West Virginia Traditional Life

Goldenseal

Summer 2003
$4.95

General Fox

Girls' State

Dirt Track Racing

Norwalk Underslung

From the Editor: "Year of Appalachia"

You might not be aware of this, but we are smack dab in the middle of the "Year of Appalachia," as officially declared by the U.S. Congress. The year began last summer and extends through this July. The culminating event will take place in Washington, D.C., as the Smithsonian Folklife Festival honors our region with a 10-day program called "Appalachia: Heritage and Harmony."

The "Year of Appalachia" idea has its roots in the 75th anniversary of the famed Bristol Sessions — a pivotal recording event that took place July 25 to August 5, 1927, in Bristol, Tennessee, often acknowledged as the beginning of the country music recording industry. GOLDENSEAL readers might recall our article in the spring issue about the West Virginia Coon Hunters string band from Bluefield, thought to be the last group to record during that session [see "The West Virginia Coon Hunters: On the Trail of a Lost String Band," by John Lilly].

As I mentioned, most people around here have been relatively unaware that there even was a "Year of Appalachia," though we are the only state that actually lies wholly within the Appalachian region. The impact of the congressional decree has been primarily felt somewhat south and west of us — Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina all have successfully used the designation as a springboard for a series of local promotions, festivals, conferences, and other initiatives, drawing tourists and press attention, and generating some renewed regional self-awareness.

Well, West Virginia is finally getting on board. A number of Mountain State artists have been invited to travel to our nation's capital in a few weeks and will take part in the Smithsonian festival. The West Virginia delegation includes musicians and singers **Lester** and **Linda McCumbers, Kim Johnson, Dwight Diller, Ginny Hawker** and **Tracy Schwarz, Jake** and **Dara Krack, Nat Reese** [see "Something to Give: Nat Reese's Early Life and Music," by Michael Kline; Winter 1987], **Carl Rutherford** [see "Carl Rutherford: Music From the Coalfields," by Jim McGee; Fall 1994], and **Elaine Purkey**. Also on hand will be storytellers **Bonnie Collins** [see "Raised Among the Hills: Storyteller Bonnie Collins," by Marc and Cheryl Harshman; Spring 1989] and **Bil Lepp** [see "The Lying Lepp Brothers," by Bil Lepp; Spring 1998], along with cook **Harvey Christie**. Happily, the West Virginia Division of Tourism has also signed on as a major festival sponsor.

We know that these folks will do us proud. Festival activities will include musical performances throughout the National Mall — a 50-acre stretch extending from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument. There will also be demonstration areas for regional foodways, dance forms, storytelling, and work lore. As many as 100,000 people a day are expected to attend. The last time a significant number of West Virginia artists were featured at the prestigious and popular Smithsonian Folklife Festival was in 1976, and it might be a while before our turn comes around again. So, if you have been considering a visit to the D.C. area, perhaps this would be a good time to go.

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival will take place on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., from Wednesday, June 25, until Sunday, June 29, and from Wednesday, July 2, through Sunday, July 6. All activities are free to the public. For additional information, visit www.folklife.si.edu.

John Lilly

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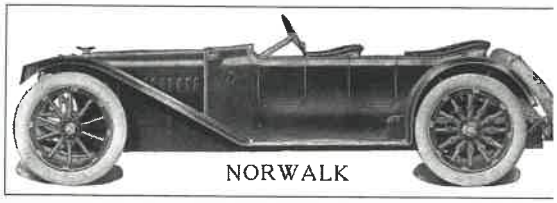

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On the cover: Major General Charles R. Fox served as state adjutant general from 1946-57. Photograph by Michael Keller. Our story begins on page 10.

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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.

Milroy's Road

April 23, 2003
Kalamazoo, Michigan
Via e-mail
Editor:
I have been a subscriber to GOLDENSEAL for several years. However, last year I failed to renew my subscription. During the early part of March, my sister, who lives in Meadow Bridge, mailed me a copy of an article from the Spring 2003 issue [see "Milroy's Road," by Donna McGuire Tanner].

Milroy Grose in 1949.

Along with members of my family, teachers, and coaches, Milroy Grose was a great role model for me as a youngster growing up in Lansing. As the author described so well, despite his paralyzed legs requiring him to walk with his hands and upper body while sitting down and the need to use special devices to drive his truck, Milroy made the trip from Graydon to Fayette Station, up and down Fayette Mountain on the narrow single-lane road, delivering the mail to Lansing and Graydon six days a week — winter, spring, summer, and fall.

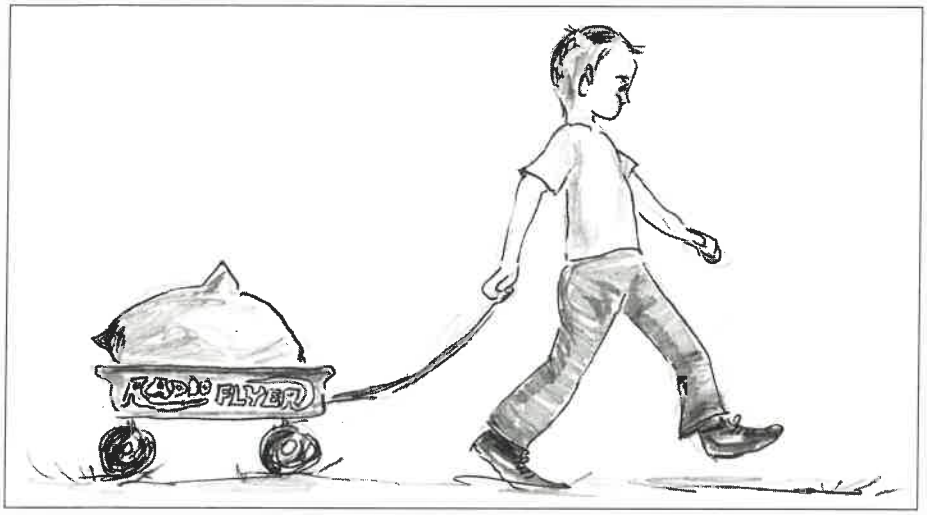
Just by his example, "Mailroy," as we called him, taught all of us, who had the good fortune to know him, many things. These included independence, the value of hard work, kindness, dependability, perseverance, and certainly how to overcome adversity. These traits and values, which Milroy Grose shared with us during his lifetime, have helped this West Virginian immeasurably, and I'm sure have helped many others who knew this remarkable and wonderful human being.

As I read the article, I realized what GOLDENSEAL does for those of us who are transplanted West Virginians, now living away from "home." It helps take us back to our roots, where we learned the values that have guided us through the ensuing years.

Thanks for getting me back on the mailing list. I am now going to be a GOLDENSEAL-er for life!
Sincerely,
Gene Gordon Jones

Fowler Branch

March 16, 2003
New River, Arizona
Editor:
The Spring 2003 issue of GOLDENSEAL is magnificent, with a front cover beautiful enough for framing. Sorry about the dearth of pictures with my manuscripts [see "Spinning Memories on Fowler Branch" and "Living By



Drawing by Carol Zimmerman.

the Bell"], but what seems like a jillion moves took care of the few photos I might have had. However, your juxtaposition of drawing, the silhouette of the old spinning wheel, and overshadowing of the bell worked remarkably well.

Of course you had no way of knowing, inasmuch as she neglected to sign it, but the sketch of the lad with wagon was done by my wife Carol Zimmerman. I couldn't even do a decent stick figure, but she minored in art and has done a number of illustrations for my travel articles.

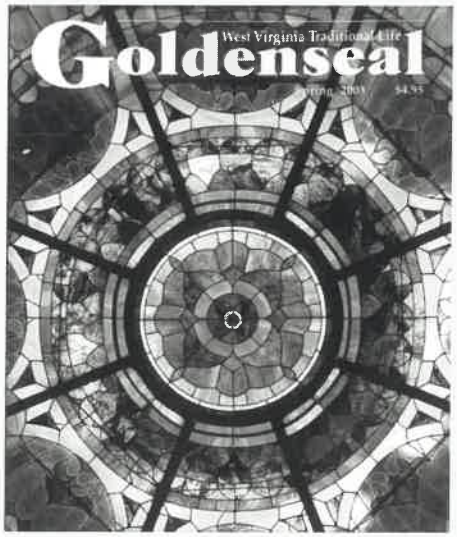
Again, congratulations on a very good issue. Also, it was good chatting on the phone with [circulation manager] Cornelia [Alexander]. It is delightful, once again, to hear a lyrical West Virginia accent.
Best wishes,
John "J.J." Ward

Stained Glass

March 14, 2003
Beckley, West Virginia
Editor:
The stained glass photo on the cover of the Spring 2003 issue of GOLDENSEAL is outstanding. The quality of Michael Keller's photographic expertise has added immensely to my enjoyment of GOLDENSEAL articles. I wish him well.
Sincerely,
William D. McLean, M.D.

March 26, 2003
Signal Mountain, Tennessee
Editor:
I love your new four-color covers of the GOLDENSEAL. I was in the printing business in Chattanooga for 34 years. Our claim to fame was that we developed the method for sampling fragrances in magazines.

Keep up the good work with your GOLDENSEAL. Many times, it takes me back to my childhood in Clarksburg and Bridgeport and keeps me current on many things going on in West Virginia.
Sincerely,
Bob Bartlett



Sid Hatfield Correction

March 10, 2003
Ansted, West Virginia
Editor:

I really enjoyed your spring issue, as always. I did notice a mistake, though. On page 8, you state that Sid Hatfield was assassinated on the Logan County courthouse steps [see "Current Programs*Events*Publications"; Spring 2003]. This actually took place at the McDowell County courthouse in Welch. As a Sid enthusiast, I felt obligated to point this out.

That being said, I love your magazine. I especially enjoy tales from the southern coalfields. Keep up the good work and keep on "smilin'."
Respectfully,
Andy Miller

March 12, 2003
Via e-mail
Editor:
In the Spring 2003 issue, page 8, is mention of Sid Hatfield's demise on the steps of the Logan County courthouse. This is in error, as it was the McDowell County courthouse in Welch. The bullet marks can still be recognized near the main entrance. I was raised in Welch and know the story well, as my father had a heart attack on those same steps some 30 years later.
J.D. Moore

Hajash Brothers

April 20, 2003
Beckley, West Virginia
Editor:
Let me compliment you and your staff for a job well done [see "Coming Home: The George Hajash Story," by Belinda Anderson; Spring 2003]. I could not have written a story as well as Belinda Anderson did. Michael Keller also did a good job of photography in my home.

I have received many

George Hajash, photograph by Michael Keller.

compliments on the story. First, my former workmate at the Beckley post office called from Mount Lookout, where he is now postmaster. He said he really liked the story.

Later, I received a call from a lady in Florida, saying how much she liked the article. She said we had something in common, as we were both born in McDowell County. I asked her where in Florida she was calling from, and she said, "Largo." I replied that she could call and talk to my brother Andy, who also lives in Largo. She exclaimed, "What a small world!" Brother Andy and the lady have become very good friends. So, West Virginian meets West Virginian in the same city in Florida.

Here in Beckley, I am flattered to hear friends and people I did not know say how much they enjoyed the story. My niece in Miami, Florida, also said she liked the story of the Hajash family, and would subscribe to the GOLDENSEAL, as she considered West Virginia her second home.

As a West Virginian, born in West Virginia and lived my entire life here, I find that stories of other West Virginians in GOLDENSEAL are all very interesting. I hope these interesting stories continue.

Again, thanks very much.

George Hajash

Thank you, Mr. Hajash. We appreciate those kind words and are grateful to you for all of your help with the story. Luckily, there are still plenty of people like you in the state, so I hope that we all can look forward to many more years of interesting stories in these pages. Thanks again for writing. —ed.

Tom Screven Letter

March 17, 2003
Fairmont, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:

Thank you for the nice article about Tom Screven [see "Letters From Readers"; Spring 2003]. I met him at the first Vandalia and was very pleased with the things he did for us old "fogies." I admired him very much and missed him when he left. We all owe him a great deal for all he did for West Virginia.

Sally Hawley, photograph by Michela Caudill.

Also, the lady playing the dulcimer at Vandalia [see "A Shared Heritage: Images of Vandalia," photoessay by Michela Caudill; Spring 2003] is Sally Hawley, not Hawkins. She's a very gracious, talented lady.

Thank you,

Bonnie Collins

Renewal Mailbag

April 3, 2003
Denton, Maryland
Editor:

My brother George Young of Corpus Christi, Texas, subscribed to GOLDENSEAL for a long time. He came to Maryland to live with us and brought his subscription with him. Once in a while, I picked it up but never read too much.

Recently, I didn't have anything to read and read several copies with the feeling I had "visited" West Virginia. Parsons was my birthplace. I was debating about signing up again when the Spring 2003 issue came, and that did it! I enjoyed the detail about repairing the dome [see "Bringing Back the Beauty: Stained Glass Restoration in Randolph County," by Barbara Smith]. I went to college in Elkins and walked by the courthouse every day.

Please find enclosed my subscription for another period.

Mrs. Margaret Margrey

April 3, 2003
Red House, West Virginia
Editor:

I remain convinced that you are underpricing your marvelous publication, so I am overpaying my renewal. I realize it is not an impressive amount, but at least it registers my "protest."

Mary E. House

see page 72.

Natchee the Indian

April 12, 2003
New River, Arizona
Editor:
The GOLDENSEAL article about the 1920's musical group Coon Hunters [see "The West Virginia Coon Hunters: On the Trail of a Lost String Band," by John Lilly; Spring 2003] and the ongoing coverage of the Vandalia Gatherings trigger memories of musicians who used to perform in the area high schools in Logan County when I was young.

Some came from Nashville's "Grand Ole Opry," and others were more localized. All featured afternoon and evening performances. For 15 cents, we students could get out of class and go to a country music show. The evening shows cost a whopping 25 cents. The school got a percentage of the take. However, the take was never much. Our Chapmanville High School had a combination gymnasium and auditorium that provided less-than-ideal acoustics. In those days, none of the groups had electric instruments or amplifiers.

To my untrained ears, the best music was made by a two-man group known as "Natchee the Indian and Indian Bill." Natchee was tall and thin with long hair that, on the street, he wore combed back, looking no more unusual than a missed trip to the barbershop. While on the stage, he combed it down around the shoulders, Hollywood-movie Indian-style. Indian Bill, who looked more Irish than Indian, was the talker. I can't recall Natchee saying a word, but he could certainly make that fiddle talk. He played "Listen to the Mockingbird" — always a crowd pleaser — like I've never heard before or since. In every performance, Natchee would undo his bow and turn it upside down to make his fiddle sound like an organ, and he would play "Amazing Grace" or other favorite hymns. Poor acoustics or not, he made the audience bring out a lot of handkerchiefs.

Natchee the Indian, Little Montana, and Indian Bill in about 1943.

Natchee competed in virtually every open fiddle contest and held all sorts of titles and awards, including the state championship, at least according to Indian Bill. Then the unspeakable happened. Natchee came in second. As Indian Bill told it every day on their Charleston radio program, "Come on out to their next meeting," at a date and place he repeated endlessly, "and make certain the championship goes back to Natchee, where everybody knows it belongs."

This was around 1940, give or take a year, or so. Do any GOLDENSEAL readers remember Natchee the Indian with his sidekick Indian Bill, or know whether they went on to fame and fortune or drifted off into oblivion?
John "J.J." Ward

What a wonderful memory of one of West Virginia's most enduring, though elusive, country music legends! According to historian Ivan Tribe, author of the book Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia *(published 1984, 1996 by the University Press of Kentucky), Natchee's real name was Lester V. Storer.*

He was born in 1913 in Adams County, Ohio, and spent a good deal of his life and performing career in West Virginia. From the mid-1930's until the onset of World War II, he appeared widely over local radio stations such as WCHS and WMMN, and developed a large following, especially at the fiddle contests, as you so deftly describe. Following the war, he did, in fact, drift into obscurity, and was found destitute in Cincinnati in 1970. He went to live with a son in California, and passed away that December. Sadly, no recordings of Natchee the Indian are known to exist.

Indian Bill, real name Bill Stallard, was originally from Portsmouth, Ohio. He performed with his wife Evalina, who used the stage name Little Montana. In addition to their appearances with Natchee, the pair made records and performed together as a duo. Bill went on to have a successful solo recording career after the pair split up in the late '40's. Recording as Billy Starr for Columbia, London, Imperial, and other labels, his biggest hit was a song he wrote called "Steppin' Out." Indian Bill Stallard passed away in 1981.

Thanks to Ivan Tribe for this information, and thanks to you, Mr. Ward, for a fine letter. —ed.

Current Programs • Events • Publications

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

Military Affairs

Hundreds of paratroopers will descend on Charleston's Yeager Airport on Thursday, August 14, as part of the 82nd Airborne Division's 57th annual convention, which will be held August 13-16 in Charleston. The parachute drop will take place at 10:30 a.m.

The 82nd Airborne Division Association includes members from all 50 states and several other countries; the West Virginia chapter has 125 members. Airborne troops were the first to invade Normandy on D-Day. Paratroopers also participated in military actions in Africa, Sicily, Germany, the South Pacific, Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere. The group gathers for a convention in a different city each year and chose Charleston for their 2003 gathering called "Operation Parachutes Over the Mountains."

Convention activities are open to association members only. Spectators will be able to observe the jump from nearby Coonskin Park or from non-secured public areas surrounding Yeager Airport. For further information about the parachute jump or the convention, call West Virginia chapter chairman Donald Jennings at (304)456-4956.

Military items of interest are on display at the Raleigh County "All Wars" Veterans Museum, located at 1557 Harper Road in Beckley. Thanks to the efforts of several local veterans and other volunteers, the new museum features display cases where artifacts from Desert Storm, the Civil War, Europe, Japan, and elsewhere can be viewed. Among the items are sand from Iwo Jima, personal and religious artifacts from servicemen around the country, uniforms, weapons, and a special wall of displays honoring women veterans. Organizers are still developing the collection and welcome additional donations.

The museum is open to the public from April through October, with regularly scheduled hours on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons. It is also open to groups by appointment. There is a small admission charge. For additional information, phone (304)253-1775 or write to P.O. Box 3165, Beckley, WV 25801-1945.

Coal Statue

West Virginia's coal heritage is the subject of the newest statue on display at the State Capitol Complex in Charleston. More than three years in the making, the seven-foot-tall bronze figure depicts an underground miner and is the work of Sissonville sculptor and dentist Burl Jones.

The statue's six-sided black marble pedestal includes a number of bas-relief plaques, portraying different periods in the state's mining history and various technologies utilized to extract coal. One plaque acknowledges the sponsorship of the West Virginia Coal Forum and includes a statement paying tribute to the West Virginia coal miner.

Coal miner statue by Burl Jones, photograph by Michael Keller.

The statue and the plaques sparked discussion last winter as environmentalists and others took issue with the statue's depiction of mountaintop mining and other details. After several protests at the capitol and a lively exchange in the editorial pages of the local papers, the statue was unveiled by Governor Bob Wise on March 6. The statue is located between the State Capitol and the Veterans Memorial, near the northeast corner of the Cultural Center.

Arts and Crafts

White oak basketry is featured in a new exhibition at the Cultural Center in Charleston. The exhibit emphasizes the work of Parkersburg artists Aaron Yakim and Cynthia Taylor; it also includes representative pieces and photographs of baskets from several other regional makers. Baskets on display range from a diminutive six-inch egg basket to a substantial half-bushel example.

In addition to finished baskets, various displays highlight the tools, materials, history, and process of traditional basketmaking. Included are explanations of the gathering, cutting, splitting, riving, and scraping processes, along with a description of the weaving methods used by Yakim and Taylor.

The exhibition is located in the second-floor gallery at the Cultural Center and will remain on display until July 14. There is no admission charge.

Basket by Aaron Yakim, photograph by Jim Osborn.

A new guide to West Virginia arts and crafts has recently been published by the Central Appalachian Arts and Crafts Cooperative. The free 32-page booklet includes the names and contact numbers of more than 200 cooperative members, listed by genre and by location. Many of these artisans have pieces on display and offered for sale at the cooperative's gallery, called Poplar Forest, located off of I-79 near Flatwoods at the Flatwoods Factory Stores outlet mall. The booklet also includes information about the cooperative, a membership form, a useful list of related Web sites, and other information.

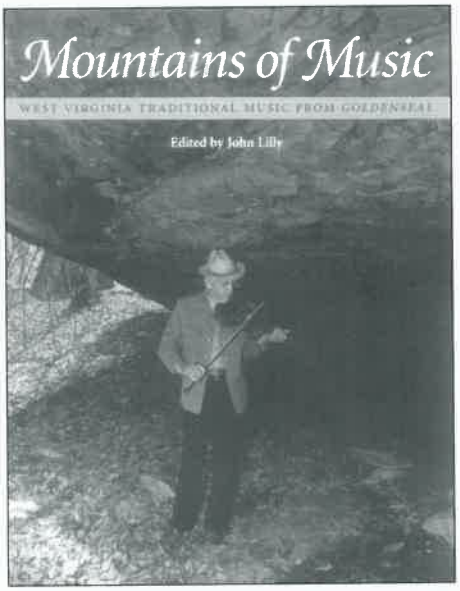
To obtain a copy of the *West Virginia Arts and Crafts Tour Guide*, or for more information, write to CAACC c/o Poplar Forest, 82 Skidmore Lane, Sutton, WV 26601; visit www.poplarforestwv.com; or call Connie McCullough at (304)765-3997.

Paranormal Conference

Fans and researchers of ghosts, UFO's, and paranormal phenomena will gather for a conference scheduled August 22-24 at Dils Conference Center in downtown Parkersburg. The 2003 Haunted West Virginia Ghost Hunters & Paranormal Conference boasts a long list of scheduled speakers and events. Among the speakers will be Wheeling native Budd Hopkins. He is the author of several books on UFO's and is considered an authority on the subject of alien abductions. Other topics expected to be discussed will be ghost hunting methods, Mothman, and what are thought to be astrological predictions of the future.

A highlight of the conference is expected to be a ghost hunt planned on Blennerhassett Island; participants are invited to stay the weekend at The Blennerhassett, touted by organizers as a haunted hotel.

There is a registration fee for all conference activities. For further information, write to Haunted Parkersburg, 917 26th Street, Parkersburg, WV 26104; phone (304)428-7978; or visit www.hauntedparkersburg.com.



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!

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Remembering Dennis Deitz and Losing "Mr. History"

For a while there in the 1980's and '90's, Dennis Deitz was "Mr. History," as far as a lot of us were concerned. It was too short a time, but he occupied it fully, coming in his old age and retirement to the true work of his life — the writing of local history and folklore. While I was editor of GOLDENSEAL from 1979 until 1997, Dennis was an occasional contributor and frequent visitor. I saw him wherever I went: at the Vandalia Gathering, the West Virginia Writers conference, Tamarack, and the other places where West Virginians with an interest in their culture would gather.

The books poured out during those years: *Mountain Memories* (Volumes I, II, III, and IV), *Greenbrier Ghost* (Volumes I and II), *The Flood and the Blood, Turnpike Ghost Stories*, and probably a dozen more. Not to be bothered with the red-tape of commercial publishers, Dennis himself had the books printed, took them to readers at countless book signings, and sold lots of them. He made money from his writing and never understood why other writers did not.

As the book titles suggest, Dennis was an enthusiastic amateur, making no pretext at the laborious standards that dull the work of many career historians. His were not the books to check for footnotes, bibliography, or even the close corroboration of facts. What he offered was the essence, the spirit, the sheer drive of whatever story interested him at the moment. His passion readily communicated itself. Dennis had a following throughout the state and won more converts to the study of history than any half-dozen college professors.

He lost Madeleine, his wife of 59 years, in 1996. Some of us

Dennis Deitz, photographer and date unknown.

feared that Dennis would soon follow his lifelong sweetheart. But as sometimes happens, loss seemed to toughen him up, and Dennis soldiered on. Governor Underwood made him a Distinguished West Virginian in 1997, and he received the Spirit of Tamarack award in 1998.

But time catches up with everyone, even historians. Dennis died on March 23, 2003, at age 89. I believe the last time I saw him was a couple years ago at Tamarack at (what else?) a book signing. They have a portrait of him there now, but it occurs to me that a more fitting memorial would be an empty book-signing table. That's where the spirit of Dennis Deitz will live on.

—Ken Sullivan

KEN SULLIVAN is the executive director of the West Virginia Humanities Council and former GOLDENSEAL editor.

The books of Dennis Deitz are available through Pictorial Histories; phone (304)342-1848 or 1-888-982-7472. Melvin Wine's recordings, etc., are available through the Augusta Heritage Center; phone (304)637-1209 or on-line at www.augustaheritage.com.

A portion of General Fox's awards and personal memorabilia from his long military career. Photograph by Michael Keller.

When I first went to interview retired Major General Charles R. Fox at his home, I could do nothing less than look in awe at the walls of his family room. Two Bronze Stars, a Legion of Merit medal, service medals from Vietnam, the Distinguished Service Medal of West Virginia, the Cloud and Banner Medal of China, and many other citations and awards filled one wall. Another offered photographs of friends, colleagues, and fellow soldiers Fox has met along the way. Among these are the Flying Tigers' Lieutenant General Claire Chennault, China's General of the Army Ho Ying Chin, and Secretary of Defense under President Harry Truman, Louis Johnson. One photo showed General Fox with President Lyndon Johnson.

At 90 years of age, General Fox can look back with justifiable pride over a military career that officially spanned 40 years, two months, and seven days. In the largest sense, though, his achievements encompass nearly a century of dedication and service to his country, and to the people of West Virginia.

Charles Ralph Fox is known to friends as Ralph and to military colleagues as Charles. The eldest of seven children, he was born November 16, 1912, to Joseph "Bud" and Amma Walker Fox in Herold, Braxton County, near Birch River. His father was in the timber business, and the family moved several times while Charles was young. He started his public education at Tiskelwah Grade School in Charleston then attended a one-room school called Phillips Run, located near Summersville in Nicholas County. In 1926, the Fox family returned to Kanawha County, eventually settling on Charleston's West Side.

General Fox relishes his memories of rural life from those early years. He recalls using sawdust from local lumber mills to pack fruits and vegetables for storage in a spring house. He also remembers collecting and eating wild nuts and berries from the woods, and

Charles Ralph Fox, age seven, in Charleston. Friends and personal acquaintances knew him as Ralph, though his military associates call him Charles. Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

While a senior in high school in 1930, Charles Fox enlisted in the West Virginia National Guard. At that time, the guard met one evening a week and participated in a two-week training camp each summer. Lieutenant Fox is shown here, standing at far left, with other members of Company "C" at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in 1936. Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

bartering gensing and yellowroot for candy or other goods at the general store.

When the family finally set down roots in Charleston, they experienced some unexpected attitudes. "The people on the East Side thought we were kind of country folks, because we were west of town," General Fox recalls. "The Elk River separated us. When you went over there, people turned up their noses like you smelled bad because you were a West Sider."

During the Great Depression, Charles worked after high school as a paper carrier for the *Charleston Daily Mail*. Besides the paper route, Charles worked the soda counter of Golf Drug Store from six to 10 in the evenings and became an apprentice to plumbers and electricians at Shamblin Electric Company. He also organized a boys' basketball team, taught a Sunday school class, and took a correspondence course from a military school at Fort Benning, Georgia.

As a high school senior in September 1930, Fox enlisted in the West Virginia National Guard in Raleigh County. He says that signing up was a way to lend a hand to a friend, Bob Jarrett. "[Bob] said if he could get so many people, they'd make him corporal. So, four or five of us went down [and] enlisted," the General recalls, adding, "I was only 17, but I told a little wee one — [I] corrected it later, because I was 18 on November 16 that year."

"Every place I went, I would be grabbed and put into a position of importance."

Charles graduated from Charleston High School in May 1931. In addition to his part-time responsibilities with the National Guard, he took a job with American Fork & Hoe Company of Charleston, where he worked from 1932 until 1937. He later took a correspondence course in electrical engineering and went to work for C&P Telephone as a repairman.

During these civilian years, Charles met and married Vernise Jane Pritt of Charleston. The couple wed in 1935 and raised four children during their 57-year union: sons Charles Warren, Mark, and Neill and daughter Janice Lynn.

Between 1930 and 1941, Charles became increasingly active in the National Guard, serving in a variety of roles, with ever-increasing responsibility. At that time, guardsmen typically met during the evening, once a week, at a local armory. They would don their uniforms, which were stored at the armory, and would take rifle practice, march, and review lesson plans for a couple of hours. They would also attend a two-week training camp each summer.

Charles married the former Vernice Pritt of Charleston in 1935. The pair are shown here with their two eldest children, son Charles Warren at left and baby daughter Janice Lynn. The couple later had twin sons. This family portrait was made in Charleston at Christmas 1940, about a week before Charles shipped out for active duty.

The West Virginia National Guard had long since replaced local militias in defending the home front. Activated in times of domestic disturbance, guardsmen often assisted citizens threatened by natural disasters or coal mining accidents. Troops were even called upon to protect criminal suspects or visiting dignitaries. The National Guard Act of 1933 further expanded the role of the state's military organization. Designated a reserve component of the United States Army, the West Virginia National Guard became immediately available in the event of national emergency, in peacetime or in war.

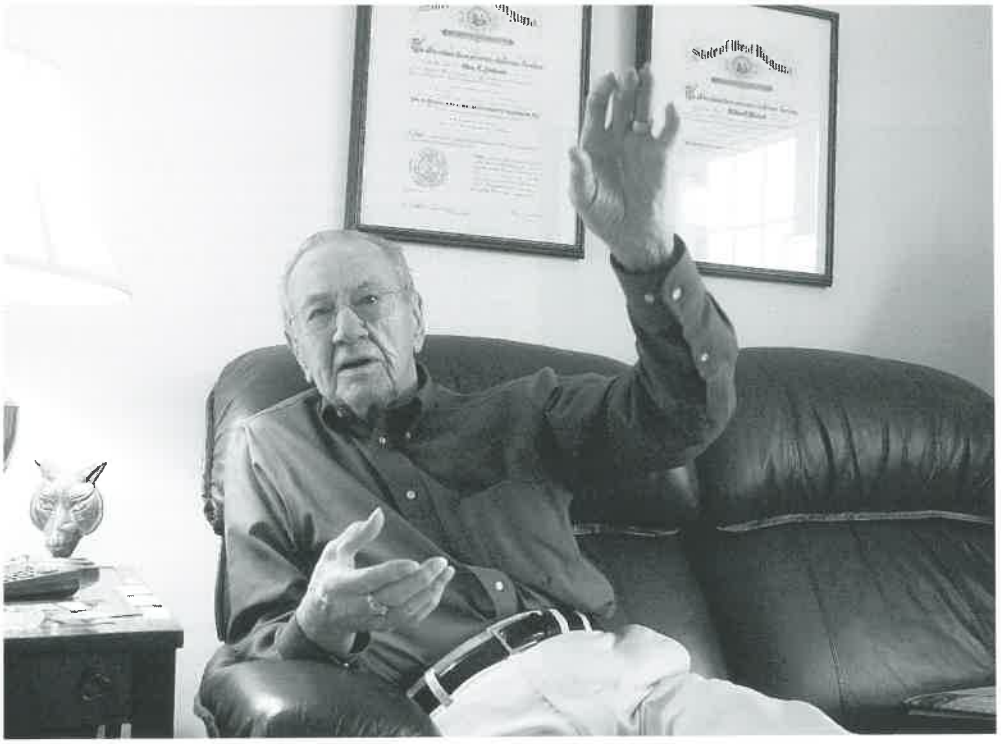
Charles Ralph Fox rose through the ranks of the West Virginia National Guard and was promoted to second lieutenant and then first lieutenant. The guard held maneuvers at Camp Conley in Point Pleasant once a year. Having worked his way up to mess sergeant, his highest non-commissioned rank, Charles was put in charge of the camp mess hall.

"At that time," he recalls, "Colonel [William] Eubank's quarters were right above Company C's mess hall. I knew he was diabetic, and [I] always had some black coffee and apple pie without sugar [for him]. He would come down and talk with me and would state the old military philosophy — familiarity breeds contempt. But he would say, 'Well, now, you're just a sergeant. I can be familiar with you, and it doesn't make any difference.' So he'd pour out his complaints and we'd chat. I thought the old man was picking on me, but as I look back on my military career, the worse he seemed to treat me, the more he was doing to train me. And every place I went, I would be grabbed and put into a position of importance."

Charles served as intelligence officer during peacetime maneuvers in Wisconsin in July 1940 and drew high-level praise for the quality of his intelligence reports, a fact that held a direct bearing on the decision to give him greater responsibilities later in his career.

By early 1941, global tensions had escalated, and the nation was brac-

Initially trained as an infantryman, Charles underwent flight training and earned his pilot wings in 1942. He is shown here in flight gear, entering the cockpit of a plane. Date and location unknown, photograph courtesy of WVSA.



At age 90, General Fox is still in good health and enjoys recalling details of his extensive military career. He is shown here in a recent photograph taken at his apartment in Charleston. Photograph by Michael Keller.

ing itself for the possibility of war. National Guard units from across the country were mobilized, including the West Virginia National Guard. First Lieutenant Charles R. Fox was called into active federal duty with the 150th Infantry at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, on January 7, 1941. Perhaps as a result of his experience as mess sergeant at Camp Conley, Charles became mess officer at Camp Shelby, where he was responsible for feeding 3,300 men. "They were generous to me," he says with a smile. "They gave me 15 kitchens to run."

He did such a good job that he was rewarded with more work. "Colonel Eubank called me in one day," the general recalls, "and said, 'K-Company from Huntington [has] about half of the men back home on AWOL. Why don't you go down there and straighten it out.'

"I said, 'Well, Colonel, I have the officers' mess, the officers' club, [I'm] executive of a rifle company and assistant battalion supply officer. When am I going to have time to take on this other?'

"'Oh', he said, 'reveille is at five a.m. and recall at four p.m. You have plenty of time after that.'"

General Fox got the AWOL soldiers straightened out. "I got the men back from Huntington," he says, "with the assistance of the mayor and the chief of police."

Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Lieutenant Fox left the infantry and earned his wings in the Army Air Corps at Brooks Field in San Antonio, Texas. Though he was a skilled pilot and an experienced aircraft observer, it was his proven organizational skills that garnered the attention of superiors. He was promoted to captain in June 1942. Three months later, Brigadier General A.B. McDaniel, citing the West Virginian's record, recommended that Fox be promoted and transferred to headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama. Fox says his commander received a call from the general, saying, "'He's better qualified than any man — any officer I have in the same rank. Promote him now!'" Fox was transferred to Birmingham and promoted to major that December.

The war kept Fox's wife and two eldest children on the move as they joined him in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. Realizing that long-term separation from Vernise was inevitable, General Fox says, "I bought her a fur coat and a few things so she'd have something to remember me while I was gone."

Given the opportunity to personally select his next assignment, Fox chose to serve in China, where the legendary Flying Tigers air team had enjoyed great success against the Japanese. "The orders to China

Major Charles Fox reported for duty in China in January 1944, where he fought with the famed Flying Tigers until April 1945. The general recalls that he sported this dapper moustache in China for exactly one week.

division of the huge agency. Fox accepted his federal commission with the rank of colonel, while retaining his title and rank as major general.

"The first two years, my family stayed in West Virginia, and I commuted back and forth to Washington," Fox recalls. In 1959, he moved his family to nearby Bethesda, Maryland.

In 1964, Fox developed South Vietnam's selective service system. In 1969, as directed by Congress, Fox conducted the United States' first lottery since World War II for the purpose of inducting eligible candidates into the military.

"West Virginians are peaceful folks," Fox says, reflecting on his long career. "Mountain people tend to be ready to defend themselves. They grew up that way. When we separated from Virginia, we left the aristocracy over there and became mountain folks — hillbillies, if you will.

"We had to learn to shoot, feed ourselves. There's a sense of loyalty. We had to help one another. If a man's barn burned down, the neighbors come in and rebuilt him one. It was typical growth of loyal support for one another. And I think that's what makes a good soldier or military man of any type — the fact [that] when he was on your team, he was all on your team, not somebody else's."

Major General Charles R. Fox retired from active duty in 1970, returning home to Charleston in 1974. He became president of the state chapter of the American Heart Association, volunteered at blood pressure clinics, started a rifle club to teach youth gun safety, taught Sunday School, and served on the board of trustees at his church.

"I served my country as a military man. Now, I am still serving. Only the end is better than the beginning."

While the general was pleased to be back home in West Virginia, he gradually began to feel the pains of loss that are unavoidable with the passing of years. In 1983, he mourned the death of his only daughter Janice. His wife Vernise died in 1992. Charles remarried, but his second wife Ada passed away in 1997. That year also saw the death of General Fox's mother Amma, at age 104. Disheartened, this brave but aging soldier felt himself slipping into a state of lethargy.

In May 1998, a group of teenagers from a local school, led by neighbors Roy and Mary Louise King, came to the general's house to perform some yard work and other chores. Concerned about his condition, the Kings invited General Fox to join them at family, church, and volunteer activities. The result for the general has been a new attitude and a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. Now, visiting the sick and elderly, taking part in community service projects and fund-raisers, even babysitting, General Fox is reinvigorated.

"I served my country as a military man," the general says. "Now, I am still serving. Only the end is better than the beginning."

General Fox visits with retired Captain John Mitchell, at right. At left is friend and neighbor Mary Louise King. The three recently attended a memorial at Yeager Airport for the 21 guardsmen who perished in a 1951 plane crash near Charleston. Here, they share a lighter moment following the ceremony. Photograph by Michael Keller.

RUSS BARBOUR was born in Huntington and grew up in Logan County. He holds a degree in broadcasting from Marshall University, joined West Virginia Public Broadcasting in 1979, and currently serves as associate producer/director. Russ met General Fox while producing the television documentary *West Virginians at War*. This is Russ' first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The first Rhododendron Girls' State program was held at Jackson's Mill in July 1941. The 200, or so, participants shown here include Katie McGee, visable in the center of the second row, wearing a striped dress.

"Win With Katie McGee"

By Sharon Wilmoth Harsh

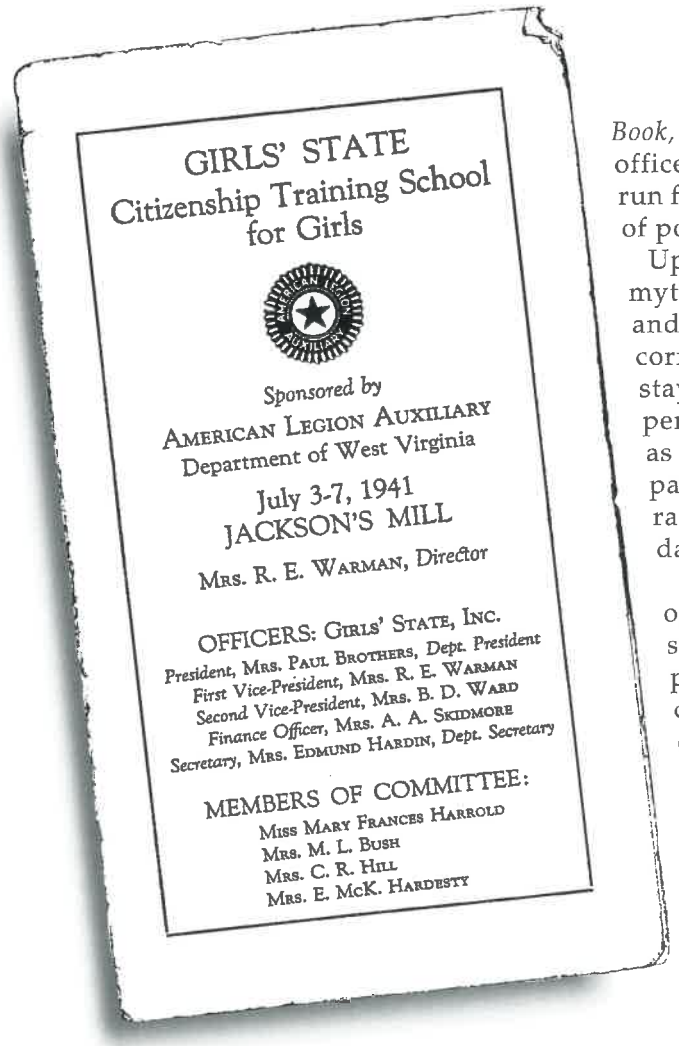
The First Governor of Girls' State Looks Back

I first met Kathryn McGee White on a Saturday morning, more than 25 years ago. I was a relatively new educator; Katie, as she is known to her friends, was a seasoned teacher. We were both attending a meeting of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, and the meeting had moved into routine business when Katie took the floor to give a report on pending issues to be addressed during the next session of the West Virginia Legislature. I sat mesmerized as Katie pointed her finger at each of us and insisted, "It is the responsibility of every person in the room to get informed on the issues." During her report, I was transformed from an educator back to the role of a student. Katie's commanding and outspoken manner made me want to take notes and ask what kind of homework assignment I should complete.

Politics and legislative issues are Katie's passion. "Mother stays current on all the important political issues," says daughter Barbara White. "It frustrates her immensely that other people do not get involved."

Katie was born in 1924 in Huttonsville, Randolph County, the daughter of A.C. and Devier Belle McGee. "My father taught school and he was deputy sheriff," Katie explains. "When he taught a whole year and didn't get paid, he decided that he had to get another job. He knew the man that had just been elected sheriff, and the new sheriff appointed my father as deputy. My father was deputy sheriff for eight years, then ran for sheriff and served as sheriff for eight [more] years. In 1932, he was appointed postmaster at Elkins. Jennings Randolph was running for [U.S.] senator at the time, and he and my father knew each other. [See "Jennings Randolph: 'Always Remember the Man and the Woman By the Wayside of the Road,'" by Michael Kline; Summer 1983.] I am sure it was through the help of Jennings Randolph that [my father] was appointed postmaster. My father was actively involved in public affairs when I was growing up.

Katie McGee White at her home in Elkins. Photograph by Michael Keller.



GIRLS' STATE
Citizenship Training School
for Girls

Sponsored by
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
Department of West Virginia

July 3-7, 1941
JACKSON'S MILL

MRS. R. E. WARMAN, Director

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MRS. C. R. HILL
MRS. E. McK. HARDESTY

As a result, I developed a natural love of politics at an early age."

The McGee family moved to Elkins when Katie was small, and she completed her education in the Randolph County public schools, graduating from Elkins High School in 1942. It was during the summer of her junior year that Katie had the opportunity to experience the political process firsthand.

During the summer of 1941, Katie, along with nearly 200 other high school students from across the state, attended a newly formed West Virginia girls' citizenship program at Jackson's Mill. Rhododendron Girls' State, as the program was called, was modeled after the highly successful Mountaineer Boys' State program that had been initiated in 1939. While only high school juniors were eligible to attend Boys State, both juniors and seniors were eligible to attend the first West Virginia Girls' State, held July 3-7, 1941.

Named in honor of the state flower, Rhododendron Girls' State was, and continues to be, sponsored and directed by the American Legion Auxiliary. During its 62 years of existence, the program has provided thousands of West Virginia high school girls the opportunity to experience and learn about the local and state electoral process.

"When I went to Girls' State," Katie recalls, "I went with the idea that I would run for office. I knew that the offices at Girls' State were set up according to the *Blue Book*, so before I went, I studied the *Blue Book* and decided what office I would run for. I had decided that I was either going to run for judge or for governor, because I thought they had a lot of power."

Upon arrival, each Girls' State citizen was assigned to a mythical political party — either Nationalist or Federalist — and to one of four "county" precincts. The counties also corresponded with the names of the cottages where the girls stayed. "The political party assignment was based on each person's registration number," Katie says. "I was registered as a citizen of Jackson County and a member of the Federalist party. Each party developed a political platform, held party rallies, campaigned, debated issues, and voted on candidates for county and state offices."

When the participants registered, they were also given the opportunity to sign up for the Girls' State Chorus or for the staff of *The Rhododendron Daily*, the official daily newspaper. Although she enjoyed journalism and music, Katie chose not to join these groups. Instead, she gravitated directly to the electoral process. "Getting elected at Girls' State was the same process that we use to elect state and local officials," Katie says. "I had to give a campaign

Katie McGee represented the ficticious "Federalist" party in her bid for governor at the 1941 Girls' State. She is shown here, at right, with "Nationalist" opponent Betty Lee Keyes, at left, and counselor Mrs. B.D. Ward.

Katie McGee campaign flyer, 1941.

speech and tell what office I would like to have. I then had to be nominated. There were several that sought the nomination from each party."

On the first day, Katie was elected as county chairman for the Federalist party and was one of four in her party elected as delegates to their state convention. The votes cast by the parties on July 3 were counted overnight, and the winners were announced the next morning in the first edition of *The Rhododendron Daily*. Katie was one of three who received a nomination from the Federalist party to run for governor in the primary election.

On the second day, July 4, girls who received party nominations officially filed for office using the standard "Certificate of Announcement" form that was used for all public elections. Nominated citizens were given from 10 to 11 a.m. to file for office. During the one-hour filing time, 129 citizens filed a certificate of announcement; 51 filed for state office, and 78 filed for county office.

The primary election was held later the same day, with party members casting votes in each of the four county precincts. When the votes were counted, Kathryn McGee, Federalist, and Betty Lee Keyes, Nationalist, emerged as the nominees for governor. Katie ran on a platform of plain language and decisive action; Betty Lee ran on a platform that advocated good sportsmanship and fair play. "My opponent even promised everybody a chicken in every pot," Katie remembers. "I will never forget Betty. She was from Clarksburg. Betty was a really nice girl, and I was really impressed with her because she had a brother that was such a good basketball player. You are impressed with that sort of thing when you are in high school. Betty and I remained friends for a number of years."

The candidates only had two days to conduct their campaigns. "Every free minute we had was de-

Rhododendron Girls' State Today

Young women in West Virginia still participate in citizenship and leadership training each summer, as Rhododendron Girls' State continues its longstanding program. Held at Wheeling Jesuit College since 1996, Girls' State hosted 400 high school juniors in 2002, and has 434 applicants for the 2003 session.

The program is still sponsored and organized by the American Legion Auxiliary. Current director Irene Weber of Berkeley Springs is in her 33rd year of involvement with Girls' State. She assures us that little has changed since the groundbreaking year of 1941, when Katie McGee attended and was elected the first governor. The election process continues, as do many of the original workshops and training sessions. This year, a few new topics have been added to reflect the changing times, such as Public Relations, Professional Development, and College Preparation. Irene expects West Virginia Governor Bob Wise and Secretary of State Joe Manchin to visit and address participants and staff, as they do each year.

The 2003 Rhododendron Girls' State program will take place June 8-13 in Wheeling. Students must have completed their junior year of high school, carrying a 2.75 grade point average. Eligible girls are invited to apply after having been nominated by school officials and members of the Legion Auxiliary. For further information, write to Rhododendron Girls' State, c/o Irene Weber, Director; 355 Harrison Avenue, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411; phone (304)258-1036.

Girls' State governor-elect Katie McGee with West Virginia Governor M.M. Neely at Jackson's Mill. The governor sent this photograph to Katie following their meeting. It included the following inscription: "To my dear friend, Governor Kathryn McGee, with every good wish in the world. Very sincerely, M.M. Neely. July 11, 1941."

voted to campaigning," Katie remembers. "You only had two days to get yourself arranged. I had several girls who worked with me on the campaign. Ursula Wilfram even stayed up all night with me planning our activities and strategies. All of our campaign materials were limited to what we could create when we got there.

"I had lots of help coming up with my campaign slogans," Katie continues. "When you were assigned to a cottage and a political party, you established assistants to help you. Those who were in your cottage were helpful because they wanted to be the cottage that won the governorship." Katie still has two of the small, hand-lettered campaign leaflets that she and her campaign helpers designed and distributed during the two-day campaign. One leaflet reads, "If you don't know the score, don't be a bore. Win with Katie McGee." The other leaflet says, "If you are blue and if you're true, see Katie through."

Polls opened at 1:30 p.m. on July 5 for voting in the general election. Girls' State citizens cast votes at the headquarters established for each of the four county divisions. Votes were counted, and by mid-afternoon, Katie was declared the winner of the gubernatorial race, winning over the Nationalist candidate by a vote of 107 to 47.

As part of her official duties as governor-elect, Katie was assigned to introduce West Virginia Governor M.M. Neely, who was scheduled to be the guest speaker for a special general assembly to be held at 4:30 p.m. that afternoon. As the assembly began, Governor Neely entered the assembly hall with an escort of 40 Girls' State citizens — 10 from each of the four county divisions.

"All he had was a thumb and forefinger on his right hand. I was just a 16-year-old girl and had limited experience regaining my composure in situations such as this."

"It was quite an honor to introduce Governor Neely and to shake hands with him," Katie recalls. "But I also had quite a shock. I introduced the governor, and then I shook his hand. No one told me that he was missing three fingers. All he had was a thumb and forefinger on his right hand. I was just a 16-year-old girl and had limited experience regaining my composure in situations such as this. I recovered quickly, and the assembly went well. But I can tell you, it was quite a shock."

At 8 p.m. that evening, at a general assembly, Katie was sworn into office by Judge Minter L. Wilson of Morgantown, who then administered the oath of office to the remaining "state officers." Following Katie's acceptance address and a speech by Governor Neely, the eventful day concluded with a party held in Governor McGee's honor. The party was given by the delegation from Jackson County, was held in Braxton cottage, and included entertainment provided by some of the Girls' State citizens.

The headline of the July 6 edition of *The Rhododendron Daily* read, "Kathryn McGee Made Governor." The story went on to say, "Kathryn McGee of Elkins, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A.C. McGee, Federalist candidate, yesterday was elected and sworn into office as the first

Governor of Rhododendron Girls' State. In her inaugural address last night, Governor McGee advocated free textbooks and a reduction of taxes on commodities. In his address, [West Virginia] Governor Neely stated that present circumstances abroad are a providential opportunity for the United States to speed up defense measures while Hitler is occupied in Russia."

Later that day, Governor McGee made numerous appointments to "state commissions" and "directorships." One of the first appointments Katie made was the appointment of Betty Lee Keyes, her opponent, to the position of "state road commissioner."

As governor, Katie conducted all the remaining sessions for the week, set up the program for the "house" and "senate," and was responsible for overseeing the mock legislative session. She gave several speeches during and after the session, introduced all the dignitaries who attended Girls' State, and presided as governor until the program concluded on July 7.

Governor McGee, second from the left in the front row, with members of the "board of public works" at the first Girls' State.

Throughout the following year, Katie represented Girls' State at other statewide events, gave speeches, and served as counselor for the next year's program, assisting the adult directors in setting up the 1942 Girls' State.

Katie recalls that her time at Rhododendron Girls' State was characterized by worthwhile instructional programs and memorable guest speakers. "Girls' State citizens were given classes in parliamentary procedure and in the organization and operation of county and state government," Katie says. One of the most unusual presentations made to the citizens was a session on "Health and Its Relationship to the Community." The session, presented by Miss E.T. Watson, Director of Alcohol Education in District Schools, Washington, D.C., was entitled "How to Drink Scientifically." Katie also remembers one guest speaker whose address was about new electronics. "The speaker told us that we would never get television in West Virginia," she recalls. "He said that we would have to put a blimp above West Virginia and beam the television down on us."

Following Girls' State, Katie returned to her home in Elkins, where she entered her senior year. Following her graduation from high school in 1942, Katie attended Madison College in Harrisonburg, Virginia, where she earned a degree in biology.

After Katie graduated from college, she returned to West Virginia and worked in the biochemistry department at West Virginia University Medical School. After a year in Morgantown, Katie married Clarence Marcus "Bud" White in 1947. "Bud had just finished the West Virginia State Police Academy when we were married," Katie says. "He worked as a state trooper for 35 years and retired as captain. After we were married, we moved to Harrisville, and then Bud was transferred to Glenville, where we lived for several years. During the time we lived in Glenville, our son became very ill and the medicine he needed was expensive, so I decided to go back to work. I went to Glenville State College and got my teaching degree. I started teaching at Tanner High School in Gilmer County, where I taught biology, chemistry, physical science, girls' physical education, and music for three years. We moved to Taylor County, and I taught physical science at Taylor County Junior High for seven years. Then we moved to Monongalia County, where I taught science for seven years at Suncrest Junior High. My husband was eventually transferred to Elkins, where we bought a home. I taught chem-

"When any of my students had the opportunity to attend Girls' State, I encouraged them to attend and to run for office. I always told them, for goodness sake, run for commissioner of the county because they got to manage the money."

istry, physics, physiology, and geology at Elkins High School until I retired in 1988 with 35 years of experience. After I retired, I continued to work as a substitute teacher for nine more years."

Katie used her work as a teacher with secondary students to promote the importance of responsible citizenship. "I always encouraged my students to stay informed about governmental issues," Katie says. "When any of my students had the opportunity to attend Girls' State, I encouraged them to attend and to run for office. I always told them, for goodness sake, run for commissioner of the county because they got to manage the money of the county. If you like to manage money, that's the office you want."

For many years, Katie went back to Girls' State, attending sessions for 15 years or more, including the 50th anniversary session held in 1991.

Katie's election as the first governor of Girls' State was an experience she will never forget and one that has had a lasting effect on her life. "I made friends throughout the entire state and corresponded with several girls for many years," she recalls. "A couple of the girls stayed with me for a week in the summer, and I maintained a friendship with Betty Lee Keyes for years. When my husband Bud and I were first transferred to Morgantown, we went to a WVU football game," Katie remembers. "We were going into the stadium, and five girls — all former governors of Girls' State — came running up to us, shouting, 'Hello, Mrs. White!' They enthusiastically chatted with me about their Girls' State memories, the cottages where they stayed, and the events that happened during the week."

Today, Katie is retired and lives in Elkins, where she spends her days reading and staying current on the news. "I like to know what is going on the world," Katie says. "I like to read the newspaper, and I subscribe to four magazines. I enjoy watching sports, and I work in my flower beds in the summer. But I watch the news all the time. I am a news addict," she admits.

Although 62 years have passed since the summer of 1941 when Kathryn Belle McGee was elected the first governor of Girls' State, some things still endure. Girls' State continues to offer high school students the opportunity to directly experience the campaign and electoral process. Citizens across America continue to believe that in order to keep our country strong, the principles of democracy need to be understood and passed on to the next generation. And Katie White still believes what she said in her acceptance speech — that everyone has a duty and responsibility to be informed about the processes of government, no matter what position in life they hold, because today's followers could be tomorrow's leaders.

Katie McGee White today. She is now a retired educator, with 35 years of experience teaching in West Virginia public schools. Katie still keeps an eye on current events and encourages others to do the same. Photograph by Michael Keller.

SHARON WILMOTH HARSH, a native of Belington, holds a Ph.D. in education from West Virginia University and is the assistant superintendent of Monongalia County schools. She has written for the *Journal of the Allegheny Regional Ancestors* and authored a book about late 19th century schools. Sharon's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2002 issue.

On July 12, 1924, Bluefield, West Virginia, and Bluefield, Virginia, held a huge municipal "wedding" ceremony, highlighted by the actual marriage of a local couple. The ribbon, visible here, marks the state line as it crosses the fairgrounds and the wedding platform. Photograph courtesy of Eastern Regional Coal Archives at Craft Memorial Library, hereafter ERCA.

The Wedding of the Bluefields

By Stuart McGehee

It isn't often that the Mountain State gets the better of the Old Dominion, but one terrifically hot day in 1924, the sudden and unprecedented growth of one of West Virginia's southernmost cities compelled its Virginia-side neighbor to change its name to honor its rival. When young Miss Emma Smith of Bluefield married Mr. Lorenzo Wingo Yost of Graham, Virginia, amidst the largest civic celebration in the region's history, the two communities were joined, as well. It's quite a story.

A small agricultural market town, Graham was founded in 1883 along the upper Bluestone River in Tazewell County, Virginia, several miles from the state line and West Virginia's Mercer County. The closest thing to a city in Mercer County was county seat Princeton until industrialization — specifically the

arrival of the Norfolk & Western Railway and the demand for high-quality "smokeless" bituminous coal from the famed Pocahontas No. 3 seam — changed all of that in the late 1800's. [See "Riding Route 52: The Old Coal Road," by Su Clauson-Wicker; Spring 2002.]

Coal was the fuel that propelled America from a rural society to an urban industrial giant. Although knowledge of the huge Appalachian mineral deposits had been common since Thomas Jefferson's 1785 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the area's rugged terrain had impeded exploitation of the "black diamond." In the decades following the Civil War, however, American industrialists began searching for an abundant and economical energy source to fuel the burgeoning industrial revolution.

So it was that the Philadelphia-owned Norfolk & Western Railway slowly snaked its way into the southern West Virginia hills early in the 1880's. Railroad officials chose a vacant meadow for the site of their Pocahontas Division's headquarters, at a low rise near the headwaters of the East and the Bluestone rivers. They chose wisely. The gentle hill, or "hump," as old-time railroad men term it, permitted natural-gravity switching for the long trains of coal cars that would soon thunder through the lovely valley, bedecked with azure fields of chicory for which the city of Bluefield was named.

Bluefield, West Virginia, was a railroad boomtown when this picture was made in the early 1920's. Photograph courtesy of ERCA.

Incorporated in 1889, Bluefield grew rapidly. As the hub of what quickly became a teeming industrial region encompassing scores of "coal camp" company towns, the new city attracted banks, insurance companies, utilities, and other businesses. Huge wholesale warehouses in the city's west end stocked the shelves of countless company stores along the N&W line in Mercer, Wyoming, and McDowell counties. A thriving African American district clustered around Bluefield Colored Institute on the city's north side. Elegant homes for the railroad executives and coal brokers adorned hills to the south, towards the towering edifice of East River Mountain, which commands the valley below.

By the early 1920's, progressive Bluefield was home to 20,000 people, two colleges, two hospitals, a country club, and several massive, 10- and 12-story downtown buildings [see "Bluefield's Biggest: The Grand West Virginian Hotel," by Stuart McGehee; Summer 1993], and was the second community in the nation to adopt the professional city-manager form of municipal government. It grew to the west along the avenue paralleling the N&W's main line, until it threatened to swallow up Virginia-side Graham, whose city fathers feared witnessing their town's submergence into a mere neighborhood of their new and muscular rival. This spurred the decision to rename Graham, "Bluefield, Virginia," and created the opportunity for the mother of all civic celebrations — "Greater Bluefield Day," in the sweltering summer of 1924.

The two cities had already merged their chambers of commerce, which took the lead in organizing the unique urban promo-

tion. A contentious June election in Graham legally permitted the name change, as many older citizens fiercely resisted losing their independent identity. The vote total was 291-227, showing how close the badly divided town came to retaining its original name.

Once the name change was approved, civic leaders asked for volunteer courting couples contemplating marriage, with one party hailing from each of the two communities. They selected Emma B. Smith and L. Wingo Yost, whose actual union would symbolize the new era of municipal cooperation. Yost, age 23, was an air-brake inspector for the N&W; Smith was a 19-year-old clerk at the Walton Construction Company. They were already dating, but the call for volunteers hurried their decision to wed. "We had been going together," Mrs. Yost told a reporter 70 years after the historic event, "but we weren't ready to get married. We were going to wait a while."

Sworn to secrecy, the two privately prepared for as public a marriage ceremony as anyone had ever seen. The site chosen for the festivities was the fairgrounds at Bluefield's City Park, where the state line crossed a parking lot between the baseball diamond and what was then the region's only airfield — today's Mitchell Stadium and Bluefield Recreation auditorium.

July 12, 1924, began with a mammoth automobile parade, starting at the West Virginian Hotel and proceeding through downtown Graham to the impromptu open-air "chapel." Flags and banners adorned nearly every yard and business. Stirring speeches by West Virginia Governor Ephraim Morgan and Virginia Governor Lee Trinkle promised greater cooperation between the often fiercely competitive rivals. Estimates placed the crowd at between 10,000 and 15,000 people. Biplanes, as new as the automobiles parked bumper-to-bumper in the city park, buzzed the crowd, eliciting cries of awe.

The marriage of Wingo Yost of Graham, Virginia, and Miss Emma Smith of Bluefield, West Virginia. Virginia Governor Lee Trinkle, at right, gave the bride away, while West Virginia Governor Ephraim E. Morgan, at center, served as best man. Minister W.E. Abrams officiates at left.

Then, a limousine, with shades drawn to keep the identities of the participants secret until the last second, slowly arrived at the thronged park, where a flag-festooned platform had been erected at the midpoint of a 450-foot crimson ribbon, marking the state line. Out stepped the officiating clergyman, the Reverend W.E. Abrams of the College Avenue Baptist Church, and then the bride. "It sure was hot that day," she recalled later. Wearing a georgette orchid dress with dainty lace trimmings, Emma Smith stood for her nuptials with one foot on each side of the state line. Incredibly, her identity had been kept from even close friends, family, and neighbors.

"I had a cousin who lived on the same street as I did," recalled Mrs. Yost. "I saw her in the crowd just stretching to see who it was. When she saw me, she shouted out, 'Oh my!' and fell back. She couldn't believe it was me." Virginia's governor gave away the bride, while West Virginia's governor served as best man. When Emma and her groom Wingo had pledged their vows and been named husband and wife, the two governors cut the ribbon, and Graham, Virginia, became officially known as "Bluefield, Virginia."

The "Greater Bluefield Day" festivities continued, with games, dances, and celebrations lasting

When Wingo Yost and Emma Smith were declared husband and wife, the ribbon was cut, and the town of Graham, Virginia, officially became known as Bluefield. Photograph courtesy of ERCA.

well into the night. Bluefield's legendarily creative boosters — famed for their "Free Lemonade" stunt [see "Free Drinks in Nature's Air-Conditioned City: Bluefield's Lemonade Escapades," by Stuart McGehee; Summer 1997] — had planned well. The last-ever game between the two cities' separate baseball clubs, the Bluefield Athletics and the Graham Red Sox, preceded their merger into the Bluefield Blue-Grays; the aptly named club survived for 30 years until the Baltimore Orioles claimed the Appalachian League farm team [see "Bluefield Baseball: The Tradition of a Century," by Stuart McGehee; Spring 1990]. Two motion-picture camera crews filmed the festivities for a short feature intended for nationwide theater distribution. More than 100 newspapers covered the quaint, unique event, including the *Baltimore Sun* and *The New York Times*.

President Calvin Coolidge sent his personal congratulations to both cities, as well as to the lucky couple. The Yosts were feted all day, receiving abundant gifts, including a $5,000 insurance policy from the chamber of commerce, and 50 merchants contributed to what was surely the greatest wedding shower in the region's history. Publisher Hugh Ike Shott provided a two-year subscription to his influential *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. A Mardi Gras-style party rollicked well into the wee hours.

The auspicious beginning to their union perhaps helped to build a strong foundation for Emma and Wingo's marriage. The civic union didn't work out as well.

The auspicious beginning to their union perhaps helped to build a strong foundation for Emma and Wingo's marriage; both were long-lived, and their pairing lasted until Wingo died in 1988, at age 87. The couple had one son named James, three grandsons, and three great-grandchildren. In 1974, they renewed their vows on their golden wedding anniversary. Mrs. Yost retired to her son's home in Florida a few years after Wingo passed away. She died in 1998 at the ripe age of 93.

The civic union didn't work out as well. Over the years, petroleum began to capture the steady markets that had fueled Bluefield's coal-based boom, and growth lagged following World War II. The West Virginia Bluefield population crested at 25,000 in 1950, and then began a slow decline, as mechanization of the southern West Virginia coal industry undermined the labor-intensive coal mines upon which white-collar Bluefield's prosperity had depended. The distribution warehouses in the west end, which had in the halcyon 1920's looked to stretch across the state line into old Graham, were torn down by urban renewal in the 1960's, and Graham's decision to hitch its Old Dominion wagon to a Mountain State team didn't look so wise to some as the 20th century closed. The Beaver-Graham high school football game is still the greatest athletic rivalry in the area, but some Virginia-side boosters would relish changing their town's name back to Graham, perhaps even holding a real divorce at the historic park along the storied state line.

History can be a strange and beautiful thing. In 1989, Bluefield celebrated its centennial, and I served as co-chair of the planning

The Norwalk Motor Car Company operated out of this building in Martinsburg's woolen district from 1912 until 1922. This photograph was made in about 1920.

In the early 1900's, a low-riding luxury car was built in Martinsburg's industrial center. The long and lavish Norwalk Underslung Six was billed as "The Car of Absolute Exclusiveness." It remains Martinsburg's primary claim to automotive history and stands as the most successful and longest-made motor vehicle known to have been manufactured in the Mountain State.

The Norwalk Motor Car Company assembled cars and trucks from 1912 to 1922 on Miller Avenue — recently renamed Norwalk Avenue — located along the Winchester & Western Railroad tracks in Martinsburg's once-thriving woolen mill district.

The auto manufacturer started in Norwalk, Ohio, in 1910. It faced financial trouble there, however, and a group of local investors bought out the company and its remaining parts stock, and moved everything to Martinsburg. The company began assembling the Underslung Six in 1912 in a building formerly occupied by the Brooklyn Brass Works.

The hulking Norwalk Underslung featured unique and expensive design concepts, many of which became standard features on later models. The Norwalk Underslung frame and suspension design lowered the car's center of gravity, making for less sway in curves. Engineers mounted the Norwalk's axles on top of the frame, while most manufacturers mounted the frame on top of the axles.

An advertisement in the 1913 edition of *Motor* magazine detailed the advantages of the low-riding car. According to the advertisement, "The keynote of Norwalk Underslung construction lies in the fact that we have brought the center of weight, the point of suspension, and the point of support to coincide in practically one point. Flat springs are used all around, sup-

ported on top of the axle. Side sway and body swing are eliminated absolutely. In rounding corners, the centrifugal force is not taken up by the springs vertically, but the stress is lateral. As a result, the Norwalk, when rounding curves, carries the same weight on all four wheels as on the straightaway."

The standard Norwalk Underslung Six was a huge convertible with 40-inch tires tall enough to bring the front fenders level with the plane of the hood. The tourer offered a 500-cubic-inch in-line, 6-cylinder, 8.6-liter, overhead-valve engine. By comparison, one of today's larger engines used in many General Motors vehicles is the 350-cubic-inch, 5.7-liter, V-8. With room for six passengers, the Underslung Six boasted a 136-inch wheelbase. By comparison, a modern, full-sized 2003 Cadillac Deville's wheelbase is 115.3 inches.

In 1912, the two-passenger Underslung roadster was offered for $2,900, the three-passenger roadster for $3,000, and the six-passenger tourer for $3,100. According to an advertisement, those prices got the owner the following equipment: "Top with curtains and cover, glass folding windshield, complete dynamo and battery, electric lighting system, self starter, speedometer, electric cigar lighter and trouble lamp, extra demountable rim, electric horn, coat rails, foot rails, trunk, all tools, etc."

The local antique car club is named in honor of the Norwalk, though none of the current members has actually owned a Norwalk automobile.

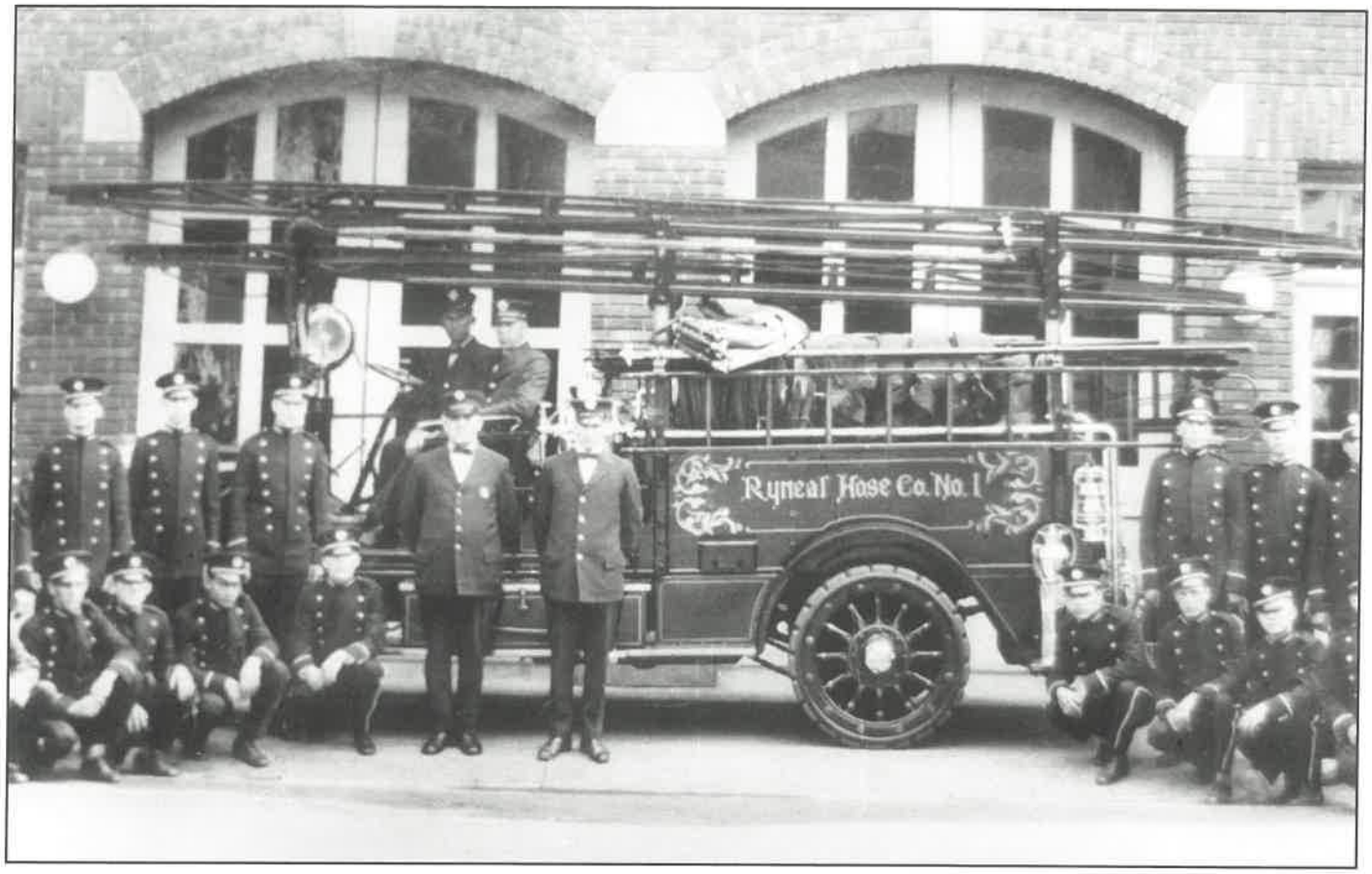
A top-of-the-line Underslung would cost a buyer about six times Henry Ford's $500-$600 price for a standard passenger car of the same era. Not a car for the common man, the Underslung was mainly marketed and sold in the more opulent sections of New York, Philadelphia, and Toronto.

"We're talking a lot of money for ol' Martinsburgers in 1912," says Garry Murphy, historian for the Norwalk Antique Car Club of Martinsburg, named in honor of the local vehicle. Garry has spent many of his 64 years tracking local lore and information associated with the Norwalk Motor Car Company and has given numerous talks about the car and its history to collectors and other groups.

"At this time, an automobile wasn't a necessity," Garry says. "Henry Ford was just getting started. This [Norwalk] was still a plaything for rich people. Hey, there's been over 3,000 cars built in this country since 1900, or names on file. Some, they only built one of, some a half-a-dozen. And some never got beyond the drawing board." [See "The Elusive Jarvis Huntington: Early Automobiles of West Virginia," by Joseph Platania; Fall 1999.]

After about 1915, few, if any, Underslung models were built. The Norwalk company began instead to produce smaller and less expensive four-cylinder models with standard suspension. Utility trucks — with an "outhouse cab sitting on a frame," Garry Murphy says — were also built during the final five years. A Norwalk truck was put into service for Hose Company No. 3 as Martinsburg's first motorized firefighting

Virtually unknown to most Martinsburg residents, the Norwalk Motor Car Company is a subject of great interest to Berkeley County car buffs and historians. Left to right, Garry Murphy, Paul Boltz, and Jeff Hollis gather at the Martinsburg Public Library to share information about the Norwalk. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.



This rare Norwalk fire truck was among the first motorized firefighting equipment in Martinsburg. Here, the Ryneal Hose Company No. 1 has its picture made by their shiny, new engine. Date unknown.

equipment. Hose Company No. 1 soon purchased a Norwalk fire engine, as well.

Information about Norwalk vehicles is not scarce. The company advertised in all of the popular trade journals, and several articles were written about Norwalks. Much of the literature is very "forward-looking," however, and often overstates the company's success and the performance of the automobiles. Some of the advertised features, and even the car styles themselves, were available only if a buyer placed a special order for the car.

Martinsburg was no Detroit. The low-production Norwalk assembly plant was never financially stable. In fact, it was ordered to close in 1915 by a Berkeley County circuit judge, but was reorganized and kept operating through sales companies and at the mercy of the bankruptcy courts until its final closure in October 1922.

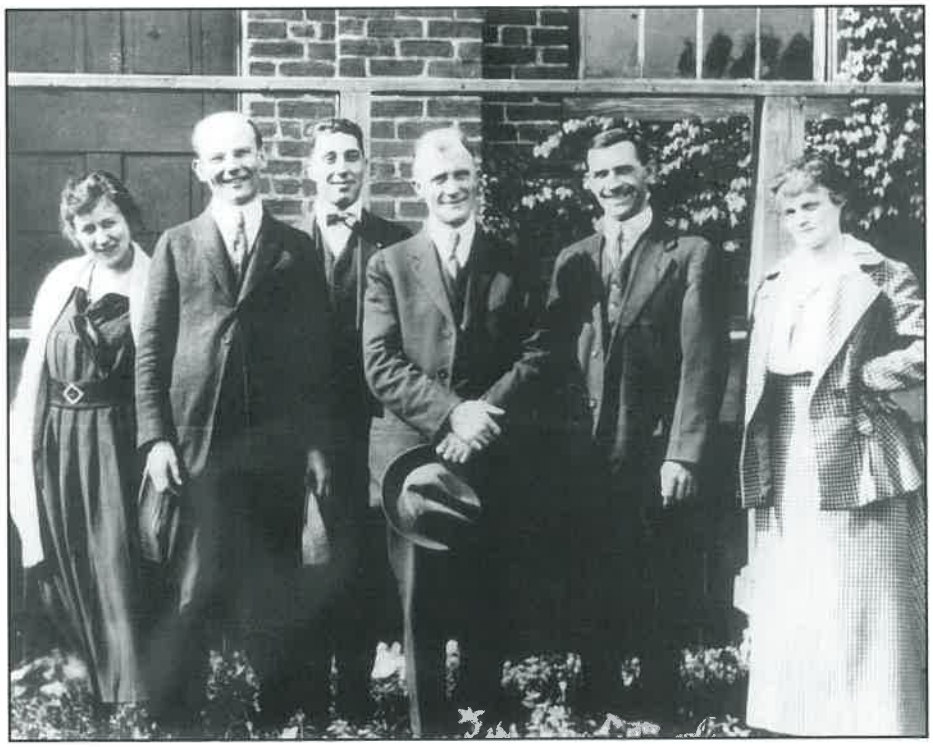
According to an April 13, 1967, *Martinsburg Journal* article, about 35 people were employed by the company, "their work week consisting of 10-hour days, six days a week, for about $10 a week."

George E. Anderson, born in 1900, worked at the factory in his youth and was one of Martinsburg's last surviving Norwalk employees. Before George Anderson died in 1992, Garry Murphy interviewed him at his West Virginia Avenue home about his work experience at the factory.

Not a car for the common man, the Underslung was mainly marketed and sold in the more opulent sections of New York, Philadelphia, and Toronto.

"[George Anderson] was a tall, lanky, rough-cut fellow," Garry remembers. "I talked to him one time. I was very impressed, and I really regret that I didn't go back and talk more." George showed him "several pieces off of Norwalk cars," Garry says, including an isinglass oval rear window for the convertible top.

George Anderson said during the interview that he worked at the factory "wherever they needed him," giving him experience throughout the plant. The order of production, he told Garry, was frame, engine, wiring, and body. While major components were brought in from elsewhere, certain parts, such as spark and throttle control or brake parts, were made or finished in the shop. He told Garry that the body was built in two pieces, and that they



General manager Arthur E. Skadden, at center with hat, posed for this picture with his office staff in about 1916. From the left, they are Margaret Youtz, Gerald Coppersmith, Mr. Snapp, Skadden, shop supervisor Mr. Boyer, and bookkeeper Hattie Lockhart.

turned out an average of about two cars per week.

A few were sold locally; most of these were trucks sold to local businesses, such as Thatcher's Dairy and Miller's Orchard [see "Apple Royalty: Berkeley County's Miller Family," by Carl E. Feather; Fall 2001]. According to George, local sales were transacted right there at the factory. A New York City company held the marketing rights to the car, and many of the vehicles were exported overseas.

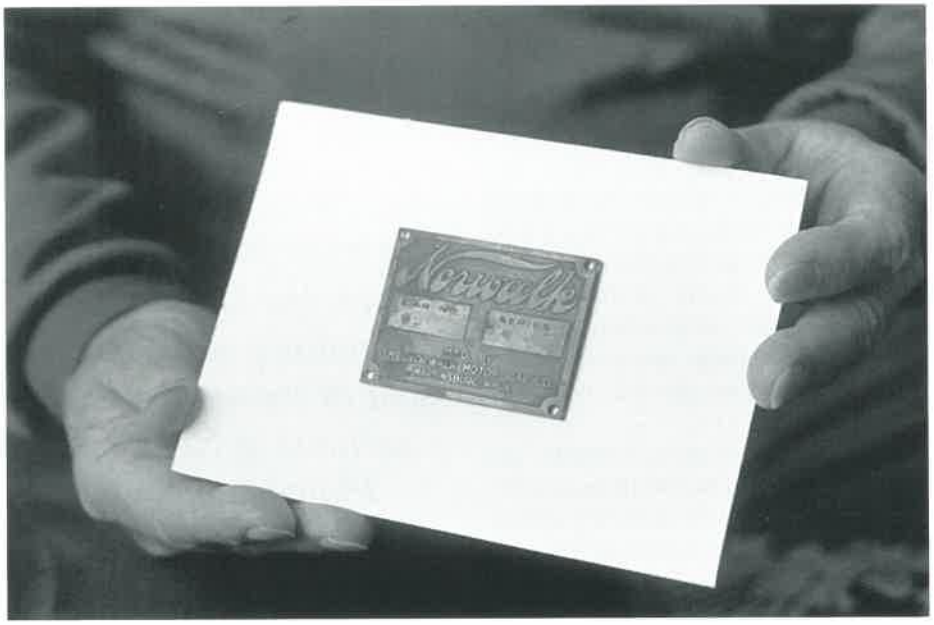
George recalled that legendary car racer Barney Oldfield came to Martinsburg when parts were being sold off in 1922 and drove away with enough frames, engines, and other components to build three Norwalks.

"Painting and detailing? We got into quite a bit of detail about that," Garry recalls. According to George, the fenders were dipped and dried, and the body was painted with a brush. The bodies were then finished on the factory's top floor. "There was a guy [upstairs] that painted them," George told Garry. "There was steel troughs around the perimeter of the building. They poured gasoline in them steel troughs, lit fire to it, walked out and closed the door, and didn't come back until the next morning. That was how they dried them bodies."

Mechanics drove the completed cars out King Street to the west end of town and used the Tuscarora Pike as a testing ground for the vehicles, according to conversations Garry Murphy had with Jim Noll, who ran a machine shop in Nollville. "Often times, you'd see this guy riding on the chassis," Garry recalls from his talks with Jim Noll. "They'd drive them out to the base of the mountain and back. They'd run the bugs out of them."

Though there is now a newly renamed Norwalk Avenue, and a popular picnic shelter in Martinsburg's War Memorial Park has been designated the Norwalk Antique Car Club Pavilion, Berkeley County residents at large know very little about the Norwalk or its history. None of the Norwalk factory employees is alive, but relatives remember fragments of the Norwalk story.

Janet Hiett, owner of the All About Fabric shop on Queen Street in Martinsburg, is the granddaughter of Alvin O. Seibert, who worked at the Norwalk Motor Car Company in his early 20's as an apprentice and ultimately became a mas-



This unused nameplate, photographed recently at the Berkeley County Historical Society, is one of the few Norwalk artifacts still remaining in Martinsburg. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

Along with their financial difficulties, the onset of World War I dealt a major blow to the company, as nearly two-thirds of the 35 workers were drafted into the U.S. Army.

Arthur Skadden died in 1919, and his wife Clara B. Skadden took charge of the company. She finally moved to Indianapolis, where the company business offices were located until the Martinsburg factory closed October 24, 1922.

"As Bill Lewis' commentaries went, everybody in the world was in that business all of a sudden. Everybody that could nail two things together and stick a piece of metal across it tried to build a car," Jeff says. "Thousands of manufacturers go to hundreds, go down to a half-a-dozen. I don't think it was anything because of Martinsburg. It was the industry itself."

Paul Boltz and Jeff Hollis toured the old Norwalk building in 1989. "We wanted to find anything that would verify or authenticate that this was the place and find evidence of things. And we found evidence," Paul Boltz says. Handwritten parts labels were tacked onto the massive wooden floor beams above parts bins in the basement of the 50' x 150' building.

In December 1989, shortly after their visit, the building burned in one of the most spectacular fires in recent Martinsburg memory. "I could have cried when that place burned," Paul Boltz says, looking through a stack of photos he and Jeff took of the building during their visit. "It just tore me up. I've thanked God many times that we got in there when we did. It was really that close."

Following the fire, Paul combed through the ruins and took home a carload of bricks, a massive iron gear from the factory's wooden elevator, and iron "S" braces from the ends of wall support rods. In 1990, the Martinsburg Jaycees buried a time capsule at the intersection of West King Street and the Winchester & Western Railroad. Inside it, Paul Boltz placed a brick from the Norwalk factory along with photos of the fire.

After all these years, only one Norwalk car is known to still exist. Owner Shirley Hoffman of Longmont, Colorado, has owned her 1913 500-cubic-inch Norwalk Underslung since 1990 — she says that she is only the third person to own it. She reports that the car has been fully restored and is in good running condition, though she mostly keeps it locked securely in the garage of her Longmont home.

Shirley has offered the Norwalk for sale, reportedly for as much as $900,000, and Martinsburg car enthusiasts have been in touch with her about it, as have other car collectors. While it is unclear whether any of these groups or individuals will be able to afford the asking price for such a rare and historic automobile, it is the fervent hope of many in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle that this last surviving Norwalk motor car will someday find its way back to West Virginia, if only for a visit.

The only known Norwalk Underslung still in existence belongs to Shirley Hoffman of Longmont, Colorado. This is Shirley, we assume, behind the wheel. Photograph courtesy of Bill Lewis, date unknown.

DANIEL J. FRIEND became interested in Martinsburg's history through his work as a reporter, columnist, and assistant city editor for *The Journal* newspaper. His weekly column, "The Rambler," has won several West Virginia Press Association awards. This is Daniel's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"The Dirt Was Flying!"

Racing Pioneer Dave Kurtz

By Tom Adamich

Dave Kurtz of Weston takes the lead in a 1939 Mercury, number "99A," during his first race at the Ritchie County Fairgrounds in 1950.

The automobile has become a cultural symbol of freedom, mobility, and entertainment throughout the nation. This is especially true in the Mountain State, where automotive awareness — stock car racing, in particular — is a way of life for many people. Not surprisingly, in the year 2000, West Virginia became the first state in the union to offer drivers an official NASCAR license plate.

Former dirt car racer Dave Kurtz at home today, with a few of his trophies. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Stock car racing in West Virginia began on dirt tracks, also known as short tracks, in towns such as Kerens, Vienna, Shinnston, Dunbar, and Mineral Wells. Beginning in the late 1940's, fans across the state packed the stands, climbed trees, and perched on hillsides every Saturday evening to watch as young individuals with a lot of heart, but not much money, came to pit themselves, their skill, and their vehicles against one another.

Drivers often raced their own daily-use vehicles, as well as surplus or junk cars modified for racing with whatever was available. Many drivers, for example, used chicken wire found at home as their roll cages. Most raced modified American-made cars, such as Ford, Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Plymouth, Dodge, or Hudson.

"I always drove full-bore anyway. That's just the way I was. If it would scoot, fly, or float, we'd put a motor in it."

Dave Kurtz of Weston is, in many ways, the embodiment of the pioneer era of West Virginia racing — quick-thinking, intelligent, resourceful, and vital. When visiting Dave and his wife Pauline at their home, I was immediately struck by Dave's knowledge of numerous topics and his ability to quickly "shift gears." Though I had arrived to talk about dirt-track racing, Dave immediately took me down the road to a local coin and gun shop, where we talked with a man about — not cars — but coins!

When the conversation eventually returned to the early days of West Virginia dirt-track racing, Dave's descriptions were rich with historical content, filled with enthusiasm, and sprinkled with a few surprises. As the discussion progressed, I began to understand the greater impact of racing on Dave and Pauline's life as a married couple, and how they viewed their experiences together as a reflection of what Dave calls the "West Virginia spirit."

Born on July 19, 1931, in Weston, Dave Kurtz grew tall and thin, eventually becoming a talented basketball player. He attended West Virginia University during the late 1940's. His dad had died in 1939, and Dave had to "carry the ball" as the man of the house. Cars were always an interest for Dave, and he was the first in his high school class to have a car — a 1928 Chevrolet Cabriolet coupe. He also owned a '39 Mercury — the car that would eventually become Dave's first race car.

Car racing wasn't something Dave had planned to do. As a young man, he was interested in all motor sports — motorcycles, cars, trucks, boats, etc. In fact, it was Dave's attendance at an "Unlimited Hydroplane Gold Cup Race" (river races with large water craft, powered by huge V-8 engines) in New Martinsville in 1949 that led Dave to begin racing cars. On their way back to Weston, Dave and a friend saw a sign at the Ritchie County Fairgrounds (now known as Pennsboro Raceway) that read, "Stock Car Racing Every

Dave Kurtz sits behind the wheel, early in his racing career. Seated on the back of the car is close friend and original pit crew member Ed Hitt. This photograph was taken at Pennsboro in 1950.

Saturday Night."

As Dave recalls, "Since we loved speed, we were interested in giving it a try. I always drove full-bore anyway. That's just the way I was. If it would scoot, fly, or float, we'd put a motor in it. The next week, I pulled that '39 Mercury in there, all ready to race. I had taken off the hood, removed the windows, took an old single seat from a junk car, set the seat in there, and secured it with bale wire. I used an old army pistol belt for the seatbelt. It worked pretty good.

"On the side of the Mercury," he continues, "I painted the number '99A,' since that was the old Ford parts number for the car. Then I grabbed some old pipe and made a roll cage out of it. Finally, I had an old football helmet, since I didn't have a proper racing helmet, and put that on."

According to Dave, racing was very different in those early days. Most races took place on fairground harness-racing tracks, which were not modified for car racing. Other aspects of the race were different, as well.

"We had time trials and were told to line up based on the times. That's like today's racing," Dave says. "However, we started the race from a standing start — the flagman would nod to see if you were ready — and [we] had to get into racing position on the straight-aways

Drivers line up and prepare to race at the Ritchie County Fairgrounds in 1950. At this time, the cars began racing from a dead stop, as shown here.

When I turned in the second-fastest qualifying time, people started to gather, because they didn't know what I had. At that same race, Monty Ward got in a wreck. Luckily, he had a cigar that he always stuck in his mouth [to protect his teeth], and that thing exploded all over his face! However, his teeth were okay. After that, I started putting cigars in my mouth.

"I was making pretty good money later on, but I remember being paid $21 in $1 bills for one of my first victories," Dave recalls. "I think it was because $1 was the entry fee to get in the race. We didn't mind getting the cash. What we didn't like was when we were given 'rubber checks' from the tracks that weren't too well-off financially. That made for hollow victories."

Dave Kurtz with his third car, a 1938 Ford coupe, numbered "99C." This photograph was made at Norwood Park near Clarksburg in 1951.

Not only was Dave a major star in West Virginia racing from 1951 until 1954, but his use of automotive engine and body technology was legendary for the time period. "When I first started racing," Dave says, "I concentrated on just the basics and worked with what we had. For example, on that '39 Mercury, we broke down the tires from a friend's truck, changed the wheels, raced, and mounted them again when we returned.

"Later, I concentrated on adjusting carburetors and ignition timing. As I learned more, I started boring and stroking the engines. We also converted cars to run on methanol. Those engines would really run cool. In fact, on a cold night, ice would form on the engine intake manifolds. We could drop additives in for extra performance," Dave says.

"We changed jet sizes to adjust for atmosphere and elevation changes constantly," he continues. "West Virginia's terrain [is] unlike any other in the United States when racing in elevation [is] concerned. We could always tell what to do by pulling the spark plugs and looking at the collar on the plug to see if we were running hot or cool."

Two big events stand out in Dave's mind as he remembers his racing career. "You had to be 21 [years old] to race in West Vir-

Every driver has his share of wrecks, and Dave Kurtz is no exception. He was unhurt after this '37 Ford had an altercation with a tree at Norwood Park in 1951. Dave is standing at right, holding his helmet.

ginia," Dave recalls. "Therefore, I wrote a note that was signed by my mother and notarized, giving me permission [to race]."

The note read, "My son, being still a minor in the eyes of the law of the state of West Virginia, has this day been granted permission by myself to take part in and to participate in any and all racing events held by the Central West Virginia Racing Association.

Signed,

Virginia R. Kurtz"

It was notarized on May 31, 1951. "Without that letter," Dave says, "I would have not been allowed to continue racing."

Another memory for Dave involves an altercation with a tree. "That wreck out at Norwood Park was something else," he recalls. "I had a Pittman arm break on my steering wheel. I remember going off the track at the back stretch and climbing a sapling tree. Luckily, a bunch of my fans came to upright the car. We took a Pittman arm off a '40 Ford and went right back to racing!"

A special memory for Pauline involves Dave's unexpected late entry into a race at Lumberport. "I was pregnant with Connie at the time," Pauline says, "and Dave went to Lumberport to watch the races. They wanted him to race so badly, but we had agreed he'd stop when the family started. However, I guess they literally picked him up and carried him over to the car, putting him directly into the driver's seat. He ended up winning! He wasn't going to tell me he won. However, a big article appeared in the *Clarksburg Telegram* talking about the race. I wasn't too mad, though, because the $125 he won almost paid for Connie's delivery."

In discussing his career behind the wheel, Dave Kurtz shares his love of motors, cars, racing, community, and family. "West Virginia racing is like no other kind of racing," he says. "The geographic differences between our state's north, south, east, and west are like no other place. We raced on a shoestring, but we could turn an 85-horsepower motor into a 200-horsepower motor because we worked together with what we had. Pauline and I were married with $38 to our name and a '39 Ford.

"I always drove hard, and even though I learned how to use strategy a bit more as I matured, I still drove hard. That's the thrill of racing," Dave concludes. "You have to be willing to drive hard!"

Though Dave officially quit racing in 1954, Dave and Pauline still love cars and keep in touch with some of their old racing friends. Here, Pauline and Dave sit on the running board of a 1931 Ford coupe belonging to Steve DeBreular. Photograph by Michael Keller.

TOM ADAMICH is a professional librarian and library media specialist from northeast Ohio. He holds a master's degree from Kent State University and is a former cataloging librarian for the West Virginia Library Commission. Tom has a longstanding interest in motor sports and is a member of the Society of Automotive Historians. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"I Was Born Talking"

Lois Koontz Nypl on Selling Cars

Interview by Ginny Painter

Photographs by Michael Keller

Lois Koontz Nypl. Born and raised in Clendenin, her given name was Lois White. In 1957, she began selling cars using her first married name of Lois Light. Later marriages changed her name to Lois Koontz, then to Lois Koontz Nypl. She is shown here with a big smile and a 1961 car sales award pinned to her sweater.

By her own admission, Lois Koontz Nypl likes to talk. One of eight children, the Clendenin native is a natural salesperson. Her quick smile, keen sense of humor, and down-to-earth personality make you feel at ease right away. It is clear why she was a successful car salesperson — one of the first women to work in the male-dominated world of car showrooms in Charleston during the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Lois speaks proudly of those days, noting that she made $9,000 in her first nine months on the job — "more than most men were making," she says. Lois quit work after seven years in order to raise her children, selling four cars during her last day on the job.

Now in her 70's, Lois still loves cars and driving. She does not hesitate to jump into her Jeep and travel, alone, to Hilton Head or to North Carolina to visit family members. I recently spent some time with Lois at her Dunbar home and asked her to tell me about her automotive career. —Ginny Painter

Ginny Painter. Tell me how you got started in car sales.

Lois Koontz Nypl. In 1955, we bought a De Soto, my husband and I did, from Thompson Motors on Virginia Street. When we were there, they asked me why didn't I sell cars for them? And I thought, "Dear me, I couldn't sell cars." So that was that.

In a few days, Gardner Buick called me from up

on Washington Street. And I still thought I couldn't do that.

So, in 1957, I decided, "Well, maybe that's not a bad idea." I knew Chevrolets better than anything, so I went to Roger Dean Chevrolet in March of 1957 and asked him. Well, Roger wasn't there, so I talked to Mort Rice, which was his general manager. He called Roger and talked to Roger over the telephone and described me to him and everything. So, they hired me.

They gave me my demonstrator, this yellow and black Belair Chevrolet '57. Well, that scared me to death. I thought, "Oh, dear me. I don't think I want to do this." I told them that if I decide to do it, I'd be at the sales meeting on Monday morning.

Lois shares memories of her colorful career in car sales with interviewer Ginny Painter. Lois believes that she was the first woman to sell cars in West Virginia, and was among the first women in the nation to enter this male-dominated field.

GP. Why did it scare you?

LKN. I had never worked. And it just scared me. Here I am going to sell cars, and I don't know a thing about it. I told them, "If I don't go to work, I'll bring your car back to you Monday morning." I decided I'd do it. So, on Monday, I went to the sales meeting.

Well, the men didn't like that at all. You know, a lady coming in their environment. Everything I'd asked them, well, they'd tell me some big yarn. I asked Whitey Hall, I said, "Whitey, how can you tell a six-cylinder from an eight?"

He said, "Miss Light, *[Lois' married name at the time]*, you get down and look at the tailpipe." I thought, they're not going to tell me anything. So, I took all the books and the movies and everything home and learned from cover to cover. Believe me, honey, I knew how much headroom you had, the wheelbase. Back then, a six-cylinder was 165, an eight was a 185, but then you had a 230 engine, a 250, and a 280. Well, they didn't know theirselves. They thought, "Well, I'm a man. I don't need to know all that stuff." In about three weeks, honey, they were asking me. It was like, "Which engine does that car in the corner over there have?" Anyhow, in three weeks, they accepted me.

GP. Were you married at the time?

LKN. I was married at the time.

GP. What did your husband think?

LKN. My husband, he worked at Carbide, he thought it was a wonderful idea.

Anyhow, we worked shift work. Their [customers], they always told you, "We'll be back." They were going to go out shopping, is what they were going to do. And if they came back while the [salesman] was off shift, I'd go ahead and sell them the car, deliver them and everything, and put [the salesman's] name on their bill. Anyhow, they really got 'til they trusted me and everything, because they found out I wasn't going to steal their deals.

GP. Did they do the same for you?

LKN. They did the same for me, after a fashion. They all called me "Momma." I was a whole lot younger than they, but they all called me "Momma," and still do to this day. Very few of them are still living.

GP. How old were you?

LKN. I was 24 when I started. We were called "Roger Dean Redcoats," so I wore a red dress. Mr. Dean was a wonderful fellow. At that time, he was on the Boulevard, there in the old McMillan Building beside the Ruffner Hotel. And then we moved over to Washington Street, where the Clay Center sits now. That's where we moved in '60.

Mr. Dean called me "Skinny." He had a pilot named Pete Quarrier, and Pete flew him around and all over to his dealerships. One day, Roger told us that the salesmen had to go to Athens to bring cars back. Pete was going to fly us up. Well, I'd never been on an airplane. So, the men would go around saying to Pete, they'd say, "Pete, did you ever get the engine fixed on

that plane that caught fire the other day?" Well, of course, I was taking it all in, honey.

So we went up to the airport, and Roger went with us. Back then, you wore the little narrow skirts. You had to get up on the wing of the plane. Well, I couldn't get there, and so the men lifted me on the wing. When I get up there, Roger says to me, he said, "Skinny, now that you're along, I can't take my pants off." And I said, "Well, Mr. Dean, if it won't bother you, it won't bother me." So he stood on the wing of the plane and took his pants off.

GP. So he wouldn't wrinkle the crease.

LKN. Uh huh. He put them on one of those roller hangers and put them in the back with the fellows and myself, and he rode up front with Pete Quarrier, with his white boxer shorts on. I'll never forget that. When we got there, he got out on the wing of the plane, put his pants back on.

Though she no longer sells cars for a living, Lois is still motor-minded. She is shown here with her 4x4 Jeep, which she drives to the beach a couple of times each year.

I went to all the new car showings with the fellows when I was with Mr. Dean. Of course, I couldn't go with the men. Mr. Dean leased a bus for the men going. They had their beer and everything.

He made me go with Mr. & Mrs. Harold Moore, which was truck manager. Mr. Moore told me going up, he said, "Now, Lois," he said, "we're going to take you to a burlesque show." Well, I didn't know what it was, to tell you the truth. But I said, "Oh, I couldn't do that, because if the men would find out that I did something like that, they'd, you know. ..."

But he said, "But the men's never going to find it out." So we did. We went to the burlesque show, honey, and we looked up, and there was all the men in the box seats up there. Of course, Mr. & Mrs. Moore and I was sitting down on the floor. They never, ever knew that I ever went to the burlesque show, because he never, ever told them.

GP. Where was this?

LKN. That was in Cincinnati. We went to Cincinnati to a new car show that year. There was about 10,000 men and just one woman, but they all treated me very nice.

GP. What was the first car you sold, do you remember?

LKN. It was 1957, a Belair Chevrolet. It was pink, and I sold it to Cunningham Funeral Home, Mr. Cunningham. He had one of the vents put in the trunk of it, because he did a lot of coon hunting, and he carried his dogs back there.

GP. Did he really? That's a great story. My husband's a coon hunter. He'll appreciate that.

LKN. Yeah, he was. He was a good old fellow.

One Saturday, this gentleman come in. I don't know whether you know, but we called people "kelsies," that we thought didn't look like they could afford to buy anything. So this gentleman come in, he had on bib overalls and an old overall jacket. The men said, "Oh, he's just a kelsie. He's just lookin'." So I went over and asked him, "Could I help you?"

And he said, "Yes ma'am." He says, "I want that black and white two-toned Chevrolet right over there in the window." So the men liked to died, because he pulled out a wad of money about that big and paid me in cash. Didn't ask for any discount or anything.

GP. How did customers react to a female salesperson, especially during those early years?

LKN. Well, they really took me well. I think they found out that I knew more about the cars than the men did. At least, when the men would have to holler down the showroom and ask me, "Miss Light, what is the wheelbase on this thing?" Or, "How much headroom do they have in this one?" I think people learned that, after a fashion, I knew probably more about [the cars] than the men did.


Jack Esteppe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RECAPITULATION

Make	1959 Year To Date	Make	1959 Year To Date
Buick	343	Imperial	14
Cadillac	137	Lincoln	39
Chevrolet	1953	Mercury	220
Chrysler	69	**OLDSMOBILE**	**523**
DeSoto	25	Plymouth	360
Dodge	180	Pontiac	488
Edsel	126	Rambler	418
Ford	1814	Studebaker	189

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Newspaper ad from the early 1960's. Lois is pictured at the top of the page, fifth from the left. Courtesy of *The Charleston Gazette*.

GP. How long did you sell cars?

LKN. I sold cars 'til 1964. I really enjoyed used cars more than I did new.

GP. Why was that?

LKN. People couldn't shop you, because there's no two used cars alike. I just really, thoroughly enjoyed used cars and always wanted to have my own place. I was going to call it "Lou Light Used Cars." I can see it yet. But then I left Roger in 1961 and went to Camp-Burdette's and sold Oldsmobiles,because Oldsmo-bile was my favorite car, to tell you the truth. I sold Oldsmobiles for Mr. Camp. He was a wonderful person, too, really good to you.

GP. What was the best thing about selling cars? What did you like about it the most?

LKN. Well, I probably learned [more] about life, really, and how to deal with people than I did my whole time going through high school. In fact, still to this day, it has taught [me] so much stuff just about things that I work with today — how to talk to people and how to deal with them. You've really got to know how to deal with people, not let them push you around.

Lois Koontz Nypl at home in Dunbar.

GP. So, how's the car business changed since you started? You said you were working before they put stickers on the cars.

LKN. In '61 or '62, the stickers came on the cars. Then you had to, of course, go by that sticker, because that was the law. When I first started selling cars for Roger, a fellow would come in, and he'd say, "Now, I have to have $2,900 out of my car." Well, you just raised it up a little bit more to give him his $2,900. But, of course, you couldn't do that after they had the stickers on the car.

But I had one little boy, honey, that come in that traded with me when I was at Roger's. He got it all traded and everything. He looked at me — he was tongue-tied a little bit, he lisped a little bit. He said, "Hey, wady," he said. "Have we twaded?" I said, "Yeah, honey, we've traded." He said, "Well, now that we've twaded," he said, "I wanted to tell you that I got a wod a-knockin' in that car." I said, "That's alright, honey. The used car that I sold you has got a wod a-knockin' in it, too."

GP. Did he laugh?

LKN. But that was the truth, it was a used car. They weren't guaranteed back then.

GP. You think a salesperson is born or made? Do you think some people are just natural sales people?

LKN. Well, honey, I think you have to really like people. And I think you have to know how to talk, and I was born talking, believe me.

GP. I don't doubt that somehow. Do you mind if I ask you how old you are?

LKN. I'll be 72, honey, in May.

GP. Good for you. Good for you.

LKN. And I'm not a bit ashamed of it. I tell everybody how old I am, 'cause I'm proud I made it this long.

GINNY PAINTER is director of public information for the Division of Culture and History. A seventh-generation West Virginian, Ginny grew up in St. Albans. She holds a degree in journalism from Marshall university and a master's in business administration from the University of Charleston. Her writing has appeared in several magazines, including *West Virginia Executive* and *Wonderful West Virginia*. This is Ginny's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

Duane Lockard is seated at right, along with brother E. Kidd and father Clyde in about 1923. The Lockard family were frequent summer visitors at Bulltown.

Bulltown of My Youth

By Duane Lockard

Grandfather Elias Lockard was a blacksmith, a farmer, a sometime preacher, and a powerful man who could swing a huge maul and drive a fencepost into the earth seemingly several inches with every blow. He could make anything you wanted involving iron or wood. At his roaring forge, he fashioned the metal apparatus needed for the road wagons that he and his sons built and repaired for farmers in Braxton County. He made a butcher knife for my mother from a saw blade. He made several garden tools for my father, including a heavy rake, which proved useful in dealing with the stubborn sod my father encountered when starting new gardens, as we moved from town to town. He made a cane for Dad when he was injured in a coal mine roof fall.

Incurably curious about how he did things, I asked my grandfather how he could make the head of the cane curl the way it did. He explained that you had to pick the right piece of wood and soften it with steam for bending. I asked more questions than he wanted to answer. At one point, he offered me a nickel if I didn't ask a question for five consecutive minutes.

His blacksmith shop was a wonderful place for a youngster to explore. There were interesting tools, machinery, and a slightly musty odor in the air. Sometimes he allowed me to turn the handle of the forge, making the coals glow red-yellow hot. I watched him closely

How well I remember the summers when I would spend two weeks visiting my grandfather in Braxton County. That was 70 years ago, give or take a year or two, and I was about 10 or 12 years old. He lived in Bulltown, most of which, alas, no longer exists, having been obliterated by the lake behind the dam on the Little Kanawha River at Burnsville. But Bulltown vividly lives on in my memory.

Elias Lockard's blacksmith shop is visible at left in this photograph taken at Bulltown in the early 1900's. The covered bridge crossed the Little Kanawha River and was the site of an historic Civil War battle in 1863.

as he took a pair of tongs and thrust his iron into the coals. When the iron was red hot, he put it on the anvil and hit it with a large hammer. The hammer would bounce along the anvil, and he would examine the iron carefully. It went back into the fire and again to the anvil. When it was shaped properly, the iron went into a wooden tub of water, sizzling and sputtering.

I found many ancient tools, which, of course, required more questions. He told me what the adz and froe were for, and that a spoke shave with its curved blades was used to shape spokes for a wagon wheel. And he showed me how to use a block plane — a wooden tool more than a foot long and about four inches across, with a blade fastened somehow in the wood.

The shop itself was located across the road from Grandfather's house and was about 60 to 70-feet long and perhaps 25-feet wide. At the right as you came into the shop was a huge gasoline motor from which belts delivered power to a series of machines, including a band saw, a planing mill, a carding mill to process raw wool, and a gristmill. I recall the rocker arm of the motor — it was as large as the forearm of a giant.

The woodworking machines were idle in my day, as was the carding system. Dad told me that, years ago, the carding mill would run day and night in sheep-shearing time to accommodate farmers from far and wide in preparing wool to be spun for the wool clothing that everybody wore. Tailor-made suits were rare.

In my day, only the gristmill still operated. Saturday mornings, farmers would arrive with sacks of shelled corn slung behind the saddles of their horses. Grandfather would grind it into cornmeal. It was purely a barter transaction without any money exchanged. The rate was, if I remember correctly, a gallon of meal on a bushel of corn. What he did with that much meal, I don't recall. But he must have traded the surplus, because no family could eat that much cornmeal. One of the pleasures of the milling process for me was the fragrant odor of hot meal that wafted on the summer air. The burrs of the mill made the meal hot, and the aroma was delightful.

Saturday mornings were also a time for tales of Bulltown and the Lockard family — tales that were probably as often true as they were fanciful. The farmers and other older people at the mill would ask

Clyde and Virgie Lockard, our author's parents, in about 1920.

me which of Grandfather Lockard's grandsons was I? After getting it straight that I was the son of Clyde, they would tell me tales about the five sons, asking whether my father was the one who became a coal miner. The farmers knew well the two who had remained in Bulltown, but they knew less about the three who had migrated to urban West Virginia. The eldest, Gideon, was an automobile mechanic in Clarksburg. He worked on a brand of luxury car called Marmons. The youngest ran a small restaurant in Fairmont. Clyde lived in six different towns in Harrison and Marion counties — wherever the tides of coal fortune took him. Two younger sisters had married two brothers from Heaters, about five miles over the hills to the south. The next generation — mine — followed the common rule and eventually left Braxton, most for other states.

The old Lockard homeplace at Bulltown, date unknown.

There were many things about the old Lockard place that tied into the stories my father and my uncles told me. The washhouse adjacent to the main house smelled like homemade soap — clean but pungent from lye. This structure had been the icehouse around 1900. In winter, the Lockard boys and their father would saw blocks of ice from the frozen river that ran past the house and haul them 100 yards, or so, to the icehouse to be preserved for summer use. The building had an outer wall of vertical planks. Sawdust would be shoveled two-feet thick, surrounding the ice completely. It worked so well that often old ice would be thrown away when a new supply became available. Icehouses were rare, so when neighbors fell ill in summer, the family would take ice to comfort the afflicted.

Behind the house, dug into the hillside, was a cold-storage cellar where a churn stood full of delicious, cool buttermilk. On top of the cellar house was a patch of blackberries, bearing the biggest and sweetest berries I've ever tasted. No doubt the quality of the berries was due to the overflow from a spring that supplied the family with pure, fresh water. By the time of my visits, the main house had water piped in — a luxury I did not have at home or at school. And in the cellar house, a generator whirred off-and-on to provide electricity. It would be many years before electricity came to Bulltown residences by wire, but the generator system served well in its time.

At the back of the house was a towering sycamore tree, noteworthy to me because Dad had planted it as a boy of 10, or so. But my aunt Louisa Marple remembers it differently. She claims her mother had ridden a horse to visit her family in Napier and was given a sycamore switch by her brother to use on her horse. She threw the switch away on getting home, and it took root and grew. Whichever story is correct, the tree grew enormously and had to be cut back so as not to fall on the house.

The house itself was built in 1885 and was in the style of Southern architecture, with two floors, and porches on both levels. On the lower porch were two swings made from the seats of old cars. I remember my grandparents sitting on a swing, and my grandfather smoking a pipeful of tobacco he had grown himself. He would bring out a twisted length of dark tobacco, cut off a pipeful, and puff it contentedly. Talking was not resting, in his judgment, so we were as silent as monks in a monastery during those times. Only the chirping of crickets and the piping of tree frogs disturbed the peace.

My grandparents were people who talked only when something really important needed to be said. I was inclined to be like my mother, who disliked visiting Bulltown because she couldn't bare the endless silence. Bored, I often chased fireflies on the lawn or ran up and down the canna-lined path to the road. If I was thirsty, I could go outside the gate and use the pump beside the road to get a drink from the tin cup provided for any passerby, as well as for family.

Grandfather was not only a taciturn man, he was pious and never uttered a swear word whatever the provocation. When sufficiently irritated, he would say "fen dubs" or "catheads and dogtails," but that was the limit. He said grace before every meal, and I was quiet and reverent. But I nearly giggled at his whistling on certain words, caused,

The Lockard family played and sang religious music at reunions, such as this one held at Bulltown in the 1920's. Pictured from the left are Sam, Lucy, Willie, James, and Elias Lockard. Elias was our author's grandfather

I suppose, by faulty false teeth.

I recall at a Lockard reunion in Flatwoods, he and three brothers and a sister sang songs to the accompaniment of fiddles played by Uncle James and Uncle Willie. They sang hymns in their reedy voices. Younger folks took the reunion to be an occasion for a picnic and some entertainment, but for Grandfather and his siblings, any gathering was a religious occasion.

His idea of medical treatment was of a distinctively down-home style. I arrived one summer with a sore ankle, which I had injured on a rusty nail on my wagon (a replacement for a missing cotter pin). It became infected, and my ankle swelled up and was inflamed. Grandpa's remedy was a leaf of tobacco, soaked in warm water and applied as a poultice. It worked. Soon, the wound healed. I don't know whether the cure was an affirmation of country medicine's efficacy or not, but at least it didn't prevent healing.

I can see him now, coming home in the afternoon, leaving the blacksmith shop with a basketful of kindling for his wife — my step-grandmother. "Mrs. Cunningham," she was called by my father and uncles. My real grandmother had died when I was only a year old. Mrs. Cunningham used the kindling to start a fire in the kitchen stove for the preparation of a workingman's breakfast with ham and eggs, freshly baked biscuits, oatmeal, corn bread, milk and buttermilk,

and fresh berries. There was apple pie, if the early harvest apples were ready to be gathered, or a berry pie, if not.

Those early harvest apple trees were a boon to the whole family. From his small orchard, Grandfather got bushels of tart, yellow apples that made wonderful pies. And they were excellent for making apple butter. During one of my vacations, it came to be apple butter time. With my two aunts in charge, the whole family got involved. On the evening before the big day, we would gather to peel, core, and slice bushels of apples. Next morning, outdoors but near the kitchen, a huge copper kettle was half-filled with apples, a little water, and a lot of sugar. A wood fire was built under the kettle. To prevent sticking and burning, it had to be stirred constantly with a long-handled paddle. A penny was placed in the kettle, and the scraper on the long-handled stirrer kept the penny moving, preventing sticking. Whether the penny had any effect I don't know, but we believed it did. More apples would be added as the mixture boiled all day. By evening, it would be thick, red, and utterly delicious. Canned, it would be a winter staple.

One thing I did every summer was to guide the elderly, blind Doctor Lovett back home a mile down the road. He was very independent. He used a wire to guide himself down the path to the road from his house. There, he would simply wait for some local to give him a ride to my uncle's little store. Whatever his accomplishments as a doctor, he was a world-class talker. He would seize the arm of his guide and wave his white-tipped cane in the air and expound at a furious rate. He particularly liked to tell stories about the history of Bulltown, and he was filled with stories about my father and my uncles. I can't remember any examples now, but not for lack of effort by Doctor Lovett to tell every tale. It was from him that I first learned the details of two Civil War skirmishes that took place in Bulltown.

Even as a summertime visitor, I knew most of the families in Bulltown, but that was not a notable achievement, given the sparse population of the town.

The Bulltown bridge, dating back to one of those battles, was still in place in my day. It was painted red. The story was told that holes in its frame structure were left there by mini-balls fired by soldiers from

Bulltown Historical Area

In the 1970's, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased property along the Little Kanawha River in Braxton County, upriver from Burnsville, to make way for the new Burnsville Lake and Dam. Most of the old community of Bulltown was flooded as a result. Portions remain, however, and are open to visitors at the Bulltown Historical Area and Overlook, located near the Bulltown Campground and the Bulltown Day Use Area at Burnsville Lake.

The Bulltown Historical Area is considered significant for two reasons. It is the site of the Battle of Bulltown, fought between Union and Confederate forces on October 13, 1863. The Union maintained a fort here, and the two sides clashed

Bulltown Overlook, in about 1980. This is the site of the 1863 Battle of Bulltown. Courtesy of the State Historic Preservation Office.

both sides, but I never saw evidence of this. One of my uncles, however, had a number of miniballs that he had found while plowing his garden. The Gauley Bridge-Weston Turnpike, a dirt road that ran along the west bank of the Little Kanawha, crossed the river at the Bulltown bridge near my grandfather's shop.

At the west side of the bridge stood a tiny store, selling a limited line of groceries and notions. It was owned, operated, and lived in by my great-uncle Labon Norman and his wife Jessie, a mysterious recluse. He was the brother-in-law of my grandfather, originally from Napier, just a couple of miles away over the hill. He had Parkinson's disease. I recall so vividly seeing him on the porch of his store in a cane chair tipped back against the wall, shaking so violently that I kept expecting to see him fall. But he never did. Sometimes when I'd visit, he would offer me candy, but mostly it was stale.

Even as a summertime visitor, I knew most of the families in Bulltown, but that was not a notable achievement, given the sparse population of the town. There were only 35 souls there when the 1940 census was taken.

One tale I heard often was the story of how Bulltown got its name. A decade before the Revolutionary War began, the story goes, a band of Delaware Indians settled in the bottomland where the town was later located. A family from Camden-on-Gauley was murdered there by Indians. Although this killing was commonly believed to have been done by a Shawnee band, a revenge-seeking group of five whites attacked the Delawares in the night, killing every man, woman, and child, and throwing their bodies in the river. The chieftain of the Delawares was named Captain Bull. The name of the town derives from this act of infamy.

Another infamous deed in my view, was the decision to flood that valley and drown my land of boyhood summers. Yet nothing can erase the vivid memories I have or the joys that I found in the Bulltown of my youth.

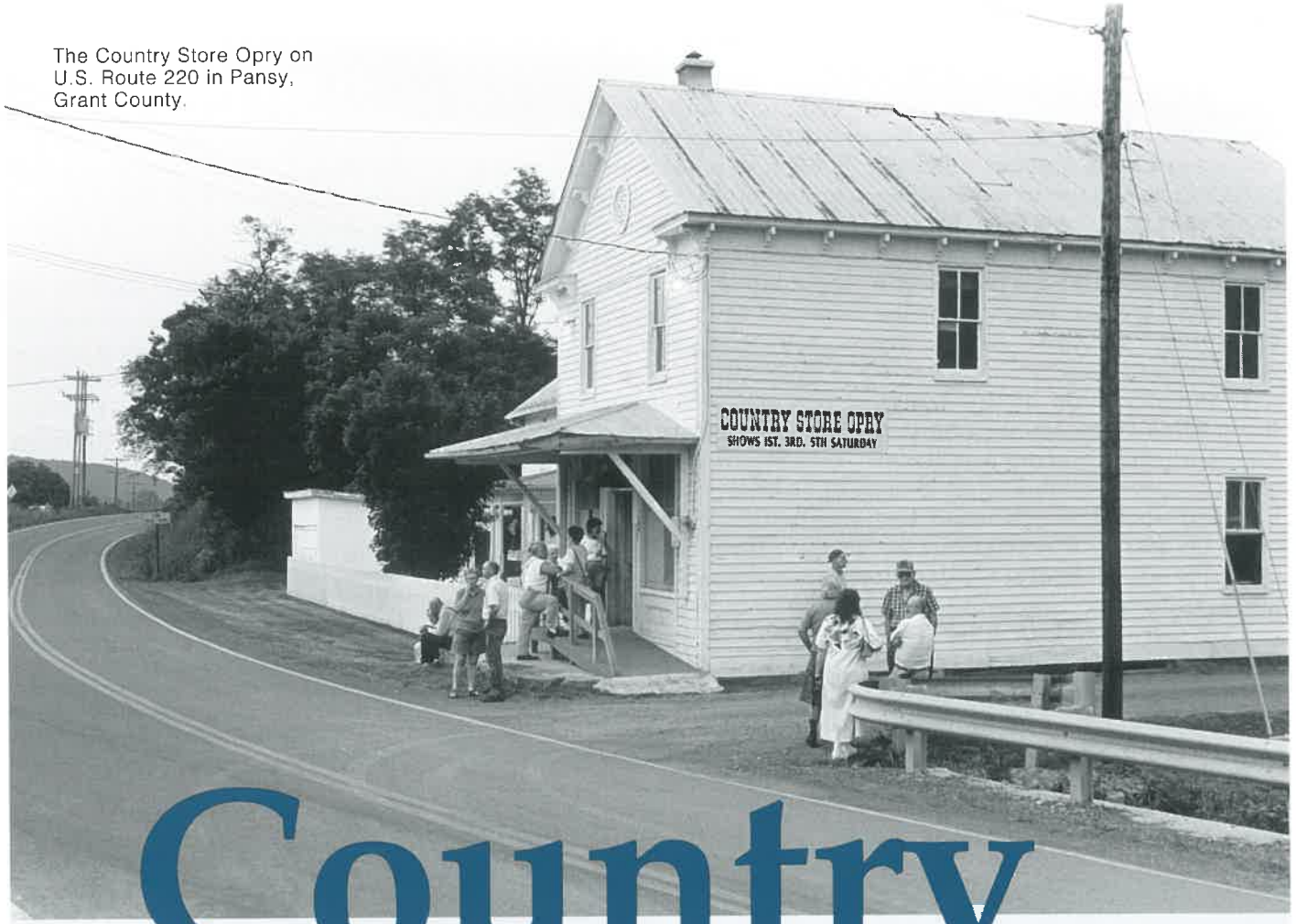
DUANE LOCKARD was born at Owings, Harrison County. He attended Fairmont State College and West Virginia University before earning his Ph.D. in political science from Yale University. He retired in 1984 after teaching political science at Princeton University for 25 years. He now lives in Massachusetts. Duane has authored several books, including *Coal: A Memoir and Critique*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

over control of the Weston-Gauley Turnpike and the covered bridge, which crossed the Little Kanawha River at Bulltown. After a 12-hour battle, the Union emerged victorious.

In addition, the area contains several important structures dating back to the 19th century, documenting the architecture and farming practices of central West Virginia during the late 1800's. Three of these buildings remain from the old Cunningham farm, owned by Moses Cunningham during the Civil War. He was a Southern sympathizer who was reportedly injured by a stray bullet as he ran into the line of fire shouting "Hurrah for Jeff Davis" during the heat of the battle.

The Bulltown Historical Area is open to the public year-round, free of charge. Guided tours are available by special arrangement. For further information, write to the Resource Manager, Burnsville Lake, HC 10 Box 24, Burnsville, WV 26335; phone (304)853-2371.

The Bulltown Historical Area at Burnsville Lake includes several preserved structures, such as the Johnson house, pictured here. The house is noted for its distinctive stone and mud-daubed chimney. Photograph from about 1980, courtesy of the State Historic Preservation Office.



The Country Store Opry on U.S. Route 220 in Pansy, Grant County.

Country Store Opry

Grant County's Music Capitol

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

Shortly before 6 p.m. on the first, third, and fifth Saturday of the month, Ernest Mullenax of Pansy, Grant County, puts one of his favorite Gibson guitars in his Dodge pickup and drives 200 yards south on U.S. Route 220 to the country store founded by his grandfather, the late W.C. Harman.

Located on a lonely stretch of the twisting highway, this two-story, frame building is home to the Country Store Opry and the Western Wheeler band. Ernest owns the building and plays lead guitar in the band. Other band members are the Reverend Ed Null, Wendell Nelson, and Carolyn Simmons of Franklin; Bob Yost of Cumberland, Maryland; Tammy Western of Petersburg; Barb Stump and her daughter Monica (the "Gold Dust Twins"), also of Petersburg; and William "Pee Wee" Heckel and his daughter Susie, who drive across seven mountains from Elkins to play in the Opry band.

Not for money or fame, they play and sing for the

sheer joy of making music. Some of the members go so far as to call the Opry a family, whose parents are the universal language of music and whose homeplace is an old country store. Even the audience members, many of whom have been coming here for more than three decades, are a part of this family.

"It's like we have a family reunion there every other Saturday night," says Susie Heckel, a vocalist and the band's drummer.

"It's good entertainment on a Saturday night," says Louella Simmons, a Pansy resident who has walked the half-mile from her house to the store on many nights. "I get to see my neighbors there that I don't see during the week."

Calling itself the "Country Music Capitol of the Potomac Highlands," the Opry's shows are held April through December. There's also an anniversary show around the middle of February and an occasional "gospel night" at the band's discretion.

The setting is spartan, at best. The "auditorium" holds about 135 patrons squeezed into rows, not unlike the chickens raised in the hencoops dotting this landscape. The audience sits in old fold-up theater seats salvaged from an Elkins movie house. The stage is dimly lit by a row of red and blue footlights; a plywood "Country Store Opry" sign with cutout letters covered with back-lit red crepe paper hangs over the stage, which, until show time, is concealed behind a dark-red, tattered curtain. The walls are decorated with harness parts, a bugle, ice tongs, horseshoes, and a "No Drinking No Smoking" sign. Until the sun goes down, more light pours through the single window and side door than comes from the modest house lights.

Despite its austere interior, the Opry has a faithful following of both patrons and musicians. "It's just a group of people who enjoy music and getting together for a good evening of playing," says Wendell Nelson, the band's master of ceremonies, lead male vocalist, and guitar player.

The Opry came into existence in the winter of 1967. This building, however, dates back to the 1890's. It was the local store for this community, and it hosted plenty of picking and singing long before Ernest Mullenax and his friends gutted it and built a stage where W.C. Harman once had his office and where Pansy post office patrons picked up their mail. Ernest says that each wall of the store was lined with shelves. Three-foot-wide counters extended down both sides of a center aisle, and clerks worked behind the counters, filling orders for groceries, clothing, fabric, and household supplies.

Photograph of sign by Ernest Mullenax.

Ernest grew up next door, in a pleasant antebellum frame home surrounded by a white picket fence. It was part of a farm that had belonged to his maternal grandmother Kate Mouse.

In the 1930's, when Ernest was a lad, residents of Pansy and nearby communities had little in the way of organized entertainment. He says that people would come down from the hills on Saturday evenings to listen to old-time mountain music played by local musicians who'd congregate on the store's front porch. According to Ernest, most were not particularly good musicians, his grandfather being the exception. W.C. Harman had a command of the fiddle and the banjo.

Ernest took his place on the front porch after 1936 — a pivotal year in his life. "When I was 11, I had polio," he says. "It put me down flat for about six months. While I was down, my mother bought me a guitar from Sears & Roebuck. She paid $7 for it."

The guitar provided therapy for Ernest, whose left leg still suffers from the polio-induced weakness. Ernest says that he taught himself to play the guitar

by following lessons in a book. After he recovered enough to join his grandfather on the front porch, W.C. taught his grandson one very important lesson about music. "He told me time is music," Ernest says. "If you played music with him, you had to keep good time. And I expect that from the people who play with me today."

Ernest put his music aside in his early adult life, as he built up a large refrigerated trucking business, which he still owns and operates. His grandfather died in 1951, and the store was shut down shortly afterward. He says his mother Bessie didn't have any interest in continuing the business, and the store sat vacant for more than a decade.

In the mid-1960's, while making a pastoral visit to Mullenax's home, Reverend Ed Null noticed his parishioner's guitar resting in a corner of his living room. Ed, a Parkersburg native, had begun playing country music when he was nine years old. He says that his father gave $38 for a Gibson guitar, which his cousin sold to them when he was drafted in 1943. The cousin spent a couple of days showing Ed a few chords before reporting for duty, and with a little additional help from his uncle, Ed was soon playing at school functions. He recalls his first performance being at his fifth-grade Valentine's Day party.

Ed says that he struck up a conversation with Ernest about playing country music, and the two men were soon picking together after Sunday evening church services.

Wendell Nelson was the third person to join the impromptu band. The Upper Tract native grew up in a family that played bluegrass music. Richard Arbaugh, one of Wendall's cousins, taught him to play guitar at the age of 13, and it wasn't long before Nelson was part of a group called the West Virginia Boys, playing venues from ice-cream socials to homecomings and the Forest Festival. Wendall eventually

The Western Wheeler band, led by Ernest Mullenax, seated at center with guitar, has played at the Country Store Opry since it opened in 1967. The band renovated the building, with seating salvaged from a theater in Elkins.

Wendall Nelson, at left, and the Reverend Ed Null are two original members of the Opry's Western Wheeler Band. Wendall took a 30-year leave of absence to work in Baltimore, but he came back in 2001. Bass player Pee Wee Heckel is also visible, at center.

drifted away from that group, which played mostly gospel and bluegrass, and found his place in country music and the Opry.

As word of the group's sweet sound spread through the South Branch Valley, other musicians offered their talents, including Quinten Harman on rhythm guitar, Sid Rohrbaugh on bass, and Sid's son Tom on guitar. "We got to playing after church on Sunday nights," Ed says. "We would all go down to Mr. Mullenax's home or to one of the homes of the other musicians, and the crowd would follow us. Other people would come to listen to us, or the neighbors would come over. It got so big, we had to sit outside in his yard and play."

As the winter of 1966-67 approached, the musicians began to wonder where they would gather for their Sunday performances. Ernest says that his father Roland C. Mullenax came up with an offer they couldn't resist — he'd let them use the old country store, rent-free, if they'd agree to maintain the building. To this day, Ernest credits his late father with giving the Opry a home, thereby continuing a tradition of country music at the Pansy store. "My grandfather would be real happy that's what his store had become," Ernest says of W.C. Harman, who died before the store's transformation into an Opry house.

Ed says that the building had been used for storage, and it took them three weekends to clean out the debris. They cleared shelving and counters from the front third of the building and created a small stage in one corner of the refurbished area. They began holding their picking sessions around a pot-bellied stove throughout the late fall and early winter that year while they completed renovations.

Wendell Nelson recalls the stage being so small that the musicians were constantly bumping into each other or falling off. Despite the austere beginnings, the Western Wheeler band — so named because of Ernest's trucking company connections — opened to a full house of 30 to 40 fans on February 18, 1967. Original members who performed that night included Petersburg country comedienne Elsie Whitmer and band members Ernest Mullenax, Ed Null, Wendall Nelson, Quinten Harman, and Sid and Tom Rohrbaugh. Shirley Yokum, who played guitar, was master of ceremonies. Of the

The Opry is housed in this old general store building, which dates back to the 1890's.

Comedienne Elsie Whitmer has been entertaining Opry audiences — and performers — with her Minnie Pearl impersonations since day one. She was photographed here in June 2002.

originals, only Wendall, Ernest, Ed, and Elsie are still living and performing. [See "'So Proud To Be Here': A Visit With Comedienne Elsie Whitmer," by Carl E. Feather; page 62.]

Wendall says that in the Opry's first several years, the band played a three-hour show every Saturday night. "It was hard to get new material every week. There was a lot of pressure on all of us," he notes. Eventually, the band adopted a schedule of alternating Saturday nights, which helped maintain both the musicians' and the crowd's interest in the project.

Initially, a hat was passed for donations to pay the utilities and make repairs to the building. But as the crowds got larger and more amenities were needed, a set admission charge became necessary. Ernest says they started at 50 cents, then raised it to a dollar a head. It graduated to $2, and a couple of years ago hit $3.

"That's ridiculous," comments Ernest. "If you were to go to Branson, you'd pay $30. And we got them beat when it comes to playing traditional country music."

Although it might seem a stretch to compare a down-home operation like the Country Store Opry to a Branson or Nashville show, Wendall says that the Western Wheeler band members strive for professionalism and perfection in their performances. He believes there was a more conscious attempt to emulate the "big time" when the Opry first started. Ernest and the band members frequently went to Nashville to see how the big names ran their shows, then tried to implement that showmanship at the Country Store Opry. During the 1970's, the Opry even had a live broadcast over WELD radio in Fisher — an attempt to replicate the WSM broadcast of the "Grand Ole Opry."

The broadcast nearly destroyed the Opry. "That hurt us bad," Ernest says. "The boy that did that show would put anyone on the stage who came in there. He put some bad stuff on there, and it gave us a bad reputation. It was bad news."

After that experience, Ernest made a rule: If you want to perform on the stage, you have to audition before him, Ed, Wendall, and Susie Heckel — the Opry Board. "If you want to sing with the band, come at 6 o'clock, and we'll listen to you," Ernest says. "We'll turn you away if we think you need to go back and practice some more."

Despite the occasional success story — and there

The Landes Ruritan operates a concession stand at the Opry, raising about $1,200 a year for Pansy-area residents in need.

have been a few — the Opry stage is not a talent farm for Nashville. Its mission is one of preservation. The band plays the kind of country music that audience members listened to on their pickup radios while they were courting.

"If you notice, you'll see the crowd is mostly older," Ed says. "We do the country music they remember from the 1950's to the early 1970's: Roy Acuff, Hank Williams, Hank Snow, George Jones, and those kinds of people."

Ernest says there's a growing demand for more gospel music, and the Opry has addressed that by offering all-gospel nights. "The people who don't drink, don't dance, don't smoke, and don't go to the movies come to see us," Ernest says.

Ernest Mullenax, at left, is the founder, bandleader, and manager of the Country Store Opry. Here, he has his picture made with band members Barbara Stump and Ed Null. The Opry is a labor of love for everyone involved.

The audience is amazingly forgiving of the ordinary seating, the tight quarters, dim lighting, occasional whiff of barn odors from the farm across the highway, roar of semi-tractors just outside the open front door, and hike to the restrooms. Indeed, longtime Opry patrons point to a little white building across the creek and recall when that two-seater was the restroom.

Ernest says that the outhouse was built by the WPA in 1938, and he maintains it as a reminder of just how far they have come. [See "The Roosevelt Outhouse," by Norman Julian; Winter 1998.] A few years ago, to meet the demands of the larger crowds, Ernest constructed a new, free-standing restroom facility with modern plumbing.

He still uses the original outhouse as a springboard for one of the many jokes he tells during the performance. Ernest says that when he was young man, another lad came down from the hills to listen to the music that was played on the steps of the store on a Saturday night. Later that evening, the young man was seen standing at the two-holer with a fishing pole, trying to retrieve something from the hole.

"My grandfather said, 'What are you doing there, boy?' And he said, 'I dropped my coat down there.' He said, 'You ain't a-goin' to wear it again, are you?' And he said, 'No, but my biscuit was in the pocket.'"

A nearby concession stand, operated by the Landes Ruritan, sells refreshments before the show and at intermission. The other thing that patrons can spend money on at the Opry are CD's and cassette tapes that the Western Wheeler band recorded live in the store. Sales help to defray operation costs, like the $6,000 it took to put up that restroom building. Most of the operating income, however, comes from the patrons who support the Opry with their faithful attendance and $3 admission fee.

The task of extracting that fee falls upon the doorman, a position filled by Edwin White. Edwin not only collects the money, but also is expected to keep an eye out for rowdy patrons. That seldom happens, largely, Edwin suspects, because Ernest does not allow alcoholic beverages in the store. Even smoking has to be done outside the building.

Like the band members, Edwin is a volunteer. His only compensation is free admission for himself and his wife Norma. From the doorman to the owner, the Opry is a labor of love, not money.

"It's the love of the people who perform here, the love of their music," Susie Heckel says, explaining what's kept this piece of Americana going for so long. "There have been times that, if it had been a business, the doors would have closed. Ernie and the original group that started the Opry are always there. Performers have come and gone, the crowd has come and gone, but their love for the music is constant."

CARL E. FEATHER lives in northeast Ohio, but has family roots in Preston and Tucker counties. His book *Mountain People in a Flat Land* is published by the Ohio University Press. Carl is the owner of Feather Multimedia, a freelance photography and writing business. He has been lifestyles editor at the *Ashtabula Star-Beacon* since 1991. Carl's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2003 issue.

"So Proud To Be Here"

Elsie Whitmer of Petersburg is always proud to be at the Country Store Opry in Pansy. Starting the first night the Opry opened in February 1967 and continuing for more than 30 years, Elsie has entertained the Saturday night audiences with her lively impersonations of the definitive country comedienne, the late Sara Ophelia Colley Cannon, better known as Minnie Pearl.

Failing eyesight during the past several years has kept the 91-year-old entertainer from driving herself the six miles from her Pierpont Street home to Pansy. However, if a relative or friend volunteers to take her to the Opry, Elsie gladly dons her frilly dress and hat with the price tag still attached and gives a command performance. [See "Country Store Opry: Grant County's Music Capital," by Carl E. Feather; page 56.]

"How-dee! I'm just so proud to be here," she says in a shrill voice to the adoring crowd. "This is your cousin Minnie Pearl, from Grinder's Switch, up here to tell you the latest goings on. I was at this party the other night, and a young man came up to me and said, 'Oh, Minnie Pearl, drinking

Ninety-one-year-old Elsie Whitmer of Petersburg loves entertaining audiences with her humorous stories and Minnie Pearl impersonations.

Elsie as Minnie

Elsie's shrill voice, country twang, costume, and homespun humor make her a dead ringer for the original Minnie Pearl. She borrows much of her material directly from Minnie Pearl's repertoire. Here's a sample:

"Uncle Nabob, he was kind of bad to go into town and get to drinking on Saturday night. Aunt Ambrosie — that's his wife — she's been trying to break him of it. So last Saturday night, he went into town, and she got herself an old false face, a set of horns, put on a robe, and hid in the bushes down there below the house. Along about midnight, here comes Uncle Nabob weaving up the road. She jumped out and said, 'Boo, I'm the devil.' He said, 'Well, let me shake your hand. You know, I'm married to your sister.'"

Much of Elsie's comedy deals with her age, its effects on her body, and her quest for romance. "When I come out here this evening, I heard a couple fellers talking about me. 'Oh, here comes that old Minnie Pearl, homeliest old girl in town.' The other feller says, 'Oh, well now, she might be all right.' About that time, I walked up and said, 'I heard what you said about me, and I don't deny it, but I resent it.' About that time, a man came up to with a gun and a mask on his face. He says, 'Your money or your life.' I says, 'Well, I don't have any money, so I reckon you'll have to take my life.' So he searched around me and said, 'Well, you're telling the truth. You don't have any money.' I said, 'You keep searching on me like that I'll write you a check.'"

Mullenax, the Opry's founder and owner. "Yet she's always been upbeat. She's never let anything get her down. She's always looked at the bright side."

After at least five decades of performing, Elsie has amassed hundreds of jokes. She says that this one is her favorite:

"My maw, she told me she was really worrying herself into pieces because the price of groceries is so high these days. She says a dollar just don't go nowhere. And Brother, he said, 'Maw, you ought to go down there to my school, cause my teacher told us the other day about a man who could make a dollar go a long way. His name was George Washington, and he made a dollar go clear across the Potomac River.' I said, 'You know, I never did believe that story. And when I get to heaven, I'm going to ask George.' Brother said, 'And what if he didn't go to heaven?' I said, 'Then you ask him.'"

Elsie laughs heartily, the kind of laughter she hopes the audience will reward her with when she tells the story on the stage next time.

"Be sure and let out your laughter," she says. "If you don't, it will drop down through your stomach and spread out in your hips."

Elsie relaxes on the porch of her Petersburg home. Although she has known some difficult times in her life, she keeps a smile on her face and enjoys getting other people to smile with her.

"We Like This Old Music"

The stage was crowded at Hillbilly Haven on a Saturday afternoon last September. Pictured from the left are Kermit Sampson, Fred Morris, Kenneth Sampson (seated), David Morris, Alvin Morris, fiddler Albert Conners, and owner Jack Morris. The dog is named Krackle.

Wetzel County's Hillbilly Haven

Text and photographs by
Carl E. Feather

For at least three generations, Morris Run in Wetzel County has resonated with the sound of music played by members of the local Morris family. According to Alethia Morris DiRemigio of Moundsville, her grandfather David Z. Morris was both a carpenter and music teacher. His knowledge and love of music was passed to at least two of his children, Okey and William F. Morris, who played banjo and guitar.

"Their father would listen to them play over the old hand-cranked telephone," says Alethia. "He dropped dead while listening to them with the receiver to his ear."

Jack Morris is one of Okey's nine children. He continues the Morris tradition of music in this hollow with his Hillbilly Haven, an outdoor music park that he and his wife Louise Maxine (Gould) opened in the spring of 1998.

Admission to this rustic Opry is free. Likewise, the stage is open to anyone who wants to join the house band for a song or two. Louise says that the Opry has attracted soloists and bands from as far away as western Maryland. If you look closely, you'll see where Jack had to build a few extra feet of stage onto the original structure to accommodate the larger groups that gather there.

Hillbilly Haven is located nine miles west of Hundred, off Route 7. Visitors take Low Gap-Rocky Run Road off Route 7, go three miles, then turn left at Morris Run Church of Christ, and follow the signs. The Opry is held the second and fourth Saturday of the month, from as soon as the last traces of winter have disappeared from the hollow, until late October.

"There was one time we almost froze to death," says Phyllis Yeater, Jack's oldest sister. "We wanted to go home, but the band kept playing."

"I had to go up to the house and get coats and shirts for people to put on," Louise adds.

The house she is referring to is the log cabin that stands on the hill above the stage and audience pavilion. Jack built this home from logs harvested off the 22 acres of Morris family property he owns. It is the land where he was born and raised, land surrounded by Morris kin and heritage. Brother David lives to the west of him, cousin Harry to the east. Another cousin lives on the land behind his, and a distant relative is across the road.

"Just about everyone around here is related to the

Left: Hillbilly Haven audience members enjoy the show on Morris Run in Wetzel County. The message on the front of the stage reads, "Welcome to Hillbilly Haven. Let's Keep Good Ole' Country and Bluegrass Alive."

The Hillbilly Haven Relief Office — a fancy name for the outhouse — has a rustic look, but it also appears to be wired for electricity.

Morrises, except me," says Louise. "I said Jack had to import me from Upshur County to get someone he was not related to."

Jack and Louise were married June 8, 1996, after meeting through a newsletter for singles. "His ad said, 'Must like country music,'" Louise recalls. A country music lover from his childhood days, Jack says that he always wanted to have his own country music park, but it took his wife's vision to make the project a reality. After she saw the hollow that Jack owned, she made a sketch of a couple of buildings and wrote the words "Hillbilly Haven" on the drawing. Jack told her that he'd build it if she were serious about following through with the work of promoting the Opry.

Louise, with help from Jack's sisters Phyllis Yeater and Margaret Sullivan, made up a bunch of fliers and tacked them up on telephone poles and handed them out to neighbors and any person they met.

Jack was in the process of building a barn for his horse at the time, and he decided to add a covered stage to the front of the structure. A pavilion for the audience was then built downhill from the stage. It consists of an open-air frame of small, upright logs capped with a corrugated metal roof. The audience sits on seats salvaged from a school bus.

The other and perhaps most important structure that Jack built is a red one-seater at the corner of the horse pasture. Jack painted "Hillbilly Haven Relief Office" on the door.

"I think anybody would be glad to be a hillbilly," Jack says, defending the Opry's name.

"We think of the term 'hillbilly' in a positive connotation," adds Louise. "To us, a true West Virginia hillbilly is a person who is a native West Virginian. We are proud to be native West Virginians, and we are

The atmosphere is casual as audience members enjoy the show from the comfort of converted bus seats. The pavilion, built by Jack Morris, provides some basic shade and shelter.

not illiterate, ignorant, uneducated people."

Jack and Louise also live up to country folks' reputation for hospitality by making sure that every first-time visitor feels welcome. Phyllis is the official welcoming committee of one. "I greet them and talk to everybody new when they arrive," she says.

"Everybody has a good time here," says Elwood Morris, Jack's cousin from Charlotte, North Carolina. "There are no strangers. If you are a stranger, just go and introduce yourself, and you won't be a stranger anymore."

They further extend their hospitality by entering every audience member into a drawing for door prizes. During the week, Jack's brother Alvin travels to area businesses and solicits the donations, which range from wooden train whistles to a free burger and fries at a fast food restaurant.

A small amount of income is derived from a concession stand operated out of a camper trailer by Barbara Schmalz, Linda Wilson, and Donna Morris. The most expensive item sold at the stand is bottled water. It costs $1. All other items — the soda, pepperoni rolls, hamburgers, hot dogs, and bowls of chili — are 50 cents each. "We didn't get into it to make a profit," says Louise. "We do it just to have some fun."

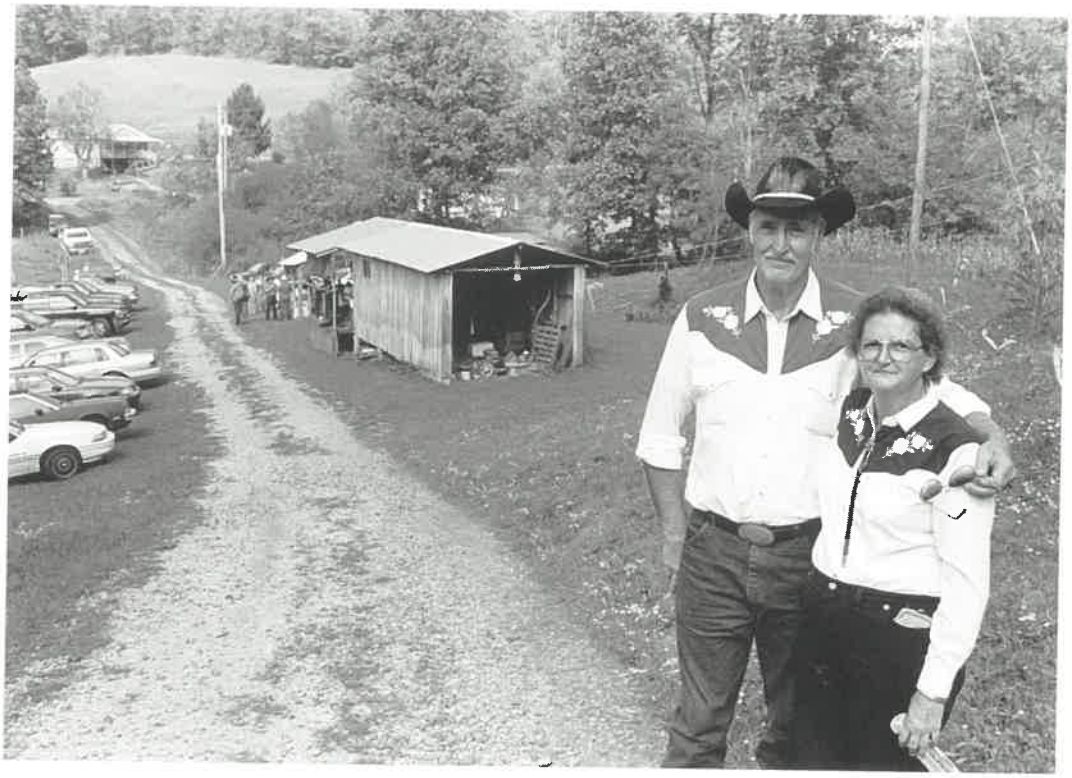
The show gets under way at 1 p.m. and continues until dark. Alvin Morris is master of ceremonies. He tells jokes, yodels, and conducts the door prize drawings, but when he asks people if they'd rather hear him or someone else sing, the vote generally goes to the other band members. He gladly yields the microphone to the other performers, who sing everything from gospel and old-time Appalachian songs to bluegrass and country.

"To us, a true West Virginia hillbilly is a person who is a native West Virginian. We are proud to be native West Virginians. We are not illiterate, ignorant, uneducated people."

The house band's composition fluctuates according to availability of members, but the full band includes Jack, who sings and plays guitar; resophonic guitar ("Dobro") player Ruth Ann Calvert; fiddler Albert Conners; and guitar players Lloye Riter, Kenneth Sampson, Kenneth's son Kermit, and Jack's brothers David and Fred Morris. Louise, who claims to be shy, sits on stage with Jack and occasionally gets up the courage to sing with him.

The audience members are mostly regulars, many of them family members and friends who come from as far away as Moundsville and Hundred. Lewis "Nick" Long, who was born in 1908, has the distinction of being both the eldest and most faithful audience member. Nick was there for the Opry's debut day and has been coming ever since. "He's the first one out here and the last to leave," says Jack. "He's had a heart attack, stroke, and pneumonia, but he still comes out here."

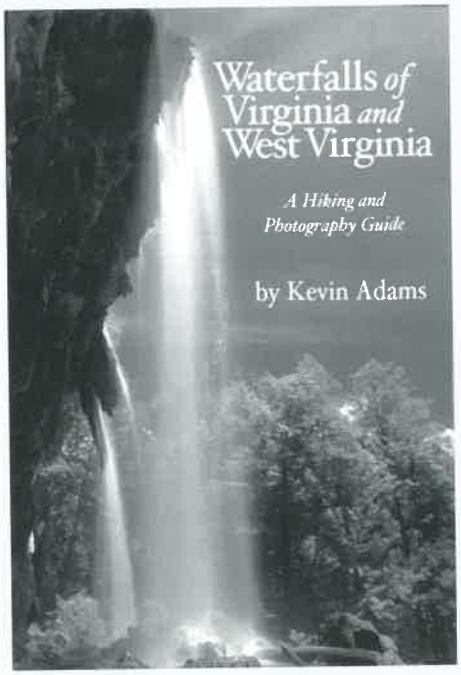
"He likes his music," says neighbor Imogene Wood, referring to Nick Long. "He can even do a little shuffle once in a while. We like this old music," she adds. "We wouldn't miss it."



Jack and Lou Morris host country and bluegrass music from April until October. Jack built the Hillbilly Haven stage onto the back of this horse barn on land that has been in his family for generations.

New Books Available

The summer travel season is upon us. Luckily, several new books and an attractive video are available to guide our way through West Virginia's great outdoors.

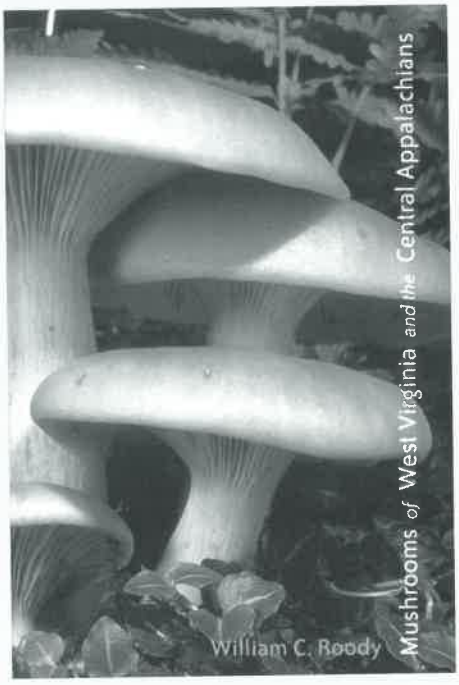


Waterfalls of Virginia and West Virginia: A Hiking and Photography Guide, by Kevin Adams, introduces readers to the art and science of visiting and photographing waterfalls. The 252-page paperbound book provides brief descriptions of about 200 falls in the region. It includes directions, accessibility information, type and height of each falls, and a one-to-10 scale "beauty rating" for each location. Black-and-white photographs illustrate many of the falls, and an eight-page color section reveals the author's own photographic skills.

A special feature of this book is its down-to-earth advice on surviving and getting the most out of a waterfall-hunting expedition, plus an informative 14-page section of waterfall-photography hints and tips. The book is available for $16.95 from Pictorial Histories Distribution, 1416 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301; phone (304)342-1848.

Mushrooms of West Virginia and the Central Appalachians, by William C. Roody, is an impressive new field guide from the University Press of Kentucky. At 524 pages, it is certainly one of the most thorough books available on this subject, and its generous use of color photography, clear organization, and succinct writing make it one of the most "user friendly."

Author Bill Roody is a seasonal biologist for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources in Elkins; he frequently lectures about mushrooms and leads collecting forays into the woods. His fine photography and descriptions are augmented with commentary about edibility, the etymology of mushroom names, and insight into traditional uses of mushrooms. The paperbound edition sells for $35 and is available by calling 1-800-839-6855 or on-line at www.kentuckypress.com.

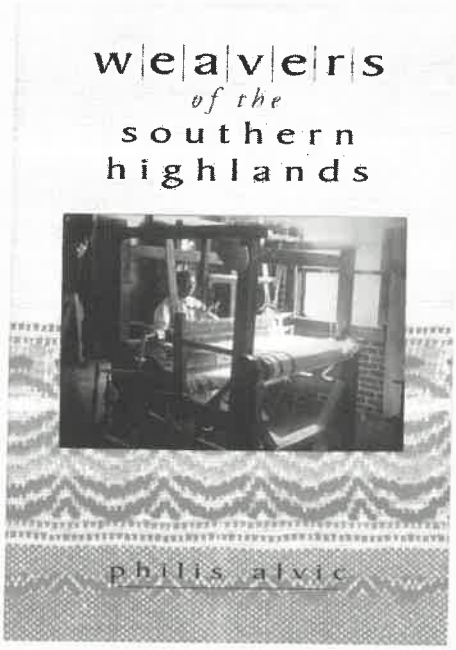


Southern Appalachian Wildflowers, by Barbara and Victor Medina, is another new field guide, this one from Falcon Publishing. The 214-page, paperbound book includes descriptions and color photographs of close to 300 different wildflowers commonly found in West Virginia and neighboring states. Organized by the color of each flower, the book is designed for use in identifying blooms while out on the trail, at a park, or along a mountain roadside. It sells for $24.95 and is available by calling 1-800-962-0973, or on-line at www.falcon.com.

For those who prefer to do their exploring from the vantage point of a comfortable chair, a new video offers a look at some of West Virginia's most scenic landscape and an introduction to one of our more talented and well-known outdoor photographers. *Mountain Memories: An Appalachian Sense of Place* is a 34-minute video from Real Earth Productions. It is an introduction to nature photographer and McDowell County native Jim Clark and his work. Clark has specialized in photographing West Virginia scenery for more than 25 years and has several books, articles, calendars, and other publications to his credit. The video highlights 125 of Clark's lush photographs of the Allegheny Highlands, while interviews with Clark provide background and insight into his life, career, and artistic approach.

The video was produced by Rich Schmitt of Mathias, Hardy County. It sells for $24.95 and is available from Patchwork Films; phone (304)645-4998 or visit www.patchworkfilms.com.

Four recent titles from the University Press of Kentucky concentrate on mountain crafts and traditional life.

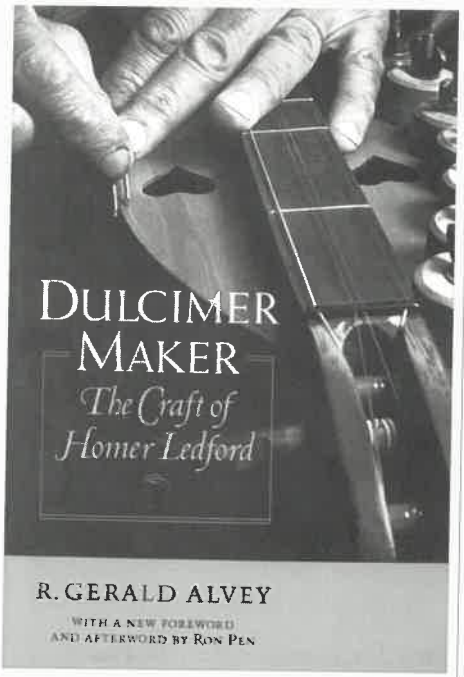


Weavers of the Southern Highlands, by Philis Alvic, is a new book about Appalachian weaving and the craft revival movement. Social reformers in the early 1900's breathed new life into this treasured art form with the establishment of settlement schools and weaving centers throughout the region after weaving became industrialized following the Civil War.

Teaching women important business and marketing skills, as well as weaving techniques, these schools and centers forged a new industry that held broad implications for local communities in terms of economic development, public attitudes, and women's empowerment. Several West Virginia schools and centers are listed, including the Mountaineer Craftsmen's Coop in Preston County, which is designated as a major weaving center.

Ms. Alvic's work is based on years of research and scores of oral histories. This 234-page hardbound book is an important addition not only to our understanding of weaving, but to our appreciation of the social issues surrounding mountain crafts. It sells for $35.

Two reissued books focus attention on the lives and work of two skilled craftsmen. In *Craftsman of the Cumberlands: Tradition & Creativity*, author Michael Owen Jones introduces us to chairmaker Chester Cornett of Perry County, Kentucky. It is a 304-page paperbound book, offered for $25. *Dulcimer Maker: The Craft of Homer Ledford*, by R. Gerald Alvey, tells the story of Winchester, Kentucky, instrument builder and musician Homer Ledford. This 216-page paperbound book sells for $19.95.



Kentucky Moonshine, by David Maurer, examines the craft and lore associated with traditional distilling, especially in Kentucky, though much of what is said here applies on this side of the Tug Fork, as well. The book was originally published in 1974 and is now available in paperback for $16.

All four of these books from the University Press of Kentucky are available by writing to 663 South Limestone Street, Lexington, Kentucky 40508-4008; by calling 1-800-839-6855; or on-line at www.kentuckypress.com.

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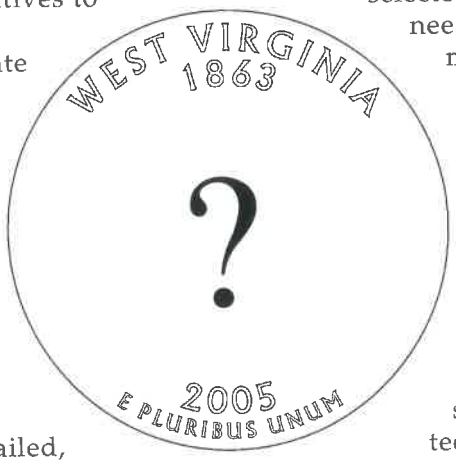
West Virginia Quarter?

In 2005, the United States Mint will release the West Virginia state quarter as part of its popular 50 State Quarters program. Governor Bob Wise recently unveiled a contest and invited all current state residents or state natives to submit designs. Announced in late April, the deadline for submissions was May 23. The governor expects to announce the five design finalists on West Virginia Day, June 20.



Contest rules were rather detailed, including stipulations that no state flags, state seals or emblems, or portraits or busts of persons living or dead would be considered. Contestants were likewise warned away from "controversial subjects or symbols that are likely to offend." Instead, the rules encouraged designs that featured landmarks, landscapes, buildings, symbols of resources or industry, official state flora or fauna, "state icons," or the outline of the state.

Initial judging was entrusted to a panel of "artistically talented young West Virginians." The designs they selected will then need to pass muster with a group of graphic artists, the governor, the U.S. Mint, the Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee, the U.S. Commission on Fine Arts, and the Secretary of the Treasury, before being returned to the governor for his final pick. The Department of the Treasury gets the last okay.

The result should show up in your loose change in about two years. For additional information, phone (304)558-2000 or 1-888-438-2731, or visit www.wvgov.org.

Goldenseal

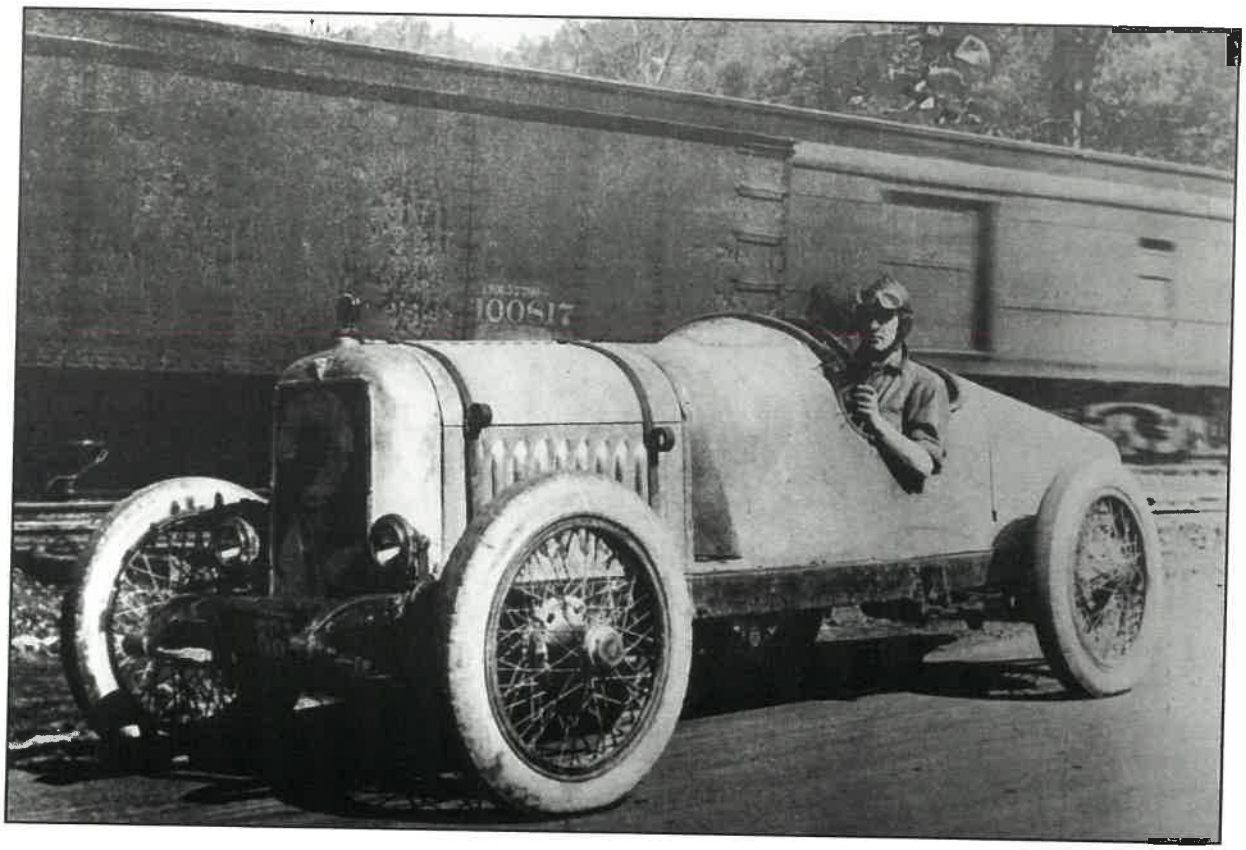
Coming Next Issue...

- Laying Track in Nicholas County
- Odd Fellows Home
- McMechen Memories
- Mining in Quick

PHOTO CURIOSITY

As articles in this issue attest, cars and car racing have been big news in West Virginia since the dawn of the automotive age. This wonderful photograph of driver I.H. "Skinnie" Moore was made at Northfork, McDowell County, in the early 1930's, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

Our notes indicate that Moore is driving a Hudson Special, but that's about all we know about this car, its driver, or the photograph. GOLDENSEAL welcomes any additional information.



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