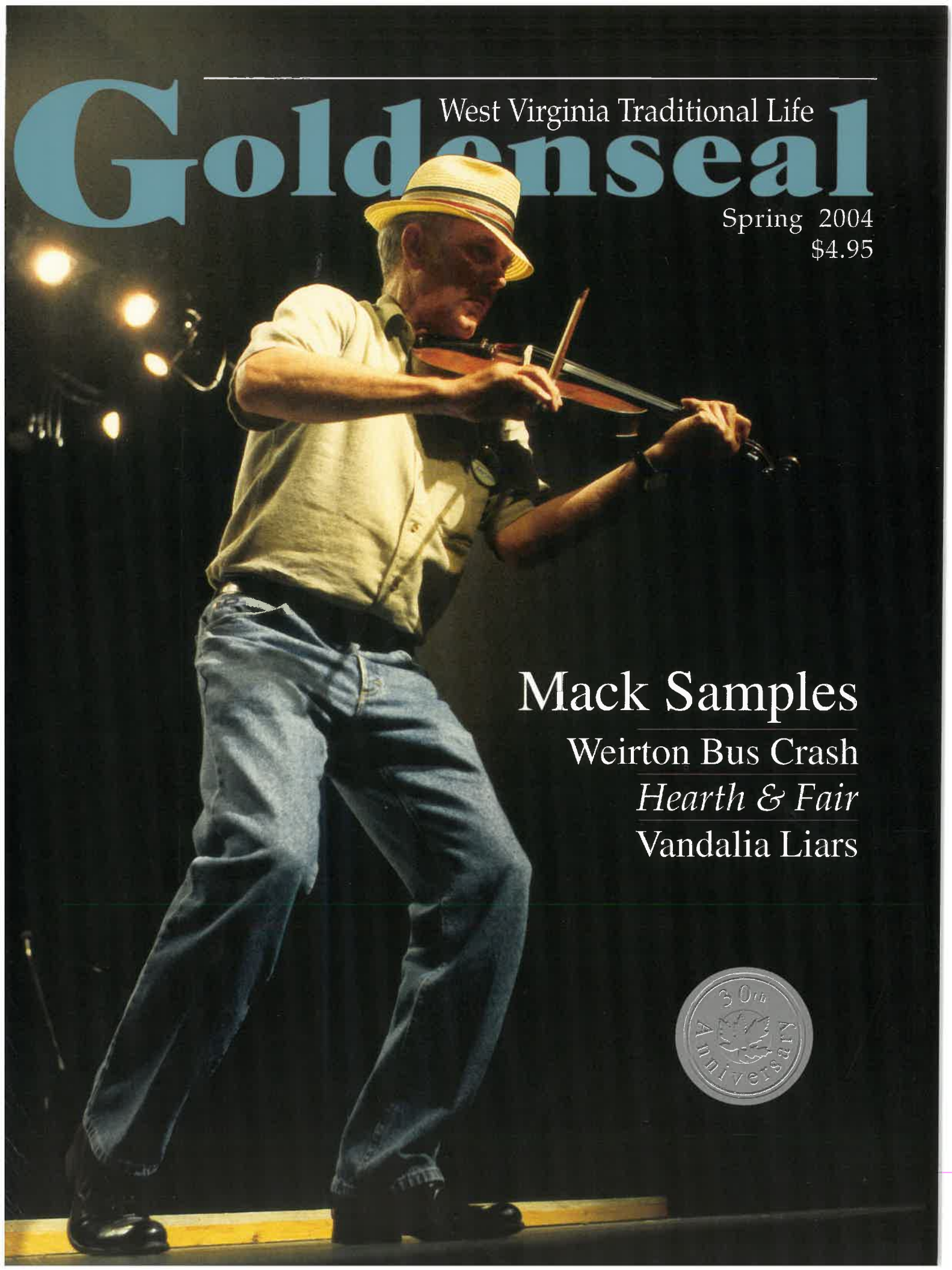
West Virginia Traditional Life
Goldenseal
Spring 2004
$4.95
Mack Samples
Weirton Bus Crash
Hearth & Fair
Vandalia Liars
30th Anniversary

Folklife*Fairs*Festivals 2004

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

March 17-21 Irish Spring Festival
Ireland (452-8962)
March 19-21 George Washington's Bathtub Celebration
Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)
March 19-21 Upper Potomac Spring Dulcimer Festival
Shepherdstown (263-2531)
March 20-21 W.Va. Maple Syrup Festival
Pickens (924-6288)
March 26-28 Appalachian Heritage Weekend
Pipestem (466-1800)
April 17 Antique Plowing Contest
Bellville (863-6342)
April 17 Feast of the Ramson
Richwood (846-6790)
April 23-25 Dogwood Arts & Crafts Festival
Huntington (696-5990)
April 23-25 Spring Mountain Festival
Petersburg (257-2722)
April 24 Spring Fling
Mount Clare (622-3304)
April 24 International Ramp Cook-Off & Festival
Elkins (636-2717)
April 30-May 1 Frontier Gathering
Kanawha State Forest (755-2990)
May 1 W.Va. Marble Festival
Cairo (628-3321)
May 1-2 Steam & Gas Engine Show
Point Pleasant (675-5737)
May 5-8 Rendezvous on the River
Blennerhassett Island/Parkersburg (420-4800)
May 6-13 42nd Wildflower Pilgrimage
Blackwater Falls/Davis (558-3370)
May 8 Mother's Day Founder Festival
Webster (265-5549)
May 9 Observance of Mother's Day
Grafton (265-1589)
May 11-15 Annual Bend Area Gospel Jubilee
Cottageville (882-2049)
May 13-16 Three Rivers Festival
Fairmont (363-2625)
May 15 Spring Festival
Romney (492-5891)
May 15-16 6th Annual Elizabethtown Festival
Moundsville (845-6200)
May 15-16 Heritage Days & Civil War Weekend
Buffalo (937-2755)
May 19-23 W.Va. Strawberry Festival
Buckhannon (472-9036)
May 28-30 28th Vandalia Gathering
State Capitol Complex/Charleston (558-0162)
May 29-31 23rd Head-of-the-Mon-River Horseshoe Tournament
Fairmont (366-3819)
June 3-6 50th Annual Union Farmers Day Celebration
Union (772-3033)
June 3-6 Blue & Gray Reunion
Philippi (457-4265)
June 4-6 Weston Carp Festival
Weston (269-2210)
June 6 Rhododendron Outdoor Arts & Crafts Festival
Charleston (776-1308)
June 10-13 5th Annual Hatfield/McCoy Reunion
Matewan/Williamson/Delbarton (235-5240)
June 11-12 Hancock County Quilt Show
New Cumberland (564-5385)
June 11-13 W.Va. Bass Festival
St. Marys (684-2401)
June 11-13 33rd Annual Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)
June 11-13 17th Annual Ronceverte River Festival
Ronceverte (647-3825)
June 12 W.Va. Basket Festival
Cairo (628-3586)
June 15-19 W.Va. Coal Festival
Madison (369-9118)
June 17-19 W.Va. State Folk Festival
Glenville (462-8427)
June 18-20 Old Central City Days Festival
West Huntington (781-2036)
June 19 Juneteenth Celebration
Huntington (522-3180)
June 19 Wood County Flywheel Festival
Mountwood Park/Parkersburg (489-1596)
June 24-27 Music in the Mountains Bluegrass Festival
Summersville (872-3145)
June 25-27 Little Levels Heritage Fair
Hillsboro (653-8563)
July 1-4 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-8159)
July 3-4 Pioneer Days
Point Pleasant (675-5737)
July 8-10 Ellenboro Glass Festival
Ellenboro (869-3780)
July 8-11 Pioneer Days
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)
July 8-13 Benedum Festival
Bridgeport (842-8240)
July 9-11 John Henry Days
Talcott (466-1729)
July 10-11 New Deal Festival
Arthurdale (864-3959)
July 14-17 Durbin Days
Durbin (1-800-336-7009)
July 25-August 1 Cowen Historical Railroad Festival
Cowen (226-3414)
August 2-7 Mannington District Fair
Mannington (986-1911)
August 4-8 Appalachian String Band Music Festival
Camp Washington Carver/Clifftop (438-3005)
August 5-7 W.Va. Blackberry Festival
Nutter Fort (623-2381)
August 6-7 Meadow Bridge Homecoming Festival
Meadow Bridge (484-7659)
August 6-8 W.Va. Square & Round Dance & Clogging Convention
Buckhannon (473-8104)
August 6-8 103rd Pinch Reunion
Pinch (965-3084)
August 13-15 Augusta Festival
Elkins (637-1209)
August 13-15 32nd Annual Logan County Arts & Crafts Fair
Logan (752-1324)
August 13-22 State Fair of W.Va.
Fairlea (645-1090)
August 14-15 Dulcimer Weekend
Fort New Salem/Salem (782-5245)
August 15 Mahrajan Lebanese Festival
Wheeling (233-1688)

(continued on inside back cover)

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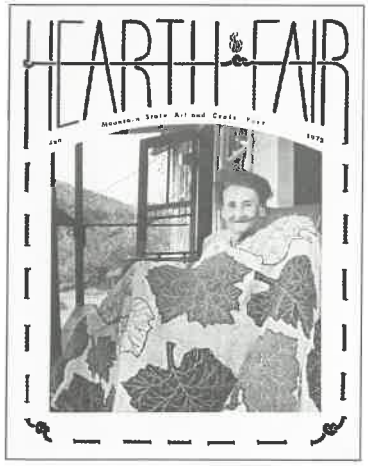

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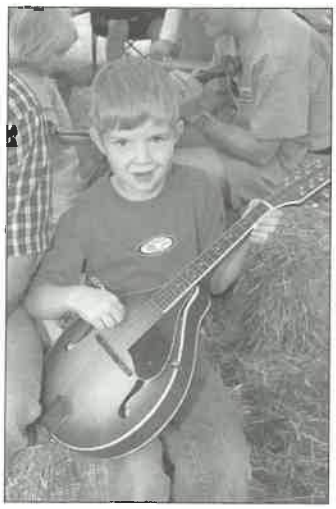
On the cover: Mack Samples steps into the spotlight at the 1997 Vandalia Gathering. Our story about Mack Samples begins on page 10. Our annual Vandalia coverage begins on page 62. Photograph by Michael Keller.

p. 34



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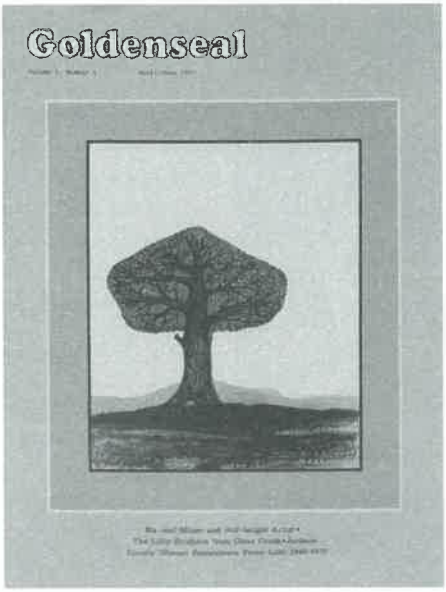
From the Editor

Win a complete bound set of GOLDENSEAL magazines! To help celebrate our 30th anniversary, we are pleased to announce a gift subscription contest, with the top prize being the first 30 years of GOLDENSEAL delivered to your door in handsome, hardbound editions — approximately $1,000 value.

All you have to do to participate in the contest is give the gift of GOLDENSEAL. The person who gives the most gift subscriptions between March 1 and December 31, 2004, will be our winner. In case of a tie, we will have a random drawing to determine who will receive the complete bound set. The second-place winner will receive a free Deluxe Gift Package (20 back issues plus our two books and a selection of reprinted articles — a $50 value). Third place will receive a complimentary three-year subscription — a $45 value.

If you have been reading my editorials for the past few issues, you are aware of how serious a concern we face in trying to build up GOLDENSEAL readership. We have been very encouraged by your response. I announced in the Winter 2003 issue that we experienced an increase of 21 readers for that issue. I'm proud to report that our spring mailing will see a further net increase of 133 subscribers — the first time in years that GOLDENSEAL has seen two consecutive increases. This is great news!

In an effort to keep this ball rolling — and to reach our goal of 1,000 new subscribers this year — we have developed this contest to further encourage gift subscriptions. The contest will include both new gifts and gift renewals. We hope that you will participate and help to spread the word about this fine magazine. Your family, friends, and neighbors will thank you for sharing this unique publication with them, while you help to ensure that GOLDENSEAL will be around for many years to come.



GOLDENSEAL Volume 1, Number 1.

Don't need 30 bound editions of GOLDENSEAL? Consider donating the prize to a local library, college, high school, or church. What a wonderful resource this would be for the people in your community! They'll thank you for years to come, and we will be forever grateful for your help in building up GOLDENSEAL's readership at this critical time.

I'll be sure to keep you posted about our progress. Thanks again for reading — and giving — GOLDENSEAL.

John Lilly

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Published letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

Fairmont Postcards

January 21, 2004
Vanceboro, Maine
Editor:
It is an interesting article on postcards and their role in history. [See "The View from Fairmont: A Century in Postcards," by Raymond Alvarez; Winter 2003.]

Electric trolley car in Fairmont, about 1900.

Regional historians have used postcards as background material for many years. In some cases, postcards have provided the only evidence of long-forgotten structures, street scenes, or older forms of transportation. The postcards in "The View from Fairmont" article provide fine examples of documentary images through 10 decades of history.

One old image of transport by trolley was not shown in the story. The scene is available today, however, as one of 24 views of American trolleys in a collection produced by Dover Publications titled *Old Trolley Postcards*. They state: "Full-color reproductions of early 20th century postcards feature the trolleys of 20 U.S. cities — from New York to San Francisco."

Fairmont is honored by being included in this historic selection. The reason is given in a descriptive paragraph:

"Fairmont, West Virginia. Fairmont & Clarksburg Traction Co. The turn of the century saw this community receive its first electric trolley service. Later years witnessed the development of a substantial interurban service, which reached the towns of Clarksburg and Weston, with branches to Mannington and Fairview. The local car pictured here is crossing the bridge that spans the Monongahela River."

Much more could be written about this high-speed interurban line, which operated over difficult terrain and provided service to many communities. This system was deemed important enough to be included in the selections by Dover.
Borgon Tanner

Spreading the Word

December 10, 2003
Glen Burnie, Maryland
Editor:
A problem with taking our copies to doctors' offices, etc., is that many of us love GOLDENSEAL and *Wonderful West Virginia* so much that we keep them (selfishly) for ourselves — sometimes for months or years before we ever give them up.

The Winter 2003 issue of GOLDENSEAL is a good example. I was born and raised two miles from Farmington and five miles from Fairmont, and lived there between 1944 and 1964. Going to Fairmont on Saturdays was "going to town" — enjoyed the postcards very much. I have a few passed down from my great-grandmother in pretty good shape, some identified as made in Germany, a couple made in Bavaria.

Coming up with a creative way to put GOLDENSEAL and *Wonderful West Virginia* out there in waiting rooms, etc., is the way to go. Perhaps a one-time member sponsorship for one of next year's issues — we send you an address and $5 to mail to a specific location.

Have a great and safe holiday season!
Richard Yost, Sr.

New Feature!

Beginning with this issue, we introduce an exciting new GOLDENSEAL feature called "**West Virginia Back Roads.**" As anyone familiar with our state can testify, the true character of West Virginia lies hidden within its small towns, remote hollers, and roads less traveled. We are pleased that veteran GOLDENSEAL contributor Carl Feather has agreed to take us down these back roads for a fresh visit each issue.

These short vignettes will introduce us to friendly faces and out-of-the-way places seldom mentioned in most travel guides — people and places full of heart, grit, and worldly wisdom. All this will be accented by Carl's excellent photography, insightful writing, and gentle sense of humor.

The first installment of "West Virginia Back Roads" can be found on page 60.

Thank you for those comments and suggestions. We can certainly mail single copies to specific addresses or business locations. Thanks for the idea. A few years ago, we did a promotional mailing to every doctor's office in West Virginia, sending them each a free sample copy of the magazine and encouraging them to subscribe. Unfortunately, this was not a successful promotion, as we received no new subscriptions or inquiries from this large mailing. Perhaps these offices are not receptive to unsolicited offers.

What it will take, I expect, is one or more trusted patients, clients, or customers drawing GOLDENSEAL to the attention of the doctor or office manager and getting them started receiving it with a one-year gift subscription.

Waiting rooms are crowded with popular, mass-market magazines. Wouldn't it be great to have something positive and uplifting about West Virginia to read, as well?

Thanks again for your support and for your encouraging words. —ed.

December 4, 2003
Milton, West Virginia
Editor:
I, too, would like to help increase reader subscriptions. I was reminded again of your offer concerning putting GOLDENSEAL in public offices. Enclosed, please find my check for $17 for which you may send a subscription to a local chiropractic clinic.

Keep up the good work.
Denver Thomas

Thanks! —ed.

Section Hand

December 29, 2003
Bushnell, Florida
Editor:
I enjoyed reading your article in the Fall 2003 issue concerning the railroad section hands. [See "The Section Hand," by Cody A. Burdette.] It brought back memories of my father Wayne C. Powell. He was 15 years old in 1922 when he started working as a section hand for the B&O railroad in the small town of Catawba, about nine miles from Fairmont. He was later transferred to another small place by the name of Little Falls, then to Morgantown.

Section hand Wayne C. Powell, front left, in the late 1920's.

During the time he worked in Catawba and Little Falls, we lived very close to the railroad and the shed where they stored the motor (or hand) car. I can remember looking forward to seeing him come in every evening on the motorcar, taking it off the track, and storing it in the shed. I remember that he would sometimes go some distance away, where there had been a wreck, to repair track and would stay several days. I understand that he sometimes cooked for the crew. He became foreman and stayed with the railroad for 20 years. He resigned in 1941 or 1942 to work in the coal mines. I always felt that he should have stayed with the rails. My father died at the early age of 68 with black lung.

I feel privileged to have lived near the rails and the steam engines during my early years. It was exciting to see the engines roll by and to wave to the engineers and brakemen.

I am sending you a picture of part of the crew on the motorcar. My dad is the one standing in front with his hat over his heart. He looks happy. Doesn't that tell you something?
Cora M. (Powell) Mace

Odd Fellows Home

October 29, 2003
Shinnston, West Virginia
Editor:
The purpose of this letter is to express my deep appreciation to you and to your author Karen Stalnaker for her fine article "'So Charitable A Mission,': The Odd Fellows Home in Elkins," which appeared in your Fall 2003 magazine.

As a 47-year Rebekah, member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, I am delighted when positive news appears about our fraternal order. This was the best article, containing not only great information, but wonderful pictures.

I commend you upon your selection of this topic for a very interesting article. In its long history, this home has provided a haven for many adults and children. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows was the first fraternal order to provide a home for its members.

I shall cherish my copy. Thank you again. Please convey to Karen Stalnaker my gratitude for her work. I believe she realizes the depth and scope of the work being done by the IOOF in

Welcome Keith Norman

Editorial assistant Keith Norman. Photograph by Michael Keller.

GOLDENSEAL welcomes new editorial assistant Keith Norman. A resident of Nitro, Keith is a 1996 graduate of West Virginia University with a master's degree in history. He worked for the West Virginia Trails Coalition and Craik-Patton House before accepting this position with GOLDENSEAL. Keith is a contributor to the upcoming *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, writing two entries on recreational trail usage in the region. While a VISTA worker in Pennsylvania, Keith coordinated and wrote a heritage-based curriculum for schools in the Altoona area.

Keith is an avid reader who has a special interest in Appalachian and European history. He can be reached at (304)558-0220 ext. 134; e-mail keith.norman@wvculture.org.

providing this sanctuary for our members.

The fall cover was so attractive in fall colors and motif. Fall is my favorite season.
Sincerely,
Wanda F. Ashcraft
Past President, Rebekah
Assembly IOOF of W.Va.

No Exaggeration!

December 16, 2003
Mill Creek, West Virginia
Editor:
Just a word or two to say how very much I enjoy GOLDENSEAL magazine.

These older stories give younger generations an idea of what survival was like in the "good old days" of yesteryear. Although many people feel that there is an exaggeration in some of the stories, I can vouch that they are for real — I feel they are very true. I love reading the stories and seeing the pictures. I feel that [the hardships] people endure in growing up usually makes them a better personality, and much more.
Have a nice day.
Arann Howard

Renewal Mailbag

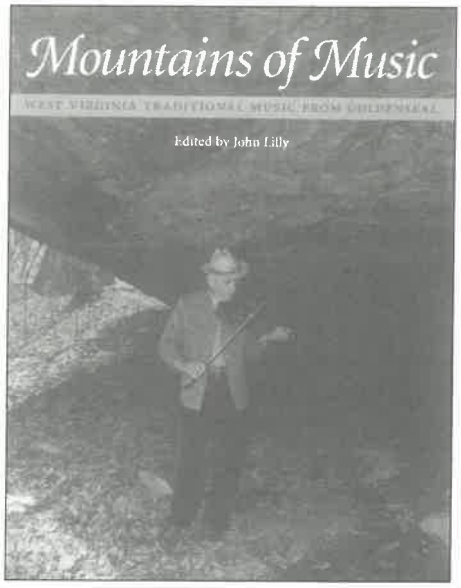
December 31, 2003
Wayne, West Virginia
Editor:
Thank you for a good magazine and a positive view of West Virginia people.
Yours,
Nancy Chadwick

December 15, 2003
Kearneysville, West Virginia
Editor:
I am sending you a little extra — GOLDENSEAL is worth more than $17.
Yours,
Ralph Canby

December 10, 2003
Asheville, North Carolina
Editor:
I thoroughly enjoy your magazine.

I used to live in several towns in West Virginia. I was the son of a coal camp physician. You bring back many good memories for me.

Even though I left West Virginia, my heart is still there.
Sincerely,
Claude A. Frazier, MD



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

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

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

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

— — — — — — — — — — — — —

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

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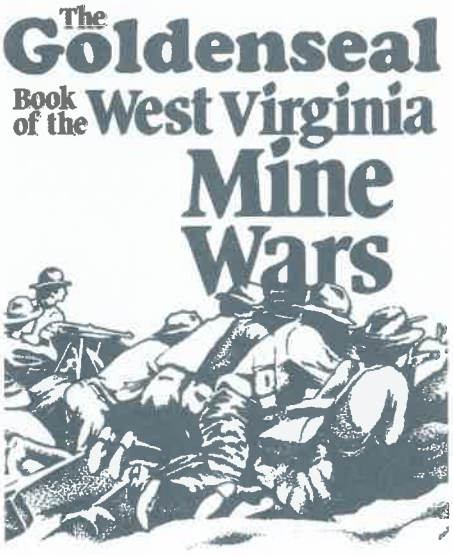

The West Virginia Mine Wars were a formative experience in our state's history and a landmark event in the history of American labor. GOLDENSEAL has published some of the best articles ever written on this subject. In 1991, former editor Ken Sullivan worked with Pictorial Histories Publishing Company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

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

I enclose $___ for___copies of *The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars.*

-or-

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Address_____

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Current Programs • Events • Publications

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

Mother's Day

The Anna Jarvis Birthplace will hold a series of events in Webster, Taylor County, on Saturday, May 8, to commemorate the 90th official observance of Mother's Day. Activities include a morning quilt auction, an afternoon memorial service, and a Civil War ball in the evening. Tours of the birthplace will be conducted throughout the weekend. For more information, contact Olive Dadisman, Route 2, Box 352, Grafton, WV 26354; phone (304)265-5549.

Mother's Day statue in Grafton. Photograph by Beth Valentine/*Mountain Statesman*.

The International Mother's Day Shrine in Grafton is holding its 96th memorial service on Sunday, May 9, in recognition of Mother's Day. Activities will include recognition of the oldest and youngest mother and the mother of the most children. Tours of the Shrine will be conducted following the memorial service. For more information, contact Clarence Paugh, 401 East Bluemont Street, Grafton, WV 26354; on-line at www.mothersdayshrine.org or phone (304)265-1589

West Virginia is recognized as the birthplace of Mother's Day. Anna Jarvis spent most of her life in Grafton and initiated the event with a service at Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton on May 10, 1908. Eventually, Anna Jarvis' persuasive abilities moved President Woodrow Wilson to sign a proclamation on May 14, 1914, declaring Mother's Day a national holiday. [See "Mother's Day Revisited: 'But After All Was She Not a Masterpiece as a Mother and a Gentlewoman...'"; Spring 1999.]

Pocahontas Library Award

The Pocahontas County Free Library System has gained recognition with its recent receipt of a national award. The library system was honored in 2003 with a National Award for Museum and Library Service from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This award recognizes libraries and museums across the country who have developed innovative programs and active partnerships with the local

Children at the Marlinton branch of the Pocahontas County Free Library System.

community. This is only the second time that a West Virginia institution has received the prestigious award.

The libraries of Pocahontas County house the largest collection of West Virginia and Appalachian material of any small library in the state, and serve as school libraries for many of the county's students. They also serve a social function, drawing residents from around the county who utilize the libraries' valuable resources. Many of these same patrons also volunteer their time and donate financially to the facilities.

For further information about the Pocahontas County Free Library System, contact director Allen R. Johnson, 500 Eighth Street, Marlinton, WV 25954; phone (304)799-6000.

Dulcimer Workshops

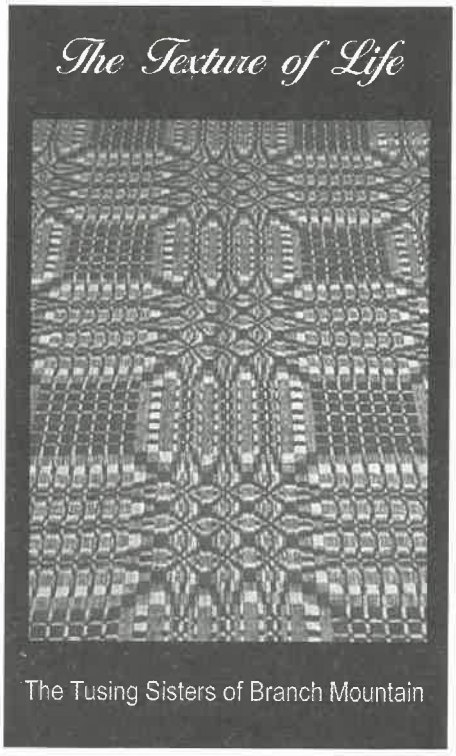
The Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College hosts its Spring Dulcimer Week from April 18-23. The six-day event offers workshops for novices to advanced dulcimer players. Attendees may also participate in jam sessions and attend films and song swaps. A public concert will be presented Thursday evening, April 22. Among the instructors this year will be West Virginia dulcimer player Patty Looman, who is known for her spirited playing of both hammered and mountain dulcimer. [See "Carrying on the Music: Dulcimer Player Patty Looman," by Danny Williams; Winter 1995.] Rates for participation, lodging, and meals vary. For more information, contact Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, WV 26241; on-line at www.augustaheritage.com or phone 1-800-624-3157, ext. 1209.

Anthology of Women Writers

Fiction and poetry produced by women writers in Appalachia is the focus of a new anthology released by the University Press of Kentucky. *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia*, co-edited by Sandra L. Ballard and Patricia L. Hudson, includes excerpts and selections from more than 100 women authors from the Appalachian region. These writers range from the obscure to the famous and include works from the early 19th century up to the present. West Virginia authors include Denise Giardina, Jayne Anne Phillips, and Mary Lee Settle, and poets Irene McKinney and Louis McNeill. The book provides biographical information on the authors as well as a bibliography of their works. The 673-page hardbound book is available for $45 plus shipping from the University Press of Kentucky, 663 Limestone Street, Lexington, KY 40508-4008; on-line at www.kentuckypress.com or phone 1-800-839-6855.

Films in New York

A program of 17 films made by state filmmakers will be shown at the Pioneer Theater in the East Village of New York City from March 24-30. West Virginia filmmakers scheduled to make the trip to New York to introduce their films include Robert Gates, Gerald Milnes, Doug Chadwick, and Daniel Boyd, among others. Films slated for screening include *Smilin' Sid, In Memory of the Land and People, Jolo Serpent Handlers, The Texture of Life*, and 13 other films. Former West Virginia Library Commission Film Services director Steve Fesenmaier is programming the series of films. Pioneer Theater owner Doris Kornish is a native of McDowell County. This will be the first West Virginia-based film series to be shown outside the state. For information about the film series, contact Gianna Chachere, East Village Film Festival, 155 East Third Street, New York, NY 10009; phone 1-212-505-2225.



County Histories Reissued

History buffs in Ritchie, Wetzel, and Monongalia counties will be pleased to know that Mountain Heritage Books has reissued three early county histories from their regions. The reissued histories are *The History of Ritchie County*

Here's My GOLDENSEAL Gift List!

Please add the following name(s) to the GOLDENSEAL mailing list. I enclose $17 for each subscription.

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[ ] I'm adding $5 extra per subscription (total $22). Please send the current issue along with the gift card!

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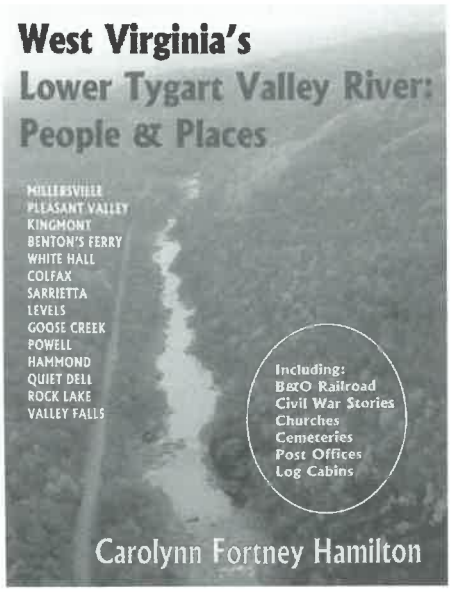
by Minnie Kendall Lowther (originally published in 1911), *The History of Wetzel County* by John C. McEldowney (originally published in 1901), and *The History of Monongalia County* by Samuel T. Wiley (originally published in 1883). The books contain extensive genealogies and early histories of the counties and have been republished in quality cloth bindings. Prices for the books vary from $25 to $50 and can be ordered by contacting Mountain Heritage Books, 101 Bryan Drive, St. Marys, WV 26170; on-line at www.mountainheritagebooks.com or phone (304)684-2529.

New County Histories

Marion, Hardy, and Webster counties are highlighted in three recent books by area authors. Author Carolynn Fortney Hamilton explores the history, inhabitants, and places of southeastern Marion County in *West Virginia's Lower Tygart Valley River: People & Places*, published



by Headline Books. The 303-page paperbound book is richly illustrated and contains chapters on railroad history, the Civil War, churches, and cemeteries, as well as many of the small towns along the course of the river. *West Virginia's Lower Tygart Valley River: People & Places* sells for $29.95 and is available at local bookstores or from Headline Books, P.O. Box 52, Terra Alta, WV 26764; on-line at www.headlinebooks.com or phone 1-800-570-5951.

The Baughmans of Baughman Settlement Hardy County, West Virginia, by Davis L. Baughman, focuses on a closely defined geographic area and the extended family that inhabited it. The Baughmans were some of the initial settlers of what would become Hardy County, and the author provides detailed genealogy on the Baughman ancestors and descendants and their pioneering efforts. The 152-page hardbound book also traces the migration of part of the Baughman family to Barbour County. Also included is information from tombstones in all the Baughman Settlement's cemeteries. The author provides ample sources for those wishing to do further research. The book sells for $20 plus shipping and handling. Copies can be obtained by contacting Davis L. Baughman, P.O. Box 128, Cottage 605B, Quincy, PA 17247.

The final book of the three is *Webster: A Pictorial History of Webster County*, by Mark Romano. As the title indicates, the 323-page hardbound book is extensively illustrated with photos and detailed captions concerning the evolution and development of the county, spanning more than 100 years. Additionally, there are chapters describing various towns and industrial concerns in the county, plus a short chapter with background information on many of the photographers whose works appear in the book. Ordering information can be obtained by contacting Mark Romano, P.O. Box 9, Cowen, WV 26206; phone (304)872-1759.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Emmett "Lefty" Shafer, champion fiddler and 1997 Vandalia Award recipient, passed away on January 13 at the age of 88. Born in 1915 near the Kanawha and Roane county line, Lefty spent much of his life in the Charleston area. He met and married his wife Velva while they were both working at Fletcher Enamel in Dunbar in the late 1930's. After serving in the navy in World War II, Lefty returned to the Kanawha Valley where he received a degree in education from Morris Harvey College in 1952, then a master's degree in education from Marshall College. Lefty spent his working years as a teacher, then as a school administrator in the Charleston area, retiring as principal of Midway Elementary School in 1976.

Lefty Shafer. Photograph by Michael Keller.

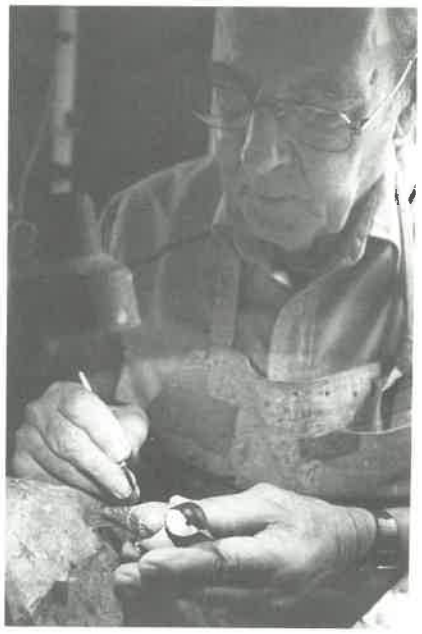
As a young boy, Lefty was surrounded by music. His father was a fiddler, and both of his parents were accomplished singers. Lefty's fiddling was especially influenced by the late Sam Jarvis, who made several 78 r.p.m. recordings during the late 1920's. Over the years, Lefty developed a smooth and precise way of fiddling, which served him well at the many fiddling contests in which he participated during his retirement years. A mild-mannered and thoughtful individual, Lefty was a fierce competitor whenever there was a blue ribbon on the line. And he won his share of them — at least 75 first-place finishes, including the senior fiddle category at the Vandalia Gathering in 1987, 1988, 1991, and 1993.

Lefty was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story by Robert Spence, which appeared in our Winter 1984 issue.

Claude Kemper, a native of Gilmer County known for his lifelike carvings of native birds, passed away on January 7. Born at Newberne in an isolated part of the county, Claude spent long hours in the fields and woods with his father, working and observing nature. He graduated from Tanner High School and attended Glenville College, where he received a teaching certificate in 1931. He married his wife Ethel around this time and taught in Gilmer County schools until 1937. He then enrolled at West Virginia University, receiving a bachelor's degree in agriculture and a master's degree in horticulture. Claude then worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the WVU extension service before retiring in 1970.

After his retirement, Claude discovered a talent for woodcarving and devoted himself to creating beautiful, full-sized replicas of the many wild birds he witnessed during his childhood years. He eventually created a series of 45 carvings, which he called "Birds of My Hollow," and became a popular figure at state folklife events and other gatherings, demonstrating his skills, displaying his work, and quizzing visitors on their knowledge of birds. He was the subject of a feature story in our Spring 1983 issue, called "Birds of My Hollow: Claude Kemper, Bird Carver," written by Noel W. Tenney.

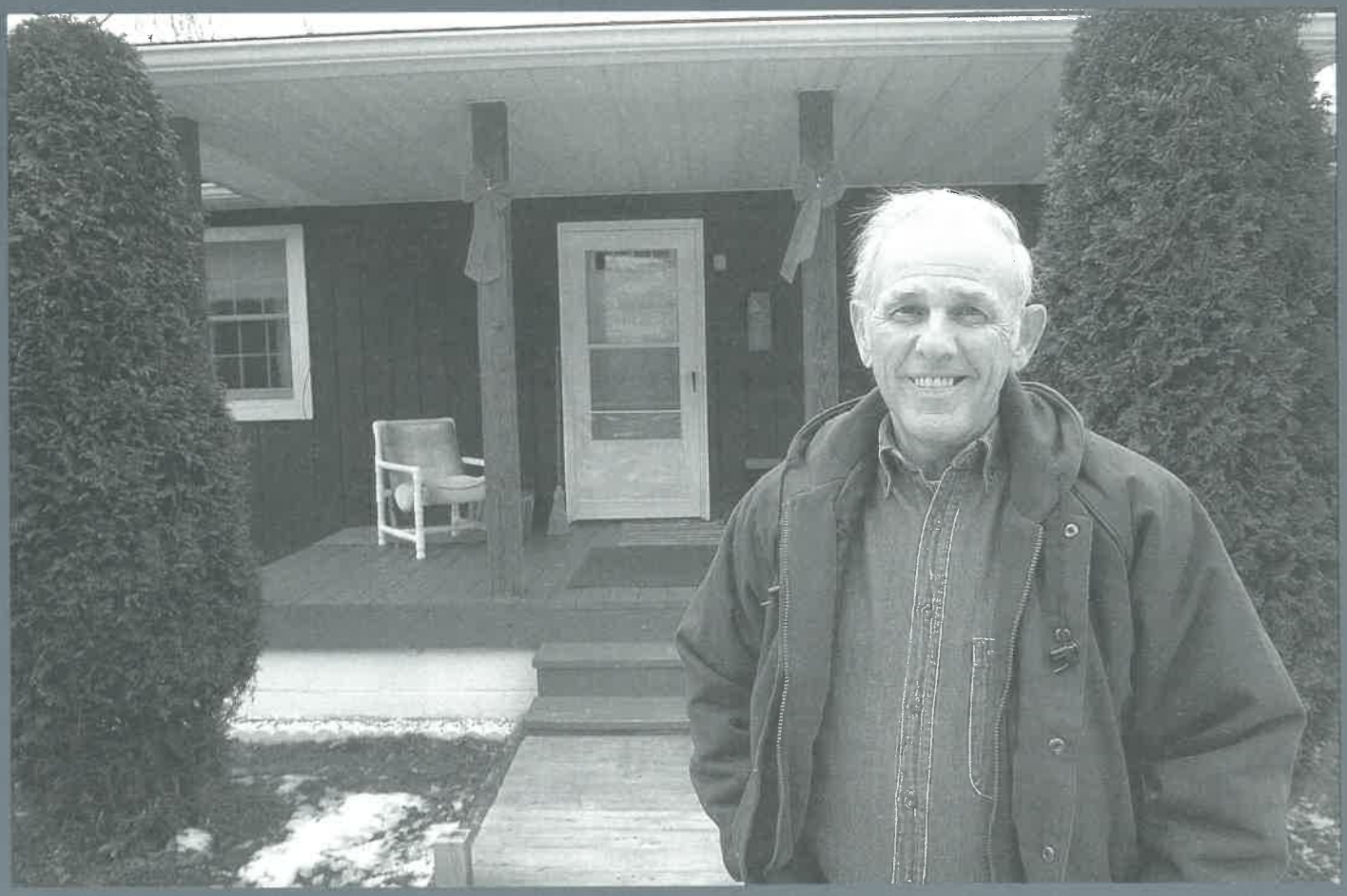
In 2000, Claude donated a complete collection of his bird carvings to Glenville State College. The collection remains on permanent display in the Claude and Ethel Kemper Room at the college library. Claude Kemper was 93.



Claude Kemper. Photograph by Noel W. Tenney.

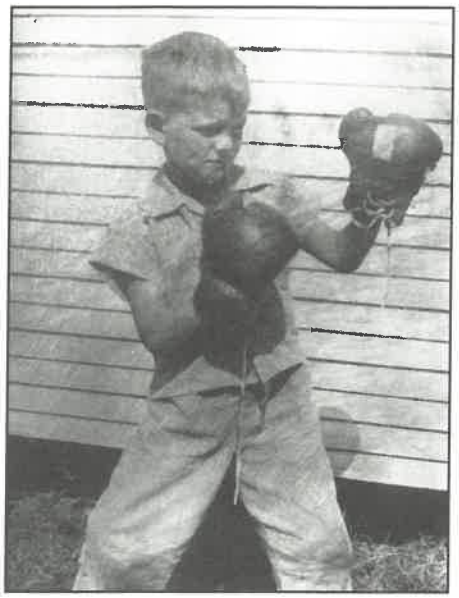
"A Neat Way to Live"

By John Lilly



Mack Samples at his home near Duck, Clay County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Vandalia Award Winner
Mack Samples



Nine-year-old Mack strikes a fighting pose at the Samples family home near the now-defunct community of Corton, Clay County.

Grandparents Walter and Susan Kennedy, Mack's mother's parents, lived a few miles down the road. They had a tremendous influence on Mack during his childhood years.

Mack Samples never set out to build an impressive list of personal accomplishments. Yet he is regarded as a West Virginia treasure, having received the 2003 Vandalia Award for his lifetime of contributions to our state's folk culture and for his many achievements as a musician, singer, dancer, dance caller, festival organizer, and author. "I didn't start out to do those things in order to achieve success in them," Mack says frankly, speaking from his home on a remote Clay County farmstead. "I just kind of did that stuff because I enjoyed doing it."

Anyone who has seen Mack in action knows the truth behind those words. Mack does know how to enjoy himself. He nearly bursts with excitement as he performs on stage as a member of the Samples Brothers Band, he flatfoots with the exuberance of a 10-year-old kid on Christmas morning, and he calls figures with a ferocious intensity that can raise the blood pressure of any square dancer lucky enough to be on the dance floor when he is calling. Whatever activity Mack undertakes, he does it with authority, enthusiasm, and deep commitment. "There's not anything I did because I wanted recognition," he explains. "It's just things I went out and did because it came natural to me."

It came honestly, as well, as he traces his family roots in the Elk River Valley for more than 200 years. Mack Samples was born in 1939 near the now-defunct community of Corton, Clay County. "My dad's property straddled the Clay-Kanawha county line, on Elk River," he explains, "about seven miles north of Clendenin, about 12 miles south of Clay. That's the area where the Samples generations got their start in West Virginia." Mack has researched his family history going back to the early 1800's. The original Samples family established themselves at the head of Porter's Creek, which flows into the Elk. "The old man's grave is right where he settled and lived," Mack says. "My great-great-granddad, my great-granddad, my granddad, and my dad are all buried within two miles of each other."

Lawrence Melvin Samples, Mack's father, worked for Hope Gas and kept a small family farm, as did most families in the Elk River Valley when Mack was young. One of eight children, Mack had four older brothers, one older sister, and two younger brothers. His mother, Velva Kennedy Samples, still lives at the old homeplace, and Mack goes there to see her two days each week. She recently turned 96.

It was Velva's parents, Walter and Susan Kennedy, who played a pivotal role in shaping Mack's early

Mack, age 22, during his navy years.

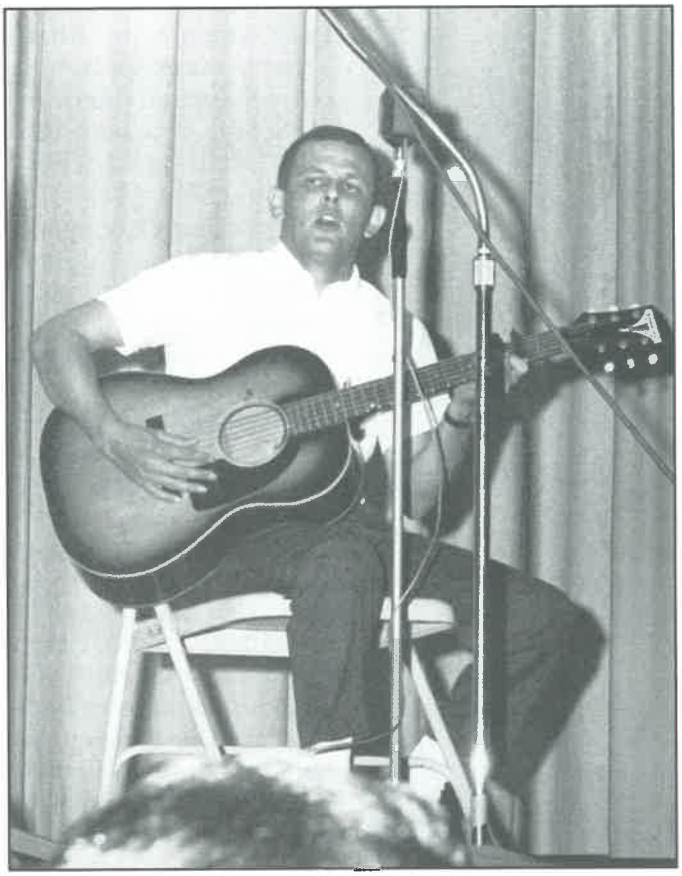
interests and establishing his lifelong dedication to rural and traditional ways of life. Mack recalls that his own family enjoyed the latest appliances and modern conveniences at their home, but Mack was drawn to the more old-fashioned lifestyle he witnessed at his grandparents' farm. "They were very, very traditional, Christian, rural people," Mack says. "[My grandfather] never had a job in his life, except for working on a farm. He lived strictly in the old traditions. I spent a lot of time with him as a kid. I was fortunate that he lived to be an old man. I always just admired so much the way he lived. He took care of *him* and didn't worry much about anything, and I just always thought that was a neat way to live."

As a youngster, Mack often made the three-mile walk to the Kennedy farm, sometimes staying there for several days at a stretch during the summer months. His granddad would put him to work in the hayfield. "I loved it. I really did," Mack recalls. "He did everything with a horse. Cut his hay with a horse, raked it up, stacked it, hauled it to the barn, and all that. I enjoyed working with him. He was a brute of a worker, and I think some of that rubbed off on me. I'm not sure why. I'm sure that my other family members saw the same things that I did there. But the one thing I admired about him, is they ate so well! Even though they didn't have any money, they ate better than anyone I ever saw."

Thanks to Thelma Samples, Mack's wife of nearly 40 years, Mack sits down to three well-prepared meals a day, just as he recalls his grandfather doing. "Since the early days of our marriage, we've always raised what we eat," Mack says. "Always have raised a big garden, can, and froze, and all that. [We] cut our own firewood. We have our own water system, comes off the hill. Just an independent way of living, which is what I like. I guess that's the old Appalachian tradition."

Graduating from Clendenin High School in 1957, Mack served four years in the Navy. He later graduated from Glenville State College, then earned a master's degree in history and government from Ohio University. He took a job teaching history at the University of South Carolina for five years before returning to Glenville State College as registrar in 1973. He stayed in that position for 21 years. In 1994, Mack accepted a job with West Virginia University as extension agent for Clay County. He retired in 1999.

During his years as a student at Glenville State College in the early 1960's, Mack became involved with the West Virginia State Folk Festival [see "'Let's Keep It Traditional': West Virginia State Folk Festival Turns 50," by Bob Heyer; Summer 2000]. Fern Rollyson, the festival organizer following the retirement of festival founder Dr. Patrick Gainer, recognized Mack's talents and organizational skills, and drew him into deeper and deeper involvement with the event. Mack was appearing locally as a folk singer in Glenville at the time, entertaining at various campus functions. Fern sought him out, as he recalls, and asked him to get involved with the festival, which he did until he left campus in 1965. According to Mack, "[Fern] did have a knack for getting people to do things for her. She could just talk you into doing it. She almost told me, 'You're gonna run the

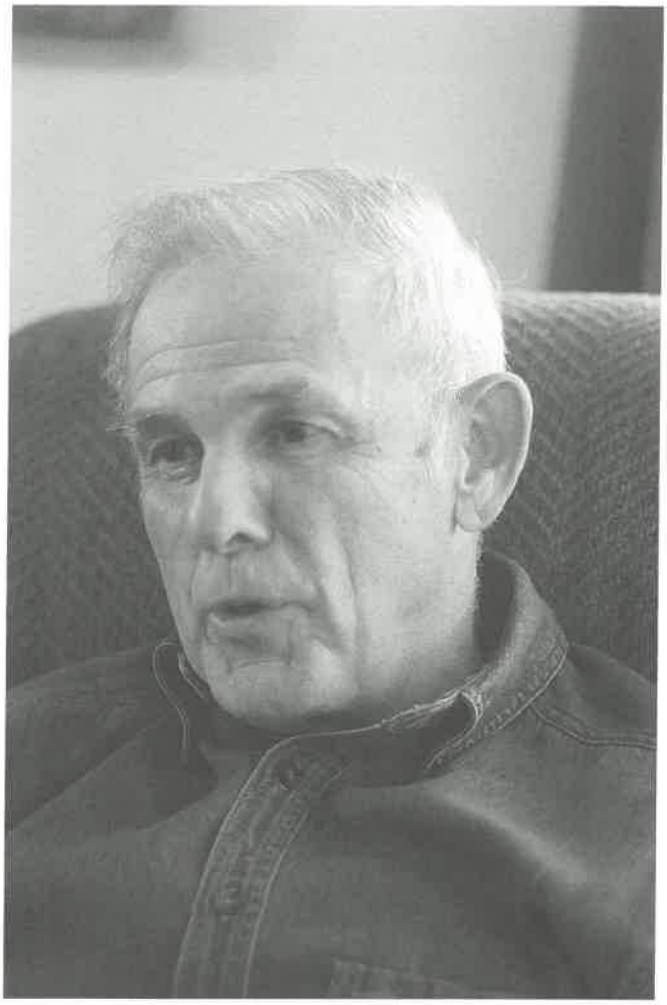


In the early 1960's, Mack appeared as a folk singer around Glenville, including performing at the West Virginia State Folk Festival, as seen here, date unknown. He later became president of the festival, a position he held for 15 years.

fiddle contest,' and, 'You're gonna be the emcee tonight.'"

Returning to Glenville as an administrator in 1973, Mack discovered that Fern was in declining health and in need of assistance with festival organizing. "I sort of eventually just took it over," Mack recalls, "not because I really wanted to. It just sort of happened. After I took the presidency for a year or two, I found that no one else would do it. We had an election every year, but no one else would ever take it. So I kind of got stuck with it there for a long time. I was very heavily involved with it. I managed to get the funding for it. It was a very difficult, demanding job — volunteer job. But to me, it was really an enjoyable experience."

Mack especially enjoyed the older musicians who were regular participants at the festival. Some of the "kingpins," as Mack calls them, included Ira Mullins, Lee Triplett, Noah Cottrell, Phoebe Parsons, Doc White, and others. "Getting to know those guys and getting to work with them was an absolute joy to me. Even though at times I wanted to throw up my hands and leave town, why, as I look back on it, it was really a great experience for me."



"Even though at times I wanted to throw up my hands and leave town, it was really a great experience for me," Mack says, reflecting on his many years of running the West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The 1970's and early 1980's were a time of heightened public interest in West Virginia's folk culture, and Mack guided the festival though some rather turbulent years as crowds of people — many of them young and from out of state — flocked to Gilmer County seeking to get involved with the festival and, particularly, with its music. While the festival reveled in the larger crowds and increased attention it received, there was an inevitable clash of cultures and lifestyles between some of the newcomers and some of the older participants. "A lot of those people who come in, [they] didn't like me much, because I was honest about it," Mack admits. "But I resented it a little bit, their coming in to take over my culture." Mack says that he overcame some of these reservations in later years and began to value the friendships and contributions some of these individuals had to offer. "Some of them handled it better than others," he points out, acknowledging that a good deal of music and heritage was preserved thanks to the efforts of these energetic, if occasionally scruffy, visitors.

One aspect of the festival that bears the indelible stamp of Mack Samples' leadership is the old-time square dancing that takes place each evening. "If I did anything to change the folk festival," Mack says, "it was that I put more emphasis on the square dance. When I first started going to the folk festival, they didn't really have a band that was hired to play for the dance. They just kind of picked up some guys on the street. Many times, they couldn't even get a set of dancers. I witnessed Tom Luzader and Willie Reed, who used to do the calling, stand there and beg for 10 minutes trying to get a set on the floor. So when I got involved with it, I started hiring bands to play — good bands. By the middle '70's, after I'd been back a few years, man, the dance floor just exploded! We had so many dancers we couldn't even get them on the floor. To this day, it remains a big part of the festival. I can tell you, if you're an old-time square dancer and you like good, old-time West Virginia square dancing, it doesn't get any better than it gets at Glenville. To me, that's the peak, right there."

Avid and active dancers themselves in several styles, Mack and Thelma have shared steps on the dance floor throughout their lives together, going back to their courting days in the early 1960's. Did the couple meet on the dance floor? "We met in geography class at Glenville State College," Mack says with a laugh. "It's not very romantic, but that's where it happened." Thelma was raised in Webster County. She had learned to dance as a young girl, thanks to instruction she received from Nicholas

Ever since they met, Mack and Thelma Samples have been avid dancers. Here, they take part in a square dance at the 1998 Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Photograph by Michael Keller.

County dance teacher Rush Butcher [see "A Pattern To Life: Folk Dancers Rush & Ruby Butcher," by John Lilly; Spring 2000]. Mack and Thelma soon discovered that they enjoyed dancing together and attended student dances, square dances, and other dance activities in Glenville throughout their college years. They were married in 1964 and still dance together frequently, including square dancing, ballroom, and swing.

Surprisingly, Mack's first exposure to dance was not a positive one. Like many students, he was forced to endure square dance instruction as a part of physical education classes in high school. "I went through that, and I hated that," he says. "I just didn't get anything at all out of it." His life changed forever, though, one night when his four older brothers took him to a local roadside beer hall called Three Gables, located about four miles above Clendenin on Elk River Road.

"They were having a square dance," Mack recalls. "I had never seen a real square dance like they had. But of all people, Mike Humphreys was playing fiddle in this band [see "'I Just Use a Bow': Oldtime Fiddler Mike Humphreys," by Robert Spence; Winter 1985]. Number one, I had never really heard a good, hot square dance band. Number two, I'd never really seen people square dance, [people] that danced with their feet as they danced — you know, flatfoot dance — as they went around. I stood there absolutely awestruck. That music and that dancing, and all that hot flatfoot dancing, I was hooked for life!"

Still a teenager, Mack began dancing at every opportunity, not only at Three Gables, but also at a skating rink in Clay where square dances were held, and at other local beer halls that featured live music and dancing. "In my teenage years, if you wanted to square dance, that's where they were," Mack says, commenting on the local taverns and roadhouses he frequented at the time. "A lot of people who went to those dances were not

Lawrence Melvin "Banty" Samples and Velva Kennedy Samples, Mack's parents, seen here during the early 1920's.

Mack is seen here at his 1956 public performance debut in Widen, Clay County. His singing won the $50 top prize in a local talent competition. "That was my first taste of stardom," Mack says, "and I never quite got over it."

drinkers at all. It was just where the dance was. As far as I know, they never danced anywhere else."

This atmosphere undoubtedly added to the freewheeling spirit of the dancing, but also created an opportunity for some rough situations, as well. "Three Gables was notorious for a good fight every once in a while," Mack says. "In my younger years, I saw several good fights there. But I had one routine when fights started — I went in the bathroom and shut the door. I wasn't big enough to fight."

Though these beer halls no longer exist, the style of dancing Mack witnessed there has stayed with him through the years. "In those days, they called out of the set," Mack says. "They didn't call through a mike. Just one of the dancers would call." Mack remembers that the figures were kept very simple, allowing the dancers plenty of time to flatfoot, improvise, and respond to the music on an individual basis throughout the dance. Some of the dances Mack remembers from the beer halls include "Take a Little Peek," "Butterfly Whirl," and a few other "very simple dances." Every three or four dances, Mack recalls, the band would play a number strictly for freestyle dancing or flatfooting. These elements are still in evidence at the State Folk Festival dances in Glenville, as well as at a few other old-time square dances held throughout the state, including those that take place at Ireland, Lewis County [see "Join Hands & Circle: Old-Time Dancing Alive and Well," by Mack Samples; Spring 1997].

Mack didn't begin calling square dances until he came back to Glenville in 1973. He credits callers Tom Luzader and Willie Reed with inspiring him and helping him develop his own vigorous style of calling. Willie Reed was Tom's mentor during the early years of the folk festival, Mack says, adding, "Most of the calls that you hear me call — the things that I say when I'm calling — are Willie Reed calls. And Tom. Of course you pick up a little here and there, but basically, that's where I started calling." Mack strives to create a certain experience for the dancers through his calling, bringing together the music, the rhythm, and the spirit on the dance floor through his patter. His years as a musician contribute to his skill as a caller. "I guess because I am a musician, I've always been able to catch the flow of the music and call with it. That makes it a very enjoyable thing to do. It's almost like singing," he explains.

The Samples and Kennedy families were well known as musicians and singers throughout the Elk River Valley. Both of Mack's parents played banjo and sang. The

The Sample Brothers Band, pictured here in 2003. In front are Buddy Griffin, at left, and John Preston. Standing, from the left, are Ted, Mack, and Roger Samples.

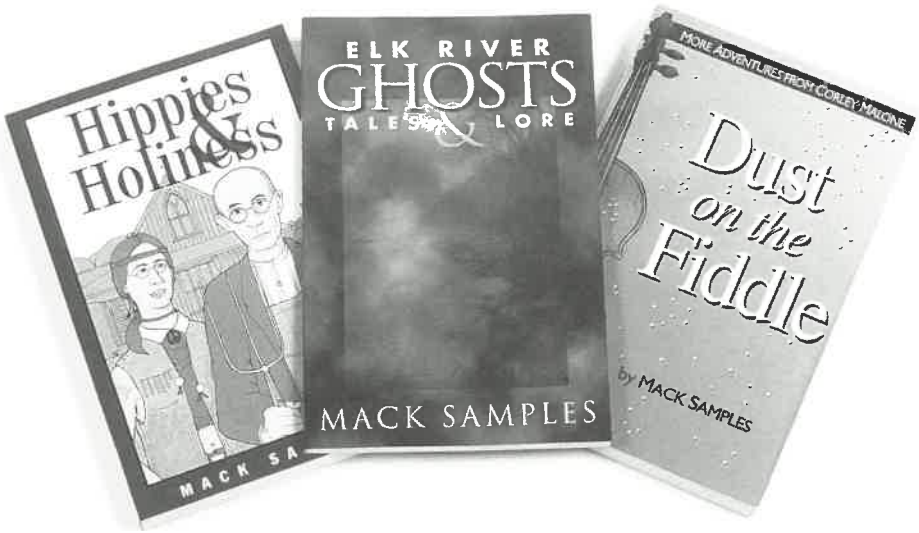
family members all sang in church, and Mack recalls several of his older relatives playing music at family gatherings. He learned his first guitar chords from his Aunt Peach.

"My first big gig in the world," he recalls, "was in 1956. I went to Widen, West Virginia, for the big Fourth of July celebration. And they had a talent show. At that time, Widen was a booming town. There's a man who was a salesman who stopped at my grandpa's store there at Corton all the time. He heard me playing in the store one day. And he said, 'You ought to go up and get in that talent show up there.' I went up there and won it. Fifty bucks! In 1956, that was a bunch of money." In the competition, Mack played guitar and sang two songs: the popular song "Young Love" and a number he had written called "A Red Sundown." "That was my first taste of stardom, and I never quite got over it," he says.

Four years in the Navy and the commitments of family life squelched any fantasies Mack might have harbored about becoming a professional entertainer, but he never let go of the music, continuing to sing, play, and perform everywhere he went. He eventually began playing in a band with his younger brothers Ted and Roger as the Samples Brothers Band. Though Mack was the first of his family to regularly perform in public, Ted and Roger soon followed his lead, developing their own talents and a loyal following during the late 1960's and early '70's while Mack was out of state. When he returned to Glenville in 1973, Mack was pleased to discover that his brothers were very serious, accomplished musicians and performers. "My brother Roger had become something of a star down at Marshall, in the coffeehouse environment down there," Mack recalls. "My other brother Ted was playing some with him, so we started playing together for the first time at the folk festival. It think it was 1973 or '74."

Initially the brothers were featured on three guitars, finger-picking together in a folk-music style and harmonizing on old traditional songs. They later added Braxton County fiddler and multi-instrumentalist Buddy Griffin and a bass player to the line-up, began to explore a more bluegrass-oriented sound, and developed the high-energy style that audiences have come to expect from this group. During the late 1970's, the Samples Brothers Band was very active, playing at folk festivals and college concerts across the state and beyond. They appeared in Virginia, South Carolina, Canada, and elsewhere. Though they never made a full-time, professional commitment to

Son Grayson Samples, at left, joined Mack and the Samples Brothers Band on stage at the Vandalia Gathering in 2003. Photograph by Michael Keller.



Three of Mack Samples' five books, seen here, are available through Pictorial Histories Distribution; phone 1-888-982-7472. Photograph by Michael Keller.

the band, Mack says that playing music on stage with his brothers and the other group members remains one of the greatest thrills of his life.

Nothing compares, though, with the pride and satisfaction Mack feels in raising and enjoying his family. Mack and Thelma have two children. Daughter Tracy lives in Pocahontas County, and son Grayson lives at Lost Creek, Harrison County. Both are talented musicians, Mack says, and Grayson occasionally plays with the Samples Brothers Band. Granddaughter Emma Grace joined the Samples family in late 2003, much to the delight of Mack and Thelma.

Many of Mack's experiences over the years have been incorporated, one way or another, into five books he has authored. The first three books are novels set between the 1950's and '70's, tracing the life and adventures of Corley Malone — a fictitious Appalachian musician and singer trying to find his way in the world. To those familiar with the life of Mack Samples, Corley's way in the world seems oddly familiar, as he experiences the lure of the rural honky-tonks, graduates high school in West Virginia, joins the military, and returns home to become involved in the growing folk music revival. Is Corley Malone really Mack Samples in a thin disguise? "He's way cooler than I am," Mack says with a chuckle, noting that he used many of his own personal experiences in creating an environment to which Corley was ideally suited.

Mack's fourth book is a collection of family tales from his mother, father, and other relatives. Titled *Elk River Ghosts, Tales & Lore,* it includes memories of Mack's childhood years as well as folk tales and ghost stories of the region. His fifth book, a fictionalized military story set in Japan, has not yet been published.

When Mack was honored with the Vandalia Award in 2003, it took him by complete surprise. Though he is not usually comfortable with being the recipient of awards and honors, Mack says, "The Vandalia [Award] was kind of neat, 'cause that's what I've been about my whole life." Given the length and breadth of Mack's contributions to the state, however, and his ongoing involvement as a musician, caller, dancer, and author, this might not be the last time he is asked to accept an award. Though he might not look forward to receiving the attention, these awards and honors would certainly be well deserved.

JOHN LILLY is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

Mack and Thelma Samples today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Lester and Linda McCumbers play music at their Calhoun County home. Photograph by Michael Keller.

"Satisfaction in My Heart"

By Kim Johnson

Lester and Linda McCumbers of Calhoun County

Above: Henry Franklin McCumbers, Lester's father. Date unknown.

Lester and Linda McCumbers have known each other their whole lives. They were married in December 1937, when they were each 16 years old. "Linda had the whole world to pick from, and she picked me," Lester says. "We walked across the hill about five miles to Joe McClung's house. He was a Methodist preacher who lived on Mill Fork, and we got married in the road in front of his house, then walked back."

"That walk back was our honeymoon," Linda adds. "My dad and Lester's dad hitchhiked over to Grantsville to get our wedding license. We set up housekeeping on Mount Run and have lived here ever since."

Lester McCumbers, son of Henry Franklin and Myrtle McCumbers, was born August 15, 1921, on Big Run in southern Calhoun County. Linda — her friends all call her "Lindy" — was born Malinda McCumbers on August 3, 1921, on Mount Run in Calhoun County, the daughter of Galry and Ada (Cottrell) McCumbers.

All of the children from the area walked together to attend the Beech Grove School at Nicut. When Lester and Linda finished school there, their formal education was over. In order for them to attend high school, they would have had to walk about 10 miles to Orma to catch a bus, then ride about 20 miles into Grantsville. Not very many students from the area went to high school at that time, because even the children were needed to help their families with the farm

Right: This 1924 photograph shows Linda McCumbers, at left, with her twin sister India and older brother Bernard. Linda and India were three years old at the time.

Linda McCumbers today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

work in order to survive.

"Before school started every morning, each of us girls had a cow to milk," Linda recalls. "While we were at school, Dad would take the horse and pull some logs up into the yard. After school was out, we'd have to go home and cut them into firewood. My older brother Bernard would get on one end of the saw, and I'd take turns with my sister India on the other end. If Dad was gone, we'd have to go up on the hill and get the fodder down for the horse and cows to eat. We'd have to tie ropes around it and drag it all the way down the hill.

"My mother did her washing on a washboard, and we would help her with all that work every week. She'd build a big fire outside to heat the water in a big iron pot," Linda says. "We'd put lye in the water and boil all the white clothes in it. Since Dad had a well, we didn't have to carry water from the creek like a lot of other people. We had to work almost all the time just to get by."

Often, the dirt roads would be impassable. "Sometimes, when the mail carrier came through the country from Villanova on the Elk River over to Servia and on to Orma, the mud would be up past the horse's knees. Almost nobody had a car or truck. If you weren't lucky enough to have a horse, you had to walk everywhere you went," Lester remembers. "One time when I was a boy, I walked with my dad a couple of miles to a little store. There had been a big snow, and it took us about four hours to get there and back. The snow was up to our belts. So wet and heavy, it was hard to walk in.

"Anybody born in the last 30 or 40 years can't imagine the things people had to endure to survive back when we were growing up. And it wasn't just a few people who had it rough," Lester says. "It was everybody. When the conveniences came along later, they were really appreciated."

Today, Lester and Linda McCumbers have a large, close-knit family of nine children, 25 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, and 10 great-great-grandchildren. "I had my first five children at home," Linda says. "Antha King was a midwife then, and she came to help me when it was time. She waited on me with Beatrice, Annalee, Paulette, and Joan. My neighbor Edna Newell helped me

Lester and Linda posed for this Christmas photograph with seven of their nine children during the 1960's. In the front row, from the left, are Billy, Timmy, and Tammy. Standing, from the left, are Roger, Linda, Lester, Beatrice, Annalee, and Joan.

Lester and Linda appear ready to hit the road in this 1963 snapshot.

when my oldest son Roger was born. My mother Ada and Lester's mother Myrtle were there, too. I had the last four children in the hospital — Sharon, Bill, Tammy, and Timmy."

Life for the McCumbers family has always included plenty of singing, dancing, and playing music. As a young girl, Linda often sang in church with her twin sister India. The girls also sang at literaries, which were gatherings at the schoolhouse where the students recited poetry and demonstrated their scholastic skills. After the recitations were over, the singing and dancing would begin.

"The girls at the school begged me to show them how to dance," Linda says. "I was always a pretty good dancer, and India was, too. We'd all go around to the outhouses behind the schoolhouse because it was fun to dance on the wooden floors in there."

Linda's grandfather John Cottrell was a popular fiddler for dances in the area. He would come to visit Lester and Linda, staying with them for weeks at a time. John Cottrell was an early influence on Lester's fiddling, and Lester plays several of his tunes today, including "Yew Piney Mountain," "Mother Flanagan," and "Sourwood Mountain." Lester still plays the fiddle that belonged to John Cottrell.

Linda's father Galry was a good singer and an agile back-step dancer. He played the banjo in the clawhammer style and also the Jew's harp. Linda's mother Ada (Cottrell) McCumbers often sang old ballads while tending to the children and doing other household chores. Ada's sisters Sarah (Cottrell) Schoolcraft and Phoebe (Cottrell) Parsons were also singers. As a little girl, Linda learned such songs as "Pretty Polly" and "Barbry Allen" from them. Phoebe Parsons and her brother Noah Cottrell, both now deceased, were popular performers at traditional music festivals across the state.

Linda McCumbers has a powerful voice and an original singing style. "I've always liked to sing the old songs that my mother used to sing," she says. "I sing the words

Lester McCumbers today. "Anybody born in the last 30 or 40 years can't imagine the things people had to endure to survive back when we were growing up," he says. Photograph by Michael Keller.

As a young man, Lester performed a variety of difficult and dangerous jobs in order to support his family. At various times, he worked in a rock quarry, on a construction crew, on road and timber crews, and delivered the mail. He is shown here in 1941, at 20 years of age.

the way I feel them, and I don't try to copy anybody."

Linda doesn't read music but learned to sing and play by ear. She watched her older brother Bernard play his guitar, and she learned to play the guitar herself to follow her singing. Along with the old-time ballads, Linda learned many hymns from her mother and sings some of her mother's favorites to this day, including "Oh, Those Tombs," "Purple Robe," and "Shake My Mother's Hand For Me."

Many listeners regard Linda as "The Singer" and Lester as "The Fiddler," but Lester is a strong singer in his own right. When they sing together, their harmonies have a pure and intense mountain sound.

Lester decided he wanted a guitar when he was about 14 years old. He worked cutting brush and hoeing corn for farmers in the area until he got enough money to send off for a mail-order guitar from the Alden's catalog. During the 1950's, Lester played guitar with local fiddlers — such as French Carpenter, Ward Jarvis, and Harvey Sampson — for dances and various community events [see "Big Possums Stir Late: Oldtime Fiddler Harvey Sampson," by Jacqueline Goodwin; Spring 1986]. At age 82, Lester is still a solid guitar player and frequently surprises people with his rendition of "Blue Yodel #1 (T For Texas)."

"My dad played the fiddle a little, and when he found out that I was interested in playing the fiddle, too, he made me one," Lester says. "My dad lived in Clay County when he was a boy. His father Thomas McCumbers was a carpenter in that area who made chairs, bedsteads, and other household goods for people. He made his own foot-powered turning lathe that he used to turn out the legs for the furniture. In those days, there were no furniture stores, and household furnishings had to be homemade or done without."

Lester's father Henry Franklin McCumbers, known as "Bub" in the community, was a farmer. "My dad did a little blacksmithing, too, and made some of his own tools. He made himself one of the turning lathes that he'd seen his father use," Lester says. "He made some little chisels and used them on the lathe, and he could turn out some of the prettiest knobs on chairs you've ever seen. He'd also shave down axe handles that he sold or traded for things he needed. He made a froe that he used to rive out fence palings and boards that were so smooth they looked like they had been planed."

Once when Bub was a young man, he was splitting firewood in the sideyard when he accidently chopped off his left thumb with the axe. Since there were no doctors within walking distance, Bub stuck the thumb back on himself and

Lester and Linda McCumbers have known each other their entire lives. Born less than two weeks apart, they have been married for 66 years. Photograph by Michael Keller.

wrapped up his hand in a rag. Eventually, the thumb re-attached on its own. Although it grew back crooked, he had good use of it the rest of his life, Lester says.

As a young man, Lester worked at various jobs to support his family. He worked in a rock quarry near Grantsville, trimming up rocks to be used in buildings. He worked on different construction crews, helping to build the Minnora School and the Grantsville rubber plant. At one time, Lester carried the mail on horseback from Nicut to Rosedale.

Linda remembers that whenever a job came up that took Lester away from home, she and Lester's mother Myrtle would take turns carrying the mail in his place. "I'd carry the mail for one week and Myrt would watch the kids for me, then she'd carry it the next week," says Linda. "The mailbags were heavy and made out of canvas. We rode an old, big horse that would just clop along, never going too fast. The rain would soak you, or the snow would just about freeze you to death. At every house, we had to get off the horse to see if there was mail in the boxes. Not very many people got mail then. It was nothing like it is now."

Lester also worked on road crews, clearing the snowy and icy roads in winter. Instead of the truck spreading salt on the road like today, he had to ride in the back of a dump truck and throw out a mixture of salt and cinders by the shovelful. It was cold and hard work. At dinnertime, the men would build a fire by the side of the road to get warm and try to heat up their food. "We'd build up a big fire and cut a stick to hold sandwiches and heat them up that way," says Lester. "I'd take ham sandwiches made from home-killed hog meat. That was real good when it got heated up on the fire. Ham meat and biscuits made the best sandwiches because it was easier to stab the stick through the middle of a biscuit to hold over the fire."

Lester worked on several different timber crews, helping cut timber for sawmills. The trees had to be cut down, stripped of bark, and then skidded down the hills. He used the two-man crosscut saw on some of these jobs, and on others, he used a one-man power saw that weighed about 75 pounds. It was heavy work carrying that saw through the hills and over the ridges, sawing with it all day, and then carrying it back on the return trip, Lester says.

"Whenever I got a day off," he remembers, "I'd usually go fishing, sanging, or maybe go hunting for a bee tree. I used to do quite a bit of sanging in my younger days. Back then, you could sell it to about any store in the country. If you wanted to trade for some store goods, like coffee or sugar, they'd give you a little more for the sang [ginseng] than if they bought it from you outright."

Playing the fiddle has always been a big part of Lester's life. He has a rhythmic and driving style of playing. Everything about Lester's music is pure and individual, from how he cradles the fiddle in the crook of his elbow to the way he bows and the notes he chooses. Lester's fiddling and singing are reflections of his whole life, with its many challenges, joys, and sorrows.

"I just don't feel right if I don't play a tune or two every day. Music just gives me a lot of satisfaction in my heart. I've always tried to play the fiddle or sing a song to suit myself and the way I feel it," Lester says. "I'd hear different fiddlers play tunes, and if I liked a certain piece, I'd try to play it in my own way. But nobody actually showed me anything on the fiddle."

Beginning in 1964, Lester and Linda's band included, from the left, son-in-law Paul Cottrell, son Roger, Lester, son Billy, and Linda. They were known as the Sandy Valley Boys.

Linda remembers a time in the late 1950's when she entered a talent show with Lester. "One time, they were having a talent contest in the movie theater at Orma," she says. "Whoever won the big prize got to play on television on Channel 4 at Oak Hill. I went down with Lester, and we signed up to play. I

sang 'Don't This Road Look Rough and Rocky,' Lester played the fiddle with me, and we won. They gave us two prizes. For some reason we didn't actually get to play on TV, but the other prize made up for that. It was a pretty good-sized stuffed monkey about a foot tall, and I gave it to my little baby granddaughter."

Lester and Linda hosted their own weekly radio show for four years during the mid-1960's at station WSPZ in Spencer, Roane County. They are seen here at the studio in 1963.

In the early 1960's, Lester and Linda played in a band with other local musicians and were known as Glen Gainer & the Sandy Valley Boys. They primarily played traditional bluegrass and country songs with an occasional fiddle tune included here and there. The group was very popular and performed at various music festivals and other events in the area. The band made a 45 rpm recording of the old-time fiddle tune "Blue-Eyed Girl" and the ballad "Willy Roy" for Blue Hill Records in Charleston.

In 1964, Lester and Linda's eldest son Roger joined the band, singing and playing the banjo. Son-in-law Paul Cottrell sang and played guitar in the group, and their son Bill played guitar and sang with them occasionally at festivals.

For four years in the mid-1960's, the band — now known as Lester McCumbers & the Sandy Valley Boys — hosted a radio show on WSPZ in Spencer, known today as WVRC. The 30-minute shows were live on the air every Saturday afternoon and were sponsored by Lynch's Market and the Millstone Garage, among others. Sometimes, other area musicians, such as John and Dave Morris from Ivydale, Clay County, would drop in and play on the show [see "Ivydale: The Morris Family Old-Time Music Festivals," by Bob Heyer; Summer 1998].

"That radio show was just like being at Lester and Linda's home," John Morris says. "They were very open with it, and everybody was welcome to come in and play a tune or two. One time when I was there, Noah Cottrell was playing 'Johnny Booger' with the banjo behind his head. I don't guess he thought about how the radio listeners wouldn't be able to see his trick banjo playing."

When Roger McCumbers was diagnosed with heart disease in the mid-1990's, the Sandy Valley Boys performed less frequently as his condition worsened. After Roger passed away in 1998 at the age of 48, the Sandy Valley Boys didn't play together as a band anymore. It was a sad time for the family, and Roger's absence will always be felt by them.

In 1995, Lester began playing music with Carroll Hardway, a clawhammer-style banjo player from Braxton County. They played at several music events, such as the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops, the Stonewall Jackson Jubilee, and the West Virginia State Folk Festival, until Carroll's death in 2002.

Lester and Linda McCumbers are still very active at traditional music gatherings throughout West Virginia and elsewhere. Although they were unable to attend the event, they were honored to be invited to perform at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival this past summer in Washington, D.C.

A nearly steady stream of people from across the country and beyond continually make the journey to Calhoun County to seek out Lester and Linda at their home, fascinated by their music and lifestyle. Fiddler Liz Doherty came from County Donegal, Ireland, just to record their music and visit with them. Erynn Marshall from Toronto, Canada, interviewed Lester and Linda at length in preparation for her master's thesis.

Lester on stage at the 2003 Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Linda's soulful singing, guitar playing, and playful smile make her a welcome and popular figure at West Virginia traditional music gatherings. Here, she flashes a smile between tunes at her home. Photograph by Michael Keller.

In August 2003, Lester and Linda were featured prominently in an interview for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and left a lasting impression on Martha Rial, a photographer for the paper. "Both Lester and Linda are such an inspiration," Martha says. "They have so much to teach musicians and music lovers about perseverance and the joys of living. They never forgot where they came from, and I like that."

Lester and Linda both look forward to playing and singing every year at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville. Lester has won the first-place ribbon in the Senior Fiddle contest there each year since 2001. His version of the tune "Yew Piney Mountain" won the blue ribbon for Senior Honors in the 2002 and 2003 fiddle contests at the Appalachian String Band Festival at Clifftop, Fayette County [see "'Clifftop': The Appalachian String Band Festival," by Danny Williams; Summer 1999].

The couple's first CD recording, called "Old Timey," featuring 26 of Lester and Linda's old-time fiddle tunes and songs, was released in 2002. [See review in "Mountain Music Roundup"; Winter 2002.]

"Anytime you go into Calhoun County and ask who plays the old-time music, the first answer you'd get would be Lester and Linda McCumbers," says fiddler John Morris. "I like their music because it is basically straight-forward and hard-driving. The singing and playing go together in a natural way that nobody can imitate. There's nothing practiced or slickly polished about Linda's singing. She just puts it out there. And Lester doesn't use any trills or fancy fiddle licks either. It's just clean, pure, and intense old-time fiddling. Their music has an edge to it, and the old style of music and singing is imbedded in their soul and being."

KIM JOHNSON is an accomplished banjo player and a longtime participant at folklife events across the state. Kim lives in Clendenin, where she was born and raised; she holds a degree from Glenville State College. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2001 issue.

An Easter Tragedy

The Weirton Bus Crash of 1951

By Mary Zwierzchowski

"We started out to church, but we never got there," Mrs. Marie DeCollo told a *Weirton Daily Times* reporter. Her words, simply stated, sum up the devastating event that occurred in Weirton on April 29, 1951.

It happened on a peaceful Sunday morning. The Greek, Russian, and Serbian Orthodox churches were celebrating the Easter holiday. The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches had celebrated that same holiday one month earlier on March 25. Still, in this city of diverse cultures, the Easter season remained. Tulips were in full bloom, and the budding foliage of Hancock County had begun to brighten the hills.

Bus driver Joseph Kraina was about to begin the 6 a.m. shift. He walked in the brisk morning air from his home on Ridge Avenue to the Pittsburgh & Weirton Bus Company garage, where he had worked for the past eight years. The spacious two-story building was situated at a sharp turn near the base of Weirton Heights hill on Pennsylvania Avenue. It housed a fleet of 15 commercial buses, and "Joe" — as his passengers called him — would have his pick of the lot. He selected a shiny new bus, one that had been purchased the previous June for $17,000. Joe revved up the engine, slipped it into gear, and began his first run of the day.

Road conditions on that sunlit morning called for careful driving. A severe rainstorm had swept through Weirton the previous night, leaving the highway littered with rocks and debris. Road crews would not arrive to clear away the debris until late afternoon.

Kraina's route — designated "Weirton Heights" — extended three miles along Pennsylvania Avenue from Main Street

Driver Joe Kraina, pictured here shortly before the accident.

The Sunday morning crash of a crowded city bus in Weirton on April 29, 1951, left 14 dead and scores injured in this tight-knit, Northern Panhandle town. Photograph by Mil Radeka.

downtown to a turnaround point near Palm Drive on Weirton Heights. He completed the hilltop route several times without incident. Then sometime around 9:30 a.m., Kraina told a passenger that his brakes were not holding. He stopped at the company garage to have them adjusted, which took about five minutes. After being reassured that the brakes were compressing properly, he was told to "take one more run."

It was near 10 a.m. when the Weirton Heights bus once again

This bus is similar to the ill-fated vehicle that crashed in Weirton in April 1951. This photograph was taken a few years later, near the site of the tragedy.

The mile-long hill descending from Weirton Heights into town leads to the bus garage and this sharp left turn. Joe Kraina's bus, careening out of control, cut across the parking lot and collided with the retaining wall near the center of the photograph. The Kraina home was located immediately above the crash site. Photograph by Carr Photo Service, early 1950's.

made the turnaround at Palm Drive and began picking up passengers. Most were headed for 10:30 a.m. Mass at the St. Paul and Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic churches located in north Weirton. Both churches stood in the shadow of the giant steel mill — the Weirton Steel Company — which ran day and night, providing jobs for more than 10,000 workers. The mill and the churches were the focal point that made Weirton Heights a close-knit neighborhood, where nearly everyone knew everyone else.

Marie DeCollo boarded the bus at 20th Street. She sat with her two daughters, six-year-old Judith and 20-year-old Chris. They continued west on Pennsylvania Avenue, making frequent stops, taking on men, women, and children — all dressed in their Sunday best.

By 10:05 a.m., the bus had reached 11th Street. Every seat was taken, and standing room had been pressed to the limit. Some even stood in the step-well near the exit.

"Joe tried his best. He really did. But luck wasn't with him."

Among those waiting to board were Kathryn Drelick and Valentino Grossi, both of Beech Road.

Kathryn Drelick's daughter Martha (Drelick) Vidas was waiting for her mother at Sacred Heart of Mary. Mrs. Drelick inched her way on to the crowded bus, moved a few steps toward the back, and accepted the seat offered to her by Sophia Yurko.

Valentino Grossi, who attended Mass at St. Paul's church, seldom rode the bus. His daughter Louise (Grossi) Enrietti recalls, "My father always rode to church with neighbors. But on this particular Sunday, he decided to take the bus." Mr. Grossi was likely the last passenger to board. He nudged forward in the crowded aisle and stood near the driver. The overloaded bus, filled with happy, chattering, church-bound passengers — 38 seated and 21 standing — began its

descent down the mile-long hill.

The 10th Street stop lay just ahead. What happened next, however, is unclear. Some say those waiting at 10th Street were left stranded as they watched the Weirton Heights bus go whizzing by. Other accounts indicate that another P&W bus — designated "State Line" — preceded Kraina's bus and made the 10th Street pick-up. Kraina's bus reportedly pulled up behind it, waited for traffic to clear, and then proceeded to pass. In any event, it was at this point that the tranquil scene began to unravel.

"We started down the hill and all of a sudden began picking up speed," 16-year-old John Stunda told reporters. The happy chatter had turned to screams of terror. "People began yelling at the driver, 'Your brakes are loose!' He was pumping at the pedals, swinging the bus from side to side, and trying to miss everything in sight." At one point, he attempted to ditch the bus in a slag dump on the left side, but an oncoming car blocked his path. He was hemmed in on the right side by a sheer cliff.

The runaway vehicle raced into the tight curve near the P&W garage at a speed topping 50 mph. The driver's last chance to avoid barreling into the busy intersection at the bottom of the hill was to swing the bus sharply onto Angela Street, which would turn the bus back uphill. The street entrance was a narrow passageway running between the bus garage and an eight-foot-high concrete retaining wall. Kraina cut the wheel hard to the right. His last words to his passengers were, "Brace yourselves. We're going to hit!"

Mrs. Marie DeCollo wrapped her arms around little Judith to protect her and told her older daughter Chris, "Take care of yourself. We're going to bump!" Marie said afterward, "Joe tried his best. He really did. But luck wasn't with him." Workers inside the garage said they heard the horn blowing and the scream of tires. A thunderous noise followed, and the building shook.

Onlookers peer into the wreckage while others on the hillside, many still dressed in their Sunday church clothes, observe the somber scene. Photographer unknown.

The left front end of the bus struck the concrete retaining wall at an angle, crushing its steel frame into a mass of twisted metal. "He almost made it," said one observer. "Just a few more feet, and he would have cleared the wall." The force of the impact hurled passengers forward, trapping many between the wrecked seats. The emergency door was jammed. Employees from the bus garage pried it open, and patrolman Joe Rodak went in.

"The scene was awful," he said. "Most of the children and adults were piled up in front of the bus. Many of the bodies were tangled with others in distorted positions. Others were pinned in the wrecked seats.

"The older people were wonderful. They insisted that we take the youngsters first. It was like a gruesome jigsaw puzzle. One girl kept saying, 'Pray for me.'"

Rescue operations were hampered by a shortage of ambulances.

The cars of private citizens were pressed into service as passing motorists stopped to offer their aid. Most of the injured were transported to the Ohio Valley and Gill Memorial hospitals in nearby Steubenville, Ohio. Others received treatment at the Weirton Steel emergency hospital.

Within minutes, news of the crash reached St. Paul's church just a few blocks away. Father Thomas Kerrigan interrupted his duties and rushed to the scene. He administered last rites to the dead and dying, and comfort to the injured. Father Emil Dobosz of the Sacred Heart of Mary parish also assisted in the rescue. Killed instantly were the bus driver Joseph Kraina, age 35, Peter Balt, age 65, and Florence Kulow, age 59. Their bodies were removed from the wreckage and placed temporarily in the nearby company garage.

By 11:05 a.m., all of the injured had been evacuated from the bus. Left behind in the bloodied, wrecked interior was an eerie display of rosary beads, prayer books, Bibles, and other personal effects. Kraina's pocket watch, still intact, was stopped at 10:10 — the exact moment of impact. Ironically, the accident happened just a few yards from Kraina's home on Ridge Avenue. His wife Peg heard the noise but did not know at the time that it was Joe's bus that had crashed.

Raymond Greco, a young doctor just two years out of medical school, was at home when the news came. Dr. Greco recalls, "My wife and I had just sat down to breakfast when the phone rang. They told me to report to the Weirton Steel hospital." He notes that treating the injured was not as chaotic as one might think. "The care went extremely well. There was a minimum of confusion. I worked with Dr. Thompson, Dr. Yurko, and others. Their skill in dealing with disasters came most likely from their war experience during World War II." The doctors worked tirelessly that day at all three hospitals. "I did not return home until two in the morning," he says.

As news of the crash resonated

"Thankful to Be Alive"

Survivor Chris Valenti Barker

Interview by Mary Zwierzchowski

Chris Valenti Barker is a lifelong resident of Weirton. She was married to Bob DeLuca for 30 years until his death in 1993, so many in Hancock County remember her as Chris Deluca. She later married Boyd Barker and today resides in Bel-Air Addition on Weirton Heights.

Chris was a passenger on Joe Kraina's ill-fated bus the morning of April 29, 1951, along with her mother Marie DeCollo and six-year-old sister Judith. Chris was seriously injured in the crash. She recently shared with me her recollections of that tragic day and of her long and difficult road to recovery.

I was 20 years old at the time. I remember it was a beautiful Sunday morning, and we were on our way to St. Paul's church. All three of us — my mother, younger sister Judy, and I — were dressed in the outfits that we bought for Easter, which we had already celebrated several weeks before. Mom and Judy got on the bus at 20th Street, and I joined them later at 12th Street. The bus was already crowded at that point, with people standing in the aisle and on the steps. I moved back to about the middle of the bus and sat with Mom and Judy — three in a seat.

Chris Valenti Barker survived the 1951 Weirton bus crash, along with her sister Judith and mother Marie. Chris was in a body cast for eight weeks as a result of her injuries. She is pictured today at her home in Weirton. Photograph by Michael Keller.

through this city of 25,000, the search for missing relatives began. Mrs. DeCollo and Judith, both seriously injured, had become separated from Chris. They found her several hours later at the Ohio Valley Hospital in Steubenville, suffering from a severe leg fracture. Her first words to her mother were, "Poor Joe. Poor, poor Joe." Chris would spend the next three months in the hospital recovering from her injuries. [See "'Thankful To Be Alive': Survivor Chris Valenti Barker," by Mary Zwierzchowski; below.]

Martha Vidas, who had waited anxiously for her mother at Sacred Heart of Mary, found Mrs. Drelick two hours later at the Ohio Valley hospital, where she was being treated for lacerations of the forehead and a fractured wrist. Sophia Yurko, who had given up her seat to Mrs. Drelick, sustained a fractured skull and remained in a coma for several weeks before recovering. Others, however, were less fortunate.

Valentino Grossi, one of the last passengers to board the bus, suffered massive head and chest injuries. "My father's injuries were too severe," says Louise Enrietti. "He died through the night."

By midweek, the death toll had risen to 11. Not included on the official list was the death of a stillborn infant boy. According to the *Steubenville Herald Star*, May 2, 1951, "Mrs. Henry Sherensky, who was seriously injured in the P&W bus crash Sunday morning, gave birth prematurely to a baby boy at the Ohio Valley hospital in Steubenville at 6:15 p.m., Monday. The infant was born dead, apparently killed by the shock of the accident." Also injured in the accident were her two children, Edward, age 9, and Michelene, age 6.

Most profound was the story of Anne (Rocchio) Nutter. She recalls, "I was 10 years old at the time and was sitting in the front seat to the right of the driver when the crash came. I had a fractured hip, among other injuries, and was in a body cast for 100 days. The bus hit the wall from the left side instead of

About 10 more people were waiting to be picked up at 11th Street. We packed them in, as we always did, and then Joe [the driver] squeezed the door shut. As soon as we began to move ahead, my mother said to me, "Something's wrong with the bus." I looked up at Joe's face in the mirror, and I knew then that something was wrong.

As soon as we started down the hill, the bus began to pick up speed. We whizzed past 10th Street. I could see people waiting there, but we couldn't stop. We were already out of control. Joe kept blowing his horn and switching lanes, trying to miss the traffic. People were screaming. As we headed into the turn [near the bus garage], we could see the concrete wall in front of us, and we knew we were going to hit. I said to my mother, "Mom, your hat — your pretty hat. It fell off." And I remember thinking, "My shoe came off. I've lost my shoes." What was happening seemed unreal.

Upon impact, the seats collapsed and the overhead bars came crashing down on the passengers.

I focused my eyes on the people around us. Their heads were bleeding. After that, everything was a blur. The seat in front of us and the seat behind us came together, and we were squeezed in between. My feet — I tried to move them — were pinned underneath. Mike Ballato [who aided in the rescue] came inside the bus with a crowbar and tried to pry the seats apart. Then I passed out.

The next thing Chris remembers, she woke up in a hospital bed.

I was in this long hallway lined with beds. I could hear people moaning and groaning and screaming. It was total chaos. I don't remember crying, but I was scared.

My mother and sister were injured, also. They were treated at the Weirton Steel emergency hospital and released. My mother searched for me but couldn't find me. She thought for several hours that I was dead. Then my stepfather Constantino DeCollo went looking for me. He found me much later that day at the Ohio Valley hospital in Steubenville.

The injuries to my leg were such that I was in a cast from my toes up to my chest for eight weeks. I was not released from the hospital until the following August, and for one year, I could not walk without the help of a brace.

Chris needed extensive therapy to strengthen her leg muscles, so she developed her own exercise regimen.

I would go down to Bill Cassidy's dance studio — on Main Street across from the bus terminal — where I would learn basic dance steps. Then I would go home and practice. Since I was at his studio so often, Mr. Cassidy offered me a job. I worked there as a dance instructor until he closed the business. After that, I opened my own dance studio, which I operated for 25 years. I also worked at the Tin Mill Credit Union. After 30 years, I retired.

Still an active and vibrant person, Chris maintains a positive attitude. She continues to serve as a volunteer at the Weirton Medical Center and until recently worked with children at the Weirton Christian Center.

In closing, I asked Chris to describe her feelings during that long, difficult ordeal. She answered briefly.

I was just thankful to be alive.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City, State, Bus Officials Meet On Road Project

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General MacArthur Plays 2nd Fiddle To Wife Early Today

head-on, which I believe saved my life." The driver — Joe Kraina — died in her lap.

Nearly all who perished in the crash lived on Weirton Heights within one mile of each other. The grieving mill town took comfort from the generous outpouring of sympathy that followed. Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York, who was at the time visiting the Diocese of Wheeling, issued a message of condolence. He said in a statement to the newspaper, "I would like to offer my sympathy to the citizens of West Virginia and to the citizens of Weirton on the tragedy of last Sunday. We offer to the stricken families all the human consolation we can express and also divine consolation through the medium of our prayers."

St. Paul's church held five funeral services in one day. That same day, Sacred Heart of Mary held two. The streets were lined with an endless procession of mourners with tear-stained faces — a scene described by many as "the saddest day in the history of Weirton."

On Wednesday morning, a Requiem Mass was held for Joseph Kraina. An honor guard of fellow bus drivers, attired in uniform, escorted the casket to the St. Paul church and cemetery. At 10 a.m., the hour of the funeral services, all P&W buses were halted for two minutes in silent tribute to the fallen driver. Kraina, who was lauded for his attempt to avert the crash, was survived by his wife Veronica and two children: Teresa, age 8, and Kathy, age 4. His tombstone bears the inscription, "Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Kathy (Kraina) Fodor now lives in Florida. "Growing up, my father became a kind of mythical figure," she says. "Everyone who knew him had only good things to say about him. I would meet people who had special memories of the bus driver who always had a joke to tell, or something to say that would put a smile on their face. To me, he will always be my hero."

On May 9, 10 days after the crash, the accident claimed two more lives — Mary Ann Bindas, age 64, and Kazimierz Machnicki, age 43 — raising the official death toll to 13. Machnicki, a Polish immigrant, had entered the United States just five weeks earlier as a "displaced person." He had been staying with the Peter Balt family in Weirton and had planned to travel to Chicago to be reunited with his wife and daughter, whom he had not seen for eight years. Machnicki, the final victim, was buried on a Weirton hilltop in St. Paul's cemetery. By mid-May, all 14 victims — including the Sherensky infant — had been laid to rest, and the long healing process began.

Within hours of the tragedy, state and local investigators tried to piece together the cause of the accident. An inspection of the braking

Investigators concluded that the broken petcock had allowed air to escape from the chamber, causing the brakes to fail.

system revealed that a petcock, or valve, on the air chamber had broken off. Search teams combed the hillside in an effort to recover the missing piece. They eventually found it in a pile of debris that had been swept to the side of the road as a result of the Saturday night storm. It matched the piece that remained in the aperture of the air chamber into which it was screwed. Investigators concluded that the broken petcock had allowed air to escape from the chamber, causing the brakes to fail. Soon after, several lawsuits were initiated on behalf of the injured passengers.

Two lawsuits were filed in the U.S. District Court of Western Pennsylvania against the P&W Bus Company and the bus manufacturer (Rocchio and Carpini vs. the Pittsburgh & Weirton Bus Company vs. General Motors Corporation). The district court entered judgments for the injured passengers, and the case was appealed.

The final resting place of driver Joe Kraina. The inscription on the headstone reads, "Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Photograph by Michael Keller.

Bus Crash Victims

Peter Balt, 65
Mary Ann Bindas, 64
Valentino Grossi, 60
Florence Herkle, 40
Diana Jackson, 10
Elizabeth Kaminski, 20
Joseph Kraina, 35
Florence Kulow, 59
Kazimierz Machnicki, 42
Patricia Jo Rock, 6
Infant Sherensky, stillborn
Alph Lawson Smith, 12
Elsie Ulizio, 52
Angeline Oliver Welshans, 26

Judge Goodrich, circuit judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, reviewed the evidence. The bus manufacturer denied responsibility for the accident and attempted to shift blame to the P&W Bus Company. They claimed that the overloaded bus had forced the outlet on the air chamber to ride close to the ground. The storm debris that remained on the highway, they said, had kicked up underneath the bus and damaged the petcock, causing air to escape and the brakes to fail. But Judge Goodrich viewed the matter differently.

Quoting West Virginia law, he stated, "A carrier of passengers has a high duty of care to its customers." He questioned the design of the braking system, noting that this was a new bus and that the petcock was positioned dangerously low to the ground and did not have a shield to protect it from rocks or debris. Goodrich concluded that the bus maker had failed in its duty to provide a safe product for the consumer. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the verdict of the district court and ruled in favor of the injured passengers. Plaintiffs in the case settled for an undisclosed amount. The case was decided November 10, 1954.

Despite this tragedy, the P&W Bus Company maintained a long and proud record of dedicated service to the Weirton community. The company, owned and operated by Michael Starvaggi, was organized in 1931 and from its inception offered daily routes from Weirton to Steubenville and Pittsburgh. In 1978, after nearly 50 years of continuous service, the P&W bus line went out of business. Starvaggi, a leading industrialist and philanthropist, died in 1979. His company, Starvaggi Industries, continues to operate out of the old bus garage on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The garage and retaining wall stand today much as they stood in 1951. The bus had skidded five feet after impact, scraping a deep gash along the concrete barrier. Some say the marks are still there.

Time has softened the impact of that devastating day, but the memories for some remain vivid. On the 50th anniversary of the crash, several churches in Weirton held a special Mass to commemorate the event. The seats were filled with friends and relatives of the survivors and victims. For those who had survived the crash, it was a day of thanksgiving. For others, it was a day of remembrance.

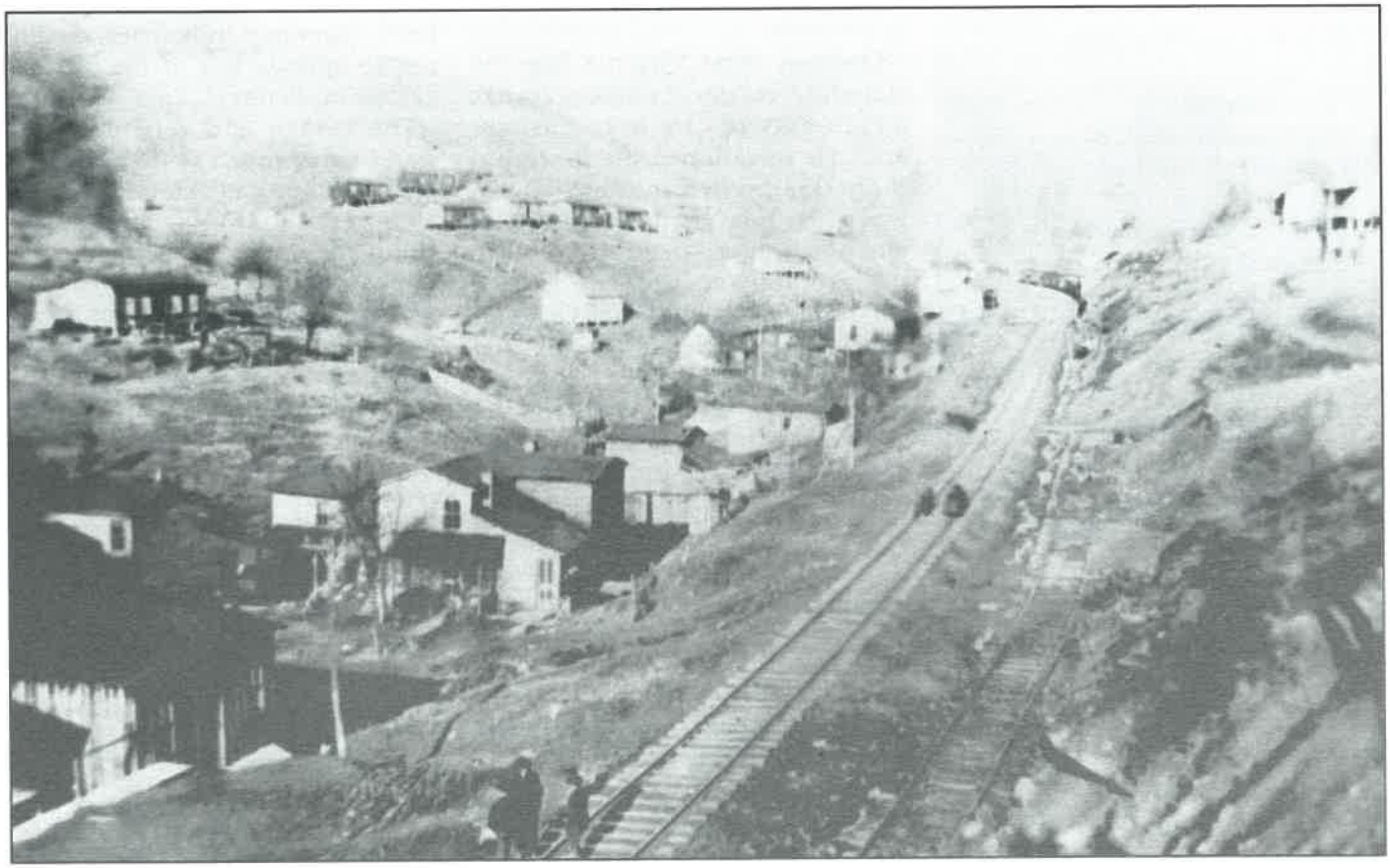
MARY ZWIERZCHOWSKI is an assistant reference librarian at the Mary H. Weir Public Library in Weirton. She grew up near the old town of Cliftonville and is a graduate of West Virginia Northern Community College. Mary's articles have appeared in the *Weirton Daily Times*, the *Brooke County Review*, and the *Steubenville Herald Star*. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2002 issue.

The Coal and the

By Stacy G. Hacker

Life in rural Braxton County was difficult in the early 1900's. My grandfather Homer Dale Hacker was born in Cutlipville in 1911, into a legacy of poverty and coal mining. While life brought him many hardships to overcome, he emerged strong in faith and proven in spirit.

No one recalls how Dale discovered his gift for music. What his children do recall is that Dale could play any instrument placed in front of him. From the piano to the fiddle to the dulcimer, Dale could pick out a tune with the best of them. He was a self-taught musician who played by ear, having never acquired the skill of reading music. From his days as a young man, his bands would play at square dances and barn gatherings throughout the community. Music was perhaps his first gift,



As a young man, Homer worked for more than 10 years at the Slab Camp coal mine at the town of Braxton, seen here in a pre-1930 photograph.

The Life of Homer Dale Hacker

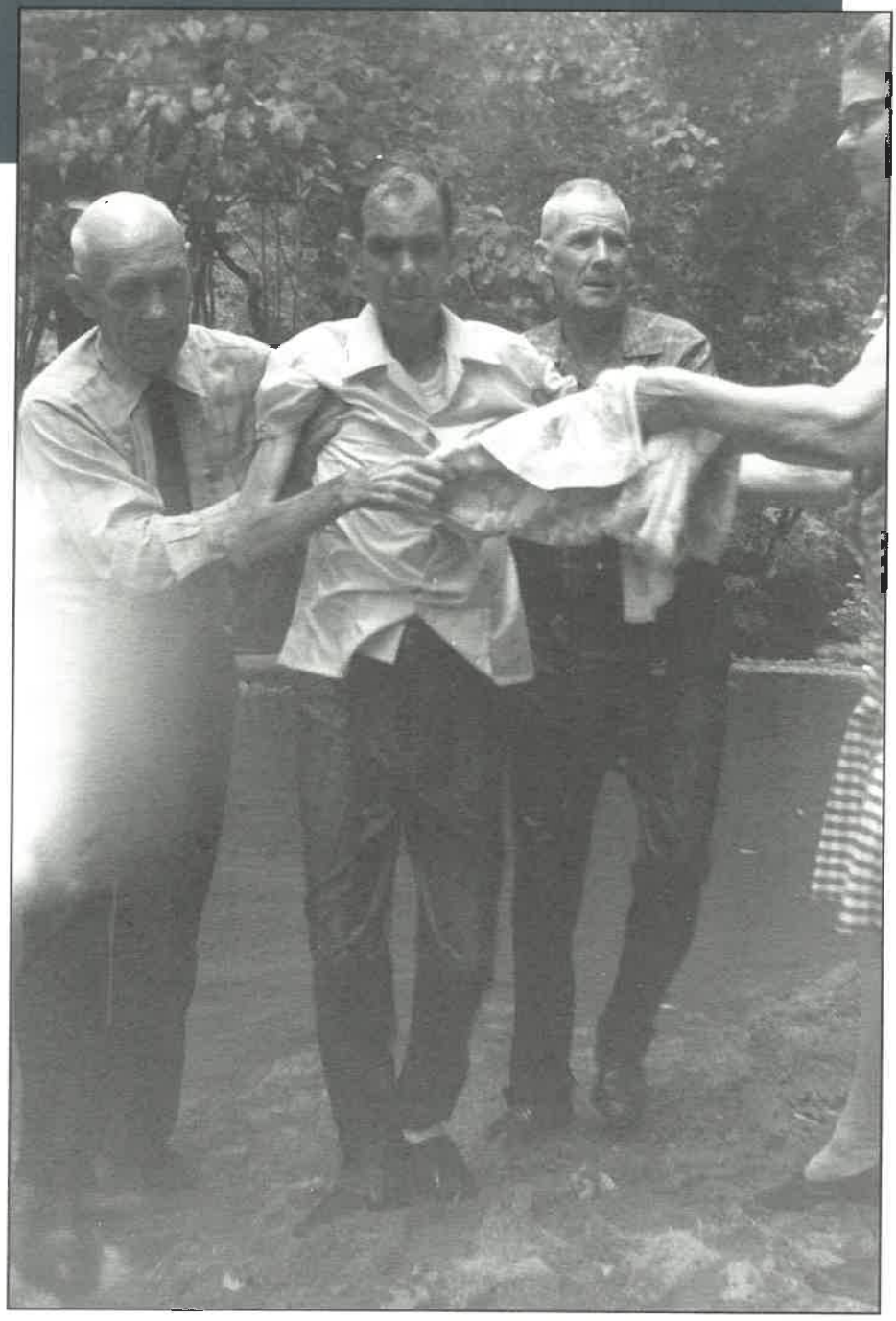
Call

but it would not be his last.

With little industry in the area, mining was one of few occupational choices available for young men. As soon as he was able, Dale found work at the local mine, as his father had done before him. His service at Slab Camp in the town of Braxton lasted more than 10 years. Life in the mine was dangerous, and it was during that time that he watched his father succumb to cancer and his brother-in-law die in a mining accident. Although Dale remarked that he would "never forget" the incident in which Robert Dennison was crushed, he continued on with his work. It was his own health that eventually took him out of the mines. Dale suffered three heart attacks at the age of 29, which left him unable to continue this strenuous occupation.

Upon hearing of Dale's condition and misfortune, John Lake, the operator of the mine, offered Dale a position at the mine store located a few miles from his home. To strengthen his heart following the attacks, Dale was ordered by his doctor to walk everywhere he went. He would walk in good weather and bad, snow, sleet, or rain. His children remember how he would rise before daylight to begin his five-mile trek to work, and often not return home until well past nine at night.

Because the only alternative route was over steep inclines, Dale took a path each night that led him through



The Reverend Homer Dale Hacker, at left, was a former Braxton County coal miner who answered the call to preach late in life. He is shown here following a baptism in Cedar Creek near the town of Exchange in the late 1950's.

Dale and Nevah on a swing set. Date known.

an active railroad tunnel. There were nights when his late return prompted concern among his young sons. They would go to the tunnel to look for their father, and when they did not find him there, they would wait for him to ensure that he made it home safely. Somehow, he always did. And he brought with him each night a paper sack full of candy. It seemed that no matter how hard times were, and how little there was to spare, Dale made sure that each evening he returned with treats for his family.

Dale spent many years working in various general stores before he began to feel the "call." As the child of nonreligious parents, Dale's introduction to religion came late in life. While working in the mine, he began to court a young woman by the name of Nevah Straley. As a young man, Dale had a likeable, yet somewhat rowdy, reputation. When her foster father forbade Nevah to see Dale until he changed his life, Dale began to attend church and became a Christian.

Eventually, he married Nevah, and they began a family. However, his involvement in the church was not enough to convince him that he was ready to preach. He told no one about his anguish at the time, but later revealed to his children that he had resisted this urging privately for many years. He spent many nights walking the floors in fear of the punishment he and his family might suffer due to his resistance.

Eventually, Dale looked to the Bible for guidance. His studies intensified as he prepared for the questioning that would allow him to become ordained. Once he was ordained as a Baptist minister, the Reverend Homer Dale Hacker set out to preach to those who usually did not attend church. After attending Sunday morning services, Dale would hold an afternoon service at the local schoolhouse. It was closer and more convenient for many of those who could not travel to a more distant church, and his presence alone drew many. His devotion to ministry was so great that he often held evening revivals between his work shifts at the store. He preached not only to Baptists, but to anyone who would listen. He became a sort of circuit preacher, traveling to many churches in the area, holding revivals, and performing weddings and creekside baptisms.

Later, Reverend Hacker devoted himself fully to his vocation, ministering at the Cutlip Baptist Church for more than 20 years. He was an inspiring minister, and people came from far and wide to hear him. While he was truly gifted in delivering the Word, Dale had an even more remarkable gift, a gift that he himself did not understand. In his study of the Bible, Dale had discovered a

At the age of 29, following a series of heart attacks, Homer accepted work at the mine store, where he was employed for many years. The store is seen here, as it appears today. Photograph by Stacy G. Hacker.

The Cutlip Baptist Church in Exchange, Braxton County, where Reverend Hacker pastored for more than 20 years. Recent photograph by Stacy G. Hacker.

passage that revealed how to stop bleeding. His children Earl and Ann both recall how townspeople would summon Dale to help heal the wounded.

In one instance, a young boy was brought to Dale. The boy had fallen from atop a culvert, broken his leg, and was bleeding severely. After reciting something to himself, Dale touched his finger to his tongue and then placed the finger on the boy's wound. The bleeding stopped. This is just one of many instances in which Reverend Hacker was called upon to help heal the wounded. As the recipient of such a gift, Dale was said to have been in awe of its power. He was reluctant to talk about it, fearful that in revealing the specific biblical passage from which he derived his power, the very idea of such a thing would be mocked. For this reason, Dale never revealed the source of his healing gift to anyone, not even his children.

Dale continued to practice his faith up until the final moments of his life. In his later years, Dale was struck with a cancer that spread to his lungs and eventually to his brain. Despite the severity of his illness, Dale played his music and preached the Word as long as he was physically able. His health failing, Reverend Hacker could often be seen walking through Cedarville, making his way to the Cedarville Baptist Church, where he performed some of his final services. Despite his own pain, Dale always had a kind word and an open ear to offer others. Undoubtedly, the heart that was once so weakened had grown strong with his unrelenting faith.

The Reverend Homer Dale Hacker lost his battle with cancer in September 1981. While I was only nine years old at the time, memories of my grandpa still bring me to weep. Grandpa was love to me, a love that never questioned and always answered. He had the ability to wrap his warmth around you with his smile and make you feel safe with the touch of his hand. Some might argue that all grandpas do this. However, I would be inclined to disagree, as I imagine would all of the children who knew the Reverend Homer Dale Hacker.

STACY G. HACKER was born in Sonora, Texas, and makes her home in St. Albans, where she has lived since childhood. She is a student at West Virginia State College where she is pursuing a degree in elementary education. This story about her grandfather, written as a class assignment, is her first published article.

Beloved by family and community members, Homer Dale Hacker is pictured here with his wife Nevah and a granddaughter in the late 1950's. He passed away in 1981 at the age of 70.

Interview by Olive Smith Stone

"I've Enjoyed It All"

Bonnie Cadle Hartley Recalls 103 Years

Bonnie Cadle Hartley, age 103, at her home on Baden Ridge in rural Mason County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The Cadle family of Mason County has held a reunion for 92 consecutive years. Members of this family are the descendants of John Zearley Cadle and his wife Mary Adams Cadle, who settled on their Baden Ridge farm in 1910. The couple had six boys and one girl: sons Cleon, Bert, Orval, Clare, Ray, and Parke, and daughter Bonnie.

Today, only Parke and Bonnie survive. Parke is 94 years old and lives in Charleston. A former heavy equipment operator and construction supervisor, he remains healthy and active. He keeps cattle on a Jackson County farm, mows

his sister's hay, and tends her garden.

Bonnie Cadle Hartley turned 103 this past January. Born in Ravenswood in 1901, she attended Marshall College, then taught in Mason and Putnam county schools. She married neighbor and fellow Mason Countian Dawson Hartley, and the pair lived for some years in Boomer, Kanawha County, where he worked in a chemical plant. After he retired, Bonnie and Dawson moved back to old family land in Mason County, where they raised cattle and grew fruit and vegetables.

Vivacious, alert, and red-headed, Bonnie still lives on that farm. She reads a book a week, crochets baby gifts, and remains involved with Bethel Community Church.

Author Olive Smith Stone is a distant relative of the Mason County Cadles [see "Hard Times, Proud Memories in Jackson County," by Olive Smith Stone; Fall 2002]. When Olive retired a few years ago, she started looking into her own family roots — a quest that eventually landed her at the Cadle family reunion. In September 2001, Olive sat down with Bonnie Cadle Hartley to discuss her long and eventful life.

Olive Smith Stone. Who do you think was the greatest person of influence during your lifetime?

Bonnie Cadle Hartley. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He did so much when we were in a period of Depression to bring the country out of it. I don't know just how he managed it, but he did.

OSS. How did the Depression affect you?

BCH. I was teaching school then, and money was scarce. Many times, the school year was only four or six months long because of lack of funds. He helped to get more money for schools. He was a great promoter of education.

OSS. Who do you think was the greatest hero of your years?

BCH. General Douglas MacArthur. He was our leader in World War II.

OSS. Do you remember how things were during World War I?

BCH. Oh, yes. I was teaching my first term of school. When Armistice Day came, we told our mother the war was over, but she thought we were teasing. She said, "Yes, I know. It is over the sea." But we finally convinced her that it was really over. There was great rejoicing that her boys would soon be home.

OSS. Do you remember having silent prayer in your school at 11 o'clock on November 11 each year?

Bonnie Cadle at age 24, when she was teaching elementary school in Milton. She later married Dawson Hartley, and the couple moved to Boomer, Kanawha County, where they lived until retirement. They then came home to Mason County.

BCH. I miss having that tradition being followed. They have changed so many good things.

OSS. Do you remember your first train ride?

BCH. Yes, we went from Ravenswood to Point Pleasant. We got off at the lower station and climbed the steps up to the top to take the train to Riverside or Red House, as it was called.

The Cadle family in 1929. They are, from the left, father John, mother Mary, and children Cleon, Bert, Orval, Bonnie, Clare, Ray, and Parke, standing in birth order.

Bonnie's brother Bert Cadle in his World War I army uniform. As a child, Bert had an affinity for fire arms, which led to some harrowing experiences, according to Bonnie.

OSS. You were familiar with trains?

BCH. Yes, the RS&G tracks ran by our house. "Ravenswood to Spencer" — I don't remember what the "G" stood for.

OSS. Did you call it what we did?

BCH. Do you mean the "Rub, Snuff, and Grin?" Yes, that's what we called it.

OSS. What was the greatest invention for the housewife?

BCH. Electricity [without hesitation]. It has made life so much easier and more pleasant — the lights, music, refrigeration, laundry, stoves. I remember the days of doing laundry on a wash board, carrying and heating water, boiling the white clothes, all the rubbing and rinses, and hanging them on the line to dry. It was an all-day task. It has made such a difference in cleaning and countless other tasks for everyone.

When [my younger brother] Clare was shot, Mother had washed all day. [She] was hanging up clothes by lantern light when [my older brother] Bert came [in] with a revolver he had traded for with someone. He fired it several times into the smokehouse wall to show it off. Dad had gone to Grandpa's to go to a meeting the next day, and Mother told Bert not to shoot anymore.

OSS. Tell me about how Clare was shot.

BCH. Let me tell you, that was a bad time! I was washing dishes, and the others were sitting around the dining table when Bert came in with the gun. He was taking the shells out. [My brothers] Clare, Parke, and Ray were sitting on the bench behind the table, and one of the shells didn't want to come out. He snapped the gun to loosen it, but it snapped on the shell that remained in the gun. The shot struck Clare on the lip and landed in his lower jaw. Mother just froze when she heard the shot. She couldn't take a step. The rest of us screamed. Clare went outside to her. The bullet had laid two teeth over on their side, toward his tongue. There was no telephone, and we couldn't call Dad.

We sent for a neighbor. [She] was born after her father's death — she'd never seen him — and was supposed to have the power to stop blood. She came and spent the night. She didn't want it to stop the bleeding altogether, so it would wash out the poison. They sat with him all night, thinking the bullet was still in his mouth somewhere. However, the bullet was found outside the next morning, where he had spit out blood. The doctor came, but he could do nothing. His jaw was broken, and Clare always had a crooked jaw after that.

Everyone was so excited. Mother sent Orval to get the cows, and he came back saying he couldn't find them. But he had been walking among them. She then sent him to tell Grandma Elzena. She told him, whatever he did, to be careful how he told her, so she wouldn't be up-

Bonnie's home today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

set. They were living near Leon, [Mason County]. When he got to their yard, she came out to meet him, sensing that something was wrong by his countenance. She asked him what had happened, and he said, "I don't want to scare you." [He] burst out crying and couldn't tell her.

Bert could never learn his lesson. He traded for another gun later on — way later on. Mother and I were both sick. We had the flu. He and a neighbor boy that lived down the hollow were going somewhere, and he was going to take the gun. Mother told him he didn't need it and not to take it. He said he would be careful, that he didn't intend to shoot it. Just take it along. The boys got into an argument about which would shoot the gun. Bert was on the rail fence. The other boy pushed him off, and the gun went off.

When they came back to the house, Mother knew something had happened. When she questioned Bert, he said he had sprained his ankle. When he took off his shoe, it was full of blood, and mother fainted. There I was, sick in bed with the flu and Bert over there bleeding and mother fainted! I had my hands full for a while. When the doctor came, the shot had gone down his leg and not touched the bone. [It] had lodged under the skin of his heel. He just cut that thick skin and removed the bullet.

Bonnie Cadle Hartley has seen some tremendous changes in her long life. She remains an avid reader, does needle work, and enjoys life every day, she tells us. Photograph by Michael Keller.

OSS. When did you see your first car?

BCH. [My brother] Parke likes to tell that one on me. That's when I let the horse step on him. We lived at Riverside, [Putnam County]. We had a barn lot that had a board fence around it. Someone had a car up at Plymouth, and they would come down by our house. We were at the barn, and I was looking after Parke, who was about one. I was eight. He always makes a big thing of it, and I tell him an eight-year-old girl should have been playing with her doll instead of taking care of a baby.

The car was coming by. [Our eldest brother] Cleon was leading a horse out of the barn lot, followed by another horse. He looked back to see the second one stepping on Parke. Cleon yelled, "Whoa!" She stopped, but with one of her big feet between Parke's feet.

Her hoof had scraped the inside of Parke's knee as she set it down. Being around the barn, you know, [Parke] got lockjaw. We almost lost him. They couldn't get food or medicine down him. He had front teeth only, so they could get a little medicine in where he had no teeth. He had to be taken to the hospital in Charleston. It was either by train or boat, and that was hard.

OSS. It was Parke that had meningitis, wasn't it?

BCH. Yes, he had it when he was about two years old. Oh, I remember his head would turn from side to side, and you couldn't hold it still. Mother was so upset about him and was grieving so. Her older sister Alice told her to quit it, for if he lived, he would be a cripple or an idiot. But mother told her she wanted him to live, regardless of what he would be. He lived to be the 94-year-old he is today. Far from being an idiot.

OSS. Do you remember your first airplane?

BCH. No, but I remember the first one I went up in. We were at Jackson's Mill, and they had a little plane and took us up to fly around over the mill site. That was about the thrill of our lives. Whoever expected to fly, let alone go to the moon? That was about 1920.

OSS. What period of your life have you enjoyed most?

BCH. I've enjoyed it all. I enjoy life now, sitting in my chair.

OLIVE SMITH STONE lives in Marietta, Ohio, where she is retired from her position as Washington County Recorder. She is the author of several published poems; her articles have appeared in *Back Home in Kentucky*, *Antique Week*, and *Farm and Dairy* magazines. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Fall 2002 issue.

My Mother's Apron

By Alice Brown Juergens

My mother always wore an apron. I've almost forgotten what her dressy clothes were like, but I'll never forget her aprons. She wore her fancy aprons on Sunday. These were made with lace trim, and she often had embroidered flowers on them.

But the ones I dearly loved were her everyday aprons. They were made of muslin, calico, or from feed sacks and were soft and snugly. When I'd curl up on her lap, she often pulled her old, soft apron around me. It felt so good being cuddled and drawn even closer to her. It seemed like a mother hen gathering her chicks under her feathers for warmth and protection.

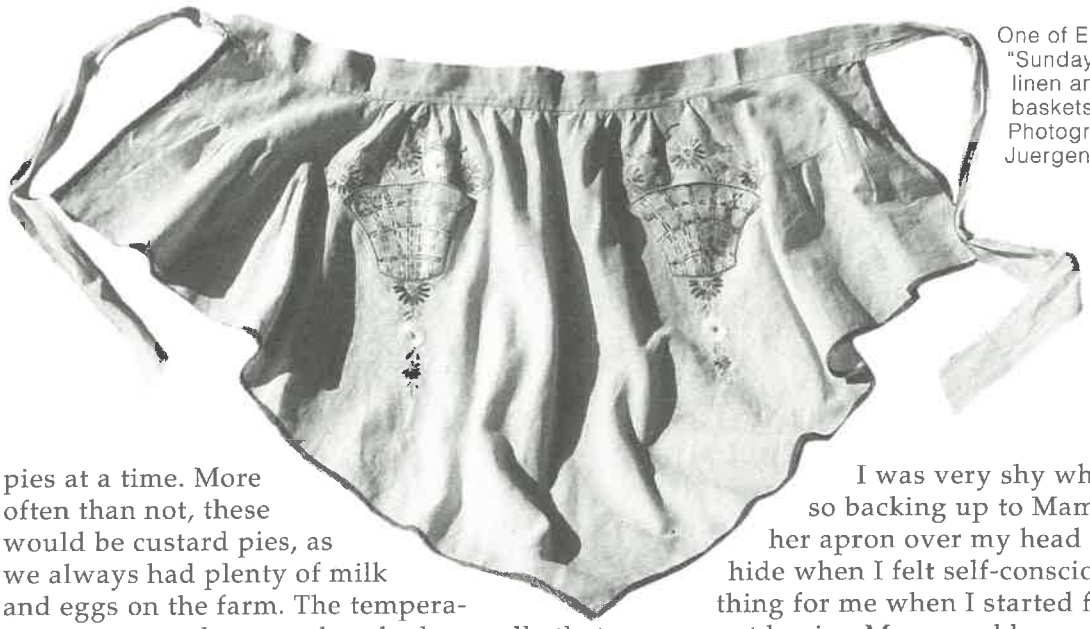
Elizabeth Huff Brown, our author's mother, sporting one of her many aprons. Elizabeth was born in 1889 and lived to be 89 years of age. She and her husband raised nine children, all West Virginia University graduates. Mrs. Brown was named West Virginia Mother of the Year in 1949. She is shown here doing the dishes in Sutton in 1972.

Sometimes, her apron was literally used as a nest to transfer a brood of fluffy chicks from a stolen nest out in tall grass into the safety of the barn. Her apron was also used to carry in apples, vegetables, or kindling.

She found endless uses for her apron while working in the kitchen. It was often used as a potholder to pull pans from the oven. A double fold of the apron's edge around the stove lifter prevented burned fingers, as she lifted a stove lid to put in another stick of wood. When she removed a pan of biscuits from the oven, she would quickly swish her apron across them to dust off the flour. There were seven sons and two daughters in our family, and my mother stood for hours cooking at the hot stove. So, her apron was used occasionally to wipe away perspiration.

My mother seldom lost her patience, but sometimes when my brothers started scuffling, she'd gather up her apron and shake it at them, saying, "You boys just get out in the yard if you're going to carry on like that!" She used the same tactics to scatter the flies from the back screen door. She'd flip her apron against the screen saying, "Mercy! Where do all these flies come from?" She didn't expect an answer to her frequently asked question about the flies, but I'm sure they were drawn to the wonderful aroma of food cooking.

She told me that she always baked three



One of Elizabeth Huff Brown's "Sunday" aprons, made of linen and embroidered with baskets of flowers. Photograph by Alice Brown Juergens.

pies at a time. More often than not, these would be custard pies, as we always had plenty of milk and eggs on the farm. The temperature gauge on the oven door had a needle that moved to low, medium, or high, but she knew just how to control the temperature herself so that everything always baked perfectly.

Except for her Sunday ones, Mama's aprons always had a big pocket, sometimes two. As she cleaned house, these pockets were a catch-all for things such as bobby pins, coins, buttons, or popcorn found under sofa cushions. She often said to my sister and me, "I can't think of one earthly reason why you girls won't wear aprons! You're wearing out your clothes by washing them so much. You could prevent a lot of that by simply wearing an apron." Then she'd add, "Not only do you wash your clothes too often, but you thrash them around in your automatic washers!"

She never did like the new washing machines and remained faithful to her old wringer washer with its gentle motion all her life. You couldn't have given her a dryer. She'd say, "Why would you waste electricity and wear out your clothes thrashing them around in a dryer when you could hang them on a line?" When she did the laundry, if the weather was too bad to hang clothes outside, she strung clotheslines in the basement or upstairs hall.

Almost everyone entered our house by the kitchen door, so if anyone ever came to the front door, we knew they were a stranger. Often when Mama saw someone coming to the front door, she hurriedly dusted table tops with her apron as she went to the door.

I was very shy when I was a child, so backing up to Mama and pulling her apron over my head was my place to hide when I felt self-conscious. The hardest thing for me when I started first grade was not having Mama and her apron to hide under. I believe today's children have missed something very special by not having known just how wonderful an apron can be.

ALICE BROWN JUERGENS is retired and lives in Morgantown. She was born and raised in Summersville and lived in Sutton for 39 years. Alice holds a degree in English from West Virginia University. Her work has been published in *Mountain Echoes* and other West Virginia newspapers. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

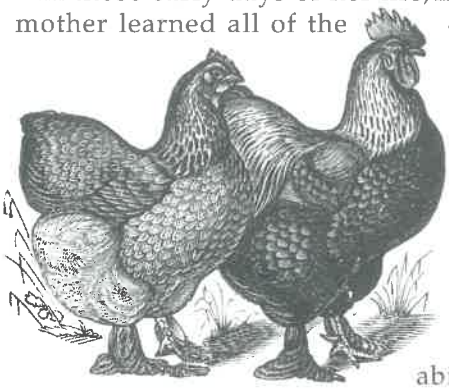
Mother and the Drunken Chickens

By Lud Freeman

My mother always said her hometown was Louisville, Kentucky. However, she was born on a farm near Bardstown, Kentucky, in April 1889. Mother had three brothers and one sister, and later the family did move to Louisville, where they all lived for the remainder of their lives — except for my mother, who went to Bluefield, West Virginia. She worked there as a milliner — a maker of ladies' hats.

In Bluefield, she met and married my dad who, at that time, was working for the Norfolk & Western Railroad as private secretary to the general superintendent of that company. They later moved to the small town of Lost Creek, Harrison County, where they owned and operated a very successful retail hardware business. [See "My Early Days in Lost Creek," by Lud Freeman; Fall 2002.]

In those early days of her life, my mother learned all of the domestic skills that were expected of girls at the time. Among these was the ability to



Salee L. Freeman, pictured here some years after the infamous chicken incident. A beautiful and genteel woman originally from Kentucky, she was forced to learn many barnyard lessons the hard way, much to her own chagrin.

prepare and can fruit and vegetables in glass Mason jars, and she was good at it. At our home in Lost Creek, we had a sunken cellar for the storage of apples, potatoes, and canned goods. Unfortunately, during periods of heavy rain, the cellar would leak from the bottom and fill up with water several inches deep — but that's another story.

Aside from having a nice vegetable garden and several fruit trees, my parents also had a chicken house and an area for keeping about 20 or 30 chickens. Most were white, but some were red and other colors. I believe that most of them were given to my dad by store customers in exchange for hardware. There were also three fully grown Rhode Island Red roosters, whose beautiful multicolored feathers shimmered in the sunlight.

One time when I was about five or six years of age, my mother went into the fruit cellar on a beautiful summer day and observed that several quarts of canned blackberries or raspberries appeared to be spoiled. The tops of the jars were pushed up, which indicated a build-up of pressure inside. Canned berries did not seem to keep very well and also did not taste very good compared to peaches and other fruit. Believing the berries were spoiled, she decided that she would feed them to the chickens. A bad decision!

I went with her to the chicken lot, where she washed out several bowls and then filled them with the fermented berries. Now I will say that it doesn't take very many fermented berries to make chickens drunk! Observing the natural "pecking order" of all birds, the roosters got to eat first. In almost no time at all, they started to stagger a little bit, stopped eating, and turned their attention to the hens. Being just a kid, I didn't know what was going on. But my mother did.

The roosters got to chasing the hens and hopping on them as fast as they could. By this time, the hens had also eaten some of the berries. They were also staggering and didn't seem to mind what was going on. During the melee, the roosters and hens kept going back to get more fermented berries. Some of them even tried to fly! The roosters didn't seem to mind if the hens were old or young, ugly or beautiful. Finally, when the roosters were all worn out and too drunk to care, they went over and laid down under the small trees in the chicken lot. The hens continued to eat the berries, and before long, all of them were laying down on the ground, as well, in a satisfied stupor.

I have no idea what that episode did to the egg production. My mother was afraid that the chickens would all die. Fortunately, none of them did. In fact, after that, I always thought that they wanted more fermented berries.

My mother was a Southern Baptist and, as such, was taught that all intoxicating beverages were evil. She was very ashamed and embarrassed over the fact she had gotten the chickens drunk, and I remember that she asked God to forgive her for doing that awful thing. I also remember that when she told my dad about what had happened, he thought it was very funny and wished he could have seen it.

That is the story of my mother getting the chickens drunk. While I didn't understand what was going on at the time, I thought it was all very interesting and amusing. I still do to this very day.

LUD FREEMAN is originally from Lost Creek, Harrison County. He currently lives in Downey, California, where he retired in 1987 from his career as an engineer in the aerospace industry. Mr. Freeman's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was in our Fall 2002 issue. His e-mail address is ludfreeman@myexcel.com.

Thursday Night at the Wetzel Republican

By Borgon Tanner

Sixty years ago, Thursday night was a time of action in New Martinsville. That night, the finest paper in the county, the *Wetzel Republican*, was produced by long-suffering shop foreman Buss Wise and three indispensable teenagers. I was the youngest of the trio, but my job was the most important. I operated the mailer.

The *Wetzel Republican* office, at the time, was well-situated in the center of the downtown business district. Diagonally across from us was the imposing stone structure of the Wetzel County courthouse. At the corner by Main Street stood the towering statue of Levi Morgan, pioneer scout. Diagonally to our left was a beautiful home overlooking the Ohio River and the ferry landing. For several years during World War I, this was the residence of my maternal grandparents.

To our right, on the lower corner of Main Street, was the well-known Bank of New Martinsville. The newspaper office came next, then an alleyway. Beyond that — with a magnificent view of the Ohio — was the historic Brast Hotel, one of the town's best-known landmarks.

The *Wetzel Republican* office and print shop occupied one large, ground-floor room, about 40-feet wide and 60-feet long. There were no partitions. A vast array of type cabinets provided internal boundaries. Office space up front extended to a depth of 14 feet. The editor's desk and filing cabinets were on the river side. The secretary — who was also the social editor and subscription manager — occupied the opposite side with her furniture. The remaining space was filled with type cabinets and printing equipment, large and small.

The *Wetzel Republican* was a letterpress shop. That was common in the 1940's. Letterpress means using "raised type," which had been cast in a foundry in a Monotype or similar machine or by the renowned Linotype. All of the type was produced by melting lead and casting raised characters, singly or in lines of type. Illustrations were also made by melting lead and pouring it in special frames. Our letterpress operation, like many others, was located on the ground floor, since there were literally tons of weight in the type cabinets and the machines.

Two large machines dominated the scene in the print shop, towering above the forest of type and galley cabinets and the other scattered equipment needed for the production of the paper and the smaller printing jobs that were done there.

At the edge of the editor's office space was our large single-cylinder flatbed press. A working antique, it occupied one-third of the length of the room and nearly one-half of the width. The top side of the press was about six feet below the 16-foot-high ceiling. One of the reasons this ancient press loomed so large was that it rested

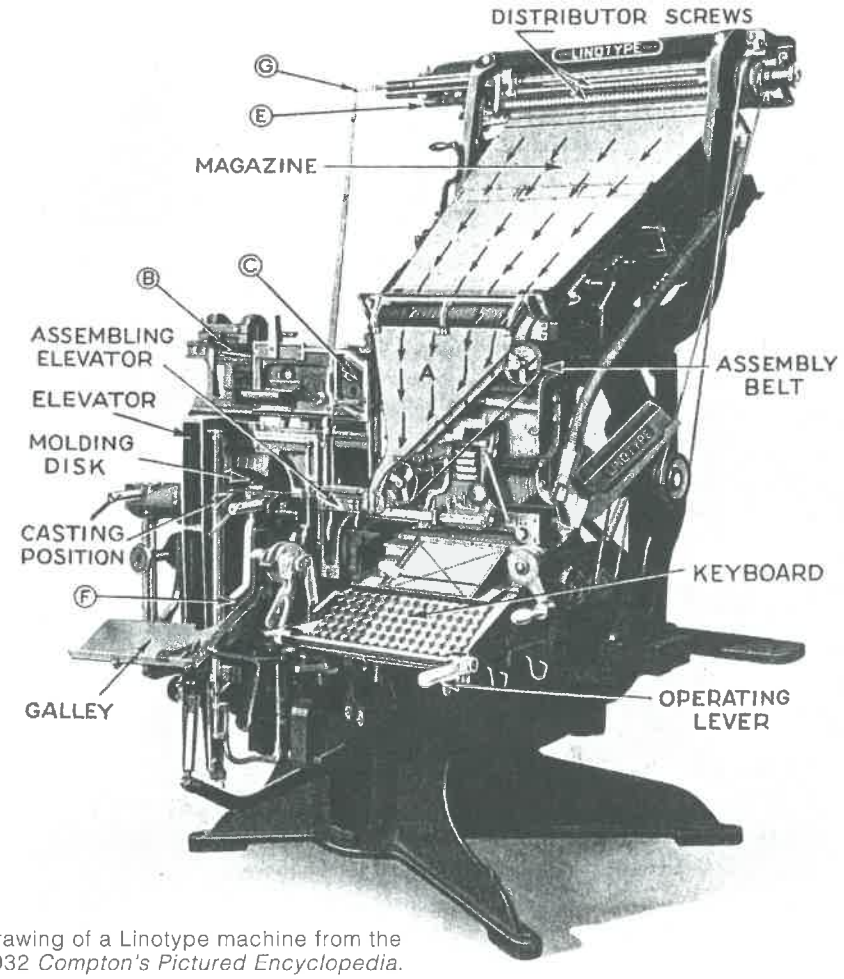
Shop foreman Buss Wise, at left, and Paul Balwanz at an old flatbed cylinder press in the office of the *Wetzel Republican* newspaper in New Martinsville, early 1930's.

on a platform, two-and-a-half feet high. This press was the chief instrument used in printing the *Wetzel Republican*. It was handled by only one person — Buss Wise, our shop foreman. In his spare time, he operated the two small job presses, ran the large paper cutter, produced all the printing cuts, and set large type for newspaper headings. (He did not operate the mailer. That was my job.)

Buss was not only versatile and patient, but he used the English language like a craftsman's tool. He personified the fact that old-time printers were excellent spellers. It was logical. To misspell a word while setting hand type meant delay while changing the offending or missing letters.

On the left side of the shop, looming above all the cabinets, was our other impressive antique — the Linotype. Paul Balwanz of Pine Grove was our Linotype operator. To me, he was a homespun genius. Linotypes were complicated and demanding machines but were indispensable to any medium or large-sized print shop or newspaper. [See "Linotype," by Delmer Robinson; January-March 1980 and "Hot Type," by Debby Sonis Jackson; Spring 1989.]

To operate the Linotype, the operator sat in front of a keyboard, similar to that of a typewriter. Above the keyboard, the tall machine slanted up and back. From



Drawing of a Linotype machine from the 1932 *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia.*

his "copy page," the operator typed in words until a certain length line was filled with brass characters (matrix or matrices) interspersed with spaces (spacebands) from the machine. By means of a lever, these metallic pieces were moved over to the casting position. Another lever was then moved, and molten lead was injected into the face of each character. A few seconds later, a hot line of type was moved onto an angled tray. After that, the characters and spacebands that had been used were carried up a narrow elevator to the top of the machine, moved horizontally along a grooved bar, and distributed. They would automatically drop down to their proper slot.

The correct sounds were critical in the operation of this machine. Any variation in sound or tone of metal against metal — indistinguishable to a bystander — would bring an alert Linotype operator to his feet, as he tried to pinpoint problems or potential problems.

Our Linotype was gas fired. Burners using natural gas kept a large pot of molten lead available all the time the machine was operating. This was one of the reasons the machine was set on a raised platform. I wonder how today's fire regulations would view this!

Any variation in sound or tone of metal against metal would bring an alert Linotype operator to his feet.

Paul Balwanz operated the Linotype on Tuesday, Wednesday, and until press time — noon — Thursday. During that time, he set probably 90 to 95% of all the text used in the newspaper. He also made a literary contribution every week. Paul wrote a column titled "Out the Crick." The "crick" was Fishing Creek — one of the major geographic features of the county. The stream begins up in the hills at the Wetzel/Harrison county line and flows northwest for 40 miles to empty into the Ohio at New Martinsville. Although it occupies a narrow valley throughout much of its length, it has proven to be a valuable corridor to the interior of the state. The valley contained eight towns and villages, a major branch of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad (the Short Line), and State Route 20. Sixty years ago, the area hummed with activity, and Paul's column was filled with rustic news and gossip about this busy area. Many read his column first, in preference to the formal news.

To operate the all-important mailer, I needed the names and addresses of all the subscribers. This information was kept on Linotype "slugs" stored in galleys and galley cabinets. The galleys were long steel trays with low sides and one closed end. The other end was open, and the metal tapered so that lines of type could easily slide inside.

Each galley held two rows of subscribers' names and addresses. Headings, in large type, proclaimed the village, town, or city that contained *Wetzel Republican* subscribers, more or less in alphabetical order. Cabinets contained Wetzel County subscribers, subscribers in the remaining counties, and finally, names and addresses of those unfortunate people living out-of-state.

Many galleys contained only two-line addresses: a person's name, village or town, and state. Nothing else. There were many small settlements located in farming, mining, lumbering, and oilfield districts 60 years ago and the local postmasters in these areas knew the people. Only in large towns or cities were three-line addresses needed. The

exceptions were addresses of military personnel. Much more information was needed for these multiline affairs.

Wednesday afternoon, Buss Wise would remove the galleys one at a time and take them over to the proof press. This simple press was used for proofing or checking sections of type and illustrations. Galleys and type were placed in the bed of the press, and the ink roller was run over the surfaces a few times. A sheet of yellow-orange — or goldenrod — paper would then be placed on top of the inked forms. The small cylinder of the proof press would be run over the double rows of type and would push the paper down onto the inked forms. The result — one sheet containing two rows of the names and addresses in that galley. Goldenrod paper was used because that color paper provided a strong contrast with the black type. People at the post office appreciated the legibility when hand sorting the papers.

When all the subscribers' lists were printed, Buss would take the sheets over to the paper cutter and cut apart the columns. Then he would paste the ends of the single strips to form strips several feet long. These were formed into several rolls to be used later in the mailer.

By Thursday morning, everything at the *Wetzel Republican* office was ready for action. The deadline for news was 10 a.m., more or less. Last-minute news items were typed, handed to Paul Balwanz, and became solid lines of type in a short time.

Buss Wise would spend all morning getting the page forms ready to be placed in the bed of the flatbed press. Our old press printed one side of a large pre-cut sheet of newsprint at each revolution of the press — one-half of the newspaper was printed at a time.

Near noon, the page forms were checked and locked into place in the bed of the big press. Paul Balwanz left for Pine Grove; the others left for lunch. By 1 p.m., Buss was back at work. Before he was ready to start printing, ink fountains, rollers, and clearances were checked.

Buss would roll up as many sheets of newsprint as he could handle and climb the steps to the press platform, located near the top of the press. From there, he could go up the steps sticking out of the side of the press until he reached the feed table at the top. The large sheets of newsprint were then unrolled and piled flat on the feed table.

From the operator's position on the press platform, he would slowly start the press and feed two or three sheets of newsprint into the machine. The press would be stopped. Buss would climb down from his lofty perch and check the sheets for proper impression, ink coverage, and, obviously, any printing errors. Usually there were a few small corrections to make before he was satisfied.

When corrections had been made, Buss would climb back up to his perch, restart the press, and run a few more copies through. Satisfied that all was in order, he would start feeding the news print continuously.

The noise was loud; the motion, fascinating. When I first saw the flatbed press operating, I was disappointed to see that it was powered by a big electric motor. Logic told me that it should be powered by steam. A long, fluted drive rod on the outside of the press — similar to the main rods found on some locomotives — moved the page forms back and forth in a majestic manner.

Paul Balwanz, pictured here in the early 1960's. A colorful and talented individual, Paul was well-loved in Wetzel County. Born near Pine Grove in 1890, he began operating a Linotype in 1926. He bought the *Wetzel Republican* in 1929 and was owner and publisher of the newspaper until 1935. He was still operating the Linotype and writing a regular column for the paper when our author worked there as a teenager in the early 1940's. Paul Balwanz passed away in New Martinsville in 1963.

After the first run was completed, all the early page forms were taken out. The remaining page forms, used to print the reverse side of the paper, were put in their proper place, and the process began again.

By 6:30 p.m., we three teenagers

were ready to work. That did not mean we anticipated much money for our labor, however. *Wetzel Republican* wages were town wages, plus a few free newspapers. The standard wage for unskilled work in New Martinsville 60 years ago was 15 cents an hour. Garden work, work in a greenhouse, mowing lawns — all were rewarded with 15 cents an hour. In my early high school years, I had 18 lawns to mow, with a push mower, naturally. I also worked part-time at Bruce Pool during summer months. The wage did not vary. [See "Diving Into History: Pools of the Northern Panhandle," by Katherine Jourdan; Summer 2002.]

Buss Wise at the job press in 1939. This versatile piece of machinery was standard equipment in the printing industry until the late 1800's, when it was gradually replaced by more modern presses. Many of these old job presses then ended up in smaller print shops, such as the *Wetzel Republican*, where they were used through the 1940's. With minor adjustments, job presses were used to die-cut, perforate, score, emboss, or print. Here, Buss is tapping down a die, apparently in preparation for a die-cut job.

By 7 p.m., enough papers were available, printed on both sides, to galvanize two of the three teenagers into action. The two older ones operated the folder. I operated the mailer, and I could only start my work after the folder had produced a few dozen good copies of the *Wetzel Republican*.

The folder, into which the full-sized printed sheets were fed, was well-designed but temperamental. Both teenagers were needed to work this multi-layered mechanical maze. Fast-moving fabric belts conveyed the paper in one direction, then stopped suddenly to allow a thin piece of steel to drop down, causing the sheet to be folded in half. Then, other belts would send this thicker arrangement off in a different direction. This action was repeated several times until the newsprint, descending through many levels, would finally emerge in the desired size with all printed pages in the proper order. One last, frantic passage took the paper past a rotary cutter, which trimmed edges so that the paper could be opened with ease.

In my mind, the folder was a contraption straight out of a mechanic's nightmare. There were scenes of rapidly moving belts running in different directions, vertical blades creasing newsprint, and streamers of ribbon-like paper spewing out from the trimmer.

On a few occasions, the folder worked well — for 15 or 20 minutes. Then a belt would break. This would cause the paper to jam, and the jamming at high speed would invariably break other belts. My teenage vocabulary, if not enriched, was certainly expanded by the "jam sessions" in the folder. It's a good thing newsprint was cheap in those days. That disreputable folder could produce piles of waste paper in an ordinary evening. On a few bad nights when both press and folder problems occurred, I actually bedded down on a thick, cushiony pile of waste paper and slept soundly until repairs were made and finished newspapers were again available for the mailer.

When 25 or 30 newspapers had successfully traveled through the flatbed press and the folder, it was time for me to go to work. My job was to operate the mechanical marvel known as the mailing machine — or mailer — and to address each copy of the *Wetzel Republican* dispatched by mail.

The mailer was a clever device. Rectangular in shape, it was about a foot long and about six inches wide. The bottom, low sides, and end plate were formed from heavy metal. At the proper balance point, a heavy wooden handle was fastened securely to the frame. A knurled brass knob occupied a place of prominence above the front of the handle. Inside the back of the mailer were two vertical slots supporting a wooden roller. A few inches away, topped by a thick brush, was a paste pot just under the handle. The front of the machine revealed a bizarre combination of a metal paddle, assorted

springs, gears, and a cutter bar. Sticking down at an angle, below the left front end of the mailer, was a smooth metal plate. This plate was connected by gears to a steel cutter bar, poised high at the front.

Comical in appearance, the mailer was efficient in operation. Preparation was simple. First, the paste pot was filled with thick, gooey paste. Then, I inserted the roller through a reel of goldenrod paper bearing names and addresses of subscribers, and dropped the roller in the slots at the back of the mailer. The end of the goldenrod paper was then threaded over the paste pot brush and through guides, which directed it to the narrow brass plate at the front of the machine.

When all was ready, I mounted an old wooden soap box to gain elevation above a table stacked with newspapers, and started to work. With a few backward motions of my thumb, a short section of goldenrod was advanced beyond the brass plate. Then, the mailer would be lifted high enough to allow the bottom plate to drop down at an angle. With one name and address projecting at the front, I would position the mailer and slam it down on the newspaper. The bottom plate was forced up. The cutter bar descended at a sharp angle, cut off the sticky address, and firmed it in place with a narrow strip of metal on the reverse side of the cutter blade. With that accomplished, the machine was lifted up, springs forced the bottom plate down and the cutter bar up, a new address inched forward, and I would slam the machine down on a fresh newspaper.

I handled the finished product, and I was always the last to leave — with the exception of Buss Wise. He was a "Good Shepherd" to us all.

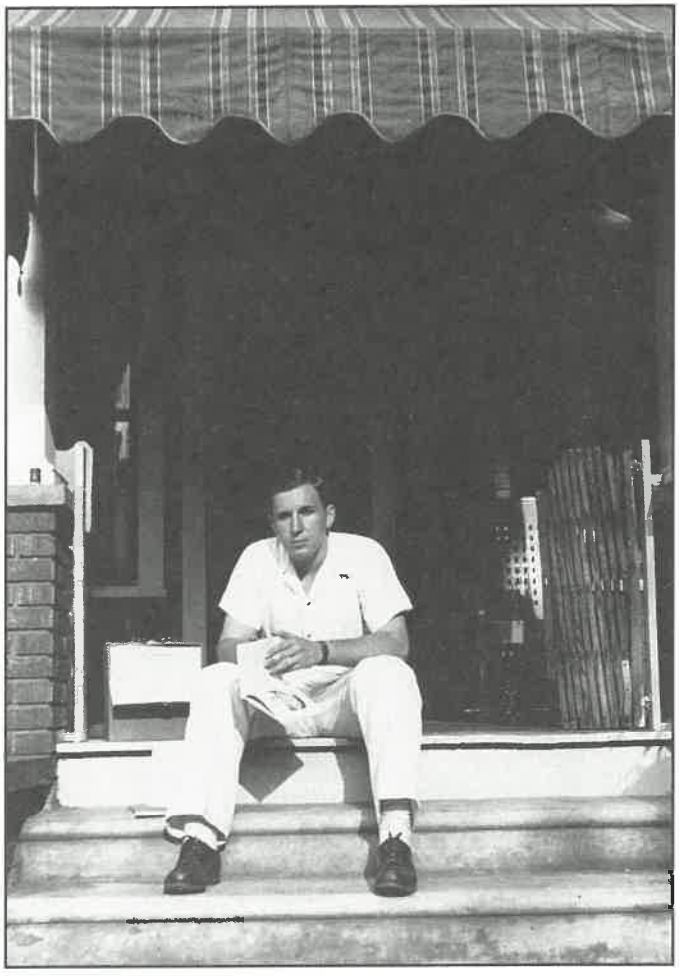
The sound of the mailer at work could best be described as a muted "SLAM-KER-BLAM." The first syllable describes the bottom plate slapping the newspaper. The next deals with the sound of the steel cutter bar sliding along the brass plate. The third repeats the sound of the cutter, label, and firming bar hitting and setting the label in place.

The work was easy but monotonous. Over and over again, it consisted of moving the knurled knob to advance the addresses and slamming the machine down on a newspaper. Problems arose when adjusting to a three-line address instead of two lines. Sometimes, an address was cut in half. With careful positioning, the bottom half could be pasted right below its top with no apparent damage.

At times, to break the monotony of addressing several hundred newspapers, I sang. School songs, songs from church camp, and 4-H all came rolling out. There was no one to criticize wrong notes or words. I was just a teenager in the 1940's, trying to stay awake and alert. Few in the shop heard me above the growling and clanking of the big press and the bedlam created by the folder and its operators.

Periodically, I would put in a new reel of addresses, replenish the paste pot, or pile up more newspapers to work on. My job continued long after all the papers had been printed and folded. I handled the finished product, and I was always the last to leave — with the exception of Buss Wise. He was a "Good Shepherd" to us all.

Near the end, tired and sleepy, I was probably reduced to proclaiming aloud, "An important teenager...SLAM-KER-BLAM...in a lofty position...SLAM-KER-BLAM...is sending important news...SLAM-KER-BLAM...to you, the subscriber...SLAM-KER-BLAM...of the *Wetzel Republican.*



Our author in New Martinsville in the mid-1940's — "an important teenager, in a lofty position."

BORGON TANNER grew up in New Martinsville and has lived throughout northern and central West Virginia. He is a book collector. Borgon, who is retired, now lives in Canada. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2001 issue.

Interview by John Lilly

Hearth

Don Page and the Roots of GOLDENSEAL

As GOLDENSEAL proudly enters its 30th year of publication, we take a moment to look back on a few of the unique individuals and circumstances that gave rise to this noble experiment in folk journalism. Few people today realize that the magazine we know as GOLDENSEAL was a direct outgrowth of an earlier state folklife publication called Hearth & Fair.

Edited by GOLDENSEAL founding editor Tom Screven and published by the West Virginia Department of Commerce, Hearth & Fair *came out approximately seven times between January 1973 and July 1974. It covered topics very similar to those found in GOLDENSEAL, with a special emphasis placed on West Virginia folk art, traditional crafts, and craftspeople.*

Don Page, now retired and living in Beckley, was director of the arts and crafts division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce at the time. He hired Tom Screven as a fieldworker, and was instrumental in establishing the publication and encouraging Tom as its editor.

I spoke with Don recently, and he had much to say about the cultural and political climate in West Virginia at the time, and his own role in planting the roots of GOLDENSEAL. —ed.

& Fair

Don Page during a recent visit to the GOLDENSEAL offices in Charleston. Born in 1930 in Glasgow, Kanawha County, Don worked for the state from 1963 until 1980. For many of those years, he was director of the arts and crafts division of the Department of Commerce. Photograph by John Tice.

Don Page. One of the things they discovered very early on, as a result of studies done by West Virginia University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was that where tourism flourished, arts and crafts flourished. Where arts and crafts flourished, tourism developed. They went hand-in-hand. In the '60's, we were slightly depressed here in Appalachia. The U.S. government was under the Kennedy self-help programs — the "bootstrap" programs — trying to do something about the economy of Appalachia. They were looking at crafts as a way of supplementing income or improving the income of the rural poor of Appalachia.

So we started in '62 looking at people who made things. It came out of the tradition of the "cash crop," they called it. Usually the wife, she raised chickens and sold eggs on the farm. That was her money. They made baskets — the men and the women who did split-oak baskets and the hickory baskets. And they did quilting. They were blacksmiths. They had skills. Among that population there were people who made things, and they wanted to sell them to increase their income.

There's always been a history of that. When we went to market, we took our wares. We took them to the village, we might say, where the population was. And we would sell those products. So out of that tradition grew a lot of the craft movement, not only in the United States, but in Europe and other foreign countries. When people travel or go somewhere, they want to buy things that are not normally available to them. Sometimes, they had to do with the tradition or the history of the people, and sometimes a product that they normally would not see at the market place. So they purchased it.

So, we were "going to market"

Basketmaker Claude Linville of Griffithsville, Lincoln County. Department of Commerce photograph.

A young Don Page, at left, with craft specialist Jane Cox — now Jane George — and director of tourism Carl Little. This photograph was taken at the arts and crafts division offices in Charleston during the late 1960's. Department of Commerce photograph.

with the West Virginians who were doing that sort of thing. Did they make things well? We found out they did, and it was in great numbers. Did they have a unique product? We found out indeed they did. So those were things that opened the market for us, and we jumped in and began.

John Lilly. Were you working for state government at the time that this arts and crafts division was founded?

DP. Well, remember we talked about it being part of tourism, and to develop arts and crafts was a means of producing tourism and economic development. So at that time, it was the economics that was a part of it, so it belonged under the Department of Commerce or had its inception there. But out of that grew cultural, historical implications that had to do with the preservation of a lifestyle. Our history was built into a lot of things we did and built.

The quilt was a utilitarian thing that took on artistic and cultural implications, particularly with some ethnic groups. The quilts had a lot of history connected with them. They had a lot of culture. They certainly were artistic. And there was a degree of craftsmanship that was involved. These were needle workers — people who worked with fabrics and the needle. So you had all of those implications. It was one of the first things that we could sell well.

I remember in the early days, we had the programs that were alive here out at Jamie Thibeault's, the great proponent that has supported Cabin Creek Quilts. [See "Cabin Creek Quilts Coming Back," Winter 1991.] They just went to New York with quilts. They put the quilts out on the van. They would toot their horn and sell quilts on the streets of New York that were made here on Cabin Creek.

So, we began immediately to throw ourselves open to the world, and the world was interested in coming to Appalachia. They wanted to see pockets of poverty. They wanted to see these things, and it was a great "buzz thing" to be helping out Appalachians and to know something about it. So there was tremendous interest in us.

Mrs. M.P. Hatcher and Mrs. H.B. McKinney spin yarn and visit with fair goers at the 1972 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. Photograph by Robert C. Combs, courtesy of West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.

The Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes, near Ripley, has its roots in the craft movement of the 1960's and in the state centennial celebration of 1963. This Department of Commerce photograph appeared in the July 1973 edition of *Hearth & Fair*.

A lot of people came to see what we were doing. And we did our things best when we came together, came to market. And coming to market meant, well, is there a special time that these special people could come together?

Our fairs and festivals were an outgrowth of that. They became the market places, because we had no market places that were year-round and that were consistent. You [could] go to the Black Walnut Festival, the old Elkins Forest Festival, or [the] State Fair. But these did not feature the craftsmen. So the [Mountain State] Art & Craft Fair was born. Out of this came the West Virginia Art & Craft Guild, as the craftsmen began to want to associate themselves together to look at their own destinies and have a voice.

Now they had a voice in government. They had a voice that could be heard nationally and internationally. It was done well. It was wonderful. People were excited about it, not only West Virginians. One of the mandates of our [state] centennial [in 1963] was to find out who we were, and be proud of that, and show it off. That puts it, I guess, almost simplistically, but we did that.

"Out of this came the West Virginia Art & Craft Guild, as the craftsmen began to want to associate themselves together to look at their own destinies and have a voice."

JL. What was your role at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair in the early years?

DP. Early years, I served as the person who would, again, unearth and find these people who made things. I used the fair as an opportunity for the market. It also enhanced the presentation of the fair that you would have new and exciting people, to see them demonstrate.

JL. How would you do that, how would you find these people?

DP. It was fieldwork. We used every source of information we could find. In those days, the home demonstration agent, the 4-H agents, and the county agents, they knew their rural people. And you could go to their office, you'd say, "Does anybody do anything like this?" "Oh yeah," they'd say. "So and so, so and so, so and so." And we'd hit the field.

We had this rich gold mine that was untapped. Everywhere we'd

Don Page was instrumental in establishing *Hearth & Fair*, the predecessor to GOLDENSEAL. Both publications were outgrowths of the state's ongoing efforts to promote traditional crafts, tourism, and economic development. Photograph by John Tice.

go, we'd find these people. Think what we had — what a time it was to be alive! To go into the field with your staff and say, "Are you doing something? Do you want to do something more with it? Do you want to make some money from it? People want to see what you're doing." It amazed these people. We would call them "craftsmen" or "artists," and they'd say, "Oh, I'm not that. I just make these things."

They were wonderful! Sometimes they [would] want to show something they thought the market would like or they had copied out of a book, and you'd look over in the corner, and I'd say, "Do you do those?"

"Oh, yeah, but they're not..." I'd say, "Ahhh! I can't believe this, that you do these things!" And they'd say, "Well, I've been doing those for 30 years and, you know, everybody's got one of them, and they're not important."

I'd say, "Oh, my." And those were the people that we were looking for. And so, we'd say, "Come to the fair. Let people see you. We've got people coming from all over the United States that want to see you." And we'd make the opportunity available to them. That was my job, with my staff.

JL. So you were identifying artists for a lot of fairs and festivals, not just the one?

DP. We tried to promote them nationally. I would sometimes take a group under state sponsorship, and we'd go down to Noonan, Georgia, outside of Atlanta, for a festival there, and Jimmy Carter would be cutting the ribbon. And Rosalyn would be there walking around, but there'd be 26 West Virginia craftsmen. And we went over into Ohio. Sandusky, Ohio. Cedar Point.

Every travel show that we did, however we promoted tourism, [we said], "Come to West Virginia, see us, and see what we do." And what we do well is that we make things. We have these products, and we have these wonderful people who are doing these things. And we had a craftsman, they'd be doing their thing in our promotional booths, and they would steal the show wherever we'd go.

We built exhibits that were taken to those shows in Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New York, Atlanta, Miami. A major portion of

MICHAEL KELLER

Folk toys by Dick Schnacke of Proctor, Wetzel County, graced the cover of the May 1973 issue of *Hearth & Fair*. Photographs by Ann Ratcliffe.

our tourism promotion was, "Come see our crafts and our artists and what they're doing." It was showing them the people, not only the product. And we were showing them a process. It was the creation of these things. It was personal, it was alive, and it had something that you could take home that was a part of that person. People would want that, and they connected with West Virginia, and I think it did a great thing for the state. So we never had problems in asking for funding to do our job.

But it was, I think, the leadership of the federal government. Because when I came to Commerce in '63, it was under a grant that the West Virginia Department of Commerce had asked for from the federal government to explore the possibilities of upgrading the quality of West Virginia handcrafts and creating markets for those products.

We had a year to do that in. Why, you couldn't! That was impossible, I said. When they showed it to me, I said, "Well, we can do it in 10 years." We had a year — enough to hang yourself. We were the only program out of the Kennedy self-help programs that was automatically funded without any question for four years. And I can say that unequivocally. The Office of Economic Opportunity was quite proud of it. They used it as a model of how that you could put federal money into a local situation and that the state would eventually take it as part of their programming. It went all the way through to the grass roots. They loved it. And it happened. When salaries were [no longer] paid by the grants process, we were put in the legislative budget.

JL. Tell me how you met Tom Screven.

DP. Well, Tom found us. We did not find Tom. Remember, everybody was looking at Appalachia. Tom [was] working in Appalachia, down in Alabama. Of course, he's a "Village Folk." He's quite wise about what's going on in the world. So he gets in his little beat-up vehicle and drives to West Virginia. I can never find why in the world that he came to me, or why we ended up together.

But [our offices] were down on Quarrier Street. Of course, parking, as it is always, [was] a problem. This clunker comes there, with smoke and a clanking valve, onto the parking lot. We're standing there looking out the window [at] someone taking up one of our valuable parking places. My boss says, "Go down and throw that fellow off the parking lot. He's not supposed to be there."

So, to make a long story short, after talking to Tom and inviting him in — he was very personable — I told him who I was and what I did, and I ended up hiring him (laughter) as one of those fieldworkers to work in the field and do the things that we were doing at the time. We were sponsoring the West Virginia Art & Craft Guild, we were working intensely with the craft fair, we were traveling all about the country trying to find markets for our crafts. We were offering technical assistance, trying to set up ways of improving what they were doing and yet maintain some level of preservation. So Tom became a staff member.

An unidentified craftsperson creates a beautiful wooden flower from a piece of dowel. Photographer and date unknown.

JL. He did that for a couple of years with you before he began editing?

DP. Yes. Tom is a prolific writer. He was here among all of this excitement, and everything was happening. And the hippie movement was in full swing, and people were

The Department of Commerce promoted West Virginia crafts on a national scale, presenting traditional craftspeople and other artists at events across the U.S. and Canada. Here, the commissioner of the Department of Commerce, Senator Lysander L. Dudley (R-Kanawha), addresses a press luncheon in New York City in 1971 while Don Page, at right, looks on. Department of Commerce photograph, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

activists. Tom is still an activist. He's supportive of people who are disenfranchised or people that don't get their proper notice. He got to circulating among that very populace. He began to want to write about it.

Communication is difficult in any generation. And it was difficult then because we had no house organ or a way that we could communicate. We tried to keep in contact with people who were at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. They were a core group and the ones who were most successful, the ones we were trying to help quickly. We had to have communication. So we had problems of who would edit a newsletter? Well, Tom liked to write. He agreed to accept the responsibility of editing a newsletter for the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair.

He wanted to do more with it, because he just saw that there was such a rich field. More than offering technical assistance and finding markets, Tom wanted to do what he does best. Of course, he was editor of just that little newsletter, but he said he wanted to do something more with it. And so I told him to go ahead and do it. He said, "No way. There's no money or anything." I said, "I'll take care of that. You just do what you want to do."

"You could talk to anybody and get help with this. Government was more of a cooperative thing in those days, you know."

And he put it together. We thrashed it out, what we could call it. It had to do with the fair, but he wanted to go beyond that. Remember, he wanted to do something beyond this being a newsletter. So "hearth," which is the home — he wanted to go into a person's life or into their community, rather than just being associated with the fair. And that gave him the latitude to do that, even in the title. So *Hearth & Fair* came about. And he produced that. And out of that came the whole story of him producing GOLDENSEAL within the auspices of the arts and crafts division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce.

JL. Those first few issues of *Hearth & Fair*, were they funded from the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair?

DP. Partially, because, remember there was a newsletter in here. Their part in it would be that they got the news, the communication that they [wanted]. So we took some funding from there. At that time, I had the ability to move laterally. I was executive director of the Guild, I was also director of the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, and I was director of the craft division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. So, I could draw from three budgets to produce something that was critical to all of our futures. So that's where the monies came from.

This was [all] part and parcel of our approach to promote West Virginia. This was advertising West Virginia. If you get them here for whatever reason — we know that from tourism — if you get the people, they'll spend their money. They'll come and stay.

A lot of these types of things led industry to look favorably at West Virginia. We were a family, we had work ethics, we had a labor pool,

"What a time it was to be alive!" Don Page says, reflecting on the exhilarating early days of the craft movement in West Virginia. Photograph by John Tice.

Hearth & Fair *grew from its first eight-page issue to a rich, 44-page journal by July 1974, including articles, photographs, and, of course, details concerning the upcoming Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. In April 1975,* Hearth & Fair *was laid to rest as the first issue of GOLDENSEAL was unveiled. Still edited by Tom Screven under the supervision of Don Page, GOLDENSEAL continued the spirit and intent of* Hearth & Fair, *but with a broader mission. It was published by the West Virginia Department of Commerce and the Arts and Humanities Council until 1977, when it was assumed by the new Department of Culture and History, today known as the Division of Culture and History.*

We are forever indebted to Don Page, Tom Screven, and the other energetic visionaries without whom this publication certainly would not be here today. —ed.

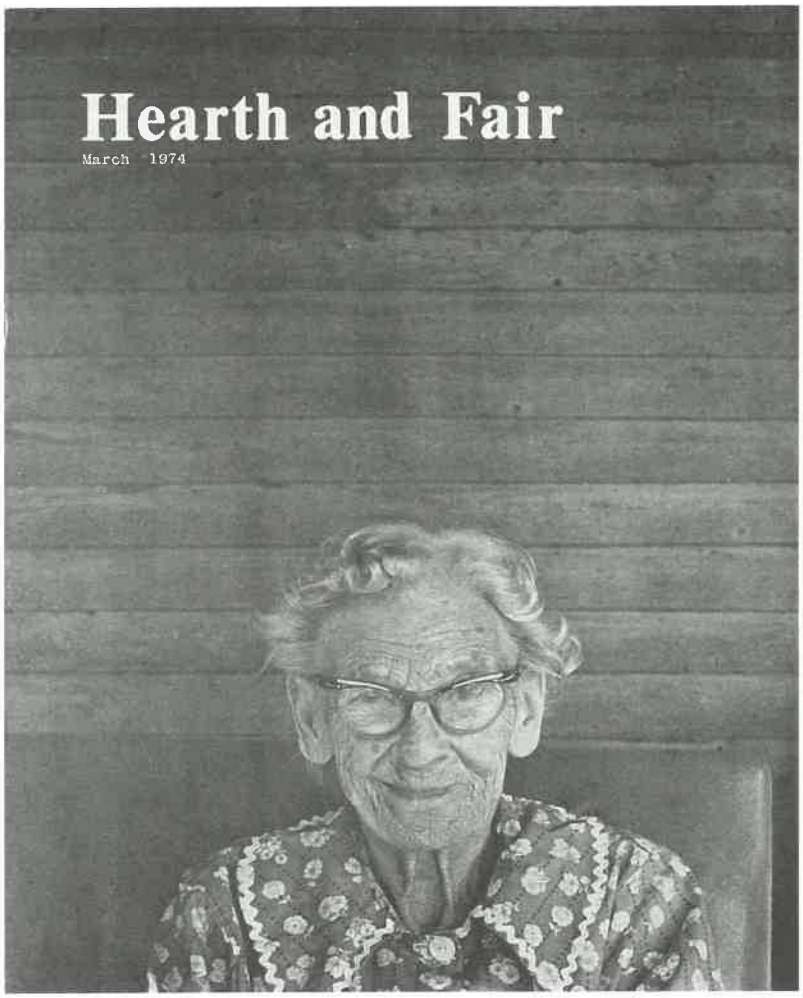
we had people who stayed at home that were dependable. We could sell those kind of things by presenting our people, so it was used in a lot of ways.

You could talk to anybody and get help with this. Government was more of a cooperative thing in those days, you know. I could go to the Department of Education and say, "We'll put one of these in every library." They looked at it [and said], "Well, we don't have materials like that." Money was not an object.

JL. Tell me a little bit about circulation. Do you remember the numbers at all?

DP. I would think less than 1,000 in the early days. Mailing wasn't a problem. It was finding the interest points. If you wanted it, you could have it. But it was new. There were very little ways of promoting yourself, unless you read the magazine itself. It stood alone. So there were very [few] people who wrote about GOLDENSEAL. We had to toot our own horn. Out of that self-tooting came the small bit of recognition we received. It's still gold, whether it's been discovered or not. That's the reason I have every issue.

Tom Screven was founding editor of the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair newsletter, *Hearth & Fair*, and GOLDENSEAL. Originally hired as a crafts fieldworker, Tom is also a gifted writer and photographer. His portrait of Kanawha County rugmaker Luena Davis appeared on the March 1974 cover of *Hearth & Fair*.



MICHAEL KELLER

Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Johnson's Corner

Wisdom, Inspiration, and Bargains at a Wide Spot in the Road

Guy "Mike" Johnson is probably the only person in the state of West Virginia to have a wide spot by the side of a highway named after him. Mike is a resident of Rosemont, Taylor County. He is a used-goods vendor who, years ago, claimed a small strip of land at the intersection of state routes 25 and 98 in Clarksburg for his impromptu flea market. The spot, owned by a utilities company, provides plenty of room for his van, five or six card tables, and three or four other vendors. It's known locally as Johnson's Corner.

It's a busy intersection that catches much of the traffic going to and coming from the Veteran's Administration Hospital on State Route 98. Those are the folks who buy the bulk of what Mike sells. For the most part, locals don't want to part with their money or don't have it to part with in the first place.

"I don't buy nothing," admits Dave Barnett of Clarksburg, who did a lot of looking but no buying when he stopped at Johnson's Corner on a Friday morning early last November. "I just shoot the [breeze] a little bit."

"Everybody knows me," says Mike as he waves to a sheriff's deputy, who just honked at him while zooming by. "Even the law buys from me."

Guy "Mike" Johnson, at left, sets up and sells used merchandise at a wide spot in the road known as Johnson's Corner, near Clarksburg. These local fellows seldom buy anything, Mike says, but they come to browse and chew the fat.

Mike, who is in his mid-70's, can be found on this spot from 7:30 a.m. until noon or later most every day except Saturdays and Sundays. He goes to auctions on Saturdays and cleans and tests his purchases on Sundays.

On this morning, Mike's stock includes antique kraut cutters, jars of buttons, Christmas decorations, assorted glassware, toy vehicles, three Prince Albert pocket-sized cans, and a gray wine jug that came over from Italy with the grandmother of the woman who gave it to Mike.

Larry Shaughnessy, an antiques dealer who regularly stops at Johnson's Corner in search of merchandise, dickered with Mike for several minutes, then parted with $12 for the jug. That single sale was more money than Mike

often makes in an entire day of peddling his goods. He says his all-time high for a single day was just $60. "Gentleman" George Snopps, a vendor Mike broke into the business a couple years ago, says he's had days when he didn't make a penny.

The stuff that sells, says Mike, are things that evoke memories or a sense of history. "People like to buy a piece of the past," he says. "Something that's gone and ain't ever going to come back."

It must be priced low, too. Even at that, many of the local shoppers don't have the money to buy his merchandise. Mike gives them a helping hand by donating items that he doesn't care to pack up and cart back home. "People come in here, they ain't got any money, they're on welfare," he says. "I give them the stuff. I had some people come in here, and I gave them a couple boxes of Avon. The kids went from door to door in their neighborhood and sold every bit of it."

Mike Johnson has a smile and a word of wisdom for anyone who stops to see him at Johnson's Corner.

Mike doesn't use the dollar bill to measure his success. "If you got one friend, you are the richest man in the world," he says. And by that standard, Mike is a rich man. "If I'm not out here, they will call the house and want to know how I am, what's the matter with me," Mike adds. "Its just good people here. I ain't never seen any bad people, just nasty attitudes."

The cup is always half full in Mike's eyes. "We look out there and see a grape; he sees a whole hand full of grapes," says one of the vendors who stakes a claim on Johnson's Corner. "We see one car; he sees 10."

His friends look for him every day they pass the corner, even in foul weather. "Johnson sits out here in the winter," says the aforementioned vendor, who declined to give his name. "I come by here one day, and it was seven or eight degrees below zero. And he was sitting out here."

The strange part of that scenario is that people will stop to shop. "I've set up my tables in the snow," Mike says. "People will drive up, get out of their cars and shiver a little bit and say, 'Boy, it's cold.' They think I'm kind of stupid to sit out here, but there's no sense in sitting at home. If I sit at home, my legs go bad. I got to keep them moving."

Mike's bad legs are a legacy from a major cancer operation he had several years ago. The surgery left Mike in a coma for more than a week and bedridden for several months. "I died once and came back," he says. "The medicine was hurting me worse than anything else in the world. I couldn't walk. And I said, 'Lord, I can't go this route.' Next thing I knew, I was walking."

Not just walking, but peddling. Although weak, Mike returned to his corner. "I'd come out, and [the other vendors] would set my stuff out for me," he says.

Mike's positive outlook is something he dispenses free of charge, along with his wisdom. "You just can't be thinking negative thoughts in life," he says. "You got to be positive. You got to fix your mind on one idea and stick with it. If you think one way half the time and think another way half the time, you won't get anywhere.

"There's three things in life," Mike adds. "There's nothing for sure, nothing impossible, and nothing forever."

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

2003 Liars Contest

Here are the winning lies from last year's State Liars Contest, held at the 27th annual Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Congratulations to the winners !

Justin Wood Kanawha County
First Place

I'm not here to tell a story to win as much as I am to do it as a public service to those who might win this year. See, last year, I won this shovel for the youth contest — this beautiful Golden Shovel — and I was so happy at the time. But soon after, it became too much. The fame became too much. I mean, you don't know what it's like to be famous until you've won a liars contest. All the interviews, all the press always there, the paparazzi. The drugs got [to be] too much — the lie enhancing drugs — they were everywhere for me. And the groupies, it was awful. I want whoever's gonna win this year to know what I went through.

It was sometime in between shooting a public service announcement with Roady the Roadkill Racoon and signing my deal with Nike for the new Air-Liars that I met this girl. This girl, I mean, she had one of those smiles that could stop traffic. Actually, there wasn't a lot about her that you would take home to your mother, but she seemed to really like me. She seemed to want to know me, Justin — the real Justin — not the liar. But I should have known. She was always asking if she could see the shovel. And when we would go out, [she asked] if I could carry the shovel around. But I was young. I was stupid. How was I supposed to know that she really didn't like me?

Well, soon I found out it wasn't only the shovel she was after. She was Canadian, too. I didn't catch on. She was always saying "ehh," but it just never stuck in my mind. She was part of a Canadian terrorist group, which in Canada isn't really as much a terrorist group, but more of a bunch of mean people from Canada. They apparently had been kicked out of Canada for littering or maybe cursing or something. But they wanted to take over the Chemical Valley here. And they wanted to use me to spread their lies, to say what they wanted to do, to give their agenda a face.

First-place liar Justin Wood of Kanawha County, with a big smile and two Golden Shovel awards — the small one for winning the youth award and the large one for capturing the overall title of "Biggest Liar." Photograph by Michael Keller.

They took me to their compound, and they told me all these things. She just kept on smiling at me, and I thought it was good. Maybe Canadians are alright. I had no idea how bad they really were.

Then they unveiled their costumes, what they were gonna rule with — these Mountie uniforms that were in blue and gold — and I just couldn't take it. John Denver started singing in the back of my head, and I realized something. By God, I'm a West Virginian, and I'm not going to let Canadians take over.

I took my Golden Shovel, and I beat my way out of there. They were throwing mayonnaise. They had caribou guarding me, but I took them out, and I battled my way.

The very next day, I came back with an army of fiddlers and banjos and lap dulcimers, and we chased them. We chased them all the way back to the cold, cold north.

And that's the kind of hardship that you have to go through being a winner of this kind of contest. I want you guys to know that I wouldn't mind taking it again, because [of what] I've already gone through. Some of them, they might not be able to handle it. I've already been through it, so don't feel like you're giving me a burden. I will do that. That's the kind of person I am.

But that's my story. I just want whoever gets this godforsaken Golden Shovel to know what they're getting into.

Rich Knoblich Wheeling

Second Place

Well, I'd like to tell you a little bit about Taylor Lewis. You see, the Lewis dairy farm, it sits right up against the old homestead up on the mountain.

One night, Taylor was sitting there watching a PBS documentary titled "Beauty Secrets of Phyllis Diller." Well, she got so motivated by that show that, as soon as it was over, she called up the sponsor — the Monongalia and Monongahela Magic Makeup & Spackling Compound Company. You may have heard their slogan — "Crack a smile or a wall, we smooth out life's wrinkles." Well, she ordered the 12-week, home-schooling, beauty cosmetic course.

When the 52 cases arrived, she stored it out in the paint shed. It was at that point that she realized she had a problem. You see, she didn't have any sisters that she could practice on. Then she had a brainstorm. She went in and talked it over with Mom, and Mom gave her approval. Each day, [Taylor] would go down to the paint shed, and she would load up that wheelbarrow with a variety of cosmetics and Dad's painting equipment. She'd then trundle the whole load on out to the pasture to where the cows were.

Each day, those docile animals would allow her to pluck their eyebrows and curl their lashes. She'd open a one-gallon can of blue eye shadow, dip in a four-inch house brush, and slather it across their eyelids. She'd take the roller and put it back and forth in that pan, and she'd smear blush all over their jowls. Then she'd take a tube of lipstick and toss it into a caulking gun and ratchet it up, come up to those big cow lips, and smear gaudy red lipstick all over them.

Well, you can imagine how they looked. It looked like Pablo Picasso painting these cows. Picture, if you will, an entire herd of cows looking like Tammy Faye Bakker on Halloween.

Well, you see, she analyzed what was wrong. And ladies, you can understand. You see, some of those cows had an autumn-colored complexion. Others were a late-spring complexion. Well, once she balanced that out with the proper foundation, let me tell you, those cows were looking beautiful. They looked like Hollywood stars of yesteryear. From their long, lush lashes to their soft pouty lips, those cows were the essence of bovine beauty.

Now, you are probably wondering if her dad had anything to say. No. Truth of the matter is, Dad thought he was the cause of this transformation. You see, [during] the same show that Taylor had been watching, he was over there in his easy chair reading his favorite cattleman's periodical — *Golden Veal* magazine. He heard that narrator on that show talk about that little beauty secret where they take a little dab of Preparation H, put it on a wrinkle, tighten up the skin, and give you that smooth porcelain complexion. He thought to himself, "You know, if I mixed that in with my cows' bag balm, I'd have the finest looking udders in the state for my cows."

So, he sent away to one of those Mexican "no questions asked" pharmacies, got himself a whole truckload of that ointment, mixed it in, applied it to his cows, and wouldn't you know, week by week, he saw the transformation. Those cows started looking beautiful. Why, he nicknamed this one particular cow "Moorlyn Monroe." Then he got this idea. He looked over at that bull, and he thought, "Yeah, I wonder if I applied it to that bull if he'd start looking like 'Fred Asteer.'"

Well, time came for the county fair, and Dad, he entered "Moorlyn." Mom, she made one of her specialties — one of those delightful cream pies. And to celebrate her daughter's work with cosmetics, she decorated that

pie so it looked just like one of those cows. Then Mom added her own touch — she added a couple of little angel wings on it, because her pies tasted so heavenly. Well, Mom was running late. She called to Taylor to take the pie on in.

Taylor picked up the wicker basket and went on down to the festivities. When she got there, she had time to cut through the agricultural building to see how the judging went. Well, she was standing there by the cow, and here comes the judge — an elderly lady respected in the community named Granny Gertrude. Well Granny Gertrude, she came on down, and she stood there, and she stopped. First at Taylor, then at the cow, back at Taylor, back at the cow. It seems beauty and the beast were both wearing identical makeup.

Well Granny, she kinda got that sly grin on her face. She reached down and picked up a red ribbon, and she reached over and clipped it on Taylor's dress. Then she laughed and turned and walked away. Taylor, she looked down at that red ribbon, and she got mad. She'd never gotten a red ribbon before. She figured if you're going to tag a ribbon on me, it oughta be "best of show." She reached into that wicker basket, and she pulled out that pie her mom had so beautifully decorated, and she screamed out, "Hey Granny, you forgot something!" Then she winged that pie like Nolan Ryan working on a no-hitter. Well Granny, she heard her name being called out and whirled around and saw that pie coming, and she ducked down just in time.

This is where I come into the story. I hear this commotion going on back behind me, and I turned around. And friends, all I remember seeing was this angel — big as a cow — coming at me at 90 miles an hour, gaudy red lips all puckered up ready to deliver the kiss of death. I barely had time to scream out "holy cow" before it hit.

Well, wouldn't you know there was a photographer for the *Intermountain Echo Daily News*, and he took my picture. It ran the next day — front page, above the fold. But I figured I was safe. I had all that cream goop on my face. Nobody could sit there and recognize me and ridicule me. It's like the good book says, "Pride goeth before you read the caption," and the caption said, "Alleged storyteller and known BS'er Rich Knoblich is shown getting a cow pie in the face."

Well, I tell you friends, they all just teased me unmercifully about my cow-pie facial after that. But I'll tell you one thing, I believe I came out ahead of Taylor's dad. Because when all those bills came in for those ointments and cosmetics, you might say he got left holding the bag.

Adam Booth Huntington

Third Place

I've come here today to tell you the story of Cabell County — the founding of it — and the great treasure that it brought to our great state. [A story] that many people don't know, as passed down through my family for years.

Travel with me, if you will, back to the days of Europe several hundred years ago, to when Antonio Stradavari was living — the greatest violin maker in the world. Well, that tradition of violin making was passed down throughout his family up until the days of his great-grandson, Huntingio Stradavari. As many great-grandchildren are, he was quite a bohemian in his thinking. Up until that day, the violins were made with flat bellies, but he wanted a curved belly.

So, he was making curved-bellied violins, and the family said, "This is terrible. You cannot do this with our family tradition. You're out of the family." He thought it was a terrible disgrace, but he was determined to make these curved-bellied violins, so he thinks, "America! I can go there and make my violins just as I want." So, he got on the next boat across the ocean and took with him his good friend, a great woodworker by the name of Giuseppe Cabelli.

They headed across the ocean. It takes quite awhile to go across, so they met everyone else on the boat. As good fortune would have it, they ran into three great men on that boat. The first one being a Frenchman by the name of Pierre Giverny, who was the Duc de Guyan — a region of France — or, as we would say, the Duke of Guyan. He was a wealthy banker. That area was known for banking.

The other two men that he met were both Englishmen. The first one being Douglas the Barber. He was a haircutter by trade. Stradavari thought this was wonderful because he could cut horsetails for violin bows and catgut for strings.

The other Englishman that he met had the name of Milton the Harper. He was trained as a harper and knew the ancient ways of tuning strings. It was wonderful fortune. They had all the men needed for a new violin company.

The boat lands in America. All the immediate areas had already been inhabited, so they traveled further in. They came to the

mountains, and that was not a desirable place for Huntingio because the high altitude gave him nosebleeds — he was from the lower area of Italy. So, they kept going, and several weeks later, they came across the wonderful Ohio Valley.

It had no high mountains. There were no raging rivers. There was the nice steady Ohio River right there, which was great to turn the wheels that would grind the rosin for the violins. There were no coal mines, which was wonderful because the dust that came from the coal would make the strings hard to play. So it was very, very desirable. The best thing was, floating down the Ohio River at that time, were hundreds upon hundreds of logs.

As many people don't know, at that time up in New Martinsville, up on the Ohio River, there was a great fig orchard. All the families would pick the figs at harvest time and put them in their buckets. [They would then] take off the branches and put them as saplings in the ground, and the trunks they would just throw into the Ohio River. They didn't need them, and they would travel down the river to this part of the Ohio River Valley where Stradavari and his group of men were.

They thought it was wonderful because there was all this wood to be used for violins. It was soft, it could be warped easily into the curved-belly violin that he liked. It was wonderfully desirable. So, they each set up their shops.

There was Douglas the Barber that set up his shop, and his town became known as Barboursville. There was Milton the Harper who set up his tuning areas, and that came to be known as Milton. Huntingio Stradavari set up his violin body-making area — his shops — and that came to be known as Huntingio Town, or Huntington, as we like to call it. The Duc de Guyan set up his banking in what came to be known as Guyandotte.

So, everyone up and down the hills now had wonderful violins. Everyone was playing the violin. Along came the surveyor to draw up the county lines. He said, "Well, gentlemen, what would you like to call this area?" They said, "Well, we've got individual town names, but we don't know what to name what you're going to call our county." So he said, "Well, I understand you're a great violin builder. Why don't you have a violin playing contest, and the winner will have the county named after him." They said that was a wonderful idea.

So, the next day, out of the mountains came all the violin players. They came and they played and played, and they had a competition and were judged. It was down to the final two: Huntingio Stradavari and Giuseppe Cabelli. So the judges said, "To make this a little interesting, why don't we look toward the best violin players around here — the crickets. If you can play your violins like the crickets, then you'll be the best violin player." So the men said, "That's fair."

"I understand you're a great violin builder. Why don't you have a violin playing contest, and the winner will have the county named after him." They said that was a wonderful idea.

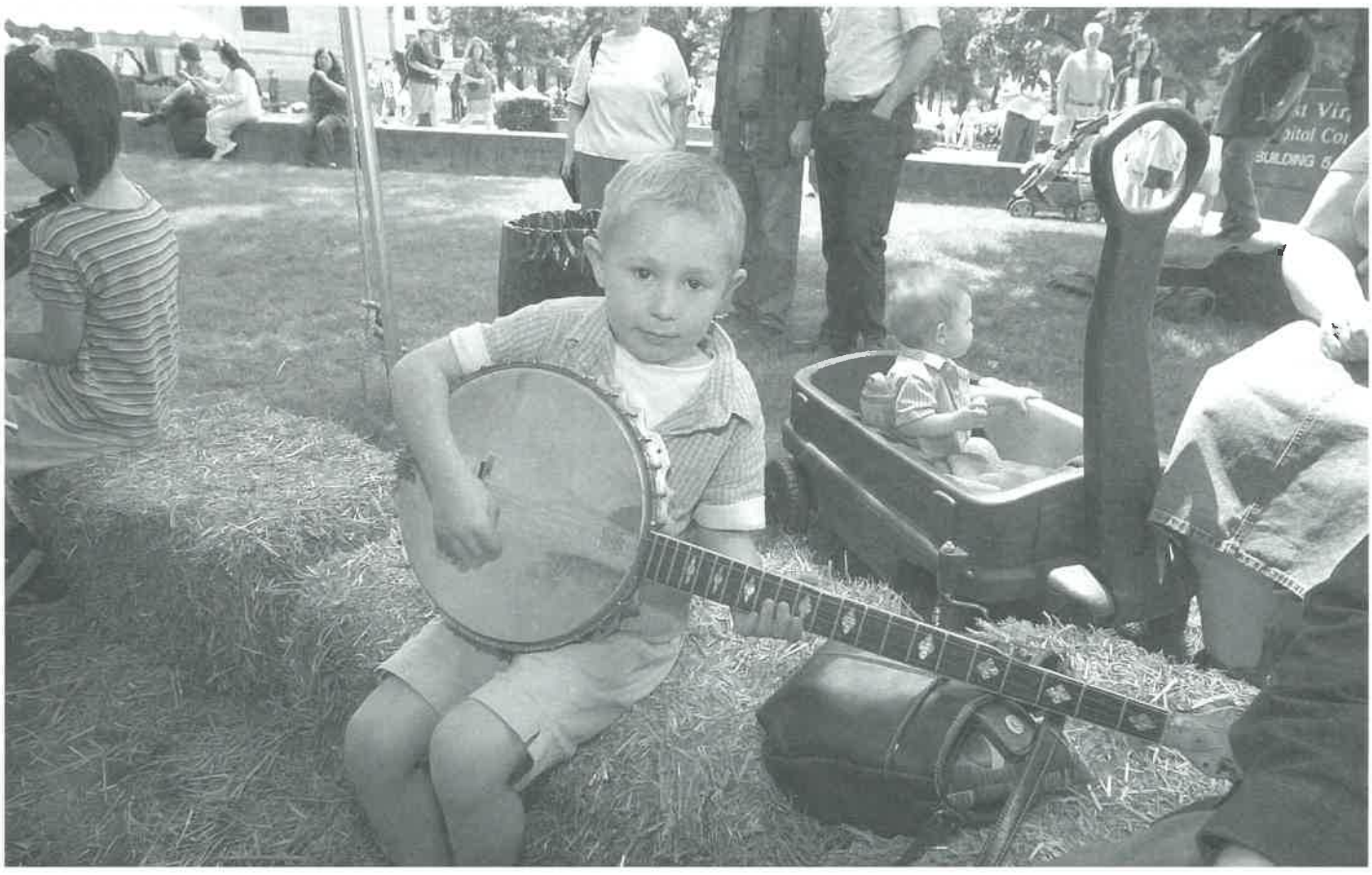
Cabelli straightens up and goes, "Tweedle deedle dee, chirp chirp chirp." Stradavari, who was an old man by then, picked up his violin and says, "Tweedle deedle deedle dee, chirp, tweedle dee." Cabelli answers with, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee, chirp, tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." Stradavari takes it on and says, "I'll take you, tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." And they start playing their violins, and there is great music everywhere, and they're playing and stomping their feet, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee, tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee, chirp, tweedle dee," and all the birds start singing, and they start playing like the bird calls. Everyone is having a wonderful time. All the people are clapping and having a good time. Stradavari is over here, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee," and his string breaks. He's left with three. He's okay — he's a good violin player — he can keep going, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." Cabelli's over here, playing just fine, doesn't lose his cool. Stradavari, "Deedle deedle deedle deedle dee," and another string breaks. He's down to two, but the men — it's all about the music at this point — they don't care about the naming of the county. They just keep playing, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." Stradavari's third string breaks — it's a tough competition — but they keep going. Cabelli, just playing as if nothing is happening. Stradavari,"Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee," and his fourth string breaks. By default, he's out of the competition. He takes his bow and throws it, and he says, "Aw, fiddle!"

The surveyor turns to Cabelli and says, "Well, you've won. We'll name this Cabelli County," which later came to be shortened as Cabell County — home of the violin makers that brought violins to all of the hills of West Virginia and the style of playing known as fiddling.

Vandalia is for kids!

Folks of all ages enjoy themselves at the Vandalia Gathering. Photographer Michael Keller captured these images of youngsters taking part in the music, dancing, crafts, and food at the free annual gathering, held the last weekend in May at the State Capitol Complex in Charleston.

We'll see you at Vandalia. And bring the kids!



Photoessay by
Michael Keller

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

28th Annual Vandalia Gathering

May 28-30, 2004

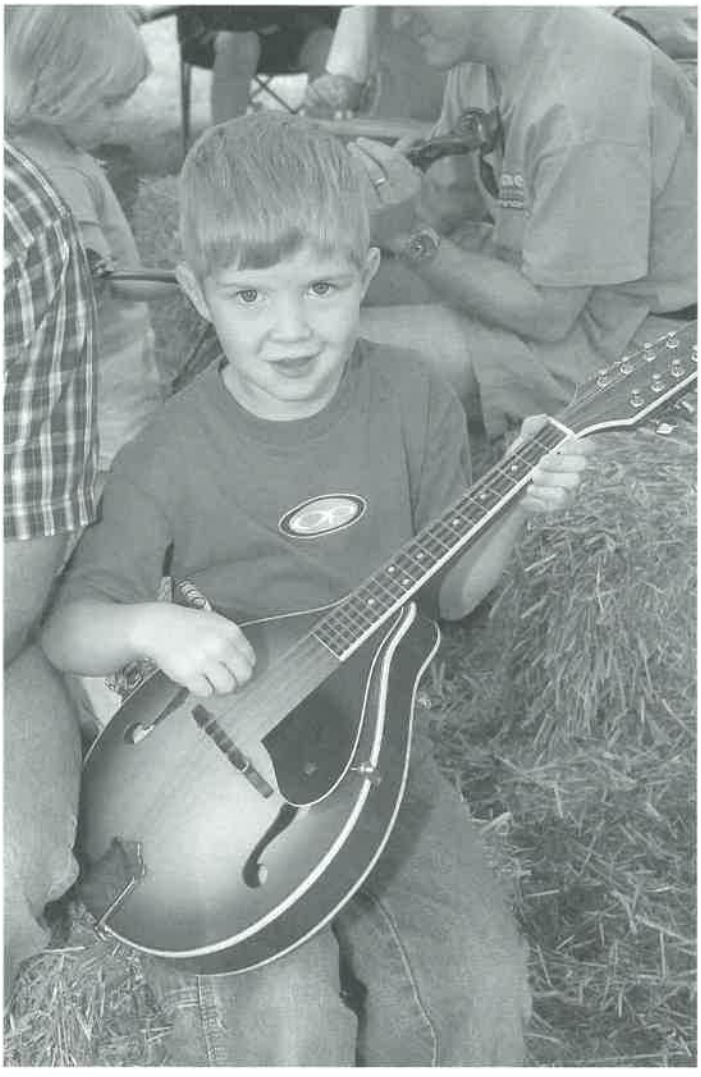
State Capitol Complex Charleston, West Virginia

Friday, May 28
7:00 p.m. Concert

Saturday, May 29
11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Heritage and Native American Dancing
11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Contests, Performances (Fiddle, Bluegrass Banjo, Mandolin)
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Flatfooting
1:15 - 3:30 p.m. Old-Time Square Dancing
6:30 p.m. Awards Ceremony
7:30 p.m. Concert

Sunday, May 30
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Heritage and Native American Dancing
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Contests, Performances (Old-Time Banjo, Lap Dulcimer, Flatpick Guitar)
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Flatfooting
1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Liars Contest
1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Old-Time Square Dancing
3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Gospel Workshop
5:00 p.m. Awards Ceremony
6:00 p.m. Gospel Concert

All events are free and open to the public. For further information, call (304)558-0220, 558-0162, or visit www.wvculture.org/vandalia.



2003 Vandalia Winners

Vandalia Heritage Award —
Mack Samples, Duck

Fiddle (age 60 and over)
1 — Woody Simmons, Mill Creek
2 — Elmer Rich, Westover
3 — Junior Spencer, Frankford
4 — Virgil Ross, Clendenin
5 — Jerry Lewis, Nettie

Fiddle (under age 60)
1 — Jenny Allinder, St. Albans
2 — Billy Ward, Elkins
3 — David O'Dell, West Logan
4 — Jake Krack, Orma
5 — Jesse Milnes, Elkins

Old-Time Banjo (age 60 and over)
1 — Woody Simmons, Mill Creek
2 — Brooks Smith, Dunbar
3 — Ira Southern, Princeton
4 — Ben Carr, Wilsie
5 — Bernard Cyrus, Fort Gay

Old-Time Banjo (under age 60)
1 — Tim Bing, Huntington
2 — David O'Dell, West Logan
3 — Andrew Dunlap, St. Albans
4 — Doug Van Gundy, Elkins
5 — Paul Gartner, Sod

Mandolin
1 — Rachel Singleton, Summersville
2 — Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
3 — John Putnam, Looneyville
4 — Will Parsons, Rock
5 — Tim Gillenwater, Griffithsville

Bluegrass Banjo
1 — Rad Lewis, Winfield
2 — Brandon Green, Beckley
3 — Butch Osborne, Parkersburg
4 — Will Parsons, Rock
5 — Ben Harrington, Fairdale

Lap Dulcimer
1 — Alan Freeman, Renick
2 — David O'Dell, West Logan
3 — Dave Haas, Cross Lanes
4 — Peter Snyder, Pigeon
5 — Bernard Cyrus, Fort Gay

Flatpick Guitar
1 — Brandon Bentley, Sumerco
2 — Matt Lindsey, Dunbar
3 — Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
4 — Donald Larabie, Gassaway
5 — Will Parsons, Rock

Back Issues Available

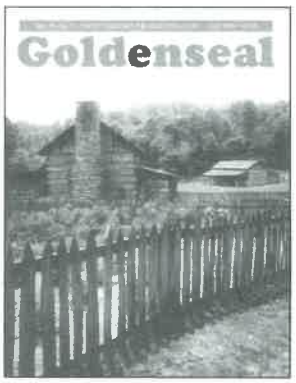
Celebrate 30 years of GOLDENSEAL!

Take advantage of this special offer during our 30th anniversary year. GOLDENSEAL back issues listed here are now just $3 each plus shipping, while supplies last.

Better yet, buy them all! For a limited time, GOLDENSEAL subscribers may purchase this entire set of 23 back issues for $30 plus $5 shipping, while supplies last.

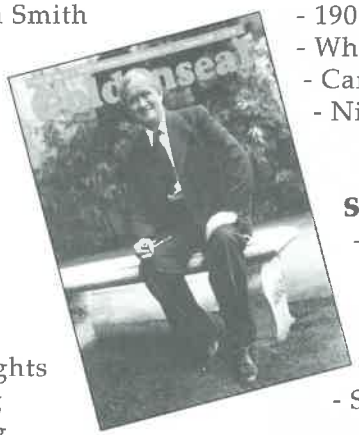
Don't delay! This offer good only during 2004!

Summer 1986
- Draft Horse Revival
- Charleston Broom Company
- Fiddler Ernie Carpenter
- Green Sulphur Store
- C&O Patch



Spring 1989
- Printer Al Byrne
- Storyteller Bonnie Collins
- Scotts Run
- Jefferson County Horse Racing
- Cartoonist Irvin Dugan

Summer 1990
- Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
- Fiddler Glen Smith
- Broadcaster Ernie Saunders
- Pence Springs
- Lebanon Bakery



Winter 1990
- Sisters of DeSales Heights
- Stonecutting
- Boatbuilding
- Folk Medicine
- Home Comfort Stove

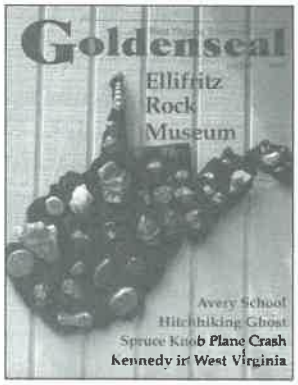
Fall 1993
- Bower's Ridge
- Ed Weaver's Service Station Museum
- Douglass High School
- Lefty the Barber
- The Greenbrier Goes to War

Spring 1996
- Elk River Tales
- Kanawha City
- Spencer VFD
- Buffalo Bank Robbery
- Banjo Player Brooks Smith

Winter 1999
- Paperweights
- 1907 Monongah Disaster
- Whitehall Hotel
- Camp Washington-Carver
- Nicholas County Christmas

Spring 2000
- Mountain State Women
- Blacksville Pottery
- Smallest Church
- Dancers Rush & Ruby Butcher
- Sally Maxwell Bennett

Summer 2000
- Mountain State Men
- Cass
- West Virginia State Folk Festival
- Old Sweet Springs
- Printer Ken McClain

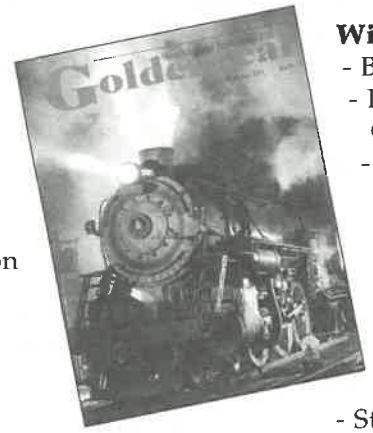


Fall 2000
- Ellifritz Rock Museum
- 1960 Kennedy Campaign
- Singing Doorkeepers
- Otsego
- Green Bank Observatory

Winter 2000
- Coondogs
- Woodturner Paul Weinberger
- Slovenes in Richwood
- Parthenia Edmonds
- Armstead Mining Family

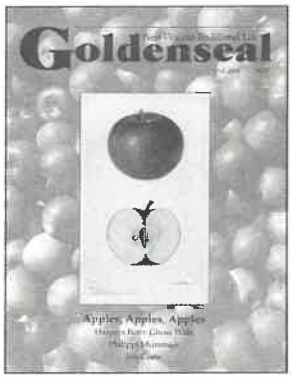
Spring 2001
- 25th Vandalia
- Quiltmaker Mabel Moore
- Bill & Mary Moats
- Don Bosco Agricultural School
- Fiddler Red Henline

Summer 2001
- Train Photography
- Coalwood
- Singers Bill & Hazel Westfall
- Pinch Reunion
- Glassmaker Danton Caussin



Fall 2001
- Apples, Apples, Apples
- Harpers Ferry Ghost Walk
- Philippi Mummies
- Jim Costa
- Malden's Norton House

Winter 2001
- Veterans Memorial
- USS *West Virginia*
- WSAZ Radio
- Spaniards in Beckley
- Black CCC Camp



Spring 2002
- Williamson Coal House
- Riding Route 52
- Filming *Stage Struck*
- Joltin' Jim McCoy
- Good Hope Church

Summer 2002
- *Princess Margy* Sternwheeler
- Fidler's Mill
- Panhandle Swimming Pools
- Cassity
- Heritage Farm Museum

Fall 2002
- Flatwoods Monster
- Deaf and Blind Schools
- Long's Store
- Lost Creek
- Preacher Denver Hill

Winter 2002
- Berlin, Lewis County
- Lebanese in Clarksburg
- Death of Hank Williams
- Gravedigger Dallas Dunn
- Volcano

Spring 2003
- Stained Glass Dome
- Pallottine Sisters
- George Hajash
- West Virginia Coon Hunters String Band
- Nuzum Dairy Farm

Summer 2003
- General Charles R. Fox
- Wedding of the Bluefields
- Norwalk Underslung Automobile
- Bulltown
- Country Store Opry

Fall 2003
- Artist Boyd Boggs
- Odd Fellows Home
- Laying Track in Nicholas County
- Ikie's Tomb
- Bill Dysard

Winter 2003
- Weaver Dorothy Thompson
- Fairmont Postcards
- Fountain Hobby Center
- Old Central City
- Lafadie Belle Whittico

Mark the issue(s) you want and return with a check (payable to GOLDENSEAL) for the correct amount. You may also charge your order using VISA or MasterCard.

___ Summer 1986/Draft Horse Revival
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___ Winter 1990/Sisters of DeSales Heights
___ Fall 1993/Bower's Ridge
___ Spring 1996/Elk River Tales
___ Winter 1999/Paperweights
___ Spring 2000/Mountain State Women
___ Summer 2000/Mountain State Men
___ Fall 2000/Ellifritz Rock Museum
___ Winter 2000/Coondogs
___ Spring 2001/25th Vandalia
___ Summer 2001/Train Photography
___ Fall 2001/Apples, Apples, Apples
___ Winter 2001/Veterans Memorial
___ Spring 2002/Coal Heritage
___ Summer 2002/*Princess Margy* Sternwheeler
___ Fall 2002/Flatwoods Monster
___ Winter 2002/Berlin, Lewis County
___ Spring 2003/Stained Glass Dome
___ Summer 2003/General Charles R. Fox
___ Fall 2003/Artist Boyd Boggs
___ Winter 2003/Weaver Dorothy Thompson

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PHOTO CURIOSITY

Did you see that rabbit?!? What appears to be a giant-sized cottontail poised to pounce is nothing more than a very tame and domesticated bunny on the hood of a car, peering curiously through the windshield. This photograph, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, was taken at the English Village resort in Shady Spring, Raleigh County, probably in the 1950's. The friendly bunny was owned by young Butch Lockhart. We have no idea what he was doing on the hood of that car.

GOLDENSEAL welcomes any additional information about this whimsical springtime photograph.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- West Virginia State Songs
- Hazel Dickens
- Oakhurst Golf Course
- Beekeeping

(continued from inside front cover)

August 26-29 Appalachian Festival
Beckley (252-7328)
September 3-5 W.Va. Italian Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (622-7314)
September 3-6 Stonewall Jackson Heritage Arts & Crafts Jubilee
Weston (1-800-296-1863)
September 3-6 Oak Leaf Festival
Oak Hill (1-800-927-0263)
September 4 Mountain Heritage Day
Fort Gay (648-5954)
September 4-5 Apple Butter Weekend
Parkersburg (420-4800)
September 4-6 Holly River Festival
Holly River State Park (493-6369)
September 4-6 67th W.Va. Horseshoe Pitchers Tournament
Parkersburg (622-8024)
September 4-6 Hick Festival
Parsons (478-3747)
September 10-11 Country Music Assn. of W.Va. Fall Festival
Fairmont (292-5854)
September 10-11 North Preston Farmers' Club Fall Festival
Bruceton Mills (379-2002)
September 10-12 W.Va. Black Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (623-2335)
September 10-12 Upper Potomac Fall Dulcimer Festival
Shepherdstown (263-2531)
September 10-12 Lincoln County Fall Festival
Hamlin (824-3981)
September 11 James C. McGrew Birthday Celebration
Kingwood (379-7621)
September 11 Mound Festival Arts & Crafts Show
South Charleston (744-7564)
September 11-12 25th Annual Hampshire Heritage Days
Romney (822-7221)
September 11-12 Riverfront Festival
Moundsville (845-2773)
September 11-12 W.Va. Honey Festival
Parkersburg (1-800-752-4982)
September 11-12 Helvetia Community Fair
Helvetia (924-6435)
September 16-19 W.Va. Oil & Gas Festival
Sistersville (652-2939)
September 16-19 King Coal Festival
Williamson (235-5560)
September 16-19 Treasure Mountain Festival
Franklin (249-5117)
September 16-19 Clay County Golden Delicious Festival
Clay (587-4455)
September 17-19 Florence Merow Mason-Dixon Festival
Morgantown (599-1309)
September 18-19 Country Roads Festival
Ansted (658-5212)
September 23-25 W.Va. Molasses Festival
Arnoldsburg (655-8374)
September 24-26 FOOTMAD Fall Festival
Fayetteville (415-3668)
September 24-26 Volcano Days Antique Steam & Gas Engine Show
Walker (679-3611)
September 24-26 St. George Greek Festival
Huntington (525-5634)
September 25 Roadkill Cook-Off
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)
September 25-26 16th Annual Leaf Peepers Festival
Davis (259-5315)
September 25-26 Doddridge County Heritage and Arts Festival
West Union (349-5595)
September 25-26 Mary Ingles on the Virginia Frontier
Winfield (562-0518)
September 26-28 Fall Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)
September 30-October 3 Preston County Buckwheat Festival
Kingwood (329-0021)
October 1-2 Southern W.Va. Italian Festival
Bluefield (589-3317)
October 1-2 Appalachian Heritage Festival
Shepherdstown (876-5113)
October 1-3 Wellsburg Apple Festival
Wellsburg (737-2787)
October 2 October Sky Fall Festival
Coalwood (297-2999)
October 2-3 Old-Fashioned Apple Harvest Festival
Burlington (788-2342 ext. 235)
October 2-3 Country Fall Festival
Point Pleasant (675-5737)
October 2-3 Bunner Ridge Heritage Days
Fairmont (363-3631)
October 2-3 W.Va. Autumn Festival
Burnsville (765-7602)
October 2-10 Mountain State Forest Festival
Elkins (636-1824)
October 5 Blennerhassett's Birthday Celebration
Blennerhassett Island/Parkersburg (420-4800)
October 7-8 W.Va. Storytelling Festival
Jackson's Mill/Weston (1-800-287-8206)
October 8-9 Wayne Fall Festival
Wayne (272-3221)
October 8-10 24th Annual Arts & Crafts Fair
Fairlea (645-6652)
October 8-10 Wetzel County Autumnfest
New Martinsville (775-2805)
October 8-10 22nd Lumberjackin' Bluegrassin' Jamboree
Mullens (294-4000)
October 8-10 Old Central City Harvest Festival
West Huntington (781-2036)
October 9 Burgoo International Cook-Off
Webster Springs (847-7291)
October 9-10 31st Annual Apple Butter Festival
Berkeley Springs (258-3738)
October 14-17 W.Va. Black Walnut Festival
Spencer (927-5616)
October 16 Pleasant Valley Craft Fair
Pleasant Valley (366-1694)
October 17 Elmer Bird Music Festival
Hurricane (562-5896)
October 17-19 Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
Berkeley County (263-2500)
October 22-24 Fiddlers Reunion
D&E College/Elkins (637-1209)
October 23 50th Annual W.Va. Turkey Festival
Mathias (897-5532)
November 6 Something Old/Something New Craft Show
Glenville (462-8291)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 2005 "Folklife*Fairs*Festivals," please send us information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address, phone number, and Web site. We must have this information by January 15, 2005, in order to meet our printing deadline. GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in this listing.

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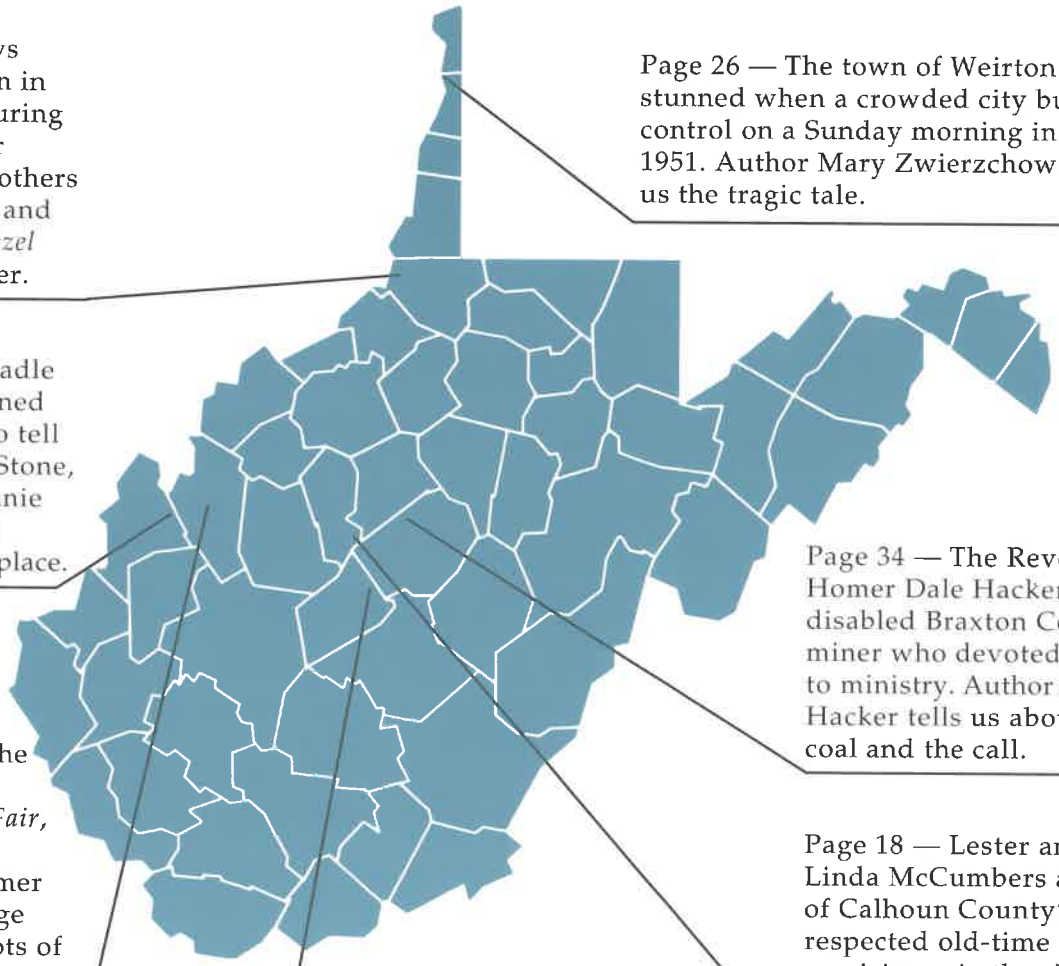
PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal



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