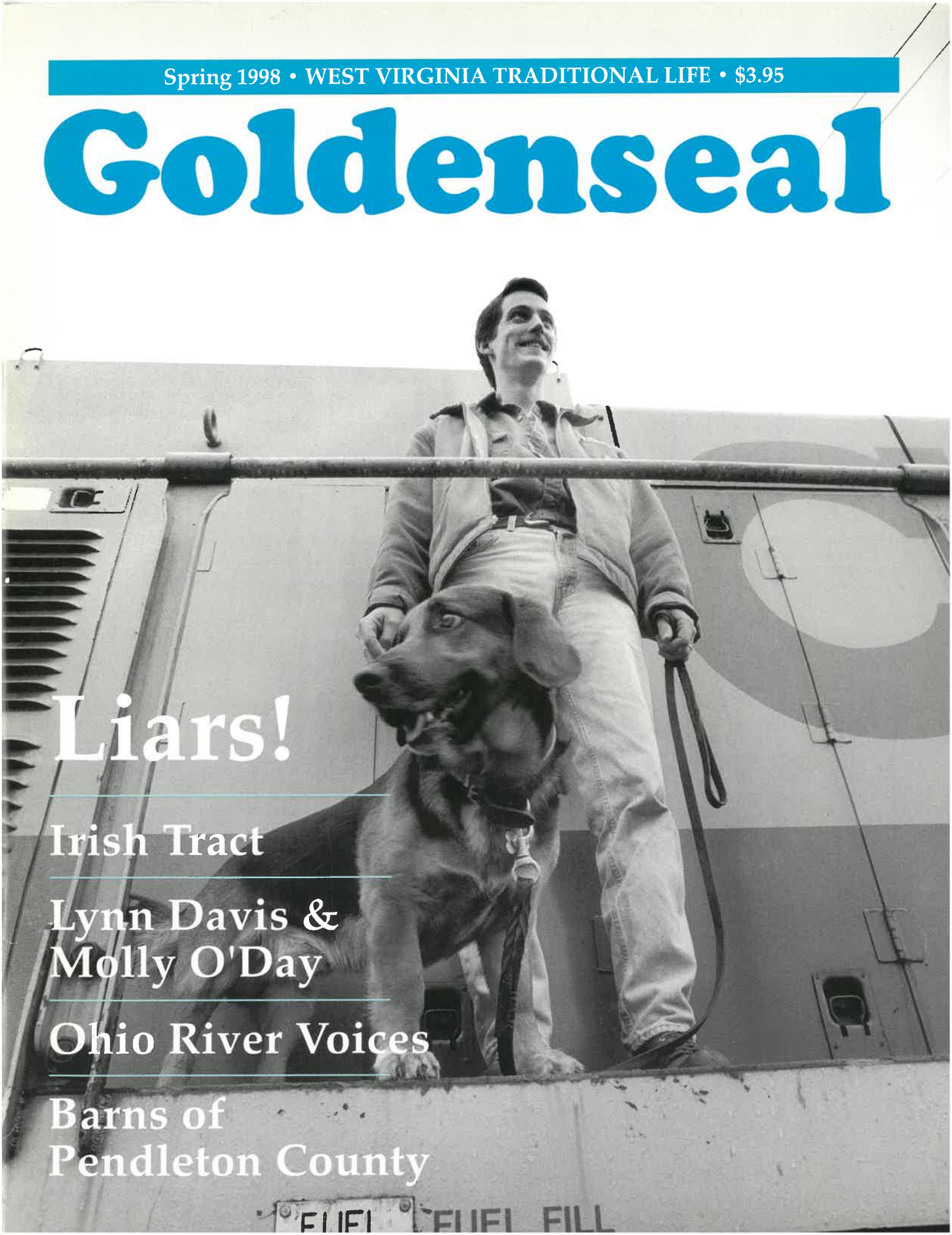
Spring 1998 • WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE • $3.95

Goldenseal



Liars!

Irish Tract

Lynn Davis & Molly O'Day

Ohio River Voices

Barns of Pendleton County

Folklife*Fairs*Festivals

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

April 18 Melvin Wine Birthday Concert
Landmark Studio/Sutton (765-3766)
April 18 Feast of the Ramson
Richwood (846-6790)
April 18-19 34th Braxton County Arts & Crafts Show
Gassaway (765-2385)
April 19-25 Augusta Spring Dulcimer Week
Elkins (637-1209)
April 24-26 28th Dogwood Festival
Huntington (696-5990)
April 24-26 Spring Mountain Festival
Petersburg (257-2722)
April 26 26th Clay County Ramp Dinner
Clay (587-4274)
April 29-May 2 Dogwood Festival
Mullens (294-5151)
May 2 Cheat River Festival
Albright (379-3141)
May 2 May Celebration
Shepherdstown (263-2531)
May 2 West Virginia Marble Festival
Cairo (628-3321)
May 2-3 Ramp Festival
Wellsburg (737-1236)
May 6-10 Rendezvous on the Island
Blennerhassett/Parkersburg (420-4800)
May 7-10 37th Wildflower Pilgrimage
Blackwater Falls/Davis (558-3370)
May 9 Historic Bramwell Spring Tour of Homes
Bramwell (248-7252)
May 9-10 Traditional Music Weekend
Pricketts Fort/Fairmont (363-3030)
May 10 Mother's Day Celebration
Grafton (265-1589)
May 19 Battle of Matewan 78th Anniversary
Matewan (426-4239)
May 20-24 57th West Virginia Strawberry Festival
Buckhannon (472-9036)
May 21-24 Webster County Woodchopping Festival
Webster Springs (847-7666)
May 22-24 22nd Vandalia Gathering
Charleston (558-0220)
May 22-24 Dandelion Festival
White Sulphur Springs (536-1246)
May 22-25 Mountain Festival
Bluefield (327-7184)
May 22-25 Spring Folk Dance Camp
Oglebay Park/Wheeling (242-7700)
May 23-25 Head-of-the-Mon Horseshoe Tournament
Fairmont (366-7986)
May 28-31 Blue & Gray Reunion
Philippi (457-4265)
June 5-7 Nongame Wildlife Weekend
Elkins (637-0245)
June 6 12th General Adam Stephen Day
Martinsburg (267-4434)
June 6-7 Confederate Memorial Weekend
Capon Chapel/Capon Bridge (856-2623)
June 7 Rhododendron Outdoor Art & Craft Festival
South Charleston (776-1308)
June 8-13 Upper Potomac Dulcimer Festival
Shepherdstown (263-2531)
June 12-13 Hancock County Quilt Show
New Cumberland (564-5385)
June 12-14 Ronceverte River Festival
Ronceverte (647-3825)
June 12-14 Spring Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Charles Town (725-2055)
June 12-14 River Heritage Festival
New Martinsville (455-3637)
June 12-14 West Virginia Bass Festival
St. Marys (684-2364)
June 13-14 Heritage Arts Weekend
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
June 17-20 West Virginia Coal Festival
Madison (369-7377)
June 18-21 49th West Virginia State Folk Festival
Glenville (462-8427)
June 19-20 Spring Art in the Mountains Festival
Tamarack/Beckley (256-6843)
June 20 West Virginia Day
Independence Hall/Wheeling (238-1300)
June 22-August 9 Fort New Salem Heritage Workshops
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
June 25-28 Bluegrass/Country Music Festival
Summersville (872-3145)
June 26-28 African American Jubilee
Wheeling (233-4640)
June 27 Pearl S. Buck Birthday Celebration
Hillsboro (799-4048)
July 1-5 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-7860)
July 4-5 Mid-Summer Music Festival
Tomlinson Run/New Manchester (564-3651)
July 8-12 Pioneer Days In Pocahontas County
Marlinton (799-4315)
July 9-12 Singing in the Mountains
Summersville (872-3145)
July 10-11 Mountain Music Festival
Caretta (875-4834)
July 10-12 John Henry Days
Talcott (466-1729)
July 11-12 Pioneer Days & Wheat Harvest
Farm Museum/Point Pleasant (675-5737)
July 12-August 9 Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops
Elkins (637-1209)
July 13-18 West Virginia Interstate Fair
Mineral Wells (489-1301)
July 15-18 Durbin Days
Durbin (456-5327)
July 19-26 48th State Gospel Sing
Mt. Nebo (472-3466)
July 20-25 West Virginia Poultry Convention
Moorefield (538-2725)
July 24-26 Upper Ohio Valley Italian Festival
Wheeling (233-1090)
July 24-26 11th Weirton Greek Bazaar
Weirton (797-9884)
July 29-August 1 Wayne County Fair
Wayne (523-1728)
July 29-August 2 Appalachian String Band Festival
Camp Washington-Carver/Clifftop (438-3005)
July 30-August 1 Bluestone Valley Fair
Spanishburg (425-1429)
July 31-August 2 American Heritage Craft Festival
Oglebay Park/Wheeling (1-800-624-6988)
August 1-2 2nd Living History Days
New Creek (788-5129)
August 2-9 Cherry River Festival
Richwood (846-6790)
August 3-8 Tyler County Fair
Middlebourne (758-2494)
August 3-8 Mannington District Fair
Mannington (986-2136)

(continued on inside back cover)

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Goldenseal

Volume 24, Number 1 Spring 1998

COVER: Bil Lepp and the infamous Buck-dog aboard a train engine. This champion liar and his dog are included in a GOLDENSEAL Special Report on Storytelling in West Virginia beginning on page 9. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Barbara A. Angle, Archie Campbell, Doug Chadwick, Greg Clark, Johnny Dahmer, Deluxe Studio, Mike Furbee, Michael Keller, Johnny Krause, McLemore Studio, Gerald Milnes, Gerald Ratliff, James Samsell

From The Editor: Tribute to Paul Lepp

Life is short. Particularly for some of the brightest and most creative among us, it is often far too short. It is with a very heavy heart that we tell of the passing of Paul Lepp, who, at age 36, was regarded as West Virginia's finest storyteller. Certainly our best liar. His life and storytelling accomplishments are described beginning on page 14. Below are tributes to Paul from some who knew him well. We will all miss him for many, many years to come. —ed.

Paul Lepp (1961-1998). Photo by Michael Keller.

I started to write about my brother almost two years ago. It never crossed my mind that my story would end up being a tribute to his life and career as a storyteller. But Paul died in January and so I think it is only appropriate to dedicate the story to his memory (see "The Lying Lepp Brothers," page 14). Our entire family would also like to express thanks to the whole community for their support and care during the time of Paul's illness and passing.

It is not just because Paul was my brother that I say he put the West Virginia Liars Contest on the map. I think most anyone involved in the contest would agree. Beyond just winning, Paul upped the standard of competition. Paul spent long hours creating his stories until every line was either a joke or an introduction to a joke. After Paul got into the contest no one who just made up a story on the spot could expect to get far. If you wanted to beat Paul, you had to get ready. You really had to think your story out. Trust me, he beat me soundly on a number of occasions.

Paul also brought other storytellers into the contest. It is no secret that he influenced my style. In fact, I never would have entered if he had not both helped and encouraged me. Paul enjoyed winning the contest, but he was never anyone's rival. He never played anybody dirty, nor did he try to discourage good tellers from entering.

Perhaps the best story I can recount about my brother's humility and will to see everyone come out for the best would be about his encounter with a major New York-based newspaper. After the 1996 contest the paper called Paul about doing a story on him and me. The writer apparently wanted to hear about conflict between us. He wanted to know if there was bad blood. Though excited about the possibility of being in a huge national publication, Paul told the guy that he and I got along great. The story was dropped. Paul only wanted the best for everyone.

May his stories live on forever. —Bil Lepp

I will never forget the first time I heard Paul tell a story. I was a judge at the Vandalia Gathering Liars Contest 1987. If I had known how funny he was going to be, I might have prepared myself. But, before any of us had any idea what was happening to us, Paul was unraveling a yarn so intricate and so funny, that not only were we busting our sides laughing at the funny parts, we soon could find no part that wasn't funny.

Even if one could have found some dispassionate zombie to have stood in to judge for us, even a zombie would not have gone against the crowd. Likely we would have been pulled apart and then left up on top of one of our green rolling hills to be picked at by a variety of both our official and unofficial state animals, that is not only bear but possum, not only cardinal but buzzard, and whatever was left over in the end, to be used as fish bait, perhaps in the hands of Paul himself tied onto his 50-pound Stren carp cord at the end of his famous Monster Stick. Needless to say, none of us was so foolish as to deny the crown to this master storyteller.

His style, I see now, was infectious. When I consider his telling, it is almost impossible to shake its influence, even here, in what perhaps should have been a more somber, even-paced reflection. He did, as only the truly great can do, cast a spell over those fortunate enough to be in his presence. And I find myself, even yet, coming under that very same enchantment. The tales themselves were, I know full well, not only funny, but remarkably elaborate constructions of plot and character, imagery, and refined (as well as unrefined) wit. I had never heard the like before.

So, farewell, Paul. You were our friend. You made us laugh and with such laughter as you unleashed, I know my very soul was refreshed. Such a gift as that only the angels and a very, very few other beings are ever given. You were one of such a glorious, blessed few. Godspeed. —Marc Harshman

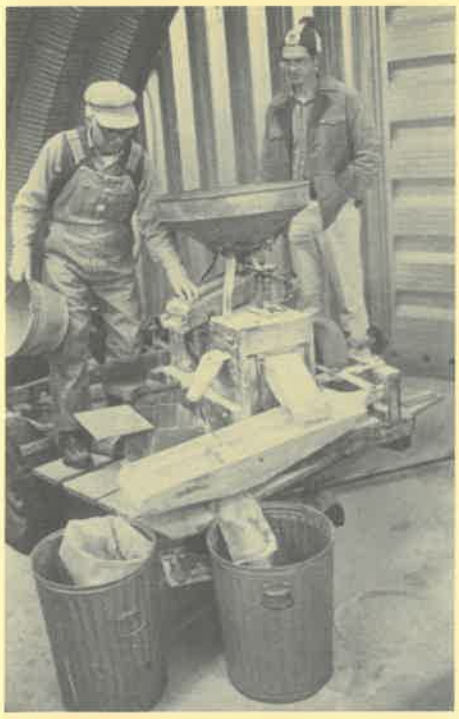
Letters from Readers

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.

Harvesting and Threshing

November 25, 1997
Glenville, West Virginia
Editor:
Gene Bailey's article on threshing ("Working for Our Daily Bread: Harvesting and Threshing the Grain," Fall 1997) sharpened many memories. A distant cousin, but a closer friend, brought his threshing machine into our community each summer. It was much smaller than the one Gene pictured and was pulled by a team of horses. A local team was added if needed for the hills.

The threshing machine was powered by a stationary gas engine with big flywheels that were mounted on a horse-drawn wagon. The straw was pitched onto a stack by a couple of men with long handled pitchforks. The wheat came out the side of the threshing machine and was caught in half-bushel buckets, then measured into sacks. This was the basis of the threshing charge.



Ancil Cutlip (left) grinding cornmeal at the 1980 Barbour County Winter Fair.

In the fall of 1941, my dad and I seeded a field to wheat, sowing the wheat by hand. My dad was especially skilled at hand seeding a field of grain or grass seed and getting a good even stand. After seeding we went over the field with a spike tooth harrow to cover the seed with soil.

In the summer of 1942 we cradled, shocked, stacked, and then threshed our field of wheat. All done the hard ways that Mr. Bailey described. This time the threshing machine was mounted on a $1\frac{1}{2}$-ton truck and was powered by an old car engine mounted on the front bumper. A new operator had also replaced our cousin.

I took a pickup load of our wheat to a flour mill at Flatwoods to be ground. The building that housed the mill was later used as a feed store, then later it burned.

That fall I got a letter from my draft board informing me that my farm deferment had been rescinded. I had to look that word up to see what it meant, but once I found out, I have never had to be reminded. So, I enlisted in the Army. When I came home from World War II in November 1946, my parents still had three or four bags of our flour in the attic.

Eating biscuits is about as close as I have come to any part of the wheat processing business since that time, but Gene's article made it all come back.
Sincerely,
Ancil B. Cutlip

Easter Egg

October 28, 1997
Clarksburg, West Virginia
Editor:
In 1900, during his campaign for the presidency, William Jennings Bryan arrived in Weston for a "whistle-stop." My grandfather, Dr. M. S. Holt, was mayor of Weston, so he took his four-year-old daughter, my mother Margaret Abigail Holt (Early), to meet the great man. My mother had gathered a bunch of dandelions and daisies which she presented to Bryan.

This egg was brought to Weston by William Jennings Bryan in 1900.

She asked him if he had a little girl. He replied that his little girl was grown. Then he reached into his carpetbag and took out a lavender Easter egg and gave it to my mother. She treasured this egg as long as she lived. When we made a (frequent) move to a new home, she always personally carried the bowl containing the egg, cushioned in cotton.

It was kept on the shelf of her china cupboard. After her death, December 11, 1986, my sister and I cleared out her apartment, and I brought the egg home with me. It now rests, cushioned in cotton in its bowl, on the shelf of my china cupboard.

The enclosed picture was taken recently. As you can see, the cotton is old and discolored. We're afraid to touch the egg to move it to a clean "nest."
Helen Page (Early) Jones

Cecile Morgan

January 14, 1998
Sandyville, West Virginia
Editor:
I don't know your magazine, but I have known Mr. and Mrs. Morgan (98-year-old Cecile Morgan, "A Pretty Little Box for Christmas," by Edelene Wood; Winter 1997). They were both fine people. I would say what made her hands so large was hard work.

Let it be making a garden, canning, drying vegetables and fruits, washing, ironing, house cleaning, paper hanging, painting, anything that come up to be done.

She also cared for her aged parents. They did not go to a rest

Cecile Morgan of Mineral Wells. Photo by Michael Keller.

home.

If more people worked like Cecile did, they would be happier and live longer. I have not seen her for years. But I'll have to say she was one of my best friends. And I hope to hunt her up.
Mrs. Archie Morgan

We agree with all the above, but suggest that photographer Michael Keller's use of a wide-angle lens for the photo also contributes to the effect. —ed.

Timber and Trains

December 30, 1997
Spotswood, New Jersey
Editor:
I was pleased to see the articles

Ely-Thomas Lumber Company ran this Shay #3 in Fenwick, 1960. Photo by Johnny Krause, courtesy of Dr. Roy B. Clarkson.

related to the Ely-Thomas Lumber Company in the Winter 1997 issue of GOLDENSEAL. It might be of interest to know most of Ely-Thomas Lumber's railroad equipment has been preserved.

Standard gauge Shay locomotives #2 and #3 are in Pennsylvania—#2 at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania at Strasburg. Number 3 and one of the company's Barnhart log loaders are at the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum in Denton Hill, Pennsylvania.

The 3-foot narrow gauge equipment is spread out in three states. Narrow gauge Climax #7 and the company's American log loader along with several cars are on display at the Cradle of Forestry Museum near Brevard, North Carolina. Narrow gauge Shay #5 was saved and is now in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Shay #6 is preserved at the New Jersey's Pine Creek Railroad in Allaire State Park. This locomotive is the only one which is operated from time to time for the public.

As one of the individuals involved with the #6 restoration and Ely-Thomas history, the picture on pages 12 and 13 of the mill at Werth is fascinating. It obviously shows a narrow gauge Climax and log train. Since I'm only familiar with Ely-Thomas narrow gauge operation in Jetsville, south of Fenwick, I hope one of your readers can fill me in on the operation at Werth. How long did rail service to the mill last and where did the line go? Any information would be greatly appreciated.

Anyone wishing to see the Ely-Thomas #6 can contact me for particulars.
Steve Ward
162 Devoe Ave.
Spotswood, NJ 08884

January 12, 1998
Troy, Pennsylvania
Editor:
I have been a subscriber approximately 20 years. You have a great magazine.

In the 1960's I helped the "Penn-York" Lumbermen's Club purchase a Shay locomotive and a Barnhart log loader of the Ely-Thomas Lumber Company at Fenwick.

The Shay was restored in 1980. The Barnhart was restored by 1997 at a cost of $40,000. They both are displayed at the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum on U.S. Route 6 in Potter County, Pennsylvania.

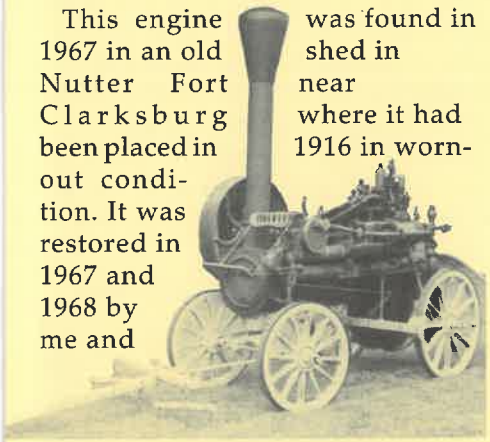
Your history of lumbering is fine. I have enjoyed six trips on the Cass Scenic Railroad.
F. Marshall Case

Thanks for writing, Mr. Case. You and others interested in this subject might wish to read the announcement on page 6 concerning the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association and upcoming Cass excursions. —ed.

Steam Engine ID

November 3, 1997
Clarksburg, West Virginia
Editor:
The steam engine shown on page

61 of the Summer 1997 GOLDENSEAL and on page four of the Fall 1997 GOLDENSEAL is an L. Spence six-horsepower portable engine built in 1883 by Ohio Valley Agricultural Works in Martins Ferry, Ohio. This company started business in 1840 and built separators, threshing machines, portable steam engines, etc.



Keith Mason's L. Spence engine.

This engine was found in 1967 in an old shed in Nutter Fort near Clarksburg where it had been placed in 1916 in worn-out condition. It was restored in 1967 and 1968 by me and my dad, the late Kenneth Mason.

The engine is shown every year for four days at the Stonewall Jackson Jubilee. In past years it was shown at the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins seven years, and at Treasure Mountain Festival in Franklin 17 years. At both of these festivals the L. Spence engine furnished power for an antique shingle mill owned and operated by Eston Teter of Fort Seybert. The L. Spence is the oldest operating steam engine under certification in West Virginia. This one is the only known L. Spence engine remaining.

I have been a "steam nut" all my life and got my first portable steam engine in 1963.

My family and I really do enjoy your fine magazine.
Sincerely,
Keith Mason

Draft Animals

September 9, 1997
Dodson, North Carolina
Editor:

Of all the issues over all the years we've enjoyed GOLDENSEAL, the Summer 1997 issue on draft animals finally inspires us to say (a much-overdue) thank you. The writing was lovely, the photos outstanding.

We're especially inspired by Daniel Richmond's story. We do some farm and garden work with one big horse, and have been breaking a team of steers that are now one year old. Working with draft animals is a link with the past that we especially cherish, as my husband Gene grew up helping his relatives farm on Fayette County hillsides in the area near Hawks Nest.

Thanks so much for GOLDENSEAL, and thanks, John, for carrying on where Ken Sullivan left off.
Best wishes for continued success.
Eric (Gene) and Betty Anderson

Daniel Richmond's oxen Ike and Mike. Photo by Michael Keller.

October 27, 1997
Flemington, West Virginia
Editor:
A follow-up on the draft animal stories (GOLDENSEAL, Summer 1997) and William D. Fisher's letter in the Fall 1997 issue. *(Mr. Fisher sent in a photograph of a street in Grafton with a letter explaining how the bricks had a slanted surface and were laid with the lip at the top so that the toe on the horse's shoe could get a hold. — ed.)*

The town of Grafton has voted to preserve the street (Mackin Street) as is and Darlene Ford has been appointed to obtain markers to so designate the street.

This street is one street beyond the National Mother's Day Shrine and directly behind the old Catholic Youth Center and Lutheran Church.
Sincerely,
Geneva M. Phelps
Secretary, Taylor County History & Genealogical Society

"Mountain Tea"

"Mountain Tea"

October 28, 1997
Warren, Ohio
Editor:
Please be advised that my dad, Daymon C. Taylor, was born on March 22, 1902, in Preston County. He is in very good health for his age, but has been wanting some "mountain tea," such as when he was a young man, and we have no idea what it is. Can you help?

You may respond to my dad as he still lives alone and is very independent. Many thanks.
Sincerely,
Joyce Gill

The GOLDENSEAL staff happily looked into this matter. We discovered that "mountain tea" is more commonly known as teaberry or wintergreen. It grows throughout the state from June to September and is found particularly under coniferous trees. It bears a very spicy red berry. Thanks for asking. —ed.

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.

Irish Heritage Events

Several events are scheduled around St. Patrick's Day in the Mountain State with local organizers in Ireland, Shepherdstown, Charleston, and Huntington planning celebrations in honor of West Virginia's Irish heritage.

At Ireland in Lewis County, the Irish Spring Festival is held from March 12 through 20. The event coincides with the arrival of spring and is sponsored by the Shamrock Extension Homemakers. For more information contact them at Star Route, Box 20, Walkersville, WV 26447; (304)452-8962.

Huntington's St. Patrick's Day celebration on March 17 includes Irish games, food, and live entertainment, and at 7:00 p.m. their St. Patrick's Day parade gets underway at Third Avenue and 11th Street. For more information contact Greater Huntington Parks & Recreation at (304)696-5954.

Shepherdstown is hosting a special concert on March 20 — "The Irish Fiddle of Martin Hayes." The concert begins at the Presbyterian Church at 8:00 p.m. Hayes is the seven-time, All-Ireland Fiddle Champion. For more information contact Shepherdstown Music & Dance, P.O. Box 1293, Shepherdstown, WV 25443; (304)263-2531.

The West Virginia Symphony Orchestra will celebrate on the Saturday before St. Patrick's Day with a special Irish concert. The Clancys and Robbie O'Connell, known as the masters of Irish folk song, join Irish tenor Walter MacNeil and the Kanawha Valley Pipes and Drums for an evening performance at Charleston's Municipal Auditorium on March 14. Ticket prices range from $12 to $30, with student tickets at $9 and $6. For more information contact the West Virginia Symphony office at (304)342-0151.

Cass Railfan Weekend

The Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association (MSR&LHA), Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, and the West Virginia State Rail Authority are sponsoring the annual Cass Railfan Weekend on May 15, 16, and 17.

The weekend features an inaugural run on the West Virginia Central — formerly known as the Greenbrier, Cheat and Elk Railroad. The three-day event is packed with activities for railroad enthusiasts, beginning with a Friday night get-together at the Cass Locomotive Shops. An evening program, displays, and refreshments are planned.

On Saturday, three Shay engines will take two trains from Cass to Spruce, where a ceremony will mark the re-opening of the new West Virginia Central rail line. A hot lunch will be served before the trains run down Shaver's Fork to Beaver Creek. Dinner will be served back at Cass that evening followed by the traditional whistle blow and "night photo" sessions. Sunday, the train ride continues with a trip up to the Wye near Bald Knob and back to Spruce for lunch. The Shays will then head off to the 4,066-foot Big Cut, the highest standard gauge main line east of the Rockies.

Tickets sell out quickly for the weekend event. Railfan Weekend train fare is $85 and includes hot lunches both days. Tickets are also available for the Saturday family buffet at Cass for $10 each. Make checks payable to the MSR&LHA. For more information call 1-800-CALL-WVA or write to Cass Railfan Weekend, P.O. Box 107, Cass, WV 24927.

Several additional excursions are planned for the 1998 season and will be open to the public. The one-day trips are designed to provide visitors to Cass with more opportunities to ride.

The Heisler #6 was used for logging on steep grades. Department of Commerce photo by Gerald Ratliff, 1978.

As part of Cass Scenic Railroad's 35th anniversary season, a special guidebook about Cass was recently written. Philip V. Bagdon,

the seasonal historian for Cass Scenic Railroad, published *Essential Cass: An Overview of Cass Scenic Railroad State Park*. The 28-page booklet, which Bagdon describes as "Cass in a nutshell," includes 31 color photographs and two maps. The pocket-size softcover book sells for $5.95, plus $1 shipping. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax. Orders may be sent to Bagdon at P.O. Box 1, Hinton, WV 25951. Make checks payable to Dog & Pony Show Productions.

Horseshoe Pitchers Needed!

Recently, GOLDENSEAL heard from Charles M. Bunner in Fairmont. Mr. Bunner keeps us informed on horseshoe pitching activities in West Virginia in his role as president of the West Virginia Horseshoe Pitchers Association.

He wants West Virginians, particularly women and junior players, to join up. The West Virginia association is chartered by the National Horseshoe Pitchers Association of America, and is ranked 16th in the country based on membership per number of residents.

In addition to the Fairmont club which holds regular competitions, pitching clubs are located in Ronceverte, Princeton, Elkins, Jackson's Mill, Harrisville, Parkersburg, and Worthington. A new club was recently formed in Pineville, Wyoming County.

Each spring, Fairmont hosts its annual Head-of-the-Mon Horseshoe Tournament. The dates for 1998 are May 23 through 25. The state tournament is another big event. This year the 61st annual State Singles Championship will be held September 5 through 7 in Parkersburg's city park.

"Horseshoe pitching is fun, makes for health, and involves many different family members at local, state, and world tournaments," Mr. Bunner reminds us.

For more information on West Virginia's Horseshoe Pitchers Association and local clubs contact Charles M. Bunner, 508 Ohio Avenue, Fairmont, WV 26554; (304)366-7986.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

We are saddened to learn of the deaths of two former GOLDENSEAL subjects.

Alice Leonore Cassady, known as "Miss Alice" to many, died in late January at age 93. She was the subject of an article by son-in-law Fred Barkey titled "According to Miss Alice: A Farm Girl Recalls Coal Town Life" in the Spring 1997 issue.

Miss Alice spent most of her life at Winifrede, Kanawha County, where she worked as a farm girl, schoolteacher, Sunday school superintendent, and elementary school principal. "I was a big part of that world and it has always been a big part of me and who I am," she said.

Shields Landon "S.L." Jones of Hilldale died in December at age 96. He was an internationally-known wood carver and the subject of an article by Charles B. Rosenak, "'A Person Has to Have Some Work To Do': S.L. Jones, Wood Carver," in the Spring 1982 magazine.

S.L. Jones' drawings and carvings are part of the permanent collections in many museums including the State Museum at the Cultural Center in Charleston, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art in Washington D.C., and the museum of American Folk Art in New York.

S. L. Jones. Photo by James Samsell, 1981.

Butterfly and Caterpillar Guide

Thomas J. Allen, a wildlife biologist with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, is the author of *The Butterflies of West Virginia and Their Caterpillars*. The new book presents 128 butterfly species, most of which are found in West Virginia during the spring, summer, or fall. A few migrate into the state annually, while others are here year round.

Thomas Allen has been chasing butterflies since he was a child. His childhood home in Massachusetts was adjacent to an overgrown field. Allen's mother made him a red fabric net so she could keep an eye on her son in the tall weeds as he attempted to catch butterflies. His father taught him how to handle the ones he caught. After studying entomology at the University of Maine, he came to West Virginia in 1970 and began to seriously research and raise butterflies, studying their life cycle and habitat in the process.

The new field guide reflects Allen's lifetime interest. It's for specialists and general enthusiasts alike, and includes sections on studying butterflies and butterfly gardening. Each species is fully described with information on habitat, life, history,

distribution, nectar sources, and larval host plants. *The Butterflies of West Virginia* is richly illustrated with detailed drawings and maps, black and white art, and stunning color plates showing the adult butterflies in actual size.

The 388-page softcover field guide is a University of Pittsburgh Press publication and is part of the Pitt Series in Nature and Natural History. Look for it in bookstores throughout West Virginia. Paperback copies sell for $22.95 and clothbound books are $37.50. Mail orders may be sent to Pictorial Histories Distribution, 1416 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301; 1-888-982-7472. Include $3.50 for shipping. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

David Hunter Strother

Last year, West Virginia University undertook a unique project: preparing the drawings of 19th century artist David Hunter Strother for exhibition, and publishing a companion book

"Joe Crane's Barn — Jefferson County, (West) Virginia; 1847/1850" by David Hunter Strother. Courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries.

about the celebrated illustrator and author.

The book, *David Hunter Strother: "One of the Best Draughtsmen the Country Possesses,"* is a stunning collection of work. It is thoughtfully presented with nearly 100 illustrations, and extensive text about the West Virginian whose pen name, "Porte Crayon," became a household word in the mid-1800's.

Strother was born in Martinsburg in 1816. In 1853, he was commissioned by Harper and Brothers to write and illustrate an article about a sporting expedition into the remote Allegheny Mountains of (West) Virginia. It was published under his pen name in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in December of that year. Its immense popularity led to other assignments and, between December 1854 and May 1861, Porte Crayon penned more than two dozen illustrated travelogues.

During the Civil War, Strother served as a topographer and staff officer to various Union generals. *Harper's* published 11 installments of Porte Crayon's "Personal Recollections of the War." A ten-part series, "The Mountains," followed introducing America to the rural character and folkways of the new state of West Virginia.

For almost a century, several generations of Strothers — including the artist's son John; his eldest son, David Hunter Strother III; and in turn his son John — made sure the body of work survived in good condition.

WVU's West Virginia and Regional History Collection acquired the collection in 1985. With the recent publication of Strother's work, an important part of life in 19th century America has been preserved.

David Hunter Strother: "One of the Best Draughtsmen the Country Possesses" is available from WVU Press, P.O. Box 6069, Morgantown, WV 26506. The 168-page book is available in softback for $29.95 and hardback for $44.95. Include $3.50 shipping for the first book and 50¢ for each additional book. Make checks payable to WVU Press.

Louise McNeill Festival Planned

Over the years, Louise McNeill's work has appeared many times in the pages of GOLDENSEAL — most recently in Spring 1993 and Winter 1994 with her article titled "Spring Cleaning." West Virginia's poet laureate died in 1993 and her funeral was held on West Virginia Day, June 20, under an apple tree in the yard of Cabin Creek Quilts at Malden.

To honor her memory, Cabin Creek Quilts and Good Living Residential Care Homes in Malden are sponsoring the first "Flapped and Flew Festival" on May 15, 1998. The event will be a time for sharing Louise McNeill anecdotes, readings, and special memories with area writers. An evening reception will also be held.

Organizer Karen Glazier explains: "Louise McNeill spent the last 4½ years of her life residing in Malden. During that period she was especially productive. She finished several of her works for publication, traveled the state in her official capacity, encouraged aspiring writers of all ages, and produced an inaugural poem for then-Governor Caperton — from a hospital bed!"

As part of the May festivities, students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades are invited to submit prose or poetry relating to the themes in one of McNeill's most beloved poems, "First Flight." It is about possibilities, youthful dreams, and belief in one's self. "First Flight" was published in McNeill's *Hill Daughter* by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1991.

Prizes will be awarded to each grade level and winners will be invited to the reception. The deadline for student entries is April 15th. For guidelines and a copy of "First Flight" contact Karen Glazier at Good Living, 107 Georges Drive, Malden, WV 25306; (304)925-1608.

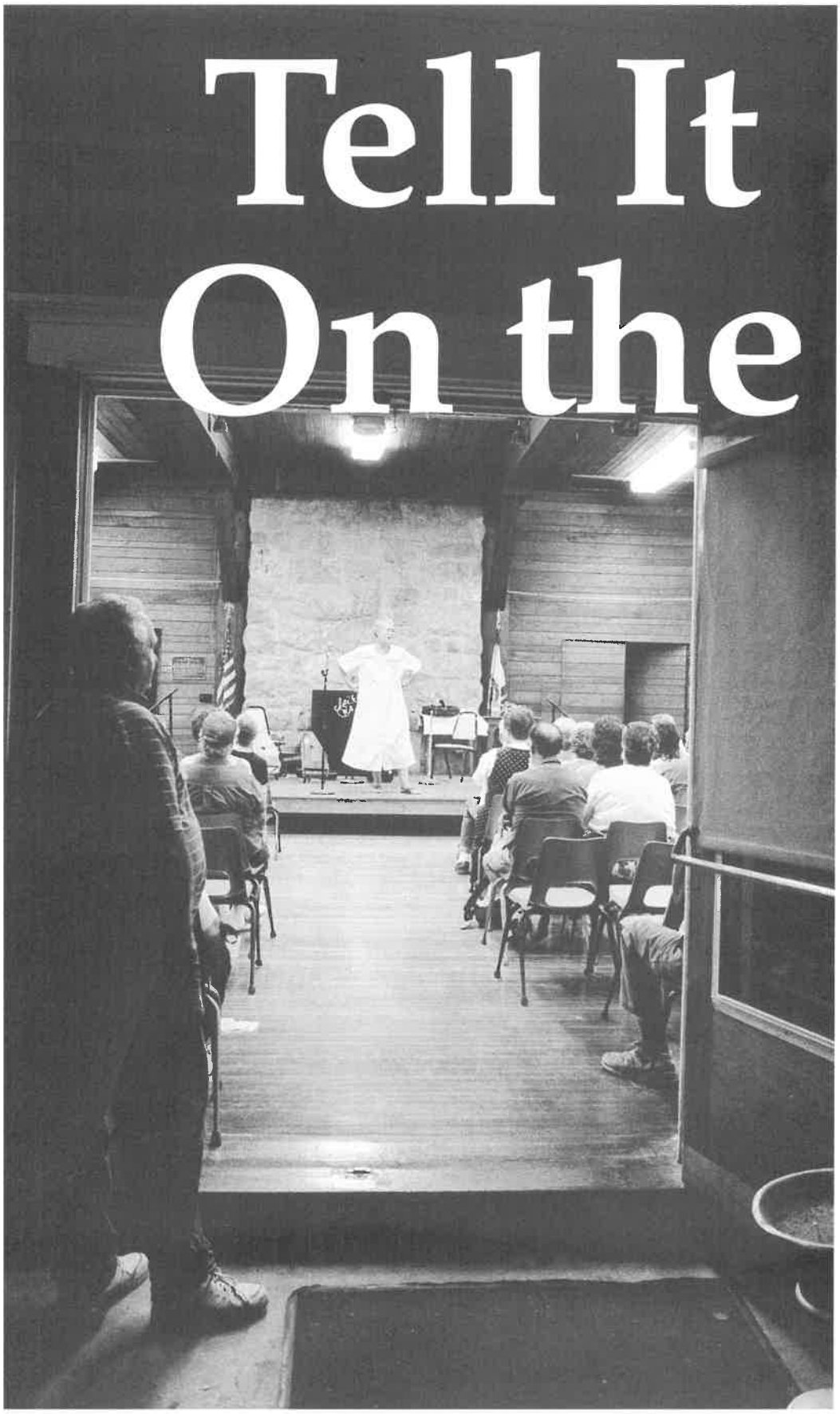
GOLDENSEAL Special Report

Storytelling in West Virginia is one of our grandest traditions.

From a front porch in Pocahontas County to a crowded auditorium in Charleston, the art and craft of spinning yarns is alive and well.

See pages 10-27.

Tell It On the Mou



A liver-eating witch named Spearfinger waylays careless children in remote mountain hollers. A fanatical fisherman cruises the New River in his Great Golden Carp Cruiser. The image of President McKinley's face emerges from a dynamited rock face in the New River Gorge, at the exact moment that the great man dies. A Tucker County homemaker awaits winning words from the Publisher's Clearinghouse. And a crafty bevy of Logan County Flower Club ladies bamboozle a skinny-dipping young man.

Such tales entertained 1,700 attendees at the second Voices of the Mountains Storytelling Festival held at Jackson's Mill State Conference Center last October. Under the crisp fall sky, 40 diverse storytellers from far and near — traditional Appalachian tall-tale tellers, professionals with national reputations, teachers, preachers, librarians, songwriters, poets, and some really big liars — gathered to spin a few hundred yarns.

On Friday, under the giant yellow-and-white striped circus tent on the Mill's sprawling lawn, 1,500 central West Virginia school children responded to the tellers' gesturing, singing, and telling with riveted gazes and gales of laughter — the sort usually reserved for famous athletes and movie stars.

Then on Saturday and Sunday, a couple hundred more people — a diverse mix of families and adults — heard stories galore in the tent, wood-paneled assembly hall, and at a special "story swapping" area for novice storytellers. Many in the audience were informal tellers of tales themselves — and some had an interest in taking it a step further.

Audience members included a young college student from Pittsburgh, two young women visiting from Columbia in South America, a

Above: Kate Long at the Friday night concert.

Previous Page - clockwise from top left: Johnnie Hill, photo by Doug Chadwick; unidentified audience member at Jackson's Mill, and Karen Vuranch, photos by Mike Furbee; Bil Lepp, photo by Michael Keller.

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A Storytelling Festival at Jackson's Mill

By Mary Rodd Furbee

Photographs by Mike Furbee

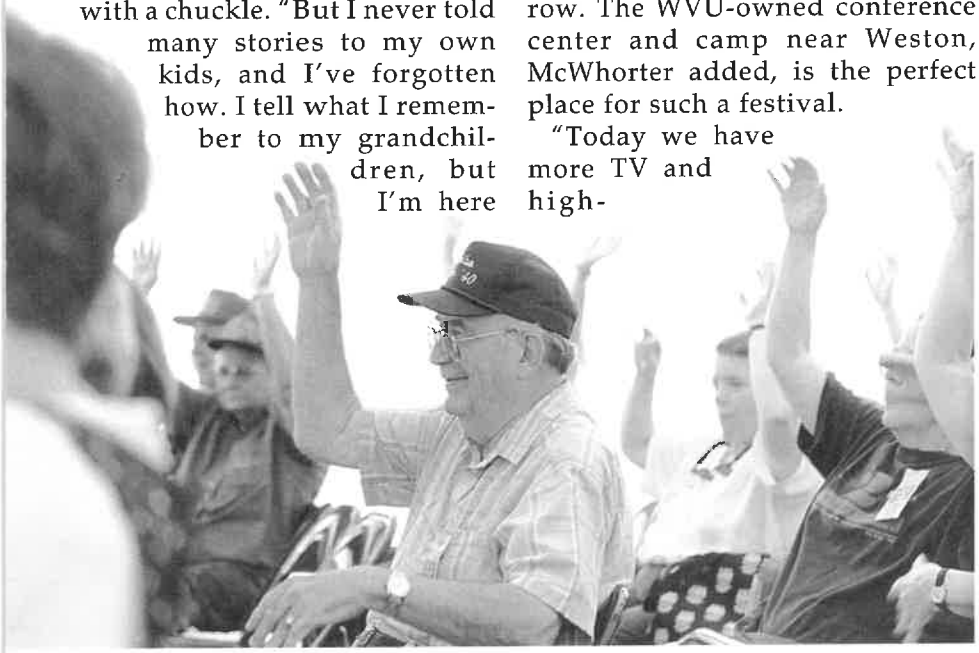
couple traveling through on their way home to Maine, and many folks from around the state. Jim and Frankie White, who migrated to Cleveland from Logan 40 years ago, came back to "remember how to tell stories." Both their families left the area — she was 10 and he was 17 — to work in the steel mills and automobile factories. They rarely return anymore since all the family is gone. But when they saw a brochure for the festival, they just had to come.

"I've been known to stretch the truth a bit — especially when talking with my wife," Jim White says with a chuckle. "But I never told many stories to my own kids, and I've forgotten how. I tell what I remember to my grandchildren, but I'm here to learn more."

Concurrent sessions at the festival focused on sacred stories, Irish and Celtic stories of Appalachian forebears, Halloween thrillers and chillers, and the fine art of lying. A panel discussion designed especially for educators elicited heartfelt discussion on why storytelling matters. And a special Saturday evening heritage program featured historic tours, demonstrations, and ghost tale sessions at the historic McWhorter log cabin, the Jackson's Mill Museum, and the Barn Arena.

"Storytelling is a lot more important now than when I was a young man," says Bob McWhorter, president of the Jackson's Mill Heritage Foundation, which sponsored the festival for the second year in a row. The WVU-owned conference center and camp near Weston, McWhorter added, is the perfect place for such a festival.

"Today we have more TV and high-voltage lifestyles, so verbal communication isn't going on in families as much anymore. But here at Jackson's Mill — especially at the camps for children and young people — we've been keeping our traditions alive through songs and stories and rituals for decades. All you have to do is look at the fascination on the faces of those kids, clear down to the little ones, and you can see that they need this — that we need this, too. These stories make our culture and history real. They make it come alive."



Just as there are many musical cultural traditions, there are diverse storytelling traditions and performance styles. The Voices of the Mountains festival welcomed them all — mime, musical ballads, puppetry, poetry, comedy, folktales, family stories, living history presentations by performers in costume, and more.

Nationally known storytellers Ed Stivender and Mary Carter Smith told sacred stories and folktales. Stivender, a Philadelphia resident who once studied to be a Jesuit priest, took center stage in his brown monk's robe, waving about little naked plastic dolls representing Adam and Eve. Stivender's version of the Christian creation story managed to be simultaneously reverent, absurd, and hilarious. Stivender calls his story "The Kingdom of Heaven is Like a Party."

Mary Carter Smith, a Baltimore resident, recounted myths and folktales with African, African American, and Appalachian themes. Smith learned many of her folktales and family stories during her childhood years spent with her grandmother and aunts in Marion and Raleigh Counties. (See story, page 24.)

Among the West Virginia and regional presenters at the festival was Bill Hairston of Charleston. He brought African American tales collected from residents of the Southern Coalfields. A retired school librarian from Morgantown, Betty Cross, told folktales she picked up

Visitors from Columbia, South America, Juliana and Claudia Acosta enjoy a tale by Mary Davidson of Morgantown on a porch at Jackson's Mill. At right is Howard Davidson.

during her long career with children and from her Gilmer County girlhood. Cleta Long, the poet laureate of Tucker County, recited her witty and homespun poems about the downside of dishwashing and the upside of waking up at dawn to the smell of homemade bread baking and salt pork frying. Ellesa High, an English professor at West Virginia University, presented stories of Native Americans.

"People who were miners and railroad workers and loggers often have some of the best stories of all."

Much to the delight of tall-tale fans in the crowd, Paul and Bil Lepp, past winners of the annual Vandalia Gathering Liars Contest, also participated in the festival. Decked out in their trademark flannel shirts and fishing vests, the pair charmed the crowd with their tried and "true" tales of hunting and fishing (and just plain living) fiascoes. (See story, page 14.)

And Karen Vuranch — who also performs living history interpretations of women such as pioneer heroine Mary Ingles Draper as part of the state's "History Alive" program — told a few hundred young listeners about a young boy raised "right where you are." The boy, a backward country kid in farmer's clothes, went to West Point, graduated third in his class and became a famous Confederate General, Vuranch told the buzzing crowd of elementary school children. The boy, of course, was Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.

Kate Long, a Charleston-based writer and West Virginia Public Radio commentator, interspersed stories about her Grandpa's hog raising techniques with audience participation songs. Long also slipped in a special plea for the children to save and tell their own stories. "In my home, the stories were about Yankees and Rebels, the Civil War kind. When my mom got mad at my dad she'd say, 'You Yankee!' I made up stories and songs about that. Save your grandma and grandpa's stories right up — and just tell stories about things you know."

Stories passed around orally change and grow and take on a life of their own, presenters at a panel discussion agreed. That, and the fact that they entertain mightily and transmit a sense of wonder about the world, account for much of their appeal. But storytelling is also about learning, and connecting, and discovery, they added. Oral traditions help us make sense of where we've been, what we've learned, and where we are headed.

One teller, Jodi French, a park ranger at the New River Gorge National Recreation Center, was so inspired by the first Voices of the Mountain Storytelling Festival in 1996 that she set about organizing the nonprofit West Virginia Storytelling Guild. Jodi tells stories about plant lore, the natural world, and the rich human and industrial history of southern West Virginia mining and railroad towns. Too often, during the course of her work, French says she meets people who think their stories are unimportant. "Yet people who were miners and railroad workers and loggers often have some of the best stories of all," she says.

"More and more people crave stories of ordinary people, who really aren't ordinary at all. They built our towns and industries. They taught our children and farmed our land. There are so many stories to

Ed Stivender.

explore. And what's exciting about it is that when people realize they have stories to tell, they realize their own importance."

Once, stories were told from generation to generation and village to village. People learned how others — be they animal, human, or divine — faced fear, outsmarted bullies, escaped from bad situations, endured hard times, made peace with enemies, succeeded in the face of impossible odds, cared for one another, made miracles.

Ilene Evans (left), a performance poet from Thomas, and Ellesa High, an English professor at WVU, swap tales in the late afternoon.

Betty Cross, a retired librarian, retells folktales from her Gilmer County childhood.

Times changed, however, and the spoken word now competes with print media, radio, television, movies, videos, computers. But thankfully, the stories weren't lost, says Jodi French. Instead, they were only "buried under a layer of very loud noise, and only a shrinking cadre of librarians, teachers, grandparents, poets, and preachers kept oral traditions alive. In recent decades, however, increasing numbers of people have tired of the prefab, media-manufactured stories."

That's why French says there's been a nationwide resurgence of storytelling.

"Being surrounded by commercialized versions of stories that don't have a lot to do with your own life, can feel isolating and lonely," French says. "Stories were once how we connected with each other, and we still need that. That's why it's spreading like wildfire."

Mary R. Furbee *of Morgantown is a freelance writer and part-time journalism instructor. A frequent contributor to* GOLDENSEAL, *her work has also been published by the* Charleston Gazette, *the* Cleveland Plain Dealer, *Gannett News Service and* The Progressive *magazine.*

Mike Furbee *is research coordinator for the Center for Rural Emergency Medicine at WVU, a photographer, and a fine traditional musician. His photographs have been exhibited at the West Virginia Juried Exhibition in Charleston, the Forest Festival in Elkins, and at the Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee at Jackson's Mill.*

Storytelling Resources

Voices of the Mountains, the West Virginia Storytelling Festival, returns to Jackson's Mill State 4-H Camp and Conference Center at Weston this fall. The event, scheduled for October 8 through 10, is sponsored by the Jackson's Mill Heritage Foundation and the West Virginia Storytelling Guild.

Guild President Jodi French says the group serves "tellers and people looking for tellers." Contact them at P.O. Box 158, Lansing, WV 26862; (304)438-8994.

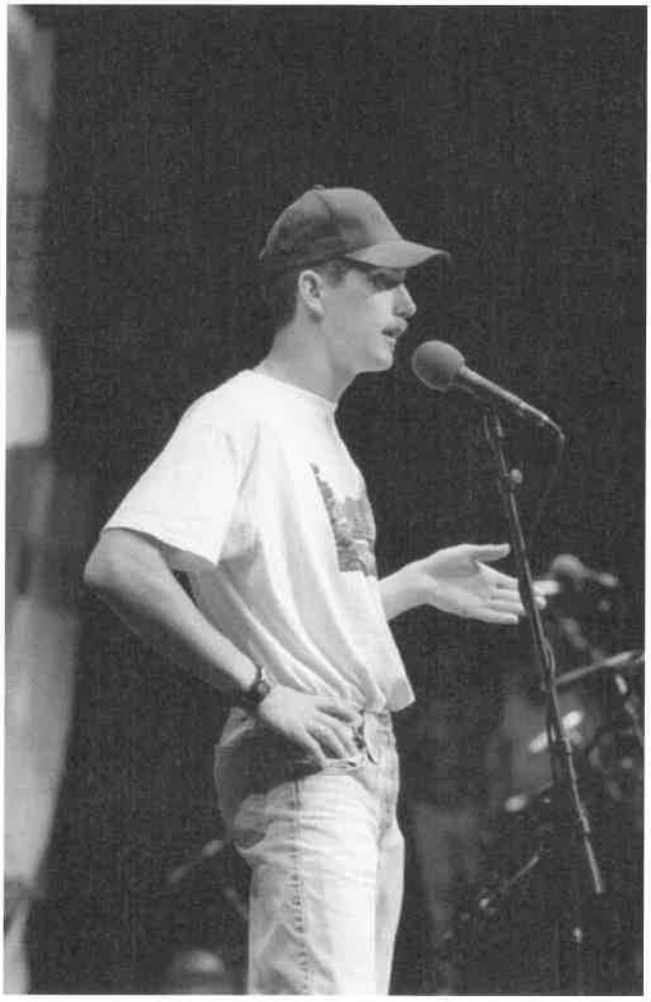
A number of festival participants have produced storytelling recordings. Karen Vuranch tells eight stories on her cassette, "My Grandmother's Necklace and Other Stories." Kate Long's "Pieces of Heart" includes stories in song related to rural life in West Virginia. The Hill Lorists (Judy Byers, John Randolph, and Noel Tenney), and storytellers Bill Hairston and Marylou Rush have also recorded their work.

Mary Carter Smith's prolific storytelling career has resulted in the books *Mary Carter Smith: African-American Storyteller* and *Mary Carter Smith: Heart to Heart*, along with cassette recordings.

The Storytelling Festival maintains a list of these and other available recordings. Contact Bob McWhorter at 1320 Dogwood Avenue, Morgantown, WV 26505, (304)599-2219; or Betty Bea Cox at (304)293-2702.

Several West Virginia festivals and workshops also offer storytelling. These include the Vandalia Gathering in Charleston, the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair in Ripley, and the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops in Elkins. For dates and contact numbers, see the "Folklife Fairs Festivals" calendar in this issue.

The Lepp Broth



MICHAEL KELLER

Bil Lepp at the 1997 Liars Contest.

By Bil Lepp

My big brother Paul, perhaps the greatest liar to ever grace the stage for the annual contest, won the Biggest Liar (first place) honor five times, Bigger Liar (second place) once, and Big Liar (third place) most recently. He claimed to have placed third at his last contest on purpose, so that he could have at least one of each colored ribbon for his collection. I have three blue ribbons, two red, and a yellow. I also hold two coveted "GOLDENSEAL Golden Shovels," which were introduced in 1996 as the first-place prize. It never bothered me to point out to Paul that there are only two of these shovels in existence and that I own them both. Paul liked to point out that while I have three first place prizes, I only beat him once. Paul placed first in all the contests in which both of us have participated, excepting one.

The Liars Contest is an annual event held during the Vandalia Gathering. The contest was started by former GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan, and, like the banjo, fiddle, and dulcimer contests also held during the Gathering, it seeks to keep alive the heritage and traditions of the West Virginia people. Storytelling is high on the list of traditional activities found in our mountains. As long as humans have wandered off to hunt or fish they have come back with tales to justify their empty hands and broken fishing poles.

Who are these Lepps and why have they been such proficient liars for so long?

The Liars Contest not only encourages the perpetuation of favorite tales from the past, but also provides an outlet for new stories to be tested. Three judges score each contestant on presentation, crowd response, and originality. It's tough to come to the Cultural Center and present tall tales, what with the Cultural Center standing in the shadow of the Capitol building, where for decades some of the best storytellers ever have held office. The Liars Contest almost always plays to a full house, and never fails to entertain. But, you might be asking, who are these Lepps and why have they been such proficient liars for so long?

John and Sally Lepp were married in 1958 in Ohio and celebrated the birth of Paul in 1961. Kevin, Tammy, and Katie were the next three children in line, and I, little Bil, came last, in 1970. Dad is a Methodist minister and Mom a schoolteacher. The Lepps moved to South Charleston in 1973 when John took a position as vice-president of Morris Harvey College, now the

Lying ers

Why things happen the way they do can sometimes never be explained. Perhaps John and Sally Lepp ponder this notion more than most, for to them goes the dubious honor of being the parents of Paul and Bil Lepp, the winningest liars in the history of the West Virginia State Liars Contest.

MICHAEL KELLER

Paul Lepp at the 1995 Liars Contest.

University of Charleston.

It all started innocently enough. Dad, himself an Eagle Scout, was eager to introduce the life of scouting to his sons. Paul took to the life very well and became a great fan of the outdoors, especially fishing. He was awarded his Eagle Scout in the late '70's. Nine years Paul's junior, I did not receive my Eagle until August of 1985. Because of our age difference we did not spend any time in scouting together, but we share the love of the outdoors, especially West Virginia.

Sally and John Lepp were married June 15, 1958, in Ohio.

Again because of our age difference, it was difficult for the two of us to interact much outside regular family activities, but on occasion Paul did take me fishing. The time that sticks most in my mind is the time Paul promised to take me to a secret spot on the Kanawha River. We pulled in front of somebody's house, and Paul said, "Alright, this lady is sort of mean and she doesn't like us in her yard, so we have to move fast when we get out of the car." I wondered if all his adventures started out this way. We got out of the car and bolted for the river. We climbed down the bank and we congratulated ourselves on not having been detected.

But our joy was premature. We had just cast when a tirade of expletives burst from the bushes up the bank like a barrage on the beaches of Normandy. The old woman was cursing us up and down for being in her yard and fishing in her river. I was a little nervous, but Paul came to our rescue. In one brief sentence he taught me more about respect for elders and tact than I'd ever learned before. Paul looked up at her and said, "Shut up lady, your howling is going to scare all the fish away!"

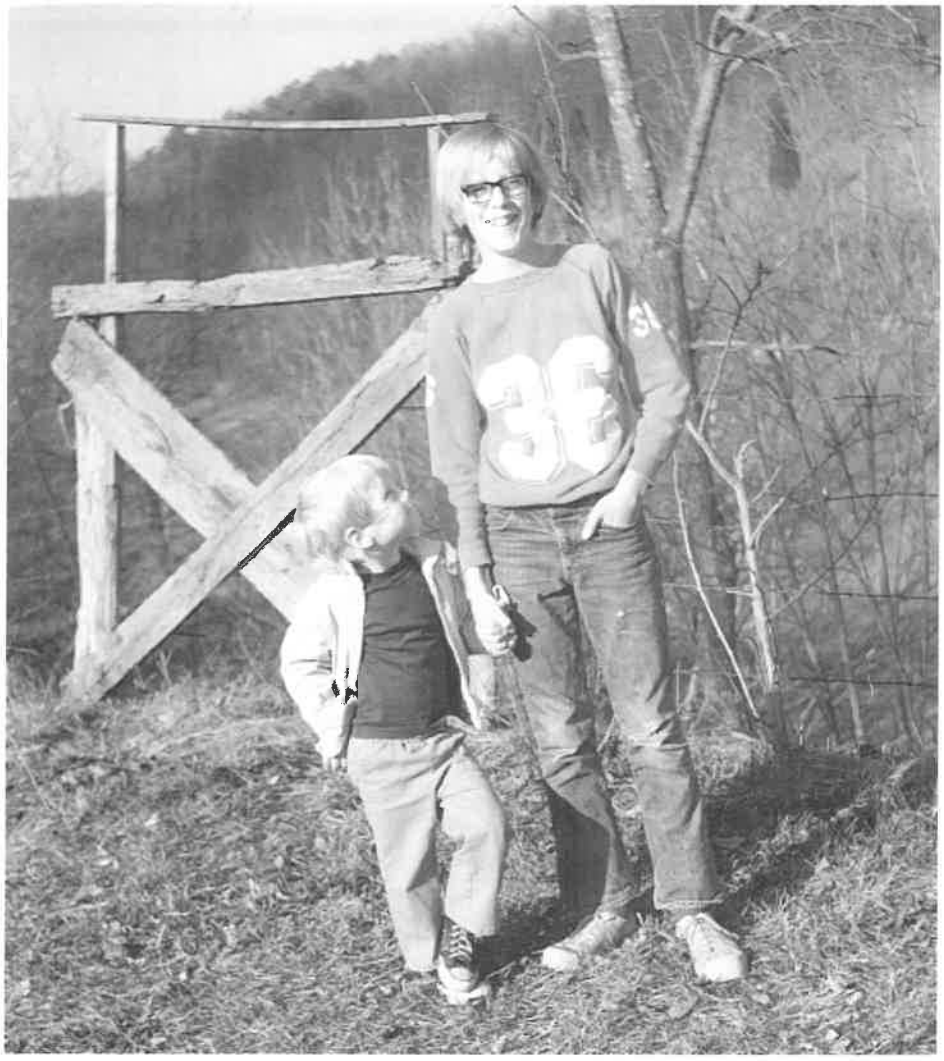
While we have never admitted just where we were born, I hold fast to the claim that we are West Virginians through and through. Paul spent the greater part of his life in

The Lepp family in 1977. Author Bil is front left at age seven. Paul is back right with glasses. Parents Sally and John are at center. Other family members are Kevin (far left), Tammy (far right), and Katie (front center).

Charleston, though he was at WVU for a spell, and in the Army for a few years. Paul was a member of the military police, stationed in Germany. But mostly he fished, and the rest was just a way to pass the time. There's not a river in the state which has not felt Paul's presence, and not a fish in the region who does not know his name. There are rumors among the fish world that Paul could talk fish out of the water. Paul could just whisper "bait" on his hook and the fish lined up to be caught. Or so it is said.

For the most part, I grew up in South Charleston, but also in Philippi. I attended and studied at West Virginia Wesleyan in Buckhannon, though, truth be told, I mostly just attended West Virginia Wesleyan. It was there I fell in with another Paul, my buddy Paul Drake, who introduced me to spelunking Boden Cave near Elkins, and other wonderful West Virginia sights. Most importantly, in terms of the Liars Contest, it was in college that I became fascinated with the CSX "Monster Coal Trains" which never fail to find a way into my stories. Though it could be easily denied if necessary, Drake taught me how to ride the trains, and sitting on the coal riding through the back, backwoods, I discovered the true West Virginia.

Who can say what drives a man to lie? Dad blames our abilities on Mom's side of the family, but perhaps it is Dad's father, Gehard Lepp, who is most responsible for the seemingly effortless lying skills welded into our genetic makeup. It's not that "Grosspapa," German for grandfather, was a bad man, or one given to be dishonest, it's just that he had a way with the truth. Grosspapa was born in the south of Russia in 1899. His family was part of a large, German speaking, Mennonite community which had migrated to Russia many years before. The Lepp family owned a giant factory which produced farm equipment and steam engines.



Bil and Paul Lepp, 1974.

When the Communists overthrew the Czar the factory was confiscated. Grosspapa joined the White Army and fought the Communists until he was forced to leave the country in 1920. He never returned to Russia.

Grosspapa came to America via Turkey, Austria, Switzerland, France, and Pennsylvania. He always said that Pennsylvania was the most barbaric country to which he'd ever been. By the time Grosspapa got to this country he spoke German, Russian, French, Turkish, some Italian, and English for certain. Factions of the family also claim he spoke various Arabic dialects and a little Hindi. These are the same factions which claim that he was with Lawrence of Arabia and that he shot down the Red Baron. Well, maybe Grosspapa didn't shoot down the Red Baron, but why clutter up a perfectly good story with facts?

To illustrate Grosspapa's ability to use language to his advantage, Paul told a true story of Grosspapa's early days in this country: "It seems that Grosspapa was in Bible study

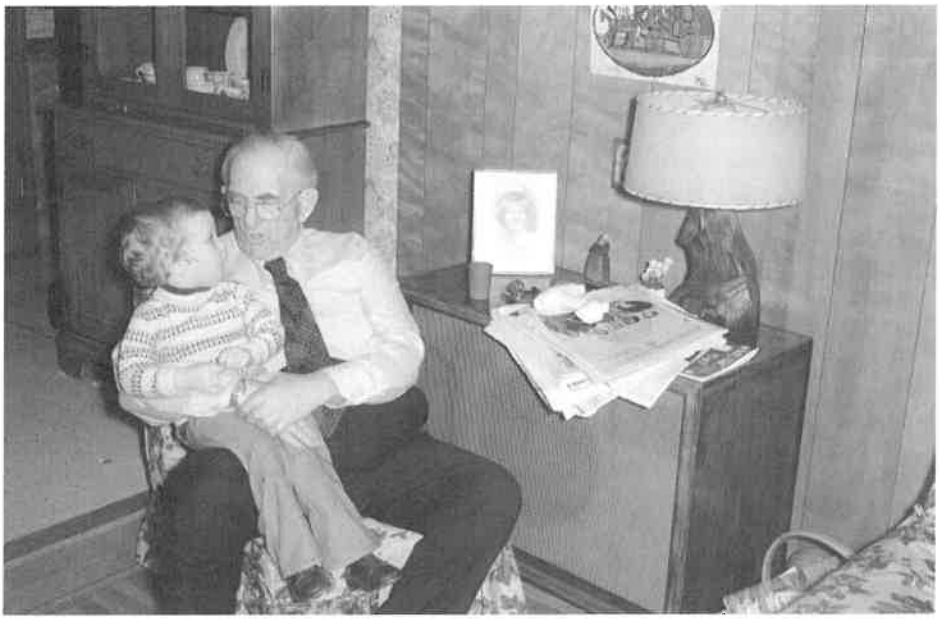
It's not that "Grosspapa," was a bad man, or one given to be dishonest, it's just that he had a way with the truth.

one Sunday when the teacher of the class wrote a sentence on the board. Grosspapa noticed a misused comma in the sentence and was polite enough to point out the error to the teacher. With a candy-coated voice the teacher said, 'Mr. Lepp, that's nice of you to try and help me, but my sentence is correct. I understand why you might have made a mistake, as English *is* your second language.' Grosspapa looked at her, sighed, and said, 'Madam, you are the one who is mistaken. And English is my sixth language.'"

Another family tale illustrating Grosspapa's mastery of language, any language, describes how he handled his constant frustration with people who could not spell our relatively simple family name. Grosspapa, always ready to help people produce the correct spelling, would patiently explain, "'L' as in 'listen,' 'E' as in 'euphemism,' 'P' as in 'phonetic,' and 'P' as in 'pterodactyl.'"

It is from this stock that we Lepp boys developed our abilities. But language is only half the lie. The rest is experience. Believe it or not, most of the lies Paul and I have presented at the Liars Contest are based, somewhere, somehow, in actual events. Paul, an avid fisherman, had long practiced his chosen trade. He had a gift for lifting stories out of the news and then developing the body of his lie around them. His first time at the Liars Contest Paul centered his story around the DC-10 which crashed in the early 1970's at the Charleston airport. The airplane was loaded with marijuana and rolled off the runway while trying to complete a somewhat less than legal transaction. It was this event, coupled with Paul's ever-present fishing gear, (that would be his Monster Stick, the nine foot surf-casting rod with six miles of brand new 50-pound Stren carp cord, with 20-pound, custom made, stainless-steel, slip-sliding sinkers), that left him hooked to the airplane, somersaulting over every bridge up the Elk River. "The pilot," clarified Paul, "mistook all the lanterns lined up by the night fishermen along the banks of the Kanawha River for the lights of the runway. Before he could correct his

Gehard and Helga Lepp lived 20 miles apart in Russia, but met in America as immigrants, and married here during the 1930's.



Grosspapa tells Bil his first lies in 1973.

mistake the pilot had flown under my cast, snagging my hook on his wing."

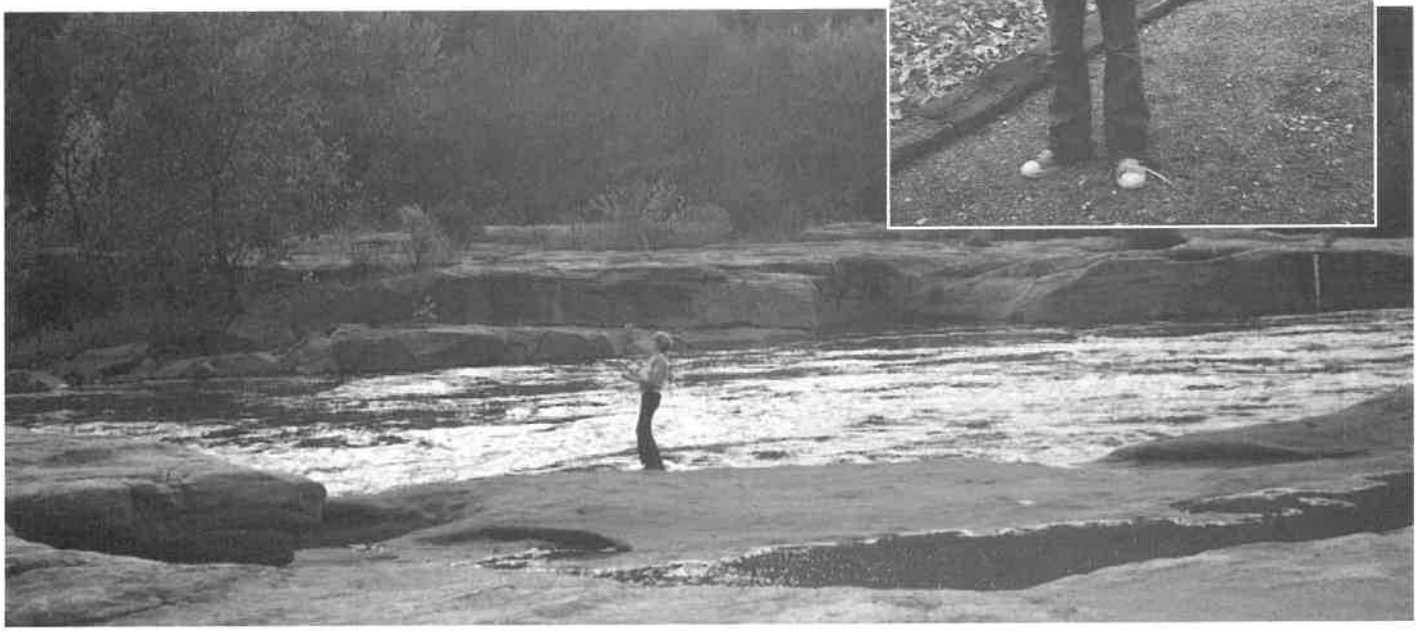
Paul had everything from airplanes, cardinals, black bears, space traveling kites, trucks, RV's and, oh yes, fish on the end of his line. It was the 1995 Liars Contest which revealed that a huge catfish spill on I-79 was the result of a freak fishing accident. Paul, returning from a trip to Weirton where his 20-pound fishing weights are custom made, ended up behind a tractor trailer transporting live catfish. Paul, who was no stranger to trouble, climbed to the top of the van in which he was traveling and began casting into the tanks of the truck. It was then that he hooked into the "biggest, baddest, meanest, one-eyed, tattoed, goateed, most unrehabitatible catfish in the whole catfish farm system" that the real trouble started. Paul explained that that fish had nothing to lose and he didn't care who he took down with him. During the fight which ensued, Paul ended up slinging an RV clear to Tallahassee, overturning the catfish truck, and being charged with a "B.I." (That's a "Being an Idiot" charge for those who don't know.)

In that contest I told the biblical story of Jonah, only Jonah was from West Virginia, fled God by jumping a coal train, was swallowed by a carp in the Buckhannon River, and was finally spit out "like so much chewed Beechnut." Paul still walked off with the first place ribbon in 1995.

Paul Lepp at the 1995 Liars Contest. Photo by Michael Keller.

During the 1996 contest I turned in my first Buck-dog story. The story details my adventures while frozen to the side of a CSX coal train by my tongue. The whole thing started as an effort to cure my dog, Buck, whose mother was a German shepherd and whose daddy was a basset hound, of gun-shy-

Paul fishing the New River, about 1976 and (right) with actual fish.



ness. However, Buck weathers the blast of my gun and chases the bullet through thin air, dragging me behind. Various happenstances evolve and I end up frozen to a train. My tongue gets stretched 40 feet long and eventually an eight-ton snowball gets frozen to the far end. After flying the train through the air, my tongue and I are left dangling from power lines where I am subsequently attacked by a bear. The bear, armed with a ball bat, is, in turn, bitten on the bottom by the ever-faithful Buck. To make a long story short, I was left wearing only boxer shorts; the bear's pelt and Buck's fur were both blown off. The three of us end up streaking through the sky with me naked as a jaybird, the bear buck-naked, and Buck bare-naked. For the first time ever, my story was just unbelievable enough to edge by Paul's, and for the first time the younger Lepp beat the elder.

After graduating from Duke Divinity School in December of 1996, I am now a United Methodist minister in the Meadow Bridge area. Though not as renowned as Paul, I tell my stories anywhere I get a chance. Tamarack was kind enough to ask me to speak in September '97, and since July of '97 I have been writing a column, "Time Well Wasted," for the *Fayette Tribune*.

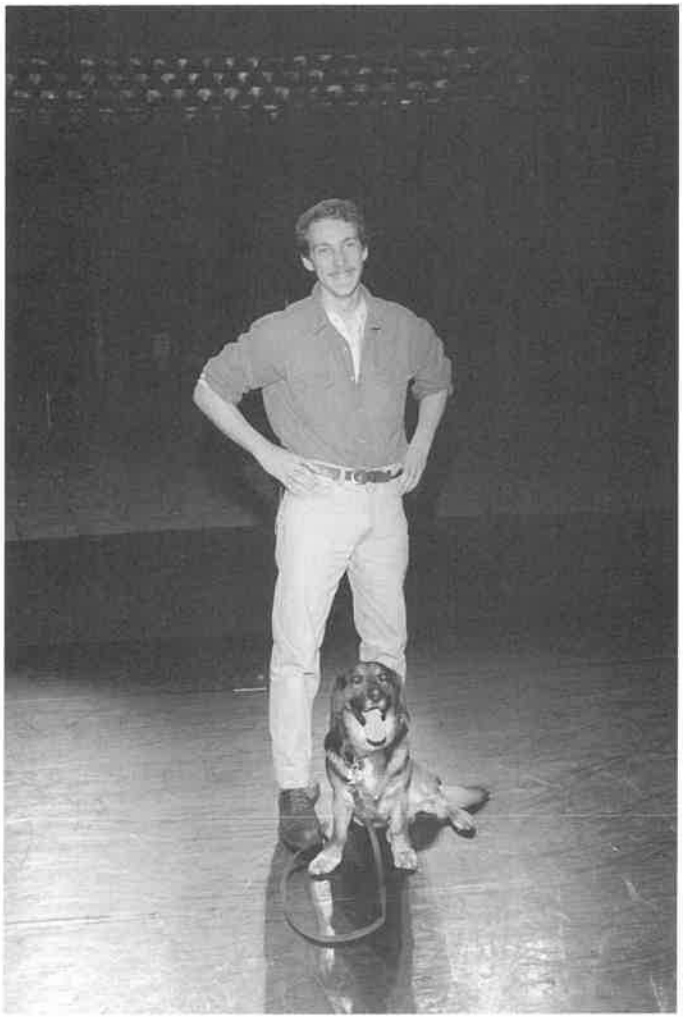
Paul quietly established himself as a storyteller in and around the state. He spoke at Berea College some years ago, and was featured on National Public Radio's "Whad'Ya Know?" with Michael Feldman. If there was a festival going on in the state with live entertainment, there was a good chance that Paul was there.

One of the most exciting results of our storytelling careers was our inclusion in the growing storytelling festival held annually at Jackson's Mill. (See article, page 10.)

People often ask "Where do you get your ideas?" That subject, however, needs to remain shrouded in a bit of mystery. While it is essentially a secret process, it is also largely a process of accident. Paul said that he first heard of the Liars Contest in the late 1980's and decided he'd give it a try if he could come up with something good. Always having been a writer, Paul had a store of unfinished novels and short stories lying around. He said he reread those looking for ideas, then, by chance, remembered the crash of the DC-10 with all its contraband. That in mind, he went fishing. Sitting by the river that night he watched the airplanes coming into Yeager Airport, remembered some lines from his old fishing stories, and things began to come together. Paul liked to keep his stories centered in West Virginia both to keep his audience familiar with the setting, and because of his great love for the state.

My story was just unbelievable enough to edge by Paul's.

Paul participated in the contest a number of times before I took the stage, so he had a ready store of good advice for me. I eagerly took his advice and applied it from the start, keeping my stories based in West Virginia. Evidence of this is my recurring reference to "Weirton's world famous steel fashioned into CSX railroad tracks stretching clear from Grafton to Cowen, via Burnsville, Buckhannon, Carrollton, and Philippi." That's the actual route run by the trains that I encountered in college. Most of my lies start with one good line that jumps into my head somewhere along the way, and then ferments, always growing into something bigger. And, believe it or not, all my stories are based in truth. I actually do have a gun-shy dog named Buck whose mother was German shepherd and whose daddy was a basset hound. With material like that, why make something up?



Bil and Buck. Photo by Michael Keller.

Bil Lepp *is a three-time winner of the state Liars Contest, an Eagle Scout, and a minister serving three United Methodist churches in the Meadow Bridge area. Bil is compiling a book of his and his brother Paul's stories.*

Sadly, Paul Lepp passed away January 13, 1998, after a long illness.—ed.

1997 Liars Contest

*Incredible golf games, magic garage door openers, million dollar sweepstakes, mysterious computers, and hard-pulling hound dogs filled the State Theater during the 1997 West Virginia State Liars Contest at the annual Vandalia Gathering. First place honors, and the GOLDENSEAL Golden Shovel award, went to **Bil Lepp** for the second year in a row. Second prize went to **Bee Murphy**, and the third place winner was **Kip Lee**. Congratulations to them, and thanks to our judges and all the participants. Here is the winning lie.*

Bil Lepp. This past December I graduated from my master's program. Ever since then I've been looking for a job. To that end I decided I would go down to the employment agency and take one of those career aptitude tests.

When I was done, the counselor called me into his office, sat me down, got that stern look a principal gets when you're in trouble. And he says, "Yours is the strangest test I've ever graded in all my days." He said, "As far as I can tell, there are *only* two careers which you might even be remotely suited for." He said, "As far as I can tell, you should either go into the line of monster truck driving, or into politics.

Well, I sat there a minute and I weighed the pros and cons of both of those ideas and I figured while monster truck driving certainly had a few *pros* in its corner, if I went into politics, I'd be dealing exclusively with *cons*. And I didn't want anything to do with that, so I signed the papers. I started down the road to my new, rewarding, and exciting career as a contestant in Monster Truck and Tractor Pulls.

Well, I've got to be honest with you, though, folks. I wasn't very good. Before long, I was in a slump and my career was fading. Well, now those of you that have heard me speak before, you remember my dog, Buck-dog. That's my extraordinary hunting dog, whose mamma was a German shepherd but whose daddy was a determined and extremely prolific basset hound.

Well, old Buck-dog is just about ready to celebrate his second birthday in dog years, that's about 14 in people years. As a consequence, he is suffering through the "terrible twos" and the onset of early adolescence simultaneously.

He's quite a handful. To complicate matters, Buck-dog's smarter than your average human and stronger than four CS&X train engines pulling in unison. To make it even more difficult, Buck-dog likes to run free but the law says I've got to keep him tied up. I tell you what, in the last 18 months, that dog has broken more ropes, chains, and steel cables than Congress has promises.

One night I tied him up to the back wall of my shed. In the morning I woke up, I had a loose dog and a lean-to. Well, now one night just about last April after a particularly grueling match at the truck and tractor pulls, I came home, I was sick and tired of my career, I was fed up with Buck-dog's antics. I went in my barn, I got the biggest chain I could find and I chained Buck-dog to the frame of my monster truck.

I looked at that rig and I said, "There, buddy, get yourself out of that one." I went in, I had my first good night's sleep I'd had in a long time. Well, now I want to establish just a little bit of credibility with you people. I think you and I both know that I'd be lying if I told you when I went out in the morning to check on Buck-dog, he had somehow gotten loose of that get-up.

No sir, when I found him, he was chained just as tight to the frame of that truck as he had been the night before. I do have to tell you, though, that when I finally did find him, he had managed to pull my truck 80 feet into the woods. And would probably still be going now if he hadn't treed the squirrel he was chasing.

Well, I looked at him there, sound asleep beneath my truck, and I got an idea. A stroke of genius, really. I thought to myself, "Wouldn't it be something if at the next truck and tractor pull, I had Buck-dog pull my truck across the auditorium?"

Right then, I started that dog on a strict training regimen. I weaned him totally off water. I got him to where he was drinking nothing but distilled diesel fuel. For meals, he ate nothing but raw meat, chunks of coal, and ramps. Bud, if *that* didn't give him the gas he needed to go on.

To get him a little bit stronger, at nighttime I just tied him up to something really heavy, some really heavy loose object — a fallen tree, a boulder, I even tied him to the tank in front of the National Armory building. And I just let him go. And just as a last measure, I took up all the newspapers I had been using to potty train him on, and I laid down muscle magazines instead.

Well, now while he was bulking up, I was working too. I got some of that cable the riverboats use to tie their barges up with and I spun that into a harness. Then I got the coupling mechanism off an old CS&X coal car. Well I took out my stainless steel, 74-function Swiss army-type knife. I quickly opened up the acetylene torch and the welding glasses. Pulled those glasses over my face and I welded that coupling mechanism to the harness on Buck-dog.

Now with that pulling rig, Buck-dog could have pulled the bottom of the New River Gorge to the top of Spruce Knob. If I had a'hooked Buck-dog up to the tip of the East-

ern Panhandle and got him running west, he could have flipped the whole state onto Ohio like a buckwheat flapjack.

Needless to say, we took the world of Truck and Tractor Pulls by surprise. In no time at all, we had won the locals, the states, and the regionals.

The national championships weren't for a couple of days, so Buck-dog and I took a little vacation. We went up to Alaska. Buck-dog did the Iditarod in six hours flat. And he did it pulling me in my converted tour bus put up on sled runners. Well, now the national champion was a guy that represented the federal government. You see, it seems our president, being from Arkansas, likes his truck and tractor pulls. And he had commissioned 144 federal agents from 117 federal agencies to build him a pulling machine.

Well, what they did, they went down to a surplus store, bought an old CS&X train locomotive, put it up on six-foot steel wheels, got one of those brand-new 5,000 horsepower Caterpillar engines, and got the boys at NASA to convert it so that it ran on a lethal mixture of diesel fuel and liquid oxygen. It was a hauling machine. Why it could haul a 168-car CS&X monster train loaded down with 19,364 tons of pure West Virginia bituminous coal clear from Cowen to Grafton, via Burnsville, Buckhannon, Carrollton, and Philippi, along Weirton's world-famous steel fashioned into CS&X railroad tracks in less time than it takes me to tell you about it. Still with me?

It was a classic John Henry situation.

Well, now the national championship it was held on a stretch of old railroad tracks just east of French Creek. And the rules were pretty simple. They backed that train engine up to Buck-dog along the tracks there and coupled the two of them together, pointed them in different directions, and then the judges walked five yards down either direction of the track and painted one railroad tie hunter's orange. Whichever contestant pulled the other guy across that line first won.

Buck-dog vs. the engine. Photos by Michael Keller.

Well, I tell you what folks, when that engine started, it started with a boom! Smoke and fire bellowed forth from its stacks like Union Carbide in its heyday. The engineer went full throttle, took the brake all the way off, and those six-foot steel wheels started to spin like the wheels on a drag car. The whole thing shook with power. It just oozed kinetic energy. But Buck-dog just leaned forward in his harness and that train didn't move.

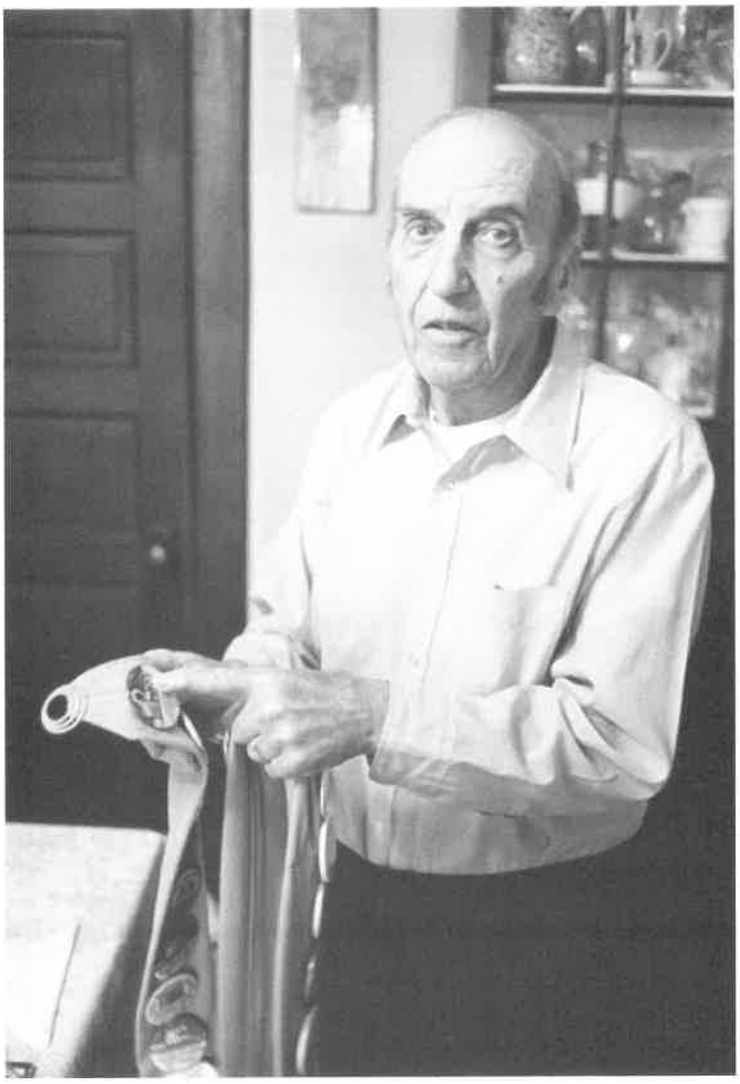
They stayed like that for the rest of the day and into the night. It was a classic John Henry situation. They went on like that for days and days, the rhododendrons bloomed, the mighty Buckhannon River surged and waned on its eternal course. But try as it might, that 5,000 horsepower engine, the brainchild of a 144 federal agents from 117 federal agencies couldn't make Buck-dog budge.

You see, it was in situations just like these when Buck-dog's daddy being a basset hound really paid off in spades. Because you see, even in the hills of West Virginia, on his short little legs, Buck-dog's center of gravity is somewhere below sea level. I could tell that dog was ready to hold out like a right-wing, gun-toting, Communist-hating, conspiracy theory-hatching, Texas separatist militia man and there was *NO* way that 144 federal agents were going to bring him down!

Well, they went on like that for days and it began to look like a draw. And then one day, ever so easy, Buck-dog started to raise his front right paw and go into a point. Well, a hush fell over the crowd. And we looked down the tracks about 30 yards and there was a squirrel making his way down the tracks, oblivious to the mortal combat not half a football field away.

Well, Buck-dog just stared at it and we all just stared at Buck-dog. And when that squirrel got within range, Buck-dog just shot after it, not even thinking about the weight he was towing. And before the judges could ring the bell to finish the match, Buck-dog had that squirrel in his grasp and that engine hanging ten feet off the ground from the lowest branch on the nearest oak tree.

They crowned him National Champion. That night he feasted on a fine meal of Alpo and squirrel gravy. And tomorrow he starts his job with the West Virginia Department of Highways. They want to know if he can pull Route 33 clear to Washington before D.C. collapses. That would be a heavy job for anyone, even Buck-dog. Thank you very much.



In 1963, Johnnie Hill founded the Pioneer Days celebration in Marlinton. These commemorative badges are sold each year to raise money.

Johnnie Hill

By Maureen Crockett

Photographs by Doug Chadwick

Johnnie Hill of Hillsboro, Pocahontas County, has tales to tell. Some are fanciful and he tells them to win a prize. Others are true history, but shine with just as much color. When my husband Bill and I visited Johnnie at his high meadow farm south of Hillsboro, we chatted with him and his wife Madaline awhile on their sunny porch with Blackie the cat, who wound among our legs, purring and rubbing shins. Yellow chrysanthemums and pink petunias glowed in the autumn sun. I watched cows grazing on the hillsides as Johnnie told us stories. Some were of past days in Pocahontas County, but the tall tales held our interest, too. He knows how to spin a yarn, to make you see long ago history as if it were happening before your eyes. He uses dialogue, he paints word pictures, he is a consummate word spinner.

He admires the strong people who lived in these mountains before he was born. So, in 1963, Johnnie started the Pioneer Days celebration in Marlinton. He had been president of the Pocahontas County Historical Society, and wanted to keep knowledge of the old ways alive in the age of television, fast cars, and electricity. Initially, he was proud that the theme stayed with pioneer activities. Times, however, have changed. "Now, it's a big affair and there's not much pioneer about it," he told us. This saddens him a little.

To help pay for Pioneer Days events, Johnnie decided the committee could sell commemorative badges each year that would show different aspects of life in bygone days. He has saved 31 of these badges, displaying them on a long ribbon on a wall of the house.

A man of many interests, Johnnie once owned an historic Civil War drum, said to have been collected from the Droop Mountain battlefield and passed through generations of local families for over a century. In 1995, Johnnie donated the drum to the museum at the Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park.

A retired farmer and insurance agent, Johnnie once found a bank of clay in one of his many meadows. Before long, he became an accomplished potter.

"I dig the clay, put it through a sieve by hand, and add water to make slip. I pour slip into the mold, let it settle, take off the mold, let it dry, fire it once, glaze it, then fire it again." His ceramics room, filled with clay, glazes, a kiln, and finished pieces, is crammed with work in progress. He fires for his artistic neighbors. Johnnie's handsome, terra-cotta clay has such a rich hue that it looks great even at bisque stage. Sometimes he just paints the piece with a clear, transparent glaze for the second firing.

"I had a booth at the State Fair for 12 years, selling ceramic frogs and turtles. I couldn't keep up with demand." Johnnie took a tray he'd made over to his one-time Hillsboro neighbor, Pearl Buck, telling her it was his "good earth."

On May 11, 1997, Johnnie Hill turned 85. The next day, as he worked in his garden, he says, "Things went black. I felt ill, and by evening, when I looked out the window, I saw two of everything." He feels fine now and he still reads without glasses, but he realizes that most of his life is past. He has great memories of his family history and his county's history, however, and he loves to talk about them.

Pocahontas County people know Johnnie Hill's tales, both true and fanciful. Linda Van Reenan, one of Johnnie's daughters, told me, "My father wouldn't ever tell a lie," then

just happened to mention that he won the Liars Contest at Pioneer Days in 1963. Here is Johnnie's prize-winning lie:

"Back in the '30's when we lived down on the farm, everything was depressed, especially prices, so we kept a lot of chickens. Eggs were only $7\frac{1}{2}$ or 8 cents a dozen so we weren't making much money. So one day I was just wondering if there was anything we could do to cut down on the price of feed — of course, feed was only $2.50 or $3 per hundred — but if there was anything we could do to cut the price of feed and make a little more on the eggs.

"At that time Lee Barlow had a sawmill on my brother's place and Johnie Keen worked for Lee. I was down there one day and looked at the big sawdust pile. I decided — I just wondered how a little of that sawdust would work mixed in the feed — that wouldn't make any difference and it would produce eggs all right, mixing sawdust with the feed.

"I asked Johnie about getting some sawdust and he said, 'Go ahead, plenty of it.' So I got a bag of sawdust that evening and took it home and started mixing it with the feed. The chickens got along pretty good. At first it didn't seem to make any difference. They got along real well.

"So I added a little more. The chickens seemed happy and laid real well and it didn't bother the production at all. I kept adding sawdust in the feed. Finally, one day I went out to the chicken house and the chickens were laying wooden eggs.

"Well, I didn't know what had happened. The customers said, 'We don't want wooden eggs; we can't do anything with them.' I didn't know what to do. They kept on laying these eggs. So I decided to set some of the eggs and see what happened. So I set nine of the eggs under an old setting hen.

"You know, in about three weeks, I went out to see about her and that chicken had hatched every one of those eggs and we had five woodpeckers and four knotholes. They were the prettiest things you ever saw. They grew up and did so well, but when they started feathering out, instead of feathers, they had leaves on them — pretty green leaves — and people came from everywhere to see my chickens with the green leaves. That was really something.

"One day I went out and something had started eating the leaves on the chickens. I couldn't figure out what it was. C. P. Dorsey was county agent at that time, and he was kind of a troubleshooter. I called Mr. Dorsey and told him, 'Something is working on the chickens, I don't know what it is.'

"One day I went out to the chicken house and the chickens were laying wooden eggs."

"He said, 'I'll come down and have a look.' He came down and looked at them. He said, 'Well, they have gypsy moths — gypsy moths are taking the leaves off them. All I know to do is make a Bordeaux mixture, with lime and bluestone and add a little arsenic to kill the moths.'

"So I mixed Bordeaux with strong lime and a little arsenic and sprayed them real well. So that took care of the gypsy moths.

"It went on until autumn came, and October — the leaves on the chickens turned a beautiful fall color, autumn color. Well, a little later then, all the leaves fell off. You know, those chickens — well, it got real cold that December. I went down to the chicken house one morning around Christmas and here these four knotholes and five woodpeckers were frozen stiff in a corner.

"I've never since tried to mix sawdust with the feed for any of my stock."

Maureen Crockett *lives in St. Albans and works as a freelance writer, photographer, and illustrator. She has contributed to* GOLDENSEAL *since 1983.*

Doug Chadwick *lives in Pocahontas County and works as a freelance panoramic photographer. His work has appeared in* GOLDENSEAL *since our first year of publication.*

Johnnie Hill was born on this farm in Pocahontas County, where he has lived for all of his 85 years.

Mary Carter Smith

By Mary Rodd Furbee

Dressed in African garb, Mary Carter Smith enchanted audiences at a recent storytelling festival at Jackson's Mill. Photo by Mike Furbee.

The regal woman with ebony skin stood silently on center stage, eyes closed as if in prayer and arms outstretched as if to embrace her audience. Garbed in a white turbaned headdress called a *geelee* and a flowing lion-colored African gown called a *dashiki*, she tipped back her head and raised her arms high. Rows of beaded and bone bracelets clattered and slid toward elbows as small and thin as those of a young girl. Between long, thin fingers laden with gold and tipped with paint, the woman clutched a beaded cowtail switch, an emblem of African royalty. As she flicked it toward the roof of the yellow-and-gold tent, hundreds of children sat shuffling and squirming — watching and waiting.

Then Mary Carter Smith — a veteran, 78-year-old storyteller with cherished girlhood roots in rural Marion and Raleigh Counties — opened her eyes and cast her powerful yet understated voice into the restless crowd. "Let me tell you the story about Cindy Ellie," Smith said, setting her hands on her hips saucily. And soon she had the crowd enthralled with her own sassy version of the classic Cinderella tale. Her rendition was a saga rooted in African American lore, yet fun for all listeners: a rollicking tale complete with "big-footed" stepsisters, collard greens and cracklin' bread, a godmother who "knew a thing or two about voodoo and hoodoo," and a drop-dead gorgeous African prince.

The children leaned forward and listened — slapped their knees and laughed.

Mary Carter Smith calls herself a *griot*. The African term means "keeper of memories," she explains. For the second year in a row, Smith shared some of those "memories" as a featured presenter at the Voices of the Mountains Storytelling Festival at Jackson's Mill during mid-October. (See story, page 10.)

As a professional storyteller and founding member of the National Organization of Black Storytellers, Smith has performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, and throughout the world. Through it all, this keeper of memories has not forgotten her girlhood days in the small West Virginia towns of Grant Town, Idamay, Fairmont and Edwight (see GOLDENSEAL Spring 1993: "Edwight: Recalling a Coal River Company Town" by Johnny M. Vergis).

Born in 1919 in Alabama, Mary Carter Smith lost both her mother and stepfather by the age of five. After their deaths, she lived for several years with her grandmother Mary Deas Nowden and aunts in small West Virginia towns. Grandma Nowden often sang songs and told stories about her life — and read to Smith from the family Bible every day. The aunts had wonderful nicknames — Aunt Booby, Aunt Teady, and Aunt Cookie — and lively, loving ways.

One of Smith's earliest memories is riding in Aunt Cookie's big car to Roaring Twenties parties in Marion County, delighting the guests there by dancing the Charleston, Snake Hips, and other popular dances of the day. "I was the Charleston Champ," she told author Babs Bell Hajdusiewicz, who wrote a children's biography of Smith for Enslow Publishers.

In 1927 and from 1930-1933, Smith lived with her Aunt Willie Nowden McAdory (Aunt Booby) in Edwight, a coal camp in Raleigh County. In Edwight, Smith attended all-black Leevale School. "I left home earlier and was bussed down the highway," she recalls. "I passed a fine white school on the way there. And each day after school, we had to wait for the white children to ride

the bus first. Then they took us home."

Smith was 15 when the family moved to Idamay, near Fairmont in Marion County. There Mary attended the all-black Dunbar High School for two years.

Today Smith peppers many of her stories with snippets of songs — spirituals, blues, songs from slavery times. This isn't surprising since music was a memorable part of Smith's youth in West Virginia. "My Grandmother, Mama Nowden, had a player piano, and I learned to sing 'lining-out' and 'shape notes' in church and at school," Smith recalls, closing her eyes as if back once again in a small one-room schoolhouse or church.

Although Smith and her family "just loved West Virginia," the family was forced to move to Baltimore in 1935. Smith's Aunt Booby became blind and needed treatment only available at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Smith recalls the move to the city well. "I was a small town girl and I thought big city people weren't very friendly at all. I wished I was back in Idamay," she says. Teased about her small town ways, Smith fought back — literally. After initially getting in trouble for fighting, however, she settled down. "I learned to control my temper, and got involved in speech and drama clubs," Smith recalls.

After graduating from high school in 1938 and college in 1942, Smith became a teacher and librarian in predominantly black, inner-city Baltimore schools. After a 30-year career, Smith took a sabbatical to do storytelling and community work full-time.

One day in 1971, while watching a news program on television, Smith learned about a riot that had taken place at a Baltimore concert. The racial violence so horrified her that she was called to "do what I could to change things." For one year, Smith volunteered as a storyteller in schools, churches, community centers, libraries, museums, and prisons. In a 1980 article for *Faith at Work*, Smith wrote: "I had a gift of communication. I had been a storyteller all my life, and now I found I could use my gift breaking down barriers between people separated by race or nationality, age or religion." Because she felt "good things happening," Smith's year off turned into a second career that occupies her still.

"I found I could use my gift breaking down barriers between people separated by race or nationality, age or religion."

One frequently requested Mary Carter Smith story had her Jackson's Mill audience in stitches. Smith wrote the story for her most recent audio cassette, which she sells through her self-operated Aframa Agency. In the monologue, "The Funeral," Smith impersonated an outspoken, elderly black woman. The woman is modeled after women Smith knew in West Virginia, Baltimore, and other places, she says.

Mary Carter Smith (center) and son Ricky (foreground) visit friends in Edwight, Raleigh County, about 1954. Photographer unknown.

Sitting on center stage in a simple straight-back chair, Smith took on the character, who is a friend of the deceased, Inez. Smith's character then unequivocally shared her strongly held feelings — at once affectionate and highly critical — about the dead woman, the mourners, the preacher, and funerals in general to her invisible friend, Lily Mae.

Smith gossiped to Lily Mae about the dead Inez's parents not having been married before Inez was born; berated a man for sticking his feet out into the aisle; and insisted that limousine windows should be clear not smoky because "people want to be seen." People should send flowers to people before rather than after they die, Smith's character declared in a loud whisper. Then, after she announced that she was looking forward to eating the ham, candied sweet potatoes, macaroni and cheese, cakes, and pies that had been prepared for the mourners to eat at the wake, Smith leaned over to Lily Mae and said: "That's the way I want it when I go. I told my children, nobody better not serve no punch and cookies over me. I want some food served over me, 'cause I ain't goin' to die but once, and I mean to go in style."

With a simple white shawl draped over her regal gown, Smith became the nosy, kvetching, arguing, loving, laughing, funeral-going, congregation member in a crowded church. Although not another soul was on stage, the audience saw and heard and felt them all. Smith took the audience there, and made them laugh and understand and forgive. She made them care about Lily Mae and Inez — about life and death. And that, Smith later told her audience during a question-and-answer session, is what storytelling is all about.

Sparky Burr

By Brenda Lloyd and Bob Whitcomb

Some storytellers tell long, intricately-crafted stories. In the West Virginia hills, another kind of story, the short anecdote capped with a punch line, is often told. On front porches, street corners, or in small general stores all through the state, one hears these stories eliciting hearty laughter. Sparky Burr, the old-timer of Lower Cheat (Shaver's Fork), who died last September, was one of this kind of storyteller.

Sparky was born near Hillsboro in 1915. During his early years he worked on the family farm and delivered *Grit* newspaper. His father died of pneumonia when Sparky was only seven. His mother struggled to raise four young children alone. His formal education was disrupted by the Great Depression, during which he quit school after his sophomore year to work in the logging camps to provide a living for his mother and siblings. He resumed his studies after two years. Sparky graduated from Green Bank High School, where he was a good student and an outstanding tackle on the high school football team.

Three weeks after he graduated from high school, his mother passed away; he couldn't afford to take advantage of an athletic scholarship offered by West Virginia Wesleyan. His younger brother and sister were sent to live with an aunt and uncle in Elkins and Sparky embarked on a lumbering "safari" across country with a companion. Together they lumbered through Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, and Idaho before reaching California's redwoods. When they were in these forests, World War II began; Sparky enlisted in San Francisco, and served in the Pacific theater. Upon his return after the war, Sparky roamed the country some more and eventually spent two years in Alaska.

Albert "Sparky" Burr in 1993. Photographer unknown.

He loved the rugged western country, but became homesick for his native West Virginia. He decided to return home for a visit and planned to go back to Alaska to live. His siblings had all married and had scattered. His only sister had remained in Elkins and was raising her young family. Sparky was now 35 years old; his family and friends suggested it was time for him to settle down. His sister arranged for him to meet a "pretty dark-haired girl with snappy brown eyes." After a courtship of only a few months, he married the former Ruth Currence in 1950. They had a family of four: two boys, two girls.

The older son passed away in 1956. Ruth died in 1974 at the age of 43. For the last 47 years, Sparky operated a small farm on Lower Cheat Road. He entertained family, friends, and visitors with his stories about war, the Depression, and country living. In telling his stories, Sparky conveyed a keen sense of drama, changing voices to imitate the characters his stories portrayed. Here are two of his stories, as we remember him telling them:

Across the road from Sparky there lived for a long time a reclusive old woman. When asked about her, Sparky would look at you with a sly smile.

"There's a woman lives there. She's 80 years old. Now don't call her old, cause she's just a day older than me. She doesn't have any friends, her family's done with her, everybody's done with her. Nobody has anything to do with her. She's just too much. Now there's some fellas come down the other day, and they saw a deer in back of her house. They was a standin' there lookin' at that deer, she comes out and says, 'Get outta here.'

"And they says, 'We're just standin' on the road.'

"So she took a shotgun, stuck it out the back window, and goes 'bam, bam, bam,' and the deer ran away. Now she's got a gun in the house, and she's been threatening to shoot people out the front door

Hunter, lumberjack, soldier, traveler, and farmer, Sparky had plenty of stories to tell. Photographer unknown, early 1950's.

with it. The pastor came one day and fixed that gun for her. And after that she was complaining, 'That pastor done something to that gun. I don't know what it was, but it won't work no more!' Well, I don't think she'll be shooting anybody out the front door now.

"I figured Morgan was probably lyin' somewhere watchin' and just a-laughin' at me."

"She won't have nothing to do with anybody around here except me. She'll call me and go on and on, same thing over and over. Sometimes I just put the phone down and go off and do something else for a while. And when I go back, she's still a-talking. She called me up the other day and says there's fellas yelling all night long up there on *her* mountain! Hell, it ain't nothing but a damn owl!

"Now every once in a while she'll get herself into a situation and I'd have to drive her into town, go to the grocery store, bring her back home. I took her to the hospital a couple of times. She'd call me up, 'I'm a-dyin! I'm a-dyin!' And I'd have to rush her to the hospital and she got in there and started screamin' at the nurses, 'Take me first, take me first!' So this last time they took her into a back room to quiet her down. Somebody comes up to me and says, 'Is she a relative of yours?'

"And I says, 'Hellllll no, she's no relative...it's bad enough bein' her neighbor!'"

"There was a feller, Morgan, lived in a little shack back in the hills here. Used to teach school, but he just up and quit and ran around the hills. You could smell 'im before you saw 'im. He'd go runnin' around the hills a week at a time, carryin' Spam or jerky, sleepin' under rock ledges. Now he was 70 when he was running the hills. Finally when he died — mighta been over 80 — they cleaned him up to find out what he looked like. He knew where all the 'sang (ginseng) was, including mine. He'd go out and track it the same way I was. Well one day, I went out to track, and saw there wasn't no berries. They shoulda been ripe, but I didn't see none. Well, the plants were there, but I bent down and looked at 'em, and they didn't have any roots on 'em. I figured Morgan was probably lyin' somewhere watchin' and just a-laughin' at me.

One day after the Forest Service had cleared right up to the falls on Johns Run, about 12 head of cattle ran off into the cut. I was herdin' 'em back, when they just turned and started going the other way. I thought there musta been a bear or something in the woods but here comes this old gray head outta the bushes.

"'Which way do you want 'em to go, Sparky?' Well, Morgan finally decided he wanted to be friends. He come up and says (deep gruff voice), 'Sparky, I like you. Come up to my place.'

"So I went up there, and there sittin' in the kitchen was a still. And he says, 'I make pretty good whiskey. Want to try some?'

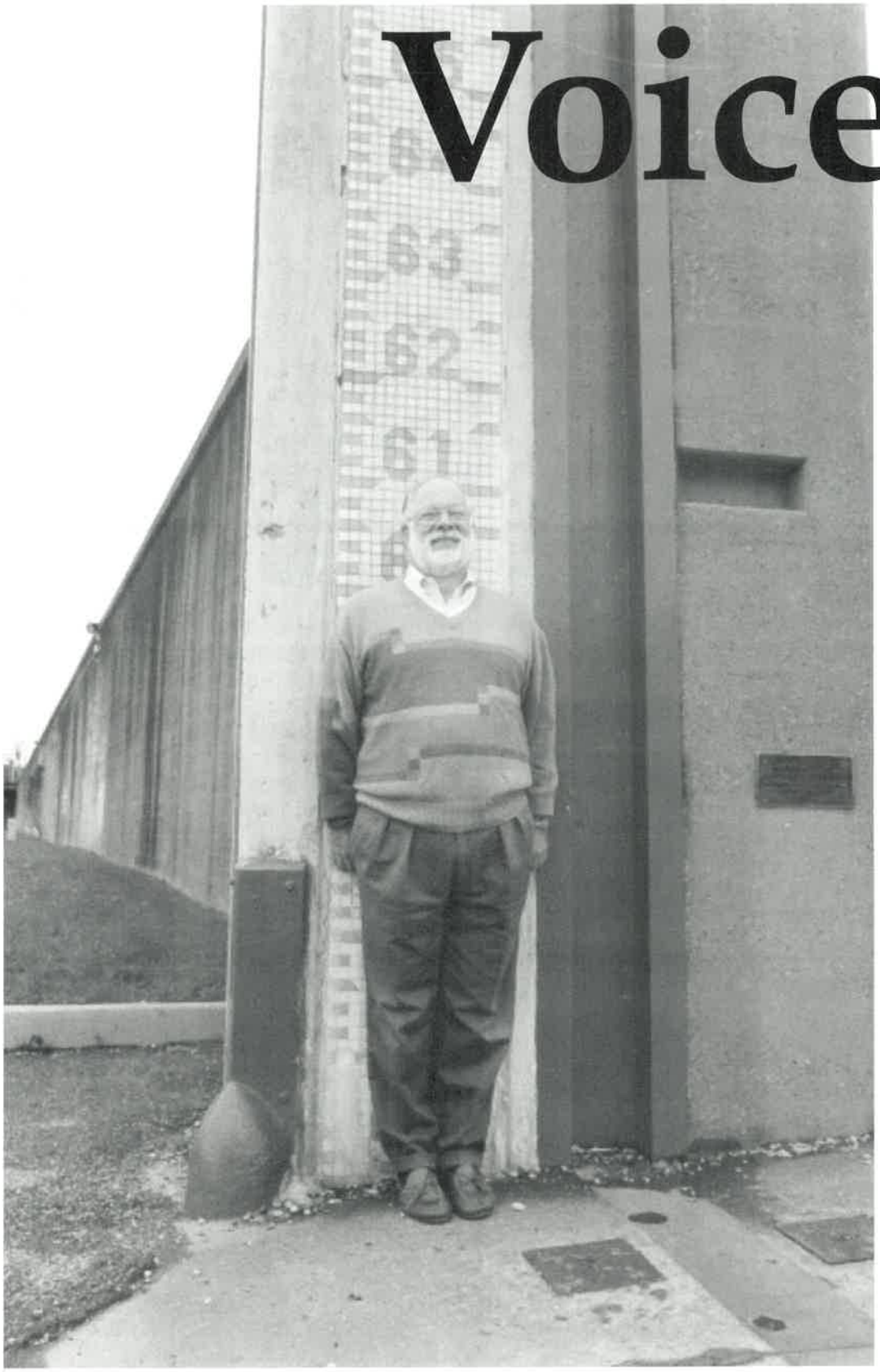
"Well, I took a sip or two, and it was all right. So Morgan says, 'Well, you take that bottle home with you. And here. You can take this canned coon!' So finally, after we had a few more nips, I left and went back down and told the old lady, 'Well, Morgan give me a bottle of moonshine and he give me some canned coon.' So I got up the next mornin' and looked at that bottle...it was so greasy I could see my handprint on it. So I decided I was gonna change it to another bottle. And then I told Ruth, 'You can fix up that canned coon for dinner tonight.' So I came home that night and says, 'Didja fix up that canned coon?'

"She says, 'Hellllll no, I threw that to the dog! He canned the head and all. I looked in there and there was two eyeballs lookin' up at me!'"

Sparky married the former Ruth Currence, a "pretty dark-haired girl with snappy brown eyes," in 1950. They pose here in 1951 with baby daughter Brenda, our coauthor. Photographer unknown.

Brenda Lloyd *was born and raised in Elkins where she now teaches sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The oldest child of storyteller Sparky Burr, she collaborated with her father's neighbor,* Bob Whitcomb, *to bring these tales into print. Mr. Whitcomb visited often with Sparky and kept a written account of his stories.*

Ohio River Voices



Echoes of the Army Corps

By Carrie Nobel Kline
Photographs by Michael Keller

The mighty Ohio River is a picturesque roadway for commercial boats and barges. It is tempered by 19 locks and dams along its 981-mile length between Pittsburgh and Cairo, Illinois, where it joins the Mississippi River. But in earlier times it was wild and excessive, at times engorged with raging flood waters or choked with ice jams. Through the summer months the river's flow dwindled to a mere trickle leaving massive boats to bake in slimy mud.

"People would float down during the spring. And then they would drag the boat up on shore and disassemble it and build their homes," explains Gerald Sutphin referring to pioneers of the 18th and 19th cen-

Allan Elberfeld, former Assistant Chief of Planning, retired after 33 years with the Corps. Here he sizes up the Huntington flood wall, completed by the Army Corps in 1945.

turies. When Sutphin of Huntington discusses early navigation on the Ohio, the stories tumble out, and one has the feeling of listening at the feet of a great elder. And yet Gerald is a man in his prime, a former employee of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District, who now runs his own graphic design business. He has been at the forefront of many museum exhibits and videos on river navigation including a new hour-long video on the *Delta Queen*; he also authored a beautifully illustrated book entitled *Sternwheelers on the Great Kanawha River.*

"So these were the boats that literally never returned," continues Sutphin. "They became farms, and barns, and sidewalks, and all the things the guy needed lumber for. And of course, this all changed, because in 1811 the first steamboat went from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. This was the first steamboat to run on the inland rivers.

"And on that trip, while passing New Madrid, Missouri, the greatest earthquake to ever strike the United States occurred. The Native Americans thought this steamboat had brought this earthquake with it, because it was belching flames and smoke with the big flashing wheels and all.

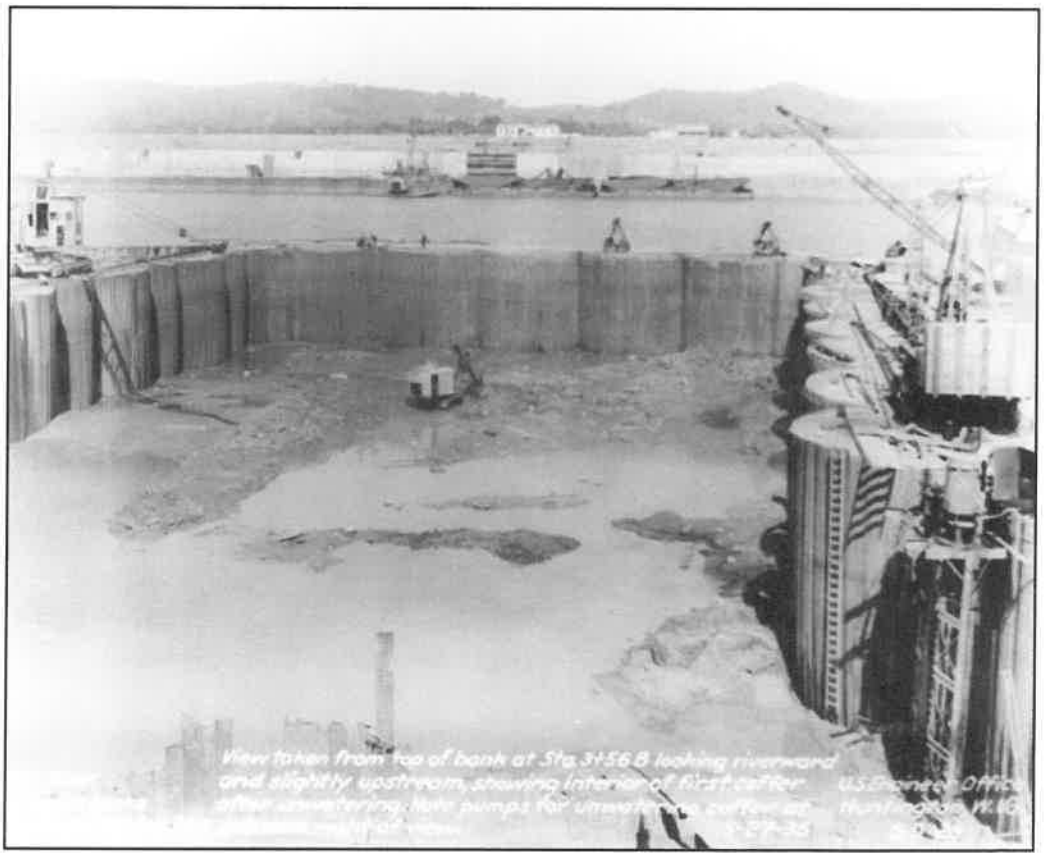
"But soon steamboats became the major means of transportation in the heartland of America."

The late Wheeling attorney Henry Schrader, with a voice roughened by 80-some years of life in a once-sooty steel town, recalled the Ohio River of the 1910's and '20's.

"I can remember droughts when the river out here at 9th Street in Wheeling wasn't any more than six feet wide. And as young kids, we'd get back and take a long run, and jump all the way over the river, and get there without getting our feet wet."

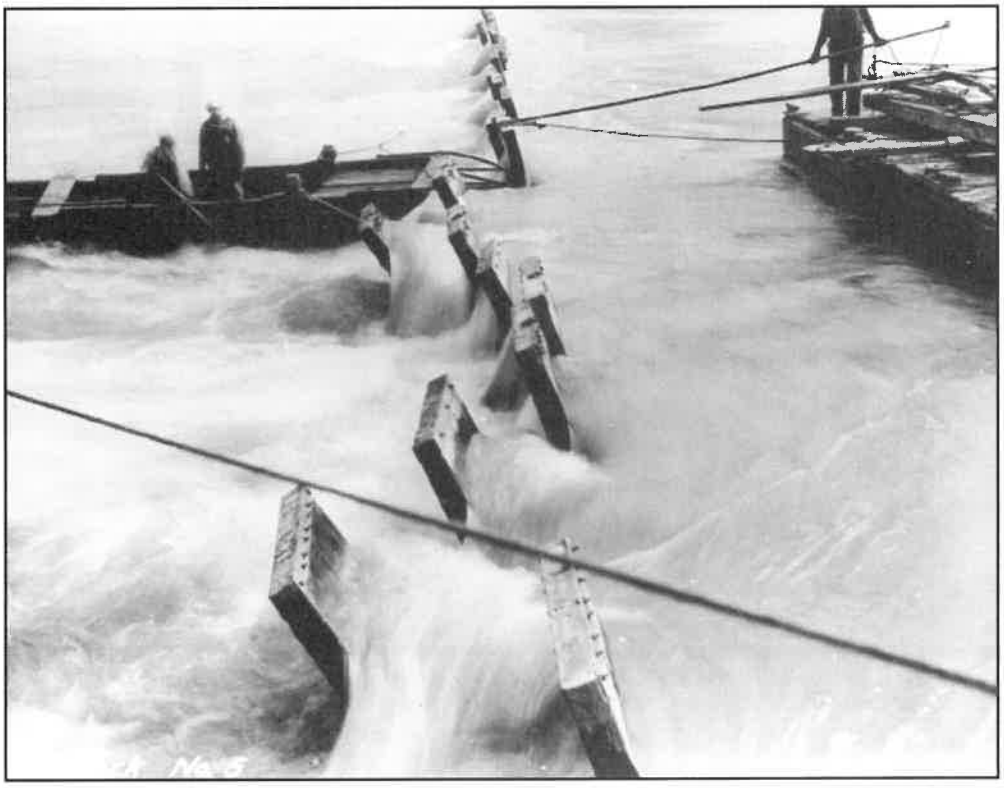
Henry Schrader was born in the early decades of this century, and knew the days of one-way river transport through generations of family stories.

Floods, such as the catastrophic Huntington flood of 1937, are persistent threats to river towns along the Ohio. River control projects by the Army Corps have significantly reduced this risk in recent years. Historic photos (pages 29 and 30) courtesy of U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District Office.



A huge steam shovel is dwarfed by the size of this coffer, under construction in 1935 as part of the Corps' Gallipolis Locks project.

"My mother's father was in the river boating business here on the Ohio River long before the time of dams. Grandfather Prince would take a load of whatever he was taking all the way down to New Orleans, and would have to come back either by a horse or walk back. And he did that."



Wicket dams (above) were replaced by modern high-lift dams, such as the Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam near Gallipolis (below).

For more than 75 years, the Huntington District of the Corps of Engineers has labored to influence natural forces along the central portion of the Ohio River. The Corps has devised increasingly sophisticated methods of maneuvering the waterways to meet the needs of man.

With the 1929 completion of a lock and dam system between Pittsburgh and the Mississippi River, the Ohio was recreated into a system of stair-step pools, each regulated to a minimum depth of nine feet to accommodate coal barges and large tows. The locks, each 110 feet wide by 600 feet long, acted as elevators to raise and lower floating traffic between the pools. A new day had dawned for navigation with the completion of this impressive inland system.

Since then, the system has been modernized. Twenty high-lift dams replaced 51 wicket dams. The main lock chambers were extended to 1,200 feet and now accommodate tows of 15 barges. Each barge normally carries 1,500 tons of cargo, equal to the carrying capacity of 58 coal trucks, according to Steve Wright of the Corps' Huntington District office. Therefore, a standard Ohio River tow of 15 barges moves as much tonnage as nearly 900 coal trucks.

Corps districts are defined by watersheds, the land that water flows under or across on its way to a river or lake. The Huntington District is responsible for water resource management along a portion of the Ohio River Watershed. The southern part of West Virginia lies within the scope of the Huntington District, while northern counties are within the jurisdiction of the Pitts-

burgh District.

"The Huntington District," explains Dr. Emory Kemp, "is right in the middle of the Ohio, so to speak. It's part of the upper Ohio, and it really is part of the lower Ohio at the same time." Dr. Kemp is Director of the Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology at West Virginia University. A small man in his middle years, a hint of English parentage lingering in his speech, Kemp is the good-natured guru of historical and contemporary bridge and dam construction. "What most people don't realize is that the Ohio has a far greater flow than the upper Mississippi. So there's a tremendous amount of water there."

Steve Wright, Chief Public Affairs Officer for the Corps' Huntington District.

As Chief Public Affairs Officer for the Huntington District, Steve Wright has traveled the District's length and breadth surveying the still-mighty Ohio and her tributaries. Wright, Iowa born and bred with a military past that carried him to Kuwait, is no stranger to rough conditions. He has visited many of the District's river towns after floods.

The Corps has devised increasingly sophisticated methods of maneuvering the waterways to meet the needs of man.

"In the Huntington District we have 311 miles of the Ohio River. That leads to 45,000 square miles of drainage basin. For example, the New River's headwaters are in North Carolina. It flows north and west through Virginia into West Virginia. And then the New River joins with the Gauley River at Gauley Bridge and becomes the Kanawha River. But the genesis of the Kanawha River is in the highlands of North Carolina."

Other high-level employees of the Huntington District, both current and retired, recall their earliest memories of the Ohio River, its tributaries, and the Corps of Engineers.

Allan Elberfeld is a former Assistant Chief of Planning. A burly economist now retired after 33 years with the Corps, Allan can expound on the complexities of any given situation. Here, he is a boy again, growing up in the Ohio River Valley.

"Uncle Ed would take me on trips. And one day he showed me the Eureka Dam, which was what the locals called Gallipolis Locks and Dam, because it was built near Eureka, Ohio. And it was radically different from anything that I had seen, because it had roller gates, and it was a fixed dam, whereas the dams that I'd grown up with around Parkersburg were the old wicket dams. ...

"I can remember as a child swimming in the Ohio River and seeing the sternwheelers go by. And my brother and I would paddle out on an inner tube and get behind the paddle wheel and ride that and just think that was grand." Countless individuals raised along the banks of the Ohio before the advent of diesel boats have memories of paddling, tubing, and swimming over the wake of the old paddle wheelers.

Jim Everman, salt mingling with

Jim Everman, Chief of Planning for the Huntington District.

his darkly peppered hair, is Chief of Planning for the Huntington District. The leisurely vowels of his Carter County, Kentucky upbringing accent his wit and clear analytical powers. Rocking back in his chair at the District headquarters, he recollects with great feeling his early associations with Corps projects.

"Just passing a lock and dam on a river as a kid struck the fancy of who operates it. Looks like some kind of a sophisticated operation. So this theme of the Corps of Engineers dealing with floods and river traffic was something I simply grew up with and always had a fascination for what they did. When the opportunity came along to go to work in a temporary position with the Corps, I quit a union job making pretty good money. My take-home salary dropped in half."

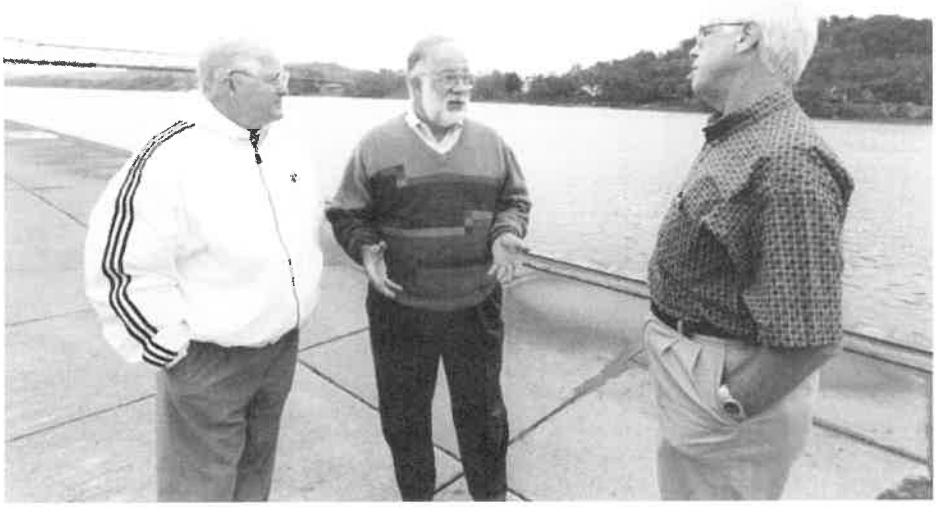
"This theme of the Corps of Engineers dealing with floods and river traffic was something I simply grew up with."

Everman, like many employees of the Huntington District, entered the Corps in a quest to be of public service. And keeping the channels of transport open throughout the District's 311 miles of Ohio River Basin has been anything but an easy job.

Retired Chief of Operations, Ken Crisp, lives with his wife Loretta in a modest home in Huntington. Still wiry and able-bodied, some say the former Chief has mellowed slightly with age. But no one would deny the stress levels that he managed while still on the job.

"Some of the nights at Gallipolis Locks would be all day and all night into the next day on some of these major emergencies.

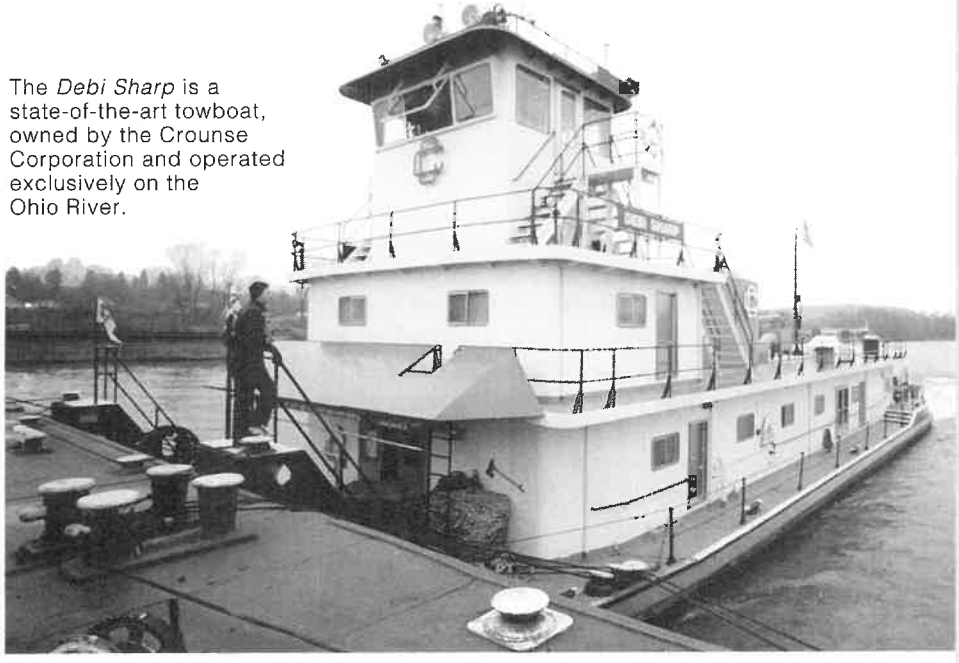
"There was a time we'd be sitting here having dinner," says Crisp, "and the phone would ring. And it would be Pat at Gallipolis, or George at Belleville, or somebody somewhere with a problem that had to have my attention."



Steve Wright (left), Allan Elberfeld (center), and Jim Wheeler exchange stories of the Corps of Engineers at the riverfront in Huntington.

"And all these things always happen at the most inconvenient time," recalls retired Navigation Chief Jim Wheeler. If anyone can paint images with words it's this white-haired native Huntingtonian. Always on call for emergencies, Wheeler was at the site of countless accidents, disasters, and equipment malfunctions on the river.

"I got home Friday night, and the workload had grown to where you'd put nine hours in. And I got home, and the phone's ringing. And it's the Deputy District Engineer. And he says, 'Have you heard about the crash of the barges on the 17th Street Bridge?' And I said, 'No, I haven't heard about it.' And he said, 'Well, you need to get the crew out right away, because at least three barges are sunk.'"



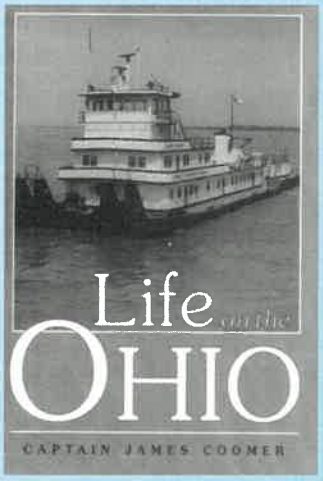
The *Debi Sharp* is a state-of-the-art towboat, owned by the Crounse Corporation and operated exclusively on the Ohio River.

Reading More About River Life

Life on the Ohio by Captain James Coomer is the sixth in a series of books about the Ohio River, published by the University Press of Kentucky. Captain Coomer steers away from river nostalgia, involving the reader more in his experiences as a third-generation pilot.

His experiences stretch from soon after World War II until recent times. *Life on the Ohio*, a 170-page hardbound book, sells for $24.95.

GOLDENSEAL contributor James Casto is the author of another book in the series, *Towboat on the Ohio*, published in 1995. The associate editor of the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* spent eight days aboard the *Paul G. Blazer*, a working towboat. Details of the development of the Ohio River's locks and dams and the efforts of the Army Corps of Engineers to modernize the aging system are interwoven with his narrative of the trip upriver and back.



For more information on the Ohio River book series contact the University Press of Kentucky, 663 South Limestone Street, Lexington, KY 40508; (606)257-8761.

The *S&D Reflector*, published by the Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen, offers more good river reading. The quarterly journal was first published in 1964. Each issue features historical and current articles about river life, along with plenty of early photographs.

The Sons and Daughters membership is open to anyone with an interest in river affairs and history. Dues are $15 annually for full member status, and $1 for associated members. Contact Mrs. J. W. Rutter, 126 Seneca Drive, Marietta, OH 45750 for more information.

Out on the river itself, the Corps' work takes on other meanings as crew members of the *Debi Sharp* share their perspective aboard a northbound towboat.

To escape the unabating drone of the diesel engine, crew members make their way to the furthermost barges, 975 feet in front of the boat at "the head of the tow," in order to share their thoughts on river life.

"To me water's very peaceful. Hear the sound?" That's Sue Ann Cooper, the crew's cook. Riverboat cooking is reputed to be outstanding, and hers fits the lore. She calmly, carefully, made her way out on the barges, five long and three wide, as the *Debi Sharp* shoved her load up the Ohio River, slow but sure at six miles an hour. Cooper is kind, but not soft, more sister than mother to her six male crewmates.

"This is such a laid back lifestyle, unless you've got high water. To be perfectly honest with you," Sue Ann admits, "I would have real concerns with one of my children working out here. Winter scares me out here. These (barges) are extremely slick in winter, and it would be easy for somebody to slide off the edge and go down. And barges come together — you're not going to stop a barge right now any more than you're going to stop a train that's moving."

"I had a real good friend get killed," says deckhand Daniel Bannan during a quiet moment in the pilothouse. Earlier in the day he had seemed almost cheerful, operating a skiff from the edge of the Huntington City Park to the *Debi Sharp*, while she idled quietly in the middle of the Ohio. Now, enveloped in melancholy and homesickness, straight dark hair falling over his young face, his words are sparse.

These barges, loaded with West Virginia coal, carry 1,500 tons each, bound for steel mills, power plants, and aluminum manufacturers down river.

Crewman Daniel Bannan on board the *Debi Sharp*.

"Fell between two barges building tow. I was right there with him." He pauses. "It makes a feller think about it."

As Daniel's words drift off, the *Debi Sharp* presses on toward her destination at Gallipolis.

The Gallipolis Locks were rededicated in 1992 as the Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam. (See GOLDENSEAL Spring 1993; "Locking Through: Remaking History on the Ohio River" by James E. Casto.) With watery blue-green eyes and taut muscles, Lockmaster Pat Worley, since retired from the Robert C. Byrd Locks, looks capable of mastering most any lock-related apparatus. The locks, located in the river between Hogsett and Apple Grove, Mason County, and Gallipolis, Ohio, draw a crew from both states. Pat Worley, like so many other rivermen, followed in his family's line of work.

"My dad worked for the Corps of Engineers at Winfield Lock. And both of my granddads worked for the Corps of Engineers on the locks. So I guess naturally I just ended up here. I've been around the river all my life."

But the nature of the work has evolved substantially through the generations.

"Conditions. I remember when Dad was working up at Winfield they didn't have shelters," says Worley. "You worked outside all the time. And every once in a while you might get to go to the powerhouse to get a cup of coffee. It didn't make any difference what kind of weather it was. And that's the way it was when I first came here. And then later on we got a metal building. Of course now we got concrete buildings with air conditioning and heat and everything else. So it was a lot different than it is now.

"You did anything and everything," says Pat, looking far off into past days. "You stayed busy. I think we did a lot more than we do now. But times have changed. And I don't think you made it if you didn't change. You had to change."

This refrain arises repeatedly during conversations with Pat Worley. "You had to change," as if change were a powerful diesel boat and he a paddler in a dugout canoe, reluctantly jumping aboard to meet the age of advanced technology. The modern era, it seems, has worn holes in the team spirit rivermen once shared. "If things were going pretty good, you'd always have somebody that was a little contrary and people would fuss," Worley recalls. "But if anything ever broke down, everybody came to work, and everybody worked hard until it was done. And there was never no fussing or anything. And I guess that's why I liked it here. It just seemed like you was one big family for years."

There was a close-knit relationship between the people on the boats and the people on the locks.

Those Corps members who have

Pat Worley (right) is a third generation riverman. Photographer unknown, 1994.

worked through the recent technological advances agree that working on the new high-lift locks and dams is far less dangerous or exhausting than the daily toil of the past. And yet, with the modern age has come a dramatic shift in human relationships. Pat Worley's voice is quiet.

"One thing I miss about the new lock — at the old lock the boats were right there. You talked to the men. You talked to the captains. Over here, boat's here 15 or 20 minutes. You don't talk to anybody. They call you and say, 'We're coming in.' They come in. And they're down 22 feet, and they wave at you, and that's about it. It's just progress. It's progress for industry. It's progress for us."

Captain Eddie Floyd speaks in a similar vein while steering *The Debi Sharp* into the Robert C. Byrd Locks. Affectionate and with grown children of his own, his young crew members have been heard to call him "Dad."

"The biggest thing I miss, when we had the old locks, then we was out there talking to the lock crew. They was down eating dinner with you on the boat, or you was up there in their shack talking on the phone to your wife. So you had personal contact. But now they're up on the high walls. It's kind of hard to really get in contact with them."

Jim Wheeler, retired Chief of Navigation, also notes the diminished camaraderie.

"There was a close-knit relationship between the people on the boats and the people on the locks. They were all really river people. And they all stuck together in those days. And they were a kind of a rough bunch. I mean the last wilderness of America was out on the rivers."

Carrie Nobel Kline *lives in Elkins where she and husband Michael operate Talking Across the Lines: Worldwide Conversations, producing books, audio tapes, and radio programs from oral histories. Working for the Huntington District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, they conducted 60 interviews between the spring and fall of 1996, and produced a 90-minute audio tape, "Working a Square Watch," in honor of the Corps' 75th anniversary. A 350-page book of anecdotes and illustrations is due to be published later this year. For more information, contact Steve Wright at the Corps office in Huntington at (304)529-5452.*

Michael Keller *is chief of photographic services for the Division of Culture & History.*

Captain Eddie Wayne Floyd pilots the *Debi Sharp* as she prepares to drop off some empty barges near Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

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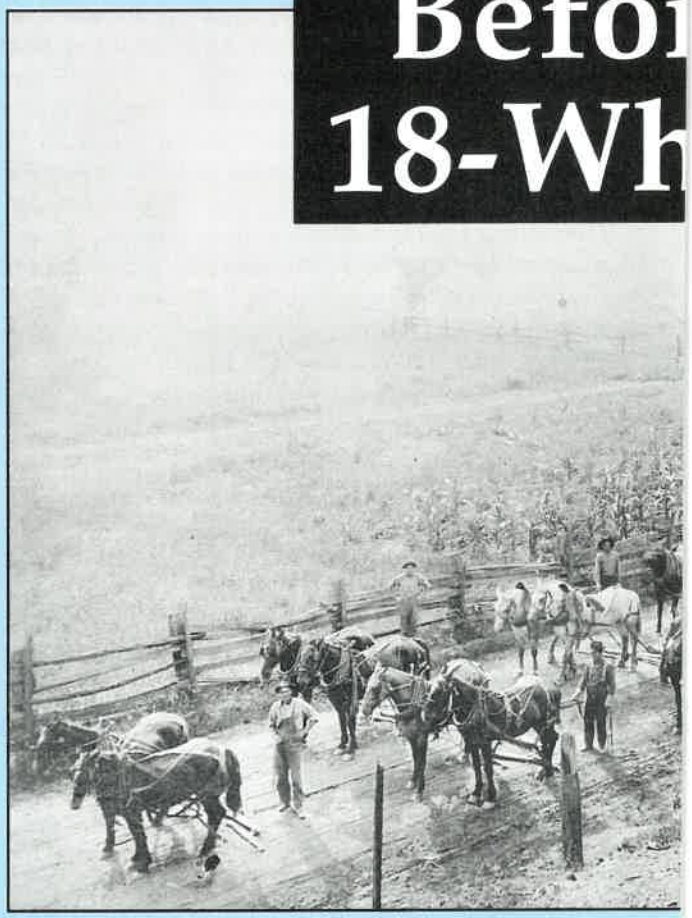
Our Summer 1997 issue celebrated the use of draft animals in West Virginia, particularly for farming and logging purposes. We were pleased when GOLDENSEAL reader Paul Moss from Belle, Kanawha County, came into our office to show us some impressive pictures of draft horses in use for heavy industrial purposes during the early 1900's. Hope Gas Company used 40-horse teams to haul heavy equipment up the slippery slopes of Lewis County. Paul was kind enough to furnish us with this account. —ed.

In the early 1900's drilling began for natural gas in central West Virginia, and in Lewis County they drilled in some large producing wells.

Having a lot of gas but no market for it, they started laying a network of pipelines to where they needed it: Pittsburgh steel mills, Cleveland, and other parts of Ohio. In order to push the gas through the lines they started building in-line compressor stations. Hope Gas Company started building Kennedy Station, and in 1911 Cumberland Allegheny Gas Company started building Hackers Creek Station high up in the hills above what is now Weston.

All the equipment came into Jane Lew by train and had to be hauled to the station sites by horse and wagon. It was approximately four miles from Jane Lew to Hackers Creek Station and approximately six miles to Kennedy Station, three miles up Freemans Creek from Jackson's Mill.

The compressor base plate was a large and heavy piece of equipment, and they had 20 teams of horses hooked up to the wagon. Each pair of horses was controlled by its own driver, or teamster. My dad, Ed Moss, drove a team of dapple grays that belonged to the Hope Gas Company. These 40 horses were attached to the wagon by a single chain and pulled as one along the rough, muddy road.



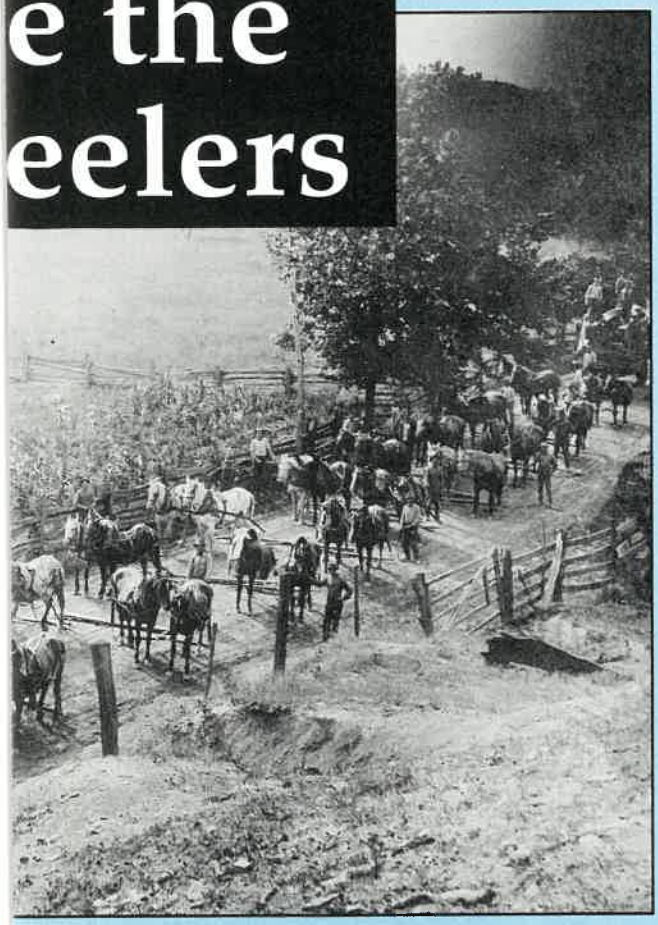
There were some soft places in the road between Jane Lew and Jackson's Mill, and the wheels of the wagon would sink into the ground. When this occurred, they had to cut logs and put them under the wagon to act as sled runners. This slowed them down a lot and would pull on the horses harder, so they had to rest more often. It took weeks to get to Kennedy Station versus a trip today of 45 minutes or less by an 18-wheeler.

— Paul Moss

Horses, wagons, and men pause during an uphill climb along the old road to Fairview Church in Lewis County.

Paul Moss *was born in 1919 at Jane Lew and worked as a driller and tool dresser before going to DuPont at Belle in 1940. He retired from there in 1978. Mr. Moss continues to visit his old homeplace where he has "lots of roots."*

e the eelers



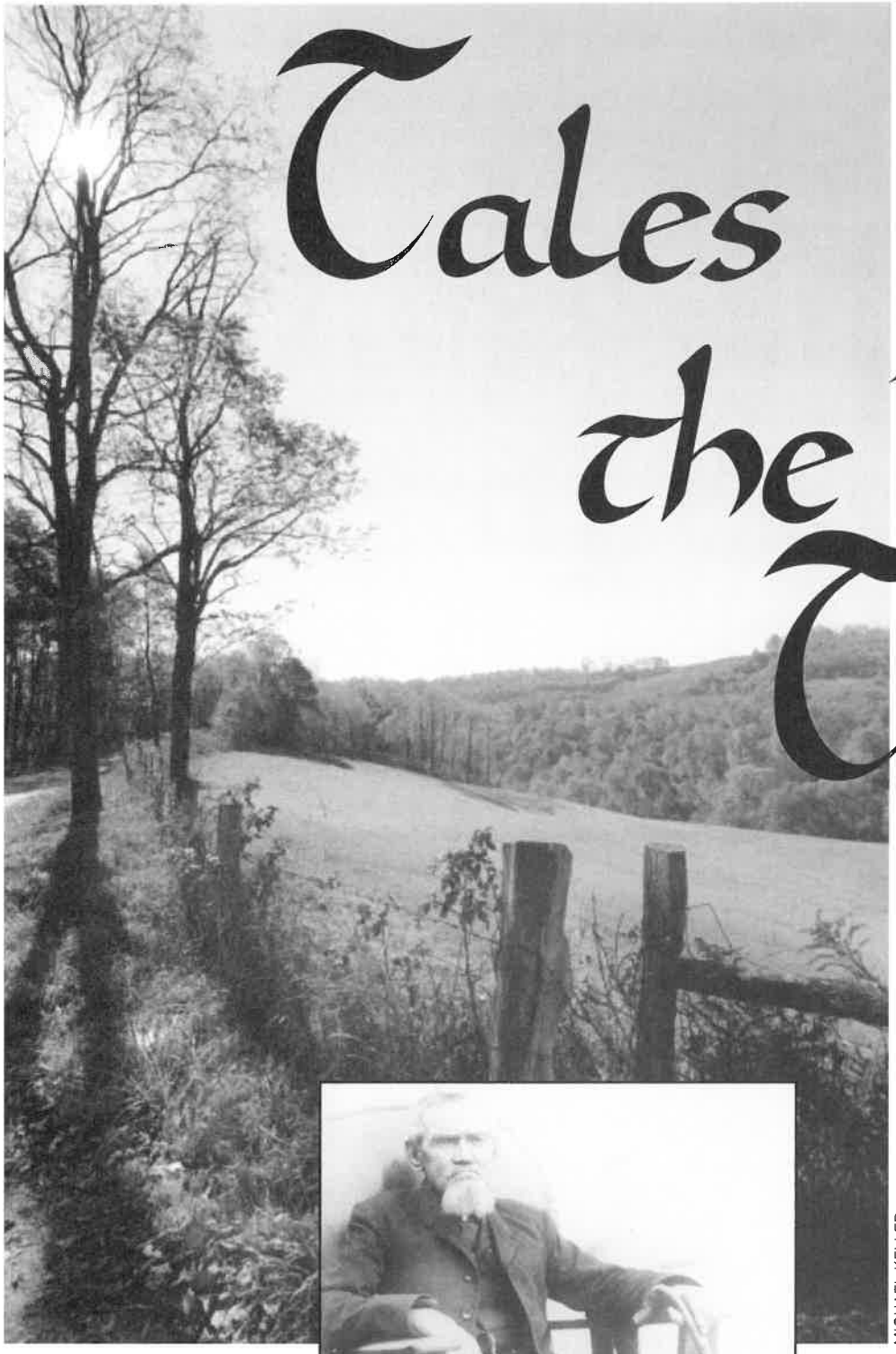
Hope workers (above) haul a compressor base plate to Hackers Creek Station. Scott Morrison has the lead team. Ed Moss drives a pair of dapple grays in the second row. Note the chain that attaches the 42 horses to the wagon, pulling it as one.

Ed Moss, our author's father, on a Hope Gas Company horse in front of the old Jane Lew post office. Postmistress Florence Knight stands in the doorway. All of the photographs here were made in 1911, photographers unknown.

These Hope Natural Gas teams are on their way to Kennedy Station. When the wagon began to sink in the mud, logs were used as improvised sled runners.

Before a bridge was built, teamsters forded the river at Jackson's Mill.

Tales from the Irish Tract



MICHAEL KELLER

Martin Lynch in 1908. Photographer unknown.

By Basil Hurley

Martin Lynch was a gifted fiddler, much in demand for parlor dances. One time, when he was returning from one, he left a farmer's gate open and the farmer's cattle got out. The farmer then painted on his gate: "No Irish or Catholics allowed."

Martin, who was born in Ireland in 1836 and died in West Virginia in 1914, was a truly multi-talented man, born out of his time. He was much better fitted for Madison Avenue or Hollywood today than for struggling with a hillside farm a century and more ago. He was an artist, a poet, had practiced photography, and he could paint letters very nicely. He added to the farmer's gate the following:

"The words above are written well. The same are written on the gates of Hell."

That is one of the countless stories Bernard Twohig (pronounced "2-ig," with the "h" silent) of Spring Dale, Fayette County, can tell about the people who have lived in his area. He has spent all his 70-plus

Bernard Twohig today at the house where he was raised on the Tract. Photo by Michael Keller.

years, save World War II military service, there. Bernard, a tall slim man, now lives on State Route 20 about a mile from his boyhood farm home. He never farmed for his livelihood, but has worked within ready driving distance of Spring Dale. He still owns the farm, pastures some cattle there, and rents out the old home.

Particularly since his retirement in 1980, the task of guardian of a heritage has fallen on him and he has performed energetically and well. The heritage is principally what we have come to call the Irish Tract, a connected and continuous expanse of over 3,000 acres which a century ago contained some 18 Irish farms. It is located at the juncture of Fayette, Greenbrier, and Summers Counties. The proximity to other Irish, not to mention the marriages between families, resulted in a community that created its own peculiarities and strengths. And the fondness of the Irish for fun created many stories for Bernard Twohig to tell.

My parents grew up in the Irish Tract.

During the mid-1840's, conditions in Ireland went from bad to worse. Already suffering from widespread poverty and political oppression, the Irish people were struck with a devastating blight of their most important and abundant crop — the potato. The potato famine, as it became known, caused millions of Irish to flee their homeland, and seek a future in America.

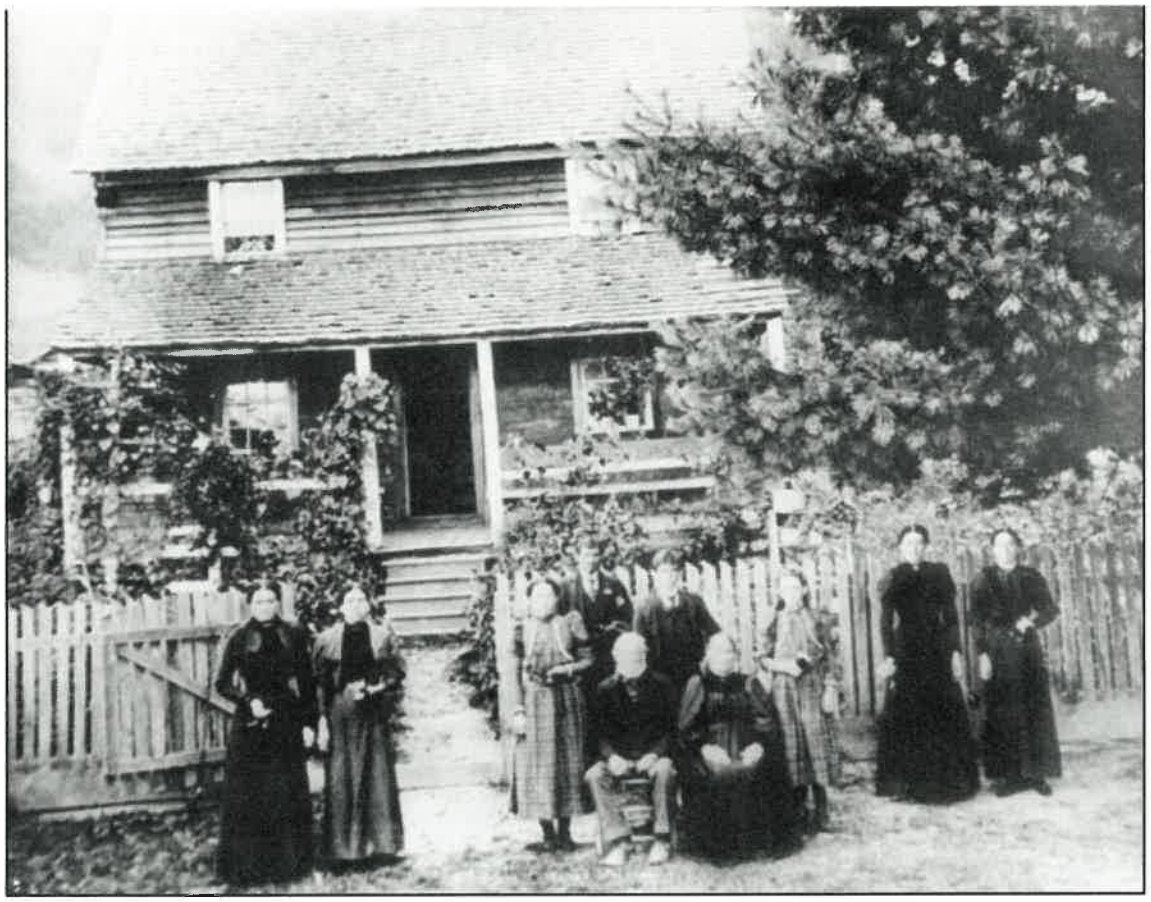
Many of the emigrants, particularly from the southern Irish counties of Kerry and Cork found their way to the hills and valleys of west-

The Irish Tract was a connected and continuous expanse of over 3,000 acres which a century ago contained some 18 Irish farms.

ern Virginia. In 1848, a 22-year-old man named Daniel Griffin from Castle Island, County Kerry, boarded a crowded sailing ship to try his luck in the New World. He eventually found himself deep in the mountains of what would soon become the new state of West Virginia.

Daniel Griffin purchased a 155-acre farm just south of what is now Meadow Bridge, Fayette County, in 1860. In 1863, James Hurley from County Wexford bought 485 acres near Keeney's Knob, followed in 1866 by John Donahue (pronounced

The author's parents grew up on the Irish Tract. Irene Donahue and William Hurley are standing, pictured here in 1917, before their marriage. Ellen Hurley Lynch is seated at right, others are unidentified. Photographer unknown.



Irish immigrant Daniel Griffin came to America in 1848. He bought 155 acres near Meadow Bridge in 1860, becoming the first Irish settler in the region. He is pictured here, seated with wife Bridget and their family in the late 1890's. Bernard Twohig's mother, Mary, is the young girl, third from right. Photographer unknown.

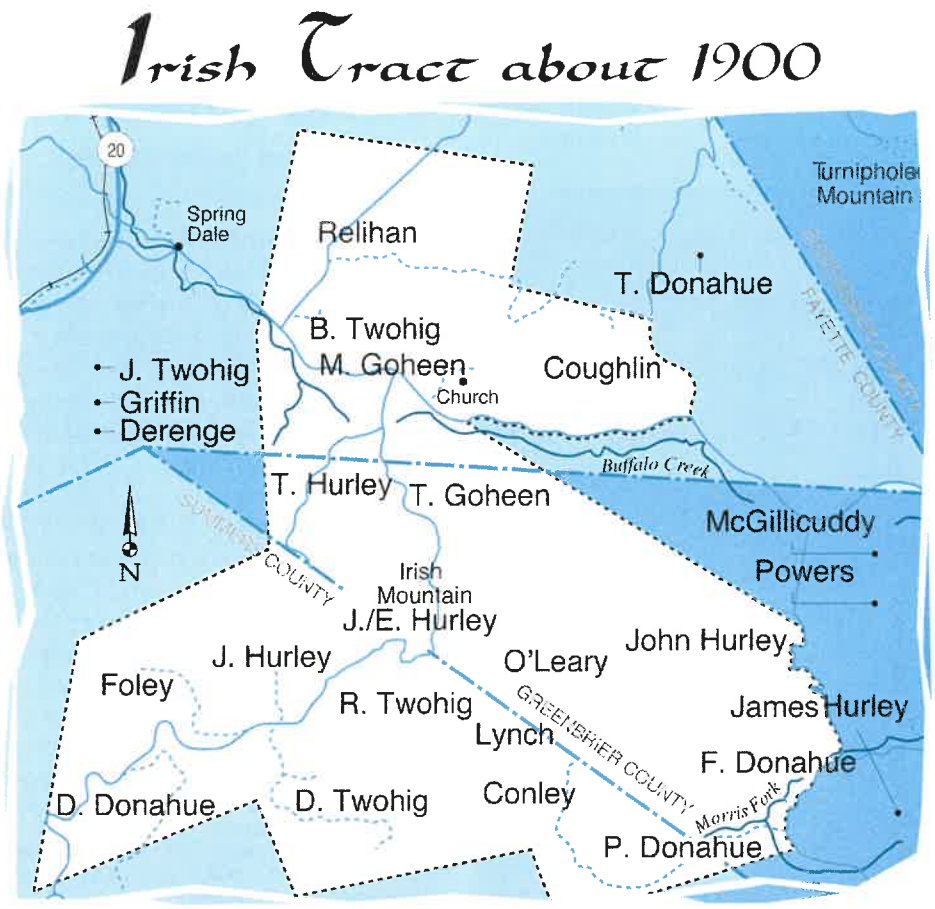
"Dun-a-hoo") from County Kerry who bought 184 acres nearby.

As the C&O Railroad construction neared its completion, other immigrant Irish laborers had to make decisions about their own futures. Some gained regular employment on the railroad, some in the mines which railroad access created, and some elsewhere. But a few made the tougher choice of hoarding precious dollars and facing the hardship of converting wooded mountains into producing farms.

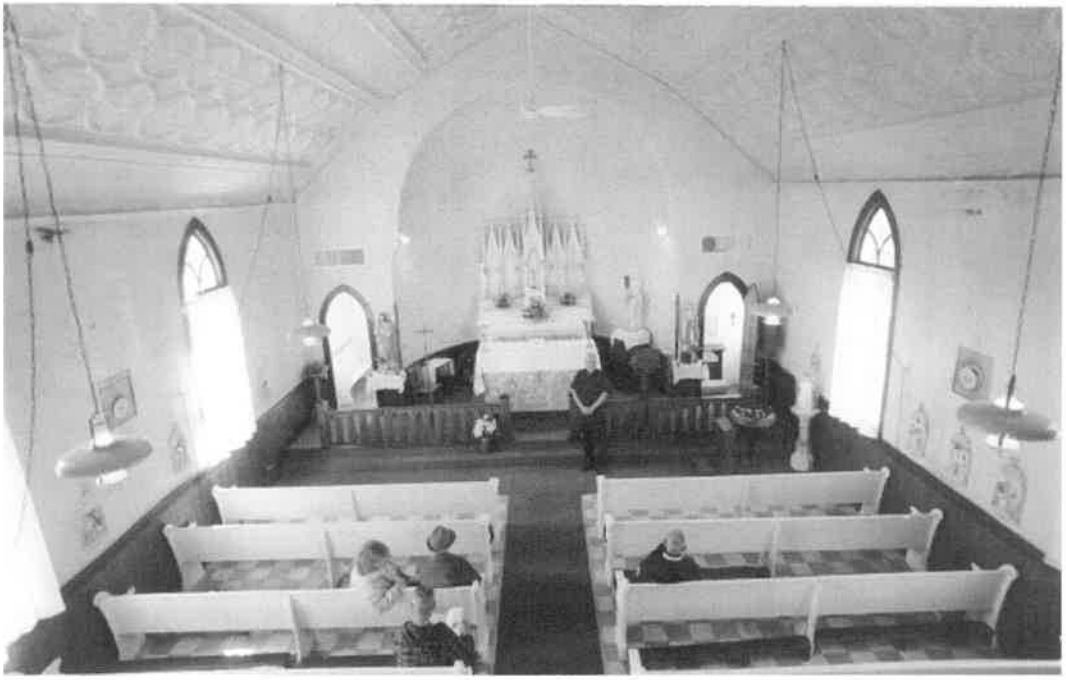
Beginning in 1870, several other families from the south of Ireland bought land nearby. Soon the Irish Tract was filling up with families named Twohig, Foley, Hurley, Donahue, Goheen, Coughlin, Relihan, Lynch, Conley, and O'Leary. The continuous tract then stood at over 3,000 acres and had been purchased from ten previous owners. The fact that the adjacent land was always available to purchase was not remarkable because the bulk of it wasn't considered suitable for farming. But farm it they did.

The highest elevation on the Irish Tract, over 3,200 feet, has acquired the name of Irish Mountain, not to be confused with the Irish Mountain in Raleigh County which was featured in the Spring 1991 issue of GOLDENSEAL. ("Irish Mountain: The Story of a West Virginia Immigrant Community" by Lois C. McLean, and "Recalling an Irish Mountain Farm Family: The O'Leary-McGwinn Connection" by Leona G. Brown.)

This entire community of Irish



Eighteen continuous Irish farms spanned parts of three counties, sustaining 116 people according to the census of 1900. Seven additional farms fell just outside the 3,000-acre Irish Tract. Map by Alex Morgado.



Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built in 1899. Photo by Michael Keller.

farm families, those whose land fell within the 3,000 acre Tract plus the several families with neighboring farms, came together to worship at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The church became the center of community life.

Cornelius Coughlin deeded land for a log church and cemetery in 1878 and the present Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built in 1899. It is located north off the Spring Dale-Dawson Road, five and a half miles west of I-64.

There were cases of three Griffin sisters marrying Twohigs and a Hurley-Goheen and Goheen-Hurley double wedding ceremony.

Tom and Kate Donahue came to church in their horse and buggy until they retired to Richwood in 1937. Bernard Twohig can recite dates like that off the top of his head. Bernard says Tom bought a car once but took it back after he ran it into the back of the barn. Tom said he drove the buggy over to Rainelle for the Fourth of July one time and "had traffic backed up clear to Rupert."

I remember Tom (who was my great uncle) giving me a pocketknife when I was a boy. He said that he had gotten it when he was a boy. The fellow who gave it to him told him to keep it until he found someone uglier than he was. Quite a joker, Uncle Tom.

Uncle Tom (1861-1949) was my Grandpa Donahue's cousin and Aunt Kate was my Grandma's sister. That case of multiple relatedness makes it a good time to introduce my double second cousin Magdalene Donahue Twohig, Bernard's wife. She was raised on the Tract too. By the time they got married in 1956, a Tract person should have run out of non-cousins to marry on the Tract, but Magdalene was lucky, according to Bernard. She's not so sure.

Bernard was the only local bachelor of suitable age and descent for ten of the "colleens," as young Irish women are called. But the other girls, including Magdalene's six sisters, all found husbands after ranging farther afield.

There were no known instances of blood relatives marrying in the Tract, but there were cases like three Griffin sisters marrying Twohigs and a Hurley-Goheen and Goheen-Hurley double wedding ceremony.

Bernard and Magdalene's children are related to 88 percent, of the 170 buried in the Sacred Heart cemetery. Those two have been the principal preservers of the church and cemetery, keeping them attractive and well kept.

The childhood memories of the couple are most vivid from the Great Depression period. Magdalene remembers walking four and one-half miles to church when the road was impassable for their 1930 model Nash automobile, a frequent situation.

Bernard says he "never saw a nickel" in the Depression years. Everyone, including the non-Irish farmers on better acreage, lived off the land. Eggs and cream were used for everyday barter for kerosene, salt, sugar, coffee, oatmeal, and, for some, rice, tobacco, or flour. Mag-

Magdalene Donahue Twohig in the 1950's.

dalene's father, Jim Donahue, took wheat to Alderson to be milled since the Spring Dale mill processed various other grains, leaving some impurities in the wheat flour. For payment, mills took a portion of the grain processed. Of course corn meal was a common product, cornbread a staple, and mush and grits not unknown.

Such things as poultry, wool, sheep, cattle, and hogs were the most common cash crops, but sale prices were depressed. Livestock was sometimes driven to Sandstone, on the New River.

My cousin, Kyle Gwinn, of Hinton spent several summers on our Grandma Donahue's farm. I lived in the coal mining town of Layland, Fayette County. I stayed at the farm only one month at age seven, and left West Virginia in 1935, when I was ten. Of our two bachelor uncles, John was the outside businessman, except for heavy work periods such as harvesting. Laurence farmed every day.

They and Grandma would sit on the front porch after supper. Grandma seldom said a word. Kyle recalls that there would be long periods of silence. Then one or the other uncle would make a negative remark about the worthlessness of people on relief and that would create a subject for extended agreement. One time there was a discussion of the relative size of people's haystacks, with larger ones judged superior.

When it became dark everyone went to bed, arising at dawn.

Uncle Laurence (1899-1983) was one of my all-time favorite people. My vivid memory is my family, Grandma, and Uncle John getting ready to drive to church in our car and John's truck. Laurence would have on his black suit and grey Stetson hat, no matter how hot the weather. He would charge up the mountain on foot on a direct route of over three miles, made simpler because it was all on Irish farms. He would get to church about when we did.

A large, attractive haystack was a matter of pride for farmers on the Irish Tract. Perched atop this beauty is Daniel Griffin, Jr.; Dan Donahue holds fork at left; Mike Twohig holds fork at right; and Mary Griffin, Bernard Twohig's mother, is on the far right. The children are unidentified. Photographer unknown, approximately 1915.

He was the hardest working person I have ever known. Bernard Twohig says that the monthly Masses were often held on weekdays because of the availability of the priest. Folks would take the opportunity after Mass for a bit of socializing — but not Laurence. He would clamp on his hat and head over the mountains. It was a work day!

In contrast was his uncle Maurice Donahue (1854-1937), who was perhaps a good man in his own way, but a very different way. His wife, formerly Eliza Paterson, died in 1895, leaving him with four daughters aged six and under. He never remarried.

Maurice did plowing with one horse. Once, when the plow strayed out of the furrow, someone suggested that he keep one eye on the horse and one eye on the plow. "What shape of face would you need to do that?" Maurice asked.

Another time Maurice was with a group of horsemen herding hogs to market when one hog laid down from exhaustion. He told the others to go on and fashioned a rig from chestnut bark and a grapevine, pulled by his horse, onto

which he rolled the hog.

Maurice played fiddle. There were several fiddlers and numerous dances — about one a month, except during Lent. They were held in homes, with the parlors cleared for action. Everyone had a parlor dedicated only for use with company, as was a custom among the general population then. The dances drew non-Irish as well and were stopped when automobiles made them magnets for crowds.

Dances were not universally approved by the elders. I remember my mother cautioning us not to tell Grandma that my parents had staged such a party in our home.

In earlier times in the Tract, a fundraising festival was held on the church grounds each July 2-4. A platform had been built for dancing and James Hurley was the principal caller. "You could hear him for a mile," they said. There was a certain amount of imbibing done inconspicuously.

Some of the neighbors were scandalized at such goings-on at a church grounds, but public participation was brisk. Dancing and male drinking are part of the Irish culture, for better or worse. (One of Bernard's stories describes a local fellow as looking quite normal on horseback; that is, until he dismounted.) Of course fathers with families had little time or money — or wifely support — for such shenanigans, but there was always an ample supply of bachelors around. Many of those that married did so in their 30's. And a good many never married. A notable example is the Michael Goheen family, in which four of seven grown sons did not wed. They stayed in the area. Rich Goheen liked to go around Meadow Bridge and take different sides of arguments with different people. Whatever they were for, he was against, and vice versa.

Rich Goheen liked to go around Meadow Bridge and take different sides of arguments with different people. Whatever they were for, he was against, and vice versa.

Timothy Robert "Bob" Hurley was among the many colorful characters from the Irish Tract. He was a schoolteacher, coal miner, and a dance caller; he never married. Dapper as an adult in the 1950's (below), he posed as "the little farmer" in 1915 with a young yoke of oxen and Robert Goheen (above).

Another bachelor was Robert Hurley (1909-1983), whom I met at my father's funeral in Ohio. He impressed me as well dressed and dignified, but Bernard has different tales to tell. One time Robert was calling a dance. He stopped everything abruptly. In the silence he asked, "Is there a bootlegger in the house?"

Robert was teaching a one-room school at nearby Lockbridge and on a Monday, after what was no doubt a strenuous weekend, he announced that school was dismissed until further notice. That ended his teaching career there, but he managed to land another position at Brown, in the New River Gorge. Apparently that wasn't too satisfactory, so he took to coal mining. A former workmate told Bernard Twohig that Robert was extremely well liked by the other miners, so much so that they helped him one time to contrive to set the coal load-

Irish bachelor Jerry Hurley, shown here with an unidentified companion in approximately 1910. An intriguing and charismatic individual, he was uncle of both our authors: Basil Hurley and Marie Twohig Sadlowski. Photographer unknown.

ing record, even though he was usually below average in productivity.

Robert later added to his education and finished his career as a high school teacher.

My father told me that he accompanied his brother Jerry Hurley (1883-1958) to Hinton one Friday to stand as best man at his wedding. The rehearsal was to be that evening. They cut over the mountains to Meadow Bridge to catch the railroad motorcar, connecting with the C&O to Hinton at Meadow Creek on the New River. The overland trek made them look pretty scruffy and the bride-to-be complained. Jerry said that if that was the way she felt, he didn't want to get married. He never did.

But Uncle Jerry Hurley lived a very useful life. His sister Ellen's husband, Martin Lynch, Jr., was killed in the 1915 Layland mine explosion which took 115 lives. Jerry supported Ellen and her six children on the farm and headed a home with two of her sons and her handicapped grandson for the rest of his life.

Jim Lynch (1905-1983) was one of the nephews who lived with Uncle Jerry Hurley until the latter's death. Jim had ulcers as a young man and the doctor suggested eating oatmeal. He ate nothing but oatmeal for 35 years.

Jim tended the church and cemetery with Jerry Goheen until Bernard took it over after his retirement in 1980. Of the 170 graves there, 39 have the Twohig name, 28 Hurley, and 19 Donahue. Of course the married women were born with other names. We also found 13 Goheens, 12 Lynches, nine Foleys, seven Coughlins, and six Griffins. There are nine other Irish names. The seven non-Irish names include 16 graves but five of those are the Derenges, of Lithuanian extraction,

MICHAEL KELLER

Forty-nine-year-old Richard Twohig is the last remaining descendant still living on the Irish Tract. Here he visits the cabin where he was raised. It was built by his great-grandfather in the 1870's. Photo by Michael Keller.

Mike Coughlin at age 100 with daughter Hazel Franklin and granddaughter Kay Wilfong in Rainelle, 1996.

long-time church members. Bill Derenge, celebrated for saving 42 lives by sealing off a mine section during the 1915 Layland mine explosion, attended the church in his youth and is buried in Rainelle.

The only descendant living on the Tract now is Richard Twohig, 49, whose modern home sits just off State Route 20 at the base of the 106-acres first purchased by his great-grandfather, Fluery Donahue. Richard works at the local landfill.

Just beyond the extreme other end of the old Tract boundaries — on his Grandfather McGillicuddy's original place — is the home of Mike Coughlin, who turned 100 in 1996. He, two sons, and two grandsons shared two adjacent houses until recently. Now nearing the age of 102, Mike lives with his granddaughter, Kay Wilfong, near Rainelle.

With the help of Kay Wilfong, Mike told about being born in a log cabin in sight of the church on the Tract and playing with the goats of his other grandfather, Cornelius Coughlin. He would walk to the fair in Lewisburg, about 20 miles. The strenuous working years, when he dragged logs out of the woods with horses, paid off in probably extending the years of his life.

No descendant other than Richard Twohig lives on the original Tract. No houses off the paved bordering roads are occupied. We children's children's children of the original settlers have scattered across the continent.

We recall our ancestors as a unique breed of people who faced that terrible potato famine in Ireland, squalid ocean voyages, the hard toil of building a railroad, and subsequent hard years taming a wilderness. I think we can fairly say that the fullness of our lives today far exceeds the dreams those settlers held for us.

Basil Hurley *was born in Fayette County in 1925 and now lives in Michigan. He retired in 1990 from United Way and has spent much of his time since then researching the Irish Tract. He co-published a history of the community with Bernard Twohig last year. The 28-page booklet is available from Mr. Hurley at 118 Varner Court, Midland, MI 48640.*

The old Twohig homeplace today. Photo by Michael Keller.

Author Marie Twohig in the 1930's.

My Childhood on Irish Mountain

By Marie Twohig Sadlowski

As the Great Depression took its hold on the nation, hardship set in, and coal mines were forced to close across West Virginia. Most of the families in and around the mining town of Layland transplanted themselves back to Irish Mountain and the nearby Irish Tract. The area was not an unfamiliar place for most of these families, as the majority were born and raised there and many still had relatives in the region. Family ties were strong and essential for survival, and family life was the focal point for daily activities.

My father, Bartholomew "Bat" Twohig, was among the group of miners who returned to Irish Mountain, along with my mother Fannie Hurley Twohig. My family lived on my Uncle Jerry Hurley's farm, where I was born. All of the farms bordered one another, and had huge tracts of land ranging in size from 200 to 300 acres. In the bottomlands, homes were equipped with well water, but if you resided in a valley or a hilly area, the houses were built in proximity to an active spring.

My family's home was a small wooden farmhouse. I lived there with my parents, my brother Leo, and my sister Kathleen. The house had only four rooms: two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a sitting room. It contained very little furniture and lacked all the modern necessities. The bathroom was an outhouse located in the backyard. During this time, the homes were heated by coal. Oil lamps were used for lighting our house at night. The Burnside stove in the sitting room kept us warm in the winter, and the wood stove in the kitchen was used to cook all our meals.

As the Great Depression escalated, my family was forced to raise our own food. We owned little livestock: a cow, lamb, chickens, and turkeys. We stored the milk and butter in a springhouse to prevent spoiling. After skimming the fat from the milk, we churned our own butter. On the hillside, we planted two gardens yearly. One garden was planted in early spring and one in late fall. Each fall we slaughtered a pig. Since meat was scarce, our diet consisted mainly of vegetables and oatmeal.

The Goheen Store, located in Spring Dale, served as both a trading post and the local post office. It was there that we would trade eggs for flour, enabling my mother, Fannie, to make our own bread. We canned vegetables mostly during the summer months. We also picked

Marie's father, Bartholemew "Bat" Twohig, and mother, Fannie Hurley Twohig.

Young Marie (center) with brother Leo and sister Kathleen.

berries of all kinds, and buried apples in the ground. The apples were buried and covered with leaves to prevent frostbite from setting in and to preserve them for later usage.

Our clothes were constructed from feed sacks and quilts came from scrap material. The local schoolhouse consisted of one room with one teacher. The teacher handled every course for each class in attendance. The school was not nearby. It was located at least ten miles from Jerry Hurley's farm. I recall walking to and from school in varying weather conditions.

The Irish immigrants brought many talents with them to America. Among these talents was a love for dancing, specifically Irish dancing. My family and friends would gather each month at a different Irish home to orchestrate a ceili (pronounced "kay-lee") which is Irish dancing at its best. You either had a partner and did the waltz, or formed a group and did the Virginia Reel. I have memories of the laughter and music bellowing throughout the house. My father Bat and his sister Teresa would play their fiddles. My Grandmother Annie Donahue Twohig did the jig, and everyone else had fun with the Irish dance. As part of the jig, we performed a forerunner to what is well-known today as clogging.

Outdoor activity on Irish Mountain was, simply put, just the best of times. I recall climbing trees, roaming through the picturesque meadows, catching fireflies and tadpoles, playing hide and seek, and kick the can. The winter months brought extremely cold weather. However, when it came to playing outdoors, there was a lot to do, including sleigh riding and building snowmen.

The Irish immigrants brought many talents with them to America.

Despite the hardships of the day, my family always provided the children with toys at Christmas. My parents ordered directly from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. If the sales of our lambs wool and turkeys increased, then we received more toys at Christmas.

The Catholic Church was of great importance to everyone on Irish Mountain. For instance, my family

Croquet on a Sunday afternoon in Irish Tract. Father Bat and mother Fannie are at right; fiddling Aunt Theresa Twohig is second from left, and Bat's sister Pauline is far left.

Grandmother Annie Donahue Twohig danced the jig at the monthly ceilis.

Grandfather Richard Twohig drove his family to Mass in the Model T Ford shown here, at left.

gathered each night to recite the rosary together. Once a month, we congregated at Sacred Heart Church in Spring Dale for Catholic Mass. Symbolic of the impoverished time of the 1930's, the main mode of transportation to and from monthly Mass was by way of walking. My family was slightly more fortunate in that regard because my grandfather Richard Twohig owned a Model T Ford. I recall him driving us home from Mass in that car, winding around the treacherous, narrow dirt roads of Irish Mountain.

I vividly recall the local doctors riding on horseback to make their respective house calls. If you lived near a functioning roadway, then a horse and buggy could be used for travels to and from your home. Hospitals were located miles away, making the local doctor a valuable commodity. Luckily, my family never had the need for a hospital, as we avoided any serious illness.

I remember the stark reality of death on Irish Mountain. The bodies of the recently deceased were left in their homes and attended at all times by their loved ones until the body was ready for burial at the Sacred Heart Cemetery. Unfortunately, my memories of a happier ceremony, weddings, are scarce since the Irish married relatively late in life.

The years on Irish Mountain rapidly passed as we strived daily just to make ends meet. But World War II broke out, and, with the work force depleted by the draft, my father found opportunity knocking in the big city — Charleston. With one dollar, literally, in his pocket, my father hopped a freight train and landed a job at the Union Carbide plant. He then moved my mother, brother Leo, sister Kathleen, and me to Charleston. We left our life on Irish Mountain forever, but as the years passed, my family managed to visit often.

My father enjoyed a long career at Union Carbide, retiring in 1963. My brother and sister both served in World War II, Leo in the European theater and Kathleen as an Army nurse. I married a Navy pilot, Bill Sadlowski, and moved from West Virginia. Together, we have raised a family of six children. My husband's career in the Navy and my career with United Airlines have allowed me to live in many cities, travel the world, and meet varying degrees of people. But my memories of life on Irish Mountain in the 1930's, its people, and its culture have remained close to my heart for a lifetime. The years were enriching and I will always treasure them as one of the most joyful and fulfilling times of my life.

Marie Twohig Sadlowski *was born in Spring Dale in 1932. She left West Virginia in 1955 and now lives in Georgia. She is a 25-year veteran employee of United Airlines.*

Marie in Charleston, early 1940's. Photo by Deluxe Studio, Charleston.

Irish Tract children, unidentified.

Margaret Hurley

Irish Faces

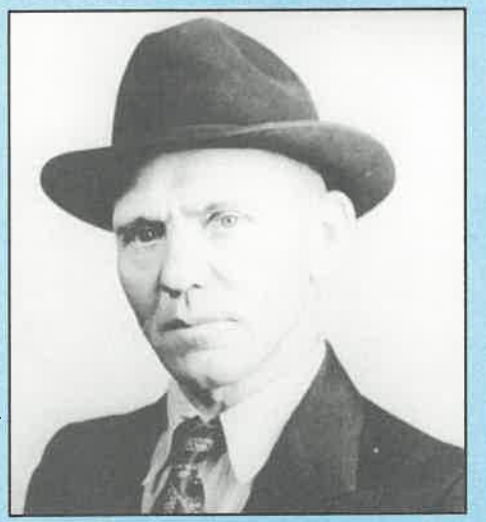
Hundreds of captivating images were gathered in developing this story about the Irish Tract. Here are a few of our favorites.

Photographers unknown.

Unidentified young Irish woman.

John Coughlin (above), about 1915.

Bat Twohig (standing) and Will Hurley: our authors' fathers.



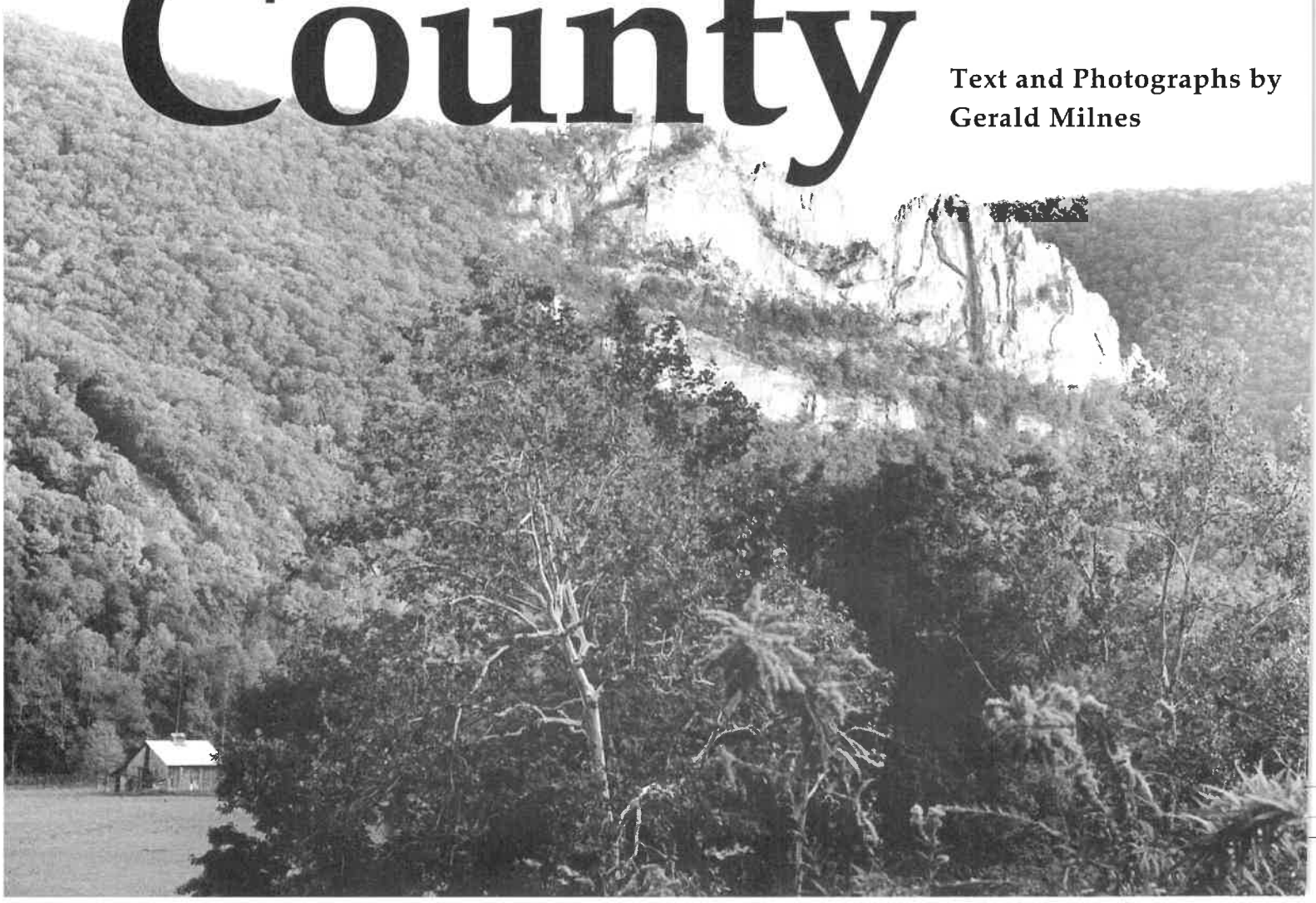
D. P. "Dan" Donahoe.

The Barns of Pendleton County

Some buildings just seem as if they belong. Old examples of traditional architecture are generally pleasing to the eye, at least to this beholder. Whether it is a cedar-shingled house on the Atlantic seaboard, a stone barn in the Pennsylvania countryside, an adobe pueblo in the Southwest, or a log barn in the Appalachian Mountains, some buildings just seem to fit. They rise from the earth, made from the very materials which surround them. Their aesthetic value is coupled with a strong nostalgic appeal.

Pendleton County is known for its rugged natural beauty. The headwaters of the Potomac River, including the South Branch, and the North and

Text and Photographs by Gerald Milnes



South Forks of the South Branch, attracted pioneers to its valleys in the mid-18th century. Most of the county's scenic wonders have had white settlers near them since that time. Today, it is hard to gaze at or photograph these natural wonders without observing evidence of man in the picture. Seneca Rocks, for instance, rises from the North Fork Valley overshadowing farmland that became inhabited over 200 years ago by Europeans. Recent archeology conducted by the United States Forest Service indicates that Native Americans inhabited the area up to 10,000 years before that.

Today, Pendleton County vistas, where the natural world coexists in close proximity to man's built environment, literally become a "cultural landscape."

In West Virginia, the most traditional mode of constructing buildings is with logs. This goes back to the days of the pioneers. It also reflects who the pioneers were. Many early settlers in western Virginia came by way of Pennsylvania. The first settlers in eastern Pennsylvania were Swedes and Finns, whose homelands were in heavily forested regions of northern Europe. Upon arriving in the New World, they built their houses and barns in the same fashion as they did in the Old World, that is, with logs. As more people from Germany, Ireland and elsewhere arrived in the 18th century, they took up this New World mode of construction. As these people moved first west and then south following the Appalachian mountain chain, they brought this style of building to what is now West Virginia. Not only log buildings, but spinning wheels, looms, baskets, mountain rifles, and countless other objects and aspects of mountain culture arrived through this course of migration.

A sawn board was a rare and valued commodity on the frontier. Pioneers built most early dwellings with logs, hewn on their sides to achieve a flat surface. People needed few tools to construct a log building: an ax, a broad ax, and perhaps a foot adz. It involved many hours of heavy, hard work to crudely shape logs into useable building materials.

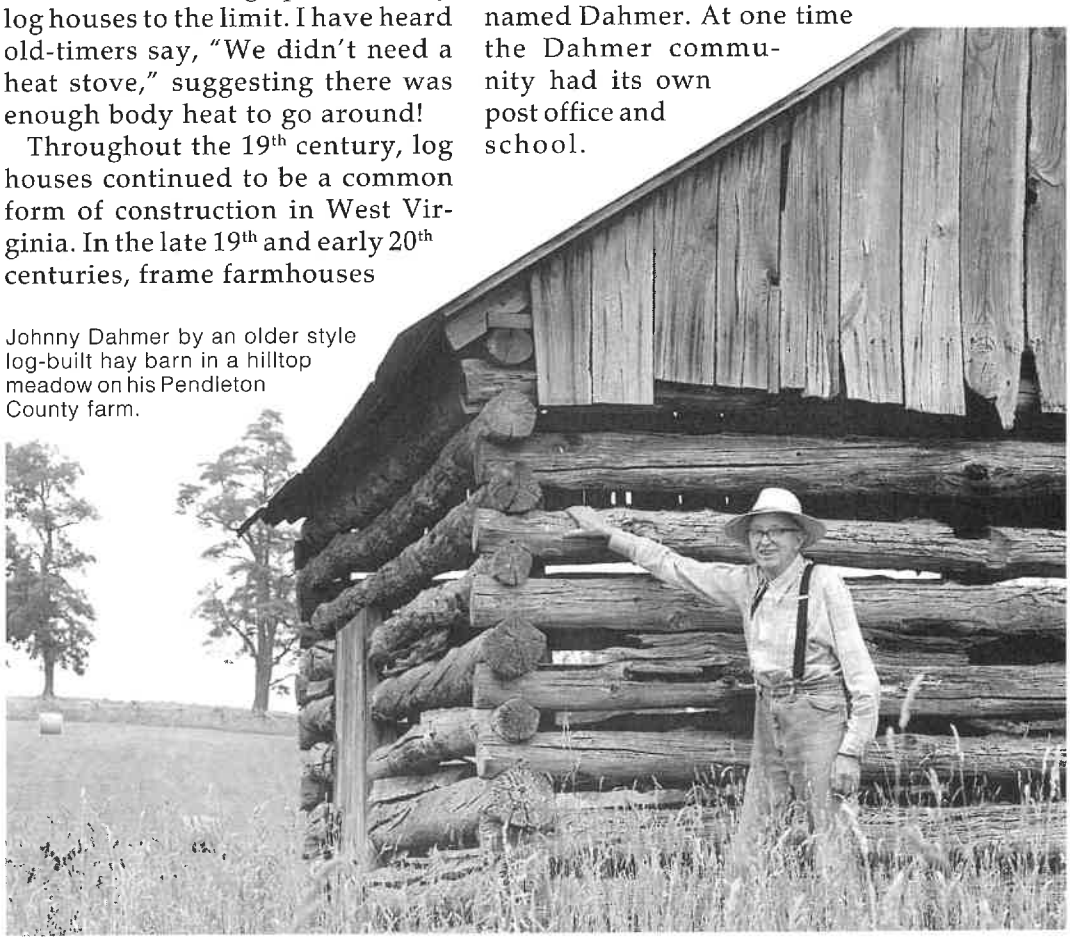
The earliest log dwellings may have had only one "window light," made of parchment, not glass, which was another rare commodity. They usually had cut sandstone chimneys and clapboard roofs. "Slab doors" were common on early houses. Back in the days of large, virgin timber, settlers made an entire door with one "slab" of wood. "Puncheon floors" are rarely seen today, but they were floors made of dressed logs laid side by side to form a floor. Some early cabins simply had dirt floors. Large families stretched the living space in early log houses to the limit. I have heard old-timers say, "We didn't need a heat stove," suggesting there was enough body heat to go around!

A sawn board was a rare and valued commodity on the frontier.

Throughout the 19th century, log houses continued to be a common form of construction in West Virginia. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, frame farmhouses often replaced the log cabins. Many people converted the old log houses to hay barns, animal shelters, or sheds and outbuildings for other purposes. Pioneer barns were built of logs in their natural round shape, with only the joining corner notches receiving special handwork.

While exploring barns in Pendleton County, I met 79-year-old Johnny Arvin Dahmer, a farmer well versed in local history and lore. In 1997, Governor Cecil Underwood awarded Johnny a certificate of recognition for "significant contributions to the preservation and promotion of West Virginia history," during the annual West Virginia History Day. Johnny also writes a regular column for the *Pendleton County Times*, a task he took over from his father. Between the two of them, they have amassed nearly 100 years of contributing neighborhood news, local history, and lore to the paper.

Johnny is a fifth generation resident of Dry Fork at a place aptly named Dahmer. At one time the Dahmer community had its own post office and school.



Johnny Dahmer by an older style log-built hay barn in a hilltop meadow on his Pendleton County farm.

Barn Again!

"Barn Again! Celebrating An American Icon" is a traveling exhibit organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and the National Building Museum in association with eight state humanities councils. The Barn Again! exhibit celebrates the many forms and uses of barns in American agricultural life. The West Virginia Humanities Council is sponsoring five exhibition sites in the Mountain State in 1998. Photographs, building materials, a model barn, barn ads, and cultural artifacts are included in the show.

Jackson's Mill starts the state tour. The exhibit, which opens March 14, remains there until April 26, and returns from August 31 through September 9. The West Virginia State Farm Museum in Point Pleasant hosts Barn Again! from May 9 through June 22. Mannington's West Augusta Historical Society and Round Barn Museum has the exhibit from July 2 through August 16. The dates for Artists at Work Gallery in Elkins are September 18 through October 31. For more information contact the West Virginia Humanities Council at (304)346-8500.

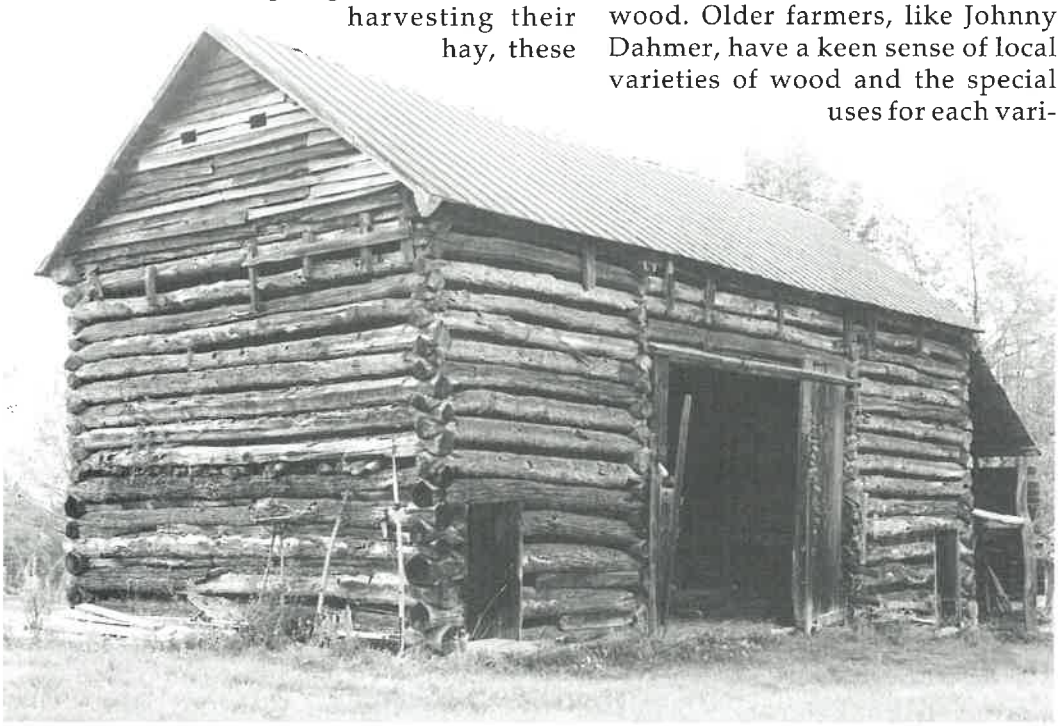
The Dahmer family descends from John George Dahmer, who emigrated to America from Germany in the 18th century. Johnny lives on the old Dahmer farm and keeps it neat as a pin and picture perfect. He maintains miles of split rail fence which separate pastures, meadows, and woodlands on the hills and around the hollows of his farm.

He showed me some unusual log and frame barns and outbuildings in the Dahmer vicinity, and some old log hay barns which dot his upper meadows. These small barns were first used to store loose hay, and then small bales. Since many farmers today have switched to using large round balers for harvesting their hay, these small structures have outlived their usefulness, and stand idle. But Johnny keeps the barns up, just as he does the old rail fences that divide his fields and give his farm a visual connection to the past. Rail fences in the area are made from chestnut. That species died out with a blight that hit in the 1930's. However, there are still enough sound rails in existence to maintain fences, a tribute to the qualities of chestnut wood. Older farmers, like Johnny Dahmer, have a keen sense of local varieties of wood and the special uses for each variety. Johnny seldom refers to a tree without mentioning the species, or points out a log building without commenting on the variety of wood in the logs. He can usually tell these details at a distance.

The people who settled in the area brought two distinct styles of barns with them.

Johnny's observations augment a sharp memory for dates and facts. Genealogists, historians, and others continually come to him for help and answers about local history and other information. *(GOLDENSEAL readers might recall Johnny from the Winter 1992 issue, in which he contributes to the stories "The View from Brandywine: Looking Back with Lester Hoover," and "The Smoke Hole," both by Joan Ashley. —ed.)* Best of all are Johnny's stories and tales about old-time people of the area. He maintains a small log house furnished with old-time objects, and makes them available for school groups and other visitors to see.

A large proportion of Pendleton County's early inhabitants were German who came by way of Pennsylvania. Johnny's ancestors were German, and he is related to most of the pioneer families in the area. It's not surprising, given the amount of log construction found in Pendleton County, that most of the early settling families can be traced back to eastern Pennsylvania. In Pendleton County, wonderful examples of older log barns, houses, and outbuildings are still in daily use and may be seen



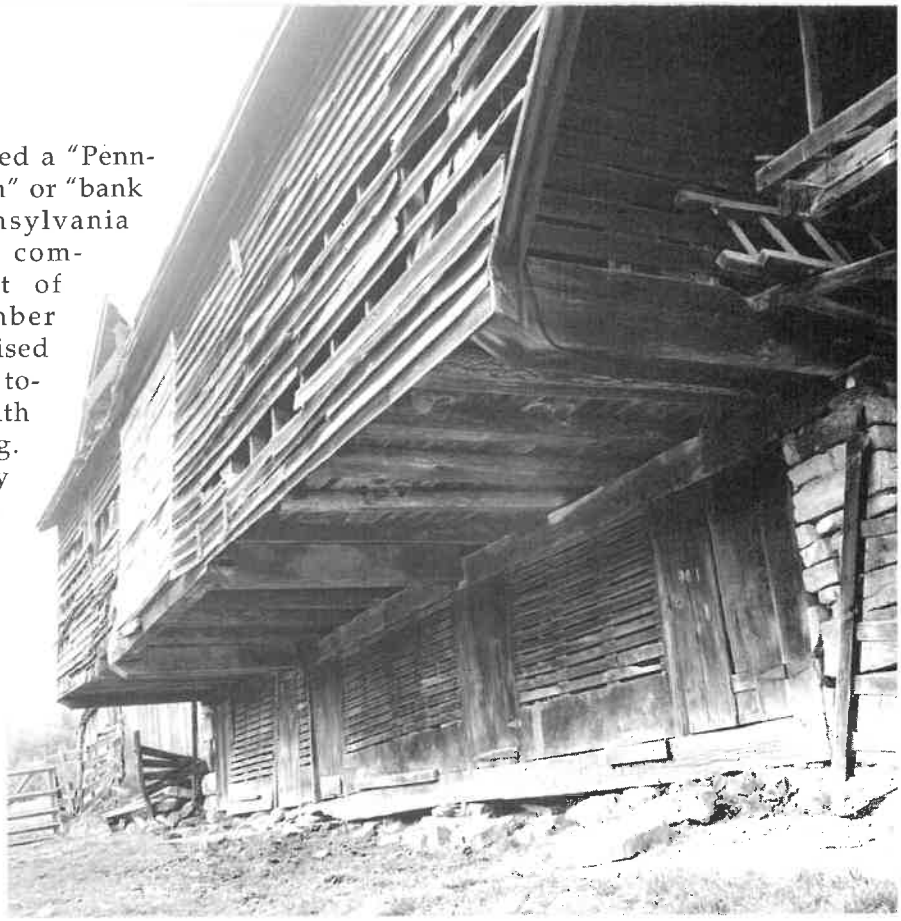
This double crib log barn in Pendleton County has "owl holes" at the gables, which allow owls into the barn to catch mice and other pests.

throughout the countryside.

Early residents built many area barns through an old-time event known as a "frolic." Through this process, as many as 50 men could put up a whole barn in a day. Johnny Dahmer's description of these events indicates that community-wide gatherings or "workings" were the way to get a lot of work done in a short time, while having some fun in the process. Like barn-raisings, log rollings, and corn shuckings found elsewhere, the work led up to a big meal, and finished with a dance. The dance was the actual "frolic," but most use that term for the whole event. Chicken pot-pie was the standard fare for the feast.

The people who settled in the area brought two distinct styles of barns with them. One type, the "double crib" log barn, is common. In this form, two "cribs" or squared rooms of logs are connected by one roof. They are often a story and a half high. When used in house construction, the area between the two cribs is sometimes termed a "dogtrot." In a barn, it often became the "threshing floor." The log enclosures on the ground floor were used to house animals. The top sections, or "mows," were for hay storage.

Threshing floors are also apparent in the other distinct barn style, usually termed a "Pennsylvania barn" or "bank barn." Pennsylvania barns are commonly built of rugged timber frames, mortised and tenoned together and with board siding. Because they required boards and nails, they were not built by the earliest pioneers. The design comes from the Old World, where it can be traced back to Germanic areas of Europe and to Switzerland, the ancestral home of many Pennsylvania Germans who now populate Pendleton County. There are lots of modifications of this style, as with log barns, in Pendleton County.



Massive Pendleton County "Pennsylvania barn" with overhanging forebay.

Old World forms of these barns often housed both the farm family and animals, as well as their feed. One distinctive feature of these barns are their two entrances at different levels. Usually built into a hill, the uphill side provides access with a wagon to the upper floors. From there, hay could be pitched into the hay mows on the upper level. Today, this central space becomes a storage area for tractors and equipment. The lower, or downhill, side of the barn has an

Double crib log barn with a "common" roof connecting both cribs. Note the log enclosures for housing livestock. The top sections, or "mows," are for hay storage.

overhanging front called a "forebay." Animals, housed in the lower level, have access to inside stalls here, and the forebay shelters them overhead. The forebay side usually faces south. There is a door on this southern side at the second story level, that is seemingly suspended up in the air. This door, when open, allows wind to blow through the central section of the barn. This feature was needed when this central section was used as a threshing floor. The wind was needed for winnowing grain in the days when this was done by hand. The winnowing process separated the grain from the lighter chaff. The draft created on windy days by these open doors allowed the chaff to be blown away when the grain was winnowed or thrown into the air after being threshed.

Johnny Dahmer at home.

There is another common type of barn in the area that is based on the two-crib, log barn style. These are barns framed with lumber, but they are built like their two-crib log counterparts. They resemble a Pennsylvania barn from a distance, but do not have the two-level feature of barns built into hillsides. These barns, built in later times when large logs for building were getting scarce and lumber was plentiful, replicate their log prototypes. Having gotten used to working in and around this double crib design, farmers simply constructed new barns out of lumber in the design in which they felt comfortable.

Johnny Dahmer showed me a farm where numerous old-time log barns, sheds, and outbuildings exist. He knows quite a bit about the farm as well as the traditions and customs of the people who had resided there up until 1973 when the last of the old residents passed on. Beyond simple dates and names, he has a much deeper understanding of local history, gained through knowing and talking to the older people throughout his life. He also heard much from his father about earlier generations who lived there. His descriptions of this place seem like a page out of history from the last century. Indeed, some aspects of this farm could have been a page from a history of the Middle Ages. The abandoned buildings now stand as a testament to pioneer technology.

In the pioneer days, nails were the hardest things to acquire to assist the building process. Floors, walls, foundations, and chimneys could all be made from readily available natural materials, and joined without nails. Roofs, on the other hand, required some type of fasteners to hold the hand-rived shingles down. By the 18th century, in rural areas, hand forged nails were readily available from blacksmiths to do the job. Every rural community and sometimes almost every farm had a blacksmith. These men made nails, but it was tedious work.

Before the use of nails, however, people still needed roofs for shelter. An ancient way to do this was through a system known as the "pole press roof." These roofs used no nails. When the log walls were completed and the ridge pole was in place, horizontal poles, parallel to the ridge pole were positioned to hold the clapboards that kept out the weather. These hand-rived boards were laid in place, then poles running the length of the roof were laid on top, with about two and a half or three foot spacers between them. These poles were sometimes called "weight poles."

I had heard through another older Pendleton County resident that this unusual old type of roof once ex-

The pole press roofing technique dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe, but was also used on the frontier by pioneer Americans. This 1851 drawing by preeminent illustrator David Hunter Strother shows a cabin in western Virginia with a pole press roof. Illustration courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries.

isted in the area. This surprised me as this form of construction dates to the Middle Ages and is only occasionally seen in sketches of 18th century dwellings. While visiting with Johnny Dahmer I pursued information about this construction method by inquiring if Johnny knew of it. He surprised me by saying that one had existed on his farm until it burned down about a dozen years ago. He then took me to an old farm where several of these old-style roofs had covered old barns and outbuildings, before they were replaced with tin. Later, when back at Johnny's place, he produced a photo that showed one of these pole press roofs that he had taken in the 1960's. Thanks to Johnny, who had the foresight to document the existence of this ancient form of construction, we have proof of its existence at a very late date in West Virginia.

I am used to seeing examples of pre-industrial technology, such as old log barns, in common everyday use in the Pendleton County countryside. I was shocked, however, to realize that this ancient roofing technique was still in use in West Virginia during the second half of the 20th century. I was able to locate a few of the old log barns in Johnny's photos which are still standing in meadows at the old farm. Although the roof had fallen in, by climbing the logs and looking down into the barn's interior, I could still make out the poles and framework of a pole press roof on one structure. While contemplating this, it occurred to me that I could easily be looking at the last example of a building with a pole press roof that has stood in America! These roofs are always described as examples of the earliest pioneer architecture. But time can stand still in ways and in places that are closer than you think.

His descriptions of this place seem like a page out of history from the last century.

While driving through West Virginia's Potomac Highlands the scenic beauty is stunning. Just as remarkable to me are the imprints people have left upon this landscape. A closer look at these imprints may reveal much about who those people were. Their particular stamp is everywhere on the land. It is seen in the barns, houses, and buildings in particular. Through closer observation and, better yet, through talking with a knowledgeable local source, such as I found on this day in Johnny Dahmer, we can make much better sense of what we see.

As in a hunting expedition, the game can be elusive. But like hunting, the process itself is rewarding. Instead of tracking live game, I tracked an old tradition. I carried a notebook and camera instead of a gun. Tracking down the old log barns with pole press roofs was much like a hunting expedition. There is always the chance of bagging a trophy. On this day, I felt I had.

Gerald Milnes *is the Folk Arts Coordinator for the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. He is a regular contributor to* GOLDENSEAL, *an accomplished old-time musician, and author of the children's book* Granny Will Your Dog Bite and Other Mountain Rhymes.

This 1960's photo from Pendleton County clearly shows a pole press roof in use during modern times. Photo by Johnny Dahmer.

The remains of what is perhaps the last standing structure in North America with an original pole press roof, located on a remote farm in Pendleton County.

Lynn Davis at home in Huntington. Photo by Michael Keller.

"Living the Right Life Now"

Lynn Davis & Molly O'Day

By Abby Gail Goodnite and Ivan M. Tribe

Each weekday afternoon just before one o'clock, Lynn Davis sits down in a little radio studio in his suburban Huntington home. When he presses a button, listeners on WEMM-FM radio hear the sound of a clawhammer banjo playing the familiar tune "Good Old Mountain Dew." However, as the vocal starts, a clear-voiced girl with a mountain accent begins to sing a set of sacred lyrics that are quite different from the original:

The midnight has passed, it's morning at last,
No longer in sin I bow;
My wandering is done, my life's crown is won,
I'm living the right life now.

Oh! glory to God, I'm washed in His blood,
His love light is on my brow;
I'm happy and whole, there's peace in my soul,
I'm living the right life now.

(From "Living the Right Life Now" by William York, used by permission of Ft. Knox Music, Inc. & Trio Music Co., Inc. All rights reserved.)

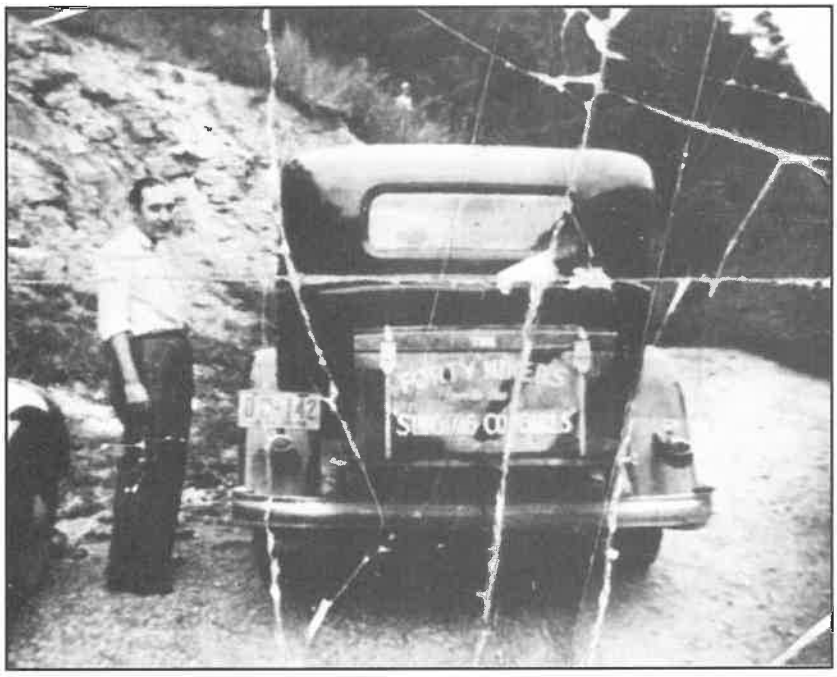
You wouldn't know from his appearance, but Lynn Davis is 83 years of age. In his many-faceted career, Lynn has been a coal miner, grocer, record retailer, restauranteur, investment counselor, and realtor in between known occupations. For over half his life, he has been a Church of God minister, but earlier he spent some 18 years in radio as full-time announcer and entertainer. Lynn was husband and bandleader for the late Molly O'Day whom many considered the greatest female country singer who ever lived.

Molly's recording of "Living the Right Life Now" still kicks off Lynn's daily radio program. For the last 26 years, Lynn has combined radio work and the ministry on his widely heard "County Hymn Time" program. Among other things, he is now acclaimed as America's oldest gospel deejay.

Leonard Davis was born near

Lynn about one year old in Paintsville, Kentucky, 1915.

Lynn met his match in 1940 when young Dixie Lee Williamson joined his band. They married in April 1941; she took the name "Molly O'Day" the following year. This photo was taken about 1942 in Renfro Valley, Kentucky.



"The Forty Niners with the 'Singing Cowgirls.'" Lynn and his group traveled in this Buick, shown near Shelbiana, Kentucky, about 1936.

Paintsville in Johnson County, Kentucky, on December 15, 1914. He grew up like many mountain youth of his era, and acquired the shortened nickname of "Lynn" along the way. His father and uncle both played old-time music and as a child Lynn learned to play the guitar and banjo. Later, his family moved to Wheelwright, Kentucky. Lynn was fortunate to grow up in an area alive with traditional music, and can recall such memorable experiences as seeing and hearing the fabled mountain fiddler, Blind Ed Haley. In his youth, Davis enjoyed tuning in to WFIW Hopkinsville, Kentucky, where he listened to programs featuring early country singers such as "Bluegrass Roy" Freeman.

In 1932, Lynn and a friend from Kentucky, Guy Ferrell, went to Huntington and got a weekly radio show on WSAZ as "Guy & Lynn, the Mountaineer Twins." Lynn played lead guitar and Guy played rhythm. Their music leaned toward the style of the Delmore Brothers featuring smooth duet harmonies and ambitious twin guitar instrumentation. The boys enjoyed their small taste of fame on the Saturday morning show, and before long they secured another job doing a Saturday afternoon program on Charleston's WCHS. Lynn and Guy still worked as coal loaders during the week in Wheelwright, Kentucky. Once a week the Mountaineer Twins traveled to West Virginia to be on radio.

Lynn sold a couple of songs to Asher Sizemore and in 1936 he took the opportunity to become a full-time performer. After traveling around for a short while, Lynn wound up at WHIS in Bluefield, where Guy decided to quit and return home. Lynn remained in radio, traveling to Virginia and Pennsylvania for a time. By now he had become an excellent lead guitarist, and his strong voice made him a persuasive radio salesman and announcer.

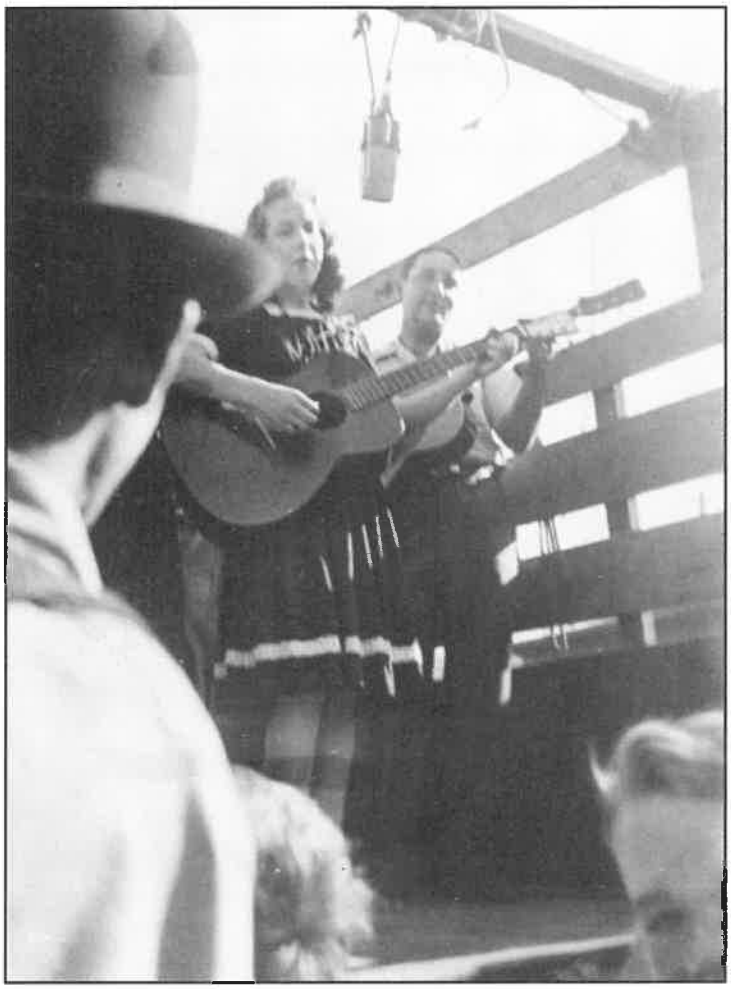
Late in 1936, Gordon Jennings wrote Lynn a letter inviting him to come and play the guitar for his band at Bluefield. Although the pay would be meager, Davis decided to leave Harrisonburg, Virginia, and head back to West Virginia. Two weeks later Lynn arrived only to find that Jennings had already hired another guitarist for his band. Disheartened, he decided to go home to his mother and father in Kentucky. Lynn stopped by radio station WHIS on his way out of town. The announcer informed him that the manager of the station, Jim Shott, wanted to speak to him. Mr. Shott wanted to hire Lynn to take charge of a whole new program advertising Bi-Tone Products. He accepted the position and was responsible for hiring the talent and paying their salaries. As Lynn recalls the incident:

"Shows you how things work out, you know, when you have somebody sort of let you down. ...I was back on the job with more money than these boys could have paid, and then I had them to hire, if I was going to hire them. ...Of course they wondered about that after they offered me a job and then hired somebody else. I called everybody, and the next morning when they all gathered in, these boys said, 'Well,

Brother Skeets Williamson and Dixie Lee, about 1938.

I guess we're out.' I said, 'No, I'm going to hire you and I'm going to pay you $12 more a week than you offered me!'"

Lynn organized a band called the Forty-Niners in Bluefield. The members included several musicians and a pair of yodeling cowgirls, Sue and Ann Mason. Lynn recalls that times were tough in those Depression days. In the mining camps, musicians often had to sell tickets for coal company scrip which they then discounted in converting to cash. In impoverished farm communities, folks would bring in vegetables and chickens to exchange for the price of tickets.



Singing off the back of a truck, Lynn, Molly, and the Forty-Niners took part in a jamboree at the Raleigh County ballpark in 1944. Other performers that day included Pee Wee King, Eddie Arnold, and Minnie Pearl.

The early years of radio offered an unusual but exciting lifestyle for a generation of pioneering musicians like Lynn Davis. During the 1930's and early 1940's, radio stations played no recorded music, relying instead on the voices and talents of musicians who broadcast live from their studios. As radio stations proliferated, there grew to be an unprecedented demand for performers.

While a lucky few were paid by sponsors for their appearances, most radio entertainers used their airtime to promote local show dates or to sell song folios or other items. After several months on one station, when performers felt that the area had been "played out," they moved on. Like gypsies, they traveled from town to town or state to state, staying a few months, then moving again. According to Lynn Davis, securing a new show on a radio station at that time was relatively easy. Musicians frequently "swapped" shows, or recommended one another to sponsors or station managers. As a result, many small town musicians amassed impressive itineraries and developed a far-flung network of valuable friends and contacts.

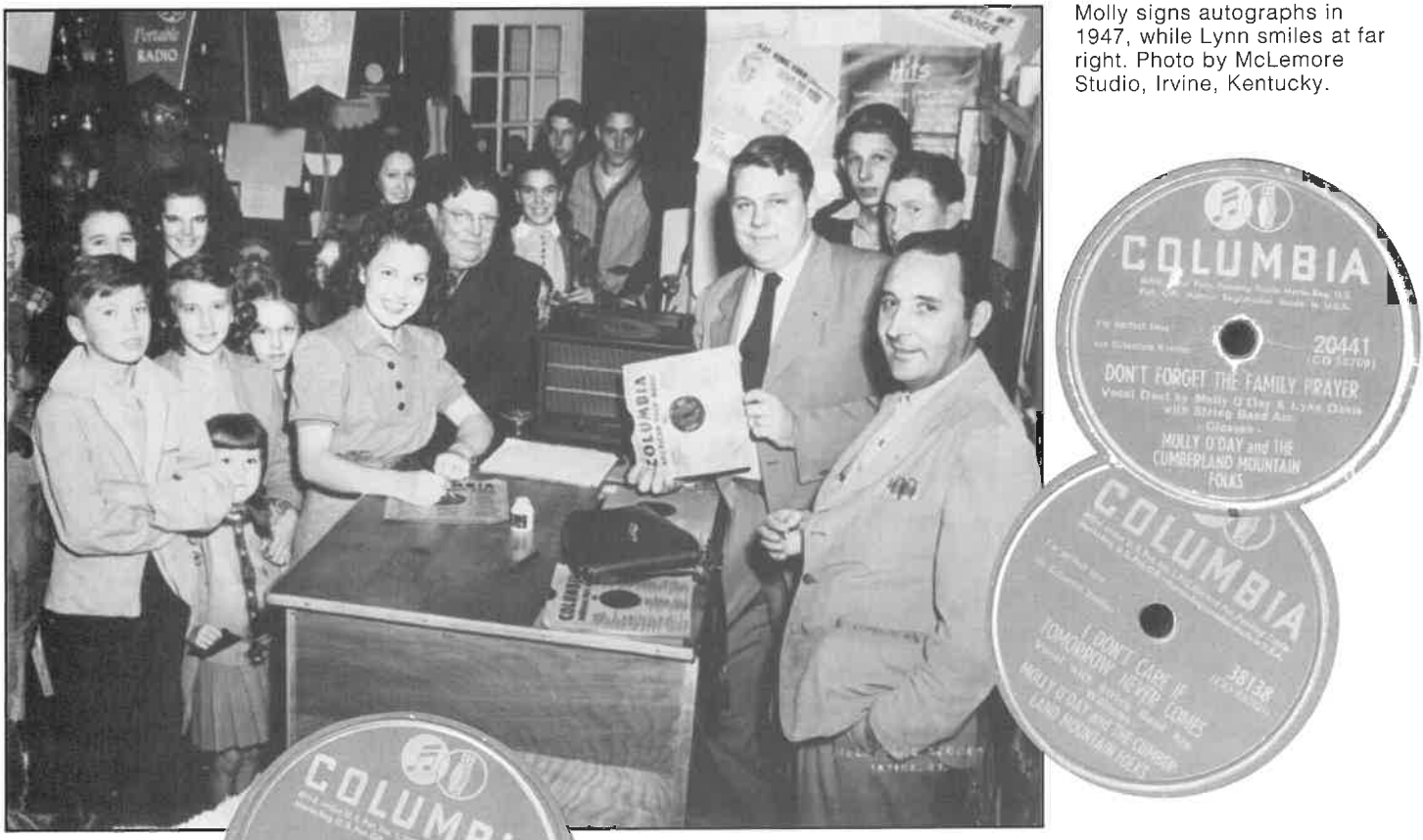
Dixie Lee was not allowed to leave home alone, so Lynn hired her and her brother, Skeets.

About 1939, the Forty-Niners relocated to WPTF in Raleigh, North Carolina, and soon after moved to KVOO in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They also played in Texas where one of the yodeling cowgirls was married. They returned to Bluefield in the summer of 1940 and the other female vocalist decided to quit and return to Pennsylvania. The Lynn Davis band lacked a girl singer.

Forty-five miles of rough road to the north in Beckley, LaVerne "Dixie Lee" Williamson was the female vocalist for Johnny Bailes' group, the Happy Valley Boys. The Happy Valley Boys were in the process of disintegration, and young Dixie Lee applied for a job with Lynn Davis' band, which she had admired for quite some time. Dixie Lee, who was only 17 years old, was not allowed to leave home alone, so Lynn hired her and her brother, Skeets. Dixie Lee and Lynn fell in love and became husband and wife six months later on April 5, 1941.

Dixie Lee was born Lois LaVerne Williamson in Pike County, Kentucky, on July 9, 1923. From childhood, she and her older brother Cecil, known as "Skeets," had dreamed of careers as radio country musicians. Learning the songs she heard the female vocalists sing on WLS Chicago, the young mountain girl emulated Patsy Montana, Lulubelle Wiseman, and Lily May Ledford, developing a powerful voice that reflected deep sincerity. Before coming to Beckley and Bluefield, she had a few months of experience at WCHS Charleston and WBTH Williamson. Skeets played the fiddle and did comedy.

Following the tradition of "radio hillbillies" at the time, the Forty-Niners traveled from station to station and town to town. The summer after Lynn and Dixie's wedding, they returned to Beckley where they were sponsored by Dr. Pepper. That fall, they relocated to WAPI Birmingham, Alabama, to fill a spot being vacated by the Delmore Brothers. In this new locale they renamed themselves the Sunshine



Molly signs autographs in 1947, while Lynn smiles at far right. Photo by McLemore Studio, Irvine, Kentucky.

Hillbillies and for a time their band included the Bailes Brothers along with the late Marion Sumner on fiddle. The show went out over a regional network including stations in Nashville, Memphis, Montgomery, Mobile, Tuscaloosa, and Jackson. They stayed there for a year, and made the acquaintance of young Hank Williams, an association which eventually proved to be beneficial for both parties. Hank often sang "Tramp on the Street," a 1939 country gospel song written by Hazel and Grady Cole. Hank sang it to a different tune from the original, which greatly impressed Dixie Lee who asked him to teach her the words. She began singing it in the Williams manner, also. Soon after, it became her most popular song.

For Hank's part, the Davises were among the first artists to record his songs in the lean years before his own meteoric career took hold. According to Lynn, Hank wrote "When God Comes and Gathers His Jewels," "The Singing Waterfall," "Six More Miles," and "I Don't Care If Tomorrow Never Comes," primarily for them to record.

The Davis group left Alabama after a year and headed for Kentucky,

With the war finally at an end, folks were anxious for entertainment.

where they got a daily show at WHAS Louisville and worked on Saturday nights at the "Renfro Valley Barn Dance." Although wartime gasoline rationing kept down the number of tourists, their radio audience grew and their live shows were crowded. They also had a large overseas audience. Even General Douglas MacArthur, in faraway Australia, frequently enjoyed their program. Clayton McMichen, an artist on WAVE, told Dixie that there was already a performer in the area known as Dixie Lee, so LaVerne Davis felt she needed a new name to avoid confusion. She chose the name "Molly O'Day."

Lynn and Molly spent most of 1944 back in West Virginia on WJLS Beckley. Working once again as the Forty-Niners, they teamed up with several important West Virginia musicians. These included talented Raleigh County musicians Bea & Everett Lilly; Hinton area Dobro player George "Speedy" Krise; and Fiddlin' Burk Barbour from Virginia.

After spending a few months in Texas at KRLD Dallas, Lynn and Molly landed at WNOX Knoxville in June 1945, appearing on the popular "Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round" show. It was here that they began performing as the Cumberland Mountain Folks and where they achieved their greatest professional success. With the war finally at an end, folks were anxious for entertainment, and the Cumberland Mountain Folks gained wide popularity.

Fred Rose, who by now was the business head of the influential Acuff-Rose publishing company, took a vacation in Gatlinburg and heard Molly singing "Tramp on the Street" in the summer of 1946. He soon renewed his acquaintance with Lynn, whom he had met in Oklahoma years earlier. Fred helped Molly and Lynn get a recording contract with Columbia Records. They went to Chicago on December 16, 1946, and cut their first session. Of the songs released from that first session, the most popular was "Tramp On the Street," which showcased Molly's clear, emotional vocals. It sold over a million copies. Other songs featured the highly-crafted duets of Lynn and Molly, and the musicianship of band members Speedy Krise, Mac Wiseman, and Skeets Williamson, as well as Lynn's fine guitar work.

An accomplished banjo player, Molly once beat Earl Scruggs in a local contest. This photo was taken in Lynn and Molly's basement studio in Huntington. Photographer and date unknown.

The Cumberland Mountain Folks were at the peak of their popularity. Drawing huge paying crowds at their live appearances — often two shows a night — they also sold songbooks and photographs as quickly as the printer could turn them out. They appeared on the "Grand Ole Opry" in 1947, and turned down opportunities to join the Opry as regular performers and to make a movie with the "King of Country Music," Roy Acuff.

Despite this success, and the apparent promise of even greater stardom, Molly and Lynn had reservations about the lives they had chosen in the world of country music. Dissatisfied, Lynn and Molly left WNOX in September 1947. Lynn purchased a grocery story near Wheelwright, Kentucky, and the pair embarked on a considerably different way of living. Although they returned to Nashville to honor their recording commitments with Columbia in December of that year, they spent most of their time and energy close to home.

Unfortunately, they had some to learn about operating a rural grocery store. After allowing credit to striking coal miners in the area, they lost a considerable amount of money by the end of 1948. They returned to radio.

Over the next year, they worked on stations in Greensboro, North Carolina; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Versailles, Kentucky. Molly and Lynn's frustrations with professional entertainment deepened, however, and the strain took its toll. In December 1949, Molly was hospitalized. They soon moved to Huntington and bought a restaurant. Lynn Davis and Molly O'Day left show business for good. Molly believed that her pursuit of worldly fame and fortune had violated a religious commitment she had made in youth and that her show business career must be abandoned. In February, 1950, the couple were

Discography

Fortunately, most of the recordings made by Lynn Davis, Molly O'Day, and the Cumberland Mountain Folks remain in print and are available. The complete collection of commercial recordings made by Columbia between 1949 and 1951 has been recently reissued on two CD's by Germany's Bear Family Records with notes by Ivan Tribe (BCD 15565). The collection is available through County Sales, Box 191, Floyd, VA 24091; (540)745-2001.

Four other albums are available on cassette only from Old Homestead Records. These include *Sacred Collection* (OHCS 101), *Early Radio Favorites* (OHCS 140), and *The Soul of Molly O'Day Vol. 1 & 2* (OHCS 312 & 313). Contact Old Homestead Records, Box 100, Brighton, MI 48116; (810)227-1997.

saved in a revival meeting, and found the internal peace that had eluded them in the entertainment world.

After their conversion, Molly only sang in churches and Lynn entered the ministry. They did two more sessions with Columbia in 1950 and 1951 to fulfill their contract, but they recorded sacred music only. The couple spent the 1950-51 school year in Estevan, Saskatchewan in Canada where Lynn studied at the International Bible College. In 1954, Lynn attended the Northwest Bible College in Minot, North Dakota, and subsequently became a licensed minister in the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee).

In February, 1950, the couple were saved in a revival meeting, and found the internal peace that had eluded them in the entertainment world.

Molly O'Day is baptized in the Ohio River in 1950 above. Lynn is on the right, Reverend Luther Painter from the Church of God in Huntington is on the left.

Saving souls. Lynn and Molly worked together at prayer meetings and revivals throughout West Virginia to spread the word of God. Here Molly prays with a young woman; Lynn is at the pulpit in War, McDowell County in 1951.

Molly assisted Lynn in his evangelistic work, sometimes with singing and testimony. Lynn pastored three churches at different times in West Huntington, Martinsburg, and in Massilon, Ohio. In the early '60's, the couple opened the Molly O'Day Music Center, a gospel record store, in Williamson.

Lynn recalls that Molly continued to enjoy singing during these years and that church congregations responded enthusiastically to her occasional performances of sacred material. Lynn and Molly's music from this time period reflects their strong religious feelings as well as their ties to traditional mountain music. Molly was always an accomplished drop-thumb banjo player, and she frequently brought the banjo into church with her. Without a larger accompanying ensemble, Lynn and Molly developed an even fuller, tighter sound as a duo. This sound was captured on two local recordings made during the 1960's which have remained in print on various labels over the years. These recordings are currently available as *The Soul of Molly O'Day, Vol. 1 & 2* on Old Homestead. They include such numbers as "I'm Living the Right Life Now," "I'll Shout and Shine," and "Sinner Man Where You Gonna Hide?" — Lynn's only recorded solo performance.

Beginning in February 1974, Lynn and Molly started a radio program on the Christian station WEMM-FM in Huntington. They did the presentation from a makeshift studio in their home. The station owner believed that folks wanted to hear

Lynn celebrated Molly's birthday with a guitar-shaped cake in 1974.

contemporary Southern gospel, but Lynn argued that listeners still favored the type of hard country gospel that the couple had always preferred. "Country Hymn Time" proved the correctness of Davis' viewpoint, as it became and remains WEMM's most popular program.

In addition to playing recordings, Molly would tell an inspiring story each day as well as engage in friendly chit-chat with Lynn and their listeners. They never rehearsed for the program, and Lynn believes the informal situation helped to make them so successful. He continues a tradition Molly started by announcing the names of fellow Christian shut-ins who are sick or disabled and unable to attend regular church services. He is careful to go over the spelling of names twice, along with the addresses.

During the mid-80's, Molly's health prevented her from appearing on the show very often. Increasingly, Lynn had to do the program alone. On December 5, 1987, Molly, hospitalized for cancer but bravely maintaining a positive attitude, "went home to be with the Lord," to quote one of her popular radio phrases.

Lynn continues to do the program every weekday at 1:00 p.m. on 107.9 WEMM-FM, keeping his late wife's spirit alive by playing one of her songs and stories on each program. Reverend Davis has developed a non-denominational approach in his ministry. He does announcements for all churches at no cost, and refuses to let the larger churches buy time on the show. Recently, Lynn has even done some guest preaching in Old Regular Baptist churches. Lynn explains why he is still active in the ministry:

"I'd actually rather be somewhere fishing...at my age, of course, a lot of people do quit, but I feel it's a ministry to a lot of people, and I'm in the ministry, so I just feel like it's something I can do to be a blessing to somebody."

In his long lifetime, Lynn Davis, along with the late Molly O'Day, has furnished both entertainment and inspiration for tens of thousands of people. Even before their own conversion, the sacred songs they rendered touched the hearts of many. Both in his ministry and through "Country Hymn Time," Lynn continues to be a source of strength to many people. What better advice can anyone provide than those words of hope that Lynn and Molly always used to close their program: "Dream of a bright tomorrow and never be less than your dreams."

Abby Gail Goodnite *is an undergraduate student at the University of Rio Grande with "paternal roots in Mason County." Her coauthor,* Ivan M. Tribe, *is a professor of history at Rio Grande with a Ph.D. from the University of Toledo. He is the author of* Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia *and a long-time contributor to* GOLDENSEAL.

Lynn Davis on the air. "Country Hymn Time" is broadcast from Lynn's home each day at 1:00 p.m. over WEMM-FM, Huntington. Photo by Michael Keller.

Remembering Molly O'Day

Molly O'Day nee Lois Laverne "Dixie Lee" Williamson. Publicity photo taken about 1948 in Knoxville by Archie Campbell.

I still remember that late summer day in 1970 when I first heard that Molly O'Day was alive and well and living in Huntington.

Could it be that the woman I heard on scratchy old phonograph records in my youth was still alive? After all, I hadn't heard of her in years.

Who knows when I first heard her mournful voice singing "Tramp On The Street?" But I remember how it felt to hear that high lonesome voice, the voice of a mountain woman — one of my people — lamenting the story of Jesus Christ's crucifixion in a song that will live forever because of her.

Age 12 in Kentucky.

And she lived in Huntington! How could I not seek her out, write about her and let the world know that I had found the unforgettable Molly O'Day.

Her smiling eyes, gentle wit, and immense wisdom made her a true joy to be around.

Molly lived the life she wanted to live, something that far too few of us can say. And I'm proud to say that, when all was said and done, and when I mourned her passing, I could see that her life made a difference, even in the virtual anonymity she sought.

And that made her a special lady to me and millions who still can hear her plaintive voice wailing the mountain blues in our memories.

—Dave Peyton

Cherokee, North Carolina, 1946.

At home in Huntington, 1973.

Dave Peyton *a native West Virginian, is a columnist for* The Herald-Dispatch *in Huntington, where he has worked for more than 30 years.*

Sally Wall has balanced trays and kept orders straight at Morrison's Drive-Inn since 1955.

The Best Curb Girl in Logan County

By Brenda West

Photographs by Michael Keller

A Logan High School 30-year class reunion banner flapped in the breeze along a roadside in Stollings, Logan County. It welcomed returning grads and proclaimed, "Sally's Still Here!" Who's Sally? She's the oldest curb girl at Morrison's Drive-Inn, and sort of "grew up" with the local teens during the 1950's, '60's, and '70's. Sally Wall is as much a part of their school memories as proms, football games, and yearbooks. The petite great-grandmother doesn't roller skate, but she sure can scoot — something she's been doing for 42 years.

"I started here in July, 1955," says Sally, a native of Henlawson and the mother of two grown daughters. "My husband Carl operated a dry cleaners and I worked for him part-time, but I wanted to make my own money. Dallas Morrison, a friend of ours, said his brother, John, owned Morrison's Drive-Inn, and maybe he could use me. Dallas called John and he advised me to come down by 6:00 p.m. the following evening."

Sally didn't have a clue as to her new duties, but by 2:30 a.m. the next morning, she was well initiated. She fell into bed exhausted. "We never left a car not waited on, no matter what the time. That was when Logan was experiencing a coal boom and business got a little hectic. I worked inside for a week, mostly making sandwiches. Then one rainy night, one of the regular curb girls got wet and a little fussy. Running out of patience, John barked, 'If you don't like it, go home,' and she went.

"He turned to me and said, 'Little Red, get out there.' I had pretty red hair then but now it comes from a bottle," Sally confides. "I replied that I didn't think I could do it. But Carmen Fanning, who got the orders ready, encouraged me to go and so I did. I've been here ever since."

Sally earned a straight salary of $15 per week, not including tips which she was not required to report. Her largest paycheck one night in the early days was $30. Today she earns $2.90 an hour and pays eight percent to the government to cover her tips.

"Either my husband who was also a taxi driver, or a local girl came in to take care of my two daughters

Sally in 1962. Photographer unknown.

when I worked," Sally says. "Brenda was 10 and Carla about four when I first started."

Morrison's celebrated its 50th anniversary in January 1997, and has earned a solid reputation for good food, especially their crispy, homemade onion rings. Their hot dogs are renowned for a secret sauce originated by co-owner, L.L. Reffeitt. Sally acknowledges that a man she knows drives from Kentucky once a month to take home about 160 hot dogs which he gives to friends and family, and a lady from Alabama arrives once a year for 30-40 containers of the delicious sauce to stock in her freezer.

John Morrison and L. L. Reffeitt were the original owners of the establishment located on Route 10 in Stollings. John is deceased and the Reffeitts spend most of their time in Florida. Reffeitt's daughter and son-in-law, Sherry and Bob Mayhorn, run the place.

"Know what a hot dog cost back when I first came here?" Sally asks, then answers her own question: "Twenty cents a piece. And soft drinks were 15¢. There were no fountain drinks then and it was hard to carry them on the trays — the bottles were so easy to topple over. We served Pepsi, Coke, and 7-Up. If someone took a bottle, the curb girl had to pay the nickel deposit.

A popular Logan County figure, Sally has her own currency.

"On Fridays we offered a cheeseburger and french fries for 49¢, drink not included. Kids from Logan High School came for lunch, usually piling into one car. Most of them didn't have the luxury of owning their own vehicle. Some of them didn't always have enough money to pay and would lack maybe 15 or 20¢. I would make up the difference. But when they showed up the next weekend, the kids always repaid me. They're grown and gone now, but many of them still come back to see me when they have their class reunions."


On the job. Sally gets ready to carry out another order in this 1975 snapshot taken from behind the counter at Morrison's.

Sally is an outgoing, upbeat employee who radiates warmth and personality. The students she formerly waited on haven't forgotten her and now return with their grandchildren, mainly to check on Sally and rehash the good old days. They still find Morrison's much the same as it was decades ago, except for a fresh coat of paint and the addition of a few picnic tables in the rear lot.

"The drive-in used to be a favorite hangout of the '50's, '60's, and '70's for the kids," Sally says. "Nowadays we don't get as many teenagers. Business is not as steady either. Mondays and Tuesdays are slow but it picks up the rest of the week. On Sundays we get a lot of church trade. We feature a complete chicken dinner for $4.29. I think we have the best food in southern West Virginia."

Sally lost her husband in 1988, and now lives in an apartment across the hall from Elizabeth Adkins, night shift manager, who has been a fixture at Morrison's for 28 years. "Mabel Shepherd, another co-worker, sees that my orders are done right. Several of the women who work at the drive-in are my friends and are long-time employees. Gay Skaggs, a veteran of 38 years, is 64, and day shift manager. She brings supper to me on Monday nights. Judy Conley has about 24 years here. Our youngest curb girl is 19."

Besides crocheting and embroidering in her spare time, Sally visits the mall, attends the Central Baptist Church where she has been a member since 1970 and enjoys babysitting with her great-grandchildren. She has four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. One of her grandsons, Rodney Burham and wife Renee, reside in White's Addition. They have two little daughters, Judith and Summer.

Sally's daughters, Brenda and Carla, live in Massachusetts and New Jersey, respectively. Sally spends Christmas and her summer vacations at her daughters' homes enjoying treasured time with her grandchildren, Delia, Jared, and Gregory.

Sally feels the most fulfilling part of her job is meeting a variety of interesting people, some of them downright amusing. "I've seen fights among the teens on Friday and Saturday nights, and one time an older couple got into a disagreement and the man dumped a shrimp dinner over his companion's head. He stomped off while she cleaned up the mess.

"One time an older couple got into a disagreement and the man dumped a shrimp dinner over his companion's head."

Then she calmly drove down the road and picked him up.

"I've met doctors, lawyers, politicians, bank presidents, and once I did an order for Wally Fowler, a country singer from Nashville. He was on his way to a songfest in the Man area."

Sally's list of satisfied customers is long and she notes that they like and respect her. Senator Earl Tomblin probably summed it up best when he said, "She always has a smiling face. She's a cheerful person and the best curb girl Logan has."

Despite being on the go from 4 to 10:00 p.m. daily except Wednesdays, Sally declares her life's been pretty good and she has no real complaints. The only medication she takes is Tylenol for an occasional headache.

"I'd like to work until I'm 80, but I feel like I'm getting too old," Sally continues. "I'm thinking of retiring by the end of 1998. I'll miss all the people, though. My boss says to stay out here as long as I want to and we'll just take it from there. But I have to accept — I turned 70 on August 13, and that makes me the oldest curb girl in Logan County.

"My children and friends even think I may be the oldest in America," she chuckles, climbing into her car and waving a cheery goodbye.

Brenda West, *a McDowell County native, has worked at the* Welch Daily News *for the past 18 years. She does feature writing and composing. She has had articles published in* IDEALS *magazine and the* Globe.

Service with a smile, for more than 42 years.

Getting Started on Spring: Grandfather's Garden

By Barbara A. Angle

Growing up on an isolated Potomac River bottom wedged between the West Virginia and Maryland mountains, I had no sense of the extraordinary in my childhood. Only now, a half-century later, do I remember the simple peace that marked those days and seasons.

Spring was particularly special. As experienced with my grandfather, William Saxon Angle, it was a time of high earth smell and coming garden. I "assisted" as he turned the soil, and when he was in his 80's, my own young son did the same.

The following is what we have for the memory.

Pappy wakes early. But then he always does, the more so with age. Stretching his old frame to its warped length, he stills, sensing some change in the world, a freshness. The warm western wind sings softly through the Appalachians. Icicles drip. And albeit unofficial, spring has come to the Eastern Panhandle. He rises, bumbles around the kitchen sipping coffee, then steps out onto the porch to sniff air newly sweet with crisp melt.

First light sees him kneeling at the garden's edge, his hand balling a bit of soil. Unclenched, the dank clod holds firm.

Soon. Not today, but very soon the earth will dry to his touch, asserting itself after winter's long turgidity. He hears the light footsteps of his granddaughter behind him. I too have risen to the day.

"Is it time?"

"What do you think?"

I crouch, mimicking Pap but with the ease of youth, my seven-year-old face tensely serious as I check the soil. "Not yet. But soon."

Two weeks later the experiment is repeated. This time the soil crumbles within his hand. We look at each other. "Now."

"For tilling anyways, putting in a few onions, maybe some lettuce," he says. "Go find a can for worms."

Pap ambles to the toolshed for the seed pouch and gas for the tractor. Also he unobtrusively siphons some 'shine into a jar. Both man and machine will require regular fueling. I busily fumble around the garage for a good worm can, my search displacing hoarded essentials — old twine rolled into balls, pop bottles, plastic milk jugs, cans of petrified paint — the debris of 50 years of hand-to-mouth existence.

Returning with an A&P Coffee can, I find my grandfather fiddling with the rotary tiller, an ambiguous model of equally ambiguous dependability. Something he mumbles is lost to little-girl ears as the motor shudders into life.

Hand to plow, rusty frame warped into weather-parched skin, he follows the machine which instinctively chugs towards the tract of weeds between house and chicken coop. Pulling the man in its wake, pulsating with animal hunger, the tiller pounces into tangled earth, chewing old growth, its spinning blades releasing furrows of dark satin. Cabbage butterflies loiter on fresh

clods whose grainy crumbs cling to my newly bare feet.

The fresh earth turns belly up at Pap's bidding, excavating stunned worms, easy pickings for me. Trailing robins glean the remains. As an expanding sun brings the first sweat, I see my grandfather take a rag from his bibs and wipe. The coffee can fills and empties twice into a barrel under the cherry tree where our fishing stock molders.

Finished, I sit on the battered car seat we use as a bench, watching Pap finish tilling. He grunts, grounding the machine in a furrow and joins me on the seat, eyeing the high day. "Time to break, I'd say."

We walk to the hand pump which he primes with a standing cup of water. After much synchronized chugging punctuated with a few heartfelt "damns," it releases a cold gush.

Grandfather William Saxon "Pap" Angle turned 100 this January. A veteran of WWI, he taught three generations of his family the art of gardening. He is pictured here at age 90. Photo by the author.

Lunch in the cool kitchen is quick: salty fried-ham sandwiches, their grease saturating the cottony bread. I drink cold milk, brittle against my teeth, while Pap sips at syrupy black coffee.

"The first of the green onions and lettuce will be ready in a few weeks," he observes. "Taste good after soggy winter leavings."

"We putting in any corn?"

"Not for a bit yet. Then maybe just a couple of rows. Takes up too much room for the return. That and the 'maters will have to wait for the moon's change." Putting grease-congealed dishes in the sink, we return to our business.

Taking several pieces of string from his pocket, Pappy ties them onto a ball of twine, sorts through the stakes saved from last year and moves to the garden. He squares off the stakes at each end of the plot, stretching the string between them.

After six short rows are laid out, I am given a crumpled bag of onion sets and the standard instructions: "Tops showing and a finger length between." Indicating with a head gesture that I am to move on, he sits stooped over a bucket of shrunken potatoes, their vitality bleeding into long ghostly sprouts, and dices them, at least one eye to a cut.

Planting onions is a game, marching the bulbs sternly to the string's regimentation. I crawl on all fours, using my index finger for the betwixt space. As an adult, I will continue to plant onions in my small kitchen garden but find the chore hard on the back. As a child, it is an excuse to dig in the earth.

Pappy waits with a shovel and bucket of spuds when I finish, his flushed face and the empty jar indicating his time has been put to good use. He digs the potato hills with fresh zeal, pausing for me to drop chunks for covering.

The bucket lightens steadily. When we finish, the sun is low, fringing the mountains' timbered hairline. Peepers weave a trill from the creek, working themselves into a mating crescendo. This is their moment. The rest of the year, the tiny frogs remain mute.

Pap reaches for the rag in his pocket and finding it sweat sodden, abuses his shirt tail. "Think we've done 'bout enough, Sissy?"

"Taters are finished," I say.

"Let's hand-turn the lettuce bed and then call it," he decides.

We solemnly study the small brown packet penciled "butterhead" in archaic cursive, then move to the littered earth nearest the house where the kitchen garbage is dumped. The moldering soil turns easily, releasing the odor of decay. Bits of eggshell glint; scraps of decomposed food stick to the shovel. The refuse affects my stomach like scummy dishwater.

Thankfully, the lettuce seed has only to be strewn, making contact unnecessary. Within a week the compost will sport a fragile green fur. Soon after, we will lunch on tangy leaves coated with vinegar and hot bacon grease.

Finished, the two of us contemplate the day's work. My grandfather's garden is about a quarter planted, its dormant area wistful under a diminishing sun. A transparent moon rides the horizon. Sudden coolness tingles the skin. Today we have made a beginning.

Barbara A. Angle *lives in Keyser. She is a retired coal miner who started in the mines in 1975 "when there were only 300 women underground." She is the author of two novels,* Rinker *and* Those That Mattered. *She now works at the Potomac Highlands Center in Romney and is working on a fictionalized biography of Nancy Hanks.*

Films on West Virginia and Appalachia

Steve Fesenmaier, director of the West Virginia Library Commission's Film Services unit, provided GOLDENSEAL with the following list of recently acquired films and videos about West Virginia and the Appalachian region.

To learn more about these new films and videos, or hundreds of others in the film library, call (304)558-3977 or 1-800-642-9021 from inside West Virginia. The homepage address is www.wvlc.wvnet.edu/film/vidcat.html. Film Services has the largest collection of mountain movies and tapes anywhere in the country. The list of videos printed here was drawn from nearly 75 recent productions brought to our attention. These vidoes and many others may be borrowed at public libraries throughout West Virginia.

Achieving Justice: A Century of West Virginia University Women in Law
55 min. 1997 WVU College of Law
A documentary video commemorating the 100th anniversary of women graduates from the West Virginia University College of Law. The program has a long and proud tradition of anti-discrimination among members of its community.

Beyond Measure
58 min. 1995 Appalshop Film & Video
People in the heart of the Appalachian mountains know how to survive hard times. As jobs are lost, communities face an uncertain future. This film, the third in Appalshop's *History of Appalachia* series, documents the efforts of citizens rebuilding their communities.

Bomb Shelter at the Greenbrier Hotel
60 min. 1995 NBC-TV
From the television program *Dateline*, this is the story of Lewisburg's world-famous resort, The Greenbrier, and its cavernous bomb shelter which was only recently revealed to the public.

Building a Cello With Harold
105 min. (16mm & VHS) 1996 Bob Gates
West Virginia native Harold Hayslett is a master builder of violins and cellos with instruments in the Library of Congress' Rare Instrument Collection. This documentary follows the building of a cello from start to finish and explores Harold's understanding of wood, his inventiveness, craftsmanship, and thorough knowledge of instruments.

Built on the Rock: The Southern Appalachians
60 min. 1997 Facets
Sixty old-time churches of the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains are profiled in four different seasons. Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal denominations are included.

Campbells Creek, West Virginia 1938-1942
60 min. Robert E. Calderwood
Early scenes from Campbells Creek, Kanawha County, of miners at the Putney mines, the company store, kids waiting for the school bus, the church at Putney, DuPont High School, and local trains and cars of the era.

Cass & Mower — Logging Trains
90 min. 1997 Green Frog Productions
This tape shows Shay engines — #2, #4, #5, and #6 — and a Heisler #6 at work at Cass. There are no tourist trains in this, just logging trains (captured by Robert Flack and Carl Franz) traveling 4,842 feet up Bald Knob. Some early history of the Mower Lumber Company is included, as well as some spectacular winter footage — some of it shot in blinding blizzards!

Evelyn Williams
27 min. 1995 Appalshop
Evelyn Williams is a portrait of an Appalachian African American woman: a coal miner's daughter and wife, a domestic worker and mother of nine, a college student in her fifties, and a community organizer. Now in her eighties, Ms. Williams is battling to save her land in eastern Kentucky from destruction by a large oil and gas firm.

An Evening with Claude Frazier, M.D.
27 min. 1993 WSWP-TV
Dr. Claude Frazier is the author of *Miners and Medicine: West Virginia Memories*. The book is a personal account of growing up as the son of a coal camp doctor and nurse. Here he recalls life in coal camps in Montgomery, Ansted, and Welch and the "ties that bind" in small West Virginia communities.

Extra Innings
60 min. 1994 WSWP-TV
Profiles some of West Virginia's coalfield baseball players from the 1930's and '40's. This video takes a look back through extensive use of historic photographs and fascinating memories of the game and times.

Flood Relief — A Time of Need
60 min. 1996 WCHS-TV
West Virginia's devastating flood of January 1996 is shown through the eyes of Charleston television news station WCHS.

Getting Over Arnette
25 min. 1997 WNPB-TV
What do you do to distract yourself from the impossibly agonizing pain of romantic heartbreak? West Virginia author Pinckney Benedict (*Town Smokes, Dogs of God*) answers this question with unexpectedly bizarre twists. From the opening twang of Hank Williams' "Long Gone Lonesome Blues" to the end credits' defiant "Hard Headed Woman" by Wanda Jackson, this drama creates a rockabilly lovesick world of trailer courts, bowling alleys, and bars. WVU theater professor Jerry McGonigle directed the film adaptation and Laura Benedict wrote the screenplay.

The Gift Horse
25 min. 1997 WNPB-TV
Tom Nicholson directed this film adaptation of Denise Giardina's original screenplay. Ansel Sizemore wins the lottery and wants to donate the money for a music hall in Charleston on the condition it be named for his father, Earl "Froggy" Sizemore. Local art administrators are torn between the money and the "wrong name" for their local temple of high culture. Wickedly funny and poignant.

Hatfields and McCoys — An American Feud
50 min. 1996 A&E Home Video
It began in 1878 and took 12 years, 12 deaths, and one Supreme Court decision before it was over. The famous family feud between the Hatfields and McCoys involved a stolen pig, a forbidden love affair, a hanging, and several cold-blooded murders. Sensational coverage in the media brought the story out of the remote Appalachian hills into the public eye. Historians and family descendants help separate fact from fiction.

Devil Anse Hatfield. Photo by Gravely-Moore Studio, date unknown. Courtesy of West Virginia State Archives.

Holy Cow! Swami
180 min. 1996 WNPB-TV
Jacob Young, famous for creating **Dancing Outlaw** and the award-winning PBS series

Different Drummer, worked for years on this three-part documentary about the controversial Hare Krishna community near Moundsville. A cloud of legal troubles descended on the religious sect's Swami and his followers including allegations of murder and racketeering.

Inauguration of Governor Underwood
120 min. 1997 WOWK-TV
This is the complete coverage of Governor Cecil H. Underwood's historic second inauguration on January 3, 1997, exactly 40 years to the day after his first ceremony.

The Journey of August King
92 min. 1996 Miramax
Set in the mountains of western North Carolina in the 19th century, this film received acclaim from critics coast to coast for its celebration of the human spirit. Jason Patric is August King, a young man whose life is changed forever when he risks everything to help a beautiful woman (Thandie Newton) on a courageous — and very dangerous — search for a new life.

June Kilgore: A Retrospective
90 min. 1995 WVLC
June Kilgore is one of West Virginia's most influential artists, known for her abstract expressionist paintings and her years as a teacher at Marshall University. To honor her, the Cultural Center in Charleston installed a retrospective exhibit of her work. The West Virginia Library Commission documented the exhibit.

Justice in the Coalfields
58 min. 1995 Appalshop
This documentary demonstrates how current labor law has crippled the collective bargaining power of unions. It follows the United Mine Workers strike against Pittston Coal Company in 1988 and the events that followed igniting a community-wide sense of outrage. These events are given context through conversations with the rank and file, a federal judge, a public interest lawyer, and the coal company president.

Mothman — The Point Pleasant Phenomenon
25 minutes 1996 CGL Productions
A local Mason County filmmaker explores the appearances of a strange "flying man with red eyes" in 1967.

Mountain Born: The Jean Ritchie Story
55 min. 1996 KCET-TV
Jean Ritchie, born and raised at Viper, Kentucky, is one of the best-loved folk singers and dulcimer players in the world. She trekked up hills and hollows to find the origins of the old folk songs she has recorded since the 1950's. Forty albums later, Jean Ritchie is still entertaining and educating audiences through the music of her Appalachian heritage.

Mountain Tells
87 min. 1996 WVLC
This three-tape series for children includes stories by Elk Valley librarian Susanna Holstein, Roane County storyteller Wanda Lou McInturff, and Doddridge County storyteller Bonnie Collins. Author Cheryl Harshman reads from her book, *Sally Arnold*, and from *A Little Excitement*. Other segments explore traditional hearth cooking and the cooper's shop at Fort New Salem in Harrison County.

Recreational Resources — State Parks In West Virginia
14 min. 1930's WPA
Professor Larry Sypolt at the WVU Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology requested a West Virginia Library Commission film transfer from the National Archives of this film which was made by the Works Progress Administration and the National Park Service in the 1930's. It shows various state parks, The Greenbrier, and the State Capitol among other recreational resources.

A 1960 Bar Mitzvah in Beckley; Kenny Fink with parents Sidney and Irene. Jewish heritage in the mountains is the subject of "Righteous Remnant: Jewish Survival in Appalachia" by Mary Ann Reed.

Righteous Remnant: Jewish Survival In Appalachia
30 min. 1997 PBS-TV
Tom Sopher is a small-town merchant with a southern West Virginia accent. He is also a part-time softball coach who works to keep Jewish traditions alive in his town. Mary Ann Reed's documentary presents interviews with Sopher and others in chronicling Beckley's Jewish community.

The Rock That Burns
120 min. 1997 Spectra Media
Professor Stuart McGehee put together four programs on the positive aspects of life in West Virginia's coalfields. Gary Simmons, one of West Virginia's longest-working independent filmmakers directed the series. The first segment describes the value of coal, while the second studies life underground. Part three portrays life in company towns, and part four covers mining in the 20th century.

Shiloh
93 min. 1997 Warner Home Video
From the Newbery Award-winning book, **Shiloh** is the story of an abused beagle puppy living in West Virginia that runs away from his neglectful owner. A young boy named Marty (Blake Heron) is determined to save the dog and risks everything to do so against the wishes of his father (Michael Moriarty) and the dog's owner (Scott Wilson). Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* called it "the best movie about a dog since *Old Yeller*."

Tell About the South
90 min. 1997 James Agee Film Project
Six years in the making, **Tell About the South** is the first feature-length documentary film to describe and dramatize the story of modern Southern literature. A central question posed by the film is: How did the poorest, least educated, most troubled region in the country produce so many first-rate writers beginning in the early decades of this century? West Virginians Mary Lee Settle and Henry Louis Gates are among those profiled.

Uncovering the Covered Bridges
60 min. 1993 WSWP-TV
This story of covered bridges presents interviews with WVU's Dr. Emory Kemp, one of the country's foremost authorities on historic bridge technology. The video takes a specific look at the history and current status of remaining bridges in West Virginia and Virginia.

Vandalia:
The Tradition Continues
60 min. 1996 Elderberry Productions
This is a sampling from the Vandalia Gathering, West Virginia's premier folklife event held each Memorial Day weekend on the Capitol grounds. Dancers, musicians, craftspeople, and presenters are featured. Excerpts date back to the first Vandalia in 1977.

Voices of Appalachia — A Documentary
52 min. 1996 Family Theater Productions
Meet some of the unforgettable people of Appalachia in this video. Share their triumphs and challenges, their dreams and difficulties. In the West Virginia coal town of Caretta, a 17-year-old girl dreams of someday being elected governor, helping her community, and living out her life in the hills that she loves. Other "voices" include an older man struggling to organize a union as a way to offer dignity and justice for young workers. A woman, once a victim of domestic abuse herself, serves as an advocate for other battered women. These people share one thing in common: their love for Appalachia.

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22nd Vandalia Gathering
May 22-24, 1998
Capitol Complex Charleston

Photographs from Vandalia Gathering 1997; photos by Michael Keller.

Friday, May 22
7:00 p.m.
Concert

Saturday, May 23
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Daytime Activities
(Storytelling, Crafts, Dance, Children's Area)

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Contests
(Fiddle, Bluegrass Banjo, Mandolin)

7:00 p.m.
Concert & Awards

Sunday, May 24
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Daytime Activities
(Storytelling, Crafts, Dance, Children's Area)

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Contests
(Liars, Old-Time Banjo, Lap Dulcimer, Flat Pick Guitar)

6:00 p.m.
Awards & Gospel Concert

All activities free of charge.
For information,
call (304)558-0220.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Engineering on the B&O
- Photographer Zebedee Crouse
- Miss West Virginia, 1923
- The Shinnston Tornado

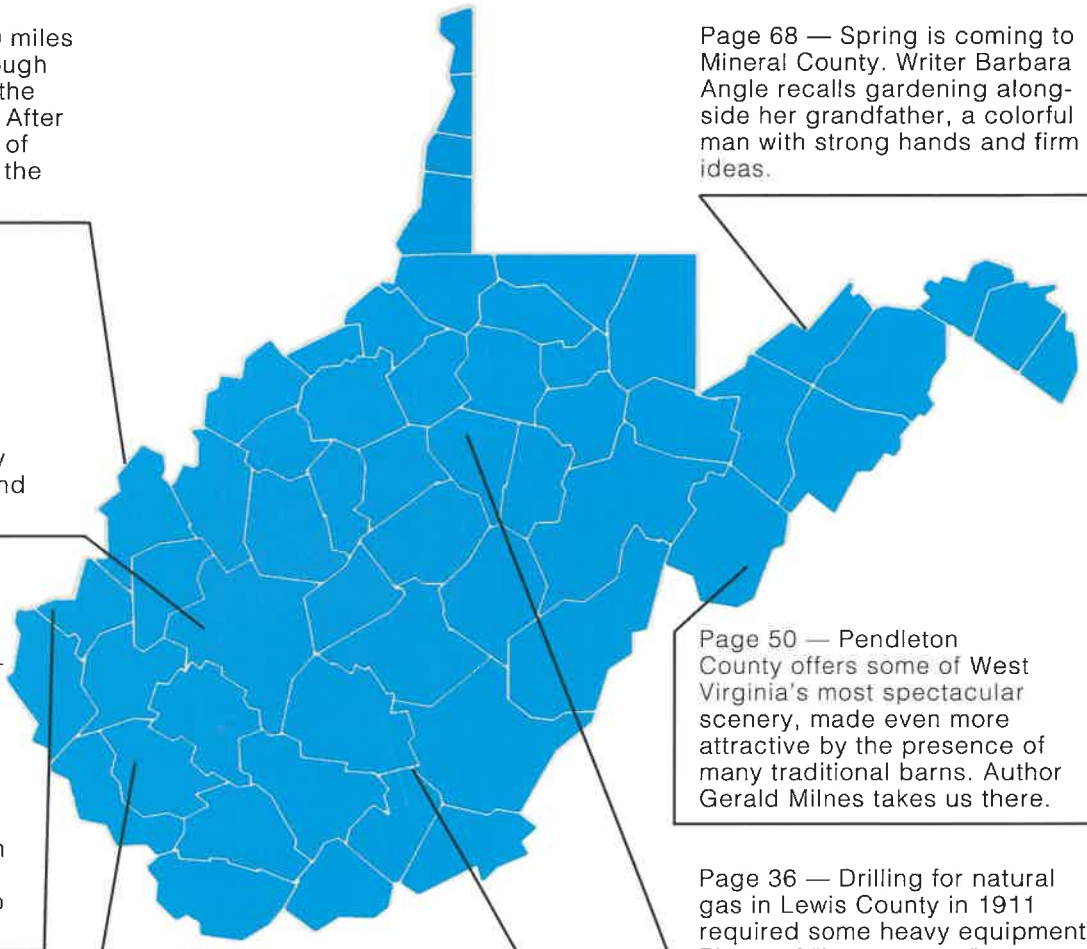
(continued from inside front cover)

August 3-9 State Water Festival
Hinton (466-5420)
August 4-8 Tri-County Cooperative Fair
Petersburg (538-2278)
August 5-10 Wirt County Fair
Elizabeth (275-4517)
August 6-9 Boone County Fair
Danville (369-7303)
August 7-9 Multi-Fest
Charleston (342-4600)
August 7-9 Logan County Arts & Crafts Fair
Logan (752-1324)
August 7-9 26th Augusta Festival
Elkins (637-1209)
August 8-9 Dulcimer Weekend
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
August 9 60th Job's Temple Homecoming
Glenville (428-5421)
August 10-15 Magnolia Fair
Matewan (426-4239)
August 10-16 38th Town & Country Days
New Martinsville (455-2418)
August 14-16 Lilly Family Reunion
Flat Top (253-7127)
August 14-22 State Fair of West Virginia
Lewisburg (645-1090)
August 15 Civilian Conservation Corps Reunion
Camp Woodbine/Richwood (846-9490)
August 18-22 Doddridge County Fair
West Union (873-1275)
August 21-22 West Virginia Blackberry Festival
Nutter Fort (623-2381)
August 21-23 34th Appalachian Arts & Crafts Festival
Beckley (252-7328)
August 21-31 Charleston Sternwheel Regatta
Charleston (348-6419)
August 22 12th Civilian Conservation Corps Reunion
Daniels (252-3161)
August 22-23 Dunkard Valley Frontier Festival
Core (879-5500)
August 31-September 5 Barbour County Fair
Philippi (457-3254)
September 4-6 14th Firemen's Arts & Crafts Festival
Jane Lew (842-4095)
September 4-6 Labor Day Gospel Sing
Mt. Nebo (472-3466)
September 4-6 West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (622-7314)
September 4-6 Erbacon Days
Erbacon (226-5104)
September 4-7 Stonewall Jackson Heritage Jubilee
Weston (1-800-296-1863)
September 5-6 Oglebay Woodcarvers Show & Sale
Wheeling (1-800-624-6988)
September 5-7 34th Hick Festival
Parsons (478-2660)
September 5-7 61st State Horseshoe Championship
Parkersburg (366-7986)
September 6 Roane County Homecoming
Gandeeville (343-8378)
September 11-12 Brickyard Bend Festival
New Cumberland (564-3694)
September 11-12 Sagebrush Roundup Fall Festival
Fairmont (363-6366)
September 11-13 Hilltop Festival
Huntington Museum of Art/Huntington (529-2701)
September 12-13 Hampshire Heritage Days
Romney (822-5013)
September 12-13 Mule & Donkey Show
Sutton (744-8372)
September 12-13 Helvetia Community Fair
Helvetia (924-5018)
September 12-13 West Virginia Honey Festival
Parkersburg (1-800-752-4982)
September 12-13 Putnam County Homecoming
Winfield (755-8421)
September 13-19 King Coal Festival
Williamson (235-2222)
September 17-20 Treasure Mountain Festival
Franklin (249-5422)
September 18-20 12th Mason-Dixon Festival
Morgantown (599-1104)
September 18-20 Nature Wonder & Wild Foods Weekend
North Bend/Cairo (558-3370)
September 19 Country Fall Festival
Lost Creek (745-4790)
September 19-20 Black Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (623-2335)
September 24-26 31st West Virginia Molasses Festival
Arnoldsburg (655-8374)
September 24-27 57th Preston County Buckwheat Festival
Kingwood (329-0021)
September 25-26 FOOTMAD Fall Festival
Camp Sheppard/Gandeeville (344-4314)
September 25-27 Volcano Days Festival
Waverly (679-3611)
September 25-27 Fall Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Charles Town (725-2055)
September 25-27 Hardy County Heritage Weekend
Moorefield (434-2460)
September 26 Roadkill Cookoff
Marlinton (799-4636)
September 26-27 National Hunting & Fishing Days
Stonewall Jackson Lake State Park/Roanoke (924-6211)
September 26-27 Autumn Harvest Festival
Union (772-5475)
September 26-October 4 Mountain State Forest Festival
Elkins (636-1824)
October 1-4 Golden Delicious Festival
Clay (548-7821)
October 2-4 Middle Island Harvest Festival
Middlebourne (758-2184)
October 2-4 West Virginia Pumpkin Festival
Milton (743-9222)
October 2-4 Battle of Point Pleasant Commemoration
Point Pleasant (675-2170)
October 3-4 Old-Fashioned Apple Harvest Festival
Burlington (289-6010)
October 3-4 Fall Country Festival
Farm Museum/Point Pleasant (675-5737)
October 8-10 West Virginia Storytelling Festival
Weston (269-7091)
October 8-11 West Virginia Black Walnut Festival
Spencer (927-1780)
October 9-10 25th Apple Butter Festival
Berkeley Springs (258-3738)
October 10 Taste of Our Town
Lewisburg (645-7917)
October 10 Big Run Apple Festival
Cameron (686-3732)
October 10-11 16th Lumberjackin'-Bluegrassin' Jamboree
Twin Falls/Mullens (294-4000)
October 10-11 Fall Art in the Mountains Festival
Tamarack/Beckley (256-6843)
October 15-18 Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
Martinsburg (263-2500)
October 17 Bridge Day
Fayetteville (1-800-927-0263)
October 17-18 & 24-25 Railroad Days
Hinton (466-5420)
October 24-25 Elmer Bird Tribute
Hurricane (562-5896)
October 25-November 1 Old-Time Week & Fiddlers Reunion
D&E College/Elkins (637-1209)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 1999 "Folklife Fairs Festivals," please send us information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address and phone number, if possible. We must have this information by January 15, 1999, in order to meet our printing deadline. GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in the listing.

GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0300

Inside Goldenseal



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