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Goldenseal

Capon Springs Memories

Flatfooting

1950 Flood

Lies, Lies, Lies

Planting by the Signs

& More...

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 13-19 Augusta Spring Dulcimer Week
Elkins (637-1209)
April 19 Melvin Wine Birthday Concert
Landmark Studio/Sutton (765-7566)
April 19 Feast of the Ramson
Richwood (846-6790)
April 19-20 33rd Braxton County Arts & Crafts Show
Gassaway (765-2385)
April 25-27 27th Dogwood Festival
Huntington (696-5990)
April 25-27 Spring Mountain Festival
Petersburg (257-2722)
April 26-27 Spring Celebration
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
April 27 25th Clay County Ramp Dinner
Clay (587-4226)
May 1-4 Dogwood Festival
Mullens (294-4808)
May 3 Cheat River Festival
Albright (472-0025)
May 3-4 Ramp Festival
Wellsburg (737-1236)
May 7-11 Rendezvous on the River
Blennerhassett/Parkersburg (420-4800)
May 8-11 36th Wildflower Pilgrimage
Blackwater Falls/Davis (558-3370)
May 10 Historic Bramwell Spring Tour of Homes
Bramwell (248-7252)
May 11 Mother's Day Celebration
Grafton (265-1589)
May 17 Allegheny Mountain Wool Fair
Mingo (335-4880)
May 18-25 Webster County Woodchopping Festival
Webster Springs (847-7666)
May 19 Battle of Matewan 77th Anniversary
Matewan (426-4239)
May 21-25 56th West Virginia Strawberry Festival
Buckhannon (472-9036)
May 23-25 21st Vandalia Gathering
Charleston (558-0220)
May 23-25 Dandelion Festival
White Sulphur Springs (1-800-284-9440)
May 23-26 Mountain Festival
Bluefield (327-7184)
May 23-26 Spring Folk Dance Camp
Oglebay Park/Wheeling (242-7700)
May 24-26 Head-of-the-Mon Horseshoe Tournament
Fairmont (366-3819)
May 29-June 1 Blue & Gray Reunion
Philippi (457-3700)
May 31-June 1 Confederate Memorial Weekend
Capon Chapel/Capon Bridge (856-2623)
June 1 Rhododendron Outdoor Art & Craft Festival
South Charleston (744-4323)
June 7 11th General Adam Stephen Day
Martinsburg (267-4434)
June 9-15 Mountaineer Country Glass Festival
Morgantown (599-3407)
June 12-15 West Virginia Bass Festival
St. Marys (684-2364)
June 12-15 Ronceverte River Festival
Ronceverte (647-3825)
June 13-14 Hancock County Quilt Show
New Cumberland (564-5385)
June 13-15 Spring Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Charles Town (725-2055)
June 13-15 River Heritage Festival
New Martinsville (455-3637)
June 14-15 Heritage Arts Weekend
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
June 18-21 West Virginia Coal Festival
Madison (369-7377)
June 19-22 West Virginia State Folk Festival
Glenville (462-8427)
June 20 West Virginia Day
Independence Hall/Wheeling (238-1300)
June 26-29 Bluegrass-Country Music Festival
Summersville (872-3145)
June 27-29 African-American Jubilee
Wheeling (233-4640)
June 28 Pearl S. Buck Birthday Celebration
Hillsboro (799-4048)
July 2-6 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-7860)
July 5-6 Mid-Summer Music Festival
Tomlinson Run/New Manchester (564-3651)
July 10-13 Singing in the Mountains
Summersville (872-3145)
July 10-13 Pioneer Days In Pocahontas County
Marlinton (799-6569)
July 11-13 Mountain Music Festival
Caretta (875-3418)
July 11-12 Dog-Dippin' Days
Beckley (253-3152)
July 11-13 John Henry Days
Talcott (466-5502)
July 12-13 Pioneer Days & Wheat Harvest
Farm Museum/Point Pleasant (675-5737)
July 14-20 West Virginia Interstate Fair
Mineral Wells (489-1301)
July 16-19 Durbin Days
Durbin (799-4636)
July 19-27 Cowen Historical Railroad Festival
Cowen (847-5106)
July 20-27 47th State Gospel Sing
Mt. Nebo (472-3466)
July 21-26 West Virginia Poultry Convention
Moorefield (538-2725)
July 25-27 Upper Ohio Valley Italian Festival
Wheeling (1-800-828-3097)
July 26-27 & August 2-3 Glass & Craft Festival
Oglebay Park/Wheeling (1-800-624-6988)
July 27-August 2 Marshall County Fair
Moundsville (845-3980)
July 28-August 3 State Water Festival
Hinton (466-5420)
July 30-August 2 Wayne County Fair
Wayne (523-1728)
July 31-August 2 Bluestone Valley Fair
Spanishburg (425-1429)
July 31-August 3 Appalachian String Band Festival
Camp Washington-Carver/Clifftop (438-3005)
August 3-10 Cherry River Festival
Richwood (846-6790)
August 4-8 Magnolia Fair
Matewan (426-4239)
August 4-9 Tyler County Fair
Middlebourne (758-2494)
August 4-10 Mannington District Fair
Mannington (986-2136)
August 5-9 Tri-County Cooperative Fair
Petersburg (538-2278)
August 6-9 Wirt County Fair
Elizabeth (275-4517)

(continued on inside back cover)

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Goldenseal

Volume 23, Number 1 Spring 1997

COVER: Our bouncy Mr. Springtime is "The Great Me" character from the books of Lou Austin, reflecting the better side of everyone. Stephanie Earls's story on the Austins and Capon Springs begins on page 9. Illustration by F. O. Alexander, ©Partnership Foundation, 1957.

PHOTOS: Bob Campbell, Greg Clark, Doug Cruise, Stephanie Earls, William Witt Jennings, Michael Keller, Rick Lee, Gerald Milnes

From the Editor: A Fond Farewell

I started this job the day after my son was born. Jay Rockefeller was about halfway into his first term as Governor of West Virginia, and Robert C. Byrd was our *junior* Senator, playing second fiddler at the U.S. Capitol to the venerable Jennings Randolph.

Time flew. My boy learned to crawl, walk, ride bikes, drive cars and chase girls. Now he's a high school senior, heading for graduation this spring. He is ready for a new challenge.

Me, too. And no, I'm not packing for college.

Rather, I have resigned as editor of GOLDENSEAL to take another job. This is my last issue. I'll be working as executive director of the West Virginia Humanities Council by the time you read this.

It has been a long, satisfying run. I've put in nearly 18 years, which comes out to 72 issues counting this one. It adds up to something like 700 feature articles, countless short pieces, and better than 5,000 pages. Whew!

I certainly haven't done it by myself. Cornelia Alexander and Debby Jackson have been with GOLDENSEAL for more than half my time here. They know their jobs inside-out and are by far the most experienced team we have had. I've been a demanding boss, pushing hard and never able to offer much more than the chance to work their hearts out at a job worth doing. They have risen to the challenge, and we part on the best of terms.

I believe they would leave with me, to tell the truth, but fortunately for GOLDENSEAL they will be staying with the publication. The two of them, together with designer Anne Crozier, institutionalize a lot of what it takes to produce your magazine. Their hard work will ensure GOLDENSEAL's future, and I'm sure I leave you in good hands.

There were others before them. Margo Stafford helped to break me in way back in 1979, while I was still stumbling back and forth to the maternity ward. Lori Henshey stands out among Margo's successors, with Kathy Mitchell and Jeannie Bess working for shorter periods.

Michael Keller has been Mr. Photography for most of GOLDENSEAL's history. He and I have traveled thousands of miles of West Virginia together, and I'm sorry that has to stop. I still recall the first run we made, a Clay County trip. We were told to go to the "yellow house up the creek" — and came to seven of them, all the same memorable egg-yolk shade, before hitting the right one. We've been lost in a few other places since then.

Mike was preceded in these pages by Rick Lee and Steve Payne, both now among West Virginia's top commercial photographers. State Archives photographer Greg Clark has performed many darkroom miracles, processing almost all the old photos we have printed in recent years.

There have been legions of freelancers, both writers and photographers. I'd better not name names, for fear of whom I might miss, but surely I may single out photographer Doug Chadwick of Pocahontas County.

Doug's work goes back to GOLDENSEAL's very first year, and there was a time when he and I freelanced here together. Maybe we will again, if the new editor will have us. That person hasn't been hired yet, incidentally, but the process is underway. GOLDENSEAL is important to the Division of Culture and History, and finding a new editor is an agency priority.

Others making contributions from outside our small staff include a blessedly short list of magazine designers — the hardworking Anne Crozier, already mentioned, and before her Colleen Anderson, Nancy Balow and Pat Cahape. We have had some fine printer reps, as well. I recall Tammy Watkins Clary and Bill Watkins — no relation, and in fact competitors — with particular respect and affection.

My thanks, finally, to the administration of the Division of Culture and History, namely Commissioner Bill Drennen and his predecessor Norm Fagan. Both understood that an editor needs rope enough to hang himself — to be allowed to develop a magazine's personality by being held accountable for the outcome rather than the details of the process. They graciously gave me the necessary cordage, and I've tried not to be too bristly in taking it.

This unspoken arrangement probably counts more than anything for this magazine's survival in a time when others failed. GOLDENSEAL was given room to grow into something which, thank goodness, readers such as you were willing to support financially. Your magazine is thriving today, and I am indeed proud to leave it that way.

Will I miss it? You bet. After all these years I'm doggone sure I've done my part, as Merle Haggard said of his grandma in a pretty good country song, so I have no regrets of that sort in walking away. I've put in my time, done my best, and feel mostly satisfied with what I've been able to accomplish.

But yes, I regret laying down work I do well and enjoy doing. I wasn't trained as an editor, but think I discovered a knack for it, at least when dealing with a subject I love as much as West Virginia's rich and colorful heritage. I'll miss that.

More than anything, I expect to miss my relationship with readers and what I can only describe as a sense of proprietorship in our rugged state. GOLDENSEAL has a

statewide constituency, which it has been a pleasure to serve. I've traveled into every corner of West Virginia, and never found a place where I didn't feel I had good business being there. I've worked in all 55 counties, known I had friends in all of them, and felt at home and welcome wherever I went.

As you may imagine, I have plenty of memories.

I can remember jolting up a Braxton County holler in a motor pool jeep with fiddler Ernie Carpenter, Mike wedged in back with his camera gear cradled in his arms and away from the jeep's hard sides. Ernie died just lately, at age 89, but he was a hale and hearty 70-something at the time and taking it better than us young fellows.

And surely I'll always remember the smell of Ernie's apple trees, in full bloom as we left his house that April day. Those blossoms seemed to represent the tender side of a tough old gentleman.

I remember traveling more than once beneath the cliffy mountainsides of Wyoming County, wishing I'd been the first to see those rugged rock castles when the world was new. And walking the streets of Williamson one day, to come, just as darkness fell, onto a gospel service full of orange-jumpsuited inmates of the Mingo County jail. Their singing called me from a block away.

And I recall the Irish Mountain graveyard in the snow, lifeless and cold, where only the wind sang. Now there's high lonesome, if ever I've felt it in this world.

I remember finding my supper in Chester one soft June evening, and lunch one time at a little place in Mannington where they wrote out the bill on a receipt from the men and boys' shop next door. Whoever checked the expense account must have wondered whether I was buying socks or sandwiches, but the food was fine, as I recall.

(Mannington was the hometown of Arthur Prichard and Russell Fluharty, rest their souls — and no, I'd best not get started on old friends lost along the way. There have been too many of those in a magazine which draws its best material from the minds of our aging parents and grandparents.)

I recall buying fruit for a couple of friends at Plateau Orchards on Bradshaw Mountain, down on the Virginia state line — and a basketful of good Eastern Panhandle apples for a busload of GOLDENSEAL travelers on another mountaintop up near the Maryland border. And surely the taxpayers will forgive the minutes stolen here and there, poking through the bookstores of Shepherdstown, Lewisburg, Elkins, Morgantown, Huntington, Parkersburg.

But most of my time was spent squarely behind my desk in Charleston, laboring from one page to the next. Editing is nose-to-the-grindstone work, or at least it has been for me. They say if something is easy you must be doing it wrong, and by that standard I feel especially good about my service here. For after 18 years making GOLDENSEAL never did get easy.

Each issue has been demanding, and of course we made mistakes. We misplaced whole counties a couple of times, and even misspelled West Virginia on the front cover on one memorable occasion. That wasn't as bad as when Richwood editor Jim Comstock had his newspaper shut down for putting ramp juice in the printing ink — but no, I don't expect to forget it. Every single magazine has required plenty of hard, painstaking work.

What wasn't ever hard was finding enthusiasm for the job, nor was there ever any lack of good raw material. I inherited a stack of manuscripts when I sat down at my desk the first day, and I left a stack there on my last day. It suggests to me that West Virginia is a big, big story, and that there is plenty of it left to tell.

For that reason and others I am optimistic about GOLDENSEAL's future. I encourage you to support the good staff I leave behind and the new editor who will replace me. With your backing — and yes, that means your subscription money — they'll do fine, and your magazine will prosper.

As for me, I've had my shot and enjoyed it immensely. I'm honored to have worked for you, I thank you for the privilege, and I bid you a fond farewell.

— Ken Sullivan

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.

GOLDENSEAL Geography

January 12, 1997
Columbia, South Carolina
Editor:
You have a nice publication. I like the old-time stuff since I am a senior citizen and born and raised in the Mountain State. Jim Comstock was my English teacher, though he

would cringe at my style of writing.
My area of expertise is not geography but your Winter '96 back cover shows an indicator for Pocahontas County sticking into Greenbrier. My county of Nicholas borders Greenbrier on the west.
Your observant and otherwise servant,
F. Page Nelson

We know, we know. And while we're always glad to take correction from a Jim Comstock student, we can't say you're the first to point this blooper out. We haven't misplaced a whole county since 1987 (Hampshire County that time), and we'll try not to do it again.

Please note also that the word "segregation" in the 28th line of page 46 of the Pocahontas County story should have been "desegregation." Our apologies to writer Maureen Crockett. — ed.

More on the Wadestown Robbery

January 7, 1997
Shinnston, West Virginia
Editor:
The saga of the Wadestown bank robbery continues.

The Summer 1996 issue of GOLDENSEAL carried my letter to the editor concerning C. C. Stewart's story about the Buffalo Bank robbery and the more violent action that took place at the Wadestown bank robbery in 1935. Well, my letter started a long string of correspondence and phone calls about the Wadestown action.

First, I received a nice letter from Carl S. Thomas, Charleston, who was a freshman at Wadestown High School at the time, with copies of the Morgantown newspaper accounts from the incident, dated December 4, 1935. Next, I had a visit from Emily Rose who lived in the Wadestown area at the time and had just read my letter in GOLDENSEAL.

The Winter '96 letter to the editor by John D. Stiles, Tallahassee, Florida, prompted a call from Schenectady, New York, to me by Mary Jo Henderson Morris, who was a daughter of Olen Henderson (the bank clerk who was shot at by one of the bandits). She said that an older sister from Florida would be calling me soon and she would remember a lot more.

Well, a few days later I did receive a phone call from this elder daughter of Olen Henderson. Her memories of the incident revealed details that I had forgotten. She remembered one part that I had never known about, of a man coming to her father's house at 5:00 a.m. the day of the attempted robbery, and asking him to go to the bank and unlock a door so that two state troopers and a deputy sheriff could get in the bank. Her memories of the incident were fantastic and very interesting to me.

Following *that* phone call was another one from a retired policeman in New Jersey. He wanted to know if I happened to be the same "Stark" that was on the West Virginia State Police pistol team in the 1930's and '40's. I replied in the affirmative. He said he remembered what a good team West Virginia had and the many trophies they won at matches near Trenton, New Jersey.

This all attests that GOLDENSEAL is a widely-read magazine.
Respectfully,
William E. Stark

Yes, it is, though your experience is a little exceptional even for our far-flung readership. Sounds like we've got folks stirred up from New York to Florida on this one! — ed.

Greenbrier Memories

November 25, 1996
Ripley, West Virginia
Editor:
Your fine article in the Summer '96

MICHAEL KELLER

The former Greenbrier Military School.

issue regarding Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca and Greenbrier Military School, brought back vivid and poignant memories as I was both a camp junior counselor and GMS student in the mid-'40's. J. W. Benjamin, Jr.'s reflections upon amorous adventures (or misadventures) at Cat Rock with female staff members from Camp Anne Bailey and Camp Allegheny were right on the mark.

The sidebar regarding a few of the school's alumni being All-American, Service Academy educated, war heroes, is perhaps personified in Ronceverte's late Jock Clifford, a West Point All-American killed in World War Two. Responding to a question by my son as to who was the most memorable Greenbrier student, Colonel C. E. Turley (coach, commandant, extraordinary Bible teacher at GMS for over 50 years and a personal role model) did not hesitate in answering "Jock Clifford."

Very truly yours,
Harold E. Starcher, Jr.

J. W. Benjamin, Jr.'s reflections upon amorous adventures (or misadventures) with female staff members from Camp Anne Bailey and Camp Allegheny were right on the mark.

All Steamed up

December 26, 1996
Morgantown, West Virginia
Editor:

Regarding the picture of the car on page 34 of the Winter '96 GOLDENSEAL — that is not a T-Model. It is a 1904 White Steamer. Ed Weaver called Christmas Eve to wish me a Merry Christmas and we went over the picture. You can just barely

PERRY COX

make out a puff of steam in the back. If it was dust it would come up from the wheels.

But what the heck, none of us were there.

Happy New Year,
R. W. Lenhart

Our thanks to you and to Ed Weaver of the Burlington Service Station Museum. This is the second time Ed has corrected us on old cars, so maybe we'd better start checking with him in advance. — ed.

No Chocolate Chips

December 30, 1996
Sandyville, West Virginia
Editor:

I read the article in the Fall '96 issue about ammonia cookies. I make these cookies every Christmas. My recipe is an old family recipe, nearly 100 years old. I like to bake these cookies on a day when you can raise a kitchen window a little bit. When you open the oven door, the ammonia odor will definitely clear your sinuses.

After reading Mildred Everson's letter in the winter issue, I decided to let you know about my cookies. My recipe, like hers, called for three cents worth of ammonia and ten cents worth of lemon oil. Enough to bake the cookies today costs $3 for the ammonia, and a two-dram bottle of lemon oil is $1.79. Our grandmothers would have thought this very extravagant.

Most of us who were raised in the country can relate to ammonia cookies, sugar cookies and molasses cookies. Chocolate chips were unheard of. Most of the cookies

New To GOLDENSEAL?

We're glad to make your acquaintance and hope you want to see more of us. You may do so by returning this coupon with your subscription payment for $16.

Thanks—and welcome to the GOLDENSEAL family!

Your Name _____

Address _____

_____

Please make your check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL. Send to:

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1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

ADDRESS CHANGE?

Please enter old and new addresses below and return to us.

OLD

Name _____

Address _____

_____

NEW

Name _____

Address _____

_____

were baked in the winter because it was then you had plenty of good fresh lard after fall butchering.

We'll be looking for our next magazine.
Sincerely,
Jo Raines

Keeping Us Straight

December 28, 1996
Newville, Pennsylvania
Editor:
I have long enjoyed GOLDENSEAL, so much so that I've renewed my subscription even though I've moved from West Virginia. And I enjoyed *most* of the article about Preston County ("Christmas Candles and Country Roads," Winter '96). However, part of one paragraph on page 17 disturbed me a great deal:

"It is fashionable in some places to deride 'WASPs' — White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants — but WASP ways remain alive, well and unapologized for here, where they continue to be admired as a positive influence. Salemites, and indeed most Prestonians, see nothing wrong with hard work, devotion to God, family, and community, and living well."

I'm not sure what you *meant* to say, but what these two sentences *do* say is that if one is not of the Caucasian race, of British extraction, and a Protestant by religious persuasion, one is somehow not capable of "hard work, devotion to God, family, and community, and living well." It is a very racist and xenophobic statement. It reveals an underlying belief which is not compatible with Love Feasts or, indeed, any of the spiritual values described in the article.

Please, say you didn't mean it!
Sincerely,
Kit and Alan Franklin

We didn't mean it. And if you read closely you will see that we didn't say it — that is, while Peggy Ross attributes the favorable qualities mentioned to the subjects of the winter issue article (pp. 16-23), the article doesn't say that those people have a monopoly on those important virtues. Nor did we mean to imply that, and we're sorry if anyone got that impression. We appreciate your viewpoint and thank you for writing. — ed.

The Clock Man

January 2, 1997
Lake Orion, Michigan
Editor:
Your winter cover story is about my cousin, Fred Reichenbach, and our family was thrilled when

MICHAEL KELLER

Freddie sent a copy of the magazine to my parents. I have one of his earliest clocks and a couple of pieces of furniture he made for us before he began making only clocks.

Fred is quite an interesting character and has led a very colorful life. His stories have kept us entertained during each of his visits to our home or our visits to his. Just a few of them could fill another of your issues. He loves his work, and he wishes he had started on this path when he was much younger.
Sincerely,
Dennis Denyer

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.

Saving the Bees

Parasite mites are threatening America's honeybee population and that threatens American agriculture, considering the little insect's big role as pollinator. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is joining in national efforts to save the bees.

A coalition of General Mills, USDA entomologists, and representatives from the American Honey Producers Association have launched a national campaign to save the honeybee by raising funds to study the deadly mites. Almost all of America's wild honeybees have been wiped out by the mites since they first came to the U.S. from Latin America, and more than 60% of America's commercial honeybees have been killed.

For its part, General Mills has put its money where the public's mouth is, offering 25 cents for honeybee research for every HoneyNut Cheerios honeybee caricature clipped from the front of the cereal box and returned to them.

Additional information is available from the Honeybee Hotline at 1-800-362-2006, or call the West Virginia Department of Agriculture at (304)558-2201.

Droop Mountain History

Civil War author Terry Lowry has published a book about the Battle of Droop Mountain. *Last Sleep: The Battle of Droop Mountain, November 6, 1863* recounts West Virginia's bloodiest battle, fought between Confederate forces under General Echols and Union forces under General Averell.

The new book is well-researched, telling of events leading up to the battle and its painful aftermath. Lowry also devotes a chapter to Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park and another to the ghosts of Droop Mountain.

Terry Lowry drew on countless sources — magazines, journals, newspapers, manuscript collections, and other books. *Last Sleep* is filled with detailed stories of those who fought and died and those who met up afterward.

Lowry's other books are *The Battle of Scary Creek: Military Operations in the Kanawha Valley, April-July 1861* and *September Blood: The Battle of Carnifex Ferry*. He is also the author of many articles about the Civil War, a contributor to the *Time-Life* series of books on the Civil War, and an avid collector of Civil War memorabilia.

The book is fully indexed, footnoted and has a bibliography. *Last Sleep* is for serious Civil War buffs. It is in local bookstores, but may also be ordered for $17.95 and $4 shipping and handling from Pictorial Histories, 1416 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301.

Drawn on Stone

"Drawn on Stone" is the name of an exhibit now at the Huntington Museum of Art. The show, featuring a selection of lithographs from the museum's collection, is arranged chronologically to reflect the history of lithography.

Lithography was commonly used in printing images in the days before modern methods of reproducing pictures. Curator Louise Polan explained the history of this old form of printing in a recent museum publication, tracing lithography back to its invention in 1798. "Drawn on Stone" illustrates how different artists used this medium.

The John Brown lithograph published here, by painter John Steuart Curry (1897-1946), is a good example of an artist using lithography in an original work.

The Huntington Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday,

10:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission is by donation. For more information contact the museum at 2033 McCoy Road, Huntington, WV 25701; (304)529-2701. "Drawn on Stone" will be on exhibit through June 8.

Fairmont Architecture

Debra Ball McMillan, an architect and associate professor at Fairmont State College, is the author of *An Ornament to the City: Historic Architecture in Downtown Fairmont, West Virginia.*

The new book represents major research on Fairmont's architec-

tural history. McMillan focuses on structures from the Marion County city's major growth era — 1890 to 1930. She documents more than 150 buildings through extensive text, numerous photographs, drawings, maps, and some anecdotes of life in Fairmont.

Debra Ball McMillian is active with Main Street Fairmont, the American Institute of Architects' West Virginia Chapter, the Fairmont Historic Landmarks Commission, the Marion County Historical Society, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

An Ornament to the City is a 384-page oversized hardback. McMillian says she wrote the book, her first, for those who remember Fairmont's past and wish to shape its future. The book sells for $34.90, plus $2.10 tax for West Virginians. It is available at many state bookstores. Mail orders may be sent to 217 Braddock Street, Fairmont, WV 26554.

Roadside Reading

Travelers along West Virginia roadways often get a quick glimpse into our Mountain State heritage by observing highway markers. These roadside signs are mostly historical, although some cover geology and other subjects. The historical markers tell of events as far back as the early 18th century.

Roadside markers use a choice few words to convey the important information. Travelers in the Eastern Panhandle may read about

GREG CLARK

George Washington's land survey, and on Route 60 a marker identifies Malden as the boyhood home of educator Booker T. Washington.

A book was recently published that identifies West Virginia's roadside markers. *Roadside Markers in West Virginia* by Charles S. Adams is a 90-page paperback, with the markers arranged alphabetically and by county and region.

The new book gives the name, text and location for each of 800 markers, including 165 never before collected in book form. The author notes that he has not visited all of the markers and cannot guarantee that all are still up or accurately located.

This most recent marker book builds upon roadside marker books published in 1937 and 1967. Adams combined the information from these earlier publications with a list of new markers he located at the West Virginia State Archives. The marker program is overseen by the Archives staff, although the new book was published independently.

Roadside Markers in West Virginia sells for $12. It may be purchased in bookstores or ordered from Charles S. Adams, 201 Ryan Court, Shepherdstown, WV 25443; (304) 876-3533.

New River Symposium

The 13th New River Symposium is set for April 11th and 12th. The popular biennial symposium is cosponsored by the New River Gorge National River — a unit of the National Park Service in West Virginia — and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

The event is open to anyone with a professional or general interest in the New River, which courses from its headwaters in North Carolina through Virginia to its mouth in West Virginia — a distance of about 250 miles. The symposium was established to preserve the river's natural and cultural heritage.

This year, the event will be held for the second time at Glade Springs Resort in Daniels. Registration is $40 and includes the Friday night banquet, refreshments and all activities, but not lodging.

Presentations at this year's New River Symposium encompass folklore, history, archaeology, botany, geology, geography, and other subjects.

For more information contact New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846; (304)465-0508. The published proceedings for some previous symposiums are available for purchase. Proceedings from the upcoming New River Symposium will be published by the summer of 1997.

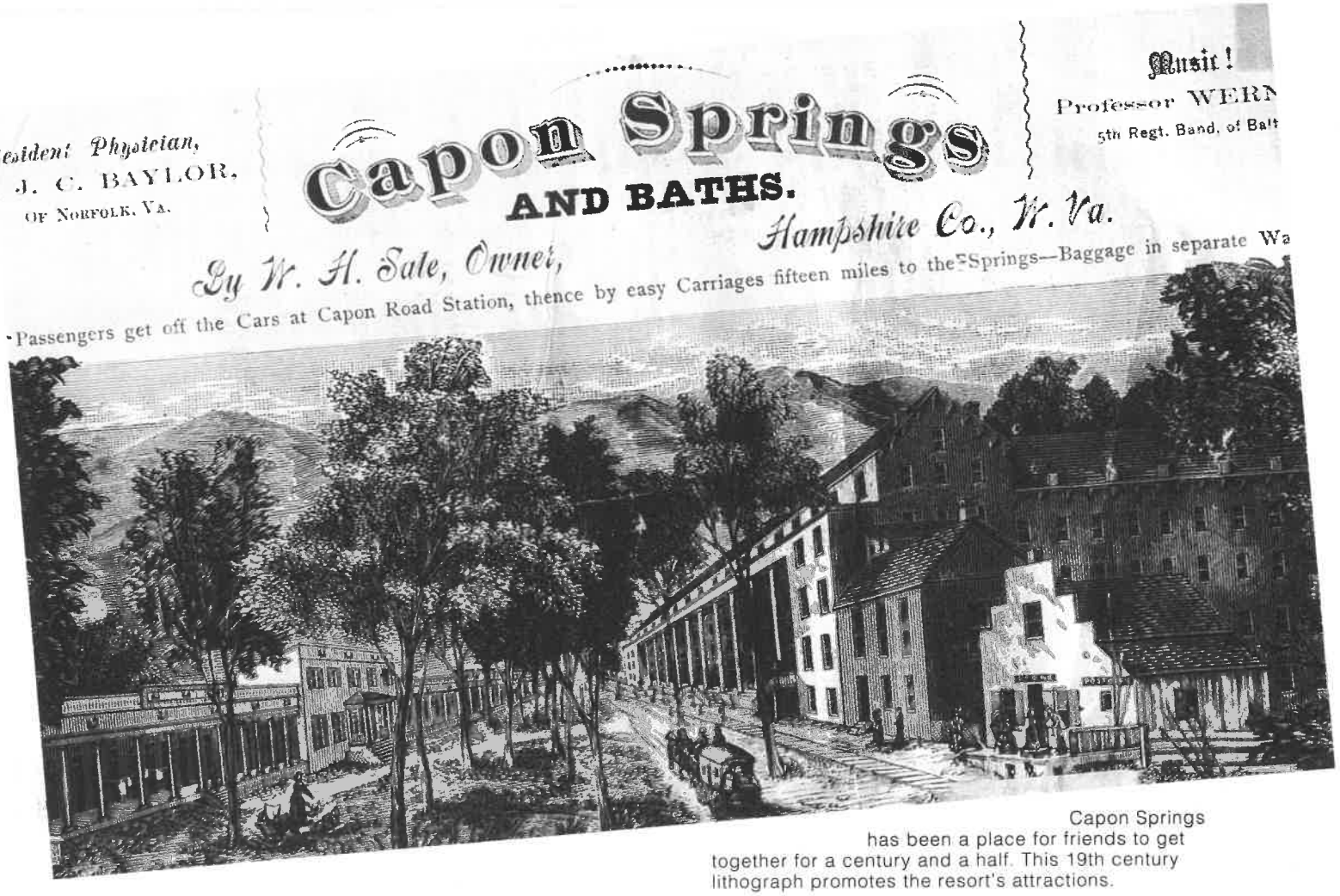
Wonderful West Virginia Editor Retires

There must be something going around, for just about the time GOLDENSEAL's editor resigned the state's "other magazine" also lost its editor. Nancy Clark, a 22-year employee of *Wonderful West Virginia*, retired in December. The monthly publication of the state Division of Natural Resources is known for its color photography, tourism and nature features, and articles that showcase West Virginia's scenery and people.

Nancy first hired on to help with copy and layout back in 1974. Within months she was named managing editor. She worked with editors Ed Johnson and Arnout Hyde in that capacity until 1988, when Hyde took early retirement and Nancy Clark stepped up to become editor.

She retired this past December. Nancy said she "hated to leave" though the job had been demanding. Clark was not shy about offering parting advice. "There will always be bean-counters who want to cheapen the product," she warned.

Well put, Nancy Clark, and we wish you the best.



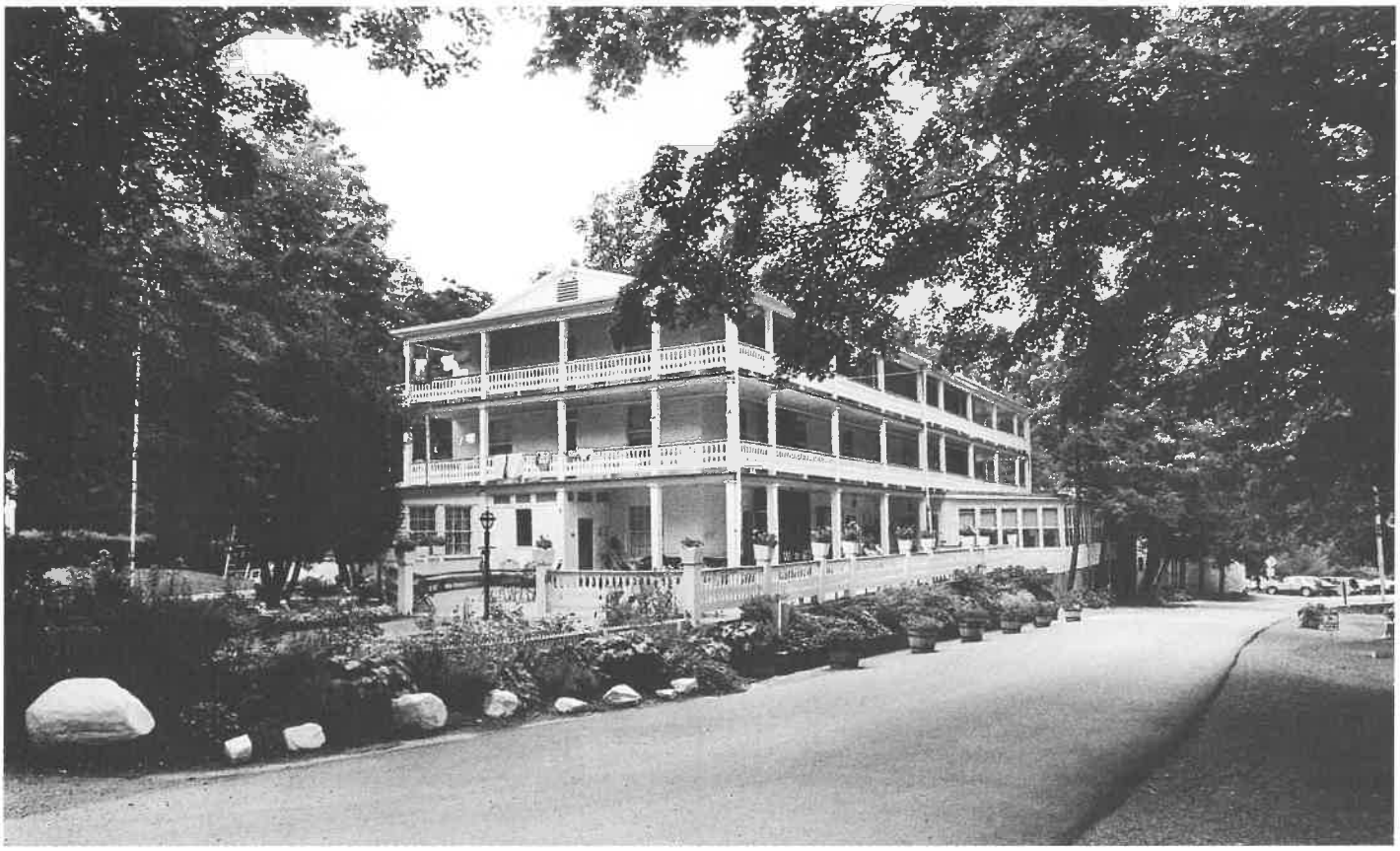
Capon Springs has been a place for friends to get together for a century and a half. This 19th century lithograph promotes the resort's attractions.

A King-Sized Reunion

Capon Springs Resort

By Stephanie Earls

It's well past noon on a pleasant Hampshire County Wednesday, and the aroma of bread in the final stages of baking slowly permeates Capon Springs and Farms Resort. The thick scent wafts



The Main House has the resort's office, dining hall and many lodging rooms. Photo by Stephanie Earls.

from the kitchen, across the well-manicured yard and toward the stately Victorian manors which skirt the central square. I can smell the baking from my spot on the hill behind the resort's main house, and even though I've just eaten, my stomach rumbles.

Lunch is over, though. The mellow strains of Broadway show tunes, piped over outdoor loudspeakers to herald the midday mealtime, can no longer be heard. Even the guests who lagged behind to chat with old or new friends at the hilltop picnic area have made their way back down the winding dirt path behind me. The cooks must be getting started on the next big feast. With more than 200 mouths to feed, there's no time to waste.

The reality of the Capon Springs resort, a century-old retreat deep in the Eastern Panhandle, is that there are more people milling about than you'd care to count, especially after the season gets underway in early May.

Remembering everyone's name, birthday, anniversary, or whether he or she won the ping-pong tournament this week last year doesn't seem to be a problem for the guests or the staff, however. People know each other here. From its family-style meals to its weekly newsletter, the place has the comfortable air of a king-sized reunion. Guests tend to return year after year, introducing first their children and then their grandchildren to the Capon Springs experience. And the same family has managed the resort for the past 65 years.

According to documentation supporting the resort's entry into the prestigious National Register of Historic Places, Capon Springs is "one of the best-preserved 19th-century spring resorts in the state." The official paperwork also emphasizes the historical continuity apparent in resort buildings, which illustrate the place's evolution from a ramshackle settlement in the late 1700's to its present grand incarnation.

The resort and associated farms are located on about 5,000 acres outside the community of Capon Springs, at the base of the Great North Mountain and just shy of the Virginia state line. The official historic district covers only a fragment of the resort property. The district stretches less than half a mile along County Route 16, which cuts through the resort's main grounds and serves as its thoroughfare as well as the only access road.

The approach from the north along this route is surprisingly abrupt. Miles of meandering, empty backroads suddenly spit you out at the stone pillars marking the resort entrance and then onto a thin corridor wedged between the massive main lodge and an expanse of meticulously kept lawn. You can't help but wonder whether you've somehow, unwittingly, turned off the road you were on.

But despite its size and despite the times, Capon Springs is a place

where you still make your own change when buying postcards. Personal checks are welcome and tabs are encouraged. It's one of those rare places where you don't have to leave the television on when you're gone in order to avert theft, which is a good thing since there are no TV's in the old-fashioned rooms.

Simply put, Capon Springs is a throw-back to a kinder, gentler, more dignified era. At the same time, it's a thriving business which draws guests back year after year even with minimal publicity. Until recently, the only advertisement was word-of-mouth, and the managers worked hard to keep it that way. It took a long while to get permission for this GOLDENSEAL story.

If Capon's success can be attributed to some magical mixture of business savvy and time-tested ideals, then Lou Austin would be the alchemist. Austin, whose descendants still run the place, stumbled into the resort business while pursuing a scheme to bottle water from the deep springs which surface on the resort's property.

Because of the reputed healing powers of these mineral waters, Capon Springs had enjoyed fame as a recreation spot as early as the 1700's. Early moves to capitalize on local tourism were made in 1849, when Baltimore investors purchased land and built a lodge, called the Mountain House and big enough to accommodate 500 people.

After a period of hibernation during the Civil War, the huge Mountain House passed into the hands of a former Confederate named William H. Sale. Captain Sale devoted himself to the place, and began to build additional facilities throughout the property. Many of the larger guest houses, including the Hampshire House and the Annex, which was converted into the main guest lodge after the Mountain House burned, were built under his direction. Today they are among the finest examples of Victorian architecture in the region.

Like other 19th-century resorts, Capon began to deteriorate after the turn of the century. Sale died in 1900, and a tragic 1911 fire claimed the Mountain House and several other buildings. The golden age began to flake away. Successive owners were unable to keep the business rolling. Finally, in 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, the property was placed on the auction block after the owner declared bankruptcy.

Lou Austin, a Philadelphian, had become familiar with the old resort while he and his colleagues were trying to make a go of the Capon Springs water bottling business. To that point, the water business hadn't done much but drain Austin's funds and time, but he was still determined to succeed as a bottler.

As Lou saw it, the only way to secure irrefutable rights to the water was to buy the spring, which lay on the grounds of the run-down, 320-acre resort. Already deep in debt, Austin decided to take out a third mortgage on his house and gamble the last of his funds on the purchase of the property. Though things didn't turn out the way Austin envisioned, this was the best move he could have possibly made.

In his inspirational book, *You Are Greater Than You Know,* Austin wrote that while he had become the owner of a resort, this fact was purely incidental. His time and thoughts were still focused on distribution of the Capon Springs mineral water into the national market. "As for the physical property that had once been a summer resort, I had it in the back of my mind that some day some of the profits from the water business would go to putting one or two of the old buildings in shape," he wrote.

According to the family, it was Lou's wife, Virginia Austin, who was first inspired to devote energy to the resort. Bonni McKeown, their

Austin Books and More

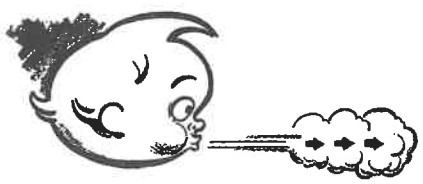
Though his life began in poverty, Lou Austin went on to succeed both personally and in the resort business. Making his beloved Capon Springs resort a success was a struggle at times, but Austin was well-grounded and sure of himself.

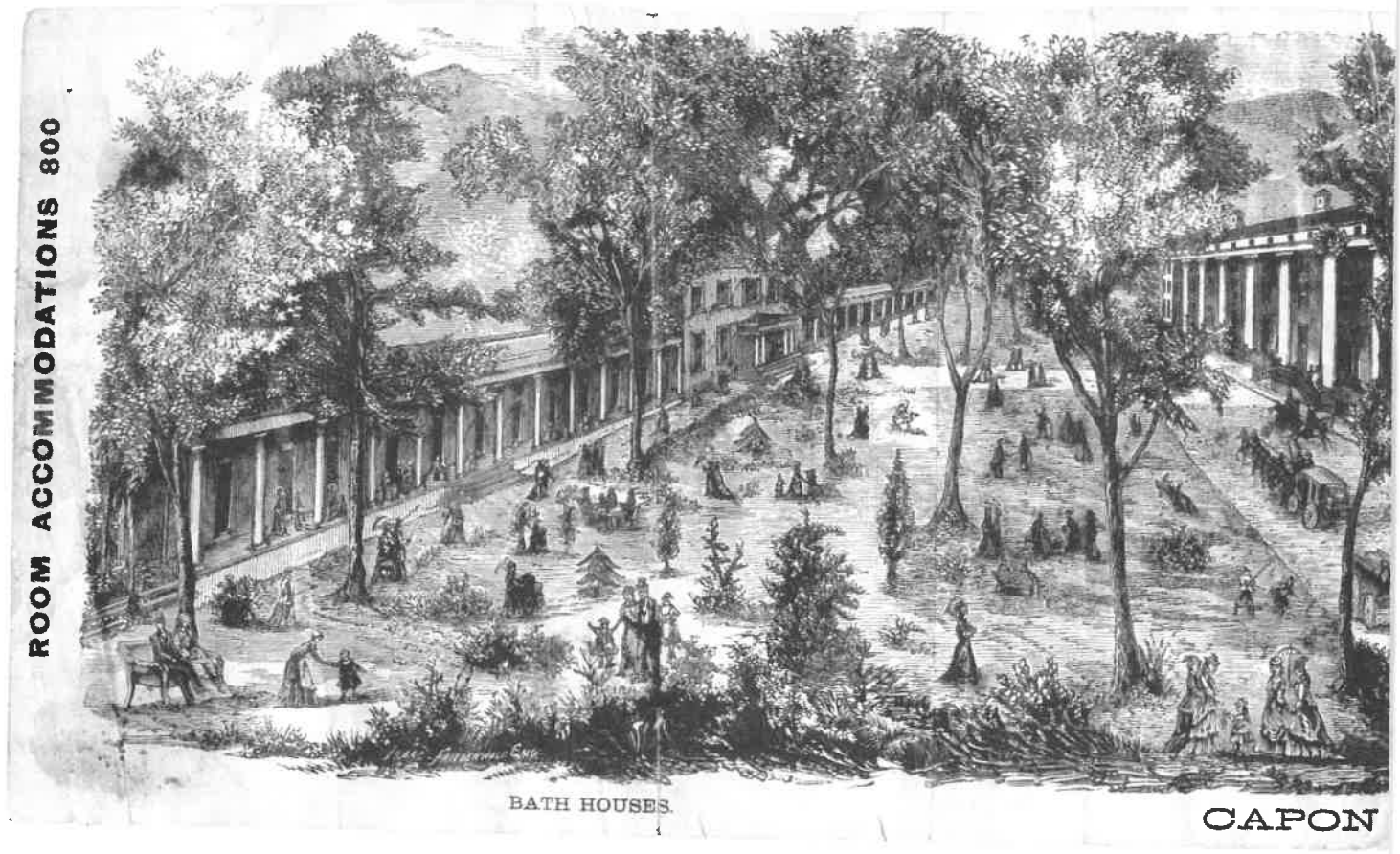
His family thinks that his beliefs are a lot of what made it all work, and Austin devoted much of his life to passing on his philosophy. He left a substantial body of writings behind. Since

his death, his family has continued publishing his books through the Partnership Foundation at Capon Springs.

Books for adults are *You Are Greater Than You Know, Your Perfect Partnership* and an anthology of Austin's writings. Children's books are *The Little Me and the Great Me* for which a parent-teacher manual was also written, *My Secret Power* and *Why and How I Was Born.* Little Me-Great Me gifts include a hand puppet, t-shirt, poster, and a nifty stuffed doll which smiles on one side and frowns on the other.

The books and gifts are available from the foundation. Contact the Partnership Foundation, General Delivery, Capon Springs, WV 26823; (304) 874-3695 for further information.





This 19th century advertisement shows the huge Mountain House at right. The building burned in 1911. Captain William H. Sale (far right), formerly of the Confederate Army, brought the resort to its post-Civil War peak.

granddaughter who today serves as Capon's land, farm and history manager, says that her grandmother was the consummate gracious hostess.

Eventually both Austins became deeply involved in the resort's renovation and management. Not long after he acquired the property, a government crack-down on advertising medical claims for mineral water further burdened Lou Austin's efforts to boost his bottling operations.

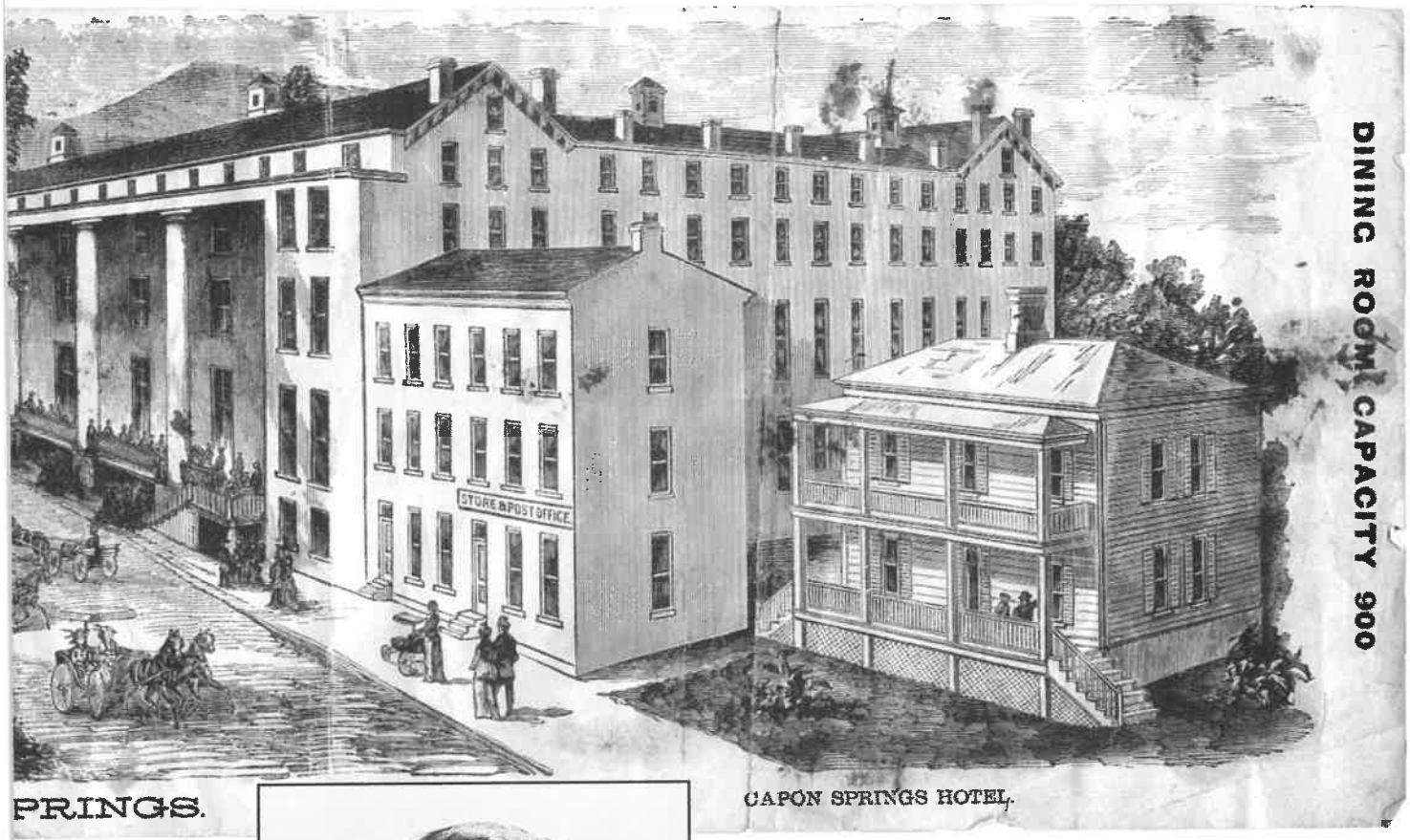
Though the bottling venture experienced periodic peaks over the next few decades, that part of the business was abandoned altogether three years after Austin retired in 1959. In his book, Lou wrote that he finally had to admit that the hotel operation was simply more lucrative and stable. "Even though he finally proved the water was good, he found that he could make more money at the hotel than at bottling," Bonni says.

According to a historical survey of Capon Springs, the Austins were able to extend electricity and plumbing to the resort's buildings by 1938, thanks to a loan from Romney banker and railroad man John Cornwell, a former governor of West Virginia. A large kitchen and dining room were added. The Austins initiated a major renovation of the existing buildings and facilities. Area residents did much of the work.

Other conveniences, including a nine-hole golf course, the pool bathhouse and fishpond, as well as numerous cottages, were added in spurts over the next few decades. Austin estimated in his book that the resort's business increased 25 percent between 1932 and 1941.

During World War Two, things really boomed. Because of its proximity to the nation's capital, military people including generals and admirals took time out from the bustle of Washington to spend time at Capon Springs. By the 1950's the resort was serving over 200 guests in almost 100 rooms. Austin had added several farms to his holdings as well, and began providing his own produce and livestock for the resort's kitchen. The farms still produce eggs, hogs and such crops as tomatoes, strawberries and asparagus.

As Virginia and Lou's children got older, they became involved in running the resort. Eventually, the three oldest children — Porter and Ted Austin and Virginia Lou McKeown — and their spouses took over. They ran the place under the close supervision of the older Austins — who, according to Bonni, refused to enjoy inactive retirements. The fourth child, Claire A.



PRINGS.

CAPON SPRINGS HOTEL.

Bellingham, worked at Capon until her early 20's.

Lou Austin died in 1976. He was followed by Virginia Austin, the mother of Capon Springs, in 1982. Before the close of the decade, most of their children had retired from the business. In 1988, the third generation, many of whom had spent years working side-by-side with parents and grandparents, took charge.

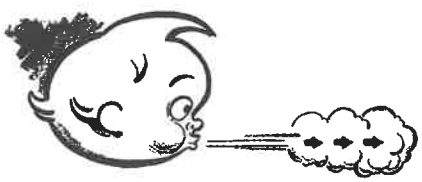
The management now includes seven members of the Austin, McKeown and Bellingham families. Other relatives help out as well, including several members of the upcoming fourth generation. Capon has over 100 seasonal and year-round employees, many of whom live in the community and belong to families who've worked at the resort for generations.

It was only recently that the "Thirds" decided to begin a limited marketing program, a move that Lou Austin had always felt would compromise the "true self" of the place.

"Lou was afraid that if he advertised, and brought in a zillion people which the place wasn't used to handling, that people would start complaining and it would be a disaster," Bonni says. "Lou figured that he should let the business grow naturally, at a sustainable rate. He felt that 'if something grows too fast, it becomes a cancer.'

"But now, we need to grow faster because of changing demographics, because people take shorter vacations as the world gets more hectic," says Bonni. "Ironically, people need to get away, but they can't see clear to getting away. So we need to meet them halfway, which means letting them know they are welcome for just a couple of days as well as the traditional week." Capon also hosts meetings and conferences.

Though the Thirds have taken small steps toward publicity to increase business at the hotel, Bonni says there's no chance they'll be abandoning any of the old-fashioned ideas that are Capon Springs



A Little Idea with Great Expectations

Lou Austin established the dynasty which still runs the sprawling resort at Capon Springs, but family and friends agree that the greatest legacy he left behind was his philosophy. It's apparent today in the attitude that prevails at Capon Springs — that of the guests as well as the staff.

"Grandpa learned through all his trials and businesses and family life that he had a partner, who was God, greater than himself," says Bonni McKeown. "We all have this inner spiritual guide which comes from somewhere greater than ourselves."

Lou felt that people are constantly faced with the choice to do good or to do evil, according to the books he wrote. He called the desire to do bad the "Little Me," while the "Great Me" aspired to good actions. "The Little Me is your selfish, fearful heart. It just doesn't get you anywhere," Bonni says. "Your Great Me is from God, so it's infinite. There's no end to what you can do."

Lou describes his outlook in his book, *You Are Greater Than You Know*, and boiled down a simpler version in a book for children, *The Little Me and the Great Me*. In the adult book, Lou delves deep into his personal philosophy. However, the theme of the 206-page book can be summed up in a few simple phrases, says Bonni.

"You are responsible for what you do, you are in charge, therefore you can't blame your actions on someone else."

Lou Austin left grandchildren Jonathan Bellingham and Bonni McKeown with sunny dispositions and plenty of playmates. The Little Me/Great Me dolls are sold as souvenirs. Photo by Stephanie Earls.

"You are responsible for what you do, you are in charge," she says. "This puts the responsibility on you, and therefore you can't blame your actions on someone else."

Bonni feels that her grandfather's philosophy and his acceptance of a spiritual "Senior Partner" are responsible for his success in business. Lou would have no doubt agreed. In *You Are Greater Than You Know*, he wrote that "it was only when I abandoned my desire to accumulate money for my personal and family benefit that things began to gravitate my way." He went on to add, "I believe all things are for the best."

Lou's ideals were apparent in how he dealt with his staff and in nurturing a healthy relationship between the resort and the Capon Springs community. Bonni recalls an old story involving a night watchman and some missing cash, and the way her grandfather handled the situation.

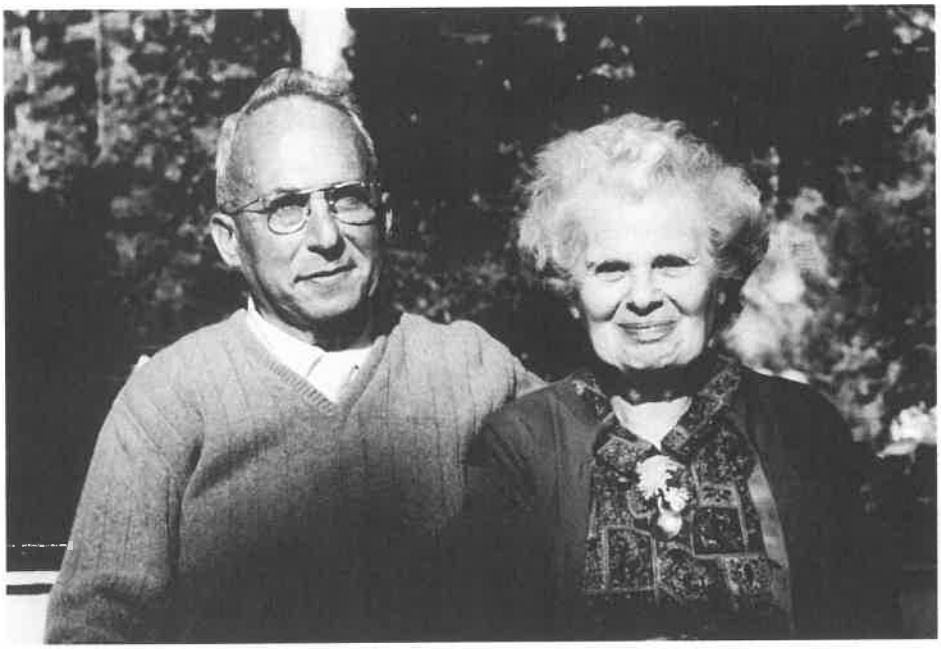
Figuring that the thief could be none other than the watchman himself, Lou told the man, in confidence, about the disappearing money. He then asked the watchman to keep a keen eye out for the thief during his shift. "The money never came up missing again and the watchman wasn't fired," says Bonni.

Lou's sense of humor as well as the simple way he strove to present his ideas can be seen in the Little Me, Great Me dolls available in the resort's gift shop. The stuffed dolls, stitched locally, have a different face on each side. One is smiling, one is frowning. They are a reminder that everybody has the capacity for evil and for good, Bonni says.

The dolls have a more practical application as well, she adds.

"You can throw the doll when you get mad, and then it makes you laugh. When you laugh, it's hard to be a Little Me too much longer."

— Stephanie Earls



The late Lou and Virginia Austin were the first family of Capon Springs. A granddaughter remembers Virginia as the "consummate hostess." Photographer unknown, about 1970.

trademark. These ideals — what they call the "Capon Way" — are what keep guests coming back each year.

"It's the whole honor system and the sense of expecting this from other people," Jonathan Bellingham says of the Capon way. Jonathan, Bonni's cousin, is the son of Lou and Virginia Austin's youngest daughter, Claire. "People feel like, 'Wow, I can be trusted and I can trust other people — this is an environment where I can bring out the best in myself.'"

Jonathan, who heads the resort's marketing and recreation departments, says there's constant pressure at Capon to simply be your best.

"Because if you're not, it will stand out. If you don't hear it from our family, you'll hear it from other guests," he says.

According to Jonathan, among other things the Capon Way means you "don't smash the tennis ball at tennis." Or if a child takes another's toys, Mom might tell him or her that such actions were not the Capon Way, Jonathan elaborates. "But when someone finds something and turns it in, or goes down to get their laundry and finds it's already been folded for them, *that's* the Capon Way."

When you ask visitors what it is they like most about the place, you'll hear amazingly similar responses. It's the people, the friendly atmosphere, the consistency that really keep them coming back, they say, the Capon Way that they've come to love, they say.

"The atmosphere of the place is conducive to wholesomeness," says Dennis McArver, of Martinsburg, who began visiting Capon Springs with his family about 20 years ago. His wife, Emmy McArver, adds that what she likes about the place is that it doesn't seem to change over time.

Their daughter, 24-year-old Susan McArver, has spent summers at Capon since she was four. She says she'll keep returning as long as she can. Even so, she says it's difficult to spell out just what it is about the resort — with its stodgy 11:00 p.m. curfew, no-alcohol policy (except in private rooms), and "grandma's house" atmosphere — that's so appealing.

"It's hard to describe Capon Springs to someone who hasn't been here," says Susan. Attempts to explain the place to her college roommates just didn't do it justice, she says. It's the kind of place where members of different generations can enjoy one another's company. At Capon Springs, even teenagers and members of the 20-something generation can enthusiastically do

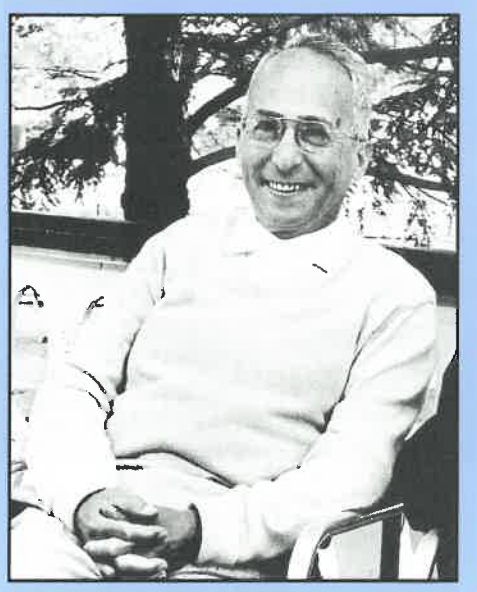
The mineral spring is the heart of Capon Springs resort. This picture shows the springhouse. The water is pumped to fountains for the free use of guests. Photo by Stephanie Earls.

Cutting 'Em Short

Despite the anything-goes attitude at his establishment, Lou Austin had his rules, especially when it came to attire. The Capon dress code was not what you might think, but if you broke it you had to suffer the consequences, no matter who you were or how much money you had invested in your wardrobe.

The idea was to preserve the informality of the vacation resort, and Lou went about that in his own way. "If you wore a tie into the dining room, he would come by with scissors and cut it off," is the way long-time guest Willard Wirtz puts it.

Daughter-in-law Peggy Wirtz remembers one such incident, during a family vacation at Capon Springs in 1965. One of the hotel's guests was determined to put Lou to the test. The man, says Peggy, hadn't seen the resort's owner do any clipping, so he snubbed the warnings and wore his tie to dinner. "He wanted to see if the rule would hold," says Peggy.



Lou Austin was a no-tie guy. Photographer unknown, about 1950's.

"It was a nice tie, too," adds Willard Wirtz. "He showed Lou the tag and said, 'You wouldn't cut this kind of tie, would you?'" The busy snip of Lou's clippers gave the man his answer.

The tie-cropping ritual wasn't always expected, points out Jim Van Metre, another regular since the late 1940's. "People would come in from Washington, not knowing the rule," says Jim. "They would take off their coats and sit down and Lou would come over and clip 'em.

"It wasn't always appreciated," adds Jim.

— Stephanie Earls

things which are traditionally uncool, Susan says. "I mean, you can play Bingo and get really into it," she admits.

Perhaps it's the simplicity of the place, suggests Jim Van Metre, who chose to honeymoon at Capon Springs in the 1960's after spending summers there as a teen. Jim says he likes how Capon has successfully avoided the commercialism which prevails at so many resorts. "Here, you're not always fussing with money," he says. "This promotes an atmosphere of trust, which is counter to what we see in everyday society."

Francie and Dory Sozio are among the many couples to spend their wedding night at the resort. When the honeymoon was over, the resort's managers presented the Sozios with three huge bags of groceries to help them set up housekeeping, says Dory. Like Jim, Francie says that her first impression of Capon Springs was that it was astoundingly *simple* and friendly once you looked past the elaborate facade of the Southern resort. "It's unimposing and rustic, but has managed to keep its antebellum flavor," she says.

Another thing which is characteristic of Capon is that people come back year after year, adds Jim. Many make it a point to return on the same week and meet up with companions from previous summers. Great friendships — even marriages — have been built his way, Jim says.

"Of the 200 people here, we know at least one-quarter of them," says guest Willard Wirtz, a former U.S. Labor Secretary who began vacationing at Capon Springs in 1942. Like many resort guests, Wirtz and his wife Jane return during the same week each summer to see old friends and relatives.

"It's a marvelous place to have the family get together," says Willard, whose book, *Capon Valley Sampler*, details some of the story of the Capon Springs area. He says that he was a close friend of Virginia and Lou Austin and during his repeated visits over the years watched the "Seconds" and "Thirds" grow to adulthood. Now he can see the fourth generation coming up.

The beauty of the location was what struck Willard's daughter-in-law, Peggy Wirtz. "It's a place to stitch yourself back together," she says. "People have been coming and enjoying this beautiful place for so long. You just feel connected with the past and with the people around you, who are having fun and who have similar values."

But Capon Springs isn't just for old guests, points out Jim Van Metre. "New people are welcomed into the tradition. Everyone talks to new people and tries to make them feel more comfortable," he

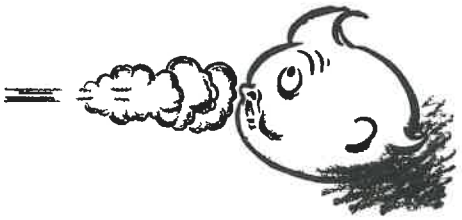


Illustration ©Partnership Foundation, 1957.

Friends reunite at Capon Springs throughout the warm months. This group enjoys a game of cards outside the Main House. Photo by Stephanie Earls.

says. The management attempts to pair old and new visitors for games and activities so that everyone feels included.

The steadfast refusal to "modernize" its ideals has helped the resort keep its goals of comfort and informality in focus. With this in mind, are the Austin grandchildren prepared to handle their first leap into today's advertising arena? Bonni thinks that a little stage fright is in order. "What we're doing is promoting a secret, and then it's no longer what it was," she says, admitting that that's an uncomfortable position to be in.

She figures that the best way to handle the change is for the resort to step out in the most honest way it knows how, the Capon Way. The idea "is to say that this is us, this is who we are and this is what we offer," she says. "People who are attracted to that will come. Other people will go elsewhere."

No doubt Lou Austin would have understood that.

The colonnade which runs through the grounds once housed mineral baths, the resort's main attraction in earlier times. Photo by Stephanie Earls.

"The

Weirton, West Virginia.
Jan. 1 1919.

The old year, 1918, closed out like the departure of a friend whom we have learned to love and know, quietly passing from our view forever hidden behind the "Curtain of time." She came to us a year ago while the dark and gloomy war clouds were darkening our nation and the Shot-torn and bleeding Continent of Europe, but glad are we to know that she leaves us crowned with victory and Peace. May the New year bring us continued prosperity, and happiness Peace on Earth and good will to all humanity.

The New year, 1919, begins with a warm wave and much rain,

The following is a brief statement of our Financial Conditions,—

Deposits in Banks, or money on hand.

Cline	$149.41	
Viola Cline	193.90	343.31
Vesta Cline	120.75	
Bulah Cline	142.35	
Total	$606.59	

War is Over — Weather Fair"

The Journal of J. W. Cline

By Jean Battlo

J. W. Cline was a faithful journal keeper, briefly recording the days of his life. Photo by Michael Keller.

"*The old year, 1918, closed out like the departure of a friend whom we have learned to love and know, quietly passing from our view forever hidden behind the 'curtain of time.'*

"*She came to us a year ago while the dark and gloomy war clouds were darkening our nation and the Shot-torn and bleeding continent of Europe, but glad are we to know that she leaves us crowned with victory and peace. May the New Year bring us continued prosperity and happiness, Peace on Earth, and good will to all humanity.*

"*The New Year, 1919, begins with a warm wave and much rain.*"

> *"Both of us had pretty fair health through the year. Paid no doctor bills and lost no time on account of sickness. Bought a Plymouth, worth $675 and still owe $250 at year's end."*

Thus begins J. W. Cline's journal, which would be kept on a daily basis through the conclusion of another war in 1945. The last sentence is more characteristic than the weighty words preceding it, for usually the folksy writer was most interested in the weather, work, vacations and the daily routine, and his naps, aching joints and gardening, than in the unsettled state of the world. His New Year entry concludes with a tally of family finances, showing $606.59 in bank deposits at the end of 1918.

J. W. Cline had started his career as a grade schoolteacher and principal at Herndon, Wyoming County, according to daughter Beulah Dunn

of Princeton. He left education for employment with the Virginian Railroad. During his railroad career, his work places included Algonquin, Bridge 65 on Herndon Mountain, Woodbay, Pemberton, Pax and Harper, and other points in the southern coalfields.

To those of us in the harried, hurried 1990's, perhaps the most striking feature of the journals is J. W.'s faithfulness in making his entries and the constancy of daily activities. Each day, including Sundays and holidays, in good health and bad, J. W. Cline wrote in his journal.

The railroad man lived in a household of women. This photo of J. W. Cline and his family was made on an unknown date.

J. W. built a solid family life after a rough start. His first wife left him when daughters Beulah and Vesta were children. He married Viola Cooper, and she played an important role in the girls' lives. Both she and J. W. were supportive in helping them enter the workplace, by no means a certain thing for young women of their day. But World War One created new possibilities for women, as would World War Two a generation later.

In fact, both girls went to work for the railroad as teenage telegraphers. J. W. had taught them the basics of Morse code, and soon his daily records included his daughters' "tricks," or work shifts, as well as his own. For March 1919, he shows that Beulah received a considerable salary for a young woman, $24.02.

To insure their future, J. W. sent his daughters to Valparaiso, Indiana, for further training. According to the journals, Vesta and Beulah went west by train in 1919. Apparently, J. W. immediately began to make plans for a visit. On July 22, 1919, he and Viola were preparing to leave. The couple spent a day in Cincinnati, where they visited the zoo, before heading to Chicago.

After a day with Vesta and Beulah in Valparaiso the whole family went back to nearby Chicago for a vacation. Then they traveled to Muskegon, Michigan, where J. W.'s mother was buried.

The excursion included Virginia Beach, Hampton Roads and Newport News. "Spent about $55," the journal recorded of the entire trip.

The older Clines stayed on in Michigan through early August, visiting relatives. Believing he might retire there one day, J. W. recorded that he "bought two lots" on August 5th. Later, the couple took the same route home to West Virginia. J. W. made a note that the round-trip expenses for the whole vacation were about $120.

By early fall, Vesta and Beulah had returned home and begun regular routines, chiefly working at bridges 54 and 362. The coal industry slid toward depression long before the rest of the economy, and the phrase "coal business is dull" begins to appear in J. W.'s journals soon after World War One.

The Clines were a solvent middle class family, but by no means secure in their standing. For example, when Beulah married Dude Dunn it had to be kept secret because she would have lost her job with the railroad under the rules at that time. Fortunately, the family's wealth improved steadily. J. W.'s entry for January 1, 1923, estimated a net worth of more than $3,600, including land at Panther Branch and an Essex car, as well as saving and checking accounts for both J. W. and Viola at First National of Hinton.

The last asset he listed that year was 25 chickens, valued at $25. The chickens were important, supplying extra income as well as food. There are several references to the sale of eggs in the Cline journals, and an entry for $4.50 for a "sack of chop for the cow" indicates the fam-

ily at least occasionally kept larger livestock. There are many references to gardening, as well.

Boarders were sometimes taken in as another source of extra income. On July 16, 1919, three days after a "Great wash out rain did much damage," J. W. noted that "A. H. Cooper and Ross Cook came over...Mr. Scaggs also staid over night." Most lodgers stayed only a night or a few nights, but journal entries show that the Clines had some boarders for longer periods.

But chiefly J. W. Cline relied on his wages. He was a steady worker. Page after page through the years begins by noting each day's labor: "worked Brg. 65," "worked 3rd trick at Pax," "worked 3rd trick at Harper," and so forth. Notably missing are sick days. When J. W. had to lose a day's work due to illness, it was noted with obvious regret at the end of the year.

J. W. ended the 1920's by noting the hard times around him in the southern coalfields. "Bad year this year," his January 1, 1930, entry began. "More unemployment than has been known in many years. Also, greatest drought on record in the country."

Fortunately, things looked better in his own family. "Good health and we are living in a new home. New car. Lost only 6 days (2 Sundays). Salary $1,802.18."

The hard work was paying off, and J. W. noted substantially greater resources in 1930 than in 1923. He had now accumulated assets of $11,200.07, including "lots and buildings" valued at $8,100. Another $1,000 was invested in "82 acres land in Wyoming." He had a $30 typewriter and $125 radio. Each year J. W. listed any liabilities as well, this year showing family debts for taxes, car and interest of $2,218. He stated his determined intent to pay off the same quickly. Other years he proudly states, "we owe nothing to anyone."

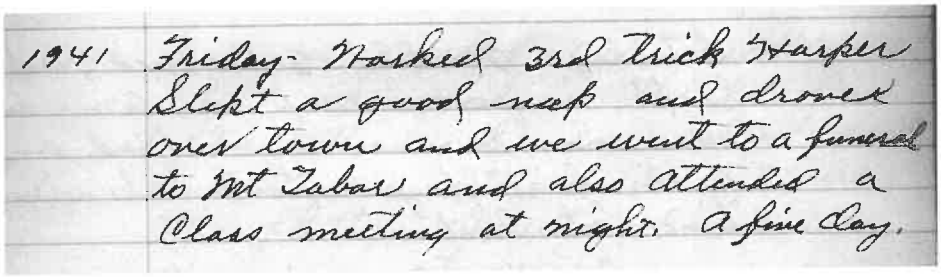
The Clines had moved to Beckley and by the first of 1931 were in a new home on Harper Road. During the preceding year, J. W. "lost only 2 days work" and reduced his debt to $1,200.

By January 1932, J. W. saw "very little indicative of better times," according to his journal. Although "the last two months of 1931 saw minor improvements in coal," he noted there had been no vacation for the Clines. "We practiced economy to the fullest extent possible," he noted, and "now owe only $265."

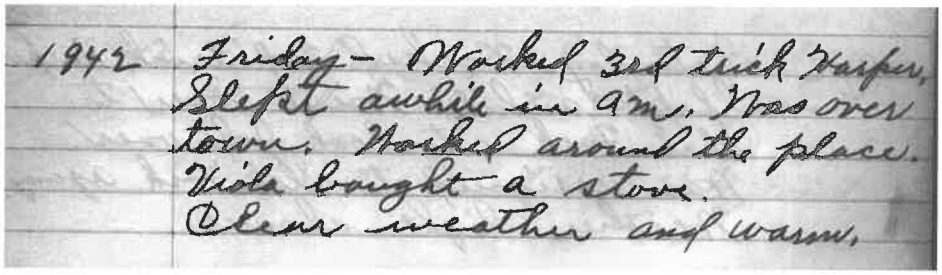
The coal business continued to be dull, but "there is some improvement due to Federal programs," J. W. noted. Missing only three days work during 1933, he made more home improvements and invested in another lot. J. W. withheld property taxes briefly due to a "wrangle over the laying of levies" but otherwise was "out of debt."

The year 1934 reads like a fax from that era: J. W. worked the third trick at Harper each day; sold eggs at 40 cents a dozen; participated in church activities and was on the board that rehired the pastor with a $30 a month raise; missed ten days of work, including four days for a trip to Washington and two visiting Vesta. With an eye on the future, he bought more lots for $232, and "owed practically nothing" at year's end.

Stepmother Viola Cline (left) with Beulah. Viola mothered the girls after her marriage to J. W. Photographer and date unknown.



1941 Friday- Worked 3rd Trick Harper Slept a good nap and drove over town and we went to a funeral to Mt Tabor and also attended a Class meeting at night. A fine day.


1942 Friday- Worked 3rd trick Harper, Slept awhile in am, Was over town. Worked around the place. Viola bought a stove. Clear weather and warm.

The next year J. W. thought "things are looking up, though millions are still unemployed or on relief." Things were "even better" for the Clines. "Both of us had pretty fair health through the year. Paid no doctor bills and lost no time on account of sickness. Took no trip this year of any note — was laid off 7 days on account of business during the coal miners' strike and was off one day to spend night with Estel Cooper. Bought a Plymouth, worth $675 and still owe $250 at year's end."

The following years were increasingly better, and the Clines celebrated them with nice vacations. Traveling seems to have been a favorite recreation, and J. W. and Viola made trips whenever "practicing economy" did not prevent it.

The world really opened up when they got a car, which happened on a second trip to Michigan in 1922. J. W. noted on that occasion that he "took an auto ride out in the county. Drove some." It was then that he acquired the Essex, his first automobile, trading his building lots for the car.

J. W. started back to West Virginia immediately, driving his new machine. He drove 218 miles to Fort Wayne, got on the Lincoln Highway to Circlesville, Ohio, and spent a night there. Next morning they "hit the trail early" and drove on to Huntington and Charleston. Cline remarked that "after Charleston, bad roads and bad gas delayed us," and southern West Virginians may still sympathize about the roads if not the gas. Fierce rains and car trouble finally shut him down, and he left the Essex at Mt. Hope. After getting parts for his car, he returned and had it "overhauled."

Not discouraged, the next Sunday J. W. took Viola on a car excursion, claiming that they "had a good ride and a fine time" on their trip to Beckley. The journals suggest that the Clines plunged enthusiastically into America's budding love affair with the automobile. In the next months, J. W. reported that he "polished the car today," "worked on our car," "cleaned and oiled the car and put up side curtains," "ordered auto fixtures," and "took rides to Baileysville and Oceana."

Free transportation was among the advantages of working for the railroad and the Clines rode the rails when not driving. In April 1921, the family went to Norfolk. They stayed overnight in Roanoke on the 19th and then went on to the Virginia coast, spending the first night there at the Victoria Hotel in Norfolk. The excursion included Virginia Beach, Hampton Roads and Newport News. The Clines enjoyed a show and a boat ride before taking the train home on April 22nd. "Spent about $55," the journal recorded.

Florida was the next year's destination. J. W. cashed a check for $100 at the Bank of Pax, then he and Viola took a southbound train to the Sunshine State.

"Passing Palm Beach and Miami on the way to Key West where we spent the night of March 10th," he recorded. They returned from the keys the next day and stayed a night at the Hotel Francis in Miami. While there, J. W. "visited the beach, took a bath in the Atlantic — was badly sunburned — went to the theater and church — continued to Lakeland — stayed at the Carolina Hotel." He added, "The most delightful part of the trip [was] visiting the orange groves and lakes." He and Viola went on to the Hotel Marlboro in Tampa, before starting back.

That same spring the Clines were off again to Michigan. They visited relatives there, and J. W. planted

Beulah as a young woman, in the fashionable attire of her era. Photographer and date unknown.

J. W.'s relations were railroad people at home and at trackside. Son-in-law "Dude" Dunn, the sharp dresser in the family, lounges here (at right) at Harper Station. Photographer and date unknown.

flowers on his mother's grave. This was the trip on which he bought the Essex.

In 1923, while on another trip to the Midwest, he attended a "funeral exercise for President Harding at Hockley Park, the president having died in San Francisco." J. W. drove this time, and the Clines camped along the way in Cleveland, Erie, and Niagara Falls. Returning home they camped below St. Albans in West Virginia on September 3rd, then "drove home and found everything OK as we left it. We capped the trip by going to the Oak Hill fair September 5th."

J. W. and Viola made even more extensive journeys in later years. He noted that 1936, for example, was a "prosperous year. Also better in the nation." The Clines treated themselves to a 24-day trip out West. In September, they traveled by train through Chicago, Minnesota and South Dakota and on across Montana, Idaho and Washington state. They saw "great scenery" at Seattle and Mt. Rainier, then traveled to Portland and San Francisco where they took a boat ride on September 29th. The Golden Gate was a highlight of the trip.

By October 1st, the Clines were on the train for Los Angeles, where they stayed at the Hotel Strand before returning eastward through the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico. After stopping at an Indian village, it was on to Kansas, Mississippi and Illinois, and finally "home sweet home." This trip confirmed that America was "a great country," as far as J. W. Cline was concerned.

The Clines purchased a Frigidare, typewriter, and a Kodak. J. W. now drove a new car, a 1941 Studebaker Champion.

Vesta and Beulah, now with children of their own, accompanied the Clines on their 1937 trip to Washington, D.C. The clan visited the Library of Congress, Arlington, the zoo, the Washington Monument, museums and shows.

In 1939, the consummate traveler proudly listed in his journal 15 hotels he had stayed in over the years. He named hotels from coast to coast, including the Continental in San Francisco, Tampa's Marlboro and Washington's Harris, as well as several in West Virginia and neighboring states.

The years were passing. J. W. had begun his journal in 1919 with reflections on the world at war, and now he was brought back to the same grim subject as World War Two swept the globe. Naturally, his account of 1941 included "one of the great events in human history":

December 7: Sunday. Worked 3rd trick at Harper. Attended Sunday school, church. And a play at night. Also a county singing school at Surveyor. Visited the Furys. A very sad event came to us. Japan declared war on us. May God Bless America.

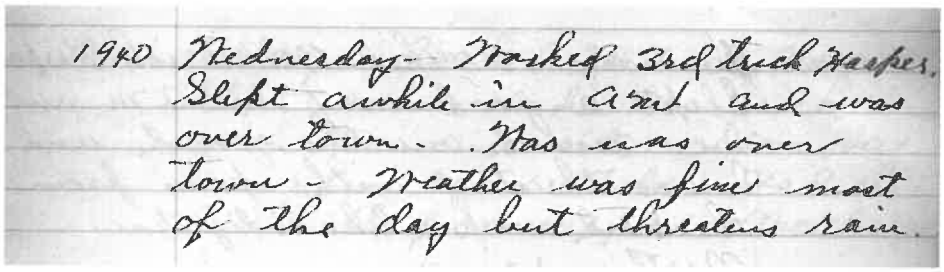
December 8: Had a nice nap. House cleaning, cabinets, etc., and intermittent snow flurries. Congress declared war on Japan.

But three weeks after Pearl Harbor, the journal keeper was optimistic: "We had a prosperous year due to the war and preparedness programs," J. W. recorded at the end of 1941. "Wages raised across country. Wishing and praying for a year pleasing to the will of God."

The family's standard of living continued to improve. During that year, the Clines purchased a Frigidare, typewriter, and a Kodak. J. W. now drove a new car, a 1941 Studebaker Champion.

The next year troubled him. "Flood in river valleys left many homeless," he wrote. "War still going on with many advances and reverses. But we hope and pray someday we will by God's will gain victory."

"Hard one," he wrote of 1943. "Great events in the world spread


1940 Wednesday- Worked 3rd Truck Harper. Slept awhile in a.m. and was over town. Was was over town - Weather was fine most of the day but threatens rain.

around the globe — no end to be seen near — but hoping the end will soon come when war will be no more. Tomorrow will bring us a new year, 1944. May we resolve to make it a joyful year, and that we strive to live an honest, upright, quiet and peaceful life through the entire year."

Cline was nearing retirement, and his 1944 entries strike close to home. He writes about his work, the weather and climate. Slick roads kept him from church at times but

The war overseas was building towards a bloody climax, but J. W.'s thoughts were on the things around him. There was still work to do on Harper Road.

he listened to services on the radio, and he and Viola saw "the old year close with Harper Church." The war overseas was building toward a bloody climax, but J. W.'s thoughts were on the things around him. "The weather is warming up to some extent," he reported in May, noting that he "planted a little corn" on the 10th.

Next month brought D Day, and like everyone else the railroader sat up and took notice.

June 6: Tues. Worked agency in Woodbay. Great news came to us — the big Invasion of Europe began. Great excitement all over the world.

But despite the world-shaking events there was still work to do on Harper Road. The day after D Day J. W. Cline had yard mowing on his mind, and in August 1945 there is no mention of Hiroshima. However, he notes on August 13th, "We are looking forward to the Unconditional Surrender of Japan. Weather fair." And a final note on the 14th, "Received at 7 p m official report of surrender of Japan and the war is over — weather fair."

J. W.'s career was coming to an end, as well. He worked his last day on the railroad on October 31. "Worked my reports up," he noted. "Ready to turn the work over to my relief man — weather clear."

Though J. W. Cline would live until 1960, the journals which daughter Beulah has preserved end with 1945. In the closing months of that year, J. W. went to Crab Orchard for final railroad business and to hand over his keys; raked leaves, wrote letters, made visits; drove to Mullens and Pineville; had a big Thanksgiving dinner with his wife and went to church that night to hear a missionary. He admitted to "doing nothing" sometimes, noted that he had "ketches" in his back, and kept up his Bible reading.

The year ended with the usual holiday flurry of shopping, gift-giving and Christmas cards. Then came Christmas itself — "And O, what a day!" according to the journal of J.W. Cline.

We may hope that life went on in the same gentle way. Unfortunately, J. W. was to live most of his remaining years without his mate. He lost Viola in 1948. Now he lies by her in the Sunset Cemetery in Beckley, the two Baptists resting under a heartfelt inscription, succinct enough to have been a part of J. W.'s journal: "Safe In the Arms of Jesus."

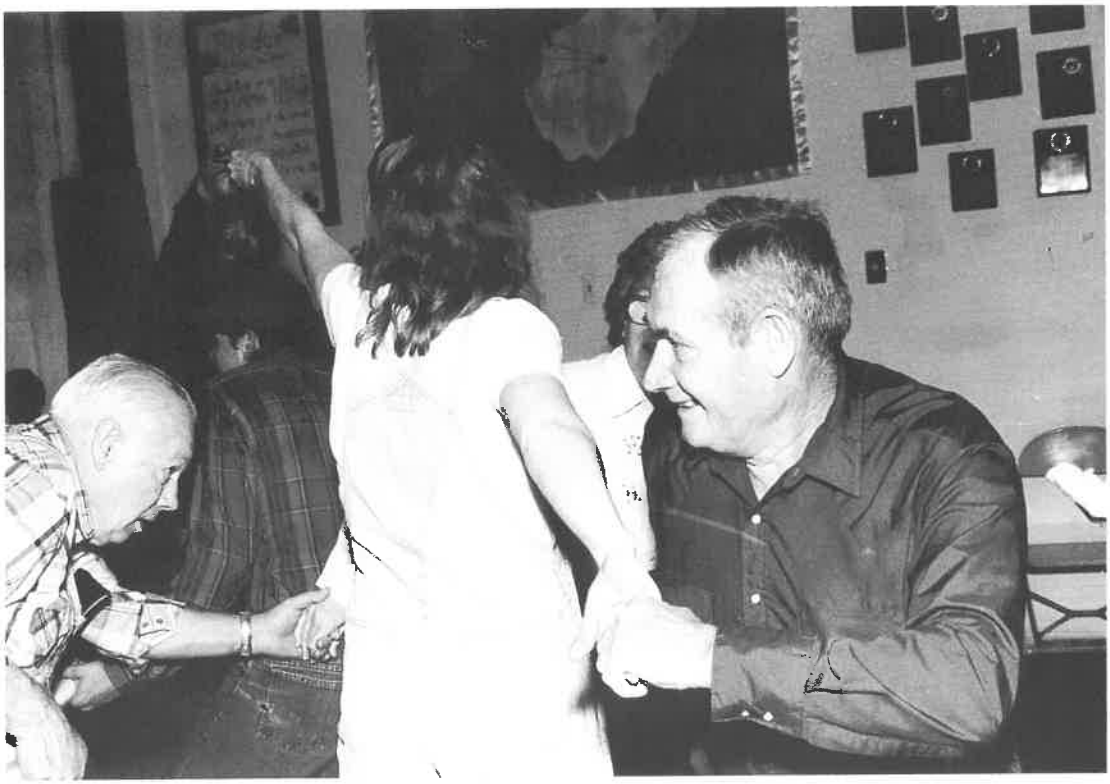
The Clines were travelers, frequently enjoying the service of the railroad they served. This is Beulah Cline Dunn, boarding for an unknown destination. Photographer and date unknown.

Join Hands & Circle

Old-Time Dancing Alive and Well

By Mack Samples

Photographs by Bob Campbell



Go to a traditional West Virginia square dance and the very first thing you hear is a live fiddle band cranking up on some old tune like "Old Joe Clark." Dancers begin to shuffle their feet a little and look to the caller. The caller begins his singsong chant:

All join hands and circle like a wheel
The more you dance the better you feel
Now all the way back in an Indian line
The ladies in front and the gents behind

If you are an old square dancer from central West

Mixing it up at the Ireland Community Center. Ike Fleming (right) is a regular at the popular Lewis County dance.

Virginia you know that no matter what figure the caller is going to call, he (or she) will begin with the above routine. That's the way all of the old figures begin.

There is no honoring your partner, no bowing, no starting the dance by swinging your partner. The first thing the dancers do is to join hands and circle left and then come right back ("on the same old track") in a single file. Then the men turn their corners (their ladies immediately behind them), and they all do the grand right and left, always passing their partner by the first time around. Only when the dancers meet their partner the second time, do they promenade around the ring.

Why do they pass their partner the first time? Because that gives the individual dancers a chance to do the "backstep" or "flatfoot" a little. From then on the caller might call a variety of figures, but that's the way all of the old traditional squares start.

Of course, square dancing is a broad term. It takes on different forms in different parts of the country. The most advanced style is probably "Western" square dancing, which features fancy clothes and very complicated routines.

The late Marshall Wiant is remembered as one of West Virginia's best traditional dancers. He is shown here at the 1978 Vandalia. Photo by Rick Lee.

Ours is more basic. The opening square dance routine described here has evidently changed very little during the past two centuries. Folks are still doing the same simple dances that were done here in the hills in the 18th and 19th centuries. If you accept a few slight modifications of the calls, the same dances were done in the British Isles long before anyone ever heard of Virginia, or the northwestern slice of old Virginia that we now call home.

For these folks, square dancing has not advanced at all. The figures have been kept simple, probably because the simple squares provide ample opportunity for the dancers to respond to the music with their feet.

There are still places where you can go to a square dance and watch people do the same squares that were being called in the same community more than a century ago, and to the same tunes. Dance figures such as *Take a Little Peek, Bail the Ocean,* and *The Butterfly Whirl,* done to a live fiddle band playing tunes such as "Soldier's Joy" and "Dance All Night With A Bottle In Your Hand" still survive in the central counties of West Virginia.

The figures have been kept simple, because the simple squares provide ample opportunity for the dancers to respond to the music with their feet.

If you are a dancer in the old tradition and you travel the festival circuit around the state, or seek out the small community dances, you are well aware of the survival of the old squares. You also know about the survival of individual flatfoot dancing or the backstepping that the dancers do between (and during) the square dancing.

Up in Ireland, in Lewis County, they call this "hoedowning." The younger generation refer to "clogging." But as I prepared this article I talked with several older dancers in the central counties, all of them over 60, and each and every one of them told me that they never heard the word "clogging" until ten or 15 years ago. I myself first heard the word at a mountain music festival in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1969.

Clogging itself is a very traditional dance, brought over from the British Isles, which flourished in the southern mountains, particularly in western North Carolina. West Virginia appears to have been a little north of that development.

During the past two or three decades professional clogging teams, most of whom learned the steps in the southern mountains, have toured the country and popularized that particular dance form.

Although clogging looks something like the old West Virginia flatfoot dance, the step is not quite the same. It is a bit more fancy and a tad more structured. Clogging has become a show dance. Team mem-

bers, or individual cloggers, dress in fancy clothes and put on a show, and they often dance to modern Nashville-type country music.

There is nothing wrong with that, and most West Virginia flatfooters will tell you that they enjoy watching a good clogging team. But those who do the old flatfoot steps, or the old backstep, dance primarily for their own enjoyment and not for show. There is no specific step that is required. In fact, you can watch ten flatfooters and no two of them will be doing the same thing. And, to my knowledge, there has never been a professional flatfoot dance team nor a backstepping team.

Mostly, they just enjoy shuffling their feet to the music. And they will all tell you, each and every one of them, that "it's all in the fiddle." No other instrument will do the job.

Many of the old flatfooters were also square dancers who incorporated the steps that they did into the simple dance routines. Marshall Wiant, a long-dead flatfooter and square dancer from Gilmer County, once told me that the object of old-time square dancing was not going through the routines. "The squares," he said, "just provide a place to get out on the floor and shuffle your feet to the music." He went on to say, "If you are out there with a bunch of other people you don't attract so much attention."

Marshall might not have wanted to attract attention, but he was the star of the dance floor at the West Virginia State Folk Festival until well into his 70's. He also showed his step at some of the early Vandalia Gatherings in Charleston.

Other good flatfooters were not square dancers at all. They danced individually in front of the band, or

There is always a little flatfooting or "hoedowning" at a country dance. Joe Forinash keeps his feet close to the floor in the old style.

The legendary Red Truman (with tie) dances in this picture from the first Vandalia, with Mack Samples to his right (in short sleeves). Photo by Doug Cruise, 1977.

Dancing at Ireland

Ace Keith and Lauree Bazuk enjoy themselves at the Deer Hunters Ball.

Ireland is a great place to dance — both the country and the West Virginia community of the same name.

"Our" Ireland is located on State Route 4 near the Braxton-Lewis county line. It is a typical rural community, a few houses and other buildings scattered along the road.

The heart of Ireland is an old two-room schoolhouse which has been converted into a community center. The facility, still being improved, features a nice kitchen area and a great dance floor. Much of the work has been done by Joe Forinash, an excellent old-time flatfoot dancer who is also skilled with his hands.

I first discovered Ireland about 15 years ago, when I heard about a square dance held during their Irish Spring Festival. The annual festival, organized by the Denton King family, celebrates the coming of spring and includes all sorts of activities. What I found there was old-time West Virginia dancing at its finest.

The old Ireland schoolhouse is plenty big for a Saturday night dance. If the lights are on, check it out. Photos by Bob Campbell.

Right off, I noticed that there was some excellent step-dancing being done as we went through the figures. Between squares, someone would call for a "hoedown" and folks got out on the floor and did the back-step or showed their flatfoot step, dancing solo. Excellent dancers such as Homer Fleming, Joe Forinash, Martha Taylor and Junior Lloyd got out there and did their thing. It was a joy to watch.

There were also some excellent square dancers and square dance couples. Paul Detamore and his wife Barbara, from Cowen, who have been dancing for many, many years, went through the figures with great style. And Ike Fleming, who also called, looked especially good in the squares, as did Rob and Carolyn Riffle.

The first few years that I attended the spring dance, the fiddle band would locate in the central hallway and the dance sets would form up in the two rooms. If there were three sets in a room there might be three different squares being called, because the figures were called "from the set," by one of the dancers. And the callers were calling old traditional West Virginia squares, such as *Take a Little Peek, Bail the Ocean,* and *The Butterfly Whirl.*

In those early days the fiddle music was provided by Rock Garton from Weston. Later Sara Singleton from Braxton County often showed up to play her well-known fiddle, with help from Carl Davis on banjo and Marian Long on guitar.

I'm still going back to Ireland, and the best thing about the dance is that so little has changed. The building itself has been greatly improved since my first visit. The partition between the rooms has been removed and a nice stage for the band has been built in the west end. The music has changed some with the passing of Sara Singleton. During my last visit in November of 1996, the fiddle music was being provided by Seibert Bender, backed up by Floyd and Patty Gregory, Susan Chapman, and Marian Long.

But the dancing has remained remarkably the same. You can still take part in old-time dancing at its best. If you ever want to see what West Virginia traditional square dancing looks like, as opposed to Western-style square dancing, take a trip to Ireland and see it with your own eyes. You will find the real stuff there.

— Mack Samples

There are two special dances at the Ireland Community Center each year. One is the Irish Spring Festival, which this year takes place the evening of March 14. The other happens on the Saturday night before the opening of Buck Season, which makes it the Saturday before Thanksgiving Week. That one is called the Deer Hunters Ball. But throughout the year, on given Saturday nights, they will be dancing in Ireland. You may call 269-8340 for information.

anywhere they got an opportunity.

Some did not even have a name for what they did. Red Truman from Clay County, who died in 1980, was probably the best flatfooter that I ever saw in person. His daughter, Joan Dawson, who now lives in Clay, told me that Red just called it dancing.

"In fact," she said, "you couldn't keep him from dancing. He would get up and dance anywhere he heard music." During the interview with Joan we got to see some video of Red dancing on the side porch of a house at a family reunion. Red himself was an active square dancer and took part in the dances that went on in Widen during the 1940's and '50's. He also danced at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville, and became something of a star attraction at the early Vandalia Gatherings.

When you watched Red dance, as I did many, many times, and then watched step dancers from Ireland or Scotland, you could see that his basic step had been transmitted through the genes from somewhere in the British Isles.

But Red's dancing had a more relaxed and informal look about it. The British Isles dancers tend to keep their backs straight, get up on their toes, and will often throw in high kicks. Red and the other old-time flatfooters have more body movement. And as the late Noah Cottrell, an extraordinary musician and dancer from Calhoun County, once instructed me, "keep your feet pretty close to the floor when you dance."

A good example of someone who made the transition from individual flatfooting to square dancing is Homer Fleming of Braxton County. Homer is one of the smoothest flatfooters that you will ever see on the dance floor, and in his later years he has also incorporated that smooth step into the central West Virginia squares.

Homer says, "I didn't start square dancing until about 25 years ago. That is, dancing in sets. When I was a kid we would put those 25-cent records on the Victrola that we got from Sears and Roebuck and just hoedown to them, so I have danced all my life. I started getting into the sets down at Gassaway Days back in the '70's. In fact, I think you were calling down there the first night I got into a set. Of course, I watched it all my life because my dad and his brother were old-time square dancers." Homer's first cousin, Ike Fleming, is a well-known square dancer and caller in Braxton and Lewis counties.

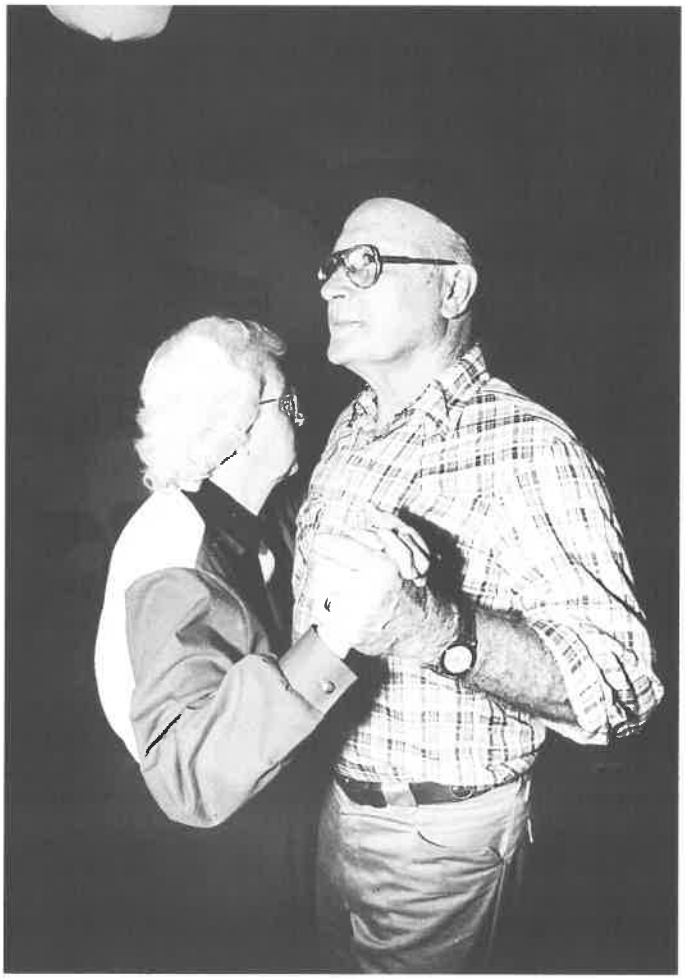
Traditional dance provides a more rigorous work-out than aerobics, and the music is better, too. Just ask Barbara and Paul Detamore.

Clogging looks something like the old West Virginia flatfoot dance, but it is a bit more fancy and a tad more structured.

I asked Homer if folks dance the same squares in Braxton that they did when he and Ike were kids. "They do the same sets exactly, the old four-couple sets," he said. "One thing that has changed a little is that someone used to just 'call from the set' in the old days. Nowadays someone usually calls through a mike, but not always. You know, up at Ireland, they still call from the set.

"But there was no big-circle dancing around here in the old days. You remember Jack Mayse. He would never allow no big-circle stuff. Jack would say, hell, that's not square dancing. And Jack's calls had been passed down through his family. They were all dancers and musicians."

The tradition has been the same in neighboring Gilmer County. Willie Reed, who called the figures at the West Virginia State Folk Festival for many years, and his successor, Tom Luzader, always stayed with the four-couple set. And they pretty much just called the old, simple, traditional squares. If a guest caller did call something more complicated, the dancers usually complained. "We are not here



Homer and Levoine Fleming find a quiet moment together. They know their way around the dance floor and the central West Virginia dance circuit.

to learn," they would say, "we are here to dance."

That pretty much says it all. Central West Virginia square dancers want to keep doing the same dances that they learned growing up, and they want them simple, so that they can flatfoot or do their own little shuffle as they go through the routines.

But it should be pointed out that simple can be beautiful. If you get a good set, eight good flatfooters, into one of the old squares, it is a fine thing to watch. I have been in sets at the State Folk Festival where the dancing got close to sublime.

The traditional square dances have followed an interesting path in West Virginia, and it is somewhat amazing that the old figures have survived. In the very early days the dances were done at informal happenings in the communities and in people's homes. Corn shuckings, bean stringings, apple-butter making, and barn raisings often ended with a square dance. Of course, the only music available during those days was live music. A band was often a fiddle and a banjo, sometimes just a fiddle. And people did not have time to learn complicated squares. They just danced the simple squares that they could learn quickly.

My dad often talked about going to square dances back in the early part of the century at the Hamrick place "over on the head of Blue Creek," which is located in the extreme northeastern edge of Kanawha County. According to him they would move the furniture out of the way and dance in the parlor. He played the banjo, and the band consisted of him and a fiddler.

"They only knew one dance," he said. "That was *Swing Old Charlie*, and they would dance it over and over."

I asked everyone that I talked with how people dressed when they went to dances in the old days. They all told me that dress was not a part of the dance. You pretty much danced in what you happened to be wearing that day. There was evidently no attempt to dress in fancy clothes in the fashion of Western square dancers. Homer Fleming comments that "no one felt like they had to dress up to go to a dance, but some of them felt like they had to get half drunk." There is no doubt that drinking and fighting were often a part of the old dances.

During the 1950's the square dance tradition re-emerged and was carried on in the roadside beer halls. I can recall Saturday night square dances at a place called The Three Gables, located about four miles north of Clendenin on Route 4. Mike Humphries, a major-league fiddler, usually provided the music, along with Romey Drawdy on banjo and Mary Hanshaw on guitar. Sometimes there would be a standup bass player.

I had the high honor of playing guitar in that band a time or two. Folks who came there, many of them from Clay County, mostly danced the old four-couple squares and often took time out to fight. They were usually not serious fights, just a few punches. Bill Carter, who ran the place, would push the fighters outside and the dance would resume.

Many people who went to places such as The Three Gables did not drink. They went because that's where the square dances were in those days and they loved to dance. Roadside beer halls went out of vogue in the 1960's, but they were an important institution in preserving and transmitting the square dance tradition. One of the significant ones was Putnam's Five Star at Stout's Mill in Gilmer County. Owner Lester Putnam, a good dancer in his own right, kept square dances going there all through the

Some of them did not even have a name for what they did. Red Truman just called it dancing.

16 Years of Foot-Stompin' — The FOOTMAD Story

The Friends of Old-Time Music and Dance, better known as FOOTMAD, was founded in 1981 by musicians and music lovers in the Kanawha Valley. It is a non-profit organization that promotes the music and dance of the past.

FOOTMAD was started by Paul Epstein, Pam Curry, John Longwell, Steve Ballman and Susan Leffler. In the late 1970's, these friends had to travel across West Virginia to find the music and dance they loved. Discussions as to how to fix that led to the formation of FOOTMAD. The idea was to preserve a rich musical and dance heritage, to present that heritage to citizens of the Kanawha Valley, and to promote nationally-known performers of music and dance. The new group was loosely organized around these goals and open to all.

Concerts by prominent folk artists cost money, and FOOTMAD raised funds by holding benefit concerts and dances. The dances were called barn dances, and still are, to emphasize the casual and neighborly atmosphere. Boogerhole Revival, an old-time string band including founder Paul Epstein, played at many of the dances and concerts. The first barn dances were held at St. John's Episcopal Church in Charleston, and were well attended.

FOOTMAD also sponsors an annual festival. Held in September, the popular get-together takes place at Camp Sheppard, a 4-H camp at Gandeeville in Roane County. The celebration opens with a pot-luck dinner, and guests are encouraged to come early to eat well.

Throughout the weekend, there are workshops, performances, and impromptu jam sessions. Many of the dances are held in the Camp Sheppard lodge, which, according to board member John Stone, "has a wonderful wooden floor for dancing." Stone, when asked to describe the music at the festival, stated that it "features Appalachian old-time music, but it is extremely eclectic, as long as it involves acoustic instruments." Several hundred people enjoy the festival each year.

As FOOTMAD's activities expanded, the organization became more business-like. Formal memberships were established, and in 1986 the formerly free-wheeling outfit incorporated with the help of Charleston lawyer Gary Barkus. FOOTMAD began publishing *Footprint*, an educational and promotional newsletter. The organization now receives grants from Fund for the Arts and the state Arts Commission, but FOOTMAD continues to rely heavily on the ingenuity and efforts of its volunteers. After 16 years there is no paid staff.

As FOOTMAD matured, its interests expanded. In the early years, Epstein, Curry and others focused primarily on attracting and promoting Irish music and dance, and to a lesser extent blues music. In a recent conversation, Epstein defined folk music and dance "as a growing and changing tradition."

So FOOTMAD has broadened its range to include most acoustical music. This includes gospel, Cajun, bluegrass, jazz, old-timey, "world" and klezmer music. Clogging is also a part of the repertoire, but not at the expense of more common dances, such as New England contras, traditional and new square dancing, and Appalachian circle dancing.

But however it has evolved, FOOTMAD has remained faithful in its commitment to preserve, present and promote traditional music and dance. It is just that, in coming of age, the organization has made room for more voices from the past.

Otherwise, not much has changed as FOOTMAD enters its 17th year. They host about six concerts per year. Sometimes the artists stay over in the homes of members and visit a few days before journeying to the next destination.

The barn dances are now held at the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, and callers come from various parts of Appalachia. Although Boogerhole Revival is now defunct, Paul Epstein and friends have formed the Trusty House Band. They play often at the dances. Pam Curry is FOOTMAD's president and has been a constant source of enthusiasm throughout the last 16 years. The common denominators in FOOTMAD are the love of the music, and a strong commitment to keep it alive and available to the public.

As supporter Patrick Weigand of Charleston puts it, "FOOTMAD is one organization which makes it easy to make West Virginia culture part of your own family heritage."

— Karen L. Fletcher

For more information on FOOTMAD events, write to: Kanawha Valley FOOTMAD, P. O. Box 1684, Charleston, WV 25326.

'60's and into the early '70's.

Carl Davis, one of the best of the surviving old-time callers, gives Putnam's a lot of the credit for his dancing and calling ability. He and his wife, Auda, rediscovered square dancing there in the 1960's when he was part of a band that traveled around the central part of the state. It was at Putnam's that he got into calling and learned to call the old figures from some of the folks who called there.

"There was Harley Singleton," Carl told me. "His favorite figure was *Bail the Ocean*, and I learned it from him at Putnam's. And I learned *Over and Under* from Paul Detamore, who is from Cowen. Over around Glenville, I picked up *Take a Little Peek* and *Waltz the Hall*. In those days we just called from the ring, you know. We never used a mike."

From there Carl went on to call dances all over central West Virginia, often in the roadside beer halls at places such as Falls Mills, Birch River, and around Glenville. And then as square dancing started to become popular at music festivals, Carl became a well-known caller at them. He was one of the first to call in the Great Hall at the Vandalia Gathering.

Interestingly enough, Carl doesn't insist on the four-couple set. "Sometimes it doesn't come out right," he said, "and you just can't get everyone on the floor in four-couple sets. I had learned some calls for a big ring, so I will call the big ring sometimes." Big-circle square dancing is common if you get a little farther east in the state, particularly in Pocahontas County.

When the music gets right, you might be inspired to holler a little. Hollering is a part of it.

Rush Butcher has also been a significant transmitter of the old traditional figures, working with young people rather than adult dancers. Rush was the WVU Extension Agent in Nicholas County for many years, and he took every opportunity to teach 4-H'ers to dance. In fact, Rush Butcher has probably taught more people to dance the old traditional squares than any other single West Virginian, and he still does it. It was from Rush that my wife learned to square dance when she was a 4-H'er in Webster County during the late 1950's. Rush, of course, teaches all kinds of folk dances. But he always includes the old central West Virginia squares in his workshops.

We should be thankful to all those who have preserved this tradition, for they have given us a precious gift. If you are a real old-time square dancer in the central West Virginia tradition you will know what I mean.

You cannot wait to get on the floor. You stand there with anticipation, waiting for that fiddle to crank up. And when it does, you feel it down deep in your spine. You don't care how you are dressed, you don't worry about making a mistake in the routine, and you are not even much concerned about who your partner happens to be. What you want to do is to get that shuffle going, find that backstep, or hit a little flatfoot as you do the grand right and left.

When the music gets right, you might be inspired to holler a little. Hollering is a part of it. And if you are a caller, there is one thing that you notice when you look out at the dancers. Everyone is smiling.

Our author can practice what he preaches. Mack Samples shows his stuff here at a 1994 Charleston dance. Photo by Michael Keller.

Alice Cassady, at right, was on the first girls' basketball team at Cabin Creek District High School. From the yearbook, 1922.

According to Miss Alice

A Farm Girl Recalls Coal Town Life

Interview by Fred Barkey

She was born Alice Lenore Cassady on February 4, 1904, at Glen Ferris. Two years later, her father James moved the family to a farm near the mouth of Fields Creek, which flows into the Kanawha River

some 11 miles south of Charleston.

Alice would spend virtually her whole life in this community, where she was variously a farm girl, schoolteacher, Sunday school superintendent and elementary school principal. In 1924, she married Charles G. Holstein of nearby Coalburg, but to this day, she is known to thousands of former students, church members, and fellow townspeople simply as "Miss Alice."

At 93 years of age, Alice Cassady Holstein still holds forth from her armchair on the history of her family and the mining operations they helped to develop.

FB. Now, as I understand it, when your father brought you and your mother here in 1906, that represented something of a homecoming. Isn't that right?

ACH. Yes, because my father had been the storekeeper for the Winifrede Coal Company which his brother, Bright Cassady, had purchased in partnership with a cousin, Thomas Wentworth Wright, in 1883. While Dad worked there, he met and married my mother, Addie Stone. She was my father's third wife, and he was already 56 years old. Not long after that they moved to Glen Ferris, where I was born.

FB. Give me a little background on the Cassadys, so that we can put things into perspective.

ACH. Well, my grandfather, William R. Cassady, his two brothers, three sisters and their mother came into Fayette County in 1853. They had apparently moved first from Floyd County in old Virginia to Greenbrier County in the late 1830's or early 1840's, and then to Laurel Creek near Beckwith in Fayette County.

They had been, I believe, tobacco farmers in old Virginia. That crop was going down, but being of Scotch ancestry they were pretty careful with a dollar so they had some resources to purchase a farm. They soon added a grocery store and a stave mill to their operations. That stave mill was a real money maker because of the demand for barrels down at the booming salt works around Malden. The Cassadys cut trees, made those barrel staves and floated them down the river to the Kanawha Salines, as it was known then.

Today Alice Cassady Holstein — Miss Alice — retains a wealth of knowledge of life in eastern Kanawha County. "That world has always been a big part of me," she says. Photo by Michael Keller.

FB. Was part of this success due to the fact that they had a ready supply of labor? I remember you telling me once that they brought their slaves from Virginia with them?

"They had been tobacco farmers in old Virginia. That crop was going down, but being of Scotch ancestry they were pretty careful with a dollar, so they had some resources."

ACH. Well, they did bring their slaves, but they freed them after they came to West Virginia. Some of them did work for the Cassadys, but as free men and for a wage. The Cassadys came to believe that slavery was wrong and the family was very much pro-Union as the Civil War approached. Both of my grandfather's brothers fought for the North.

FB. So the Cassady brothers were pretty well off by the standards of the day?

ACH. I'd say they were wealthy by those standards. My grandfather had six children and financed them all in school for as far as they wanted to go. My dad's brother, Bruce, went to med school in Kentucky and was going to set up a practice in the West, but he died out there of some epidemic.

My Uncle Bright, who was at one time the sheriff of Fayette County, must also have had a pretty good education and probably got family money to get him launched in the coal business, because when he and our cousin purchased the Winifrede Mines, he had apparently already become pretty well-known as a successful coal operator. He was also the president of the South Side Foundry in Charleston, and was an officer of the Charleston Bank.

FB. Your family farmed to make a

living. I presume that a lot of what you produced went to feed the rapidly expanding population along the creek?

ACH. Yes, and I was involved in that. I was doing chores like most farm kids did, as far back as I can remember, but when I was about nine or 10, I began to regularly peddle milk up the creek to the miners. I carried it in a bracket-like thing similar to what old-fashioned milkmen used. It was five cents a pint, 10 cents a quart and 20 cents a gallon. I did that all through grade school and even when I was in high school. We also sold butter, eggs and other dairy products.

I also helped my dad on a peddling wagon that we would run up the creek once a week. We sold tomatoes, corn melons, even chickens sometimes. Now, we didn't go all the way up the creek, but we did make it six or seven miles unless we would sell out sooner, which we often did.

FB. I suppose that being related to the mine owner meant that there was no problem with you selling on the creek. Were other farmers offered the same privilege?

ACH. The company was pretty liberal about that, and there were other farmers who ran peddling wagons.

The one I remember most was a fellow by the name of Eph Dickens. He was a real character, wore his pants to where you'd think they were going to fall off any minute, like some of the young boys do today. As soon as the vegetables began to ripen you would see him riding his mule from the Coal River area over the mountain to the West Winifrede Hollow. Usually, his wife would be tagging along behind him carrying produce in her apron.

They say that one time as he was passing the West Hollow tipple, one of the men up there yelled down, "Hey, Eph, how come your wife isn't riding?" and old Eph yelled back, "'cause she don't have her no beast." When my Suzanne was a toddler, her diaper was always ready to fall off and we used to call her "little Eph."

Alice at age six, in 1910. This portrait was made on a boat moored at Winifrede Junction. Photographer unknown.

I think that part of the reason the company didn't mind the peddlers too much was that it was hard to service a mining population scattered over miles and miles of creek.

FB. What was the extent of company ownership?

ACH. Well, from the mouth of Fields Creek up a good little ways, there were independent communities.

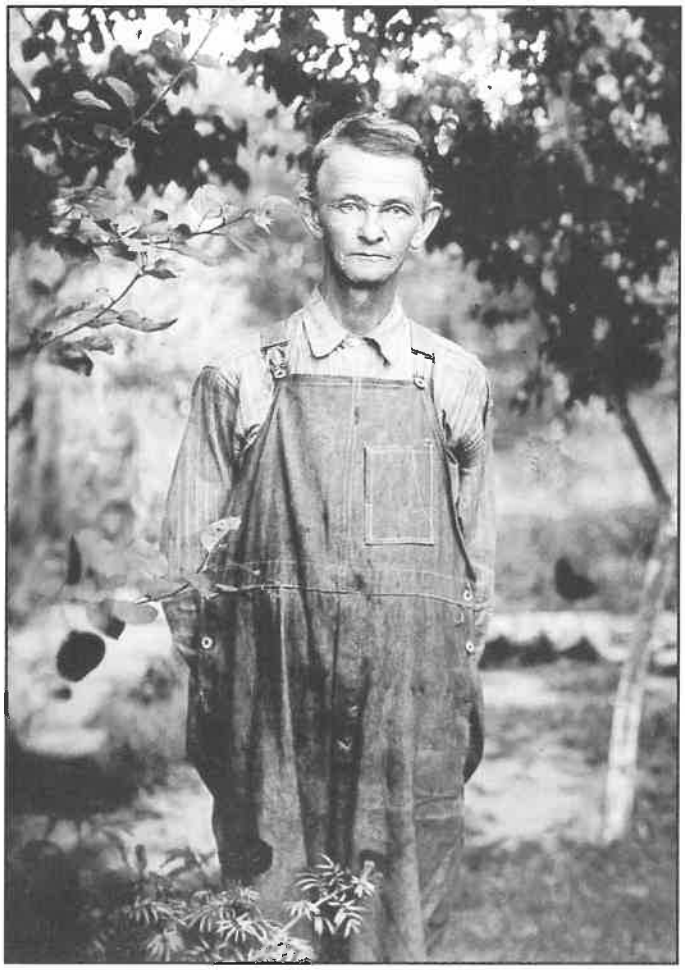
The first town we called Cooper's Town because there were so many people with that name that lived there. Somehow, I always had the impression it had been a slave settlement at one time, but I don't know why I believe that. There was a one-room school there which was called the 51 School.

There was a church there and the Holy Rollers, that's what we called them, had that church and held real lively services. We used to go once in awhile, and one time one of the women of that church got so carried away that she rolled and rolled on the floor. Well, her dress came up and she wore panties made of feed sack, and they said you could still see the brand "Harvey's Best" right across her rear end.

You then had a stretch called Wrightsville, which was named for my dad's cousin, whom he called "Ike." The houses were a little better in Wrightsville and they had a two-room school. This town may have been owned by the company, but the next town called Brooksville, which was named for an old settler, Brook Huddleston, was probably independent. In a lot of these communities people owned their own homes or rented them from the people who did own them.

At any rate, you finally got to the real company property, which was Winifrede itself; the real center of things. It was really a nice, well-kept community. Many of the company officers lived there, and their houses usually reflected their standing in the company.

You also had the big company store, which I always felt was a wonderland of goods. They had everything, so you never had to leave Winifrede. Everything from baby clothes to caskets to bury you in, arranged in departments starting with groceries. It was such a big operation that they built a separate building across the street that handled nothing but meat. It was made of tin, and we called it the Tin



Father James Cassady preferred farming to bossing others in the coal mines. Photographer and date unknown.

Store. It was beautiful meat, but high-priced. So were the store goods, but they were also of the best quality.

There was also an engine house where they kept the trains repaired. The company had a narrow-gauge rail line up the creek. And there were homes over there for the engineers and the railroad people. The most memorable railroad worker there was a man they called "Petticoat Elkins." They said he was a hermaphrodite, whatever that is, but he wore a skirt instead of trousers. I can see him yet in the door of that engine house in that outfit. He seemed to be accepted just fine, and I think he fathered children.

Next in Winifrede, you had what they called White Town. This was a real desirable place to live, and there were a lot of two-story houses painted white and well-maintained. They also had built a beautiful little church up there.

FB. What kind of people lived in these places you have mentioned? Was there a heavy concentration of foreigners? Were there also blacks?

ACH. Well, it seems to me there was a sprinkling of foreigners when I was growing up, but you must remember this was an old operation that was incorporated when Kanawha County was still part of Virginia. There might have been a lot of foreigners at one time, I don't know. But, I can tell you that there was only one black, down below what we called Sulfur Springs which was on up the creek. That was a black lady who pretty much ran the company's boardinghouse in Winifrede.

Where you get your blacks was up the West Hollow. When you go up the creek it divides at a place called The Corner and the whole operation was divided into the North Hollow and the West Hollow. The train always had a passenger car but it didn't go up the West Hollow. You had to walk the rails up there, and there was black and white living mixed.

My Aunt Trixie Hall lived up there between two black families. On one side was Gus Chapman and his wife. He was the tallest black man I ever saw and he had already buried three wives. One of the things about those days was how many women must have died in childbirth. On the other side was the Smoots, Aunt Em and Uncle Jess.

Now, Aunt Em Smoot was the nicest person. She and my Aunt Trixie talked a lot. We would go over to the Smoots and sit on their porch and have a big time, but they would never come over to Aunt Trixie's front porch. Aunt Em would cook up some wonderful food for us, but she always brought it to the back door and wouldn't come in under any circumstances. There was that kind of closeness, but social separation.

FB. So if you stayed on the train, it would take you up the North Hollow? What was that like?

"The big company store was a wonderland. They had everything, from baby clothes to caskets to bury you."

ACH. Well, about halfway up that hollow was a big stable set up. A Mr. Harless was the mule master. By the way, they could use mules rather than donkeys because the coal seams were so relatively high. And there was a post office along through there at a place called Carbon.

Up through there, the road branches to the south, but if you keep on going north, you ended up at the Massey and Green graveyard. We would go up there sometimes to bury someone. It was quite a big deal when someone died. The company would close that mine for a day. People would pour into the deceased's home to pay respects, bring food for the family and all of that, and somebody would sit up with the corpse.

FB. I imagine that living close together in somewhat isolated communities could bring certain tensions into play.

ACH. You're right, in a way.

You couldn't find people more willing to help each other, and they could usually stick together when the occasion required. On the other hand, one of the things that made the creek a nice place to live could also sometimes create problems. This was a family area and got more so over time. When you did have a disagreement or a fight, there was a tendency to get the whole extended family and their friends on each side involved. It could be a pretty big deal and last a long time. I also think that tensions between communities could cause difficulties.

The fights could be about something that happened in the mines or about somebody courting someone they shouldn't have been. That happened more than you might like to think, and if it was discovered, it could be big trouble.

FB. It seems to me that the dangers and stress of the job combined with the sameness of day-to-day life in a coal camp would make recreation of any kind important.

ACH. You're absolutely right on that. I felt that the coal miners were often starved for something to do. Just about anything would draw a crowd.

Just to give you an idea, my Uncle Charlie Hall had what they called a Graphaphone that played those old coil-like records. He'd put that thing out on the front porch and it would be no time before there were all kinds of people sitting out on the rails in front of the house yelling out the selections that they wanted Uncle Charlie to play.

The company certainly recognized the importance of recreation. They built an opera house. In the early days there would be programs there, and later on there were movies there every Friday and Saturday. Another thing the company did was to run a special train when the big showboats came up the river.

Now, that was quite a thing. People would be so excited, getting ready and yelling to others as the train came down the creek, "Are you going to the show?"

Some folks loved those showboats so much that they traveled to the next place it was going to play to see it again. I think the smaller showboats were even more popular. My favorite was the one owned by Captain Billy Bryant. When we kids would hear that he was coming, my friend Jack Gleason would collect scrap metal and I would gather green onions and kale to sell so we could go to the show.

A farm girl at work. Alice recalls helping peddle milk and other farm products to families along Fields Creek.

By the way, the miners were pretty good at creating their own humor. They loved practical jokes.

I could give you a lot of examples, but my favorite was the time my cousins, the Nalle brothers, and Jim Lavender pulled a trick on one of the train conductors, a man they called Captain Orthrop. Now, this captain would get drunk about every weekend and one time those boys rented an old trained bear from one of the medicine shows that would come through. Well, I don't know how they got it to do it, but they got that bear into the bed with Captain Orthrop and you can imagine what happened when he woke up!

FB. I suppose the company also sponsored a baseball team?

ACH. Yes, later on they did.

I know that people are aware that there were ball teams all through the coalfields, but I am not sure that people understand what folk festivals the ball games were. The company would rent a boat to take the team and its followers to games down the river. People would pack huge picnic lunches for the trip and tried to outdo each other in the spread they could set out. I remember one time Old Man Lavender took beans and cornbread and acted like it was the finest cuisine, because he thought everyone was getting carried away.

FB. Did everyone socialize together in these activities, regardless of whether you were management or labor?

ACH. Pretty much together, but at certain times there were two different worlds. Vacations are good examples. You had times in the summer when the mines would shut down. At that time, the company people would go to northern cities for their vacation. They would start planning and packing for their trips months in advance.

It is easy to see that C. G. "Hodie" Holstein might have captured a young woman's fancy. He married Alice the year before this picture was made. Photographer unknown, 1925.

But the miners had to pretty much stay here. They might take some local or day trips, but they had to create their own good times. There was an awful lot of gambling that went on, and a certain amount of drinking. We never did have a saloon that I can recall, but there was a good bit of moonshining. My husband said that the finest moonshine around was made up Winifrede Hollow.

FB. And certainly there were serious separations during the big coal strikes and Mine Wars that raged through here?

ACH. Yes, those were the worst times because people who had gotten along now had to choose sides. There was so much bad feelings, and the actions of some people were never forgiven. A lot of trouble came due to the use of Baldwin guards in kicking out strikers before the First World War, and they brought in people from Kentucky to take their jobs. There were a lot of people up here who never did trust the West Virginia State Police when it was created because so many of them were believed to have been mine guards.

FB. I know your husband-to-be, Charles Holstein, was heavily involved in the miners' march on Blair Mountain. Could you tell me a little about that?

ACH. A lot of those miners were quite radical. His father, Abraham Lincoln Holstein, in fact, ran for office on the Socialist Party ticket in 1916; had he run in 1914, he would have won.

Anyway, Hodie [Charles Holstein] was a soldier in World War I. He and a lot of the other vets trained the miners for that march, both up there at Coalburg and here at Winifrede.

"I don't know when I was more frightened — the first day I went there as a student or the first day I went there as a teacher."

Actually, Herb Hall was the commander of the Coalburg contingent and Hodie was his assistant. Herb got cold feet and backed out, so that left Hodie in charge. He used to tell about breaking into the Catholic Church up there at Coalburg to get weapons that people believed the Catholics kept stored, and of how he was at the meeting when Mother Jones read that telegram from the president asking the miners not to march. He said he knew the telegram was a fake because she stated that it was signed by Warren H. Harding and he read a lot and knew the

Alice and Hodie Holstein in their mature years. Hodie had helped to lead the Miners March as a young man, according to Alice. "A lot of those miners were quite radical," she says.

President's middle initial was G. He said he didn't say anything because everyone was armed to the teeth and anything could have touched off a fight.*

Hodie was sure that he could be indicted for his role in the strike so he fled to the Philadelphia area and worked in a refinery in Camden, New Jersey. Fortunately, he never was indicted or anything.

FB. Were you teaching school about that time?

ACH. Yes, I started teaching in the same school that I had attended when I was five years old. I'd gone to the Cabin Creek district high school, which is today East Bank, and then I went to New River State for a year, where I played guard on the girls' basketball team.

The school I started in was called Lewiston, and I had the first three grades. I don't know when I was more frightened — the first day I went there as a student or the first day I went there as a teacher.

FB. I imagine it was quite a challenge to teach three grades. How did that work?

ACH. The way it worked was really by using the pupils themselves. You had student leaders in each grade that would help their classmates while I taught the next grade. It was a good system really, sort of like an ungraded system today. It was pretty basic — a lot of reading and reciting.

The miners wanted their kids to get an education but they were mostly concerned that the children behaved and applied themselves. It was their custom that if the child got paddled at school, they would get another paddling at home. A lot of times, I wouldn't paddle a poor little fellow who would have to sit there knowing he would also get it when he got home.

FB. You only taught there for a little while, isn't that correct?

ACH. Only one year, and then I moved to the Chesapeake school, which had been built here in town. Once I started teaching down there, I got more and more involved with things in Chesapeake, but Lord have mercy on Pat Mitchell, before you knew it people from Fields Creek and the Winifrede area would move down here, so the connection of our shared experiences continued.

I was a part of that world and it has always been a big part of me and who I am.

* This controversial incident took place on August 23, 1921. Many other miners concluded the telegram was a fake and were dismayed that the beloved Mother Jones had apparently tried to mislead them.

Miss Alice on a recent visit with her son-in-law, our author Fred Barkey. Photo by Michael Keller.

Making a Life in the Valley

Witt Jennings of the Upper Kanawha

By Caroline P. Jennings

Photographs by William Witt Jennings

My grandfather, William Witt Jennings, came over the mountains from Virginia in March of 1912. His timing could not have been better, nor the place he came to, for he found work as an assistant chemist at the Electrometallurgical Corporation plant in Glen Ferris. The EMCO plant was just beginning to expand, and it took the Fayette County community along with it.

William Witt Jennings was born on January 16, 1893, in Campbell County, Virginia, the youngest of the nine children of Ella Witt Elder and William Dean Jennings. The Jennings family had been in Virginia since pre-Revolutionary times, leading lives which ranged from humble to middle-class.

Orphaned at the age of two, my grandfather — Witt, as he was known — was taken in by three maiden aunts, Sallie, Lillie and Mollie Jennings, the sisters of his father. One brother, Sam, was raised with him, and the other seven children were parceled out to other relatives. As a result, Sam remained the only one of his siblings Witt was ever close to. At the age of 11, he was sent to live at the Miller Manual Labour School near Charlottesville, where Sam had been sent two years previously. Both boys remained there for many years, until each graduated at the age of 18.

The Miller School, which still exists, was founded in 1878 according to the instructions of Samuel Miller's will. Mr. Miller left an endowment so that orphan children could be "fed, clothed, and instructed in all the branches of a good, plain, sound English education, the various languages, both ancient and modern, agriculture, and the useful arts." For my grandfather and for my grandmother, whom he met there, the school became a family. Both expressed loyalty and affection toward the institution all their lives.

While at Miller, Witt came under the tutelage of the chemistry master, R. C. Price, probably the single greatest influence on his future. It was, in fact, Professor Price's recommendation which helped Witt to obtain his first job in Glen Ferris. The teacher-student relationship grew into a fast friendship which lasted through the years. Professor Price's own son later became general manager of the company's plant at Alloy.

The upper Kanawha was an exciting place when Witt Jennings arrived there. His employer — later absorbed by Union Carbide and now Elkem Metals — was to dominate the local economy for the rest of the century. Witt became very

Witt Jennings was a company man with a strong family side. This is his picture of wife Katherine and children Anne and Billy. Date unknown.

much a part of his company's history, and helped to move its specialty metals manufacturing down the river from Glen Ferris to Alloy.

Shortly after he arrived in Glen Ferris, Witt received a letter from his former teacher which he kept all his life, and which guided his work in West Virginia. The letter may sound prim to today's reader, but its contents provided advice which my grandfather took very much to heart.

"Dear Witt," Professor Price wrote on March 17, 1912. "As you are about to enter on the duties of a responsible position, allow me to express my full confidence in your preparation & suitability to assume such duties, and to offer a word of advice.

"Be careful with all your work — the simplest operation deserves the same care as the more complex.

"Be ready and willing to take suggestions from those who have a right to make them.

"Keep an even temper. Stick close to your work & never be out of place.

"To one and all be civil and courteous.

"Never criticize the acts of any officer or employer.

"Be loyal to the company..."

Professor Price closed by urging Witt to "take advantage of the splendid opportunities before you," and by offering his very best wishes.

My grandfather had just passed his 19th birthday. The letter marked his transition from youth to adulthood, from a protected orphanage to the wide world, and from life in the mainstream to what he would have considered a backwoods.

He made these personal changes at a time when the country itself was undergoing its transition from the Victorian age to the modern, technological world. My grandfather and others like him saw themselves as re-inventing America, at the same time as they clung to the values of the past. For them, company towns such as Glen Ferris combined the finest of both worlds to provide residents a comfortable and secure environment amid the changes of a new technical age.

Self portrait of the photographer at his day job. This picture shows Witt Jennings at his desk at the Glen Ferris plant in March 1914, about two years after he went to work there. Look closely — the diagonal line across the right foreground is a cord running from Witt's left hand to the camera, to snap the photo.

On March 16, 1928, my grandfather, by then assistant superintendent of the Glen Ferris plant, gave a speech before the Charleston Lions Club which illustrates the philosophy at work:

"On account of the water power making it necessary to locate our plant at a distance from any large city or town it has been necessary for us to provide for our employees and their families a very modern and beautiful village. Their homes, about 75 in number, are up-to-date in every respect with every convenience you enjoy here in Charleston. Our dwellings are of permanent construction, plastered and painted or papered inside, with hardwood floors, and our rents will average about $1.25 per room per month.

"We provide two recreation halls, one for white and one for colored employees and their families, where they may enjoy at the Company's expense, semi-weekly motion picture entertainment. There are also pool tables, card rooms, dance rooms, rest rooms, and rooms for meetings of the Ladies Aid and any other organization of like character in which our employees may be interested.

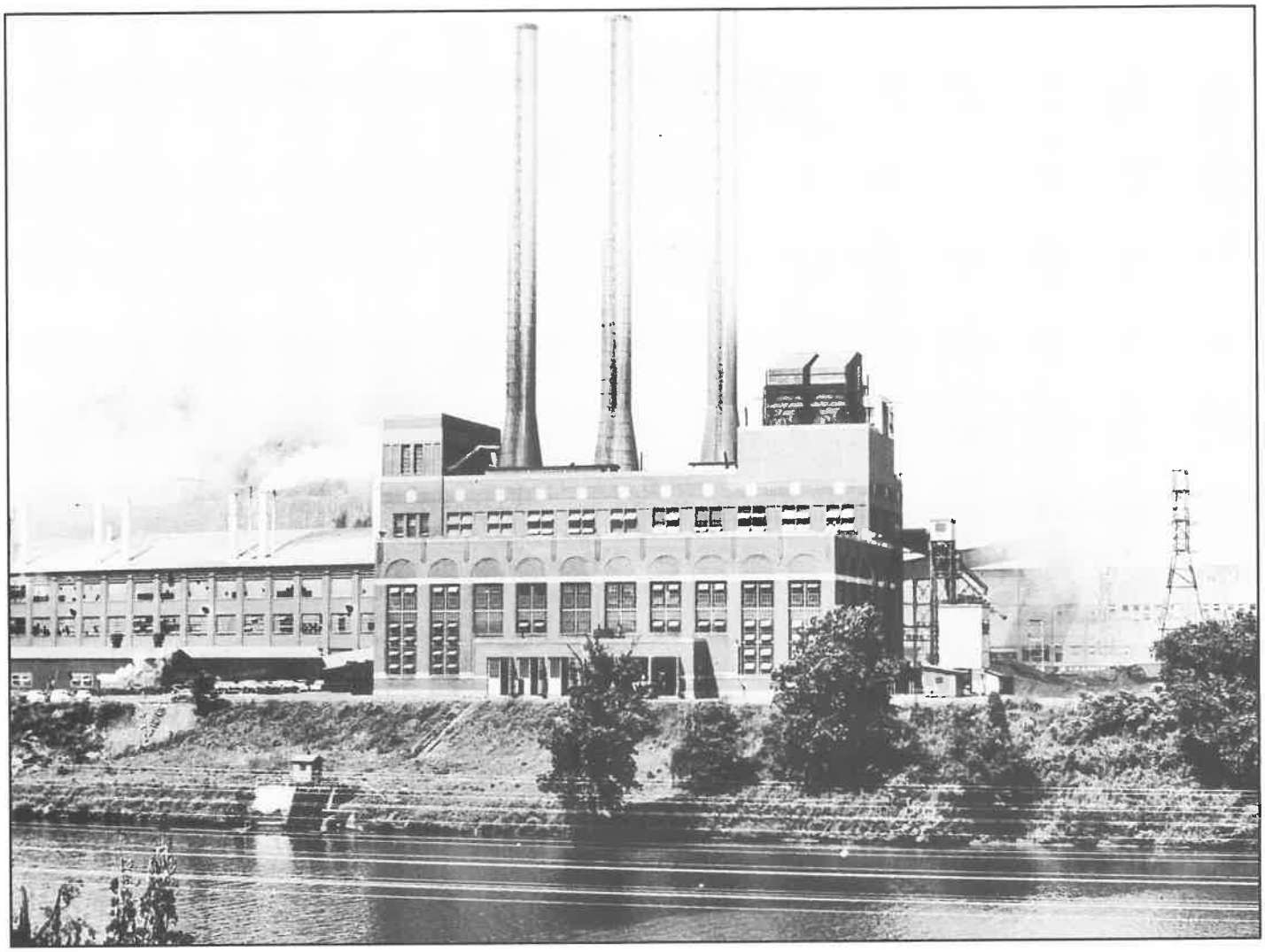
"We also realize that contented children make contented employees, so we have provided playgrounds with equipment for them, concrete tennis court, and equipped bathing beach. With this equipment the children stay off the paved road and away from the railroad tracks where accident hazards are numerous.

"As about 55% of our employees own automobiles we have provided modern garages at a rental of $1 per month. We also supply our employees without charge a portion of plowed land for their gardens each year as well as modern barns for their cows. We allow no livestock to roam through our village. Prizes are given each year to the employees who have the best appearing yards around their dwellings, which practice has stimulated the beauty of our village very much.

"You are naturally wondering what effect all of this will have in the operation of our plant. We believe that men who take pride in their homes will take pride in their jobs which enable them to keep their homes. This is proven when I tell you that we have operated our plant for three one-year periods without a lost time accident. At the end of each one-year period, we shut our plant down and entertain our employees and their wives with a banquet, dance and entertainment."

After the '40's, this system began to break down. Employment became less secure, as did the corporate dominance. But during the heyday of the '20's and '30's, the concept of such controlled and self-contained communities seemed both exciting and workable. EMCO, which was absorbed by Union Carbide in 1917, entered into an understanding with its employees of all ranks, by which it invested in their lives in return for their loyalty.

Today we are wary of such arrangements, but according to the standards of the time well-run company towns were regarded as both progressive and successful. Ironically, the governance of such communities had all the hallmarks of a paternalistic socialism, except for the fact that they were owned and managed by large corporations such as Union Carbide.



The old industrial plant at Glen Ferris (right) was Witt's first professional assignment. He eventually ran this plant and its much larger replacement at Alloy (above). Dates unknown, Alloy photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

The position which my grandfather ultimately attained was middleman, straddling the line between the workers and the real bosses, who for the most part remained unknown in the head office in New York. As Professor Price had advised when he started out, Witt Jennings became and remained a "company man," loyal to his employer, but with an inherent faith in the workers whom he supervised. He was the perfect man for the job.

His potential must have been recognized early, for in 1917, barely a year after his marriage and when he was 24 years of age, he was sent to Niagara Falls for special training. At the end of the eight-month program he was made assistant superintendent of the company's Anniston, Alabama, plant. He remained there until March 1919, when the Anniston works were closed. He was then made assistant superintendent of the Kanawha works — the plant at Glen Ferris — and he and his wife and small son returned to West Virginia, this time

Was Witt Jennings Involved? The Hawks Nest Tragedy

Hydroelectric power for the big Union Carbide plant managed by Witt Jennings was supplied by the water rushing through the Hawks Nest tunnel. Building the Fayette County tunnel cost hundreds of lives, and was America's worst industrial tragedy according to research by epidemiologist Martin Cherniack. Witt, my grandfather, was in a high management position during the exact years of construction of the tunnel and the new plant at Alloy. The question inevitably arises as to the extent of his involvement in the disaster.

The project to harness the vast power of the New River began in 1927. In that year, the New Kanawha Power Company was organized as a "captive" utility, a Union Carbide subsidiary whose electricity would be marketed solely to the proposed Alloy plant. The idea was to acquire the rights to a public resource for the use of a private enterprise. Under the power company's auspices, plans for a tunnel to divert the waters of the New River through the mountain above Gauley Bridge were finalized, legalized, and — at last — realized.

The hydro complex also included the Hawks Nest dam and a downstream power plant, the tunnel linking the two. The tunnel was finished in 1932, within the two years demanded by the construction contract, an amazingly short time to complete such a technical feat. The demand for speed undoubtedly contributed to the lack of safety precautions which led to the deaths from acute silicosis of so many workers.

Such disregard for the health of the tunnel workers most likely arose in part from the fact that the majority of them were black migrants, forced by the Depression to find work far from home. Rinehart and Dennis, the Virginia firm contracted to build the tunnel, is said to have brought with it a Southern view of race relations. As Dr. Cherniack observes in his book, few black West Virginians were employed, because they refused to tolerate the company's abusive methods.

While the tunnel was being built, and for several years after, the new plant at Alloy was also under construction. Witt Jennings seems to have been more involved with preparing for the opening of the plant than with building either the plant or the tunnel, however. During the years of tunnel planning, 1927-1930, according to his notes, he was mainly concerned with gearing up for the expected increase in production once the Alloy plant opened. He was occupied with "assisting in the search for raw materials for use at the Boncar [Alloy] plant, purchasing the Boncar coal mine, and spending additional time at the Niagara plant for 'big furnace' experience, etc," his notes say.

In short, Witt was getting himself ready for the biggest job of his life. He was made superintendent of the old and much smaller Glen Ferris plant in September of 1930, but his notes make it clear that the succeeding four years were a time of transition, looking toward the new operation at Alloy.

He would not have been a party to decisions regarding the tunnel, because he was made superintendent after tunnel construction be-

to stay. When the huge new plant opened at Alloy in 1934, Witt was its first superintendent.

Both of my grandparents were happy to return to the Kanawha Valley. Forced by conditions in Alabama to be frequently separated, they had written long, daily letters to each other. They had both observed repeatedly, "we didn't know how good we had it in Glen Ferris, did we?"

With a good degree of certainty that Glen Ferris would be their permanent home, my grandmother and grandfather set about creating the kind of life which they envisioned for themselves. From the start, it was easier for him than for her.

My grandmother, Katherine Pleasants, was from a more genteel background than my grandfather, in spite of her own family's impoverished state. She was a direct descendent of illustrious Virginia ancestors, the Randolphs and the Pleasantses. Witt took greater pride in this than she did. He was the one who informed his children and grandchildren of this notable bit of family history. I can well remember my grandmother adding gruffly, "but it's nothing to brag about — you had nothing to do with it!"

The oldest of five children — four girls and a boy — Katherine had been raised in frugal circumstances by her mother, Annie Pleasants. Her father, Randolph Pleasants, had died prematurely after many years as a paraplegic. All four girls were sent to the Miller School, as it was imperative that they learn to support themselves. Katherine taught school briefly before her marriage to my grandfather, and in the early years in Glen Ferris she tutored children whose parents preferred that they be taught at home.

The difficulties which Katherine had in adjusting to life in West Vir-

This striking picture shows Hawks Nest Tunnel under construction in 1932. These rocks released deadly silica dust as they were excavated. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

gan and because the tunnel work was outside his field of knowledge. The technical challenge of the tunnel undoubtedly interested him, but mostly he was excited by the prospect of the expansion of his tiny Glen Ferris plant into the huge operation at Alloy. In 1928, the Glen Ferris plant employed 110 men. By 1943, the Alloy operation employed 2,400, both men and women.

Witt was naturally distressed by the reports of deaths in the tunnel. He says that in his notes, and again in a letter to his teenaged daughter at the time of the Congressional hearings. As superintendent, he was known to care about those under him. That compassion undoubtedly extended to the tunnel workers, but perhaps only in an abstract way since they were not *his* men. The emotional distance was compounded by the fact that they were migrants, not members of the local community.

Ultimately, Witt's concern was not with the tunnel, or even any aspect of the physical plant, but with the production of ferro alloys. He was, after all, a chemist. In a letter written to his daughter in early 1936, he complains of too many visitors from the main office in New York: "I feel that we ought to call this some kind of museum rather than a manufacturing plant. I sometimes feel I should be jumping through hoops instead of trying to make ferro alloys, with all the people who want to come and look."

— Caroline Jennings

Martin Cherniack's book on Hawks Nest is The Hawks Nest Incident: America's Worst Industrial Disaster *(1986, Yale University Press). The tragic tunnel was also featured in the Spring 1981, Spring 1987 and Fall 1990 issues of GOLDENSEAL.*

ginia arose mainly from her reticent personality and her fragile health. She was shy and ladylike, and her inability to make friends quickly and easily was sometimes construed as snobbishness. As her husband rose in the ranks, she was increasingly called upon to play hostess to the out-of-town officials who visited Glen Ferris, and this sometimes proved to be very demanding.

For many years, Katherine's fragility was perceived as hypochondria, until she was finally diagnosed with kidney disease and had surgery for it in the mid-1930's. Over the years, she became increasingly reclusive.

Ironically, their character differences had just the opposite effect from what might have been expected. Katherine's shyness seemed to make her feel differences between people more acutely, but it also contributed to a high level of empathy and compassion. Witt, on the other hand, was able to overlook surface differences in his interactions with others, even while he accepted without question the class and racial barriers which put such limits on the aspirations of many at that time. He worked comfortably and easily with those around him, while conforming to the needs of his employers and the corporate hierarchy which he served.

During their early years in West Virginia, both of my grandparents harbored a conviction that in certain respects life was more backward here. Until about 1923, my grandmother returned to Virginia for frequent long visits. Both of their children were born in Richmond, her mother's home, because they believed better medical care could be had there.

But gradually these attitudes

The upper Kanawha Valley could be a lonely place for newcomers. This photo, made about 1919, shows Katherine and Billy "all dressed up and in the middle of nowhere," our author says.

changed. Katherine and Witt felt less and less like transplants and more like citizens of a place they increasingly loved and felt loyalty toward. In addition, the valley itself was changing. By 1928, the road to Charleston was paved, and cars became more numerous. Montgomery seemed close enough to utilize its services more easily, and there was a hospital there, opened by William Laird in 1919. The Kanawha Valley came to feel less like an isolated backwoods and more like a secure but industrious haven.

Still, some mixed feelings remained. My grandfather's ambivalence was evident in the conflict between his love for the valley and intent to stay there, and his ambitions for his children.

In the 1940's, he bought from Union Carbide the piece of land in Falls View where the National Guard Armory now sits. He was fond of the place for its historic interest — the property included the remains of the home of Paddy Huddleston and his family, who had lived there in the 18th century. Daniel Boone had stayed at their inn. My grandfather valued this local history. He wanted to spend the rest of his days in the valley where he had spent almost his entire working life and which he had come to love as home.

On the other hand, he encouraged his children to seek schooling away from West Virginia. Though satisfied with his own attainments as superintendent of the Alloy plant, his close contact with higher officials in the company did not fail to impress him. These men and their families lived more sophisticated lives in elegant suburbs around New York and sent their children to colleges such as Smith and Yale.

Witt pushed his children in that direction — toward a more urban and upper-class life, if that was what they wanted for themselves. At the same time, his own example showed how satisfying life in Glen

MICHAEL KELLER

Stanley Cavendish in 1990.

Although he never managed the big Alloy plant, another GOLDENSEAL subject began his long career working for Union Carbide in the upper Kanawha Valley.

Another Carbider Remembered

Stanley Cavendish was on hand when the deadly Hawks Nest tunnel was built to carry the waters of New River through Gauley Mountain to provide hydropower to Alloy. His job was to monitor the output from tunnel excavation, taking rock samples as necessary. After his work on the tunnel project was finished, Cavendish continued working for Carbide at South Charleston.

This past fall Stanley Cavendish died in Charleston at the age of 90. The chemical engineer shared his recollections of the tunnel work in the Fall 1990 GOLDENSEAL story, "'I Think We've Struck a Gold Mine': A Chemist's View of Hawks Nest."

Mr. Cavendish lived through a gruesome part of West Virginia's history. The Hawks Nest tunnel project ranks among the country's worst industrial disasters. Silica rock dust caused hundreds of deaths, according to the best scholarly estimate, the victims mostly black, migrant workers. Stanley Cavendish remembered talk of the deaths and the $3,000,000 lawsuit that followed.

"The lawyers got the big part," he said.

Ferris was. His older child, my father, determined to remain in the valley, and he did so. When he was away from there, even as a child, he missed it terribly. I possess several letters which he wrote to my grandfather from Virginia, and all of them strike the same note: "Tell the boys I miss them and I'll be home soon. Do they miss me?"

My grandparents had one other child, a daughter, and her attitude was the opposite of her brother's. Even as a child, my aunt preferred spending her summers in Virginia, where she could participate in a broader social life and feel she was part of a larger world. Whereas the valley nurtured my father, it stifled her. She was sent away to school at a young age, and she rarely came home after that.

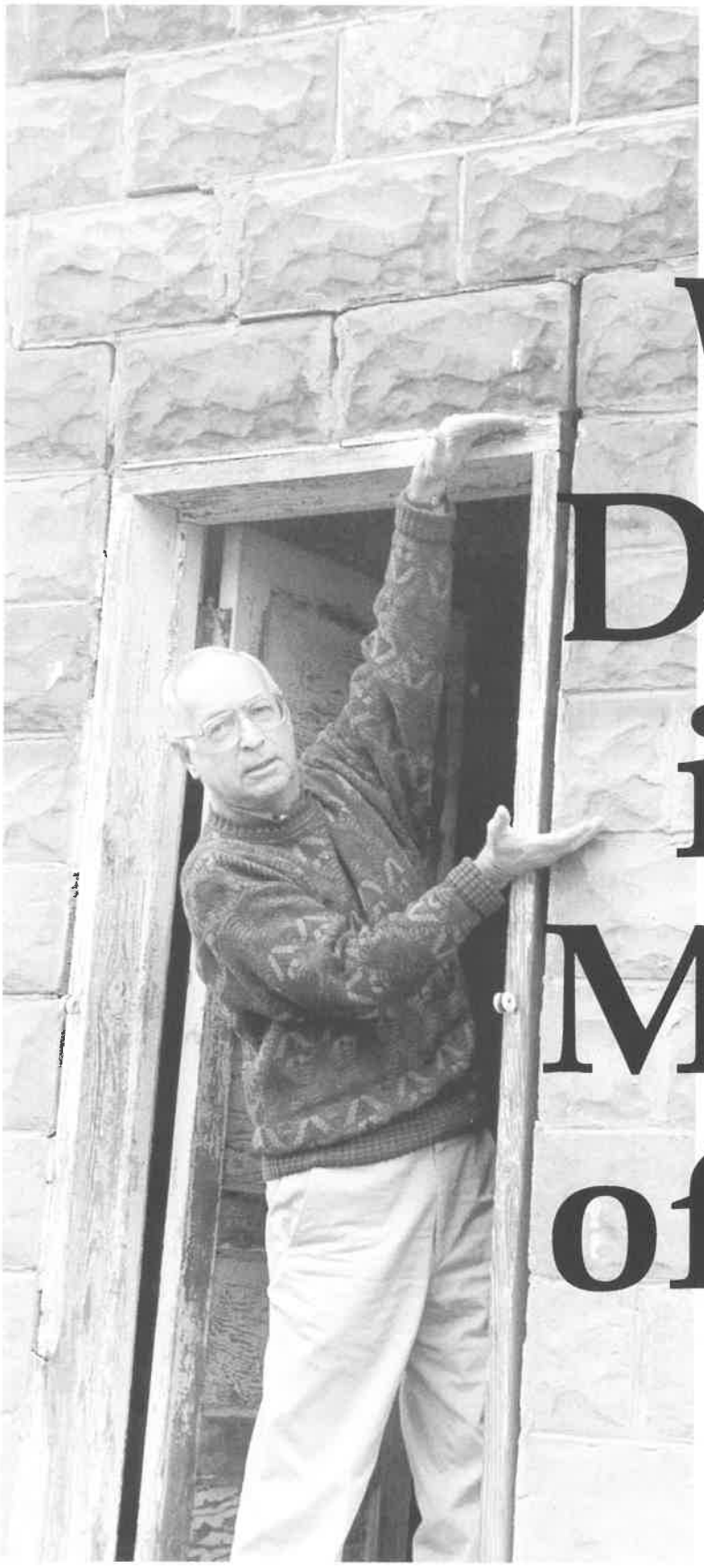
Upon my grandfather's retirement in 1956, he and Katherine moved to Lewisburg, because they thought the air there would be better for her health. By then, she was nearly an invalid. Witt returned frequently to the Kanawha Valley — as often as every week — until his own health began to fail. At the end of their lives, they returned to the valley and to my father's house at Falls View. They died in the Laird Memorial Hospital in Montgomery within two years of each other.

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to Witt Jennings's love of Glen Ferris and the upper Kanawha are the hundreds of photographs which he took with the four-by-five box camera he brought with him as an 18-year-old fresh off the train and eager to begin his first job. He developed the pictures himself, in the lab at the plant in Glen Ferris.

The photographs printed here came from among some 850 taken between 1912 and 1937, which document the growth of a valley and a town, its day-to-day life, and the parallel growth of a family. Some of the photos are negligible, of course, but many others are both haunting and beautiful. At their best, my grandfather's pictures reveal sensitivity and love, as well as the excitement of creating a new life in a new place.

Witt Jennings, his son and daughter, about 1927. Billy inherited his father's love for the valley and made his home there, while Anne found her life elsewhere.

Billy and Anne pose at Glen Ferris by the riverside, about 1923.



"The Worst Disaster in the Memory of Man"

Recalling the '50 Flood

Bill Adler has seen plenty of high water in Weston, but the '50 flood was the worst. Photo by Michael Keller.

By Joy Gilchrist

1950 — The halfway mark of the 20th century.

It started like most other years: The ball dropping at Times Square; Guy Lombardo broadcasting his "Champagne Music" across the airwaves to housewives and snoring husbands everywhere; and congregations praying at Midnight Watch services in churches from Maine to Texas.

In Lewis County, West Virginia, an eight-year-old girl visited her grandparents and stayed up for the very first time to see in the New Year.

As the hands of the seven-day clock atop her grandmother's kitchen cupboard approached the midnight hour, the clock began to whir for the first of 12 bongs. The girl and her grandfather stepped out onto the front porch to hear farmers up and down the Stone Coal valley firing their shotguns to chase away the old year and welcome in the newborn 1950.

Families rushed from their beds and escaped to the hills with only the clothes on their backs.

Harry Truman was president then, and Okey L. Patteson was governor. Damon West was coach, teacher, and athletic director at Troy High School in Gilmer County, and 23-year-old Bill Adler, home from college, was learning the women's clothing business in the family store, the well-known Adler's on Main Avenue in Weston. Bob McWhorter was working and saving his money to go to Salem College in the fall; Nick Winemiller, the girl's grandfather, was strip-mining coal in Lewis County.

They did not know it, but these local fellows were in for exciting times in the new year.

The first five months passed normally enough. Democrats and Republicans were preparing for the 1950 campaign. Farmers planted their crops and hoped for a good growing season. The Troy baseball team broke a record, beating Sand Fork, Normantown, Tanner and Glenville to come out the top team in Gilmer County. Union coal miners made plans for their annual ten-day paid vacation beginning the first week of July.

All over West Virginia school let out by late spring. The girl returned to her grandparents' home in Lewis County to spend the summer. The weather was warm and just right for fishing. The girl, her dad, mom and younger brother spent an early June afternoon seining for minnows in a shallow pool under the Hardman Run bridge on Stone Coal Creek; the next day they planned to go fishing.

That night it began to rain. It rained and rained and rained some more.

On the morning of June 4, the girl stood on the porch of her grandparents' house on the hill overlooking the creek, which flowed down the other side of the valley. Off to the west, all that could be seen were the brown murky waters edging ever closer to the tombstones of the Masonic Cemetery. To the east, water flowed across the bottomlands of a local dairy farmer. There would be no fishing that day.

Instead, the family loaded themselves onto the back of the grandfather's 1936 truck and headed toward town. The grandfather drove the family as far as the Hope Natural Gas pumping station on Route 33 east of Weston, where water was over the road so deep that a car could not go through by itself. He chained car after car to his faithful Diamond-T and towed them through.

By the next day the waters had receded. Life for the girl and her family returned to normal, but people up and down the creek and throughout the West Fork River basin were faced with weeks of cleanup. The river had crested at 17.5 feet.

That was the first round. Much worse was soon to come.

Some days passed. It was frog-gigging time on the upper reaches of Middle Island Creek and along the streams that fed the West Fork and Little Kanawha. Families loaded their dinner tables with heaping platters of succulent frog legs.

Damon West had grown up along the banks of Leading Creek, a tributary of the Little Kanawha. A graduate of Glenville State Teachers College, a World War II veteran, and by now married with two children, he had returned to Troy to live and to teach and coach at his old high school. A natural at contact sports of all kinds, Damon also enjoyed hunting, fishing and frog gigging. He had a little rowboat that he used for fishing and to weave in and out of the reeds in search of frogs.

Late in the day on June 24, 1950, Damon and a friend went gigging. Afterwards they tied the boat to the creek bank and carried their buckets of frogs to the house. An hour or so later, it began to rain — torrential rains that sent Leading Creek and other waterways to record heights by the next morning. Damon, knowing that creek waters could rise rapidly, returned to untie his boat and move it to higher ground.

The downpour continued. It rained for five hours with the heart of the storm centered along the Lewis County line where it joins Gilmer and Doddridge. According to a *Weston Democrat* article of June 30, 1950, what followed was considered "the most disastrous flood in the history of this section." Before it was over, 35 lives were claimed by the rushing torrent, with the Doddridge communities of West Union and Smithburg being hardest hit.

Rainfall in the Leading Creek valley was estimated at seven to eight inches. Only seven of the 35 homes in Troy escaped the devastating waters, and it was only because of the heroic efforts of Damon West and others that no lives were lost.

Most people in this farming community were in bed when Leading Creek, supplemented by the waters of Fink Creek, roared out and buried the town. The electricity went off, and the night was pitch black. Families rushed from their beds and escaped to the hills with only the clothes on their backs.

Damon went to help a local storekeeper, Ira Reed, move things to safety. "When I came back home, water was in our house," he recalls. "My wife Edna and Ola Adams were moving stuff out and taking it next door. The water kept rising.

"I could see that Edna and our son Larry were going to be all right, so I grabbed the rowboat and, with two neighbors, began to check other dwellings.

"First we took the Varner family off their second floor. They just stepped over the upper porch rail. They were trapped in the house because the water came up so fast."

Communities on the headwaters were hit first. This is West Union, at the head of Middle Island Creek in Doddridge County. Photographer unknown, 1950.

Damon remembers that he was in the bow of the boat as the others guided it from house to house through the floating debris and swirling waters. "When we reached the William and Frances Woofter home, we knew there was somebody in there," he says. "We heard a noise. While the others held the boat against the back porch, I tore through the screen porch and swam in. Things were floating everywhere, and the water was about seven feet deep. It was dark.

"I found the old people — both were in their 80's — in their bedroom. They were standing on

their bed with the water covering their shoulders. When I grabbed Mrs. Woofter, she gave up . She collapsed. I swam with her to the bedroom window. With help from the others outside, I broke the upper sash and pushed her through.

"Then I went back for her husband. If we had been 15 minutes later, they both would have drowned."

When daybreak came, water was everywhere. According to Damon, it crested at 25 feet in Troy, seven feet deeper than the 1888 flood, the previous deepest flood in the community. Troy, on the upper reaches of the Little Kanawha watershed, was one of the first communities hit in Gilmer County. As the flood rushed on, others felt the power.

An article in the June 30, 1950, edition of the *Glenville Pathfinder* describes damages downstream,

"I found the old people — both in their 80's — in their bedroom. They were standing on their bed with the water covering their shoulders."

where the water crested at 31.1 feet in Glenville late Sunday afternoon. Water was four feet deep in Main Street and most downtown businesses were flooded.

In Doddridge County the tragedy was "the worst disaster to strike this section in the memory of man," according to an article in the *West Union Record* on Thursday, June 29. Smithburg was virtually wiped out, and the havoc at West Union was "almost unbelievable."

Seventy-eight homes disappeared. Others were totally wrecked, and still others were uninhabitable for months. Numerous businesses including the Blandville post office were swept away or totally destroyed. The covered bridge into West Union from Route 50 was destroyed, as was the iron bridge leading to what was called the "new section" of Smithburg.

In Lewis County, the torrential rains sent the West Fork River and its tributaries to record heights, with the river cresting above 25 feet near dawn on Sunday, June 25.

Young Bill Adler was at the family store in the heart of downtown Weston and recalls the Saturday evening rainstorm that began about half an hour before the stores closed. "It was a cloudburst, with terrific lightning and a deluge of rain as heavy as one ever sees. But it seemed to be just another storm, although it continued longer than usual. Anyway, I went home and went to bed.

"About midnight my sister, Martha, returned home from a party at Lake Riley. She woke me up to say that streets were already flooding, and members of the Kraus family, the owners of Lake Riley, were

Bill Adler would have been treading water at this spot in 1950: The same Weston intersection, shown below at the time of the flood, was part of the hard-hit business district. Recent photo by Michael Keller, old photo courtesy State Archives.

bringing boats into town to help the volunteer firemen evacuate people. She thought we ought to go to the store in case the water got high enough to flood it.

"I pooh-poohed that idea at first," Bill continues. "Weston had had many floods, but the water had never threatened the store, although it often backed up into the basement.

"But she was alarmed and insistent, and as much to satisfy her as anything else, my stepfather and I got dressed and started uptown. It was still raining, but not as hard as earlier. We found our paths blocked by already-flooded Court, Center and Main Avenues. However, the B&O railroad tracks were still above the flood, and we walked them to town. This was probably around one o'clock in the morning.

"At the store, where nothing was yet amiss except water in the basement, we called a couple of employees on the phone and asked them to come back to help move merchandise, just in case. And although we were still not worried, we began to lift dresses and other clothing suspended on racks to higher levels. We removed the drawers from merchandise tables and stacked them on top.

"Around three o'clock, the water began seeping through the floor and rose slowly. By five o'clock it reached 17 inches and crested. It was getting daylight, and the scene was amazing, unbelievable. The water was over parking meters on Water Street behind the store. On Main Avenue in front, we could see that our neighboring businesses to the left and right and across the street were awash. It was made worse later in the morning, when huge trucks began running through the water, creating muddy waves that washed into the stores and damaged even more property."

Bill is an expert on flooding on the West Fork River. "In fact, it was floods that led me to do "Yester-

More Bad Weather: The Big Snow of 1950

Remember the winter of '96, when the snow reached a depth of 54 inches in Greenbrier County and 20 to 30 inches blanketed the rest of West Virginia? What about the previous year, when similar amounts caused the governor to declare a state of emergency in all 55 counties?

These were baby storms in comparison to the "Big Snow" that struck on Thanksgiving Weekend 1950, just five months to the day after the devastating 1950 flood.

Billed as "the worst snowstorm in the memory of mortal man" by the *Weston Independent*, this whopper dumped 45 to 48 inches throughout the entire state in three days. Snowfall records set that weekend remain intact 46 years later. Neighboring states were also crippled by the massive amounts of the light, fluffy snow that began falling on Friday morning.

"By the time I reached Elkins, I was traveling through snow that was eight feet high on either side."

Plummeting temperatures on Friday evening coupled with the continuing snowfall made travel almost impossible by Saturday. Towns and villages were cut off from neighboring communities until State Road trucks could break through.

Boyd L. "Rocky" Swisher remembers the drifting snow. Although he now lives in Harrisonburg, Virginia, he was born and raised in Randolph County and retains a cabin home, "Swisher Holler," on the edge of the Monongahela Forest near Glady.

"I've seen storms in these mountains many times," Rocky says, "but none was ever as bad as that one.

"I was a traveling salesman for the West Virginia Bedding Company out of Parkersburg. My territory included Washington, D.C. Wherever you were and whatever you were doing, Harry Garman, the boss, expected you to be in Parkersburg for a sales meeting on Saturday morning.

"I left D.C. on Friday evening. I hadn't gone very far when it started raining and sleeting," Rocky recalls, adding that worsening weather forced him to pull over for the night before he reached the West Virginia line.

"When I woke up the next morning, it had snowed a lot more. A Greyhound bus had pulled off beside me because he couldn't see either. My car doors were frozen shut and some people from the bus helped me out. Finally I got back on the road and headed toward Elkins. The further I came, the worse it got.

"Coming across Allegheny Mountain, the wind had blown the snow against a snow fence in an arch. There was so much snow that it was almost a tunnel. It entered my mind as I was going through there that it could fall on me. By the time

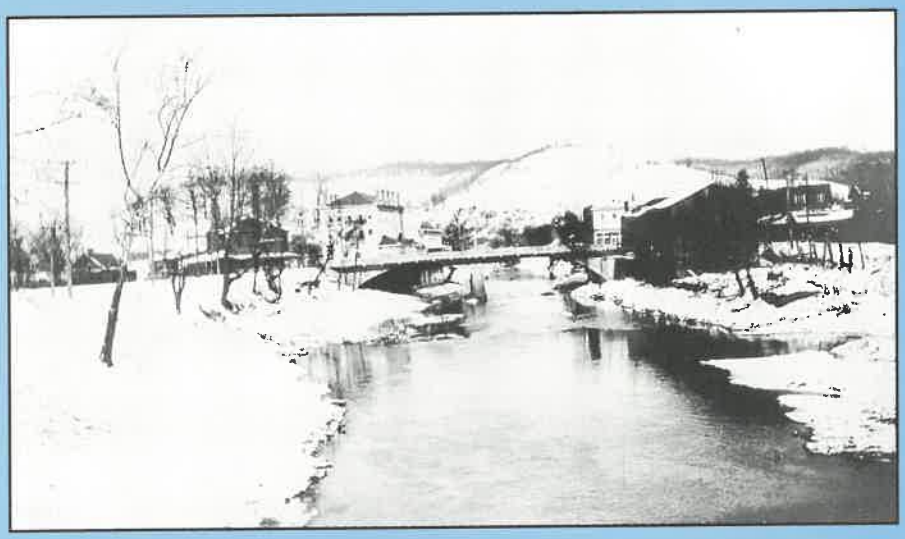
I reached Elkins, I was traveling through snow that was eight feet high on either side.

"I called Harry after I got to Elkins and told him I didn't think I could make it. He said, 'That's okay. I can't even see my car out there!'"

Harry's car wasn't the only one buried by the big snow. Cars parked on Friday night were completely covered by Saturday morning. Roofs collapsed in several buildings throughout the state, including the W. T. Grant store on Main Avenue in Weston. Bus and train services were cancelled. Mail stalled until Monday. Schools and courthouses were closed for the entire week following the storm.

began. My grandfather, Nick Winemiller, pushed his way through the drifted snow from Weston to Clarksburg in his big Diamond-T and brought back his bulldozer. He went over all the principal streets in town and "broke a road with ease," according to a story in the *Weston Independent*. He worked well into the night of Sunday and most of Monday.

By week's end, the situation was under control. It warmed on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and the snow began to melt. Sunday, December 3, was warmer than usual, and around dark it began to rain. This was



The West Fork at Weston was back in its banks and surrounded by snow by December 1950. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

In the rural areas, farmers faced heavy losses of sheep and cattle. Ours was a more agricultural state in those days and large numbers of sheep were raised on mountain pastures and high hillsides far from feed and barn. The storm kept herdsmen from getting to them and many were lost. Bill Aman of Lewis County trudged through Leading Creek valley searching for and feeding his neighbors' livestock. His deeds were repeated throughout West Virginia as neighbor pitched in to help neighbor.

When the storm was over, the gigantic task of removing the snow too much for the already swollen rivers and streams. Another heavy flood seemed certain. Fortunately, nature stepped in and lowered the temperatures and the rain changed to snow. The West Fork River crested at 18.2 feet.

The story ends in tragedy. Two brothers, Farrell Thomas Fisher, 11, and his baby brother, Johnny Lee, 4, fell from a swinging bridge at Roanoke and drowned in the cold West Fork. They were the only Lewis County casualties of the severe weather of 1950.

— Joy Gilchrist

years," the *Weston Democrat* column that earned me the unofficial title of Lewis County Historian," he chuckled. "While reading about the floods, I found all this good old information of bygone times. I told *Democrat* publisher Bob Earle about it." Bill began his popular column in 1982 and continued it for a decade.

Former Lewis County resident Robert F. "Bob" McWhorter, now of Morgantown, was working at Jackson's Mill 4-H Camp in June 1950. Bob remembers that he, Bill Landcaster of Sutton, "Chick" Thorn of Weston, and several other Mill employees went to Weston to a movie that Saturday evening.

The movie was a long one, and they missed the last Clarksburg-Weston bus that would take them to Jackson's Mill. Normally, they would have walked, but it was raining hard. The young men decided to stay at the Camden Hotel that night. They left a wake-up call for early the next morning.

"We woke up a long time after the desk should have given us the wake-up call," says Bob. "I was so angry that we were late for work. I knew that 'Uncle Charley' Hartley, the [Jackson's Mill] director, would be upset that none of us had come back. I called the desk clerk and started raising cane. The clerk asked me if I had looked out the window. There was water everywhere.

"I tried to call the Mill and couldn't get through. Then we went out and waded through town. Finally, sometime late in the afternoon, I tried to call the Mill again. This time I reached them. It was the first call they had received since the evening before. They had been trying to call Weston and couldn't get through, either.

"They put Uncle Charley on the phone and he told me about a couple from over on Freeman's Creek near Kennedy Station being burned by exploding gasoline."

Seventy-four-year-old Creed L. Shutts of Valley Chapel picks up

the story here. "I was living here then," he says. "I'd come out of the service in '47. It was my parents who were burned.

"It was Sunday morning, early. They were out in their chicken yard trying to get the chickens in when the floodwaters broke a huge 450,000-gallon gasoline storage tank loose from its foundation.

"The tank floated a short distance downstream, banged into something, and exploded in a sheet of flames. The blaze swept downstream. At the next bend it set fire to a new dairy barn that we had just built. Then the flames leaped over and set fire to Dad and Mom. Mom jumped into the water to put out the flames.

"Eventually someone came along and got them into the house. They were there for a long time before we could get any help," Creed remembers. "I know it was late afternoon.

"We didn't have any boats around here. Jimmy Hall had a lumber mill and had a big pile of lumber down by the creek. It had all washed away in the flood, but a lot of it had caught on a fence row there by the farm. Someone gathered a bunch of it up and built a raft. Then they floated them out of there and down to the Mill, one at a time."

Creed concludes, "They were burned real bad. Somebody treated them for awhile at Jackson's Mill. I don't know how they got the medicine to treat them. Then they were in Dr. Trinkle's and Dr. Fisher's hospital, the old City Hospital at Weston, for three months apiece. They were in the same room. The hospital's gone now."

Bob McWhorter knows the answer to where the medicine came from. "Uncle Charley said that Martha Coyner, the camp nurse, was badly in need of medicine to treat the Shutts," Bob recalls from his telephone conversation. "He gave me a list. I remember that one of the things they really needed was saline solution. I told him that I'd get it there somehow."

Bob pauses to reflect. "I was only 21 and I was in pretty good shape. I had been raised on the West Fork River. I was a good swimmer. I life-guarded at the Mill part of the time. I thought I could swim it if I had to.

"I went over to Ralston's Drugstore and told Minter Ralston what I needed and why. He got it together for me. Then we had to figure a way to keep it dry.

"Now maybe I shouldn't tell you this — but, by today's standards, I suppose it's okay," Bob says with a grin. "You have to remember this was in the days before plastic bags and things like that. We wrapped it in condoms. Then I started toward the Mill.

Damon West remembers the flood very well, having helped rescue people from the waters of Leading Creek at Troy. Photo by Michael Keller.

"John Hitchew picked me up in a big coal truck. He said he'd get me as far as he could. We headed out Main Avenue and before long the truck floated into a guard rail and that was the end of that."

Bob shakes his head. "I started wading and swimming," he continues. "I can't tell you now which I did more of — wade or swim. I went out the old road. It wasn't that bad until I got to the bridge there by the old mill. The water was two and a half feet over the side rails and it was running fast. If I had tried swimming there, I would have been washed right on down the river. So I reached under the water and held on to the side rails. I finally got there.

"I was only 21 and I was in pretty good shape. I had been raised on the West Fork River. I thought I could swim it if I had to."

"The people were kept at the infirmary at the Mill for several days. They were in shock and had second and third degree burns of the hands and face. Martha took good care of them. Her assistant was Mary

Katherine Moats. They were both from Ritchie County.

"I think it was that fall that Martha left and went to medical school. She became a doctor, and I think Mary Katherine was her nurse. I don't know where they are now. It was that same fall that I started school at Salem College.

"It was an awful time," Bob says of the flood and its aftermath, "but it was a good time too. Everyone worked together to help each other."

The attitude of helpfulness was visible throughout the region following what is now called "The '50 Flood." The American Red Cross under the direction of a local disaster committee chairman in each county established emergency headquarters and rendered assistance to any family who was in need and unable to help themselves. The Lewis County Health Department immunized more than 5,000 for typhoid.

Radio station WHAW at Weston had just gone on the air a few months before. They carried news bulletins and issued warnings for flood victims. Truckloads of goods were hauled to relieve Troy, West Union, and other isolated communities. Local newspapers carried warnings about the dangers of contaminated water and issued safety instructions, and they recorded the events in pictures and words.

Everyone remembers the 1985 flood, but these high water marks show that the '50 flood topped it slightly. Bob McWhorter made a heroic trip to Jackson's Mill with medical supplies in 1950. Photo by Michael Keller.

And the girl's grandfather? He got out his trusty Diamond-T again and used it to help families in Weston dispose of their soggy household goods. The girl still remembers his story about dumping waterlogged pianos in the back of the athletic field at the present-day Robert L. Bland Junior High School. She wonders if ghostly strains of Bach, Beethoven or boogie ever issue forth from the playing field.

The '50 Flood was one of the costliest in our

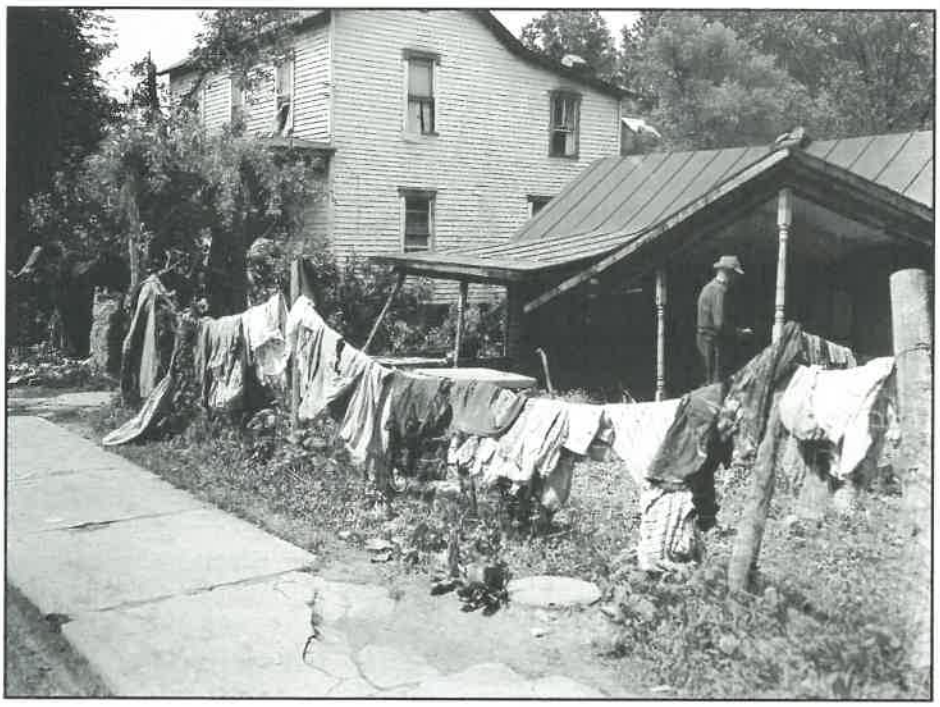
The sign at water's edge says "No Parking Here" and it doesn't seem likely that anyone will try. This is downtown Weston. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

state's history in the loss of life and property. Its effects touch us even today. The deluge, as well as major droughts in 1930 and 1953 and more recent events, were among the forces responsible for the eventual construction of Stonewall Jackson Dam and Lake on the upper West Fork in the 1980's and '90's.

And of course the '50 Flood lives on in the old newspapers, and in the recollections of survivors. These newspaper records and the fact that West Virginians are natural storytellers, always relating their memories whenever two or more are gathered with nothing special to do, were what led me to write this story — that and a personal interest and strong recollections of my own.

For the little girl, you see, was me.

Clean-up is the heartbreaking part. This is Weston's East 3rd Street, later in June 1950. Photographer unknown.



Flood on the Net

During the past few years, the West Virginia State Archives has become more and more involved with making state history available on computer.

Most recently, staffers set up an on-line exhibit about the Buffalo Creek disaster. The exhibit, available instantly and worldwide to anyone with a computer and access to the Internet, marks the 25th anniversary of the Buffalo Creek flood. It was on the morning of February 26, 1972, when coal-black floodwaters swept the life out of Buffalo Creek hollow in Logan County.

The killing waters escaped from an improperly-built coal waste dam at a Pittston Coal Company mine site. One-hundred eighteen people died.

The Buffalo Creek on-line exhibit includes text and visuals, including photographs made at the time by the late Ross Taylor, Jr. The address for the exhibit, which is part of the West Virginia History Database website, is http://www.wvlc.wvnet.edu/history/historyw.html.

When the River Riding

If you had grown up on the banks of the Ohio River like I did, you would know that floods are a way of life. River people don't get excited when the first predictions of a spring flood are mentioned. Flood talk is ordinary conversation. My parents Zack and Laura Jacobs were never too concerned. They knew exactly when to be cautious, and when to be frightened, and when to make the first move to safety.

My dad was top honcho in our house when the beautiful Ohio started acting up. We lived in Wheeling, and he worked in a steel mill near the river. It was part of his job to know just how much floodwater was coming and when it would reach our city, so he and his men could cool the huge blast furnaces before the water touched them. Big companies like his were the first to get the facts about the rising river. Not until Dad said so did Mother and the family start to work to make ready to let the river into the house — uninvited, of course.

When Dad passed the word that we were going to have a flood, Mother would take over from there. She would start by stocking up on food. Bread, cookies, crackers, cheese, cans of fruits and vegetables — anything we could eat right out of the can, or which didn't have to be cooked or refrigerated. We carried it all in boxes to the second floor, along with big jugs of drinking water.

Mother would also get a supply of aspirin, Vicks salve, iodine, cough syrup and all the basic medicines in case she had to play doctor while we were marooned. She never forgot the castor oil, either. No matter how high the water prediction was, Mom and Dad insisted on

Came to Our House:

Out the Flood of 1936

By Geraldine Jacobs Baker

The 1936 flood in downtown Wheeling. This view looks southward down Main Street. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia and Regional History Collection/WVU.

staying in the house.

Of all the floods that hit our house, the one that was the worst and that I remember the most was the spring flood of March 1936.

Because of the heavy rains and snow that had fallen all winter long over the Northeast, by the first day of March the Ohio River was threatening but still within its banks. For the last three weeks of February, in the barber shops and on the street corners, the old-timers had been giving out their predictions. But the river receded to a low level, and stayed there. In another few days it rose again to the same high level, but for the second time the river fooled them, and fell back.

By the middle of the month everybody was confused. But then, on the 16th day of March, bango!

My dad came home from work and gave the order. "This is it," he said. "Pittsburgh is going to get it, and so are we. Everything upstairs." He was right. The river really socked it to us on this third rise.

We began carrying things right away. Mom took a corner in one of the upstairs bedrooms and made a kitchen area, with the table and chairs. Near the table she placed the food and drinking water, with the dishes and other things necessary to prepare the meals.

When everything from downstairs was upstairs, we had just a small footpath through the three rooms. The path led to the beds, the kitchen area, and the bathroom. We never put anything around the windows, so we could have a good view of the water on all sides of the house. My dad would always secure a large extension ladder to one of the upstairs windows to use in case we would ever have to exit in a boat. Thank God, we never did.

We watched the muddy water climb each step, coming closer and closer. There were only three and a half steps left.

There were eight adults, three canary birds, one dog, one bowl of goldfish, seven rooms of furniture, plus tools and stuff out of the garage and cellar, all crammed into three bedrooms and a bath. We were packed like a can of sardines.

March 16th came on Monday. By

bedtime, the water was all around us on the street and in our backyard. The cellar was half flooded, the water rising fast. Upstairs we used the same bedroom that was set up for a kitchen area for a living room, also. It was here we would eat, sit around and talk, tell stories, play cards, put records on the Victrola, and sing a bit. In the background, the radio continually played so we could hear the latest reports of the river stages.

This room was nice and warm. It was the only room in which we had any heat after the water reached the cellar and we had to extinguish the fire in the furnace. On one side of this room there was a gas fireplace. It had a hearth, a mantel, and a two-foot-square sheet of asbestos in the back wall of the firebox. This fireplace had at one time had an iron grate, where coal was burned.

Tuesday morning, March 17th, we found our cellar was completely flooded and the river just about ready to come in on the first floor of our house. We would always stay downstairs and walk around in the empty rooms and go out on the front porch and talk to any of the neighbors who hadn't left yet, as long as we could before the water took over. Then we would surrender to the mighty river and go into seclusion upstairs.

By Wednesday, March 18th, the river was still on the rise. At noon, we had about three feet of water on the first floor. We heard reports over the radio of how bad things were in other parts of the city, and we became a bit concerned as to whether to get out of the house now or take our chances.

All day long, the river would rise and stop, rise and stop. Most of the neighbors had left their houses to go stay with relatives on higher ground.

Thursday morning, we awoke to real problems. The water had covered the gas and electric meters downstairs. Now we had no heat, no telephone, no lights. We bundled up in extra clothes to keep warm. One good thing was that we had plenty of food and water. Although it was always eaten cold, we never missed a meal.

In our house, the stairway had ten steps up to the upstairs hall. We watched the muddy water climb each step, coming closer and closer as the hours passed. At this time, there was only three and one half steps left for the water to cover. Then water would break through the floor boards of the second floor, and soak everything. Every hour my dad would measure with a yardstick and keep account of how many inches the river was advancing.

The Ohio was now eight feet deep in the room beneath us, and another six feet to the ground. We had to look down on the cold muddy water each time we walked past the stairway.

We began to fear that we were wrong to have made the decision to stay. When Mal, my brother, would see the tension building up, he would call to Sis and me, "Come on kids, let's do a couple of songs." Then we would break into one of our favorites, "Where the River Shannon Flows," "Indian Love Call," or "In the Evening by the Moonlight." Our trio was good. Mom would sometimes join in, filling the dismal rooms with harmony and a feeling of togetherness.

The view from the author's house during the March flood. "We all knew the situation was serious," she says.

As scared as we all were about the water coming up the steps, we had yet another problem threatening us. In its way, it was worse. It was a dirty, filthy problem. It was the toilet. The sewer was backing up in the bowl.

This problem of backed-up sewer was new to us. Never before had Old Man River taken over like he was doing now. We hadn't been using the toilet these past two days because it couldn't be flushed. We all used Mom's old-fashioned chamber pot and "flushed" it out the window. There wasn't anything

else we could do. But still the toilet backed up to the thick lip of the bowl, just ready to overflow onto the floor. Two different times I found my mother standing and staring at that toilet bowl. I could tell that she was praying, and praying hard.

This had been a rough day on all of us, and how we hated to see it get dark since we would have no electric lights. Mother had stocked up on candles, but the candle light made the crammed rooms look even more gloomy. There were also old-fashioned oil lamps that we used for lights, the kind with a wide wick and a tall glass chimney. Mother always kept them handy, to use whenever there was a storm and the electricity went off.

I think that Thursday was our worst day. We sat around wearing extra sweaters and coats, sometimes even a blanket around our legs, just waiting. Hours dragged by. We were starting to get on each other's nerves. We were thankful for the cold food, but also sick and tired of it.

We had no radio now and no reports as to whether the river had stopped rising. All day we saw no people out in their boats to call to and ask the latest stage predictions. We had no idea how much water was yet to come or what conditions to expect. A quietness seemed to creep in. We began to feel dejected and alone. We expected the toilet to erupt anytime.

We all knew that the situation was serious. We went to bed miserable creatures, hearing the water slapping against the house and knowing there was a chance we might have to vacate the premises before morning. It started to rain, and that certainly didn't make us feel any better.

Fortunately, our apprehension was in vain, because the river had crested and we didn't know it. Or, seven of us didn't know. But my dad knew, because he had sat up in a chair all night keeping watch, dozing off a bit, but never letting go of the yardstick in his hand. He could see that the river had stopped rising.

We awoke the morning of Friday, March 20, with two wonderful surprises awaiting us: Dad's news and the smell of fresh coffee brewing. And we had warm boiled eggs on the table along with bread, butter and jelly. This was the first hot food we had eaten for three days. Dad took us over to the cold fireplace and pointed to the make-shift stove he had created from one of the oil lamps. When he got it to boil water, good old Dad must have known how Robert Fulton felt when he extracted steam power from a tea kettle.

When Mama got up and saw the water boiling in the bucket, that was all she needed to start breakfast. I had never cared for crumbly hard-boiled eggs before, hot or cold, but this morning they tasted great. From then on, we had hot coffee, soup and baked beans. Once Mom even boiled potatoes with the skins on. We gobbled them up with salt and pepper and a bit of butter.

When we first came upstairs, Mom had started out using paper plates. When they were all gone, we used her regular dishes which we piled in a corner, dirty, after each meal. Sometimes we ate from wax paper or napkins. Mom had been rationing the jugs of water for the past two days. Outside of a little bit to wash our face and hands, and brush our teeth, the rest was saved for drinking and cooking. All of us wanted a good bath, but it just couldn't be. The men didn't even shave.

At sundown, we figured this had been a pretty good day. Along with the hot food, the bright sunshine warmed our spirits and gave us quite a lift. When we went to bed this night, for the first time in four days, we all relaxed and slept better, knowing that the river had crested. We felt safe, as of now.

Saturday, March 21, was another good day. The river had stayed at its Friday crest of 54.5 feet, and then during the night receded. Dad had made a line on the wallpaper to mark where the river had crested. It was only 18 inches from coming onto the second floor of our house.

As for that toilet bowl, I think we should have given it a medal or maybe had it bronzed. It deserved some kind of a citation for the way it held its own and fought back during the four-day battle with the Ohio River. We shall always be grateful that it came out the winner.

Geraldine Baker at 3440 Chapline Street in dryer times. Photographer and date unknown.

Two different times I found my mother standing and staring at that toilet bowl. I could tell that she was praying, and praying hard.

"Buck Ain't No Ordinary Dog"

The 1996 Liars Contest

As you may imagine, Liars Contest participants are an unruly bunch. We were reminded of that at last year's event when one of the winners, Jim Lance of Jefferson County, broke free of the stage, left the microphone behind, and began working the crowd like a revival preacher. Needless to say, it was impossible to tape him — a shame since Jim is one of the state's top storytellers. That leaves us unable to publish the top three tales as we usually do in the Spring GOLDENSEAL, so we've decided instead to present Bil Lepp's first-place story with a condensed version of the second.

You may contact GOLDENSEAL for information about the 1997 West Virginia State Liars Contest.

His mother was a German Shepherd but his daddy was a basset hound. He stands about half a yard high and about a yard and a half long.

Bil Lepp. Well now, folks, I had a story all ready to tell you, but then I got here to the Liars Contest and people were talking about dogs and comets and hunting and fishing and all sorts of things, and it reminded me of something that happened recently.

You see, I've got a dog. And my dog's name is Buck. But Buck, he ain't no ordinary dog. What you've got to understand about Buck is that his mother was a German Shepherd but his daddy was a basset hound. So he stands about half a yard high and about a yard and a half long. While he inherited his mother's looks, he got his daddy's legs in the bargain, so he looks like a German Shepherd that swallowed a Ford Fairlane.

Bil Lepp carried off "The Goldenseal Golden Shovel," presented for the first time at last year's Liars Contest. We expect he will know just what to do with it.

But what he lacks in good looks, he makes up for in nasal prowess. That dog has got a nose to rival Toucan Sam. Old Buck can sniff out a skeleton in a closet four years old. He's not allowed in the Governor's Mansion *or* the White House.

I could tell right from the start that Buck was bound to be one of the greatest hunting dogs that ever

lived. He and I used to sit up all night long, we'd watch them hunting videos on the VCR, and then we'd read each other *Field and Stream* until we fell asleep.

The only thing keeping Buck from being *the* greatest hunting dog that ever lived was the fact that he was a little bit gun shy. It was just about last April, when we were thick in the middle of that cold spell, that I figured it was as good a day as any to teach Buck to quit being gun shy.

Now old Buck, he was sound asleep by the fireplace. He had his legs straight up in the air, his tail was wagging. I could tell he was dreaming about beautiful little dogs on short little legs. I got a piece of cardboard, I drew a target on it, I laid it on the compost pile in the backyard. I got a rope, I woke up Buck, I tied one end of that rope to Buck's collar, I tied the other end to my belt loop.

Then I got out my 30-30 rifle, I got out one shell, and I held it down there where Buck could see it, so he could get a feel for it. He looked it over real good, licked it a couple of times, and then he sniffed. He took a good couple of sniffs of that bullet. I loaded it in my gun, I aimed at that target — and blamo, I fired.

Well now, as per usual, I neglected to consider the full consequences of my actions. I don't know exactly what Buck was thinking, but as far as I could tell he thought he was supposed to track that bullet.

I didn't think it was very funny. 'Cause you see, no sooner did that bullet leave the barrel of my gun, then Buck shot out after it. He jerked me right behind him, right out of my boots, and there was that bullet cruising through the air, Buck right on its tail and me following behind, tied to that rope.

Buck followed that bullet right through the hole in that piece of cardboard, dragging me with him. And then he dragged me, head-first, through that pile of compost. I don't know if you folks know what it's like to be pulled head-first through a pile of dung. You probably do — it's an election year.

State Storytelling Festival

The first West Virginia Storytelling Festival was held last fall at Jackson's Mill. About 2,000 people attended the event which featured more than 40 Appalachian storytellers.

Rebecca Rankin took part in the first West Virginia Storytelling Festival. Photo by Gerald Milnes.

The festival featured the Lying Lepp Brothers, Paul and Bil, both state champion liars, and others familiar to the readers of GOLDENSEAL. Among them were Bonnie Collins, Gerry Milnes, Glen Smith and others. Folklorists Judy Byers, John Randolph and Noel Tenney performed as "The Hill Lorists," presenting Appalachian tall tales, and "Tale Spinners" Richard Knoblich and Harve Tannenbaum also entertained.

"Living history" characters were part of the program, with performances by GOLDENSEAL contributor James Casto (Collis P. Huntington), Karen Vuranch (Mother Jones) and others. The historical figures were sponsored by the West Virginia Humanities Council, with festival funding provided by the West Virginia Commission on the Arts.

Planners hope to make the storytelling festival a big event for West Virginia. It will be scheduled each year for the week after the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee, to attract storytellers and a big audience.

The dates for the 1997 West Virginia Storytelling Festival are October 10, 11 and 12.

There is an admission charge. For more information contact the Jackson's Mill Heritage Foundation, Route 1, Box 238, Jane Lew, WV 26378; (304) 269-7091.

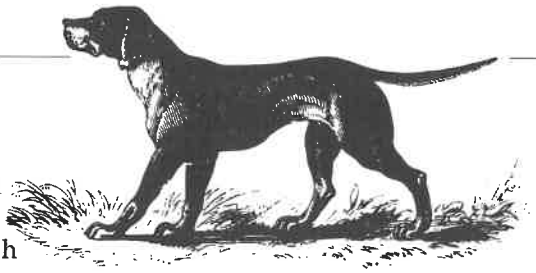
But we followed that bullet, flew right out of the pile, and then that bullet went into the woods. Buck followed it. Every time it glanced off a tree, or ricocheted off a rock, he followed that bullet, clear down to the railroad tracks. Now, that's that fine and famed run of Weirton's World-Famous Steel fashioned into CS&X railroad tracks, running clear from Cowen to Grafton, via Burnsville, Buckhannon, Carrolton and Philippi.

Now, rolling down those tracks, just then, was a gigantic, 168-car, CS&X monster train, with five engines and one in tow, laden and loaded down with wonderful West Virginia bituminous coal. That bullet slammed right into the side of one of those moving coal cars, and — well, the Buck stopped there.

That line tied to his collar and to my belt loop snapped taut and it ripped my jeans right off me. When I hit the side of that train, I was screaming. Partly because I was scared, but mostly because, like I said, it was thick in the middle of that cold spell, it was 15 degrees out, and now I wasn't wearing nothing but my boxer shorts.

And because I was screaming when I hit the side of that train, my tongue was sticking way out of my mouth — and I guess you figured it out. My tongue was sticking out of my mouth, and it was first thing to collide with that train. Well, I'm sure you all know about cold metal

Another Good Dog



Buck is a doggone good dog, as anyone can see from the adjacent tale by Bil Lepp, but he is not the only good dog ever to lope out of the hills of West Virginia and into the pages of GOLDENSEAL. By no means.

Take Ol' Rusty, the Marshall County wonder, for example, some of whose good points were chronicled for us in 1987 by Gordon L. Swartz III, the lucky owner.

The following excerpt is from Gordon's essay.

Not only did Ol' Rusty have a nose; he had a brain. He knew my guns as well as I did. When I come out of the house with my 12-gauge, he'd have a grouse on point. I'd come out with my .22, and he'd have a squirrel or a groundhog located. I'd come out with my 20-gauge, and he'd be running a rabbit. I'd come out with my pistol, and he'd have a coon treed.

But what topped it all was when I decided to go fishing down at Wheeling Creek last spring. I come out of the house with my fishing pole, and there was Ol' Rusty — digging worms.

I remember one time the Strope boys was talking about their dogs following a cold trail. I told them that if I was to put Ol' Rusty on a trail, he'd follow it no matter how old it was. Them Stropes didn't believe me. They had seen Ol' Rusty in action, and they knew he was too good a dog to waste time on a cold trail.

So Howdy Strope says, "He's too good a dog. You couldn't make him follow a cold trail."

I says, "He will, if I tell him."

Then I felt I had to prove it. We walked out across the pasture field. I whispered in Ol' Rusty's ear, and he took off kind of winding his way 'cross the field towards the woods. He struck a trail.

I says, "It's an awful cold trail, but I'll let him run it for a ways."

Ol' Rusty ran out over the field till he was about halfway across. Then he jumped about four feet in the air, come back down, and continued on the trail. He went into the woods, and me and the Strope boys commenced to follow him. We'd just entered the woods when Ol' Rusty barked.

We made our way over to the big white oak where Ol' Rusty was barking. There was a coon's skeleton laying in the first forks. Them Strope boys' eyes kind of popped, but they had to believe what they seen.

As we started back to the house, Howdy says, "You proved your point. I never would have believed it, if I hadn't seen it. I only got one question. Why did Ol' Rusty jump up in the air out in the middle of that pasture field?"

I says, "Boys, there used to be a rail fence going across that field."

— Gordon L. Swartz III

and a tongue in the middle of a cold spell. My tongue froze solid to the side of that train.

I was stuck to that train like scandal to a politician.

There I was. I had my feet under me still, and I was running alongside that train just the best that I could, but before too long I tripped. My feet swung out behind me, so I was frozen to the train with my feet out and my left hand holding up my boxer shorts, 'cause I sure didn't want to lose those, and my right arm sticking out like this.

The train was probably doing about 50 miles an hour, and the wind was blowing right into my mouth. And that caused all the saliva to get washed out of my mouth, it ran down my cheek, cascaded over my shoulder, spilled out over my right arm and sprayed out behind us. Now with the air being 15 degrees, it didn't take long for all that saliva to freeze up. Before long, sticking 50 feet out and perpendicular to the side of that train, was a 50-foot wing of frozen drool.

The wind was catching up under that wing pretty good. I noticed the wheels on the right side of that train were lifting up off the track ever so easy.

We crested a hill and started down, folks. We were probably doing about 80 by the time we were halfway down the hill, and the lift and the drag and the speed and all that aeronautical mumbo-jumbo must have been just right, 'cause that train shot straight into the sky.

We were airborne. If there had been anybody with me, they would have certainly called us the Wrong Brothers.

Well, I had never done any flying before. But I went ahead and I took that train for a couple of loops-de-loops and then I did a straight climb, I did a stall-out, executed a couple of perfect flatspins. The exhaust was pumping out of the engines pretty good, so I figured what I'd do is write my name white in the smoke like them daredevil pilots.

I did all that, but then I started getting just a little bit nervous. 'Cause, well, I started thinking about the fact that I don't have a pilot's license. "Heck, I don't even have an engineer's license," I said to myself. I figured the FAA and the CS&X railroad police would be looking for me, so the best thing I could do was get that train out of sight.

I straightened that train out and I started to take her in. Now, folks, I'd never landed a train before. And when you consider all I had to steer with was my tongue, the train only

had one wing and the one wing the train did have was iced-over, I was a little bit scared.

I'm not going to lie to you, I was scared to death, but I just kept saying to myself, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." I laid that train right down. The landing was just a little bit bumpy, but you know, I was feeling pretty good about myself. In fact, I was feeling right proud.

But you know the old saying about how pride cometh before the fall. Well, you see, this is where all the trouble started. I looked up ahead of me, and there was a tunnel coming up fast. That train didn't have any problem at all going into that tunnel, but I was sticking out just far enough to the right side that my head collided directly with the rock just to the right of the opening to that tunnel.

I came to a sudden and violent stop. That ice wing shattered off me, but my tongue was still frozen solid to the side of that train and that train was still going. My tongue was getting pulled further and further out of my mouth. It was about 40 feet out of my mouth when I realized one of two things was about to happen: Either my tongue was going to get jerked right out of my mouth or that train was going to come to a stop.

I said to myself, "Thumthin' hath got to gib."

It was just then that I heard a loud snap and my tongue, 40 foot long now, came barreling down that tunnel like a giant rubber band hell-bent for fury. It slingshotted me 80 feet into the sky. By this time it was raining and snowing and sleeting and all that sort of thing, and that snow and sleet and moisture started to condense right on the tip of my tongue. Before I knew what was going on, there was an eight-ton snowball on the end of that 40-foot tongue. We must have looked like a giant lollipop, followed by a sucker on a stick.

Now, gravity started working its magic pretty quick there. It got hold of the eight-ton snowball and we started skydiving. It was kind of like having Roseanne Barr for your parachute. We were headed straight down. My only consolation was that we were headed for a clearing. The closer we got, the more I realized there were power lines down there. I managed to wiggle and worm myself just right that I dropped right in between two of those power lines. But when I was ten feet from the ground, the snowball on the end of my 40-foot tongue straddled two of those wires and left me suspended.

I was hanging there, you see, just kind of hanging there, waiting for spring to come and thaw my tongue or for someone to come along and help, whichever came first. Either way, I had more hang time than Michael Jordan.

While I was just hanging there by my tongue on those power lines, a little old jaybird came and lit on my head. And I looked over to the edge of the woods just in time to see a nasty old, mean-looking black bear coming out of his cave. He was lean and hungry from a long winter's hibernation, and he was looking for something good to eat. All I can figure when he looked up and saw me with that jaybird on my head, hanging from the end of my tongue and in my boxer shorts, he must have thought I was some sort of X-rated pinata sent straight from heaven.

'Cause you see, that bear reached into a tree, a big hollow tree there, pulled out an aluminum ladder, a big fat baton, and a sombrero. He put that sombrero on his head real good, he set that aluminum ladder up beneath us and he started up. By this point in my day, folks, I'd seen so many strange and remarkable things that a sombrero-wearing, ladder-toting bear didn't strike me as odd.

He got to the top of that ladder, and he took a couple of practice swings. He was just getting ready to bash me good with that baton, standing there on the top of that aluminum ladder, when out of nowhere here comes Buck cruising just as fast as his little legs would carry him. He hit that clearing, he quickly assessed the situation, bounded up that ladder and bit that bear right on the butt.

Now when Buck bit that bear on the butt, that bear dropped that baton and lost his balance. And that bear was rocking back and forth on the top of that ladder trying to get his balance back with Buck biting hard. And in a last-ditch effort that bear grabbed hold of my ankles. Now when that bear grabbed hold of my ankles, standing on that aluminum ladder with Buck biting his butt, when that happened, that completed a 70-million volt circuit that none of us had anticipated.

Buck quickly assessed the situation, bounded up that ladder and bit that bear right on the butt.

The resulting explosion — let me see how I can explain this best, now — the resulting explosion came down my tongue, blew all the feathers off that bird, blew the pelt off that bear, and blew the fur off Buck and the boxer shorts off me, and shot us all — the eight-ton snowball, my 40-foot tongue, the jaybird, me, the bear and Buck straight into orbit.

There was me, I was naked as that jaybird, that bear was buck-naked, and Buck was bare-naked. And we were streaking across the April sky like a comet, some guy in Japan even picked us up on his telescope.

Now, eventually everything got back to normal and I got on home. If I learned anything at all from that day's adventure — and it seems like the sort of thing I should have learned *something* from — I guess the only thing I can say is that sometimes it really is best to let sleeping dogs lie.

Mixed News from the Old Champ:
Paul Lepp Takes Charge

Paul Lepp — that's right, brother to current champ Bil Lepp — has won the West Virginia State Liars Contest so many times we've lost count. He was back last year to claim second place.

The '96 elections were heating up at that time, as you may recall. Paul had politics on his mind, and you could tell he had also been pondering the Montana Free Men, various other militia doings, and the notorious case of the Uni-bomber.

And as usual, he had things all figured out.

Paul Lepp. Hello, West Virginians. On this auspicious occasion, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news.

Paul Lepp is ready to take charge. "Do not be alarmed," he says. Photo by Michael Keller.

The bad news is that it is with a heavy heart that I lay aside my precious Monster Stick fishing pole and my treasured Liars Contest title and place them in a blind trust, as Jay and Gaston have done with their fortunes before me.

The good news is that just as Senator Dole gave up his seat in the Senate to take a shot at the presidency, I am giving up this Cultural Center stage for the Capitol Building.

You see, in this day of Free Men and militias I have taken it upon myself to bypass the entire electoral process, to eliminate six months of negative political campaigns and to declare myself the "Uni-Governor" of West Virginia.

Do not be alarmed, this is no Montana kind of thing. It will be the first time in 133 years that a governor has stood up and professed to be a professional flat-out liar *before* he, or she as the case may be, takes office.

It's a beautifully simple thing. If I the Uni-governor tell you that I'm for it — well, you'll know I'm against it. If I tell you I'm against it, you'll know that I'm for it.

And if I tell you that it's good for you, you'll know that it ain't.

Let me give you some examples: I'll stand for good jobs and good wages; I'll stand for education and a clean environment. I'll stand for cheap gas and low taxes. I'll stand for Jesco White, the dancing outlaw, as Secretary of State, and I'll stand for free cheese.

Of course, you ain't going to get none of that, except for the free cheese.

I know what you're thinking. Each and every Mountaineer in this audience is thinking, "Well, hey, that's the way we've been governed our whole lives." But I, the Uni-governor, submit that there is a difference. And the difference is peace of mind. I'm the Uni-governor, I'm a liar, and you know it now.

Nothing's going to change. If you were making plans to move to North Carolina, well, hit the road.

But if you, my fellow West Virginians, choose to stay the course with me — and I know that you will, because that's what we do —

During my term, never shall a license plate leave the West Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles with the words "Penn State Alumnus" printed on it.

you can go out this very evening, pick you up a four-year financial planner, fill it in from cover to cover with red ink. In my entire term, you'll never need any white-out.

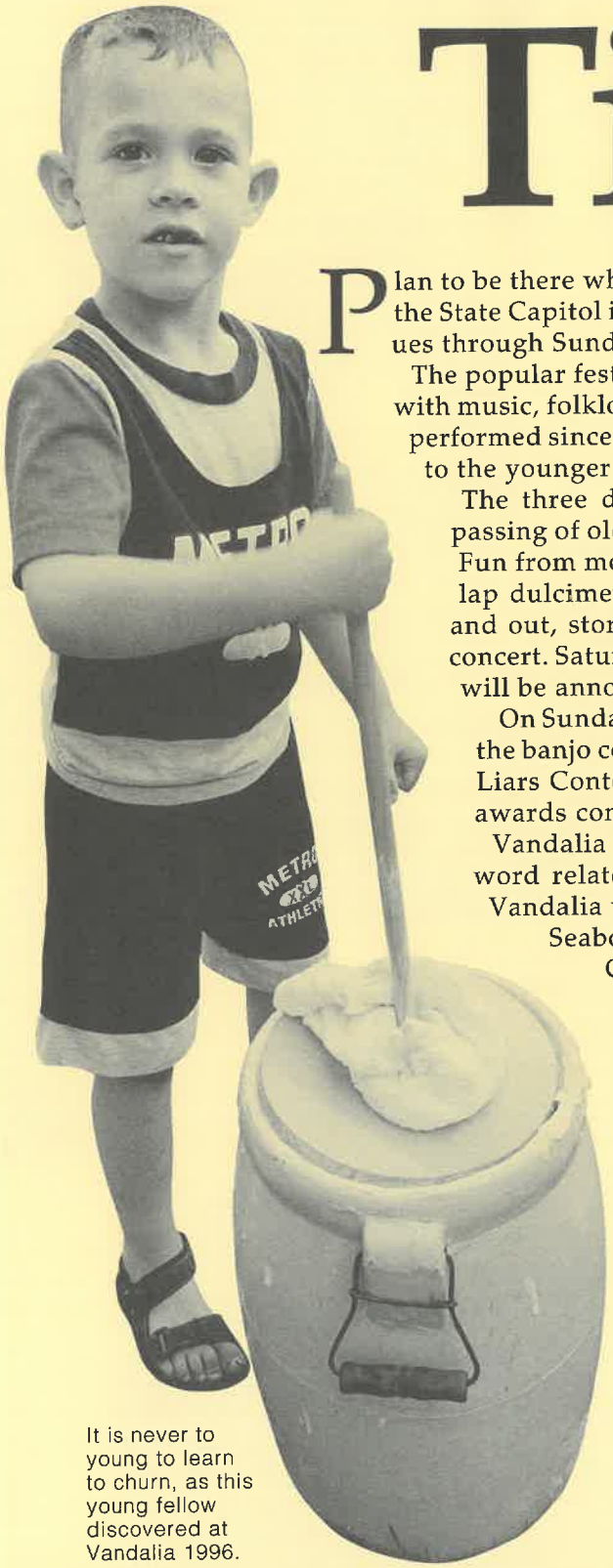
Now I can see in your faces, you're thinking, "This sounds too good to be true. What's in it for the Uni-governor?"

The answer is, "Not too much."

The only two things I ask of you are: Number one, that during my term, never shall a license plate leave the West Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles with the words "Penn State Alumnus" printed on it. And number two is "Montani Semper Liberi," a Latin term that loosely translated says, "To the Uni-governor goes all the blank Department of Natural Resources trophy fish citations that he wants."

I thank you, I welcome you to my administration, and I cordially invite each and every one of you to a free steak dinner at the Governor's Mansion immediately following this contest.

Vandalia Time!



It is never to young to learn to churn, as this young fellow discovered at Vandalia 1996.

Plan to be there when Vandalia Gathering returns this spring to the grounds of the State Capitol in Charleston. The festival begins Friday, May 23, and continues through Sunday, May 25.

The popular festival celebrates the Mountain State's rich traditional heritage with music, folklore, dance, crafts and food. Many in the Vandalia family have performed since the early days of the festival, thus passing down the old ways to the younger generation. Last year marked Vandalia's 20th year.

The three days kick off with a evening concert on Friday where the passing of old friends is noted, and the things they believed in celebrated. Fun from morning until after dark is on tap for Saturday with fiddle and lap dulcimer contests, craft demonstrations and sales, dancing indoors and out, storytelling, food booths, activities for kids, and a big evening concert. Saturday evening is also the time the 1997 Vandalia Award winner will be announced.

On Sunday, the festivities continue with more crafts, dance, music, and the banjo contest. By the day's end, the winner of the West Virginia State Liars Contest will be announced. Vandalia 1997 concludes with a final awards concert in the late afternoon.

Vandalia visitors sometimes ask about the name of the festival. The word relates to the very early history of what is now West Virginia. Vandalia was a proposed British-American colony west of the Eastern Seaboard, one of several land settlement projects from the late Colonial period. The Vandalia Colony originated in the land speculation of influential Englishmen and prominent Colonial Americans, some of whom became America's Founding Fathers.

In 1768 Benjamin Franklin, one of the organizers of the Great Ohio Company, sought to acquire Ohio Valley lands for settlement. His group proposed the creation of Vandalia as a 14th colony with its capital at Point Pleasant. The proposed Vandalia colony, named as a political gesture to Queen Charlotte (wife of George III) who claimed descent from the Vandal Tribe, fell by the wayside with the coming of the Revolutionary War.

Vandalia Gathering takes place at the Capitol Complex, just off I-64/I-77 in Charleston, both inside the Cultural Center and on the adjoining grounds of the State Capitol.

Vandalia Gathering is sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. There is no admission charge. The photographs which follow, by Michael Keller, are from Vandalia 1996.

Vandalia Time!

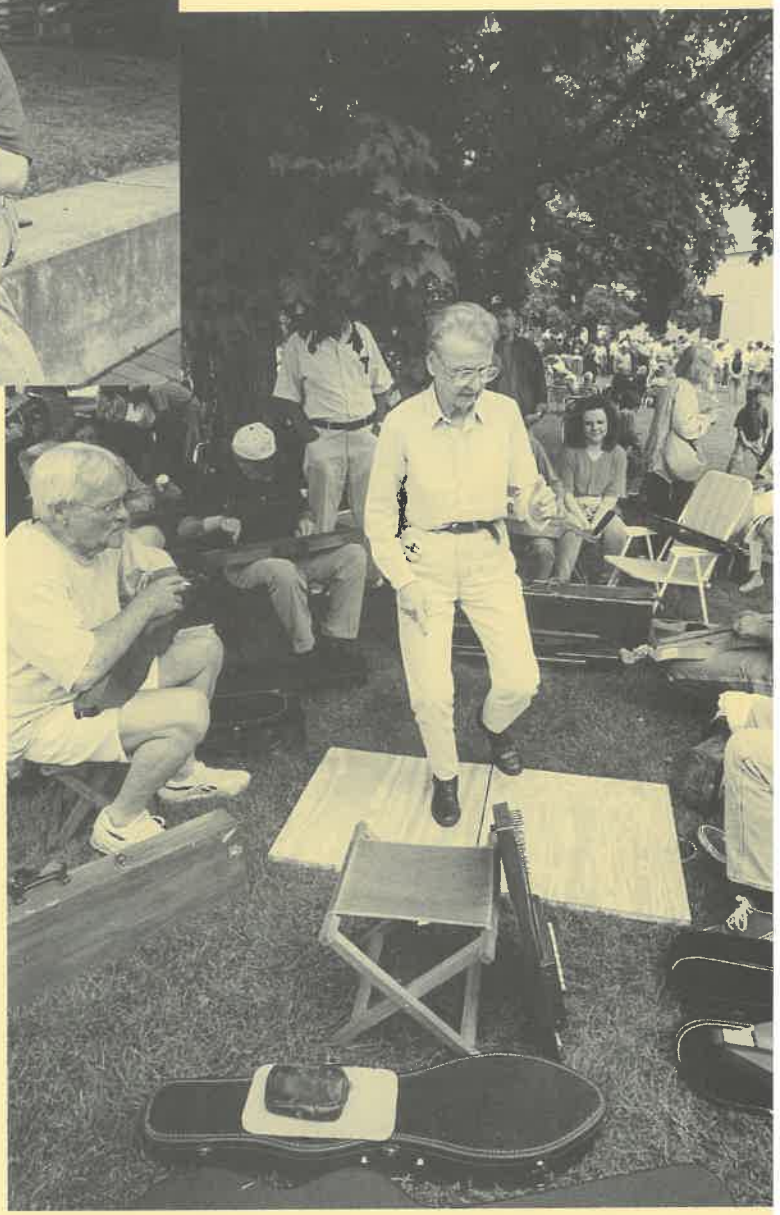
Elmer Bird won the big prize last year, the coveted Vandalia Award. Elmer, the "Banjo Man from Turkey Creek," usually hangs his hat in Putnam County.

Right: Our highland heritage is celebrated at each Vandalia. This is Mark Nelson.

Below: Jamming is a big part of any good festival. This group found a spot by the State Capitol.

Joe Dobbs and Stewart Schneider find a peaceful spot on the capitol grounds.

Below: Nadine Lewis flatfoots while Jim Ruziska checks her style.



How else is our heritage to be handed down? Mother and daughter at Vandalia '96.

Vandalia Video

Last year, in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Vandalia Gathering, the Division of Culture and History produced a special video about the popular folklife festival. "Vandalia: The Tradition Continues," shot by Robert F. Gates of Omni Productions, includes festival footage of the Vandalia performers, but also plenty of crowd scenes. Gates caught many festival-goers just having a good time.

The souvenir video is a sampler of the best of Vandalia Gatherings, held each year over the Memorial Day Weekend on the Capitol grounds since 1977. Dancers, musicians, craftspeople and storytellers are highlighted on the tape.

"Vandalia, The Tradition Continues" sell for $20, plus 6% sales tax from West Virginians, at the Cultural Center Shop. Mail orders may be sent to The Shop, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305. Make checks payable to the Cultural Center Shop and include $3 shipping and handling charges.

By The Signs

By Joann Mazzio

On its rush through the hills of Webster County, the Elk River quicksilvers through a section of bottomland known as Cherry Falls. In the 1930's and 1940's, along State Route 15 and spreading to the river, Cherry Falls was a patchwork of vacant lots and houses, each house with its own garden.

In those days a garden was a necessity, transformed into a virtue by World War II. But for my father, Walt G. Berry, gardening went beyond practical considerations. His garden was a symbol of his personal philosophy and an extension of his character.

For his time, my father was widely traveled and well-informed. His experiences shaped some strongly held opinions. One of these had to do with food.

According to him, there were two major food groups. Stuff in cans, baloney, most candy, Nehi grape pop, and all dry cereals, including Jack Armstrong's All-American Wheaties, were sissy foods and not fit for consumption by the Berry family.

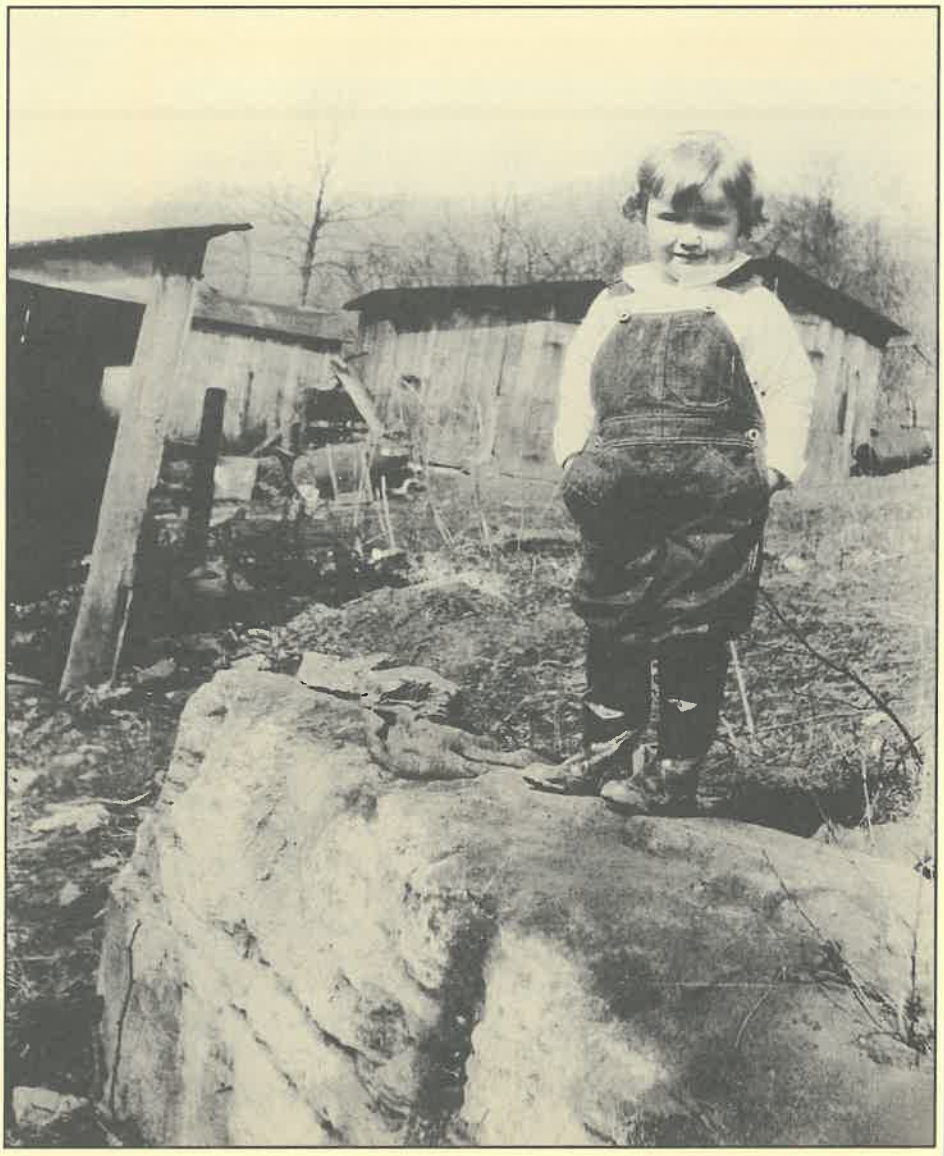
The good food group included oatmeal, fresh milk, horehound candy, red meat, and all the produce we grew in the garden, whether eaten fresh or put up for the winter.

As for his character, my father was competitive. By trade, he was a painting contractor, and his letterhead said, "When we paint, it stays painted." The warm days of summer were his busiest season. Still, he found time to put in and tend a garden.

Maybe he was living some standard from his agrarian youth when a true man wrested his family's food from the soil. Or, as I think, he had entered himself in some unnamed agricultural sweepstakes where, year after year, he had to prove he was a better gardener than anyone else in Cherry Falls.

When I was still so young that I believed every word that fell from my daddy's lips, he lured me into the garden as his sidekick and apprentice. He told me the tomatoes wouldn't grow if I didn't pat the soil around the seedlings with my little hands, and there would be no corn or beans if I didn't drop the seed onto the hills with my magical fingers.

Because of the magic, almost ev-



Our author in earlier days, suited and booted and ready to garden.

erything flourished. Heavy beefsteak tomatoes tugged against rag strips holding the plants close to wooden stakes. Fat kernels of sweet corn plumped out the tasseled ears, and Kentucky Wonder beans hung thick from the vines.

The potato plants also rioted into dark-green, luxurious foliage, but this was not so good. With all the growing going on above the surface, there wasn't enough energy going into the tubers underground.

Our potato crop was always adequate but not bountiful. And all the bushy foliage, right out by State Route 15 where any passing gardening critic could see it, caused my father acute embarrassment.

He got advice from the county extension agent, plowed manure into the soil and ranged as far afield as Clarksburg to buy seed potatoes. Then, one spring night, I came upon him with his hands on his hips, studying the sky.

"Do you think that moon would hold water?" he asked me, the apprentice. "Or maybe it's the other way; it's not supposed to hold water. Or maybe it's supposed to be in the dark of the moon when you plant potatoes. Or maybe that's for cucumbers."

Mother, overhearing him sort through his muddled folklore, said, "Mrs. Fuller always has a good crop of potatoes. She told Aunt Pet she plants by the signs. Why don't you ask Mrs. Fuller what's the best day for planting?" This suggestion was not made innocently or helpfully.

"Signs? That's superstition. Ignorant superstition," my father said.

A few days later, he asked me to walk over to the river with him to "see how it was running." Our route took us past Mrs. Fuller's garden. It had been plowed, and she had some beds worked up near the kitchen door, probably planted with lettuce and radishes. Two rows of string trellis had tendrils of green pea vines already stretched to the lower strand.

I loved green peas and was always begging to plant some, but we never did. I don't remember why. Perhaps they were sissy food.

My father looked at the unplanted ground and snorted. Mrs. Fuller hadn't yet planted her potatoes.

A day or two later, out of my mother's hearing, my father said in a confidential way, "Why don't you just walk over by yourself and see if the river's running?"

There's never been a kid born who doesn't know where this kind of conversation is heading. I didn't reply.

He tried to sound casual. "You could stop by Mrs. Fuller's. Just say hello. You're growing up. You've got to learn to be neighborly."

"No."

"No, what?"

"No, I'm not going to ask Mrs. Fuller about any signs."

"I don't care about signs. That's superstition. Just work the conversation around and ask when she's planting her potatoes."

"I don't care about signs. That's superstition. Just work the conversation around and ask when she's planting her potatoes." He added, "It wouldn't hurt anything to plant ours about the same time."

Having been brought up by the "children should be seen, not heard" rule, I didn't have many conversational skills. Certainly, I didn't know how to finesse a competitor who might have occult powers into revealing her potato-planting secrets.

Nevertheless, as I stumped through the damp gray evening and down the river road, I tried out an opener. "I was just over seeing how the river was running, and I got to wondering when you're going to plant potatoes."

Boy, did that sound stupid.

My resentment at being sent out to make a fool of myself was running high when I got to Mrs. Fuller's kitchen door. Reluctantly, I knocked.

The door opened a crack, and a sliver of light escaped. "Why, it's Joann," Mrs. Fuller said, and drew the door open wider.

I slid into the warm kitchen. I'd never been in Mrs. Fuller's house before and took in the light bulb hanging from a cord over the ironing board, the table set for supper for one, and the geraniums on the windowsill.

Mrs. Fuller looked different without the old fedora she wore outside. Her black eyes regarded me steadily. "Are you selling something for the school?" she asked me, smiling.

"No, ma'am. My dad wants to know the best time to plant potatoes," I blurted.

At first she look surprised. Then she mashed her lips together and puckered her chin like I'd said something funny but she couldn't laugh.

"Wait here," she said.

By the ironing board was a door smaller than the one I had entered. She opened this door just wide enough for her body to squeeze through. I felt cold air surge past, into the kitchen. She closed the little door behind her. I heard the click of a light switch, then silence.

Judging by the smell, stew bubbled in the pot on the stove and cornbread warmed in the breadwarmer. The kitchen was ordinary in its coziness, but Mrs. Fuller's absence and her secretiveness scared me. What was she doing behind that closed door?

I was thinking of leaving, of giving up my role of gardener's sidekick, of forfeiting my father's confidence in me as a message bearer. I edged nearer the outside door, ready to slip into the darkness and run home.

Without a sound, the door to the inner sanctum opened by an infini-

Try It Yourself

The signs of the zodiac are a source of idle amusement for many, trivialized by the popular interest in astrology into pick-up lines in singles bars. But to rural families who have planted by the signs for generations, it's serious stuff — tried and true.

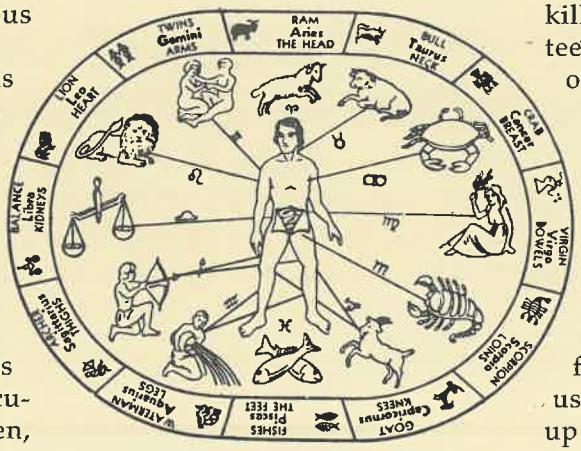
You may try it yourself this spring. First consult a planting calendar or the planting table in the almanac, where each day is assigned a particular sign. These symbols dictate when such crops as corn, beans or potatoes are best planted and harvested.

Each sign is known for its qualities — for example, masculine, feminine, airy, dry, barren, fiery, earthy, moist, watery, fruitful or very fruitful. Planting should be done on one of the moist or fruitful days. Gardeners who consult a planting calendar or almanac will find that it is best to plant on one of the many favorable days that occur every month.

The fruitful signs are Scorpio, Pisces, Taurus or Cancer. Each sign appears at least two or three days each month.

All the signs of the zodiac have long been associated with parts of the human body, and the fruitful signs mentioned above are in the loins, feet, neck and breast, respectively. Corn is best planted in the sign of the breast (Cancer) according to one table we consulted, but one gardener remembered that his father always tried to plant corn in the sign of the arms (Gemini). Flowers are best when planted in Libra (kidneys).

For gardening purposes, the astrological signs are closely interwoven with the phases of the moon.



Rules for planting and harvesting take into account both the sign governing the day and the phase of the moon on that day. The almanac's outdoor planting table is based on the moon's phases and instructs gardeners to plant above-ground crops between the days the moon is new to the day it is full. Plant root crops from the day the moon is full to the day before it is new again.

Don't make sauerkraut or pickles when the signs are in the stomach or feet, or it'll stink you out of the house.

The moon and the signs have provided guidance for other work as well. A common belief is that you don't nail shingles or boards on the "growing side" of the moon, or the ends will draw up and curl. People have butchered, cut hair, killed weeds, cut brush, or pulled teeth based on the signs. It's recommended to paint houses or cars in a dry sign like Leo or Aires, and lay a foundation in Capricorn.

Virginia Knapp, who lives at Mill Creek in Kanawha County, describes herself as "a country girl all my life." She learned about the signs from her parents and nowadays uses them mostly for working up sauerkraut or pickles. Don't try to make either when the signs are in any part of the stomach or feet, she advises, or "it'll stink you out of the house." As a young bride she decided to try it her own way, different from the way her mother had shown her. She made a gallon jar of kraut. "For five or six days, you couldn't stand to be close to it," she says.

Mrs. Knapp's gardening also benefits from her knowledge of the signs. She knows from experience that if you plant beans in the twins (Gemini), "they'll bloom to death, but not bear."

"I love my garden," she professes. "I've been at it a long time. Just read your signs, that's all it takes."

— Debby Sonis Jackson

tesimal amount. Mrs. Fuller compressed herself and her layers of clothing enough to sidle through.

She held a strip of paper toward me, and I looked at it without touching it. It seemed to be the white border torn from a newspaper page.

"Here. Give this to your dad. I wrote it down in case you forget. Tell him Tuesday and Wednesday. No later than Thursday, but Thursday's not so good."

When I got home, I asked my father, "How does she know what days? What signs has she got?"

"Probably guessing."

Mrs. Fuller was a good guesser. Our potato yield was bountiful enough that fall to satisfy even my father's competitive character.

The next year, and the next and the next, I went to Mrs. Fuller's house and stood in the kitchen while she slipped into the secret room.

I never saw what lay behind that closed door.

Mother's Day Museum

The mother of Mother's Day and her mother, Anna Jarvis and Anna Reeves Jarvis.

Anna Jarvis of Grafton founded Mother's Day. After her own mother's death in 1905, Jarvis undertook a fervent letter-writing campaign to politicians and newspaper editors, and in 1910 West Virginia made Mother's Day an official holiday. The U.S. Congress followed in 1914.

The holiday has since become a gold mine for those selling cards, candy and flowers, but Anna Jarvis herself died fighting the commercialization of Mother's Day. "A maudlin insincere card means nothing except that you're too lazy to write!" she once said.

Today the mother of Mother's Day is remembered with an annual Mother's Day observance at the church she attended, now known as the International Mother's Day Shrine.

Last spring, the birthplace of Anna Jarvis was opened for tours. The two-story farmhouse, near Grafton, has been renovated as a museum telling the stories of Anna Jarvis and her mother, Anna Reeves Jarvis. The historic 1854 house also served as a headquarters for General George McClellan during the Civil War, and the surrounding grounds were campgrounds for his troops.

The Anna Jarvis Birthplace Museum is open for tours April through December, Tuesday through Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Admission is $4 for adults, $3 for seniors, and $2 for students. The museum also provides a guide to escort tour groups to other historic attractions in the area, with group discounts available. For more information contact the museum at Route 2, Box 352, Grafton, WV 26354; (304)265-5549.

GOLDENSEAL Keepsakes

Folks used to getting their GOLDENSEAL four times a year between soft covers may be surprised to learn that back issues of the magazine are available in annual hardbound volumes as well.

The magazines are bound in a light golden fabric with the title, volume number and year imprinted in red on the spine. Most of the years of GOLDENSEAL are available in hardbound volumes — 1980 through 1986, 1988 and 1989, and 1991 through 1995, though quantities per year vary.

The cost is $25 per book, plus $3 shipping. Make checks payable to Mountain Arts Foundation. Orders may be sent to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305.

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Our Writers and Photographers

GERALDINE JACOBS BAKER was born and raised in Wheeling and still lives in the Northern Panhandle city despite the high water of her youth. Her family home at the time of the 1936 flood was at 3440 Chapline Street, she says. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

FRED BARKEY, professor of labor relations and the humanities at West Virginia Graduate College, is among our state's foremost historians. He has written for numerous periodicals, journals, and scholarly publications. West Virginia labor history is his field and social democracy for workers his specialty. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1996.

JEAN BATTLO was born in Kimball and still makes her home in the McDowell County community. She is a teacher, poet and playwright, and has had numerous works produced by professional and community theater companies. Her most recent book is *Behold the Man*, a reverent speculation about the early life of Jesus. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1996.

BOB CAMPBELL, a native West Virginian with rambling ways, has lived in California, Florida, Europe and Asia. He now lives in Elkins where he works as a filmmaker and photographer. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1984.

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

STEPHANIE EARLS, a native of Berkeley Springs, worked until recently at the *Morgan Messenger*, where she earned several state journalism awards. She was educated at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Stephanie moved to Oregon on a whim, she says, where she is now "doggedly pursuing a writing career." This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

KAREN L. FLETCHER researched her story on the dance organization FOOTMAD as a class assignment in the West Virginia History class of Dr. Stuart McGehee at West Virginia State College. She is now a student teacher in Kanawha County. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JOY GILCHRIST of Lewis County is the founder and executive director of the Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants, and a member of the state Archives and History Commission. She is the author of six books, including *A Pictorial History of Old Lewis County*, and has published articles in many state newspapers. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1994.

CAROLINE P. JENNINGS lives in Massachusetts, but has deep ties to West Virginia through her grandparents. She drew on what she knew of her grandfather's "personal ambitions" and the photographs he made in the upper Kanawha Valley from 1912 to 1930 for her article in this issue. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

JOANN MAZZIO was raised in Webster County. She attended West Virginia Wesleyan and WVU, where she earned a B.S. in aeronautical engineering, the first woman to receive such a degree there. She now lives in New Mexico, and in what she calls her "third career" has published two novels and numerous articles. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1996.

MACK SAMPLES, a native West Virginian, is a musician descended from a long line of mountain musicians. He is a graduate of Glenville State College and Ohio University. After many years as dean of admissions at Glenville State, Mack joined the WVU Extension Service in Clay County. He has published two novels and articles in *Wonderful West Virginia* and other publications. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1985.

Festival Fun. If you look forward to the special events of spring and summer, there's a recent book on West Virginia fairs and festivals you may want to check out. *Fairs, Festivals & Funnin' in West Virginia*, by Catherine Henderson, lists and discusses events across the state. It takes an in-depth look at more than 300 happenings in the Mountain State.

The 342-page softcover book is presented in an easy-to-read, large type format and includes an index to the year-round lising of events.

Fairs, Festivals & Funnin' in West Virginia may be purchased for $11.95 at area bookstores.

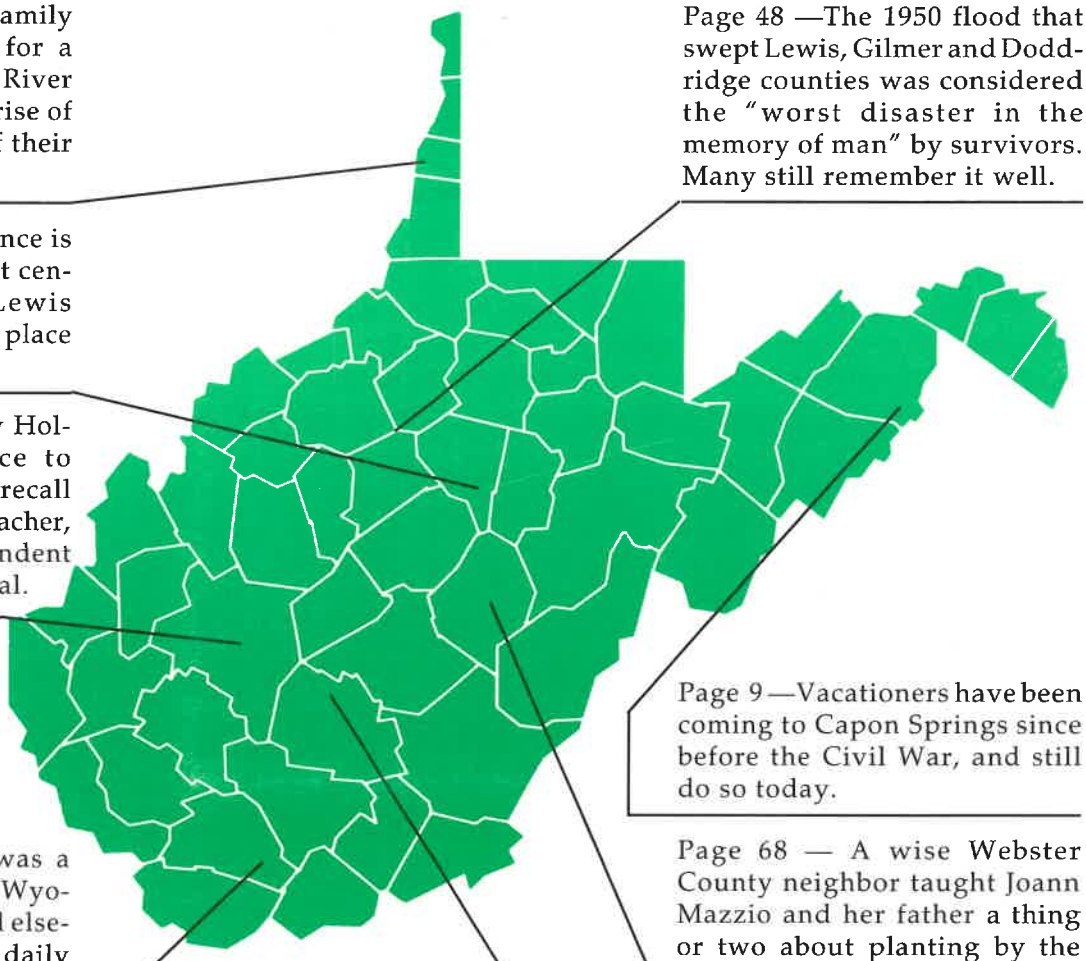
(continued from inside front cover)

August 7-10 Boone County Fair
Danville (369-7303)
August 8-10 Logan County Arts & Crafts Fair
Logan (752-1324)
August 8-10 25th Augusta Heritage Festival
Elkins (637-1209)
August 8-10 Dulcimer Weekend
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
August 8-16 State Fair of West Virginia
Lewisburg (645-1090)
August 9 Mountain Music Festival
Pipestem (466-0626)
August 10 59th Job's Temple Homecoming
Glenville (428-5421)
August 11-17 37th Town & Country Days
New Martinsville (455-2418)
August 15-17 Lilly Family Reunion
Flat Top (253-7127)
August 16 Civilian Conservation Corps Reunion
Woodbine/Richwood (422-1997)
August 19-23 Doddridge County Fair
West Union (1-800-296-2574)
August 21-24 Cairo Days
Cairo (628-3970)
August 22-24 33rd Appalachian Arts & Crafts Festival
Beckley (252-7328)
August 26-27 Dunkard Valley Frontier Festival
Core (879-5500)
August 22-September 1 Charleston Sternwheel Regatta
Charleston (348-6419)
August 23 Civilian Conservation Corps Reunion
Beaver State Park/Daniels (252-3161)
August 24-30 Barbour County Fair
Philippi (457-3254)
August 26 Foundation Day
Tomlinson Run/New Manchester (564-3651)
August 29-30 Oglebay Woodcarvers Show & Sale
Wheeling (242-7700)
August 29-31 13th Firemen's Arts & Crafts Festival
Jane Lew (842-4095)
August 29-31 Labor Day Gospel Sing
Mt. Nebo (472-3466)
August 29-31 West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (622-7314)
August 29-September 1 Erbacon Days
Erbacon (226-5104)
August 29-September 1 Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee
Weston (1-800-296-1863)
August 29-September 1 10th Annual Weirton Greek Bazaar
Weirton (797-9884)
August 30-September 1 33rd Hick Festival
Parsons (478-2424)
August 31 Roane County Homecoming
Gandeeville (343-8378)
September 5-7 Hilltop Festival
Huntington Museum of Art/Huntington (529-2701)
September 5-7 Hampshire Heritage Days & Antique Show
Romney (822-5013)
September 6-7 Brickyard Bend Festival
New Cumberland (564-3694)
September 11-14 29th West Virginia Oil & Gas Festival
Sistersville (652-2939)
September 12-13 Sagebrush Roundup Fall Festival
Fairmont (363-6366)
September 13-14 Mule & Donkey Show
Sutton (744-8372)
September 13-14 Helvetia Community Fair
Helvetia (924-5018)
September 13-14 West Virginia Honey Festival
Parkersburg (1-800-752-4982)
September 13-14 Putnam County Homecoming
Winfield (755-8421)
September 14-20 King Coal Festival
Williamson (235-2222)
September 18-21 Treasure Mountain Festival
Franklin (249-5422)
September 19-20 FOOTMAD Fall Festival
Camp Sheppard/Gandeeville (768-9249)
September 19-21 11th Mason-Dixon Festival
Morgantown (599-1104)
September 19-21 Nature Wonder & Wild Foods Weekend
North Bend/Cairo (558-3370)
September 20 Country Fall Festival
Lost Creek (745-3466)
September 20-21 Black Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (623-2335)
September 25-27 30th West Virginia Molasses Festival
Arnoldsburg (655-8374)
September 25-28 56th Preston County Buckwheat Festival
Kingwood (329-0021)
September 26-28 Volcano Days Festival
Waverly (679-3611)
September 26-28 Fall Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Charles Town (725-2055)
September 26-28 Hardy County Heritage Weekend
Moorefield (538-0394)
September 26-28 National Hunting & Fishing Days
Roanoke/Stonewall Jackson Lake State Park (924-6211)
September 27 Roadkill Cookoff
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)
September 27 Crafts & Antique Show
Glenville (462-8819)
September 27-28 Autumn Harvest Festival
Union (772-5475)
September 27-October 5 Mountain State Forest Festival
Elkins (636-1824)
October 2-5 Golden Delicious Festival
Clay (587-4900)
October 3-5 Wellsburg Apple Fest
Wellsburg (737-0801)
October 3-5 Middle Island Harvest Festival
Middlebourne (758-2437)
October 3-5 West Virginia Pumpkin Festival
Milton (743-9222)
October 3-5 Battle of Point Pleasant Commemoration
Point Pleasant (675-2170)
October 4-5 Old-Fashioned Apple Harvest Festival
Burlington (289-3511)
October 4-5 Fall Country Festival
Farm Museum/Point Pleasant (675-5737)
October 5 Heritage Craft Festival
Graham House/Lowell (466-5502)
October 9-12 West Virginia Black Walnut Festival
Spencer (927-1780)
October 10-12 15th Lumberjackin'-Bluegrassin' Jamboree
Twin Falls/Mullens (294-4000)
October 10-12 West Virginia Storytelling Festival
Weston/Jackson's Mill (599-2219)
October 11 Taste of Our Town
Lewisburg (645-7917)
October 11 Big Run Apple Festival
Cameron (686-3732)
October 11-12 24th Apple Butter Festival
Berkeley Springs (258-3738)
October 16-19 Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
Martinsburg (263-2500)
October 18 Bridge Day
Fayetteville (1-800-927-0263)
October 18-19 & 25-26 Railroad Days
Hinton (466-5420)
October 19-26 Old-Time Week & Fiddlers Reunion
D&E College/Elkins (637-1209)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 1998 "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 by January 15, 1998, 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.

GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0300

Inside Goldenseal



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