Black Lung • Elaine Purkey • Boy Scouts • Crum • Baseball

West Virginia Traditional Life

Goldenseal

Summer 2006 $4.95

Activist Songwriter Elaine Purkey

From the Editor - The Gift of Activism

As I sit to write these words, hearings are taking place in Buckhannon into the heart-wrenching disaster that took place on January 2 at the Sago mine, near Tallmansville, in Upshur County. In the lobby of the Cultural Center, just a few feet from my door, sits a stark art exhibit, featuring pieces of coal, one for every miner who has died this year mining coal in West Virginia, carved with their initials. The total is 18.

To longtime residents — and longtime readers of GOLDENSEAL — these are just the latest installments in the everlasting struggle between the demand for coal and the safety of the work force. We all know that today's headlines become tomorrow's footnotes, eventually replaced by a new set of tragic headlines. And the cycle repeats.

The first recorded mine disaster in West Virginia was an explosion at a mine in Newburg, Preston County, in January 1886. In it, 39 workers were killed. This shocked local people and drew attention to many dangerous mining practices that had previously gone unnoticed. A coroner's jury looked into the incident and issued the following verdict:

"The Coroner's Jury Decides that the Newburg Horror was the result of the neglect of orders and disobeyance of the law — The Jury Takes To Task and Decounts at Length much needed Legislation."

A book, titled *They Died in Darkness*, by Lacy A. Dillon (1976, McClain Publishing Company), recounts 43 West Virginia mining disasters, from 1886 until 1968. The book is available at most West Virginia public and academic libraries, and I recommend it to anyone who wishes to learn more about this part of our state's history.

Our fervent hope is that each new disaster draws attention to a specific problem or cause and that substantial change takes place as a result, saving future lives and injuries. To some extent, this has happened. Governor Joe Manchin was quick to respond to the explosion at the Sago mine and the fire at the Alma mine in Logan County last January by asking the State Legislature to pass new mine emergency response measures. The new laws set maximum response times for reporting disasters, place electronic tracking devices on underground miners, and mandate emergency oxygen stations and supplies within the mines. We applaud the governor and the legislature for taking these steps to improve our response to future crises. We also encourage them to continue to look for progressive ways to save workers from the need for such emergency measures in the future by reducing the risk of explosions, fires, slate falls, and other mining catastrophes from happening in the first place.

In this issue of GOLDENSEAL, we learn how the infamous 1968 Mannington mine explosion in Marion County, which killed 78 miners, spawned the movement for black lung legislation. As mourners and survivors searched for answers in the wake of that tragedy, activists seized the opportunity to draw attention to a less dramatic, though more insidious, killer — miners' respiratory disease. It's a fascinating and important story. [See "'Let's See What a Fight We Can Give Them': The Black Lung Movement in West Virginia," by Catherine Moore; page 6.]

On a similar theme, we meet author William C. Blizzard, son of union leader Bill Blizzard. The younger tells how the elder Blizzard led the 1921 miners' march to Blair Mountain and subsequently stood trial for his role in the historic conflagration. [See "Son of the Struggle: A Visit with William C. Blizzard," by C. Belmont "Chuck" Keeney; page 20.] Activist and songwriter Elaine Purkey of Lincoln County, pictured on our cover, uses original and traditional music to deliver her powerful pro-labor message to contemporary audiences. [See "'One Day More': Activist Songwriter Elaine Purkey," by Paul Gartner; page 14.]

While disasters and hard times can often bring much-needed reform, it doesn't just happen on its own. It takes the vision and tenacity of strong leaders and activists, who are uniquely qualified to motivate the public and sway public officials. Thank God for them.

John Lilly

Volume 32, Number 2 **Goldenseal** Summer 2006

p. 6


p. 38


p. 32


p. 52


p. 56

On the cover: Activist and songwriter Elaine Purkey from Harts, Lincoln County, performs at the Cultural Center in Charleston. Our story begins on page 14. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Joe Manchin III
Governor

Kay Goodwin
Secretary
Department of Education
and the Arts

John Lilly
Editor

Gordon Simmons
Editorial Assistant

Cornelia Crews Alexander
Circulation Manager

BlaineTurner Advertising, Inc.
Publication Design

GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $17 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs.

Correspondence to:
The Editor
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

Phone (304)558-0220
e-mail goldenseal@wvculture.org
www.wvculture.org/goldenseal

Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The Division of Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

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.

Pepperoni Rolls

April 5, 2006
Spring, Texas
Editor:
My brother-in-law, Ray H. Gray, sent me the spring issue, and I was so happy to see and read about Mr. Argiro, People's Bakery [in Fairmont], Cheech and Polly Argiro, and the pepperoni rolls. [See "The Pepperoni Roll: State Food of West Virginia," by Colleen Anderson; Spring 2006.] There were many fond and sweet memories of friends and relations on Robinson Street.

Thanks for the memory, and more, about my home state.
Sam Maiolo

April 7, 2006
Clarksburg, West Virginia
Editor:
I really appreciate you giving us a chance to tell about our family's Health Bread Company in Clarksburg, and of our product, the real Italian pepperoni roll, which we feel is the creme de la creme in pepperoni rolls in north-central West Virginia. Our bakery was started 80 years ago by my great-grandfather. In 1955, my father, Benny D'Annunzio, became the owner of the family business.

Pepperoni rolls are labor-intensive products. I can remember being recruited, along with my brother, Rick, to bag pepperoni rolls for our father when we were five and seven years old. Fourth-generation bakers, we recently took over the family business, sharing over 60 years of baking experience. Our bakery is maybe the largest Italian bakery in West Virginia and one of the oldest. Our pledge is to keep quality and consistency in our product, and service to our customers is still our main goal.
Thanks,
Chris D'Annunzio

We appreciate your writing, Chris. The D'Annunzio family's Health Bread Company bakery is located at 1909 Williams Avenue in the North View section of Clarksburg; phone (304)622-3492. They are open on Sundays and come highly recommended. —ed.

Health Bread Company bakery in Clarksburg.

Burgoo/Bergoo

March 28, 2006
Webster Springs, West Virginia
Editor:
Please accept our sincere thanks for including the article about the Burgoo International Cook-Off in the spring issue. [See "Burgoo, the Stew," by Allen D. Arnold; Spring 2006.]

We have been receiving feedback from several peo-

Slim Bosely and his garden in Barbour County, 1978. Photograph by Warren Poling

ple who have read the article, as well as inquiries regarding entry in the cook-off. We are looking forward to a great event on October 7, thanks in part to the inclusion of the event in your publication.
Sincerely,
Merle Moore

Slim Bosely

March 27, 2006
Barberton, Ohio
Editor:
It is always a treat to receive this magazine, but this issue was special. I especially liked the article about my father. [See "Slim Bosely and His Outhouse," by Warren Poling; Spring 2006.]

My oldest sister, Norma Jean, favored Daddy the most. She was tall, 5'11", and had his posture. Since Daddy was gone so much in the winter plowing roads, Norma had most of the outside chores to do. We had no brothers, so she became the "boy" of the family.

Retiring was hard for Daddy, so to keep busy he'd drive to Belington, four miles away, a couple of times a day to "gossip" with his retired friends and drink coffee. He knew everybody in Barbour County. Then, when Mother died, he added more trips to town as a way to handle his grief.

Although Mother and Daddy disagreed about most things, they truly loved one another. We girls were thankful when Daddy and Octava Wilmoth from Belington became friends. This filled a big void that was left by Mother's death. Daddy and Octava had many good times together.

Daddy only had an eighth-grade education, but was very knowledgeable about many things. He liked to study West Virginia history, and the stars. He liked working crossword puzzles. And he read GOLDENSEAL magazine for years.
Slim Bosely's daughter,
Alberta Bonner

Renewal Mailbag

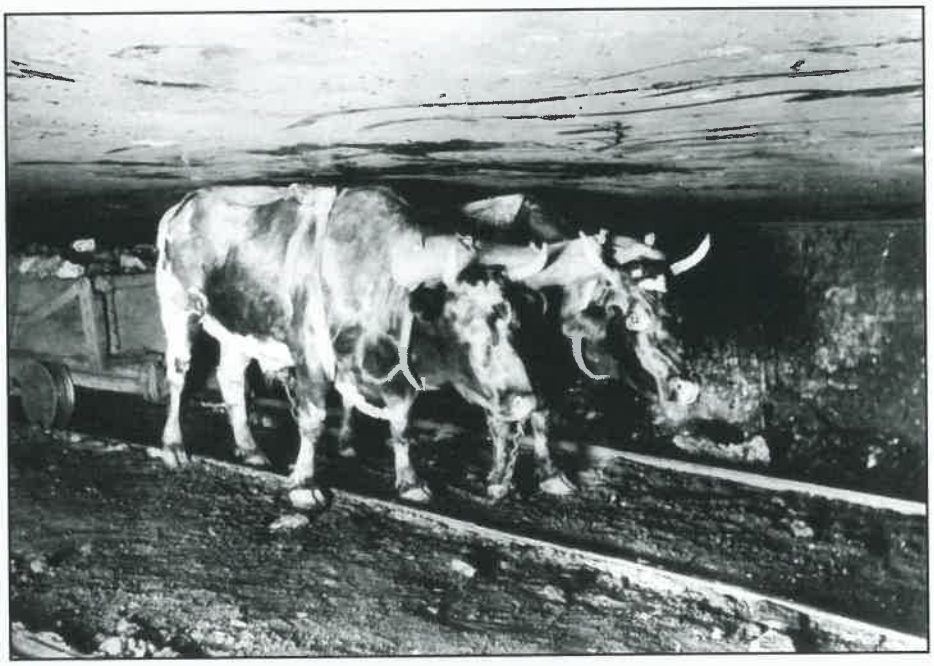
April 12, 2006
Fenwick, West Virginia
We have been subscribing and reading GOLDENSEAL for many years, and I think the spring issue is the best ever.
Thank you,
Dot Spencer

March 21, 2006
Huachuca City, Arizona
I had planned to drop my subscription, but the Spring 2006 issue convinced me that was not a good decision! So, please renew my subscription for three years.
Norma J. Lavinder

March 23, 2006
Milton, West Virginia
Great job! We look forward to the arrival of your magazine. We spend a great afternoon reading to each other and looking for ideas on interesting places to visit!
Merrily Taylor

February 15, 2006
Strasburg, Virginia
Receiving GOLDENSEAL is like getting a letter from home.
Bernice Murphy

Four-Legged Miners



Oxen hauling coal underground at Rivesville, early 1900's. Photographs courtesy of Marion County Historical Society.

In our Summer 2005 issue, we published a fascinating "Photo Curiosity," showing goats being used to haul coal out of a mine. We recently heard from Dora Kay Grubb, president of the Marion County Historical Society, who tells us that this picture was made at the Consol Mine at Rivesville in the early 1900's.

Dora tells us that the original photograph was donated to the historical society about 10 years ago by Colonel Charles Allard, along with a number of additional images, showing various animals being used to haul coal from the same mines. Included in the collection are a photograph of a team of oxen hauling loaded coal cars underground, and one of dogs hitched to smaller loads of coal outside the mines, seen here.

Our sincere thanks to Dora and the Marion County Historical Society for sharing these images with our readers. These and other photographs are on permanent display at the Marion County Historical Society Museum, located at 211 Adams Street, next door to the courthouse, in Fairmont. For more information, phone (304)367-5398 or visit www.marionhistory.org.

Dogs harnessed to coal cars at Rivesville. The bigger dog at left appears to be hitched to a larger load of coal.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Major General Charles R. Fox. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Charles R. Fox, West Virginia State Adjutant General from 1946-57, died February 28 at a rest home in Marmet. He was 93. Fox was born in Braxton County in 1912, and his family settled on Charleston's West Side in 1926. While still a senior in high school, Fox enlisted in the West Virginia National Guard in 1930, beginning an illustrious military career that spanned more than 40 years and took him around the world. He eventually became the state's longest-serving adjutant general. Among his many awards, honors, and accomplishments, General Fox is credited with planning and overseeing the rebuilding of the West Virginia National Guard following World War II. He was featured on the cover of our Summer 2003 issue and in the accompanying article, "Major General Charles R. Fox," by Russ Barbour.

Elizabeth Thurmond Witschey. Photograph by Michael Keller.

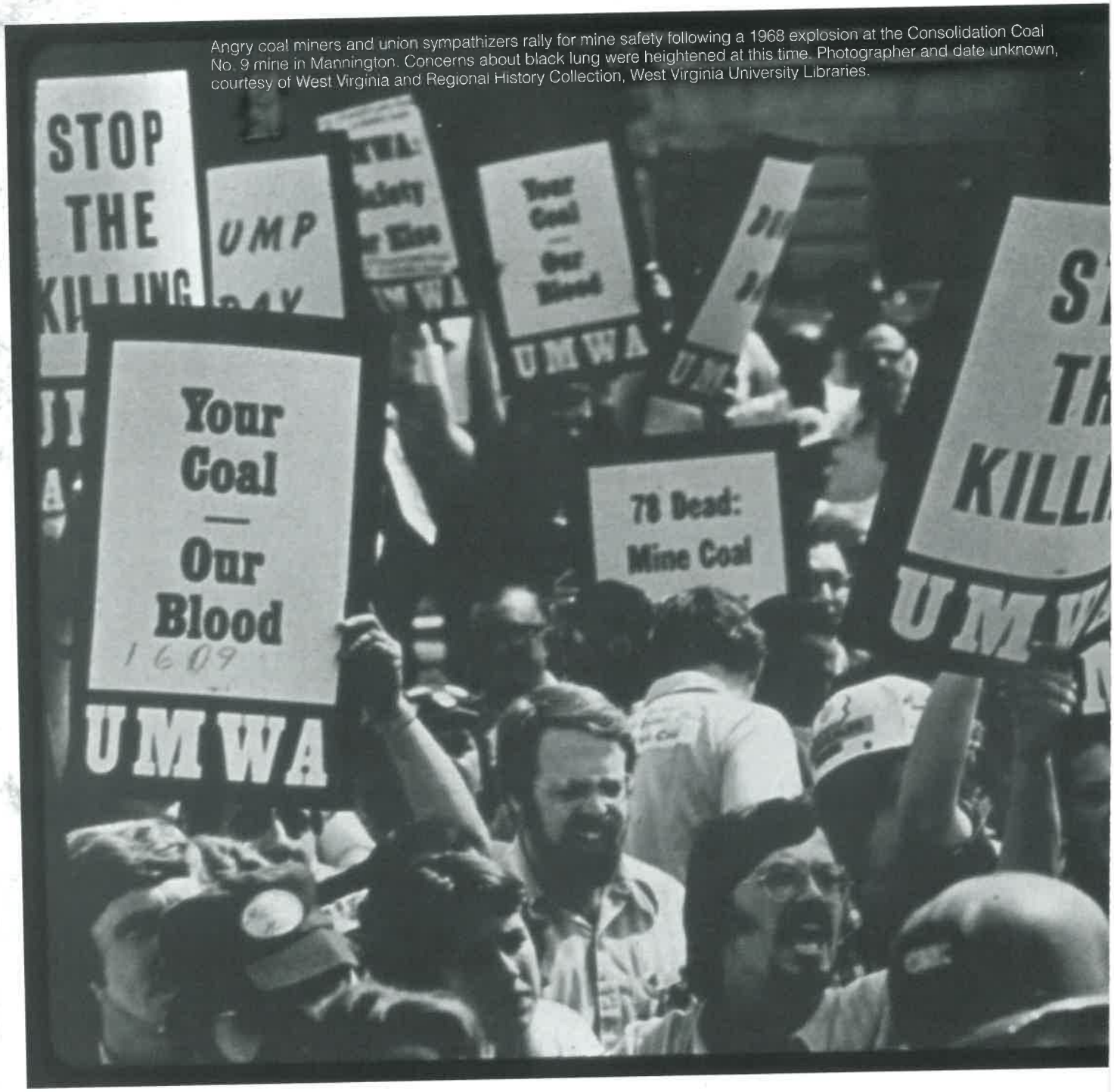
Elizabeth Thurmond Witschey, who related her fond memories of growing up in Logan in our Spring 2000 issue, passed away on April 15. Elizabeth's story, titled "My Memories of Logan: More Than Feudin' and Fightin'," told of fun times she had during the late teens and early '20's, attending school activities, parties, and social gatherings in the famous coal center during its heyday. "Logan was a great place to grow up," she said. "Nobody has ever tried to give it any good publicity. I finally decided to do it myself." Leaving Logan in the early 1930's, she married Parkersburg accountant Robert E. Witschey, and the pair settled in Charleston. Elizabeth was an accomplished musician and taught piano for many years. She performed with the Charleston (West Virginia) Symphony Orchestra, and other groups, and was active in the local arts community. She was 97.

John Perkovic of Benwood, Marshall County, passed away on March 12, at age 88. John ran the family grocery store on Boggs Run for 60 years and helped to keep his family's Croatian heritage alive. Father Mike Perkovic taught his children the traditional music and songs of his native Yugoslavia and formed West Virginia's first tambouritza orchestra in the early 1930's. John played in this family band for many years, performing over WWVA radio and traveling around the state, making personal appearances. John managed the Croatian Cultural Club in Benwood, taught traditional music to young apprentices, organized music and dance groups, and coordinated performances. He and his sister Olga were regular participants in the annual Vandalia Gathering in Charleston and were featured in the article, "The Music Made Everything Okay: Michael Kline Interviews the Perkovic Family of Boggs Run"; Summer 1982.

John Perkovic. Photograph by Ron Rittenhouse.

Morgan Morgan VIII, the last in a long line of namesakes going back to the first white settler in present-day West Virginia, died in Martinsburg on March 26. The state legislature authorized a monument in 1923, recognizing Morgan Morgan as the first permanent white settler within the state borders. Morgan came here from Wales in around 1726 and built a cabin on 1,000 acres near what is now Bunker Hill, Berkeley County. He also became the first civil officer, the first judicial officer, the first commissioned military officer, the first road engineer, the first tavern owner, sponsor of the first church, and ancestor of the first governor of the state. Morgan Morgan VIII was born in Martinsburg in 1929 and worked at the Interwoven plant there for 20 years. He was 76 and leaves no direct descendants.

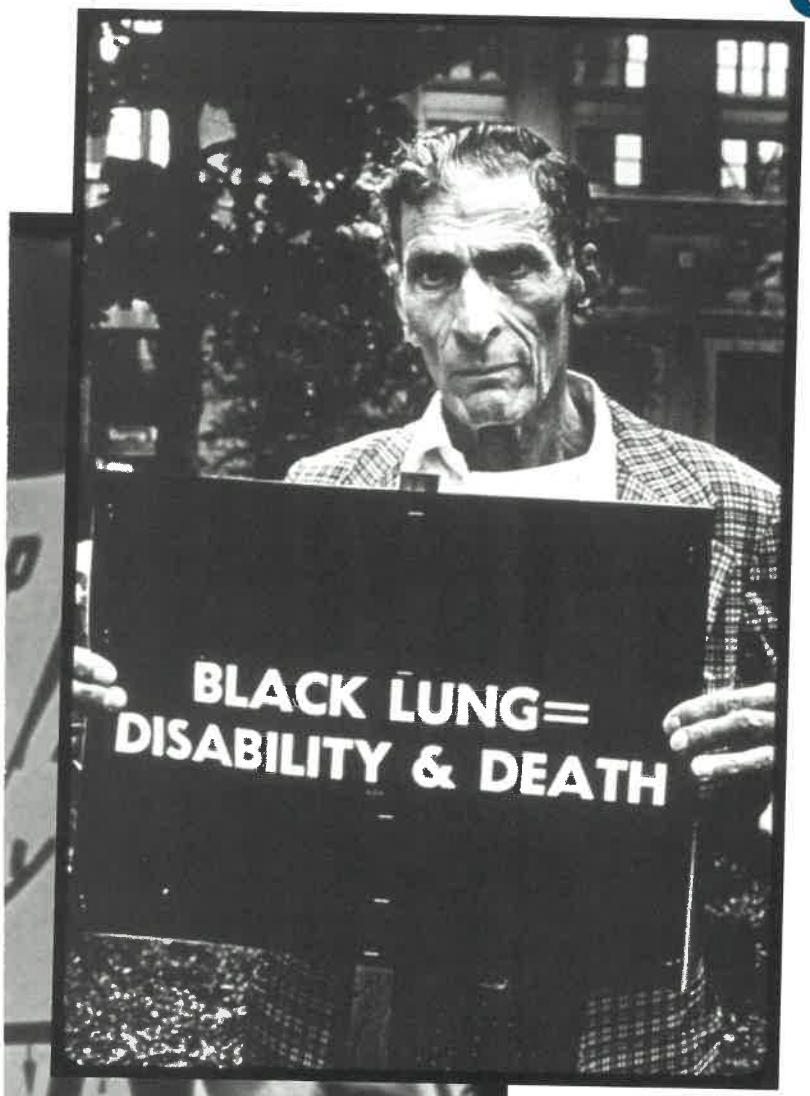
"Let's Show Them Can Give Them"



Angry coal miners and union sympathizers rally for mine safety following a 1968 explosion at the Consolidation Coal No. 9 mine in Mannington. Concerns about black lung were heightened at this time. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

What a Fight We

By Catherine Moore



Above: A marcher holds a grim message during a black lung rally. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

The Black Lung Movement in West Virginia

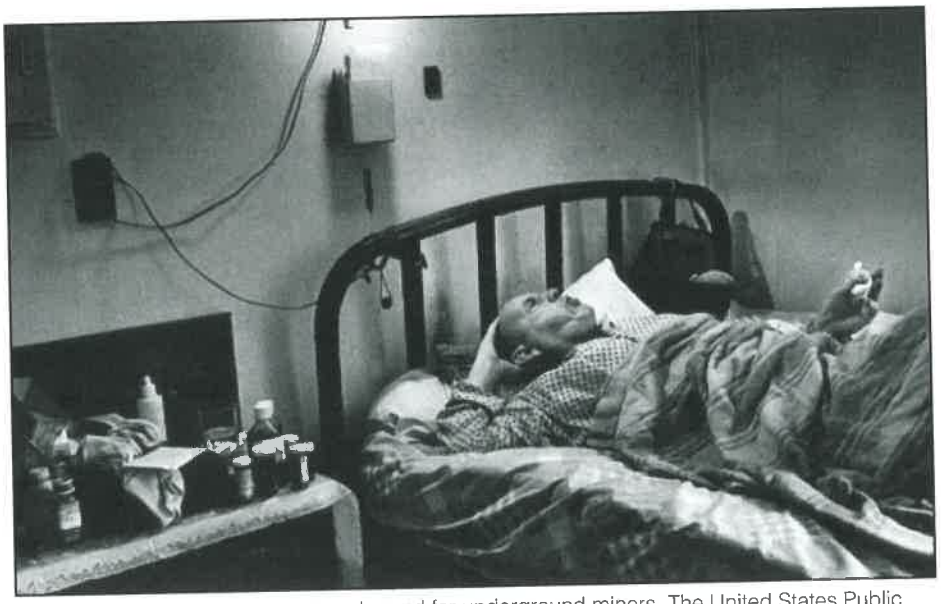
On January 28, 1969, an empty wooden coffin rested in the rotunda of the State Capitol while lawmakers bustled by. It was placed there by coal miners to call attention to a social cause that thousands of West Virginians would fiercely rally behind that year. Above it hung a short but affecting poem written by Mildred Mullins, the wife of a disabled miner:

"Compensation we are asking,
While alive and still gasping;
When life is o'er and hymns are sung,
Then they'll know we have black lung."

Though America had been highly dependent on the Appalachian coalfields to fuel the industrial revolution and two world wars, until the late 1960's there were few laws either protecting coal miners from the significant dangers of their occupation or compensating them for the results. Instead, miners relied mostly on their own knack and luck to keep themselves out of harm's way.

In some cases, this was enough. But all the luck and talent in the world could not protect them from the tiny coal dust particles, fine as talcum powder, that were constantly filtering through their lung tissue as they worked. Years of breathing the dust left many men disabled, in pain, hopeless, out of work, and with no possibility of adequate compensation, or even acknowledgment.

Despite several important medical conferences held on the topic in Elkins during the 1950's, black lung was, on the whole, not accepted as an authentic disease by the medical community. Some doctors even went so far as



Respiratory ailments are a common hazard for underground miners. The United States Public Health Service estimated in the late 1960's that as many as 125,000 coal miners suffered from some stage of black lung disease. Here, a miner, identified only as McCoy, coughs from his bed, with a bed stand full of medications nearby. Photograph by Earl Dotter, date unknown.

to claim that coal dust might be beneficial to workers' health because of the comparatively lower incidence of tuberculosis among miners and because they believed it caused the men to cough up dangerous silica.

Then, in 1968, a movement spread through the coalfields of West Virginia that changed everything. Throughout that year and perhaps earlier, small groups of disabled miners from Fayette and Kanawha counties met informally in each others' houses to discuss what could be done about their situation. They were frustrated by what they felt was an unwillingness on the part of the United Mine Workers (UMW) leadership, in particular union president Tony Boyle, to confront mine operators about safety and health.

With promises but little action from their union president, the miners hooked up with three energetic, theatrical doctors, a group of young VISTA volunteers, and a few enthusiastic politicians. The miner-activists and their supporters sought to change the law in West Virginia to provide compensation for the disabilities that had already befallen them, as well as offer protection from black lung for future miners.

Misdiagnosed, misunderstood, and misnamed (as silicosis, "compensation-itis," miners' asthma, miners' nerves, and miners' consumption), the causes and effects of the disease now known as coal miners' pneumoconiosis, or black lung, had not been studied much in this country. Even among those who did study it, little consensus had been reached about its nature. The United States Public Health Service estimated at the time that one miner in five — or around 125,000 working miners — suffered from some stage of black lung.

A pulmonary specialist working in Beckley, Dr. Donald Rasmussen had been researching black lung since 1963. His detailed knowledge of miners' pulmonary health, and the tests he performed in his clinic, provided the crucial medical foundation for the arguments being put forth by the miners.

Dr. Hawley Wells, a pathologist who had worked with Rasmussen in Beckley, was frustrated as coal companies continuously alleged that miners were dying of heart disease when it was evident to him that the cause of the heart disease was actually the coal in their lungs.

But everyone agrees that Dr. I.E. Buff, a cardiologist from Charleston, was the true showman of the outfit. His booming voice and rabble-rousing speeches, heard on national radio and television programs, became familiar to West Virginians as he grew to be an important media figure for the movement.

The trio, calling themselves the Physicians Committee on Miners Health, served at times as a mouthpiece for the miners. They appeared at meetings of miners around the state, presenting their medical opinions about the disease, as well as dramatically reinforcing, with their strong rhetoric, the workers' growing conviction that injustices were being committed against them.

Dr. Donald Rasmussen, a pulmonary specialist from Beckley, began researching black lung in 1963 and became a key supporter of the black lung movement. Here, Dr. Rasmussen displays photographs of diseased lung tissue. Photograph by Earl Dotter, date unknown.

Another critical source of support came from a group of young VISTA workers and Appalachian Volunteers sent to West Virginia under the federal government's "War on Poverty" program. Their role, by and large, seems to have been one of organizational and moral support.

One involved miner, James "Jeep" Hall of Gallagher, Kanawha County, describes his respect for the workers in this way: "They was more or less like hippies, and they helped us. When Tony Boyle's people would come to the statehouse, we had the VISTA people on our side. They got threatened really bad, because they weren't part of the miners. But, by God, they didn't scare easy. They were some of the best people you'd ever want to meet. They were just kind of out of the ordinary for us coal miners."

One of the most visible of those was Craig Robinson, originally from Buffalo, New York, now living in Beckley, who spoke to the Mine Safety and Health Administration in a 1999 interview. "My role in the black lung movement was as an educator and organizer and network builder," he recalls. "I helped to bring coal miners together to talk about the problem, helped to bring info to those suffering from the problem, and helped bring experts into contact with the miners themselves so they could mutually educate each other. The movement was definitely not one caused by VISTA volunteers or one that they were chiefly responsible for. It was mainly the coal miners themselves that took this on and made it a success."

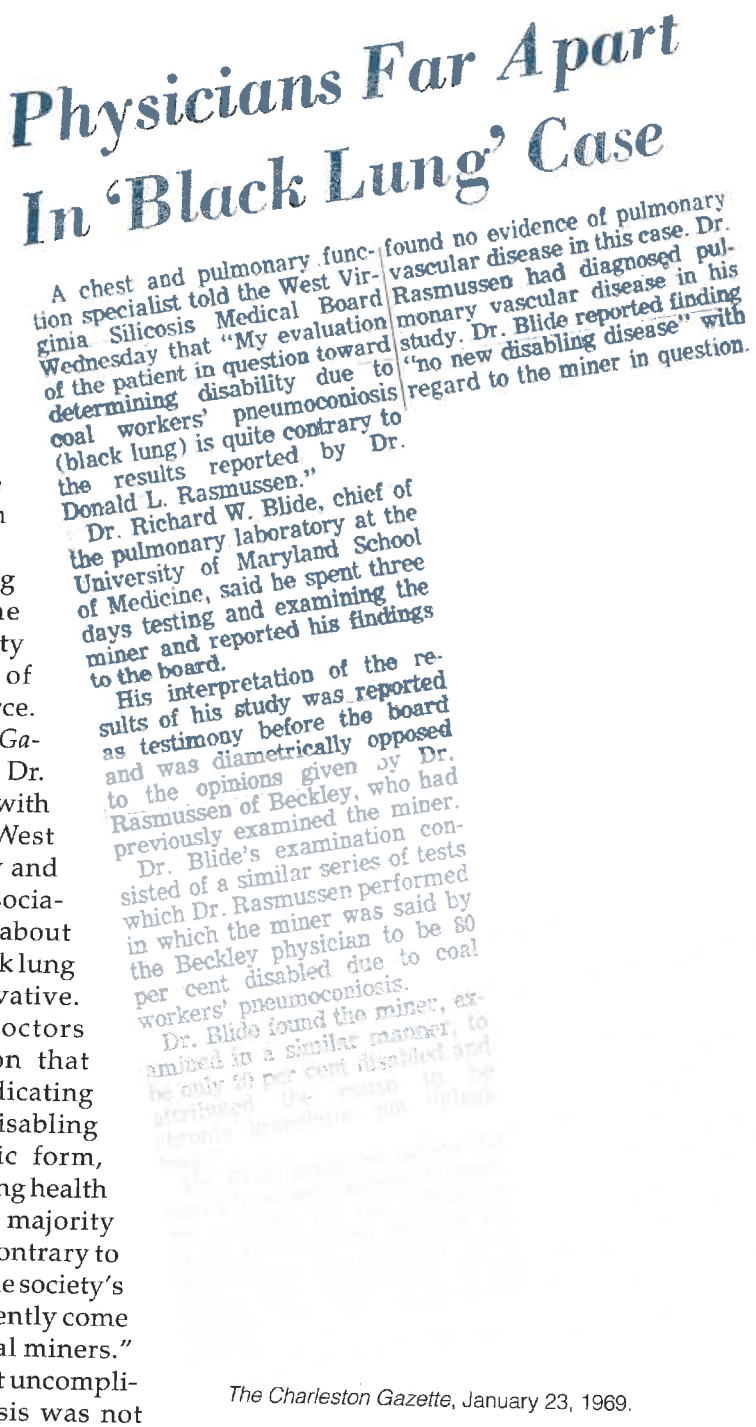
For the coal companies, implementing health safety measures — such as dust level detectors or water sprayers to keep down dust — had obvious drawbacks. These procedures were sure to slow down production and cut into profits. They also argued that the financial burden of paying compensation would significantly threaten an industry already under strain from competing markets. It was more efficient from their standpoint to seek out doctors who agreed with their position on black lung: that the condition was far rarer and less disabling than the trio of "renegade" doctors were claiming and that, in the majority of cases, the symptoms were caused by cigarette smoke rather than coal dust.

Debate among those within the medical community over the nature of black lung was fierce. In *The Charleston Gazette*, Dr. Buff and Dr. Rasmussen sparred with physicians from West Virginia University and county medical associations, whose claims about the existence of black lung were more conservative. Cabell County doctors passed a resolution that stated: "Claims indicating that a disastrous, disabling disease in epidemic form, producing devastating health effects upon a large majority of state miners, are contrary to the observations of the society's members who frequently come into contact with coal miners." They also argued that uncomplicated pneumoconiosis was not a disabling disease and would not negatively affect a worker's health.

This was the cast of players when, in 1968, a tragedy in the West Virginia coalfields shocked the nation. In its aftermath, a new energy was injected into the fight for black lung legislation.

The Pittsburgh coal seam underneath Marion County is seven feet thick in the Farmington-Mannington vicinity. The Consolidation Coal No. 9 mine was as large as Manhattan. At 5:30 a.m. on November 20, 1968, an explosion shuddered through the earth. Twenty-one miners struggled to the surface, but 78 went missing. The fire in the mines raged for 10 days, until they were sealed — some said too soon — to starve the fires of oxygen.

The northern coalfields have been the scene of a number of mining disasters, all due to explosions. The ignition source for this particular one was never positively determined. Investigators, however, identified a combination of causes that they



Physicians Far Apart In 'Black Lung' Case

A chest and pulmonary function specialist told the West Virginia Silicosis Medical Board Wednesday that "My evaluation of the patient in question toward determining disability due to coal workers' pneumoconiosis (black lung) is quite contrary to the results reported by Dr. Donald L. Rasmussen."

Dr. Richard W. Blide, chief of the pulmonary laboratory at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, said he spent three days testing and examining the miner and reported his findings to the board.

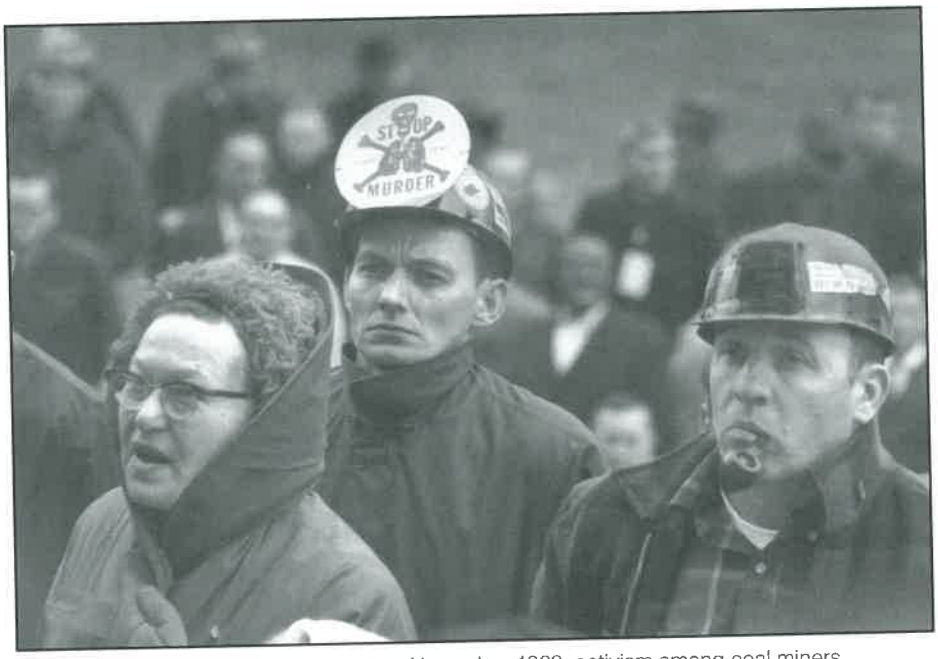
His interpretation of the results of his study was reported as testimony before the board and was diametrically opposed to the opinions given by Dr. Rasmussen of Beckley, who had previously examined the miner.

Dr. Blide's examination consisted of a similar series of tests which Dr. Rasmussen performed in which the miner was said by the Beckley physician to be 80 per cent disabled due to coal workers' pneumoconiosis.

Dr. Blide found the miner, examined in a similar manner, to be only 50 per cent disabled and attributed the cause to be chronic bronchitis and [illegible]

found no evidence of pulmonary vascular disease in this case. Dr. Rasmussen had diagnosed pulmonary vascular disease in his study. Dr. Blide reported finding "no new disabling disease" with regard to the miner in question.

The Charleston Gazette, January 23, 1969.



Following the Mannington disaster in late November 1968, activism among coal miners increased. In January 1969, the Black Lung Association was formed, and meetings were held throughout the coalfields. Miners and their families expressed intense interest, as shown in this photograph, taken in Charleston by Doug Yarrow.

believed contributed to the incident: inadequate ventilation, inadequate control of explosive methane gas and coal dust, and inadequate testing for methane.

When Tony Boyle arrived at the scene of the disaster, he outraged miners and their families with the unconsidered statement that Consolidation Coal, in his opinion, was "one of the better companies to work with as far as cooperation and safety is concerned. As long as we mine coal, there is always this inherent danger connected with mining coal."

The national media ran with the story of the explosion, drawing widespread attention to the severe safety hazards of the coal industry. The event awakened the sympathies of ordinary Americans, alerted journalists and safety advocates to the poor safety record in the coal industry, and outraged miners. National newspapers and broadcast networks devoted print space and airtime to the heartbreaking aftermath of the disaster. Finally, people other than coal miners and their families were beginning to talk. From the explosion at Farmington, national media attention turned to black lung.

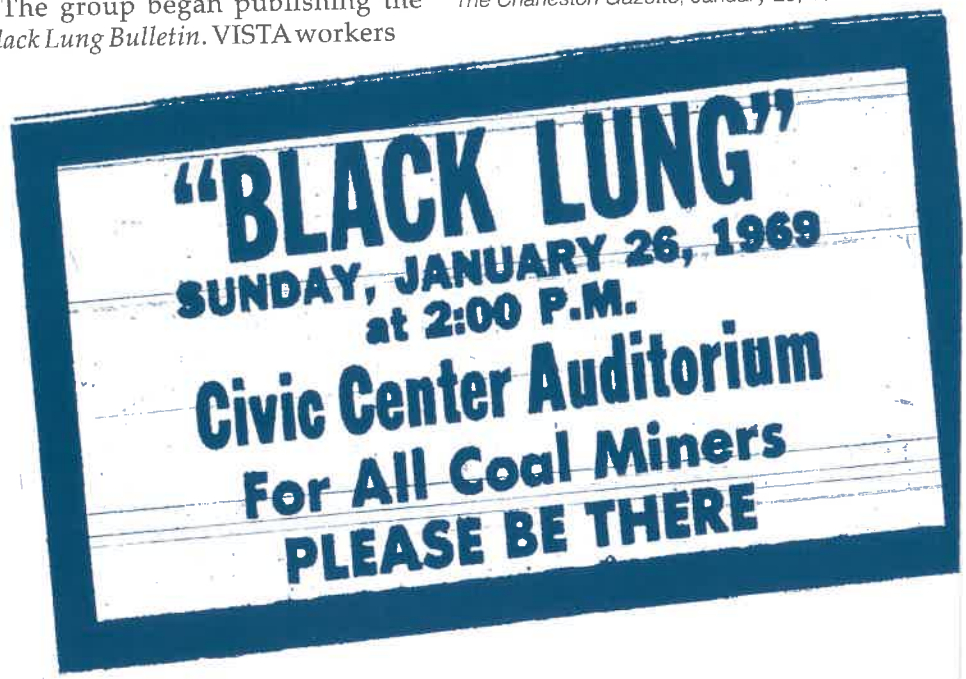
In the early days of 1969, the nation's first Black Lung Association (BLA) was created in West Virginia to channel the unrest in a more organized way. The group's first president, Charles Brooks of Kanawha City, mortgaged his house to pay for the services of a lawyer. Area businesses and individuals also donated to the cause. Other early officers in the BLA were Ray Stall (vice president), Ernest Riddle (treasurer) and Raymond "Turkey" Wright (secretary), who sometimes posed as a dead miner in a coffin during black lung marches and demonstrations.

The group began publishing the *Black Lung Bulletin*. VISTA workers came up with an old printing press, and soon the miners were sending out about 3,000 newsletters per month. They planned regional meetings in local union halls and other facilities in Marmet, Logan, Vivian, Chelyan, Madison, Beckley, Pineville, Montgomery, Affinity, and other spots in the coalfields.

One miner described the meetings, in which Dr. Buff would display an actual set of crispy, coal-dust-encrusted human lungs from an autopsy: "We would open with a prayer. Buff would take them lungs and act — well, he went a bit too far sometimes. It's like this. You see, there wasn't but a very few people ever saw a set of lungs. He told the men about the bad lungs, and he'd yell, 'Feel 'em! Feel 'em!'"

Energy mounted in Charleston as the 1969 legislative session drew to a close. When several black lung bills were introduced in the House, miners and other activists lobbied at the statehouse and marched on Kanawha Boulevard to draw additional media attention. Miners filled the galleries of the statehouse and watched as the debate over black lung unfolded on the floor in the weeks leading up to the final vote.

The miners consciously made an effort not to disrupt the proceedings. However, at a meeting in Affinity, one miner, referring to a planned demonstration at the Capitol, stood


"BLACK LUNG"
SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 1969
at 2:00 P.M.
Civic Center Auditorium
For All Coal Miners
PLEASE BE THERE

The Charleston Gazette, January 23, 1969.

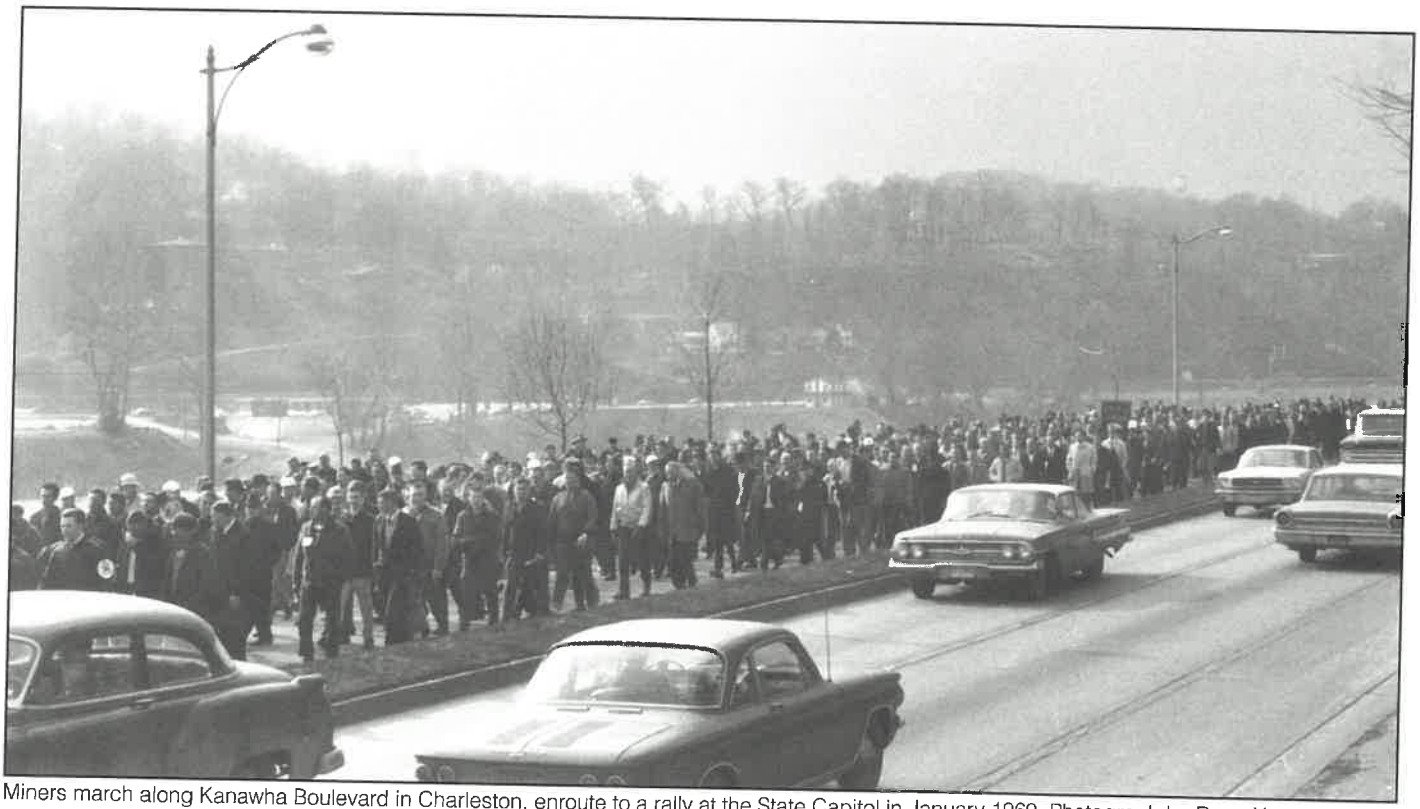
Theatrics became a trademark of the black lung movement as activists stopped at almost nothing to make their point. Here, a miner poses in a "coffin" in the rotunda of the State Capitol in January 1969. Photograph by Doug Yarrow.

on his chair and shouted, "Some of these legislators say we're finks and rabble-rousers. But we're coal miners, and the only thing we ever got was when we went out and fought for it! So I say, let's all get to Charleston tomorrow and show them what a fight we can give them!"

Ken Hechler, a U.S. Congressman at the time and advocate for the miners, added a sense of humor and spirit of fun to large rallies in Charleston. Headed for a rally at the Civic Center where he was invited to speak, Hechler says he "saw this delicatessen that was open, saw hanging in the window a huge slab of bologna that was about 15-18 inches long and very, very thick. When I got up to speak before the miners, first of all, I said, 'The West Virginia Medical Association has a special message for you,' and held up a big placard that said, 'Black lung is good for you,' which is, of course, exactly what they had been saying. 'The UMW has also said they're on your side, and here's my answer to that,' and held up the slab of bologna. Of course, this stirred up tremendous enthusiasm and laughter on the part of the crowd."

Rallies might have had their lighter moments, but debate over the black lung bill was getting serious. The idea of "presumption" was crucial to both sides. A presumption clause in the law would essentially lift the burden of proof in black lung compensation cases from the miners' shoulders to the other side. Establishing proof of disability from the disease was often difficult for miners with limited resources, especially given that X-rays only sometimes indicated impairment.

By February 1969, the miners and their supporters had come a long way in a remarkably short time. Their pressure on lawmakers was significant, but they still feared that


Miners march along Kanawha Boulevard in Charleston, enroute to a rally at the State Capitol in January 1969. Photograph by Doug Yarrow.

U.S. Representative Ken Hechler displays his famous slab of bologna at a black lung rally at the Charleston Civic Center Auditorium in January 1969. Photograph by Ferrell Friend.

it might not be enough to match the strong lobbying powers of the state's coal companies. It was at this turning point that the miners once again took matters into their own hands.

On February 19, *The Charleston Gazette* reported that, in Beckley, "between 400-500 miners walked off their jobs in support of the black lung legislation." Versions differ about where and by whom this soon-to-be massive wildcat strike initiated, but the following weeks proved to everyone that the workers were ready to face economic hardship in order to push their issue.

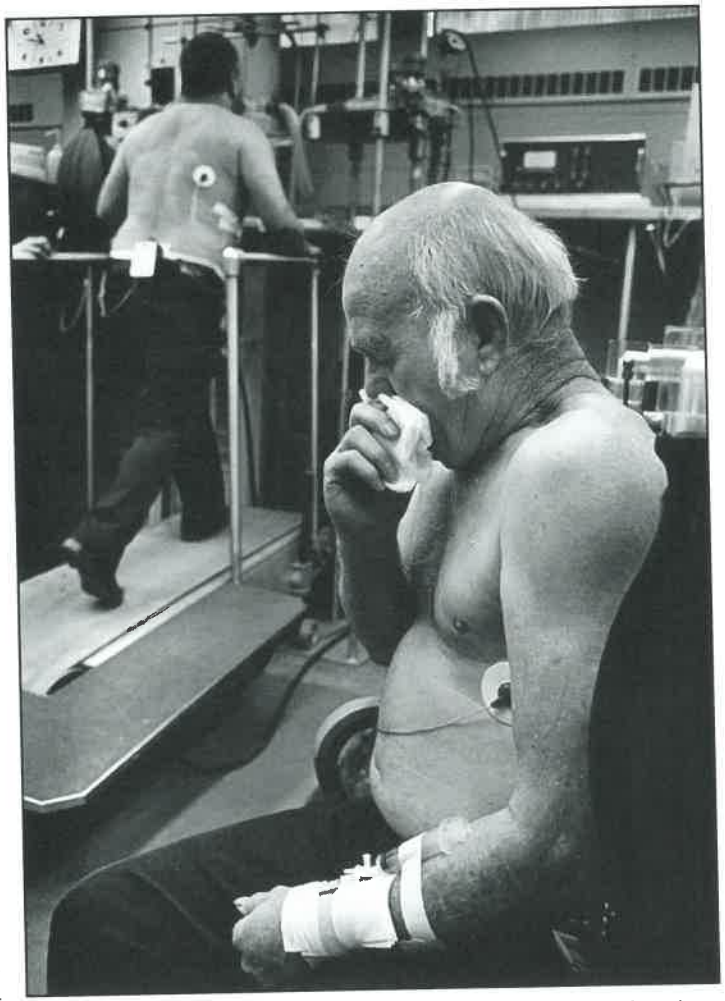
In a matter of weeks, 40,000 miners in West Virginia left their jobs. The strike affected nearly 100% of workers, shutting down almost every mine in the state for over three weeks, and causing major headaches for coal and energy companies. In this way, the miners hoped to pressure the legislature into acting before the end of its session, which was growing exceedingly near.

Miners again converged on the Capitol and filled galleries. Many wore hard hats with skulls drawn on them, below the words "Black Lung, Murder," or held signs with the numbers 78-4, symbolizing the number of deaths at Farmington and Hominy Falls. Their rallying cry, heard at marches and demonstrations, was the unambiguous "No law, no work!"

Almost too late, a bill was rushed to the House and Senate floors during the last 10 minutes of the legislative session on March 8, passing nearly unanimously. Almost as though they couldn't believe it themselves, the miners stayed on strike until the bill was signed by Governor Arch Moore on March 11, 1969.

The bill was the result of a joint-committee compromise between a liberal House bill and a more conservative Senate bill. Its presumption clause stated that if a miner had been exposed to dust for over 10 years and could medically prove he had pneumoconiosis, then it would be assumed that the disease was a result of his job and that he could then receive benefits. It permitted X-rays and "other medical evidence" to be used as proof. It did not go as far as the BLA had hoped, but it dramatically liberalized the current laws.

Rep. Hechler's focus quickly moved to the United States Congress. He shuttled doctors and coal miners from West Virginia to D.C. to testify and demonstrate the negative effects of coal dust on workers' health. Widows of Farmington and other mines, led by Sara Lee Kaznoski, made trips to D.C. to put additional pressure on law and policy makers. "Very few congressmen could refuse the request of a widow from Farmington to have an audience to explain the problems," says Hechler. The women were a principal reason for the law's passage.



Even after improved black lung legislation was passed, miners faced an uphill battle to prove disability. These coal miners are being tested for the disease. Photograph by Earl Dotter, date unknown.

Widows, Wives Carry Miners' Safety Battle to Washington

By John W. Yago
Gazette Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Five widows of the Mannington mine disaster were told Monday that the Nixon administration will support efforts to improve health and safety conditions in coal mines.

"There will be a lot more you can expect from your government than just sympathy," Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel told the women at a hastily arranged meeting. "This administration is going to support strong legislation having to do with health and safety."

The

Fairmont and Mrs. Frances Ferris of Shinnston. They were accompanied by Mrs. Eugenia Kaznoski of Barrackville and Mrs. Josephine Zogal of Baxter.

The women, whose plane from Clarksburg was an hour and a half late, were met at Washington National Airport by Rep. Ken Hechler, one of the leading advocates of stronger mine laws, and representatives of the United Mine Workers Union.

In addition to meeting with Hickel, their whirlwind tour of Washington included a conference with Rep. Robert H. Mollohan of the First District

a meeting with House Spea-

After a 20-minute meeting with Hickel, the new interior secretary told the women that the situation in the mining industry had been neglected for too long.

"I'm just a little tired of those who are talking about mine safety but not doing anything about it," Hickel declared.

He added that there is no doubt that Congress will do something about it this year.

Hickel agreed with Mrs. Kaznoski that it is all right to go to the moon but con-

The Charleston Gazette, February 25, 1969.

Hechler is an author of the black lung provisions of the federal 1969 Coal Miners Health and Safety Act, signed by President Richard Nixon after rumors of another widespread coal strike were put forth by West Virginia widows and miners.

Though the miners had secured a cautious legislative victory, deciphering the law and its regulations proved complicated and their enforcement problematic. A year after the law took effect in the state, a mere 11 coal miners were receiving lifetime awards for permanent and total disability due to occupational pneumoconiosis.

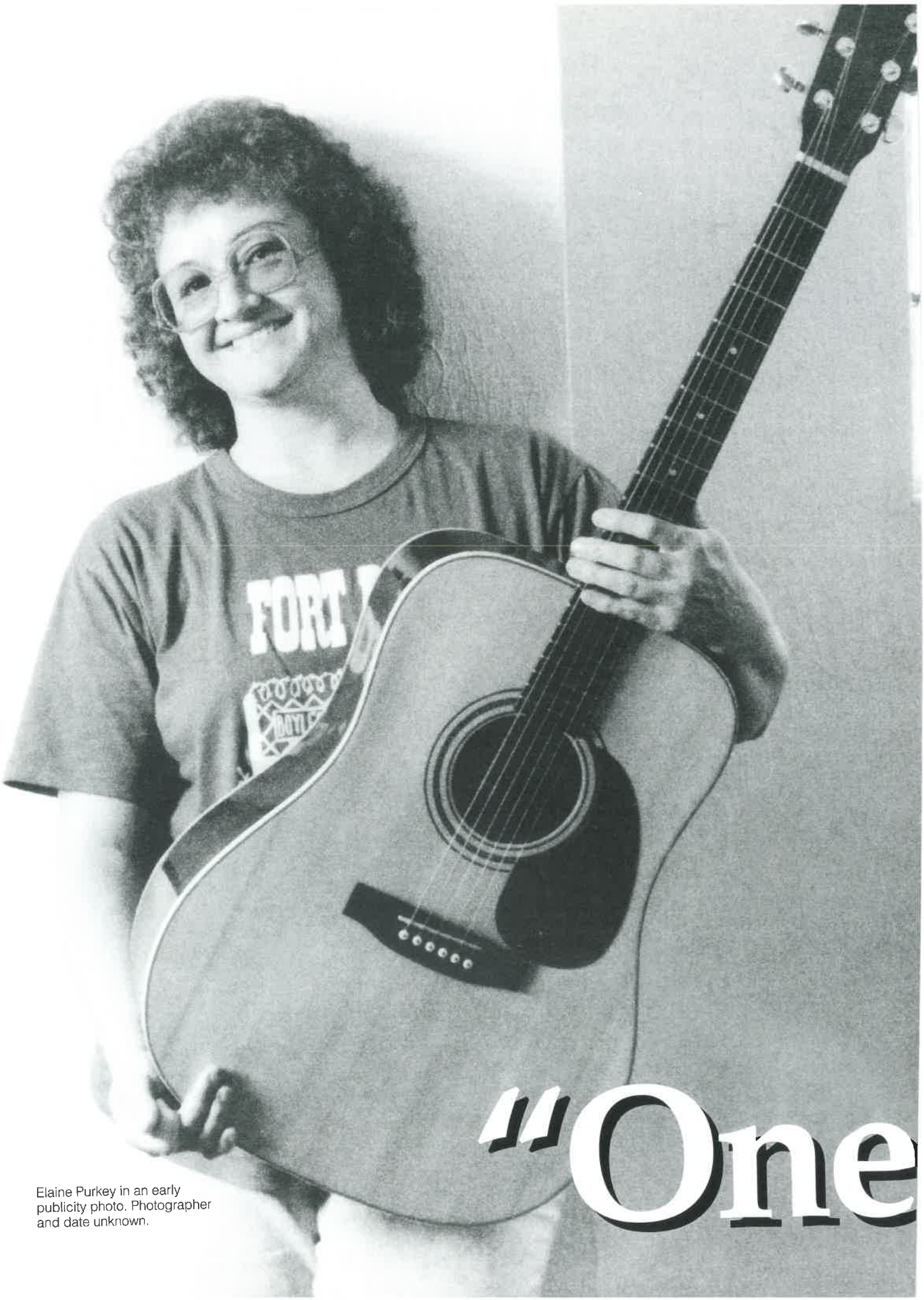
Fraudulent sampling in the mines has been reported over the years, including tampering with dust level detectors and tip-offs about the impending arrival of safety inspectors, a sign that the problem hasn't been totally solved.

Federal laws have been revised and the level of protection for miners has waxed and waned with the comings and goings of presidential administrations and agendas. Today, the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund is administrated by the United States Department of Labor. It pays for diagnosis and monthly compensation when coal companies, for a variety of reasons, do not. Being approved for black lung disability is still quite challenging. Retaining lawyers for the cases, which can take 10 years or more to pursue, is probably the most significant stumbling block. Due to the nature of the disease, it is still difficult to prove disability, and only a handful of lawyers nationwide will accept the cases.

The American Lung Association today estimates that 400 people per year die from black lung, though the UMW puts the figure at 1,500. Strides have been made, and obstacles still exist, but one thing is certain. The term "black lung" and, more importantly, the people who suffered from the disease and then struggled to improve their odds, are an enduring part of our state's memory.

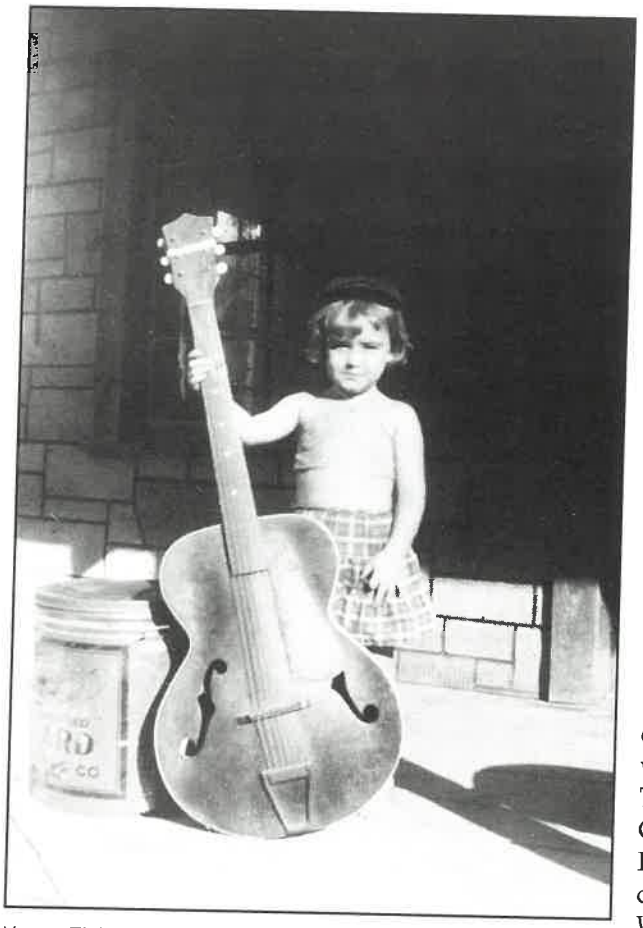
CATHERINE MOORE is a native of Charleston, currently completing a degree in comparative literature at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Catherine is a graduate of George Washington High School, where she was editor of the school newspaper. Catherine's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2005 issue.

President Jimmy Carter signs the Black Lung Benefit Reform Act on March 1, 1978, while congress members look on. Visible to the right of Carter is West Virginia Senator Robert C. Byrd; to the left is Senator Jennings Randolph. Photographer unknown, courtesy of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, East Tennessee State University.



Elaine Purkey in an early publicity photo. Photographer and date unknown.

"One



Young Elaine Moore with a guitar, bigger than her, in the mid-1950's.

tiful.' I thought there is absolutely no reason that people should have to fight like this for their jobs and have to fight for a way of life that is supposed to be guaranteed us by the Constitution." So Elaine fitted new words to the old, familiar melody — a traditional practice within the labor movement.

Soon after, in 1992, legendary singer and Weavers founding member Ronnie Gilbert was giving a benefit concert to aid striking miners. Gilbert asked Purkey to perform her songs in the show.

"The last one I sang was 'America, Our Union.' Everybody was on their feet, and everybody was crying."

Singer Ginny Hawker from Gilmer County also took part in the Ronnie Gilbert concert. She invited Elaine to a workshop she was conducting at Kent State University in Ohio.

"She was teaching a class of mountain vocals," Elaine says. Elaine was asked to demonstrate the points Hawker was teaching. "The way she sings and the way I sing, we just throw everything from our toes to the top of our heads into it."

After Kent, "Things just took off," Elaine says. "I never applied for a job singing. Never. They always called me." Elaine has sung in Vancouver, Chicago, at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., as well as at the Vandalia Gathering, Allegheny Echoes, Augusta Heritage Center, and other places closer to home.

Home for Elaine is essentially the place where she was born. These days, the Lincoln County hollow where Purkey was raised is called Sand Creek Road. When she was born, it was known as Bend in the River, just below Atenville on the Guyandotte. She has fond memories of life then, and her recollections are woven with music.

"We got a big family," says the former Elaine Moore. "My mom is out of a family of 14 kids. And they all sang. Some played guitar, but they all sang. That was just a big part of our lives. On weekends that was what we did."

The Moore family land was "just three miles up a hollow," Elaine says. "Grandpa had the property. As his children got married, he would give them a piece of property, and they'd build a home on it. We were all right there on one little [piece of ground]. Nobody had televisions. Nobody had cars. Nobody had radios. The grownups would get together and start singing, because that was what they did.

"I was five years old, and there was a big rock in Grandpa's yard. They'd stand me up on that rock, and I'd stand there and sing for people."

In high school, Elaine played in talent shows and school carnivals with older brother Ira. "He played guitar and sang, and I would sing with him," she says, adding that there were four other brothers and sisters who also made music.

"I didn't learn to play [guitar] till I was 14, and that was only because [Ira] wouldn't play for me," she recalls. So her mother, Bernice Shelton Moore, taught Elaine her first chords. "You'd think as musical as my dad was that he would have taught me, but he didn't."

Winford Moore, Elaine's father, was a railroader. He worked away during the week, coming home on weekends. Winford was a versatile musician, Elaine says.

"Oh, he played everything. He played clawhammer-style banjo. He was around 13 or 14 years old when Blind Ed Haley used to play fiddle through the country on Harts Creek. [My father] would go sit on porches and different places and

Many in the Moore family play music. Elaine has been especially influenced by her father, Winford Moore, shown at right with a fiddle. At left is Elaine's cousin Kenneth Moore.

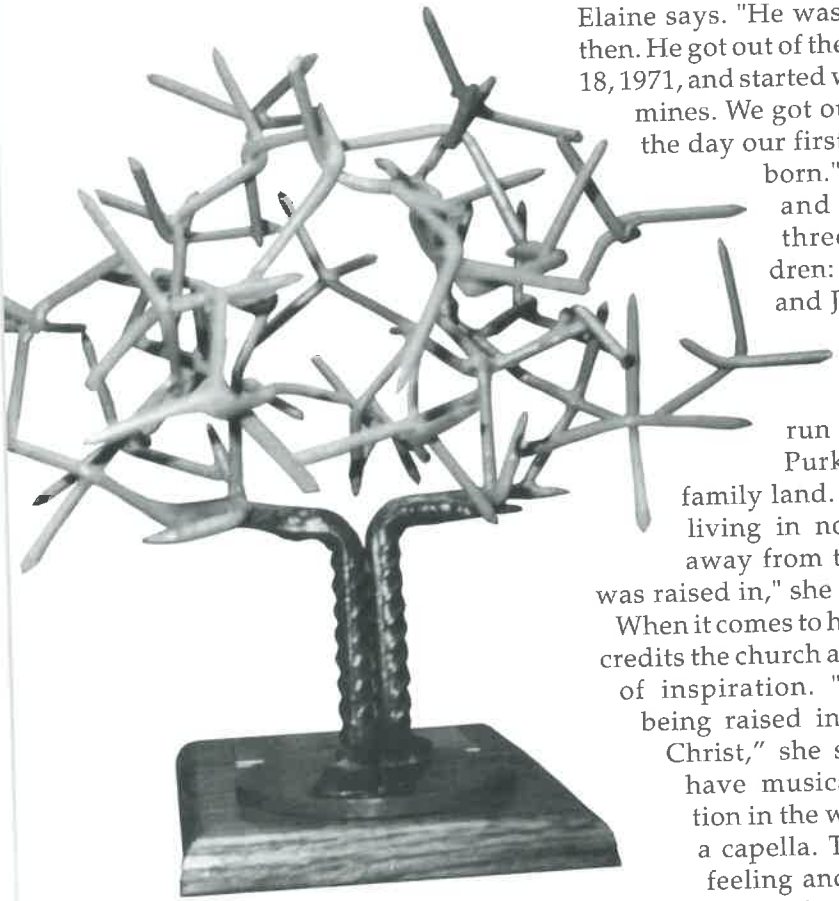
watch [Haley] play."

Elaine attended a two-room schoolhouse at Atenville, then graduated from Harts High School in 1967. She moved to Washington, D.C., in 1968 and worked for the Naval Ship Service Command.

"I worked in the payroll office first, and then I switched over to the office where they appropriated money for the shipyards to run," she reaclls. "And the old saying held true: 'You can take the girl out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the girl.' Everytime I'd come home, it got harder and harder to go back." So in June 1969, she came back to Lincoln County for good, "where I knew who I was," she says.

In December of that year, she met Bethel, and they were married in March 1970. "I married a coal miner,"

Classrooms provide a ready setting for Elaine as she combines her musical and motivational talents in her West Virginia Studies programs. Here, she and a group of second graders in Chapmanville share a song in 2000.



A jackrock is made by bending and welding together two large nails. It is used by activists to damage the tires of non-union trucks, as described in Elaine's original composition, "Jackrock Song." This "Jackrock Tree" was presented to Elaine and Bethel by the locked-out steelworkers of Ravenswood Aluminum in 1998.

Elaine says. "He was in the service then. He got out of the service March 18, 1971, and started work in the coal mines. We got our first payday the day our first daughter was born." Today, Elaine and Bethel have three grown children: Lethea, Tanya, and Jill.

Elaine's roots in Lincoln County run deep, and the Purkeys still live on family land. "The house I'm living in now is four feet away from the house that I was raised in," she says.

When it comes to her music, Elaine credits the church as a major source of inspiration. "It comes from being raised in the Church of Christ," she says. "We don't have musical instrumentation in the worship. We sing a capella. That's where the feeling and everything for my music comes from, singing those gospel songs and listening to my mom sing all of her life. When she did dishes. When she hung clothes. When she rocked the babies. Whatever she did, she sang. And then when we were together, no matter where we were together, we sang. I listened to that for 42 years before I got my chance."

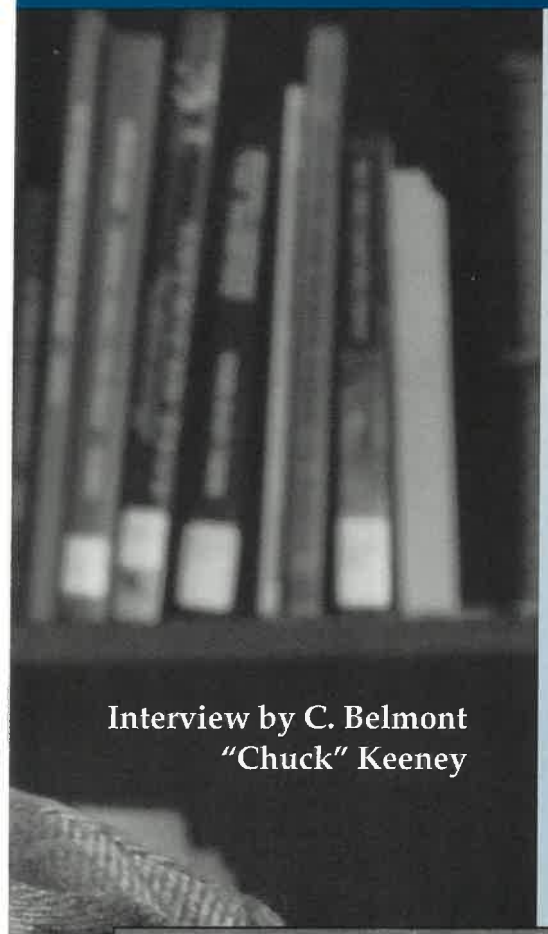
But it might not have happened without the "The Friendly Neighbors Show." Elaine credits producer and emcee Wallace Horn for providing encouragement and simple know-how. "He told me, 'A microphone can be your best friend or worst enemy — you decide that.'" In the early days, Horn would talk touring bluegrass bands into letting Elaine and her group open for them, giving her valuable experience.

While her mother taught her the basics and her dad set a standard of excellence, it was Horn who helped her to put it all together, Elaine says. "Wallace is the one person that taught me how to use what I got from my parents. It is why I take it so seriously. It is a big responsibility and a very emotional thing to talk about."

Her life hasn't been all roses, Elaine says. Like many other wives during that bitter Pittston strike, Elaine was forced to find work outside the home.

"It was a matter of 'have to' for us," Elaine says. "Our girls didn't understand why I had to do it. That was Dad's job. Why did I have to be

Struggle



Interview by C. Belmont "Chuck" Keeney

William C. Blizzard was born deep in the coal country around Cabin Creek in 1916 and has lived a life every bit as colorful as his family's legacy. A student of journalism and photography, a World War II veteran, and freelance writer, Blizzard has journeyed a long way from the coalfields of his youth. But the legacy of his birthright casts a long shadow.

His father was the famed United Mine Workers leader Bill Blizzard, who rose to prominence during the West Virginia Mine Wars and became one of the key figures in the 1921 armed march on Logan and the subsequent Battle of Blair Mountain. [See "The Red Neck War of 1921: The Miners' March and the Battle of Blair Mountain," by Michael Meador; April-June 1981, also in The GOLDENSEAL Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars; *see page 4.]*

As a boy, William watched as his father and other union leaders, such as Frank Keeney and Fred Mooney, were tried for murder and treason in Charles Town. He sat next to his father when the jury found him not guilty and observed his father's continuing leadership role in the UMW, working alongside men such as Van A. Bittner and T.C. Townsend until he was appointed president of District 17.

While his father led the union, William carried labor's banner with his pen and camera, writing for such publications as Labor's Daily *and* The Nation. *He has recently published a book titled* When Miners March: A History of the West Virginia Coal Miners, *in which he recounts the career of his father and the story of the Mine Wars in West Virginia. Still lively, energetic, and full of wit, William Blizzard met with me in October 2005, two months shy of his 89th birthday, to reminisce about his life, his father, and how the union cause has marched on through the past century. —Chuck Keeney*

The Blizzard family in St. Albans in the early 1920's. Father Bill is at the right, mother Rae is at left, sister Margie is at center, and young Bill is at rear.

Chuck Keeney. Let's start by talking about your youth. You were born in Eskdale, [Kanawha County]. Did you grow up there?

William Blizzard. I didn't really grow up in Eskdale. My mother and father lived in one of them coal company houses for a time. When I was about five years old, my father was looking for a place to live

Bill as a high school sophomore in St. Albans, about 1932.

after his acquittal. He was looking around and found this old house with a tin roof and an outhouse around St. Albans. It was a small house, but a two-story one. From there I went to school in St. Albans. I went to high school in Boone County in a Presbyterian school for the first two years, and my last two I went to the high school in St. Albans. We didn't have much of anything at that small school except what you would call the basics: reading, writing, and arithmetic. So I was delighted when I transferred to St. Albans where they offered Latin and chemistry, which were classes that I really needed and really wanted.

CK. Where did you attend after high school?

WB. West Virginia University.

CK. Did you graduate from there?

WB. Yes, I did. Actually, I was really unhappy with the school. I felt out of place, because I was there with wealthy people who were connected with the coal industry on a management level, and, you know, I was kind of a lone sheep. I just didn't feel like I was treated very well. I didn't like it, and I almost quit. But I didn't have any real choice. My parents would've wrung my neck if I quit. So I stayed and graduated with a B.A. degree [in English literature]. I also had minors in French and Spanish.

CK. So people treated you differently because of your father?

WB. Yes, well I thought so. At first I didn't know why it was, but as I look back, I realize that a reason for the way some people treated me [was] because of my father's role in labor. My parents realized it, though they didn't say anything to me. They initially sent me to high school away from St. Albans where there were kids whose parents were in railroad and coal management. They thought I might be mistreated, so they sent me to that Presbyterian school in Madison.

CK. Was your family Presbyterian?

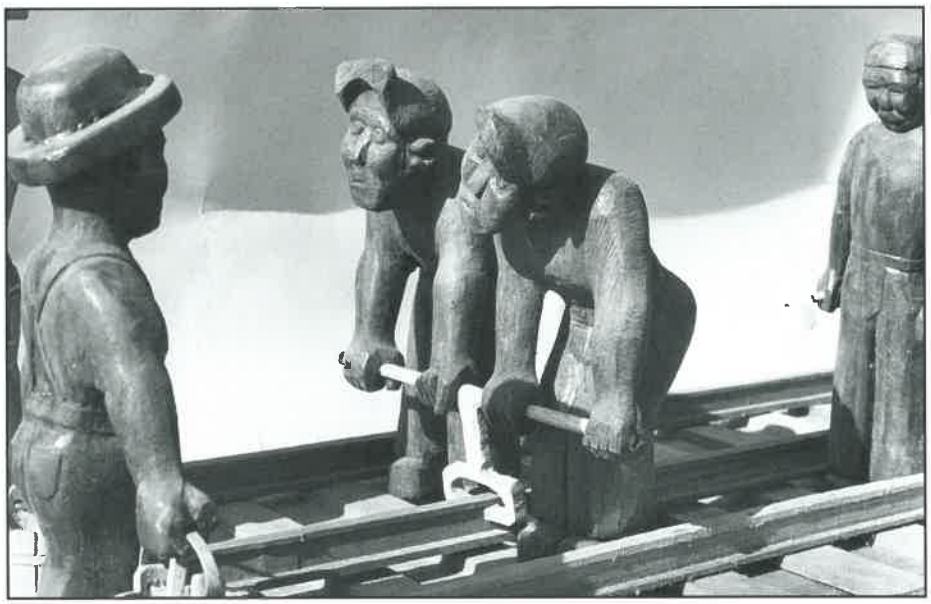
WB. No, no. My mother told me, "When you get there, you tell them that you're a Republican and a Baptist." My people, by the way, were Republicans. My father was. It seems like an anomaly, but that's the way he was, and he stuck with it the rest of his life, except during the FDR years.

CK. You served in World War II. Tell me about your service during the war.

WB. Well, I had already graduated from college, and I didn't want to leave my new wife. So I just waited around till I was drafted, and I just took what they offered me. I told them I would like to get into some photography, if there was an opening. It happened that there was, and so I went to a photography school in Denver, Colorado. It wasn't very much longer after that we were sent overseas to serve in an intelligence area. It was an information-gathering thing, using P-38 planes, in those days the fastest planes the U.S. had. They took guns out of them and put cameras in instead. The pilots would fly along, and they would take photos of enemy territory. Most of my work was in the film processing.

CK. Didn't you attend Columbia University after the war?

WB. Yeah, after the war, I moved to New York City with my wife. I was paid by the government on the GI Bill to go to school, and I wanted to anyway. Columbia University was within walking distance of where I lived. They had listed there in their



Trained in the military as a photographer, Bill spent much of his career with a camera in his hand. This photograph by Bill appeared on the cover of GOLDENSEAL, July-September 1975 — our second issue. It shows the woodcarving of Raleigh County artist Charlie J. Permelia.

The elder Bill Blizzard, a miner from Cabin Creek, was 28 and president of Sub-district 2 when he led union miners from Marmet toward Logan in 1921. Although fired from the union by John L. Lewis, Blizzard later served as District 17 president, beginning in the 1930's until his retirement in 1955, three years before his death.

catalog a whole series of professional writing courses. I studied magazine writing, newspaper writing, and so forth.

CK. After which you became a freelance writer and worked some for *The Charleston Gazette*. Is that correct?

WB. Yes, well, that is true.

CK. How long did you work for the *Gazette*?

WB. Let's see, 12 years. 1959 is, I believe, when I started. The reason they hired me was because I had multiple skills: I was a photographer, and I was a writer. I drove all over West Virginia and interviewed various people, writing about locals, and so forth. Anything about West Virginia that I thought would be interesting to West Virginians.

CK. How did you incorporate your military experience in photography with your journalism?

WB. It wasn't really a difficult task. I worked for magazines a great deal, and newspapers. When they wanted to save money, they had me do two jobs instead of one. A lot of magazines want separate people for each task, but many of the times, they let me do both. I've taken pictures everywhere, the southwestern deserts, even Europe. Sometimes taking pictures can be pretty dangerous. When I covered the Widen strike, it was a pretty volatile atmosphere. (Laughs) You were taking serious risks to go into the strike zone and take good pictures. Luckily, I never got shot at. But it can be a risk. [See "Strike Duty: A State Trooper Recalls Trouble in the Coalfields," by C.C. Stewart; Winter 1995.]

I also did some work for GOLDENSEAL. One of the articles, a labor one, actually, the GOLDENSEAL editor had contacted a man who had done a great deal of wood carving in the area around the New River. I was hired to take pictures of the carvings he had done. [See "Working on the Railroad: The Historical Wood Carvings of Charlie J. Permelia," by William C. Blizzard; July-September 1975.]

CK. Where did you work after the *Gazette*?

WB. I worked for a labor paper. It was called *Labor's Daily*. It was established in Charleston, on the west side. It was intended to be a national periodical for the whole labor movement. I worked there two-and-a-half or three years.

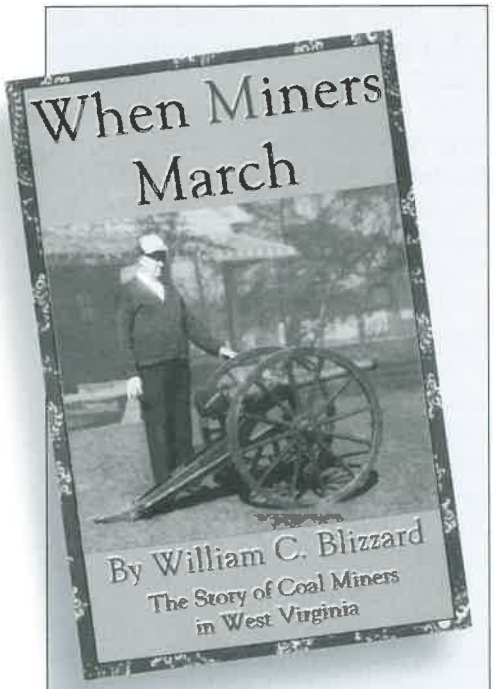
CK. Were you involved with any other labor activism besides *Labor's Daily*?

WB. Not specifically labor activism, but I did some articles for *The Nation*. One of them was on the Widen strike and the whole labor situation in West Virginia. One was a biographical sketch of the editor of *Labor's Daily*. Ralph White was the editor's name. I don't know whether he is still alive or not. He was real happy to have me, partly because of my skills and partly because my father was president of the UMW District 17. And the paper, of course, wanted the support of the major unions. He called himself "Scoop" after he became a newspaper guy. Scoop was put in charge of *Labor's Daily* by the International Typographical Union. It was a big job.

This union was divided into two factions. One faction financially supported the paper, while the other faction opposed. The faction that opposed was all in a fuss because of the Red Scare that McCarthy got started up in Wheeling. This faction, because they feared the paper was a little too far left of the ledger, so to speak, wanted to dissolve the paper. I wasn't ashamed of being a part of the paper, and I'm not afraid to mention that some of the people I was associated with were affiliated with socialists, although I wasn't directly involved with their politics. I refused to disassociate myself with people because of their political views, as long as they were pro-labor. From the way I understand it, *Labor's Daily* was eventually dissolved as a result of the Red Scare. We were on the FBI's bad side. (Laughs)

CK. You have recently published a book on the labor movement, specifically the UMW in West Virginia and the Mine Wars, called *When Miners March*. When did you write the book, and what made you decide to write it?

WB. Well, I had thought about it for a while when I was taking my vari-



When Miners March: The Story of Coal Miners in West Virginia began as a series of newspaper columns written by Bill C. Blizzard in the 1950's. It was published in book form in 2004. The cover photograph shows Bill in his yard at Winfield with a field cannon, said to have been used against the miners during the Battle of Blair Mountain. To purchase *When Miners March*, send $24, including tax and shipping, to Appalachian Community Services, 229 Bitrice Road, Gay, WV 25244. An audiobook version, dramatized by Ross Ballard II of Martinsburg, is being prepared by Mountainwhispers.com.

ous writing courses at Columbia. I bumped into another student there who was writing something on the Mine Wars for a master's degree, or something, and I thought maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea for me to start thinking seriously about writing something on it. I wrote it while I was working for *Labor's Daily*, and they published it in the newspaper as a serial. I was good friends with the editor of the paper, and he wanted badly for his paper to be supported by the UMW, so we thought it would be a good idea to publish what I had written.

CK. How did your work finally make it into book form?

WB. It became a book many years later. It was originally written around 1952. I wanted to get it published as a book, but I was busy with other jobs as a freelance writer and it kind of dropped out of my plan. I did get an agent at one time, but she and I didn't get along too well. She did say there were some publishers interested, but the work was a bit too controversial, something that not everybody's going to be agreeable about, you know. My book is very much biased in favor of the coal miners. Well, I don't really think of it as being biased (laughs), but anyways, I thought it important that the coal miners' story be told.

So, many years later, I moved down to where I am now in Winfield, and, one day, somebody tapped on my door. There was this guy standing outside, and he had something under his arm. He told me he was looking for Bill Blizzard, and I said, "Well, you found him." (Laughs) He explained to me that he had gotten a copy of my manuscript and had been using it in teaching some labor history classes out in the Midwest, and he had tracked me down. He asked me if I would like to get it published, and I thought, why not? His name is Wesley Harris.

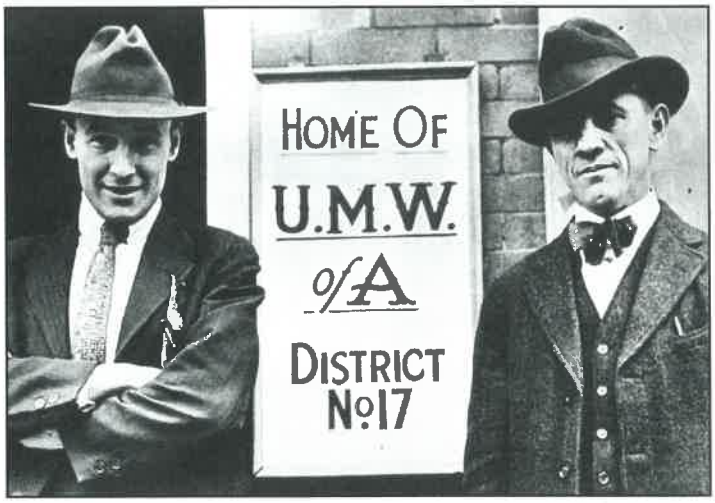
CK. What do you want people to take from your book?

WB. I wanted to show how people lived and give in great detail the things that the newspapers had ignored, not being very sympathetic to the miners. I wanted to cover the years leading up to Blair Mountain and show what deeds had been done to the miners and how such things had forced them into violent action, to where they felt they had no alternative. Whether they were correct or not in their actions, I'm not going to say. I know my father thought they were correct.

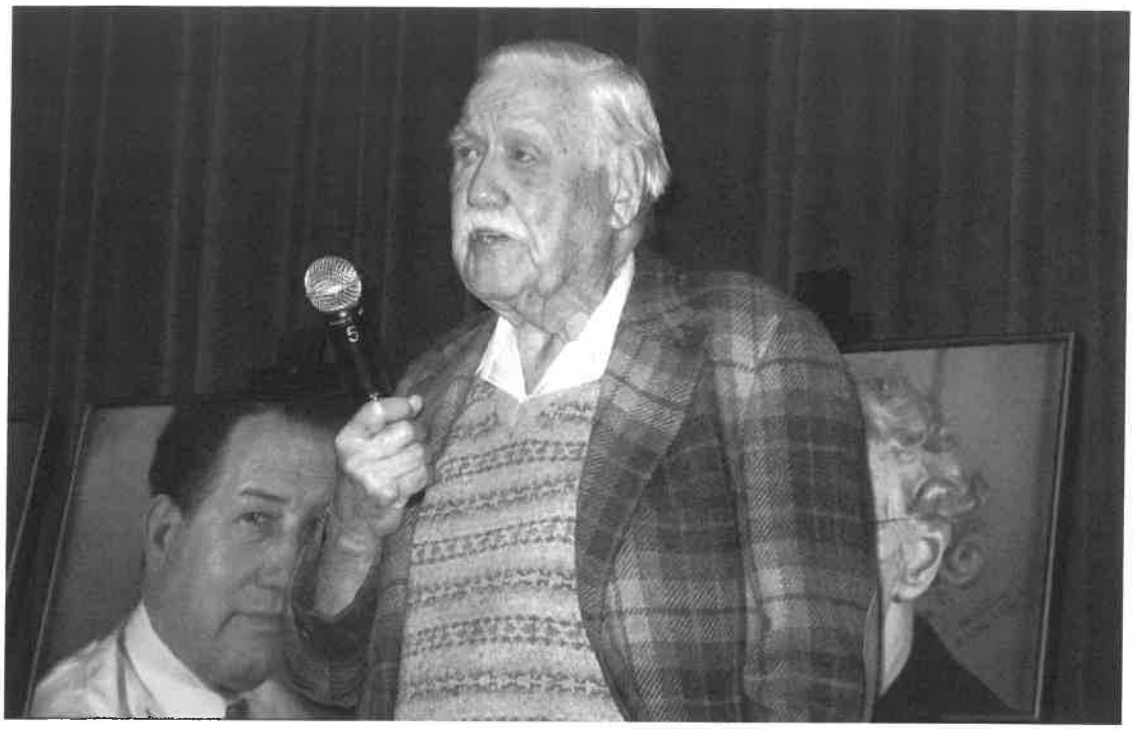
CK. Let's talk for a moment about your personal recollections from the Mine Wars. After the armed march on Logan and the Battle of Blair Mountain, your father, along with many others, was tried for treason and murder. Although you were very young, do you remember anything from the treason trials?

WB. The only thing I remember very vividly was sitting beside my father in the courtroom when the jury came in that acquitted him. My father watched very intensely and nervously. As they came in, my father sprang up from beside me almost straight up in the air and landed on the table in front of us. And there he was, squatting on the table as the jury filed in, and I wondered what in the world was he doing that for. (Laughs) I remember that very well. Of course, after he was acquitted, there was a big hullabaloo, but I didn't pay much attention to all of that, being only about five at the time. But I never will forget how my father acted when that jury came in.

CK. The Mine Wars were filled with a number of colorful leaders and characters from both sides, some of whom you knew. I'd like to run a few



Labor leaders Fred Mooney (left) and Frank Keeney. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.



Bill Blizzard addresses the audience at a recent gathering in Charleston, while a portrait of his father looks on, seemingly with approval. Photograph by Steve Fesenmaier.

names by you and get your impressions of these individuals.

WB. Okay.

CK. Frank Keeney. *[One of the leaders of the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strike (1912-13) and UMW District 17 president during the armed march on Logan, Keeney later formed his own union, the West Virginia Mine Workers, and is author Chuck Keeney's great-grandfather.]*

WB. Yeah, Frank. I didn't really know him well early on, but I knew him much better in later years, after he had been kicked out of the UMW by John Lewis and they wouldn't let him back in. He tried to form his own union, but it was later broken up — probably none too gently — by UMW organizers. He was a very decent guy who got a raw deal out of the whole situation. I bumped into him accidentally in Charleston when I was older, and he was parking cars in downtown Charleston. Who could believe that Frank Keeney would end up as a parking lot attendant? But there he was. Later on, I got to know him and found that he was a strong supporter of my father before and after Blair Mountain. Frank and I became great friends.

CK. Van Bittner. *[Bittner was a union organizer and was closely connected with John L. Lewis. Bittner worked with the UMW in Alabama, Illinois, and West Virginia, where he briefly served as District 17 president in the 1930's. Bittner became a strong political voice in the state during the 1940's.]*

WB. I knew Van Bittner better than any of the rest of them, because he worked with my father and was in our home a lot at the time. He came from a coal mining background. My only impression [of] Mr. Bittner — I thought he was an extremely bright, capable man, and at the same time, I thought he was the most vain man I had ever met in my life. (Laughs) Simply because the way he spoke about himself and how he spoke about books and his opinions. He was vain. My father knew about it, too, but wanted to keep his job, and Van was president of District 17 at the time. My father was working for him at the time, before he became president.

CK. T.C. Townsend. *[A Charleston lawyer and former coal miner, T.C. Townsend defended Blizzard, Keeney, Mooney, and other miners during the treason trials. Townsend ran for governor in 1932 on the Republican ticket, with the support of Van Bittner and Blizzard, but lost to Democrat Herman Guy Kump.]*

WB. (Laughs) Old Tom! He was my father's attorney during the treason trials. He also helped my father get some jobs before the armed march, and that was tough to do because my father wasn't always the most welcome guy in the workplace, if you know what I mean, because of his past, and all. My father supported [Townsend] when he ran for governor in 1932.

CK. What would you like for people to remember about your father?

WB. That he was a very, very strong advocate of organized labor, that he was a coal miner and had been subjected to the same treatment as other miners of his day.

CK. Well, thank you so much for sharing some of your memories with me today.

WB. You're quite welcome. My father would probably bang me on the head if he heard all that I just said, but he's not around to hear anything about it, so I guess it's okay.

C. BELMONT "CHUCK" KEENEY of Alum Creek is the great-grandson of union leader Frank Keeney. A writer and historian, Chuck served as a researcher for *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*. Chuck is a doctoral student and teaching assistant in history at West Virginia University. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Blair Mountain: A Brief Overview

On August 24, 1921, a party of 5,000 union coal miners crossed Lens Creek Mountain in southern Kanawha County. Their number swelled to an estimated 10,000 before the march culminated in the town of Blair in Logan County. Waiting above them along the ridge line of Blair Mountain was an army of mine guards, deputies, and state police marshaled under the command of Logan County's sheriff, Don Chafin.

From initial skirmishes on August 28 until the arrival of federal troops on September 4, these two armed groups waged a battle across the length of Blair Mountain in one of the most dramatic episodes in American labor history.

The southern West Virginia coalfields had for years been a contested territory between coal operators and members of the United Mine Workers. An already bitter struggle turned violent on May 19, 1920, when a gunfight erupted in the streets of Matewan, Mingo County, between pro-union town sheriff Sid Hatfield, and townspeople, versus a detachment of Baldwin Felts detectives sent to evict the families of striking miners from their homes. [See "Eyewitness: Marie Robinette of Matewan," by Dallas H. Jude; Winter 2004.]

When the shooting was over, Lee and Albert Felts lay dead along with five other detectives. On the other side, two miners and a bystander were killed, and Mayor C.C. Testerman had been mortally wounded. Acquitted of murder in a subsequent trial, Sheriff Hatfield and Ed Chambers appeared in Welch, McDowell County, on August 1 to answer charges of involvement in a separate shooting at the Mohawk coal camp. There, Hatfield and Chambers were ambushed and shot dead on the steps of the McDowell County courthouse.

Coal miners throughout the state were outraged at the murders and by August 20 were assembling at Marmet, armed and wearing red bandanas, to begin the march on Blair Mountain. They hoped to free southern West Virginia from the control of the coal companies by occupying Logan and forcibly overthrowing the political machine of Sheriff Chafin.

Once the Battle of Blair Mountain began in earnest, state and federal officials were alarmed. Chafin's troops were armed with machine gun nests and commandeered aircraft to bomb the attacking miners, but the miners seemed determined to push ahead.

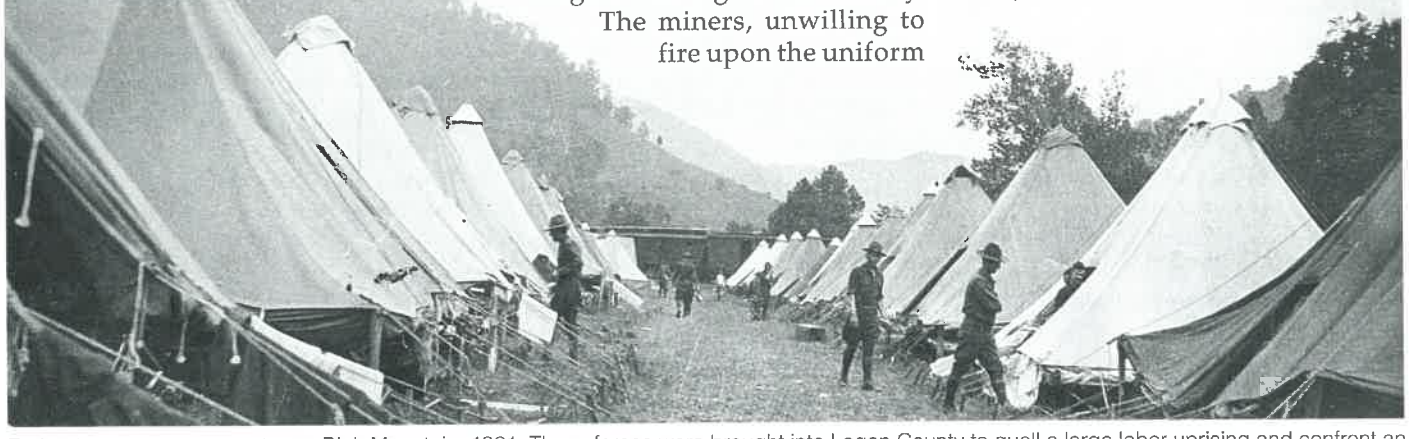
On September 1, responding to a plea from Governor Ephraim Morgan, President Warren Harding dispatched federal troops, as well as an air squadron under the command of Billy Mitchell. Within days, troops began arriving in the vicinity. The miners, unwilling to fire upon the uniform that so many of them had recently worn in World War I, surrendered their guns and were allowed to return home.

Coal operators, not satisfied by having thwarted the invasion, financed the prosecution of many participants on various charges of murder and treason. [See "'I Like to Tell This History': William O. Macoughtry, Jr., Recalls the Treason Trials," by Daniel J. Friend; page 27.] More enduring, however, was the effect of the miners' defeat on the organizing efforts of the UMW in the southern counties of West Virginia. The union was effectively crippled there until the advent of the New Deal changed the political fortunes of organized labor throughout the nation.

Today, Blair Mountain remains contested ground, this time between coal companies seeking to extract its wealth through new methods of mountaintop removal mining, and residents, environmentalists, and others intent on historic preservation of the site.

Decades after the conflict, published historical accounts have prompted the public to rediscover this long-neglected event, most notably Lon Savage's *Thunder in the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War 1920-21* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990) and Robert Shogan's *The Battle of Blair Mountain: The Story of America's Largest Labor Uprising* (Westview Press, 2004).

—Gordon Simmons

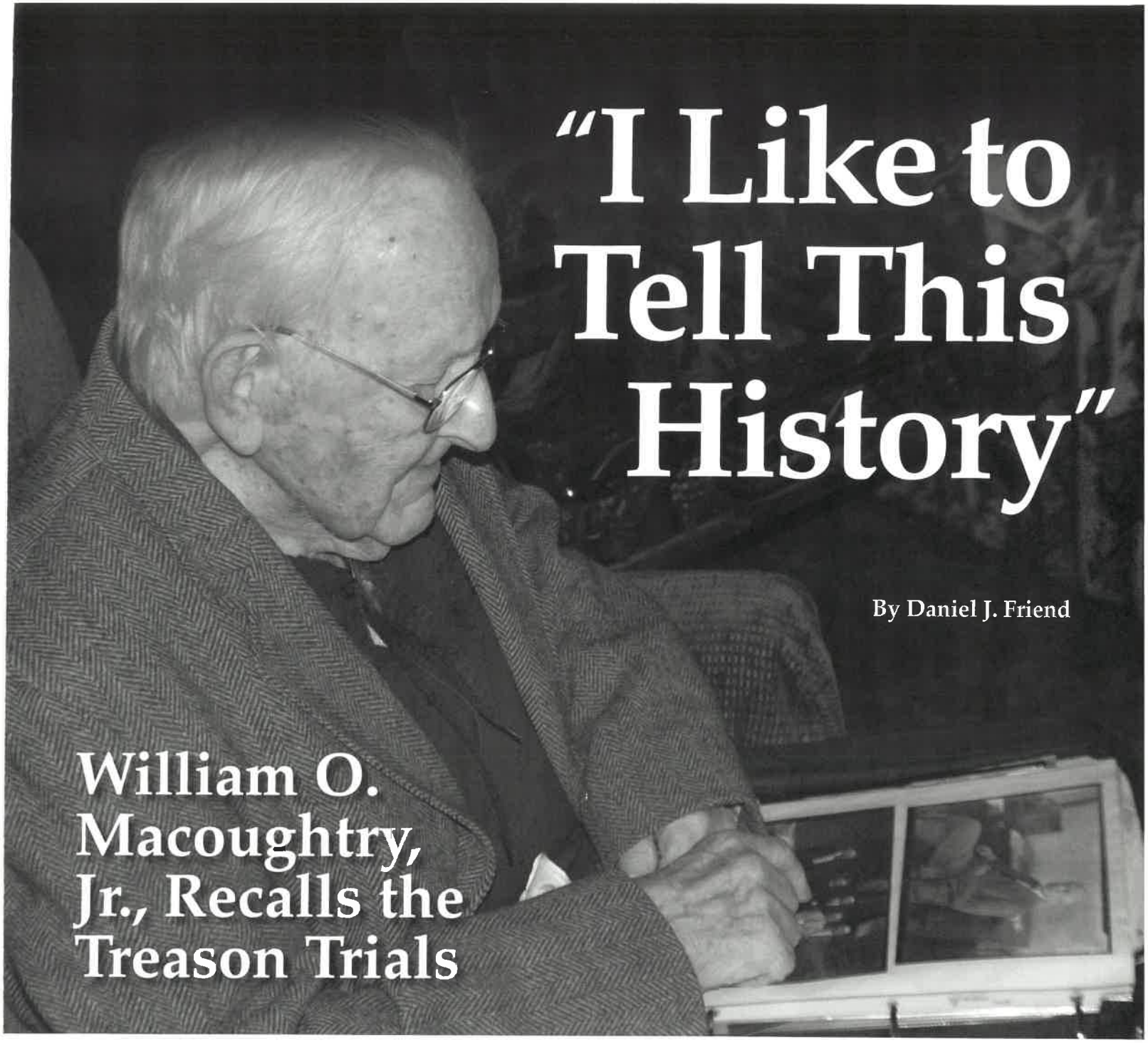


Federal troop encampment near Blair Mountain, 1921. These forces were brought into Logan County to quell a large labor uprising and confront an estimated 10,000 miners, marching from Kanawha and Boone counties.

"I Like to Tell This History"

William O. Macoughtry, Jr., Recalls the Treason Trials

By Daniel J. Friend



William O. Macoughtry, Jr., age 96, still has clear memories of the miners' treason trials that took place in Charles Town in 1922. He is shown here at his home near Kearneysville, Jefferson County. Photograph by Dana Spitzer.

William Orr Macoughtry, Jr., was 12 years old when the Mine War trials of 1922 were held in the Jefferson County courthouse in Charles Town. At 96, Macoughtry is one of the last surviving witnesses to the proceedings, where labor leaders stood accused of treason and of killing law enforcement officers during the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain in Logan County.

Macoughtry's father, William O. Macoughtry, Sr., served as Jefferson County sheriff from 1921 through 1924, and his uncle, James Grantham, was a special deputy to the courts. Macoughtry Jr. — then called "William O." — would often head over to the courthouse after school from his eighth-grade class at Wright Denny School.

During a recent interview at a private home for the elderly, not far from the 190-acre Middleway farm where Macoughtry grew up, he described how his boyhood farming community was affected by the spectacle of the highly publicized trials.

"My being a boy, I never took in much of the trial," he recalls. "Day after day, it was just questions, questions, questions. All I did was just sit and look around. My uncle [James Grantham] was always sitting there, because that was one of his main jobs — handling the jury and

Sheriff W.O. Macoughtry, Sr., stands at far right in this photograph, taken with the jury for the trial of Walter Allen, who was convicted of treason. Allen jumped bail and was never apprehended. At left is bailiff James Grantham, William Macoughtry, Jr.'s, uncle. The jurors are, left to right in the front row, Samuel J. Hockensmith, J.R. Lewis, B.W. Ware, and C.E. Ashwood. Standing in the second row are H.H. Huyett, George W. Rouss, J. Ernest Watson, and Francis Daniel. In the back row are Alonzo Jones, B.L. Byers, D.O. Stull, and Charles J. Derr. Photograph by John League.

opening and closing the courts. And I'd go up and sit there on the bench beside him, right down beside the judge's stand. The first time I went in there, I walked in with my cap on and sat down. And my uncle said, 'Hey, take your cap off. The judge will get you in jail if you don't get your cap off.'"

Macoughtry does not recall legal details, but he was a keen observer of the goings on outside the courts. "I used to listen a good bit," he recalls. "We didn't have radio, and stuff, in those days. I'd sit down and listen to the older folks talk about it."

William Blizzard, Frank Keeney, and Fred Mooney faced multiple charges for their roles in the Logan County conflict. They stood trial in the same courthouse in which abolitionist John Brown was found guilty of treason in 1859. Blizzard, Keeney, and Mooney eventually went free, but not before a long court battle.

"They sent a whole lot of these miners for witnesses," Macoughtry remembers. "And they brought their whole families with them, because they were just barely livin' out there where they were [in southern West Virginia]. The union, they gave them some money, but not near enough to keep them here, and people in Charles Town kept them and fed them. They had a tent village on the old horse show grounds for a lot of them to live in, because there wasn't that many houses for rent in Charles Town."

William Macoughtry, Sr., had been a deputy for four years, starting in 1912, before becoming sheriff. He deputized his wife's brother, James Grantham, to help with the mine trials.

"[My father] had all the courts to tend to, and he was also [dealing with] prohibition," Macoughtry Jr. says. "They took a lot of pictures of the juries, and my dad would be standing on one end of the jury, and he was a little short. His brother-in-law [James Grantham], a big guy, was always on the other end."

William Sr. and his wife Caroline (Grantham) Macoughtry had three children: Margaret, born in 1904; Mary, born in 1906; and William Jr., born in 1910. Both sisters are now deceased.

Some of Macoughtry's most vivid memories of the miners' trials are of his father's friendship with Logan County sheriff Don Chafin. The Logan County Coal Operators Association had paid Chafin to keep union organizers out of southern West Virginia. He and his deputies reportedly harassed, beat, and arrested those suspected of participating in labor meetings. He hired a small army of additional deputies, paid directly by the association.

"He was a dead enemy to the union," Macoughtry says. "He was the operators' man altogether. Chafin and my dad got to be pretty good friends. But those miners just hated Chafin." [See "The Don Chafin Era," by Russell Foglesong; Fall 1989, also in *The* GOLDENSEAL *Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*; see page 4.]

Macoughtry says Chafin gave his father three pistols and a rifle before some the trials were moved from Charles Town to Lewisburg.

"Don Chafin had all kinds of guns that were furnished him to carry, and he gave my dad three revolvers and a repeater Winchester .22 rifle for me. The two revolvers were big police revolvers, nickel-plated. But the third one was a smaller .32 special. They were all Smith & Wesson.

William O. Macoughtry, Jr., as a young man. Photographer and date unknown, copy photo by Dana Spitzer.

Crowded interior of the Jefferson County courthouse during the 1922 miners' trials in Charles Town. Photograph by John League.

My dad took that .32 special for his special gun to carry."

When the miners and operators descended on Charles Town in 1922, many of them were still carrying their own weapons, Macoughtry remembers.

"They all wore guns here," he says. "That war could've started [again] right here in Charles Town. The courtroom was always crowded with spectators, but if they went in, they had to leave their guns. A deputy sat out there at a table and collected all the guns. And even the big-shot lawyers from Charleston, and all, had these pretty little pearl-handled guns. Everybody carried guns."

Macoughtry says many of the local residents did not sympathize with the miners.

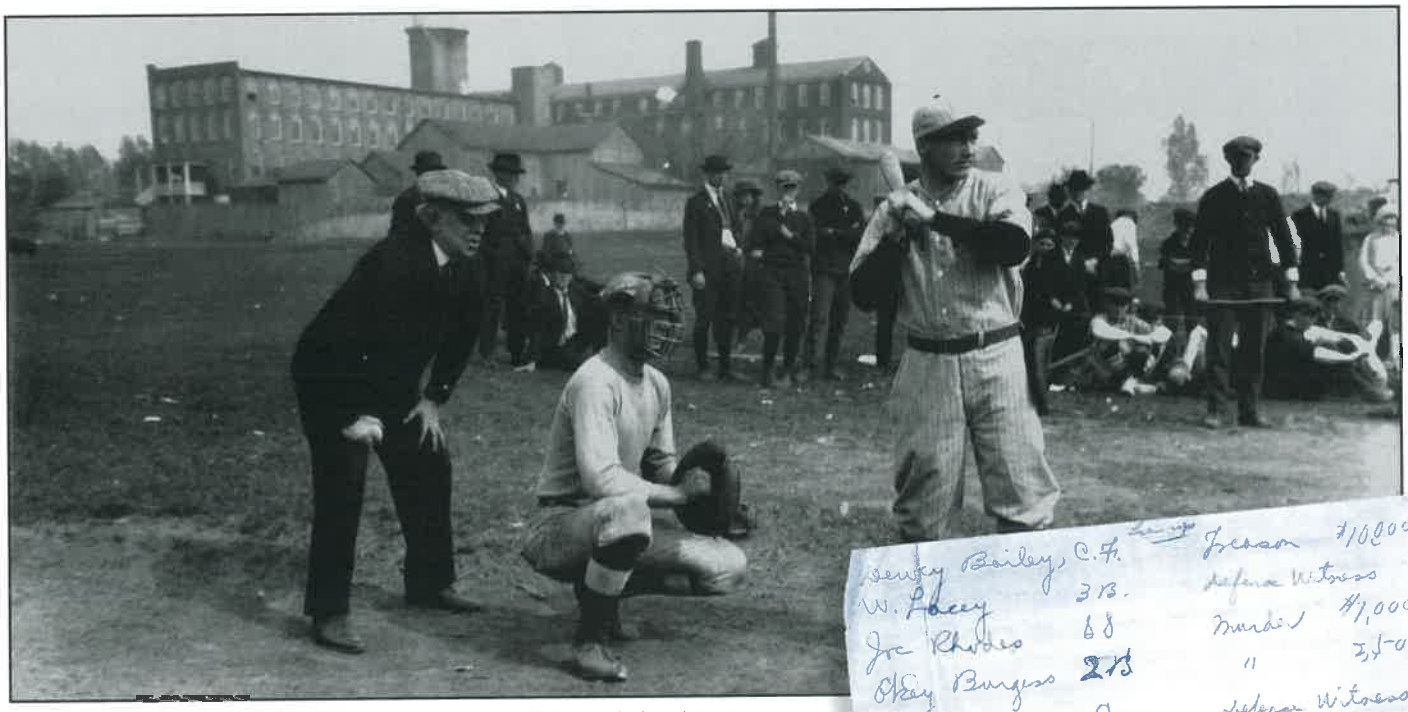
"Jefferson County was more farming than anything else at that time," he says. "Most of the jury were landowners and farm owners. And they weren't in favor of unions. They said if they hired a guy and he wasn't getting enough money, they'd just tell him to get the hell on away from there. And if he got in that barn and sat there and wouldn't let anybody else come in, they'd go in there with a shotgun and run him out. They didn't realize the union, what a big thing that was. They were more on the side of the operators.

When the miners and operators descended on Charles Town in 1922, many of them were still carrying their own weapons.

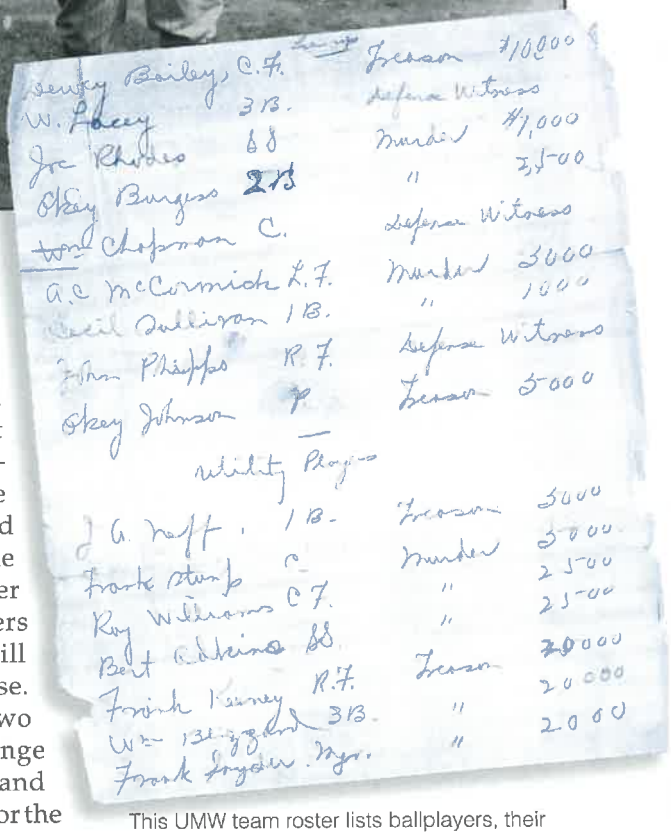
"There were a few unions, and a lot of people were in favor of the miners, too. The people of Charles Town, the Red Cross and everybody, helped take care of them, because they had all those children."

Jefferson County farmers who were called for jury duty had a great hardship keeping their crops and livestock in order, Macoughtry recalls.

"The jury didn't get to go home, or anything, until the end of the trial. Some of those trials went on for four weeks, and some went for three weeks. And the farmers were in there, and they couldn't get home to tend to their farms. They had to have neighbors or their wives [do that]. There was one man that was on the jury had a wife and 10 children on a farm out near Summit Point. [His wife] would come in maybe two or three times a week, and he would tell her what had to be done. 'Course the neighbors, and all, would come in and help her get the work done. The jury men were rarin' to get home and cut their corn."



Defendant Bill Blizzard is at bat in this unusual baseball game, during the treason trials. In these games, accused miners played local citizens to raise money for charity, and perhaps muster sympathy for their cause. This photograph was taken at Ranson, with a harness factory visible in the distance. Team manager Frank Snyder, charged with treason, is the umpire. Photograph by John League.



This UMW team roster lists ballplayers, their positions, pending charges, and bail amounts.

As the case against the striking miners developed, grand juries handed down 1,217 indictments, including 325 for murder and 24 for treason. Hundreds of miners were charged and jailed, and trials took place across the state. When the trials were finished, the only treason conviction was against Walter Allen, who skipped bail and was never captured. The most prominent treason trial was that of Bill Blizzard, considered to be the leader of the miners' army. Tried at Charles Town, Blizzard was acquitted. Frank Keeney and Fred Mooney were charged with murder and treason, but after lengthy trials and changes of venue, all charges against them were dropped.

The Reverend John E. Wilburn and his son were convicted of murdering Logan County deputies. Both were pardoned by Governor Howard Gore after serving three years of their 11-year sentences. Macoughtry says at the end of the Charles Town proceedings, his father transported a man and his son by train from Harpers Ferry to the state penitentiary in Moundsville, after they had been convicted of murder. He believes those men might have been the Wilburns. Macoughtry remembers that the older of the two men agreed to provide evidence for the state in exchange for a shorter sentence. Union sympathizers reportedly threatened to kill him for helping the state's case. Sheriff Macoughtry and the two convicted miners had to change trains at the Morgantown and Kingwood railroad junction for the last leg of the trip to the prison.

"Somehow, they got word to this ol' guy that they were going to kill him when he went to the penitentiary," Macoughtry says. "They were going to meet him on the road someplace. And when they pulled in at the M&K junction, there was about 30 of them in a big crowd, standing there watching him get off the train. The old man, he begged my dad to let him have one of his pistols to defend himself. But that bunch, they just stood and glared. They didn't say anything or make any move of any kind. [The sheriff and the two men] walked off the train and went on over and got on the M&K train, and nobody got killed."

Sheriff Macoughtry had a stroke in the late 1920's. William O. came home from West Virginia University in 1927, where he had been studying agriculture, to run the family farm, which he did for the next 30 years with his mother. Sheriff Macoughtry died in 1939.

William O. married Anna Dunaway, who taught in Jefferson County schools for 40 years. William O.

Photographer

Charles Town black residents gather at the depot on a rainy day, apparently waiting for a train.

Two members of the defense team during the 1922 miners' trials. At left is UMW lawyer Harold Houston. At right is defense attorney James Manson of Charles Town.

and culture, the community brass band Henson's Gang, the construction of Charles Town horse track, children, sports teams, and numerous other fascinating images of Charles Town in the early 1900's.

There are few people in the Jefferson County seat who remember John League, and those examples of his work that do remain are largely unidentified. He appears to have left no records nor any living family members in the area. It took a modern-day photographer from Berkeley County to help bring League's work back from the obscurity of a dusty bin in an antiques mall in Martinsburg.

Dana Spitzer, himself a professional portrait photographer working out of Bunker Hill, bought 200 glass-plate negatives taken by John League, after his uncle tipped him off to the find back in the early 1990's. Spitzer purchased the negatives from a dealer in the John Street antiques mall building, once part of Martinsburg's Kilbourn woolen mill complex. The dealer told Spitzer that the negatives had been set out with rubbish on a curb in Charles Town several years earlier and that he had salvaged them to sell.

"He had told me that he found them in the trash," Spitzer says. "He wasn't prepared to deal with nitrate negatives." The 5"x7" glass-plate negatives are not only fragile, but are notoriously difficult to handle.

"They'll actually catch on fire and burn right inside your enlarger," Spitzer says. "People just strip the emulsion off of them and use the glass. There's actually a lot of greenhouses made of them."

Spitzer went to quite a lot of trouble to make prints from the plates. He initially converted an antique "hot head" enlarger to a cold unit to avoid overheating and destroying the delicate photo material. Spitzer had success with his modified enlarger and managed to print quite a few photos. With prints in hand, he set about researching the captivating images of Charles Town that he had uncovered, doing whatever he could do to try to identify the people and events in the photographs.

These lovely ladies are from Saint Hilda's finishing school in Charles Town.

A portrait of an unidentified black couple. John League was one of a few photographers to document this population during this highly segregated time.

Henson's Gang brass band poses for a picture at the old horse show and fairgrounds in Charles Town. Note the unique octagonal, double-decker bandstand.

"I would stop by Grandma's Diner and sit around and talk to people and show them the pictures," Spitzer says. "The next thing you know, you get half-a-dozen people around you saying, 'Well, that's so-and-so.'" In addition to gathering valuable information, Dana also generated considerable interest in the collection, receiving a steady stream of requests for copies and prints of the images.

To deal with this increased demand for handling the fragile negatives, Spitzer devised some new methods of processing the images. Since he uses digital technology for his own business, Dana discovered a more efficient way to view League's work. With his modern digital camera, Spitzer photographed the League negatives as they lay illuminated

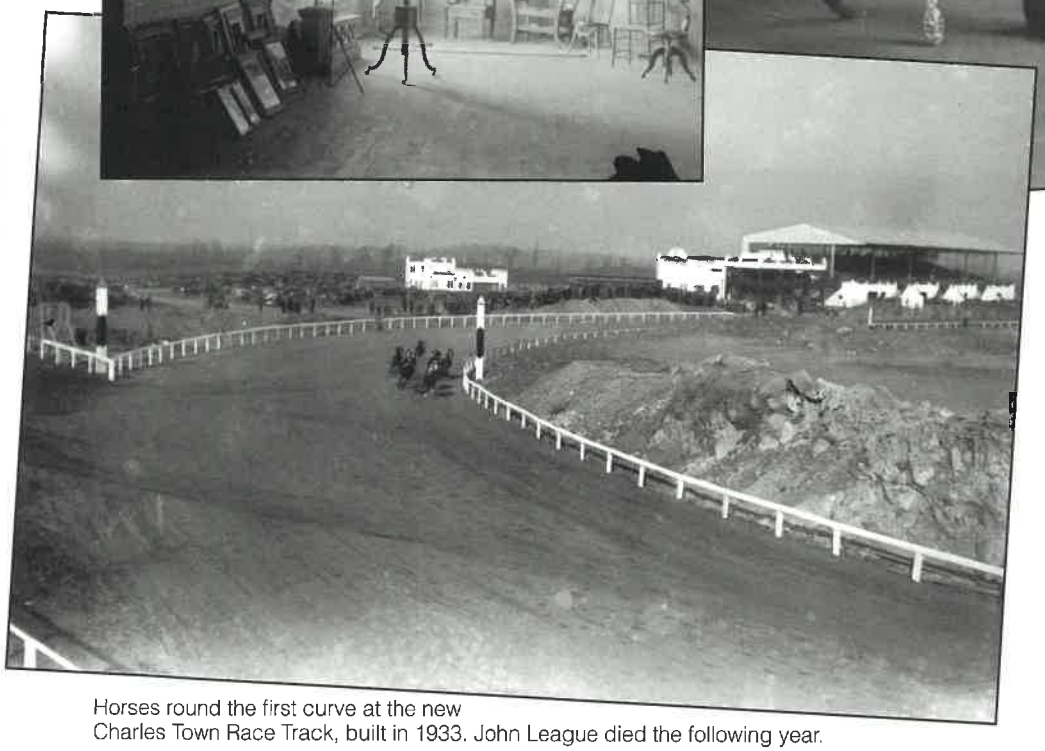
John League's son Sherman rides a kiddie car on the cobblestone sidewalks of Charles Town.

on a standard light table. He then downloaded the negative images to his laptop computer and converted them to positive images. Using simple photo-editing software, he could then lighten or darken the images and enlarge or reduce them. His former method of enlarging and developing often required several hours to produce a single print. Now he was able to generate custom prints in a fraction of the time and at much less risk of damage to the original images.

Though very little is known about League, some of his own photographs reveal fragments of his personal story. One shows his wife and one of his children at the entryway to the studio. Spitzer says he has often considered trying to match the doorway in the old photograph with those in buildings in downtown Charles Town today, assuming the old building still exists.

Interior of John League's photography studio in Charles Town.

Confederate veteran Ben Beavers, seated, posed for this portrait with his grandson Arthur Ramey. The younger man was preparing to serve in World War I.



Horses round the first curve at the new Charles Town Race Track, built in 1933. John League died the following year.

"If I found that door, I'm sure I could find the studio," Spitzer says. A photograph of the interior of League's studio shows what appears to be an old 8"x10" camera, Spitzer says. The 200 plates in Spitzer's collection are of a different size. To Spitzer, this is intriguing.

"Somewhere in Jefferson County, there's some 8"x10" negatives—probably," he says.

The Taste of Coal

By Marsha S. Brand

My father moved our family to Morgantown in 1952, the year before my brother was born. I was eight at the time, my sister four, and my mother cried well into the next year. We left behind their first new house, built in Silver Spring, Maryland, one of Washington, D.C.'s, brand-new postwar suburbs.

Gearing up for World War II, the nation's capital had drawn my father from Ohio and my mother from Arkansas. It was there they had met, courted, and married. Dad had worked at a privately owned company vital to the war interests, where he saw his boss bring his own son into the business and the handwriting on the wall. In the meantime, my grandfather took a job at Montgomery Ward in Morgantown. A few years later, he started his own business and asked my father and my uncle to join him. And so it was that coal became part of the world I grew up in. It permeated my town. It provided heat. I learned not only what it did, but what it looked like, what it felt like, how it tasted.

For our first home in Morgantown, my parents rented a 30-year-old frame house in a 30-year-old Westover neighborhood, two doors up from my grandparents. It seemed ancient to me then. Nearly every furnace in the neighborhood was coal-fired, and Mom continually complained of the thin layer of greasy coal dust that covered the window sills within an hour of cleaning them. Coal not only heated the houses, but it powered most of the town's few factories. The same thick, ugly haze that hung over Pittsburgh hung over Morgantown.

But at night, coal also created small pockets of beauty. Evenings, the five of us would get in the two-toned green Chevy station wagon for a ride. Dad would often drive south, through the outskirts of Morgantown, then beyond Richard. Up on the hill to the right we would come upon the row of 20, or so, coke ovens, their open mouths yawning hot and red, otherworldly and beautiful. Later, on hot summer nights when Mom and Dad allowed us to sleep on the flat porch roof, the lights along the conveyor to Arkwright's coal tipple across the river formed an unclasped diamond necklace that drapes down the hillside still.

After two years in Westover, we moved across the river to a house built in the middle of the 1800's, with no central heat. While the bedrooms upstairs and the breakfast room downstairs were heated by natural gas space heaters, the big living room, the little living room, and the dining room were heated with coal fireplaces. My chores often included

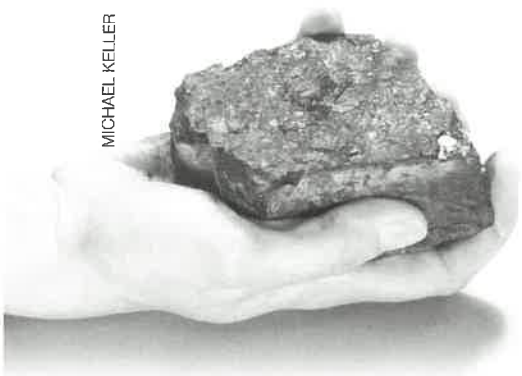
Author Marsha Sanders (Brand) with brother Rick in Morgantown, 1954, seated in front of a coal-burning fireplace.

This large home on Collins Ferry Road, built in the mid-1800's, was home to the Sanders family for several years.

taking out the ashes, bringing in the coal, cleaning out the fireplaces, and stoking the fires.

If I were first up in the morning, I'd go down to the fireplace in the little living room and, taking the poker, break the fused, domed roof of coal stacked and banked the night before, exposing the bruised, red embers. Throwing on a few small shovelfuls of fresh coal, I would sit in front of the hearth in the still-silent house, staring at the flames, dreaming.

I left that house after I finished school and have never lived with coal since. But after I'd left West Virginia and came back to work in the family business myself, part of my job was selling fireplace equipment. When an occasional customer would come in asking for a coal grate, the memory of those times I spent in front of an open coal fire came back.



MICHAEL KELLER

I grew up detesting what coal could do. I saw how dirty it made the town. Working in the university library archives, I read documents that detailed the dreariness and often-tragic history of the miners I'd learned about in school. The greed and arrogance of so many of the coal mine owners seemed common knowledge, and stories in the newspapers about the political corruption coal engendered in the state appeared to wax and wane with the moon.

But I have a real affection for the substance itself. Holding an actual lump of coal up to the sun, I would be dazzled when a facet of the "black diamond" caught and reflected the sunlight. And I always loved the pleasantly acrid smell of the oily black coal residue, when I picked up a handful.

I have actually eaten coal. I was an impressionable eight when my dad assured me it was edible. Pigs, he said, ate it all the time. I knew he was teasing me, but with a sense of acting on a dare, I took a piece and put it in my mouth. It was salty! Never did I think it would taste like food.

I have an even more intimate connection with coal. Red dog, that nonvolatile by-product derived from the oxidation of coal, used for road building and the topping of unpaved roads, is sharp as knives to fall on from a bike. After all these years, I still carry a piece of red dog under the surface of the skin on my right knee.

In the 1950's when I was growing up in Morgantown, coal was the energy you could touch. Morgantown's tangible dependence on coal has long vanished. Until my husband and I moved near the river a few years back, where we watch the coal barges make their way down the Monongahela every day, I had forgotten the very real presence coal still has in our lives.

MARSHA S. BRAND graduated with a degree in English from West Virginia University in 1966 and worked as an editor and proofreader before joining the family business in Morgantown. This is Marsha's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

When We Were Boy Scouts

By W. Joseph Wyatt

William H. "Bill" Wyatt of Charleston was dedicated to the Boy Scouts for more than 65 years. He is shown here, bugling, in about 1935.

Before I was old enough to be a Boy Scout, I yearned in vain to join my scoutmaster-dad as he departed on day hikes and weekend camping trips with the boys and other leaders of Troop 146 in St. Albans. When I moved out of the Cub Scouts at age 11, at last I was in Dad's troop. Today, I recall those times with my father as a special part of my life.

As an adult, Bill Wyatt served as a scoutmaster for 21 years and in other leadership roles in the Buckskin Council. Here, he teaches knot tying to some young scouts, date unknown.

William H. "Bill" Wyatt was a scouter, boy and man, even until the day he died. I remember vividly the last time we helped him out of bed and into the front room, in mid-December 1999. At 81, and weak from a long battle with cancer that would claim him a month later, he sat proudly in his scoutmaster's uniform one last time, as we anticipated a visit from several officials of the local office of the Buckskin Council. The gentlemen arrived and made some small talk. Then they told my father that the local Boy Scout office would be re-dedicated in his name. It was a signature act of respect for my father, honoring his lifetime of devotion to local scouting.

Dad had been a Boy Scout in Troop 71 on Charleston's West Side in the 1930's. Later, upon returning from World War II, he began a 21-year stint as scoutmaster of Troop 146. Following that, he involved himself in troop and Buckskin Council committee work, volunteered at National Jamborees, and led a local scout museum project.

Dad always referred to "Mr. Guice" with reverence. Charles P. Guice is thought to have organized the first Boy Scout troop in West Virginia, when he was commissioned a scoutmaster on December 10, 1910, in Barrackville, Marion County. After moving to St. Albans, where he became the first superintendent of schools in 1913, Guice organized the first Boy Scout camp in Kanawha County, located on the banks of the Coal River.

An entry in Guice's diary reveals the perils of the early days. According to the diary, a scout named Nancarrow was bitten by a copperhead snake while at the camp. Guice was horrified to learn that the troop's first-aid kit had inadvertently been left behind. There was no physician closer than Madison and no good road on which to quickly seek help. Fortunately, Guice had carried his personal first-aid kit and was able to clean the wound with hydrogen peroxide and apply a tourniquet. Nancarrow survived and later became a successful Ravenswood businessmen. Charles P. Guice served scouting all his life and was the first person to be awarded the Silver Beaver Award, scouting's highest honor for a volunteer at the local level.

I often heard my father talk about another man, one whom he considered to have been his mentor in scouting. M.H.F. Kinsey was hired in 1919 as the first scout executive in the Buckskin Council. There had been a number of troops in the area, such as Guice's Troop 3 in St. Albans,

Charles P. Guice was an early leader in the local scouting movement and was thought to have organized the first Boy Scout troop in West Virginia in Marion County in 1910. He later organized the first Boy Scout camp in Kanawha County. He is shown here in 1917, at age 35.

but there was no formal council organization. That changed in 1919 with Kinsey's hiring.

Kinsey was an organizer. During the World War II years, he mobilized the Boy Scouts to conduct scrap metal drives, hold paper drives, and grow victory gardens. Another of his projects was the start-up of a "Trail Blazers" hiking club. He awarded patches when members had hiked distances of 100, 250, 500, 750, and 1,000 miles. Of all my father's accomplishments in scouting, his award from Kinsey as the first to receive the 1,000 Mile Award was one of which he was most proud. My father told me that the only hikes that counted toward the award were those led by the outdoorsy Kinsey himself. Truly, Kinsey was supremely devoted to Boy Scouts.

For Kinsey, and later for my father, scouting was all about turning boys into responsible men. As a boy listening to my father talk about Kinsey, I guessed correctly that Kinsey had become like a second father to my dad.

M.H.F. Kinsey oversaw the development of several of the Buckskin Council's official summer camps. The first, Camp Pequoni (Pe-KONE-ee), was established in 1920 and was located 28 miles up the Elk River from Charleston, in Clay County, near the community of Porter. The scouts had obtained a lease on six acres of land from the B&O railroad. On arriving to begin construction of the camp, Kinsey discovered that crops had been planted by squatters who were living on the land. The scouts settled with the squatters for $150, plowed the crops under, and built the camp. It opened on July 7, 1920.

Although no scouts were ever seriously injured at Camp Pequoni, Kinsey's memoir provides an indication of what could have happened in such a remote location. Around 10:00 one morning, a distraught woman ran into the camp, exclaiming that she was dying. She screamed that she had been bitten by a copperhead. Her arm was swelling and turning a dark color. The scouts applied first aid, but the woman clearly needed professional medical help. The camp was accessible only by rail, but fortunately a crew of section hands was nearby. They agreed to allow the scouts to use their handcar, and two scouts pumped the car to Clendenin, where the woman was successfully treated.

Camp Pequoni served as a camping home to hundreds of scouts until 1926, when a camp closer to Charleston was sought.

I recall my father's tales of his camping days at the new location, Camp Walhonde (Wal-HAWN-dee), located on Alum Creek, about five miles south of Charleston, which served local scouts from 1926 until 1945. My father and his brothers, Noble and Stanley, camped there during numerous summers in the 1930's. As I write this, I glance at the shelf beside my desk, where rests the bugle on which my father played "Taps" at Camp Walhonde. Seeing it there, not quite as shiny as it was 70 years ago, reminds me of my father's anecdotes of the camp, such as how he and Noble played "Echoing Taps" each evening. I can almost hear the comforting tune as it must have fallen on the ears of hundreds of Boy Scouts, in their beds and with sleep closing in, and the faint smell of campfire smoke lingering in the still night air.

Camp Walhonde had many advantages, in addition to proximity.

M.H.F. Kinsey was the first scout executive hired by the Buckskin Council. He served as executive director from 1919-46.

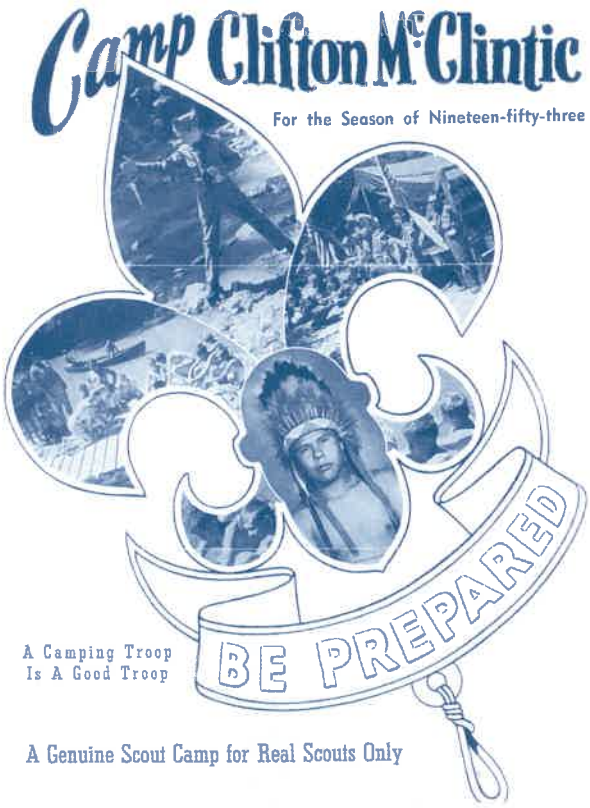
Hiking has always been integral to the Boy Scout program. These scouts hiked from St. Albans to Point Pleasant in 1924. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State Archives (WVSA), St. Albans Historical Society Collection.

There was a great deal of flat land, and the Coal River was available for swimming. Despite its advantages, Walhonde was to be replaced. In late 1945, physician Clifton F. McClintic gave the scouts a camp in Greenbrier County. In the spring of 1946, Camp Walhonde was sold to Union Carbide for $20,000, and its name was changed to Camp Cliffside.

Camp McClintic, located about six miles west of Lewisburg, served many southern West Virginia scouts from 1946 to 1959. "McClintic" was in some ways more primitive than Walhonde. Most of the scouts lived in tents built upon wooden platforms. In contrast, most of the camping at Walhonde had been in frame buildings, although, at times, excessive numbers of scouts had necessitated tent camping, as well. Many former McClintic campers still feel a shiver as they vividly recall the extremely cold water in which they swam. The water flowed out of mountain caves that the scouts frequently explored.

Because Camp McClintic was lacking sufficient flat land, it was decided that another camp was needed. So it was that Buckskin Scout Reservation came into existence, holding its first camping season in 1960. Buckskin, as it is usually termed — many older scouts and leaders call it Dilley's Mill — consists of 1,800 acres split by State Route 28 in Pocahontas County. This beautiful camp has served scouts of southern West Virginia longer than all the other camps combined. It remains in use today and features many fine improvements, including a large dining hall, chapel, trading post, activities shelter, improved swimming area, and a 16-acre lake. Camping is done in platform tents

Boy Scouts conduct a flag ceremony at Camp Pequoni, near Porter, Clay County, in about 1920.



Summer program cover for Camp McClintic, located west of Lewisburg in Greenbrier County. This camp was in use from 1945-59.

in wooded areas that surround the lake. Tens of thousands of scouts have spent one, or more, weeks at Buckskin.

I first camped at Buckskin in 1961. This was a place where we worked on advancement. While there, I recall earning merit badges for nature studies, soil and water conservation, and other subjects. And I'll not forget the large lake and how, around the age of 15, several buddies and I earned the Boy Scout Mile Swim Award. Four lengths of the quarter-mile lake had to be traversed, without stopping to rest. Each swimmer was accompanied by a rowboat, in case exhaustion overcame us. We all made it, as I recall. I have forgotten how long it took me to complete that mile. I am guessing it must have been an hour, or more. But what a feeling of accomplishment we all enjoyed that evening as we congratulated each other for making it!

Buckskin Reservation is also the place where I joined the Order of the Arrow, an honor camper organization. Candidates are chosen either by their scoutmasters or by vote of their fellow Boy Scouts in their local troops. Joining OA is contingent upon completion of an "ordeal," a term more than apt to describe what one must do in order to become a member.

At an evening campfire, each newly elected candidate is called out and then taken to a remote area of the woods, where he must sleep alone. He is picked up the next morning and led to an area where he is given some uncooked breakfast food, along with two matches. If he can't get a fire started, he will go hungry. Another rule is that a candidate may not speak during the two-day ordeal. Thus, asking for help is not done. Fortunately, I got my fire going and ate well enough. Then we were put to work. We filled potholes in the roads, built check dams to stop erosion, and did whatever else was demanded of us. We walked in crews of about eight candidates and, when walking from one job site to the next, always had to move in single file and "linked up" with one hand on the shoulder of the scout in front of us. By evening, we were treated to a meal in the camp's dining hall,

Scouting and camping go together. These young campers are lined up for food, no doubt cooked over an open fire, in 1947. They are members of Troop 6 of Beckley. Pictured at right is scoutmaster Albert Allen, Jr. Photograph courtesy of WVSA, Albert Allen, Jr., Collection.

Author W. Joseph "Joe" Wyatt as a Boy Scout in 1963.

although still we could not speak. By the third day, the ordeal was over, and we could forever say that we were "in OA."

"Be prepared," the Scout Motto tells us. It is a tribute to the scouting program that first aid and other preparedness skills are taught. There have been many scouts who have acted heroically when their duty called. Boy Scouts Berry Rogers and Wade Myers, both of South Charleston, were expecting to lead a routine Webelos Cub Scout meeting in 1974 when leader William S. Jones fell to the floor. He had suffered a heart attack. To make matters worse, Jones had a severe cut and was bleeding profusely. The Scouts administered CPR and controlled the bleeding. Ultimately, help arrived, and Jones was saved. He was thankful and able to be present weeks later, when both boys were awarded the Boy Scouts of America Medal of Merit.

A recent act of heroism occurred in 2004 and was accomplished by scout Andy Morrison of Troop 68 in Cross Lanes. While riding bikes with several buddies, he saw one of them, William Smoot, miss a curve and fly off the road and into a telephone guy wire. The wire all but amputated Smoot's foot. "In Boy Scouts, they give you first-aid training and tell you what to do," Morrison told *The Charleston Sunday Gazette-Mail*. "I was scared half to death." Scared or not, Morrison applied pressure by wrapping a towel tightly around the injured foot and held on while a neighbor called 911. Medical professionals credited Morrison with saving Smoot's life. Morrison later received the Boy Scout Heroism Award.

Although acts of heroism receive a great deal of public attention, the routine activities of scouting life are what most of us recall. I remember the weekly meetings in which I learned skills, such as first aid, knot tying, campcraft and more. Day hikes and weekend camporees were highlights for me, as well.

One of my lasting memories is of a winter camporee in Putnam County, when the nighttime temperature dipped to seven degrees. Even before leaving home, the proper layers of insulated clothing — especially the boots — had prepared us for what was to come. On arriving at the campsite, we swept away six inches of snow and set up our tents, with the temperature around 20 degrees. Then we quickly dragged together a large stack of firewood. Soon, we were warming ourselves by our campfire. As the sun dipped behind the horizon and the temperature dropped, we spread straw inside our tents to better insulate ourselves against the severe weather. That night, snug inside my sleeping bag, I did not get cold. As I look back on such experiences, I understand how those days

The Order of the Arrow is an elite organization within the Boy Scouts, designed for accomplished campers. These scouts, wearing their "OA" sashes, pack for a trip in about 1950. Scouts Roger Burns and Paul McManamay from Troop 6, Beckley, are visible at left, along with scoutmaster Albert Allen, Jr. The other scout is unidentified. Photograph courtesy of WVSA, Albert Allen, Jr., Collection.

Cub Scouts attempt to cross a rope bridge at a camporee in the 1970's. Photograph by Frank Wilkin, courtesy of WVSA.

shaped my realization that I could not only endure hardship, but could overcome it with proper planning and work.

At times, scout activities involve unusual, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. One of those was a 1949 trip by canoe from Charleston to Cincinnati. Twelve older scouts launched from the steps of the State Capitol building. The scouts hailed from Charleston, Clay, Boomer, South Charleston, St. Albans, and Rupert. The group paddled by day and camped along the riverbank at night. "Everyone's in tip-top shape — not a paddle blister in the crowd," said Thomas A. Beaver, a field executive who led the trip, upon their arrival in Cincinnati. "Best day's mileage was 45 miles between Manchester and New Richmond," recalled trip historian James Dillon, in a newspaper article of the day.

James Dillon; his father, Wesley; and brothers James and Donald became part of scouting history in 1950 when all four were awarded the Eagle badge on the same day. It seems strange now, but until the late 1950's, there was no age limit on when one could achieve the scout ranks. Wesley Dillon, a leader of Explorer Post 48 in South Charleston, and his three sons had made a pact that they would all work to earn scouting's highest rank — and they did. It is unknown whether this "dad and three sons — same day" award is a national record, but I would not be surprised if it is so.

Another of those who made the canoe trip was Jack Lanier, who was a few years ahead of me in Troop 146. Lanier had earned our troop's first Eagle badge in 1949. He describes the trip to me in a recent phone conversation from his home in Maryland: "I was working at Camp McClintic that summer when I got wind of the canoe excursion. I was anxious to make the trip, but there was a complication. The trip was scheduled for the last two weeks of the summer, precisely when I would be expected at football practice. I was a first-stringer on the St. Albans High team and would be required to attend daily practice in preparation for the team's first game."

Lanier continues: "I doubted that my coach would excuse me from practices, so I put the matter aside.

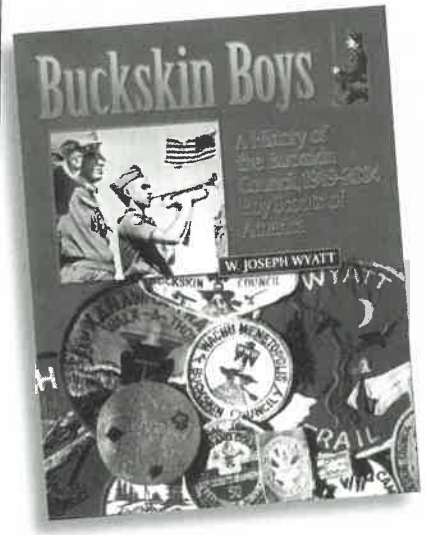
The Wyatt family is all smiles as son Joe receives his Eagle Scout badge in St. Albans in December 1963. At left is father Bill Wyatt; at right is mother Gerry.

Quite by accident, I found myself in a Lewisburg restaurant on my weekly evening off from my duties at scout camp, when in walked the coach, Dick Sidebottom, who was in the area on a fishing trip. Seizing the opportunity, I approached the coach, who was glad to see me. After some small talk about scout camp and football, I broached the subject of the canoe trip. Coach Sidebottom sensed the direction in which my heart pulled. He thought about the unusual request, then said, 'Jack, after paddling a canoe from Charleston to Cincinnati, you'll be in better shape than you would after two weeks of football practice, so go ahead.' And I made the trip."

Scouting days have been, and continue to be, the best of days to many young people. So it was for my dad and me, fortunate as I was to have grown up with a scoutmaster-father. My dad had hoped to write a history of local scouting, but cancer pre-empted his project. About three years ago, I found several boxes of photos and clippings he had accumulated in order to write the book. I took up the project and saw it to completion. The book, titled *Buckskin Boys: A History of the Buckskin Council, 1919-2004,* was published by Pictorial Histories Publishing Company in 2004. The work includes many stories my dad had told me, combined with my own scouting experiences. It provided me with a unique perspective on the people and events that have made local scouting what it is. And, if Dad is looking down now, I trust that he feels I have done "my best, to do my duty," as the Scout Oath says.

The Wyatt Scout Museum is located in Charleston at 2829 Kanawha Boulevard East, in the basement of the William H. "Bill" Wyatt Buckskin Council office. The museum is open by appointment; phone (304)340-3663.

W. JOSEPH WYATT was born and raised in St. Albans and now lives in Hurricane, Putnam County. He earned graduate degrees from the University of Miami in Florida and West Virginia University, and currently teaches psychology at Marshall University. In addition to his book on Boy Scouts, Joe has published a novel and a psychology textbook. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Buckskin Boys: A History of the Buckskin Council, 1919-2004 was begun by Bill Wyatt and completed by son Joe in 2004. It is available as a large-format paperback from Joe Wyatt, P.O. Box 844, Hurricane, WV 25526, for $24.95, plus $3 shipping.

Over the Hill Is Out

Author Karl Priest, seated, on the stoop of his Orchard Manor home, with friend Odie "Corky" Jones, in 1958.

The largest public housing project ever built in West Virginia opened in the summer of 1955 in a pocket between Charleston's West Side and North Charleston. Trees hid the neighborhood along Route 21, and a mountain curved around most of the rest of the area where the project was built. The best view of the conglomeration of dozens of red brick buildings containing 360 apartments was a narrow opening at the project's entrance on West Washington Street. Most vehicles took a more convenient route to North Charleston. After the initial publicity, most people would have forgotten the complex existed had it not been for continuing newspaper notoriety.

Taking its name from the apple orchard it replaced, Orchard Manor was home to about 1,500 of Charleston's poorest residents. Many of the families were fatherless, and many of the fathers who were present abused alcohol. Life in "The Manor," as it became known, was a mixture of typical neighborhood interaction and inner-city ghetto realities. Contrary to the utopian hopes of the politicians who facilitated construction of the housing project, it was mostly the latter. Those stories can be found in old newspaper headlines and police blotters. Within the culture of crime and violence that engulfed the Manor, tucked behind one of the brick apartment buildings that lined the dangerous streets, there was another world lived out by a group of baseball-playing boys.

I arrived in the Manor as an eight-year-old kid during the spring of 1956 with my parents, who were both raised on self-sufficient farms. My father, Howard Priest, was from Braxton County. My mother, Ruby Justice, arrived in Charleston from Martin County, Kentucky. I was an only child, but hardly noticed it, because I was surrounded by so many other kids and was quickly welcomed into the close-knit society of serious baseball players.

Almost every summer day, a couple of boys would start passing a baseball behind my row-house building, which sat diagonally across the street from our ballfield. The other boys, who all lived in apartments without air-conditioning, were drawn outside by the sound of rawhide slapping leather. They arrived wearing shorts or tattered jeans, with T-shirts or bare chests, their heads usually covered by a beloved baseball cap with precisely bent bill and a carefully formed tuck behind the team letter. Some were barefooted. A few came on bicycles with their baseball gloves dangling from the handle bars, but most walked with their gloves on their hands, as they spat into and banged the pocket with the opposite fist. We would play pepper or ball-strike pitching games, using a garbage pit as a backstop, until enough boys gathered around. Then we would cross the street to begin the baseball game that would go on for hours.

We played baseball behind a four-story apartment building. There was playground equipment scattered in three open areas among the project,

Karl points to where the ballfield once stood. Today, a fire station sits on the site. Photograph by Michael Keller.

first outside corner of a stairwell near the far end of the apartment building. Batted balls hitting the brick wall made for some crazy caroms and exciting plays at second base. Even though batted balls reaching the street were home runs, we ruled that a foul ball that was caught was an out. The year before we outgrew our ballfield, Ronnie was able to hit the ball over the top of the building. Just determining whether it was fair or foul caused some heated arguments, but the most vehement arguments erupted when Gene would stand in the street beyond the huge building, unable to be seen by Ronnie. A teammate would stand on the top of the hill, in sight of home plate, and tell Gene when Ronnie hit the ball. Gene, an excellent fielder, would catch the fly ball, sometimes narrowly missing passing cars, before the ball hit the pavement. The brothers never came to blows, and Ronnie would finally accept his fate and walk away, angrily muttering.

One particular home run was a one-in-a-billion occurrence. I do not remember who hit the ball to straight-away center field, but it coincided with a passing dump truck full of sand. The ball landed in the sand without alarming the driver, who continued on down the road, ignoring our shouted pleas to stop. That ended our game for that day.

In left-center field, at the base of the hill that served as our home run fence, there was a wide circular clump of shrubbery. Any ball going into those bushes was in play, and the fielder had to go in and retrieve it. Many an outfielder who chased balls into that tangle of bushes went home looking like he had been attacked by an angry cat. Between the bushes and foul territory there were metal clothesline poles, which presented outfielders with serious obstacles, especially if clothes were hung on the clotheslines.

Batted balls hitting the brick wall made for some crazy caroms and exciting plays at second base.

Once, someone hit a ball through an apartment window. It hit the kitchen table and amazingly ricocheted back out through another pane of glass. At first, broken windows caused us to make a hasty retreat. As we grew older and more brazen, we would remain on the field and start yelling for an imaginary kid to "come back" whenever an apartment occupant, looking for the culprit, poked her head out of a just-broken window.

Broken-window complaints caused the Housing Authority to assign the maintenance men to attempt to keep us from playing baseball on the lot. Often, we had to abandon our game and run when we saw the men coming between apartment buildings toward the ballfield. At one point, they removed the handle from a faucet that was located between apartment buildings inside a garbage pit. That eliminated a source of between-inning drinks of water for the ballplayers. Finally, the maintenance men erected a sign, proclaiming "Absolutely No Ball Playing Allowed in This Area." The sign was placed just behind where our pitcher stood, so the sign only became an obstacle, making it more interesting for infielders trying to catch pop-ups.

Sometimes, to avoid the maintenance men, we would carry our equipment and walk — some would ride a bicycle, hauling a friend on the cross bar or handlebars — to the city-maintained Legion Field recreation area. To get there, we passed by a junkyard and trash landfill. When we arrived, we frequently could not play, because city crews would be working on the field or teams would be practicing. Other times, we would go to the more distant Cabell Field, where we gathered with other West Side boys. In our late teens, Ronnie and Gene could hit a baseball off the railroad trestle that passed high above and beyond the left-field fence. On a couple of occasions, we

Blackberry Tales

By Nicole Rose

As children growing up in Pocahontas County, my siblings and I enjoyed the long summer months. One activity we all looked forward to was blackberry picking. While driving, we would look out the car window and ask, "Mom, are the berries ready yet?" As I've grown older, I can't help but get excited when I see the blackberries growing along our road whenever I go back home. It brings back sweet and funny — if sometimes painful — memories.

Young Katie Rose, our author's sister, picks blackberries at Locust Creek, Pocahontas County, in 2004.

When I was around seven or eight years old, my grandparents took my two younger sisters and me blackberry picking near our house in Locust Creek, in southern Pocahontas County. Once we were off the hard road, my grandfather stopped and let all three of us children sit in the back of his beat-up red truck. As it happened, my grandparents' mean old cocker spaniel, Captain, was along for the ride. He was a grouchy dog who didn't like children. He had chased my sister Jenny several times, causing her to be terribly afraid of him.

We bumped along until we pulled into the brushy cow pasture. My grandparents got out of the truck and set us down on the ground. Our empty ice-cream containers in hand, my sisters and I headed for the berries. Plunk, plink, the berries sounded as they hit the bottom of our buckets.

"Amy, stop eating those berries!" I yelled as my youngest sister ate some berries out of my growing container.

"But they're yummy," she said through her black-and-blue lips.

"Ouch, that thorn got me!" Jenny yelped as she yanked her small hand back.

"Be careful," our grandmother warned as she took a look at Jenny's bleeding thumb. Meanwhile, our grandfather had worked his way further into the berry bushes till we could only see his head sticking out of the green briars. He must have preferred to pick in silence, as some do, because he went further into the bushes as we girls yelled and complained.

"Where's Captain?" Jenny suddenly asked, as she remembered to be on the look-out for the worrisome dog. We all stopped and looked for Captain, but he was nowhere to be seen. "Captain! Captain!" we began to call. Just then, we heard the awfulest yelp we had ever heard, and we all screamed.

"Arr, arr, orr, orr, arr, orr," we all heard. "Captain! Where is he? Lee, get Captain!" my grandmother screamed to our grandfather. We dropped our buckets as the berries spilled out, covering the grass. Amy stepped in her berries, slipping, as she almost fell to the ground. I caught her just in time to drag her into the truck as we slammed the door. Jenny rolled

up the window.

Our grandfather ran out of the bushes, and Captain came following him. Grandpa had his hat in his hand, wildly swatting at the air around Captain. Back in the truck, we started to whimper, because we didn't know what was going on. Grandpa grabbed his water jug out of the truck and poured our cold ice water out on Captain. We then began to see small things flying away in the air.

"Girls, come on out now," Grandpa said, laughing, as we crawled out of the truck. "Ole Captain just got into a bees' nest, and those bees were stinging him real good," he told us. Grandma was now fussing over Captain and told us we'd better go home so Captain could get some rest.

"What about our berries?" I asked.

"I think I have enough for something," Grandpa said as he added his berries to Grandma's, making almost a full gallon. We agreed that we wanted to go home. We'd had an eventful evening, and now we were anxious for blackberry cobbler. Grandpa put Captain, who was lying on his side and panting, into the front seat of the truck and swung us into the back with our empty buckets. I looked over at Jenny, and I swear I saw a big grin on her face. I knew that grin wasn't for the blackberry cobbler, but for mean ole Captain, who finally got what he deserved.

My mother recently shared a humorous blackberry picking story that she experienced as a child. She, her three siblings, their mother, and grandmother all decided to go blackberry picking one hot August morning. This was no ordinary blackberry picking trip but a mountain blackberry expedition that took them to Williams River in Pocahontas County. Mountain berries are a different variety of blackberries. They are very large — about the size of your thumb — and grow high on the mountain tops of West Virginia. Mom and her siblings were excited about the trip. Upon arriving at their destination, they had to drive up a long-abandoned, unpaved logging road. The mountain berries were plentiful, and their pails began to flow over.

"Look at that big patch over there," my mother recalls her grandmother saying. Grandma made her way over to the promising-looking patch and began picking. Grandma was a large woman, and, though she was 70, she got around fairly well. After picking all the berries within her reach, Grandma decided to make her way through the briars and get the ones in the middle of the patch.

"Help!" they all heard Grandma shriek as she fell through the berry patch. A shower of blackberries flew into the air as she fell down. They all ran over to her. To their dismay, they discovered that Grandma had fallen over a cliff, about eight-feet down. The thick berry patch had given the illusion that solid land was underneath, but the berries were actually growing on the side of the hill.

"Grandma, are you okay?" they all yelled. She told them she was fine, but to come and help her up. Everyone burst out laughing. They couldn't help it! It was such a funny sight to see Grandma lying at the bottom of the hill, wedged between an old log and the hill. Her glasses were astray on her face. Blackberries were stuck in her hair, which was usually perfectly pinned up. Her clothes had pieces of loose dirt on them, and dirt smudged her now-flushed face.

"Come down here and help me up," she demanded. Everybody carefully made their way down the hill, but they couldn't stop laughing. They were laughing so hard that a couple of them tumbled

Katie Rose and Captain, the cocker spaniel, at Hillsboro in 1999.

Great-grandmother Mary Virginia Shafer and author Nicole Rose at Hillsboro in 1990. Mrs. Shafer once fell over a cliff while berry picking.

down the steep embankment. After they all got to the bottom of the hill, they began to help her up. Since Grandma was a large lady, getting her up was a hard job for one woman and four children. Once she was standing, they burst into laughter again as they saw her nylon pants covered with brown mud all over her bottom. Grandma straightened her glasses and shook her hair free of the berries.

After somehow managing to climb the cliff with Grandma, my mother said, "Let's get going." To her surprise, Grandma said, "No, let me refill my bucket, then we'll be on our way. I have to have that mountain berry pie!" Grandma got her pie that day, after finally making it home in the late afternoon following her harrowing mountain berry experience.

Another scorching August, my nine-year-old sister Amy headed out the road to go blackberry picking. Amy was a nervous kid. She often worried about strange things, such as skunks climbing in her bedroom window at night and spraying her or getting chased by deer. She seldom ventured far from our house.

Our cousins from Valley Head, Randolph County, came to visit one week, and Amy wanted to go blackberry picking with them. They all loaded up on their bikes, put their picking buckets around the handlebars, and headed off. They only had to travel about half a mile until they came to a large hill that was covered with berry bushes. Amy and our two cousins parked their bikes at the bottom of the hill and slowly worked their way to the top, picking berries. Their buckets were close to full.

"What's that noise?" Amy asked as she looked into the thick briars. Nobody but she had heard anything. "I hear something growling," she said as she looked all around.

"Amy, stop it. You're scaring me. There's nothing out there," my cousin Jessie told her.

"Ahh! Help me! The bear has my leg," Amy screamed as she kicked her leg around wildly.

Jessie looked over at Amy and saw her jumping around. Then Amy took

off and ran right out of her shoes. "Run! There's a bear in the woods. He had me!" Amy screamed as she ran down the side of the hill. Jessie and Matt started screaming, as well. They all dropped their buckets on the ground. They rushed down the hill, falling and getting caught in the briars. Amy screamed for her life, but also for the pain of the briars in her bare feet.

When they reached the bottom of the hill, Amy took off running down the road. "Stop! Don't forget your bike. Amy, come back!" Jessie yelled as Amy ran past her. Amy continued to run with all her might down the road until Jessie and Matt rode past her on their bikes. Amy crazily jumped on Jessie's bike, which came crashing down. Matt continued to peddle with all his might past the accident scene to save his own life. Jessie and Amy got the bike back up and jumped on again. Both girls had skinned and bleeding knees, but they just wanted to get home.

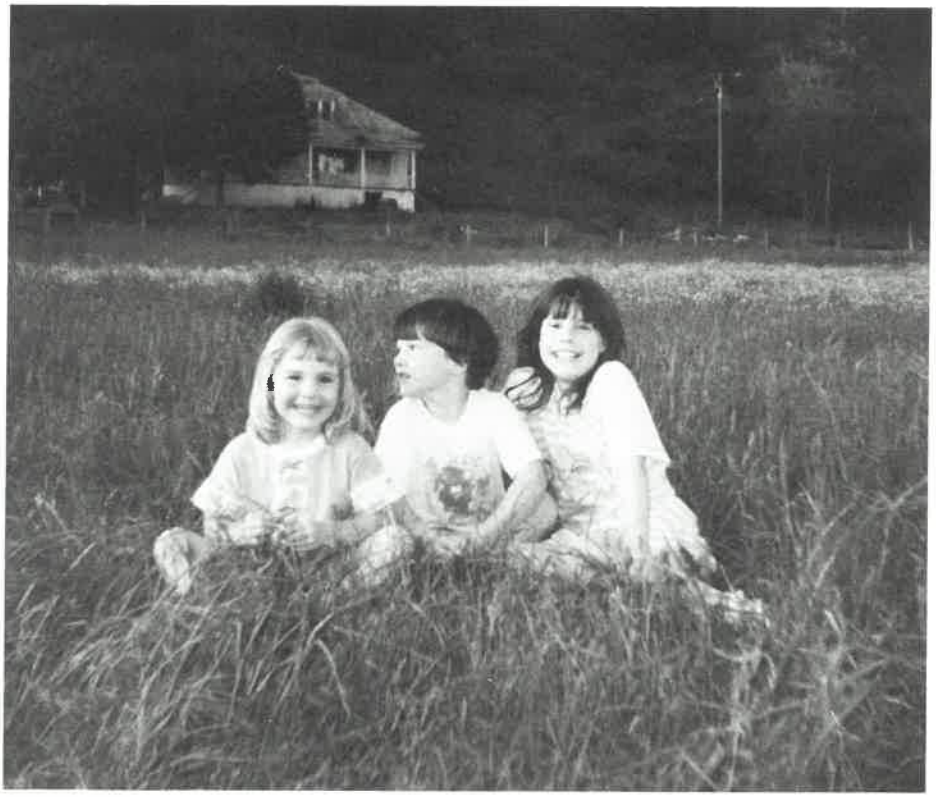
My mother and I had watched the scene play out from the front kitchen window. We didn't know what had happened, so we ran outside. "A bear got me, Mom. He reached out of those blackberry bushes and tried to grab my leg," Amy told my mother through hysterical tears.

Amy Rose, age nine, at about the time of the "bear incident," in 2001.

"Where's your shoes, Amy?" Mom asked. Of course, she didn't get an answer, just Amy crying and rambling on about the bear that grabbed her. Mom and I didn't believe her story. There was no way a bear would have just grabbed her leg and not tried to come after her. Although it was funny, we couldn't laugh, because of her skinned-up knees and all of the thorns in her feet.

After Amy had settled down, my mom took a look at her leg. Where the bear had supposedly grabbed her, she found blackberry thorns. A blackberry bush had actually gotten a hold of her leg, and the thorns still remained to prove Mom's theory. The bear was only a fantastic thought of a nervous nine-year-old. We still tease Amy about her overactive imagination, and this story gets a good laugh everytime it is told.

These are just a few of the funny blackberry tales I cherish. But ask any West Virginian if they have any blackberry picking stories, and you'll get a similar earful.



Author Nicole Rose, at right, at her grandparents' farm near Lobelia, Pocahontas County, in 1994. At left is cousin Jessie Kidd; at center is sister Jenny Rose.

NICOLE ROSE grew up in Pocahontas County and now lives in Teays Valley, Putnam County. She is a student in elementary education at West Virginia State University. This article was written as a class assignment at WVSU and is Nicole's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Still Standing

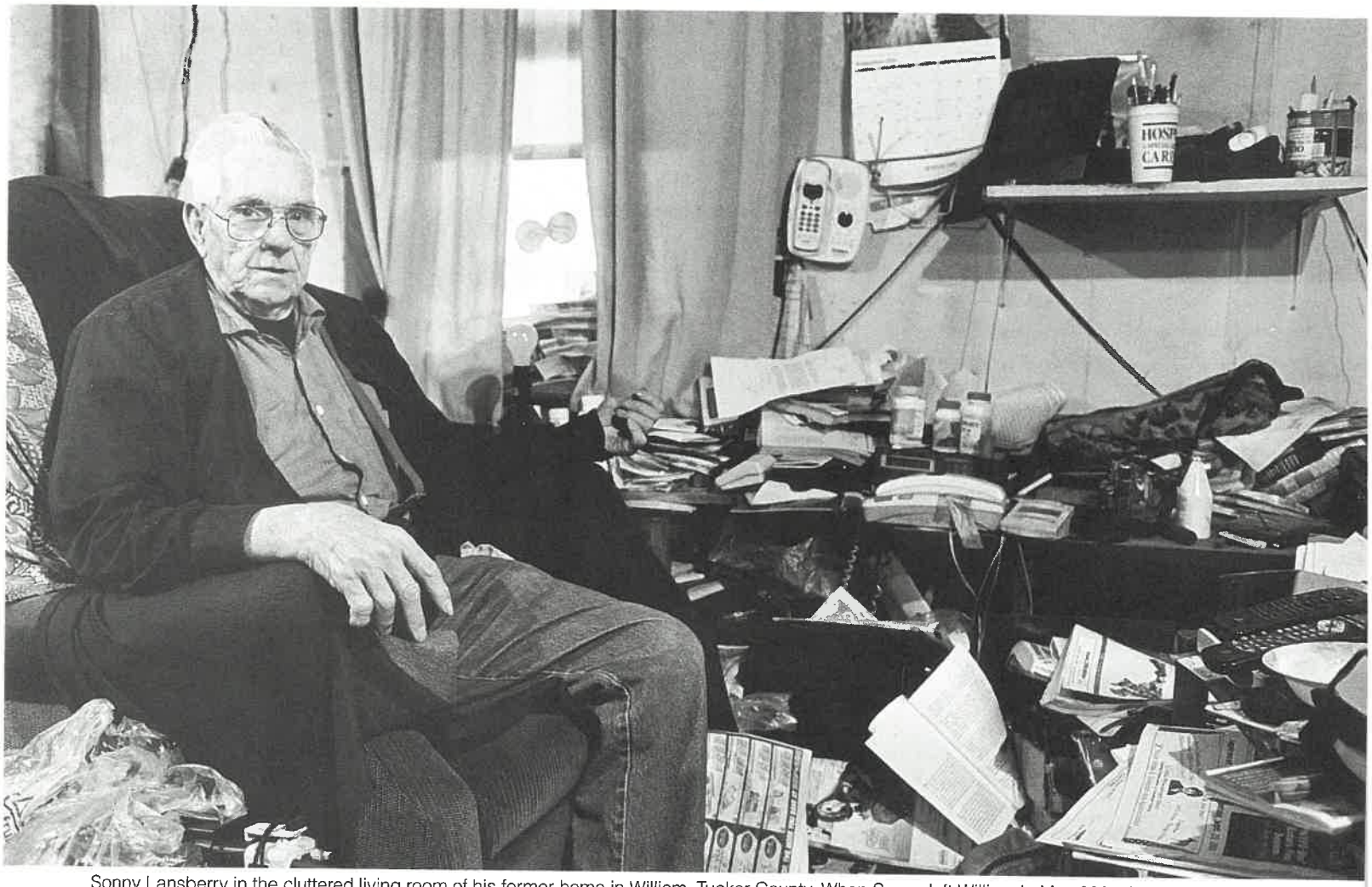
Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

Life provides plenty of unexpected challenges. For 73-year-old Tucker County native Charles "Sonny" Lansberry, those challenges have been physical, emotional, and financial. Through it all, he has somehow found the strength to carry on.

Sonny lived most of his life in the all-but-gone town of William. Personal circumstances forced him to move to an apartment in Thomas in early 2005, where GOLDENSEAL *contributor Carl E. Feather caught up with him last September. —ed.*

in Tucker County

Sonny Lansberry Carries On



Sonny Lansberry in the cluttered living room of his former home in William, Tucker County. When Sonny left William in May 2005, he was the last native resident to call the place home.

"I really get down in the dumps," Sonny tells me as we sit in his small, but neat, apartment in Thomas. He moved into the monitored dwelling about four months earlier, following several months of failing health.

Left: Seventy-three-year-old Sonny Lansberry in the woods near his Tucker County homeplace. Sonny lost his right leg to an infection while in the Navy but remained active and independent for many years.

"If I had my way, I'd be out in the woods today," he says. "But I guess everything has to come to an end." Sonny is referring to the active lifestyle he enjoyed while a resident of William, a vapor of a hamlet located just north of the intersection of routes 219 and 90 in northern Tucker County. Only four households are in William, and Sonny's was the oldest. His ramshackle house is one of only two remaining from the town's heyday. The other heritage house, located across U.S. Route 219 from Sonny's old place, was owned by the late Ray Cosner and now belongs to an absentee owner. Of William's original brood, Sonny Lansberry was, until May 2005, the last one to call the place home.

I visited Sonny at his old William residence in September 2004, when he was still able to live independently. During that visit, Sonny shared his

William was once a prosperous timber and commercial center, Sonny says. During its heyday, it was home to three sawmills and 300 residents. These dapper fellows posed for this photograph at the town depot in 1905. Sonny Lansberry was born near here in 1932. Photographer unknown.

recollections and photographs of the William he knew as a child. Most importantly, he shared his inspiring story of independence against personal and physical challenges.

Sonny says William was originally known as Forsythe. From July 20, 1886, to September 6, 1887, it had a post office under that name. The Richard Chaffee Lumber Company built a single-band mill at William in 1900. It burned on September 14, 1901, was rebuilt, and burned again on June 25, 1907.

William C. Bond, the town's namesake, built his own large, single-band mill in 1906. That mill also burned, and Bond was arrested and charged with arson. A long, costly trial finally cleared him of the charges in 1913. The mills are all long gone now, the only hint of their former presence being the circular foundation of a former mill structure in the bottomland across from Sonny's old house.

Although timber provided employment for many of the men in William, Sonny's father, Charles, worked in the coal mine at Pierce, about one mile west, where Sonny was born on September 24, 1932. "We lived in an old lumber camp house," Sonny says. "There were 10 of us altogether: my parents, my sister, five boys, my uncle (Fred), and my grandmother."

The house stood a stone's throw from the school, and although both structures are now gone, Sonny can point out the depressions in the earth where the foundations once stood. An apple orchard grew on the land now occupied by an electrical substation.

Sonny says this little village once had 300 residents. Old pictures Sonny keeps in a large plastic box suggest a prosperous community that boasted a musical band, hotel, and grade school. A class photo from 1912 shows 18 students and two teachers; one of the teachers is smoking a cigar. Another undated image shows 30 youngsters gathered outside the schoolhouse.

By the time Sonny's family moved from Pierce to William, the school had closed and the town was in decline. William depended upon timber for its livelihood, and when the timber gave out, the woodsmen packed up their axes and families and moved on.

"As people left here, they tore the houses down, or they fell down," Sonny explains.

The one business that was still a going concern when Sonny was growing up in William was Oliver "Ott" Cosner's general store, which stocked necessities and made special orders for any other goods. Sonny eventually made his home in the former store. His parents had bought the simple, two-story frame building after Cosner closed his store in the early 1950's. It was a step up for the couple, who had lived for years without benefit of running water. Cosner's store had that luxury and was a good buy for the family, even if the purchase price did not include

Still standing, though barely, this building was Sonny's home for most of the past 50 years. It was formerly Oliver "Ott" Cosner's store and is today one of two original structures remaining in William.

Cosner's general store in William. Photographer and date unknown.

the land. To this day, Sonny owns the house but leases the land for $640 a year. Sonny had graduated from Thomas High School in 1951 and was away in the Navy when all this happened. Circumstances brought him back to William, however.

A machinist's mate, Sonny planned to make a career in the Navy. But while aboard ship in Florida, he fell on the deck and injured his right leg. An infection developed, and, five years into his career, Sonny had his leg amputated about halfway above the knee.

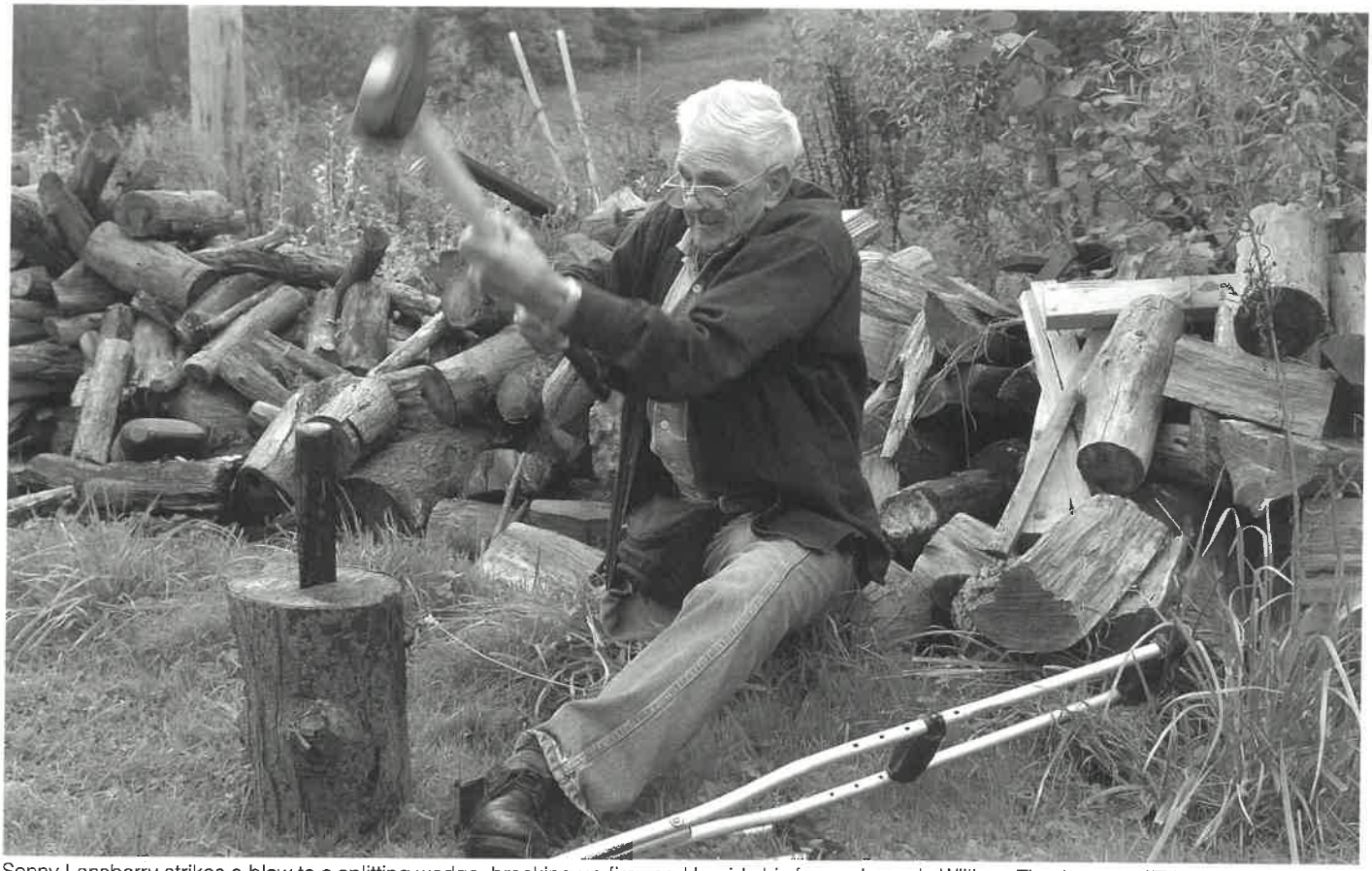
He was married at the time and had a two-year-old son, William Charles, and six-week-old daughter, Debra (Huebner). As he was waiting in the hospital for the amputation, he received word that his wife had left him and abandoned his children, on his son's second birthday — March 9, 1957.

"I even thought of suicide," Sonny tells me as we sit in his cluttered, dingy living room in William, the former showroom of Cosner's store. "But I wanted to take care of my kids. My kids were the only things that mattered."

After he got out of the Veterans Administration hospital, Sonny returned to William, moved in with his mother and children, and tried to scratch out a living. His father had died by that time, and the family had very little money on which to survive. Disabled and broke, Sonny found ways to make money and keep his kids fed.

His first venture was peddling eggs, which he purchased from Amish farmers in Oakland, Maryland. Sonny bought the eggs for 40 cents a dozen, marked them up 50 percent, and sold them door-to-door in the Thomas area. After three years of scraping by on that and his military disability pay, Sonny got a job as a security guard at the West Virginia Forestry Camp for Boys, in Davis. He worked there 10 years.

Looking back on their childhood, both Debra and William Charles recall a father who was determined to provide for his children, and a grandmother who filled the role of mother to them.



Sonny Lansberry strikes a blow to a splitting wedge, breaking up firewood beside his former home in William. Thanks to an ATV, specially modified crutches, and tremendous determination, Sonny provided for himself and raised two children under difficult circumstances.

"I've often wondered, looking at other guys I know, if [they] would have done what he's done with just one leg," William Charles says. "If I lost a leg or an arm, I'd probably mope around and do the least I had to do. But not Dad. Whatever he done, he did full force."

"My grandmother was there, too, so he didn't do it all," says Debra, a Maryland resident. "He was a generation ahead of his time, as far as getting custody of us kids. With my dad, it's mind over matter to him. He's been a survivor. That's why he's around today."

William Charles says their father gave them a good childhood, despite the isolation of where they lived and his limited means to provide.

Ott Cosner behind the counter of his store in William. This showroom eventually became Sonny Lansberry's living room. Photographer and date unknown.

Both William Charles and Debra moved away from home after high school. Sonny's mother died in the late 1970's, about the same time his children were heading out of the house. Sonny took on the responsibilities his mother had helped with, such as cooking and laundry. But house maintenance essentially ended; only the most pressing repairs were made.

His independence was aided by the ability to drive. After he came home from the Navy, Sonny owned a 1953 Chevrolet standard-shift car. He operated the clutch with his foot. The gas and brake were operated with a broom handle, until the day the stick broke as he was coasting into Thomas. His car came to rest about six inches from a state trooper's car. Fortunately, the trooper was acquainted with Sonny and his disability.

"He said, 'You go home and put a "For Sale" sign on that car, or I'm going to give you a ticket,'" Sonny recalls. "I put a sign on it after that."

Sonny got around the house, his yard, and the woodlands surrounding his house using two metal crutches equipped with special wide rubber tips, and a four-wheel all-terrain vehicle. Sonny is not exaggerating when he says there are but two things his disability prevents him from doing: house cleaning and dancing, thanks to incredible determination and his ATV.

"That four-wheeler I got, that helps me get around. That's been a blessing to me," he says.

The abandoned Western Maryland railroad bed that runs between William and Bayard was Sonny's equivalent to a superhighway. He used the right-of-way to access the forest for hunting, cutting firewood, and searching for artifacts from the former rail and lumber activities. He shot and hauled an eight-point buck from these forests in 2002. The forest was also his cathedral.

"I come up here and sit when I have nothing else to do," he says. "I feel close to God when I'm up here in the woods."

Sonny heated his home in William with a combination coal/wood furnace. Using a chain saw (he sat while he sawed), he cut downed trees in the forest into chunks of wood he could lift into a homemade cart pulled behind his ATV.

"It's mind over matter to him. He's been a survivor. That's why he's around today."

"I used to split the wood by hand, with a hammer and wedge," he says. William Charles and his son Chaz would assist Sonny with those wood-cutting forays. "He'd scare me to death when we'd go out with the chain saw to cut firewood. But if you'd say something to him, he'd climb all over you," recalls William Charles.

It wasn't unusual for Sonny to go alone several miles into the woods on his ATV. He never worried about being stranded there, despite black bears roaming the forest. Sonny says he always took dinner with him on the ATV.

"I go up there, and if I get hungry, I eat canned Vienna sausages and beans, beans and weenies. My daughter tells me I ought to go out and eat, but I eat out every day," he says.

One evening as he was heading home from a day in the forest, he dropped and damaged his flashlight. Without a light to guide him and darkness closing in, Sonny concluded it was safer to stay put rather than try to navigate the forest in total darkness.

"So I spent the night in the woods," he says. "I would have fallen and hurt myself if I'd tried to go on in the dark."

William Charles, who lives in nearby Gorman, Maryland, but works in Thomas, says he'd usually stop and check on his father every evening on

his way home from work. In the winter, he, his son Chaz, or a neighbor boy would bank the coal fire in Sonny's basement furnace and shovel the night's supply of coal closer to the furnace door. William Charles says he always worried about his father climbing those narrow basement stairs with just one leg and a crutch.

Chaz, who spent weekends and evenings at his grandfather's house, also assisted him with daily chores. Sonny and Chaz enjoy a very close relationship, says William Charles. "He's 'Pap's boy,' that's what he calls him. He and Dad just hit it off," William Charles says of the eldest of Sonny's four grandchildren.

In May 2004, tired from a long day of cutting firewood in the forest, Sonny fell in his living room and broke his hip. He scooted to the telephone and called for help. Later that night, he was flown via medical helicopter to Pittsburgh, where surgery was performed to repair his broken hip.

"I thought, 'This is it. This is the end of my way of living,'" he says. A month of hospitalization followed. His family and doctor discouraged Sonny from returning to his home and independent lifestyle. But after just two weeks in rehabilitation, Sonny went back to his home, woods, and four-wheeler.

To make life a little easier, Sonny bought a hydraulic log splitter, which he hauled into the forest with his ATV. He also gave up mowing his neighbor's lawn and that of the power company, though he continued to mow his own grass with a riding mower.

Sonny spent one more winter by himself in the old house, but by the spring of 2005, it was clear that his days of independent living in William were over. He has come to accept the fact that his house will probably be razed once his possessions are cleared out. His children say the house is beyond repair.

"It needs a lot," Sonny says of his weary abode. "It's about ready to fall down."

His children have peace of mind knowing their father is living in a monitored apartment where he can get immediate help and isn't surrounded by so many obstacles and hazards. But they also know their father's heart is breaking because of all he's lost in the transition.

"I'd still rather be where I can get out and go," Sonny tells me. "I got the four-wheeler out of the shed the other day, and my arms are still not strong enough to steer it."

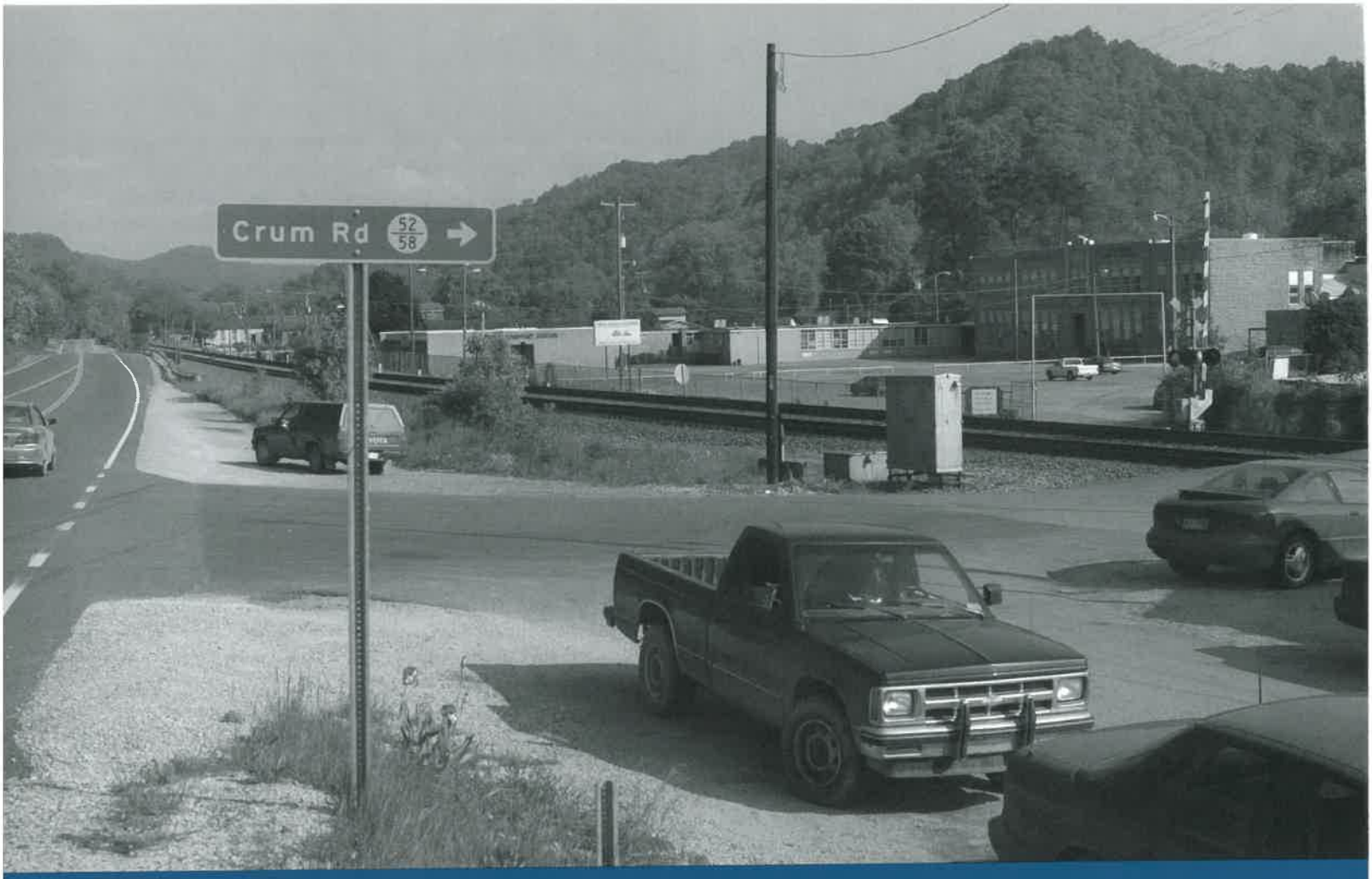
Sonny has disposed of his saws, and he's sure the four-wheeler will be gone soon, too. He has only his memories and a bag full of photographs he took during his woodland wanderings to recall the independent lifestyle he once knew in William.

Sonny has replaced cutting wood and riding his ATV with less strenuous activities, like reading, visiting with his neighbors, and learning to use his computer and digital camera. He says keeping busy helps him deal with the loss of freedom. And, just as Sonny learned to adapt to a different way of life after losing his leg, he's learning to make the most of this stage of life, as well.

"I want to get out, but I know I can't," he says. "In life, we all got to face things."

Now living in a monitored apartment in Thomas, Sonny Lansberry is surrounded by his memories.

CARL E. FEATHER lives in northeast Ohio and has family roots in Preston and Tucker counties. His book, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, is published by 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.



Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Redeeming the *Real* Crum

The town of Crum, Wayne County. U.S. Highway 52 is visible at left. At the center is Crum Elementary School, and to the right is the two-story Crum Middle School, housed in what used to be the old high school building. Running the length of the photograph, and the length of the town, are the Norfolk & Southern railroad tracks.

The first thing I noticed about Crum, Unincorporated, was the traffic jam. A Norfolk & Southern train was stalled on the track that runs parallel to U.S. Route 52 and School Street, the main thoroughfare through this town in extreme southwestern Wayne County. The train blocked both Crum Road and Crum Hollow Road, the only two roads into downtown Crum. Lines of vehicles, four-to-six deep, spilled out of the short nub of road between Route 52 and the railroad crossing gates, slowing the otherwise swiftly moving traffic.

Such is the price of progress.

It was around 6:15 p.m. on a Wednesday evening, and like many of the other motorists stalled by this inconvenience, Margie Allen and her daughter were heading to midweek service at the Crum Church of Christ, a brick structure adjacent to the Crum Pizza Shop on School Street. Margie was standing outside her minivan, talking to a friend in the car in front of her, when I approached on foot.

She gave me a big smile, friendly "hello," and asked if I knew why the train had stalled at the crossings. I didn't have a clue, although the next day I learned that the culprit was Tunnel No. 4, a mile-long railroad tunnel just north of town. The rail line is reduced to one set of tracks at the tunnel, and low-priority rail traffic, like the train that blocked the crossings, must acquiesce to fast freight at the tunnel.

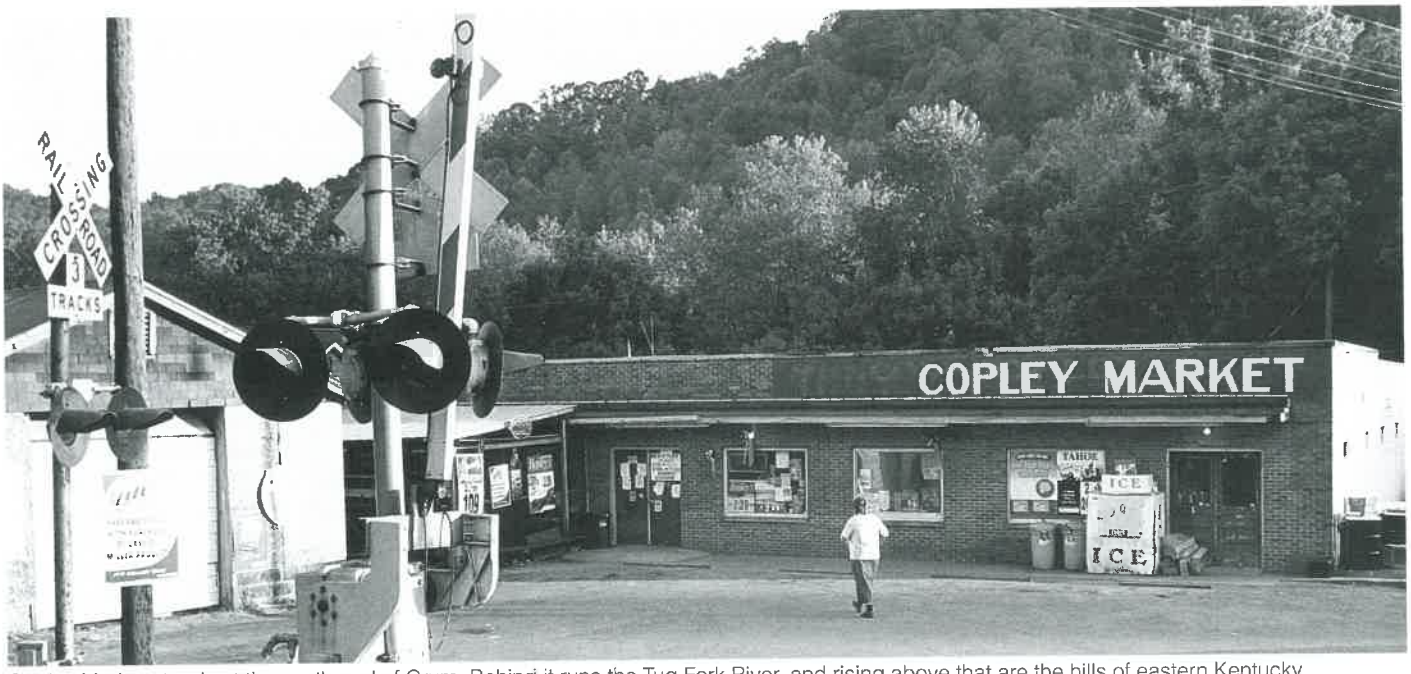
I learned this from Herb Dawson, a Crum native who holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Marshall University. He retired from teaching in 2000 to pursue his passion for local genealogy. He can tell you who married whom in Crum, where they are buried, and what they did between those events. Books containing his research fill shelf after shelf, bookcase after bookcase, of his Rear School Street home.

Speaking of genealogy, Herb was born on November 12, 1938, one of seven children born to George and Jessie Raines Dawson. Herb is a straight shooter with as much nervous energy as a swallowtail butterfly in a field of wildflowers. He deals in facts and willingly discloses both the positive and negative aspects of his community and the folks who have lived there. But when our conversation got around to a popular and controversial book named for his hometown, Herb went on the defensive.

We were talking about the coming-of-age novel *Crum*, written by Lee Maynard, a Crum native, first published in 1988, reprinted in 2001 by West Virginia University Press. As a contemporary of the author, Herb insisted that the events Maynard attributes to Crum simply didn't happen. Boys didn't blow up outhouses, get shot at by Kentucky boys while swimming in the Tug Fork, have sex on the school bus, or expose themselves to girls and their teacher.

Herb said that he and many of the other residents who lived in Crum during that era feel the fictional characters in the novel are based upon real Crum residents or composites of several persons, and that bothers him. And he doesn't like the fact Maynard used the name of their real town for his novel. He said Maynard's disclaimer doesn't

Herb Dawson of Crum. An amateur, but passionate, genealogist, Herb displays a few of the family photographs he has collected. In his hands is a photograph of the Dawson family taken at a 1958 reunion in Crum. Herb is standing at the far right, age 19.



Copley Market stands at the south end of Crum. Behind it runs the Tug Fork River, and rising above that are the hills of eastern Kentucky.

excuse his taking fictional liberties with a real place and real people.

Herb likes facts. The day before we met, he went to the Wayne County courthouse looking for an explanation of how Crum got its name. His research uncovered a deed, dated August 22, 1888, conveying a tract of about 12 acres to the Ohio & Norfolk Railroad Company for construction of a railroad up the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River. William Crum, Sr. and Jr., were the sellers in this transaction, which would establish Crum Station at the site and eventually bring a modicum of progress to what had been a small farming community.

"Before the railway came in, it was not a big town," Herb said. "There never was even a need to name the place — this was farming, this was not coal mining. A family might have a coal bank for their own use, but that was all."

Through the early 1940's, Crum's population was fewer than 400 and the town a scattering of stores, houses, and truck gardens. Crum also had a Masonic lodge, movie theater, skating rink, several taverns/bars, and numerous churches — all white Protestant. That was the Crum in which Herb grew up.

Herb said there was an elementary school in town, as well as small schools scattered across the hollows and ridges. A junior high school was opened in Crum in 1941 and the high school in 1950. He said there were families in Crum who valued education, and there were those who saw education as a waste of time, as is the case to this day.

Herb's father, George Dawson, was in the former category. He boarded out during his high school years so he could attend school in Kingswood, Kentucky. After graduating in 1927, he headed to Marshall University, where he earned several bachelor's and advanced degrees. He became a high school teacher, who passionately shared his love of learning with both his students and his children. To this day, former students of George Dawson who live in Crum — men like Frank Little, proprietor of Little's Cash Store — still recall him as a great teacher, who could make even the most boring subject matter interesting.

Through the early 1940's, Crum's population was fewer than 400 and the town a scattering of stores, houses, and truck gardens.

Herb is one of George Dawson's success stories.

"My goal was to go to college," said Herb, explaining why he left Crum after graduating high school. "I was not hell-bent to get out of Crum, but there's no college in Crum."

After Herb got his degrees at Marshall, he taught around the state before coming home in 1969 to head up the vocal and instrumental music program at Crum High School, later teaching music at Crum Elementary, Dunlow Elementary, and Fort Gay Elementary schools.

"I had moved and moved," he said. "I was tired of moving. I had the opportunity to get the job as band director for Crum High School, and I wanted to provide an experience in music for these students that I didn't have."

His wife taught elementary school in Crum, and they raised their only child, Jeffrey, in Crum. Jeffrey couldn't find work there after graduation and moved out of state. Herb, however, stayed behind and is firmly entrenched in Crum. As he walks down the street, former students and lifelong friends shout "Hi, Herb" and wave from their car windows as they pass him.

Everybody in Crum knows Herb Dawson.

His red-roofed white house and two garages are part of the roughly quarter-mile-long section of downtown Crum compressed between the Tug Fork and railroad grade. Sharing this narrow strip are Crum Elementary and Middle schools at the north end, and Copley's Market at the south. Between, there's a Masonic hall, two churches, a day care, cemetery, and the Crum Public Service Department, the latter located in a dilapidated white house next to a trashed mobile home in an overgrown lot.

Martha Maynard, officer in charge at the Crum post office, says 480 households pick up their mail at this location. Another 155 rural route patrons are also served by the post office.

In stark contrast to the trashed mobile homes are several newer houses and well-maintained, stately, older homes, like that of Ralph Dawson, Herb's brother and owner of the Crum Pizza Shop. Ralph's real-estate holdings stretch to the Tug Fork and include six mobile homes in deteriorated condition and the house in which Herb, Ralph, and their siblings were raised. Herb calls the collective holdings "Ralph's Ponderosa."

Down the street toward the elementary school there are several houses whose backyards are planted in grave markers. Some of the markers, like those of the Copley family, are enclosed by a single chain, hanging in long loops from metal posts. There are two rectangular plots delineated by stonework and blocks, but devoid of markers. Herb, who has cataloged the burial ground, said he'd like to know who is buried under the black plastic and piece of green indoor-outdoor carpet used for weed control in these plots. Someone evidently retains a connection to the deceased, for, as is the case with most of the graves here, there are plastic floral arrangements on the unmarked plots.

Herb Dawson cleans dirt from the headstone of William C. Crum, Sr., one of the town's original residents and namesakes.

Herb explains everything in terms of people and their dates of birth, marriage, and death. The history of Crum is no exception. He got down on his knees in front of two stones and started clearing the encroaching grass from their concrete bases. On the left is William Crum, Jr., 1854-1948; Vicy Brown, 1858-1935, is on the right.

Herb told me how Crum family members became intertwined through marriage with other names endemic to Crum: Marcum, Copley, and Queen. He pointed out the grave of Billy Scott Queen, a 22-year-old casualty of the Battle of the Bulge. Herb still recalls the memorial service and the pride his community felt when the fallen soldier's exhumed body was finally laid to rest here in 1948.

Our next stop was another Crum cemetery, about a half-mile north of Crum's business district, where William Crum, Sr., is buried, along with various Maynards, Farleys, and Queens. We examined a few of the graves in the old cemetery then headed down the hill to Little's Cash Store, where Frank Little, Crum High School Class of 1952, was preparing to deliver the produce he hauled in from Parkersburg earlier that day. Frank held off on his deliveries long enough to tell me why he's still living in Crum while so many of his classmates went north to Columbus, Ohio, and other industrial cities, after high school.

A Korean War veteran, Frank said he, too, followed the West Virginia exodus after he got out of the service. He lived and worked in Columbus for five years, but family ties called him back to Crum.

Joyce Conn is the fourth generation of her family to own Copley Market in Crum. "You need family, people you can count on," Joyce says.

"My father and mother were here, and when my dad got sick in his later years, he wanted me to come back and help with the store," Frank said.

Frank's been working the store in Crum ever since the early 1960's. He calls his two-story building "a mini-mini-Wal-Mart" that stocks the essentials. It's a tough business, and the last 18 years have been especially difficult, since Route 52 diverted traffic from the narrow byway that passes his store. But Frank perseveres.

"My roots are here," he explained.

Frank's Crum roots don't stop with family. Like many of those who made their living here before the railroad came, Frank still does some farming. On the next leg of our Crum tour, Herb introduced me to some of that farmland as we took the scenic drive along River Bend Road — a narrow, paved road that follows the Tug Fork as it convulses in a series of loops.

There are wide, fertile fields along this stretch of the river, but there's not much evidence of farming. There are residences, however: the run-down mobile homes so often associated with "poverty-stricken Appalachia," but also houses that would be at home in upscale suburban subdivisions. Herb told me that earnings from coal mines and the railroad built many of these houses, but there are also professionals and retired persons who have chosen rural Crum as their home.

Martha Maynard, the officer in charge at the Crum post office, later told me that there are 155 postal patrons on this rural route with Crum as their address. Another 480 Crum patrons pick up their mail from boxes in the post office. The entire rural route that runs out of the post office, which includes some Fort Gay addresses, is about 75 miles. It seemed that Herb and I covered every one of those miles as we toured the Crum countryside.

Herb had a meeting of the Wayne County Historical Society that evening, and we parted ways late in the afternoon so he could be on time.

I stopped at Nettie's Diner, a long, gray building at the north end of town, where three men were sitting around a table waiting for Tammy Spaulding to cook their food and Donna Evans to serve it. Tammy is a Columbus, Ohio, native, who came to Crum by way of marriage three decades ago. Her husband, Howard, is one of the men who was waiting for his dinner.

You can either eat coal dust in Crum or not eat at all.

Howard told me his parents, Crum natives, migrated to Columbus and still live there. He stayed only long enough to get a wife, then went back to Crum. He's the only one of the nine children who returned, however.

"I came out of my [Columbus apartment] one day, and a man was chasing a woman with a butcher knife. I said, 'That's it, I'm getting out of here.' I didn't want my kids around that junk. I like the quiet here," Howard said.

In Crum, Howard lived the life of a coal miner, nearly dying several times in the mines. Tammy says you can either eat coal dust in Crum or not eat at all. Howard ate dust until his body had its fill. But he's not leaving Crum. When asked what he thinks of Maynard's book, Howard summed it up succinctly:

"That's not the Crum I knew."

Leaving the diner, I walked down the street to Copley's Market — a deceptively large store, once you're inside — and started scanning the aisles of canned goods, hunting and fishing gear, game bird supplies, and just about anything else a Crum resident would need to survive this side of a Wal-Mart.

Joyce Conn was working the counter. She told me the store was built in 1957, and she's the fourth generation to own it. In a different community, she and Frank Little would be in competition with each other, but Joyce said it doesn't work like that in Crum. He hauls produce in for her store from Huntington, and she splits her bread orders with his store.

"We try to help each other survive," she said.

More than the trains that rumble past her store, more than the Tug Fork that flows behind the Copely Market and the Kentucky hills that rise beyond it, more than a place to earn a living and pitch an easy chair at the end of a hard day, what keeps Joyce, Frank, Howard, Herb, and many other Crum residents grounded along the Tug Fork is what ultimately makes any other town a home for its residents.

"You need family, people you can count on," said Joyce as she watched another day come to an end in Crum, West Virginia.

Crum: The Novel
Why the Fuss?

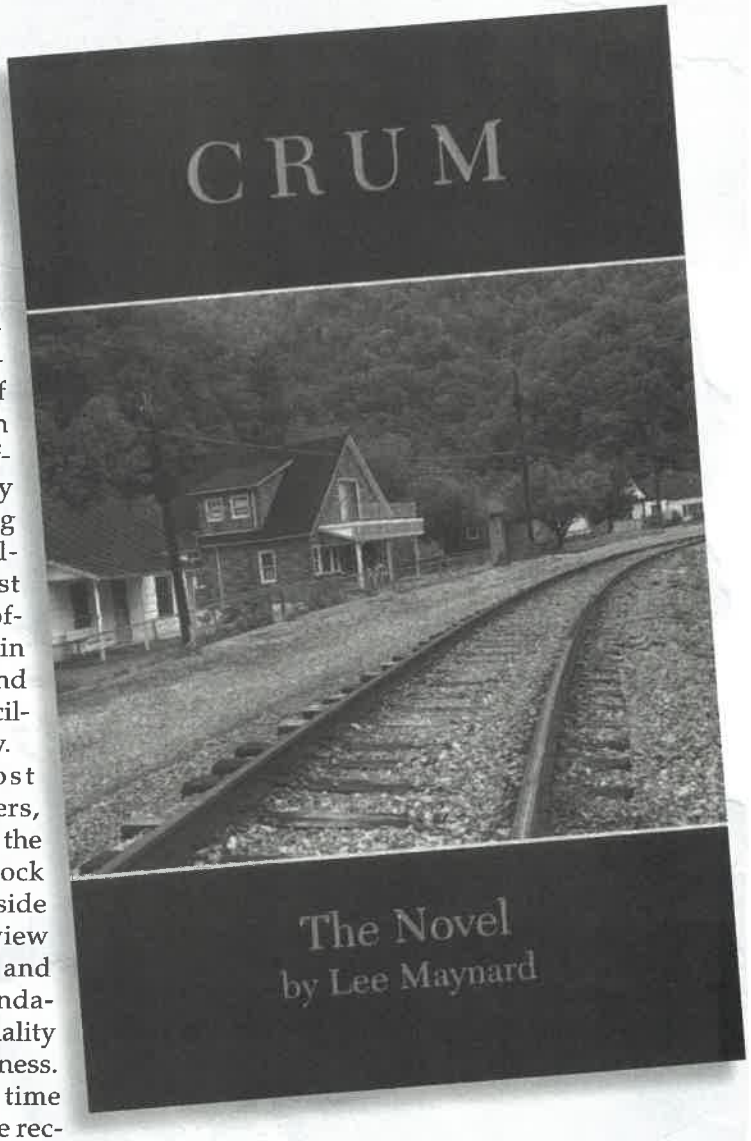
When Lee Maynard's coming-of-age novel *Crum* was published by Washington Square Press/Pocket Books in 1988, it was as a paperback original, a first book by a veteran magazine writer. It was also a deceptively modest beginning for what would turn out to be one of the more controversial chapters in West Virginia's literary history.

From the outset, the book inspired both local admirers and detractors. Maynard's humorous depiction of small-town life in rural West Virginia, as seen through the eyes of an adolescent boy determined to escape to the big city, found a polarized readership. Some raved about the book; others loathed it.

There's nothing particularly new in West Virginia writers using real places for fictional settings. Mary Lee Settle's Canona is principally based on Charleston and Keith Maillard's Raysburg on Wheeling. Maynard, however, did not create a fictional name for his novel's setting, but used instead the real name of his hometown in the book's title.

The novel's tone is another distinction from the works of these other authors. Biting and irreverent, Maynard's book has invited comparisons with *Catcher in the Rye* and *Portnoy's Complaint* for its ribald humor with teenage hijinks, longing, and glimpses of sentiment. For some readers, *Crum* is a bittersweet reminder of what it was like to be that age, irrespective of the location.

After the first edition went out of print, the novel became something of an underground hit, attracting a cult following. Antiquarian book collectors paid up to $100 per copy. In 2001, the newly created Vandalia Press, an imprint of West Virginia University Press, reissued *Crum*, for the first time in a hardcover edition, with a new afterword by the author and a critical introduction by novelist Meredith Sue Willis.



A new round of notoriety — and free publicity — was set off by the decision of Tamarack officials not to carry the book among Tamarack's collection of West Virginia titles offered for sale in its prestigious and popular retail facility near Beckley.

Unlike most other booksellers, Tamarack selects the books it will stock by hiring an outside book juror to review submitted titles and make recommendations based on quality and appropriateness. The juror at the time of *Crum's* reissue recommended not buying the novel, despite its West Virginia author and setting. When word of this reached local newspapers, a spate of articles followed, throwing more limelight on the book and its controversial reception. *Crum's* reputation now had the added cachet of being "banned in Beckley." One admirer was moved to defend the book on the floor of the House of Delegates.

In her foreword to the Vandalia Press edition of the novel, Meredith Sue Willis contends that, however much the book indulges in regional stereotypes, its ultimate effect is to undermine those images. Willis concludes that *Crum* is ironic, fictional, and "part tall tale," but, at the same time, also a "love letter from a native son to his home place."

The ultimate testimony to the enduring popularity of *Crum*, among at least some readers, might be seen in the subtitle to its second edition. Rather than following the original publisher's conventional lead, titling the book *Crum: A Novel*, Vandalia Press prominently displays the title as *Crum: The Novel*.

Text and photographs by
Carl E. Feather

Go Fish
Discovering Pleasure Valley

I stumbled upon Pleasure Valley while trying to find a shortcut from Belington to Parsons. Following my map, I turned east on Barbour County Road 9 and followed it to Kirt Community, where the road to Teter Lake heads off to the right and the narrow byway to Montrose goes to the left.

What the map does not show, however, is that before the road makes its encounter with Route 219, it narrows to a gravel path engulfed by a forested valley, sparsely inhabited by a handful of hardy year-around residents, vacation cottages, and the Pleasure Valley Trout Farm.

Visiting with the farm's owner, Paul F. Richards, Sr., I found that my experience of discovery paralleled his, some four decades earlier. Paul tells me that he and his wife, Kathleen, were visiting the area from Clarksburg one weekend when they headed across the valley from Route 219 to avoid road construction. Paul, an amateur spelunker, had been exploring limestone caves in the region when he came upon the back road. Gradually, the gravel road turned into a wide path through the grass as they got farther from the highway and deeper into the forest.

"We got to the top of a hill. It was hot, and we had the windows rolled down," Paul says. "We could hear this church music playing about halfway down."

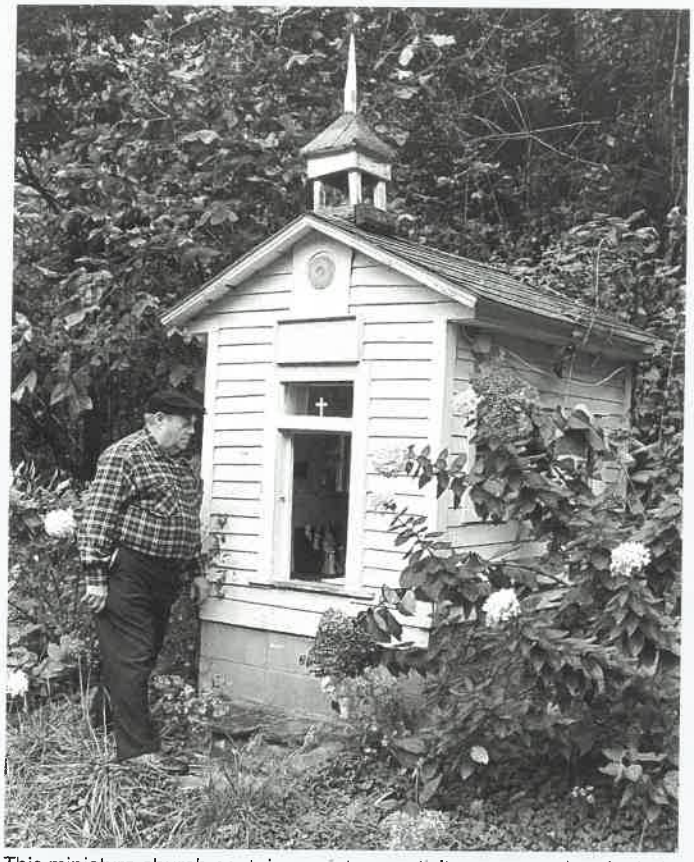
Reassured by the music that they were near civilization, the couple followed the sound to a mom-and-pop roadside attraction consisting of a very small snack shop, small picnic pavilion, fish pond stocked with goldfish, and a second pond stocked with trout.

Paul and Kathleen had discovered Pleasure Valley.

"We stopped and seen that they had pop and stuff," Paul says. "We got something cold to drink, and the old fellow who had it asked if we'd like to see the fish. So I bought a bag of food and fed them."

The old man, Aldine "Dine" Poling, asked what drew Paul and Kathleen to the valley. When he learned that Paul was a cave explorer, Dine told him

Paul Richards peers through the window of his bait shop and concession stand at Pleasure Valley Trout Farm in southern Barbour County. Paul has been the owner here since 1969.



This miniature church contains a vintage nativity scene, a church choir made of ceramic figures, salt and pepper shakers, and other figurines donated by visitors over the years. The loudspeaker, mounted just below the eave, no longer works, though it's what drew Paul Richards and his wife to Pleasure Valley nearly 40 years ago.

about a dandy limestone cave up the road.

"He told me you could feel this cold air coming out of the sink, and there was a room in there with a big flat rock. The men from around here would go up there and sit with their lanterns and play cards to get away from their women," Paul says.

Paul made a mental note of the cave and promised he'd explore it someday. Nearly two years passed before he returned, however, only to discover that Dine had died and his widow was looking for a buyer. Drawn to the peaceful setting, nearby caves, and retirement potential of the property, Paul and Kathleen purchased it in 1969 and have lived there ever since, including the 25 years Paul made the 100-mile round-trip commute to his job in Clarksburg.

Paul never got to enter the alleged subterranean escape from domestic life — road construction and blasting in the area evidently collapsed the ceiling of the fabled lair. He confirms there are still at least two caves in the valley — Pleasure Valley and Booger — whose entrances need a lot of work before they can be explored.

Retired from Lockheed Aircraft in 1994, Paul keeps busy tending to the business of fish. The pond on the north side of the road, one of the two original ponds, is stocked with large goldfish and koi. Trout are in the other original pond. Bass, trout, bluegill, and catfish are stocked in a newer, larger pond to the side of their home. In 2002, 487 trophy citation fish were caught in the ponds.

Over the years, through word of mouth and a few motorists seeking a shortcut, Paul has built up a faithful clientele of fishermen and their families.

"I got people coming in from 17 different states," he says. "I got regulars who make it a habit to come here."

The farm is open February 1 to November 30. Ice and bitter cold don't keep determined fishermen from trying their luck. "I've had as many as seven holes in the ice and 14 people on there at one time," Paul says. "I had five-to-six people lined up at one hole where the fish were hitting, taking their turn."

Vestiges of the farm's 1950's roadside-attraction days include three scaled-down structures: a white frame church with a steeple, an open display case, and a small shed. The buildings are repositories for all manner of artifacts: rocks containing fossils, rusty roller skates, a small stuffed crocodile, a stuffed bobcat, and old pots and pans. "He had them there for people to look at," Paul says of the previous owner, who had a penchant for collecting. "Over the years, people have abused the things."

Except for those items kept in the miniature church — its door opens to reveal a vintage nativity scene, ceramic-figure church choir, and pews and window sills occupied by salt-and-pepper shakers and figurines deposited there by Sunday afternoon visitors from decades past.

On the front of the church, just below the eaves, is the old loudspeaker that once reproduced the recorded church music that originally drew Paul and Kathleen to the valley. Paul says the Polings always played religious music over loudspeakers on Sunday afternoons, and he continued that tradition for a while.

"I had some people complain about the music," he says. "When the equipment went bad, I never bothered to replace it."

Paul says there used to be a plaque near the church that credited Aldine Poling as the founder of Pleasure Valley. His successor sees no reason to change the name: surrounded by fish, hills, and wildlife, this valley is indeed a pleasurable place for Paul Richards and others who have discovered it.

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.

Buffalo Creek Flood Exhibit

A new museum exhibit, titled "Remembering Buffalo Creek," is on display at the Museum in the Park of Chief Logan State Park through August. The 1972 Logan County flood killed 125 people and left thousands homeless when a Pittston coal-waste dam collapsed. Newspaper articles, Red Cross memorabilia, films, and a quilt made by survivors are among the items on display.

The museum is located four miles north of Logan on State Route 10. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, and 1 to 5 p.m. on Sundays. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

For information, call Adam Hodges, phone (304)792-7229, or visit www.wvculture.org/agency/press/loganbuffck.html.

Labor Hall of Honor

The West Virginia Labor History Association, founded in 1976, recently named three additions to its West Virginia Labor Hall of Honor.

Charles Franklin Keeney was a UMW leader in the Mine War of the 1920's and later served as president of the West Virginia Federation of Labor. [See "Son of the Struggle: A Visit with William C. Blizzard, Jr.," by C. Belmont "Chuck" Keeney; page 20.] Daniel V. Maroney of Cabin Creek served as international president of the Amalgamated Transit Workers in the 1970's. Bethel Purkey of Chapmanville, a leader in the 1989 Pittston strike, was also inducted. [See "'One Day More': Activist and Songwriter Elaine Purkey," by Paul Gartner; page 14.]

Bethel Purkey of Lincoln County, 2005 inductee into the West Virginia Labor Hall of Honor.

The Labor Hall of Honor commemorates West Virginians who have made significant contributions to the cause of working people. For more information, or to make nominations, contact association president Fred Barkey, 1599½ Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25311; phone (304)346-2030.

Mine Wars Drama

Terror of the Tug, an original theatrical production based on events in the 1920's Mine War in southern West Virginia, will be staged at the McArts Amphitheater in McDowell County. Show times are at 8 p.m. on July 21, 22, 28, 29, and August 4 and 5, with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, August 6, as part of Coal Heritage Weekend. The play is written and produced by Jean Battlo, a frequent contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

For tickets or more information, phone (304)435-3833 or 585-7107, or e-mail mcarts@frontiernet.net.

World War II Remembered

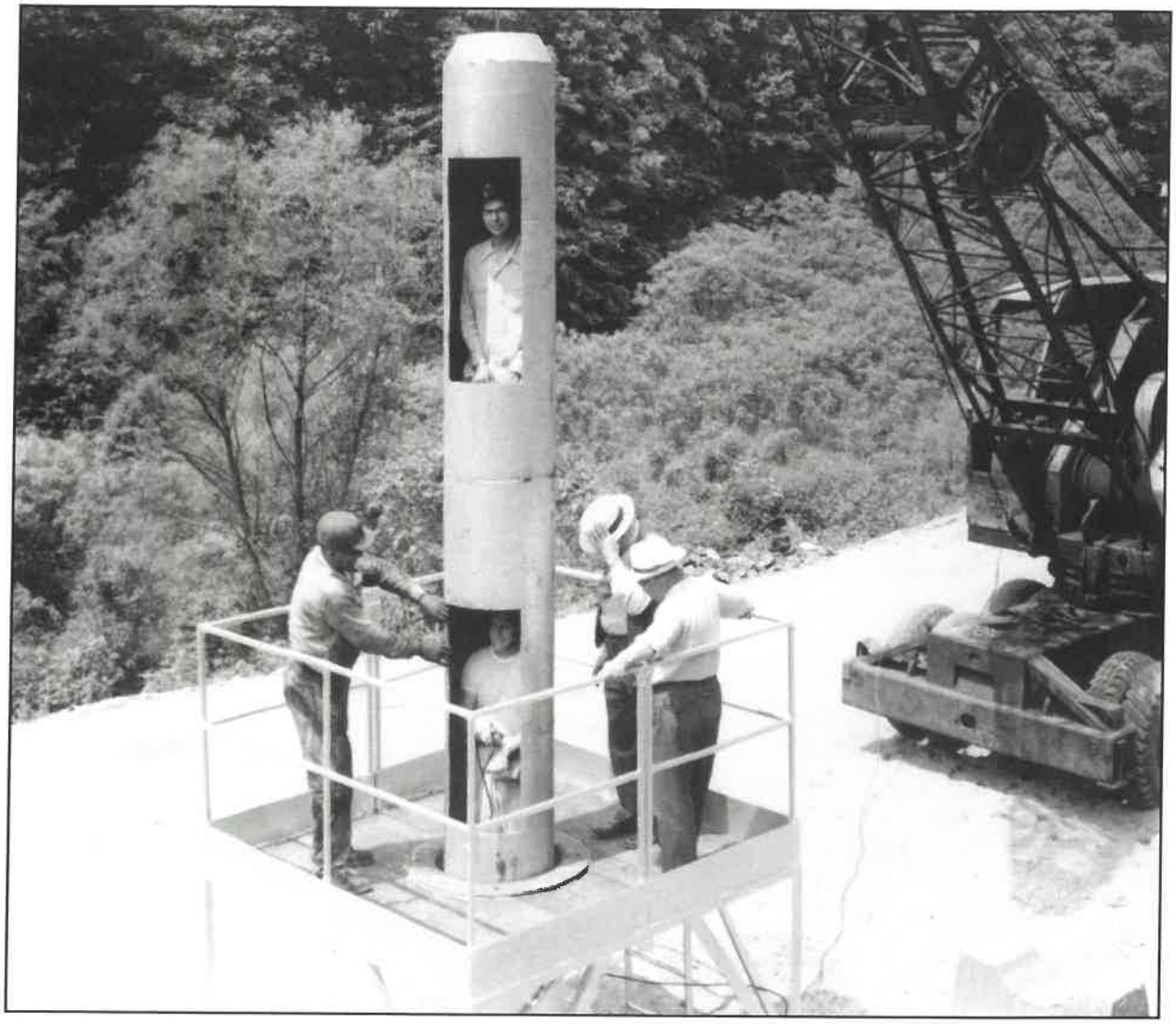
The Greatest Generation Exhibit and Gallery in Rowlesburg, Preston County, will host a Living History Weekend June 17-18, commemorating World War II. The weekend will include reenactments, displays of equipment, weapons, and vehicles. Veterans will be on hand to recall their experiences. Adult admission is $5, $3 for children 6-12.

On display at the gallery through November 30 is a World War II exhibit collected and assembled in the U.S. and Europe by curators Jef Verswyvel and Maggie DeWeirdt, Rowlesburg residents originally from Belgium. For more information, phone (304)454-2410 or visit www.thegreatestgenerationsociety.com.

"Produce for Victory," an exhibit of home-front war posters from 1941-45, will conclude a national tour with several stops in West Virginia. The exhibit is a project of the Smithsonian Institution and is sponsored in-state by the West Virginia Humanities Council. It includes 26 reproductions of vintage images designed to rally public support for the war effort. Tour dates include Arthurdale Homestead Museum, June 16-28; Parkersburg Art Center, August 4-September 15; Catholic Heritage Center in Wheeling, September

1940's war poster from Kroger Grocery and Baking Company, courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution and the West Virginia Humanities Council.

Photo Curiosity



How does it work? This experimental mine emergency escapeway at Coalwood, McDowell County, is pictured in June 1951. Homer Hickam, Sr., mine foreman and father of famous author Homer Hickam, Jr., rides in the lower chamber. In the upper portion is H.E. Manck. The photograph is courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

This cylindrical contraption is a new one on us, though it certainly seems like an ingenious design. Mine safety was an ongoing concern for the huge Carter and Olga coal companies [see "Historic Coalwood," by Stuart McGehee; Summer 2001], so it's not a big surprise that they experimented at Coalwood with the latest escape and rescue technology, such as this.

If you have ever ridden in a device like this one, or can shed any light on its operation, please let us know at the GOLDENSEAL office.

Goldenseal
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0300

PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal

62
0 94295 76645 1