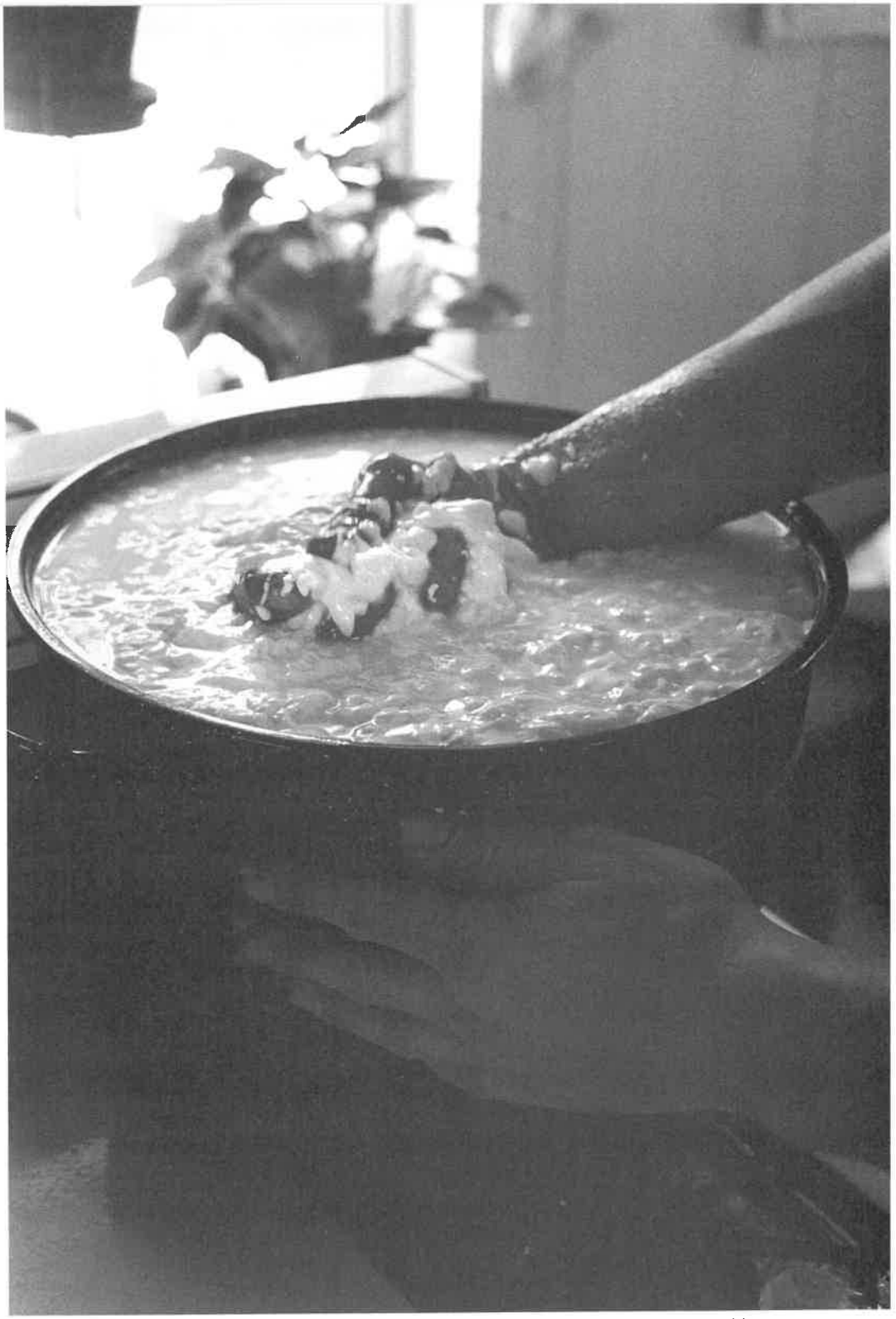
Just like their cousins in Switzerland, Helvetians give the standard answer to strangers who ask how they give their cheese its distinctive taste, replying *"Unter d' Mist Stock."* That means, "We bury it in the manure pile to cure." Barns like Alvin Burky's produce plenty of manure, but visitors gullible enough to believe that the cheese goes there are also likely to be sold some of the premium-priced, life-prolonging eagle eggs produced by local banty hens.

And every Swiss-speaking Helvetian knows the poem:

Appenzeller Maidli,
wie machtst du d' Käss?
"I' steck es in der Kugeli,
I' druck es mit dem Füdeli,
Darum ist d' Käss so räs."

Roughly translated — and roughly is the only way to translate this one — that goes as follows:

Maiden from Appenzell,
how make you the cheese?
"I put it in the crock,
I press it with my fanny,
therefore is the cheese
so pungent."



The separation of milk into curds and whey is the essential first step in cheesemaking.

Actually, making cheese is basically the same all over the world: Milk is heated, enzymes cause the milk solids to separate from the liquid, and microorganisms living in the drained solids produce various flavors. A cheese's texture is determined by the fat and acid content of the milk, the temperature to which it is heated, and the conditions of the curing process. Its flavor is determined by the strains of

bacteria present, the breed of cow, and even what the cow eats — itself affected by the region's soil, climate, altitude and plant varieties. For those skeptical about the influence of the cow's diet, a sample of cheese from a cow who has gotten into a patch of ramps should serve to convince.

Helvetia cheese, typical of Swiss *Bärg Käss*, begins with the evening milking. That milk is strained, cooled as quickly as possible, and chilled overnight. In the morning the cows are again milked. This still-warm milk is poured through strainers directly into the big kettle which is beginning to heat up. Then the cream is skimmed from the previous night's milk and kept for butter, ice cream, and berries. The chilled skim milk is poured into the kettle with the morning's milk and heated to a specific temperature in order to kill any unwanted strains of bacteria.

After the milk has reached the correct temperature, it is removed from the fire and allowed to cool to another specific temperature. At this point an enzyme called rennet is stirred into the milk. This causes the milk solids to separate from the liquid resulting in curd and whey. Naturally produced rennet comes from the stomach lining of a calf which has only eaten milk; today it can also be produced in a laboratory.

The milk with rennet is kept warm, and the cheesemaker has an hour's wait for the curd to form. Industrious cheesemakers take this time to go into the curing cellar and turn the older cheeses. Occasionally these curing cheeses are scrubbed as well, to remove the naturally occuring mold.

After this hour has passed, the real work begins. The milk has now separated into a soft white layer of curd resting on top of the whey, a translucent yellow liquid. A long wooden sword or a wire-strung cheese harp cuts the gelatinous curd into one-inch cubes, or the cheesemaker may break the curds by hand for smaller batches such as Alvin Burky makes. Then the kettle is moved back onto the fire for cooking. The cheesemaker submerges a bare arm into the curds and stirs, taking care to break apart any curds which are too large. When all the curds are of proper size, the bare arm comes out and the kettle is stirred with a long-handled whisk called a *Käss Messer* until the proper temperature is reached. This temperature varies, depending upon the month of the year.

It all begins with the rich milk of Randolph County cattle.

The steaming whey is immediately poured off the curds, which have now settled to the bottom. The curds are then packed into cloth-lined molds. Weights press out the remaining whey and compress the curds into a solid cheese body. In the evening the fragile new cheeses are taken out of the molds, unwrapped from the cloth, turned upside-down and placed again into the cloth-lined cheese molds. The weights then press the cheeses until morning when the bleary-eyed cheesemaker removes the cheeses to a salt bath, washes the molds and cheese cloths, and prepares to repeat the entire business.

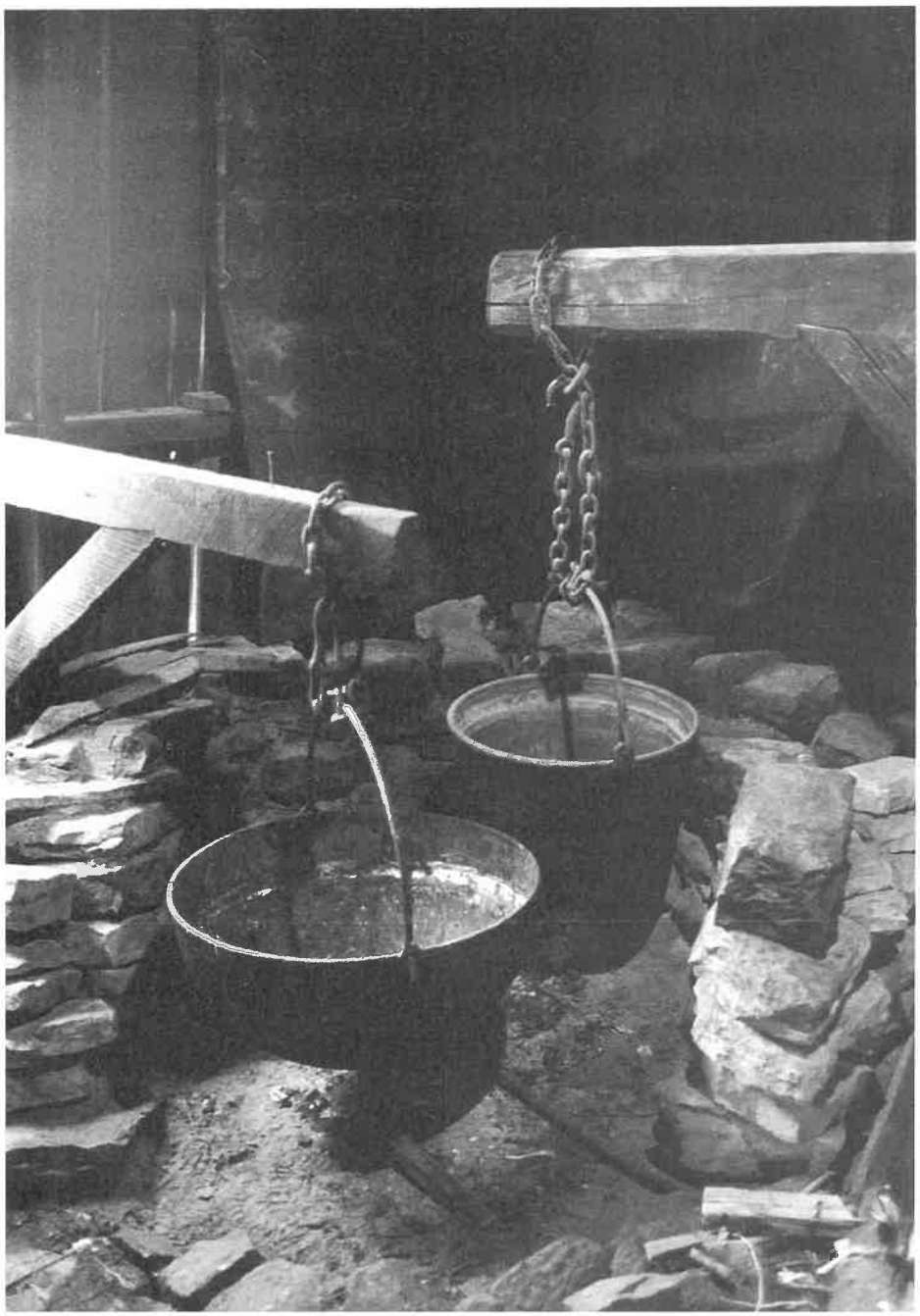
Curing cheese varies from cheesemaker to cheesemaker. Each has secret methods which are passed down through the family. The fact that curing cellars are closed to the public for sanitary reasons only adds to the mystique. However, certain elements are common to all curing. It begins with a salt bath or a salt massage for the new cheese, which is then stored in a climate encouraging the growth of certain molds. The ripening cheeses are washed and turned regularly. The washing solution is the gravest of secrets.

Savvy cheesemakers can predict with reasonable accuracy the characteristics of the individual cheeses and can match them to the tastes of particular neighbors or family members. This makes for good friends and happy customers. With *Bärg Käss* or mountain cheese this prophetic ability is important because the completely natural cheesemaking process results in every batch being unique. Some cheeses are sharp, some are mild. Some are hard, some are soft. Some are rank, some are mellow. It depends on the weather, the season of the year, and even the mood of the cow.

Helvetia has a long and illustrious line of cheesemakers, continuing to the present with Alvin Burky and the Balli sisters. The most respected of the recent past was Geraldine Smith Betler, the wife of the local dairy farmer. Geraldine learned from her mother-in-law Ella Karlen Betler, studying the unpredic-

tability of factors such as weather and the temperament of cattle. Geraldine and Ella became the first cheesemakers in the Baggerly-Mailloux cheese house of 1973. She is considered the grandmother of the line of Cheese Haus cheesemakers who came after her, including Betty Daetwyler Biggs, Heidi Fahrner Mailloux, John Hedges, Mary Alice Hostetter, Cathy Mailloux, Bruce Betler, Susan Cunningham Wooten and Alvin Burky.

Betty Daetwyler Biggs, best known outside the community as leader of the Helvetia Folkdancers, did her own experimenting and research. She learned from her mother, Margie Fahrner Daetwyler, the trick of putting the wooden



The old Burky cheese house is used mostly for storage nowadays. The interior (left) shows an open stone fireplace in the Swiss style, with timber cranes to swing the two big kettles on and off the fire as cheesemaking proceeds.

molds and shelves in the bright sun occasionally to bleach. Betty claims that the best way to enjoy a good Helvetia cheese is simply sliced with fresh fruit at hand.

Alvin Burky, a lean, muscular 33-year-old (and single), is retired from the Cheese Haus but sometimes misses the challenge of six cheeses a day. Now making one a day on his farm, his cheesemaking advice is the most sought after in the village.

Like good wine, fine cheese is not merely a food — it is an event. When

The curds have a consistency similar to cottage cheese as the whey is drained away.

a Helvetian brings up a cheese among neighbors, everyone gazes toward the cellar door to catch a first glimpse of the rind. Depending on its external appearance the cheese will evoke comments such as "That's mighty yellow," or "Boy, that one looks perfect!" If the cheese looks awful, the host will speak first and apologetically, perhaps murmuring, "I don't know what this one will be like." A guest then replies optimistically, "Sometimes the worst-looking ones taste the best."

The rind is wiped with a dry cloth and the cheese laid on the cutting board. A long knife slices several *Schnitzels*, which are then set before the guests. Ideally, one of the host's children has been sent to the cellar to siphon some wine from the barrel. The glasses are filled, and each guest, followed by the host, takes a slice from the board. They politely sniff the cheese, break it to test the texture, then nibble off a bit and chew reflectively. If the cheese is above average, the guests will begin to praise it and sip their wine. If it is below average, attention will immediately shift to the wine.

Debbie Lewis Sayer, a cook at Helvetia's famous Hütte Restaurant, describes the reaction of guests at their first sampling of Helvetia cheese as "always interesting." Before new guests order an entire cheese sandwich plate or a bowl of cheese soup, she will often sneak them a *Schnitzel* to be sure they will like it. They approach the slice as a cat would approach a kettle of hot milk. "When they finally get around to eating it, most people really love it," says Debbie.

The best way to eat Helvetia cheese, according to most Helvetians, is on a toasted cheese sandwich with homemade bread. Swiss *Käss Brot*, or cheese bread, is a slice of cheese broiled until bubbly atop a slice of dark bread.

In the summer the preferred sandwich of Nancy Daetwyler Gain is sliced young cheese, mayonnaise, and freshly sliced tomatoes from the garden. Nancy brings up her cheese after only four weeks of curing because she prefers the mild, green flavor.

Elsie Klee Burky disagrees, saying "the stronger the better." She undoubtedly inherited this preference from her Appenzell ancestors. Her girlhood neighbors, the Balli sisters, now produce the most

Cottage Cheese Pie

Vada Betler Smith treasures her Grandmother Anna's cottage cheese pie recipe, as preserved by Aunt Hazel Betler McClellan. You may substitute half-and-half for sweet cream and commercial dry-curd cottage cheese for the homemade cheese preferred by Helvetians:

1 pint cottage cheese, dry
1 pint sweet cream
1/2 t. salt
1 t. vanilla
4 eggs
1 T. cornstarch

Using an electric mixer, beat eggs well. Add rest of ingredients and beat on high speed for about ten minutes or until well mixed. Bake in an uncovered crust at 400 degrees for ten minutes. Set temperature back to 350 degrees and continue baking for 30 to 35 minutes. Mrs. McClellan says that you can tell the pie is finished when you take a knife, stick it down into the pie, and it comes out clean.

cheese in the area. They save Elsie only their rankest cheeses.

Stories too numerous to count surround Helvetia cheese. Margie Fahrner Daetwyler recalls bringing up a beautiful cheese from the cheese cabinet one night to present to her brother Stuart Fahrner as a birthday present. In the morning she went to the kitchen and found that a rat had bored a hole into it. Slicing out the middle, she gave the cheese to Stuart in two chunks. "Here," she told him, "it's bound to be a good one. The rats sure liked it!"

Margie's daughter Betty Daetwyler Biggs, along with a cousin, Catherine Mailloux, were employed at the Cheese Haus during the 1970's. Among their tales is one about the time they took off to Buckhannon and had so much fun that they left an entire kettle of milk to sour. Cathy's mother, Cheese Haus proprietor Eleanor Mailloux, got so, uh, impatient that she drove to Buckhannon to fetch the girls back to work.

Cheese milk or whey makes good pig slop, and local farmers are always happy to haul away this byproduct. In his eagerness, one unfortunate farmer dumped a whole milk can of warm whey into his hog trough one evening. The next morning the pigs were dead, because whey must cool and sour a bit before feeding it to stock. The villagers had fun that summer accusing cheesemakers Betty and Catherine of poisoning the man's pigs.

There is a belief among neighboring Czar residents (as recounted by James Smith, who married into a Swiss family) that the Swiss oldtimers made an alcoholic beverage out of the whey. However, Margaret Koerner, Helvetia's oldest citizen, says in a heavy German accent, "I had never heard of dat, und I don't dink it is twue."

Besides the obvious nutritional value of a cheese made wholly of organic ingredients and cured in an all-natural process, in at least one instance Helvetia cheese has been known to have extraordinary healing powers. Many years ago on Turkeybone Mountain, Margaret Egelson Isch was caring for her ail-

The Cheese Haus replicated traditional methods as a tourist attraction and commercial venture. This picture shows Heidi Mailloux at work. Photo by Norton Lewis Gusky, 1978.

Alvin Burky closes the packed curds into a wooden cheese mold. Weights press out the remaining whey and solidify the curds together.

Frieda Balli weighs and prices cheeses at the Balli family farm in Webster County.

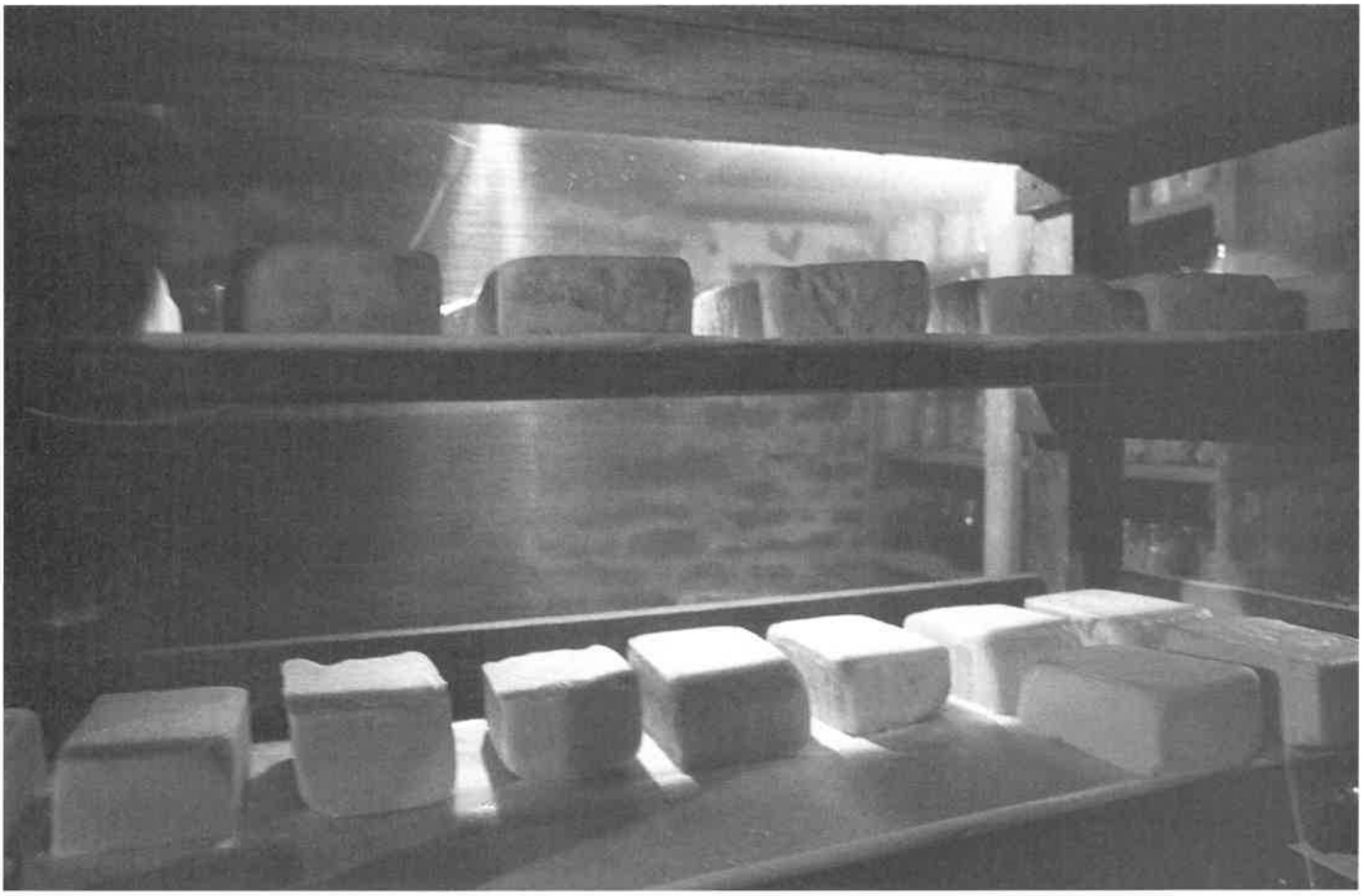
ing mother. Living under the same roof and under their share of stresses, these good women were occasionally known to wear out their normally sweet dispositions.

One morning Margaret made a cheese which, due to the humid weather, bloated out of its mold, dumping the heavy pressing weights onto the kitchen counter. This being the straw to break the camel's back, she hurled the cheese to the floor and proceeded to jump on it until her temper abated. Due to its unusual condition, the cheese did not break up but instead bounced Margaret like a trampoline. Observing her daughter's fit of cheese stomping, old Mrs. Egelson feared that Margaret's sanity had begun to slip. Convinced that she might have to care for daughter, granddaughter and son-in-law, the old woman's health picked up remarkably and remained so for some time thereafter.

The golden bricks of *Bärg Käss* are not the only cheese tradition passed down in Helvetia. The oldtimers were also fond of their Limburger. This was not the proper Limburger made according to the methods employed in the Province of Limburg, but is called Limburger only because it is soft and it reeks.

Norman and Vernon Burky remember how their mother Alma Betler Burky made the rank delicacy on the Burky farm. "When the regular cheese would come out of the mold, Mom would trim strips off the sharp edges and put them by the cookstove in a little crock

Cheese rests like ingots of gold in the cellar of a Helvetia farmhouse.



with a lid," Norman recalls in his Swiss accent. "The stuff would start working in there, and you had to keep the lid on or it would stink up the whole house. If you ate any, you had to wash your hands three or four times to get the smell off your fingers. But they sure liked it."

Another local cheese is *Smearkäss*, or cottage cheese. Every Helvetian farm child has been sent to the garden with scissors to get some *Schnittlauch* (chives) for the homemade cottage cheese. The word *Smearkäss* is Pennsylvania Dutch in origin, and the Swiss of Helvetia are often called Dutchmen by their neighbors.

Smearkäss begins with cool milk, which is skimmed and then left in a kettle to sour. Left long enough, the sour milk forms a curd which is broken into bits. These curds are cooked slightly to solidify them before they are strained through cheese cloth. Vada Betler Smith, now one of the village grandmas, licks her lips as she describes her own Grandma Anna Häessig Betler's preparation. "It's best when the curds are still warm," Vada says. "You pour fresh cream over them, because they're so dry, and sprinkle on a little pepper. Gosh, I could fill up on that!"

Culture travels both ways, of course, and in Switzerland the idea of cottage cheese came from the United States. The Swiss call it *Hüttekäss*, literally cottage cheese.

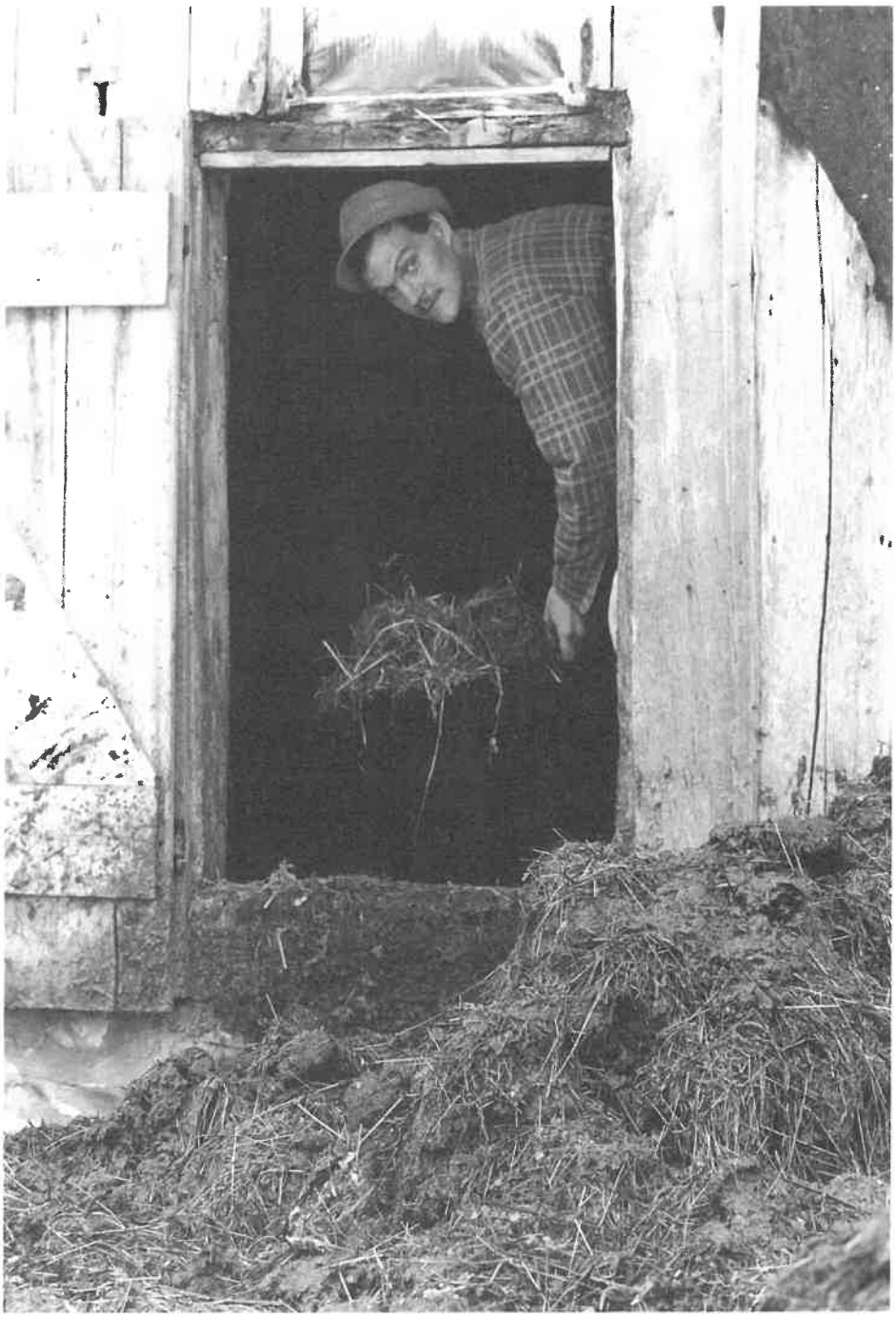
Visitors from Switzerland find themselves quite at home in Helvetia. Once invited into a local farmer's house, they perform rituals of cheese tasting, wine sipping, and conversation identical to those of rural Switzerland. They remark that the cheese tastes similar to the *Bärg Käss* of the St. Gallen Oberland or of Canton Glarus. But they confess that there is something unique about it.

So the most humorous Swiss will knowingly ask the Helvetian, "How do you get it to taste that way?" And the Helvetian will reply with a twinkle, *"Es komt vo unter d' Mist Stock!"*

Getting Yours

If you'd like to try Helvetia cheese, your best bet is to go to Helvetia. Eleanor Mailloux of the Hutte Restaurant says that supply varies — "some seasons less, some seasons more" — but generally visitors will find cheese for sale in the Randolph County village.

Getting Helvetia cheese shipped is a different matter, and the customer must be willing to be flexible. Ms. Mailloux says she can inform you as to whether cheese is "available now, or two weeks from now," and she does take orders. The price is $4 to $6 per pound, plus shipping. Direct inquiries to Eleanor Mailloux, Box 42, Helvetia, WV 26224; (304)924-6435.



The Burky barn produces a sizable heap of manure over a long Randolph County winter, but Alvin remains mum about the old rumor of curing cheese there.

Eleanor McElroy

"An Influence for Good"

By Raymond Alvarez

Eleanor McElroy pauses by the maternity reception desk. Her work as a hospital volunteer tops a long service career. Photo by Michael Keller.

Miss Eleanor Doratha McElroy is a vibrant bundle of energy at Fairmont General Hospital, where she has volunteered on a regular basis since 1967. Wearing her pink smock and proudly displaying her 10,000-hour service pin, she delivers mail to patients, dispatching deliveries from her wicker basket. She distributes cheer along with cards and letters, as she rushes from one floor to the next. On Fridays, she conducts a Bible study group for the patients on the hospital's skilled nursing unit.

With such a schedule, she's always in a hurry. When you are 89 years old, self-sufficient, fiercely independent, and dedicated to serving others, there's no time to rest, especially if you're like Miss McElroy.

She's done so many things in her lifetime, always with zest and compassion. She probably holds the record for continuous community service in Marion County, if such an award were given. In 1983, she received the first West Virginia "Golden Angel" award as the outstanding volunteer of the year at the annual meeting of the State Auxiliary to the Hospital Association. She's an inspiration to those who meet and work with her at Fairmont General.

She's humble about her accomplishments, and it's impossible to estimate the number of lives she has touched. She doesn't seek praise and prefers to live in the present. She keeps few relics. In fact, several years ago she moved to a smaller house with her sister and decided to get rid of photographs and memorabilia. "No room for them," she explained. Instead, Miss McElroy keeps her memories.

"I was born December 2, 1904, on the Island at Wheeling at 12:20 p.m. Daddy always said they had to wait dinner for me," she stated. Eleanor was the first of four children born to George L. and Hazel Virginia Combs McElroy. The McElroys moved to various Ohio Valley towns for the next few years. Then when she was seven years old, her father moved the family to a farm near Hoodsville in a rural section of northeastern Marion County.

George McElroy was hired as the hoisting engineer at the Grant Town coal mine, responsible for getting the coal to the tipple and the miners in and out of the mine. He wanted to live near the mine but chose a nearby farm rather than putting his family into one of his employer's company houses. "My father always said a man owed his wife and children the best food he could give them, and we always had plenty to eat from our farm and garden," Eleanor recalled.

Her Grandmother Ella did not think it was a good idea for young Eleanor to walk long country roads to go to school, so she kept her in Wheeling where she could attend a neighborhood school on the Island. In January 1911, she entered first grade at Madison School and attended through sixth grade.

After her 12th birthday, her grandmother thought Eleanor was old enough to handle rural school life, so she rejoined her family at the Hoodsville farm. She completed the next three months at the Grant Town Graded School and passed the state test for high school in March 1917. She attended Fairview High School for one year and then completed the next two years at Fairmont Senior High School. She

boarded with a friend of her mother's and graduated in 1920. She was only 15 years old.

The 'standard normal course' for a teaching career was offered at Fairmont Normal School, the forerunner of Fairmont State College. Eleanor and another girl rented a room in Fairmont while they both attended the school. She completed this program of instruction in 1922. That summer she worked as a clerk for the Fairmont Woolworth's, which wanted to train her for a manager's position. Although she had a contract with the city school district to teach at an elementary school, the state refused to issue a teaching certificate since she wasn't 18 yet. The school district superintendent assigned her anyway, and she left Woolworth's to pursue her first semester as a substitute for any high school teacher who was absent. She also helped in the library as needed during that first semester.

Her record of volunteerism and community service began during her two years at Fairmont Normal, where she was the YWCA president. As a service project, her girls club provided storytelling at the Fairmont Salvation Army nursery, which furnished day care for working mothers. One afternoon, a club member couldn't keep her appointed time for story hour and asked Eleanor to substitute. "I told several stories to the children before a four-year-old crawled under my left arm and pleaded 'Now tell us a true story about you and where you live.'" Eleanor then told of life on the farm and described all the animals. "Now take me home with you," the child demanded.

She considered it and later obtained permission to take the child to the farm for the weekend. Hearing about the underprivileged children at the center, Eleanor's mother visited the Salvation Army supervisor and soon Eleanor was taking other children home with her on weekends and holidays. Of the 23 children then at the Salvation Army nursery, most visited the McElroy farm for a few days.

Eleanor spent a lot of time with the infants at the center, teaching most of them to walk. The supervisor soon began referring widowed fathers with small children to Eleanor and her family to make "good arrangements to care for their motherless children" in the days before foster care programs.

So numerous children were welcomed into the McElroy home from 1921 through the Depression years. Eleanor's younger sisters, Doris and Zella, who later taught at Rivesville Elementary School, were also concerned about the plight of poor children. They began to bring kids home as well. If children's clothes needed washing or their stomachs needed filling, the McElroy sisters were concerned. The family farm produced plenty of food to share. Even their brother Harry and their father helped with the visiting children. It was a family affair for nearly 20 years.

She told of life on the farm and described all the animals. "Now take me home with you," the child demanded.

Eleanor (left) with siblings Harry and Doris and Grandmother Mary Ellen Combs in Wheeling, about 1910. Photographer unknown.

Sometimes the cases were desperate ones. Two sets of parents were told by physicians to get their infants into the "hands of someone who knew delicate babies" or they would not live to their first or second birthdays. "We kept them to their seventh year," she recalled, adding that both children returned to their parents and later lived productive lives.

Eleanor spent the first nine years of her career teaching at Fleming, Barnes, Miller and Butcher elementary schools in Fairmont. During this time, she completed her AB degree at Fairmont State College and received a master's degree in education from West Virginia University.

In 1931, she completed a summer course of study from the Zanerian College of Penmanship in Ohio. This was an in-depth program on the fine art of handwriting. "I spent seven days just working on the letter 'W' alone," she recalled. With this training completed, she served as the Fairmont Independent District penmanship supervisor from 1931 to 1933. By 1933, the Marion County independent school districts had consolidated into a single, county-wide board of education. She continued as a county penmanship supervisor through 1942 and worked in all the county elementary schools on a visiting basis.

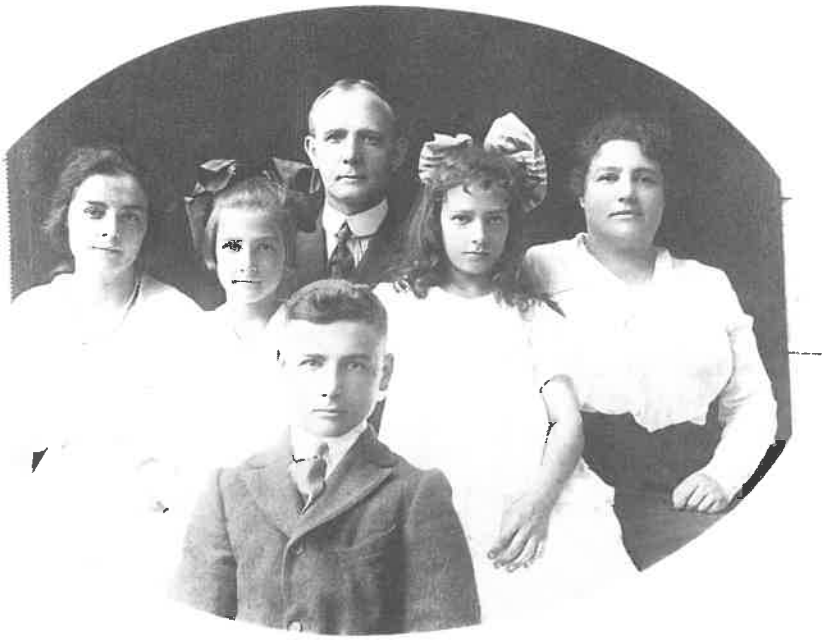
Nearly all the school desks had a small round hole in the upper right-hand corner. This held the ink bottle, and the schools provided ink, pens and nibs. Cursive writing was taught beginning in the first grade back then. "We used penmanship as a means of developing character," she said. "I taught that it was only common courtesy to write so people could understand you." Letter writing would later figure into another project she initiated for high school students during World War II.

Girls generally excelled at proper penmanship. "Boys couldn't do it," she commented, at least not as well as the girls, but when they finished her course of instruction they were nonetheless proud of their skills.

"You know," she chuckled, "I seem to be remembered most for teaching penmanship when I meet former students today." She sighed that the subject is hardly even taught in the school system today. Her own handwriting is as crisp and neat now as it ever was, including those hard-learned "w's."

With the promise of being assigned ninth grade English, she joined the faculty at Monongah High School in 1942 and remained there for 25 years until her retirement. She taught a wide range of subjects including all four years of English, speech and drama, journalism, civics, commercial geography and general math. Monongah High School served the children of coal miners from that town as well as nearby coal towns such as Worthington, Hutchinson, Four States, Carolina and Everson.

These communities had distinct ethnic and cultural roots, attracting Italian, Polish and middle European immigrants to work in the coal mines, as well as black Americans from the South. The rural farm areas around Monongah contributed Appalachian families descended from early Marion County settlers. Eleanor enjoyed the cultural diversity of her students and sought to inspire lofty goals in them all, especially those who came from low-income families.



Family portrait, about 1916. George and Hazel McElroy pose with children, including Eleanor at left. Photographer unknown.

"We used penmanship to develop character. I taught that it was only common courtesy to write so people could understand you."

She was not content to be idle and sought employment during the summer months when the schools were closed. Perhaps her most interesting period came during the war when she worked in a steel mill in Warwood, preparing pipes for shipment overseas. At a Fourth of July picnic that summer, her boss said that the men had never been able to get as much work out of the pipe machine as she did.

Eleanor says that some others were less commited to wartime production. She recalls that one woman co-worker remarked, "My husband is overseas, but I don't mean to kill myself here for that reason." Then this lady didn't receive any mail from her husband for a week and was "dissolved into tears" in worrying about his safety. There were no more complaints about having to work too hard after that.

During the war years, Eleanor also worked with the Red Cross and developed special programs at Monongah High. She headed a project of keeping in contact with local boys in the military. "We wrote a 'yard-long letter' from pupils to each boy in turn," she recalls. Her journalism classes created the *Serviceman's Informer*, a newsletter of school events, community news, autographs and short notes written by the students.

"It was read by every member in the unit until it was threadbare. A commander of one ship wrote to the school principal and asked that it be mailed monthly, which I made sure was done," she said.

After the war ended, the *Serviceman's Informer* continued to reach many servicemen overseas as well as those in training. Another project involved preparing Red Cross boxes for school children in postwar Holland.

Miss McElroy in her prime middle years. Monongah High School faculty portrait, 1945.

"We collected good used clothing and food," she recalled. One Monongah family saved their rationed sugar, and Miss McElroy's mother added tea bags. The Dutch recipient wrote back that "no child ever waited for Christmas as anx-

iously as my wife for tea and sugar." When the package arrived, the woman had a tea party for all the other families in their neighborhood. Under the Nazis they had forgotten what such social gatherings were.

Her work was appreciated at home as well. The 1946 Monongah High *Black Diamond* yearbook had the following dedication: "To one who has served faithfully for four years as a friend, teacher, and yearbook advisor. She has shown a keen interest in all students, she has influenced many to continue their studies and through the war years she was a regular correspondent, carrying cheer to many servicemen and women through her personal letters and gifts and through the 'Servicemen's Informer.' Eleanor D. McElroy has been an influence for good in Monongah High School."

And that wasn't all. Eleanor's sense of duty and service eventually led her to pursue a second career in the ministry. "I would have become a missionary if my mother would have allowed it," she said. When asked to give a sermon at a Methodist Women's Day service in Wheeling, she impressed the audience and church officials with her eloquent message. In 1949, the Methodist Church recommended her for a pastor's license, which she received in 1950. With this, she became one of the first women Methodist ministers in Marion County.

The committee that supervised ministerial education decided she didn't need to attend a seminary but could pursue a correspondence degree through the Emory University School of Theology. Eight years was often required for completion, but she finished the coursework in only 17 months. Final orders were conferred by Bishop Wicke in 1953.

"A new church had been declared on Harter Hill near Worthington and I was assigned in the spring of 1950. We baptized people in a frozen stream that Easter," she recounted. "The district superintendent had a rubber suit and I was just in a white dress. His wife gave him the dickens when she saw how wet and cold I was. I didn't mind, though. It was fun!"

Later she pastored both Harter Hill and Bowles Chapel, near Grant Town. By the early 1960's, her permanent assignment was Pitcher Chapel, a small white frame church nestled on the banks of the Monongahela River in Dakota Camp, a coal mining community located a few miles north of Fairmont.

The church dates back to the early 19th century, according to Eleanor. "During the Civil War, two men carved their names into a pew which was in use when I was there," she stated. This small church had a regular attendance of approximately 40 parishioners throughout

Aunt Laura Prepares for the Next Century

Laura Powers of Jackson County recently had a pacemaker implanted at age 101. "Aunt Laura" was featured in the Spring 1993 GOLDENSEAL.

Her doctors said she is the oldest person they know of who has had the pacemaker surgery, admitting that the case is an unusual one. "If I heard of a doctor putting a pacemaker in a 100-year-old woman, I would be concerned," her surgeon told the *Jackson Star News*. "But until you look Mrs. Powers in the eye, you don't understand."

"It's been a long time since I felt this good," Aunt Laura herself said following the surgery. We wish her all the best for the future.

MICHAEL KELLER

her tenure, which ended with her second retirement in the mid-1980's. "I was a minister for 36 years, all told," she states with great pride.

And that brought on her third career. As a minister, she would come to Fairmont General Hospital to visit hospitalized church members and those in need of comfort. A close friend of hers did the mail at the hospital, sorting cards and letters for patients and delivering them.

"My friend lost her ride to the hospital when a family member became ill. She knew I was there daily and drove my own car, so she asked me to take her up to the hospital and help her if I wanted to," she said.

Eleanor got a firsthand view from the volunteer's perspective of helping the hospital staff. "I knew the girls on 3 West were nearly overburdened at meal time," she explained. "I offered to help feed patients after I retired from school." So she pitched right in and helped. About three weeks went by and Helen Eddy, the assistant nursing supervisor, had her paged over the hospital intercom.

"We baptized people in a frozen stream that Easter. The district superintendent had a rubber suit and I was just in a white dress. I didn't mind, though. It was fun!"

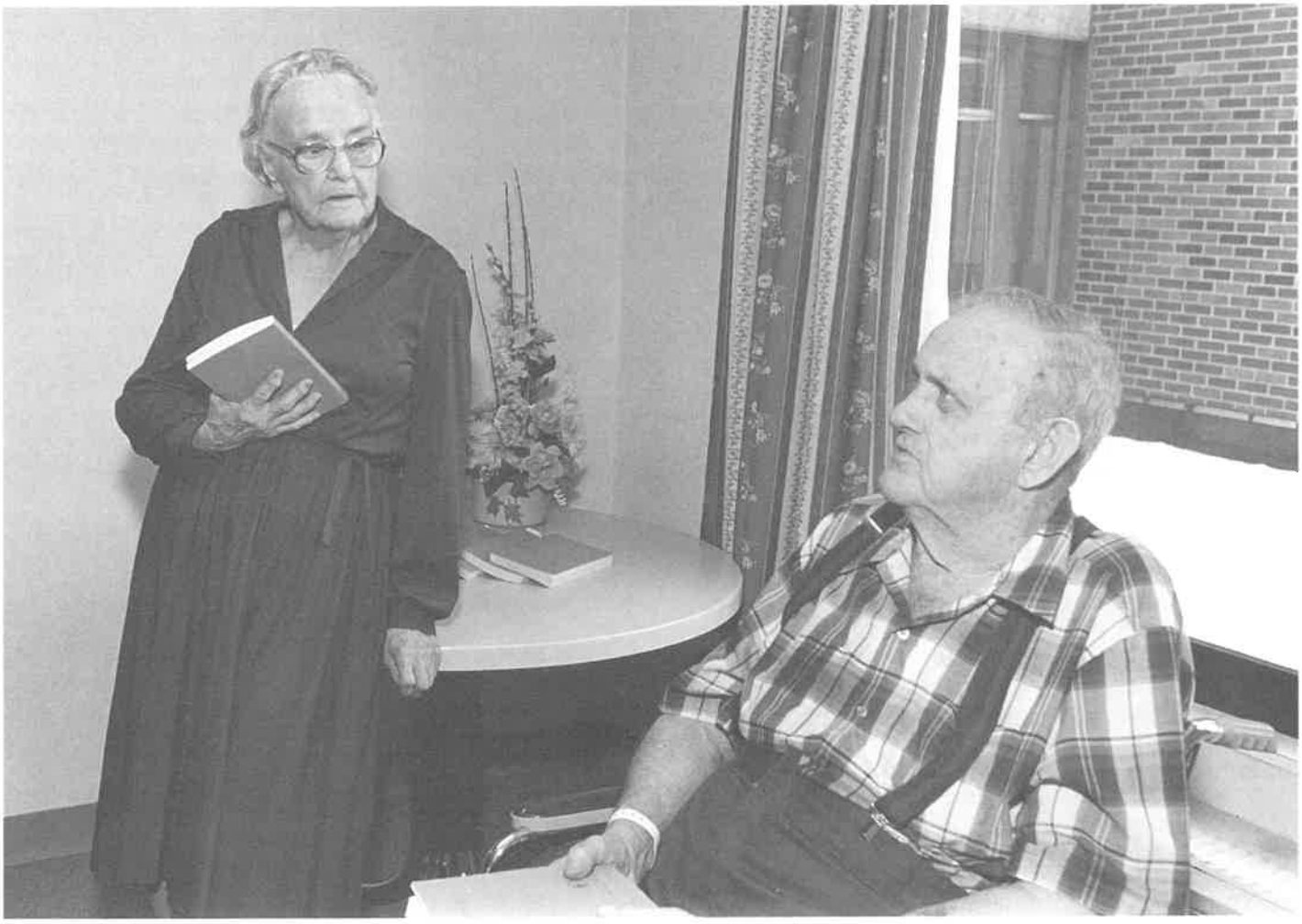
"I was scared to death to hear my name paged like that. I was frightened of Miss Eddy when I went into her office. She said, 'I hear you've been helping feed our patients,' and I admitted it. 'Well then, you'd better join our auxiliary.' I did, and I'm still there as a volunteer today."

With such a lifetime of sharing, teaching, and working to help others, kindness could be her middle name. In fact, that may nearly be so. "My father named me and my sisters," she said. "Did you know that Eleanor means 'light' and Doratha means 'gift of God'?

"He didn't know that at the time; he just liked the name," she said with a twinkle in her eye. "Isn't that interesting?" she asked.

Surely all those who have known her, shared with her, received her gifts of knowledge, compassion, and spiritual guidance for the past seven decades would agree.

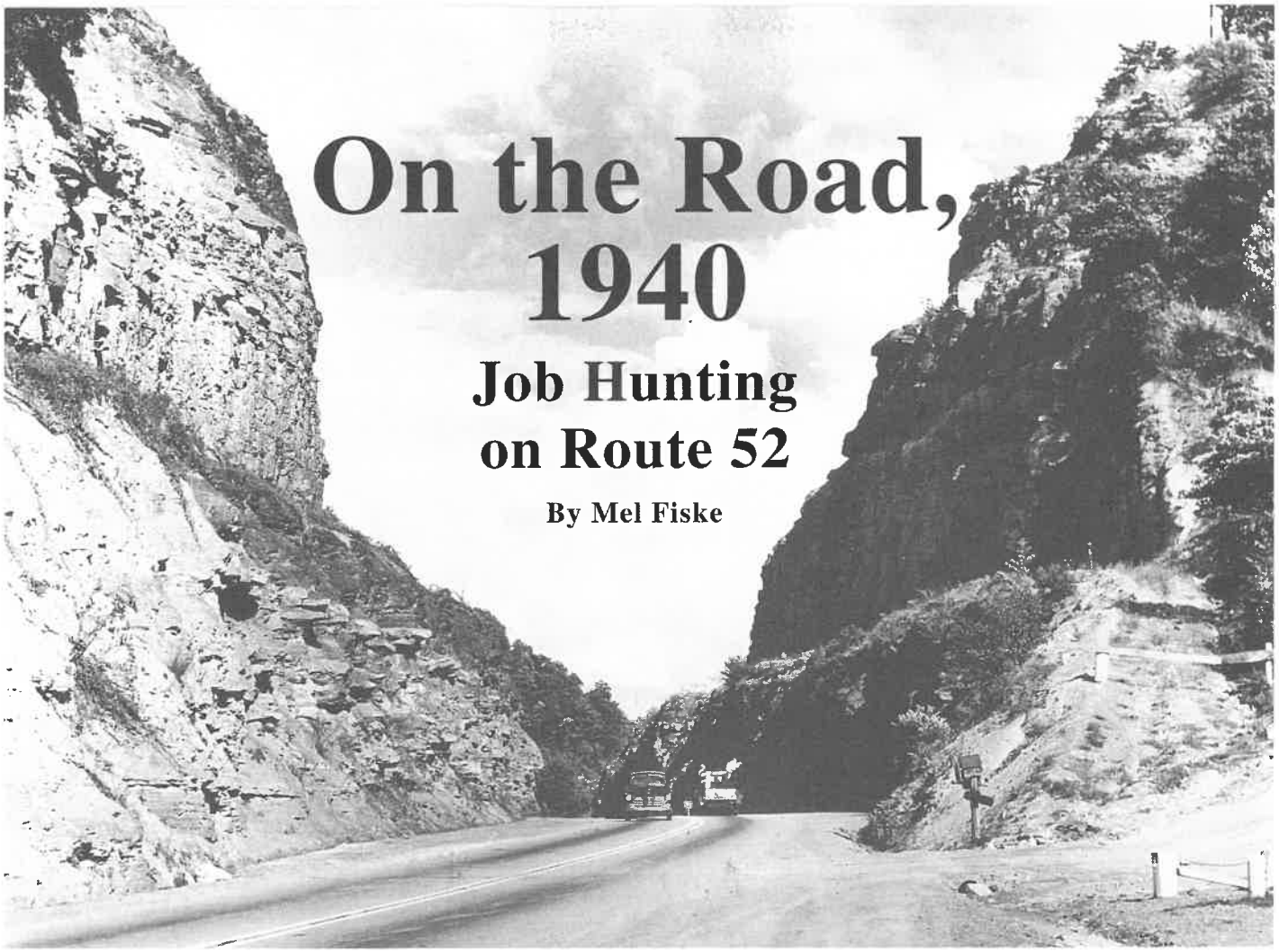
Volunteerism and her experience as a minister come together in Eleanor McElroy's weekly Bible class for nursing care patients. Here she talks with Bill Criss. Photo by Michael Keller.



On the Road, 1940

Job Hunting on Route 52

By Mel Fiske



U.S. Route 52 takes the Premier Cut on its way to Welch. By this point Mel Fiske's job search was nearing an end. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

I hitchhiked down the Ohio Valley and across southern West Virginia in the summer of 1940, approaching editors in newspaper city rooms, sometimes standing in long lines to fill out applications in factories and mills, looking for work, any work. This was late in the Depression. Times were tough, I was constantly reminded, and I kept getting turned down. Me and 20 million other people.

I didn't try to find a job in a filling station, because I had just graduated from journalism school and wanted to put my training to use. Besides, I thought, a newspaper job paid better than pumping gas at 25 cents an hour, the minimum wage then.

With a canvas suitcase in one hand and an out-thrust thumb on the other, I found my first rides to factory towns along the Ohio River. Usually, I was let off near the center of town. In the grubby toilets of gas stations I stripped off my road clothes, washed up and put on my wrinkled blue serge suit to appear presentable when I accosted an editor.

As the editor looked up from his desk, I'd tell him I had studied journalism at Ohio University and worked on the *Athens Messenger* for a couple of years. I'd ask hastily if he had a reporter's job open. Some responded brusquely. Some kindly. Some were solicitous. Some helpful. But they all said no.

Disappointed, I would leave the newspaper and hunt out a restaurant. From a small change purse, I would extract five cents for a cup of coffee. As unobtrusively as possible, I spooned sugar into the coffee until it was saturated. The warm liquid sugar was my meal for the afternoon, and oftentimes, evening.

If it was late, I would call it a day. I headed to another gas station to change my clothes, folding my suit into the canvas case. Then I walked to a residential street off the main highway until I found a parked car. I sat near it, waiting for nightfall. When all was quiet on the street, and lights flickered out in the houses, I'd open the car door and crawl into the back, stretching out on the seat, the plush roof of the car sloping over me protectively, like a small tent. I curled up on the seat, my suitcase for a pillow, counting on daylight to awaken me before the owner returned. It beat sleeping in cold, wet fields.

My days started early, when dawn came through the car windows. Stiffly and groggily I would walk to a cafe, wash up, order coffee and, if there was any extra change in the purse, a doughnut. Then the road.

Morning rides seldom took me far. Men going to work carried me short distances. But one morning south of Huntington I caught a ride with a hardware salesman on his way to Williamson, the county seat of Mingo County, more than 60 miles over mountain roads. He drove a two-door Ford. As I swung myself into the seat beside him I noticed that the back was crammed with shovels, axes, rakes and other tools.

Dressed in a rumpled, shiny black suit, he was gaunt, his neck taut and stringy, his Adams apple protruding like a beak. His eyes left the road for a second as he peered sideways at me. He asked where I was headed.

I told him I was trying to find a job on a newspaper, explaining that I had been studying journalism in college.

He grunted. He told me, a nasal twang in his voice, that there were sparse pickings down the road. He ticked off Williamson, Welch, Bluefield, maybe Princeton, adding that he knew those towns well. His customers included two or three stores in each city as well as company stores "in the hollers."

Holler? Dare I show my ignorance and ask? I did.

He squinted at me. "Holler? Why, that's a place — a bunch of houses. With a store. Near a mine. 'Tween a couple of mountains."

I nodded, as if I understood.

Suddenly, in a cracked voice, he blurted angry words about company stores and the coal companies that owned them. He sputtered on about how miners in these towns were forced to pay high prices for his hardware and other goods in the company stores. Then, just as suddenly, he stopped. He asked himself what was he griping about. "I've got a job. Hell of a lot better than most people, ain't it?"

I nodded and squirmed to control the rumblings in my stomach. I was afraid they were loud enough to be heard by the salesman. I coughed and cleared my throat to hide each rumble.

The tires made sucking noises on the hot tar of the road. The tools in the back clanked and rattled as the car bounced over ruts and potholes. Rounding a curve, the salesman began braking the car as he saw a rough cabin by the road ahead. A crudely lettered sign announced "EATS" from the roof eave.

Twisting his mouth in a wry grin, he told me that he was hungry, that I was hungry, and that we should get "some eats."

I can still taste that meal. It was a feast: half a chicken, steak-fried, mashed potatoes drowned in gravy, fried tomatoes, biscuits with jam, endless coffee without sugar. I sat on a stool next to the salesman and ate deliberately, relishing the good taste, the smell, the abundance.

He watched me unhurriedly. He shook his head as I cleaned the plate with bits of biscuit. While I tipped my coffee cup back to get the last drop, he pulled a dollar bill from a small roll in his pocket and paid for his meal and mine. Eighty-five cents.

I thanked him as we settled back in the car. Twenty miles to Williamson, he announced.

Sooty, red brick buildings lined the dusty main street when we got there. The salesman parked in front of a hardware store and stepped out of the car. He reached into his pocket.

Thrusting two quarters into my hand, he told me that he knew what it was like to be hungry. He had been there, too. He told me to get something to eat later and turned away.

I thanked him, and watched him carry a battered briefcase and a box into the store. "Good luck," he called back.

I followed my routine of changing into a suit to hear another editor say no. After I switched to my traveling clothes I hurried to the city's outskirts and stood beside a U.S. Route 52 sign. It was mid-afternoon. I could get in a few more miles before dark.

This was the Depression. Times were tough, I was constantly reminded, and I kept getting turned down. Me and 20 million other people.

The car that stopped next was a brand-new Hudson sedan. The driver, his weather-beaten face peppered with specks and pock marks,

Our hitchhiking author toured Iaeger thanks to a talkative driver. This photo is from about the time of his trip. Photographer unknown, courtesy Rose Marino.

announced he was going as far as Welch.

White paper was spread on the car seat. I slid in and shut the door. The driver quickly told me the Hudson wasn't his, that he was delivering it to a dealer in Welch. I sat back, luxuriating in the comfort and enjoying the new car aroma, just as fine then as it is today.

He drove rapidly, explaining he wanted to get to Welch in time to catch the last bus back to Williamson. He slowed only when he came to grimy, meager coal towns on the highway. Company stores, which also housed the coal company offices, the police force,

post office and company doctor's clinic, dominated the main streets of these coal-blackened towns. Every ten miles or so another town bulged in the road.

The driver kept up a commentary. "This here is Pie," he reported as we came to bleak clapboarded buildings facing the road and two rows of railroad tracks. He didn't know how it got that name. "It ain't pie in the sky," he chuckled. "That's for sure."

Justice was a town in a narrow valley severed by a deeply rutted dirt road. Rickety houses, some on gangling stilts, clung to the steep hillsides. Behind the shacks were narrow outhouses. There was no justice there, my driver opined.

When we came to a town called Iaeger he slowed the car to a crawl. He was raised here, he said, and got his first job in the mines when he was 15. Now I knew what the specks on his face were — coal dust imbedded in his skin.

He explained that the coal seams hereabouts were two, sometimes three feet thick. You had to crawl in to get it and "crawl 'round like a snake to shovel it out," he said. His shoulders twitched, as if shuddering over a buried fear. He confessed that work in the mines "got to me." He couldn't crawl into any more holes, he said. "I needed space."

He slapped the steering wheel. "I got lucky," he laughed. "Got me this garage job in Williamson." He jammed his foot down on the accelerator. The car lurched past the Iaeger company store. He told me, with a shake of his head, that he probably would still be working in the mines if the seams had been thicker, as they were around Welch.

He drove deftly around hairpin turns as the road curved between steep mountain slopes. Abruptly, the road dropped into Welch, a city in a bowl of mountains.

Wyoming Street, narrow and paved with cracked red brick, went past the county courthouse, a four-story granite building on top of a hill. Blocks of granite steps climbed the hill to the courthouse entrance where two torch-like lights punctured the dusk. I shivered a little in the sudden cold as I got out of the car and thanked my driver.

As the heart of the Billion Dollar Coalfield, Welch boomed in the 1940's. Russell Lee photographed bustling McDowell Street in August 1946. Courtesy National Archives.

The McDowell County Courthouse was a major Welch landmark in our author's day, and still is. He recalls loafing on the steps his first afternoon in town. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

Too late to visit the office of the Welch *Daily News*, across from the courthouse, I wandered along dingy Main Street, past a department store called Robinson's, a marble-fronted jewelry shop, a narrow telephone company building, two banks on opposite sides of the street and around the corner to a restaurant I remember as The Acropolis. Its lights were a beacon.

The sign in the window attracted me: "All you can eat — 50 cents." I had 50 cents. And I was hungry again. I opened the fly-specked screen door. A short, dark-haired man in a white apron was behind a linoleum-covered counter, wiping it down.

He watched me sit at a counter stool. "Coffee?" he asked, reaching for a cup and saucer. I nodded. He went to a stove against the back wall near the end of the counter

Politics and Presbyterianism:

Editor Will Keyser

Editor Will Keyser (front and center, with glasses) hosts a *Daily News* staff dinner at the Carter Cafe in Welch. A former employee recalls him as the "greatest booster West Virginia ever had." Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Rose Marino.

As the adjoining article notes, Editor Will Keyser of the Welch *Daily News* put an end to a young man's desperate search for work when he hired Mel Fiske in 1940. Keyser's daughter, Grace Tuckwiller of Lewisburg, recalls that her father helped many other people and that spur-of-the-moment judgments were not unusual for him. She says he could ask just a question or two and know whether he wanted to hire someone.

Keyser is remembered as quite a man by those he worked with and others. He was born in Marshall County in 1892 and raised on a farm, but in 1910 moved with his family to the Wheeling area where he attended public schools and the Elliott Commercial School. His newspaper experience began with a reporter's job on the Wheeling *Intelligencer*. He was later named city editor there before moving on to become editor of the Bellaire *News Ledger* in nearby Ohio and then editor and manager of the *Daily Review* in Sistersville.

In 1923 Will Keyser came to Welch for Wheeling newspaper magnate H. C. Ogden to buy the local weekly paper, the *McDowell Recorder*, and turn it into a daily. On December 3, 1923, he published the first issue of the Welch *Daily News*. Keyser would print many more editions as publisher and managing editor for more than 40 years.

Daughter Grace says, "He never could sit back and watch it happen." She remembers accompanying her father to the scene of a train wreck, a mine disaster, an airplane crash, and a riot at the jail in the county courthouse. Keyser's obituary in the Welch *Daily News* agreed: "Never a desk-bound executive he gained a reputation for being first on the scene when a story broke. Yet far from the stereotypical fire-breathing editor Keyser was a soft-spoken gentleman, known for his careful grooming, erect carriage and courtly manner."

Fred Muckenfuss of Welch, an early colleague of Keyser's, remembers a man concerned for his employees. He recalls Keyser's fatherly talks to him and says that *Daily News* employees always looked forward to "big doins' at Christmas" while Will Keyser headed the paper.

In his column, "Purely Personal," Keyser campaigned for such things as better roads and took the politicians of the day to task. Reporter Angeline Footo worked with Will Keyser for 18 years. She points out that in her time females were not usually reporters, but she knew she could do the job. Keyser knew it too. He was her mentor. With the war taking the men away, Keyser trained Footo on the courthouse and criminal beats. She says his favorite stories involved "politics and being a Presbyterian."

And Keyser's politics were unusual for McDowell County. He attended the Republican National Convention for 40 years, and in 1944 ran as a Republican candidate for State Senate.

Will Keyser was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Welch. He didn't miss Sunday school in 16 years, and served as deacon, elder, and Sunday school superintendent and teacher during his lifetime. He worked with the Girl Scouts, Kiwanis Club, Salvation Army, McDowell Public Library, and Welch Chamber of Commerce. Keyser was a two-term president of the West Virginia Press Association.

Governor Cecil Underwood appointed Keyser to the State Conservation Commission and he continued to serve under W. W. Barron, Underwood's successor. Will Keyser loved to hunt and fish, mostly fish, according to Angeline Footo. She adds that he was the "greatest booster West Virginia ever had." She says he couldn't believe it when people would actually go to the beach instead of Blackwater Falls.

Will Keyser retired from the Welch *Daily News* in 1964 and moved to Lewisburg, maybe to get in some good fishing on the Greenbrier River. He died in Greenbrier County on New Year's Day in 1987.

-Debby Sonis Jackson

and filled the cup from a battered speckled coffee pot.

I asked him if I could get steak and potatoes for 50 cents.

"All you can eat," he replied. "Like the sign says."

He went to the stove to fill my order. I looked around. A few tables along a wall faced the counter and its line of stools. On the wall was an idealized representation of the real Acropolis, surrounded by swirling clouds, on a denuded hill in Greece. Most of the painting was clouds.

I soon found out his name was Gus. He told me about himself as he bustled around his pots and pans. He was, of course, from Greece, and had come to Welch because a cousin of his, a miner, had paid his way here. After working for years in restaurants, he opened his own, becoming independent and proud of it in America.

He brought the browned steak, flanked by mashed potatoes and bedraggled green beans and set it before me with a flourish. He stepped back, folded his arms across his chest, observing me like an anxious mother.

I had told him I was going to apply for a job on the *Daily News* the next morning. And he had said that I might get a job because things were picking up. He began wiping the counter compulsively. "This is the Billion-Dollar Coalfield," he informed me, his voice rising excitedly. "McDowell County *is* the Billion-Dollar Coalfield," he repeated, as if considering himself a part owner, savoring his share of the billion.

I nodded and chewed in agreement.

Gus chattered on, his dialect part Greek, part mountaineer. He suggested I try the mines if the job at the *News* didn't come through. The mines were hiring, he said.

I cut the juicy steak, stirred it around in the gravy and shoveled it into my mouth. That was the only shoveling I wanted to do, but I didn't tell him that.

I cleaned my plate and pushed it toward Gus. He went back to the big stove, returning with another steak, and more potatoes and beans. Leaning up against the counter, he stood watch.

Slowly I chewed on the meat and nibbled on the beans. Suddenly I felt something erupting within me.

"Where's the toilet, Gus?" I muttered. He pointed. I stumbled to the door, opened it and plunged my head into the bowl. I heaved. I spewed. I retched up steak, potatoes, beans, chicken, biscuits and doughnuts, back to the beginning of time.

Finally, I washed my face with cold water, cleaned the bowl and staggered to my seat at the counter. Guy sympathetically handed me a cup of tea. It warmed the hole in my stomach. I stopped shaking.

I slapped my two quarters on the counter as I thanked Gus and apologized for the mess I made. I picked up my suitcase and headed toward the door. I asked where the bus station was.

He came to the door, grabbed my arm and put the two quarters in my hand. He held my shirt sleeve, warning me that the police wouldn't let me sleep in the bus station.

He stepped aside to let a couple through the door to the restaurant. "Come back later," he said. "Sleep in my place." He turned to his customers.

I looked back at Gus as he stood behind his counter. Three large light bulbs overhead lit the restaurant as if it were a stage set. Gus was center front, his broad face and crinkly hair spotlighted. What made a man like him so generous? Was it sentiment for strangers, such as he was, in a strange land? Was it a need to be accepted in this alien place?

I wondered about Gus and all the good, helpful people I'd met on the road.

I dozed on the courthouse steps until dark and then returned to The Acropolis. Gus offered me some food. I refused but drank tea while he stacked chairs on tabletops and swept up. Tucking a small cash box under his arm, he led me past the courthouse, up a small hill and down a driveway to the back of a house terraced into the side of another hill. Ducking between wooden piers that held up one side of the house, Gus opened a door into a basement apartment. The sitting room into which we walked held two overstuffed chairs and a new dark green couch. The place was neat and warm.

Gus pointed to a doorway, grinned and said, "Bathroom." He waved me to his couch while he went to a closet-like kitchen to boil water for more tea which we savored as he talked about his life. I sat back on the couch, listening, but the warmth of the apartment and events of the day and weeks caught up with me. I fell asleep sitting upright.

Gus woke me early. He had to be in his restaurant at five. I washed up quickly, put on my good suit and followed him through the murky dawn. At the counter I ate a stack of pancakes and watched Gus feed a steady stream of customers as they shuffled in. When you saw black-

Editor Will Keyser was the man who launched Mel Fiske on a lifetime of gainful employment. Keyser works here at his typewriter at the *Daily News*. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy West Virginia Press Association.

"McDowell County is *the Billion-Dollar Coalfield," Gus repeated, as if considering himself a part owner, savoring his share of the billion.*

rimmed eyes you knew they were coal miners.

At eight, I was in the Welch *Daily News* building, reading yesterday's paper, waiting for the editor.

He led me upstairs to his small office, lifted newspapers and books from a chair and invited me to sit. "I'm Will Keyser," he said, extending a thin, bony hand. Greying hair cut short framed a high forehead. He examined me through rimless glasses.

I explained how I happened to be in Welch, told him of my background and showed him my book of clippings. He looked through the book carefully, re-reading several stories.

Leaning back in his chair, he told me that a job was opening up in a week. "Our courthouse reporter is leaving to go back to school," he said. He handed back my book of clips. My pulse beat faster as Mr. Keyser praised my writing style. "You can write clearly and simply," he said. "That's what we want."

Then he offered me the job. I think my heart stopped.

"The pay is $18 a week," he added. "And anytime you write over 200 inches in a week, I'll pay you a nickel an inch."

I did a quick calculation. If I worked 40 hours, that meant I made 45 cents an hour. A small fortune. And the extra five cents an inch. A bonanza.

I did a quick calculation. If I worked 40 hours, that meant I made 45 cents an hour. A small fortune.

I wanted to jump onto Will Keyser's cluttered desk and do a jig. But I stood up, leaned over, took his hand and solemnly promised to do a good job. He suggested we meet the city editor, Kid Hardison, and the rest of his staff. I nodded dazedly and followed him out of the office. I stopped him in the hallway.

I told him, apologetically, that I didn't know how I could stay there for a week; that I didn't have any money. "No," I added, "I've got 60 cents."

He looked at me, shrugged and said that he would give me another job for the week. He turned to a door in the hallway and pulled it open. A rank, musty smell overwhelmed us. Out tumbled two large cartons crammed with clippings, mats and photographs. Other boxes were piled from floor to ceiling beside overflowing file cabinets. A colossal mess.

He explained that this was the morgue, newspaper talk for the *Daily News* back files. Will told me to spend the week organizing it, to do the best I could.

He reached for his wallet and pulled out a ten-dollar bill.

"Here's your pay in advance," he said.

For 15 months I covered the courthouse, state and city police, draft

Welch Reporter Rides with the Highway Patrol:
"Drivers, Drunks and Lovers"

The police beat was part of Mel Fiske's responsibilities at the Welch Daily News. *One long night in the fall of 1940 he took to the road with local state troopers. He filed the following report in the newspaper for Tuesday, September 17, under the title "Reckless Drivers, Drunks, Even Lovers Keep State Police Night Patrol Busy."*

Trooper Earl Yeager jerked the state patrol car to a stop on the narrow Davy road. He spun the wheel quickly, backed up and set chase for a car already a few hundred yards in front and moving rapidly away in the night.

"Did you see that guy?" he asked Trooper W. F. Erwin, sitting silently beside him. "I swear, he missed us by an inch."

The tires of the patrol car screeched as Yeager swung around the curves at 40 miles an hour. The lights of the police car danced eerily along the rocky hill walls bordering the road.

"Crazy fool. Look at him go," Yeager continued. "He must be drunk."

The police car gradually overtook a red tail light, all you could see of the car ahead. It was 2 o'clock, Sunday morning, and a cold, ghostly mist stuck to the road.

The road widened on the hill above Mohegan and Yeager shot the car ahead, came beside the dark sedan he had been chasing. Erwin leaned out the window of the police car and flashlighted his quary to a stop.

"Where are you going?" Yeager asked as he sauntered to the stopped car. "To a fire?"

"Davy," replied the driver.

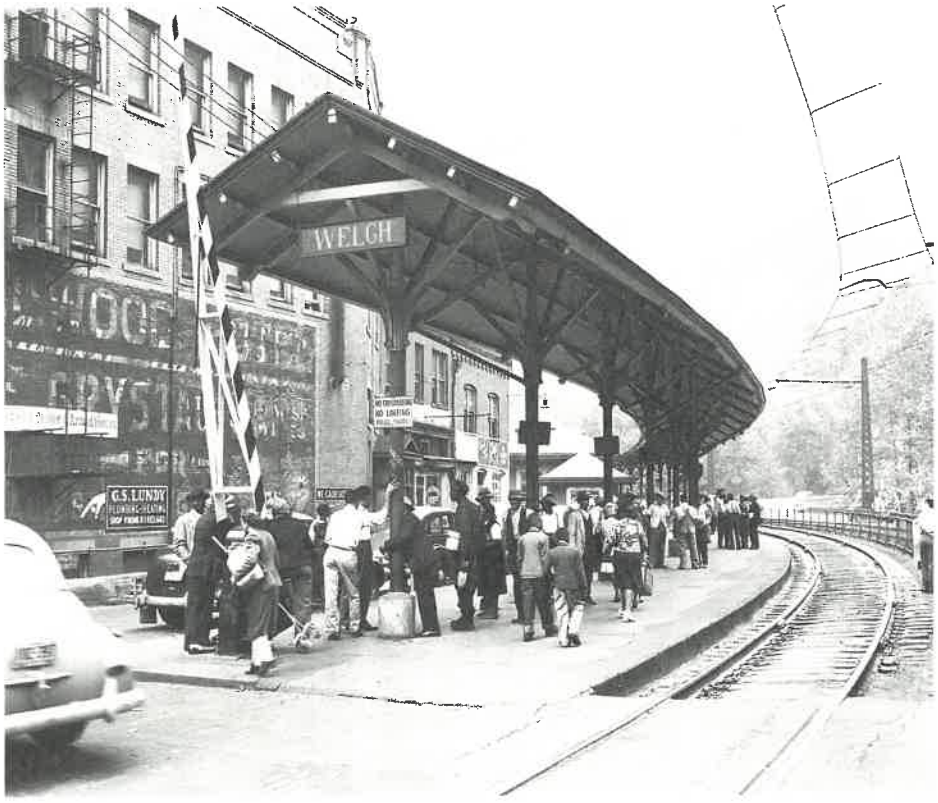
"Don't you know you should not drive more than 15 miles an hour on this road," Yeager questioned. "It's dangerous at even that speed. Let's see your license. Let me smell your breath. Is that your family with you? Going home, eh? Well now you take it easy on this road hereafter. O.K. Go ahead."

State Policeman W. F. Erwin looked after McDowell County's drunks and roadside lovers. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy West Virginia State Police.

"Naw, he wasn't drunk," Yeager told Irwin [sic] as he turned the car

board, city hall, hospitals and mortuaries in Welch and nearby communities. I wrote about mine accidents, three of them major catastrophes, murders and murder trials, the first contingent of World War II draftees, and worked with sports editor Tony Casali to cover local elections. Every day was exciting. I left to take a job as editor of the *Voice of Labor* in Cumberland, Maryland, at $40 a week. In early 1943, I quit that to enlist in the Marine Corps. After two and a half years in the Pacific, I emerged in one piece in 1946.

All in all, I'm proud of those years. I succeeded at most of what I tried to do after finally getting my start at the Welch *Daily News*. But I couldn't clean up Will Keyser's paper stable in one week. I tried.



Trackside at Welch, August 1946. Coalfields people poured in and out of town by train and car while the good times rolled. Photo by Russell Lee, courtesy National Archives.

towards Welch. "Just a crazy kid, that's all."

From 8 o'clock Saturday night to 3 Sunday morning, Yeager and Erwin overseered [sic] the Browns Creek district roads. Their co-workers, Troopers Mike Hofstetter and C. E. Dye, kept patrol in the Adkins district during the night.

In the early hours of the evening Yeager and Irwin [sic] drove between Welch and Iaeger, stopping in the numerous roadhouses along the way. "We keep an eye on the drunks, and get any of them before they start fights," they explained as they entered U.S. Route No. 52.

At the inn Erwin grabbed a stocky, disheveled man sitting outside and brought him to the police car. His cap tilted back on his head, the drunk muttered, "I'm not drunk. I'm not drunk. I just had a beer. I'm not drunk. I live here in Welch, and I'm a hard working person. Officer you're making a mistake this time, I swear I'm not drunk."

On the steps of the county jail where they booked the talkative drunk, Yeager yawned and mumbled: "It's funny. They're all not drunk, and they've all had one beer. That's what they all say. But we've got to protect other people. That fellow may have gotten into a fight or an accident. Much as we hate to do it, taking him to jail is the only thing we can do to keep him out of trouble and keep him from spreading harm."

Later in the evening the troopers committed three other drunks to jail.

Erwin whistled softly as Yeager piloted the car on Route 52 towards Iaeger once more. "What's that thing doing there," he asked Yeager, pointing to a car parked beside the road. Yeager stopped and directed a beamlight into the parked car.

"What's the trouble, Bud" Yeager called.

"Nothing," answered a youth distangling an arm from his girl friend's neck.

"You'd better get moving, then. Don't want anything to happen to you."

"Yes sir," the youth said quickly.

"And don't crush that girl of yours," Yeager laughed as he started away.

"Now that kid is probably cursing the dickens out of me for breaking his lovin' up, but he may be robbed or he may even be shot by some robber," Yeager explained. "We've got to keep a watch for that."

All through the night the police car radio sputtered and rasped as calls mingled with static..." Attention...Unit 23...Unit 23...Car 234... Car 2-3-4...Signal 27...signal 2-7...near Craigsville...near Craigsville," a call broke through the static.

"That's an upstate unit," Erwin stated. "Signal 27 denotes an auto accident. Other signals represent anything from murder to drunks. We get a hell of a lot of calls some nights. Other nights are quiet, like tonight. In order to get a call through to us or the other car in the Welch detachment a phone call to the Beckley broadcasting unit has to be made. Then Beckley puts the call on the air. It's a good system. It certainly speeds up our work."

He yawned and glanced at his watch. "3 o'clock," he announced. "We'll be heading back to the barracks pretty soon. Got another day tomorrow," he said sleepily to Yeager.

"Yep," Yeager assented, "we've got to hit the hay sometimes, even though we don't do it very often."

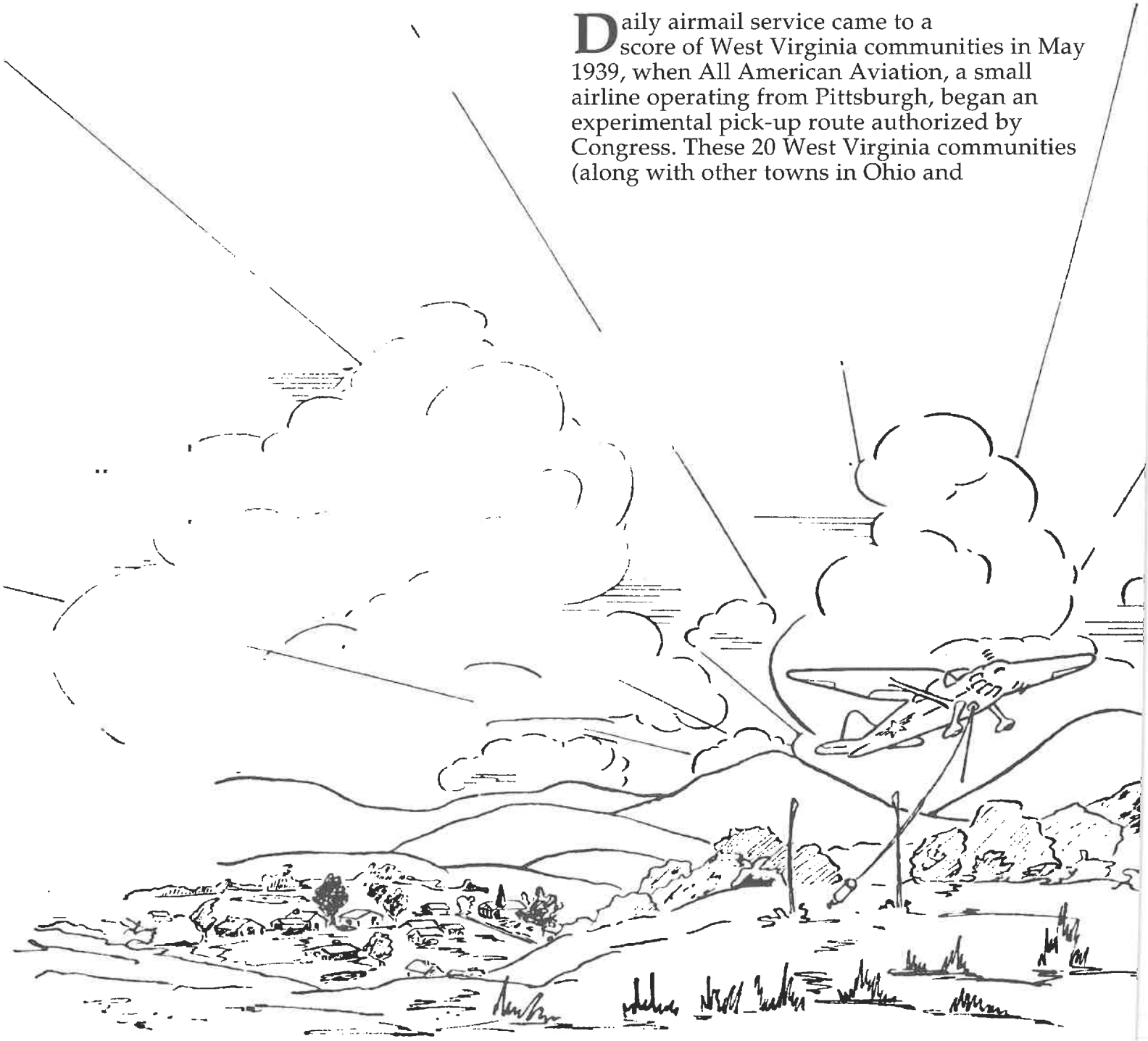
—Mel Fiske

Flying Post Offices

Airmail Comes to Rural West Virginia

By Louis E. Keefer

Daily airmail service came to a score of West Virginia communities in May 1939, when All American Aviation, a small airline operating from Pittsburgh, began an experimental pick-up route authorized by Congress. These 20 West Virginia communities (along with other towns in Ohio and



Airmail in the mountains. This scene is from a 1945 greeting card from All American Aviation, the "Airline to Everywhere."

Pennsylvania) were the first in the nation — and in the world — to have the innovative service.

Every morning and afternoon except Sundays, one of All American's single-engine Stinson Reliants, winging from town to town at about 500 feet above the hilltops, would angle downward to each designated pick-up point. There it would drop a bag of inbound mail, then in the same pass pick up an outbound bag with a grappling hook. The pilot headed off to the next town as the crewman brought the dangling bag aboard by winch. The plane never actually touched down. Such flying was a chancy business — like almost landing on the short narrow deck of an aircraft carrier, but being waved off at the last possible minute. Several airmen were killed during the years the service was provided.

Pick-up points could be established in almost any cornfield or pasture providing the pilot an unobstructed approach. An airport wasn't needed.

For a year, the service was strictly experimental. But when, regardless of adverse weather and the absence of navigation aids, 92 percent of all scheduled pick-ups were completed, the U.S. Post Office Department established regular service on August 12, 1940. Throughout the war years, All American added stations and routes, taking its pick-up service into New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and several New England states.

By late 1940, 33 West Virginia towns were served. Service to Ripley was added in 1943. The pick-up schedule was changed from time to time — especially after the war, when swifter twin-engine Beechcrafts were put into service on some runs. The last pick-up flight was in 1949.

Both West Virginia routes began at Pittsburgh, traced their ways to the refueling terminus near Huntington, then returned to Pittsburgh the same day. Route 49A linked towns down the center of the state. Route 49B linked towns along the Ohio River valley. Veteran employees of the All American service call themselves "forty-niners," and hold annual reunions in Pittsburgh to talk about old times.

Joy Harsh says the toughest part was retrieving the occasional incoming bag that fell in the brush. "My grandchildren can't believe I ever even had such a job."

Of the 20 West Virginia communities given service in the first year, only seven had airports, and just two had scheduled airline service. Most pick-ups were made from hilltops, golf courses, farm fields, and in one case the corner of a cemetery. By 1943 some 34 communities were served.

The pick-up system was simple. A pair of 36-foot steel poles were set 60 feet apart, with the mailbag attached to a rope between them. The plane flew at about 100 mph just above and between the poles, trailing a four-fingered hook that snagged the rope and mailbag. If the pilot missed, he'd circle around and make another pass. Because All American Aviation employed only the most highly skilled pilots, go-arounds were seldom required. Each town had to put up $450 a year: $150 for equipment, plus $300 toward an attendant's salary. For most towns, this was a real bargain. There's no record of any place rejecting the deal.

Lots of people — more than there's space here to thank — have remembered the pick-up service for me. The highlights which follow are arranged in the manner of a flight south through the state's heartland, followed by one flying north, back up the Ohio Valley.

After a pick-up at Morgantown, the southbound plane went on to Fairmont where Joy L. Harsh, now of Belington, hauled the airmail to and from the Fairmont post office. She wrestled bags that sometimes weighed 50 pounds. She says the toughest part was retrieving the occasional incoming bag that fell in the nearby brush. "Young women didn't wear slacks or boots back then," she told me, laughing. "My grandchildren can't believe I ever even had such a hard job."

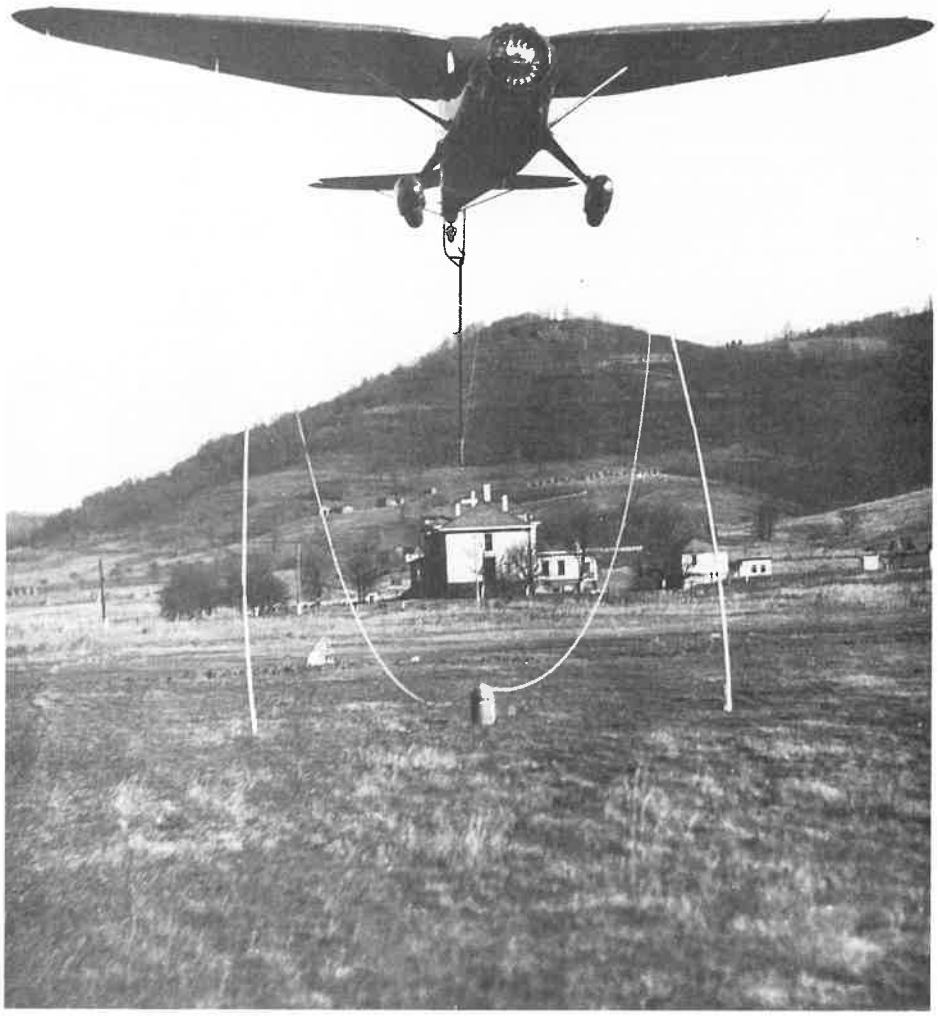
All American Aviation called its mail handlers "messengers," and praised them as an indispensable link in the system. The December 1946 issue of the airline's newsletter, "Pick-Up," described Lena Swiger of Nutter Fort as almost missing out on her job as the messenger at Clarksburg. When Johnny Graham, the supervisor of Route 49A stations, came to interview her, she thought he was a door-to-door salesman, and told him, "I don't want any." During the war, a majority of AAA's messengers were women.

Some others were boys still too young to be drafted. After the Clarksburg pick-up, the mail plane went on to Grafton where James D. Hulley was the messenger. He'd just turned 16 and earned his driver's license. Until entering service in 1943 he met the planes twice daily at Bluemont Cemetery, highest point in Grafton.

"Friends at the post office recommended me for the job," he remembers. "I worked for them a year, for $18 every two weeks. I provided the car and bought my own gas. The mailbags didn't weigh much, as I recall, and if something especially important was inside they'd be padlocked. It was an easy job, except when a pick-up hook didn't hold and a bag would slip off maybe a half-mile away, and I'd have to go find it."

After James Hulley went into the service, Buck Hussion took over the messenger's job. Dick Craft was 16, and remembers helping Hussion from time to time. "He was an older man who walked with a slight limp," Craft recalls. "I'd drive up to Bluemont Cemetery with him, and give him a hand putting the sacks on the pick-up rope. I was then working part-time for the post office, carrying special delivery letters and parcels, many of which came in by plane. A great job for a high school kid."

Because the cemetery was city-owned, its use by All American had first to be approved by the Common Council, and by Mayor P. F. Gillispie. Permission for one year's use, "without cost to said city," became effective May 1, 1939, though the first flight was not until June 25, 1939. An attractive first day cover designed specially for stamp collectors showed



Pick-up airmail was strictly seat-of-the-pants flying. The plane (above) swooped in to snare the mail by grappling hook, without ever touching down. A ground courier at each place prepared the sturdy mail sacks for pick-up, as shown in the photo below. Plane photo courtesy *Wetzel Republican*, courier photo courtesy USAir; photographers and dates unknown.

a plane in flight over the smokestacks of a very industrial city simply identified as "Grafton, West Virginia."

Bettye Bartlett Swiger, also of Grafton, remembers when the pick-up site was shifted from the cemetery to her dad's 30-acre farm four miles out U.S. Route 50 toward Pruntytown. "After the pick-up was moved to our farm, Howard Fast — he's dead now — moved the mail back and forth to the post office. Often he'd stop by the house, and drive me up to the top of

A farmer brought in the lost airmail bag. Asked how he'd found it, he said, "It found me. Smashed my henhouse all to smithereens." He thought it might have been a German bomb.

the hill. He had a two-way radio in his car and we'd talk with the pilots.

"I was listening the day an incoming pilot reported he was returning to Bridgeport with engine trouble. I saw the plane fly straight into a hilltop. Both men were killed, and I was sick for days." The May 11, 1949, crash killed Captain Bill B. Burkhart and flight mechanic-mail handler William J. Steinbrenner. Only six weeks later, June 30, 1949 — and for different reasons — All American ended its West Virginia pick-up operations.

From Grafton, the mail planes sped on to Philippi, then to Belington where, at first, Wanda Holbert Poling was mail handler. AAA gave her a radio receiver for her 1929 Ford. "If there was a thunderstorm or something, they'd call to let me know they would be skipping the stop. The pick-up site was on a hill up from Paternity Cemetery. The pilots would tip their wings, and wave and smile at me."

Later, the Belington messenger's job was taken over by Jim McCulley, and later still by Iona Tallman. A sportswoman who enjoyed hunting and fishing, Iona found climbing a tall walnut tree to retrieve an errant mailbag no challenge at all. On days when the pilots might have trouble

Wanda Holbert Poling with the Model A she used as the airmail courier at Belington. She quit after the baby came, she said. Photographer and date unknown.

seeing, because of rain or snow, she remembers lighting flares beside both of the pick-up poles to guide them in. In 1949, when she worked, the company required all of its messengers to wear a pistol. That was okay with Iona.

"The folks at the post office gave me the outgoing mail exactly 30 minutes before the scheduled arrival of the planes," she told me. "Sometimes, if a plane was early (which I would know from maintaining radio contact), I had to really hustle to get out there and get that bag hung up in time. They paid me $34 every two weeks, and the work was fun."

The airline's corporate history, too long to summarize here, is well described in *The Airway to Everywhere: A History of All American Aviation*. It is a fascinating story. The first president and principal investor was Richard C. du Pont, by the mid-1930's a young, world-class glider pilot.

After du Pont's tragic death in 1943 during the testing of a new army troop glider, Halsey R. Bazley became president. In 1953, All American became Allegheny Airlines, which, in 1979, became USAir, now a major international carrier.

From Belington, the plane went on to Elkins. There, Guy Hammer worked in the post office and part-time for the airline. Elkins, he explained, was the first stop at which radios were given to ground personnel so they'd know if planes would arrive on time. "We had the worst weather on the whole route, and really needed them. But the radios were handy for other messages, too. Sometimes a pilot might call to say that he was landing, with a parcel too big for the sack. That meant he had to use

Airmail courier service was usually lonely work, but the local dignitaries turned out for Grafton's first day, June 25, 1939. The Stinson came by on schedule, blurred by its speed in the photo above. Photos by Harold S. Fawcett.

Above: The official first day cover from the U.S. Post Office showed a generic plane and generic town, but it said Grafton just the same.

Below: At its peak the pick-up service originating with the Pittsburgh to Huntington runs had expanded to serve parts of several states. Courtesy Hagley Museum and Library.

the facilities."

The plane went from Elkins to Buckhannon and then Weston, Francis Gissy's hometown. In 1936 Francis left home to go build DC-3 airplanes for Douglas Aircraft in California. He recalls how fast his mail from Weston was delivered once the pick-up service started. "My folks'd send me an airmail letter by afternoon plane, and I'd have it in Santa Monica the next day."

From Weston, the pick-up pilot flew on to Glenville — with less than a thousand people, the smallest community served. Even so, Glenville was soon posting three pounds of airmail daily. The man credited as "legislative father" of the service, West Virginia Congressman Jennings Randolph, wrote a story for the January 1940 *Popular Aviation* magazine, claiming that, per capita, Glenville's airmail exceeded "that of the world's largest airmail center."

After Glenville came Grantsville, then Spencer, where young Robert Sinnett was happy to earn pop and sandwich money by helping the AAA messenger there. "He had a radio in his car, so we always knew when the plane was due," Robert recalls. "There was nothing to it. The pick-up site was on Route 14 toward Parkersburg. There's a manufacturing plant there now."

From Spencer, the plane flew to Ripley. Twelve-year-old Phillip Wright was there the first day, September 27, 1943.

He recalls half the people in town turning out to watch the first pick-up, and to listen to the speeches.

"Months later I remember watching and seeing a bundle fall from the plane about half a mile too soon," Phillip says. "My Boy Scout Troop was excused from school two days in a row to find it, but we failed. The third day a farmer brought the bag into the post office. Asked how he'd found it, he said 'I didn't. It found me. Smashed my henhouse all to smithereens.' Asked why he hadn't brought it in sooner, he said he thought it might've been a German bomb. His wife finally nagged him into taking a closer look."

"The outgoing bag would snap off those two support poles like it was fired from a giant slingshot. I thought it was beautiful."

The excitement in Ripley couldn't hold a candle, however, to that in Morgantown when the service was initiated four years earlier on May 12, 1939. More than 7,000 people gathered at the airport, high school bands furnished music, and children were dismissed from school at one o'clock simply to see the festivities. Aviation officials such as Civil Aeronautics Administrator Linton M. Hester and the head of the Post Office's airmail service division in Washington, Charles P. Graddick, were among those attending. Morgantown's postmaster, John R. Fortney, told the *Dominion Post* that 4,000 letters went out to "every state in the nation" that first day.

The pick-up system had a most unlikely inventor in the person of Dr. Lytel S. Adams, a California dentist. Dr. Adams demonstrated his system

Courier Iona Tallman of Belington found airmail work no particular challenge, she says today. She served late in the history of the pick-up service. Photographer unknown, 1946.

at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933 but was unable to obtain a contract for delivering the mail. "Somewhat discouraged," Jennings Randolph continued in his *Popular Aviation* story, "he came to my office in Washington in 1935, with a letter from W. P. Wilson, of Wheeling, W. Va., board chairman of the Fokker Airplane Corporation, who knew of my interest in expanding our air-mail system." Congressman Randolph introduced the "Experimental Air Mail Service Act" in 1938, and its passage

"It was fatiguing work, and very dangerous. Some of them were scared all the while they did it. That's what real courage is, being scared and still going ahead."

by Congress led to the inauguration of the service. Fifty years later, during "Festival of Flight" ceremonies at Salem College, where he had graduated magna cum laude in 1924, Randolph was honored along with Lt. General James H. Doolittle for this and many other contributions to the world of flight.

After pick-ups in Charleston, Nitro, St. Albans, Hurricane, and Milton, Route 49A planes landed at Huntington to refuel, then returned to Pittsburgh as they'd come. Route 49B planes serving Ohio River communities also landed at Huntington as their refueling point before turning back to Pittsburgh via that more westerly route. Let's follow one of those home.

Heading north again, the first pick-ups in West Virginia were at Ravenswood and Parkersburg. The sturdy Stinsons maintained their schedule at Parkersburg even during the serious 1940-41 Ohio River flood. Men using rowboats hung the outgoing mailbags just over the water, while the planes dropped badly needed medicines and whole blood on dry land nearby.

After Parkersburg came Marietta,

Below: Francis Gissy of Weston was a satisfied patron of AAA airmail. He says his mail routinely traveled from West Virginia to California within 24 hours after he moved to the West Coast in 1934. Photo by Michael Keller.

then St. Marys, where Sam Grimes was the first of several mail messengers. Still in high school, he was allowed to leave his classes between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. to run (he had no car) to the post office, carry the outgoing mail to the pick-up site, set it up, and then return the incoming mail to the post office. Sam could run a 100-yard dash in a very fast 9.7 seconds, which was good because the total round trip from school was a mile.

"They cleared a space about 50 yards square in this old cornfield, where the Badger Lumber Company used to be. The incoming bags would bounce along for about 30 yards, so they needed all that space. When the plane hooked onto the outgoing bag it would snap off those two support poles like it was fired from a giant slingshot — almost like a rocket going off into space. I always thought it was beautiful."

After Sam Grimes went into service, Clifford Bailey took over at St. Marys. "One of the three sites we used was out on Old Pike road across from the Reynolds home. Sometimes I'd give a couple of boys a nickel each to go find incoming mailbags that'd dropped over the hill in the briars and brush. One could streak across the field in a flash. Looking back, I like to think that Bill Reynolds — that's who it was — wouldn't ever have been a star halfback for the Pittsburgh Panthers and the Cleveland Browns but for helping me!"

Frank Ruttencutter was eight years old when he saw the first pick-up in St. Marys. Years later and much bigger, he helped yet another mail messenger, "Smoke" Stewart, set up. "If I recall correctly, the poles came in three sections. The top section had a kind of hairpin clip with a small triangular flag attached to the top. We'd lay the assembled poles on the ground, place the mailbag rope in the clips, then raise the poles, putting the ends into pipes in the ground. After I gave up helping, I'd still always steal a glance out the high school windows when the planes went by — which they did virtually at eye level."

Frank Ruttencutter wasn't the only young St. Marys man fascinated by the planes. All three Brown boys, Ellis, Larry, and Dale, whose father Frank Brown was a rural mail carrier for 40 years, hold vivid memories too. Larry recalls that even inside the school they could hear the pilot cut back power coming in, then gun the

"Elkins Had the Worst Weather"

A Pilot Recalls the Pick-up Service

What was it like to fly All American Aviation's air mail pick-up service? John Harkin, who now lives in Florida, flew Route 49A across central West Virginia for five years. Here's part of what he told us:

I had about 4,000 hours flying time, and was with TWA as a co-pilot when I joined All American. Friends recommended me and it was a kind of flying I really wanted to try. At the outset, I spent three weeks flying as just an observer with a regular crew. In fact, I memorized where all the pick-up stations were located, so that I would be able to find them without maps. We had maps, of course — "sectionals" not unlike today's — but we rarely used them. We navigated by watching the patterns of the hills and rivers, and watching for landmarks.

Before we left Pittsburgh every morning, we got a weather report. Each of the three weather-reporting stations on our route [Morgantown, Clarksburg, and Charleston] had to have not less than a 500-foot ceiling and one-mile visibility. If the weather was marginal, the pilot and the dispatcher would discuss it, but the pilot had final say on whether to take off. Flying over rough terrain like West Virginia could be pretty bumpy, but when you're busy at the controls, you don't notice that much.

In between stations, we were on our own. We wouldn't know what the weather would be until we got there. Sometimes we'd have to skip a station, but we'd radio ahead to the messengers on the ground so they'd know not to wait. Elkins had the worst weather. If there was an overcast down to the mountain tops, we had to fly through a kind of pass, making seven turns through the valleys to find the airport. Though we didn't carry passengers then, we were a scheduled airline and were expected to meet our delivery times. More than 90 percent of the time we did.

There weren't many other airplanes to watch out for, and then only around the few bigger airports. It was usually easy enough to see the pick-up poles, even at a distance, because we knew where to look and because visibility over the nose of those Stinson Reliants was very good. It was really a fine aircraft. I never had a forced landing in West Virginia but did once in Pennsylvania when an engine blew apart on me.

We usually had enough fuel aboard to fly from Pittsburgh to Huntington to Pittsburgh nonstop. That depended on how much mail we took on at Pittsburgh. If we had a heavy load, we'd need to refuel at Huntington. As far as I can remember we set the fuel mix at Pittsburgh and didn't change it again — we never flew high enough to have to "lean out" the mixture. I liked our winter schedule best, because we had to get back to Pittsburgh before dark, and I'd get home sooner.

Our flight mechanics, who operated the winch and sorted the mail *en route*, seemed like a breed apart. They could put up with anything. They weren't required to have flight training, but they were excellent licensed aircraft mechanics. I don't think they paid much attention to the flying. They were too busy handling the mail. Yes, I can recall scaring myself a few times. But I loved flying and stayed with it. I retired at 60 as a captain with USAir, with more than 30,000 hours flying time.

— Captain John Harkin

engine sharply after the pick-up. "The teachers gave up on teaching until the planes had gone," Dale says.

During 1941, All American began its air express service, dropping and picking up parcels along with letter airmail. Depending on the size and fragility of the parcels it was sometimes necessary to drop them by parachute. Working in conjunction with the Railway Express Agency, All American did what it could to boost this business, including the use of direct advertising.

After St. Marys came Sistersville, then New Martinsville. John D. Patterson still has an advertisement mailed by All American to his father, Frank J. Patterson, a Ford dealer for 25 years. The ad shows the times, usually the next morning, when the late afternoon mail from New Martinsville would reach America's major cities. A growth in air express business pointed the way to the airline's switch to larger, twin-engine aircraft in the late 1940's.

Next came Moundsville, where the pick-up site was near the old Fokker Aircraft field in Glen Dale. [See "Wings Over Glen Dale" in the Winter 1991 GOLDENSEAL for the Fokker story.] Neil Crow's brother, John Russell Crow, was one of the pilots. Neil remembers how he'd buzz the family's farm on U.S. Route 250 outside town, waggling his wings hello. Now and then he'd drop a note as well.

Russ Crow — officially Captain John Russell Crow — flew thousands of miles of airmail pick-up service for AAA in West Virginia. Photo by S.W. Kuhnert, date unknown.

One crewman left after his first day. "Man, I quit," he said. "I've had enough of this job. Half the time you can't even see the ground!"

"Flying pick-ups was dangerous work," Neil Crow says. "Those old Stinsons were awful dependable, but there was often fog in the valley, and Russ said sometimes he could only gauge how close the ground was by lining up with a water tower or some other benchmark. One crewman left him after his first day. 'Man, I quit,' he said, 'I've had enough of this job. Half the time you can't even see the ground!'"

Russ Crow's widow, Ruth "Pat" Miller, a Moundsville native now living in Maryland, says that after Russ dropped out of school he worked for TWA as a mechanic, learning to fly on his own time. Eventually he earned his commercial license, and began flying an eight-passenger company plane based in Cincinnati. She was the stewardess, later doubling up as co-pilot. Russ joined All American right after Pearl Harbor, flew pick-up for two years, then flew in AAA's Air Transport Command division until after the war.

"Like all the pilots," Pat Miller told me, "Russ took turns on the Pittsburgh to Philadelphia runs, along with his West Virginia runs. He didn't like going to Philadelphia because that meant staying there overnight. His only crash came in Pennsylvania — a sharp downdraft smashed his plane into the treetops on Tuscarora Mountain near Port Royal. Some people teased him later — fortunately he was uninjured, though the plane was lost — about the base radio operator's returning his S.O.S. by signaling back to 'Crow in the trees.'

"Of course, I knew all the pilots very well, and I remember all those who were killed. It was terribly fatiguing work, and very dangerous. Some of them were scared all the while they did it. That's what real courage is, being scared and still going ahead with something. The flight mechanics also were very brave — taking the same risks, for far less pay."

After Moundsville came Wheeling, which was served by a pick-up point near Yorkville, Ohio. From there it was only a few miles further to Wellsburg. In 1945, Alice F. Wisner lived in a house next to the pick-up field. "One day, I heard the plane as usual, but then a terrible explosion. I raced out of the house and across the field, and saw its remains in a gully down the hill, the crew killed instantly. The field is now a golf course, part of Brooke Hills Park."

The spectacular December 6, 1947, crash was no fault of pilot Thomas E. Bryan or flight mechanic Burger N. Bechtel but was the result of a structural failure. The *Brooke News* reported that the new twin-engine Beechcraft had made a perfect pick-up, but seemed unable to climb. The pilot then appeared to jettison fuel which burst into flames in midair. A formal investigation said the crash was caused by the "failure of a right-wing spar cap." The wing's collapse probably ruptured the fuel tank.

After Wellsburg, there were pick-ups at Steubenville, Ohio, and Weirton, and then at Washington and Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, before the planes landed again in Pittsburgh. There, the weary pilots who had spent all day fighting the tricky winds and air pockets over the West Virginia hills could get a good night's sleep at home before having to do it all again the next day. Brave men!

Tales of the Rails

Railroading was different in 1943 when I began my career as a telegrapher on the Hinton Division of the Chesapeake and Ohio. Later I worked as freight agent and clerk. Today the entire railroad system in the East is run by remote control from Jacksonville, Florida, but in those days the people in the telegraph towers, ticket offices, yard offices and the cabs and cabooses on the trains were responsible for the efficiency and safety of the road. They were a special breed.

Old railroaders tell and re-tell of things that occurred in the day-to-day performance of their duties. These stories are told with great good humor. They bring back the days when railroaders were like a family, and many of them are funny whether you're a railroader or not.

Take the tale of the agent, working at Cotton Hill on New River, who took care of a difficult situation in a unique way. A fancy dog arrived in a cage on a local freight. Someone in Fayetteville had ordered it. The agent was supposed to feed it, but when he opened the crate to put the food in, the dog took off down the riverbank. The agent couldn't find it. He took an old skinny stray up to the freight room and put that in the cage.

When the man came to get his dog, he said, "That's not the dog I ordered!" The agent said, "Well, that's the one they sent. You'll have to take it up with the kennel company."

The section of track between two open telegraph offices was called a block. The movement of trains within a block was controlled by automatic signals similar to traffic lights. Near each signal was a metal box containing a telephone called a block phone, from which a trainman could call about his orders. If a situation arose requiring a change, the operators in the telegraph towers received special orders from the train dispatcher in Hinton. Operators wrote these orders by hand and handed the orders to passing trainmen with a wooden hoop with a loop on one end, or read them to a trainman who called in on a block phone.

A telegrapher working at Prince wrote out a message from the train dispatcher at Hinton and handed it up to a westbound train. The train went on down through Stretcher's Neck Tunnel and stopped on the other end. The brakeman called back to the operator and asked him what the message said. The operator repeated the message to him. The brakeman asked him why he didn't write so somebody could read it.

Behind-the-scenes people kept the C&O running on time. This unidentified telegrapher was photographed at the Huntington office in 1942. Photographer unknown, courtesy the C&O Historical Society.

"Lookie here, fellow," said the operator, "if you can't read my writing, I'm not responsible for your education!"

One classic is the story about a witty brakeman, nicknamed "Fergy." One day Fergy was switching the yard at Deep Water. Some cars derailed out onto the main line. Fergy jumped on the block phone and rang Thurmond to report it. The division superintendent was on the phone in an office along the line talking to somebody. Fergy, excited by the possibility of an even greater wreck that this situation might cause, hastily turned the crank on the block phone, causing the phone to ring in the superintendent's ear. He growled, "Don't you know you're supposed to ask if the line is busy before you ring this phone?"

Fergy said, "Well yes, but this is an emergency!"

The superintendent said, "Do you know who you're talking to?"

"Well, no...," Fergy replied.

"This is the division superintendent!"

"Well, do *you* know who *you're* talking to?" asked Fergy.

"Well, no, I don't."

Fergy said, "Well, then, kiss my ___," and slammed down the phone.

Fergy was lucky that the superintendent didn't know. Talking that way to a superior would have been considered insubordination and

Workday Humor from the C&O Line

By Marshall D. Gwinn

Track gang spikes down rails in the New River Gorge near Thayer, 1944. This was a common scene on railroads in the days before modern track-maintenance equipment. Photographer unknown, courtesy the C&O Historical Society.

grounds for discipline. There was a hierarchy of officials, starting with the superintendent. Next came the chief train dispatcher, then the trainmaster and road foreman of engines. They made regular inspection trips to be sure the railroad was run in a safe and proper manner. If they found infractions of rules, carelessness, drinking or sleeping on the job, the offending employee would be called before a board of inquiry, and either disciplined or fired.

Once while engineer Jake Lilly was sitting on his engine at Gulf Switch waiting for his brakeman to walk the train, he fell asleep. Then the trainmaster showed up, climbed up on the engine and caught him. Slowly opening his eyes, Jake saw a pair of shiny dress shoes, and knew it was an official. Quick-thinking Jake raised his head and said "Amen," as if he'd been praying.

Then there was the agent who was talking to the superintendent about a matter, and they weren't getting along for some reason. The superintendent lost his temper and he said, "I want somebody on this phone who has some sense!" The agent said, "Go get him, I'll wait."

A colorful character at work in the office at Hilldale, between Hinton and Talcott, was engrossed in a book when the phone rang. A contractor working on the east portal of Big Bend Tunnel asked him for permission to put off a shot of dynamite. The operator was supposed to get the dispatcher's permission, but he was busy with the book so he said, "Yeah, go ahead."

The contractor called in after the shot and told him that the track would be blocked up for a couple of hours. The operator hadn't realized that, so to protect himself he got on the dispatcher's phone and said, "Mr. G_____, the contractor wants to put off a shot at the east portal of the tunnel."

Mr. G_____ said, "Better not let him. No. 13 is due in an hour."

"But, Mr. G_____," said the operator, "this is only a little shot. It won't take very long to clean up."

Mr. G_____ said, "I guess it'll be okay in that case."

Then the operator leaned back in his chair a few minutes, got back on the phone and said, "Mr. G_____, you know that little pot shot I told you about? Well, it was a little bit bigger than we thought, the track will be blocked about two hours."

The same colorful character was once working at Quinnimont. The telegraph office was in a tower over the yard office. The telegrapher and the yardmaster could exchange messages by hanging them on a hook attached to a rope, which ran on a pulley within a chute between the two offices. One Fourth of July, the clerk working downstairs in the yard office put a firecracker on the hook. He lit it and yelled up through the chute, "Pull it up quick. It's a hot one!"

The victim said a few choice words, while the clerk was reared back in his chair laughing, right under the chute. The victim picked up a bucket of bug dust — slack coal — and poured it down the chute, all over the clerk's white shirt, down into his pants, and even into his shoes. The first victim had the last laugh.

A new brakeman was training in the Hinton yard at night. The brakeman training him said, "You get half-way along the train, and when I give you a signal from the head end, you relay it to the rear." The trainee went back to the middle, and the head brakeman wound up and swung his lantern in a big circle, the signal to back the train up. But the lantern handle broke and the lantern went into the river. So the trainee wound up his lantern and threw *it* in the river, too.

An operator-clerk's work could become complicated. Each train leaving a yard had to have a consist, a list of all the cars in order. Each car had an initial, a number, place of origin, destination, and contents, written in correct order

on the consist.

Once, at Quinnimont, I was in the teletype room trying to straighten out consists. They had to be changed according to how the yard engine switched cars around. It wasn't easy. In walked an official and introduced himself. The car numbers were still swirling around in my head, and my mind drew a blank. After I scratched my head a while I remembered my last name and said, "My name's Gwinn," and after scratching a little longer, "Marshall Gwinn."

Maybe it's something that happens to railroaders. I know of a conductor at Raleigh who couldn't get his car started one day and hitchhiked to work. The driver struck up a conversation and asked him his name. He couldn't remember to save his life. He was ashamed to ask anybody at work who he was, but remembered his telephone number. He called his wife at home and asked her what his name was so he could sign the time sheet.

Now on to a good-hearted but nervous yardmaster at Thurmond. He would go into the telegraph office and yell out the bay window at his yard crew down below. The windows were usually filthy, but one day the telegraph operator cleaned them. The yardmaster came in and stuck his head through the closed window. Luckily, he wasn't hurt.

One evening a conductor arrived at the east end of Handley yard with a 20-car train, ready to quit for the day. He wanted to leave his work train in the railroad yard for the night. He called the yardmaster for a track to pull into. The yardmaster told him he didn't have any available, remarking, "We only have 20 tracks, you know." The conductor said, "Well, we're not coming in there sideways!"

An extra operator was working as operator-clerk at Quinnimont. The yard crew was "taking 20" and sitting around talking. Willo Seco, the engineer, was telling the others about the fine points of running an engine. The operator said, "Aw heck, Willo, I could teach a monkey to run an engine." Willo said, "Son, to teach a monkey, you have to be smarter than the monkey."

One witty fellow wasn't a railroader at all, but he worked with

Telegrapher at Thurmond:

A Day's Work on the C&O

By Roy C. Long

The Thurmond rail yard in the 1940's, the time of Roy Long's employment there. This is the view from the depot, where Mr. Long worked. Photographer unknown, courtesy C&O Historical Society.

The alarm clock went off with a jolt at 4:45, breaking the stillness of the night. Oh! For just a few minutes more sleep, but there wasn't time. After a quick breakfast and a short walk from my home at 236 Main Street in Avis to the Hinton passenger station, I was on my way to spend another day as telegraph operator at the New River town of Thurmond. It was a good place to work in the 1940's.

Local passenger train No. 7 departed at 5:30. No. 7 originated at Hinton and was always on time, being made up with the equipment that arrived from Huntington on No. 8 the previous evening. There would be several telegraph operators riding the train to various offices in the New River Gorge. School children on their way to Montgomery High School boarded at Glade, Quinnimont, Prince and other stations along the line. At 6:50 a.m. the train arrived at Thurmond, and my eight hours work for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Company began.

Captain Beverly E. Walker of the Thurmond local would be at the station looking for passengers transferring to his train. His train schedules were as follows: No. 134 left Thurmond at 7:05 a.m., en route to Mount Hope, and arrived back into Thurmond as No. 135 at 9:20 a.m. No. 234 left at 10:30 a.m., en route to Minden, and arrived back as No. 235 at 11:26 a.m. Eastward main line local passenger train No. 14 would make its stop at Thurmond around 11:30 a.m. The fireman would climb onto the engine tender and take water while the station work was being performed. Captain Walker's train then left Thurmond as No. 238 at 11:45 a.m., en route to Cunard on the South Side Branch, and arrived back as No. 239 at 12:59 p.m. The train stayed at Thurmond until after main line local passenger train No. 13 ran and then left en route to Mount Hope as No. 136 at 3:10 p.m. It arrived back as No. 137 at 5:52 p.m., making connec-

tion with main line local No. 8 and F.F.V. No. 6. "F.F.V." stood for Fast Flying Virginian, and fast it was.

About 8:25 a.m. westbound F.F.V. No. 3 would make its passenger stop. General Yardmaster Bartley Farry would be on the station platform watching the passengers. As soon as the last passenger boarded No. 3, he would wave his white handkerchief frantically at the engine crew to leave. They paid no attention to his signals, however. His ego was satisfied by being seen by people who didn't know better, rather than by being obeyed by people who did. The baggageman waited on a hand signal from the brakeman or conductor, and the engineer waited on the bell signal from the baggageman before starting the train, which was all in accordance with railroad rules.

At 8:00 a.m. Marshal Dickinson, a grown man but still a "call boy" in railroad parlance, would enter my office and take a seat. Marshal had a home at Alderson and batched in a shanty at Ballyhack, just across the river from Thurmond. He would be breathing hard and wheezing from his walk across the bridge because of his asthma. He would fill his pipe with dried mullein leaves and inhale the smoke, claiming it was a good folk medication for his ailment. Although it left a foul odor in the office, no one objected. A nice man he was, always a sad expression on his face.

Soon Marshal would be calling trainmen to work: A crew for Rend Subdivision to Minden; another crew for a doubleheader for Keeneys Creek Subdivision and one for Hawks Nest Subdivision; the "KG" crew for the former Kanawha, Glen Jean & Eastern Railroad; a crew for White Oak Subdivision and one for Loup Creek Subdivision mines. In the afternoon a crew would be called for the South Side branch and for another run called the "horn," meaning it worked the mines on the main line on both sides of New River between Sewell and Macdougal. This crew would sometimes do the work at Dunfee sand plant. During the day when the main line traffic would permit, the Thurmond yard engine would pull and supply nearby Canyon Top mine.

Several coal trains would come out from Handley with class H-8, 2-6-6-6 engines, handling 90 loads or 7,500 tons. Tonnage ratings depended on local conditions. The rating for this class engine increased to 8,300 tons east of Thurmond, and while the big engine took on coal and water the yard engine would add eight or nine loads to the train. Also, a train of empties would arrive from Hinton, its engine having turned on the "Wye" at Quinnimont. The yard engine would get a run order from South Side Junction to Meadow Fork and put the empties away in the yard tracks at Ballyhack. The main line crew would then pick up a train of about 98 east loads totaling the proper 8,300 tons.

First trick — day shift to non-railroaders — at Thurmond was a busy job, and my day passed quickly. Sometimes there was a ride home to Hinton, but mostly I had a wait of two hours, 30 minutes for local passenger train No. 8. The oil bench was a welcome place to lie down and sleep while waiting for my train.

The school children would be on No. 8 returning home from school. No. 8 arrived at Hinton at 6:30 p.m., which meant I had been on the road 13 hours and been paid for eight. The job worked seven days a week, and No. 7 did not run on Sunday mornings. That meant a trip back to Thurmond on No. 5 at 8:30 Saturday evenings, after being home two hours. I slept on the oil box or on a bench in the Thurmond trainmaster's office and returned home on No. 6 at 7:30 p.m. Sunday.

After about a year on first trick, my union, the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, negotiated a 48-hour work week for us. That established more jobs. I was able to bid in second trick at Thurmond, 3:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. The work was much lighter, and I had better transportation connections from home to work. Local passenger train No. 13 left Hinton at 1:35 p.m. and arrived at Thurmond at 2:50 p.m. The "George Washington," No. 2, put me back into Hinton at 12:45 the next morning. That made a ten hour, 15 minute day for my eight hours pay. The alarm didn't go off at 4:45 a.m. any more, and now there was a day of rest each week.

An earlier version of this article appeared in the Hinton News *in 1989. Our thanks to them.*

railroaders a lot. Tom Prince was the teletype telephone repairman for the C&P Telephone Company. One day when he was working on the teletype at Quinnimont, a westbound train stopped at the yard office. The brakeman came in and reported a man lying in the other track as they went by. He said that the man appeared to be disturbed. Tom looked up at him and said, "If you were laying between the rails with a train going by on the other track, you'd be disturbed too!"

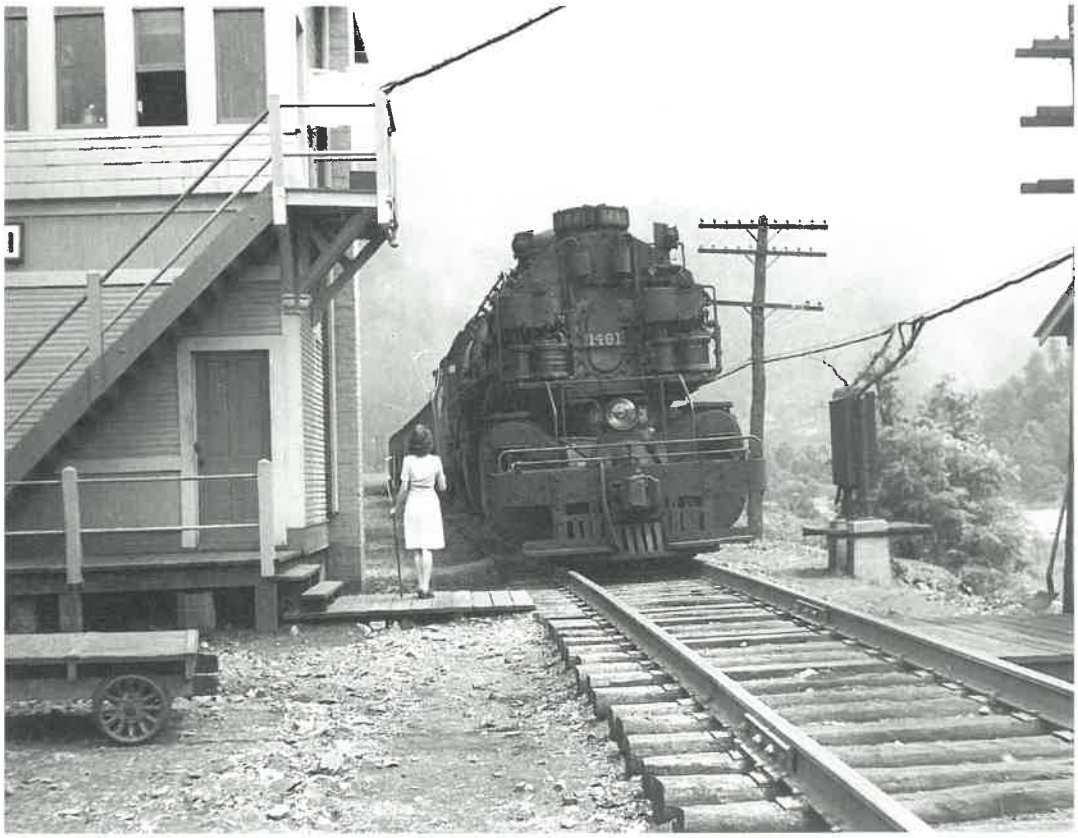
Leonard Ford came to Beckley Junction from the L&N Railroad in Kentucky years ago. He was a telegrapher's telegrapher. When he had trained for the job, all messages were sent in Morse code on a telegraph key, called a "bug," and received at a distance on a sounder, a metal plate that moved magnetically against a metal post.

Mr. Ford could send and receive code faster than anyone I ever saw. The operators at HU office in Huntington (supposedly hotshots) would take the weights off their speed keys and try to "put him under the table," slang for sending too fast for him, causing him to break transmission and ask to have the message repeated. Mr. Ford would write it all down, and under his breath, he kept saying, "Shoot! Come on! Shoot! Come on!" They were going too slow for him.

Not all telegraphers were men. Even in the early days, several women qualified for jobs along the line. Mrs. Marable and Mrs. Defenbaugh were two of the earliest. They rode horses to work at CW cabin at the west end of the Hinton yard. Other women were hired during World War II to replace men who had enlisted or been drafted. Among these were Nelsie Jones Ferri, Letha Richardson Nichols, and Betty Pack.

When a certain one of these ladies began work on the main line they told her it was very important to report anything wrong with a passing train, such as smoke around a wheel. Smoke might indicate a hot journal box, which could cause a wheel to fall off, resulting in a wreck.

A crack passenger train, No. 1, went by Meadow Creek with steam escaping from one of the steam lines



Many women worked at stations and telegraph offices along the line. This operator stands by to hand up train orders to locomotive passing NI cabin at Prince. Photographer unknown, 1946; courtesy the C&O Historical Society.

The C&O Historical Society

They didn't ask and we didn't promise, but this seems a good place to tout the services of the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society. Their photographs illustrate the adjacent story by Marshall Gwinn, and we have called on them in the past for help with other GOLDENSEAL articles.

The society, which is independent from the railroad company, is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the history of the C&O and its predecessors and successors, within the broader history of American railroading. Their principal activity is to archive C&O records and related historical materials, including over 100,000 engineering and mechanical drawings, 50,000 photographs, 5,000 publications, and 1,500 linear feet of manuscripts. The society also is involved in the restoration and interpretative use of historic railroad rolling stock and smaller artifacts associated with the C&O.

Chessie the C&O mascot suggested you could sleep like a kitten on the C&O. Courtesy CSX Corporation.

The C&O Historical Society needs "members, volunteers, and interested supporters," according to its current brochure. The thousands of West Virginians who are employed by or retired from the C&O or the Chessie System are welcome to participate, as are others with an interest in railroad history. Membership dues of $19 per year may be sent to the C&O Historical Society, P.O. Box 79, Clifton Forge, VA 24422. The society receives visitors and researchers from eight to five, Monday through Friday.

used to heat coaches. She reported a hot box middle ways of the train. The train dispatcher stopped No. 1 at Glade and had the trainmen walk their train. They reported that it was only a steam leak. The dispatcher scolded her for causing him to delay a first class passenger train. The next train, No. 91, a "manifest" or fast freight which didn't have a steam line, went by smoking, so she reported a steam leak middle ways of that train. She got the nickname "Eagle Eye" after that but went on to become one of the finest operators and agents.

Once, when I was working at Quinnimont, I copied a telegram to the yardmaster, tracing a railroad car. I copied part of it as "a car of pickles" for Beckley. The yardmaster yelled up, "Marshall, are you sure this message is right?"

I said, "Yeah, that's what it says."

He said, "That's funny, because that's the number for a coal car. They surely don't send pickles to Beckley in a coal hopper!"

I said, "Well, I'll call HX on the telephone and verify it."

HX was the relay office in Hinton. The telegrapher at HX said, "Oh no! It says coal for Pickers and Becker, Cincinnati!"

A witty dispatcher named Bill Lilly coined a word for a fast-moving freight engineer. Country star Hank Snow had a popular train song called "Moving On." When someone asked how No. 90 was moving up New River, Bill told him that it was "Hank Snowin' 'em." That got to be the common term for a fast moving freight.

The New River trainmen who worked out of Hinton were, I guess, about the best anywhere. They followed orders and took care of business. As dispatcher Martha Morgan said, "You could tell them to go over in a field to get a groundhog, and they would go and not argue about it."

But working on the railroad was great fun, too. Railroading had its zany side and its zany characters. "You can get by for 40 years on the railroad, claiming ignorance," brakeman Chill Martin said, and he wasn't far from right.

"Helping the Spirits Talk"

Winning Stories From the West Virginia State Liars' Contest

Photographs by Michael Keller

Jeanne Wilson says she wore her best straw hat on her fateful Washington trip, and we think she saved it for Charleston too. She went home to Calhoun County with a ribbon to match.

It was a new game at the State Liars' Contest last spring, with an entirely fresh set of winners. Jeanne Wilson of Calhoun County carried off top honors, the first female champ in the ten-year history of the event. Terry Hollinger of Huntington finished second, with Carl Rutherford of McDowell County third. Judges George Daugherty, Bonnie Collins and Marc Harshman officiated, as in recent past years.

The winners carried ribbons, cash and glory to their homes across West Virginia. The 1994 contest takes place Sunday, May 29, at 2:00 p.m. in the Cultural Center theater in Charleston. Call Ken Sullivan at (304)558-0220 if you wish to pre-register.

Jeanne Wilson. I was fishing at Big Bend back in Calhoun County, and I noticed how the Little Kanawha River goes in the wrong direction. That river ought to be turned around heading toward Grantsville, our county seat. You know, we don't even have a stoplight in Grantsville, they are all down here in Charleston. Our tax money leaves, and now there was our river heading out. Well, goldurn, if they've got grants for this and grants for that, they ought to have a grant for a town called Grantsville, so we could keep our water flowing home.

The more I thought about it, the madder I got. I hightailed it to town, put on my best straw hat, hopped in the Chevy and rattled down the road to Washington, D.C. Found out where Congress hangs out. And found me a congressman. I set to and I told him about those stoplights and our tax money, and how every drop of water that falls on the Calhoun County hills was leaving.

I was banging on his desk and stomping my feet and waving my arms around, and he hurried over there to me and started stroking my arm, stroking my arm.

"Calm down, sister," he said. "Sister, calm down! You just write your name down, and I'll look into it."

Called me "Sister!" Surprised me! But then, Paw was a wild one.

I wrote my name down, but I got to thinking how maybe I'd better not leave it all up to my kinfolk. So I just found me another office and found me another congressman. You can tell one by looking at him.

I went up to him, eyeball to eyeball, and I told it like it was.

"Well, who is this kook?" he said.

"Hold it, buster!" I told him. "There's an election coming up. I have a vote. My friends have votes. And what's more, I am well acquainted with the president of the First Baptist Church Ladies Guild."

That word "vote" made a gentleman out of him. He said, "Madam, just write down your name. It will be a joy to look into it."

I wrote my name down, but then I heard the whole gang was going to convene at the Capitol. I thought it would be convenient if I went too, just to see how they were going to turn that river around.

We were in a room that was as big as Wal-Mart! I had to sit way up in the balcony, but that's alright, a lot of my neighbors have been looking down on Congress lately.

As well as I could make out, they were down there jawing about how to get out of debt. Now I could have told them that talking wouldn't do it, but they talked and they talked and they talked, never got down to brass tacks about how to turn our Little Kanawha River around.

So finally, finally, I just reached into my pocketbook, took out my telescopic fishing pole, threw a line over the balcony rail and caught me a congressman! Hooked him right in the collar. Who-eee! He was swaying this way, and swaying that way, and swaying this way. His face was red, his eyes bugged out, his false teeth clattered to the floor and he started to gag.

When I thought I had his attention, I told him what he'd have to do to have a friend in Calhoun

County. He said, "Just write your — gag — name down, and I'll — gag — look into it."

So as I could write my name down, I let him off the hook. And I headed home for the hills.

Now that brings me to why I came here today. I came here because I want to invite you, every one of you, every last man, woman and child from this front row to the back. Pack up a baloney sandwich, meet me next Sunday at two o'clock at Big Bend. We're not going to "write down our names." We're going to sit on that riverbank, and you can see which way that water still flows. And you're going to know without a shadow of a doubt that that "D.C." after Washington stands for "Dang Congress."

Terry Hollinger. I'm here today to share with you the story of my great, great, great-uncle George, who was one of the last American entrepreneurs. Entrepreneur, as you know, is a French word for scoundrel.

George started his entrepreneuring very early in age, when at about three years he started a horse-finding business. He would go out of a morning and find a horse, and then he would send a little note: "Dear Sir, I found your horse. You may either be a free-spending liberal and pay the sheriff $3 to bring this horse back, or you may show yourself to your neighbors as being a fiscally-responsible conservative and pay me $1.50 to do the same thing."

The horse owners, desiring no new taxes, paid the $1.50. The business thrived. George moved west where he could find more horses to find. He found himself one day in Lexington, Kentucky, returning for the third time a horse that he had found from this particular farm. The farmer was busy digging postholes. He said to George, "I'm tired of paying you $1.50 every time you find my horse, and I'm going to build a fine, white board fence all around this farm."

Well, George looked at that a minute and he said to the man, "Would you pay me ten cents a posthole?" The farmer said indeed he would, and George ran off immediately to the new city of Huntington, West Virginia, where in the middle of the city he found Collis P. Huntington himself standing in the middle of a great empty area filled with nothing but old fence lines.

He said, "Mr. Huntington, what in the world is this vast empty area?"

And Mr. Huntington said, "Why, young man, this is a Super Block where in no time at all you will see vast edifices and energetic enterprises."

"Well," George said to him, "wouldn't this come about more quickly if you were to pay someone to carry off this trash?"

"Pay?" said Collis.

"Well," said George. "I'm a man of great civic spirit and I will do it for free."

Free was the active word, and within moments George was busy carrying the old fence posts down to the river, fashioning a great raft, onto which as evening fell he put the last thing of value ever to come out of the Super Block in Huntington — the postholes themselves.

Down the Ohio River he went to Covington where he broke up the raft, sold it for firewood, hired a wagon train and over the hills he went. And on the morning, Monday next, the farmer went into his farm and there were postholes everywhere.

Oh, the word was electric! It was no time at all before everybody in Lexington wanted a great, white board fence all around their farms. Ah, George was in heaven. He began to exploit his own West Virginia neighbors, going and buying their used postholes for a penny apiece.

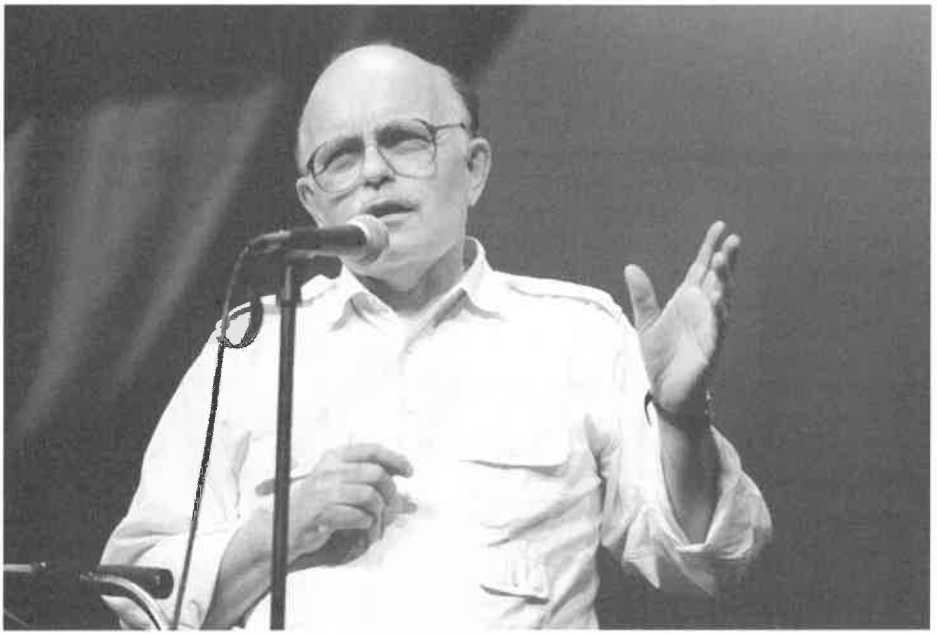
He imported French postholes for wineries, and Italian postholes for pizzerias. His money grew. He began to invest in ramp ranches in Richwood. He bought a dog. He got a wife, married one of the Big Ugly sisters.

Now, I see a man back here telling his out-of-state cousin that Big Ugly is a place in West Virginia. Yes, it is. But I have to tell you, that in the time when Uncle George lived, before being politically correct, that was what we said about young ladies who were "facially challenged."

Almost immediately came a letter from the federal government. They had decided for reasons of national mental health to build a fence around the entire state of California. George wondered where would he ever be able to steal this many postholes? While he was thinking, came a rumor. A man in Detroit had begun a project to build a motorized posthole digger and take the California contract himself.

This man, a Mr. Henry Ford, made George do the one thing which he had never done before in his life — tackle a job in an honest manner. He knew the only way that he could win

Terry Hollinger of Huntington talked of potholes and politicians. There is a connection, he thinks.



this contract was to build an automatic posthole machine. A machine in which in the comfort of air conditioning — once air conditioning had been invented — he would be able to make perfectly sized, shaped and wrapped postholes which he could send all over the world. He put his fortune into it. He mortgaged his ramp ranch.

He was even forced to the point where he had to choose between his dog and his wife. Being a true West Virginian, he chose the one that was most loving and loyal. He chose the one that he had spent many a night in the woods with. He chose the one that had chased many a raccoon and a squirrel up a tree.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, he chose his wife.

Then as the creditors were nipping at his heels, he said, "It's done." But, unfortunately, it wasn't quite done, because the magenta and mauve posthole paper for wrapping the California postholes had not come in time. "What care I," said George. "I've never wrapped a posthole before. Bring on the train, load up the postholes. On to glory!"

And on to glory they went. 'Til in the middle of Nebraska, George felt it necessary to call on the engineer to halt the train while he found a bush, behind which he could relieve himself of nature's call.

George, of course, had never been in Nebraska. There are no bushes. So by the time that he had gotten back from South Dakota, some unthinking railroad functionary, mistaking these cars for being empty, filled them up with grain and sent them back to Philadelphia. George was crushed. He was ruined. But man that he was, he sent a card off and he said, "Dear Henry Ford, you have won." In return mail came another card that said, "Oh silly West Virginian of unknown ethnic origin, I was not building a posthole digger, I was building an automobile."

George became bitter. He began to think how in the world he could get back at this man who had stolen his manhood, destroyed his fortune. He would go into the basement every night and turn out postholes while he thought.

Then one night it came to him. Grabbing up a three-quart kettle as a measure, he began to saw off those postholes into little chunks. Day and night he went. His neighbors came and they would look in the window at him and say, "Oh, what are you doing George? Making potholes?"

He said, "No, you fools, these are kettle holes."

"George is making potholes, George is making potholes."

"You will pay for your derision," George said.

And pay indeed we have. For late at night George filled up his wagon and he filled up the highways and byways of West Virginia with those treacherous, treacherous potholes. And a treacherous pothole they are indeed, because they cannot be *capped* with tar, nor can they be filled with a *ton* of gravel. And it's often heard as people go along our highways — "Oh, there's another one of these dang cap-nor-ton potholes."

And though my Uncle George died a bitter and broken man and though I myself have paid the cost of those nasty cap-nor-ton potholes, I hold him no grudge because he's given me a way to make a living. Now I take those potholes and I rent them out to politicians where they can store political speeches and campaign promises.

I had thought to bring one here today for you all to see, but I knew there would be children in the crowd and I was afraid that someone might open it up. The half-life of a campaign promise, once exposed to honest air, is not but 37 seconds, after which it divides into a great lie.

And I'll not have it be said that I came all the way to Charleston, West Virginia, to fill the air with lies and tall tales.

Carl Rutherford. I don't want to be insulting to you all, but there's too many people here to be out of liars by now. So here goes a little one.

I had a grandpa who was a very wonderful person. He'd go to town Saturday to do the shopping. Sometimes he'd make it home with the groceries in a feedsack over his back, and sometimes we'd have to haul him and the groceries in over a horse's back. He'd get drunk in town.

He was quite a character. I believe he was a little bit Cherokee and some Irish, 'cause he could really dance when he got drunk and he had a scream that sounded just exactly like a panther a-screaming. He used to let that out to a widow woman down the camp that lived in a two-story house there in Warriormines when he'd be going up through there Saturday afternoon.

Well, they had a guest show up one time at Grandpa's who was a, uh,

Carl Rutherford's tales fall so close to his McDowell County roots that he risks being disqualified for telling the truth.

regular guest. His name was Shorty Hoover. And Shorty was kind of a bachelor, I guess you would say, and he was a wanderer. He would show up in the bib overalls and a blue gingham shirt and the old slouch hat, with a little roll he carried with him. I guess that was in case he got in between places where he could spend the night. When Shorty showed it was usually a time a-getting rid of him. And Shorty didn't like to take a bath, so his welcome wore out pretty quick.

So we were sitting there at the old fireplace one night, and Shorty was outside somewhere. They was discussing how they might get rid of Shorty. It was time for him to be long gone, but he wasn't gone yet.

I don't know if all of you are aware of it or not, but in these hills you run into quite a bit of spiritualism. Spirits on both sides of the realm. There's the good spirits and there's the other spirits, and one is just about as strong as the other. You can choose whichever side you want to be on — and you can be pretty stout on either side.

The spirits that the mediums work with will talk with you through tappings on the wall, what not, through breezes moving through a room that wasn't there before.

Some of my uncles and my grandpa, they helped the spirits talk that night. One of them got up in the loft where there was a couple of feathertick mattresses for kids to sleep on. And they had this set of hames hanging up there. Hames are the gear that goes over the collar that you put on a horse when you're going to work him, have him pull a load. The collar's real soft. The hames are made out of wood and iron. And you have a ratchet-type closure similar to the dog you put on a chain when you're dogging down a load of logs on a truck. Works on a ratchet action, locks and closes the hames on a horse. Can sound a little bit like the lever action of a .22 rifle or a lever-action shotgun.

Somebody, I don't know who, got outside the wall there and up in the attic. Shorty come back into the big main room where the fireplace was and what not, where we popped corn when we wanted to, and where I sneaked and smoked my first cigarette — then went out and got sick in the snow.

Anyway, Shorty come back in from his sojourning outside, smelling as usual. Nobody wanted him to sit down beside of them. There was a tapping on the wall.

My grandmother said, "Hush, younguns, what is that?" Everybody got quiet. And there was just a light tapping. It done it again. Mammie said, "Hush, younguns, hush younguns. That's a spirit come to talk to us." Everybody got quiet.

Mammie said, "Are you a spirit?" It went "tap." Mammie said, "Will you tap once for yes and twice for no?" It tapped once.

Mammie said, "Is there somebody here you want to talk to?" It tapped once. Mammie said, "Is it some member of this family?" It tapped twice. Shorty's ears kind of perked up.

Mammie said, "Is it something bad about this person?" It tapped once. Mammie said, "Can you tell it to all of us?" It tapped once. "Is something bad going to happen to this person?" Yes.

"Is this a man or a woman or a child?" Didn't say nothing. Mammie said, "Is this a man?" It tapped once. Mammie looked around. I was of the family, but I was a grandson from another house.

So my grandmother, Mammie, she said, "Is this a guest of this house?" It tapped once. Finally Mammie said, "Is he sitting beside of me?" Shorty was sitting right off to her right on a long bench there in front of the fireplace. It tapped once. "Sitting to my right or my left?" It didn't say nothing. Mammie said, "Is it sitting to my right?" It tapped once.

Then Mammie said, "Lord, Shorty, it's about you. But I don't know how to go about finding out what it is. Must be something bad."

Shorty, he's sitting there just kind of shaking in his boots. You could have heard a feather hit the floor, it was so quiet in there.

Mammie, she had long black hair on her. She died at 114 and she still had long black hair. After she died — it was just a little bit before Easter — they went around cleaning the house up, getting ready for the wake. And they found about 11 or 12 coffee cans full of eggs that she had gathered up and hid, so she'd have plenty of eggs to boil up for all the kids to hide on Easter. She was a nice person but she got after me with a broomhandle one time because I was going off the back-porch with my hand full of pickled beans out of the pickle-bean barrel. I was running like that and eating them beans, as she was after me with a broomhandle.

Anyway, she was a stout-willed person and pretty well thought of. So there wasn't nobody thinking about snickering or making any fun of Granny talking to a haint. My granny was the one that seen this feller riding on a horse up at the old Burnt House Place with his head under his arm. She'd seen that, and nobody said there was anything wrong with her seeing that.

So Shorty's there wondering what in the world this is all about, and Mammie she's got to figure some way to get this out in the open. So she says, "Does this have anything to do with a death with this guest in our house?" And it tapped twice. She looked at Shorty kind of relieved, and Shorty looked kind of relieved.

And she said, "Does this have anything to do with sickness with our guest?" And it tapped once and before anybody could say anything, it tapped two times. So that left it kind of open for debate.

Mammie turned around and she said, "Shorty, I don't know what to say to you but there's a haint come here to talk to you, so I got a feeling maybe you need to be somewhere else. Maybe there's something going on that you need to be at. Where were you planning on going next?"

And Shorty said, "I, I was thinking about going over by John Hagerman's place." She said, "Well, I hear tell they're home."

So she went on and talked to that haint a little bit more and brought out a few more things. The main thing was that when the sun come up, things were going to happen — when the sun come up in the morning, things would be happening. She did get that much out of that haint.

Well, I reckon you already know by now, I don't have to stand here and tell you that when we all got up the next morning, Shorty Hoover was not there. He had lit out and gone! He was not in them parts anymore, and he wasn't there for two more years. He didn't come around even the next year.

Vandalia Time!

The Vandalia Gathering is West Virginia's homecoming, held each Memorial Day Weekend at the State Capitol Complex in Charleston. Annually since 1977 tens of thousands of West Virginians and friends of West Virginia have congregated on this occasion to enjoy each other's company and to celebrate the Mountain State's rich and varied traditional culture.

This year will be no exception. Vandalia 1994 begins Friday, May 27, with the regular Friday evening opening concert. The festival continues Saturday, with a full day of music contests, storytelling, stage performances, dance, and craft sales and demonstrations. The big Saturday evening concert, Vandalia's central event, begins with an awards ceremony at seven.

Vandalia continues Sunday, May 29, with more music, dance, and crafts. The big West Virginia State Liars' Contest gets underway at two o'clock in the Cultural Center theater. The festival concludes with a final awards concert in the late afternoon.

The annual quilt show, which opens each year at Vandalia Weekend and continues through the summer, offers a special format for 1994. Selected quilts from the West Virginia Permanent Collection will be shown this year, contemporary quilts in the great hall of the Cultural Center and historic quilts in the north wing of the State Museum.

There will be other special events throughout the weekend. Sales booths on the festival grounds will purvey hearty examples of West Virginia's traditional mountain and ethnic foods. A commemorative T-shirt will be offered for sale in the Cultural Center Shop and in the Vandalia sales tent.

The five-string has Amos Ross's entire attention.

There is no admission charge for the Vandalia Gathering, and the participation of all true-hearted mountaineers is mandatory. You may call the West Virginia Division of Culture and History at (304) 558-0220 for more information.

The pictures here and on the next two pages, by Michael Keller, are from the 1993 Vandalia Gathering.

Storytellers Marc and Cheryl Harshman entertain a Vandalia concert crowd.

Vandalia Time!

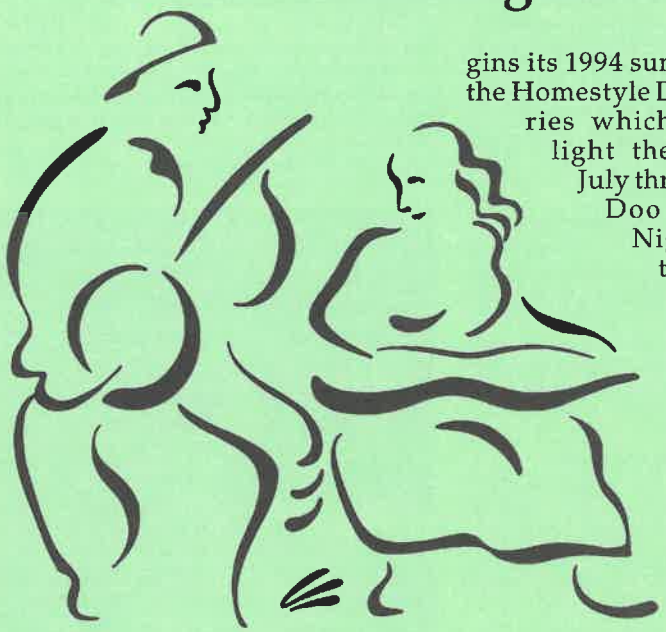
Sylvia O'Brien and Hilary Keller know that Vandalia is the place for young and old West Virginians to get acquainted.

Above: If you can't kick up your heels at Vandalia, where can you do it?

Center: Mack Samples of Glenville (right front) leads a spirited square dance set at Vandalia 1993.

Left: Vandalia Award winner Jane George is congratulated by her husband, fiddler Frank George.

Summer Fun at Camp Washington-Carver



Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County is an arts and music center operated by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. The historic site dates back to 1937 when McDowell County legislator Fleming A. Jones, Jr., introduced a bill to create a black 4-H camp for young West Virginians.

The federal Works Progress Administration built the camp from 1939 to 1942, literally from materials at hand, as workers took timber and stone from the grounds near Clifftop. Camp Washington-Carver, dedicated on June 26, 1942, was named for black leaders Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. West Virginia State College ran the camp until 1978, and a year later it was turned over to Culture and History. The camp was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, and its first full season of events began in 1984 after much work and renovation.

Camp Washington-Carver begins its 1994 summer season with the Homestyle Dinner Theater Series which offers popular light theater from early July through late August. Doo Wop Saturday Night, a Washington-Carver classic, features oldies rock and roll on July 16.

One of the most well-attended events, the Appalachian String Band Music Festival, returns August 4 through 7. This festival includes contests and cash prizes for old-time banjo, fiddle and string band categories, plus a non-traditional string band contest. Melvin Wine, Wilson Douglas and Frank George are the honored "West Virginia masters" to be on hand for the event. Rough camping, good food and showers are available during the three days of music. Scheduled string bands include the Bing Brothers, Ill-Mo Boys, The Boiled Buzzards, and Kettle Creek.

On August 20 an Old-Time Day and Gospel Sing will be held with Squire Parsons, Conrad Cook & The Calvary Echoes, The Humphreys, and The Brighterside Quartet. Camp Washington-Carver's summer program concludes on September 10 with the True Value/Jimmy Dean Foods Country Showdown. For more information on any events at Camp Washington-Carver contact Camp Washington-Carver, Route 1, Box 5, Clifftop, WV 25831 or call (304)438-3005.

Films on West Virginia and Appalachia

Steve Fesenmaier, director of the West Virginia Library Commission's Film Services unit, provided GOLDENSEAL with the following list of recently acquired films and videos about West Virginia and the Appalachian region. Film Services has the largest collection of mountain movies and tapes anywhere in the country. They may be borrowed at public libraries throughout the state.

Act Up: The Story of a Performance
90 min. (VHS) WNPB-TV
Jude Binder is director and teacher at Heartwood Dance Center in Calhoun County. She conducts a workshop in six segments including working together on a performance, training the body, costumes and masks, and excerpts from the production "Broken Bough."

Before the Mountain Was Moved
58 min. (16mm & VHS) 1971 McGraw-Hill
Chronicles the efforts of one coal miner to save the mountains of Raleigh County from strippers. Shows how he succeeded in obtaining state legislation in the name of environmental conservation.

Cultural Conversation: Vandalia '93
4 tapes/29 min. each (VHS) 1993 WVLC
Bill Drennen, Commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, hosts a series of interviews with traditional musicians. Drennen's guests are Lefty Shafer, Woody Simmons, John and Marvine Loving, and Sylvia O'Brien and Phoeba Parsons. You've read about all of these people in the pages of GOLDENSEAL.

Dancing Outlaw
60 min. (VHS) 1993 WNPB-TV
Jesco White, the Boone County Dancing Outlaw, has become a cult hero. This video includes the original interview from the *Different Drummer* TV series plus never-before-seen footage and outtakes of the famous mountain dancer.

East Wind — West Wind: Pearl Buck
90 min. (VHS) 1993 WSWP-TV
Refocus Films
A blend of oral history and historical footage forms an intimate and intriguing portrait of Pearl Buck, one of the most popular and prolific writers of the 20th century. Buck was born in West Virginia in 1892 and raised in rural China as a missionary child. Among those who share their memories are her sister, Grace Yaukey; fellow Nanking missionary, 103-year-old Cornelia Mills; and author James Michener.

Good Earth
138 min. (VHS) 1937 MGM/UA
This award-winning film recreates Pearl Buck's *Good Earth*, a Pulitzer Prize novel, in extraordinary detail. The singular determination of the slave bride of a simple Chinese laborer to survive the forces of nature and greed which threaten to tear her and her family apart is both moving and inspiring.

Harry Brawley: Making a Difference
30 min. (VHS) 1993 PBS-TV
Harry Brawley was a man of many talents, an educator, broadcaster, politician, historian, and occasional GOLDENSEAL freelancer. This special includes interviews with former Charleston mayors John Hutchinson and Chuck Gardner, sportscaster Ernie Saunders and other broadcasters, professor Evelyn Harris, and Brawley's wife Betty. There are numerous interview clips with Brawley, who died in March of 1992.

MICHAEL KELLER
Johnny Paycheck, Porter Wagoner and Webb Wilder on the set of *Paradise Park*.

Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia
60 min. (VHS) 1993 Augusta
Old-world Swiss traditions survive today in the remote mountain community of Helvetia, Randolph County. Descendants of 19th-century immigrants discuss their music, dance, yodeling, foodways, crafts, customs and celebrations. Directed by GOLDENSEAL freelancer Gerald Milnes.

Homemade Tales: Florida Sloane
28 min. (VHS) 1993 Appalshop
Florida Sloane is a singer and storyteller who lives in Knott County, Kentucky. As a child, she contracted typhoid fever. The doctor told her mother that the illness damaged Florida's brain, and that she would never be able to speak plainly. But later she learned to speak, and celebrated this accomplishment by creating stories and songs of everything around her.

Ivanhoe
28 min. (VHS) 1993 Appalshop
When New Jersey Zinc shut its Ivanhoe and Austinville mines in 1981, nearly 200 people lost their jobs in a Virginia mountain community which already had seen other companies leave. This documentary includes Ivanhoe's annual Fourth of July parade and interviews with members of the Ivanhoe Civic League, who talk about efforts to bring jobs back to their New River community.

Johnstown Flood
26 min. (VHS) 1990 New Dimension
The true story of one of the most devastating disasters in American history. Describes the events leading up to and the moments following the Johnstown Flood of 1889, when a private dam burst and sent a wall of water into the Pennsylvania mountain town, killing hundreds of people within minutes.

Library: Heritage Days 1992
60 min. (VHS) 1992 Friends of Hampshire County Library
The Friends of the Hampshire County Public Library hold an annual Antique and Collectible Show and Sale as part of Hampshire County's Heritage Days. They've put together a video about it.

Light Reflections
14 min. (16mm & VHS) 1948 James Davis
James Davis was born in Clarksburg and taught for many years at Princeton University. He became one of America's first influential avant-garde filmmakers, influencing other artists of the post-World War II era. This film is an experiment in capturing the color and movement of light transmitted from the artist's mobiles.

The Making of Paradise Park
25 min. (VHS) 1993 Aerial Image

Bill Drennen directed this documentary about Danny Boyd's award winning film, *Paradise Park*. Charlotte Angel, a Charleston filmmaker, did most of the cinematography.

Mutzmag: An Appalachian Folktale
53 min. (16mm & VHS) 1993 Tom Davenport
Set deep in the Appalachian mountains of the 1920's, this folktale is about a plucky girl named Mutzmag. In a series of hair-raising and comical adventures, Mutzmag saves her gullible half-sisters with nothing but a broken pocket knife and a ball of string. This exciting story is a traditional trickster tale, but with a resourceful heroine instead of a hero. The scary scenes will delight older children, teenagers and adults.

North to Katahdin on the Appalachian Trail
28 min. (VHS) 1992 Thomas Hogeboom
This 28-minute film presents the Appalachian Trail through the eyes of seven hikers attempting the 2,000-mile journey from Springer Mountain, Georgia, to the hauntingly beautiful Mt. Katahdin in Maine.

Northern Exposure
55 min. (VHS) 1992 CBS-TV
This "Return to West Virginia?" episode of the *Northern Exposure* TV series features Alaska disc jockey and general philosopher Chris Stevens (played by John Corbett) who is arrested for parole violation and faces extradition to his home state of West Virginia. In real life, Corbett is a 1979 graduate of Wheeling Central Catholic High School.

On Strike
56 min (VHS) 1992 Films for the Humanities & Sciences
Television's *48 Hours* takes the viewer inside the 1989 United Mine Workers strike of the Pittston Coal Company. The meaning and goals of unionism and the realities of strike-breaking are presented in this program.

Paradise Park
100 min. (VHS) 1992 Big Pictures Inc.
An elderly resident of a West Virginia trailer park wakes up one morning with a vision that God will visit that evening and grant all the tenants a wish. One thing's for sure, life will never be the same in Paradise Park. Featuring Grand Ole Opry star Porter Wagoner, wrestler Dusty Rhodes, country music legend Johnny Paycheck, veteran silent film star Lina Basquette, and Larry Groce, host of American Public Radio's "Mountain Stage." Directed by Daniel Boyd. Partial nudity may offend some.

Prehistoric Ohioans
38 min. (VHS) 1992 Stillwater Productions
An overview of the prehistory of the Ohio River Valley, concentrating mainly on a few Ohio sites.

The Prize
4 tapes/110 min. each (VHS) 1993 Films Inc.
This series, subtitled "The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power," is the saga of the panoramic history of oil and the struggle for wealth and power that surrounds it. Narrated by actor Donald Sutherland and featuring an engaging musical score, *The Prize* captivates the viewer with never-before-seen archival footage as well as new film segments, letters and personal mementos. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning, best-selling book by Daniel Yergin. Tape I includes oil and gas history from the Mountain State.

Rachael Worby — Arts & Letters Series
11 tapes/30 min. each (VHS)1993 WNPB-TV
Features artists, news personalities, actors, musicians, scholars and singers who participated in First Lady Rachel Worby's Arts & Letters Series at the governor's mansion in Charleston. The first videotape looks at West Virginia artists from the 1991-92 programs. Additional Arts & Letters guests include actor David Selby from Morgantown, singer Ollie Watts Davis, the Celtic music group Mountain Thyme, cable television entrepreneur John Hendricks, TV newswoman Faith Daniels, and scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a native of Mineral County and the first African-American to earn a doctorate from Cambridge University. Artists in the series include woodworker Rev. Herman L. Hayes, watercolor artist Nancy Thompson Gunnoe, and stone and wood sculptor G. Connard Wolfe.

Rachael Worby — Day One Profile
10 min. (VHS) 1993 ABC News
The ABC program *Day One* did a profile of Rachael Worby in May 1993. Worby is the conductor of the Wheeling Orchestra, the smallest town in America to sponsor a full-time orchestra, and leads children's concerts at Carnegie Hall under the direction of Isaac Stern.

Ready for Harvest
28 min. (VHS) 1993 Appalshop
This documentary looks at clear-cutting in the Southern Appalachians and forest issues through the experiences of the Western North Carolina Alliance. Like grassroots groups throughout the country, the Alliance has opposed policies established by the U.S. Forest Service which members argue run counter to conservation practices and discourage public participation in decisions about how public property is used.

The Silent Heart
60 min. (VHS) 1992 Silent Heart Production
Catholic nuns of the Visitation of Holy Mary taught local children as well as boarding students at DeSales Heights Academy. The video chronicles the end of the school and convent and the end of an era in the history of Parkersburg. The demise of this school mirrors a crisis in the Roman Catholic church as fewer young nuns take the place of their aging sisters. The DeSales Heights story was featured in the Winter 1990 GOLDENSEAL.

Sit Down and Fight
60 min. (VHS) 1992 PBS Video
Walter Reuther was born in Wheeling, but when he died flags flew at half-mast in Detroit. Reuther was president of the United Auto Workers and later the CIO. He fought one of the bloodiest battles in the history of American labor when auto workers were


WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES
Labor leader Walter Reuther.

faced with the growing problems of new auto assembly lines. The union and Reuther devised a simple strategy: they sat down — first at GM, then at Chrysler, and finally at Ford. This is a story of a union and its leader, whose vision of workers' rights changed the way Americans worked.

Where the Lilies Bloom
97 min. (16mm & VHS) 1973 MGM/UA
Based on the award-winning book by Vera and Bill Cleaver and adapted by Earl Hamner, Jr. (*The Waltons*), this is the story of a young woman who struggles to keep her family together against all odds. Set in North Carolina's Smoky Mountains. Rated G.

The Wild and Wacky World of Hasil Adkins
29 min. (VHS) 1993 Appalshop
Boone County native and one-man band Hasil Adkins begins where "Country Roads" ends. He invented "The Hunch" and is the composer of such European hits as the "Chicken Walk" and "I'm Gonna Cut Your Head Off And Hang It On The Wall." He gives us a sample of his art as he dances, sings and stomps on the top of his truck (we hope it's his) and entertains in a tavern.

Women Miners Conference
28 min. (VHS) 1984 Appalshop
At the end of June 1984, over 100 women miners from 15 different states and Canada came together at West Virginia State College to discuss women-related topics such as sex discrimination, parental leave, trade unions, and acid rain. The keynote address was by Cecil Roberts, vice-president of the UMWA.

Wood, Paint, and Marbles
21 min. (VHS) 1993 M.J. Gibbons
Winner of best documentary in the 1993 West Virginia Student Film Competition. A humorous yet insightful look at the offbeat art and philosophy of Charleston artist Charles Jupiter Hamilton. An excellent introduction and a must-see for admirers of Hamilton and his work. Contains material that may offend some viewers.

Recollections of Ashford

Recent GOLDENSEAL articles on Ashford General Hospital and West Virginia's prisoner-of-war camps brought back memories for reader Robell Clark of Daniels. Ashford was the huge military hospital established at The Greenbrier resort during World War II. Mr. Clark, who worked at Ashford late in the war and afterwards, sent the following account:

I volunteered for the Army in July 1941, the war started in December, and I received a medical discharge in September 1943. I worked as a loom fixer in a textile mill after that. Since textile pay at that time was very low, I went to work at the Ashford General Hospital on July 5, 1945. I was assigned to the supply department. We had everything from drugs, all surgical equipment, dental equipment and supplies, to all household furniture.

In this supply department we had one soldier, three civilians and three German POW's. Due to the size of the hospital we had supplies coming in every day. About every ten days we would receive one or two boxcar loads at the local freight office. On one occasion they had a large amount of surgical bandages ordered, but due to the shortages at that time they sent sanitary pads. Things were ordered by the thousand.

Since this was a major surgical hospital, they would receive patients by rail in hospital cars. As soon after their surgery as they could, the Army would send them home to recuperate. This sometimes would be up to six or eight months. One of my jobs was to help a lieutenant forward all their paychecks. This averaged around 3,000 to 3,500 checks a month. This would take two full days. These were forwarded all over the United States.

When a hospital train came in I would take a load of linens, sheets, pillow cases, towels, washcloths, etc., and exchange with them for their soiled ones. Another of my jobs was keeping plenty of oxygen to the surgical department. This had to be done twice a week.

Filling orders for supplies was an everyday job. The first of the week we filled the large orders, then the balance of the week was fill-ins. About every three to four weeks we hauled a 52-gallon container of alcohol to the pharmacy. In the back of the warehouse was a room about 12-foot-square, with concrete sides and top and a large steel door. In this room was kept all the controlled drugs, alcohol, ether, and so forth.

The closing of Ashford General Hospital in June 1946. Civilian Robell Clark was one of the last to serve there. From a color transparency, courtesy The Greenbrier; photographer unknown.

Among the numerous items in the warehouse were dictionaries of various languages, translating them into the American language. The POW's used the German-American dictionary enough that they had good English, with a German accent.

All three of the POW's were the same age as myself. They would let you know real quick that Germany had a draft board just like ours. They said they had nothing against anyone else and did not want to be drafted. They were just like boys next door.

When there was work to be done they went ahead with it without anyone telling them to do it. When there was furniture to be delivered or picked up in town or Lewisburg, the three POW's and myself would do it. In stock we had three large two-way radios. One of these guys wired them together until they could pick up German broadcasts. They would listen to them telling the people how they were winning the war. The POW's would listen a few minutes, calling the German broadcasters every name in the book. At one time they had Italians at Ashford, but they did not stay very long until they moved in the Germans.

These boys all came from working class families that knew what hard times were. When they were leaving they gave me their home addresses. Before they left they had some of their friends in the hospital make me a nice leather wallet and a hunting knife. I still have them.

I can remember only one bad incident that happened at their camp on the back side of the airport. The camp itself was made of former Civilian Conservation Corps buildings moved from nearby. They had one soldier as a guard that had been mistreated by the Germans in Europe. One of the POW's was walking across the airport to his assigned duties when this guard hollered "Halt." The POW did not hear him so the guard shot him, best I can remember it was in the leg. The soldier was punished for it, because he knew better.

In the supply department we had to ship out everything, so I was one of the very last to go when Ashford closed. I had already made arrangements to transfer into the Corps of Engineers at Bluestone Dam in Hinton.

— Robell B. Clark

Remagen Reprinted

When American GI's Charles Penrod and Ralph Munch topped a hill near Remagen, Germany, and peered into the valley below, they beheld a sight that astonished and delighted them — a bridge spanning the sparkling Rhine River.

It was March 7, 1945. Penrod, Munch and other members of Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, were pushing eastward in a grand Allied sweep toward Berlin.

Everyone expected the Rhine to be a formidable barrier, figuring the retreating Germans would destroy every bridge in sight to prevent the enemy from following. Yet there it was, an Allied superhighway to victory. By day's end, the Americans had taken the span in the face of stiff resistance and planked over its railroad tracks to carry invading tanks and trucks.

That afternoon, a quartet of combat historians was dispatched from the III Army Corps headquarters to chronicle this unexpected development. Leading that detail was Major Ken Hechler, now West Virginia's secretary of state. In 1958 Hechler, then a U.S. Congressman, published *The Bridge at Remagen*, a gripping look at the events of that day and the lives of soldiers on both sides of the conflict. The book sold 600,000 copies, and in 1968 a movie was made from it.

Now Hechler has revised *The Bridge at Remagen* for the 50th anniversary of World War II. The new illustrated edition includes 70 combat photos, a chapter on making the movie, and updates on the soldiers and the town. The large-format paperback sells for $12.95 and is available in bookstores.

—Bob Withers

Ken Hechler, then a southern West Virginia Congressman, with actors George Segal and Ben Gazzara on the *Remagen* movie set.

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, Dance!
_____Fall 1992/Bell Bottoms at Bethany
_____Summer 1993/Fairmont Romance
_____Fall 1993/Twin Falls State Park
_____Winter 1993/Monongah Mine Disaster

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We apologize for not crediting Mark Crabtree's fine photographs in the "Dogs and Birds and Shooting" article in the winter GOLDENSEAL. Mark's photos appear on pages 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, and 40.

Our Writers and Photographers

RAYMOND ALVAREZ, a native of Marion County with graduate and undergraduate degrees from WVU, is vice president of ancillary services at Fairmont General Hospital. He has published several articles in health journals. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1992.

BRUCE BETLER is a native Helvetian. His bachelor's degree is in philosophy and English, and he holds a graduate degree in theology from Catholic University. Betler has worked as a cheesemaker in Helvetia and the Swiss Alps, and is now pursuing the study and preservation of Swiss folk culture in Helvetia. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

CARL DODRILL was born in Webster County and now lives in Ohio. He is a member of West Virginia Writers, the Ohio Writer's Guild, and the International Society of Poets. He has published a book of poetry, *Run Home! My Son!*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MEL FISKE lives in California and is retired. He founded a ceramic industry trade magazine, which he published for 25 years. He has produced numerous stories, two plays, and a memoir. Traveling through Welch a few years back stirred Fiske's memories of his experience on the road in the 1940's. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MARSHALL D. GWINN, a retired railroader, lives in Beckley. He says that he compiled his tales of the rails after his brothers urged him to "write some old railroad stories for posterity." This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

ELAINE PRATER HODGES is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, freelance writer and researcher. She divides her time between two places — New York City and Pocahontas County — and says she prefers her West Virginia home. She graduated from Hurricane High School and once taught English at Dunbar High. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

LOUIS E. KEEFER, a frequent contributor to GOLDENSEAL, was born and raised in Wheeling and educated at Morris Harvey College, WVU and Yale. He is the author of *Italian Prisoners of War in America, 1942-1946: Captives or Allies?* and is now working on a book about Ashford General Hospital, the subject of his last contribution to GOLDENSEAL, in Fall 1993.

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

ROY C. LONG, a native of Moss Run on the C&O line near Covington, Virginia, is a longtime resident of Hinton. He retired from CSX in 1981, after 42 years. He has written a weekly column of local railroad history for the *Hinton News* since 1986. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DANNY WILLIAMS is the folk arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History.

BOB WITHERS, a Huntington native, is a copy editor at the Huntington *Herald Dispatch* and pastor of the Seventh Avenue Baptist Church. A Marshall University journalism graduate, he describes himself as a lifelong railroad enthusiast. He has written for *Moody Monthly*, *Trains* and *Grit*. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1991.

(continued from inside front cover)

August 12-14 Elkins (636-1903)
Augusta Festival

August 12-20 Lewisburg (645-1090)
State Fair of West Virginia

August 13-14 Salem (782-5245)
Dulcimer Weekend (Fort New Salem)

August 13-14 Weston (745-5376)
State Horseshoe Tournament (Jackson's Mill)

August 14 Glenville (428-5421)
56th Job's Temple Homecoming

August 15-21 New Martinsville (455-2418)
Town & Country Days

August 19-21 Flat Top (253-7127)
Lilly Family Reunion

August 20 Richwood (882-2293)
Civilian Conservation Corps Reunion (Camp Woodbine)

August 20 Clifftop (438-6429)
Old-Time Day (Camp Washington-Carver)

August 22-28 Cairo (628-3705)
Cairo Days

August 23-27 West Union (782-3126)
Doddridge County Fair

August 26-28 Morgantown (599-1104)
Mason-Dixon Festival

August 26-28 Beckley (252-7328)
29th Appalachian Arts & Crafts Festival

August 26-September 5 Charleston (348-6419)
Charleston Sternwheel Regatta

August 27 Core (879-5500)
12th Dunkard Valley Frontier Festival

August 29-September 3 Philippi (457-3254)
Barbour County Fair

September 2-4 Jane Lew (842-4095)
10th Firemen's Arts & Crafts Festival

September 2-4 Mt. Nebo (472-3466)
Labor Day Gospel Sing

September 2-4 Clarksburg (622-7314)
West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival

September 2-5 Weston (1-800-296-1863)
Stonewall Jackson Heritage Arts & Crafts Jubilee

September 3-4 Wheeling (242-1929)
Oglebay Woodcarvers Show and Sale

September 3-4 Erbacon (226-5104)
Erbacon Days

September 3-4 Parkersburg (428-3000)
American Indian Heritage Weekend (Blennerhassett)

September 3-5 Parsons (478-2424)
Hick Festival

September 4 Gandeeville (343-8378)
Roane County Homecoming

September 5-10 Summersville (872-1588)
Nicholas County Potato Festival

September 9-11 Huntington (529-2701)
Hilltop Festival (Huntington Museum of Art)

September 10 Fairmont (363-6366)
Sagebrush Roundup Fall Festival

September 10 Clifftop (438-3005)
Country Showdown (Camp Washington-Carver)

September 10-11 Romney (822-5013)
Hampshire Heritage Days

September 10-11 Winfield (755-8421)
Putnam County Homecoming

September 10-11 New Cumberland (564-3801)
Brickyard Bend Festival

September 10-11 Helvetia (924-5018)
Helvetia Community Fair

September 10-11 Parkersburg (428-1130)
West Virginia Honey Festival

September 11-17 Williamson (235-5560)
King Coal Festival

September 15-18 Sistersville (652-2939)
26th West Virginia Oil & Gas Festival

September 15-18 Franklin (249-5422)
Treasure Mountain Festival

September 16-18 Cairo (558-3370)
Nature Wonder & Wild Foods Weekend (North Bend)

September 17 Lost Creek (745-5134)
Country Fall Festival

September 18 Danville (369-6254)
Fall Festival of Arts and Crafts

September 19-24 Parsons (478-3990)
Tucker County Firemen's Homecoming Fair

September 22-24 Arnoldsburg (655-8374)
West Virginia Molasses Festival

September 23-25 Charles Town (725-2055)
Fall Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival

September 23-25 Gandeeville (768-9249)
FOOTMAD Fall Festival (Camp Sheppard)

September 24-25 French Creek (924-6211)
National Hunting & Fishing Days

September 24-25 Moorefield (538-6560)
Hardy County Heritage Weekend

September 24-25 Union (772-3003)
Autumn Harvest Festival

September 24-25 Parkersburg (679-3611)
Volcano Days Engine Show & Festival

September 29-October 2 Clay (587-4900)
Golden Delicious Festival

September 29-October 2 Kingwood (329-0021)
Preston County Buckwheat Festival

September 30-October 2 Middlebourne (758-2511)
Middle Island Harvest Festival

October 1-2 Burlington (289-3511)
Old-Fashioned Apple Harvest Festival

October 1-9 Elkins (636-1824)
Mountain State Forest Festival

October 2 Lowell (466-5502)
Heritage Craft Festival (Graham House)

October 7-8 Wellsburg (737-0801)
Wellsburg Apple Fest

October 7-9 Milton (743-3032)
West Virginia Pumpkin Festival

October 7-9 Mullens (294-4000)
Lumberjackin'-Bluegrassin' Jamboree (Twin Falls)

October 8 Lewisburg (645-7917)
Taste of Our Towns

October 8 Cameron (686-3732)
Big Run Apple Festival

October 8-9 Logan (752-0917)
Aunt Jenny Wilson Old-Time Festival

October 8-9 Point Pleasant (675-7750)
Battle of Point Pleasant Commemoration

October 8-9 Berkeley Springs (258-3738)
21st Apple Butter Festival

October 9-16 Elkins (636-1903)
Old-Time Week & Fiddlers Reunion (D&E College)

October 12-16 Spencer (927-2490)
West Virginia Black Walnut Festival

October 13-16 Martinsburg (253-2500)
Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival

October 15 Fayetteville (465-5627)
Bridge Day

October 15 Bluefield (425-2778)
14th Country Craft Guild Show

October 15-16 & 22-23 Hinton (466-5420)
Railroad Days

October 21-31 Wheeling (243-4000)
Boo at the Zoo (Good Children's Zoo)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 1995 "Folklife Fairs Festivals," please send us information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address and phone number, if possible. We must have this information in by January 15, 1995, in order to meet our printing deadline. GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in the listing.

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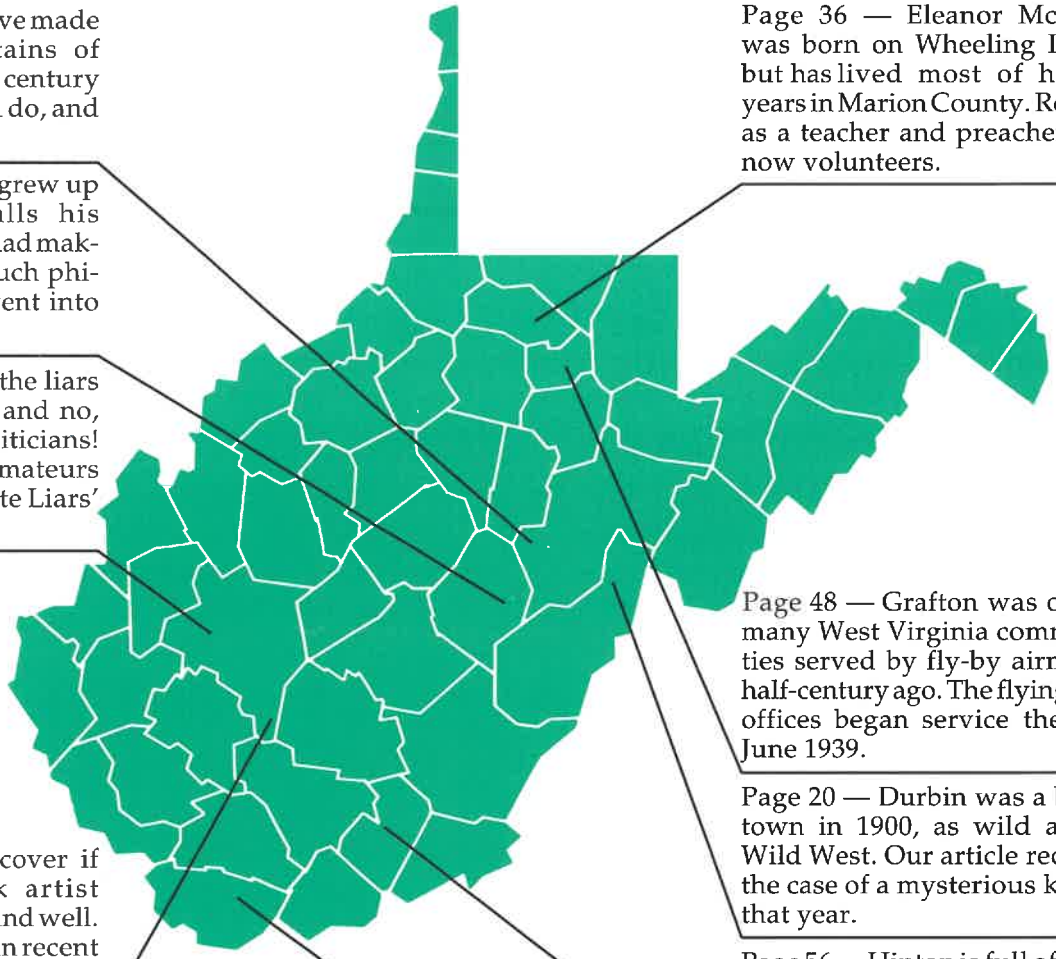

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