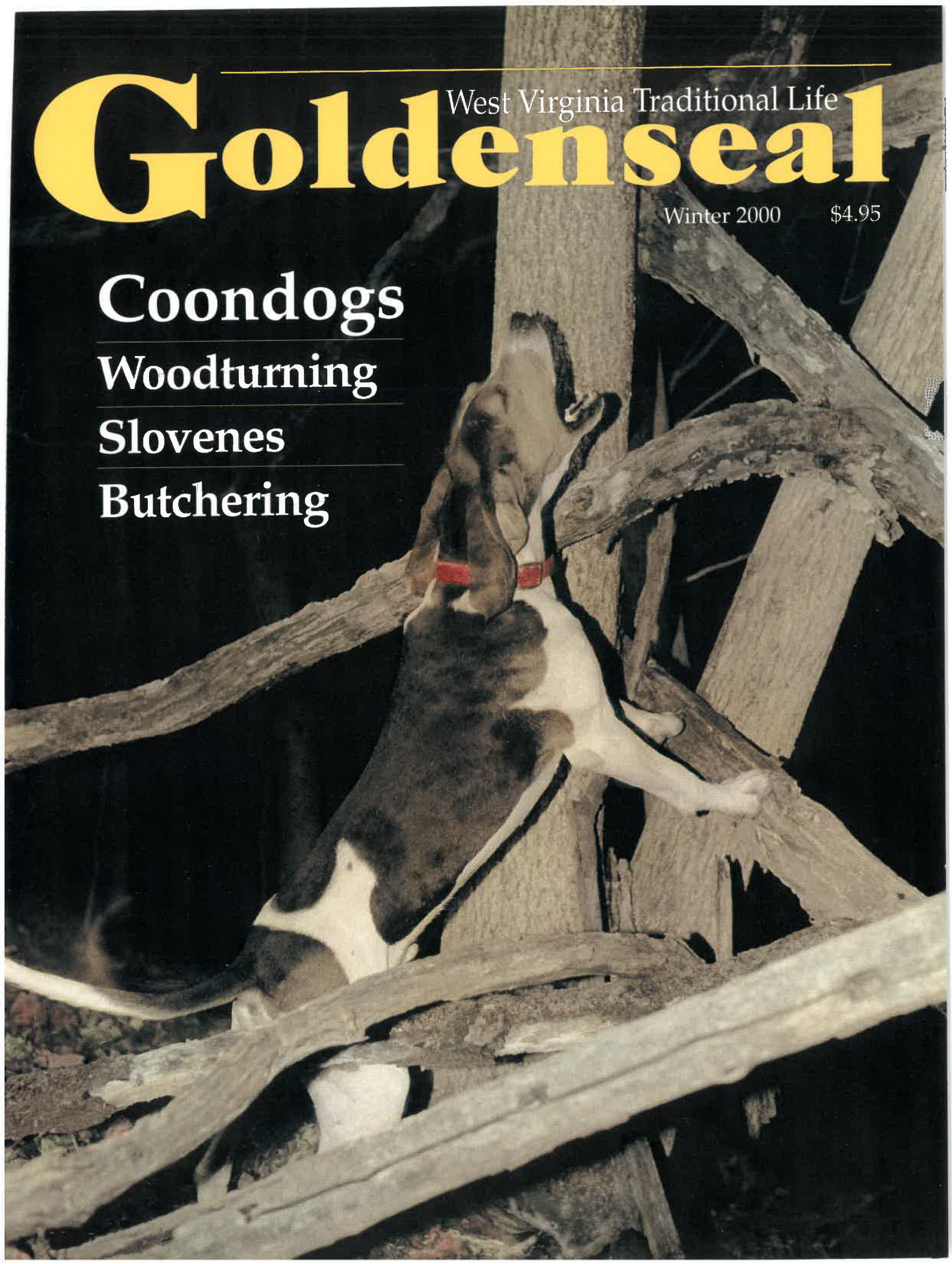


Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Winter 2000 $4.95

Coondogs

Woodturning

Slovenes

Butchering

From the Editor: Of Dogs and Taxes

As the first gusts of winter blow across the hills, it's nice to curl up with some good reading. If you are reading these words, then you're curling up with the latest issue of GOLDENSEAL. It's chocked full of good reading, and I hope that you thoroughly enjoy it.

A good bit of this edition of the magazine is devoted to the venerable West Virginia sport of coon hunting — as I write this, I'm having an awfully hard time resisting all of the obvious puns, but I remain "doggedly" determined not to fall "prey" to such low humor. Oops!

In addition to coondogs, this issue contains two encouraging pieces about apprenticeship learning. Our state's cultural diversity is celebrated with stories about African American coal miners, Slovene immigrants in Richwood, and Parthenia Edmonds — an 85-year-old granddaughter of slaves whose dreams were fulfilled in West Virginia's southern coalfields.

Seasonal offerings include butchering on a Barbour County farm, and recollections of Christmas celebrations in Canebrake. "Mountain Music Roundup" brings us up-to-date on recordings of traditional music, and the GOLDENSEAL index looks back over another banner year.

While 2000 has been a great year for the magazine in many ways, there are some serious challenges facing us today which could directly effect you, our faithful readers, in the very near future. As you are aware, GOLDENSEAL is now completely self-supporting through the sale of magazines to people like you. We are proud of the fact that we can sustain such a high-quality publication with no state financial support; we owe this accomplishment to you, our paid subscribers.

The downside to this successful transition from voluntary to mandatory subscriptions, however, is that according to state law we are now liable for the 6% West Virginia state sales tax. In April 1997, the state legislature passed an amendment to the tax code granting a specific exemption to our sister publication, *Wonderful West Virginia*, a magazine which is published by the Department of Natural Resources. Since GOLDENSEAL and *Wonderful West Virginia* are very similar magazines, each published by the state and each promoting West Virginia's cultural heritage and natural beauty in its own way, we sought to be included in this exemption to the state sales tax, feeling that this was an obvious issue of fairness.

Unfortunately, efforts to have GOLDENSEAL included in this exemption were unsuccessful. As a result, the state began the process of collecting current and back taxes from GOLDENSEAL earlier this year, with payments totaling over $30,000 for the fiscal year which ended last July. These collections continue today, and GOLDENSEAL's hard-won cash reserves are now about gone.

We work very hard to keep magazine costs down on our "Big Three" items: printing, postage, and personnel. Through careful contract negotiating, meticulous mail handling, and conservative staff salaries, we have managed to keep our annual subscription price steady at $16 since 1995. Nevertheless, costs continue to rise, and it is inevitable that you will eventually see those higher production costs in the form of a modest rate increase at some point in time.

If, however, we are forced to also add the 6% state sales tax to your subscription price, the new amount would almost certainly put the price of the magazine beyond the reach of a large number of our readers. This, then, could possibly force us to raise the price even further since we would have fewer paid subscribers, starting a spiral effect which I would prefer not to even think about!

Lou Capaldini, the acting commissioner of the Division of Culture and History, has assured us that he and others within state government are prepared to bring this issue to members of the state legislature and the governor-elect in hopes that the matter can be resolved during the 2001 legislative session, by passing a separate amendment to the state tax code specific to GOLDENSEAL.

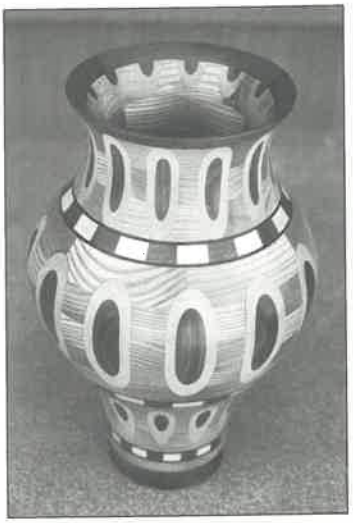
We sincerely hope that these efforts are successful — the future of GOLDENSEAL may hinge on it. As always, your thoughts and comments on this subject are welcome and encouraged.

I would hate to have to "hound" you for more money than necessary. Oops! Dogs and taxes aside, I hope that you appreciate our efforts to bring you this fine magazine. Most of all, I hope that the holidays find you healthy and happy, and surrounded by those who mean the most to you.

John Lilly

Volume 26, Number 4 **Goldenseal** Winter 2000

p. 10



p. 28

p. 46

p. 52

On the cover: Knothead, a Walker hound belonging to Jerry Shaffer, trees a raccoon in rural Kanawha County. Our stories about coondogs, and the people who love them, begin on page 10. Photograph and hand-tinting by Michael Keller.

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Cecil H. Underwood
Governor

Division of Culture and History
Louis A. Capaldini
Acting Commissioner

John Lilly
Editor

Cornelia Crews Alexander
Circulation Manager

Anne H. Crozier
Colleen Anderson
Designers

GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $16 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs.

All correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editor
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

Phone (304)558-0220
e-mail goldenseal@wvculture.org
www.wvculture.org/goldenseal

Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. The Division of Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Printed in West Virginia by The Chapman Printing Company.

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.

Fred Layman

September 18, 2000
Via e-mail
Editor:
I was very interested in your article about Fred Layman [see "Fred Layman Saves It All," by Norman Julian; Fall 2000]. I am a native West Virginian living now in Florida. My family moved from Clarksburg in 1968. My father was on the Harrison County Emergency Squad. He was a charter member — I have a copy of that original document.

Fred Layman at Victory Lane in Clarksburg. Photograph by Norman Julian.

My mother graduated from Victory High School and I would like information about getting a brick in her honor. I am also interested in the Lyda Clark Nursing Home, considering it was my home for the first eight years of my life. I know some history on the building, but not its origination. My grandmother owned it from the early 1950's until about 1967. I went back and visited last year and was very disheartened at the disrepair the beautiful building was in. I would love to make a trip back there again to talk with Mr. Layman about the workings of the emergency squad.

I love your magazine, especially when I read about places my family came from. Again, thanks for the great articles. I look forward each quarter to the magazine and read it from cover to cover.
Sincerely,
Debbie Marteney Owen.

Fred tells us that he and his group have sold nearly 5,000 bricks along Victory Lane at the old high school. If you are interested in buying a brick, you can contact Fred via e-mail at FGL46VSH@aol.com. —ed.

Hitchhiking Ghost

September 11, 2000
Via e-mail
Editor:
Most curious! The Ghostly Hitchhiker [see "The Hitchhiking Ghost of Fifth Street Hill," by Joseph Platania; Fall 2000] is one of the most widespread ghost stories in the world, with versions found as far away as China and Turkey, and as far back as pre-automobile days. There was even a popular song based on it years ago. But this is the first time I ever heard of its happening so repeatedly in the same place. Still, the version in your Fall 2000 issue has one major feature in common with all the other accounts: the people quoted in the article are never the ones who actually *had* the experience.
Sincerely,
Mary Clawsey

It just goes to show that the old tales are the best tales. We actually were able to identify two popular songs based on this legend, both of them recorded in 1965. Dickey Lee's song, "Laurie (Strange Things Happen)," which reached #14 on the pop charts that year, tells the story of a lovesick teenager who walks a young girl home after a dance. He later discovers that she was a ghost and finds his borrowed sweater laying on her grave.

A more exact retelling of the Hitchhiking Ghost tale is found in the bluegrass song, "Bringing Mary Home," a hit for the Country Gentlemen. It debuted the day before Halloween 1965 and spent four spooky weeks on the charts, peaking at #43.

Fact or fancy, this ghost story truly has a "life" of its own. —ed.

Treasure Mountain

September 12, 2000
Franklin, West Virginia
Editor:
What a wonderful publication! I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that the last issue was my first exposure to GOLDENSEAL. Being a fairly new West Virginia resident, I continue to discover her treasures. Thank you for your extensive coverage of the Treasure Mountain Festival [see "Current Programs, Events, Publications"; Fall 2000]. We are deeply appreciative.

Incidently, you might be interested in a program at Davis & Elkins College that connects West Virginia heritage artisans with those desiring to learn their craft, so that our "old ways of doing things" are not lost. This may be a nice feature, if you have not done so already.

Thanks for your interest in, and for sharing, what is great in our wonderful state!
Very Sincerely,
Linda Long
President,
Treasure Mountain Festival

Thank you for those kind words. I hope that the 2000 Treasure Mountain Festival was a big success. The program to which you refer is the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. As luck would have it, we have two features in this issue related to it [see "Turning and Learning: Paul Weinberger's Woodshop," by Dave Shombert; page 28, and "Passing It On: The West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program," by Gerald Milnes; page 35]. —ed.

Rex Harper, Ken McClain

September 29, 2000
Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania
Editor:
My grandmother Hattie Carr Bennett McClain was diagnosed with TB when she was pregnant with my mother Agnes Virginia McClain Hyre. Hattie went to Asheville, North Carolina, which in those days was the place to go for the cure of TB. My mother's illness became worse, and it was decided that she and her baby daughter would be returned to West Virginia along with a black nannie to care for them on the trip.

They arrived in Elkins on the train and were met by my grandfather Reverend Robert M. "Reverend Bob" McClain and his sister Cordelia "Aunt Delia" McClain Harper. Arrangements were made for the nannie to return to North Carolina on the next train, and Aunt Delia took little Agnes with her.

My grandmother died a short time thereafter when my mother was two months old. My grandfather was not prepared to take care of such a young child, especially with three other little children at home, so Aunt Delia took little Agnes to raise in the small village of Frenchton, along with her own six children.

Rex Harper [see "Rex Harper: My West Virginia Dad," by Sheldon Harper; Summer 2000]

Cordelia "Aunt Delia" McClain Harper holding young Agnes, 1913.

was Aunt Delia's youngest. He and my mother were very close, like brother and sister. When they were older, my mother would bake cookies and salt-rising bread to send to Rex every so often. He loved it, and they would call each other often. My mother misses those phone calls.

What a surprise to also see the article on Ken McClain — another first cousin of my mother's [see "A Lasting Impression: Recalling Printer Ken McClain," by Mariwyn McClain Smith; Summer 2000]. Ken, Rex, and Agnes were all grandchildren of William Henry McClain and Mary O'Ferrell McClain.

On behalf of my family and my mother — now 88 years young — I want to thank you and Sheldon for the wonderful tribute you have paid to a real true West Virginia Mountaineer, Rex Harper.
C. Eddie Hyre

Sallie Maxwell Bennett

August 29, 2000
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
When we visited Westminster Abbey this summer, we made a point of finding the Royal Flying Corps window, which was cited in a GOLDENSEAL article

Sallie Maxwell Bennett. Photograph from West Virginia Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

["'Able Courage': The Monumental Sallie Maxwell Bennett," by L. Wayne Sheets; Spring 2000]. We were told that we could obtain a photograph of the window from the Westminster Abbey library.

Upon gaining admittance, we were kindly received by Miss Christine Reynolds who showed us the "Bennett window" file, which contains a number of letters from Mrs. Bennett. Miss Reynolds mentioned that she has recently received several requests for information about this window, which we agreed were probably triggered by the GOLDENSEAL article.

We did, in fact, acquire a photograph of the window. As mentioned in the article, the state seal of West Virginia is represented in the lower right-hand corner. The mountaineer and coal miner, with the date of becoming a state between them, are pictured on a shield; the banner above the shield contains the intitials, "W.Va.F.C.," which stands for West Virginia Flying Corps, which, as stated in the article, was organized by Louis Bennett.

For those interested in more information, Miss Reynolds may be reached at:
The Cloisters
Westminster Abbey
London SW1P 3PA
United Kingdom
e-mail: christine.reynolds@westminster-abbey.org
Sincerely,
Evan Buck and
Theresa Królikowski Buck

Curious

September 10, 2000
Parkersburg, West Virginia
Editor:
I am writing in regard to "Photo Curiosity" in GOLDENSEAL.

I looked in my fall issue. Where was the answer — if any — to the large church on page 72 of the Spring 2000 issue? Also, two mules hitched to a wagon ["Photo Curiosity"; Fall 1998]. I did not see the answer. Also, the Summer 2000 "Photo Curiosity" of the four musicians — one fiddler, two banjos, and one guitar. I did not see any answer.

I am enclosing my check for another year of the GOLDENSEAL. It is one fine book and I read it from cover to cover.
C. Paul Smith

I'm glad you asked. We usually get a tremendous response to our "Photo Curiosity" requests [see page 6], but sometimes our queries go answered. The photo you mentioned from Fall 1998 drew about 40 responses, identifying the animals as wearing fly nets. See page 72 of the Winter 1998 issue for more about fly nets.

Unfortunately, the other two photos you cited are still unidentified. We received many suggestions as to the possible identity of the church from Spring 2000, but none could be verified. The identities of our musicians from our Summer 2000 "Photo Curiosity" remain a mystery, as well.

We appreciate your curiosity!
—ed.

Fiddler Identified

September 15, 2000
Orrville, Ohio
Editor:
On page 51 of the Summer 2000 issue was a picture of an unidentified fiddler. The man is Homer Lawson, a Calhoun County resident who passed away some years back. He was my wife's great-uncle.

I really enjoy the GOLDENSEAL magazine. I read every issue thoroughly.
Rex Miller

Fiddler Homer Lawson in Glenville, 1960. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, Department of Commerce Collection.

Phoebe Snow

September 26, 2000
Elkins, West Virginia
Editor:
I am writing in response to Mr. Ben Hawker's May 15 letter [see "Letters from Readers"; Fall 2000] inquiring about "the true story of Phoebe Snow," as seen on Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad cars.

According to Freeman H. Hubbard, editor of *Railroad Magazine* in the 1930's, Phoebe Snow was a "dainty young lady created in 1904 for the sole purpose of publicizing the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad," to "convince the traveling public that the Lackawanna offered modern passenger service that was luxuriously clean, because Lackawanna engines burned anthracite, instead of more grimy bituminous coal." One promotional ditty which they used went as follows: "Phoebe Snow, dressed in white,/Rides the Road of Anthracite."

Mr. Hubbard's 1945 book, *Railroad Avenue: Great Stories and Legends of American Railroading*, also recounts the true story of Kate Shelley, a 15-year-old daughter of a deceased section hand on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad, who crawled across a railroad bridge over the flooding Des Moines River in the middle of the night on July 6, 1881, and ran a half mile to the Moingona, Iowa, depot to report that a nearby bridge had been destroyed by the flood, thereby saving the approaching C & NW midnight limited passenger train. This story was memorialized in several poems and ballads including one written in 1930 by MacKinley Cantor. The story fairly closely resembles the Phoebe Snow story that E.C. Bramham told Mr. Hawker in the mid-'30's; it seems reasonable that he might have read Cantor's "Ballad of Kate Shelley" and confused the two names.

Phoebe Snow, the Lackawanna belle.

I would be interested in hearing whether you received other versions of the origins of Phoebe Snow.
Yours for limitless trivia,
Harry B. Mahoney

Kennedy Reaction

Our feature story about the 1960 Democratic presidential primary campaign [see "Kennedy In West Virginia," by Topper Sherwood; Fall 2000] generated an unprecedented amount of mail. Most of the letters were quite positive, though we were also soundly chastised by a few readers over this article. This was in addition to the many letters and calls we received about our Kennedy-related "Photo Curiosity" from the same issue [see page 6].

Charlton and June Cox from Hinton were pleased to recognize their daughter as one of the majorettes entertaining Senator Kennedy on the streets of Hinton, shown in a photograph on page 22. GOLDENSEAL contributor Basil Hurley [see "Tales From the Irish Tract"; Spring 1998] was reminded of a passage from Homer Hickam Jr.'s book, *Rocket Boys*, in which young Homer meets Kennedy on the campaign trail in McDowell County. The two men briefly discussed the future of the space program.

Joy U. Berkley from Morgantown recalled working on the Kennedy campaign in 1960 along with her friend Gloria Morris Allen, now of Tehachapi, California. Joy forwarded to us a chapter from Gloria's autobiography. In it, Gloria shares pleasant memories of John and Robert Kennedy, particularly on one occasion when she helped the two brothers find an open laundromat in Kanawha City and waited with them while they quietly did their wash.

Other readers wrote to express their displeasure that GOLDENSEAL would devote space to this subject, given that the Kennedy family are not native West Virginians, and considering the large number of allegations and scandals which have emerged over the years surrounding this controversial family, their personal lives, and their politics.

While emotions still run high on this topic, the 1960 presidential primary campaign was clearly a unique and distinctive chapter in our state's history, and one which continues to merit our careful study and attention.

We very much appreciate hearing from all of the readers who took their time to write to us on this subject. —ed.

Kennedy in Gary

We received a great many responses to our "Photo Curiosity" in the fall issue, ranging from retired coal miners to former governors. Through these knowledgeable readers, we have learned a great deal about this historic photo.

The picture was taken in April 1960 in Gary, McDowell County, as Senator John F. Kennedy campaigned for the Democratic presidential primary election that spring. At left is campaign coordinator ***Robert McDonough****; the man standing next to him is unidentified, possibly a Secret Service agent; facing right is Welch attorney* ***Samuel Solins****; the man behind Kennedy's right shoulder is unidentified. Behind Kennedy's left shoulder is* Charleston Gazette *editor* ***Harry Hoffman****; and at right is U.S. Steel executive* ***C.W. "Bucky" Connor****.*

Of the numerous cards, letters, calls, and e-mails we received, the following letter from a Bluefield attorney is perhaps the most revealing. Thanks to all who responded to this "Photo Curiosity." —ed.

September 12, 2000
Bluefield, WV
Editor:

The photograph was taken in the southern West Virginia coal mining community of Gary in McDowell County. I was born in Gary in 1938, and have lived there most of my life. I practiced law in Welch from 1965 until 1984, and have been practicing in Bluefield since that time. I was not in Gary at the time this photograph was taken in the spring of 1960, because I was in my senior year at West Virginia University.

There was a large coal preparation plant constructed at Gary by the United States Steel Corporation right after the second World War. It was known as the Alpheus preparation plant, and the men in the photograph are looking out over that preparation plant located below them in a narrow valley.

On the left side of the photograph is a tower on which there is a conveyor that transported coal refuse and coal slurry from the preparation plant in the valley below. This conveyor belt went over the main state highway going from Gary to Welch, and anyone living in that area during the time would recognize it.

I knew two of the individuals who appear to be talking to Senator Kennedy. The man on Kennedy's left who is wearing a dark hat is C.W. "Bucky" Connor, Jr., who was the general superintendent of the United States Steel coal operation in Gary at the time. I knew Mr. Connor well because I dated his daughter and was in his home many times. He was highly regarded and well liked in Gary. He is deceased.

The man on Kennedy's right is Samuel Solins, a well-known Welch attorney. I practiced law in Welch during the time Mr. Solins practiced there, and I was a member of the Welch Rotary Club when he was a member. Samuel Solins was a personal friend of President Harry S. Truman, and was instrumental in having President Truman come to Welch to deliver the Veteran's Day address sometime in the 1950's after President Truman had left office. Veteran's Day is a large event in Welch each year and many notable leaders have spoken there. Like Truman, one of Mr. Solins' habits was to take a daily walk, and, even in his 80's, he could be seen walking each day at noon in Welch. Mr. Solins was one of the main reasons McDowell County has a nice public library. Mr. Solins is now deceased.

GOLDENSEAL published an article about Gary written by Dr. Stuart McGehee [see "Gary: A First-Class Operation," by Stuart McGehee; Fall 1988]. I have been a longtime subscriber to GOLDENSEAL, and enjoy reading all of the articles.

Very truly yours,
Wade T. Watson

Current Programs • Events • Publications

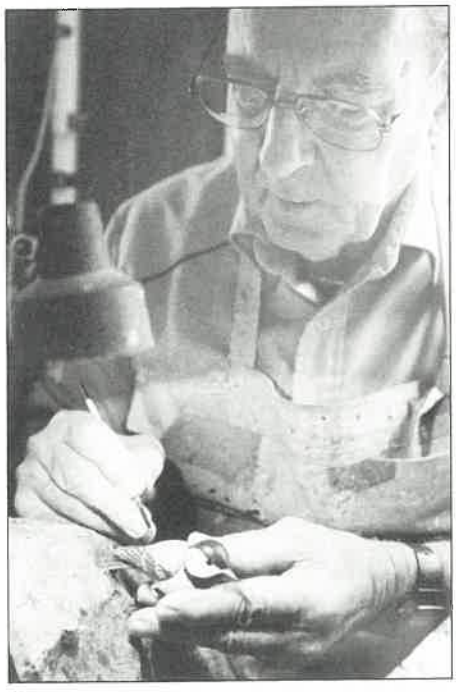
GOLDENSEAL announcements are published as a service, as space permits. They are not paid advertisements and items are screened according to the likely interests of our readers. We welcome event announcements and review copies of books and recordings, but cannot guarantee publication.

Bird Carvings Donated

Woodcarver Claude Kemper has donated a collection of 45 handcarved West Virginia birds to Glenville State College. Claude, featured in the Spring 1983 issue of GOLDENSEAL [see "Birds of My Hollow: Claude Kemper, Bird Carver," by Noel W. Tenney] has been creating his colorful and realistic bird carvings for more than 25 years. His images are based on the feathered creatures he observed while growing up on a farm near Tanner, Gilmer County.

The centerpiece of Claude's gift to the college is a 10-bird sculpture called "Feathers of Yellow," featuring lifelike depictions of wild birds with yellow coloration including the goldfinch, meadowlark, yellow warbler, and several others. The display cases for the bird carvings were custom-made using wood donated by Claude's friend and GOLDENSEAL story subject John Cooper [see "Growing Christmas: John Cooper and Santa's Forest," by Debby Sonis Jackson; Winter 1992].

Claude, now 89 years old, donated the unique collection in a ceremony held at the college this past August. The carvings will remain on permanent display on the second floor of the Robert F. Kidd Library, and may be viewed during normal library hours. For more information, call (304)462-4109.



Bird carver Claude Kemper. Photograph by Noel Tenney.

Heritage Newsletter

West Virginia's African American heritage is the subject of a newsletter published recently by the African American Heritage Family Tree Museum in Ansted. The newsletter tells of the many varied activities associated with the museum and its staff, including the recent John Henry Festival, special musical performances at the museum, community outreach programs, financial matters, and general information related to local African American heritage.

On display at the museum in Fayette County are many items of interest including photographs taken by portrait photographer William H. Jordan [see "Photographer William H. Jordan: A Portrait of Ansted's Black Community," by Connie Karickhoff; Winter 1998]. William's grandson, museum director Norman

Here's My GOLDENSEAL Gift List!

Please add the following name(s) to the GOLDENSEAL mailing list. I enclose $16 for each subscription.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

[ ] I'm adding $4 extra per subscription (total $20). Please send the current issue along with the gift card!

Gift Giver's Name_____

Address _____

_____

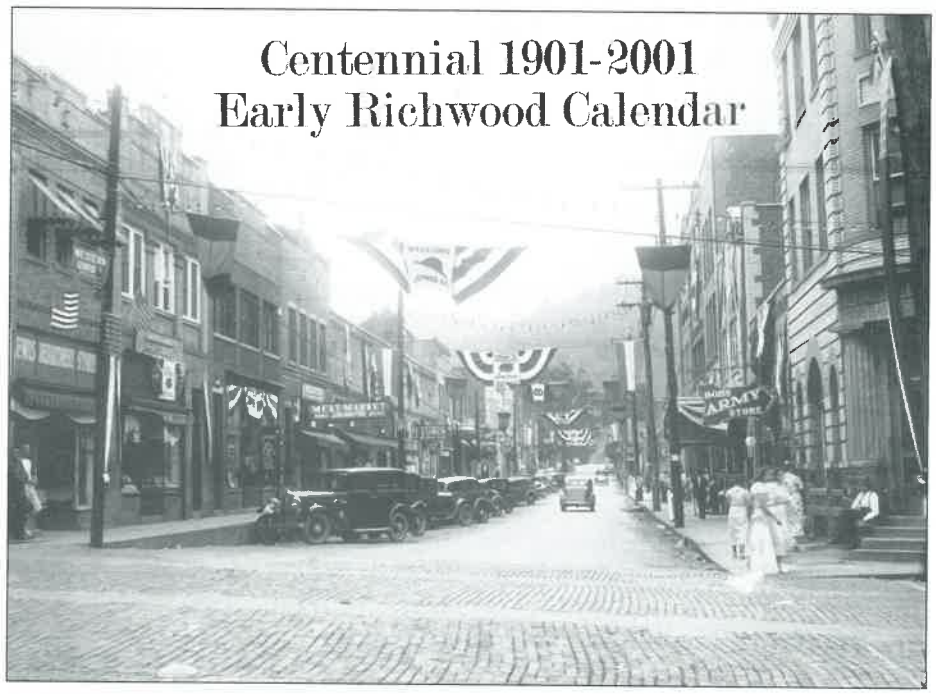
Name(s) to be signed on gift card:

_____

[ ] Add my name too! I enclose $16 for my own subscription.

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.

Send to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300



Jordan, is also a GOLDENSEAL contributor. Norman's article, "Camp Washington-Carver: An African American Landmark in Fayette County," appeared in our Winter 1999 issue.

The museum will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2001, with festivities planned for May 26. For more information, or for a free copy of the recent newsletter, write or call AAHFTMA, HC 67 Box 58A, Ansted, WV 25812; phone (304)658-5526, or e-mail brucellajordan@africana.com.

Richwood Centennial Calendar

The town of Richwood in Nicholas County celebrates its 100-year anniversary in 2001. Commemorating this milestone, members of the community have produced an attractive calendar featuring historic photographs of Richwood during its early years. The pictures were all taken by Richwood photographer Finley Taylor between 1900 and 1946 and show activities ranging from typical street scenes to parades, political rallies, and, naturally, a log sawing contest. Richwood was once considered the "hardwood capital of the nation," and is the subject of a feature story in this issue of GOLDENSEAL [see "'Where the Rails Turn Up': Slovenes Come to Richwood," by Nancy Svet Burnett; page 38].

The calendar is a fundraiser for the Richwood Public Library and represents the first effort in an ongoing partnership between the library and Timeless Creations, owners of the extensive Finley Taylor photography collection. Plans call for a series of annual calendars to be produced over the next several years, highlighting additional photographs from the collection.

The 2001 calendars are available for $15 each plus shipping ($3.20 shipping for up to four calendars) from the Richwood Public Library, 8 White Avenue, Richwood WV 26261; phone (304)846-6222, or via e-mail at lindseyl@raleigh.lib.wv.us.

GOLDENSEAL Tourism Award

GOLDENSEAL magazine received the 2000 "Spirit of West Virginia" Stars of the Industry Award from the West Virginia Division of Tourism. The prestigious award was presented to editor John Lilly at the

MICHAEL KELLER

Governor's Conference on Tourism, September 28, at Snowshoe, Pocahontas County; the award recognizes the magazine's accomplishments over the past year in preserving and promoting our state's cultural heritage.

This is the second year running that GOLDENSEAL has been honored at the annual tourism conference — in 1999, author Danny Williams received second place in the "Best Magazine Feature Story" category for his article, "Clifftop: Appalachian String Band Music Festival," which appeared in the Summer 1999 issue.

State Museum Renovation

The West Virginia State Museum at the Cultural Center in Charleston is set to undergo a complete renovation. The initial phase of the redo was introduced on October 20 by Governor Cecil H. Underwood, who officially unveiled the first of the new exhibits located in the Great Hall on the main floor of the Cultural Center.

Photograph of Jenes Cottrell by Gerald Ratliff, on display in the State Museum.

The new Great Hall exhibit contains many treasures from the State Archives and serves as a preview of the extensive museum renovations to come. The exhibit introduces the main museum themes: work, community, history, people, and land. Several photographs from the GOLDENSEAL files are featured as illustrations in the new, permanent Great Hall exhibit including photographs by Michael Keller, Ron Rittenhouse, Doug Chadwick, Gerald Ratliff, and others. We are proud to see these GOLDENSEAL images on display in the State Museum.

Installation of the remaining exhibits in the ambitious, $6 million renovation project will begin shortly, with completion slated for April 2002. For information on the museum renovation, call Ginny Painter at (304)558-0220 ext. 120.

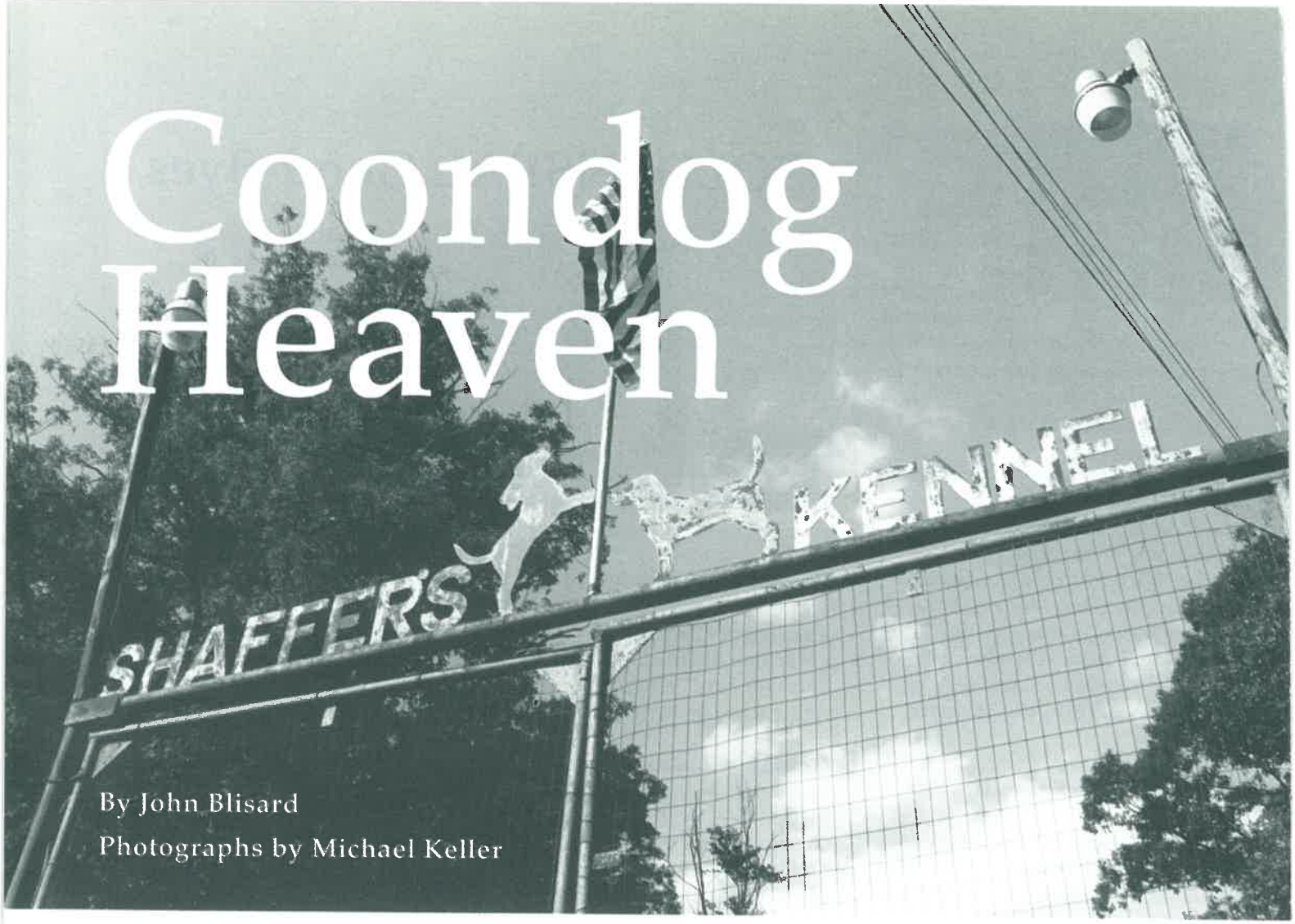
GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Rosa Pheasant. Photograph by Steve Rotsch.

Traditional fiddler **Rosa Bunner Pheasant** passed away on September 3 in Fairmont at age 93. Rosa, along with son John, granddaughter Cathy, and great-granddaughter Meredith, was the subject of a recent GOLDENSEAL story [see "The Fiddling Pheasants of Fairmont," by Torie Knight; Spring 2000]. Rosa was born in Marion County into a musical family and began learning to play the fiddle when she was 10 years old. Through a lifetime of fiddling for dances, at family get-togethers, and "just for fun," she passed along a love of music which is carried on today by three subsequent generations of Pheasants.

Georgia Bryant with husband Maury.

Georgia Gordon Bryant of Princeton passed away on September 25. She was 80. Georgia was born in McDowell County in 1919. She struggled through hard times during her early years, but through perseverance and hard work, found success in Princeton during the 1950's when she operated a popular restaurant. Her story, "How I Came To the Thorn Street Diner," appears in our Spring 2000 issue and recounts her life experiences. Excerpts from her GOLDENSEAL story were read aloud at the memorial service.



Coondog Heaven

By John Blisard

Photographs by Michael Keller

When I arrived at the gate of Shaffer's Kennel for my first visit, I saw 12 or so coondogs, 25 deer, and a flock of Canada geese. The dogs barked in a friendly way at my arrival, but to my surprise, they showed no interest in the nearby deer or the fowl.

I soon learned that this 100-acre compound in rural Kanawha County, protected by two miles of fence, is in a different world. Here, coondogs from across the country — as many as 50 at a time — revel in ideal surroundings, under the watchful and loving care of dog trainers Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer. These hounds are here for an advanced education in trailing and treeing raccoons, and the Shaffers' finely honed teaching methods keep the dogs' attention focused on their intended game, and away from all distractions.

Coondogs have been an important part of the hunting scene here in West Virginia for generations, going back to the colonial period. In an earlier day, the hunting skills of mountain people were essential to their survival, and a good dog was as important to them as a straight-shooting rifle. As recently as 25 years ago, raccoons were considered valuable for their fur; some hunters still eat the meat.

Coondogs have been an important part of the hunting scene here in West Virginia for generations, going back to the colonial period.

More often today, however, hunters and their dogs enjoy the sport of trailing and treeing raccoons for the sheer pleasure of it: the enjoyment of being in the woods in the dead of night, and the satisfaction of shining a light high into a tree and seeing the reflection of two small eyes peering back. An increasingly popular pastime in recent years has been participation in organized competition hunting, where dogs earn points, prizes, and prestigious titles and trophies for their hunting skills.

Here at the head of Coopers Creek, Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer are training some of the top coondogs in the nation. They have dedicated the last 13 years of their lives to raising, training, and boarding coondogs — full time. Try to picture this: 100 acres of rugged hillside surrounded with an electric fence, nine feet tall, providing a protected environment in which dogs have the freedom to run,

learning to trail and hunt coon. Freshwater streams keep two ponds full, hosting Canada geese, duck, deer, and raccoon, all sharing the compound with the Shaffers and their dogs.

A special, 10-acre area is set aside for early training; well-stocked feeders here keep the resident coons fat and happy. Video cameras stationed throughout this section allow Jerry and Yvonne to look in — and listen in — on their students' progress. Other cameras permit views of the boarding kennel, main gate, and the areas around the ponds.

When they aren't busy trailing and treeing coon, the adult dogs stay in the 28-run main kennel, located about 100 yards from the house. The younger dogs are kept separately in a large pen just beside the Shaffers' home, for constant contact and bonding with Jerry and Yvonne. Most of these dogs are here for the "puppy program." This program focuses on letting the dogs run free, learning to run the woods with their peers and learning to pick up the raccoon scent on their own.

Some dogs are here to be broken from running deer. A Basset hound is trained to lead unbroken dogs to the deer. If one of the trainees bolts to chase the deer, Jerry administers a small shock via an electronic collar around the dog's neck. The Basset hound returns to Jerry at that point, trainees in tow. Jerry says that after a few of these exposures, the pups begin to ignore the deer.

Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer at their home on Coopers Creek, Kanawha County. The couple own and operate a nationally recognized training facility for coondogs.

On my second visit, I was greeted at the gate by a dive-bombing turkey buzzard with a four-foot wingspan. Inside the gate stood about 30 deer, just standing around looking at me. Jerry had just delivered their daily feeding by the pond. He spends an average of $3,500 on whole-kernel corn for them each year. The deer can come and go as they please. They jump the fence and explore the vast acreage outside the compound when they wish, but they seem to come back for that daily feeding.

The coon are kept within the two miles of fence, providing a steady,

Modern kennels such as these house the dogs-in-training when they are not in the woods trailing or treeing coon.

Puppy love. A young redbone and a Walker pup lavish affection on Jerry. These youngsters are here for the "puppy program" and stay in a pen adjacent to the Shaffers' home, where they have plenty of opportunity to get personal with their trainers.

constantly reproducing population for training the dogs. The Shaffers' 100-acre creation has evolved into what some would consider a game preserve. According to Larry Mueller, hunting dogs editor for *Outdoor Life* magazine, the Shaffers have America's premier coondog training facility. Jerry tells me that he was the first in the country to build a fully self-contained facility dedicated to training just coondogs. Foxhound facilities like this had been around for years, but none just for coondogs.

Jerry was born in 1941 on nearby Kaufman Branch, where the family homeplace still stands. He says that there were generations of Shaffers, Neelys, and Hannas living up that hollow, practically all of them related to him. His grandfather's brother, Doc Neely, was the area's unofficial veterinarian. Jerry attended Baxter Grade School, Elk Grade School, and Lincoln Junior High before graduating from Stonewall Jackson High School in 1960.

His family lived in Charleston while he was growing up, so Jerry would hitchhike to the homeplace after school every day to squirrel hunt. His daily squirrel hunting habit soon branched over to include coon hunting.

They met at a friend's house and haven't been apart since. Jerry and Yvonne have much in common, but their shared love of coondogs is their most obvious bond.

Jerry's pre-coondog-training employment history includes eight years as a sales representative for McCullough Chainsaws, and after that, nearly 15 years owning his own business, Shaffer's Chainsaw Headquarters, selling and servicing chainsaws, mowers, tillers, and the like.

Yvonne Parsons was born in Hernshaw in Kanawha County. When she was about six months old, her family moved to Kanawha City where she resided through her college years. She graduated from Charleston High School and attended West Virginia State College. She has always loved animals, and when she was younger, wanted to be a veterinarian. She worked at Sears and Trivillian's Pharmacy while attending college, and later worked for a magazine for a few years in marketing.

Then she met Jerry, and everything changed. They met at a friend's house and haven't been apart since. Jerry and Yvonne have much in common, but their shared love of coondogs is their most obvious bond.

Yvonne was the first woman in West Virginia to hunt competitively on a United Kennel Club (UKC) sanctioned hunt. Her main dog was and a redbone called Coopers Creek Old Red. After winning a hunt one night with her, a man asked Yvonne how much she would take for Old Red. Yvonne told him, "I'll take $7,000." The man reached for his checkbook, and Yvonne said, "Put it away, she's not for sale." She just couldn't sell the dog.

Jerry and Yvonne were married on October 13, 1977. That night, they were driving around with some dogs in the back of the truck, out some unfamiliar dirt road, when Jerry tried to convince Yvonne that they were lost. He let the dogs out, and the "Wedding Night Hunt" was underway. Yvonne knew better. She might have been a city girl, but she knew that they weren't lost. Jerry was off listening to the dogs on trail. When he returned to the truck, Yvonne had built a fire. She made it plain that night that she was there for the long haul.

Jerry and Yvonne built a log house on their Coopers Creek property where they lived for the first 14 years of their marriage. For the first six months, they lived without electricity; they carried water until they dug a well. Even under those conditions, they were very happy. After all, they were doing what they wanted to do, working for themselves, and building up what would soon be a thriving dog-training business.

In 1987, they had the fence up and the kennels were ready to go. They had placed their first advertisement in a national coondog magazine, and were just waiting for the business to come. One day, Jerry was mowing the grass when he hit a two-pound piece of metal that shot out of the mower, breaking and nearly severing his leg just below the calf. During his long recovery time, Yvonne did all the work tending to the dogs' needs. She fed them, cleaned their kennels each day, and took them on nightly hunts. As soon as Jerry was able to get to the four-wheeler, he took the dogs on their hunts, dragging his cast-bound leg to the tree to praise the hounds after they'd treed a coon.

Those early days are now behind them, and their training and boarding activities keep Jerry and Yvonne so busy these days that they hardly ever leave the property. The Shaffers currently have 36 dogs enrolled in their various training programs in addition to the 14-or-so dogs which they own. I asked how many states are usually represented in any given year at their place, and Jerry tells me that it would be easier to list the ones *not* represented. The day before my second visit, a man drove from Vermont to pick up his dog that had been there for training. The week before that, a longtime customer from Washington State had driven three of his young pups across the country to leave them with the Shaffers for puppy training. Dogs from 35-50 states usually

Deer roam freely throughout the Shaffers' property, but are especially common in the area around the ponds, where Jerry administers their daily feedings of whole-kernel corn. The dogs, such as January shown here on a four-wheeler, are trained to ignore deer, geese, and other critters; they chase only raccoons. Photograph by John Blisard.

Young Yvonne Parsons gives her dog Tags a ride in this 1953 snapshot taken at the family home on 58th Street in Kanawha City.

Jerry and Yvonne were married in 1977, and for the first 14 years of their marriage, lived in this log house. They are shown here in the late 1970's with an impressive collection of hunting trophies, hides, and redbone hounds. Photographer unknown.

show up each year. They have customers in Canada, as well.

As with most businesses, word-of-mouth advertising is most important in coondog training. Many hunters who have lost to Shaffer-trained dogs in competition have, themselves, become customers for life.

Through trial and error, the Shaffers have learned what works for them when it comes to training dogs. They can usually get a one-year-old dog treeing with consistency in about 30 days. The old, traditional method of training centers on letting the younger dogs tag along behind an older, seasoned dog. When the younger dogs follow the older dog on trail and to the tree, they're just playing second fiddle, members of the barking chorus. Jerry's method puts the younger dogs in an independent role, permitting them to strike and tree the coon as leaders, not as followers.

Every time I visit the Shaffers, I am impressed by the love and dedication they have for each other, and for what they have chosen for their life's work. They live it every day.

The pups are started in the fenced, 10-acre tract where there is the highest concentration of coon to scent and tree.

The next stage of training is exposure to the more natural, 90-acre fenced plot. This is where trailing is learned — the scent of coon is too concentrated in the smaller area for trailing. Although Jerry feeds coon in the larger area, he changes feeding locations constantly to keep the coon laying down new tracks for the dogs to discover. This keeps the dogs on their toes — and noses.

Lariat, a young male Plott hound.

The **Plott hound** is the only one of the coonhound breeds that is not descended from the foxhound, and is the purest and most closely documented of the six recognized breeds. In the mid-1700's, Jonathan Plott emigrated to America from Germany, bringing a few hounds, which he used to hunt wild boar. Having settled in the mountains of North Carolina, Plott began training his dogs to hunt bear due to the absence of wild boar. The Plott hound was registered with UKC in 1946. Plott hounds have great stamina and courage. Coloration is a brindle — a streaked or striped pattern of black or tan hairs on lighter or darker background — or black with brindle trim. Average weight for males is 50-75 pounds, females 40-60 pounds. They are popular for both bear and coon hunting.

The **American black and tan coonhound**, developed in the southern United States, is an excellent tracking dog. It was originally bred during colonial days from American and Virginia foxhounds. Outcrosses with the bloodhound show the source of the colors, the large-boned frame, long ears, and famous "cold nose," so useful for trailing and tracking. This breed was the first coondog to be admitted by UKC in 1900. Coloration is deep black, with tan covering less than 15 percent of the body. White on the breast is permitted. Males average 50-75 pounds, females 40-65 pounds. Average height to the shoulder for males is 23-27 inches. Voice is strong, especially at tree, with a coarse chop.

Annie, a young black and tan female.

Yvonne Shaffer with Ginger Ann, a female redbone pup.

The **redbone coonhound** has been favored by many West Virginia hunters, including Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer. Early owners of red hounds of unknown heritage were impressed by their dogs' prowess in tracking and treeing coons, and referred to them as "redbone hounds." Later, a few serious owners started breeding these dogs intentionally to produce a great hunter with consistent color and hunting characteristics. The first dogs of this type were called "saddlebacks," owing to a black saddle which was later bred out of the dogs, eventually producing a distinctive, solid red color. Redbone males average 55-65 pounds, females 45-55 pounds. Natural treeing instincts make them experts in coon hunting.

— John Blisard

More information is available about coondogs from UKC by writing to them at 100 E. Kilgore Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49002, or on the Internet at www.ukcdogs.com or www.coondogs.net. Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer invite questions about coondog training. You can write to them at Rt. 5, Box 315, Charleston, WV 25312, or via e-mail at coondogtrainer@cs.com.

"I tell you, it's pretty hard to throw a coon in a bag if you have it by the tail, 'cause that coon's feet sticks out every which way and catches the outside of the bag. We were having a time."

Raccoon Tales

Interview by Patricia Workman

During the 1950's, Doc Stowers from Nicholas County had a special permit from the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources to catch live coons and transport them across state lines. At that time, the number of coons in West Virginia was very low, while there was an overabundance of raccoons in some areas, such as up around Lake Erie. Game and wildlife clubs contracted with Doc to catch a certain number of live coons, then turn them loose in various parts of the state. Doc, Clennie Workman, and Ralph Bryant spent a lot of their time during the mid-1950's catching and releasing live coons to help build up their population in central West Virginia. What follows is a colorful account of a few of those trips as told by Ralph Bryant. —Patricia Workman.

Ralph Bryant. Me, Doc Stowers, and Clennie Workman traveled north to Meadsville, Pennsylvania. Doc had contracted an order for 100 live coons to a hunting club. So, the three of us headed to Paul Hunter's camp to catch the coons.

Back then, in the 1950's, there wasn't any interstate highways. All the roads were two-laned, narrow, and winding. We traveled on old Route 19 all the way up to Morgantown. From there we traveled to Uniontown, then almost up to Lake Erie. This was the general area where we planned to hunt.

It was always a big trip. Doc owned a '52 Chevrolet truck with a homemade topper on the back. We'd get all our coon hunting gear, camping equipment, and supplies, and, of course, the dogs in the back of the truck. Clennie always had two or three dogs, Doc five or six. When we got loaded, we'd take down the road with a dog's head sticking out of every window.

Well, on this particular trip, just up past Uniontown, Pennsylvania, we got stopped by the state police. I was driving. The trooper wanted to look in the back of the truck just to see what we had back there. He must have thought we were moonshiners. We had so many dogs, it looked like the back of the truck was loaded with coal. I told the trooper we just had some dogs back there. I don't think he believed me. So, Doc walked back and let down the tailgate on the truck. Well, we had dogs jumping out everywhere. It scared that trooper about half-to-death. He was probably thinking he'd get eat alive by all those dogs.

Coonhunter Doc Stowers from Nicholas County helped to replenish the local raccoon population from the late 1940's until he passed away in 1963. Along with fellow hunters Ralph Bryant, Clennie Workman, and others, Doc traveled on far-ranging coonhunting expeditions and transported hundreds of live coons back to West Virginia. He is shown here at a hunting cabin in Georgia, 1956.

Well, after things quieted down, we got all the dogs loaded back into the truck and continued on our trip. We finally made it up to Paul Hunter's where we picked up the key for his camp.

If you ever hunted with Doc Stowers, you went hunting as soon as you arrived. We would hunt continuously — day and night — until we got our quota of live coons. In this area where we were hunting, they make quite a bit of maple syrup. The majority of our coon catching was done around those syrup houses. I guess the coons liked to eat the run-off from the syrup or something, I don't know.

One morning, Doc was looking for a certain syrup house that me and Clennie had never been to before. Doc just knew if we could find that syrup house, we would catch all kinds of coons. We finally located the place around 10:00.

Clennie had an old coonhound named Buster. Doc said, "Turn ole'

This rare albino raccoon was captured by Doc and his partners in northern Pennsylvania and brought back to Nicholas County in the 1950's. The men thought that they would get rich by breeding it and selling albino coons to area hunt clubs. According to Clennie Workman, though, their dreams were shattered when the offspring were "just old coon-colored."

Buster out." Well, of course, Clennie and me knew it was gonna be an all-day deal when we turned Buster loose. After we turned him down through the woods, we heard him a-way off running the coon, then treed.

Doc stayed in the truck while me and Clennie went down to catch the coon. We took our coon catching equipment and walked down into the woods. Doc was to drive around on the other side and pick us up. Doc wasn't in the best physical shape. He was up in his 60's by this time. When he'd get tired, he'd do the driving and we'd do the walking.

When we got to the dog, he was right by the road. In a short while, Doc arrived with the truck to get us. Well, Doc decided he'd get out and help us catch the coon. Buster had three coons up the tree. I decided to climb the tree while Clennie and Doc caught the coons. I punched out one coon, and it got into the creek. Doc jumped in the creek after that coon. Apparently Doc didn't think the water was very deep, but it was up to his knees, and it was ice cold.

Doc used a big pair of tongs to help catch and hold the coons. The purpose of using the tongs was to hold onto the coon around the neck — or actually anywhere he could get a hold of — until we could get the coon down and bag it.

Well, I tell you, Doc had that poor coon in and out of the creek several times. Finally, he decided to get the coon by the tail and drag it out on the ground. Me and Clennie were supposed to have the bag ready. But now, I tell you, it's pretty hard to throw a coon in a bag if you have it by the tail, 'cause that coon's feet sticks out every which way and catches the outside of the bag. We were having a time.

I decided to come down out of the tree and help them. I told Doc just to throw the coon over on the ground and I'd put my coat over it. Then we could catch and bag it,

Clennie Workman with coondog Buster at left in the mid-1950's. The other dog is named Benny.

The chase is on! Here, a small dog pursues a raccoon at Clennie's home near Muddlety, Nicholas County, in the 1960's. Clennie kept this coon as a pet; the pair are just playing.

like you're supposed to do. Doc and Clennie were worn out fooling with that coon.

Well, about that time, the coon got a hold of Doc's pants leg and run right up it. Doc still had a hold of the coon's tail, and all the time it was climbing up his leg. Doc was trying to pull that coon off his leg. Clennie jumped in to help Doc, then the coon bit him on the thumb. Now at this point, the coon had gotten the best of them. They had to turn it loose. The dog had to tree it again.

Doc was always the cook at the camp. If we were doing real good catching coons, we'd eat steak. Now, as we weren't having much luck, he put us on hamburgers. So Clennie told me, "We'll have to do good tonight, 'cause we've been eating hamburgers for three days." That's all we'd eat, day and night, was hamburger. Clennie said, "If we catch a lot of coons, Doc'll put us back on steaks." We caught 14 coons, so Doc fixed steak that night.

On this particular trip, we spent two weeks in Pennsylvania. We caught 105 live coons. We brought the coons back to Summersville. The men from the wildlife club met us there at Doc's house. We had to unload the coons from one vehicle, then load them into another vehicle. This, of course, created a lot of excitement. There were coons all over the ground and up the trees in people's yards. Finally, after a few hours, we got all the coons caught and placed in crates. Then those fellows set out for home with their load of live coons.

I believe that was back in 1958. We hunted coons in 1955, 1956, 1957, and up into 1958. I was expecting to be drafted into the Army, so I ran around and hunted with Doc Stowers and Clennie Workman for a few years until I was drafted in 1958.

We caught 808 live coons in one year. That was treeing every coon with a dog, shaking them out, catching them by hand, putting them in the sack, and getting them into the truck. I don't know if that's a record or not, but that's a whole lot of coons to catch in one year.

We hunted in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and the northern part of Florida. These areas were overpopulated with coon, and this is where we probably caught about 95 percent of all our coons. There weren't very many coons in our country back then, and some game clubs were trying to build up the coon population in West Virginia and Kentucky.

When we first started catching coons, Doc had been using the tongs. Once the coon hit the ground, he'd get it down with the tongs. Then he had a larger dog to catch the coons. Sometimes he'd stomp the coons with his foot, to help hold it down. We'd have to make the dog get back away from the coon,

"Doc still had a hold of the coon's tail, and all the time it was climbing up his leg. Doc was trying to pull that coon off his leg. Clennie jumped in to help Doc, then the coon bit him on the thumb. Now at this point, the coon had gotten the best of them."

"When I went to the service, then we quit coon hunting. It kind of broke up the team. We were just like the Three Musketeers. We were all good friends. We never failed to have lots of fun wherever we went. It sure was the good old days."

which was hard to do, at times. Then Doc would put those tongs around the coon, and we'd throw it into a sack.

Sometimes, this method hurt the coons. The people that were buying the coons didn't want any of them hurt. They wanted good, healthy coons. What with the coonhound biting on 'em, then Doc stompin' on them, we decided we was gonna have to find a more humane way of catching the coons.

We decided we needed to get a little catch dog. Doc told me to hunt one up. I put out the word I was looking for a little squirrel dog. I heard that Early McKinney had one. I went up to Early's house in Pine Run just down below town. The house was built up on poles and all the dogs were tied underneath the house. People didn't use dog houses back then. They always tied their dogs underneath their houses.

Now, I was wanting a little dog that had enough grit to catch those coons, and Early showed me one he called Freddy — had plenty of scars from fighting off all those dogs down at Early's. The little fella seemed to have a lot of spirit. I traded Early a six-pack of beer and a pack of Camel cigarettes at Bell's pool room. Back then, I thought that was an awful price for a squirrel dog.

The next day, we left on a trip to Georgia. We were hunting in the daytime. Of course, we had Freddy with us. The coondog run one up a little bush out in a field. I punched the coon out and it hit the ground. Freddy didn't know what to do, as he'd never seen a coon before. But after two or three tries, a little bit of coaxing, and encouragement, he started catching the coons automatically. We trained him to catch the coons in just one day.

We'd shake the coon out of the tree, it would hit ground, then Freddie caught and held the coon. Then we threw the coat over the coon and put it in the sack. But then Freddy got to biting and hurting the coons. He was too mean on 'em. Doc decided we'd have his four big teeth pulled. He took the dog down to a vet in Charleston and had his teeth pulled. Then all Freddy had was his little, fine front teeth, so he couldn't hurt the coons. Then he'd just hold onto the coons. Then after that, he could catch a cub or big coon and never hurt them at all.

Freddy was just a little brown and white feist. He was some dog. Actually, he was everybody's dog. Anybody that wanted to go hunting would come and get him. He loved to coon hunt or squirrel hunt.

When I went to the service, then we quit coon hunting. It kind of broke up the team. We were just like the Three Musketeers. We were all good friends. We never failed to have lots of fun wherever we went. It sure was the good old days.

PATRICIA SAMPLES WORKMAN has worked for West Virginia Department of Human Services for 18 years. Her book about her late husband, *Fond Recollections: My Memories of Clennie*, was published in 1998. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 1998 issue.

Ralph Bryant's father C.Z. Bryant was another one of Clennie Workman's hunting buddies. C.Z. at left and Clennie are on a hunt in Nicholas County in this photograph from the 1970's.

Clennie Workman from Nicholas County was an avid woodsman and an expert coon hunter. He is shown here in 1990 at age 75. Photograph courtesy of Anglers Roost.

Straight Talk On Coondogs

Clennie Workman On the Air

A memorable court trial took place in Nicholas County in early 1982. According to the April 17, 1982, edition of the West Virginia Hillbilly *newspaper, plaintiff Chester Addington from Webster County had purchased a coondog — a promising-looking bluetick hound named Ol' Blue — for $400 from a man in Richwood. Unfortunately, Ol' Blue never treed coon number one for Mr. Addington, but spent his time instead chasing the local deer population through the West Virginia hills.*

After one month and 20 days of coon-hunting frustration, Mr. Addington attempted to return the dog and requested a refund of his $400. The two men failed to come to terms, and the case ended up in the halls of justice.

This colorful trial included a guest appearance in the courtroom by Ol' Blue himself, and testimony by expert witness Clennie Workman [see "Recollections of Robinson Fork: Nicholas County Rural Life," by Patricia Samples Workman; Spring 1996]. Clennie was an avid coon hunter and was able to shed some light on the definition and the value of a "straight coondog" for the jury.

Judgement was found for the plaintiff, and Clennie gained some local notoriety for his expertise and his courtroom appearance.

A new radio station, WCWV-FM, came to Summersville two years later. Talk-show hosts Annetta Williams and Harry Lynch invited 71-year-old Clennie Workman to join them in the studio as a guest on their "Coffee Club" program to discuss coondogs. What follows is an edited transcription of that 1985 broadcast. —ed.

Annetta Williams. Clennie, I've known you probably all my life. You're just from up on Muddlety here in Nicholas County, right Clennie?

Clennie Workman. Right.

AW. I thought to myself, what in the world will I ask Clennie about a coondog? And the one question that I really came up with immediately was: Is any dog a coondog, Clennie? Or is this a special breed?

CW. Well, it depends on how you work the dog, mostly. I've made coondogs out of dogs that you didn't think would make anything. It's the way you work the dog.

AW. Is it mainly a beagle? Or could it be a terrier? Or is it just any dog?

CW. Well, no, it ain't that kinda breed. No, them beagles and them things you mentioned there, they're not coondogs.

AW. They're not coondogs.

CW. No. Oh, some of them might tree up a coon, but that's not a coondog. It takes a hound, mostly. A hound dog to work with coons.

Harry Lynch. Does it make any difference if it's purebred? I guess coondogs are registered through UKC, aren't they? If you have a Walker, or a redbone, or a mixed breed, does it make any difference, Clennie, as long as you train it right?

CW. Well, yeah, big difference, I think, in the breed of dog. But what it takes to make a coondog is to keep it in the woods and work with it, any breed you fool with.

AW. All right. Now let's say, Clennie, that I decided that of all the things I've never done in my life, that I'd like to go coon hunting or have a coondog. Clennie, first of all, where can I go to get me a good coondog?

CW. Well, that's a hard question for me to answer because most people that has a real good coondog won't let 'em go.

AW. Oh, okay. All right. Then, Clennie, let's say that I get me a coondog. Let's say that I go somewhere that somebody will take my offer and let me buy a coondog, and so forth. How would I go about training them? What would I do?

CW. If you're gettin' a coondog, it's supposed to be already trained.

AW. Oh, okay. How would *you* go about it then? You're a trainer. What do you do to train that dog to tree a coon?

CW. Well, like I say, you just gotta keep it in the woods where the coons is, and work with it. Deer's supposed to be the hottest scent of anything in the woods, and sometimes it's hard to break them off from deer, foxes, and stuff like that. That's your problem.

HL. Clennie what's a pure coondog? I'll build this up a little bit. Two, three, four years ago, there was a trial in town at the magistrate court where a fella claimed he'd been sold a pure coondog. He took it out, it chased deer, and got runnin' back through the camp and about trampled himself to death, the guy said. And so, the attorneys called Clennie Workman in as an expert witness to define a pure coondog. So, what is your definition of a pure coondog?

CW. A coondog is a dog that, when you go in the woods, you know what he's gonna run. I mean, he ain't runnin' everything. He's a coondog. He don't run anything but a coon. It's a hard job to train dogs to do that.

AW. But Clennie, with that case in magistrate court of somebody saying they thought they had a purebred coondog and it wouldn't do anything but tree the deer and so forth, how did you determine, as you were the expert called in, if that man truly had a purebred coondog or not?

CW. Well, they just wanted to know from me what a "straight coondog" was, you see. And just what I told you is what a straight coondog is: a dog that don't run everything. That's the part they wanted me to answer over there in that court.

HL. We might point out why something like this would go to court. Someone listening who's not

Poor Ol' Blue landed in a Nicholas County courtroom in 1982 for his failure to hunt coon for his owner. Here, Ol' Blue has his day in court as attorneys Greg Null at left and Steve Davis look on. Photograph courtesy of Harry Lynch.

A pair of coondogs compete during a field trial in Randolph County, 1995. Photograph by Gerald Milnes.

familiar with coon hunting might say, "My goodness, what's the big deal? A dog's a dog's a dog." But what's a good coondog cost you now, Clennie? You can pay a lot of money for a coondog, can't you?

CW. This one dog, they's a fella in Virginia offered me $1,500 for him. I wouldn't sell him for no price, right now. Of course, things changes. Right now, I wouldn't sell him for no price.

AW. I had no idea that they cost that much.

HL. Yeah, they do. I guess there's a code of honor among coon hunters. If someone tells you they got a coondog, daggone it, that's what you expect to get, isn't it?

CW. That's what you expect to get is a coondog. There's so many of 'em that calls 'em coondogs that's not coondogs. They run anything that they get after in the woods, and gives you a lot of trouble. It's hard to buy a good coondog.

AW. Clennie, you were talking about someone down in Virginia who would offer you $1,500 for this dog. Is there something like a fraternal group of people or something that own coondogs? How did the man down in Virginia actually get to know that you had this particular dog, and so forth?

CW. Well, you see, I let this one fella in Virginia have three dogs: one foxhound and two coondogs. That's the way he got in contact, through that fella.

AW. Do you go to hunts, or do you go to coon chases, or something?

CW. No, I don't go to them wild coon hunts because you're liable to get your dog tore up with other dogs, or something. Or may get 'em to run at something they ain't supposed to.

HL. What about coon trials? Do you go to any of those, Clennie?

CW. Oh, I just go and stay around them, but I hardly ever take a dog.

HL. What do think of them, do you enjoy them?

CW. Well, I enjoy them, yeah.

AW. What is that, Harry? What is a coon trial?

HL. Well, I'll let Clennie tell it. He's the expert.

AW. Clennie, what is a coon trial?

CW. Well, they just call 'em field trials and they bring these dogs — bunches of 'em — around, and they drag a coon and hang it up in a tree about so far up. They just get back and they turn the dogs loose and they run into that tree, which I don't think means anything. I don't think

my dog would even go to that tree. Too smart.

HL. They count the barks, don't they?

CW. They count the barks.

HL. For about a minute, they count the barks, and I guess the dog that barks the most wins. I've seen a couple of them. They're kinda fun to watch. But it doesn't have much to do with coon hunting, does it? You put a coon in a tree and tell *me* where it's at, and I can find it, too.

CW. That's right.

AW/HL/CW. (Laughter)

AW. How many barks would it take you, Harry? (Laughter)

HL. I can't bark that often. (Laughter) But I can bark a little bit.

AW. Clennie, what do you do when the dogs do tree a coon?

CW. Well, in the huntin' season, I shoot it out.

AW. Then what do you do with it?

CW. Well, sometimes I sell the skin.

AW. So, you're selling the hide, huh?

CW. And if somebody wants a coon, why I give it to 'em. A lot of people likes coon meat. I used to, but after I went to Pennsylvania, I don't care for it no more.

HL. Why not? What happened in Pennsylvania?

CW. There was too much coon smell. The last time me and Doc Stowers was up there, we brought back 250 live coons.

AW. Oh my.

HL. (Sigh and laughter) How many dogs?

CW. Oh, I don't remember just how many. I only had one dog, I think. He had three or four redbone dogs, I don't know.

AW. Clennie, when did you begin your interest in coondogs? As a young boy?

CW. I started huntin' with my dad when I was about, well, I don't know how old I was.

HL. When did you get your first coondog?

CW. Oh gosh, I don't know.

HL. Must not have been much good then, if you don't remember. (Laughter)

CW. (Laughter) You know, back when I was a kid, they wasn't too many coons. They were pretty scarce. Whatever the dogs treed, we usually got it: possum, skunk, or whatever.

HL. What do you like most about coon hunting, Clennie? Is it the sound of the dogs barking? Just being out there? Or do you have to get a coon everytime you go out to enjoy it, or what?

CW. Well, it makes it better if you tree a coon, because if you're out there, walk around or drive around a good while at night and never hear a dog barking, it kinda gets bad.

AW. Clennie, we're gonna listen to these coondogs a little bit here. Where are they now? Are you ready? Harry, are you ready?

HL. I'm ready. (Starts tape recording)

AW. Okay, let's go. Where are they, Clennie? (Dogs begin to bark) Where are they at this time?

CW. (Dogs barking) You mean where the dogs is at? They're on the tree barking.

AW. (Dogs barking) They're on the tree barking. Okay, we were talking a little bit about how many yelps that we'll hear. So, are we hearing a lot of yelps right now?

CW. (Dogs barking) Yeah, you can hear a difference in those two dogs a-barkin' there. They'll go on. I just let 'em go. She's barkin' more than the other dog.

AW. (Dogs barking) Yes. Okay, so the one that we're hearing the most right now — we can hear one above the other — is he the one that you were offered $1,500 for?

CW. (Dogs barking) That one.

HL. (Dogs barking) How far off can you tell your dog's bark? Can you tell your dog?

CW. (Dogs barking) Yes, I can tell my dog as far as I can hear him bark.

HL. (Dogs barking) As far as you can hear him bark, you know your dog?

CW. (Dogs barking) I know my dog.

Thanks to Patricia Workman for providing us with a tape of this broadcast, and to WCWV-FM for their permission to edit and publish it.

Clennie Workman passed away in January 1999 at age 84. —ed.

Clennie was very fond of this redtick hound named Jimmy — a good example of a "straight coondog." Clennie, at right holding the lead, was offered as much as $1,500 for this fine hunting dog.

Turning and Learning

Paul Weinberger's Woodshop

By Dave Shombert

He was studying a drawing as I walked up to the shop door, so engrossed that he didn't know I was there. As I stood for a moment and watched him, I could almost see the wheels turning in his head.

After 50-some years as a patternmaker, mouldmaker, and woodturner, Paul Weinberger of Weston has the ability to look at a two-dimensional drawing of a complex bowl or vase and easily visualize it in three dimensions. Never mind that it's going to be made of literally hundreds of small segments of wood in several different sizes, or that the final shape will be a graceful curve that sweeps through the squared-off geometry of the segments. He can picture the final result in his mind and anticipate the problems that will arise along the way.

I knocked on the side of the doorway as I entered. "Well, here's Dave," he said cheerfully. His face lit up with a welcoming smile as I walked into the shop. "Morning, boss," I said as I set my coffee cup beside his on top of the woodstove that warmed the shop.

It was 9:00 a.m., and I had just arrived from Elkins, ready for another day of my apprenticeship — watching, listening, asking why, trying, sometimes failing, trying again. In short, learning everything I can from this master artist and craftsman [see "Passing It On: The West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program," by Gerald Milnes; page 35].

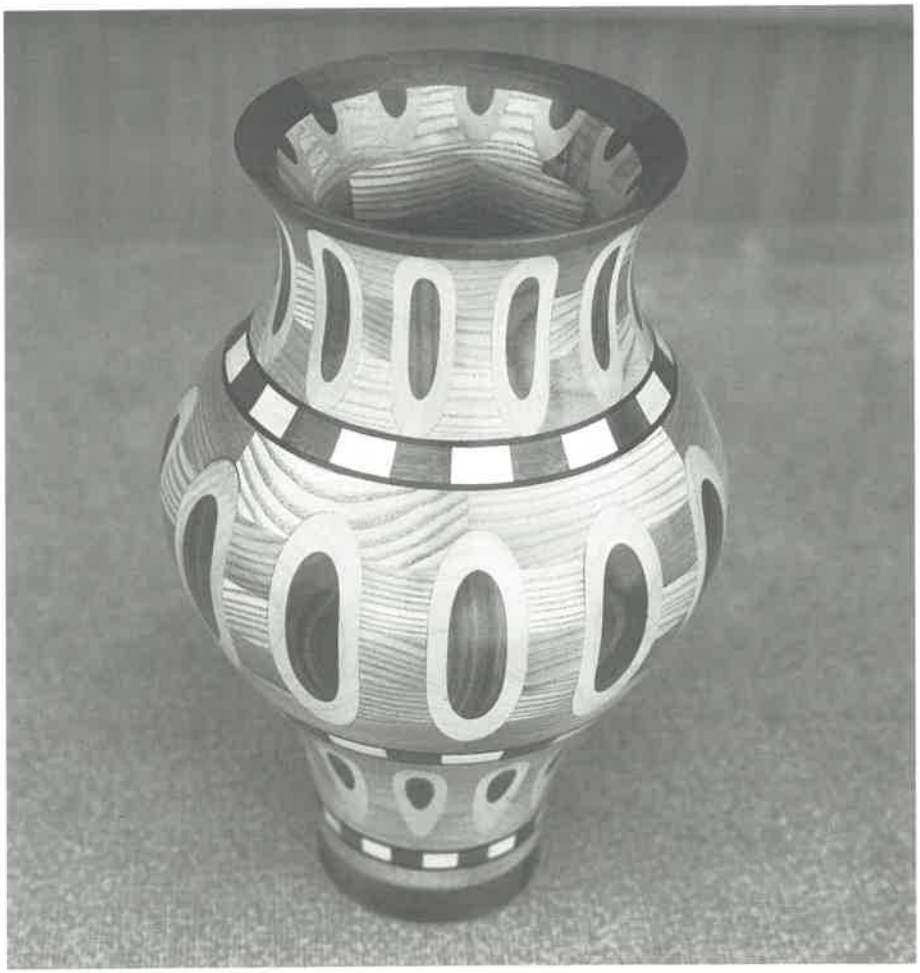
Paul prefers a more complex technique called segmented turning.

We spent a few minutes talking about nothing in particular, whatever came to mind. I looked at some templates he had cut out for the project he was working on, and he explained how they had been laid out, working from the drawing. His knowledge of geometry is thorough, for which he credits his math teacher at St. Patrick High School, Sister Mary Grace. "I had a lot of good teachers, all along the way," he recalled. "She was one of the best. I'll never forget her, I really won't." Fondness for his former teachers is one of Paul's prominent traits.

Then he told me about the wood that he was going to use for this particular piece. He poked around in one corner of the crowded shop and came up with an ash board that was over 10 years old. He'd been saving it for just such a purpose.

"Well, what are we going to do today?" he mused, as if he didn't have the day mapped out in his head. He already had the tools and materials laid out. We were close to finishing up a bowl that he and I had been working on together for about six weeks.

The conventional method of turning a wooden bowl is to mount a single piece of wood on a lathe, spin it, and shape it with specialized tools to the desired form. Paul has made countless such pieces over the years but prefers a more complex technique called segmented turning. This technique involves cutting out many small pieces of wood and gluing them together to produce a "blank" — the counterpart of the single piece of wood in the more conventional method. The blank is then mounted



Above: Master artist Paul Weinberger meets with apprentice and author Dave Shombert in Paul's woodshop in Weston. Dave is learning the art of segmented woodturning from Paul through the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program [see story on page 35]. Here, Paul holds a blank, which will be used to make a segmented bowl, while Dave looks on. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Right: A segmented vase by Paul Weinberger. Photograph by Gerald Milnes.

Paul Weinberger at his lathe, shaping the inside of a bowl. Photograph by Michael Keller.

on the lathe, spun, and shaped by the usual turning techniques. The advantage of this method is that it allows the turner to use different species of wood, vary the grain orientation for visual effect, and add geometric design features to the piece.

This bowl, one of several we've made together, is such a piece. We glued segments into rings, glued the rings together into a blank, and had already turned the inside of the blank to match the template which we made from the drawing. Now it was time to work on the outside. I mounted the bowl on the lathe — one which Paul's father had bought in 1934 — and started adjusting the chuck to get the bowl centered. If it was off even slightly, the rim of the finished piece would not be circular — an obvious flaw. After I had tweaked it awhile, I decided that maybe it was good enough. "That's pretty good," he said. "Let's move that rascal this way just a little more." We did, and then it was dead on.

He started the lathe and began shaping the outside of the bowl with a gouge, using a technique that was very different from what is described in most books. "I once had a fella tell me I couldn't do it this way," he chuckled as the long, thin shavings curled off the wood and piled up on the lathe bed. "You take over," he said, handing me the gouge. He went about some other task, but came back every few minutes to watch. I saw a slight frown on his face, and seconds later, the gouge caught on the spinning wood, leaving a noticeable scar. "Keep that handle up," he advised. I managed to shave away the damaged area without further disaster and continued.

"I once had a fella tell me I couldn't do it this way," he chuckled as the long, thin shavings curled off the wood and piled up on the lathe bed.

As I worked, I thought about the similarity between segmented turning and patternmaking, and how Paul has combined his skills as a craftsman with his artistic side.

Have you ever studied a piece of glassware with a relief design on it and wondered how it was made? The moulds which are used to make these designs are formed from intricate, handmade wooden patterns. The patternmaker's trade is a complex one, requiring many skills: carving the design into a piece of wood, using the wooden pattern to cast a metal replica, and using the metal casting to make a completed glass mould. A complex piece may require making several individual patterns and combining them. The tools that are used range from simple carving gouges to complex metal and wood lathes. An understanding of the physical properties of wood and metal is essential, as is the ability to work with unerring precision. Add to this mix an artist's eye — the sense that

Employee Matt Linger at left stands with Paul in Weinberger's Mould Shop in Weston, during the 1980's. The large, two-piece metal moulds shown here are made from intricate, handmade wooden patterns (inset). Photographers unknown.

The Weinberger family in Weston, 1948. Paul is in the back row at left along with his sister Frieda, father Gottfried, and mother Amalia. In the front row are Paul's sister Hilda at left, and sister Wilma at right, holding Paul's young son Tony. Photographer unknown.

determines exactly what curve the side of a vase should take to make it look graceful rather than clumsy — and you have a person with the ability to produce beautifully designed and crafted objects that please both the eye and the touch.

Paul was born to Gottfried and Amalia Weinberger in 1923. Gottfried was a mouldmaker and millwright in his native Austria, and he brought these skills to the glass industry which flourished in this part of West Virginia during the first half of the 1900's. Paul and his brother Siegfried attended the Homewood neighborhood school through fourth grade, then transferred to St. Patrick Catholic school. High school was followed by a brief training period at the National Youth Administration in Charles-

Grace and Paul Weinberger were married in 1947. They are shown here in the dining room of their home in Weston, admiring a bowl made by student and GOLDENSEAL author Dave Shombert. Photograph by Michael Keller.

ton, then on to a patternmaker's apprenticeship at the Navy yard in Portsmouth, Virginia. By this time, World War II was in full swing. Paul finished a four-year apprenticeship in two-and-a-half years and was shipped to the front lines in Belgium.

On his return home to Weston in 1945, his father put him and his brother Siegfried to work in the family mouldmaking business. Weinberger's mould shop served the thriving glass industry in West Virginia for over 40 years, with Paul taking over after his father's death in 1954. Eventually, foreign competition and a reduced demand for handblown glassware drove many such family-owned shops out of business. Paul sold the mould shop to a former client and retired in 1988, but "taking it easy" wasn't in the cards.

After a few months of catching up on his reading, Paul's creative juices started flowing again. He built a small shop behind the family's Weston home and devoted his skills to the artistic work he had always wanted to do on the lathe. Segmented turning was the logical choice because it's so similar to patternmaking. Some of Paul's pieces are constructed of more than 400 segments of walnut, maple, and ebony veneer. One such vase won second place in the 1998 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes, while a similar but larger piece was purchased by a New York collector for a price in the thousands of dollars.

"I wrote long letters, and sometimes I'd include shavings from the work I was doing."

I had been cutting for quite awhile and the gouge was dull. I stopped to sharpen it, the way he had showed me, on a grinding wheel. Many woodturners use elaborate jigs and fixtures to hold the gouge against the wheel at exactly the correct angle. Paul would never criticize this approach, and he might even encourage it for a beginner. But such devices were not available when he was learning, so he learned to sharpen his tools without them. I thought about this as I tried to hold the gouge against the wheel at a constant angle while rotating it. How many years did it take for him to be able to do this with such apparent ease? I got the gouge as sharp as I could. I knew it could be better, but it was sharp enough. When I started cutting again, the wood came off in long, thin shavings, almost as fine as the ones he had produced.

It was a good time to break for lunch. We retired to the kitchen, where his wife Grace joined us. We talked a bit about what their children, Tony and Anita, have been doing. Grace grew up in Weston. She met Paul when they were teenagers, but their courtship really began when he was serving his apprenticeship at the Navy yard. "I wrote long letters, and sometimes I'd include shavings from the work I was doing," Paul chuckled.

They were married in 1947, and their love and respect for each other is still obvious. She showed me a handcarved heart that he made for her many years ago. When I asked about their life together, the memories were clear: their first house on Center Street where the landlady lived downstairs, the flood of 1950 that caused them to build their own house on Broad Street, and the friendships they shared with other families in the community and in the glass industry.

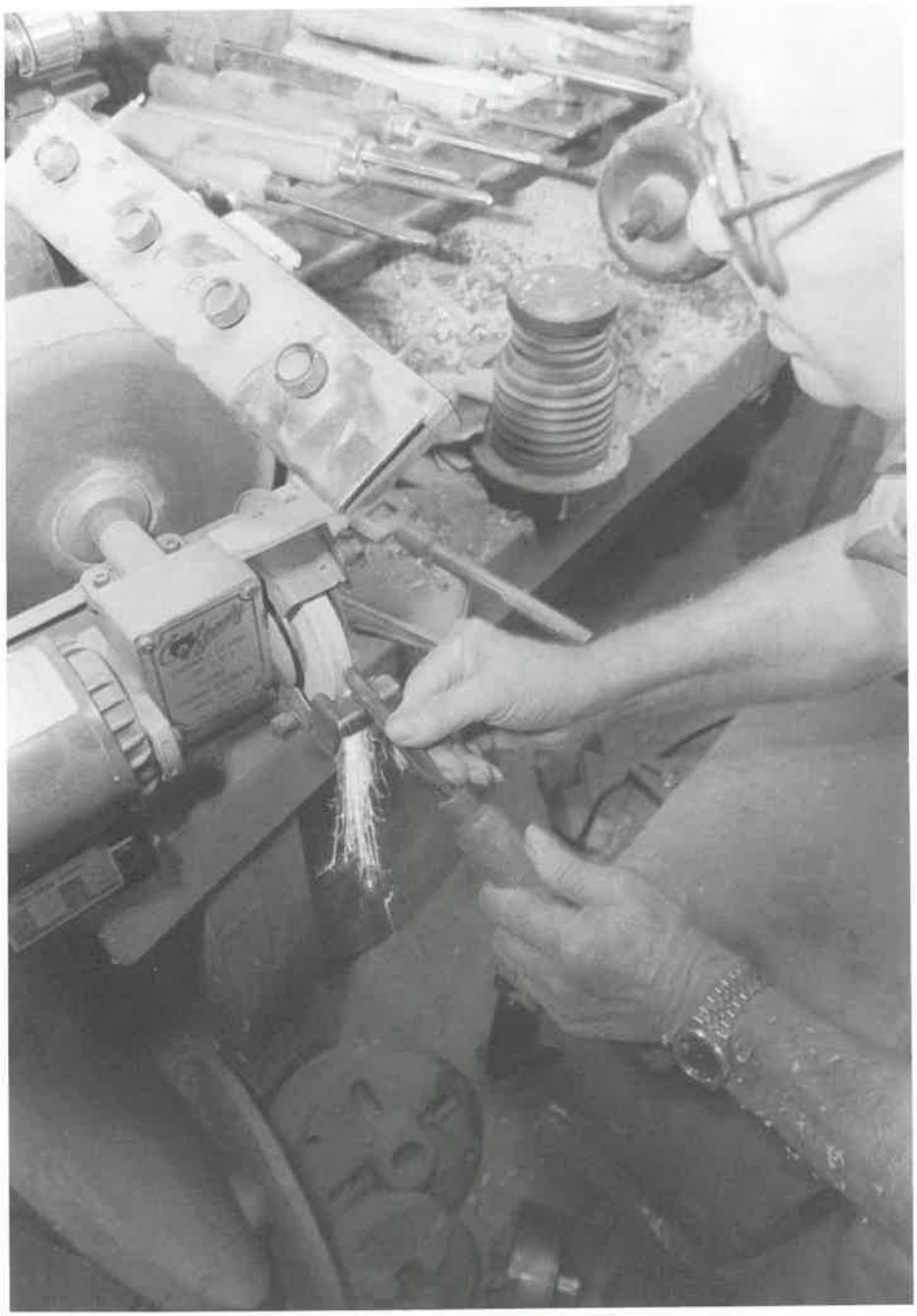
One of Grace's closest friends today is Evelyn Burke, who lived across the street many years ago with her husband Oley. "We just said recently, in all these 50 years, there's never been an unkind thought between us," Grace said. "I pick her up every Friday at 10:30 and we go get our hair done together. I've been blessed with good friends, I've taken care of a lot of people. I've had an interesting life, always caring for somebody else. Paul used to kid me, ask me when I was going to get a job that pays something. But I think that's what

I'm supposed to do, take care of friends and neighbors. I did volunteer work when the kids were in school, PTA and all that. After they were gone, I volunteered at the hospital, garden club, town, church. I do a lot of volunteer work."

Soon Grace went off on another mission, and Paul told me more about his apprenticeship at the Navy yard. "We were building a lot of ships at that time," he recalled. "Some were battleships, sister ships of the 'Missouri,' and we made patterns for them. We also built the aircraft carrier 'Shangri-La.' President Roosevelt named her that because she was going to be so fast that nobody would know where she was. I was there that day when she was launched, and we went down and watched. I'm telling you, that is something to see — when a big chunk of metal that you've been working on for months and months, all of a sudden it starts to move. Forty-five-thousand tons of steel, that is really something to see. There I was, just a young squirt from up in the hills."

We finished lunch and headed back up to the shop to resume work on the bowl. We had done as much as we dared with the gouge and switched to a scraper, a tool that is much easier to control. He sharpened it on the old grinder and handed it to me. I started the lathe and touched the scraper lightly to the spinning bowl. It's important to move the tool smoothly and continuously, but the differing properties of the segments make it difficult. Without realizing it, I kept the scraper in one place a little too long, and a very slight groove resulted. The eye would probably never detect it, but the fingers sure could. He was patient as he showed me how to keep the tool moving, always moving, while watching the outside of the bowl take shape.

Paul sharpens a turning gouge at the grinding wheel. Photograph by Michael Keller.



Eventually, I eliminated the groove and blended that part into the rest of the curved surface. Now the wall was getting thin. The difficult part is to get it so that when you pick the bowl up and draw your fingers over the inside with your thumb on the outside, you'll feel the wall thickness get gradually smaller towards the rim.

We stopped the lathe frequently and checked the thickness with a caliper — an old set that he's had since the days of his apprenticeship. Finally, it was just right. A little sanding and the bowl was ready for me to take home and start applying the finish. We had decided on a Danish oil finish, which requires several coats and lots of curing time between them, but would bring out the beauty of the grain.

It was after 3:00, about time for me to head back to Elkins, but we talked for awhile before I left. He showed me a mould that he made years ago, when the glass industry was booming and his mould shop was prospering. He remembers those days fondly, and the family glass businesses: Louis Glass, the Webers, the Kafer family. The people who made up those businesses were much like Paul's father. Many of them had emigrated from Europe. They knew the trade, and they knew each other. They

More About Woodturning

Paul Weinberger and author Dave Shombert are both members of Mountaineer Woodturners, the West Virginia chapter of the American Association of Woodturners. This local group currently has about 50 members and meets on the second Saturday of each month at Cedar Lakes craft center, near Ripley. Monthly meetings usually include demonstrations or training sessions given by club members in a friendly, informal atmosphere. Other benefits of membership include occasional workshops given by nationally known woodturners, participation in group projects, and the opportunity to sell work at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair held at Cedar Lakes each July. Anyone with an interest in woodturning is welcome to attend these meetings. For further information about Mountaineer Woodturners, call Dave Shombert at (304)636-8083.

Samples of Paul Weinberger's work may be viewed or purchased on-line at www.mountainmade.com, a recently developed Internet Web site featuring the work of West Virginia artisans. Paul also sells his pieces directly. For further information, write to Paul at Route 4, Box 31-R, Weston, WV 26452.

Dave Shombert sells his work through Artists At Work, an artist's cooperative at 329 Davis Avenue in Elkins; phone (304)637-6309.

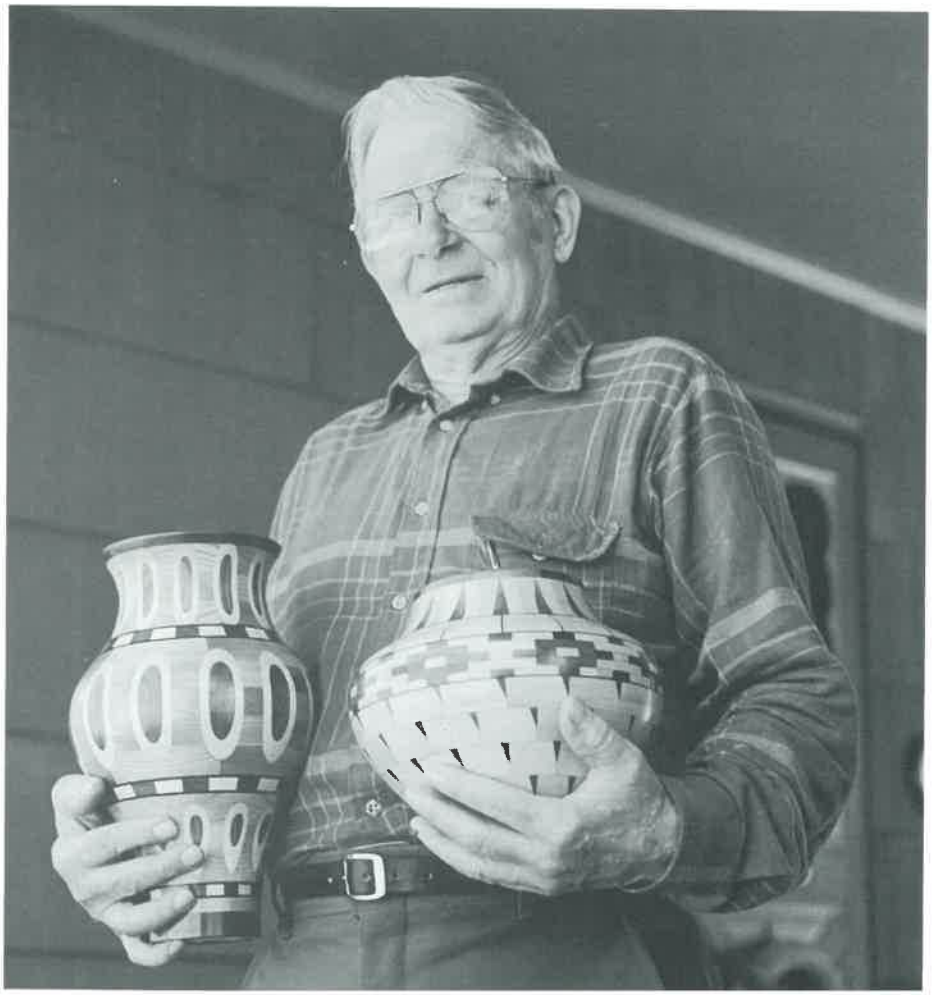
Both Paul and Dave also have work available at Tamarack in Beckley along the West Virginia Turnpike; phone 1-88TAMARACK.

worked together in more of a cooperative spirit than a competitive one, with the workers moving freely from one company to another. There was pride in their work and pride in each others' work. Most of them are gone now, Paul said, and the glass trade isn't what it used to be.

I asked how glass objects are made today, how it is different. Paul told me that it's all very precise now. The machines are efficient and accurate, producing many more pieces per hour than was possible in his days, with very few defects. His words seemed approving, but I got the feeling that he thought something was missing. And something is missing, though he wouldn't say it. What's missing is the human touch, the skilled hands that carved and shaped the patterns until the critical eye said it was right, and in so doing, gave a touch of humanness to the objects that the mould would produce.

It isn't the same now, and he knows it. He seemed a little sad, remembering his father and friends and the work in which they took so much pride. He was quiet as we closed up the shop and started down towards my car. But as I opened the car door, his shoulders straightened, and the smile came back to his face. "Finish up that bowl this week," he said. "I've got a good idea for what to start on next."

DAVE SHOMBERT is a retired physicist living in Elkins. This article is based on Dave's 1998 apprenticeship with Paul Weinberger; he and Paul remain close friends and Dave continues to make frequent visits to see Paul in his workshop. In addition to woodworking, Dave is an old-time fiddle and banjo player whose writings have been published in the *Old-Time Herald* magazine. This is Dave's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Paul Weinberger on the porch of his Weston home, with samples of his work. The vase at right in this photograph received a second place award at the 1998 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. Photograph by Gerald Milnes.

Braxton County fiddle maker Norman Adams teaches Phillip Holcomb during a 1997 apprenticeship.

community exists, repairmen and craftsmen are needed to keep instruments in shape and to provide traditional musicians with something on which to play. The apprenticeship program has supported a violin bow re-hairing apprenticeship, instrument repair apprenticeships, and several instrument making apprenticeships.

The late Norman Adams of Braxton County, a remarkable craftsman, taught Phillip Holcomb to make a fiddle. Phillip now has his own instrument making and repair business, and Norman's knowledge and technique of instrument building live on.

Of course, numerous instrument playing apprenticeships have also taken place whereby all of the stringed instruments used in West Virginia traditional music have been taught to eager apprentices. A few of the musical master artists with whom GOLDENSEAL readers may be familiar include fiddlers Melvin Wine, Woody Simmons, Sarah Singleton, Glen Smith, and Bobby Taylor, plus banjo player Andy Boarman, guitarist Carl Rutherford, dulcimer player Patty Looman, mandolinist Bob Kessinger, and many others.

Since 1989, when the first folk arts apprenticeships were approved, about 120 apprenticeships have taken place or are currently underway. The program receives financial support from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the West Virginia Division of Culture and History through the West Virginia Commission on the Arts.

The program is designed specifically to encourage and nurture traditional arts and crafts as they already exist within the state. Far from seeking to revive bygone practices, the aim of the apprenticeship program is to rejuvenate and stimulate folkways among current practitioners for positive artistic purposes.

The program serves to identify important master artists from across the state through research and fieldwork. Next, it attempts to match each master artist with an appropriate student from his or her community. Once an apprenticeship has been approved, the program provides financial support to the master artist and logistical support and guidance to the apprentice. There is also an extensive system of documentation involved in each apprenticeship.

The benefits to the participants are both obvious and subtle, tangible and intangible. The program often brings a certain amount of publicity and recognition to the individual master artists, many of whom may have been previously unknown outside of their immediate families or local communities. The students gain a new skill and artistic outlet, occasionally leading to new career opportunities. Many students and teachers develop deep and lasting friendships which extend well beyond their apprenticeships. The local communities and the state as a whole benefit from the perpetuation of valuable and irreplaceable aspects of our folk culture.

Most importantly, the apprenticeship program offers many skilled folk artists the best gift they may hope for: an apprentice who will carry on their skills and practices. This legacy becomes a form of gratitude bestowed upon them for a lifetime of dedication to an artistic expression that has meaning for them and their community.

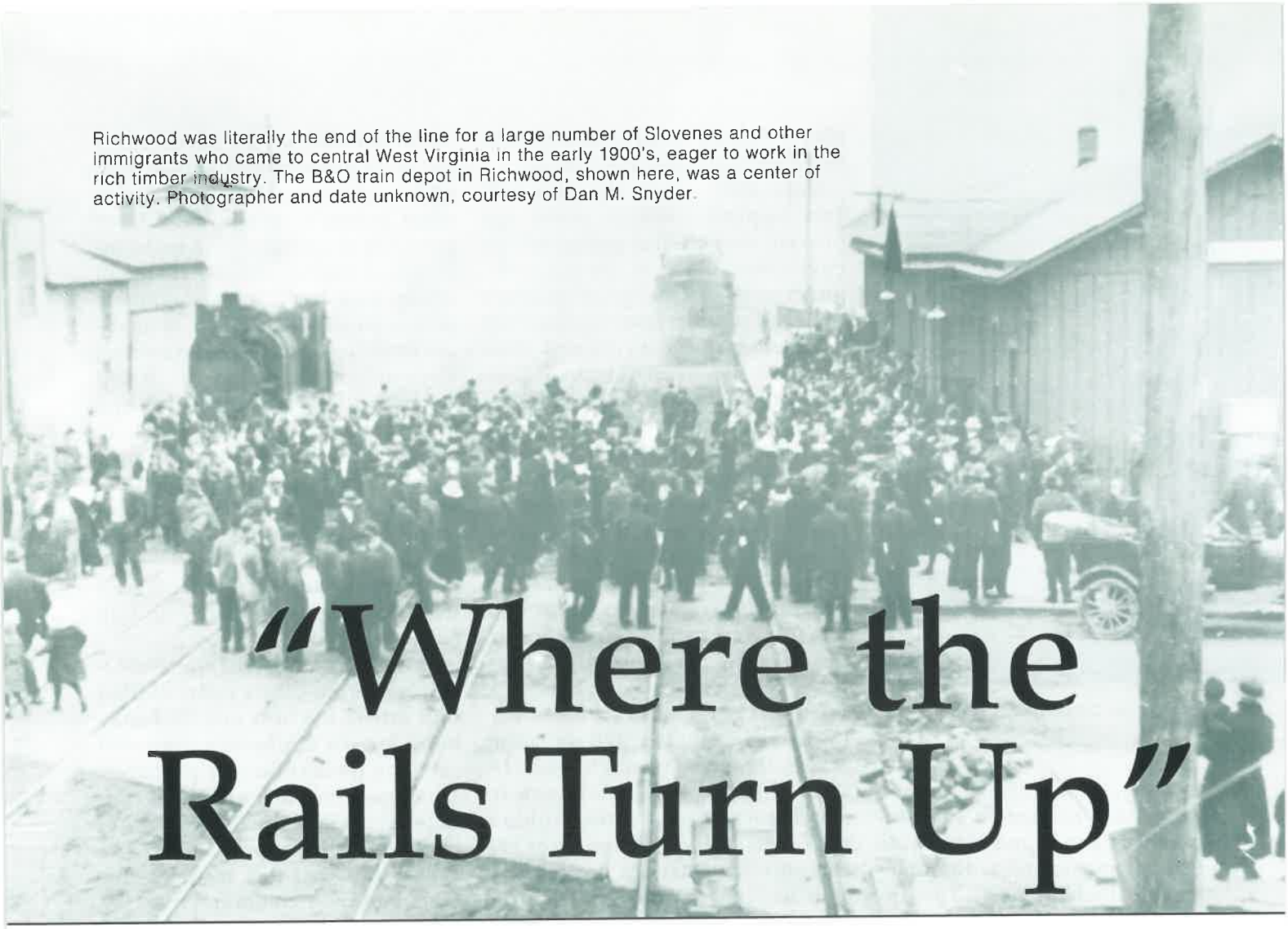
GERALD MILNES is the Folk Arts Coordinator for the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins. He also is the founder and coordinator of the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program, and is a frequent GOLDENSEAL contributor.

Apprenticeship Learning

The West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program is open to all West Virginia residents through a written application process. Once approved, apprenticeships match recognized master artists with students for one-on-one instruction in a wide range of topics. These include instrumental folk music, dance, craft, decorative folk art, foodways, rural living, ethnic traditions, folk speech, folk songs, folk tales, and beliefs.

Master artists and students apply together; a panel meets to review applications twice a year. Application deadlines are April 1 and October 1. For guidelines, application forms, or more information, contact Gerald Milnes, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241; phone (304)637-1334.

The program also welcomes financial contributions and information about potential master artists.



Richwood was literally the end of the line for a large number of Slovenes and other immigrants who came to central West Virginia in the early 1900's, eager to work in the rich timber industry. The B&O train depot in Richwood, shown here, was a center of activity. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Dan M. Snyder.

"Where the Rails Turn Up"

Slovenes Come To Richwood

By Nancy Svet Burnett

Many Slovenes left their homeland in the early 1900's, in search of jobs and a better life in America. Now called Slovenia, this mountainous country in south-central Europe was until recently part of Yugoslavia, and before World War I, was part of Austria. The Bartol, Jonas, Logar, Prelaz, Svet, Urbas, and Wise families of West Virginia were all Slovene immigrants from the village of Cerknica who settled in Richwood, determined to make a new life for themselves in a new land.

Crawling on their stomachs, young Frank Svet and his best friend Frank Tekavec pulled out the tinsnips tucked into their belts and cut the barbed wire separating the Italian and Yugoslav border. They slipped under the wire in the dark of a summer's night and made their way to Trieste to board a ship for America. The year was 1927.

Crawling on their stomachs, young Frank Svet and his friend Frank Tekavec pulled out the tinsnips and cut the barbed wire separating the Italian and Yugoslav border. They slipped under the wire and made their way to Trieste to board a ship for America. The year was 1927.

Most emigrants to America did not need to make such a dramatic exit, but these two 17-year-old men were just one year shy of conscription into the Yugoslav army. There were other compelling reasons to emigrate, as well. The economy in the newly formed Yugoslavia was poor, and job prospects were virtually nil. So brothers, sisters, cousins, and employers who were already established in West Virginia recruited fellow Slovenes to work with them in the booming timber

Slovenia was part of Austria until the end of World War I, then part of Yugoslavia until 1991, when it became an independent nation. Map by Ed Hicks.

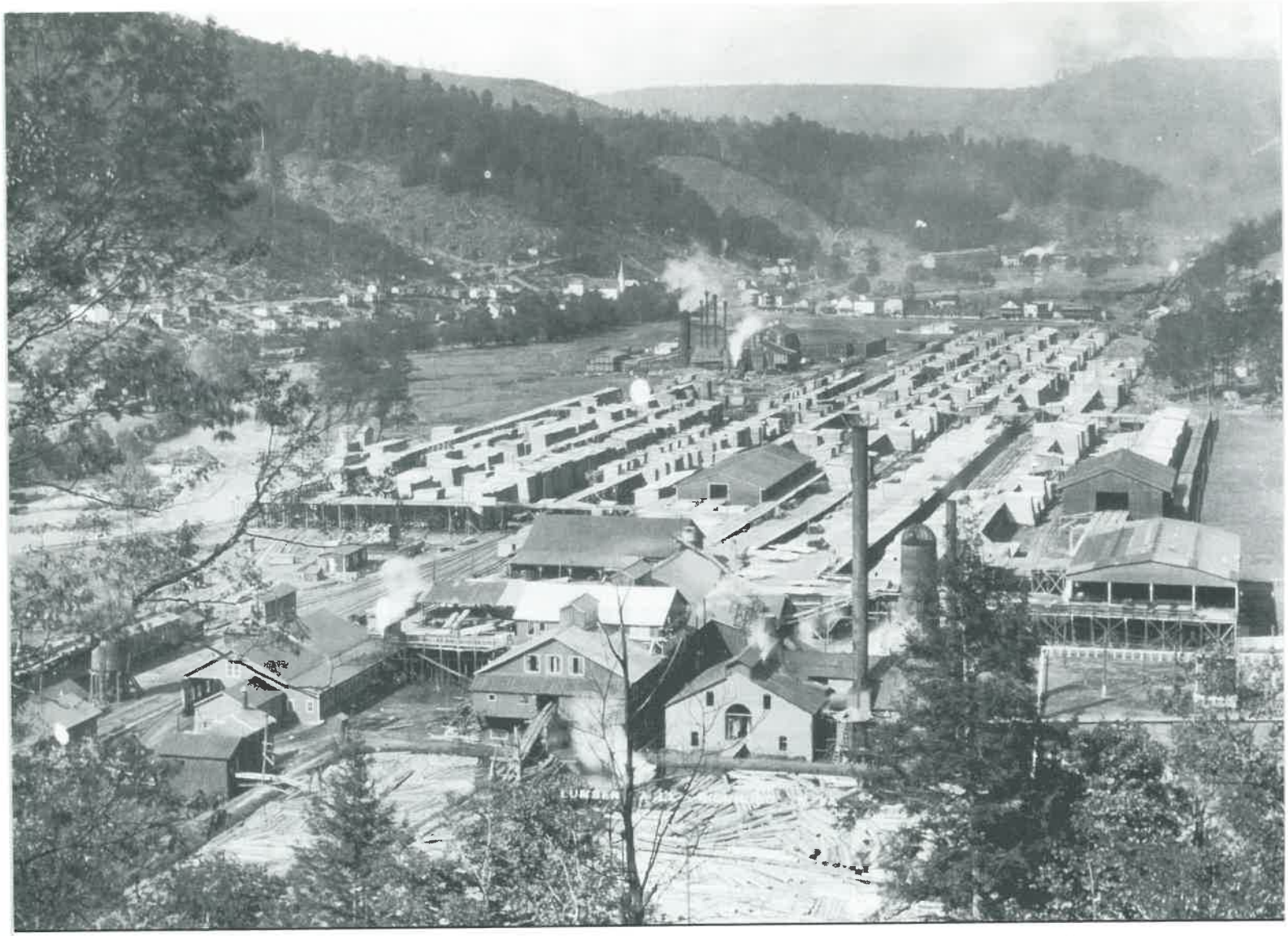
Young Frank Svet, the author's father seated at left, and Frank Tekavac, standing in front, made a daring escape from Yugoslavia in order to join other Slovenes in Richwood in 1927. They are shown here in a Nicholas County lumber camp along with Tony Grenat seated at right, and woods boss Frank Loncar standing in the doorway. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Frances Zadell Tekavec.

town of Richwood. The Slovenes — or Austrians as the locals knew them — were skilled woodsmen. Not only were the woods familiar to them, but their new home in Richwood looked strikingly similar to their hometown of Cerknica.

Travel to the U.S. was by ship with the immigrants packed into steerage-class berths; a normal crossing usually took around two weeks. After long days at sea, the first glimpse of America for the immigrants was the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor, and for many it became the most memorable event of their passage. No immigrant ever forgot seeing this famous symbol.

After enduring the rigors of Ellis Island, the Slovenes moved on to the next stage of their journey — the train station in Manhattan where they would board a train for Richwood. Wishing to reassure themselves about the upcoming train trip, the immigrants would frustratedly try to communicate in a strange language. Cecilia Tekavec Logar was able to finally ask the conductor, "What time clock train go?" The conductor pointed on his watch to the correct departure time.

Frank Svet was concerned about where he would get off the train. When he asked, the conductor gestured by lifting his hands up to-



Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company mill in Richwood, 1914. Photographer unknown, courtesy of Maxine Corbett.

ward his shoulders, indicating steel rails bending back over themselves. "Son, just ride 'til you don't see any more tracks. Where the rails turn up will be Richwood — the end of the line."

The rail journey seemed endless, but finally the train pulled into the Baltimore & Ohio depot in Richwood. The long trip from the Old Country was over. The immigrants went to boarding houses or to the homes of family and friends before beginning work in the new country.

Richwood was a boomtown in the 1920's. The vast timber supply in the area had made it the "hardwood capital of the nation." Richwood at the time could boast of several large mills and factories: a paper mill; a tannery; and a handle, hub, and clothespin factory. The latter was considered the largest clothespin factory in the world. The streets of the town were so crowded that one could hardly walk. Jobs were plentiful. To the newly arrived immigrants, it looked as though the legendary "streets paved with gold" they had heard about in the Old Country might, indeed, be a reality.

Richwood was a boomtown in the 1920's. The vast timber supply in the area had made it the "hardwood capital of the nation." Richwood at the time could boast of several large mills and factories: a paper mill; a tannery; and a handle, hub, and clothespin factory. The latter was considered the largest clothespin factory in the world.

At the heart of Richwood's prosperity was the Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company (CRB & L Co.). Formed at the turn of the century during the robber-baron era, the CRB & L Co. held approximately 250,000 acres of timber in the watershed areas of Nicholas, Webster, and Pocahontas counties. These vast acreages would eventually become part of the Monongahela National Forest. Many of the Slovene immigrants soon went to work in company-owned lumber camps which had been established

in the outlying timberlands.

Work schedules in the lumber camps were from dawn to dusk, six days a week. Despite all work being done by hand, timber output from the camps was substantial. Frank Urbas remembers one-hundred fully loaded log cars leaving camp daily at the height of the logging days. Slovene men were often called upon to work on the bridge crews because of their woodworking talents. They would build bridges across streams and creeks for the railroads hauling logs to the mills.

Women kept house without electricity, refrigeration, or running water. They used kerosene lamps for light. Agatha Bartol would crawl under parked railroad cars to get to the creek and then crawl back with the water she needed for her family. Rattlesnakes abounded, as did bedbugs.

Frances Cimpernam Svet, the author's mother, was a young assistant cook at Camp 73. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the Svet family.

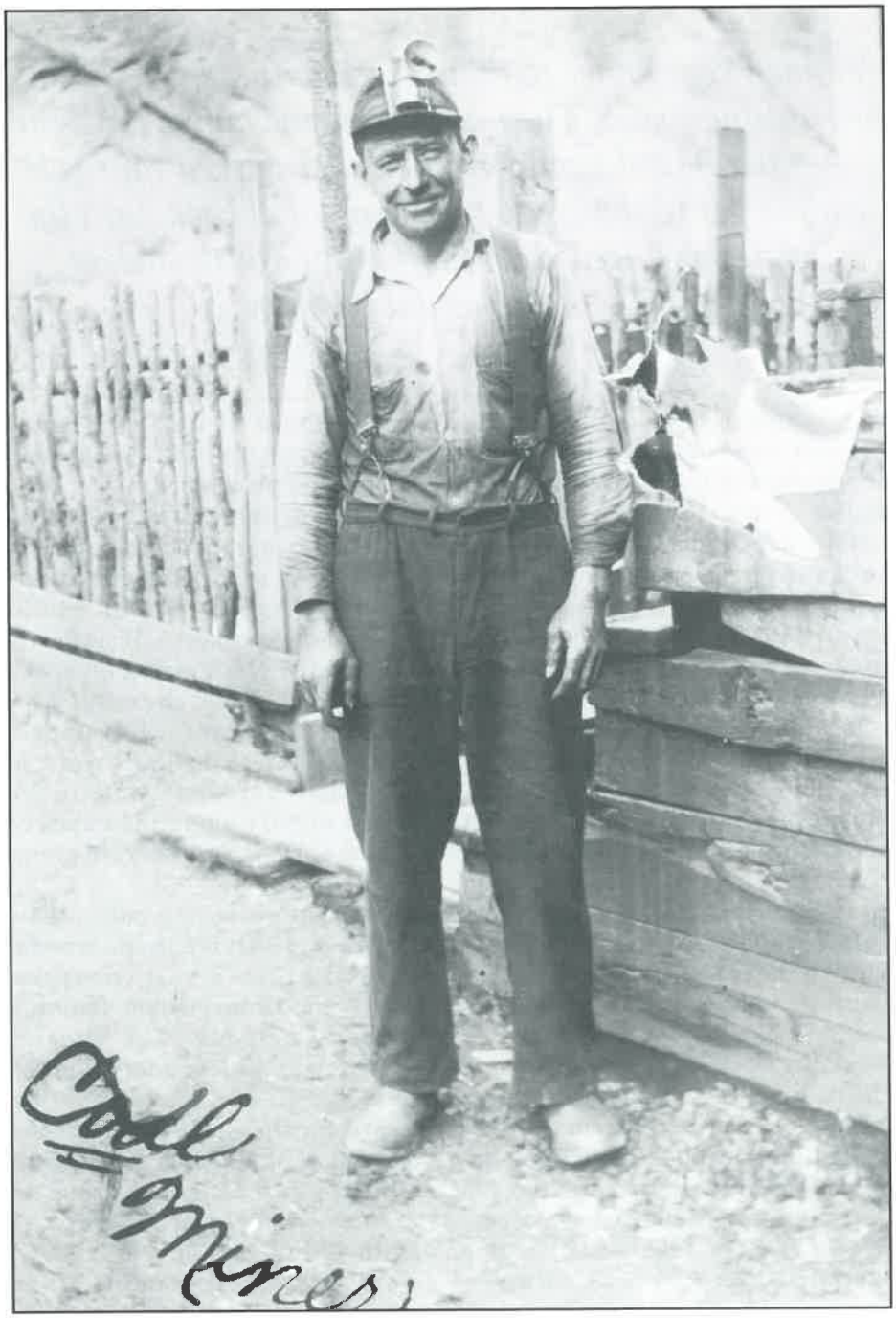
Slovene women often worked as cooks in the lumber camps. They worked just as hard as the men did, seven days a week. All foods were made from scratch, and extensive preparation was needed to cook for a log camp full of hungry men. It was not unusual to peel a bushel or more of potatoes for breakfast. At 4:00 a.m., the cooks would start cooking a lumberjack breakfast of ham, bacon, eggs, biscuits, gravy, sometimes pancakes, and always coffee. Meat — sometimes three kinds — beans, potatoes, and gravy were a daily supper. Bread was made in No. 3 wash tubs. Frances Kebe Urbas was a cook in many of the camps. Her assistant at Camp 73 was Frances Cimperman Svet. Together, they cooked three meals a day and did laundry for 75 men. Later, Frances Kebe Urbas' sister-in-law Frances Tekavec Urbas ran the kitchen at Camp 73 with her assistant Anna Wise.

Most women hated the camps because of the primitive conditions. They had to set up housekeeping in shanty cars, small wooden buildings, or boxcars that could be loaded onto the railroad flatcars and moved whenever the log camp moved. The board floors and walls were not insulated, and Agatha Bartol told her son Harold that she could see the chickens through the cracks in the floor. Donnie Urbas Cox's mother Frances told her that on the cold, February morning that she was born at Camp 73, snow came through the cracks in the wall and drifted on the bed.

Women kept house without electricity, refrigeration, or running water. They used kerosene lamps for light. Agatha Bartol would crawl under parked railroad cars to get to the creek and then crawl back with the water she needed for her family. Rattlesnakes abounded, as did bedbugs. Bedbugs were so thick that kerosene had to be poured nightly along the edges of the bed and mattress before going to bed.

Just as it took strong individuals to work and survive in the woods, so it did to run a vast enterprise such as the Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company. The general manager was the legendary Charles "Charley" S. Badgett. He was a shrewd businessman who ran the company with a firm hand leaving his mark on the company and on the personal lives of his employees, including the Slovenes.

Perhaps the best example of the extent of Charley Badgett's influence in the community was his directive to Frank Bartol. In 1929, Frank lost most of his life savings when the Citizens Bank in Richwood failed. Frank had a little money left in a second bank and was considering withdrawing it. Badgett came to the Bartol home on Maple Street and told Frank not to take his money out of the second bank; it was safe. Frank continued to worry until he finally withdrew his money. When Frank went back to work, Mr. Badgett called him



By the late 1930's, many Slovenes were working underground in area coal mines, including Joe Urbas, shown here at Jerryville, Webster County, in 1937. Photograph courtesy of John Urbas.

A story passed down in the Svet family recounts a young Frank Svet approaching his boss Jerry Webb Hollifield. "Mr. Hollifield, please, I'd like a raise from 10 cents to 20 cents," Frank said. Hollifield roared back, "If you don't want the job, there are plenty of others behind you who will work!"

into his office and told him, "Well, Frank, you can go home and get fat." Frank Bartol was fired.

The Great Depression had a profound impact on the timber industry, and Richwood was hit hard. The Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company survived through the careful management of Charley Badgett. He moved the company out of the unprofitable logging camps and contracted logging out to individuals. The CRB & L Co. had always been involved in coal mining as a source of fuel for its logging trains, so Badgett expanded his coal operations as the timber industry slowed down.

The Great Depression brought an end to the lumber camps and to that phase of the Slovenes' lives. They, like the CRB & L Co., soon made the transition from the woods to the earth — from logs to coal. From a hard life above ground, many now entered an even harder one underground.

By 1935, the Cherry River Boom & Lumber Company had moved much of its operations to Jerryville, an established coal camp on the Gauley River in Webster County. Jerryville was a true coal camp. Like the lumber camps, it was established solely for the purpose of providing homes for the employees of the mine company. The company owned everything. They also provided everything — a doctor, store, school, church, and sometimes recreation. Jerryville, named for woods boss Jerry Webb Hollifield, was remote — an all-day train trip from Richwood and approximately 18 miles from the nearest town of Bolair. The only way in and out was by railroad.

Jerryville became home to a large concentration of Slovenes. Many Slovene men had been apprenticed to tradesmen in the Old Country and as a result, were experienced blacksmiths, mechanics, and wood workers. Many did bridge work for the railroad after their daily shifts in the mines. "Big Frank" Svet's blacksmithing skills were in de-

mand for repairing augers, picks, and other equipment used in mining. He also worked as a miner. His strength was well known, and he could carry a section of steel rail on his back. Stories are told about the days when he dug and hand-loaded 20 tons of coal underground in a 36-inch seam, and 35 tons of coal above ground.

Wages were small by today's standards. Miners were paid, on the average, 10 cents a ton for coal that they mined by hand, and bosses were not eager to increase wages. A story passed down in the Svet family recounts a young Frank Svet approaching his boss Jerry Webb Hollifield. "Mr. Hollifield, please, I'd like a raise from 10 cents to 20 cents," Frank said. "I have a family to support now." Hollifield roared back, "If you don't want the job, there are plenty of others behind you who will work!"

Pay statements reflected the typical wages for a Jerryville miner. Out of the monthly wage, a miner had to pay for his powder and supplies to mine coal, his rent for a shanty and the coal to heat it, doctor's fee, tax, insurance, and charges to the company store for food and other items the family had bought during the month. At the end of the month, many Jerryville miners did not have a payday, because their earnings were applied to the debts they had accumulated at the store.

The Richwood Store Company, or company store, was a large operation in Jerryville. It was a sizable building with three warehouses that supplied everything the miners and their families needed: dry goods, clothing and shoes, furniture, food, and in the early days, feed, hay, and horseshoes for horses. For employees of the company store, hours were long. Two days a week, the store was open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., with a one-hour lunch break for the employees. The other days of the week, the store was open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The company store accepted money, credit, or scrip in exchange for goods.

Shanties in the coal camp were as uncomfortable as those in the lumber camp. Typical shanties consisted of a kitchen, living room, and two bedrooms. They rented for approximately $4 a month plus an additional charge of $1.50-$2 for the coal used to heat the house and to fire the cookstove.

Entertainment on Sunday — the only day off — had to be found within the confines of Jerryville. No one left town unless there was an emergency, and then it was only to go to Richwood by train. Sunday was a holiday and everybody dressed up in his or her "Sunday best." Women would visit their neighbors up and down the track. Men might hunt, fish, or play cards on a stump in front of their shanties with the other men. For sport, Frank Urbas and Andy Sparmblack would box. Most of the Slovenes were Catholic, so once a month Father Marion would come from Richwood to say Mass. Since there wasn't a Catholic church in town,

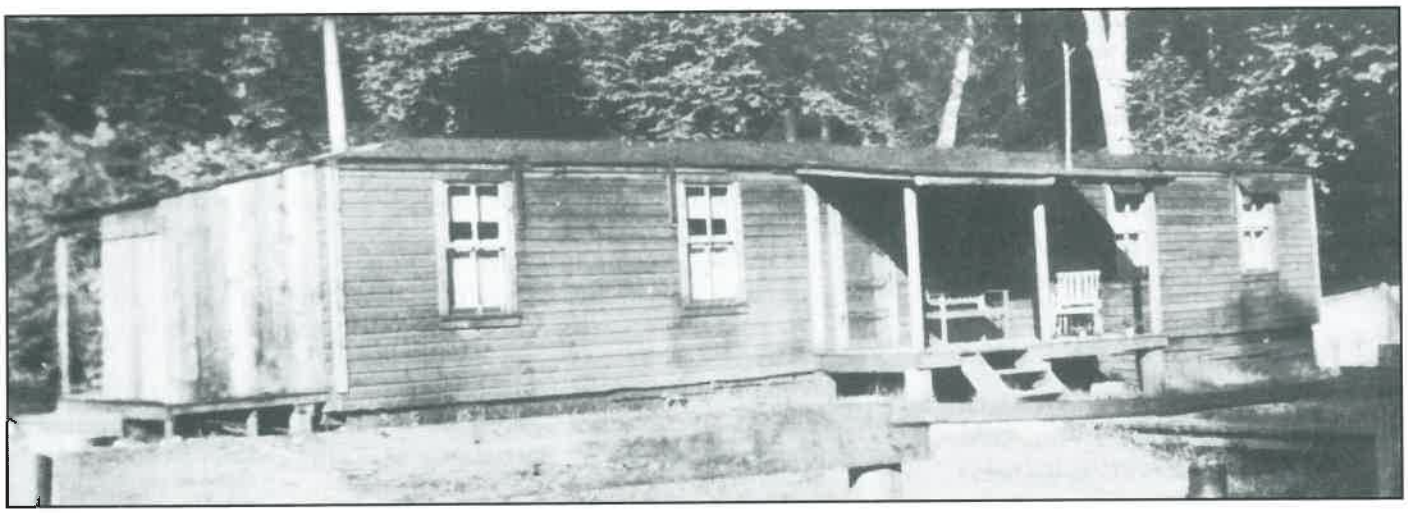
Ethnic Heritage

Not much remains of the once-rich Slovene heritage in Richwood. Along with the Italian and Greek immigrants, the Slovenes of Nicholas and Webster counties have entered the cultural mainstream over the past 50 years.

Holy Family Catholic Church is still active in Richwood and most of the remaining immigrant families still attend this house of worship. The church, however, reflects the culture of the general population rather than that of any particular ethnic group.

Still, reminders of Richwood's ethnic past persist. A recent Richwood Homecoming Celebration featured Slovenian and Italian floats in the homecoming parade. In 1994, author Nancy Svet Burnett published a 25-page booklet titled *Slovenes In Rural Appalachia: An Oral History*, in which she gives a detailed account of Slovene immigration, work experience, and eventual assimilation in central West Virginia. Her accompanying GOLDENSEAL story is based upon this earlier work. To obtain a copy, or for more information, write to Dr. Nancy Svet Burnett, P.O. Box 1676, Sandpoint, ID 83864; phone (208)263-0276.

Slovenes in Richwood are among more that 50 ethnic communities from around the state considered in a 1999 report titled *An Introduction To West Virginia Ethnic Communities*. Coordinated by GOLDENSEAL for the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, research and writing for this 99-page report were handled by Jimmy Triplett of the Augusta Heritage Center, with funding assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. The report divides the state into eight geographic regions, then identifies and briefly describes each area's current, or recently active, ethnic communities. Groups include African Americans in the Kanawha Valley, Hungarians in the Eastern Panhandle, Carpatho-Ruthenians in Morgantown, Jews in Parkersburg, and 16 different ethnic groups in the Northern Panhandle, among many others. Community activities are described and contact information is included for each group. Copies of the report are available for $10 each from the GOLDENSEAL office, or may be downloaded over the Internet at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal.



The Tekavec shanty in Jerryville, 1939. Photograph courtesy of Frances Zadell Tekavec.

Mass would be said at a home, usually the Husarik shanty.

In the evenings, the Slovenes would meet in front of the Tekavec shanty on Straight Creek. With a huge bonfire blazing to ward off the ever-present bugs, they would sit and sing songs from their homeland to the sounds of Joe K. Urbas' accordion. Known as wonderful singers, their songs could evoke a range of sentiments from homesickness and sadness, to laughter and joking. When Jerry Intihar brought cherries from his sister Mary Jonas' farm on Hinkle Mountain, Frances Zadell Tekavec would bake cherry strudel for her guests.

Demand for coal during World War II ensured mining in Jerryville through the 1940's. By the early 1950's, however, a recession caused a massive decrease in coal production, and Jerryville could not recover. The company abandoned the tracks, and Jerryville soon became a ghost town. The end of Jerryville changed the lives of the majority of Slovenes.

When the Slovene immigrants left Jerryville, they began another journey, this time into the mainstream of American life. Entering the mainstream — or assimilating — was accomplished by several bridges. The main one used by the Slovenes was hard work, a trait that identified them in Europe and had become their trademark in their new country, as well. The men continued to work in coal mines in the Richwood area, and the women continued rearing children, doing household chores, and often keeping boarders to augment family income. Mary Prelaz took in laundry for several of the local doctors. She would wash, iron, and starch 14 white shirts for the week for each one of the doctors. Her pay was $1.25 for a bushel of shirts. Some of the Slovene families bought farms or other businesses to provide additional sources of income. The most widely known Slovene-owned business was the Prelaz Restaurant in Richwood.

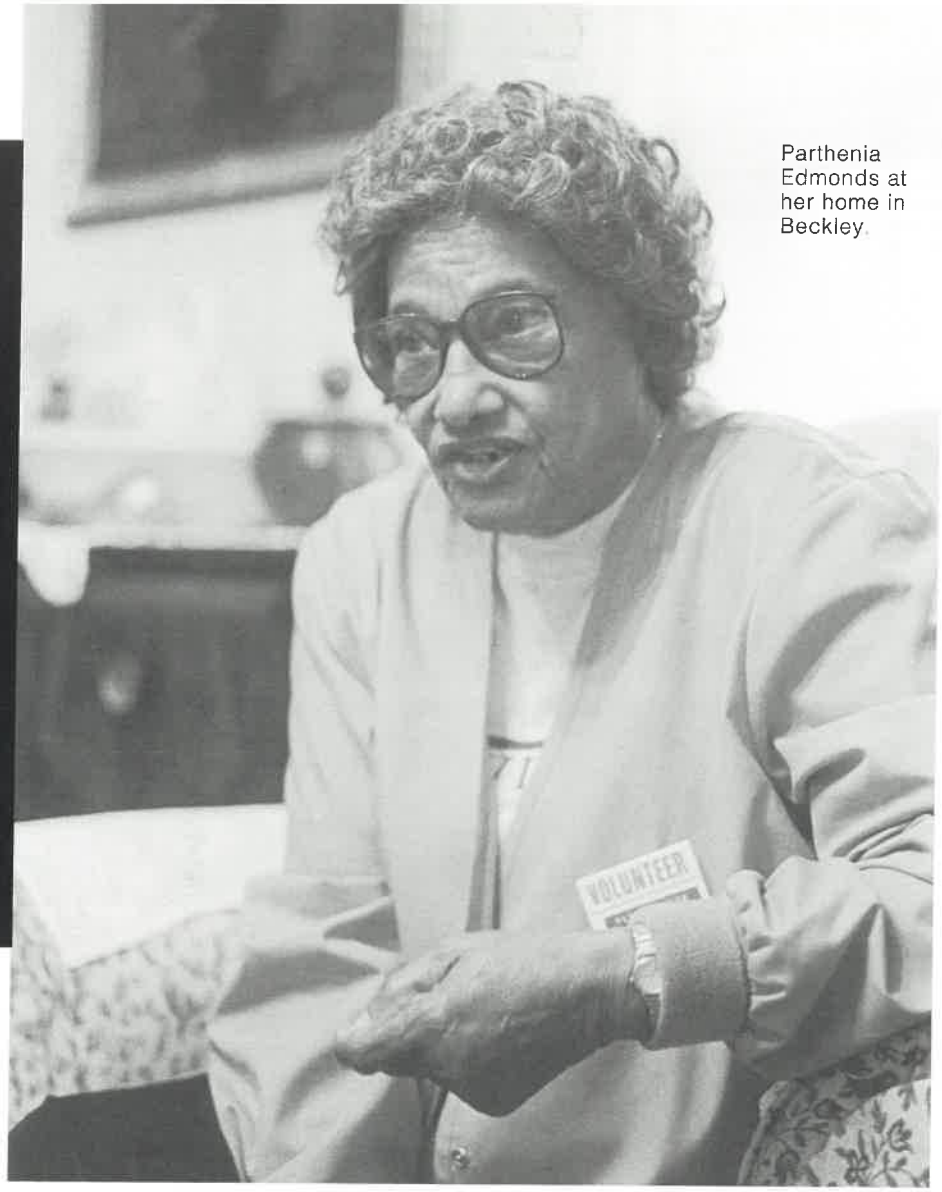
When the Slovene immigrants left Jerryville, they began another journey, this time into the mainstream of American life.

A second bridge into the mainstream was education. Slovene parents insisted that their children attend school and study hard; studying was considered as much a child's job as coal mining was the father's job.

Language was another bridge. After several of the eldest children in Slovene families went into first grade speaking only Slovene and no English, parents made sure that the same thing would not happen with the other children. Slovenes knew that speaking English well was the key to becoming Americans, and was the only way to stop the derision that occurred when they spoke in broken English. Immigrant Joe Urbas learned to defend himself with his wit after first having to defend himself with his fists. When a fellow worker made fun of his English and the fact that he spoke another language, Joe replied, "If I forget this language [English], I have another I can speak. If you forget it, you'd have to bark like a dog."

Citizenship, and its subsequent voting privilege, was the last bridge into the mainstream. Those Slovenes who did not already possess citizenship valued it as a prize well worth the hard work and preparation it required.

Assimilating into mainstream America was not without its obstacles. From 1900-'35, during the wave of heaviest immigration and settlement, immigrants of all nationalities sometimes met with suspicion and violence. In Richwood and surrounding areas, the Slovenes endured mostly rock-throwing and name-calling. As one second-generation Slovene re-



Parthenia Edmonds at her home in Beckley.

on the farm. "Because I was the oldest girl," she says, "I had to learn, at an early age, child care, cleaning, and cooking."

By 1922, times grew so hard on the farm that her father did not get enough money from his tobacco crop to even buy his wife a new dress. "History will tell us that the sharecroppers never did get their fair share for their hard work," Parthenia comments.

Jessie learned of new mines opening in West Virginia and went to Eckman in McDowell County to seek a job. He left his wife and children behind on the farm until he could earn enough to pay for their transportation to the coalfields. When Jessie Fountain earned a paycheck and obtained living quarters, he sent for the family. Parthenia's Aunt Julia took the family and their belongings to the train depot in Martinsville, Virginia, where they boarded a train to Roanoke. Jessie met them there and took them to their new home.

When they arrived in Eckman, the coal camp made a lasting impression on Parthenia. "I can still remember lying in bed at night and seeing the coke ovens burning," she says. She recalls that her father was glad to work in the mines, away from the cheating farm-owners who took advantage of sharecroppers.

Young Parthenia spotted a schoolhouse and learned that she was eligible to attend. She had longed for an education. "I was about nine years old when I first entered school at Keystone-Eckman and was tested," she recalls. "My mother had home-schooled me on the farm, and I had advanced so that the teachers decided I was third-grade level. And I caught up, so I passed two grades in one year."

Her favorite memory of that first year of school at Keystone-Eckman was winning a silver dollar for reciting the poem, "Trees," by Joyce Kilmer. She says, "It is still one of my favorite poems because of the line, 'Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree.'"

By 1925, her father learned that a Raleigh County mine owner was paying more for coal loaders, and "with such a large family, we needed more money," she explains. So, Jessie Fountain and his wife packed up their family and headed for Tams, 15 miles southwest of Beckley.

When the family stepped off the train at the railroad depot in Tams, Parthenia recalls seeing one of the most beautiful and immaculate coal mining towns she had ever seen. At that time, Tams was a thriving town served by both the B&O and Virginian railroads. It had piped water, electricity, and a movie theater—before Beckley had any of these.

Tams was established in 1909 by the Gulf Smokeless Coal Company and was named for founder Major W.P. Tams and his brother W.F. Tams. Unlike many other coal towns which had out-of-state, absentee owners, the Tams brothers lived right in Tams and took a strong, personal interest in their company and in their community. Parthenia recalls that Major Tams would sponsor a garden and yard contest each year. Her Aunt Bertha had such beautiful flowers and such an immaculate yard that she would take the $50 prize every year. Aunt Bertha ran a boardinghouse in the upper end of Tams, nearer the town of Stotesbury, reserved for the black community.

Segregation practices at the time had the white community in the middle of town near the company store and tipple, while the immigrant community lived at the lower end of Tams, closer to the town of Ury, first called Cooktown. By the

The New Salem Baptist Church is one of the only structures remaining today in Tams. Parthenia and her family attended this church, which was featured on the cover of our October-December 1979 issue.

time Parthenia and her family arrived, these communities had a combined population of more than 2,500 people.

The Fountain family moved into a small house next door to the boardinghouse. "When I walked into our new home at Tams, I discovered it had a nice sink with a water spigot in the kitchen, and I thought we were rich," Parthenia says with a smile.

In the summer months, Major Tams would hire the young boys in the community to white-wash fences, outhouses, coal houses, and other buildings in the town. At 13 years of age, Parthenia went to work for the coal company doctor and his wife. "I did the cooking, cleaning, and shopping at the Tams company store," she says. Her two older brothers went to work with their father in the Tams mines. "So, with what the four of us made from our jobs, we survived," she says.

During the Great Depression, Parthenia recalls, "Mr. Tams gave out gardening seeds to the miners, and we always had a cow which afforded our family milk and butter. And we raised chickens and had eggs, and with a garden," she adds, "a good supply of vegetables for canned goods. We also learned to share with our neighbors."

The New Salem Baptist Church was an important center for the black community at Tams [see "Homecoming," by Yvonne Farley; October-December 1979]. Parthenia recalls being baptized in the creek which runs beside the church, singing in the choir, and attending regular services and other activities there. The church still stands and is one of the only structures still remaining at Tams.

"When I walked into our new home at Tams, I discovered it had a nice sink with a water spigot in the kitchen, and I thought we were rich."

The coal camp had a movie theater and swimming pool, and there was no discrimination. "I recall the first movie I ever saw at the coal camp theater was a western featuring Tom Mix," she says. The train depot was a very popular place on Sundays. "Everyone congregated there to watch people getting on and off the trains," she recalls.

Around the fireside at evening, Parthenia listened to her parents talk about the farm they lived on, and sharecropping. "I wanted to get a good education and somehow help them someday to have a better life," she says. Attending school and getting a college education were always in her daily thoughts. "I knew the odds of a black woman attending college in the middle of the Depression from a family of 11 people on a coal miner's wages was out of the question. But, when the teacher would ask the class who planned to attend college, I would raise my hand, knowing it was just a dream."

Parthenia went to school faithfully, borrowed her teachers' books

Parthenia stands at the intersection where she was seriously injured in a school bus accident in 1931, and shows her scar.

to study more, and dreamed. The odds may have been against her, but fate soon played a role in making her dream come true.

A black high school had been established in 1927 just a few miles down the road from Tams, near another coal mining community, Amigo. Parthenia had advanced to the seventh grade that year, and, even if college seemed to be out of the question, she was determined to get a high school diploma.

A young coal miner named Pete Bush, who also desired a high school education, volunteered to drive the students to school each day. An old truck was fashioned into a makeshift school bus with bench seats on each side of the back portion of the truck. A tarpaulin was used as a cover.

It was a spring day in 1931. Parthenia had advanced to the ninth grade, and she was working late in the school concession stand. The "bus" was parked out front waiting on her. All the other students had climbed aboard, taking the choice seats. Parthenia was the last one to get in the back of the truck and was seated at the end. As the old truck full of kids motored through the small community of Ury, just a mile from Parthenia's home, a Beckley music company delivery truck pulled out of a side street and broadsided them.

Parthenia was seriously injured in the wreck. She and another girl were treated by the Tams coal company physician first and then sent immediately to the Beckley hospital for further treatment. They feared that Parthenia would lose her arm. "But by the grace of God and a young intern, Dr. M.M. Ralsten, my arm was saved," Parthenia says. She had to spend the next 28 days in the Beckley hospital and all summer taking therapy. Although she is now fully recovered, she still bears the scar from the accident on her right arm.

In the autumn of 1931, this dark cloud bore a silver lining for Parthenia as the board of education reached a financial settlement with the music company. The

The 1937-'38 Women's Senate at West Virginia State College, Institute, Kanawha County. Parthenia is seated at center. Photograph by Holt Photography.

Parthenia married Jerry Earl Edmonds in 1939, and the couple moved to Beckley. By 1949, they had two sons, shown here. Benny is age two and Jerry is age six in this 1949 photograph.

Parthenia and adopted grandson Timothy in the back room of Edmond's Grocery in Beckley, 1967.

money was held in trust at the Tams company store for Parthenia and the other injured girl, and provided Parthenia with the savings she would need to attend college. Parthenia grew more intent on her studies, and in 1935, she graduated valedictorian from Byrd-Prillerman High School.

She enrolled as a freshman at West Virginia State College at Institute that fall. The idea of leaving the small mining town to travel "so far" to college was, she says, "awesome." The excitement of entering a different environment, however, took away the fear. "I roomed with my high school pal Irene Dixon, who was from Rhodell in Raleigh County."

The girls rode the train to Institute to begin their freshman year. They had to cross the Kanawha River on a small boat with their trunks aboard, which they found "rather frightening," she says. They lived in McCorkle Hall, which was nice and clean and had a parlor for entertaining. Parthenia worked in the dining room washing dishes for the teachers.

The first week of school, Parthenia recalls that she did suffer from homesickness tremendously, but after a talk with her matron Mrs. Jordan, "I was able to focus on why I wanted an education and a better future life," she says.

Parthenia began to work with a nurse teacher in the village at Institute to secure funds for her sister Annie to attend college. She also had time to play basketball and volleyball and served two years as a member of the women's senate.

In the spring of 1939, Parthenia Fountain graduated with a degree in home economics. She was the first four-year college graduate from either the Fountain or Hairston family.

After graduation, she came back to Tams. Her first job was to teach adult education in the community for $90 a month. In December of 1939, Parthenia married Jerry Earl Edmonds of Tams. The couple moved to Beckley where they paid $25 down and purchased the house on Gregory Street where she still resides today.

Earl, as he was known, worked as a coal miner. Parthenia was soon hired as a substitute teacher at Byrd-Prillerman High School in Amigo, commuting by bus each day and teaching such subjects as home economics, Spanish, and science. She also taught at McAlpin Grade School and Stratton High School.

Parthenia soon became discouraged about her chances of landing a permanent teaching position, however. "I found out early that

home economics teachers were not a fast turnover — no sickness due to their knowledge of good nutrition," she says. After one full year of substitute teaching, she decided to go into business for herself. In 1940, she purchased a grocery store in Beckley with her sister Lucinda Hughes. They called the store Jerry's Grocery. Parthenia says that the store was located in a racially mixed neighborhood and was named after her eldest son Jerry.

"My training in home economics prepared me for buying and budgeting, and I had a year of business mathematics which helped in making my tax reports," she says. "I enjoyed store business. It was a service for the community." Parthenia designed children's clothing "on the side," and she and her husband raised a large garden and sold the produce in their store. Although she enjoyed the experience, Parthenia and Earl sold their share of the store to their business partners Lucinda and Albert Hughes about two years later.

In the 1950's, Pathenia says, "I cashed in my life insurance and built a store beside Piney Oaks School, which we called Edmond's Grocery." She and Earl operated that store for 20-some years and "had a wonderful business."

During that time, Earl still worked in the mines, a career which spanned from 1927 until 1970. He worked at Tams, East Gulf, and retired from the Fireco mine. The couple reared three sons. Through hard work, Parthenia says, it was another dream fulfilled to "assure our sons a better life and an education."

Jerry Earl, the eldest, is an accomplished athlete who now lives in Henderson, North Carolina, where he works for a printing company and operates a private tennis school. Benjamin lives in Plantation, Florida, where he has a career in the bricklaying trade. Timothy, the youngest, graduated from the Art Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and now lives in Richmond, Virginia. Her husband Earl passed away in 1991.

Looking back over her life from the tenant farm, to the coal camp, to the city, to fulfilling her dreams, Mrs. Edmonds says, "I march by my own drum beat. I was born of a divine will and am here to fulfill my destiny. I have always mapped out my own dreams, but I got into college on the divine will of God through a school bus accident."

Parthenia adds, "I'm glad I grew up in my time when you had to work hard." Even today, after a full life of teaching school, rearing a family, and operating a business, she has not slowed down much. She continues caring for the needy, serving dinners, working in the election polls, and doing church work.

"I think winning my silver dollar, and my teacher telling me I had a good mind and memory, sparked the thought that I wanted to go to college and become a teacher to help others."

PAULINE HAGA is a freelance writer living in Crab Orchard, Raleigh County. Her books include *Tribute to the Coal Miner, Salute to the Veterans of World War II*, and around 50 research volumes for genealogists. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Fall 1999 issue.

DOUG CHADWICK is a panoramic photographer living in Pocahontas County. His work has appeared in GOLDENSEAL since our first year of publication.

At age 85, Parthenia remains healthy and active. She is shown here in her backyard with an old cookstove which she used for many years. "We cooked many a pot of delicious beans on that stove," she says.

Memories *of a* Mining Family

Tony Armstead Recalls Four Generations

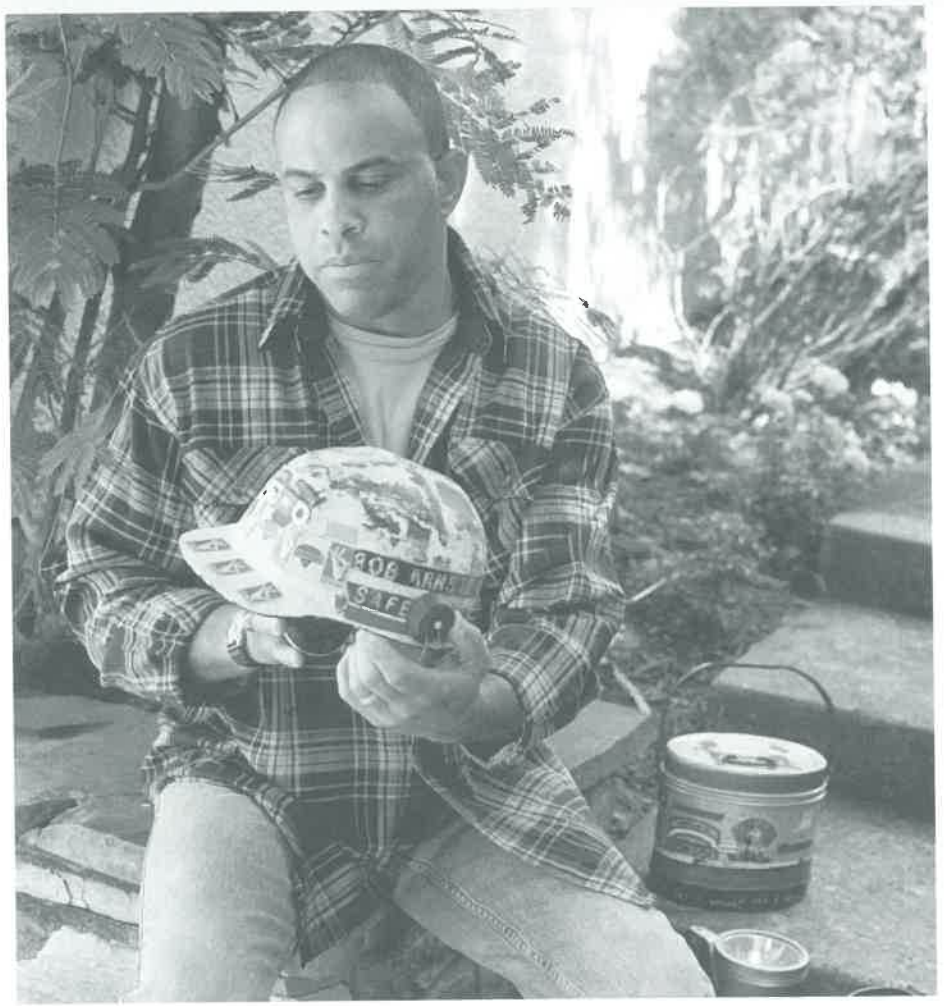
By Sharon L. Gardner

Photographs by Mark Crabtree

In the fall of 1981, Tony Armstead became the fourth generation of his family to mine coal. Four years later, he had to walk away. "My choice would have been to stay with mining," Tony says. "I liked the work, and I wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps. But I decided against it."

From 1916 to 1987, there was at least one member of the Armstead family working in the mines. Tony's great-grandfather William Armstead was born in 1870. He entered the Alabama coalfields to escape sharecropping and worked alongside prisoners sentenced to mining as their punishment. Tony says, "My great-grandfather William brought his sons — my grandfather James and my uncle Clifford — into the mines as young boys. I can't imagine being nine years old and working underground, day in and day out. But they did it."

With the promise of better pay and improved working conditions, the three Armstead men and their families relocated to the northern West Virginia coalfields in 1925. After finding work in the Watson mine, they settled in the Marion



Tony Armstead represents the fourth and final generation of coal miners in his family. Here, he sits outside his home in Morgantown and examines his father's mining helmet. Beside him are a lantern and a lunch bucket which also belonged to his father. Tony used the lunch bucket himself during his own four-year tenure in the mines.

Brothers Clifford (left) and James Armstead began mining as boys in Alabama before moving their families to Marion County in 1925. James, born in 1901, was Tony's grandfather.

Bob Armstead, born in Fairmont in 1927, was Tony's father. This photograph of Bob was taken when he was 16 years old, at about the time he entered the mines.

County community of Watson, near Fairmont. Tony's father Bob was born there in 1927.

Grandfather James, whom Tony calls "Paw," moved his family to the racially segregated coal camp of Grays Flats, outside of Grant Town, in 1929. His job was driving horses hauling two-ton coal cars out of the mines. Although James worked hard, he struggled to support his growing family of 11 children during the Great Depression.

"From 1929 to 1941, they lived in a four-room, coal company house with no inside plumbing," Tony says. "Because Paw worked six days a week in the mine, my dad and his brothers had many chores to do. Also, the coal company charged way too much for coal to heat their home, so the boys gathered spill-coal from the trains."

The United Mine Workers local chapter elected James Armstead recording secretary and financial secretary in the early 1930's. "Paw was big on the union," Tony says. He wrote letters for miners who couldn't read or write. That's amazing for a man with a fourth-grade education who taught himself to read. He wanted the miners to get what they deserved for working so hard."

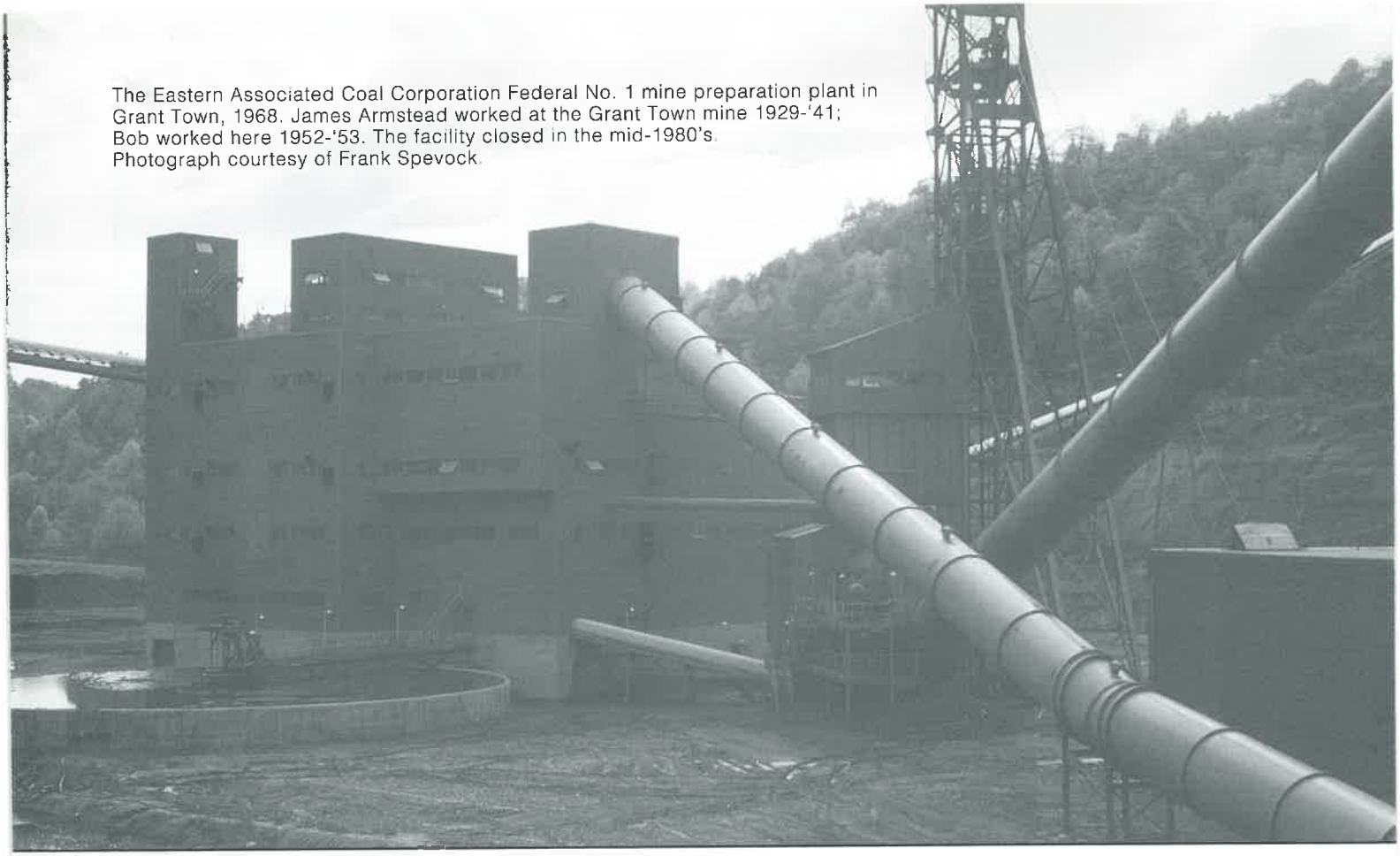
Like many fathers of his generation, James was a tough disciplinarian, especially with the five boys. "My dad told me that Paw was in charge of the boys, and my grandmother was in charge of the girls," Tony says. "Paw was a very serious man."

From 1916 to 1987, there was at least one member of the Armstead family working in the mines

Few stories of James' work experiences have survived the years, but Tony remembers one ghost tale his grandfather told. "Paw had to walk a mile to the mine at 5:00 in the morning," Tony says. "It was pitch dark in winter. One morning, he heard someone walking toward him. As the sound of boots clicking on the road approached, he realized no one was there. The walking boots said, 'Good morning,' as they passed by. Paw believed he'd met the ghost of a dead miner."

The increasing use of mining machines forced James out of the Grant Town mine in 1941, and the family had to vacate their coal company house. James moved his family to Fairmont and began work in the Dakota mine which still needed horse drivers to haul coal. Great-grandfather William, who by then was disabled and was living with James and his family, died in Fairmont in 1943.

James soon took work at Barnesville Shaft mine outside Fairmont and arranged a job for his son Bob. Once he walked inside Barnesville Shaft that first day in 1947, Bob was hooked. "My dad loved being a coal miner," Tony says. "From the beginning, the whole idea of mining appealed to him. When Barnesville shut down, they were both transferred to Everettville. Five months later, Everettville shut down. My grandfather got a job at Jordan mine, and soon got my dad a job there. Dad got laid off, worked in Grant Town a couple years, and went back to Jordan in 1954. Paw stayed there until he retired in 1956."



The Eastern Associated Coal Corporation Federal No. 1 mine preparation plant in Grant Town, 1968. James Armstead worked at the Grant Town mine 1929-'41; Bob worked here 1952-'53. The facility closed in the mid-1980's. Photograph courtesy of Frank Spevock.

In the late 1950's, recession in the coal industry forced Tony's father into a four-year layoff. Bob had to accept a low-paying job that barely kept the family going. He got back on at Loveridge in 1963 and mined steadily for the next 24 years.

Tony recalls, "My first awareness that my dad was a coal miner is him taking my brother Mike and me to the coal company store on Fairmont Avenue every Saturday morning. You could go there and get anything, even furniture. We went for groceries, school clothes, and his work clothes. After shopping, the last thing he did at the company store was fill up his gas tank."

Over the years, Bob learned to operate all the mining machines and seemed to have a knack for fast and efficient work. These qualities, and a strong work ethic inherited from his father, got the attention of his supervisors. One supervisor encouraged Bob to take the mining test, and in 1968, Bob earned certification to be a foreman — a noteworthy accomplishment for a black man in the 1960's.

Before the introduction of mining machines in Marion County, blacks had easy access to jobs in the mines. After machines started replacing men, however, black miners suffered the heaviest layoffs. Some owners and foremen considered blacks incapable of running the new machines.

Machines had cut the workforce to less than half, but the percentage of black miners had dropped from 25 percent to 2 percent of the total.

When James Armstead worked in the Grant Town mine in the 1930's, he was one of 500 black men on the payroll. When Bob hired on there in 1952, less than 20 blacks and 900 white men worked the mine. Machines had cut the workforce to less than half, but the percentage of black miners had dropped from 25 percent to 2 percent of the total.

The pattern of prejudice continued, especially after the arrival of the continuous miner in the 1950's. This powerful machine cuts and loads the coal in one operation, and some feel that the operators of these machines are the most important members of the mining work crew. Competition for these jobs can be fierce, and in the early years, blacks were generally not even considered.

Tony learned of his father's reaction to this discrimination years later. "After my dad got on at Loveridge, he put in for the loading machine," Tony says. "Loaders had to learn to run the continuous miner so they could fill in. Dad concentrated on running the continuous miner, and he got very good at it. So good, in fact, that foremen started pressuring him to take the job permanently, but he refused. That was his aim: to get himself into the position of saying,

'No. I will not help you mine coal faster because of all those years of denying my race the opportunity to run this machine.' He never told them that was why, but to him, refusing to do it was a victory."

A few short weeks after Bob earned his certification as a mine foreman, tragedy hit a mine in Marion County. Consol's Farmington No. 9 exploded. National media attention focused on Farmington as the company was forced to seal the mine 10 days later with 78 miners trapped inside. Tony recalls the terrible effect this disaster had on him. "Although I was only 10 years old," he says, "I can remember the Farmington explosion in November 1968 just like it was yesterday. Before Farmington, I used to pray every day, 'Bring my daddy back home safely.' After Farmington, I was terrified that somebody would have to come and get me at school to tell me my dad was gone."

When Tony was 16, his grandfather James died of black lung at age 75. "Paw had been in the mines for 50 years," Tony says, "most of that time without any protection from the coal dust. He was on oxygen during the last six months, and he dropped 60 pounds. That was hard."

Tony was quite aware of the dangers involved in mining. His father's success as a foreman, however, plus the promise of good pay, made Tony believe that he'd like to try mining.

"I was 23," he recalls. "Dad called me from the regional office and asked, 'Do you think you can be here in 30 minutes? I'm here with Al Polis, and he wants to see you.' I made it in 20 minutes. My dad introduced me. Mr. Polis made a couple phone calls and then asked, 'Can you go to Blacksville No. 1 tomorrow?' I knew that was a Consol mine in Monongalia County. I said, 'Yes!' After two weeks of mining school, I started to work.

"I think my dad was concerned, because he gave me lots of advice," Tony recalls. "He told me to do what I was told, not what I thought I should do. He said, 'You have experienced miners in there. You listen to what they say because they aren't going to do anything to get you hurt. You see a roof that doesn't look good, don't chance it.' The whole time I was in the mine he preached, 'Danger, danger.'"

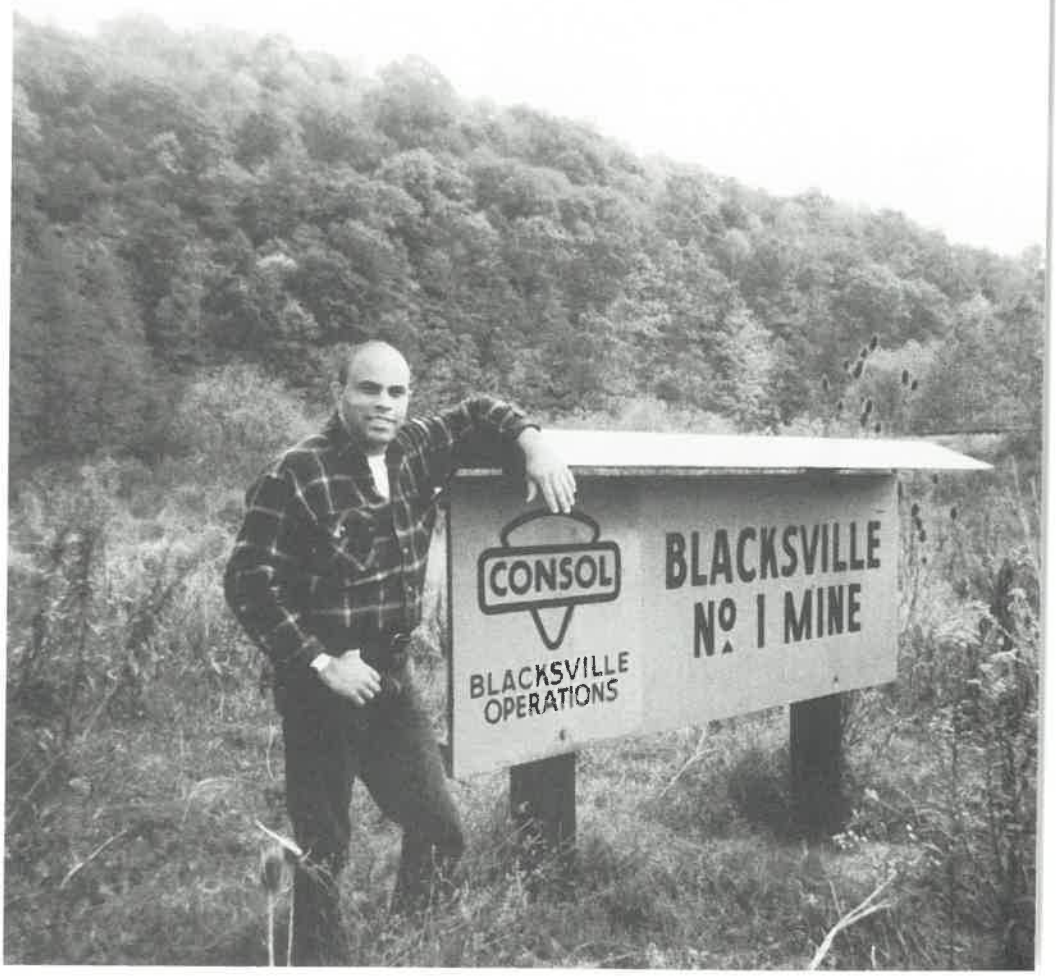
When Tony started at Blacksville, he worked outside, straightening supplies in the supply yard. "Dead man's work," he calls it. "I got anxious to go down in," Tony says. "After one week, they opened up a new section, and I went in. It was just like my dad described. Twenty-five of us rode the cage down 625 feet in one minute with the only light coming from our battery lamps. Tracks ran everywhere. The first sight that impressed me was a trip of coal with 40-ton motors hauling at least 50 coal cars."

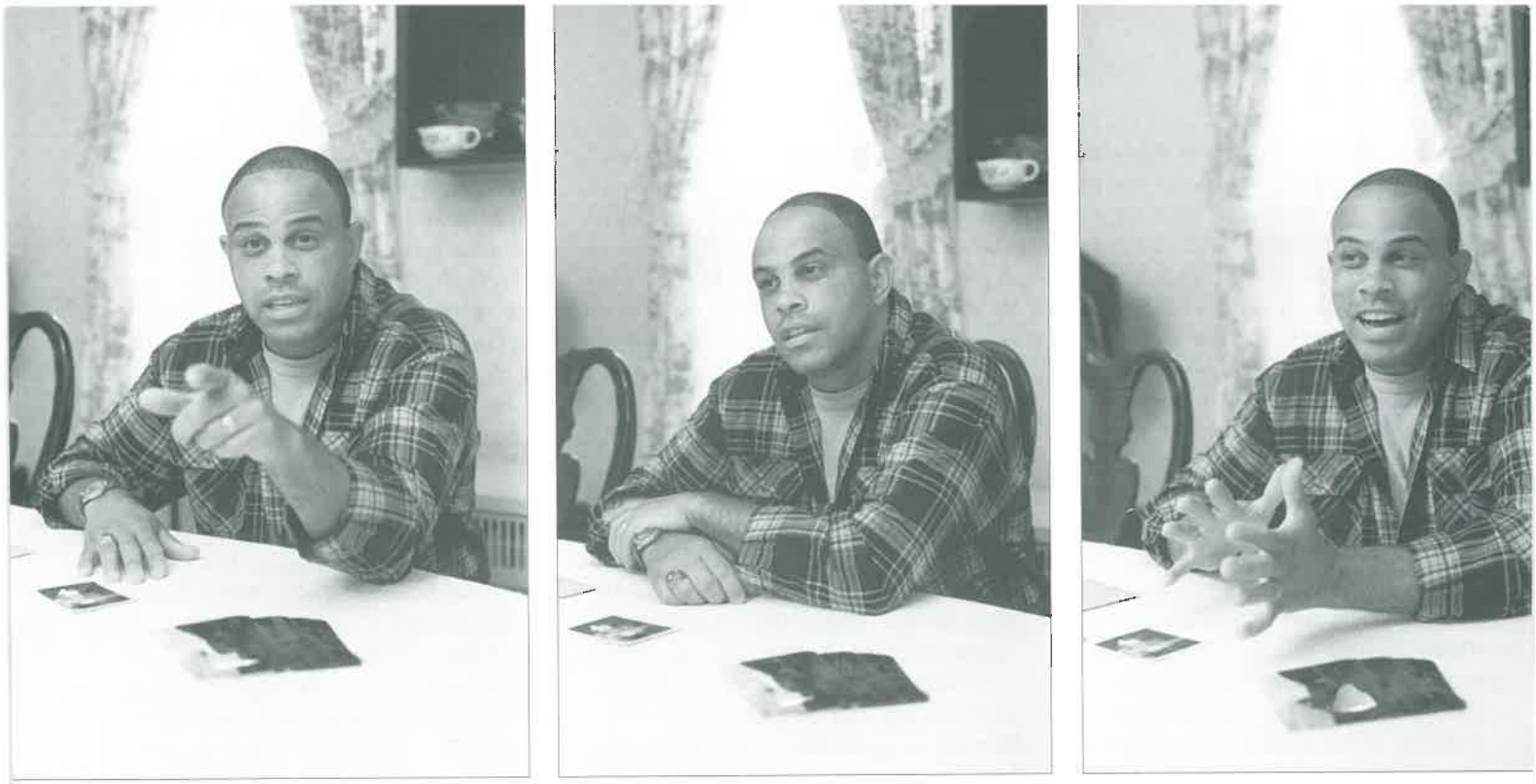
Blacksville No. 1 was a relatively new operation when Tony began work there in 1981. "The mine was dry, less gassy than most, and had no worn-out equipment. My job was general inside laborer. I worked with a small crew, including a couple women, building cribs to support the roof and helping masons build concrete stoppings. I really enjoyed the work. The time went quickly, and there was always something to do.

"I was a little scared at first. The darkness bothered me, but after a month or two, I adjusted. Dad had told me about the roof cracking and rumbling, so I accepted that quickly. The noise made me think about the wood fires in my grandparents' home.

"My fiancee Donna was very scared for me, because no one in her family was a miner. The first thing she thought of when I said I was going into the mines was

In 1981, Tony began work at the Blacksville No. 1 mine in Monongalia County. The threat of layoffs, however, and the uncertain future of mining caused him to walk away in 1985. Photograph by Sharon Gardner.





Mixed feelings and strong emotions emerge as Tony Armstead discusses life in the mines, and his family's proud history as coal miners. Tony is shown here in the dining room of his Morgantown home.

Bob and Gay Armstead, Tony's parents, in Fairmont, 1984.

Farmington No. 9, and how those men were trapped, waiting, gasping for breath. Donna didn't understand about the machinery and didn't even know miners had to carry in their own water. My mom was terrified for me and tried to talk me out of staying in. She had Donna call her each day after I got home for several months. I understood. Mom didn't want to get a phone call that I got hurt or killed. She didn't worry as much about my dad because he had so many years of experience.

"We learned to live with the fear," Tony adds. "There's certain risks that you have to take in life. But it was there, in the back of our minds, that anything could happen. I always said a prayer before I went down, 'God, please take me down and let me work safely. Not only me, but all the other miners on this shift.' When I came up on the cage, I'd look up and see daylight and always say, 'Thank you, God. I made another safe day.' We never had to evacuate the mine, and never had a fire or an explosion. So He did take care of us."

After about 18 months, Tony bid on a shuttle car. Bob had been a shuttle car operator for 14 years, and was pleased to see his son follow suit. "They called me 'Buggy Ruggy,' because I was pretty good at it. My dad got a kick out of that."

One thing that Bob had warned his son about happened when Tony had been working at Blacksville almost two years — the inevitable layoff. "My first time was six months," Tony recalls. "It was something how the old coal miners knew when a layoff was coming. They said, 'The big boys are outside.' Sure enough, when we came up, there hung the 'Layoff' sign. They went back to a 14-year hiring date, so I didn't even have to look. I knew I was out the door. After they called us back, I worked one year and got laid off again in 1983. I kept looking for work. We had a hard time living on unemployment, and I got extensions for as long as I could. We lost our apartment. That second layoff made me decide I couldn't stick with it. I felt the same thing would continue to happen to me that happened to my dad — all those layoffs. I couldn't stand that uncertainty. I was adamant about not going back the third time and facing an uncertain future."

This photograph from the GOLDENSEAL files shows the Lowther family from Lewis County with a 1,100-pound hog, date unknown.

scald the hair off the hog had to be in place with water in it and a fire built under it. Dad used railroad scrap metal with holes in it and an old gear box which he heated in the fire. He used a hook to place the red-hot metal in the water repeatedly to keep the water hot for scalding.

The large, iron lard kettle had to be ready to go. The block and tackle had to be in place for raising and lowering the hogs into the hot water for scalding and scraping. A tripod had to be set up for the hogs to be gutted. And a work area had to be set up for cleaning the entrails or stripping the fat. The sausage mill had to be cleaned and ready, as well. The knives had to be sharpened and gun ready.

All of this preparation took place along with the farmer's other chores such as feeding his animals, milking the cows, and going to work if he had a paying job. The farmer's wife would assimilate these once-a-year tasks into her steady stream of cooking, cleaning, sewing, washing, ironing, canning, and raising a family.

On the appointed day, everyone gathered at our farm and the butchering began. Each man and woman had a specialized task. Some men were sharpshooters and were very adept at shooting the hog in the head and being accurate enough not to make the pig squeal. His manhood was on the line. The shooter aimed at an imaginary cross-hair between the hog's eye and ear. A black hog was considered harder to shoot because it was harder to see this spot. Maybe he had only a second to do it before the hog moved. If for any reason the shooter missed his mark and shot the animal in the shoulder or ham, he had not met the test.

Some amazing stories were produced to cover these unfortunate incidents: the gun needed to be "sighted" or the barrel bores were "ridged" with wear. The most interesting explanation was the "double-skulled" pig. Many marksmen claimed that some hogs had a double skull and consequently they were doubly hard to bring down with one bullet.

However, there was no face-saving device for the man who shot his pig in the shoulder, ham, or side. Besides the waste involved by piercing the prime cuts with a bullet, there was genuine concern for the suffering of the animal. A quick kill was a mark of skill and manly virtue. The code was not written anywhere, but it was clearly understood and enforced by the community.

Grandpa once had the humiliating misfortune to make his pig squeal. Grandpa Jay fancied himself to be quite a hunter, among other things. As he grew in age, the legends of his youth in the logging camps and coal mines escalated to

Our author Lillian Poe is at front right in this 1948 photograph, as she and her siblings head off for their first day of school. With her in the front row is first-grader Curtis Poe; Lillian is entering the third grade. Standing behind them are Jim, Joetta (at center), and Lola.

Paul Bunyan proportions. His prime skills, according to Grandpa, were drinking, fighting, and finding willing women. He never got to finish the good parts of his stories because our mother considered this kind of knowledge inappropriate for her girls. She always dismissed his legends as lies, or rolled her eyes heavenward and sighed, "Here we go again."

But the day Grandpa made the pig squeal, there was no saving story. My three-year-old cousin Lois Lenore laid down in the middle of Aunt Willodene's living room and demonstrated the vivid scene. She flailed her arms and legs and squealed before a room full of adults and older children after she announced, "Here's how Papaw make de piggy squeal." She then let out short, piercing squeals, as she echoed the sounds which she had heard earlier. She was whisked away quickly, and talk resumed after a period of embarrassed silence.

Once the hog was shot, it had to be bled. The big workhorses Bob and Bill would panic when they smelled the fresh blood, so we used our pony to haul the hog to the barrel and to work the block and tackle. The little pinto would work all day raising and lowering the hogs as he was commanded to do.

Once the hog was cleaned thoroughly by scraping the hair from all parts, it was hung on a tripod where it was gutted. Mike Murphy gutted the hogs and he would say the same thing every year: "Keep your hands off the hog at all times." The entrails were caught in a washtub and Mother or Uncle Sweden would trim the fat from them for lard at another workstation. The liver was salvaged, but my parents did not use the kidneys or lungs in any way. Dad never allowed anyone to use the blood of the hog either; it was simply a byproduct of butchering, in his estimation.

The head was set aside to be trimmed for mincemeat or other meats removed from the jowls. The hog was then sawed into two halves. Two men stood ready for the hog halves to be cut loose from the tripod. Each of the men catching the hog halves had to have a firm footing as the weight of 200-250 pounds fell across his shoulders. The ground was preferably hard with freezing, and often the icy hills resulted in falls. The halves were then carried to the meat house to be divided by shoulders, hams, pork chops, and spareribs, while other portions were added to the sausage or canned.

Uncle Sweden's task was to render the lard. The outcome was to be white and creamy, a reduction of the trimmed fat from the hog. If the fire under the lard kettle became

Tony the pony was a big help at butchering time. The author's father John Poe is shown here with young Paul Louis Greenlee atop Tony in the 1940's.

One day at supper, about halfway through the meal, Dad said that he had an announcement to make. He sounded so serious that he instantly had everybody's attention. He said, rather solemnly, "There isn't going to be any Christmas this year."

The oldest children, my brother and I, were 13 and 12. The three youngest children were aged five, seven, and nine. Forks and spoons were dropped, eating stopped, and the air was filled with silent disbelief. Finally, somebody broke the silence with a question. "Why?"

"Santa Claus is dead," he said, his voice solemn and trembling. Again, more silence. And then, another question.

"How?"

"Because," he said, "John L. Lewis shot him."

For a moment, there was surprise, then more disbelief and consternation. Everybody looked at my mother, and her face finally gave the game away. There was the sound of everybody exhaling and a great peal of laughter. Dad never kidded much, which had made him all that more believable. We regained our lost appetites, and the meal continued. Christmas was on again!

Another memorable Christmas for me took place in 1944. I had been in the Army since April and had finished basic training at Fort McClellan, Georgia, in early December. After a brief leave, I was soon on my way to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where a large group of soldiers was being assembled for the trip to Europe and war. I had departed Canebrake on about December 20, and it was not a happy time.

At Camp Kilmer, there was a delay. We were to be shipped on the "Queen Mary," and they were having some problems loading the 15,000 soldiers onto the boat. There was paperwork to be done, and the officer in charge of our company noted from my records that I could type. He asked me to help. I was bored out of my mind and welcomed the change.

On December 23, an announcement was made that our departure would be delayed until January 1, and that anybody who lived within a 300-mile radius could have a three-day pass for a quick Christmas at home. I was just outside of the zone, but because I had helped out in the office, they said I could go if I thought I could get back in three days.

I was ready, but had no money. I had won about $50 in a dice game and had wired that and my other extra funds home — I wasn't going to need American money in Europe. I wired my dad to send the money back (he must have thought I had gone crazy), and it came in time.

I took a bus to the nearest town, and a train to Philadelphia, then to Roanoke, and from there on the "Powhatan Arrow" to Welch. It had taken 22 hours. I caught a bus out of Welch at about 7:00 in the morning and arrived at the bridge across from my home at about 8:00 on Christmas Day.

When the bus stopped and I got off, my dad was watching and instantly began to run to meet me, like the father of the prodigal son in the Bible. It was the first time I had ever seen him so emotional.

On arrival at home, I was greeted by Mom and the rest of the family, visited for a while, and then shared the best Christmas dinner of my life. I was also introduced to my new baby sister who had been born on December 23, after I left home. Dad and Mom had heard me say that when I got married and had a daughter, I was going to name her Cheryl Anne. Concerned that I might not come back from the war, they named my new sister Cheryl Anne. That was just fine with me.

I had been up for 30 hours. After a bit of sleep, we spent the rest of Christmas Day as a family. After a brief night's sleep and 24 hours at home, I was on my way back to Camp Kilmer. Dad and my brother took me to Bluefield to catch the "Arrow" back to Roanoke. Dad even let me drive our '31 Chevrolet to Bluefield. I drove fast over the snowy and icy roads. My brother was scared and showed Dad the speedometer, but Dad glanced away and said nothing. Years later, my brother said that Dad told him on the way back home that he would not have said a word if I had wrecked the car and killed us all.

I had 26 hours to get back to the camp. I retraced my trip and made it right on time. Six days later, I was aboard the "Queen Mary" and on my way to Europe. Those are two Christmases I will never forget!

ROSS W. MARRS grew up at Canebrake, McDowell County. He served in the armed forces during World War II and the Korean Conflict, and later spent 40 years as a United Methodist minister. Ross is now retired and lives in Deland, Florida. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Author Ross Marrs, at right, with father Rufus, 1944.

Mountain Music Roundup

By Paul Gartner

The hills of West Virginia are still alive with the sound of mountain music. A pile of recent recordings — some with new material, some vintage — highlight West Virginia's continuing contributions to recorded American music over the last century, showcasing our ever-evolving folk culture.

"Old-Time Music of West Virginia: Ballads, Blues and Breakdowns," a recent two-volume CD reissue of classic 78 r.p.m. recordings from County Records, documents Mountain State musicians from the 1920's and '30's: the "Golden Age of Country Music." The CD's also feature well-done liner notes placing the recordings in their historical context.

It seems that West Virginia's booming coalfields — and their proximity to Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina — provided a potent combination of musical talent, creative inspiration, and economic opportunity. Some musicians traveled here for work and left their mark on Mountain State music, and vice versa. Others were born here and came to prominence during those years.

Clark Kessinger is first out of the barn on **Volume One** (CO-CD-3518). The legendary Kanawha County fiddler's 1928 recording of "Garfield's March" showcases his rich, woody tone, sweeping double stops, and perfect vibrato. Listen to his fiddle contemporaries in this package, and you'll hear just how far ahead of his time Kessinger

really was [see "Clark Kessinger: Pure Fiddling," by Charles Wolfe; Fall 1997].

Williamson Brothers & Curry, from Logan County, are another amazing bunch of musicians. Two cuts, "Gonna Die With a Hammer In My Hand" and "Warfield," have a driving syncopation that sounds thoroughly contemporary, even after more than 70 years. Their voices, soaring above the blend of fiddle, guitar, and ukelele, also show a tremendous black influence.

"Poca River Blues" and "Muskrat Rag," from Clendenin fiddler Sam (Reese B.) Jarvis, features Jarvis' smooth, stately bow work and stunning guitar runs from Dick Justice. The latter tune is a variation of "Uncle Joe," and both melodies remain fiddle standards in West Virginia today.

Logan County guitarist Frank Hutchison was a medicine show veteran whose records, with bluesy lap-steel guitar and vocals, saw some commercial success. Hutchison was also a country music pioneer, having recorded "West Virginia Rag" in January 1927 (included here) before country music legend Jimmie Rodgers made his first recordings later that year.

Blind Alfred Reed, from Princeton, wins the "If the shoe fits, can I borrow it?" award. His "Explosion In the Fairmont Mine," while based on a real event, is a reworking of Vernon Dalhart's "Dream Of the Miner's Child."

On a happier note, "Home Brew Rag" from the Tweedy Brothers, a lively combination of piano and two fiddles, is a tribute to the joys of homemade beverages. The swirling fiddles, backed up by cascading piano, are a romp. Continuing this spirited theme, the Fruit Jar Guzzlers "Stack-O-Lee," about the 1895 barroom killing of Billy Lyons, also offers a rare listen to two-finger banjo picking from the Kentucky-West Virginia line.

Volume Two (CO-CD-3519) features more fine music from these same artists and others, including the first (1931) recording of "Little Foot Prints," by the West Virginia Ramblers. The song was later recorded by Bill Monroe who turned it into the bluegrass standard, "Footprints In the Snow." The Tweedy Brothers return with "Rickett's Hornpipe." Fiddlers across the Mountain State still play this lively tune.

Despite the black musical influence evident on many tracks here, it would appear that few black West Virginia string bands were recorded during those early years. In those days, black musicians were generally regarded as blues artists, and white musicians

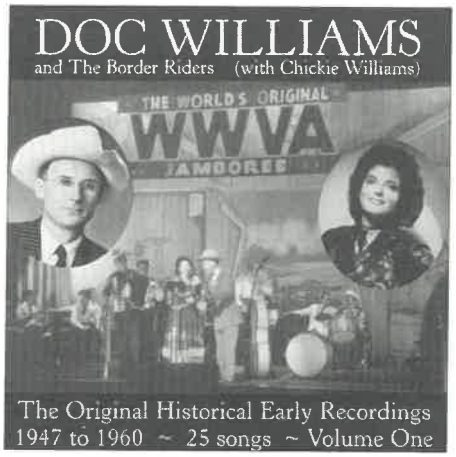
recorded for the so-called "hillbilly" market, despite a vast shared repertory. Perhaps some of these rare recordings have been lost to time. We do owe a debt of thanks, however, to record collectors for preserving these and to the folks at County Records for reissuing them on these two excellent CD's.

Three newly-released recordings showcase artists familiar to GOLDENSEAL readers and highlight the diversity of our state's musical heritage.

Mercer County bluesman **Nat Reese** [see "Nat Reese: Something To Give," by Michael Kline; Winter 1987], who received the 1995 Vandalia Award, calls his music "the old way" of playing. On "West Virginia Blues Man," a 1999 release from Roane Records (RR-109), Reese sings a lifetime of living, all in a heartfelt, bluesy style with just a touch of a swing influence. While every word he sings may or may not reflect Nat's firsthand experience, songs like "I Got a Sweet Little Angel," "Tired Of Slippin' Around," and "Sick and Down" say it all. This is particularly true on "Ain't Nobody's Business," where he sings of the uncertainties of life: "You know today I have ham and bacon,/And the next day, people, there just ain't nothing shakin'." Natural facts, folks.

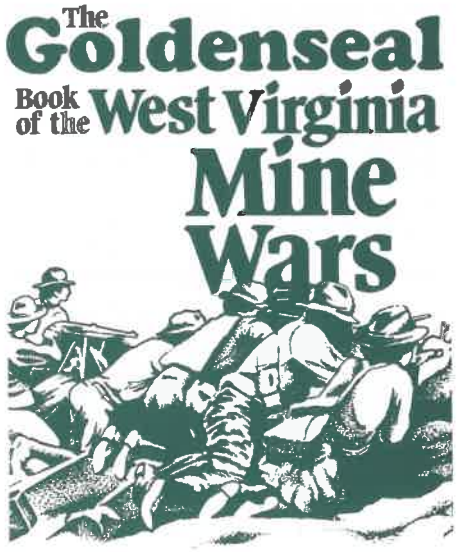
And he puts it across with more than words, scat singing a verse or two when necessary, as on "Old Shanty Town." Reese's vocal improvisations are skillfully understated, and not easy to do. Displaying more versatility, his clean guitar playing takes a deep blues turn on "Sick and Down." This and "The Lonesome Laudromat" bring to mind the classic big-city blues of Big Bill Broonzy. This collection from the southern end of West Virginia is relaxed but full of passion.

Heading up north, **Doc Williams** is a singer whose music has crossed many borders [see "Doc Williams: A Half Century At the 'Wheeling Jamboree,'" by Ivan Tribe; Spring 1987]. Broadcasting from WWVA's "Wheeling Jamboree," Doc and his wife Chickie, along with the Border Riders, reached listeners from Canada to Maine and on to Florida. Williams entertained close to home recently when the GOLDENSEAL bus tour stopped at Bethany College this past October, and Doc treated the group to a fine set of live music.



"Doc Williams: The Original Historical Early Recordings 1947 to 1960 — Volume One" (Wheeling Records 505) is a look back at a great career. In this collection, listeners hear how Williams merged traditional songs, post-World War II country music, and Eastern European polkas. "My Old Brown Coat and Me" is a ballad that might have crossed the Alleghenies with the first wagonload of settlers. "Remember that an old brown coat, while not so very grand,/Can cover up as warm a heart as any in the land," the song says.

Doc's musical landscape is traveled by Indian maidens, cowboys, love-struck farm boys, and Moms and Dads — warmed with lots of heart. Take "Willy Roy the Crippled Boy" — a moving song about a little boy's bedtime prayer that he might walk. The well-known Williams composition was covered by



The West Virginia Mine Wars were a formative experience in our state's history and a landmark event in the history of American labor. GOLDENSEAL has published some of the best articles ever written on this subject. In 1991, former editor Ken Sullivan worked with Pictorial Histories Publishing Company to produce this compilation of 17 articles, including dozens of historic photos.

Now in its third printing, the book is revised and features new updated information. The large-format, 109-page paperbound book sells for $9.95 plus $2 per copy postage and handling.

I enclose $ ___ for ___copies of *The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars.*
-or-
Charge my
___VISA ___MasterCard
_____
Exp. Date

Name _____

Address _____

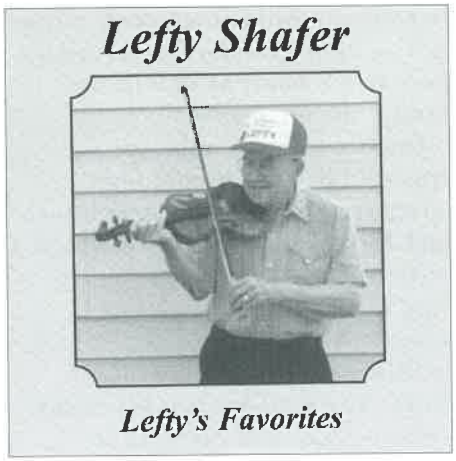
_____

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL. Send to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304)558-0220

country music legends Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper, as well as Roy Acuff. Or "Don't Break Her Heart Boy" — this previously unreleased song captures a father's mixed feelings on his daughter's wedding day. Chickie shines on her hit, "Beyond the Sunset." Coupled with the recitation, "Should You Go First and I Remain," she touched hearts everywhere.

The accordion is central to Williams' sound, and it steps to the front on "Merry Maiden Polka." Polkas struck a chord with many of Doc's listeners who shared his Eastern European roots. The Williamses were recording pioneers, too, using one of the nation's first reel-to-reel tape machines. These state-of-the-art recordings still ring with authenticity.

Speaking of the real thing, there are few West Virginia fiddlers better than **Emmet M. "Lefty" Shafer** [see "'A Lot Of Good Music': Lefty Shafer Talks Fiddling," interview by Robert Spence; Winter 1984]. Lefty received the 1997 Vandalia Award. Some fiddle purists may consider Lefty a "transitional" fiddler, since he grew up hearing old, cross-tuned pieces like "Elzic's Farewell," while at the same time being influenced by "modern" fiddlers such as Clark Kessinger or "Grand Ole Opry" mainstay Arthur Smith. Most West Virginians just know that



Lefty sure can fiddle, and "Lefty's Favorites" (Roane Records 112) is ample proof. The new CD contains 28 tracks collected from all four of Shafer's earlier LP and cassette recordings made between 1982-'95.

From the trusty dance tune "Liberty," to a crowd pleaser like "Midnight On the Water" or the contest classic "Blackberry Blossom," Shafer, who plays left-handed with the fiddle strung right-handed, has something for everyone. A retired school principal from Kanawha County, he learned "Poca River Blues" from Sam Jarvis back in the 1930's. He plays in the smooth style for which Kanawha and Roane county fiddlers are known. Shafer is also a quite a whistler, working his way through a forest of birdcalls on "Listen To the Mockingbird." He is also a composer, as we can hear on the bluesy but lighthearted "Lefty's Lament."

Several representatives of the "next generation" of West Virginia musicians have also been busy lately, and they have released a number of impressive new CD's.

What can you say about a guy who has had his guitar refretted 11 times since 1982? How many notes is that, anyway? While you're doing the math, it's a safe bet that **Robin Kessinger** is somewhere picking. Guitar wizard and former national flatpicking champ Kessinger — his great-uncle was fiddling legend Clark Kessinger — comes from a family of fine musicians [see "The Kessinger Family," by Paul Gartner; Fall 1997].

While Robin often performs with his brother Dan, his father Bob, or his son Luke, "Raw Guitar" (Roane Records 110) is just Robin. And that means fiddle tunes, complex cross-picking, slides, and gentle harmonics

ringing from his acoustic guitar. There are also a couple of thumb-and-fingerpick tunes thrown in for good measure — "Flint Creek" and "Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar." The reflective "My Love I Miss Her So" further demonstrates Robin's range.

On another Roane release, "Duets" (RR 115), Kessinger teams up with fiddler Cathy Pearson — better known to Vandalia audiences and GOLDENSEAL readers as **Cathy Pheasant** [see "The Fiddling Pheasants of Fairmont," by Torie Knight; Spring 2000]. Robin's tasteful guitar back-up underpins Cathy's sweet and throaty fiddling. "Leather Britches," "Billy In the Lowground," and "The Cuckoo's Nest" are among the 12 tunes that get a workout here. The pair trade breaks and variations for a fun session of contest favorites.

Speaking of which, **Robert Shafer** is another young fellow with enough blue ribbons to stretch from here to Winfield, Kansas, and back. Robert is the 2000 national flatpicking guitar champion, having won the contest this year in Winfield. Shafer's style leans toward the "hot" side, and "Swingin' Appalachian Style" (Roane Records 114) proves it. "Swingin'" features Shafer on guitar and mandolin with the late Randy Howard on fiddle. And swing they do, from "Little Rock Getaway" to "Bill Bailey" (these are two of the tunes that helped Robert snare that recent ribbon, by the way). Shafer's jazzy licks are subtle, refined, and merit close listening. He's an expressive player whose musical imagination keeps growing.

Did someone say growing? Calhoun County fiddler **Jake Krack** isn't even out of high school yet, and he's already released four CD's on the

family's WiseKrack label. On his latest, "Home At Last" (WiseKrack 1198), Krack is joined by John Blisard on banjo and Danny Arthur on guitar, two respected West Virginia musicians. Traditional fiddling from the Mountain State is the dominant sound here with local fiddle standards "Sandy Boys" and "Rachel" included among others. Strains of West Virginia fiddlers Bobby Taylor and Melvin Wine can be heard on "Redbird" and "Faded Love," respectively. "Home At Last" is another fine offering from this talented young musician.

Just up the road a ways, **Ginny Hawker** and **Tracy Schwarz** recorded "Good Songs For Hard Times" (Copper Creek CCCD-0183) at their home in Tanner, Gilmer County. The husband and wife team blend obscure gems from early bluegrass, traditional folk, gospel tunes, bedrock country, and new songs written in the old styles. Ginny serves as the president of the West Virginia State Folk Festival, and Tracy is nationally known, first as a member of The New Lost City Ramblers and later for his work with Cajun fiddler Dewey Balfa. Joining them on this recording are two esteemed West Virginia pickers, Buddy Griffin on mandolin and Jim Martin on bass, along with Tracy's son Peter Schwarz. Ginny and Tracy offer beautiful harmonies throughout, particularly on "Fog On the Water." You can't find better country duet singing than on "Touch My Heart." This is a first-rate recording, full of heart, particularly on Tracy's original song, "Time to Sell."

Another Copper Creek release, "25 Year Collection" (CCCD-0143), is a surprisingly strong look at the last three decades of music making from bluegrass mainstay **Dick Kimmel**. Now living in Minnesota, Dick is a native of the Eastern Panhandle. He was very active in West Virginia's music scene during the 1970's and early '80's, and wrote the GOLDENSEAL profile of the late banjo maker, Andy Boarman [see "Andrew F. Boarman: The Banjo Man From Berkeley County," by Dick Kimmel and Peggy Jarvis; January-March 1979]. Two standout tracks on this collection feature Boarman's impressive banjo playing along with Kimmell. Another treat here is "Parry Sound Reel," from Kimmel's days as a Quaker youth-camp counselor. The camp band exudes youthful energy, and recalls great New England "junket" fiddle bands. Other tracks, many of them recorded here in West Virginia, follow Kimmel's varied bluegrass career.

Finally, here are two new CD's which will appeal to those whose tastes run toward more eclectic or modern styles, and which reflect some new directions in our musical heritage.

"The Crossing" (Alula Records 104) is a new release from multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, and Wheeling native **Tim O'Brien**. This ambitious, thematic collection explores Tim's Irish roots [see "Wheeling's Irish Thread: An O'Brien Family Tale," by Margaret Brennan; Spring 1999].

O'Brien mixes a healthy respect for tradition with modern sensibilities, as heard on "Ireland's Green Shore," where he draws on verses collected from the late Maggie Hammons of Pocahontas County. Ireland meets Nashville

in this thoughtful collaboration featuring a long list of talented guest artists.

Continuing in the super-picker vein is "Wires & Wood" (Giant Records 24744) from Jackson County native and guitar-mandolin-fiddle ace **Johnny Staats**. He is joined here by a studio-full of Nashville's best including West Virginia natives Tim O'Brien, Jerry Douglas, and Kathy Mattea; the CD was also co-produced by local guitarist Ron Sowell, a longtime member of the "Mountain Stage" band. Staats swept the Vandalia contests in guitar and mandolin back in 1996, and his red-hot "newgrass" picking style is the centerpiece of this much-heralded release. It is available at most retail outlets.

To order the other recordings mentioned here, write to:
County Records, P.O. Box 191, Floyd, VA 24091
Roane Records, Route 3 Box 293, Spencer, WV 25276
Wheeling Records, P.O. Box 902, Wheeling, WV 26003
WiseKrack Records, HC 71 Box 87, Orma, WV 25268
Copper Creek Records, P.O. Box 3161, Roanoke, VA 24015
Alula Records, P.O. Box 62043, Durham, NC 27715-2043

PAUL GARTNER moved to West Virginia from Ohio in 1977, and now lives at Sod, Lincoln County. He is an old-time banjo player, freelance writer, and copy editor for *The Charleston Gazette*. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2000 issue.

New Books Available

A number of new books have come into our office recently, which are of interest to fans of traditional music.

America's Instrument: The Banjo in the Nineteenth Century, by Philip F. Gura and James F. Bollman, traces the instrument from its African roots, to its popularization on the minstrel stage, its acceptance as a parlor and orchestral instrument, and its early manufacture in the late 1800's. In addition to extensive documentation and commentary, the 303-page, hardbound book includes hundreds of images of period banjos, many of them in color [see "Photo Curiosity," inside back cover]. This is a landmark publication for any banjo enthusiast. The book sells for $45 and is available from University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288; or www.uncpress. unc.edu.

For those with a taste for folk songs, there is a new book compiled and edited by W.K. McNeil titled ***Southern Mountain Folksongs,*** published by August House. This 235-page, paper bound volume highlights non-narrative folk songs, rather than the traditional story ballads found in many other songbooks. It focuses exclusively on songs found in the Appalachian and the Ozark mountains, and draws parallels and distinctions between the songs of these two similar, but contrasting, regions. Detailed editor's comments, musical notation, and song lyrics are provided for each song, along with an extensive bibliography and a list of suggested recordings. *Southern Mountain Folksongs* sells for $12.95. For more information, call August House at 1-800-284-8784.

Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music, by Benjamin Filene, is a scholarly analysis of traditional folk music and its complex relationship to popular culture. This thought-provoking study examines the role song collectors, folklorists, record company executives, producers, radio programmers, and publicists have played during the past century in defining and popularizing the notion of "authenticity" as it relates to American folk music. The 325-page, paper bound book sells for $19.95, and is available from University of North Carolina Press; phone 1-800-848-6224.

Goldenseal Index

Volume 26, 2000

Articles which appeared in Volume 26 are indexed below, under the categories of Subject, Author, Photographer, and Location.

In the Subject category, articles are listed under their main topic, with many cross-referenced under alternate Subject headings. Each entry is followed by the seasonal designation of the issue, issue volume and number, and page number. Short notices, such as appear in the regular column, "Current Programs, Events, Publications," are not included in the index.

The index for the first three volumes of GOLDENSEAL appeared in the April-September 1978 issue, and the index for Volumes 4 and 5 in the January-March 1980 magazine. The index for each successive volume appears in the final issue of the calendar year. The cumulative index is available on our Web site at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/gsindex.html.

Subject

Author

Photographer

Location

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685 FOR GOLDENSEAL: WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE (U.S.P.S. No. 013336), Filing date October 1, 2000, published quarterly, at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Number of issues published annually: 4. Annual subscription price: $16. The general business offices of the publisher are located at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. John Lilly is the contact person at (304)558-0220.

The names and addresses of the publisher, editor and managing editor are: publisher, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; editor, John Lilly, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; managing editor, John Lilly, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The owner is: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: NONE.

Publication Name: Goldenseal: West Virginia Traditional Life
Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Fall 2000

The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months is:
A) Total no. of copies:
Net press run: 21,625
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 18,704
2) Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 1,190
4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
C) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 19,894
D) Free Distribution by Mail:
1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 19,894
H) Copies Not Distributed
(Office Use) 1,306
(Returns) 425
I) Total 21,625

Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 100%

The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date are:
A) Total no. of copies
Net press run: 21,000
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 18,196
2) Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 1,151
4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
C) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation 19,347
D) Free Distribution by Mail:
1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 19,347
H) Copies Not Distributed
(Office Use) 1,653
(Returns) -0-
I) Total 21,000

Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 100%
I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

John Lilly, Editor

Back Issues Available

- ____ Spring 1989/Printer Allen Byrne
- ____ Summer 1990/Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
- ____ Winter 1991/Meadow River Lumber Company
- ____ Fall 1993/Bower's Ridge
- ____ Spring 1996/Elk River Tales
- ____ Fall 1996/WVU Mountaineer
- ____ Fall 1997/Harvest Time
- ____ Fall 1998/Post Office Art
- ____ Winter 1998/Country Vet Doc White
- ____ Summer 1999/Woodcarver Herman Hayes
- ____ Winter 1999/Paperweights
- ____ Spring 2000/West Virginia Women
- ____ Summer 2000/West Virginia Men
- ____ Fall 2000/Ellifritz Rock Museum

Stock up on GOLDENSEAL back issues! Purchase any of the magazines above for $3.95 each, plus shipping, while supplies last. Pay just $2.50 each, plus shipping, for orders of 10 or more.

Better yet, take advantage of our new Deluxe Gift Package: receive all 14 back issues listed above, plus a copy of the book *Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from* GOLDENSEAL, a copy of *The* GOLDENSEAL *Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*, and a full-color reprint booklet featuring our 1985 Homer Laughlin China article, all for only $50 plus shipping! That's a savings of nearly $25 off the regular price.

Treat a friend or treat yourself to this memorable collection of GOLDENSEAL books and magazines. Sorry, but the special 25th anniversary back issue offers, listed in our 1999 magazines, are no longer available.

Take advantage of our new Deluxe Gift Package, and celebrate West Virginia traditional life!

(Please include $1 shipping for orders of 1-3, $2 for orders of 4-9, $4 for orders of 10 or more.)

I enclose $_____ for_____ back issues of GOLDENSEAL.
-or-
Charge my ____VISA ____ MasterCard
#_____
Exp. Date _____

Name _____
Address _____
_____

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.
Send to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

New To GOLDENSEAL?

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

Thanks — and welcome to the GOLDENSEAL family!

I enclose $ _____ for a subscription to GOLDENSEAL.

-or-

Charge my

____VISA ____MasterCard

_____

Exp. Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

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

GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304)558-0220

ADDRESS CHANGE?

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

OLD

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____

NEW

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____

Bus Trip a Success!

A happy busload of GOLDENSEAL travelers gathers at the Wetzel/Marshall county line during our recent tour of West Virginia's Northern Panhandle. Photograph by Richard Lemley.

The fifth GOLDENSEAL bus trip was another big success, as our staff hosted a lively group of travelers through West Virginia's Northern Panhandle this past October 13-14.

We gathered in historic Wheeling and began our journey with a fact-filled tour of the city led by local guide Olive Watson. After a tasty stop at the Lebanon Bakery, we made our way north to Weirton, where author Pam Makricosta showed us the spectacular All Saints Greek Orthodox Church and presented a program on local Greek heritage. Our next stop was Newell and the famous Homer Laughlin China Company. In Chester, we were greeted at the World's Largest Teapot by a group of local citizens, who showered us with Hancock County hospitality.

That evening at Bethany College, after a short warm-up set by singing editor John Lilly, we were treated to a special performance by country music star Doc Williams and his talented singing daughters.

On Saturday morning, we toured Bethany, then made our way south to Moundsville. After a bone-chilling tour of the West Virginia State Penitentiary, we stopped at nearby Grave Creek Mound historic site for lunch and a quick taste of Archaeology Day activities. We then took to the hills for a harrowing ride down Sally's Backbone and on to our final stop at St. Joseph's Settlement. The view from the church was breathtaking!

We arrived safe and sound back in Wheeling. The trip made for two very full days, but it was well-worth every minute. Thanks to all who joined us for this memorable trip!

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Turner Hollow
- Fiddler Red Henline
- Vandalia at 25

PHOTO CURIOSITY

Do you know this banjo player? This riveting photograph, taken in 1865, is quite possibly the earliest known depiction of a West Virginia musician. The original sixth-plate tintype was purchased recently by musician, college professor, and author Philip Gura, who obtained it at auction over the Internet. Written inside the back of the case is the following: "Bald Knob, 'West' Virginia, March 18, 1865, 'Billy Banjo,' a Yankee picker."

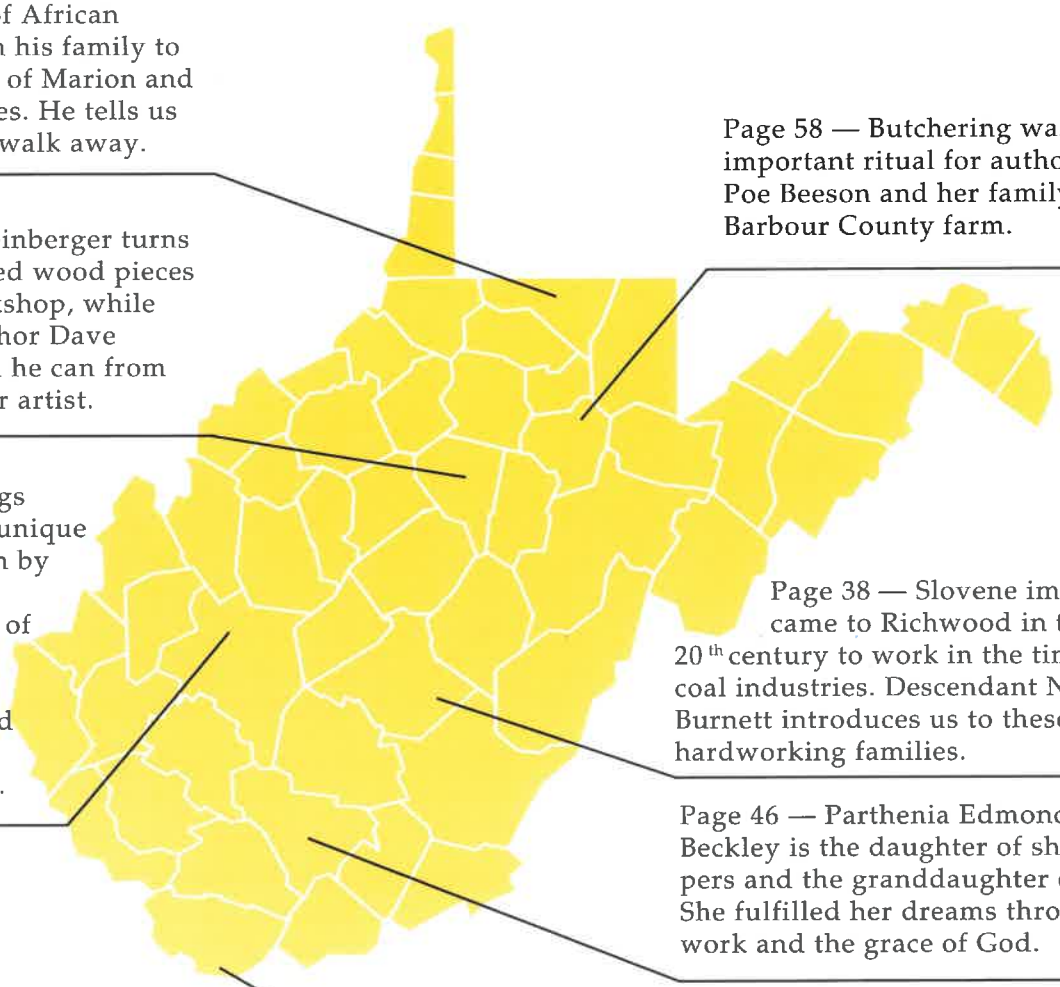
Philip is the coauthor of a new book, *America's Instrument: The Banjo in the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1999 by the University of North Carolina Press. The large-format, 303-page book contains many historic images such as this [see page 68]. Philip has given us permission to publish the picture in hopes of learning more about this young Boone County musician.

If you know anything about Billy Banjo, please write or call us at the GOLDENSEAL office.

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

PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal



04
0 94295 76646 8