Asturians • Circus! • Elmer Rich • Forest Fires • Sunday Dinner

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Fall 2009 $4.95

Spanish West Virginia

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 Culture 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 Culture 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 Chapman Printing
Charleston - Huntington - Parkersburg

Letters from Readers

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

Back-to-the-landers in Greenbrier County, 1971.

Back to the Land

June 18, 2009
Charleston, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
The article on the "hippies" was excellent. [See "Back to the Land in Pocahontas County," by David Holtzman; Summer 2009.] I was in McDowell County in the late '60's at First Presbyterian Church. That church was an established venue and had both liberal and conservative members. I had friends in all camps.

Anyway, my wife and I got to know many of the VISTA-type workers, some of whom were alternative-culture people. We also had older people with ideas sympathetic to hippiedom. Dr. John S. Cook was not only my doctor, but he and his wife, Violet, were our best friends. John traveled the nation on a bike in his early years and was a member of some sort of radical youth organization. He wore cheap shoes from Sears and gave his life effort to taking young people on the Appalachian Trail. The Cooks were my strong supporters and worked hard to put black and white young people in social situations.

The alternative folks are now middle aged and older, but they contributed much to life in McDowell County. We housed some in our home, fed them, and talked with them lots. One group had been to Cuba, and we enjoyed their travelogue.

Old hippies never die — they just dress better. I never qualified for hippie, but was offered a joint once and thought it a great honor. Hidden beneath the lapels of my preacher clothes beat a heart of sympathy for the young people who sought another way.

Thanks for that article. So many memories.
Lawton Posey

June 8, 2009
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
Loved the hippie issue! Lots of them migrated to Monroe County. One of them is now a doctor and married to my niece.
Best to you,
Roberta L. Allison

Pendleton County poor farm, near Upper Tract, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Pendleton County Historical Society.

Poor Farm

June 4, 2009
Kingmont, West Virginia
Editor:
I am writing to tell you the information in the caption of the picture on page 38 of the summer issue is incorrect. [See "'It Was a Hard Life': Growing Up at the Pendleton County Poor Farm," by William D. Rexroad.] It states the poor farm is near Brandywine. The poor farm is located on U.S. Route 220, near Upper Tract. I was born and raised in Upper Tract and passed by the poor farm almost everyday.

When I was five years old or so, my brother and I were going to Franklin with my dad. We hadn't seen or noticed the big building before and asked Daddy what it was. He pulled over to the side of the road and told us to get a good look and remember where it was, because it was the poor farm and would probably be our home someday.

Thank you for a wonderful magazine, which lets us remember and know what a great state we live in.
Yours truly,
Shirley B. Bingman

Thank you for writing, Shirley. We appreciate the correction and apologize for the error. —ed.

Union Mission

July 7, 2009
St. Albans, West Virginia
Editor:
I appreciate the article "Mission Hollow Memories" by Karl Priest in the Summer 2009 issue of your very fine magazine. I can relate to it as I spent much time there

Union Mission gospel car, date unknown.

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:

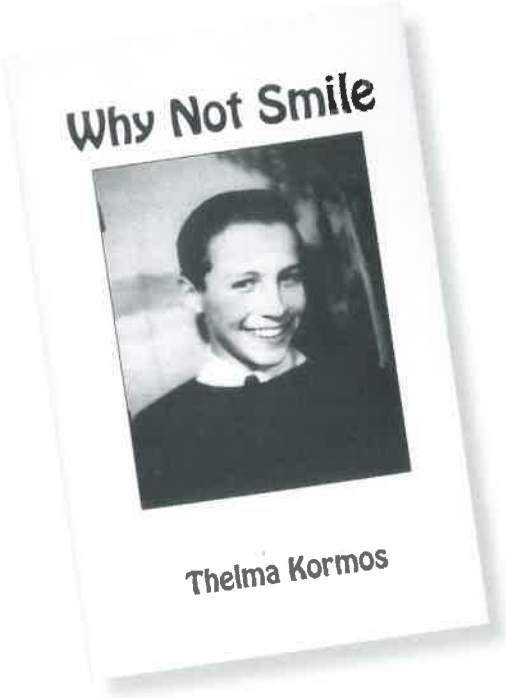
_____

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

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.

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

myself. I was placed there at the age of two and was there off and on for about five years. I was taken good care of and treated well. I, too, enjoyed the camp; the pool and Maypole were special delights. I was saved while there at about the age of five years.
Yours truly,
Thelma Lanham



John Kormos Book

Vanceboro, Maine
June 22, 2009
Via e-mail
Editor:
On Friday, May 15, I received a call from an excited person — John Kormos. John called to let me know that his book was going to be reviewed in GOLDENSEAL. [See "An Orphan's Tale"; Summer 2009.]

I have known him for over 60 years. John Kormos is the most decent, brave, courageous, and determined individual I have ever met. And I have had contact with thousands, in many localities and from all walks of life. John is a person without self-pity or remorse, just a strong, positive outlook.

We both attended Magnolia High School, and, later, he was considered by my parents to be a member of our family. Few could have survived the ordeals he encountered in life. Later, when he had his little shop in New Martinsville, he was considered an important merchant in the downtown area.

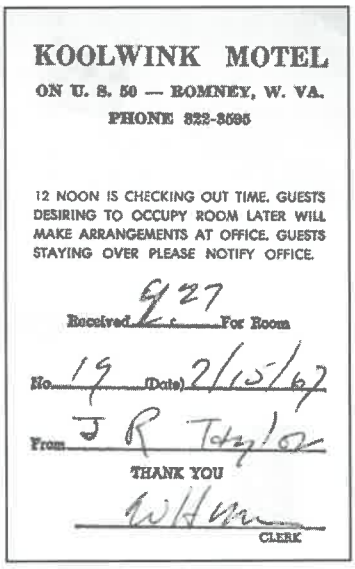
Thank you for honoring this outstanding person and his faithful wife, Thelma.
Borgon Tanner

Koolwink Motel

June 2, 2009
Alderson, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
I read the Koolwink Motel article with great interest. [See "Koolwink Motel: The American Dream in Romney," by Carl E. Feather; Spring 2009.] My wife, Diana, and I spent our wedding night there on July 15, 1967. We married in Baltimore and were traveling to Blackwater Falls for our honeymoon but wouldn't be able to get there until very late. So we stopped for the first night at the Koolwink in Romney instead. We stayed in Room 19, and the room cost was $9.27. That was over 41 years ago.

We've been back two or three times on special occasions since then to spend a night and reminisce and have thoroughly enjoyed ourselves each time. Wallace and Pauline Mauk are very special people, and the rooms are always "top-notch!"

About the only things that have changed at the Koolwink are the room numbers. The room we had in 1967, Room 19, is now Room 36. Of course, the room prices have also increased, mostly due to inflation, but they're still very reasonable. Keeping everything else the same is a good thing!
Jack R. Taylor


KOOLWINK MOTEL
ON U. S. 50 — ROMNEY, W. VA.
PHONE 822-3595

12 NOON IS CHECKING OUT TIME. GUESTS DESIRING TO OCCUPY ROOM LATER WILL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS AT OFFICE. GUESTS STAYING OVER PLEASE NOTIFY OFFICE.

Received 9.27 c. For Room
No. 19 (Date) 2/15/67
From J R Taylor
THANK YOU
CLERK

Jack R. Taylor's 1967 room receipt from the Koolwink Motel in Romney.

Renewal Mailbag

June 17, 2009
Alum Creek, West Virginia
Editor:
GOLDENSEAL has brought so much enjoyment to me this year. I have been inspired to hike Seneca Rocks, listen to some gifted Appalachian musicians, and to "look around me" for some beautiful West Virginia orchids. Your stories make great conversations at family gatherings. GOLDENSEAL is also a fun learning resource for my teenager! Reading about the genuine interests of the people in our state touches my heart with much appreciation. Please renew my subscription. I've also enclosed a gift subscription for my friends.
Thank you,
Dovie Schultz

June 18, 2009
West Des Moines, Iowa
Editor:
We love your magazine. My roots are in West Virginia, and we have much family there. We really enjoy the history. Keep up the great work!
Jan Grace

May 19, 2009
Quinter, Kansas
Editor:
Thank you for the two "grace" issues and the "urgent notice" re: Renewals. I love the GOLDENSEAL and don't want to be without it.
Mary Jo Jamison

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.

Everett Lilly Vandalia Award

Everett Lilly receives the 2009 Vandalia Award. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Bluegrass music pioneer Everett Lilly of Clear Creek, Raleigh County, was presented the 2009 Vandalia Award during the evening concert on Saturday, May 23, in the Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater as part of the annual Vandalia Gathering. The Vandalia Award is West Virginia's highest folklife honor and is presented each year to recognize an individual's lifetime contribution to the folklife and traditions of West Virginia. Everett and his band, the Lilly Mountaineers, also performed during the concert.

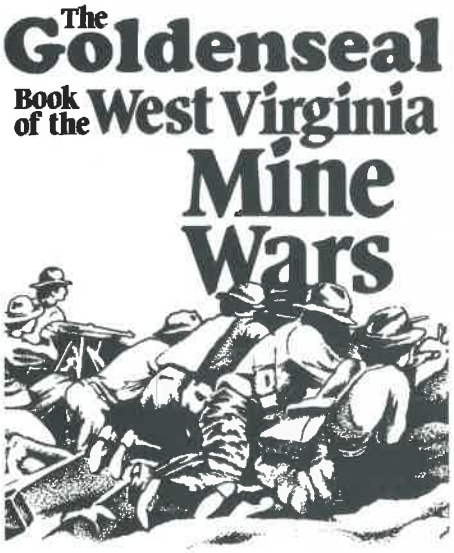
Everett Lilly and his late brother, Michael Burt "B" Lilly, were instrumental in bringing what they called "American folk country music" to audiences in New England during the 1950's and '60's and, later, to Japan. Everett was the subject of a feature story in our Summer 2009 issue. [See "'Keep a-Goin'': Musician Everett Lilly of Clear Creek," by John Lilly.]

· For the past 30 years, Everett has continued playing music in West Virginia with family members in the bands Clear Creek Crossing and the Lilly Mountaineers, as well as occasional appearances with B as the Lilly Brothers, until B's death in 2005.

Music Hall of Fame Induction

West Virginia musicians Hawkshaw Hawkins, Nat Reese, the Bailes Brothers, Don Redman, Doc & Chickie Williams, Frank DeVol, and Larry Combs are the 2009 inductees into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will take place November 21 at the Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater at the Culture Center in Charleston. The event will be hosted by Charlie McCoy and Kathy Mattea and will be recorded for later broadcast by West Virginia Public Television.

The Hall of Fame, begun in 2007, honors achievement by West Virginia musicians in all styles of music. Previous inductees have included fiddler Clark Kessinger, songwriters Hazel Dickens and Blind Alfred Reed, opera star Phyllis Curtin, classical composer George Crumb, rock



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

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

— — — — — — — — — — — —

I enclose $ ____ for ____ copies of *The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars.*

-or-

Charge my

___VISA ___MasterCard

_____

Exp. Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

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

'n' roll pianist Johnnie Johnson, bluegrass pioneers the Lilly Brothers, and polka king Frankie Yankovic, among others.

This year's inductions will include country, jazz, blues, pop, and classical musicians. For more information, call the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame at (304)342-4412 or visit www.wvmusichalloffame.com.

KidFid in Marlinton

The Pocahontas County Opera House is sponsoring the 2nd Annual KidFid, now known as the Robert C. Byrd Youth Fiddle Contest. The competition will take place on Saturday, September 26, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the opera house in Marlinton. Musicians age 21 and younger are eligible to compete in banjo, fiddle, guitar, and an "other" category, for age groups under 13, age 13-16, and age 17-21.

The contest is part of the Autumn Harvest Festival and Roadkill Cookoff in Marlinton. [See "Roadkill Cookoff: You Ate *What?!?*" by Tamar Alexia Fleishman; Fall 2007.] The 24th Annual Autumn Harvest Festival also features food, crafts, agricultural exhibits, a dog show, clogging, and horseshoe pitching.

KidFid contestant at Marlinton in 2008.

Event information and a contest registration form can be found on the Web at www.pocahontasoperahouse.org. For more information, call Maggie Thornton at (304)799-6645, toll-free at 1-800-336-7009.

Jerry and Debbie Lewis with quilt block in northern Mason County.

Mason County Quilt Trail

Several Point Pleasant residents have been busy developing the Mason County Quilt Trail to draw attention to historic areas, farms, and various businesses around Mason County. Each "quilt" on the trail is a uniquely designed 8x8-foot square that is painted by local residents in a traditional quilt pattern.

The National Quilt Trail started in Ohio and now includes 21 other states. The Mason County Quilt Trail is the first in West Virginia, and Dennis Bellamy of the Mason County Convention & Visitors Bureau is working to bring the quilt trail to the rest of the state. Point Pleasant is a center for tourism in Mason County, and Bellamy believes that the trail is a way to urge travelers to visit the outlying areas of the county.

For more information, call the Mason County Tourism Center at (304)675-6788, on the Web at www.masoncountytourism.org.

Gourd Workshop

A gourd workshop will be held during the West Virginia State Farm Museum's Country Fall Festival on October 3-4. Participants will use gourds to create their own birdhouses, bowls, and various craft decorations.

The workshop will be conducted by members of the Gourd Patch, a group of volunteers that promotes the creative use of gourds. Members of the group grow their own gourds and sell their handiwork to raise funds to benefit the Farm Museum, located near Point Pleasant.

Other events at the Country Fall Festival will include an antique gas engine show, an antique bottle show, an antique tractor pull, a quilt show, a Gravely swap meet, and a Wild West gunslinger show. A church service will be held at 9 a.m. and a gospel sing at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday.

All activities are free to the public. For more information, call the Farm Museum at (304)675-5737, on the Web at www.wvfarmmuseum.org or e-mail wvsfm@wvfarmmuseum.org.

West Virginia State Rock

Bituminous coal has recently been declared the official West Virginia state rock. On Wednesday, June 3, 2009, Governor Joe Manchin signed legislation recognizing the mineral's contribution to West Virginia's history and economy.

MICHAEL KELLER

Britnee Gibson, a senior at Gilbert High School in Logan County, was born and raised in the coalfields of southern West Virginia. She became aware that West Virginia had no state rock while working on a project for the CEDAR Regional Coal Fair in 2007. She collected 2,500 signatures on a petition to support the official designation for coal. With the help of Senator Truman Chafin (D-Mingo) and Delegate Harry Keith White (D-Mingo), Gibson was able to get the resolution introduced before the 2009 session of the West Virginia State Legislature, where it was passed near the end of the session.

Gerald Milnes, Ph.D.

Gerald Milnes, Folk Arts Coordinator for the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College, was awarded an honorary doctor of fine arts degree at D&E's commencement ceremonies on Sunday, May 10.

Dr. Gerald Milnes.

For more than 30 years, Milnes has researched, documented, and written about many aspects of mountain culture, as well as performing and teaching traditional Appalachian music. He is a nationally respected folklorist and musician and has received numerous honors and awards. Milnes has produced 14 films about West Virginia folklife and traditions, and, in 2006, he was honored as West Virginia Filmmaker of the Year. He has produced 17 audio recordings of West Virginia traditional musicians for the Augusta Heritage label, and is the author of several books. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2009 issue. [See "The Natural World of Bernard Cyrus."]

Congratulations, Gerry!

GOLDENSEAL for the Blind

GOLDENSEAL is now offered on NFB-Newsline (National Federation of the Blind), a program of the Special Services Division of the West Virginia Library Commission. NFB-Newsline provides free access to national and local newspapers and magazines to residents who are unable to read or use standard print due to a visual or physical impairment. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using a Touch-Tone phone.

GOLDENSEAL is also available in audiobook format from the Library Commission. For an application or additional information, call 1-800-642-8674 or (304)558-4061. Visit the West Virginia Library Commission on the Web at http://librarycommission.lib.wv.us or e-mail talkbks@wvlc.lib.wv.us.

see page 72.

Parade of Progress exhibits on display in the mid-1950's.

Parade of Progress

In the fall of 1953, West Virginia welcomed the future — sleek and streamlined — as General Motors' Parade of Progress paid a visit to the Mountain State. Promoted as the "greatest scientific exposition ever put on wheels," the parade toured the nation between April 15, 1953, and July 17, 1956. It rolled into Wheeling on October 22, 1953, visited Huntington and Charleston, and left the state on November 9.

Crowds thrilled to the impressive display of motor vehicles. The mile-long caravan comprised approximately 38 vehicles, including 12 gigantic Futurliners — unique bus-like contraptions with "Flash Gordon" styling, glass domes, and a single middle seat for the driver. Local officials led the parade, riding in six red convertibles. Next came the row of Futurliners, followed by 20 tractor-trailers, trucks, and passenger cars: Cadillacs, Buicks, Oldsmobiles, Pontiacs, and Chevrolets, all painted red and white.

When they arrived at their destination, workers spent a day and a half putting up a huge Aerodome tent and assembling a massive show of modern science and technology exhibits. The Futurliners were specially outfitted with various fold-out displays — one on each side of each Futurliner. One display depicted the Soap Box Derby, sponsored by Chevy. Another featured a model of a small village, which changed over three complete sequences to show how a rural town becomes a modern metropolis through the course of several decades. The buildings and roads automatically flipped, twisted, popped up, and disappeared throughout the exhibit. This display alone took an estimated 15,000 man hours to complete and required the precise workings of 25 electric motors.

According to publicity, other attractions included "The Motor that Runs on Sunshine," "Cooking on a Cold Stove," "Synthetic Rubber That's Made in a Pop Bottle," "Microwave Magic," and "Jets and Rockets." Organizers stressed that this was "Not an Automobile Show" and the fact that admission was free. Families with children were particularly encouraged to attend.

Between the middle of April

and late October 1953, an estimated 1.5 million people had seen the displays. In Wheeling, the Parade of Progress was set up at Bridge Park on October 22. In Huntington, they arrived at St. Cloud Commons on October 28. From November 5 through 9, the Parade welcomed visitors to the campus of Charleston's Morris Harvey College. On Monday, November 9, a special presentation was offered for Charleston-area high school and middle school students.

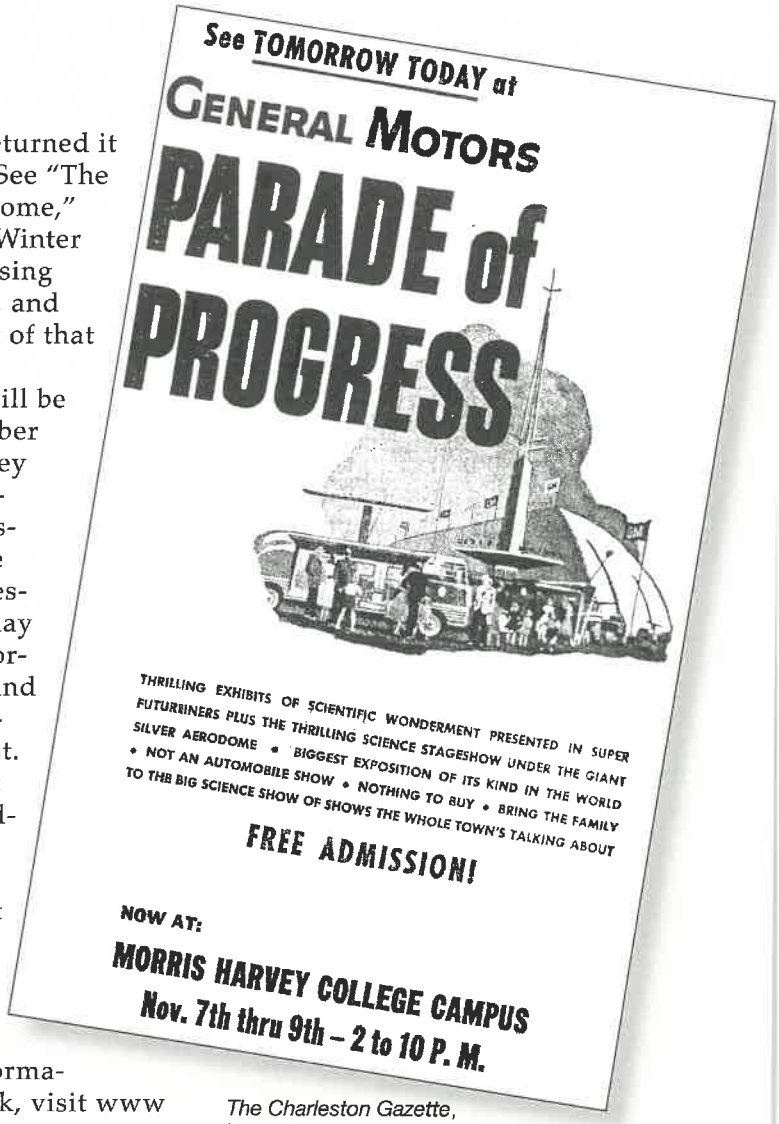
Then the Parade of Progress rode off into the sunset. Although it was not a car show, the extravagant Parade was designed to promote GM's forward thinking at the time, and, ultimately, the company hoped it would somehow sell cars during a slow time in the automobile market. By 1956, however, attitudes had changed, and the Parade of Progress was laid to rest. The rapid spread of television into American homes and other advertising opportunities attracted GM's promotional dollars instead.

The Futurliners, originally built at a cost of $100,000 each, were sold off for $600 a piece. Most ended up collecting rust in vacant lots, though a few were eventually salvaged. One, the recently refurbished Futurliner #10, will make its proud return to West Virginia this September, when it will be featured at the 2009 Norwalk Festival in Martinsburg.

The Friends of the Norwalk Foundation, a local antique car club organized around the West Virginia-built Norwalk Underslung automobile, recently obtained the last known Underslung in existence and returned it to West Virginia. [See "The Norwalk Comes Home," by Daniel Friend; Winter 2008.] They are raising funds to pay for it, and this festival is part of that effort.

The Futurliner will be on display September 26-27 at the Berkeley County Youth Fairgrounds in Martinsburg, as part of the annual Norwalk Festival. Also on display will be the 1914 Norwalk Underslung and other antique vehicles of local interest. Live entertainment is also on the schedule. For tickets or more information, call Chris Breeze at (304)267-3140.

For more about the Futurliners, the Parade of Progress, an informational DVD, or book, visit www.futurliner.com.



The Charleston Gazette, November 7, 1953.

Refurbished Futurliner #10 will be on display in Martinsburg, September 26-27.

State Museum Reopens

Photoessay By Michael Keller

On June 21, 2009, the West Virginia State Museum reopened to the public, following an extensive renovation. The 23,000 square-foot museum, located in the lower level of the Culture Center at the Capitol Complex in Charleston, is free to the public and is open Tuesday through Sunday.

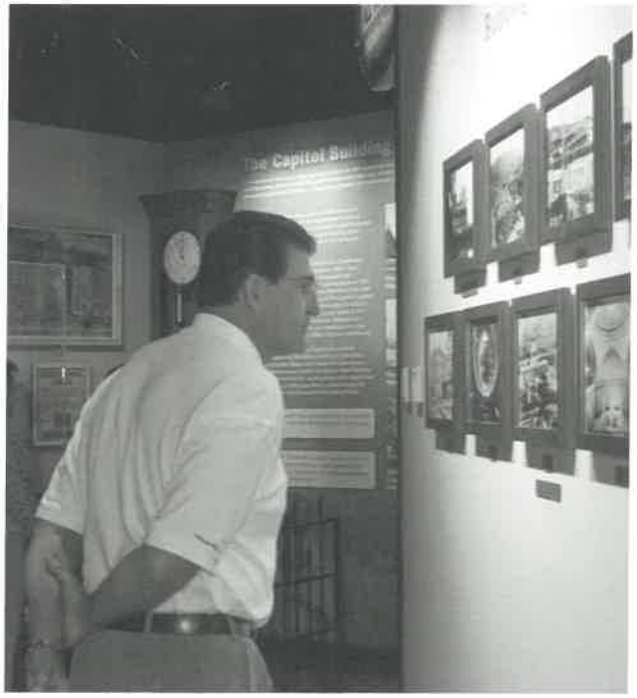
The new museum features numerous multimedia presentations, depicting topics related to the history of West Virginia. These include Appalachia during prehistoric times, the early settlement period, Civil War and statehood, coal mining and industrialization, labor struggles, the changing roles of women, West Virginians at war, railroads and riverboats, the New Deal, social change, transportation, and other topics.

A chronological trail, known as a "show path," takes visitors through the museum's main attractions, while additional display areas, known as "discovery rooms," offer more detailed looks at specific topics and events. There are a total of 26 discovery rooms and approximately 60,000 artifacts on display. For more information, phone (304)558-0220.

Culture and History photographer Michael Keller took these recent photographs of the new museum.

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


SPREAD OF RAILROADS
MODEL TRAIN


The Capitol Building


Emerging Artists of West Virginia

Special Report

Spanish Mountaineers

Spanish surnames are plentiful in north-central West Virginia — Fernández, Alvarez, Rodríguez, Martínez — a vivid reminder of the rich Spanish heritage here, dating back to the early 20th century when zinc, coal, and glass operations flourished and attracted a huge immigrant workforce. In Beckley [see *"En las montañas:* Spaniards in Southern West Virginia," by Tom Hidalgo; Winter 2001], Spanishburg in Mercer County, and other communities around the state, workers from Mexico, southern Spain, and elsewhere were drawn to the mines, railroads, and lumber camps.

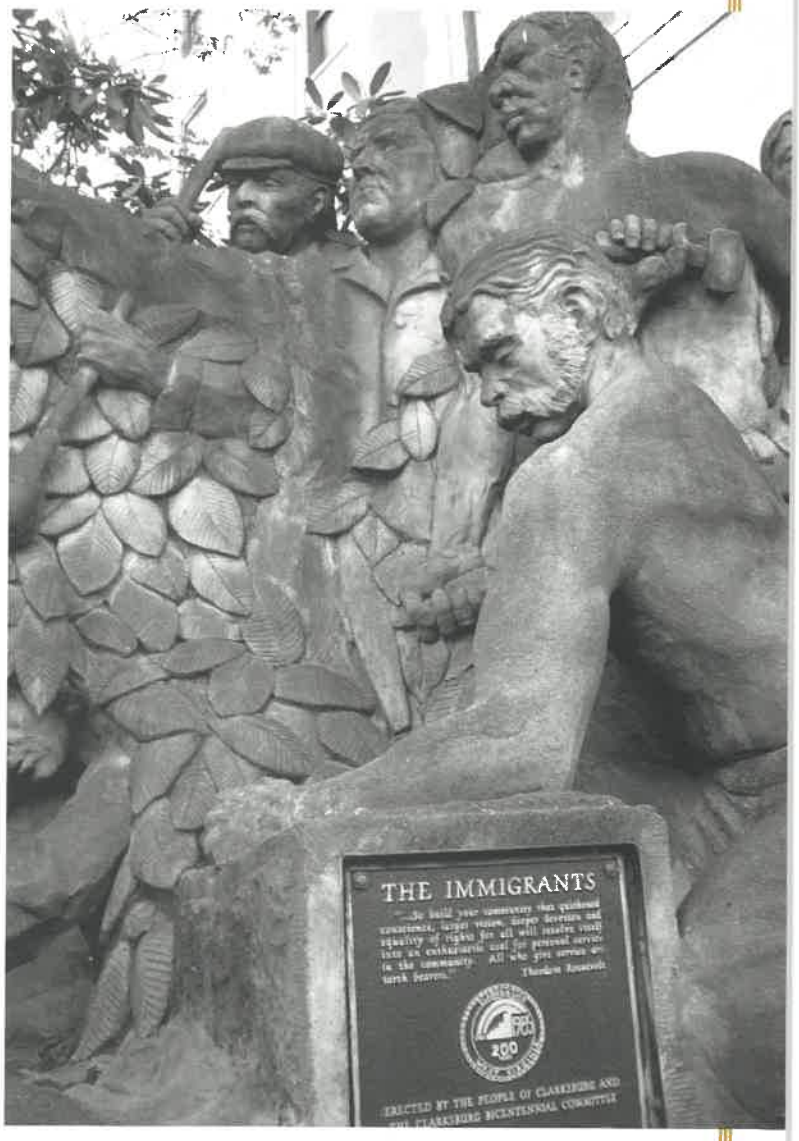
The Clarksburg area was particularly attractive to workers from the north coast of Spain, especially the province of Asturias, where zinc and coal fueled the local economy and people made their homes on rugged hillside farms. At one point, as many as 1,500 Asturian immigrants lived in the Harrison County town of Spelter, now little more than a memory.

In 1903, the Grasselli Chemical Company of Cleveland, Ohio, unveiled plans for a zinc plant in what is known today as Anmoore, near the outskirts of Clarksburg. The plant began production the following year. In 1910, Grasselli opened a second plant, located along the West Fork River, in an area known as Spelter — the name used for the flat bars of zinc that result from the smelting process. The town was also known as Zeising, named after plant general manager Richard Zeising. By 1913, Grasselli's combined Clarksburg operations were the second-largest zinc producer in the nation. Soon, two other zinc plants opened nearby.

The hot, dirty work of running the zinc furnaces was accomplished largely by experienced Spanish workers from the towns of Arnao, Aviles, Mieres, and Naveces in Asturias, where there were similar plants. Grasselli representatives actively recruited Spanish zinc workers to come to Harrison County between 1904 and 1920, and the town of Spelter was built to house them. The immigrants came in search of a better life, and most sent for their families to join them. Three or four generations of Spanish — and in many cases, Spanish-speaking — West Virginians settled in Harrision County and the surrounding area. While some opened shops and businesses and others worked in coal and glass, Spaniards remained the driving force behind the zinc industry. Though the boom period of zinc smelting began to fade in the 1930's, production continued here until 2002.

Today, most of the plants have been demolished or decommissioned. None of the original immigrants are still living, and most of their descendants have scattered. Still, a strong Spanish presence remains in Harrison and Marion counties. A Spanish social club still holds regular meetings. A recent Web site [www.asturianus.org], book [*Pinnick Kinnick Hill*, by G.W. González], and video documentary [*Asturian U.S.*, by Luis Argeo] are evidence of a revived interest in this history and heritage.

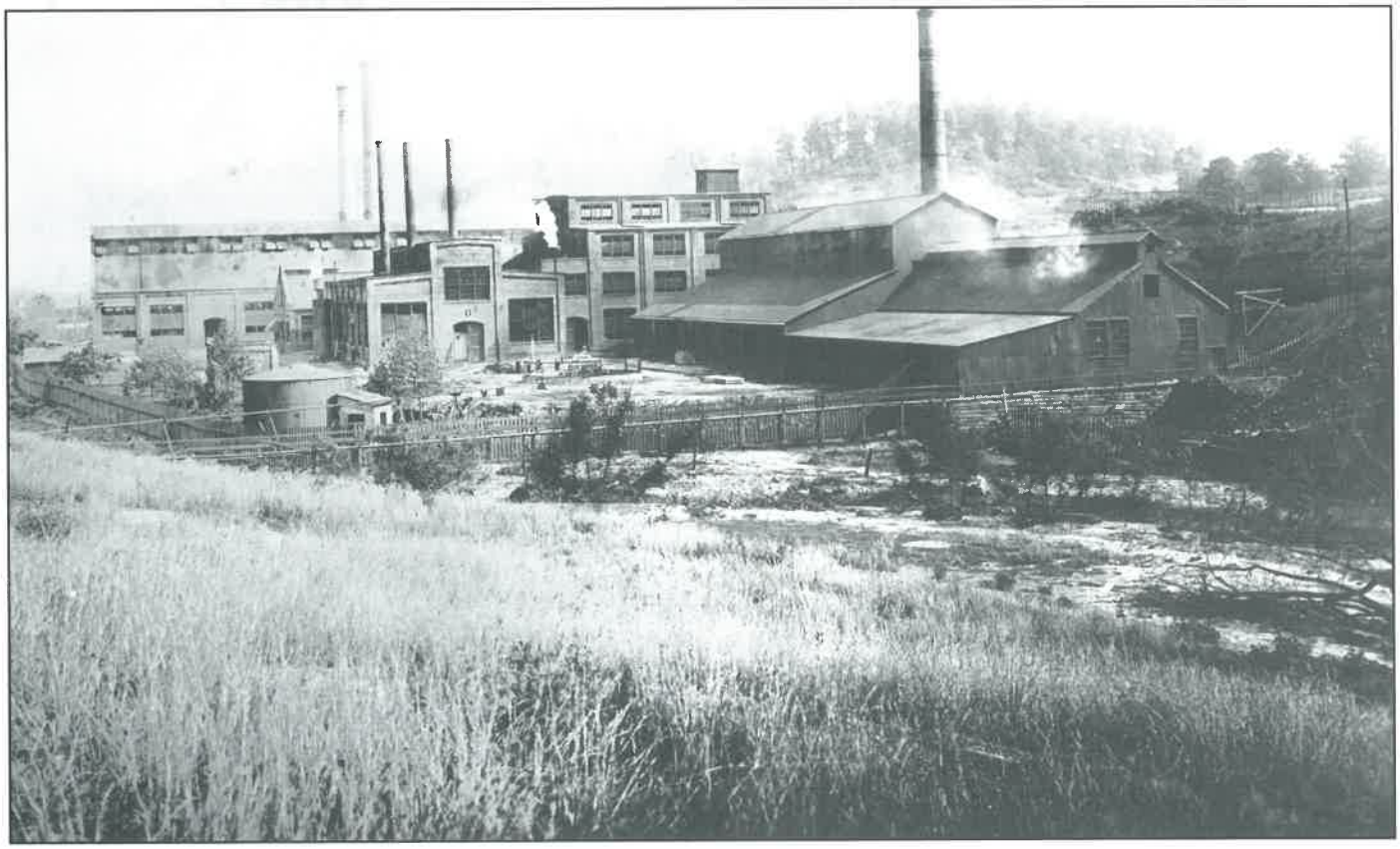
In the following pages, GOLDENSEAL celebrates Spanish West Virginia.



"The Immigrants" sculpture by W.D. Hopen, located outside the Harrison County courthouse in Clarksburg. Photograph by Luis Argeo.

Asturian West Virginia

By Luis Argeo



The Grasselli Chemical Company zinc plant in Grasselli, now known as Anmoore, near Clarksburg. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, Monongahela Traction Company Collection. Date unknown.

Spanish immigrants came to Harrison and Marion counties by the thousands to work in the zinc factories during the early 20th century. The Diego Vásquez family is pictured here in Spelter (Zeising) in 1912. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, Ruth Yeager Collection.

"We believed that they were going to the best place of the world, but they suffered a lot there. It was very hard for them. Very hard, yes." Mrs. Covadonga Vega López speaks about her neighbors and relatives from Arnao, an Asturian coastal village that saw hundreds of metallurgical and mining workers shipping towards the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, far away, to the isolated mountains of West Virginia.

That was almost one century ago. They departed Spain seeking new opportunities, or as it is said in the movies, searching for the American Dream. The workers proceeding from the Arnao Royal Asturian Company of Mines ran up against a tepid welcome after landing at Ellis Island immigration offices in New York. They would eventually reach their own American Dream, although splashed with indifference, difficulties, and discrimination.

Their labor experience in mines, factories, and blast furnaces in their home country led them to those places where chimneys, shafts, and cooling towers proliferated among the woody green and the stony black of the coal valleys. They gathered in small company towns that were built for workers close to the factories — towns that belonged to the chemical and mining companies, with low-rent houses, storehouses, school, and church: towns like Spelter, Anmoore, and Moundsville in West Virginia, and Donora in Pennsylvania.

These were towns where Asturian

Asturian zinc workers in Spelter, date unknown. Experienced factory workers were recruited from the north of Spain, where there was a history of zinc smelting. In 1915, as many as 1,500 Asturians lived in Spelter.

immigrants were in the majority, places where for many years people could speak the Asturian language, ate fabada (mixture of beans and rice with chicken), played the bagpipe, and danced the traditional *Xiringüelu* for fun. Asturian and United States histories converged in the hills, valleys, and rivers of the Appalachian region, thanks to the zinc workers.

"Wherever there were zinc factories, there were Asturians. They were those who better could stand such a nasty and helly work," Isaac Suárez, octogenarian, son of Asturians, and born in Spelter, says in Spanish. "That's why the Spanish language was very common in the smelting furnaces."

"The Asturians involved in the zinc industry thought of themselves as one community," says Art Zoller Wagner, grandson of another Asturian who arrived in West Virginia in 1917. "They communicated with each other; traveled to each others' fiestas, weddings, and funerals; and shared news about job opportunities. The experience of any of the locations would have had much in common with the others."

Spelter, Harrison County, is today a dismantled and silent residential Clarksburg suburb. Nevertheless, its 175 wooden houses hosted 1,500 people of Asturian origin in 1915. All the families depended on the zinc mill that Grasselli Chemical Company had raised at the edge of the West Fork River. All of the families knew each other and, by and large, they were a happy community.

They used to organize *espichas* over the surrounding green meadows, which later on were called picnics. Any excuse was good to be in a good mood and celebrate a party full of Spanish sausages, pies, and potato omelettes. The bagpipe sounded daily, and they devised clever methods to draw liquor from berries and other forest fruits, even during those Dry Law years.

Occasionally, they had to endure some intimidation from the Ku Klux Klan, or had to face the bosses and go on strike, but generally they made good use of the opportunity West Virginia gave them to succeed. They could even organize *espicha* parties to collect money to send to families that were suffering the devastation of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) in Asturias.

Many of the immigrants came to West Virginia with the intention of earning their fortunes and returning to Asturias. They noticed, however, that the situation in Spain was not inviting enough for them to return. Besides that, they had to support those who remained in Asturias and other relatives who were arriving

La Familia Fernández

Recalling a Spanish Family in Clarksburg

By Raymond Alvarez

On Memorial Day 2008, my second cousin, Patty, brought her family from Houston for their first visit to West Virginia. I drove them to Clarksburg to see the house where her grandmother, Sally, grew up at the home of my Grandmother Fernandez. I knocked at the door, and a kind lady answered. After we explained that this was the home of our grandmothers, she gave us permission to walk about the property.

The front porch, with its second-story balcony, was now gone. The house sported new siding. The outbuildings had been torn down many years ago. The side

José Fernández immigrated to Clarksburg from the Spanish province of Asturias in 1913. His wife, Maria, joined him two years later. They are pictured here in 1917, with four of their eventual 10 children. Standing in front, from the left, are Rosario (Rosalie) and Socorro (Sally). Behind them are Maria, Francesco (Frank), Serena (Lorraine), and José. Lorraine was our author's mother.

Map by Art Zoller Wagner.

yard seemed smaller than I remembered. I looked at the marbles embedded in the cement sidewalk and touc hed the old horseshoe that was also there — mementos from Uncle Pancho and Uncle Louie, who, as young men, had poured the concrete in 1957.

As Patty's husband photographed the town of Clarksburg below, I had a hard time holding back silent tears. The house had been sold in 1970 shortly after my grandmother's funeral. I looked for her zinnias and roses, or traces of her beds of mint, *eneldo* (dill), and chamomile. Although they weren't there, the memories lingered of the Spaniards who made this their home.

In 1909, in the village of Felguera, in Riosa, a province of Asturias in northern Spain, José Fernández Iglesias married Maria Sariego Guardado. In a few short years, they had three daughters: Socorro (Sally), Rosario (Rosalie), and Serena (Lorraine). While Maria was content with her life in Spain, an ambitious José planned to emigrate to America, where many of his friends had found a prosperous new life in a small town in north-central West Virginia, known as Clarksburg.

In the spring of 1913, José sailed from Spain to England to New York City on the ship *California*. Upon arrival and without knowing any English, he made the journey to Clarksburg, where jobs awaited in the zinc and glass plants. After two-and-a-half years, he had a stable job at the Hazel-Atlas Glass factory, and arranged for his wife and daughters to join him.

The dutiful Maria arrived in New York City on September 12, 1915, with her three girls, having sailed from Spain to Liverpool on the *Adriatic II*. She had departed at a particularly dangerous time, since Germany had declared the seas around Great Britain a war zone. Any ship found there that year faced attack without warning. Maria might or might not have known this, but if the voyage didn't terrify her, their arrival at Ellis Island in New York City probably did.

Records indicate that she arrived in America in good health, with three children, and carried less than $20. Fortunately, José was there to meet them and escorted the family by train to Clarksburg. After a 10-day sea voyage and a two-day train ride, she had no time to rest. Awaiting her was a small home in North View, where two Spanish male boarders anticipated better meals and housekeeping.

This was not the life of relative comfort Maria had enjoyed in Spain. Sally, the eldest child, would later comment that her mother said if she could have turned around and gone back to Felguera, she would have done it right then without hesitation. In Spain, Maria's family had the means to hire a woman to help her look after her three daughters. In Clarksburg, however, Maria had no help to care for the children, her new home, and the boarders.

Six Fernández children at home on Brannon Avenue in Clarksburg in 1931. Standing in front, from the left, are Luis (Louie), Manuel (Pancho), and Maria Luisa (Mary Louise). Behind them are Serena (Lorraine), Rosario (Rosalie), and Paulina (Pauline).

The household grew steadily as Maria gave birth to six more children: Franceso (Frank), Paulina (Pauline), Jesus (Andy), Manuel (Pancho), Luis (Louie), and Maria Luisa (Mary Louise). Maria also gave birth to a son, José, who died following his birth in 1923. By 1924, the industrious José purchased a larger house on Brannon Avenue, in the Montpelier area that overlooked the city below. He acquired the property from the Cabo family who had returned to Asturias. José now had a home that accommodated the growing family and even a few more boarders. They had a dairy barn, large garden, milk house, a chicken house, and several outbuildings. The youngest two children were born in this house.

Most of the Fernández women married local Spaniards. Socorro (Sally) wed Charles Muniz in 1930, and the couple moved to Detroit, Michigan. Photograph by Oak Leaf Studio.

Around this time, José left the glass factory and began work in the coal mines situated near Pinnick Kinnick Hill, on the east end of town. Other income for the household came from milk and dairy products sold to neighbors, often delivered by the children. Maria and the boys kept the small dairy operation compliant with local inspection regulations, as they handled the milking, processing, and sanitation. In addition to the small herd of dairy cows, they raised chickens, ducks, and rabbits for food. A grape arbor was located on the eastern part of the property.

With help from Italian neighbors, José built a brick oven near the milk house. On bread-making day, Maria would prepare large bowls of flour dough. She would set these aside, covered with damp cloth, while she built a large wood fire in the oven. After the fire subsided, she'd remove the ashes. With a rag mop on a long stick, she'd quickly swab all the inner bricks. The children would bring the loaves of bread up the hill from the house, and she would bake a week's supply in the oven, using a flat bread board to transfer the baked goods to baskets. In addition to loaves, she would knead a ball of dough into a rounded flat shape, which would be basted with egg batter to make golden pizza-like flat bread, similar to *focaccia*, and was enjoyed by everyone at the end of bread-baking day.

Her routine of work continued, sun up to sun down: bread-baking day, laundry day, ironing day, linen changes, house cleaning, child care, milking, gardening, canning, and butchering poultry and game.

A winemaker, José had adapted the Spanish custom of distilling *grapa* by substituting grain for grapes. During Prohibition, he kept his neighbors supplied with his bootleg whiskey. The young Fernández girls would often take the whiskey to regular customers, mostly Italians in the neighborhood. The alcohol would be conveyed in a hot-water bottle, hidden in a basket under a layer of lettuce leaves to escape the suspicious eyes of law enforcement. Upon arrival at their destination, the contents were transferred to the owner's preferred container. José did run afoul of the local authorities from time to time, but he kept his distilleries hidden or in secret locations until Prohibition was repealed in 1933.

Though his earnings as a miner were meager, the family prospered, thanks to the continuous work of the industrious José and his tireless wife, Maria. In 1940, at the age of 57, José died at St. Mary's Hospital. His death certificate reads "coal miner and farmer" — an apt description of his two occupations.

Maria faced the challenges of widowhood at the age of 52 with a teenaged son and daughter left at home. Her adult children had already sought lives of their own, one by one, often out of state. As a means of income, Maria continued to share her house with boarders for the next 18 years, often young couples, who rented rooms on the second floor of her house.

Maria's older daughters all married Spaniards from

Frank Hermosilla married Rosario (Rosalie) Fernández in 1933. They moved to Fairmont, where Frank opened a successful mens' and boys' clothing store on Madison Street. Frank is pictured here at his store in the 1950's.

Marion and Harrison counties. In 1930, Sally married Charles Muniz and moved to Detroit, Michigan. Three years later, Rosalie married Frank Hermosilla. They moved to Fairmont, where Frank soon established a successful men's clothing store. Lorraine, my mother, married Manuel Alvarez, who worked for the Koppers Coal Company's Grant Town mine. They moved to the north end of Fairmont in 1936. In 1939, Pauline became the fourth daughter to marry, as she wed Oscar Alvarez (not related to Manuel). After living in Zeising (Spelter), Oscar and Pauline moved to Florida in the late 1940's.

Following military service, Frank and Manuel moved to Detroit and each married. Andrew never married. Though he worked for a while in Detroit, he was eventually hospitalized for most of his adult life. In 1947, Mary Louise, the youngest daughter, married Rudy Torjak, whose parents were from Budapest. They bought a house across the street from Maria in Clarksburg. Louie lived at home and remained a bachelor. While Louie was the first of his family to graduate from Washington Irving High School, in 1965, he became the first adult sibling to pass away.

Alone in her home after Louie's death, Maria maintained her house, kept chickens, and planted and tended her large vegetable garden as well as her flower beds, bursting with multicolored zinnias grown from saved seeds. During May, roses from her trellis would be cut and taken to the cemetery on Decoration Day to honor deceased Fernández family members.

Throughout her life, Maria served as a midwife to Spanish neighbors and to at least one of her daughters. She kept an immaculate home and remained fairly self-sufficient in her adopted country. Not fond of traveling, Maria preferred to remain in her hillside home. On rare occasions, letters and photographs were exchanged with her family in Spain, or visitors from Asturias brought news. She had one beloved sister, Sabelia, whom she never saw once she left Felguera.

Maria chose only to speak Spanish, knowing or using very few words in English. Over the years, her 15 grandchildren learned to communicate with her by pointing or speaking a few words in Spanish. She was known to them simply as "Wella," from the Spanish word *abuela*, meaning grandmother. Maria could not read nor write, but understood how to make change when needed in business transactions. She preferred to make her own simple ankle-length dresses, long aprons, and work apparel. She grew her own food, baked, or preserved what she needed. She rarely went to downtown Clarksburg for any reason other than necessity.

On most Sundays, there was a gathering at her home of her chil-

Author Raymond Alvarez at age 17 months, with second cousin Aurora Ribero, at a Spanish picnic in Fairmont in 1952.

Following the death of José in 1940, Maria kept boarders, gardened, raised chickens, and stayed busy with her growing family. She is seen here with children and grandchildren in 1949.

dren living nearby in Fairmont or Clarksburg. From time to time, her children visited from Michigan and Florida, and these were welcome reunions, often culminating with a group photo of adults and grandchildren seated on the hillside near her garden. The women busied themselves in the house, the men smoked on the side porch, and young cousins explored the barns. A lively mix of Spanish dialects (Gallego, Castilian) could be heard, while cast-iron skillets of *arroz con pollo* (chicken and rice), *chorizo* sausage, and fried hot peppers simmered. The sausage, obtained from Spanish people in Zeising, consisted of coarsely chopped pork and pork fat, with fennel seeds, garlic, and seasoning added to make *picante* (spicy hot) varieties. Tapas dishes (small appetizers), salad, mounds of homemade bread, and of course, homemade wine brought by Manual Álvarez or Frank Hermosilla rounded out the meal.

Despite her limited ability to converse, Maria had many friends among the women in her multicultural neighborhood, which was referred to as the "League of Nations." Though she never drove a car, she made a handful of trips to Detroit or Miami to see family. Louie brought her to Fairmont for the annual Spanish picnics, or to visit with Lorraine and Rosalie.

In the fall of 1968, Maria suffered a series of health problems and became infirm. She was cared for by Lorraine and Mary Louise until her death on an early spring day in 1970. Her life was simple but complete during the 55 years she resided in West Virginia.

Today, her only living children are Pancho in Michigan and Pauline in Florida. The remaining Fernández descendants are first, second, and third cousins, scattered throughout the United States. A West Virginia reunion of 41 grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren from eight states met in 2008 to celebrate their heritage and reflect on their family's history.

Heritage refers to something that is inherited from one's ancestors. It has several aspects, including traditions, beliefs, and customs taught by one generation to the next, often orally. This is especially significant if it is repeated over a long sequence of time. Heredity is the passing on of traits to offspring. The story of the Fernández family from Clarksburg encompasses all of these.

RAYMOND ALVAREZ, a native of Fairmont and a graduate of West Virginia University, holds a doctorate in health administration from Central Michigan University. Raymond is a frequent contributor to GOLDENSEAL, his most recent contribution appearing in our Fall 2008 issue.

Maria Sariego Guardado Fernández, born in Spain in 1888, lived most of her life in West Virginia, where she died in 1970. She never learned to speak English, read, or drive, but led a full life, surrounded by her family and Spanish-speaking friends. Maria is seen here in 1955.

The Spanish Picnic

By the 1930's, Spanish people from the Clarksburg and Fairmont areas frequently held social gatherings at various homes, or at locations such as Spelter (Zeising) or the Nicholas Corral farm in Grant Town. Several men organized and chartered the Spanish American Recreation Club in Fairmont. Early on, the club offered solidarity during the Spanish Civil War and, in later years, provided a forum to quietly discuss ways to deal with the growing McCarthy era in the 1950's. A nationally publicized "communist trial" at that time, involving a faculty member of Fairmont State College, created an atmosphere that seemed to accept that no foreign-born person could be trusted.

The Spanish American Recreation Club also provided an outlet for celebrating heritage. Eventually, a building was purchased on Quincy Street, near Ogden Avenue, which served as the club's headquarters. In addition to regular meetings, club activities included formal outings. Often, West Virginia families would go to Donora, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, where an organized Spanish community held large events in the summer.

Starting in the late 1930's, a Spanish Picnic became an annual event held at Morris Park in Fairmont. Morris Park sits high atop a hill on the east side of Fairmont and was ideal for gatherings of any size. The WPA had constructed many of the footbridges, retaining walls, and other stonework. The park's main pavilion was the site for the picnics held continuously there until the late 1960's.

The picnics were always scheduled the third Sunday in July, beginning early afternoon and ending in the evening. Pavilions were generally first come, first served, so the task of staking out and holding the main pavilion was given to the teenaged boys, such as Frank Hermosilla, Jr., or Dominic "Babe" Hermosilla, who would be there early on a Sunday morning.

Often, many Spaniards who had left West Virginia to find employment in Michigan or Ohio attended. Serafine Garcia was one of these gentlemen, and he often photographed the gatherings. This summertime event included plenty of food to share, cooked by each of the women. For the children, a cooler held an unlimited supply of ice-cream push-ups (orange and raspberry sherbet), as well as an assortment of Nehi sodas from Hermosilla's Market, owned by Joe Hermosilla and his sons.

Activities were held throughout

Smiling faces abound at a Spanish Picnic at Morris Park in Fairmont in 1954.

with Pennzoil in Grantsville, and Mary Frances tended the home fires. She nurtured their three children and took care of milk cows, chickens, gardens, food preparation, cooking, sewing, and general housekeeping. "She was a powerful worker," Ralph often says about his late wife. One of the things she worked at was bringing the family together around Sunday dinner.

I met Ralph just a year after Mary Frances had died, and the cellar beneath the house was still full of her handiwork — hundreds of glass jars full of food from the garden and the field. The family has had to weed out many of the oldest jars of food, but occasionally they still pull something from the cellar to add to their communal meal. Today it is Pam who prepares Sunday dinner, with help from her sons, Danny and John, and her partner, Gene Reed. But at one time, Pam worked side-by-side with her mother. "Mom always planned the main course," Pam recalls. "And she always made some kind of cake or pie. She'd pack that in Dad's lunch all week."

Daughter Pam Copeland has taken over kitchen duties since her mother passed away in 2002. Here, Pam stirs a pot of homemade chicken and noodles. Also on the stove top are cooked cabbage, boiled potatoes, and sauerkraut.

Though she downplays the amount of work it takes to fix the large meal every week, Pam does rise early on Sunday mornings at her place and begins preparations for the meal in her own kitchen. Sometimes work starts the night before, particularly when she wants to make bread. She prepares a hearty meat dish, sometimes homemade white bread or cornbread, and a variety of vegetable dishes. Pam and Gene have a large garden, where they raise local favorites, such as half-runner beans, tomatoes, cabbage, squash, and peppers. Pam cans and freezes much of what comes out of the garden, and the fruits of those labors end up on the Sunday dinner table throughout the year, too.

Pam cans and freezes much of what comes out of the garden, and the fruits of those labors end up on the Sunday dinner table throughout the year.

Take the cabbage, for example. Pam makes sauerkraut from the tight, pale green heads, but she freezes large quantities of cabbage, as well. She blanches the leaves "to get the green out," rinses them under cold water, sprinkles them with a little sugar, and stores them in plastic bags in the freezer. At Sunday dinner in mid-July, the kraut and the frozen cabbage — both worked up the previous summer — make an appearance on the table, seasoned with fried bacon and its drippings.

Much of their Sunday dinner fare is raised locally. Lowell's garden at the homeplace and his brother John's garden at his home in Cairo likewise help to feed the crowd that gathers. Depending on the season, Lowell and John pile fresh vegetables on the kitchen counter, and Pam prepares what she can for dinner — fried squash, cucumber salad, sliced tomatoes. What is left over goes home with family members and friends. The last time I visited, Lowell gave me a large Ziploc bag of fresh onions.

Ralph and his sons butcher hogs and beef cattle in the fall or winter of every year. Last year, they butchered seven hogs, with help from extended family and friends. "We don't buy much meat around here," Lowell notes. Pam's cellar, like that of her mother, contains a whole shelf full of jars of preserved meat, which come in handy when

Homegrown squash, onions, cucumbers, and tomatoes from the garden of Lowell Davis.

she needs to stretch a meal.

Though the weekly gathering usually involves immediate family and close friends, at times friends of friends and their relatives show up unannounced. Pam recalls one Sunday when she pulled up to her dad's place and discovered a driveway full of cars and 27 people looking forward to dinner.

"It was a little hectic," she says. That was one of those times when a jar or two of beef chunks — hastily retrieved from Mary Frances' cellar — came in handy. "You just have to heat it up in a pan," Pam says. "It makes excellent gravy. We always have a kettle of potatoes full, too." If nothing else, there are enough meat and potatoes to feed everyone. When I was there, a friend of the family had brought her daughter and grandchildren. Pam wasn't sure that the bag of corn Lowell had brought would be enough, so she broke the cobs in half to make sure everyone got a piece. "It always works out," Pam says.

Though dinner is usually ready by 1:00, most people show up earlier. Ralph's sons and some of his grandchildren come in the morning and mow, weed, sweep, and tinker with machinery. The Sunday I visited, Pam's son, Danny Copeland, worked at rehabilitating his grandmother's ferns, which had gotten peaked in their pots. He took them to the stoop on her old washhouse and rinsed their roots, then carefully transplanted them in fresh soil and set them back

Helping out around the farm is part of the weekly ritual at the Davis homeplace. Here, son Lowell Davis pulls weeds from the flower beds.

on a stand on the porch. Even Ralph's great-granddaughter, six-year-old Rylee Copeland, did her part by helping to clean up grass clippings.

While others are working outdoors, Pam is thoroughly ensconced in the kitchen, stirring soup beans, whipping potatoes, slicing bread, and setting plates, napkins, and utensils out on the kitchen bar. Usually by the time Pam has dinner ready, everyone has begun to gather on the porch or mill through the kitchen. Pam always fills a plate for her father first. "Dad's never had to serve himself from the stove," she says. Ralph usually eats at the bar in the kitchen with his grandson, John Copeland, and his son, Lowell. Gene often takes his plate into the den and catches NASCAR on TV. Others eat on the porch. "Cleaning that dining table off every time gets to be a lot of work," says Pam, with a nod to the dining room, just off the kitchen.

Dinnertime! Ralph Davis digs into a Sunday meal at the kitchen table of his Ritchie County home, flanked by grandson John Copeland (at left) and Lowell Davis.

Things are a little more casual today than they were when Mary Frances was at the helm. "Mom always had the dining table set and the food put in bowls on the table," Pam remembers. "She wouldn't like to know that we're serving ourselves out of kettles on the stove now!" But it's certain that Mary Frances would be happy that her family is still gathering every Sunday, the way she taught them to and the way she was taught as a girl by her own mother.

Pam waits until everyone else has served themselves before she finally makes her way to the stove to fill up her own plate. She eats in the living room in an easy chair across the room from her dad, who is relaxing and letting his own meal digest. When she is done, she returns to the kitchen, pulls out a stack of Tupperware trays with lids, and begins to portion out Ralph's meals for the week. "Mom always said, 'You have to take care of your dad,'" Pam recalls. After reflecting a minute, she adds, "I really do [Sunday dinner] for Dad."

The meal and the relaxation afterwards are hard-won rewards for a week's worth of work and for their morning's labor at the farm.

But Ralph isn't the only one who benefits from the ritual. For others, the meal and the relaxation afterwards are hard-won rewards for a week's worth of work and for their morning's labor at the farm. For Lowell, who sometimes works six days a week at his paving job, Sunday is often the only day he has to tend to the farm that he and his brother have already inherited from their father and to eat heartily of familiar, homemade food. When dinner is ready, he piles his plate high with soup beans, cooked cabbage, chicken and noodles, several stalks of onion from his garden, a slice of Pam's homemade bread — slathered in butter — cucumber

After everyone has eaten their fill, Pam prepares trays from the leftovers. She leaves these in the refrigerator for her father to eat until the following Sunday, when the process begins anew.

salad (with cucumbers from his garden), and a couple of pieces of corn on the cob and a glass of iced tea. The first Sunday I ever dined with the Davises, Lowell teasingly asked me what I'd done to earn the meal I was eagerly helping myself to at the stove. I certainly hadn't been paving I-79 between Clarksburg and Fairmont all week, nor had I been weed-eating around the flower beds, mowing, or brush-hogging. I had made an apple pie for the occasion, though it seemed a meager contribution in comparison.

After the meal, everyone relaxes into the pleasure of a full belly. Lowell reclines into a cushioned chair on the front porch and leans his face into his left hand. There he dozes lightly before going out to his big garden to stake tomatoes. Pam rocks on the porch swing. Ralph takes his usual position at the far end of the porch, where he can survey the lawn and the drive. A couple of grandchildren throw a football in the yard. Rylee drives her miniature John Deere riding mower until the battery begins to fail. Danny starts up the four-wheeler and invites several of the youngest visitors on a ride down Laurel Run.

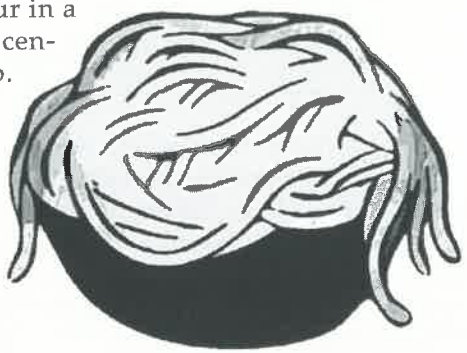
Though I never had the pleasure of meeting Mary Frances, I sense her presence every time I come to Ralph's place — in her African violets and ferns that her family lovingly tends, in her wide array of ceramic collectables that decorate the house, and in the meal that continues to bring her family together every week. Not only does their act of gathering every Sunday honor her memory, the food that graces the table is a material manifestation of the skill and knowledge she passed on to her daughter. Before her mother died, Pam asked her how to make several of her dishes so that she could write down the steps. "Mom never used a recipe," Pam says. "So I asked her to tell me how to make the things I hadn't learned by heart." Like most good cooks, Mary Frances had a sense for amounts and procedures, rather than exact measurements. "She'd

Taste for Yourself

The following is Mary Frances Davis' recipe for egg noodles, as she dictated it to Pam Copeland several years ago. These are the noodles Pam made for Sunday dinner in mid-July and which author Katherine Roberts had the pleasure of sampling.

Egg Noodles

Place two or three cups of flour in a mixing bowl. Make a well in the center. Add two or three eggs, ¼-tsp. salt, and ¼-tsp. cream of tartar. Add ¼-cup water or milk. Mix. If too sticky, add more flour. Roll out on floured board and let dry out. Roll up and cut to suit your own preference. Roll out [noodles] like pie dough. Boil and serve.



When many of her peers have given up the Sunday dinner tradition, Pam Copeland makes sure it remains vital.

just say, 'Put a little salt in it,' or 'Add some sugar.' And I'd have to say, 'How much, Mom? A half teaspoon? A quarter teaspoon?'"

As we cleaned up in the kitchen after dinner, family friend Tammi Oliver remembered fondly the Sunday dinners at her grandmother's house when she was a girl. "I really miss that," she says. "It's why I love to come here so much."

The passage of time takes away members of our families who nurture practices that teach core values — hard work, self-sufficiency, and generosity, to name a few. These are the individuals, like Mary Frances Davis, who garden, put up their own food, and gather family. It is up to subsequent generations to make sure these practices persist, and it often falls to one or two people to carry on a cultural and family tradition, such as Sunday dinner. It takes effort and commitment, particularly as more and more outside interests compete for time and attention.

When many of her peers have given up the Sunday dinner tradition, Pam Copeland makes sure it remains vital. She foregoes sleeping late, shopping and eating out in Parkersburg, and generally "doing her own thing" on Sundays, and instead devotes her time and energy to preparing a big meal for her family.

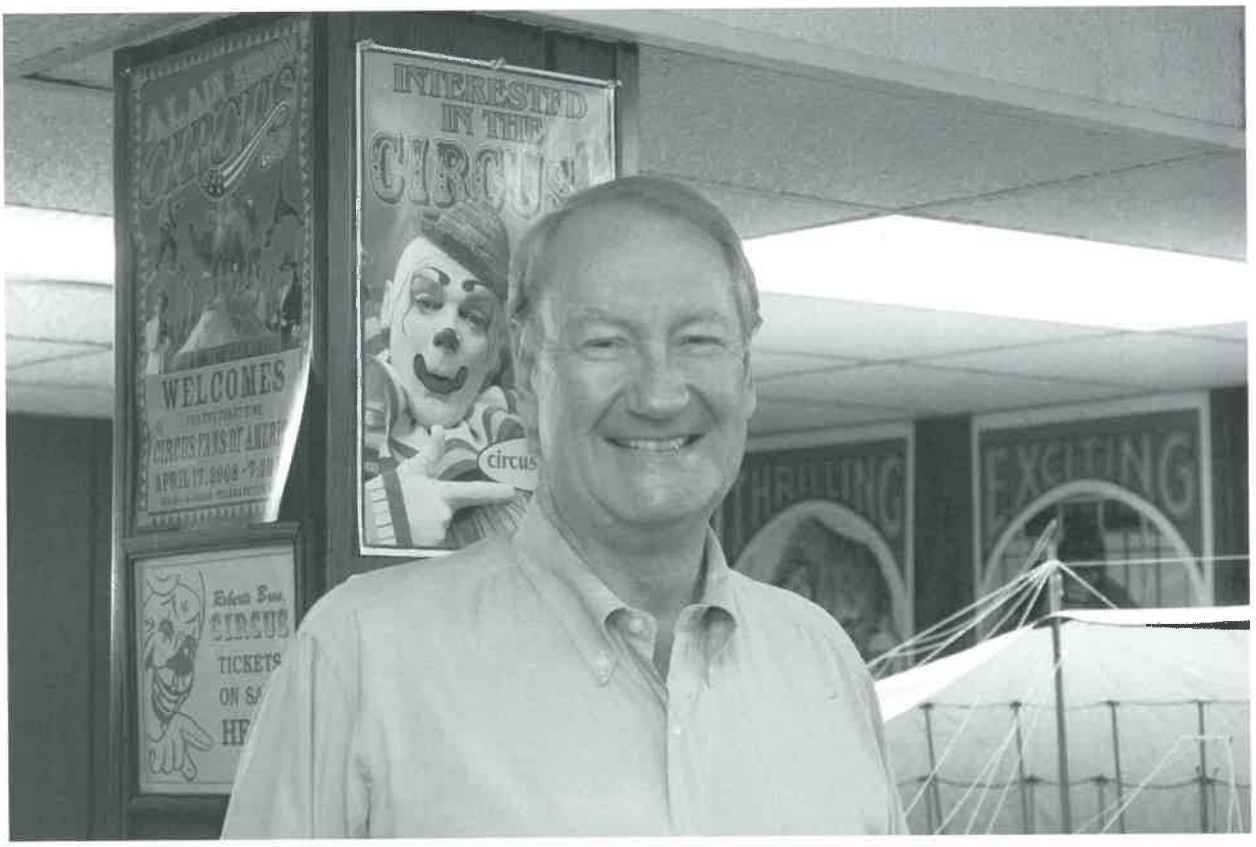
KATHERINE ROBERTS grew up in Parkersburg. She holds a doctorate in folklore and cultural anthropology from Indiana University and teaches folklore and American studies at the University of North Carolina. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appears in our Summer 2005 issue.

Ralph Davis, members of his extended family, and family friends on a Sunday in 2008. Standing, from the left, are Pam (Davis) Copeland, Ralph, Danny Copeland, Gene Reed, Tammi Oliver, and John Davis, Sr. In front are Rylee and John Copeland.

CIRCUS!

Life Under the Big Top

By Mort Gamble



Mort Gamble, a lifelong circus enthusiast, at home in Charleston. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Once upon a time, the mere mention of the word "circus" inspired thrills and excitement beyond measure. On barns and fences, in store windows, and wrapped around telephone poles, posters portrayed attractions that you just had to see. Circus Day was coming at you! A holiday on wheels. Trucks, railroad cars, wagons loaded with the strange, the odd, the curious, the beautiful, the sensational, the unforgettable — a caravan with exotic people and animals that invaded a town for one day only, hijacked your sense of the normal, the routine, then evaporated like a dream.

On a warm May afternoon in the late 1950's, my mother, little brother, Dave, and I waited expectantly on blue wooden bleachers in our hometown of Moorefield for the matinee performance of the Beers & Barnes Circus to begin. For weeks, we had stared at the poster on a nearby shed — a grinning clown pointing a gloved finger at the happy date of arrival. Finally, the circus had rolled into Moorefield, materializing on a nondescript, vacant field on the south end of town. On what was suddenly the most important real estate in the world, the show beckoned with mysterious tents and colorful banners. The din of the generator truck mixed with the smells of spring grass under canvas, fresh popcorn, and dusty elephants. Within hours, it would all vanish again.

A candy vendor, or "butcher" in circus parlance, limped through the tent hawking Sno-Cones, warming up the audience, and advising of a recent calamity.

"We had a little trouble a few days ago," he announced ominously, eyes flashing, with a hint of combat fatigue in his tone. "The big snake got loose."

Midway through a transaction with the butcher, my mother seemed skeptical of his yarn and even more wary of his stained hands. She selected the treats herself.

But I believed. To a seven-year-old growing up in rural West Virginia 50 years ago, a traveling big-top circus was just about the most exhilarating enterprise you could see. Like many children, I was marked indelibly by the pure sensory joy of the circus. With Tinkertoys, a bandana, and household string, I soon created a model of a big-top tent. My parents and grandparents dutifully took

Circus Kirk, ready for business, in the 1970's. Photograph by Mort Gamble.

Mort Gamble ran off and joined the circus in 1973. He traveled throughout West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland with Circus Kirk for the next two summers, mostly managing the circus concession stand. He is seen here with one of the circus trucks in 1973. Photographer unknown.

me to circus movies, like *The Greatest Show on Earth* and *The Big Circus*. Each time we visited a show, I would come home to my miniature version, sit for hours, and dream. I read book after book on the evolution of the American circus, from overland wagon troupes and gigantic productions transported by rail to the smaller truck shows that still played the "high-grass" towns like Moorefield. I learned that the circus was a different world, with traditions, a social structure, and language all its own. I found myself stepping closer and closer to the center ring.

Meanwhile, I pursued a more academic interest in circuses. At Moorefield High and later, after I transferred to Fairmont Senior High School, my teachers invited me to write essays and make presentations about my interest,

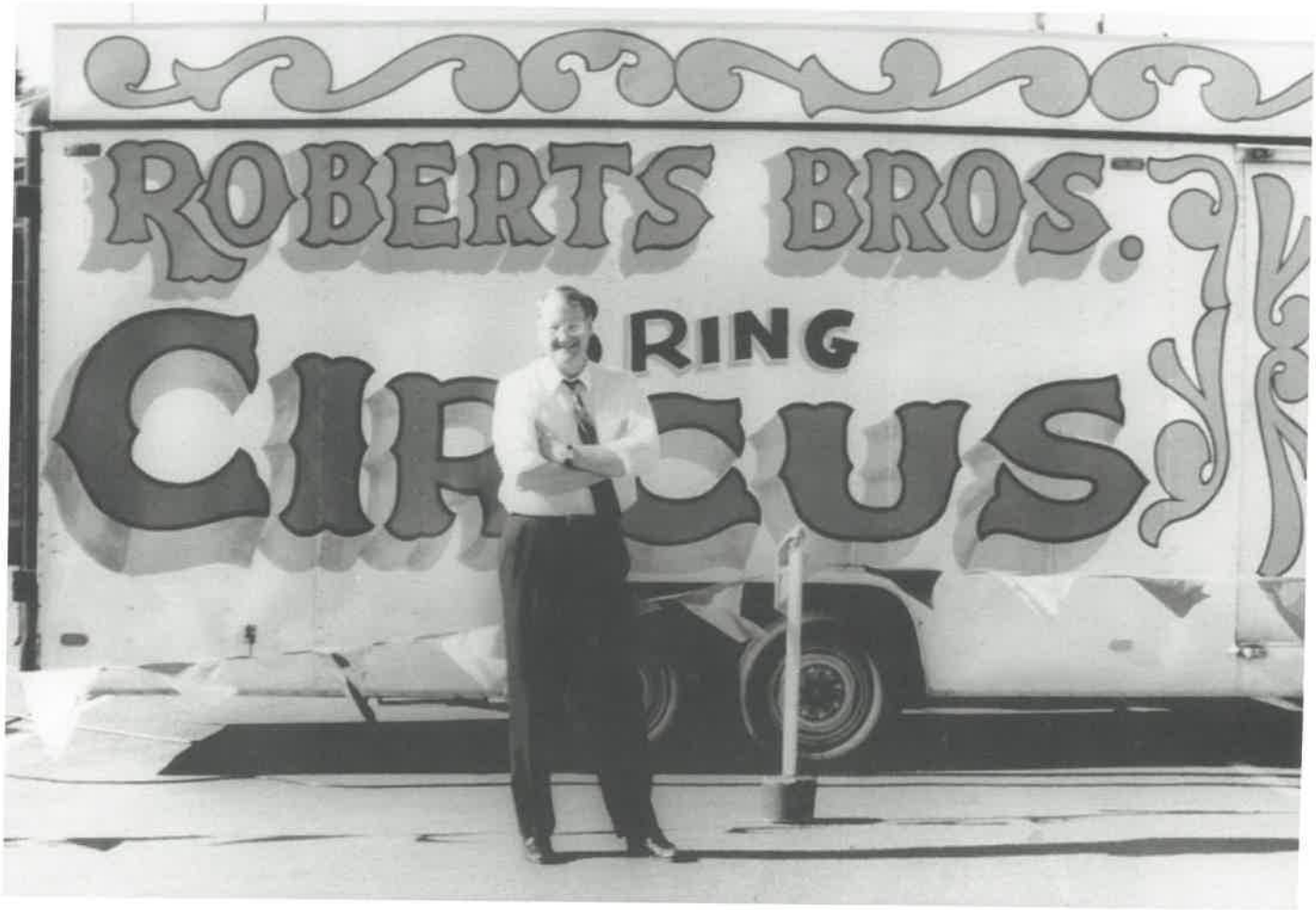
An all-student production, Circus Kirk attracted young people who sought adventure and a different way of life. Here, performer Darrell Miller rehearses between shows in 1974. Photograph by Mort Gamble.

ing years, I had seen hundreds of performances, but the circus this evening somehow seemed like my first. I had brought the show — this company of over 50 human and animal performers — to my town. People were laughing and applauding, and I was proud of the circus for doing what it did best. I looked over the heads of the audience to the far end of the big top, and my eyes reached back to Circus Kirk, now gone, and the crowds we used to have sitting then on some of the same grandstand equipment that had found its way through the twists and turns of circus commerce to the Roberts Bros. big top tonight.

In the center ring, the head clown was holding up a rubber chicken, the audience members laughing as if they had never seen it all before — and maybe, after years of TV sit-coms, they hadn't. The clown recognized me as the local promoter, and he caught my eye. Stepping out of character for the briefest of seconds, he stared up at me and mouthed "Thank you." Thank you for making this a big day for the circus.

I stayed until the moms and dads bought the last of the cotton candy, the men with rough hands rolled up the tent, and the brightly painted trucks pulled out, one by one. I yearned to go with them, one more time, as if still obedient to the ways and commands of the circus. But I couldn't. Not tonight. It was their show. And as someone once said of circus life, tomorrow — the only day that mattered now — would take care of itself.

MORT GAMBLE was born in Cumberland, Maryland, and grew up in Moorefield. He earned a graduate degree from West Virginia University in higher education leadership and currently is assistant to the president at Bethany College. Mort has written articles about the circus for *The Many Worlds of Circus*, *The White Tops*, and *The Little Circus Wagon*. Mort resides in Charleston with his wife, Mary Elizabeth. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



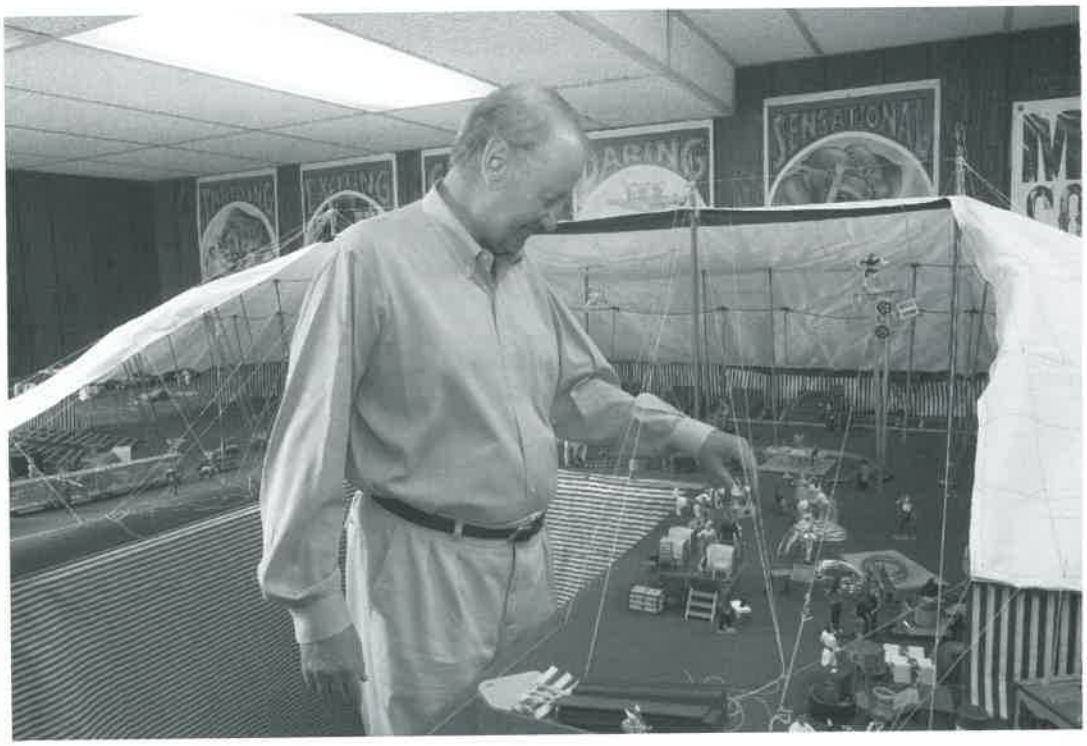
The circus was still in his blood in 1994 when Mort Gamble signed on to promote Roberts Bros. Circus in Fairmont. He is seen here with a satisfied smile — the show drew a capacity crowd. Photographer unknown.

Mort Gamble's Private Circus

Author Mort Gamble is a lifelong circus fan. Not only has he worked in the circus; promoted circus performances; and researched, taught, and written about the history of the American circus, he has built a half-inch-scale model in his basement.

The Mort Gamble Cole Bros. Circus is a complex and detailed replica, patterned in part after the 1950's Clyde Beatty Circus. Mort started building his model as a boy in 1957 and continues to add to and modify it.

Culture and History photographer Michael Keller took these recent pictures of a man and his rather extensive hobby.



Mort Gamble adjusts some performers under the big top of his massive model circus, located in the basement of his Charleston home.

Miniature giraffes beg for treats from customers, who come in all shapes and sizes.

A patron strikes a dramatic pose when encountering these miniature elephants. The Mort Gamble Cole Bros. Circus features 20 pachyderms.

Photoessay by Michael Keller

An aerialist swings gracefully over the center ring under the big top.

Mort's wife, Mary Elizabeth, had this banner made for Mort's 50th birthday celebration in 2001. His mother's maiden name was Cole, so the name of his model circus honors both sides of his family.

Mort Gamble holds a miniature likeness of himself — the owner of the show.

Hard Work and Music

Fiddler Elmer Rich at his Westover home in 2001. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

Fiddler Elmer Rich

By Mark Crabtree

"A person will never amount to anything toting a fiddle around under their arm," Eunice Rich told her teenaged son Elmer in the 1930's. While Eunice wasn't often wrong, she might have missed the mark with that particular comment.

Otis Pugh was a friend and neighbor of the Rich family at River Seam and became one of the early settlers in Arthurdale. When a music festival was planned for the summer of 1936 in Arthurdale, Pugh was one of the dance callers. Pugh arranged for Sanford Rich; Harry Rich; and Harry's sons, Harry Junior "June," Rensel, and Elmer, to provide the music. Eleanor Roosevelt was there and participated in the square dance.

There was also a fiddle contest. Just as he came on stage to play for the contest, Elmer recalls, the tuning pegs on his fiddle slipped. "I spit on them to make them stick, and tuned them up right there," he says. He played well enough to receive second place. His father, Harry, took first place. Elmer remembers that Mrs. Roosevelt pinned the ribbons on the winners of the fiddle contest.

Elmer quit school after finishing junior high. He started to attend University High School but found it didn't suit him. "I went in the front door and on out the back," he says. He started working as a farm hand for his brother-in-law, Everett Trickett, and Trickett's grandfather, John Hawkins. "I worked on his farm for a couple of years. Drove his horses, put in his crops, cut his hay, milked his cows, separated the milk. Then I worked up at another place there. Fellow name of Brock — he was my first cousin. He was working at the mines but kept a few cows and wanted me to milk the cows for him. I was doing the milking for about two dollars a week. They kept me pretty busy."

Elmer began courting Sylvia Miller around that time. Elmer's family had moved from their old home near River Seam to a house they built on a hill along Indian Creek Road. They attended nearby Lynch Chapel United Methodist Church, and Elmer met Sylvia there.

Elmer recalls, "Well, I was kind of looking around at the girls at the time. I'd borrow the old man's car — I was driving by then. Every

Elmer played dances regularly with figure caller Ross Litman at the Marilla Recreation Center in Morgantown. This 1950's photograph shows, from the left, Ross Litman, Denny Raber on banjo, Elmer, Willis Poling on guitar, and Pete Wilkerson on piano. Photographer unknown.

Sunday, they'd walk to church and I'd take them home — her and her mother."

Elmer and Sylvia went together for nearly three years. By the time they married in 1941, he'd found work with the Monongahela Railway. He'd heard from a neighbor who worked for the railroad that they were going to hire some men. "He said, 'You be down there in the morning.' I went, and they told two of us we needed to go to Brownsville, [Pennsylvania], for a physical, and if you passed, you'd go to work in the morning," Elmer recalls.

"I came home and got Pap's car and drove up there, about 80 miles. Went down to the doctor's office down at the station. That other fellow that went up, it seemed like he was trying to get in ahead of me to get examined, and he did. I found out later that he'd have been ahead of me in seniority if he hired on first. He knew that — his dad was a railroader, you see. Well, as it turned out, he didn't pass, but I did. I worked from then on, hardly missed a day for 40 years. I was the youngest one there when I started and the oldest when I retired."

Elmer at the 1986 Monongalia County Fair at Westover Park, holding his first-place trophy. Photographer unknown.

The Monongahela Railway ran from Brownsville, Pennsylvania, to Fairmont, and up to the Loveridge mine near Paw Paw, Elmer says. Elmer hired on in the car shop in Maidsville, doing repairs on the railroad's rolling stock.

"I started work there as a car helper," he says. "You had to do a lot of blacksmithing work then. I was lucky enough I got with Jim Cooley from Star City. He'd been a regular blacksmith there before I started, but he was a regular car man then. All the car men did their own blacksmithing work. I was his car helper for a while, and he got me started with blacksmithing, like making those flat iron sill steps on the corners of the cars that get torn up.

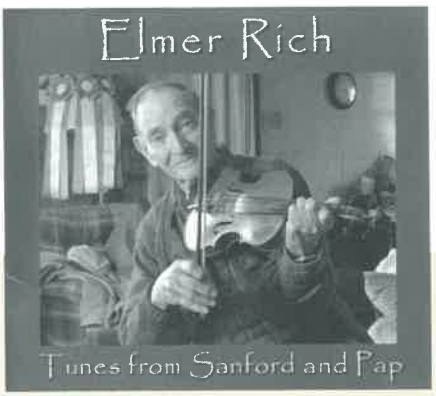
"We heated in that old coal forge. We had an air line there you used for testing the cars, so we used that air for the forge. It would blow the coal until it got hot enough. That was a lot easier than [using] a bellows. I was on the other side with a sledge hammer, helping Cooley. We had a vise there we'd put the iron in and work it around however we wanted it. Take a sledge and pound it around. ...

"I worked about three years of that and then got promoted to car man. A car man can be a car inspector, or he can be a car repairman. From there on up you could be a gang leader, or boss. I bossed a job for three years before the shop closed up down here."

Hear the Music

The fiddling of Elmer Rich is featured on a new CD recording from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. Titled *Tunes from Sanford and Pap* (AHR-029), this recording was made in 2008 and 2009 by Mark Crabtree and Tom Gibson in an effort to document fiddle tunes Elmer recalled from his youth in Monongalia County. As the title indicates, the majority of these tunes were learned from fiddlers Harry and Sanford Rich, Elmer's father and uncle, respectively. Some are quite obscure, while others reflect the common repertoire of dance fiddlers in northern West Virginia during the 1930's and '40's.

In addition, the CD also includes four tunes recorded by Charles Seeger at Arthurdale in 1936 and played by the Rich family, featuring Harry and Sanford on fiddles and 16-year-old Elmer on mandolin. Among these titles is the original recording of "Colored Aristocracy."



Tunes from Sanford and Pap sells for $15, plus tax and shipping, and is available from the Augusta Heritage Center at www.augustaheritage.com or by phone at (304)637-1209.

Elmer spent 11 years as a road crew boss, responding to emergency and derailment calls anywhere on the line.

"I remember one time up here at Dupont," he recalls, "we had 22 cars come off. They were just like a junkyard. No track or nothing. Part of the rails was over on the river bank. A lot of the cars just folded up like a deck of cards. ...

"I went on a lot of those durned wrecks. I hate 'em. You get stuck on them. I went out one afternoon and worked all night, all the next day, and all the next night. When I came home that next day, I couldn't hardly walk."

Elmer quit the railroad in 1980, retiring at age 61. "I'd have worked longer, but I could retire because I had 30 years in," he says. "I had enough — more than enough."

Elmer continued to play music through his years at the railroad, fiddling for a lot of dances at Marilla Recreation Center, with Ross Litman as the figure caller there for many years. Sylvia liked to dance and would often accompany Elmer. After their son, Clifford, was born in 1953, Sylvia didn't like going out to dance as much and eventually asked Elmer to give them up, too.

Fiddle contests then became Elmer's main musical activity, other than playing music with his family. He didn't travel far for contests, but he was a force to be reckoned with in his area. Elmer and Woody Simmons were friendly rivals for many of the contests, often with one taking first and the other second place. [See "Woody Simmons: Recollections of a Randolph County Fiddler," by Michael Kline; July-September 1979.] Elmer still enjoys giving a play-by-play retelling of those old contests with Woody, Glen Smith, Lefty Shafer, and the other great old West Virginia fiddle players.

During the last years that his wife was alive, Elmer didn't play much music and had mostly stopped entering fiddle contests. After Sylvia's death in 1999, however, friends and family members encouraged him to get out and play music again. Elmer had never completely quit playing, and his skills came back quickly. Friends encouraged him to enter some of the larger fiddle contests around the state, and so he did. In 2000, Elmer won first place senior fiddle at the Vandalia Gathering in Charleston (and again the following two years), first place at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival contest senior division at Clifftop, and first place senior division at the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins.

Still active and enthusiastic, Elmer plays monthly at the Black Bear Burritos restaurant in Morgantown. He is seen in this recent photograph, playing with Josh Wanstreet on fiddle, Corey Bonasso on bass, and Keith Ross on guitar. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

He hasn't slowed down since. For several years, Elmer played weekly with a varying group of musicians at the West Virginia Brewing Company in Morgantown. He continues to play at least once a month at the Black Bear Burritos restaurant in Morgantown, and is the central figure at a weekly jam session at the Westside Senior Center in Westover.

That jam brings together a diverse group of musicians, including Elmer's sister, Mary Toothman, playing the hammered dulcimer. In addition to playing the standard old-time tunes, the Westover jam session musicians are learning a "new" repertoire of tunes that Elmer and Mary remember their family playing in their youth. Occasionally, Elmer still has a tune pop into his head that he hasn't thought of for many years.

While Elmer places a high value on his family's tradition of music, he has always enjoyed learning new music and continues to do so. Whenever Elmer pulls out his fiddle, you never know whether you'll hear some ancient fiddle tune handed down through the generations, or the latest piece he has learned from a recording. Either way, you know it's gonna be good.

MARK CRABTREE is a photographer and freelance writer living in Morgantown, with family roots in Brooke County. His photographs have appeared in publications including *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* (London). Mark is a frequent GOLDENSEAL contributor, his most recent contribution appearing in our Winter 2006 issue.

By Mike Seeger

Elmer Rich and

In 1936, Elmer Rich and his family traveled to Arthurdale, Preston County, to participate in a musical event. As the accompanying story indicates, Elmer took second place in the fiddle contest there, and the Rich family provided music for square dancing. They also met Eleanor Roosevelt.

In addition, the Rich family recorded at least 10 numbers for collector Charles Seeger. These field recordings were later put on deposit with the Library of Congress. Musician Mike Seeger, late son of Charles Seeger and half-brother to folk singer Pete Seeger, grew up listening to these recordings. As a young man, Mike was a member of the influential string band the New Lost City Ramblers, key players in the folk music revival of the 1950's and '60's.

GOLDENSEAL asked Mike to reflect on these 1936 recordings and the role they played in his early musical life. —ed.

In 1941, I was about eight years old. I was living in the far suburbs of Washington, D.C., when my parents, Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger, first let me use the family record player. It was a simple box with one speaker, a heavy pick-up arm with a cactus needle that had to be replaced or sharpened every record-play or two, and a variable-speed turntable that my mother used to slow down the records so she could catch all the subtleties of old-time singers and fiddle players. I learned how to sharpen the cactus needle, would set the needle down on the edge of the record, and marveled at the sounds.

Our family record collection at that time consisted of a few commercial old-time blues and string-band records and about 100 aluminum disc copies of field recordings made by well-known folk music collectors, like John and Alan Lomax, and also by lesser-known collectors, such as Sidney Robertson Cowell, and a few by my father. We didn't have a radio, though we sang a lot and our parents played piano and guitar. Hearing all that great music on those 100 discs was a revelation.

Many of the discs were made as part of government efforts to revitalize local musical life and foster everyday people's pride in their traditional heritage — this was during the tough economics of the mid- to late 1930's. A few musical community organizers were sent out to identify craftspersons and musicians in a community who would help arrange programs to strengthen such artistic expressions.

My dad was head of one of these projects — the music unit of the

Eleanor Roosevelt dances the Virginia Reel at Arthurdale in 1938. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia University Libraries, West Virginia and Regional History Collection.

"Colored Aristocracy"

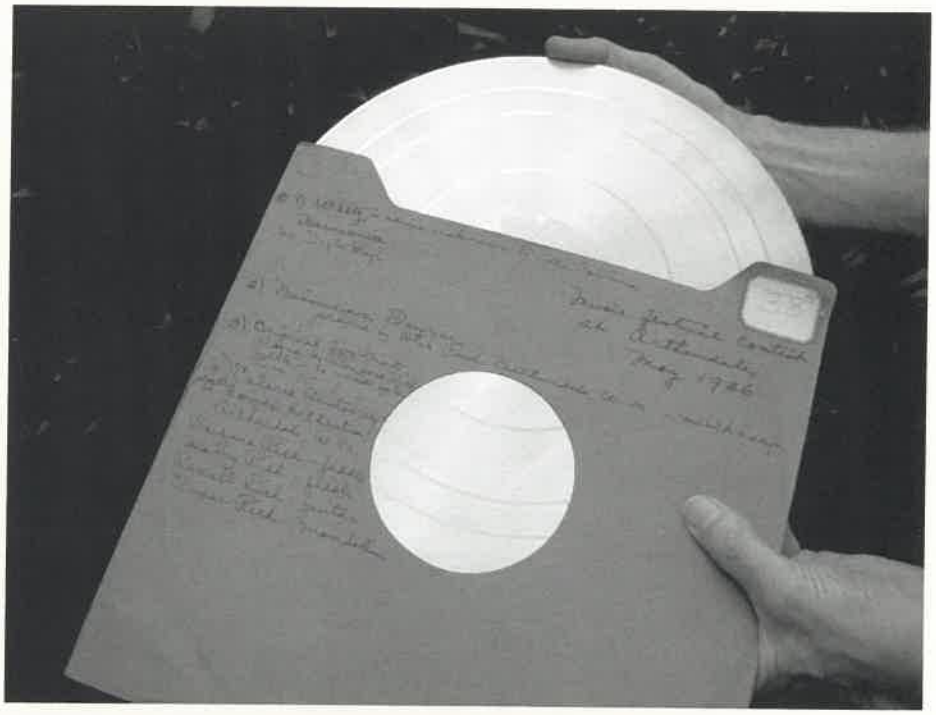
Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administration. One of his field workers, Fletcher Collins, arranged a fiddle contest at Arthurdale, which attracted the Rich family. My dad recorded several pieces by the Riches at the event in 1936, including the first known recording of the now widely played tune "Colored Aristocracy." It featured Sanford and Harry Rich on fiddles, Rensel Rich on guitar, and Elmer Rich on mandolin.

As a pre-teen, one of my personal "top 10" was that recording of "Colored Aristocracy." I loved it. But now I sometimes try to figure out why. Firstly, the combination of the melody and chords is unusual and appealing. The way most people play it now is based on a recording made by the New Lost City Ramblers in 1958, when we put new chords to the tune. It's been through many changes since, including a change in the melody. Sometimes it's played on the banjo; more often it is used as a contradance tune.

But for me, the sound of the original recording is special. The fiddle is way out front and very clear. Sanford Rich was a truly fine fiddler. The other instruments, second fiddle, guitar, and mandolin, were indistinguishable from one another and became a powerful, mysteriously ambiguous harmonic rhythm foundation, full of life, lift, and dynamic effect. Like many of the old-time bands, they wound up each repetition of the tune as if it were the end of the performance or dance, then they'd start another repetition with gusto. You'd have to dance or at least have some serious foot-tapping with this music.

When the New Lost City Ramblers recorded the tune first in 1958 and again in 1996, we wondered whether or not to use the original name, whether it might be objectionable to some listeners. We came to understand that the term "colored" for many years had the same connotation as "black" or "people of color" does today. We hoped we were doing the right thing in the long run. The tune has since been recorded by several black players, all using the original name.

The origin of this tune is unclear. There's a late minstrel-era piece of sheet music from about 1900 by the same name, but it isn't this melody. There are many ways that this ragtime tune, probably from about that same time, could have acquired its name. Someone who had seen the sheet music might have either deliberately or otherwise given this name to their own tune or to another tune that had no name. It's possible that Sanford could have composed the tune. I asked Elmer Rich about this, and he didn't know where the tune came from. So we'll just have to wonder and be thankful to the Rich family for our pleasure as we play and dance to their tune, "Colored Aristocracy."



Aluminum disc recording of the Rich family at Arthurdale in 1936. Photograph by Mike Seeger.

The original 1936 field recording of "Colored Aristocracy" is included on the new CD recording titled, The New Lost City Ramblers: 50 Years — Where Do You Come From? Where Do You Go? *(Smithsonian Folkways SFW-40180). For more information, visit www.folkways.si.edu or phone 1-888-FOLKWAYS.*

MIKE SEEGER was a traditional musician and performer, who home made his home in Lexington, Virginia. Sadly, Mike passed away as this issue was going to press. This was his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"Bad Luck Hit Us Again"

By Betty Jo Giudice

Josie Perkins Walton was born in 1894 and died in 1963. Her life, from the time she married James Floyd Walton in 1908 until a year before her death, is chronicled in the following story. It is taken from her journals, with the author making few changes. Josie's own words are italicized.

In their 40 years of marriage, Josie and Floyd moved 49 times and had nine children. Life was very hard, but they made the best of it. Hardships were met with tenacity and dedication, and it becomes evident as we read what a strong woman she was. Josie was a lifelong resident of West Virginia, mostly in Greenbrier County, and no one could say anything bad about the state without hearing how she felt.

Josie married James Floyd Walton on March 20, 1908, in Covington, Virginia. She was only 14, but in those days it was not unusual to marry young.

Josie Perkins wed Floyd Walton in 1908, when she was 14 years old. They were married for 40 years, until Floyd's death in 1948. During that time, the couple had nine children and moved 49 times. This picture was taken on their wedding day.

Josie Walton's Journal

We went to housekeeping at the Toll Gate House. We had a step stove, an iron pot and tea kettle, an old tin coffee pot, a fry pan, a few dishes and silverware, two beds, an Old King heater, Grandma Walton's walnut drop leaf table, and two old chairs. We also had 10 pounds of flour, some coffee, sugar, soda, baking powder, a little piece of bacon, and a few beans. We had gathered a little firewood from Grandpa's farm, and we were comfortable.

Floyd went to work at Boone Farm at $1.25 for a 10-hour day, and we were very, very happy to be by ourselves. We didn't know much about making a garden, but we made one the best we could.

They lived there and got along well for four months, when Floyd had the opportunity to go to work on Colonel Driscoll's farm for $1 a day. The house rent was free, and they could get what vegetables they needed out of the truck patch. By December, Colonel Driscoll didn't have any work for Floyd, and they had to move again. Floyd went to work for Lahma Sarver on his farm for 75 cents a day.

During the winter, we had no rent to pay or fuel to buy. There was plenty of wood for the cutting, and the Sarvers gave us some milk and sold us butter and eggs cheap. There was just our first-born child, Hughie, and me to eat, because Floyd got his meals at the Sarvers and left before daylight and got back after dark. Gee, but I got lonesome sometimes.

Floyd's brother, Acie, arrived on March 20, 1909, to help put a roof on the back shed so they could have more room. When it was finished, they went to visit Josie's mother, who lived about a mile away in Ronceverte. When they got to the top of the hill, they looked back and saw that their house was on fire.

Everything burned except four chicken hens and a pig. We went on to Mother's, where the baby and I stayed for a few days. Floyd went back to the Sarvers to work and stayed some time. Mrs. Sarver sent me a suit of hers and enough material to make Hughie a dress.

They sold the pig and four hens and took what wages Floyd had to buy train tickets to Stanaford to work at the mines. They stayed with Floyd's older brother, Luther, and Josie helped Luther's wife, Annie, care for the five children and two boarders in return for her and Hughie's board. They couldn't get any money from the mines for a month but could cut scrip and buy at the company store.

A family was leaving the mines the last part of April, and we got enough money from Luther on Floyd's work to buy a cook stove, a few dishes, some cooking things, springs and mattresses, a cook table, and four pieces of chairs. We didn't have a bed, but we found a few pieces of two-by-fours and made a post-and-rail. We got some boards for slats and put the springs and mattress on it. I bought two pillows at the company store, and Annie loaned us a couple of blankets. While we were there Hughie, took cholera morbus. The doctor said it was the water, and we had to move again.

Floyd Elmer Walton, the fourth of nine children, in about 1914. Like two of his brothers, Elmer died young.

So, they sold everything they had and moved back to Ronceverte to Josie's mother's home. Floyd went back to work for Mr. Sarver, and this time they moved into a little one-room shack that was in his yard. Mr. Sarver and Floyd were going to build a kitchen on the back of the shack.

James Floyd Walton was born in 1886 and lived a hard life. He farmed, timbered, mined, did road work, built houses, and performed various other jobs in his 62 years. The date of this photograph is unknown.

When Hughie got better, I took her to my sister Mandie's in Ronceverte until the kitchen was finished. Mandie had two sick children and a boy who was just starting school. He had to have someone to take him to school, so that job became mine. I also had to walk to the top of Livesay Hill twice a day to milk and help with the work. I didn't mind.

Josie wanted some money for Christmas that year, so her mother went to Ronceverte to take orders for walnuts from the stores. After the milking was done, Josie carried Hughie a mile to her mother's, where she could be watched. Josie and Nellie Howard went on another mile, where there were loads of black walnuts piled up. Her stepfather took a wagon and filled it to haul back. He sold them and gave her a share. The week before Christmas, they sold more and got some much-needed clothes. She was able to buy a few things she needed to make Christmas nicer.

In April of 1910, Floyd had a chance for a much better job. They moved to Mr. Burroughs' farm, where Floyd worked as a handyman. The house, garden, and fuel were free, and Floyd got more money. Josie went to work housecleaning for Mrs. Burroughs and made quite a nice little sum. They raised a good garden, and things were looking up for them.

In the middle of August, Floyd lifted something and ruptured himself. He was under a doctor's care until the first of October. He lost his job, and it was a very hard time, as I was carrying our second child. Tommy was born October 13, 1910.

Floyd got better and went to work cutting wood for Guy Bell at 60 cents a cord until they could find another place to go. They finally got a house in Ronceverte with two rooms for $4 a month, but they had to furnish their own fuel. One of Floyd's friends, Clarence, helped cut enough wood to last the winter.

Floyd heard of a farm above Lewisburg and went to see about it. He came rushing back and said we had to move that day. Mr. Jackson, the owner of the farm, brought Floyd in a wagon, so we packed up and moved on the Monday after Thanksgiving. There were cows to milk, milk to separate, milk to churn, and butter to print. The house rent, fuel, garden, fruit for family use, and one third of the crops were free. We were paid 10 cents an hour for the work we did on the farm, including other work done for the Jacksons. I boarded Clarence for 10 cents a meal.

On May 16, Floyd was bitten by a snake and almost died. He was off work until August and developed blood poisoning in the same hand. He missed more work, and Mr. Jackson got another family to take our place. We had to move again.

This time, they moved to a shack on Bessie Jackson's place, shucking corn and doing odd jobs, but it helped them until Floyd found work with Johnson Handley. He rode horseback four miles to the job and had to leave home before daylight and got back after dark. The children only saw him on Sunday. Again, Josie was very lonely and never saw anyone but Sallie Crone for a long time.

In May of 1911, Josie's uncle, Joe Perkins, and his son, Homer, moved in with them. They were happy to have them, because they bought a cow and that would mean milk. After the cow freshened, she had four heifers, and they were able to have plenty of milk and butter.

As usual, the industrious Josie did all she could to help out. There were plenty of wild berries for jam and preserves, and when the cherries, peaches, and pears got ripe she canned and made pies until she "was sick of them," she wrote. She sold a lot of blackberries and raspberries when they came in and was able to keep the family afloat for a while.

However, they had to move again in September to Luther McMillan's farm, a mile from Lewisburg. The house, garden, fuel, and cow pasture were free. They had moved a wagonload of fruit with them and, after they got there, made two large kettles of apple butter.

Josie dug potatoes, and that did them for the winter. Floyd put out a large field of wheat. Work was scarce that winter, so Floyd contracted a piece of timberland on the farm to cut. He made good wages and hired two men to help him. Josie boarded them for 10 cents a meal. They had plenty to eat with all the fruit, milk, and eggs.

Bad luck hit us again in April. Floyd had an attack of appendicitis. Dr. Parker took care of him for days before he decided what was wrong with him. They took him to Hinton Hospital on April 28, 1912, and he was operated on the next day. He was in the hospital for three weeks, and when he went home he had a boil on his arm. He wasn't able to work, so Grandpa and Acie came to work the corn. I started doing laundry for Mrs. Handley, and we were getting along much better. Our third child, Floyd Elmer, was born July 31, 1912.

They moved again to the Dryer farm, in a little four-room house that was awfully cold. Floyd worked for Mr. Dryer and cut cordwood. He contracted a job of timber cutting from John Handley and Guy Bell on Dars Hill. Floyd had three men who went there and batched and cut timber. They built a little two-room camp. The week before Christmas, Floyd, Josie, and the children had to move into it. It was cold, and the shack was very rough. The only thing they had was plenty of wood. Josie went back to cooking for the men and three small children.

The heifer that Uncle Joe had given Josie freshened, and they brought her home and broke her. They had a chance to buy a sow and eight pigs for $15, so they borrowed the money and bought them. They fattened them up and sold off the six pigs to pay off the loan. They killed the sow.

In November, they moved again to a farm on Carroll Hill. Floyd went to work for Mr. Lewis at Savannah Mills for $1 a day, but he had to walk two miles a day each way to work.

On the night of December 8, 1913, Johnny got sick. The doctor gave him some medicine and said he would be better the next day. He died that night at 9:00 and was buried at the Carroll Hill church on the 12th.

Bad luck just seemed to follow them. Life went on this way — moving, struggling, finding jobs, loosing jobs, moving again. Josie was always raising a garden, boarding men, sewing for people, or doing housework. It seemed she never tired, for she seldom complained, but it is certain she was often very weary.

War broke out in April 1917, and everything went sky high. They struggled and, with their ingenuity and hard-work ethics, made it through winter after winter.

In August 1917, Floyd Elmer, their fourth child, died of cholera inflamed. He was buried alongside John on Carroll Hill. The flu broke out that year and killed Floyd's brother, Vincent, and two of Josie's brothers.

Josie and Floyd with a flock of chickens at one of their many homes.

Floyd Walton with his three youngest sons, in about 1935. From the left are Glen, Hazle, and Basil. Today, Hazle Walton is the only family member still living.

One of Josie and Floyd's later moves was to Ronceverte, to Brown's Factory, on Lake Anderson's place.

We paid $14 a month and moved just in time for our fifth baby, Guy Bell, to be born on April 29, 1919. When he was six weeks old, he took double pneumonia and they didn't think he would live through it. With the help of Dr. Compton, Veda Robinson, God, and me, he pulled through.

Things were finally looking up for the family. Floyd got a job at Ronceverte Grade School, and they moved onto the old Graves' place. The children were able to start to school, and the first thing they did was bring home chicken pox. In January, they got whooping cough and brought it home to Guy. Later they all got the flu. Guy Bell took pneumonia and died on March 6, 1920. Except for Floyd, the family was all too sick to attend the funeral. The grief was almost too much for Josie.

Floyd and Josie moved again in December of 1921. They had just finished killing two big hogs when their sixth child, Glen, was born. Life became harder again, but they were able to make do until better times came along. From 1921 until 1924, when their seventh child, Hazle, was born, they had moved four more times.

In January of 1926, things had gotten pretty serious again. Their eighth child, James Basil, was born. There was no work, so Floyd went to Rich Creek, in Fayette County, to get a job on a sawmill owned by the Morgan Lumber Company. That job didn't last very long, so Floyd continued to take job after job, and they moved another five times in two years. He worked for the Morgan Lumber Company at Swiss, the Birch Run Mines, a farm in Nicholas County, the Kingston Mines, and finally moved back to Lewisburg to work for Slater Tuckwiller.

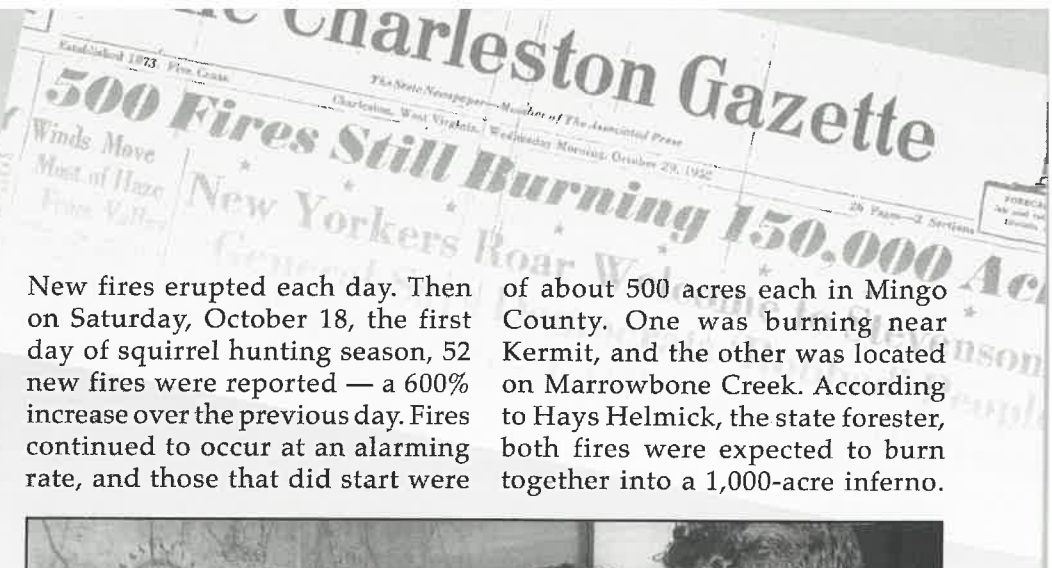
When Greenbrier Military School opened in 1929, Hughie got a job taking care of Captain Joe Moore's three children for $5.50 a week and board. Things were looking up again, and that year we had a chance to buy two lots at Fairlea and 5,000 feet of lumber for $10 — enough to rough in a house.

With the help of friends and family, they were able to move into their house in April. Josie took another job, working for Mrs. Renier at the Corner Cupboard in Lewisburg. It was a seasonal job, and she had to pick up little sewing and housekeeping jobs.

Finally, in the spring of 1932, Tommy and Floyd got jobs on the state road. Josie and Floyd were able to finish the upstairs of their house and were very comfortable. But in 1933, a lamp exploded and the house burned to the ground. They lost everything they owned and had to go out the window in their nightclothes. Because of Josie's good sense, they had $800 in insurance coming to them.

We had some meat, two shoats, and a few chickens, the lots paid for, and a little over $200 to start again during the Depression. The good people of Fairlea, Lewisburg, and Ronceverte gathered up furniture, food, and clothing for us, and that night we were all together again in a house with enough food to eat.

Tommy and Floyd finally collected on their money that had been coming to them for the road work. It was about $60. With the insurance money and what was saved, they were able to buy some buildings across the Greenbrier River at Caldwell. The buildings had to be torn down and ferried across the river. With the help of a group of men, they got the buildings torn down and the lumber taken to Fairlea, where they were going to build their house again.



Early in the summer of 1952, people living throughout the Midwest and East began to worry about the lack of rain. Drought conditions, in varying degrees of severity, prevailed over all states east of the Rocky Mountains. In the Appalachian Mountains, the conditions were not as critical as in some parts of the country, but they were far from normal.

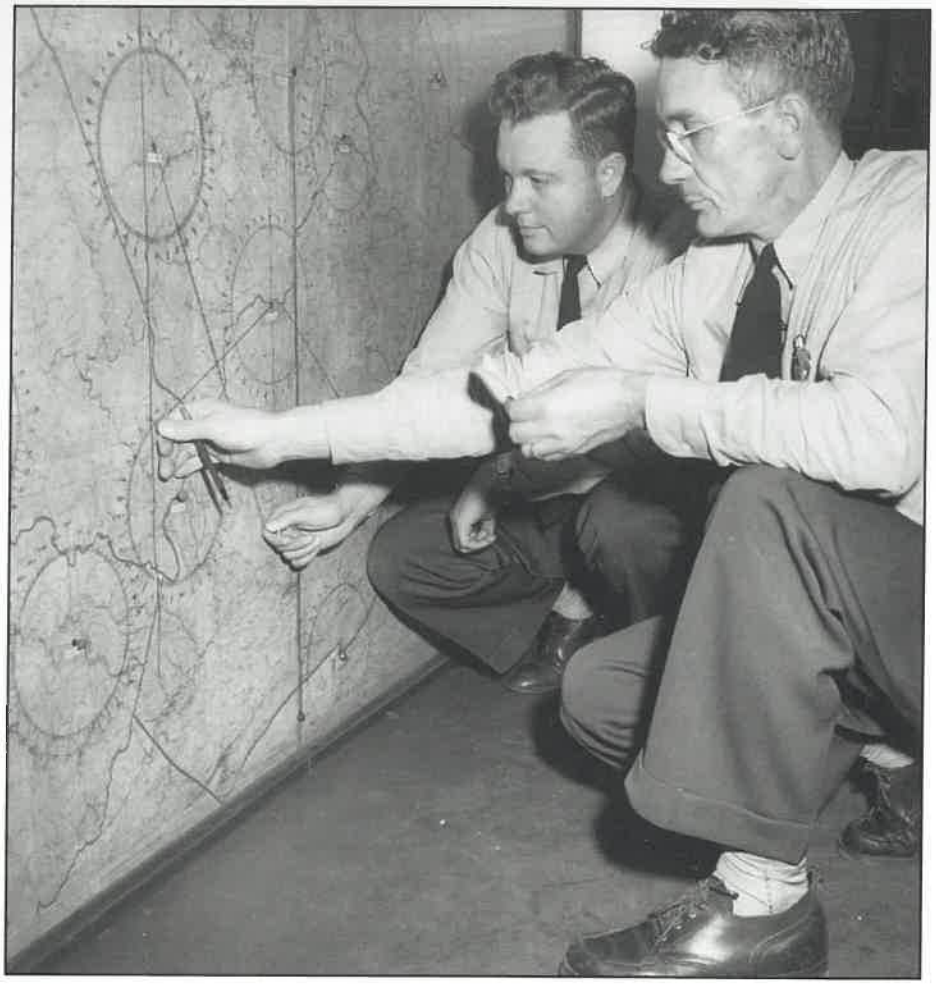
In West Virginia, an event was about to occur that was to have far-reaching environmental consequences for decades to come. "The Big Burn of '52" would char more than 600,000 acres of forestland in the state, causing untold damage, especially in the loss of timber. Hundreds of homes could have been built from the wood that was ruined by the fires that fall. Many trees showed signs of damage even 50 years later.

As that summer progressed, conditions grew more severe, though sparse, intermittent rains kept the trees green and forest fires remained relatively sporadic through the end of the growing season. There was not, however, enough precipitation to soak into the ground and maintain adequate moisture content below the surface. Precipitation through the months of September and October was the third lowest on record, exceeded only by the terrible drought years of 1887 and 1930.

West Virginia, with its then-10 million acres of forestland, was dangerously dry as October unfolded. Early in the month, the number and severity of wildfires, known as the "fire load," became rather heavy, but the Conservation Commission's (now DNR) Division of Forestry was still able to control them. To fire-control personnel, it became evident that these fires were growing increasingly resistant to control. Deep burning, several inches beneath the surface, was encountered.

Then it happened! The official fire season opened October 15, with an active fire season already at hand and conditions critical. New fires erupted each day. Then on Saturday, October 18, the first day of squirrel hunting season, 52 new fires were reported — a 600% increase over the previous day. Fires continued to occur at an alarming rate, and those that did start were becoming more and more difficult to extinguish. One forest fire that started in Kanawha County on Sunday was still burning six days later, after being contained at least four times. By October 23, the scene across southern West Virginia was bad, with more than 200 reported fires raging through tinder-dry forests.

Largest of the fires were two of about 500 acres each in Mingo County. One was burning near Kermit, and the other was located on Marrowbone Creek. According to Hays Helmick, the state forester, both fires were expected to burn together into a 1,000-acre inferno.



Assistant state foresters Milt Harr (at left) and Frank Frazier in the district office in Beckley discuss the location of a fire reported by fire tower observers during the disastrous 1952 fire season. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia Division of Forestry.

Southern West Virginia was hardest hit, with the largest number of fires occurring in the Conservation Commission's District 5, encompassing Wayne, Mingo, Lincoln, Kanawha, Boone, Cabell and Lincoln counties. Helmick issued a call for volunteer firefighters and asked that they report to the scene of a fire with rakes, hoes, and shovels, or contact the nearest Conservation Commis-

sion district office.

"Our greatest danger is wind," Helmick explained. Nightly frosts had been causing an increase in the number of falling leaves, which accumulated and filled fire lines as quickly as they could be cleared.

An unidentified woman uses a broom to battle flames in the fall of 1952. This UP Telephoto appeared in *The Charleston Gazette* on October 29, 1952.

He termed the situation as "simply more than we can handle."

The next three weeks were unprecedented in the history of organized forest fire control in West Virginia. Frank Frazier, assistant state forester in charge of fire control, recognized that the situation was developing disaster proportions and called on Hays Helmick to request assistance from all divisions of the Conservation Commission and other state departments that could be rallied. He further recommended closing the hunting season, broadcasting a general appeal to the people of West Virginia to eliminate all brush burning, and advising extreme caution with any use of fire outdoors. Helmick took the request to Carl Johnson, director of the Commission. After a quick flight by Johnson over southern West Virginia to assess the situation, immediate action was taken.

Mobilization by the Conservation Commission was on an unprecedented scale. Employees of Game, Fish, Education, and other divisions worked around the clock to aid foresters in their battle. Conservation officers and trained forestry personnel in noncritical areas in northern West Virginia were assigned temporary duty in fire-stricken southern counties to combat arson fires. Secretaries took their typewriters to the field to keep up with the growing stacks of paperwork dealing with food, gasoline, communications, and equipment.

The request for closing of the hunting season was reviewed. Governor Okey Patterson gave his consent, which was required by law, and Carl Johnson issued a proclamation to suspend the hunting season, effective 9:00 p.m. Thursday evening, October 23.

Fires began to take a toll on human life and property. George Washington Ebert, an 84-year-old farmer living near Scherr, Grant County, died in the Potomac Valley Hospital in Keyser from burns received while fighting a forest fire near his home. Three Charleston High School students released from school to help fight a fire on Kanawha State Forest were injured when the truck they were being transported in overturned on Louden Heights Road, near Charleston. A Kanawha County church and a Putnam County barn were destroyed by forest fires.

A state of emergency was declared, and additional equipment was ordered, with delivery requested by the most expeditious means possible. The West Virginia Air National Guard cooperated by delivering a planeload of fire-fighting equipment from Wilmington, North Carolina, to Kanawha Air-

port. Other supplies and equipment came by truck or railway express. On October 28, for example, 900 fire rakes and 200 brush hooks arrived by air from a manufacturer in North Carolina, and 4,000 units of Army C rations came from Columbus, Ohio. The U.S. Forest Service sent two experienced foresters into the Beckley area to assist state foresters there to regroup their forces.

Given the number of fires raging, the Conservation Commission's regular radio network soon became overloaded. Amateur radio operators volunteered their services and quickly became indispensable. At the specific request of Conservation Commission director Carl Johnson, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) authorized the frequency on which the "hams" were operating as a voluntary emergency channel, to prevent outside interference. Marshall College (now University) also joined the battle by lending its mobile radio station, which was quickly put into operation at Daniel Boone Park, near the state capitol in Charleston. United Fuel Corporation employees, stationed mainly in the critical areas of southern West Virginia, operated with about 75 mobile units and had standing orders to immediately report any fires they saw. United Fuel also provided 500 of its employees to man the fire lines.

Five thousand men were on the fire lines battling the blazes by October 26 and were reported to be losing in their efforts to control the blazes in the southern counties. Most of the northern part of the state was reporting good progress, but the Eastern Panhandle still had two large fires. Lester McClung, then a district forester stationed at Romney, said, "There are only three fires, but two of them are really bad ones. One of them is burning between Circleville and Franklin on North Fork Mountain. This big fire burned down a fire tower with equipment in it." The other large fire was in Grant County, but reports that the city of Keyser was threatened were not true.

By this time, nearly 500 fires were thought to be burning statewide, but it was difficult to keep up with the exact number. Some fires burned for days before they were discovered. Smoke had reduced visibility to almost zero. Commercial airline flights into Charleston and Huntington were canceled. For several days, only one or two flights were able to leave these two airports daily. In Mingo County, the smoke was so heavy that individuals walked in front of school buses in some places to make sure the roads were safe. Smoke from fires in southern West Virginia blanketed New York City and the entire East Coast.

Asher Kelly, a forester who flew fire patrol, reported trying to fly over Fayette County to locate a troublesome fire in the Minden area. "There was a fire in there somewhere, but they hadn't been able to locate it because it was so smoky," he related. "I flew from Kanawha Airport up the Kanawha Valley. I'd fly from ridge to ridge, back and forth, because it was so smoky. I could hardly even see the ground. As I came by the tall WOAY radio tower [at Oak Hill], I could look up and see the red light on that thing." [See "Smoke Pilot: Flying Forester Asher Kelly," by Robert

Arson was a major cause of forest fires, especially in Mingo County, where it is estimated that more than 50% of the 1952 fires were intentionally set. Here, conservation officer Dennis J. Keffer of Logan County uses a bloodhound to track arsonists. This photograph appeared in the November 8, 1952, edition of *The Charleston Gazette*.

Dense smoke from 1952 forest fires posed a problem across the state and was visible as far away as New York City. Smoke from this 1956 Boone County fire is typical. Photograph by David Cruise, courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, Department of Natural Resources Collection.

Beanblossom; Fall 1991.]

By October 28, the Conservation Commission received authorization from Governor Patteson to call out the National Guard. Patteson also directed the commissioner of the State Road Commission, Keith Griffith, to make 3,500 to 4,000 men, plus equipment, available to the Conservation Commission. After being initially held in reserve, the Guard became a vital tool in suppression efforts. Martin Howes, then an assistant chief of the Division of State Parks assigned to Mingo County, announced as an evident warning to fire bugs that National Guard members assigned there were armed and patrolling in an attempt to put a stop to the practice of setting forest fires.

The West Virginia State Police and the Mingo County Sheriff's Department also assisted in the effort. Howes estimated that more than 50% of Mingo County's fires were deliberately set. Another severe arson problem materialized on Buffalo Creek in Logan County. Marvin Reed, a private consulting forester who represented several large land companies in southern West Virginia, had spent several days and nights fighting fires there. He stopped at Man one morning to purchase a cup of coffee after battling blazes all night. As he went to pay for the coffee, a pistol he was carrying accidentally fell from his pocket. He quietly retrieved it, but no additional fires started in the area after that. Kanawha County Forest Protector Jack Bibb, smoke-stained and weary, grimly told a news reporter he was "positive most of the fires in this area were set deliberately."

Reasons for arson fires are many and varied, stemming in part from the complex socio-economic problems common in southern West Virginia, where most of the problems occurred. Because of landownership patterns established at the turn of the century when outside companies purchased vast coal holdings, the local population, not owning the property, never developed a conventional land ethic. These large companies, interested only in coal or other minerals, cared little for what happened on the surface. Knowing their profit was safely tucked

underground, they made only a token effort to control fires on their property, and then only when they threatened structures. Widespread poverty, high dropout rates, and chronic unemployment contributed indirectly to the problem, as well. Simply put, individuals failing to acquire fundamental educational levels cannot easily understand scientific concepts about proper forest management and fire protection. On a more personal level, the mind of an arsonist is difficult to comprehend. Some fires may have been set for excitement, to get back at the coal company or the local "game warden" for giving them a citation in the past, or to earn the meager 25 cents an hour the state paid volunteers at the time for assisting with suppression efforts.

Law enforcement became an important part of fire fighting operations in general. Conservation officers from noncritical areas of the state were assigned for duty in southern West Virginia. Dozens of persons were arrested for backfiring, throwing cigarettes from cars, and for incendiarism. According to an interview with William Bostic, Logan County conservation officer, a bloodhound from the state penitentiary at Moundsville was sent to the county to assist in tracking down arsonists.

Dense smoke created an increased opportunity for other illegal activity, as well. Internal Revenue Service officials reported that, apparently thinking the smoke screen from numerous forest fires would hinder enforcement, moonshiners became more active. Near the end of October, agents destroyed a 60-gallon still and a 120-gallon one on Jude Branch, and another 60-gallon still on Messenger Branch near Dingess, both located in Mingo County.

Light rain fell on November 3 across the state and "knocked down" most of the going fires. Experienced foresters knew it was not enough to bring the fires under control unless more rain came the next day, but with the prospect of rain in the air, volunteers returned to their homes. The supply of manpower dwindled away to a scattered few, along with the exhausted regular forces of the Conservation Commission. The next day, the effect of the rain had dissipated, and most of the old fires broke over and blazed up again. In addition, 45 new ones were reported. These fires, fanned by dry, gusty winds, burned thousands of additional acres. By the time soaking rains came, 203 more new fires had been reported during what was another hectic week.

On November 9, enough rain and snow finally fell to extinguish the blazes. The Big Burn of 1952 was officially over. Since then, other bad seasons have occurred — 1963, 1964, 1987, 1991 — but none the magnitude of this terrible fall.

ROBERT BEANBLOSSOM is a district administrator with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources' Parks and Recreation section in Charleston. He is a native of Mingo County and a graduate of West Virginia University. Robert's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appears in our Winter 1992 issue.

Veteran fire tower observer Jeff Johnson was one of the thousands of professionals and volunteers who helped battle the 1952 fires. He is seen here at the Williams Hill fire tower, Boone County, in 1956. Photograph by David Cruise, West Virginia State Archives, Department of Natural Resources Collection.

Confessions of a West Virginia Forest Ranger

Author Robert Beanblossom teaches a fire safety class in 1979. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia Division of Forestry.

I was employed full time by the West Virginia Division of Forestry on December 1, 1973, and was assigned to Mingo County in southern West Virginia. Mingo and nine other coalfield counties had long been described as "the hotspot of the East," since fire occurrence there ran so high. The area, which includes less than 30% of the state's woodlands, averages 64% of the state's total fires and 84% of the state's total burned acreage.

Until recent years, the state relied heavily on a volunteer local fire warden organization for fire suppression. These were local individuals who agreed to assist with suppressing a fire when one occurred. There were seldom enough volunteers available, however, particularly during prolonged dry spells, so you wound up driving yourself to the point of exhaustion.

This was the case in the spring of 1976, which up until that time was the worst spring fire season ever recorded. I worked 34 days with only one day off during that period, mostly 16-17 hour days; some were around the clock.

Fires started in mid-February and continued up until late May. The forestry district that covered southwest West Virginia ended the season with an even 1,000 fires. I sat in my vehicle and had the dispatcher at Milton give me nine fires at one time. I had been married the previous November, and several mornings my new bride and I would pass each other on the road, as she was going to work and I was returning home to eat breakfast and sleep a couple of hours before going out again.

A typical day involved getting out by 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. to walk and check control lines on fires from the previous day. Afternoons usually brought more fires to fight. Once a fire was reported, I drove to that area, scouted the fire to determine where best to put in our control lines, and then contacted the nearest local fire warden to round up a crew. If we had no other fires, I generally went on the hill with them. If I had other fires, I would leave them at that one and start the process all over again.

Crews also had to be fed. When I was a ranger, we were not allowed to purchase prepared food, so that meant stopping at a grocery store and buying meat, bread, cheese, milk, etc., and preparing sandwiches on the tailgate of a pickup truck. That was still some of the best food I ever ate!

As night fell, the temperature dropped and the humidity rose, which generally slowed the fires. This was the best time to bring a fire under control. Usually, I got home between 1:00 and 3:00 a.m. We would go for days like this. One time, I was so tired I could not drive the remaining five miles to my home. I pulled off beside the road and slept in a cold truck that close home! I just couldn't go on.

In addition to fighting fires, we also had the responsibility for en-

forcing fire laws. I well remember my first case. I had caught this lady's elderly mom and dad burning illegally and had stopped to patiently explain the laws to them. Figuring that I could accomplish more with education than with a heavy hand, I did not issue a citation. They thanked me, and I left.

Not more than three weeks later, I was patrolling the area, and this same lady was burning her trash illegally. When I walked up to her house, she came to the door, saw who I was, and angrily ordered me off of her property. I simply got in my vehicle, drove to Williamson, and secured a warrant for her arrest. Since she went to church where my uncle was pastor, she tried to get him to pressure me to drop the charges. This only made me angry.

Finally, she demanded a trial before a Justice of the Peace. I knew all about "good old boy" politics, and I didn't want to lose my first case. I nervously entered the courtroom on a Saturday evening and presented my case. Her defense was that "she forgot the law." The JP then leaned back in his chair and stated, "Before the court renders a decision in this case, it has something it wants to say." Uh-oh, here it comes, I thought, figuring he was about to dismiss the case.

He then looked at the woman and said: "This young man here has a lot of authority. The law charges him with protecting the forests of this state. He can set backfires, he can destroy fences, he can even make people go fight fire. By the fact that you ordered him off your property, you were obstructing an officer. Had he charged you, I would have sentenced you to a year in jail!"

It is a satisfying experience to extinguish a fire and know that you are doing something worthwhile.

He had either deliberately misread or incorrectly read the law — incorrect because it would have only been a minor offense. She paid her fine, and, needless to say, I had no further trouble from her!

Fighting forest fires gets in your blood. It is a satisfying experience to extinguish a fire and know that you are doing something worthwhile. Even though I left the Division of Forestry long ago and was no longer directly responsible for forest fire control activities, I have remained active. I worked in southern West Virginia in 1991, 1999, and 2001 during severe fire seasons. I also am certified on the national level as a public information officer and as a wildfire prevention and education team member and have recently seen assignments in Ohio, Georgia, Alaska, California, Montana, and many other states. There is more and more pressures on our forests today. We have a growing population and a limited land base. People need the benefits a healthy forest provides, such as wood to construct new homes, clean water, and a place for recreation. To have been a small part of protecting our forests and helping provide those benefits has been a rewarding experience.

—Robert Beanblossom

An experienced hand at fire fighting, Robert Beanblossom sweeps burning wood back onto a hillside in Mingo County in 2001. Photograph by Lori Wolfe/*The Herald-Dispatch*.

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

Chain-Saw Art in Horner

Andy Kerns makes his living by releasing animals from logs and stumps. The Horner resident is a chain-saw artist who travels the West Virginia festival circuit from early spring to late fall, demonstrating his rough-cut artistry with the hopes of selling a few pieces in the process. In 2007, Andy was booked at 30 festivals.

I caught up with him at the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins, where Andy was in the process of completing a bear. The festival season was winding down and Andy, in his late 30's, was looking forward to spending the winter in the cabin he built below his parent's Lewis County house.

"I take the winter off," explains Andy, whose full name is James Andrew Kerns. "I get caught up on orders and do shop jobs for people where we live. I got a five-foot-long walleye to do for a guy, and a ram for another guy."

Andy is an Ohio native, the son of native West Virginians who moved north to find work. The family alternated between the two states for many years. After Andy's father, James, retired from General Motors and moved back to West Virginia, Andy changed his residency, as well.

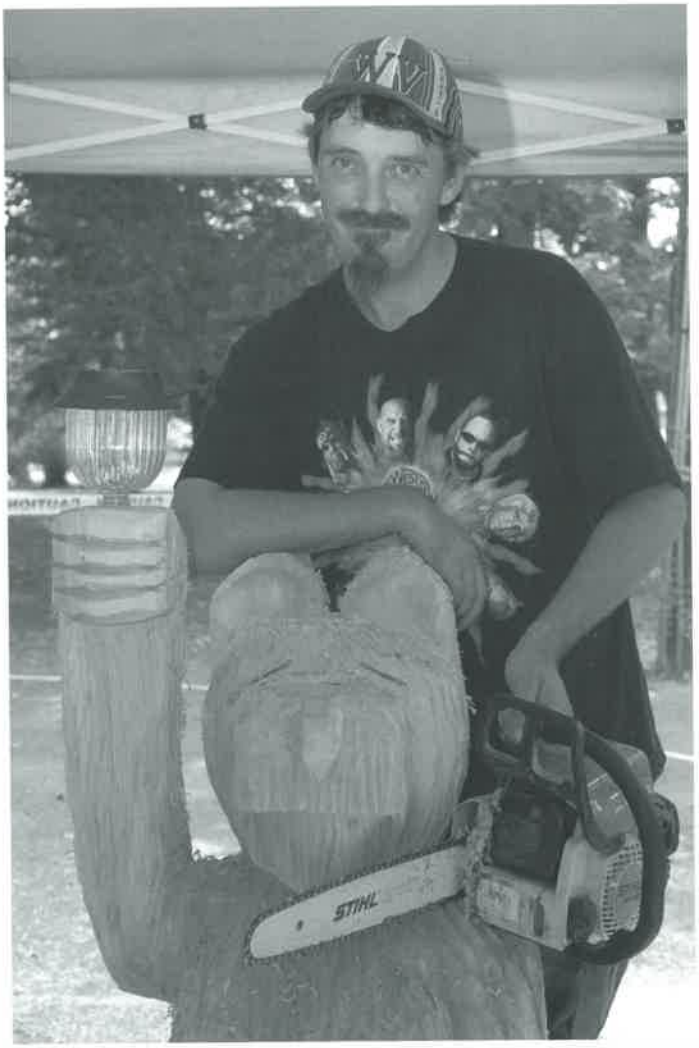
"I love it down here," Andy says. "It's so beautiful and peaceful."

Andy took a circuitous route to becoming a chain-saw artist. He enjoyed drawing as a child and dabbled in painting as a young adult, but there wasn't a market for his work. He got into building custom cabinets and also did some artistic automobile painting, but that fad didn't last long.

"People loved the work, but there wasn't a big call for it," he says.

While attending a festival in Ohio more than a decade ago, Andy happened to notice a chain-saw artist at work. He talked to the artist about his work and got this piece of advice: Don't try it. It is just too dangerous for a novice to tackle.

Undaunted, Andy went home and carved an Indian from a log. His work surprised both him and his parents. Andy says a survey worker came to his house, noticed the Indian carving, and encouraged him to go into the business of selling his work. With help from



Andy Kerns with chainsaw and a bear. This newly carved cub is hoisting a solar-powered light in his raised paw.

Chip Turner of Appalachian Glass, Andy got on the festival circuit and started demonstrating his work and making money.

Unmarried, Andy had the freedom to jump into the business full time. He's been making his living doing chainsaw carvings ever since. He attributes his success to raw talent and a willingness to constantly explore new expressions in wood. Andy has a repertoire of 100 different animals and figures in wood, including bears, eagles, dolphins, and cacti. And he's always willing to try something new.

Chips fly as Andy and his chain saw attract a crowd at the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins. Andy demonstrates his skill at as many as 30 festivals each year.

"You can bring a picture to me, and I'll carve it," says Andy.

He begins every carving with an assessment of the log or stump from which he'll release the figure. Andy says he envisions the completed work in his mind as he slowly encircles the log and studies its characteristics. Then he turns what will become the front of the piece toward the crowd and goes to work.

"It just comes out of my mind," he says. "I get an image, see it, and carve away anything that conceals what I see." He never gets that same image twice, however.

"Every piece is different," he says. "I don't make two things exactly alike. I've had people ask me to make two identical items, and I got to tell them I can't do that."

Andy works with a single chain saw, a Stihl MS170, that weighs about eight pounds. It's a very basic saw, with a 16-inch blade and bar. Under Andy's control, the saw creates both the rough cuts and fine details. It is physically demanding work, but Andy loves it, especially when he draws a crowd.

"I've had at least 300 people around me," he says. "I don't pay any attention to them. I'm too focused on what I'm doing."

At festivals, Andy usually works with logs provided by the sponsor. Being in West Virginia is a definite advantage to his work. Andy says he was constantly looking for logs when he lived in Ohio.

Logs that come from residential areas or farms often reveal unexpected and dangerous treasures buried beneath their bark. Andy has cut into barbed wire, nails, and even bullets.

"I was carving a beagle. I got down to its head, and there were three .30-30 shells in its nose, like someone had shot at the tree," he recalls.

Andy says his most popular carvings are eagles and bears, which are also his favorite subjects. "I do bears because they sell good and the people like watching me do them," he says. As for the strangest thing Andy has carved, he blushes a bit and refuses to describe it.

"I can't tell you that," Andy says. "The man wanted it to put next to his chair. I had to do it from my imagination. He wouldn't supply me with a picture. He said his wife wouldn't like that too much."

CARL E. FEATHER, freelance writer and photographer, is owner of Feather Multimedia. Carl is a resident of Kingsville, Ohio, with family roots in Preston and Tucker counties. He is a regular GOLDENSEAL contributor.

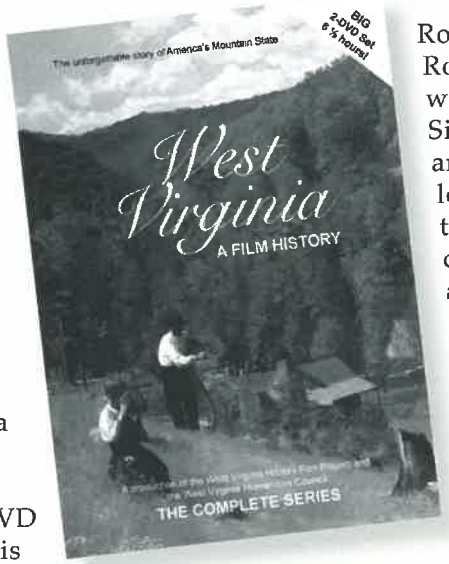
Got an idea for *West Virginia Back Roads?*

If you know of an interesting or unusual person, place, or attraction along the back roads of West Virginia, please let us know. E-mail Carl E. Feather at carl.feather@feathermultimedia.com.

2009 Films on West Virginia and Appalachia

By Steve Fesenmaier

West Virginia: A Film History
2009 (1995)
6½ hours
WNPB-TV/ West Virginia Humanities Council



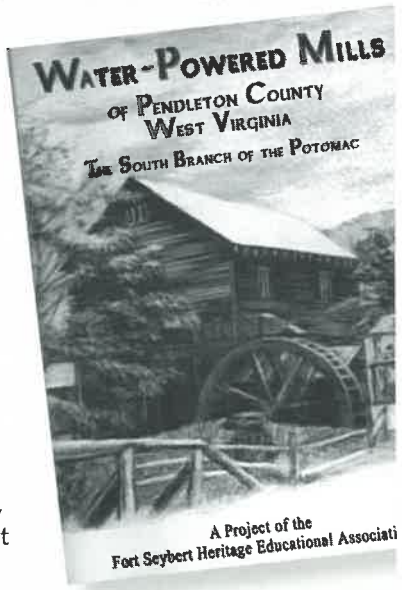
On June 20, 2009, the West Virginia Humanities Council released the DVD version of this monumental film series, originally aired over West Virginia Public Broadcasting in 1995. Directed, written, and co-produced by Mark Samels, executive producer of the poplar PBS series *The American Experience*, this four-part documentary chronicles the development of the Mountain State from the presence of the first inhabitants to modern times. Using paintings, still photographs, and motion picture clips, the series follows the contributions of the men and women who shaped West Virginia's cultural, economic, and political landscapes.
Access: West Virginia Humanities Council at www.wvhumanities.org/filmhistry.htm; phone (304)346-8500

Appalachia: A History of Mountains and People
2008
Four 55-min. episodes
Agee Films
This four-part documentary, touted as the first "environmental history series," is the work of Ross Spears and Jamie Ross, who spent 10 years working on it. Actress Sissy Spacek narrates, and E.O. Wilson, a leading biologist and the keynote expert, describes the unique and important biological systems that make Appalachia what it is. The series ranges from prehistoric descriptions of the region, to the coming of Europeans, war and industrialization, and recent developments and rebirth. A soundtrack CD is also available.
Access: www.appalachiafilm.org

Reconstructing Bill: The Story of Governor William C. Marland
2009 58 mins. WVPBS
Considered among the state's most intelligent and visionary chief executives, William Casey Marland gained notoriety as governor (1953-1957) for his call for a severance tax on natural resources and his stance on school integration. Marland made national news in 1965 when he was discovered driving a Chicago cab as part of a self-made rehabilitation program in his fight to overcome alcoholism. He died of cancer at age 47. This film attempts to bring better understanding and a more complete view of Marland and his accomplishments through interviews, archival news film, home movies, still photographs, and audio recordings.
Access: WVPBS; phone (304)556-4900


Governor William C. Marland. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State Archives.

The Water-Powered Mills of Pendleton County
2008 74 mins. Fort Seybert Heritage Educational Association



More than 40 water-driven mills existed at one time in remote Pendleton County, and this nostalgic documentary visits many of them. Gerald Milnes, one of West Virginia's leading filmmakers and musicians, directed and produced this film for the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College and the Fort Seybert Heritage Educational Association. Elder residents, such as the late Johnny Arvin Dahmer and Grace Dyer, as well as Eston Teter and many others talk about the wonderful world they enjoyed when these water-powered mills were common in the North Fork, South Branch, and South Fork districts. The DVD is interactive, providing individual information on many of the mills.

Access: FSHEA c/o Deborah Horst, HC 69 Box 47E, Brandywine, WV 26802; phone (304)358-3884

40 Years: The West Virginia Highland Conservancy
2008 60 mins.
Omni Productions
In October 2007, the West Virginia Highland Conservancy, the state's oldest environmental advocacy organization, celebrated its 40th anniversary at Cheat Mountain Club on Shavers Fork. Charleston filmmaker Robert Gates was there to make this documentary. Former presidents and members, including some of the state's best-known environmental activists, converse about the many successes and failures of the group's first four decades.
Access: Omni Productions; phone (304)342-2624 or e-mail omni@ntelos.net

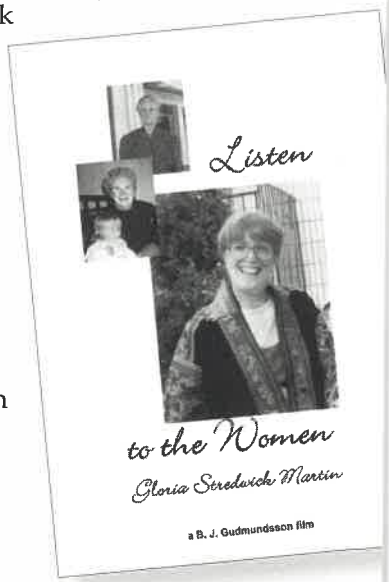
Black Lung: A History
2009 28 mins.
MSHA
Using archival footage, the story of this 1960's populist uprising in West Virginia is told in cinema verité style. Interviews with several miners with black lung are mixed with comments by many West Virginia experts on coal mine safety to tell a compelling story of their success fighting their own union, the State Legislature, and the U.S. Congress. Their victory was the much-heralded Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. Congressman Ken Hechler, primary author of the bill, is shown addressing miners in Kanawha County. Doctors, labor leaders, and government officials of the day are also interviewed.
Access: MSHA Printing & Training Materials Distribution; e-mail Taylor.Sharon@dol.gov or phone (304)256-3257

Buffalo Creek Disaster
2009 (1972) 22 mins.
Omni Productions
On February 26, 1972, the gob pile dams at Pittston's Buffalo Mining failed at Three Forks above Lorado on Buffalo Creek, Logan County. A tidal wave of sludge and water swept down a 17-mile valley, killing 125 people and leaving thousands homeless. The following day, Citizens to Abolish Strip Mining flew over Buffalo Creek, and filmmaker Robert Gates photographed the valley. The next day, Gates filmed destruction in the Amhurstdale area. After State Police spotted his 16-mm Bolex camera in the back of a pickup truck, they blocked them from proceeding into the upper valley, citing a government-imposed news blackout. Gates edited this film into a 22-minute silent montage, portions of which appeared recently on the History Channel. In honor of the 35th anniversary of the Buffalo Creek disaster, Gates annotated the original montage to tell the story.
Access: Omni Productions; phone (304)342-2624 or e-mail omni@ntelos.net

Coal Country
2009 90 mins.
Evening Star Productions
Mari-Lynn Evans, a native of Bulltown, Braxton County, and producer of the recent three-part series *The Appalachians*, returns to her native state to produce a provocative film about mountaintop removal mining (MTR). The film opens in Williamson, at a summer party paid for by Massey Energy. Many people who support MTR are interviewed, including president of the West Virginia Coal Association Bill Raney, the president of the National Coal Association, and people who are involved in MTR site restoration. On the other side, interviews include many longtime opponents of strip mining, such as leading West Virginia public servant Ken Hechler, musician Kathy Mattea, Judy Bonds, and others. This film on MTR shows both sides of the hotly contested issue more than any previous release.
Access: www.coalcountrythemovie.com

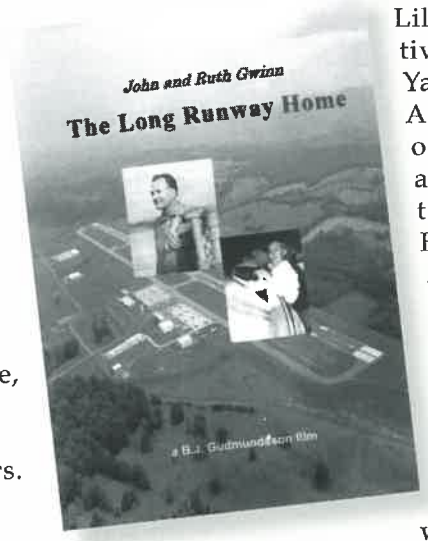
Kanawha City Glass films
Between 1916 and 1980, the Kanawha City area of present-day Charleston was the site of Libbey-Owens-Ford, the world's largest maker of sheet glass. Across the road, the Owens-Illinois factory was once the world's largest manufacturer of glass bottles, operating from 1917 until 1963. Local filmmaker Joseph Hodges has produced two films recently concerning these plants. Using historical photographs, reunion footage, and comments from retired workers, Hodges revisits the days when Kanawha City was one of the glass capitals of the world.
Access: Phone (304)925-1819 or e-mail joe1819@suddenlink.net

Listen to the Women
2008 36 mins.
Patchwork Films
B.J. Gudmundsson profiles Gloria Stredwick Martin, showing her work as an advocate for victims of family violence and sexual assault, and celebrating her lifetime of dedication to women's issues. Ms.



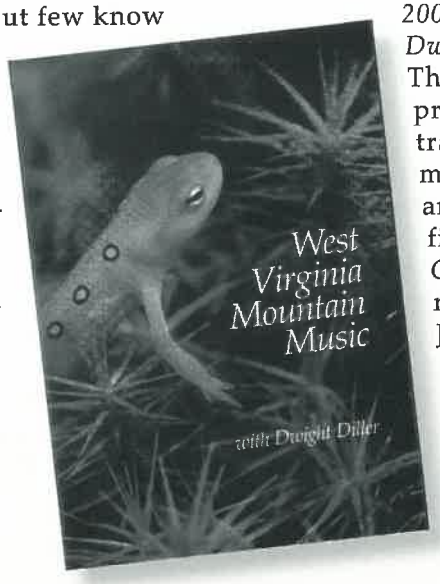
Martin is a victims' advocate and former executive director of the Family Refuge Center in Lewisburg. She discusses her remarkable life, including a trip to a global conference on women held in China.
Access: Patchwork Films at www.patchworkfilms.com; phone (304)645-4998

Long Runway Home: Honoring Col. John and Ruth Gwinn
2008 36 mins.
Patchwork Films
Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel John W. Gwinn built the Greenbrier Valley Airport at Pence Springs in 1967, and, together with his wife, managed it for the next 27 years. Mrs. Gwinn, the former Ruth Tolley, was born in 1919 in Raleigh County. The WPA built an airfield on her family's farm in Summers County, and she was hooked. "I didn't learn to drive," Ruth says. "I learned to fly!" She soloed at age 16 and holds the distinction of being the youngest woman in West Virginia to obtain a pilot's license. This film highlights this colorful couple and their dedication to rural flight.
Access: Patchwork Films at www.patchworkfilms.com; phone (304)645-4998

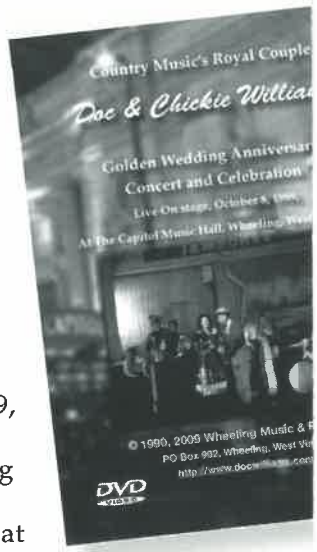


West Virginia Music Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony
2007/2008 120 min. each
WVMHF
The new West Virginia Music Hall of Fame inducted 19 influential musicians, singers, and composers at ceremonies held in Charleston during November the past two years. The gala evenings featured appearances and performances by many of the living inductees, as well as tributes to those who are deceased. Both ceremonies were aired live by West Virginia Public Broadcasting, and the resulting DVD's provide a record of these memorable nights. Highlights from 2007 include Hazel Dickens, Bill Withers, George Crumb, Little Jimmy Dickens, and Billy Edd Wheeler. 2008 highlights include Charlie McCoy, Robert Drasnin, the Lilly Brothers, and relatives of polka king Frankie Yankovic.
Access: The DVD's are offered as a premium for a minimum $15 donation to the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame; visit www.westvirginiamusichalloffame.com or phone (304)342-4412

Still Bill
2009 90 mins.
Slab Fork Productions
Musician Bill Withers was born in 1938 in Slab Fork, Raleigh County. Inducted into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame in 2007, he is the composer of many of the best-known songs written in America since WWII, including "Ain't No Sunshine," "Lean on Me," and "Use Me." Many know his songs, many popular artists have recorded them, but few know much about this quiet man, who had a major influence on American popular music. Dr. Cornel West, Sting, and others are interviewed, along with Withers and his family and friends.
Access: www.stillbillthemovie.com



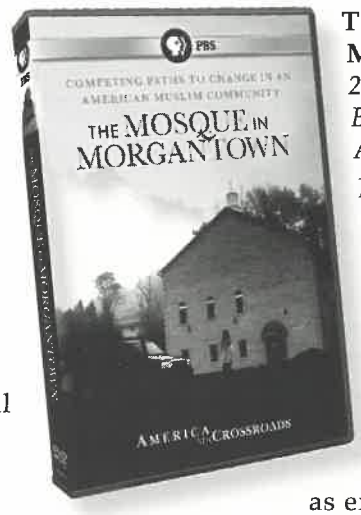
Doc & Chickie Williams Golden Wedding Anniversary Concert
2009 (1989) 90 mins.
Wheeling Music
Wheeling musical legends Doc & Chickie Williams were to the WWVA *Wheeling Jamboree* what Roy Acuff was to the *Grand Ole Opry*. They played to enthusiastic audiences there each week, beginning in the late 1930's, and drew large crowds to their live shows, thanks to their wholesome and family-oriented presentation of traditional country music. In 1989, the pair marked their 50th wedding anniversary with a special concert at the Capitol Music Hall in Wheeling, including many of their most popular numbers, guest artists, and family members. This DVD is a reissue of the original video tape of the concert, with 30 minutes of new bonus material.
Access: Doc Williams, P.O. Box 902, Wheeling, WV 26003; e-mail wheelingmusic@gmail.com



West Virginia Mountain Music
2009 40 mins.
Dwight Diller
There is no human presence except that of traditional mountain music in this soothing and innovative nature film. Retired *National Geographic* photographers Bates and Jody Littlehales spent years gathering images from the rugged mountains of Pocahontas and Pend-

leton counties, depicting native plants and animals throughout the four seasons. Dwight Diller's stark fiddle and banjo playing provides an apt soundtrack for this lush and relaxing visit to what is perhaps the most rural and remote corner of our state.
Access: Elaine Maxham Diller, Morning Star Folk Arts, HC 64 Box 415, Hillsboro, WV 24946; phone (304)653-4397 or e-mail ediller@gmail.com

Remembering William C. Blizzard
2009 55 mins.
Killer Productions
William C. Blizzard (1916-2008) was one of three children of legendary labor figure Bill Blizzard, leader of the "Red Neck Army" at the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain. The younger Blizzard spent his life working as a journalist, photographer, and labor activist; was the author of the 2004 book *When Miners March*; and was the subject of a feature story in the Summer 2006 issue of GOLDENSEAL. [See "Son of the Struggle: A Visit with William C. Blizzard," by C. Belmont "Chuck" Keeney.] In spring 2008, Charleston filmmaker Kelley Thompson interviewed Blizzard for more than an hour for another project. When Blizzard died that December, Kelley decided to make a film about this man who spent almost a century fighting for West Virginia miners, using this interview footage along with the comments of coworkers, scholars, and other admirers.
Access: Kelley Thompson, killer64@suddenlink.net; phone (304)344-1990



The Mosque in Morgantown
2009 75 mins.
Brittany Huckabeee
After reporting from post-9/11 Pakistan, Indian Muslim *Wall Street Journal* reporter Asra Nomani returns to the West Virginia town where she grew up, to discover that the mosque there had been taken over by men she sees as extremists. This film chronicles what happens when she decides to fight back, angering even the mosque's moderates. The film tells a story of competing paths to social change, American identity, and the nature of religion itself.
Access: www.shoppbs.org

West Virginia Author: James A. Haught
2008 30 min.
WVLC Library Television Network
Host Gordon Simmons interviews author and *The Charleston Gazette* editor James A. Haught, concerning his new book, *Fascinating West Virginia*. The book is a compilation of Haught's essays on the state that have been published over the years in the *Gazette*. Born and raised in Wirt County, Haught has worked at the *Gazette* for 50 years, first as reporter, and then as assistant editor, and as editor. He is also the author of books about religion, science, and other topics.
Access: www.librarycommission.lib.wv.us/html/ltn/index_ltn.html

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.

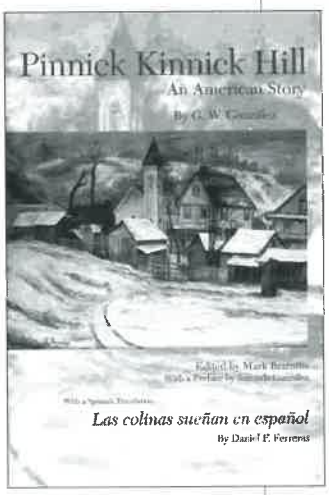
Send to:
GOLDENSEAL
The Culture Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304)558-0220

Note from the West Virginia State Treasurer's Office:

When you provide a check as payment, you authorize the State Treasurer's Office to use information from your check to make a one-time electronic fund transfer from your account or to process the payment as an image transfer. Funds may be withdrawn from your account as soon as the same day you make your payment. You will not receive your check back from your financial institution. For inquiries, call 1-866-243-9010.

Pinnick Kinnick Hill

The lives of West Virginia's Asturian immigrants during the early 20th century were marked by hard work, joyous celebration, ethnic struggle, and resilience. True stories about these Spanish factory workers and their families are found elsewhere in this issue. [See "Asturian West Virginia," by Luis Argeo; page 14 and "*La Familia Fernández:* Recalling a Spanish Family in Clarksburg," by Raymond Alvarez; page 19.]



A recent book, published by West Virginia University Press, offers an extended look at the Asturian immigrant experience in Harrison County, told through the thinly veiled historical fiction of author G.W. González. *Pinnick Kinnick Hill: An American Story* was written during the 1970's — part memoir, part history, and part novel. The manuscript lay unpublished for more than 25 years until the late author's son, Thomas González, submitted it for consideration to the editors at WVU Press. It was published in 2006.

Pinnick Kinnick Hill is a real place, located in Clarksburg and the site of many Spanish picnics over the years. The book's central character, Juan Villanueva, is fictitious, but his story of immigration, family, struggle, and triumph rings true to the reality of thousands of Asturians who came to Harrison County to work in the zinc mills and surrounding industries.

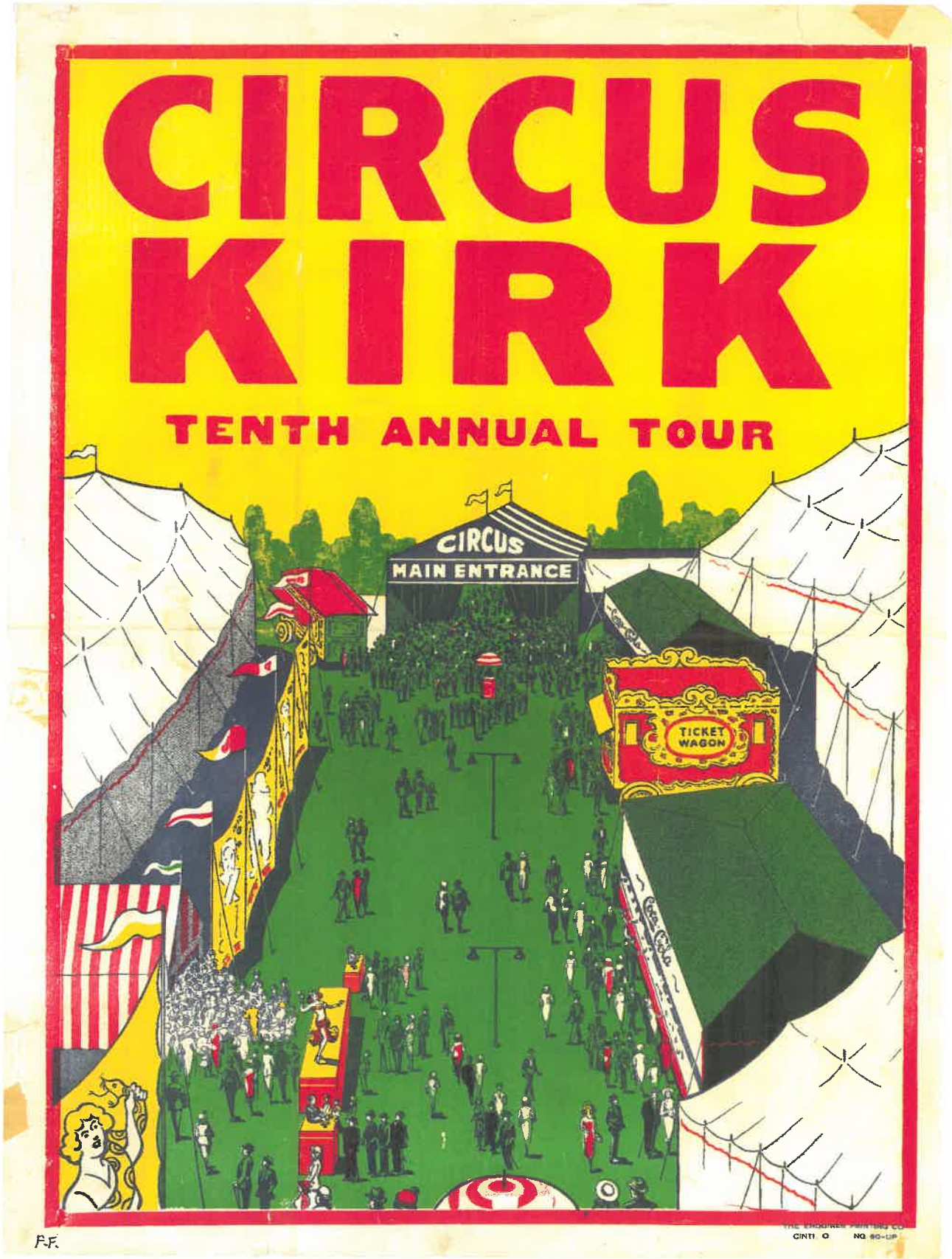
Two unique features give *Pinnick Kinnick Hill* added value. A lengthy and detailed preface by Suronda González puts the story into the context of immigrant history and industrial fact, sorting out where the book veers from the actual record and where it supports it. In addition, the entire book is published in a bilingual format, with English on the right-facing pages and Spanish on the left. Not only is this useful for Spanish-speaking readers, but underscores the bilingual nature of this immigrant community.

Pinnick Kinnick Hill: An American Story, a 246-page paperbound edition, with photographs and Spanish translation, is available from West Virginia University Press. It sell for $22.95, plus tax and shipping. A hard-cover edition is also available. Visit www.wvupress.com or phone 1-800-621-2736.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Buffalo Creek 1972
- Ron Hinkle Glass
- Oil and Gas
- Hundred, Wetzel County

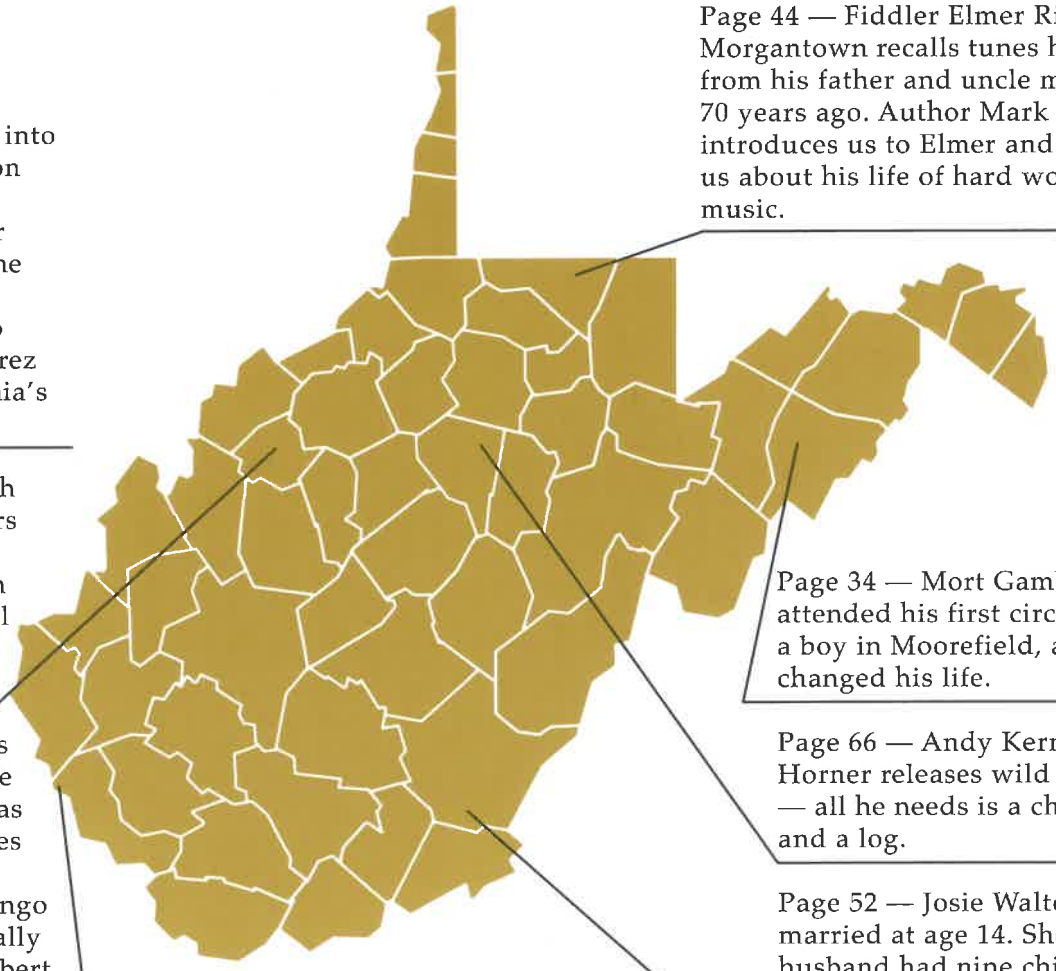


Undated poster from the Enquirer Printing Company. See story beginning on page 34.

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

PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal



93
0 94295 76645 1