Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Fall 2002 $4.95

Flatwoods Monster

Deaf and Blind Schools

Lost Creek

Long's Store

From the Editor: The Unexplained

Don't panic! You haven't received a copy of the *National Enquirer* instead of your cherished GOLDENSEAL. As it so happens, UFO's, spaceships, and strange, unexplained creatures have a legitimate place in the contemporary folklore of our state, and we are pleased to bring them to you in this issue.

The occasion for this journey into West Virginia's paranormal past is the 50th anniversary of the alleged appearance of the infamous Green Monster (also known as the Braxton County Monster, the Flatwoods Monster, and the Phantom of Flatwoods), reportedly seen by several witnesses on the evening of September 12, 1952. To this day, Flatwoods proudly calls itself the "Home of the Green Monster," and the town plans a gala celebration on September 12-14 in honor of its scary visitor (see page 56).

While delving into the story of the Flatwoods incident, we uncovered layer upon layer of interest in this subject, both popular and institutional. We discovered that the Green Monster has been taught in Braxton County schools; author Buddy Griffin even came across a written examination that was given to students to test their knowledge of the topic. We found books, magazine articles, and Web sites. The colorful, 13-inch-tall plaster figurine seen on the cover of this issue sits in my office at the Cultural Center.

The Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library has an extensive special collection devoted to the work of renowned UFO researcher and author Gray Barker, who began his career by looking into the Flatwoods sightings (see page 64). Fairmont State College has been documenting accounts of the monster since 1993, and recently commissioned a dramatic musical production about the incident (see page 62). Even the West Virginia Humanities Council plans to include an entry about the monster in its upcoming *West Virginia Encyclopedia*.

As you can see, the monster comes to us with impeccable credentials. We hope that you will enjoy making its acquaintance.

Naturally, this issue also contains more terrestrial content. We take an extended look at our state's efforts to bring educational opportunities to the visually and hearing impaired through the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in Romney and their former sister schools in Institute (see pages 10 and 22).

Elsewhere in this issue, author Rachelle Davis takes us inside Long's Store in Parsons, telling us how the business was snatched from the jaws of destruction following the 1985 flood, and continuing our on-going series about country and family-run stores (see page 37). Along the way, we visit small towns, hear family stories, and meet salt-of-the-earth people who remind us of why we love West Virginia.

These stories also remind us of why GOLDENSEAL is so important. Nowhere else in the universe is there another publication where the people of a region (or creatures of a planet) are given the opportunity to tell their own story, in their own words, as they do in these pages. It's a unique adventure in publishing, to be sure, and one in which we can all take tremendous pride.

The unavoidable reality, however, is that it takes more than "green monsters" and good intentions to make it happen. It takes plenty of hard work and the sustained financial support of thousands of readers like you. Many of you will be receiving your subscription renewal notices within the next few weeks, so please be on the lookout for this mailing. As you review your renewal materials, I hope that you will consider taking advantage of our new money-saving multiple-year subscription offer.

While you're at it, perhaps now is a good time to plan ahead for the holidays. A gift of GOLDENSEAL is always welcome, and frankly, your gift subscriptions and renewals are essential to our survival. With no state funding, advertising, or grant money, we rely entirely on you. So please think big!

Thanks for being part of the GOLDENSEAL team.

John Lilly

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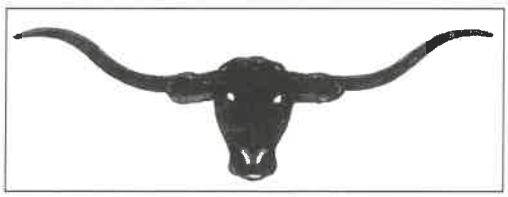
p. 10

p. 37



p. 30

p. 45

On the cover: The Green Monster was reportedly seen by several people in a field near Flatwoods, Braxton County, on September 12, 1952, and has since become etched in local lore. Our stories begin on page 56. Figurine photograph by Michael Keller.

p. 56

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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.

Riverboats

June 17, 2002
Via e-mail
Dear Editor:
I renewed my subscription to GOLDENSEAL for another year, and I'm right glad that I did. This morning, I received the Summer 2002 issue, and I noticed a Web site concerning the riverboat regatta in St. Albans. [See "Captain Pete Grassie and the *Princess Margy*," by Lisa Blake, and "A Lotta Regatta" sidebar.] When I was a kid, I thought that I wanted to be a riverboat pilot. I once built a three-foot-long model of the riverboat *Robert E. Lee*. Its stern paddlewheel was driven by a battery-operated electric motor. It was before the days of radio control, but it was fun to play with in the West Fork River at West Milford. I have no idea what happened to the model boat. That was long, long ago.
Best wishes always,
B.L. "Lud" Freeman

Thank you for those comments, Mr. Freeman. Thank you, also, for your interesting article about growing up in Lost Creek, which begins on page 30 of this issue. —ed.

Fidler's Mill

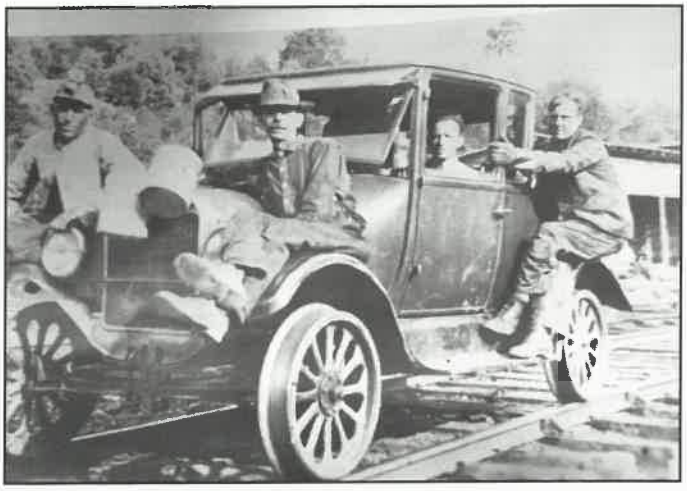
June 9, 2002
Huntington, West Virginia
Editor:
Your magazine is a joy to read and a pleasure to handle. The Summer 2002 issue has an interesting article titled "Fidler's Mill: Rediscovering an Upshur County Landmark," by Jeffrey Harvey. This article is especially interesting to me because it is about my family. I spent a lot of fun times

William Franklin Fidler and family, date unknown.

at the "Slate Pencil Bank" and the "Blue Hole" on the Little Kanawha River.

There is a picture of my grandparents on the front porch of their home in Rock Cave, about three miles from Fidler's Mill, which was incorrectly identified in the magazine. Their names were William Franklin and Mary Emma McAvoy Fidler. On the porch at the left is Georgia Cook, a girl from Alaska who helped grandmother with the housework and the care of Blanche, their handicapped daughter. Sitting in a chair in the doorway is daughter Blanche. Next to her is son Willard, grandfather William Franklin Fidler, son Clarence, and my grandmother Mary Emma McAvoy Fidler. My father Stanley was away at the time the picture was made.

Thank you again for printing this article about Fidler's Mill. Congratulations to Jeffrey Harvey for his excellent journalism skills.
Sincerely,
Jessie F. McClain



Model T Ford on rails at Cassity, late 1920's

Kane & Keyser Hardware

June 6, 2002
Woodstock, Virginia
Editor:
Your article titled "Life On the Road: Selling Hardware for Kane & Keyser," by Sharon Wilmoth Harsh in the Summer 2002 issue brought back a vivid memory of when my father purchased an electric Home Comfort Range from a traveling hardware salesman in June 1951 in Wyoming County. The purchase of this range meant that I would not have to cut, split, and stack firewood anymore. No more preparing the stove with firewood and paper the night before so my father could light it at four in the morning and fix breakfast for myself and five younger siblings before he was off to the Otsego mine. [See "Mine Mishap," by David H. Halsey; Summer 1992 and "Otsego: Remembering a Wyoming County Coal Camp," by David H. Halsey; Fall 2000.]

The stove was delivered in a Virginian Railroad boxcar to Mullens, where we had to pick it up. Since our house was not wired for 220 volts, our neighbor Vascar Rhinehart, an electrician at the Otsego mine, wired our house so that we could use our new Home Comfort Range.

Other than the convenience when compared to a wood-burning stove, one of the selling features about the range was a deep well, which served useful in preparing pinto beans, as well as greens and other mountain delicacies. The stove was still in use when the last kid left home in 1962.

Keep up the outstanding editorializing, which produces a unique, super magazine.
Respectfully,
David H. Halsey

Cassity

June 17, 2002
Morgantown, West Virginia
Editor:
The article on Cassity in the Summer 2002 issue really woke me up. [See "A Home in Cassity," by Shirley Gower.] About four years ago, my buddy from Deer Park, Maryland, sent me this picture and asked me if I knew what kind of car this was. It was a 1926 or '27 Ford T Model, with steel wheels designed to run on railroad tracks. Maybe Kate Currence or her brother Paul Pastine might know these men, going or coming from work.

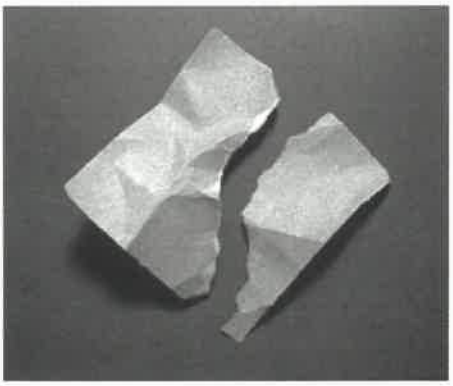
Another great issue. Thanks for all your work.
Sincerely,
R.W. Lenhart

Sandpaper

The following letter was written to author Charles Caldwell, and is reprinted here by permission. —ed.

June 8, 2002
Hinton, West Virginia
Dear Mr. Charles Caldwell:
I want to thank you for the extremely well-written, charming, and sensitive autobiographical memoir, "Sandpaper," which appeared in GOLDENSEAL, Summer 2002.

You were able to convey in a clear and concise way how you and your friends spoke, and the conversations you had with the prospective buyers of your Gail Russell "masterpiece." I liked your description and understanding of Eddie Bradshaw. Your writing reminds me of Russell Baker.



Photograph by Michael Keller.

But that's not all that I found appealing. I also liked the texture of the paper selected for this article. The photographs contributed to my appreciation, particularly the one of the sandpaper. "Sandpaper" demonstrated a completeness or a unity in substance, composition, and concise style, which I thought was quite beautiful.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Raymond J. Moyer, Jr.

I'm sure that Mr. Caldwell appreciates those kind words, as do we. Giving credit where it is due, congratulations are also in order to A.C. Designs and photographer Michael Keller for their fine work on this story. We're glad that you enjoyed it. —ed.

Greenbrier Coal House

May 30, 2002
White Sulphur Springs,
West Virginia
Editor:
I really enjoyed the article on the coal house in White Sulphur Springs. [See "The Other Coal House," by Belinda Anderson; Spring 2002.] I became acquainted with the Myles family when they first came to White Sulphur. Mrs. Myles taught my children in school. I did business with Tip and Andy, being in the insurance business myself. Andy was a good Christian boy. He spent many hours working for his church. When he told or promised you something, it was as good as done. It was a sad day when he was stricken down with sickness.

I bought many gifts from the coal house. Among my favorites is the old Cass railroad steam engine carved by Tip from coal in minute detail, with a clock in the center. The coal house was a wonderful place to do your Christmas shopping. Guests from The Greenbrier hotel gave Andy a good business.

The coal house is still for sale. David returned and settled everything, and took his mother back with him [to Texas] to live out the rest of her life. This family is missed by everyone and the entire town of White Sulphur.
A.H. Bennett, Jr.

Andy, Tip, and Quindora Myles with customers at the Coal House gift shop, 1962.

Mummies, Death Mask

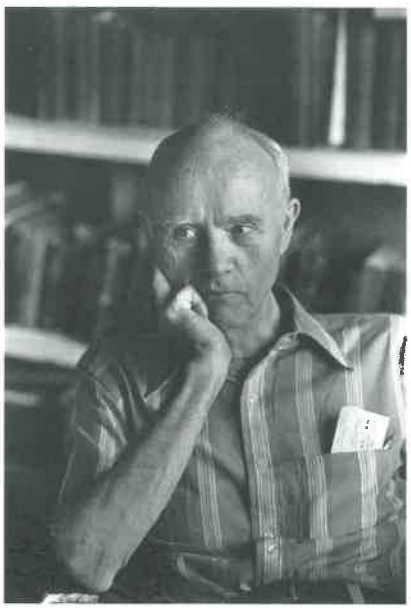
May 19, 2002
Volga, West Virginia
Editor:
I was extremely interested in two stories in the Fall 2001 issue of GOLDENSEAL: "Making Judge Robinson's Death Mask," by Richard Crawford and "'Preserved Until Judgement Day': The Philippi Mummies," by Barbara Smith. At 12 years of age, I am a

Hillbilly RIP

On a sad note, the *West Virginia Hillbilly*, the longstanding, self-styled, often outlandish weekly newspaper founded in 1957 by editor, publisher, and historian Jim Comstock, appears to have met its demise. The last issue to come from their Richwood office was mailed in December, and recent publisher Sandy McCauley has reportedly left the state.

The *Hillbilly* was in a class all its own, with innovative features such as the "University of Hard Knocks" and "Gullible's Travels," regular columns by U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd and U.S. Representative Nick Rahall, and a steady dose of local lore, legend, history, and humor. One of the *Hillbilly's* more notorious moments came when Comstock reportedly decided to "perfume" the pages of his publication with the scent of local ramps, which brought groans from area postal workers and a reprimand from the federal government. Comstock was featured in a GOLDENSEAL article titled "GOLDENSEAL Meets *Hillbilly*: An Interview with Jim Comstock," by Ken Sullivan; January-March 1980.

Jim Comstock passed away in 1996 and was remembered in our Fall 1996 issue.



Jim Comstock in 1980. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Beulah Edwards Bird passed away on May 25, 2002, at the age of 79. Beulah married Putnam County banjo player Elmer Bird in 1945, and the pair traveled widely, attending traditional music festivals across the country and making friends everywhere they went. "I never got tired of the music in any way," Beulah told an interviewer. "I've met some of the most interesting people there ever was." She and Elmer were frequent participants at West Virginia music events, including the annual Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Elmer Bird passed away in 1997. Beulah was featured in an article titled "Vandalia Wives," by Kim Johnson, in our Spring 2001 issue.

Beulah and Elmer Bird. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Margaret Fidler Demastes of French Creek was featured in the article "Fidler's Mill: Rediscovering an Upshur County Landmark," by Jeffrey Harvey; Summer 2002. In the article, Margaret shared memories of watching her father Russell Fidler operate the water-driven mill, the last of his family to do so. She also described the fun she had playing with her sister at the mill, attending parties and social gatherings there, and swimming in the Little Kanawha River. In later years, Margaret was instrumental in local efforts to restore and renovate the 180-year-old structure. Margaret passed away on June 3, 2002, a few days before the article was published. She was 73 years of age.

Margaret Fidler Demastes. Photograph by Michael Keller.

young Barbour County native interested in the history of Barbour County and the significance it has for this state. I toured Adaland Mansion when I was seven or eight, maybe even nine or 10. [See "Philippi's Adaland Mansion"; Fall 2001.] It amazed me how beautifully decorated it was, and how it really seemed as though you were in the Victorian era, as it was decorated in a Victorian way.

The Philippi mummies also overtake me with great interest. I have often sat and wondered about the two women, the formula, and Mr. Graham Hamrick himself. Often I think, "What if the secret ingredient to the formula is in everyday use, like sugar, salt, pepper, or something like that?"

Most people my age have no interest in Philippi's significance in West Virginia's history. Thank you so much for featuring those two incredible, vivid, well-written stories.

Sincerely,
Sarah Wentz

Adaland Mansion in Philippi. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Renewal Mailbag

June 3, 2002
Jacksonville, Florida
I inherited this magazine when my father died. This has been the best magazine! I've kept it up ever since. Thank you!
Sammi Wortman

May 13, 2002
Vista, California
Hi:
I just wanted you to know that I have looked and looked to find a magazine or book that told stories of people from the South. I'm from Michigan, but my family were all from Arkansas. I don't know about my family's life, but these people and their stories [in your magazine] give me great satisfaction. You fulfill my interests of life — music, jobs, and good ole down-to earth people.

I was traveling throughout the United States, and I ran across the GOLDENSEAL. I started reading and couldn't put it down. I just wanted you to know how much I truly enjoy.
Thank you,
Karen Przybyszewski

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.

Kate Long at 1997 storytelling festival, Jackson's Mill. Photograph by Mike Furbee.

Storytelling Festival

The seventh annual Voices From the Mountains storytelling festival will take place October 9-12, at Jackson's Mill, near Weston. The theme for this year's event is "Storytelling Around the World," and organizers have scheduled a diverse group of tellers to appear. Special "School Days" sessions are planned on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, offering as many as 1,200 children each day a chance to participate along with teachers, parents, and chaperones. The festival also includes evening performances, story swaps, ghost tales, and storytelling technique workshops. Overnight lodging is available.

The storytelling festival was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL article titled "Tell It On the Mountain: A Storytelling Festival at Jackson's Mill," by Mary Rodd Furbee; Spring 1998. For more information about this year's gathering, call 1-800-287-8206 or send e-mail to mcwhor@earthlink.net.

Canaan Valley Conference

A four-day conference at Canaan Valley State Park and Resort will explore the region's natural and cultural history, local plant and wildlife, and economic and environmental issues. The ambitious gathering, called Canaan Valley and Its Environs: A Heritage Landscape Celebration, is scheduled October 16-20, and is organized by Canaan Valley Institute, a not-for-profit group founded in 1995. According to conference coordinator Paula Worden, the first two-and-a-half days will be devoted to technical and scientific presentations and discussions, including day trips into the surrounding forest and to nearby communities, Thomas and Davis. The final day-and-a-half of the conference is intended for a more general audience.

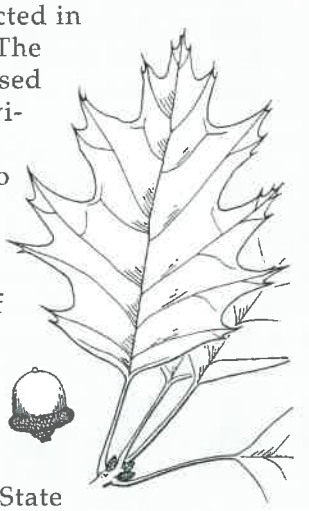
Evening plans call for group meals, speakers, photography displays, and theatrical presentations. Organizers have been working on the conference for the past two-and-a-half years and hope to attract approximately 300 people to the event from West Virginia and surrounding states.

A bound anthology will be given to all conference participants, including several articles about Tucker County and the surrounding area reprinted from past issues of GOLDENSEAL.

For more information or to register for any portion of the conference, call the Canaan Valley Institute at 1-800-922-3601, or send e-mail to celebration@canaanvi.org.

Attention Seed Collectors

The West Virginia Division of Forestry will pay cash for seeds and nuts collected from West Virginia forests. In an effort to further propagate specific varieties of West Virginia hardwoods, the Division of Forestry will pay individuals, service groups, families, or church groups for bushels of butternut, yellow poplar, red oak, and mixed oak nuts collected in the state. The nuts are used by the Division of Forestry to grow some of the one-and-a-half million seedlings produced each year at the Clements State Tree Nursery, located about 10 miles north of Point Pleasant. The seedlings, in turn, are distributed in bulk to anyone in the state for use as wind breaks, land reclamation and reforestation, erosion control, wildlife enhancement, or any other forestry use.



Those interested in collecting seeds should call the Division of Forestry before they begin collecting to receive a collection allotment and to obtain more detailed instructions; phone (304)675-1820.

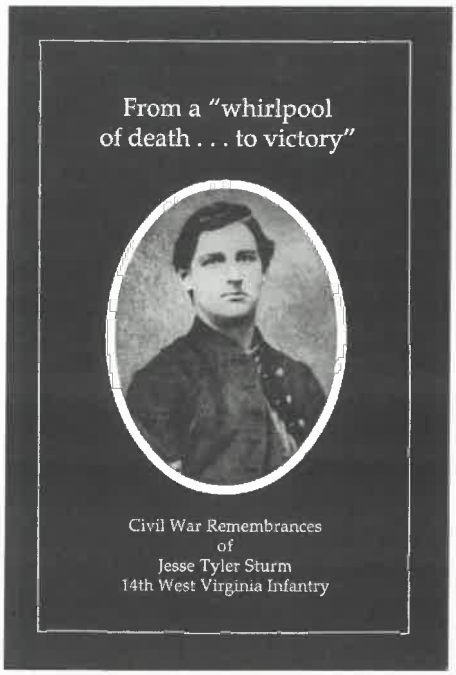
Civil War Conference

Historians and Civil War buffs are invited to participate in the first-ever local conference about the conflict, titled West Virginia 1861: The First Campaign, scheduled September 19-22 in Elkins. Presented by the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, with financial support from the West Virginia Humanities Council, the conference will offer presentations and seminars each morning from noted Civil War scholars and researchers, exploring the early history of the war, its roots in western Virginia, and how these developments led to the formation of the 35th state. During the afternoons, participants will board busses and travel to several important Civil War battle sites, including Philippi, Corrick's Ford, Laurel Hill, Rich Mountain in Beverly, and others.

For registration information, call the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation at (304)637-7424, or send e-mail to richmt@richmountain.org.

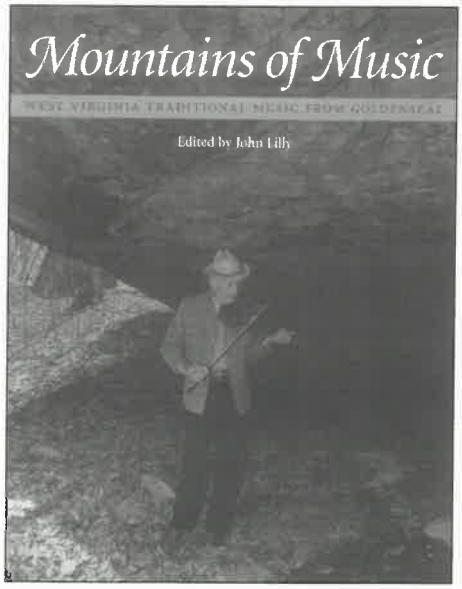
New Civil War Books

After more than 140 years, local interest — and passions — still run high concerning the War Between the States. Not surprisingly, authors and publishers continue to provide us with a steady stream of reading matter on this complex and compelling topic.



A recently rediscovered memoir has been published by the West Virginia State Archives and History Section, titled *From a "Whirlpool of Death ...to Victory": Civil War Remembrances of Jesse Tyler Sturm, 14th West Virginia Infantry*. Sturm was a Union soldier who fought with the 14th West Virginia Infantry from 1862 until 1865. His recollections of those experiences first appeared as a series of newspaper articles some 40 years later in Kansas, where the Marion County native settled following the war. Now assembled in book form, Sturm's writings provide a personal look at a soldier's life on the front lines of some of the war's most dramatic battles. The 175-page paperbound book is available for $15, postage paid. Make checks payable to West Virginia History, and send to Archives and History Section, Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; phone (304)558-0230.

A memoir of the conflict told from the opposing side can be found in the book *French Harding: Civil War Memoirs*, edited and with a forward by Dr. Victor L. Thacker of Buckhannon. A Confederate veteran of more than 30 battles and skirmishes, Harding later became an elected member of the West Virginia Constitutional Convention, the sheriff of Randolph County, and a two-term state legislator. The 254-page paperbound book sells for $15.50, and is available from McClain Printing Company, P.O. Box 403, Parsons, WV 26287; phone 1-800-654-7179 or e-mail mcclain@access.mountain.net.



Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from GOLDENSEAL gathers 25 years of stories about our state's rich musical heritage into one impressive volume.

Mountains of Music is the definitive title concerning this rare and beautiful music — and the fine people and mountain culture from which it comes.

The book is available from the GOLDENSEAL office for $21.95, plus $2 shipping per book; West Virginia residents please add 6% sales tax (total $25.26 per book including tax and shipping).

Add *Mountains of Music* to your book collection today!

I enclose $____ for____ copies of *Mountains of Music.*

-or-

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

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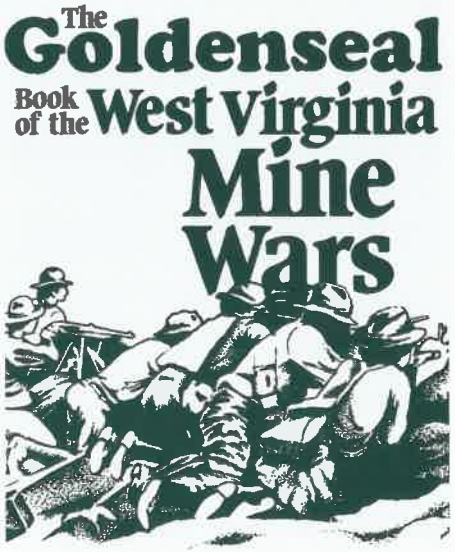

The West Virginia Mine Wars were a formative experience in our state's history and a landmark event in the history of American labor. GOLDENSEAL has published some of the best articles ever written on this subject. In 1991, former editor Ken Sullivan worked with Pictorial Histories Publishing Company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

Now in its fourth printing, the book is revised and features new updated information. The large-format, 109-page paper bound book sells for $10.95 plus $2 per copy postage and handling. West Virgina residents please add 6% state tax (total $13.61 per book including tax and shipping).

I enclose $____ for____ copies of *The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars.*

-or-

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

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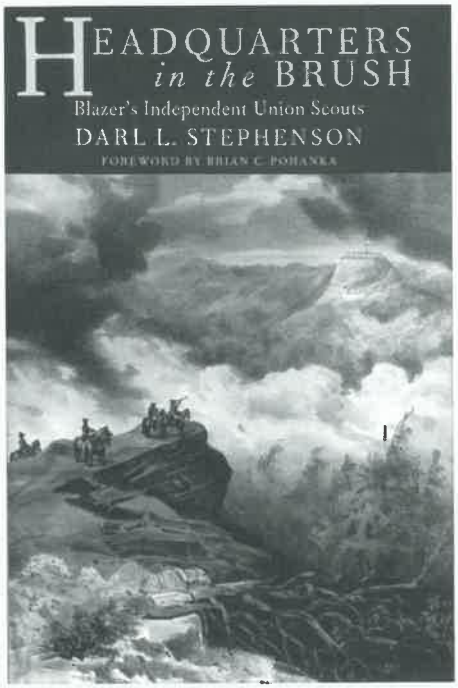
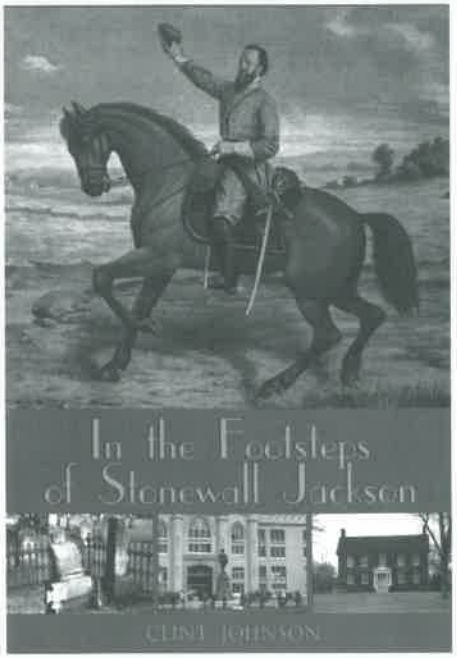
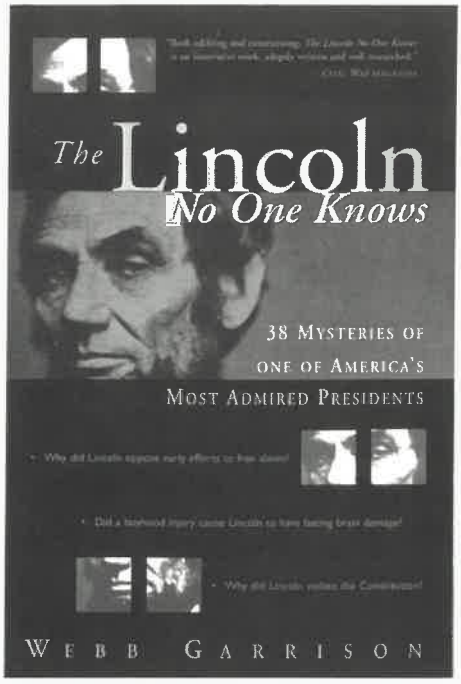
Beyond the battlefront, guerilla warfare was waged throughout the conflict in many parts of western Virginia, especially in the rugged terrain surrounding the New, Gauley, and Kanawha rivers. To combat a growing number of Confederate insurgents, Union scouts were organized into a special unit, selected from the best men in the 9th West Virginia Infantry and the 12th and 91st Ohio infantries, eventually coming under the command of Richard Blazer. The story of this little-known, crucial, and violent chapter in West Virginia's Civil War history is told in the book *Headquarters in the Brush: Blazer's Independent Union Scouts*, by Darl L. Stephenson. It is available in a 355-page hardbound edition from Ohio University Press, and sells for $29.99. For more information, call (740)593-1154 or check the Web site www.ohio.edu/oupress.



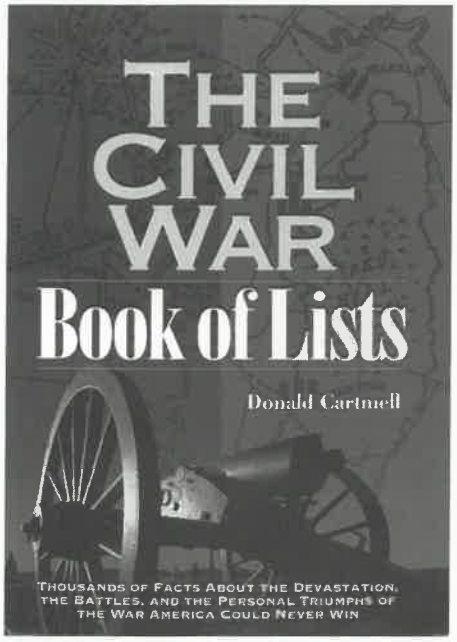
Three key figures from the Civil War are profiled in separate books, all newly released. *A Commitment to Valor: A Character Portrait of Robert E. Lee*, compiled and edited by Rod Gragg, is an easy-to-read collection of short quotations, anecdotes, documents, and photographs, designed to reveal the complex personality and fighting spirit behind this legendary military leader. The small-format, 144-page book is available, hardbound, from Rutledge Hill Press for $12.99; phone (615)902-2338 or visit the Web site www.rutledgehillpress. com.



In the Footsteps of Stonewall Jackson, by Clint Johnson, views West Virginia's most famous Civil War hero through visits to scores of locations associated with his life and career. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was born in western Virginia, and local readers will be especially interested in the first 53 pages of this book, in which the author highlights more than a dozen West Virginia sites, from Jackson's boyhood home at Jackson's Mill, to his mother's hometown of Ansted, to the battlefields of the Eastern Panhandle. The remainder of the book follows Jackson's trail to Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Florida, then to New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and even Canada. The 238-page paperbound book sells for $12.95, and is available from John F. Blair, Publisher; phone (336)768-1374.



The Lincoln No One Knows: 38 Mysteries of One of America's Most Admired Presidents, by Webb Garrison, finds controversy and intrigue in a range of rarely discussed aspects of Lincoln's private life and early professional career. The author leaves most questions unanswered, but raises many topics that are sure to spark interest among those who have studied the life of this great national leader. The 308-page paperbound book, published by Rutledge Hill Press, sells for $12.99.



Finally, for those who need to know it all, there is the newly published compendium titled *The Civil War Book of Lists*, by Donald Cartmell. Among the esoteric facts included here are 28 alternate names for the Civil War, five generals killed by "friendly fire," 50 ways to leave the Army, five famous female spies, 11 medical complaints of Stonewall Jackson, and, well, the lists go on. The 264-page paperbound book is published by New Page Books, and sells for $17.99. To order, phone 1-800-227-3371, or visit the Web site www.newpagebooks.com.

Writers on Radio

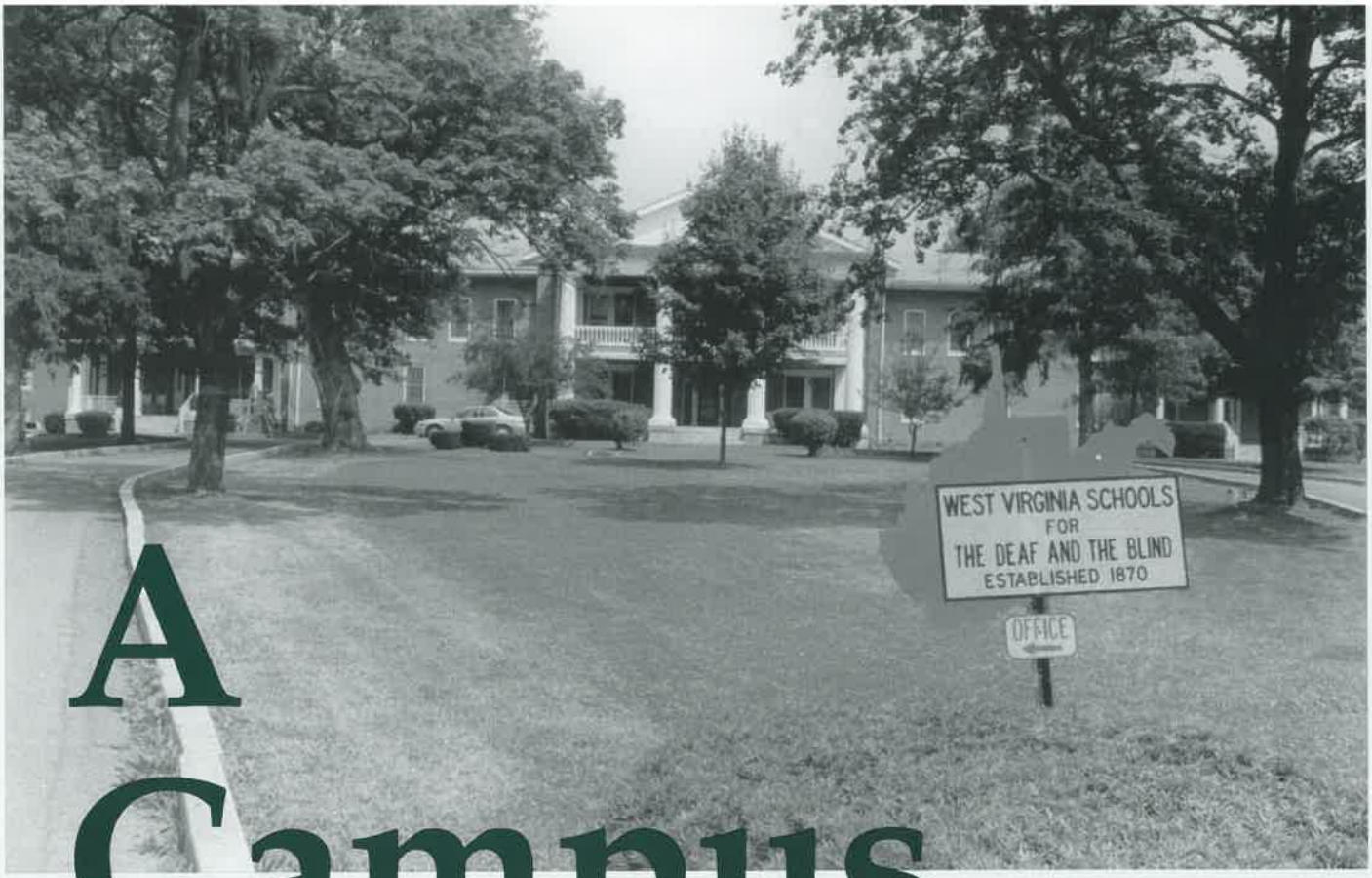
Interviews with 14 of the state's top fiction writers and poets will be featured in a new radio series to be broadcast each Tuesday this fall on West Virginia Public Radio. Charleston writer, musician, and radio commentator Kate Long, an early GOLDENSEAL contributor [see "Bringing the Kids Back Home to George" and "An Area Full of Teachers"; January-March 1979] will host the 14-part series, called "In Their Own Country." The hour-long broadcasts will begin on Tuesday, September 17, with a program featuring state poet laureate Irene McKinney; broadcasts will continue each week until December 17. Future writers include Denise Giardina, Richard Currey, Marc Harshman, Davis Grubb, and others. For a complete schedule, check the Web site www.wvpubcast.org/writers or phone (304)558-3000.

Book Festivals

Two upcoming book festivals highlight West Virginia's diverse literary community, and offer the public a chance to do some early holiday shopping for autographed copies of books by some of their favorite West Virginia authors.

The second annual West Virginia Book Festival will take place October 11 and 12 at the Charleston Civic Center, presented by the Library Foundation of Kanawha County, the West Virginia Humanities Council, and Charleston Newspapers. Organizers expect more than 30 authors to participate, including GOLDENSEAL contributors Su Clauson-Wicker, Mary Rodd Furbee, Sharon L. Gardner, and others. GOLDENSEAL will once again have a booth in the exhibition hall — stop by and say hello! For additional information or a complete schedule of events, call Cindy Miller at (304)343-4646, or visit the Web site www.wvhumanities.org.

The Ohio River Festival of Books will take place Saturday, November 9, at the Huntington Civic Center. The one-day affair will include book signings, poetry readings, children's programs, book appraisals, author reception, and other activities. Among the 49 authors scheduled to participate are GOLDENSEAL contributors Ancella Bickley, Fawn Valentine, and Irene Brand, as well as John O'Brien, Elder John Sparks, and many others. The event is sponsored by the Cabell County Public Library, the West Virginia Library Commission, the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, and other organizations. For more information, check the Web site www.ohioriverbooks.org, or send e-mail to orfob@cabell.lib.wv.us.



MICHAEL KELLER

A Campus Called Home

A late summer breeze carries the fragrance of trimmed grass and fresh paint through the tree-lined campus of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in Romney. An air of anticipation surrounds the campus as staff and employees wait for the students to arrive, like others have done before them for more than 130 years.

The West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

By Kathee Rogers

tives connected to the schools as students, teachers, or staff.

At first, students were admitted to the schools from ages six to 25 for a term of five years, then eight years, then finally for a full 12 years, following guidelines set for all state public schools. At first, students did not go home during the school year, for the trip to Romney was a long and sometimes complicated adventure for these children. In later years, students were allowed to go home — if they paid for the trip — at Christmas and Easter. Today, students are driven home in air-conditioned buses every few weeks during the school year.

As instructed by the legislature, the schools keep a record of each student and their personal information, including the cause of their disability. The schools still retain these books. Causes of blindness listed during the early years included typhoid fever, scrofula, measles, smallpox, brain fever, and accidents with forks, guns, knives, and even hot lard. Deafness was mostly congenital, followed by scarlet fever, brain fever, and accidents ("lost hearing at two years old from the butt of a sheep on his head"), convulsions, whooping cough, measles, and a "cold in the head."

Early efforts to teach deaf students included this complex apparatus in 1885. Photograph courtesy of WVSD&B.

Selden Brannon enrolled at the School for the Blind in 1916, at 10 years of age, and stayed at the school for most of the remainder of his life. He graduated in 1927, taught from 1932-48, and was then principal of the School for the Blind until 1971. One of the most celebrated and well-loved members of the schools' community, he passed away in 1997. Photograph courtesy of WVSD&B.

According to a history written by Selden W. Brannon, retired principal of the School for the Blind, the new schools grew under the direction of various principals (now called superintendents) until 1874, when Major John Collins Covell became principal. During his tenure, Major Covell made several improvements, including canvassing the state for students; installing gas lights, steam heat, and spring water; and adding a dining hall, new classrooms, and a chapel. Educated for the ministry, then trained as a teacher for the deaf, Covell signed his worship services on Sunday mornings.

Professor Johnson organized the first club for blind students at around this time, called the Saturday Morning Club. Its members met every Saturday morning to debate important social questions. Deaf students debated in the Covell Literary Society. The Christian Endeavor Society for blind boys and girls met each Sunday afternoon. *The West Virginia Tablet*, written and printed by the School for the Deaf, also included contributions from blind students and featured local news items, advertisements, and student essays about travels and daily life at the school.

Helen Keller's visit to the schools in 1916 was a great success, as reported by the student newspaper. According to the paper, Helen felt the audience's applause through her feet. It continued, "After her lecture, she answered many questions and read the lips by placing her thumb on the larynx, her first finger on the lips, and her second finger on the nose." After her lecture, she spent an hour with deaf and blind students. "She talked and spelled and recited, read the lips, and answered questions, and was a most alert and interested person," the paper reported. "Her touch is so light and soft and delicate that one does not notice the contact in talking or singing."

In the early days, blind students were educated mostly by listening and repeating lessons out loud,

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Over the years, a number of graduates from the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind have returned to Romney to serve as teachers. Author Kathee Rogers recently interviewed two of these individuals.

Nineta Garner

Nineta Garner was a student at the School for the Blind from 1955 until 1960, and later taught there for 33 years. Originally from Hundred, Wetzel County, Nineta first came to the school as an eighth grader, joining her older twin brothers, who were also sight impaired. She shares these recollections.

I got on the bus and rode with my brothers from Hundred to Romney. I guess I was the typical 13-year-old, looking for an adventure. I think part of it was because I did have brothers that were seniors, it wasn't brand-new and strange to me. I had been up here maybe once a year to visit them.

My main classes were just the regular junior high, high school curriculum that would be taught in public school, with the use of either Braille or large print. I used large print at the time. I took courses in Braille reading and writing. I took two years of French class and had to use Braille because there weren't any large-print books.

The snack bar was the real center of social activity. It was a little wooden frame building called the Wagon Wheel. There was an old wagon wheel fixture with electric lights inside. After lunch, Mrs. Hoffmaster would open the snack bar for 15 minutes when we could see our friends. Then, after supper, it would open for another 15 or 20 minutes. It was only for the older students at night. That was the social place on campus.

Mr. Brannon was the principal then, and he taught history classes to us. Everyone that was a student respected and remembers Mr. Brannon. In the fall and spring in the afternoons, if we didn't have anything to do, we could call Mr. Brannon, and he might call another teacher or two, and they would take us on a hike — boys and girls — maybe over through the woods, or to the Sulphur Springs back behind Gravel Lane.

Mr. and Mrs. Oldfield taught dance. She taught ballet and he taught ballroom dancing and modern dance, like jitterbug. He worked more with the blind students. At one time, he coordinated with the School for the Blind Chorus, and they sang "Around the World in 80 Days" while three couples did a dance.

Not everyone has to perform perfectly in society to be successful, but those who are handicapped have to work a little harder at it to get a job, and be a little more particular in their habits, in their travel skills, and in other areas. You have to train children for these things.

Nineta Garner was a student at the West Virginia School for the Blind during the late 1950's, and then taught at the school for 33 years. This recent photograph shows her at the school, with an electronic Braille note taker. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The Wagon Wheel snack bar was a favorite gathering spot for Nineta and her friends. The snack bar is shown here during the 1960's. Photograph courtesy of WVSD&B.

Norma McCarty Czernicki

Norma McCarty Czernicki attended the West Virginia School for the Deaf from 1946 until 1950. She returned to Romney 19 years later and realized her dream of teaching the deaf. Here, she reflects on her years as a student.

Norma McCarty Czernicki graduated from the School for the Deaf in 1950. She returned to the school to teach in 1969. She is shown here at the Hampshire County Public Library, where she currently works. Photograph by Michael Keller.

I was born in Lumberport, Harrison County, to Wayman and Virginia McCarty. My parents owned a small dairy farm a few miles from Lumberport on Nolan's Run. I had two younger hearing sisters, Glenna (now deceased) and Peggy of Mount Clare.

The loss of my hearing started in the third grade. The cause was unknown. By the sixth grade, I had no hearing left. The Lumberport High School principal would not accept me when I finished the sixth grade because I had no lip-reading skills. He felt it would be too hard on his teachers. Therefore, my parents enrolled me at the West Virginia School for the Deaf in Romney as a seventh-grade student.

Stanley R. Harris was superintendent of the school at the time. In my opinion, he was a good, strict man who had the schools at heart. He was often seen in the dining room and the school building, checking on things.

There were plenty of activities for the students: hiking, parties, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Covell Literary Society, handicrafts club, Future Homemakers of America, cheerleaders, pep squad, football, softball, basketball. In the fall, the girls walked to a local orchard for apples, at the owner's invitation. In the winter, some of the students ice skated on the dam near the school. It is no longer there.

Once a week, students went shopping downtown. We girls would stop at Hill's Drug Store and purchase ice cream, then sit at the small glass tables, eating and talking. What fun! We also bowled in the old bowling alley in the basement of the Elementary School for the Deaf.

Before entering the West Virginia School for the Deaf, I had never seen the language of signs used. At first, I thought it a strange way to communicate. Then, I realized it was very much needed. It took a while for me to use it. Students and a teacher were willing to help me.

Norma McCarty at graduation, 1950. Photographer unknown.

Norma entered Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., at the age of 16. She graduated from Gallaudet in 1955 with a bachelor's degree in two majors — education and library science. Norma followed her husband to his teaching job in Great Falls, Montana, where she became chief cataloger at the local public library. She later became chief cataloger for the Tennessee Valley Authority libraries in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Since returning to Romney in 1969, Norma earned a master's degree in education from Frostburg State University and a master's degree in library science from the University of Kentucky. Retired from her last position at the School for the Deaf, she currently works at the Hampshire County Public Library in Romney.

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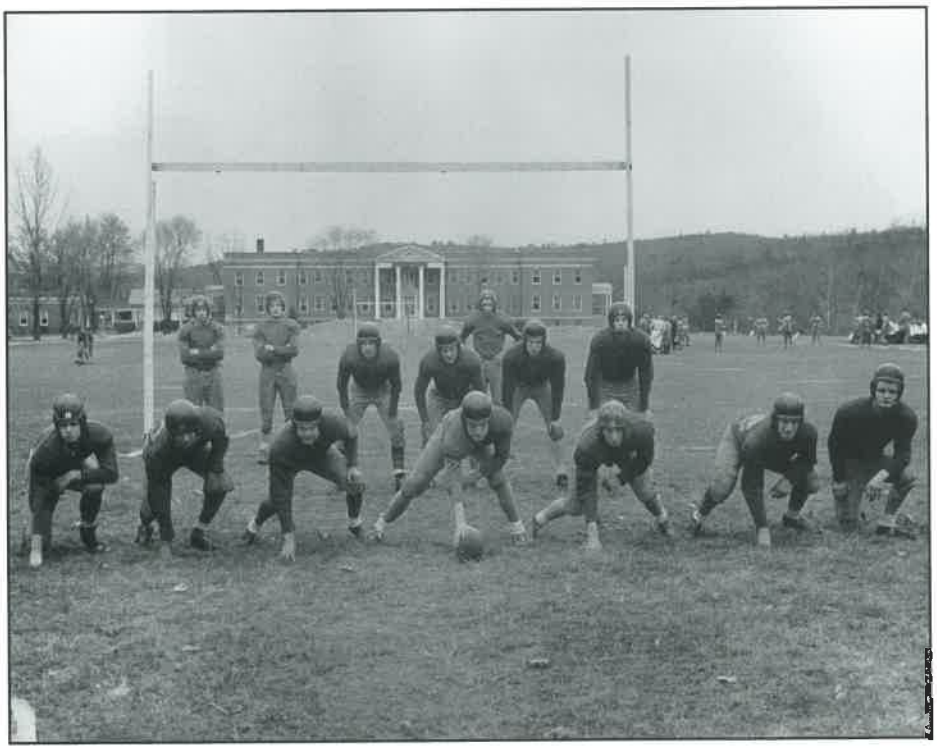
although there were books available at that time printed in embossed standard type. Geometry, trigonometry, Greek history, and philosophy were a few of the advanced classes offered for blind students during the 1875 school year. Maps used in the School for the Blind were made by poking holes with two different diameter sewing needles on a regular printed map. Three rows of holes represented mountains, two rows were used for boundaries, and a single line for rivers. Tacks and pins showed cities and towns.

By 1877, the deaf school had established a Department of Visible Speech, hiring Miss Susie Allen, a graduate of Alexander Graham Bell's school in Boston. It was not until 20 years later that the school's name was changed to the West Virginia School for the Deaf, dropping the word "dumb," meaning "unable to speak." It was still some years, however, until students were no longer referred to as "inmates."

Selden Brannon, who is now deceased, came to the school from Calhoun County in 1916, at 10 years of age. "We had a tight schedule," he recalled in an interview. "We were up at 6 a.m. and had academics from 8 to 12:45. Lunch was from 1 to 2, and from 2 to 4, we had music and shop. At 4, we had physical education, chin-ups, and skin-the-cat, and such things. After supper, we had a study hall supervised by teachers, and then from 8:30 to 9, we read the newspaper. Before the invention of radio, we didn't have any other entertainment for the evenings. Saturday and Sunday (after church), we older boys were turned loose to walk around town. We raided the orchards and got chestnuts galore, and fruit. Bad weather, we would go the railroad tracks and station at Vanderlip. They had a coal stove in there. We'd buy chew and smoking tobacco for 15 cents. It was just childish stuff, that's all. I had a good time."



Above: The Lions football team of the School for the Deaf posed for this picture during the 1950's. Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

Below: Ballet class at the School for the Deaf during the late 1950's with instructor Nina Oldfield, at right. Photograph courtesy of WVSD&B.

Athletics and physical education have always been an important part of the student experience at the schools.

Athletics and physical education have always been an important part of the student experience at the schools. In the early days, calisthenics were taught to the male students. Later, team sports were added, such as football, softball, basketball, wrestling, and track, as well as girls' track and swim teams.

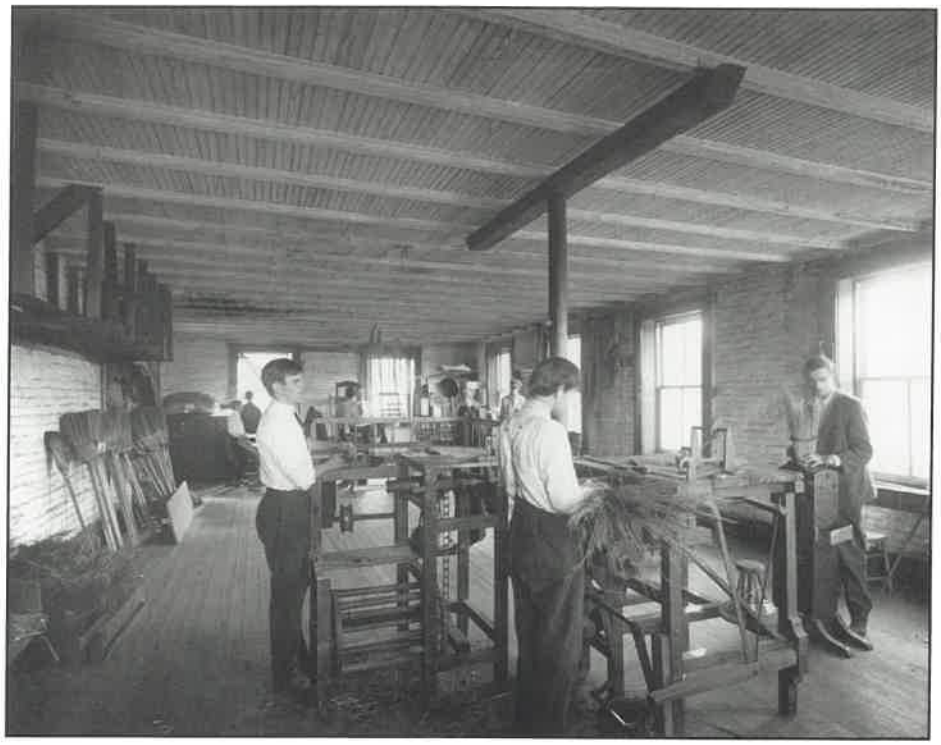
The blind teams compete against those from other blind schools in the region, such as the Maryland School for the Blind, Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, or other members of the Eastern Athletic Association for the

Blind (EAAB). Cheerleaders also travel to these schools to encourage their teams.

Once the gymnasium was built, a sports carnival was held each spring, and every student on campus was involved in one way or another through their gym classes. The carnival included folk dancing, rope climbing, exercises, and demonstration wrestling, as well as somersaults for the smaller children. Diving, synchronized swimming, and races were held in the indoor swimming pool. There was also a roller skating rink with a wooden floor.

In the late 1980's or early '90's, the blind school started participating in goal ball competitions with other schools in the EAAB. Goal ball is a fast-moving sport begun in Europe after World War II for blind veterans, which eventually spread to the United States. In the sport, there are three players on each team. All of the players are blindfolded in order that partially sighted team members have no advantage. The object is to score goals by throwing a ball through the opposing team's players and across the goal line at the back of the court. The ball has a bell inside, and the spectators are silent during play so that the contestants can hear the ball. Each team member's position and the court have raised boundary lines. Team members are arranged in a triangle, with one forward point player and two wings in the back. Players wear pads and attempt to block the ball with their entire bodies, listening closely to hear the bell and anticipating the ball's direction. Good players can throw the ball hard enough so that the bell won't ring.

During the schools' middle years, many different vocational courses were offered. Deaf boys could learn printing, linotype, carpentry, shoe repair and leather work, baking, and agriculture. The girls learned beauty culture, domestic science, typewriting, needlework, and dressmaking. The blind girls also studied music and basketry. Blind boys learned broom, brush, and mop making, reed work and chair caning, weaving, mattress making, and piano tuning.



Vocational training takes many forms at the Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Above, blind students learn to make brooms in 1914. Below, deaf girls learn various crafts and needlework under the watchful eye of instructor Mrs. Glenn Hawkins during the 1950's. Photographs courtesy of WVSA.

By the 1890's, 125 students were enrolled, and the schools had taught a total of 320 deaf and 138 blind students. The facilities, however, were not ideal. In 1894, for

example, a matron and governess cared for all 156 children. Keeping everyone washed and combed must have taken a herculean effort, even with the help of older students. Up until 1910, deaf and blind students shared dormitories, matrons, and supervisors. Professor Johnson lobbied for complete separation of the schools up until his death in 1913, but without success.

In the early 1920's, the School for the Blind was finally moved to separate quarters after the purchase of the Potomac Academy building, formerly the Presbyterian Potomac Seminary. It is currently used as a cafeteria for the blind school. Today, the schools share the physical education building, maintenance, laundry, and food services, and are under the same administration office. Some vocational classes are held jointly, and a few students

The Radio Boys

By Kathee Rogers

As kids growing up in the early 1960's, Ed McDonald and Mike Fox were fascinated by radio; they still get excited when they discuss the radio business. Their adventure began in Burlington, Mineral County, when Ed's dad bought his 10-year-old son a tiny transmitter kit.

According to Ed, blind kids weren't encouraged to run around or play sports in those days. So, instead of sitting around doing nothing, he listened to the radio. When his father put the small transmitter together for him, Ed knew that he wasn't just a listener anymore. He packed his transmitter — 4x4x2 inches with three exposed hot tubes and a terminal that would give you a mean shock — and his legal 10 feet of antenna, and went to visit his Grandma in Hedgesville. He phoned the neighbors and told them to tune in, and his radio career began.

Ed came to the West Virginia School for the Blind in the fall of 1964. He was already a seasoned broadcaster at the age of 14, and brought his radio equipment with him to school. In that day, rock & roll DJ's were considered cool and smooth, and the girls liked them. The temptation was too much, and Ed snaked out just a little more antenna across the boys' dorm roof than the FCC allowed. After all, he reasoned, transmitting wasn't any fun unless you could reach the girls' dorm, as well. It worked.

Ed's roommate Ed Greenleaf soon caught the bug and got his own transmitter. Radio 83 and Radio 95 were (unofficially) born as competing stations at first, with 83 covering the weekdays and 95 filling the airways on Saturdays and Sundays. The boys eventually combined their efforts, and 83 became their frequency on the AM band, with the (still unofficial) call letters of WDNR. Along the way, Mike Fox and Roger Williamson joined in the fun. The school tried to encourage the boys' interest in constructive activities and gave them a room in the dorm's basement for their equipment.

By the early 1970's, the crew was rocking right along. Their signal reached a few blocks away from the school, then went all the way to Burlington. Their creativity was also increasing. The DJ's used their growing record collections and "borrowed" pop music taped from other stations onto a reel-to-reel tape recorder. They transcribed

The West Virginia School for the Blind's student radio station WJGF during the mid-1970's. Shown here, left to right, are Raymond Camp, Dwayne Duffield, and Dana Angalet. Photograph courtesy of WVSD&B.

from both schools attend Hampshire High School for selected classes. For day-to-day operations, though, the schools operate independently.

Some changes at the schools were not without controversy. Superintendent James Thomas Rucker's daughter Anna recalled in a 1970's interview, "My father enlarged the music department for the blind, employed the first regular physical education teachers for both boys and girls, and football and basketball were played on the campus for the first time. He permitted dancing in the school for the first time. For this, he received a storm of criticism from the townsfolk."

Governor William E. Glasscock replaced Rucker in 1910 with R. Carey Montegue. Raised in White Sulphur Springs and sight impaired from retinitis pigmentosa, Monte-

news and sports into Braille to be read on the air during their news times. Gary Householder mailed them rock & roll tapes from WKAZ, where he worked. A few of the boys did some country music shows, and the sentimental "Sunday Serenade" was a weekly special.

He could have turned them in, and should have, according to the rules of his first-class broadcasting license, but new instructor John George Freeland saw talent and ingenuity in the boys and their small bootleg station. Before any of the students' transmissions reached the ears of traveling FCC agents, George got to work and filled out the appropriate paperwork for the school. When filing for call letters, George joked around with the boys and put his own initials down — WJGF — not expecting to have their first choice approved. The boys left it, and the license came back with George's initials as their official name.

On March 5, 1973, test music from a 10-watt station called WJGF broadcast on 91.5 FM, and the West Virginia School for the Blind radio station became official. As the years went by, George helped the boys continue their education. Some went on to college, and 10 received their ham radio licenses. New students joined the station. George Keady, instructor from 1976 to 1981, was replaced by the current broadcasting teacher, George Park. After a boost to 110 watts in 1985, the station changed frequency to 88.1 FM. In 1996, the school got a new transmitter, moved it to a nearby mountain, and sent its waves out at 104.1 FM. Today, its blast of 1,000 watts covers a four-state area.

In the last year or so, the station's call letters were changed to WVSB for West Virginia School for the Blind. This upset a few of the original radio boys, still loyal to their first instructor. George Park assures them, however, that before he passed away, John George Freeland asked when they were going to change the call letters, which he sent in as a joke.

Today, WVSB plays a variety of music, with spots for history shorts and tourism information. Student DJ's in the basement of the West Virginia School for the Blind dorm sit in a fancy, glass-walled booth, and learn the radio trade with up-to-date electronic equipment. They can play canned music from tapes or CD's, or flip a few vinyl records on the turntable for fun.

The original radio boys are all grown up now; some are still broadcasting. Ed Greenleaf works for Verizon in Dunbar. Gary Householder also lives in Dunbar and has done engineering work for WKAZ and WCHS in Charleston. Roger Williamson, the musician of the group, works at Blind Industries in Cumberland, Maryland. Mike Fox worked for his third-class broadcasting license and gained DJ experience from Oakland, Maryland, station WMSG, as well as several other stations.

Ed McDonald has outgrown his first desire to be a hot-shot rock & roll DJ, and settled into public radio, "where I'm more suited," he says. He's worked at many radio stations and is now concentrating on his own syndicated radio show called "Sidetracks," featuring folk and bluegrass music. The show airs on WVMR in Frost, Pocahontas County, and on stations in Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana. It can also be heard on the Internet at www.livestreamamerica.com.

Radio personality Ed McDonald came to the West Virginia School for the Blind in 1964, and was instrumental in establishing the school's student radio station. He is shown here at the controls of his own studio, where he produces his syndicated weekly program "Sidetracks," featuring folk and bluegrass music. Photograph by Kathee Rogers.

Modern technology has enabled 10-year-old student Ethan Bolyard to hear for the first time. Ethan's cochlear implant is visible on the side of his head in this recent photograph, showing him and his mother Natalie Combs practicing phonics at the elementary deaf school. Photograph by Michael Keller.

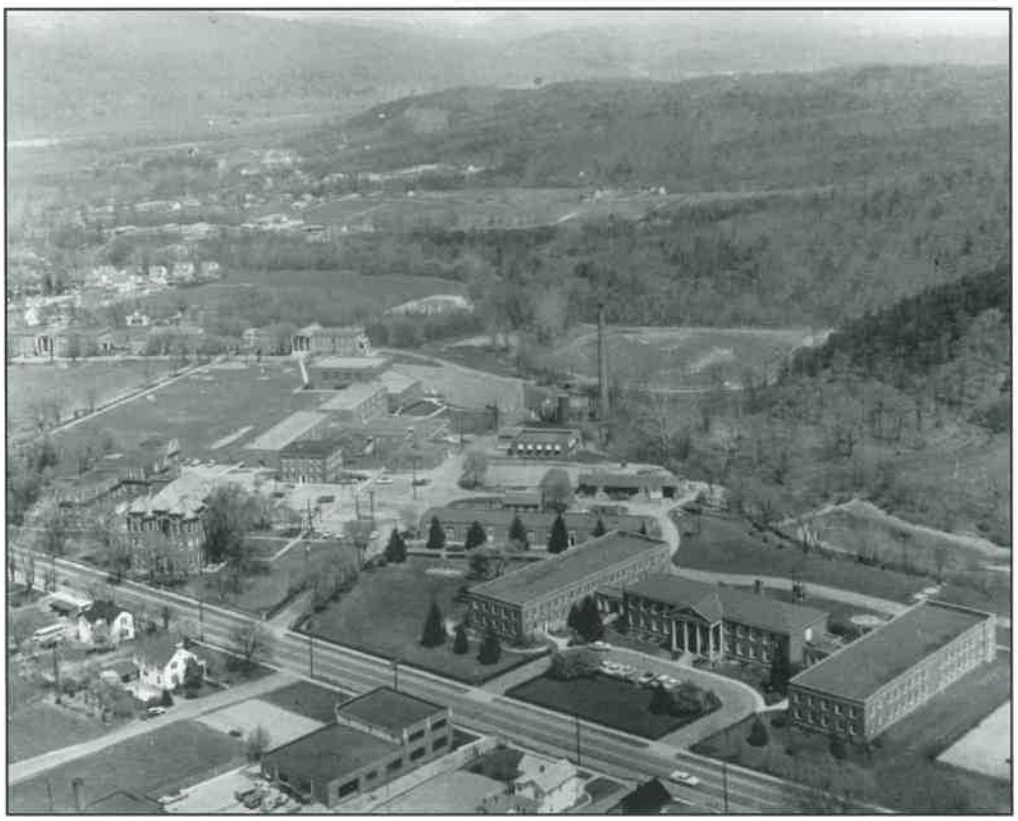
gue was very well educated, becoming a member of the state legislature at the age of 24. His advocacy for the teaching of speech and lip-reading to deaf students was a controversial issue at that time. During his administration, the school also adopted the use of Braille to replace the New York Point system of writing.

Modern technology has made life easier for many within the deaf and blind communities, though some of these innovations are not without controversy of their own. One advanced surgical procedure for the deaf called cochlear implantation can restore hearing, in some cases, through a complex system in which auditory signals are transmitted directly to the brain, bypassing the ear completely. This new procedure has stirred controversy among certain members of the deaf community who do not regard deafness as a handicap and consider the implants unnecessary.

When the Spanish influenza came to Hampshire County in 1918, more than 200 students and employees at the school became ill. Four hired nurses also became sick. Teachers, community volunteers, and two Red Cross nurses from Parkersburg came to help, resulting in the death of only four students. Another outbreak in 1922 caused only one death, though 180 students and teachers were ill for two weeks.

In 1931, the state farm produced field crops for the dairy herd, eggs from 600 hens, 86 hogs, and more than 40,000 gallons of canned produce. The farm continued to supply food for the school and other state institutions up until the 1950's. The barn still stands, housing a few boarded horses, but much of the farmland has been sold.

Today, some additional property close to the campus has been acquired and some old buildings were razed to make room for new classrooms and dorms. Over the years, renovations have changed other



The West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind play a big part in the cultural and economic life in Romney. They also occupy a good bit of real estate, as this aerial photograph from the late 1960's illustrates. Currently, the campus includes 16 major buildings and more than 79 acres of land. Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

structures, particularly the administration building. A multihandicapped unit has been added to the school, and early intervention programs now reach out to families throughout the state. Modern, computer-based technology fills the classrooms, but the schools' dedication to educate and prepare children for life has not altered. According to Dr. Patsy Shank, principal of the Elementary School for the Deaf, "Our kids feel like they belong here and are loved and nurtured here. They develop good self-identity and acceptance of themselves because they realize there are other children like them."

The students finally arrive in Romney, spilling out of family cars and vans, instead of wagons, stage coaches, and trains as they had during an earlier time. Students still tote suitcases and boxes, though brightly colored laundry baskets are a modern addition. Old friends call out greetings in voice or sign. They hug and gossip, catching up on the summer's news. Timid newcomers hang back at first, but adjustments to new surroundings come quickly to children, even some as young as three or four years old. Teachers, parents, and students huddle over schedules in each school's registration room.

As the afternoon wears on, a group of boys play a rollicking game of basketball near the administration building, while other students find their dorm rooms and store their treasures from home. They are settling in for a new school year, much as students here did more than a century ago.

KATHEE ROGERS lives in Romney, where she is editor of *Hampshire History*, a quarterly publication. She holds a bachelor of science degree in forest biology from State University of New York. She has written numerous newspaper feature stories, edited an annual hunting tabloid insert for the *Hampshire Review*, and has written several published poems. This is Kathee's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

GOLDENSEAL For the Visually Impaired

Thanks to the good folks at the West Virginia Library Commission, GOLDENSEAL is available to blind and disabled West Virginians on audio cassette, free of charge.

According to Sally Kessell of the Library Commission's office of special services, approximately 89 people currently receive audio tapes of GOLDENSEAL. The magazine is read by a volunteer, recorded, and delivered to blind and physically handicapped registrants on cassette tape. This free service was begun in 1972, and affords the visually impaired and those with other disabilities an opportunity to keep up with GOLDENSEAL, as well as with thousands of other current books, magazines, and other library materials. Some of these materials are also offered in Braille.

To apply or to register for the audio tape program, call the West Virginia Library Commission's office of special services at (304)558-4061 or 1-800-642-8674.

Graduation day is a key moment in the life of any school. This photograph shows joint graduation ceremonies for the deaf and blind schools during the late 1960's. Visible at right is a student delivering a graduation address or poem in sign language. Superintendent Elden Shipman is standing at the podium, while Selden Brannon is seated directly behind the stack of diplomas at center. In the foreground with headphones is teacher George Freeland, founder of the blind students' radio station (see page 18). Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind were originally housed in this building, constructed in 1926 in Institute. When this photograph was taken in 1943, it served as the Administration Building.

The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind

By Ancella Bickley

In 1955, the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind at Romney received a new population when the West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind at Institute closed as a result of the 1954 court decision marking the end of racial segregation in public schools. Several staff and teachers, among them Minnie Holley Barnes and Emily Raspberry, relocated with the black students to their new school. This transfer of students and personnel brought to a close more than a quarter of a century of operation of the historic facility at Institute, and began a new chapter in the history of the schools at Romney and in the education of black deaf and blind students in the state.

The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind came into being through legislation spearheaded in 1919 by Harry J. Capehart and T.G. Nutter, black delegates to the West Virginia State Legislature. A committee of black citizens appointed by the state Board of Control then selected a 19-acre site adjacent to the West Virginia Collegiate Institute — now West Virginia State College (WVSC) — for the new facility.

The schools were housed in a three-story, brick, all-purpose building, and opened in 1926. The

Author Olive Smith Stone grew up near the Jackson and Mason county line, not far from the Long Hollow Baptist Church. "We attended the Methodist church in the morning and the Baptist in the afternoon," she writes. This photograph was taken in 1989.

known as the "Pickle Bean Church," was even closer. I never knew how it got that name, but that was the name most commonly used for it. We were not allowed to attend it, as it was called a "Holy Roller" church, and they spoke in "tongues." Most of the people who attended there did not live in the community, riding horseback for miles to reach it.

We attended the Methodist church in the morning and the Baptist in the afternoon. There was little difference in their teachings, and the preachers of both denominations stayed at our home when the revival "protracted" meetings were held each year. These meetings might last several weeks, and my mother provided clean beds and cooked good food for the preachers. Since the churches also served as the social center for the young people, we often walked or rode horses to attend night services at the Rock Castle United Brethren Church about three miles away, as well.

I was born in 1922 at the Major Harpold place, which my father had bought from my mother's brother-in-law Verde Lathey after her sister Myrtle and Myrtle's baby Mary died of food poisoning. Verde had kept store just below the Foster Chapel Church, and the old store building was part of the purchase price. Dad still had the "old place," which he had bought when his father died, as well as the Uncle Jud Zearley farm. Uncle Jud went to Oklahoma after his son's death when the boiler of the sawmill blew up, and his wife and their daughter died soon afterward.

Since the churches also served as the social center for the young people, we often walked or rode horses to attend night services at the Rock Castle United Brethren Church about three miles away.

Olive was the youngest in the Smith family. She is shown here holding her pet cat Bertha Jane in 1927. Standing, left to right, are Olive's mother Pricy Smith, brother Holly, sister Inez, brother Luther, and sister Gladys. Not pictured are father Ike and eldest brother Clyde.

When I was small, I could see the remains of an old cabin behind our barn. We called it the Starcher house. We could also see the remains of the John Williams place down the hill below our back porch. He had been a Mormon elder and had married one of the Cadle girls. The Will Cadle house, as well as the Ervin Thomas house, could be seen from our back porch. I could see the smoke from the chimney of Martha Hoschar, who lived with her sons Philip and Charley and daughter Cora. Charley was a World War I veteran. My Aunt Marinda and her husband Elisha Stewart lived a little further down the creek.

My father took a job in Parkersburg when I was quite young and left the farmwork to my mother and brothers. My eldest brother Clyde worked with my dad in Parkersburg for a while, before I started to school. At one point, Clyde went to North Dakota to live for a year or so with Dad's cousin John Zearley. John, his brother Luther, Ben Woodall, and my Uncle "Little Jim" Smith had all gone there to homestead. Only John stayed in the Dakotas, and his family still lives there. Clyde came back home and later married Cornelia Kessel. They lived at Mount Alto. Cornelia, now age 93, still lives at Mount Alto and is well- known for her interest in local history.

The Victory was a one-room school where I attended. It was later renamed the Long Hollow School and was located across the road and creek from the Hoschar farm. We carried water from their spring for the school's drinking water. There was a wood-burning stove in the middle of the room that burned logs nearly three-feet long, but some coal was used for heat in later years. In winter, your front side burned while your backside remained cold. The lower side of the building was set up on large sandstone rocks about 30-inches high to make the floor level.

I had gone to school along with my eldest sister Inez before I officially enrolled. Inez had been my second mother, as my actual mother kept the farm going with the help of my brothers Holly and Luther in our father's absence. Inez married Lee Oldham of Evans in the spring of 1926, and I started attending the Victory

Olive Smith was all smiles in this 1941 snapshot, taken when she was 18 years old and soon to be married.

school on my own in September of that year, two months before I was four years old. I didn't miss a day of school that first year. Luther was still in school when I started, as was my sister Gladys. It was good to have an older brother to drag me out of snowdrifts or out of the creek when I fell into it.

My first teacher, Boyd Parsons, came by our house on his horse, Old Pete, and I rode behind him on the horse for much of my first year of school. We always had men teachers. Austin Kessell, who had taught my father and who was my sister-in-law's father, was my teacher part of a year, and his son Albert finished the term. I remember that Albert had his ears frostbitten, and they looked so painful. Another teacher who made a great impression on me was Clyde Casto of Rock Castle. He was our first college graduate and the first person I had seen drive a car on that particular road that followed the creek bed. Willard Kessell, who was the teacher when I took the eighth-grade diploma test and later was the principal of the Ripley Elementary School, was another who had quite an impact on my education.

By the time I took that exam, my brother Luther had married May Belle Livingston. My sister Gladys was working at the American Viscose Company in Parkersburg. She soon married a widower, Bernard Braun, and later lived in the Belpre, Ohio, area. My brother Holly joined the Navy in 1935 and spent 20 years in the service.

Dad came back from his job in Parkersburg to the farm in 1930, when he lost his health and the money that he had in the bank at the beginning of the Great Depression. The drought of 1930-31 had been enough to discourage the strongest. The price of eggs was five cents a dozen. Beef cattle were selling for five cents a pound, if anyone could buy them. My brothers cut down trees for the leaves that the cattle could eat when the train-car load of straw that Dad had bought was gone. Dad tried to keep the cattle for a higher price, but to no avail. Clothes were worn out, and old things had to "make do" because new things were not affordable. We were more fortunate than many, though, as our springs did not go dry nor was our land mortgaged. But finding money to pay the taxes was a great problem.

I was the last of the family at home and had to be both a girl for Mother and a boy for Dad. I raked hay and took it back into the mow for Dad and separated the milk and churned for Mother. My mother had become the community nurse. I never knew when I would have to build a fire in the old Home Comfort kitchen stove, bake biscuits for breakfast, and do all the other things that she ordinarily did because someone had come during the night to take her to deliver a baby, help one with croup, or be with a dying neighbor whom she would later prepare for burial.

Olive's brother Holly left the farm and joined the Navy in 1935, eventually spending 20 years in the service. He is shown here at home on his first leave, standing with his mother Pricy Smith.

Inez had been my second mother, as my actual mother kept the farm going with the help of my brothers Holly and Luther in our father's absence.

My mother never wanted to be considered a midwife, but the role just naturally fell to her. Doctors Dwight Staats and C. Royal Kessell expected her to be there to assist them when they arrived, if the roads and conditions allowed them to arrive at all. Many families couldn't afford the doctors' services and called her instead. She knew the use of many herbs for tea that she had learned from my husband's grandmother Alice Robinson, who had been her neighbor when she was first married.

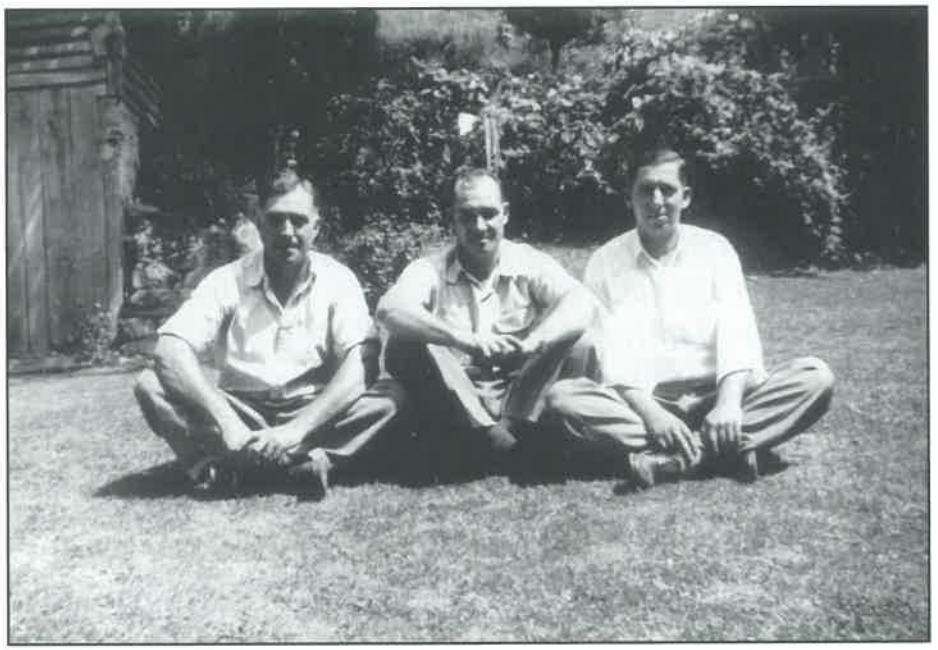
My mother insisted that I must go to high school. I had made better grades than most, having won my first fountain pen for having the highest yearly average in school. My older siblings hadn't had the opportunity to go, and it would be a sacrifice for my par-

The Smith girls were grown and married by 1956, when this picture was taken at a family reunion. Shown, left to right, are Gladys Braun, Olive Stone, and Inez Oldham.

ents, as they were aging and could use my help at home. I was 12 when I entered the ninth grade at Cottageville Union High School. I stayed with my former teacher Boyd Parsons and his wife Luella at Evans. He was carrying the mail on the long Evans route, mostly by horseback at times. I rode a school bus from Evans to Cottageville during the week and walked the five miles home on Friday night and back on Sunday evening. Georgia Stewart and her sister Evelyn had rented a house in Evans to attend the same school, and we made those trips together on the weekends. Stewart Sayre, who lived about half the distance, walked with us, too.

By this time, our neighbors were moving out to get jobs to help them recover from the Depression. The roads were not improved — there was still knee-deep mud in winter despite some rock pounded into them by W.P.A. workers under Roosevelt's program aimed at assisting those in poverty. There was no electricity or gas wells at that time, although they came later. The work all had to be done the hard way, and only after I was married was the electric line put through the area, making the work less strenuous for my mother.

I spent the next three years of school with family members in Parkersburg, and I graduated from Parkersburg High School in April 1939. The term that year was shortened because of the school's lack of funds. I found that graduating at the age of 16 didn't help me get a job, however, so I returned to the farm to help Dad and Mom for a year. I then went back to Parkersburg and did housework for $2.50 a week for the Dan Barrack family, who owned a junkyard on East Seventh Street. I was earning $6 a week at the same job when I got married two years later, and the rent for our first apartment was $6 a week with everything furnished.



The Smith boys at the old homeplace in 1956. From the left, they are Clyde, Holly, and Luther.

My parents were almost the last ones to leave the Foster Chapel community by the time my husband and I moved them to a little house beside us. It was not only that one small community, but the entire surrounding area was being abandoned. About 10 square miles between Parchment Valley in Jackson County and the Spruce Valley in Mason County became abandoned land. As the heirs inherited the farms, they were left to go back to timberland, just as they had been many generations earlier. Most of the houses are now gone. Timber companies are buying the land, and some few of the roads have been improved to allow one-lane, year-round traffic, but many are as bad as they ever were, and some are

Parents Ike and Pricy Smith in 1959. They later left the farm and came to live in a small house near Olive and her husband. They were among the last families to leave the Foster Chapel community.

totally abandoned. A few people have recently moved back and have slowly begun to repair a few of the houses, and there are maybe a dozen or so mobile homes and summer cabins in the area.

The Foster Chapel Methodist Church burned, and a small block building was built to serve the few remaining members through the 1960's. It is now abandoned, but the cemetery beside it is kept mowed. The Mount Carmel church has been gone about 55 years. The Rock Castle United Brethren Church, which was built by my husband's Stone family and others of the Thirteen Mile Creek valley, has been vandalized and the property eroded away by the "four-wheeler" gangs.

It has been about 40 years since there was a homecoming at the Long Hollow Baptist Church, several years after its last service had been preached. It is still standing, but the roof leaks. My mother enlisted the help of Terrence Woodall to keep the church repaired. He is a descendant of the family who originally gave the land for the church, and he lived with his wife Elva Morrison just across the line in Mason County. My mother had hoped people would come back to the area and use the church again. The Woodalls soon moved away, though, as they were of retirement age. As its last living member, I gave the pews to another small Baptist church, which was built nearby where there is a good road. They had been using old theater seats. They painted the old high-backed pews white with gold crosses on the ends, and sent me pictures of them.

There were no coal mines in this area with their immigrants and company stores, nor any trains for miles. The roads were about as bad as roads could get, except when they were graded around Memorial Day, but the first hard rain washed away that illusion. The only thing we could ever brag about was the hard-working, honest people who raised their families on

These people had been there for generations. It was hard for the old ones to leave this land.

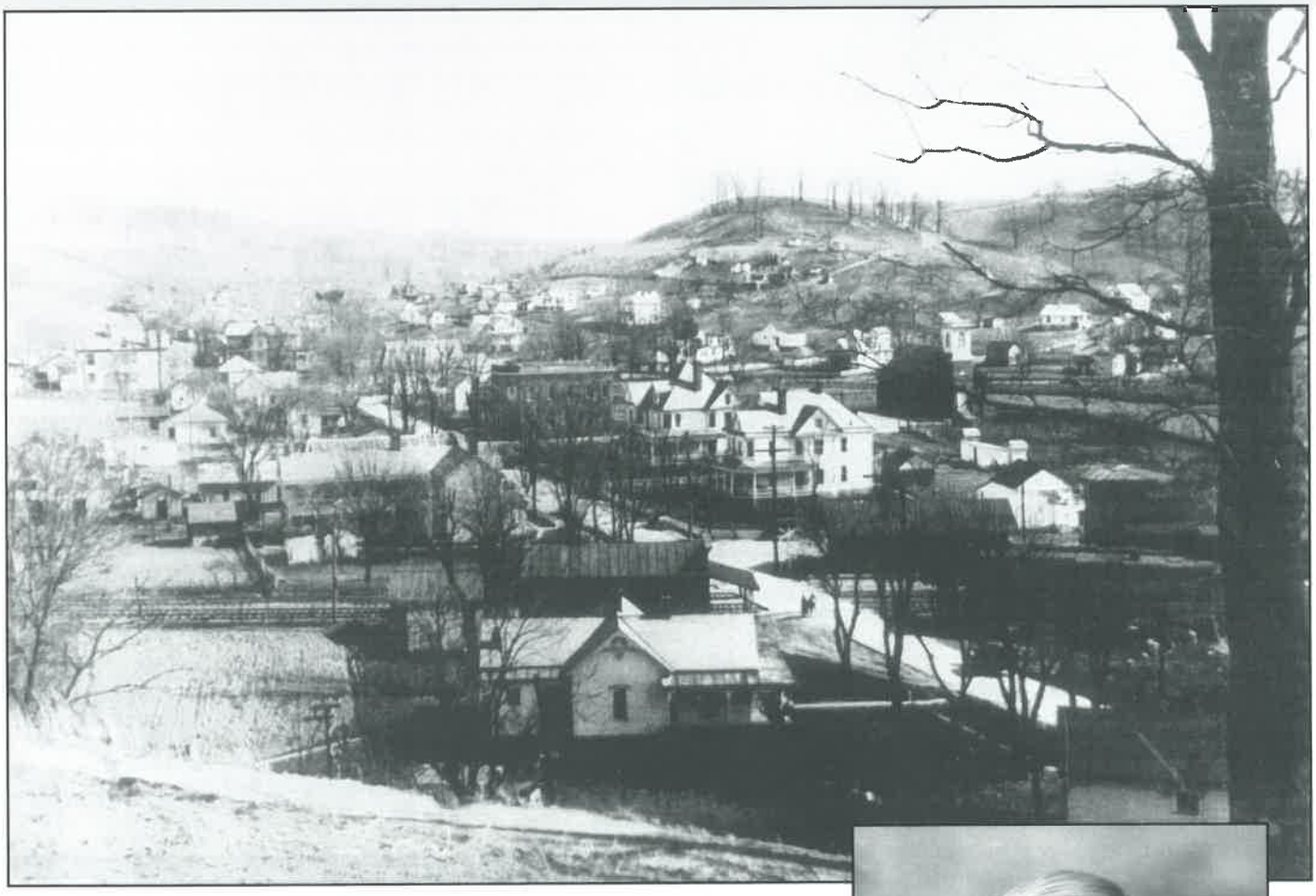
little farms whose top soil was worn out and washed away by erosion. These people had been there for generations. It was hard for the old ones to leave this land.

Some sections of the state have much to write about and have had their stories told over and over. This section just faded into obscurity. Those of us who still remember the way it used to be are proud of our heritage, with its hard times, because it helped to make us who we are today.

OLIVE SMITH STONE lives in Marietta, Ohio, where she is retired from her position as Washington County Recorder. She is the author of several published poems; her articles have appeared in *Back Home in Kentucky*, *Antique Week*, and *Farm and Dairy* magazines. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Olive Smith Stone today.

My Early Days



Lost Creek, Harrison County, in 1915. The railroad tracks are visible in the middle of this photograph. The J.B. Freeman Hardware Store was eventually located along these tracks. Photograph courtesy of Patty Bassel Smith.

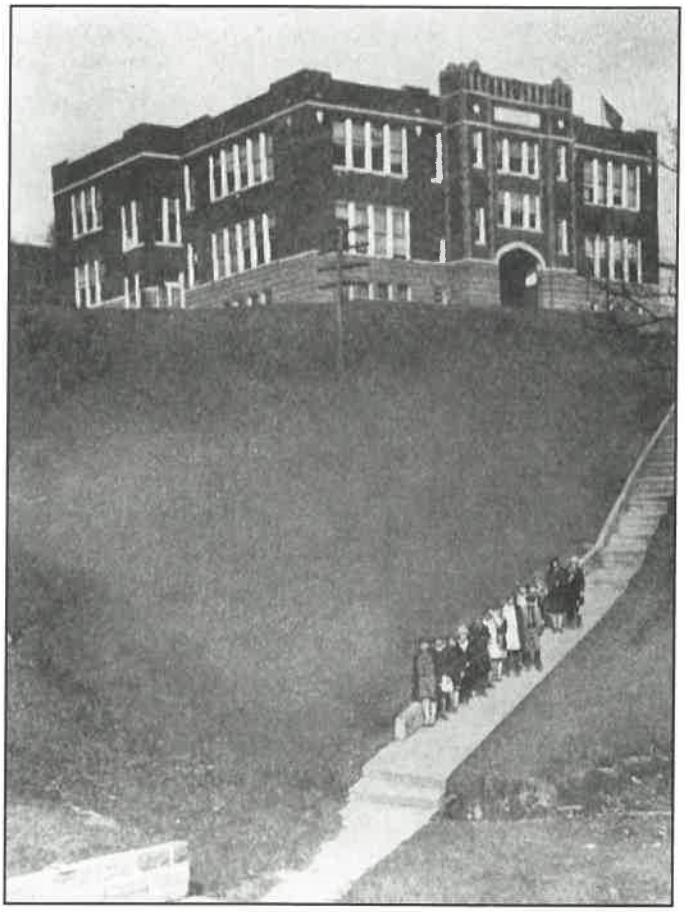
There is a legend that once in a heavily forested portion of central West Virginia, there stood a tree on the bank of a small creek. Carved upon it were the following words and initials: "I AM LOST — K.D." Beside the tree was found the skeleton of a man! I do not know if this legend is true because the tree is no longer in existence nor are any of the people alive who can confirm it. However, some people believe that this is the way that the Harrison County town of Lost Creek got its name — I have heard this story all my life.

Author Lud Freeman, at age five, in Lost Creek.

School. Almost a mile north of the main part of town was the small settlement known as the Brick Church, whose congregation was Seventh Day Baptists. We also had a blacksmith, Mr. Dawson and his sons, who did all kinds of blacksmith work including the shoeing of horses. They also had a mill for grinding corn into meal. Mr. Wayford Waggoner kept a herd of dairy cows, and he delivered butter and milk in old-fashioned glass bottles three or four times every week. Lost Creek also had sufficient trades people to take care of whatever the population of the town needed. The Wiant family were builders of homes, and the Wetzel brothers did fine carpentry and cabinet making. In later years, after electricity came to the town, they operated a woodworking mill and general cabinet shop. Several men pursued the painting and roofing trade, Mr. Creed Fogg was a fine wallpaper hanger, while Mr. Lester Losh took care of most of the plumbing needs. The grade school and high school employed about 20 teachers and maintenance people, all of whom lived in the town in those early days. We even had a volunteer fire department. I have gone through all of this to show that even in those early days before electricity, Lost Creek was quite a thriving community.

In addition to all of the above, there was the productive Righter Coal Mine and Tipple, which was located on a railroad spur about a mile-and-a-half west of the main part of the town. While the mining and shipping of coal was very important, it was not nearly as important to the town's economy as was farming and the raising of cattle and sheep.

Just before the Great Depression, West Virginia was said to be one of the largest beef cattle producing states east of the Mississippi River, and Lost Creek was thought to be the largest cattle shipping point in Harrison County. I cannot document these claims, but they seemed to be well-known at the time. Many large landowners who raised corn, wheat, alfalfa, and garden crops also ran large herds of cattle and sheep. All of these folks had charge accounts at the hardware store and only paid their bills once a year, when their livestock was sold. When they did pay up, they would often ask for a discount! And my father would often give them a little discount. Charging interest on a credit account was unheard of in those days, but it was a kinder and more gentle time. Many of those wealthy farmers would let poorer folks raise a few head of cattle on their land for a very small fee, or for free.



Lost Creek High School in about 1932. The high school sports teams were known as the Lost Creek Long Horns, in recognition of the local cattle industry and some distinctive, transplanted Western steers.

All of that area was great grazing land, and practically all that was required for raising livestock was water and a little salt. However, Mr. Enoch White and his brother Jim White did own and operate a livestock

West Virginia was said to be one of the largest beef cattle producing states east of the Mississippi River, and Lost Creek was thought to be the largest cattle shipping point in Harrison County.

The Lost Creek High School class of 1941 included author Lud Freeman, shown second from the left in the bottom row.

feed store. They sold whatever other supplies were needed in order to support the large number of cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens that lived in and around Lost Creek. Every few days, I used to go to their store with my nickel or dime to purchase a small sack of "scratch feed" for our 20 or 30 chickens. Dr. Isaac Maxwell was the local veterinarian, and he was a very busy man.

In the late summer or early autumn, usually before school started, these livestock farmers would drive their herds of cattle or sheep right down through the main part of town, then to the left down the county road past my home, and finally west down a dirt lane to the cattle loading pens. This was quite a sight, which was always worth watching by all of the town people, especially by young boys such as myself. Each farmer would ship 200 or 300 animals at a time, and a couple of riders — with the aid of two or three trained cattle dogs — would lead the drive. Three or four more riders would follow each herd, one of whom was always the owner. These men all rode fine saddle horses with Western saddles, and they were dressed in what was then considered Western attire with Stetson hats or the equivalent in straw hats. It was such fun to wave to — and be acknowledged by — the riders. [See "Mountain Cattle Drives," by Robert and Judith Whitcomb; Summer 1998.]

In the late 1920's, there was a terrible drought in Texas and Oklahoma. Thousands of cattle died there from thirst and lack of food. To help ease this problem, several cattle car loads of these Western cattle were shipped to the farmers at Lost Creek, where they could live and be fattened up. When they arrived, some were dead, and all who were alive were almost starved. However, some did survive and lived to fatten up on the hills of Harrison County. The outstanding feature of these Western cattle was that they all had long horns — totally unlike the cattle which were normally raised in our area. At that time, Lost Creek High School had good basketball and baseball

teams, but the athletic department did not have a slogan or mascot. Several of these farmers had sons and daughters attending the high school, and somehow it was suggested that the athletic department should adopt the slogan of Lost Creek Long Horns. And so it came to pass that the slogan was "Lost Creek Long Horns" and the insignia was the front view of the head of a long-horned steer. This continued until Lost Creek High School was closed and torn down to make room for the interstate highway, which now passes through that property.

Joseph Berkley Freeman, our author's father, in about 1940. J.B. Freeman ran a successful hardware store in Lost Creek from the mid-1920's until his death in 1946.

In Lost Creek, everything has always been within walking distance, so the hardware store was only what is now a normal city block from our home. In those early days, it was a one-man business, six days a week, from 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. My dad locked the store for about half an hour around noon when he came home for dinner, and again around 5:30 when he came home for supper. In those very early days, there was no restaurant in Lost Creek. Sometimes, he would have to open the store on Sunday to get some linseed oil or some other medication for some farmer who had a sick horse, or for some other emergency. Dad was always good about that even though it sometimes caused him to miss attending church.

By the time I was old enough to know how to sort this thing from that, I worked in the hardware store. I did this before I started the first grade in elementary school. The J.B. Freeman Hardware store was a rambling frame structure some 60-feet long and about 40-feet wide. My dad later added about 30 more feet to the length of the building. The store was adjacent to the B&O railroad depot. The two buildings were connected by a rather wide outdoor platform that extended all the way along the west side of the hardware store. In those days, almost all of the merchandise was shipped to us in boxcars.

The B&O ran from Clarksburg, through Lost Creek and Weston, and on to Flatwoods, where there was a junction. The main line ran through Lost Creek, and on each side of it was a siding, or spur. One of these spurs was beside the depot and the hardware store, and the other went west down to the Righter Coal Tipple, past Jim and Enoch White's feed store, to the cattle loading pens.

The hardware store handled everything but groceries and drugs. We carried all of the normal hardware, three brands of paint, paint thinners in 55-gallon drums, barbed wire and roll fencing, all types of composition and metal roofing materials, coal and gas burning cooking and heating stoves of all kinds, all sizes of horseshoes and harnesses for horses, glass and window screen cut to any size, a large assortment of firearms, cartridges and shotgun shells, gunpowder, dynamite, mercury in crock bottles, all normal sizes of pipes and fittings, a very large assortment of nails, bolts, and screws, and several high-quality brands of every available hand tool on the market at that time. If someone wanted something that was not in stock, my dad would special order it for that person, if it was available anywhere in the eastern United States. The hardware store was the largest retail business in Lost Creek, at one time.

My dad had a contract with the International Harvester Company to sell McCormick & Deering horse-drawn mowing machines, hay rakes, and other farm machinery, as well as repair parts for any model of these machines. He occasionally sold a tractor on a special order. He carried Oliver level-land plows and Vulcan hillside plows with plowshares that flipped to either side for plowing back and forth on the side of a hill. He sold replacement parts for many things, including copper coils for "side arm" hot-water heaters for those folks who had pressure-driven or gravity-flow water systems. The Alkire boys usually bought two or three of these replacement copper coils every year, and it was said that they made the best moonshine to be had anywhere. I don't know if this was

If someone wanted something that was not in stock, my dad would special order it for that person, if it was available anywhere in the eastern United States. The hardware store was the largest retail business in Lost Creek, at one time.

true because we never asked, and they never told. However, they did seem to buy an unusual number of those copper coils.

A complete yearly inventory of everything in the store had to be taken. It always started on Christmas Day afternoon, and if we were lucky, the inventory was finished by New Year's Day. It was hard and very cold work, as every item had to be counted and the price listed in an inventory book. The store was always kept open during inventory, and several farmers would very often come in and sit around the large Burnside coal stove, which was located in the central part of the store, rather close to the wrapping counter and cash drawer. They were certainly not "loafers" in the true sense of the word, but they just didn't have much to do during those cold winter months while snow was on the ground.

Lud Freeman today.

A few chairs and nail kegs were provided as seats, and stories of every kind were told and exchanged — some true and some not true. Often, the freight railroad trainmen would come in to get warm and to hear and exchange stories and jokes. That big coal stove would often get red hot, and it was a wonder that it didn't set the building on fire. But it never did.

The store was robbed almost every year. The burglars sometimes broke a window, sometimes cut through a door panel, and sometimes came up through the floor! The robberies usually happened only once a year, almost always just before the start of hunting season. The items that were taken were usually several guns and the ammunition for them. Also, some dynamite and carbide lamps, and carbide to make the illuminating gas. Occasionally, a few copper coils were also taken. The robberies were mostly quite small. We knew who the burglars were, but could never prove it. It was a nuisance, but after all, most of the time they were just good customers of our business.

In those early days, Lost Creek had no electric power, which meant no inside plumbing, no hot or cold running water, and no sewer system. The Monongahela West Penn Electric Power Company did have an inter-urban electric rail line, which ran from Clarksburg to Weston. There was a passing spur in Lost Creek where the passenger cars met every hour-and-a-half on their trips to and from either city. They ran from 6:08 a.m. until 12:08 a.m., just after midnight, every day and were quite reliable. The company also had some electric freight engines, or motors as they were called, which could pull standard freight boxcars and gondolas, and delivered short-haul freight from Clarksburg. Mr. Warren Douglas owned a confectionary and ice-cream parlor adjacent to the electric rail line, and he sold the streetcar tickets and handled the small amount of freight that was shipped by that means. In those early days, it cost 15 cents to ride the streetcar from Lost Creek to Clarksburg or Weston.

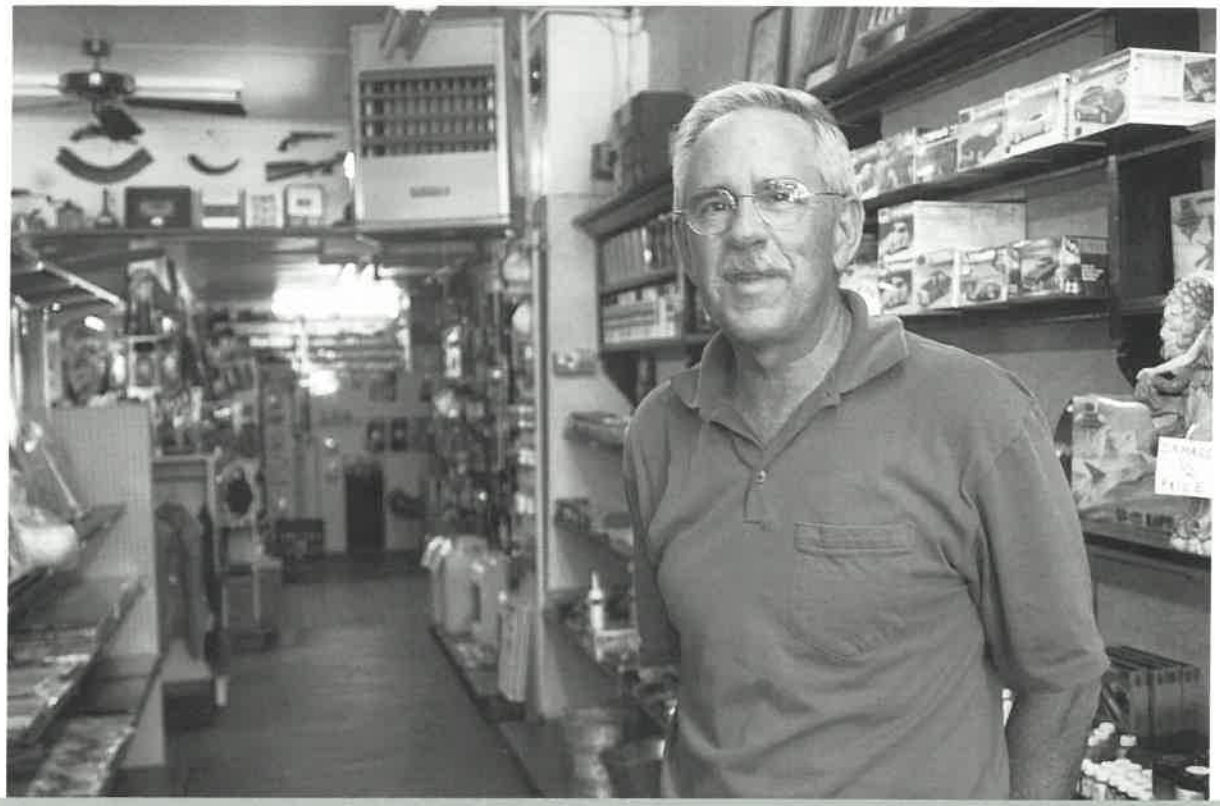
In about 1928, the Monongahela Power Company wired Lost Creek for 110-volt electricity. Before that, all lighting was by gas or oil lamp, and all heating was by gas or coal. Natural gas was very cheap in those days, but gas lights were never very good, and they were dangerous. Everyone was happy to get electricity because it meant better lighting, running water from Myers or Fairbanks Morse water systems, and indoor plumbing. My father immediately had some men build a new kitchen and a bathroom. You have no idea how much better it was to have a real bathroom! Being from Louisville, my mother always hated Lost Creek, mainly because of there being no electricity and all of the associated problems. Now she could have a vacuum cleaner, an electric washing machine, an electric iron, and indoor plumbing!

After my father's death in 1946, my mother and I decided to sell the hardware business. In 1947, I moved to Los Angeles County, California. My mother passed away in 1968. Perhaps sometime in the future, I may be able to add a little more to the wonderful story of the early days of Lost Creek. I am in rather poor health now, and I wanted to tell this story before it was too late.

LUD FREEMAN is a retired engineer living in Downey, California. He spent most of his career working with aerospace technology, designing solar panels and power conditioning equipment for spacecraft. He retired in 1987. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER

By Rachelle Davis



Benjamin Franklin Long, III, third-generation store owner of Long's Store in Parsons. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Nickels and Dimes in Parsons

The deadly and devastating flood of November 4, 1985, destroyed many homes and businesses in Parsons and Tucker County. This photograph, taken on November 5, shows water and debris at the Shavers Fork trestle in Parsons. Long's Store was severely damaged in the flood and is visible at right (see circle). Photograph by John Warner, courtesy of WVSA.

First Street in Parsons once boasted a wealth of thriving, independent merchants. Today, Long's store is one of the very few businesses that survives, thanks to the determination of the Long family and, ironically, to the heartbreaking flood of 1985.

Known locally as Long's, the B.F. Long & Company 5&10 Store has held a prominent place at 331 First Street since 1924. That's when founder Benjamin Franklin Long, Sr., moved the business from nearby Walnut Street, where he had first opened up the shop two years earlier.

Benjamin Franklin Long, Jr., and his wife Lela ran the store for more than half of its life. The store had provided a good living for them and their four children, but in 1984, they decided to retire. They had signed the business over to their son Benjamin Franklin Long, III, in 1977, but he had never actually worked in the store. In 1984, Ben was employed as a car salesman for Lambert's Chevrolet-Oldsmobile, and he says that taking over the store didn't seem feasible. "I didn't see how I could make a living at it," Ben says today. "At that time, I thought it had gone downhill, and distributors were going out." Without a commitment from Ben, his parents decided to reduce their inventory and close up shop. Long's shut down in the fall of 1984.

Then came the flood on November 4, 1985. [See "Looking Back Ten Years Later: The Flood of '85," by Todd L. Newmark; Fall 1995]. It nearly destroyed Ben's home, and it heavily damaged the car dealership where he worked. His parents' home on Fork Mountain was out of the floodplain, but the old store suffered heavy damage. Floodwaters forced it off of its foundation and filled it with mud; any remaining merchandise had to be discarded. Like a number of other damaged structures in Parsons, Long's bore the big red letters that federal officials used to mark buildings slated for demolition.

Ben spent that November through the following March repairing his house and returned to selling cars at Lambert's in April. He hadn't

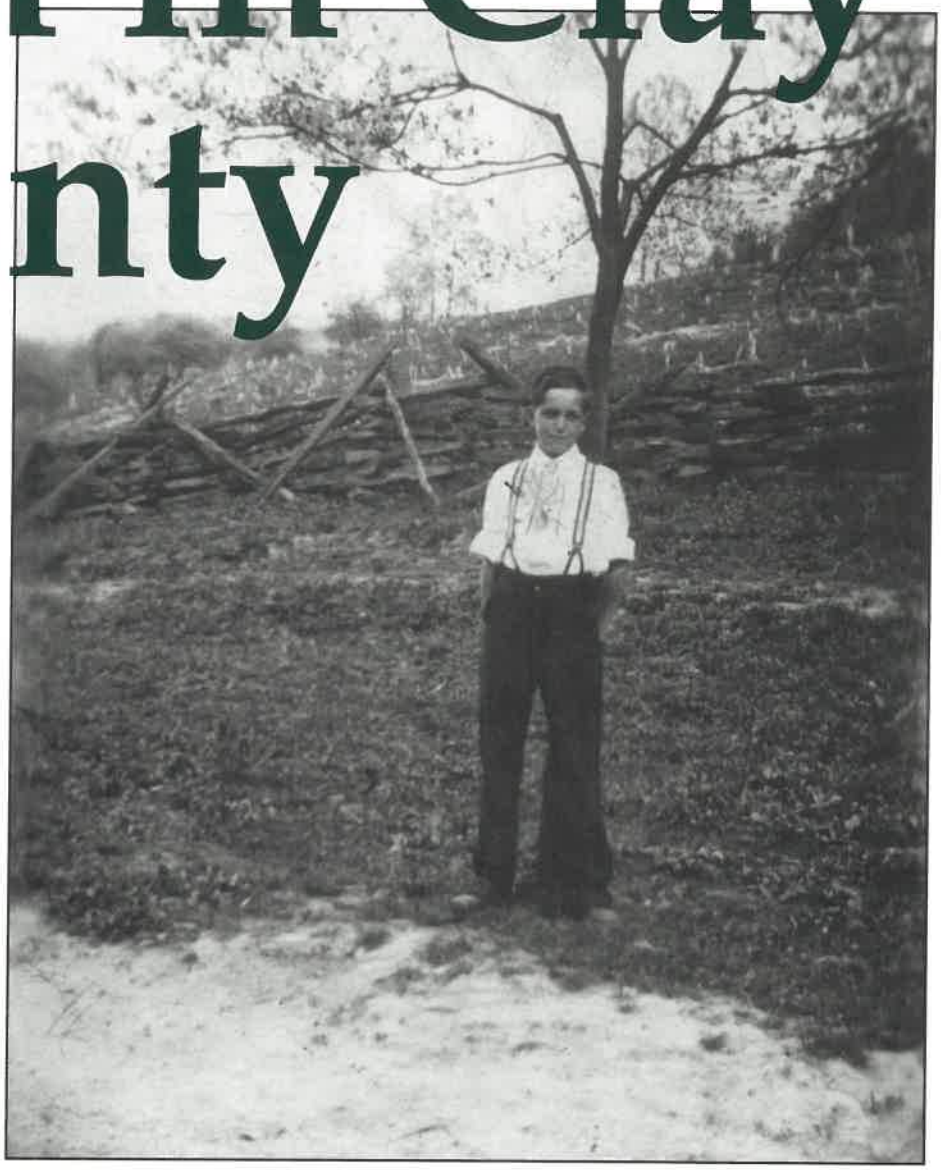
When I Was a Young Man in Clay County

By Harold P. Young

I was born July 2, 1917, at Glen, Clay County, the third child of Preston and Vesta Keeney Young.

My mother's parents were Harrison and Janetta "Nettie" Keeney. They were married August 2, 1880, and lived at Glen. He was a farmer. Grandmother Keeney died before I was born, and Grandfather Keeney lived with us in his later years. One day, my parents missed him. They looked and saw him walking away, a few hundred yards distant. When my father overtook him, he drew back his cane as if to strike him and said, "Pres, I'll knock the ticks off of you." His mind was deteriorating.

My father's parents were Lee B. and Anna Morris Young. They were married September 18, 1878, and also lived at Glen. He farmed, bought and sold cattle, and grew apples in a large orchard. I probably worked more in the fields with my grandfather than I did with my



Author Harold Young at his family's Clay County farm in 1925.

Harold's grandparents Lee B. and Anna Morris Young posed with their 10 children for this family portrait in the late 1800's. Harold's father Preston Young is standing, fourth from the left, in the back row.

father. I have many fond memories of my father's parents.

Granddaddy taught us three boys a lesson on sticking together by taking his pocketknife and cutting several small sticks, smaller than a pencil. He told us to put them all together in our hands and try to break them. We could not. But when one stick was taken alone, it was easily broken. He taught us many, many valuable lessons. Sometimes, he would ride by our house on his horse, and we would ask, "Granddaddy, where are you going?" The quick reply, "None of your business." Another valuable lesson. We loved to visit our grandparents and spend evenings in the winter around a good open fire. Granddaddy would go to the cellar and get apples for everybody. We would peel and eat all we could hold. At 75 years of age, Granddaddy could jump up and crack his heels together two times before he came back to the floor. Grandmother Young was also a kind, loving person, but not a very outgoing one.

The Young homeplace, where author Harold Young was born in 1917 and lived until he was 21 years old.

The house we lived in was of wooden construction. It was not built on level ground. The back side was only a few inches off the ground, while the front was three or four feet off the ground, with large locust posts supporting it. I guess it would have been called a story-and-a-half since it had two bedrooms upstairs. There was no insulation in the house. The living room was heated by a very large "round oak" heating stove fueled with wood and coal. Of course, we had a large cooking stove in the kitchen. In the mid- to late 1920's, Daddy had a chimney built in the center of the two front rooms. There was a fireplace in each room, back-to-back, using one common chimney. A porch ran halfway around the house. You entered the front rooms from a small hall off the porch. The kitchen was also entered from the porch.

The house had a corrugated sheet-metal roof. It was built of rough-sawed lumber, but it had dressed lumber weatherboard siding

painted white. Uncle Fred Schutte, my Aunt Mabel's husband, was a professional painter, and he painted the house the second time it was painted. He was visiting his in-laws, saw that the house needed painting, and told Daddy he would paint it for the same daily wage that he was making at his job. And so he did. A good deal for both.

Harold's mother Vesta Keeney Young was an elementary school teacher before she was married, and in later years became a licensed practical nurse. She is shown here, front left, in an undated photograph.

There was a large two-story barn, a chicken house, a coal house, and an outside toilet. The original outside toilet was replaced in the early 1930's with one built by the W.P.A. [See "The Roosevelt Outhouse," by Norman Julian; Winter 1998.] We had a large yard with a mill-sawed picket fence about four-feet high, with three gates. I lived in this one house until I was 21 years old.

Our farm consisted of 64 acres, from which we got all the wood we burned. Keeping wood to burn was a big job, and we boys learned to chop wood with an axe at a very young age. My granddaddy bought me an axe for my very own, and I wore it out before I was grown.

Before we got electricity, we used kerosene lamps, but Daddy bought a carbide generating system, probably in the mid-1920's. With this system, carbide dropped into water and generated a gas which was piped 20-30 feet to the house, then to each lamp. The lamps were usually

Clay County Celebration

Clay County will celebrate its most famous agricultural product with the 29th annual Clay County Golden Delicious Festival, September 19-22, in Clay. The Golden Delicious apple was said to have originated in Clay County in 1914, and was featured in a GOLDENSEAL article, "'The Greatest Apple in the World': Striking Gold in the Clay County Hills," by John L. Marra; Fall 1995.

This year's festival will include live music, rides, and more than 60 vendors; it is expected to draw as many as 14,000 people. A baking contest on Friday will judge the best apple cobbler, pie, cake, dumpling, butter, and jelly. The West Virginia State Yo-Yo Championship will take place on Saturday, and fireworks are planned for both Friday and Saturday evenings.

Photographs by Michael Keller.

A special feature of the 2002 Golden Delicious Festival is the 11th annual presentation of the outdoor drama *Solomon's Secret*, presented Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings at nearby Dundon Hill scout camp. The play recounts historic events in the lives of a local Cherokee family, portrayed by as many as 70 actual descendants and other local actors.

For information about the Clay County Golden Delicious Festival or the outdoor drama, call Bill Dunn at (304)587-4455.

Harold's parents, Preston and Vesta Young. Dates unknown.

overhead in each room, but could also be mounted on the walls. This was an improvement over kerosene, but it was short-lived. The generator got a leak in it, probably due to rust. We abandoned it in a few years and went back to kerosene. Our mother usually took care of the lamps, but the children helped when they were asked to help.

We had a cellar dug into the ground about two or three-feet deep, with shelves around the walls. One could not stand up straight in it. In extreme cold spells, we would light a kerosene lantern and put it in there to prevent freezing. We kept some milk in the dug-out cellar. Sometimes, Mother would put milk in half-gallon jars and submerge it in the spring. Fresh water was piped from the spring into the house — gravity fed. We always had plenty of water.

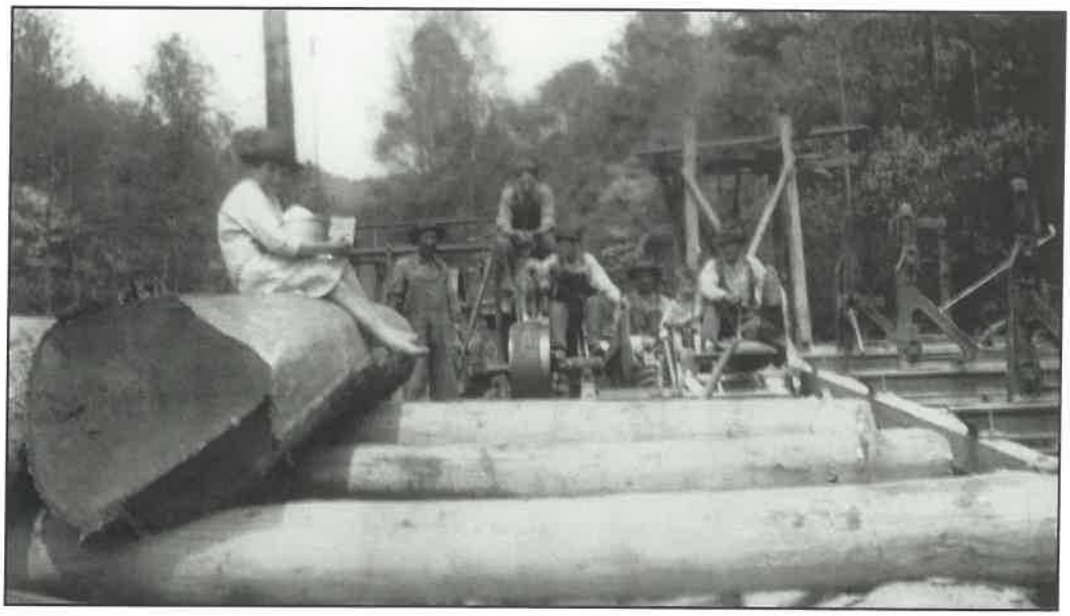
My duties as a child were to help carry water, help with getting wood, and be sure there was kindling wood to start the fire next morning in the cook stove. When Daddy was out with his wagon and team of horses and didn't get home before dark, we boys had to take the kerosene lantern to the barn so that he could see and could do what had to be done.

My duties as a child were to help carry water, help with getting wood, and be sure there was kindling wood to start the fire next morning in the cook stove.

In summer, we had to go to the field and drive the cow, or cows if Mother was milking two. Mother always did the milking. She also did the cooking with the girls' help, the ironing, and made most all our clothing. We had some store-bought Sunday clothes — knickers, when we were little boys. Daddy repaired our shoes. He was very good at it. He had several size lasts. He did not do much sewing, only on the upper parts of a shoe, never on the soles. He used different sized tacks, or brads as we called them. On rare occasions, he would mend shoes

for a neighbor boy or girl.

My father made a living working in timber. As far back as I can remember, he and his cousin Farley Caldwell jointly owned a steam-driven sawmill, and each owned a large team of horses. Their main finished product was crossties, which were sold to railroad companies. They also sold rough lumber to anyone to build a house, barn, etc. Back then, you moved the mill to where the timber was. There, the timber was cut, skidded to the mill by horses, sawed, and the finished product delivered or picked up. I can remember seven locations where the mill was set up. Three of these locations were two or three miles from home, in which case my daddy left his horses in a temporary barn and walked to and from work.



Preston Young ran a portable, steam-driven, sawmill from 1914 until the Great Depression. This photograph from the early 1920's shows Preston, seated at right, behind the saw blade. The girl seated on the log, at left, is probably Harold's sister Mabel, bringing her father's lunch.

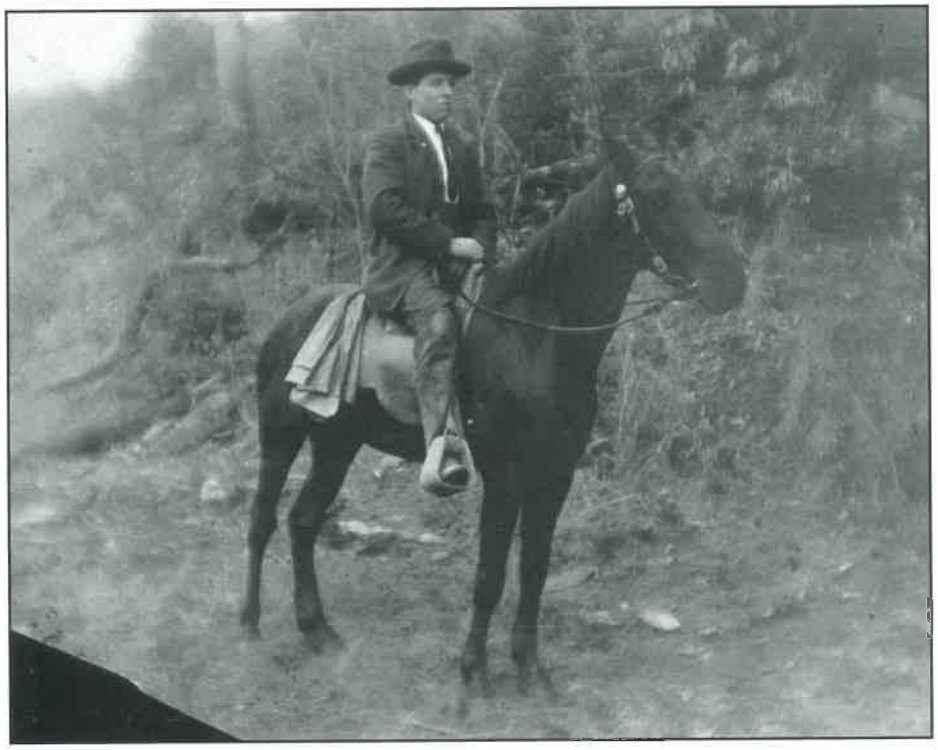
Some of my earliest and fondest memories are of being around the mill. My Daddy did the actual sawing. The logs were moved into and away from the saw by a carriage that had small wheels and ran on a track similar to a railroad track. Farley fired the boiler, and steam was made to run the engine and power the operation. This means of livelihood supported our family from about the time my parents were married in 1914 until the Great Depression, at which time it was abandoned.

During this period of time, my daddy and his brother-in-law, my Uncle Bent, built a house about 200 yards away from our house. Uncle Bent and Aunt Blanch lived there. In 1924, Aunt Blanch died, leaving two young sons, ages eight and two years old, to be cared for. Kester, being eight, came to live with us. Bob, who was two, went to live with grandparents a quarter-mile away.

Now there were five children in our home, two girls and three boys: Mabel (nine), Lela and Kester (eight), me (seven), and Herbert (six). If I remember correctly, we three boys were all in the same grade.

The first year Herbert was in high school, he road horseback four or five miles each morning and evening to catch the school bus. The first thing he had to do when he got out of bed was to go to the barn and feed his horse so that the horse could eat while he got dressed and ate breakfast. We three boys decided to erect a small box directly over the existing feed box, wherein we deposited the six or seven ears of corn that were to be breakfast for the horse. The box was built so that the bottom could be slid out, allowing the corn to drop into the feed box. We attached a strong string to the end of the sliding bottom, ran the string through a crack in the barn, over

The Young children in about 1920. From the left, they are Herbert, Harold, Lela, and Mabel. In 1924, they were joined by their cousin Kester, who came to live with the family.



Preston Young in about 1925.

the lower limbs of two beech trees, across the creek, and into the upstairs window. We attached the string to the bedpost. All Herbert had to do the next morning was yank on the string, and the bottom disengaged from the box 100 or so yards away, allowing the horse access to his breakfast.

When Daddy lost the sawmill, he got in touch with Tom Young, a brother of Uncle Bent's who had a crew of men working in the timber business up on Williams River. Daddy told him he needed a job, and Tom said to come on up. Daddy went and worked 60 to 90 days for him, staying in the logging camp.

In 1931 or '32, Uncle Rupert Morton got my daddy to apply for work at the mines. He was hired at Brooklyn in Fayette County to do various labor, but soon found himself with a crew of men cutting out timber, mostly posts used to prevent the roof from falling in the mines. He was right back to the only work he was really qualified to do. When he died on August 15, 1935, he was foreman over the timber crew, which consisted mostly of men who lived in our neighborhood, many of whom had worked for him and Farley before.

After Daddy died, the company promoted Farley to the foreman's position, and he immediately came and took me to Brooklyn to give me a job. I failed the physical examination due to the vision in my right eye. Farley took me back home and took Kester, and he got the job. He worked inside the mine and loaded coal a year or two. He then quit and went to Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company to work until he was drafted into World War II.

With Kester away at work, Herbert in high school, and no income, I was more or less the head of the household. We had a good team of horses, not big like Daddy's team of years ago, but a good farm team. I delivered a lot of coal to neighbors in the fall of the year, usually getting $2 per load, making six or eight dollars per day. When I plowed for people, I got $4 per day. In the winter when the road was knee-deep in mud, I got frequent calls to bring my team and pull a car out of a mud hole, or from over a hill. This type of work paid better when the car to be pulled belonged to someone from town, not a neighbor. Not many neighbors had cars, and the ones who did were not so apt to get in trouble. Each year found me farming less and less.

My father had three brothers: my

The Young family posed for this family portrait at a reunion in 1934. Seated are Harold Young's grandparents Lee and Anna Young. Standing, from left to right, are Harold's aunts Leota Morton, Eldora Finney, Mabel Schutte, and Florence Morton; uncles Carl B., John W., and Clarence M.; and father Preston B. Young.

uncles Carl, John, and Clarence. They were each like a father to me. Uncle Carl got me a job of a few weeks digging a pipeline ditch. I will never forget how tired I would be at the end of the day. This job paid four or five dollars per day.

Uncle John got me a job for while putting foot-logs across the creek for people to walk across over the water, especially school children. I had an older man as foreman on this job. We built six or eight of these. We had to go into the woods and find a long, straight, slim tree; cut it down; and haul it to where it was to be placed. In some places, we had to build a base for the foot-log to rest on — maybe on one end only, maybe on both ends. These had to have a few steps built so that one could get up to the foot-log.

After I failed the eye examination at Brooklyn, Uncle Clarence decided that I should go to Charleston to see an eye doctor, Dr. Mathney. He prescribed a series of exercises to hopefully correct my vision. I had to make regular office visits, and Uncle Carl played a vital role in allowing me to get there. I would sometimes ride the school bus to his home and take his car to Charleston. Other times, when he had to have his car, I would ride the school bus to the highway and thumb my way to Charleston and back home. This was probably for six to nine months duration. Dr. Mathney charged me very little, if anything. Good thing, as it was of very little or no benefit. What I want to emphasize is the willingness and expense Uncle Carl showed in getting me there and back.

Uncle Clarence was superintendent of Clay County schools at the time. He told me one day that he had deposited $50 in the Clay County Bank for me and gave me a checkbook. I can't remember all the transactions I made, but do remember one. Uncle Clarence had told me to buy a calf when I found one at the right price. I bought a yearling heifer for $20, but when I undertook to catch her to bring her home, I could not get hold of her. I took someone with me a second time, same results. I told some people of my experience. Anyway, the right man found out about it and gave me $35 for her along with some more cattle. He brought a truck, loaded them all up, and took them to market.

These uncles were so very, very good to me and my mother. Many times, they went out of their way and at their own expense to do things for us. In the fall of 1937, Uncle Clarence hired a young lady from Charleston to teach school at the one-room school in the neighborhood were my younger brother and sister were now attending. Her name was Frances Jenkins, and her father owned a feed store near the end of Slack Street in Charleston. The feed store was housed in the old K&M (Kanawha & Michigan) Railroad building, where hay and feed were kept, the office being located across Slack Street.

Frances and I developed a friendship from which I met and got acquainted with her parents. On a visit to the store in the summer of 1938, Mr. Jenkins asked me if I would like to come work for him in the feed store. I went home, and mother and I (and probably Herbert) discussed it. On Labor Day weekend of 1938, Uncle Carl came, loaded up my bed and a few cooking utensils, and took me to Charleston.

Mr. Young's adventures in Clay County came to an end as he forged a new life for himself in Charleston. His association with the Jenkins family has been a close and happy one, now lasting more than 60 years. In addition to many other close ties, Harold worked alongside three Jenkins family members during his 31-year career at Union Carbide.

In 1941, Harold met Willavene Long, whom he describes as "a lovely, tall, beautiful blonde lady" from Foster, Boone County. The pair were married in 1944 and raised a daughter. The Youngs still make their home on Charleston's west side, but Harold has never forgotten his Clay County roots. —ed.

Harold Young today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

HAROLD P. YOUNG completed grade school in Clay County in 1933 and later received his GED. He served in the Army during WWII, and worked for Union Carbide in South Charleston from 1951 until retiring in 1982. This is his first published article.

"I've Done My Best"

Denver Hill of Foster, Boone County, overlooking one of two large gardens on his family's 200-acre farm.

Old-Time Preacher Denver Hill

By Holla Price Fair **Photographs by Michael Keller**

Deep in the heart of the southern Appalachian coalfields lives a man named Denver Hill. He was born in 1923 in the small town of Foster, Boone County, the third of 11 children in his family. In his office in the back of his home, he writes and publishes a small gospel newspaper called *Know the Truth*. Mr. Hill has produced this paper for 14 years, but that is just one part of his long and interesting life. Over the years he has also been a farmer, soldier, miner, surveyor, shopkeeper, evangelist, broadcaster, and I'm proud to say, my grandfather.

When visiting with Denver to interview him for this story, we walked back into his little office where he works. The room is filled with books on every wall from the ceiling to the floor. The little printer he uses sits on one end of his desk, the paper folder is on the opposite end. Right in the middle sits an old typewriter he uses to type his paper. Some of the lettering on the keys have faded off from the constant pecking of Denver's rough and hardworking fingers.

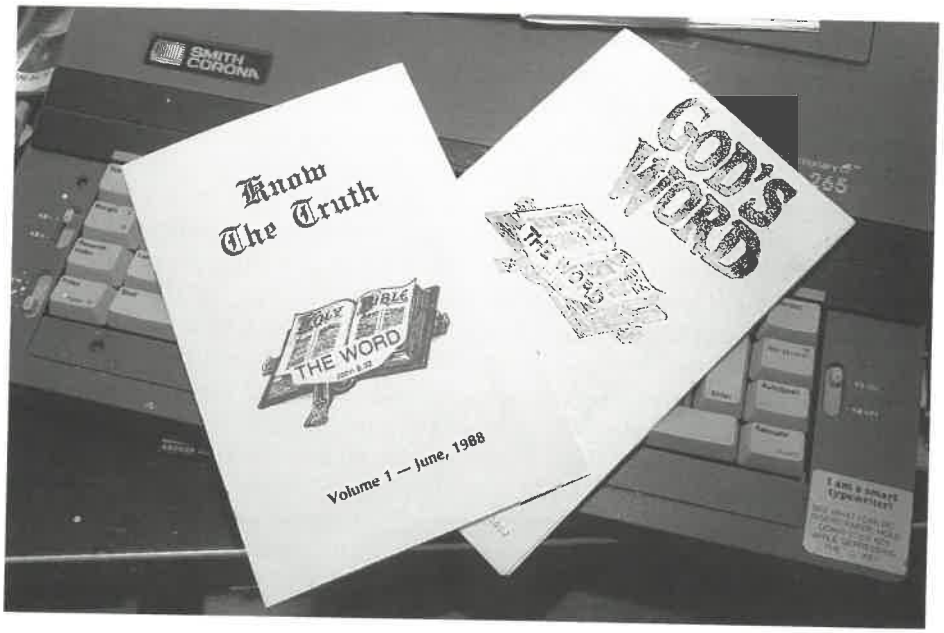
When the 78-year-old man sat down, I noticed how his right arm could only go halfway up. This was due to the breakage of his shoulder bone from injuries he received while working in the mines. I made sure that I spoke extra loud so that Mr. Hill could hear what I was trying to say. Denver is of average height, a jolly man with gray hair combed to the side to cover a tan bald spot on his head. His eyes are brown with a slight white glaze over them due to cataracts, and his skin is tan in some places from exposure to the sweltering sun in the garden. Denver plants two large gardens with a 1956-model tractor. He also plants many beautiful flowers along his walk and in his flowerbeds, which have a special type of glow.

I asked Denver about some of his fondest childhood memories. "When I was 5 years old," he says, "my dad farmed the hillsides. He said to me, 'Son, you can thin while I hoe.' He showed me how to put two fingers down in the dirt around the stalks of corn and pull everything outside my fingers." Denver also remembers having conversations with his grandfather Albert about the times when his grandfather would saw logs, pull them to the creek with a team of horses, and raft them down to market in St. Albans.

"When I was 17," he says, "I had my first real job. I worked with what was called the 'Three C's' — Civilian Conservation Corp. We worked in Nevada helping ranchers build reservoirs and drilling water for their cattle to drink. My job was to cook for the 40 men in what we called a spike camp."

In 1943, Denver went into the Army and served in World War II. He was assigned to Hanover, Germany. I asked him what stood out the most in his mind about the war. "The most frightened I've ever been in my life," he says, "was when two other soldiers and me were in the streets of Hanover. The shells and tracer bullets were going off everywhere. We needed somewhere to stay for the night. We found an old building with hay in the bottom of it, and we crawled down in the hay. The shells and tracer bullets went off before our eyes all night long."

When the war ended, he recalls that they were ordered to pack their little duffel bags and catch the "40 and eight." The 40 and eight was a



Denver has been publishing evangelical materials since June 1988, when he produced his first issue of *Know the Truth*, at left.

The Hill family posed for this photograph in 1956. Denver, standing with his wife Margaret, is holding baby daughter Paula. At center is Alvanna, and Laverne is at right.

type of train that would hold either 40 men or eight horses. This took Denver to Oltnetz in Germany, where he and the other soldiers were scheduled to relieve the men there. While on this trip, he went to a concentration camp called Buchenwald. There, he met a little Polish boy, who was Jewish. The boy took them into a small room and said, "I hate this room. Here I saw my mother and brother die." The boy told them that he was made to stand in the room while they put his mother and brother on an elevator and took them upstairs into the furnace. The Nazis shoveled the ashes out the window. "This was horrifying to me," Denver says.

"In 1946, after returning home from the war," he recalls, "I went to work for the Princess Dorothy Coal Company at Robinhood in Bandytown." He was a civil engineer who ran the transit and surveyed the mines. He also had the responsibility of writing fatality records from mine disasters.

Denver himself was injured twice in the mines. Once, he was riding the mantrip out when it derailed, pinning his arm against the sandstone as the buggy traveled. Another time, when he was engineering at the tipple, a man one floor above him rolled a rock — 27 inches thick, 57 inches long, and 18 inches wide — off onto the three-inch-thick oak floor. The huge rock broke through the floor, hit Denver in the hard hat, and nailed him straight into the ground, he recalls. He broke his shoulder and many other bones in his body and was in a full body cast for seven-and-a-half months.

During the time when Denver worked in the mines, the U.S. flag flew over the pits because the federal government had seized the mines. Denver recalls a time when the superintendent said to him, "Denver, don't wear your mine clothes in the morning. Just come to the top of the hill, and I'll pick you up there." When the superintendent picked him up, the bookkeeper was in the front, and Denver got in the back. The superintendent threw a .45 caliber handgun in the backseat and said, "If we're held up, use this. We're going to the Kanawha Valley Bank to pick up over $100,000 for payroll." During that time, the miners were paid in cash.

When production began to fall in the mines, Denver worked several other jobs until the early 1970's when he went into business for himself. He bought an old country store for $20,000, including stock. He worked that business until he retired in 1986.

Throughout this time, Denver and his family lived on a 200-acre farm on Cantley Branch, near Foster. He had purchased the farm shortly after his marriage to Margaret Dennison in August 1945, and the couple raised three daughters there. Denver and Margaret still live on the farm, where they recently celebrated 57 years of marriage.

All of these joys and hardships strengthened Denver's faith in God. On January 16, 1950, he was baptized, and in 1951, he began to preach the gospel himself. In the early '60's, Denver hosted a gospel radio program, which was broadcast on three Charleston radio

Denver Hill in uniform, 1945.

The Legend of the Flatwoods Monster

By Buddy Griffin

September 12, 2002, marks the 50th anniversary of the reported sighting of an alien creature in the hills of Braxton County. Some dismissed it as a hoax, but those who were actually there at the time have a different perspective. The event would have a profound impact. As a result of it, Flatwoods would earn the nickname "Home of the Green Monster." The frightening tale would be told time and again by those who witnessed the event, and friends and neighbors would speak of it in whispers. The story would live on, passed down through the generations and becoming part of the oral folklore that is so unique to our mountain culture and heritage.

MICHAEL KELLER

I was five years old when I first learned about the Flatwoods Monster, also known as the Braxton County Monster, the Phantom of Flatwoods, or simply the Green Monster. It was an experience that was burned forever into my mind.

During the early 1950's, my family and I lived in Summersville, and I loved to go on fishing trips with my dad and other relatives. On one of these fishing expeditions late one summer, we spent most of the morning fishing up and down the Elk River, just above Sutton, in Braxton County. Tired and hungry, we retreated to a local restaurant for lunch. This restaurant was located at the "Y" intersection of routes 4 and 19, about half-a-mile south of downtown Sutton. We were seated in a booth near the window and had just finished ordering our food. We were making small talk with the waitress when she looked at me and commented, "You'd better look out, or that monster will get you."

Boogie-Man Has B.O.

Monster From Space Roaming W. Va. Hills?

Police Discount Half-Man, Half-Dragon Figure Seen in Hills as 'Saucer' Hysteria

SUTTON, W. Va., Sept. 14 (U.P.)—Seven Braxton county residents vowed today that a Frankenstein monster with B. O. drove them from a hilltop near here but police figured the smelly boogie-man was the product of "mass hysteria."

The thing, described by witnesses as "half-man, half-dragon," had not been reported seen since Friday night but residents of the area said a foul odor still clung to the hilltop yesterday.

All of this started when Mrs. Kathleen May of Flatwood, W. Va., said she and six boys, one a 12-year-old [illegible] Guardsman, [illegible] hill to investigate [illegible]

Metallic Odor Indicates Meteor

Officers Shake Heads Over W. Va. Ogre Tale

SUTTON, W. Va., Sept. 15—(UP)—Eyewitness accounts of a tall, glowing monster with a blood-red face skulking in the hills divided Braxton county today into two camps—believers and skeptics.

Seven persons said they saw the [illegible] I hate to say I don't believe it," unearthly being, described as Stewart said. "Those people were "worse than Frankenstein," in the scared—badly scared, and I sure hills above Flatwood, W. Va., Fri- smelled something."

day night. Authorities said they believed State police and a number of the "flying saucer" which Mrs. residents hooted at the reports as May's sons saw was a meteorite. a product of mass hysteria. Police The incident occurred during a said the eyewitnesses' guess as to meteor shower over a three-state the monster's height varied from area. seven to 17 feet.

The excitement began when the two young sons of Mrs. Kathryn May, a Flatwood beautician, said they saw a "flying saucer" and [illegible] B. Fisher's farm near here. [illegible]

Newspaper accounts from September 14 and 15, 1952, reflected the public hysteria and the official skepticism that greeted reports of a monster coming out of Braxton County. These clippings are from the Wheeling *Intelligencer*, September 14, 1952; and the Wheeling *News-Register*, September 15, 1952, respectively.

Why would someone offer that kind of "helpful" advice to a five-year-old kid? Her words, nonetheless, had the desired effect, and I felt the blood drain from my face in terror. I looked to my father for reassurance, or a conspiratorial wink, or a smile indicating that the waitress was kidding. But there were none!

An uncomfortable silence fell over the afternoon dining crowd, and the room took on the stale air of a funeral parlor. In quiet, hushed tones, conversations slowly resumed. My young ears picked up bits and pieces of dialogue laced with words such as "fireball," "spaceship," "red eyes," and "10-feet tall." My heart thumped painfully against my thin chest when I heard the phrase, "Eat you alive!"

Apparently, the fear in my heart was communicated clearly on my face. A burly gentleman leaned around our booth and commented, "Don't worry about the monster getting you, kid. You'll smell it before it gets near enough to grab you." The diners around us erupted into gales of hearty laughter that reverberated around the room for a good two minutes. I looked questioningly at my father, still hoping for some form of reassurance, and he began to explain.

Recently, some people in the nearby community of Flatwoods had an unusual experience, he said. A fireball, it seems, had fallen from the sky. A few residents witnessed this phenomenon and had gone to investigate. When they got there, they discovered a hideous monstrosity with fiery red eyes. Some of the search team reportedly were overwhelmed by a highly noxious odor and ran for their lives. My father finished by saying that he wouldn't let the monster get me.

Flatwoods beautician Kathleen May was an eyewitness to the alleged appearance of the Flatwoods Monster on the evening of September 12, 1952. Although she has no explanation for the sighting, she stands by her story to this day.

I felt a little better, but my once-strong interest in bass fishing was now completely overshadowed by a nagging fear of monsters. My thoughts strayed, and I felt a desperate urge to retreat across the mountain to the safety and comfort of home.

That episode in the restaurant left an impression on me so intense that still today I am repulsed and fascinated by the Green Monster. It wasn't until some years later, when my parents moved from Summersville to Sutton, that I actually had the opportunity to research the subject of the monster in detail. I soon developed a burning desire to

Monster Festival

The town of Flatwoods has big plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their infamous visitor. The Flatwoods Monster Festival is scheduled September 12-14, on Main Street, in downtown Flatwoods.

According to Flatwoods mayor Peggy Clise, activities will get underway on Thursday, September 12, at about dusk, marking the precise time of the reported sighting with a candlelight and sparkler vigil in town.

The following day, Friday the 13th, Flatwoods expects a visit from alleged eyewitnesses Kathleen May Horner and her sons Eddie and Freddy, who will be on hand to pose for pictures and sign autographs. The center of activity will be the old A.W. Berry store on Main Street, which will serve as a temporary "monster museum," courtesy of UFO researcher Frank Feschino. Friday's plans also include children's games and attractions, live music, green cotton candy, and a big green birthday cake.

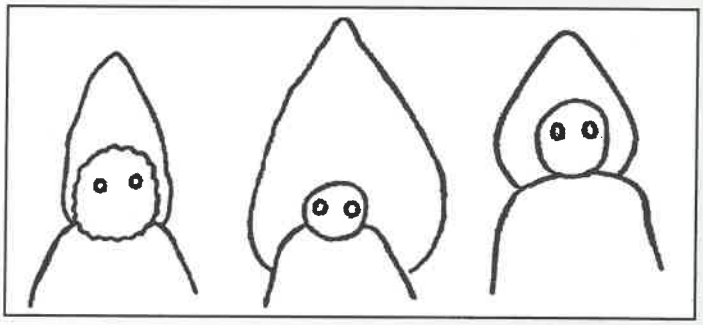
In addition, the weekend marks the centennial of the founding of the town of Flatwoods, as well as the annual Flatwoods Fall Festival. The celebrations will come together on Saturday, September 14, to include a parade with a combined Green Monster and centennial theme. Organizers also expect apple butter making, clogging, gospel singing, crafts, yard sales, and a community dinner.

Throughout the weekend, Green Monster memorabilia will be on display and offered for sale, including souvenir t-shirts and collectable monster figurines.

For more information about the free festival, call (304)765-2870 or 765-7235, or check the Web site www.flatwoodsmonster.com.

know more about local history and about the odd events that had transpired in and around my new hometown in September 1952.

I began my search in the local newspaper morgues, looking for stories related to the topic. The Sutton papers, the *Braxton Democrat* and the *Braxton Central*, provided many of the basic details of the event, including the names of the witnesses and other key personnel. The witnesses included beautician Kathleen May and seven young people: her sons Edward ("Eddie") and Theodore ("Freddy") May, their friends Ronald Shaver, Neal Nunley, Teddy Neal, and Tommy Hyer, and teenager Eugene "Gene" Lemon. These people and their accounts were the chief source of information about the incident. For them, the experience was extremely frightening and very real.



These three sketches were reportedly drawn by three of the boys who were present at the Flatwoods sighting. They vary only in slight detail from one another, and were thought by some observers to lend credence to the reports. The sketches appeared in *Fate* magazine, January 1953; courtesy of Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection.

Near dusk on September 12, 1952, they claimed, the boys were startled from a game of football by what appeared to be a fireball streaking across the sky. Overwhelmed with curiosity, they ran to investigate. Before proceeding to the site, they stopped by the home of the May family and alerted Kathleen May, who accompanied them to the suspected landing area on the Bailey Fisher farm. Along the way, they were joined by Gene Lemon, a 17-year-old National Guardsman.

According to an account published in the *Braxton Central* newspaper, "As the group neared the top of the hill, Mrs. May said the air became foggy and misty and that a peculiar metallic odor, which burned their nostrils and hurt their eyes, was prevalent. As the group reached the crest of the hill, Mrs. May said she saw a huge ball of fire about 100 yards away, pulsing light and making a slight hissing sound. She and the young men with her all estimated that the ball must have been at least 10 feet or more in diameter. They continued to follow a path around the hill which would have brought them within about 50 feet of the glowing object.

"As they walked along, Mrs. May said that suddenly to their left, and about 75 feet from the glowing object, there appeared two lights resembling powerful flashlights which seemed to be about a foot apart. One of the boys turned his flashlight on the lights, and there stood this huge, man-like creature, which Mrs. May said looked to be about 12 feet in height and four feet in width. Describing the spectacle, she said it had 'a bright red face, bright green clothing, a head which resembled the ace of spades, and its clothing from the

waist down hung in great folds.' As they saw the object, Mrs. May said it appeared to be 'moving towards us as if it were floating through the air.' The viewers immediately took flight. ..."

Frightened, Mrs. May immediately contacted local officials Robert Carr and Burnell Long. The authorities arrived at the site later that night, and continued their investigation early the next morning. Officials noted a lingering odor, two long skid marks, a trampled region impressed in the waist-high grass, and a few greasy spots. Any remnants or traces of the object or its occupant were gone.

As word of the incident spread, a sense of fear, hysteria, and doubt filled the small town. The story was initially made public through the efforts of A. Lee Steward, owner and publisher of the *Braxton Democrat* newspaper. He was the first reporter on the scene to interview the shaken and trembling eyewitnesses. J. Holt Byrne, owner, publisher, and editor of the *Braxton Central*, also covered the story.

Pam Singleton Blevins grew up in Flatwoods, surrounded by stories of the monster. Today, she lives in Hurricane, and views the matter with a sense of humor. She is shown here, at her home, with a monster figurine. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Soon, journalists from around the country descended on Flatwoods, looking for anyone who could lend credence to these strange reports or offer some rational explanation. Interest in the story was fueled by news of similar sightings that night in Wheeling, Parkersburg, Bluefield, Charleston, and elsewhere in West Virginia, as well as in surrounding states. Kathleen May and Gene Lemon were interviewed on national television and speculation about the case ran wild. The story of the "Phantom of Flatwoods," as the media dubbed it, was voted one of the top 10 news stories in the nation by the Associated Press in 1952.

Despite the eyewitness accounts, various explanations were given for the occurrence. Many regarded it as a coincidence or a natural phenomenon. Some believed it was the result of a revolving beacon light shining on the remnants of a flaming meteorite trail, casting an eerie glow on a lone tree that stood on the hillside. Others conjectured that it was a frightened owl in the moonlight, while still others dismissed it as a childish prank. Some people didn't know what to believe.

Author Ivan Sanderson came to Braxton County a few days after the sighting and conducted what was considered by many to be the most detailed investigation into the incident. His 26-page report put forth an astonishing theory. He wrote, "A flight of aerial machines, maneuvering in formation, initially came in over the eastern seaboard from the Atlantic at about 7:00, passed over Baltimore traveling northwest, then veered around and headed back over central West Virginia 15 minutes later, from the northwest to the southeast. Something went wrong, and they began to go out of control. The one that reached Flatwoods landed, rather than crashed, and it's 'pilot' or occupant managed to get out before it disintegrated."

Sanderson claimed that the occupant was wearing a special suit that reacted with our environment, and that the alien and its ship were destroyed by the chemistry of the Earth's atmosphere. He attributed the foul aroma and the misty fog to the dissipation of the craft and the alien. He concluded his report with this question. "If this is not the explanation, then somebody has to explain two things: What did the people see at Flatwoods, and what happened to it?"

Many books and articles have been written about the Flatwoods Monster, with more of them coming out each year. One of the most well-known of these is *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, by Gray Barker. Barker's book, published in 1956 by University Books, includes a narrative on the Flatwoods sighting based on tape-recorded interviews he conducted with the witnesses shortly after the event. The book's success helped to establish Barker, a Braxton County native, as one of the leading UFO researchers in the country. [See "Gray Barker: West Virginia Ufologist," by Matthew Mullins, page 64.]

The monster story has been passed down in Braxton County to successive generations in the

classroom, through songs, and in the retelling of the original legends. During my years as a social studies teacher, I had the good fortune to run across an extensive file containing various clippings and other information, including a 30-question quiz pertaining to the incident, which was given to local students to test their knowledge of the subject. I continued this tradition by passing along the story to my students in class.

Former Flatwoods resident Pam Singleton Blevins, now of Hurricane, grew up as I did, surrounded by stories of the monster. As she recalls, there were times when the monster was all that would be discussed in her grade-school classes. Several years after the sighting, the school principal, whom Pam says wholeheartedly believed that the reported monster was a UFO, led students on a field trip up to the farm where the sighting had occurred. He showed them the large indentation in the ground where the spaceship was said to have landed, and delivered a lecture on the spot. Pam describes the indentation as being perfectly round and oddly scorched at the middle.

According to Pam, however, there were relatively few people in town who firmly believed that Flatwoods had been visited by an alien invader. The majority viewed the situation with amusement, or, as she says, "something to laugh about." One enterprising young man fixed up his Volkswagon to look like the Green Monster and drove it around town for years, while an elderly lady submitted a recipe to the town's centennial cookbook for a "Green Monster Shake."

Others in town viewed the matter with some embarrassment, Pam says, and feared that it gave Flatwoods a bad name. She acknowledges that the attention helped to put Flatwoods on the map, however, and she admits that the monster and its legend are "part of my heritage, too."

Over the years, the Flatwoods Monster has become as much a part of West Virginia's cultural heritage as the Hatfields and McCoys, or John Henry. Even now, 50 years later, Flatwoods has a sign posted at the edge of town welcoming visitors to the "Home of the Green Monster." One can still find t-shirts and colorful figurines depicting the alien in its full, hideous glory. Folks still come from miles around asking questions and hoping to see the site where the creature had been reported.

What did Kathleen May and the others see that night? Did it really disappear, or is the Flatwoods Monster still lurking in the hills of central West Virginia?

[The author wishes to thank Valerie Mullins for her assistance with this article.]

BUDDY GRIFFIN is originally from Summersville and now lives in Sutton. He earned his bachelor's degree in English from Glenville State College and taught social studies at Gassaway Middle School. An accomplished musician, he currently teaches music at Glenville State College and serves as the college's director of cultural affairs. This is Buddy's first published article.

The site where the monster was allegedly seen is on private property, but owners occasionally give permission for curiosity-seekers to visit the spot where the legend of the Flatwoods Monster began, 50 years ago. Photograph by Michael Keller.

By Amy Baker

The Flatwoods Monster Goes to College

There's nothing they like better than a good story, and there are few stories they like better than the chilling tale of the Flatwoods Monster.

When Dr. Judy Prozzillo Byers of Fairmont State College first met author Dennis Deitz at a conference at Pipestem in the 1980's, they formed an instant friendship. She was intrigued by the twinkle in his eye and his passion for storytelling. "We became good friends," Byers says. "Dennis is a West Virginia treasure."

Born and raised in Greenbrier County, Dennis Deitz is noted for his historical and fictional writing and is the author of 14 books, including books for children, books about the Civil War, and a popular collection called *The Greenbrier Ghost*.

Dr. Byers has taught English, English education, and folklore at Fairmont State College since 1973, and is currently director of the college's West Virginia Folklife Center. Judy and Dennis share a fascination with the story of the Flatwoods Monster, and have been collaborating on an ambitious anthology about the legend, which they hope to publish in the near future.

"Mrs. May Horner was so genuine and so sweet and sincere. She had this experience that changed her life, but she had absolutely nothing to show for it, not even newspaper clippings."

Deitz has been interested in the story since his mother told him that she and her nephew saw "something" shoot across the night sky on September 12, 1952, as they sat on a porch in Richwood. In 1993, he asked Byers if she would help him to collect the entire story, and she agreed.

Judy and her daughter Julia accompanied Dennis to Sutton on September 13, 1993, to visit Mrs. Kathleen May Horner, the main witness to the alleged 1952 sighting. Mrs. Horner, whom Byers says is a very animated woman and a wonderful storyteller, shared the details of what she saw that fateful evening.

Dr. Judy Byers is director of the West Virginia Folklife Center at Fairmont State College, and has been documenting accounts of the Flatwoods Monster since 1993. Photograph by Michael Keller.

"I lived in Flatwoods, Braxton County, on September 12, 1952, with my three children and worked as a beauty operator," she recalled. "Near dusk on that day, my two sons [Eddie and Freddy] came running to the house along with four other boys. They had been playing touch football at the grade school playground. They were very excited because they had just seen something bright and glowing fall from the sky just over the hill behind our house. They thought it might be a meteorite.

"I grabbed a flashlight and ran with them up the hill, followed by our two dogs. As we headed up the hill, the air became foggy and smoky. The dogs began to stall and whine, then bark loudly. Their actions were strange, since they always followed my boys everywhere. But this time, they did not want to go any further up the hill. Within minutes,

we understood that the dogs knew a lot more than we did.

"Suddenly, we saw pulsating colored lights, and then just over the brink of the hill, we saw a craft of some sort, which appeared to be hovering just two or three feet above the ground. It was round in shape, with lights.

"As I looked over the hill, I sensed that something was near me. Since it was now dark, I turned on my flashlight in the direction of a soft rustling sound. Directly in front of me, hovering above the ground, was an object that ever after became known as the 'Braxton County Monster.'"

Byers and Deitz initially went to visit Mrs. Horner with the intention of collecting her story for possible publication, but they came away with the idea of creating an anthology covering all of the complex ramifications of the tale. "Mrs. May Horner was so genuine and so sweet and sincere. She had this experience that changed her life, but she had absolutely nothing to show for it, not even newspaper clippings," Byers says. "She had nothing but her memory. She just wanted to have a compilation for her grandchildren, and that's our dream."

According to Byers, the story of the Flatwoods Monster is an excellent example of a contemporary supernatural legend. "I was amazed at how the story has slid into the oral tradition and has taken on the folkloric cloak that's so typical of the rich West Virginia storytelling we have here," Byers says.

Oral tradition has taken over the story in many respects, altering facts, she points out. For example, Byers says, Mrs. Horner never reported that she saw a "green monster." In fact, she never used the word "monster" at all. The creature Mrs. Horner saw had no arms; the media gave the thing humanoid features. Mrs. Horner said that when she shone her flashlight toward the thing, two beams of light shot down on her; she didn't say that it had eyes.

Byers interviewed Mrs. Horner several times between 1993 and 1997, and once traveled with her to the location of the sighting. Audio and video tapes of this research are kept on file at the Folklife Center.

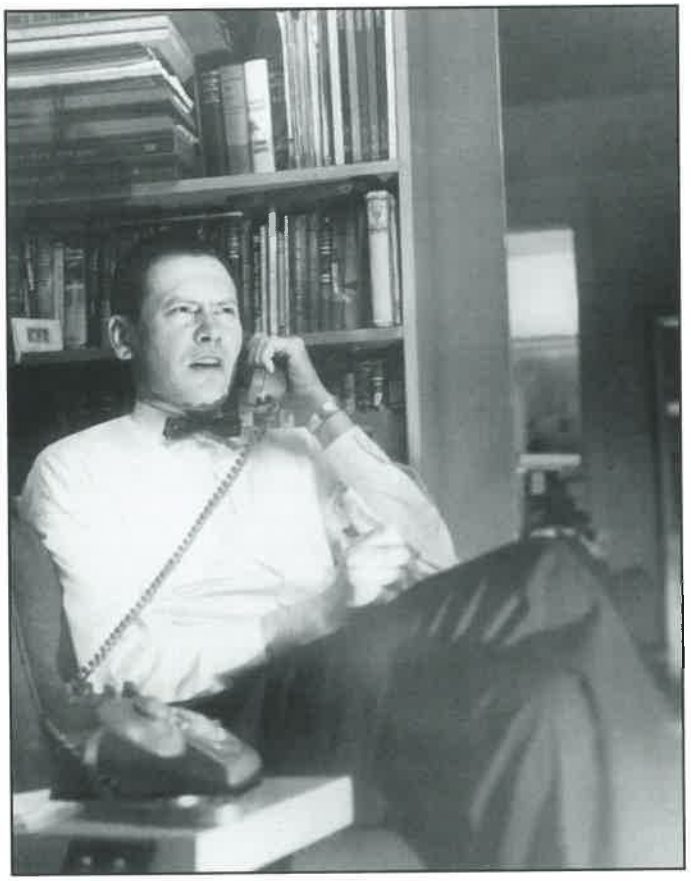
Fairmont State College's involvement with the legend of the Flatwoods Monster took theatrical form this past June with the premier of a musical drama based on Dennis Deitz and Judy Byers' research. *The Flatwoods Monster: From Tale to Musical Drama* was written by Dr. Alice A. Moerk, professor emeritus in music from Fairmont State College, now living in Florida. The play is written in six scenes and involves five characters who sing all of their lines: a mother, two children, a narrator, and a character who plays the roles of newsman, skeptic, UFO researcher, and "Man in Black." The premier was presented as part of Summer Institute 2002, an educational seminar for teachers sponsored, in part, by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

"Some of the greatest storytellers in the world came from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany," Byers says, "just like the people of West Virginia. You are really seeing genetic talent being translated into these hills. Therefore, the story of the Flatwoods Monster is just a perpetuation."

AMY BAKER is the publicity director for Fairmont State College. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The legend of the Phantom of Flatwoods came to life on stage at Fairmont State College last June with the premier of a new musical drama about the mysterious event titled *The Flatwoods Monster.* Pictured here, left to right, are actors John Fallon, Kelly Dunigan, Megan Dunigan, and Carolyn Sheets. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Gray Barker



UFO researcher, author, and publisher Gray Barker in his Clarksburg office, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection.

West Virginia Ufologist

By Matthew Mullins

One of the first writers to respond to the September 1952 reports of a possible UFO sighting in Flatwoods, Braxton County, was a young Clarksburg man named Gray Barker. A former school teacher born in 1925 in Riffle, Braxton County, Barker made his career in the theatrical business, first selling movie projection equipment, then distributing films to theaters around the state, and later operating a theater and selling audio-visual equipment and films to educational institutions.

He was also a freelance writer with a flare for the dramatic, and was struck by the strange stories he heard coming from Braxton County. He began his investigation as a skeptic. If it was a hoax, it should be exposed, he thought. But if there was any truth to it, he realized, this would be a great story. He telegraphed the editor of *Fate* magazine in Illinois to see if there was any interest in an article about the incident. The editor wired back, "Story probably hoax but investigate rigorously. Don't speculate simply state facts. 3 or 4 pics up to 3000 words. Monday deadline."

After interviewing the witnesses and visiting the site, Barker wrote an article about the case called "The Monster and the Saucer," which presented the events and witnesses in a favorable light. Barker's *Fate* magazine article concluded, "What I do know is that when you talk to seven people with honesty in their eyes, you know in your heart when they are telling you the truth. These people did see something. And whatever they saw was very much like what they described."

Beginning with this work, Barker plunged headlong into researching UFO's and other strange phenomena. As early as September 1953, he began publishing *Saucerian* magazine, the first issue of which sold for 25 cents and, naturally, featured the Flatwoods Monster on the cover. ("A Full Report of Investigation — SAUCERNEWS — What's Doin' With the Saucers," the coverlines blared.) Barker soon launched Saucerian Press and Saucerian Publications from his home in Clarksburg, and over the next 30 years, wrote or published countless

Some of the many publications produced between 1953 and 1983 by Gray Barker's Saucerian Press in Clarksburg. Courtesy of Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection; photograph by Michael Keller.

books, pamphlets, articles, magazines, newsletters, and other materials about "the unexplained." Other titles included the *Saucerian Bulletin*, the *Saucerian Review*, and *Saucer News: A Journal of Scientific Ufology*. The latter was heralded as the "Official Publication of the Saucer and Unexplained Celestial Events Research Society."

His popular 1956 book, *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, published, curiously enough, by University Books rather than his own imprint, included a chapter on the Flatwoods incident. It also delved for the first time into the mysterious "Men in Black," subsequently a staple of 1950's and '60's UFO literature. Barker's tales about these mysterious beings who attempted to silence UFO witnesses inspired a comic book series and recently formed the basis for two big-budget Hollywood movies.

Gray Barker was known to have a flair for the dramatic, and sometimes enjoyed creating UFO hoaxes. This unusual photograph of an apparent flying saucer was filed in a folder marked "Fake UFO" in the Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection, date unknown.

Other books written by Gray Barker and published by Saucerian Press include *The Bender Mystery Confirmed* (1962), *Gray Barker's Book of Saucers* (1963), *The Strange Case of Morris K. Jessup* (1963), *Gray Barker's Book of Adamski* (1966), *The Silver Bridge* (1970), *Gray Barker at Giant Rock* (1976), and *MIB: The Secret Terror Among Us* (1983).

In addition to his publishing efforts, Barker maintained extensive files on a wide range of paranormal subjects and carried on worldwide correspondence with researchers, eye-witnesses, and those interested in similar topics. He was heavily involved in investigating the reported Mothman sightings in Point Pleasant, which he worked into his book *The Silver Bridge*. Barker was also an early chronicler of such UFO staples as Hangar 18 (the hangar at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, where the bodies of aliens killed in crashes and their damaged ships are supposedly kept); various saucer-crash stories that echoed the now-famous Roswell, New Mexico, incident; the Philadelphia Experiment (a Navy experiment that allegedly took the lives of most of the crew of a ship during an attempt to "teleport" it); and other cases.

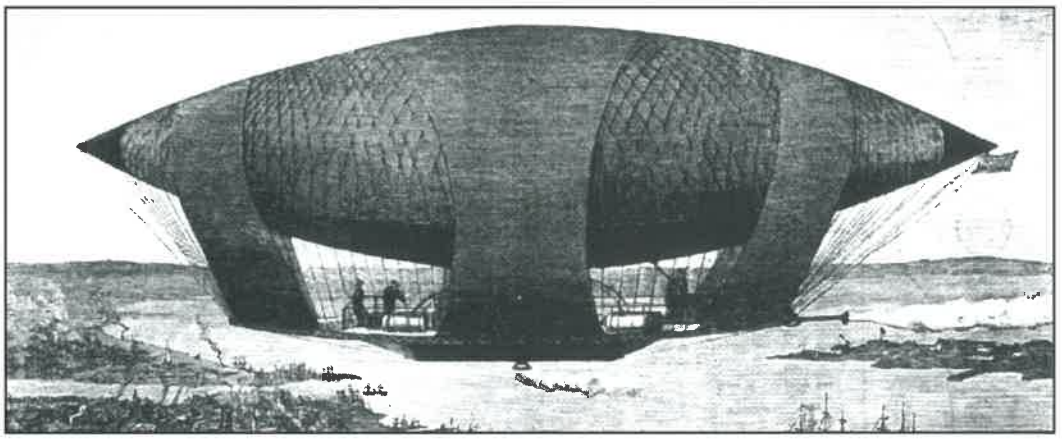
Part scholar, part prankster, Barker was not above manufacturing hoaxes and creating imaginary UFO sightings purely for effect. Some of these efforts included taking staged photographs of apparent flying saucer sightings made with small saucer-shaped models and fishing line. At times, he was known to freely adapt or fictionalize UFO reports in his published writings. He also allegedly forged letters written on U.S. State Department and other governmental stationery, a practice which reportedly led to Barker and his accomplices being investigated by the FBI.

After he died in 1984, much of his personal archive of UFO and paranormal research materials were acquired by the Harrison-Clarksburg Public Library, where they are housed as a special collection in the historic Waldomore mansion, located directly behind the main library building. The collection includes thousands of file folders containing correspondence, photographs, audio tapes, manuscripts, and other materials. Also in the collection are several hundred books, periodicals, pamphlets, and monographs dealing with UFO's from every known angle. Visible, as well, are several framed pictures of Barker at various points in his colorful career, plus one or two of the small saucer-shaped models he used to create his "fake UFO" photographs. The Gray Barker Collection is open to the public by appointment. For information, call librarian David Houchin at (304)627-2236.

MATTHEW MULLINS of Charleston has been fascinated by stories of unexplained phenomena since moving to the state in 1967. He is currently working on a book about "scary creatures, strange things, and weird events" in West Virginia. He can be reached at P.O. Box 2854, Charleston, WV 25330-2854; e-mail mtnmysteries@yahoo.com. This is Matthew's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

UFO's In

By Matthew Mullins



Airships, such as this one, created quite a stir when viewed unexpectedly by West Virginia citizens in the late 1890's. Illustration courtesy of *Fate* magazine.

Since ancient times, nearly every culture has told stories about odd beings and strange crafts arriving from above. Once attributed to religious visitations, they were later blamed on hysteria or delusion on the part of the witnesses. Even today, people still report seeing unexplained lights performing impossible aerial maneuvers and aircraft that do not match the description of any known earthly flying machines.

UFO researchers seem to agree that West Virginia is a "window" area where an unusually large amount of paranormal activity occurs.

West Virginia has a long and varied history of these sightings. Almost every time there is a nationally reported UFO story, there are reports of local sightings, as well. UFO researchers, known today as ufologists, seem to agree that West Virginia is a "window" area where an unusually large amount of paranormal activity occurs. Whether based on actual events or inspired folklore, the reports are numerous, and the witnesses seem sincere.

Before the advent of flying saucers, unidentified airships were widely reported in the U.S., most beginning in 1896 and continuing for about a year. On April 19, 1897, a luminous object was reportedly seen in the skies over Sistersville. It flashed red, white, and green lights, and, after it was viewed with "strong glasses," led an observer to describe it as a "huge cone-shaped arrangement, 180-feet-long, with large fins on either side." An article in the September 1996 issue of *Fate* magazine titled "Airship Fever," by Gary L. Blackwood, states that the sawmill whistle in Sistersville was blown, and crowds of townspeople gathered to look up at the airship. Perhaps the occupants of the airship were doing some viewing of their own, as bright lights from the craft were shone down upon the crowd.

These airship reports preceded the first recorded dirigible flights in the U.S. by nearly seven years, although many of the more sensational reports have been discounted as journalistic hoaxes perpetrated to boost newspaper circulation. Similar unidentified airship sightings were noted as late as 1910 and 1916 in Huntington and elsewhere.

1947 is generally considered the beginning of the modern age of UFO's. During that year, the concept of "alien visitors" was introduced to the public, as was the term "flying saucer." Nationally, there were a number of high-profile UFO incidents, including reports of nine bright objects flying in formation near Mount Rainier, Washington, in June, and the famous incident near Roswell, New Mexico, in July, in which the bodies of several alien visitors were allegedly discovered at a saucer crash site. Reports of lights and discs in the sky were big news in virtually every state in the country that year, and West Virginia was no exception.

According to the July 10, 1947, issue of the *Charleston Daily Mail*, flying saucers had been seen over Charleston twice the previous afternoon. At 4 p.m., three deputy sheriffs were sent to investi-

West Virginia

An Historical Overview

gate a report that flying saucers had struck a house in the South Hills area of Charleston. They found no evidence of the discs nor any damage, only a large crowd that dispersed when it began raining. Then, at 4:30 p.m., Mrs. Otis Stipp reported that she and several other persons had seen saucers flying over Broad Street. They then "circled slowly and disappeared into the east," she said.

The flying saucer phenomenon continued for the next five years, with no sign of disappearing. To the contrary, the sightings were growing more and more frequent. By 1952, the idea of flying saucers and alien visitors was firmly entrenched in popular culture. Contemporary science fiction, such as the movies *The Thing (From Another World)* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, seemed to be projections of anti-communist paranoia and fueled the public imagination. Beyond Hollywood's contributions, real-life flying saucer reports were in the news continuously.

The concept of flying saucers was introduced in 1947, both nationally and within the state. This "Fake UFO" photograph, courtesy of Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection, suggests the sort of unidentified flying objects many people reported seeing in the skies over West Virginia during the late 1940's and early 1950's. Date unknown.

On July 22, 1952, an airport control tower operator tracked on radar and visually observed "golden lights" over Cleveland, Ohio. The next night, July 23, six armed planes were scrambled from Columbus, Ohio, to chase a mysterious object through the skies. One Columbus television station interrupted coverage of the Democratic National Convention to broadcast live footage of the object and the jet chase. The object was tentatively identified as a weather balloon.

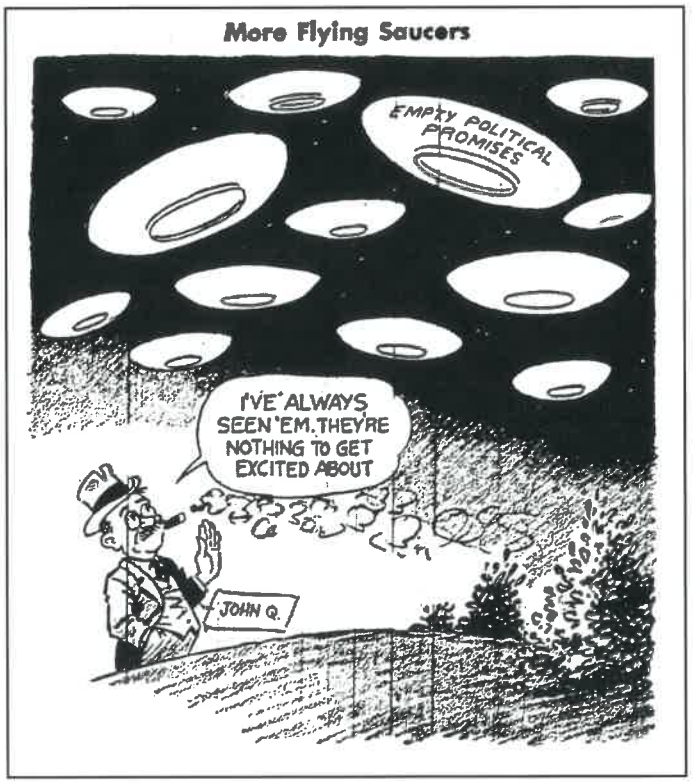
Also on July 22, a commercial airline pilot reported seeing seven objects between Washington, D.C., and Martinsburg, which he described as looking like "falling stars without tails." According to the pilot, they were capable of changing speeds unpredictably, varying from being almost motionless to attaining "tremendous speeds."

Three days later, on July 25, Mrs. Lewis Prather of Middleway, Jefferson County, found a strange object on her farm. After recalling the recent unexplained reports concerning the airplane pilot, she called the press. From a distance, the object resembled an airplane fuselage, but when it was viewed up close, it

looked more like a sophisticated kite. About five-feet square and designed to take wind from any direction, the frame was wooden and covered with a thick paper, with "glossy aluminum paint on one side." Written on the side of it was ML-307-C-AP. The object was never positively identified.

Other reports of alleged UFO sightings continued to dominate the news throughout July 1952, especially in the area surrounding Washington, D.C., and Washington National Airport, resulting in intense government and media scrutiny.

It was in this climate of heightened sensitivity and acute public awareness that the "Phantom of Flatwoods" landed in Braxton County on September 12, 1952. By far the most sensational UFO story of the year, it nearly eclipsed all other similar reports. [See "The Legend of the Flatwoods Monster," by Buddy Griffin; page 56.]



The Charleston Gazette, September 5, 1952.

1966 and 1967 saw another period of widespread UFO activity across the country, and once again, West Virginia was no exception. Among the reports in late 1966 was that of Woodrow Derenberger of Mineral Wells. At about 7:30 p.m., on the evening of November 2, 1966, while returning home from Parkersburg, Derenberger came upon a saucer-shaped craft hovering above the roadway. When he stopped his vehicle, a strange man with a dark complexion came out of the craft and communicated telepathically with Derenberger. People driving by the spot later reported seeing Derenberger speaking to an odd man. This odd man turned out to be Indrid Cold from the planet Lanulos, in the "galaxy of Ganymede," according to Derenberger, who went on to have what he claimed were a series of subsequent contacts with alien beings. Derenberger gave numerous interviews and became a minor celebrity on radio and television.

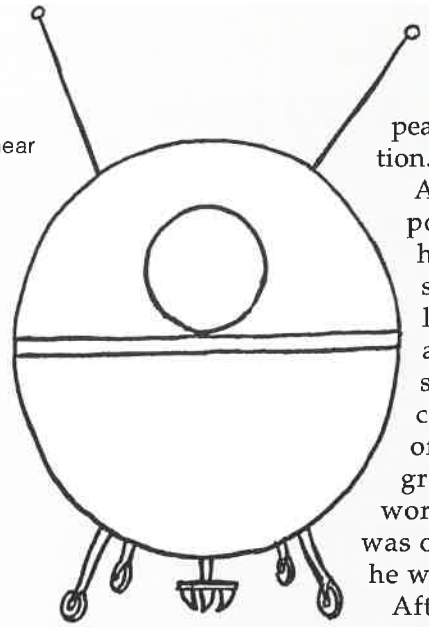
In January 1967, a flurry of reports came from the St. Albans area. One of these came from a minister and his wife who were traveling between St. Albans and Spring Hill when they claimed to see an object "flare up in the sky in front of us." According to the startled couple, "It was kite-shaped and trimmed in pale pink and green, with a red tail." Other reports described a "ball of fire" and an "oval, glowing silverish object." Similar objects were seen all over the state and were reported by many credible witnesses.

On January 19, 1967, Tad Jones of Dunbar reported encountering a "dull aluminum sphere, which hovered about four feet above I-64, one mile from the Institute interchange." Jones stopped his truck within 10 feet of the object. The sphere, 20 to 25 feet in diameter, had two antennae on the top and four legs with wheels on them, he said. Between the legs of the craft was a revolving propeller, shaped something like the agitator in a washing machine. Jones chose not to report his sighting to anyone.

The next day when he arrived at work, he found a handwritten note stuck in the door of his appliance shop. The note read, "We were here, and if you don't keep your mouth shut, we'll be back." At this point, Jones decided to go public with his sighting. He became obsessed with UFO's after this experience, and soon lost his family and his job. Jones eventually left the area.

None of the reports from that time, however, could match the strangeness of the Mothman sightings near Point Pleasant. Similar flying creatures had been seen locally at about this same time. There was what appeared to be a "brown human being" seen gliding through the trees near Clendenin, a huge black bird in Charleston with a wingspan of six or seven feet and a face like a monkey, and other similar reports in Mason, Logan, and Kanawha counties. For almost a year, frequent reports surfaced about the creatures and their usually nocturnal antics.

The Mothman was described as being around seven-feet tall and with a wingspan of about 10 feet. The gray and white creature seemed not to have a neck or, indeed, a real head, and its burning, red eyes rested low on its body between its shoulders and powerful wings. It seemed to be attracted to vehicles, was afraid of lights, and more than once was reported peeking into windows and flying near



Sketch of an unidentified "dull aluminum sphere," reportedly seen hovering over I-64 near Institute by Dunbar resident Tad Jones on January 19, 1967. Jones' sketch appeared in *The Charleston Gazette* the following day.

houses full of terrified people.

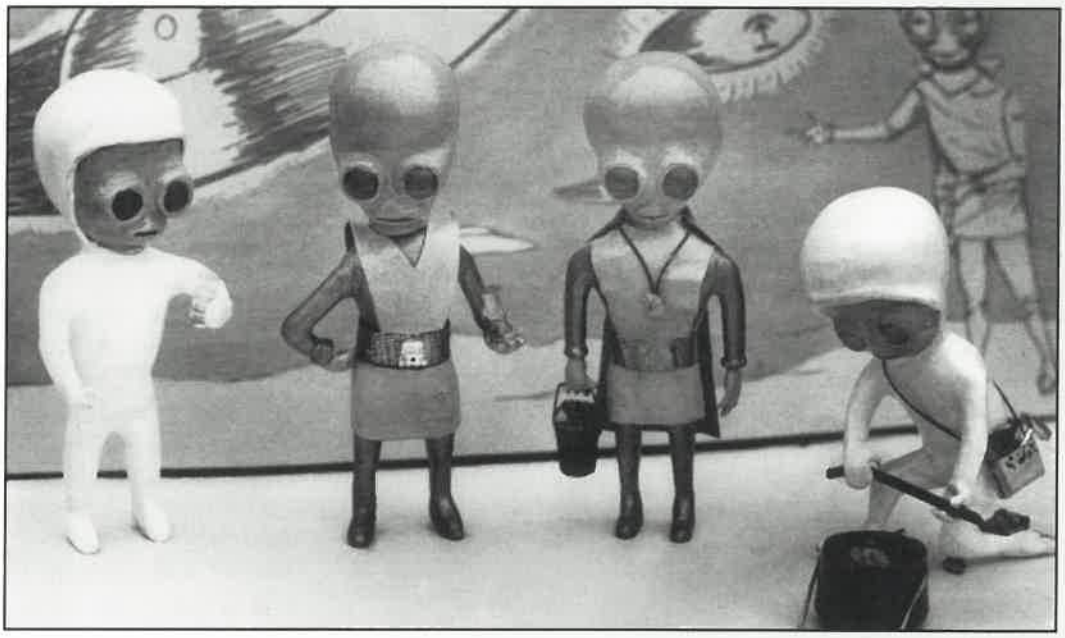
The sighting that initially caused the press furor over the Mothman came on November 16, 1966. Two young couples were driving in the abandoned TNT plant north of Point Pleasant when they spotted a thing with glowing red eyes, which had a hypnotic quality. When it began to approach their car, they fled toward town. Reaching speeds of up to 100 miles an hour, they were amazed as the flying creature kept pace with them. It followed them down U.S. Route 62, staying about 50 feet off the ground and only flying off when they neared the city limits. After a press conference the next day, the story received national attention, and the creature was dubbed Mothman by a local newscaster, playing off the current popularity of the *Batman* television series. Dismissed by skeptics as an errant sandhill crane, the Mothman inspired several articles and books, and recently became the subject of a popular Hollywood movie.

Another bizarre UFO report to come from West Virginia was that of the Vegetable Man. This case began in July 1968 and was investigated by Clarksburg ufologist Gray Barker and recounted by him in an article in the December 1976 issue of *UFO Report*. [See "Gray Barker: West Virginia Ufologist," by Matthew Mullins; page 64.] According to Barker, a young man named Jennings Frederick was hunting on his father's farm in Marion County. On his way home, he stopped on a hillside to look at the setting sun. As he caught his breath, he became aware of a strange sound, which seemed to be coming from the sky. At first, it was gibberish. But as it seemed to slow down, he began to understand actual words. He was told that he had nothing to fear, that the speaker or speakers had come in peace. They asked for medical information.

As Frederick reached into his back pocket, he felt a prick on his right hand. When he looked, he saw a strange green hand with seven-inch-long digits. They looked like vines and had sharp pointed tips with suction cups on the ends. Frederick couldn't free his hand from the grip of the creature. The thing's body was green and thin, and looked for all the world like the stalk of a stout plant. It was over a foot taller than Frederick, and he was powerless against it.

After several moments, the thing let go of his arm and ran up the hill, taking giant strides of nearly 25 feet at a time. As Frederick tried to compose himself, his attention was called to a huge silver ship that whistled and disappeared quickly into the sky. Several weeks later, Frederick left to serve a tour of duty in the Air Force.

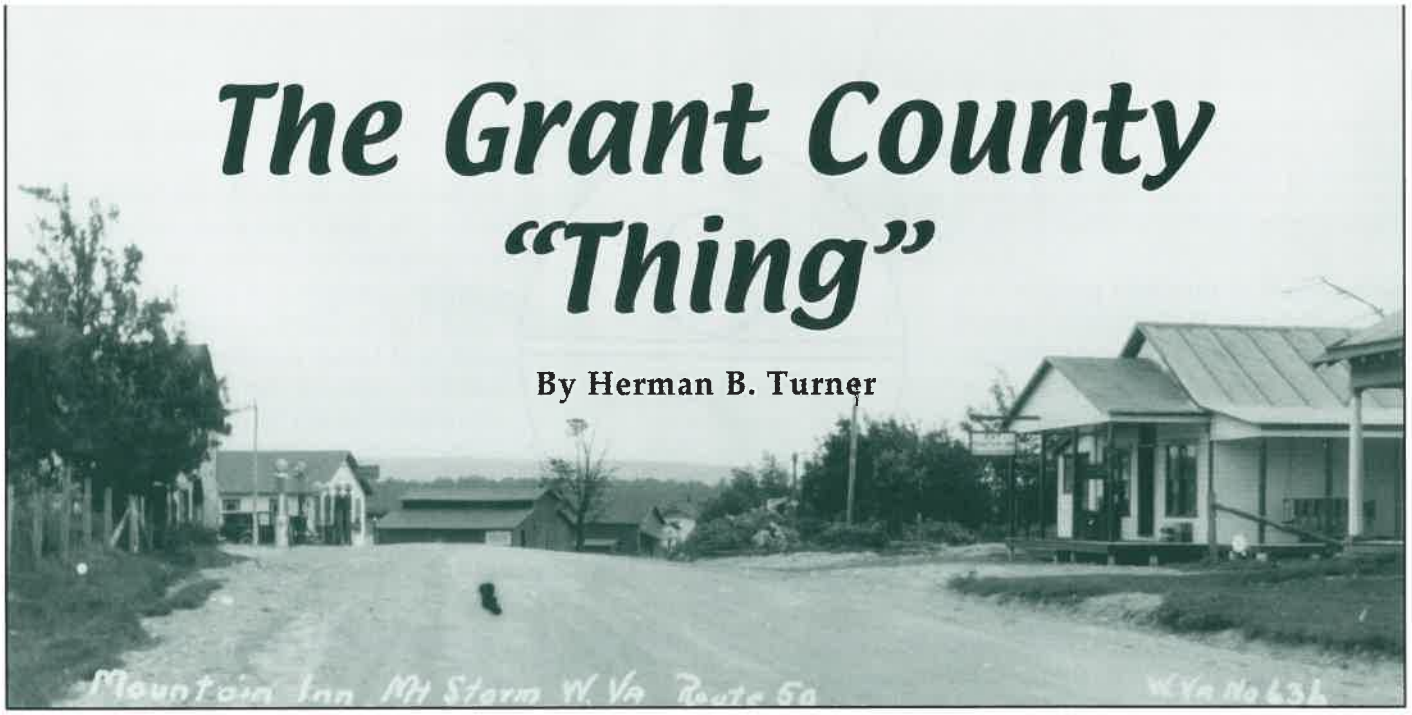
These are but a sampling of the many incidents involving UFO's in West Virginia's past. Alleged contacts and sightings continue to occur frequently, though most are never reported because the witnesses fear ridicule, harassment, or possibly a visit from the ominous "Men in Black." After all, the strangeness of some of these encounters are enough to cause most witnesses to question their own sanity. Don't expect the phenomena to stop anytime soon, however, across the country, or here in West Virginia.



Real or not, aliens, spaceships, and UFO's have become a part of our culture, and it looks like they are here to stay. These lovable creatures were made by Karl Machtany; photograph courtesy of Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection, date unknown.

The Grant County "Thing"

By Herman B. Turner



The high ridges of Grant County were the site of a mysterious event in May 1965, when a local dam keeper saw a fiery object fall from the sky. This photograph was taken at Mount Storm in the late 1930's, a few miles north of the sighting, courtesy of WVSA.

This is the true story of an event that took place on top of Allegheny Mountain, south of Mount Storm, Grant County, in May 1965. The event took place at the Little Stoney River Dam, west of Maysville, near the large coal-fired electrical generating plant located on top of the mountain. The Little Stoney River Dam supplied supplemental water for the electrical facility and played an important role in its overall operation.

Fred Becker was caretaker of the Little Stoney River Dam at that time. On June 15, 1965, I decided to drive up to the Little Stoney River Dam to visit Fred Becker. Fred was a member of one of the churches where I served as pastor.

Fred met me as I was getting out of my car and remarked that he was glad to see me. He invited me into the house for a spell. Sitting down at the table, sipping fresh-brewed coffee, and nibbling at a piece of homemade stacked coconut cake, we discussed local current events for a little while.

Fred remarked again how glad he was that I had come to see him, because he had something that he felt was very important to share with me. Fred asked if I had time to listen to a true story. I told him, "My time here is your time." Fred took a long sip of his steaming coffee and began.

"It was several weeks ago, about May 15, or near abouts," he said. "It was a typical late afternoon here on the mountaintop. A gentle breeze was stirring the leaves on the trees and kicking up small waves on the surface of the dam, reflecting the twilight of the evening's approach.

"The azure sky was displaying a few long stratus clouds, exhibiting a natural beauty to behold in the sky. The frogs were croaking, the katydids and crickets were singing, and the birds were darting from limb to limb, making chirpful sounds. The white tail deer and her spotted fawn had appeared on the back side of the dam, and some crows were pestering the grey squirrels who were barking at them. All of nature seemed to be in harmony.

"As I was walking toward the house, I realized that all of nature had become silent. The stillness was so quiet that one could have heard a pin drop on the ground. I scanned the sky very carefully, but I saw nothing unusual.

"A short time later, I saw it! I stopped right in my tracks. The object that I saw was something not of this world! I will call it the 'thing,' for the lack of a more appropriate name for it.

"The thing was making a loud shrieking and roaring sound, emitting a large trail of sparks in its wake. Little wonder that my friends of nature who sang to me each evening had become silent! On and on it came — shrieking and roaring and emitting sparks, not only from the rear end, but from all over its body. Closer and closer it came, louder and louder its shriek and roar.

"The flaming thing lit up the area as if the sun had just come up. It appeared to be about eight or 10-feet long with a trail of sparks 10-feet long, or so. I surmised that if it remained on its course, the thing would surely hit the mountaintop nearby.

"Suddenly it happened! The thing struck the top of the dam reservoir, plunging right into the middle of the water surface. As the thing hit the water, it gave off a loud hissing sound, sending steam, vapors, and water into the air like a geyser. Rain-like stuff showered over the area of the dam. As the thing began to sink, there was a loud explo-

sion under the water. Again, the thing sent up a large sheet of steam and water all over the surface where it came into the dam. And then a great silence covered the area.

"A short time later, my nature's friends resumed their evening ritual. The hoot owls and the screech owls soon joined in. The whip-poorwills began calling to their mates, and everything seemed to be back to normal here on the mountaintop.

"I later decided to drain the dam," Fred continued, "to see if I could find or recover anything the thing left behind, something which may now be lying in the soft mud on the bottom of the reservoir.

"So, I drained the dam. After the dam had drained dry, I gathered up my gum boots and a little bucket, and I started walking through the muddy bottom. I was going alongside the Little Stoney River, which was flowing on the bottom of the dam, looking carefully along each side of the stream for evidence of something that might have fallen into the soft mud. As I got to about the center of the dam's bed, I saw a hole in the soft mud where something had entered the mud. I reached down and found the object.

"Washing the mud off of it, I discovered that I was holding a piece of something from another world. Placing the chunk into the bucket, I looked around and discovered several more pieces of the thing, washed them off, and placed them in the bucket, as well. Checking the soft mud carefully, and finding no more pieces of the thing, I took my bounty to the front of the dam and set it down. I then closed the gates of the dam, and Little Stoney River began to refill the reservoir again. Washing my boots off, I picked up my bucket and bounty, and headed for the house. I placed my pieces of the thing on a shelf, where I could admire them from time to time, while sitting down to sip a cup of fresh-brewed coffee."

Author Herman Turner examines a piece of the "thing" that allegedly fell from the sky and was retrieved from the muddy bottom of the reservoir at the Little Stoney River Dam in Grant County. The object was given to Mr. Turner in 1965 by Fred Becker, who witnessed the strange occurrence and relayed the story, and the souvenir, to Mr. Turner.

After Fred dictated the story to me, he got up, went to the shelf, and picked up some of the pieces or chunks that had lain on the bottom of the dam. He said that he wanted me to have them.

Fred died in 1973, at the age of 71. He left no family. I moved away from Mount Storm and settled in Virginia, but this story has stayed with me, though dormant, for the past 37 years. I had promised Fred that I would write his story, as he revealed it to me. It is being told here for the first time.

HERMAN B. TURNER is a retired minister living in Fulks Run, Virginia. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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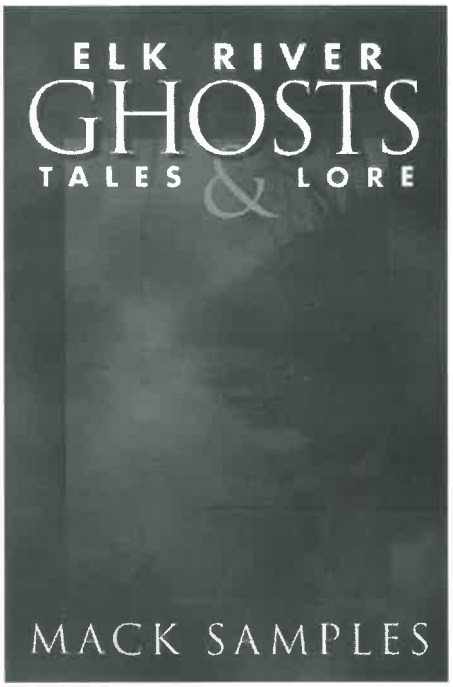
Elk River Ghosts, Tales & Lore



Life, death, and the "unexplained" come together in this new book from author and GOLDENSEAL contributor Mack Samples. *Elk River Ghosts, Tales & Lore* is a collection of short chapters based on folk legends of the upper Elk River region combined with colorful incidents from the author's own experience. Although surreal tales of wandering spirits and unearthly creatures take center stage here, of equal interest are the revealing glimpses of small-town and rural life that make up at least half of these stories.

Mack Samples collected many of these tales from older Clay and Kanawha county family members, particularly his late aunt Mayme Samples Cole and his 93-year-old mother Velva Kennedy Samples. The stories range from ghostly accounts of an Indian spirit prowling the banks of Porter's Creek and a mysterious, bulletproof eight-point buck roaming the Clay County woods, to true-life tales of love and deception in a small, church-going community, and the shocking arrival of two young Catholic girls at Clendenin High School in the late 1950's. All of these stories are well-told, and presented in the casual, easy style characteristic of Mack Samples' writing. [See "Join Hands & Circle: Old-Time Dancing Alive and Well," by Mack Samples; Spring 1997.]

The 82-page paperbound book, published by Quarrier Press, sells for $9.95, and is available from Pictorial Histories, 1416 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301; phone (304)342-1848.

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Coming Next Issue...

- Lebanese in Clarksburg
- Putnam County Gravediggers
- Volcano
- Mountain Music Roundup

PHOTO CURIOSITY

Mountain octopus?!? Believe it or not, this eight-tentacled creature was pulled from the Blackwater River near Thomas on January 11, 1946. According to a newspaper article from the time, this was one of six octopi seen in the icy river that day by a local 15-year-old boy. He claimed that the fish were alive when he found them, but that this one was killed as he lassoed it and pried it from the rocks.

Though scientists cast doubts on the boy's story, no definitive explanation was ever offered for this strange discovery, and many questions remain unanswered. How did the octopus get there? What size was it? What became of it afterwards? (What kind of bait did he use???)

If you have any information about this unusual West Virginia fish tale, please let us know at the GOLDENSEAL office. Photograph courtesy of Jim Costa.

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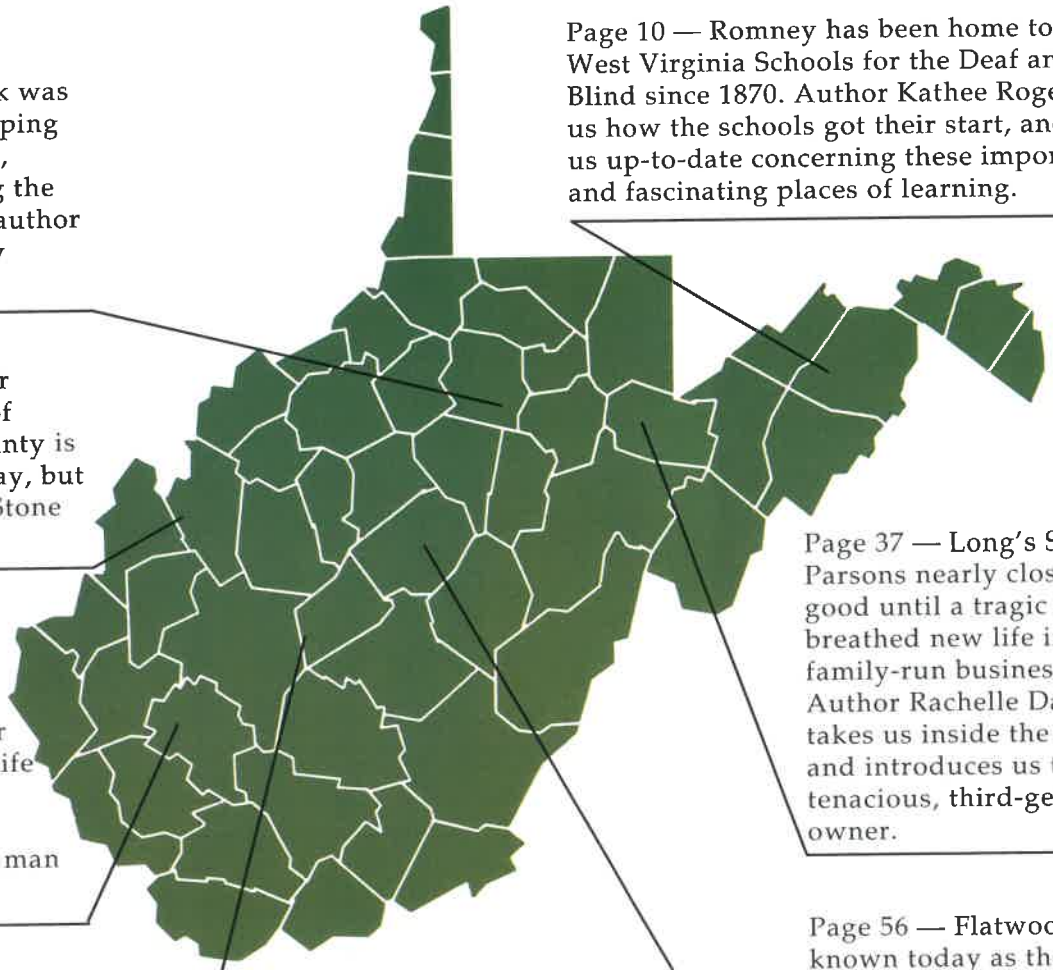

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