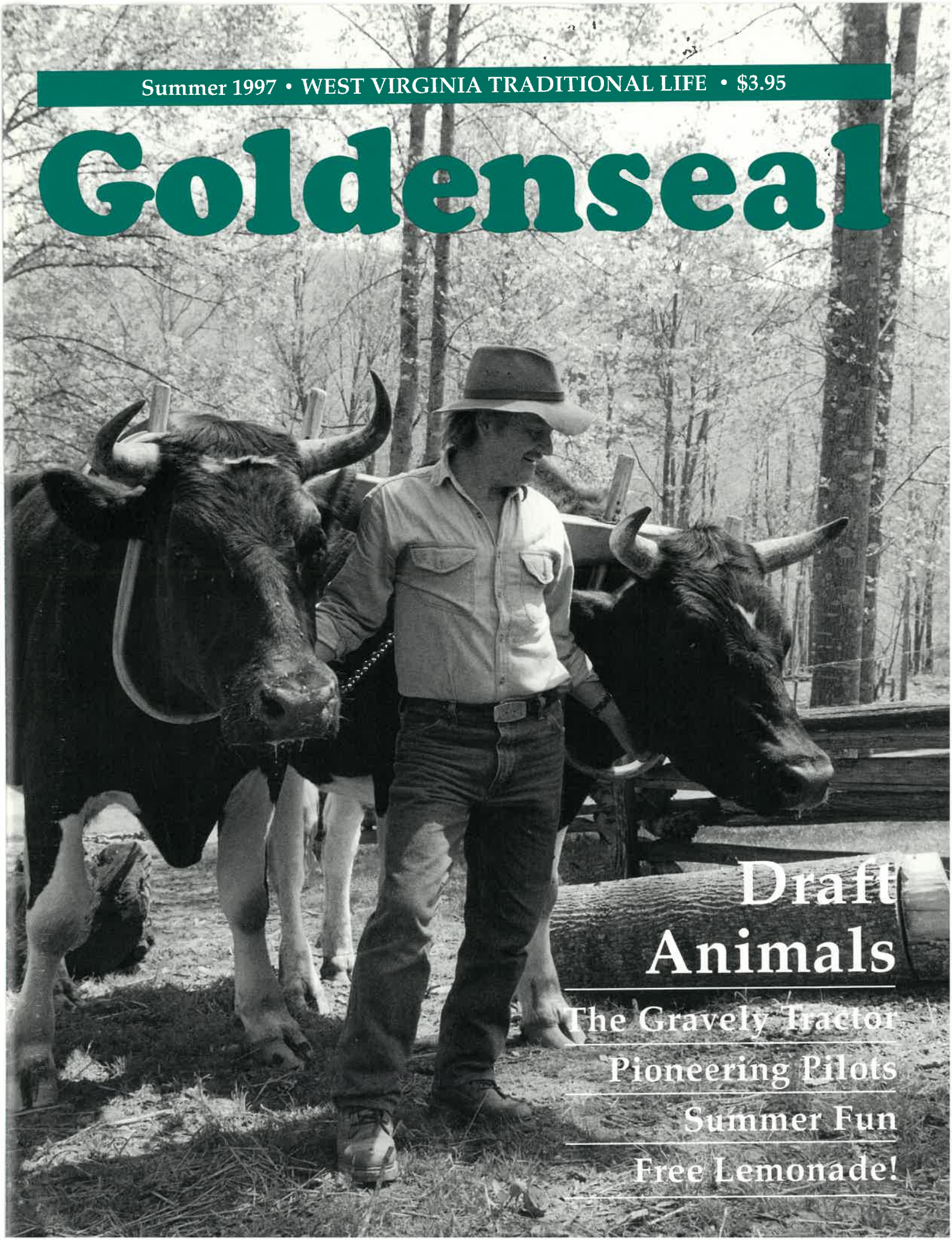
Summer 1997 • WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE • $3.95

Goldenseal



Draft Animals

The Gravely Tractor

Pioneering Pilots

Summer Fun

Free Lemonade!

From The New Editor: Greetings

Welcome to another memorable issue of GOLDENSEAL! I know that the Summer 1997 issue will stay with me and the other members of the GOLDENSEAL staff for quite some time. I'll explain in a minute, but, before I do that, allow me to introduce myself.

I am John Lilly, and I am proud to be the new editor of GOLDENSEAL. As most of you are aware, long-standing editor Ken Sullivan bid us farewell with the spring issue to assume his new position across town as the executive director of the West Virginia Humanities Council. It is an intimidating prospect for me, on my first day, to sit behind his desk, peck away at his computer, and officially assume the awesome responsibility of managing one of the finest and most unique magazines ever published.

I might be completely overwhelmed except for the realization that I have already been hard at work on this summer issue for over six weeks. Together with the intrepid, resourceful, and incredibly flexible GOLDENSEAL staff of Debby Jackson, Cornelia Alexander, designer Anne Crozier, and photographer Michael Keller, we have "pulled the weight" of preparing the magazine you now hold in your hands through very challenging circumstances over the past several weeks. Most of this was accomplished before I ever moved to Charleston, some of it before I was actually hired as editor!

MICHAEL KELLER

John Lilly became editor of GOLDENSEAL on May 19, 1997.

For the past four and a half years, I have worked at Davis & Elkins College in Elkins as publicity coordinator for the Augusta Heritage Center. In case you are not familiar, Augusta is an internationally-acclaimed folk arts education program best known for its summer workshops, annual Augusta Festival, and Augusta Heritage Recordings (see article, page 53). While hard at work there, I interviewed for the position of editor here. When I was offered the editorship in early April by then-Commissioner of Culture and History Bill Drennen, the magazine was already up against the deadline for preparing this summer issue. Before my appointment was finalized, Governor Underwood appointed new commissioner, Renay Conlin. While we anxiously awaited her Senate confirmation and my opportunity to re-enter the hiring process, the summer deadline loomed larger than ever. At that point, it was agreed that I would begin editing the summer issue by special contract, shuttling back and forth from Elkins to Charleston, holding down a full-time job on one end and scurrying to pull the summer issue together on the other. I felt like Henry Kissinger in a pick-up truck.

Well, as you can see, all's well that ends well. Renay was confirmed, I was hired, and I hope you will agree that the summer issue has turned out quite well indeed.

I enjoyed trundling over Irish Mountain with Michael Keller to meet Daniel Richmond and his oxen, Mike and Ike, in search of our cover photo. Like you, I learned more about Gravely Tractors than I ever expected to know; I took to the air with Rose Cousins and our other pioneering aviators; I traveled back up Turkey Creek with Elmer Bird; I marked my calendar for the Augusta Festival and Stonewall Jackson Jubilee; and I could almost taste that free lemonade in Bluefield.

Like you, I love GOLDENSEAL! I have read the magazine for many years and I am thrilled and honored to play a role in its continuing success. I will also assure you that GOLDENSEAL will continue to be the same magazine of traditional West Virginia life that you have come to expect. As always, the editor, staff, writers, designers, and photographers are here working for you, the readers. If you have comments or ideas, please let us know. If you are a writer, I very much look forward to speaking with you about your story ideas and to possibly sharing with you a few of my own. If you just want to say hello, please call, write, or simply stop by and see us.

Allow me to take a few lines for some important personal thank-yous. First and foremost, I would like to thank Ken Sullivan and his predecessor, Tom Screven. They created, shaped, and developed GOLDENSEAL into the magazine we see today: culturally significant, artistically designed, and financially stable. Ken left the desk stacked high with wonderful manuscripts and he willingly remains just a phone call away.

I greatly appreciate the patience and cooperation afforded me by Margo Blevin, director of the Augusta Heritage Center. She taught me volumes about managing a folk arts organization, and allowed me the flexibility to work on GOLDENSEAL during my last several weeks at Augusta.

I would especially like to thank my wife Cathy, my two young sons George and Mason, and my hound dog Jingle who agreed to come here with me. They have "hung in there" for what has surely been a wild ride. It'll get easier, I promise!

I would also like to publicly thank folklorist Gerry Milnes of Elkins who has generously shared with me his knowledge and insight regarding West Virginia folk traditions over the past several years. Gerry introduced me to Melvin Wine, Patty Looman, Woody Simmons, Dwight Diller, Fasnacht, ferrydiddles, fox chasing, and countless other treasures.

I look forward to sharing with you my love and enthusiasm for West Virginia, its history, and its heritage for many years to come. And, like you, I look forward to reading each new issue of GOLDENSEAL.

— John Lilly

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $16 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs. All correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Phone (304)558-0220. Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

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Goldenseal

Volume 23, Number 2 Summer 1997

COVER: Daniel Richmond, with oxen Ike and Mike, takes a break from hauling logs on his beautiful Raleigh County homestead. Men and draft animals work together throughout West Virginia, continuing a strong tradition as old as time. Stories begin on page 9; photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Joe Blankenship, Doug Chadwick, Greg Clark, Mark Crabtree, Mike Furbee, B.F. Gravely, Gravely and Moore Photographers, Michael Keller, Lisa Millimet, Gerald Milnes, Michele Morita

Letters from Readers

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

April 29, 1997
Walnut Creek, California
Ken Sullivan, former editor:
I am a native of West Virginia, I was born in Welch in 1930, attended public schools there, and graduated from West Virginia University. After graduation I entered the army and that career of 27 years and my subsequent civilian careers took me out of the state. However, I have been an eager and faithful reader of GOLDENSEAL for many years. In fact, now that my family members are all either deceased or have left the state, GOLDENSEAL and the university are my key remaining ties to West Virginia.

You and I have never met but when I read of your departure from GOLDENSEAL for a new opportunity, I felt as though I had lost a longtime friend. Every issue of the publication makes West Virginia "then and now" come to life as no other publication could. I am an avid reader and can tell you that no other publication of which I am aware, matches yours for the solid writing, the coverage of the topics selected, the unique approach, and for the human coverage.

It is of course true that no one is completely irreplaceable and I am sure that your replacement will do an excellent job — I wish him or her well. However, I hope above all, that your replacement does not change the style or thrust of coverage of the magazine. I have always thought of GOLDENSEAL as being the reader's link to great history, traditions, and culture of the state. I hope that it be permitted to remain so.
Sincerely,
Jack L. Hancock

Thank you for your kind words about former editor Ken Sullivan and GOLDENSEAL magazine, Mr. Hancock. As Ken's successor, and a longtime GOLDENSEAL reader myself, I am here to assure you that we do not have any plans to change the style or thrust of the magazine. We only wish to keep faithful subscribers, such as yourself, happy and reading GOLDENSEAL for many years to come. —ed.

Capon Springs Reunion

March 31, 1997
Capon Springs, West Virginia
Editor:
Ken Sullivan's last issue certainly was a dandy and we are proud to be part of it. The extended Austin family joins in thanking Stephanie Earls for her article and the GOLDENSEAL staff for the editing and layout and for taking good care of our old pictures. And we're glad Ken got to keep the "Me" doll!

The article on Capon Springs has brought us over a dozen phone calls and perhaps some new guests who will enjoy the spirit here. An old college friend wrote here after reading the magazine. I hadn't seen her in over 25 years. So your headline about Capon as a "Reunion" place rings true. Neighbors down the road here also enjoyed the article. It's always interesting how someone from the outside portrays something that we see every day in a new way.

Thanks from all of us at Capon Springs and Farms.
Sincerely,
Bonni McKeown

March 14, 1997
Bunker Hill, West Virginia
Editor:
I read with great interest your Spring '97 issue highlighting the Capon Springs Resort. I have family ties to that hotel, now known as Capon Springs and Farms.

My grandfather's brother, William M. Orndorff, was for a long time associated with the management of the hotel. He was born in 1859 and died in 1923. He worked with Captain William H. Sale and Charles F. Nelson. He made many trips to meet the hotel's guests at the train depot and transport them to the hotel. I remember at one time there was dire need to employ a cook. He went to Winchester, Virginia, the nearest large city, to accomplish a "hands-on" approach to the endeavor.

My father, Marshall Lee Orndorff, spent his honeymoon with his second wife at the Capon Springs Hotel. The management gave them an old-fashioned "belling" as part of their celebration. My Grandmother Orndorff's sister's son "Moss" Rudolph, worked for years at the hotel.

I have corresponded with Willard Wirtz, author of *Capon Valley Sampler*. He has expressed interest in conversing with me about history of the Capon Springs and Yellow Spring area and sharing with him pictures and stories — possible meeting place — the front porch of the Capon Springs Hotel!
Sincerely,
Robert Setser Orndorff

Cline Diary

March 16, 1997
Lewes, Delaware
Editor:
I enjoyed the article by Jean Battlo, "The Journal of J. W. Cline," in the spring issue. I was especially interested in Harper, West Virginia, for I spent much time there as a youngster.

My grandfather, T. J. (Jeff) Harper lived there with his brothers and sisters in the town named by their father, H. H. Harper. As a young child I remember well Mr. Dunn, the stationmaster at Harper (it was never called Harper Station, but rather the railroad station at Harper).

It was Mr. Dunn, a very pleasant and helpful man who showed me how the telegraph worked, and who would let me, from time to time, tap out a message on the key to some mysterious person far away and decode the return message for me. He was also very patient with me when I went to play on the heavy scales in the station. I didn't know that Mr. Dunn was "sharp dresser of the family" but I remember that he was a very interesting man for a ten-year-old to talk to. I also spent many a minute playing as a kid on the baggage cart Mr. Dunn is leaning on in the photo on page 23.

Everything in Harper was centrally located, for example, the U.S. Post Office (at one time run by Aunt Pearl Harper) was located just behind the station. Aunt Pearl's (and Uncle French's) beautiful home sat up on the hill opposite the train station and is still there today. Uncle French (my grandfather's older brother) owned and operated the Harper General Store, located next to the post office, until his murder in a botched robbery attempt on October 26, 1935, just a few steps from the station. Uncle French was shot as he walked home across the railroad tracks at 8:40 p.m. with the daily receipts from the store. My grandfather, hearing the shots, raced out of his house and Uncle French died in his arms. Fortunately for the killer, the local police caught him before the Harper brothers did and his trial was one of the biggest in Raleigh County history in the 1930's.

Fortunately for the killer, the local police caught him before the Harper brothers did.

Harper Station, photographer and date unknown.

Harper was a great little town to be raised in during the 1940's and '50's. I have great memories of the place, my family, and their friends like Mr. Dunn. I would like to thank GOLDENSEAL for helping me to bring back those great memories.
Sincerely,
Gary D. Wray

Old-Time Dancing

March 31, 1997
Port Orange, Florida
Editor:
I enjoyed your Spring '97 issue, especially the article by Mack Samples, "Join Hands and Circle — Old-Time Dancing Alive and Well." I was born in Clay during the '20's and grew up in Clendenin in the '30's and '40's. Mack Samples brought back many good memories to me.

I beg to differ with him when he writes that clog dancing was not known in central West Virginia. In the 1930's I remember my parents and my mother's sisters reminiscing about dancing and clog dancing in the town of Clay (they called it Clay Court House) after the turn of the century. Dancing was discreet (it was the work of the devil) in parlors with the blinds drawn or on side porches and verandas.

My mother and her sisters thought it was hilarious the way the young men would clog dance with their backs arched, hands on hips, and strut in front of the young ladies with their high kicks. They correctly attributed this activity to their Scots-Irish forebears. I never knew what my parents were talking about until I saw clog dancers from Northern Ireland perform on stage years later.

My mother and her sisters thought it was hilarious the way the young men would clog dance, hands on hips, and strut in front of the young ladies.

The Three Gables roadhouse was built at the end of World War II at Queen Shoals above the town of Clendenin. It was exceptional for the times.

I wish that Mack Samples had included Campbell's Inn in Spencer as a dancing roadhouse spot. It was the liveliest in central West Virginia. Again, I enjoyed this issue and article.
Sincerely,
Harry C. Andrews

Thanks for writing, Mr. Andrews. In his article, Mack Samples stated that the word *"clogging" was unheard of in West Virginia's central counties. Old-time dancers there call it "hoedowning." —ed.*

'50 Flood

March 31, 1997
Jane Lew, West Virginia
Editor:
I have had many nice comments on my story, "The Worst Disaster in

the Memory of Man — Recalling the '50 Flood," and a couple of corrections. One was my own fault (I had misplaced a note) and the second could only have been avoided if I could have found someone who knew where Martha Coyner and Katherine Moats were/are.

As it turned out, Bill Foster of Weston knew that Martha Coyner was from Upshur County, although she did practice in Ritchie County after leaving Jackson's Mill. My other mistake involved "John Hitchew." He died while still a young man. His sister-in-law, Virginia Davisson of Weston, called and asked that his name be corrected. It should have been John T. Hiteshew. She bought extra copies of the issue for his daughter and grandchildren.
Job well done, all of you!
Joy Gilchrist

Dreamland Pool

March 28, 1997
Tucson, Arizona
Editor:
I used to "inhabit" that wonderful pool called Dreamland [GOLDENSEAL, Summer 1996], in the 1930's. I even saw my ten-year-old

HERALD-DISPATCH

Dreamland Swimming Pool.

brother, Jack Crist, take his first dive off a 20-foot board there. Also, I danced to some of the big bands.

"You don't quit swimming because you grow old, you grow old because you quit swimming."

However, there is one item that was not mentioned — a sign at Dreamland that said, "You don't quit swimming because you grow old, you grow old because you quit swimming." How true! I am 80 years young and still swim. Just thought you'd like to know.
Sincerely,
Alice Anita Bott

Pocahontas County History

January 29, 1997
Ronceverte, West Virginia
Editor:
I was born at Marlinton in 1931. My working career carried me far away from the beauty of West Virginia. I enjoyed greatly "Getting Along Together — Black Life in Pocahontas County," in your Winter '96 issue.

I have done extensive research on blacks in Pendleton and Pocahontas counties through the Federal Census. I have some disagreement with Maureen Crockett that there were never many blacks in Pocahontas County. Only free blacks were generally listed in censuses. Slaves were only listed as a total number by sex at the end of a report. By law of Virginia, slaves were to leave the state once buying freedom or manumitted by owner/masters wills.

The county history book says that "black tithables remained much the same in the pre-Civil War years. There were 227 slaves and 17 free in 1830 alone, compared to 2,298 whites." As the county population grew throughout the 19th century, so did that of blacks.

Yes, many blacks came after the Civil War. But many were there in the 1850's and early 1860's. One of the original blacks in the county was Benjamin Warwick (referred to as "Greenbrier Ben"), who was 70 years old in 1850. He was freed in the will of Jacob Warwick whose life was saved by Ben in an 1818 attack by Indians.

I too differ with Mr. Simmons's statement that "blacks came to the

DOUG CHADWICK

The late Ruby Wheeler.

county mainly to build the railroads and work at Denmar." There were many, many black families in the county in the 1870's and 1880's. The building of the railroad wasn't until the late 1890's, early 1900, and Denmar wasn't until the late teens. The lumber industry was much more apparent, along with agriculture, followed by the tanneries.

My disagreements are substantiated, but are not meant to take away from this marvelous article.

Ms. Ruby Wheeler passed away January 2, 1997. She was buried in the Pleasant Green Church Cemetery that author Maureen Crockett visited.

I am a delighted GOLDENSEAL subscriber for many years. I love articles on Pendleton and Pocahontas counties.
Sincerely,
William Lindsay

Rock Spring Park

March 5, 1997
Cleveland Heights, Ohio
Editor:
I have just read the Winter 1985 issue containing an article about

Rock Spring Park, which was located in Chester, Hancock County. I'm really not as slow a reader as you might first think. I recently obtained a complete set of GOLDENSEAL and have been reading them avidly, just now arriving at Volume 11, Number 4.

The article contains photographs of various rides and locations within the park. One discusses the world's greatest scenic railway, a gravity-operated ride that was a mile long. It was said that although the attraction cost $35,000 to build, it paid for itself in its first year of operation, 1906. The comment was then made that it seemed likely that either the claim or the construction costs were exaggerated since the price of the ride was only a nickel.

Actually the claim may be accurate. The first gravity railroad was built in 1827 by Josiah White of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, its inventor. The railroad was used to haul coal from the mountains to a river for transport to Philadelphia. It permitted Mr. White to successfully market anthracite coal, which had previously been unpopular as a fuel.

The railroad was known as the Mauch Chunk and Summit Hill Gravity Railroad. By 1870 it had achieved such a reputation that crowds of curious visitors regularly came to watch it operate. On its inaugural day as a tourist amusement in 1873, it carried 35,000 passengers at a nickel apiece. By the turn of the century, it was the nation's second most visited tourist attraction behind Niagara Falls.

If the Rock Spring Park gravity railroad was equally successful, the claim made for its success would not be unreasonable. Roller coasters have become the amusement industry's most popular ride to this day, and even the original railroad existed until 1937. There is now a foundation devoted to preserving its history.

Sincerely,
Frank E. Wrenick

More Flood Memories

April 16, 1997
Sandyville, West Virginia
Editor:

I was in the midst of compiling a story on the deadly 1950 flood at West Union, Doddridge County, when I received your Spring '97 issue with Joy Gilchrist's article.

I want to share with you the adventure that my husband's family experienced that June night in 1950.

The Lowther home sat near Tom's Fork, close to where it joins with Meathouse Fork on Route 18 in New Milton district. This is very near the headwaters of Middle Island Creek which was to become a raging torrent that swept away lives and property that sad night.

My husband, Bob, his sister and brother lived with their parents in the home of Bob's grandparents Varnum and Eva Lowther, a three-generation household.

As the water continued to rise the family retreated to the second floor, but when the water reached the top step Bob's dad decided it was time to leave. But how? The storm was still raging and the lightning was so constant it was almost like daylight.

Knocking a hole in an upstairs closet wall, he led the family across the rafters above the kitchen area into the cellar house which was built up against the side of the road bank.

My mother-in-law was carrying her six-month-old son, my father-in-law was carrying an oil lamp. Somehow they managed to climb out a back window of the cellar house, up the road bank and out the road into a garage.

West Union in June 1950.

It must have been a long, miserable night for the small band of refugees, but next morning was even worse as they surveyed the damage done by the muddy water. The house was filled with mud and stink. Neighbors took them in until the cleanup could be accomplished.

Preaching a sermon a few years ago, my husband retold some of these events and mentioned that even though the glass mantels on the oil lamps were notoriously thin and would break at the drop of a hat, the mantel and globe survived the trip through the rain. The combination of a hot glass mantel being hit with cold rain would normally have busted it to pieces but it never broke. It stayed to light the way. Someone else must have been with them that fateful night.

Sincerely,
Martha Ann Lowther

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.

State Folk Festival

The West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville, now in its 48th year, was founded by West Virginia folklorist Dr. Patrick Gainer. According to early festival programs, its purpose was "to preserve the remnants of the pioneer life and culture of West Virginia in music, entertainment, education, social and economic activities to the end that citizens may appreciate and respect the achievements of their forebearers."

Illustration by Helena Triplett.

These lofty words still apply today. The West Virginia State Folk Festival is one of the Mountain State's most authentic folklife events.

The 1997 festival takes place June 19 through 22 with activities scheduled throughout the town. Festival-goers will find square dancing and gospel singing on Court and Main Streets, Civil War encampments on the courthouse lawn, slide shows and spelling bees at the Methodist Church, and music programs at the Glenville State College Fine Arts Center. Storytelling, puppet shows, a children's play, workshops, and a Sunday morning religious service round out the Folk Festival program.

Downtown Glenville turns into a craft village with craft demonstrations in basket making, pottery, blacksmithing, wood carving, weaving and spinning. Heritage crafts are encouraged rather than souvenir items.

The Folk Festival Belles have been a tradition since 1957. Each Belle is over 70 years of age and represents the true pioneer spirit. They are the honored guests at the festival, selected by Extension Homemakers and senior organizations throughout the state.

The West Virginia State Folk Festival is akin to a big family reunion. Organizers work to present musicians, singers and dancers who have learned from their ancestors. However, everyone who plays, sings, dances to or appreciates traditional southern Appalachian music, crafts and culture is welcome, according to this year's brochure.

Accommodations are available for the West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville State College or area motels. Camping is offered at Cedar Creek State Park. For more information call 1-800-480-8098 or (304)462-8427.

Mules In Service

In 1943, army officer H. L. "Lee" Hames found himself second in command of one of World War II's more unusual expeditions. He was aboard a trainload of men and mules bound for West Virginia to train fellow soldiers in pack animal transportation. Lieutenant Hames recounted his experiences for GOLDENSEAL in the article, "The Mule School" [Spring 1991].

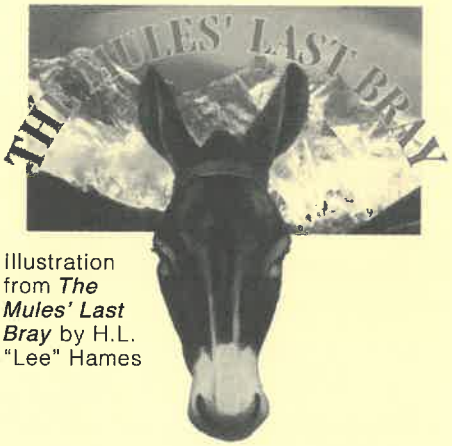


Illustration from *The Mules' Last Bray* by H.L. "Lee" Hames

Now Lee Hames has written a book about the history of mules' service to man. *The Mules' Last Bray: World War II and U.S. Forest Service Reminiscences* is a Pictorial Histories publication. Hames spent a lifetime with horses and mules as a range cowboy, a rodeo hand, a horse-logger, a rancher and a mule packer — both civilian and army.

He laments the fact that the army no longer plans its campaigns around a supply system dependent on mules and that mules no longer cultivate crops or work in hay. Though his book tells of mule-packing experiences in Montana, Burma and China, Lee Hames holds West Virginia in high regard. "I have seen a lot of the Rocky Mountains and I have also been over the Himalayas," he writes, "but I do not believe that any of them excel in the flowery beauty of the West Virginia mountains in the spring."

Much of the book is devoted to United States Forest Service mules, mule training stateside, and Hames's World War II experiences with pack animals where he says

the U.S. Army soon discovered American mules were needed in China more than American men.

The Mules' Last Bray is an 80-page softbound book, nicely illustrated with historic photographs, line drawings, and maps. It sells for $9.95, plus $3.50 postage and handling. Send orders to Pictorial Histories, 1416 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301; 1-888-982-7472. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

Berkeley Journal

The Berkeley County Historical Society recently announced the publication of an unusual journal. *Tales to Tell Tourists* is a compilation of original manuscripts written by Berkeley County high school students in 1929. Members of the historical society found the student papers, 33 stories in all, while going through old files.

The manuscripts were written in pencil or ink and revolve around the same theme — "Tales to Tell Tourists." Though the stories contain a few factual, spelling and grammatical errors, they provide a personal look at local history. Most of the tales are about Berkeley County, but some get into Morgan and Jefferson as well.

The students, 16 to 18 years old when they wrote the papers, would be 84 to 86 years old today. The Berkeley County Historical Society is offering *Tales to Tell Tourists* as a special issue. It may be purchased by mail for $5, plus $1.50 shipping and handling. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax. For more information contact the historical society at P.O. Box 1624, Martinsburg, WV 25402; (304)267-4713.

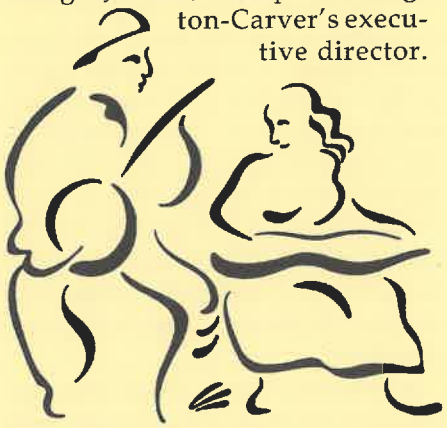
String Band Festival

Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County will present the Eighth Annual Appalachian String Band Music Festival from July 30 through August 3. The event has been expanded to five days and includes concerts, contests, nightly dances, workshops, crafts, story-telling, and jam sessions set in the beauty of a rural mountaintop retreat.

Opening day starts with an evening square dance from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Banjo contests are held on Thursday, July 31, and Friday features non-traditional band and fiddle contests. Saturday, the last full day of the event, is set aside for traditional band and dance contests. Cash prizes are awarded for all contest categories.

West Virginia musicians Melvin Wine and Frank George, along with Brad Leftwich of Indiana, will present a series of Appalachian Masters Workshops. The Rain Crows of Valley Bend promise to provide good dance music in addition to their Friday night concert performance. On Sunday, a group hymn sing is held before everyone heads home.

"The Appalachian String Band Festival is fast becoming *the* old-time festival of the East," says George Jordon, Camp Washington-Carver's executive director.



"It is a mountaintop gathering of musicians, family and friends."

The festival is produced by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. It is a family event. This year, new youth categories have been added in the fiddle and banjo contests and supervised activities and day care for kids are built into the schedule. Plenty of good home-cooked food is served

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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!

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at the Great Chestnut Lodge and West Virginia homegrown fruits and vegetables, snacks, and vegetarian entrees are sold.

Admission is $5 for adults, $3 for seniors and children. Children under two are admitted free. Rough camping is available. For more information contact Camp Washington-Carver, HC 35, Box 5, Clifftop, WV 25831-9601; (304)438-3005.

State Dance Convention

The 26th West Virginia Square, Round and Clogging Convention will be held August 1 through 3 at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon. While the convention is generally geared to dancers with prior instruction, beginners are welcome in some of the sessions.

Workshops are set in seven different dance halls and include instruction in mainstream, plus and advanced squares; round dancing; clogging; country and western couples; and line dancing. A "Grand March," style show, and sewing workshop are also planned.

The Dance Convention, held the first full weekend in August each year, welcomes all dance clubs — from square, round and clogging groups to contra and country and western dancers. Membership in the West Virginia Square and Round Dance Federation is free. Members receive mailings for the yearly convention and club information is automatically forwarded to the National Square Dance Directory.

Instructors from West Virginia and surrounding states donate their teaching time at the Buckhannon convention. Advance registration is encouraged. The cost is $15 per person prior to July 20, or $18 at the door. The cost for the Saturday workshop only is $5. Dormitory lodging and meals are available at West Virginia Wesleyan. For information contact Diana Payne, P.O. Box 628, Clarksburg, WV 26302; (304)622-0585.

Artists' and Craftsmen's Guild

West Virginia's fairs and festivals keep the state's artists and craftspeople busy this time of year, and for the public there's no better time to see some great work.

The West Virginia Artists' and Craftsmen's Guild, the only statewide organization for artists and craftspeople, is a big help to the arts and crafts industry in West Virginia. Membership is open to everyone at every level of involvement — full-time professionals, art educators, shop owners, beginners, or fine art/craft collectors.

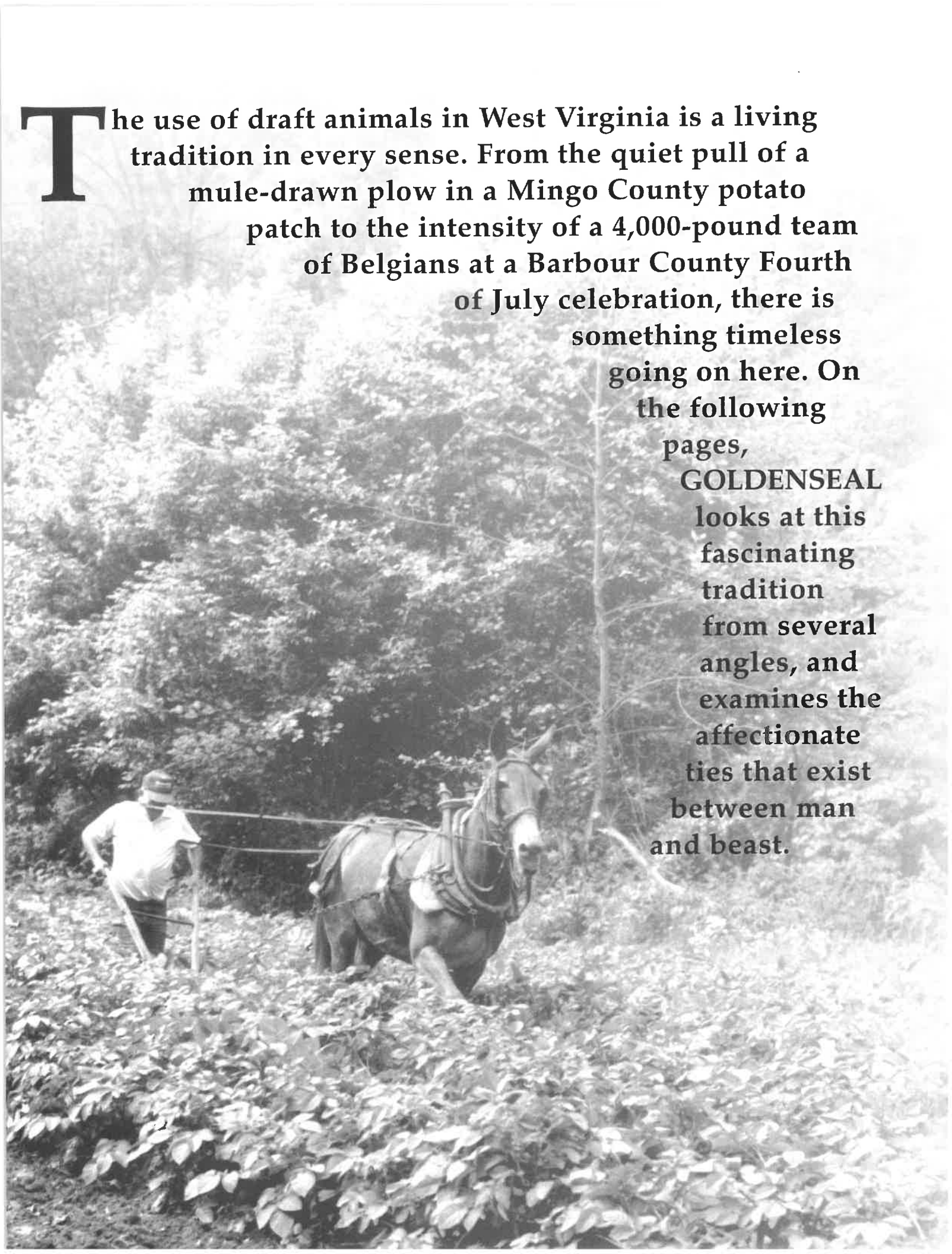
The nonprofit organization began as an outgrowth of the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Ripley in 1963, and still co-sponsors the big event. In addition to publishing a newsletter and directory for members, the guild concerns itself with professional development.

Workshops are offered on taxes, bookkeeping, promotional materials, pricing, and marketing, and the guild assists other organizations, shops, and individuals in locating artists and craftspeople. Members receive information on fairs, festivals, competitions, suppliers and professional publications as well.

The West Virginia Artists' and Craftsmen's Guild also plays a strong role in public education, providing speakers to talk not only about the guild but about arts and crafts in West Virginia.

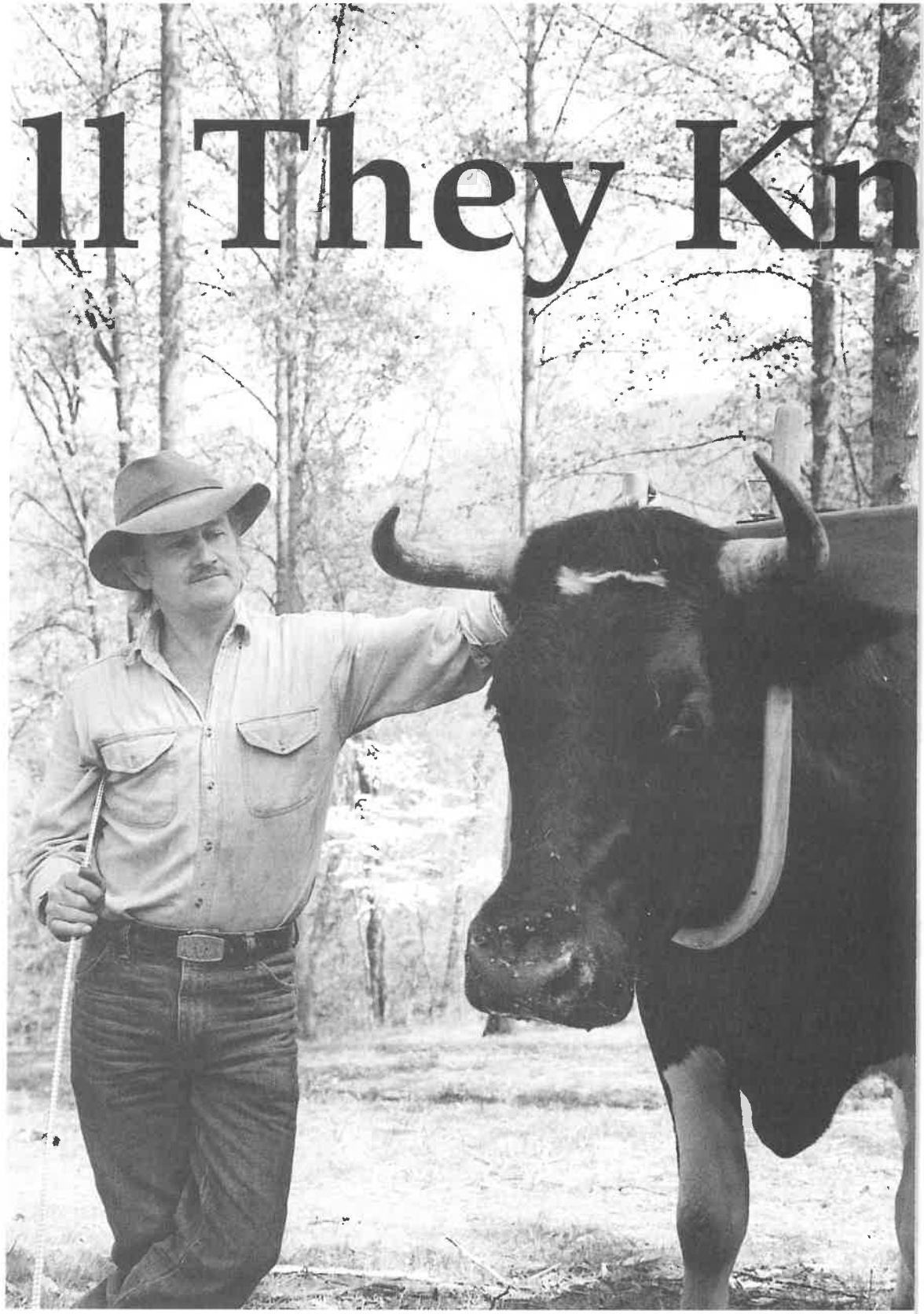
Annual membership dues are $15 for students, $20 for individuals, and $30 for families. Group memberships are $40 and lifetime memberships $100.

If you would like more information on the guild or wish to become a member, contact the group at P.O. Box 968, Charleston, WV 25324.



The use of draft animals in West Virginia is a living tradition in every sense. From the quiet pull of a mule-drawn plow in a Mingo County potato patch to the intensity of a 4,000-pound team of Belgians at a Barbour County Fourth of July celebration, there is something timeless going on here. On the following pages, GOLDENSEAL looks at this fascinating tradition from several angles, and examines the affectionate ties that exist between man and beast.

"All They Kn



Daniel Richmond and I met when he became part of an oral history project I began working on last summer — a collection of stories of mountain people born before the coming of cars and electricity.

He lives on ancestral land in Raleigh County where he cleared and built his homestead by hand. It sits directly above Sandstone Falls with a dramatic overlook down to the New River. You can hear the whine and rumble of trains far below, and the great sounds of the rain-driven river are amplified and funneled up to you by the huge hollows beyond the poplar log house. It is the most beautiful place I have ever been on a radiant summer morning.

Daniel Richmond About Then and Now

Interview By Lisa Gray Millimet

ew Was Pull and Get It"

Daniel Richmond. My name is Daniel Richmond and I was born on the banks of the New River in Richmond District March 12, 1946. I was raised on a farm my brothers and I still live on, which we have owned for 200 years, passed down from generation to generation. There were ten of us kids and we made our living off the farm. We farmed with horses, raised corn, raised hogs, raised cane, raised everything — even a little bit of hell.

1796 is when we got a land grant from the governor. It's written on a sheepskin and we have the old deed signed by James Monroe.

The farm is 200 years old this year; 1796 is when we got a land grant from the governor. It's written on a sheepskin and we have the old deed signed by James Monroe, governor of Virginia at that time, who later became president of the United States. This was all Virginia then. We are the fifth generation.

Left: Daniel Richmond of Raleigh County uses oxen to work farmland which has been in his family for 200 years. Photo by Michael Keller.

On Page 9: Jesse Browning of Mingo County cultivates his potatoes and plows his garden with a mule. Like many old-timers he prefers a mule for working garden crops. Photo by Gerald Milnes.

My great-great-grandfather William was from England. He lived to be real old — 96, I believe.

Lisa Millimet. Did you grow up in an organized, hardworking family?

DR. Yeah. One thing Dad believed in was work. And my mother [did] too. We never did think twice about it.

LM. So your brothers live in the original house down below you by the river?

DR. Yeah. That's the old log house we were raised in. All the boards are planed by hand, and it's whipsawed lumber and handhewed logs. It's close to 200 years old.

I've heard my dad talk about the giant chestnuts that grew in this country — extinct now. He said when you cut a tree down it took a seven-foot crosscut to reach through. It took two men the biggest part of the day to cut that tree down and the biggest part of the next day to cut a log off it.

I've heard him tell about his dad, my grandpa, one time pulling a red oak log so big that they had three big yokes of cattle pulling it down the mountain. It was 16 feet long and six feet, six inches through the butt end! He said you could hear the yokes a-grinding and a-popping, just pulling with everything in them. Those cattle pulled so hard they got down on their knees — skinned their legs. All they knew was pull and get it. And they had fender logs — poles laying on the lower side of the road, aging trees, to keep this big log from rolling over the mountain. When they started down this mountain, they took one yoke off and had two to

William Richmond, Daniel's great-great-grandfather, was the first settler in Richmond District, Raleigh County. Photographer and date unknown.

pull it down. And for some reason the road gave way and this big log rolled down against one of these fender poles and broke it and the log went over the mountain — took both yokes of cattle over the hill — flopped them end for end, buddy. It just threw cattle everywhere, snapped the yokes off their neck, pulled the bows. These old-timers just figured their necks were all

Stands of huge timber once covered Irish Mountain. Photo by Lisa Millimet.

broken, that they were dead. But when they got to them, all four steers were on their feet — no yokes or bows or nothing on their necks.

They were skinned up a little bit, bruised, but never broke the hide.

I've heard my dad talk about the giant chestnuts that grew in this country. When you cut a tree down it took a seven-foot crosscut to reach through.

So they got the cattle together, put them in the barn, went to the woods, cut new yokes, made new bows — that took a good couple days — and took all three yokes and went back to the tree. [They] got it to where it was level and drug it up to the boat landing. There was a sawmill straight across the river at Sandstone and they pulled this huge log up to where they could roll it in the river.

They had to keep dragging it until they could get it out there where it would float. Then they cut two big trees and they tied one on each side of it and floated it to the other side of the river where people had cattle to hook to it. They drug it out, bored holes in it with augers, and put dynamite in it to bust it open to saw it at the sawmill — because the mill just wouldn't saw a tree that size. Imagine a log so big through the butt end that you couldn't see a tall man's head over the top of it when he stood against it! He said *that* was a log and the rest of them were sticks. The mountains were just full of trees like that. You could just split rails for days on one giant chestnut, it was just as straight and just as true.

LM. How did you get a log off a hill without rolling over the cattle, anyway?

DR. If they were going *straight* down a real steep hill, they'd take a yoke and cattle that was broke to "jay off," that is they'd have a place at a certain spot the cattle could break off onto — a little level place to the right or left. These cattle were trained to do that. They would drive a set of grabs into the log, big hooks, and as soon as it started over, the cattle would listen and if a log started coming behind, the teamster would squall at them, and they'd take off running and when they jayed off, the grabs would pop loose and the log would just keep right on going straight on to the bottom and then you'd hook to it again. They used horses to jay, too. But if the grabs didn't turn loose or something, it just took them all and went over the mountain with them — killed them.

They kept steers in case something would happen to one but they wouldn't be broken to lead, [or] drive. And if a steer would get a broken leg or something like that, they'd just go catch a wild steer, and put him in the yoke among the rest of the cattle, maybe three or four yokes. And if he didn't want to go, the other steer would drag him until he got up. It wouldn't be long he'd be pulling with the rest

"Gee" means right and "haw" means left; team, driver, yoke, and load move together up a hill. Photo by Michael Keller.

of them. They would have to fight him every day to get him back in the yoke but after a couple of months, every day and every day, he'd get right in there.

LM. Daniel, tell us about why you left here and what happened to bring you back.

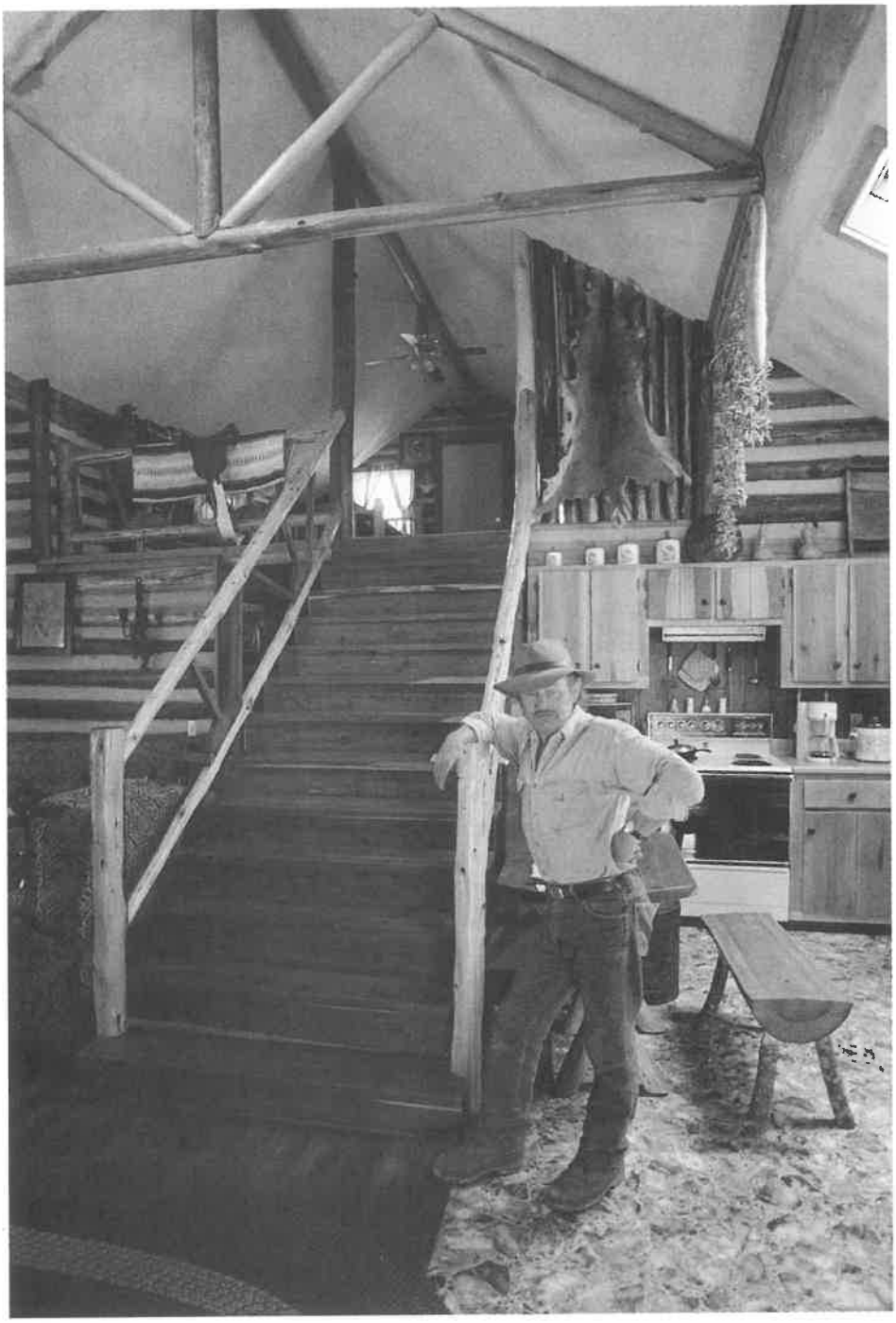
DR. I got married and left here back in 1970 — went to Maryland because I didn't think there was anything here for me. I thought everybody was the same until I got out in the world a little. I guess many old homesteads have been let go because people have moved away or they're ashamed of where they came from. They don't want nobody to know about eating a possum and sleeping in an old cabin with the wind blowing through the cracks. Anyway, it was too crowded and dangerous up there and I just couldn't handle the rat race. So I moved back, cleared land, built a log cabin and a barn. And it's a good life here. This is one hillbilly that's proud of where I come from. Proud of where I'm going, too. I'll never leave again. I'll eat groundhogs before I'll go back, eat cornbread and drink spring water, which ain't no bad life either — if you got a possum to go with it now and then. Actually, I still eat groundhogs but I laid off on the possum. I got a cholesterol problem.

LM. So tell me what you're trying to do with your life.

DR. I'm trying to go back to the old way of life as much as possible, and I've got a start on it right now. If I live, I'm planning to live as close to how my great-grandparents did 150 years ago. It's the way I was raised. I love the peace and quiet of these mountains and everything about them.

LM. Is there anybody doing this besides you?

DR. There's a few people starting to break yokes of oxen but to go back and give up everything to live like this? Very few would. You know my father, Webster Richmond, was in his 50's before he married. He was born back in the 1880's and he lived to be 82. He was really old-fashioned. He believed in a mowing scythe, an ax, a crosscut saw, and a pair of horses or a yoke of cattle. He didn't want nothing to do with no tractor. We didn't have any electricity and what we did for entertainment — our dad would tell us stories at nighttime of what happened years ago, handed down.



Daniel at home. The poplar logs were cut from Richmond land and pulled to the home site by a team of horses. Daniel built this house before he owned Ike and Mike, his oxen team. Photo by Michael Keller.

LM. Like what?

DR. Well, he'd tell us tales about logging with cattle and about riding horses to a dance after a night. He'd tell about how he bought a threshing machine. They pulled with two teams of horses and whoever's house he went to, that's where he'd stay until all the wheat was

(continued on page 16)

How to Train a Giant

I got interested in oxen when I was a kid and heard the old-timers talk about working with them; their power and easy-going steadiness and lumberly ways. So when I came back I got a pair of calves. They were black Holsteins and I raised them on a suck bottle.

Daniel uses cucumber wood, a variety of magnolia, to carve the yoke for his team. The most challenging part, however, is achieving the 180° bend in the hickory bows. Photo by Michael Keller.

By the time they were two months old I had them weaned and I made a little tiny yoke for them. That was a treat. The yoke wasn't hard to make. The bows were almost impossible. I liked to never got those things bent! I thought for sure those old-timers had to have ordered them from Sears and Roebuck. But I finally caught on to it. I had mine pretty well broken before I found out anything. I didn't know there was anybody had oxen anymore but I finally got some books from up in the New England states. I also got one of the Foxfire books — made my own yoke pattern.

The trick with bows is having plenty of time. Bend them slow and easy. And it's got to be nothing but shell-bark hickory. And the yoke you want to make out of something strong but light, like cucumber [Cucumber Magnolia Tree] or sassafras. So I made two little tiny bows and a little yoke out of cucumber. When I was trying to make the bows, they were something else. I cut down a small hickory, split it open and tried to bend it. I put it in between a forked tree, about the size of what their necks should be, and I tried to bend it real slow but it broke.

So I tried boiling it, and I boiled it and boiled it but it broke again. It turns out there were little tiny knots right in the bow, that's what was causing it to break. It won't stand pressure, it's too weak there. So I cut another hickory and I split it open. You have to make sure there's no knots. Leave the bark on the outside of it, bend it to the inside. Where you are going to bend it, whittle it down to the thickness that you are going to leave it. But the pieces that come up on his neck on each side, just leave them rough, leave them big.

Of course, it's going to bend at the weakest point, where you whittled it down. Knots can be anywhere else, but cannot be in that bend — bend it real slow. If you're in a hurry just throw it down and go in the house because that's the end of it.

Just pull a little bit on one end, then a little on the other and keep pulling it around a little at a time until you get it like a small calf, about six inches apart. Then take it out from the forks and bend it back down. After you have bent it one time, it will take the pressure next time. The wood is then stretched. Then tie it with a string and hang it up in the smokehouse and let it cure out. It's pretty tough to find a hickory that doesn't have knots in it.

The yoke isn't very hard to make. But it needs to be made out of something that won't crack under a hard pull; something light — the cattle don't need to carry any more on their neck than they have to.

They took to the yoke just like they were born to it. I had them both broken to lead and they would follow me anywhere. The first time I hooked them to the sled, I had a suck bottle in front of them and they just followed me around and they've been working ever since.

I starting out breaking them with lines but by the time they were four months old, I had them "gee" and "haw" broken without lines. I don't use any lines, halters, bridles, nothing now.

Any steer who has bits in his mouth is an unbroken steer. The only thing I use is a little buggy whip. And I don't really consider them broken until I can leave the buggy whip home. I use them to haul out wood and clear land. They are two and a half years old and

they are called working steers right now. They won't be called oxen until they are four years old. They weigh about 3,200 pounds together and when they get full grown, they'll weigh at least 2,500 pounds a piece.

I'm 5'4" tall and when I was training them, they were small. I could look across their backs and tell what Mike, the off steer, was doing. You're supposed to walk on the left near the lead steer. If the off steer was laying back, I could tap him on the rump and keep him up with the other steer.

But as they grew taller Mike developed a little habit. When I get to pulling a heavy load I have to get on the off side to make him do it. He is lazy. He will do his thing if he sees me behind him on his side. He knows it's time to get after it, not lay back in the yoke. If I train another yoke of cattle, I'll teach them to work both sides. The way they are trained now, if I would take the lead steer and put him on the off side, it's the same as tying all four feet together. They can't walk for nothing. The commands are entirely different to them. You can't even drive them.

Bend it real slow. If you're in a hurry just throw it down and go in the house because that's the end of it.

Both of my steers are broken to ride. I can ford the river up to their bellies riding them with the yoke on. I can work them and get from one back over to the other while they're pulling a load. I used them to pull my logs in for my barn and I used them to lay some logs on the top part of my barn. I don't weigh but 135 pounds and some of these logs weigh 700 or 800 pounds a piece. They are 35 feet long and I couldn't get them on the top of my barn.

So I put my oxen on the inside of my barn with a long chain and two skid poles and I was on the outside at least 20 feet away from them. The chain was hooked in the middle log and I was outside keeping it on the skid poles. They pulled until it got on top and all I had to do was holler, "Whoa!"

They stopped right there. It's just like having two big giants helping you. They are absolutely great! Oxen never get scared or excited or if they do, they don't run off like a horse — calm down real quick. If you raise your voice, that scares them more than anything.

To start out with the commands, pick out the lead steer, the left steer walking from behind. The right one's the off steer. After you break them to lead and teach them to follow you and get them used to the yoke, you can start putting halters and ropes on them. Then take a buggy whip, put lines on them and teach them, "come up" and "whoa." They catch on to that real fast.

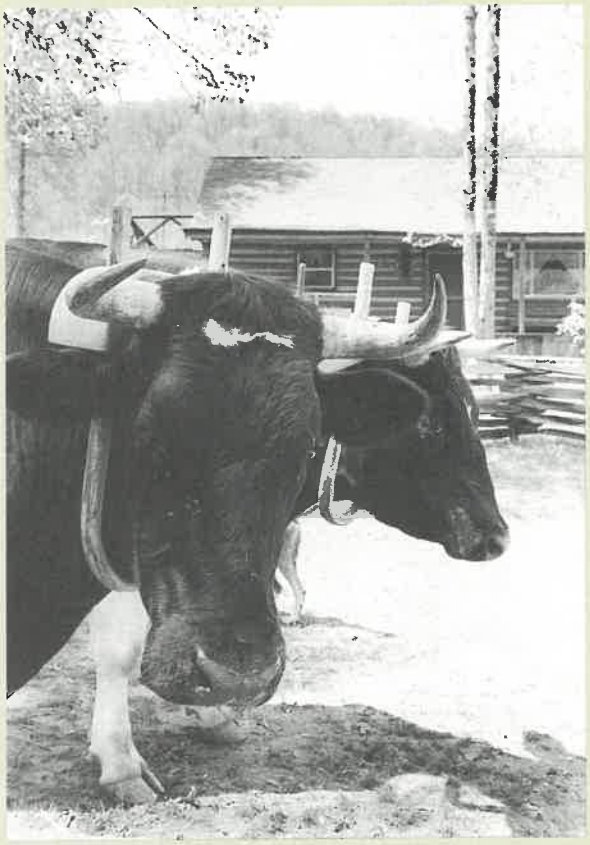
Then you have got to teach them "gee" and "haw." "Gee" means right and "haw" means left. "Gee" goes right by tapping the one on the left on the rump and the other one on the nose. The one on the right puts on the brakes and the lead one just sort of swings around him. And to go "haw," you tap the lead steer on the nose lightly and pull on the line. Then tap the one on the right on the rump and he just turns around to the left. But don't use the lines any more than you have to. Use command and the whip. My steers don't know what a whipping is but I will crack them every now and then to get their attention. It's just like a fly was lighting on them. They're not hard to break at all.

Checklines are a set of lines like you drive a team of horses with and you put bits in their mouth and you have bridles on them. It's a nuisance, it's in the way and they're so easy broken without it. And by the time I'd put the lines on a horse, I could be out hauling in wood with the steers. I can be working my cattle and holler at them from 75 feet behind and if it's a tight place where logs are rolling over the hill, I'm out of the way, not up against them.

Plus a horse is 17 hands tall and I'm 15 hands tall. I can't get the harness on him. If these steers grow much taller, I'll have to do something else to put the yoke on them. Climb up on the horns maybe!

I know you have heard this term "dumb as an ox." I wish the hell a horse had the brains of an ox — and a lot of humans. The only thing that oxen like when they get through, they want their chin scratched. They demand that. They will lick you with their sandpaper tongue if you don't scratch their chin.

I think one reason people preferred cattle years ago [was that] leather and metal for harnesses were hard to come by. And oxen



Eventually growing to a weight of 2,500 pounds each, these young cattle are called working steers until they are four years old. The term oxen is used for grown steers which have been trained to work; "castrated bulls with a college education," says Daniel. Photo by Michael Keller.

grew bigger than the horse. Horses were small, years ago, mostly kept for cultivating and riding. They preferred oxen for farming because they were stronger. Nowadays we have horses just as big as any ox, but years ago it was different.

Dad said the steers back then all had horns and they grew pretty long. He said the cattle would be walking along pulling a wagon and the horns were so long that one steer's horn would hit the other's and they would clack together — "clack, clack, clack" — sound like music. And some of them would take a knife and shape them and make them grow the way they wanted them to.

In West Virginia working teams are just a thing of the past. They want the logs out faster and use modern equipment — dozers, skidders. But those just gut the land. Absolutely destroy it.

The last man that timbered over here was old man Burke Richmond. He logged with horses. As a kid I'd go help him. He would drag logs so far that he almost wore them lopsided. But they just don't use them anymore. I hear that some places in the national forests they're making them go back to horses because they don't want the land all tore up when they're timbering. You can log all day with a team of cattle or horses and in one week's time, in the summertime, you can't tell where you logged. You can log one hour with a skidder or dozer and it will be there permanently — trashed. The trees may grow back, the mountain never will.

And now not many people are doing this — less and less. I'm alone really but I'm not lonely. I am very happy with it. I could take my yoke of steers and go into the woods and stay ten hours and it's like I have been gone two hours. And do it the next day the same. And do it by myself. I like it that well. I'm a registered full-bodied pioneer and I like my way of life.

—Daniel Richmond

Free of their yoke, Ike and Mike enjoy an encouraging word from Daniel. Photo by Lisa Millimet.

(continued from page 13)

threshed. Everybody would help, then he'd move on to another farm and thresh. Corn shuckings were the same. Every now and then they'd have a contest and bury a pint of liquor in a pile of corn and see who could shuck into it the fastest and get it.

I've heard my dad tell it made no difference how steep the land was. There was just a ribbon of trees between each farm and everybody had plenty of everything — except money. But we were rich in a lot of ways. We ate like kings. There were 65 families in this little community! When I was a boy he'd take us around to some of the old places and tell us who lived there.

These mountains are plum full of chimneys, pieces of an old pioneer cabin rotting away where people used to live — though you could hardly tell there was ever a farm there now. They're all gone. One old guy, Math Jake, had a peg leg. They called him Peg Jake. And when old man Dewey Atkins was a boy 85 years ago, he used to get in front of the old man and lay down in the furrow and the old man would take the plow and plow the dirt on top of him. Then he'd dig his way out, and run and get in front of those cattle, and he'd let him get down next to the plow and they'd plow him under again. He and those kids thought that was a lot of fun.

And back up on Irish Mountain

there's Irish been buried for a hundred years in the cemetery up there. A lot of tombstones say from County Clare, Ireland — Dillons, Hurleys, McCartheys, Gwinns, O'Learys, Connors. A whole mountain of Irish and each one of them had their own place and farmed, had plenty and helped each other. Dad remembered they were straight from Ireland and didn't even speak English; just enough to get away with.

There is a Catholic church up there built by the Irish back in the 1800's. St. Colman Catholic Church where the Irish came to worship. It's about two and one half miles from my cabin on a dirt road up the mountain — up, up, up 'til you get there. Looks like you're climbing to the sky but after you get up there it levels off, sets up on a knoll to the right. The approach from the road up to it is so steep that when you walk back down, feels like your toes are going through your boots. All the pews are planed by hand and they were whipsawed lumber. You can see the grooves in them where they've been hand planed — poplar.

I remember John and Fannie Connor when I was a kid. They were true Irish. They claim the old man would get drunk and get to cussing himself, look in a mirror and shoot through the mirror at himself. And James Simon Connor — *there* was an Irishman and if he liked you, he liked you. But he could be carrying 50 pounds on his back up this mountain and if he didn't like you and you stopped to pick him up to take him home, he wouldn't ride with you — wouldn't have anything to do with you. He was very stubborn. He was the last true Irishman of this mountain, the last one. And there ain't but one thing left and it's that church — oh, maybe a foundation here and yonder. A lot of the old places don't even have a stone foundation but you can tell where [they were] by the rock piles and rock fences they built when they cleared the fields. Very few people know about that.

To me that life was a paradise. I wish I was born a hundred years ago. I'd be dead now, but I'd be a satisfied man.

I'd like to see a lot of people come back, like myself. But I don't think it will ever happen. To me that life was a paradise. I wish I was born a hundred years ago. I'd be dead now, but you know, I'd be a satisfied man.

I wish the old-time chestnut was back and everybody could rive out shingles, could split rails. I believe everybody would be a lot more healthier and a lot more happier than they are now. The more you get, the more you want — and for what? To buy a fancier casket with? I'd just as soon be buried in a pine box.

When I close that red gate into my place, I'm going back into paradise where it's peaceful and quiet. I can saddle my horse and just ride for endless miles back in these mountains and never see trash — nothing. And I hope it stays this way. People move away to the city thinking they'll live a little bit better, but they aren't any better off than these old pioneers who built those cabins, worked yokes of cattle around these steep mountainsides and rode an old horse to town and back. Those people were free. After moving away and coming back, it looks damn good. When I ride a horse through here I stop and look and think about those old houses and people like my Grandpa Atkins, a mountain man from a bygone lifetime.

Nobody knows or cares but as long as I'm living, I will care. I know what happened in these mountains.

Heading home. Photo by Michael Keller.

Dellis Rowan guides his team of Percheron horses, Jack and Bud, as they pull two log sections. It's always Bud on the left and Jack on the right. Buck is close behind. Photo by Joe Blankenship.

Randolph County Horsepower

By Judith Stutler

The sound of horsepower is not a roar but a whinny when brothers Buck and Dellis Rowan of Randolph County are out logging. Their equipment produces only two horsepower of energy and uses dried grasses for fuel, but can remove choice logs from nearly anywhere in the woods with relatively little damage to the surrounding environment.

Darrell "Buck" Rowan, 69, of the Elkins area and his younger brother Dellis Rowan, 65, of Mabie, say the old way is environmentally the best way in logging — and their team of Percheron draft horses is testimony to their belief.

On a recent job near Harpertown Road outside of Elkins, Dellis's massive five-year-old iron-gray Percheron horses — always Bud on the left and Jack on the right — made gentle blowing sounds through their noses, their heads slightly bowed, their massive feet gripping earth on their way up a slope for their next load.

The Rowans and their horse team can extract about 3,000 board feet of timber on an average day. The only trace of their activity are skid rows, paths less than 20 feet wide, cut through the woods and bordered with small-diameter logs, that serve as a guideline for skidding the freshly-felled timber to a landing site. Like trails made by giant snails, the paths winding down the hillside are marked not with tire treads but with alternating arcs made by the Percheron's hooves and footprints produced by their human masters and friends.

The Rowans' only condescension to modern technology is to use a chainsaw to fell the trees instead of two-man crosscut saws commonly used by loggers about a century ago.

"I always liked horses for logging," Dellis says. "You don't tear up the ground and timber as you do with equipment."

Buck is quick to add, however, that "We're not here to criticize modern equipment — there's no way you can get enough horses to fill the demand for timber."

Percherons are not the only traditional tools that have experienced a renaissance in the Rowans' work. Grabs, spreaders, cant hooks, J-grabs and grab skippers used 85 to 90 years ago are not quaint steel-and-wood tools to hang over a fire-

place or antiquated words buried in an old dictionary. To the Rowans, the traditional logging items are vital to their enterprise, allowing them to cut, trim, and hook together as many as four logs for a horse-drawn trip downhill to a landing site.

As motorized equipment needs fuel, so do horses — and lots of it. Bud and Jack, who each weigh a hefty 1,800 pounds, consume $1\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of grain each three times a day and a half bale of hay.

In addition to boarding, feeding, and grooming his horses, Dellis also serves as the team's farrier, repairing and creating new horseshoes as the need arises. Red tassels embellishing Bud and Jack's harnesses and placed there "for the duration," according to Dellis, brightly punctuate the muted browns and grays of the forest.

The sons of the late Eslie Rowan, who worked as a teamster in the forests and mines, the two brothers haven't made their livelihood in logging but it's a significant part of their retirement years.

Buck, who worked ten years at Channell Grocery and from 1964-'82 at the Western Maryland Railroad shops in Elkins, said when he was 18 or 19 years old he had a team of logging horses and engaged in some timbering.

"He got married and I took over," Dellis says with a laugh. "He almost couldn't keep his wife for working with the horses."

Dellis worked 26 years in the Division of Highways maintenance shop in Coalton where he served as crew leader for 15 years. Joking about the difference in their ages, Dellis says his brother is older but "I've got more miles."

Logging for the two retirees provides a profitable pastime but is not an everyday occupation.

"We sit by the fire and hunt in the wintertime," Buck says, "but if I'd go somewhere and sit down for too long, I'd grow old."

An item on Dellis's schedule this spring was to travel with Bud and Jack to Grantsville, Maryland, to join a wagon train headed to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, to participate in a "living history" convoy that included 29 teams last year.

The Percheron draft horse breed has quite an extensive and remarkable history of its own. According to information from the Percheron Horse Association of America and the *International Encyclopedia of Horse Breeds*, native mares of the LePerche region of France were mated with Arab stallions during the eighth century and the Middle Ages. Their equine offspring became noted for strength as well as appearance, and by the 17th century the horses were in demand for various uses.

The old way is environmentally the best way in logging.

Percherons were first imported to the United States in 1839, and importation continued until World War II. The draft animal became popular with teamsters, and by 1930, a government census showed there were three times as many registered Percherons as other draft breeds combined. Following World War II and the mechanization of farm implements such as tractors, Percherons were not widely used except by a handful of farmers, particularly the Amish.

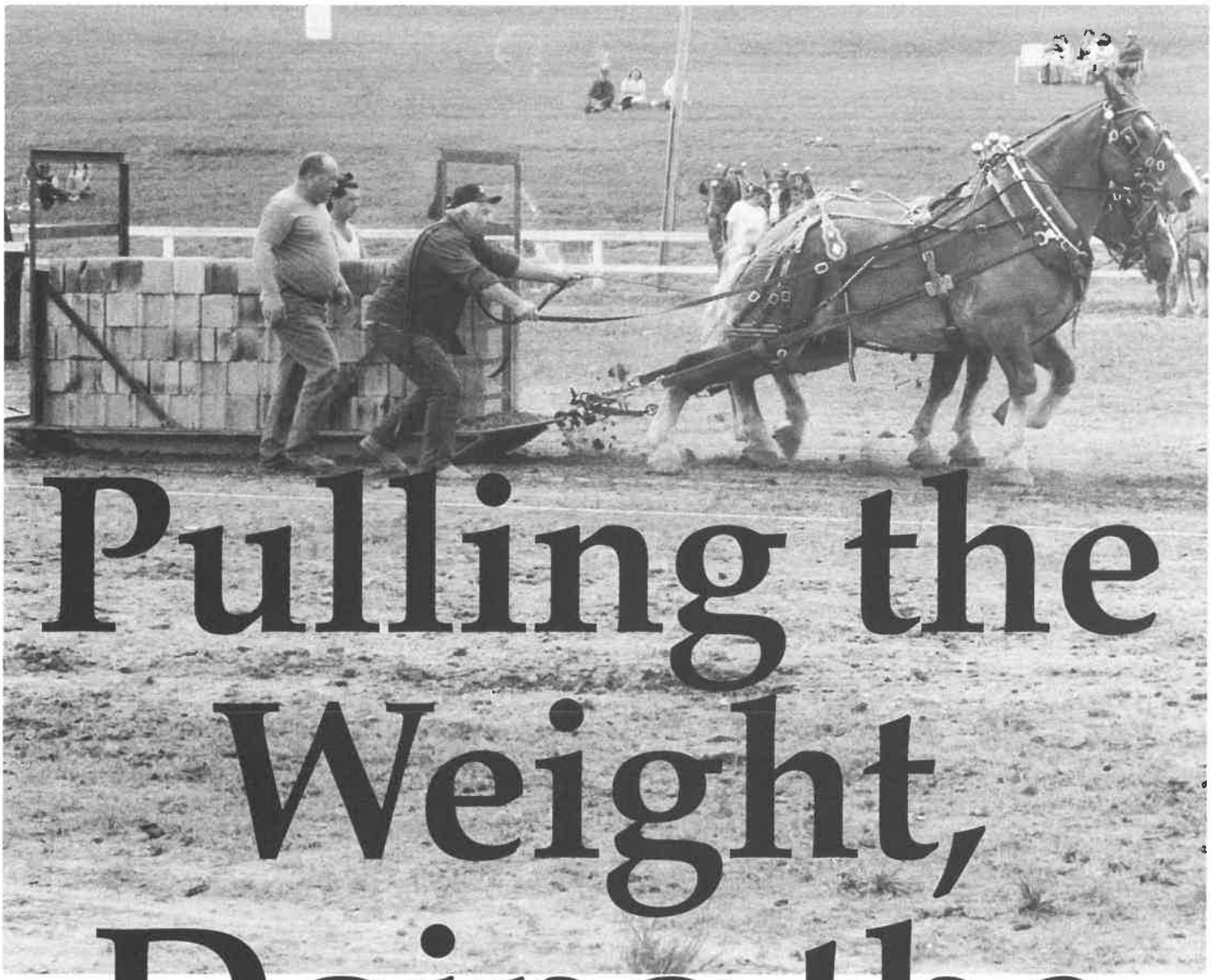
Beginning in the late 1960's, however, the usefulness of Percherons was rediscovered and the horses were again used for working in the woods and on small farms, and for recreational purposes such as parades, hayrides, and horse-pulling exhibitions.

Although eager to complete their daily work in the woods, the brothers say they are always willing to stop to give talks about early logging methods to visitors or school children out on a field trip.

"We enjoy this work and believe in what we're doing," Buck says. "So far we're making our customers happy. The state forest [officials] are very much interested in our work.

"This may be the end of this art," he says. "But if our kids have a mental picture of this, it won't be a lost art forever."

Bud and Jack, ready to pull. Photo by Joe Blankenship.



Pulling the Weight, Doing the Work

Barbour County's Horse Pull

By Eric G. Waggoner

Photographs by Michele Morita

We are standing, the photographer and I, near the faded white fence that encircles the field. We've never seen horses this big. The rest of the crowd — a good-sized one that comes and goes throughout the contest — obviously has. They are fans, friends, other competitors, and neighbors; they're quick to applaud the action inside the corral.

The day isn't really overcast, but thick patches of clouds keep the sun from shining for any extended period. It's a little humid, too. I don't think any of us would be surprised if it rained, but that's not slowing the contest down. We watch as a team of horses are led to an iron sled stacked with cinder blocks. The team is hitched to the sled and, almost as soon as the hitch has been completed, the serious action starts.

The horses — big, heavy-bellied, a mottled tan color — suddenly hunker down and dig with their hind legs into the dry earth, steadily pulling that sled, not snorting but breathing loudly and strongly, puffing out air, their manes tossing as their heads kick back and forth against the weight. No one in the crowd speaks; the only human voice is the horses' owner, yelling, "Ha! Get up there! Get up!" to spur them on. We're all watching the field, watching the horses, watching that sled move behind them while the dirt gets tossed up under their hooves.

And then it's over. The horses stop, standing quiet and still now, where they had been almost frenzied a second before; an ear twitches lazily on the one closest to me. "Good pull," one bearded man says to another, and the other nods his agreement. The crowd applauds.

Festivities something like these are going on all over the country today. It's the Fourth of July, after all.

I would imagine there are festivities something like these going on all over the country today. It's the Fourth of July, after all. I am running around the Barbour County Fairgrounds, a hilly patch of land between Philippi and Belington off U.S. Route 250, taking in the action. Most of the standard Fourth activity is up a hill, over a rise and away from us, out of our sight. The Lions Club has a booth set up; they're selling pop and hot dogs. There is face-painting and balloons, barbecue sandwiches, and noisemakers. Local businesses are sponsoring games for the kids and music for the adults. There's a "Battle of the Bands" taking place on a covered stage; heavy metal music filters down to us where we stand in a punched-out section of the fairgrounds. But the music isn't the heaviest thing around. The real weight is down here, in the corral.

Barbour County is horse country. As we crossed the covered bridge and pulled into town, the photographer and I remarked on all the signs — advertisements for stables and riding lessons were scattered alongside the road, each with a particular logo or fancy script that made me think of the stately show horses in your finer men's magazine cologne ads. Very cultured, don't you know. I wondered whether we were dressed properly.

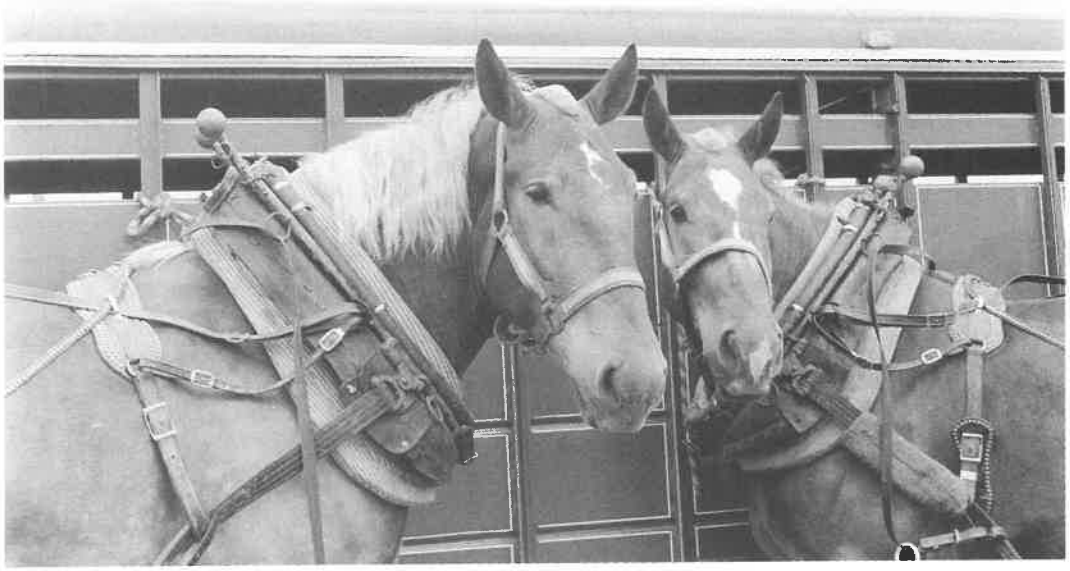
When we pulled into the parking lot — a grassy ridge off to the side of the fairgrounds, where a smiling citizen waved us through — we saw them. Horse trailers are hard to miss as a rule, and ten or 15 of them together are pretty well impossible to ignore. I walked towards them, and I remember thinking three things, in this order, as I got closer:

First, "There are the horses."

Then, "Those horses are pretty big."

Then, "Shoot, that's a *big* horse!"

The trailer doors were being unlatched and opened, horses were being hitched together; owners, trainers, breeders, and showers who hadn't seen each other



Opposite Page: Charles Geho's team, Bill and Dan, pull 9,000 pounds.

Left: Bill and Dan relax at the Barbour County Fairgrounds.

in a long time were getting reacquainted. One thirtyish man, the brim of his hat pushed back on a fuzzy head, stepped out of the trailer into the sun and spoke to someone in the crowd gathered around the ramp: "Hello, neighbor."

His sunglasses hid his eyes and it was hard to tell who he was speaking to, but his crooked smile and easy wave said it better than words: he was speaking to everybody.

If you're not involved in the horse community, you don't see them much these days, but that's because draft horses are still doing what they have always done — pulling the weight and doing the work, quietly and without much fanfare. Draft horses are a particularly solid breed, noted for their brute strength and willingness to pull the plow, or the logs, or whatever. The term "workhorse" may not have originated with them, but it may just as well have. They are big, heavy, thickly-muscled animals, nothing like the sleek ponies I was imagining on the drive in. Loggers have traditionally used them to pull felled trees out of the forest; they can negotiate rough terrain better than the smallest tractor, and pull weight as handily as the biggest. In Barbour County, in fact, wood is still a major natural resource, and draft horses are used here and there.

The horse owners and trainers here today are from in-state, but they are also from Maryland and Pennsylvania. I understand, in fact, that there's another pull like this one going on in Pennsylvania today, but that hasn't stopped these folks from coming out. A lot of them haven't seen each other in a long time, and while the horses are being hung with leather harnesses and strapped in, a lot of the people take time to get caught up. There's a fair amount to talk about after a year has gone by.

Chuck and Lenora Mots watch the horse pull from the hillside with son Trey.

All 20 of the horses here today are registered Belgians, and as I've previously noted, shoot, that's a *big* horse! Belgians, a particular strain of draft horse, are originally of European stock, and appeared in the United States fairly recently, in the early 1800's. Julius Caesar favored them as war-horses, and I guess any horse good enough for the Roman Empire is bound to be a solid worker. Belgians are tall, measuring anywhere from 15 to 17 hands high (hands being equal to about four inches), and can weigh upwards of 2,000 pounds. Compared to an average horse, that's about twice the weight and taller by a foot. *Big*, I say. A Belgian's midsection — the trunk, or what's called a barrel on a horse — is truly barrel-shaped, low-hanging but solid. They can take in a lot of air. The Belgians use that deep breath to set themselves up and move a tremendous amount of weight, which is what they do on the farm or in the woods. In fact, it's what they are doing today.

There are ten teams of two horses each, waiting in a row along the widest part of the corral. Each two-horse team is hitched together, and trails a hook behind it; the hook is attached to an iron sled, and that sled is piled with cinder blocks. The horses pull the sled piled with weight as hard as they can, trying to tug it 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet — regulation distance — and keep the sled in between the track markers, about 16 feet across. After each turn, a Zetor 4340 tractor, on loan from Country Tractor of Elkins, pulls the sled back to the starting point.

And that happens over and over with more and more weight, until the process of elimination leaves the strongest team out front. Each team gets three shots per round; two during the first pass, and a third after everyone has gone once. You don't accumulate distance on these turns; you've got to pull the distance all at once for it to count. Each team is followed by its trainer driving his team with nothing more forceful than voice commands, holding onto the reins and calling for more power, more strength; two other people from the trainer's crew follow close by, in case there's any trouble.

The president of the Draft Horse and Mule Association, Delmer Hershman, is in the field watching the proceedings closely, reporting measurements and distances and helping to guide the sled back to its starting position after each pull. His yellow cap and blood-red shirt make him easy to spot when Jack May points him out to me. Jack May is the vice-president, and he's also the day's emcee. Jack announces

1997 Horse, Mule & Donkey Events

The West Virginia Draft Horse and Mule Association returns to the Barbour County Fairgrounds this year on Saturday, July 5th. In addition to the draft horse shows, the day will feature music, food, fireworks, crafts, a flea market, a "Battle of the Bands" contest, and a "Little Miss Barbour County" beauty pageant.

The pony pull gets underway at 10:00 a.m., and the draft horses take center stage at 1:00 p.m. Ken Boone, director for the big Fourth of July event, points to recent improvements at the fairgrounds — a new building and new stage with seating for 2,500 under roof and plenty more room under the stars.

The Barbour County Fairgrounds, located just off I-79 on Route 250 halfway between Belington and Phillipi, are clearly marked by road signs along the way. Admission to the Saturday event is $2. For more information contact the WVU Extension Office in Philippi at (304)457-3254 or call Ken Boone at (304)823-3135.

Draft horse enthusiasts may also want to check out the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins on Saturday, September 27. The Forest Festival's horse pull begins at 1:00 p.m. at Camp Pioneer in Beverly, just four miles from Elkins. Admission is $1 for adults and 50¢ for children. For more information contact the Mountain State Forest Festival at (304)636-1824.

And the Mule & Donkey Show returns to Sutton this year on September 13 and 14, Saturday and Sunday. The Central West Virginia Riding Club sponsors the event which is held at Holly Gray Park and gets underway at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday. On Sunday, more than 30 classes of competition are shown including contest, driving, costume, halter, and pleasure riding. There is a $3 entry fee for contestants with the exception of three classes which are $10.

For more information contact Robert Smith at (304)744-8372.

the beginning of each round and names each contestant, every now and then reminding the crowd of the total weight being pulled. Round one starts off at 4,000 pounds, and gets bumped up 1,000 with each subsequent round. He's sitting in a cinder block shelter with a PA system beside him; when he speaks, his voice echoes up the hill and back again.

I can't think of any better exercise in futility than two or three men trying to hold back 4,500 pounds of horse.

Jack May has the pattern and rhythm of a man experienced in emceeing — his deep voice rises and falls when he rolls out a name and adds "up here next to work for you." He is used to the job, as it turns out; he's been doing it since the first pull 21 years ago, when the setup was even less technical than it is today. "I emceed the first one of these here in 1975," he says, waving a hand up the hillside. "We didn't have a PA system then, so we parked a Rescue Squad van up near the track and we broadcast out of that." He puts the microphone to his mouth again and looks at the field where one team is being led off, "Okay, how 'bout a big hand for them." The crowd applauds again.

"See, it's a dead weight pull," he tells me in between rounds. "They'll just keep piling on the weight and go at it until they can't pull any more." I've tried to stay out of his way during the contest — he's got a lot to keep up with, announcing distances and names, calling the next team up when it's almost their turn, and various other duties — but all I have to do is ask a couple of questions and soon he's got me beside him in the emcee's booth, explaining to me exactly what I'm seeing. It's hard not to get caught up in the friendly atmosphere. These are people who love what they do, and whose families and friends have come around to watch them work. A woman whose son's team is competing today calls out from her folding chair, "Hey, Jack, give that boy a couple flyers for the County Fair."

In fact, 21 years ago, and every year up until this one, the horse pull was held at the Barbour County Fair, during the last full week in August. Ken Boone, director of the Fourth of July committee, says the timing has something to do with planning for the largest crowd, which tends to show up on the Fourth. "During the past few years the crowd for the pull has gotten a little smaller. I've seen this whole area" — the grassy hills surrounding the corral — "full up with people, spreading out lawn chairs, looking for the best seats. But we've had the pony show earlier today, and a lot of people came for that." I asked him if the weather may have something to do with the smaller crowd this year. He shrugs. "Oh, maybe," he says. "But that doesn't seem to matter much to the horse people here. They are a real tight-knit group." He pauses to look at the field, where the current team is puffing and digging the dirt, slowly pulling the sled along the track.

And who are the horse people

When not in competition, John Holk's team enjoy attention on the sidelines.

here? Some are farmers, and some still do logging work, and some are quiet when you ask them, because, after all, that's not why they're here today. Today is something else entirely; today's a different kind of work.

John Holk from Fairmont is one. He's a stocky man, leading a team whose combined weight is about 4,200 pounds. Holk's got a smile that appears to be permanent, even when he is spurring the horses on. Patting the side of one horse, Holk explains the difference between a chain hitch and a solid hitch, which is the kind they're using today. "See, with a solid hitch there's no slack between the sled and the horses. Chains would allow for a little give, but the solid doesn't." How long does it take to train the horses for a contest like the one today? "Oh, we trained for about two months this time out. You can't just get out here and do it — got to prepare."

He should know. Holk, like most of the people here, is no amateur. "I've been working with draft horses since about 1953, I'd guess. Been doing the pull here for about 18 years — never missed one in that time." I asked him what he does during the other days of the year, and his answer seems to fit his friendly personality. "Oh, we go around to some of the Field Days. A lot of places have competitions like this, but the horse will pull a plow, or do some other farming kinds of things. More like a show than a contest. We go around, give wagon rides, trail rides." Holk's horses, Tom and Jerry, are pretty popular with the crowd. A lot of kids crowd our side of the fence, getting as close as they can without getting *too* close. Tom and Jerry are a rich brown color, and seem to like the camera. They can also pull with the best. Holk yells, "Get up there, Tom! Get up there!" Their legs dig deeper, their bodies go low and tense.

The team pulls 10,000 pounds for 27 1/2 feet, no problem.

Like all the trainers and owners here today, Holk's got a handle on how much power we are actually talking about. "I expect we'll go up to around a nine, 10,000-pound pull today." He hopes the tractor can handle it. "They ought to be okay, it's a four-wheel drive. I've seen two-wheel drives get hung up pretty quick, though. Oh yeah, a lot of times." No one, however, seems to be too worried about the horses managing.

Another one of the "horse people" is Hartman Wilson, from Bridgeport. Wilson has helped to arrange the contest today, and his team weighs in at about 4,500 pounds. In comparison to some of the other contestants, Wilson is a youngster. "I've been doing this pull for around ten years," he says, but his connection with draft horses goes back well beyond any competition. He's been doing this for years, giving wagon and trail rides, and showing horses on top of all that. When I asked him how long he's been around horses, he smiles, and I understand what an impossible question that is to answer. He looks over at his team, who are waiting their turn for the next round. "Whew," Wilson shakes his head, "I couldn't tell you. I've always been around them."

During one late round, up around 8,000 pounds, Wilson's team does what teams do on occasion — they anticipate the pull and take off before the link to the sled has been completed. I can't think of any better exercise in futility than two or three men trying to hold back 4,500 pounds of horse. When Wilson's team bolts, though, the sidelines snap immediately into action; three men from other teams run out onto the field and grab the reins with Wilson, and eventually (with the benefit of a constant "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!") get the team stopped and led back around to the sled. I look over at Jack May in the emcee's booth.

"Yep," he says, "that's the way it goes. They're out to beat each other, but if one gets in trouble, the others get right in there and help out." He's right. That kind of thing happens two or three more times before the contest is over, and the

reaction from the other competitors is always the same.

And one time, the horses break and come right towards me, where I'm standing outside the fence. Have I mentioned how big these horses are?

In the end it's Jerry and Becky Riggs of Cameron who take the day; their team pulls 10,000 pounds for 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet, no problem. In the midst of congratulations and handshakes, all the competitors are called out by name, all get ranked, and all are thanked for coming out. When Jack May tells me the dollar amount for top prize, I'm pretty amazed; that amount wouldn't even cover travel expenses for some of the teams today. He doesn't laugh, politely, at my surprise. "No, they don't make a bit of money on this at all."

So what was today about? Some animal rights advocates, as Ken Boone tells me, have been criticizing events like these, talking about the cruelty involved. But these are people who love the horses they bring; all throughout the day we never heard an unkind word or saw a tap any heavier than a light flip of the rein. And this is what Belgians are built for; it's the kind of work they've done since the Roman Empire. If the horses can't tug the weight on a given turn, they stop, and that's all; they don't force it, and neither do the trainers. And when they aren't pulling, they are standing close beside each other, nuzzling or bending their heads to receive pats from the bystanders. And it's most certainly not about money; the one-time cost of one of these horses would turn the first place prize here into pocket change. It is nice and it is a bonus, but it's not the reason. No, I think, watching the horses get led off and listening to the people here tell their stories and offer congratulations, I think it's about something else.

While I'm watching all of these people lead all of that power away for another year, I look back at the corral. It's empty now, except for that lone Zetor tractor, gasping and blowing smoke and pulling that sled full of 10,000 pounds of cinder blocks back down the track to be unloaded — pulling that sled a sight more slowly than the Belgians did. Ken Boone looks a bit worried. "I signed all the paperwork for that tractor," he says, watching. "I hope I don't have to fill out a repair form."

You could argue, I guess, that nobody understands weight better than someone who works with the land, who depends on the forces of nature to get by; someone who plants, or trains, or raises, or tries to harness a little bit of the power in the world to get something done. People who stand close to that strength all their lives develop a healthy respect for it. Not everybody understands that kind of power.

Hooking the horses to the weight today — that's a way of letting those animals do what they are made to do, and letting them remind us, maybe, of work that needs to be done. It allowed all of us a look at something we don't often see.

A team of Belgians is led to the pull.

An early Gravely ad, courtesy Gravely International.

Ben Gravely's Garden Tractor

Inventor Benjamin Franklin Gravely from Kanawha County created an ingenious motorized garden plow in 1915. Today, Gravely International is one of the world's leading manufacturers of two-wheel and four-wheel riding tractors, commercial mowers, and lawn and garden attachments. Here is the story of how it all began.

By John L. Marra

"It could go anywhere a man could walk and cultivate even on the West Virginia hills, where they plant corn with a shotgun and dig potatoes by shoveling out the bottom row and running like hell to escape the avalanche." Those were the words of an old-time Gravely Tractor dealer describing the new motorized garden plow invented by South Charleston resident Benjamin Franklin Gravely back in 1916.

Tinkering with the development of a motorized push-by-hand plow was a passion for Ben Gravely for years. He had a knack for inventing things, having secured 65 U. S. patents in his lifetime.

The best known of his inventions was the Gravely garden tractor, a farm and garden implement that plowed a deep furrow in the history of American agriculture.

Benjamin Gravely was born in Dyer's Store, Henry County, near Martinsville, Virginia, on November 29, 1876. At that time, his father owned a plug tobacco business and he was able to send young Ben to a school for men located near Mt. Airy, North Carolina.

He worked as a salesman for the Eastman Kodak Company following his schooling and learned the basic principals of photography there. His next job took him to Huntington sometime around 1900 where he became acquainted with a young photographer named Charles R. Thomas. Together the men set up the Gravely-Thomas Studio at 948 Third Avenue in Huntington. It was while he had the Gravely-Thomas Studio that he became acquainted with a young lady from Pomeroy, Ohio, Elizabeth Susan Downie. They were married in

the fall of 1902, in Pomeroy.

With the hope of better opportunities, Ben Gravely soon moved his photography business to Charleston. Here he set up shop in the old Burlew building that housed the Burlew Opera House.

Eventually, 124 Capitol Street in the old Sterrett Building in Charleston became the home of Gravely and Moore Photographers, a business he opened with his cousin-in-law, Marguerite Moore.

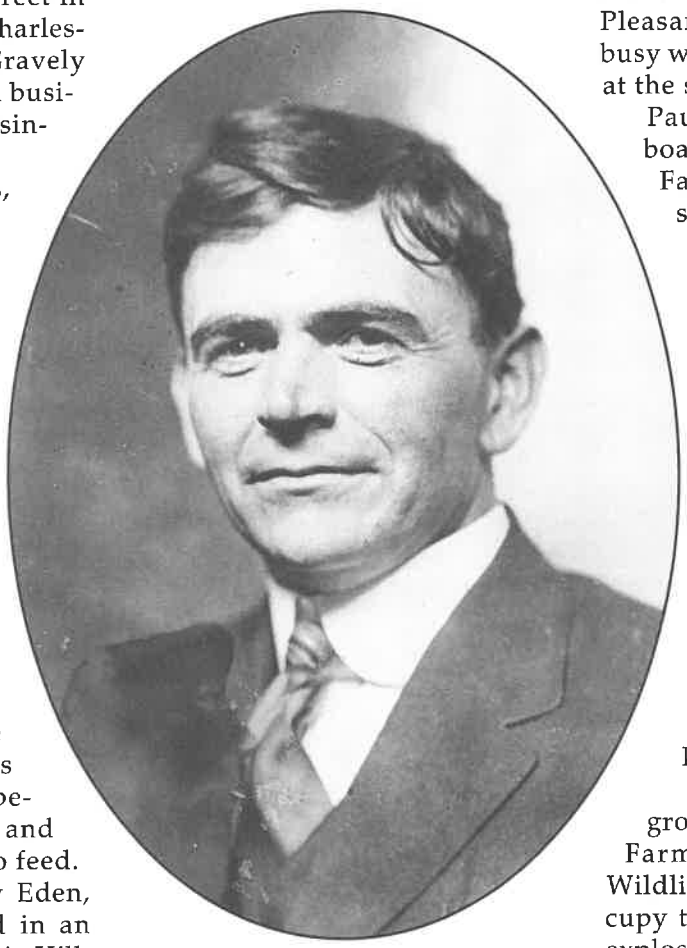
With her, his son Charles, and daughter Louise, Gravely and Moore Photographers thrived for 60 years before closing its doors in 1963.

Even while working as a photographer, his heart, interest, and time were directed at tinkering with that power-driven push plow. The land around his home became a proving ground where he tried new designs for his "motor plow" to help raise his family garden. Like his parents, working the soil to raise extra fruits and vegetables was a necessity for Ben, especially considering that he and his wife had five children to feed.

Daughter Louise Gravely Eden, now deceased, was quoted in an early edition of *West Virginia Hillbilly*: "We moved to South Charleston from East Washington Street in May 1911. Papa had to let the U.S. Government have our house for the Naval Ordnance Plant [now South Charleston Stamping & Manufacturing] in 1916." It was in South Charleston that Gravely started building the first prototype of the Gravely Tractor.

It seemed that as soon as the Gravely family settled into a new house, they were abruptly relocated. "We moved to Vandalia in South Charleston, Streetcar Stop 3, and built a home near the old Blaine place. Our lot went back to the river near the head of Blaine Island. The island was farmed then. Our house was next to George Schlosstein's home. He had the Dunkirk Glass Plant at Stop 5. In 1924, Carbide bought our place as well as several others," Louise Gravely Eden continued.

Corinne Martin, wife of Mohler B. Martin of Porter, Ohio, who made



Benjamin Franklin Gravely in 1920. Photo by Gravely and Moore Photographers.

parts patterns for Ben Gravely, lived near Blaine Island (Streetcar Stop 7) at the same time as Louise Gravely. "We would swim the Kanawha River to the island in the summer. They grew watermelons on the 19-acre island. We would fill our stomachs, then swim back home. We couldn't bring a melon back with us unless we had a boat because they were so big and heavy," she says.

Louise described her father as a family man who wanted his parents to rest comfortably in their advancing years. "Papa also bought a farm in Point Pleasant for his parents but they chose to make their residence in Virginia. Mama, my little sister, and two brothers went to live there. We all loved it, as Mom's many relatives in Pomeroy could visit so easily. Papa, Mom's cousin Marguerite, and I went over to Dunbar, only going over to Point Pleasant on weekends. Pop was busy with the plow and we worked at the studio," Louise recalled.

Paul Fitzgerald, who is on the board of directors of the State Farm Museum located in Mason County, remembers the Gravely farm. "They had a small dairy, maybe 15 or 20 Holsteins and Jersey cows. Ben Gravely would try out his new cultivator invention on the 100 acres they had there," he recalls. "Charles, Ben Gravely's son, actually ran the farm up until the federal government bought him out. For a $10,000 payment, the government made the Gravely farm part of the World War II TNT Plant located four miles north of Point Pleasant," he continues.

The Mason County Fairgrounds, the West Virginia State Farm Museum and McClintic Wildlife Management Area now occupy the property where the TNT explosive plant once flourished.

Two of the first Model D motor plows and an early Model L can be seen today at the West Virginia State Farm Museum, located adjacent to the Mason County Fairgrounds north of Point Pleasant.

"It was believed that Ben Gravely was actually trying to invent a post hole digger."

It wasn't until Mr. Gravely started working in his family garden in South Charleston that he realized there ought to be an easier way of cultivating his garden other than

The Gravely Tractor:

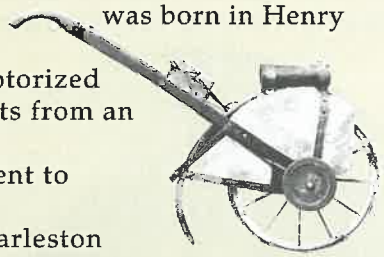
Yesterday and Today

1876 — Benjamin Franklin Gravely was born in Henry County, Virginia.

1915 — Gravely builds the first motorized plow using a push plow and the parts from an Indian motorcycle.

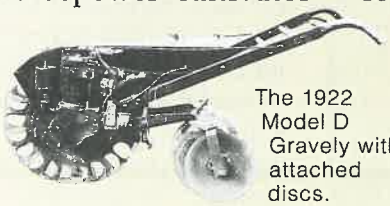
1916 — Gravely obtains a U.S. patent to build the Gravely Motor Plow.

1922 — Ben Gravely assembles Charleston business investors and incorporates $200,000 worth of stock to start the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company.



The original Gravely in 1915 was a crudely-powered hand plow with the working parts of an Indian motorcycle.

1922 — The first Model D single-wheeled 2.5 horsepower cultivator rolls off the factory floor in Dunbar.

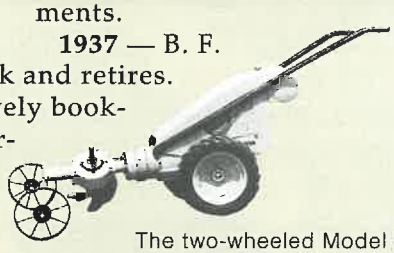


The 1922 Model D Gravely with attached discs.

1937 — The Model L two-wheeled 5 horsepower cultivator is marketed offering a wide range of attachments.

1937 — B. F. Gravely sells his company stock and retires.

1937 — D. Ray Hall, the Gravely bookkeeper, buys a controlling interest in the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company and becomes its president.



The two-wheeled Model L was introduced in 1937.

1941 to 1945 — Limited Gravelys are sold on the homefront. Substantial numbers are manufactured and shipped overseas where they were used by the U. S. Armed Forces.

1952 — Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company becomes Gravely Tractors, Inc.

1953 — Benjamin Gravely dies at the age of 76.

1960 — Gravely president D. Ray Hall sells the company to Studebaker Packard Corporation for $12.5 million.

1968 — The last Gravely Tractor rolls off the Dunbar factory floor. Gravely operations move to Clemmons, North Carolina.

1982 to present — Gravely International operations are shifted to Brillion, Wisconsin.

— John L. Marra

The Model L design continues to this day with some modifications. This is a modern-day Gravely Tractor.

Early photos by B.F. Gravely, present-day Gravely photo courtesy Gravely International.

with just a hand push plow.

Gravely just may have stumbled on to the cultivator idea by accident. George Randolph, also of Point Pleasant, mentions, "It was believed that Ben Gravely was actually trying to invent a post hole digger. Supposedly, Gravely's post hole digger got away from him during its initial trial run and plowed a long furrow from one end of the family garden to the other before reeling it in under control."

Whether the cultivator idea was developed by accident or plan, Benjamin Gravely's new invention would soon become an integral part of the agriculture community.

As early as 1911, Gravely was roughly designing and building a power-driven push plow. The first prototype to the modern Gravely Tractor was a crude one — a powered hand plow rigged up on a single tractor wheel with belts. The 2.5 horsepower engine and flywheel were on one side and the gears on the other. The crankshaft went through the wheel hub so the weight was centered on one spot to get the most traction. The components were simple: his own wooden-handled garden push plow and the working parts of an Indian motorcycle given to him by Mr. Doney of South Charleston.

Ben Gravely would have the blueprints of specific parts drawn to scale. A pattern was then made and taken to the West Virginia Malleable Iron Company in Point Pleasant for casting.

Mohler B. Martin remembers that Ben Gravely came to him several times to have certain parts made for the tractor. "I would design the pattern usually out of wood in order to have that part cast. Gravely would often take the patterns to be cast to Malleable Iron," he says.

Martin would continue making patterns for him even after Ben Gravely retired. "Even after Ben Gravely was no longer with his old company, he would still ask me to make the patterns for several of his new ideas," Martin recalls. "It was

Ben and Elizabeth Gravely had five children. Here daughters Virginia (left) and Louise entertain themselves at their father's studio following the birth of their brother Alex. Photo by Gravely and Moore, date unknown.

during World War II that Ben wanted to invent a rotary blade lawnmower. I can remember making the pattern to be cast of aluminum for the mower housing itself."

Ben Gravely, surprisingly, had little training as a draftsman, but was talented at making complex drawings of gears and wheels. He had the ability to visualize a part and then have it machined or forged.

George Randolph of Point Pleasant remembers a surprising fact about Ben Gravely. "Even though he was an excellent designer, he couldn't read a blueprint. Therefore, when he wanted a specific part for his cultivator made, he would draw the part with chalk or the point of a nail on the factory floor. The engineers would then make the blueprints for its manufacture," he recalls.

Dean Harper of Dunbar worked for Gravely from 1932 to 1937. Harper later owned the Harper Machine and Manufacturing Company just a throwing distance across the railroad tracks from the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company. He was also one of the many people on whom Ben Gravely relied to make parts for his tractor.

"Both of us would kneel to the factory floor over there at Gravely's and he would scratch the likeness of a specific part on the cement floor with the point of a nail. I would draw up the blueprint, have the pattern made and then mill it at my shop or send it out to be cast," he remembers.

Ben Gravely spent five years designing and redesigning his motorized plow. Then on December 5, 1916, he patented the most significant invention of his lifetime, "The Gravely Motor Plow."

In the early development years of the tractor, friends and relatives were so excited about his newfound invention that several were making orders before manufacturing even got started.

In 1922, satisfied that his photography business was in good hands, Ben Gravely started his own business, the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company. The plant was on Gravely Lane in Dunbar, and began manufacturing the first motor plows in 1922.

The old factory still stands today.

The components were simple: his own wooden-handled garden push plow and the working parts of an Indian motorcycle.

The towering smokestack still rises from the old factory walls and sports the name Gravely, visible in bold dark letters.

Local newspapers heralded the coming of the new business in the Kanawha Valley. One reporter described the area's newest industrial enterprise, "The Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company will manufacture a highly efficient type of truck farm and garden cultivator that will put the horse entirely out

Son Charles ran the Gravely farm in Mason County until the family sold it to the government. Charles Lane in Dunbar, the site of the old Gravely factory, was renamed for him. Photo by Gravely and Moore, date unknown; courtesy State Archives.

Above: Streetcar Stop 3 in South Charleston (middle) was the Gravely's Kanawha Valley home. Photo by Gravely and Moore, courtesy State Archives.

Below: Ben Gravely wasn't shy about trying out his invention on his family. Here wife Elizabeth pushes the Model D prototype. Photo by B.F. Gravely, date unknown; courtesy State Archives.

of business in so far as this line of agricultural pursuit is concerned."

J. M. Stewart, West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture, gave his nod to the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company in a February 1924 letter.

"This is to state that I have visited the factory of Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company at Dunbar, West Virginia, also have witnessed an exhibition of the efficiency of the 2 horsepower motor cultivator manufactured by this concern.

"The material used in the construction of this machine is high class. It is strongly built and capable of performing all of the services claimed for it. From the performance which I witnessed it will unquestionably operate with a high degree of efficiency any of the tools used for cultivating crops.

"This factory is owned and directed by men of high business standing in this community and the inventor of this machine, Mr. B. F. Gravely, is an experienced agriculturist."

Investors were drawn like a magnet into the corporation. Well-known Charleston businessmen were quick to invest: they included Charles F. Sterrett, Garnett Surface, Eustice Rose, Staunton Issac, C. R. (Major) Morgan, George Lancaster, H. E. Bek, Solon Fletcher and George Chounis. Staunton Issac would later become vice president of the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company.

A great deal of early credit for the success of the Gravely Tractor goes to Eustice Rose. Rose came from the Naval Ordnance Plant in South Charleston and was a gifted engineer and mechanic whose work was instrumental to the development of the Gravely Tractor. He became the chief engineer and plant superintendent during the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company's early years.

Ben Gravely had a passion for product reliability.

Interestingly enough, Eustice Rose, with his engineering talent, would later be linked to the development of the nation's first automatic transmission developed by the Chrysler Corporation.

The new industry in Dunbar was a boom to employment in the Kanawha Valley. It gave almost 100 employees well-paying jobs and at the same time was pushing an output of nearly 75 cultivators a day.

"Dear Gravely"

West Virginia Gravely owners were satisfied customers. In 1960, they joined thousands of Gravely users across the country in filling out and returning a questionnaire about Gravely equipment.

The results were published in the 1962 book, Dear Gravely, *published by Gravely Tractors in Dunbar. The following letters are reprinted by permission of Gravely International.*

Orden V. Hamrick, Webster Springs: " The Gravely is a fine tractor, and has done everything I have tried to do with it. It will mow land that is too steep for a big tractor. I mow 10 acres of hill and woody land. By using my dual wheels I can use it anywhere a team of the best horses can be used. I can now take better care of my land with my tractor. It will cut brush and weeds from my pasture which I never had time to cut before."

Victor Ferrell, Webster Springs: "In the six years I've owned my Gravely I have done a tremendous amount of work with it. The upkeep has been very small, and it still operates about as good as new. Most of my land is rough, and I certainly have given the Gravely a thorough test for rugged, hard work. I have 20 acres planted in Christmas trees, and I use the Gravely in keeping weeds and brush cleared from the land. It is surprising to see the size of the brush it will cut. It is the cheapest 'hired-hand' I've found."

Myron B. Hymes, Buckhannon: "I practice law and am President of the Board of Trustees of West Virginia Wesleyan College, and these jobs are very demanding and time-consuming. I have very little opportunity for recreation. There is nothing I enjoy more than spending a day with my Gravely in pine trees and gardens. The results accomplished are very rewarding. I enjoy playing golf, but much prefer taking the day off and going to my farm and Christmas tree plantation and getting behind my Gravely. In a short time there has been a transformation of the portions of the farm over which I have operated the Gravely. This experience is most pleasing and rewarding, and gives me a change from the busy days in my office, which I think is very beneficial to my health."

The Director of Recreation, Moundsville: "The City of Moundsville purchased the second Gravely last July. We tried several small tractors, but Gravely has been the only one that will do our job. We keep three baseball fields in shape, plus a large play area."

Don J. Hunt, Charleston: "I have used the rotary plow for grading roadbed and knocking off high spots or high banks that needed lowering. This was done by going forward and backward and plowing the dirt in the direction I wanted to make my fill, until I had the dirt moved to the place I wanted it. This has saved me the expense of a bulldozer or highlift several times. I have also used the rotary plow for the initial earth moving when digging footings for houses. This saves several hours of manual labor. I have used the rotary plow for spreading a large pile of gravel for a roadbed. The Gravely is by far the outstanding plow in its class on the American market today."

Arnold G. Bailey, Keyser: "When I bought my Gravely the dealer told me it would pay for itself if I put it to work. I started plowing gardens in March, and by the end of the spring season, in May, I had $275, having worked a total of only about 10 days, due to weather and other things. On four days I exceeded the $30 mark, and one day I made $39. I have a goal in mind of $50 in one day. Nearly all of my customers are pleased, some are overjoyed, some wait especially for me to come, and a number make me promise to plow their gardens next year. I have plowed bluegrass sod, river sand, hard clay, sandstone gravel, and some gardens that were nine-tenths ashes. I plowed an $11 garden May 25 that had weeds three feet or more high, and not a leaf could be seen after I finished. A man with a big tractor plowed it about the same time last spring, and you had to look twice to see if he had plowed it or not. I did a very good job on three gardens after another make of large tractor had failed."

C. O. Core, Rand: "It is good for a lifetime yet. I would not want to part with it if I could not get another one."

"It was a wonder he made the number of tractors he did. Ben kept changing the design and made it hard to get them on the market. Every time he came up with a new design improvement — which was frequent — it would slow down production. I guess that's what happens when you have an inventive mind," recalls Mohler B. Martin.

Within a few years, it was reported that the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company had sales outlets established in the major agriculture producing areas of Florida and California. Sales representatives were even established in France, Switzerland, and Germany.

Ben Gravely was quite a salesman. He would pack his Studebaker touring vehicle full of newly manufactured motor plows and set out for Florida. Before crossing the Florida border he would sell all he had to farmers along the way, then return to Dunbar, pack up and head south again. Earlier newspaper accounts place the cost of a cultivator at around $150, a lot of money in those days, but the public was more than satisfied for the time and effort they saved at their farm, home, or business.

The components of the first Model D were described by Ben Gravely in a 1922 Charleston newspaper account: "The parts of the machine are made of the best material that can be made," he said. "It is the same class of material that goes into the highest priced automobiles. All of the parts are manufactured at the plant with the exception of the magneto and carburetor which are the best that are made," he continued.

According to the present-day Gravely parts manual, the early D models had one wheel, weighed 150 pounds, was the size and height of a push plow, and was painted red.

The Model L, introduced in 1937, sported two wheels. Also in 1937, the horsepower went from the early 2.5 horsepower to a 5 horsepower engine. The Model D had separate reservoirs, one for oil and the other for fuel; most were fitted with water-cooled engines, although the later D models were air-cooled.

However, Craig Seabrook, chairman of the Model D and L Gravely Network, says several D models were manufactured after 1937 and several L models before 1937. He also says not all Gravelys were manufactured in the United States. An assembly line was started in England in 1949 though the overseas production only lasted two years, according to Mr. Seabrook.

It gave almost 100 employees well-paying jobs and at the same time was pushing an output of nearly 75 cultivators a day.

One of the early selling points of the new motor plow was its capacity to cultivate land more efficiently. Earlier promotions by Ben Gravely mentioned that one third more crops could be planted due to the planting rows being moved closer together. Unlike with a large tractor or horse and plow, the ground could be planted right up to the fence line.

Ben Gravely had a passion for product reliability. Every part of the new tractor was tested and then retested for quality. "Uncle Ben would purposely stress the parts of the tractor until that part broke. He would then rebuild the broken parts even stronger," recalls William Gravely II, the great nephew of Benjamin Gravely, presently living in Charleston.

Even though Ben Gravely's new business was financially stable, the Great Depression and stock market crash were trying times for the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company. Ben sent out desperate letters to Charleston businessmen, hoping their response would mirror their earlier interest when the company was in its infancy.

In those pleading letters to prospective financial supporters, he wrote, "Put some of your money into productive enterprises and the problem is solved. *INVESTIGATE, INVEST, BOOST, KEEP YOUR MONEY AT HOME AND BRING IN MORE.*"

Other letters contained sales pitches, "Our product *SELLS, STAYS SOLD AND REPEATS.*"

However, the financial climate of the early 1930's left its mark on the Gravely industry. During the lean years, investors received almost no dividends. Declining tractor sales even reached the pocketbooks of the Gravely factory workers. "Benjamin Gravely had difficulty meeting payroll and on several occasions it was reported he had to settle wages owed with offers of company stock," William Gravely II recalls.

Ben was about to face reality. In 1937 he retired from the day-to-day management of the Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company.

His business partner and accountant, D. Ray Hall, acquired enough

Author John Marra (left) and Farm Museum board member Paul Fitzgerald look over the Gravely tractors now housed at the Mason County museum. Photo by Michael Keller.

The West Virginia State Farm Museum

Agriculture was once a way of life for the majority of the people in West Virginia. With today's fast-paced world, occasionally we need to stop and reflect on the simplicity of earlier times.

The West Virginia State Farm Museum is a living memorial to the farmer, preserving the history of West Virginia farm life. A trip to the museum, four miles north of Point Pleasant, will take you back in time as you stroll through its recreated farm village. You can step back into history in their general store, blacksmith shop, post office, one-room school, an authentic log cabin built in the early 1800's, and many more of the 30 historic buildings on the grounds.

An old Lutheran church, located at the museum, was the earliest Lutheran church west of the Allegheny Mountains. The church is complete with a safety balcony for women and children and a musket rack by the door, which was necessary to protect against Indian attacks.

James Lewis, acting director of the museum, is quick to point out the many working displays for the public. "During the summer months visitors to the West Virginia State Farm Museum can see cloth being created on a loom, sorghum syrup being boiled down to a sweet delight, cornmeal ground on an antique grist mill, as well as wheat being harvested with an old threshing machine."

Visitors can browse through an enormous collection of antiques ranging from butter churns, old bottles, hand tools, corn shellers, old guns, and plows to large antique farm equipment like tractors, carriages, horse-drawn wagons, and sleighs. In one large building you'll find a display on the first one-wheeled Gravely motor plow manufactured in Dunbar. Included in the display is an extensive pictorial history about the motor plow and its inventor, Benjamin Franklin Gravely. This historical section of the museum is supported in part by the Gravely International Company of Brillion, Wisconsin.

Several of the buildings on the 50-acre museum site house unique collections. The Morgan Museum, established in 1905 by Syd Morgan, is the home of his collection of mounted birds and animals. John Greene of Milton donated the old country store which is stocked with local crafts, cornmeal, hardware, and other items usually needed in a farm community. Mr. Greene also donated an old kitchen, carpenter shop, and an antique blacksmith shop fully equipped to make or repair any item on the farm.

The West Virginia State Farm Museum is a place to appreciate the lives our forefathers lived. The museum is also an open lab for thousands of school-age children who visit to get a look at history through a "living window."

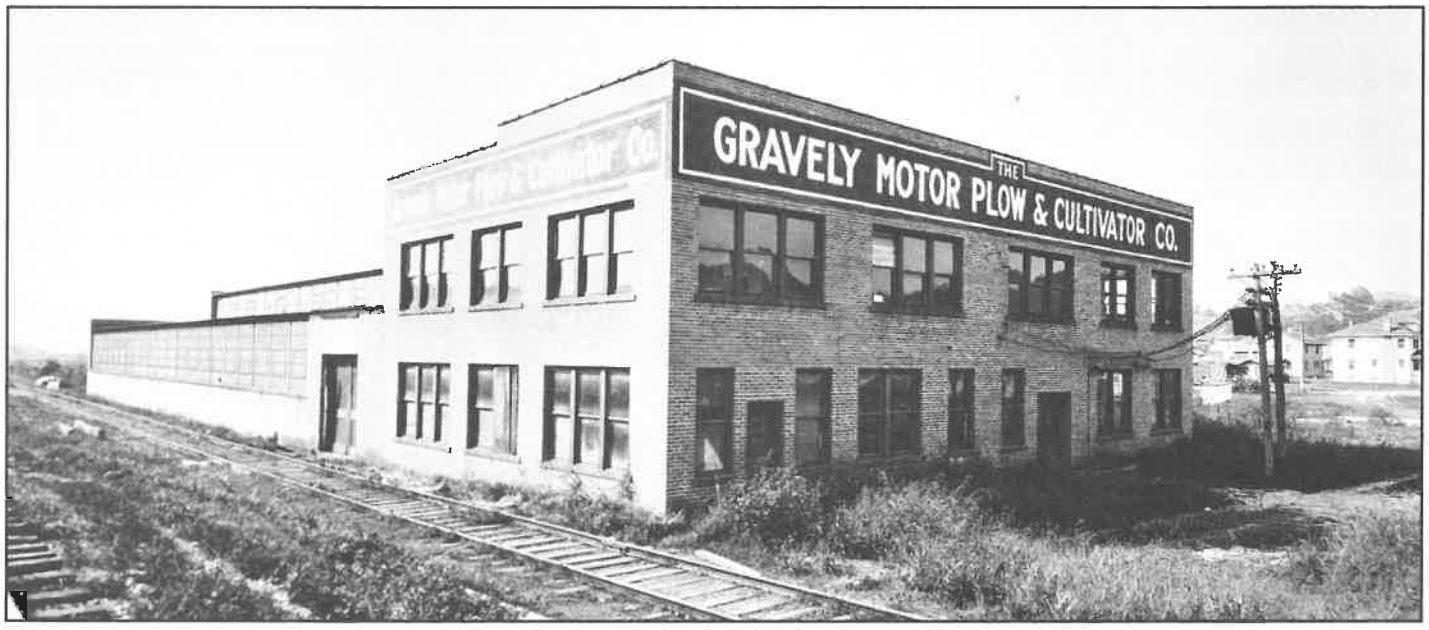
The museum continues to plan for the future. "Presently we have aspirations of building the West Virginia Agriculture Library and we have already collected hundreds of old agriculture books," Jim Lewis mentions. "We are actively reconstructing an old bank, veterinarian office, and barber shop, all of which will be fully equipped with antiques for that specific occupation. Construction will start in June."

The West Virginia State Farm Museum is open April 1 through November 23 on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Guided tours can be arranged upon request. Admission is free and donations are appreciated.

Contact the Farm Museum at (304)675-5737 or 675-2834, Route 1, Box 379, Point Pleasant, WV 25550.

— John L. Marra

A hay rake sits idle at the West Virginia State Farm Museum. Photo by Michael Keller.



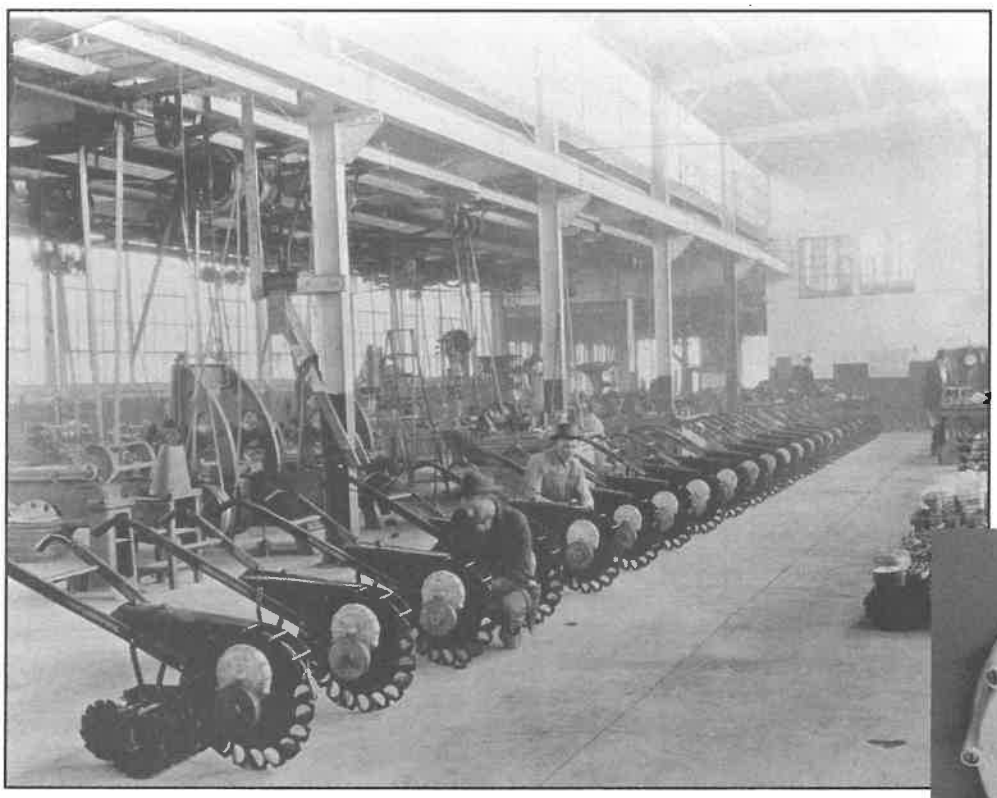
The Gravely Motor Plow and Cultivator Company opened in Dunbar in 1922. Photo by Gravely and Moore, date unknown; courtesy State Archives.

stock to have the controlling interest in the company by 1937 and became its new president. Ben, around the same time, sold his remaining stock in the company. Eustice Rose, after a reported argument with Hall, also left Gravely and found employment with Dupont at their Belle plant. He was later rehired by Hall to build a 4-cycle engine for the Model L.

Gravely's new owner was an excellent businessman and was able to expand the company into a financial giant. D. Ray Hall was notoriously frugal which was probably one reason the company remained financially stable. John A. Marra, my uncle who lives in St. Albans, can remember the days when D. Ray Hall lived just across the street on Poplar Drive. "We would see him walking all the time to work, down to the railroad tracks and over to the Dunbar toll bridge leading to his factory there. Most people knew he walked so he would avoid paying the toll," Marra recalls.

D. Ray Hall died recently and his will directed that his house be given to the City of St. Albans to be used as a museum.

Later known as Gravely Tractors, Inc., Hall sold the company in 1960 to the Studebaker



Gravely Tractors lined up inside the old Dunbar factory (above); and an old Model D gearbox (right). Factory photo by Gravely and Moore, date unknown, courtesy State Archives; gearbox photo by Michael Keller.

Gravely Mow-In

Gravely Tractor owners and Gravely fans will be in Dunbar later this summer for a Gravely Mow-In. Shawnee Park in Dunbar is the site for the gathering on Saturday, July 19, beginning at 9:00 a.m. The day-long affair includes Gravely Tractor displays, antique parts, educational exhibits, and a tour of the old Gravely factory.

Richard Juftus of Richard's Lawn & Garden in Spencer is one of the organizers for the event. "I supply the U.S. with Gravely parts and keep the old tractors running," he says. He employed two mechanics that had worked at the Gravely factory in Dunbar until they retired from his business. Now Mr. Juftus keeps up with parts and repairs, and operates a technical hotline for Gravely Tractor owners. For more information contact Richard Juftus at 130 Main Street, Spencer, WV 25276; 1-800-827-4551.

Craig Seabrook, chairman of the Model D and L Gravely Network and a Mow-In organizer, says the event is open to the public. Admission will be charged for those who bring tractors. It is $10 in advance, and $15 the day of the event. A banquet is also planned for the evening of the 19th. Reservations may be confirmed through Mr. Seabrook.

The Gravely Network publishes an "Old Gravelys" newsletter which goes to nearly 300 members. For information contact Craig Seabrook, 14444 Watt Road, Novelty, OH 44072; (216)338-5950.

Corporation for a reported $12.5 million.

Studebaker's buyout meant the end of the union at the Dunbar factory.

Eugene "Big Bill" Miller worked at Gravely from 1942 until he retired in 1963. His son Charles, who lives near Huntington, says the factory workers were given two options before Studebaker would permanently close the Gravely factory and move its operations to Clemmons, North Carolina.

"Employees could relocate in Clemmons but their salary would be at a starting position regardless of their years of experience or salary level. Option number two would be for Studebaker to recommend employees for employment at the many Gravely distribution and sales locations throughout the United States. This was Studebaker's plan to break the union and it worked," Miller remembers.

"Dad took the option with a Gravely dealership in Uricksville, Ohio, and finally Richard's Lawn and Garden Gravely dealership in Spencer, Roane County," he continues.

Ben Gravely died in January 1953, at age 76, just four months after his wife Elizabeth and he celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

William Blizzard, a reporter for Charleston's *Sunday Gazette-Mail*, captured the reality of B. F. Gravely's business life in a 1964 article: "Gravely probably put more money into his famous tractor than he ever realized from it. A man who loved to putter in his garden, Gravely in this case, sowed much and reaped little."

Hall sold the company in 1960 to the Studebaker Corporation for a reported $12.5 million.

"Actually," said his daughter Louise Gravely Eden, "Papa would have been pleased that Studebaker purchased the plant. From 1917 until he died, he owned at least ten Studebakers. And Papa would have been happy to know that Gravely Tractor is still giving people work."

Ben Gravely believed in taking his product on the road. Salesman C.E. Bryant (above) sold Gravelys, as did Ben Gravely himself; Ben would load up his Studebaker touring vehicle with tractors and head south.

"I Was Never Afraid of Anything"

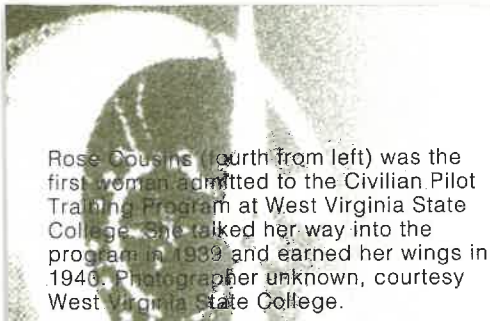
Pilot Rose Rolls Cousins

By Mary Rodd Furbee

In the late 1920's, several boys in Fairmont had a "camp" in a vacant lot. They built a shack, played war, told secrets, and established rules — the foremost of which was NO GIRLS ALLOWED.

But one boy's sister, a feisty nine-year-old tomboy named Rose, didn't take the exclusion lying down. She was accustomed to playing tag football and romping about with her older brother Emery and his buddies. Young Rose was offended, annoyed enough to round up an army of young girls. Armed with rocks, the girls got within throwing range of the clubhouse and commenced firing. Not surprisingly, the boys evacuated and charged toward their enemies. This sent all but one girl high-tailing it home, and that girl was Rose Agnes Rolls.

Standing her ground, Rose verbally vented her anger. In return, her furious brother ordered another



Rose Cousins (fourth from left) was the first woman admitted to the Civilian Pilot Training Program at West Virginia State College. She talked her way into the program in 1939 and earned her wings in 1940. Photographer unknown, courtesy West Virginia State College.

boy to shoot her with his BB gun. "Shoot her in the leg," he cried. And the boy did.

With a chuckle Rose Rolls Cousins, an African-American Marion County native born in 1920, admits that this dramatic encounter was an indicator of things to come. "I wasn't a girl," she says emphatically. "I was a person." And that person went on to become the country's first black woman licensed as a solo pilot in the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP). The Civil Aeronautics Authority administered the CPTP at U.S. colleges and universities from 1939 through 1942. Rose Cousins earned her wings at West Virginia State College.

Thanks to a supportive and ambitious father who told her that she could be anything she wanted to be, Rose Cousins more than once broke down barriers of race and gender. "I always wanted to do 'boy' things," recalls the statuesque 76-year-old. "In fact, I wanted to do anything someone told me I couldn't," she adds with a laugh. "I wanted to do everything my brother did, too. I played football with him and his friends until I was 15 — and I hated dolls. Every Christmas I'd get a doll, for some reason. By the second day, I had dismembered it. I was playing that I was a doctor — a surgeon."

Yet along with her independent character and obvious pluck, something else played a role. That, she says frankly, was the tawny shade of her father's skin, which caused many people to think him white.

"My family came here way back," Rose says. "And my father and his parents were so light-skinned, people didn't realize they were black." Rose's father, Theodore Emery Rolls, was raised in downtown Fairmont behind the saloon his parents operated on Jackson Street. "Tony Moose" was his nickname. Rose's mother, Anne Alberta Thornton, was raised in Charles Town, where her father drove a sulky at the Charles Town Race Track.

Rose's parents were ambitious people who operated several businesses in Marion County. Rose and brother Emery pose with their mother, Anne, above, and with their father, Theodore Emery Rolls (inset). Rose's father took her up in a plane for the first time when she was six years old. Photographers and dates unknown.

"Other blacks worked in the mines, but not my father. He became a businessman like his father before him," Rose says. "He had white friends and black."

Rose's entrepreneurial parents ran an integrated roadhouse, a black hotel, and a barbershop in Marion County. Later in life, her father became the custodian at the Marion County City Building. Together the couple pushed their children to study hard.

"They were ambitious, and I was ambitious," Rose remembers. Referring to her family's somewhat elevated status and good connections with the white community in a then-segregated era, Rose says, "It wasn't right at all, but it's the way things were. We could get things other black people couldn't because we were light-skinned and because of who my father's friends were."

"People kept asking how he could afford to send us to college. He always answered that he couldn't afford not to."

As a result, she recalls only a handful of encounters involving overt prejudice. And when that happened, she usually reacted with characteristic stubbornness and pride.

"Once I went to the Fairmont Theater to see a movie. This was before integration. Blacks had to sit in the balcony, but I decided I wouldn't do it. So I sat downstairs. Well, this usher came along and asked me to leave two or three times. He started getting nasty, you know, and threatened to call the manager. I said, 'Fine, call him.'"

The manager, however, was Fuzzy Knight, a good (white) friend of her father's. "He told that man to leave me alone because I was 'Moose's' daughter. I'm not saying it's right. It's just the way things

were back then."

Another incident from her childhood illustrates how Rose's family straddled the local white and black communities. For a short time the family moved to Carolina, a small mining camp where her father was hired as the barber (another of his many skills). "The man who hired my father thought he was white because he looked white and his nickname, 'Tony Moose' sounded Italian," Rose recalls.

"The town divided into two parts," she adds, "with blacks on one side of the track and whites on the other. Well, they gave him a house on the white side of town. Then when we were moving in — his wife and children — they realized we were all black." Despite this, she adds, the company allowed the family to remain on the white side of town.

At age 16, Rose went off to West Virginia State College (WVSC) near Charleston — then a predominately black college that attracted students from across the United States. Although her family wasn't wealthy, her father was determined that she and her brother would attend college. "People kept asking how he could afford to send us to college. And he always answered that he couldn't afford not to," Rose says.

It was while getting a bachelor's degree in business administration at WVSC that Rose "pushed" her way into the Civilian Pilot Training Program in 1939.

Only a handful of black women had earned pilot licenses before, and none had ever been trained courtesy of Uncle Sam. Rose's opportunity arose in part from being in the right place at the right time. But a childhood memory gave birth to her desire to fly, and persistence clinched the deal.

As a student, Rose worked in the office that administered the newly-formed CPTP. Once there, surrounded by the young black pilots in training, the memory of a childhood dream began to haunt her.

"When flying first got started, I was a little girl. Pilots would come to Fairmont and rent a field. They would bring planes and charge you $1 to ride. When I was six, my father took me up in a biplane with double wings and an open cockpit. A lot of people were too afraid, but my father always said I was never afraid of anything," Rose says. "That plane ride," she explains while sweeping her right hand upward, "was the most wonderful experience in the world. I loved it."

Graduate Rose Agnes Rolls in 1940, photographer unknown. From the book, ***West Virginia State College (1891-1991): From the Grove to the Stars***, courtesy West Virginia State College.

After that, Rose recalls, she had a recurring dream where she flew, using her thin young arms as wings. That dream, she says, stopped only after she learned to fly a plane. "I finally decided to ask James C. Evans, who I worked for in the president's office, if I could get in the CPTP. He said, 'Well, I don't *think* so. They are training men to go into the military.'"

But Rose persisted until James Evans said he would see what he could do. True to his word, he wrote a series of letters asking government officials for permission to allow one determined female in the program. "Finally, word came back that if the female could pass the same mental and physical exams, she could participate," Rose says. "And, of course, I did," she adds with characteristic confidence.

The Civilian Pilot Training Program included flight lessons, navigation, meteorology, air-traffic regulations, mechanical engineering, and more. Rose and the ten men in the program with her learned to fly a small two-person plane with an open cockpit: a machine light enough to "pick up and move around," she says.

Instructors teamed up with students and taught them to put a plane into a spin — and pull back out again. They learned to land with the engine off and to fly upside down. And through it all Rose insisted on being treated the same as the gang.

"Mostly, they treated me like a little sister. But, you know, they [the planes] had propellers. One person had to sit inside, while the other pulled the propeller down and around to get it started. At first the guys would say, 'Oh, I'll do that for you.' But I said, 'You will not. I'll do it myself. I am not a girl, I'm a pilot.'"

Cursing was something else she had to train the men about. "I'd be up in the plane with an instructor and he would yell, 'Get your nose up, damn it!' Then he'd say, 'Oops,

I'm sorry' about the cursing. I just said to him, 'I'll just put my hair up under my hat, and you pretend I'm a man. Then you can say anything you want to say!'"

To get her license, Rose had to do a solo cross-country flight, using only a compass and sight as her guides. Sometimes students got lost, including a man who earned the nickname "Wrong-Way" after ending up in an Ohio farmer's field. On her flight, Rose encountered strong winds. But she stood her course and completed her flight. Details of the flight are recorded in a faded green booklet with yellowed paper, which she still has today.

Rose Cousins in Fairmont today. Her home is filled with aviation books, magazines, family pictures and photographs from her flying days. Photo by Mike Furbee.

After graduating and obtaining her license in 1940, Rose worked for West Virginia State College helping to run the CPTP program. Then in 1941, she traveled with the original ten students to the Tuskegee Training Program in Alabama — the newly established Air Force training program for black combat pilots.

"At first, they wouldn't let black pilots fly, but Eleanor Roosevelt said they should and got it started. They called it an experiment because they didn't know if black men were smart enough," Rose explains.

Given that the U.S. Air Force was barely prepared to accept black men, it wasn't surprising that they refused Rose's bid for enrollment. And for determined young Rose, barely 21 years old, it was a disappointment. "I really thought I might talk my way into it like I had at the Civilian Training Program. But they said 'no,'" Rose says with some lingering regret and anger.

Still, a particular memory helps relieve the sting of rejection. "I did talk a trainer into taking me up while I was down there," she says. "He said I would definitely have been accepted if I had been a man."

Of the ten young West Virginia State College men who applied at Tuskegee, two were accepted — Mac Ross from Ohio and George Spencer "Spanky" Roberts, from Fairmont like Rose. Roberts, now deceased, got his license after Rose did and later became commander of the 99th Pursuit Squadron of black combat pilots. "They were the only squadron that didn't lose a bomber during the war, so they certainly proved those who doubted their abilities wrong," Rose says.

After being turned down at Tuskegee, Rose attempted to join the group of white civilian women pilots who ferried supplies to and from the troops. They also said no. So Rose returned to West Virginia State College, and helped run the Civilian Pilot Training Program. There she married Ted Cousins, a junior tennis champion from New Jersey. Soon, however, her mother fell ill and she returned to Fairmont.

"If things had been different, I never would have left West Virginia State," Rose reflects. "I loved it and could have done better there. I came back because my father and grandfather died during the same year and my mother and grandmother needed me. But I know I could have done so much better staying there," she says.

Despite her business degree, the only work Rose could find in Fairmont upon her return was teaching at the county's black high school, Dunbar High School. "Some businesses said I had too much education; others said they would lose customers. All I could get was teaching math at Dunbar."

Even there, Rose broke new ground. "Math was usually taught by a man, but all the men were off at war, and I had minored in math.

My degree was in business and teaching wasn't what I wanted to do, but I did a good job."

A few years later, Rose took a secretarial job offered to her by Pat Beacom, the city treasurer. "Some of the employees said they would resign if I came to work there," Rose says. "But Pat just said, 'All resignations will be accepted.'"

It was in the late 1950's that Rose began the career she has had for 38 years and intends to keep as long as she can.

"I got a call from the secretary of the newly formed Fairmont Clinic, which was established for miners and their families. Integration was just getting started, and she asked about getting some black employees. So I offered my services," Rose says.

"It was only secretarial work, which I was overqualified for. But it was in the business world, and I worked my way up to manager of medical records," she adds.

Despite regrets over doors that didn't open and despite her native talents and ambition, Rose is proud of the life she has built in Fairmont. Divorced when her daughters were young, she raised her two daughters alone. She was also deeply involved with a local community theater — The Little Theater — for almost 20 years, often serving as the producer and director of productions. Race, she says, rarely impacted her life because she wouldn't let it.

"It didn't bother me," she says, and then recounts an example of how she coped with assumptions she found offensive.

"I belonged to the black Episcopal church across from Dunbar. And when it closed, I just went on over to the white Episcopal church. Most of them knew me and welcomed me, but one or two didn't. One of them said when she was introduced to me, 'Do you know my maid?' and I just said right back to her, 'No, do you know mine?' Then others took her aside and told her I was just as likely to have a maid as she was."

Rose never lost her love for flying. She still goes flying with friends who own small planes as often as she can, and her spacious, immaculate home near the Fairmont Clinic is filled with aviation-related books, magazines, and photographs.

Along with plaques honoring her achievements and dozens of family and CPTP photographs, her walls sport photos of famous black generals, astronauts, pilots, scientists, and sports figures — female and male. Places of honor are reserved for her CPTP mentor James C. Evans, who became Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Franklin Roosevelt, and her friend George "Spanky" Roberts (both deceased).

"I'll just put my hair up under my hat. You pretend I'm a man. Then you say anything you want!"

Several years ago, the Fairmont *Times-West Virginian* revealed Rose's early involvement with aviation and spurred her to reestablish contacts with many veteran and current aviators. In addition, she has been invited to give several presentations to school children and community organizations. "It makes me feel good when younger women and girls tell me we opened the doors for them and let people know women could do this," she says.

Although Rose has many memories and assorted memorabilia from her days as the lone woman pilot in the CPTP, there is one thing she doesn't have — her wings.

"When my daddy died, I pinned them on his coat lapel, so they are in the grave with him. He was the one who signed the paper giving me permission to fly and always told me that I could come with him wherever he went if I could keep up with him. I guess I have always walked fast trying to keep up with him — and I still do."

Rose was happy to go along with photographer Mike Furbee when he suggested a trip to the Pleasant Valley airport. She never lost her love of flying, and still goes up with friends who own small planes.

Rose Agnes Rolls, shortly after she became a licensed pilot. Photographer and date unknown.

Flight Memories

Before embarking on her first solo flight in 1939 — the flight that would earn her a pilot's license — Rose checked her maps, plotted her course and checked the meteorology.

She donned her helmet, squeezed herself into the small open-cockpit plane, and took off. She flew from Institute to Parkersburg, then over to Ohio — and the trip was as smooth as butter.

"It wasn't that long a trip, only a few hours. We had to land at different points — sometimes just a field — along the route and someone was there to record our landing in the flight book...I felt completely alone — it was thrilling," Rose says.

Not long after getting her license, however, Rose took another flight that was even more memorable. She and CPTP classmate Marshall Fields flew to Pittsburgh, where he had been raised and she had relatives.

"We needed to fly places to keep up our hours," Rose says. "It's not like driving a car, where you pay your money and you are set for five years. You have to keep flying and log your flight hours to keep your license," she explains.

Rose and her friend flew to Pittsburgh where they were greeted with cheers from a slew of people, wined and dined, and written up in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a prominent black newspaper.

"Both of us got out and kissed the ground."

"We stayed for a visit, a few days, then we got ready to leave. The tower cleared us to go, so we did. But ten minutes out we ran into an electrical storm. Those little planes are not equipped for all that bouncing around — and we were too low for using a parachute, which we didn't have in the first place."

The plane had dual controls, Rose explains. So while one pilot flew, the other plotted the way back to Pittsburgh. "We were in this terrible lightning storm. The lightning and thunder were all around, and the plane was bouncing everywhere. If we had been struck, that would have been it. It was about the only time I have ever been frightened in the air. And when we got back to Pittsburgh, both of us got out and kissed the ground."

— Mary Rodd Furbee

Dubie, Spanky, and Mr. Death

West Virginia's Pioneering Black Airmen

By Ancella R. Bickley

When stories of the Tuskegee Airmen are told, few listeners are aware that West Virginia played a part in the development of some of these first black military pilots. Our state's participation in this epic venture may be illustrated through the lives of three men: William Lee Hill, called "Dubie"; George Spencer Roberts, called "Spanky"; and John Lyman Whitehead, called "Mr. Death." Although not the only Tuskegee pilots with West Virginia connections, Hill, Roberts, and Whitehead were representative of this important moment in history; their personal triumphs became possible only after the American military opened the doors of service and opportunity to black airmen.

William Lee "Dubie" Hill was born in Huntington in 1920. He began training as an Army Air Corps cadet in 1943, and received his wings that same year. Dubie Hill's Air Force career spanned 21 years. Photographer and date unknown.

"I saw him in 1944 south of Naples," explained Lieutenant Colonel Robbin Washington (now deceased), who grew up with William Lee Hill in Huntington. "He was with the 332d; they were flying escort service for bombers going into Romania." Others who knew William Lee in earlier years remember him as a student at Huntington's Douglass High School, a football player who in the fall of 1938 went off to the all black North Carolina Agriculture and Technical College, familiarly known as A & T.

In the late 1960's and '70's he was a mail carrier, a member of the Douglass High School Reunion Committee, and a frequent visitor to Unkie's Shoe Shine Parlor. There, along with a number of other black Huntingtonians, William Lee held forth on various topics.

I knew him as a neighbor and friend from early in my life. Our backyards — his on 27th Street and ours on 28th Street — joined. When he retired and came back to Huntington and built a house on his family's old homeplace, he constructed a gate from his backyard to ours. Unofficially, he was Dubie; officially, he was Major William L. Hill, (now deceased) U. S. Air Force, Tuskegee Airman.

William Lee Hill was born in Huntington on March 18, 1920, to Leander and Carrie Edwards Hill. His father met an early death. His mother relinquished custody of him and his sister Lelia to their grandparents, Sylvia and Simon Peter Hill, and their Aunt Leona and her husband William Hale. Two uncles, Tolbert and Cecil Hill, were also close by.

Like many of the other residents of our area, known as "the Patch," Dubie's grandfather Pete worked on the C&O Railroad. Those of us from the neighborhood remember him as a stern man. I can still visualize Mr. Hill at dusk standing out on his porch calling for William Lee to come in. So for me, the Dubie of later life was always the William Lee of my childhood.

Although I am not sure that William Lee knew Spanky, it is likely that their service assignments crossed. Spanky was Colonel George Spencer Roberts, first in his class at Fairmont's Dunbar High School, West Virginia State College graduate, husband of Edith McMillan Roberts, father of four children, and one of the first Tuskegee Airmen.

The involvement of Eleanor Roosevelt likely led to the Roosevelt administration's directive to develop a black flying unit.

The son of Spencer and Estella Roberts, Spanky graduated from Dunbar in 1934 and enrolled at West Virginia State in the fall of that year. He graduated from there in May 1938 with a B.S. degree in Mechanical Arts and returned that fall to complete education credits and secure a teaching certificate. It was during this period that the Civilian Pilot Training Program at West Virginia State got underway and Spanky Roberts was one of the early enrollees.

Rose Agnes Rolls Cousins from

George Spencer "Spanky" Roberts was the first cadet accepted for pilot training at Tuskegee Airfield. His mother wrote the words "God ride with him" on the back of this official Air Force photo. Photographer and date unknown.

the adjoining story was also among the initial trainees.

John Lyman Whitehead, "Mr. Death," the son of Jasper and John Lyman Whitehead, Sr., came to West Virginia State from his home in Lawrenceville, Virginia, in 1941.

His fondness for flying was an important force in his life, however, and he left WVSC after two years to participate in the pilot training at Tuskegee, gaining his wings and commission in 1944. "He had a life-long love affair with flying," a friend, Dr. James A. Russell, also from Lawrenceville, remembers. John Whitehead's sister, Mrs. Wanda Marine, corroborates Dr. Russell's memory. "My brother always loved planes," she says. "Our mother even decorated his bedroom with curtains with airplanes on them."

The Civilian Pilot Training Program was sponsored by the Civil Aeronautics Authority and taught the first black pilots to fly. This effort was not, however, the first attempt to develop training opportunities for black flyers.

According to historian Ulysses Lee in his book *U.S. Army in WWII: The Employment of Negro Troops*, blacks had been trying futilely to gain admission to the Army Air Corps since World War I. Provisions for flight training and an unheralded plan for an all-black air unit were included in a 1939 bill which became Public Law 18. These PL 18 provisions were, however, ineffective.

Lee further states that in 1940, there was an attempt to amend an appropriations bill to force the inclusion of blacks in planned Air Corps' expansion. The amendment was defeated, and the Air Corps continued to do nothing. In a bold move under its own auspices, however, the Civil Aeronautics Authority established the Civilian Pilot Training Program with branches at several all-black institutions — Tuskegee, Howard, Hampton, Lincoln University (Missouri), West Virginia State College, A & T, and Delaware State.

In actuality, there was no absolute connection between the Civilian Pilot Training Program and the opening of the Air Corps to blacks. Completion of the civilian course, however, inevitably raised the question of what the next step in black pilot training, and use, could be.

It is probable that changes came because of a combination of circumstances: the presence of this pool of black flyers; the agitation from the NAACP, the black press, and the black public; and the politics of the time. The involvement of Eleanor Roosevelt was particularly important and likely led to the Roosevelt administration's directive to the War Department to develop a black flying unit. It was at this point that the part of 1939's Public Law 18, which dealt with the creation of a black flying unit, was pulled out, dusted off, and, in 1941, put into effect.

Following World War II, while I was a student at West Virginia State College, John Lyman Whitehead returned there to complete his degree. Wearing a brown leather flyer's jacket on his small frame, he moved about the campus amidst whispers of "Mr. Death," a title that seemed to fit his image as a mysterious pilot. Given the nickname because of his gaunt face and slim build, he accepted it and painted it on his airplane. His sister, Wanda Marine, feels that it suited him because he was absolutely fearless as a pilot.

Mr. Death flew with the all-black 301st Fighter Squadron, 332d Fighter Group during World War II, and after the war he became the first black jet pilot instructor in the United States Air Force. During the Korean conflict he was operations officer with the 49th Fighter Group, 7th Fighter Bomber Squadron, completing 104 missions.

Ulysses Lee elaborates on the problems that the military felt was

John Lyman Whitehead was called "Mr. Death" by his fellow pilots and by students on the campus of West Virginia State College following World War II. He poses here with a Convair F102 Delta Dagger. Photographer and date unknown.

posed by bringing black pilots into the service. He emphasizes that foremost, the military did not want to disrupt the nation's code of racial ethics. Who would service a black flyer's plane? And even if there were black ground crews and black air strips, what would happen if a flyer had an emergency and had to land at an all-white air field? Who would service his plane? Where would he spend the night?

Actually, the struggle to get blacks into the Air Corps was a part of the continuing struggle for equitable participation of blacks in the military. To highlight this struggle, the NAACP in January 1941 organized a National Defense Day protest. Lee notes that one of the Army's responses to this protest was to set up the all-black flying unit and call for volunteers on a first-come, first-served basis. Pilot applicants had to have two years of college, and preference would go to those who had Civilian Pilot Training experience.

On July 19, 1941, the Tuskegee Airfield opened. Spanky Roberts was the first cadet accepted for pilot training. In March 1942 the first class graduated and went on to become the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the nation's first black flying unit, commanded by B. O. Davis, Jr. Also in 1942, the Air Corps activated the 332d — a black fighter group composed of the 100th, the 301st, the 302d, and later, the 99th.

When the dust settled from all of the political maneuvering, blacks such as George Roberts, William Hill, and John Whitehead were prepared to train as Air Corps pilots. Spanky Roberts had completed the Civilian Pilot Training Program at West Virginia State College in 1940 and he was commissioned as a second lieutenant pilot by March 7, 1942. His first combat experience was in North Africa and he ended World War II with more than 100 missions against the enemy in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

When B. O. Davis left the command of the 99th, Spanky Roberts replaced him. After the war, he became the first black to command a racially integrated unit in the U. S. Air Force. His decorations included the Air Force Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters and two Presidential citations. He retired as a full colonel in the U. S. Air Force and died on March 8, 1984.

William Hill completed A & T's Civilian Pilot Training Program and in March 1943 began training as an Army Air Corps cadet, receiving his wings in December 1943. He became a part of the 332d.

Among the medals which he received for his military service were the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Euro-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Purple Heart awarded for severe burns received when his plane crashed.

"After the crash," Lieutenant Colonel Washington said, "the flight surgeon would never clear him to fly again."

William Hill retrained in other military specialties and performed them during the rest of his Air Force career. Although he married, the marriage did not last and there were no children. He retired in 1964 and returned to Huntington. He died there on August 24, 1981, at the age of 61.

In 1958 John Whitehead became the Air Force's first black experimental test pilot. Achieving the rank of lieutenant colonel, he also held the Distinguished Flying Cross with five oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal. John Whitehead, who died in 1993, and his wife Colleen were parents of one daughter.

The historic rise of the Tuskegee Airmen was touched by West Virginia through West Virginia State College and through men such as William Dubie Hill, George Spanky Roberts, and John Mr. Death Whitehead.

Although bound by America's racial codes and often treated with disrespect, the Tuskegee Airmen performed with valor and efficiency. They demonstrated for the world at large and for their countrymen, in particular, that they were courageous, skilled, and dedicated pilots and loyal citizens of the United States.

The Wertz Airfield was located adjacent to and west of West Virginia State College. Civilian Pilot Training Program personnel both flew and taught here. From the book, ***West Virginia State College (1891-1991): From the Grove to the Stars***, courtesy West Virginia State College.

Elmer Bird with father Andrew Bird's banjo, recently restored by Early Vermillion. Photo by Michael Keller.

Elmer Bird

The Banjo Man from Turkey Creek

By Paul Gartner

Now Turkey Creek's sure runnin' wild,
From here to the mill is about three miles.
Wadin' that creek to the other side,
Sack o' corn on my shoulder to keep it dry.
Turkey Creek's way out of its banks,
Come on Fred, got to take a chance.
Swim that creek, keep your head up high.
Mama needs meal that's nice and dry...

(From "Turkey Creek" by Elmer and Beulah Bird. © 1987 John Hartford Music BMI.)

Life on Turkey Creek has changed since the late 1920's when Elmer Bird lived the words to his song,"Turkey Creek." A paved road now winds along the quiet valley in rural Putnam County, and the grist mill to which Elmer rode his mule is long gone.

Many residents there know Elmer Bird as a neighbor, a farmer who raises Black Angus cattle. Others know him as a former co-worker or fellow retiree from Union Carbide.

But old-time music fans everywhere have heard of "The Banjo Man from Turkey Creek." The Banjo Man plays a driving, "double drop-thumb" clawhammer style. And since the late 1970's, Elmer and his wife Beulah have taken his music across the United States and Canada, entertaining audiences with his brand of old-time music, which has its roots right there on Turkey Creek.

Elmer's branch of the Bird family has lived there since the Civil War, when they migrated from Virginia. "They came from Franklin, Virginia," Elmer says. "The one which would have been my great-granddad I guess, he got into it with his brothers. They were gonna sic the army on them. They sort of took up for the slaves. They left probably on account of fear of being harmed.

"They came into Narrows, Virginia, [and on to] Flat Top and Jumping Branch. They came looking for land."

After some time the Birds arrived in Putnam County. "Some of them walked through first and they found this land way up this holler here. That's where my grandpa settled. He was just real young then. They walked right up Turkey Creek."

That little boy who walked up Turkey Creek, Joseph, grew up to marry a woman named Elizabeth, and they had 11 children. Elmer was born on May 28,1920.

While Elmer doesn't think those original Birds played any music, three of Elizabeth's children were "the ones that picked the music up" — Winifred, John, and Andrew Bird.

Elmer's parents were Andrew Jackson Bird and Lottie Johnson Bird. Andrew learned to play the banjo from his brother Winifred. Elmer later taught himself to play by watching and listening to his father.

"They called him Andy Bird. We farmed on a little hillside farm here on Turkey Creek," Elmer says. "We'd be working in the fields, and he'd come in every day at noon. We worked pretty hard, hoeing tobacco and corn and stuff. We'd eat dinner then he would grab the old banjo and start playing it. I'd lay down on the floor and rest. I was tired.

"See, all the time I'm listening to him playing [while I'm] relaxing on the floor. I'm trying to figure out what he's doing. And every evening he'd play the banjo.

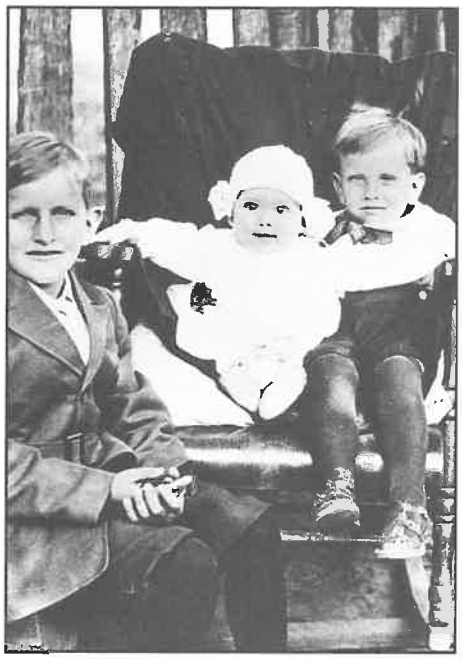
"And I'd say, 'Aren't you tired? I'm tired.'

"He'd say, 'Yeah, but it relaxes me.'

"He was one of the best drop-thumb clawhammer players. He was smooth, real smooth. He never took his music nowhere. When he was a youngster they played for square dances within five or ten miles of where they lived. Back then, people didn't have automobiles or anything like that. This would have been back in 1915, back in there."

His father and uncles learned their music in picking sessions at the home of an older man named "Daner" Bowles, who lived past the head of Turkey Creek, up on a ridge

Andrew Bird at age 15. Photographer and date unknown.



Brother Hamon (left) and baby brother Verland with Elmer Bird. Photographer and date unknown.

This WCMI publicity postcard is from 1940. The arrows point to cousin George Bird (left) and Elmer. Photographer unknown.

which shared his last name.

"Bowles Ridge was traveled a lot back then," Elmer remembers. "We went to the mill at Griffithsville. We had to raise wheat and have it threshed. That's where we got our wheat made into flour, over there at Griffithsville."

Daner was a farmer and good friend of the Bird family. "That's who had this banjo that I have now, that my uncle learned to play on, and my dad learned to play on. I learned to play on the same banjo. You know, I can barely remember Daner Bowles when I was a kid. I can remember seeing him when I was eight or ten years old. He played a lot of different instruments. I would say he was probably responsible for old-time music getting started here."

When Elmer took up playing the banjo, he was at least the third generation to play music on Turkey Creek.

Elmer started out with a two-finger style of banjo playing, but all along he wanted to play drop-thumb clawhammer like his father. Drop-thumb clawhammer playing uses the thumb and first or second finger — held in a clawlike manner — to strike down or brush on the strings. The thumb pulls the fifth string and is also used to cross down

When Elmer took up playing the banjo, he was at least the third generation to play music on Turkey Creek.

to the second, hence the term drop-thumb."

I picked two-finger, you know. For three or four years there that was all I could do. I wanted to play drop-thumb. I got about seven years old I could do pretty good, two-finger, I could play about any tune my daddy was playing. I couldn't do drop-thumb.

"I set down on the porch and tried to get daddy to show me how. I was about ready to give up on the banjo. One day I was sitting out there and it came to me just as natural. I sounded just like my daddy. Tickled me to death. So I really put in a lot of time on the banjo then, after I got so I could drop thumb."

One uncle who helped to shape Elmer's music was Addison Bird. But he didn't play an instrument. He danced. "I'd take my banjo up to his house. He lived off Turkey Creek up a holler. I'd be playing the banjo for him to dance. It was funny to me how good he danced and I'd just ease off on that banjo and he'd still be playing the tune [with his feet]. If I could dance like that now, I'd be John Hartford."

Addison didn't clog, exactly. "He called it the backstep, the double-shuffle backstep. His head didn't even hardly move, feet just moved

and he literally played a tune with them feet. I mean he played a tune like you play it on the banjo."

But the biggest influence on Elmer's music was his cousin, George Bird. They were boyhood friends and learned the family music together. For many years, the boys would get together on weekends at Uncle John's house on Clymers Creek. With his Uncle John on fiddle, George on banjo, and Elmer on guitar, they played music into the wee hours.

Of course, life was more than music back then. Elmer was also exposed to his share of hard work. The Birds were farmers and raised corn, wheat, and tobacco, plus their food. Elmer attended school until the fourth grade, but that was his choice, he says. He wanted to farm.

"I started working cattle when I was just five or six years old. My dad gave me a calf and we made a steer out of him. Got him from a fellow named Tom, and that's what we called him. Called the other one Low. My dad made me a little yoke. Anyway, I started working the cattle. The longer I worked, I wanted to stay home and work. I scraped their horns so they looked like Texas longhorns. One weighed 1,750 and the other weighed 1,800 pounds. I did everything there was to do on a farm.

"Later on, I sawlogged with them. People found out I had that real stout yolk of cattle and I could go over any bluff with them; people hired me to do their logging."

This was by the time he was 12, "and I wasn't big as a minute."

In those early days, Elmer was hearing more than just fiddle and banjo music at home. There was another sound reaching the mountains — radio. More specifically, the Grand Ole Opry.

In the 1920's, radios were few and far between, but Beulah, then Beulah Edwards, had an older sister who owned a radio. While Beulah is a bit younger than Elmer, she has known him all her life. Eight-year-old Elmer and other youngsters in the area would troop way out to her house on Thornton Ridge to listen to WSM from Nashville.

Eck Gibson and The Mountaineer Ramblers were (left to right) Dewey Thacker and Leonard Thornton on fiddle, Elmer Bird on banjo, and Eck Gibson on guitar. They asked Elmer to play with them for one week and he stayed 15 years. Photographer and date unknown.

"We sure would enjoy the Grand Ole Opry," Elmer says. "That was back when they had the Crook Brothers, the Possum Hunters, Dave Macon, and all those guys like that."

The Old Farm Hour was another popular radio show, broadcast over Charleston's WCHS. When he could, Elmer would travel to the Middleburg Auditorium and catch the show. "When George and I were just kids [teenagers] we played on WCHS and WSAZ. The Future Farmers of America had programs and they would always want us to come and play."

Elmer and George continued listening to the Grand Ole Opry and around 1939, with local radio performances under their belts and maybe some stars in their eyes, they set out for Nashville and the Grand Ole Opry — walking.

"I was about 19. George was 16 or 17. We didn't have money. I had about $18. He didn't have a cent. I had sold my tomato crop. We were walking and hitchhiking. We got to Ashland, Kentucky, and we played in a couple of beer joints and picked up a quarter or two here and yonder."

In Ashland, the boys found a room at the Southern Hotel on Carter Avenue. "This lady, she rented us a room for a dollar. It was a big old hotel, had about 40 rooms in it." Soon Elmer was helping to clean the hotel in exchange for the room, and George had a job at a local grocery store. "Pretty good deal," Elmer says. "Didn't interfere with our music."

The landlady told the boys they ought to see if they could audition for Asa Martin, who hosted a show

on radio station WCMI in Ashland.

When they saw Mr. Martin at the station, he asked the boys to play a fiddle tune, then he asked for a song. Then he said, "Yeah, you can sing, too. I'll just put you down for those two numbers on the show today."

"That was the end of our audition," Elmer says. Asa Martin's radio show was called "The Morning Roundup," and it went on the air about 6:00 a.m. "We had to walk about nine blocks every morning to the first show on WCMI and we were late most mornings and we would have to run that nine blocks," Elmer says.

As part of the "Morning Roundup Gang," they played two shows a day: a 15-minute show in the morning and a 30-minute show at noon. "We had been there just a little while and we started getting a lot of requests for our songs, especially out of Ohio. So we told them our names were 'George and Elmer,' but part of the time they called us 'The Bird Brothers.' We played 'Columbus Stockade Blues,' 'Echoes from the Hills,' 'Beautiful, Beautiful Brown Eyes,' and a lot of fiddle and banjo tunes. That's what Mr. Martin really wanted us to do."

The Roundup Gang also played on Asa Martin's live Saturday night broadcast from the Cliffside Casino. "It was a big theater back north towards Huntington from Ashland. They had square dances and prizes for the best square dance group. They had fiddle contests."

The Banjo Man plays a driving, "double drop-thumb" clawhammer style.

Elmer and George showed up for the fiddle contest and made a big impression. "The first night we were there George said, 'We want to sign up for the fiddle contest.'

"I said, 'No, we don't know nobody here yet.'

"He said, 'Well, we can play better than they can.'"

"I did everything there was to do on a farm," Elmer says, and this 1956 family snapshot proves it. Son Rob sits at far right and nephew Gregory at left, with friend Michael Johnson in between.

George approached the judges, and they asked where his guitar player was. The usual format was fiddle with guitar back-up.

George told them he only had a banjo player. The judges were skeptical. "He kept arguing with them," Elmer says. "Then one of the judges said, 'Let him go ahead. The banjo won't carry him no way. Even if he can play the fiddle, he'll lose anyway.'"

George replied, "We'll take our chances on that."

"If you miss a string on that banjo," George said to Elmer, "I'm gonna kill you. We're gonna win this." And they did.

"I'll never forget what tune we played. We just played one tune. We played 'Arkansas Traveler.' I can see the rosin standing up on that fiddle. I was driving that Arkansas Traveler right on down the road," Elmer says.

George and Elmer had been in Ashland for six months when it was time to return home. George had to finish high school at Hurricane, and Elmer went back to the farm.

"That walk to Nashville was the end of us playing together," Elmer says. It wasn't too long until World War II broke out, and Elmer was in the service. "I got called in the Army in the first of '42," Elmer says, but "George didn't go in the service for a while. He went to Pittsburgh and got married."

Elmer saw action in North Africa and on through Sicily. He was in a staging area for the D-Day invasion when he got the news that George had been killed in the invasion of France. Elmer came home in October, 1945. "I don't try to remember anything from the war. I was just real glad to get home."

After the war, with his musical partner now deceased, Elmer figured his music days were over. He and Beulah married on December 4, 1945, and started to raise a family. They built the house they live in on Turkey Creek, and farmed, while Elmer drove a truck and did hauling for people. In 1954, he was hired at Union Carbide in South Charleston.

That same year, a local bluegrass band — Eck Gibson and The Mountaineer Ramblers — had a daily radio show and needed a banjo player at the last minute. "They had six radio shows on WHTN," Elmer says. "Eastern Food Market sponsored them. They played a 15-

John Hartford and Elmer at Hartford's home on the banks of the Cumberland River in Tennessee. John and Elmer met in 1975. "Elmer is one of the strongest people I've ever met in my life. He has an incredible sense of willpower and determination, in all aspects of his life and particularly in his music," says John Hartford.
Elmer gave John his first subscription to GOLDENSEAL. Thanks, Elmer!

minute show five days a week and on Saturday they had a 30-minute show.

"So he asked me if I'd go down and talk to that guy, he wanted me to play banjo and I said, 'Well, I'm not bluegrass.' So I showed him, I did clawhammer. I could pick two-finger, but I wasn't a bluegrass player. So they put a set of picks on me and told me to play three-finger. Never had nobody show me or nothing. They told me if I could help them out a week, they would get another banjo player.

"I played banjo with them for 15 years."

Elmer and the Mountaineer Ramblers continued the daily radio show through 1955. Every Monday evening they recorded shows for the whole week.

"It wasn't bluegrass I was playing, it was old-time three-finger is what it was," Elmer says. "I kicked off anything they wanted to play. But I never was bluegrass. People told me 'You're not a bluegrass banjo player.' I said, 'I'm not trying to be. I'm just filling in till they get somebody!'"

This wouldn't be the last time Elmer's music would invite such comparisons. Years in a bluegrass band brought with it a reputation as a bluegrass player. As a result, he met some resistance at old-time banjo contests.

Once a contest judge in Harpers Ferry warned him, "Now don't you 'grass it." "I played 'Red Wing' and 'Under the Double Eagle,'" Elmer recalls. "Just as slow as you could play them and still get in all the notes. I couldn't see no bluegrass.

"They said, 'If you 'grass it, we'll have to disqualify you.' So they disqualified me. They said it was too slick.

"Since then, I've judged a lot of contests. You don't judge a guy by what he is wearing or who he is, or whether they are male or female. You judge his instrument. They judged me just as soon as I walked up there."

Elmer doesn't see anything wrong with playing a bluegrass standard like "Orange Blossom Special" in the clawhammer style. "I just use their tune. They use ours. That's where bluegrass started from."

By the early '70's, Elmer wanted a change. It was at the Art and Craft Fair in Ripley that he met a fretless banjo maker named Gene Dickerson.

Elmer remembers that he picked up one of Dickerson's banjos at his booth, and Dickerson asked, "Where did you ever learn to play like that?"

Dickerson asked if Elmer played in a band, and Elmer explained it was a bluegrass band and they didn't have much use for clawhammer. "He said, 'You need to leave that band immediately.' He started sending me to where there were gonna be old-time shows and contests. He actually got me started doing my single act."

So by 1974, Elmer knew it was time to move on. He told Beulah he

He was honored with the Vandalia Award at the 1996 Gathering. And he is also a six-time, first-place winner at Vandalia.

wanted to go solo, and play what he wanted. "If I want to play fast, I'll play fast. If I want to sneak in a country song every now and then — I do 'Momma Tried' — a few country songs like that. I found out after I got to doing a lot of different jobs, I could play to a lot wider

audience."

That "wider audience" is what lead Elmer to develop his double drop-thumb style.

As Elmer explains it, straight clawhammer "sounded too draggy and the audience didn't pay attention to me, because I was playing like my dad played. The audience didn't like it, it wasn't good enough, they wanted something more lively," Elmer says. "I doubled my speed just about. That's when I came up with double drop-thumb clawhammer. I still pick the drop thumb, fifth and second, but I'm getting *all* those strings at one time or another — wherever it needs it. Only thing I'm getting on the way back up is the fifth string with my thumb. Everybody thinks I'm catching [notes on the way back up], but I'm not."

Elmer played a lot of jobs for free the first year, but with the understanding that the following year, he wanted paid. It was at one of those early gigs that he picked up his "handle."

A promoter in Ohio had listed him as "The King of Clawhammer Banjo Players," but Elmer wasn't comfortable with it. Sometime later, "Dave Morris was putting on a show out at Rippling Waters," Elmer says. "He wanted me to play on it. He couldn't remember what I called myself, so he said, 'We'll just call him The Banjo Man from Turkey Creek.'"

It was at the 1975 Skyline Bluegrass Festival in Ronceverte that he met his future collaborator and producer, John Hartford.

One of the scheduled bands didn't show up and Elmer was asked to fill in at the last minute. "So I ran up the hill and got the banjo and got up on the stage," Elmer says. "I got my breath and I told the audience I would try to do this for them.

"John Hartford was down under the stage and I didn't know that." After Elmer's set, the Grammy Award-winning songwriter had some advice for him.

Elmer remembers Hartford said, "You're the best old-time banjo player that I have ever seen, but sit down and let me tell you, don't ever apologize to an audience again, even if they don't like you. Let them be the judge and don't ever tell nobody again that you're gonna try to do something.

"You just play that banjo like you're capable of playing it. Let them make up their mind what they think of it."

"It was actually good training for me," Elmer says. Elmer already had two albums out at this time, starting with "Elmer's Greatest Licks," in 1979; and "Home Sweet Home," in 1982.

Elmer Bird won the Vandalia Award at last year's Vandalia Gathering. Photo by Michael Keller.

Elmer and Beulah in 1940 when he first came back from the army. Photographer unknown.

This chance meeting with Hartford led to a friendship and musical collaboration — the internationally-acclaimed musician wound up producing and playing fiddle on Elmer's next three albums: "Bumble Bee Waltz," in 1985; "Turkey Creek," in 1987; and "George How I Miss You," in 1992. The latter album was a tribute to George Bird.

In the two decades he has been a solo act, Elmer's music has taken him across the U.S. and Canada. He has performed at the 1982 World's Fair, the Renfro Valley Barn Dance, Berea College, Midnight Jamboree in Nashville, Silver Dollar City in Missouri, Burbank Center for the Arts in California, at the Winnipeg Festival in Manitoba, and many other places.

And he is known at home, too. Elmer has appeared on Mountain Stage, at the State Folk Festival in Glenville and the Pumpkin Festi-

val in Milton. Elmer is a regular at the Appalachian String Band Festival at Clifftop and Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. He was honored with the Vandalia Award at the 1996 Gathering. And he is also a six-time, first-place winner at Vandalia.

The Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America, based in Nashville, respected his banjo prowess, too. The group awarded him "Best Old-Time Banjo Player" in 1984, 1985, 1986, and 1990.

And he hasn't lost touch with his radio roots, either. He is a cast member at Jamboree USA in Wheeling.

Elmer's best moment on stage? It was last November in Cincinnati, in that city's brand-new Paramount Theater. "The promoter knew I wasn't up to par. I went out there and hit the banjo one time and said, 'I'm just a clodhopper from Turkey Creek.'"

Elmer asked the crowd to sing along with him. "I let the crowd do about half of it — I pulled a John Hartford trick on them."

The crowd gave him a standing ovation and called him out for an encore. He obliged with the "Orange Blossom Special." "Man, I just burned it down," Elmer recalls.

"I don't think there was ever any more people to come backstage after a show," Beulah adds.

"That was probably the best show I ever did in my life," Elmer says.

In 1985, a woman in Shreveport, Louisiana, was watching the Nashville Network's "Nashville Now" show on television when she heard country star Charlie Louvin announce that "The Banjo Man from Turkey Creek — Elmer Bird" would be at his upcoming bluegrass festival. The woman went next door and asked her neighbor, Vedious, if this might be the same Elmer Bird who used to play music with Vedious' late husband, George Bird.

Vedious called directory assistance and found Elmer's number. They became reacquainted, and later she asked Elmer if he wanted George's old banjo. Soon it was back on Turkey Creek.

It wasn't in the best shape, so Elmer had it restored by his friend, luthier Early Vermillion. The beautiful turn-of-the-century, open-back banjo, with mother-of-pearl inlay and fine carved heel, is a prized possession.

In 1992, Elmer was diagnosed with a rare blood cancer. While it has meant frequent trips to hospitals for treatments, his spirits are good and he is anxious to play again.

Last fall, he completed another recording, "My Most Requested." Fans and fellow musicians asked him to record an all-instrumental tape. "I'm glad I did it, because I sure couldn't do it right now," Elmer says.

Last December, Elmer and Beulah celebrated 51 years of marriage. They are the parents of three children — Jane; Elmer Robinson Bird, Jr.; and Craig. They also have six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

"I worked at Carbide for 27 years and 10 months. At one time I had a hundred head of registered Angus cattle and played music every weekend. People would ask me, 'Doesn't that make you nervous?'

"I'd say, 'I don't have time to be nervous.'"

Elmer and Beulah today at home on Turkey Creek. Photo by Michael Keller.

Augusta Festival

Photo by Mark Crabtree.

By Katherine Roberts

West Virginia, oh my home
West Virginia's where I belong
In the dead of the night
In the still and the quiet
I slip away like a bird in flight
Back to those hills
The place that I call home.
(From "West Virginia, My Home," words and music by Hazel Dickens; © Happy Valley Music)

If you need an excuse to come home to West Virginia, the Augusta Festival, held every August in Elkins City Park and on the campus of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins, is reason enough to pack your bag for a weekend visit to one of the most beautiful parts of the Mountain State. A production of the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College, the weekend-long festival celebrates the vitality of West Virginia folk culture.

Throughout the year, the Augusta Heritage Center sponsors workshops, festive gatherings, and educational programs designed to celebrate and pass along traditional arts and lifeways. This mission crystallizes in the Augusta Festival.

The Augusta Festival weekend features a lively mix of concerts, crafts, and clogging; song swaps, jam sessions, and kids' activities. Festival action swings back and forth between the college campus, the city park, and back again. The festival crowd is a mixture of Augusta students, master folk artists, and enthusiastic participants from across West Virginia and neighboring states. Organizers see the festival as an opportunity to share the "Augusta Experience" with the general public and local community.

The festival comes on the heels of five weeks of Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops and reflects the variety of workshop offerings as well as the vibrancy of the participants and instructors.

Workshop offerings range from material folk art (felting, rag rug

weaving, whittling) to traditional music (old-time fiddle and banjo, gospel singing) to performance (storytelling and dance). They attract participants from all over the country who want to learn traditional art forms from the tradition-bearers themselves.

During Old-Time Week, the last workshop week of the summer, Augusta invites several traditional West Virginia musicians to the Center as visiting artists. They perform string music and unaccompanied ballads which came to Appalachia with the early settlers, a tradition that spawned contemporary bluegrass and country music.

Atsa Augusta 1996, on a late Thursday afternoon, Carroll Hardway and Lester McCumbers sit on folding chairs in the lobby of the Harper-McNeeley Auditorium. They are surrounded by a middle-aged crowd of old-time music fans and musicians. Carroll Hardway, from Elmira, Braxton County, is on banjo and Lester McCumbers, of Nicut, Calhoun County, plays fiddle.

After a rendition of "Yew Piney Mountain," Lester beckons his wife Linda to the small stage and helps her to climb onto the risers. "You going to sit down or you going to stand?" Lester asks her. "I'll stand," she says. Standing a little behind and to the side of Lester, Linda folds her hands in front of her as she sings "The Cherry River Line." Her voice is high and strong, and the audience erupts into applause and whoops of approval when she finishes. Traditional artists such as the McCumbers and Hardway are revered at Augusta.

Traditionally, folk arts have been passed on to people from within the same folk group, often by family or community members. "I learned from when I was a little girl," says Linda McCumbers about the ballads she sings. "From my mother and my aunt (Phoeba Parsons)." However, at Augusta, many people pay tuition to learn the folkways of people whom they may have never met before and who may be from outside their own folk culture. But the arts are passed on in the traditional methods of learning by doing, observing, and listening. What is forming at places like the Augusta Heritage Center is a different kind of folk group, one defined not by region, community, ethnicity, or family, but by a passion for the preservation and continuation of traditional arts.

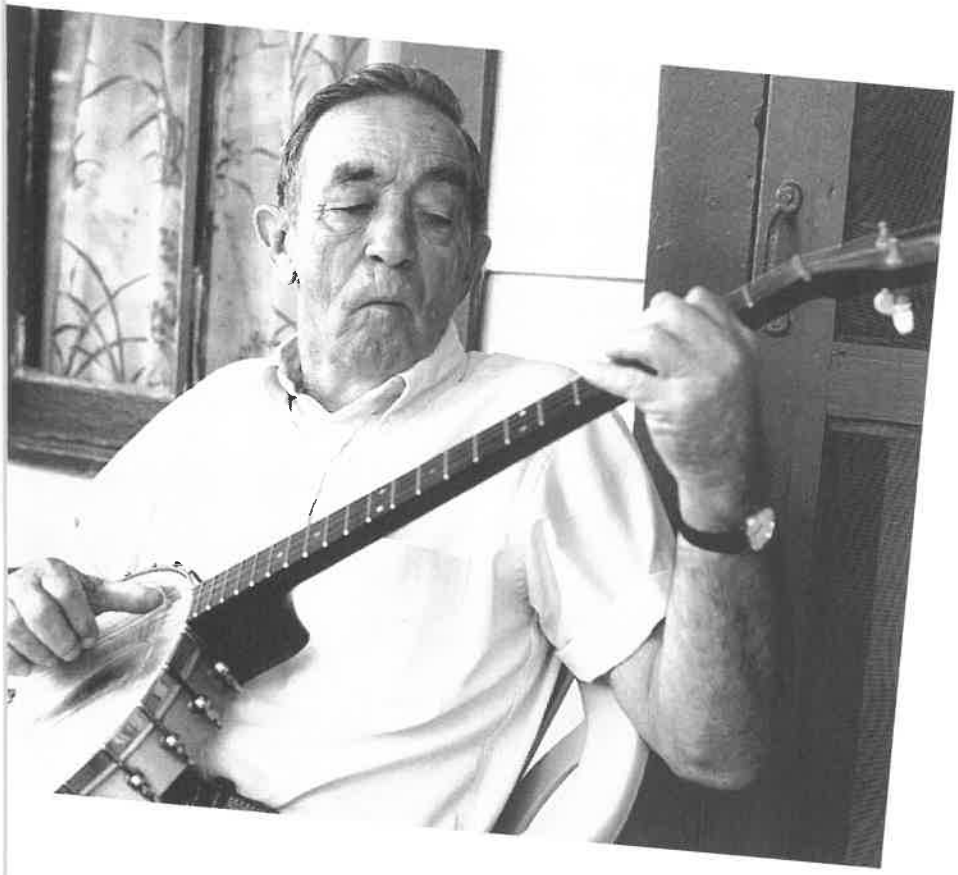
Fiddler Lester McCumbers (above) from Calhoun County and banjo player Carroll Hardway (right), Braxton County, were the master artists during Augusta's 1996 Old-Time Week workshops. Photos by Gerald Milnes.

"It's died away a lot, you know, from what it used to be," says Lester about the old-time music he grew up with. "Even since our time. Since we were playing, there was so much more of it than there is today. Everybody that's growing up young seems to want to get into bluegrass." But both Carroll and Lester agree that the efforts of people like Gerry Milnes, Augusta's Folk Arts Coordinator, have helped to save their traditional music for future generations. "Augusta has kept it from completely dying out," says Carroll Hardway. "Had it not been for people like Gerry Milnes who got here in time to preserve a part of it, by now it would not have grown."

What is forming at places like the Augusta Heritage Center is a different kind of folk group, one defined by a passion for the preservation and continuation of traditional arts.

Lester laughs, "Don't tell him he said that, though!"

As the McCumbers and Lester Hardway are preparing to drive home on Friday afternoon, just hours before the 1996 festival's opening concert is to begin, workshop activity across the Davis & Elkins campus is reaching a fevered pitch. A weaving class is clacking



traffic of festival goers, heading for the concert at Harper-McNeeley Auditorium. As the auditorium fills up, the hum of excited chatter reaches a palpable thickness.

The audience hushes itself as Darryl Stephens and Bruce Betler of Helvetia, Randolph County, walk wordlessly on stage without introduction. They open the concert with traditional Swiss flag throwing or *fahnenschwingen,* accompanied by the music of the tremendously long Alp horn. Darryl Stephens produces a royal sound on the gigantic horn, standing stock still and ramrod straight while Bruce Betler tosses and flips the enormous red flag of Switzerland high into the air, its white cross always perfectly visible to the audience. Their performance serves as an emblem of what the Augusta Festival is all about — the vitality and dignity of traditional lifeways.

away next door to the Augusta Heritage Center offices; upstairs autoharp students strum in unison, their heads cocked in concentration; in the Davis & Elkins chapel, Vocal Week students make a joyful sound under the direction of West Virginia gospel leader Ethel Caffie-Austin; and on the smooth wooden planks of the pavilion floor, teen cloggers drum out rhythm with their butterfly feet.

All this workshop activity goes romping right into the 24th annual Augusta Festival, its enthusiasm and energy helping to ignite the festival spirit.

While the majority of people who participate in Augusta's summer workshops are from outside the state, Margo Blevin, Director of the Augusta Heritage Center, points out that the weekend festival attracts more locals. "A lot of people don't know we do anything else but the festival," she says. "There are a lot of people around who, if you say, 'Have you ever been to Augusta?' they say, 'Oh, yes, I come up to the park every year.' And what they mean is they come to the festival. It is really our main means of visibility in the community and the state. It's really more of a community thing than anything else."

Elkins Mayor Jimmy D. Hammond agrees, "There are a lot of people in the community who take advantage of it," he says. "And it gives the whole community a boost. Downtown shops, restaurants, hotels all fill up. It's a real spike to the economy."

As Friday evening draws nigh, the streets of Elkins do seem to swell with the

Hazel Dickens, originally from Mercer County, will once again be featured at the 1997 Augusta Festival concert, August 9, in Elkins. Photo by David Gahr.

Ethel Caffie-Austin, who recently received an honorary Doctor of Arts degree from Davis & Elkins College, has been involved with Augusta since 1978. Photo by Michael Keller.

As Betler and Stephens exit the stage, emcee John Lilly, Augusta Publicity Coordinator, (now editor of GOLDENSEAL, see inside front cover) welcomes the enthusiastic crowd to the concert. "We have with us tonight people who have changed the course of American music," Lilly says.

And it is no exaggeration. The musicians range from crosspicking guitar legend George Shuffler, to composer/dancer/instrumentalist John Hartford, to popular folksinger Peter Seeger, to the lively string band the Rhythm Rats, to the Georgia Sea Island Singers, to Kentucky master fiddler J. P. Fraley, to West Virginia's own first lady of traditional folk and bluegrass music Hazel Dickens.

When John Lilly introduces Dickens, the audience falls silent. "Hazel Dickens is an icon," Lilly says. "She is a pioneer of bluegrass music and one of the first female bluegrass vocalists."

Dressed in black pants, a black shirt with a red rose print, and jaunty red pumps, Hazel Dickens walks out on the stage with her guitar to whistles and cheers of delight from the audience. She begins her set with an anthem for every displaced West Virginian, "West Virginia, My Home."

She is joined by Ginny Hawker, old-time singer and musician from Tanner, Gilmer County, for "Mama's Hand," another piece that reflects Hazel's inner conflict over leaving her Mercer County home to find work out of state. She is close to this song, proud of it. "This is a song I wrote about my mother and me," she says.*

I knew what I was leaving
I would never find again
And it was hard to let go of
mama's hand
My mama's hand...

(From "Mama's Hand," words and music by Hazel Dickens, © Happy Valley Music)

* The song received the 1996 Song of the Year award from the International Bluegrass Music Association. —ed.

Hazel Dickens has said she likes it when a singer sings like they feel it, like they know what they are singing about. When she sings, you know that *she* knows what the words mean.

Although Augusta has been traditionally associated with Appalachian music, Friday night's concert reflects the diverse array of traditions that the Center has come to embrace and champion. The Georgia Sea Island Singers, made up of Frankie and Doug Quimby who hail from St. Simons Island, Georgia, add a ribbon of African American heritage to the festival weave. Frankie tells the story of Ebo's Landing, the site of a mass suicide by a group of Ebo people who, upon their arrival at Dunbar Creek on St. Simons Island, discovered that they were to be slaves, at which point they walked into the water, singing:

I'll be buried in my grave
I'll go home to my Lord and be
free.
Freedom, freedom over me
Before I'll be a slave

(From "O'Freedom," early 1800's, traditional song)

The audience joins in, singing softly, slowly.

After the gospel harmony group the Northern Kentucky Brotherhood Singers has satisfied cries from the crowd for an encore, the audience scatters into the cool night, heading to the dance pavilion for square and contra dancing or gathering into tight little jam session groups across the campus to play and listen to more old-time tunes.

Around midnight, a crowd begins to gather in what is known as the Ice House, a cylindrical stone building that clings to a hillside on campus. Faint strains of blues harmonica, guitar, and piano issue from its thick walls. Inside it is smokey, dimly lit, and crowded with a ring of swaying people; a smiling, sweaty little group of musicians is at their center.

Suddenly a rich, throaty voice rises from the crowd to meet the music.

It is Annie Neeley from Clarksburg, lead vocalist for the newgrass band Appalachian Spitfire. She has participated in Vocal Week Workshops for the first time this summer, thanks to Augusta's West Vir-

1997 Augusta Festival

The 1997 Augusta Festival, August 8-10, marks the 25th anniversary of this unique and eclectic event. Highlights this year will include concert performances by a wide range of Appalachian musicians and singers, a juried craft fair featuring over 60 local and regional artists, dance activities ranging from Cajun to contras, and much, much more.

The festival begins at 8:00 p.m. Friday evening, August 9, on the Davis & Elkins College campus. Choices will include dancing, a songwriter showcase, jam sessions, and song swaps into the early hours. Leading the way on the floor of the open-air dance pavilion will be callers Beth Molaro and Martha Tyner calling to the live (and lively!) music of several bands including Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys, Joyce and Jim Cauthen and others.

The songwriter showcase will feature the performing talents and original compositions of nationally-known tunesmith Hugh Moffat ("Old Flames," etc.), Native American songwriter Eddie Bushyhead, Carol Elizabeth Jones, and others. Meanwhile, anyone with an instrument, a tune, or a song to share is welcome to join in the wide array of impromptu jam sessions and song swaps scattered throughout the campus.

On Saturday, August 10, the festival gears up for a full day of free activities at Elkins City Park, a shady nine-acre park directly across appropriately-named Sycamore Street, from the college campus.

From 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., thousands of people will stroll through the park, enjoying a rich tapestry of traditional crafts displays, hands-on activities for kids, music and dance performances and workshops, poetry, storytelling, food, and folklife activities. An Appalachian Poets' Gathering throughout the day will give way to a Liars' Contest in the late afternoon; the top liar retells his or her prize-winning tale to close out the afternoon.

Saturday evening beginning at 7:30 p.m., the Augusta Festival moves back to Davis & Elkins College for the official 25th Anniversary Celebration and the Augusta Festival Concert in Harper-McNeeley Auditorium. Concert performances will include legendary West Virginia singer and composer, Hazel Dickens; Pocahontas County banjo player and ballad singer Dwight Diller; and new West Virginia string band, Gandydancer, featuring fiddlers Dave Bing and Gerry Milnes, banjo player Ron Mullennex, and guitarist Mark Payne. Other concert performers will include North Carolina's Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys; Cherokee singer and dancer Walker Calhoun; and unaccompanied gospel group, the Northern Kentucky Brotherhood Singers.

The 1997 Augusta Festival will conclude with a nondenominational gospel sing on Sunday morning, August 10, beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the college's chapel, led by Ginny Hawker and Flawn Williams.

Augusta Festival tickets are available from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. Weekend ticket prices are $20 for adults; $15 for children and senior citizens. Daytime activities are free to the public. For a free Augusta Festival brochure, for more information, or to order tickets, call (304)637-1209.

This one-of-a-kind banjo by instrument builder Kevin Enoch will be raffled off along with a free week of Augusta tuition and a $100 gift certificate to mark Augusta's 25th Anniversary Celebration. Photo by Tom Barr.

A large juried craft fair, complete with craft demonstrations such as glassblowing, highlights free Saturday afternoon Augusta Festival activities in Elkins City Park. Photo by Michael Keller.

Dave Morgan from Randolph County, and his LP-powered dancing dolls. Photo by Monica Guye.

ginia Artists Scholarship, funded in part by the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. "I've made a lot of connections here," she says. "I met Hazel Dickens. I just wish there were more young people in the workshops and at the festival."

On Saturday morning, while Friday's night owls slumber, Augusta volunteers and staff are transforming the Elkins City Park into a festival landscape — erecting big white tarps, checking sound systems, setting up stalls for crafts people. The regular horseshoe tossers, picnickers, and promenaders have relinquished their green, shady park to gospel singers, cloggers, fiddlers, liars, poets, and artisans of all sort.

Throughout the day there is a kaleidoscope of activity — a children's concert at the main stage, demonstrations by West Virginia master folk artists under the folklife tent, discussion and performance of sacred music styles at one of the workshop stages, and jam sessions with local old-time musicians all over the park.

There is the feeling that things are unfolding spontaneously, one event spurring the next. Under a tree near the main stage, old-time musicians Denver Caynor from Buckhannon and Dave Morgan from Ellamore, Randolph County, are standing next to a tub bass that Dave Morgan has fashioned — a bass made from a slat of wood, one long wire for plucking, and an upturned washtub. "This here is a state-of-the-art tub," he says, giving its string a pluck.

He and Denver are joined under the tree by Gerry Milnes and Andy Boarman, master old-time banjo maker and player from Hedgesville, Berkeley County. They play "Red Wing" while a small crowd gathers to listen.

At the folklife tent nearby, Morgan's "miniature dancers" are gyrating on top of their phonograph stands. He has created an automated "limberjack" toy that jiggles and spins on its wooden paddle

Master riflemaker Bill Mullenix, left, and apprentice Jim Heck display their work in the festival Folklife Tent. Photo by Gerald Milnes.

which is attached to the turntable of a record player.

"They made a lot of these paddle dancers," he says. "I got ideas from that. I wanted to put some action to it. I got old fashioned phonographs and styled (the miniature dancers) from that. You can't buy any part of that no place."

Indeed, the toys are a hybrid invention — a mix of store-bought rubber doll parts and clothing, hand-whittled wooden torsos, and thin cut metal limbs — perched and "dancing" atop old record players. There are likenesses of Minnie Pearl (complete with straw hat and tiny dangling price tag), Grandpa Jones, and Crystal Gayle. Two boxers circle around one another in a miniature boxing ring, taking random swings with their metal arms.

Two stalls over, gunsmiths Bill Mullenix, from Harmon, and his apprentice Jim Heck, from Glenmore, Randolph County, display their muzzle loaders. They have their guns mounted on a double sided rack so that the intricate craftsmanship of each is wholly visible. Their curly maple barrels, striped around with the natural grain of the wood, are inlaid with small silver and brass shapes such as crescent moons and hearts. Carvings of twisting vines and delicate leaves wrap around the buck stocks of Bill Mullinex's guns. "I get the ideas from vines I see growing in the woods," he says. "Or I'll go in a restaurant and see designs on the placemats or get an idea from watching clouds."

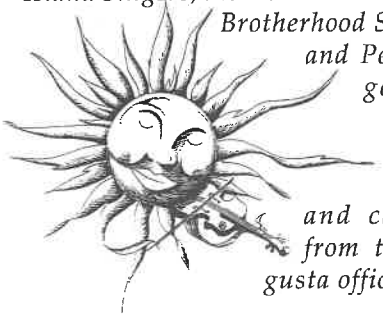
"I get the ideas from vines I see growing in the woods. Or I'll go in a restaurant and see designs on the placemats or get an idea from watching clouds."

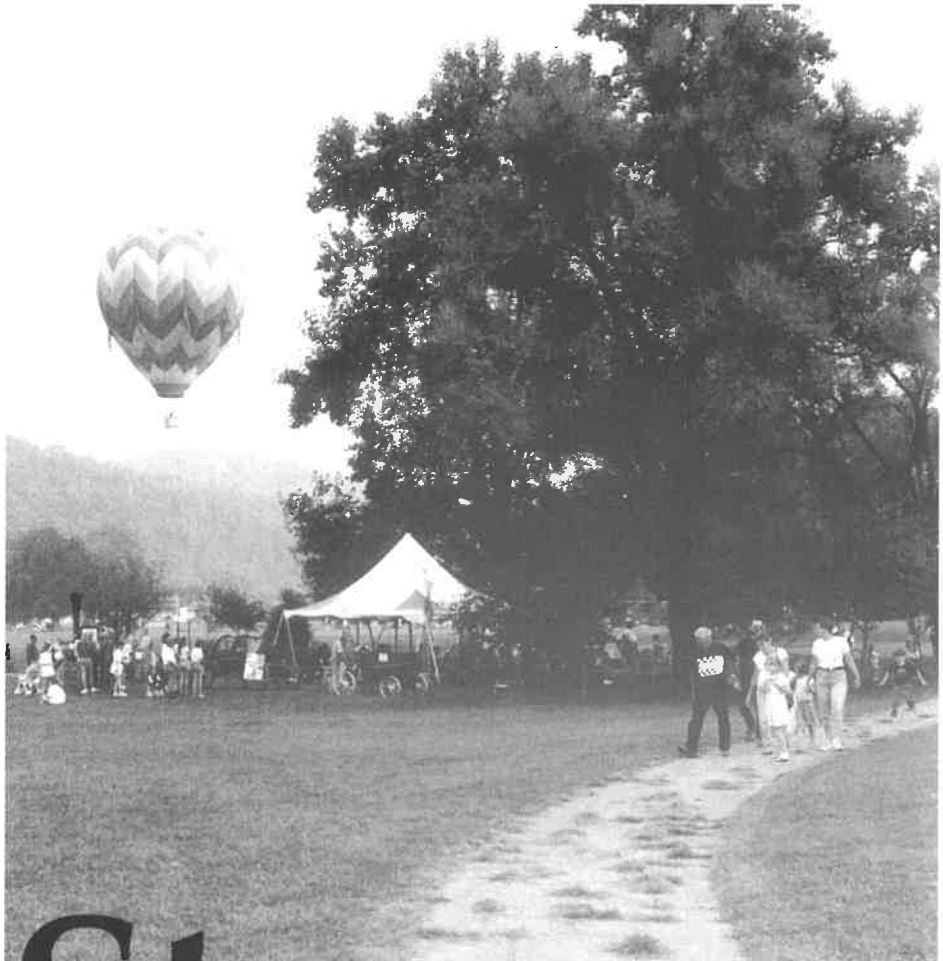
Bill Mullinex and Jim Heck are part of the West Virginia Folk Art Apprenticeship Program, administered by Augusta, which links traditional West Virginia folk artists with apprentices who wish to learn the art in the traditional manner. "I'll identify someone as a traditional artist," says Gerry Milnes. "And then I do a little search in the community for a good apprentice. I match them up and help them apply." For Jim, who was injured in an automobile accident and was unable to return to his job as a radiator repairman, the apprenticeship program has led to a new career. "Gunsmithing is a full-time industry for me," he says. "I'm working on an order for a guy up at Penn State and one for a diplomat to Greece." This is his first time to present his art at the festival and he is beaming, talking excitedly about every aspect of gunsmithing.

Living traditions, such as the ones exhibited by the master artists and their apprentices, are what distinguish the Augusta Festival. This is not a festival devoted to the resurrection of lost arts, cloaked in musty period dress and theme park atmosphere. West Virginia culture is not rarified and turned into museum artifact here. Rather, it is celebrated with vitality by its own old and new tradition-bearers, who share generously with their visitors.

As Ginny Hawker says Sunday morning at the gospel sing while sharing the unaccompanied hymns of her Primitive Baptist childhood, "No one's going to perform here. This is a sing-along. If you don't know the words, just sit and take it in, so you can take it back home with you."

Performance highlights from Augusta's 1996 concert season, including Augusta Festival concert excerpts from Hazel Dickens, the Georgia Sea Island Singers, the Northern Kentucky Brotherhood Singers, and Pete Seeger, are available on CD and cassette from the Augusta office.





A hot air balloon ride offers a good view of Jackson's Mill 4-H Conference Center during the annual Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee.

Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee

By Danny Williams

Photographs by Mike Furbee

For those of us who have trouble making decisions, summer and fall can be pretty rough times here in West Virginia.

We look at our GOLDENSEAL calendar of fairs and festivals, and we see at least a half dozen or so fun events happening all at once. Food festivals, craft shows, music gatherings, historical programs, art exhibits, dance performances, family and community reunions — how in the world can we settle on just one place to spend a weekend, when what we really want is to see it all?

The only time our life gets any easier during these nice-weather months is on Labor Day weekend, because that's when we can attend all of these events at one time. We just head to Jackson's Mill 4-H Conference Center, near Weston, for the Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee. Every year, this is the biggest show of traditional products, entertainment, and exhibits anywhere in the state.

If there is anything you would leave the house to go see, they've probably got it at the Jubilee. While many other big annual festivals have narrowed their focus over the years, the folks at the Jubilee have just kept on adding more and more since they started the event in 1974.

One of the original Jubilee events was a first-rate craft fair, now grown to over 150 entrants. Once housed around the stall area of the state 4-H livestock barn, the show has now spilled over into several tents set up around the stately old camp.

The state's finest needleworkers compete for ribbons with their quilts, lace, knitted and crocheted items, and weavings. Cooks and gardeners enter pies, preserves, and canned goods in a tantalizing contest.

The Jubilee's fine art show has

grown into one of the strongest annual exhibitions of painting, drawing, and printmaking in the state. A top-quality photography competition emphasizes photos of West Virginia people and places.

Two more recent additions to the Jubilee, a Civil War re-enactment and a pioneer encampment, bring some of our American history to life.

One building is full of hard-to-find West Virginia books for sale, and another offers West Virginia preserves, candies, baked goods, and herbal products.

From the lofty vantage point of a tethered hot-air balloon ride, you can look down on the exhibit of large and small steam engines, or across the road to the woodchopping demonstration put on by West Virginia University forestry students.

And be sure to catch the glassblowing demonstration, the petting zoo, the West Virginia marbles exhibit and shooting match, the dance performances, the restored mill, and the museum.

Did you work up an appetite doing all that? All the usual festive foods are here, plus chicken and beef barbecue, catfish dinners, cornbread and beans, apple dumplings with ice cream, and even a sit-down meal in the old camp dining hall.

It's so big that lots of folks can't walk around fast enough to see it all; so the Jubilee shuttles visitors around the grounds on long farm wagons fitted with seats and pulled by tractors. There is just no other event in the state which offers as much.

It wasn't always like this. Bill Frye, now the director of the conference center, was in on the planning of the first fair as a local Lewis County extension agent. He remembers that first event with a chuckle.

"They had had a 'Country Life Jubilee' here at Jackson's Mill in the '20's and '30's. It was more of an agricultural, 4-H type event, with some inspirational speeches thrown in. Some people around here remembered those as being wonderful events, so there was a push to start up some big annual program here again.

If there is anything you would leave the house to go see, they've probably got it at the Jubilee.

A working steam engine is among the many displays.

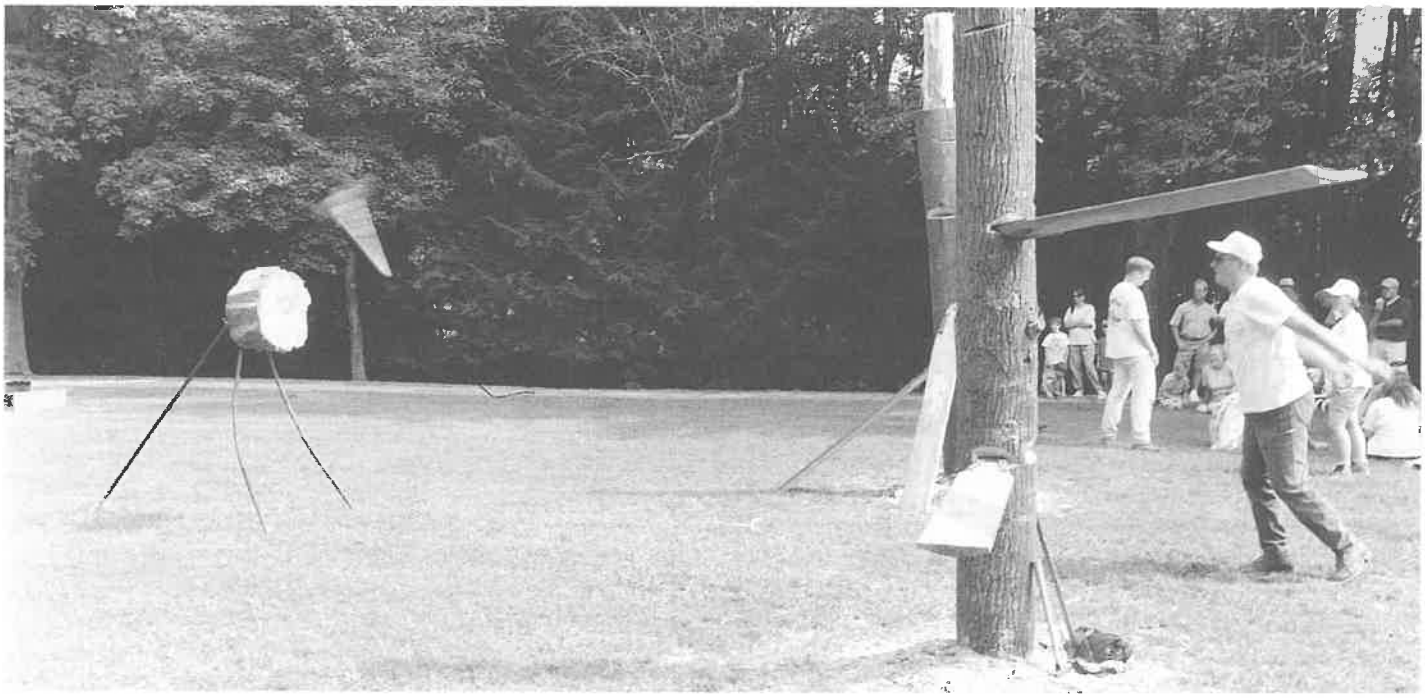
"None of us really knew if this would work or not. That first year we had about 40 craft exhibitors, and we had to space them out around the barn so it wouldn't look too empty.

"And the way the music is now, that was just an accident that it turned out to be so great. We didn't have any money to hire any professional musicians, so we just invited pretty much anyone who wanted to play to come on out, stay in the dorms and eat in the cafeteria, and play."

That happy accident put the Jubilee down the path to putting on the broadest show of West Virginia music anywhere.

Kenney Parker, who has directed the music for all 23 Jubilees, fits right in with the festival's do-it-all attitude. Until recent years, he just put out the word that everyone was invited, then pointed us to the beds and the table when we showed up. Lately he has had to put a cap on the number of performers invited, but it's a very big cap. About 100 musicians take turns on the stage, offering a unique mixture of old-time dance music, gospel singing, traditional bluegrass, ancient ballads, familiar songs, hot instrumental picking, and sweet simple old tunes.

Most of the more active performers from across West Virginia are here, but so are several others who do not often play or sing in public. Some of the bands perform slick and dramatic shows which they have carefully worked out in rehearsal, and some of them just sit and make music the same way they would in their living rooms or on their



A fair-goer demonstrates his skill at ax-throwing, though his aim appears to be a little high.

porches.

The performers vary a little from year to year. A sampling of long-time Jubilee regulars includes Dave Bing, Bonnie Collins, Jim Costa, Dwight Diller, Joe Dobbs, Wilson Douglas, Frank George, Ginny Hawker, David and John Morris, Lefty Shafer, and Melvin Wine.

With so many musicians and only one stage, of course there's plenty of time for the performers to do what off-duty musicians love to do — make music. All day and into the night, the area outside the stage is littered with small knots of pickers and singers, trading new music and repeating old favorites. Most of the performers return every year, and like birds returning to nest in a favorite tree, they gravitate to their habitual perches to make music with old friends.

John Garton, from Petersburg, is a carver of carousel horses and a regular at West Virginia fairs and festivals.

That's why we keep coming back. On this weekend, we are at home with friends.

I have been involved in every Jubilee, beginning with the very first one in 1974.

In the early days I helped the late Ray Epler, my musical mentor, in his dulcimer booth. I learned much of my music during the long hours of the fair, and finally decided that I could learn to build dulcimers myself. And I fell in love with the family feel of the Jubilee, talking and playing away the evenings on the porches of the old camp cottages.

When Ray decided to give up the demanding business of sales, I exhibited my own handcrafted dulcimers for several years. The Jubilee organizers even gave me the same booth Ray and his wife Edna had occupied, in the left rear corner of the barn. This was the first major craft fair where I sold instruments I had built, and I'll never forget the shock I felt every time a stranger bought one of my dulcimers.

Eventually I started selling most of my dulcimers privately, and could no longer produce enough instruments to show at such a busy fair. Music director Kenney Parker knew how much I loved participating in the Jubilee, so he invited me to come back as a performer, playing my banjo and dulcimer on stage.

Come August 29, I'll be back for my 24th year — more than half my life.

Many of the other Jubilee people, musicians and exhibitors alike, are also drawn to Jackson's Mill every year for reasons which have little

to do with business. For us, the Jubilee is part fair, part reunion. We've seen children grow up here, toddling around their parents' craft booth and eventually learning a trade of their own. Some of our finest musicians once gave their first red-faced performances on stage in the Jubilee barn. Back at the cottages after hours, we have talked far into the night, played music under the stars, and witnessed some amusing youthful antics. We Jubilee old-timers have shared so many experiences here, missing this weekend would leave a sad hole in our year.

Bill Hairston, a musician and the long-time emcee of the stage show, agrees. "There's nothing else like this festival. So many of the craftspeople and musicians bring their families and stay on the grounds, it's like summer camp here. I need to come here every year just to see how everyone is doing, ask them about their jobs and their kids, and tell some of the same old stories again."

Philip Arabia officially sells art, frames, and wooden crafts, but he's more often chatting with old friends or playing chess across the table in his booth. He says that the Jubilee was one of the first places he and his wife brought their wares when they moved to West Virginia more than 20 years ago. "Somebody told us, 'You have got to get into the Stonewall Jackson Jubilee,' so we called and asked about it. The people in charge were just so nice to us, so eager to have us here and not really caring at all about any red tape or anything. Their attitude was just, 'Sure, come on over.' Then we got here and found out that's the way everybody here is. Now I would hate to miss this weekend for anything."

Dean Six, an active compiler and publisher of books on traditional lore, especially enjoys the evenings around Randolph cottage, a stately log dormitory where the late-night musicians usually meet. "I stay up here in this cabin every year. Sometimes it's a little hard to sleep, but who cares? A bunch of people playing that wonderful music on the porch, a dozen great conversations going on at once, kids running around having fun. I can always catch up on sleep when this is over."

Today, more than 100 musicians and dancers from around the state, including fiddler Dave Bing and dancer Russ Taylor, make the Jubilee one of West Virginia's top traditional music events.

With the enormous size and scope of the Jubilee, there are several hundred people sleeping on the grounds and enjoying this rare good time. Apparently, some of this joy filters through to the Jubilee visitors. I see many of them year after year, with the same smiles on their faces and sometimes occupying the same seat in the audience. Like those of us who work the festival, they have built up a stock of fine memories, and they need to come home every year for more.

Getting to the Jubilee

The 1997 Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee happens August 29 through September 1. The hours are noon to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Monday. The music programs continue well past the official closing time on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

To get to Jackson's Mill 4-H Conference Center, take Interstate 79. Exit at Weston (exit 99) or Jane Lew (exit 105). Either exit is about seven miles from the site and the route is clearly marked with Jubilee signs.

Advance passes are available for $10 for all four days and may be purchased prior to the Jubilee or on Friday, August 29. Daily ticket prices are $5 for adults, $3 for seniors, and $1 for children under 12. Children with adults will be admitted free on Friday and Monday. For more information contact the Jubilee Office at Jackson's Mill 4-H Conference Center, Weston, WV 26452; 1-800-296-1863.

Lefty Shafer Wins Vandalia Award

Fiddler and singer Emmett M. "Lefty" Shafer is the recipient of the Vandalia Award for 1997. Vandalia planners told GOLDENSEAL of the decision just as the summer issue was going to press, and drafted editor John Lilly to write the official award proclamation.

The Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folklife honor, is given each year by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. The award recognizes those who have made outstanding contributions toward the perpetuation of West Virginia's traditional music, arts and crafts, or other folkways.

Lefty Shafer is among the finest of West Virginia's traditional fiddlers. A former school principal, he got into fiddling full time after his 1976 retirement. Since then, Lefty has generously shared his talents at square dances, festivals, schools, nursing homes and senior centers throughout West Virginia. In all he's been fiddling and singing for more than 60 years.

The old-time fiddler has carried off literally hundreds of awards over the years, among them the 1987 West Virginia State Fiddle Champion. There isn't room in his house to keep all of the ribbons and trophies he has earned. Lefty is a regular at West Virginia events and a long-time performer at the Art & Craft Fair in Ripley, the Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee at Jackson's Mill, and Vandalia Gathering.

Friend and fellow fiddler Bobby Taylor says that Lefty comes from a unique region for old-time fiddlers. "They are known for their smooth, clean sound," he says. "Lefty is one of the last remaining of a generation of Roane/Kanawha fiddlers."

Lefty Shafer was born in Roane County in 1915. His father was a fiddler, and it was on his fiddle that Lefty learned to play music "strictly by ear." He began fiddling on his own at the age of 15, and within a few years learned to read music.

He credits both his father and mother with influencing him to sing. His mother sang soprano and alto. His father, a bass singer, taught at music schools in churches and schoolhouses by the old shape-note method. Lefty says he can still "sight read" shape-notes to this day.

"I can't remember when I couldn't sing," Lefty says. " My mother said I could sing before I could talk." Those who have heard Lefty know him as a whistler as well — a talent he gladly performed on West Virginia Public Radio during a "Whad'ya Know" radio show in 1991 — and he is also known for his mountain dulcimer playing. Lefty Shafer has produced several recordings including "Lefty Shafer Fiddles, Sings and Whistles," "Lefty Shafer, West Virginia State Fiddle Champion 1987," "Mockingbird Hill," and "Muddy Lane."

"My greatest pleasure is in sharing my knowledge and ability with someone younger who is eager to learn," he says. In a 1984 GOLDENSEAL article, "A Lot of Good Music: Lefty Shafer Talks Fiddling," Lefty elaborated. "The greatest pleasure I get out of it comes from three things: the recognition that you get, the friends that you make, and the music that you hear."

Lefty Shafer, the 1997 Vandalia Award winner. Photo by Michael Keller.

Free Drinks in Nature's Air–Conditioned City:

Bluefield's Lemonade Escapades

By Stuart McGehee

Bluefield is a good place to cool it, with its breezy summers and normally moderate temperatures. Even if Mother Nature fails, the city fathers will step in with a free round of ice-cold lemonade.

A Lemonade Lassie does her duty in this picture from a 1950's promotional brochure. Courtesy Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

When the summer temperature tops 90 degrees Fahrenheit, the Bluefield Chamber of Commerce serves free lemonade on the streets of the Mercer County city. They have done so for as long as most people can remember. Their hospitality has brought world-wide publicity, just as the business leaders who created the stunt intended, but it has also created its share of mostly good-natured controversy.

The idea was for Bluefield to boast about its geographic blessings. The city is perched atop the watershed of the Bluestone and East rivers. At 2,612 feet above sea level at the downtown post office, Bluefield is West Virginia's loftiest incorporated community. Although it sits in the extreme southern part of the Mountain State, actually astride the Virginia state line, it routinely registers the lowest temperatures in West Virginia. Bluefielders know that a cool breeze almost always blows across East River Mountain — especially in winter. Geologists, meteorologists, and climatologists alike have pondered the peculiarity.

Because Bluefield sat at the crest of its main line from Norfolk to Cincinnati, the Norfolk & Western Railway located its Pocahontas Division headquarters and rail yards at the site. Railroad business soon birthed a thriving community, and the lush azure fields of chicory gave the new city its name in 1889.

As the vast Pocahontas Coalfield opened westward along the N&W rails, Bluefield quickly became the undisputed capital of the southern West Virginia's "smokeless" coal industry. Soon, other powerful business interests gravitated to the railroad town, as utilities, insurance companies, wholesale warehouses, and banks brought wealth

Mayor Ray Evans claims his free lemonade while businessman W. J. Cole stands by for his, in this photo from the 1940's. Photographer unknown, courtesy Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

and power to the bustling valley. Within 50 years some 25,000 folks called Bluefield home.

Like many West Virginia cities, Bluefield was hard hit by the Great Depression. Mines slowed production, tonnage on the N&W dwindled, and the mining equipment firms, company-store wholesale houses, and other support services laid off workers.

In part to combat the recession, Bluefield's energetic Chamber of Commerce developed a series of vigorous urban booster schemes to fight hard times with energy, enthusiasm, and attitude. The city's mild weather came readily to mind, cool summers being a major attraction in the days before universal air-conditioning. Chamber director H. Edward Steele, a veteran journalist and tireless promoter, asked *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* publisher Hugh Ike Shott to offer free copies of his afternoon edition on the rare occasions when the mercury topped 90.

Mr. Shott wasn't the sort to give things away, but the relentless Steele managed to interest W. J. Cole in his scheme. In 1937, Cole somewhat recklessly offered to give free lodgings at his sumptuous West Virginian Hotel if the weather reached the magic number. He soon lived to rue his civic generosity when the valley unexpectedly heated up and a state convention of Odd Fellows all enjoyed his luxurious accommodations *gratis*.

The Chamber leadership then hit upon the innovative and less expensive notion of serving free lemonade — "hot weather and lemonade go hand in hand like ham and eggs," said Steele — to promote Bluefield's cool, breezy summer season. The plan was instituted in 1939, but mild weather prevailed and the free beverage was not served until August 1941.

After two years Bluefield's thirst had built up. Girls from the Sub-Deb club of Beaver High School and the Debonaires of Virginia-side Graham High ladled an incredible 87 gallons in the noontime hour. Stuart O'Dell of WHIS radio broadcasted the proceedings live. The local publicity caught on nationwide, and Lowell Thomas carried the Bluefield event on Mutual Radio.

The year 1942 found the entire country plunged into the Second World War, but there was still time to celebrate the one sweltering hot day in July when Bluefield achieved the necessary heat to unleash the citrus. Wartime rationing limited sugar and fruit, but patriotic Bluefielders chipped in with their ration coupons to make up the all-American beverage.

Trouble loomed. The more conservative members of the Bluefield Ministerial Association protested the shorts and halter tops worn by the comely servers, claiming that it was a "step downward in civic morals." The resulting publicity again catapulted Bluefield into national prominence, this time on the coast-to-coast Associated Press radio network.

Fortunately for the financially strapped Chamber of Commerce, chilly weather prevailed throughout much of the war, and the late '40's saw so many cool, wet summers that folks were ready to sweat a little. In fact, the Lion's Club marched on the City Board, claiming that the Chamber's actions had jinxed decent hot, dry summer weather away for good.

It was all merely a preliminary for the spectacular summer of 1952.

Decades of prevailing winds failed that year, and heat descended like a plague of locusts upon Bluefield, turning city sidewalks into griddles. Five consecutive days witnessed a withering 95 degrees, and the smog from the big coal-burning locomotives in the N&W yards hung over town like a choking black cloud. Twenty-four times

Wacky Weather!

While Bluefield claims the name of "Nature's Air-Conditioned City," there are other cool spots in the Mountain State during the summer months. Notably Beckley and Elkins. The National Weather Service reports an average high of 78 and 79 degrees respectively in the two towns over June, July and August. This is well below Charleston and Martinsburg normal highs of 85.

Bluefield's record high occurred in 1988 with a reading of 96 degrees on July 16. That was nothing compared to August 6, 1918, when Charleston reached a record 108 and Parkersburg a record 106.

West Virginia's hottest temperature ever was 112 degrees. It happened twice — once at Moorefield on August 4, 1930, and in Martinsburg on July 10, 1936.

But as hot as it sometimes gets, it can also get surprisingly cold in West Virginia during the summer.

Fiddler Woody Simmons sometimes warms up and loosens up, even though he lives near normally cool Elkins. Photo by Michael Keller.

As World War II was drawing to a close, folks in Huntington and Clarksburg were going through their coolest summer temperatures ever — 39 and 33 degrees on June 6, 1945. The year 1972 brought the coolest recorded nighttime summer temperatures to Charleston, Beckley, Bluefield, Parkersburg and Morgantown, with these cities reporting temperatures ranging from 30 to 37 degrees on June 11. Their average summer lows range from 58 to 64 degrees.

West Virginia's hottest temperature ever recorded was 112 degrees in the Eastern Panhandle. It happened twice — once at Moorefield on August 4, 1930, and in Martinsburg on July 10, 1936. Three Mountain State towns just shy of the Eastern Panhandle can boast the all-time coldest summer temperatures. On June 2, 1966; June 11, 1972; and June 4, 1977, Arbovale and Seneca State Forest in Pocahontas County and Canaan Valley in Tucker County saw their temperatures plummet to 24 degrees.

Weather is a subject few tire of talking about. Ken Batty of the National Weather Service in Charleston was happy to talk to us about West Virginia's summer temperatures, and he graciously provided the data to draw our weather comparisons from. Bluefield's citizens have more than a fleeting interest in their weather. It's something everyone talks about, especially during the summer months when even nature's air-conditioner sometimes goes on the blink.

in all that awful year the Chamber of Commerce was forced to pay off. The merchants who supplied the lemonade — principally thriving restaurants like Jimmy's, the Pinnacle, the Matz, and Paul's Grille — cheerfully footed the bill at first, but they began to grumble as gallon after free gallon rolled down the parched throats of the sweating citizenry.

Finally the servers could no longer stand the blistering sidewalks. The Sub-Deb girls went on strike, demanding that the well-heeled businessmen who had concocted the scheme in the first place themselves man the ladles in the steamy dog days. As an amused nation looked on, the Chamber gallantly sent a charter bus full of 35 "Lemonade Lassies" to Myrtle Beach to cool their righteous indignation.

The Lemonade Lassie work stoppage was not the only ramification of 1952's unseasonable swelter. Bluefield's neighbors began to poke fun. A police-escorted motorcade from the Beckley Jaycees brought several cases of lemons down from Raleigh County in a thinly-disguised gesture of urban contempt. Fortunately Bluefield's luck recovered, and a welcome cooling trend allowed the local Chamber members to don winter coats and mittens and greet their Beckley rivals with hot coffee and doughnuts.

The next summer brought another three weeks of lemonade serving, prompting a re-thinking of the giveaway. The resourceful Ed Steele prudently moved the location of the lemonade thermometer from the post office downtown several miles northwest to the new Mercer County Airport. After all, the official weather station was located at the airport, reasoned Steele. And maybe he happened to remember

Bluefield Besieged. One of Bluefield's most unusual weather phenomena was captured in this December 17, 1993, aerial photograph by Mel Grubb. The photo shows dense fog spilling over East River Mountain and down into the Mercer County city. The four-lane Bluefield bypass is visible just in front of the fogbank, with Bluefield to the right. The spectacular fog flow continued for several hours. Photo © Grubb Photo Services.

that the airport, at 2,892 feet elevation, was conveniently 200 windswept feet above Bluefield's central business district. As pilots know, the mountaintop runway near Bluefield is always breezy and often cool.

Steele's adroit switch solved the problem quickly. Between 1960 and 1982, the official reading at the airport topped 90 only one time. People grumbled about a promotion which could only rarely be used. *Daily Telegraph* cartoonist Rand Taylor routinely lampooned Steele's icy calm. One hapless weather station manager nearly lost his job over the public outcry when he reported ten consecutive days at 89 and a half degrees. There was no conspiracy, glibly claimed the lemonade masters.

Still the legend grew. Newspapers from Atlanta to Seattle followed Bluefield's temperature tussle. Letters addressed simply to "Nature's Air-Conditioned City" easily found their way to the remote southern West Virginia municipality. A "Lemonade Brigade" of Bluefield boosters carried the dual themes of mild climate and urban opportunity to neighboring states.

When prim matrons worried about serving on Sundays the brief uproar was resolved when the Chamber paid off on Monday at lunch time. Bluefielders brashly challenged any other town and offered 90 gallons of the yellow stuff free to any city which could prove a milder summer. The national press reported each effort. Willard Scott told NBC *Today Show* audiences of the latest caper.

Yet more acrimonious controversy loomed on the horizon. Protest over the location of the official

thermometer rose like the mercury each summer. Often it was clearly and manifestly 90 degrees downtown, yet Steele stubbornly refused to pour. "Who lives on Hurricane Ridge?" asked an irate reader of the *Daily Telegraph*. July 1987 roasted the community to a sultry slow burn, and finally, in open defiance, WKOY radio talk host Bob Barnett and the local United Way served the cool drink in Chicory Square downtown. Bootleg lemonade, the Chamber called it.

The ageless Steele and the Chamber of Commerce special events committee could hardly deny the public relief in 1988, however, as Old Sol mercilessly poured his fire upon Bluefield. Seventeen times that memorable summer the official reading at the windswept airport topped 90. The Chamber's budget dried up as quickly as Mercer County's backyard gardens, and the businessmen grumbled at the continual expense. Resourcefully, they lined up national sponsors for the following year, Coca-Cola, Hi-C, and Minute Maid, but the weather failed to cooperate. Cool breezes prevailed in '89, and it never once hit the magic number.

Never one to allow adversity to hamper his enthusiasm, Steele, now in his ninth decade, presided in 1991 over the city's "Lemonade Escapade" celebration of the 50th anniversary of the durable stunt. A host of innovative activities helped Bluefielders savor the remarkable history of their city's free drinks policy.

Parades, dances, carnivals, commemorative memorabilia, and a homecoming reunion of all the Lemonade Lassies highlighted the August festivities. Grand Marshall Steele presided on his 85th birthday over a lengthy parade including antique cars from each of the five decades of the promotion's history. Boutique-chic yellow was all the rage that summer at the Country Club in south Bluefield. A 1958 Edsel Bermuda was auctioned off at a Bluefield Orioles baseball game at Bowen Field. Downtown, the ball players obligingly fielded lemons hurled from the parapet of the West Virginian Hotel.

When a ceremonial pouring was arranged to honor the momentous occasion, the event made CNN and even the London, England, nightly news broadcast. Clippings in the Chamber scrapbook from as far away as Japan to Ethiopia attest to the success of the anniversary festival.

Yet merely three weeks after the grand celebration, an irate and irascible *Telegraph* editor, obviously sweating over his computer keypad, impudently called for a downtown thermometer. No doubt the controversy will continue, as each summer brings new challenges. Probably it is all for the best and to be expected.

Eddie Steele was already on the job more than a half-century ago. This cartoon is from a 1938 *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*.

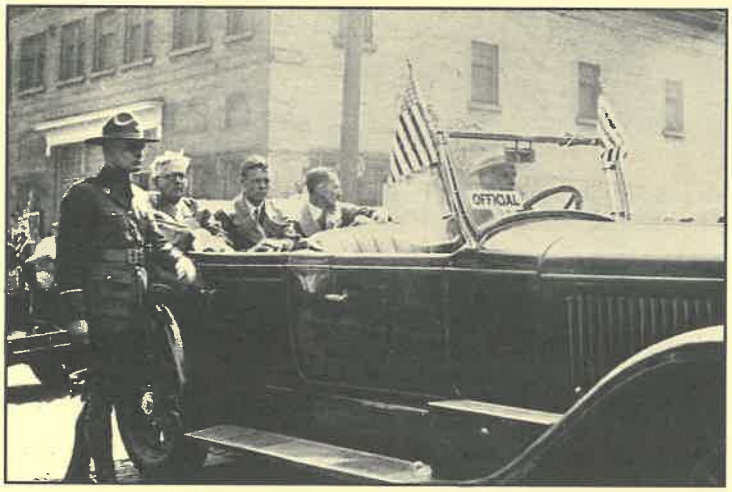
After all, a place which boasts of nature's own air-conditioning is bound to find itself on the hot seat once in a while.

The Lemonade Brigade, ready to head south on a promotional trip. Photo by Mel Grubb, courtesy Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

Lucky Lindy

On May 20, 1927, Charles A.Lindbergh became a national and world-wide hero for being the first man to fly solo on a non-stop flight over the Atlantic Ocean. He flew 3,600 miles from New York to Paris in 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours, in his Ryan Mono plane, the "Spirit of St. Louis."

People on both sides of the ocean were well aware of the event. On the day of the flight some of Wheeling's church doors were kept open for those who wanted to say a prayer for Charles Lindbergh.



Aviator Charles A. Lindbergh (seated, center) was honored with a parade when he visited Wheeling in 1927. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

Many people were afraid for him and did not believe he would make it. After his spectacular flight, Lindbergh was highly honored in France, and invited to one American city after the other. I don't know why, or how, he was invited to Wheeling, my hometown, but he came.

It was a sunny summer morning, August 4, 1927, when Mom and Dad and all of us, along with the other neighbors, got out in front of our house to watch the sky. Charles Lindbergh put on a show high in the clouds.

The whole neighborhood oohed and aahed and screamed with delight as he did nose dives and flip-flops in his shiny silver plane. Later in the afternoon there was a parade. When lunch was over, we all got a good bath and dressed up in our Sunday clothes for the big event. My sister and I got to wear our favorite dresses with ruffles around the hems and big hair bows to match. Shiny black patent leather slippers with a single top strap and a pearl button completed the outfits. My brother wore a nice clean shirt with a bow tie and his best salt and pepper suit with knickers.

We all stood along the curb on the sidewalk, not very far from our house, and waited two hours to see the man whose name had been in our minds and on our lips for the past year. "Here he comes," someone shouted.

My dad edged me out into the front row of the crowd because I was so short and couldn't see over the heads of the other people. The parade finally turned the corner, and we all got a full view of "Lucky Lindy." He was so tall and handsome. He sat on the rolled back canvas roof of his roadster and we saw the locks of tousled hair hanging over his brow.

He nodded, smiled, and waved to all of us as the car came to a stop right in front of the place where my family was standing. My dad took off his hat and circled it high over his head several times, sending a greeting to the "lone eagle." He was only a few feet away from us.

My playmate Freddy,* an older kid on the block, ran from the curb and climbed onto the running board of the slow-moving roadster to shake hands with Charles Lindbergh. He was quickly put back on the sidewalk. The roadster slowly continued down the street, following behind a flurry of beautiful American flags snapping in the breeze. The patriotic music blared out over the crowd.

Everywhere people hung out of windows, cheering and throwing confetti down on Lucky Lindy and the parade-goers. Just like Freddy, some people got the urge to leave the sidewalk and go into the street to touch Charles Lindbergh and join the parade. The crowd was singing and waving small American flags as they marched behind and around the great aviator.

When the parade was over, we went home to get ready for supper. Later, as we sat around the big round table in our kitchen, we happily recalled the fun and excitement of the day. We realized it would be a long time before we stopped talking about Charles A. Lindbergh and bragging to out-of-town relatives about how we got to see him within arm's length.

Stories about him came and went. I can remember my dad telling us about a referee who stepped into the ring during a prize fight at Madison Square Garden, raised his hands over his head, and quieted the crowd. He told them that Charles A. Lindbergh at that moment was alone in his plane over the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. He asked that everyone bow their heads in a minute of silent prayer, and they sincerely did so. At the end of the minute of silence, the cheering and wild throwing of pop bottles and such began again.

Several songs were written about Charles Lindbergh. "Lucky Lindy" was the one we sang the most. After his historic flight there were many stories that came out in the newspapers and over the radio, showing the respect and admiration the people held for Lucky Lindy. This is only one of them.

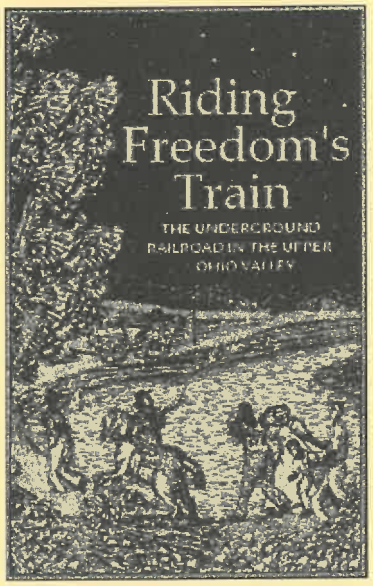
— Geraldine Baker

* "Freddy" is Fred Reichenbach, the grandfather clock man, featured in our Winter 1996 issue.

Riding Freedom's Train

"From the establishment of slavery in America until the end of the Civil War, between 30,000 to 100,000 escaping slaves traveled the network of roads, rivers, conveyances and safe houses that comprised the Underground Railroad."

These words introduce the history behind two recordings recently produced by Michael and Carrie Nobel Kline of Elkins. "Riding Freedom's Train: The Underground Railroad in the Upper Ohio River Valley" and "I Believe in Angels Singing: Songs from the Underground Railroad Era" are one-hour audio documentaries based on oral histories, songs and stories gathered by the Klines.



The couple's work took them throughout the Ohio River Valley, and on both sides of the Ohio River. "Riding Freedom's Train" tells the story of the Underground Railroad movement from the viewpoints of both Quakers and African-Americans, two groups of people who worked closely together to free slaves.

According to Quaker historian Bill Taber, the Underground Railroad was named "because it was as if people magically disappeared and reappeared somewhere else, as if there was a railroad under the ground."

The Klines involved students in the collecting of spoken and sung testimonials. The Train cassette features narratives by Neilda Pitts, John Bracey, Bill Taber, Ancella Bickley, Katherine Jacobsen, Bernita Bundy, Bruce Yarnall, Diana Bell, Ethel Caffie-Austin, Florence Edgerton Rockwell, Reverend Barbara Early, Henry Burke, and Loran Williams interspersed with music rooted in the Underground Railroad experience.

During the production of "Riding Freedom's Train," the Klines pulled together the most pertinent songs to produce the second tape, "I Believe in Angels Singing." It features complete versions of songs used for background or bridging on the Train cassette. Twenty-five songs are performed by Neilda Pitts, Bertha Tolliver, Ken Jacobsen, John Jackson, Phil Wiggins, Verta Cooper, Ethel Caffie-Austin, Emma Perry Freeman, and the Northern Kentucky Brotherhood.

The story *is* in the music. As Ancella Bickley explains, "There were songs like 'Follow the Drinkin' Gourd.' That was the Big Dipper. So they're being told to follow this, and to find the man who is waiting for them under the tree and will take them to Freedom."

"Every communication that went around the plantation between slaves was conveyed by a song, because they weren't allowed to freely assemble and talk issues over amongst themselves," adds Henry Burke.

"Riding Freedom's Train" and "I Believe in Angels Singing" were produced by Unity Productions with support from the Chace Fund and the Ohio River Border Initiative — a joint project of the Ohio Arts Council, the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The tapes may be ordered from the Klines at 114 Boundary Avenue, Elkins, WV 26241; (304)637-5511. The cost is $12 each, plus $1.75 shipping, or $20 for both, plus $3 for shipping.

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Cedar Lakes Workshops

The Cedar Lakes Crafts Center is offering a full schedule of summer workshops for beginning and professional craftspeople. The workshops are conducted by outstanding master artists and crafts instructors in the rural setting of the Cedar Lakes Conference Center near Ripley.

Cedar Lakes is also home to the granddaddy of West Virginia outdoor craft fairs, the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. The dates for 1997 are July 2 through 6.

This is the 22nd year for the Cedar Lakes Crafts Center workshops and a variety of classes are offered. The first summer session runs from July 13 through 18 and offers three workshops — basic cabinetry by Jim Probst of Hamlin, multi-level machine art by Pat Rodgers, and white oak basketry by Aaron Yakim and Cindy Taylor.

From July 20 through 25, Pat Rodgers follows up with an advanced machine art workshop, Buckhannon woodworker Kermit McCartney teaches advanced wood joinery, and Charleston weaver Janet Hamstead will work with beginning and intermediate students on the basics of weaving. Warping, designing, drafting, color, and material selection will be examined.

The next week, July 27 through August 1, stained-glass window construction will be taught by Denise Hight of Charleston, quilting by Paul McDade, and a watercolor workshop by Dora Hagge.

Weekend sessions on wooden hand planes and three-dimensional quilt blocks will be held on August 8 through 10. The Cedar Lakes Crafts Center also offers a full schedule of fall workshops. Classes on blacksmithing, steel knife making, quilting, and jewelry making are among the scheduled workshops. A special quilting retreat is planned for the week of September 7 through 12.

Gloria Gregorich, director of the Cedar Lakes Crafts Center, added some top-notch music workshops to the fall schedule as well. From October 5 through 10, Wayne Henderson and Robin Kessinger teach flatpick guitar, Bobby Taylor teaches old-time fiddle, and Mike Bing conducts a workshop on old-time mandolin.

For a full schedule and information on fees, lodging and meals, contact the Crafts Center at Cedar Lakes, HC 88, Box 21, Ripley, WV 25271; (304)372-7873.

Herb Derr teaches steel knife making this fall at Cedar Lakes.

Our Writers and Photographers

GERALDINE BAKER, born and raised in Wheeling, enjoys writing about her experiences growing up in the Northern Panhandle. For this summer issue of GOLDENSEAL, she recalls a vivid childhood memory of seeing Charles A. Lindbergh in her hometown. "He was the first famous person I ever saw face-to-face," she says. Her last contribution to the magazine appeared in Spring 1997.

ANCELLA R. BICKLEY, a native of Huntington, is a graduate of West Virginia State, Marshall and WVU. She has worked as a teacher and college administrator. She is the author of *History of the West Virginia State Teachers' Association* and other publications. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1996.

JOE BLANKENSHIP is a native of Elkins and chief photographer for the Elkins *Inter-Mountain*. He has won awards from the West Virginia Press Association and the Mountain State Forest Festival Association for his work. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

MARY RODD FURBEE, a native of Pittsburgh, came to West Virginia 21 years ago. A freelance writer and part-time WVU journalism instructor, her work has been published by *The Charleston Gazette*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Gannett News Service and *The Progressive* magazine. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1996.

MIKE FURBEE, a native of Philippi, is research coordinator for the Center for Rural Emergency Medicine at WVU. He is also a photographer and fine traditional musician. His work has been published in newspapers and magazines, and exhibited in the West Virginia Juried Exhibition in Charleston, the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins, and at the Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1996.

PAUL GARTNER lives in Lincoln County. A native of Ohio's Mahoning Valley, he moved to West Virginia "by accident" in 1977. He plays old-time banjo and is a regular at West Virginia festivals. He works as a freelance writer and is a copy editor and writer for *The Charleston Gazette*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

JOHN L. MARRA, born and raised in Morgantown, now lives in Hurricane. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from WVU and is employed by the university as the county extension agent in Cabell County. He is the garden editor for the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*, and produces and anchors weekly home and garden segments for WSAZ television in Huntington and Charleston. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1995.

STUART McGEHEE holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. He is archivist at the Eastern Regional Coal Archives in Bluefield, associate professor of history at West Virginia State College, and chairman of the West Virginia Archives and History Commission. Stuart's membership in the local Chamber of Commerce no doubt provided insight to his piece on Bluefield's lemonade escapades.

LISA GRAY MILLIMET, a former resident of Braxton County, has been trying to return to West Virginia ever since she left the state in 1974. She recently became the "guardian of a Summers County homestead" where she hopes to move one day. A producer of documentaries, Lisa is now working on a book of oral histories from mountain people born and raised before the coming of electricity and highways. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHELE M. MORITA, originally from New Jersey, came to West Virginia to attend West Virginia Wesleyan College where she earned a bachelor's degree in public relations and graphic design. She now lives in Arizona and works as a graphic designer and freelance photographer. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

KATHERINE ROBERTS moved to Parkersburg when she was 12 years old and considers West Virginia her home. She first saw GOLDENSEAL in her eighth-grade West Virginia studies class. She now lives in Louisiana where she works as a folklorist and teaches part-time at the University of Southern Louisiana in Lafayette. She wrote about her experience at the Augusta Festival after attending the event for the first time last year. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JUDITH STUTLER, a native of Elkins, has worked for the last 11 years as a reporter and photographer for the Elkins *Inter-Mountain* and has won numerous West Virginia Press Association awards for her writing and photography. She earned her degree in Appalachian studies and sociology from Davis & Elkins College. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

ERIC G. WAGGONER is a native of Charleston and a graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan College. He is now a graduate student at Arizona State University. Eric is a musician and a writer in any spare time he can manage, playing guitar at festivals in his home state each summer. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1996.

"Quilts '97"

The Great Hall of the Cultural Center is filled with 32 colorful quilts by West Virginia quiltmakers. The "Quilts '97" exhibit, displayed on forty-foot-high marble walls, will remain up through September 1st.

Anne Weaver of Durham, North Carolina, served as judge for this year's show. A teacher, quilter and quilt judge, Ms. Weaver is a member of the American International Quilt Association and the American Quilter's Society.

Six quilts were awarded cash prizes in applique and pieced categories, and a special purchase award went to Janet Mercer of Parkersburg. Her quilt will become part of the West Virginia Permanent Collection.

"Quilts '97" is open to the public weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and weekends from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. To receive guidelines for next year's exhibit write to Quilts '98, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305. For more information call (304)558-0220.

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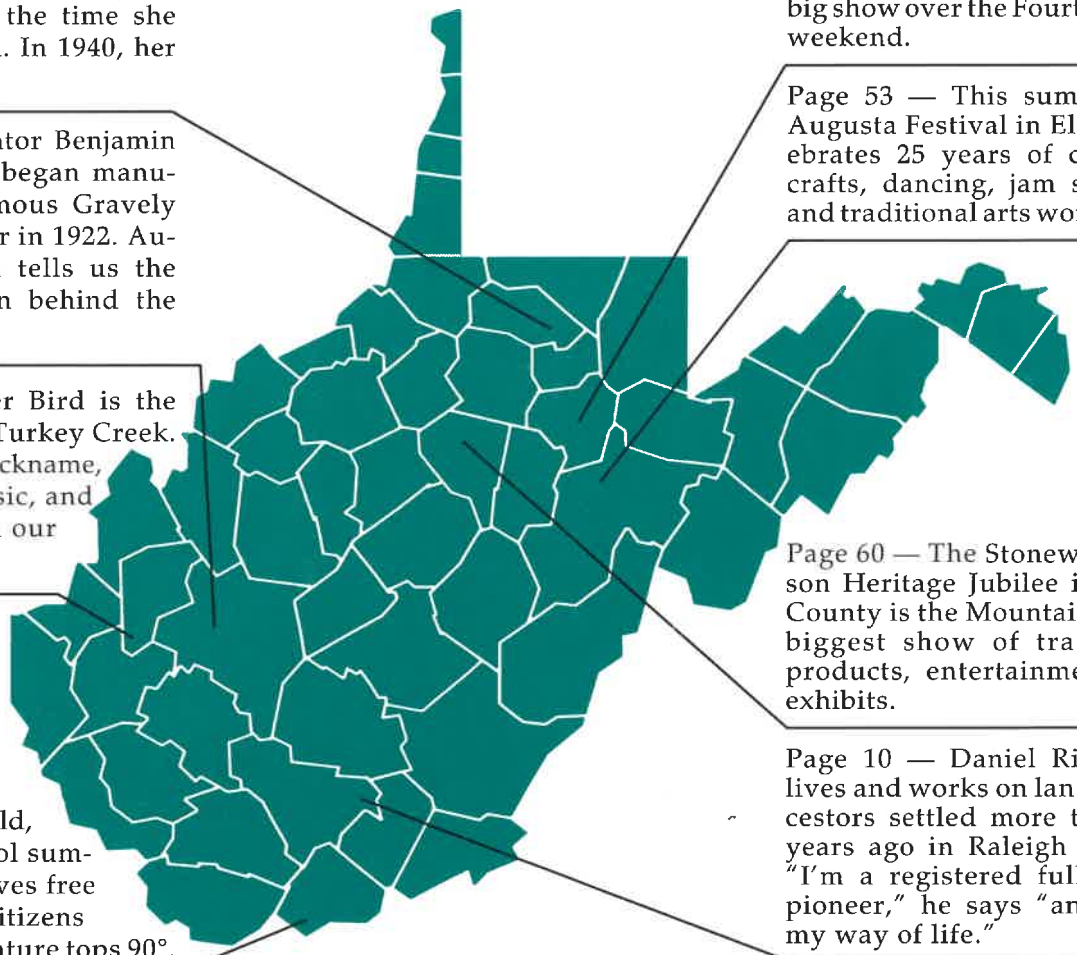
Inside Goldenseal



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