Goldenseal

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Special Clay County Issue

Goldenseal

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COVER Detail from a photograph taken around 1928 of the Widen School student body posed in front of the Y.M.C.A. Photographer unknown.

The Teacher Corps Project in Clay County

In June 1975, the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies (C.O.G.S.), in conjunction with the Clay County School System, was a recipient of a Tenth Cycle National Teacher Corps grant. The overall purpose of this project was to provide enriched educational opportunities for teachers and students in Clay County. One component of the project was directed toward providing teachers and students a variety of multi-cultural learning opportunities and experiences.

Focusing initially on the culture and heritage of the Appalachian region in general, and that of Clay County specifically, teachers have been involved in a variety of graduate courses, inservice activities, and use of community resource people during the two-year project period. Most of the articles in this issue of GOLDENSEAL represent the results of teacher research emerging from a graduate course coordinated by Barbara Yeager, Associate Professor, Morris Harvey College. Additional inquiries about the Teacher Corps Project should be directed to Dr. Ronald B. Childress, Director, Teacher Corps Project, West Virginia College of Graduate Studies, Institute, WV 25112.

This Clay County Issue

This special Clay County issue of GOLDENSEAL is an experiment that we launched last year. Only with the assistance of the staff of this admirable C.O.G.S. graduate program could we have undertaken such a venture. Mrs. Barbara Yeager's off-campus teacher-students in her Appalachian Cultural segment of the program were asked to contribute articles on their county for publication. The articles on the Maysel musician, Wilson Douglas, by Mrs. Nancy McClellan were already in progress and are most appropriate to be included.

After a time it became clear that too much material for the single issue would be developed by the Clay teacher-students, so the experiment became a competition. What we have included here is, in our judgement, the most suitable material submitted.

The majority of the recent photographs in this issue were made by Gary Simmons, the new assistant to the editor of GOLDENSEAL. Photographs made by those other than Mr. Simmons are credited accordingly.

We are most grateful for the assistance we have received from the Teacher Corps Project's staff, Dr. Ronald B. Childress, Director; Mrs. Barbara Yeager, instructor-consultant; and Mrs. Mary Hughes, Community Coordinator with the Project. Mrs. Hughes at every turn has given us patient help that deserves our special thanks. To the many Clay Countians who have assisted in the production of this issue in various ways we extend our sincere thanks.

The Editor

Widen, The Town J. G. Bradley Built

By Betty Cantrell, Grace Phillips, and Helen Reed

WIDEN IS a part of a 93,000-acre tract of land granted to Simon D. Cameron, secretary of war to Lincoln, and later United States senator from Pennsylvania. He was the great-grandfather of Joseph Gardner Bradley, thought to be the last of the old-time coal barons. Bradley was president of the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company, which is located in the eastern part of Clay County. The portion of land on which Widen is located was sold to W. K. Edwards, who in turn sold it October 8, 1894, to Henry Murphy. Murphy sold it again in 1896 to the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company.

In 1898 Captain Halberstadt, the mine prospector for the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company, discovered deposits of coal at Dundon on Elk River. In 1904, Captain Halberstadt discovered that coal of a finer grade than the coal at Dundon could be found at the present site of Widen. The next step was the construction of a railroad to Widen from Dundon to transport coal to the markets.

In the fall of 1909, under the direction of L. G. Widen, a crew of 70 or 80 men began building the railroad, and it was completed in the spring of 1911. The same crew built a commissary and a tipple, and on July 14, 1911, the first load of coal was shipped from the new mine. The production in 1911 was 89,617 tons; in 1912, 159,491 tons; and in 1913, 267,261 tons.

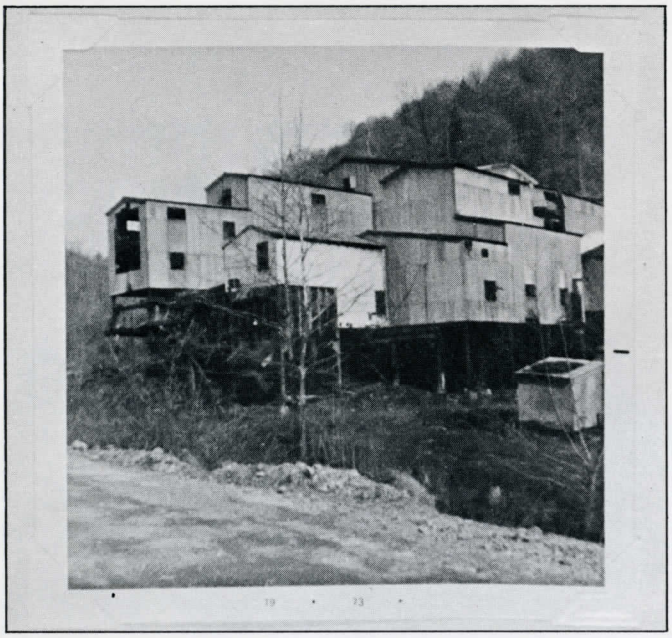
Mr. Widen, head of the railroad construction, was very well liked by the men who worked for him and by the company. When the post office authorities asked for a name for the town, there were several suggestions, among them Rich Run. The post office department desired a name of only one word. Mr. Bradley, in a conversation with a Mr. G. Bray and Mr. Widen, suggested using the name Widen. Mr. Widen protested against the use of his name, saying that he did not want his name attached to such a wild place. Mr. Bradley, nevertheless, sent the name in and it was accepted. Mr. Widen then told him that he must make a good town out of it or he would sue him for damages. On his return visit after 20 years he said with feeling. "Mr. Bradley kept his word. He has really made a town out of it." Indeed he had.

Joseph Gardner Bradley came to Clay County in 1904, as a right-of-way agent for the Buffalo Creek and Gauley Railroad. Later he became president of the railroad, president of the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company, and owner of more than 81,000 acres in Clay, Braxton, and Nicholas counties. Mr. Bradley's payroll in a good year was over four million dollars. He was quoted as saying to the publisher of the *Clay Messenger* on September 23, 1952, "It is 48 years ago now since I rode across Elk River from Clay to Dundon on Will Reed's white horse."

Bradley was born in Newark, New Jersey, and was the great-grandson of Simon Cameron, President Lincoln's secretary of war, and considered by many as father of the Republican party. His grandfather, James Donald Cameron, was President Grant's secretary of war; and his paternal grandfather, Joseph P. Bradley, was an associate justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. J. G. Bradley graduated from Harvard Law School in 1904, and at that time lived in Boston. He was an old-guard aristocrat. He died in March 1971 at his home in Needham, Massachusetts, at the age of 89.

Bradley was the focal point of the empire he created in Clay County. He and his wife made their home in the small town of Dundon in a lovely little valley far from the dinginess of Widen. This is an important detail. He did not choose to live in Widen, his town, and he built his home far away from everyone else's. No one came to his home except for business purposes. He seemed to avoid Widen as much as possible, in fact he put the mine superintendent in charge of the town. He often went to Florida or New York for two or three weeks at a time. This was part of his philosophy. He probably did not think it would be a good idea to become too close to his people. He had three different types of clothes for the three towns. He wore his best clothes in Widen, his next best in Swandale, and patchy ones in Dundon. At least he wanted people to feel he was one of them. It is difficult to meet someone who really knew this man.

Some researchers say that another reason for his staying away might have been that he didn't like what



he saw in the town he had created. But in order to achieve his ambitious goal, he apparently felt he had to run the town in this way, the totalitarian way. He built up the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company until it was one of the biggest mining companies in West Virginia.

This brief description of J. G. Bradley should give some insight into his character. He was an opportunist. First, he married into money, and, secondly, he used this to make more money. He was a smart man. He knew how to use his acquired land. He also knew how to use people. Not only did he grab opportunities, but he was good at making them. For example, when a person needed a loan or was in trouble he was always anxious to help. He wanted to keep the people contented.

Families in Widen had both working-class and lower-middle-class traits. They were above average or large in number. There were families from several nations and races, Polish, Chinese, Hungarian, Anglo-American, and Negro. They all lived together, isolated from any neighboring town, except for one winding road and the railroad.

Bradley tried to keep the people there. He provided everything they could possibly want materially. There were Methodist and Baptist churches and a special church for blacks. Other facilities were a swimming pool, fishing pond, hunting lodge, community building, fire department, post office, bank, company store, medical center, grade school, high school, boarding house, ballfield, and Y.M.C.A.

Many who were born there in the early years lived and worked in Widen all their lives. Their fathers had worked for the company and many of their children would work for it. All of these nationalities and races intermixed very well socially, except for the blacks, who lived on Fayette Street, the first street seen when entering Widen. The black people were not blatantly discriminated against, yet they socialized mostly within their own group.

Some opinions of J. G. Bradley are less harsh than others, as is indicated by memoirs written by Mr. Parker C. Black, a retired educator who went to Widen

Top left. The old tipple as it appeared in 1973. It is no longer standing. Photograph by Dorothy Butler.

Above. Old photograph:
"Inspection trip inside mines." This photograph was taken in August, 1953 of Mrs. Jackson Boyd, a friend of the Bradleys, J. G. Bradley, and Mrs. Bradley. The photographer's initials were "HCJ." Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Ollie Lanham.

The center of Widen today. From the left, the volunteer fire department, the former bank, the post office, the old community building, and a former residence.

from Parkersburg in 1925 and left in 1939. In that period the elementary school was expanded to a high school that was accredited by the North Central Association. Mr. Black wrote a longer account of his life than the excerpt below in the months before his death in December of 1975 in Parkersburg.

Mr. Bradley was from Boston and came from and was associated with wealth. He was an aristocrat in the old accepted sense. But make no mistake. Do not downgrade him. He had wealth and power and was somewhat aloof, but he had the interests of his people at heart. He paid salaries far above the prevailing scale in order to attract the most competent people and to prevent the Unions from organizing his industries. Unions were never able to organize until after he retired and sold out. He was utterly opposed to them.

If ever there was a fiefdom in the United States, that area was it. But it was a benevolent government and most of the people liked it. The employees for the most part were local people, and strangers were checked carefully before being engaged. Troublemakers were given quick notice that they were *personna non grata.* They soon disappeared. Widen was the most law-abiding community I have ever been in.

The above is merely background material as a prelude to my experiences with the company. I went to Widen in 1925 as principal of a ten-teacher elementary school. Mr. E. T. Price was the general superintendent of the coal operation. He was quite a character. He governed completely. He was Mayor, Council, Big Boss, sole trustee of the school, truant officer, president of the bank; in fact, he was everything. But, again, make no mistake, it was a benevolent dictatorship. If one did his job well, he had nothing to fear; but if one were remise, he did not last long. Price's classic dismissal notice was "I want my house." An employee could not resist because the company owned all of the houses.

In my interview with Mr. Price before accepting the position, he said: "Mr. Black, we want good men. I will pay you twice what you are now getting. All I ask is your loyalty. You will be in complete charge of the school, and will have a free hand. I do not know anything about running a school, but I do know when a man makes a major mistake, and if you make one, I'll sure as hell tell you so! I do not want to be bothered. You run it. Organize it, employ your own teachers, offer teachers $15.00 a month beyond the state pay and we will pay the extra, make your own budget and buy your own equipment."

Those were my instructions when I went there and I made the most of it. Incidentally, my rapport with Mr. Price was perfect until he died two-and-a-half years later. It was a blow to me to lose him. Later, when Mr. Hinshelwood became superintendent, because the teacher turnover was so great, I persuaded him to pay $15.00 the first

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Ex-Elk River Coal Co. Head, J. G. Bradley, Dies At 89

"It is 48 years ago now since I rode across Elk River from Clay to Dundon on Will Reed's white horse."
–J. G. Bradley of his first visit to Clay County.
The Clay Messenger, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1952

Joseph Gardner Bradley died Tuesday at his home in Needham, Mass., at the age of 89.

From his first visit in 1904 as a right-of-way agent for the old Buffalo Creek and Gauley Railroad, J. G. Bradley was destined to become one of the most prominent and respected men in the history of Clay County.

From right-of-way agent to President of the BC&G Railroad to President of the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company and owner of more than 81,000 acres in Clay, Braxton, and Nicholas counties, Mr. Bradley's payroll in a good year was $4 million.

Mr. Bradley, with help from former Messenger editor, W. S. Distrill, kept the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company as one of only two mines in the state that did not fall into the hands of the United Mine Workers.

Born in Newark, N. J. Mr. Bradley was the great grandson of Simon Cameron, President Lincoln's secretary of war, and considered by many as father of the Republican party. His grandfather, James Donald Cameron, was President Grant's secretary of war and also a senator from Pennsylvania, and his paternal grandfather, Joseph P. Bradley, was an associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court.

J. G. Bradley graduated from Harvard Law School in 1904. He [illegible] listed in Who's Who of Amer[illegible] of the Bar.

Above. Bradley's obituary appearing in the *Clay Messenger*.

Right. Bradley's former home in Dundon near Clay is now dangerously delapidated.

year, $20.00 per month the second year, and $25.00 per month the third and subsequent years.

It should be noted at this point that the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company always maintained a nine-month's term for all of its schools, the ninth-month expenses for teachers salaries and materials expense being borne by the company exclusively. Eight months, at that time, was the prevailing practice throughout the state except in the urban centers.

Bradley ran a unique school system, and wages for his employees were also good. In 1928 his going rate for loading a car of coal was $1.50, well above the average paid in other places. In the days of hand-loading, 900 men were employed. By 1950 the number had dropped to about 600 men. In 1954 employees numbered 525, probably a result of the 1952-53 bitter strike in which one man lost his life. By 1958 the number had diminished to a mere 400 men, due partly to more advanced methods of mechanical mining. In 1959 Bradley sold out to Clinchfield Coal Company. Bradley had resisted the unionization of Widen, but the new company signed with the United Mine Workers almost immediately. However, this was not to save Widen; on December 30, 1963, the mines closed down. With the closing of the mines in the early '60s, Widen was drastically changed from the booming, progressive town of earlier years.

Virginia Chapman grew up near Ivydale and occasionally visited Widen years ago. Recently she wrote this account of a visit there in 1968.

Today I went to Widen. Thomas Wolfe was right, "You can't go home again." If Widen had been my hometown, I would have been terribly saddened at the sight. I was only an occasional visitor at my brother's home in Widen when I was young. But the first sight left me with a nostalgic feeling. I couldn't find the house until it was pointed out to me. The tipple has been disassembled, some of it sold for scrap metal, and the rest lies in disarray on the hillsides. The buildings around the main opening are falling down. The huge, high building with its tin sides and broken windows stands guard over the empty splay pools, boiler room, washhouse, and Legion Hall. The main office is boarded up, as is the clubhouse and many, many other houses.

Heavy equipment, such as four big heavy shovels and smaller welding trucks, all bearing the insignia ELRICO stood deserted, and seemingly where they were last used. A house with a plaque by the door reading "The Parsonage of Widen" stands in a row of empty houses, facing a row of dilapidated houses where once the elite of Widen lived. The bosses that helped run the operations

Remnants of Bradley's railroad, the Buffalo Creek and Gauley, near his former home at Dundon.

lived in these houses with steam heat, indoor plumbing, and garages out back.

The tiny building that functioned as a grill when the big one burned, is now the post office. The big green bank building now houses the "Widen Grill." There is a counter and row of bar stools on one side, and opposite is a small glass showcase holding various items in front of the shelf-lined wall holding a meager supply of groceries. I think strangers are viewed with suspicion, because I sat at the counter for more than ten minutes before my presence was even acknowledged by the three people there. When I simply asked for a coke and film, the atmosphere warmed, but I believe if I had begun asking questions, it would have cooled immediately. This is just the feeling I had.

The streets are still black dirt, but the creek is as clear as any mountain stream.

The school is now only two rooms, and is taught by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Elliot, who came out of retirement this year to teach there. Part of the big school building is in the process of being torn down on orders of the State Fire Marshall.

Behind the school stands the new church, opened in 1954. Clean, gray stuccoed walls, trimmed in gleaming white, it stands almost three dimensionally against the hill behind, a fitting monument to the golden age of Widen. Inside the spacious chapel room, the emptiness was enhanced by the register stating the attendance the last two Sundays was 40 and 42.

The building which was once a gym, but later the company store, is boarded up and the front is falling in. The old church is now the deserted U.M.W.A. Hall and stands opposite the seldom used huge community building. The swimming pool, tennis court, and lodge at the end of an impassable road are also in such disrepair that they could never be used again.

The water meter man said he serviced 75 meters, but some of these people live other places and still maintain their home in Widen. Most of the houses have different paint now, other than the Widen red of earlier times; and one house even has white aluminum siding which glistened glaringly in the sun. This alone would have been impossible when the mines were operating.

There isn't a black or foreign person left in the town. The old Negro church is still perched on the side of the hill overlooking the empty houses in "colored town."

There is still talk of opening the mine, but the feeling in Widen is that the opening would be in the Dundon-Harrison area and never again in Widen. Standing almost anywhere in Widen, one can look and see the results of strip mining in the surrounding hills. 16,500 trees were set out last year as part of reclamation work, but it will be many years before they can cover up the ugliness.

Yet things for Widen may change again. Although several business and residential buildings and the school are gone, an article appeared recently in a local paper indicating a revival of the operations in Widen. In an article dated October 13, 1976, *The Clay County Free Press* stated that Majestic Mining currently employs 100 men and is in the process of expanding to open deep mines which will ultimately employ additional personnel. It may not be the booming town of the '30s again, but Widen is *not* dead!

Mostly Work: Making a Home in Widen

By Barbara Yeager

A 14-YEAR-OLD black girl shivered in the wind and wrapped her baby tightly against the January cold. The trip from Mobile, Alabama, to Charleston, West Virginia, had given her time to wonder. What would life in Widen be? She would have more time to imagine now, for she was boarding the train which ran from Charleston to Dundon. It was 4 a.m. on January 25, 1935, and Mrs. Mary Forte was still eight hours away from her destination. The train crawled from Charleston to Dundon and she was anxious to get her first look at Clay County. She and her infant son suffered through "a long wait" at the Dundon station and finally were told it was time to board again. This time, at 8 a.m., they were taking a B & O train from Dundon to Widen, their new home.

As the steam engine puffed away from the Dundon station, it carried a string of freight cars and one passenger coach. The hills of Clay County seemed worlds away from Mobile, Alabama. Mrs. Forte felt a sting of homesickness as she stomped the snow off her feet. She remembers, "When I left home my aunt gave me a pair of galoshes and I had a polo coat. That's what I came to West Virginia in."

Mrs. Forte spent the next four hours "looking out the window as the train went around the curves and you could just see the engine; it was just puffing away with a string of cars so long, just going round and round. I thought, well, if I had fare back to Alabama, I'd catch the next thing smoking."

Noon at last and Widen was before her—the town owned by one man, a Mr. J. G. Bradley. As she and the baby stepped from the train into deep, deep snow, Mrs. Forte caught her first glimpse of the office, the row houses, the doctor's office, the tipple, the wash house, and the shop—the places she would come to know well over the next 32 years.

Her husband Roosevelt was waiting for her. He was a coal loader at the Bradley mines, and he and Mary were to make their home with relatives for the next three years. The young wife and mother learned quickly about her new home, and life began to develop for her family in a fashion typical of other residents of the black community in Widen.

One of the first things she found was that at the time "Widen was so crowded that you just couldn't get any place to stay. People were just living, you know, I'd just say on, top of each other. Houses were filled. So we lived with his, my husband's, sister for three years before we could get a house. You were put on a waiting list with the company. You went down and you signed for a house." This crowded condition was not prevalent in the white community, however.

Mary Forte at home.

A House of Their Own

At last, in 1938, a family at the lower end of Fayette Street moved back to Alabama and the house they vacated became the home for the Forte family. By this time there were two sons, and Mary had mastered the art of being happy in Widen. She followed the lifestyle her sister-in-law had set as an example.

Their homes at this time did not offer the conveniences of gas or water. Their rent amounted to $8.00 per month. They heated and cooked with coal stoves. "Everybody was responsible for getting his own coal. We had coal houses, built outside, just a big old square house with a door and a window. You'd order your coal and they would bring it and throw it in the house through that window and you'd go shovel it out through the door. And I think we were paying $1.75 for a load of coal."

The homes did have electricity. "The wires was outside of the ceiling. They weren't inside, just outside. Of course, we had our house rewired and put the wires inside. I don't know how much our electric bill was, maybe $1.75, maybe $2.00."

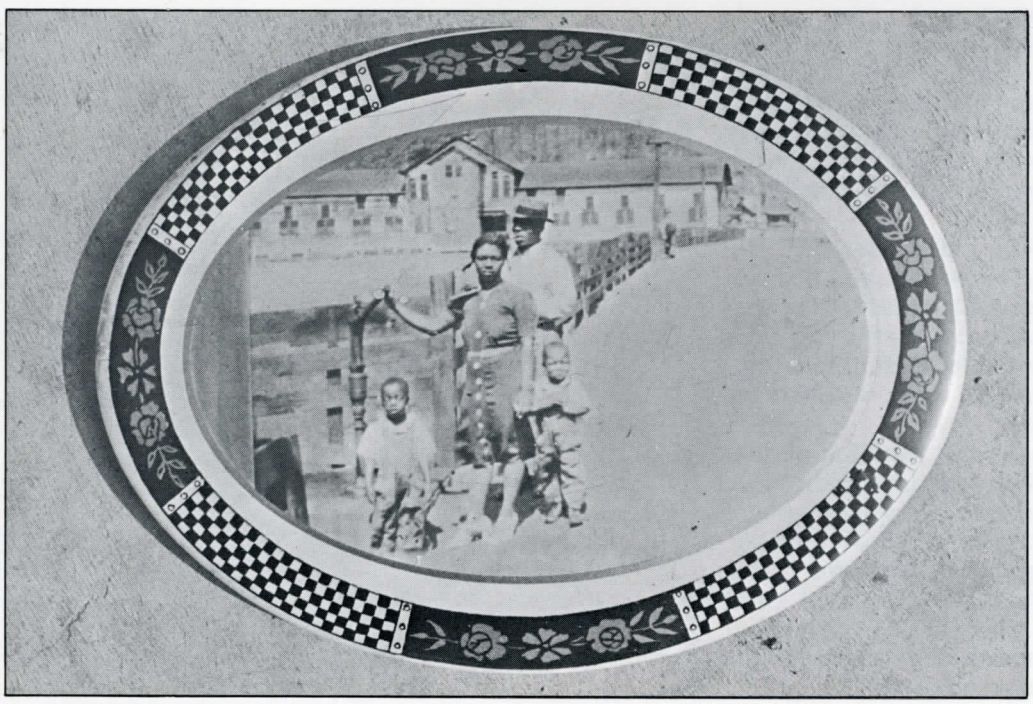
Some years later, when gas came to Widen, the Forte's and three other families were permitted to "pipe water from the schoolhouse." She remembers, "We bought the pipes and connected on to the schoolhouse. There was my house, Dwight Morgan's house, Mrs. Williams' house and my sister-in-law's. We were the only four that had running water."

Along with housing, a wife and mother is primarily concerned with feeding and clothing her family, no matter what culture she finds herself in. Mrs. Forte feels that, in general, the needs of the residents of Widen were easily accessible. "I can remember there was a man from out of Charleston came to Widen every two weeks, 15th and 30th. Lucendi, I think that was his name. That's who we did our shopping with. We made our grocery bills with him and he delivered every two weeks."

There were also groceries available in Widen. "If you wanted to, you could go to the stores and buy your meats. The only thing my sister-in-law would order would be flour, meal, about 50 pounds of lard, about 25 pounds of sugar, and tobacco and cigarettes and milk for my baby. We bought Eagle Brand milk and we buy this by the case. That's what we could order. And if you wanted anything between the two weeks you could go to the company store which was down below Widen and buy whatever you needed. You'd get your scrip or check or whatever, I don't just remember what they were using when I came to Widen. They might have been using scrip. But it was a company store.

"Now my sister-in-law, always would have a garden. I didn't have a garden till we got our home and then Roosevelt, he would have a garden every year—vegetables. And some years we would raise a hog and kill him. We had the big smokehouse in the yard. They call it "big smokehouse" and we'd put our meat in there and then smoke it. That's where we kept the meat and lard from killing time to killing time. That's, I say, from the fall of the year when they kill until the next year, when they'd kill again. Make the sausage! My sister-in-law, she would season it and then make balls and cook it and put it in food jars and then seal it, you know you'd have to seal the lids. Then store it in the smokehouse. That's the way we kept sausage."

When it came time to buy furniture, the Forte's purchased from Hartley's, a department store in Charleston. But for other purchases, the company store was their source. "We could go there and get our scrip and if you wanted to buy dresses, you could buy your clothes, and the fact of the business, you could even buy your casket. You didn't even have to, I mean, go out of Widen to get a casket if you died. My



"We were on our way to the post office (1939) when this man asked if he could take our picture. Later on we got this picture in the mail for free. I don't know what he took the picture for." Sons Norris (left) and Nathan (right) and husband Roosevelt. The Y.M.C.A. can be seen in the background. Photographer unknown.

Mrs. Forte in 1941-42. Photographer unknown.

husband paid 25 cent a month for burial fund and if that was all you had, why—the casket—that's what you would get if you passed on for the 25 cent, at that time.

"I'd say we always get the best of everything because we were the first street that the peddlers would come down [entering the town] to when they'd get down off Widen Hill. They had to come right down past Fayette Street, and I'd say we would get all the good stuff.

"We didn't have to go out unlessen we just wanted to. Go to the store and get any kind of meat you wanted, any kind of dress you wanted, even buy your furniture, go to the bank and get your scrip cashed. The only thing, if anybody drank, naturally they'd have to go out and buy their drinks. Now, they sold alcohol in Widen, but, you know, a lot of times you don't want to pay a big price for it, you know. We just had a good time up there, I thought."

Fayette Street

The black part of Widen consisted of "as near as I can guess it, it might have been about forty families." For those families there were "maybe thirty, maybe less' houses. Some were four-room houses, some were eight-room houses. And two families to a house in these double houses." The homes were situated "all on one long street, Fayette Street. That was the black street." Three houses, a barber shop, and a Y.M.C.A. were across the creek on the lower end of Fayette Street near the Forte house. On the upper end of the street, going out of Widen, across the creek, there was another double house. "You know what I mean by double is the eight-room and two families to a house."

In spite of the fact that the blacks lived close together, there was not an easily definable black culture in the community. The reason was that "most of the blacks, they were from different places, not just the South. Just my husband and his sister and her daughter, we from the South." The others were from different parts of the United States and had come into Widen to find work—"some from the North, not all from the same place at all."

The blacks did share a religious life. "We had a community church, just one church." Most of the families belonged to that church. "We had a minister, he would come from his hometown on Sunday some. One time we had a minister who would come out like on Saturday and stay with one of the deacons and his wife and preach Sunday and Sunday night, and then someone would take him to Clay to catch a bus to come back to Charleston. You could catch a bus out of Clay at that time at ten o'clock. Between 10:00 and 10:30 you could get a bus back into Charleston.

"At one time we had a preacher, now, he and his family moved into Widen and he went to see Mr. B_____, and he got a job in the mines and he worked in the mines awhile and would preach on Sunday. But he had two churches. He had a church out of Widen and one in Widen and he worked during the week."

Just "certain" blacks were active in the church. "The 'overheads' [church officials] were active. You know how it is with the youngsters." The social life of the community was not church centered. "They didn't have picnics or anything like that, that I can remember. I can't remember ever going to a church picnic."

Recreation and Schools

Actually, for the blacks, there was very little social life in Widen—"mostly work." As for the women, she recalls, "We hardly knew each other. That's right, we hardly knew each other. Most of the women on the upper end of Widen, they didn't work. In fact of the business, nobody worked [outside the home]. You know, just only, I think, it was one or two that worked in Widen. That was Mrs. E_____, she worked for the bankers wife, Mrs. M_____, and a lady named M_____, she worked for the super." The other women were at home raising children and keeping house. "But there was one lady, Miss F_____ H_____, she worked maybe just one or two days a week for one of the doctors."

For relaxation they "could go to the movies. I think they showed movies on Monday night, Wednesday night, and I think Friday and Saturday night, if I'm correct. But anybody who wanted to see a movie, well, they would have these posters up in the Y.M.C.A., and if you wanted to go see, you paid your 35 cent and you could go. I think they stayed on from seven to nine. They would be different movies each night. Sometimes the children would go once a week. Sometimes they wouldn't go at all, just depends on what's showing." The men worked up until Friday night. They relaxed on Saturdays. "They would go to the "Y" and get 'em a beer and they could shoot pools over there and visit with the other men. That was it." Recalling the 'Y', Mrs. Forte remembers, "The blacks ran it. It wasn't restricted. The white could come in and buy beer, drink beer, but they—if they did, it was quite [only] a few. It wasn't too many—to drink beer. There was a similar place in the white community.

They called it the Grill, down by the bank. This was in the lower end of town, the Grill. That's where you could go and buy most anything you wanted, to eat ice cream, drink pop, most any kind of sandwiches. The Grill—I don't think you could buy beer." Since the men left the house at 5:30 a.m. for the mines and returned home for supper between 8:30 and 9 p.m., they undoubtedly looked forward to a day of relaxation on Saturday.

For the children in Widen, life centered around the school. There was a separate school in the black community. "They had one room for the school. It went through the eighth grade. There was one teacher. There might have been 20 and there might have been less students." After black children finished the grade school, before integration, they had to leave the community in order to attend high school. Most of them went to board in either Institute or Clarksburg. "The county board of education paid $30.00 a month for each child that had to go away to school, and the people they boarded with, they were charging $40.00 a month for the boys and $30.00 for the girls." The parents had to make up the difference when they sent their boys to high school.

After integration, the black children attended school with the white children in Widen through the eighth grade, and they then attended Widen High School. Later, when the consolidated high school was completed in Clay, all the Widen students were bused into Clay for their secondary education.

Health services for all of Widen were provided by the company in so much as they saw that doctors, dentists, and optometrists were available for the people. The physicians were residents of the community, while the dentists and optometrists held office hours periodically in Widen, usually in the Y.M.C.A. Employees contributed monthly dues for medical services. When they needed medical attention or out-of-town hospital care, it was free. They paid for dentist's and optometrist's fees out of their own pockets.

Mrs. Forte never saw the man responsible for the community. "Never did see him. I would see his picture, but that's all. But to see him, I don't think I ever seen him. I did see his wife once. They told me that was his wife. She was kind of a medium sized lady. She was, well, from the way I could see her, she was a person that—you know how it is when you have a lot—and I don't know if she looked down on the people or what. And she wore these white gloves. Well, I guess she was just a person that had a lot."

The Fortes never knew when Mr. Bradley was in town. "He just came and went. I think his stops would be at the clubhouse where all the V.I.P.'s stayed. At least we never knew when he came and went. We just knew we worked for J. G. Bradley, and at least, my husband said, that if the men they had scrip in the office that you could just go and get it and he just let you have it, but I never had to go through with that. I wouldn't know. Every time I went to get scrip, I could get it. But most people said that he was a father to them and he was good to them, but, now, as far as me *knowing* that, I don't know. I never suffered anything from him and I never had to go and ask him for anything. So I couldn't say. All I know is we lived there from 1935 until 1968. Up until 1958 it was a very peaceful existence and very happy."

The Exodus

In 1958 J. G. Bradley sold out to Clinchfield. The young blacks had "moved out, oh, I say, long in the 1950s. They started moving out, the younger men with families, moved out to distant places and got jobs." At the time of the Clinchfield takeover there were only a handful of blacks left in Widen. "It might have been about 15 or 16 black families left in Widen when Clinchfield took over."

Changes came to Widen "kinda gradual" in those days, "just one thing after another. Everyone didn't own a house had to buy one." That was the first big change. "We bought our homes before they [the mines] closed down. We bought our house for $300.00. We paid $60.00 down and they cut $20.00 a month with interest from his pay. We bought our lights from the power company, and we bought bottled gas for awhile and we paid $20.00 for two tanks. And when they put gas in we bought that. We went to gas heat. We had the house plumbed and we bought gas stoves. We didn't put in heating systems like over in the white people community, because they had the better homes. Although we had fixed ours up pretty good to be in a coalfield, we had the rooms changed around and had sheetrock put in and that way we had pretty good insulation."

Perhaps the biggest change in their lives came when the mines closed. "It was December, 1963. We stayed there five years after the mines closed. After the mines closed down they had work in the mines pulling the rails, getting the steel out of the mines. Now, Roosevelt, he worked at that. After that closed he worked on the state road down in Clay. He worked at that. And just little odd jobs until he was 55. You see, you can retire from the U.M.W. at 55, if you couldn't get any work. They dropped it to 55 from 62. So after that he retired from the U.M.W. at 55. And then he got his social security at a ten percent discount. And with that, we didn't have too much expense, so we just made it until we moved out in 1965."

By 1968 there were perhaps five or six black families left in Widen. "We were the second one to move among the blacks. My sister-in-law moved first. We moved next." After these two families left, there were two or three black families left, and within three years they too had moved from Widen. There are no blacks in Clay County now at all according to the information Mrs. Forte has at this time.

The Forte's moved in 1968 to a comfortable home in Dunbar. With their family of two sons and three daughters, raised and gone from home, Mrs. Mary Forte looks back over her Widen days as "good days." Widen was a place where "we all got along good. We never had any problems." She confessed, "Once upon a time, I just thought I couldn't live anywhere else but Widen."

The following article is reprinted from *U. S. News & World Report,* the January 29, 1954, issue. The situation was also the subject of a long article in the February 20, 1954 *The Saturday Evening Post.* Called "The Reign of Terror at Widen, W. Va." it was by Craig Thompson.

A BATTLE JOHN LEWIS LOST

Rugged Mineowner Wins 15-Month Fight

U. S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, Jan. 29, 1954

Guns are back in their racks. Shooting has stopped. Pickets have been called off. A strike is ended in West Virginia.

This was no ordinary strike. One man was killed, others were shot at. A miner's home was blasted; bridges were blown up.

The winner, after 15 months of strife, is a rugged individualist who owns a coal mine. The loser: John L. Lewis.

WIDEN, W. Va.

An old-fashioned mine war—complete with killing, gunplay and dynamiting—has come to an end in this mountain town in West Virginia. Armed guards have left their hillside pillboxes. Miners no longer travel to work in convoys, with guns ready for action. Police have pulled down their roadblocks. A long and bitter strike is over.

This strike, which lasted 15 months, developed into a clash between two strong-willed individualists. Lined up on one side were John L. Lewis and his United Mine Workers. On the other side were a mineowner named J. G. Bradley and an independent union of his employes. Mr. Bradley heads a company that owns 125 square miles of timber and coal land in this area, 50 miles northeast of Charleston, W. Va.

The winners in this bitter struggle turned out to be Mr. Bradley and the independent union. While the strike was on, no holds were barred.

It all started in September, 1952. A group of miners went on strike in an effort to form a new independent union at the Bradley mine. They objected to policies of the League of Widen Miners, an independent union formed in 1938. The League of Widen Miners defeated John Lewis's United Mine Workers in a bargaining election in 1946 and won certification by the National Labor Relations Board as agent for the miners. It has a contract with Mr. Bradley running into 1955.

After the strike was a month or so old, the strikers obtained the backing of the United Mine Workers and joined the Lewis union. Other UMW members in the area were assessed to help the strikers. From that time on, it was a showdown between the UMW and the Widen independent union, with Mr. Bradley and Mr. Lewis maneuvering in the background.

Finally, the Lewis union capitulated. Strikers voted on Christmas Eve to give up the struggle. Consent to end the strike was obtained from William Blizzard, district president of the United Mine Workers, who was Mr. Lewis's representative in handling the strike. The strikers generally conceded that they were getting nowhere.

"We don't like to admit defeat, but we knew we were beaten," was the way Darrell Douglas, one of the strike leaders, put it. "The strike had been pretty costly to us, since we weren't getting anything out of it, and we decided to ask Mr. Blizzard to call it off.

"It just looked like a lost cause. We still think we were right and the company was wrong, but our men were tired of staying on the picket line. Morale was low among the pickets."

Cost to the United Mine Workers was estimated at more than $100,000, based on Mr. Blizzard's report of outlays running $2,000 to $3,000 a week at one time during the walkout. Mr. Blizzard, interviewed last week, declined to give any estimate of total cost.

Mr. Bradley was determined from the start to stop Mr. Lewis, regardless of how much money it cost.

"There never was any question in my mind as to the outcome," Mr. Bradley told *U. S. News & World Report* last week. "I held the trump card from the first. That card is the fact that I was just supporting the position of my own miners. They never wanted John Lewis to organize them. They didn't want Lewis to tell them when they could work, when they must strike, how long they must go payless. My men have turned down Lewis's organizers in years past whenever he tried to recruit them into his outfit.

"So, when I refused to bow down to Lewis's demands for a contract, I was backing up my own men. On that basis, we won. Things might have been different if my men wanted the Lewis union. But they wanted to keep their own independent union. They voted for it in a secret NLRB election. NLRB told me to bargain with that independent union. That's the law, and I am obeying.

"It wasn't a fight between Lewis and me. It was a fight between the big, strong United Mine Workers and the little League of Widen Miners. I've always kept out of John Lewis's bailiwick and I thought it was unfair of him to trespass on ours."

Mr. Bradley was asked if he had any advice for other employers who might get into the same sort of situation.

"I'd say to another businessman," he replied, "find out what your men want. If they want you to support them against a strike, do it. The worst thing in the world is an industrialist who sells out his own men, who signs a contract with some union boss when the men don't want it."

In looking back on the strike, Mr. Bradley said: "The strikers at first thought they would be out only a week, that I would cave in fast. But as things dragged on, and they spent all of their accumulated savings, they got into Bill Blizzard's power. When they got into trouble, they didn't have a lawyer, couldn't afford one. Blizzard was their only means of defense. He supplied the legal help, and they became slaves of Blizzard. Finally, Blizzard had enough, and called the strike off."

Does the outcome of this fight indicate that Mr. Lewis is slipping?

"No," Mr. Bradley answered. "Coal operators in many cases are a bunch of cowards. A lot of them would like to be free of Lewis's domination, just as many coal miners want to be free of him. But the operators won't take the risk of fighting a knockdown fight with John Lewis—even with the industry suffering from depressed business conditions."

The strike itself had violent overtones almost from the start.

At first, the strikers blockaded the town of Widen and the near-by Bradley mine, known as the Elk River Coal & Lumber Company. The company charged that the road leading into Widen was being blocked for a time by a mass picket line. Cars reportedly were overturned, shots were fired at a car carrying miners to their jobs.

(Continued on page 12)

It developed into a battle of lifelong neighbors, shooting at each other in the dark hills, tossing dynamite bombs, blowing up bridges and autos. Sometimes it was brother against brother, or father against son.

The crew of a work car on Mr. Bradley's private railroad told police that pickets stopped the car, beat up one of the workers, seized several others and held them until State police arrived. Pickets denied the charge.

Rifle bullets were fired into buildings in the mine property from the wooded hills surrounding it. Power lines were shot down. A train carrying residents of Widen through the "blockade" was shot up. Telephone lines were pulled down. Two railroad bridges were destroyed by home-made dynamite bombs. A woods was set on fire. A miner's truck was shot at. A power substation at the mine was blown up.

Cars on a near-by State highway were dynamited, others were shot at. Mine guards reported that someone opened fire on them from the woods. A striker's home was blown up, another striker's car was dynamited, as was a tractor owned by a striker. Acid was tossed on cars of working miners.

Then, on May 7 of last year, a miner was shot and killed during an exchange of gunfire as a convoy of working miners went past a cook shanty of the strikers. A striker was convicted of second-degree murder; his case is under appeal. After that, State police put up roadblocks near Widen, checked every car going into the area.

Through it all, a big majority of the Bradley miners kept on working. One of them, to avoid the early blockade of the highway, walked for miles underground, through abandoned mine tunnels, to report for duty. Many of them, living in the company town, could go to work without facing the picket line out on the main highway. But they all risked being shot at from near-by hills every time they went to work.

The miners who worked had a chance to earn large pay checks with overtime. Some stayed on duty for two shifts in one day. Some got as much as $50 a day. The mine operated six days a week.

The strikers, meanwhile, were living on handouts from the Lewis union, picking up odd jobs where they could find them. At first, strikers and nonstrikers often lived side by side in Widen. But, by the time the strike ended, families of strikers had moved out of the company-owned houses. Some had lived there all their lives.

From 70 to 150 strikers stayed with the strike to the bitter end. Mr. Bradley estimated the number at 70, Mr. Blizzard at 150. The mine did not take back any of the strikers who remained out until the end. The company contended that all of them were involved in violence, or had condoned it.

The over-all cost of this labor war probably never will be known. Mr. Bradley estimates revenue losses to Widen and near-by towns at about a million dollars, but declines to estimate what the strike cost his company.

There was, however, loss of income during a brief period when the mine could not operate. Some customers switched to new suppliers. It cost money to replace railroad bridges that were blown up and to repair buildings damaged by bombs. Overtime payments were heavy. Miners who were transferred to jobs as armed guards were an added expense.

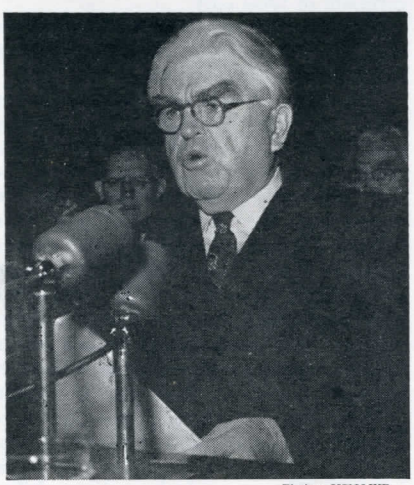
Legal fees were heavy for both the company and the United Mine Workers. Not all of the fighting took place in the hills. There were long and involved court battles. Some still are going on. The State police force was also under heavy expenses. At one time, 25 officers were stationed in the Widen area.

At present, the Bradley mine is operating three days a week, as is the coal industry generally. Guards have gone back to digging coal, the guns have been put away. There is less overtime. Before the strike, the mine employed 600 men. About 525 miners are on the pay roll now. They receive the same hourly rate that is paid under Mr. Lewis's contracts, but Bradley miners get an extra hour of work a day, at time-and-a-half rates.

Present schedules call for two shifts a day. Mr. Bradley reports that his men are digging the same amount of coal on the two shifts that formerly was mined in three shifts. "We have efficient machinery and hard-working miners," he explained. "The men feel that it is their operation; they want to help keep it going. They are loyal to the company, as they were in the strike." □

THE MINERS: 'THEY WANTED . . . THEIR OWN UNION'

THE LOSERS: MR. BLIZZARD . . .



. . . AND MR. LEWIS

Photos—USN&WR

The long battle was costly to both sides

Widen Today

Photographs made in February 1977
By Gary Simmons

A. The church of the black community is on a hill across the street from the black section of Widen.

B. The church's interior.

B.

A.

C.

C. Rusting coal cutting machines near the entrance of Bradley's mine site. The shed in the distance covers a cradle dump.

D. Nicholas Street contains more houses than any other Widen street.

E. Thirty years ago this was the scene of vigorous activity. The coal tipple stood in the background. The stone foundation, center, is what remains of the washhouse where the coal was sized and cleaned.

D.

E.

Wilson Douglas:
Mountain Man and Mountain Musician

By Nancy McClellan

OF ALL THE RICHES in Clay County none are of more value than her music and the men and women who keep it alive; among these, none is more worthy of interest than Wilson Douglas, mountain man and fine fiddler. The highest compliment Wilson can pay is to say of someone, "He's a real mountain man," and Wilson himself can be accorded that title by almost any criterion you might wish to set. By heredity and birth; by his own life; and by that most powerful claim of all, his love for the mountains.

Well before the Civil War the Douglas family had settled in what is now Clay County. By 1917 Wilson's grandfather had bought a farm on a fork of Rush Creek at Booger Hole, a farm still so isolated that, standing there on a windy November hill, you can well believe the tales of ghostly teams and riders and of unseen women who cry and walk the roads. On this farm which lies beneath "Painter" Knob and overlooks a cemetery holding the graves of many of his family and earlier ones dating back to 1810, Wilson was born in 1922 to Shirley and Goldie Morris Douglas.

At the age of 13, Wilson moved from this farm on Booger Hole to a home on Otter Creek where he stayed until he entered the Army in World War II. Upon his return from the Army in 1945, he lived for a number of years in Ivydale; there he married and brought up two sons, one who practices law in Morgantown and one serving in the Marine Corps. He now lives with his second wife, Delma, on Hansford Fork near Maysel, less than 20 miles from the place he was born.

Thus Wilson's roots run deep. In part perhaps because he has spent all his life essentially in one place, Wilson is imbued with an unusually keen sense of the past, his own and his community's. What distinguishes him, however, from many others with similar experiences is his balanced view toward that experience. He sees clearly that the good old days were equally hard old days. And while he feels pride, almost reverence, in his heritage, Wilson does not romanticize.

In the following passages, tape recorded in March, 1975, and November, 1976, Wilson speaks of a portion of that heritage, first of his early life on Rush Creek and later of certain contrasts between the past and the present. Like many another mountain man, Wilson is a natural-born tale-teller, but his musician's ear and an artist's eye for vivid detail make his reminiscences especially memorable.

Delma and Wilson Douglas at the Brandywine Mountain Music Festival at Concordville, Pa., in July 1975. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

Mountainside Beginnings

Wilson Douglas. This country, it's so lonesome now. I like to come back, occasionally. But when you get to thinking about things, you hate to walk back down the road. You know. You hate to walk back down the road.

See this knob here in front of us? That's called Painter Knob. The old-timers called a panther a "painter". The panthers, they bred and denned on this knob and there's rocks back in there you can crawl back in. And over there is Buzzard Rocks. The buzzards congregated there in the nesting time; it was the high place. In the spring of the year the buzzards come there and in the fall they gather there and leave. Those rocks are the oldest, most designated point in Clay County. They was an old trail on that ridge during the Civil War. The old-timers traveled on it going from Clay County to Calhoun County. And down yonder's the old picnic ground—years and years ago when my father was a boy the old hard-shell Baptists had their meetings there. And that's the family cemetery up above.

See, when we moved here there was a three-room house my grandfather had. My father built two rooms. It was a five-room plank house with a cut stone chimley and a porch all around.

Yeah. 'Course, we had no refrigeration, no electricity. 'Course you can't see it now, but that cellar—these rocks came from big rocks back up to the foot of Painter Knob. They was churned with a churn drill. They wasn't no jackhammers or air compressors. And they were shot out with black powder. And this here rockmason by the name of Wayne—he's dead now—he handpicked these rocks, picked them out and laid them up there. It took one whole summer to cut them rocks. And we had a little trough, we'd put cold water in there to set our milk in to keep it from spoiling, and my mother kept that milk in these big crocks. I've put a many a potato in there; I put many a canned stuff in there. Me and my mother has canned and we would carry that cellar full of vegetables, muskmelons, cucumbers. And we got up before daylight, and you can picture that, I believe. It's just like it was, only the house is burned down. And I've seen that cellar so dang full that the floor was full!

And we had a bucket and a windlass. That's an old dug well, was dug in 1920, two years before I was born. And that—well, there was the finest water there was.

I was going to tell you—you know, nowadays—this is no slur to anybody—when people wash clothes, they put about everything in the washer *but* the clothes, you know. And my mother, we used to have an iron kettle, before the washing machine comes out, and she had to wash on her hands but we went clean. We didn't have very many clothes. And you'd build a fire under this brass kettle and if they wasn't boiled, they wasn't satisfying, they wasn't sanitary. We would take this old white P and G soap, white naphtha, and we'd shave off big chunks of that soap, let it boil in that water. Lord-a-mercy, them clothes! White, you know, just like lye. Yeah. They had to be just right, now. You had to carry water, start shaving that soap, about half a bar. Them clothes had to boil so long; while they was boiling you took a stick, took them out of there, put them in the rinse tub, see. Yeah, she was particular. Scrubbed the floors. And if I'd of set my foot on the carpet, I'd of died! Them old wooden floors, they were scrubbed with sand and P and G soap. And, brother, she was clean, now. She was clean.

Them tales sound like fairy tales, but they're true. Times was hard. And Lord-a-mercy, a dime was bigger than a million dollars! Dad made his living farming, and he'd work in the mines. Well, when we'd get too hard up—Widen's a mining camp over here. And my father and me would—he had an old '26 model Chevrolet car—we would gather them vegetables up and take them to Widen and sell them to all those black people. In them mining camps you'd draw scrip, but we had to take a ten cents off a dollar discount—scrip, see—to get the real money. And if we had to have lamp oil, we'd take half a dozen eggs around to the store and we'd get a gallon of oil. If you had money coming to you, you'd get a due bill.

You couldn't read after dark, unless you read by firelight, so's not to waste lamp oil. Had to self-educate yourself. It was hard getting an education. I walked from here to Rush Fork School, me and my two sisters, a mile. And you'd carry a six-pint lard container for a lunch bucket—would have eggs and cornbread or an apple or apple butter, and a big Dutch onion. And I got $3.00 a month for sweeping and cleaning the school.

And, as I recall, in the summertime we'd work late-like and the frogs would be hollering. And barefooted—we just got one pair of shoes a year. Well, before we went to bed Mother'd see that we washed our feet. And we went through the front room and out on the porch to this well and poured water in a washpan and washed the dust off our feet. And we'd set on this front porch till late. Of an evening, why, we'd set out here and look to the head of Booger Hole. And you could hear people farming back at that time, you know. Nowadays there's too much noise in the air—you can't holler and make anybody hear you. But once I could holler and you could hear me clear to that valley there. But now there's too much noise in the air—you can't holler no distance. And if our clock stopped, well, we'd holler down here to these Ashleys lived down here, holler down and ask what time it was, to reset our clock, see. And my father used to set here on this front porch, and when he'd tune that old five-string banjo up, he'd play that banjo—it was so doggone lonesome that it was pitiful; and you could hear it all over this country. But he had his mind on getting ready for the winter. It was a burden. He looked ahead, and my mother canned.

Becoming a Man

But there no question that people were closer

Douglas in November 1976 at the cellar house foundation below Painter Knob, his birthplace. Photograph by Rick Osborn.

then than now. My parents done the best they could by me and I'm grateful. They never raised their voice. But you better not let my mother holler at you twice! There wasn't no hollering to get you out of bed. And Dad's word was Law and Gospel. His "Children, it's time to go"—that was it. And I used to think he was too hard on us. Until I got a man, I saw he wasn't. He was firm, he was good to us, but he never told us twice.

But my kids—I got one that's a lawyer and one that's a Marine—they can't understand. But I *liked* it here, them days, you know. But there wasn't anything to look forward to, really. And I had to work awful hard, never will forget it. But my children, they can't see it; they say, "Dad, how'd you ever live like that?" I said, "What else was there to do? Everybody with the same dang dream, with the same high hopes," and—but they don't understand, you know.

The people that wanted to learn got out. I didn't know anything really. And when I went to the Army, I took every dang school I could get in. I studied. I learned how to get along in this world, to live in this world, to get along with people. I pick out, select what I can get along with, and what I can't, I let alone. And I study every man. You know you've seen people you didn't like, but you'd study them. I try to get that man's turn, and I try to find out what he *likes* and then I try to study up enough to cope with him and just touch him here and yonder till he'll get to liking me, and then I'll find out something about him. You see? And if you don't do that, you're lost. Yeah . . .

Besides being an abundant source of such stories as the above, Wilson presents a perhaps more profound link with the past in the depth of his woods lore and his folk knowledge—knowledge, once widespread, the more valuable now because it is so nearly lost. Both he and Delma are deeply aware of the most minute signals of the seasonal cycles in the mountains. And Wilson's love and knowledge of nature are intricately woven in his whole philosophy of life.

Harvey McClellan. I want Wilson to retell a little bit what he was talking to me about. I told him I was interested in these woods. And then we were—Wilson and I were talking about how different a tree looks growing in the forest from the way it looks when it's all by itself and can branch out, you know. When it's confined by its brothers and sisters, how it grows so straight.

Wilson. Yeah, that's right;

Harvey. And Wilson mentioned the way you can smell the forest.

Lore of the Woods and Planting

Wilson. Right. You can smell the plants. You can smell them. There is so many different odors that it is just wonderful. Well, I'm going to put it this way; there is no perfume that was ever made that will smell like it. *Nothing* smells like the forest in the spring of the year. And you see everything is different. There is no tree exactly alike. The bark will be different or the grain will be different, the leaves will be different, or the branches will be more or fewer. Am I right, Delma? And the green willow is the first to show.

And you see these sparrows and cardinals and various types of birds. But in the woods you see an entirely different race or different variety of birds. You see the little sapsuckers, the little twig-pullers. And you'll see all different kinds of birds. The bluejays. And you'll notice the hawks. The hawks and, well, thousands of things that you'll notice. And each has its own time. Right. And, well, this is getting back to the almanac, the signs.

Well, now, a lot of scientists will say there's nothing to the signs being in the feet or the bowels or the heart or the eyes. But according to where the sun is in the seasons on each side of the earth, it works. You know. The signs. Well, now, you can cut out board timber out of blocks, out of white oak—they roof their houses, some of the old-timers in this country, with split oak boards; you split them out with a froe. You rive them. They call them riven boards; we call them clapboards too. Yeah, and if you put them on when the moon is light, they'll curl up; but you put them on in the dark moon, it'll lay flat till it seasons. And you plant corn in the dark moon it won't get as high as my head, it won't do no good; plant it in the light moon, the fodder'll be ten foot high and no ears, you see. And now you go with your pickled beans and pickled corn—you explain that to them, Delma.

Delma Wilson. Yeah. If you pickle things when the signs are in the bowels, you cannot eat them. You go with all these old people, now. Sylvia Cottrell [O'Brien], you know, she's an old-timer and she makes *the best* pickles, and—

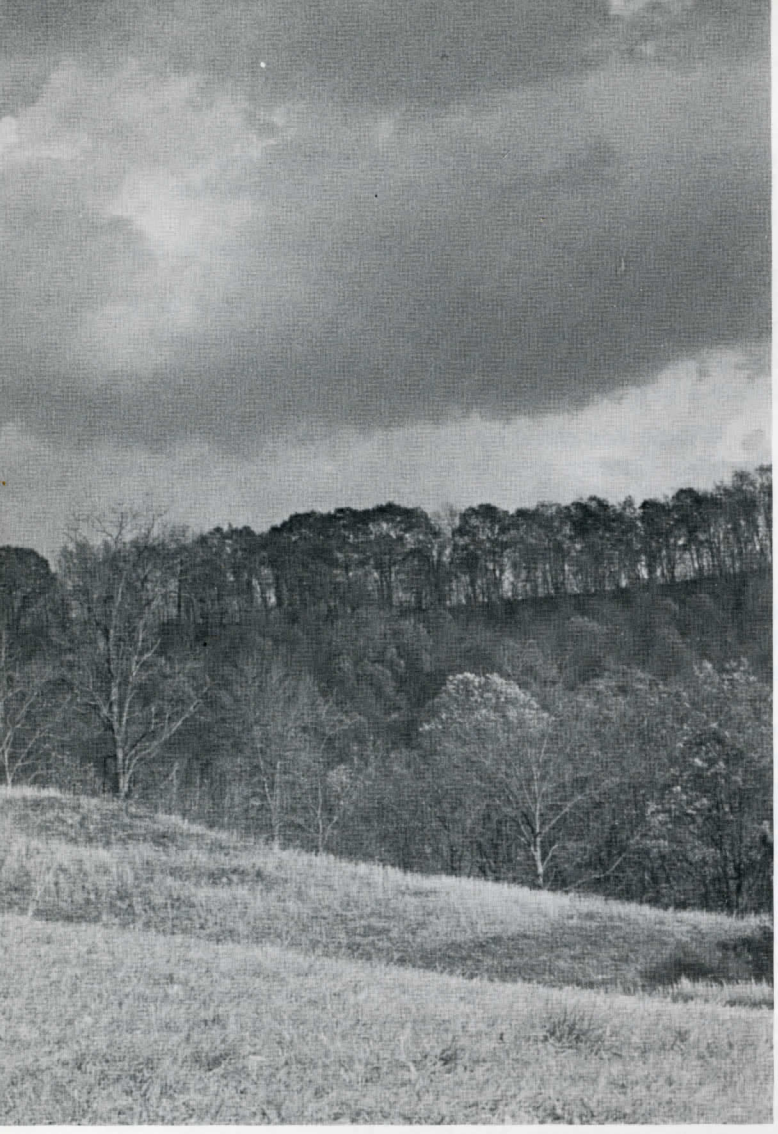
Wilson. That's right, she can't be beat.

Delma. And you talk to her, she'll tell you the same thing.

Wilson. And in a dark moon the brine won't raise on your cabbage to sour your kraut, either. It won't raise.

Delma. Put it in your crock in a light moon and it'll raise. And it'll boil the brine out.

Wilson. They's so many things like that. And in this country, now, during the summer, Harvey, if



View from the hillside of Douglas' birthplace near Booger Hole. Photograph by Rick Osborn.

you see the leaves turning up—you can see the bottoms of the leaves—inside of twelve hours it's going to come a real severe storm. You can bet on it. In 12 hours. Every time. And now, this is my saying here: these hoot owls in this holler—you might hear them tonight, you might not—when he hollers in the north side of the hill, look out! it's going to be winter if he hoots over there a few days. But if he goes to the south, the weather's going to break up. It'll do it every time.

And if you're logging of the summer, when you cut this poplar timber when the sap's running, you'll peel that bark right off, you see. Why, there's no ice that was ever froze as slick as that there log is. You can start it down the hill, it'll jump 20 feet in the air! It'll go right on to the landing. Some of these loggers aim the logs when the sap's running. And then they use them to make tanbark from the bark and paper and what have you.

And, well, you see, they are all come to color. And you take a white walnut tree, nothing grows under that tree. They's nothing grows. Each night as the dew falls, an acid—that acid will eat up anything. Park your car under it a few nights and the paint's gone. Ain't that right, Delma? That's a white walnut, a butternut. We don't have too many. And the nuts are fine, boy, they're delicious! And then you have the persimmon, you know. They're good in a certain time of the year. The wood's no good, it's a rough grain. And then you have your sassyfras, your ash, your white ash, your black walnut, your white walnut (which Jenes Cottrell makes all of his banjo necks out of), and the elm. And we have what's called a hackberry, it's a slick-bark tree, grows real tall. And you have your sarvis [service] and dogwood. And my Lord! How many more? Shellbark, slick-bark. And then we have a gum. A gum tree, with the mistletoe in it, you know. And a gum tree has no grain in the wood and you couldn't burst it with dynamite. There's no such a way of splitting one of them open, you can't do it. And, now, it makes good firewood after it seasons, but there's no way to burst one of them. It has no grain. Just like a rock that's cut, it has no grain. And we have the spruce, the jack pine, the hemlock, the needle pine, the black pine. And well, the sour gum, which is a bassy wood, it splits good; the sour gum, which has little countersunk marks all through it. Water beech. Water birch. Delma, there, she can tell a tree, what it is, as far as she can see it. And I can too.

Delma. It's a beauty here in late spring to look up this holler. And different trees come out in leaf at different times and they are different colors. There'll

be ever so many different shades of green, you know.

Wilson. Yeah. And Delma has some beautiful flowers here of a summer. And the wild rabbits, they lay out there and waller and dust theirselves, you know, six or seven of them in a game!

And in the fall of the year this country is fantastic. You'll see one tree's fiery red, the next one will be yellow, the next one will be brown, the next one will be a variety of colors. And the animals, you know, the squirrels, they have a certain time to feed on a certain thing. They know when it's right, you see.

And when you dig into that—They's something that very few people ever stops to notice, what makes this planet tick. Really how beautiful it is! In other words, what I'm trying to say, what life really means if you stop to look for it. And I believe, I believe that this world was made for—it was made to harmonize, to live in harmony, to get along, and not be in some kind of a confusement or disagreement all the time.

'Wound up Tight'

Above all else, Wilson Douglas is a musician. He first played guitar, "Carter style," and was "a fair ballad singer" as a young man. And he now even repairs instruments when his friends can talk him into it. "They put me in the middle. They say, 'Can you fix it?' 'Yeah, well, I probably can, it'll take me a month. Don't be in no hurry, I can't get it out for awhile.' When you get nervous you have to quit working on them, they're delicate." But it was the fiddle that, as he says, "took me and set me right" and the fiddle which has held him for nearly 40 years.

In Clay County for a man like Wilson there was always the music—the hoedown after a neighbor's barn raising, the gospel sings at Little Laurel Church and the all day meetings with dinner on the ground; above all, the front porch picking of a summer's evening or the warm fiddling of a winter's night. Despite the pervasiveness of music, however, Wilson notes the age-old conflict between the artist's temperament and community attitudes. These attitudes stem primarily from the drinking and carousing sometimes associated with musicmaking and from the reputation for general all-around shiftlessness imputed to musicians. Wilson laughingly comments about a fellow fiddler, "Lord, he's not a bit afraid of work! He'll lay down and sleep by it." And of another, "He takes care of his hands: he won't lift nothing no heavier than a piece of light bread!" But the dominant Calvinist work ethic also enters in; and Wilson has felt the conflict keenly within his own life.

Wilson. Musicians are people that are in search of something. They're wound up tight. They'll stop and search for things, really get down to the bottom of the Good Lord's Creation. Yeah. And musicians are high-tensioned, they're *touchy* about whatever they do.

And Dad would get on me when he thought I was playing too much. In this country if you participate in too much music, you're not too high thought of. As long as you're prudent, as long as you're having hard times, that's fine. But, brother! don't relax too much!

And, now, you get to the place, you come to the place sometimes, you just think—well, heck, I believe—well, I just can't play music and work both, you know. You get to thinking, well, I'll just quit the music. But you won't do it. That's right, it's kinda a bug, it's actually a bug.

Wilson has come by his music naturally. Because the Clay County area is singularly rich in musicians and traditional music (much of it heard but rarely outside the region), Wilson has taken his some 400 fiddle tunes from many sources. He has been most directly influenced, however, by the several-generations-long tradition of music on both sides of his own family and by his encounters with three other particularly splendid fiddlers.

Wilson's maternal grandmother, a fiddler herself, was his first teacher, and both his parents were highly regarded traditional musicians. His father was a banjo player; his mother, who still lives in Ivydale, was a ballad singer. But his real inspiration to learn came from the fiddling of Ed Haley, an almost legendary blind musician from Ashland, Kentucky. In recent years Wilson has especially admired the fiddling of J. F. Fraley, of Rush, Kentucky. The most telling influence on Wilson, however, was the master fiddler from Clay County, French Carpenter. In a relationship quite uncommon today he virtually apprenticed himself to Carpenter for a period of several years.

It is the dedication and discipline implicit in such a relationship that sets Wilson apart from many other mountain musicians. Music for him is decidedly not just an avocation, it makes demands. It's not uncommon, for instance, for him to bundle Delma into his little red VW and drive a hundred miles or more to listen and learn from a respected fiddler like Burl Hammons, "the lonesomest fiddler I ever heard." Finally, what Wilson Douglas knows in his bones is the bittersweet truth that joy received is balanced fully by sacrifice paid.

Wilson. Now, I don't claim to be a top fiddler, but I fiddle it from the heart, the way I want to and, you know, the way it does me good. There's a lot of things I could have been. But I'm not. I'm not and I'm not going to worry about them. I could have been many things, probably. But them hoedowns always kept me from being those things. And I'm not going to worry about them.

I know what makes me happy. And they ain't nothing more interesting to me than to try to get a complicated note on a violin. And never rest till I do get it. A man learns a little. He never learns it all. And nowadays the young people don't have no interest to stop and play music. They ain't got no patience; they think they have to play it overnight. But, now, I'm telling you the truth. I've played the fiddle *hungry* and enjoyed it, I couldn't tell you when I'd eaten. In other words, I've sacrificed a lot to play music. But it done me a lot of good.

How I Came to be a Fiddler

By Wilson Douglas and Nancy McClellan

Douglas playing at the Brandywine Festival, 1975. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

MY GRANDFATHER and Saul Carpenter were half-brothers and Saul's wife was an Indian. And my grandfather, Martin Stephenson Van Buren Douglas, was one of the greatest ballad singers of all times and he couldn't play anything. But he sang songs during the Civil War and before. Tunes like the old "Willow Garden" and "Barbry Allen."

My grandmother, now, she was a good fiddler and all her brothers were top fiddlers on my mother's side, the Morris side. My mother, she used to be a pretty good ballad singer, she couldn't play music. She'd sing "The Little Blossom" and those old songs. But my dad was one of the best, the plainest, old-time banjo players you ever heard. He played it slow, but he'd put everything in it. And then he lost his thumb and he quit. But, now, he had an ear for music.

In the evening we'd sit out there and look to the head of Booger Hole and my father used to sit there on that front porch—and like I said, he very seldom relaxed—but when he tuned that old five-string banjo up, he'd play that banjo—it was so doggone lonesome that it was pitiful and you could hear it all over the country. He'd play a few of them old tunes, pick the old "Barbry Allen," "Gunboat Going Through Georgia," "Pretty Polly," and the "Little Birdie." When he played four or five and he got tired, he'd quit! But that banjo would almost speak.

And like I said, Grandmother Morris was an old-time square dance fiddler. And 1935-36 was a severe cold winter. I was 13 years old. I had played the guitar up until that time for various fiddlers. During that winter I lived about a mile from my grandmother's. Every night I would take my guitar over there and play; I had learned how to tune it with her fiddle. At that time she had the only old fiddle in the country. To my knowledge. The old instrument was patched with solder, carpet tacks, and various other things. She and her son lived alone. Each cold winter night I'd get in wood and coal for the old pot-bellied Burnside stove. I would stay all night and go to school from there in the morning. She would play hoedown fiddle tunes half of the night. She played mostly dance tunes on two or three strings. She seldom played the bass.

That winter passed and we continued to play. The following winter her health failed her and she began to lose interest in the violin. However, that fiddle began to sound good to me. Then I suddenly decided I would quit playing the guitar and try to make some kind of a fiddler out of myself. Times was hard, money was scarce. The only work I could get at that time was on a farm. I got 5¢ an hour or 50¢ a day. So I started saving my money to guy me a fiddle.

First Fiddle

And I lost a lot of sweat getting it. I saved, I believe it was $10.40 with postage, in order to buy a violin. So I saved $10.50 and ordered a $9.95 fiddle from Sears Roebuck. And then I had to work me out a bow; you could buy a top bow then for $2.65. Then I got the bow, and I didn't have any case. So I carried the violin in a 24-pound Sunny Field flour bag! Until I got me a case. And this violin case that I bought later was $2.35 plus postage, and I kept it up to about a year ago, then I gave it away. Fiddle strings were 25¢ and at that time there was one penny tax plus. I'd buy them over at Clay, at King's Jewelry Shop; his son's still got the shop. You got Black Diamond strings for 26¢ and now they're three dollars.

And I couldn't tune the violin at that time. Now there was an old gentleman by the name of Charlie Drake lived about two miles from where I lived.—Now this was before I got with my grandmother to learn.—

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He could tune the violin, but he couldn't play it, really; just a little tune or two. I'd take the old fiddle up there and get it tuned. Maybe the wind would be blowing. Put her down in that flour bag and start home. By the time I got home, the variation in the temperature would throw the E or A string, mostly, a little out. But I didn't know the difference! I'd saw on her until she didn't sound good, take her back.

And I did that until my grandmother taught me, until I got the sound. And, like I said, she was a good fiddler and I was a guitar player at that time. I started on the guitar when I was nine years old; I played the Carter fashion.—But that fiddle got through to me. I liked it! And after she quit playing she taught me the notes to start the "Soldier's Joy." Well, I wore the "Soldier's Joy" out!

And then she said, "Well, Wilson, as time goes on"—said—"I can't tell you every little thing. If you want to play bad enough, you'll learn." So I kept improving. And she was 91 years old when she died; her health got to ailing and she just completely quit playing.

Well, I finally learned to play "Soldier's Joy." After this, everyone I knew that could play a fiddle, I managed to visit them and listened to get a new tune in my mind. I tried to make it a habit to play four or five hours each day in a room to myself. And during that time there were only two battery radios in the country to my knowledge, and my father owned one of them. So every Saturday night we would listen to the WSM Grand Old Opry until it went off the air at 1:00. All the neighbors would gather in to listen to the mountain music.

Ed Haley

Then during that time, about 1939 or 1940, Ed Haley came in the country and that put me *on,* see! I was 17 the first time I saw Ed Haley.—There was an old gentlemen lived in Calhoun County joining, Clay County, by the name of Lorie Hicks. He was a good old-time rough fiddler. I would ride a bicycle over to his home to hear him play the fiddle. Then somehow Lorie Hicks contacted Ed Haley in Ashland, Kentucky. In about a month Haley came to Calhoun County. So the news got around through the country that Ed Haley was at Lorie Hicks'. Everybody around went to hear him play.

I told my mother, I said, "I heard old man Mr. Ed Haley play the fiddle and"—I said—"I'm going to learn." She said, "Wilson, it's hard—I doubt it. Maybe Mother could teach you." "Well," I said, "I'm going to learn or there ain't a bull in Texas!" So I started making every arrangement. Now, I wouldn't spend a penny for nothing till I got that $10.40 to order that violin.—I thought it was something, but it wasn't really.

One day it came from Sears Roebuck. I'd walk to the mailbox and I'd hear the mailboy coming and I was there to meet him.—It used to be carried by buggy and team.—I counted the days until that violin came, I think it was nine or ten days. It was in the carton and the mailboy said, "Here, Wilson, is your package." Oh, man! I commenced tearing that thing open. All shiny and nice, you know! But it wasn't, really.

There's so many things come into my mind.—It was 12 miles from where I was raised over to Lorie Hicks' where Ed Haley'd come to. He'd play until about 12 o'clock at night, and he got tired, he'd quit. I was really not conscious of coming back home.—I'd ride a bike, had an old trap of a bicycle; and if a gang didn't gather up to go in an old '29 Model A Ford truck, we'd start walking, maybe somebody'd come along in an old car and pick us up. Or we'd start in time to walk it. Lord! IT WAS 12 MILES!—And I'd come back home and I wasn't really conscious of when I left and when I got there. I was just *dazed* with that fiddle.

And it was just like a dang carnival, you know. We just sat and never opened our mouth and, like I said, he'd scare them fellers, them fellers never tried to play. Doc White asked him one night, said, "Ed, how do you play them tunes without changing keys?" "Well," he said, "Doc, I change them with my fingers!" He wasn't being sarcastic with Doc, he liked Doc.

Well, when he'd take a notion to go back to Kentucky, we'd all beg him to stay another week.—Doc White would say, "Now Ed, listen. They's a gang of people coming from Roane County, you can make some money. Now, you stay another week." Ed was bad to swear. Well, they'd talk him into it. Maybe he'd make four or five dollars a night.

The last night, the last time I seen him—I was a big boy and I'd got over there, had went with some fellers. I was sitting in this old split bottom chair, sleepy, you know, but every time he'd play a tune, I'd survive. And he said, "Son, what's your name?" I didn't know that he knew that I'd been sitting in front of him.—I told him.—He said, "You've been over here every night, haven't you?" I said "Yeah" and I said, "Mr. Haley, you've played tunes for everybody," and I said, "and I don't have no money. I'm saving up money to buy me a fiddle." He laughed! I said, "How about you playing me a tune?" "All right, what is it?" I said, "Play the 'Black-eyed Susie.' " Well, that's really no tune. It's just a little old thing. "Well," he said, "dammit, I'll play it. I don't like to play it. But I'll play it." Said, "Them's single-line tunes. But I'll play it for you."—And he did; because I was interested, you see.

And some of these old music fans, some of them—maybe you've noticed it—it touches them. Some of them will cry and everything else. Maybe somebody of these old farmers would come along; they'd had a tune and maybe their father played or some of their ancestors, and they'd heard it. They'd say, "Well, Ed, play me this tune," and they'd hand him a dollar. Well, he'd play it for 15 minutes! They'd sit there with big tears, you know. And somebody else, "Well, Ed, play this tune." And they'd hand him another dollar.—Well, he'd play till the money ran out and he'd quit!

French Carpenter

And Carpenter, he was in and out of this country a lot; he worked up around Oak Hill. Sometimes he'd come to Clay County for a weekend. I would go and

stay the weekend with him; and he started to teach me to play the fiddle.

French Carpenter was an interesting man. Had been a bugler in the World War. He was not a large man at all. And I guess he could have put on a flour bag and it'd look good on him. Had been a handsome man. Fair complected, hair combed straight back. And big blue eyes. Fair every way. And he was a man you couldn't hear him walk on nothing; And this don't make no sense: he was a feller could walk in the mud, but yet he wouldn't get his shoes dirty! and walk across the floor, it was like cats! And dance. Lord have mercy! that man could dance!

And right after the war and when I got discharged, why, after I found out Ed Haley was dead, well, Carpenter came back in the country and in 1958 he retired —lived in a little old house over here right where Rush Fork and Otter meet, house is still there. And he'd take that fiddle out about dark, you know, and all them frogs hollering—you know in the spring of the year.— I thought that was the lonesomest dang thing I ever heard.

So I practically stayed with him. Oh, I was with him off and on for eight or nine years. And we'd get together from one to three times a week to play the fiddle. And he had a first cousin was a hot banjo player. And we'd play all night! Play the god-blessed night! And he'd make me tune my fiddle with *him.* And he'd say, "Now, Wilson, don't you try to copy me. For you can't. That's ruined a many good fiddler. We have a different time. If you happen to be something like me, fine. *Play yourself.*"

So we got to be so doggone good it just sounded like one fiddle, you know. I'd miss a note, he'd stop, he'd say, "Now, play that over again, you missed it, Wilson." He'd make me get it, wouldn't let me see no peace till I did.—He was that way.

And Carpenter and me'd play, and Carpenter had his time, you couldn't push him, he had a certain time. And if he got with a musician didn't suit him, he'd say, "Well, I don't feel good, I'm going to quit for tonight." You know? He wouldn't offend nobody, he was very kind.

Oh, I worked every day. And I'd go up there, I was all out of steam! I'd work six days a week and I was always up to one or two o'clock in the morning with that fiddle. Well, I'd come home and I'd go to bed and that fiddle tune would keep pushing me; I couldn't sleep. I could just almost put my finger on it. And I've got up at four o'clock in the morning and played that tune. And after I got it, I'd go to bed.

Carpenter drove me all the time and he kept telling me he had a bad heart condition and he said, "I want to push you all I can." And the man died in 1964 and had a couple of tunes I never got to learn. He was a wonderful old-time musician.

A Musician's Philosophy

Now, I don't claim to be a top fiddler, but I fiddle it from the heart, the way I want to and, you know, the way it does me good. There's a lot of things I could have been. But I'm not and I'm not going to worry about them. I could've been many things, probably. But them hoedowns always kept me from being those things. And I'm not going to worry about them.

Douglas at Brandywine Festival, 1975. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

And now I go to these conventions, and when you walk in a place—Competition makes any individual good at anything you do; if you've got competition you want to get good right then! And if you ain't good, it'll put your best in you. And then—you know what I'm talking about—when you feel that chill, boy! look out! When I feel that chill, I'm ready! I can play the fiddle then. I'm just like two preachers wanting to preach! —And sleep, hunger, fatigue leaves you. It don't bother you till you quit and then you're *dead.* By gosh, you're dead. I've gone to these places and I couldn't see no way of ever getting home without stopping along the road—and Lord! I was give out, I was sleepy —and them tunes that them old gentlemen would play would ring in my ears for a week. And when I'd come home, I don't know, it seems like I just, like I just dropped in a hole. There wasn't nothing there.—It's hard for me to explain.

And the way I feel about music, I think these musicians—I do it myself—each one is expressing his past, his present, what he should have been, and what he hopes to be. And he's expressing all of his sorrows, all of his happiness.—If you study him close you can almost read his life. And I think when they're all playing good, clean, honest music—banjo-picking, guitar-playing, fiddling, what have you—I think you're just as close to heaven on this earth as you'll ever be. If you've got the music in you. You know what I mean? I believe that. I don't mean I put that above a hereafter or above an eternal life. But in *this* world, that's my Paradise. In this world.

EVA SAMPLES KING

Her Story

By Eva Samples King

I WAS BORN June 27, 1903 in a small log cabin near Twistabout Ridge in a little valley where blue birds made their nests and catbirds and robins sang.

Some of my earliest recollections are of my mother telling me these birds were the Good Man's birds. The first grief I can recall was when my father had set some "deadfalls" (traps) to catch whatever was taking his corn he had planted. One morning early, he brought several dead birds he had caught and threw them on the porch for the cats to eat. One was a beautiful red bird. I picked it up and found its little eyes were open and it was still warm. I cried and cried, thinking my Dad was very cruel.

My parents were very superstitious, as were most people in my childhood days. One night, a rooster crowed while still on the roost. Thinking it to be bad luck, my Dad killed all three of the roosters. My Mama cried so much that Dad went to a man named Dude Parks and bought a big white rooster, but Mama was sad all day.

I remember the White Ash bloom and the red roses and the Spring below the house. And always, we went to Sunday School and Dad had family prayer every night. When I was four, we moved to Big Laurel where Hiram Young had a lumber company. They used horses and mules to haul the logs on train cars over a narrow steel track. My Dad was a timber cutter and farmer. Farming was a must in our days with eleven children to feed. Although we never went hungry and didn't complain over the hard work, we often wished for a new coat or pair of shoes. Each autumn Dad would buy us a pair of coarse winter shoes and these had to last us until spring. My first coat was my Mama's old cape. It had a fur collar but the fur had worn off in places and when it rained, the collar felt wet and slippery like the groundhog hides we tanned for shoestrings.

My brothers and sisters and I attended a one-room school house on Twistabout, and during the frequent revival meetings, the teacher let the church have the schoolroom from 11:00 to 12:00 each day. The preacher would preach so plain about heaven and hell that I was scared of God and felt like He must be a very cruel God. I was also scared of mad dogs, drunks, and insane people, also afraid of ghosts and graveyards. Our Mama would tell of ghost tales and tokens and signs of death. Near the place of my birth was the feared mud hole in the woods near a country road where many people told of seeing and hearing weird ghostly noises. Granny Sams would tell stories of seeing lanterns floating through the air at night with no one near the light. My favorite subjects in school were English and spelling. I was so proud of winning a prize three years in a row for receiving the best marks in my class. I loved to write compositions and poetry even as a child and, oh, how I loved to read the fairy tales that Dad called junk. I can remember Dad wondering what the world was coming to if such books were allowed in our school library.

My home life as a child was very peaceful and I loved to wander alone along the creek and hollows peeping into birds nests, hunting ginseng, Yellowroot [goldenseal] and mushrooms. I also loved to skate on the ice, wade and swim in the creek, fish and hunt with my brothers and loved the warm family ties that bound us together in a Christian home. I worked as a hired girl in homes where a new baby was born, hoed corn, picked blackberries, raspberries and beans at home and for other for small pay. When I was twelve, my sister Addie and I were carrying berries to the cellar and I stepped on a Copperhead snake and it bit me on the ankle. I was so glad it bit me instead of Addie for she was only seven and it surely would've killed her. There was no doctor around but Dad cut the wound and squeezed out the venom. Mama ran and killed a chicken and put a fresh chicken entrail directly on the spot. This was to draw out the poison. After this, there was turpentine, then a poultice. I survived the ordeal and grew up, or thought I did and began having boy friends aplenty.

I was a little afraid of boys and usually after the second or third date I would tell them not to come back. The boys in our days mostly were gentlemen and respected us, but I still stayed shy of boys until I reached the age of 19. Then I fell deeply in love with J. B. "Jake" Samples. We were married November 5, 1922, in my home on Big Laurel Creek which now is Procious. I had never been any farther away from home than Clendenin and Ivydale and when we moved

Eva Samples King at home.

to Meadow River, it took two days to make the trip. (Now we can make it in two hours.) I felt like I was thousands of miles away from home and was so homesick for my parents and younger brother and sisters. Eighteen months later, I became a Mother. I felt that I had done something no one else ever had done, given birth to the most beautiful baby boy I had ever seen, Basil Dare Samples, who became known to us as "Dickie" in later life.

Jake and I moved several times during the next few years, as Jake found work wherever it was to be found during the depression years. Also, the babies began coming, and while the years were lean and money scarce, by the Lord's help, we made it through. Don was born in 1928 and two years later baby Mark was born. Baby Mark contracted pneumonia in April of '32 and died at the young age of 19 months. Then, four months later, on July 4, 1932, a flood washed our home on Reed Fork away and destroyed all of our garden and potato patches. So, we rebuilt high and dry above the road and had a peaceful happy life dedicated to our family and the Lord. Phyliss was born in 1934 and Tony came along in 1938.

By this time, we had prospered a bit and had built two new houses, a grocery store and a garage where Jake worked. Then, devil whiskey was voted in by our great citizens (and some church members). Gradually this evil got the best of Jake. Oh, the lonely nights I spent in prayer and shed many bitter tears, wondering if he would get killed or kill someone. Jake was such a good hearted man, such a humble Christian, such a good father, but the devil and whiskey dragged him through the mire until his money, farm, and self-respect all were gone.

We moved to Spring Hill where he finally found a good job as an engineer at the Naval Ordinance plant. Jake stopped drinking and in 1940, Kay was born. My happiness was not to last, though, because on October 2, 1941, Jake was killed by a train as he was coming home from work. The war was eminent and the plant was working many hours of overtime. We thought he must have fallen asleep while waiting for a slow freight train to pass on one track.

After his death, I moved back to Twistabout with

my little family near where I was born and bought a run-down farm. The house had a leaky roof and we even had to build an outhouse. Thank God, we had our health and the kids had plenty of energy and were so willing to help. Dickie joined the Navy at 17 and Violet eloped at the young age of 15, but I had Don, Phyliss, Kay, and Tony, and I was not a quitter. Don and I hoed corn for neighbors for $1.00 a day. I took in washings and we raised vegetables, chickens, and sold eggs to get by on. Then, Dickie sent a small allotment check from the Navy to help with expenses. Don went to work for McClung and Morgan at the age of 14.

When Kay was three I married Quentin Samples, assistant Elder, and to us was born Sherry in 1949. After twenty-four years of a peaceful marriage, Quentin died of cancer. Sherry went away to college and this time, I was all alone. Two years later, I met Rex Harrah ahd we were married. We were together for three years and three months when Rex passed away. Once again, I was alone, but two years later, I met Homer King, an old-time acquaintance who had returned to West Virginia to spend his retirement years. We were married and our time is spent in visiting the sick and aged, long rides over country roads enjoying the seasons passing together, with no hurry or worry about when we get home. We've had heartaches and misunderstandings, but we also have family prayer, plenty to eat, and are thankful for so very much.

Sons Don and Tony have made it mostly on their own, and my girls are just the greatest. My darling firstborn son, Dickie, met sudden death at the young age of 47 after 21 years of service in the Navy. Tears still fall in abundance when I think of my firstborn son and his years away from me.

Some of my happiest childhood moments were "possum hunting" with my brothers, Grover and Dick and going to church, even as a tiny girl. Also, as I grew up, I helped the county's only doctor, Dr. A. A. Smith, deliver at least thirty brand new babies. Dr. Smith is retired now and doesn't deliver babies any more, and I am now content to cuddle my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

I have pulled through many storms, been hungry, almost froze to death once, overheated working in the garden, and have had surgery three times, including cancer, but good Doctors and the Good Lord pulled me through.

The greatest experience in my life was finding Christ and experiencing the great cleansing feeling when I was baptized in Elk River 55 years ago . . . to feel a burden lifted, a prayer answered and the touch of the Master's hand . . . the clasp of a warm friendly hand . . . these are blessings I will long remember and cherish. Now that I am 73, in the winter months, I enjoy setting by my son Don's fireplace, also walking in the snow, but my favorite pastime is reading my Bible and writing poetry. I only write now and then when I feel the urge, and then, words pour out faster than I can pen them.

I attribute my longevity to always getting plenty of exercise, courage, not being a "quitter," and not having any bad habits, except eating too much. My advice to the younger generation would be to always look up, don't expect too much, look at your own faults, see the best in others, be willing to give as well as receive. So say no to temptation, say yes to God, let him lead in all phases of life, and expect a better day for each tomorrow. Thank God for each new day and take the advice of the Psalmist who wrote, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." Never get too old to learn and take advice when needed. Always stay young at heart and the God of Peace will give you peace.

EVA SAMPLES KING

Some Poems

By Eva Samples King

Yesterday

written for the Toledo *Weekly Blade,* Toledo, Ohio *1916—age 13*

If we could recall yesterday
how many of us would?
Some evil Thing That we had done
we could exchange for good

Some cross words That we have said
a kinder work we'd say
we could have lightened someone's load
along life's tiresome way

But yesterday is past and gone
and can come our way no more
we must prepare To face life's snares
that we have faced before

Today will soon be yesterday
So let's try and do our best
To make our last yesterday
A little brighter than the rest

Abner Jehu Samples (1869-1943), Mrs. King's father.

My Dad Was the Boss

in memory of Dad

My dad was a kind man he was One of the best
I'd like to sleep near him, when time comes to rest
he counseled us soundly, helped carry our cross
but one thing for certain our Pa was the boss

There were several places we girls were allowed
but dad gave strict orders, stay in the right crowd
If we kept his orders our dad wasn't cross
But he proved to us always that he was the boss

he'd take us to church, sometimes ma was too frail
To climb o'er the hill to the church in the vale
he prayed for us nightly, "don't let one be lost"
his rules were respected for pa was the boss

I think of him often when my faith grows dim
I always found comfort when talking to him
he read us The Scripture when on life's sea we'd toss
I loved my dear father I'm glad he was boss

May 20, 1976

Eva King's son Basil Dare "Dickie" Samples (1924-1971)

In Memory of Dickie

my son died March 27, 1971
Basil Dare Samples (a sailor 21 years)

Near Meadow River where deep woods sway
My son was born one night in May
I was the proudest mom on earth
The night I gave my first son Birth

Your dark blue eyes and soft brown hair
I felt an angel had brought you here
To lay beside me on my bed
Upon my arm I held your head

Then you grew up and went away
and my dark hair soon turned to grey
on the USS-Eagle fifty-five
Our God above kept you alive

The Navy held you many years
as Silently I dried my tears
you often wrote when on the sea
I love you mom "Please pray for me"

But now you sleep in a lonely grave
My Son that once was strong and brave
yes miles away from home you sleep
Oh Dickie for you I still weep

March 15, 1976

The Slaying of the Innocents

written for the *Clay County Free Press*

God Bless America we pray I'm sure God wonders why
When Thousands of our unborn babes
This year will have to die
King Herod slew the innocents from two yr. old & less
but mothers mourned and wept for them because of loneliness

These mothers' arms were empty Their hearts were torn apart
Rachel weeping for her children, because that they were not,
but how about the mothers, who said "Dr., slay my child"
The serpent says destroy them, he always has beguiled

How can a mother sleep at night agreeing to this sin
God placed your child beneath your heart and let its life begin
The criminals allowed to live, death penalty is gone
and people kept alive, tho dead, machines just drag them on

Stanza

yet little babies have to die who might be the world have blest
A Dr. or a minister and brought much happiness
Oh mother e'er you pull the switch to murder your unborn,
what will you tell your Maker, on the resurrection morn.

if Abel's blood could cry to God
your child's could cry out too
Get on your knees and ask the Lord
"What will you have me do?"

1976

Two of Eva King's songs have been published as follows:

"All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray"
Harmony Way, 1959
James D. Vaughan
Lawrenceburg, Tenn.

"The Master Looks Down"
The Solid Rock, 1952
Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Co.
Dallas, Texas

appears again in:
Heaven's Song Parade No. 2, 1954
Moore Publishing Co.
Charleston, W. Va.

EVA SAMPLES KING

Her Granddaughter's Portrait

By Vicki Samples Jones

EVA DALE Samples Samples Samples is my grandmother. I always enjoyed telling folks that my granny was born a Samples, married a Samples, and, when he died, married another Samples because she couldn't stand to change her name. After the second Samples died, she proved me wrong and married a Harrah. Then after he died she became Eva King.

Granny lives on Twistabout Ridge in an old house that holds nearly all of my holiday memories. Like the majority of Clay County's labor force, Dad left the state with his young family in search of employment. But West Virginia keeps a tight hold on her boys, and we came "home" every chance we got.

Granny's youngest child, Sherry, is eight months younger than my sister and eight months older than myself. The three of us entertained each other in ways of childhood that are always assurances against boredom and that make the memories pleasant.

Granny was forced to hold her family together alone during a difficult period in our nation's history. The effect of that struggle never left her. Even when she was financially able to provide substantial loans to her children she lived as frugally as ever.

For years Granny sold Blair products in the hollers and ridges of the Twistabout area. Sherry and Vivian and I used to make a regular outing of delivering for her, or going out with her to take orders. She also cleaned the Liberty Advent Christian Church, a small white building a short walk from the house. We pretended to be a great help, but I am sure we were more trouble than anything else. But we stacked song books, taking as much time to sing from them as to put them away. Sherry even learned to play the piano from

Mrs. King stands at the entrance to "Fairyland". In her granddaughter's words, ". . . everything about Granny Evie's was magic, and Granny was the most magic of all."

the old shape note books, still used in that church today.

Bible reading and family prayer were regular events at bedtime. Granny has always had a deep faith in God and a respect for his handiwork that shows itself in all her poetry and in her daily life. She accepts, with stubborn mountain simplicity, concepts that theologians argue about endlessly. On Sunday evenings the Bible reading was replaced by church service, but there were never too many prayers.

The only souce of heat in that little house was a pot-belly stove that sat in the middle of the living room. For my sister and me it was vacation adventure to snuggle under piles of quilts with Sherry in the drafty back bedroom. But I know that Sherry slept alone in that cold room every night. Granny used seemingly useless scraps of material to make warm and beautiful quilts, not only for her own home, but for children and grandchildren as well.

The path to the outhouse went through the chicken yard, and I can still remember Granny making sure that I wiped my feet on the grass before I could come back in the house. There were chickens to lay the big brown eggs that Granny sold, chickens to cook up with dumplin's, baby chicks for grandchildren to hold, and big mean looking roosters to wake everybody up too early! If Granny didn't love animals, she certainly tolerated them well. She's never been without them. There were cute little pigs that turned into frightful hogs before our next visit, and beautiful gentle-eyed cows that scared us to death when we crossed their pasture to play on the "Big Rock." She has a soft touch for dogs and cats, too, and I can't remember a visit when there wasn't a new litter of kittens in the cellar-top.

The Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society of the Liberty Advent Christian Church had an ongoing rummage sale, and Granny was the one who kept it going. All the clothes were stored in the smokehouse, and it was a magic place for three little girls to play. But everything about Granny Evie's was magic, and Granny was the most magic of all. This has to be, for the woods beyond the garden is Fairyland. I have known that since before my memory begins, and I somehow believe that the path to Fairy Rock was kept worn by more than our small feet. To Fairy Rock we took milkweed pods, opening them to leave new wardrobes of filmy white gowns for the fairies. It was Granny who helped us believe that it was the fairies, and not the wind, that took the miniature gowns away when we left. She also helped us believe that the fairies, and not the birds and chipmunks, ate the bits of cake we left for their "tea."

The magic in that house could be spooky as well. As safe as we felt in Fairyland, where not even snakes concerned us, we would not enter Dismal, the same woods, but on the other side of the house. As we grew older, of course, going to the forbidden woods was much more exciting that the familiar and safe. But as a young child I knew that there were horrors unnamed just across the chicken yard! No one has yet matched the quality that Granny could put into a ghost story. I still feel shivers and wonder if they could just possibly have been true!

But Granny is much more than just a magic lady. She is all that is wonderful about the mountain spirit. She is fiercely independent, with a deep wisdom balanced by a sense of humor that always lifts and never puts down. At 73 she has seen more of the dark side of life than should have been her share, but her hope and her joy flow in abundance to brighten everyone's day.

But We Were Tough and Hardy

By Bonnie G. Stanley

This article is based almost entirely on a tape recorded interview with John Kyle in his home on January 8, 1977.

IN 1911 JOHN KYLE'S maternal grandfather, John Thomas Krantz, moved to the Ugly Run area with Kyle's father John Riley Kyle and mother Elizabeth Jane Krantz Kyle, who were newly married. They lived in a one-room log house and farmed virgin soil. On June 29, 1912, John Kyle was born at Ugly Run, which was named for the crooked, seven-mile-long creek that empties into Buffalo Creek. He attended a one-room school there and later went to Clay County High School for three years.

When his father became too ill to work, the young Kyle entered the mines to support his parents, a brother, and two sisters. Later, his interests took him to the ministry and to home study to supplement his public schooling. He developed abilities for writing and reading, all the time maintaining a knack for woodworking—he's expert at cabinetry and furniture repair and refinishing. In the early 1960s Kyle entered Fairmont State College and completed a teaching degree in industrial arts. Today he teaches shop at Clay Junior High School. He writes a Who's Who column for the *Clay County Free Press* and is compiling a collection of his ancestors' writings which he hopes to publish someday.

Kyle and his wife Becky live at Clay in a white, two-story frame house, where his woodworking abilities are evident throughout. In this setting he was interviewed about early life in Clay County.

John Kyle. My father with his father had secured a parcel of land in that particular area somewhere after the turn of the century, I don't know just when....There were 45 acres of land, and I remember my father showing me the various fields when I became large enough to remember things, showing me the various fields and telling about he and his father having cut down the timber and had piled logs and burned them because there were no sawmills in the area and no use for the timber. The timber was a real problem to them because they had to cut down the logs and get rid of it so they could have the land cleaned off for the purpose of farming. They were farmers and lived pretty much on what they were able to take from the soil. Planted and cultivated crops and also fruits and nuts and what have you that grew up.

And that area later became known as—or our post office—when a post office was established a few years after that, [it] was known as Cresmont. And the name of that place still exists. There was a railroad station there and a large dairy farm situated by the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company some years after that. And before the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company came there to begin to develop the timberland in that particular area, there was another lumber company called the Crescent Lumber Company, and they built a large band mill, one of the first band mills that was in this part of the country. The band mill means a band saw, a continuous band of steel going around two pulleys with teeth on it, driven by a large engine of some sort, the steam

engine. They sawed the logs, and that kind of sawmill is opposed to a more modern type of mill which is just a circular blade saw. And the band saw had the advantage of being able to saw much larger logs, logs of much larger diameter.

There was a store nearby, a country store. Incidentally, the store was owned and operated by one of my uncles, Mr. Rhodes, who had married my father's sister. He operated the country store.

A railroad running from Dundon to Widen also provided means of transportation out of that wilderness situation to the county seat of Clay which was not called Clay then. It was called Clay Court House. It retained that name until, I think, 1923 when, by an act of the West Virginia Legislature, the court house phrase was dropped and left the name Clay.

Bonnie Stanley. Do you remember about the date when your family came to this area?

JK I couldn't say exactly what time. My great-grandfather Robert Kyle moved to the Enoch community which is now a community or neighborhood located on the head of Dog Run Creek, which is about ten miles distant from this location which I previously described. He came to that country I think, to the best of my knowledge, in the latter part of the 1840s. And he was one of the first persons to enter that area. He came there from over in Sycamore country [southwestern Clay County] and brought his wife and a small family, and they carved out a homestead or farm out of wilderness, cutting virgin timber. It would be hard for you to believe the size of the trees. Some of those trees, yellow poplar trees, as much as seven feet in diameter and 35 to 40 feet before you had the first kind of a limb on those trees. And in those days, they didn't even have a crosscut saw . . . they had to chop them up and roll them in heaps and set them afire.

BS Chopping with just an ordinary ax?

JK With an ordinary double-bit ax, a blade on each side. And it was almost an endless task to think about carving out a farm in that particular area, because it was virgin timber. The timber had never been cut when my great-grandfather came to that area. And then he dies as a young man. He was only 47, I think, when he died, as some of his descendants had tuberculosis and I suspect that he was affected with tuberculosis. Of course there were no medical services and no drugs in that day, and the extreme hard work and exposure to which they

John Kyle

were subjected brought his early death.

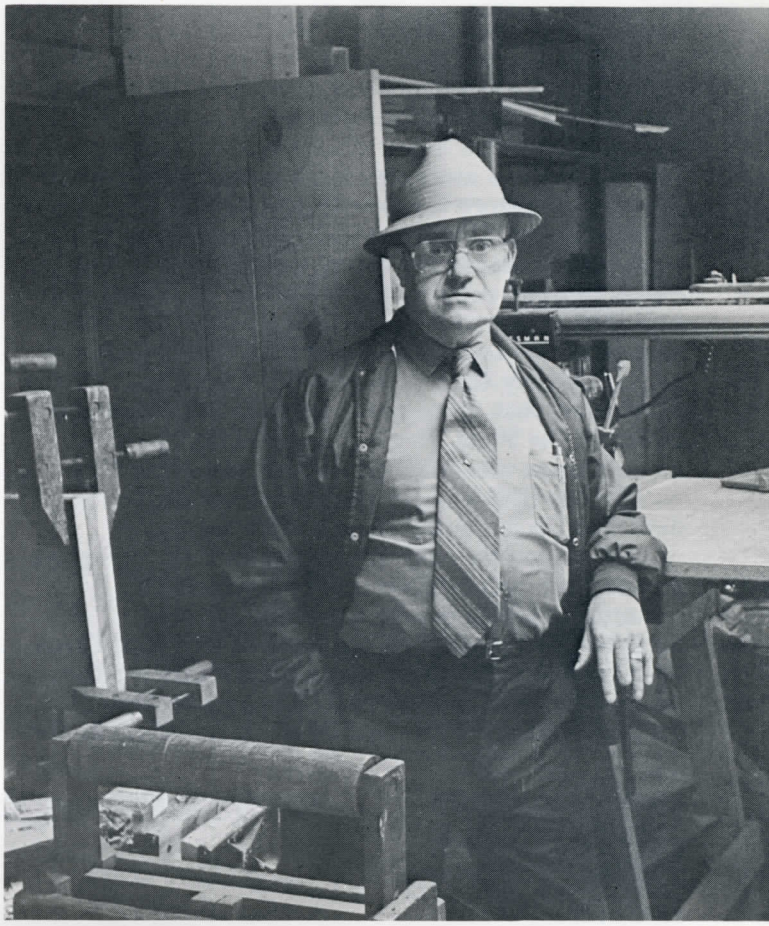
Then after that there's a time lapse there that I don't know a great deal about. When I became aware of my grandfather Kyle, my father's father, he was living in what is now called the Lizemores area of Clay County. He had married one of the girls, Mary Jane Holcomb, of that area. Not very long after they were married, they moved to a community later called Enoch, and is presently referred to as Enoch, W. Va. There was a post office established there. And, incidentally, my grandfather, some years after he had come there to settle with his family, was authorized by the U. S. Government to establish a post office. And he established the Enoch post office and operated it as postmaster for 43 years. And then when my grandmother died—he was elderly and he decided that he would no longer maintain the post office. And he had begun to think about transferring that farm to my father. And we were planning at that time to move from the area where we lived in the Ugly Run or Cresmont country to Enoch, because it was a much better farm. And they would sell or dispose of the smaller place, the 45-acre farm, and we would have the place which was about a hundred acres.

BS What was your life like growing up as a child . . .?

JK Well, many of the things I remember of my childhood was pretty tough. But as I reflect through recent experiences on those times, I'm sure that there were not many things to worry about or to cause us frustration other than perhaps getting enough food to eat and some clothes to wear. Things were pretty tough. We ate just what we gathered from the land.

I can't remember when we first had sheep. We kept sheep really for three purposes, the primary purpose to get wool. And we sheared the sheep in the spring of the year after the chill of winter was gone. The wool was washed and later on we were able to send it to Nicholas County to a carding mill. This is a mill that combs it apart and straightens out the fibers and then rolls it in little rolls about as big around as your index finger. Those rolls were about 24 inches long. They were called cards. You took those cards and with the use of a spinning wheel—just a common device that had a spool on it. And you pump the treadle to turn the wheel and the wheel then, with a belt made from a piece of yarn string around the spool, twisted the wool fiber and wound them on the spool. My mother then would use the yarn to make sweaters and socks, stockings and mittens, gloves and toboggans, and that type of thing. We used our sheep for this particular purpose.

There was a time—I can't rememer especially when—my grandmother and my grandfather used wool in another regard. They had a loom and they wove sheets or cloth blankets on the loom. I can remember an old lady in that Enoch community some years later who was a very famous weaver [Mary (Mrs. Sam) Hamrick]. She would make some beautiful things, towels and blankets and scarves,



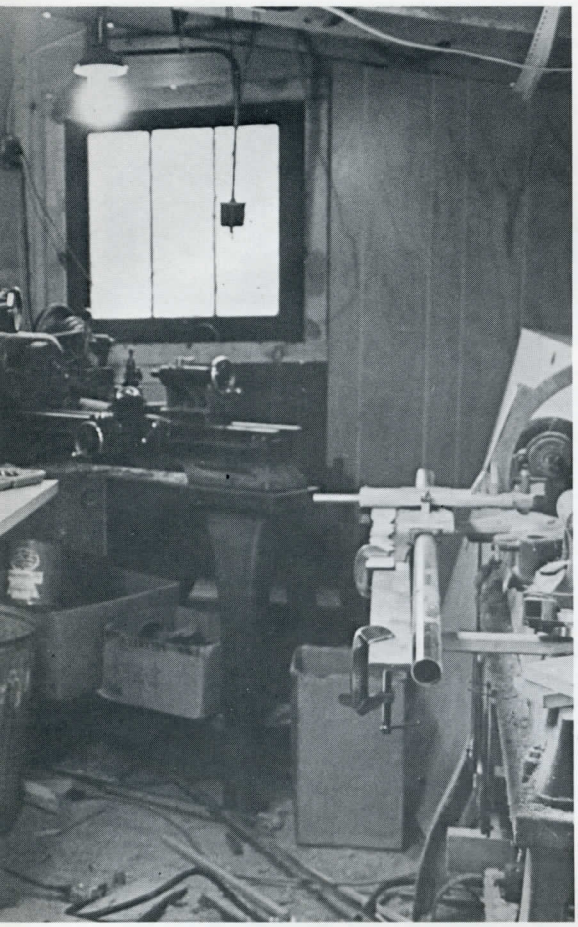
Kyle in his woodworking shop.

rugs and this type of thing using different colors of yarn to make these things.

BS The looms must have been really large, weren't they?

JK The looms were large. It was probably seven-and-a-half feet wide so that you could make a blanket for a bed. I think a blanket is 80 inches wide perhaps, or in that area. We raised our sheep for that purpose, and we also would occasionally sell some of the male lambs on the market to get a little bit of money. Generally we didn't sell them. We just exchanged them at the store. Maybe they would come to the store to pick up the sheep, and people would bring their lambs to sell at that particular time. These were always sold in the late spring and summer. You didn't get much for them, but we needed money so badly for some things that we couldn't produce, so we sold the lambs so we could get money for that.

And then also we would butcher some sheep to get meat called mutton. I never did like it, and of course my mother and our family were not gourmet cooks. Perhaps if some modern cook with modern cooking devices would take lamb chops now, I might be delighted about it, but I remember how it was in those days. So the three things that we kept the sheep for were wool for clothing, for economic purposes to sell our overstock, and to use for meat



purposes. And we also raised hogs. We kept cows and we kept chickens, and there generally was available to us by way of food, particularly in the winter time.

We had difficulty in the summertime. In the summer was a real problem because we had no refrigeration. We seldom ever butchered anything, a sheep or a hog, in the summertime. I don't remember as a child ever butchering any species of cattle. Now, some people would butcher cattle, but times were so difficult for us and we were so economically depressed and poverty-stricken, I guess is the terminology, that we couldn't afford to kill a cow or even a steer. We sold them in order to get money. But we had eggs. In the fall of the year and in the wintertime, we always had plenty of eggs. We not only used eggs, but we also peddled eggs and sold them in order to get money.

And I can remember in those days if company came to our house who might be a relative or the preacher, called the circuit rider, to stay overnight, in order to make a good impression and show our hospitality, my mother would always provide a chicken dinner. That chicken dinner was generally chicken and dumplings, rather than to be fried chicken. We never had any fried chicken other than in the spring of the year. We occasionally would maybe kill a young chicken and fry it, and I can remember how delicate it was as compared to the other kinds of meats we ate.

One advantage we had in those early years of my life, there was no closed season on wild game. And I've gone with my grandfather on a Saturday afternoon for just a mile-and-a-half or two miles outside of our farm with an old muzzle-loading mountain rifle, and in two hours we would have shot 12 to 15 squirrels. And we'd skin those up and we'd have squirrel for dinner.

BS You had plenty of meat then, didn't you?

JK Yes. There was no problem at that time.

BS What about things around the house? Did you make like any furniture or anything for your house then, or did you buy it or what?

JK Most of the things that we had around the house in the early years of my remembrance were all made by us, the tables, the chairs. I can remember the time in my childhood when we did not have a single chair in the kitchen. We had a large table. It was 12 feet long and I remember it was three feet wide, and we had benches around the table. The benches were simply a log split open. On the flat side it would be smoothed off with either a smoothing plane or foot adze, which was a chopping tool. And then they would drill holes at an angle in the bottom of that log and drive limbs of trees or small round sticks into those holes and cut them off for the legs. And these were the benches.

Then, of course, as years moved on and things became a little better for us, we finally got some chairs. I can remember that my grandfather and my father and my mother had a chair, and we kids sat on benches around the table. And this was really the kind of furniture we had. However, as I remember, the beds we had were metal—the frames of the beds were metal. Now, my grandfather Kyle had some rope beds. They were made out of wood, and he had made those beds himself. He would hew out the posts of the bed and fasten them together with the cross members. And then the rails of the beds had holes drilled in them, and he would lace a piece of rope through the rails of the bed. The tick, we called it, which was the same thing as a mattress in this day—you take a large piece of material, sew it up and make a sack out of it. And then you could fill that either with feathers or straw [oat or rye straw]. Some people filled them with corn shucks. And then you would put this tick on those ropes. It didn't make a good bed at all. It was lumpy, and of course the way you had to work in those days, you were so tired that you could sleep, I suppose, standing up and walking or lying down on the ground and that type of thing. But we didn't have very much comfort.

We had an open fireplace. We had to cut wood and carry wood to make the fire. And the house was real cold, but we were tough and hardy. Had to build resistance to ward off disease and germs and that type of malady. We'd keep a roaring fire until we got ready to go to bed, and then we'd hop in bed and have several covers or blankets and some of these

heavy woolen blankets. You'd sometimes have enough cover on you that it would feel real heavy, as if to crush you, but we—There was always several people sleeping together which added additional warmth. Life was pretty tough. As a result, you had to be hale and hardy.

BS Are there other skills or crafts or hobbies or things that you learned from your parents? And about your writing, you like to do some writing too, don't you?

JK I'm not sure, I'm really not sure where I learned the things I do . . . from my parents, or if they came from even my grandparents, or whether they were developed from some other sources. However, I remember and I have, I suppose, the only existing copy of a series of writings that my grandfather did in 1925 and '26 under the title of "Recollections of an Old Man." And the man who at that time owned the *Clay County Free Press* was a very good friend of his. He asked my grandfather to write some articles. He wrote the series of articles which described some of the early years of his life and gave a little bit of history of the people with whom he lived, and his parents.

I had an uncle, my father's brother, his brother next oldest to him, who lived in the city of Charleston and was associated with West Virginia politics in the late teens and '20s. I always considered him to be a man of some high degree of intelligence. And he did some writing for the *Clay County Free Press* during the war years, the Second World War during the '40s, the late '40s and through to the end of the war. He also had written two or three articles when he was in the Spanish-American War stationed in the Philippine Islands, and some of those writings have been published in the *Clay County Free Press.*

I can remember when I was going to school, elementary school, a one-room school over on Ugly Run. I always loved the reading class. I suppose you would call it literature in this modern day, but we called it reading. We had a reading class that was the first thing in the morning. I was considered a good reader. Generally stood at the head of the class, in the reading class. And I like that sort of thing.

And I remember in those early years, my early teens, sitting down and writing stories. And of course my stories were simply patterned after some of the stories that someone else had written. The only thing, I changed some names, and I used the names of some of the kids that lived in our community. And I wrote those stories. When I became associated with the ministry in the early '50s (1951), I began to read some more, study some more.

And my formal education until that time had been very, very limited. I had, as a matter of fact, completed the eighth grade, in that Ugly Run School. My father had insisted that I go to Clay County High School. I went to Clay County High School three years and then was forced to drop out to go to the mines and take a job because he had become so ill that he could no longer work. I had to

Kyle and his wife Becky at their home in Clay.

go to work to support the family. I had a brother and two sisters who lived with us in our home and we had no support. By that time the farming business—we had progressed to the point that you didn't make all your living off of the farm. There were certain things that had to be bought and paid for with cash of one kind or another. So I stopped at that particular point.

JK . . . I think that Clay County is a good place to grow up because you are exposed to a kind of in-between situation. It's not the deepest and [most] intense form of poverty, and neither is it the elite society that you find in some of the cities of even some of the other parts of the country.... It makes my kind of people, the kind of people who I think have a better concept of life, who have more appreciation of life, who have more appreciation for life itself. I have known some people who had ugly dispositions in my lifetime, who felt that the world owed them a living. And I don't think you'll find that in Clay County. I think people are proud folk, and they feel that if there is a way to make a living, they'll make a living.

Hickory and Ladyslippers

By Jerry D. Stover

The farthest thing from my mind was the idea of our writing a book. However, after organizing and teaching my art students a unit on Appalachia, we conceived the idea to write a book about Clay County's history. From our research we have discovered that there has been very little written on the history of Clay, other than the short but concise history written by Perry Woofter that is in the West Virginia University Library.

I was made aware of the need to preserve what we have by Mrs. Barbara Yeager, while taking her Appalachian Culture class. Mrs. Yeager stressed to all of the students the importance of writing down what history we could learn from the older citizens. She said that after this generation passes we will have lost most of the rich heritage that has been preserved in the hills of Clay County. She made us aware of the pride we should have for Clay County. Many times, she explained, when people live in an area for a long time, they start taking things for granted. I am sure that this is true of most of us. Mrs. Yeager also pointed out the innate talents the people have in sewing, hunting, folk arts, or various other skills characteristic of this area. All of these things were taken into consideration while I was discussing Appalachia and Clay County with my students. It was a lesson on looking at ourselves and learning together.

The idea of the book came out of our discussions on what we as Clay Countians were losing by the passing of our grandparents and friends. I am saddened to think that both of my grandfathers are gone, and that all the stories and happenings of their lives will not be recorded in our present volumes. There was discussion about compiling the materials gathered during the two-year period of Mrs. Yeager's class, but this did not satisfy my students. During a discussion one student commented, "Mr. Stover, why do we have to wait for two years to do a book? Do you realize that many of the older people will die within that time?" Of course he was right, and with a consensus of all the students, we proceeded to gather and organize our volumes of history.

This is not intended to be a chronological order of events which have made up Clay County history, but will be stories of events and many everyday happenings as told and written down by our people. Many times there might be some repetition, but to prevent the loss of any originality of work that has been done, we will try not to eliminate any materials if all possible.

The whole idea of what we are doing was summed up by one of the students during a discussion on how we would organize ourselves to write the books. He said, "We are not saving the past, but we are saving the future!" Many of my students have spent many long and exhausting hours interviewing and writing down our history.

It has taken us a year and a half to get our first book completed. We tried in all that time to get financial support from different sources but were not successful, and this gave us the feeling that people did not believe that we could do this. After all, "What and where is Clay County?" We have really had our ups and downs because we did not have a typewriter or anything else to work with. The students borrowed typewriters and cassette tape players, and we worked and saved to purchase tapes. We all had to pull together in a united effort, and many times I know the students got disgusted at not having anything to work with. But they still continued.

This school year has been a little easier because the administration let us have a period to work on our history during one of our regular scheduled Art II classes. We still do not have anything much to work with, but with grit and determination we will succeed. However, without the help from the County Office, our superintendent James Dawson, our principal Jerry Linkinogger, and our principal last year Mr. Lyle Shreves, the completion of our first volume would have been impossible.

Through the help of attorney Steve Algren and the newly formed Clay County Jaycees, we have gotten a grant to help us publish our first volume, *Hickory and Ladyslipper, The Life and Legend of Clay County People,* Volume I. The grant was awarded to us through the West Virginia American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, and we will

forever be grateful to them.

Our first book, hopefully, will be printed by May 1, and a special thanks must go to Mr. Hubert Moore for his help in this effort. Our first volumes will be in paperbacks and later will be sold in a large hardback edition. We are not sure of the cost of the first volume, but it will be held under five dollars. If anyone would like to secure a copy this can be done by contacting Mr. Jerry D. Stover, Art Instructor, Hickory and Ladyslippers, Clay County High School, Clay, West Virginia 25043.

In our first volume we have tried to pick from the best materials we have gathered from all parts of the county and present the reader with an overview of Clay County. In a sense, to organize and publish such a book has been in the minds of many people here for many years. This seems, however, to be the only attempt that has been successful.

There is much to be learned by studying the transcribed words and the writings of the people from Clay County, and we the people of West Virginia will be their recipients. Much time and effort has been given by many people in helping the art students and me gather materials for our publications. Everyone we have talked to, with the exception of a very few, has given us his or her complete cooperation and we would like to thank them.

EXCERPTS FROM

Hickory and Ladyslippers, Volume I

The following pieces of prose and poetry are only a few of the many materials that are being gathered by the art students at Clay County High School in an attempt to save some of their mountain heritage.

The Old Water Mill

My thoughts turn back to long ago when as a
child I wandered to and fro.
Across the meadow and over the hill and down
the valley to an old water mill.

The miller was old his hair was grey.
He whistled a tune as the mill ground away.
The old mill wheel made a screeching sound
as the water turned the wheel round and round.

I listened to the whirr of the old mill wheel
as it slowly turned the burrs to grind the meal.
The miller worked hard grinding at the mill.
Resting in peace until the judgment day.

My memory goes back some sixty years and my eyes
now grow dim with tears.
It seems I can hear the ripple of the mill that
turned the wheel of that old water mill.

Although I am growing old.
I scarce can think it so,
but when I see a creek or a rippling rill,
I think of barefoot days and the old water mill.

The above poem was written by Neva Hazel Nichols Bird from Lizemores, Clay County. Mrs. Bird was born February 19, 1904, in a three-room hewed log house built by her grandparents.

The Old-time Water Mill

Comparatively few men or women under 30 have ever seen a water mill in operation. Yet, not much more than that number of years have elapsed since the time when the water mill was one of the most important things in the community. Upon its operation depended the bread supply of the families living within a radius of several miles. The water mills were not so numerous because of the lack of suitable sites.

Nearly every mill is now a complete wreck. Some people, however, have hauled away the millstones as souvenirs of bygone days.

So important was the operation of the grist mill, that an old statute enacted by a West Virginia legislature exempted the owner of such a mill from grand jury duty.

Several years ago, in Clay County, there were several of these mills. Seven miles below Clay, at Yankee Dam, Hiram Lewis owned a mill that supplied farmers on both sides of the Elk River for miles with breadstuff. In the vicinity of Lizemores two mills were operated one of them by John T. Morton, father of Dr. U. G. Morton.

On Porters Creek, not far from Odessa Post Office, Bin Moore had a mill. John Gray operated one on Buffalo Creek near what is now Eakle Station on the B. C. & G. Railroad.

One mill on Muddlety Creek carded wool. People from Clay County took their wool to this one. This carded wool was then spun into clothing for the entire family. In the eighties there were several hand looms in this territory for this purpose.

Few people in Clay remember these mills, but those that do vouch for the importance they had in those days.

This sketch was written by Geneieve Welch Young in the early 1940s, during her participation in an extension class from Glenville State College on West Virginia folklore. Mrs. Young is a retired Clay County teacher and now lives and teaches in Melbourne, Florida.

In This Issue

BETTY BURDETTE CANTRELL was born in Procious and was the first child of Chester and Othel Davis Burdette. After graduating from Clay County High School, she married Alfred Cantrell and moved to Medina, Ohio, where she graduated from Baldwin-Wallace College. She is presently employed by the Clay County Board of Education Teacher Corps Project and has been with the Clay school system for six years. She has attended Morris Harvey College and West Virginia University and plans to receive her M.A. in education from the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies (C.O.G.S.) in May of this year.

MARY HUGHES, a Clay County native, is the daughter of J. B. "Benny" and Peggy Vaughan. She was educated in Clay County schools and attended Glenville State College. She is currently enrolled in West Virginia State College, majoring in education. Formerly a social worker with the West Virginia Department of Welfare, she is presently employed as Community Coordinator with the Teacher Corps Project.

VICKI SAMPLES JONES was born in Clay County in 1950. Having received her B.A. in English Education from Glenville State College, she now teaches at Clay County High School. She is especially interested in the literature and music of her Appalachian heritage.

NANCY MCCLELLAN grew up on a small farm near Ashland, Kentucky, and attended schools near and in that city. She graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1954 with an A.B. degree in ancient languages. A Phi Beta Kappa, she completed all course work for a M.A. degree in classical language at the University of Chicago in 1955 and received a M.A. degree in English at Marshall University in 1966. She is now professor of English and the humanities at the University of Kentucky-Ashland Community College. A founder of the Mountain Heritage Folk Festival in 1970, she has also served as its co-chairman since 1972. She has been on the board of directors of the Ashland Area Art Gallery since 1971.

ELIZABETH GRACE PHILLIPS was born in Holcomb (Nicholas County) and graduated from Richwood High School. For two years she attended West Virginia Wesleyan College and taught in public schools while attending Glenville State College where she received her bachelor's degree. She is enrolled in the graduate program in education at C.O.G.S.

HELEN BLACK REED, daughter of Reta and Parker C. Black, was born in Parkersburg and was educated in Wood and Clay County schools. She received her A.B. degree from West Virginia University, majoring in French and social studies. She is married to James W. Reed, prosecuting attorney of Clay County. Her interests include music, traveling, and boating. She attended Morris Harvey College to become certified for elementary education and expects to receive a M.A. degree in elementary education from C.O.G.S. in May of this year.

BONNIE G. STANLEY is a teacher at Clay Elementary School. A native of Wallback (Clay County) she attended Glenville State College and received a B.A. degree in elementary education there in 1973.

JERRY D. STOVER was born in Boone County in 1944. His parents being Clay County natives, they moved back to Clay when he was ten years old. He received his A.B. degree in art and speech in 1967 from Glenville State College. He is now working on his masters at C.O.G.S. He and his students are very interested in collecting and preserving the heritage and culture of the Clay County area.

BARBARA YEAGER is an associate professor of English at Morris Harvey College. She serves as the Appalachian cultural consultant and instructor for the Teacher Corps Project in Clay County. Mrs. Yeager worked as early as 1968-69 with Mr. William Plumley to form Morris Harvey Publications, a vehicle of the college which has published 11 regional collections and produced six Appalachian Arts Festivals. She is particularly interested in Appalachian children's literature and has edited with Anderson and Warner a supplementary reader for the intermediate student of this region. Her objective is to stimulate cultural awareness which develops a positive self-image. This, she believes, will lead to the preservation of cultural materials that otherwise may have been lost to our descendents.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Frametown
Servia
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Left Hand
Newton
Duck
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Clio
Amma
Wallback
Ivydale
Elk
Strange
Creek
36
Procious
Queen
Shoals
Morris
4
Clay
Jct.
Swandale
Dille
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