Jones Diamond • *Cardinal* • Widen • Blind Alfred Reed

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Winter 2008 $4.95

Coal Art

From the Editor: Coal for Christmas?

Coal for Christmas? Why not!

There was a time, several decades ago, when coal was as common as dirt in most homes. It was a black, dusty, unavoidable part of daily life. And the thought of getting a lump of it for Christmas seemed more dreadful than getting nothing at all. I wasn't raised during those times, so I'm only guessing, but I imagine that the idea of using coal to create art or jewelry would have been quite incongruous to people of my grandparents' generation.

My, how times do change! Today, people collect pie pans and pottery as valuable antiques. Some save old mine scrip and carbide lamps as mementos of days past. Some even keep chamber pots and use them as wall hangings, planters, or picture frames. (I knew an old fiddler who complained that people today go to the bathroom in the house and eat their dinner in the yard!)

The fact that we find beauty in something as common as West Virginia coal says much about our culture. First of all, it celebrates what is natural and native to these mountains. It also recognizes the hard work and sacrifice required to bring this resource to the surface. In no small way, our appreciation of coal art honors the countless men and women who have made lives for themselves and their families in and around the mines. I am certain this is the intent of those who created the striking coal figurines pictured on the cover of this issue and featured in our cover story, beginning on page 10. [See "Coal Art: The 'Other' West Virginia Coal Industry," by Jean Battlo.]

Most important to me, however, is the statement that coal art makes about the creativity and resourcefulness of West Virginia people. The determination to "make do or do without" rings clear in every issue of GOLDENSEAL, as our citizens tell their stories in these pages. While each story is unique, this theme recurs over and over and paints a picture of what it means to live in the mountains. Like any other important part of our traditional life, coal is woven into our past, present, and future. To use coal as an artistic medium, and to admire the many forms it can take, is a natural extension of the way people have lived in Appalachia for generations.

Coal sculptor James Stewart, from Boone County, was a retired miner, diagnosed with black lung after 30 years in the mines. The doctor told him to quit smoking. To keep his hands busy, James began whittling in wood and later taught himself to carve large and realistic images out of chunks of coal. This nervous hobby became a second career and brought him national acclaim, before his death in 2005. [See "Coal Sculptor James Stewart"; page 16.]

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KELLER

Other artists around the state make art from coal by powdering it, mixing it with a liquid resin compound, and pouring it into a mold, resulting in a nearly countless variety of objects, ranging from sophisticated jewelry to kitschy outhouses and Christmas decor. Large figurines from McDowell County's Coal Camp Creations have introduced a new dimension to cast resin coal art, both in the sheer size of the figures — the largest coming in at a towering 27 inches tall — and in the ambitious designs, styled after classical Greek sculpture.

Coal art is clearly intended for the souvenir hunter and gift shopper. It ranges in price from a couple of bucks to hundreds of dollars. It is made locally, using local coal and employing local artists. Most pieces are durable and ship well, and all are testimony to a state and its people who know who they are and where they come from.

So, this holiday season, once you have filled all your stockings with GOLDENSEAL gift subscriptions [see coupon on page 4 and the subscription card located inside the back cover], why not consider giving some West Virginia coal to those closest to your heart?

Happy holidays from all of us at GOLDENSEAL!

John Lilly

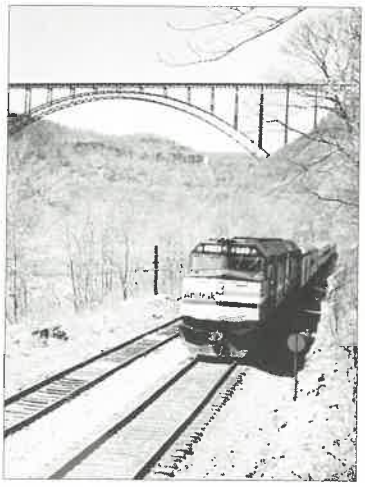
Volume 34, Number 4

Goldenseal

Winter 2008

p. 10

p. 38



p. 24

p. 54

p. 45

On the cover: Coal figurines from Coal Camp Creations, located in Kimball, McDowell County. Photograph by Michael Keller. Our story begins on page 10.

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Joe Manchin III
Governor

Kay Goodwin
Secretary
Department of Education
and the Arts

Randall Reid-Smith
Commissioner
Division of Culture and History

John Lilly
Editor

Kim Johnson
Editorial Assistant

Cornelia Crews Alexander
Circulation Manager

A.C. Designs
Publication Design

GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $18 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs.

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

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

Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

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

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

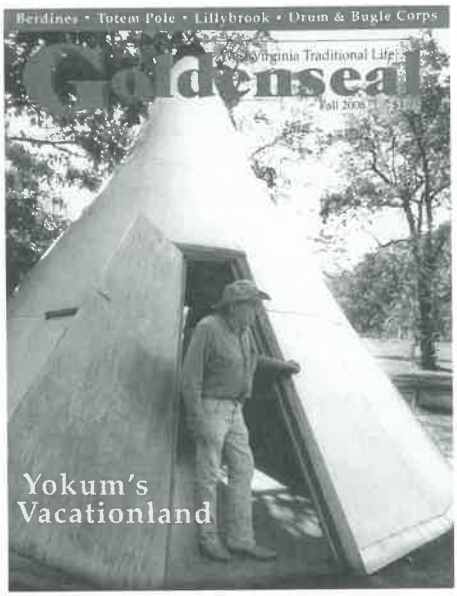
Printed in West Virginia by
Morgantown Printing & Binding

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.

Yokum's Vacationland

September 10, 2008
Charleston, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
When GOLDENSEAL arrives at the Posey house, everything stops for me. So, when I spied the picture of Carl Yokum standing next to a teepee on the cover, I eagerly opened the issue. [See "Yokum's Vacationland: Carving Out a Big Life at Seneca Rocks," by Carl E. Feather; Fall 2008.]



As I noted in my Summer 2004 article about my 1958 experiences as a young ministerial student in Pendleton County, I was the beneficiary of hospitality from Mr. and Mrs. Yokum during my three months service to six Presbyterian preaching points in the Seneca Rocks-Circleville area. [See "A City Preacher Comes to Pendleton County," by Lawton W. Posey.] I will never forget the bountiful meals that Shirley and sometimes their very young daughter, Patsy, cooked up for me. Carl took my worn-out tires to be recapped after the rocky roads had cut my older tires to bits.

Carl, Shirley, and their family are without equal. I have not seen them for 50 years, but am privileged to remember them as hearty people in their early prime.

When I called Shirley to get information for my Pendleton County article, she remembered me as "the young feller." That was me! Dumb as a stump and in need of loving care, which I got.
Lawton Posey

Drum & Bugle Corps

September 16, 2008
Columbia, Tennessee
Editor:

I was cutting grass this afternoon when the mailman came by. I stopped to see what bills I had received, and there was my Fall 2008 issue of GOLDENSEAL. Wow! Well, I parked the mower, sat on the patio, started my first peek, and found another excellent issue.

The Drum & Bugle Corps article caught my eye. [See "Marching to Glory: Bluefield's American Legion Junior Drum & Bugle Corps," by Stuart McGehee.] Your opening photograph has no date, but could it be at the state American Legion Convention in 1932? Our Drum & Bugle Corps from American Legion Post 13, Clarksburg, performed at the 1932 Convention. I still have my parade bugle, purchased by my parents. Our troop won many of our instruments by collecting the

American Legion Post 13 Drum & Bugle Corps of Clarksburg at a pet show in the early 1930's, behind the Harrison County jail. Roy M. Pritchard is kneeling, second from the right.

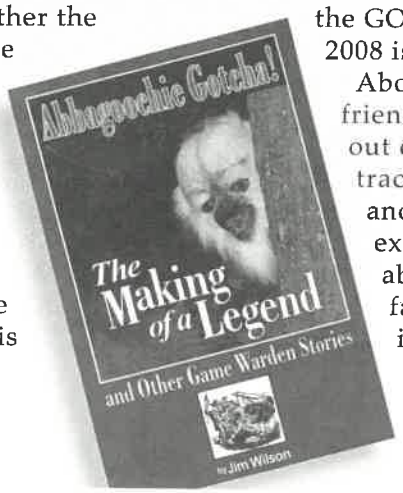
most labels from certain canned products.

You included a nightime photo taken in Bluefield, but notice the battery packs on the marchers. They might have worn carbide light holders, but the lights were battery powered.

Keep up the good work! GOLDENSEAL made my day (of course, with God's help).
Roy M. Pritchard

Abbagoochie

September 16, 2008
Via e-mail
Editor:
Just wanted to thank you for the unique way GOLDENSEAL presented my book, *Abbagoochie Gotcha*, in your last issue. [See "All About Abbagoochie," Fall 2008.] By unique, I mean somebody (probably you) actually read the book or enough of it to offer info that wasn't contained on either the inside or outside covers.
Thank you for that.



I have already received over a dozen orders as a result of the coverage. This is the fastest I've received orders from a "Bookshelf" type review. The thing that's amazed me so far is that the book is attracting an age group of 11-14 year olds. I certainly didn't expect this, as I wasn't targeting the young-adult audience.

Thank you again for your interest and coverage.
Warm regards,
Jim Wilson

Road Trip

The following letter was addressed to author David H. Halsey and is used by permission. —ed.

August 17, 2008
Pulaski, Virginia
Mr. Halsey:
I hope you are doing well and are the person who wrote the delightful article "Road Trip: An Eye-Opening Journey to Pocahontas County in 1947" in the GOLDENSEAL Summer 2008 issue.

About two weeks ago, my friend Lorina and I started out on an adventure to trace your "Road Trip" and become part of your experience. We talked about you and your family as if you were in the car with us. We

Here's My GOLDENSEAL Gift List!

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

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

[ ] I'm adding $5 extra per subscription (total $23). Please send the current issue along with the gift card!

Gift Giver's Name _____

Address _____

_____

Name(s) to be signed on gift card:

_____

[ ] Add my name too! I enclose $18 for my own subscription.

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.

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

left Pulaski, Virginia, and pretty much followed your trail; every area was checked off as we passed.

Although I am not from West Virginia and was never in the state until about 20 years ago, the area has become a wonderful, exciting adventure for me. The real passion probably started with the GOLDENSEAL magazine. I have attended outdoor theater depicting mine wars, love stories, and murder; have attended churches of several denominations; visited very old cemeteries; read numerous books; and drove and drove! I still can't get enough of West Virginia and its people.

Thank you for the tears, laughter, and joy I felt while reading your story.
Warm regards,
Brenda Thomas

Mullens Memories

August 4, 2008
Tampa, Florida
Editor:
In your Spring 2008 issue was a really great article by Mrs. Virginia Cook about Mullens. [See "89 Years in the Coalfields: A Satisfying Life in Wyoming County."] I lived there for nearly 12 years and graduated from Mullens High School, Class of '62. I was privileged to have been a home economics student with Mrs. Cook as my teacher.

I was also present on April 26, 1960, when John F. Kennedy came to town, spoke, and was in a parade. I was a 15-year-old sophomore. We were all let out of school at noon and allowed to walk downtown to see Senator Kennedy.

Mrs. Cook states that her husband, Woodrow Cook, drove the convertible on that visit. This is incorrect. The driver of the convertible was Mrs. Margaret Hash Ramey. Also in the convertible were Dr. Ward Wylie and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., son of the former president. Just thought you would like to know.

Thank you for a wonderful magazine.
Nancy Dennis Stephens

U.S. Senator John F. Kennedy in Mullens, Wyoming County, April 26, 1960. At center is state campaign manager Dr. Ward Wylie; at right is Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.; driving is Mrs. Margaret Hash Ramey. Associated Press photograph, courtesy of *The Charleston Gazette*.

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.

U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd at the Nashville Convention Center on October 4, 2008. Photograph by Kim Johnson.

Byrd Fiddling Award

Senator Robert C. Byrd was presented with the Dr. Perry F. Harris Award on Saturday, October 4, 2008, recognizing his lifelong support of traditional fiddle music. Perry F. Harris was the founder of the Grand Master Fiddler Championship in Nashville, often considered to be the most prestigious fiddle contest in the country. Coordinators of the Grand Master Fiddler Championship, Howard Harris and Ed Carnes, presented Senator Byrd with the award on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. Byrd received a standing ovation from the audience.

During the afternoon, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) recognized Senator Byrd at ceremonies held at the Nashville Convention Center. Jacqueline Proctor, Deputy Commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, read proclamations from Governor Joe Manchin and Culture and History Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith. West Virginia musicians Bobby Taylor, Andrew Dunlap, and John Preston were on hand and played "Red Bird" and "Durang's Hornpipe," two of Byrd's favorite fiddle tunes.

Senator Byrd was an accomplished fiddler during his earlier years, recorded an album of fiddle music in 1978, and was the subject of a feature story in our April-June 1979 issue. [See "Robert Byrd, Mountain Fiddler," by Dave Wilbur; this article also appears in the book *Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from* GOLDENSEAL; see coupon on page 8.]

Jefferson County Jail

The historic Jefferson County jail at Charles Town has undergone a $2.3 million restoration and is now open to the public. Designed by Alfred B. Mullet, the jail is notable for its architecture and history and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Jefferson County jail and adjacent courthouse have a colorful past. In 1859, abolitionist John Brown was accused of treason and stood trial on this site. In 1922, coal miners and union organizers were brought to trial here for charges related to the Battle of Blair Mountain. [See

Jefferson County jail in Charles Town.

"Jefferson County Courthouse and Jail," Summer 2006.]

In 2000, the county commission voted to demolish the old jail, but local citizens and preservationists organized to save the building. After a six-year legal battle, the current county commission voted to save and restore the jail. Now, the circuit clerk's office is located here, as well as the circuit court. The building is also a repository for Jefferson County records.

The Jefferson County jail was formally dedicated September 20, 2008, in conjunction with Charles Town Heritage Days. For more information, visit www .savethejail.org.

Marion Historical Society

The Marion County Historical Society is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The society was founded by Bernard Lee Butcher, a noted Marion County educator and attorney, who was interested in history and genealogy. The society has been involved in the reconstruction of Prickett's Fort and the preservation of Fairmont City Cemetery. It also maintains a museum, located at 211 Adams Street in Fairmont.

Upcoming events at the museum include an open house on Saturday, December 13, from 10 a.m until 5 p.m. Hammered dulcimer player and 2007 Vandalia Award recipient Patty Looman will be featured.

For more information or to learn about other events sponsored by the society, call (304)367-5398, e-mail marionhistorical@yahoo.com, or visit www.marionhistorical.org.

CCC Camp Museum

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. The West Virginia State CCC Association opened a museum in 2002 to

recognize the contributions of the CCC and their legacy in West Virginia.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the CCC to help ease unemployment and the economic hard times in the years following the Great Depression. The CCC lasted from 1933 until it was phased out in 1942. During that time, West Virginia had 67 CCC camps, with 55,000 men enrolled in the program. The CCC built hundreds of bridges and developed more than 30 state parks here, building cabins, picnic shelters, and lodges, as well as lakes and ponds. The CCC also worked with farmers and developed soil-erosion control methods for farms throughout West Virginia. [See "Camp War: Remembering CCC Company 3538-C," by Ancella R. Bickley; Winter 2001.]

The museum is in the historic Quiet Dell schoolhouse in Harrison County, located off I-79 at Exit 115. The West Virginia CCC Camp Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., and on Sunday from 1 until 5 p.m. Call (304)622-3304 for more information, or visit www .wva-ccc-legacy.org.

Coondog Heaven DVD

After 20 years training coondogs, Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer of Shaffer's Coonhound Training Facility offer their best coondog training tips and dog behavior training techniques on a new DVD.

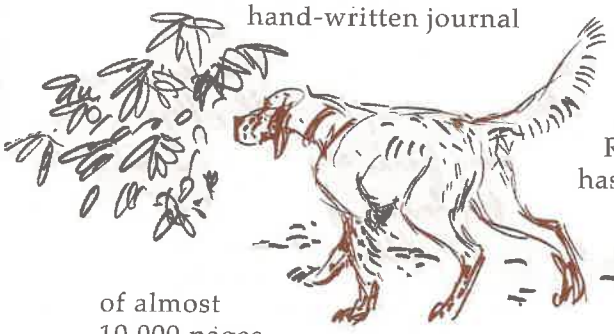
The Shaffers own a 100-acre facility, located near Charleston on Coopers Creek, and have successfully trained some of the best coondogs in the nation. The dogs receive training in trailing and treeing raccoons and learn to keep their attention focused on the raccoons instead of distractions, such as deer. [See "Coondog Heaven," by John Blisard; Winter 2000.]

Dog trainer Jerry Shaffer with coonhounds. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The DVD, *Coondog Heaven*, directed by local filmmaker Terry Lively and produced by the Shaffers, sells for $34.95. For more information, contact Jerry and Yvonne Shaffer at Rt. 5 Box 315, Charleston, WV 25312; phone (304)965-6824 or visit www.shafferstrainingfacility.net.

George Bird Evans Collection

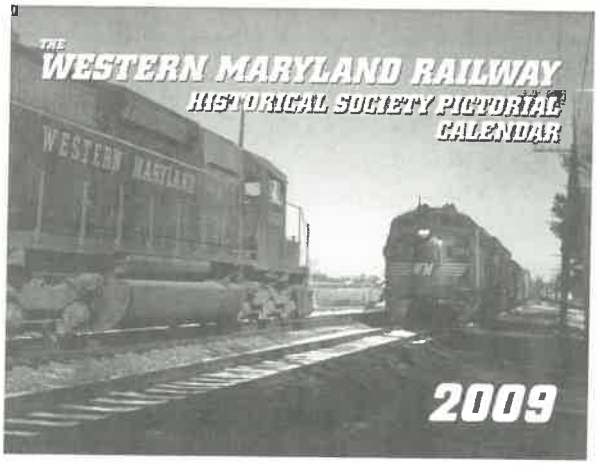
The West Virginia University Libraries in Morgantown have acquired an extensive collection of books, manuscripts, artwork, and photographs by George Bird Evans, one of West Virginia's most recognized outdoors writers. The collection includes a hand-written journal



of almost 10,000 pages, documenting Evans' hunting seasons from 1935 until shortly before his death in 1998. This journal is extensively illustrated with sketches of bird dogs, game birds, and mountain landscapes.

During the 1950's, Evans began writing about hunting and outdoor life in West Virginia. Over the next 40 years, he wrote more than 100 articles and 24 books, which established him as one of the foremost writers in the outdoor field. [See "Dogs and Birds and Shooting: George and Kay Evans of Preston County," by Peggy Ross; Winter 1993.]

The George Bird Evans Collection is open during the West Virginia and Regional History Collection's normal hours: Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., and Tuesday until 9 p.m. An exhibit about Evans is on display in the library's J. Hornor Davis Family Gallery through December 2008. For more information, call (304)293-3536 or visit www.libraries.wvu.edu/wvcollection/index.htm.



2009 Railroad Calendar

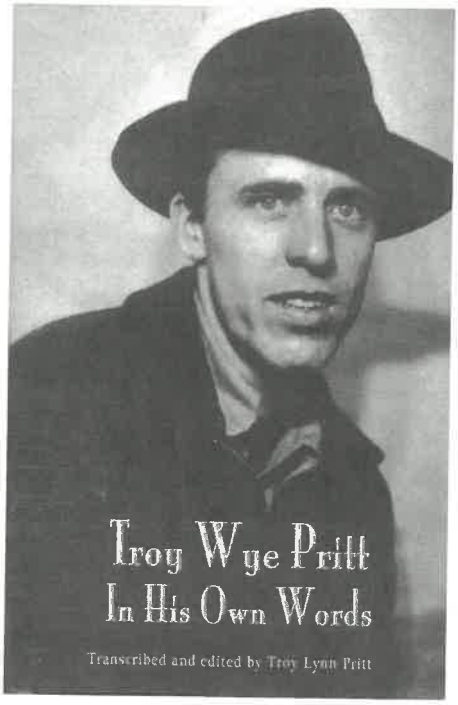
The Western Maryland Railway Historical Society has published its 2009 calendar, featuring 15 full-page scenic color photos of Western Maryland Railway trains, with an extra section of color photos of vintage railcars. The Western Maryland Railway is an historic freight line, which operated for 125 years as an independent railroad in West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

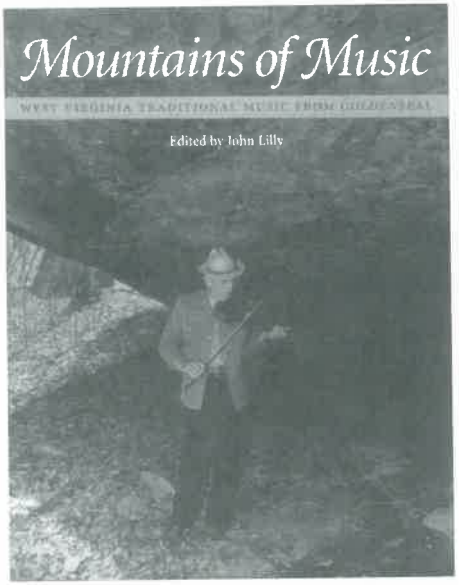
The Western Maryland Railway acquired the West Virginia Central & Pittsburgh Railway Company, a narrow-gauge line operating from Elkins, in 1902. In the late 1880's, the WVC&P railroad opened up the northeastern area of West Virginia for development of its coal and timber reserves, and boomtowns, such as Davis and Thomas in Tucker County, sprang up. After acquiring the WVC&P, the Western Maryland Railway maintained a large locomotive shop and roundhouse in Elkins and was a major railroad hub in that part of the state for many years.

The 2009 Western Maryland Railway Historical Society pictorial calendars sell for $11 each, plus $2 shipping and handling. They are available from Leo Armentrout, 2000 Reese Road, Westminster, MD 21157. For additional information, call (410)299-9589 or visit the Western Maryland Railway Historical Society's Web site at http://moosevalley.org/wmrhs.

Pritt Oral History

A new book by GOLDENSEAL author Troy Lynn Pritt chronicles his father's long railroading career. *Troy Wye Pritt In His Own Words: Oral History 1916-2005 Elkins, West Virginia* includes the elder Pritt's recollections of growing up in West Virginia during the years after World War I, the 1918 influenza epidemic, and the Great Depression. The author also includes his father's early experiences of working on farms and in grocery stores, and later as a machinist for the





Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from GOLDENSEAL gathers 25 years of stories about our state's rich musical heritage into one impressive volume. *Mountains of Music* is the definitive title concerning this rare and beautiful music — and the fine people and mountain culture from which it comes.

The book is available from the GOLDENSEAL office for $21.95, plus $2 shipping per book; West Virginia residents please add 6% sales tax (total $25.26 per book, including tax and shipping). Add *Mountains of Music* to your book collection today!

— — — — — — — — — — — — —

I enclose $ ___ for ___ copies of *Mountains of Music.*

-or-

Charge my

___VISA ___ MasterCard

#_____

Exp. Date_____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.
Send to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304)558-0220

GOLDENSEAL Good-Bye

Dorothy Thompson. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Dorothy Thompson, nationally known weaver and weaving instructor, passed away on October 1. She was 88. Dorothy was raised and educated in Arthurdale, Preston County, where she learned the art of traditional weaving. After taking special classes in overshot weaving from a master artist in Louisville, Kentucky, Dorothy returned to Arthurdale, where she met and married her husband, Ben Thompson. The couple settled in Canaan Valley, Tucker County. They raised a family and farmed, Ben operated a wood shop, and Dorothy practiced and taught weaving. During the 1970's, they established Ben's Old Loom Barn near their home, where Dorothy held weaving classes for many years. In 2000, Dorothy was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. She was featured on the cover of our Winter 2003 issue and was the subject of an article, titled "Weaver Dorothy Thompson," by John Lilly.

Western Maryland Railway in Elkins, Bergoo, and Spruce.

Troy Wye Pritt's father, Wye Plummer Pritt, was a foreman and track supervisor for the Western Maryland Railway in Elkins for nearly 50 years, and was featured in our Winter 2005 issue. [See "Wye Plummer Pritt: Fifty Years As a Track Man," by Troy Wye Pritt and Troy Lynn Pritt.]

Troy Wye Pritt In His Own Words, a 202-page paperback, includes an appendix of names and places, and is available from Mtnpride Books, P.O. Box 212, Wilmar, AR 71675. It sells for $23, check or money order only. For more information, e-mail Troy Lynn Pritt at mtnpridebooks @att.net.

Country Music Oral Histories

The Country Music Foundation (CMF) in Nashville has completed an extensive oral history preservation project, including interviews with recording artists, songwriters, and a variety of personnel involved in the country music industry since the 1920's, many from West Virginia.

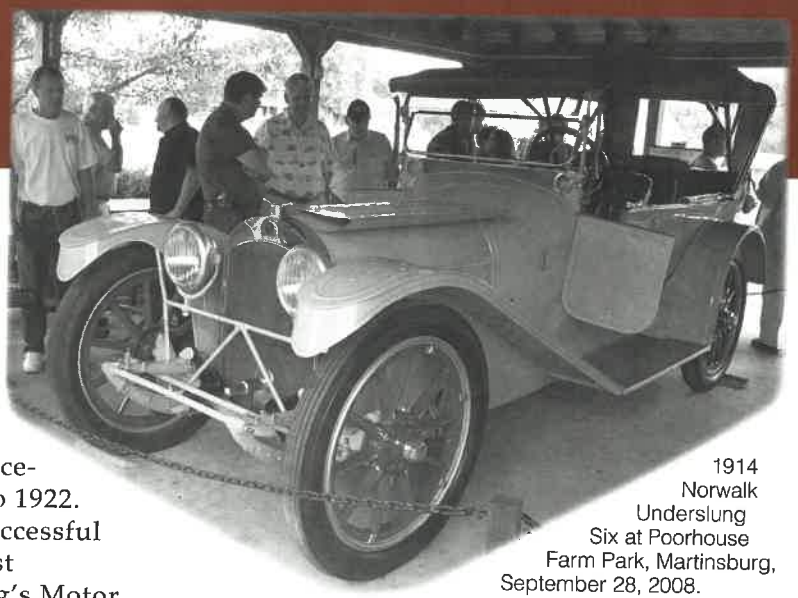
Mountain State artists represented in the interviews include Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper, Doc Williams, Red Sovine, the Bailes Brothers, Kathy Mattea, and others. Additional performers who appeared regularly on the *WWVA Jamboree* and elsewhere are also included, such as Grandpa & Ramona Jones, Mac Wiseman, and Mabelle Seiger.

The CMF oral history collection includes more than 600 audio recordings and transcripts and is housed in the Frist Library and Archive in the new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in downtown Nashville. It is open to the public by appointment.

Visit www.countrymusic halloffame.com and follow the links to Exhibits and Collections, or call (615)416-2005 for more information about the collection.

THE NORWALK COMES HOME

By Daniel J. Friend



1914 Norwalk Underslung Six at Poorhouse Farm Park, Martinsburg, September 28, 2008. Photograph by Daniel J. Friend.

On September 10, Frederick and Dianna Gantt of Hedgesville, Berkeley County, hitched a trailer to their motor home and headed west to bring home the last known example of Martinsburg's automotive heritage — a 1914 Norwalk Underslung Six touring car. The Norwalk Motor Car Company built cars and trucks in Martinsburg's once-thriving woolen mill district from 1912 to 1922. They were the longest-made and most successful motor vehicles ever manufactured in West Virginia. [See "The Norwalk: Martinsburg's Motor Car," by Daniel J. Friend; Summer 2003.]

With Vic and Shelly McFillan following in a separate motor home, the two couples made the 3,400 mile, 10-day trek to return the bright yellow vehicle with a burgundy top from Longmont, Colorado, to Berkeley County. The journey was the culmination of six years of careful negotiations with the former owner by members of the Norwalk Antique Car Club, who formed the Friends of Norwalk Foundation, Inc., a non-profit group that will raise funds to pay off a $280,000 bank loan that brought the historic car home.

The total cost of the car was $300,000. Owner Shirley Hoffman informed car club member Christopher Breeze last spring that she was planning to sell it, most likely on the Internet through eBay.

After Hoffman called, Breeze immediately called Dianna Gantt and notified her that the car could be put up for open bidding. Thirteen car club members quickly formed a foundation and raised a $20,000 down payment, which was wired in June to Hoffman. The foundation board then set to work finding a local bank to finance the remainder of the $300,000 asking price. Centra Bank of Martinsburg agreed to a no-interest loan, and the funds were wired to Hoffman. The Gantts and McFillans then set out to retrieve the car.

The Norwalk arrived back in Martinsburg on September 20, and the car club hosted a special event on September 28 to mark the return of the low-riding luxury vehicle, billed as the "Car of Absolute Exclusiveness." Among those present to celebrate the return of the Norwalk were Circuit Court Judge Gray Silver III and Martinsburg attorney Clarence E. "CEM" Martin — both grandsons of Gray Silver, one of the original stockholders of the Norwalk Motor Car Company.

"I think it's a wonderful thing for the community," Silver says. "It's part of the heritage."

Martin agrees. "This is a truly significant event," he says, commending the foundation members who made it happen. Martin calls the return of the Norwalk car to Martinsburg "one of the greatest achievements" among volunteer historic preservation groups in the Eastern Panhandle.

Breeze says the most important thing now is to raise funds. "The only way this car will remain in Martinsburg is through contributions to pay off the debt," he says. "This is the only remaining Norwalk car known to exist in the world, and it is an integral part of history for Martinsburg and West Virginia."

For more information or to send donations, write to Friends of the Norwalk Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 1464, Hedgesville, WV 25427.

DANIEL J. FRIEND is a reporter, columnist, and assistant city editor for *The Journal* newspaper in Martinsburg. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2006 issue.

Coal Art

The "Other" West Virginia Coal Industry

By Jean Battlo

"Mac Dowell," a 27-inch-tall coal sculpture from Coal Camp Creations in Kimball, McDowell County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

When U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a War on Poverty, West Virginia became a central front. The many antipoverty programs at that time included a concerted effort to support arts and crafts in the state. It was fortuitous that the director of the arts and crafts division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce was Donald L. Page, now retired and living in Beckley. All of us who know that grand old man are familiar with the story of how he became the unsuspecting commander in the war. [See "Hearth & Fair: Don Page and the Roots of GOLDENSEAL," by John Lilly; Spring 2004.]

Under an economic umbrella provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Page spearheaded the Arts and Crafts Technical Assistance Demonstration Project. It was in this official position that he got the idea of making arts and crafts from coal.

Don Page, former director of the arts and crafts division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. During the early 1960's, Don was instrumental in developing coal art as a cottage industry in southern West Virginia. Photograph by John Tice.

"It was during the Christmas of 1963," Don recalls. "Unemployment was a very serious problem in West Virginia and elsewhere. I had the responsibility of trying to do something about this for artists and craftsmen, to come up with something that was both appealing and had marketability."

Page already had a background in mold-making and plastics when he was sent to Stotesbury, Raleigh County, to "come up with something unique." Located on Winding Gulf, Stotesbury was named for E.T. Stotesbury, who along with E.E. White, operated the mines there until they were purchased by the Koppers company in the 1930's. The history of the mines' decline is well known, and the resulting poverty and unemployment has been well recorded. From this atmosphere and using the available natural resources, Page formed the unique craftsmanship of coal figurines.

"I developed a medium that was about 55 to 60% coal dust and 45% polyester," Don says. "There was already some coal jewelry being made, but coal figurines were a new West Virginia concept. I went to Steve Turkovish, a wood carver from Kanawha County, and we started with three characters: a coal miner, a lumberjack, and a railroad engineer."

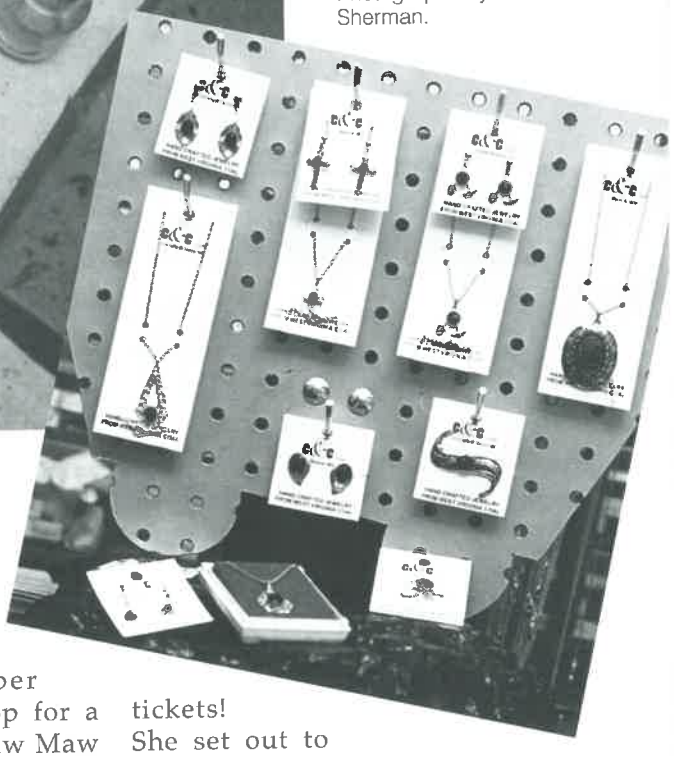
As this second coal industry developed, Page taught others and helped establish small cottage industries around the state. At Cass, cinders from the railroads were used in developing figurines germane to the railroad industry. In time, these West Virginia programs extended beyond the state, as Don Page was influential in helping establish several coal-figurine businesses in neighboring states.

During the two decades following Don Page's initiation of the project, several new artisans took up the tools. In 1980, Mary Dell Carter of Alderson decided to open a shop. She called it C&C Crafts, short for "Carter & Carter Crafts," in hopes that the enterprise would become a family business. Some of the Carters were miners, so Mary had a respect for the coal industry. She hoped her new business would solidify her familial ties.

Sharon Altizer, heiress to her grandmother's vision, is the artisan at C&C Crafts today. Sharon notes that Mary Carter's plan was successful and that Mary's children and grandchildren have participated in the business' success over the past two-and-a-half decades.

Sharon writes of her initial reaction to her grandmother's plans, "I myself remember the day she told me she was going to make coal jewelry. In my 10-year-old mind's eye were big Flintstone-like hunks of coal beaded around some poor, unsuspecting woman's neck

George and Sharon Altizer of Renick, Greenbrier County, run C&C Crafts, a coal-art business started by her grandmother, Mary Dell Carter. Photograph by Ken Sherman.



Coal jewelry from C&C Crafts. For more information, write to HC 68 Box 283, Renick, WV 24966; phone (304)497-3387. Photographs by Ken Sherman.

like a dog collar. Ick! Nobody will ever want that!"

Acknowledging the immaturity of her own initial vision, Sharon recalls that her mother and grandmother began to develop beautiful jewelry of the best quality they were capable of making.

"As my sister Lori and I became old enough, we were allowed to help by boxing and carding jewelry, and then learning to put it together. The making of stones and putting them in the findings was reserved for the grown-ups," Sharon writes.

Sharon's childhood memories of working the cottage industry with her mother and grandmother reflect the best of earlier times and slower paces. "I remember summers in the '80's especially well," she continues. "I went with [my grandmother] to call on customers in her big, green-and-white van with green shag carpet, loaded full of jewelry and figurines. We traveled all over the state to allow customers to handpick what they wanted. I learned a lot about our state in my teens as a result of this travel. I visited most every state park and 'mom-and-pop' shop in West Virginia.

"I remember being greeted by deer at the back door of the van at Canaan Valley," Sharon writes. "And I remember asking a clerk at one shop for a 'Watchamacallit' while Maw Maw proclaimed that I had to tell her what kind of candy bar I wanted! We spent such wonderful quality time together that I developed a bond with my grandmother like no other."

On the phone, Sharon describes how important her Maw Maw has been in her life:

"When she died in 2001," she says, "she had created a modest, but profitable souvenir business known the state over. She had gone from spooning little granules of coal powder into the finding to having my artistic mother create molds and process the coal powder into a liquid to make stones. She had gone from a single widow woman to a well-known and respected traveler. We teased her about sweet-talking her way out of a few speeding tickets!

She set out to make a little extra income and keep a family involved with one another, and she definitely accomplished that. My father (her son) made a lot of jewelry off-and-on for years, as did my mother, my sister, and myself. Her other son and his family were involved with various aspects of her business, as well. My husband is rather artistic, so when he came into my life, he became an integral part of the jewelry-making process. He has become the person who makes stones since Maw Maw died, and the smell of the not-so-healthy chemicals in our home brings floods of memories of my grandmother."

Sharon's father, aunt, and uncle allowed her to continue operating C&C in Renick, Greenbrier County. "They knew it meant a lot to me, not

financially, as we try to keep costs low just as she did. But both my husband and I are such traditional people, we both had a close relationship with my grandmother that it just seemed right to continue.

"It is an interesting business, but a very dirty one, as anyone who has ever been around coal knows."

Customers were very receptive to our plans, so business continues today, 28 years after Mary Dell Carter had a dream."

In 1997, Janet Yoney of Beaver, Raleigh County, established Black Gold Coal Crafts. Janet and her husband, Ralph, were introduced to the craft when her landlord approached them and asked if they were interested in learning to make coal jewelry and figurines. They were advised to contact a retired coal artisan about buying his molds and unused materials. In this way, they attained some copyrighted items that no one else had for sale.

It was a long process and there was a lot to learn, but Janet and her husband eventually learned to make the molds and where to buy their materials. They have now added new products, such as Christmas items, nativity sets, ornaments, and a variety of other things.

According to Janet, "We are always looking for new customers and new opportunities. People often ask us if we hand-carve the figurines from a piece of coal, but we have to tell them we use powdered coal and mix with a resin to make the figurines. We make a wide variety of figurines such as coal miners, coal mining machinery, trucks, trains and animals, four-wheelers. We are expanding to making outdoor items.

"It is an interesting business, but a very dirty one, as anyone who has ever been around coal knows. You can check out our Web site for more pictures and more info, at www .blackgoldcoalcrafts.net."

The newest company in the field of coal figurines is Coal Camp Creations, an enterprise of McArts Fine Arts, Inc., in McDowell County. As artistic director of McArts, I received a call from Tamarack's Cheryl Hartley in December 2004, suggesting that the coal-figurine business might make McArts economically independent. More reluctant than Don Page in 1964, I said, "No, I don't think we want to go into business."

However, subsequent calls to Rachel Lester, McDowell County Economic Development Authority executive director, led us to a conclusion that this was a real opportunity for the arts organization. Through a year-and-a-half of meetings with the board and the late artist and potter Dina Brown, Coal Camp Creations was born.

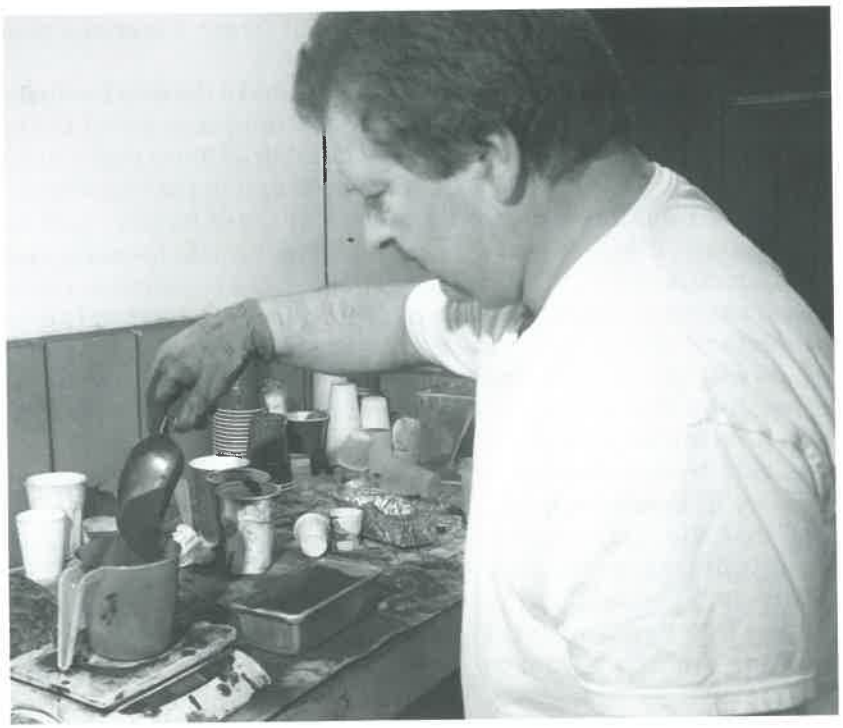
In order to make the new business creative and unique, we decided to make a number of items that would have been found in the households of most coal camp homes, such as coal buckets, bowls, teapots, and lunch pails. I also hoped to develop a distinctive, fictional miner's family. The first commission went to Dina Brown, to whom I presented a design developed from my research of classical statues.

We wanted a heroic kind of figure who represented McDowell County coal miners in the early 1900's. Looking at Michaelangelo's "David" and recalling that artist's fanciful idea that he "freed the sculpture that was captive in marble," our desire became to free the art captive in coal. The result was a two-foot-tall figure called "Mac Dowell," or "Mac" for short. Eventually, the "large Mac" was

Sculptor Walter Shroyer of Bluefield, Virginia, in his studio at Bluefield College. With his wife, Linda, Walter is completing work for Jean Battlo's Coal Camp Creations. Photograph by Michael Keller.

joined by a medium and small Mac, and the first family, along with other items, were juried into Tamarack in 2006.

"We've seen an interest in all kinds of mining-related items," says Tamarack's Cheryl Hartley. "Coal figurines have always been popular in our souvenir department, but we thought there would be a place for something different from the souvenirs currently being sold."



As Coal Camp Creations began to go public, Don Page's name came up over and over. I first contacted Don to interview him for this article. That meeting led to his becoming a consultant for, and developing forms for, the CCC molds.

"We put three unemployed coal miners back to work making coal-miner statuettes," Don says. CCC currently employs Julie Kozar and Anthony Gianato. Learning their craft quickly, Julie and Anthony mix the pulverized coal with polymer binding agents and place the mixture in molds dusted with talcum powder to accommodate easy exit. A precision grinder is used to abrade away any post-mold adherences.

The work is temporarily being done in Gianato's Hardware store in Kimball, but

Anthony Gianato of Kimball mixes powdered coal with resin, pours the mixture into a mold, and extracts a figurine. Photographs by Michael Keller.

will eventually be located in the old Houston Coal Company store. The Coal Heritage Authority has granted $750,000 to pay for the renovation of the historic Houston Coal Company store building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building will also house a coal museum, where travelers on the Coal Heritage Scenic Byway will be able to watch the figurines being made, as well as tour a museum being planned for the site.

The 2008 figure, "Charlie Dowell," Mac's son, has been sculpted by Parkersburg sculptor Kim Thomas and should be ready by the end of the year. Another recent addition is "Mrs. Mac," created by Bluefield, Virginia, sculptors Walter and Linda Shroyer.

All the miner statues and other items of Coal Camp Creations are made in McDowell County, with McDowell County coal. CCC is working to make "the free and independent state" the greatest producer of coal art in West Virginia.

JEAN BATTLO was born in Kimball, McDowell County, where she still resides. She is a teacher, poet, and playwright, and has had works produced by professional and community theater companies. Jean is the author of *McDowell County in West Virginia and American History*. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2005 issue.

"Mrs. Mac" and "Mac Dowell" are two of the popular coal figurines from Coal Camp Creations. They come in a variety of sizes. For more information, call (304)436-4042. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Cheryl Hartley, general manager of Tamarack, with a display of coal art at Tamarack's Beckley facility. "Coal figurines have always been popular in our souvenir department," Cheryl says. Photograph by Michael Keller.

James Stewart of Danville, Boone County, passed away in 2005. A 30-year veteran of the mines, he received national attention during his retirement years as a self-taught sculptor, working in the very material he had dug for three decades — West Virginia coal. [See "The First Time I Ever Rode a Lear Jet: Boone County Coal Sculptor James Stewart," by Johanna Eurich; Winter 1982.]

During the 1980's, Stewart was renowned in coal company boardrooms for his realistic sculpted busts of company executives. When Stonie Barker, president of Island Creek Coal Company, received a coal bust of himself as a gift, he admired it so much that he commissioned Stewart to create one for Armand Hammer, chairman of Occidental Petroleum Corporation, parent company of Island Creek Coal.

Coal Sculptor James Stewart

Retired miner James Stewart of Danville, Boone County, was a self-taught artist who often made sculptures out of local coal. Photograph 1982 by Doug Chadwick.

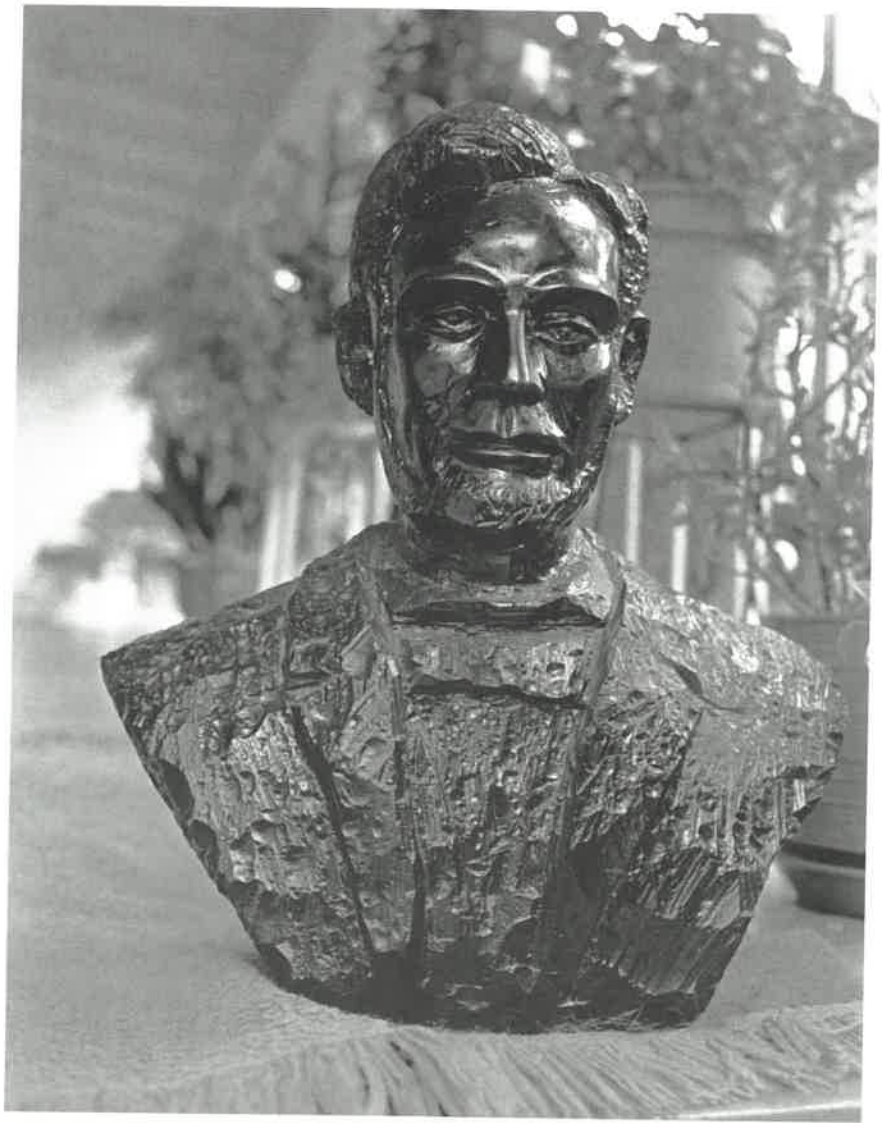
Tools and materials used by James Stewart. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

It wasn't long before people outside the coal business also wanted their likenesses carved in coal, and Stewart sculpted busts of broadcaster Paul Harvey, astronaut Neil Armstrong, UMW president Arnold Miller, and Abigail "Dear Abby" Van Buren, among others.

Stewart was 15 years old when he started working in the mines, hand-loading coal. He retired from Westmoreland Coal Company in 1972 and was diagnosed with black lung in 1973. When doctors insisted he stop smoking, he began sculpting coal and carving wood to keep his hands busy.

A self-taught artist with no formal training, his works are one-of-a-kind. "I'm not acquainted with another sculptor," he said in a 1982 interview. "I think that's what makes my work unique — it's not patterned after anyone else's work. I didn't learn anything from anyone else."

Stewart made his own tools in his blacksmith shop from pieces of mining equipment, each tool precisely designed to do a particular job. He learned blacksmithing while serving in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the late 1930's and used those skills when he later worked for Westmoreland Coal. Stewart intended to make and sell tools after his retirement, but people were more interested in his carvings.



Coal bust of Abraham Lincoln by James Stewart. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

The coal for Stewart's artwork was donated by local coal companies. He preferred to work with hard cannel coal, because it wouldn't crumble or break apart when being carved. "It's real hard, and usually it's all from the same seam," he said. "You've got to learn to work that coal. If I change seams, I've got to learn the character of that new coal. I don't think anyone who's not a miner could do this. ...You learn the grain of coal, and you learn to select the pieces of coal that won't fall apart after you work on it a while."

In the mid-1970's, James Stewart created the trophies for the Charleston Distance Run, a feature of the annual Sternwheel Regatta. The National Railroad Association commissioned Stewart to create a sculpture for their ad campaign in 1982. He designed an engine emerging from a tunnel and carved it from a large block of coal. After the ad campaign was over, this 110-pound piece was given to Senator Robert C. Byrd for his private collection of West Virginia art.

James' wife, Verlie, had an active role in the family business. She carved the fine detail work on the faces of the coal sculptures with small tools and sandpaper. On her husband's wood carvings, Verlie rubbed beeswax into the surfaces to preserve the natural color of the wood. Although she had no training in clerical or office operations, she devised a system of filing and accounting that worked very well for them.

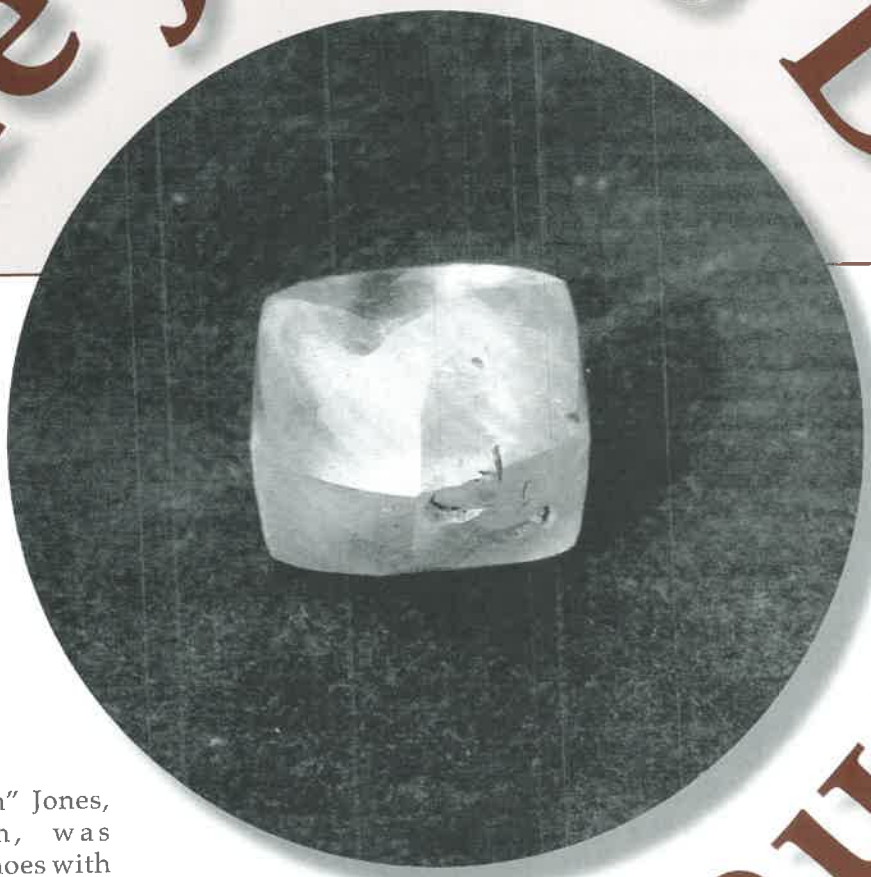
During the 1980's, James and Verlie exhibited their work at several arts and crafts fairs around West Virginia, including the Rhododendron Arts & Crafts Fair and the Lions Club Arts & Crafts Fair in Charleston, and at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes near Ripley. Verlie Stewart passed away in August 2006.

A number of James Stewart's coal sculptures remain on display in private collections across the West Virginia coalfields. Several pieces can be seen at the Handley Funeral Home in Danville.

For further information about James Stewart and his art, e-mail Betty Stewart at stewartsculpture@yahoo.com.

By Carl E. Feather

The Jones Diamond



The 34.46-carat Punch Jones Diamond at right was found in April 1928 near Peterstown, Monroe County. It is still considered the largest alluvial diamond ever found in North America. This photograph was made in 1968 at the Rich Creek Bank in Peterstown.

William P. "Punch" Jones, the firstborn, was pitching horseshoes with his father, Grover C. Jones, Sr., in April 1928, when he happened to notice a translucent stone where the horseshoes had kicked up the dirt. Fascinated, the 10-year-old boy decided to save his find in a wooden box, which his father stashed in the tool shed on their property.

Grover and Annie Grace (Buckland) Jones lived in a modest, one-story frame house on Sycamore Street. The street dead ends at the house, or more accurately, Rich Creek, which borders the side yard, then cuts a course parallel to Sycamore before flowing under U.S. Route 219.

The tool shed where Punch stored his find is gone, but Charlotte Ann Faulkner, the Jones' sole daughter and number 17 in the line, still lives in the family home and can point out where the shed stood. By the time she was born, 1946, the gem was on loan to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where it remained until 1964, when Grover requested its return.

Grover Jones was born in Red Sulfur Springs, Monroe County, on April 19, 1889. He and Annie Grace, who was 12 years his junior, met while Grover was teaching elementary school in Virginia. They were married on April 19, 1916.

Thus began the union that would lead to what is apparently the world record for male consecutive births (Guinness does not track this accomplishment). Punch came along in 1917, and 15 boys followed: Robert "Bay," Dick, Tom, John, Paul, Woodrow Wilson "Monk," Tad, Pete, Grover Jr. "June Bug," Rufus, Buck, Franklin Delano "Sam," Leslie "Arms" Howard — named after the famous actor — and Giles Monroe. (A son born between Tad and Pete requested his name not appear in this article.) Eleven of the 16 boys served in the military between World War II and the Korean War.

There is indication that the couple had a difficult time coming up with male names by the time boy number 16 arrived. Giles, born in January 1942, was known only as "Baby Jones" until March, when his birth certificate was amended to "Giles Monroe," the names of the adjoining West Virginia/Virginia counties where they lived.

Mixed Blessings for a Peterstown Family

The odds are staggering: The couple who held the world record for the most consecutive male births — 16 — also owned the Peterstown property on which was found the largest alluvial diamond ever discovered in the United States.

Grover C. Jones raised a family of 17 children on a school teacher's salary. He is shown here in 1960 with a violin in the yard where he and his eldest son discovered the diamond while playing horseshoes.

There was no precedent on either side of the family for multiple consecutive male births, nor has the feat been repeated in subsequent generations. Grover Junior had five consecutive girls, then a boy; another one of the sons had one boy and two girls.

But for the first 30 years of Grover and Annie Grace's marriage, girls were more scarce than diamonds in the Jones household. "My mother used to joke with me," says Charlotte, who as the only girl and youngest child enjoyed a very special relationship with her mother. "She'd say she never gave up on having a girl. My mother and I were really close."

The large family and Grover's modest teacher's salary ensured a spartan existence. "We had a rough time, I'll tell you," says Woodrow, a Galion, Ohio, resident. "It was rough. We had a rough time getting food."

Charlotte has a copy of her father's 1945 contract with the Giles County School Board, which set his pay at $130 per month for nine months. A garden, some chickens, and a milking cow helped stretch the meager salary at the dinner table, and the boys recall the family having enough food to share with others. In the economy of that era and place, the Jones family was neither poorer nor richer than most of their neighbors. Their greatest assets were their determination and children, and as soon as Punch and the older boys were able to work outside the home, they did so to bring in extra income. Both Punch and Robert labored for the

Grover and Annie Jones, at far left and far right in this photograph, pose with 15 of their 16 sons — considered a world record. The family was honored at the New York World's Fair in 1940, the same year this picture was made.

Works Progress Administration in the 1930's, says Woodrow.

Grover entered the teaching profession with just an eighth-grade education, but as standards changed, he was forced to attend college in order to retain his job. He attended Radford College in the summers of 1913 to 1917 and from 1932 to 1936. He never obtained a college degree, yet Hazel Overstreet, Punch's widow and a resident of Chesapeake, Virginia, says her late father-in-law called himself a "professor."

"He called himself 'Professor Grover Jones, Esquire,'" she says.

Annie Grace did not work outside the home, nor would it have been practical with at least a half-dozen youngsters under her care for most of a three-decade span. The boys recall their home as having four bedrooms, and Woodrow says it was common to sleep five boys to a bed.

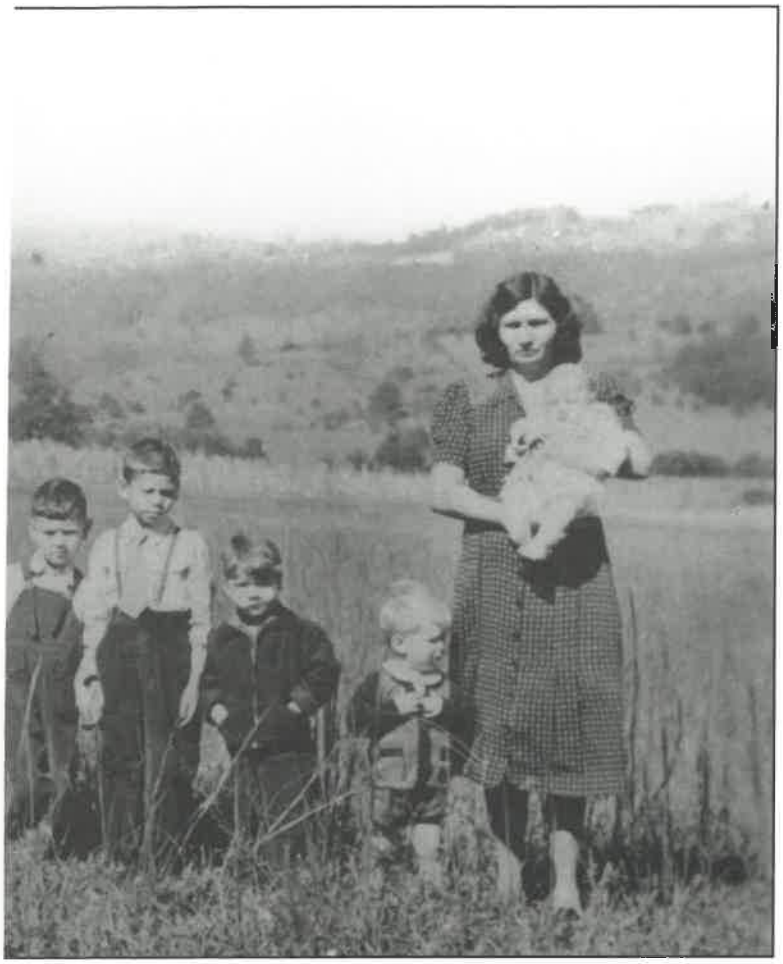
With that many mouths to feed, meals tended to go on all day long. As for discipline, much of the responsibility for oversight fell upon the older boys, especially Punch, who served as a mentor and example of good behavior. Neither Grover nor Annie Grace had time to dote on one child, and the boys learned to "dry up" whenever they started bellyaching to their mother.

The Jones boys were good athletes, and they could usually stay out of trouble by finding a touch football game to occupy their time. The boys recall their father as an excellent fiddler; every Friday evening, Grover joined other string players in the lower room of the Jones home for a community square dance. James Buckland, Grover's father-in-law, called the dances. Looking back on those days, Woodrow is amazed so many people could squeeze into that room and still find space in which to dance.

In 1940, the family — 15 boys and their parents — were thrust into the national spotlight. The occasion was the World's Fair in New York. A millionaire paid the family's train fare for a round-trip from Bluefield to New York City, where they made personal appearances and did radio and print interviews. October 3, 1940, was declared Grover Jones Family Day at the World's Fair. [See "A West Virginia Boy at the New York World's Fair," by Dan B. Fleming, Jr., Summer 2004.]

Woodrow, age 15 at the time, says there were two highlights to the trip. First, it meant every child got a set of new clothes, paid for by the sponsor. "First time in my life," says Woodrow of owning new clothes. His other memory is of meeting Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, who were filming *Strike Up the Band* in New York at the time.

The six-day trip included appearances on national radio programs and a visit to the White House, where they were to meet



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The President was unavailable, so the First Lady ended up leading the tour.

Carnation Milk Company offered Grover and Annie Grace an endorsement deal that would have generated extra income and made life much easier.

"He turned it down," says Woodrow.

"My mother and dad were private people," says Charlotte. "They liked their privacy."

The family returned to Peterstown and their hardscrabble existence. By then, Punch had followed in his father's footsteps, gone away to college, and became a teacher. After the Radford Arsenal was built in nearby Radford, Virginia, Punch exchanged teaching for defense work. While working at the ammunitions factory, Punch learned about the various forms of carbon, an ingredient of gunpowder. He got to thinking about the sparkling stone he'd found 14 years earlier, and decided to ask Dr. Roy Holden, a geology professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Blacksburg, to take a look at his childhood treasure. As a geologist, Holden was often approached by people who thought they had found a diamond when, in fact, it was a chunk of quartz. He suspected Punch Jones' stone would be no different.

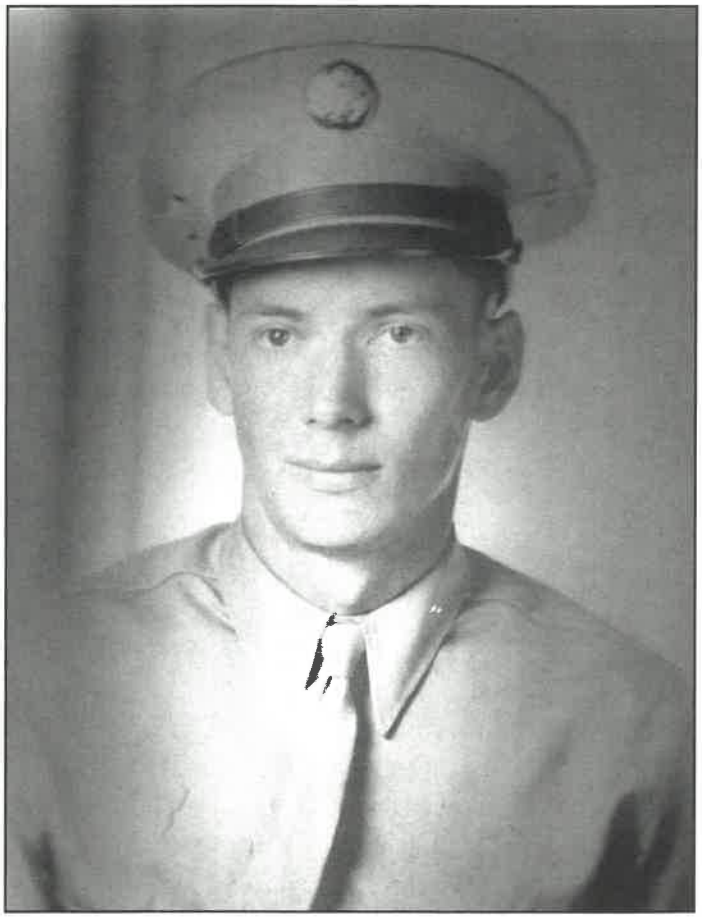
"It just looked like a piece of glass to me," says Hazel Overstreet, recalling the first time Punch showed it to her.

One can only imagine Holden's amazement when Punch Jones produced the 5/8-inch, 34.46-carat, greenish-gray, eight-faced diamond from his pocket — the largest alluvial diamond ever discovered in the North America. Alluvial diamonds are those found away from kimberlite pipes, igneous rock deposits that bear diamonds from deep within the earth. Alluvials are usually found in river gravels that carry the stones away from their original kimberlite source. Accordingly, Rich Creek, which periodically overflowed its banks onto the Jones property, has been credited as the likely source of this incredibly rare find.

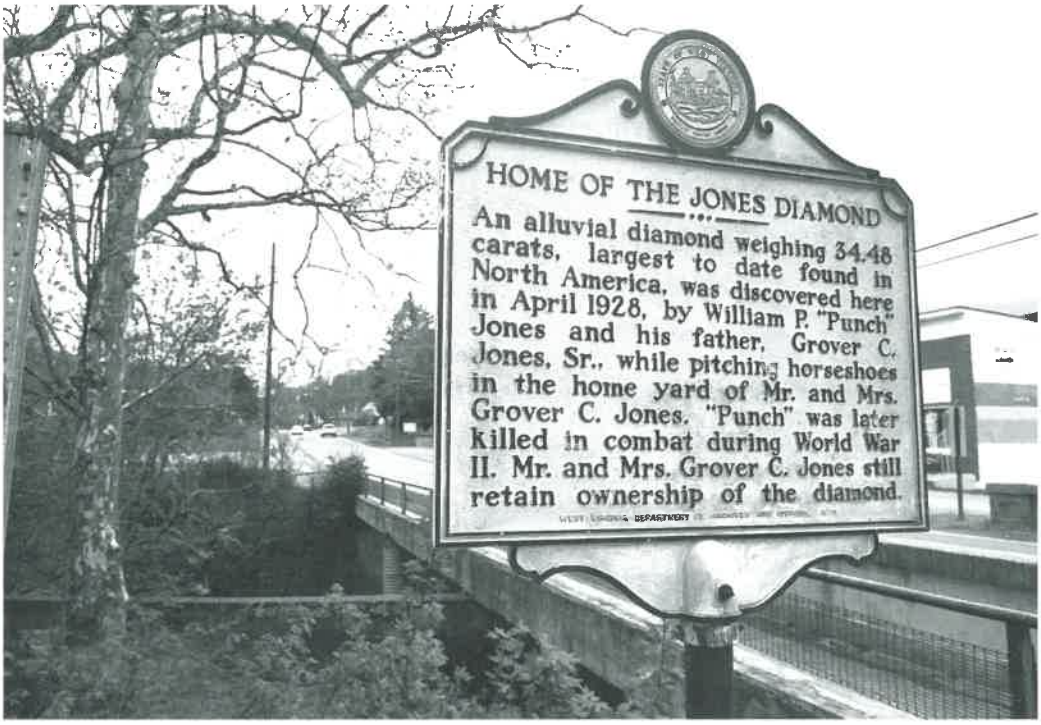
But locals had their own theories, some suggesting that a bird found the diamond and fortuitously dropped it in the Jones' front yard. Others thought it originated in a pile of coal near the horseshoe court. Some suggested it fell to Earth from outer space. However it got there, its validation as a gem brought prospectors to Rich Creek in hope of finding its sister in the creek's gravel bottom.

"People have come by wanting to look around," says Charlotte. "They just wanted to walk up on a diamond. It would be nice if another one would come by."

Hazel, who'd been dating Punch since high school,



William P. "Punch" Jones in uniform. Before shipping out in World War II, he placed the diamond with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He married his high school sweetheart, Hazel, in 1943 and fell victim at the Battle of the Bulge on April 1, 1945. Following his death, questions arose concerning control and ownership of the diamond.



This historical highway marker at the end of the street where the Jones family lived in Peterstown predates the 1984 sale of the diamond. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

says events that would separate Punch from his diamond unfolded soon after the gem was verified. Punch was drafted, and following up on Holden's suggestion, he placed the diamond in the care of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., until he could return from the war and decide what to do with it.

Although his induction into the Army accelerated their relationship, Hazel says Punch did not offer to make an engagement ring from the diamond. "He didn't know what to do with it right then," says Hazel.

One of Punch's younger brothers drove Hazel to Tyler, Texas, where they married July 26, 1943, in the home of a preacher. Punch, who was in training to be a pilot, moved on to Colorado, then Missouri, at which point Hazel returned to West Virginia.

In December 1944, while Punch was on leave, Hazel gave birth to their son, Robert. Hazel says her husband's leave was cut short by a massive call for reinforcements to assist the Allied effort at the Battle of the Bulge. The Battle of the Bulge washed him out of that pilot program and into the 97th Infantry. He had only three days to spend with his new son. That Christmas holiday was the last time Hazel and the Jones family saw Punch. Hazel says her late husband was extremely emotional as he departed, almost as if he had a premonition of his fate. While in California awaiting deployment overseas, he made a recording and sent it to his son to listen to at some future date.

"He told Bob to be good to me, because I'm a real good person," Hazel says. But he made no mention of the diamond.

Punch's luck ran out on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945, while conducting patrol operations in Belgium. The patrol of 10 to 12 men came under attack; only two survived to tell of it. Punch was not one of them.

Woodrow, a tank operator, was involved in his own struggle for life just nine miles away on the Rhine

Charlotte Ann Jones Faulkner, 17th child and only daughter of Grover and Annie Jones. Charlotte and her husband bought the family home where she and her 16 brothers were raised. She points to the area where there once stood a shed, where the diamond was stored for 14 years before it was identified. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

River when Punch was killed. Six months passed before he learned his brother was dead.

Punch was buried in Belgium. In 1950, his remains were returned to the United States and laid to rest in the Peterstown Cemetery.

The sight of a War Department telegram had become familiar to Grover and Annie Grace. In June 1944, their son Paul was shot in the leg six days after hitting Omaha Beach. He recuperated at a hospital in England, then went back to the front, only to be shot in the same leg again. Another son, Robert, became seriously ill while serving with the Navy in Italy. Woodrow was shot in the hand while exiting his tank.

Hazel says Punch had made a will, which gave 50% joint ownership of the stone to her and their children, and 50% to his parents. But Punch's death put the diamond in a new light for the family; its sentimental value meant more to Grover than its monetary worth, and he refused to sell it.

The gem, which became known as the Punch Jones Diamond, remained in the custody of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Russell Feather, museum specialist-gemologist with the Smithsonian, recalls having a brief conversation about the diamond with Dr. Ed Henderson back in the mid-1980's. Dr. Henderson was curator of the stone at the time.

"He recalled that the Jones family did not want anyone handling the diamond at all," recalls Feather. "He told them if Mrs. Roosevelt wanted to handle the stone that he would let her."

Most of the Jones children thus grew up never seeing the diamond that would bear the family name.

"The first time I ever saw it was when I graduated in 1964 and we went on a senior trip to Washington, D.C., and I saw it in the Smithsonian," Charlotte says.

Later that year, the diamond was returned to Grover, Sr., who placed it in a safety deposit box in the First Valley National Bank, Rich Creek, Virginia. It was brought out on at least one occasion for public display at the 1968 West Virginia State Fair in Lewisburg.

Hazel says she attempted to get custody of the diamond, so she could sell it and raise cash to help her son with college expenses. The effort ended in court when Grover refused to acknowledge her claim.

The Punch Jones Diamond was sold at auction in October 1984 through Sotheby's of New York. It reportedly brought $67,500 from a buyer in the Orient. Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's Jewelry Department.

Robert Jones, Punch and Hazel's son and a retired lawyer living in Chesapeake, Virginia, says the judge ruled that Grover and Annie Grace had a 75% claim to the stone, largely because the gem had been found on their property. Robert's claim was only 25%; Hazel had no claim. Grover, increasingly sentimental about the gem, refused to sell. Long-standing animosity between Hazel and Grover, arising from Hazel's decision to move away from West Virginia after Punch died, also figured into the standoff, Robert says.

Grover died in 1976, at the age of 84. In 1984, Robert and Annie Grace came to an agreement to sell the diamond through Sotheby's Auction House in New York. The diamond sold for $67,500, which left them with $60,750 after commission. Robert bore additional sales expenses from his share, as well as expenses his grandmother had accumulated in a previous attempt to sell the gem. The diamond went to a buyer in the Orient, and the family lost track of it at that point.

Robert says his motivation for selling the diamond was to raise cash to help his grandmother in her senior years. He's certain his father would have wanted it that way. Ideally, Robert wishes the diamond could have stayed in the Smithsonian. "I think the diamond was for [Punch] probably a lot like it was for me," Robert says. "It was important to me that he was the one who found it, and it had some significant value in the history of West Virginia. It was there to help take care of my grandmother if she needed it."

Annie Grace died in 1992. Although some newspaper reports quoted her as saying she wished Punch and Grover had never found the diamond and would just "throw it in the New River," Charlotte says her mother never expressed those sentiments to her. Nor did her parents ever sense that the diamond brought bad luck, despite Punch's tragic death. Indeed, for the most part, the family simply ignored the diamond.

"We never thought too much about the diamond," Woodrow says. "We never thought it was worth anything."

"It was just one of those things that, after the novelty wore off, it was taken for granted," Charlotte says. "I think my father and mother just chose to do it that way. They were not greedy people in any sense of the word. They were very satisfied with the life they lived."

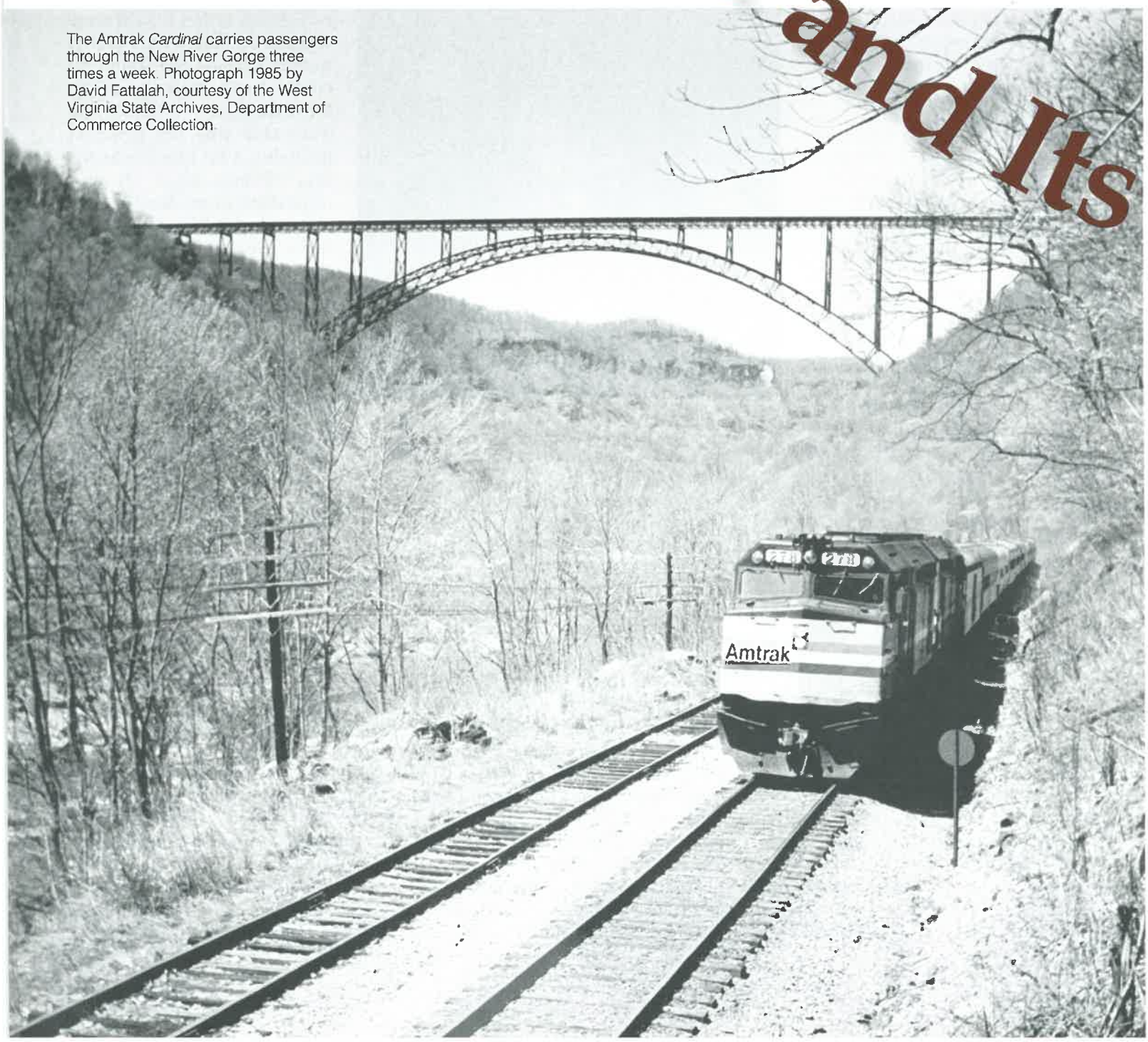
The Cardinal and Its

By Bob Withers

Did you know that nylon was invented in Kanawha County? Or that Queen Victoria provided funds to establish the town of Caperton, Fayette County, so that coal could be mined there? Or that there once was a hospital at McKendree, a few miles up New River, where only woods, kudzu, and copperheads can be seen today?

You might, if you have ridden Amtrak's eastbound *Cardinal* through the New River Gorge and have enjoyed narration offered by members of the Huntington-based Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society.

The *Cardinal* has been staffed for more than two decades by knowledgeable volunteers, such as current coordinator Jim Pickett of Kenova, Wayne County; retired trucker Bill Gillespie of Poca, Putnam County; and the Reverend Charles W. Aurand, a



The Amtrak *Cardinal* carries passengers through the New River Gorge three times a week. Photograph 1985 by David Fattalah, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Department of Commerce Collection.

Rolling History Lesson

Wheeling native and 48-year Huntington resident. At present, 19 society volunteers are qualified to narrate aboard the thrice-weekly Chicago-New York passenger train, whenever they are available.

The volunteers, who board the train at Huntington or Charleston, know their subject. And when they're finished, the passengers do, too.

The New River Gorge, established as a National River in 1978, is rich with history. Narrators are equipped with a script, but many of them put a little extra jam on the bread. One of the finest in this regard is Rev. Aurand, retired pastor of Huntington's St. Paul Lutheran Church, with whom we now tag along on a typical trip.

Well into his 80's, Aurand boards the *Cardinal* gingerly. He is clad in a brightly colored sport jacket. On one lapel is a flashing railroad crossbucks pin and a golden Lionel Train pin. His 25-year membership pin in the National Railway Historical Society on the other lapel. Another set of crossbucks adorn his tie, and his nametag is clipped to his jacket pocket.

He takes his station in one of the coach's vestibules, where the public address microphone is located, and stands for more than three hours — all the way from Huntington to Hinton.

Aurand starts his narrative well before Charleston. He stuffs his script in his pocket and never refers to it once. Using his well-honed pastoral eloquence, he talks extensively at times, without a single "ah" or "uh."

"It's a shame the state wasn't named 'Lincoln,'" he remarks half-seriously as he explains West Virginia's birth during the Civil War.

Narrators always tell about the state capitol, the first major landmark passengers see across the Kanawha River when the train departs Charleston. They point out the DuPont plant, also across the river in Belle, which originated nylon and many other modern chemical conveniences.

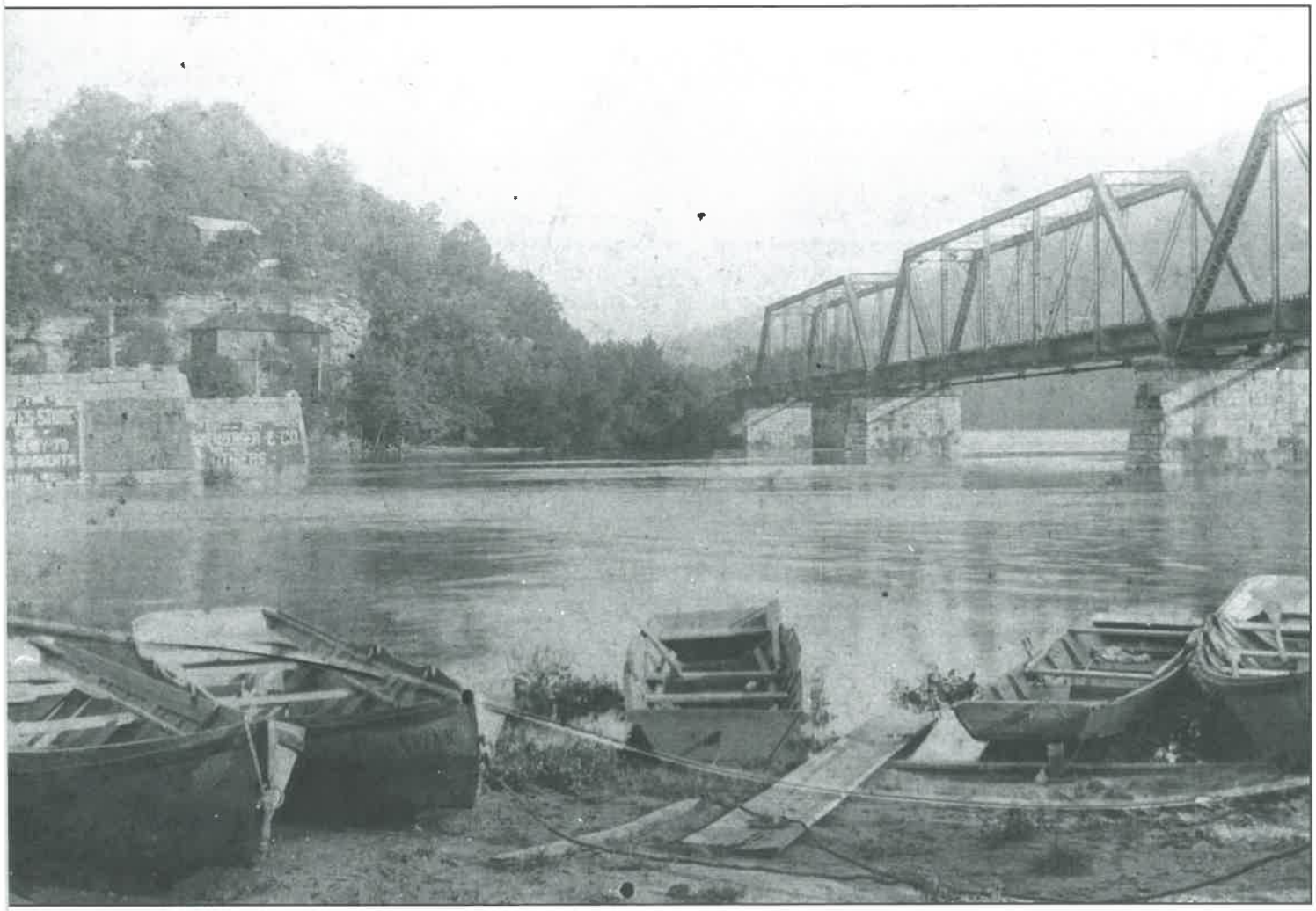
Aurand mentions a derrick in the Kanawha River. "They're dredging coal lost from loading barges," he notes.

Assistant conductor Howard Goodloe asks Aurand to make the Montgomery announcement for passengers disembarking there while the coach attendant assists a passenger. Under way again, the preacher resumes his monologue. "Now you'll notice how wild the river is," he points out near Deepwater.

When narrators mention the Elkem Metals plant at Alloy, Fayette County, passengers stare as the train passes the spectacular Kanawha Falls and the old bus that serves as a fishing camp on a rock out in the river at Gauley Bridge. "How did that bus get there?" their puzzled expressions seem to ask. [See "'Bus On A Rock': Bruiser Cole's Camp at Gauley Bridge," by Anna Sale; Winter 2005.]

Soon after the train starts up New River, passengers see its shallow "dries," with house-sized boulders strewn around in the streambed like so many children's toys. Within minutes, they see the Hawks Nest Dam, which Elkem predecessor Union Carbide opened in 1936 to divert water through a three-mile tunnel to the mill's electrical power plant. Construction of the 40-foot-wide tunnel led to the silicosis deaths of almost 400 workers and inspired countless laws regulating

The Reverend Charles W. Aurand, of Huntington, one of 19 volunteer narrators from the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society, aboard the Amtrak *Cardinal* in 1993. Photograph by Bob Withers.



Railroad trestle at Gauley Bridge, Fayette County. The Gauley River is in the foreground, the New River in the distance, at right. The two flow together here to form the Great Kanawha River. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, date unknown.

workplace safety. [See "Hawks Nest Revisited"; Fall 1990.]

Aurand follows that grim fact with several river rarities:

"The Kanawha is wider at its source than at its mouth."

"The New River flows from south to north."

"The river is misnamed — it is one of America's oldest rivers."

Fellow narrator James Reed, a retired schoolteacher and principal from Danville, Boone County, recently deceased, used his script more than Aurand does but added his own special touches, too. He even revealed how New River got its name.

"Captain Abraham Wood got some friendly Indians, horses, and mules and set sail up the James River to the headwaters of the Roanoke River," Reed's notes say. "Then, by way of the Staunton River and its tributaries, they came to a mountain that they crossed on September 13, 1671, and descended to a 'great river,' the waters of which ran 'west and by north.'

"One of the explorers exclaimed, 'Ah, a new river.'

"'Let's call it Wood River,' suggested another, after the expedition's sponsor who had died en route.

"The river was called Wood for a while [some sources say Woods River and that the sponsor himself named it], but the New appellation is the one that stuck."

Aurand mentions that the curve east of Cotton Hill was where railroaders drove the "golden spike" on January 29, 1873, connecting two C&O segments that opened a rail artery all the way from Richmond to Huntington. Water from the James River was ceremonially poured into the Ohio River soon afterward.

As the train crosses to the north bank of New River, narrators call attention to Hawks Nest State Park's 585-foot-high overlook, constructed in 1930 on a cliff along the lofty hairpin turns of U.S. Route 60 — the Midland Trail — where passengers see tourists looking back at them. [See "Homer L. Wells: Midland Trail's Mystery Photographer," by Bob Moore; Fall 2006.]

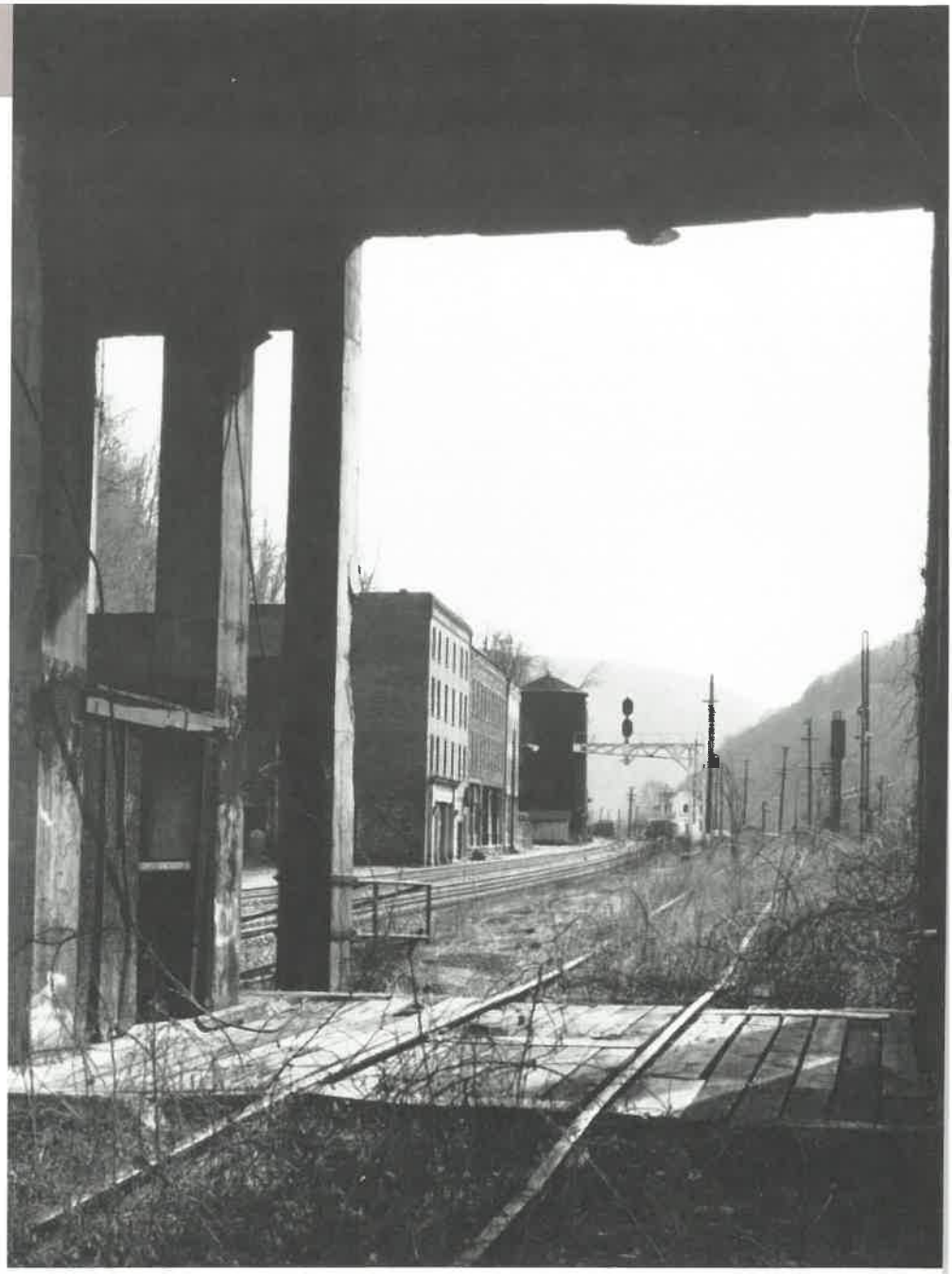
Then they point out the giant steel arch New River Gorge Bridge, which carries U.S. Route 19 across

the gorge a whopping 876 feet above the river, and whose image graces the obverse of the 2005 West Virginia Quarter. Amtrak engineers slow down so passengers can get a good look and snap photos. Those who had been standing, bending over, or kneeling to gawk out the left side of the train suddenly shift to the right.

A string of ghost towns and worked-out coal mines follows — 85 of them have been identified on old maps — that are now hidden by dense forest and an occasional rusting loadout. The abandoned coke ovens at Sewell offer one of the most obvious hints that industry once flourished in this remote canyon.

"You'll notice we're the only ones down in here," Aurand comments, adding to the eerie ruggedness of the realm. But the loneliness lasts only until passengers spot rafters battling the tumbling, rock-strewn whitewater or setting up camps near the railroad right-of-way.

Narrators give plenty of attention to Thurmond, which once generated almost one-fifth of CSX predecessor Chesapeake & Ohio Railway's coal revenues. Today, the town is populated by a restored depot, shells of old buildings, and perhaps five people. But back in the "good ol' days," it was known for its saloons, violence, and vice. People said there was no law west of Hinton and no God west of Thurmond. [See "Thurmond: Change Continues in a New River Town," by W. Hodding Carter; Summer 1995.]



Thurmond, as it appears today. This was once a bustling railroad and coal shipping center. Photograph by Bruce Burgin, 1995.

The surroundings grow more secluded as the train passes each milepost, but Aurand always knows where he is.

"The hospital at McKendree wasn't much bigger than a large house is now," he says. "It served mostly Lithuanians, Polish, Italians, and a few Americans at a cost of $1.50 a day. Today, for that much money, hospitals will give you a drink of water and show you out."

The timbre of the train's rumbling changes as it roars through Stretcher Neck Tunnel, west of Prince. The railroad built the tunnel to avoid a meander of the river around a five-mile neck of land, and some say it's haunted. [See "The Ghosts of Stretcher's Neck," by Leona G. Brown; Fall 1998.]

Prince was named for brothers William and James Prince, who bought the surrounding land in 1870, built a fine home, and started a mercantile business just before the railroad came.

"They received a lifetime pass to ride C&O trains, because they donated the land for the station," Aurand says.

Then, he quickly adds, "If you stretch your neck, you may be able to see Chessie," referring to a large mosaic of the C&O's feline public relations mascot in the waiting room floor. [See "The Duke of Prince: Ticket Agent Marvin Plumley," by Bob Withers; page 32.]

"Quinnimont," he announces a mile later. "The name means 'five mountains,' referring to the summits travelers can see from here. Ads in New York papers boasted fresh air, a mountain experience,

The Stretcher Neck Tunnel, identified on the portal as "Stretchers Neck," was completed in 1932. Though technically off limits to pedestrians, local people still use the tunnel as a walkway, which has resulted in several mishaps and numerous ghost tales. Photograph by Michael Keller.

and the American plan for only $2 a night." [See "Quinnimont: Going Back to a New River Town," by Leona G. Brown; Fall 1990.]

Then he interjects a commercial: "That's Grandview State Park up there," he says, prompting passengers to look at one of the five peaks. He mentions the park's live dramas — *Honey in the Rock* and *Hatfields and McCoys* — and repeats the state's tourist information hotline, 1-800-CALL-WVA. [See "Grandview," by Leona G. Brown; Summer 1996.]

By design, Aurand gives passengers a break from time to time. But he never complains about standing without rest himself and doesn't even shift his weight from one foot to the other.

Once the train crosses into Summers County, passengers learn about an old quarry at Sandstone where silica rock was cut to provide West Virginia's contribution to the Washington Monument. They also marvel at the sight of Sandstone Falls.

Once Aurand signs off at Hinton and finally seeks a seat for the remainder of his ride to White Sulphur Springs, passengers applaud him and promise to write glowing letters to Amtrak.

Some narrators talk beyond Hinton, pointing out such things as Big Bend Tunnel at Talcott, where legendary "steel-drivin' man" John Henry died after challenging a steam drill. [See "John Henry: The Story of a Steel-Driving Man," by Robert Tabscott; Summer 1996.]

Although Aurand has chosen to rest, his desire to educate is

Ride the *Cardinal*

The Amtrak *Cardinal* runs three times weekly through the New River Gorge on its Chicago-New York route. A popular feature of the trip is the historical narration provided by members of the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society, which operates one of the oldest historical narration programs in the country. The narrators are volunteers, and there is no set schedule for the narrated trips. To check on availability, contact the society at 1-866-639-7487.

For more information about fares and schedules of the Amtrak *Cardinal*, call 1-800-8782-7245, or phone (304)253-6651 on Wednesday, Friday, or Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

kitten playing on the track under the train. Much to the conductor's consternation, Warner crawled under the train to retrieve it.

"Little fellow, you're going to get hurt under there," Warner said. "Why don't you come with me?"

The conductor soon cooled, and Warner asked him if he could take the kitten home to Charleston. Allowing animals aboard, except for seeing-eye dogs, was against Amtrak's rules, but the conductor agreed to the request. Warner slept all the way home, with the kitten sleeping on his chest.

Rev. Aurand is always amused by passengers who see the hillside homes of Hinton come into view and think they are arriving in Washington, D.C. Back when the train carried double-decker Superliner coaches, he chuckled under his breath when passengers went to the restroom and, coming back upstairs, couldn't remember whether to turn left or right to find their seats.

Bill Gillespie met someone running for president of the United States on one of his trips, but the person didn't make much of an impression.

"I can't remember who it was," Bill says.

Art and Iris Malcom of Huntington remember the day they weren't paying attention, and the conductor had to stop the eastbound train a second time to let them off at White Sulphur Springs.

"We walked back to the station on the gravel," Art Malcom says.

Bob Moore recalled a particularly frigid day when the westbound train was running several hours late.

"The station was closed," he said. "I was standing outside with maybe a dozen other people, some of whom were Greenbrier guests ready to leave on the train. The driver of a hotel limousine who had taken people to the [Lewisburg] airport was returning and noticed us standing there freezing."

The driver pulled into the station parking lot, which is across Route 60 from the hotel entrance.

"You guys would be a lot more comfortable in the lobby, where we have a fireplace going," he told Bob and loaded them into his vehicle. "We will let you know when the train is coming."

What followed was a cozy thawing-out in overstuffed chairs, with free coffee to boot.

"They were really nice to us," Bob said.

BOB WITHERS is a retired reporter and copy editor for the *Herald-Dispatch* in Huntington. He is a journalism graduate from Marshall University, a Baptist minister, and a lifelong railroad enthusiast. He has written five books on railroads and contributed to the *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2007 issue.

Passengers wave to the engineer, perched high in a modern Amtrak diesel engine, as they prepare to board the eastbound *Cardinal* out of Huntington. Photograph by Bob Withers, 1993.

The Duke of
Ticket Agent Marvin Plumley

By Bob Withers

What on earth will Amtrak do, now that Marvin Clyde Plumley has retired?

Plumley's last day as ticket agent at Prince, Fayette County, on CSX Transportation's main line through the New River Gorge, was Sunday, July 29, 2007. Vacation time stretched his working life to October 1, finishing a career of 40 years and three months on CSXT, its Chesapeake & Ohio predecessor, and Amtrak. He spent the final 23 years of that career at Prince, a mere stone's throw from where he came into this world in a railroad company house.

"It's a most unusual thing," he says, "to be able to work and retire a mile from where you were born."

Marvin has been fascinated by the rail industry all his life, and he earned that interest honestly. Both his father, Earless C. Plumley, and his grandfather, Frank Plumley, were C&O track workers.

When Marvin was born on September 26, 1947, the family lived in a one-story, frame structure against the hillside, a quarter-mile west of Stretcher Neck Tunnel.

"You could spit on the track," Marvin says.

Steam locomotives ran in the area until late 1955, and Marvin saw — and admired — many of them.

"You had to look at them," he recalls. "You were right on top of them."

Marvin Plumley, ticket agent at the Prince railroad station in Fayette County for 23 years. Photograph by Bob Withers.

Prince

Marvin started first grade at Quinnimont School, located a mile east of Prince, and walked through the tunnel to get home.

Marvin often rode trains No. 104 and No. 5 on Saturdays with his family — he had seven brothers and four sisters — to and from Hinton, where his parents shopped at Fitzgerald's, C&O's company store. They left Prince shortly after noon and were back home by 9 p.m.

"I remember them bringing me in the station at Prince when I was a kid," he says. "The floor was all taken up. They were using the baggage room as a waiting room, and they laid boards across the floor joists in the regular waiting room so people could get to the restrooms."

Marvin's father didn't drive, so his sons often took him to work. One assignment took him to Macdougal, across the river from Hawks Nest, where he slept at night in MA Cabin [the Macdougal control tower] long after it was closed.

"I used to take him to Thurmond. He worked as a bluff watchman before they had slide fences," Marvin recalls. "He slept there in a shanty all week."

Marvin hired out as a station laborer in Hinton on July 21, 1967, a year after he graduated from Sandstone High School. He did everything, including loading and unloading mail sacks. The sacks could weigh up to 200 pounds if they contained catalogs. He also swept floors and furnished cabooses with ice, water, and coal.

Working off the extra list, Marvin performed clerical duties anywhere he was needed, including Hinton, Meadow Creek, Quinnimont, Prince, Thurmond, Gauley Bridge, Beckley, and Raleigh. After the clerks' and telegraph operators' seniority lists were combined in 1973, Marvin added CW Cabin [the control tower at the west end of Hinton] to that list. He learned the job at Montgomery, but got "kicked off" by a senior employee before he could work it.

"I was the first clerk on the Hinton Division to change over and work as a clerk and an operator," he says.

Marvin changed employers when C&O transferred ticket agents' jobs at Clifton Forge, Prince, Hinton, and White Sulphur Springs to Amtrak on March 17, 1975.

"I had worked Bob Morris' job at Prince and Jack Ward's job at Hinton," he says. "They recommended that Amtrak hire me."

For the next three-and-a-half years, Plumley worked a swing job — Saturday and Sunday nights at

Three-year-old Marvin Plumley is third from the left in this 1949 snapshot, taken at the Plumley home in Prince. "You could spit of the track," Marvin says of the rail line, visible at left. From the left are McGee Plumley, David Anderson, Marvin, and Willard Plumley.

Marvin began his career in 1967, when he signed on as a station laborer in Hinton. He is shown here, 29 years later, moving luggage at Prince in 1996. Photograph by Doug Andre.

Prince, Monday and Tuesday nights at Hinton, and Wednesday nights at White Sulphur Springs.

"People with more seniority turned it down," he recalls. "Nobody wanted it until they found out it paid travel time. But it was too late then."

In October 1978, Amtrak closed its agencies at Staunton, Clifton Forge, Hinton, and White Sulphur Springs, which rearranged things for Marvin.

"They didn't have anybody to relieve Bob at Prince," he says, "so they made [me] a job."

It was the best job he ever had.

"I was by myself in Prince on Saturday and Sunday nights. Bob was there two nights by himself, and we were together three nights," he says. "If Bob wanted off, I worked seven nights, including two nights at time-and-a-half. It paid good, and if I wanted off, all I had to do was call Bob. It's easier if you work with somebody."

But on October 1, 1981, Amtrak discontinued its daily *Cardinal*, and Marvin went back to the C&O. He ended up with another swing job — two days and one evening at Quinnimont and one midnight shift each at CW Cabin and Hinton. The following spring, travel-time rules changed, and the railroad substituted two days and an afternoon at Meadow Creek for the three shifts at Quinnimont.

"The good Lord has blessed me. It seems like every place I've been, one door closed and another one opened."

"They took away the travel pay, but that was closer to home, so I made money," Marvin says.

A woman with more seniority, who had a habit of kicking Plumley off jobs after he had made careful notes on how to accomplish them, kicked him off this one, too. But a clerk/operator position opened up at Rainelle on January 13, 1983. And that's the way it has been.

"The good Lord has blessed me," Marvin says. "It seems like every place I've been, one door closed and another one opened. I can give you example after example."

Marvin made his final move after longtime friend and mentor Bob Morris died suddenly from a heart attack. The *Cardinal* had been restored as a thrice-weekly train on January 8, 1982, and its nighttime schedule "flopped" to a daytime run in the spring of 1984 to take advantage of the New River Gorge's fabulous scenery. So on December 14, 1984, Plumley went back to Prince, and that's where he finished his career.

"When I quit, I was the oldest of 175 men on the Amtrak Southeast District 2 seniority roster [covering West Virginia, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia] and had been for about six years," he

says. "I was never kicked off."

Hence Amtrak's problem — filling his shoes.

In the first place, Plumley knows virtually everybody in Fayette County and where they live. He's a walking history book, accumulating tales of the rails over a lifetime.

For instance, there was L.C. Auldridge, the first ticket agent assigned to Prince's 1946 station.

"A man had died at the V.A. hospital in Beckley, and they were shipping his body back to Richmond," Marvin says. "Lawrence Kessler, the station laborer, had taken the casket from the hearse, loaded it onto a baggage truck, and had the truck positioned next to No. 2 track."

As luck would have it, though, Kessler looked toward the tunnel and saw that the eastbound train was charging into the station on No. 1 track instead. He tried to hurry his shipment to the other side of No. 1 track, but the corner of the locomotive caught the truck, turned it over, and dumped the casket into the parking lot. Fortunately, it didn't open, though the accident made quite a commotion. Auldridge, possibly fearing a lawsuit, ran to a window in the ticket office and shouted, "Is anybody hurt?"

"No," Kessler drawled as he straightened up the mess. "He was already dead."

Or this:

"Holly Jividen, an operator at NI Cabin [the Prince control tower], lived on the west end of the tunnel in an old farmhouse," Marvin says. "He sold eggs to railroaders."

Auldridge bought eggs from Jividen, and one day after Jividen delivered them to the station in a brown paper bag, Auldridge put the eggs in the baggage room.

"Bob Morris' wife had put two hard-boiled eggs in his lunch, and Bob put them in the sack with Lawrence's fresh eggs," Plumley says. "Lawrence didn't say nothing for a long time, so finally Bob told him, 'Lawrence, I hear Holly has some hens down there that lay hard-boiled eggs.' "

Of course, Morris had tipped his hand. Auldridge knew who had tricked him.

"He hit the ceiling," Plumley says.

During the last years of Marvin's career, there was no one else at the station to talk to, except people who came in asking for information or buying tickets. But that didn't mean he loafed during his 8 a.m.-to-7:30 p.m. shift on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, as one might suspect with just one eastbound and one westbound train arriving and departing thrice weekly.

Since Prince was the only staffed station between Charlottesville and Charleston, crews often called Marvin on their cell phones when they picked up passengers at unmanned stations. Amtrak's yield-management system raises fares as travel days get closer. So, when passengers boarded and wished to pay with cash, crews weren't sure what to charge them. They called Marvin, who figured the amounts and made out the tickets, to be picked up when the trains arrived at Prince. He took care of other problems, too, such as one man who boarded at Staunton on a later day than his ticket specified. Plumley calculated that he owed an additional $13.

"That's probably what has helped keep the station open more than anything," Marvin says. On a particular Friday about three weeks before Plumley quit, the station's total revenue was $1,658.70. Included in that figure was $342.40 in sales generated from last-minute purchases elsewhere.

"Conductors have a hard time figuring how much to charge with Amtrak's 'buckets' of fares," he says. "Those fares make passengers mad when they start comparing them to

Marvin Plumley assists passengers at the Prince station in 2007. Photograph by Bob Withers.

Marvin smiles as he receives his retirement certificate from Amtrak on July 29, 2007. Photograph by Doug Andre.

each other. We've complained about it, but Amtrak says they encourage people to make reservations early, and that's the way it was going to be."

However the money rolled in, Prince did a brisk business throughout Plumley's tenure. During the last week in June 2007, station revenue was more than $3,700 a day for two straight days — almost 30,000 passengers got on or off trains during the month.

"People think I didn't do anything," he says. "But this station used to have four employees and two swings. At the last, I was the only person out here. And sometimes, that phone really smoked."

He swept the waiting room and platform. He and two volunteers repainted the "PRINCE" signs on the ends of the umbrella shed. He cut the station's grass, did the weed-eating in summer, and shoveled snow in the winter, just like he still does for ill neighbors and his church. He drove to the bank and Federal Express in Beckley on company business. He didn't let the propane tank's gauge go below 200 gallons. He inspected every freight train that passed, looking for dragging equipment or sliding wheels. And he washed the station's windows.

It was a point of pride for Marvin to have up-to-the-minute information to share with patrons.

"I asked for four 10-hour days instead of three 12-hour days so I would have one day without trains, but they wouldn't do it," he says. "You can't hardly wash windows in a white shirt."

He brought his chain saw from home to eliminate trees that were fouling his view of eastbound signals. He scrubbed the restrooms, and with the help of fellow agent Chuck Friend, plugged two roof leaks with 10 gallons of tar.

He has given people his lunch. He lent his coat to a woman waiting on a passenger one chilly day and lost it when they took off. One fall, he got a stack of two-by-fours and covered an expansion joint between the station roof and platform shed roof so bats wouldn't return in the spring and he wouldn't have to shovel up their droppings every morning from one end of the station to the other.

"I hated to leave in a way," he says. "I did a lot of stuff other people wouldn't do. But I'm worn out. I'm tired of working."

He always kept track of his trains' progress, receiving reports of their departures from advance stations. Modern technologies made it possible in recent years for engineers to report their departures from unmanned stations, too. And if they didn't do it in a timely fashion, Plumley called them and asked. It was a point of pride for Marvin to have up-to-the-minute information to share with patrons.

"Computers are amazing, when they work," he says.

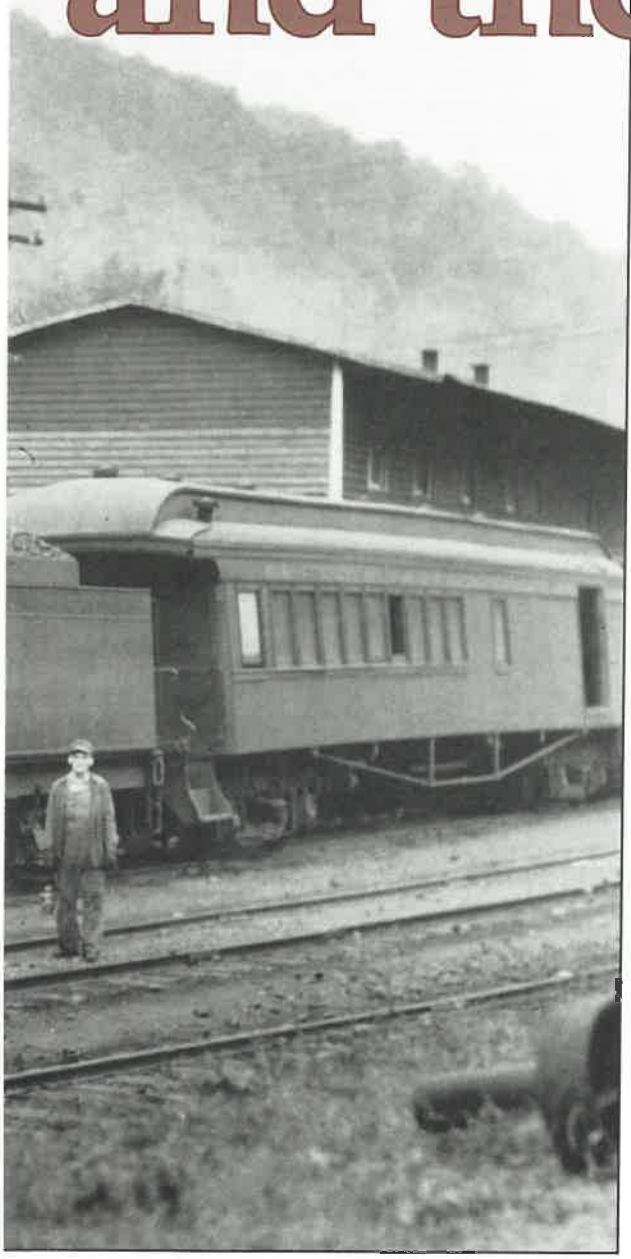
Plumley kept all that work caught up, finishing projects ahead of time when he could, just in case something unexpected came up.

"Bob Morris says I was the only fellow who filled out my diary a week in advance," Marvin jokes.

Add to that the last-minute details of a 40-year career — local people dropping by to take his picture or give him retirement presents, such as a $25 check or a giant chocolate-chip cookie.

Marvin never vacationed more than nine days, mostly just a week at a time. Superiors kept close track of his work habits, sometimes without his knowledge, and duly recognized them. Several years ago, a distinguished-looking gentleman got off the train for a minute or two during its stop.

the Smoke, and the Bell



Buffalo Creek & Gauley engine No. 4 lets off smoke and steam at Widen, Clay County, in the mid-1950's. On the engine, from the left, are Johnny King and Jobe Young; on the ground are Ray Conner, Princey Love, Holly Paxton, and Bernard Mullins. Photographer unknown.

Being aware of the J.G. Bradley conglomerate in Clay County all my life, I thought I would jot down some thoughts and memories. Much publicity has been given to Bradley inheriting this vast acreage of land. Why he chose to come there instead of building lavish houses for show, like the Hearsts, Vanderbilts, or Rockefellers, may never be known.

I doubt there ever was a company that hired more farm boys and timbermen, all unskilled, and taught them to be miners, machinists, railroad firemen and engineers, dairymen, or sawmill operators. Mr. Bradley did not appear to have any social prejudices, as he hired a Japanese cook, blacks, and immigrants, as well as locals.

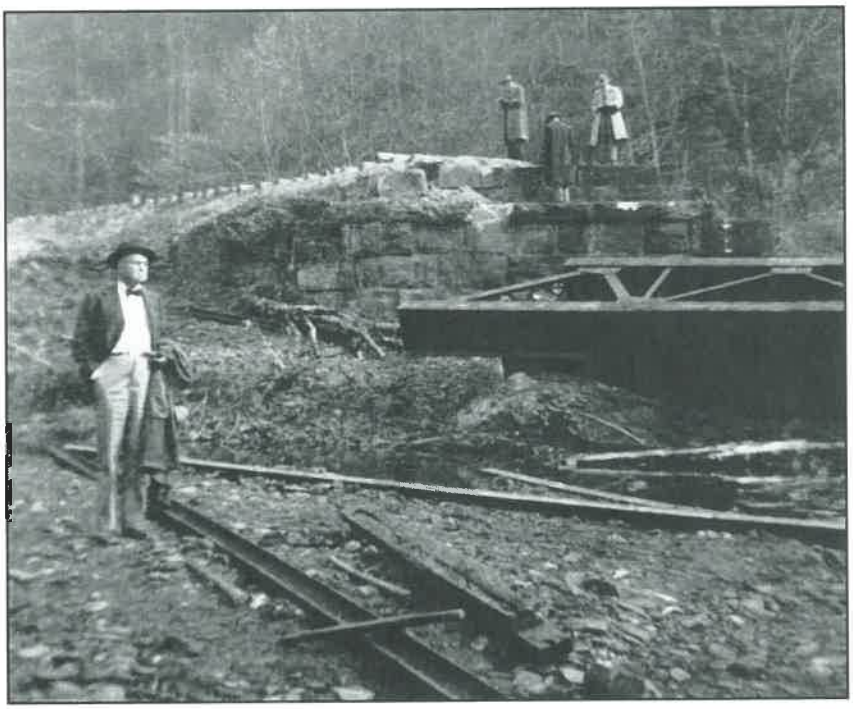
Many persons in that area were fed, clothed, and educated by jobs provided by Mr. Bradley. Families had their furniture moved in and out by train. Little communities sprang up along the tracks: Avoca, Adair, Eakle, and Sand Creek. Communities close-by thrived from the paid workers at Widen, Dundon, and Cressmont. Swandale had a huge lumber-sawmill business fed by logs cut nearby. Cressmont provided all the dairy products — all serviced by the main railroad. Dille had a large furniture store owned by Mansel Walker. There were various "mom-and-pop" grocery stores around. Clay profited, also, as many persons who rode the train to Dundon could walk from there to Clay. They could shop all day and return home on the train in the afternoon.

Children rode the early train to Dundon and walked to the old high school. My husband's brother and sister were two who went to Clay High. Land was given to Clay County near the new Clay High School, long called Bradley Field.

Widen was the center of activity. Though Dundon had a store, post office, school, and community building, as did other company-owned communities, they were never as large as Widen. Widen had rows of houses painted barn red, with board fences with just enough room between boards for kids to stick their toes in to get to the top. Most houses had a large backyard, as did our house. We had a cow named Tiny and a family dog. The house had electricity and coal heat.

The town had been laid out so that workers could walk to their work area. There was a bowling alley, post office, a grill, bank, store, theater, churches, and community building. Also a Women's Club, Rotary Club, and a baseball team. Actually, it was a self-contained town.

Apparently, Mr. Bradley tried to hire excellent teachers, as many



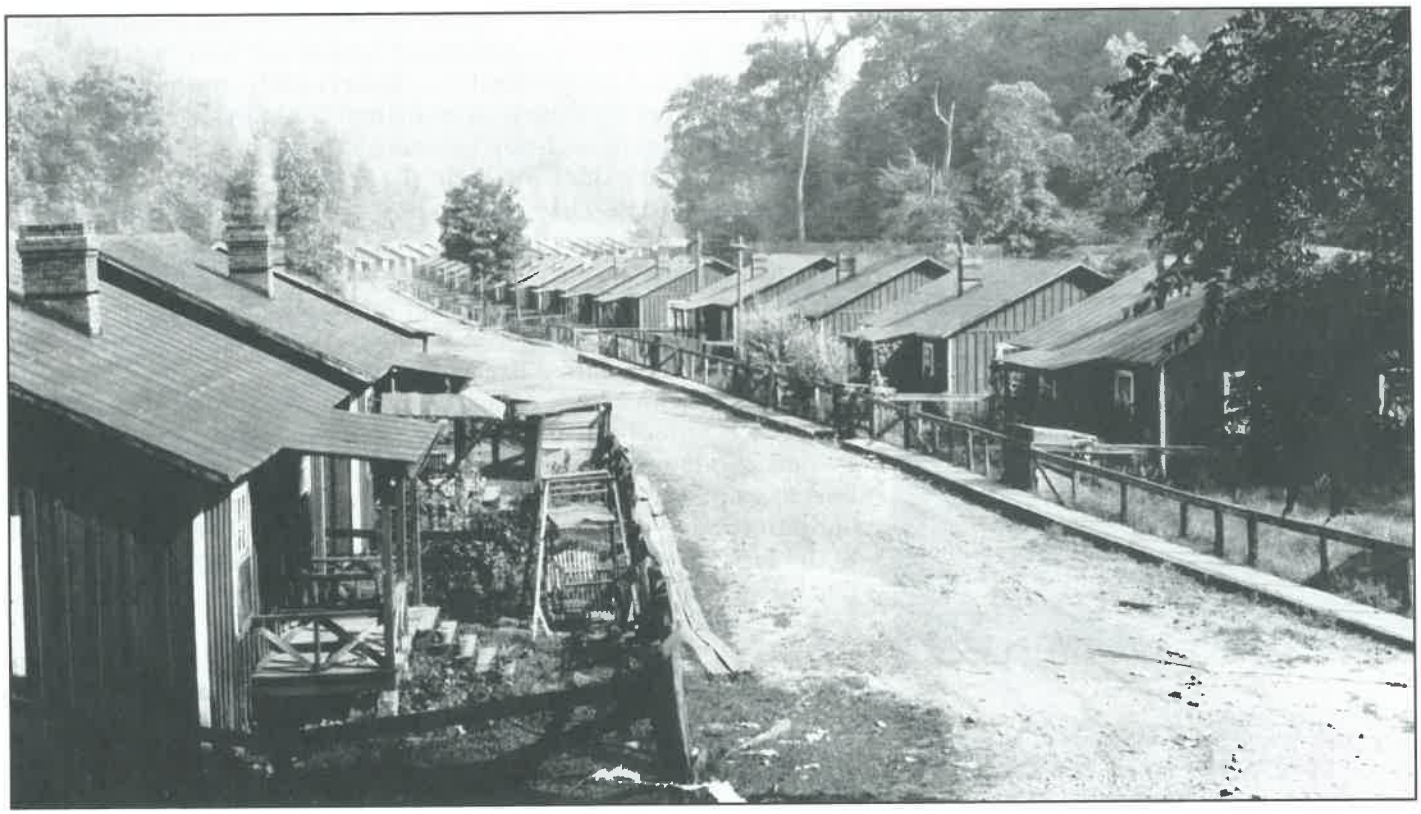
Company owner and founder J.G. Bradley, at left, scans a badly damaged trestle at Widen in 1952.

students excelled in various fields. Medical services were provided. I particularly remember Dr. Brown and nurse Pearl McGhee.

Compared to some other early West Virginia mining towns, there were no known brothels or all-night poker games, no flamboyant trips to the bank with wheel barrows of money. I can only guess crime was statistically low. The wage scale was always a little higher than most companies paid. Many boys followed in their father's footsteps to work for the company.

I was born at 23 Nicholas Street in Widen, the fourth child of Jessie Jane and Jobe Young. I was preceded by two sisters, Edith Faye and Radie Lee, and a brother, Shirley Hiram. Our parents had met at Mount Ovis Church at Enoch. The church is still standing. Mom was born at Herold, Braxton County, daughter of John and Emma Dean. Dad was the son of Howard and Radie Kyle Young. His parents had died when he was about eight or 10.

After several years working in the woods with his uncle, Dad heard of a fireman's job at Widen. He was wanting a better life and immediately went to Mr. Bradley and asked for the job. Mr. Bradley questioned him, asking why he thought he could do a good job. Dad's reply, "I know I can." A simple handshake closed the deal, lasting until the last steam engine pulled the last load of coal from Widen. Dad was 19 when he was hired and went to work as fireman, with Burl Hayes as engineer, on the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad.



Residential streets in Widen, date unknown. In 1925, the population of Widen was 2,500. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

Author Barbara J. Young (Workman) with three of her siblings at Widen in about 1935. Standing at left is sister Radie; Barbara is seated; standing at right is sister Edith; brother Shirley is standing at rear.

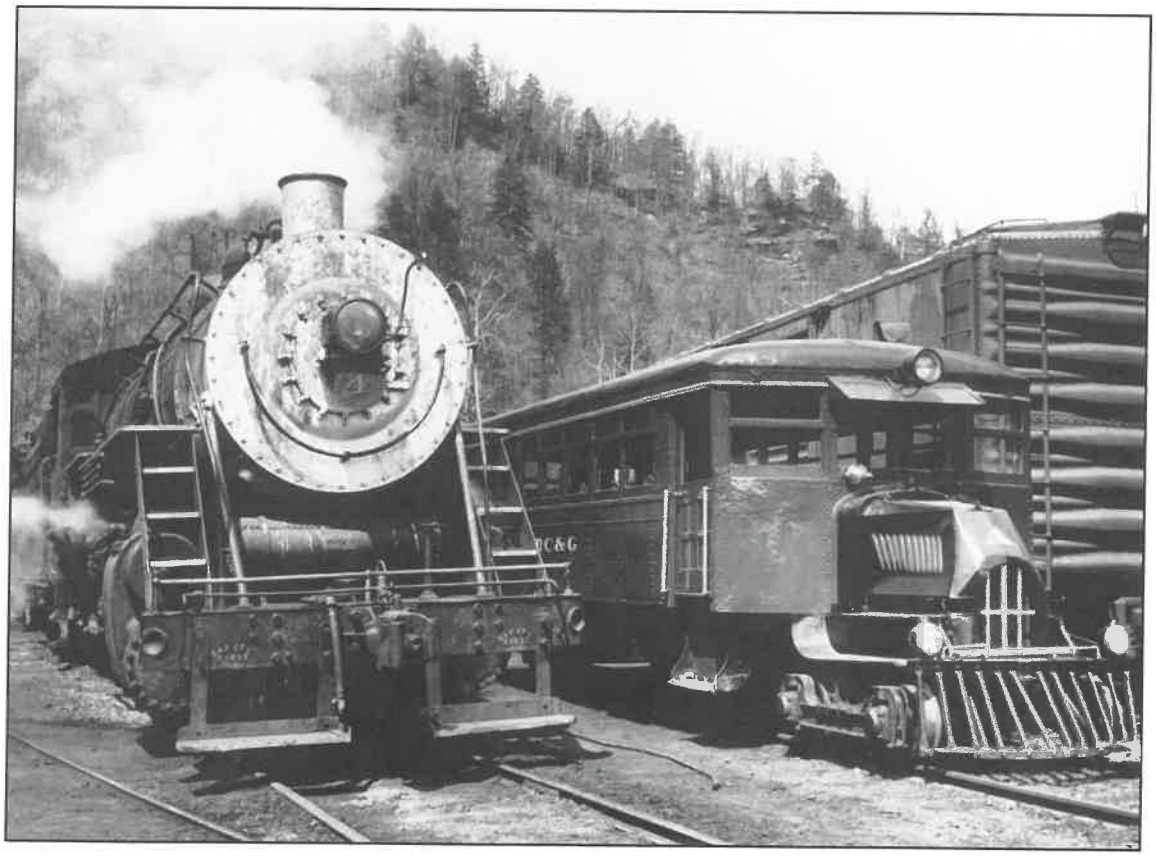
I don't know how much schooling Dad had, but he could figure in his head faster than us kids could figure out on paper. He had beautiful penmanship and could read very well. I'm guessing most of the early employees were of similar circumstances — just looking for a job. The employees were proud of their jobs, which provided a good living for their families and allowed the company to flourish.

The steam trains had cowcatchers on the front, as strays from Cressmont and private homes wandered onto the tracks. Also wild hogs, not rounded up each fall, visited the tracks, as well as snakes and other smaller creatures. There were also railcars and buses. One I remember was coal-dust green and clacked along the tracks. It was used for passengers, milk, mail, and other supplies. One bus was called Bradley's bus, which he used to travel from town to town to check on operations.

The train route was the only way in for hoboes. Having heard of job opportunities, these fellows were quite numerous. Sadly, some got in dangerous places and were killed. If caught riding along, there was no punishment.

I always remember the shiny railroad watches all trainmen had. The watches had to be inspected and passed regularly. Only three or four brand names were recognized for railroad watches. Dad's watch was always placed on the dresser in his bedroom, not to be touched.

These railroad men belonged to a union, American Brotherhood of Trainmen, and were examined regularly by the B&O railroad. They traveled on the B&O lines near Dundon to sidetrack loaded coal cars and pick up empty coal cars to deliver to the



BC&G engine No. 4, at left. At right is BG&C rail bus "A" at Widen, photographer and date unknown. This model "AG" Mack rail bus was built in Allentown, Pennsylvania, in 1921 and operated in Widen for 10 years.

In the late 1930's, the Young family purchased this tract of land near Glen, in western Clay County.

mines at Widen.

In those days, the communication in the railyards was with lanterns, fueled by oil with a cloth wick. I still have one with the "BC&G RR" name on it. The lantern has a red-glass globe, with a large round bail they could swing. It was very important for the engineer to see these lanterns and understand the conductor's and brakeman's signals.

Most of the BC&G crew got along really well. We heard lots of names mentioned from time to time: Bernard "Moon" Mullins, Ray Conner, Giles Blankenship, Princey Love, Alva Cart, Emory Sigman, Isaac Triplett, and Sam Burkhammer to name a few. I can also remember the deep hurt felt when one of their own was killed. Holly Paxton fell under the train, and Jim P. Wilson brushed against a building, losing his balance. However, fatal accidents were rare.

I remember Dad leaving on the evening shift. I would follow him to the gate, yelling, "Bye, Daddy. Save me a pie." Mom always packed two small pies in his bucket, and he always left me one, which I devoured every morning before breakfast.

We were always dirty from the coal dust. And there was always the train, the smoke, the whistle, and the bell — always a thrill for kids.

Life was comfortable at Widen, but in the late 1930's, Dad bought a tract of land at Glen, located on the western edge of Clay County. It was a portion of the land used by the Clay Lumber Company, which his paternal grandfather, Hiram Young, had operated. Dad boarded at Widen during the week, coming home on weekends. He always brought groceries and lots of goodies, as he always had a sweet tooth. Dad would cook breakfast lots of times, usually pancakes. His biscuits have always been our favorites.

If he could find a brush heap, he often set it on fire, usually letting it get out so us kids could fight the fire. He enjoyed the freedom of the open spaces at Glen. Life at Glen was much different from Widen. No more fences. We roamed the hills and walked about half-mile to school. We worked and helped with the chores.

Our family was growing. Naomi Fern and David Keith were added in the late 1930's, and Wilda Mae "Cookie" was born in the early '40's.

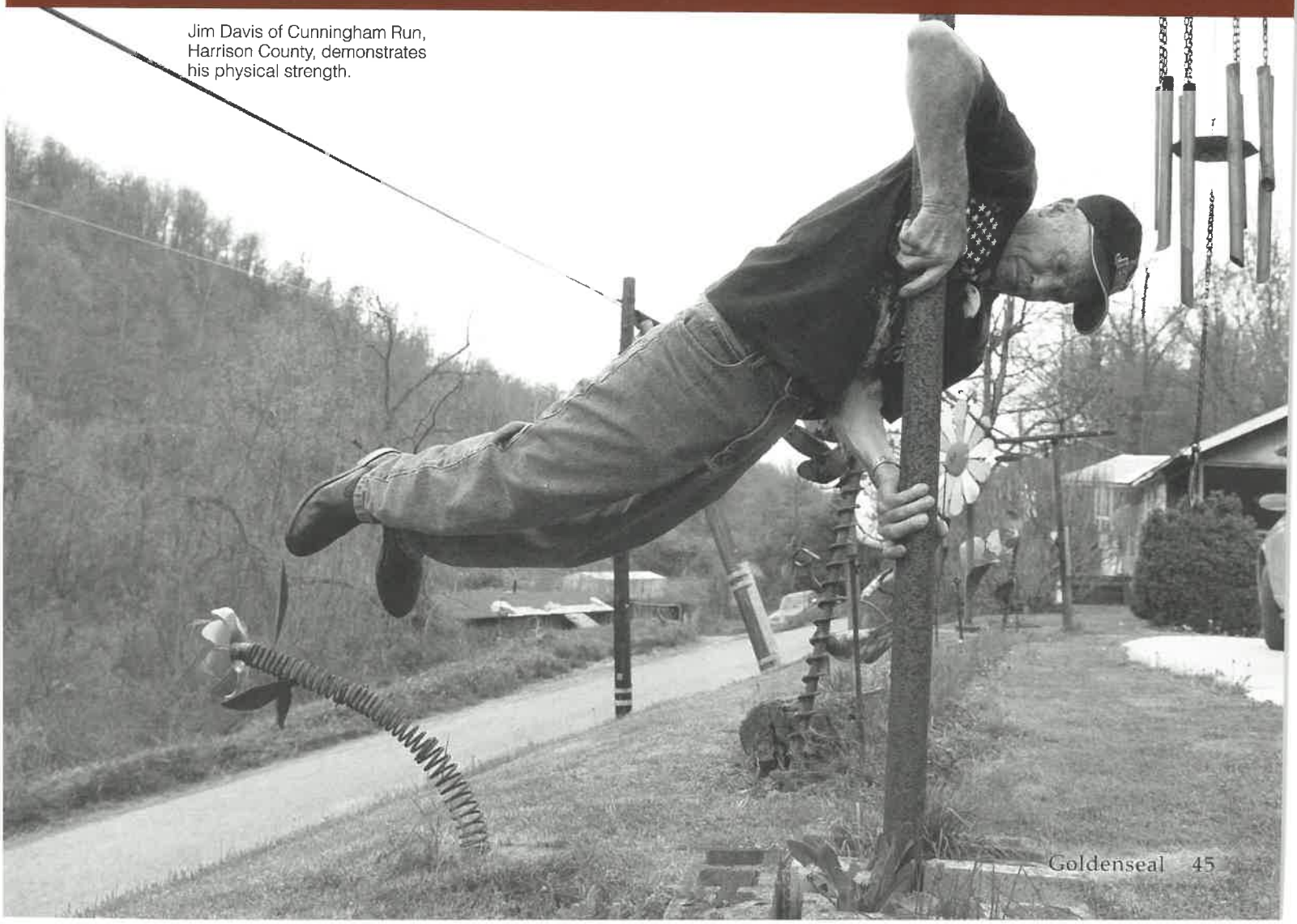
By now, Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

Students and teachers at a domestic science class in Widen. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

"I'm a Walking Miracle"

Jim Davis of Cunningham Run

Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather



Jim Davis of Cunningham Run, Harrison County, demonstrates his physical strength.

Playing the harmonica is one of Jim Davis' many interests. Others include sculpture, wood carving, poetry, songwriting, and motorcycle riding. Jim believes his talents and strength come from God.

Jim Davis cleared a path through the garage clutter to his weight set, squared off at the dusty iron bar, and firmly planted his hands thereupon. He took a deep breath, and with every muscle in his body working in unison, raised the 500 pounds of metal a few inches above the stand and held it there for an agonizing second.

Grinning at his accomplishment, Jim, 74, picked up a 50-pound block of metal and swung it above his head. He walked outside to a flagpole, grabbed hold of it a few feet above the ground, raised his legs and held himself perpendicular to the pole until he looked like a human flag, flapping in the Harrison County breeze on a warm April afternoon.

Despite this demonstration of physical strength, Jim Davis says his real strength comes from God, who inspires and directs his every task, from building flowers and coal miners out of scrap metal to carving eagles from logs, from writing poems and playing the harmonica to lifting weights and riding motorcycles. "Whatever a person does, I think before you can do anything, you got to ask for God's help," he says.

Credit for Jim's varied talents must also go to the isolated childhood he knew growing up on the family dairy farm on nearby Jones Run.

One of seven children born to Alva and Lona Gregory Davis, Jim started life in a log cabin. His given name is Bryan, but he became known as "Jim" to the family as a result of the wrinkled skin he had as a baby.

"My mom and dad lived beside an old fella, Jim. He was wrinkled up like a prune," Davis says. "I had wrinkled skin, so they called me 'Old Jim.' Well, I got quite a few wrinkles now. I tell people that when you got wrinkles, that's just room to stretch."

The family made its living from a Holstein herd of about 50 head.

"I had to do a lot of different jobs," Jim says. "My dad made my education for me. He helped me a lot. A farm is a real good place for kids to grow up on. We practiced our golf swing with a scythe, mowing weeds."

Jim says one of his uncles played

Jim sits on a bench he made from walnut lumber, decorated with carved and painted morning glories. In front is a carving he made of the State Seal of West Virginia.

guitar and harmonica. One of those harmonicas fell into Jim's hands, and he annoyed his mother with his constant efforts to produce music. Finally, his mother got tired of the noise and gave Jim an ultimatum.

"Mom was going to throw the thing away," he says. "She said 'If you don't learn to play that thing right now, it won't be here when you get up in the morning.'"

Jim took a hymnal off the piano, turned to "He Hideth My Soul," and played the song perfectly. "She said, 'The harmonica is yours,'" Jim recalls. He's been playing the harmonica correctly ever since.

He credits his uncle Gilbert "Gib" for getting him interested in another pastime he's followed throughout his life, weight lifting. "When I was 16, one night my uncle was showing off. He could hold an anvil in his hand on an outstretched arm. He influenced me to exercise. I was doing 75 pushups every night before I went to bed," Jim says.

He built up his muscles to the point he could eventually lift a 100-pound bag of dairy feed with one arm and raise it above his head. He converted a portion of a loft in their barn to a gymnasium. "When a guy is out in the country, he learns to entertain himself," Jim comments.

He took a vocational course in high school, concurrently learning welding, machine trades, and typing. "That way, if I got out of work, I was so well-rounded, if they needed something typed, I could type it for them, then I could go out and fix their machinery," says Jim, who could type a blazing 105 words a minute in his prime.

Jim put those typing skills to work in the Navy, where he served as a yeoman, a naval term for a clerical worker or typist. After the service, he returned to the farm and eventually got a job in the coal mines. But when his brother narrowly escaped death in the Farmington mine explosion, Jim decided to look for another line of work. He headed to northeast Ohio,

A bit of a daredevil, Jim scales a 25-foot sunflower he built in his yard.

where he worked as a construction laborer and later trained as an industrial welder.

He and Virginia were married by that time — they'd eloped under the pretense of going to a drive-in movie. After getting hitched by a pastor in Weston, they drove to Jim's grandparents' house for their honeymoon.

"He made me go back to the car and get my marriage license before I could bring her in," says Jim, whose reputation for being a jokester preceded him. Jim and Virginia had two boys and three girls. After several years in Ohio, they decided to return to West Virginia, where he bought their place near Peora, Harrison County, in 1970.

"The coal mines were paying higher than [factories] were in Ohio," he says.

He and Virginia made their home in Cunningham Run hollow, a 15-minute back-roads drive from U.S. Route 119. It was just five miles from his old home place and provided the isolation and room to tinker Jim longed for in Ohio.

"I liked the hills, and I came back to finish my time in the coal mines," he says. "I'm kind of a loner. It doesn't take a lot to keep me busy."

He worked for the mines for several years then went out on his own as a contract welder. Jim says he never had a shortage of good-paying work repairing construction equipment.

"If a person does what he likes to do, you'll do a better job on every job you do. If you enjoy your work, you'll look forward to getting out of bed every day," he says.

There was one day, however, that Jim probably would have been better off if he'd stayed in bed. It was a Friday, and Jim was working at a remote coal mine location. He was on the job site, which had closed down for the weekend, and was wrapping up his work there when he noticed he'd parked his truck with its wheels on top of the welding leads. Rather than move the vehicle, Jim decided to free the leads using his well-conditioned muscles.

"I put the welding lead down the middle of my back, squatted down, and pulled as hard as I could," he says. "When I raised up, I proceeded to break my back."

Jim says he had no feeling from his waist down and couldn't walk.

"I knew what I had done is crammed those backbones together, those knuckles in the sockets, too tightly. I had asked too much of my bones, and they popped out of their sockets. When they jumped out, they pinched my spinal cord right there," he says.

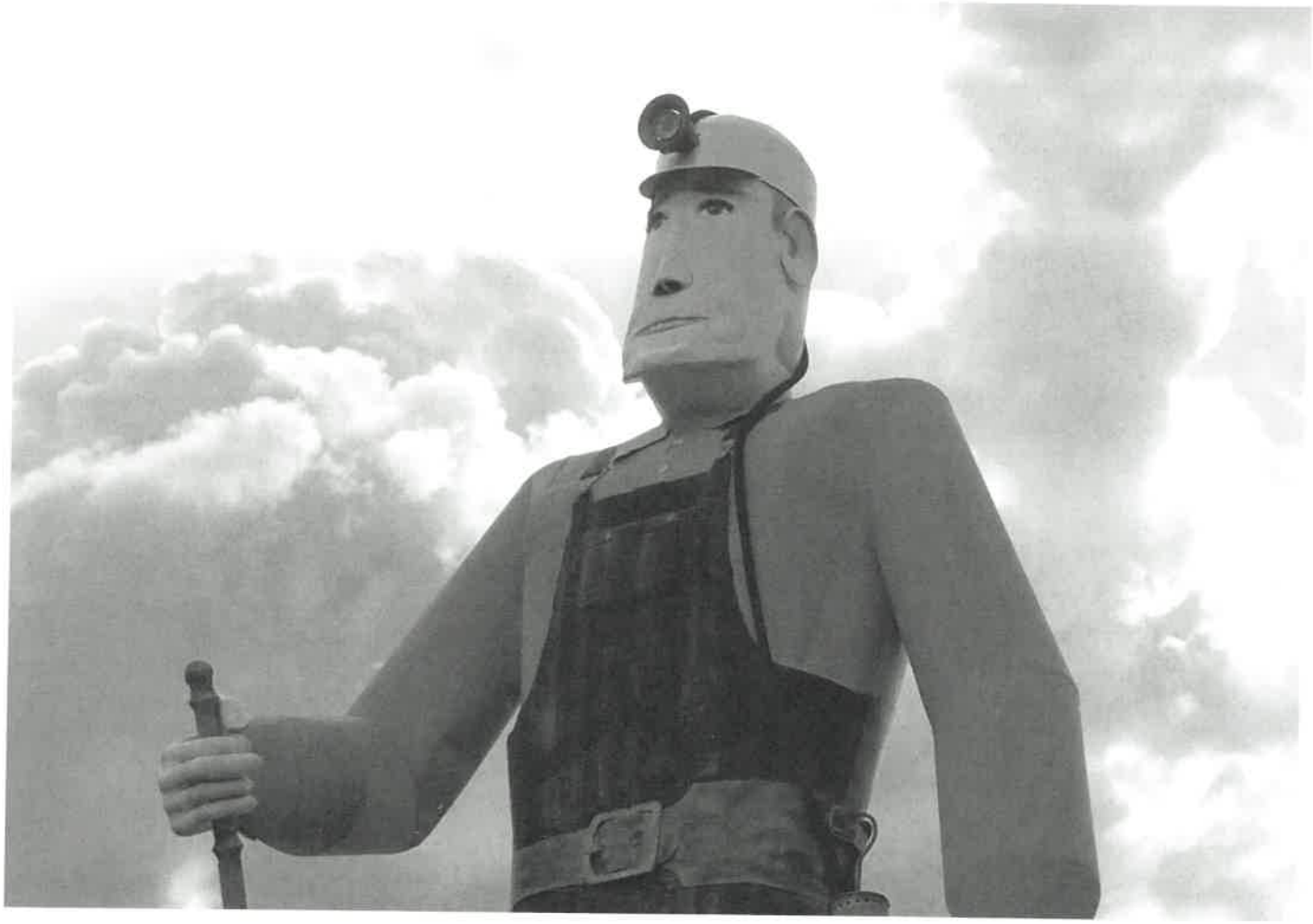
He had no radio, no cell phone. It would be 60 hours before another human showed up at the site.

"I didn't lay there very long," he says. "The very first thing I did is prayed. I looked up and said, 'Lord, I'm in a bind. Are you going to let me crawl around like a snake for the rest of my life for being stupid?'"

Jim says divine intervention saved his neck — make that back. He reasoned that if doctors use traction to restore compressed vertebrae to their proper locations, Jim could rig something on the spot to accomplish a similar effect. Using his immense upper-body strength, he pulled himself onto the toolbox on the back of his truck, secured a length of chain to the truck, and wrapped the other end around his ankles. "I made sure I had just about what I needed for a hangman's job," he says of the chain length that would act as a traction unit. "I wanted that jerk when I got to the end."

Jim flipped backward off the toolbox and over the side of the

An assortment of flowers and critters lines the road leading up to Jim's house on Cunningham Run. Jim creates these items from scrap metal collected at coal mines and at other welding jobs.



An 18-foot-tall coal miner built by Jim Davis.

truck. The effect was immediate.

"Praise the Lord," he says. "I felt my legs again. When I got back on my feet, I could hardly stand up. It felt like I was walking on pins and needles, like they were gouging me all over. But, you know, sometimes pain is a good feeling. Whenever you've had no feeling, pain is a good feeling."

Jim drove home, and when he walked in the door that night he told Virginia, "I'm a walking miracle."

He never bothered to go to a doctor or hospital for evaluation, and more than 20 years after repairing his own "broken back," Jim Davis is still doing incredible things with it. The decorations in Jim's yard and home bear testimony to his capabilities and creativity. His driveway is lined with an assortment of metal flowers, most of which are three to four feet across, blooming on stems of four-inch chain with welded links. The petals and leaves are cut from an assortment of scrap metals, including roofing tin and one of Jim's favorite construction materials — hot water tanks.

The largest of these creations, a sunflower, rises more than 25 feet above the sloping yard and required a crane to erect. Jim shimmies up the pole, takes his perch on a little seat behind the flower, and stretches out his arms. "Look, Ma, no hands!" he declares.

"This pipe came from a gas line that ran through here," he says, back on the ground. "They were removing it, and I said, 'How about saving me a couple joints of that?'"

Virtually everything in Jim's yard, and much of the furniture in his house, is the result of his penchant for recycling, particularly scrap metal from coal mine jobs: teeth chipped from the edge of loading buckets, road grader exhausts, bulldozer bearing hubs, thick drill bits, and lengths of drag chain with three-inch links. Jim welds the links to form the graceful stem of a flower made from a bulldozer's wheel bearing hub. For a morning glory's trumpet-shaped blossom, Jim painted washing machine agitators light blue. He cut a daylily's bloom from a discarded piece of sheet metal.

"When I got done with that one, I said to my wife, 'See that bunch of flowers over there? Well, this bud's for you!'" Jim says with a laugh.

The bigger-than-life metal trillium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, holly bush, turkey, and blue heron share a common heritage — the scrap pile in Jim's front yard.

"I'd get exhaust systems from big old dozers, trucks, backhoes. Anytime we'd dismantle something, I'd carry the scrap away. That kind

of pleased them [at the mines], because I'd go around and gather up the junk," he says.

At the time, Jim stockpiled junk, thinking it would make a nice retirement nest egg when redeemed at the recycling yard.

"I thought, 'I'm going to make me a pile of junk up here, and when the price goes up, I'm going to sell it,'" he says.

Jim built the miner from discarded water heaters and erected it at the company's Lincoln Center headquarters. It was dedicated in 1999. Southern had a brick plaza constructed around the base of the miner and dedicated it as a memorial to all coal miners who died while working in the industry. Bricks with the names of the miners are sold for $50 each. Jim says he

Detail of a bald eagle carved by Jim Davis. The bird has a 76-inch wingspan.

But the price didn't go up, and Jim decided to convert his metallic IRA into lawn ornaments and furniture. People started noticing his work — given its size and prominent display, it was hard not to. A miniature-golf course owner commissioned him to make a 22-foot-tall miner for a coal mine-themed course in Fairmont, visible from highway I-79. That led to a second commission, an 18-foot miner for Repair King, a mining-equipment repair company located in Shinnston. Phil Southern, owner of the company, said he commissioned Jim to make the miner as a memorial to his father, Charlie, who was killed in a Kansas coal mine disaster in 1951. Phil named the miner in his father's honor.

"I saw the [first] one he'd made, and I thought that would be a nice thing for us to do," Southern says.

worked from a drawing, but the proportions came from a soda delivery worker who happened to be at Southern's place of business while Jim was there discussing the project.

Jim makes his own carving devices, usually from discarded or broken tools.

"I measured a guy who came to restock the Coke machine," Jim says. "He was two feet across at the shoulders and six feet, two inches [tall]. I made everything three-to-one on that coal miner, so he's 18 feet, six inches tall, and six feet wide at the shoulders."

Jim maintains the memorial by applying a fresh coat of paint every year, something he's been negligent in doing to his rusty yard flowers.

"I climb a ladder and paint that guy," he says. "The last time I painted him, the paint was too light in color, and it looked like the guy had poison ivy and they put calamine lotion all over him."

Jim's creativity hit a roadblock when he ran out of money to purchase welding supplies.

"I ran out of oxygen and acetylene," he says. "I thought I'd see if I can make something out of wood. I said, 'God, here's a piece of wood. I'd like you to make something out of it.'"

That something turned out to be a bald eagle with its wings spread wide and a trout in its talons. Many more carvings followed: the State Seal of West Virginia, a dark coon-hunting scene based upon his childhood experiences in the woods, a smaller eagle flag-holder, and a deacon's bench with morning glory blossoms burned into the sides and painted.

"While I was carving that, a hummingbird came into the garage and tried to get in one of those flowers. I said, 'Thank you, Lord.' That was a real compliment," Jim says.

A large cherry log that was dumped in his driveway is being transformed into Jim's largest carving to date: a bald eagle with a wingspan of 76 inches. Jim hopes to eventually sell the piece — it's too large for his house. Indeed, it's probably too large for just about any house.

"I don't know of anybody who'd want to put that in their house, but I'd like to sell it," he says.

Jim also makes his own carving devices, usually from discarded or broken tools. For example, he adapted a broken electric chisel to pneumatic power. He then fabricated a variety of attachments to make the various textured cuts required for an eagle's feathered wings.

One of his most challenging carvings was creating a table lamp and shade from two pieces of wood.

The body of the lamp is a section of a cherry tree trunk that had been strangled by a grape vine. The encroaching vine caused the trunk to separate and follow the vine's stranglehold for a couple of feet, then rejoin. Jim removed the bark and vine from the tree trunk to reveal the spiral, then carved several nuthatches from the sections above and below the trunk.

"That was fascinating to me. That was a remarkable piece of wood. That was something God did. What fascinates me is how God made that join back together at the top," he says, studying the lamp.

He created the lampshade from a maple log. He sawed off a section of the log, an inch or so thick, for the base, then he went to work hollowing out the log to leave behind just the bark and a thin layer of the wood.

"I used chisels and drills," he says. "I'd drill holes and then cut across them. It took me a couple of weeks to get that cleaned out."

Jim takes the lamp to Sunday school classes, where he uses it as an object lesson to talk about how God can repair a person's life.

"I tell them drugs can put a squeeze on their lives, that drugs can tear you apart. But if you turn your life over to God, he will cause your life to come back together," he says.

Jim also finds creative outlets in poetry, songwriting, and music. He plays the harmonica and guitar, and he and his wife sing their gospel music in area churches. His poetry reflects his faith in God and fascination with the natural world. He gives credit to God for everything he does and creates.

"I live by John 3:27: A man can receive only what is given him from heaven," Jim says. "I believe if a man wants something, he's got to ask God."

Jim feels God even supplies our recreational needs, which in his case happens to include riding motorcycles. He's owned close to a dozen of them, starting with a 1941 Indian Chief he purchased from his older brother Harold while working in Ohio. His most recent acquisitions are a 1977 Kawasaki and a 2003 Yamaha Road Star with only 456 miles. Jim and his wife use these gifts from God in the Bikers for Christ ministry in their church.

"God has a sense of humor," he says. "I was praying for a Harley-Davidson, and he gave me one of those old Japanese bikes. It's the craziest thing I have ever seen."

CARL E. FEATHER lives in northeast Ohio and has family roots in Preston and Tucker counties. A freelance photographer and writer, Carl is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

Jim and Virginia Davis in the yard of their Harrison County home. The couple sing gospel music in area churches.

by John JJ Ward

The Enchanted Coat

Drawing by Carol Zimmerman.

As a child of past, interminable hard times, I had the soul-shriveling humiliation of wearing hand-me-down clothes from older siblings and relatives. This was especially difficult to handle in small towns and rural areas like Chapmanville where everybody recognized each garment. But borrowing clothes to wear caused no loss of esteem.

I had a remarkably good break by having an indulged cousin living 12 miles away in Logan. Not only were his hand-me-downs a cut above what I was accustomed to, but 12 miles was a "fur piece" (long distance) away back then, and nobody in Chapmanville would ever recognize them.

Among my cousin's castoffs during my junior year of high school was a remarkably attractive sports coat. My aunt, a highly talented seamstress, had made it with loving care for her only son. Likely because it was homemade and not "store bought" as we then categorized garments, he had seldom, if ever, worn it. Made from a soft herringbone tweed, in a blend of light blue and grey, it seemed to match almost everything — vital for the average teenager who had only a couple pairs of slacks, one for everyday and the other for dress-up.

Requests to borrow my coat began immediately. A village couple, Bruce and Nellie, once considered the handsomest pair in town, had been going together for years, so long in fact that time had begun to nibble away at their youthful good looks. I was surprised when Bruce, long out of high school, asked to borrow the (it had lost the "my" and become "the") coat for the weekend. Monday at the post office, Bruce returned the coat. He confided, "I popped the question to Nellie last night."

An old dowager standing nearby blurted, "Well, I'd say it was about time!"

"What, uh, what did she say?" I asked impatiently.

"She never said nothing, but just cried all over the, uh, your coat."

"Sound's like a 'yes' to me," the dowager allowed.

By my senior year in high school, the arms of the coat had been around most of the prettiest girls in the district, but regrettably, I wasn't in it most of the time. At our school's first prom, of sorts, I was surprised when my best friend, Matt, son of the town's grocer, demanded, "I've got to have the coat for the prom."

"But Matt, you've got more clothes than anybody in town, except maybe Bert McFarlen," I protested.

Author John JJ Ward in his merchant marine uniform in 1943.

"Yeah, that's just it. I've asked Madeline Lilly to the party, uh prom, and Bert did, too!" Bert, a bit taller and perhaps handsomer than Matt, was the son of the town's other major merchant. "I'll give you two dollars, and you can have the pick of my stuff to wear."

"Nah! It's our school's first prom, whatever that is, but a big deal for Chapmanville, and I want to wear it myself," I said.

"Three dollars," he said, holding out three crisp dollar bills. Three dollars was a small fortune, when a coke cost a nickel and an ice-cream sundae a thin dime. I pocketed the money, and we exchanged coats. Later, Bert McFarlen said that he would have given me five dollars.

But Madeline turned them both down. "I want to be free to associate with whomever I choose," she told them, smiling distantly.

However, at the prom, Madeline spent most of the evening with Matt and left with him in my coat. Afterwards, a few of the most adventurous of us stopped by what passed for the area's nightclub and were astounded at the prices. A coke cost a whole quarter! Matt sat there, unflustered at the costs, with the arm of my coat around beautiful Madeline.

After school was out, Spud Woods, another classmate and neighbor, asked to borrow the coat for what he said was a job interview. I never saw him or the coat again.

Years later, when my fortunes changed somewhat for the better, I tried relentlessly to replicate my enchanted coat. But I couldn't find anything to match it. In Hong Kong, where I had only a single night, a team of tailors had a coat ready the next morning. Nice, but no match! Ultimately, I tried tailors on four continents, always hopeful but disappointed.

The last hope, my aunt, by then had failing eyesight and couldn't help. But she was indeed surprised and delighted that the coat her son had rejected had been so popular elsewhere.

Decades later, at our high school class reunion (it was a small school so we had multiple classes lumped together), I met Spud's widow. "Whatever happened to my coat?" I asked, trying to sound casual.

"I told Spud that he should return it, but he said you'd joined the service and had a handsome uniform and wouldn't be needing it anymore. He proposed to me in that coat, and he wore it at our wedding. He loved it, and I know he would have wanted to be buried in it, but he'd put on weight and it no longer fit."

"Then you still have it?" I suggested eagerly.

"No. Actually I donated it, with all his things, to Goodwill. Sorry," she said, looking distressed.

Recently, I encountered yet another West Virginian, a talented seamstress from St. Albans, who had sewn a variety of skillful things, including wedding dresses, band uniforms, and costumes for festivals. And now, with far more sophisticated sewing machines and endless types of materials available, maybe, just maybe! Should I?

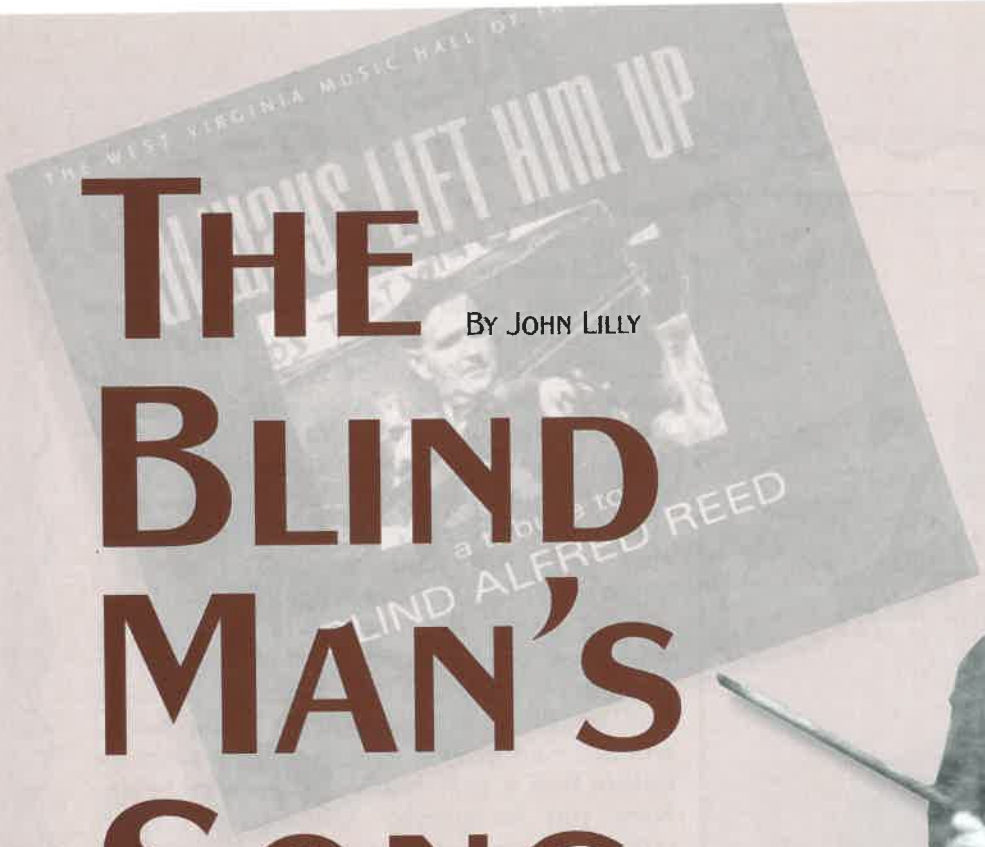
Well, sometimes miracles do happen. Well, just maybe. After all, I could leave it to my handsome grandson.

JOHN JJ WARD is a Chapmanville native, now living in Arizona. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2004 issue.

THE BLIND MAN'S SONG

RECALLING ALFRED REED

By John Lilly



Young Violet Reed climbed a tall tree near her family's home in Summers County and watched the road. She was looking for her father, Blind Alfred Reed, to return from Hinton, where he would go most days with his fiddle to play and sing on a street corner, a tin cup by his side. She could see him coming from a distance, walking down the road, fiddle tucked under one arm. Sometimes, if the day went well, he'd have a pound of bacon in his hand. Or, if the day had gone very well, an entire bag of groceries. Other days, he'd come home literally empty-handed.

These were the years leading up to the Great Depression, and Blind Alfred Reed was fighting valiantly to support his family through his music. A gifted songwriter, fiddler, and singer, Alfred also played the guitar, banjo, mandolin, and organ. He taught music lessons, played for meetings and dances, made recordings, and sold printed copies of his song lyrics. On many days, he made the three-mile walk from his rented farm to downtown Hinton, to play and sing on the streets for

Blind Alfred Reed in about 1927.

loose change. He was also an ordained Methodist minister and occasionally preached at local churches.

Violet Reed was the fourth-born of five children in the Reed home — a brother named Basil died young. The household also included Alfred and his wife, Nettie, and Alfred's older sister, Rosetta, known to family as Aunt Rose. Alfred and Rose were both born blind in Floyd County, Virginia: Alfred in 1880 and Rose in 1867, two of six children of Riley and Charlotte Akers Reed. The family moved to a farm in West Virginia when Alfred was young. Although he moved often, living at various times near Hinton, Bellepoint, Princeton, Kegley, Pipestem, Cool Ridge, and elsewhere, Alfred spent virtually his entire life in southern West Virginia. His music, however, traveled around the world.

Today, Violet's children have fond memories of their grandfather. "Grandpa and Aunt Rose had a sitting room," recalls Delores Crawford of Sinks Grove, Monroe County, the eldest of Violet's five children. "We would always go in there and sit with him and her, and they would sing. He would play, and they would both sing his songs to us. He was always a lot of fun; he was always joking and laughing with us."

Little is known of Blind Alfred Reed's early life. His family farmed, and somehow Alfred received an education, including learning to read and write in the New York Point System, a predecessor to Braille, which Alfred preferred. He became a skilled musician, though neither of his parents played music. He developed a knack for language, a biting sense of humor, and a keen eye for social issues. He also held to a deep religious faith. All of these were evident in the songs he would later write and record.

Delores Crawford of Sinks Grove, Monroe County, above, and Janet Hunter of Ronceverte, Greenbrier County — two of Blind Alfred Reed's seven living grandchildren. Photographs by Ken Sherman.

Alfred married Nettie Sheard in 1903, and their first daughter, Savannah, was born in 1904. Then came sons Arville and Tessie, daughter Violet, and sons Basil and Collins. The family rented farms and raised most everything they needed.

"They had a fireplace and burned wood," Delores says. "[Nettie] had a wood stove that she cooked on. It was comfortable, always clean and neat — Grandma was a good housekeeper and a good cook. They had the big garden, and they had the cow, and they had the chickens and the turkeys and the honey. A lot of fruit trees grew around there, so they could make jams and jellies."

Granddaughter Janet Hunter of Ronceverte, Greenbrier County, says that life was a struggle for the Reed family. "My mother [Violet] didn't like to talk about it," Janet says. "We've got the impression it was a very difficult upbringing, because of the lack of money. I know that she and her sister would at times go live with families and work for them, you know, help them with their housework. I guess that was a way to help with the family income. She never would tell me many stories, though. We never did know why our mother wouldn't tell us these stories."

Music, religion, and a positive attitude helped Alfred and his family through the hard times. In his later years, Alfred joked and played music around the house nearly everyday, and his grandchildren feel confident that these habits existed during his earlier years, as well.

Alfred Reed married Nettie Sheard in 1903, and they raised a family of six children. They are pictured here in about 1913. From the left are Arville, Alfred, Savannah (rear), Tressie, Nettie, and young Violet. The family also included sons Basil (who died young) and Collins.

Local musicians often stopped by the Reed home to visit and play music. Some of these included fiddler Fred Pendleton, John Duffey, Harry Fulton, Ott Dunbar, and Rich Harold. Sons Arville and Collins played music, as did daughters Savannah and Violet.

Alfred had a talent for writing songs, especially clever, topical songs, and he was frequently called upon to write special compositions for political candidates or local causes. One politician, "Chap" Hubbard, hired Alfred to write a song protesting the proposed moving of the Mercer County courthouse from Princeton to Bluefield. Although he kept up on current events and voted regularly, Alfred wasn't especially involved in politics, according to sons Arville and Collins in a 1971 interview. Alfred was a Republican, they said, but admired Franklin D. Roosevelt. [See "The Life of Blind Alfred Reed," by the Rounder Collective; January-March 1976.]

It was Blind Alfred Reed's songwriting that eventually afforded him the opportunity to make recordings. The wreck of the Virginian No. 3 at Ingleside, Mercer County, on May 24, 1927, made local headlines, killing the engineer and fireman. Alfred Reed told the story of this railroad tragedy in chilling detail, and his song, called "The Wreck of the Virginian," attracted a good deal of attention. It apparently caught the ear of well-known Virginia singer and performer Ernest "Pop" Stoneman. As luck would have it, New York recording executive Ralph Peer was planning a talent-scouting expedition into the Appalachian Mountains that summer and was on the lookout for rural musicians. Pop Stoneman and his family were among the first to be invited to participate in these recordings, scheduled for late July and early August in Bristol, Tennessee. [See "The West Virginia Coon Hunters: On the Trail of a Lost String Band," by John Lilly; Spring 2003.]

Ralph Peer was especially interested in finding mountain musicians and singers who represented authentic rural traditions, but who composed and performed their own songs. An astute businessman and music publisher, Peer hoped to obtain copyrights to these original songs, in addition to making recordings for the Victor Talking Machine Company. Over the course of these two weeks, Peer discovered two of the most important and enduring country music acts of all

Rosetta Reed (1867-1957), known to the family as Rose, was Alfred's older sister and lived with Alfred, Nettie, and their children. Born blind, she is recalled as a good singer, though family members are uncertain whether she ever played the guitar. This guitar probably belonged to Alfred. Photographer and date unknown.

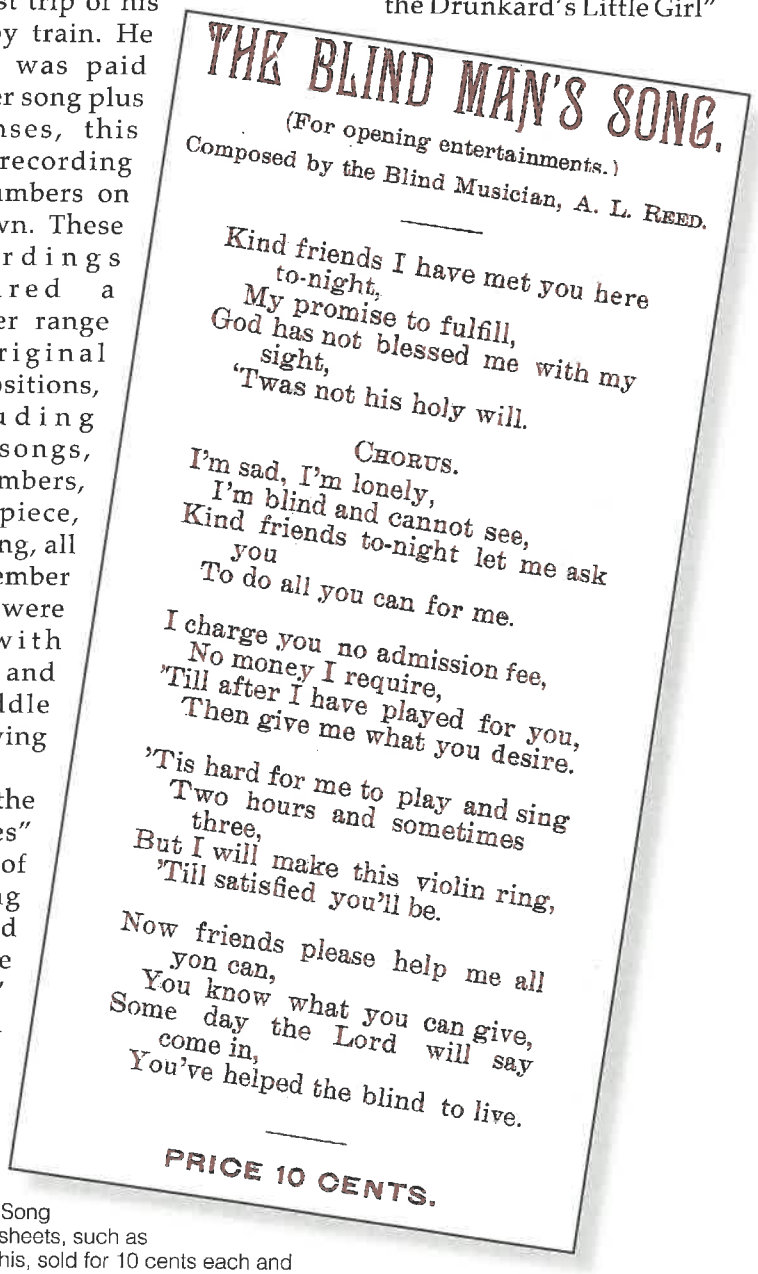
time: the original Carter Family and the "Singing Brakeman," Jimmie Rodgers. The success of this recording expedition, known today as the "Bristol Sessions," has led many to consider this as the beginning, or birthplace, of today's country music recording industry.

At Pop Stoneman's urging, Ralph Peer wrote to Blind Alfred Reed and invited him to come to Bristol to record his song about the train wreck. On July 28, 1927, Alfred made the recording, accompanied by his own fiddle playing. His clear baritone voice, stark fiddling, and poignant lyrics told the story of this unfortunate accident in a heartfelt and memorable way — no doubt exactly what Ralph Peer was hoping to hear. Mr. Peer must have been encouraged, because he also recorded Blind Alfred Reed performing three other original songs that day, accompanied by guitarist and neighbor Arthur Wyrick: "I Mean to Live for Jesus," "You Must Unload," and "Walking In the Way With Jesus."

Alfred was paid travel expenses plus $50 per song — a significant payday for Reed at the time.

Soon, Alfred was invited to travel to Camden, New Jersey, to make another series of recordings. That December, along with son Arville and fiddler Fred Pendleton, Alfred made what at the time was the longest trip of his life, by train. He again was paid $50 per song plus expenses, this time recording six numbers on his own. These recordings featured a broader range of original compositions, including two tragedy songs, two topical numbers, a sentimental piece, and a novelty song, all recorded on December 19, 1927. Most were performed with Alfred singing and playing the fiddle and Arville playing back-up guitar.

"Explosion In the Fairmount Mines" is a reworking of an older mining song, often called "Dream of the Miner's Child," adapted by Reed to commemorate the 1907 Monongah mine disaster. [See "No Christmas in Monongah: December 6, 1907," by Eugene Wolfe, Winter 1993 and Winter 1999.] "Fate of Chris Lively and Wife" tells the true story of an ill-fated couple near Pax Junction, Fayette County, who unwisely drove their wagon on the railroad tracks. "Why Do You Bob Your Hair, Girls?" comments on the morality of women's hair styles of the day, while "Always Lift Him Up and Never Knock Him Down" is a timeless plea for patience and understanding during trying times, said to be one of Reed's most popular numbers. "The Prayer of the Drunkard's Little Girl"



THE BLIND MAN'S SONG.

(For opening entertainments.)

Composed by the Blind Musician, A. L. REED.

Kind friends I have met you here to-night,
My promise to fulfill,
God has not blessed me with my sight,
'Twas not his holy will.

CHORUS.

I'm sad, I'm lonely,
I'm blind and cannot see,
Kind friends to-night let me ask you
To do all you can for me.

I charge you no admission fee,
No money I require,
'Till after I have played for you,
Then give me what you desire.

'Tis hard for me to play and sing
Two hours and sometimes three,
But I will make this violin ring,
'Till satisfied you'll be.

Now friends please help me all you can,
You know what you can give,
Some day the Lord will say come in,
You've helped the blind to live.

PRICE 10 CENTS.

Song sheets, such as this, sold for 10 cents each and helped Blind Alfred Reed earn money. This song was performed, but was never recorded.

Though the Reed family moved frequently, this farm near Pipestem was their home for many years. Photograph by Dave Shombert, 1999.

voices the plight of a child of an alcoholic father. An unexpected highlight of the session, recorded and sung as a solo number by Arville Reed (incorrectly credited as Orville Reed) is "The Telephone Girl," a witty and humorous story of a love-struck young man and a bewildering beauty, who spends the day in a distant gaze, saying "Hello, hello."

While in Camden, Alfred, Arville, and Fred Pendleton also recorded four numbers as a trio, calling themselves the West Virginia Night Owls (or West Virginia Nite Owls). Only two of these were released: "Sweet Bird" and "I'm Goin' to Walk on the Streets of Glory." Two unreleased songs from that session bear intriguing titles: "The Fate of Rose Sarlo" and "Give the Flapper a Chaw."

These commentaries on modern life during the late 1920's, ranging from women's issues to industrial disasters, alcoholism, and encroaching technology, reveal much about Alfred Reed's personal concerns and about life in southern West Virginia at the time. Few other songwriters addressed such matters, and none as effectively or as thoroughly as Blind Alfred Reed. With these Camden sessions, Reed emerged as a fully developed artist with a unique style and repertoire.

Back home in West Virginia, Alfred apparently returned to his normal life, continuing to ply his music in Mercer, Summers, and Raleigh counties. At age 47, with five children, a wife, and a dependant sister, perhaps a life of show business and touring didn't seem practical to Alfred. His blindness no doubt added layers of complexity to the prospect of traveling and performing extensively. It is also entirely plausible, in fact likely, that Blind Alfred Reed had no desire to embark on the risky pursuit of fame and worldly wealth. By all accounts, he was a contented and cheerful man, well-loved and cared for, and with a consistent local audience for his songs. He kept busy with his musical engagements, sold placards printed with song lyrics, collected occasional royalties from record sales, and wrote songs about whatever caught his interest.

Two years later, in December 1929, Alfred was invited to make another group of recordings for the Victor company, this time in New York City. He and Arville took the train north, arriving in sub-zero temperatures. They went immediately to the stylish Knickerbocker Hotel, where they

Blind Alfred Reed Recordings

Few of the original recordings by Blind Alfred Reed are available today. Three songs, "You'll Miss Me," "Explosion in the Fairmount Mines," and "Sweet Bird" (by the West Virginia Night Owls), are included on the County Records compilation CD *Old-Time Music of West Virginia: Volume 1* (CO-CD 3518). This CD is available from County Sales, on-line at www.countysales.com or by calling (540)745-2001.

The earlier collections *How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?* (Rounder Records 1001) and *Blind Alfred Reed: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order* (Document Records DOCD 8022) are currently out-of-print.

The New Lost City Ramblers were among the first to include Blind Alfred Reed's songs on their recordings. "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" and "There'll Be No Distinction There" appeared on their 1959 album *Songs of the Depression* (Smithsonian Folkways FH 5264). Reed's song "Beware, Oh Take Care" is included on the Rambler's *Old Timey Songs for Children* (Smithsonian Folkways 17064). Both of these recordings are available from Smithsonian Folkways, on-line at www.folkways.si.edu or by phone at 1-800-410-9815.

California musician Ry Cooder recorded Reed's song "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" on the album *Ry Cooder* (Reprise) in 1971. In 1976, he recorded "Always Lift Him Up" on *Chicken Skin Music* (Reprise).

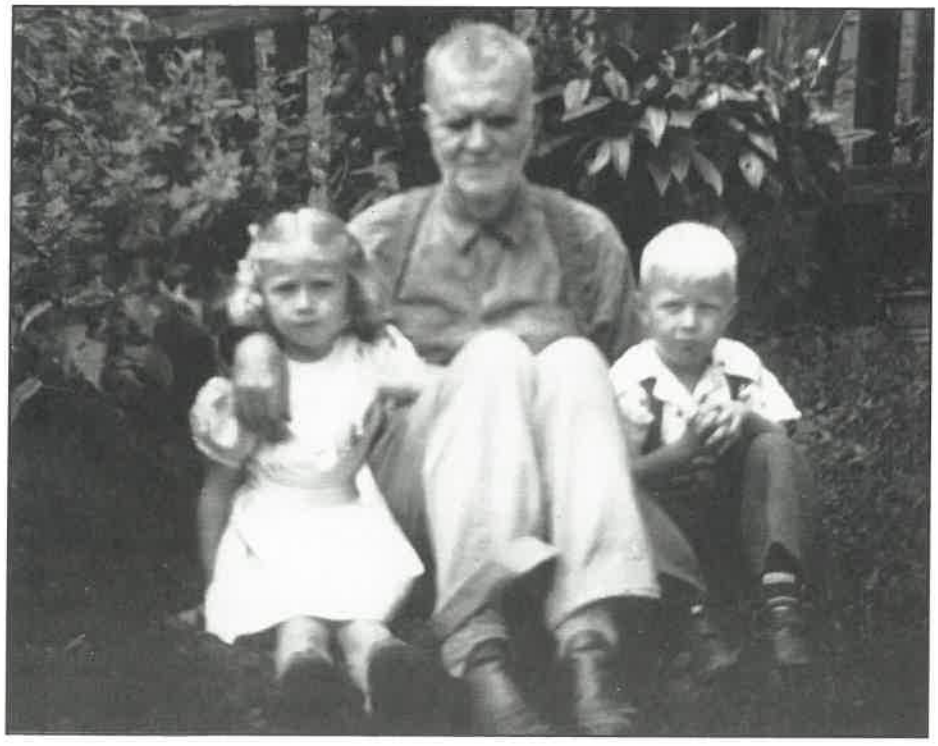
The Red Clay Ramblers recorded "The Telephone Girl" on their 1976 album *Twisted Laurel* (Flying Fish).

Internationally known rock musician Bruce Springsteen included "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" on his 2006 recording *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions (American Legacy Edition)* (Columbia).

All of these more recent recordings are available on-line at www.amazon.com, and elsewhere. The 2007 release, *Always Lift Him Up: A Tribute to Blind Alfred Reed* is reviewed on page 66.

were instructed by the Victor people to stick close by for fear that they might get lost in the city.

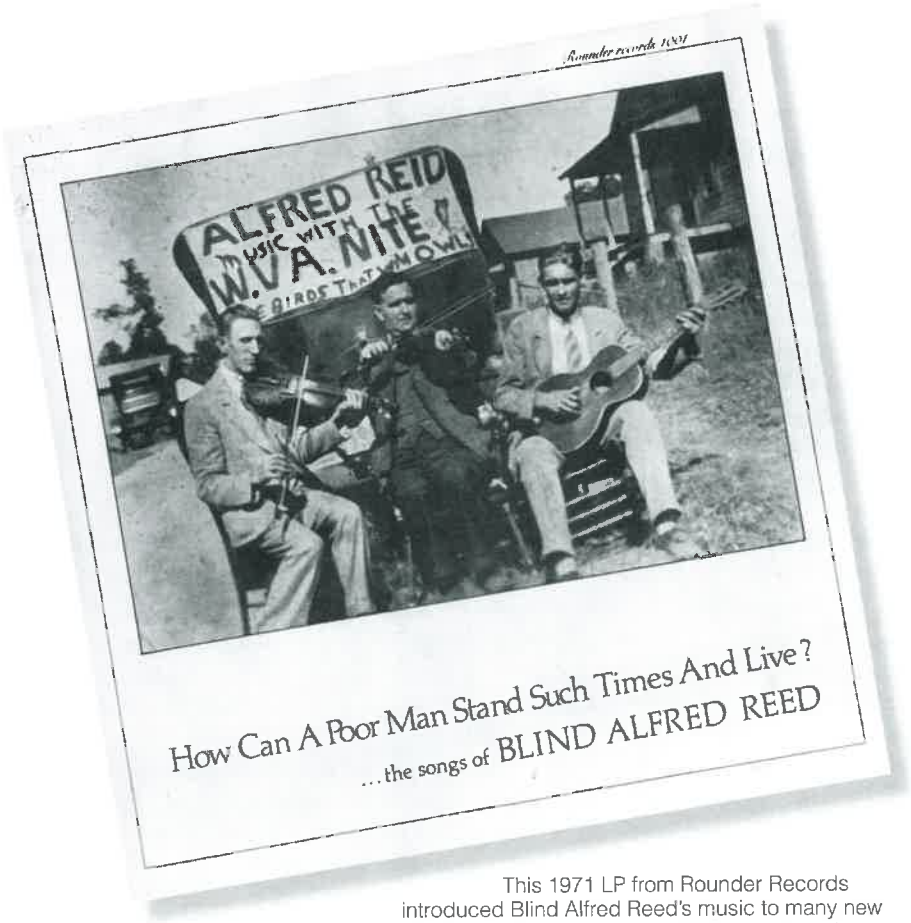
On December 3 and 4, Alfred and Arville recorded 10 more songs. These new numbers featured a familiar mix of topical lyrics, gospel themes, and sentimental songs, but introduced more ambitious vocal arrangements, featuring Arville singing harmony on several songs and taking the lead on two more. These final recordings by Blind Alfred Reed captured him at his peak and preserved some of his most powerful songs.



A kind and affectionate man, Alfred Reed is remembered fondly by his descendants. He is seen here with grandchildren Mary and Denny Reed in 1949.

"There'll Be No Distinction There" expresses a universal wish for racial and ethnic harmony in a religious setting, with lyrics including, "In the same kind of raiment and the same kind of shoes / We'll all sit together in the same kind of pews / The whites and the colored folks, the Gentiles and the Jews / We'll praise the Lord together and there'll be no drinking booze / There'll be no distinction there."

The battle of the sexes was a popular topic for Blind Alfred Reed. These 1929 sessions included five songs — half the total output — discussing matters of gender, with titles including, "Woman's Been After Man Ever Since," "We've Got to Have Them, That's All," and "Black and Blue Blues" decrying the ways of modern women, and "Beware" — an earnest warning to young ladies concerning the wiles of unscrupulous male suitors.



This 1971 LP from Rounder Records introduced Blind Alfred Reed's music to many new listeners. The embedded photograph, taken in about 1927, shows Fred Pendleton at left, Blind Alfred Reed at center, and Arville Reed at right. The three musicians performed and recorded briefly as the West Virginia Night Owls.

Perhaps most significant were Blind Alfred Reed's commentaries on social conditions of the day. "Money Cravin' Folks" condemns greed and materialism, citing selfish lawyers, preachers, merchants, doctors, and landlords as examples.

However, the song that has introduced the name of Blind Alfred Reed to audiences worldwide is "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" This eight-verse song is written from the perspective of a common man coping with rising prices and increasingly hard times. According to one verse, "Most of preachers preach for dough and not the soul/That's what keeps a poor man always in a hole/We can hardly get our breath, taxed and schooled and preached to death/Tell me how can a poor man stand such times and live?"

While the 1929 crash of Wall Street echoed across town, Blind Alfred Reed sat in a New York recording studio and articulated the struggles and concerns of blue-collar workers, farmers, and their worried families. When he was finished, he returned to West Virginia, this time to stay.

The Great Depression knocked the legs out from under the recording industry, leaving Alfred and Arvil's recordings difficult to sell in large numbers. Victor released the recordings and promoted them vigorously, but the sour economy spelled an end to Alfred's brief career as a recording artist.

By all indications, Alfred had no regrets and once again returned to familiar patterns back home. He played in Hinton until 1937, when the police began to enforce a long-dormant law, banning blind musicians from playing on the streets. In time, an aging Blind Alfred Reed quit performing in public altogether.

According to family members, however, he never stopped writing songs or playing for friends or family around the house. While many of Alfred's later compositions have been lost to time, his family does recall a playful ditty he made up to quiet fussy grandchildren, as well as a rather detailed song about future son-in-law, Henderson Booth, who landed in a city jail for a traffic violation while on a date with Alfred's daughter, Violet. Family members also remember Alfred singing hymns and popular songs, as well as some of the songs he had written and recorded, accompanying himself on fiddle, banjo, or guitar.

When grandson Denny Reed was about eight years old, Alfred gave him his fiddle, which Denny keeps as a cherished memento of his grandfather. Denny is a contemporary country musician living in New Jersey.

"I often wonder why he gave it to me," Denny says. "But about the time he gave it to me is about the time I started playing guitar. Maybe he figured, 'This kid's gonna be musical, so I'm gonna give it to him.'"

Alfred's wife, Nettie, passed away in 1948. Family members cared for Alfred and Aunt Rose until his death in 1956, of natural causes at the age of 75. Alfred and Nettie are buried at a small cemetery near Elgood, Mercer County. Rose died in 1957.

Within a few years, young artists from across the country were performing and recording Alfred Reed's songs.

The songs and recordings of Blind Alfred Reed continued to circulate among collectors and fans of early country music. In 1959, the New Lost City Ramblers recorded three Blind Alfred Reed songs for Folkways Records. In 1970, roots musician Ry Cooder released a popular version

of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" on his self-titled Reprise LP.

In 1971, a Massachusetts group known as the Rounder Collective called on Arville and Collins Reed. The Collective — Ken Irwin, Bill Nowlin, and Marion Leighton — conducted detailed interviews with members of the Reed family and obtained permission to reissue Blind Alfred Reed's 78-r.p.m. recordings on a modern LP record. The LP, *How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live? The Songs of Blind Alfred Reed* (Rounder Records 1001) was released in 1971.

Within a few years, young artists from across the country were performing and recording Alfred Reed's songs, including the Red Clay Ramblers, David Lindley, the Blues Band, and others. In 2006, rock music superstar Bruce Springsteen released his version of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?"

In 2007, Blind Alfred Reed was among the first group of inductees into the new West Virginia Music Hall of Fame. In conjunction with this honor, the Hall of Fame produced a CD recording, titled *Always Lift Him Up: A Tribute to Blind Alfred Reed* (Proper American PRPACD006), featuring performances by country music stars Little Jimmy Dickens, Connie Smith, Kathy Mattea, Tim & Mollie O'Brien, and others. [See "Mountain Music Roundup," by John Lilly; page 66.]

Fifty-two years after his death, Alfred Reed is recalled fondly by a large and far-flung family of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and other relatives. His music seems to be gaining in popularity, as more and more people become aware of his songs.

According to granddaughter Delores Crawford, "I think it's just amazing that he's still remembered and that his music is still being played, because I know that he didn't even dream that anything like this would happen. I think it's because [his music] is so down-to-earth, and a lot of it holds true today. We're going through a lot of the same stuff [now] — it hits home for a lot of people."

Even younger family members, who might not have otherwise understood or related to Blind Alfred's music, are taking notice. According to great-granddaughter Tina Wilson, "I am so impressed and honored to know that he was such an influential man in the music world. Who knew?!?"

JOHN LILLY is editor of GOLDENSEAL magazine.

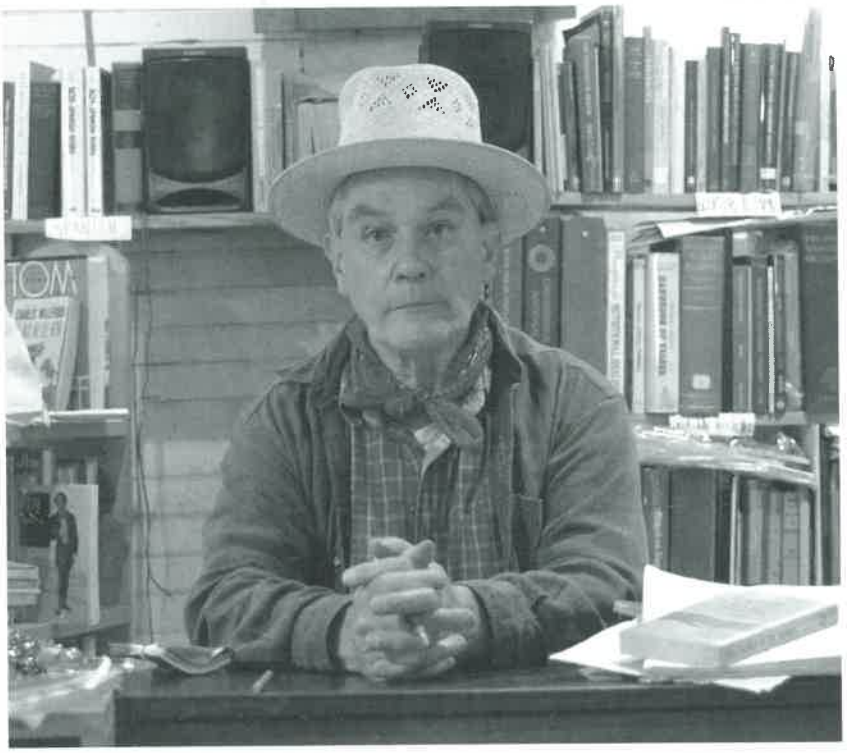
Relatives and extended family members of Blind Alfred Reed posed for this recent photograph in Lewisburg. Seated, from the left, are granddaughters Janet Hunter and Delores Crawford. Standing are great-great-grandson Jacob Fraley, Frank Hunter (Janet's husband), great-granddaughter Teresa Koon, great-granddaughter Debi Fraley, and great-great-granddaughter Rachel Biesemeyer. Photograph by Ken Sherman.

Text and photographs by
Carl E. Feather

The Poet of South Jefferson Street

Robert Head stood in the doorway of his South Jefferson Street bookstore in Lewisburg, watching his poetry in action:

humans driving cars
hav been reclassified
as arthropods because of
their metal exoskeleton &
they no longer walk upright
& the brain body ratio
is nuthin to brag about.*



Robert Head of Lewisburg loves books. He sells them, reads them, and writes them. Robert has owned and operated a bookstore in Lewisburg since 1977.

On this damp Thursday afternoon, however, Head's thoughts were upon Alfred Russell Wallace's *Island Life*. The esoteric book, due to arrive from the community college's library this afternoon, was an important link in Head's latest line of research, the Azores.

"I worked my way last year through Wheellock's *Latin*," Robert tells me, when asked why he chose a distant island group he's never visited as his latest research topic. "I got so bored reading Cicero. The Azores are green and fertile. The Azores are very beautiful and warmed by the Gulf Stream."

Robert launches into an explanation of theories about tectonic plates and why one cannot sail directly to the Azores from Europe even though they are in the North Atlantic. It's all about trade winds and the Gulf Stream, he explains. Someday, he'd like to visit the islands, on a boat, of course. It would not be fitting for the author of *Vultures Eat the Dead & Jets Eat the Living* to fly.

The chapbook is one of 12 collections of poetry written and published by Robert. Themes of injustice, particularly toward Native Americans, and man's self-destruction run through these thin but deep volumes of learned writing. His "The Resurrection of Osceola" earned first place in the 2005 poetry competition of West Virginia Writers, Inc. Ironically, his living comes from selling the words of other authors.

"I make my living selling books," he says. "I break even on my publications."

Born January 7, 1942, in Tennessee, Robert has been married to words since childhood.

"I loved books when I was a child," he says. "My father used to complain I was spending all his money on books."

After high school, he pursued the study of English at a series of universities and colleges. By 1964, Robert was studying Old English at University College Dublin when he met another American

student, Darlene Fife. When he and Darlene learned the United States was bombing Vietnam, they abandoned linguistic studies for a higher calling.

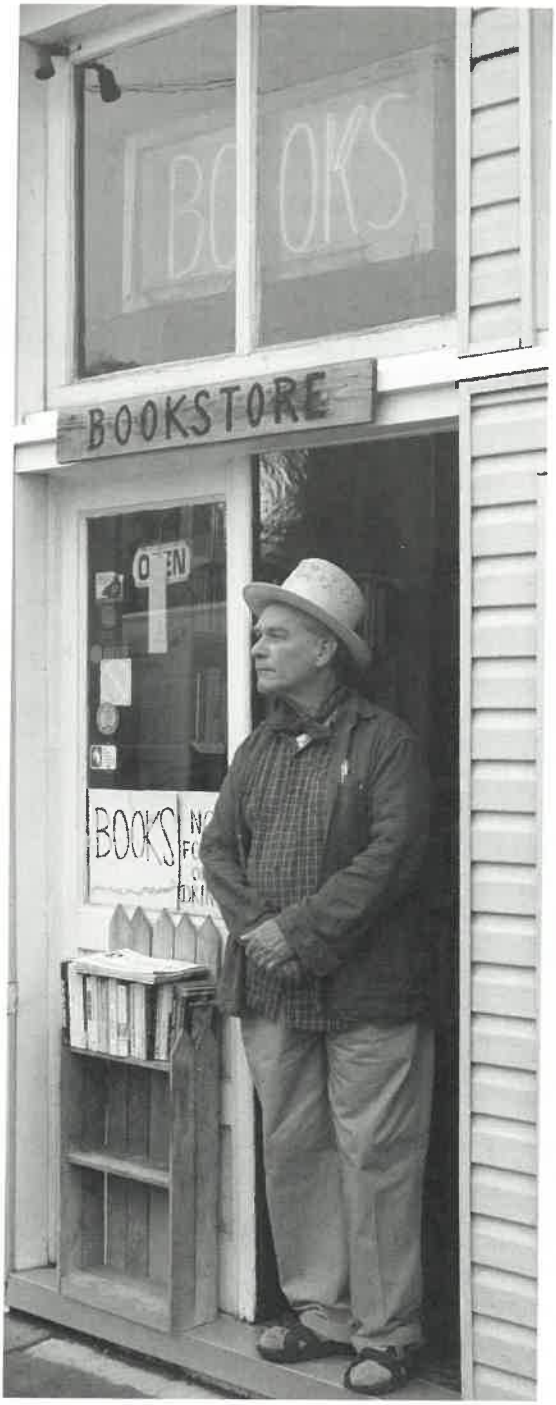
"We decided to return to New Orleans and exercise our rights as citizens to protest the war," he says.

Robert and Darlene edited *NOLA Express*, a radical, anti-war newspaper, from 1968 to 1974. Upon the suggestion of an acquaintance, they moved to Lewisburg in the spring of 1974 to establish and care for a 115-acre wildlife refuge.

Darlene continues to tend the refuge and lives there six months of the year. She also runs a craft and plant store next to Robert's bookstore, which he opened in 1977.

Like the terse poetry he writes with all lowercase letters, ampersands, and pruned spellings, Robert's storefront is tight and minimal, a chapbook squeezed by two fat reference volumes. Even its name is a model of economy. "Bookstore," says Robert.

The storefront is defined by a set of heavy wood-and-glass doors, only one of which opens. It binds on the old wooden threshold and takes extra effort to jar, just as Robert's poetry requires an extra mental push to comprehend.



Robert stands in the doorway of his bookstore, called Bookstore, surveying the traffic on South Jefferson Street. He doesn't own a car and takes a dim view of the fossil-fuel burning vehicles that crawl past his store.

Bookcases made of thick, rough-sawn oak and other hardwoods line a long hall that leads from the front door to a slightly wider, brighter mid-section lined with more bookcases. And beyond that is an even wider room with more books and a platform large enough to accommodate the upright piano upon which Robert is learning to play Bach.

Above this piano is a self-portrait painted in 1978. The long braids of hair he wore in that portrait have given way to shorter, graying locks hidden under a straw hat of Amish origin. A red bandana tied about his neck completes the facial frame. He speaks softly, not as an angry, iconic anti-war protestor of the Vietnam era, but a wise poet at peace with the thoughts he retails on South Jefferson Street.

A young female customer interrupts our conversation. She's looking for Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Robert seems slightly offended that she'd expect to find the dark tome among his refined volumes. He steers her toward a gentler Capote work.

"I try to avoid books like *In Cold Blood* and *Helter Skelter*, gory, bloody books about murder," he says.

Robert likes living in a small town, and the wide yet compact range of Lewisburg amenities fits well with his anti-automobile sentiment.

"I don't own a car; I walk," he says. "I think automobiles are very destructive, and I think we are in Iraq because of the automobile."

Lewisburg also gives him access to culture, the arts, and learning. Language, however, remains his first love. He taught himself Coptic, Greek, and Latin to draw one layer closer to the minds of the great poets.

"When you read [poetry in] another language, you read each word more carefully," he says.

His latest linguistic venture is Portuguese. "Mostly, I read Portuguese poets," Robert says. "They seem to be more serious than Americans."

Aside from having his poetry widely published and sold, Robert Head could find no better business than owning Bookstore in Lewisburg. All the knowledge of the world is at his fingertips, except that one obvious question: Just how many books are in Bookstore?

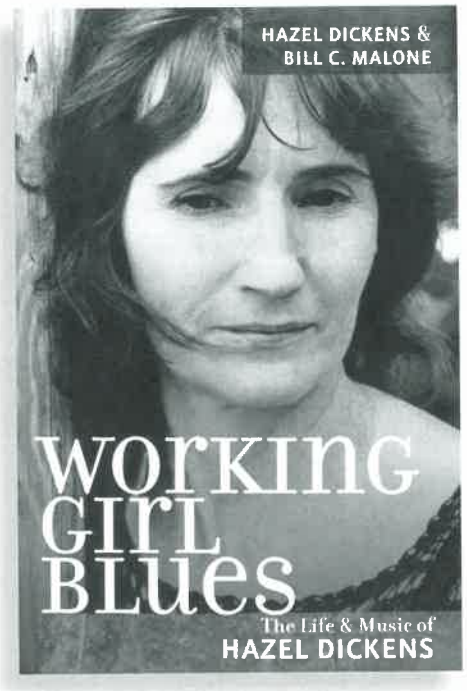
"I let the books count themselves," he says, spoken like a true poet.

*Poem from *Vultures Eat the Dead & Jets Eat the Living*, copyright Robert Head. It, and Head's other chapbooks, are available from Bookstore, 104 S. Jefferson Street, Lewisburg, WV 24901. The price is $5 each, postpaid.

New Books about Music

By John Lilly

There is much to learn about West Virginia traditional music, so we are pleased to see several new books come into our office, concerning various performers and regional styles from around the state.



Hazel Dickens is an icon, and it is about time a book-length biography was published about her. Several years in the making, *Working Girl Blues: The Life and Music of Hazel Dickens*, by Hazel Dickens and Bill C. Malone, was released by the University of Illinois Press in May 2008. It is a unique combination of autobiography, historical record, photo album, and songbook.

Noted country music scholar Bill C. Malone offers a detailed 29-page biography, tracing Hazel's life from her hard-times childhood in Mercer County, through her unsettled teen years and early 20's in Baltimore, her development as a musician and songwriter, to her ascent as an internationally revered figure in country and bluegrass music. Much of the book consists of the lyrics to 40 of Hazel's original songs, along with her personal comments, offering insight and background information about each title.

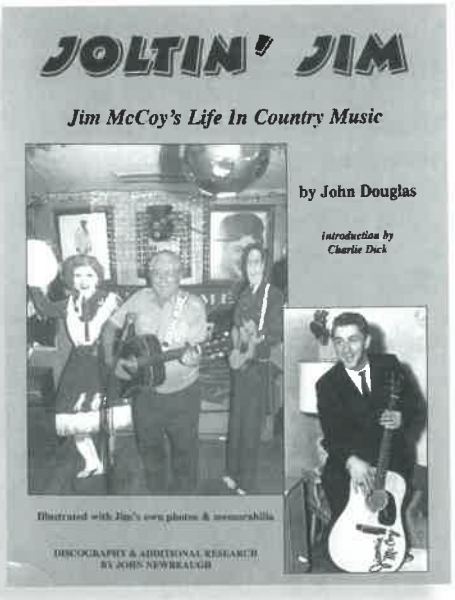
The book also includes an exhaustive discography and index. A treat for friends and fans of Hazel is the inclusion of dozens of marvelous personal photographs, many of them never before published, showing her at various important points in her life and career.

Hazel Dickens was the subject of a feature story in our Summer 2004 issue, titled "'West Virginia, My Home': A Visit With Hazel Dickens," by John Lilly.

Working Girl Blues is a 144-page paperback, available for $17.95, plus shipping, from www .press. uillinois.edu or phone (217)333-0950.

Morgan County native **Jim McCoy** has enjoyed a long and varied career in country music, documented in a new book by *Morgan Messenger* editor John Douglas, called *Joltin' Jim McCoy: Jim McCoy's Life in Country Music*. Douglas wrote a feature story about McCoy in our Spring 2002 issue, titled "Joltin' Jim McCoy: Morgan County's Country Music Troubadour."

Born in 1929 on Highland Ridge, near Berkeley Springs, Jim McCoy was a teenaged disc jockey when he met a young Patsy Cline and played a key role in introducing her to local radio audiences in 1947. McCoy soon developed a performing career of his own, writing and recording numerous songs. He later started his own recording studio and label, featuring acts from West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Currently, McCoy owns and operates a nightclub and restaurant, located a few hundred feet from where he was born.



The 79-page, large-format paperback chronicles each phase of McCoy's multi-faceted life and career, illustrated by numerous personal photographs, publicity pictures, and memorabilia. The book sells for $15.95, plus $4 shipping and in-state sales tax ($20.91 total), and is available from Jim McCoy Book Project, P.O. Box 901, Berkeley Springs, WV 25111.

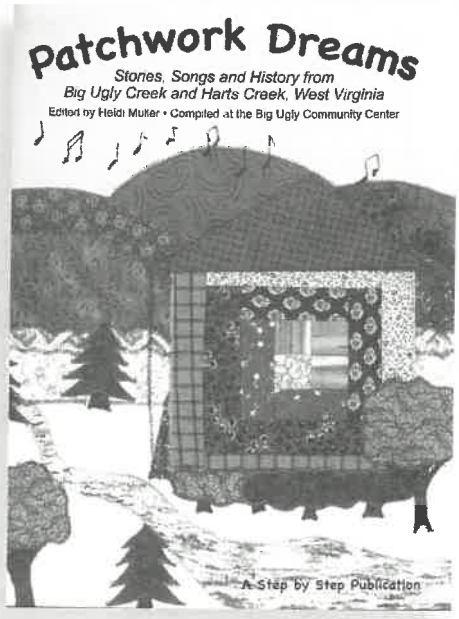
Songwriter, performer, painter, humorist, poet, and author **Billy Edd Wheeler** is featured in the Winter 2008 edition of *Appalachian Heritage: A Literary Quarterly of the Southern Appalachians*, published by the Berea College Appalachian Center in Berea, Kentucky. Born in 1932 at Whitesville and raised at Highcoal, both in Boone County, Billy Edd Wheeler today is a Nashville songwriting legend and a highly regarded artist. He has written hit songs for Johnny Cash and others, released several successful CD recordings, coauthored books on Appalachian humor, and had paintings on display at prestigious art galleries throughout the region. Last November, he was inducted into the new West Virginia Music Hall of Fame.

This issue of *Appalachian Heritage* highlights Billy Edd Wheeler, including 19 of his colorful paintings, 48 pages of writings by or about him, and a special CD recording of Billy Edd performing 20 of his original songs. The journal and CD together sell for $6, plus $2 shipping.

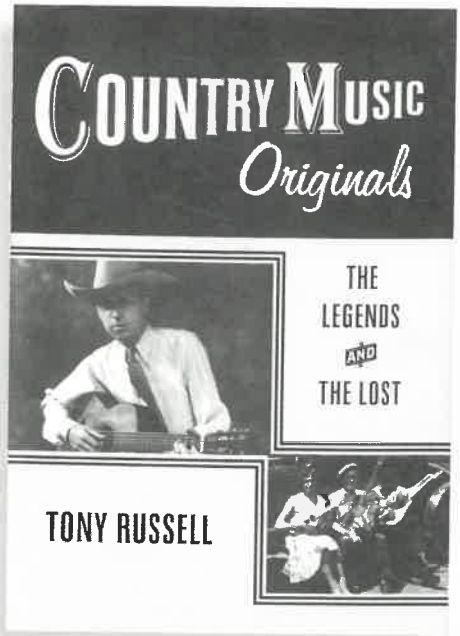
To purchase a copy, or for additional information, call (859)985-3699 or visit www.berea.edu/appalachianheritage.

Patchwork Dreams: Stories, Songs, and History from Big Ugly Creek and Harts Creek, WV, is an anthology of essays, oral histories, vintage photographs, artwork, and songs from Lincoln County. Published in 2007 by Step by Step, Inc., the 202-page, spiral-bound, large-format book is the result of grant-supported work by artists and teachers to promote education and the arts, wellness, and local leadership in southern West Virginia since 2004, through the Big Ugly Community Center.

Edited by Charleston-based musician and songwriter Heidi Muller, *Patchwork Dreams* offers a broad range of content, tied together by a central theme of life and art in this rural and rugged area. Much emphasis is placed on local history, along with recently written original songs with local topics and titles, such as "Big Ugly Woman," "Sangin' Time," and "Lincoln County Crew." Two CD recordings accompany the book, providing full versions of the 24 songs that appear in the text, followed by instrumental-only versions for teaching purposes.



Patchwork Dreams is available at local bookstores, at Tamarack, or on-line at www.heidimuller.com; phone (304)414-4452. The cost is $30, plus shipping.



West Virginia is well-represented in a new book about the pioneers of country music, titled *Country Music Originals: The Legends and the Lost*, by Tony Russell. Published in 2007 by Oxford University Press, *Country Music Originals* offers brief biographies of 110 musicians or string bands who recorded during the 1920's, '30's, and '40's. Concise, entertaining, and smartly written, the book includes many popular artists, as well as those who are nearly forgotten.

West Virginia artists in the book include Blind Alfred Reed, Roy Harvey, Clark Kessinger, Frank Hutchison, and Molly O'Day, all of whom have appeared in GOLDENSEAL. Also included are Ed Haley and Billy Cox.

Country Music Originals is a 258-page hardcover edition, including 274 black-and-white photographs and a bibliography. It sells for $29.95 and is available from the publisher at www.oup.com/us.

Mountain Music Roundup

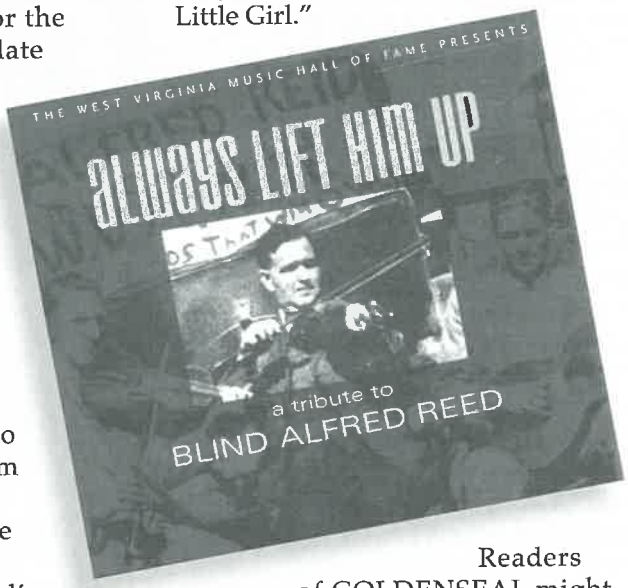
By John Lilly

Welcome to our annual review of West Virginia mountain music. A theme of "old meets new" recurs among this year's recent releases. It's natural, it's inevitable, and it's a good thing!

Blind Alfred Reed was a prolific songwriter from southern West Virginia, who made a series of landmark recordings for the Victor company in the late 1920's. A feature story about Reed appears on page 54 of this issue. [See "The Blind Man's Song: Recalling Alfred Reed," by John Lilly.]

When he was inducted into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame in 2007, the Hall of Fame decided to produce a tribute album to Reed, highlighting modern Mountain State singers and musicians performing Alfred Reed's songs. The resulting CD is called *Always Lift Him Up: A Tribute to Blind Alfred Reed* (Proper American PRPACD0006), and it includes performances by Little Jimmy Dickens, Kathy Mattea, Connie Smith, Tim & Mollie O'Brien, Ray Benson, Charlie McCoy, and many others, all with strong ties to West Virginia. *Always Lift Him Up* is as joyful as it is eclectic, clearly showing how Blind Alfred Reed's original songs fit well in a variety of contemporary settings.

The Nashville approach works particularly well with Little Jimmy Dickens' playful take on "Woman's Been After Man Ever Since" and on Connie Smith's heartrending version of "The Prayer of the Drunkard's Little Girl."



Readers of GOLDENSEAL might especially appreciate the more traditional readings, especially "Walking In the Way With Jesus" by the Nichols Family, "You'll Miss Me" from Tim & Mollie O'Brien, "There'll Be No Distinction There" from Bare Bones, "Always Lift Him Up and Never Knock Him Down" from Dwight Diller & John Morris, and "Walking In the Way With Jesus" by Johnny Staats & Robert Shafer. My favorite moments on this fine CD are Nat Reese singing "Black and Blue Blues," Larry Groce's atmospheric "You Must Unload," and Tim O'Brien's rollicking finale "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?"

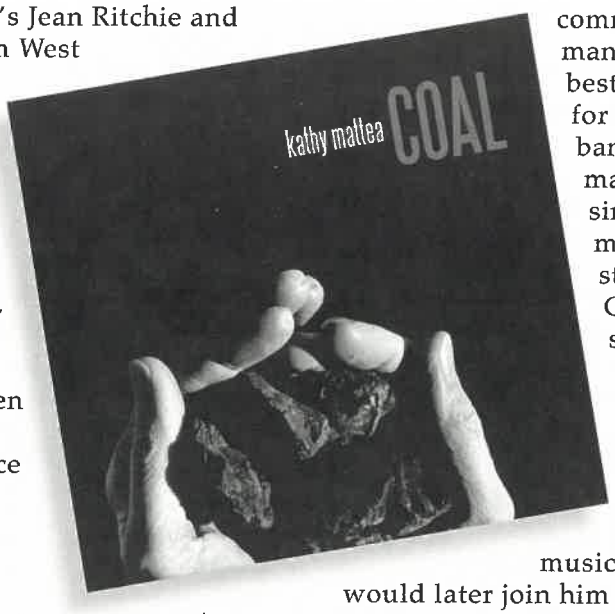
Two minor quibbles: Several of Reed's songs are humorous, and some of these artists are more successful at delivering this material than others. Also, it would have been nice to have included at least one of Blind Alfred Reed's original versions here, since relatively few listeners have had the opportunity to hear those precious old recordings. Nevertheless, this is a satisfying collection and an important recognition of one of West Virginia's true musical pioneers.

Always Lift Him Up is available from the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame, on-line at www.wvmusichalloffame.com or by calling (304)342-4412.

Born in West Virginia with coal-mining grandfathers on both sides, **Kathy Mattea** has recently returned to her roots with an excellent collection of old and new mining songs. *Coal* (Captain Potato Records 7653260-2) includes 10 songs and one brief instrumental, built around the theme of struggle and hard times in a world reliant on coal and the men and women who mine it. Produced in Nashville by country music star Marty Stuart, this 2008 recording is a glowing reminder of just how good country music can still sound, in the right hands.

At the center, however, are the songs. Two compositions from

Kentucky's Jean Ritchie and three from West Virginia native Billy Edd Wheeler make up half the collection, and they are all well-chosen and well-sung. Bruce "Utah" Phillips' "Green Rolling Hills (of West Virginia)" and Merle Travis' "Dark as a Dungeon" are fairly common songs in some circles, but they are welcome and are performed especially well here.

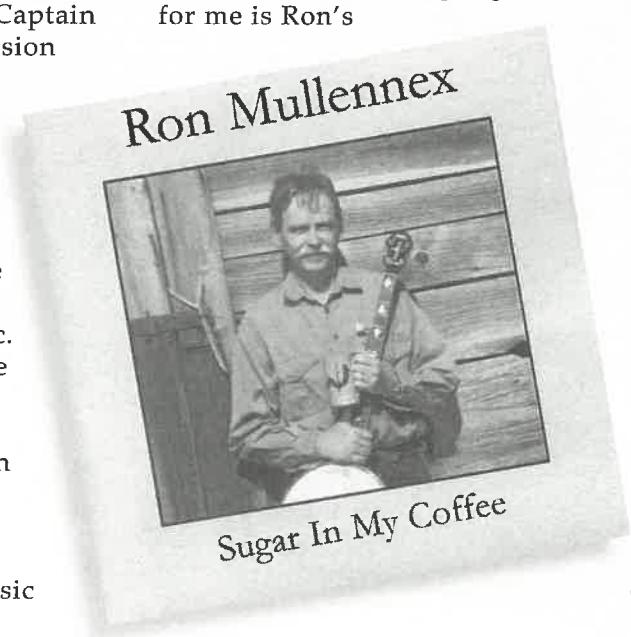


To record and release this CD was a fairly bold move for Mattea, I would think, considering her 20-year career as a mainstream country music singer. She is apparently at that stage where she can take such risks, though, and we are all the better for it. This album will appeal to Mattea's worldwide legion of fans as well as to regional listeners of traditional music. We highly recommend it.

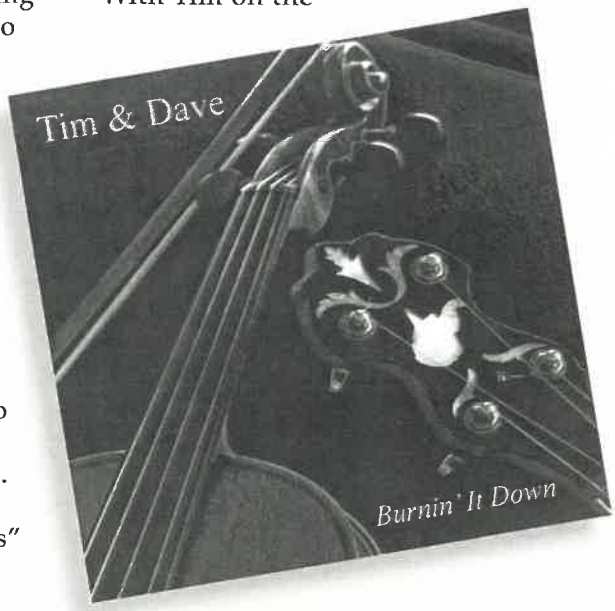
Coal is available from Captain Potato Records, 900 Division Street, Nashville, TN 37203; on-line at www .mattea.com

Closer to home, several West Virginia old-time players and singers have released or re-released recordings of their music. Three of these emphasize instrumental music.

Ron Mullennex, originally from Randolph County and now living in Bluefield, has been an important part of West Virginia's traditional music community for many years, best known for his clear banjo playing, mandolin, and singing. A member of the string band Gandydancer since the late 1990's, Ron put out a cassette of his own in 1997, featuring musicians who would later join him in that band, including Gerry Milnes, Dave Bing, and Mark Payne. The tape, titled *Sugar In My Coffee*, was re-released on CD last year by Roane Records (Roane 127) and includes more than a dozen fine old-time tunes and a few songs. Ron's banjo playing is the focus of this CD, playing solo and in various combinations with guitar, fiddle, and voice. The ensemble tracks, such as "Bonaparte Crossing the Alps" and "Yew Piney Mountain" are exciting and reminiscent of the Gandydancer band, for obvious reasons. A highlight for me is Ron's solo performance of "Lonesome Rambler," featuring his soulful singing and skillful banjo. Also included are a couple of original tunes from Ron, based on older melodies. *Sugar In My Coffee* is available by writing to Roane Records, 904 Walnut Street, Glenville, WV 26351.



Band mate Dave Bing has lately been touring and performing with his brother Tim. Both Dave and Tim Bing are tremendous musicians, each winning first-place ribbons at the Vandalia Gathering numerous times. With Tim on the clawhammer banjo and Dave switching between the fiddle and the guitar, they make a lot of music. A new CD from **Tim & Dave**, titled *Burnin' It Down* (jMp 206), shows the pair burning their way through 20 instrumentals. The tunes are old and interesting and the playing is fast and precise, sometimes to a fault. In most cases, however, this is old-time fiddle-and-banjo music as it is heard today at festivals and concerts across West Virginia, presented by two of the finest. *Burnin' It Down* is available by writing to Jim Martin Productions, P.O. Box 152, St. Albans, WV 25177.



Fiddler **Chance McCoy**, of Greenville, Monroe County, is

fast becoming one of the most respected young musicians in the state. Winner of the 2007 Vandalia Gathering fiddling contest, Chance has recently been on the road with Everett Lilly and the Lilly Mountaineers. His recording debut is a new CD called *Chance McCoy and the Appalachian String Band*. Like the Ron Mullennex title mentioned above, this recording contains a mix of settings and textures. The band tracks — about half the collection — are spontaneous and peppy, including occasional whoops and hollers and, in one case, some flatfoot dancing. This is reminiscent of the sound younger musicians often achieve at modern fiddlers conventions, such as Clifftop (WV), Mt. Airy (NC), or elsewhere. The remainder of the selections show a more sparse and reflective side to Chance's music. On "Little Birdie," he plays a deep-sounding banjo and sings several verses, as he does on "Little Pink." Both of these selections reveal Chance as an effective solo performer with an engaging vocal style and a sound that is simultaneously archaic and contemporary.

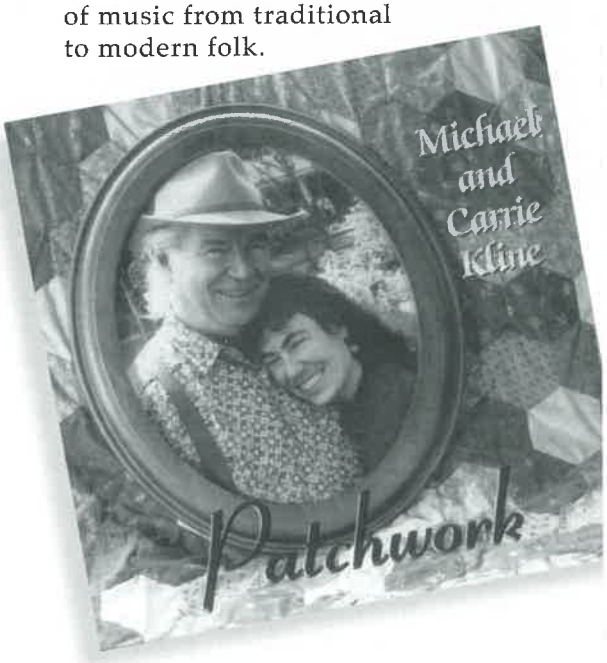
Chance McCoy and the Appalachian String Band is available on-line at http://cdbaby.com/cd/chancemccoy.

Three new CD's highlight our region's vocal traditions, each with a modern twist.

Bare Bones, an unaccompanied vocal trio from Charleston, perform a mix of traditional gospel songs and doo-wop. Formerly known as Soup Kitchen (or the Missing Person Soup Kitchen Gospel Quartet), Bare Bones has been performing for more than 25 years. Their new CD, titled *Put Your Loving Arms All Around Me*, features Bill and Becky Kimmons and Mark Davis. Highlights include gospel favorites "Do Lord (Do You Remember Me?)," "Blind Bartemus," and "I'll Meet You In the Morning," the latter featuring former Soup Kitchen member Dock Cutlip. The CD is available on-line at www.barebonesare.us.

Kate Long of Charleston is an award-winning songwriter who draws on traditional mountain music for much of her inspiration. She has lately been performing with champion flatpick guitarist Robin Kessinger. **Kate Long** and **Robin Kessinger** have released a new live CD, titled *What We Do: A Live Recording*, featuring Kate's original material, several traditional songs, and Robin's fine guitar work. It is available on-line at www.robinandkate.com.

Frequent GOLDENSEAL contributor Michael Kline and his wife, Carrie, from Elkins, are dedicated musicians and singers. The latest CD from **Michael** and **Carrie Kline** is called *Patchwork*, and, as the name implies, it features a range of music from traditional to modern folk.



A generous collection of 20 titles, *Patchwork* includes old-time instrumentals, traditional ballads, and some contemporary folk songs — most notably, four fine selections from Maryland songwriter David Norris. On these numbers, the Klines are joined by singer Hanna Thurman, who completes a smooth vocal trio. This pleasant, homegrown recording is available by writing to Talking Across the Lines, 114 Boundary Avenue, Elkins, WV 26241; on-line at www.folktalk.org.

Goldenseal Index

Volume 34, 2008

Articles that appeared in Volume 34 are listed in the index below under the categories of Subject, Author, Photographer, and Location.

In the Subject category, articles are listed under their main topic, with many cross-referenced under alternate Subject headings, as well. Each entry is followed by the seasonal designation, volume and issue number, and page number. Short notices, such as those that appear in the regular column "Current Programs, Events, Publications," sidebars, "GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes," etc., are not included in the index.

The GOLDENSEAL Index is published each year in the winter issue. The cumulative index is available on our Web site at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/gsindex.html.

Subject

Author

Photographers

Location

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685 FOR GOLDENSEAL: WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE (U.S.P.S. No. 013336), Filing date October 1, 2008, published quarterly, at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Number of issues published annually: 4. Annual subscription price: $18. The general business offices of the publisher are located at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. John Lilly is the contact person at (304)558-0220.

The names and addresses of the publisher, editor and managing editor are: publisher, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; editor, John Lilly, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; managing editor, John Lilly, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The owner is: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: NONE.

Publication Name: Goldenseal: West Virginia Traditional Life
Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Fall 2008
The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months are:
A) Total no. of copies: 18,750
Net press run:
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 14,946
1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541
2) Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 1,266
4. Other Classes mailed Through the USPS -0-
C) Total paid and/or Requested 16,212
Circulation:
D) Free Distribution by Mail: -0-
1. Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
2. In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
3. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 16,212
H) Copies Not Distributed (Office Use) 1,804
(Returns/Shredded) 73
I) Total 18,750
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation:100%

The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date are:
A) Total no. of copies 18,750
Net press run:
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 14,663
2. Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 1,371
4. Other Classes mailed Through the USPS-0-
C) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation 16,034
D) Free Distribution by Mail: -0-
1. Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541-0-
2. In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
3. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS-0-
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 16,034
H) Copies Not Distributed (Office Use) 2,716
(Returns/Shredded) -0-
I) Total 18,750
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 100%
I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

John Lilly, Editor

New To GOLDENSEAL?

We're glad to make your acquaintance and hope you want to see more of us. You may do so by returning this coupon with your annual subscription payment for $18.
Thanks — and welcome to the GOLDENSEAL family!

I enclose $_____for a subscription to GOLDENSEAL.
-or-
Charge my
___VISA ___ MasterCard
#_____
Exp. Date _____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Please make your check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.

Send to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304)558-0220

ADDRESS CHANGE?

Please enter old and new addresses below and return to us.

OLD

Name

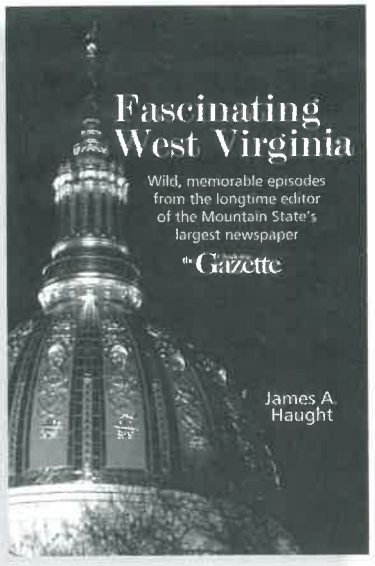
Address

NEW

Name

Address

Fascinating West Virginia



Longtime editor of *The Charleston Gazette*, James A. Haught, has seen much in his half-century at the state's largest newspaper. And as the paper's first investigative reporter, he has much to tell. And tell it he does, in a recent collection, titled *Fascinating West Virginia*, published in 2008 by *The Charleston Gazette*.

An avid history buff, Haught begins his volume with several short chapters on the formation of the Appalachian Mountains, Indian wars, and the initial settlement of the Kanawha Valley. He hits his stride, however, when he digs into the 20th-century scandals and debacles where he cut his teeth as a young (and not-so-young) news hound. Haught's reports on the controversies surrounding governors Wally Barron and Arch Moore are incisive and detailed. The reader gets the impression that Haught relished his role in holding these and other high officials accountable for their actions.

Haught also includes several odd and quirky chapters in our state's history, such as the UFO craze of the 1950's, the Portugese wine fraud of the 1960's, and the Kanawha Valley textbook controversy of the 1970's. Now in his 70's, Haught reflects on the changes he has seen over the years, from his rural youth in Wetzel County to the modern, computer-drive newsroom of today.

Fascinating West Virginia is well-titled, well-written, and provides unique insight into the career and personality of one of the Mountain State's preeminent newsmen. The 169-page paperback volume sells for $15 from the lobby of the Charleston Newspapers office on Virginia Street in Charleston, or $18 via mail from Charleston Gazette Books, 1001 Virginia Street East, Charleston, WV 25301; phone (304)348-5140.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Bernard Cyrus
- *The Friendly Neighbors Show*
- Weston State Hospital
- Basketball Star George King

PHOTO CURIOSITY

But, will it fly?!? These three well-dressed travelers are probably hoping not, at least not anytime soon, judging by their apparel. While questions abound concerning this intriguing craft's airworthiness (ie. What exactly does that steering wheel steer?), there is little doubt that considerable time, effort, and creativity went into its design and construction.

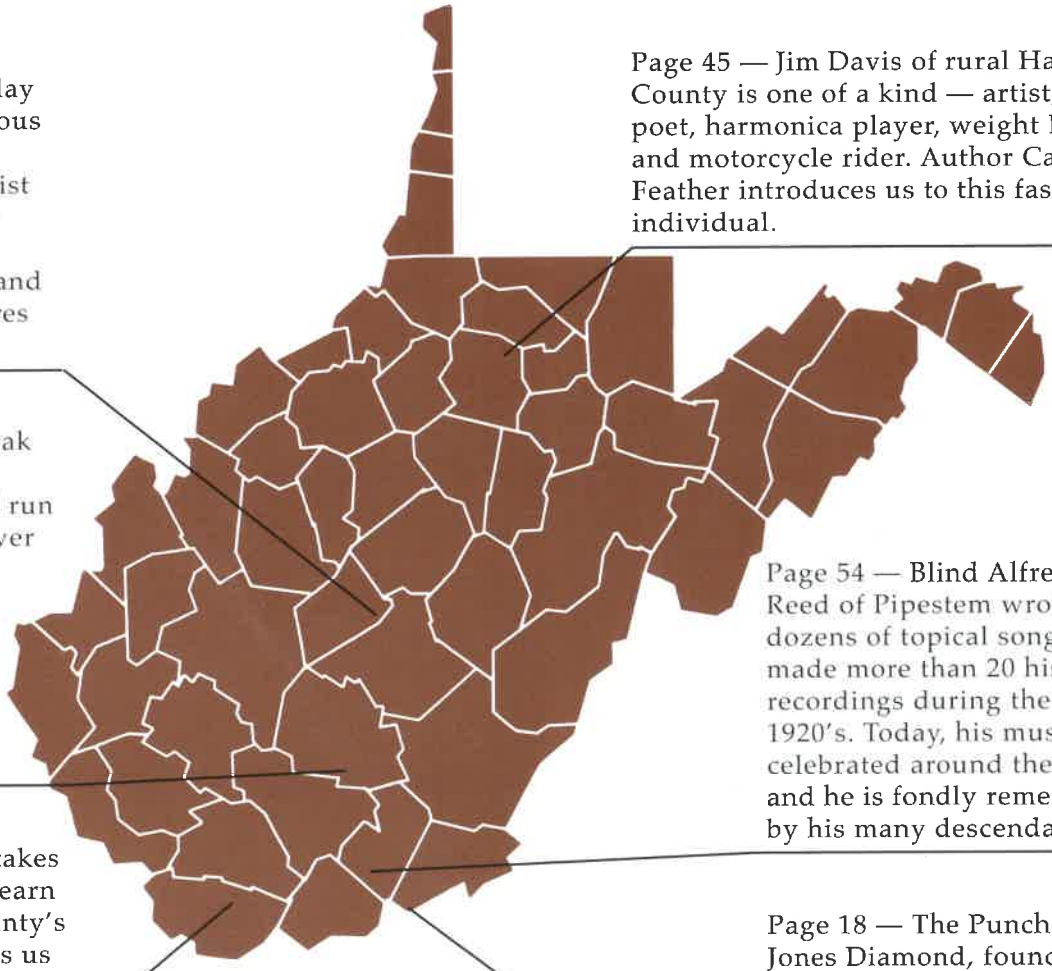
The three individuals are, from the left, Mattie Woodbridge, Will Darling Woodbridge, and Mrs. Joseph Moffat. We are guessing that the first two are married and that the two women are sisters. Their appearance on this contraption attests to their adventurous spirit, even if they were only posing for the camera.

This photograph comes to us courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Lucy Summers Quarrier Collection, photographer and date unknown. If you can shed any additional light on these fine folks or their fabulous flying machine, please let us know at the GOLDENSEAL office.

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

PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal



84
0 94295 76645 1