Ordnance Plant • Fairfax Stone • Ely-Thomas • Ramps

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Spring 2010 $4.95



Pilot Steve Weaver

Volume 36, Number 1 **Goldenseal** Spring 2010



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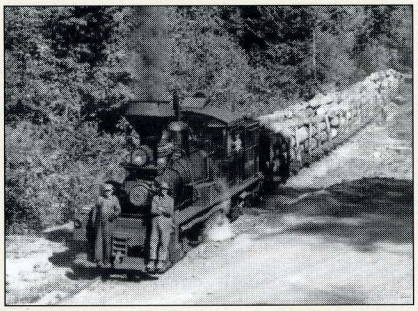

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On the cover: Pilot and author Steve Weaver at the Upshur County Regional Airport. Photograph by Michael Keller. Our story begins on page 20.

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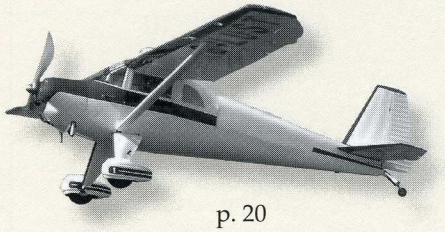

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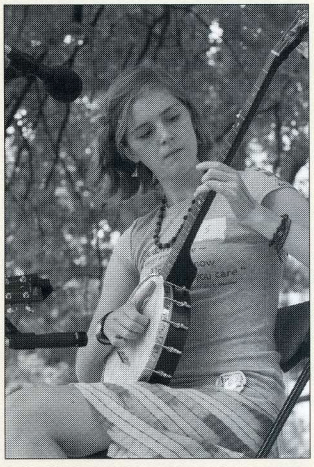

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Folklife • Fairs • Festivals 2010

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

March 12-14 George Washington's Bathtub Celebration
Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)
March 13 Irish Festival
Pipestem (466-1800)
March 14 & March 17-21 29th Annual Irish Spring Festival
Ireland (452-8962)
March 19-20 10th Annual SistersFest
Sistersville (771-8699)
March 19-21 Upper Potomac Spring Dulcimer Festival
Shepherdstown (263-2531)
March 20-21 Potomac Highlands Regional Maple Festival
New Creek (788-1834)
March 20-21 W.Va. Maple Syrup Festival
Pickens (924-5096)
April 9-11 Lewisburg Chocolate Festival
Lewisburg (1-800-833-2068)
April 10-11 Wildwater River Festival
Webster Springs (847-2145)
April 17 72nd Feast of the Ramson
Richwood (846-6790)
April 17 Scottish Celtic Heritage Festival
Parkersburg (740-423-4744)
April 23-25 Dogwood Arts & Crafts Festival
Huntington (696-5990)
April 23-25 Glass Fest
Weston (269-1030)
April 23-25 Spring Mountain Festival
Petersburg (257-2722)
April 24 Helvetia Ramp Dinner
Helvetia (924-6435)
April 26-May 1 New River Birding & Nature Festival
Oak Hill (1-800-927-0263)
April 30-May 2 Scottish Heritage Festival & Celtic Gathering
Bridgeport (842-0370)
May 1 Heritage Farm Spring Festival
Huntington (522-1244)
May 1-2 Steam & Gas Engine Show
Point Pleasant (675-5737)
May 1-3 Cheat River Festival
Albright (329-3621)
May 7-8 16th Annual Bluegrass Festival
North Bend State Park (643-2931)
May 7-9 Mullens Dogwood Festival
Mullens (732-8000)
May 7-9 Spring Fest
Franklin (358-3884)
May 8 Berkeley County Heritage Day
Martinsburg (267-4713)
May 8-9 Bramwell Spring Home Tour
Bramwell (325-8438)
May 8-9 Mother's Day Founder's Festival
Webster (265-5549)
May 9 102nd Observance of Mother's Day
Grafton (265-5549)
May 12-16 69th W.Va. Strawberry Festival
Buckhannon (472-9036)
May 14-15 Buffalo Heritage Days
Buffalo (937-2755)
May 14-16 Seige of Fort Randolph
Point Pleasant (674-2141)
May 15-16 Elizabethtown Festival
Moundsville (845-2552)
May 22 Kanawha Valley Sustainability Fair
Charleston (941-3281)
May 24-30 Webster County Woodchopping Festival
Webster Springs (847-7666 or 847-2145)
May 27-29 Three Rivers Festival
Fairmont (363-2625)
May 27-31 Dandelion Festival
White Sulphur Springs (536-9206)
May 28-30 34th Vandalia Gathering
State Capitol Complex/Charleston (558-0162)
May 28-30 Spirit of Grafton Celebration
Grafton (265-3950)
June 1-5 Bend Area Gospel Jubilee
Ripley (373-2286)
June 3-5 Calhoun County Wood Festival
Grantsville (354-6671)
June 4-6 Blue & Gray Reunion
Philippi (457-2368)
June 5 Appalachian Music Festival
Tamarack/Beckley (1-888-262-7225)
June 5 Mountain Music Festival
Caretta (875-3418)
June 5 Pattyfest
Morgantown (864-0105)
June 11-13 Ronceverte River Festival
Ronceverte (647-7400)
June 11-13 Spring Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)
June 15-19 W.Va. Coal Festival
Madison (369-9118)
June 17-20 W.Va. State Folk Festival
Glenville (462-5000)
June 18-20 Hometown Mountain Heritage Festival
Ansted (658-5065)
June 18-20 Mid-Ohio Valley Multi-Cultural Festival
Parkersburg (428-5554)
June 18-20 Old Central City Days Festival
West Huntington (544-4880)
June 18-27 FestivALL
Charleston (364-8972)
June 23-26 Music in the Mountains Bluegrass Festival
Summersville (872-3145)
June 24-26 W.Va. Quilt Festival
Summersville (610-6098)
June 24-27 St. Albans Riverfest
St. Albans (722-2865)
June 25-27 Little Levels Heritage Fair
Hillsboro (1-800-336-7009)
July 1-3 Gassaway Days
Gassaway (364-5111)
July 1-3 Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-7860)
July 1-3 Point Pleasant Sternwheel Regatta
Point Pleasant (593-2404)
July 7-11 44th Annual Pioneer Days
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)

(continued on inside back cover)

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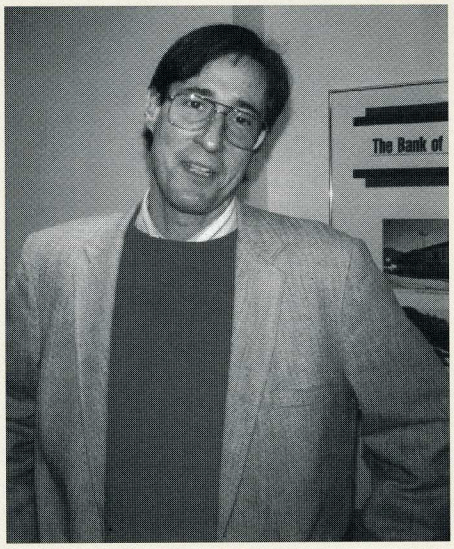
From the Editor



Dr. Stuart McGehee. Photograph courtesy of Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

Stuart McGehee was a joy and an inspiration. News of his passing in Bluefield on January 12 spread fast among his academic colleagues, students, fellow historians, musical friends, associates, and admirers. His apparently self-inflicted demise was shocking, according to one commentator, as Stuart was wont to be.

Energetic, intelligent, creative, and independent, Dr. McGehee gave West Virginia the gift of his indomitable presence for more than 25 years. He was born in Alabama in 1954, the son of a preacher. After earning a master's and doctorate in American history from the University of Virginia, he taught at Bluefield College, where he was named "Professor of the Year" in 1994.

Stuart loved Bluefield and everything about it, especially its rich and coal-laden history. In 1984, he was named archivist at the new Eastern Regional Coal Archives, where he became the preeminent historian of the Pocahontas coalfields. Concerned with what he saw as a distorted and one-sided study of the subject by other historians and activists, Stuart focused his attention on the positive side of the coal industry and the jobs, money, culture, and benefits it brought — and continues to bring, in his view — to southern West Virginia.

I first met Stuart in 1997, when I became editor of GOLDENSEAL. Stuart was teaching West Virginia History at West Virginia State College (now University) and routinely assigned his students to research, write, and submit manuscripts to GOLDENSEAL. You have seen many of these student manuscripts in print, including two in our Winter 2009 issue. Stuart also wrote numerous stories for the magazine himself.

As a teacher, Stuart was without equal. He "exploded" into the classroom, as one former student put it, challenging and engaging students, and making the history of West Virginia and the southern coalfields the vibrant and fascinating topic it should be.

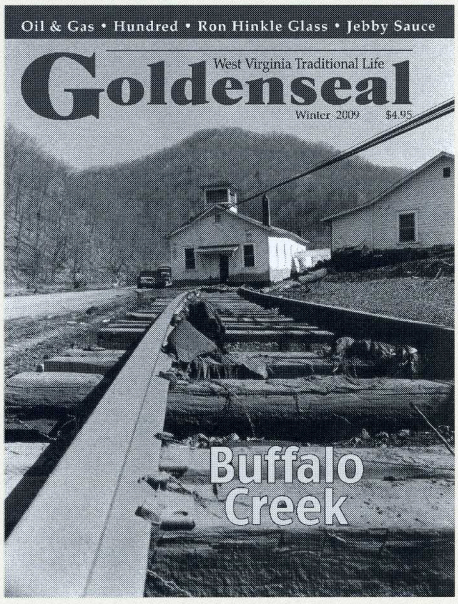
My favorite memory of Stuart involves attending the annual Coal Show with him several years ago. This was a huge gathering of the coal industry and its suppliers, held at a fairgrounds and meeting center near Bluefield. I spent the day with Stuart and enjoyed every minute of it, listening to him talk, sparring with him about the coal industry, and discussing baseball, food, and music. Walking with Stuart McGehee through the floor of the Coal Show was much like walking with Bill Clinton through the floor of the Democratic National Convention. I was indeed in the company of royalty.

Farewell, Stuart. You are sorely missed.

John Lilly

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.



Buffalo Creek

December 29, 2009
Lorado, West Virginia
Editor·
I received my copy of GOLDENSEAL. [See "Echoes of Buffalo Creek", Winter 2009] I am a survivor. I was 17, married, and expecting twins on that black morning of February 26, 1972. I lost my mom and dad, aunt, and two first cousins, along with my two best friends. My father and mother are William and Lotta Mae Webb Jarrell. My aunt, Margaret Jarrell. Karen Jarrell and Patrick Jarrell, my cousins. Berma Jo and Anita Owens, my best friends. They were sisters. All died that morning.

On page 21, that is my trailer up against the mountain with the house in it. That was in lower Lundale. On page 20, the old woman with glasses is my sister's husband's grandmother, and she is holding my niece. The woman is Alley Jacobs, and the little girl is Ronda Hoosier. I had never seen that picture. It brought back a lot of memories, some good, some bad.

The flood is a part of my life; it's not who I am. The people on Buffalo Creek, before and now, are proud people, loving people, and will help anyone who needs help. I am proud to call Buffalo Creek my home. I live not far from where I grew up. It's not the same, but if I close my eyes I can see each community as it was before that day.
Thank you,
Deborah Mays

Noble Conner

December 16, 2009
Via e-mail
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
Your most recent issue covering the Buffalo Creek disaster was outstanding not only for its coverage of that event, but also its financial and social aftermath.

For me personally, however, the article on Noble Conner caught my eye immediately. [See "Magic and Memories: Recalling Noble and Louise Conner," by Betty Conner McClung; Winter 2009] Mr. Noble Conner's son Gene Conner built the house that my wife and I live in, located on Jane Street in Charleston. My late wife, Pamla Umberger, and I bought this home when I retired from active ministry in 1999 We loved the house. My contractor, who did some renovations, said it represented a quality of construction more like 1919 than 1949, when it was built. Mr. Conner also built stone retaining walls all around the house and left a personal mark, as his wife Ann's initial is incorporated in the fireplace woodwork.

It is a small world, enhanced by GOLDENSEAL and by modern communication devices, such as e-mail.
Lawton Posey



Noble Conner with grandson Bernard and dummies "Oscar" and "Windy Higgins" in 1944.

One-Room Christmas

December 14, 2009
Lawton, Oklahoma
Editor·
Enjoyed the article in the Winter 2009 issue, "Christmas In a One-Room School," by Norma Payne. I graduated from Belington High School in 1950 and have very fond memories from there. The excellent education I received has benefitted me in so many ways. The teachers at BHS were the finest there were.
Sincerely,
Raymond A. Chidester



Mort Gamble and clown Middy Streeter in 1979.

Circus!

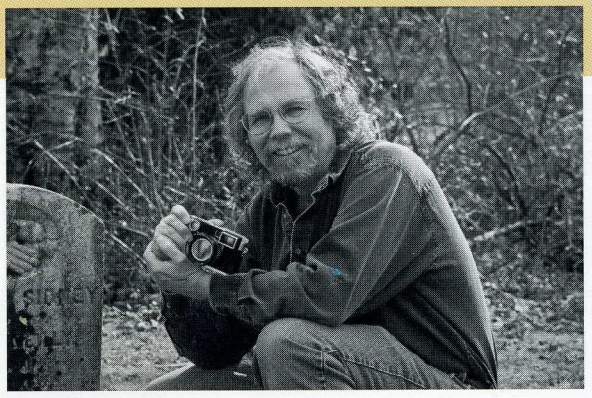
November 2, 2009
Via e-mail
New York, New York
Editor·
Even though I am highly biased (my name and photograph having appeared in the article), I would like to compliment you on publishing Mort Gamble's splendid piece on his love of the circus. [See "Circus!. Life Under the Big Top", Fall 2009] His prose is filled with the kind of insights that only someone who has pursued a lifelong passion could offer. I can imagine that many a reader who has not attended a circus in decades might have unexpectedly fond and possibly profound thoughts about the rich tradition of circuses in West Virginia after reading Mort's article. You'll have to take my words with a generous grain of salt, though, because Mort is someone whose friendship I will always treasure.
Sincerely,
Middy Streeter
(former circus entertainer)

Renewal Mailbag

October 19, 2009
Eaton, Ohio
Editor·
Thank you for continuing to publish such high-quality articles and photographs. Your stories have been a great source of information for our travels through the Mountain State. GOLDENSEAL has helped me learn about the wonderful place my relatives called home, before coming north to Ohio. Thanks for the memories!
Sincerely,
B J Price

December 11, 2009
Helvetia, West Virginia
Editor·
I've enjoyed the GOLDENSEAL magazine for nearly 30 years after being given the magazine by a neighbor. I'm 89 years old but have recently been confined in my home following a severe car accident plus crippling arthritis. Spent most of my life in West Virginia. Love reading about my home state.
Bernice R. Morgan

Michael Keller Departs



Michael Keller. Photograph by Hilary Keller.

Michael Keller, longtime photographer for the Division of Culture and History and regular GOLDENSEAL contributor for the past 28 years, is moving on to another job. Mike's excellent photographs first appeared in our Summer 1982 edition, and have graced every issue of the magazine since Spring 1983. Over the years, he shot approximately 60 covers, including the current one, and digitally colored or hand-tinted three others. In addition, he authored two stories.

Mike attended Virginia Commonwealth, Marshall, and West Virginia State, eventually receiving a master's degree in humanities from West Virginia College of Graduate Studies. A self-taught photographer, he worked with the West Virginia Department of Highways, serving in their print shop as a camera operator.

Mike came to Culture and History in 1981, as an assistant photographer. After the departure of Rick Lee in 1984, Mike was promoted, eventually becoming director of photographic services for the agency. His technical instincts led him to digital photography, which in turn led him to become skilled at computer technology. He designed the first Culture and History Web site and has managed GOLDENSEAL's Web presence from the outset.

Over the years, Mike took countless thousands of pictures for the agency, many of them for GOLDENSEAL. Artistic and cantankerous, Mike has been an important part of our work here, and we will miss him. He takes a new position with the West Virginia Humanities Council, joining former editor Ken Sullivan and former assistant editor Debby Sonis. Mike will work as digital media editor and Web master. We wish him every success!

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.



Samuel King competes in Irish road bowling. Photograph by Denton King.

Irish Spring Festival

The 29th annual Irish Spring Festival in Ireland, Lewis County, will begin on Sunday, March 14, with a flag-raising ceremony at 11.30 a.m., followed by the Pot 'o Luck Dinner at 1:00 p.m. and the Psalms of Ireland gospel sing at 2:30 p.m.

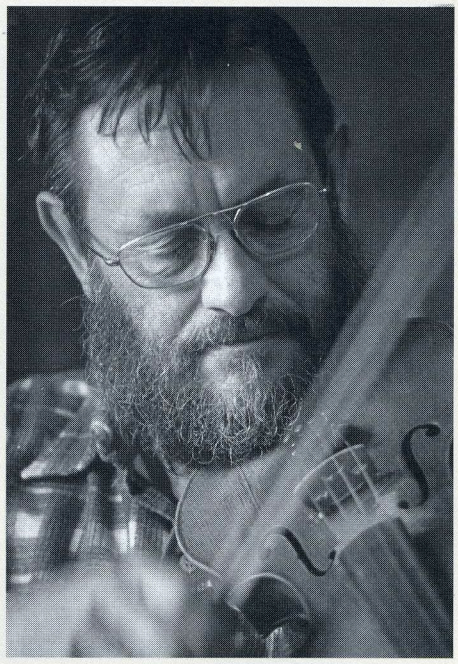
The festivities resume on Wednesday, March 17, and continue through the following weekend with activities, including the King and Queen Coronation, an Irish harp workshop, a greenery stroll, Irish road bowling, and a Snake Chase (10K walk/run). Other activities include a square dance, kite flying, horseshoe pitching, a hunting dog demonstration, and a bike tour. The vernal equinox and official declaration of spring will be on Saturday, March 20, at 1:32 p.m.

For more information, phone (304)269-7328; on the Web at www.angelfire.com/wv/irishspringfestival.

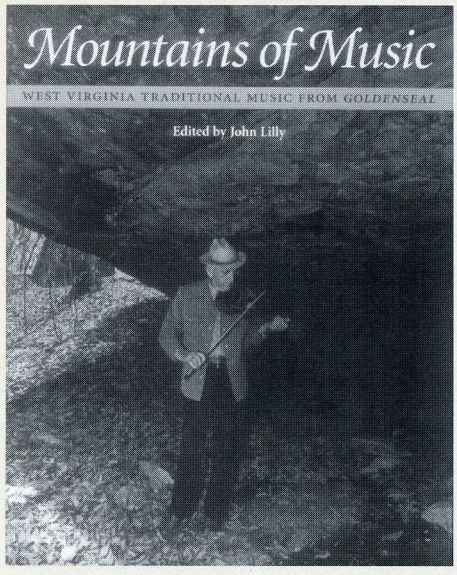
Franklin George Gathering

The Franklin George Old-Time Music Gathering will be held April 23-24 at Camp Sheppard, Gandeeville. The highlight of the weekend schedule is the music and stories of Franklin George, with other activities, such as a black powder shoot and Irish road bowling, on the agenda, as well.

Vandalia Award recipients



Franklin George. Photograph by Rick Lee.



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

The book is available from the GOLDENSEAL office for $29.95, plus $2 shipping per book; West Virginia residents please add 6% sales tax (total $33.75 per book, including tax and shipping). Add *Mountains of Music* to your book collection today!

— — — — — — — — — — —

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

-or-

Charge my

____VISA ____MasterCard

#_____

Exp. Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL.
Send to:
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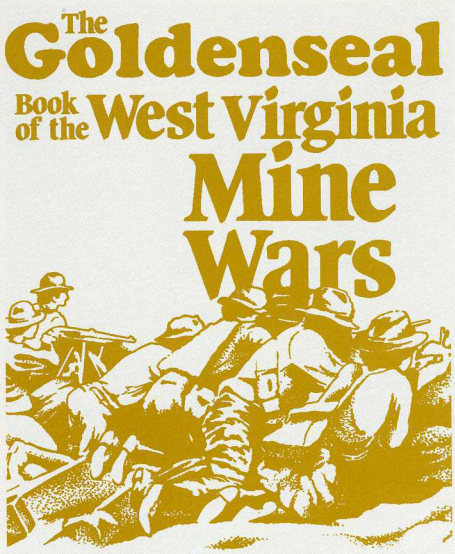

The West Virginia Mine Wars were a formative experience in our state's history and a landmark event in the history of American labor. GOLDENSEAL has published some of the best articles ever written on this subject. In 1991, former editor Ken Sullivan worked with Pictorial Histories Publishing Company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

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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

Frank and Jane George are longtime participants in West Virginia traditional music and craft activities. [See "'Grandpaw Got Me Started' Frank George and the Old-Time Music," by Michael Meador; Spring 1983.]

Admission to the gathering is free. Camping and cabin space are also available at no charge. Food will be available in the kitchen at a reasonable price. For further information, phone Larry Dent at (304)927-8170; or visit www.thefranklingeorge gathering.com.

Traditional Music Day

The Pricketts Fort Memorial Foundation will sponsor a Traditional Music Day on Saturday, May 8, from 10:00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Scheduled performances will take place inside the Visitor's Center all day, and informal jam sessions will take place throughout the park. The public is invited to bring instruments and join in the music, or just rest a spell and listen.

Food concessions will be available. There is no charge for the entertainment, though tours of the fort and the Job Prickett House do require a ticket.

For more information, call (304)363-3030; on the Web at www prickettsfort.org. Musicians interested in playing may phone Darlene Fox at (304)782-1657 or e-mail dulci4276@verizon.net.

2010 U.S. Census

Forms for the 2010 U.S. Census will be mailed to homes across West Virginia during the month of March, in preparation for Census Day, April 1, 2010. This year, the form consists of only 10 questions and should only take a few minutes to complete.

The U.S. Constitution requires that a census be taken every 10 years to determine the number of citizens in each state. Statistics from the census help determine how federal funding is used each year for schools, job training, hospitals, senior centers, and public works projects. The data collected also help determine the number of seats each state occupies in the U.S. House of Representatives. Authorities hope to enumerate as many individuals as possible to ensure that our state receives its share of federal money.

For more information, visit http://2010.census.gov/2010census/



Pricketts Fort.



South Charleston Interpretive Center and LaBelle Theater. Photograph by Kim Johnson.

Interpretive Center

The South Charleston Interpretive Center, located next to the historic LaBelle Theater on D Street, is now open. The federally funded center documents South Charleston's industrial history, the landmark Mound, and the Midland Trail.

A replica of the Adena Mound is prominently displayed, featuring Native American artifacts from the Kanawha Valley, and interactive kiosks. There are also detailed photographs of many artifacts found during excavations conducted by the Smithsonian Institution in the area during the 1880's.

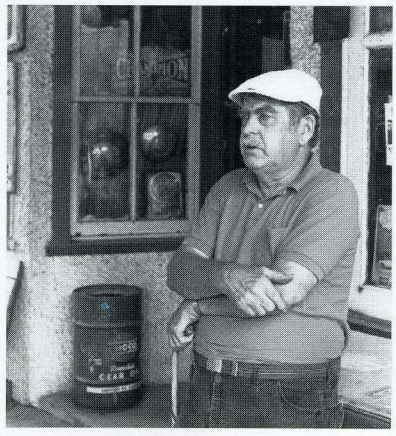
The center's Midland Trail exhibit illustrates the history of the trail, which is one of the oldest roads in America. The trail crosses some of the most rugged terrain in West Virginia. Scenic attractions along the way include the New River Gorge Bridge, Babcock and Hawks Nest state parks, and the historic Glen Ferris Inn.

Another exhibit at the center depicts the Banner Window Glass Factory and the Belgian glassworkers who came to South Charleston in 1907 to produce handmade glass.

The South Charleston Interpretive Center is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., and Saturday from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, phone (304)720-9847; on the Web at http://cityofsouthcharleston.com.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Ed Weaver, unofficial historian of Burlington, Mineral County, passed away November 3, 2009 He was 78. A lover and collector of old cars and antiquities of all descriptions, Ed maintained his private Service Station Museum along U.S. Route 50, on the outskirts of Burlington and next door to his home. He and his wife, Catherine, painted cars to make a living, while Ed also did auto body work and dealt in antique machinery. He quit that work in 1991. Ed's ad hoc collection of do-hickeys, whatnot, and anything with wheels was a labor of love that saw visitors from across the country and around the world. The man and his memorabilia were featured in a GOLDENSEAL story titled, "'Not a Going Business' Ed Weaver's Service Station Museum," by Bill Moulden; Fall 1993.



Ed Weaver. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.



William O. Macoughtry, Jr. Photograph by Dana Spitzer.

William O. Macoughtry, Jr., of Jefferson County was one of the last known witnesses to the famous Mine War trials of 1922. At the time of the trials, Macoughtry's father was Jefferson County sheriff and his uncle was a special deputy, as the courts handled 1,217 indictments related to the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain. Only 12 years old at the time, Macoughtry observed the proceedings and paid close attention to local citizens, as they reacted to the trials and the extensive publicity they generated. He shared his memories and observations with GOLDENSEAL readers in an article titled, "'I Like to Tell This Story' William O Macoughtry, Jr., Recalls the Treason Trials," by Daniel J Friend, Summer 2006.

Born in 1910, Mr. Macoughtry was a farmer, educator, and musician. He passed away on January 2, 2010, a few days shy of his 100th birthday.

Phyllis and Carl Guthrie

By Kate Long

A Wartime Romance

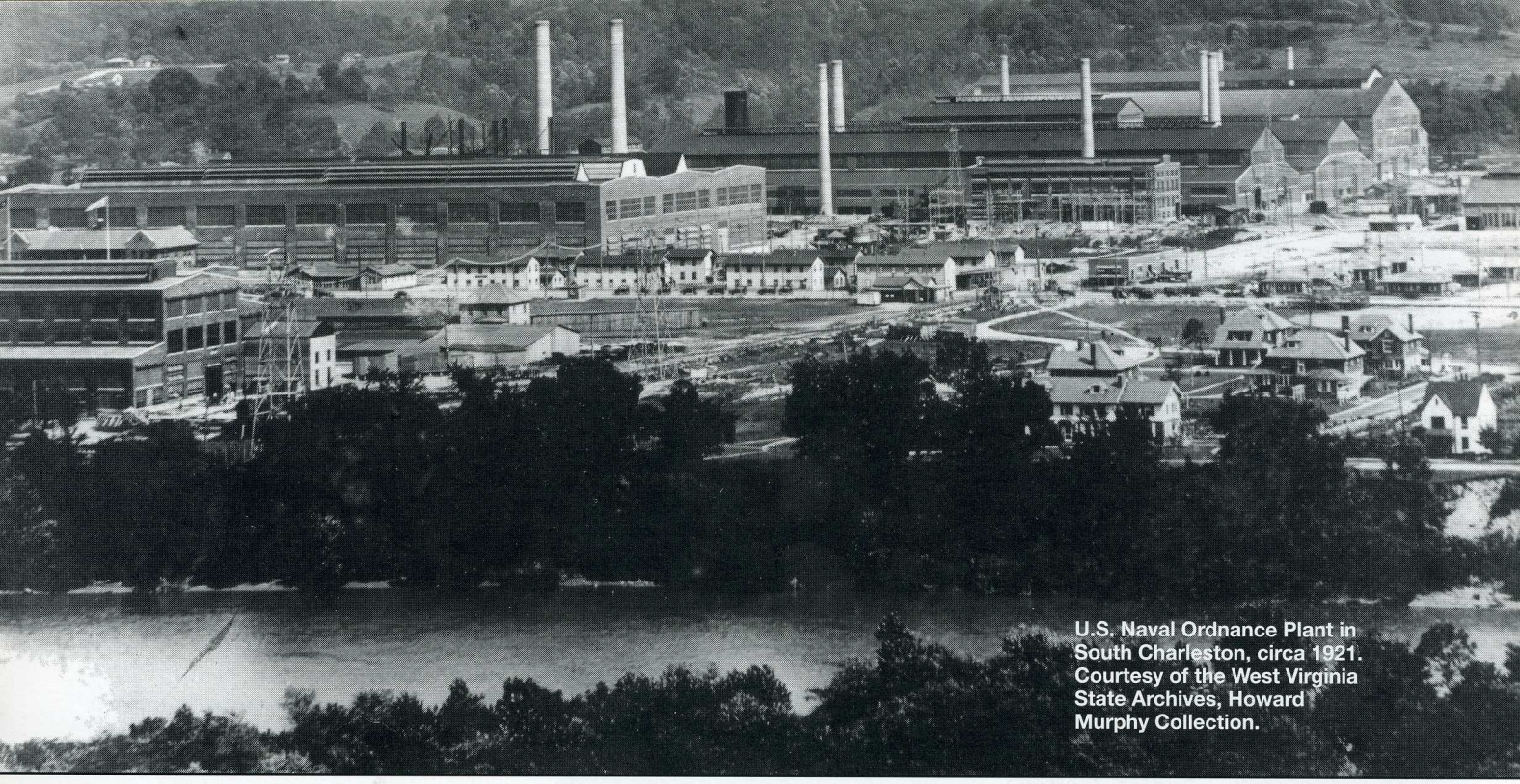


Phyllis and Carl Guthrie at their home in Summersville, holding a portrait of themselves from the 1940's. Photograph by Michael Keller.

In March 1942, at the height of World War II, 20-year-old Carl Guthrie looked out the window of a troop train as it pulled out of the Charleston railway station. "And there was my pregnant wife, Phyllis, running down the tracks after the train, waving her arms, calling, 'Goodbye, goodbye!'" he said from the couple's home in Summersville. "I'll never forget that sight."

Carl and hundreds of other West Virginia draftees and enlistees were headed for army training in Ohio. "I was only 19, a wartime bride," the former Phyllis Mobrey recalled. "I knew he had to go, but I could hardly stand it, so I took out running after the train." Carl is 86 now, and Phyllis is 85. Sixty-eight years have passed since then, "but I remember those war years clear as day," she said.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. On December 27, high school sweethearts Phyllis and Carl got married. They had planned to wait, but the war changed everything. "After the United States got into the war, we



U.S. Naval Ordnance Plant in South Charleston, circa 1921. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Howard Murphy Collection.

didn't see any reason to wait," she said.

Pearl Harbor was bombed on a Sunday. Carl was working overtime that day, climbing telephone poles for the Chesapeake & Potomac phone company, replacing steel telephone wire with copper between Charleston and The Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs. [See, "*The West Virginia WWII Home Front*: Ashford General Hospital. The Greenbrier Goes to War," by Louis E. Keefer; Fall 1995.]

They'd been working on that job about a month. "When I got off the truck at the parking garage that night, there were paperboys yelling 'Extra! Extra!' out on the street," Carl said. "It was Pearl Harbor. We were in the war."

Phyllis heard the news at church. Nearly three weeks later, Carl drove to St. Albans to pick her up. "I was an only child, and we told my mother we were going to Kentucky and get married," Phyllis said. "And Mom just said, 'You better know what you're doing, because this is wartime.'"

They spent their $200 in savings on furniture and set up housekeeping in a South Charleston apartment. Carl knew he'd be going to war, so he had applied for army flight school, but he got drafted first. After he left for basic training, Phyllis moved in with her mother and father to have their baby.

She was worried and depressed, apart from Carl. "Mom said, 'Phyllis, you'd better go to work and make some money. You're going to need it when Carl comes back. I'll take care of the baby while you work.'

On December 27, high school sweethearts Phyllis and Carl got married. They had planned to wait, but the war changed everything.

"So I got a job at the Naval Ordnance Plant, and I was really glad I did. It made me feel like I was helping win the war and maybe bringing Carl home sooner."

When Phyllis stepped into the huge factory along MacCorkle Avenue in South Charleston, she walked into another world. "It ran three shifts a day, seven days a week, in three huge buildings on both sides of the road," she said. "Thousands of people worked there. They roughed out the gun barrels on one side in the Carnegie steel plant. On the other side, General Machinery finished the barrels, made the nozzles, and fit it all together."

During World War II, MacCorkle Avenue was alive, 24 hours a day, Phyllis said. "Every time a shift changed, even in the middle of the night, the street was full of people. Buses were coming in from the countryside. The lights burned all night. People were stopping in restaurants along MacCorkle Avenue and getting their lunch packs. There were all kinds of shops and car dealers, businesses.

"People came from out in the country, from different counties, Fayette County, Raleigh, Boone County, the Huntington area. The pay was good, because you got overtime. Most people had defense gas allotments, and some would carpool. A lot had little buses that brought them."

Inside the plant, everyone worked in one huge room. "It was like a circus in there, all that racket, incredibly noisy," she said. "They had big cranes operating, lifting the barrels, and they were moving those big-as-this-house gun barrels from one station to another, getting them ready to ship out. The cranes had whistles, and the little carts pull-



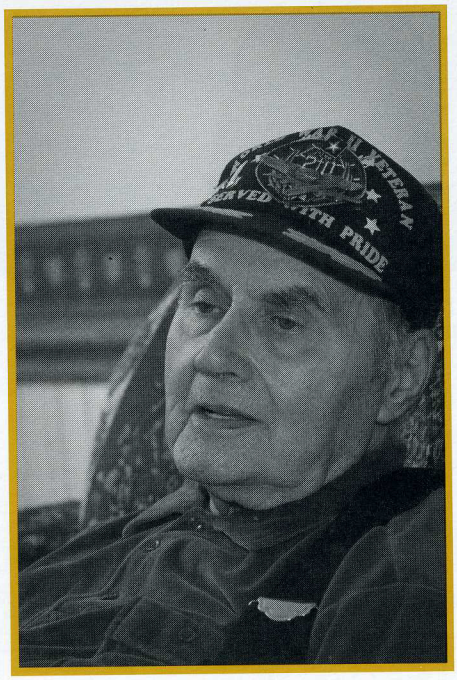
Phyllis and Carl wed in December 1941 shortly after the U.S. entered World War II. Carl was drafted a few months later, and they saw each other only three times in the next two-and-a-half years. Photographs by Michael Keller.

ing stuff had horns. It was always BEEP BEEP get out of the way and the cranes going RRR-RRRR.

"The cranes were on tracks, and they'd ring a bell when you got too close to them. If they'd dropped one of those gun barrels on you, you'd have been smashed to smithers."

The work schedule was rough. "It was sort of like being in the army yourself," she said. "We got lunch and bathroom breaks, and that was it. Most people brought bag lunches. But they had what they called food carts, like they do in hospitals, drinks and crackers and candy bars."

The gun barrels were 20 feet long and about 10 inches in diameter, meant to be attached to the big battleships. "They'd turn those 20-foot barrels straight up and down, hoist them with the cranes. The ceiling of the Naval Ordnance Plant was so high, you could do that kind of thing in there.



"A lot of the older workers, it'd be too much for them. They'd have heart attacks on the job. It was really hot in there. A lot of the employees had never worked a job before, so they didn't understand about working. They'd work awhile, then they wouldn't show up. They'd come back thinking they had a job, and they didn't, because the plant had to be in operation all the time."

As a teenager, Phyllis had worked at the dime store in St. Albans for a dime a day. "I was always a good employee," she said. "I showed up on time."

The plant supplied all the big firepower for the U.S. Navy, and security was very tight. "You couldn't just walk in the door, even if they knew you. You had to go through a fence and a gate. You'd see guards with guns on both sides. Same thing when you walked through the middle door. You had to state who you were and what your purpose was for being there. I had a badge and a number. If there was any suspicion, they'd let you know."

Phyllis and her baby lived with her mother and father, a few blocks from the plant. Her father left his truck driving job with the city to work for Carnegie Steel on the other side of MacCorkle Avenue. "At Carnegie Steel, they roughed out the gun barrels," Phyllis said. "Then they'd ship them across the street, and we'd finish them, hone them, shine them, make the cuts, and put the nozzle in the barrel. A nozzle was about two feet wide.

"We all did our part. Dad was working day shift, and I was working midnights. Mom was cooking breakfast for him and supper for me and awake half the time with [baby] Steve. So she had a time, too."

Talking to Rosie



Thanks! Plain and Simple is a new organization that seeks to further the well-being of West Virginia's veterans. Among the group's many initiatives is an ambitious program to interview and document the work of civilian women during the war years, the so-called Rosie the Riveters.

To date, Thanks! Plain and Simple has interviewed approximately 20 "Rosies," out of the 100-some women they have identified from the state who worked in defense plants during World War II. Plans are underway for a documentary film, slated for release in 2011.

Phyllis Guthrie is one of these women who was interviewed by Thanks! Plain and Simple. Her information was referred to GOLDENSEAL; author Kate Long subsequently conducted her own interviews with Phyllis and Carl Guthrie for the accompanying article.

Special thanks to Anne Montague of Thanks! Plain and Simple. For more information about the organization and its work, or to refer a "Rosie," phone (304)776-4743 or visit www.thanksplainandsimple.org.

They had no car, so they walked to work. "We had wartime rationing: coffee and sugar and shoes and gas. I was on my feet all day, so I traded my gas coupons for shoe coupons, because when I first went to work, I had to walk all over that plant, inspecting machines. I'd wear out my shoes.

"I started as an inspector, going out in the plant," Phyllis said. Soon she was promoted to inspection of the finished gun barrels.

"That was a lot of pressure on an inspector," she said. If the inspector rejected a gun barrel, the company didn't get paid. "They had thousands and thousands of dollars of labor in a gun by the time it got to me, and if it wasn't right, we'd have to scrap it. I mostly inspected the hones with depth gauges, to see how wide they were. There couldn't be any burrs, or the gun could injure the men who were firing it. When the gun left our plant, it was a finished product. A battleship would have three or four of those big things, made in South Charleston."

The plant supplied all the big firepower for the U.S. Navy, and security was very tight.

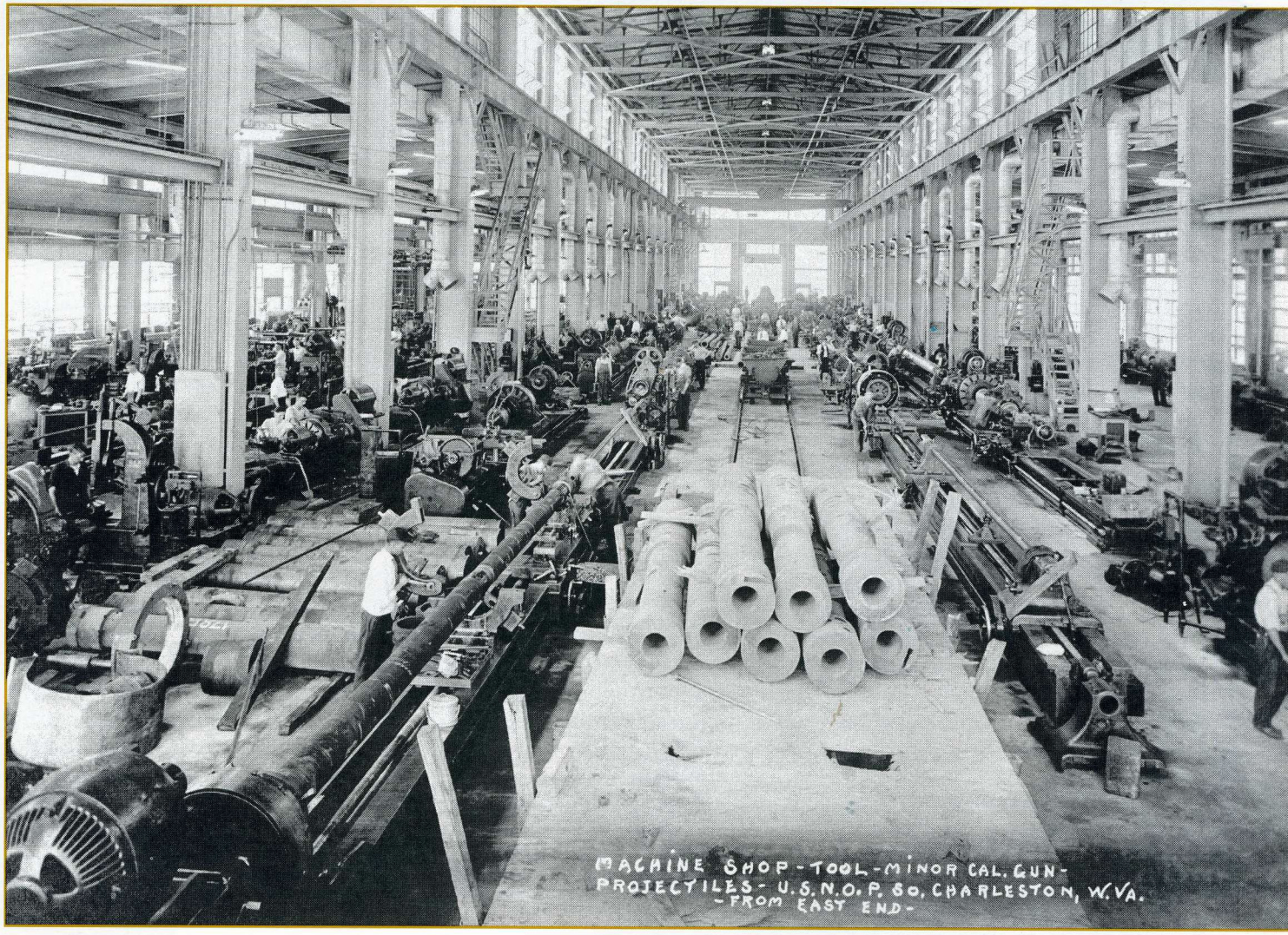
Phyllis was known as a tough inspector. "I took it very seriously," she said. "I'd tell them I had a husband in the service and cousins and all, and I wanted to do everything I could to help them. It was important for those barrels to be right."

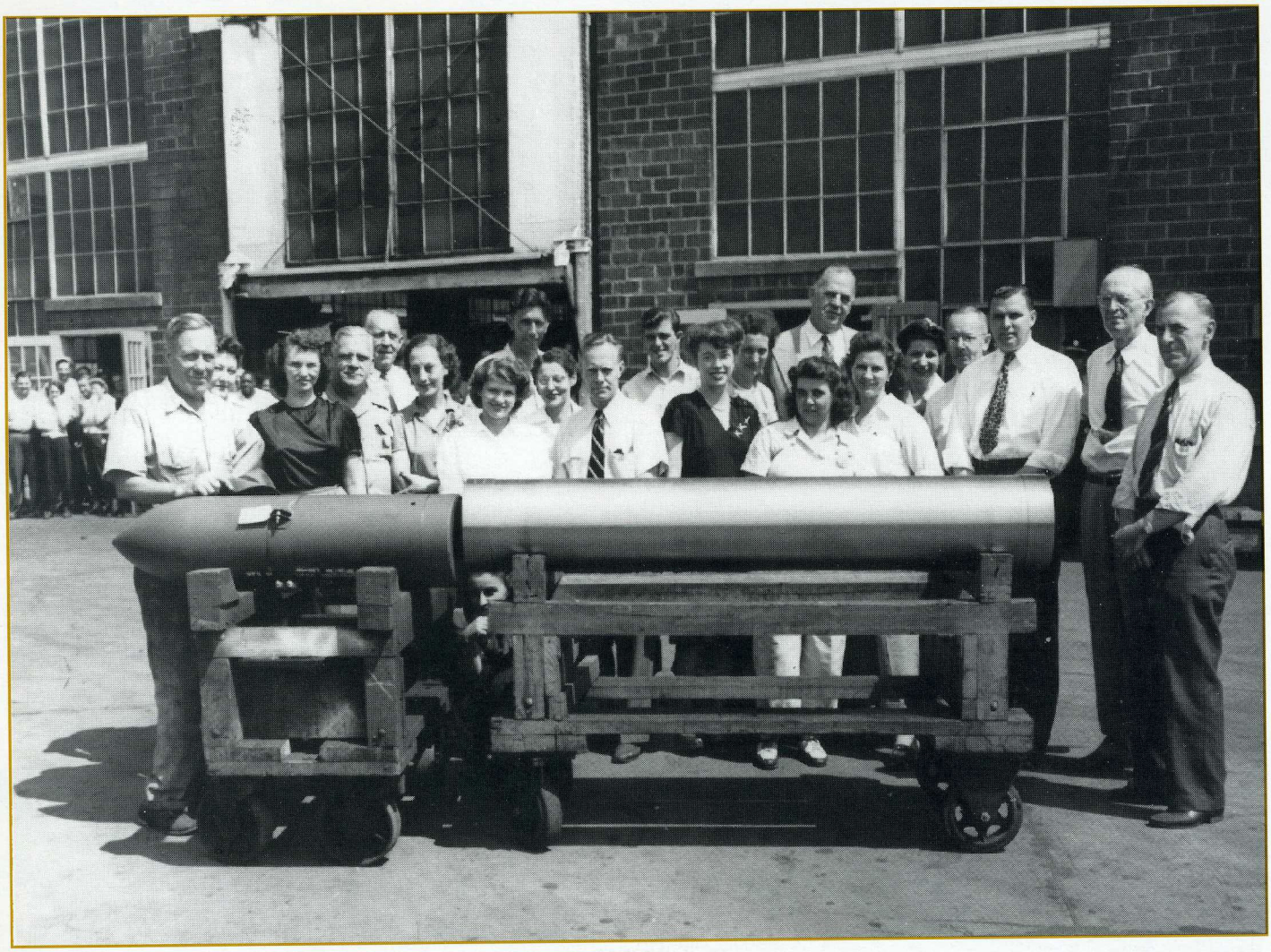
Once, Phyllis scrapped a gun barrel because the depth wasn't right. "I wasn't going to have the shell come back and hit the man who was operating it," she said. "And some of the workers were mad at me for that, so they called me to inspect another one."

Warm oil ran through the barrel as the workers made the cuts, "so you had to clasp the cutters before the inspection, to stop the oil from flowing out. And I asked them, 'Are all the cutters clasped?' And they said 'yes.'

"So I stuck my face down there and put my gauge down the barrel. And soon as I did, here came all this warm oil shooting out of the barrel. It gave me an oil bath. I was covered. I thought the plant had blown up on me till I saw they were all laughing. I had to walk

Inside the U.S. Naval Ordnance Plant machine shop, the largest machine shop in the world during the early 1940's. Photograph by E.N. Cullums, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, George Holbrook Collection.





Workers at the Ordnance Plant pose with a large artillery shell, made at the South Charleston factory. At its peak, the Ordnance Plant employed 7,400 workers, half of them women. Photograph courtesy West Virginia State Archives, B.D. Whitehair Collection.

home like that."

But she didn't let up. "My number was 87 I told one of my cousins who was career navy, 'If you ever see the inspection number 87, you'll know it was me, and you'll know it's right.' He never saw my number, but he saw the stamp where it was inspected in South Charleston."

At one point, she went six months with no days off. As she went about her job, Phyllis was always thinking of Carl. He had been accepted into army pilot school by then and had been sent to Syracuse to begin flight training. "We wrote a lot of letters to keep in touch. You'd look for the mailman. One day, you'd get one a week old, the next day four days old, the next two weeks old. There was no phone service to speak of, so we didn't get many chances to talk on the phone."

She saw him three times in two-and-a-half years. When Carl was sent to Ocala, Florida, for advanced training, Phyllis and his sister caught a bus with the baby. They stood up all the way to Florida because so many people were traveling. "People with babies and everything," she said. "It was crowded, because of the gas rationing, mostly people going to see their soldiers or guys being transferred from one place to another.

"They quit making the gun barrels the day the war ended."

"We talked a lot, and I realized how blessed I was. Some of those wives didn't have money for clothes or anything. Nobody had much money. When we got to Ocala, we found out you could get all the orange juice you could drink for a nickel, big pitchers. So that's what we ate while we were there, orange juice."

After the baby started walking, Phyllis changed from midnight shifts to the 4-to-12 shift at the ordnance plant. "I could be with Steve that way, and it made it better for Mom. She could get out, too. Mom would see a plane going over, and Steve would say, 'Daddy in the sky!' And he'd get out and wave that little hand at the plane going over."

Carl got his wings as a navigator in July 1945. The war ended a month later, in August 1945. Carl had been assigned to a flight crew on a B-29 If the war had not ended, they would have been flying from Tinian Island to Tokyo.

"We were supposed to bomb Tokyo from 30,000 feet," Carl said. "That's what we were going to do. The B-29 was the only plane capable of doing that. We'd fly 1,400 miles one way, over water all the way, except for two islands. A pretty dangerous mission. A crew consisted of 11 men, and I was going to be the navigator.

"But on August 6, we dropped the atomic bomb. On August 9, we dropped another one. And on August 19, Japan surrendered. In October, they told us we had a choice to stay in or get out. By then, I was a second lieutenant. What I was trained to do, I did it, and I did it well. But what I wanted to do was go home."

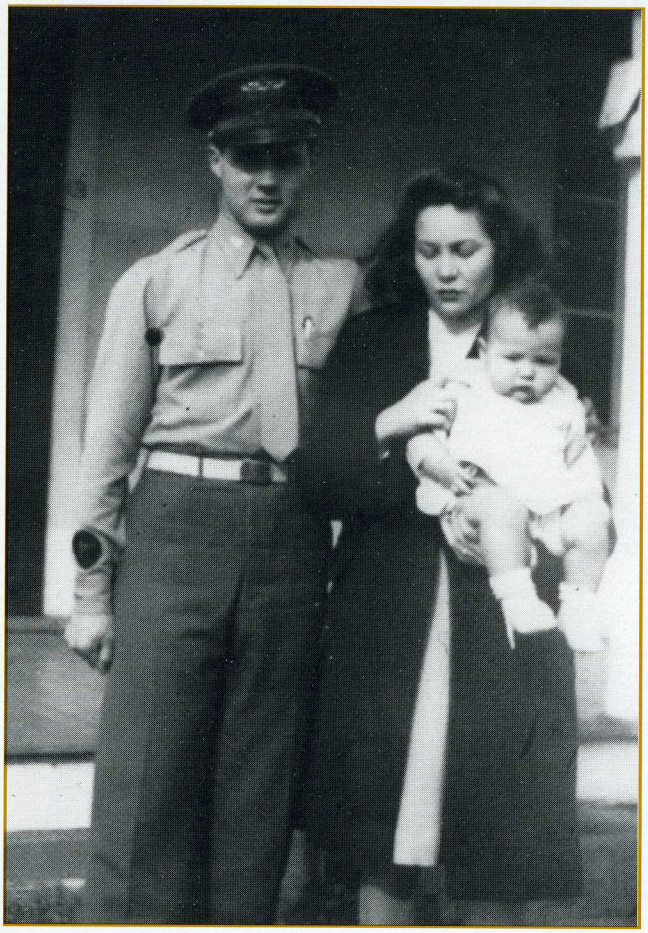
Phyllis was at work when the news broke. "When we heard the war was over, everyone was throwing their hats and ringing bells, and saying, 'The heck with this job,' and 'We're going to celebrate,' and 'We're not working seven days a week anymore.' There was dancing and hugging and goodbyes and see you later.

"After that, there were no more gun barrels to be made. It was just 'Get this out of the way, take this there, put this in the garbage where the "dead men" are.' The 'dead men' were the barrels that didn't pass.

"They quit making the gun barrels the day the war ended," Phyllis said. "Suddenly, it was quiet. The cranes stopped. It was just real nice, really. Lots of people were laid off right away. So there were a lot of people I never saw again. I took about two-and-a-half weeks off, then went back for about another six months, helping them clean things out and salvage and ship stuff."

Phyllis, toddler Steve, Carl's parents, and "a gang of Carl's relatives" were on the railway station platform when Carl's troop train pulled in. "There were a lot of people waiting for the train on the platform," Phyllis said. "Crying and dancing and hugging and kissing and little kids backing off from their dads. They didn't know them, and they were crying for their mother, holding onto their hands."

Little Steve didn't know Carl, so he hung back. "But Carl has a way with kids, and pretty soon, it was fine," Phyllis recalled. Living with her parents, Phyllis had saved enough money to put a payment down on a house, "so we moved in and started cooking."



Carl was home on leave visiting his wife and young son in South Charleston when this snapshot was taken in 1944, photographer unknown.

Carl had a job waiting for him with the telephone company "They made sure to equal the pay I was making in the service," he said. "And they added the two-and-a-half years I spent in the service to my telephone company service, too. That helped with my pension."

He went back to being a lineman, a cable splicer. After about two months, he was promoted to foreman, then general manager for West Virginia. When he retired in 1984, he was division manager for support services for all of the C&P service area, overseeing 5,000 employees.

Phyllis never did see one of the guns she inspected mounted on a ship. "But I knew we had armed them," she said.

Carl often thinks about the men who died and his good luck that the war ended when it did. "We lost 400,000 people in World War II. The flying personnel, we lost 30 percent of them. We lost them."

The ordnance plant fell idle after World War II, then re-opened on a much smaller scale during the Korean War. In 1961, FMC Corporation bought it from the government and remodeled it to build M-113 armored personnel carriers for the Vietnam War.

"My cousin was the caretaker five or 10 years," Phyllis said. "Nothing was in there. But most of the buildings are still there. There's a lot of history inside them."

KATE LONG is a Fayette County native, now living in Charleston. Kate holds a bachelor's degree in English from West Virginia University and a master's degree in special education from George Washington University. An experienced writer, she has won national awards for her work with *The Charleston Gazette* and West Virginia Public Radio. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our January-March 1979 issue.



A crowd gathers on August 30, 1920, as Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels inspects the Ordnance Plant in South Charleston on the third anniversary of its ground breaking. The plant was completed in 1919. Detail of panoramic photograph, courtesy of the South Charleston Museum.

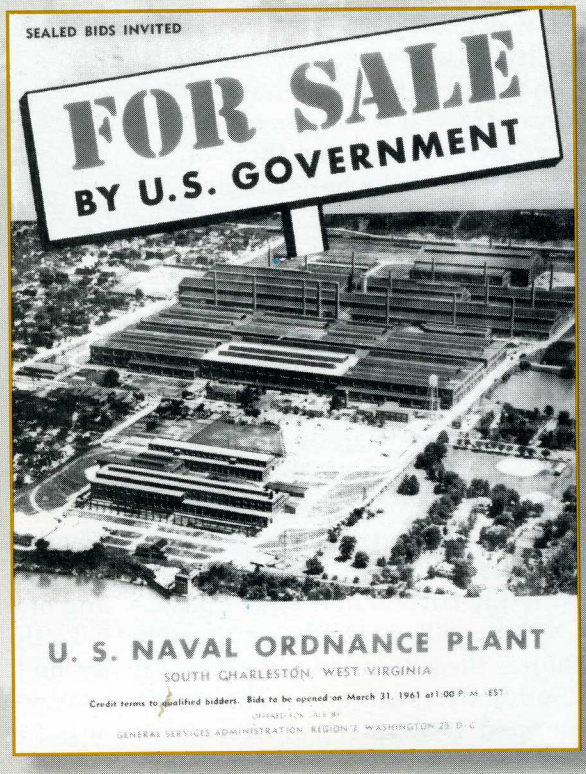
U.S. Naval Ordnance Plant

A Brief History

Nestled between U.S. Route 60 and Interstate 64 in South Charleston lies one of West Virginia's largest and most historic industrial facilities. Comprising more than one million square feet of floor space, the facility today is called the South Charleston Industrial Park. During World War II, however, it was known as the U.S. Naval Ordnance Plant and at one time produced more naval armaments than all other U.S. factories combined. Clearly, South Charleston and the Ordnance Center played a vital role in the U.S. military victory in the 1940's. The Ordnance Center's roots, however, go back another 30 years.

The U.S. Congress, seeing war clouds on the horizon, authorized the building of the Ordnance Center in 1916, primarily to manufacture armor plating for the navy's expanding fleet. The state of West Virginia donated 210 acres along the Kanawha River, and the federal government erected the plant at an approximate cost of $20 million. Completed in 1919, the center came too late to be part of the Great War effort, but manufactured test armor plate, gun forgings, and projectiles for the navy until 1922, when it was mothballed. Approximately 2,000 workers were laid off; a staff of 43 people stayed on to perform upkeep until 1929, after which the facility sat vacant for 10 years.

In January 1939, two of the empty buildings were converted for use by the National Youth Administration (NYA), to train young men in the metal and mechanical trades. In April 1939, the navy leased a section of the plant to Carnegie-Illinois Steel Company for heat treating and finishing of steel plates, marking the industrial rebirth of the Ordnance Plant.



Advertising flier, dated 1961. The facility was sold for approximately $4.3 million to Food Machinery Corporation (FMC). Courtesy of the South Charleston Museum.



Armored personnel carriers made at the Ordnance Plant during the 1960's, destined for Vietnam. Photograph courtesy of the Charleston Newspapers.

Under lease to the General Machinery Ordnance Corporation and Carnegie-Illinois, the plant turned out naval gun barrels, air-to-ground rockets, and torpedo flasks throughout WWII, when it boasted the largest machine shop in the world. At its peak of production in 1944, the number of employees reached 7,400, half of them women. Work stopped when the war ended, and the facility once again lay fallow.

The Korean conflict during the early 1950's saw renewed activity at the center, but at a fraction of its previous pace and employing only a few hundred workers. The U.S. government sold the Ordnance Plant to Food Machinery Corporation (FMC) in 1961, for more than $4.3 million. FMC remodeled the facility and built armored personnel carriers for the Vietnam conflict throughout much of the 1960's.

In the early 1970's, the plant was sold to the Park Corporation, which owns it to the present day. The complex has been leased to American Motors as an automobile stamping operation, to Volkswagen to stamp parts for their popular Rabbit vehicles, and to other businesses. When Volkswagen moved its operations to Mexico in 1988, some former employees began Charleston Stamping and Manufacturing (CSM). The facility was recently equipped with state-of-the-art stamping and robotics, and CSM is currently seeking additional tenants to continue the industrial heritage of this historic facility.

Current tenants include UPS shipping, AEP Central Machine Shop, Cummins Crosspoint, West Virginia Spring & Radiator Company, and others. For more information, phone (304)744-4601 or visit www.charlestonstamping.com.



The Ordnance Center, known today as South Charleston Industrial Park, is home to several businesses, with space available to rent. Photograph courtesy of the South Charleston Museum, taken in 1994.

South Charleston During World War II

By Helen Byrnside Williams



Author Helen Byrnside (Williams) in South Charleston, mid-1940's.

Whenever I drive I-64 through South Charleston, I am reminded of the four years we lived there during the Second World War. Prior to Pearl Harbor, most Americans had strong pacifist leanings. Consequently, by the time we woke up to Germany's relentless domination of Europe and Japan's attack on us, the United States was seriously lacking in military capability. To counteract this deficit, the country began an all-out effort to close the gap. South Charleston, with the giant Union Carbide complex sprawled along the Kanawha River, was the hub of a string of plants stretching along the river for some 40-odd miles.



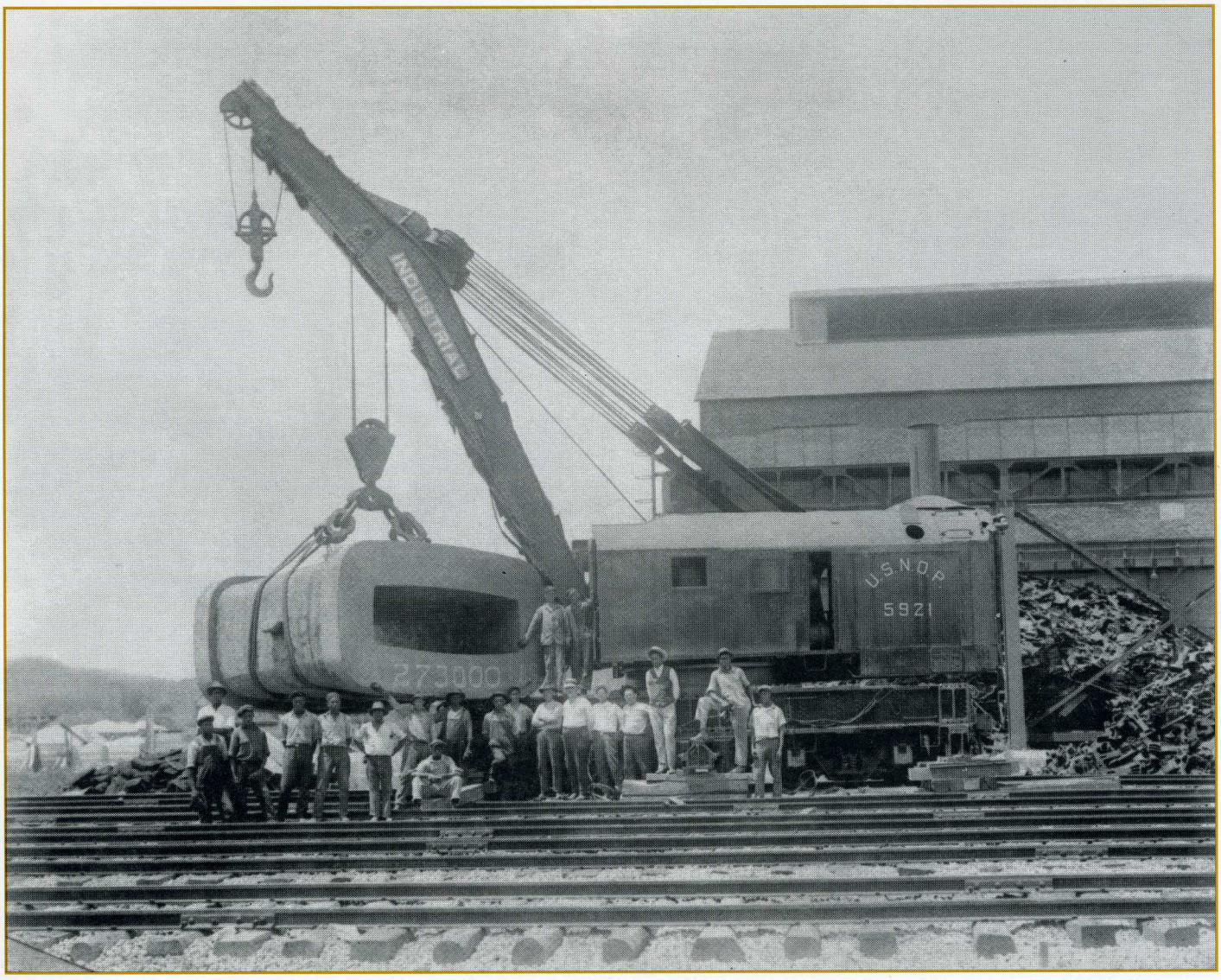
View of downtown South Charleston from the Mound, looking south along D Street, in about 1948. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, South Charleston Public Library Collection.

Following the onset of the war, South Charleston changed overnight from a modest little town into a mid-Atlantic version of the Wild West as Union Carbide expanded production. Old plants were revived, and new plants came into being. Farmers left their fields, and women walked out of their kitchens to take advantage of the unprecedented availability of good-paying jobs. Day and night, seven days a week, the streets teemed with shift workers coming and going. The doors of diners, beer joints, and pool halls were constantly opening and closing. Anyone passing by could hear the wail of Roy Acuff, or the Andrews Sisters singing "Rum and Coca Cola," along with the hoots and hollers of men and women fresh off a shift having a high old time, celebrating the end of the Great Depression, or trying to ease their concerns about the war.

I was seven when we moved to South Charleston. My father, who had been a salesman, left Coyle & Richardson Department Store in 1942, shed his business suit, and went to work at the Naval Ordnance Plant, which produced armament for battleships. We lived on Kanawha Turnpike and had to cross the railroad tracks on our way to school, church, or town. It was often a long wait while the old chugging, coal-fired engines rolled by, pulling long lines of cars loaded down with freight, including big guns and tanks. Occasionally, a troop train would come through, always full. The troops seemed to be bursting through the doors and windows as they waved in passing.

South Charleston changed overnight from a modest little town into a mid-Atlantic version of the Wild West.

The sky was often thick with smoke, gases, and fumes, evidenced by weird combinations of grey, red, yellow, and green. The main thoroughfare presented an awesome view, especially at night when the lighted buildings spread a glow that lit up the area for blocks around. One fascinating sight was a giant complex of pipes, with steam mysteriously escaping from this pipe or that. You had to wonder how they could ever pinpoint the problem in all that maze of pipes when something went wrong. The noise could be overwhelming with whistles, sirens, clanking machinery, and trains slowly moving forward and backward, causing the railroad cars to slam together down the line, like a row of dominoes.



The railyard in South Charleston saw much activity during the 1940's, as it does today. This 1940 image shows workers and equipment behind the U.S. Naval Ordnance Plant, as the facility was made ready to press ship and machinery parts. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Helen Harbert Collection.

Every aspect of our lives was governed by the war effort. The government issued sheets of stamps for purchasing necessary staples based upon the size of your family. Sugar, coffee, shoes, cigarettes, and gasoline were some of the items I remember as being rationed in order to secure an adequate supply to the troops. When you ran out of stamps, you did without until the next book was issued to you. Travel was limited. Stores would have long lines running down the block, as customers lined up to purchase cigarettes on payday. Nearly everyone smoked. Candy bars were kept out of sight, and you had to ask if any were available. Valley Bell and Blossom Dairy did a booming business selling ice cream for a nickel a dip. Coca Cola was a nickel a bottle, and I don't remember there being any shortage of it.

Grim reminders of the war included small satin banners hanging from window blinds. A banner with a gold star indicated a relative had been killed in the war. A silver star represented a relative whose injuries were serious enough to be discharged from active duty It was not unusual to see two or more gold or silver stars on those banners.

The city was subject to periodic blackouts when all lights were extinguished. My father would walk the darkened streets, sporting an arm band and carrying a large flashlight covered by a black cloth, in search of offenders. Heavy fines were levied against anyone not in compliance. Even lighting a cigarette outside was a chargeable offense.

I was one of four children, and we were sick a lot during this period, no doubt aggravated by constant air pollution. I recall few trips to the doctor. My mother treated us with mustard plasters for chest congestion, Vicks salve for stuffy noses, sweet oil and cigarette smoke for earaches, aspirin for pain and fever,

Epsom salts for sprained limbs, and bicarbonate of soda in warm water for indigestion and stomach complaints. Severe throat infections called for swabbing the throat with some antiseptic that smelled like iodine, and, boy, did it sting!

Inoculation for childhood diseases was given in all the grade schools. I have a vivid recollection of standing in line, waiting apprehensively for my turn. As each child opened the door of the room where the doctor was dispensing the shots, a large shadow of the doctor and the needle, resting on a small, smoking brazier, was cast on the wall, lending a grisly note to the proceedings.

Every fall, we were fitted from neck to thigh with a new set of cotton knit underwear, which became an itchy torture in overheated classrooms. This custom was considered a must to stave off chills that could lead to pneumonia. Although I understand penicillin became available in the 1940's, I don't remember hearing of it. The word "antibiotic" didn't exist as far as I knew Hanging over all of our heads was the dreaded polio, with no cure in sight and often fatal.

The war years continued. Millions of people suffered and died around the world. We were fortunate. There was not one member of our entire extended family killed in the war, to the best of my recollection. My half-brother returned from the war with a Purple Heart, having chased the enemy across North Africa and having participated in the invasion of Sicily with U.S. General George S. Patton. He was given a medical discharge in exchange for a leg full of shrapnel and lifelong recurring malaria. He bought a farm way out in the middle of nowhere, hoping to find some peace. He never discussed the war.

My own older brother and I spent the war years riding bicycles, playing kick the can, and watching double features at the LaBelle Theater on Saturdays for a dime. Of course, we did not have television or video games. Instead, we listened to *Inner Sanctum* and *The Green Hornet* on the radio and let our imaginations fill in the details. It was pretty scary stuff. The Mound, now neatly coiffed as a historic site, attracted lots of kids, including us, who wore a circle of sandy pathways around its circumference. In search of adventure, we would pack a sack lunch and hike to Ward's Hollow (now completely developed with streets and houses), roaming the woods and splashing in the creeks. At other times, we would wander about the old rock quarry at the end of Kanawha Turnpike, with the spooky abandoned graveyard that rose above the top of the quarry. Sometimes we would take the long bus ride to Rock Lake Pool, where we'd spend the entire day in the water without a drop of sunscreen or lotion. Halloween, we'd put together something in the way of a costume and roam for blocks without harm, or fear of any, returning home to see who had the biggest pile of sweets.

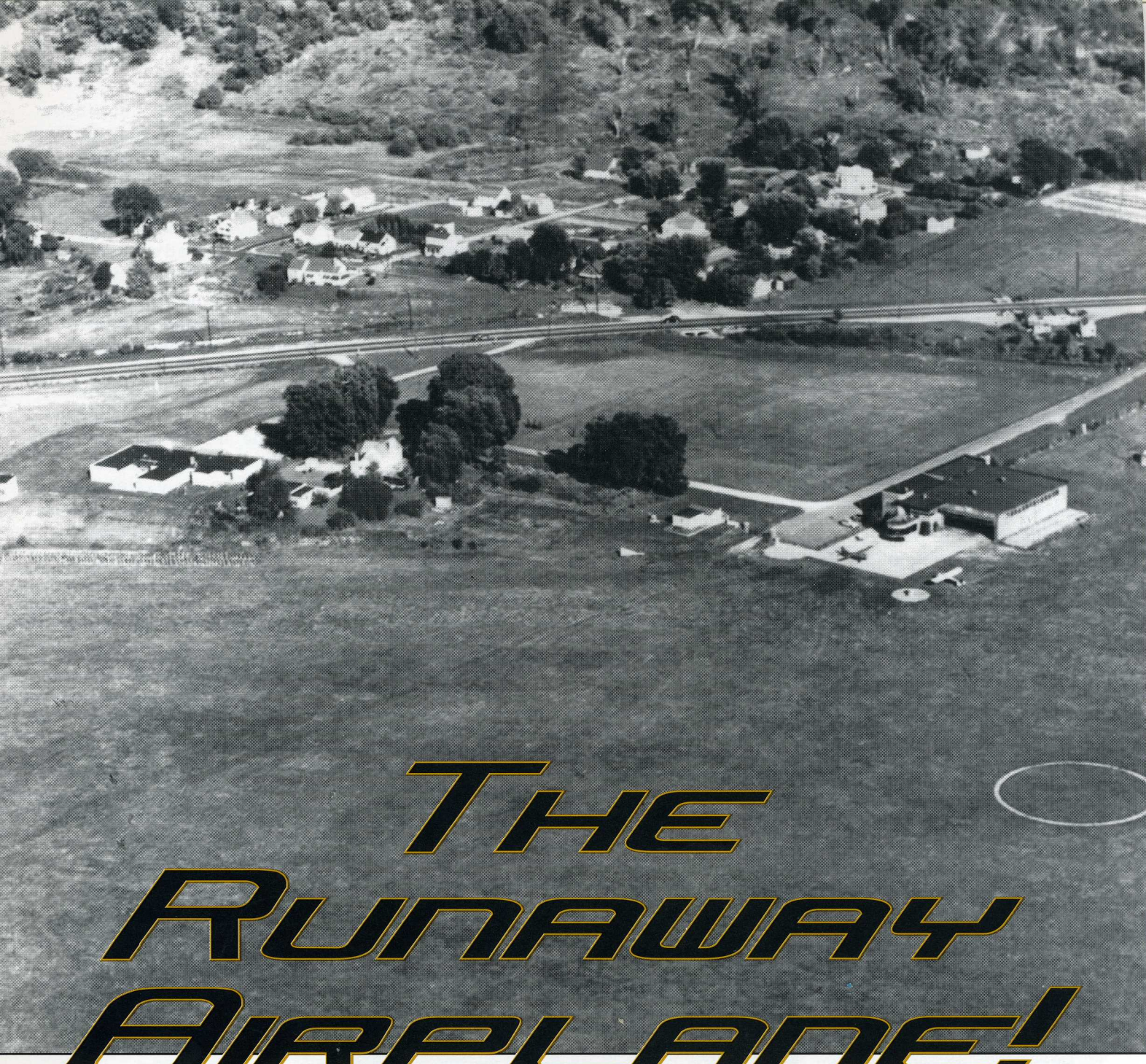
A lot of things changed for me, but I still fondly remember my childhood in South Charleston during the war years.



Helen Byrnside with her father, Frank, in South Charleston, in about 1946. Frank Byrnside died two weeks later.

Then, as suddenly as it began, the war ended and we moved away I had to make new friends and devoted a lot of my spare time to listening to records and learning the latest dance steps. That fall, I entered Lincoln Junior High School. By then, my older brother considered himself too grown-up to hang out with his kid sister. Quite unexpectedly, my father died. A lot of things changed for me, but I still fondly remember my childhood in South Charleston during the war years.

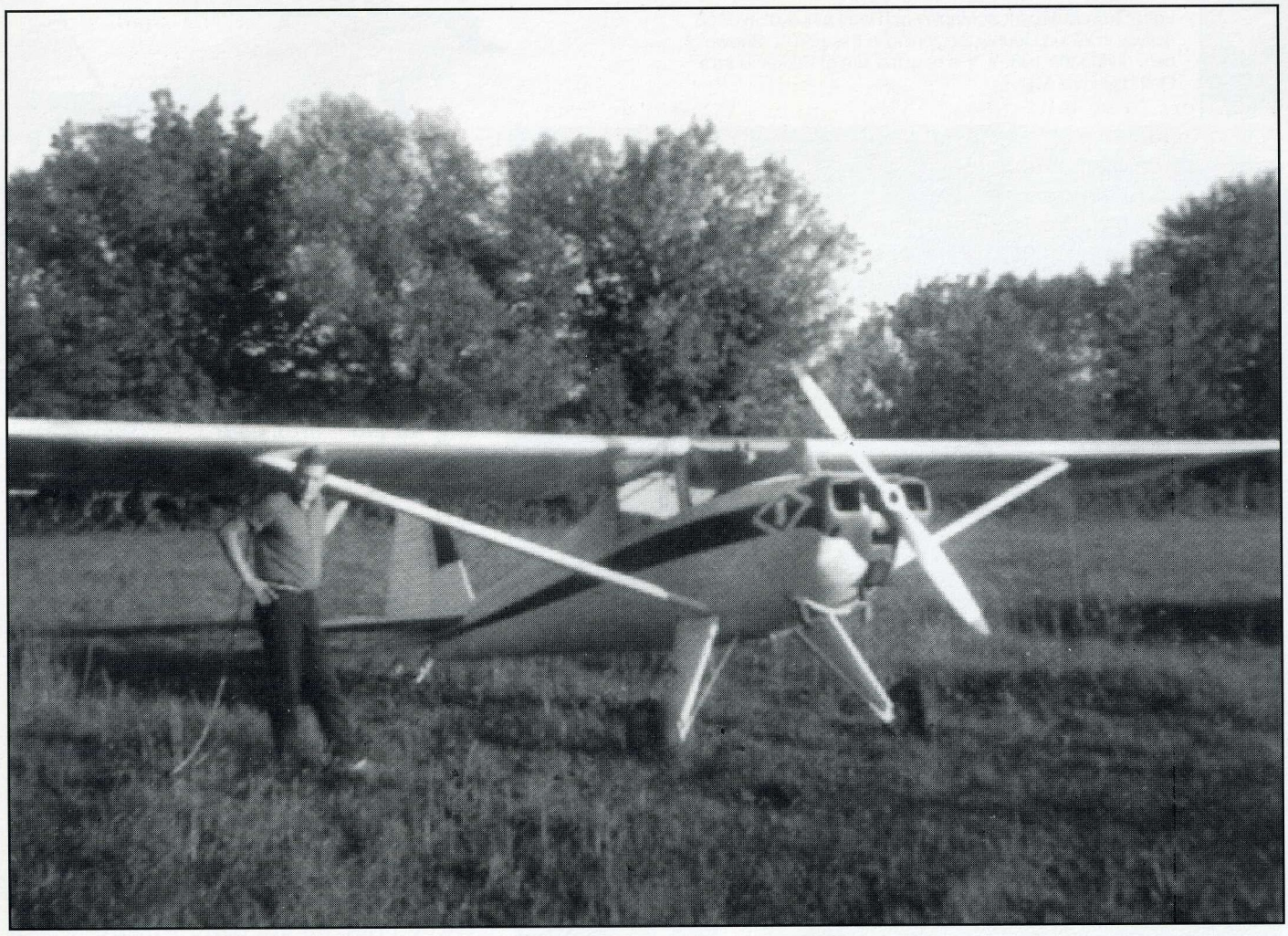
HELEN WILLIAMS was born in Charleston, but grew up in Parkersburg, where she attended DeSales Heights Academy. During her career, Helen was an executive secretary, a real estate agent, and a legal assistant. She currently resides in Midlothian, Virginia. This is Helen's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



The Runaway Airplane!

By Steve Weaver

Twilight faded by the minute and darkness descended like a cloak on the rugged West Virginia landscape slipping by, a thousand feet below the dangling wheels of the white Luscombe I was flying. The first twinges of panic rose in my chest as the seriousness of my situation dawned on me. I stared frantically at the lights of cars moving on the now-invisible roads below. Inside them, I knew, were ordinary people, safely making their way home along familiar highways. I wanted to be with them. I wanted out of this devil machine, carrying me to my apparent doom. I wanted my mom.



Steve Weaver with his new Luscombe 8-A in 1962, at Stewart Airpark.

tion, I could expect my airplane to carry me home in about 56 minutes, give or take for wind, whatever that meant.

This was wonderful news. I could make the flight after work and get back well before dark. Today was a beautiful day with little or no wind and fine weather forecast to continue. I would go this very evening!

Quitting time came at five o'clock, and I was out the door in a flash. I drove as fast as I could, without attracting police attention, to the airport, where my airplane awaited me.

The old Stewart Airpark lay on the west side of Parkersburg, by the banks of the Ohio River. Built in the 1920's, it was one of the few old-time flying fields that had survived into the 1960's. The landing area was acres of well-drained sod, some 1,800 x 3,100 feet in size. From the air, it looked like a great, green velvet table cloth. It was bordered to the west by the river and to the east by State Route 47 A flood wall cut diagonally across the south end of airport property, and a small neighborhood marked the north end of the field. In 1962, Stewart Airpark was home to about 50 airplanes. The field was uncontrolled, but it had lots of traffic during the pleasant months, with 40-cent-per-gallon gas fueling great amounts of aeronautical activity.

I quickly made my way to where the white Luscombe was tied down. My flying kit for this trip consisted only of an Esso road map. I realized that I knew U.S. Route 50 like my own face in the mirror and thought I could recognize it as clearly from 500 feet as I could from the altitude at which my 1957 Chevy usually operated. So that was my plan. I would follow the roads, the same roads that I used to drive from my home in the middle of the state to where I now lived. I would just "drive" home. This would work just fine, I knew

The shadow of my little airplane leapfrogged over the sluggish lines of evening traffic, and I felt completely superior to all that crawled about below me.

Five-o'clock traffic, the preflight of the airplane, and getting fuel had taken precious time and caused my departure to be much later than I had anticipated. I glanced anxiously at my watch while doing the run up at the end of the sod runway and took solace in the 56-minute estimated enroute time that my friend had made for me. This would still work. I would still have time to complete the round-trip and make it back to the field before dark, I told myself.

Just as I'd been taught, I gently pushed the throttle forward. The little airplane responded by accelerating across the lush grass, the tail coming up and the wings nibbling at the air. It bounced gently once or twice on the gear, then eased into a slow climb through the warm summer sky. The air sparkled with the golden sunshine of the late afternoon, and the broad Ohio River fell away to my right as I turned toward downtown. I would pick up Route 50 there and follow it east, and it would take me to within 15 miles of my destination. Route 50 would be my compass.

I looked down on the city as I made my way across town, and soon the familiar pattern of Washington's Pike appeared below me. I thought how easy this was and wondered why anyone would want to navigate any other way but following roads. The shadow of my little airplane leapfrogged over the sluggish lines of evening traffic, and I felt completely superior to all that crawled about below me. How could I not, for I was a flyer now and had no patience for things that moved about on the earth.

Soon, I was following the road through open countryside, and the familiar hamlets of Ellenboro, Pennsboro, and West Union passed beneath the nose of the airplane. I watched the town of Salem appear. Then the city of Clarksburg loomed before me, a place I knew well and where I planned to hook up with State Route 20. That road wound through the hills to the southeast for



1960's aerial view of downtown Parkersburg, looking north. Steve Weaver picked up U.S. Route 50 here and followed it heading east, toward the Barbour County town of Arden.



The Weaver family home, located along the Tygart Valley River in Barbour County, was Steve's destination in June 1962. Steve's uncle, James Elbert Stemple, stands in front of the house in this recent view.

several miles on its way to Philippi, the town that had served as our family's trading center during my youth. From there, the Tygart Valley River made its serpentine way to the village of Arden, the target for tonight's mission. Finding my destination would be as easy as following the path from my bed to the bathroom in the house where I grew up and that now awaited my unannounced and dramatic appearance in the sky above it.

Finding Route 20 South, it was only a matter of minutes before I was over Philippi, the historic covered bridge passing beneath me as I joined the river and continued downstream. This seemed like a dream to me. After a lifetime of looking up at this very patch of sky, I was at this minute zooming through it, announcing my passage with an important-sounding roar to all those below.

Since my mission plan called for minimum altitude over the target, I wound the trim forward and stuck the nose of the little airplane down. A satisfying hiss of air washed over the airframe, and the little A-65 Continental engine took on a serious note, as the airplane slid down the slope I had created. The whole craft took on a vibration I had never felt before as the airspeed indicator needle reached for the red line that marked "this fast and no faster."

About a mile from my parents' house, the river makes an oxbow of its meandering path toward the Ohio. As I passed this point, centered between the stream's grassy banks, something flashed by, close beneath my wheels. A power line, I noticed belatedly, now spanned the river here and was hanging from the supporting towers that crowned the tops of the hills bracketing the stream bed. By how much I had missed the heavy cables I couldn't say, but the image of the windings that were built into the cables during manufacturing remained burned into my brain like a photograph, and it shook me.

After a much-too-late, involuntary jerk on the control stick, I shakily continued my descent into the river valley. My heart was pumping

By how much I had missed the heavy cables I couldn't say, but the image of the windings that were built into the cables during manufacturing remained burned into my brain like a photograph, and it shook me.

what felt like quarts of adrenaline through my system, and my breath came in short pants as I banked the Luscombe quickly right, then left, to stay over the twisting river. One last sharp bend remained before the short, straight run the river made past my parents' house. I came around it in a near vertical bank, my altitude down to the planned 200 feet above the river. A few seconds later, the familiar white farmhouse flashed past my left wing, and I was climbing as fast as the little airplane could go, to escape the valley.

I had done it! My mission had gone like clockwork, discounting the fact that I'd almost killed myself on the power cable. Now satisfaction joined all the other emotions that were having their way with my brain. Rising above the steep, wooded hills surrounding my village, I aimed the airplane back toward Philippi to rejoin Route 20.

Slowly my heart rate and breathing returned to normal, and I looked about me. With the concentrated effort and the excitement of finding my destination, I had lost track of the day's progress. I was shocked to see that the sun had just set, the very top of its orange orb now just peeking above the western horizon. Where had the time gone? I now realized that the straight line my friend had plotted for my journey bore no resemblance to the drunken path I had scribed through the air. I'd taken nearly twice the allotted time to fly the distance.

Once again, my heart was trying to hammer its way out of my chest. The control stick and throttle grew slick from my sweating palms. I frantically reviewed my options and immediately thought of the warning my instructor gave me after he'd checked me out in the Luscombe from the grass at Stewart. "Do not land this thing on a paved runway until I ride with you. You'll ground loop it."

That eliminated almost all of the airports that I could get to before dark. The few that were left were much shorter than anything I had ever landed on. Should I go to one of those and crash now, or continue toward Parkersburg and crash later? My decision was aided by my penchant for putting off things that I didn't want to do. Crashing an airplane fit into that category, so I immediately opted to continue on toward Parkersburg.

I felt trapped, and, for the first time in my short flying career, I wished I were on the ground. By now, I was over Route 50, westering toward the dregs of orange glow left on the horizon. Aloft, I was still bathed in dim light, but darkness was spreading quickly below me. Automobiles now had their lights on, and while I could still make out the path of Route 50, it was getting harder to keep it securely beneath me.

Salem passed underneath, the downtown area lit brightly By the time I reached Pennsboro, the ground was totally dark, and I was following the lights of moving cars that I fervently hoped were heading toward Parkersburg. Worse, I had no lights on the airplane and nothing to light the instrument panel, which at this point was just a dark shape in front of my knees. I had never been in an airplane at night before, and as the visual cues that I had used in flying without even thinking about them slipped away one by one, I felt like a man being swept by swift waters to a waiting waterfall.

After what seemed to be an eternity, an indistinct glow of light appeared at my 1:00 position. It slowly grew brighter. In a bit, I passed over a service station. I could see an attendant pumping gas into a pickup truck that sat washed in the flood of the island lights. As I looked down, the attendant's face turned up toward me, no doubt



Steve at the controls of his Luscombe in 1962. Too late, he realized that the plane's instrument panel was unlit and that he had no nighttime flying experience.



Steve is a lifetime flight enthusiast. He is pictured here with a Stinson Gullwing at Benedum Airport in Bridgeport in 1952.

wondering why no lights shown on the airplane passing above.

Yes! The station was one on Route 50, where occasionally I gassed up my car on the way home. Now I knew I was not far from Parkersburg, and, more importantly, I knew that I was over the right road after all. In a matter of minutes, I could see the outskirts of the city, well-lit by the street lights and the signs of stores that lined its ways. The huge, orange-colored Mr. Bee's Potato Chip sign perched above the street leading to the airport came into view like a beckoning, friendly beacon.

A few minutes later, my high spirits fell as I reached the area where I knew the airport to be. There were no bright strings of runway lights awaiting me, only a large, square, airport-sized area of total darkness. My lack of night experience was complete. Not only had I never flown at night, I had never even been to the airport at night and didn't know the runway wasn't lighted. Now I had to land an airplane at night for the first time, do it without benefit of seeing my instruments, and as a special topping for my flight of idiocy, also manage to hit an unseen runway.

As I flew across the center of the field and looked straight down, I could see the outline of white airplanes parked on the dark grass, reflecting the glow of the city lights. Using that position as a guide, I turned downwind and pulled on the carburetor heat, as I'd been taught. With no way to see my airspeed or altitude in the darkened cabin, I knew I had to rely on the mental patterns established by the repetition of landing practice with my instructor. I would have to rely on the feel of the airplane against my hand and the sound of the air moving past the ship to gauge my airspeed. I hoped my inner clock would let me time the length of the downwind and base legs of my pattern. Once I'd rolled out on final approach, I could aim for the square of darkness that I knew was the airport.

As I pulled the throttle back to idle, I said a small prayer, asking God to forgive me for my arrogance and stupidity and to please, please let me survive this mess I'd made. I sincerely hoped the homily was true that God protects drunks and fools, for I surely was the latter.

Giving the trim the number of twists I remembered from other landings, the little airplane settled into my hand and I began the glide. Seconds passed. When I thought the time was right, I made the 90-degree turn to the base leg of the pattern, careful to neither pull the nose up nor let it drop. The airplane felt almost normal in spite of me not being able to see instruments or the runway. When the square of darkness filled my left window, I made the last turn onto the final approach to where I hoped the runway would be.

While I had been over the streets and neighborhoods of the town, or pointing away from the field, the

Now I had to land an airplane at night for the first time, do it without benefit of seeing my instruments, and as a special topping for my flight of idiocy, also manage to hit an unseen runway.

lights on the ground had given me reference and made maneuvering the airplane almost like daytime. Now I was pointed at a dark hole. As I sank lower, it became harder to sense the attitude of the airplane. I concentrated on not making changes to the controls and listened intently to the sound clues the ship gave me.

Suddenly, I saw the top of a shadowy hill silently ghost past beneath my wheels, and I knew I'd passed the flood wall that marked the south end of the airport.

I was about as well-positioned as I could hope for. As I sank down into the darkness, I looked desperately for some clue to tell me where the ground was. When I could stand it no longer, I broke the glide and started feeling for the ground. The Luscombe stalled and dropped, and I knew I'd flared too high. I jammed the throttle forward and eased the stick until I felt the wings gain purchase. Once more, I pulled the throttle back and began the process over again. This time, the ground was just beneath the wheels when the airplane stalled and we touched with a small bounce, settled solidly on the gear, and rolled straight through the dark and the mist that was beginning to form above the wet grass.

As one could imagine, my failure to return to the airport before dark had not gone unnoticed. As I taxied slowly in, I was met by a mighty contingent of cars and people, looking to me at the time much like a lynch mob. It was led by my instructor, a giant of a man named Red Bozo, who looked 10 feet tall in the wall of headlights backlighting him. A caravan of cars led the way back to my tie-down. I made my excuses to Red, all lies, for what could I say?

I remember driving back to my apartment, feeling as if I had just



awakened from a wrenching dream. I knew that I had just experienced life on the very edge. I also knew that things could have easily ended another way. I felt blessed to still be drawing breath. At that moment, life seemed so inexpressibly sweet to me, and I vowed that I would never again do something so foolish. On the other hand, I never before felt so alive!

STEVE WEAVER is a native of Arden, Barbour County, and is a graduate of Philippi High School. He attended Alderson-Broaddus College and West Virginia Wesleyan College. Following a stint in the U.S. Marine Corps, Steve took flying lessons, became a flight instructor, and opened a flying school in Buckhannon in 1968. He is active in aircraft sales and travels the world delivering airplanes. This is Steve's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Still active in flying and selling airplanes, Steve Weaver sits in a Cessna Cardinal, one of several planes he is brokering, at the Upshur County Regional Airport, near Buckhannon. Photograph by Michael Keller.



The Cooper family farm in Gilmer County, where author John Cooper was born in 1919. This photograph was made in 2008 by John Cooper.

Living Through the Great Depression

By John Cooper

Our country's recent recession makes me think back to my childhood, during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Let me share some of those memories with you.

I was born September 29, 1919, on a 105-acre farm on Stone Lick Creek in Gilmer County, two-and-one-half miles from Coxs Mills and two-and-one-half miles from Auburn in Ritchie County. During this time, we were self-sufficient on the farm. We killed two hogs each year and made our own lard and soap from the fat. We had our own cows, which we milked twice a day, churned our own butter, made buttermilk and cottage cheese. [See "Churning Butter," by John Cooper; Winter 1997.]

We had our own chickens for eggs and raised a large garden, so we had about all of our food taken care of. My mother canned about 1,000 quarts of fruits and vegetables each year. We had a "dry house," a special heated small building where we dried lots of fruits and vegetables for use in the winter.

We had a flock of 20 to 30 sheep, and the sale of lambs and wool were the chief source of farm income. My dad had a large team of horses and a road wagon, which he used to haul supplies to oil and gas wells in the region. This boosted the cash income, as well. There was a gas well on the farm, from which we received free gas, which was used for heating and fueling the dry house.

People with a farm such as ours, if the farm was paid for, lived pretty good through the Depression. However, our situation was not that way.

My grandmother, Mary Jane (Hall) Cooper, died at an early age, during childbirth with her 11th child. My eldest aunt was 18 at the time, and she assumed the mother's duties. Of course, the other children helped, too. Eventually, all the aunts and uncles left the farm. My grandfather was a very religions man and wanted to do everything "proper." So he hired two girls to take care of one woman's work, since hiring only one girl would have been considered "improper."

Before I was born, my parents had lived at Mangum, Oklahoma, where my dad was a barber. Sadly, his barbershop burned down. They moved back, and, in 1916, my dad and mother began to take care of my grandfather and the farm. Grandpa paid them $20 a month for these duties. My grandfather died in 1921 without leaving a will. It became necessary for my dad and mother to borrow $5,500 (a lot of money in those days!) from an Auburn bank to pay each aunt and uncle for his or her share of the farm.

That was the beginning of our family's hard times. The farm itself



The Cooper family in 1921 Parents Eric "E.J." and Lillie are seated; standing from the left are Frank, Edith, and Newton. Young John Cooper is on his mother's lap.



Feeding livestock was one of many daily chores on the farm, our author points out. Here, a team of experts feeds a calf in about 1928. John Cooper is at left, brother Newton at right, mother Lillie at center, and baby Mary Walters — daughter of a neighbor — is seated on the calf.

did not generate much income, so Dad used the team and wagon to haul supplies to gas wells. He earned $10 a day. Quite often he had to stay overnight at a farmhouse along the way and pay board for himself and his team. Then things really blew up when lightning killed one of our horses and the gas company plugged our gas well. At that time, a good workhorse sold for as much as $400.

Soon it became necessary to buy a wood-burning cookstove and a pot-bellied one for heating the house. Things got so bad that we finally had to sell the farm. I suppose we got enough money to pay things off, but I don't know. I was eight years old at the time, and my mother and father didn't want to worry me with all their problems.

We moved to Glenville in the Hays City addition. The Pittsburgh & West Virginia Gas Company had three houses at the junction of State Route 5 and U.S. Highway 119 We moved to the middle house. The house was very small, with only two bedrooms downstairs. My brothers and I slept on the floor, on straw ticks in the attic. I remember getting out of bed on a cold winter morning and running rapidly downstairs to my parents' heated bedroom to put on my clothes. The present-day Glenville senior citizens' building is near where we lived.

How did we live? I'm not sure. I know that my mother sold Winona Goods — a company that made underwear and other clothing — door-to-door. We did have a cow for milk and butter. We had a large garden, and Mom did a lot of canning in jars, just like she did on the farm, winning prizes for them at the county fair and bringing in a little money. Dad worked part-time as a truck driver at that time. During this period, the road between Glenville and Spencer was being paved, and Dad hauled stone from the railroad at Gilmer Station used for the road work. I remember riding with him some, and I enjoyed that very much.

My sister Edith, nine years older than I, managed to go to Glenville State College and get a teaching certificate. It was called a "short normal" certificate. In the winters of 1930 and 1931, she taught in a one-room school, Laurel Point, near Coxs Mills on Coxs Camp Fork, which was called Hog Run in those days. Her job provided additional family income of about $60 a month. One of those years, she bought me a pair of work shoes for Christmas. That was all I got that year. Christmases were very lean in those days.

I was two years younger, and two years smaller, than my brother Newton, so I wore hand-me-down clothes all the time. One time when I was 11 or 12 and growing pretty fast, I had a pair of knee-length pants called "knickers." I remember seeing a pretty girl, and I started to take extra-long steps just to show off to her. However, her observation was just, "Your pants are tight." She was right. Suddenly I was terribly embarrassed wearing those hand-me-downs.

I went barefooted to school until Thanksgiving each year, until

I started attending high school. Only one other boy in a class of 20 students did the same thing. I was never invited to any parties, probably because of poverty. That was the way it was, and we just accepted things this way.

During the Great Depression and even past World War II, feed for farm animals was sold in print sacks. Good seamstresses could make dresses and other clothing from them. One of my caregivers, 73 years old, remembers these dresses and underclothing made of patterned feed sacks. They were attractive, practical, and lasted almost forever.

Around 1933, we moved to a larger house, the Tierney House, near the courthouse in downtown Glenville. The purpose of that move was so that we could keep college students as boarders. We kept six girls, board and room, and sometimes somebody else, just for us to have food to eat. I remember that a college professor even ate with us regularly. I learned how to set tables, carry food, and wash dishes. After two or three years there, we moved to the North View area in Glenville. Mom continued to keep college students as boarders, and my brother Frank ended up marrying one of them.

My parents were devout. We attended Trinity Methodist Church in Glenville. In order to be able to tithe to the church, Dad assumed the janitor job. My brother Newton and I did the cleaning part of the time.

During the 1930's, Dad never had any regular, lasting jobs. He barbered for a time at Tierney Barber Shop in Glenville. A haircut was 25 cents — not much to make ends meet. In addition, he had to pay a percentage for use of the shop. One winter when he was unemployed, he went to his cousin's farm and helped prune apple trees. Of course, he got plenty of apples when they were picked.

I used any honorable means I could to get a few dollars. During my senior year in high school, I trapped muskrats in the Little Kanawha River and Stewarts Creek nearby our home. I ran the trap-line before school, and I earned enough selling muskrat hides to pay for my senior class ring. It cost $15. I graduated from Glenville High School in 1936.

Upon graduating, it was expected that I go to college, since my brothers and sisters did before me. Tuition at Glenville College in 1936 was $15 a semester for 18 hours. I was able to go to Glenville College freshman and sophomore years very cheaply because I lived at home. My junior year at West Virginia University tuition was $35 per semester; being in college that year cost me a total of $503. My senior year cost a little over $600, because I was on the university livestock judging team and we competed with other schools at our own expense.

The summer between my junior and senior years, I worked on a farm for a dollar a day, with room and board. I earned $63 that summer. It was pretty hard work for very little pay, but I was lucky to have a job. Also, during my college years, I worked part of one summer for the Pittsburgh & West Virginia Gas Company. I worked in a gang cutting small brush and tall weeds with a scythe, on pipeline right-of-ways in Gilmer County. We found lots of copperhead snakes The person who found the snake would pin it to the ground with his scythe. The snake would invariably curl over the scythe blade, and the next guy would cut it in two.

After finishing college, I owed $750, which I had borrowed at the rate of $35 a month from a relative. I kept a written record of every penny I spent, from a rare ice-cream cone to a haircut. I still have the records, which I showed to my



Having lost their farm, the Cooper family moved into town. They are pictured here at a house in the Hays City addition in Glenville, 1930. Standing from the left are parents E.J. and Lillie, Edith, and Frank. Seated at left is John; at right is Newton.



After graduating college, John went to work for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in Grafton, where he advised local farmers. John photographed this fellow about 1940, after helping him raise a flock of turkeys.

grandchildren just this year.

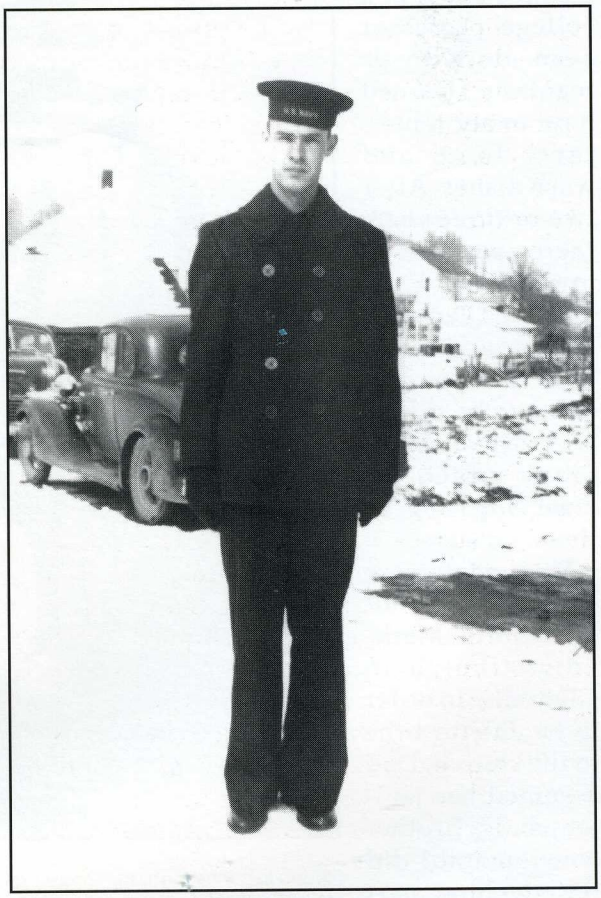
Franklin Delano Roosevelt was sworn into the presidency in January 1933, and soon created programs to help folks who suffered during the Depression. Several of these programs helped me and my family directly, while others helped indirectly Perhaps the Works Progress Administration (WPA) helped us more than any of them. Their main projects were road improvements. Dad worked on various road jobs with the WPA. At that time, paved roads were scarce. I remember that the road between Glenville and Sand Fork was a dirt road and very slick when it rained. Rock was crushed to make the base for hard-surfaced roads later. Dad took great pride in being able to improve the grade of a road by just "eyeballing" it.

Another WPA job that he worked at was the distribution of food commodities. A food commodity was free food to the needy. People would go to the distribution center and be doled out food as needed. We received some commodities, also. I learned to like grapefruit at that time.

WPA encouraged poor people to raise gardens. One of Dad's WPA jobs was as a distributor who visited low-income farmers and encouraged them with their gardens, perhaps taking them seed. His wages were 25 cents an hour. I enjoyed going with him.

National Youth Administration (NYA) was another New Deal measure that was very important to me. It was a program to help college students, and it helped me in my junior and senior years at WVU I was entitled to work 15 hours a week for a professor and received 25 cents an hour, making my earnings $15 a month. That helped.

Citizens Military Training Corps (CMTC) was another program of the '30's. It was designed to train young men to become army officers. I went a month for two summers following high school to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis. We stayed in tents and led a military life. The first summer, I trained in the infantry. The second summer, I was in a machine gun company. My main purpose in going was to get a little money. The army did not pay me for the training, but they paid me $30 for travel. I had a few dollars left after paying the bus fare.



John Cooper in his navy peacoat in 1943.

The United States Department of Agriculture created three strictly agricultural programs in the 1930's. These were Farm Security Administration (FSA), Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (ASCS), and Soil Conservation Service (SCS). All are still in existence, but now have different names. The first two have been combined to create the Farm Service Program. I worked for the FSA immediately after graduation from WVU in 1940. The Soil Conservation Service was changed to the Natural Resource Conservation Service. This branch of government became my life's vocation, as I began working in Roane County for the Soil Conservation Service right after WWII. I worked there until 1965, when I was transferred to Mason County and worked with the SCS until my retirement in 1979.

Another very important measure that was created was Social Security, which was initiated in 1936. It was a brand-new concept for the country, one which proved very helpful. I worked some that summer and was assigned a Social Security number. I probably have one of the lowest numbers, since I had one of the first numbers issued in the year of its inception. Social Security is very important to most retirees today.

If anything good can be said about the Great Depression it is that prices were low. Bakery bread, unsliced, could be bought for five cents; 100 pounds of dried soup beans was $3. At WVU in Oglebay Hall, there was a dairy store that sold one large scoop of ice cream for five cents and two scoops for 10 cents. After I finished college and had a job, I bought a pair of Nunn Bush dress shoes for $10. Before WWII, gasoline was 11 cents a gallon.

The Great Depression of the 1930's affected different people in West Virginia in different ways. If a person had a steady job, his family could live rather comfortably. For example, a friend of mine had a dad who owned a ferry boat and a farm. They weren't that affected by the Depression. Having a farm that was paid for was also a way to live rather comfortably. The fact that our farm was not paid for made all the unfortunate difference for our family.

I am very thankful that I am not living in poverty anymore. I am 90 years old and have accumulated enough to see me through the end of my life. I have always lived frugally, even to the present day That was always our mindset, and that became ingrained in me. Most people from my era were very affected by this, also. Though many have passed on, my generation took the influence of those difficult years and built a thrifty, frugal way of life. Hard work for little pay was many of this generation's story

I am thankful that my parents had persistence, willingness to sacrifice, faith in God, and determination to get our family through it. I'm not rich, but I have been blessed.

JOHN COOPER was born in Gilmer County in 1919. He holds a degree in agriculture from West Virginia University. After retiring from the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, he operated Santa's Forest, a Christmas tree farm in Mason County, which was featured in our Winter 1992 issue. John's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2005 issue.



An avid photographer, John Cooper has spent many hours photographing older West Virginians and scenes of rural life. This 1971 photograph of 83-year-old John Kapp at a dug well in Taylor County is one of his favorites. John Cooper also created the composite cover photograph for our Winter 1992 issue.



By Janet Estep

Danger In

1958 Mine Rescue Team

Helen Estep had supper ready to put on the table at five o'clock on October 28, 1958, just as she did every day. She waited for her husband, Jim, to come home from his job at Imperial Smokeless Coal near Leivasy, in southern Nicholas County. But time passed, and still Jim didn't show up at their home in Crichton, near Quinwood, located across the line in Greenbrier County. Finally, at seven o'clock, Jim Williams, the chief electrician at the No. 2 mine, came to the house to tell Helen that her husband had been called as part of the Imperial Smokeless Mine Rescue Team to an accident at the old Richwood Sewell Mine.

The day had started normally. Later that morning, however, Jim Williams came inside the mine where Jim Estep was working to tell him that the Mine Rescue Team was needed at the Burton mine of the Oglebay Norton Coal Company. Jim Estep, who is now my father-in-law, had been part of the rescue team since it was formed in 1954.

Jim's first job in a coal mine was in 1937, when he was 17 years old. He had sold powder at the company store for Koppers Coal Company in Elk Ridge when he was 16 and started hand-loading coal the following year. "We hand-loaded coal for 30 cents a ton. The cars were six-ton cars. I was on one side, and Dad was on the other," Jim recalls.

"We trained from seven to nine in the evenings, once a week, or four times a month. The state paid us four dollars for each week we trained.

Left: Jim Estep, at left, worked in mining for more than 40 years. He was section foreman when this photograph was made in about 1950. At center is mine foreman Monroe Heaster; at right is general superintendent A.P. Littelton.

"I've never been without a job since then. Never drew unemployment. They used to say we had three meals a day· corn meal, oatmeal, and miss a meal."

For three years, Jim worked at Rossmore in Logan County. In 1941 he married Helen Nagy at Logan; in 1942 they came to Quinwood, where Jim started working for Imperial Smokeless Coal Company as a day laborer underground. In 1949 he became a section boss and, in 1953 he received his mine foreman's certificate. He retired in 1982 after working in mining for more than 40 years. Jim and Helen Estep still live in Crichton, in the same house where they lived when the accident occurred.

"At one time," Jim reminisces, "there were 3,000 miners living in Quinwood. We had two barbershops, a Kroger store, seven beer joints, a movie theater, two restaurants, and a department store."

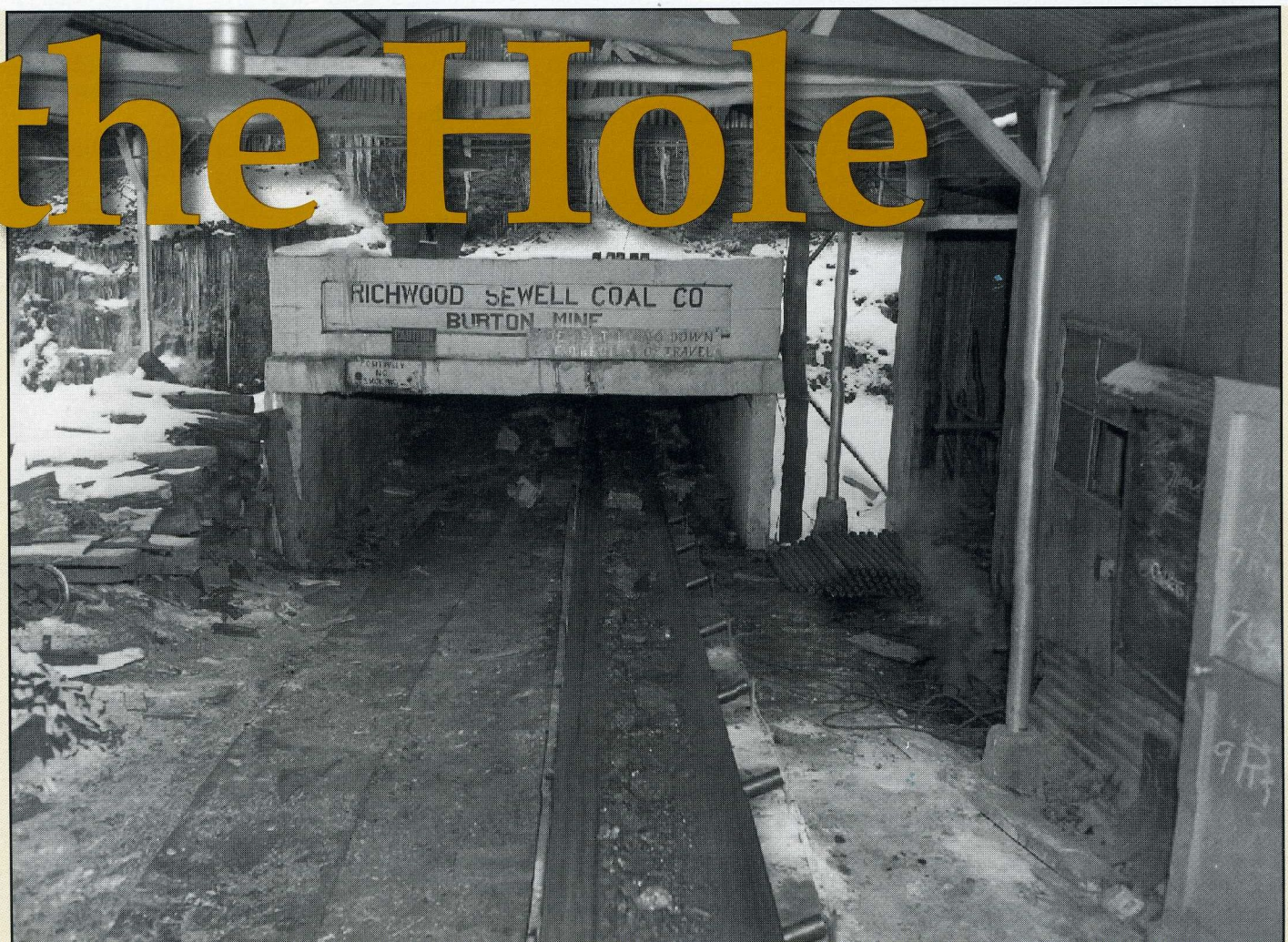
The original Imperial Smokeless Mine Safety Team consisted of mine foremen and engineers: Dick Nesselrotte, Glen Shannon, Bill Coffey, M.D Legg, Friday Hambrick, and Jim Estep. As spaces opened up on the team, other miners were added.

"We went back over once a week to train," says Jim. "We trained from seven to nine in the evenings, once a week, or four times a month. The state paid us four dollars for each week we trained. They provided us with coveralls. I was kind of late getting there one evening, so I was left with a pair of coveralls that was too big. I had to roll the sleeves up on them. But after they laundered them, they all shrunk. Mine was the only set that fit."

Bill Derring, a state mine inspector, helped to train the team. Bill was underground during a mine accident in 1915 at Layland, where he was trapped in the mine for four days. According to Jim, Bill told them that one of the things those miners did to survive was to eat the

Opening to the Richwood Sewell Burton Mine, near Craigsville, Nicholas County, at about the time of the 1958 disaster. Photograph by the *Nicholas County News Leader*, courtesy of Images by Romano.

the Hole





Above: Imperial Smokeless Coal Company Mine Safety Team in about 1954. Kneeling, from the left are Jim Estep and Friday Hambrick; standing are Dick Nesselrotte, Glen Shannon, Bill Coffey, and M.D. Legg.



Left: Women anxiously await word of loved ones following the October 28, 1958, explosion. Photograph courtesy of Charleston Newspapers.

bark off the support posts in the mine.

"Now almost every mine has a rescue team," says Jim, "but back then they were just trying to get the teams organized." Current mine rescue teams participate in competitions to improve their skills, but few rescue teams in 1954 had that kind of opportunity to prepare for a real-life situation. [See "'Worth Their Weight in Gold' Recalling Red Jacket Safety Day," by Joe Plasky; Summer 2007]

On the morning of October 28, 1958, the Imperial Smokeless Mine Rescue Team received its first call to respond to a mining accident. The team that worked the disaster that day, along with Jim Estep, included Lewis Channell; Kermit Henson; M.D. Legg; William Kennedy, Jr., Tom Johnson; Millard Smith; A. Littleton; and Robert M. Cain.

Imperial Smokeless immediately took the team and its equipment in company cars the 20 miles or so up State Route 20 to the old Richwood Sewell Mine, which had become the Burton mine of Oglebay Norton Coal Company, near Craigsville. The rescue team knew there had been an explosion inside the mine and were trained in first-aid and how to respond in the event of such a mining accident. "Everything they taught you came right back," recounts Jim. "I



Tipple at Richwood Sewell's Burton Mine along the Gauley River, a few years before the explosion. Photograph by the *Nicholas County News Leader*, courtesy of Images by Romano.

was worried going in. When I got out, I said, 'Thank you, God.'"

Newspaper accounts about the accident have been collected by Millie Hammonds Stinnett, and they report that the initial blast was from gas igniting inside the mine. Thirty-seven miners of the 54 who were working that morning escaped from the mine, but 17 remained inside.

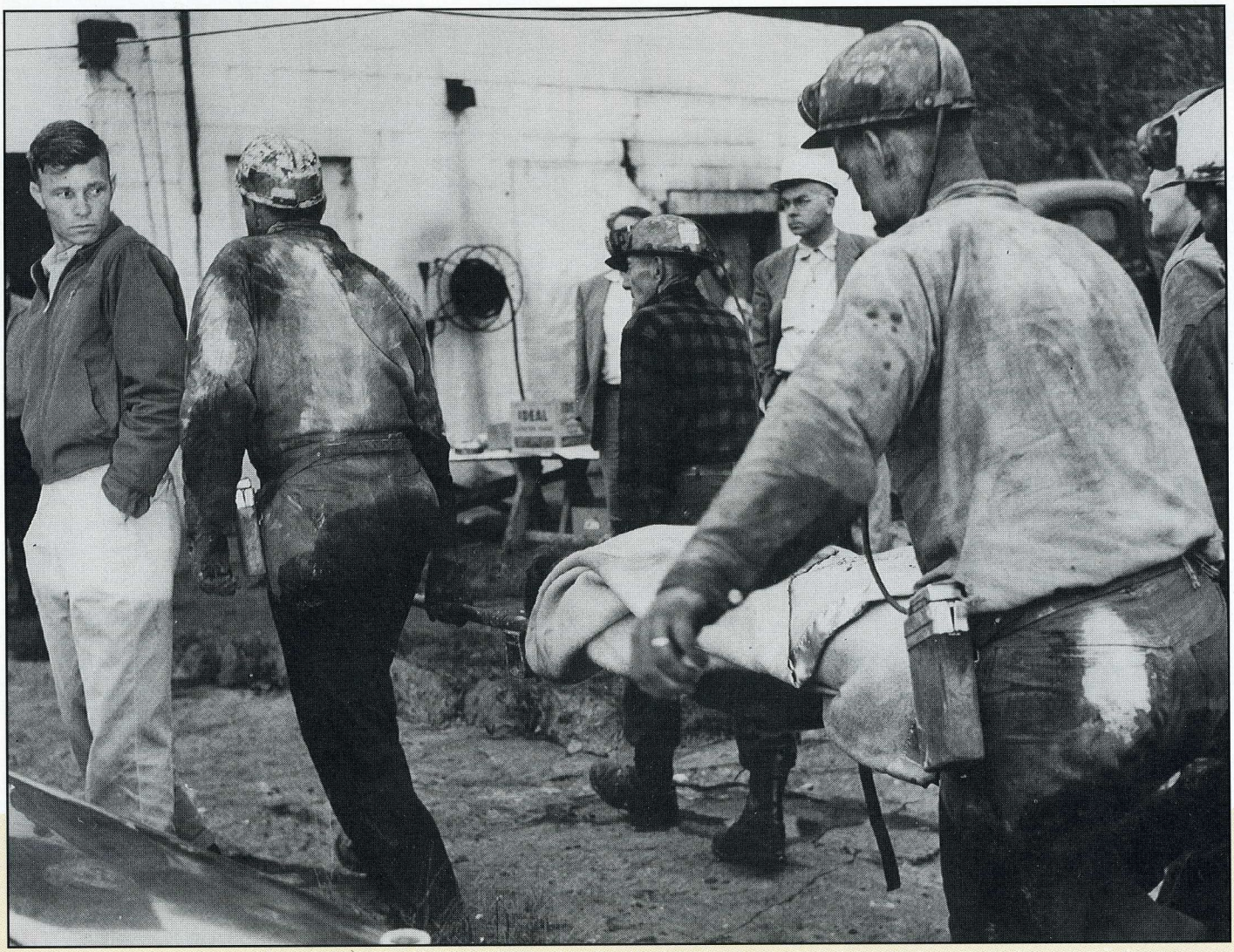
The first rescue team to arrive after the explosion was from Fenwick, which was closest to the mine. Four miners who survived the blast were brought out by the Fenwick team. They were Bill Tucker, Artie Humphrey, Okey Donalson, and Paul Davis. Davis died from his severe burns two days later at the Sacred Heart Hospital in Richwood.

According to Jim, "There's always a back-up team outside the mine when a rescue team goes inside. The Imperial Smokeless team was the second one in. There was another team from Philippi that was back-up for us. They were the third team to go inside.

"There are two entries to each side of a mine," says Jim. "And there's an entry in the middle of those, with a belt that carries you into the mine. Sometimes the roof was so low you had to turn your head to the side and lay flat so that your head didn't hit the roof. There are about 20 to 24 inches between the belt and the roof of the mine."

Jim and other members of the rescue team rode the belt into the Burton mine to the end of the fresh air. "After that, we walked," says Jim. The air pumps were shut off because of the danger of sparks igniting another explosion. "There were what I call swags in the mine, low places. In those swags, we waded in water up to our waist. We carried our equipment in through that water. We had stretchers that

"Everything they taught you came right back. I was worried going in. When I got out, I said, 'Thank you, God.'"



A victim is carried from the mine on a stretcher, while spectators look on. Photograph courtesy of Charleston Newspapers.

were six feet long. We carried the [dead] miners back out through the water."

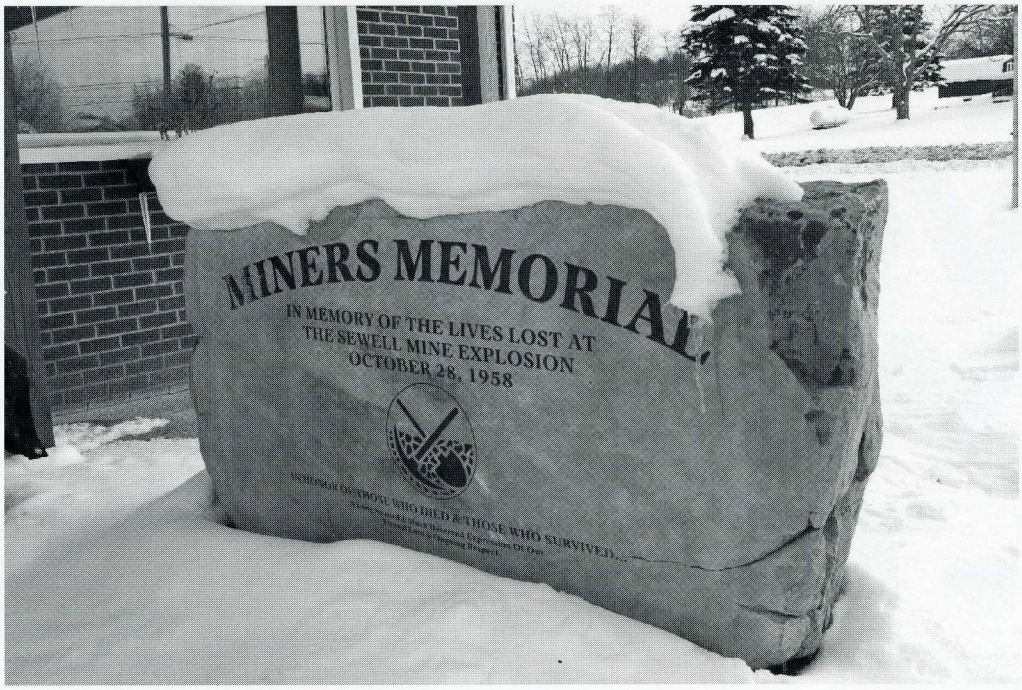
After the rescue team got off the belt, they walked about a quarter- to a half-mile further into the mine. "We wore our oxygen apparatus the entire time we were underground," Jim recalls. "Now they have a full face mask for oxygen, but we had a unit with a nose clasp and a piece that fit in your mouth that you bit down on. After we got inside to where the miners were, some of the men vomited into their mouthpiece, and we had to wash them out so they could breathe through them."

They discovered the first accident victim after walking in about 100 to 300 feet. The Imperial Smokeless rescue team was a recovery unit that day; Jim says that his team did not rescue any living miners.

"If I remember correctly, we brought out about 10 of the 13 men who died," says Jim. "We identified them by the name tag on their lamp belt. All miners wore those belts. They had your name and social security number on them. We tagged the bodies and put them in a metal basket. We were cautioned not to hit another piece of metal with those baskets, because it might cause a spark. The men were burned pretty badly, and some had their clothes burned off. We took them back to the fresh-air base, where mine inspectors examined them and then put the baskets on the belt to take them up out of the mine."

One of the men who died was Harry Westfall, who had worked previously at Imperial Smokeless Coal Company. "I remember Harry Westfall," recalls Jim. "He moved to Oglebay because it was closer to home and he didn't have to drive so

It took a special kind of person to climb on a conveyor belt and ride into an explosive mine with only some stretchers and breathing equipment.



Miners Memorial at the Ranch House Restaurant in Craigsville, dedicated in 2008. Photograph by Michael Keller.

far. He had a thumb missing on one of his hands, and that's how I recognized him when we found him."

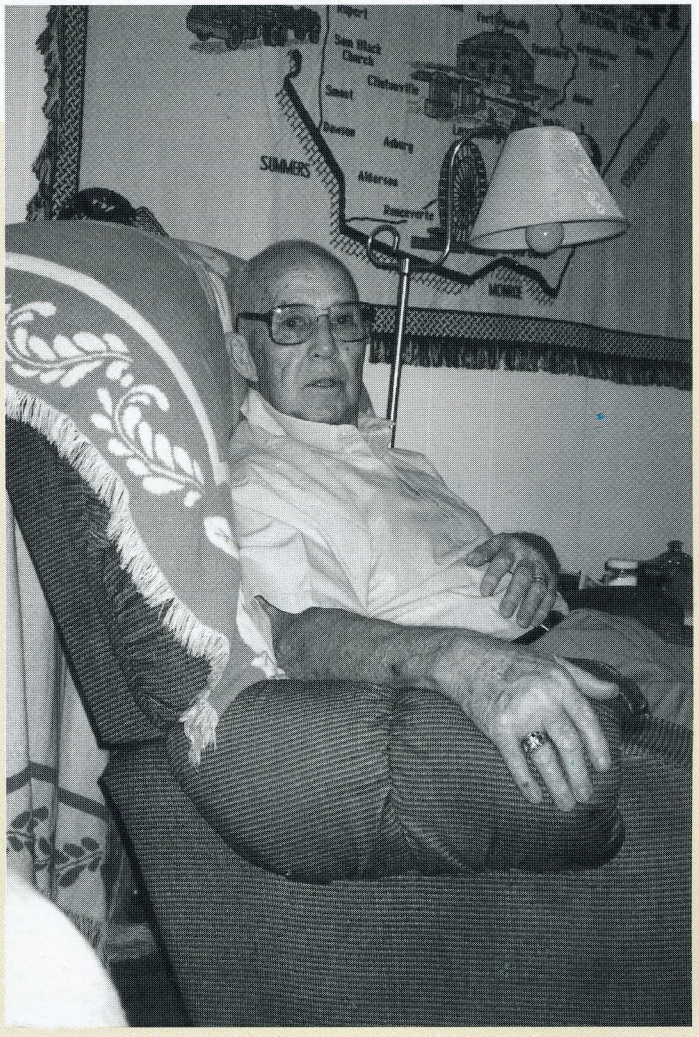
The other miners who died were William Anderson, Harry Fletcher, Ralph Adams, Henry Bryant, Howard Chaffin, Donald Davis, Olan Gates (mine superintendent), Joseph McVey, Kyle Spencer, Eddie Stevenson (assistant superintendent), Pete Weese, and Gwen Wyatt. Millie Hammonds Stinnett says that 115 men worked at the Burton mine, which means that the accident claimed about 12 percent of the total workforce at the mine and about 26 percent of the 54 men who were working inside that morning.

"They wanted us to stay longer, but Mr. Littleton [superintendent of Imperial Smokeless] said that we'd been there for 13 hours, and that was enough." When the Imperial Smokeless team came out, they were debriefed for about 30 or 40 minutes before going home.

"We were off for two days after that," recalls Jim. "For two days I was so sore I couldn't bend my knees from all the lifting and crawling we had to do." On December 23, Imperial Smokeless vice president J G McCurry sent Jim a letter of appreciation for his recovery work as part of the team. A check for $50 was enclosed.

The explosion at the Burton mine was the only time the Imperial Smokeless Safety Team was called to respond to an accident. They were put on alert one other time but didn't have to respond. As with all areas of life, technology has greatly changed today's approach to mine rescue. It took a special kind of person to climb on a conveyor belt and ride into an explosive mine with only some stretchers and breathing equipment.

"It was no play thing," says Jim. "To recover somebody, to have somebody survive an accident, made it all worthwhile."



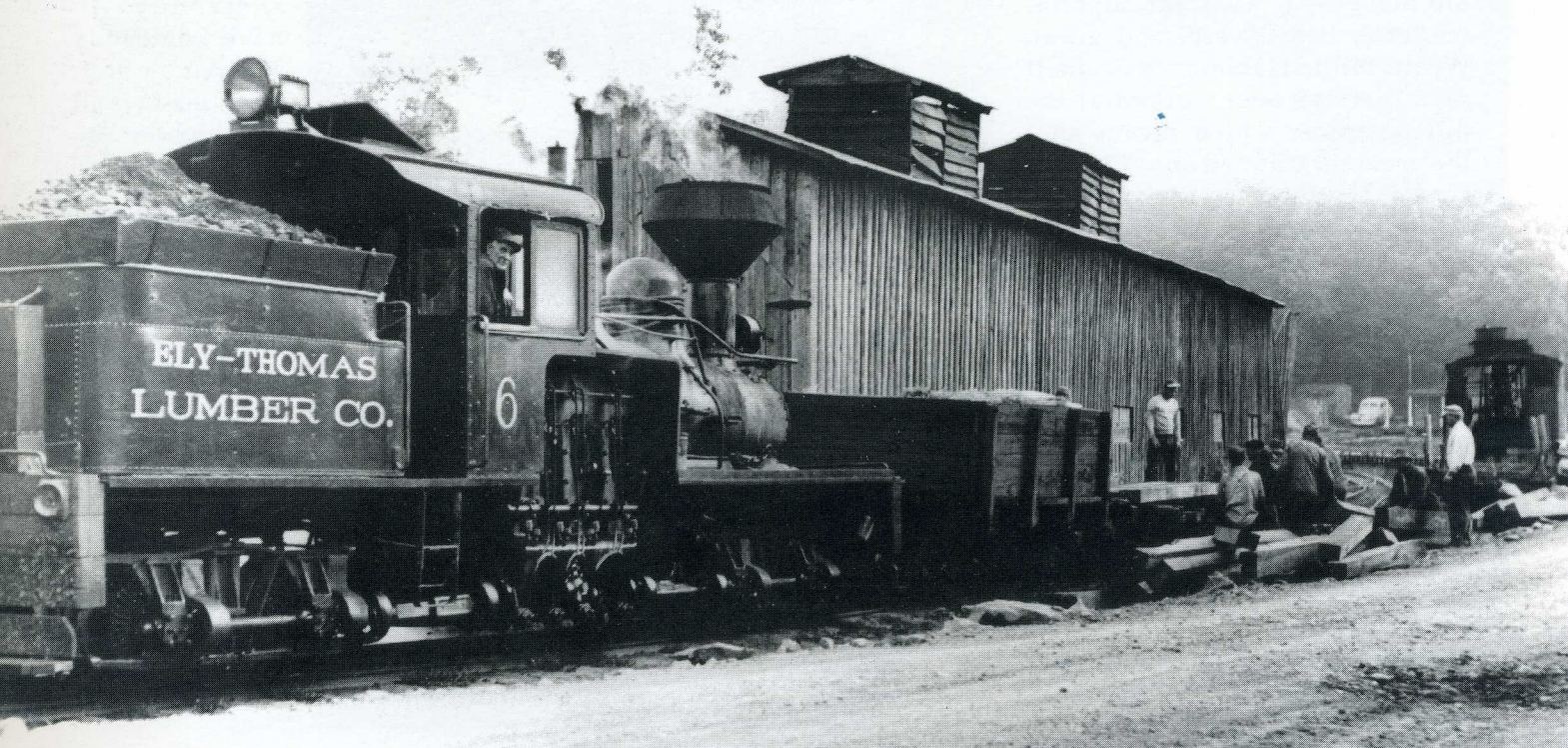
Jim Estep at home in Crichton, Greenbrier County. He retired from mining in 1982. Photographer unknown.

JANET ESTEP was born in Richwood and grew up in Rainelle. She earned a bachelor's degree in English from Berea College and a master's degree in educational administration from West Virginia Graduate College. Janet is a counselor at Virginia Highlands Community College in Abingdon, Virginia. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2008 issue.

INTO THE WOODS WITH ELY-THOMAS

One Day's Drama at Jetsville

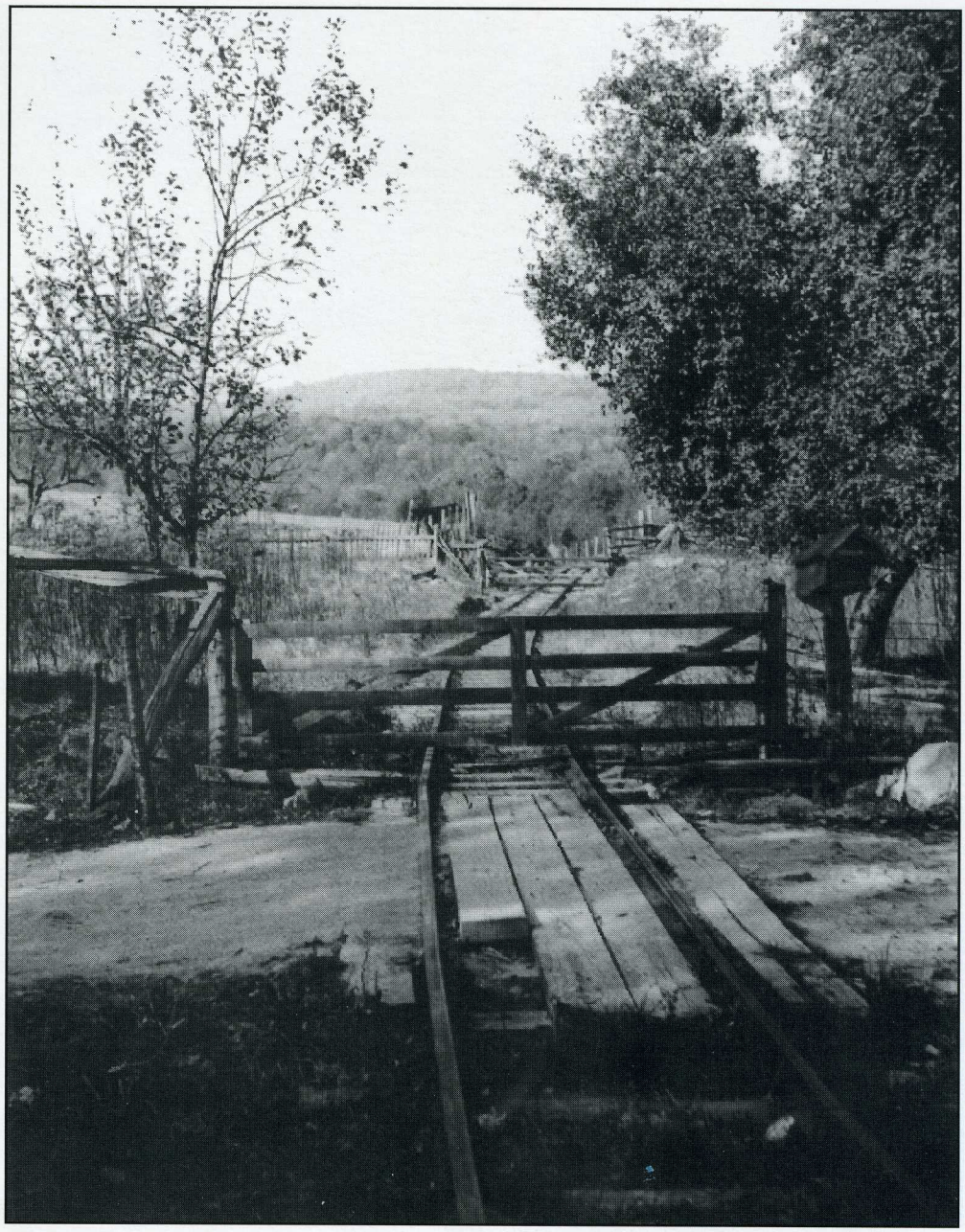
Text and photographs by Borgon Tanner



It was a cool, frosty morning in September 1954. Fog hovered overhead. On this day, Curt Golden, woods boss of the Ely-Thomas Lumber Company, was going up the mountain to complete a difficult assignment handed down by his boss, Ralph Ely, in July.

Curt Golden was a capable woods boss. He was in charge of all operations from laying track and building bridges to cutting and loading the timber in the high woods of Nicholas and Greenbrier counties. A robust man of 72, he was just completing his 57th year in the railroad and logging game, and his 10th year with Ely-Thomas. [See "Ely-Thomas Lumber Company," by Patricia Samples Workman, Winter 1997] His years of experience in remote logging camps had provided him with unusual standards.

In Jetsville, he made his living quarters in the steel cab of a former steam locomotive. A bunk, stove, table, and chairs fit in his weather-proof cab. The open back, front, and window on one side had been boarded up, and a heavy locked door insured privacy. One item always close at hand in the old cab was a loaded .38 caliber revolver. It hung upside down from a nail above his bunk. I doubt if it was used to frighten away panthers.



The tracks cut through a cow pasture, equipped with these distinctive wooden gates. The crew carefully opened and shut the gates as the train passed, to keep the cows from roaming.

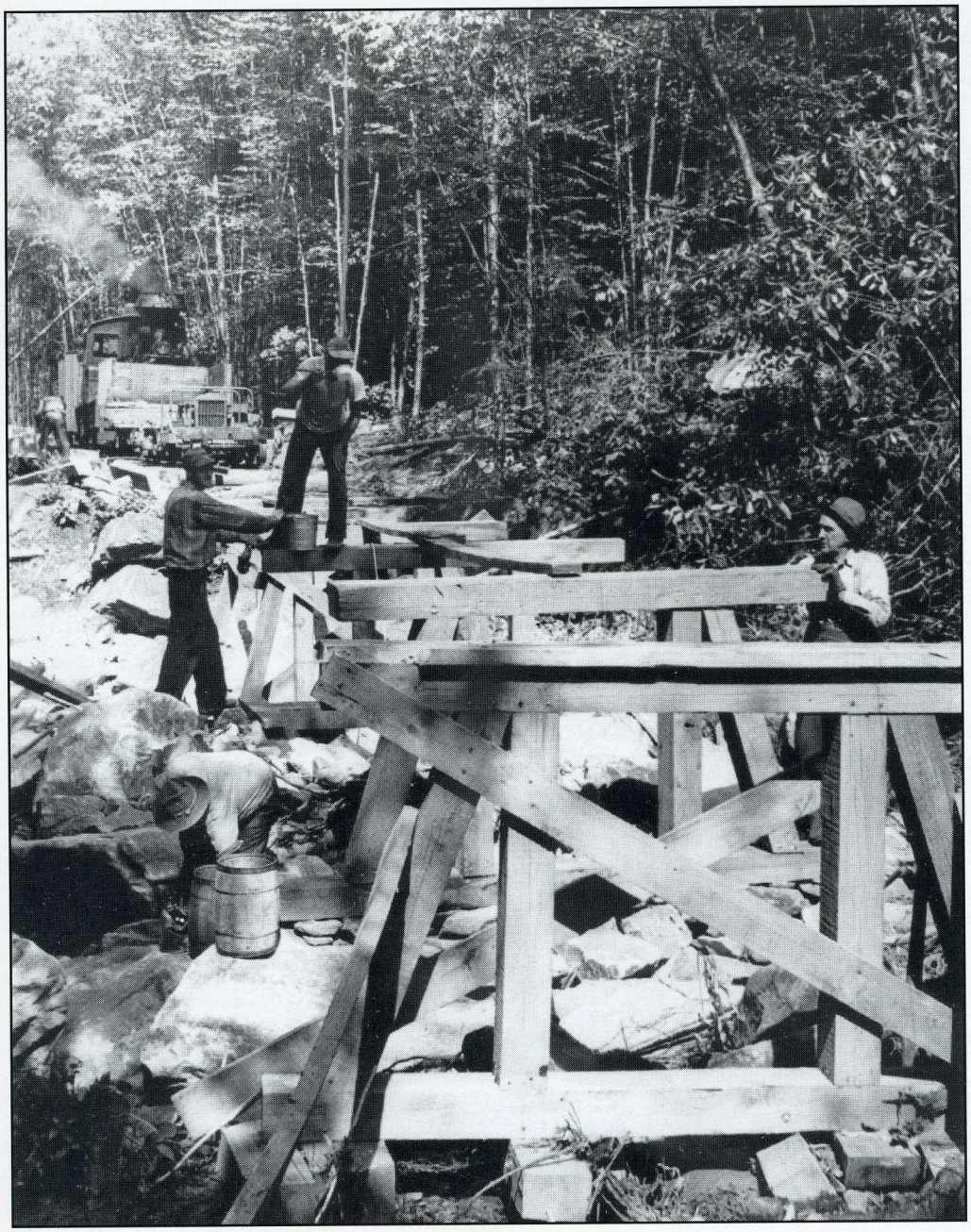
In 1954, the logging operation concentrated on reaching second-growth timber, about 15 miles away, at the head of Big Laurel Run. But logging activities had come to a halt on July 18. A torrential rainstorm had washed out all the bridges on the three-foot narrow-gauge road. Trees had been uprooted, and grass was left hanging on tree trunks, six feet above the ground. The deluge had shifted sand and gravel banks and created new stream beds. Broken bridge timbers were strewn across the narrow valley.

Left: An Ely-Thomas Lumber Company work train prepares to leave Jetsville, Nicholas County, to complete track and bridge repairs in September 1954.

Ralph Ely estimated that it would take three months to replace all the bridges — three months and $30,000. With good timber waiting to be cut on the far mountain, he sent Curt Golden to survey new bridge sites and then rebuild the bridges.

The standard tools of this woods boss consisted of a six-foot sapling for sighting, a plumb line, and a carpenter's level. With these basic implements, he could build bridges or lay out the roadbed of a logging line.

Our visit was well-timed. Almost six weeks after the flash flood, the last bridge would soon be completed. With this, Curt Golden and his bridge crew would have built 21 bridges in 42 days at a cost of $10,000.



Woods boss Curt Golden, at right, sights across a bent, as workers repair flood damage to the bridge and track near the head of Big Laurel Run.

We arrived in our trusty Volkswagen as the trains were made ready for one of the final days of bridge building. "We" meant myself, my wife, and 18-month-old son, Martin. I greeted Curt Golden and introduced my wife and young son. I asked if we could tag along, and the amused woods boss suggested we travel to the head of the rail line with them in the work train. He said that we could ride in the boxcar — a short, homemade affair with seats, a potbellied stove, tools, and lunch buckets. We climbed aboard.

The work train consisted of a #6 Shay engine, the little boxcar, and a flatcar. One end of the flatcar held hay for the logging teams in the woods, and the other end was loaded with bridge timbers. The sawn timbers for the last trestle had been brought from the mill at Fenwick by the mine run.

With the last of the bridge timbers loaded, the section gang headed for the boxcar, and the eight-man bridge crew settled down on the hay bales. Since we were blocking the main yard track, our engineer moved the work train onto a short siding to allow the log train to go around us.

The first to leave Jetsville that morning was Curt Golden in his bright red motorcar, known as a speeder. He would lead the procession up to the head of Big Laurel Creek, where all the day's action would take place.

The log train with #5 Shay and a string of rattlers was next to leave. The crew of the log train needed extra time to reach the siding and switch the log loader to the main track. Then they would push the empty log cars, except one, in the siding, pick up the loader behind the empty, shove it up close to the rattlers, and clear the main track before our train arrived.

After the log train left, the work train came out of the siding and followed the others in a leisurely fashion. We paused briefly when we came to the parish pasture. Men of the bridge crew opened the gates, and we moved slowly across the pasture, the Shay making soft clicking sounds as the gears meshed in unison. We paused while the last gate was closed and the two gatemen took seats on the hay bales again.

The section crew reacted to this drama with a few grins. Communication was minimal. When they first climbed into the boxcar, they acknowledged our presence with a few nods. After that, they spoke to each other in Italian. Their speech reminded me that in West Virginia, hundreds of miles of track had been built by sturdy Italian crews, dating back to the late 1800's.

We settled down in the boxcar. In places, the uneven track produced



Loader swings a log from the log pile to the waiting train.

a slight rocking motion. Many of the crew slept, as did our son, Martin.

To climb 1,400 vertical feet to the head of Big Laurel Run, we followed the creek along the valley floor before we encountered steep grades. Soon, the Shay was bellowing as we climbed the first 5% and then several sections of the 7% grade. Finally, we stopped at the foot of the steep grade where the log train was waiting for us to pass. Hay bales for the logging horses were unloaded.

In that 1,500 feet, we had to climb 150 vertical feet. We crawled slowly up the 10% grade. Not only extremely steep, it contained two reverse curves.

When we left, the engineer yanked open the throttle of the Shay. We had only a short distance to go, perhaps 1,500 feet, to reach the site of the last bridge. But in that 1,500 feet, we had to climb 150 vertical feet. We crawled slowly up the 10% grade. Not only extremely steep, it contained two reverse curves.

We stopped close to the bridge site on a level stretch of track and



Jess Hammond uses a peavy to steer a large log into position — hard and dangerous work!

unloaded bridge timbers. The section crew picked up tools and began shoveling and packing chunks of rock, dirt, and sand under the ties.

We were close to 3,900 feet elevation, and here was sand. Our son soon discovered a small "sand mine," and for several hours while I was taking photographs, he played in his own sand pile in the shade of the hardwood trees. While my wife divided her time between watching our son and nearby activities, I photographed Curt Golden and his crew at work. They had several bents to construct and position before they could bridge the gap left by the flood.

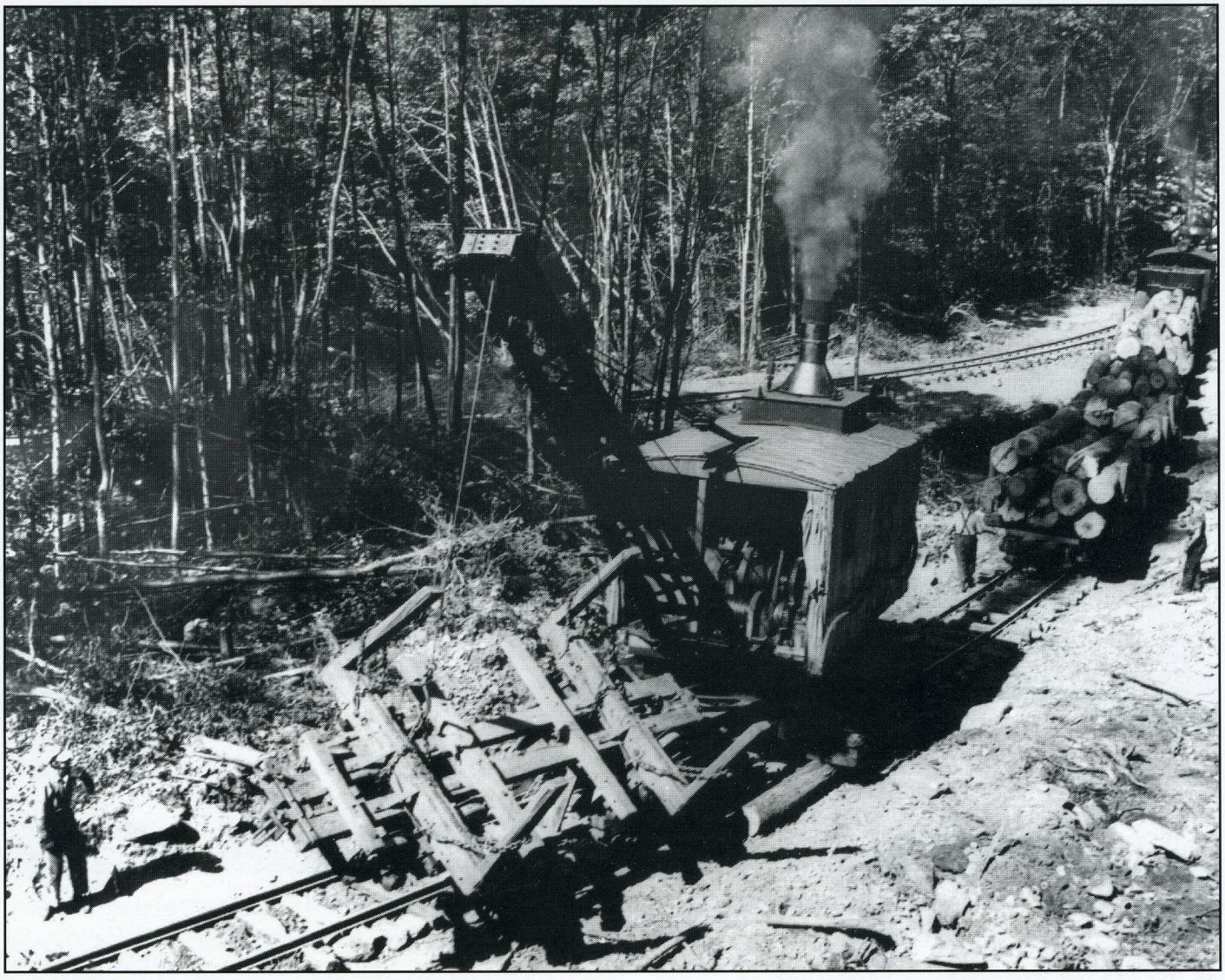
A bent is a framework of poles or sawn timber used to support a bridge. It has a bottom (mud) sill, two vertical timbers (plumb posts), two angled timbers (battery posts), a cap, and cross bracing. One or more bents bridged the various gaps. Logging railroads placed stringers above to span all the bents. Ties would go across the stringers and, spiked to the ties, the rails.

The remaining bent had to be jacked into proper position before other work began. A few men did that while others put in a mud sill for a bent on the near side of the stream. Once the first new bent was erected and plumb line checked, the other bents were built in fairly rapid order.

The September day had turned warm, and the bridge crew was in a relaxed mood. During a mid-morning rest, they related a recent adventure: Two weeks earlier, while the steep 10% grade below us was being cleared by loggers and the section crew, Curt Golden and his crew, anxious to learn about conditions at the last bridge site, walked up grade to the high stream bed. There they found one remaining bent. With that knowledge, they could determine the amount of timbers needed to bridge the stream bed.

While inspecting the far bank, they found the roadbed of an old standard-gauge logging line built 40 years earlier, in 1914. Near the top of the mountain, the old railroad grade crossed a military road that the Confederates had cut during the Civil War. Evidently, the Confederate forces were headed for the Cherry River area later known as Richwood. The crew found several cannonballs that they assumed had fallen off military wagons. Two weeks later, the men were still excited about their find.

After taking photographs, I checked on my wife and son, now resting in the shade. I walked over to the top of the 10% grade and heard sounds of steam-powered machinery. Far below me, plumes of smoke and steam disclosed #5



"Swinging the cars" is a lost art, practiced on narrow-gauge logging railroads. To save switching, an empty "rattler" is swung around in front of the log loader before being loaded.

Shay collecting loaded log cars. Rhythmic sounds and puffs of smoke indicated the log loader was filling the daily quota of logs for Ralph Ely.

As I walked down the 10% grade to get a closer view, I nodded to the Italian section foreman and his crew. The main line at the bottom of the grade was blocked by #5 Shay and a partial train of loaded log cars.

It was fascinating for me to watch the log train crew in action. The operator of the log loader would swing the boom around towards the log pile and drop cable and tongs close to a log. The tong hooker would open the tongs and slap wood.

The tong hooker would open the tongs and slap wood. When the log was lifted, the sharp ends would dig in deeper. The log was lifted, swung, and loaded on the empty car.

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The tong hooker or brakeman would guide the log into position on the car with a peavy. Once the log settled down, the tongs would be pried out and boom, cable, and tongs swung around to fetch another log from the pile. When the last log was loaded on the first rattler, the heavy Shay with the loaded log car drifted downgrade a short distance.

On branches where grades are not steep, Ely-Thomas crews employed a unique plan feasible only on the narrow gauge. It was called "swinging the cars."

The first step had already been taken. The #5 Shay with one loaded log car had drifted downgrade to leave a space below the loader.



Loaded and heading down the mountain, this log train is pulled by #5 Shay engine. Riding the front of the engine are Jess Hammond, at left, and Ellis Kaye.

While this was going on, the brakeman had uncoupled an empty log car from the string above, released the hand brakes, and let it drift down toward the back of the loader. Brakes were applied a short distance from the loader, and the car stopped.

The log loader boom had two cables: one from the upper end of the boom, the other halfway down. A pair of tongs were mounted at the end of each cable. Only the upper cable was used to lift logs, but both cables were used to lift cars.

The tong hooker and the brakeman wrapped one cable around the frame at the rear of the car and another at the front, hooking the tongs around each cable to form a loop. The operator then raised the boom, lifted the empty car off the rails, slowly swung the car around, and positioned it over the rails below the loader. With peavys, the tong hooker and brakeman pushed the trucks (wheels) over to land on the rails. The cars were never level when they were swung, so one end touched down first, and, with persuasion, the other end would also land on the rails.

The brakeman threw the switch back for the main line, climbed on the last log car, and the train went slowly down the mountain to Jetsville.

While the empty car was still held in place by the cables, the Shay, with one load attached, backed up the grade and coupled onto the empty. The Shay provided the braking power to keep loads and empty cars in place while the log loading continued. By the time 12 or more rattlers were loaded, considerable braking power was needed to keep the log train from running away.

"Swinging the cars" saved much switching and time on the mountain grades. It could not be done in all locations, but sidings and log landings were laid out with this time- and labor-saving practice in mind. Watching a two-ton log car being swung through the air was an exciting experience, one of the most unusual sights I have ever seen on logging roads.

Finally, all the log cars were loaded. The Shay by this time had its nose downhill, several hundred feet away, on a 5% grade. The Shay



Curt Golden on his speeder, with Meta and Martin Tanner, our author's wife and son. Note the improvised bridge work, replacing flood-damaged supports.

and its log train inched forward to clear the switch on the main track leading uphill. When clear, the brakeman threw the switch back for the main line, climbed on the last log car, and the train went slowly down the mountain to Jetsville.

It was late afternoon when I climbed the 10% grade past the section crew and renewed by acquaintance with my wife and young son. Martin, worn out from playing in his sand pile, was dozing in the shade.

Curt Golden and his bridge crew had used all their timbers to construct the bents needed for the last bridge. Only stringers, ties, and rails were needed to reach the other side.

The woods boss had his bridge crew board the flatcar and his guests board the boxcar. The work train backed down the 10% grade to the switch and then headed in the siding close to the loader. This allowed Curt Golden to take his speeder down the steep grade. Passing the section foreman, he told him to have his men "down tools" and get on



Tong hooker and brakeman Ellis Kaye and Jess Hammond begin the big job of unloading the log train at Jetsville in the late afternoon.

board the work train. Down in the valley, the work train would stop, and timbers from the flood were salvaged. The woods boss passed the siding and led the parade back to Jetsville.

We came out of the siding and slowly backed down the mountain. With only two cars, the engineer of #6 Shay had no problem controlling the train. Miles passed before we left the mountain grades and entered the lower valley. The rhythm of the Shay changed. A short time later, we stopped when Curt Golden flagged down the engineer where salvage work was to be done.

The woods boss had plans for us, as well. He sent one person to help us climb down from the boxcar and carry Martin, while we followed with our gear to his speeder. He knew that my wife and son were tired and that I wanted to photograph the crew at work unloading logs at Jetsville. We transferred to the speeder and traveled down the valley at a moderate speed. Frequent remarks were made on the devastation created by the flood.

The Ely-Thomas operation ended in 1955, concluding 11 years of intensive narrow-gauge logging in West Virginia.

A few minutes later, we were in Jetsville, and Curt Golden stopped his speeder near our Volkswagen. I placed our sleeping youngster on his blanket in the back seat. My wife stayed nearby to watch him and the log crew.

My last photographs caught the final work of the day. The engineer on #5 Shay had backed the loaded log cars out on a long, curved elevated track. On the inside was an inclined surface that led to a shallow amphitheater. At the lower edge was the dual-gauge track where the standard-gauge loader was sta-



After operations ceased at Ely-Thomas, this #6 Shay engine was sold and shipped to New Jersey. The boy is unidentified, photographer unknown; courtesy of Jim Comstock.

tioned. Logs from the narrow-gauge train were dumped into this broad arena and rolled down within reach of the standard-gauge log loader.

Once positioned, the loaded log train did not move. The tong hooker and brakeman started with the last car in the line and knocked holding chains away from the hardwood stakes. The men stayed clear as the logs tore loose from the log car and thundered down the incline to the bottom. Car after car was unloaded. Occasionally, a log would be reluctant to join the others. A few turns of a peavy would send it twirling, crashing, and rolling down to the pile below.

I took photographs from a respectable distance. A wise person does not take close-up shots with tons of hardwood logs cascading down a slope.

That was the final act in the day's drama at Jetsville. Our mission to observe and record work on the Ely-Thomas had been successful. I walked over to Curt Golden and expressed my heartfelt thanks for the cooperation and courtesy he had extended to me and my family. He accepted my thanks, said he was glad to be of service, and wished us a safe journey home. We drove away as the late afternoon sun highlighted the narrow-gauge engine house at Jetsville.

The Ely-Thomas operation ended in 1955, concluding 11 years of intensive narrow-gauge logging in West Virginia. Rails were pulled up and equipment offered for sale. Although remote, the line was well-known. It had seen many visitors over the years, and my family and I felt fortunate to have been among them.

BORGON TANNER is a native of Clarksburg. His family moved to New Martinsville, where he graduated from Magnolia High School. Borgon has been a documentary photographer, railroad historian, and a teacher in Maryland public schools. His articles have appeared in *Classic Trains* and *Rural Delivery*. Borgon currently lives near Vanceboro, Maine. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2004 issue.

"Just a Little Bit of History"

By Carl E. Feather



Sign along County Road 9 in Tucker County points travelers to the Fairfax Stone Historical Monument. The original Fairfax Stone is long gone, but the remains of a 1910 marker and a 1957 monument stand at the headwaters of the North Branch of the Potomac. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

Finding the Fairfax Stone

Most people who visit the Fairfax Stone Historical Monument do so simply because the brown sign at the ghost town of Forty-Three on U.S. Route 219 points them to it. Although the stone officially resides in Tucker County, it marks the spot where Tucker, Preston, and Grant counties converge, near the Garrett County, Maryland line. Some come here with a vague idea of the stone's greater historical significance, but most are just in search of one more photo opportunity for the family vacation album.

"We have no idea what this is all about," admits Janice Newton, an Amarillo, Texas, resident who, in the fall of 2008, was visiting the state with her husband, "Wib," a Northern Panhandle native.

"It's a historic place, that's for sure," Wib says. "I didn't know it existed. It's just a little bit of history."

Like most visitors, the Newtons read the bronze plaque on the monument, looked at the little trickle of water that emerges from under it, returned to their car, and drove away in search of more scenic fare.



Jane Close (Natale) and her mother, Marion Close, at the stone in the early 1940's.

Shortly after the Newtons left, Pete and Jane (Close) Natale stopped to walk around the monument and reminisce. Jane, a Thomas native, and her husband, a native of Coketon, were visiting their old stomping grounds as they prepared to transition from life in St. Louis to a new residence in Florida.

"This is the first time I've ever been here," says Pete, who grew up just four miles from the stone. "I knew it was here, but I didn't know exactly where."

For Jane, the stone was a nostalgic tug to her memory. She recalls an outing here during the World War II years with her parents. Her dad snapped a picture of her and her mother, Marion Close, standing next to the stone, which was much taller and more pointed than it appears today

"My dad liked to visit places, and we were out riding around when we stopped here," Jane recalls. "I got up on the stone, and Dad took my picture."

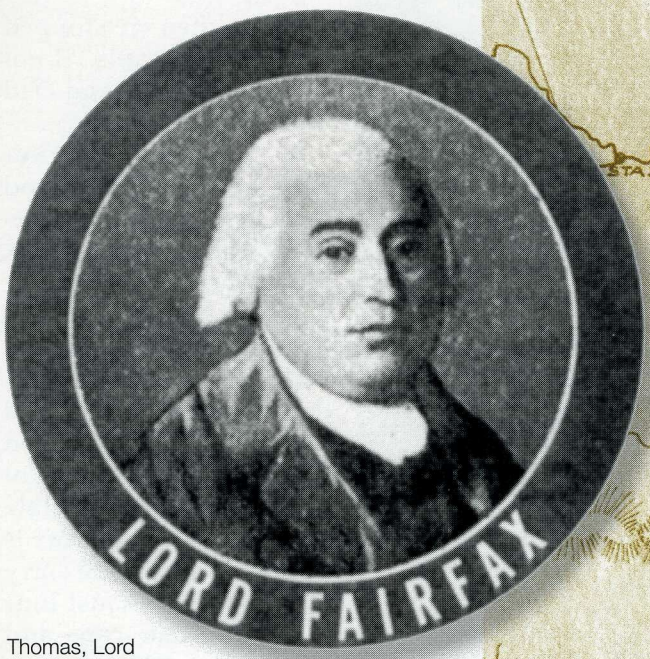
The concrete marker Jane and Marion stood next to that day was actually the fourth "Fairfax Stone" to be placed here. Owned, managed, and operated by West Virginia State Parks and Forests, the monument is located in the middle of reclaimed strip-mining land. Part of the Blackwater Falls State Park operation, Fairfax is a petite and minimal entry in the system — just four acres, a trash can, and parking lot. There are no restrooms, paved parking lot, or souvenir shop.

The last item is somewhat debatable. Over the years, furtive souvenir hunters have chiseled away at the stones erected here to mark what is one of West Virginia's most historic spots. There have now been five stones at the location, and all but the last one, a boulder, have fallen victim to visitors who wanted to own a piece of the rock.

Robert "Rob" Gilligan, Blackwater Falls State Park superintendent, says vandalism or souvenir gathering is rarely an issue at the site these days. The biggest nuisance he and his staff must deal with is the occasional overflowing trash receptacle.

Rob says there were an estimated 3,157 visitors to the monument during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2007, down about 700 from the year before. He attributes the drop to logging activity that closed the access road for a while. The numbers are estimates only. There's no gate, no registry, and no one to actually count cars and bodies every day. The estimates are based on anecdotal observations of park system employees doing maintenance at the site.

Rob confirms that the majority of the visitors are the curious, who really don't have any idea what the marker is all about. A smaller class consists of serious history buffs who have a grasp of the spot's significance in determining the borders of West Virginia and



Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Sixth Baron of Cameron. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office.

Maryland.

"We'll get groups, people who are interested in the history of it," Rob says. Those groups are often out of Virginia because the border issues generally predate West Virginia's formation.

Rob also recalls a conference held at least a decade ago by a fledgling historical group, Society for the Preservation of the Fairfax Stone, but, to his knowledge, nothing more came of it.

The weathered plate on the monument states that the original stone, set in 1746, marked the source of the North Branch of the Potomac River. However, as with most history, there's a great deal more to this story of exploration, geography, and conflict than what will fit on a bronze plate.

The stream that emerges here is a fickle trickle. Visit in summer, and you'll find more water dampening the ground under your vehicle's air-conditioning unit than what the earth spits up under the huge boulder that marks the headwater spring. Nevertheless, of all the various springs and false starts in this great river's western basin, Captain Benjamin Wislow, Colonel William Mayo, and their survey party in 1736 set this point as "the true Meridian of the first Fountain of the River of Pattowmack." The line, drawn north some 36 miles to the 40th degree of latitude — the Pennsylvania border — would establish the western boundary of Maryland.



Map circa 1900, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

More important to what would become West Virginia, this point marked the northwestern boundary of land grants given by King Charles II to Lord Hopton. Hopton, a powerful friend of the king, received six million acres whose boundaries were the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers. Hopton sold this estate in 1688 to Thomas Lord Culpeper, Baron of Thorsway, who did a short stint as governor of Virginia. After his death, the land grant descended to his only child, Lady Catherine Fairfax, who married Thomas, Lord Fairfax, the Fifth Baron of Cameron. That estate was handed down to their eldest son, Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Sixth Baron of Cameron, in 1722.

The Fairfax Land Grant was 2,450 square miles, stretching from tidewater to the headspring of the Potomac, south to the first fountain of the



Men and women pose for a picture at the Fairfax Stone in 1889. This marker, the third monument at the site, was placed in 1885 by the Davis Coal & Coke Company of Thomas. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

Rappahanock River.

Lord Fairfax came to America in 1735 to look after this estate and investigate issues of encroachments. To settle those issues, the king appointed a survey party to this vast tract, "the Northern Neck of Virginia." The survey was essential to determining the boundaries of both the Maryland and Fairfax grants. Ten years later, a second set of commissioners was appointed to survey the line between these headwaters, known as the Fairfax Line.

Both parties ignored the South Branch's superiority in length and westernmost origin. Homer Floyd Fansler, in his *History of Tucker County*, attributes the error to the volume of water in the streams at the time of the original survey, November 1736. Thanks to a heavy rainfall, the North Branch won the contest. Had weather not skewed the competing branches' volumes, the surveyors probably would have followed the South Branch to Highland County, Virginia, about 60 miles south of Fairfax Stone.

When the second set of surveyors — whose party included Peter Jefferson, father of the nation's third president — reached the Potomac's "first fountain" on October 22, 1746, they used marks left in spruce and beech trees by the original party to verify the headwater position. They set there "a Stone by the Corner pine mark'd FX."

This landmark became a bone of contention between Virginia and Maryland. Had the surveyors established the South Branch as the "first fountain," Maryland would have gained a 20-mile strip of land that would have included all or a portion of at least six counties now in West Virginia.

West Virginia's border dispute with Maryland continued until 1910, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of West Virginia.

This error was confirmed as early as 1754, when Colonel Thomas Cresap, a Marylander, correctly identified the true source of the Potomac. But more pressing concerns prevented Baltimore and Fairfax from asserting their rights against Virginia, and then the Revolution came along, which put the whole mess on the backburner.

West Virginia's border dispute with Maryland continued until 1910, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of West Virginia. Maryland's southwestern border point is not at the stone, however. No, to further confuse things, the little but mighty stream takes



Remnants of the 1910 Fairfax Stone, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, David Strand Collection.

an immediate swing to the west as it emerges from the damp soil and travels a horseshoe turn for about 3/4-mile before arcing to the east. If you follow a northward line from the headwater, you'll eventually encounter another stone that marks that boundary at Kempton, Maryland. The reason it's here and not at the headwaters? The southwestern border is set where the meridian drawn from the Fairfax Stone intersects the Potomac River, located 3,983 feet north of the "first fountain."

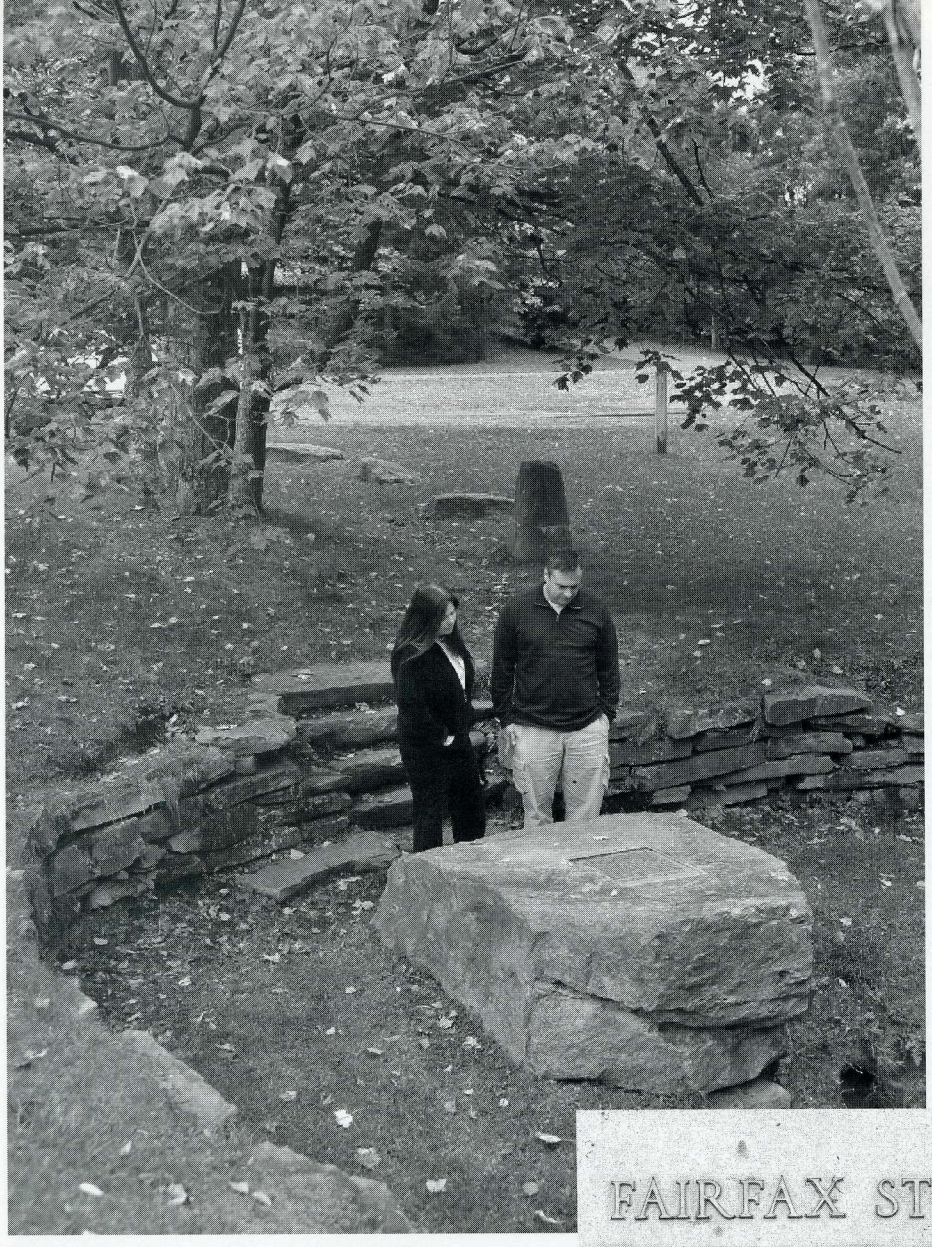
Tradition states that the original Fairfax Stone set in 1746 was a small sandstone pyramid inscribed with the letters "F-X." When Melcher did his work on the line in 1859, he described the stone as "on a spot encircled by several small streams flowing from springs about it. It consists of a rough piece of sandstone, indifferent and friable, planted to the depth of a few feet in the ground and rising a foot or more above the surface. Shapeless in form it would scarcely attract the attention of a passerby. The finding of it was without difficulty, and its recognition and identification by the inscription FX, now almost obliterated by the corroding action of water and air."

Homer Floyd Fansler, in his *History of Tucker County*, describes the other four stones that were erected to mark this contentious boundary·

• 1859 by Melcher, who placed the new stone immediately in the rear (south) of the original he located. Melcher's marker was four pieces of sandstone, built up to an apex, 4.5 feet tall. The base stone was 2.5 feet square; the other three pieces formed the pyramid.

• 1885 by Davis Coal & Coke Company of Thomas. The two earlier stones were easy targets for vandals, who evidently chipped away at them until December 1884, when what was left of both markers was broken up, allegedly by sledge-hammer wielding ruffians, and carried away. The new marker consisted of "four squared stones, the top one beveled on each side and flattened at the apex, on which was placed a fifth stone, a small one for a capstone," wrote Fansler. This stone was notable for the letters "FX" on one of the bevels and, on the opposite, a coat of arms, believed to be that of the Calvert family, the Lord Baltimores of Maryland. The marker, about 18 inches square and 24 inches tall, and its capstone in particular, had an interesting dual function. Visitors left their names and addresses beneath it "for any person interested in acquiring a correspondent," according to Fansler, who attributes this trivia to an eyewitness.

• August 12, 1910, by the Joint Boundary Commission of Maryland and West Virginia. Sometime around 1900, as the story goes, a disgusted surveyor broke the 1885 stone to pieces on a dare. When the commission set its stone, there were no remnants of previous stones to guide them. The new marker, made of concrete, had the inscription "FfX 1746" on its south side and, on the reverse side, 1910. This is the pyramidal marker Jane Close Natale recalled being photographed with, a marker that still stands, but after years of suffering the abuse of target shooters and souvenirs hunters, diminished in quality and stature. It started out 4 feet, 4 inches tall.



Wilbert and Jane Newton read the inscription on the 1957 monument at Fairfax Stone. The 1910 stone is visible behind them. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

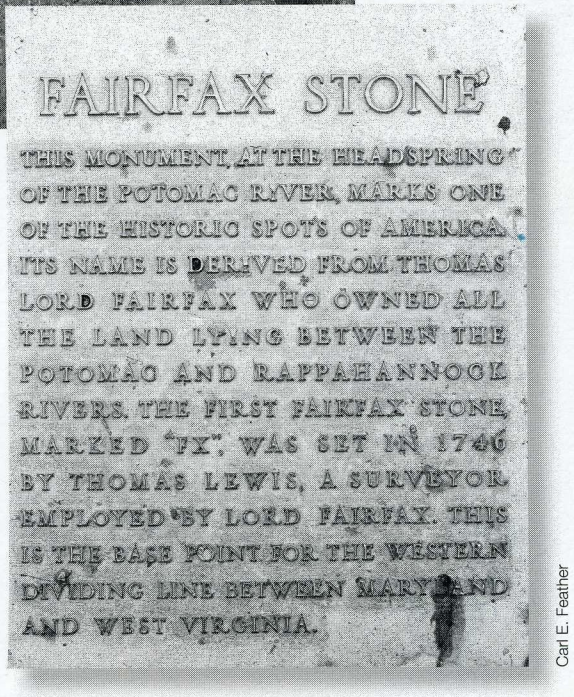
• In 1957, the Western Maryland Railway Company gave four acres of this historic spot to the state for the purpose of establishing a park. This action prompted placement of yet another stone, this time a six-ton monolith. A bronze plaque bears a brief history of the stone and is embedded in the boulder. The site was dedicated on October 5, 1957, by Queen Silvia XXI of the Mountain State Forest Festival. The boulder was set by Daniel "Boone" Pase, who had just started his 37-year career at Blackwater Falls State Park when he and his crew were assigned the task. [See "Building Blackwater: A Visit with Daniel 'Boone' Pase," by Carl E. Feather; page 56.]

"That rock was laying on the bank along the highway between Davis and the top of Canaan Mountain," says Boone, a resident of Thomas. "We got a fellow who had dozers and a trailer. He just pushed it up on that trailer with the dozer, and we hauled it off."

What most people don't know, says Boone, is that the monument is sited about 50 feet from where the spring actually emerges from the ground. "Reclamation [of the strip mine] had covered that up," Boone says. The stream was diverted with a pipe to the location where Boone and his men — Joe Lawrence, Frank Roby, and part-timers Chippy Wilson and Ed Keenard — set the stone. Boone says he and that crew also created the stonework around the site.

Boone claims to have seen pieces of an earlier Fairfax Stone when he was a kid — most likely the remains of the 1885 stone. "They gathered them up and took them to the Smithsonian," he says.

Rob Gilligan says he'd like to add more interpretive signage to the site, so visitors can get a better grasp of the monument's significance. He would also like to see the old rail fence that once enclosed this parcel restored.



Carl E. Feather

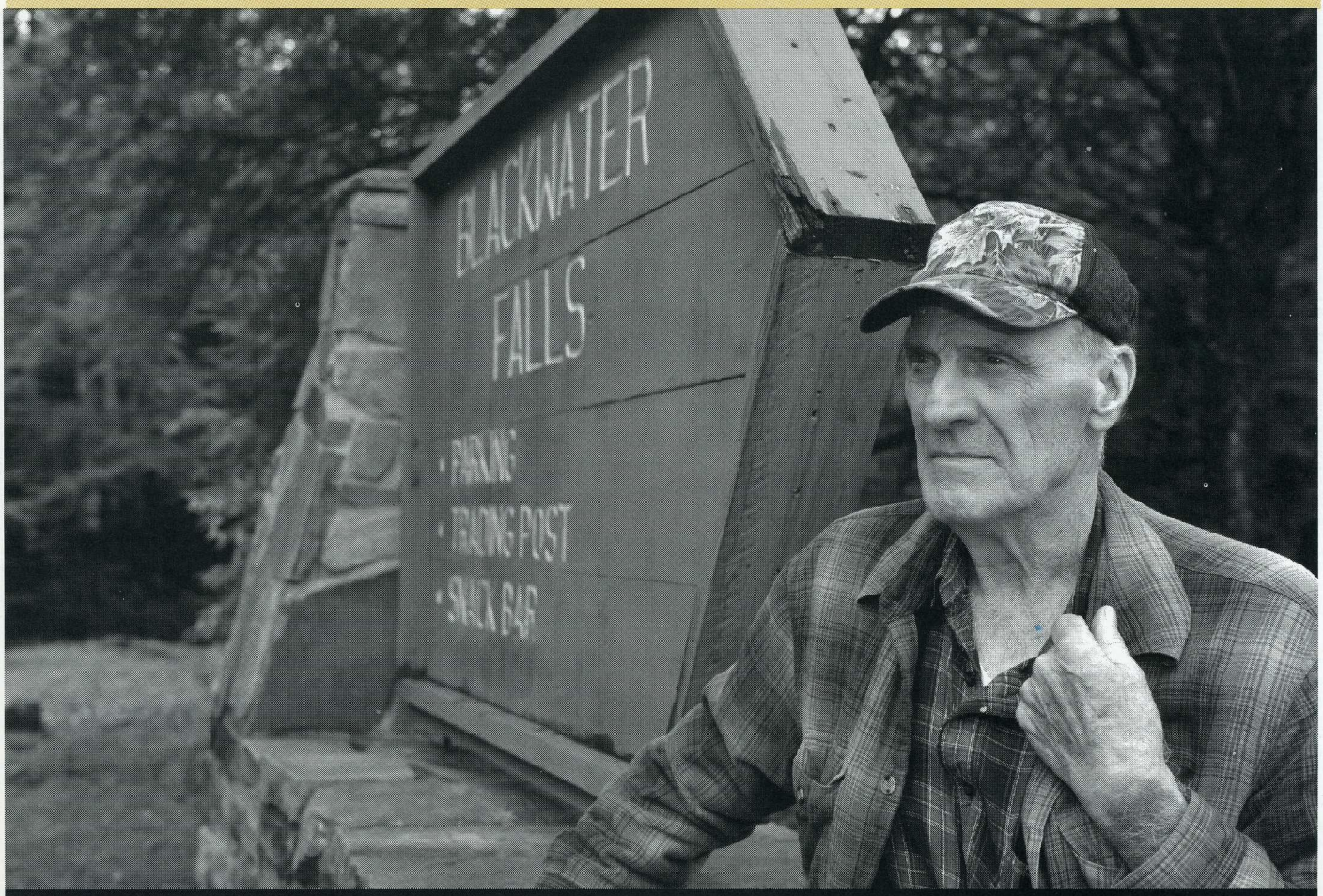
A new survey of the land owned by Western Pocahontas Properties was made in 2008 and new markers set to delineate the state's property lines. The Division of Natural Resources approved purchase of four concrete and bronze markers for the corners. Otherwise, the site's appearance is unlikely to undergo much else in way of improvements, says Rob.

"It's kind of a pretty little spot down there," he says.

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.

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

Building Blackwater



Daniel "Boone" Pase, of Thomas, worked for 33 years at Blackwater Falls State Park. Boone was involved in the construction of many of the park's amenities, including this sign.

A Visit with Daniel "Boone" Pase



The Blackwater River in May 1957 Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Department of Natural Resources Collection.

Daniel "Boone" Pase's well-worn handprints are all over Blackwater Falls State Park. You just have to know where to look for them. Boone and his crew built the locust picnic tables and cleared the groves they rest in. His stonework is found throughout the park — the swimming pool wall, the chimney at Pendleton Point picnic pavilion, and the triangle at the intersection of the Falls and Lodge roads. He laid water lines, cleared timber, moved rocks, planned and constructed the steps to the falls, and built riding and hiking trails, one of which bears his name. Although he didn't build the lodge, he maintained it and knew the structure like his own house.

"I know this lodge inside and out, underneath it, too. I've crawled from one end to another underneath it, putting sewer pipes in it," Boone says as he surveys the front of the 55-room building that was constructed shortly after he was hired in 1955. Boone served as construction maintenance coordinator 28 of his 33 years at Blackwater, and his years there paralleled those of extensive park expansion and improvements. He retired in 1988.

Boone is a Thomas native, one of four children born to Bert and Madge Pase. His earliest recollections of the park revolve around the gypsies who took up residence there with their horse-drawn wagons. The park was undeveloped — just a dirt road back to the falls and canyon overlook.

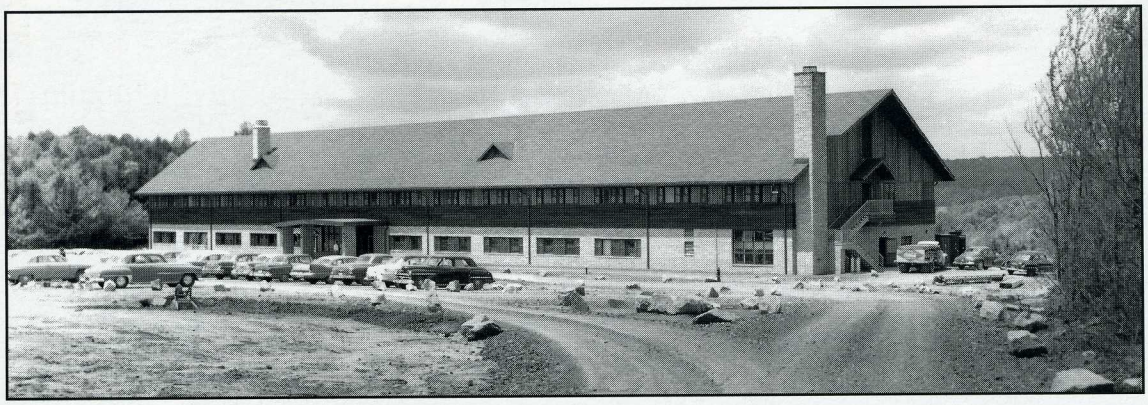
It was his uncle, Herb "H.A." Pase, and his grandfather, Andrew Jackson Pase, who equipped Boone with the skills he would use to help transform this rugged land into one of the state's most beloved parks.

"I worked with my uncle when I was a kid, and with my granddad. My uncle was one of the best carpenters in the country. He could look at that house right there and tell you what size the windows are. All his boys were all gone, and he got me to work with him," Boone says.

Boone graduated from Thomas High School in 1947 and went into the military. After he completed his service, he followed buddies to northeast Ohio to find work, first in Youngstown, then Cleveland.

"I just couldn't stand it up there," he says. After giving Ohio three chances, Boone returned to Thomas. "I couldn't stay away from home. I had to come back."

The park job soon found him.



The lodge at Blackwater Falls, shortly after its completion in 1957 Photograph by David Cruise, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Department of Natural Resources Collection.

"Old Mr. Cramer, Bill Cramer from over to Davis, came looking for me and asked me if I'd go to work for him," Boone says. "I'd worked with him before. We'd do odd jobs here and there."

Boone's first work at Blackwater was cutting grass along the park road, for 45 cents an hour.

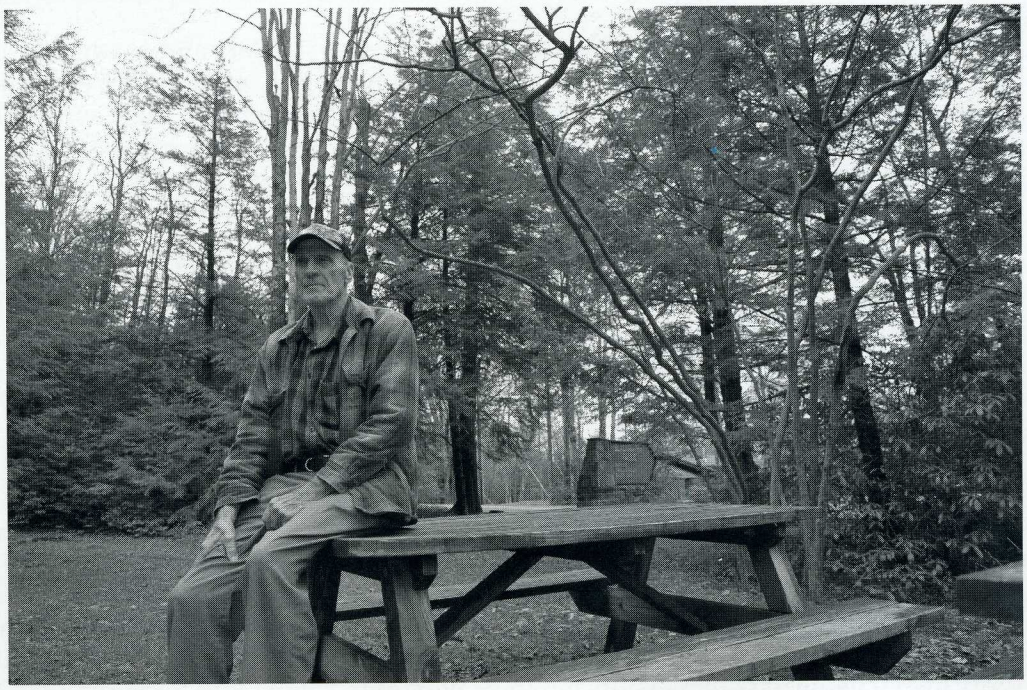
"We didn't have power mowers. We mowed the grass along the road with these Austrian scythes," Boone recalls. "I'll never forget old man Corell. He was an Italian feller. He had a little anvil with him — just a little thing — and a little hammer. When [his scythe] would get dull, he'd take that there scythe and he'd beat that thing on that little anvil. Boy, I'll tell you, it would get razor sharp. They gave us a file to use. But when he'd see us using that file we had, he'd get mad. Oh, he'd get mad!"

Boone says Virgil Spitzer was the first superintendent he worked under. He recalls Spitzer as a "fine man." There were three or four other men, mostly Davis residents, working at the park. Names like Floyd Mullenax, Raymond Cousins, Abe Knox, and a man simply known as "Woody" come to Boone's memory when he talks of those days. "They were all old," he says. "I learned a lot from them old guys."

The park had not changed much since Boone's childhood days — just a single road with a turnaround at the end. On October 5, 1953, the donation of 935 acres to the Conservation Commission from the West Virginia Power and Transmission Company provided the foundation for park expansion. The following year, plans were announced for a lodge and campground, access roads, swimming pool, picnic shelter, playgrounds, souvenir shop, and staff housing. It was an opportune, exciting time to be a part of the park's construction and maintenance crew, which would have the task of caring for the new lodge and cabins, built by a Wisconsin company.

"We started going out and clearing the timber where they built the lodge," Boone says. "After we got that cut out, we went on out and helped them contractors clear cut the places where the cabins were going to be, 45 cabins. After we did that, we came back and cleared a place right above the lodge for storage and for the assistant superintendent and the lifeguards to stay in it."

Boone says the maintenance crews initially worked out of an old Works Progress Administration (WPA) shack that stood on the main road, but they soon had a new building by the lodge. During construction of the lodge, all of the equipment and material came into the park on a former rail grade from Davis, because



Building picnic tables, such as this one, for Blackwater Falls and other state parks was one of the jobs Boone Pase and his crew were assigned in the 1960's. Many of these locust-wood tables are still in use.



Beautiful and dangerous, Blackwater Falls was in full flow when this picture was made in May 1957 Photograph by David Cruise, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Department of Natural Resources Collection.

the park bridge over the Blackwater River was also under construction.

The park's maintenance and construction crew was assigned the task of building amenities that the lodge's guests would expect to find. Boone's first construction job was working on a crew that built the picnic pavilion above Pendleton Point overlook. The pavilion's stone fireplace was built by Boone and is still in use.

Boone also had the task of operating a rock crusher that reduced the abundant sandstone in the park into road material. "They got an old crusher from southeast West Virginia and brought that up there. I crushed rock, off and on, for about five years for the parking lots and roads," Boone says.

A rift between the construction and maintenance supervisor and top brass in Charleston resulted in an opening, and Boone got the job.

"They made me the construction and maintenance coordinator," Boone says. "I had 14 fellers working under me. Some of them stayed mostly at the lodge, taking care of maintenance there."

The number of visitors grew quickly once the lodge was built — 195,000 of them in 1957 Guests expected the park be open even in the worst of blizzards, and Boone recalls times he had to plow through drifts taller than his truck.

"In the winter of 1957, I saw snow drifts out there 12 feet high. I drove the old REO army truck to plow with. If the drifts got too high, we'd use the bulldozer. We'd get snowed in there two days at a time," says Boone, who stayed at the lodge rather than try to make it home on snowy nights. "I'd go to work in the morning and have to walk in from Davis to get the plows."

Boone says the snow actually encouraged visitation.

"The [visitors] loved it up there in winter. They'd come up here and go to Canaan skiing and the sled run at the park," he says.

Boone oversaw construction of that run, and his friend and neighbor, Robert White, built the towline for it. White used the engine from an old truck to power the line, and Boone says that apparatus is still in use at the park after all these decades.

In the early 1960's, the Blackwater crew was given the task of building picnic tables for virtually every state park in the system. The tables were constructed from rough-sawn locust that had to be planed and cut by park workers before it was suitable for working. Boone can point out the tables he and his crew built, and although they are gray and pocked with experience and inscriptions, they continue to serve picnickers.



Carol and Boone Pase at their home in Thomas, sitting beneath a large photograph of Blackwater Falls in winter.

"That was hard work," Boone says of the labor that went into finishing the rough-sawn lumber. Boone figured out that by cutting out the middleman and buying directly from the mill, the state could save enough money to have the mill finish the lumber, as well.

"It gave me a lot more time to do other things," says Boone, who was always looking for ways to make park dollars go further and his crew more efficient.

Once an amenity was built, its maintenance was turned over to Boone and his crew, which at times included young men from the West Virginia Forestry Camp for Delinquent Boys (Davis Center). Over the years, Boone touched the lives of scores of troubled youth from the camp, located near the entrance to the park.

Boone says his supervisory approach was to work alongside his crews whenever possible and use psychology as necessary.

"I had a water line to build down to the campground. It was probably about a half-a-mile long. So I divided them up into three groups — six men to a group — and the guys that dug the certain length of ditch the quickest got to smoke a cigarette. I'd give them a pack of cigarettes, or I'd take them to the lodge and get them something to eat," Boone says. "Boy, I made them work like a dog. There is always a way you can use a little psychology to get something out of a feller, you know."

Boone enjoyed working with the public as much as he did with his crews.

"I never run into anybody up there who didn't like the park. They loved it up there. I met a lot of wonderful people out there," he says.

In a park like Blackwater, with a 57-foot waterfall and a 600-foot-deep canyon, opportunities for injury and death were ever present. Boone counts at least five deaths that occurred at the park — three persons who died at the falls and two who drowned in the river while fly fishing — during his years there.

"This one couple had four kids, and they made their kids stand up there along the side," Boone says. "You could walk out there to the point. They were out there looking over, and the lady slipped. [Her husband] grabbed her and they both went over. That's terrible. I can just imagine what them poor kids felt like. But they'd walked right by the [warning] sign."

On another occasion, a group of boys were "partying" and diving off the edge of the falls into the deep pool below One of the young men couldn't swim, but took the dive all the same. "That was the last jump he ever made," Boone says.

Another dangerous spot in the park was at Pendleton Point overlook, which at one time was configured so motorists could drive their vehicles to the edge. Boone and his crew built the overlook patio, which in the early days of the park had barriers of steel rails. Still, Boone knows of at least three vehicles that went over the ledge.

"This feller was from Parsons. He was the manager [of a grocery store]. He come up there, and he sat there all day. I was thinkin', 'I wonder what he's sitting there for?' So finally, that evening after I come home from work, he went out there and drove right down through and knocked my rails out — they was heavy, too — and went down in that canyon and never got a scratch."

In another incident, a young owner ditched his Pontiac in the canyon when he could no longer afford the payments.

"Another feller went out there with a one-ton truck and did the same thing, for insurance," Boone says. "A couple of guys went down there and took the

transmission out, carried it up themselves."

The vehicles were not recovered.

"The truck is still there. They are rusted up. If you go over to the lodge and there's no foliage on, you can just barely see them, if you know where to look," Boone says.

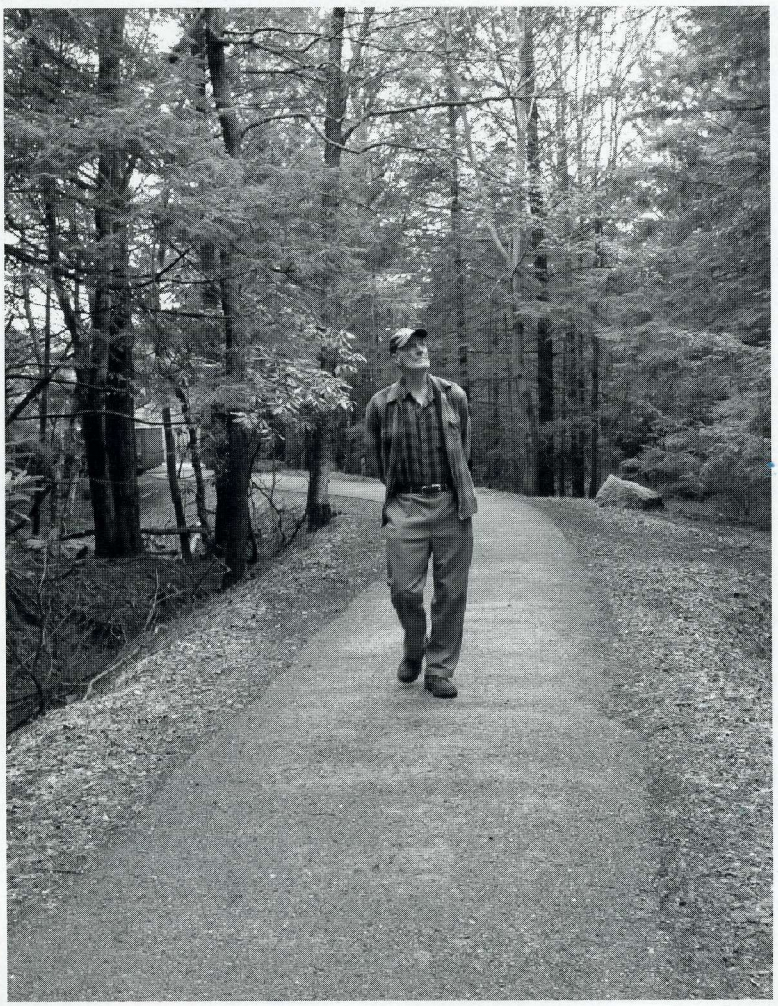
Boone can also tell you that hidden behind the falls near the pedestrian overlook side is an inscription allegedly left there by visiting British royalty decades ago. He has no idea what it says, but recalls seeing it when the overlook deck was being constructed.

He also has stories about more visible amenities, such as the triangle of land where the park roads converge near the river.

"We went up where Route 93 is. That used to be an old railroad grade up there for the lumber company and the coal companies," Boone says. "Up there beside the railroad track, they had a big building where they kept their hand carts and stuff by what we called the 'A-frame' road. It had a stone foundation in it, so I asked the [railroad] company if I could get [the foundation stones]. We took our men up there and got them out, and that's what we built that triangular thing out of. That's where those stones come from."

Of all the projects Boone helped build at the park, none gave him as much satisfaction as the Gentle Trail, a paved walkway that leads to an overlook deck on the lodge side of the canyon. Boone conceived the idea, drew up the plans, and then went looking for donations to make the fully accessible trail possible. It was dedicated September 2, 1983, "So that all may equally enjoy the wonders of God's handiwork."

Boone says building the platform was the most challenging part of the job. "We had to put 6-by-6-inch posts from the bottom clear up," he says. "I had a couple of fellers who weren't afraid of heights to help me with that."



More than 20 years after retiring from Blackwater Falls State Park, Boone Pase still enjoys returning to the area and walking the Gentle Trail, which he helped build.

The trail to Lindy Point, a less gentle but very popular trail nevertheless, was also cut by Boone and his crew They built the overlook at the point, which is downstream from the lodge.

Boone retired from the park in 1988 and went to work for a tar company in Oakland, Maryland. He and his wife, Carol, live in a house Boone built from scratch. He even harvested the timber that went into the house. As with the park, his invisible handprints of craftsmanship and hard work are throughout the home. Indeed, his carpentry work can be found in the homes of many Tucker County residents, as Boone Pase has been quick to lend a hand with repairs and construction as his neighbors and friends needed help.

"I helped build a lot of houses around here," Boone says. "You know, people couldn't afford to pay for help."

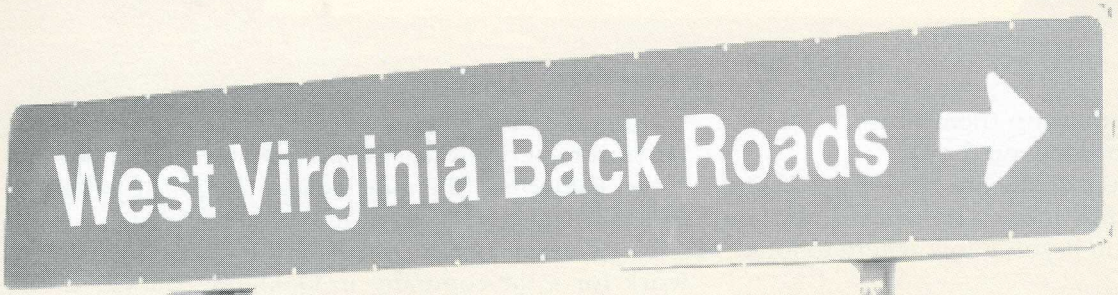
Carol and Boone have two children: Tammy Hebb, a teacher at Thomas; and a son, Danny, who is on disability.

Boone still likes to visit the park and check on the condition of the many visitor amenities he helped build and maintain. And he still finds beauty in the elegant falls and peace in the raging, frothing river whose falls and canyon helped give Davis a new identity after the lumbermen had their way with the wilderness. Boone knows both the canyon and river well.

"It's amazing. You go down along the Blackwater, and there are nice places down there where people go down and camp," Boone says of the river. "I used to fly fish in that river a lot."

A trail that splits off Dobbin House Trail is named in Boone Pase's honor. Pase Point Trail leads to the rim of Blackwater Canyon. To the west of this point, the Blackwater joins the North Branch, rivers that carved both a canyon and a career for Daniel Pase.

"I really loved it out there at the park," Boone says.



Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Ramp Sunday at Mount Grove

There wasn't a dry eye in the place. The pungent odor of ramps cooking on the stove and frying on the griddles at the Mount Grove Volunteer Fire Department induced watery eyes and runny noses among hundreds of patrons who came out for one of West Virginia's most ingrained culinary traditions.

Held by many volunteer fire departments as an annual fundraiser, ramp dinners coincide with the maturation of the long, slender white roots that pack an onion/garlic-like flavor in the bulb and horseradish-like heat in the leaves. Wherever the ramps grow wild on forested mountainsides, there's likely to be a fire department or church ready to cash in on the vernal phenomenon.

Mount Grove Volunteer Fire Department has held a ramp dinner since the early 1980's, says Jeff Harsh, fire chief and treasurer of the 25-member Preston County department. The dinner is held the first Sunday of May in the department's buildings at Mount Grove on U.S. Route 219, just 1/10 mile from the Tucker County line.

It is an excellent location for a meal with a good reputation — they take their motto, "The Best Stinking Dinner You'll Ever Eat," very seriously. More than one patron freely testified that there is something special about Mount Grove's victuals. That's cash to the department's coffers and music to Jeff Harsh's ears, because he knows what that something special is — a secret "seasoning" members aren't allowed to reveal. Jeff says they won't even enter ramp cook-off events if the rules require entrants to share their recipes.



Ray Ball with a mess of Tucker County ramps in May 2009. Ray dug these beauties using the homemade ramp hoe shown here.

Jeff says that back when the dinners started, they were traditional affairs put on by the older members of the department and community. Today, it's a more youthful crowd, both in the kitchen and at the tables, which fill up quickly.

"Once the younger ones took over, we've tried to spice it up, change the style," Jeff says.

Cris Roth enlisted the assistance of her stepfather, Ralph "Jeep" Evick, to come up with



Hundreds gather for the Mt. Grove Volunteer Fire Department's annual ramp dinner, held the first Sunday of May. The fire department's buildings are located on U.S. Route 219, just north of the Tucker County line.

the unique seasoning, which is applied to the stewed ramps at just the right moment. Jeff and Cris oversee this secret step.

On a typical Ramp Sunday, the department will serve more than 700 meals in the course of four hours. The 2009 menu included fried potatoes with or without ramps, pinto and great northern beans, cornbread, ham, various incarnations of raw and cooked ramps, and more desserts than a family reunion.

Jeff Harsh says they ordered 50 pounds of bacon, 268 pounds of ham, 600 pounds of potatoes, 180 gallons of pinto beans, and more than 35 bushels of ramps for the 2009 meal. While a lot of it can be prepared the morning of the event, the ramps require special advance handling.

Two weeks prior, volunteers spend a weekend cleaning and trimming the ramps. It takes 40 to 50 people working 10 hours to accomplish the chore.

"Thirty-five bushels is an awful lot of ramps," Jeff says of the fresh ramps, which are packed in bags and frozen until they are ready to be cooked or fried. Volunteers take a break the following weekend. "We can't stand the sight of them after all day. We need the next weekend off," Jeff says.

The day before the dinner, the volunteers tackle another five bushels of ramps, which are processed for fresh eating. The tops are cut up for the department's signature salad: ramp greens tossed with bacon and a secret dressing, then topped with a hard-boiled egg slice.

The department looks to vendors like Ray Ball of Davis for the key ingredient. Assisted by his grandson, Cody Ball, the retired coal miner dug at least 150 bushels of ramps in 2009 Mount Grove is his biggest customer.

He uses a mattock-type tool that he designed and built just for that purpose. Ray says it takes about three good whacks at a bunch of ramps to get underneath the roots and release them from the frosty soil. He's been harvesting ramps since he was a teenager, and Ray says the best ramps aren't found in April or May, but January. "They're hotter, they got more bite to them," he says.

Ramps were bringing $15 a bushel in 2009. Ray says there are plenty of them on Tucker County's mountainsides, but like everyone else who enjoys this pungent treasure, he worries about the effect clear-cutting the forest will have on future harvests.

On this rainy Sunday morning, however, minds were fixed on the present. Norma Nixon drove some 50 miles from Fairmont with her friend, Vera Eakle, to enjoy a ramp dinner in Norma's native Preston County.

"I try to introduce everybody to ramps," says Norma, who had attended the Aurora Fire Department's dinner the prior week. "I got friends who have never heard of ramps."

Norma buys several bags of ramps to take home with her "I take them home and fix my own," she says. "If you want to get a smell that will take your breath away, put them in a dehydrator. I did that in my house and it was so strong, I could hardly get my breath. I'll never do that again."

Speaking of breath, the ramps' lingering odor is the kind of thing that just has to work its way out of the body, and Jeff Harsh says customers are responsible for the meal's after effects.

"It's a spring tonic. It flushes you out in the spring," he says. "One lady come in here with a bunch of others and said she wasn't going to eat any. We said 'You might as well eat them, everybody else in the car is going to smell like them.'"

Mount Grove's annual ramp dinner is the first Sunday of May from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost of the Mount Grove dinner in 2009 was $7 a person, but Jeff Harsh says a price increase is likely in 2010. For more information, phone (304)735-6801.

2009 Liars Contest

Bass fishing with strange bait, celestial visits from a cantankerous angel, and a fairy tale gone wrong were among the winning tales spun at the Vandalia Gathering's ever-popular State Liars Contest, held last May 24 at the Capitol Complex in Charleston. The 2009 winners were:

1st Place – Peter Kosky (Charleston)
2nd Place – Scott Hill (Ghent)
3rd Place – Alex McLaughlin (Charleston)
Youth Award – Ellie Lepp (Charleston)

Congratulations to all of our winners, and thanks to everyone who participated. On the following pages are excepts from some of the winning stories.



First-place winner Peter Kosky. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Peter Kosky First place

"Liver Lips"

The government has recently been talking about stimulus, and they're handing out all this stimulus money. That really doesn't mean a whole lot to an average American like you or me. So me and some of my buddies have figured out how to take an adverse situation, a potentially tragic situation, and turn it into our own stimulus package. I'm going to try to teach you how to do that for yourself, because little hinges open big doors. And little keys open big bank vaults, and what you have to do is find that little key to that little hinge to that door, or that bank vault, or whatever it is, and open it up and make it work for you.

All this would not have happened if it hadn't been for the fact that my friend R.W caught a fish with his lips. I was in Cave Run Lake, Kentucky, with two of my buddies, Griffin and R.W., and we were in a three-man johnboat about evening time, about the time you throw topwater out. I was in the back by the engine, and Griffin was in the front tying a topwater jitterbug lure on his line. R.W was in the middle, and he wasn't really fishing. He was drinking beer and eating a big bucket of buffalo wings.

About that time, Griffin reared

back to cast that jitterbug. As that lure came back, it popped R.W 's lips off with that treble hook. R.W got up and was just going crazy. I took my bandana and put it over his mouth, and put some duct tape over it so he wouldn't bleed out on us.

I got the motor going, and Griffin's reeling his line in. It just about gets to the boat, when a four-pound smallmouth whacks that jitterbug. We get it in the boat and pop it on the head with a set of wirecutters. We get that treble hook out of that fish's mouth, and the lips are still on there. The human lip is very resilient, by the way, but we'll get to that later.

We took the lips off that hook and threw those lips in a ziplock bag, put it in the cooler, and headed for the shore. By now, it's starting to get dark. We weren't familiar with Cave Run Lake, since we're from West Virginia, but we thought, "Surely to God there's a doctor around here somewhere."

Finally, we found a 24-hour care center, and they had this young Pakistani doctor, fresh off the boat. He'd never done a lip reattachment before, even though he lived in proximity of a fishing area where that could happen. Well anyway, the doctor did reattach the lips, but the problem was that he put the bottom one on top and the top one on the bottom. So now R.W talks like this:

He calls me up on the phone, "Hello?"

"You want to go fishing?"

"Is that you, R.W ?"

"How you know it's me?" Well, I can tell.

Well, R.W got his lips back, and that ain't important anymore. What's important is, what happened here that we can profit from?

We realized that the only reason that bass hit that jitterbug was because those lips were on there with the hot sauce on 'em, that buffalo sauce. We contracted with a rogue doctor in the former Czech Republic who does human cloning. All he does is make human lips. He makes them all day in his little lip factory laboratory. When he gets about 10 pounds of them, he freezes them and sends them to us. We soak them for three nights and three days in our own special buffalo hot sauce stuff. We put them in little ziplock bags, and we've been selling them at the Milton Flea Market. We call them Liver Lips. These Liver Lips are so popular with fishermen, because it's the perfect texture. It won't come off a hook, the fish are nuts about the sauce, and you're guaranteed you're going to catch something.

The lesson today is, first, you have to find that little bit of adversity and turn it around into something that'll be profitable, make your own stimulus package. The second thing you need to remember is to come down to the Milton Flea Market and buy some Liver Lips.

Scott Hill Second place
"My Cantankerous Angel"

I have some issues. One of my issues is that I am hypersensitive. And one of the things I am hypersensitive about is people taking pokes at our great state. You all have heard about why the toothbrush was invented in West Virginia. We're not even going to go there. Or, why birds fly upside down across West Virginia. We're not going to go there, either.

I think one of the reasons for my hypersensitivity to West Virginia jokes is my name. I go by Scott Hill. When I was in the seventh grade, I learned about William the Conqueror. I thought that would be a regal name, so I became William Scott Hill. William, the name of conquerors and kings, becomes Will, and then it becomes Willie, then it becomes Bill. Then it becomes Billy, if they like you. Then it's Billy Hill, and then it's Hill Billy, and we're fighting! You can call me Scott, all right?



Second-place winner Scott Hill. Photograph by R. Andrew Hill.

Well, I was invited to the White House. I was going to get to meet the vice president of the United States. It was a year ago. About a week before I got to go, Mr. Cheney on Fox News says jokingly, "I've got Cheneys on both sides of my family tree, and I'm not even from West Virginia." My grandma was a staunch defender of the state, and she'd be turning over in her grave with me going to meet the vice president after he said that.

I decided that maybe I shouldn't go. But I called my buddy John, and he's one of the smartest guys I know. I asked John, "Would you go to see Dick Cheney, after he said that about us?"

He said, "Well, Scott, yeah I'd go. He is the vice president, and it is the White House. You need to go. It's not like he's asking you to go hunting with him."

I said, "Well, I'll go." So I went.

When I got to the White House, it was pretty! I went through security, and everything was fine. There was a long line, and every-

body was meeting him. I heard him up there. And I was in the line.

All of a sudden — pop! My cantankerous angel pops up on my sleeve. Some people've got a guardian angel. I've got a cantankerous angel that tends to get me in trouble. It's my grandma, that's who it is. She put the "can" in cantankerous. She's been gone for 30 year and still gets me in trouble.

She pops up, and I hear her voice, "Scott?"

"Yeah, mommaw"

"I can't believe you're going to shake hands with this man."

I said, "But he's the vice president of the United States."

"I wouldn't do it."

I said, "How many times were you invited to the White House?"

She said, "Well, that's not the point." Anyway, we talked and scrapped back and forth in the line. Then I got to Vice President Cheney

And I said, "Vice President Cheney, it's an honor to meet you."

He says, "GR-GR-AGRGRGR." [grunting noise]

And then, out of my mouth comes, "We know you're not from West Virginia because you'd have a lot better manners. And, Mr. Cheney, we know you're not from West Virginia because you'd be a much better shot."

It's amazing how strong those Secret Service fellows are. I am the only West Virginian that floated out of the White House on a cushion of air. And I heard my grandma's voice saying, "Scott, that was a good job. I'll stay here at the White House for a while. I'll see you later."

Ellie Lepp Youth award

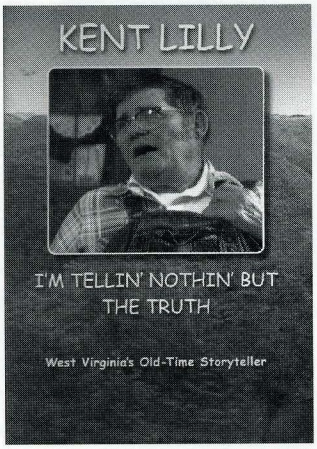
"Tookalot and Tookie"

This is one of my favorite stories of a princess and a prince. It's about a prince named Tookalot and a princess named Tookie. Tookie is a lot like Rapunzel, because she lived in a tall, tall castle and she had long, long hair.

One day, Tookie was out in the forest singing her favorite song, "Dum de-oh-dee, my name is Tookie."

More Storytelling

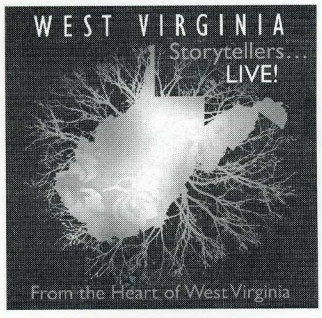
West Virginia is famous for storytelling. Whether it's tall tales, family history, traditional folk stories, or just plain old bald-faced lies, it seems nearly everyone in the Mountain State has a yarn to spin. A number of recent recordings and books attest to this fact.



A new DVD from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College presents traditional storytelling in its most authentic form. *I'm Tellin' Nothin' but the Truth* features Camp Creek native Kent Lilly, sharing stories, legends, opinions, and recollections in a colorful yet down-to-earth collection of videotaped interviews. He covers topics such as Lilly family history (including how many of the family members came to be known by such curious nicknames), Civil War legends, farming practices, cures and remedies, witchcraft, and riddles. Kent is not a storyteller in the modern sense — his tales are independent of the theatrics and rehearsal common today — but his tales and delivery are thoroughly entertaining and have the ring of truth about them, even if some of the stories stray a bit from the straight and narrow.

I'm Tellin' Nothin' but the Truth is the work of award-winning filmmaker Gerald Milnes and features Milnes' trademark unassuming production, allowing the film subjects to speak for themselves, without undue embellishment. The 60-minute DVD sells for $20, plus tax and shipping, and is available on-line at www.augustaheritage.com or by phoning (304)637-1209

The West Virginia Storytelling Guild is an organization of about 50 tellers, offering resources, references, and support for storytelling throughout the state. In October 2008, the Guild presented a storytelling concert at the West Virginia Book Festival at the Charleston Civic Center. The concert was recorded and is now available as an audio CD. Titled *West Virginia Storytellers... Live! From the Heart of West Virginia*, it features tales from well-known local tellers Granny Sue Holstein, Jo Ann Dadisman, Rich Knoblich, and Suzi "Mama" Whaples, as well



The prince lived in a treehouse. So the prince heard her. The next day, the prince hopped up on his horse and rode his horse and put binoculars on. When he saw the castle, he put the binoculars on the horse, and the horse rode and rode and rode. Poof! That "poof!" sound was the noise of the horse's nose slamming into the castle's wall.

Then the prince said, "Tookie, Tookie, let down your hair." So she did. And then he started climbing up her hair like this. But he was a little too chubby, and he flipped her out the window

Kaploosh! She landed right in the duck pond. And then one of the ducks flipped her into the swan pond, and one of the swans flipped her into the feetaller pond, and that doesn't really make sense. And then one of the feetallers flipped her on the shore. And Tookie and Tookalot, along with their many, many, many kids lived happily ever after.

And the moral to this story is whenever you hear somebody say, "Let down your hair," always look down before you let down your hair. The end.



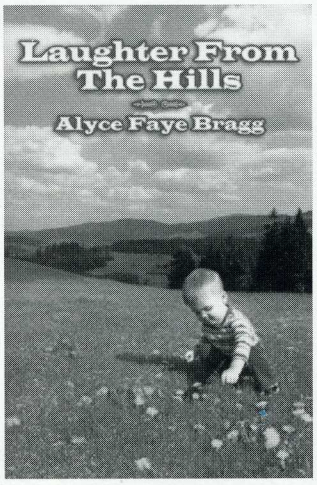
Youth award winner Ellie Lepp. Photograph by Paula Lepp.

as performances by Donna Washington of Colorado and Donna Wilson from Ohio. Recorded in front of a live audience, this 46-minute CD reveals the world of modern tradition-based storytelling and its appeal to people of all ages.

The CD is available from Jo Ann Dadisman, phone (304)864-0879 or e-mail jdadisman@aol.com. The price is $15, plus tax and shipping, for each CD For more information about the West Virginia Storytelling Guild, visit http://wvstorytellers.org.



Rich Knoblich is a veteran storyteller from Wheeling and a frequent participant at the State Liars Contest. Many of his winning stories have been featured in GOLDENSEAL; now these and other original tales are available in book form. *Talking 'bout the Relatives: Tales That Grow Taller with Each Telling*, is a 121-page collection of stories, spanning Rich's 20 years as an award-winning teller. The book also includes a listing of Rich's career highlights and his professional resume. Published by Arcadian House, *Talking 'bout the Relatives* sells for $12.95 and is available through Amazon.com or by phoning (304)232-6436.



Laughter from the Hills, by Alyce Faye Bragg, and *Chuckles and Grins*, from Raymond Daugherty, are a pair of lighthearted books about everyday life in West Virginia. Alyce Faye Bragg is a popular Clay County author, whose newspaper columns are widely read. [See "Columnist Alyce Faye Bragg: Everybody's Grandmother," by George David Begler; Summer 2007] Raymond Daugherty is a 91-year-old retiree from Mathias, Hardy County, who has previously written three other books. Both authors are young-at-heart, and their whimsical stories and observations are sure to agree with a large number of GOLDENSEAL readers.

Laughter from the Hills sells for $18.23, tax and shipping included, from the West Virginia Book Company, 1125 Central Avenue, Charleston, WV 25301, phone 1-888-982-7472. *Chuckles and Grins* is available for $10, plus $1.50 shipping, from Raymond Daugherty, 2054 Jenkins Hollow Road, Mathias, WV 26812; phone (304)897-5366.

VANDALIA



Do you enjoy good old-time and bluegrass music? How about flatfooting and square dancing, traditional crafts, storytelling, and baked goods? Well, the Vandalia Gathering is the place for you. This free annual event celebrates the best of West Virginia's traditional culture, in the beautiful setting of the State Capitol Complex. Join us for the 34th annual Vandalia Gathering. These photographs by Michael Keller recall the fun, faces, and activities of last year's gathering.



TIME!



34th Annual Vandalia Gathering

May 28-30, 2010
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, West Virginia

Friday, May 28

7:00 p.m. Concert

Saturday, May 29

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Appalachian Heritage Dancing, Jam Tent, Kids Activities, Storytelling

12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Performances, Contests (Fiddle, Bluegrass Banjo, Mandolin), Old-Time Square Dancing, Flatfooting

1:00 p.m. Pound Cake, Homemade Biscuits, Jams/Preserves Contest

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Pound Cake and Jams/Preserves Walk

6:30 p.m. Awards Ceremony and Concert

Sunday, May 30

12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Appalachian Heritage Dancing, Jam Tent, Kids Activities, Performances, Contests (Old-Time Banjo, Lap Dulcimer, Flat-Pick Guitar), Old-Time Square Dancing, Flatfooting

12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. Storytelling

12:00 noon - 2:00 p.m. Needlepoint Contest

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Liars Contest

3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Gospel Workshop

6:30 p.m. Finale Concert

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



2009 Vandalia Winners

Vandalia Heritage Award
Everett Lilly, Clear Creek

Fiddle (age 60 and over)
1 - Gerry Milnes, Elkins
2 - Lester McCumbers, Nicut
3 - Elmer Rich, Morgantown
4 - Junior Spencer, Frankford
5 - Donald Jones, Scott Depot

Fiddle (under age 60)
1 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
2 - Chance McCoy, Greenville
3 - Greg Bentle, Huntington
4 - Jenny Allinder, Culloden
5 - Doug Van Gundy, Elkins

Youth Fiddle (age 15 and under)
1 - Jerrica Hilbert, St. Albans
2 - Ray Cossin, Mt. Alto
3 - Annie Fowler, Scott Depot

Old-Time Banjo (age 60 and over)
1 - Jim Mullins, St. Albans
2 - Ken Sheller, Elkins
3 - Mack Samples, Duck
4 - Steve Harrison, St. Albans
5 - Eugene Parsons, Orma

Old-Time Banjo (under age 60)
1 - Chance McCoy, Greenville
2 - Tim Bing, Huntington
3 - Andrew Dunlap, St. Albans
4 - Bob Shank, Bruceton Mills
5 - Bob Smakula, Elkins

Mandolin
1 - Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
2 - John Putnam, Looneyville
3 - Brandon Shuping, Williamson
4 - Adam Hager, Kenna
5 - Luke Shamblin, Elkview

Bluegrass Banjo
1 - Doug Cossin, Mt. Alto
2 - Ed Price, Huntington
3 - Butch Osborne, Parkersburg
4 - Swanagan Ray, Ripley
5 - Brandon Shuping, Williamson

Lap Dulcimer
1 - Chance McCoy, Greenville
2 - Hunter Walker, Beckley
3 - Heidi Muller, Charleston
4 - Dave Haas, Cross Lanes
5 - Bob Webb, Charleston

Youth Lap Dulcimer (age 15 and under)
1 - Hunter Walker, Beckley
2 - Will Manahan, Elkview
3 - Shalor Gore, Charleston

Flat-Pick Guitar
1 - Matt Lindsey, Dunbar
2 - Swanagan Ray, Ripley
3 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
4 - Richard Adkins, Cross Lanes
5 - Jamie Rhodes, Culloden

Youth Flat-Pick Guitar (age 15 and under)
1 - Logan Jones, Charleston
2 - Eric Campbell, Hurricane
3 - Andrew Fry, Winfield

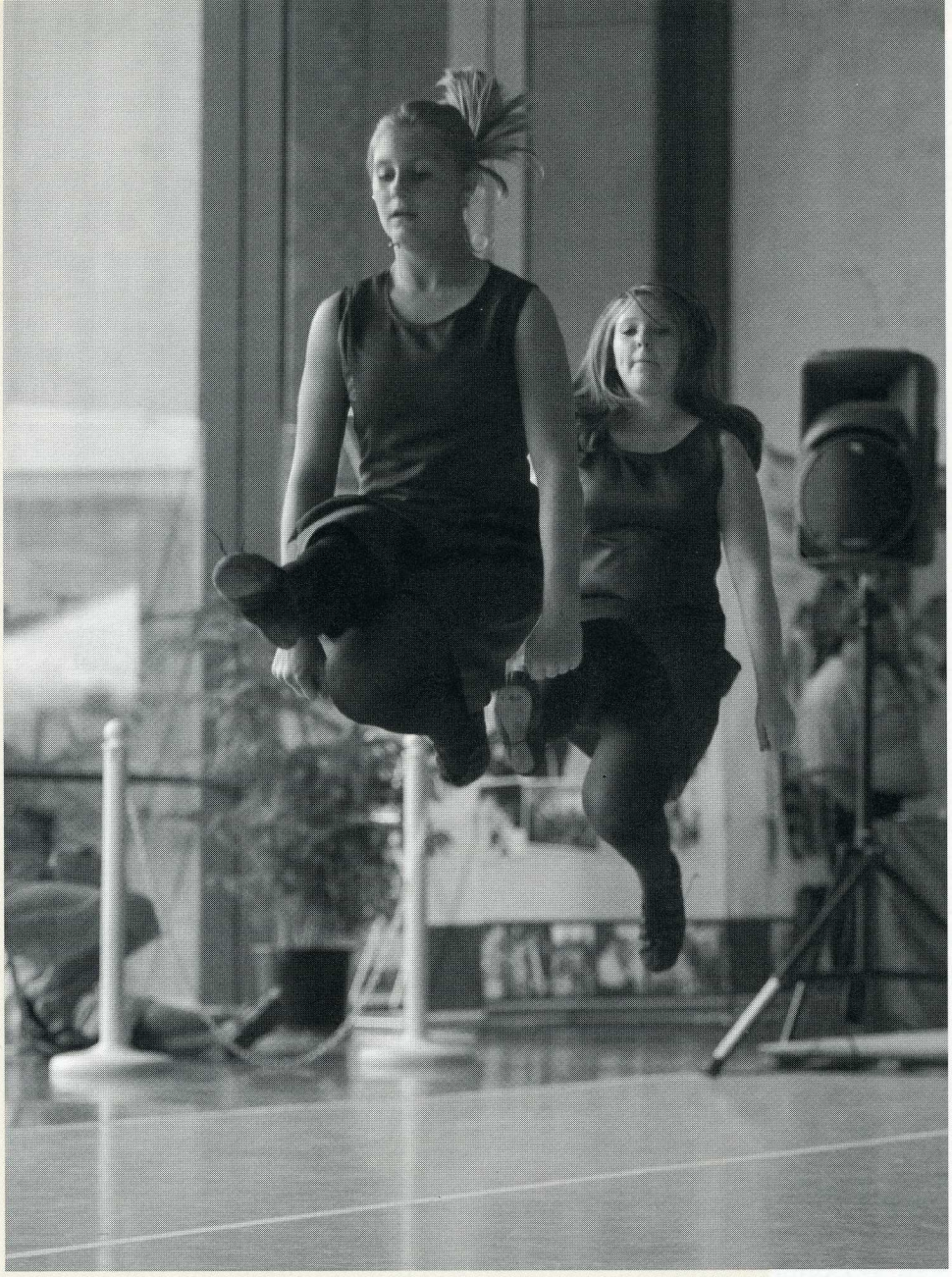
Fruit Cobbler Winners
1 - Valerie Burgraf, Elkview
2 - Lynna Middleton, Elkview
3 - Blair Chapman, Charleston

Youth Fruit Cobbler Winner (age 15 and under)
Blair Chapman, Charleston

Pound Cake Winners (all ages)
1 - Ella Hoffman, South Charleston
2 - Tabitha Erwin, Scott Depot
3 - Shonnette Koontz, Charleston

MICHAEL KELLER was director of photographic services for the West Virginia Division of Culture and History for more than 20 years. He currently works for the West Virginia Humanities Council.









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___ Summer 2004/1939 World's Fair
___ Fall 2005/Coke Ovens
___ Winter 2006/Whitcomb Boulder
___ Summer 2007/Raising Goats
___ Fall 2007/Seneca Rocks
___ Winter 2007/Photographer Lloyd Gainer
___ Spring 2008/Dancer Lou Maiuri
___ Summer 2008/Fenton Glass
___ Fall 2008/Yokum's Vacationland
___ Winter 2008/Coal Art
___ Spring 2009/Bernard Cyrus
___ Summer 2009/Back to the Land
___ Fall 2009/Spanish West Virginia

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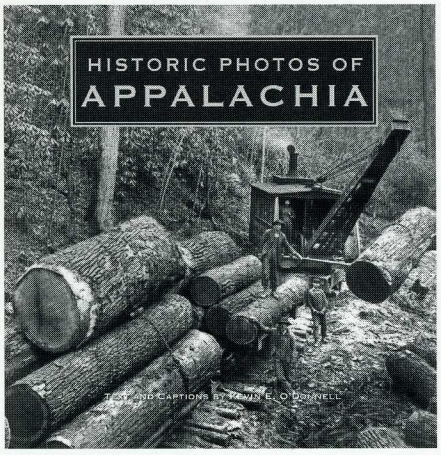
Appalachia in Pictures



Nearly 200 rare, historical images depicting life in Appalachia are included in a new book from Turner Publishing Company of Nashville, Tennessee. The book is titled *Historic Photos of Appalachia*, and, as the name suggests, it offers an extensive look at people, places, and activities in the southern mountains, mostly during the late 19th century and early 1900's.

Three-fourths of these photographs come from the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University (ETSU); most of the remainder are from the collections of Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. Given these sources, it is natural that the bulk of these pictures feature subjects in East Tennessee and Western North Carolina, though West Virginia is represented with several of the most compelling photos in the book.

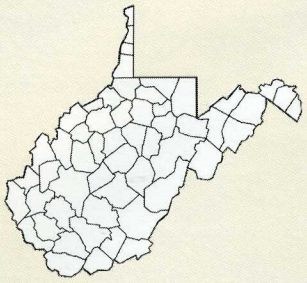
One of these is the cover photograph, showing a steam-powered log loader hoisting some first-growth timber onto a railcar in about 1910. GOLDENSEAL author Borgon Tanner offers a first-hand account of this activity during the last days of steam in Nicholas County in this issue; see story beginning on page 40. Other West Virginia images include a vintage panoramic view of Harpers Ferry and several views of life and work in the southern coalfields from the 1960's.

Historic Photos of Appalachia is an attractive, hardbound edition, including 199 pages of black-and-white photographs. Kevin E. O'Donnell, professor of English and director of the environmental studies minor at ETSU, provides informative notes and captions. The large, square-format book is part of Turner Publishing's Historic Photos series, which includes dozens of similar volumes on topics ranging from Alaska to Virginia. The book sells for $39.95, plus shipping, and is available from local retailers, Amazon.com, or www TurnerPublishing.com; phone 1-800-788-3350.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Newell Zoo
- Lonesome Pine Fiddlers
- Balli Sisters
- Morris Memorial Hospital



(continued from inside front cover)

July 9-10 Benedum Festival
Bridgeport (1-800-368-4324)

July 9-11 John Henry Days
Talcott (466-1729)

July 17 Alpine Lake Bluegrass Festival
Terra Alta (789-2481)

July 23-25 Upper Ohio Valley Italian Heritage Festival
Wheeling (233-1090)

July 25-August 1 Cowen Historical Railroad Festival
Cowen (847-2145)

August 1 Swiss National Holiday
Helvetia (924-6435)

August 1-7 Cherry River Festival
Richwood (846-2596)

August 4-8 Appalachian String Band Music Festival
Camp Washington Carver/Clifftop (558-0162)

August 6-8 Multifest
Charleston (421-1585)

August 9-15 Town & Country Days
New Martinsville (455-4275)

August 12-15 Logan County Arts & Crafts Festival
Logan (752-1324)

August 13-15 Avalon Folk Festival
Paw Paw (947-5600)

August 13-21 State Fair of West Virginia
Fairlea (645-1090)

August 15 Mahrajan Lebanese Festival
Wheeling (233-1688)

August 20-22
Jefferson County African American Cultural & Heritage Festival
Ranson (725-9610)

August 27-29 Appalachian Festival
Beckley (1-877-987-3847)

August 28-September 5 Oak Leaf Festival
Oak Hill (465-5617)

September 3-5 Jackson's Mill Jubilee
Weston (1-800-296-7329)

September 3-5 W.Va. Italian Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (622-7314)

September 4-5 Apple Butter Weekend
Blennerhassett Island (420-4800)

September 4-5 Festival of the Rivers
Hinton (466-1401)

September 4-5 Holly River Festival
Holly River State Park (493-6327)

September 4-6 Paden City Labor Celebration
Paden City (337-9080)

September 5-6 Fall Gospel Jubilee
Point Pleasant (675-5737)

September 9-11 41st Nicholas County Potato Festival
Summersville (1-866-716-0448)

September 9-12 CultureFest 2010
Pipestem (320-8833)

September 10-12 Hampshire Heritage Fest
Romney (822-0384)

September 10-12 Lincoln County Fall Fest/Fair
Hamlin (346-5315)

September 10-12 W.Va. Black Heritage Festival
Clarksburg (641-9963)

September 16-19 Golden Delicious Festival
Clay (587-7323)

September 16-19 Treasure Mountain Festival
Franklin (358-3884)

September 17-19 Flemington Days Fair & Festival
Flemington (265-5549)

September 18-19 Country Roads Festival
Ansted (658-5212)

September 18-19 Grape Stomping Wine Festival
Summersville (872-7332)

September 18-19 Harvest Moon Arts & Crafts Festival
Parkersburg (424-7311)

September 18-19 Mothman Festival
Point Pleasant (675-9726)

September 19-20 Applachian Heritage Festival
Camp Creek State Park (425-9841)

September 23-15 W.Va. Molasses Festival
Arnoldsburg (655-7371)

September 24-26 Hardy County Heritage Festival
Hardy County (897-7202)

September 24-26 Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)

September 24-26 St. George Greek Festival
Huntington (522-7890)

September 25 Harvest Festival Day
Cass (456-4300)

September 25 W.Va. Roadkill Cook-Off
Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)

September 30-October 3 Preston County Buckwheat Festival
Kingwood (379-2203)

October 1-2 Pine Bluff Fall Festival
Shinnston (592-1189)

October 1-2 Southern W.Va. Italian Festival
Bluefield (589-3317)

October 1-3 Oglebayfest
Wheeling (243-4066)

October 2 Freshwater Folk Festival
White Sulphur Springs (536-1361)

October 2 October Sky Fall Festival
Coalwood (297-2999)

October 2-3 Country Fall Festival
Point Pleasant (675-5737)

October 2-10 Mountain State Forest Festival
Elkins (636-1824)

October 7-10 26th Salem Apple Butter Fest
Salem (782-3565)

October 7-10 W.Va. Pumpkin Festival
Milton (634-5857)

October 8-10 28th Lumberjack Bluegrass Jamboree
Mullens (294-4000)

October 8-10 Wardensville Fall Festival
Wardensville (874-3424)

October 9 Oktoberfest
Bramwell 1-800-221-3206

October 9 Bergoo International Cook-Off
Webster Springs (847-7291)

October 9-10 Apple Butter Festival
Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)

October 14-17 Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
Martinsburg (263-2500)

October 14-17 W.Va. Black Walnut Festival
Spencer (927-5616)

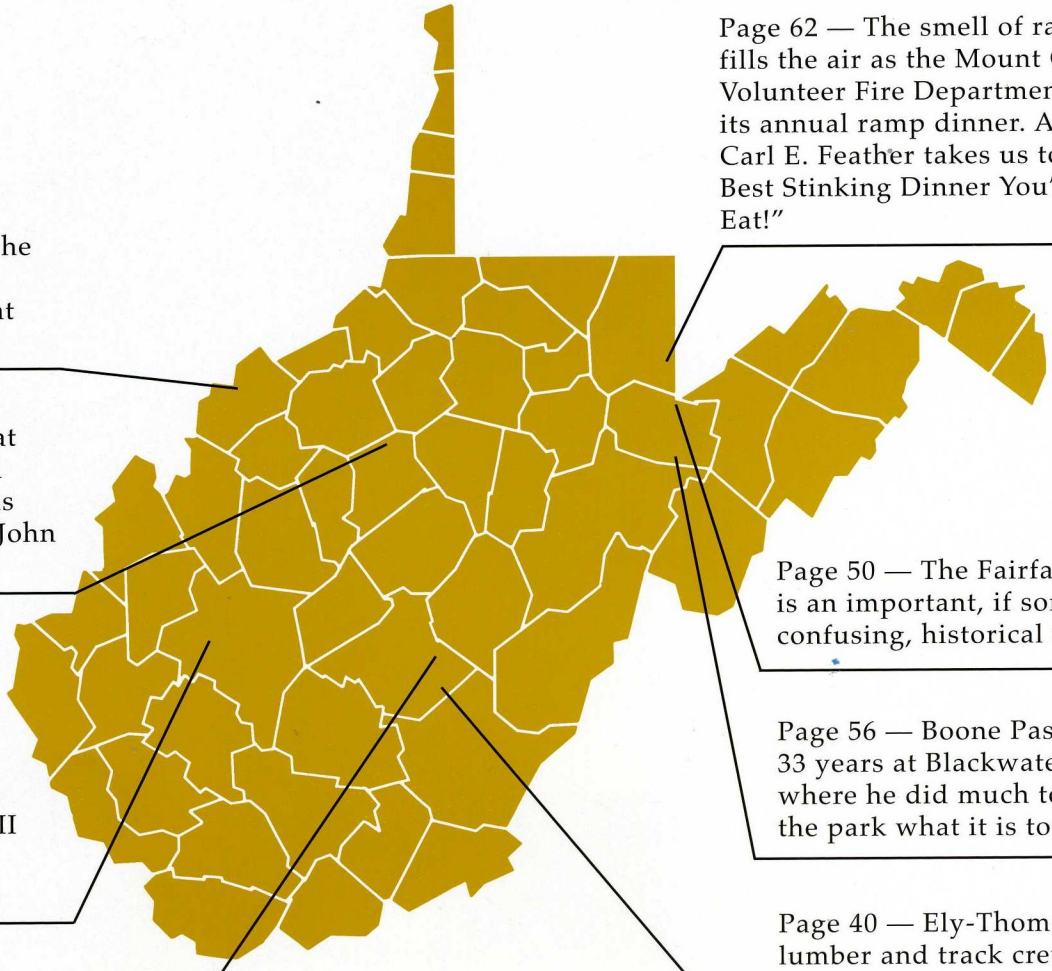
October 29-30 Fiddler's Reunion
D&E College/Elkins (637-1209)

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 2011 "Folklife•Fairs•Festivals," please send un information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address, phone number, and Web site, if available. We must have this information by January 15, 2011, in order to meet our printing deadline. GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in this listing.

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

PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal



Page 20 — Steve Weaver was a new pilot in 1962, when he left Parkersburg on a harrowing twilight adventure.

Page 28 — The Great Depression hit hard in Gilmer County, as 90-year-old author John Cooper recalls.

Page 8 — The huge Naval Ordnance Plant in South Charleston was instrumental in the U.S. victory in WWII and changed this community forever.

Page 62 — The smell of ramps fills the air as the Mount Grove Volunteer Fire Department hosts its annual ramp dinner. Author Carl E. Feather takes us to "The Best Stinking Dinner You'll Ever Eat!"

Page 50 — The Fairfax Stone is an important, if somewhat confusing, historical marker.

Page 56 — Boone Pase worked 33 years at Blackwater Falls, where he did much to make the park what it is today.

Page 40 — Ely-Thomas lumber and track crews, working out of Jetsville, had their hands full following a flash flood in 1954.

Page 34 — Craigsville, Nicholas County, hosts a memorial for the 14 miners who perished in a nearby explosion in 1958. Jim Estep recalls the rescue and recovery effort.

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