Lou Maiuri • Reed Organs • Berkeley Springs • Ramp Egg

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Spring 2008 $4.95

Mountain Dancer Lou Maiuri

Folklife • Fairs • Festivals 2008

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

March 14-16 George Washington's Bathtub Celebration
Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)
March 14-15 9th Annual SistersFest
Sistersville (455-5907)
March 15 Irish Festival
Pipestem (466-1800)
March 15-16 Potomac Highlands Regional Maple Festival
New Creek (788-1834)
March 15-16 W.Va. Maple Syrup Festival
Pickens (924-5096)
March 28-30 Upper Potomac Spring Dulcimer Festival
Shepherdstown (263-2531)
April 4-6 Wildwater River Festival
Webster Springs (847-5449)
April 18-20 W.Va. Sustainable Fair
Elkins (269-7681)
April 19 70th Feast of the Ramson
Richwood (846-6790)
April 25-26 International Ramp Cook-Off & Festival
Elkins (636-2780)
April 25-27 Dogwood Arts & Crafts Festival
Huntington (696-5990)
April 25-27 Glass Fest
Weston (269-1030)
April 25-27 Spring Mountain Festival
Petersburg (257-2722)
April 26 Helvetia Ramp Dinner
Helvetia (924-6435)
April 26 Pickens Ramp Dinner
Pickens (924-5415)
May 1-3 Frontier Gathering
Kanawha State Forest (755-2990)
May 2-4 Engines & Wheels Festival
North Bend State Park (643-2931)
May 2-4 Scottish Heritage Festival & Celtic Gathering
Bridgeport (842-3457)
May 2-4 Spring Fest
Franklin (358-3884)
May 3 Cheat River Festival
Albright (329-3621)
May 3 Heritage Farm Spring Festival
Huntington (522-1244)
May 3-4 Steam & Gas Engine Show
Point Pleasant (675-5737)
May 5-11 New River Birding & Nature Festival
Oak Hill (1-800-927-0263)
May 7-10 Mullens Dogwood Festival
Mullens (732-8000)
May 9-11 14th Annual Bluegrass Festival
North Bend State Park (643-2931)
May 10-11 Mother's Day Founder's Festival
Webster (265-5549)
May 11 100th Observance of Mother's Day
Grafton (265-1589)
May 13-17 Bend Area Gospel Jubilee
Ripley (373-2286)
May 14-18 W.Va. Strawberry Festival
Buckhannon (472-9036)
May 16-17 Buffalo Heritage Days
Buffalo (937-2755)
May 17 Matewan Massacre Reenactment
Matewan (426-6512)
May 17-18 Elizabethtown Festival
Moundsville (845-2552)
May 20 Berkeley County Heritage Day
Martinsburg (267-4713)
May 22-24 Three Rivers Festival
Fairmont (363-2625)
May 22-26 Dandelion Festival
White Sulphur Springs (1-800-833-2068)
May 23-25 32nd Vandalia Gathering
State Capitol Complex/Charleston (558-0162)
May 23-26 Spirit of Grafton Celebration
Grafton (265-3950)
May 24-25 W.Va. Wine & Arts Festival
Martinsburg (263-0224)
May 26 Webster County Woodchopping Festival
Webster Springs (226-3888)
June 4-7 Calhoun County Wood Festival
Grantsville (354-6671)
June 6-8 Rail Trail Festival
Cairo (643-2931)
June 7 Mountain Music Festival
Caretta (875-3418)
June 7 Pattyfest 2008
Morgantown (864-0105)
June 12-15 Ronceverte River Festival
Ronceverte (647-5855)
June 13-15 Hatfield McCoy Reunion Days
Matewan (426-4522)
June 13-15 Spring Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)
June 19-22 West Virginia State Folk Festival
Glenville (462-5000)
June 20-22 Hometown Mountain Heritage Festival
Ansted (658-5065)
June 20-22 Mid-Ohio Valley Multi-Cultural Festival
Parkersburg (424-3457)
June 20-22 Old Central City Days Festival
West Huntington (528-5697)
June 20-24 W.Va. Coal Festival
Madison (369-9118)
June 21-22 W.Va. Spring Wine Festival
Crab Orchard (252-9750)
June 26-29 Music in the Mountains Bluegrass Festival
Summersville (872-3145)
June 26-29 St. Albans Riverfest
St. Albans (722-2865)
June 27-29 Little Levels Heritage Fair
Hillsboro (1-800-336-7009)
June 28 Lavender Fair
Alum Bridge (269-7681)
June 28-29 Living History Days
Point Pleasant (675-5737)

(continued on inside back cover)

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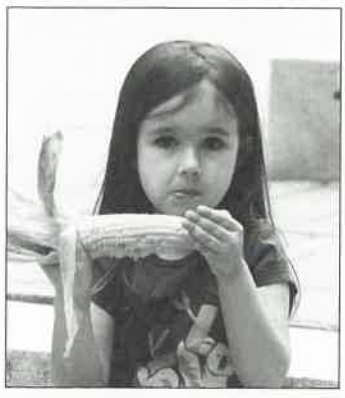

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On the cover: Dancer Lou Maiuri and apprentice Judy Van Gundy demonstrate some steps at a recent Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Author Doug Van Gundy fiddles in the background. Photograph by Michael Keller. Our story about Lou Maiuri begins on page 8.

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From the Editor

A gentleman just left my office, carrying a small plastic display case, a few bookmarks, and a handful of GOLDENSEAL subscription forms. He owns a hardware store in Wetzel County and thought he might be able to sell a few copies of our magazine alongside the nuts, bolts, hammers, and weedeaters offered at his store. He's going to start with just a couple of copies per issue then order more, depending on the customers.

I like this. GOLDENSEAL in a hardware store. Seems fitting to me. The down-to-earth people who can find their way around this gentleman's crescent wrenches and gardening supplies would find plenty to like within our pages. You see, we've had an uphill climb over the years getting our magazine into the hands of potential subscribers, so we appreciate this opportunity to place it next to a cash register at a Wetzel County feed-and-seed.

We are glad to make the same offer to anyone who wishes to sell GOLDENSEAL at his or her place of business. We have a nice supply of those handy plastic display stands, which we'll give you free of charge. And we offer the magazine at wholesale prices, with no minimum purchase and 100% return or exchange. It's a hard deal to beat, and we appreciate your help getting the magazine out there in the public eye. If you have a business and are interested, call Cornelia Alexander at (304)558-0220 ext. 153.

Circulation and cash flow are constant concerns around here, as they are at most small magazines these days. We are grateful for the generous grant we recently received from Secretary of Education and the Arts Kay Goodwin and Governor Joe Manchin, placing the magazine in every school, library, prison, and literacy group in the state. We are also grateful to this fellow from Wetzel County and other store owners who offer the magazine for sale at their places of business. We are especially grateful to thousands of our faithful readers, who cheerfully and promptly renew their subscriptions each year. We couldn't do it without you! Nevertheless, we need to face some financial realities.

Starting with this issue, the price of a GOLDENSEAL subscription is now $18 for one year, $34 for two years, and $48 for three years. That's an increase of $1 per year, or 25 cents per magazine. We think this is a fair and modest increase, considering the steady rise in postage, printing, and the other expenses we incur bringing GOLDENSEAL to you.

Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm. And be sure to look for GOLDENSEAL the next time you're in a hardware store.

John Lilly

Letters from Readers

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

Roy Harvey

December 4, 2007
Beckley, West Virginia
Editor:
Thank you for the beautiful tribute to my father. [See "'Daddy Loved Music': Recalling Guitarist Roy Harvey," by Matt Meacham; Winter 2007.] He was a giant in the eyes of a little girl, and remained a giant the 30 years I had with him. The article was beautifully written, as are all the articles in GOLDENSEAL. Again, thank you for one of the best memories of my lifetime.
Sincerely,
Louise Harvey Johnson

Guitarist Roy Harvey.

Chapel Cars

December 18, 2007
Via e-mail
Editor:
Imagine how pleased we were with the "Glory Bound" article. [See "Glory Bound: Chapel Cars Come to West Virginia," by Wilma Rugh Taylor; Winter 2007.] Those

Chapel car *Herald of Hope*, date unknown.

chapel cars made important religious contributions to the lives of early coalfield families. While researching my book, *Kelly's Creek Chronicles*, I found a June 22, 1917, diary reference to a "coach with a preacher and his wife at the powerhouse sidetrack." Seems Rev. Newton took his railway church from Cedar Grove up Kelly's Creek to a siding at Ward, and remained in the area for an extended stay. A community church for Ward was built in 1919. The *Herald of Hope*'s trip apparently was very successful.
William R. "Bill" Hudnall
Lt. Col., Retired

Bible Walk

Editor:
We received a copy of GOLDENSEAL Winter 2007 and were especially pleased to see such a nice story about the Bible Walk at the Good Counsel Friary in Morgantown. [See "West Virginia Back Roads: Bible Walk in Morgantown," by Carl E. Feather.] The writer expressed the Bible Walk's

Father Jude Mili. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

history and status so well and was most sensitive to Father Jude's health.

Thanks again for such a nice article and a great magazine.
Bob Carubia
Light of Life Community

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Please add the following name(s) to the GOLDENSEAL mailing list. I enclose $18 for each subscription.

Name _____

Address _____

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Georgia Wickline with granddaughter Barbara Wickline (Rasmussen).

Georgia Wickline

September 29, 2007
Lindside, West Virginia
Editor:
As a longtime resident of the Greenville area, I was quite pleased to see an article titled "Food and Rebellion in Monroe County" in GOLDENSEAL Fall 2007. [See "Food and Rebellion in Monroe County: Recalling Georgia Wickline," by Barbara Rasmussen.] I have known and respected the Virgil Wickline family most of my life and went to school with several of the children. I commend author Barbara Rasmussen for an admirable job on the family story, with the exception of the comments she made about Indian Creek Primitive Baptist Church, the church where her grandfather attended.

She says of this church, "It was hard-shell Baptist preaching, but there were no serpents, only an angry God." Frankly, I am at a loss as to why the author made such a derogatory statement respecting this venerable old church. Apparently the author is ignorant of both the history and present practice carried on at Indian Creek Church. The services begin with congregational singing, prayer is offered, followed by a gospel sermon in which the Scriptures are expounded. What in that implies an angry God?

Furthermore, her comments concerning the division among the membership that took place in 1955 were far from accurate. She might be interested in referring to the Winter 1983 issue of GOLDENSEAL, which has a lengthy article on a meeting at Indian Creek Primitive Baptist Church. [See "'No Place They'll Treat You Better': A Weekend at Indian Creek Primitive Baptist Church," by Yvonne Snyder Farley.]

I mean no disrespect to the author and again state that I enjoyed the article very much, aside from the aforementioned exceptions. Several members of Indian Creek church have asked me to make these corrections, and, as a former pastor of the church, I felt compelled to do so.
Respectfully,
Elder Norvel P. Mann

Author Barbara Rasmussen sends this response:

My essay shared childhood memories, most of them nearly 50 years old. However misguided my grandfather might have been in explaining the situation in his church to me at age 10, my memory of his anguish is vivid. It is his anguish, not the actualities, that has stayed with me and which I shared in my writing. I thank Elder Mann for reading my piece and for his nice compliments. His was one of nearly 30 kind notes I received after the piece appeared in GOLDENSEAL.
—Barbara Rasmussen

Stanley Brothers Response

Our "Photo Curiosity" in the Winter 2007 issue drew plenty of responses from our knowledgeable readers. As you might recall, the photograph showed the famous Stanley Brothers bluegrass band, performing with some unidentified musicians in Huntington over WSAZ-TV in 1950. We are pleased that we can now put a name with each of the individuals in that picture.

Left to right: camera operator George Woody, mandolinist Darrell "Pee Wee" Lambert, fiddler Lester "Les" Woodie, banjo player Ralph Stanley, and guitarist Carter Stanley. Photograph taken 1950 in Huntington

The cameraman was longtime WSAZ-TV camera operator and engineer George Woody. Born in 1927, George reportedly worked for WSAZ-TV from 1949 until the mid-1960's. He went on to managerial positions at other TV stations, most recently at WDIO-TV in Duluth, Minnesota, where he still lives and works.

Mandolin player Darrell "Pee Wee" Lambert was born in Thacker, Mingo County, in 1923. An original member of the Stanley Brothers band, he joined with Carter Stanley and Roy Sykes as members of the Blue Ridge Mountain Boys in 1946, joined later that year by Carter's younger brother, Ralph. The band then became known as the Clinch Mountain Boys. Pee Wee stayed with the Stanley Brothers until 1950. He lived in Ashland, Kentucky, until 1957, when he and his wife, Hazel, moved to Columbus, Ohio. Pee Wee worked in civil engineering and played music part-time until his death in 1965.

Fiddler Lester "Les" Woodie joined the Stanley Brothers' band in 1949. Born in Valdese, North Carolina, Les was introduced to the Stanleys by childhood friend and guitar legend George Shuffler. Les took part in some of the Stanley Brothers' most influential sessions for Columbia Records, fiddling on such seminal recordings as "Man of Constant Sorrow" and "Little Maggie" before joining the Air Force in 1951. Les currently lives in Altavista, Virginia, where he has been with WKDE radio for the past 46 years, currently serving as general manager.

Carter Stanley, born in Dickenson County, Virginia, in 1925, left an indelible mark with his fine singing, songwriting, and guitar playing before his death in 1966. Multiple Grammy Award-winning tenor singer and banjo player Ralph Stanley, born in 1927, continues to record, perform, and be a standard-bearer for traditional Appalachian music around the world.

Together, these gentleman served as pioneer broadcasters of early country music television in West Virginia. Special thanks to Hazel Lambert, Pete Kuykendall, Les Woody, Donna May, Gary Reid, George Parnicza, and others for their time, help, and generosity. —ed.

Current Programs Events • Publications

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

Mother's Day Centennial

Sunday, May 11, 2008, will be the 100th anniversary of the first celebration of Mother's Day. Anna Jarvis organized that first observance on May 10, 1908, at Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton. That location, built in 1873 at 11 East Main Street, is now the International Mother's Day Shrine.

There are numerous events leading up to the centennial observance. There will be a traditional Victorian-era tea at the Grafton shrine on Saturday, May 3, from noon to 4:00 p.m. Programs begin at 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 10, at the Anna Jarvis Birthplace Museum in nearby Webster, and will include music, speeches, and a presentation for Mother of the Year.

For more information on the Mother's Day service in Grafton, phone (304)265-0019, or visit on the Web at www.mothersday-shrine.com. For more information on the Anna Jarvis Birthplace Museum events, phone (304)265-5549.

Anna Jarvis. Courtesy Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.

Monongah Centennial

A 100th anniversary commemoration of the Monongah mine explosion was held in downtown Monongah, Marion County, on December 6, 2007. [See "Monongah Centennial"; page 72.] Bishop Michael Bransfield blessed a bell donated from the Molise region of Italy, home to 87 of the fatalities. At 10:30 a.m., the approximate time of the explosion, there was a moment of silence, followed by a noon Mass and a funeral procession to the cemetery, where a granite marker donated by the Italian government was dedicated.

Coal Miners Memorial

A Coal Miners Memorial in Quinwood, Greenbrier County, was dedicated on June 30. Three granite slabs, inscribed with the names of more than 1,800 Appalachian coal miners, were installed. Plans to expand the memorial and to eventually establish an adjoining museum are in the works.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Bye

Coleman C. Hatfield, colorful descendant of the legendary Hatfield clan, passed away on January 14 in Charleston. Born in Logan in 1926, Coleman was an optometrist by trade and served as president of the West Virginia Optometric Association. He was best known to GOLDENSEAL readers for his insight into Hatfield family history, especially concerning the Hatfield-McCoy feud. Coleman was the great-grandson of patriarch "Devil Anse" Hatfield and, in 2003, coauthored a book about him, titled *The Tale of the Devil: The Biography of Devil Anse Hatfield*. Coleman was also interviewed on at least two occasions by author Bob Spence for related articles in GOLDENSEAL. These included "Hatfield History: Reconsidering the Famous Feud"; Fall 1995, and "After the Feud: Livicey Hatfield's Photo Album"; Fall 1998. He was 81.

Dr. Coleman C. Hatfield. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Coal Miners Memorial in Quinwood, Greenbrier County. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

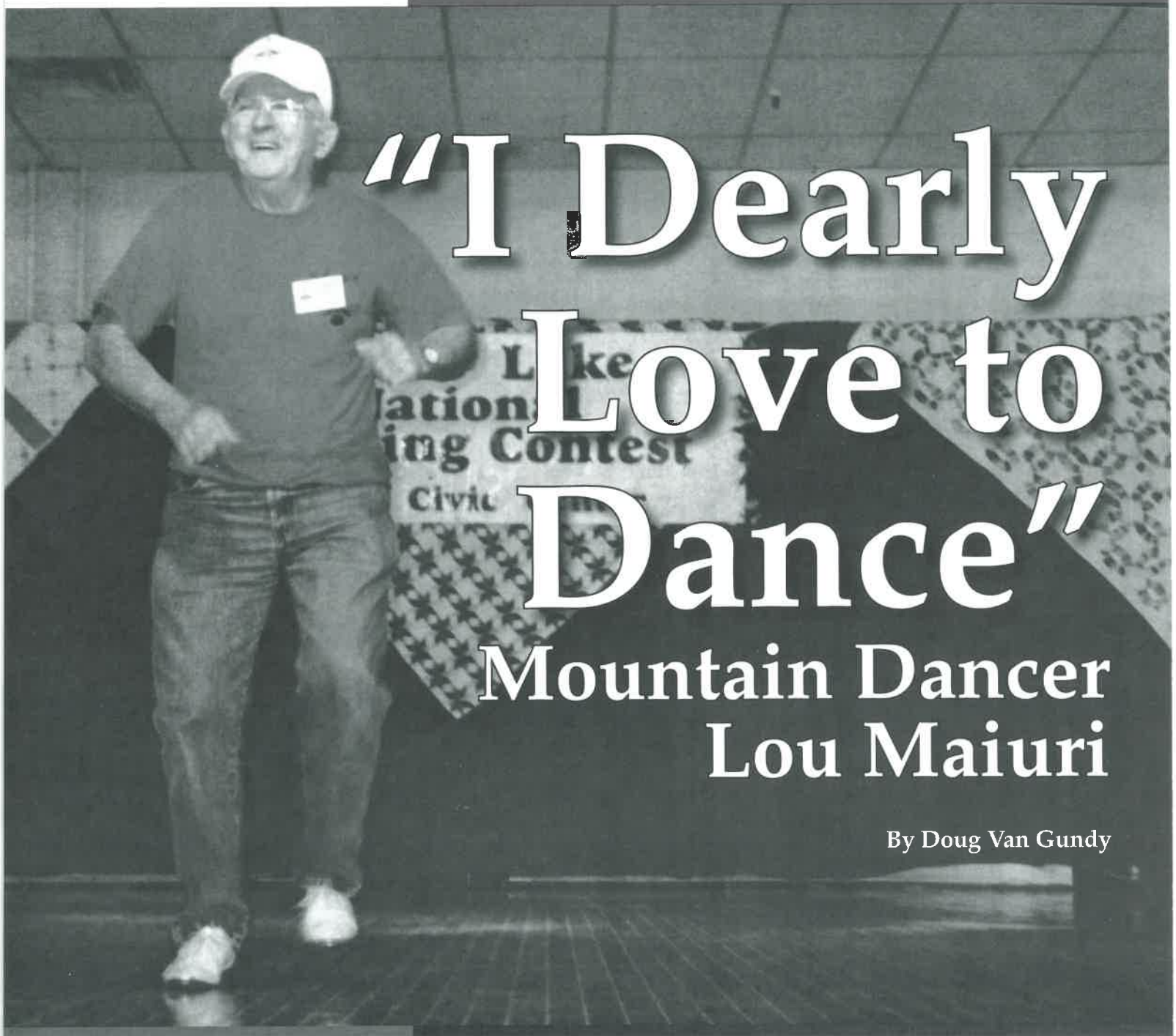
Donations to complete the projects may be sent to the Coal Miners Memorial, P.O. Box 25, Quinwood, WV 25981. For more information, phone Ed or Gaye Zopp at (304)438-8924.

Cass Barber

Lyle E. "Lefty" Meeks, 88, began cutting hair in Cass in 1948. [See "Lefty the Barber: Still Clipping at Cass," by Louise Burner Flegel; Fall 1993.] On Saturday, May 17, Lefty's Barbershop will commemorate his 60th anniversary of doing business in Cass by offering customers haircuts at his original 50¢ price.

The barbershop is located just up the street from the Cass Depot, and the anniversary event is part of the Cass Railfan Weekend, May 16-17. For more information, e-mail Mindy Bond at pccvistaleader@gmail.com, or phone Cass Scenic Railroad State Park at (304)456-4300.

Barber Lefty Meeks of Cass. Photograph 1993 by Doug Chadwick.



"I Dearly Love to Dance"

Mountain Dancer Lou Maiuri

By Doug Van Gundy

Lou Maiuri is a nationally respected traditional dancer. Here, he demonstrates some of his fine Appalachian flatfooting for an audience in Oklahoma in 1998.

If you have ever attended a traditional square dance in West Virginia, the odds are pretty good that you have seen Lou Maiuri in action. And if you have ever danced to Lou's calling, seen how he welcomes beginners and experts alike onto the floor, watched him line out the dance so clearly and easily, and heard him turn to the waiting band and ask for "a little traveling music," then you could be forgiven for thinking that this man was born with leather-soled shoes on his feet and a microphone in his hand. But you'd be wrong.

Now in his 78th year, Lou Maiuri [pronounced "My-*yoo*-ree"] of Summersville has been calling square dances professionally for a little more than a quarter century. He turned a lifelong love of all kinds of dancing into a second career, one that has taken him all over the Mountain State, as well as to Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky, and regularly as far afield as Florida and Oklahoma. According to Lou, "About everything I do revolves around dancing. I don't say it's my whole life right now, but it practically is. Everything that I do, in one way or another, directly or indirectly involves dancing."

If Lou's contributions to dance in West Virginia came solely through his dance calling, they would be major. But Lou is also a world-class flatfoot dancer, keeping the old styles of mountain step dancing alive through teaching, performing, and competing. He has been involved in the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop for years, both as an instructor and a judge. [See "'Clifftop': Appalachian String Band Music Festival," by Danny Williams; Summer 1999.] He has a self-produced instructional DVD and video called, "Let's Flatfoot!" and last year, while wintering in Florida, he took a long enough break from bass fishing to win the Florida State Clogging Championship, beating out dancers one-third his age.

According to Lou, "Flatfoot dancing is sometimes called backstep around here, and I've heard it referred to as sure-footing, backstepping, or flatfoot. Whatever you want to call it, it's a step dance. It was brought here by our immigrants, and it's been here since our earliest settlers came. Most people who have studied the history of the dance will tell you that it came from our English ancestry, and part of that is true. But the English weren't the only ones who came to this country and brought a step dance. The Irish, the Scots, the Germans, even the African Americans, they came here and they brought a step dance you could call clogging or backstepping. The Italians brought a step dance, too."

Lou Maiuri's parents were among those Italian immigrants. They raised Lou in Montgomery, Fayette County, where he was born in 1928.

"My dad settled in Pocahontas County back in [about] 1910," Lou says. "He came to this country to work on the Greenbrier, Cheat & Elk [Railroad] at Spruce. He had a sister that had already come and was living there." While he eventually moved to Montgomery to raise his family, Giosafitti "Joe" Maiuri maintained many friendships in Pocahontas County, regularly going back to the Marlinton area to deer hunt, fish, or

"Everything that I do, in one way or another, directly or indirectly involves dancing," Lou says. This is true, and he has the mailbox to prove it. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Lou's father, Giosafitti "Joe" Maiuri, was born in Cippano, Italy, in 1895. He came to West Virginia when he was 16, to work on the railroad in Pocahontas County. He is shown here, at left, with an Italian work crew at Cass in 1915.

visit with old friends, often taking Lou along for company.

"[My father] was born in 1895 in Cippano, Italy. When he came to this country, he was 16 years old, and he couldn't speak a word of English. Of course, he got a private tutor, and right away he started to learn. He went to school until all of us kids were born, and I guess until we were pretty-well grown. I remember when he graduated from New River State College [now West Virginia Tech], he finally got a college degree in English and economics."

Learning and culture were highly valued in the Maiuri household. Lou became keenly interested in music when he was an adolescent, string music in particular.

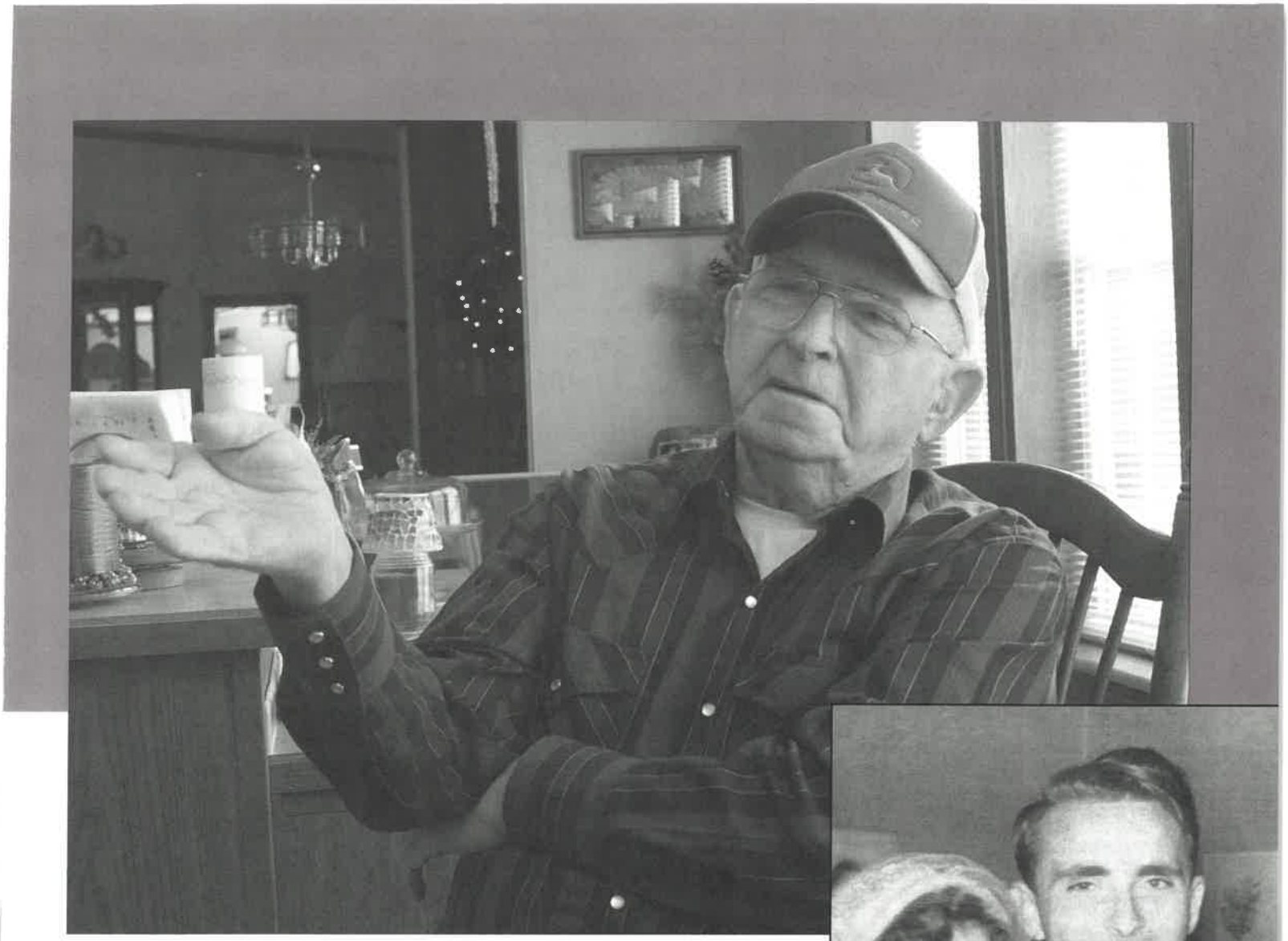
"I remember, at the time, my brother and my sister that were older than me were taking piano lessons," he recalls. "It was important to my dad. It was good for their cultural training and their social training, so they took piano lessons. I had a finger cut off here [at the first joint], and you know, I was kind of handicapped. I always wanted to play the guitar, but, at the time, nobody around was giving guitar lessons, and that's what I wanted to learn, a stringed instrument. Of course, this here [holds up finger] kind of hampered me from playing a guitar or playing a piano, so I just kind of lost interest in it. But I didn't lose interest in the music, 'cause I still liked to hear it and I still liked being around that type of music."

Lou Maiuri was born in Montgomery, Fayette County, in 1928. He is shown here at six years of age.

He soon turned his energies to the dance floor.

"I started to dance in my early teen years, in high school," Lou says. "The modern dance then was the jitterbug, so, for a while, I kind of backed off from the string music, even though I still liked it and still listened to it. But I got into the modern type of dance. I'd guess my sister and I probably taught half of the kids in our school to jitterbug. I could always work with the boys, because I always learned both parts. I could dance the girl's part, and I could dance the boy's part. The boys went backwards, you see, and I could teach them. I dearly love to dance."

After high school, Lou took a job with the telephone company in Glasgow, Kanawha County. It was here that he met his wife, Jessie. Soon after they were married in 1950, Lou became introduced to the older style of flatfoot dancing on one of his regular trips to Pocahontas County with his



Lou retired from the telephone company in 1989 after 42 years of service. Here, he relaxes at his home in rural Nicholas County, near Summersville. Photograph by Michael Keller.

father. The trip came about because of a broken leg — not his own, but that of his younger brother.

"My brother got his leg broke playing football, and he was in the hospital at Montgomery," Lou recalls. "My dad went to work at 3:00 in the afternoon on the railroad. But everyday before he went to work, he'd go down and visit my brother. He was in the hospital a week or 10 days. Back then, they'd keep you forever with a broken leg. There was a gentleman in the same room with my brother by the name of Wayne Jackson. And Dad, he friendlied up with him, and he'd visit with him at the same time. Wayne and [my dad] got to talking, and they found out that they had a lot of mutual friends up in Pocahontas County. At the time, Wayne was working for John Hunter McClintic, [who] was a lawyer in Charleston that owned the McClintic farm there on Swago Creek at Buckeye.

"So, anyway, they got out of the hospital, and Wayne went on home. One Sunday, my Dad came by and picked me up and said they were going to Marlinton and wanted me to ride along. So I rode up to Marlinton. I think I might have been 20 years old then. I was already interested in the banjo and the mountain-style dancing and all that. I went up there, and I met [Wayne]. He is the same age as I am. We struck up a friendship that lasted [until] today. I'm talking over 50 years I've been friends with him. That was [also] the beginning of my love for two things: old-style flatfoot dancing and sugar-cured country ham. Of course, that sugar-cured country ham is a whole story on its own.

Working atop a telephone pole in Glasgow, Kanawha County, Lou spotted his wife-to-be as she walked by. Lou and Jessie are shown here on their wedding day in 1950.

"It was through [Wayne] that I got acquainted with the Carpenters. Dan [Carpenter] lived back on the head of Williams River. The McClintics had land back there, and I'd go back there with [Wayne]. That's how I met Dan Carpenter, and that's how I met Hamp Carpenter. Dan played the banjo and danced, and there was an old fellow named Jess Moore that lived there. Jess played the fiddle. That was the first time I'd ever heard the 'Black Mountain Rag.' I always thought that it was written about Black Mountain, back there on the head of Williams River. Hamp was [Dan's] brother, and Hamp played the fiddle. That was the first place that I had an opportunity to watch Dan, to watch him dance and pick the clawhammer banjo. Then I had an opportunity to see Hamp dance. He was a really good dancer and a really good fiddler. I was around some square dances where Hamp was playing, and [they danced] the old-time flatfoot dancing that I do today. Of course, they did their own steps, you know, just what felt good to 'em, but that was where I really got interested in the old style of dance. After that, it stuck with me ever since."

"They did their own steps, you know, just what felt good to 'em, but that was where I really got interested in the old style of dance."

During subsequent trips to Pocahontas County, Lou attended many of the legendary dances at the Dunmore Community Center, and got to hear that particular brand of calling.

"James [Carpenter] was a good square dance caller, and Bob Dean was a good square dance caller," he recalls. "Those two stick in my mind, because they'd call in time with the music. Now I know that most people don't need a whole lot of cueing, but if you're not dancing and just listening, it makes for better listening, and really it makes for better dancing, if you call in time to the music. My problem that I'd always have if I was dancing to someone who didn't call in time with the music, and he'd be in one time and the band would be in another, I didn't know whether to

Lou was exposed to old-time mountain dancing as a young man, during numberous visits to Pocahontas County. Here, Lou leads a group in a traditional circle dance at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins. Photograph courtesy of the Augusta Heritage Center.

Lou and Jessie settled in Glasgow, where they lived until 2000. They are shown here with daughters Mary (standing) and Linda in 1957.

dance to his cadence or the band's cadence. The style of calling that I remember up there, James Carpenter and Bob Dean, they would call in time with the music.

"At those square dances, the community dances, they played the old-time tunes, the old vintage tunes. You'd hear 'Turkey In the Straw,' and you'd hear 'Cripple Creek,' and the 'Black Mountain Rag,' and the 'Soldier's Joy.' Those were old standby square dance tunes. Then you'd hear lots of tunes that were in 2/4 time that didn't have any overriding melody, 'cause a lot of your old-time callers, they didn't sing-song any of their calls. They just told the dancers what to do."

While Lou became interested in the old style of dance during those trips to Pocahontas County, raising a family and working full time for the telephone company took precedence over his dancing. After a number of years, Lou began taking his young children to Jeff Driggs of St. Albans for clogging lessons. Lou and Jeff struck up a friendship over their mutual love of dancing.

"Jeff and I, we talked a whole lot about square dance calling and figures and this and that," Lou says. "Jeff helped me, mostly with timing and calling in the phrase of the music and things of that nature. If there is any one person in my life that impacted on my teaching ability and my calling ability, it would have been Jeff Driggs.

"Jeff is probably the best dance choreographer in the country right now, bar none. I'm talking about clogging choreography. Probably one of the best teachers, too. I think he's a genius, myself, when it comes to clogging."

Now, Lou spends the bulk of his time passing along what he has learned from Jeff Driggs, Bob Dean, and James Carpenter. For the past dozen or so years, Lou has been on

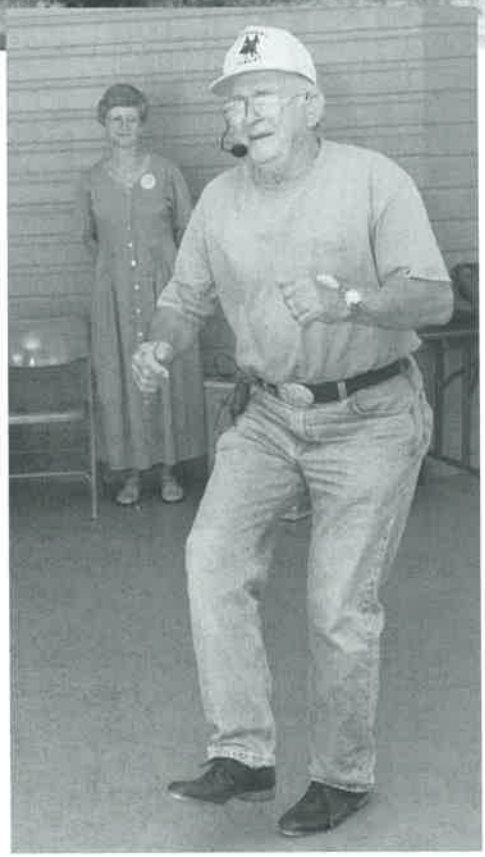
Lou dances with granddaughter Jennifer Jeffries at Pipestem in 1987.

The Appalachian Country Cloggers, Lou's dance team since 1990, are pictured here at his home in 2005. They are, from the left, Eugene Radcliff, Jean Woods, Valerie Facemire, Sue Samples, Ellen Radcliff, Carol Edwards, and Joe Cooper. Lou is kneeling in front.

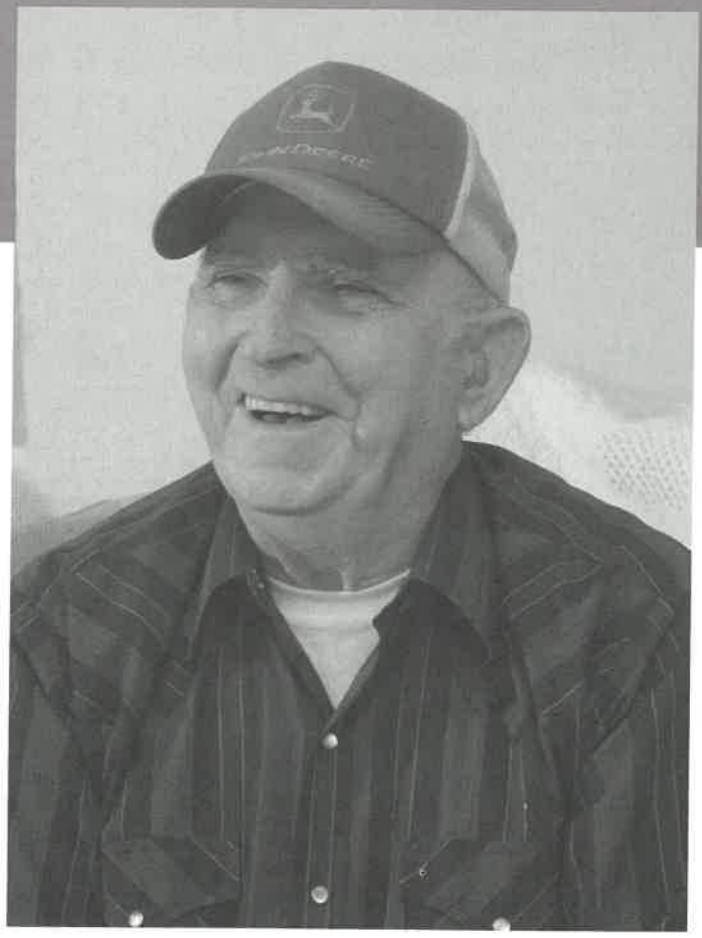
staff at the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College during their summer workshops. One of the most rewarding and far-reaching results of Lou's involvement with Augusta is his having been chosen to take on a pair of apprentices to learn his particular style of dance calling. [See "Passing It On: West Virginia Folks Arts Apprenticeship Program," by Gerald Milnes; Winter 2000.]

"That [Augusta apprenticeship] was the first formal apprenticeship I have ever done," Lou says. "It came about through my work at Augusta. I had some exposure up there, and people had an opportunity to hear me call and observe my calling techniques. I do the old style, and they liked what they heard. [The apprentices] were the ones that initiated the thing. They were Dave Shombert and Judy Van Gundy [both of Elkins].

"The apprenticeship was great, absolutely great. We did it in 12 lessons. When [Dave and Judy] came for the program, they always brought a couple or three people with them, and I had a couple couples from around here. My wife and I, we would join in, too, so we would actually have a little square dance where we could have some hands-on. It wasn't just sitting down and talking. It was actually some hands-on stuff. And then a little bit later on, I had the opportunity to call a couple of dances, and they came and each of them called some figures and did very well. We met once every two weeks for six months. Every time, we had at least one square where we could have some hands-on work. [That] eliminates a lot of that stage fright. You can make tapes, and you can write figures down, [but] until you get into an actual situation where you are calling and working with a group, then it's hard for you to learn.



A longtime instructor at Davis & Elkins College's Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, Lou demonstrates a few steps while apprentice Judy Van Gundy looks on. Photograph courtesy of the Augusta Heritage Center.



Jessie and Lou Maiuri have been married 57 years. They are pictured here at their home in Nicholas County. Photographs by Michael Keller.

"I used to go along years ago, and I still do occasionally, I'll put a tape in the tape player, and, as I'm driving, I'll call figures. If there's a certain figure that I want to work on or some patter I want to create for a certain figure, that's where I'll work on it. You can learn a certain amount that way, but it's still not like having hands-on, and having a group that you can call to — having the experience of watching them, and watching the ones that are getting behind, and the ones that are up with the figure, and making all of those little adjustments. That's something you can't learn [from a tape]."

Lou still averages two or three dances a month throughout the year, and more during the summer months. He will drive for hours to call or attend a dance in Morgantown; Athens, Ohio; or Abingdon, Virginia. While he has no illusions that square dancing will replace video games and the Internet as the pastime of choice for West Virginia's youth, he is optimistic about the future of dance.

"I like to see young people at dances," he says. "There's so much peer pressure now and so much competing for these kids' time and their energy that a lot of them just don't think it's cool to get involved in old-time dancing. Of course, after they get there, they have fun.

"I think that 75 years ago, it was the mainstay of entertainment. Everybody had square dances, and there were square dances every week. Even 50 years ago, you could find them every week, but you had to look for them. In this day and time, you can [still] find a square dance every week, somewhere. You might not have anything right in your community, but you can always find a dance. You might have to drive a little bit.

"Something that's helping now with the square dancing is [that] we have more musicians now. People are taking an interest in the old-time music. You can see that up at Augusta. People are coming together from all over the world, from all professions, and you have more musicians that are available to play now."

As long as he is able, and as long as there are dancers to dance, Lou Maiuri will be there on the hardwood, working his patter, and moving smiling people around the floor with the sound of his voice. All he needs is a little traveling music.

DOUG VAN GUNDY of Elkins is a poet and old-time musician. He has a master's degree in poetry from Goddard College. Doug teaches composition and literature at the Gaston Caperton Center of Fairmont State University and has published in *Fretboard Journal* and *The Charleston Gazette*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Bear Fork Trading Post in Calhoun County on a recent Saturday night.

Bear Fork Trading Post

Live Music in Calhoun County

By Kim Johnson

Photographs by Michael Keller

Co-owner Melvin Cottrell, shown here with a banjo, descends from a long line of old-time musicians.

Melvin and Patty Cottrell of Calhoun County have fulfilled a longtime dream of having a comfortable place where folks can enjoy an evening of music and camaraderie in an alcohol-free, family atmosphere. In 2002, they bought the Trapper's Inn, an old beer joint located on U.S. Route 33/119, near the Calhoun/Gilmer county line. The building had been unused for several years and needed major renovations.

Originally, it had operated as a trading post, where hunting and trapping supplies were bought and sold, as well as furs and ginseng. Located at the edge of the Bear Fork forest in Calhoun County, the old trading post did a booming business. The 8,800-acre tract known as Bear Fork is currently owned by Coastal Lumber Company. In the early 1900's, it was owned by the Bennett family, who sold the property to Interstate Cooperage Company. About 1910, a major timbering operation sprang up on Bear Fork, and a narrow-gauge railroad was built into the backwoods to transport the trees down to the stave yard at Gassaway. The railroad hauled freight and passengers, making it easier for people to travel from Bear Fork to the towns of Gassaway, Rosedale, and Frametown, then on down Elk River to Charleston.

From 1910 until about 1918, during the building of the railroad and while the timbering operation was going on, tent camps housing the workers were located throughout the Bear Fork area. Hundreds of men who worked on the railroad, in the lumber camps, and in the sawmills occupied these tent camps. Musicians were very popular in these camps, providing a diversion from the hard and dangerous work that the men endured. John Cottrell, Melvin's grandfather, was among the most popular fiddlers.

One of the songs that was widely sung in the tent camps at this time was called "Logging on Bear Fork." Some of the words are:

"John Cottrell being willing,
His bow arm being strong;
He played the sets on old Bear Fork,
About four hours long."
[traditional, courtesy of Gerald Milnes]

John Cottrell, son of Solomon and Sarah [Simmons] Cottrell, was born in Calhoun County in 1870. He married Malinda Cogar in 1899, and they made a home on Wildcat, which was

Emcee Rick Falls addresses the crowd at Bear Fork. The family-oriented music hall previously served as a beer joint and a wilderness trading post. Melvin and Patty Cottrell have owned it since 2003.

a hollow off Trace Fork of Bear Fork. John was a well-known fiddler and always in great demand for square dances and community gatherings throughout the Calhoun/Gilmer/Braxton area. There was always a lot of music being played in John and Malinda's household. Their children Noah and Phoebe played banjo and fiddle, while their other daughters Sarah, Stella, and Ada were known for their ballad singing.

Ada Cottrell married Gallory McCumbers in 1917. Their daughter Linda McCumbers remembers her mother singing to her as a small child. Linda still sings songs today that she learned from her mother and aunts, ballads such as "Pretty Polly," "Knoxville Girl," and the "House Carpenter."

Linda's husband, Lester McCumbers, gives credit to John Cottrell for many of the fiddle tunes he plays, including "Yew Piney Mountain" and "Mother Flanagan." John Cottrell often came to visit his granddaughter Linda, and would sometimes stay with Linda and Lester for days at a time. "John Cottrell had a way of tapping both of his feet while playing the fiddle," Lester says. "He kept a steady rhythm with his feet, and all by himself he was as good as a whole band." Lester still has John Cottrell's fiddle, and he regularly plays it during his appearances at Bear Fork, as well as at music events all over West Virginia, including the Vandalia Gathering, the West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville, and the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop. [See "'Satisfaction in My Heart': Lester and Linda McCumbers of Calhoun County," by Kim Johnson; Spring 2004.]

John and Malinda Cottrell both passed away in 1956 and are buried at the Ebenezer Church cemetery on Left Hand, near Orma.

Their son Noah, born in 1902, could play the fiddle and sing. He was particularly known for his old-time banjo playing. Sometimes Noah included some trick banjo playing in his tunes for comic effect, such as playing the banjo behind his head or dangling the banjo like a clock pendulum in the middle of a tune. He is remembered for his tunes "Johnny Booger," "Fox Chase," and "Old Rattler." Noah married Frona Jones in 1933. They lived on Crummies Creek and raised a family of 16 children. Frona died in 1969, and Noah died in 1991.

Fiddler John Cotrell, left, was Melvin's grandfather. He is pictured here with daughter Phoebe (later Phoebe Parsons) and wife, Malinda, in 1923. Photographer unknown.

Noah Cottrell's sister Phoebe [Cottrell] Parsons was born in 1908, and was a renowned performer in her own right, appearing at various fairs and festivals around West Virginia. She was a prize-winning banjo player, winning the banjo contest at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville many times. Phoebe is also remembered for her ballad singing, flatfoot dancing, storytelling, and her sense of humor. In 1976, she represented West Virginia at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C. Phoebe was presented with the Vandalia Award in 1987, recognizing her lifelong contributions to West Virginia

Phoebe Parsons, Melvin's aunt, displays her first-place banjo ribbon, won at the West Viriginia State Folk Festival at Glenville in 1976. From the left are Willis McCumbers, Lester McCumbers, Linda McCumbers, Phoebe, Harvey Sampson, and Noah Cottrell (Melvin's father). Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

traditional music and heritage. She passed away in 2001 and is buried in the Lambert Cemetery on Crummies Creek, beside her husband, Perry Parsons.

Phoebe and Perry's sons are also musicians: Roscoe plays fiddle, and Eugene is a banjo player.

Noah's son Melvin Cottrell and Melvin's wife, Patty, have always loved bluegrass, country, and gospel music. They have been supporters of traditional music in the Calhoun County area for many years. Preserving the old-time music and passing it down to future generations is important for Melvin and Patty. They have encouraged their grandsons Cameron and Cody to learn guitar and other instruments.

Melvin is a banjo player himself, and several of his brothers and sisters play music, also. His sister May [Falls] Bugden plays the guitar and sings traditional songs, as well as writing and performing her original compositions. She also writes poetry and is a weekly performer at the Trading Post.

"I get a lot of enjoyment from both hearing other people perform and also playing music myself. Music satisfies my soul."

May's son Rick Falls plays several instruments and also sings. Rick is a fifth-generation musician, and he is very passionate about passing the musical traditions along to younger generations. He has taught guitar to his sons Jeremy, Jason, and Josh. "Music has brought a lot of happiness to my life," Rick says. "I get a lot of enjoyment from both hearing other people perform and also playing music myself. Music satisfies my soul."

In addition to the guitar, Rick plays banjo, mandolin, bass, and fiddle. He is a regular performer at the Trading Post. Rick started teaching guitar classes at the Trading Post in 2004 and currently has about 18 students.

People in the community are very supportive of Melvin and Patty and their goal of having a local place

Live music at the Bear Fork, featuring (from the left) Billy McCumbers, Tim McCumbers, Lester McCumbers, and author Kim Johnson.

where people can get together to hear and play music. Some people have donated instruments for the use of students who might not have one to play. John Collins is a boy who came along with his brother to attend guitar lessons. Melvin saw that he was interested in the music and gave the boy a donated mandolin with the condition that he learn to play it. John has done just that.

The musical traditions of Calhoun County are alive and well at the Bear Fork Trading Post. Local people can see and hear area bluegrass, old-time, and gospel groups, as well as other musicians from outside the region. For a small admission charge, the audience can enjoy an evening of good food and music in a family atmosphere, without the presence of alcohol and its associated problems. Nationally known bands, such as the Lewis Family, have performed at the Bear Fork Trading Post. Calhoun County old-time fiddler Lester McCumbers is a popular performer, and musicians from the Glenville State College bluegrass music program are regularly featured, as well.

There are no remnants of the old beer joint that once operated here. The building has been refurbished and enlarged, with more windows added as well as a fresh paint job. What once was a weed-choked, dirt lot is now a well-lit, blacktopped area with ample marked-off parking spaces. Melvin recently added a large, open-sided canopy in the grassy area between the parking lot and the creek, so that people can visit and play music outside in good weather.

Inside, there is a stage and dance floor at one end of the large room. The back wall is decorated with two American flags. Off to one side of the stage is a private tune-up room for the musicians. During the performances, the stage itself is well-lit. Thanks to the new sound system that Melvin installed, the audience has no problem hearing everything that goes on. The front of the stage currently features two fabric cut-outs of black bears.

Dancers enjoy the music at the Bear Fork Trading Post in Calhoun County.

The kitchen area and tables are located at the other end of the room, near the door. Patty serves up some good country food from the kitchen to accompany the music. In the middle of the room is a good-sized seating area. Several pictures of musicians and family members adorn the walls.

Admission to the Saturday night performances is $5; children under 12 years of age are admitted free with an adult. The doors open at 6:00 p.m., with the music starting at 7:00. The audience is very appreciative with enthusiastic applause following every number, and often in the middle of a song following a particularly hot instrumental break. There are good crowds on any given Saturday night, but whenever local favorites, such as Lester McCumbers or the bluegrass band Mountain Fury, are on the stage, the place fills up fast. The atmosphere is very informal, and often during the evening a few will get up and dance, with Patty showing beginners a few of the steps. Frequently, some in the audience will request their favorite songs.

Melvin and Patty are all smiles as they greet guests at the Bear Fork Trading Post.

Melvin and Patty are constantly thinking of new and different ways that the building can be utilized. This past summer, they started hosting free jam sessions every Friday evening from 5-10 p.m., which have been very popular. Plans for the future include continuing the guitar lessons along with adding clogging lessons and a possible bingo night.

The jam sessions on Friday nights are very loosely structured, with people coming and going as they wish. On Saturdays, the featured band starts at 7:00. Then, a group made up of different local musicians, usually with Rick and Melvin among them, plays from 8:00 till 9:00, with the featured band returning and playing until 10:00.

Melvin and Patty are very appreciative of the love and support that they have received from the community since opening the Bear Fork Trading Post. "If not for the help and commitment of several people in this community, this place would not be here today," says Patty. "Melvin and I both have had health issues in the last couple of years, and had it not been for the help of family and friends, the doors at the Bear Fork Trading Post might now be closed. Volunteers have given many hours of their time for cleaning and maintaining the building, cooking the food, and just pitching in wherever needed. We can never thank them enough for their efforts."

For information about classes or upcoming musical events at the Bear Fork Trading Post, call Melvin Cottrell at (304)655-8602.

KIM JOHNSON was born and raised in Clendenin, where she still lives. She received her degree from Glenville State College. Kim is a banjo player and frequent participant in the Vandalia Gathering. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2005 issue.

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

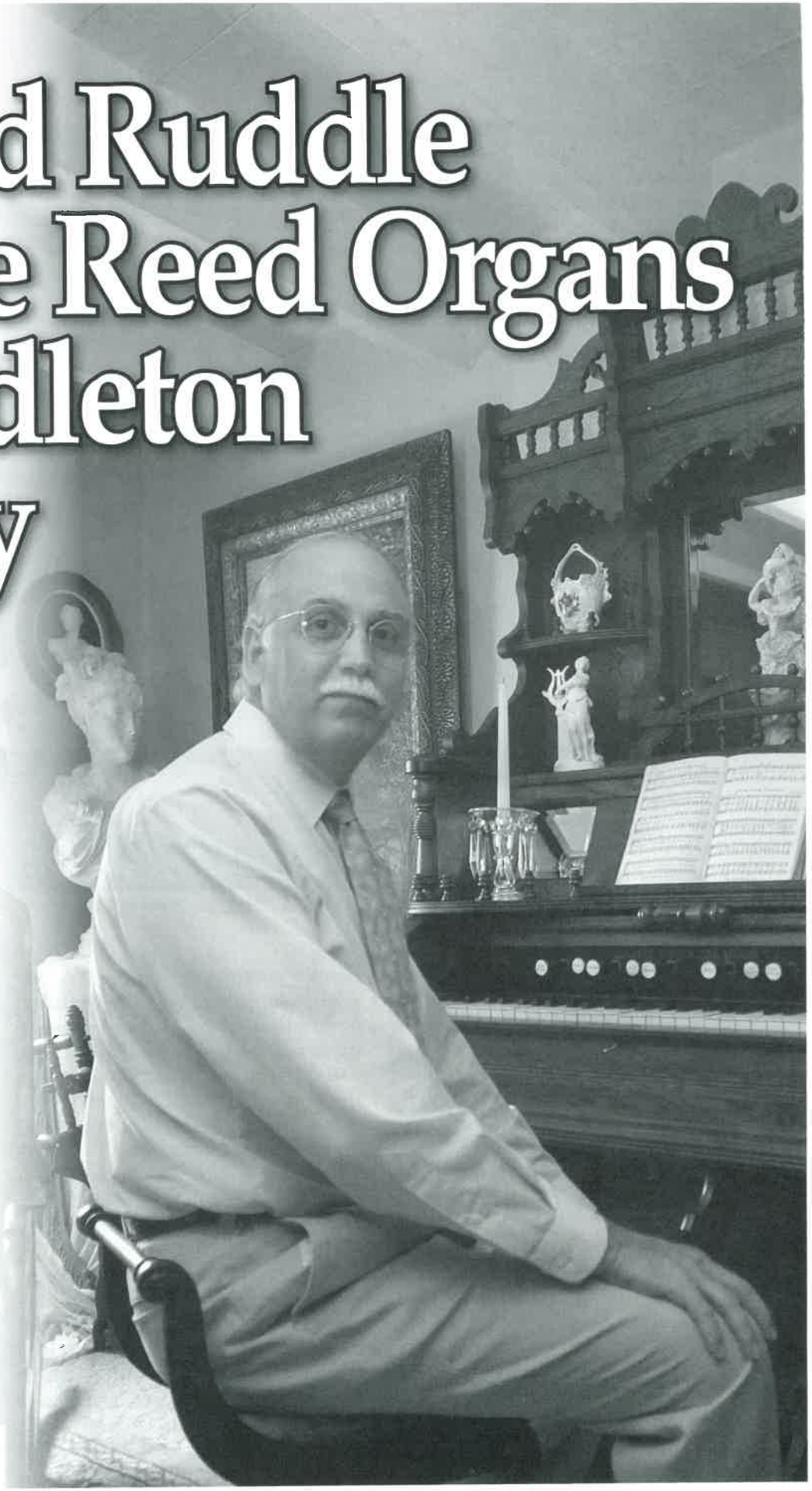
Richard Ruddle and the Reed Organs of Pendleton County

By Lawton W. Posey

Each Sunday morning, Richard Ruddle leaves his 19th-century log home in Ruddle, Pendleton County, to attend 8:30 services at a lovely Presbyterian church in the Upper Tract community. When services are over there, he goes a short distance to the church that bears his family name — Ruddle — for services and stays to teach the adult Sunday school class.

Richard is the organist for these churches, and the organs he plays are historic instruments of a type now rarely seen, except in unspoiled rural and small-town churches. These foot-pumped reed organs were at one time popular instruments, perhaps as frequently found in the mountains as the dulcimer or the banjo.

Richard Ruddle is a repository of much Pendleton County history. When I ask Richard about his family background, he gives a compact



Richard Ruddle at a 1901 Weaver reed organ in the liiving room of his home in Franklin. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The Ruddle home in Franklin, where Richard lives today, is shown in this 1905 photograph. Standing from the left are John Preston Ruddle, Lelia Ruddle Swedley, Aud Ruddle, John M. Ruddle, Ernest Ruddle, Virginia Ruddle, Zola Simmons, Almeda Ruddle Simmons, and Floyd Ruddle.

history of the Ruddle area of Pendleton County, going back to the 1700's. Ruddle did not become the official name of the community until after the War Between the States, Richard says, when a post office was established in his great-great-uncle Edmund Ruddle's grist mill in 1881.

Today, Richard lives in an 1871 log home built by John Matthew Ruddle, a veteran of the Civil War. As president of the Pendleton County Historical Society, Richard is deeply involved in research and promotion of the study of his county's history. Interested particularly in Civil War history, he is a charter member of the Brigadier General James Boggs camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. For the past 13 years, a reunion of this camp has been held at the historic Ruddle home, with people from West Virginia and surrounding states attending. He is also a member of the George Rogers Clark camp of the Sons of the American Revolution. In 1998, he received a West Virginia History Hero award.

Richard, 55 and a bachelor, teaches history and art at Pendleton County High School. He is retiring soon, after 33 years of teaching.

The instruments Richard plays, sometimes called pump organs or harmoniums, supplied music faithfully for rural congregations that did not have electricity for mechanical blowers or for electrical amplification. Now and then, a young person would operate a hand lever or a crank, which provided the necessary wind so that the organ could sound, but usually, the instrument was powered by foot pedals or pumps manned by the organist.

Reed organs were widely used in churches, parlors, and lodge halls in West Virginia and elsewhere for a century and more. In the 19th century, there was a desire on the

Young Richard Ruddle plays an 1890 Cornish reed organ, his first instrument, in 1967. This organ was lost in the 1985 flood.

part of musical instrument makers to produce an instrument that would have some of the characteristics of the traditional church organ, without the great cost. Instruments producing sound from reeds had been common for a long time. The clarinet, oboe, English horn, and other wind instruments had reached nearly modern form by the mid-19th century. The piano had taken its present shape, as well.

The reed organ was born about this time and began to appear in homes and churches. A standard keyboard, similar to that of a piano or an organ, was mated to an action consisting of a wind source and sets of tuned brass reeds, not unlike those in the harmonica or the accordion. When the keys were pressed, the sound was rather like that of a church organ, but not quite. Sometimes the sound seemed quite harsh to those whose ears were used to the mellow, flute-like tones of the church organs of the day, but the sound of the reed organ was well-loved by many rural congregations in West Virginia and elsewhere.

And what was that tone like? If you have heard an accordion or a harmonica, you might have a faint notion of the sound of the reed organ. Skilled builders could change

The grave of John M. Ruddle in the yard of Ruddle Church, located in the community of Ruddle, Pendleton County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

the shapes of the reeds to vary their tone, so that a simulation of the sound of the flute, the trumpet, or even shimmering strings could be produced.

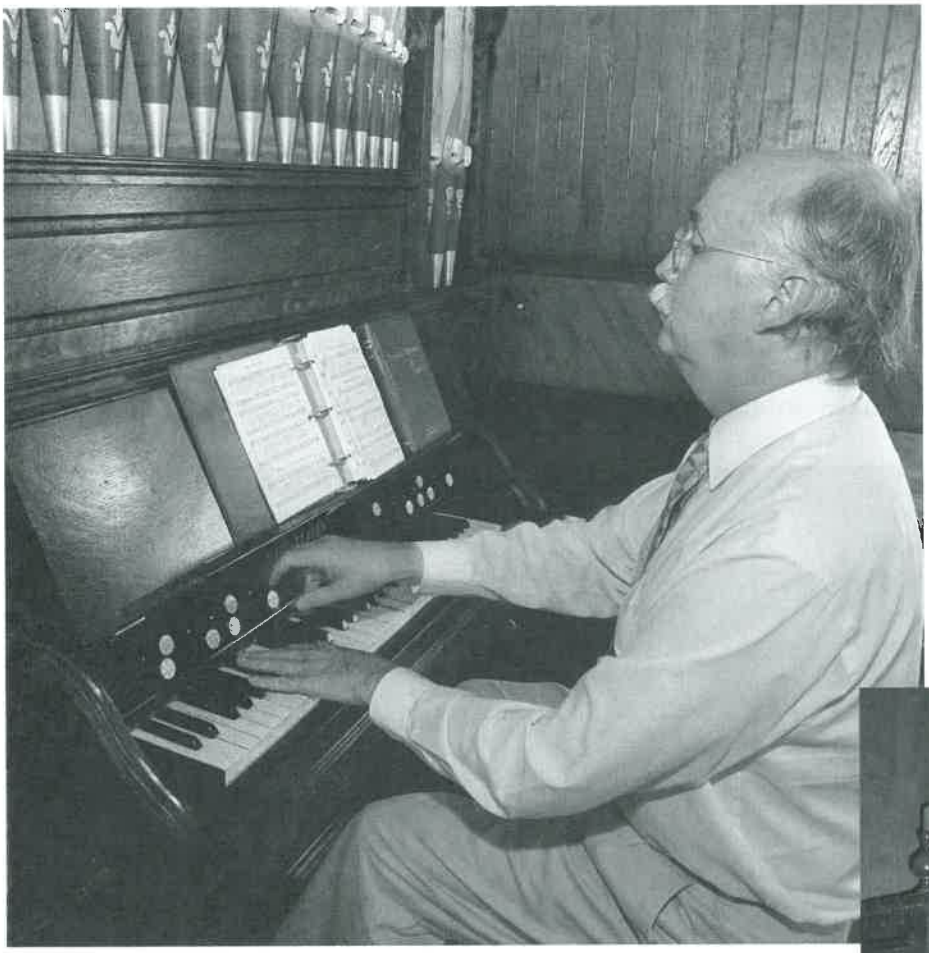
This new instrument could be played like an organ and had the defining characteristic that sets the organ (and its modern electronic substitutes) apart from the piano: When one holds a note, it never decreases in sound. It often looked like an organ and had knobs, called "stops," which, when pulled or pushed, allowed the player some control over the tone of the instrument. The names on the knobs imitated pipe-organ terminology, such as "flute," "diapason," "trumpet," and "violina."

Churches in my youth that used reed organs often did not have electricity. Many private homes had reed organs, and fraternal lodges used them in their ceremonies. These organs could be produced with many sets of reeds and additional keyboards, each offering some variation in sound. Played at full strength, even a small reed organ could support the singing of a large congregation. In the early days, traveling evangelists, like Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday, used these organs to great effect.

None are produced today, but many survive. The Estey Organ Company of Battleboro, Vermont, built over a half million of them. Other companies, including Sears Roebuck, were sources for these intriguing instruments. None were made in West Virginia.

To a great extent, the reed organ is seen today as an antique, but many are still being used in churches all over the world and in private homes. Richard Ruddle plays several in Pendleton County, each with its own unique features. The small Estey organ in Ruddle Church operates on the suction principle, with air being drawn through the reeds by a vacuum. The much more complex Upper Tract organ is built rather like a mechanical-action pipe organ, with the sound being produced by air pressure. The reeds are installed in special wooden appliances that

This vintage reed organ, located at Ruddle Church, was made by the Estey Organ Company of Battleboro, Vermont, purchased in 1914. Photograph by Richard Ruddle.



Richard adjusts the stops on a Vocalion reed organ, located in the Upper Tract church in Pendleton County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

mellow the tone, take some of the harshness out, and cause the organ to sound rather like a small pipe organ. As Richard Ruddle plays this organ, one can almost imagine being in a ritzy downtown church with a real pipe organ, costing a fortune.

When Richard was in the seventh grade, his mother purchased a piano, which came with some music lessons. He made weekly trips over Shenandoah Mountain to Harrisonburg, Virginia, to take the lessons, which ended after a few months since he had little interest in learning the piano. The reed organ fascinated him. His great-aunt Jessie Ruddle had his great-grandfather's organ in her parlor, and the church had an Estey chapel organ.

In February of his freshman year in high school, things changed for Richard. He discovered an unused Cornish reed organ, built about 1890, in Hartman's furniture store. Since he did not have the asking price of $30, he began to sell greeting cards to raise the money. By early summer, he was helping his father paint houses, and by June of that year he had enough to buy the organ and to have Mr. Amos Burkholder of Harrisonburg, Virginia, repair it and set it right. Richard was on his way as an organist. That was 1966. Sadly, that organ was almost totally destroyed by the devastating 1985 flood.

At Ruddle Church — built in 1881 and the oldest standing Presbyterian church in Pendleton County — he plays an Estey chapel organ, Model H, built around 1914. Money for this organ was raised by Mrs. Frank Hohman, who came to Ruddle as a new bride. She missed having an organ in her church. It was bought from the Estey company for $49.10, shipped to Harrisonburg, Virginia, and brought over Shenandoah Mountain by horse and wagon. This is a small organ. Richard comments, however, that it is adequate for the small church and the tiny congregation.

The Upper Tract church has a very rare organ, only two others of which I have discovered in my explorations of reed organs in West Virginia. This magnificent and expensive organ bears the name Vocalion and dates from the turn of the 20th century. It appears to have pipes, like a traditional church pipe organ. The pipes are dummies, added for appearance, but are themselves works of art.

This rare Vocalion organ was built around 1900. The ornate "pipes" are purely decorative, but the well-worn foot pedals are all business. Photograph by Richard Puddle.

For 100 years, this organ has made beautiful music for the Franklin Presbyterian Church and then for the Upper Tract church.

The Vocalion, also pumped with the feet, has a rich sound, resembling that of a pipe organ. Playing a large pressure-type instrument can be daunting, and a bit of strength is required. Since I myself have owned and played reed organs, I know that one can work up a sweat playing for a service or sing-along.

Richard mentions that he has also played other reed organs that still exist in historic churches in Pendleton County. One is the fine organ in the old log building called St. George's (Episcopal) Chapel at Smoke Hole.

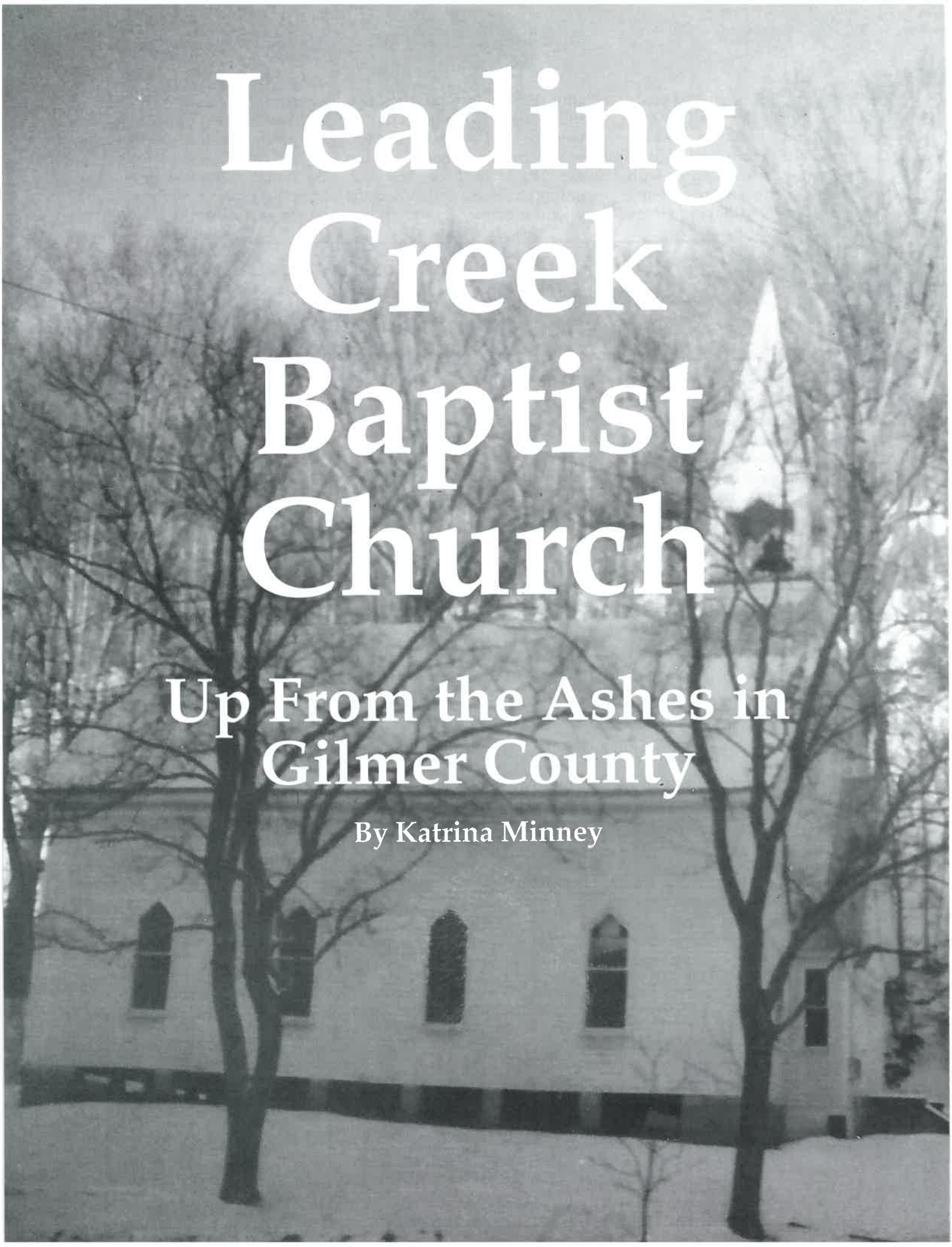
Sadly, Richard Ruddle notes, few young people are interested in playing the reed organ these days. Like the accordion, it has fallen into disuse. There are those, however, including the Reed Organ Society, Inc., who vigorously promote the restoration and use of this part of America's past. Compact discs of reed organ music are still being made and sold. The Reed Organ Society's web site is www.reedsoc.org.

For 100 years, this organ has made beautiful music for the Franklin Presbyterian Church and then for the Upper Tract church.

Richard Ruddle, Pendleton County teacher, historian, and musician, is a person who values West Virginia's old ways. Even though modern substitutes, such as electronic keyboards, can offer a faint imitation of the sound of the reed organ, there is nothing like a country congregation in full voice, singing with an authentic wind instrument, pumped by foot power, and played by a person with real devotion to the faith. Such a one is Richard Ruddle.

LAWTON W. POSEY is a retired Presbyterian minister living in Charleston. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, he is a freelance writer, published in *Christian Century*, *American Organist*, and *The Charleston Gazette*, among others. Lawton's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was in our Summer 2004 issue.

The Upper Tract Presbyterian Church in Pendleton County. Photograph by Michael Keller.



Leading Creek Baptist Church

Up From the Ashes in Gilmer County

By Katrina Minney

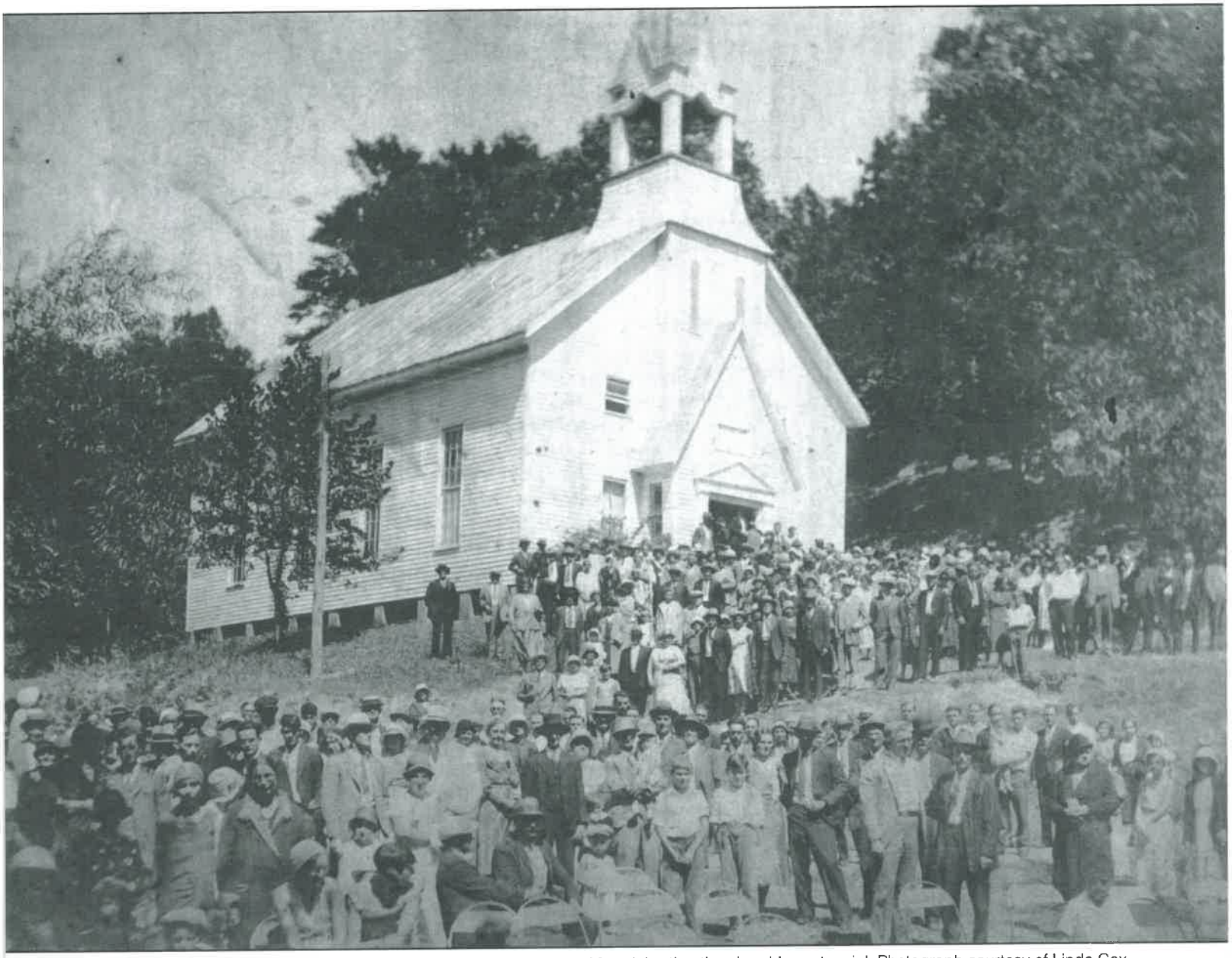
From the road below, the little church sitting on the bank looks rather ordinary. The small, white building nestled tightly against the steep hillside is nothing fancy or outstanding to see. Some folks just passing through might not even realize that it is a church. But for people living in the small community of Alice, Gilmer County, Leading Creek Baptist Church is a well-known landmark. Those who attend the little church will gladly share their heartfelt testimonies and treasured memories of this sacred place. I grew up attending this church, and I know its story well.

The church was organized on November 26, 1832, by elders Benjamin Holden and Carr Bailey. Since they initially had no building, services were held in the home of Henry Bush for several years. Bush's farm sat across the creek from the church's present location. In 1847, the first church building was constructed. This was a log structure, and it sat on the hill near Henry Bush's home, adjacent to the Alice Cemetery. Situated between Glenville and Coxs Mills, the new church was a welcome addition to the community of Alice, and membership began to grow quickly.

The church purchased additional land across the creek from where the log structure stood on March 23, 1877. Soon a new, much larger building was constructed. The new structure was dedicated on the first Sunday in June 1878, by Reverend John Woofter. Woofter had come from Lewis County and began preaching at Leading Creek on November 5, 1843,

The Reverend Henry Miller and his wife, Zelia, at Leading Creek Baptist Church in 1973.

Left: Leading Creek Baptist Church in Alice, Gilmer County, as it appeared in 1977.



Leading Creek Baptist Church and congregation on September 8, 1932, celebrating the church's centennial. Photograph courtesy of Linda Cox.

at the age of 27. He married elder Carr Bailey's daughter and served as pastor until his death, 47 years later. The original church building had been razed, and when Woofter died, he was buried on the exact spot where the original altar had stood.

In 1911, improvements were made to the church building. These included construction of a bell tower, two classrooms, a vestibule, and a balcony. A lovely white country church sitting on the hill, with its steeple pointed toward the bright blue heavens, the church had a traditional look about it and was truly picturesque. This was the church my family attended for generations. My grandparents William Roscoe and Martha Jane Radcliff lived a quarter of a mile away, and we lived just a few houses beyond them. Much of my family lived on Alice Road, and the church was a significant part of our lives.

As a small child, I can remember being lifted up to reach the rope that pulled the church bell on Sunday mornings. All the children of the church took turns ringing that bell. This was a great honor, and, although the tremendous sound that was emitted was a bit frightening for a little girl, I was proud to ring it. Sadly, this is one of the few personal memories that I have of that glorious old building.

In the early morning hours of March 23, 1980, our lives were turned upside down when Leading Creek Baptist Church was destroyed by fire. I was only six years old, but the memory still haunts me. My grandma called and woke us up around 4:00 that morning to tell us that the church was burning. My dad immediately jumped in his car and left, while my mom stayed behind with my younger

brothers and me. Dad would later talk about how horrible it was to stand in front of that tremendous raging fire, and of the tormenting, helpless feeling of knowing nothing could be done to stop it. He compared it to watching someone you love dying right in front of your eyes.

Our house was less than a half-mile from the church, and Mom and I could see the sickening orange glow over the treetops. My brothers were still sleeping, and for the longest time the two of us just stood there in silence. I remember her finally wrapping her arms tightly around me as we cried together. Unfortunately, the fire department had been called out to another fire, and by the time they arrive on the scene, everything was gone. When we went down to the church later that morning, all that remained were a set of concrete steps and smoking embers, still glowing red with intense heat. That beautiful old church, which had stood there for more than 100 years, was reduced to a pile of ashes.

The fire had been set by arsonists, and, sadly, these criminals were never caught. Our church was one of five in the area to be set on fire over the course of a few weeks. The night that ours burned, the fire department was attempting to extinguish another church fire. Rumors flew through the community about who might be behind these horrible crimes, but nothing was ever proven.

In the hours following the tragic fire, church members gathered at my grandparents' house. As everyone sat around in despair, trying to figure out what they were going to do, someone shouted, "Hey, look at the rainbows." We quickly ran outside into the front yard. There, up in the sky, were several small rainbows. Some were upside down, some were in a straight line. It was an amazing sight to behold. I remember feeling like it was magic. I'd never seen anything like that before. As a child, I was confused to see people crying over this beautiful scene. Then I realized that they were tears of happiness, not sorrow. Suddenly, the members of the church had a newfound sense of strength, and their spirits were uplifted. Later, a professor at Glenville State College would write an article about these rainbows, offering a scientific explanation for their origin — rays of sunlight reflecting off the polar ice caps. For the members of Leading Creek Baptist Church, however, this was surely a message of divine inspiration and encouragement.

The church did not have adequate insurance coverage, so they would have to start over from scratch. Until

On March 23, 1980, Leading Creek Baptist Church was destroyed by fire. Investigators suspected arson, but no charges were ever filed.

This monument for the Reverend John Woofter, who pastored at Leading Creek Baptist Church for 47 years, marks the spot where the altar of the original church once stood.

the church could be rebuilt, services were held in the upstairs of my grandparents' cellar house. Over the next few months, we were overwhelmed by an outpouring of community support. Donations came in from local residents, area businesses, and other churches. Meanwhile, our church held fundraisers and did whatever we could to get back on our feet. I remember the ladies of our church baking all week long in order to have Saturday bake sales.

Before long, our prayers had been answered; a new building was constructed in the same spot as the previous one. The first service in our new building was held on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1981. Although not nearly as big or grand as the old church, this white frame building would suit our needs and provide us with a place to worship. At our church's official dedication, the statement was read, "We dedicate this building to the service and upbuilding of God's kingdom."

Since then, the church has continued to thrive, and, today, it remains as a pillar of the community. Although it is located in a rural area and its membership is small, the spirit of Leading Creek is strong. Over the years, several people have moved out of the community, and, sadly, many of the older generation have passed on. Yet the members of Leading Creek Baptist Church, like those from so long ago, remain determined and dedicated. Regular services are held on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights, with special revivals and gospel sings held on a regular basis. I have often heard my mother say, "I believe that God has a purpose for our little church, or it wouldn't be there."

When the trees have lost their leaves, Reverend Woofter's tall monument can be seen upon the hill, standing in the corner of the Alice Cemetery. Though weathered with age, it still stands out like a beacon, looking out over the land. My grandparents' home sat directly across the creek from the cemetery, and, as a child, I remember being a bit intimidated by the ancient-looking marker that seemed to watch over everything below. I was glad when the leaves were on, because it blocked the monument from my view. Now, as an adult, my heart is overwhelmed when I see it. I respect and appreciate the history and dedication that is represented by the engravings in the stone.

Leading Creek Baptist Church was an important part of my childhood and will always be special to me. When I was a kid, I could hardly wait for Sundays. We went to church in the morning, and, afterward, my entire extended family would gather at my grandparents' for Sunday dinner. If the weather allowed, my brothers, my cousin, and I would walk home from church. On the way, we often picked flowers for Grandma to put

The rebuilt Leading Creek Baptist Church, as it appeared in 1987.

in a bouquet. The churchyard was a great place to play, and we loved to chase each other around the building. The woods behind the church always seemed so mysterious, and we imagined what might be hiding in there.

I moved to Charleston when I was 14, but we continued to spend most weekends at my grandparents', so I still went to church there. Years later, I got married in that little church. I started my own family and eventually found a church closer to home. After all, the distance between Charleston and Alice is about 110 miles, so attending faithfully was out of the question. The church I attend now is a wonderful place, and I feel very at-home there. My grandparents have both passed away, so I rarely go back to Gilmer County. Every now and then, however, I make a trip to visit some of my other family members and drop in for a church service at Leading Creek.

As much as this place means to me, it is hard to go back home. My heart aches for days gone by, and I sorely miss my loved ones that are no longer there. It hurts me to realize that my grandma won't be there singing those hymns, and my grandpa will never again mow the churchyard. The years seem to have gone by so fast, and I find myself wishing that I had spent more time just being a kid. But, as I walk through the doors, it is like coming home, and I am surrounded by memories. Although the nostalgia is almost more than I can bear, I feel grateful and blessed to be part of such a special place. It is in these moments that I realize Leading Creek Baptist Church is much more than just a building.

On Sunday, November 26, 2006, I had the privilege of attending the church's 174th Homecoming Celebration. The ladies of the church served a delicious lunch after the morning service. The weather was gorgeous, with sunshine and warm temperatures in the 70's. We actually set up tables outside and laughed about having a picnic in November. An afternoon service was held following lunch, commemorating the church's anniversary. I was honored to share my research of the church's history and sing a song for the special occasion. Many church members shared their stories and memories of the past. We had several visitors, and I saw familiar faces that I hadn't seen in many years. Candles were lit in honor of those who were no longer with us.

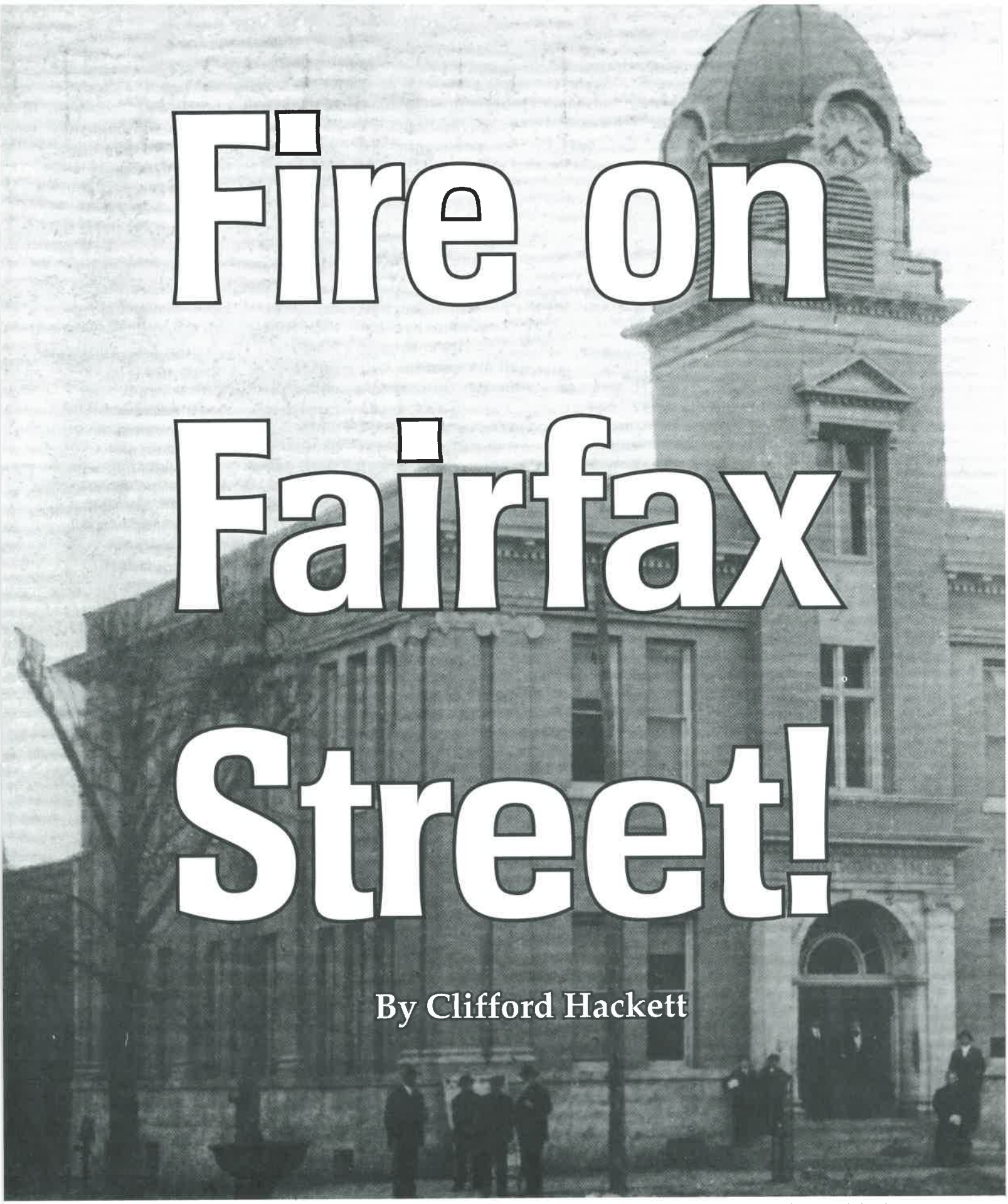
The children played outside during the afternoon service, and we could hear them through the open windows of the church. I knew my daughters were out there, collecting leaves and chasing them as they blew around the yard, just like I used to do. I couldn't help but smile as I sat there, listening to the sound of their laughter. Every now and then, I could feel the gentle breeze blowing through the window, and I just wanted to close my eyes and savor the feeling of contentment that came over me. At that moment, I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else in the world.

Author Katrina Minney and daughter Rachel participate in a worship service at Leading Creek Baptist Church in 2007.

KATRINA MINNEY grew up near Glenville and is a graduate of Sissonville High School and West Virginia State University. She lives with her husband and two daughters in Sissonville and teaches English at Nitro High School. This is Katrina's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Fire on Fairfax Street!

By Clifford Hackett



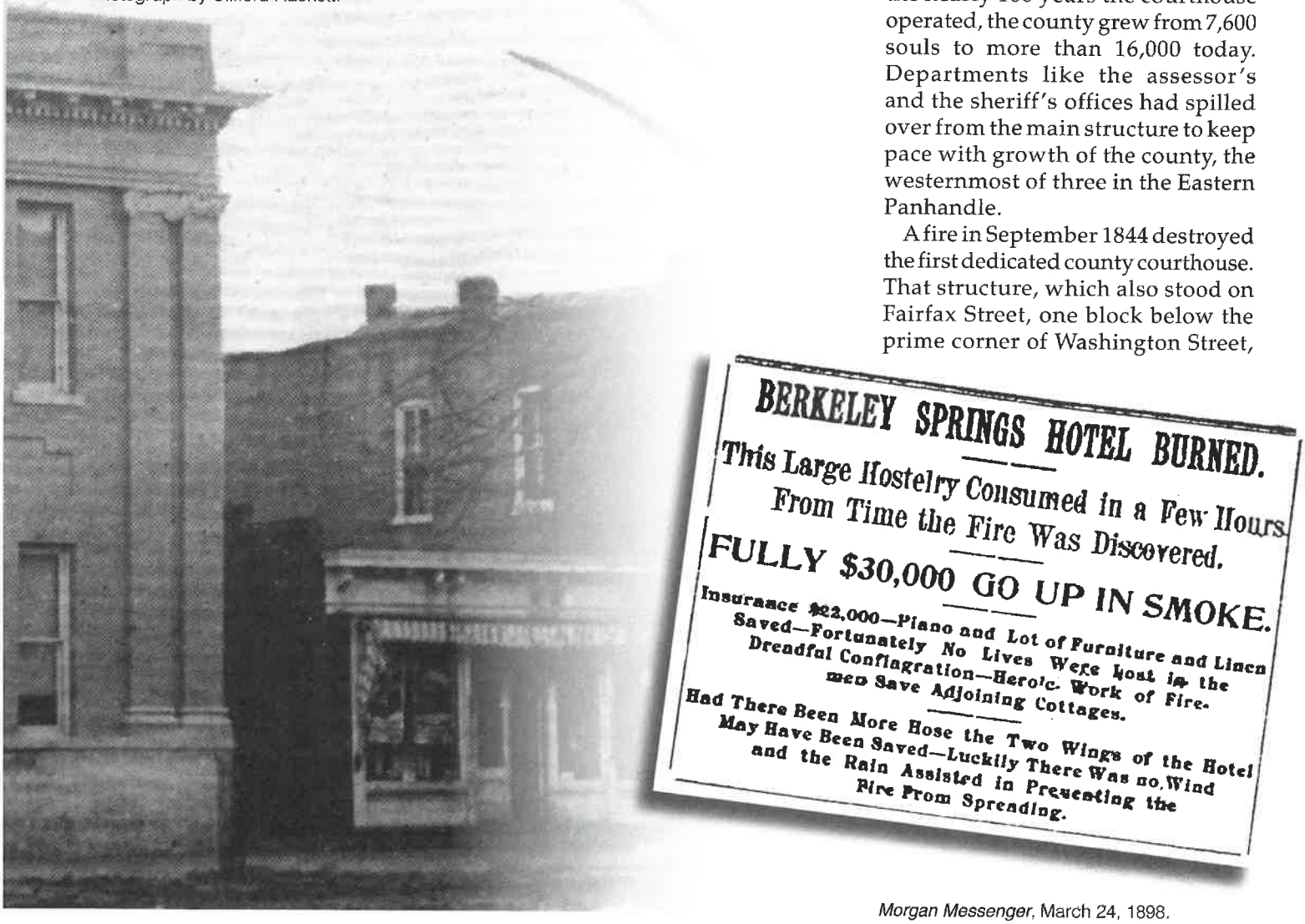
The Morgan County courthouse in Berkeley Springs, built in 1908, was destroyed by fire on August 8, 2006. This undated postcard view is courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, WVSA hereafter.

The shell of the Morgan County courthouse, after the 2006 fire. Photograph by Clifford Hackett.

When the Morgan County courthouse burned to a black-brown shell in August 2006, the local newspaper called the tragedy the "end of a landmark." But the 1908 building, cornered on Fairfax and Washington streets, was only the latest to fall victim in a sad series of fires in the heart of the town of Bath, as the center of Berkeley Springs is called. Fairfax Street has been burning for centuries.

The courthouse's hollow shell, which stood for several months as a reminder of the town's fiery history, is now gone. It will be replaced, not restored. The finely proportioned yellow brick structure with its photogenic gray-domed clock tower was picturesque, but outdated. In the nearly 100 years the courthouse operated, the county grew from 7,600 souls to more than 16,000 today. Departments like the assessor's and the sheriff's offices had spilled over from the main structure to keep pace with growth of the county, the westernmost of three in the Eastern Panhandle.

A fire in September 1844 destroyed the first dedicated county courthouse. That structure, which also stood on Fairfax Street, one block below the prime corner of Washington Street,



BERKELEY SPRINGS HOTEL BURNED.

This Large Hostelry Consumed in a Few Hours From Time the Fire Was Discovered.

FULLY $30,000 GO UP IN SMOKE.

Insurance $22,000—Piano and Lot of Furniture and Linen Saved—Fortunately No Lives Were Lost in the Dreadful Conflagration—Heroic Work of Firemen Save Adjoining Cottages.

Had There Been More Hose the Two Wings of the Hotel May Have Been Saved—Luckily There Was no Wind and the Rain Assisted in Preventing the Fire From Spreading.

Morgan Messenger, March 24, 1898.

was replaced by a 1845 building. It was this structure, lasting only 60 years, which was replaced by the yellow brick building, recently lost. If buildings had ghosts, the vanished courthouse could tell stories about other major fires it had seen nearby.

In March 1901, the Fairfax Inn was destroyed by fire, removing the town's only hotel. The Fairfax Inn blaze marked a low point in a town that had experienced many ups and downs in the preceding century. Only three years before, in March 1898, the other large hotel in town, the Berkeley Springs Hotel, burned in what the *Morgan Messenger* called "the most disastrous and destructive fire" the town had ever seen. These two major hotel fires in three years came as the entire country was in economic depression.

In March 1935, the Hotel Dunn, a few yards up Fairfax Street from the courthouse, was flamed by an arsonist so badly that it had to be demolished. In August 1974, the Hotel Washington, across Fairfax Street from the courthouse, lit up the intersection with a tragic fire, which took 12 lives.

Why so many fires on Fairfax Street? Is the modest thoroughfare somehow doomed? Or, do careless people — locals, tourists, and other visitors — congregate in these favored blocks and cause hotels and courthouses to burn? No simple explanation seems to cover all of these fires, though a combination of human error, faulty design, and limited fire-fighting equipment seems culpable.

Steve McBee, former fire chief and current member of the town's volunteer firefighters, thinks today's sprinkler technology could have saved all of these Fairfax Street buildings. "There's never been a life lost or serious damage in a building with a functioning sprinkler system," Steve says. Even the tragic Washington Hotel fire — the only one with lives lost — could have survived with sprinklers, he thinks.

"That fire raced up the elevator shaft, but sprinklers would have snuffed it out. The deaths came from smoke inhalation. Then, the whole structure collapsed," Steve says.

Better communications at the time of the most recent fires allowed the local volunteer company to summon aid from nearby firemen in West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania towns. Telephones, then radios, replaced the old bell tower of the courthouse in calls for help. But the sobering fact is that almost all of these fires created near or total losses for the public or private owners.

Insurance was often available, but frequently lagged behind replacement costs. In the recent courthouse fire, the county commission estimates $14 million in replacement costs. Insurance coverage was less than $5 million. (The original building cost less than $18,000 to erect in 1908.)

Even in 1898, the Berkeley Springs Hotel had better coverage. Damage was estimated at $30,000, with $22,000 of insurance. But damage to the Fairfax Inn three years later was estimated at $15,000, with only $7,000 in insurance. The 1901 fire at the Fairfax Inn destroyed one of the town's oldest buildings. Located directly opposite the park with its famous springs, the inn was estimated to date from no later than 1795. In the intervening years, the hostelry was known first as O'Farrell's Coffee House, then as the Florence Hotel, then as the St. Charles, before succumbing as the Fairfax Inn.

Name changes also converted the 1845 Strother's Hotel to the Pavilion Hotel, and finally to the Berkeley Springs Hotel, before its fiery end on March 22, 1898. The local newspaper interestingly commented two days later that "as major fires so seldom occur in this town, it took some time before people could be aroused" and convinced that a major blaze was underway. It had been more than a half century since the first courthouse burned, but there were many more fires to come.

The Hotel Dunn was built by Daniel Dunn and opened in April 1903. Together with the new Hotel Washington, it started a hotel revival to replace the ill-fated Berkeley Springs Hotel and Fairfax Inn. Together, the two new structures formed an answer to the plea of the *Morgan Messenger*, which closed its 1901 story of the

The Hotel Washington, later called the Washington House, was located across the street from the courthouse and state park, at the corner of Fairfax and Washington streets. The core of this building dated to pre-Civil War times. It was converted to a hotel in about 1898 and was added onto and remodeled several times over the next 76 years. When the landmark burned on August 25, 1974, it destroyed most of a city block and killed 12 people. Undated postcard view courtesy of WVSA; 1974 fire photograph by C. Dwan McBee, courtesy of the *Morgan Messenger*.

Fairfax Inn fire with these words: "Now for a big, modern hotel and that right speedily!"

The three-story Dunn building, with 65 rooms, was smaller than the nearby Hotel Washington, which had opened in 1905 with an 80-room addition to what had been the 20-room Park View Hotel. The Hotel Dunn stayed in the Dunn family until its mysterious and apparently criminal end in 1935. There was no insurance. Illness in the Dunn family apparently provoked the decision to demolish the building and end the business.

Today, the town of Bath is a prosperous and growing tourist destination, once again a favored site for second

1844

First county courthouse burned; cause unreported

1898

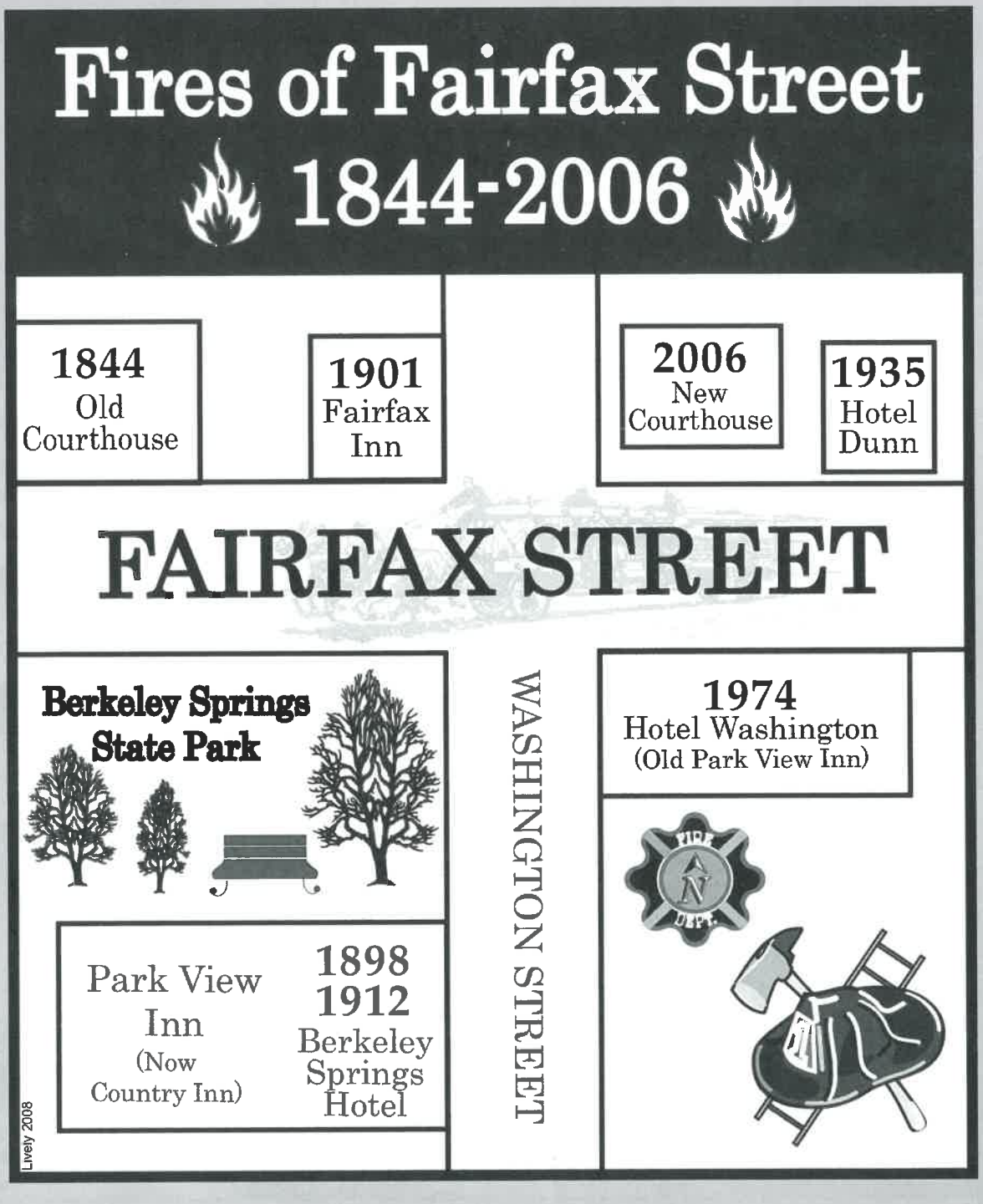
Berkeley Springs Hotel destroyed; fire started near flue in billiard room, according to owner who discovered it at 1:45 a.m.

1901

Fairfax Inn destroyed; fire started at mid-morning in ironing room where old asphalt shingles were being burned; burst fire hoses and low water level in pump house slowed firemen

1912

Surviving annex of Berkeley Springs Hotel destroyed by fire of unknown cause



1935

Hotel Dunn badly damaged after early morning fire; arson suspected because fire started outside the building

1974

Hotel Washington (earlier the first Park View Inn) and adjacent stores destroyed; basement fire smoldered hours before moving upwards through interior walls and elevator shaft and bursting into flame at 3 a.m., fatally trapping 12 visitors

2006

Courthouse fire largely destroyed the interior and damaged adjacent buildings; electrical problems in a ceiling in the early evening apparently smoldered until a raging fire burst out at 4:30 a.m.

Former fire chief and current volunteer firefighter Steve McBee says that today's firefighting technology could have saved all the Fairfax Street buildings. "There's never been a life lost or serious damage in a building with a functioning sprinkler system," he says. Photograph by Robert Peak.

homes and a popular retirement site for Washingtonians. A new courthouse, hopefully as graceful and distinguished as its predecessor, will emerge to absorb the county government, now housed in trailers. Besides planning for the new courthouse, the county commissioners have vastly improved the emergency fire and rescue services.

"We have great volunteers in the fire and rescue teams," says Glen Stotler, president of the Morgan County commission, "and we will help them improve in every possible way, considering the county's recent growth in both residents and visitors."

Despite this growth, the town's historic center remains largely unchanged. The tiny park and springs at the corner of Fairfax and Washington streets form Berkeley Springs State Park, with all the support and protection that designation provides. Nearby, just off Fairfax Street, a long-established hotel sits adjacent to the park. It opened in 1933 as the new Park View Inn by the Harmison family, long associated with local hotels, on the site of the old Berkeley Springs Hotel, whose fiery destruction in 1898 amazed the town. The hotel became the Country Inn when it was sold in 1972. A few years back, another sale changed its name again, but the new owners have changed it back to the Country Inn. [See "'It Feels Like Coming Home': Old-Time Hospitality at the Park View Inn," by Jeanne Mozier; page 40.]

A large chain motel now operates several miles south of town, toward Cacapon Resort State Park. Coolfont Resort, now under redevelopment, offered rental houses as well as overnight rooms, and will soon have condominiums. It sits on the slopes of the same 2,300-foot-high Cacapon Mountain as does the big state park. These newer facilities give visitors more choices. But many still prefer the more traditional rooms in the town of Bath, hence the popularity of a number of bed-and-breakfast homes within walking distance of the in-town state park and nearby restaurants.

"Our two state parks — one downtown, the other on the mountainside — now preserve Berkeley Springs not only as one of the state's finest destinations, but one with a great history for the state and nation," says Tom Ambrose, superintendent of Cacapon Resort State Park.

The many fires along Fairfax Street, devastating as they were, only punctuate the long and lively history of a thriving area.

CLIFFORD HACKETT has lived in Berkeley Springs since 1981. After graduate studies in history at Yale, he spent 10 years in foreign service and 12 years working on Capitol Hill. Clifford has authored several books on international affairs. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 1988 issue.

"It Feels Like Coming Home"

Old-Time Hospitality at the Park View Inn

by Jeanne Mozier

The Park View Inn in Berkeley Springs welcomed guests at this location on Washington Street from 1933 until 1972. This wintry view served as a Christmas postcard in about 1940

Owners "Aunt" Jennie and Walter "Toad" Harmison in 1947. The pair were tireless and dedicated innkeepers.

"It feels like coming home," was the comment made most often by guests at Walter "Toad" and Jenny Harmison's Park View Inn. The Harmisons kept in personal touch with their guests, and guests responded in kind. Visitors returned year after year to the hotel in Berkeley Springs, often making reservations a year in advance. They wrote thank-you notes to the Harmisons and sent flowers.

The decor supported the homey feel, from the cozy living-room atmosphere of the lobby with its couches, antique wing chairs, and fireplace, to the bedrooms with maple furniture and white, ruffled curtains. In season, every room had a bowl of fresh, local apples. Area rugs were used throughout the hotel, no wall-to-wall carpet. The dining room had paper doilies rather than tablecloths. The waitresses, however, were always dressed in white with aprons so starched they could stand on their own.

"Salute to Mrs. Harmison's House"

Chicken and turkey and country ham,
Muffins and biscuits and raspberry jam.
"Oho," said the man with the widening grin,
"What corner of heaven have I fallen in?"

Tomatoes and corn and T-bone steak,
Cheese and pie, ice cream and cake.
The wise one replied, putting napkin to chin,
"Your heaven is right here in Park View Inn."

[1958 poem by guest Peter Snyder of Silver Spring, Maryland]

Toad Harmison and Jennie Hawvermale were wed in 1917, with less than $200 between them. They are shown here at about that time.

From 1933 until 1972, for many guests, the Park View *was* home. Families would come from Pittsburgh and Clarksburg for the summer. The wife and kids would stay while husbands traveled back to work during the week, returning to Berkeley Springs for weekends. Others remained for weeks to take the baths for their health. Five rooms were set aside on the first floor for those who had difficulty walking up the stairs. Family ties were also prominent among the workers, with many parents and children on staff.

"Toad and Jennie always had family members living at the inn," recalls Betty Lou Harmison, who was married to Toad's nephew and heir, Bill Harmison.

As the opening poem suggests, food was a prime attraction of the Park View Inn, which ran on the American Plan, providing guests with three hefty meals a day. There was no fancy chef brought in from a culinary school. Local country women, used to preparing large meals, did all the cooking under Toad's supervision. "Tillie Unger was the first cook," recalls Betty Lou. "Then came Mary Cain. She was a great cook." Policy at Park View was that anyone who ate in the kitchen ate free. "There was a long bench, and people would come in to swap gossip and drink free coffee. Reid Johnson, the head massager at the State Park, ate lunch free at the hotel every day for years," says Betty Lou.

The hometown feel of the Park View Inn was in contrast to that of its predecessor, the famous and stately Berkeley Springs Hotel, which, for a half century, occupied the same historic site adjacent to the warm springs and park in the center of town, until it was destroyed by fire in 1898. [See "Fire on Fairfax Street!" by Clifford Hackett; page 34.] Built by Colonel John Strother of Martinsburg in 1848, the Berkeley Springs Hotel had a capacity of 400 guests and catered almost exclusively to those well-to-do summer visitors who came for the society that grew up around the famous mineral springs. After the fire, the site remained empty for more than 25 years as the town watched a parade of big-city investors and syndicates float plans of elaborate, luxurious resort hotels. None made it past the talking phase, and the empty lot turned into an overgrown jungle. In 1933, *The News* paid tribute in an editorial celebrating the opening of the Park View Inn: "Without the aid of promoters, without the enlistment of stock salesmen, without a fanfare of trumpets, and without a loud beating of drums, Walter Harmison has a hotel."

Toad Harmison had innkeeping in his blood, three generations of it, in fact. All his life, he lived with people associated with hotel work. Both Toad and his future wife, Jennie Hawvermale, were working at the Dunn Hotel in Berkeley Springs when they married in October 1917, with less than $200 between them. A week later, Toad was off to war and Jennie to teach school in southern Morgan County. During the 1920's, the Harmisons continued gathering experience. They leased and ran the

Starting with a modest seven-room inn, the Harmisons built the larger Park View facility during the height of the Great Depression. They opened it in 1933 and never looked back. This 1952 postcard view shows the lobby, decorated for the holidays.

Dunn. Toad ran a poolroom/restaurant and a newstand. He hung out with the regulars at Mutt Wash's barbershop, playing cards, dice, and the horses at the Charles Town races — all skills he would use later. Toad was ambitious; he always wanted an inn. "He was a born innkeeper," says Betty Lou. "Everyone liked him."

In 1929, Toad and Jennie leased St. Vincent's Rectory, originally one of the town's historic summer cottages. According to *The News*, they opened the seven-room Park View Inn there with a chicken dinner on May 29. Tax records for the first year showed gross sales of nearly $15,000.

Toad Harmison had innkeeping in his blood, three generations of it, in fact. All his life, he lived with people associated with hotel work.

The Great Depression reached Berkeley Springs about the same time that Toad and Jennie Harmison were gearing up to build their dream business: a new, expanded Park View Inn. They owned the site, local banks had promised to loan them $10,000, plans were drawn, and materials were already in place. Soon after the election in 1932, disaster struck. The banks could not honor the loans and soon closed. The Harmisons were near despair.

"It has just about ruined me," wrote Toad. "I have stopped everything." He worked day and night trying to interest individuals and banks in nearby towns. "Have almost given up hope," he wrote. "No one knows what Mrs. Harmison and I have been through this past week."

Instead of quitting, the young couple signed notes to their suppliers, who urged them to proceed, including Jack Hunter of Hunter's Hardware in Berkeley Springs and Aldine Lakin of Hagerstown Lumber. Under the direction of local contractor Cliff Michael, a new hotel was built. It was 30 by 60 feet, four stories high, and made of fireproof brick. There were 18 guest rooms and nine baths. Building on such a tight budget, each room had only one electrical outlet, because they cost 30 cents apiece. A white-pillared portico gave the building a colonial look, fitting for Berkeley Springs.

On a bright May day in 1933, all the guests in the dining room of the old Park View were invited to pick up their chairs and carry them across the highway to the new brick building. The food was transported from one kitchen stove to another in time for lunch.

With all debts paid off in the first year, Toad began shopping around to secure a loan on the completed inn, which had been running at near capacity, even out of season. By 1937, a pair of two-story brick wings had been added, and the Park View Inn was as it would be for more than 40 successful years. The grounds included a tennis court, fishpond with fountain, and open-air garden

The Harmisons treated their staff like family and gained many loyal employees in return. This photograph from a 1954 staff party shows Aunt Jennie Harmison (seated at center with a child on her lap), future owner Bill Harmison (standing at left, with white tee shirt), longtime cook Mary Cain (next to Bill), and waitress Faye Murphy (standing third from the right, with a woman's arm draped over her shoulder).

house perfect for playing cards. The business grew year after year. By 1940, the Harmisons were once more debt-free.

For nearly 20 years, until his death in 1954, Toad was both the man behind the food as well as an informal activities director at the inn. Guests would return every year, and Toad would arrange oyster roasts and card games. One of the favorite local stories centered around his excursions to Effie Weller's Blue Hill saloon, across the river in Maryland. Toad would tell his wealthy city guests to dress up, that he was taking them somewhere special. They would arrive at Effie's with its speakeasy atmosphere, sawdust on the floor, and low-life hangers-on at the bar. Before the party arrived, Effie would lecture the regulars: "Toad Harmison's coming with important people. They're going to spend money, so you all behave."

Another well-publicized excursion in 1938 took 30 guests to Jake Puffinberger's holler south of town, "a typical mountain home," according to *The News*. Well known as the best all-around shot in Morgan County, Jake reportedly gave an "interesting discourse on the hunting and trapping of wild game and how this adventure had become the major means of livelihood during the winter for his large family." Not only did Toad bring baskets of food from the inn, but his guests presented a "purse of considerable size" to Jake. They dubbed him "Knight of the Mountains" and his wife "Queen of the Hills."

Bob Hawvermale, another Harmison nephew who worked as a bellhop, has his own favorite story. "Toad was a great kidder," Bob says. "One time, he staged a card party for some guests then persuaded the local police to raid the game."

It was not all a party with Toad, however. It was mostly hard work. "No one today can imagine how much work they all did," says Betty Lou. Her husband, Bill, orphaned like his uncle Toad, worked at the hotel from the time he was a small child. He lived in a dormitory-style space on the fourth floor and essentially was raised by staff who lived there. Toad kept a room down the hall; Jennie lived in a room on the first floor behind her office and took all her meals there.

According to a 1947 article in *Hotel Monthly*, Toad's day started at 4 a.m. "It takes a heap of working to keep everything going," he said. Toad's pre-dawn list included doing all the meat cutting, dressing fresh poultry, starting fires including in the coal cookstove, baking cakes and pastries, and getting roasts started. Virtually all the food was fresh and local to a degree unheard of even in today's most prestigious eateries.

"Toad and Bill would kill about 150 chickens in the morning," remembers

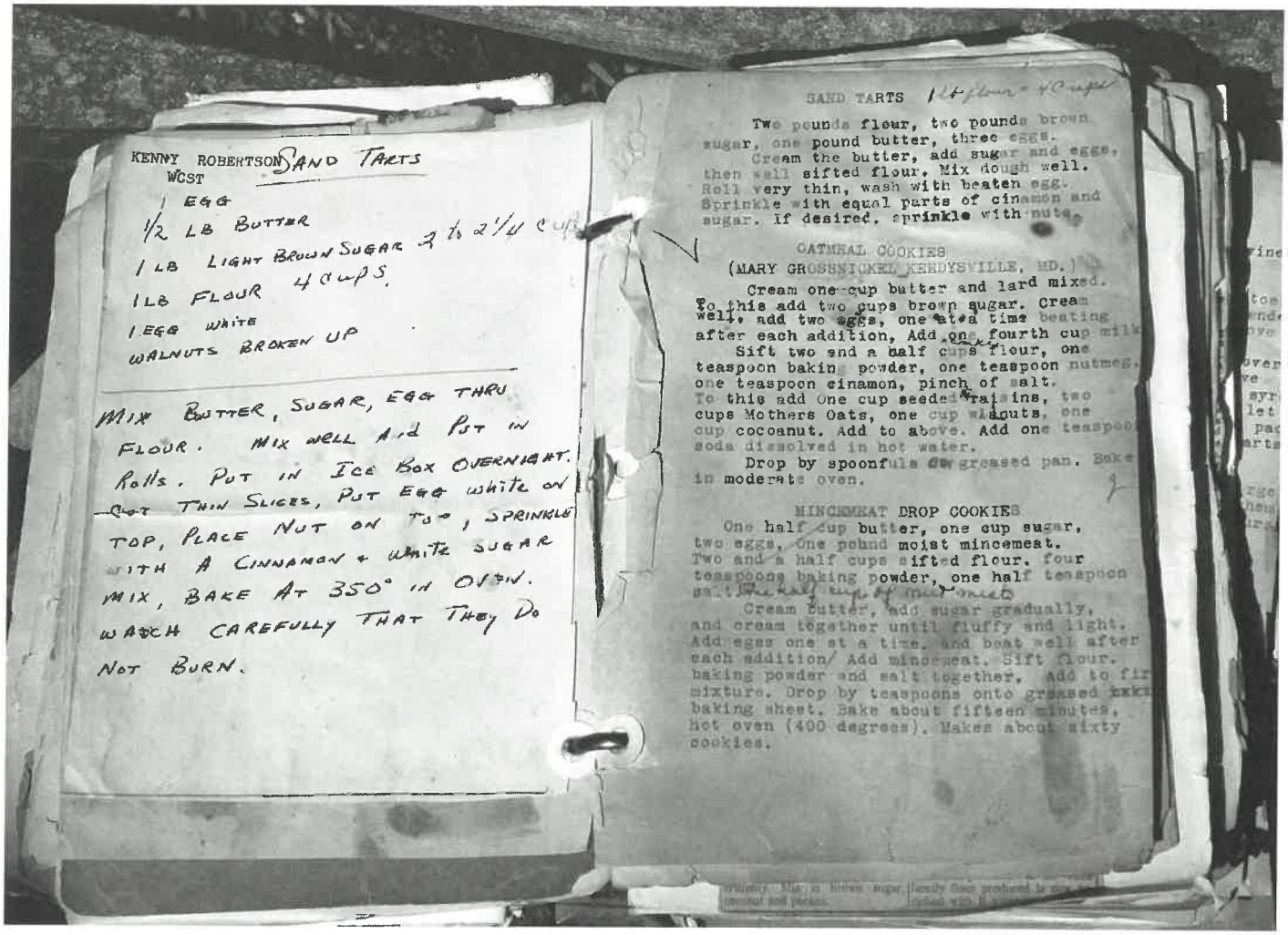
Bob Hawvermale. "They would cut off the heads and throw them in a huge drum where they would flop around. Then we would pluck all the feathers. Eventually they got an electric chicken plucker, but, in the 1930's, we did it by hand." Once plucked, the chickens would go to the kitchen, where the local ladies who did the food prepping and cooking would finish the job, gutting the carcasses and plucking any pinfeathers. "Sunday dinner was a major meal," says Bob. "There was always roast chicken with all the fixings, and fried chicken, too."

As *Hotel Monthly* reported, Toad's work did not end with preparing the food: "With the first sitting served, on goes a clean jacket, and he helps clear the dining-room tables of soiled dishes. Mealtime over, into his Jeep and away he goes over a mountain or two to pick up fresh vegetables, fruit, or poultry." Saturday night was always steak, butchered at the inn from beef bought locally. Toad would don his chef hat and apron and personally attend to the broiling of every steak.

In the early years, the Park View had a large kitchen garden on the hotel grounds. A special group of local women would come to work with Jennie, canning the jellies, jams, pickles, fruits, and vegetables served at meals year 'round. Country ham was always on the menu, and local hams had a special building to hold them. Homemade biscuits were served with every meal; all pies, cakes, and cookies were made in the Park View kitchen.

"We had an Apple Butter Festival every fall at the inn long before there was one in town," recalls Betty Lou. "Aunt Jennie would get local apples, and we'd bring out the copper kettles. We made at least three big batches and jarred the butter to be used at the table and as gifts for everyone at Christmas."

While Toad presided at the "back of the house," Jennie ran the front. "Aunt Jennie was always passionate about flowers," says Betty Lou. "We grew them on the grounds and others at Folkestone," a country house bought in 1942. It was often used for special guests seeking privacy. Jennie would go out every day to pick flowers, and she did all the arranging. "I remember finding her late one night crying while she sat arranging the flowers," recalls Bob Hawvermale. "She said she was so tired, but that she was the only one who could do this."



Good food — and plenty of it — was a hallmark of the Park View Inn. This tattered cookbook was used for all the cooking in the Park View kitchen. Photograph 2007 by Jeanne Mozier.

Aunt Jennie managed the Park View for 15 years following Toad's death in 1954. She is shown here in 1958 in front of her late husband's portrait, with the inn pictured in the background.

Jennie also set the house rules. Meals were served at specific times, and guests could not be served in their rooms, although she waived this rule for Harry Truman's vice president, Alben Barkley, who spent his honeymoon at Park View. "None of the waitresses had ever prepared a tray for a guest before," says Betty Lou. "Bill instructed Faye Murphy in all the details of how to do the tray — white cloth, bud vase, and so on. Faye was impatient with the fuss and snapped, 'I'm d--- glad it's not Eisenhower!'"

Jennie required that guests return to the hotel by 11 p.m., although Toad often slept on the couch to open the door for latecomers. Other nights, when he wanted to go out, he would tell the bellhops to leave the door unlocked. Once Toad was gone, residential guests, like the men from the local sand mine, would climb the fire escape to get in through a window that was always left unlocked. "They said it was like being in a college dorm with a vigilant housemother," recalls Betty Lou.

Jennie Harmison died 40 years after opening the Park View Inn. Toad may have been a born innkeeper, but it was Aunt Jennie who was always there and who, with the help of Toad's nephew Bill, added her mark to the hospitality history of Berkeley Springs. For thousands of guests who thought of the hotel as home, it was Aunt Jennie who made it so.

More than 70 years after the Park View Inn's founding, a hotel still occupies the brick structure at the south end of the park.

JEANNE MOZIER and her husband own and operate the Star Theatre, a vintage neighborhood movie house in Berkeley Springs. She is the author of two books: *Way Out in West Virginia*, and *Wonders of West Virginia* with photographer Steve Shaluta. Jeanne's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was in our Spring 2006 issue.

Today, the former Park View is called the Country Inn, continuing a grand tradition of hospitality in Berkeley Springs.

Betty Lou Harmison

Muse of the Park View Inn

By Jeanne Mozier

Betty Lou Harmison of Berkeley Springs was named a History Hero in 2007 by the West Virginia Archives and History Commission for her lifetime of work preserving and promoting the history of her adopted town. During the brief period of the early 1970's when she and her husband, Bill, were proprietors of the Park View Inn, she collected and saved all the documents related to its building and operation. "I found the papers stuffed in boxes and drawers," she says. Today, she has the hotel's history neatly arranged in binders. Her plan is to write a book. Her extensive archives were the source for much of the accompanying article.

Betty Lou arrived in Berkeley Springs at the beginning of World War II, just in time to finish high school and marry Bill Harmison before he went off to war. By marrying Harmison, Betty Lou found herself surrounded by the rich history of hospitality that came along with his family's business, the Park View Inn.

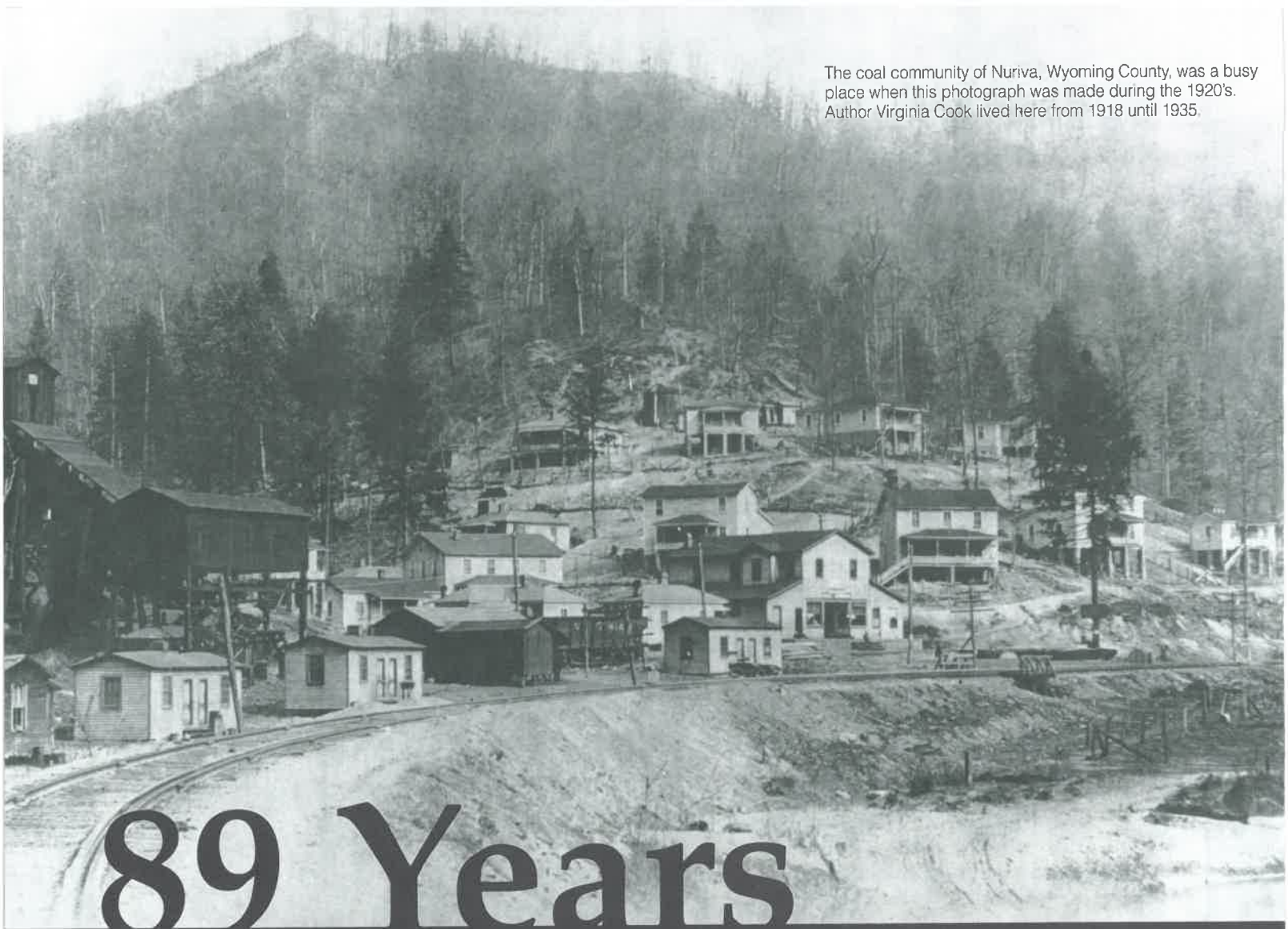
"When Bill came back from the war, Toad and Jennie [Harmison] made him feel an obligation to them and the inn, so he continued working there. He worked seven days a week from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m," she recalls. "He did everything."

Bill took on much of the responsiblity for running the inn along with his Aunt Jennie following his uncle's death in 1954. When she died in 1969, she left him the business. "We operated it for a couple years," says Betty Lou. "Bill was a fourth-generation innkeeper in Berkeley Springs. There was a William Harmison involved with the Berkeley Springs Hotel when President James Polk visited in 1848."

Bill and Betty Lou sold the Park View to Jack and Adele Barker in 1972, who renamed it the Country Inn. When asked in later years why he sold the hotel, Bill replied, "I was tired" — a fair comment from a man who spent virtually all his young and adult life working every job at the hotel.

Bill Harmison died in 2006 after a long illness. Betty Lou lives in a home they built on what was once the kitchen garden of the Park View Inn. The new owners of the property, Nancy and Stjepan Sostaric, have retained the Country Inn name but pay tribute to the Harmison legacy with the Park View Garden Room and by posting Betty Lou's history of the town and inn on their Web site, www.thecountryinnatberkeleysprings.com.

Betty Lou Harmison with her History Hero award in March 2007. Photograph by Jeanne Mozier.



The coal community of Nuriva, Wyoming County, was a busy place when this photograph was made during the 1920's. Author Virginia Cook lived here from 1918 until 1935.

89 Years in the Coalfields

A Satisfying Life in Wyoming County

By Virginia Cook

The narrow valleys between the densely forested hills of upper Wyoming County were very sparsely populated until the beginning of the 20th century. About 1903, W.N. Ritter developed a timbering and sawmill operation at a site along the Slab Fork Creek, later called Maben. Many valuable coal deposits were being discovered in Wyoming County, and in 1906, the Deepwater Railroad (which later became the Virginian) reached the area.

My parents, Bob and Gertrude Wildey, both were born in Cincinnati, Ohio. They married in 1917. My uncle Bill Ruby had purchased a small mining property in southern West Virginia called, variously, Tracefork, Tracoal, and then Nuriva. He prevailed on my dad to move to West Virginia and become his office manager.

Several miles below Maben, at the confluence of Slab Fork Creek and the Guyandotte River, a small town called Mullens was growing into a mining and railroad center. I was born on August 25, 1918, at the Mullens hospital. I have the hospital bill, which states that the doctor charged $5 and the nurse $3 a day, for 10 days. Later, a brother and sister completed the family.

Nuriva was built on a hillside with modest frame houses, a tipple, and a company store. The superintendent, office manager, store manager, and mine foreman all had houses in the top row. We walked up a long flight of wooden steps to get home.

Our house had a coal furnace in the basement, which my dad had to bank every night and stir up every morning. At first, we had an icebox in the kitchen. An ice man came around weekly in a wagon and hoisted a large chunk of ice into our box. Milk was delivered daily in bottles outside the back door by a Lusk family, who lived up a nearby hollow.

Mother did many household tasks that are now obsolete. The wooden floors had to be waxed regularly. First, you spread paste wax while on your knees, and then you shined it with a heavy block waxer on a pole. We three children enjoyed putting on heavy socks and scooting around to help shine the floor.

When her lace curtains were dirty, they were washed, starched, and then stretched on frames with little nails sticking up on all the edges.

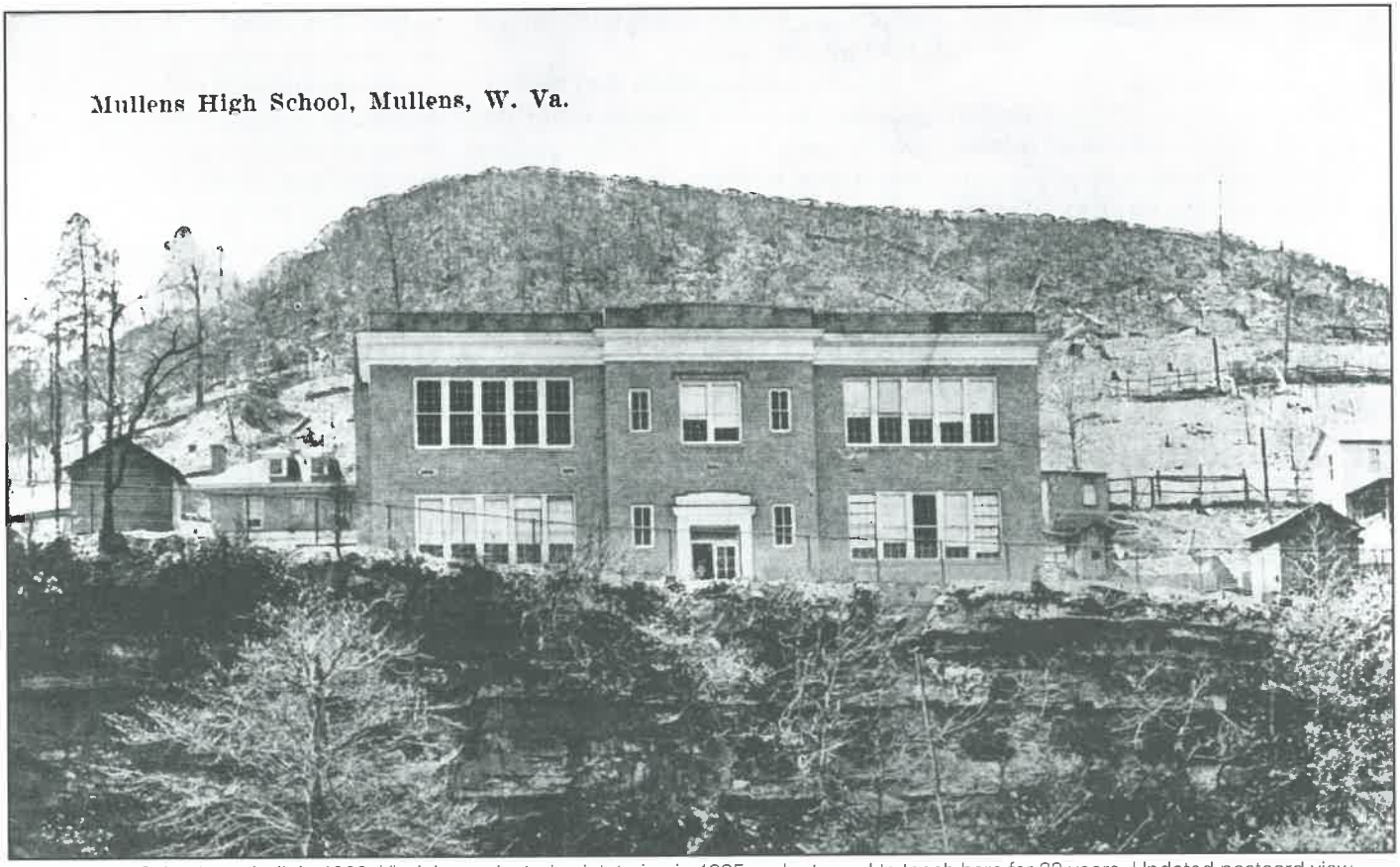
We had a chicken coop at the end of the yard. For Sunday dinners, Mother would wring the neck of the chicken (quite a feat) or chop it off on top of a tree stump. Following that, she plucked the feathers, singed the fine hairs below, and finally cut the bird into pieces.

Another tedious task that Mother seemed to enjoy was cleaning the wallpaper. She used a dough-like substance, with which she made long strokes down the paper surface. She continually kneaded the dirt into the cleaning substance as she worked over each wall. Since there was coal dirt from the poorly filtered hot-air furnace, one could clearly see the improvement.

Wash day, usually Monday, was a very difficult day in the early 1920's. The homemaker fixed at least two washtubs of water: one soapy and the other for rinsing. She scrubbed the dirt out of the clothes on a washboard, then put them through a hand-operated wringer into the rinse water and finally wrung them out again.

They were hung on a line in the backyard to dry. If it rained, she had to dry them in the house or basement.

Virginia Wildey (Cook) with sister, Betty (at left), and brother, Jim, at Nuriva in about 1930.



Mullens High School was built in 1928. Virginia graduated salutatorian in 1935 and returned to teach here for 33 years. Undated postcard view courtesy of WVSA.

Tuesday was ironing day, with many items starched, dampened, and pressed. Some families used heavy irons heated on a coal stove.

We had the only home phone in the camp, a black one hanging on the living-room wall. Occasionally, we'd be awakened during the night by a miner asking us to "please call the doctor."

The company store had boxes and barrels, from which dried fruit, lard, and other items were measured out to customers. Blocks of cheese and sides of meat allowed the store man to cut the pieces and sizes requested. Dad's office furnished scrip, which could be used for money in the store.

My parents enjoyed an active social life with officials from other mines, professionals, and business people from Mullens. My dad loved to dance. If a group of friends arrived, often the living-room rug was rolled up and records put on the Victrola. Some people had a player piano instead. We children were excited to watch. Dad was the one who taught me to dance.

Another pleasure was going swimming down the Guyandotte River at Blue Hole with family and friends. After the swim, we enjoyed hot dogs roasted on a stick over an open fire.

Our first car was a Jewett. To get new cars to sell, the automobile dealer could have them shipped in on a train, or he could hire a group of young men to drive them in from the factory. My husband told me of doing this when he was young. The cars had a regulator, so they could only go 35 miles per hour. With the roads at that time, it was a very tiresome journey.

Our main vacation every year was to drive to Cincinnati to visit relatives. Traveling in West Virginia in those days took one over many mountains with narrow, winding two-lane roads, usually with no railings on the sides for protection. Filling stations and restrooms were very scarce. On one of Dad's most frustrating trips, he had to fix five flat tires.

On one trip, our route took us to a ferry across the Ohio River. The sides of the ferry only had a rope across. I remember being scared that the car might roll off into the Ohio River!

School busses were unheard of during my time in school. I walked with friends down the railroad tracks through the tunnel, across the trestle, and on to school. It was enjoyable and good exercise, too.

A new high school was built in 1928. Many of my classes were interesting and challenging. I especially remember chemistry with W.S. Woodell, who later became a professor at Concord College. We had school banquets and club dance programs. Also, my crowd had parties at home, where, at the junior-high age, we played kissing games, like post office and spin the bottle. When I entertained, I always served homemade oatmeal cookies and root beer we made in the basement.

Movies were popular. Although they were in black and white and were silent, the conversation was

printed on the screen. Various local girls were hired to play the piano during the performance.

In the summertime, carnivals and circuses came to town. The visiting chautauqua, also in a tent, presented both educational and entertaining programs. [See "Chautauqua: Bringing Culture to Clarksburg," by Mary V. Stealey; Winter 1991.]

I graduated in 1935 and was salutatorian of my class.

During this period, the Great Depression hit Wyoming County. Mines were closing. Banks were failing in Mullens. My uncle sold Nuriva, and Dad was temporarily out of work. After a worrisome period trying to sell insurance, he took a new job as office manager for Buckeye Coal & Coke Company at Stephenson.

When it came time to start college, Mother thought a two-year girls' school, Virginia Intermont, at Bristol, Virginia, would be right for me. I enjoyed the classes there and the other girls, but the rules were very strict.

I made flowered living-room drapes and covered two orange crates for a dressing table. I thought it was the prettiest apartment in town.

Woodrow "Woody" and Virginia Cook at their wedding in August 1940.

After Intermont, I enrolled as a junior at West Virginia University. In 1937, there was only one girls' dorm, Woman's Hall, located on the hill above the parade ground.

During the Depression years, the New Deal helped provide money for students to work in order to earn part of their college tuition. Both at Intermont and WVU, I worked under the NYA [National Youth Administration] as a dining-room waitress, dorm receptionist or "buzzer girl," and cafeteria server.

After the strict girls' school experience, in September 1937, a boy led me down High Street and up an alley to dance at the Rendezvous. I thought I was in heaven! Dances were also held at the armory or at the Hotel Morgan. A circle dance called the "Big Apple" was popular, where different dancers were called to the center of the circle to shine.

After graduation, I went home to Mullens and was hired to teach home economics at the high school. I found a local boy was waiting for me. He sang beautifully and was one of the best dancers in town. The Depression had erased his dream of going to WVU law school. So, after several years at Concord College, he was clerking at the local men's store and driving a school bus.

Woodrow Cook and I were married in August 1940 at the Presbyterian church. His mother made my wedding dress and the one for my matron of honor, Helen Shufflebarger. I made the one for the bridesmaid, my sister Betty. Since we had no florist in Mullens at the time, my Aunt Mae Ruby made the bouquets.

We bought some furniture for a three-room apartment. I made flowered living-room drapes and covered two orange crates for a dressing table. I thought it was the prettiest apartment in town.

We settled down to "live happily ever after," but World War II was looming. In the spring, Woody found his name at the top of the draft list. Several of his friends had also been called to the service, so we had a farewell dinner at a local spaghetti spot. We danced enthusiastically to "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree with Anyone Else but Me till I Come Marching Home."

He was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for basic training. I was pregnant with our first daughter, and our letters were full of "how could we get him out of the army." He was discharged a month before Pearl Harbor, and our family life resumed. Little red-haired Barbara Lea Cook was delivered in 1942 in our apartment.

The war worsened, and Woody worried that he might be drafted again as a private. So, in the spring, he applied for officer training school. I went down for the ceremony and dance at Camp Lee, Virginia, when

he became a second lieutenant. After a time at Fort Dix, New Jersey, he sailed for England on the Queen Elizabeth. He was assigned to the quartermaster corps of the 8th Air Force and remained in England for the duration of the war. Before he was discharged in 1945, he had risen to the rank of major.

At home, we had gas and meat rationing. Women met to roll bandages and wrote many letters to our servicemen. A certain number of our local servicemen were killed before the war was over, and others endured appalling conditions as prisoners of war.

In the period after the war, our small town was booming. Coal was in great demand. On Saturday nights, the streets were crowded. Our high school had so many pupils that one class was held in the ground floor entry way.

At my first county teachers meeting, I naively wondered why the large group of Negro teachers didn't vote. Later I found out that, at the time, they weren't allowed to be members of the state educational association, but had their own separate organization.

Our second daughter, Lucinda O'Neal Cook, was born in 1947 at Wyoming General Hospital.

I thoroughly enjoyed my 33 years teaching vocational home economics at Mullens High. I tried always to make my classes interesting and useful to the girls. Our state supervisors, Pauline Stout and Genevieve Williams of Bridgeport, set high standards and gave useful help. In my earliest days, I was expected to make home visits to all my pupils, and did so, through the coal camps, up the hollows, and along the mountain ridges. Seeing my girls in their homes made my teaching more realistic.

Another of my duties was to have a Future Homemakers of America club. Every year, I took a group of girls to Leadership Camp, first at Jackson's Mill, later at Cedar Lakes. I was on the committee of vocational agriculture and home economics teachers who, in 1949, near Ripley, crossed a swinging bridge, surveyed a wide expanse of land, and recommended choosing this area as a site for the state FFA/FHA camp, Cedar Lakes. [See "Building Cedar Lakes," by Debbie Sonis Jackson; Fall 1990.] Our club was very active. We gave programs, had style shows, and every year took a busload of girls to the southern regional meeting at Concord College.

Virginia Cook taught home economics at Mullens High School for more than three decades. This undated photograph shows her conducting a classroom cooking demonstration.

Our two daughters were both good students, and both sang in church choir and for many programs. They also participated successfully in speech activities. Both attended and graduated from WVU.

In 1962, as a junior, Barbie competed successfully for vice president of the WVU student body. Law student Ralph Bean, Jr., from Moorefield, ran for and won the presidency. Their collaboration led to marriage. They now live in Bridgeport.

Daughter Cindy married dental student Jean Chagnon of Manchester, New Hampshire. Cindy has been president of the New Hampshire school board association. Both daughters are active in good causes in their areas.

My husband, Woodrow, became a partner in N.D. Trent men's store. He also served as a city councilman, mayor of Mullens for eight years, and commissioner of Wyoming County court for 18 years. In 1960, both Jack Kennedy's and Hubert Humphrey's campaigns brought them to Mullens. Since my husband was mayor, he drove the convertible in which Jack Kennedy rode around town.

After much planning, we had a two-story brick house built on Mullens Hill. Here, we've enjoyed many

dinners, bridge sessions, picnics, and badminton games in the backyard with family and friends.

The coal boom gradually died. Some area mines closed, and mechanization required many fewer employees at those that continued. A better road to Beckley took shoppers away from our local stores, and they declined. Many buildings became empty.

The terrible flood of 2001 almost wiped out our little town. Slab Fork Creek became a mighty river that streamed down all our city streets, ruining all the businesses, the bank, the post office, and the churches.

We have recovered somewhat, although some businesses closed, and buildings were torn down or remain empty. With the help of volunteers from many places, all the churches have been restored. But our population today is much smaller. Mullens High has merged with Pineville High to become Wyoming East. However, its total enrollment is not as large as that of Mullens High after World War II.

Possibly because of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coal is in demand again. Huge coal trucks rumble through our streets, and long coal drags are common on the railroad through our town.

Virginia and Woody enjoyed an active social life, including frequent dances. They are shown here at the Guy 'n' Dot Christmas square dance in 1979.

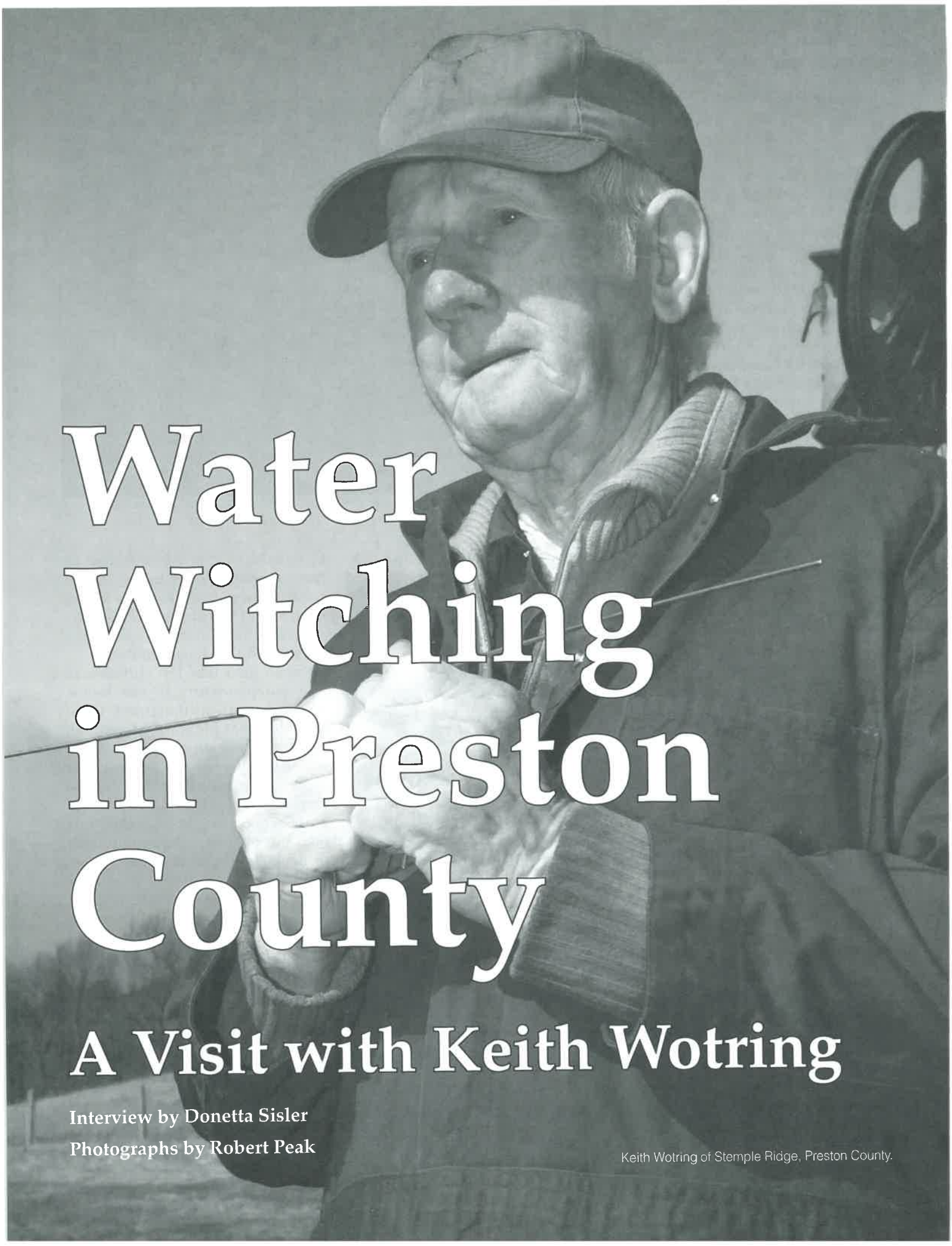
In February 2004, my husband died. I had to learn how to be a widow, as have so many ladies in my church congregation. I had kept his letters from World War II, and I read many of them to him during his last winter. We relived that long-ago time.

I'm so glad that I'm still able to live independently in our home. Vacations with my daughters' families add great pleasure. My church provides inspiration and fellowship, and I enjoy growing flowers. For exercise, I can walk in the Mullens Opportunity Center, located in our old grade school. Neighbors and friends take me to doctors' appointments in Beckley, the local senior center, Council on Aging, and to dinner theaters at Tamarack in Beckley. The state library commission provides a wide variety of books on tape and large-print books, which are welcome due to my increasing macular degeneration.

So, at 89 years, my days in Mullens are still enjoyable. As I look back, I feel I've had a most satisfying life. Small towns are friendly, safe places in which to spend a life, especially in southern West Virginia.

Virginia Cook today in Mullens. "Small towns are friendly, safe places in which to spend a life, especially in southern West Virginia," she says. Photograph by Bill Archer.

VIRGINIA COOK lives in Mullens. This is her first published work.

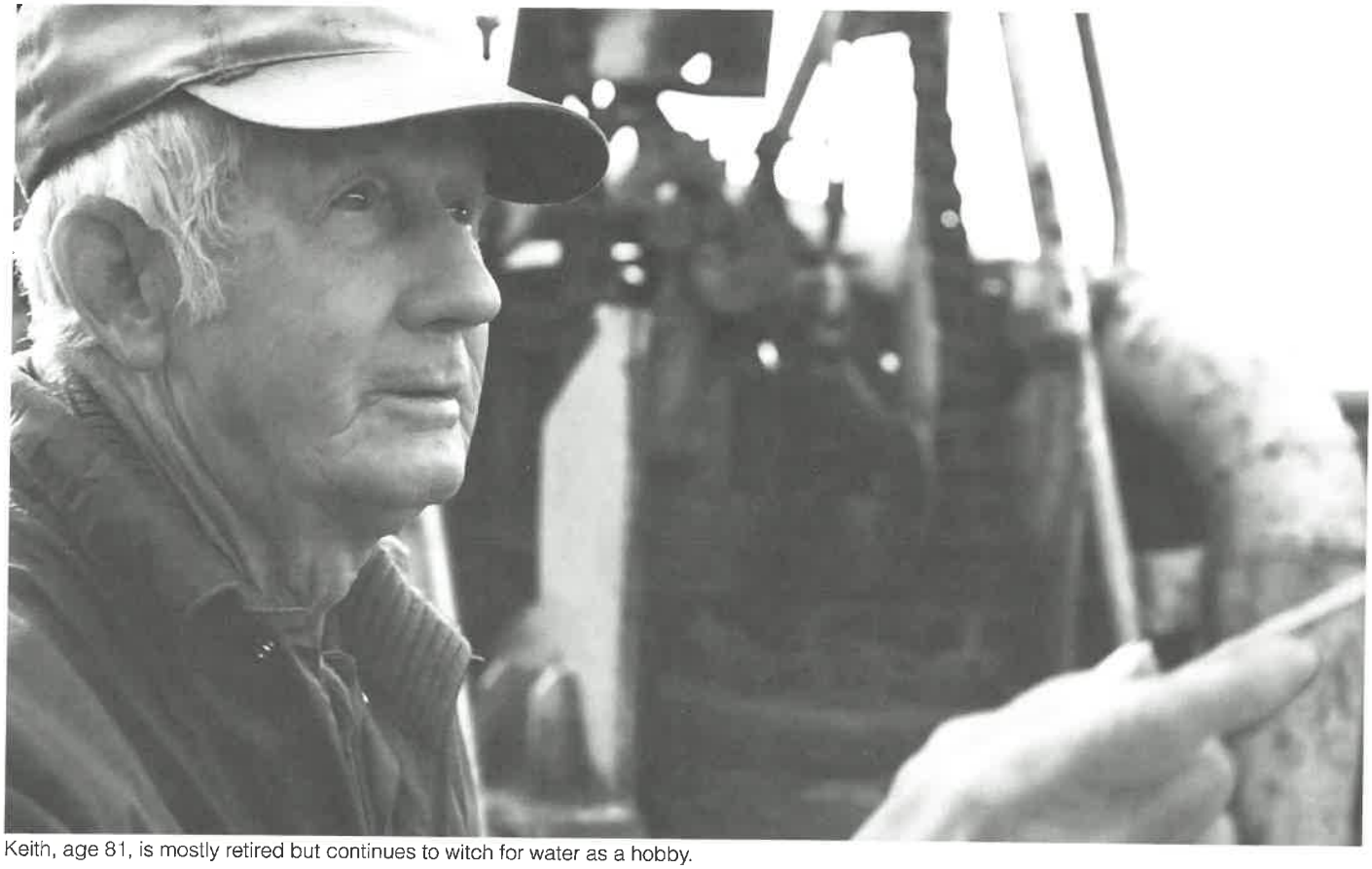


Water Witching in Preston County

A Visit with Keith Wotring

Interview by Donetta Sisler
Photographs by Robert Peak

Keith Wotring of Stemple Ridge, Preston County.



Keith, age 81, is mostly retired but continues to witch for water as a hobby.

Keith Wotring was born in July 1926. He grew up on Stemple Ridge, Preston County, across from the Grange Hall School, which he attended for nine years. Keith was deferred from joining the army because of hardships at home. His mother suffered a terminal illness, and Keith stayed at home to help with her care and to help his dad eke out a living on the farm, supporting his eight siblings.

Keith's hard-working childhood prepared him for an array of occupations over the years. His first job was working for Gay Loughrie in the timber business, followed by Snead & Everly mining in Accident, Maryland. He later worked as a mechanic for Garbart Coal Company and as a mechanic for Joe Fint at Seneca Sand stone quarry. Finally, Keith was self-employed as a mechanic, an electrician, doing backhoeing, and digging wells. Those were his full-time jobs. His hobby, however, is witching wells.

Those of us who do not live in metropolitan areas depend on ground wells for water. In late summer, many of my neighbors experience the havoc of their wells running dry or getting low. Farmers have to haul water from ponds and streams for their livestock, and others haul water for their homes from springs in the area.

One recent summer, my water pump began running abnormally, and my electric bill showed a sharp increase. I went to visit my good friend Keith to see if he could help me. He determined I had a leak in the water line. After twisting the arms of several family members, I prepared for the big day of pulling the submersible pump out of my 260-foot-deep well. I needed to install new plastic line.

We drug the line in a circle around my yard. At each step of the process, Keith would ask me questions. It finally occurred to me that Keith was trying to teach me his trade. He didn't want to just come over and get the job done. He wanted me to understand every aspect of the process.

Inspired by my experience with Keith that day, I decided I had to write his story.

Donetta Sisler. At what point in your life did you realize that you had the skill to witch wells?

Keith Wotring. Well, I just got me two wires, and I just tried it. It worked.

DS. How did you know it worked?

KW. Well, the first well I ever drilled, I tested it, and it worked from there on. I just get better and better all the time.

DS. How did you figure out you were getting better?

KW. Well, the wires was working differently. Instead of crossing, they was going out straight. You learned

if they went out straight, it showed you which way the way the water was a-running.

DS. So if the wires are going out straight, you just position yourself in that path to see which way it's running?

KW. Right.

DS. When you are digging a well, why does it matter which way it's running?

KW. Well, you know whereabout the stream is. If you get off the side of it a little bit, maybe five or six inches, you'll miss it. Then you wouldn't get no water.

DS. When you're going out with your wires, how do you know when you have hit a stream?

KW. They'll start moving out. When they go like that, that's a main stream. And you got one, maybe two, maybe four on each side of that main stream.

DS. How do you figure out where to mark the spot? If you're on a stream, a long stream, how do you decide this is the place?

KW. I mark that place, and then I check clear around it. If it's right, right there's where it will be.

DS. When you know you have water, what is happening to the wires?

KW. They'll turn and they'll slither. You can put 'em back, and they'll fly right back out as long as you're right there on that stream. If you back off of it and there's no water there, they won't move. They'll just stay there.

DS. Do you always use wires?

KW. Yeah.

DS. How long are they?

Stainless steel welding rods, cleaned up and bent at the proper angle, serve as divining rods for Keith as he searches for underground streams of water.

KW. About eight inches, stainless steel. They is welding rods. I took the coating off of them, cleaned them up.

DS. Can you remember the first well you witched?

KW. Yep. Out at Big Bear Lake. We's just playing around out there, and a guy had limbs. He was witching with a limb. I picked up a couple welding rods, bent them, got 'em in my hands, and they started workin'. I took the coating off the rods, smashed them with a hammer to get to the stainless steel.

DS. When they are bent, how much are you holding onto?

KW. I just got 'em in my hands, they're just loose. When you hit that stream of water, they'll turn right in your hands.

DS. Do you have any idea how many wells you have dug?

KW. Well, I know it's over 100.

DS: How far [down] can you go?

KW. 300 feet.

DS. What have been some of your problems?

KW. When you hit sand, you gotta put steel casing in. With my rig, I can't put it in. I don't have the thing to do it with. It'll take over. You have to get out.

DS. You have hit caves before. Why did you have to quit drilling?

KW. Afraid of losing the seals. Get down there and bend around. That's it. You done lost 'em.

"They'll turn and they'll slither. You can put 'em back, and they'll fly right back out as long as you're right there on that stream."

DS. As an electrician, did you teach yourself how to hook up the wiring for the pumps?

KW. Yep. One time, when I lived at Gortner, I wired a new house. That was the first one I ever wired. Inspector come out there, and he checked that out. Said, "Who is that feller done that for you? The best job I ever seen." The wires wasn't bent and twisted around. Everything was just neat as could be. That was the first one I ever done. I done it at night.

DS. When did you dig your last well?
KW. The first of July [2006].

DS. So when you turned 80, you were still digging a well?

KW. Yep.

Carol Wotring. He does it [witches wells] now for Dixon, 3-D Drilling from Kingwood.

KW. Yeah, the last three wells.

DS. Why did they get you?

KW. [The limbs] are not working for him. He witches with the limbs. The last one on Lantz Ridge, 450 feet, nothing. He came up here and wanted me to go out there and witch. He said something's the matter. I went out there and witched around and found one. Then I went up around his. Wasn't nothing there.

DS. Does he pay you to witch a well?

KW. I didn't charge him anything. They've been good to me, and I'm good to them.

DS. If someone asked you to witch a well for them, do they pay you?

KW. If they want to give me something, it's all right. If they don't, it's all right. I move on.

CW. No, he never charges anything.

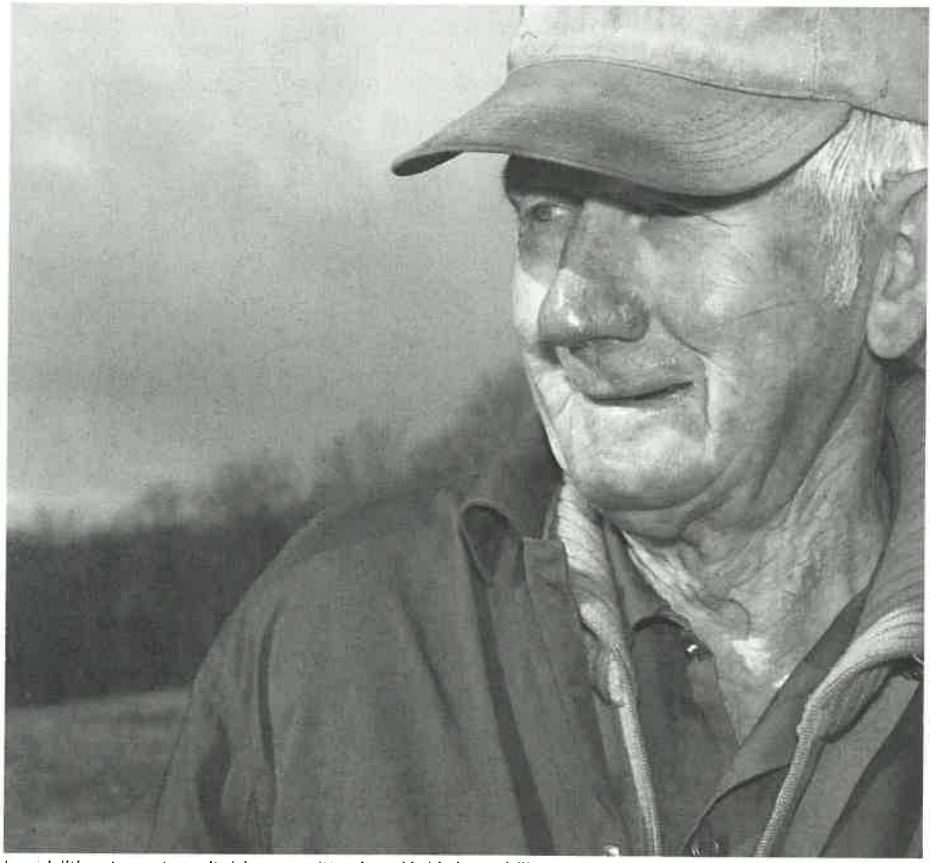
DS. Does Dixon always witch a well before he starts drilling?

KW. Oh yeah. He wouldn't start drilling without a witch. A lot of them don't believe in it. It's true. Some of them just set up and drill.

DS. Can you witch for anything other than water?

KW. Nope, I can walk across a water line and won't even pick it up. Water line. From your well, you know, into your house. I can walk across it, and it will never move. Some other people can pick up the water line, but I can't. My rods won't even move on a water line or sewer line or anything.

DS. I don't understand what you are saying. They won't move on a water line, but what do they move on?



In addition to water witching, or dowsing, Keith is a skilled electrician and driller. He has also worked in the timber industry, as a mechanic, and operating a backhoe.

Keith Wotring's drilling rig. Keith has drilled more than 100 wells and says he can go down as far as 300 feet with this equipment.

Young Dakota Peak gets a lesson in dowsing from Keith Wotring.

KW. Just that stream of water.

DS. You have one daughter, Kathy Wiles, and two grandchildren, Melanie and Robbie. Do any other family members do this?

KW. Melanie. Yeah, she can pick 'er right up.

DS. Have you ever witched a well and been totally off?

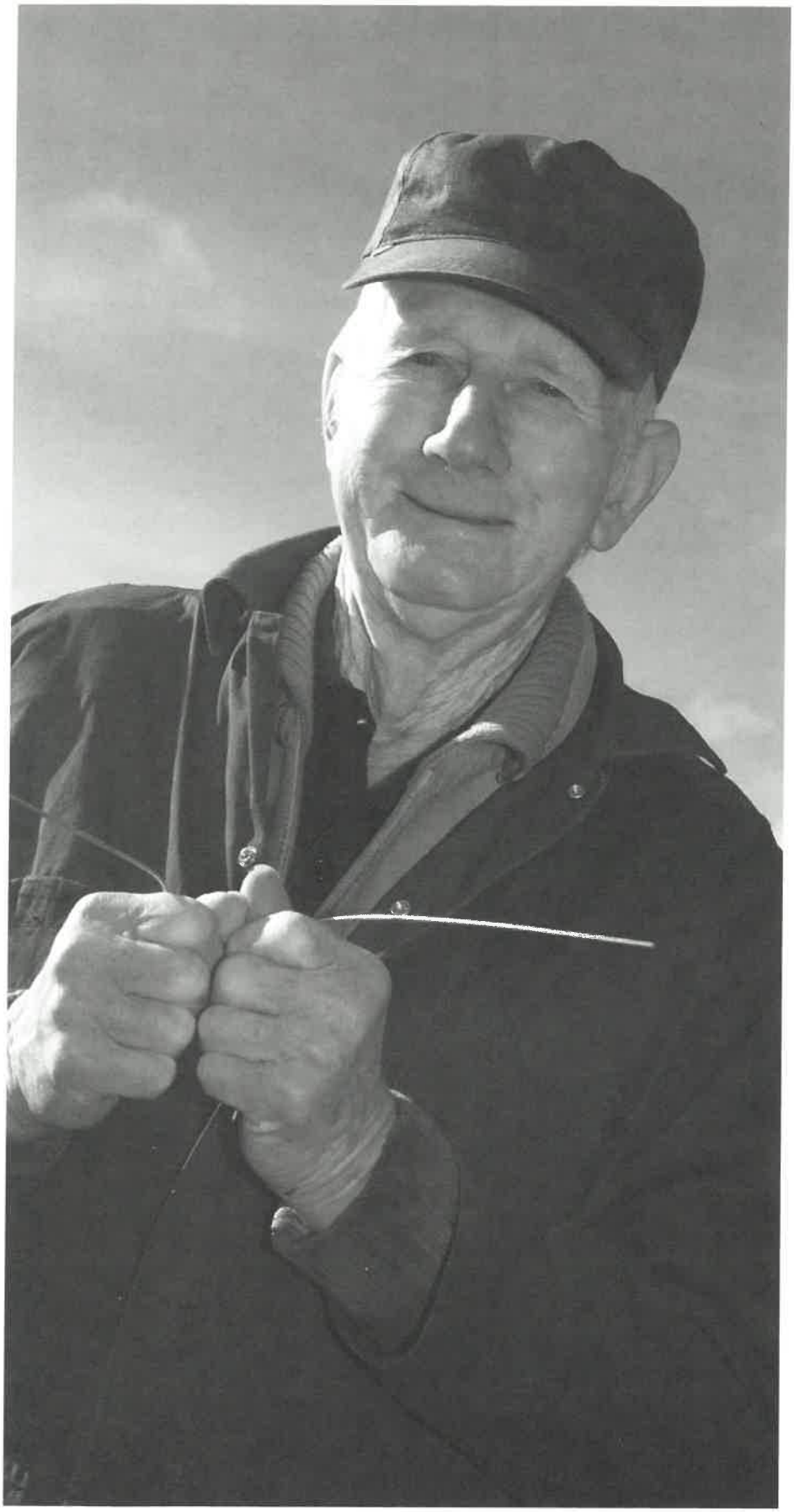
KW. Nope. They've always been true to me.

DS. When people ask you to witch a well, why do you do it?

KW. Help people out.

DS. What do you do in your spare time?

KW. Work in the garage. Work on motors, lawn mowers, and stuff.



Keith Wotring enjoys using his gift to witch for water in order to help others, he says.

After turning off the tape recorder, Keith took me outside to show me his magic. After using his wires to find a stream in his yard, he handed them to me. Low and behold, I found out I have the power, too! I was exhilarated. Keith explained that the underground streams have three levels: The first stream is surface water, the second is good water, and the third is iron. A driller aims to quit drilling one casing below the second stream.

Water witches are also called dowsers or diviners. Many of them use maple, peach, willow, or apple branches instead of metal rods. Metal coat hangers can work, too. It is estimated only one in 1,000 persons has the capability of witching. To some, witching remains a mystery. To those who practice, it is likened to situations where the good Lord uses them, without questioning why it works. It is a talent to enjoy.

DONETTA SISLER is a lifelong resident of the Aurora community in Preston County. She holds a master's degree in education from West Virginia University and has taught business subjects in a high school in Accident, Maryland, for 28 years. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2001 issue.

ROBERT PEAK is a photographer and graphic designer living in Berkeley Springs. His work has been published in *National Geographic, Escape,* and *Adventure Cyclist*. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2001 issue.

First Lady and the Ramp Egg

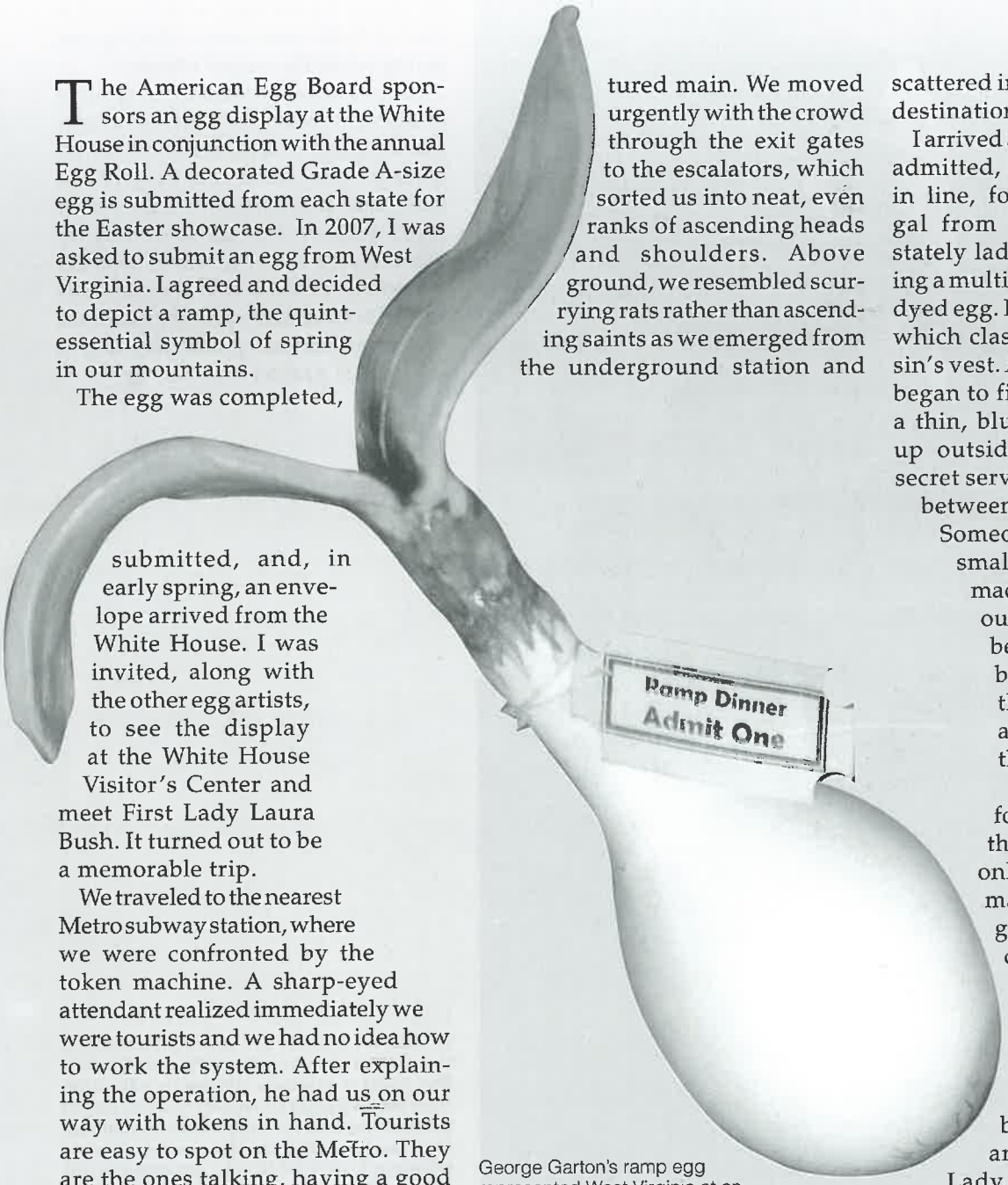
By George Garton

The American Egg Board sponsors an egg display at the White House in conjunction with the annual Egg Roll. A decorated Grade A-size egg is submitted from each state for the Easter showcase. In 2007, I was asked to submit an egg from West Virginia. I agreed and decided to depict a ramp, the quintessential symbol of spring in our mountains.

The egg was completed, submitted, and, in early spring, an envelope arrived from the White House. I was invited, along with the other egg artists, to see the display at the White House Visitor's Center and meet First Lady Laura Bush. It turned out to be a memorable trip.

We traveled to the nearest Metro subway station, where we were confronted by the token machine. A sharp-eyed attendant realized immediately we were tourists and we had no idea how to work the system. After explaining the operation, he had us on our way with tokens in hand. Tourists are easy to spot on the Metro. They are the ones talking, having a good time, and looking at one another. The regulars sit or stand quietly with expressionless faces, staring into vacant areas, avoiding eye contact of any sort.

At our stop downtown, people burst from the cars like water from a ruptured main. We moved urgently with the crowd through the exit gates to the escalators, which sorted us into neat, even ranks of ascending heads and shoulders. Above ground, we resembled scurrying rats rather than ascending saints as we emerged from the underground station and scattered in all directions to various destinations.



George Garton's ramp egg represented West Virginia at an official Easter egg display at the White House in 2007.

I arrived at the event, was screened, admitted, and placed next-to-last in line, followed by a gregarious gal from Virginia. Ahead was a stately lady from Wisconsin, wearing a multicolored vest resembling a dyed egg. I wore a many-colored tie, which clashed nicely with Wisconsin's vest. As we waited, excitement began to fill the air. Finally, behind a thin, blue curtain, a limo pulled up outside. Silhouetted forms of secret service agents took positions between the limo and the door. Someone said, "There she is!" A small figure stepped out and made her way to the door. Her outline moved down the line behind the curtain and then briefly passed by a gap in the curtains, resulting in an audible murmur from the group.

Finally, she stepped out for all to see and approached the egg display. A hush that only a librarian could command descended over the group. After a round of official greetings and introductions, the First Lady's aides and agents took positions around the egg display, the photographer set up quickly, and the process began. One at a time, the artists approached the First Lady, shook her hand, pointed out their egg, turned to have their picture taken, and moved on — an assembly-line procedure that lasted about 25 seconds each.

I stood beside a female aide, waiting to advance, when, like a field commander ordering troops into

Author George Garton with First Lady Laura Bush.

battle, she curtly said to me, "Go." I obediently moved to the next station beside a burly male aide.

As I stood waiting beside this aide, the thought occurred to me, "Sweaty hand! Oh no! I'm about to shake hands with the First Lady with a soppy puppy paw." So I thrust my right hand inside my jacket, Napoleon style, to wipe it on my shirt. This menacing action immediately drew the attention of two agents who glared at me. Realizing my predicament, I slowly removed the offending hand, then, as Wisconsin walked away, a nudge to the back of the arm signaled it was my turn.

I approached the First Lady, a slight woman, ramrod straight posture, character lines at the corners of the eyes — the gift of time, children, and a husband who became president — a practiced manner that is still genuine, and an honest sincerity and graciousness. Her hand was slender and delicate, but the grip had a politician's firmness.

She read my tag and proclaimed "Well, it's West Virginia!" drawing out the last "a" in a manner reminiscent of A. James Manchin's famous "West Vir-GIN-yahh." I told her my name and pointed out my egg on the stand. She responded, "Oh, how wonderful!" in the sweet, gentle, sing-song manner of an elementary school teacher. The First Lady stood patiently, and I began to explain the egg:

"It depicts the ramp, a wild leek that grows in the mountains of West Virginia," I said. "Each spring, organizations such as volunteer fire departments harvest the ramps and put on fund-raising dinners." The First Lady nodded approvingly. I then told her, "If the president would only come to West Virginia and eat some ramps with us, he wouldn't be bothered by all those pesky reporters for two or three days." Her brow furrowed, her head tilted slightly to the left, her eyes narrowed, a short wordless pause, and she responded with an icy "Oh." I realized immediately that 10 seconds is not enough time to expound convincingly to anyone on the munificent benefits of the ramp. The First Lady then turned for our picture. FLASH. She thanked me for providing an egg, and Virginia was moving in to take my place. My 25 seconds with the First Lady were history.

The First Lady waved goodbye to us, and we responded with appreciative applause. She moved outside into a gauntlet of sunglassed agents and ducked quickly into her limo, followed by the retinue of aides, off to her next venue. We realized that, unlike the First Lady who was a virtual hostage to her aides, agents, and schedule, we were free to come and go as we pleased. Meeting her was a high honor for all of us, but none of us envied her job.

We toured the White House and exited on the Lafayette Park side. Here we saw a biblically dressed character with long hair and beard. He had a ram's horn, upon which he would blow in the direction of the White House. This was followed by a ranting quotation of scripture and condemning analysis of the president's performance. The tourists, most of whom were school children, paid little, if any, attention. On the expansive front lawn was displayed an equally expansive banner, approximately four feet high and 50 feet long. In big, bold letters, the sign proclaimed, "Americans Against Male Circumcision." The sign attendants looked bored.

As we headed back to our car, we reflected on all we had seen this day and thought, "What a great country we live in! What a wonderful thing, freedom!"

GEORGE GARTON was raised in southern Harrison County, where he still resides. A former teacher, he has worked as a realtor for most of his career. This is George's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

West Virginia Back Roads

Text and photographs by
Carl E. Feather

A Shop for Sore Eyes in St. Marys

Being No. 2 is good enough for Chester Bills. Chester and his wife, Betty, own Bills Antiques and Collectibles on Route 2, in the Pleasants County town of St. Marys. The big sign by the road says "Bills Antiques and Collectibles," but the little one on the front porch says "EYESORE NO. 2."

The dubious designation was made by a delegation of Ohio citizens who identified and ranked the biggest eyesores in St. Marys. After the local newspaper published their findings, Betty fired off a letter to its editor expressing her displeasure at being named Eyesore No. 2, or being named at all, for that matter. She also had the wooden sign made for the front porch, where the store wears it like a badge of honor.

No doubt the delegation was distressed by the quantity of used merchandise that spills out of the store, onto its porch, and across the lawn. The merchandise, which ranges from old hand pumps and washtubs to wooden crates and chairs, stays outdoors in all kinds of weather until sold — or stolen.

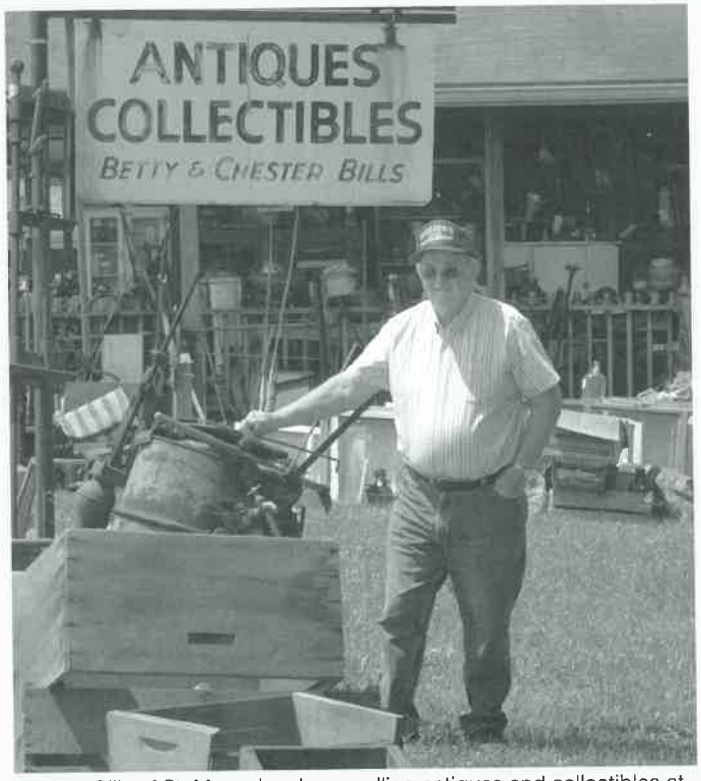
Organization is haphazard inside, as well. Tables and shelves overflow with the stock Chester and Betty have spent years acquiring.

"That's one thing I don't do a very good job at: organization," Chester admits. "I usually wait until I sell something out, then I put something else in its spot. I may not know where the individual piece is, but I know where to look."

Chester and Betty have been selling collectibles at this location, 911 Second Street, since the early 1980's, to the best of his recollection. Getting stock for the shop was no issue for Chester, who was nearing retirement from the construction industry when he decided to go into the antique business. Born in 1927, Chester had been going to auctions since he was 12. "I went with one of the neighbors," he says, recalling his first auction. "I bought a pocket watch. I gave $8 for it. I've been going to auctions ever since."

His purchasing eventually focused on antique engines used in the oil and gas fields around the Ohio River. Chester learned how to restore them and spent a lot of time in antique engine collector circles. At one time, he had more than 60 engines. He says the best money he ever spent at an auction was the dollar he paid for a washing machine with a gasoline engine. "It was a rarity, but it was laying in a pile of junk when I bought it," he recalls. Restored, the engine fetched $800 at a show.

The problem with going to auctions where an antique engine might show up was that Chester would always come home with a great deal more than engines. It was with this accumulation that he opened his store in what had been a rental home.



Chester Bills of St. Marys has been selling antiques and collectibles at this location on Route 2 since the early 1980's. Merchandise spills off the porch and onto the lawn of his shop.

You name it, he's got it. In addition to countless items on display inside and outside his St. Marys store, Chester Bills says he has at least four other buildings and garages full of accumulated merchandise.

"I started this shop as a rental property, but [after] I had it rented three months and didn't get any rent out of it, I told the renters I was going to open a shop. I got out of the real estate business real quick," he says.

Just a few months into the antiques and collectibles business, tragedy — or more accurately, an airplane — struck.

"An airplane lost its power and was trying to make it to the bottoms when it hit my mother's house [next door] with his landing gear," Chester recalls. "Then he hit the roof and chimney [of the store], turned a flip-flop, and landed by the tree."

Betty witnessed the whole thing from her car. The store was closed, and she was at the intersection on her way to work when it happened. Though the pilot survived, the building was a loss. They demolished the old house and started over with a new shop.

It's not been happily-ever-after, however. On at least three occasions, trucks have lost their brakes as they descended the Route 16 hill to Route 2. There was only one place for them to go: through the side yard – and merchandise – of Bills Antiques and Collectibles.

"One came through," says Chester, "and got stopped just before he hit the house."

Chester doesn't worry about the losses from weather, runaway trucks, or after-hours shoppers. "I get a little bit of stuff stolen once in a while, but not very often," he says. "I've had more stuff stolen from inside than outside."

Chester enjoys meeting and talking to his customers, but there are two things about his business he doesn't like: people who balk at paying sales tax on used items and shoppers who assume the prices on used goods are negotiable.

"I feel the public does the antique dealer a disservice when they haggle," he says.

Chester specializes in glassware, appropriate since his shop is located in the traditional heart of the state's glassware industry. The eclectic stock also includes a monstrous antique cash register, violins and a viola, a golf ball collection, antique toys and trains, old tools, and table after table of odds and ends. The stock in his store is but a sampling of the treasures he's purchased at auctions over the years and placed in storage until the right time. He has at least four other buildings and garages "full of stuff."

"I could sell stuff from now until I die, and I wouldn't have to get any more," he says.

Nevertheless, he still tries to attend at least one auction a week in addition to keeping regular hours at the store.

"It gives you a reason to get up and move around in the morning," he says.

Bills Antiques and Collectibles in St. Marys is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m; phone (304)684-9383.

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.

2007 LIARS CONTEST

Perilous diving boards, freezing mules, and long-winded knights came alive at the 2007 State Liars Contest, held last May at the 31st annual Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. The contest winners were Karen McKay of Ripley (First Place), Rich Knoblich of Wheeling (Second Place), Jerry Cooperman of Martinsburg (Third Place), and Noah Lepp of Charleston (Youth Award). Congratulations! Here are selections from the winning tales.

Karen McKay Ripley
First Place

"I Never Looked Back"

I'm wanting to talk mostly to the young people, especially the young girls. You fellas can just nod off at this time. I want to tell you, first of all, that my daddy's daddy was 65 years old when my daddy was born. Now this is an important fact. First, it tells you something about West Virginians, and it tells you something about my daddy. My daddy being raised by two generations before, he was very hard to catch up-to-date.

In 1966, I wanted nothing more than to be like the rest of the girls in Jackson County. I was 13 years old, and I wanted with all my heart to be like the other kids.

The WPA — I have to thank all those departed souls who worked on the municipal swimming pool in Ravenswood, because that swimming pool was just about all there was to do on Memorial Day. All West Virginians know that there's no better word than "free." Cheap is good, but free is better. On Memorial Day, you could go to the swimming pool, constructed by the WPA, and you could get in free.

Of course, all the kids was going to be there. And I wanted to be there, just like all the other girls, in a two-piece bathing suit. In 1966, if you had a two-piece bathing suit and you was 13 years old, you was going to be a popular kid.

I lived way out in the country, and I wanted to be like the town girls. I started working on my daddy early, saying "I've got to have a two-piece bathing suit."

Karen McKay, first-place winner. At left is emcee and contest founder Ken Sullivan. Photographs by Michael Keller.

"Ahhh, no," he said. And I commenced to think, what was the problem with showing two inches of midriff? And I understood, though it came from an old way of thinking, that women really ought not to be wearing even pants.

My daddy would not relent, and I begged and I begged, and I whined and I whined, as only young girls know how to do with their daddies. Finally, he relented.

I went down to Almeda's in Ravenswood, and I got me one of the prettiest two-piece bathing suits you'd ever want to see. It was plaid. Back then they only had one height for the hip, and that was as low as possible. I got me my suit, and I was standing in front of the mirror at home in Silverton, just admiring myself in the full-length mirror with the two-piece bathing suit on. I think I was just looking like I was going to win Miss Teenage America. I just knew it.

There was only one trouble, and I hadn't quite realized it yet. You know those bathing suit tops, they would have a little bra built in. And, of course, that was for people that needed them. I didn't need it. My greatest fear was that people would discover, especially the other girls in town, that I was not developing properly. Back then, I was very tall, skinny, and flat-chested, to tell you the truth. I know you don't believe it right now.

Just in case I hadn't developed in time for Memorial Day, I got to thinking about what I could do. You know them socks that go in together and come back alone? I got to thinking about this. I got me some of those socks, the nylon kind that you could wad up real good, and stretch out, and poke your fingers in them. You could kind of make you a little falsie. So I took those socks, and I eased them into that top of my two-piece bathing suit. I mean to tell you, I was hot.

When I was looking so good, I thought this would be a good time to confront my fear of heights. They had them a high-diving board I had never dared to go off. I figured since I was looking so good, I might as well walk the gang plank and get it done with, all in one fell swoop, looking as good as I did.

Now, you look up at those high-diving boards, and you think that they're about this wide. And you climb the ladder up to the high-diving board, and you get up there, and they're only about like this. Now, I can't see very good, not without my glasses. I was born cross-eyed. I had to look down at the diving board so I wouldn't fall off, walking out there real slow-like till I got to the end of the diving board. It commenced to occur to me that I was going to have to either jump or back down.

That's another thing about West Virginians. They don't back down. Somehow or another, they're going to do it. Now, I believe in prayer. So I paused for a moment and put my back back, so everybody could see my current development, properly. I prayed to God, "Give me the courage to take this leap of life off of the high-diving board down into the pool."

And do you know what? It's a lot farther down than you think. But I was a person of faith and commitment, back then even. I believed in myself, and, more than anything, I believed in not backing down.

So, I held my breath. Everybody go through this with me, just so you can imagine it with me. Take a deep breath, a real deep breath. And I held my nose, and I prayed, and I jumped off as if I was diving off of the Niagara Falls.

I didn't dive — no. I was going to jump feet first. I figured that'd break my fall, because I wear size 12's. So, on the way down, me looking as beautiful as [I] could [while] holding my nose, looking up at God, and taking that last final step off of the great unknown into flight.

The wind was a-whistling, I was holding my nose, and my feet no sooner hit that water, there was a giant pop, and that brassiere top came right up. Them socks flew about 10 foot up in the air. I knew that I was really going to have some trouble owning up to this, so I did the only thing a true West Virginia woman would do. I held my breath and swam to the other end of the pool, and I never looked back.

Jerry Cooperman Martinsburg
Third Place

"Poor Judgment"

I'd like to thank the railroad for being here today. I didn't work on the railroad, and I didn't come here by railroad. The reason I want to thank the railroad is some history lesson back in 1863, at the foundation of our fine state.

First of all, I need to do a little map for you. Right at my fingertips, I have a map of West Virginia. Excuse me, no I don't. That's a map of Texas. Over here I have a map of West Virginia. And the part I want to talk about is the little part here at the end of my thumb, where Martinsburg, and Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan counties are located. Because of the Civil War, the reason why those three counties were included in West Virginia was because the railroad would have been running through enemy territory.

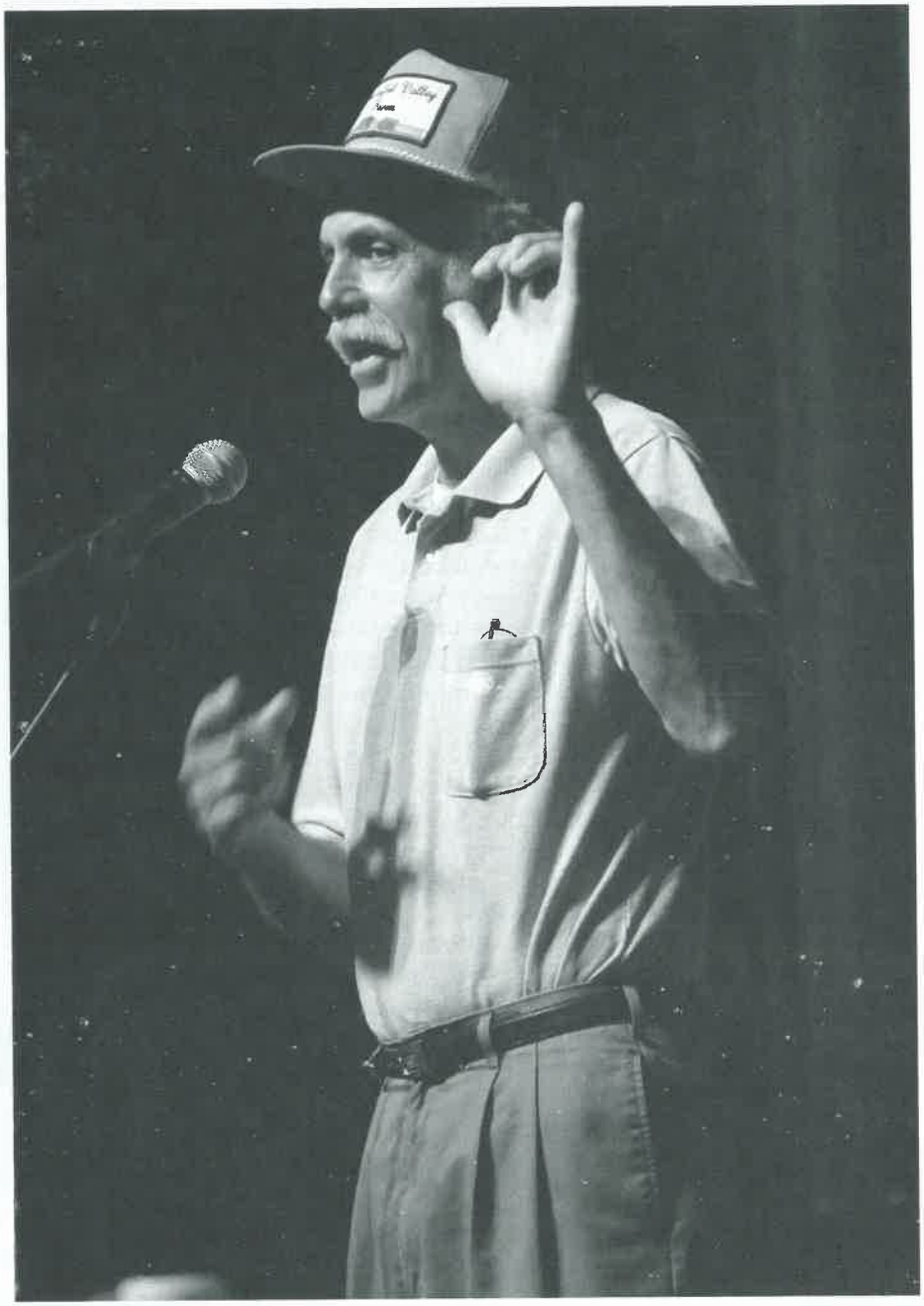
Living in Martinsburg, under other circumstances, I might have been living in Virginia had the railroad not passed through that area. In that case, I would have aspired to be part of the Virginia Liars Contest. The Virginia Liars Contest is handled a little differently than here. The entrance fee is much, much higher. It is not done on a yearly basis, but when you win, you get to live in the Governor's Mansion. Until the next contest.

In West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, we have some important credentials. First of all, it is the source of the barley, the wheat, the corn, and most of the dairy products for the entire state of West Virginia, because it's flat. It has almost all of the animals whose legs are of equal proportions.

There's a special program that's currently going on there. Between the hotel-and-motel industry, the fast-food restaurants, the banks, and the West Virginia Division of Highways, they are intending to eradicate all of the pastures, farmland, and woodlands in the Eastern Panhandle. And they're doing an excellent job of it. In 1954, there were 139,000 acres of farm ground, and in 2002, there were only 54,000. That's approximately one-third left from what there were in 1954. To me, that looks like poor judgment.

Now, you all are probably familiar with poor judgment on a personal basis. Poor judgment would be thinking that the Harlem Globetrotters were bound to lose just anytime now. It would be thinking that Pete Rose was a good bet for the Baseball Hall of Fame. It would be investing in Enron stock now that the price is down.

It would be traveling along the West Virginia Turnpike and refusing to want to pay the $3.75 and run-



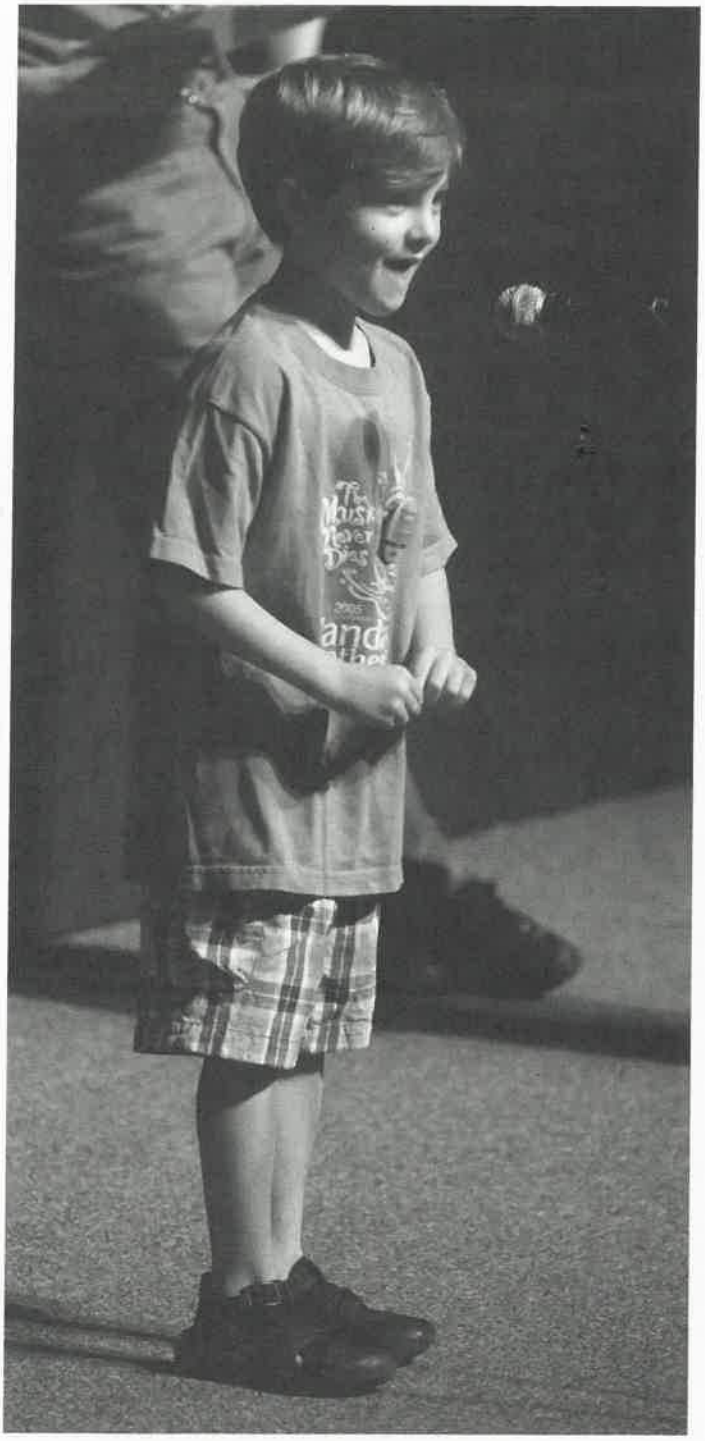
Jerry Cooperman of Martinsburg won second place.

ning out of gas. Only when you ran out of gas, you pulled off to the side of the road, you put on your four-way flashers, you went for help, you came back with the gallon of gas, only to find your battery was dead because the four-way flashers had sucked the juice out of it, and now you need a jump.

Another concept of poor judgment would be to think you're going to make big money at farming. Farming has its own elements of poor judgment. One item would be to wait until the cows came home. Another would be wearing your church clothes down into the barnyard.

The animals themselves can have poor judgment, and it can lead to their difficulties. I'd like to describe to you an event [where] an animal had poor judgement, and it led to the animal's demise. And that would be in poetic form:

Once a faulty 'lectric wire
Caused the corncrib to catch on fire;
The kernels popped and shot around,
Like winter snow across the ground;
The noise awoke the old brown mule,
Who showed poor judgment, as a rule;
Despite mild weather, she took ill,
The sight of snow caused her a chill;
Safe in her stall, they found old Rose,
That August morn the mule had froze.



Seven-year-old Noah Lepp of Charleston was presented with a special youth award. Noah's father, Bil, and uncle, Paul, were each winners of the West Virginia Liars Contest on multiple occasions.

Noah Lepp Charleston Youth Award

"The Dragon's Tale"

Once upon a time, there were two knights called Bob and Joe. Bob found an article in the newspaper in the sports section that said, "The guys who slay the dragon may have thine damsels' hands in marriage."

And Bob said to Joe, "Let's go." They walked two miles, had a snack of Oreo cookies and water, walked another mile, and saw the dragon's cave. There was a sign above it that said, "Hello. This is the dragon's cave. I like sandwiches."

The knights walked in on their tiptoes, but the clanking armor unfortunately woke the dragon up. This is also bad news: he was woken up before he wanted to. So he was steamed.

The dragon said, "Well, I have fire."

The knights said, "We have swords."

The dragon said, "I have scales."

The knights said, "We have shields and armor."

The dragon said, "Well, I have a long tail. I don't think you have any of those."

And Bob said, "Oh, yes, I do." And he started telling a long and boring story. And it went on and on and on. [The dragon] was bored to death, literally.

[The knights] had the damsels' hands in marriage, and Bob said, "I think we're going to get our pictures in the daily paper."

And Joe said, "No, I think we're going to get our pictures in the nightly paper."

They had the damsels' hands in marriage, and they had children, and when the children were 18, the story started all over again.

Vandalia Time!

Photoessay by Michael Keller

Last Memorial Day weekend, the State Capitol Complex came alive with the fun and excitement of the 31st annual Vandalia Gathering. Musicians, singers, dancers, storytellers, crafters, cooks, and thousands of attendees came together to celebrate the best of West Virginia traditional life. Culture and History photographer Michael Keller was there and shares these photographs with us.

2007 Vandalia Winners

Vandalia Heritage Award — Patty Looman, Star City

Fiddle (age 60 and over)
1 - Lester McCumbers, Nicut
2 - Gerry Milnes, Elkins
3 - Boyd Phillips, Elkins
4 - Don Jones, Scott Depot
5 - Elmer Rich, Morgantown

Fiddle (under age 60)
1 - Chance McCoy, Martinsburg
2 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
3 - Zack Fanok, Morgantown
4 - Ray Cossin, Mt. Alto
5 - Jerrica Hilbert, St. Albans

Youth Fiddle (age 15 and under)
1 - Ray Cossin, Mt. Alto
2 - Jerrica Hilbert, St. Albans
3 - Arianna Macy, Charleston

Old-Time Banjo (age 60 and over)
1 - Gerry Milnes, Elkins
2 - Ben Carr, Wilsie
3 - Bernard Cyrus, Fort Gay
4 - Ted Samples, Harrisville
5 - Charlie Loudermilk, Frankford

Old-Time Banjo (under 60)
1 - Bob Shank, Bruceton Mills
2 - Bob Smakula, Elkins
3 - David O'Dell, West Logan
4 - Ben Townsend, Romney
5 - Jim Mullins, St. Albans

Mandolin
1 - Chris Davis, Ona
2 - Steve Acord, Fairdale
3 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
4 - Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
5 - John Putnam, Looneyville

Bluegrass Banjo
1 - Brandon Green, Sophia
2 - Ben Harrington, Artie
3 - Doug Cossin, Mount Alto
4 - Andrew Kidd, Hurricane
5 - Zach Life, Murraysville

Lap Dulcimer
1 - Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
2 - Dave Haas, Cross Lanes
3 - Heidi Muller, Charleston
4 - Tish Westman, Mabscott
5 - Tim Gillenwater, Griffithsville

Youth Lap Dulcimer (age 15 and under)
1 - Katie Stricker, Charleston
2 - Shalor Gore, Charleston
3 - Jackson Davis, Tornado

Flatpick Guitar
1 - Matt Lindsey, Dunbar
2 - Adam Hager, Kenna
3 - Brandon Bentley, Sumerco
4 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
5 - Tim Gillenwater, Griffithsville

Youth Flatpick Guitar (age 15 and under)
1 - Jacob Ryder, Marlinton
2 - Doug Cossin, Mt. Alto
3 - Levi Lipps, Bomont

32nd Annual Vandalia Gathering

May 23-25, 2008

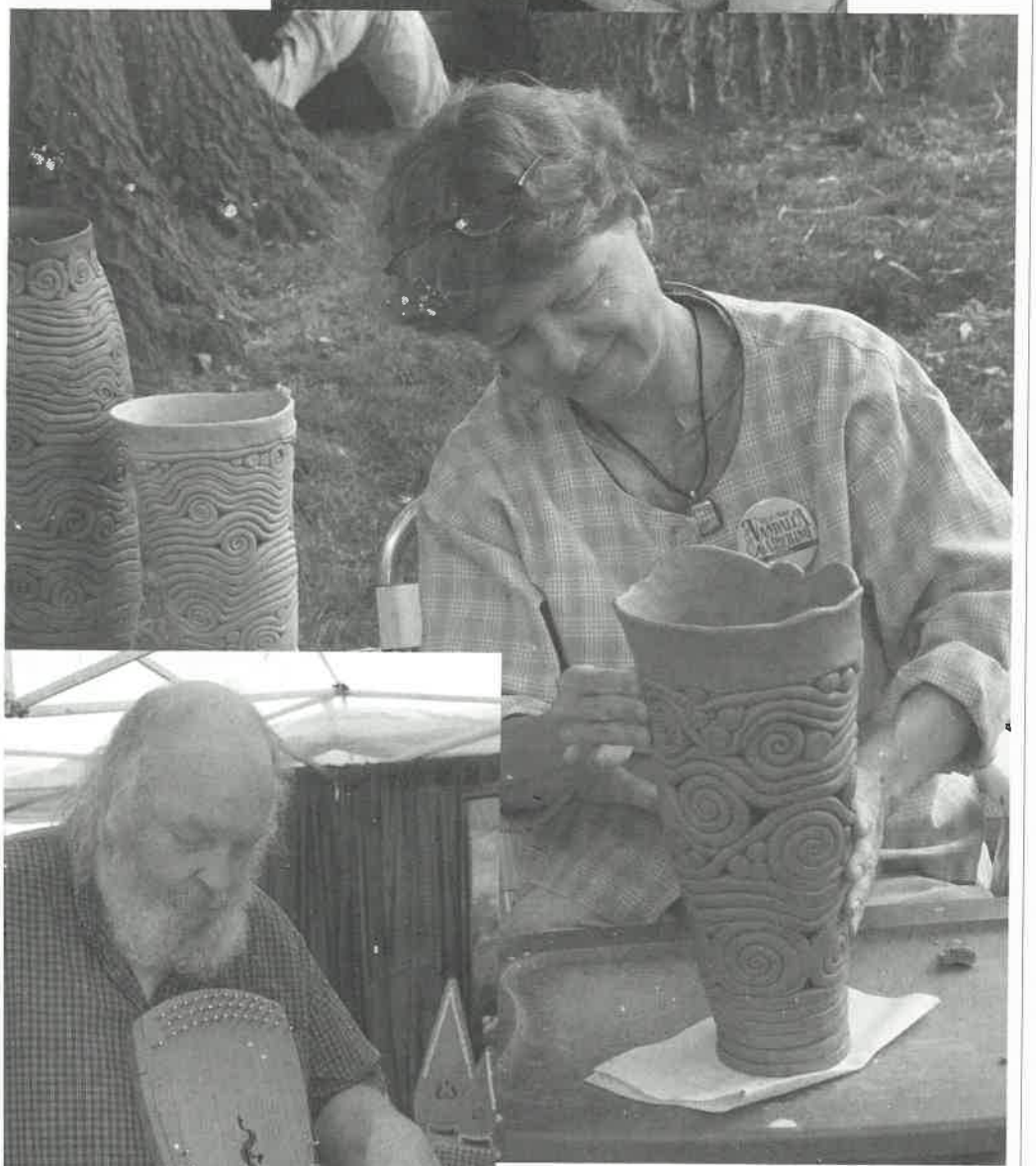
State Capitol Complex — Charleston, West Virginia

Friday, May 23
7:00 p.m. Concert

Saturday, May 24
11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Appalachian Heritage Dancing, Jam Tent, Kids' Activities
11:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Down Home Visits with Vandalia Award Recipients
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Performances, Contests (Fiddle, Bluegrass Banjo, Mandolin)
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Old-Time Square Dancing, Flatfooting
1:00 p.m. Pie, Cake, Jam & Bread Contest
4:00 p.m. Cake Walk
6:30 p.m. Awards Ceremony and Concert

Sunday, May 25
11:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Down Home Visits with Vandalia Award Recipients
12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. Storytelling
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Appalachian Heritage Dancing, Jam Tent, Kids' Activities
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Performances, Contests (Old-Time Banjo, Lap Dulcimer, Flatpick Guitar)
12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Old-Time Square Dancing, Flatfooting
1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Liars Contest
3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Ethel Caffie-Austin Gospel Workshop
6:30 p.m. Finale Concert

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



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Monongah Centennial

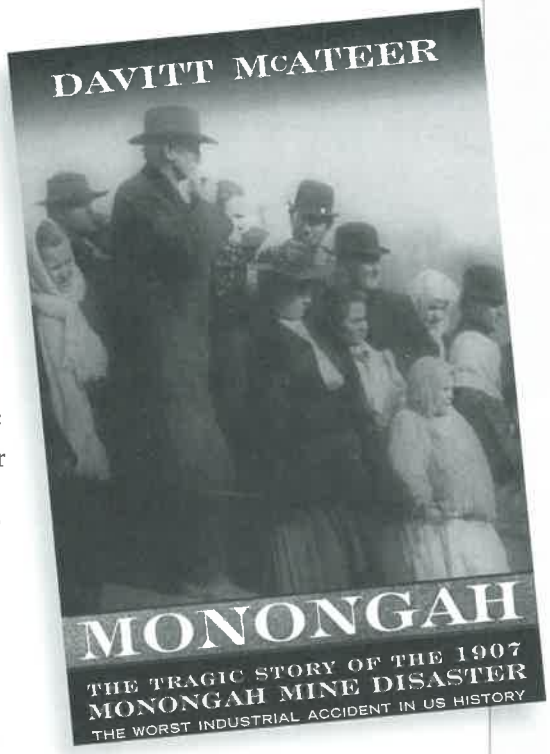
Monongah, by Davitt McAteer, is a comprehensive exploration of the 1907 mine disaster regarded as the worst industrial accident in American history. Based on 30 years of research, this is the first book to tell the entire story of this tragic event. [See "December 6, 1907: No Christmas at Monongah," by Eugene Wolfe; Winter 1999.]

The Monongah tragedy, occurring just before the holiday season 100 years ago, generated massive national publicity, drawing attention to working conditions and adding momentum to modern developments such as industrial unionization and government health-and-safety regulations.

The author identifies additional fatalities among the mostly immigrant workforce, bringing the likely death toll to nearly 500 men and boys. Hundreds of women were widowed and more than 1,000 children were orphaned, as well. The daily lives and circumstances of immigrant coal miners and their families are explored, in addition to the events that led to the massive explosion.

Author Davitt McAteer, currently of Shepherdstown, has had a long and distinguished career on behalf of occupational safety and health issues in state and federal government, as well as for the United Mine Workers of America. There is an introduction by Robert Reich, former U.S. secretary of labor.

Monongah is a 331-page hardback with photographs, index, footnotes, bibliography and sources, a reprint of the Mines Relief report of fatalities, and an identification guide of individuals mentioned in the text. The book sells for $30, and is available from West Virginia University Press, on the Web at www.wvupress.com; phone 1-866-988-7737.



Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Fenton Glass
- Moonshining
- Rainelle Airport
- Organ Cave

(continued from inside front cover)

July 3-5 Gassaway Days
Gassaway (364-5111)
July 3-6 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-8159)
July 3-6 Point Pleasant Sternwheel Regatta & River Festival
Point Pleasant (675-6788)
July 10-13 42nd Annual Pioneer Days
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)
July 11-12 Benedum Festival
Bridgeport (1-800-368-4324)
July 11-13 John Henry Days
Talcott (466-1729)
July 12-13 Meadow River Festival
Rainelle (438-6047)
July 17 Alpine Lake Bluegrass Festival
Terra Alta (789-2481)
July 19-20 Roundhouse Rail Days
Martinsburg (264-4842)
July 25-27 Upper Ohio Valley Italian Heritage Festival
Wheeling (233-1090)
July 26-27 Cowen Historical Railroad Festival
Cowen (226-3222)
July 30-August 3 Appalachian String Band Music Festival
Camp Washington Carver/Clifftop (558-0162)
July 31-August 2 West Virginia Blackberry Festival
Clarksburg (622-3206)
August 1-3 Multifest
Charleston (421-1585)
August 4-9 Cherry River Festival
Richwood (846-6069)
August 8-10 Logan County Arts, Crafts & Antique Festival
Logan (752-1324)
August 8-10 Mahrajan Lebanese Festival
Wheeling (233-1688)
August 8-16 State Fair of West Virginia
Fairlea (645-1090)
August 11-16 Town & Country Days
New Martinsville (455-4275)
August 16 Jackson County Bluegrass Festival
Ripley (372-3229)
August 16 Swiss National Holiday
Helvetia (924-6435)
August 17-20 Jefferson County African American
Ranson (725-9610) Cultural & Heritage Festival
August 21-24 Appalachian Festival
Beckley (1-877-987-3847)
August 29-31 W.Va. Italian Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (622-7314)
August 29-September 1 Stonewall Jackson Heritage
Weston (1-800-296-1863) Arts & Crafts Jubilee
August 30-31 Apple Butter Weekend
Blennerhassett Island (420-4800)
August 30-September 1 Paden City Labor Celebration
Paden City (337-9080)
August 31-September 8 Oak Leaf Festival
Oak Hill (465-5617)
September 5-7 W.Va. Black Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (623-2335)
September 9-14 Lincoln County Fall Festival
Hamlin (346-5315)
September 11-12 Heritage Port Sternwheel Festival
Wheeling (232-4134)
September 12-14 Monarch Butterfly Festival
Wellsburg (737-4411)
September 13 Braxton MonsterFest
Flatwoods (765-3300)
September 13-14 Hilltop Festival
Huntington (259-2701)
September 18-21 CultureFest 2008
Pipestem (320-8833)
September 18-21 Golden Delicious Festival
Clay (587-4455)
September 20-21 Country Roads Festival
Ansted (658-5282)
September 20-21 Grape Stomping Wine Festival
Summersville (872-7332)
September 20-21 Harvest Moon Arts & Crafts Festival
Parkersburg (424-7311)
September 20-21 Mothman Festival
Point Pleasant (675-9726)
September 20-21 Treasure Mountain Festival
Franklin (249-5117)
September 25-27 W.Va. Molasses Festival
Arnoldsburg (655-7371)
September 25-28 Preston County Buckwheat Festival
Kingwood (379-2203)
September 26-28 Annual Leaf Peepers Festival
Davis (1-800-782-2775)
September 26-28 Fall Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)
September 26-28 St. George Greek Festival
Huntington (522-7890)
September 27 Harvest Festival Day
Cass (456-4300)
September 27 W.Va. Roadkill Cook-Off
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)
September 27-October 5 Mountain State Forest Festival
Elkins (636-1824)
October 2-5 W.Va. Pumpkin Festival
Milton (634-5857)
October 3-4 Pine Bluff Fall Festival
Shinnston (592-1189)
October 3-4 Southern W.Va. Italian Festival
Bluefield (589-3317)
October 3-5 Oglebayfest
Wheeling (243-4066)
October 4 October Sky Fall Festival
Coalwood (297-2999)
October 4-5 Country Fall Festival
Point Pleasant (675-5737)
October 11 Bergoo International Cook-Off
Webster Springs (667-9111)
October 11 Oktoberfest
Bramwell (248-8004)
October 11-12 Apple Butter Festival
Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)
October 9-12 W.Va. Black Walnut Festival
Spencer (927-5616)
October 10-12 26th Lumberjack Bluegrass Jamboree
Mullens (294-4000)
October 16-19 Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
Berkeley County (263-2500)
October 18 Bridge Day
New River Gorge (465-6517)
October 26-November 2 Fiddlers Reunion
D&E College/Elkins (637-1209)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 2009 "Folklife*Fairs*Festivals," please send us information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address, phone number, and Web site, if available. We must have this information by January 15, 2009, in order to meet our printing deadline. GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in the listing.

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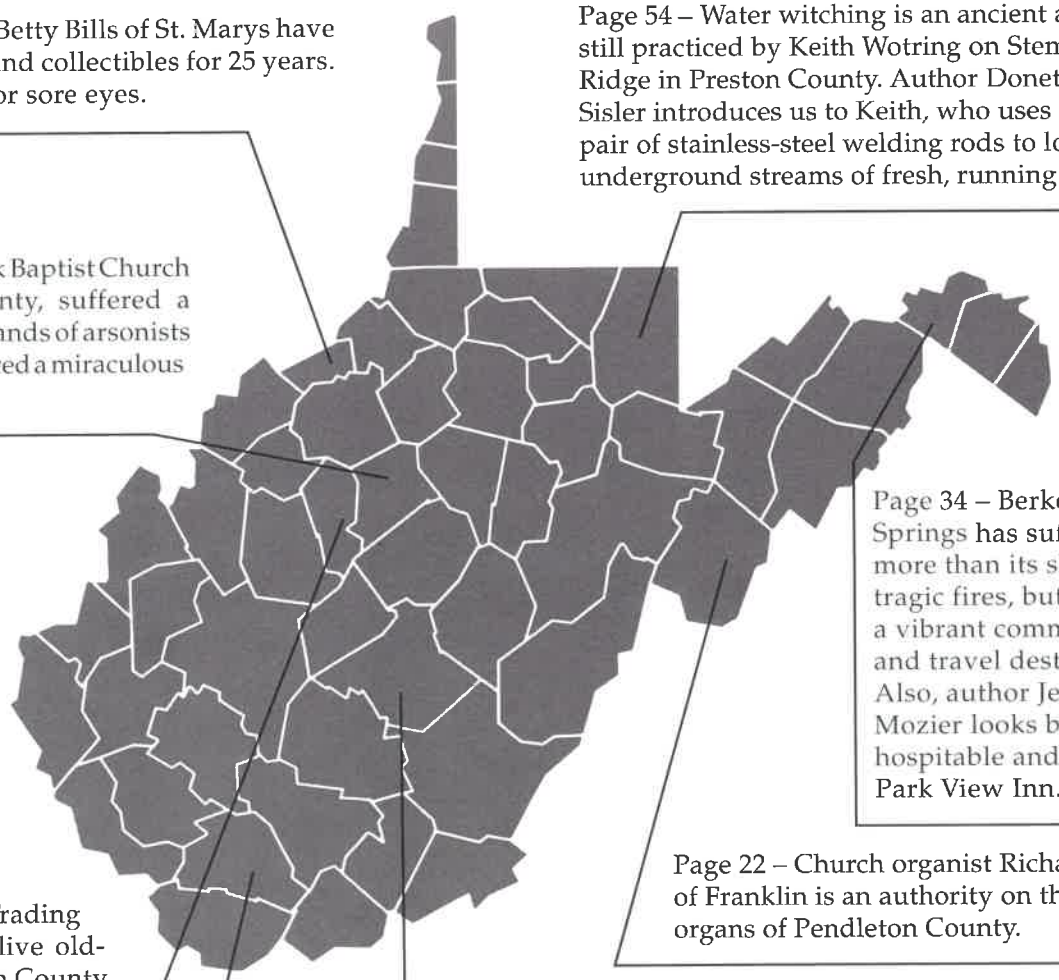

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