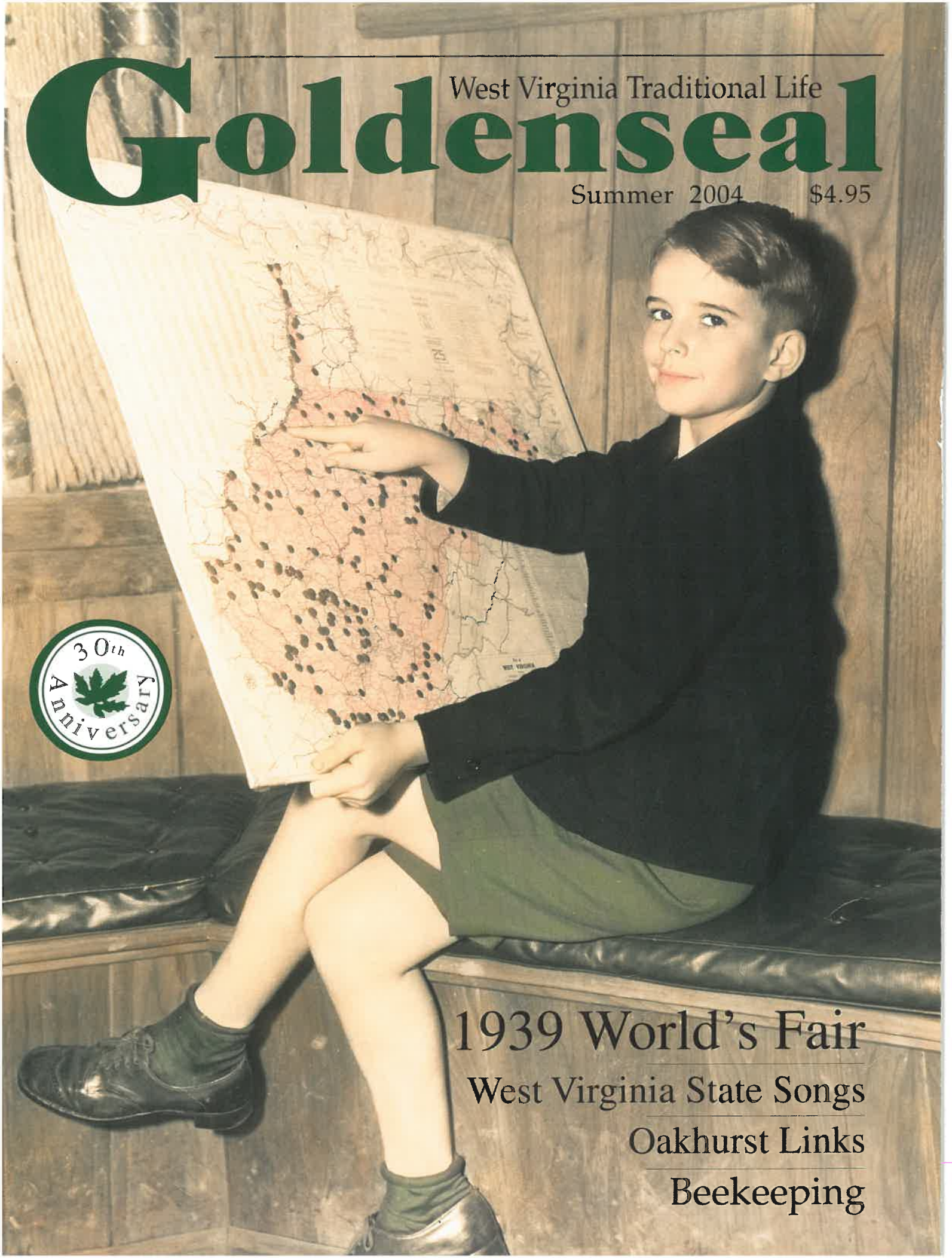
West Virginia Traditional Life
Goldenseal
Summer 2004
$4.95
30th Anniversary
1939 World's Fair
West Virginia State Songs
Oakhurst Links
Beekeeping

From the Editor: State Symbols

Nothing says "West Virginia" like a rousing rendition of "The West Virginia Hills." Better yet, add "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and my personal favorite, Hazel Dickens' "West Virginia, My Home," and most any loyal resident's heart will swell with pride. Music has always been a big part of our state's identity, offering a lasting symbol of West Virginia for all the world to appreciate. In this issue, we look at all three of our official state songs, along with many of the other worthy anthems dedicated to the glories of the Mountain State. Our extensive state song coverage begins on page 18.

Representing the state in thoughtful and positive ways was the intent of State Senator Dan B. Fleming, Sr., who served as resident director for the West Virginia exhibit at the huge 1939-40 World's Fair in New York City. His son Dan, Jr., spent two summers at the fair. He shares some wonderful recollections of his experience there and tells how 45 million fair visitors were exposed to West Virginia's best during this significant event. Dan's picture is on the cover of this issue; his story begins on page 10.

Other important symbols of the state include our official flower (rhododendron), our official tree (sugar maple), official bird (cardinal), animal (black bear), fish (brook trout), fruit (Golden Delicious apple), butterfly (monarch), and soil (Monongahela silt loam). Not the least of these is the official state insect — the busy honey bee. Known for its industriousness and productivity — along with that sharp little stinger — the honey bee has been an official state symbol since 2002. Boone County beekeeper Guy Kelley has been tending these critters and gathering their honey for more than 55 years. His story begins on page 38.

In addition to these many and varied symbols, it is important that West Virginia also have a forum for writers, photographers, and readers to share knowledge, history, folklore, and insight. In this sense, I view GOLDENSEAL, too, as a symbol of West Virginia. Now in our 30th year, there is no other magazine that examines and celebrates the history and culture of our state as we do. We are constantly reminded of the lasting value of this publication as our office regularly fields phone calls, letters, and e-mails from people across the state and around the world, requesting back issues, reprints, photocopies, and information found only in these pages.

There are few matters more serious to those of us who love this magazine than to ensure its long-term viability. That brings me, once more, to the subject of renewals and gift subscriptions. If you have been reading my editorials in the past few issues, you are aware that we face a formidable challenge trying to regain recent losses in circulation. I was happy to report modest gains during the last two quarters. Unfortunately, we have suffered another setback. As of this writing, we are down 423 readers as compared to our spring mailing, and 387 when compared to this time last year.

I can't stress enough how important it is that our readers take ownership of GOLDENSEAL's future through faithful subscription renewal and the generous giving of GOLDENSEAL gifts. We do not have a sales force, and we do not rely on telemarketing, mass mailing, Internet "spam," or other high-pressure sales gimmicks. The only way GOLDENSEAL can grow — or survive — is if our loyal readers do their part.

To encourage you, we recently introduced our 30th anniversary gift subscription contest. First prize — awarded to the individual who gives the most new gifts or gift renewal subscriptions between March 1 and December 31, 2004 — is a complete bound set of GOLDENSEAL magazines dating back to our first issue. Second prize is a free Deluxe Gift Package, and third prize is a complimentary three-year subscription.

Best of all, you will be helping GOLDENSEAL continue to tell the story of West Virginia, hopefully for generations to come. Thanks for your support!

John Lilly

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p. 10

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On the cover: Author Dan B. Fleming, Jr., on his last day at the New York World's Fair on August 30, 1940. Our story begins on page 10. Photographer unknown; coloration by Michael Keller.

p. 18

p. 62

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Letters from Readers

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

Mack Samples

March 12, 2004
Fairmont, West Virginia
Editor:
GOLDENSEAL'S article about Mack Samples is wonderful [see "'A Neat Way to Live,': Vandalia Award Winner Mack Samples," by John Lilly; Spring 2004]. He's one great person. But then, he has a good family, wife, children, and brothers.
Bonnie Collins

Mack Samples at Widen, Clay County, in 1956. Emcee Bill Ashley is at right.

March 28, 2004
Duck, West Virginia
Editor:
I know Thelma already sent you a thank-you note for the GOLDENSEAL article, but I wanted to send an additional "thanks."

I am amazed at the response I have gotten. I have heard from out-of-state relatives that I did not know existed. I have also taken a little ribbing from my fellow musicians. Some have been calling me "cover boy."

My mother was especially pleased. I think she appreciated the picture from her youth [see page 14]. She told me that she looked a lot better in those days. In fact, she still looks pretty good for 96.

Some of my informants tell me that the article created quite a stir in Glenville. Hope it sells you a few copies up there.

Buddy [Griffin] and I played the WWVA Jamboree on March 20. The lady who books the entertainment there had also seen the article and had kind words [to say] about it. She booked the Sample Brothers Band for June 12.

Guess I'll see you around the circuit.
Sincerely,
Mack Samples

April 1, 2004
Cowen, West Virginia
Editor:
On page 15 in the last GOLDENSEAL, with Mack Samples was my brother, Bill Ashley. He was the emcee of that talent show [at Widen in 1956]. He was killed in a mine mishap one year later on September 27, 1957.
Bob Ashley

Bonnie Cadle Hartley

March 19, 2004
Ocala, Florida
Via e-mail
Editor:
My grandparents William and Lottie Blackburn lived on Baden Ridge in Mason County, and my father John was born there in

Bonnie Cadle Hartley. Photograph by Michael Keller.

1910. He had three brothers and three sisters, all born there. They are all gone on to their maker now. It was nice to see the article about Bonnie Cadle Hartley and recall to mind the area. [See "'I've Enjoyed It All': Bonnie Cadle Hartley Recalls 103 Years," by Olive Smith Stone; Spring 2004.]

I enjoy the GOLDENSEAL so much. Thank you.
Charlotte A. Smith

April 13, 2004
Bethlehem, Georgia
Editor:
Imagine my delight and surprise when a familiar photo appeared in the Spring 2004 issue of GOLDENSEAL! It was a photo of my grandfather's family taken several decades ago [see page 39].

Olive Smith Stone truly captured the spirit and vitality of the entire Cadle family in [her article]. She made me take note, once again, that "my people" are made of strong stuff.

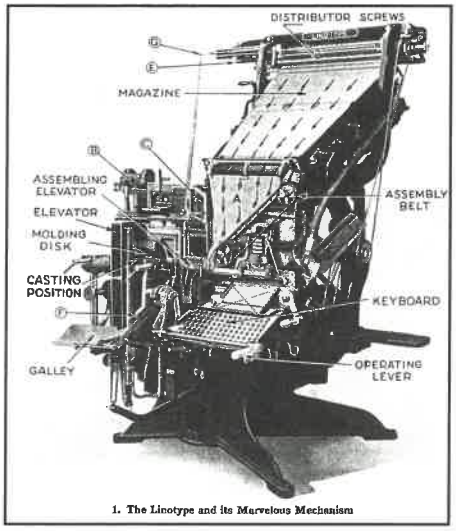
Thank you for giving my family a future treasured heirloom, in written form.
Sincerely,
Nancy Cadle Craddock

Wetzel Republican

March 28, 2004
Vanceboro, Maine
Editor:
I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be published again in GOLDENSEAL. I consider it an honor to have my stories printed in a magazine of quality. [See "Thursday Night at the *Wetzel Republican*," by Borgon Tanner; Spring 2004.]

Your wartime copy of the *Wetzel Republican* was quite appropriate. The Victory stamps were there that we purchased in school, and John Iams — long a familiar figure in New Martinsville affairs — was again in the headlines. The photographs of Buss Wise and Paul Balwanz portrayed the main characters, and there was even space for our most noteworthy machine — the Linotype. I am pleased with your creation.

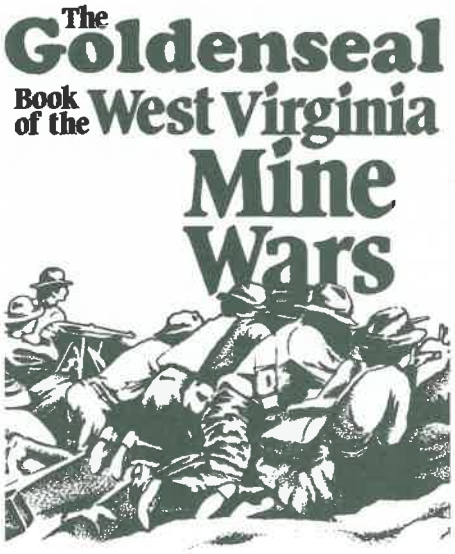
Again, my thanks.
Borgon Tanner



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

Claude Kemper

March 10, 2004
Saint Albans, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
The Spring 2004 issue of GOLDENSEAL arrived today, and I was



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.*

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surprised to see an article related to the passing of my late uncle Claude Kemper [see "GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes"]. He was truly a good person and enjoyed the unique attributes of West Virginia that make the state a wonderful place to call home. These are the same treasures expressed in each issue of GOLDENSEAL.

I'm sure you've heard the saying that "everyone has a story to tell." Many people knew my Uncle Claude. However, many people did not. GOLDENSEAL is a wonderful tool that avails the reader the opportunity to experience and share these life stories first hand. It is clear through the deliberate care and detail expressed in each piece that GOLDENSEAL is produced by talented people who invest genuine effort into each story. That kind of labor not only imparts integrity to the work, but also injects a certain quality that is often lacking in other publications of today.

Again, thanks for supplying us with a tangible device in which to remember the multifaceted life of Claude Kemper.

Best regards,
Matt Kemper

Fairmont Postcards

March 30, 2004
Meadows of Dan, Virginia
Editor:

I thoroughly enjoy GOLDENSEAL and especially the Fairmont postcard article [see "The View from Fairmont: A Century in Postcards," by Raymond Alvarez; Winter 2003].

I am an antique postcard dealer, having grown up with a mother who collected postcards her entire life, starting in McMechen, Salem, and Rainelle and ending in Buckhannon. Postcards are, indeed, sometimes the only lasting, reliable resource to document places and events. Sadly, West Virginia tends to have had more than it's share of boom/bust villages and towns.

Best wishes,
Beth Almond Ford

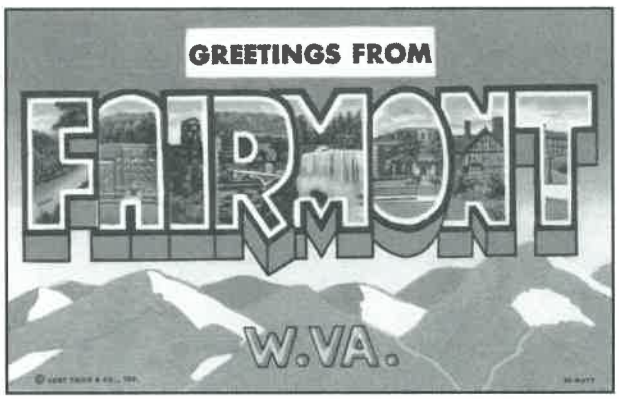
Odd Fellows Home

February 23, 2004
Buckhannon, West Virginia
Editor:

Recently, over at the Harrison County Police Department building in Horner, historian Maurice Allman handed me a copy of Fall 2003 GOLDENSEAL. I was glad to get the address and subscribe. I read about every word from cover to cover.

Of particular interest to me was the article about the Odd Fellows Home in Elkins [see "'So Charitable a Mission': The Odd Fellows Home in Elkins," by Karen Stalnaker]. About 1926, our family and my uncle and his family traveled to Elkins to visit children at the home.

A father died in our community, leaving several young children in the care of a mother with no support. My father was a member of I.O.O.F. and probably helped to have the children cared for at the home. So, the decision was made to make the trip.



I was quite young, and so were my cousins. We lived in the rural area of Lewis County, and the journey to Elkins

Old Fellows Home in Elkins. Photograph by Michael Keller.

was quite an experience for a country boy. We took plenty of picnic food for the children of the destitute family, too.

Our visit there was near the time the pictures were taken for Karen Stalnaker's informative article. The resident children explained the work duties of the boys and girls. I remember the large cornfield that the boys hoed. The girls carried water, plus [performed] other light duties.

From Buckhannon to Elkins or near, there was a dirt road. The two Model T Fords made the journey across those mountains okay.

Yours truly,
W. Howard Reeder

Renewal Mailbag

March 17, 2004
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Editor:
I have thoroughly enjoyed your wonderful magazine for many years. I grew up in the beautiful mountains of southern West Virginia then left Logan in 1969 to "see the world." Now, some 34 years later, I live in a very large Canadian city.

I still miss "Almost Heaven" and return once a year for a visit. My Canadian wife Peggy loves our beautiful state.

Sincerely,
Robert "Bob-o" Shelton

March 30, 2004
Portland, Oregon
Editor:
I have received GOLDENSEAL for a few years now. I enjoy reading the stories about West Virginia. I grew up on a small farm in Nicholas County and graduated from Nicholas County High School in 1943. I then went into the Navy, served in the Pacific theater, and met and married an Oregon girl. I never got back except for visits, which I always enjoyed.

West Virginia is a beautiful state. I have many memories, which I cherish.

John R. Johnson

March 29, 2004
Johnson City, Tennessee
Editor:
My husband W.W. Dalton is deceased. [He and I] both grew up in the southern part of the West Virginia coalfields, living last in Coalwood, home of the "Rocket Boys" [see "Historic Coalwood," by Stuart McGehee; Summer 2001]. Then, we moved to Tennessee. My love and heart are still in West Virginia — so many happy memories. I have liked Tennessee, too, but can never forget the happy years spent in "Almost Heaven" West Virginia.

Thanks again for many years of interesting and happy reading.

Sincerely,
Louise Dalton

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.

Quilt Quest

Quilts will be on display at 12 quilt and sewing shops across the state during the 2004 Mountain Quilt Quest, scheduled June 9-12. Organizers encourage participants to visit all 12 shops on the tour and to collect patterns and blocks at each stop in order to create an original West Virginia sampler at the conclusion of the tour. There will also be drawings for sewing machines valued up to $1,499 as grand prizes for those who complete the entire tour.

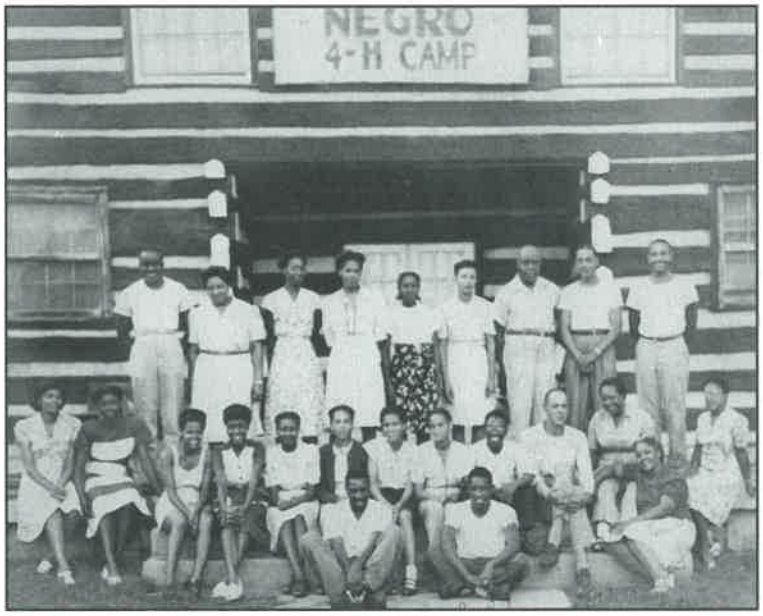
Participating shops are located in Morgantown, Charleston, Huntington, and Fairmont, as well as Elkins, Summersville, Glenville, Bridgeport, Hurricane, and Victor. For a map of quilt shop locations or for additional information, call Regina Sneed at (304)744-3670.

African-American Heritage Arts Camp

The 18th annual African-American Heritage Arts Camp will take place June 12-19 at Camp Washington-Carver, located near Clifftop, Fayette County. Open to students of all races and ethnic backgrounds who have completed grades eight through 12, the camp offers instruction in a range of visual and performing arts, including dance, vocal music, percussion, visual arts, drama, orchestral strings, and band.

Camp Washington-Carver was established in 1942, the first Negro 4-H camp to be built in America. Over the next 21 years, thousands of black children from across West Virginia attended summer camp activities there. Today, the facility is owned by the state and is operated by the Division of Culture and History. It was the subject of a feature story in our Winter 1999 issue, titled "Camp Washington-Carver: An African-American Landmark in Fayette County," by Norman Jordan.

Tuition for the African-American Heritage Arts Camp is $100, including lodging, three meals a day in the Great Chestnut Lodge, and all educational materials. For more information, phone Stan Spottswood at (304)549-2635, e-mail stan@stanspottmusic.com or visit www.wvculture.org/sites/carver.



Camp Washington-Carver, Fayette County, during its years as a Negro 4-H camp. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

Patty Looman. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

Pattyfest

Marion County dulcimer player Patty Looman will be the guest of honor at the third annual Pattyfest old-time music festival, scheduled Saturday, June 12, near Morgantown. The free event will be held at Camp Muffly and will bring together traditional musicians and enthusiasts to play music, visit, and celebrate the many contributions made by Patty Looman. Known as a tireless supporter of traditional folk music, Patty has taught and encouraged many dulcimer players and students in the Morgantown area, at the Augusta

Heritage Arts Workshops in Elkins, and elsewhere. She was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story in our Winter 1995 issue, titled "Carrying on the Music: Dulcimer Player Patty Looman," by Danny Williams.

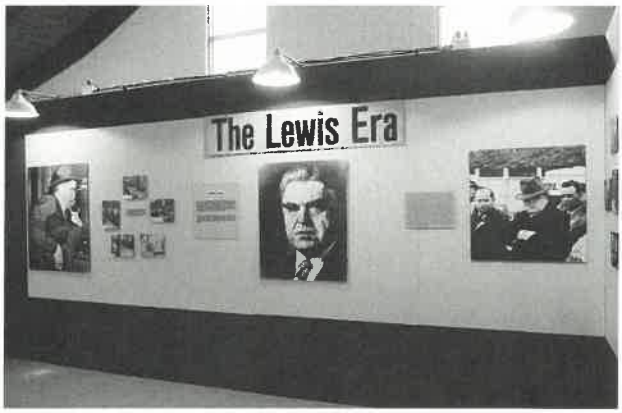
Pattyfest activities will include performances, jam sessions, workshops, and a square dance. The event is sponsored by the Morgantown Friends of Old-Time Music, Mountaineer Dulcimer Club, and BOPARC. For directions to Camp Muffly or for additional information, call (304)864-0105 or visit www.PattyFest.org.

Troubadour Reunion

A reunion of musicians who have shared the stage with Morgan County entertainer Jim McCoy will take place Sunday, July 18, at 1 p.m. at Troubadour Park, located on Highland Ridge near Berkeley Springs. A popular country music recording artist, performer, and radio personality, Jim once played a pivotal role in the budding career of young Patsy Cline during the mid-1940's. He is now the owner of the Troubadour nightclub where he and his wife Bertha offer live music, maintain a West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame, and organize special events. Jim was the subject of a feature story titled "Joltin' Jim McCoy: Morgan County's Country Music Troubadour," by John Douglas, in our Spring 2002 issue.

Joltin' Jim McCoy in the 1960's.

All musicians are invited to join Jim and his band mates for the free reunion and jam session, which will also include a covered dish supper. For directions or more information, call (304)258-9381 or visit www.TroubadourLounge.com.



Coal Heritage exhibit on display at the Museum in the Park, Logan. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Logan Coal Exhibit

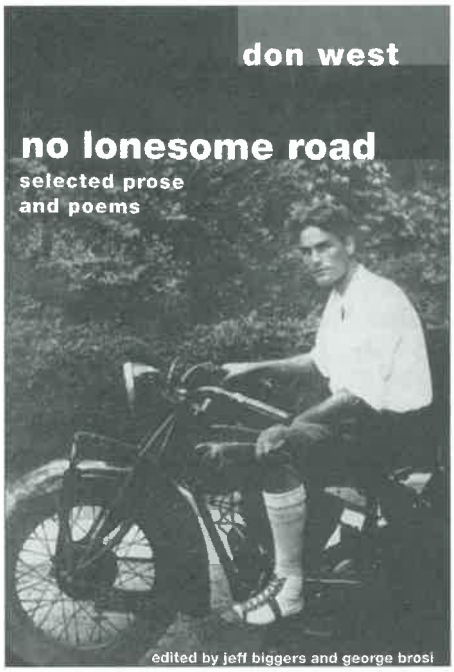
Early coal mining activities in West Virginia are the focus of a recently unveiled museum exhibit on display this summer at the Museum in the Park at Chief Logan State Park, located near Logan. The exhibit is titled "The Mining Life: Coal in Our History and Culture" and was originally created in 1981. Since then, it has been on display at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, and has traveled to other locations. This is the first time the exhibit has been seen in its entirety in 13 years, and the first time it has ever been on display in Logan County.

Included in the exhibit are historical items and photographs related to early mining methods and tools, coal operators, safety issues, company towns, and early unionization efforts, including the West Virginia mine wars. The Museum in the Park is operated by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Regular hours are Thursday and Friday from 5 until 9 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., and Sunday from noon until 5 p.m. Special tours are available for school groups. Admission is free. For more information, call (304)792-7229.

Racial Memoir

Two men who grew up in Charleston — one black and one white — have collaborated on a unique shared autobiography titled *Red, White, Black & Blue: A Dual Memoir of Race and Class in Appalachia*. The authors are former Culture and History commissioner Bill Drennan and civil rights activist Kojo (William T.) Jones. Both men grew up in the South Hills section of Charleston during the late 1940's and 1950's and offer their thoughts, memories, and observations of those sometimes-turbulent years. What emerges is a study in contrast as their alternating reflections view similar circumstances through different eyes, colored by race and social status. Editor Dolores M. Johnson, professor of English at Marshall University, adds an analysis in the final section of the book, comparing and contrasting both the authors' texts and their use of language, revealing subtle and striking differences in style, substance, and meaning.

The 220-page paperbound book, with illustrations, sells for $17.99



and is available from the Ohio University Press. For more information, call (773)568-1550 or visit www.ohio.edu/oupress.

Don West Collection

The works of renowned writer and social activist Don West are featured in a new collection from the University of Illinois Press titled *No Lonesome Road: Selected Prose and Poems*. Born in Georgia in 1906, West became a central literary figure during the 1940's with the publication of works such as the books *Clods of Southern Earth* and *O Mountaineers!* He later became involved with a range of social issues and emerged as a leading voice for change in Southern Appalachia. In 1965, he and his wife purchased 600 acres in Summers County and established the Appalachian South Folklife Center. He was featured in a GOLDENSEAL story titled "Don West, Poet and Preacher," by Ken Sullivan, in our October-December 1979 issue. This new volume is the most complete collection to date of the poems, essays, articles, letters, speeches, and stories of this pioneering and influential writer.

The 227-page paperbound book is edited by Jeff Biggers and George Brosi and sells for $25. It is available from the University of Illinois Press at www.press.uillinois.edu; phone 1-800-537-5487.

Bluegrass Odyssey

Twenty years of bluegrass music is captured in an attractive and authoritative book titled *Bluegrass*

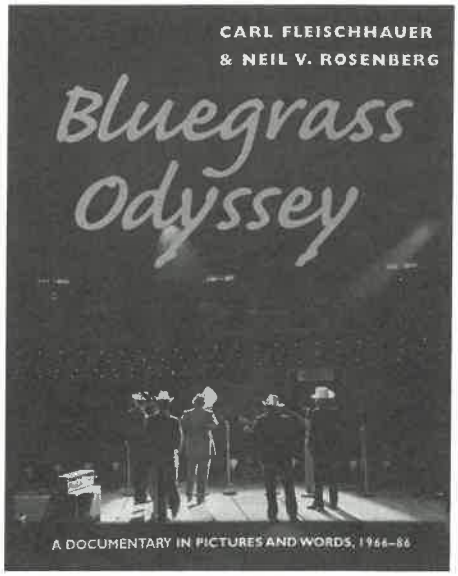
GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Joe Gluck, longtime dean of students at West Virginia University and retired pastor at Forks-of-Cheat Baptist Church in Monongalia County, passed away in Morgantown on February 18. Originally from Auburn, Ritchie County, Joe was well-traveled and well-educated, holding degrees from Bethany College and Yale Divinity School and doing post-graduate work at Harvard and Oxford universities. He began work for WVU as a youth counselor in 1933 and continued with WVU in a variety of capacities for the next 70 years. He was a popular figure on campus, even posing as Santa Claus at university holiday celebrations for 40 years. Joe is most familiar to GOLDENSEAL readers through his role as minister at Forks-of-Cheat Baptist Church, where he served as Bear Master for the church's annual church dinner. Joe and this pioneer feast were the subject of a story in our Spring 1991 issue titled "The Preacher and the Bear: A Monongalia Church Celebrates an Unusual Tradition," by Linda Hepler. Joe Gluck was 89 years old.

Joe Gluck wearing a bear-tooth necklace. Photograph by Ron Rittenhouse.

Elsie Whitmer, country comedienne from Petersburg, died on March 5 at age 92. Elsie was the subject of the story "'So Proud To Be Here': A Visit With Comedienne Elsie Whitmer," by Carl E. Feather, in our Summer 2003 issue. Born Elsie Crites at Elkhorn, Grant County, in 1911, Elsie suffered a difficult childhood and an equally challenging adult life. Through it all, she maintained her positive outlook and wonderful sense of humor. Beginning in the 1950's, Elsie developed a comedy routine in the persona of Minnie Pearl, complete with signature hat, frilly dress, and down-home jokes and stories.

Elsie Whitmer. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.



Odyssey, highlighting the documentary photography of Carl Fleischhauer and the insightful writing of musical historian Neil V. Rosenberg. The book includes photographs taken by Fleischhauer during the years 1966 through 1986, showing bluegrass luminaries, fans, and parking-lot pickers engaged in the passionate pursuit of this energetic music. While the photographs range geographically from San Francisco to Nashville, the bulk of the more than 200 images here were taken in West Virginia and neighboring states. Among the West Virginia images are photographs of Everett Lilly at a cemetery in Clear Creek, Bill Monroe and Melvin Goins at a festival in Merrimac, bluegrass fans dancing in the mud at the Braxton County Bluegrass Festival in Sutton, Mac Wiseman performing in Preston County, the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys in Marlinton, and an informal jam session in Stumptown. Also included is a memorable picture of Mercer County native Hazel Dickens fastening Bill Monroe's cufflinks at Bean Blossom, Indiana, in 1970.

[See "'West Virginia, My Home': A Visit With Hazel Dickens," by John Lilly; page 32. Carl Fleischhauer, a frequent GOLDENSEAL contributor during our early years of publication, returns in this issue as the photographer for our Hazel Dickens story.]

Bluegrass Odyssey, published in 2001, is a large-format, 189-page, hardbound volume. It sells for $34.95 and is available from the University of Illinois Press. For more information, visit www.press.uillinois.edu or phone 1-800-537-5487.

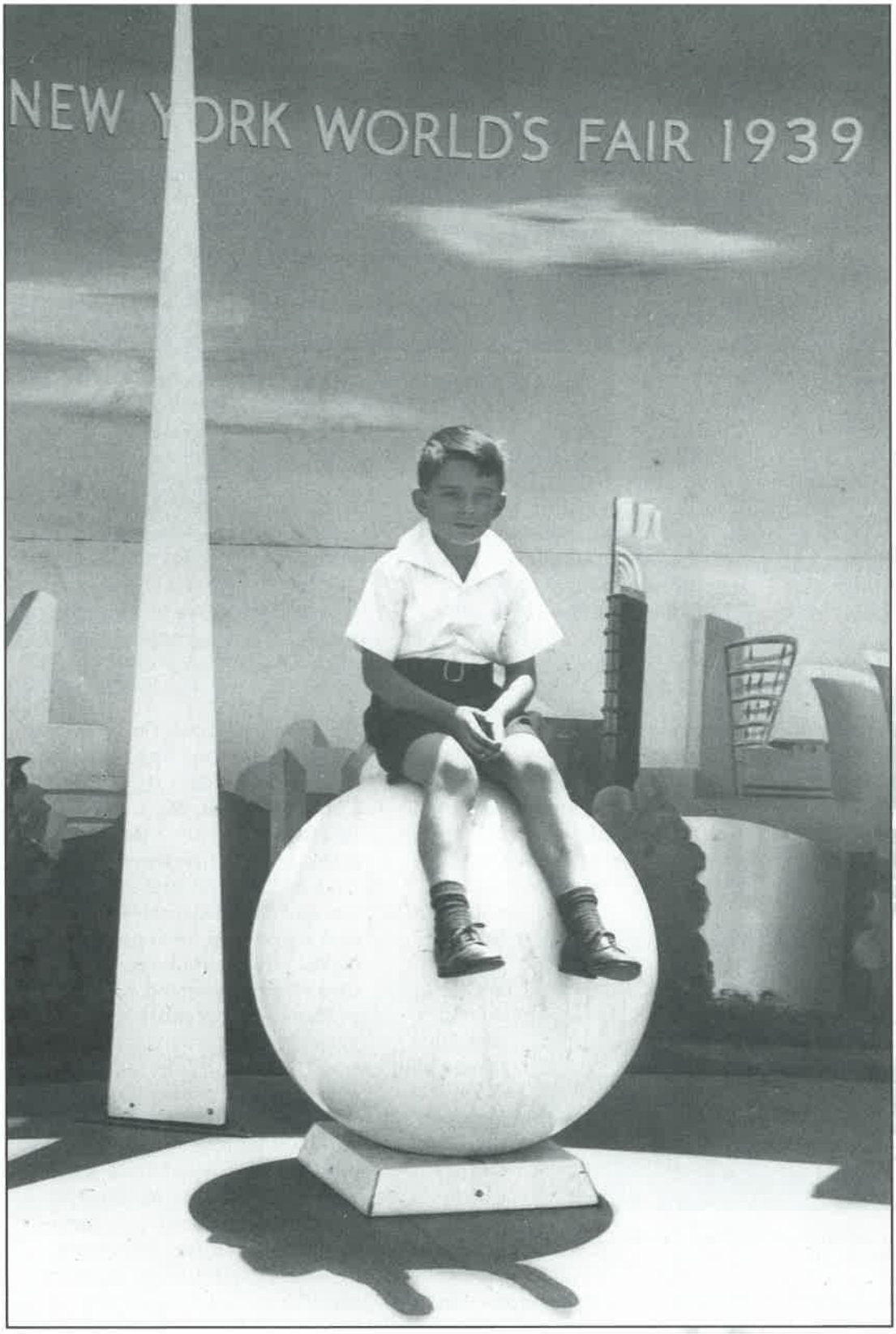
Elsie was a regular performer at the Country Store Opry in nearby Pansy from the time the show was founded in 1967. "Be sure to let out your laughter," Elsie said. "If you don't, it will drop down through your stomach and spread out in your hips."


Ernest Mullenax. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

Ernest Mullenax of Pansy, Grant County, founder of the popular Country Store Opry, passed away on February 23. Ernest was born in 1925 at Pansy, where his grandfather owned a general store and post office. The frame structure was a center of local activity, including hosting impromptu music gatherings. Ernest was stricken with polio at the age of 11, and his mother bought him a guitar to help him pass the time during his recuperation, sparking a lifelong interest in music. As an adult, Ernest farmed and ran a successful refrigerated trucking firm during the week. On the weekends, however, he and his friends played music for pleasure, eventually refurbishing the general store to house their gatherings. The store was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL article in our Summer 2003 issue titled "Country Store Opry: Grant County's Musical Capitol," by Carl E. Feather. Ernest Mullenax was age 78.

Charles E. Kirk of Kanawha, Wood County, passed away at the age of 71 on January 6. Born in Parkersburg, he was raised by his grandparents on a remote farm in the Turner Hollow section of Wood County. Life was difficult on the farm, and Charles recalled the details — both the good and the bad — in our Spring 2001 issue in his article titled "Red Clay Memories: My Early Life in Turner Hollow." Leaving the farm in 1946, Charles moved back to Parkersburg, where he learned the meatcutters' trade and worked in local grocery stores and meat shops. He later owned and operated Kirk's IGA in Kanawha for more than 25 years.

Mary Rodd Furbee, popular West Virginia author, teacher, and GOLDENSEAL contributor, passed away April 21 in Morgantown. She was 49. For the past 25 years, Mary had served as a writer, editor, television producer, and college instructor. She worked with West Virginia University students and residents of Scotts Run to produce a community newspaper called *The Compass*, and authored a series of books for young readers about pioneering women of the American frontier. Her most recent GOLDENSEAL contribution appeared in our Spring 1998 issue.



Dan B. Fleming, Jr., our author, at the New York World's Fair in 1939.

Right: The Court of States included the classically styled West Virginia building, visible at right in this photo. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, WVSA hereafter.

Ever since I was a young child, I have enjoyed going to a fair. Seeing the happy faces of people winning blue ribbons for the best canned preserves, listening to a "carney" pitching a midway game to win a stuffed animal, or getting messy fingers from eating cotton candy, fairs have always been fun to me. However, nothing will ever equal the unique experience I had at the New York World's Fair during the summers of 1939 and 1940.

A West Virginia Boy at the New York World's Fair

By Dan B. Fleming, Jr.

In this modern age of instant communication and high-speed travel, it is unlikely that we will see another World's Fair such as those that were so popular from the late 1800's up until a few decades ago. What once seemed novel and exotic, drawing millions of people from around the world, is no longer so enticing. Cities and countries that underwrote such events in the past hesitate to spend the large financial outlay needed to facilitate such projects today. In many parts of the country, even state and county fairs are disappearing.

The state of West Virginia was first represented at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 — the World's Columbian Exposition. A hallmark of that fair was the introduction of the first Ferris wheel, invented by George Ferris. West Virginia also had exhibits in 1933 at the Century of Progress in Chicago and at the Great Lakes Exposition in Cleveland in 1936.

Nothing before or since, however, has equaled the New York World's Fair of 1939 and 1940. At a cost of $155 million, it was built on 1,200 acres of marshy wasteland in Flushing, Queens. The theme was "Building the World of Tomorrow." The fair drew 45 million visitors over two years, during a time while the nation was still in the grip of the Great Depression. Fair creators hoped it would help to stir the nation out of its economic doldrums by providing new hope for the future based on progress in science and technology. It was a jackpot for modernist architects

West Virginia resident commissioner State Senator Dan B. Fleming, Sr., at right, with fair official C.T. Strickling in 1939. Courtesy WVSA.

and social planners.

Convinced that this was a good opportunity to let people everywhere learn more about West Virginia, the 1937 State Legislature appropriated $35,000 to prepare an exhibit in New York, with another $40,000 appropriated later. A fair commission was formed. My father State Senator Dan B. Fleming was selected to be the resident commissioner for the West Virginia exhibit, with Governor Homer A. "Rocky" Holt serving as ex-officio chair. House Speaker James Kay Thomas was the vice-chairman, and Agricultural Commissioner J.B. McLaughlin was appointed secretary. The exhibit was constructed in New York over a period of two years and was barely completed in time to open on April 30, 1939.

The fair presented a view of what the world might be like in the future, ranging from cities located in space to new forms of agriculture, industry, transportation, and communication. The symbol of the fair was the 700-feet-high trylon and perisphere. Inside the perisphere was a scale model of a city of tomorrow.

Some of the most popular industrial exhibits were sponsored by the Chrysler, Ford, and General Electric corporations. The most famous exhibit at the fair — where you could wait for hours to enter — was Futurama, sponsored by General Motors. Visitors there would ride in a moving chair that simulated riding in an airplane as they flew over communities of the future, an experience like something from a science fiction movie. There was also an international area, including exhibits from 60 nations. A large entertainment area featured shows such as Billy Rose's Aquacade, showcasing swimmers such as Johnny Weismuller of Tarzan movie fame.

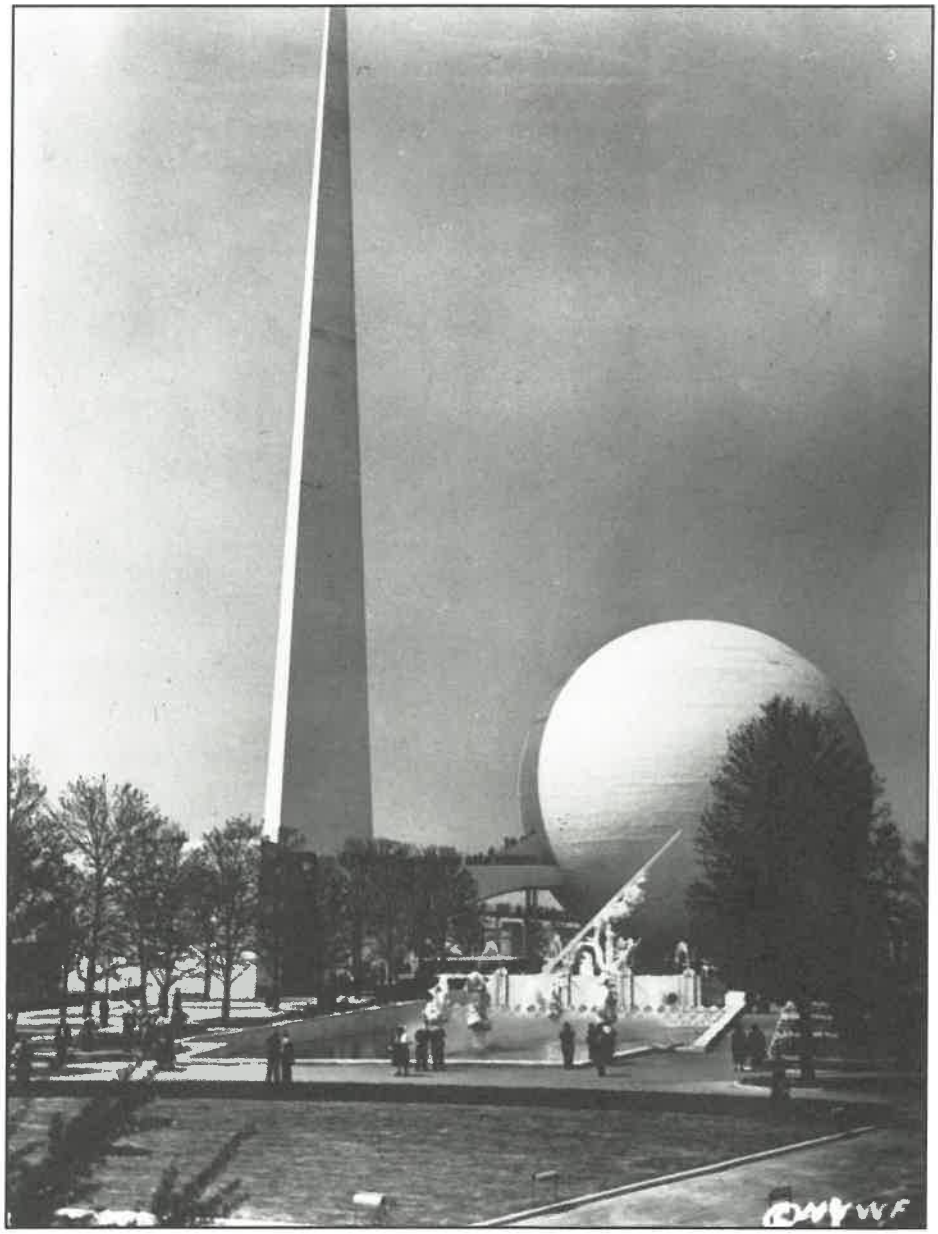
The West Virginia building was located in the Court of States and was classical in design. The interior included exposed beams and paneled wood that emphasized West Virginia's timber industry, using materials such as black walnut, butternut, birch, and spruce. There were large murals showing composite scenes of the state displayed on the upper walls, designed by W.C. Grauer, the director of the Old White Colony at White Sulfur Springs. These paintings were flanked by large photomurals enlarged by George Kossuth of Wheeling, using photos by Kossuth and other West Virginia photographers.

Dan Fleming, Jr., is near the front and center (see circle) in this photograph, including children from many nations, an early version of Donald Duck, and actress Judy Canova. Courtesy of WVSA.

There were eight dioramas in the four walls and 10 exhibit cases housing West Virginia products, including the work of state artists and artisans. Exhibits included pottery from the Homer Laughlin China Company and Warwick China, as well as Fostoria, Blenko, Fenton, and Seneca glass. There was also pottery made by my mother Ruth Fleming, by Carol Ogdin, and by high school students from Blacksville. [See "Blacksville Pottery: Local Hands and Native Clay," by John Lilly; Spring 2000.] The smallest metal tube in the world — made of nickel by Montel Metals in Huntington — was featured, as were displays from the chemical industry of the Kanawha Valley. The most dramatic item in the exhibit was the largest block of bituminous coal ever mined. It weighed in excess of six tons and was shown in a large display case in the center of the floor.

I was seven years old when the fair began on April 30, 1939. A few weeks later, I was very excited when my mother told me that we were going to spend that summer at the fair. I was particularly excited when I discovered that I would miss the last few weeks of school. I had never been in a city larger than Charleston, so I had no idea what it would mean to live in New York or to go to a World's Fair. The only fair I had ever attended was the Pleasants County Fair in St. Marys, and that seemed a big deal to me at the time.

We took the train to New York from Parkersburg — my first overnight train ride. Our family rented an apartment near the fair in Flushing. After getting settled, my mother and I took a subway to the fairgrounds — another novel experience. Sixty-five years later, I can still remember my first view of the fair. I gawked at the spectacular buildings with futuristic murals on the walls, huge statues, lagoons with spouting fountains, and flags of all colors and designs. The first building I remember seeing was the U.S.S.R. pavilion, topped by a giant worker nicknamed "Worker Joe," holding a red star to the sky.



The 700-foot trylon and nearby perisphere were hallmarks of the fair. The perisphere housed a scale model of a futuristic city.

The fair presented a view of what the world might be like in the future, ranging from cities located in space to new forms of agriculture, industry, transportation, and communication.

For the next two summers, my life seemed unreal. A typical day found me being given a dime and allowed to head off on my own into the fairgrounds. I soon learned that there were places I could even get free food. The Heinz exhibit had booths that gave me free samples of their products in little paper cups. My favorites were baked beans and macaroni and cheese. If it was a hot day, I would visit the

The exterior of the West Virginia building. Dan Fleming, Jr., and his mother Ruth are visible at right, standing on the steps. Courtesy of WVSA.

The interior of the West Virginia building. Highlights included native hardwood beams and paneling; extensive murals and photographs on the walls showing scenes of the state; glass, pottery, and industrial displays; and a six-ton block of coal at the center. Photograph by Underwood & Underwood, courtesy of WVSA.

Chrysler building, featuring a new innovation — air conditioning. One of my daily hangouts was the amusement area where I could hand-feed milk to baby bear cubs. I became acquainted with some of the operators of the children's rides, and they would let me ride for free when business was slow. I also found that a good source of money was a grassy area across from the West Virginia building, where tourists would stretch out to rest. I discovered that if I searched carefully, I could nearly always find some loose change that had dropped out of their pockets. Finding a nickel or dime was great, and a quarter was a real jackpot.

Performers of all kinds appeared at Children's World, and I would go to see shows by Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy and was able to talk to movie stars such as Judy Canova — a frequent star in the comedy half of Saturday matinee double features. It was exciting to see athletes such as Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey. My favorite experience was leading the Children's Day Parade, seated beside the World War I hero Sergeant Alvin York.

Probably the biggest moment for everyone at the fair was the visit by the King and Queen of England. They were entertained at the Hyde Park home of President Roosevelt, where they were served hot dogs and then sailed down the Hudson River to visit the fair. They took the fair by storm and were greeted by monstrous crowds, pushing and shoving to get a better look at them as they rode through the fairgrounds in an open car. I was not sure at the time why everybody was so excited, but I was there and got a good look at the King and Queen while surrounded by cheering and

waving crowds.

My worst day at the fair was when I took the Life Saver Company parachute jump. I was placed on a tiny canvas seat and raised several hundred feet in the air. Then the chute was dropped in a semi-free fall. Even today I have a fear of heights; I am still not sure whether it started with or came after the jump.

The staff in the exhibits were all very friendly to me, with the exception of the Japanese pavilion. The staff there appeared to be very pleasant, but had little use for children, and certainly not me. On Japanese Day at the fair, representatives of Japan presented to the fair's officials a torch representing eternal friendship between the U.S. and Japan. My father often related how the Japanese pavilion was my least favorite place to go, owing to their two-faced approach. He noted that the bombing of Pearl Harbor reinforced my view, since the "eternal friendship" lasted only a year.

A live television broadcast from the fair in 1939 included, from the left, Senator Dan B. Fleming, Sr., Dan Fleming, Jr., television personality Muriel Roberts, and RCA exhibit manager and Morgantown native Joe D'Agostino. Courtesy of WVSA.

My father was fortunate in being elected the president of the States' Association at the fair, providing him entree into many special events. One of his most important duties as the exhibit manager was public relations, welcoming thousands of West Virginians who visited the fair. My father loved to show the folks from back home around and would help them in any way possible. The many West Virginians living in the New York area would also frequently visit the exhibit to get a taste of home.

A cross my father had to bear only too often was the unfortunate image that many visitors had of the ignorant West Virginia hillbilly. One women from Boston told my father, in a very condescending manner, "Why, you seem just like people living anywhere," and commented on his wearing shoes. He responded to her, "At least we never burned witches at the stake."

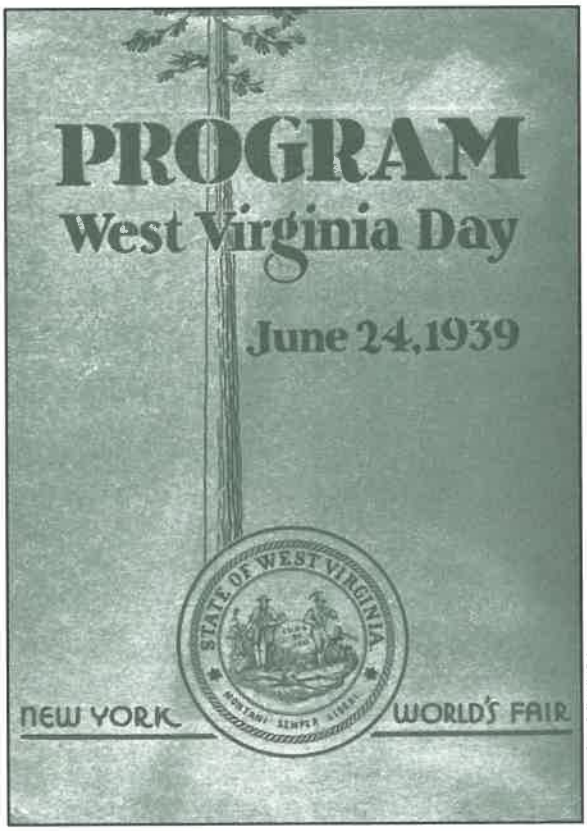
My father loved to show the folks from back home around and would help them in any way possible.

Adding freshness to the day-to-day activities at the West Virginia exhibit was the constant flow of new hostesses who would work there for two weeks at a time. Many had never been in New York, let alone a World's Fair, and the enthusiasm of these short-term employees infected everyone with their joy and excitement. They were provided with travel and per diem expenses, allowing many West Virginians, such as school teachers, a chance to work the fair while helping represent the state in greeting visitors and performing other duties.

Another West Virginian, Joe D'Agostino, originally from Morgantown, was manger of one of fair's most featured exhibits — the RCA pavilion. He soon became a good friend of my father. In 1932, D'Agostino had been the first man in the United States to have television reception in his home, which was located in Plainfield, New Jersey. Before managing the RCA exhibit, he was an engineer for the National Broadcasting Company and built the first amateur radio station in Morgantown. Graduating from West Virginia University at the age of 18, he went to New York and became a leader in helping to develop the new invention of television. Despite his success in New York, Joe remained true to his West Virginia roots and served five years as head of the New York WVU Alumni Association.

Joe invited my father and me to be televised with him at the set in

the pavilion, so we were on worldwide television in 1939. Of course, there were only a few hundred sets that could receive the show at the time. While we were being televised, I was worried that I would foul up as they asked me questions while large cameras and very bright and hot lights loomed over us. As a result, I didn't fully appreciate the unique experience until years later.



COURTESY OF WVSA

Each state with an exhibit at the fair had their day in the sun. West Virginia Day was quite a big event, with special trains leaving the northern and southern parts of the state, as well as Washington, D.C., bringing hundreds of guests to attend the two-day program. In 1939, the speakers included Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson of Clarksburg and John W. Davis, presidential candidate in 1924, also a native of Clarksburg. In 1940, Governor Homer A. Holt was the featured speaker. A high point in 1940 was the vocal program presented by Eleanor Steber, well-known singer at the Metropolitan Opera and a native of Wheeling. She later visited the West Virginia building.

Each West Virginia Day also featured a West Virginia Breakfast, including everything from Morgan County tomato juice and Preston County buckwheat cakes to Pocahontas County lamb chops and Fayette County sourwood honey. One unique touch in the program was a recipe for cooking ramps — certainly a dish unknown to New Yorkers.

When not at the fair, we would often go into Manhattan. I was most unimpressed by Chinese food, but I enjoyed the unique aromas, sights, and sounds of New York. A favorite story, one I have told so often that it bores my children, concerns the time when my mother took me to see a world premier movie. Since I was accustomed to the old Robey Theater in St. Marys, I did not know what to expect. We waited more than an hour in a line several blocks long to see the *Wizard of Oz*. Adding to the excitement were the in-person appearances of Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, who sang, danced, and spoke to us from the stage.

The second year of the fair in 1940 was much less exuberant than the first. World War II had broken out the previous fall, and some nations failed to return the second year. Germany had no exhibit and was the only major European nation not represented. Sadly, a suitcase bomb was set off at the British pavilion on the Fourth of July, killing two people and wounding others, making future visitors uneasy as to what might happen to them. The war atmosphere, coupled with the ongoing Great Depression, contributed to the fair losing money. The second year, the amusement area was less cultural and more "honky-tonk," featuring carnival attractions, naked women, and other shows that I did not see.

Wheeling opera singer Eleanor Steber presented a vocal program to highlight the 1940 West Virginia Day at the World's Fair. Courtesy of WVSA.

The Fleming family at the fair. From the left, they are Dan B., Jr., sister Eleanor, mother Ruth, and Dan B., Sr. Date unknown, courtesy of WVSA.

By the end of the summer of 1940, I was a real veteran fairgoer; the *New York Herald Tribune* called me "a champion sightseer of the fair." At the end of August, my mother and I returned home by train. The following Tuesday, I began school at St. Marys Elementary School, my perspective of the world greatly broadened, to say the least.

One of the last remnants of the fair for me occurred shortly after we returned home. We received a call that a live turkey had arrived for me at the train station. Apparently, I had signed up to win a turkey at the Virginia exhibit and had won. For a time, we wondered what else might show up out of the blue.

Despite all the glamour of the fair and New York, it was wonderful to return home and lead a normal life once again. My father stayed until the fair closed on October 27, 1940. Today, you can still visit the site of the fairgrounds, located near Shea Stadium. The Queens Museum has an excellent display on the fair. Most of the materials on the fair from my father's personal collection have been donated to the West Virginia State Archives in Charleston.

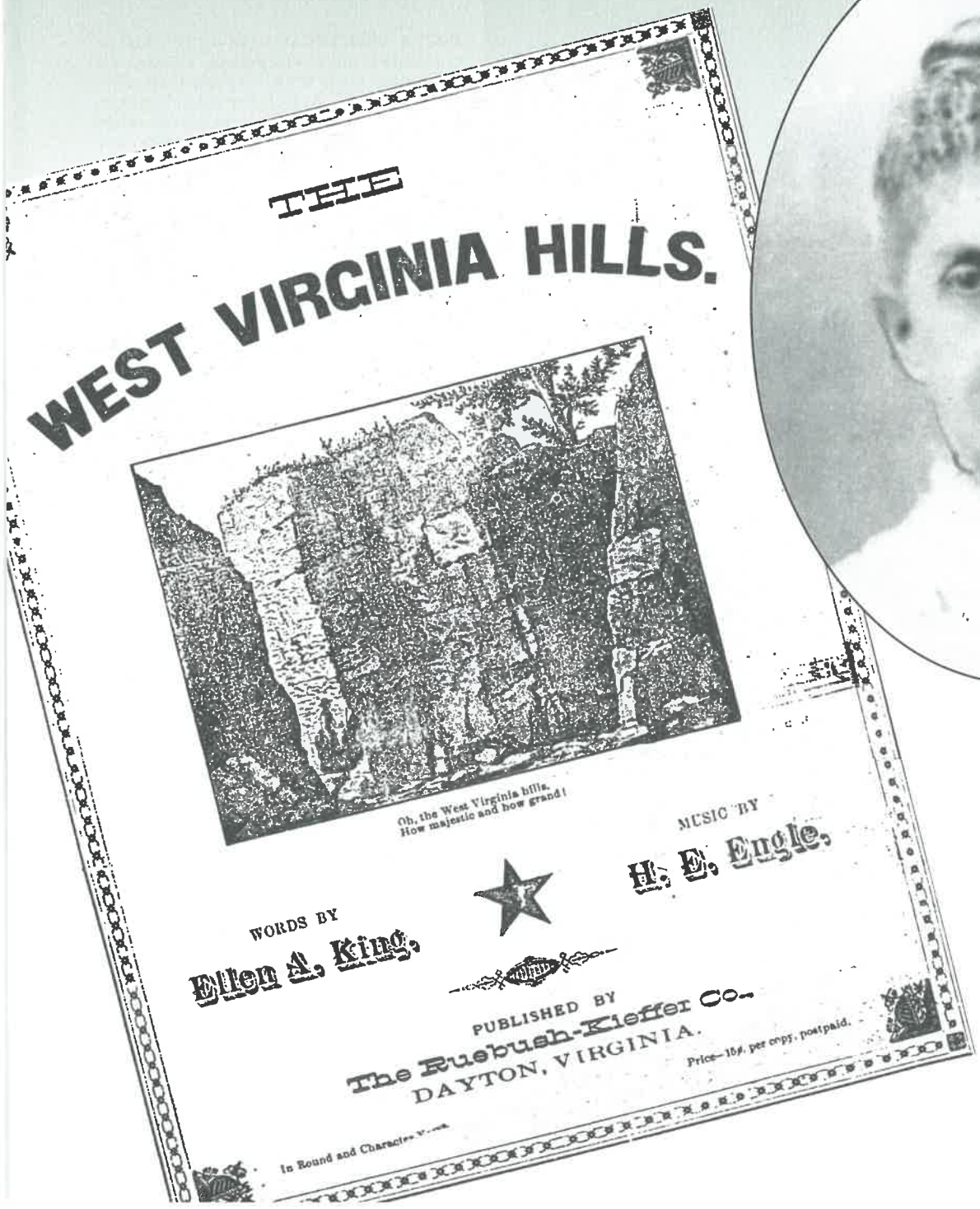
Thinking back about those marvelous days at the fair 65 years ago, West Virginia seems to have been well represented, showing the best features of the Mountain State. Many visitors ranked it near the top of the state exhibits. My family was proud to help represent West Virginia to the rest of the world. Even though I left the state many years ago, I am still a dyed-in-the-wool Mountaineer.

DAN B. FLEMING is a native of St. Marys, currently living in Blacksburg, Virginia. He graduated from West Virginia University with a master's degree in political science, received his doctorate in teacher education from George Washington University, and served as a Fulbright Scholar in India and a Congressional Fellow of the American Political Science Association. He is professor emeritus of education at Virginia Tech. This is Dan's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

West Virginia was well represented at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, our author reports. Here, state officials raise the West Virginia flag on opening day, April 30, 1939. They are, from the left, Senator Dan B. Fleming, Sr., Speaker of the House James Kay Thomas, and Senate President William M. LaFon. Courtesy of WVSA.

By Richard Ramella

West Virginia's



Ellen Ruddell King first published the verses to "The West Virginia Hills" as a poem in the *Glenville Crescent* newspaper in September 1885. Some accounts credit her husband, the Reverend David King, with writing some or all of these words in honor of his wife. Photographer and date unknown. Courtesy of WVSA.

Three State Songs

It is unusual for a state to have more than one official song. West Virginia has three. At least three people, including an 11-year-old boy, had creative voices in writing the first song more than 100 years ago. A military officer wrote the second after distinguished service in World War II. And a Charleston jazz musician began composing the third while she was asleep in the early 1960's.

"The West Virginia Hills," with words by Ellen Ruddell King and music and chorus by Henry Everett Engle, was completed in 1885 in Gilmer County.

"West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home" appeared in 1947 and was composed by Col. Julian G. Hearne, Jr., a Wheeling native, attorney, and career military officer.

The third song, "This Is My West Virginia," was written by Charleston musician and performer Iris Bell in 1962.

Each of these three songs had received an official designation from the State Legislature over the years. "West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home" was declared the first official state song in 1947. In 1961, an edited and approved version of "The West Virginia Hills" was also made an official state song. In 1962, "This Is My West Virginia" was named the official Centennial Song of West Virginia. Understandably, this resulted in considerable confusion.

To resolve the matter, all three songs were declared official and equal by House Concurrent Resolution No. 19, adopted by the State Legislature on February 28, 1963. The Secretary of State's office is guardian of the official versions.

Though they are melodic and heartfelt, Hearne's and Bell's works have not been performed often. Long before it was declared official, however, "The West Virginia Hills" was used on many public occasions. And for nearly four

Henry Everett Engle, a Barbour County native, wrote the music and chorus to "The West Virginia Hills" after reading Ellen King's poem in the newspaper in 1885. The song was published the following year. Photographer and date unknown. Courtesy of WVSA.

The Old Arm Chair In Which Music To "The West Virginia Hills" Was Written

Courtesy of Carl Fleischhauer, photographer and date unknown.

generations — in those days when people more often gathered to sing for pleasure — the old anthem proved a favorite. It has sweep and majesty and thunder, especially its inspired chorus, which singers divide into a call and echoed reply, singing, "Oh the hills (beautiful hills), Beautiful hills (beautiful hills), How I love those West Virginia hills!" The three songs represent early, middle, and modern eras of the state's history. And here's how each came to be.

There's divided opinion about who wrote the words of "The West Virginia Hills." The official sheet music credits Ellen King, born in 1846 in Glenville, Gilmer County. Other sources, including a state road marker in Barbour County, say the creative one was her husband, the Reverend David King.

Rev. King came from his native Pennsylvania in about 1877 to teach at Glenville Normal School, now Glenville State College. Ellen Ruddell and King were wed in 1879. They soon departed the banks of the Little Kanawha River in favor of Punxatawny, Pennsylvania. They later lived in New Jersey. One story has Ellen King penning the words during a nostalgic visit home to see her father Stephen S. Ruddell.

Mary Ann Radabaugh, a retired Glenville teacher and writer, has researched area history. She believes Ellen King wrote the poem herself. "Ellen died in 1927," says Mary Ann, "and it was after her death that someone started the rumor... her husband had written the words." Mary Ann notes that the song takes the first-person viewpoint of a state native, which Mrs. King was, and Rev. King was not.

Another version of the story holds that Rev. King wrote the poem as a love letter to his wife as she visited Glenville. A later account suggests the poem was actually a collaboration between the two. However it came to be, the poem was published — under her name — in September 1885 in the *Glenville Crescent* newspaper. There, it was read by Henry Everett Engle, a farmer and music teacher who was born in 1849 south of Philippi in Barbour County.

Henry Engle stood six feet, three inches tall and weighed more than 200 pounds. Farming was his main interest; music was his avocation. His brother James said Henry was the strongest man and fastest runner he ever knew. When the composer was 70 years old, he could outwork his farm employees.

Henry wed Julia Lloyd in 1885, and they had a son named Aldine. The composer was postmaster from 1889 until 1919. He served on the board of education and was a member of the county court from 1915 until 1921. He was a Christian and a prohibitionist who expressed his anti-alcohol stance in a song titled "Save the West Virginia Boys and Girls." Other songs included "Take the World for Christ," "My Country Home," "The Rhododendron," and "Live a Holy Life."

Brother James told family members he was present when Henry first read the poem in the newspaper. James said Henry sat in a rocking chair and hummed a melody. He repeated some parts. Then he took an envelope from his pocket and wrote the basics of the tune's musical notation. Henry later said the tune came to him as if by inspiration.

In one published account in the *Charleston Daily Mail*, Henry's widow, Mrs. Julia Engle, recalled that her husband was so moved by the poem that he immediately paid a visit to Mrs. King. Visiting Gilmer County from her home in New Jersey, Mrs. King was said still to be in the vicinity when the poem was published. During their visit, Henry Engle explained to Mrs. King that he enjoyed the poem and offered to try his hand at setting it to music. According to Julia Engle, "Mrs. King was delighted by the idea." Henry reportedly began writing the tune in his head on his way home.

When Henry reached the chorus and sang, "Oh, the hills," the boy spontaneously chimed in, "Beautiful hills." It sounded so right that it became part of the finished song.

The melody is Engle's, as is most of the rousing chorus, but not all of the chorus. The Gilmer County Historical Society tells in its 1994 history how the song took its final form. According to this account, 11-year-old Orpha T. Engle watched and listened as his Uncle Henry worked on the song. When Henry reached the chorus and sang, "Oh, the hills," the boy spontaneously chimed in, "Beautiful hills." It sounded so right that it became part of the finished song. The uncle always gave his nephew credit for the inspired addition.

The published version was copyrighted and before the public in 1886. It appeared first in *The Royal Proclamation*, a songbook edited by Aldine Kieffer and William Blake of Dayton, Virginia. Engle agreed to the song's inclusion in the book with the stipulation copyright be registered in his name. Instead, the song was copyrighted by Kieffer & Blake, Music Publishers, according to the Library of Congress.

Through a string of kinship over the years, Rick Collins and his daughter Cortney of Tanner, Gilmer County, have been entrusted with material connected to Engle's work. Rick Collins and his wife Jane live on land where once stood Engle's homestead, of which only some chimney stones remain. The Collinses possess an organ on which Henry is believed to have composed the song and the rocking chair where he sat as he first read Mrs. King's poem. Among the items passed down to the Collins family is a songbook that

Henry Engle published. It has 16 songs — including "The West Virginia Hills" — and sold new for five cents.

Connected only by the song, Ellen King and Henry Engle survived for decades after "The West Virginia Hills" was introduced and saw the song warmly accepted by their fellow West Virginians. Mrs. King lived to 81 but never again in West Virginia. She died in Hollywood, California, in 1927. Her husband passed away in 1921. Engle died in 1933 after a fall from a horse. He was 84. Orpha — O.T. Engle — emulated his uncle by teaching at singing schools in north-central West Virginia counties.

The song was commercial property for 75 years. At the 1960 gathering of the West Virginia Music Educators Association in Morgantown, members asked Dr. C. Buell Agey of West Virginia Wesleyan College to come up with an official version of the song. That version was approved by the group's executive board and the state music consultant, Dr. Thomas Wikstrom. State legislators adopted a resolution naming it a state song in 1961, two years prior to it being redesignated, along with the other two songs, in 1963.

Following are the words of the official version of the song, as edited by Dr. Agey:

Oh, the West Virginia hills!
How majestic and how grand,
With their summits bathed in glory,
Like our Prince Immanuel's Land!
Is it any wonder then,
That my heart with rapture thrills,
As I stand once more with loved ones
On those West Virginia hills?

Chorus:
Oh, the hills, (beautiful hills),
Beautiful hills, (beautiful hills),
How I love those West Virginia hills!
(beautiful hills)
If o'er sea o'er land I roam
Still I'll think of happy home,
And my friends among the West Virginia hills.

Oh, the West Virginia hills!
Where my childhood hours were passed,
Where I often wandered lonely,
And the future tried to cast;
Many are our visions bright,
Which the future ne'er fulfills;
But how sunny were my daydreams
On those West Virginia Hills.

Oh, the West Virginia hills!
How unchang'd they seem to stand,
With their summits pointed skyward
To the Great Almighty's Land!
Many changes I can see,
Which my heart with sadness fills;
But no changes can be noticed
In those West Virginia hills.

Oh, the West Virginia hills!
I must bid you now adieu.
In my home beyond the mountains
I shall ever dream of you;
In the evening time of life,
If my Father only wills,
I shall still behold the vision
Of those West Virginia hills.

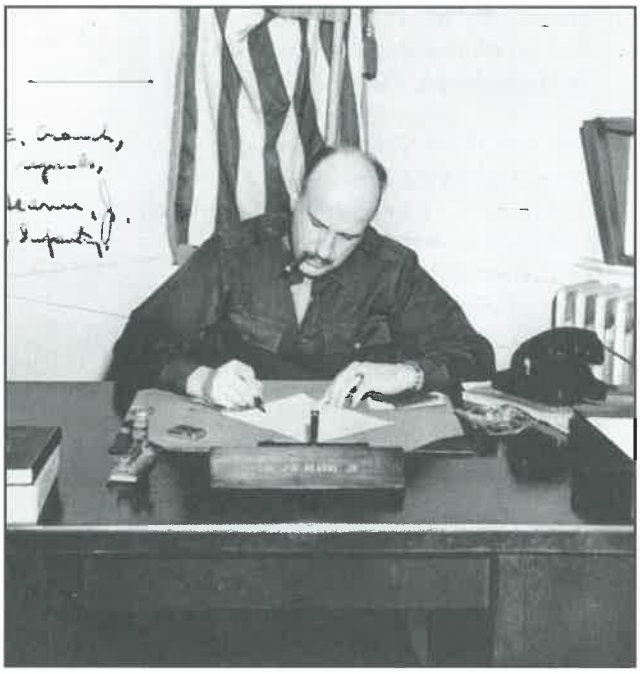
Col. Julian G. Hearne, Jr., was born in 1904 to accomplished Wheeling parents. His father was a lawyer. His mother Lydia Cromwell Hearne was a physician who served in many volunteer capacities in Ohio County and across the state. In the 1920's, she was director of the West Virginia Historical Society. The family home was called Hearnlee.

Julian, Jr., graduated in the 1926-27 class of Harvard Law School, but it was not the practice of law that most distinguished him. In World War II, Hearne commanded the 24th Infantry Regiment in the Pacific. He was reported to be the first American officer to accept the surrender of an enemy garrison in Japanese-held territory. That surrender came on August 22, 1945, on Aka Island near Okinawa, Japan. A Japanese officer gave Hearne a ceremonial sword marking the end of the battle, which he later donated to the Smithsonian Institution.

Also in the 1940's, Hearne wrote "West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home." It became the sole official state song in 1947. Hearne didn't want any monkeying around with his creation, which he presented as a lofty work. The sheet music instructs, "On solemn occasions, may be played moderately, with feeling, at rallies and other assemblys (sic), march tempo is appropriate. Ought not be played as country music or in hillbilly fashion."

Hearne continued in the military after the war and served in the Washington, D.C., area. Mike Henderson of Silver Spring, Maryland, says Hearne returned to Wheeling in the 1970's. Henderson notes, "I was Colonel Hearne's secretary in Wheeling while I was attending Wheeling College [now Wheeling Jesuit University]." Hearne also composed music on military and patriotic themes. The *Harvard Law Bulletin* reported his death at age 91 on March 18, 1995, in McLean, Virginia. The song has two verses:

West Virginia, My Home, Sweet Home,
My heart beats with lasting love for you,
Where my roots are so deep, where my
forefathers sleep,
Where kinfolks and friends are staunch



Colonel Julian G. Hearne, Jr., of Wheeling, the writer of West Virginia's first official state song, "West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home," published in 1947. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of WVSA.

and true;
Where the Blue of the North, and the
Grey of the South long have
blended in perfect harmony,
Where the East meets the West, and
derives from each the best,
That's West Virginia, Home, Sweet Home
for me!

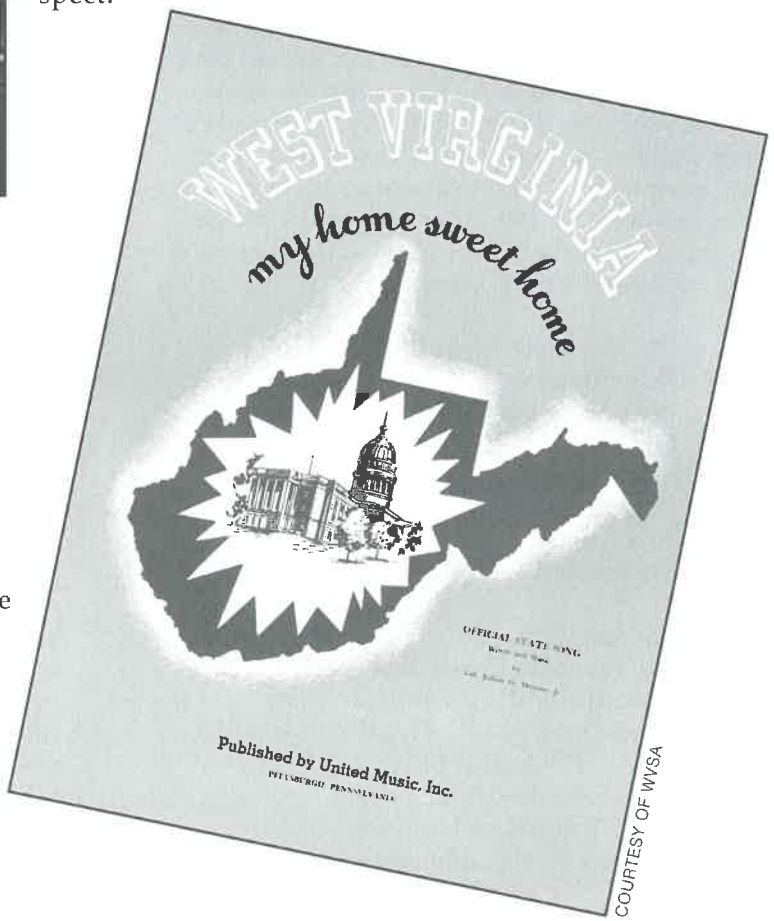
West Virginia, My Home, Sweet Home,
Where mountains and hills and
valleys too,
And the orchards, the farms,
timberlands all have charms,
And fact'ries and mines are on review;
There I work, and I play, and I
worship Sunday,
In that land where the mountaineers are
free.
Other States are OK, it's a grand old USA,
But West Virginia, Home,
Sweet Home for me!

Iris Bell woke in the middle of the night with the words and melody ringing clearly in her mind: "This Is My West Virginia." "My mind was singing," Iris recalls. "I got up and wrote the rest of the words right then, the music, too." It was all on paper before daybreak.

The inspiration came on the birthday of Bell's beloved grandfather John Good, an artisan and contractor who built the Charleston house where she was born in 1934 and where she lives today. From the first inkling, she knew the song honored her grandfather.

It was October 1962. Bell was 28 years old, a musician and well-known performer around the capital city. She took the song to state officials, and it was soon named the official Centennial Song for West Virginia. It was then accepted as one of the three equal, official state songs the following year.

After the 1963 announcement, Bell received a call from Col. Julian G. Hearne, Jr., composer of "West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home." "He said he hoped there'd be no fight about the songs," Iris says. "There was mutual respect."



COURTESY OF WVSA

Bell's father Aaron Jones Bell was an eye, ear, nose, and throat surgeon with doctoral degrees in philosophy and psychology. Her mother Irene was a classically trained singer and pianist, who wanted her daughter to follow her lead. The child endured piano lessons until age 14, then quit.

As a teenager, Iris discovered jazz. Singer Sarah Vaughan and pianist George Shearing became prime influences. When she graduated from Stonewall Jackson High School in 1951 and pursued her own style of music, her mother was supportive but disappointed. "I did my music right away. That's all I ever wanted to do," Iris says.

She attended the University of Illinois and Centre College, a liberal arts school in Danville, Kentucky. She started a band called the Iris Bell Adventure in 1956 in Charleston. She was the group's singer and pianist.

In 1967, the band took to the road. After touring, Iris and the group settled in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and appeared for seven years as the sole attraction at a club called the Rubaiyat. She returned to the family

Charleston songwriter and jazz musician Iris Bell. Iris began composing the words and music to "This Is My West Virginia" in her sleep one night during October 1962. Later that year, it was named the state's official Centennial Song, and the following year, one of three official state songs. This publicity photograph of Iris was taken at about the time the song was written.

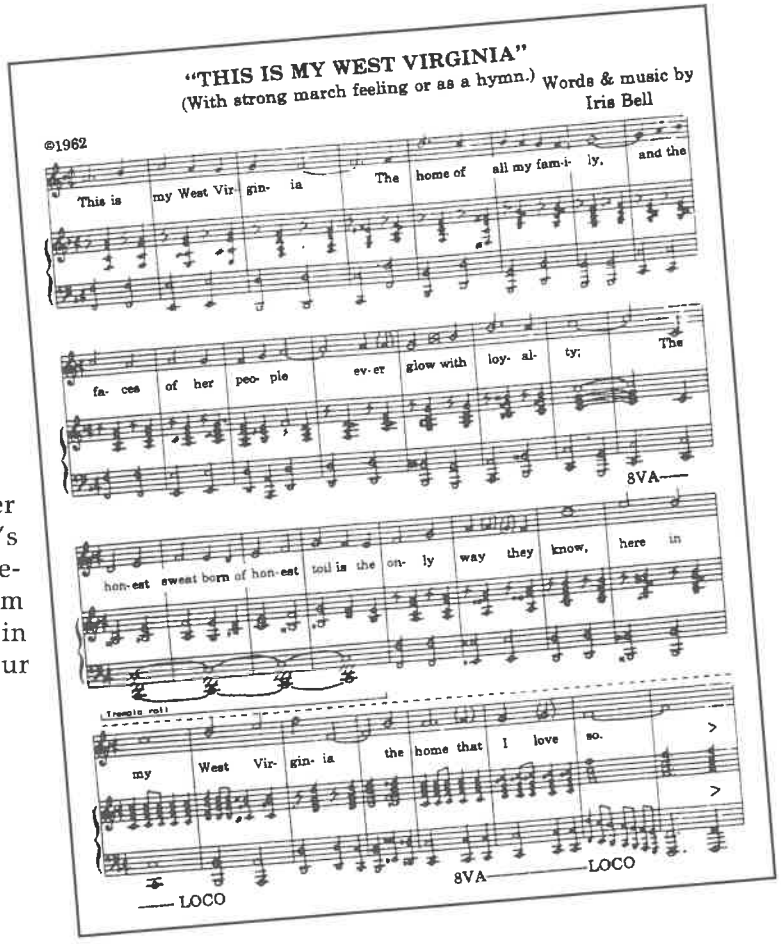
home in Charleston in 1978 and cared for her Alzheimer's-stricken mother until the mother's death. Iris performed annually in the now-defunct West Virginia State Jazz Festival. And from time to time, she still performs before audiences in the Charleston area. Her hopeful song has four verses:

This is my West Virginia, the home of
all my family,
And the faces of her people ever glow
with loyalty;
The honest sweat born of honest toil
is the only way they know,
Here in my West Virginia is the home
that I love so.

This is my West Virginia, her beauty
calms my fevered soul;
In the times of dread and anguish it makes
my spirit whole,
I lift mine eyes unto these hills and they
give me power to go on,
Here in my West Virginia, where I was born.

This is my West Virginia, and free her sons
will always be,
We will stand behind our principles as in
1863;
Her pride will live and her strength will
grow till her mountains turn to dust;
This is my West Virginia, the land I trust.

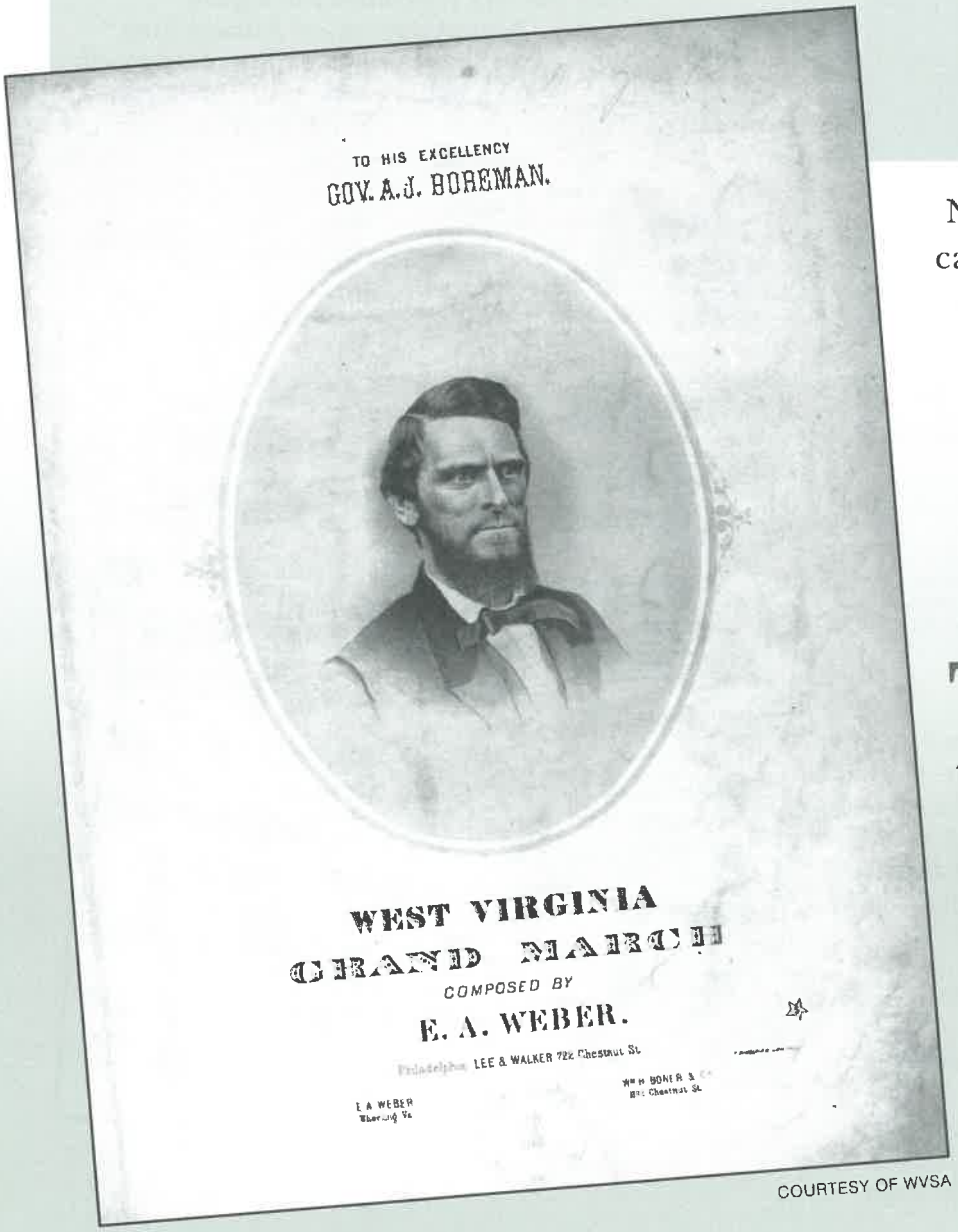
This is my West Virginia, these hills that
guard my liberty,
And her flag proclaims the legend
"Mountaineers are Always Free,"
Where e'er I go she will call to me through
the world in which I roam,
This is my West Virginia, my land, my
home.



A State of Music

Songs of Hills and Home

By Richard Ramella



COURTESY OF WVSA

Not long after West Virginia came into existence, a parade of musicians marched onto the scene, turning out melodies and lyrics to celebrate the state and its people. Today, more than 140 years later, the parade is still passing.

The effort to define the Mountain State through music hasn't let up since E.A. Weber released "West Virginia Grand March" in 1865 in Wheeling. The sheet music to that song is in the State Archives, along with a 1916 entry, "West Virginia Shore," by R. Rohrkaste.

Works celebrating West Virginia have wide range. Some are funny enough to make the proverbial dog laugh; others can reduce listeners to bittersweet tears. And there are entries in differing styles: traditional country, bluegrass, waltz, polka, swing, blues, rag, hornpipe, and rock.

Much traditional music bears the

state stamp. Fiddler Henry Reed of Glen Lyn, Virginia, was in his 80's when he performed "West Virginia Gals" for a field recording available from the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. "West Virginia Birdie" is a fiddle tune whose origins have been traced to a popular song of 1870. Some of the words include:

> Oh birdie, I am tired now.
> I do not care to hear you sing.
> You've sung your happy songs all day.
> Now put your head beneath your wing.

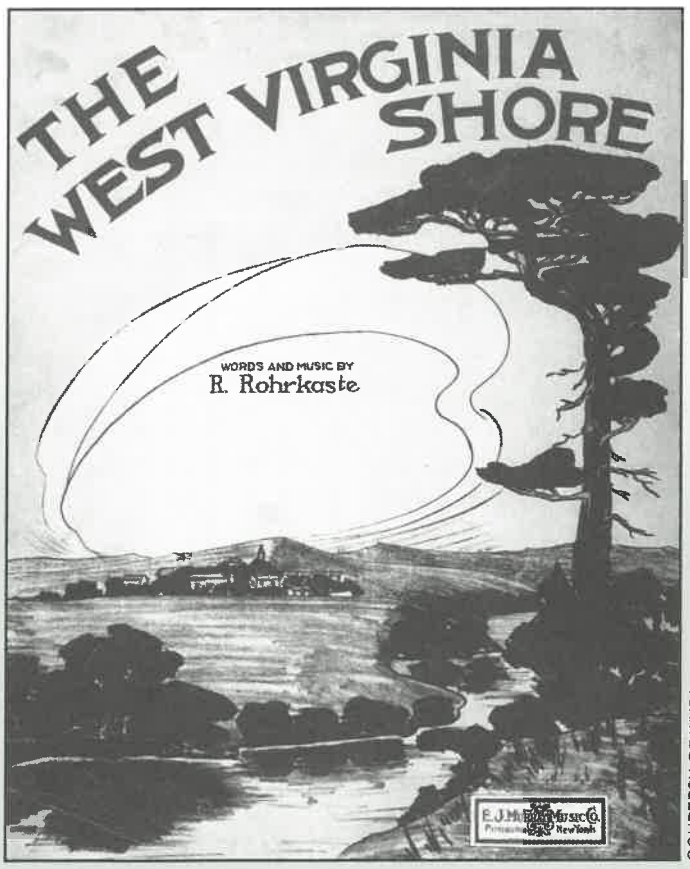
With the rise of radio, when country entertainers favored western dress, performers who reached regional audiences found it wise to tailor their music geographically. Hank Keene in 1936 performed "My Home in the West Virginia Hills." Kidd Baker, a Canadian who found his way to Wheeling, recorded "Wheeling Back to Wheeling, West Virginia," in 1952. Radio station WWVA of Wheeling featured "To You and My West Virginia Mountain Home." "From Out of the Beautiful Hills of West Virginia" was recorded by Chickie Williams, born 1919 in Bethany. She and husband Doc Williams were stalwarts on the Wheeling radio scene for years. [See "Doc Williams: A Half Century at the 'Wheeling Jamboree,'" by Ivan Tribe; Spring 1987.]

In 1951, North Carolina native Clyde Moody recorded the "West Virginia Waltz" for King Records. West Virginians Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper took their career to national prominence on the "Grand Ole Opry" radio show in Nashville and used a theme song called "West Virginia Polka" in the 1950's. The Louvin Brothers, Ira and Charlie, wrote the song. There is another "West Virginia Polka," as well. Jimmy Sturr's lively and inventive version is on the contemporary CD titled *Polkapalooza*. For dancing, it's fast enough to keep both feet in the air half the time.

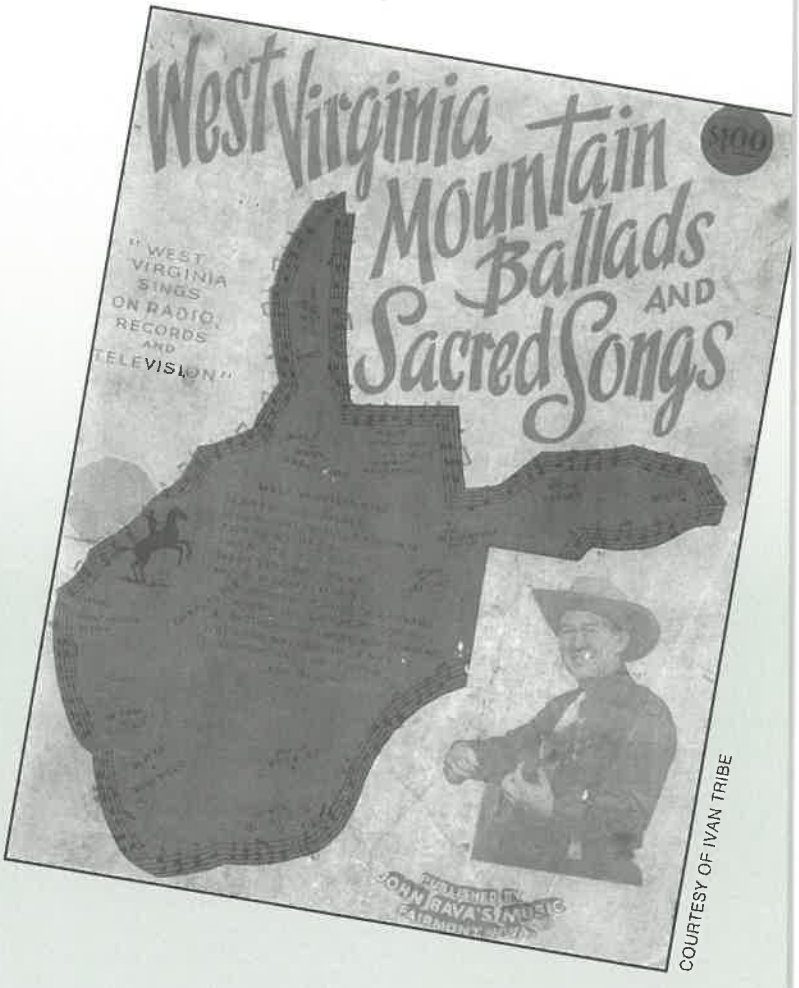
Coal mining has its music, including "The West Virginia Mine Disaster," by Jean Ritchie, a Viper, Kentucky, folk singer; "West Virginia Coal Miner's Blues" is by Beckley's Don Stover and the White Oak Mountain Boys.

School songs form a special category. Perhaps most familiar is West Virginia University's "Hail West Virginia." It goes, in part:

> It's West Virginia, It's West Virginia,
> The pride of every Mountaineer,
> Come on you old grads, join with us young lads.



COURTESY OF WVSA



COURTESY OF IVAN TRIBE

It's West Virginia now we cheer!
Rah! Rah! Rah!

Years ago, Tin Pan Alley learned a valuable lesson from Stephen Foster: Songs celebrating specific places are of lasting interest to the people of those places. There are many songs about how great it is way back in a particular state, where there is a cabin on the ridge, old folks waiting on the porch, plus the sweetest girls and the purest water, or vice-versa. Many of these songs were written by people who seldom strayed from the coastal entertainment centers.

Such a song, "I Wanna Go Back to West Virginia," still available today on CD, has survived primarily because it was recorded by musical satirist Spike Jones. Working on the West Coast in 1942, Bill Crago wrote the lyrics and Grace Shannon the melody. The song takes the viewpoint of a World War II draftee:

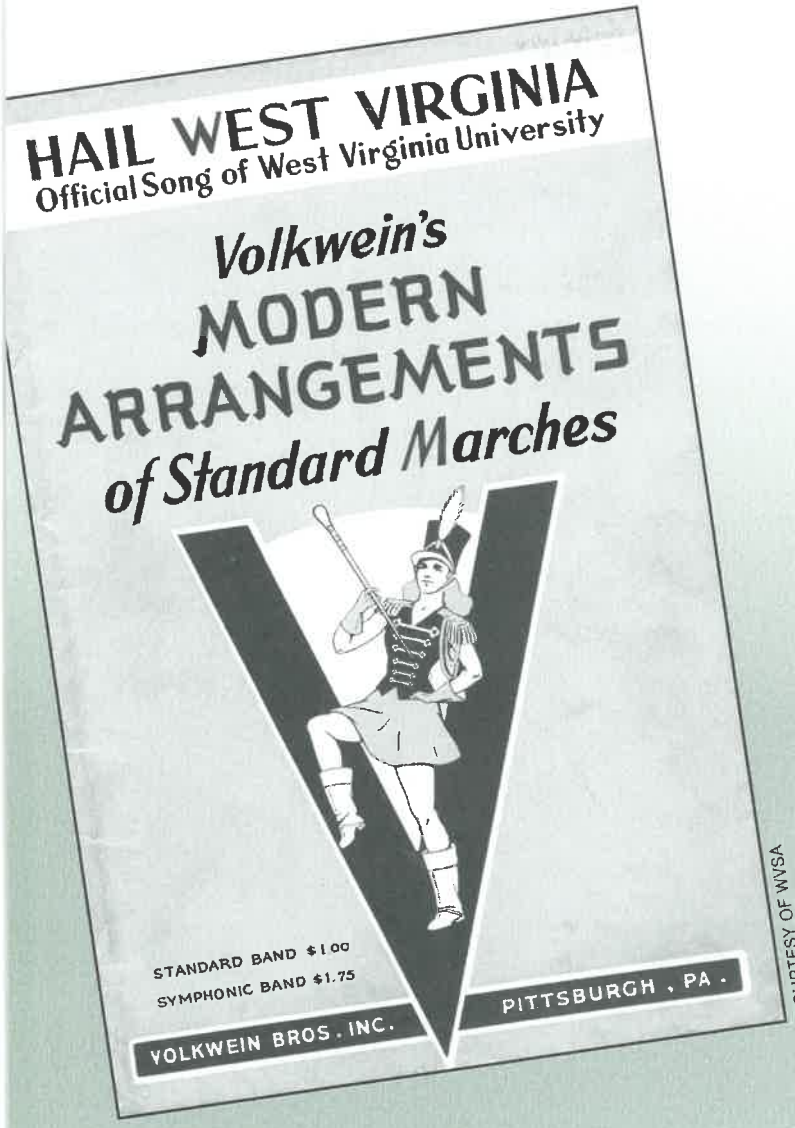
I wanna go back to West Virginia
I wanna go back to the one I love.
Where the skies are blue,
And the birds sing, too,
Take me back to West Virginia.

Spike Jones, who billed himself as the "Master of Musical Mayhem," was surprisingly gentle with the song, allowing only a few klaxons, engine noises, and train whistles to signify homeward transportation. Instead of murdering the music, he gave it a quick, cheerful presentation, dropping into Dixieland jazz near the end.

During the war, Jones made USO tours and appeared on a weekly radio show at military hospitals caring for the wounded. He said he often got requests to play "I Wanna Go Back to West Virginia" from these grateful audiences.

While "The West Virginia Hills" is a stirring state song, "The West Virginny Hills" is quite different. Marvin Moore and James Leisy's comic song appears as sheet music in a 1960's book, *Songs for Swingin' Housemothers*. It tells the story of various swains' pursuit of a girl. It starts this way:

In the hills of West Virginny,
Lived a girl named Nancy Brown.
All the boys were chasin' after her,
From many miles around.



COURTESY OF WVSA

COURTESY OF RICHARD RAMELLA

But they came rolling down the mountain,
Rolling down the mountain,
Rolling down the mountain mighty wise.
For it was kissin' they were seekin',
But she would never weaken,
And she's pure as those West Virginny skies.

There is a classic theme that reflects emotions shared by many who were born in West Virginia and were forced away. It is the lament of the economic exile. In the early 1960's, that idea became a musical genre that spoke to the dispossessed Southerner coping with Northern urban life. It's an idea that must be supremely important, for it appears to inexhaustibly radiate from the hearts of songwriters. These days, it seems the lament is less about place and more about time — the disappeared, idealized, nurturing West Virginia of youth.

Hazel Dickens' "West Virginia, My Home" is among the most touching songs of this type. [See "'West Virginia My Home': A Visit With Hazel Dickens," by John Lilly; page 32.]

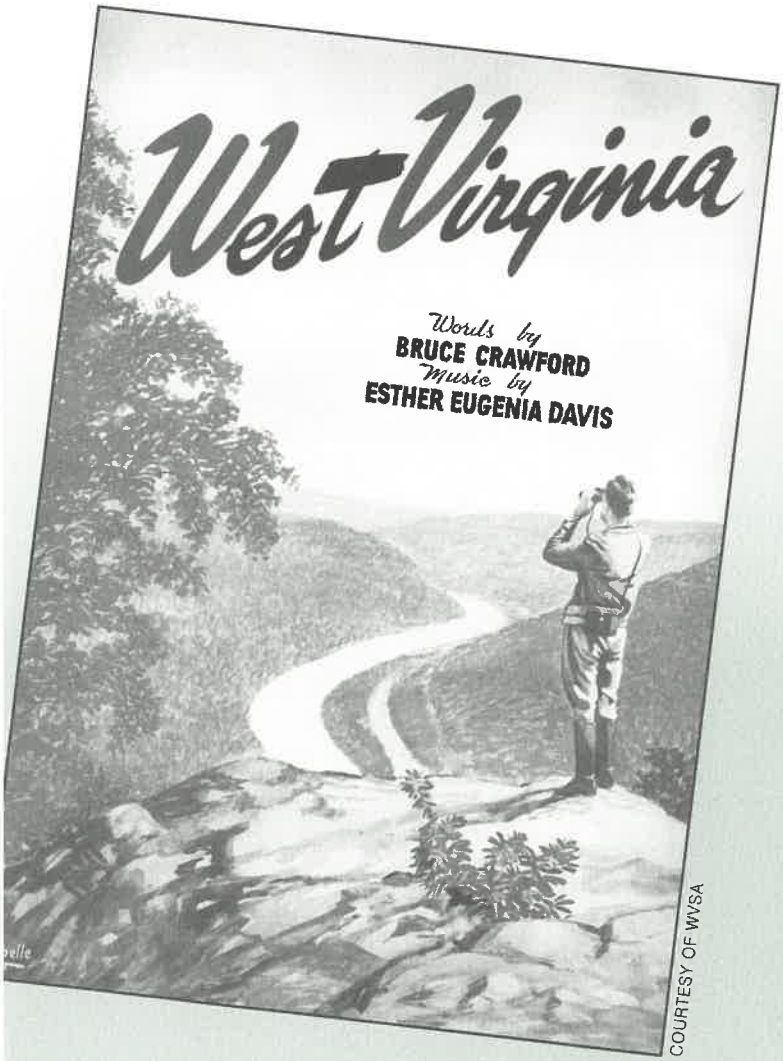
Bruce "Utah" Phillips, who lives in Nevada City, California, and champions the struggles of workers, wrote "The Green Rolling Hills of West Virginia" from the viewpoint of a miner's adult child who must migrate north to find work:

The green rolling hills of West Virginia,
Are the nearest thing to heaven that I know.
Though the times are sad and drear,
And I cannot linger here,
They'll keep me and never let me go.

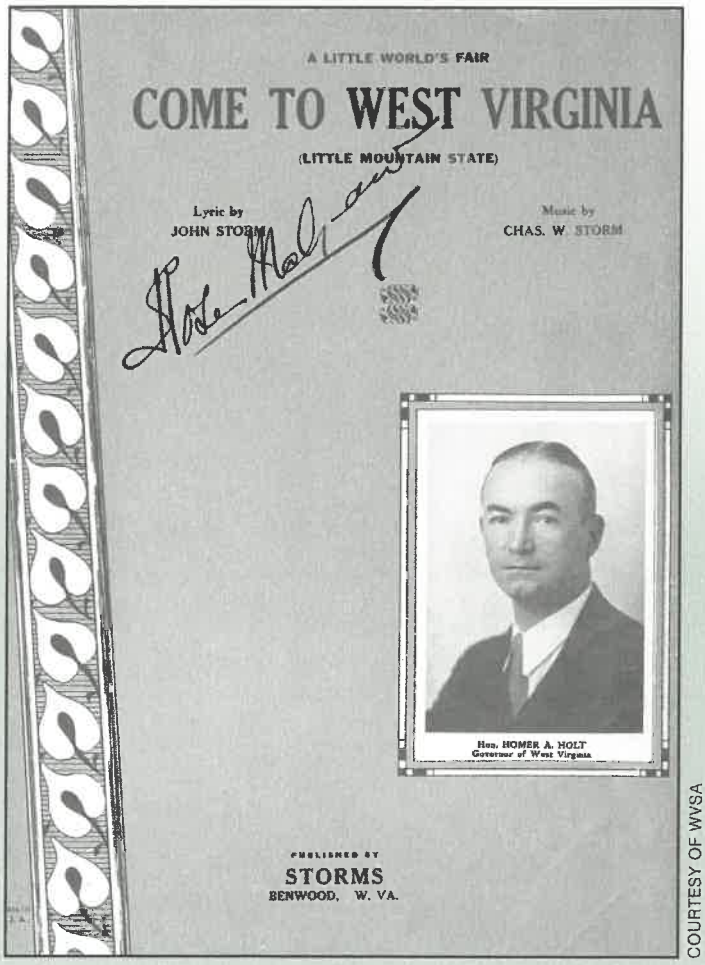
Kathy Mattea's "Leaving West Virginia" appeared on her 1989 album, *Walk the Way the Wind Blows.*

"Take Me Home, Country Roads" doesn't even mention West Virginia in the song title, but it is in a class all its own when it comes to popularity. [See "When 'Country Roads' Began: Genesis of a Mountain State Favorite," by Richard Ramella; page 29.]

And the beat goes on. Ginny Hawker and Kay Justice perform Tracy Schwarz's touching "Pathway to West Virginia" on a 1988 release by Pathway Productions. Bob Lind's "West Virginia Summer Child" is on his 1999 album, *The Best of Bob Lind.* "West Virginia Chose Me" is just one of the accomplishments of Colleen Anderson, a Charleston writer whose poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have appeared widely.



COURTESY OF WVSA



COURTESY OF WVSA

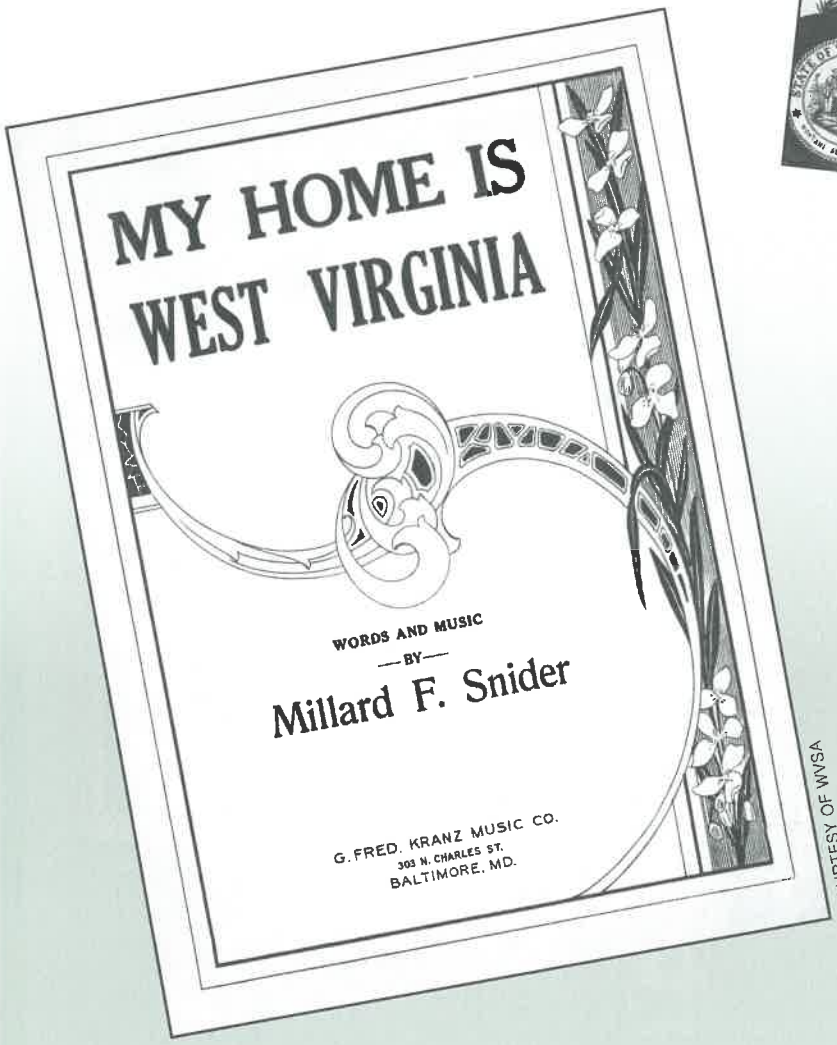
Big Wreck's 2001 album *The Pleasure and the Greed* includes a rock song called "West Virginia." A thick skin might be required to withstand the belittling humor of comedienne Judy Tenuta's "Reba and West Virginia" on the 1995 album, *In Goddess We Trust*. The Cowslingers, a Cleveland country punk rock group, maintain an infectious beat in "West Virginia Dog Track Boogie" on the 1995 album of the same name.

Holly Near, known for her songs about social justice and confrontation, on a 2002 CD called *Early Warnings*, offers "West Virginia Friend" — a peaceful consideration of friendship.

Also in 2002, in an unusual development, the West Virginia State Lottery issued a promotional CD of 17 West Virginia songs, distributing nearly 20,000 copies to lottery participants. Titled *Songs of Home*, the recording was produced locally by musician Ron Sowell and featured primarily recently written songs about the state, performed by West Virginia artists.

The parade of songs is practically endless, with more songs coming out every year. No matter what your taste in music or point of view, there is likely to be a West Virginia song for you.

COURTESY OF WVSA



COURTESY OF WVSA

When "Country Roads" Began

Genesis of a Mountain State Favorite

By Richard Ramella

COURTESY OF BILL DANOFF

The song "Take Me Home, Country Roads" evolved over one month in late 1970. It began when a young couple named Bill Danoff and Kathy "Taffy" Nivert drove from Washington, D.C., to her family reunion in Gaithersburg, Maryland. On Clopper Road, then more rural than it is today, Danoff started noodling with a song idea about traveling in the country. The earliest version had nothing to do with West Virginia.

Danoff and Nivert in those days performed as Fat City and appeared at the Cellar Door, a Washington, D.C., folk club. Singer John Denver was a rising star. By 1970, Denver had cut three albums, but he had generated no hits of his own. When he was booked into the Cellar Door that winter, he asked for Fat City as his opening act.

Following opening night on December 29, 1970, the three performers headed to Danoff and Nivert's cellar apartment to share music. There was a collision. Denver's thumb was broken, and there was a detour to a hospital to get it splinted. They finally ended up at the tiny apartment.

By this time, "Country Roads" had taken on West Virginia as its subject, inspired by an artist friend's letters that rapturously described the state's beauty.

Danoff and Nivert performed the unfinished work for Denver. "I flipped," Denver recalled. The three stayed up till 6 a.m., changing words and moving lyrics. Denver's brief participation and his vow to put the song on his next album got him co-writer credit. When they performed the song that evening, Danoff recalled, "It seemed as though the audience would never stop applauding. Next show, same thing. We knew we had a hit on our hands."

Danoff and Nivert sang backup on the recording. West Virginians loved the song, but some grumbled about geographical miscues. The referred-to Blue Ridge Mountains elude the Mountain State by several miles, and the Shenandoah River is usually associated with Virginia, though it does touch Harpers Ferry.

The poetry of the song pushed emotional buttons, however, and the state basked in reflected glory as the song became John Denver's first hit song in 1971. It has since been adopted as an unofficial state anthem. It is played by marching bands, sung by school choruses, and was even used recently by the West Virginia Division of Tourism as a theme song to attract visitors.

Denver sang the song in Morgantown when Mountaineer Field was dedicated on September 6, 1980. After a sterling career, Denver died October 12, 1997, in a crash of his experimental plane into California's Monterey Bay.

Danoff and Nivert went on to form the Starland Vocal Band, which enjoyed a 1970's hit "Afternoon Delight" and a brief CBS-TV show. The couple later parted. Today, Danoff and wife Joan own the Starland Cafe in Washington, D.C.

"Take Me Home, Country Roads" may not have started life as a West Virginia song, but it clearly is here to stay. For more information, visit www.billdanoff.com.

"Salt Pork, West Virginia"

A Musical Mystery Solved

By Bill Archer and Richard Ramella

A West Virginia town called Salt Pork is world-famous through the music of Louis Jordan, a singer and saxophonist whose Tympany Five produced some of the biggest hits of its era. There is no such place as Salt Pork. And yet there is, in a way — Bluefield, where Jordan got into a bit of trouble with the law in the early 1940's.

The jump blues song "Salt Pork, West Virginia," mentions the Mercer County town and addresses a real person. The lyrics begin:

> McNeal, McNeal, don't steal my
> automobile;
> I'll take you to a café and buy you a
> really fine meal.
> Hey, Jack, I got to do some ridin'.
> Soon we gotta come to a dividin'.
> I don't want to continue,
> 'Cause the sign says Salt Pork,
> West Virginia.

The "Jack" here isn't meant as a proper name; the common equivalent would be "buddy." The "McNeal" of the lyrics was Wallace W. "Squire" McNeal, a Bluefield justice of the peace from 1920 until his 1944 death. McNeal and Jordan met after Constable J. Earl Bailey pulled over the musician's car and accused Jordan of speeding.

Jordan was already well-known at the time. The Arkansas native's first records appeared in 1938. By 1943, he had made the charts with highly danceable rhythm 'n' blues and novelty tunes. By the peak of his career, he had appeared in Hollywood films, recorded with Bing Crosby, and taken his band to top venues around the nation.

From the collections of the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University.

Popular Jordan songs included "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens," "Caldonia," "Choo-Choo Ch'boogie," and "Stone Cold Dead in the Market," recorded with Ella Fitzgerald. Decca Records also released "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't (My Baby)?" which became a giant hit and a catch phrase.

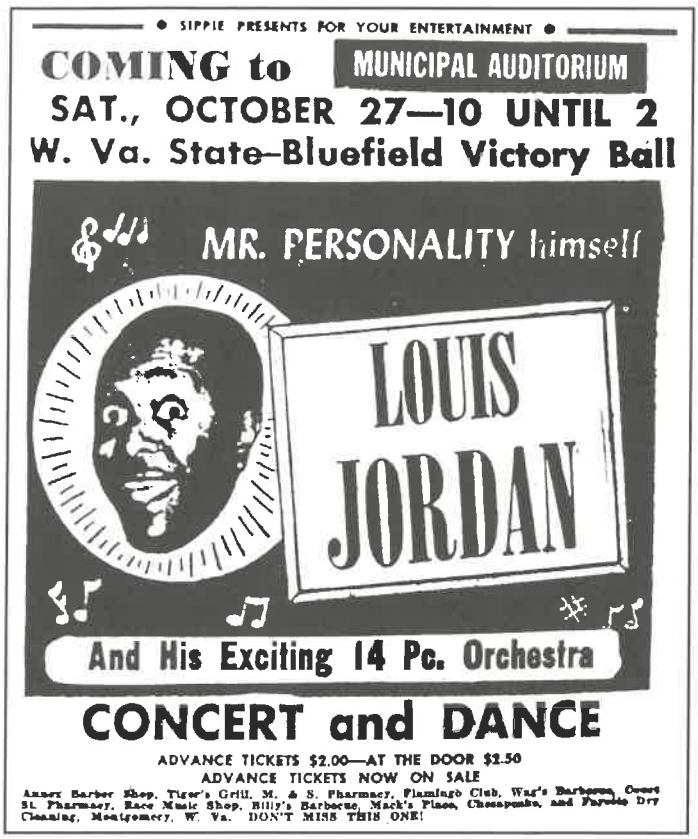
Jordan's presence in Bluefield was no fluke. Even top performers were willing to dot the map with profitable one-night stands between larger engagements. When Constable Bailey did his duty, Jordan was headed to a show.

What happened next led to the song. It was Jordan's story but the musical creation of William Tennyson, Jr., a 22-year-old New Orleans composer. The song was recorded July 16, 1945, in New York City. The lyrics included this plea to McNeal:

> Don't steal my wheels.
> I'll buy you anything on the
> menu.
> I'm sorry, I got to go to Salt
> Pork, West Virginia.
> And that's where my
> baby lives.

In a section patterned after a bus or train station announcement, Jordan calls out: "Philadelphia...Washington... Alexandria...Richmond... Norfolk...Bluefield... Where?" Then he sings the final words: "Salt Pork, West Virginia."

Southern West Virginians were intrigued by the lyrics, and myths about the song have persisted for six decades. Some maintain Salt Pork was a name for Keystone, once the site of a notorious red-light district in McDowell County. [See



The Charleston Gazette, October 19, 1951.

"Cinder Bottom: A Coalfields Red-Light District," by Jean Battlo; Summer 1994.] Other stories have Jordan and his entire band put in jail, where they were fed salt pork for breakfast. The bandleader is reported to have said he would never return to "this salt-pork town." Not true.

The truth is much kinder — to Jordan, McNeal, and Bluefield itself. And the person who shares that truth is Nancy M. Byrd, McNeal's niece. He told her and other family members the story the day after the event, and she relayed the information in a letter from her home in Carlsbad, California.

Following the traffic stop, Jordan was taken before McNeal and told his car might be impounded to cover bail. Nancy Byrd says the musician and the Tympany Five were on their way to the Bluefield Inn, "the nearest thing we had to a nightclub, in those days," she says. "But how was he to get there with no car?"

Jordan had a disarming manner, and he put it to work in court. Byrd relates, "He began to joke with Uncle, and both of them — having a great sense of humor — found things to laugh about. It was decided the car would not be impounded. ...He could proceed on with the promise to leave the area when his performance was ended. Louis offered to buy the squire the best meal 'Salt Pork, West Virginia,' had to offer. When that was refused, he said when he got home, he said he would write a song to McNeal [about] his experience, which he did. He had no idea how close he was to spending the night in the Bluefield jail."

No court record has been found of a charge against Jordan. McNeal died 11 months before the song was recorded. John Chilton's Jordan biography *Let the Good Times Roll* (University of Michigan Press, 1994) mentions the song only briefly. In a personal letter, Chilton quoted a Jordan interview, in which Jordan explained that the title of the song referred to a hotel where the musicians stayed. "Everytime we came into town, that's what they had: greens and salt pork. So we called it 'Salt Pork, West Virginia,'" Jordan said. No mention was made of a court appearance.

The experience didn't sour Jordan's taste for Bluefield. He maintained connections there. Promoter Ralph Weinberg, of Bluefield, for several years arranged bookings in the South for the Jordan group, and Jordan employed Bluefield attorney Jerome Katz to draw up the agreements.

Jordan died in 1975 at his Los Angeles home. His popularity had waned with the ascent of rock 'n' roll. Yet, later musicians credit his innovations with paving the way for the new music. And along the way, Jordan good-naturedly created a West Virginia town that appears only on the landscape of admired American music.

BILL ARCHER is senior writer for the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

RICHARD RAMELLA is a freelance writer born in Maitland, McDowell County. His first newspaper job was with the *Welch Daily News*. He has worked as a writer, photographer, designer, and editor for 13 newspapers and published a computer magazine for nine years. Richard currently lives in Centralia, Washington. This is his fifth contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Listen to the Music

For more information about musician Louis Jordan or to obtain copies of his recordings, visit www.louisjordan.com. Information about "Take Me Home, Country Roads" can be found at www.billdanoff.com. For purchase information or sound clips for "West Virginia, My Home" and other Hazel Dickens recordings, go to www.rounder.com and search under artist "Hazel Dickens."

Other West Virginia songs mentioned in this issue, as well as countless additional West Virginia titles, can be obtained or excerpts accessed through the magic of your home computer and the Internet. Writer Richard Ramella is quite familiar with such things and has kindly prepared an extensive list of Web sites and links, which should take you and your mouse wherever you need to go.

To view this useful list, visit our Web site at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal, click on the Summer 2004 issue, and look for "Listen to the Music." Happy surfing!

"West Virginia, My Home"

A Visit With Hazel Dickens

Interview by John Lilly

Hazel Dickens today at her home in Washington, D.C. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

Songwriter and performer Hazel Dickens is among the most respected and celebrated folk or country music artists to come from West Virginia. She has recorded 11 albums, contributed to the soundtracks of nine feature films or videos — including such popular releases as Matewan *and* Songcatcher *— and has seen her songs recorded by artists such as Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, New Riders of the Purple Sage, Hot Rize, and others. Among the many honors and awards she has received is the prestigious National Heritage Fellowship, presented to her by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2001.*

Born in 1935 near Montcalm, Mercer County, Hazel was among 11 children born to Hilary Nathan Dickens and Sarah Aldora Simpkins Dickens. The pair were originally from Floyd and Carroll counties in Virginia and migrated to southern West Virginia in

search of work. Through injury, a declining economy, and personal hardship, however, times grew tough for the family. Hazel eventually left, as did the majority of her siblings and her parents.

Using her songs and her undeniable mountain singing, Hazel became a forceful voice in labor and political movements and an articulate spokesperson for mining and women's issues. Songs such as "Black Lung," "They'll Never Keep Us Down," "Coal Mining Woman," and "Mannington Mining Disaster" focused widespread attention on West Virginia's economic and social concerns, while "A Few Old Memories," "Mama's Hand," and "Working Girl Blues" gained her a national audience and recalled her Mercer County upbringing.

Curiously, all of these songs were written after Hazel left West Virginia for Baltimore, and later, Washington, D.C. Driven to the city by economic necessity, Hazel never abandoned her mountain roots. This strong attachment finds expression in many of her songs, but none more so than her anthem, "West Virginia, My Home." Recorded and performed by numerous artists over the years, it is considered an unofficial "state song" in some corners. It is also a theme song for Hazel, who sings it — passionately — every time she appears in public.

I had the opportunity to visit with Hazel Dickens at her home in Washington, D.C., in June 2003, where we discussed this song and her beloved West Virginia home. —ed.

Hazel's parents Hilary and Sarah Dickens during the 1940's.

John Lilly. Were all 11 of those children at home at one time?

Hazel Dickens. I doubt at one time, because they married young. My oldest sister married at 15, and my oldest brother married at probably 17, 18, 19 — married very young. Of course, they quit school at a young age. One sister married at 16, and one sister married about 19. Some of the boys married later.

JL. Did you appreciate this home when you were young, or could you not wait to get out of there? Do you remember what your thoughts were?

HD. Well, in the beginning, I don't think we were thinking of getting out of there, you know. I don't think we knew what "getting out of there" meant. I don't think we had anything to compare it to. Of course, there was no television or anything like that and, most of the time, not even a radio. It depended on what was happening there or what my father got into, you know, to work at. At one time, he was hauling timber for the mines. In the prime years, he was doing pretty good. But the more broke-down that he got where he couldn't do that heavy lifting and stuff, things started to go downhill with all the last children that come along.

The first children didn't have it all that bad. There

Young Hazel with guitar during one of her frequent visits home during the 1950's.

Hazel was one of 11 children in the Dickens family. She is shown here, standing at the far left during a family visit in the 1950's. In the front, with guitar, is brother John. Hazel's brother Arnold is at the center, and sister Sally stands at the right. Next to Hazel is her niece Hattie. Mother Sarah stands behind Arnold in the back row at the center.

was generally stock around, you know. I mean livestock, and a garden. A lot of the times, we lived out in the country. And if we didn't, we would live right outside of town. We never lived right in the coal camp because [my father] was not a coal miner. And the coal miners got the houses, the company houses. But once that period was over, he started to go downhill, getting whatever work that he could, 'cause he couldn't deal with that timber anymore. He couldn't lift.

JL. He was injured?

HD. He had a double rupture, and he would not have it operated on. And so he began doing things like hauling coal for people and moving people. He had the boys, you know, the young strapping boys that were like over six feet tall, so he could always take a couple of them with him. And I imagine, too, it wasn't just a matter of not being able to lift. I imagine it was when the mines around there closed down, you know. I don't know if he was that enterprising, or not, to just keep going for months and months. I imagine he did for a while, but then after that, he would do whatever he could to make a living. I imagine he was moving people or hauling coal to houses, or later on, he became a tenant farmer.

JL. Would he move the family around a lot during that time?

HD. Yes. Yeah, we always moved around a lot. And, gosh, I mean I can remember — how many places we moved? There were so many. One, two, three, four, five, six — I can remember six right off the top of my head without even hardly thinking.

JL. So, tell me about leaving there. Do you remember the day you left?

HD. Uh, I remember. I remember kind of, not really. I wanted to go 'cause I wanted to get a job. But I was trying to gather what my feelings were like when I was thinking about the actual walking out the door.

JL. So this must have built up. You were getting to an age where you felt like you needed to find work.

HD. We were poor as church mice. Pa was poor.

Hazel, at right, with her older sister Velzie Woolwine in Baltimore during the 1950's. Hazel lived with her sister when she first moved to the city.

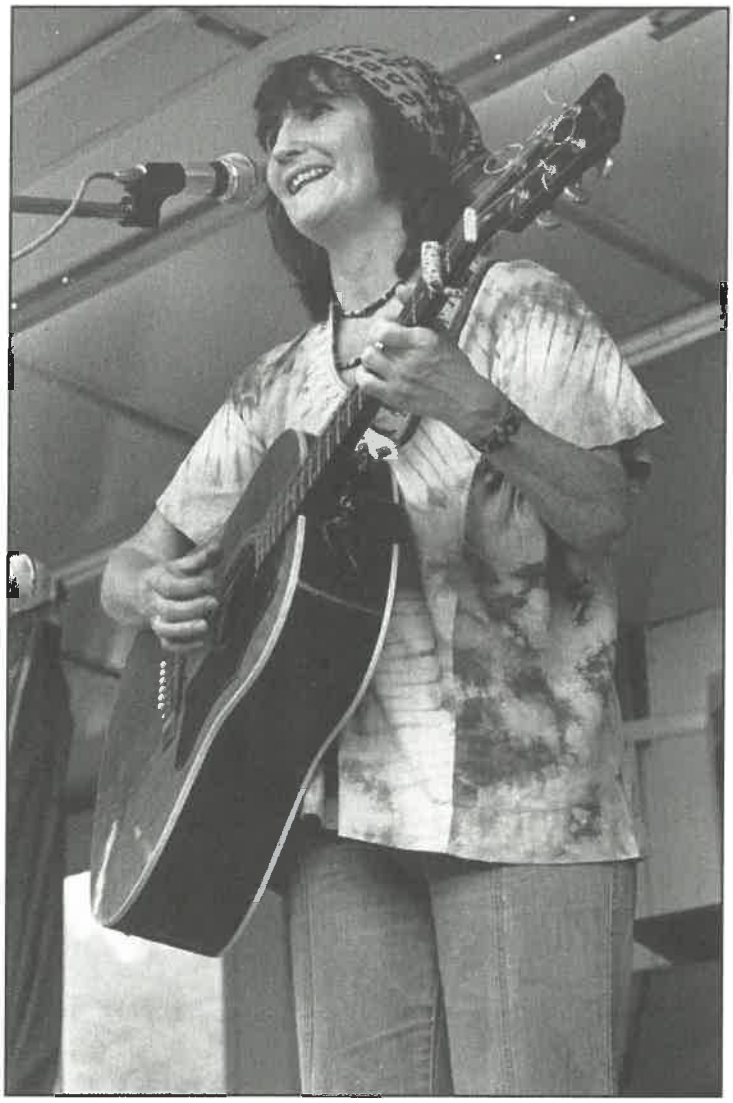
JL. You were about 15 or 16?

HD. I was just turning 16 and was not old enough to get a job. You had to have work papers in order to get a job, and I couldn't get them until I was 17. I guess I kind of would do babysitting or anything I could do just to get by. When I first went to Baltimore, my sister had a young kid. He was two years old. So I could stay there until I got 17 and keep him.

JL. Tell me more about when you actually left. Did you get on a train? Did you take a car?

HD. Well, I had some relatives that came back and forth. One time after that, I got on a Greyhound. But by that time, it was relatives that drove me away. My brother would come back at times, and my sister would come back at times. She was always trying to get me to leave. I could remember many times coming back and forth with my brother and visiting after I left, so I know he had a car. And my sister, she bought a new car. She got a job in the factory, so she was coming back. So, it was always people coming or going from Baltimore. ...They wouldn't let me go there at first. But, when [my sister] finally got through to them, my father finally consented to let me go.

I guess I expected a lot of things to be different, you know. But there were just plain old apartments, old row houses, you know. It was not any grand thing. I don't know what I thought. I was just thinking, you know, go and make a lot of money, and buy all these nice clothes, and everything. When you got finished working, there was not that much left.



Hazel Dickens performs at the Appalachian People's Festival at Camp Virgil Tate, Kanawha County, in August 1975. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

JL. Do you recall thinking that you'd make some money and go back home with it, or did you think that you'd stay there once you left?

HD. No, no. I think I was just thinking of going to visit. But I don't know if I really thought about it at that point. I don't know if I got that far. Because, see, by that time, we had gotten so destitute that it was either I do that, or we had nothing. Because at that point, my father couldn't work anymore.

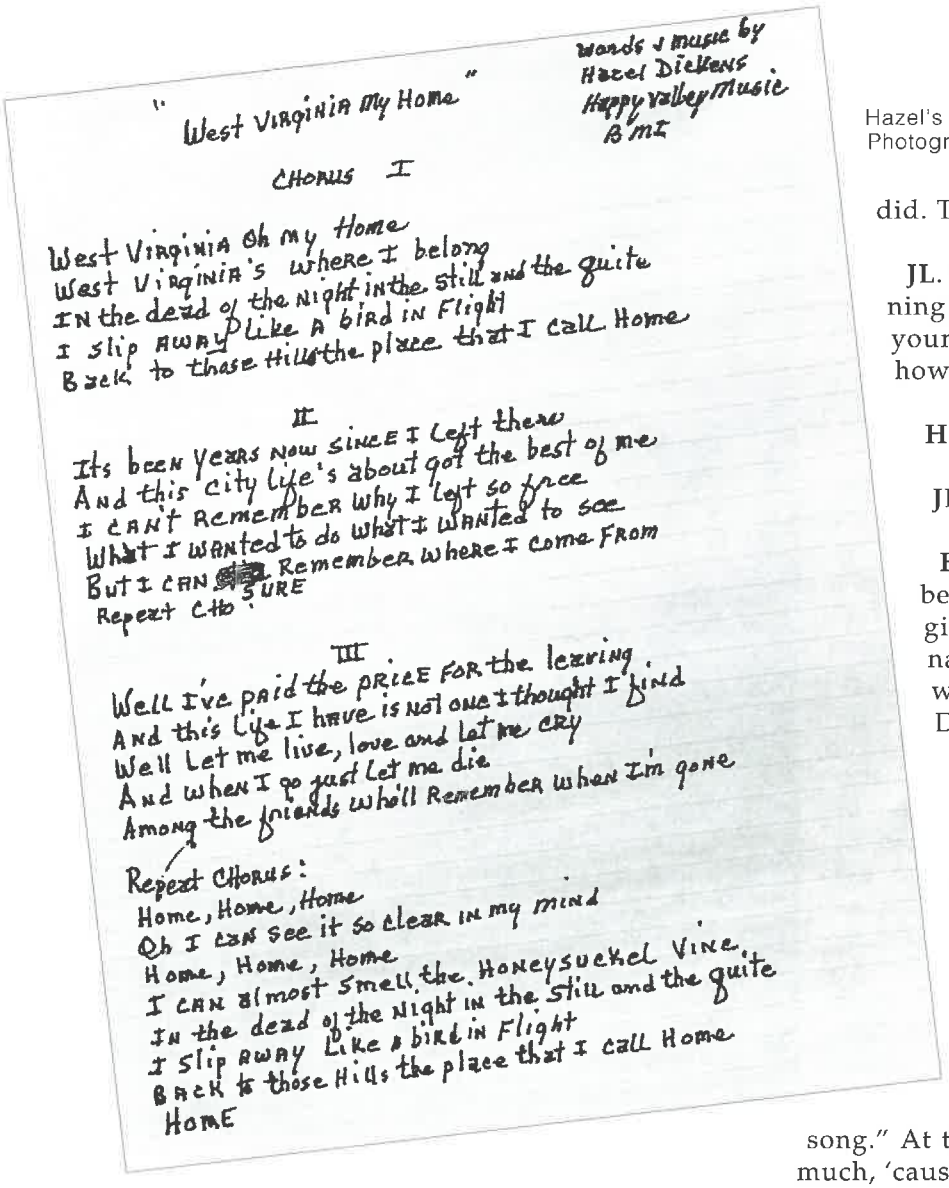
I can remember not having a coat one winter and having to stay in the house. It was stuff like that. I had to quit school 'cause I didn't have clothes to wear. So it was a matter of staying there with nothing or going to get a job and having, you know, having clothes to wear, get a guitar, buy my guitar — which I did — and all that stuff, you know. I would not have had anything if I had stayed there. Most of the time, we didn't have enough to really eat. We had bare minimum, as far as food is concerned.

JL. Were you homesick when you got to Baltimore?

HD. I think so, yeah. I think I was. I think it was so different that I had a pretty hard time adjusting and just trying to figure everything out. I was terribly shy and very, very unsocialized. I don't think there was anybody that I could think of that was as unprepared as I was to go to a big city, you know. I know people say that a lot of times, but we were kept at home. We weren't allowed to get out. Even at school, when I was in school, they wouldn't allow me to go to a lot of picnics or stuff like that. I might have went to one or two the whole time I was at school. They were very strict on us.

JL. Did you live with relatives when you first arrived in Baltimore?

HD. Oh yeah, with my older sister, with her husband and her little boy, who I babysat until I got a job.



"West Virginia My Home"

Words & music by
Hazel Dickens
Happy Valley Music
BMI

CHORUS I

West Virginia Oh my Home
West Virginia's where I belong
IN the dead of the NIGHT in the still and the quite
I slip AWAY like A BIRD IN Flight
Back to those hills the place that I call Home

II

Its been YEARS NOW SINCE I Left there
And this city life's about got the best of me
I CAN't Remember Why I left so free
What I WANTED to do what I WANTED to see
But I CAN Remember WHERE I come FROM
Repeat CHO SURE

III

Well I've paid the PRICE FOR the learning
And this Life I have is NOT ONE I thought I find
Well Let me live, love and let me CRY
And when I go just Let me die
Among the friends who'll Remember when I'm gone

Repeat CHORUS:
Home, Home, Home
Oh I CAN See it so clear IN my mind
Home, Home, Home
I CAN almost Smell the HONEYSUCKEL VINE.
IN the dead of the NIGHT IN the Still and the quite
I slip AWAY Like A BIRD IN Flight
BACK to those HILLS the place that I call Home
HOME

Hazel's handwritten lyrics, used by permission. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

I did her work, did some of her housework, and cooked for them, cooked supper for them. But no, I wouldn't have gone if it had been me to go on my own. I would have been much too inhibited, much too shy to do that. I wouldn't have known what to do, 'cause I did not have that expertise, like people learned later on when they went to school, you know. They learned certain social skills, but we didn't. We didn't see anybody else.

JL. So this would have been about 1951 or '52?

HD. Almost up to '54. When I had met Mike [Seeger] about '54, I had just gotten a job, and I didn't know anybody.

JL. So, you were there for a couple of years before you really even met anybody other than your family.

HD. It was sort of like a hillbilly ghetto, you know. We didn't know anybody outside of the people that came from back there [in the mountains]. And they moved up there [to Baltimore] like we did. That's about it.

JL. So, when do you remember first beginning work on a song about West Virginia being your home? You want to talk a little bit about how those first words came down?

HD. Well, I think it was a long time, yeah.

JL. It was years afterwards.

HD. Yeah, yeah, and I don't even know the beginning. I'm trying to think when the beginning of it was. The idea probably originated there in Baltimore, 'cause I didn't write it until I was here [in Washington, D.C.].

JL. When did you move to D.C.?

HD. '69, beginning of '70, 'cause I moved in the spring up here. But, I didn't write it all at one time. It just kind of sat there. The chorus came actually pretty quick, yeah. But the rest of it didn't for a while. It just kind of sat there in my book. I was thumbing through one time, and somebody saw the words and said, "You better finish this. It looks like a good song." At the time, I didn't want to dwell on it too much, 'cause I didn't know where to take it. I guess I didn't want to deal with those feelings.

The first verse, I think, came about by the differences between people, you know, the people that you met, which is different than us. People looked down upon us as hillbillies, you know. They just did (laughter). No matter what you did or how much you tried to clean up your act or be like city people, they still looked upon you as hillbillies, and that always bothered me. We were so used to our bunch. I couldn't see what was wrong with us (laughter). I think it began out of some of those feelings, the differences.

The second verse came because I became disillusioned with some friends. I didn't feel like they were as loyal as the people I had known back home. I realized later, much later, what some of the differences were, [that] they were not able to express themselves like the people I grew up with. They weren't Southern. A lot of people don't know what you are talking about when you say that, but there really is a difference. A lot of Southern people are very expressive. They're very emotional, about even friends. It don't even have to be relatives, you know. They could express how they felt, where a lot of Northern people didn't. They were a little bit cool or laid back or

unemotional about how they expressed themselves, or how they showed their feelings, or how they felt about the friendship, whatever they felt for you. They didn't know that, but it came across to a Southern person who had been used to a lot of closeness, neighborliness, [and] comradery in other people you grew up with.

It's like I used to say, you could grow up in the city right next to somebody, and you could die or they could die, and they'd never know it. Somebody would tell you so-and-so passed, and you wouldn't know it. [If] you had a relative lived close by or something like that as your neighbor, or somebody that grew up where you did, then they would always be over there. You could always tell the difference. I know the second verse was because I was disillusioned. I didn't feel that same comradery that I did back home.

For people who did not have that outlet, or other friends or other places to go or things to do, you could get very lonely. You go out and sit on your steps — the stoop, as they call it — everybody going somewhere, you know, up and down the street, and you were just sitting there. You had nowhere to go. You would sit there wondering where they were going, what's going on, 'cause you didn't know that many people.

Usually if somebody moved up [from West Virginia], if they asked you about an apartment for them, you would try to get them an apartment near where you were, you know. Or if you knew them, you'd try and get an apartment where they lived, so you would have somebody that you could go visit or come visit you, or go eat with them, or they'd come eat with you.

I can remember the one building that we lived in, these people, they moved in. They were from the same place that we were from, or at least from West Virginia, you know. And we'd get up and have breakfast together. We'd go to their apartment, and they'd come to our apartment. We were just tickled to death that they were there (laughter). We just couldn't believe it, you know, that it was almost like a family. When you'd go out, you went out together. You didn't go down the street and say, "I'm so-and-so. Would you like to come over tonight?" We just didn't do that. You stayed with your own kind (laughter).

Hazel completed the song "West Virginia, My Home" in about 1972 and first recorded it on an album titled Hazel & Alice, *with singer Alice Gerrard (Rounder 0027), released in 1973. Hazel re-recorded the song in 1980, with her own band and with a slower tempo and a more emotive feeling. This version was included on an album titled* Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People *(Rounder 0126). Following this release, Hazel began performing the song regularly in public, to enthusiastic audiences.*

JL. The people in West Virginia really love that song.

HD. You know, there's a lot of feeling went into that song. No matter where I go or where I live, I have always identified with West Virginia as my home, no matter what. And some people used to kind of look askance at me at for saying [that]. When anybody asked me, without a minute's hesitation, I have always been like that. And they said, "But you don't live there, and you haven't lived there." I said, "Well, what does that matter?" I said, "You identify with where you are from, wherever it is." And I said, "That's the place I always identified as being from, and that's it" (laughter). I said, "I don't apologize for it." I said, "That's where my home base was."

JL. And still is, I gather.

HD. And still is.

JOHN LILLY is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

"No matter where I go or where I live," Hazel says, "I have always identified with West Virginia as my home, no matter what." Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

Guy and Lorene Kelley at their home near Bloomingrose, Boone County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Guy Kelley

The Beekeeper of Bloomingrose

By Kathy O. Smith Hundley

Guy's father Guy Mason Kelley, Sr., got his son interested in beekeeping more than 55 years ago. Here, Guy, Sr., is pictured with a pair of hives in Boone County in 1968.

One recent Memorial Day weekend, our family traveled from Ohio to West Virginia for a reunion. While we were there, we decided to pay a visit to Lorene and Guy Kelley, my sister-in-law and her husband, who live up Toney's Branch, past Bloomingrose, Boone County.

Guy Kelley is 70 now. He has been making beehives, keeping bees, and collecting honey for more than 55 years. "It was really my dad Guy Mason Kelley, how I got into beekeeping," Guy told us. "He had two or three hives of bees, and us kids would help him. We were living basically right here where we're at, only the next house up. I'm the only one of the kids got into beekeeping. The others, they won't mess with bees. They're even afraid of the honey!"

Guy's dad told him that their ancestors were probably Dutch and Irish, and they were all coal miners. Guy worked in the coal mines about 12 years. After a tour of duty in the Army, Guy married Lorene Hundley of Packsville, Raleigh County. The couple lived in Chicago for a few years, then moved to Elyria, Ohio, where Guy worked in a foundry. While in Ohio, Guy started back into bees. He had about 37 hives there.

"I lived right in the back row of a bunch of houses. I had a lot of property in behind me, so it didn't bother people too much," Guy recalled. "But anytime anyone got stung, it was Kelley's bees! I worked at a foundry there for 15 years. Then I got sick, and it was cancer of the stomach. They cut out 65% of my stomach, and it still gives me problems sometimes with eating. I was put on permanent disability, and I had to cease all kind of work.

"That's when I moved my wife Lorene and our six children back to Bloomingrose, up Toney's Branch, at

Guy dons a protective suit before working with his bees. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Guy emerges from a nearby cornfield with a swarm of captured bees in 2001.

the head of the holler, where my folks and sister were still living. I brought all my bees and beekeeping supplies with me, and I set up my hives again. Been doing it ever since."

While we visited, the sun was shining, and Guy was standing out in his yard staring up at one of his fruit trees. Bees filled the air. "Look up yonder," Guy said. "The bees are swarming. The hive was getting overcrowded, so they made some new queens so the old queen could leave and take a bunch of those bees with her."

The queen must have stopped right there on that branch, because there was a reddish-orange mass about the size of a large football hanging on the notch of a branch and extending on up. It was nothing but bees on top of bees, crawling all over each other, alighting on each other, and drooping down like candle wax. "I'm thinking about catching that swarm and getting them to set up in one of my empty hives," Guy said.

Over on the hillside behind him, I could see three tidy rows of white wooden boxes, some of them with cinder blocks on top, some of them stacked two or three high. It looked like he had about 30 or 40 hives there, surrounded by an electric fence and floodlights. Guy said that there were other hives about to swarm, too. But this swarm was convenient because it had stopped on his property and in a low tree. "The other bees," he said, "there is no telling where they will light. If it was on top of a 100-foot-tall tree on a steep hillside somewhere down the holler, then I might just have to let them go. I don't climb them trees no more."

It was nothing but bees on top of bees, crawling all over each other, alighting on each other, and drooping down like candle wax.

Pretty soon, Guy decided what he was going to do. He disappeared into his bee shed and came back out, covered up in white from head to foot by his bee suit and elbow-length gloves. His face and neck were shrouded by a yellow, square, mesh veil attached to one of his camouflage hunting caps, and he wore leather boots. He carried an extension ladder, which he leaned up against the tree below the swarm. Then, he got an empty hive, placed it on the grass to the side of the ladder, and laid a white cloth in front of the hive. Lorene found some oily rags. Guy lit them and made sure they were burning good. Then, he extinguished the flames and put the smoldering rags inside the metal canister of a hand-held smoker. Attached to the side of the canister was a set of accordion-type bellows. Guy squeezed the bellows a few times to make sure a good jet of smoke was coming out of the spout.

Checking to see that his snippers were in his right hip pocket, he climbed up the ladder toward the buzzing, furry swarm of bees, holding a bow saw in one hand. Guy snipped away the extra branches

Lorene Kelley uses a smoker and a great deal of patience to drive a captured swarm of bees into their new home. This snapshot was taken in Ohio, probably in the late 1960's.

and twigs until the swarm was exposed. The bees, meanwhile, seemed unconcerned, busily walking all over each other as others kept arriving, filling the air with whirling insects. Guy took hold of the uppermost part of the branch with his left hand and started to cut through the main branch about a foot below the swarm. It came away in his hand, and there he was, holding a live swarm of bees at arm's length. He laid the bow saw up in the tree and ever-so-carefully started back down the ladder, holding the swarm aloft like a prize.

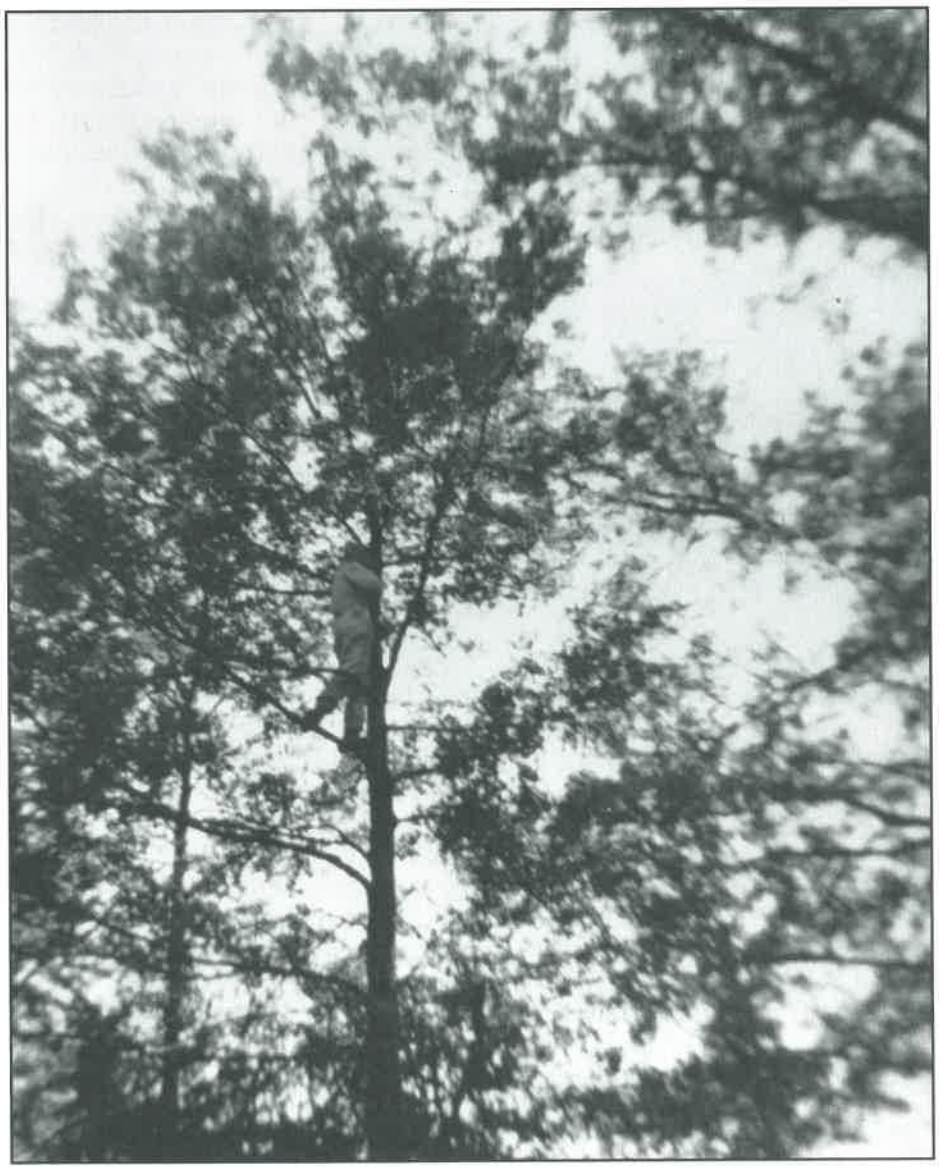
Guy gently laid the lumpy, buzzing three-foot section of forked branch onto the white cloth in front of the hive. Lorene stood safely back and started squeezing the bellows, creating a smoke screen behind the bees, trying to herd them toward the hive opening. Wave after wave of bees started walking into the horizontal opening at the base of the hive, and the huge pile of bees gradually got smaller. Bees were now crowding all over the hive, and Guy gently shooed them toward the front opening, using the smoker.

In a while, the white cloth in front of the hive was practically empty. The bees were staying inside the hive, so Guy was pretty sure the queen bee was in there, too. Carefully holding the hive away from his body, Guy lifted it and carried it up the hill. He had already chosen a place for it and had put down a couple of 2x4's to keep the hive up off the damp ground. He placed the hive, put a cinder block on top of it to hold the lid on, then put a mason jar of sugar water upside down by the hive opening. Bees started crawling over to the jar and started drinking. They would use this for nectar so the queen would start laying eggs, Guy explained.

He took up the smoker again to make sure the bees stayed by the hive and used the feeder. He wanted them to learn that this was their new home, so they would return to it when they next would go out to gather pollen and nectar. Finally, Guy was satisfied.

With the swarm captured and settled into their hive, Guy and I sat and talked. I asked him if the holler had changed much since he grew up there. "I remember when there was only three cars on the whole holler," he said. "Wasn't no power, was no gas,

Guy Kelley in Ohio, 1973. Guy and Lorene returned to their home in Boone County in 1977 after he developed health problems.



Guy captures a swarm of bees from a tall tree in Ohio in 1969.

was no telephone, and I seen ruts in the road there big enough you could almost get lost in 'em, where them big logging trucks was just hauling up and down the dirt roads.

"Don't remember my grampa," he continued. "Never did know him. Now my ma's mom, I was around her several years. She was just real strict, you know, the way the old-timers were. She didn't allow the kids to go too far away from home, so she could keep an eye on us. We had to mind her."

I asked him about the first jobs he had when he was a kid. "When I was young," he recalled, "I used to help a couple guys around here. They built houses and sold them or built houses and rented them. They was Lonzo and Alferd McClung, lived right around Bloomingrose and Racine. They started me off at 50 cents a hour, but it didn't take too long before they put me up to a dollar an hour. And a couple springs there, I helped a man named Roy Belcher to plow fields, you know, for garden spots. And before I went into the Army, I worked for Montgomery Wards down in Charleston.

"When I got old enough, I went to work in the coal mines. When I was young like that, I used to like to load coal by hand, by shovel, you know. If we were lucky, sometimes we'd make $30 of a day, sometimes we'd make $10. We loaded coal by the ton, and they paid us by how many ton we loaded. The coal was just a seam of coal maybe three- or four-feet thick between two layers of rock. I've drilled and shot my own coal at places I worked in all by myself. Most places, the machine men would cut out the coal on day shift, and then the afternoon shift would come in and clean it all up by hand."

After he got out of the military, Guy met Lorene Hundley, his future wife. His first cousin kept after him to go with him and visit with the two Hundley sisters. "Course, I had a car, and he didn't," Guy recalled. "I said yeah, I'd go up. Well, I kept going back and forth, kept going back and forth, and finally my first cousin Frank Adkins married Freda. Me and Lorene went together 18 months before we got married. We was married 26 months before the first [child] came along. But after that, it seemed like every year, another one came along." Guy and Lorene moved up to Chicago right after they were married.

Guy told me, "When I was in Chicago, I started out in a factory, making enamel — white enamel like goes on refrigerators and cook stoves. I got a job out there driving a city bus, too. You had to take an IQ test before they'd give you an application. I passed the test and the physical, then they got me started into a school that paid us $2.50 an hour while we was going to school. It was six weeks of schooling for defensive driving and learning their transfer system. Driving these buses is not what everyone thinks it's cracked up to be. The public is *so* hard to get along with. Bus drivers were always getting robbed, and the only thing they would cover was $5 in change you had to have when you started out. If you had $50 and got robbed, then you was just out that much money. We weren't even allowed to carry a

and try to rob the beehives of their honey. One time, Guy heard a noise late one night, looked out, and saw a bear trying to get into a hive. He shot over its head to scare it away. Later, he rigged up an electric fence with a hotwire on the top. But the bear got smart and would bend over to get under the wire and still get at the honey. Then Guy put in a motion sensor so that floodlights and an electric alarm would go off and scare the bears away. It works most of the time, he said.

Today, Guy Kelley keeps about 30 hives of bees, surrounded by an electric fence and floodlights to discourage bears, raccoons, and other intruders. Photograph by Michael Keller.

During the winter, Guy does chores, including fixing up frames and hives for the next season. How much there is to know about beekeeping! Guy agreed. "It all started as a hobby, but it's all work. Now I'm getting older, it's getting heavier. Carrying those hives with a full swarm of bees, or a super full of honey, it can be awful tiring," he said. "Now I gotta use an inhaler throughout the day. And I gotta watch my sugar. I can't be biting a chunk out of that honeycomb like I used to.

"But a helper, now, that wouldn't be bad. Maybe if you had somebody you could name as a runner, like, 'Go get this, and go get that. Go get me another ladder, or a shorter ladder,' whatever," he said with a laugh. "If somebody is wanting to get into bees, I can help 'em. They'll get started by reading anything they can get their hands on about honeybees, like I did. There are beekeeper meetings all over the state that they can go to. Then all they need is a hive, and I could fix 'em up with bees, or they could order bees from the South, whichever they prefer. If someone wants to get started and they come and ask me for advice, or call me on the phone, I'll help 'em out in any way I can. Be happy to."

Guy Kelley can be reached by writing to Box 64, Toney's Branch, Bloomingrose, WV 25024, or by phone at (304)837-8628.

The finished product. Guy hoists a quart of his hard-won honey. "It all started as a hobby," he says, "but it's all work." Photograph by Michael Keller.

KATHY O. SMITH HUNDLEY, originally from Toronto, Canada, lives in Medina, Ohio. Her husband is a native of Kanawha County, and Kathy has conducted extensive research into his family and their history, which led her to Guy and Lorene Kelley. Kathy holds a degree in psychology from Oberlin College and works as a construction laborer in Ohio. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Fishing in Berwind

By John Burnett

Author John Burnett in 1947 at Kerr Grade School in Berwind, McDowell County.

As a young boy growing up in Berwind, McDowell County, one of my favorite things to do was fish. When my mother sent me to the company store to buy something, I had to cross the steel bridge over the creek to get to the store. As I crossed, I would look at the creek and imagine all the big fish I could catch out of it. Sometimes, I did not have fishing line or hooks, but neither item was terribly expensive and could be purchased at the company store. Any tree branch could be used as a pole, and if I didn't have a sinker, I could tie a small rock on the line, which worked just as well.

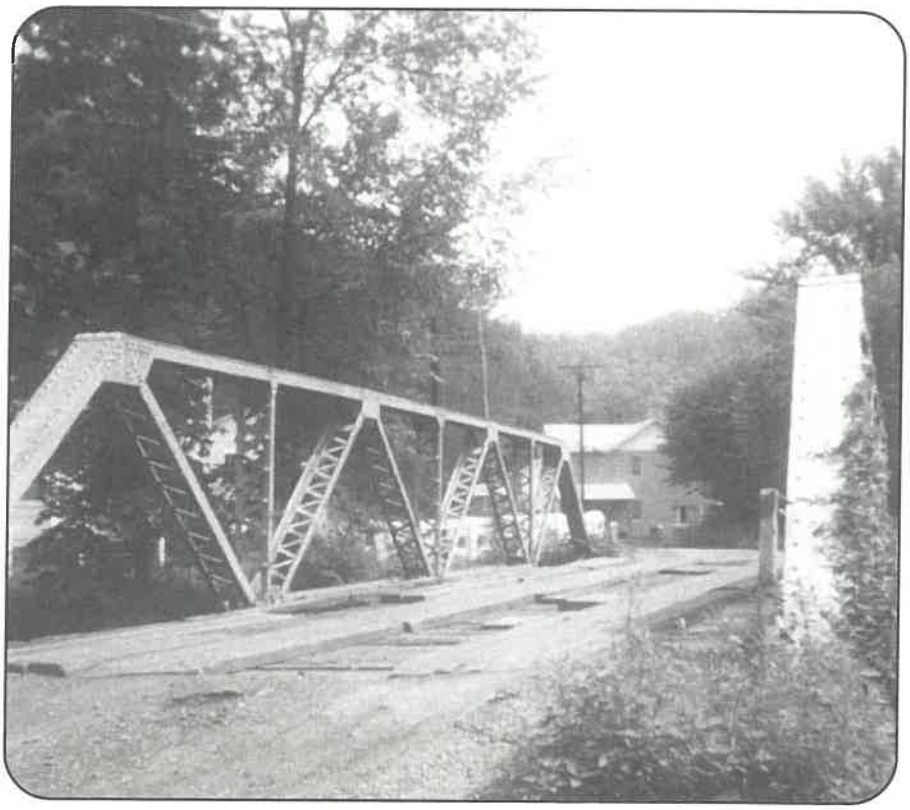
One of my favorite places to fish was from a large boulder on the creek bank just beyond the bridge, next to the doctor's office. The water seemed deeper, and other people seemed to have good luck catching fish there. A dirt walkway ran above the creek bank, where thick, wild grapevines grew in the trees next to the creek. A small path provided access down to the creek.

Red earthworms were used for bait. We dug for them in areas where dishwater or wash water was frequently thrown or piped. Night crawlers were also used. They could be found in grassy areas in most people's yards and in the park-like areas around the bank,

big offices, and the post office. We had to look for night crawlers in the grass at night, of course, with a flashlight and a fairly quick hand. Each worm had a hole that it lived in. You had to catch the worm before it retreated back into its hole, which it was never fully out of. We could often catch two at a time, if two nightcrawlers were mating.

One of the best baits that fish went for in a big way was crayfish meat. Everyone in Berwind called them "crawdads." Crawdads were plentiful in the clearwater streams around the hollow in New Town and in Old Town. They were difficult to catch, however, as they were very fast. They usually lived under rocks in the streams, and we usually had to get our feet wet to catch them. They were various sizes, and the bigger they were, the faster they could escape. They always moved backward at lightening speed, and their large pinchers were a deterrent. We never once thought about eating crawdads, though today they are considered a delicacy in New Orleans and elsewhere.

A boy named Billy Griffin taught his younger brother Saint John, his nephew Boomer, and me a trick to get fish to bite every time. He would take chewing tobacco, put it in a jar with a small amount of water, and mash it up into a liquid. Then, he put his worm on the hook and dipped it into the liquid. The fish went for it like crazy. The only problem was that kids our age could not always get chewing tobacco. On rare occasions, I could break off a small piece of Daddy's tobacco, if it was around, but that was not often. I never thought to try snuff, but that wasn't easy to come by either. Quite a number of women in Berwind used snuff. The act was called "dipping snuff." They put it in their bottom lip and held it in their mouth. Periodically, they had to spit, and sometimes a coffee can was kept around for that purpose. Miss June dipped snuff, and she would spit on the ground when we were fishing, usually where no one would be walking. In general, it was thought not to be a nice habit.

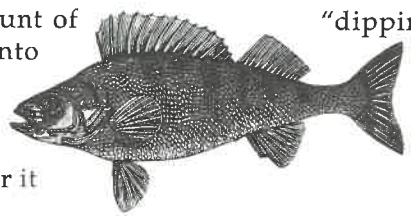


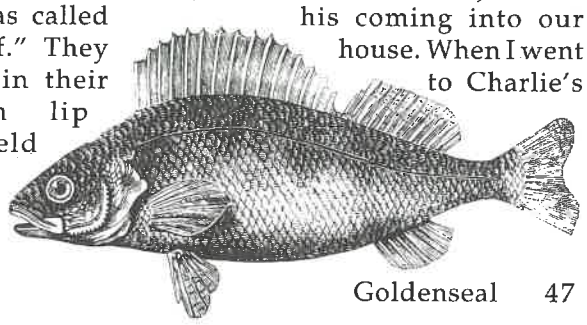
Steel bridge where our author often fished as a child. The bridge has since been replaced due to repeated flooding.

Charlie would take me to his latest fishing spots, and I would take him to the latest ones that I knew about. Sometimes we caught fish, and sometimes we didn't.

I had a good fishing buddy named Charlie Simms, who taught me a lot about finding pieces of lead along the railroad tracks and how he and his dad used to melt lead to make sinkers. He told me that there was a small charge-type device that was put on the railroad tracks to let the engineer know when to stop the train, when picking up loaded coal cars. It made a small pop, like a firecracker, when the train rolled over it. The engineer then knew he had moved the train far enough, to go back, and pick up more coal cars. Part of the charge was made of lead, and we would pick those up between the railroad tracks. The lead was pliable enough that we could hammer it with a rock and attach it to the fishing line as a sinker.

Since I was black and Charlie was white, I never was allowed inside his house, although I don't think my parents would have objected to his coming into our house. When I went to Charlie's

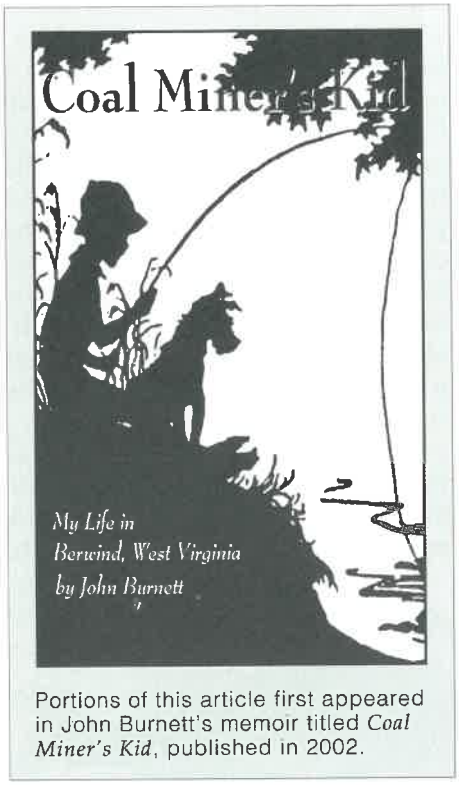




house, I would knock on the back door. If Charlie was not eating lunch or dinner or not on punishment for something, he would come outside. He was a very animated and energetic kid and always excited about what he was doing.

My family lived in a row of houses behind the club house, where the houses were situated on the crest of the mountain. There was lots of space underneath the houses, with the back parts against the hill and the front parts resting on pilings made of mortar and stones. There were steps down to the front yard from the front porch of the houses. Most families had a swing and chairs on their front porch. Charlie and I would dig for worms under our house and under the Bradford's house next door, so we always had plenty of bait. We kept the worms in empty tin cans partly filled with dirt and would take one worm out at a time to bait our fishhooks. Charlie would take me to his latest fishing spots, and I would take him to the latest ones that I knew about. Sometimes we caught fish, and sometimes we didn't. If the fishing wasn't so good that day, we would skip rocks across the creek.

John Burnett with some playmates at the Berwind post office in 1947. From the left, they are Rocile Bradford, Kay Bradford, John Burnett, and Jimmy Burnett.

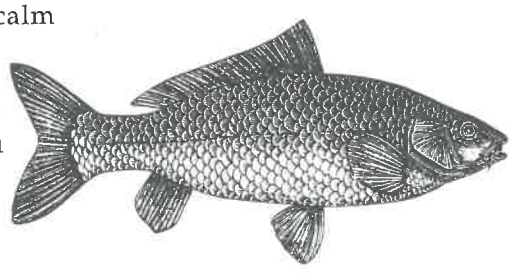


Portions of this article first appeared in John Burnett's memoir titled *Coal Miner's Kid*, published in 2002.

We enjoyed going down to Rift to the area called the Break Through, which had high cliffs on both sides, rapids, and huge boulders next to the water, with flat rock areas on both sides. The water seemed to churn at the Break Through and was so narrow and deep that we could almost jump across from one side to the other. Further down, it became a wide expanse of calm water where two creeks flowed into one. There was a high railroad trestle there that had to be traversed if you wanted to fish on the other side of the Break Through. South of the trestle was a bridge over the creek that all vehicles crossed enroute to Berwind from the town of War. Just upstream from the bridge was a large, square cement platform that jutted out into the creek. It was a favorite fishing spot for many people, including Charlie and me.

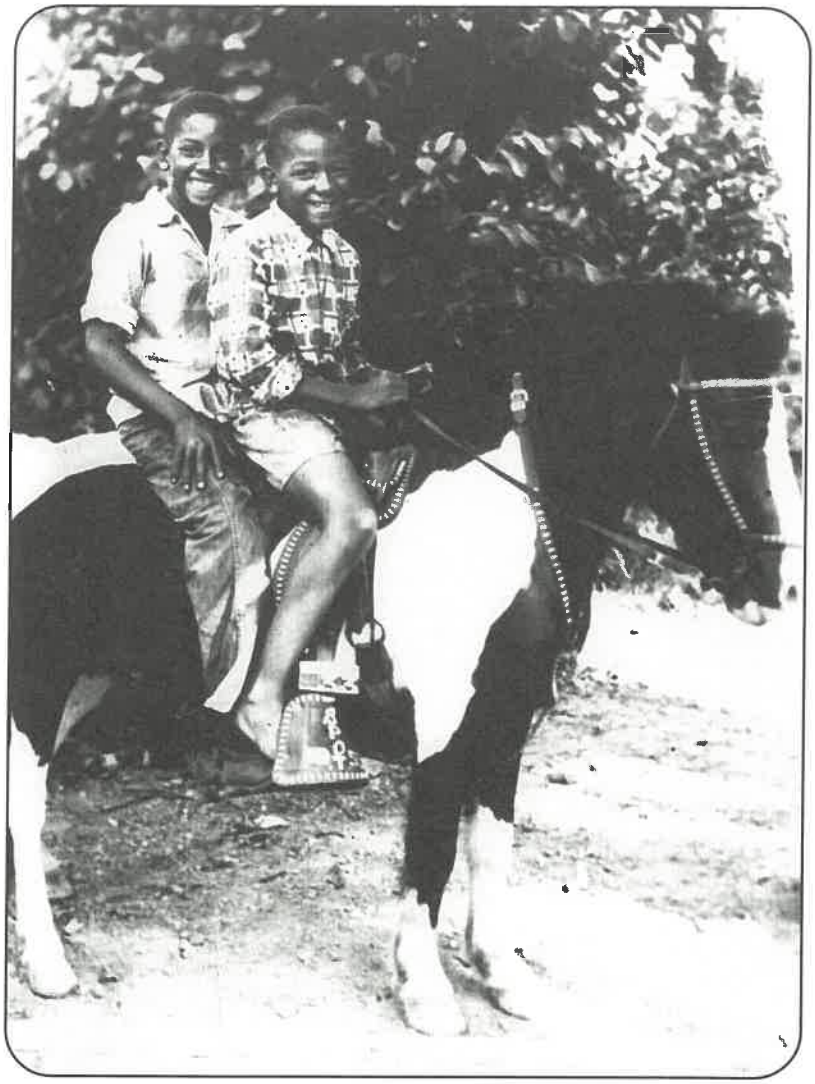
In the area where the two creeks met, we would sometimes find my great-uncle Frank Divens fishing. My family members affectionately called him "Daddy Frank." Daddy Frank always had the latest fishing equipment, complete with a rubber wading suit. He would be out in the water where Charlie and I could not go. He had all kinds of lures, expensive fishing rods, and reels. He had one very fancy fly rod with a reel that had a lever on it. When pressed, it retracted the line back on its spool. He seemed to be an expert at casting lures and at fly casting. I had fantasies of growing up and someday owning the kind of fishing gear that Daddy Frank had. Sometimes, Daddy Frank fished in the creek behind the Kerr Grade School. At recess, I would watch him fishing from the playground and wish I was out there fishing, too.

I often fished with Mrs. June Smith and Mrs. Roberta Graves. In Berwind, married or adult women were called "miss" and their first name. To show respect, it was



usually "Miss June" or "Miss Roberta." No one bothered to say "missus," even though that was understood. By the time I was fishing with these ladies, I had a rod and reel of my own. We would go in the evening to fish and would stay until after dark. We each had a Y-shaped tree branch that had been cut to rest our fishing rods on. The bottom was cut to a point so that the stick could be easily stuck in the sand. The rod rested in the "V" portion of the stick, with the back part of the rod resting on the sand behind.

Oddly enough, Miss Roberta was afraid of earthworms but loved to fish. She would wear gloves to bait her hook, but many times Miss June or I would bait her hook for her, so she could get her line back into the water quickly.



John and brother Jimmy Burnett pose for this classic pony shot in 1954.

We used flashlights after dark to see the line jerk when a fish tried to take the bait. The end of the rod would bounce up and down when a fish was caught on the line. The fishing reels had a tension setting that allowed the line to be pulled by a fish, and the reel would make a loud zipping or fast clicking sound when the fish ran with the hook. It was very exciting to hear the reel make that sound, and we would immediately grab the rod to set the hook. We knew we usually had a fish on the line. We caught a lot of fish at night. After a while, we would each have a stringer of fish in the water. Invariably, a water moccasin would swim over toward our fish, and that would be the abrupt end to our night fishing that evening. Everything would be packed up, and we would leave immediately.

Invariably, a water moccasin would swim over toward our fish, and that would be the abrupt end to our night fishing that evening. Everything would be packed up, and we would leave immediately.

One evening when I was fishing with Miss June on the creek bank behind the grandstand of the Berwind ball diamond, I caught a black-looking turtle, which looked to be about six to eight pounds. As soon as I got him on the shore, he got off the hook and headed for the water. Miss June grabbed him by the tail and flung him back further on shore. Then she put him in a big bucket she carried, which he could not get out of. Since I had caught the turtle initially, Miss June cooked it and invited me out to her house to eat some of it. It was boiled like a stew, and the meat was very white and tender. It tasted like chicken to me. I have eaten turtle a number of times since and always enjoyed it.

The type of fish that were caught in Berwind were silver sides, suckers, catfish, bluegill, and an occasional smallmouth bass. How these fish survived in the creek, I don't know. Most of the time, the creek was black with coal dust washed from any number of coal mining operations upstream, including Berwind.

JOHN BURNETT was born in Berwind, McDowell County, and lived there until the age of 12, when his family moved to Indiana. He currently lives in southern California. He is a decorated Vietnam war veteran and a retired audiology technician. This is John's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

A City Comes to

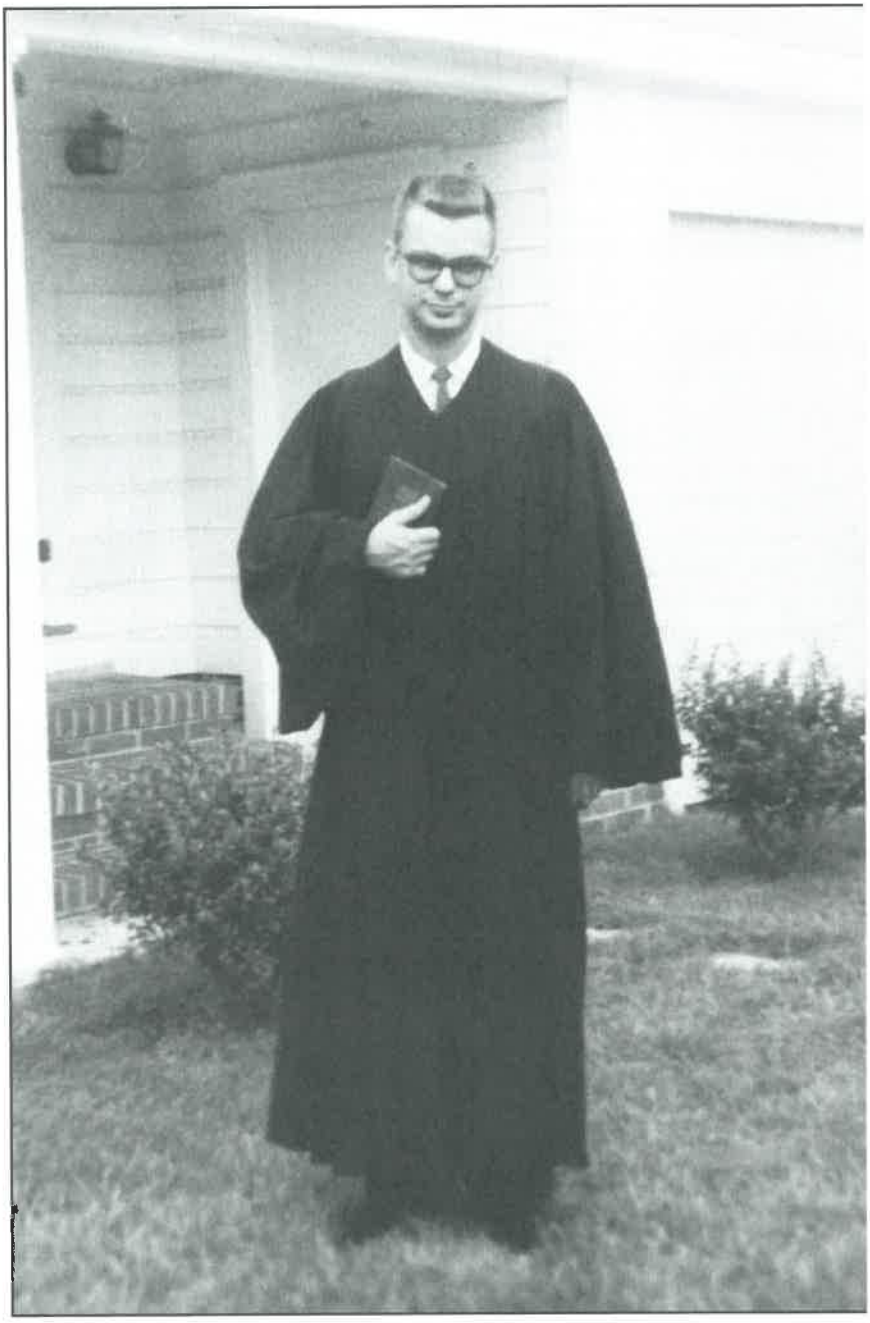
In the spring of 1958, the field-work director at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, informed me that my assignment for the summer was to work as the student assistant to the Reverend Dale McClure Jones, who served a six-point preaching circuit in Pendleton County. Of Pendleton County, I knew nothing. In my mind's eye, it was a very rural place, isolated and poor. Later, I learned that isolation is not all bad, and poverty is an illusive thing. My summer in Pendleton County proved to be an eye-opening and heartwarming experience.

I aimed my 1953 Chevrolet westward, towards a state I had never visited. After some hours of steep, twisting mountain roads and some impressive views of great valleys, I entered Pendleton County. It did seem remote and isolated. I soon entered the city limits of Circleville, where the Rev. Mr. Jones (affectionately called "The Prophet") lived. I was startled to see a sign there that read, in bold letters, "Public Water Supply Unapproved." Circleville was — and is — a small place, graced with a beautiful school building and a small but most attractive Presbyterian church. The preacher's house, which we Presbyterians call "The Manse," was a typical small-town, two-story dwelling.

I banged on the door. A smallish man, bald and smiling, answered. Immediately, he offered a me a share of his lunch. Cold pork and beans and warmed-up franks never tasted better. I expected my next step to be the short drive to Mouth of Seneca, where I was to live in Yokum's Motel.

Dale would have none of that. He first had to let me see the "field," as he called it. I knew I was in for an adventure as Dale loaded me into a nondescript sedan, covered with dust and dried mud. Off we went to take a look at all the churches and chapels that made up the circuit. Up one mountain, we visited tiny Elk Mountain Chapel in a community that seemed dominated by pastureland and sheep meadows. Then, we went to a place called Big Run, where the dwellings seemed to be very basic and the people ill-dressed with not much to do.

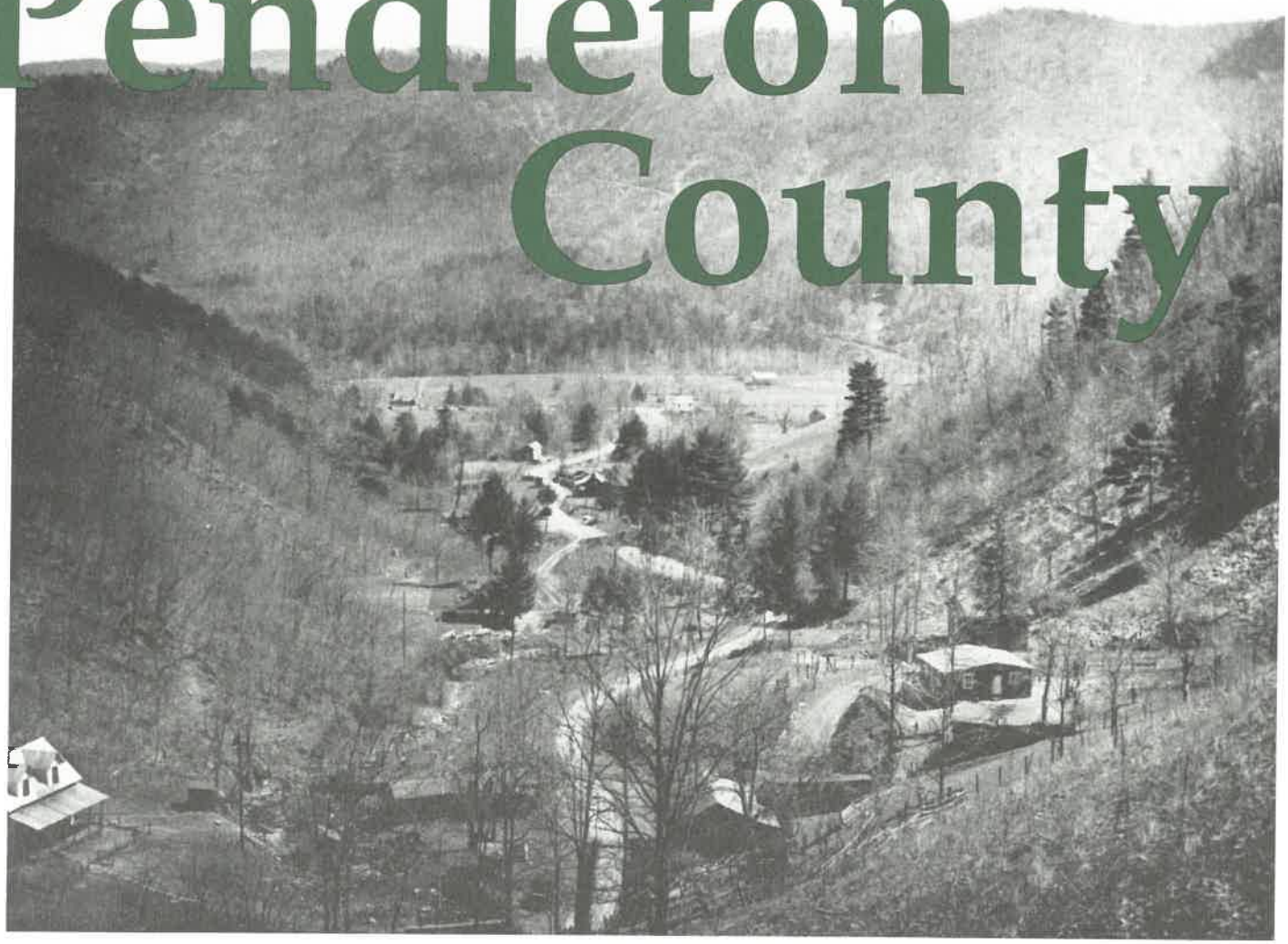
Further up, way past any "improved" roads, the underparts of the car brushed against the tops of rocks haphazardly arranged into a semblance of a road. Dale noted that we were now in Highland County, Virginia, and that



Author Lawton W. Posey in about 1958, the summer he came to Pendleton County. Photograph by P.A. Posey.

Preacher Pendleton County

Text and photographs by
Lawton W. Posey



View of Bennett Gap, Pendleton County, in 1958. Photograph by Blaine Cunningham.

this was the interestingly named Swank Chapel.

Heading back toward Mouth of Seneca, we stopped at Mallow School, where services were held. It was a typical one-room schoolhouse with a large woodstove in the center and a bucket-and-dipper arrangement for the quenching of thirst.

We arrived in Mouth of Seneca. In the shadow of Seneca Rocks sat Seneca Rocks Presbyterian Church. Made of stone, it looked sturdy and well-maintained. There were a couple of stores about, one of which was Harper's, founded in 1902 and still in existence at the same spot today. Another was the home of an auto body shop. A lonely new Ford car sat in the window of the Ford garage, which also sold tractors.

Nearby, Yokum's Motel appeared well-kept and occupied, and quite modern. In 1958, the complex was operated by Carl and Shirley Yokum. There was a two-story motel, a combination restaurant and gas station, and a group of small cabins rented out to people wishing to fish in the very cold streams running to the rear of the property. Everything was quite comfortable, and the prospect of abundant meals lay ahead. I soon learned that the Yokums' 12-year-old daughter Patsy was, like her mother, an excellent cook. The Yokums had a television in their sturdy home, as I recall, which was unusual at that time. Newly born Sammy provided much entertain-

Elk Mountain Chapel, one of six "preaching points" on our author's summer circuit in 1958.

ment for the family and guests. Now, 46 years later, Yokum's Vacationland continues in business under the management of Carl and Shirley and has a Web site.

My memories center around the people, the tiny churches, the isolation and lack of services, and the sense of adventure I had as I rode about the circuit that summer. The people of Pendleton County were, with very few exceptions, the most hospitable and generous people I had known up to that time in my life. Whether I visited in a large and well-outfitted farmhouse complete with pump organ and kerosene refrigerator, or in a small cabin with no conveniences, there were usually coffee and pie or cake. At Big Run Chapel, where some people had electricity generated by means of a "Delco" plant, children and adults crowded into the church building with a palpable sense of enjoyment and acceptance of whatever message I might bring to them.

Big Run Chapel had a very fine Mason & Hamlin reed (pump) organ, superior in every way. I had some experience with these instruments, and once I announced that I would play it for them in an evening program. The yellow glow of the lamps gave "atmosphere" to my program, which consisted of hymns and selections from the classics. "Do it again," one lady said. I had to leave and could not, but their joy in hearing their organ — seldom played — was great.

Up at Swank Chapel, a lovely young woman with six children — one still nursing — crowded the back row of that chapel. I wondered what she thought as she listened attentively to my irrelevant remarks while nursing number six. She always gave me a smile when we shook hands at the door. Here, the collection was received in the hat of one of the elders. There was a piano that would hardly play, the yellowed keys resisting my efforts. This kid from a suburban church had to adjust to a variety of "lacks," which did not bother the congregation one bit.

One young couple I recall lived in the Riverton area, where they took care of his or her mother, an elderly woman who had crippling arthritis and remained always in bed. A trip to the physician took a while in their late-'30's Chevrolet sedan. They made few such doctor visits. I cannot imagine either the pain of the trip for medical care or the suffering of that lady. She always welcomed me, though, and tolerated with good humor my prayers at her bedside, made out of a book. I had not learned that invaluable skill of praying "out of my head." On one visit, the young man showed me how to align the front wheels of the car with a couple of sticks and a carpenter's square.

The people of Pendleton County were eager to share their skills, knowledge, and lore. A home remedy might stave off a doctor visit. Shirley Yokum suggested "Bolar Water" for my case of "pink eye." There being no barbershop in that part of the county, I could depend on a neighbor to cut my hair.

The beautiful Seneca Rocks Presbyterian Church, with the author's 1953 Chevrolet visible in the foreground.

Seneca Rocks Presbyterian Church interior.

The preaching points, all six of them, had evidently become accustomed to preacher boys, like me, with citified ways. The Sunday school superintendent at Seneca Rocks would solemnly announce upon my arrival from Mallow School that the service was now turned over to the preacher. There was no break between Sunday school and church. A coffee hour was not needed. Seamlessly, the morning activities blended into each other. My job was to fit in. My urban ways and restrained style didn't seem to bother them a bit.

After all, they had the Rev. Mr. Dale Jones. Dale was remarkable. A bachelor, he was a graduate not only of Davidson College and Union Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, but held a master's degree in deaf education from the famed Gallaudet College for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. He could converse easily in sign language, and now and then would conduct a wayside conversation with a deaf person working in a field. He was enthusiastic and faithful and cared not a whit for ceremony or elaborate services. A wedding conducted in Elk Mountain Chapel for a fellow who worked in the tannery and his pretty bride was as lovely as any held in a cathedral. I pumped the chapel's reed organ and delighted in its sound. The congregations loved Dale, and I am sure that he never revealed his outstanding educational background to anyone. In later years, I understand he returned to teaching deaf children.

Dale and his summer bible school director Miss Mary Buck promoted such schools in all the preaching points. I was named "director" of three of them, but everyone knew that Mary Buck was the star. Countless bible songs, the pledge to the American and Christian flags, and memorized portions from the bible and the *Child's Catechism* occupied three hours of each day for two weeks. My snooty and newfangled educational theories were tolerated, but never adopted. My first summer bible school was held in the Nazarene Church in Onego. I had thought that the settlement was probably named for some Native American place, and my attempt at pronunciation — "Oh-*knee*-go" — was quietly corrected. "*One*-go" was right.

I still remember each of those six congregations. Services held in the evenings were conducted in "dim religious light." The preacher had the best light, provided by an "Alladin" lamp with a delicate, glowing mantle instead of a cloth wick.

The isolation of the area provided more benefits than deficits, in my view. There was time to visit people in their homes, to reflect, to learn. With rare exceptions, there was no television. The phone system was the same as the one my parents had when they married in 1932. These were party-line phones with perhaps 20 households sharing a line. The main switchboard was in the home of Gladys and Thursie Butler at Macksville. These devout United Brethren ladies could hear the sounds of my coins dropping in a pay phone and would connect me to my girlfriend's home in Waynesboro, Virginia. If the call

Children play a game outside of Big Run Chapel in Cherry Grove, 1958.

The Reverend Dale M. Jones is shown here, at left, in the back of a truck with an unidentified farmer, apparently with fishing on his mind. Rev. Jones was a popular local figure in Pendleton County, and our author served as his student assistant during the summer of 1958.

was important, I would drive over to Gladys and Thursie's house and call from their phone. It was on its own line, and my conversation was not made public to the community. Even though the telephones seemed the modern desk type, they still required a turn of a crank to summon the operator, or varying lengths of rings (long-short-long, for example) to get another person on the party line.

That old single-position Kellogg cord board was later donated to the State Museum in Charleston, having been replaced by a thoroughly modern system. Some residents of the area, I am told, protested this improvement, preferring instead the personal services rendered by the faithful operators.

A visit to a doctor involved a mountainous drive to Franklin, or an easier trip to Petersburg. Both places were modern for the times. Car dealers, churches with pipe organs, several physicians, and a clinic for women needing specialized care at time of birth made such places exotic to those for whom local mountain schools, porch-front barbering, and home remedies were the stuff of daily life.

I shall never forget Pendleton County. It was, and is, a place of rare beauty and of genuine "characters." Glenn Judy repaired and expertly painted the damaged fender of my car between coughs induced by smoking and lead-paint-ravaged lungs. He once had sprayed paint on stately Lincoln cars in a Ford Motor plant out of state. Nineteen-year-old Jack Yokum convinced me, with laughter, that I would enjoy a pinch of mint-flavored snuff, since I could not smoke in the hay field. That was my one and only "dip." A kind lady knew that I loved a particular soft cookie and provided them on my frequent visits. The sounds of chain saws, bleating sheep being led for castration, and gasoline-powered washers remain with me until this day.

There are fewer privations today in Pendleton County. The phone system is entirely modern. Television is ubiquitous. School consolidation — still controversial — has eliminated many mountain schools, including the charming one in Circleville. I need to check on whether there is a barber or a doctor or a fast-food place on the Circleville side of the mountain.

In 1958, my love affair with West Virginia began. Almost 30 of my 42 years of ministry have been spent in this state. No matter how advantaged my life is now, I still recall the generosity and ingenuity of the people of Pendleton County.

LAWTON W. POSEY was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and earned a master's of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. An ordained Presbyterian minister, Lawton served churches in Virginia and West Virginia for nearly 40 years, including churches in Welch, Norfolk, and Charleston, where he retired after 20 years as pastor of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. His previous contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our October-December 1980 issue.

Lawton W. Posey poses for a picture with a young Pendleton County parishoner. Photograph by Blaine Cunningham.

A Miracle at Fall Run Church

By Roscoe Plumley

The Fall Run Church on U.S. Route 19, just north of Falls Mill between Heaters and Ireland, has been an attraction to me over the past 50 years. It is a small wooden structure located in the valley on the right side of the road in northeastern Braxton County.

Having served as an extension agent for West Virginia University, I was required to travel from Beckley to Morgantown or Jackson's Mill occasionally. Each time I passed that little church, I had an urgent impulse to stop and visit. My traveling was always in the early morning or late afternoon on weekdays, however, when there was no activity at the church.

After I retired, my wife and I attended a meeting at Jackson's Mill one Saturday, and we were coming home on Sunday morning. We decided to leave I-79 and headed down old Route 19 to visit that church. When we arrived, they were having Sunday school. We went in and sat down to enjoy the session. After the lesson was over, people were making announcements and generally giving testimonies. I introduced myself and my wife and told them of my long desire to visit the church.

An elderly gentleman asked me if I knew the history of the church, and I had to answer no. He then told me the story. He related how a change in the road during the early 1930's had moved the road from the front to the back of the church, and at a very close distance. The community decided that they should turn the church around and move it back away from the road.

That decision required considerable planning to obtain the steel beams, jacks, and other matter needed to do the job. One elderly man accepted the task of getting the necessary equipment and offered to help to move the church. Money was short everywhere in the 1930's, so generosity was needed.

Fall Run Church today. Photograph by Roscoe Plumley.

Miraculously, it picked the church up, turned it around, and moved it safely down the valley about 200 feet.

The man had located much of the help to do the job, but he died before the job was started.

That summer, in July 1935, a flash flood came down the valley. Miraculously, it picked the church up, turned it around, and moved it safely down the valley about 200 feet. All that was left for them to do was to jack it up and put a foundation under it. That was done, and the church is still there and in use today.

The church has a homecoming each year on the fourth Sunday of August. I attended the meeting a few years ago and asked some questions and took some pictures, but most of the older people who knew the whole story had passed on. Some of them are supposed to have said that the people of Fall Run Church were too poor to have the church turned around to face the new road, so the Good Lord did it for them.

For more information about the Fall Run Church homecoming, call Ruth Singleton at (304)452-8617.

ROSCOE PLUMLEY is a retired West Virginia University extension agent from Beckley. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"Across the Ocean in Philadelphia"

My Early Days in Mineral County

By Betty Bowers Snyder

Granny was not the grandmotherly type. There were no soft edges on her, perhaps because of the hard life she had led. Born before the turn of the 20th century, she was the youngest of three children. Her given name was Rozelia Ann Ralston, but her older sister Hazel found that pretty name difficult to pronounce. For some reason, she began calling Granny "Otie." That name seemed to fit her no-nonsense attitude and stayed with her all her life.

Granny's older brother James was the much-loved only son and left home early to see the world. He did this with style, sending home cards from faraway places and returning home on occasion to his adoring family. Granny's older sister was a bit on the wild side and married young.

Granny, on the other hand, was the serious, responsible child who gave up her first love without a fight when he was deemed unsuitable by her family. After all, she was the daughter of Hamilton Taylor Ralston, a skilled master mason who was well-respected in his community. Unfortunately, Granny's father died at an early age, and both of her older siblings left home, so she and her mother, Mary Urice Ralston, kept the small farm together.

There were three constants in my childhood: my granny's strength, my mother's devotion, and the 40-acre farm on Limestone Road that was our home.

The farm consisted of 40 acres of fertile land, 3½ miles from Keyser, Mineral County. It was said that to grow vegetables, all one had to do was drop a seed, spit, and jump back. In reality, the farm did provide almost all the necessities.

Ironically, when Granny married, it was to a lovable rouge from a good family. James Bowers had a good job with the B&O railroad, but his real love was running moonshine. Unfortunately, he liked to drink it almost as much as he liked running it. By all accounts, he was a likeable man who was a lot of fun — drunk or sober. He and my granny had two daughters named Hazel Pearl and Virgie Mae. They were the apples of his eye. He died in his 30's in a new car filled with "shine." The wrecked car was found upside down in a shallow creek. The story goes that many strange women came and cried over his casket. Granny was left to hold the family together, only this time with two small girls and an ailing mother.

Several years later, Granny met her second husband, Robert Davis. He was a good man who worked the land with her and fathered two children. The first child was stillborn, but the second child, Bobby, lived and was doted on by Granny for the rest of her life. After a lingering illness, Granny's second husband died of heart disease. She was heard to remark that she had

ever shared with us.

"I don't know if it's fit for mixed company or for the younguns' ears, but I suppose it's okay for this occasion," she said. "It seems two old ladies, Bessie and Maude, were at the gossip fence. Bessie said to Maude, 'How's your daughter these days?' 'Not any good,' Maude replied. 'She's been in bed with arthritis.' 'Oh no,' gasped Bessie. 'Arthur was always the worst one of those Ritis boys.'"

That evening takes on a warm glow in my memory. Aunt Pearl and Uncle John were indeed married in two weeks and eventually Raymond went to live with them in a small house they purchased on Old Schoolhouse Road in Martinsburg. They began their marriage in a one-bedroom apartment on Queen Street. On one occasion, my mother and I rode the train to Martinsburg to visit them. I remember them insisting we take the bed while they made great sport of camping out on the floor in the living room. It was as though they were sprinkled with fairy dust that warmed everyone around them.

Some people believe that Camelot was in England or perhaps the Kennedy White House. But, for me, Camelot will always be a one-bedroom apartment in a gritty West Virginia town where an unlikely prince and princess spoke gently to each other and loved mightily.

I was the first person in my family to graduate high school. Granny and Mom were so proud when I graduated, even more so when I later received my bachelor's degree from West Virginia University. However, when I received my master's degree, Granny remarked that she "reckoned that I'd had about enough schooling."

Granny was old-fashioned and set in her ways. She never completely trusted electricity, though she came to peacefully coexist with it after a while. My mother had saved her money until she had set aside enough to have the house wired. We had light bulbs that hung from the ceiling, with long strings to turn them on and off. Later, my mother bought Granny a washing machine. Appliances were difficult to locate after the war, and Mother, hearing about a washing machine at Weese's Appliance Store on Main Street in Keyser, made sure she was the first person there when the store opened. Mr. Weese graciously allowed my mother to purchase the washing machine on time, paying $10 a week.

After that, Granny no longer had to wash clothes using a scrub board and a wash tub, although we still had to turn the wringer by hand. My mother also bought linoleum for the floors and had a new flue built for the heating stove. She spent the rest of Granny's life striving for her approval and affection. Sadly, while Granny appreciated my mother's efforts, she was never able to give her daughter the unconditional love she craved.

For my part, my relationship with Granny was one of mutual respect. As I grew older, I would hug and kiss her often, and she gradually came to accept these shows of affection and even returned them.

Sometimes, a smell or taste will remind me of my childhood. But mostly, it's the music that will bring those days sharply into focus. I can picture us kids and the farm and even some of the animals. But mostly, I remember Granny in a cotton dress with an apron. Her hair was pulled back in a bun, and her work-worn hands were never idle. She was simply the strongest woman I ever knew.

These are some of the people and events that were part of my childhood. By today's standards, we were a poor family. But, to me, these experiences were rich with the flavor of life on a small farm in the beautiful West Virginia hills. They remain treasured memories of a simpler time.

BETTY BOWERS SNYDER is a native of Mineral County. She holds a bachelor's degree from West Virginia University and a master's degree in business administration from Lewis University in Illinois. She served 25 years as director of a social service organization in northern Illinois before returning to West Virginia following her retirement eight years ago. She currently lives in Shepherdstown, where she is president of CASA, a volunteer service organization. This is Betty's first published writing.

Betty with a puppy. She was a few years older and wiser by the time this picture was made. Betty lives today in Shepherdstown.

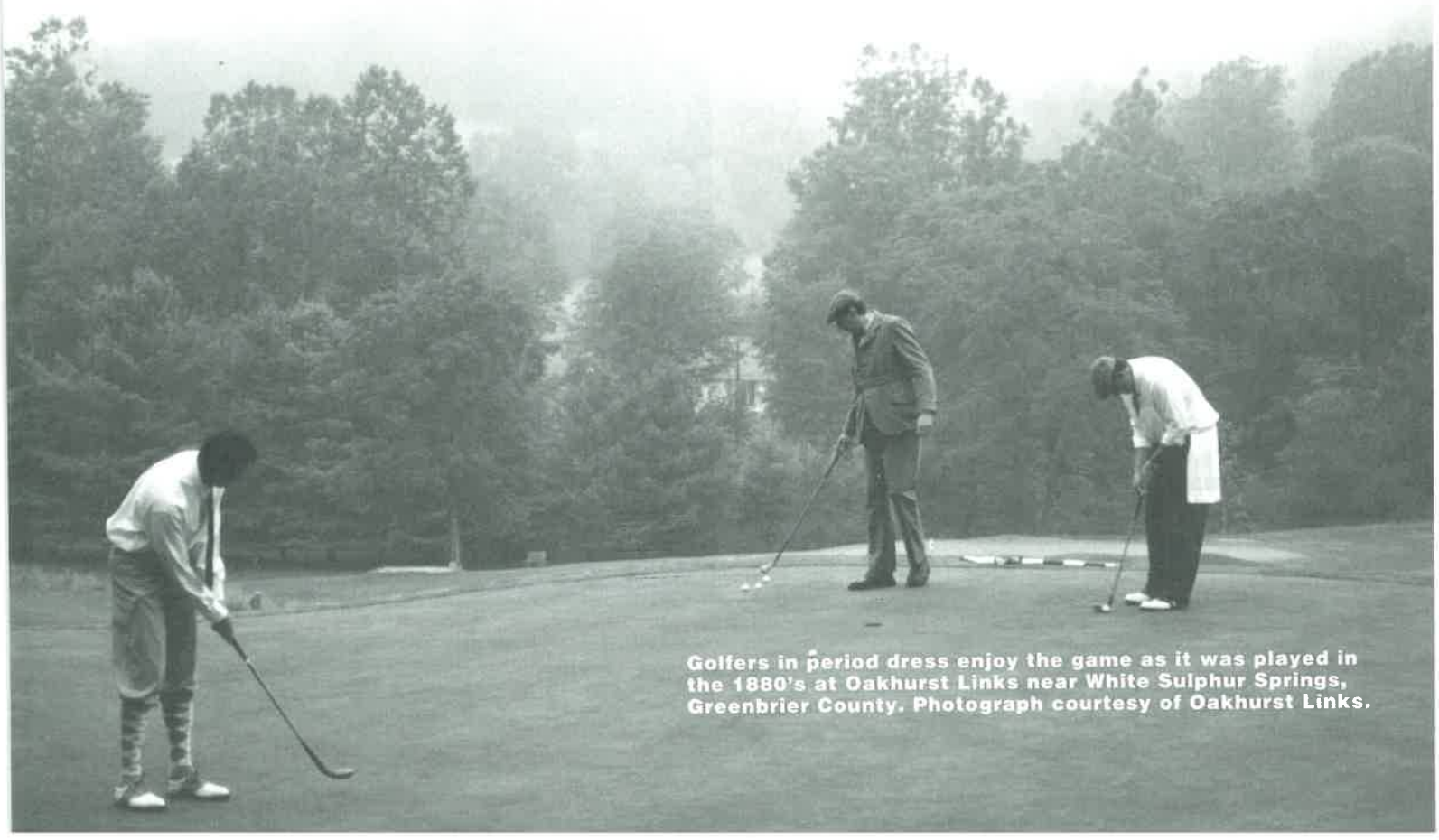
Oakhurst Links

Golfing the Old-Time Way

By David Cottrill

Photographs by Michael Keller

Golfers with a keen interest in history can come to Greenbrier County and step back in time. At Oakhurst Links near White Sulphur Springs, they can play the game just the way it was played in the 1880's.



Golfers in period dress enjoy the game as it was played in the 1880's at Oakhurst Links near White Sulphur Springs, Greenbrier County. Photograph courtesy of Oakhurst Links.

A "gutty" — an historically accurate golf ball made from the sap of the Asian sapodilla tree — still used at Oakhurst.

Current owner Lewis Keller with a set of replica golf clubs.

They can leave their clubs, balls, tees, and bag in the car; they won't be using them. Marth a Asbury, the course historian, provides visitors with replicas of the era's wooden clubs along with a couple of "gutties" — balls made of gutta-percha, a substance derived from the sap of the Asian sapodilla tree. Golf bags and wooden tees were yet to be invented in the 1880's, so golfers carry a clutch of four or five clubs in their hand and fashion "tees" from sand and water found in buckets placed at each tee box.

If they dress in period costume, as players sometimes do, and if the secluded parking lot with its modern vehicles is out of view, players could well imagine themselves in a 19th century match.

Martha Asbury explains to guests the rules for 1884 match play. You have to play your lie no matter how bad it is. You have to play around or over your opponent's ball if it lies between your ball and the cup. If you lose your ball, you're out of contention for the hole, and you must wait for the next tee to drop a new ball. If your ball breaks, as gutties sometimes do, you can play the largest piece until you hole out. Only then can you bring out a new ball.

About four-dozen sheep wander about the course, keeping the fairways "mowed" — a touch of 19th century authenticity. If a ball lands in sheep castings, you're entitled to a free drop. If you hit a sheep, you're assessed a penalty stroke. Martha says that hitting a sheep happens about once every season.

Four gentlemen farmers with roots in Scotland created the course in 1884. Brothers Alexander and Roderick MacLeod, along with George Grant and Russell Montague, were neighboring landowners outside of White Sulphur Springs. The four would frequently gather on brisk evenings around the fireplace in Montague's parlor to chat, sing Scottish ballads, play charades, or recite poetry. George Grant told his friends one evening that his cousin Lionel Torin was coming for an extended visit from Ceylon, where he managed a tea plantation.

Hearing that Torin was an avid golfer, they hit upon the idea of fashioning a course on Montague's rolling acres for Torin's benefit. Since they had no heavy equipment, the course had to essentially follow the contours of the land.

Upon his arrival, Torin was ecstatic. The five took to the game with such enthusiasm, they played year-round in all kinds of weather. A Christmas Day match became a fixed tradition. The men were objects of considerable curiosity among their neighbors, who often dropped by to witness this strange obsession without realizing they were watching the first golf game in America played on a designed course.

In 1888, the little golf club began competing for a prize they called the Challenge Medal, which featured in its design a pair of crossed clubs and the slogan "Far and Sure," although Montague later confessed that none of them hit the ball very far, or sure. After about a decade of continuous use, the course reverted to wild flowers and weeds when the club disbanded.

Lewis Keller, current owner of the property, tells how the restoration of Oakhurst Links came about. He was a close friend and frequent golfing partner of the

Sheep share the course at Oakhurst, though hitting one with your ball will cost you a penalty stroke, according to course rules. Photograph courtesy of Oakhurst Links.

late Sam Snead. He and Snead often played summertime matches at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs.

"I was living in New York and Florida at the time," Lewis explains. "Snead suggested I buy property in the area so we could spend more time playing golf together in the summer. He told me about this place, its history, and brought me up here to meet Mr. Montague [Russell Montague's son Cary]. When he found out I was a golfer, Mr. Montague, who was blind, took me by the hand and walked outside and started pointing out the golf holes. He agreed, on a handshake, to sell it to me, and we moved in during the summer of 1961. We started raising thoroughbred horses here."

Lewis raised horses primarily for the thoroughbred market, but kept a few to race for his own enjoyment. His jockeys wore green and white silk jackets featuring a design of crossed golf clubs inspired by the original Oakhurst symbol.

"In 1982, Dick Taylor, a golf writer and friend of Jack Nicklaus, paid me a visit," continues Lewis. "He had heard about the place at a golf tournament. He asked if I would consider restoring the course and talked about what it would do for the history of golf.

"I contacted Bob Cupp, a golf course architect, and he said, 'If you'll go ahead and do it, I'll bring my staff up there to do the work, and I'll not charge a penny.' Cupp read everything he could find on the course. We gave him all the records and letters — everything the Motangues had."

Next, Keller located replicas of period clubs and gutta percha balls. With these tools in hand, Keller and Cupp drove balls toward the greens they had located to determine the probable distances of play for each fairway.

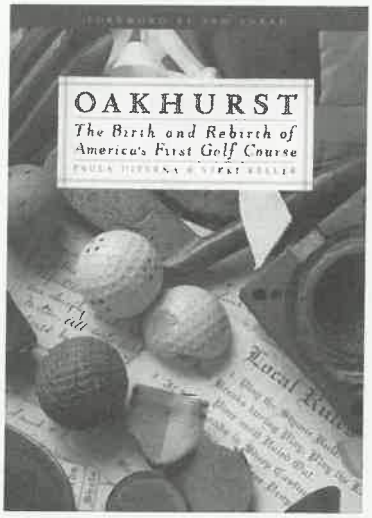
"Cupp came within 50 yards of the length Montague had estimated the course to be. On October 20, 1994, we opened. Sam Snead was on hand to hit the first ball," concludes Lewis.

An annual tournament called the National Hickory Championship was begun at Oakhurst in 1998. Contestants dress in period attire and, of course, use the wooden needle-nose clubs of the 1880's. Martha Asbury talks about an annual October corporate golf outing there called the Sheep Dip Classic, which also requires participants to don costumes of the era. She says the facility is busiest in October, when people come to enjoy the colorful foliage on the surrounding mountains.

The short sturdy flagsticks on the greens, according to Martha, reflect the presence of the sheep, which

Close-up of a putter used at Oakhurst. These specially made wooden clubs are replicas of those first used on the course and are required equipment today.

Read More About It



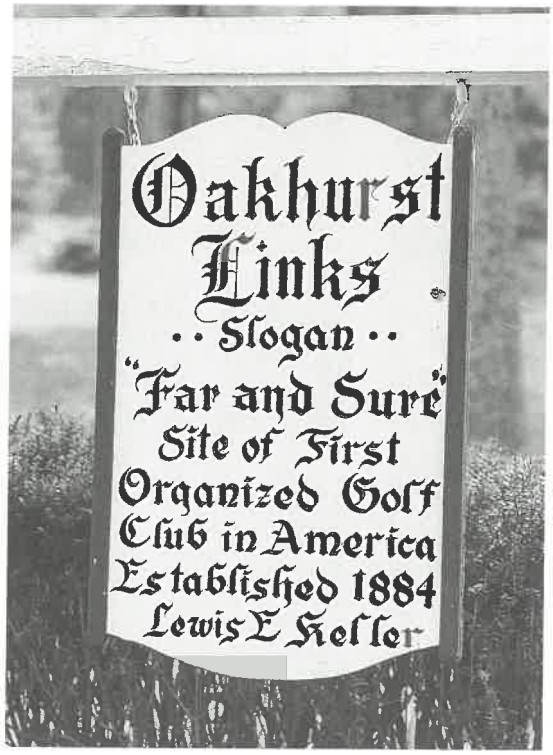
The history of Oakhurst Links, thought to be the first golf course built in America, is detailed in a recent book titled *Oakhurst: The Birth and Rebirth of America's First Golf Course*, published in 2002 by Walker & Company publishers of New York. The 194-page hardbound book was written by New York-based writer and golf enthusiast Paula DiPerna and Vikki Keller, daughter of current course owner Lewis Keller. It includes information about the early game of golf, how it came to America, and how it found its first home at the Montague estate near White Sulphur Springs in the 1880's. The book also chronicles memorable matches played there over the years, as well as the course's eventual return to pastureland and its rebirth in the late 20th century. Many historical photographs are included, along with a foreword by golfer Sam Snead. Copies are available for $23 from Walker & Company at www.walkerbooks.com or through Oakhurst Links by calling (304)536-1884.

are constantly rubbing against them or, in the case of juveniles, butting their heads against them.

It is the clubs, however, that give visiting players the most authentic flavor of the old game. The long, narrow needle-nose head of the driver bears faint resemblance to modern drivers. The putter itself very much resembles today's driver. The rut iron, used to scoop the ball from a wagon rut, could pass for a soup spoon with a too-long handle.

Martha tells about a lady golfer who, on one occasion, couldn't find her ball, although she was pretty certain about where it had landed. While she was puzzling over it, a reclining sheep got up and moved off, and there was her ball under the sheep. "I told her I taught the sheep to do that," Martha says with a laugh. She tells of another lady who complained that a sheep "baaed" every time she went to hit her ball. Martha also likes to tell about the golfer who hit a mighty tee shot that hooked left, hit a tree, and ricocheted onto the green just 18 inches from the hole. "It was the funniest thing I've seen here, almost a hole in one," she says.

The old Montague home, now on the National Register of Historic Places, serves as Oakhurst's clubhouse and as a museum. Martha shows visitors photographs of America's first club maker, Montague's handyman Fraser Coron, a skilled woodworker. When play first began at Oakhurst, only Lionel Torin had clubs, and there was no place to buy any. So Montague asked Coron to try his hand at making replicas of Torin's clubs. Fraser Coron became quite proficient at making clubs with applewood heads and hickory shafts. One photo in the museum shows an elderly Coron displaying his craft to a very young Sam Snead.



The museum also displays seven balls found over the years on the estate. In addition to a couple of ancient gutties, there's a wooden ball from the World War I era, when no other substance was available for ball making.

Oakhurst's popularity among golfing enthusiasts has grown since its rebirth. Martha Asbury's guest book records visitors from 25 states and six foreign countries. She says Lee Trevino, who played the course twice, found the old-style play so demanding that he joked he would likely have been but a caddie in those days. Prominent among West Virginians who play the links at Oakhurst from time to time is basketball legend Jerry West.

Oakhurst Links is the only place in the world where a golfer can embrace the 19th century game as living history. To arrange a match, call (304)536-1884. Note the course's founding date in the phone number.

DAVID COTTRILL is a retired college instructor of religion and philosophy and works part-time as a staff writer for the *Mountain Messenger* in Lewisburg. A native of Clarksburg, he now lives in Alderson, Greenbrier County. This is David's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

Mountain State Miniature Golf

Almost Heaven in 18 Holes

Photoessay by Michael Keller

For those who prefer the confines of a putt-putt course, one of the newest and most creative in the state can be found in Beckley on Harper Road. Mountain State Miniature Golf is the brainchild of Kevin Traube (photo 7), owner of Little Brick House Gift Shop.

Kevin has run the shop for 18 years along this busy stretch just off West Virginia Turnpike exit 44. A few years ago, Kevin recognized the need for a low-cost, family-oriented attraction in the area and hit on the idea of developing a miniature golf course with a West Virginia theme. He unveiled his creation in 2002 — a clever, sophisticated, and challenging 18-hole putting range with every hole commemorating a separate West Virginia location or topic.

On the first hole, a short par three, golfers putt across a replica of the famous New River Bridge. A replica of the Summers County John Henry monument is featured on hole 10 (photo 6). Some holes recognize general topics, such as "Wild Wonderful West Virginia," complete with swinging timber and chainsaw-carved bear cubs (photo 1). "Country Roads" includes a sharp incline up a narrow lane and across a covered bridge (photo 2), while "Mountain Still" includes a rather convincing copper coil and thumper keg arrangement surrounded by a circuitous par three hole (photo 5).

Of particular local interest is the "Wildwood House," featuring a model of the home of Alfred E. Beckley (photo 3), and the insane "West Virginia Turnpike" hole featuring treacherous switchbacks and three maddening toll plaza obstacles (photo 4). At par five, it's the course's most demanding hole and its most popular among locals, according to Kevin.

Photographer Michael Keller recently visited Kevin at Mountain State Miniature Golf and took these photographs. Also at the course that day were Cathy Weaver and her son Garrett from Beckley. They come here frequently, they say, and we appreciate their allowing us to photograph them during their outing.

Mountain State Miniature Golf is located at 1818 Harper Road in Beckley; phone (304)253-7242. It is open seven days a week, year round.


5


6

7

Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

A Plate from Every State

License Plate Forest in Pleasant Valley

Every Sunday morning, about a dozen regulars gather at Hammel's Exxon in Pleasant Valley, Marshall County, to rehash the week's news, catch up on the stuff that never makes the newspaper, and wash down breakfast sandwiches with hot coffee.

It's a ritual that's been going on since Fred Hammel and his wife Jean bought the station and general store back in 1977. When they moved it across Route 250 to a new building a couple of years ago, the Sunday morning gang followed the coffee pot to the new location, where Fred thoughtfully installed chairs and a bench for this Sunday morning congregation.

"Some of them refer to it as their church service," says Fred. "It doesn't hurt business one bit to have them sitting around."

Fred and his wife Jean retired in 1999, and their son Eric now runs the gas station, convenience store, Laundromat, and car wash that grew out of the original business. Daughter Lisa has taken over what used to be the general store and converted it into a booming work-clothes and work-boot outlet.

After toiling seven days a week from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., Fred figured he deserved a good retirement, one of seeing the United States in a recreational vehicle. So, in 1999, after Jean retired from a teaching career, they purchased a 2000 Holiday Rambler and 1999 GEO, which they tow. In just four years, they put 100,000 miles on the GEO and crisscrossed the United States more than 20 times. Their retirement hobby grew into a new career for Fred, who serves as a wagon master for Adventure Caravans. It's a fitting retirement for a man who made his living selling gasoline and fixing vehicles.

Folks who know Fred and Jean — and there are a lot of them from Moundsville to Cameron — can learn where this wayfaring couple have been by checking the license plate forest just up the hill from the Exxon station. Fred has mounted some 1,200 plates on

Fred Hammel wanders through his license plate forest located on Route 250 in Pleasant Valley, Marshall County.

more than a dozen 4x4 poles up to 13 feet in height. As of November 2003, they had visited every state except Utah, Oregon, and Hawaii, which were among their destinations for the upcoming travel season.

Fred collects license plates like other people collect postcards and knickknacks. He began his collection at the age of 16, when he got his first car — a 1957 Chevrolet. That car's plate, a 1958 blue-and-yellow West Virginia tag, tops the pole dedicated to Mountain State plates.

"It's like even though you sell the car or trade it, the license plate is a part of it, and so you keep it," Fred says, explaining how a man can get attached to a rusty rectangle of stamped metal. [See "Clifford Weese and the West Virginia License Plate," by Joseph Platania; Fall 1999.]

Fred and his wife Jean collect license plates during their RV travels, but they always enjoy coming home to West Virginia. Here, Fred smiles between a few of his West Virginia plates.

During his working years, Fred kept his collection packed away in a box. Then, on one of their first RV trips, Fred and Jean visited the famous Sign Post Forest in Watson Lake, Yukon Territory. Since the forest started in 1942, tens of thousands of travelers on the Alaskan Highway have made and posted their unique "we-were-here" testimonies in the forest.

Fred says his wife and children initially thought the idea of a license plate forest was kind of silly, but they have since become enthusiastic seekers of more branches for these trees. Jean now keeps an eye open for junkyards — or, as Fred prefers to call them, salvage yards — when they crisscross the country.

He's not alone in his pursuit of the world's most expensive bumper stickers. Fred says he's often approached by the classic car collector who is looking for a particular year of plate to display on a vintage vehicle. And special-issue plates are always hard to find, and therefore worth the challenge of the hunt.

For example, while crossing Georgia, Fred spotted a salvage yard just as the sun was taking its last bow. He pulled into the yard and asked the owner if he could look for plates on the merchandise.

"The man said, 'Help yourself, but you probably won't find anything that's worth anything,'" Fred recalls. Summer Olympics souvenir hunters had already stripped the bumpers clean, the owner explained. But Fred decided to look all the same, and emerged from the yard with a Georgia Summer Olympics license plate. Stop at the Exxon station, and Fred will point it out to you.

He'll tell you that his favorite plate is the one from Alaska with a bear on it. He stopped at a garage in the Yukon and talked the owner's wife out of it. "She shouldn't have done it, and her husband didn't like it one bit," Fred says. "But I shipped him a couple West Virginia plates when we got back and made it all right."

With scores of RV friends who know that he collects plates, Fred is constantly getting donations to his forest. One RV friend brought back plates from Aruba and Australia. You can see them, as well as plates from Mexico and most of the Canadian provinces, in the forest.

Although the couple log 25,000 miles, or so, a year visiting other states, they always come back to West Virginia for the summers. They live on the farm that belonged to Jean's grandparents. She likes to grow her flowers there, and both of them enjoy being near their seven grandchildren. As much as Fred enjoys traveling, he knows there's nothing like coming home to the aptly named Pleasant Valley.

"I wouldn't even suggest selling out and traveling full time to her," he says. "I'd have a problem on my hands if I did that."

Hammel's Exxon is located on Route 250 in Pleasant Valley between Moundsville and Cameron. There is no charge to visit the license plate forest.

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.

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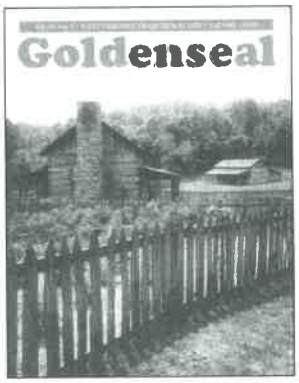

Fall 1993
- Bower's Ridge
- Ed Weaver's Service Station Museum
- Douglass High School
- Lefty the Barber
- The Greenbrier Goes to War

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

SOLD OUT

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

Summer 1990
- Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
- Fiddler Glen Smith
- Broadcaster Ernie Saunders
- Pence Springs
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- 1907 Monongah Disaster
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- Camp Washington-Carver
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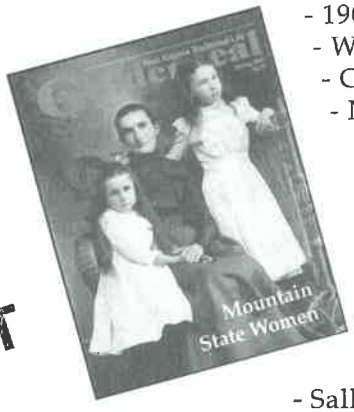

Spring 2000
- Mountain State Women
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- Smallest Church
- Dancers Rush & Ruby Butcher
- Sally Maxwell Bennett

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

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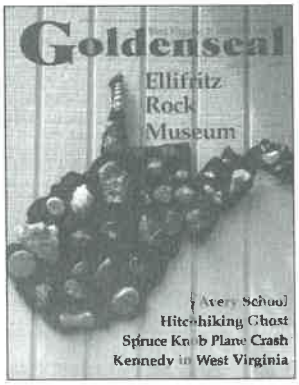
Summer 2000
- Mountain State Men
- Cass
- West Virginia State Folk Festival
- Old Sweet Springs
- Printer Ken McClain



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

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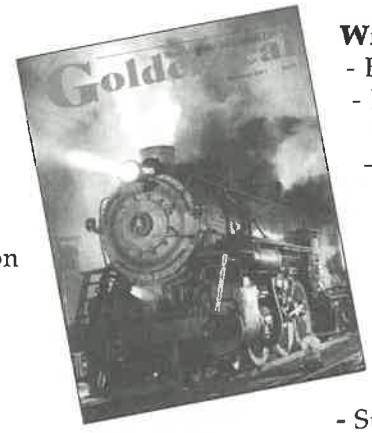
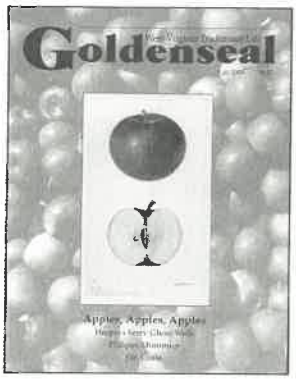
- Train Photography
- Coalwood
- Singers Bill & Hazel Westfall
- Pinch Reunion
- Glassmaker Danton Caussin



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

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- *Princess Margy* Sternwheeler
- Fidler's Mill
- Panhandle Swimming Pools
- Cassity
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- Flatwoods Monster
- Deaf and Blind Schools
- Long's Store
- Lost Creek
- Preacher Denver Hill

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- 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
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- Country Store Opry

Fall 2003
- Artist Boyd Boggs
- Odd Fellows Home
- Laying Track in Nicholas County
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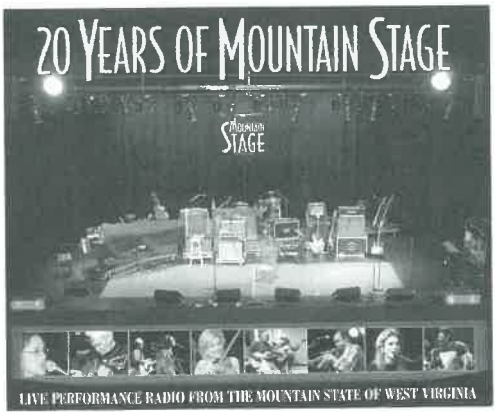
"Mountain Stage" Book

Among West Virginia's most recognized musical exports is the weekly "Mountain Stage" program. A production of West Virginia Public Broadcasting, it is produced in Charleston and syndicated over more than 100 radio stations and nearly 200 television stations worldwide. Since 1983, the program has logged more than 500 shows and featured nearly 1,500 artists. It was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story in our Fall 1988 issue [see "From Right Here in the Mountains: West Virginia Public Radio's 'Mountain Stage,'" by Jim Balow].



Marking the show's progress is a new book titled *20 Years of Mountain Stage*. The 132-page volume is edited by Michael Lipton and published by Friends of West Virginia Public Radio, Inc. It includes hundreds of candid photographs — most of them in color — and highlights the evolution of this popular program. West Virginia artists here include Ethel Caffie-Austin, Hazel Dickens, Ginny Hawker, Melvin Wine, Nat Reese, Gandydancer, John Blisard, David Morris, Tim O'Brien, Kathy Mattea, and others.

The show's eclectic approach to music is evident throughout. In the introduction, host Larry Groce comments, "'Mountain Stage' reflects what is going on in popular, folk, and roots music across the country and around the world." To back that up, the book includes a complete roster of every program produced during the show's first 20 years, as well as extensive details and a behind-the-scenes look at how "Mountain Stage" has grown and changed.

Copies of the book sell for $30 paperbound, $50 hardbound, plus shipping, and are available on-line at www.mountainstage.org.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Presidential Candidate John W. Davis
- Grafton Railroading
- Ritchie County Root Cellars
- Accordions

PHOTO CURIOSITY

Who is this guy, and what is he doing in that basket? Danielle Bodkin found this photograph tucked between the pages of an old hymn book she purchased at a Cross Lanes library book sale about 10 years ago. The book was dated 1886, though the fellow in the photograph appears to us to be wearing a World War I-era Army uniform. From the smile on his face, we gather that he is not being held against his will, but we can't tell you much else about him.

If you have any idea what's going on with this doughboy in a basket, please contact us at the GOLDENSEAL office.

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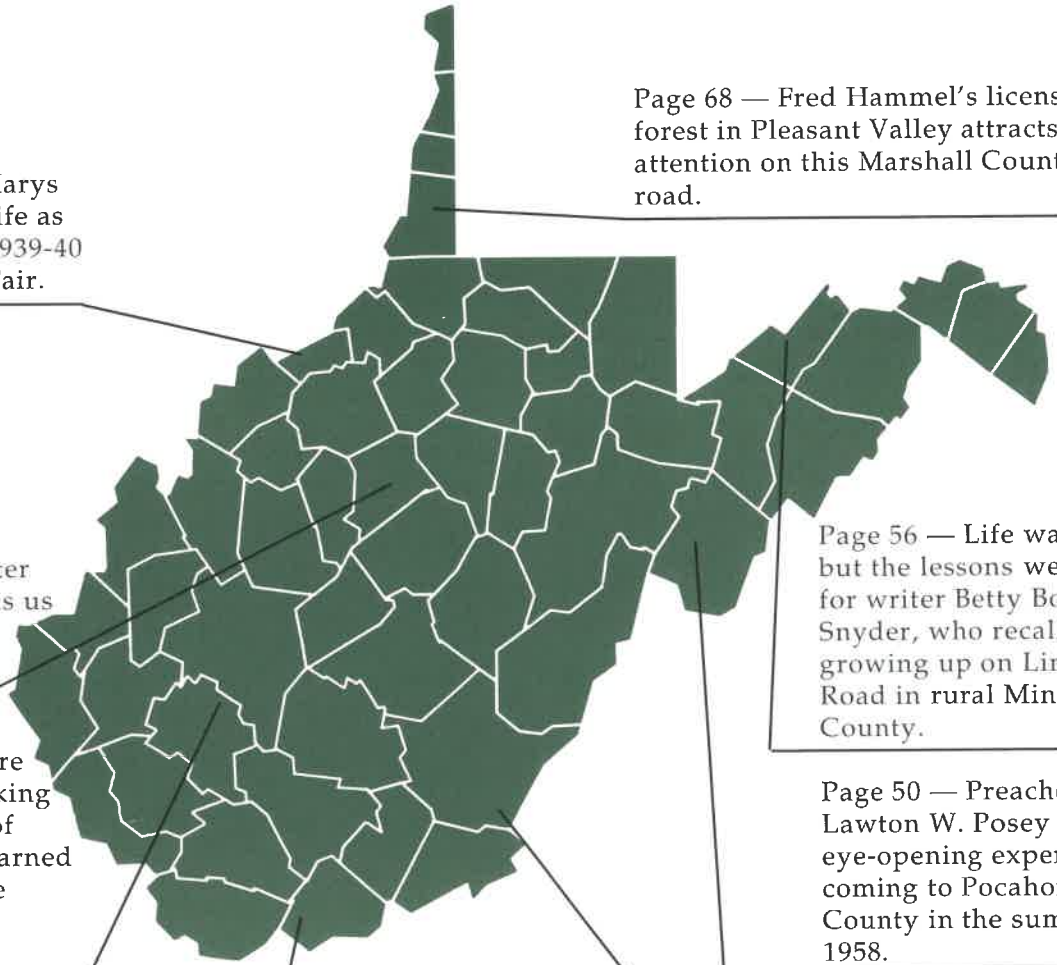

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