Lonesome Pine Fiddlers • Balli Sisters • Newell Zoo

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Summer 2010 $4.95

Chickens!

From the Editor: We're on Facebook!

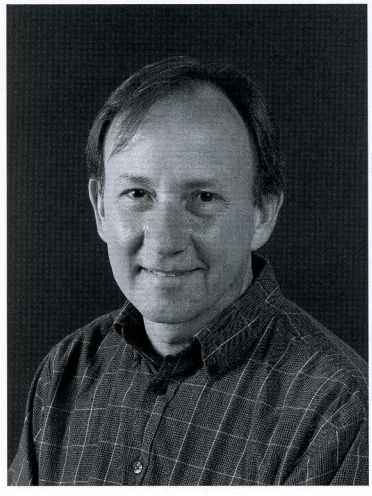
It's a whole new world out there, in case you haven't noticed. I resisted it as long as I could, but I've finally been dragged, kicking and screaming, into the digital age. Credit where credit is due, I have two teenaged sons and a very hip, computer-savvy wife. Now I own a digital camera, a cell phone, and a lap-top. I'm so linked up its almost comical.

Among the modern-day marvels now part of my daily life is the social networking Web site called Facebook. What started out to be a forum for mostly young people to chat and share photos and YouTube clips has exploded into a global, multigenerational social necessity. I understand that more than 3 million people use Facebook each day A quick search identified more than 500 users named John Lilly! And more are joining this free service each day

Before he left in January, former Culture and History photographer and Web tender Michael Keller set up a GOLDENSEAL page on Facebook. Around that time, I got my own Facebook page and noticed how useful this thing can be. I can communicate with individuals or large groups of people with ease, and other people can send me information, as well. Granted, not all of this communication is stuff I really need to know, but I can sift through it pretty quickly to find the good parts.

The GOLDENSEAL page lay fallow until one day about two weeks ago, when I decided that we either had to figure out how to work this thing or let it go. I called Michael Keller, he made me a site administrator, I added editorial assistant Kim Johnson, and we were off to the races. We updated the site, added photos, and promoted it through our personal contacts. As of this morning, GOLDENSEAL has 1,105 "friends" and counting. They come from the U.S. and 12 other countries, 57% are women, and 30% are age 55 or older. Charleston and Clarksburg have the most, but we also have significant numbers from New York, Charlotte, Atlanta, and Zelienople. I'm impressed!

And what do all these people do on our Facebook page? Well, they can browse any of several photo albums, check out the current issue, or look at sample stories from some back magazines. Many people comment on stories and photos or weigh in on their favorite topics. Here are a few samples:



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KELLER

- "The best magazine and most honest that I read."

- "I love GOLDENSEAL. As an old Kentucky boy, I really wish that such a magazine existed for my home state but, alas it does not. I read every issue cover to cover as soon as I receive it."

- "I have done a lot of hiking around in various woods in southern West Virginia and have never run across the queen lady's slipper. It is indeed rare! And quite stunning!" (Commenting on Bernard Cyrus' orchid photos)

- "I had NO idea there were diamonds in West Virginia. We learn something new every day!" (Commenting on photos of the Punch Jones Diamond)

We are just getting going, but we hope to make our Facebook page an important part of our work here. We hope to build a swap-and-shop feature for readers who wish to buy, sell, trade, or give away old magazines. We also welcome comments and suggestions concerning past and future stories.

Of course, what we really need to do is figure out how to turn all those Facebook friends into GOLDENSEAL subscribers. High tech or not, GOLDENSEAL is still a print publication that costs about $300,000 a year to produce. And we rely on paid subscribers to cover those bills. Perhaps Facebook will help us reach the new readers we will need to sustain the magazine as we head into the future.

Please join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com. We need all the friends we can get!

John Lilly

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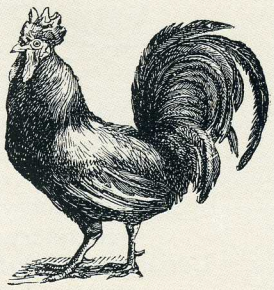

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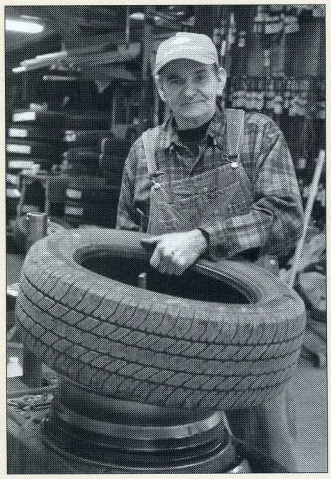

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On the cover: "Tweety," a banty rooster from Calhoun County, belongs to Tim McCumbers. Photograph by Kim Johnson; our story about chickens starts on page 18.

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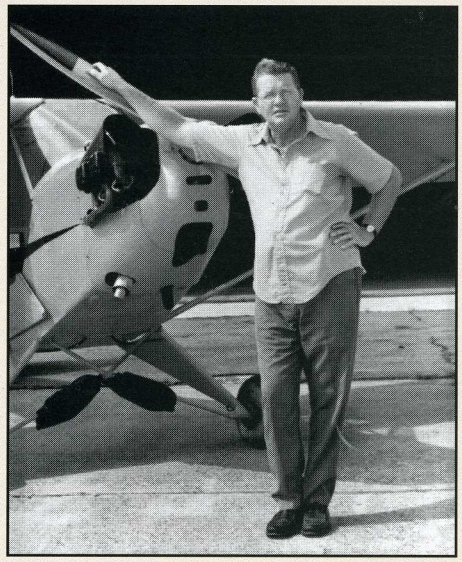
GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Published letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.



Pilot Steve Weaver

March 9, 2010
Belpre, Ohio
Editor·
In your Spring 2010 edition, your story about pilot Steve Weaver mentioned his flight instructor. [See "The Runaway Airplane!" by Steve Weaver.] That was my father, W.R. "Red" Boso, so named for his red hair. Dad received his private pilot's license in 1937 as a senior in high school. He took all his ratings — private, commercial, multi-engine, and flight instructor — and became an instructor at Stewart Airport in Parkersburg. He taught many students there before World War II.

At the outbreak of the war, he traveled to Dayton to enlist in the Army Air Force but was rejected because he had had rheumatic fever as a child and his blood would not clot in the required amount of time. Not to be left out, he joined the navy as a civilian flight instructor and served at Memphis Naval Air Station training navy pilots. He returned to Parkersburg after the war to resume his job as flight instructor at Stewart, later serving as manager of the field. In 1962, when Steve was there, I was attending Glenville State College, and my brother Dick (he later became a flight instructor and executive pilot) was in high school. Dad died in 1975.

When Steve mentioned that Red Boso was a giant of a man, he was right. Dad will always be a giant of a man to me.
Dave Boso

Dr. Stuart McGehee

March 5, 2010
Bramwell, West Virginia
Editor:
Thank you for the kind words regarding Dr. Stuart McGehee. [See "From the Editor"; Spring 2010.] I knew Stuart for many years and worked with him on various committees and projects. His knowledge and presentation of history was always fascinating to me. I often told him that if more teachers could make history come to life like he did, students would be excited about history and the world around them. He would always laugh and say that one had to love history in order to share it with others.

One of my fondest memories of Dr. Stu, as I often referred to him, was when we were both on the board of the Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau. On one occasion, the board went to a Bluefield Orioles baseball game. It was a warm, sunny day. As we all climbed the steps to find our seats, Dr. Stu was waiting and motion-

ing for us to join him. We all sat around him and enjoyed his banter and support of the local team, complete with loud shouts of victory. Dr. Stu's enthusiasm was contagious, and we all were jubilant when we left the game.

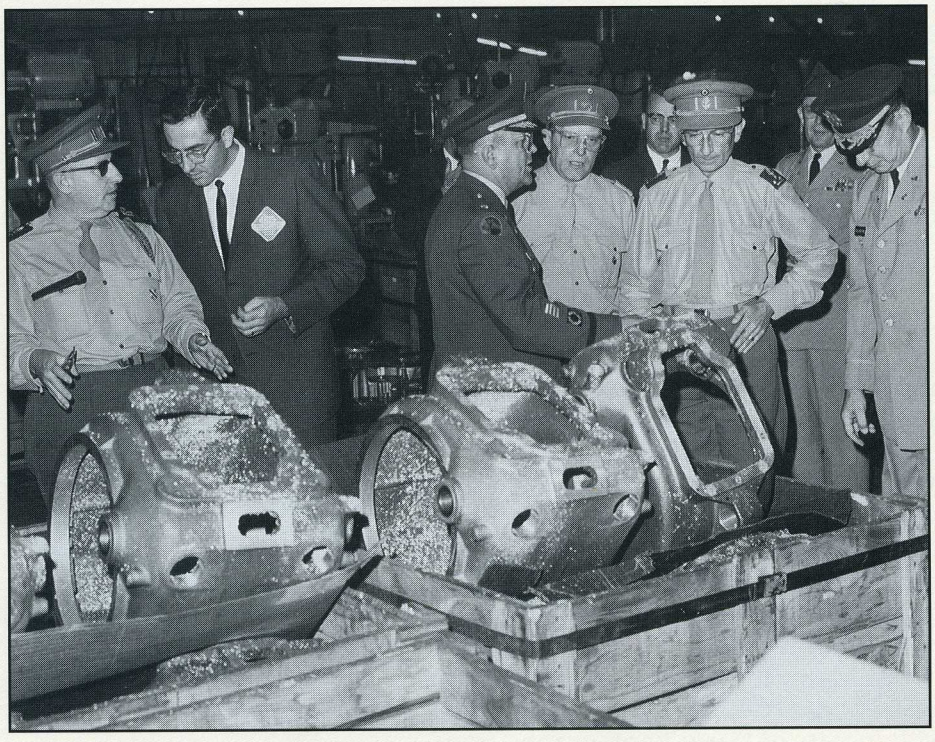
Yes, he will be sorely missed.
Sincerely yours,
Betty Goins

South Charleston

March 12, 2010
Via e-mail
Deltona, Florida
Editor:
I read with great interest your stories related to the old Naval Ordnance Plant in South Charleston. [See "U.S. Naval Ordnance Plant: A Brief History", Spring 2010.] I was the navy supply and fiscal officer at the plant during 1959-61, the final closing phase of the plant. I had responsibility for disposing of the multimillion-dollar inventory of the navy's war-reserve machine tools, held in reserve for the navy's bureau of ordnance. The few remaining navy personnel were phased out when the plant was sold to Food Machinery Corporation (FMC) in 1961.

My family and I were quartered in one of those old brick military houses across the street from the main plant. What a great tour of duty!
Regards,
Floyd "Gene" Combs
LT, USN (Ret)

Produce stand near Grafton, 1941 People unidentified. Farm Security Administration (FSA) photograph by John Cooper.



Navy officials brief visiting Belgians at the Naval Ordnance Plant in South Charleston, circa 1960. Photograph courtesy of the Charleston Newspapers.

Great Depression

March 4, 2010
Via e-mail
Glenville, West Virginia
Editor:
I just read the article in your Spring 2010 magazine entitled, "Living Through the Great Depression," by John Cooper.

My brother and I grew up during the latter part of the Depression years, although we hardly realized it then. Our parents didn't let us know how hard those years were. We were taught to work, and we learned how to save and make do with what we had. I found myself thinking back to some of our childhood days, and they were much like what John Cooper described. Our dug well looked exactly like the one pictured in the story. I believe John's brother, Newton, was one of my high school teachers. Thanks for a great article and the recollection of many memories.
Betty Woofter

April 6, 2010
Rochester, New York
Editor·
I think John Cooper and many other, West Virginians might say they'd just as soon not have lived through the Great Depression. But there was honor, dignity, and

strength in how those who lived through the 1930's faced that adversity

I want to thank GOLDENSEAL for providing a forum for West Virginians to tell their stories. According to Frederick Buechner, in his book *Telling Secrets*: "Even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead. To lose track of our stories is to be profoundly impoverished not only humanly but spiritually."

Thanks to John Cooper and all the GOLDENSEAL contributors for helping us keep track of our stories.
Mary Daniel Cooper

Ely-Thomas Lumber

March 15, 2010
Hutchinson, Kansas
Editor:

The first two lines of Borgon Tanner's fine article about the Ely-Thomas Lumber Company trains sure caught my eye. [See "Into the Woods with Ely-Thomas: One Day's Drama at Jetsville", Spring 2010.] They bore a remarkable similarity to the first two lines of my favorite train song, "Wreck of the Old 97." From the article: "It was a cool frosty morning in September 1954. Fog hovered overhead." From the song: "It was a cold frosty morning in the month of September. The clouds were hanging low"

Maybe Tanner is also an old-timey musician, in addition to being a good storyteller. (Or did the editor slip that in there, he being a musician himself?)
William D Rexroad

That fine choice of words was all Borgon's doing. I'm glad you picked up on the train-song reference. Thanks for writing —ed.

Darrell Bush

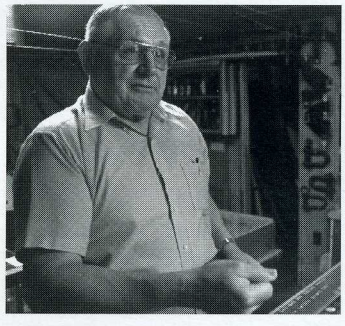
December 11, 2009
Via e-mail
Richmond, Virginia
Editor:
I really enjoyed the article about Darrell Bush. [See "'Hand Tools and Hard Work' Oil and Gas Man Darrell Bush," by Richard S. Bailey; Winter 2009.] Reading about Darrell's work in the Glenville area and seeing pictures of those old derricks brought back memories. When I was a child, we used to go look at some well Granddaddy was having drilled somewhere out in the hills. We would spend summer vacations at the family homestead on Mineral Road there in Glenville, and that was always one of the highlights of our yearly trips.

My granddad, Guy Bell Young, was a lawyer in Glenville. As legal representative of the South

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

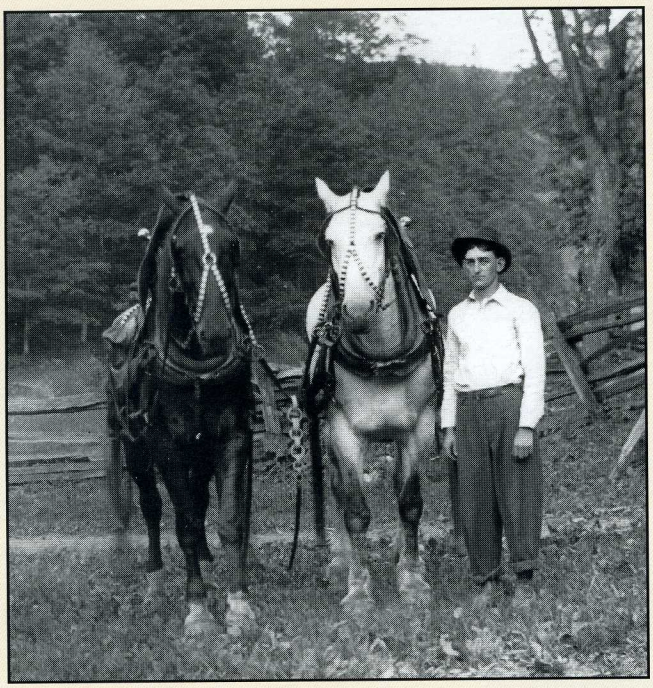
Linda McCumbers. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Linda McCumbers, well-known Calhoun County musician and wife of fiddler Lester McCumbers, died April 3. She was 88. Malinda McCumbers, known to friends as "Lindy," was born on a farm in Calhoun County in 1921. She married Lester, her husband of 72 years, in 1937, and the pair raised nine children on a farm in the Nicut community. Often recognized for her strong guitar accompaniment to Lester's fiddling, Lindy was a fine singer, especially noted for her chilling renditions of old ballads, hymns, and traditional mountain songs. "I sing the words the way I feel them, and I don't try to copy anybody," Lindy said in the Spring 2004 issue of GOLDENSEAL. [See "'Satisfaction in My Heart' Lester and Linda McCumbers of Calhoun County," by Kim Johnson.]



Mike Hornick. Photographer unknown.

Mike Hornick was a retired coal miner and electrical engineer who devoted much of his life to preserving the history of coal mining in Gary, McDowell County. The son of a Russian immigrant miner, Mike earned a degree in engineering from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and undertook a career as an electrical engineer at Gary. Once he retired from the mines, Mike began collecting historical photographs of Gary and the U.S. Steel mining operations there. He amassed more than 2,000 glass-plate negatives, which he lent to the Eastern Regional Coal Archives at the Craft Memorial Library in Bluefield for copying and preservation. Samples from this collection appeared in our Fall 1988 issue, in an article titled, "Portraits of Gary: Photographs from the Mike Hornick Collection." Mike passed away in Bluefield on March 21. He was 80.



Darrell Bush with team of horses. Date, location, and photographer unknown.

Penn Oil Company, he occasionally did a little speculating himself. Although we had to sell off the homestead earlier this year, my aunt, Mary E. Young, still resides in Glenville.
Sincerely,
Guy B. Young II

December 30, 2009
Via e-mail
Redmond, Oregon
Editor·
I enjoyed the story about Darrell Bush and his work in the oil and gas fields. That was just a part of his interesting life. I would like to see Richard Bailey go back and talk to Darrell about his life as a kid on the farm, his war history, and his gardens — the best in the neighborhood. If Darrell did not have the biggest and best, he would find out why and it would be fixed. If any of his seven sisters needed anything fixed around the house, they would call and have Darrell and Mary to come help.

Thanks again for the nice story, but it's not finished.
Kitty Thompson

Subscription Mailbag

February 2, 2010
Oceanside, California
Editor·
I was born in Beaver, Raleigh County, in 1927 and entered the Marine Corps in 1944. I have now lived in Oceanside, California, since 1966. One of your customers, who I have become acquainted with, let me review her copy of your magazine. Remember the song, "Just One Look That's All It Took"? I felt led to subscribe right away.

Just a little information to let you know us hillbillies do stick together, even when we have been out of state for years. I know I am going to enjoy the book very much.
May God bless you,
Charles Cline

February 5, 2010
Martinsburg, West Virginia
Editor·
I became acquainted with GOLDENSEAL in my dentist's office. Every six months is not enough. What a delightful way to learn West Virginia history and geography!
Thanks for being there.
Margaret R. Welsh

see page 72.

Buffalo Creek Disaster

Following the publication of our Winter 2009 issue, we received several lengthy and impassioned letters from readers, concerning the 1972 flood at Buffalo Creek. Here are two highlights and one author's response, edited for space. Upon request, we would be happy to send copies of these unedited letters to interested readers. Thanks to all of those who wrote. —ed.

December 28, 2009
Via e-mail
Phoenix, Arizona
Editor:
The Winter 2009 three-part story (exposé) of the 1972 Buffalo Creek disaster was Pulitzer Prize quality. I grew up in Chapmanville, some 30 miles downstream from Man.

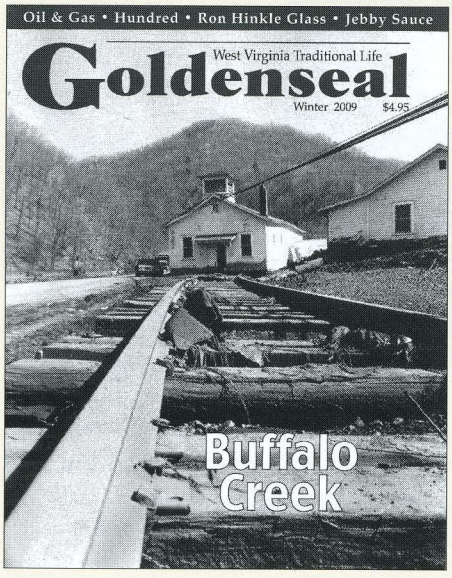
The record of the mining industry in the Mountain State often has been one of shameful greed. Glib representatives of northeastern companies, aptly called robber barons, bought up the mineral rights from hill country people, my forebears included, for as little as 50 cents an acre. Fortunes left the state in mile-long trains, while little of the profits stayed.

The few laws and regulations governing the coal industry were poorly, or not at all, enforced. Abandoned mines were left open, and their slate piles caught fire and burned for years. Slate and tailings were dumped into the river and its tributaries. Every year, new releases of mine water killed every living water creature.

Those who shrug it off with "other industries are just as bad" provide little consolation.
John JJ Ward

December 7, 2009

St. Albans, West Virginia
Editor:
After reading the story on the Buffalo Creek mine disaster in the Winter 2009 issue, I felt I needed to correct some errors made by the representative from the American Red Cross, Mr. Lewis Bondurant. [See "Echoes of Buffalo Creek: Lewis Bondurant," by



Margo Blevin Denton.]

I was stationed in Welch at the time this happened. I was contacted by our state police headquarters in Beckley and advised that we needed to send someone to the scene to assist the troopers from Logan. I volunteered to go as I was familiar with the area, having been stationed in Logan for five years.

I drove from Welch to Gilbert and then on to Man. I met with Corporal Walter Garrett, who was in charge at that time, and told him I was there to help any way I could. He told me that they had no contact with anyone on the head of Buffalo Creek, and would I be willing to walk in and carry a radio. That was the only way to get there, as the roads and bridges were all gone in the area. I knew a shortcut by crossing the mountain on foot, which would bring me out near the head of Buffalo Creek.

I drove my patrol car up into Wyoming County and up the first hollow I come to on the left as far as I could, and then parked. I started up a path towards the top of the hill. I began to meet people walking out. They advised me that everything was gone, washed away by the flood.

When I reached the Buffalo Creek side, I came out in Lorado or Lundale, I don't remember which town it was. The water was still running down the valley It was a mess, houses destroyed, cars overturned, railroad cars turned over, and rails bent like pretzels. To top it off, I couldn't talk on the radio. I could hear the traffic, but I couldn't talk to anyone.

Then I started helping the people that were left to search for bodies, and we found several. Days and nights seemed to blend together. The helicopters and their crews were a great help and were to be commended for their work. After about four days, I got on board one of the helicopters and flew out to South Man. Before I left the area, other troopers, National Guard, Department of Natural Resources, and Corps of Engineers were beginning to arrive.

There were food kitchens set up on Buffalo Creek by an Amish group and one from the Salvation Army. I don't know how they got that far, but they sure did and should be commended for their effort to help the people, who were in dire need.

Mr. Bondurant stated in his article that he had tried to get police help and couldn't. As a member of the state police, I take issue with this. Field headquarters and a morgue were set up within sight of where this gentleman was

located at Man High School. I'm sure police cars were passing by there all of the time. He had all of the help he could ask for or needed, if he asked for it. I know any trooper would have helped him.

Mr. Bondurant also stated that the only way you could get into the area where he was located was by traveling poor back roads and that the phone lines were down. I don't know anything about the phones, but West Virginia State Police had communication with the outside by radio and would be glad to help if he asked.

I didn't submit this letter to be critical of the Red Cross, but the statements were so untrue that I had to make a response. I am a retired member of West Virginia State Police, with 25 years of service, and proud of it. I retired in 1985. I have been a subscriber to GOLDENSEAL for a long time and I hope for a very long time to come. I just turned 75 years of age this year.
Regards,
Millard P Cook
Retired Corporal, WV State Police

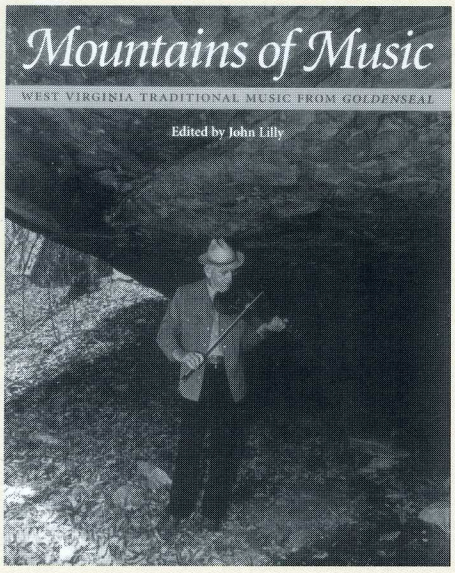
Author Margo Blevin Denton sent the following response. —ed.

January 9, 2010
Via e-mail
Elkins, West Virginia
Editor:
Corporal Cook's letter is fascinating. It shows how focused each organization was on alleviating some of the chaos in that long, narrow area. The state police obviously had an enormous task to carry out and did it well.

I don't think this letter contradicts Mr. Bondurant's observations from his viewpoint. Lew said he was in charge of the Red Cross shelter at the high school, which was filled to bursting, sheltering perhaps 2,000 people who were constantly coming and going. The police were understandably too busy to patrol there, so Lew was pretty much on his own. He was so busy that he was never able to get outside to see anything else and had to rely on word-of-mouth for his information. He never even saw the morgue, which was a few yards away.

And that was probably true of everyone doing their job at this disaster. Lew was not criticizing the police for not giving him backup in the shelter. I'm sure had things really gotten out of hand, they would have come to his aid.
Margo Blevin Denton

Buffalo Creek, Logan County, 1972. Photograph by Jeanne Rasmussen, courtesy of the Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.



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-

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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.

Fiesta ware. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Fiesta Festival

Homer Laughlin China Company will host the Fiesta Festival June 24-26 at Clarke Field in Newell. The company began production of their colorful and popular Fiestaware line in 1936, and its popularity continues today. Fiesta Festival activities include plate painting for children, a flea market, and the debut of the second edition of the Fiesta Festival commemorative plate. The festival is sponsored by the Top of West Virginia Convention and Visitors Bureau, the arts council in Hancock County, and Homer Laughlin China Company.

For more information, phone Homer Laughlin China Company at 1-800-452-4462 or visit www.topofwv.com.

Hatfield-McCoy Reunion

The 11th Hatfield-McCoy Reunion will be held June 10-13 in Mingo County at Matewan and Williamson, and at Pikeville, Kentucky. The festival will include a variety of family-oriented activities and events, such as the popular Tug Across the Tug, a tug-of-war between the Hatfield family on the West Virginia side of the Tug Fork River and the McCoys on the Kentucky side. Other highlights include dramatic portrayals of Devil Anse Hatfield and Randall McCoy during the feud and free concerts throughout the weekend.

The Hatfield-McCoy Marathon will be run on Saturday, June 12. Runners may also participate in a half marathon of 13.1 miles; there will also be a once-around-the-block mini-marathon for children.

For more information, visit www.hatfieldmccoymarathon.com or phone (304)426-6621.

Poultry Festival

The 67th annual West Virginia Poultry Festival will be held July 24-31 in Moorefield. The festival kicks off on Saturday, July 24, with a pageant to choose the West Virginia Poultry Queen, who will reign during the festival.

Events throughout the week include a golf tournament and educational meetings for poultry producers. Youth Day activities include a youth barbecue-chicken cooking contest, which encourages contestants to prepare chicken with their own original sauces and seasonings. There will also be

Members of the Moorefield Lions Club grill chicken at the annual West Virginia Poultry Festival. Photographer unknown.

youth poultry and egg judging, parts identification, and evaluation of breaded chicken patties.

The Moorefield Lions Club will sponsor a chicken barbecue all day on Thursday, July 29, followed by the Grand Feature Fireman's Parade in the evening. For more information, phone the West Virginia Poultry Association at (304)530-0273 or write them at 206 Winchester Avenue, Moorefield, WV 26836.

Swiss National Holiday

The town of Helvetia will celebrate the Swiss National Holiday on Saturday, July 31. Festivities begin at 3:30 p.m., including a paper lantern parade, folk dancing, and yodeling. Food will be available.

Celebrated in Berne, Switzerland, since 1891, the Swiss National Holiday marks the 600th anniversary of the founding of Switzerland. Swiss immigrants first came to Randolph County in the late 1860's. Due to the isolation of the area, Swiss cultural traditions of dance, music, and food have been preserved through the years in Helvetia.

For more information about the Swiss National Holiday, phone The Hutte restaurant at (304)924-6435 or visit www.helvetiawv.com.

Quilt Festival

West Virginia Quilters, Inc., will host their seventh biennial Quilt Festival this June 24-26 at the Summersville Arena and Conference Center in Summersville. Events include a quilting class on Thursday, a children's quilt scavenger hunt, hand-quilting demonstrations, and educational activities offered by the Marion County Reading Council.

DOUG CHADWICK

A quilt show will feature a display of more than 100 quilts. Participation in the judged show is open to members of West Virginia Quilters, Inc., which is open to all quilters. For entry and membership forms, visit www.wvquilters.org or phone Christine Ballengee at (304)610-6098.

Folk dancers at Helvetia. Photograph by Dave Whipp.

State Folk Festival

The 60th West Virginia State Folk Festival will be held at Glenville the weekend of June 17-20. The folk festival offers activities such as banjo and fiddle contests, jam sessions, Appalachian crafts, a spelling bee, antique cars, and a quilt show.

Nightly square dancing features traditional West Virginia squares called to live old-time music. Demonstrations of traditional West Virginia crafts such as blacksmithing, basketry, pottery, and wood carving are featured along Main Street during the festival.

An old-time gospel sing will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday at the Methodist Church on Main Street. Highlights of the festival are the Friday and Saturday evening concerts held at the Glenville State College Fine Arts Center beginning at 7 p.m. each evening. The festival concludes on Sunday morning with a church service at the historic Job's Temple, located 10 miles west of Glenville on U.S. Route 5.

Visit www wv folkfestival.com or phone (304)462-5000 for more information.

String Band Music Fest

The 21st annual Appalachian String Band Music Festival will be held August 4-8 at Camp Washington-Carver, located at Clifftop, Fayette County. Known simply as "Clifftop" to many, the festival is a popular destination for thousands of musicians from across the country and around the world.

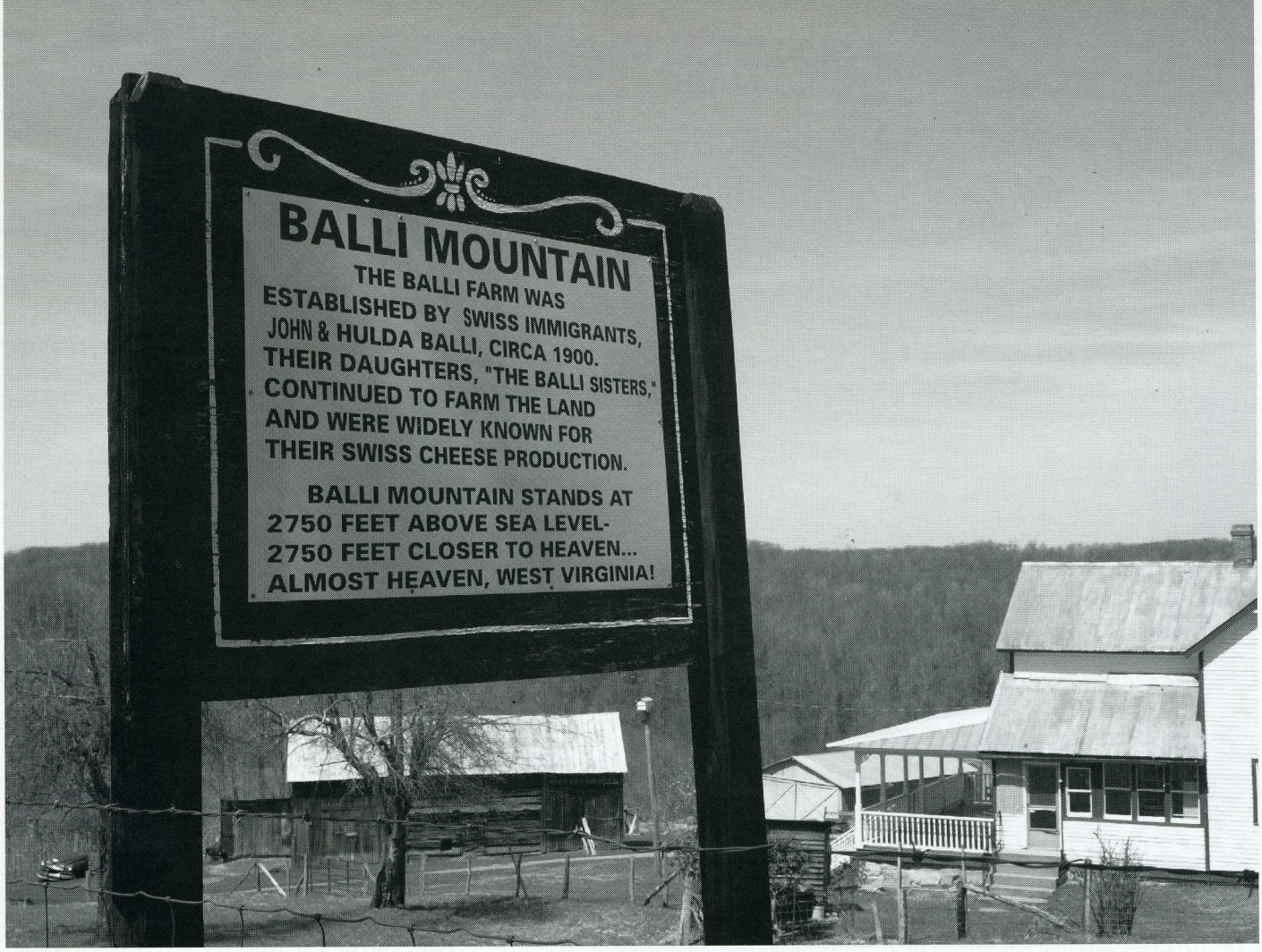
Highlights include fiddle, banjo, band, and dance contests, concerts, and workshops. Nightly square dances are held in the historic Chestnut Lodge. Jam sessions occur throughout the 583-acre festival grounds.

For a complete schedule, camping and admission prices, contest rules, or other information, visit www.wvculture.org/stringband or phone (304)558-0162.

By Alan Byer

Visiting the Balli Sisters of Helvetia

Three Balli sisters posed for this photograph in 1998 in the kitchen of the Balli home. From the left are Martha Balli Jones, Anna Balli, and Freda Balli. Freda's twin sister, Gertrude, passed away the previous year and is commemorated here by the empty chair. Photograph by Samanda Dorger.



Among the earliest Swiss immigrants to the Helvetia area, members of the Balli family have lived in Randolph County since 1875. This mountain bears the Balli name. Photograph by Alan Byer.

One Saturday in October 2000, my wife, Ginny, and I drove through the high mountains of Randolph County to visit our old friends the Balli sisters. I had been stopping in and seeing these Helvetia natives for more than 30 years, buying their homemade Swiss cheese, quilts, and other goods, and helping them with farm chores when needed.

As we neared the house, we noticed a red pickup truck parked in the drive, its bed filled with boxes and furniture. It turns out we had stumbled upon a momentous event: Anna and Freda, the last two of three Balli sisters who had lived there nearly all of their lives, were moving. The next day, for the first time in over a century, the house John Balli built with his own hands would be empty.

John (Johann) Balli's family had emigrated from Switzerland to Tuscarawas County, Ohio, in 1870 and then moved to Helvetia in 1875. Helvetia had been settled about a decade earlier by Swiss immigrants, lured by claims that the land and climate were almost identical to that of Switzerland. [See "Ella Betler Remembers Helvetia," by David Sutton; April-June 1980.]

When he was in his early 20's, John purchased some 200 mountaintop acres about six miles west of Pickens, a thriving sawmill town five miles south of Helvetia. He immediately started construction of a large, wood-framed house at the highest point on his acreage. When the house was completed, he traveled across the mountain to visit his neighbors, the Hellers, and volunteered to help them plant that year's crops. Though we can't be certain of his real motives, John was soon working the plow while the Hellers' daughter, Hulda, drove the team. Before long, John and Hulda were man and wife. They set up housekeeping in the new house on what became known as Balli Ridge.

The couple created a prosperous farm in the Swiss tradition and eventually raised eight children: seven girls and a boy.

The couple created a prosperous farm in the Swiss tradition and eventually raised eight children. seven girls and a boy. Among other talents, they brought with them the knowl-

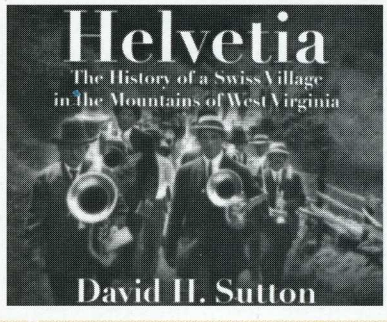
Anna, Freda, and Gertrude Balli, from left to right, farmed together on Balli Mountain for nearly half a century, employing traditional Swiss farming methods. They are pictured here with a team of horses in 1959. Photographer unknown.

edge and skills needed to make a unique and especially fine form of Swiss cheese. They frequently bartered or sold four-to-five pound rectangular loaves of this cheese for those things they couldn't grow, raise, or make themselves. [See "Bärg Käss: Cheesemaking Among the West Virginia Swiss," by Bruce Betler; Spring 1994.]

The Balli children completed their educations at schools in Webster Springs, Buckhannon, and Elkins; only the twins, Freda and Gertrude, returned to the farm. After John died in 1957, the twins stayed on to farm the 200 acres themselves. They continued to make and sell the highly prized Swiss cheese, along with fresh-churned butter, eggs, nut kernels, and other hard-to-find seasonal delicacies. Older sister Anna had been teaching in Diana, and, when she retired in the early 1960's, she returned to Balli Ridge to help Freda and Gertrude on the farm.

I first met Freda, Gertrude, and Anna in 1965, when my family spent a weekend at Holly River State Park, which surrounds the Balli farm on three sides. The park superintendent recommended that we visit the sisters, so we drove up the winding road one beautiful

Helvetia Book



The unique history and colorful traditions of West Virginia's best-known Swiss community are preserved in a book titled, *Helvetia: The History of a Swiss Village in the Mountains of West Virginia*. Written by Helvetia native and GOLDENSEAL contributor David Sutton, this book was originally published under a different title in 1990. The initial 1,000 copies went quickly, and the book has long been out of print.

Newly reissued and expanded by West Virginia University Press, this 144-page paperbound edition retains Sutton's original text, outlining the fascinating history of this remote mountain village. Helvetia, the Latin name for Switzerland, was founded by Swiss and German immigrants in 1869. It thrived as an agricultural community through World War II, then experienced decline during the post-war years. During the 1960's, a revival of interest and investment breathed new life into the community. Capitalizing on Swiss traditions such as cheese making and Fastnacht, tourism became an important part of the local economy and remains so today.

In addition, *Helvetia* includes maps, documents, and other illustrations, including several historical photographs by Gottfried Aegerter. [See "A West Virginia Swiss Community: The Aegerter Photographs of Helvetia, Randolph County," by David Sutton; April-June 1980.]

The second half of the book comprises a contemporary photo essay, footnotes, several useful appendices, a detailed index, and bibliography. Sutton also adds a new introduction.

Helvetia sells for $22.95 and is available from West Virginia University Press; phone 1-866-WVU-PRES or visit www.wvupressonline.com.

fall Saturday morning. What a revelation! We wandered around, completely enthralled by the sights, sounds, and smells of this place that seemed to have been frozen in time a half-century earlier. The sisters all spoke English with heavy Swiss accents and often talked among themselves in their family's old-world dialect. We bought as much cheese as we could haul, along with eggs for breakfast the next morning. Dad was especially pleased to learn that they sold shelled hickory nuts by the pound. The sisters told us that they had just recently bought their first tractor and had retired their huge work horses, whose halters and reins still hung in the barn.

Cheese making was an old-world Swiss tradition carried on by the Balli family in the mountains of West Virginia. Here, Freda Balli weighs and prices several blocks of fine homemade cheese in 1994. Photograph by Michael Keller.

After that, our family visited the Ballis once or twice a year, often in the spring and fall. This continued for the next three decades, even after I graduated from WVU and set out on my own. These visits developed a pattern, so much so that they've mostly blurred together in my mind.

We would park at the top of their drive, by the gate with a sign that advertised their wares that day, and then walk down the path that led to their front door. The sisters always had a dog, and it would run out to meet us, usually cordially but sometimes with a note of wariness. Freda or Gertrude would usually be waiting at the front door and would invite us into that sparkling but simple kitchen with its huge wood-burning cookstove and wonderful dairy smells. Usually, the milk destined for the next batch of cheese would be heating on the stove, and one of the sisters would be stirring the curds with her hands.

Freda would then open a door at the back of the kitchen, and we'd follow her down the wooden steps to the dirt-floored basement. Floor-to-ceiling shelves along the walls were packed three deep with home-canned provisions of all kinds. Two large wooden bins, one for potatoes and one for turnips, were recessed into the wall, and a large, ancient-looking cider press rested at the far end of the basement. We would always head straight for the wire-screened cheese-curing frame, just to the left of the stairs. Freda would show us their ripest cheeses, but she would always explain that a certain number were reserved for The Hutte restaurant in Helvetia. After we selected our cheese from those remaining, we'd head back upstairs to the kitchen table. If they had eggs, cheese, nutmeats, or other goods for sale, Freda would mention them to us.

Often, she would show us their latest quilt and, in later years, paintings of local scenes created by George Good, who visited them from Scott Depot. Finally, one of the sisters would weigh our cheese and carefully total our purchase in a little notebook. When our business was completed, Gertrude would always invite us to sign their guestbook. Usually, my dad, who is a beekeeper, would ask about their bees and volunteer to look at the hives on our way out.

Usually, the milk destined for the next batch of cheese would be heating on the stove, and one of the sisters would be stirring the curds with her hands.

Sometimes, this routine would be broken, and those visits stand out most clearly in my memory Once, as we pulled into their drive, we could see Anna struggling with a large calf. She was trying to load him onto the truck and asked us if we could help her. With my dad, Anna, and I pulling on the halter, and my mom and girlfriend pushing

Anna, Gertrude, and Freda, left to right, with a lovely handmade quilt. Photograph by Gerald Milnes.

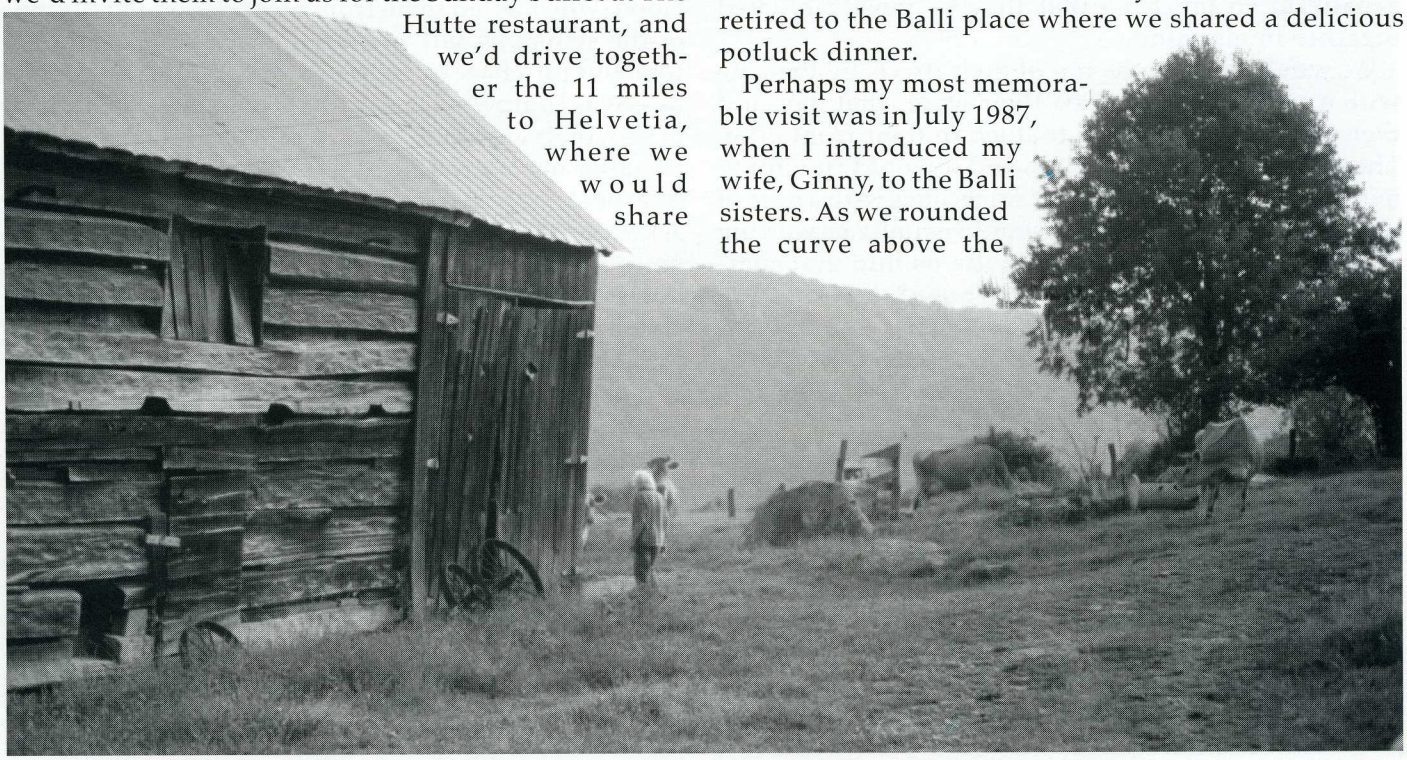
from behind, we finally coaxed the recalcitrant little beast up the ramp and onto the bed.

If we happened to be there when they were preparing a meal, the sisters would invite us to share it with them. These were always special occasions for us. They would fill the kitchen table with home-canned vegetables, home-cured ham or sausage, potatoes, relish, cake for dessert, and, of course, cheese. After one of the sisters said table grace, often in Swiss German, we would sit and chat with them as we ate. Other times, we'd invite them to join us for the Sunday buffet at The Hutte restaurant, and we'd drive together the 11 miles to Helvetia, where we would share Eleanor Mailloux's sumptuous feast.

Once I mentioned that I had been fishing for trout in the park but hadn't had much luck. Freda suggested that I use some of their redworms for bait and led me down to the manure pile next to the barn. There, she carefully lifted one edge of the pile with a shovel and showed me how to grab the elusive worms before they could escape. After we had accumulated a can full, Freda invited me to fish in a large beaver pond, down in a remote valley on their property, and gave me detailed directions. I spent the rest of that afternoon catching and releasing sparkling little brook trout in that secluded pond.

We visited them one Memorial Day weekend, and the sisters invited us to join them, other members of their family, and several neighbors for a Sunday service at the Pleasant Hill church, just down the road toward Pickens. With my mom filling in on the piano, about 20 of us sang hymns, prayed, and then stood outside in the shade and chatted amiably. Afterwards, we all retired to the Balli place where we shared a delicious potluck dinner.

Perhaps my most memorable visit was in July 1987, when I introduced my wife, Ginny, to the Balli sisters. As we rounded the curve above the



Anna Balli tends to some farm chores while curious dairy cattle look on. Photograph by Gerald Milnes.

house, Ginny and I could see considerable activity in the field below. Closer inspection revealed the sisters, most of their extended family, and a neighbor baling and storing hay. We asked if they needed any help, and brother-in-law Louie Jones invited us to pitch in.

Ginny and I spent the rest of that day helping where we could, sometimes loading bales onto a trailer or into the back of a pickup and, at other times, feeding the bales onto a conveyor that lifted them into the loft of a small barn. Othie Cowger, a neighbor, drove the tractor, and Martha Jones, the eldest of the Balli women, drove the pickup. They were using sassafras-wood hay rakes and three-pronged forks, crafted by Othie, to gather the hay into piles. Sister Rosa Balli Marts, by far the smallest in stature of those working that day, continually exhorted my wife to not "overdo it" as they loaded hay together.

Ginny Byer, our author's wife, appears satisfied after a hard day's work loading and stacking hay at the Balli farm in 1987 At right is neighbor Othie Cowger. Photograph by Alan Byer.

When we finished, the air was filled with dust and chaff that caused the afternoon sunshine to appear as golden rays. Gertrude had been back at the house preparing a meal, and we gathered in the kitchen and on the front steps to eat. In honor of Othie's birthday, the sisters surprised him with real, hand-churned ice cream. Long after darkness had fallen, two very tired, but elated, beginner haymakers thanked the Ballis, and we headed back to our cabin in the park.

Though we thought the Balli sisters were ageless and indestructible, the passing years exacted their toll. When we visited them in 1995, Freda and Anna were unable to lift the huge cheese kettle off the stove and asked me to help them. The next day, back at The Hutte in Helvetia, Kathy Mailloux told us that the sisters had tried, without success, to hire someone to help them with the cheese making.

Family and personal responsibilities kept us away from Balli Ridge for the next few years. In October 1997, my parents called to tell me that Gertrude had passed away. We stopped in Helvetia the following year and discovered that The Hutte was serving Alpine Lace Swiss cheese imported from Ohio. Sisters Anna and Freda still lived on the farm, but they could no longer continue the family's cheese making tradition.

As we walked that familiar path in October 2000, a very friendly dog ran out to greet us. As always, Freda met us at the front door and invited us into the living room. She told us that Anna was very ill but might be able to sit with us for a few minutes. Before long, Freda helped her into the living room. Louie and Martha Jones appeared from behind the house, where they had been harvesting walnuts. As we chatted, Freda revealed that she and Anna would be leaving the farm to live with Louie and Martha in Volga the following day, Sunday. My wife asked if they still had quilts for sale. With Louie's help, Freda carefully unfolded a beautiful, very colorful star-pattern quilt. We bought it then and there.

Anna soon began to tire, and Freda helped her back to her makeshift first-floor bedroom. We stepped outside to chat with Louie while Martha hulled black walnuts with a small hatchet. Finally, we re-entered the house. Freda led us to Anna's bedroom door, and we told Anna goodbye and waved. She lifted a hand in return. As we shook Freda's hand and bade her farewell, we knew that we probably would never see either sister again.

When we finished, the air was filled with dust and chaff that caused the afternoon sunshine to appear as golden rays.

Freda died January 26, 2002; Anna followed March 16, 2003. Martha, the eldest of John Balli's progeny, passed away January 22, 2006, six days after her 101st

Anna and Freda Balli in 2000. Gertrude passed away in 1997 Freda died in 2002; Anna followed in 2003. Photograph by Alan Byer.

birthday. Of all the people my wife and I worked with in the hayfield that July day in 1987, only Louie Jones, Martha's husband, survives as this is written.

Though the state of West Virginia had first option on the Balli acreage when it passed from the family, several relatives stepped forward to buy the farm. They added a large porch to the front of the house, improved its accessibility and updated some of the amenities, and today rent it out by the week. With the exception of the new porch, the farm appears much as it did 40 years ago.

My wife and I visited niece Rose Ann Cowger and her husband, Denzil, in April 2009 at their home outside Hacker Valley. Rose Ann and Denzil are basket and chair weavers and sell their wares out of a large loft above the kitchen. While we were there, a group of out-of-state senior citizens stopped by for a visit and the opportunity to buy beautifully crafted woven goods.

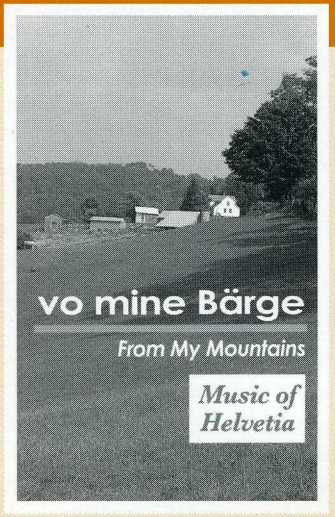
After their visitors departed, Rose Ann and Denzil invited us to share lunch with them before we drove out to visit the Balli farm. I noticed a baby's high chair in one corner of the kitchen and asked Rose Ann about its history. She replied that, when she was born, John Balli, her grandfather, ordered the high chair from a catalog. When the Pickens & Hacker Valley Railroad train delivered it to the Pickens station, he walked the five miles to Pickens and then retraced his steps up to Balli Ridge with the chair on his back. By her first birthday, Rose Ann was sitting in the chair in her parents' Replete Road home. Eventually, she used it for her own children, and they, in turn, used it for their children. History indeed!

More about Helvetia

The music, food, folkways, and festivals of the remote village of Helvetia are affectionately documented in a pair of projects from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins.

Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia is a 60-minute film produced by award-winning documentary filmmaker Gerald Milnes. It depicts this remote and remarkable Randolph County community and the old-world Swiss traditions that are still practiced there by descendants of the original 19th-century immigrants. Cheese making, yodeling, flag tossing, crafts, and holiday celebrations are among those practices shown here. Freda, Gertrude, and Anna Balli are featured prominently in this 1993 film, recently made available on DVD.

A 1998 audio cassette features traditional Swiss music as played by members of the Helvetia community. The cassette tape titled, *vo mine Bärge [From My Mountains]: Music of Helvetia*, includes dance tunes, marches, yodels, and a variety of songs. The performers include Bruce Betler; Fred, Norman, Vernon, Alice, and Denice Burky; and Joe McInroy, singing and playing fiddles, mandolin, guitars, and bass. The informative liner notes and attractive package include an introduction written by former GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan.



Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia sells for $20, plus tax and shipping. The audio cassette, *vo mine Bärge*, is on clearance, selling for $3 while supplies last. Both are available from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College; phone (304)637-1209, on-line at www.augustaheritage.com

After lunch, we followed the Cowgers up the winding gravel road to the Balli farm. We immediately noticed the huge front porch with its rocking chairs, and Denzil told us how he and Rose Ann had designed the porch and had it built by a contractor. He pointed out the large foundation stones, and told us how he had discovered them beneath the refuse in the old manure pit. He had hauled them out one-by-one with a tractor. How and why these immense, professionally cut stones had ended up where they were is still a mystery, but they match the foundation stones beneath the rest of the house seamlessly

Rose Ann and Denzil led us into the kitchen, and we remarked that it was virtually unchanged. The cookstove was still there, and the diaper-drying racks, first installed by John Balli over a century ago, still hung above it.

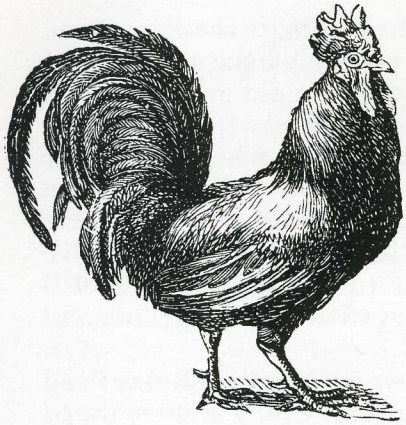
Instead of opening the door to the basement, Rose Ann opened another door and invited us to follow her upstairs. In all the years we visited the Balli sisters, we had never seen their second-floor living quarters. Beds for all the Balli children were still in their places, and Anna's collection of books and 33 1/3-rpm records still occupied the built-in shelves with their glass doors. Rose Ann and Denzil have added a second-floor bathroom. With that exception, the Balli living quarters probably have not changed since they were occupied by eight rambunctious children and their tired parents.

Downstairs, in the sun porch where the three sisters painstakingly sewed their quilts, Rose Ann proudly showed us murals painted on the cabinets by her daughter, Janet. Besides those imaginative additions and some new furniture, we could still visualize the three sisters sitting there talking and sewing.

That evening, as we drove back up Balli Ridge Road toward Holly River State Park, Ginny and I stopped above the house to read the interpretive sign placed there by the family and pay our respects one final time. In the fading light, I could almost hear the sisters talking in their beautiful accents and imagine Freda standing at the front door as a dog, tail wagging, greeted us on the path.

ALAN BYER was born in South Charleston. He earned a degree in English from West Virginia University and works as a technical writer in the Baltimore/Washington, D.C., area. His writing has appeared in *Trains*, *West Virginia Hillbilly*, and *Log Train*. Alan's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2006 issue.

Still in the family today, the old Balli house is rented out by the week. Photograph by Alan Byer.

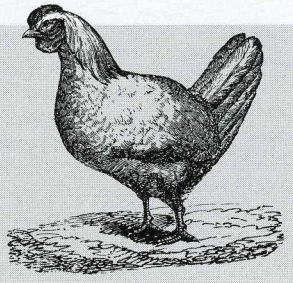


Not long ago, my wife was fixing some chicken for dinner. This got me to thinking about the old Upshur County farm that I grew up on and the frustration I had with chickens some 50 years ago.

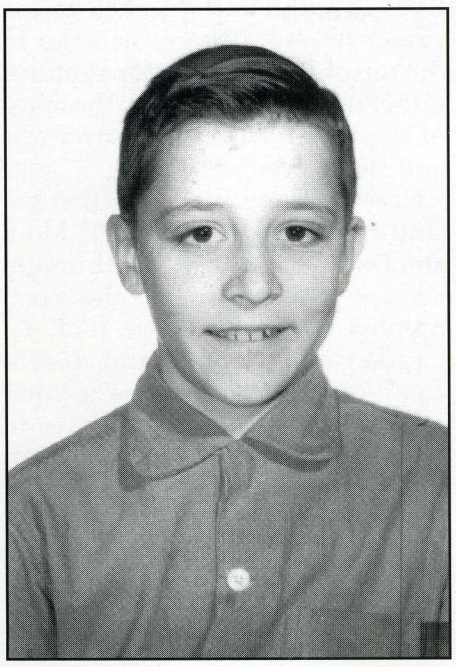
I Remember

KIM JOHNSON

Chickens



By Charles M. Morrison, Sr.



Author Charles M. Morrison at age 11 in 1955. Chores and chickens kept him busy on his family's Upshur County farm.

Being raised on a 28-acre farm, part of my daily chores included feeding the chickens corn, giving them water to drink, feeding them some crushed oyster shells, and, last but not least, gathering the eggs. Every egg counted, either to eat or to sell at Holden's grocery store, which was located nearby at Tennerton. Mom and Dad would take the extra eggs there and would sell them and use the money to buy groceries that we needed. My mother would wash and clean the eggs before they could be sold.

We had a variety of different chickens. We had chickens that laid white and brown eggs and some banty eggs, which were smaller. You could easily tell the pullet eggs, because they were smaller when the pullets first began to lay eggs.

Our neighbors, the Wingroves, raised a lot of chickens and sold eggs, also. They would ask us boys to come over and shell out some corn to feed their chickens. They were rich enough to have a corn sheller, which made it easier and quicker to shell the corn. We would take turns turning the crank to shell the corn. We would turn it as fast as we could with no ears of corn in it and then see how many ears we could feed through the sheller before it would stop. It would grind off right around 13 or 14 ears before stopping. The Wingroves also had little plastic coils that were white, blue, red, and green. They would place them on the hen's leg to tell the age of the hen and if they were laying or not. We did not need them for our chickens.

One day when I was very young, I was coming back from the mailbox and had to go past the chicken house to cross the old footbridge to cross the small stream to get to our farmhouse. All the chickens and roosters were outside scattered about, scratching and eating in the pasture field. I don't know why, but an old rooster came at me from behind and flogged me on my back and around my neck. Not only did it scare me, but also the spurs and flapping of the wings hurt quite a bit. Now, I didn't do a thing to provoke that rooster! Needless to say, after that incident, chickens were not my best friends. An older gentleman told me some time later to watch an old rooster, and if he lowered his breast and head and started for you, that he was going to jump you. Looking back on the way the old roosters would act before attacking, he was right.

I remember one time coming out the back door of the house and going through the back gate. Just outside

the fence that went around the yard, I spotted a rooster, maybe 30 feet or so away from me. I reached down and picked up a small rock and let it fly, striking the rooster in the head or upper neck. The rooster hit the ground, and I thought for sure that I had killed him dead. I looked back toward the house to see if Mom or Dad saw me and then headed for the rooster. I got within 10 feet or so, and he flopped a little and just laid there. I then got closer and saw the white of his eyes blink and a relief came over me. He was not dead! I took my foot and nudged him. The old rooster then attempted to get up on his feet with one wing outstretched, touching the ground, and sort of went around in a circle. When he got his senses back, he ran for all he could to get away from me. Didn't have much trouble with the roosters after that.

MICHAEL KELLER

I recall another time when it was wet from raining overnight and after the early farm chores were done, I went down in the meadow to French Creek to do some fishing. I had caught a few bluegill, chubs, and catfish by noontime, and Mom called me to come to lunch. I grabbed my fish and headed for the house to eat. There was block wire fence around our yard, so I laced my wooden fishing pole in the top blocks of the fence, since I planned to fish again right after lunch. I ate quickly so I could get back to my fishing. I asked Mom and Dad, and they said it would be okay. Up I jumped and hurried through the back porch toward the walkway to the fence, where I had left my fishing pole.

What I was about to see I wasn't ready for, let alone try to explain to Mom and Dad. There, hanging down from my fishing pole, was a chicken that had swallowed the worm that I had left on the hook. The old hen was flopping and trying to get loose. Now, the fence was five-foot high and attached to the gatepost, and a brace went up to the top of the gatepost for support. Either the chicken went up the brace or flew up to where the worm was and swallowed it.

Here were my choices: either get shut of the chicken, or tell Mom and Dad. Thinking things through, I knew that they knew the exact number of chickens we had. So I called for my mom and dad to come out. They gave me a good talking to and told me I'd have to kill the chicken. So I went and got the axe and cut its head off. Now there was one less chicken to take care of, and a good chicken dinner with chicken dumplings was for Sunday dinner.

I was always glad to see the preacher or other company come for Sunday dinner, as usually that meant an old rooster's head would

Now there was one less chicken to take care of, and a good chicken dinner with chicken dumplings was for Sunday dinner.

be chopped off or Mom would open up a canned jar of chicken. Anyway, that meant some good, crisp fried chicken and homemade dumplings.

When we would butcher a chicken to eat, there were lots of feathers that we would get rid of. Us boys would save some of the tail feathers or long wing feathers and make toys to play with. We would get an ear of corn from the corn crib and shell the corn off the cob. Then we would cut about a half-inch from the end of the cob until you could see the pith or soft portion in the center of the cob. We would then take three of the long feathers and push them into the soft area. We would then place our index finger on the back of the cob and throw the cob up into the air, small end first, as hard as we could throw. It would go up into the air and then turn downward. The feathers would hold the back end of the cob up in the air, causing the cob to come down spinning in a circle.

We usually had five or six nests in the chicken house for the hens to lay their eggs in. The nests were made of wood about 14 to 16 inches square and filled with hay. I recall having to watch the chickens and trying to find their nests when they would sometimes go and start their own nests outside the building. I have found them starting nests under the building, in tall weeds, and even in the hay that was in the barn. When I found them, I would disassemble their new nests and move the hens back to the chicken house with the others.

After they had laid about a dozen or so eggs, the old hens would start setting on the eggs to hatch them. This is why I had to count the chickens every evening as I shut the door and locked them up for the night. If one was missing, it was setting on a nest outside, or it was possibly dead. Now when the hens would start setting on the eggs, I would have to pen them up separately from the other hens.

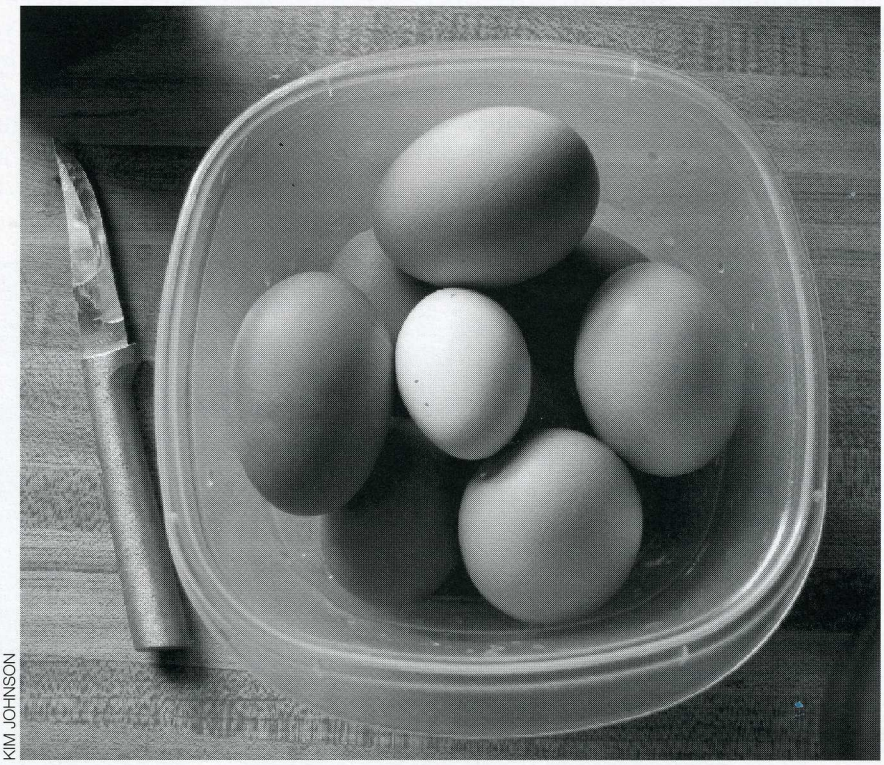
Let me explain. When a hen is setting, she quits laying eggs and will hatch chicks if she sets long enough. That meant less eggs to sell and more work for me, because I would have to pen them up in our old coal shed and would have to feed them water and corn separately from the others. It would usually take two or three weeks being penned up separately before they would quit setting.

Time was of great importance to everyone, especially when we were children. So when I was told how to break those hens from setting, I decided to give it a try. Sure wish I could remember the fellow that gave me the directions how to do it, but I cannot remember who it was. He told me the secret was to scare the hens and they would quit setting. He suggested that I take

The Morrison farm at French Creek in 1962. Our author's mother, Edna Morrison, is at center. At left is the coal shed where young Charles penned up setting hens. Photographer unknown.

the chickens down to the water and throw them in the creek. No problem, since a small stream runs through the farm. The only problem was not to let Mom and Dad see what I did, because they probably would have dusted my pants for it. Finally I got my chance.

Mom and Dad went to town and were usually gone for at least a couple of hours. I went to the coal shed and got my first hen that was setting and headed for the small creek. I didn't show much mercy, making sure the hen got good and wet. I repeated the same with the rest of the hens that were setting Thinking I had it made and was finished with having to care for those hens, I was kind of proud of my accomplishments. All seemed well until I went to feed and water and collect the eggs in the evening. I entered the henhouse and headed for the nests to collect the day's eggs. To my surprise, there on the nests still clucking and setting, were those hens that I had baptized in the creek that day. Needless to say, I did feel like a fool. So I had to carry those hens out and separate them and place them in the coal shed. Bet the prankster who told me that is still laughing!



KIM JOHNSON

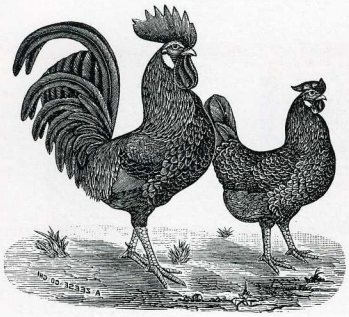
Well, it wasn't over yet. Being a sucker and quite naïve, I was told another way to break them. Most of you can remember the small-size brown paper bags that penny candy came in. Well, I was told to get some small gravel, put it into the paper bag, then take a string and tie the bag to the chicken's tail feathers. I was told to tie it so when the chicken would run, the paper bag would rattle and scare it. You can imagine the problem trying to hold a chicken and tie the paper bag to its tail, making sure it was hanging at the right length to hit its legs and feet. Mission accomplished, once again I felt pretty proud and ready to give it a try. In all my years, I don't think that I have ever seen anything that was so funny or made me laugh harder than what I was about to see.

I turned that chicken loose, and the first step or two it didn't seem to notice. Then it turned its head looking back when it heard the paper bag with the gravel in it. Immediately the old hen started running, the bag swinging and hitting its feet as it ran. The old chicken would turn its head from one side to the other looking back trying to see what was behind it or might be chasing it. While it was looking back, it would trip, turning end over end when it came to the rocks and uneven ground, and running into the block wire fence. Finally, the old hen just squatted down, wore-down, tired, and just gave up.

One by one, I tied a paper bag to each of the setting hens and turned them loose. I thought surely this had scared them bad enough to break them from setting. I felt very comfortable and proud of my accomplishments, until I went to collect the eggs that evening. You guessed it, there sat those old hens on their nests, clucking and still setting. Fully whipped out, I grabbed the old hens and had to pen them back up in the old coal shed until they quit setting.

Along in the fall when the chickens stopped laying, we would use old burlap sacks and nail them over the windows, doors, and cracks to insulate and keep the cold out. We still had to feed and water the chickens daily through the winter. Just last November, a lady at our church said that she hoped her chickens would start laying more eggs so she could bring them to give to many of us I told her that the chickens laying lots of eggs was over till next spring. She looked at me sort of puzzled and asked why And I told her that the chickens virtually quit laying in the fall and started back up in the spring. Yes, she would get a few along, but not like in the summertime. I also told her that it was a good time to chop their heads off and eat them. She quickly replied that she could not do that, as they were named after people she knew. I told her, well, you're going to have to just feed and water them until spring comes.

One of the chores with chickens that I detested the most was cleaning out the chicken manure, feathers, and hay that was on the floor. Now, if you have not been around chickens much, those critters had



Besides fried eggs, chicken and dumplings, and selling eggs, they kept the area free of spiders, grasshoppers, and other bugs and insects.

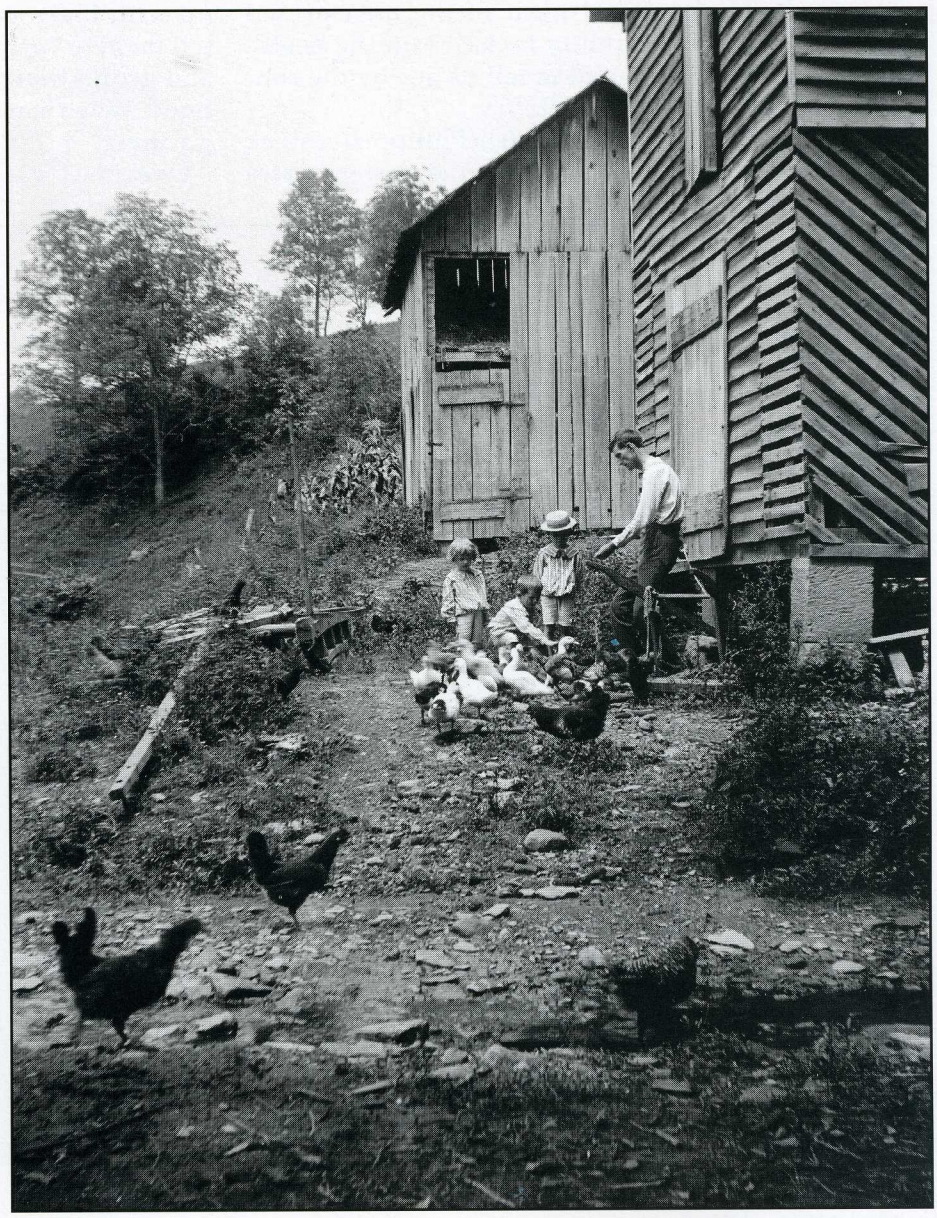
lice on them. That is why you see the old chickens scratching and flopping in the dirt to get rid of the lice. By the time you would get the henhouse cleaned, you were covered with lice. It was not pleasant at all when you would feel them crawling on you, though these are not like the lice that live on humans. We would get a bar of homemade lye soap, hit out for French Creek, and scrub ourselves down from the top of our head to our feet to get rid of the lice.

One time, we forgot to shut and lock the door to the chicken house. The next morning when we woke up, I thought we were in for a "rod of correction," because as we looked over toward the chicken house, there were dead chickens scattered all over. With the door left open, a fox had slipped in and killed them all! My dad called Dewey Rollysen, a state game trapper, and he came and set four traps. He succeeded in catching the fox, but also caught one of our neighbor's dogs. We never did leave the chicken house door open again!

I now look back and realize the benefits of the chickens. Besides fried eggs, chicken and dumplings, and selling eggs, they kept the area free of spiders, grasshoppers, and other bugs and insects. They were constantly eating. I can remember seeing them run to catch a bug that was hopping or trying to fly away from them. While they kept our garden fairly clean of insects and bugs, problems would arise in the late summer when the tomatoes and cantaloupes were getting ripe. Then the chickens would peck hunks out of them. Back at that time, we did not have to fence the gardens to keep the deer out, so the chickens could come and go as they pleased from the garden area. That meant work again, keeping them out of the garden.

Back years ago, just about everyone that lived on our road kept chickens, on both large and small farms. Today, there is only one family on the entire road that keeps a few chickens, and you can bet your old hat that one person is not me! But I still like to eat chicken and dumplings.

CHARLES M. MORRISON, SR., was raised on a small farm in French Creek. A graduate of Buckhannon-Upshur High School, Charles is a veteran of Vietnam, served in army intelligence, and worked for the FBI. He is retired from the West Virginia Division of Highways, where he served as a district office supervisor. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2002 issue.



Photographer Lloyd Gainer with children, chickens, and ducks in Gilmer County, circa 1903.

A Horse Called Fred

By Hobart Everson

When I was a boy growing up in the East Bend community of Barbour County, none of the farmers had tractors. The work was all done with horses. Most of the farms were small, and very few could afford to own tractors. Many of the men worked in the coal mines, and farming for them was a sideline.

As for the horses, they were usually nondescript and were of no particular breed. If they were dogs, I guess you could call them mutts. Horse trading was commonplace, and most of the men prided themselves on their ability to ascertain the health conditions of a horse and to tell its age by the condition of the animal's teeth.

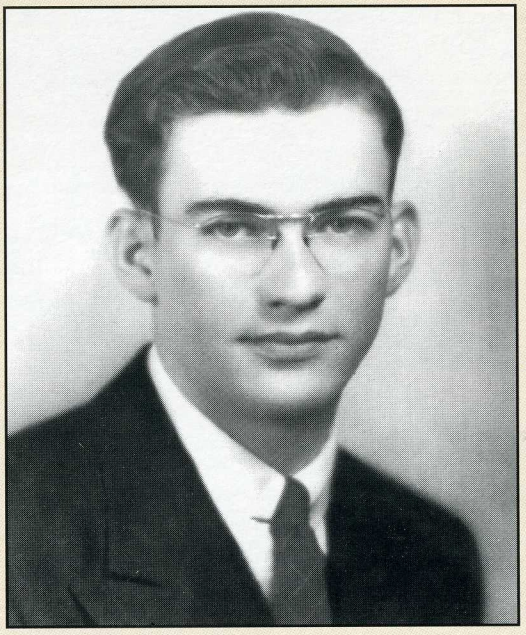
During the 1930's, Harry Huff, a Philippi livestock dealer, was importing horses from the western states and selling them at auction to the local farmers. My father needed a horse, so he went to Mr. Huff's auction to see if he could obtain one. When he came home that night, he brought home Fred. Fred was coal black and had a big brand burned into his flank.

Old Fred had two striking characteristics: One, he must have been a trick horse in his former days. And two, he was the laziest horse I ever saw. He didn't like to exert himself, and he knew every trick in the book to get out of work. Sometimes he was teamed up with Lady, my brother's mare. When you would tell them to "get up," Fred would stretch out his body and grunt, though his trace chains wouldn't even be tight. When Lady started the load, then Fred would go along.

One time I was plowing for my brother, Harry, using

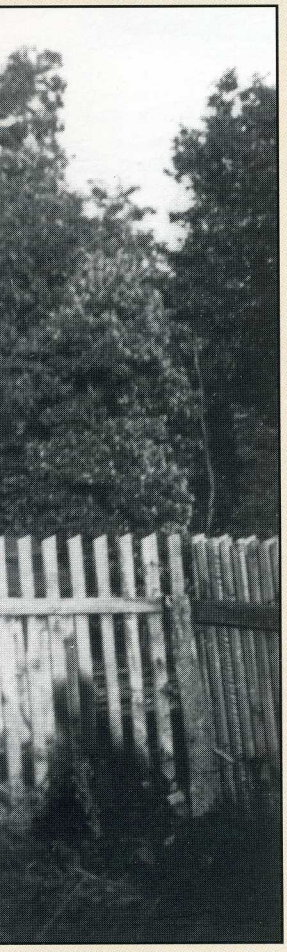
Our author's brother, Bretsell, sits bareback on Fred at the Everson family farm in 1935. J. Elmer Everson, our author's father, holds the reins at left. Photographer unknown.

Fred and Lady and a two-horse landside plow. When I would instruct them to "get up," Fred would use his stretch-and-grunt trick. When he discovered that would get him a slap on the rump, he resorted to another trick. Fred could take his rear foot and deftly unhook his trace chain from the singletree. It was impossible to plow with one of the trace chains unhooked, so I would have to hang the lines over the plow handle and rehook the trace chain. Fred would turn his head to watch what I was doing. Many times I would not even get back to the plow handles before Fred had the trace chain unhooked again.



Author Hobart Everson in high school. Photographer and date unknown.

Perhaps the crowning achievement of Fred's laziness came on a threshing day. Mr. Holbert had a threshing machine that he took around to the farmers' places during threshing season to thresh their grain for them. At this particular time, our oats hadn't been stacked but were still in shocks in the field. Therefore, the oats had to be hauled to where the threshing machine was set up.



On one load I remember, we had the wagon loaded with 65 shocks of oats. Fred and Lady were hitched to the wagon. When the wagon pulled up to the threshing machine, it had to wait a while for the wagon ahead of it to pull out. While we were waiting, the wagon wheels sunk into the ground a couple of inches, so it was harder to start moving again. When Fred and Lady were told to "get up," Fred refused to pull. Of course Lady couldn't start the wagon by herself. To make a long story short, the other team was hitched to the wagon in order to pull it up to the threshing machine. My dad wasn't there that day, so Fred got off lucky If my dad had been there, Fred would have pulled or he would have been killed on the spot.

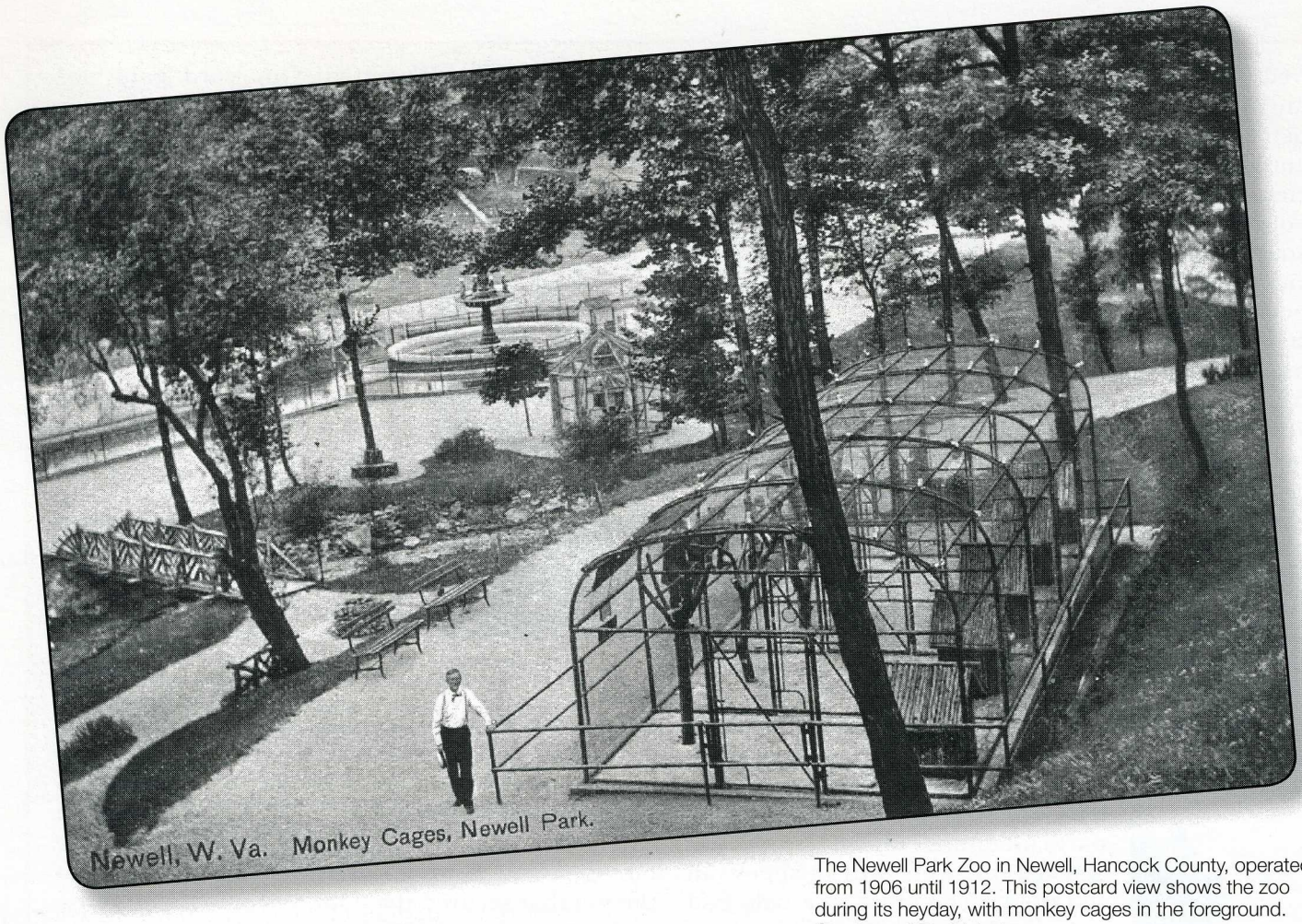
Fred didn't just use his "horse sense" to get out of work. He used his intelligence to get whatever he wanted. Our yard gate was fastened with the usual style of latch. Of course, the grass in our yard was preferable to what was on the outside, to Fred at least. When Fred wanted to feast on the grass in our yard, he simply lifted the gate latch and came in and helped himself. My dad didn't like to have Fred come into the yard whenever the notion struck him. So he bored a hole through the parts of the latch and inserted a wooden pin into the hole. Now before the latch could be lifted, the wooden pin would have to be removed. No problem. Fred would take his teeth and pull the pin out, lift the latch, and come in as he always had done before.

Fred could let himself into the barn just as easy. We had a wood yard where we cut our firewood on the bank above our barn. I was there one day when Fred decided he wanted in the barn. I sat there and watched him. It was downright fascinating to see him at work. First, he used his teeth to pull out the pin that secured the door. Then he put his nose under the edge of the door and flung it open — hard. When he started in the door, he just had his head in when, wham! The door hit him in the ribs. Fred backed out and went through the process all over again. Same results. After he tried this a few times, he decided to try something different. This time, he flung the door back just hard enough to get it open. Then he shot through the opening like a flash. As he went in, the door smacked him on the rump, but he made it.

When Fred wanted to feast on the grass in our yard, he simply lifted the gate latch and came in and helped himself.

Fred is long gone now, and so is my dad. But you can be sure of one thing. It was interesting to have this lazy but clever horse around for a few years.

HOBART EVERSON is a Barbour County native and a graduate of Belington High School, Fairmont State College, and Ohio University. Hobart retired from teaching in 1983 and now resides in Texas. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2007 issue.

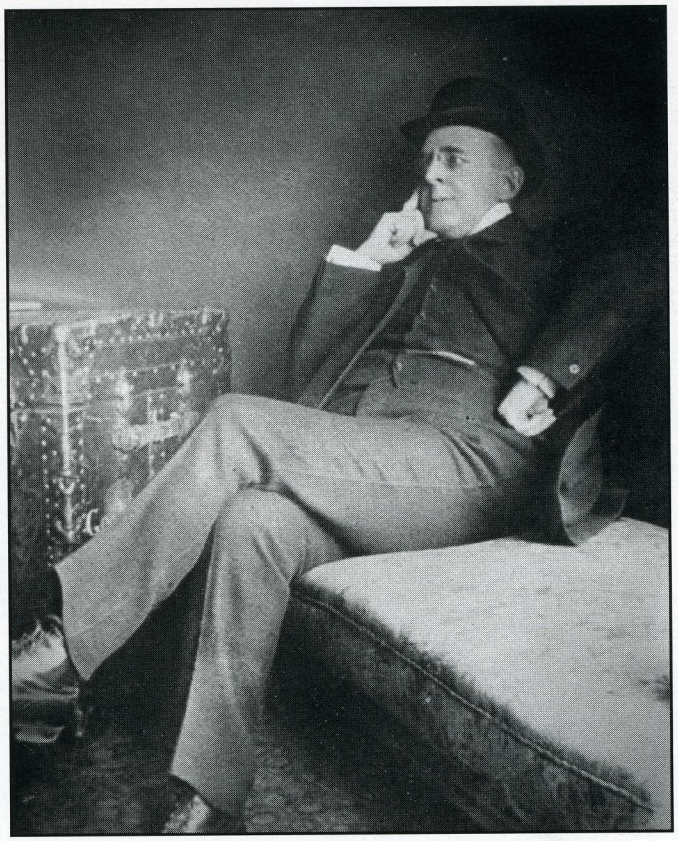


The Newell Park Zoo in Newell, Hancock County, operated from 1906 until 1912. This postcard view shows the zoo during its heyday, with monkey cages in the foreground. Courtesy of David Jester.

Rise and Fall of the Newell Park Zoo

By Bob Barnett

The Newell Park Zoo, with its cages of seals, monkeys, geese, porcupines, deer, and raccoons, and the adjacent Laurel Hollow picnic grounds were immaculate. The flower beds were in full bloom, planted, trimmed, and manicured.



George Washington Clarke was a vice president of the Homer Laughlin China Company and served as superintendent of Laurel Hollow and the Newell Park Zoo. Photographer and date unknown.

May 23, 1909, was to be the biggest day in the short history of the Newell Park Zoo. The zoo, located in Laurel Hollow in Newell, Hancock County, had opened for its fourth season the previous Sunday, attracting 2,000 people. Many more visitors were expected this Sunday — so many that the streetcar line put on extra cars to handle the huge crowd that was predicted.

The Newell Park Zoo, with its cages of seals, monkeys, geese, porcupines, deer, and raccoons, and the adjacent Laurel Hollow picnic grounds were immaculate. The flower beds were in full bloom, planted, trimmed, and manicured by a crew from the Homer Laughlin China Company, which owned the zoo (under the auspices of its subsidiary the North American Manufacturing Company). Homer Laughlin was the largest employer in the town and had been the driving force in building the town less than five years before. [See "The Homer Laughlin China Company," by Jack Welch; Spring 1985.]

The major draw on that warm spring day was the premier of the most impressive animal attraction ever housed in northern West Virginia. The Newell Park Zoo had purchased two polar bears to live at the zoo in a cage especially built for them.

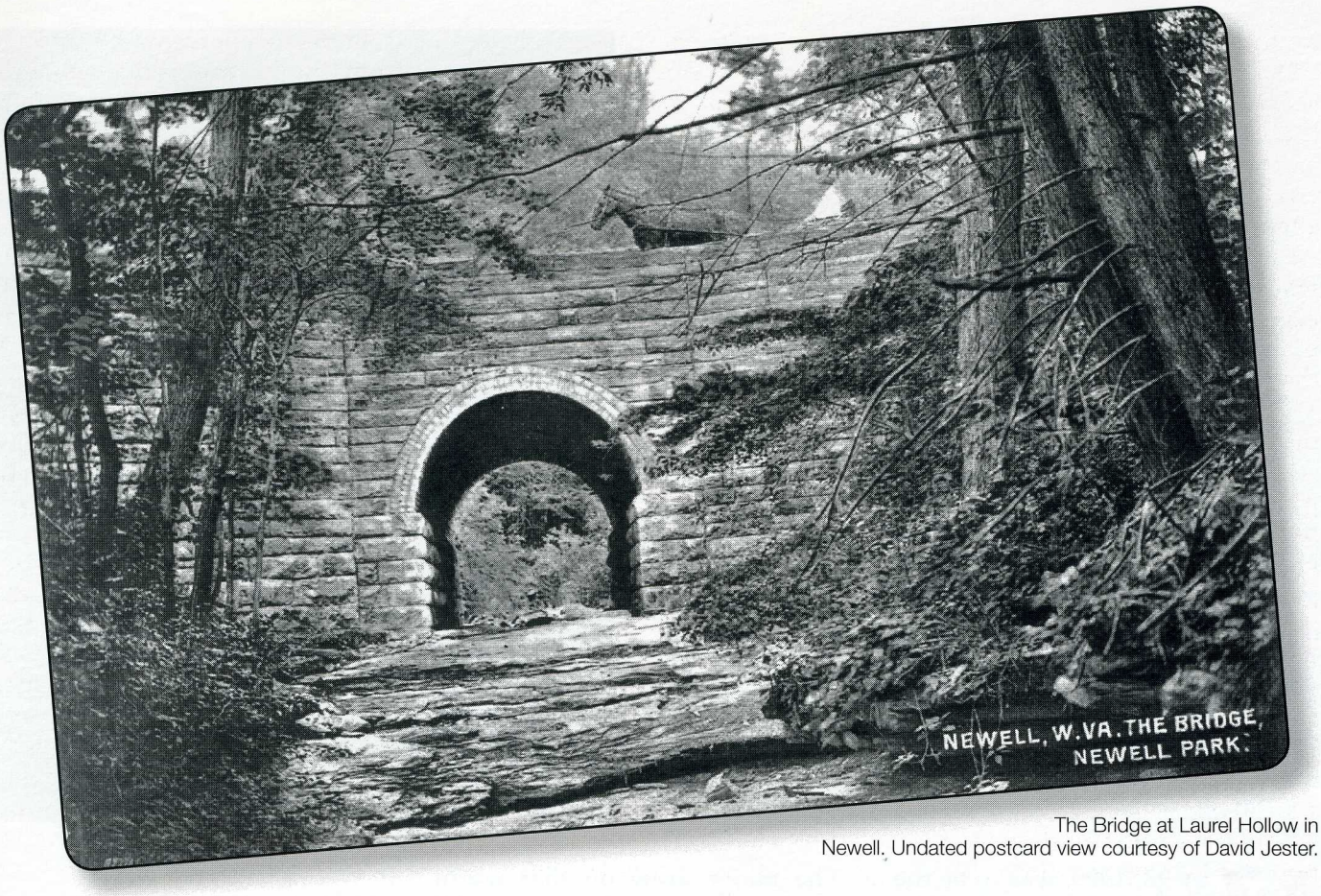
George Washington Clarke, a vice president of Homer Laughlin and its leading salesman, was a strong advocate for developing a free recreational program in Newell. Artistic, courteous, and urbane, he was the company's leading salesman and a legend in the pottery business. Clarke felt that an attractive opportunity for recreation would draw workers to the new town of Newell and help keep the work force contented at a time when the company was expanding and workers were scarce. He believed that recreation should be provided for free, unlike the nearby Rock Springs Park in Chester, which was a full-blown, for profit, amusement park with paid rides, restaurants, and shows. [See "Rock Springs Park: A Panhandle Playground," by Susan M. Weaver; Winter 1985.]

Clarke took an active role in the development of the park. In what little spare time that he had, he served as the superintendent of Laurel Hollow and the Newell Park Zoo. Eventually, the Newell Park Zoo became his obsession.

Laurel Hollow was a beautiful valley about a ¼-mile wide, extending south from the Ohio River for ¾ of a mile, along both sides of the Sixth Street Hill Creek. The valley was attractive, with lush grass, abundant wildflowers, and ancient birch, oak, and beech trees shading rich bottomland.

As work progressed on the Homer Laughlin pottery, work also began on Laurel Hollow and the Newell Park Zoo. George Clarke talked the company into pouring money into the endeavor. In 1906, a series of wide pathways was laid. An artificial lake was created, for boating and swimming, by building a dam at the end of the valley near the Ohio River.

The zoo began to take shape, as well, as two seals, weighing 120



The Bridge at Laurel Hollow in Newell. Undated postcard view courtesy of David Jester.

pounds each, were placed in the seal pool. Very quickly four Virginia deer, raccoons, and beavers were added. In addition, a flock of exotic birds, including pelicans, demoiselle cranes, and Mandarin ducks were purchased for the lake. On July 4, a herd of burros arrived to provide rides for children.

The highlight of the 1906 season was the instillation of an Edison kinetoscope used to show motion pictures on the lakefront, free of charge. In those early days of silent films, many towns did not have movie theatres, so the motion pictures shown in Laurel Hollow stirred tremendous interest. At the end of the season, many of the animals were sent to Pittsburgh's Highland Park Zoo for the winter.

Park activities reached full swing during the 1907 season. Laurel Hollow remained a prime place for picnics; it was particularly a favorite for church groups. In 1907, no fewer than seven church picnics from churches in Newell, Chester, and East Liverpool, as well as a Salvation Army picnic, were held at Laurel Hollow. The picnic season was topped off with a 12-day evangelical meeting led by evangelist A.F Noethlich, who traveled all the way from Columbus, Ohio, to lead the services.

During that season, crews made many enhancements to the park. Lush flower beds were planted along the walks. They strung electric lights throughout the park for nighttime activities and completed a large Verde fountain with a fishpond. A huge movie screen was set up near the Washington Street entrance to the park. Films were changed twice a week, with religious films shown on Sunday night. The outdoor theatre could seat 400 people. A new piano purchased that season enhanced the silent films and accompanied the popular musical acts booked by the park. In August, a series of amateur shows and Mademoiselle Carrion's five trained bears drew large crowds.

The additions to the zoo were also a huge hit that season. Four different kinds of pheasants and black porcupines were added. Two alligators were placed in the pool around the fountain. A herd of Southdown sheep was brought in to keep the grass cut. But the monkey cage drew the largest crowds.

The Newell Park Zoo began the season with a baboon and two small rhesus monkeys. They proved so popular that the cage was divided into four sections so that more monkeys could be added and kept from fighting. George Clarke personally went to New York to purchase more monkeys, including two ring-tailed and a black spider monkey. The final addition to the monkey population included a mate for the baboon and another rhesus monkey, purchased from the Dream City Park in Pittsburgh, which also supplied two rabbits specially trained to live in the monkey cages.

The 1907 season ended in September with a Hancock County

Reunion. Clarke offered a prize of $100 and a trophy for the high scorer in a track meet held during the day. A movie, vaudeville acts, and brief speeches by prominent citizens rounded out the final evening program of the season. At the end of the season, the park management began work on a bear cage. The sheep were sold because they were not very good at keeping the grass cut.

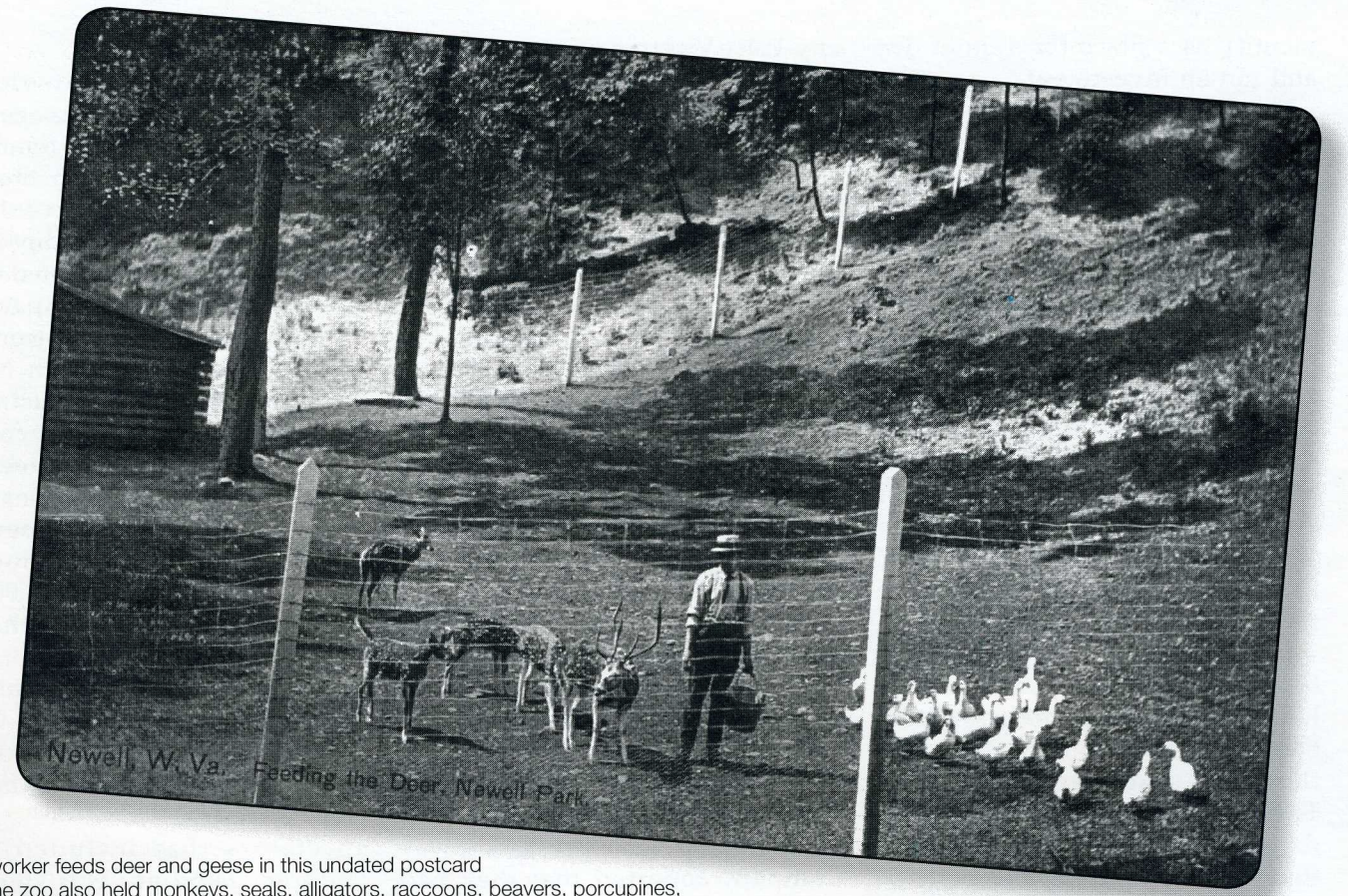
The success of Laurel Hollow and the Newell Park Zoo, the completion of both the Homer Laughlin pottery and the Edwin M. Knowles pottery, a 15-kiln factory next to Homer Laughlin, were signs of prosperity in the new but unincorporated town of Newell. By early 1908, Newell had 150 houses and a population of 576 residents, many of whom came from the farms of Appalachian Ohio and West Virginia for the prospect of a factory job and a steady paycheck.

The zoo remained extremely popular throughout the 1908 season, with burro rides, deer, seals, and monkeys as the main attractions. But some problems began to develop at the park. In an attempt to calm a wild and unruly baboon, the zoo staff placed a raccoon in the cage as an experiment. The experiment was a failure. The baboon became particularly upset when the raccoon entered the little house where the baboon slept. A brief fight ensued, and eventually the zoo staff removed the raccoon from the house and the cage. Another problem was that the dam constantly leaked water from the lake into the Ohio River, often leaving the lake too shallow for either boating or swimming.

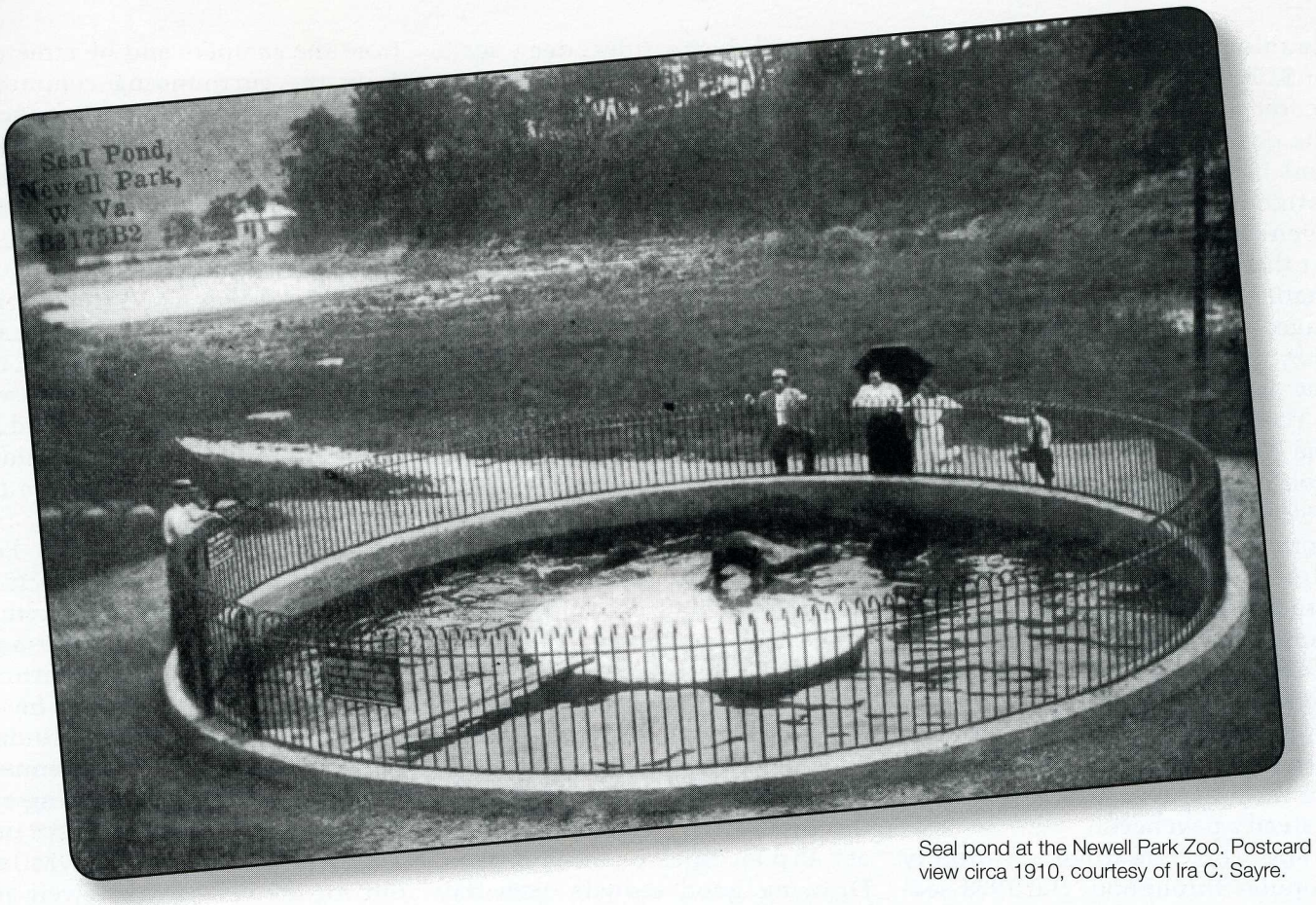
The most impressive event of the season was advertised as "the biggest camp meeting ever attempted in the area." Religious services began as early as 6:00 a.m. with a holiness meeting and continued throughout the day until preaching at 7:45 p.m. concluded the program. Drawing good crowds each day from the campers and by streetcar from the surrounding communities, the meeting was pronounced a huge success. In addition to the big camp meeting, the usual number of church picnics took place during the summer.

For the remainder of July and throughout August, the park resumed presenting its customary evening entertainment. With the end of another successful season, the park management vowed to add improvements for the following year, including repairs on the dam.

In the spring of 1909, an *East Liverpool Review* article, dripping of boosterism, touted the growth of Newell. A description of the park was the centerpiece of the article: "Newell has the reputation of having one of the most up-to-date parks in West Virginia. No amusements are in place, everything of a mercenary feature being kept out. The Laurel Hollow Park was laid out for the benefit of Newell and



A zoo worker feeds deer and geese in this undated postcard view. The zoo also held monkeys, seals, alligators, raccoons, beavers, porcupines, sheep, burros, polar bears, pheasants, and several varieties of water fowl. Courtesy of David Jester.



Seal pond at the Newell Park Zoo. Postcard view circa 1910, courtesy of Ira C. Sayre.

vicinity as a place for a quiet day and not an investment."

The first mention of polar bears being added to the park came in an April 1909 newspaper article. Only a few, if any, animals were kept at the zoo over the winter, so George Clarke purchased many more in the early spring. The animals that he had purchased that spring were four Asiatic deer, two seals, and an assortment of monkeys. The raccoons, squirrels, porcupines, and ducks were already living at the zoo. The polar bears, the newspaper article reported, were purchased in New York and were being shipped to Newell, where their cage was in the process of being completed.

The prospect of having polar bears was clearly a step up in the level of animals at the zoo. Polar bears were not only exotic, but they required special handling. They were the biggest and most dangerous animals ever housed in the Newell Park Zoo, and perhaps the only polar bears ever housed in any West Virginia zoo.

The bears arrived separately Details of the bears' arrival are conflicting, but in the most plausible account, the female bear arrived on Friday and was placed in the bear cave, which was blocked off from the outside cage by an iron fence. The male bear arrived Saturday and was placed in the outside cage. The bears were kept separated. Ernest Tetrow, the Pittsburgh zookeeper who oversaw the transport and caging of the bears, advised the Newell zoo management that a fight between the bears would likely occur if they were placed together immediately.

Meanwhile, the novelty of having a chance to see two live polar bears at close range created huge excitement in the local area. There are no accurate estimates of how many people were in the park that day to see the polar bears, but two days later the Newell Street Railway Company reported that they had carried 5,915 passengers from East Liverpool to Newell.

As the crowd grew to view the male bear in the outside cage, there was a clamor to see the female polar bear, sequestered in the cave. George Clarke saw this event as the high point of the zoo and park that he had personally promoted within the Homer Laughlin Company. The huge crowd was a vindication of his ideas of publicizing both Newell and Homer Laughlin by using free recreation and entertainment.

Both of the bears seemed calm Sunday morning and appeared to have adjusted nicely to the new cage and cave. Despite the warning from the zoologists, around 11:00 a.m. Clarke signaled to remove the door separating the two bears.

Clarke had made a tragic mistake. As soon as the female bear was in the outside cage, she immediately began to attack the male bear in front of a large crowd of horrified spectators that included small children. The fight was short but fatal. The much larger male bear

swatted the female with his paw, knocking her down. He proceeded to follow up his attack by biting and clawing the smaller bear. The fight was finished in little more than two minutes. However, the male bear continued to pull the carcass of the dead bear around the cage with his teeth before throwing her into the pool in the middle of the pen.

Despite the fact that the fight was short lived, the loud growling drew picnickers from all over the park to the bear cage. The crowd stood transfixed as the park employees tried to remove the dead bear from the pond. They could not get the male bear back into the cave, so they had to carefully remove the female from the pond while holding the male bear at bay. The operation took two long, tense hours. The crowd outside the cage grew to huge proportions as word of the fight spread throughout the park and the town. The day that was billed as the biggest day ever at the Newell Park Zoo turned out to be the biggest disaster ever in the history of the zoo.

The reason for the fight was easily explained the following day. As taxidermist Joseph Williams removed the bear pelt, he discovered, to his and everyone else's surprise, that what had been sold to the zoo as a female bear was actually a small male bear. Zoologists explained that male and female bears seldom attack each other, but two male bears in a cage often will fight. The surviving male bear was kept in the cage through the remainder of the season and then was sold.

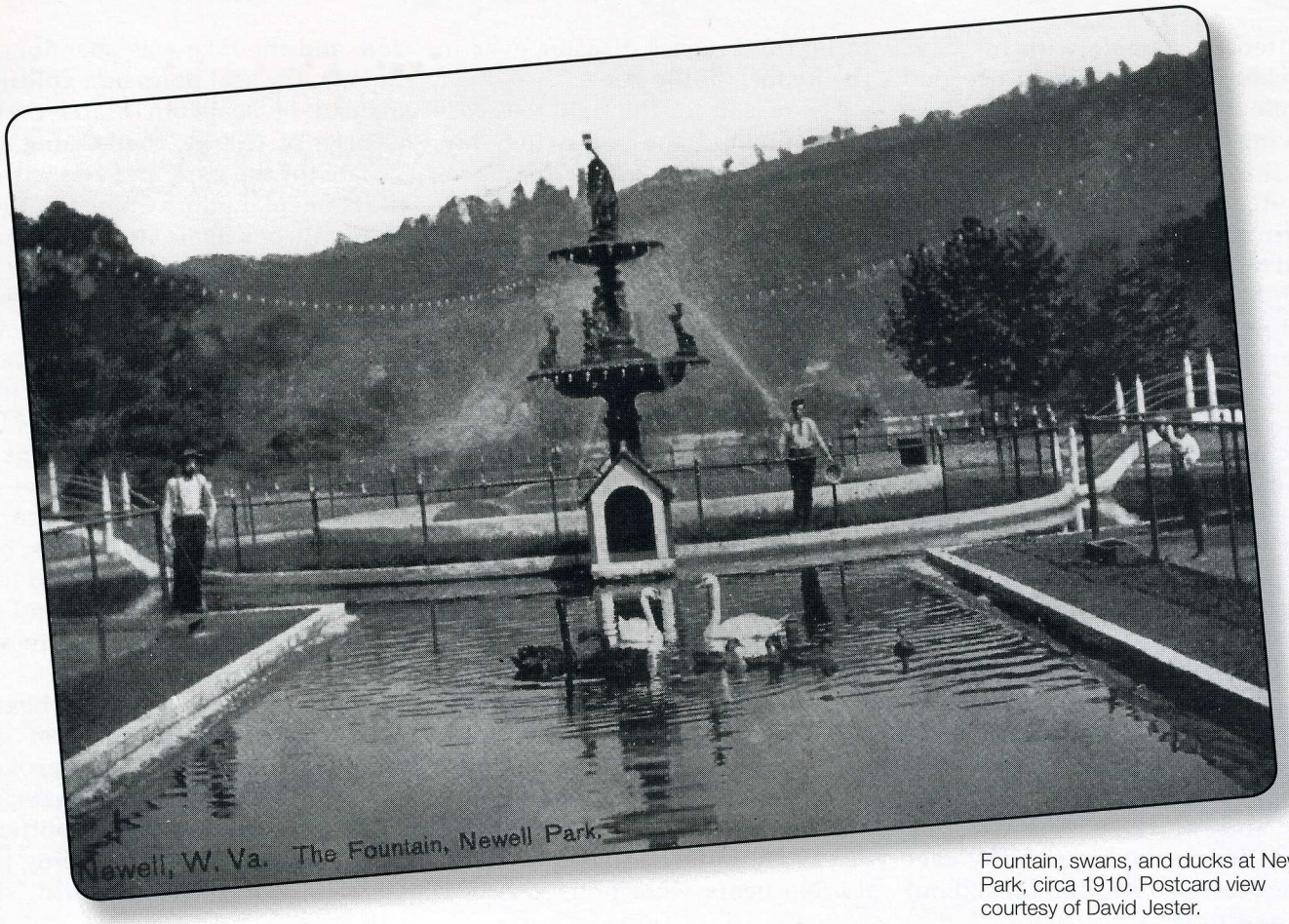
The park and zoo continued to operate through the end of the 1909 season, providing motion picture films and musical acts on Sunday evenings. The 1909 season concluded with the second annual potters' outing during the first week of September.

Laurel Hollow Park and Newell Park Zoo operated the 1910 season, but at a diminished level of activity. No bears were housed in the zoo, and the lake was abandoned. In 1911, the seal pond had goldfish instead of seals. In March 1913, George W Clarke, the leading advocate for the park and zoo within the Homer Laughlin Company, died suddenly of a heart attack while on a sales trip to Los Angeles.

"George Washington Clarke died in 1913, and there wasn't anybody at Homer Laughlin who had the interest to run the park, so it just went downhill," said Joe Wells III, the fourth-generation president of Homer Laughlin in a 2007 interview. For the next several years, people continued to picnic in the park, but the grounds received less and less care from Homer Laughlin and no more animals were housed in the zoo.

In 1920, Homer Laughlin began to fill in the valley nearest the river with broken dishes, broken molds, and other waste material from the manufacture of pottery. [See "Wall of China: Recalling the Greatest Dump in the World," by

A large crowd stood aghast as two polar bears fought a brief but fatal battle at the Newell Park Zoo on May 23, 1909. Photograph by J.H. Simms, courtesy of George Hines.



Fountain, swans, and ducks at Newell Park, circa 1910. Postcard view courtesy of David Jester.

Bob Barnett; Spring 1992.]

When my family moved to Newell in 1951, the town had 2,000 people and was still unincorporated. The seal pit, the bear cave, and some other stone structures left from the Newell Park Zoo were still visible, as was the tunnel built to carry the creek under the streetcar tracks. We climbed on the seal pool and barked, pretending to beg for fish. We explored the bear cave and double-dared each other to walk back on the creek through the 50 yards of cobwebs in the tunnel. We tried to picture what the park and zoo must have been like, but even with vivid imaginations it was difficult to visualize. We had heard vague stories about the park from adults, but never from anyone who had actually seen it in 1910. By the 1950's, the memories of Laurel Hollow and Newell Park Zoo in its glory were fading from memory.

Today, Laurel Hollow is making a comeback. On November 1, 2008, my wife, Liz, and I drove five hours from our home in Huntington to Newell for the dedication of a new Laurel Park. A number of Newell citizens formed the Newell Improvement Coalition, which, with the support from the Hancock County Commission, had cleared the underbrush from the east side of the former park area, built a bridge across the creek, and laid gravel paths that followed the creek for about ½ mile.

The dedication was held under a stand of maple trees brilliant with yellow fall leaves that reflected a golden glow from the setting sun on the crowd of 30 people who gathered for the ceremony. During the ceremony, the Wells family, on behalf of Homer Laughlin, gave the Coalition a 99-year lease on the hollow Jean Wells Ricks' husband, Victor "Pete" Ricks, spoke on behalf of the Wells family of the long relationship between the Wells family, the pottery, and the town of Newell.

We stood above the Laurel Hollow woods where I had played many times as a young boy. I looked down Washington Street to Newell's only stoplight, which was glowing red and green. The old Newell High School building, where I had gone to junior high and high school, was off to our right. Clarke Field, a baseball field and playground named in honor of George W Clarke, was behind us across Washington Street. The world's greatest dump, now mostly planted in grass, was also across Washington Street. On the other side of the dump in the distance was the castle-like building of the Homer Laughlin China Company Standing beside me was my childhood friend Susie McKenna Bebout. It was a classic Newell moment.

BOB BARNETT grew up in Hancock County. He taught sports history at Marshall University for 35 years, retiring in 1998. Bob has written for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Washington Post*, *Sports Heritage*, and the *Journal of Sports History*. His most recent GOLDENSEAL article appeared in our Spring 2005 issue.

More Newell Reading

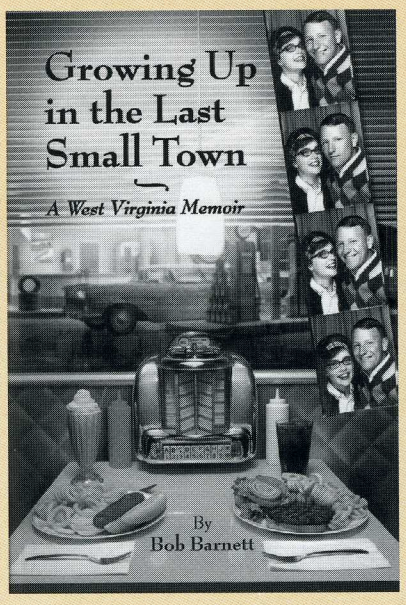
Born in Follansbee, Brooke County, author Bob Barnett came of age in Newell. In a new book titled, *Growing Up in the Last Small Town: A West Virginia Memoir*, he recounts the 12 years he and his family lived in this scruffy but endearing industrial community at the northern tip of Hancock County.

The Barnett family moved to Newell in 1951, when Bob was seven years old. A skilled writer, Bob deftly tells the story of Newell in its heyday alongside his own personal tale of childhood and adolescent small-town life. GOLDENSEAL readers might recognize amended versions of several of Bob's previous magazine articles, as well as one by his wife, Lysbeth. Several photographs from GOLDENSEAL also appear in the book.

Bob Barnett taught sports history at Marshall University for 30 years, so it comes as no surprise that much of this memoir is sports related. Other community activities, such as academic life, work, and entertainment are also included. Special attention is paid to high school dances and proms, and the important roles these rituals played in the world of Newell teens at that time.

Features that set this well-written memoir apart include Barnett's succinct and readable account of Newell's history and the town's intimate ties to the famous Homer Laughlin China Company and neighboring racetrack. Also welcome, and surprisingly unusual for this kind of book, is a detailed index of names, useful to Newell residents and relatives searching for family ties.

Growing Up in the Last Small Town is published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation; phone (606)326-1667, on-line at www.jsfbooks.com. The 255-page paperbound edition sells for $15, plus shipping.



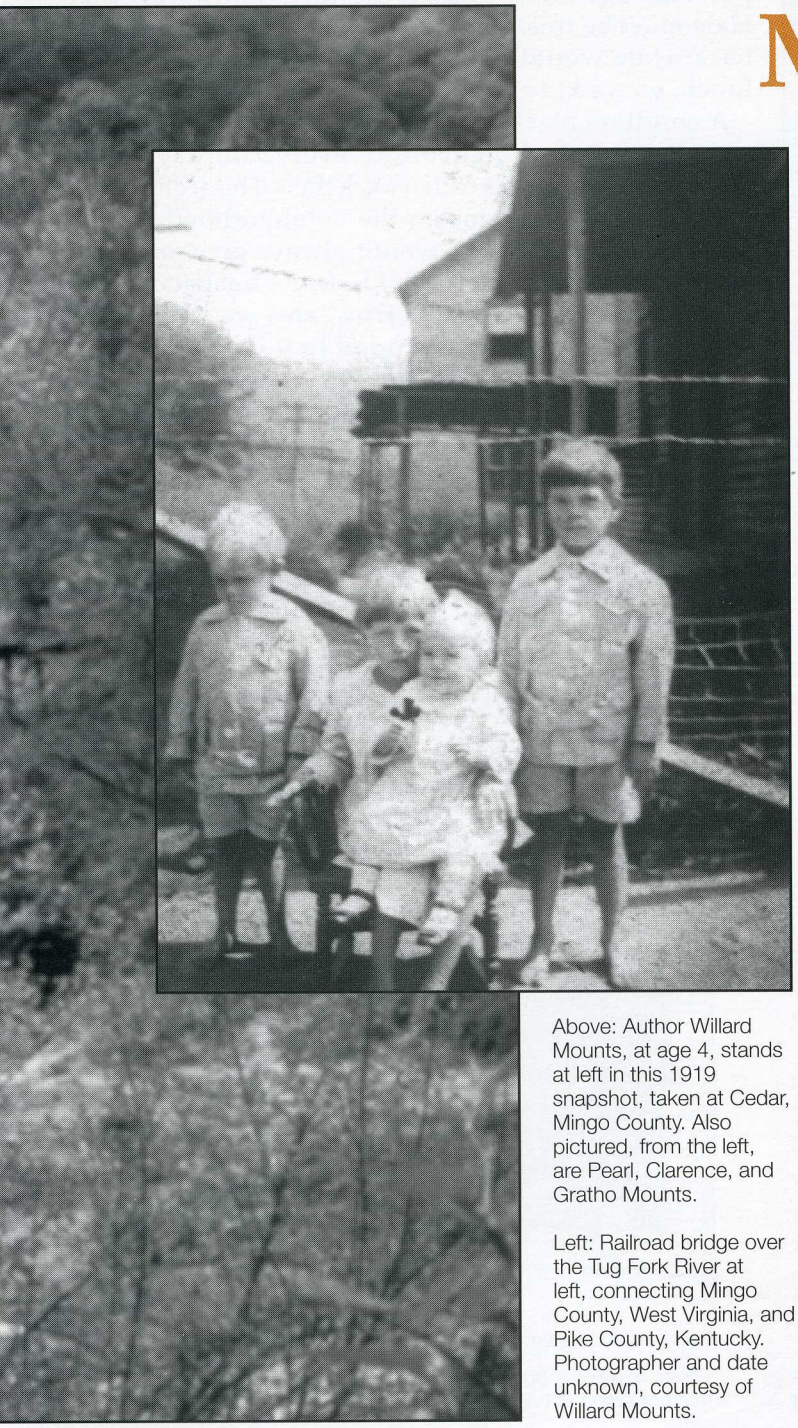
Visitors stroll through the renovated Laurel Hollow park at Newell in November 2008. Remnants of the old park fountain are visible at right. Photograph by Bob Barnett.

We Lived Railroad

By Willard Mounts

Along the Tracks

My Early Years in Mingo County



Above: Author Willard Mounts, at age 4, stands at left in this 1919 snapshot, taken at Cedar, Mingo County. Also pictured, from the left, are Pearl, Clarence, and Gratho Mounts.

Left: Railroad bridge over the Tug Fork River at left, connecting Mingo County, West Virginia, and Pike County, Kentucky. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Willard Mounts.

I was born March 30, 1915, in Cedar, Mingo County. My fifth-generation grandfather, David Cecil Mounts, had settled in Sand Siding in 1802. Before he could construct a log cabin or even a three-sided lean-to, my fourth-generation grandfather, Mitchell, was born in the hollow of a sycamore tree.

My father, Kimble Anderson Mounts, was born in Cedar in 1893. He started working in the coal mines as a trap door attendant at age 12, for 25 cents per day. In 1910, he married my mother, Margaret Nancy Marcum, when she was 16 years old and he was 17

At first they had just the bare minimum of furniture: a coal-burning cook stove, a bed, table, and two chairs. They soon learned the difference between "wants" and "needs." Even though Mom and Dad only went through the second grade, they raised a family of two girls and five boys. I was the third one in line.

We lived along the railroad tracks for the first 17 years of my life. The Hatfield-McCoy feud was just winding down about that time, and I happen to be part McCoy. That was during the times that the miners were trying to form labor unions along the Tug Fork River Valley, and many miners were killed throughout Mingo County.

The coal and passenger trains would go by our house about every half hour, and they created such a noise that all conversation stopped. We were so accustomed to the noise that it did not disturb our sleep at night. It was exciting to hear the whistles blow I do miss the sound of the old steam whistles and the smell of the white smoke that came out of the smokestacks.

Once, a very large steam engine stopped for a red signal light near our house. Dad and a few of us kids went to see it up close. The engineer came down to

Our author's parents, Kimball and Margaret Mounts, with Kimball, Jr., "Posey," in 1923.

the berm of the road and explained the engine. It was a Mallette engine manufactured in France, and it was brought to America during World War I. The largest locomotive built at that time, it could travel faster while pulling more loaded cars of coal than any other engine, which would help with the war effort.

At times, a few of us boys would go to a signal storage box and remove a torpedo, which was a round explosive, about the size of a silver dollar and about ¼-inch thick. We would break it into about four pieces and put them atop one of the rails. When a train would come by and the front wheel of the engine would run over the four pieces of torpedo, they would explode and make a loud noise. The train engineer would look at us kids and smile. He knew we were just having fun.

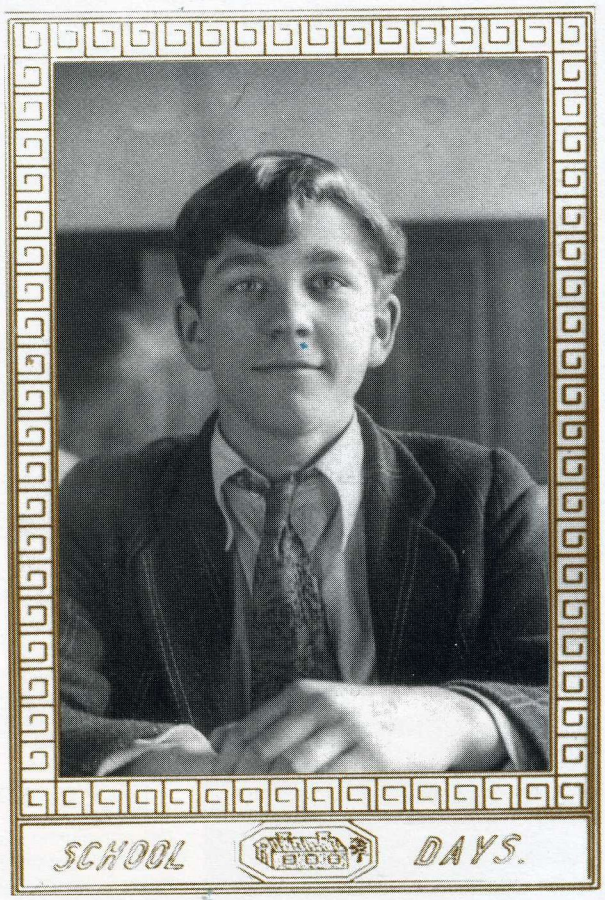
One of the craziest and most dangerous things that we boys did was to put a few grains of carbide into an empty carbide can, punch a hole near the bottom of the can, put a few drops of water in the can, and screw the lid on gently — not too tight. We would shake the can so the water would contact the grains of carbide and hold a lighted match near the hole. The gas from the carbide would explode, making a loud noise and blowing the lid into the air.

When I reached the age of seven, I started walking alongside the railroad tracks to school for the first time. If the weather was warm, we would stop at Wally Christians' and draw some water from his well to quench our thirst. If it was cold in the wintertime, we would stop at B. Vance's house to warm our hands and feet.

A young neighbor boy, Hale Neu, was living with his adopted parents. They treated Hale very badly. Once, his adopted mother threw a butcher knife at him. As he raised his hands to protect himself, the knife struck his hand and pinned him to the wall. Two nights later, three men dressed with white sheets over their heads knocked at Hale's door and spoke with his adopted parents. They told them in no uncertain terms that Hale must be treated with kindness or they would be back. Hale would usually come to school without a lunch, so we kids would share ours with him.

A childless black family lived next door to us. The wife, Sukey, baked "light bread" every Saturday. That's what white bread was called back then. The aroma from the yeast would permeate the neighborhood, and it smelled so good. Sukey would always give us kids a slice of the bread. Yum Yum! Sukey's husband made us a little wooden wheelbarrow, and we had lots of fun wheeling each other around in it.

When I was nine years old, our family moved two miles down the railroad to Vulcan. That is where the

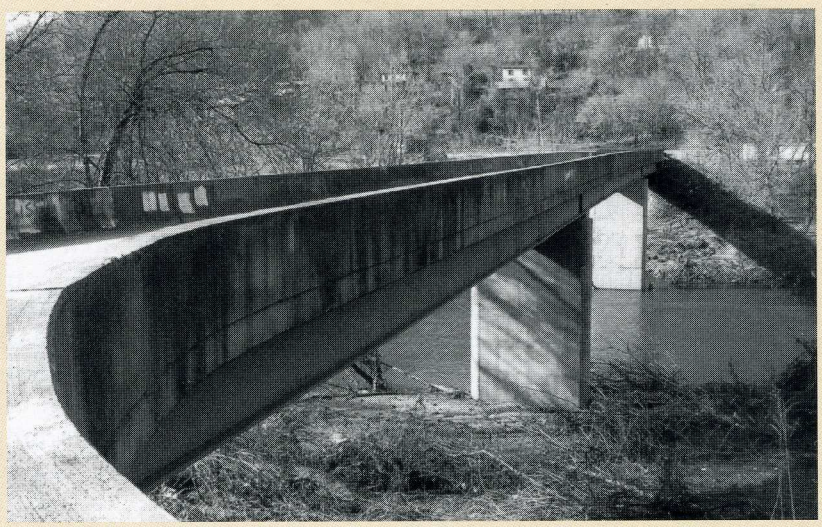


Willard Mounts at age 13, in 1928. He graduated from Magnolia High School in Matewan in 1934.

The Vulcan Bridge

In 1975, a dilapidated 67-year-old wooden footbridge collapsed into the Tug Fork River. This left the people of Vulcan, Mingo County, no easy way to cross over into Kentucky, where many of them worked in the mines, bought groceries, or patronized or owned small businesses.

Pleas to highway authorities in both Kentucky and West Virginia for a new bridge failed to bring immediate results, so Vulcan resident John Robinette took matters into his own hands. The 43-year-old former carnival barker, notary public, and self-appointed mayor began an ambitious phone-calling and letter-writing campaign, tapping every legal authority he could find to procure a new bridge. Exasperated, he wrote to the embassies of East Germany and the Soviet Union. No answer.



The Vulcan bridge as it appears today, looking across the Tug Fork River toward the West Virginia side. Photograph courtesy of Billy and Lisa Lester.

Undaunted, Robinette wrote directly to Russian leader Leonid Breznev. A letter from Mr. Breznev indicating that the Russians would consider building a bridge in Mingo County ignited an international flurry of interest, including inquiries from the New York Times, Associated Press, and ABC News. Iona Andronov, a Russian journalist, came to Vulcan to investigate. His Russian-language report was broadcast over the Voice of America, bringing worldwide attention to this tiny West Virginia community, at the height of the Cold War. Not all of it was welcome.

Governor Jay Rockefeller wrote Robinette an angry note saying, "West Virginia needs no more negative publicity, emphasizing the neglect and inconvenience our people must put up [with] in certain parts of the state."

In the end, John Robinette got his bridge without one Russian ruble being spent. West Virginia and Kentucky split the cost of the $1.7 million span, built 338 feet long and 14 feet wide by the Orders Construction Company of St. Albans. It was dedicated on July 4, 1980. John Robinette christened the bridge with a bottle of Russian vodka, Iona Andronov proposed a toast, and a juke box played rock music from the muddy banks of the Tug Fork River.

Russians helped us build a bridge across the Tug from Mingo County to Pike County, Kentucky. It was dedicated with a bottle of vodka July 4, 1980, as they cut the red ribbon.

When I was young, passenger trains stopped in Vulcan to take on coal and water. Each day, the porter, who asked to be called "Colored John," would get off the train and play with us kids. One day, he handed me a chunk of ice wrapped up in a newspaper. I quickly ran home to show it to my mom, since we seldom saw ice where we lived.

Every Monday, he would gather the funny papers from the train and give them to us kids. I still remember some of the funnies: Katzenjammer Kids, Joe Palooka, Daisy Mae, Li'l Abner, Skeezix, Little Orphan Annie, and Mutt & Jeff.

Mingo County is coal country. When a miner was killed in the mines, the foreman would sound an alarm. Most of the women and children would gather at the bottom of the incline, waiting for the body to be brought down on the conveyor. Most all were crying and wailing because none of us knew at that time if it was our father, son, or brother.

Once, when one of the fathers was killed in the mines, it left his family destitute. That was in the 1920's, before any kind of insurance, food stamps, or compensation was available. The superintendent, P.J Winn, allowed the family to remain in their company house, but they had no food to eat. When Colored John learned about their dire food situation, he started going through the dining car daily, gathering the food scraps, putting them in paper bags, and giving them to the destitute family. I hope to meet Colored John again someday in the Promised Land.

The nearest doctor to our house was several miles away, so Mom was our family doctor. Periodically, or in case of a complaint from a stomach ache, out came the castor oil, followed by a dose of calomel. That took care of our complaints, but it left us weak for a day or so. We really hated that stuff, but it did the job.

Mom did have another store-bought remedy called Castoria, which had a very pleasant taste. It was made from figs and sugar and was used just in case of a light complaint.

Each year, Mom planted a garden, where she raised most of our food. She would also pick fresh greens from the surrounding area, such as lady's slipper, dock, and young poke shoots, which she would mix with some mustard greens and beet tops from the garden, then steam them lightly and add a little vinegar. Boy, did they taste good!

In the fall, we would gather black walnuts, mulberries, apples, blackberries, and, just after the first frost, a few paw paws, that is if the skunks or 'possums didn't get them first.

Sometimes, Mom would catch a catfish, and were they good eatin'! A few times, she would catch a soft-shell turtle and make turtle soup. At times, when Mom was milking the cow, she would point a teat at our cat's mouth so it could have a treat. If we kids wanted a treat, she would squirt the milk into our mouths, as well. That was fun!

From our cows we had fresh milk, buttermilk, and we churned our own butter. During the wintertime, Mom would put the excess cream into a two-gallon crock and set it on the hearth beside the open fireplace. Within a few days, we would have clabbered milk to eat. And if we had a supply of brown sugar, we could have a small amount of that on our clabbered milk, as well. That was a real treat for us kids!

A couple of times, one of the cows was killed by a train. All was not lost, because Dad would skin the carcass and cut up the good meat. Then Mom would boil the meat and put it into glass jars, which she stored underneath the house.

During the winter Dad would butcher a hog. Mom also raised chickens, and once in a while we would have chicken and dumplings for dinner or fried chicken. Periodically, Mom would catch a catfish or Dad would catch bullfrogs. Pork from the hog, red meat from the cow, chicken, fish, and frog legs was our total meat supply. We never bought meat from the store.

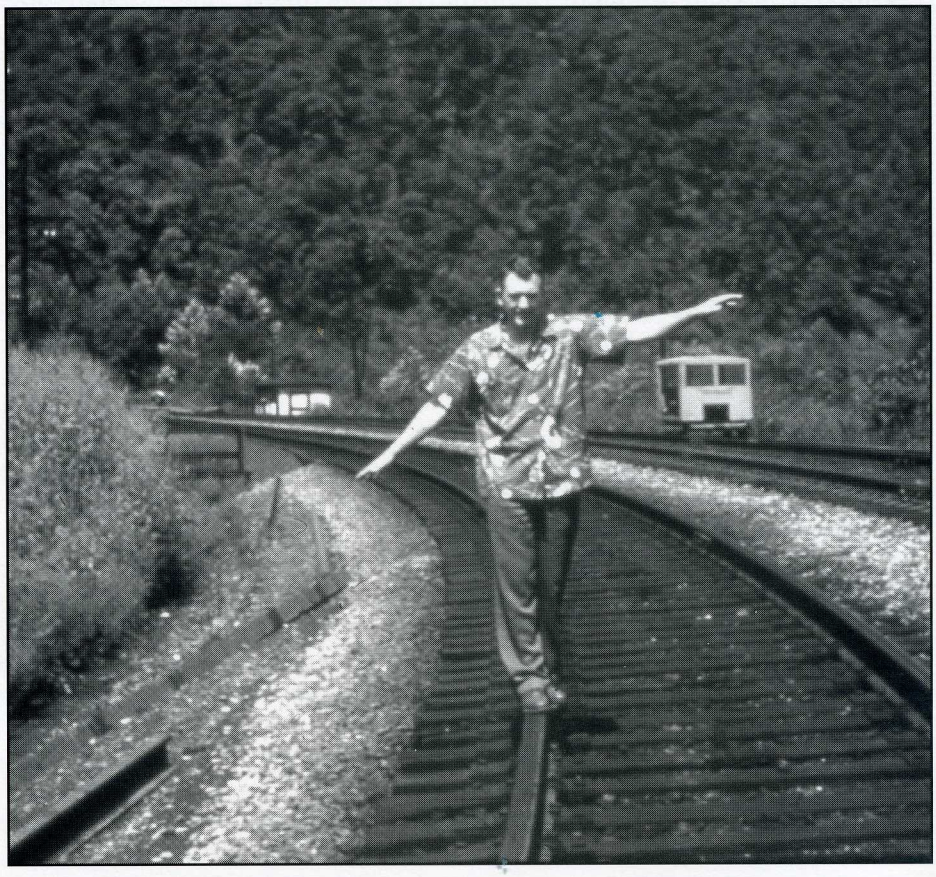
About once a year, everyone would gather at the one-room schoolhouse for a box supper, a cake walk, and cake guessing. The men would guess what article was hidden inside the cake. After that, we would play games, such as passing the thimble or musical chairs.

At Christmastime, all the families living along the railroad track would gather at the schoolhouse at Stafford for a Christmas celebration. We decorated the only tree with strings of popcorn and lighted candles. It's a wonder we didn't burn down the house. In our family, the two girls usually received a Raggedy Ann doll, and the four boys would get a cap pistol, so we could play cowboys and Indians. If we were really lucky, we would receive an orange.

Mom had a foot-peddled Singer sewing machine, which she used to make or mend our clothes. At times, she would use flour sack material in mending our clothes. The last time that I saw that sewing machine was in 1975, when I visited my folks on Mother's Day.

Those days are now gone, as are my parents and most all of the people I grew up with along the tracks in Mingo County. All that remain are my recollections and a few souvenirs. The family heirlooms that I have are my grandfather Alex's shoemaker's last, one of Dad's Bibles, his sheriff patch, pocket watch, and a statue of Jesus that I gave to Mom many years before.

WILLARD MOUNTS, age 95, is a native of Mingo County. A 1934 graduate of Magnolia High School in Matewan, he received a degree in business management from Mountain State Business College in 1936. Willard worked for Luby Chevrolet in Denver for 21 years, and later retired as business manager from Jack Kent's Cadillac dealership in 1980. Author of two books, Willard now lives in Colorado. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Now living in Colorado, Willard Mounts was home for a visit in the 1970's when an unidentified photographer took this shot of him balancing on the rails near his old homeplace in Mingo County.

Grandma's First TV Show

By Phoebe Whittaker

Daddy surprised us, bringing home our first TV set in 1958. Now I could watch TV like my friends. At age seven, I became a spot on the rug in front of the TV. Variety shows, game shows, whatever was on when I came home from school, I watched. Then school was out.

Author Phoebe Braun (Whittaker) sits at right. Grandparents Pricy and Isaac Smith are at left in this 1954 snapshot taken in Jackson County. Photographer unknown.

Normally, I would have been excited about staying with Grandma Pricy and Grandpa Isaac Judson Smith a few weeks of the summer. But they lived on a farm in Jackson County, a few miles from Evans, out the ridge from Foster Chapel Church. Needless to say, they had no TV.

So, there I sat, playing with sticks in the dirt. I watched as Grandma hoed the garden, pulled weeds from flower beds, fed the chickens, picked beans, and pulled ears from the corn stalks. About midmorning, I helped carry buckets of water to fill up the wringer washing machine and rinse tubs. She washed and hung the clothes out on lines to dry. I got to empty the water, pouring out buckets full, and playing in the mud.

Grandma cleaned me up and sent me to get kindling to start the fire in the wood-burning kitchen stove. She fired up the stove and got out the flour, eggs, and all the good things that go into a homemade cake. She nestled the big blue bowl on her hip and whipped the batter with a big wooden spoon. I helped count 300 whips. The hot stove and the summer heat made the kitchen seem to be a huge oven. Every time Grandma wiped her face with her apron, a few more wisps of her long, gray hair would fall from her braids. When she caught me watching her, she would smile, then turn back to the task at hand, her face full of purpose.

After dinner, Grandma washed the dishes, pots, and cast-iron skillet. She cleaned the table, and the worn linoleum floor had to be swept, too.

It was dark by the time we sat together in the living room. The farmhouse was small, and the living room had just enough space to maneuver comfortably between the potbelly stove and furniture. Grandpa sat and smoked his pipe. Grandma sighed as she sat down, then reached for her sewing basket.

I looked around. The only thing to watch were the canaries as they flitted about their cages, chirping. Hmmm. Time for Grandma to watch some TV, I thought. I climbed on the stair steps at the side of the room that led to the attic.

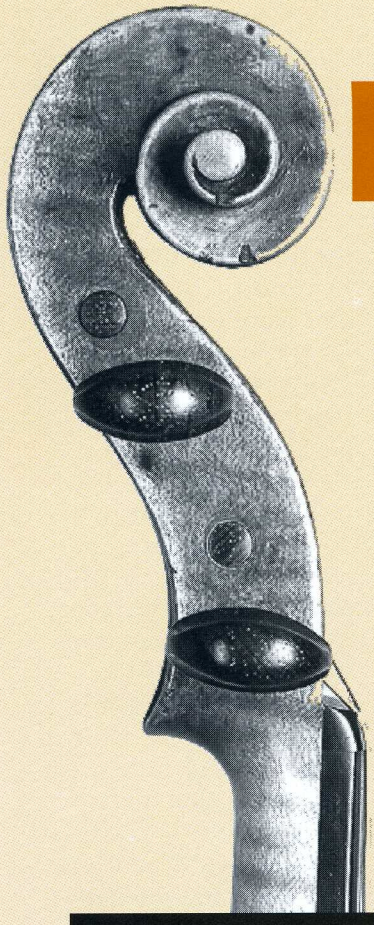
"Ladies and gentlemen," I began. They looked up. "I want to welcome you to tonight's show on WRLFZQX, the only station to broadcast the *Ed Sullivan Show* live in all of Jackson County." They chuckled.

I was the announcer and all the guests (including Elvis, playing his guitar), and did all the commercials, bringing down the house when I leapt from the stairs, picked up a box of "Pricy Smith's" own espes-shul-ly fine and really rare mix of bird seed, gathered from down in Long Holler and along the banks of Five Mile Creek, guar-run-teed to not only make canaries sing, but chickens, too!

Never had I seen or heard Grandma laugh so hard. Grandpa laughed too, but Grandma almost came out of her chair. Her face was beet red, and tears rolled down her cheeks. She rocked back and forth, at times smacking her thighs, throwing her head back, and almost hooting. She could just catch her breath before a new cascade of chuckling burst forth. Shaking with mirth, she held her sides as if trying to keep the rippling laughter from splitting her wide open. The more she laughed, the more I "entertained."

She had quite a story to tell Mother and Daddy when they came. For days, it seemed every time she looked at me, she would chuckle and shake her head, her eyes twinkling. I don't remember if we "watched TV" more than once, but I will never forget that night and Grandma's first TV show.

PHOEBE WHITTAKER was born in Parkersburg, grew up in Belpre, Ohio, and currently resides in Florida. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



n the Trail of the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers

By Bill Archer

Mingo County's Lonesome Pine Fiddlers didn't invent bluegrass music. But for nearly three decades, they played and sang with the best of them, introducing thousands of listeners to their exciting sound and launching the careers of some of the style's biggest stars.

Ezra Cline posed for this family snapshot in 1949 at Bluefield. Daughter Patsy is at left, wife Margaret is at center, and son Scotty is at right.

Bass player Ezra Cline was the oldest member of the musically talented Cline family. Born on Gilbert Creek, January 13, 1907, he died on July 11, 1984, "within 100 feet of where he was born," according to his son, Scotty Ireland Cline. Banjo picker Ireland "Lazy Ned" Cline was born on May 3, 1921, also on Gilbert Creek. Ireland's brother, fiddler Ray "Curly Ray" Cline, was born on Gilbert Creek on January 10, 1923.

The three cousins were all fifth-generation grandsons of Nicholas and Mary Cline who, with their son Peter Cline, emigrated from Germany in about 1767. Peter Creek in Pike County, Kentucky, is reportedly named for Peter Cline. The three young musicians, along with a local guitarist named Zeke Stepp, earned a measure of popularity along Gilbert Creek and the surrounding area in the late 1930's. From the start, they performed as the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers.

Left: The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers, led by Mingo County native Ezra Cline, were one of the most influential bluegrass bands in the country. Pictured here are Mercer County natives Melvin and Ray Goins on guitar and banjo, respectively; fiddler Ray "Curly Ray" Cline, kneeling at left; and Ezra Cline, kneeling at right; in Pikeville, Kentucky, in the mid-1950's. Photographs courtesy of Scotty Cline unless otherwise noted.

"That was a group of people who really enjoyed themselves," Lucille (Cline) Phelps of Iaeger, McDowell County, says of her childhood friends from Gilbert Creek. "My uncle Orville Cline had a little theater at the head of Gilbert Creek, where we all grew up. My dad was a cousin to Curly Ray. We all knew each other really well."

Phelps, now 73, attended school with Curly Ray Cline. "I can still recall that little school up on Gilbert Creek where we all went," she says. "I grew up right around the curve from the Cline boys. They were good people and good musicians. They loved to perform at that old theater on Gilbert Creek."

Like most able-bodied young men in the coalfields, Ezra and Curly Ray went to work in the mines. "They worked almost 15 years in the mines around Gilbert Creek in Mingo County," Scotty Cline says. "They played music, but they [also] worked in the mines."

In 1938, the trio of Cline boys left the mines of Mingo County and headed off to Bluefield to pursue careers in music and a shot at performing live over radio station WHIS. [See "Country Radio: The Early Days of WHIS, Bluefield," by Garrett Mathews; Fall 1984.]

There they met talented radio announcer Ordon L. "Gordon" Jennings of Maybeury, McDowell County. Jennings was an accom-

plished guitar picker with a melodious singing voice. He had a smooth and confident vulnerability about him that translated well through the radio airways, as evidenced by the many fans who enjoyed listening to him on the radio and, later, seeing him on television.

"Gordon was just Gordon," says retired WHIS radio and television entertainer Don Whitt. "He did not try to be anyone else. He did not try to razz-a-ma-tazz you. He just had a common, ordinary, everyday voice that people really related to. His listeners thought of him as their friend. Back then if you were on the radio, people invited you into their homes everyday for as long as you were on [the] air. He never changed. He always let his fans know how much he appreciated them."

Jennings was already a popular local radio announcer and musician by the time the Clines arrived in Bluefield to audition for one of the live music slots on the WHIS radio line-up. The Mingo County cousins had a very special and unique sound, and Jennings noticed. Joining "Cousin" Ezra Cline playing bass fiddle, Ireland "Lazy Ned" Cline on banjo, and "Curly" Ray Cline on fiddle, Jennings tied the sound together with his guitar and vocals. The Cline cousins and Gordon Jennings made a solid musical connection.

"My dad was a showman," Scotty Cline says of his father. "Back then, they had to work on radio to get their names out in the public, but that didn't pay too much. [So] they had to improvise and come up with ways to keep the band going."

The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers developed some interesting methods to cash in on their radio popularity. According to Scotty Cline, the band fabricated a stage on a flatbed trailer and brought it with them to various coalfield communities. They would arrive in town early in the day, put up posters and playbills on utility poles announcing the time and location of the concert, and hope a crowd would show up.

"Dad called them 'candy shows,'" Scotty says. "He bought cases of gummy candy that came in boxes about the size of a Cracker Jacks box. Dad would buy a $7 watch and stuff a certificate for the watch in one of the boxes.

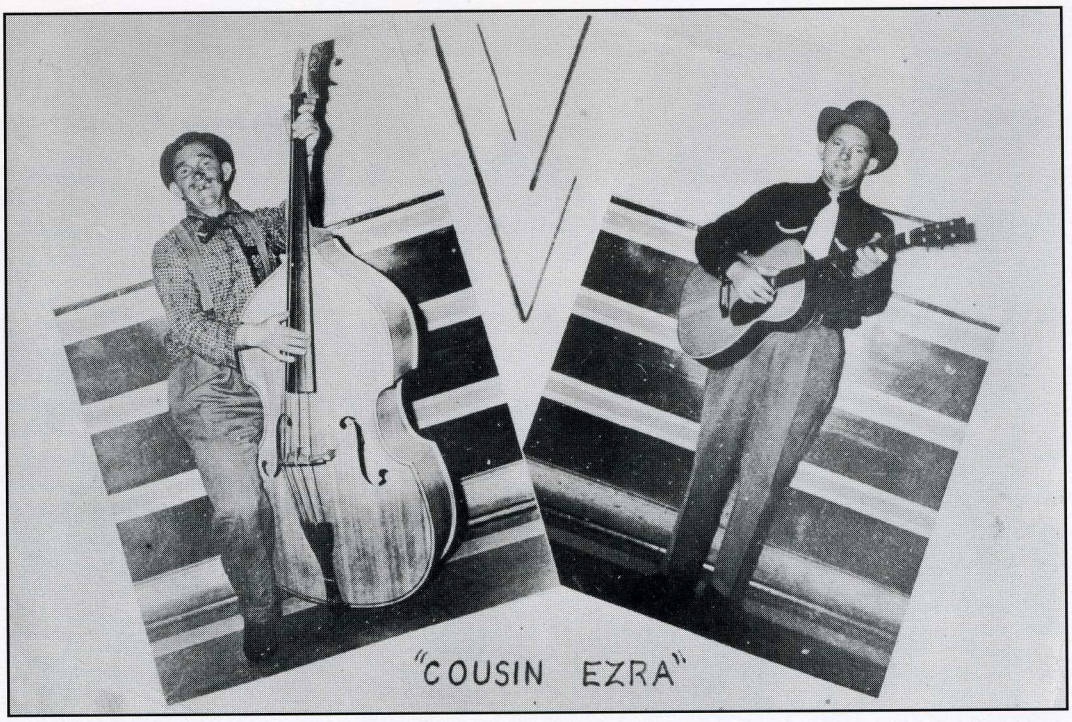
"The show would start at whatever time it was supposed to start. When they took their first break, the fellows in the band would go out among the crowd, selling boxes of candy for a quarter a box. All the while, Dad would be explaining that there is a certificate in one of the boxes for a brand new wristwatch," Scotty Cline says.

Scotty says his late father fondly

Leaving Gilbert Creek in 1938, the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers moved to Bluefield, where they found work on radio station WHIS. Pictured here in the WHIS studios in 1941 are, from the left, Gordon Jennings, Ireland "Crazy Ned" Cline, unidentified announcer, Curly Ray Cline, and Ezra Cline.

remembered the candy shows as being successful, although none of the performers got rich from them. "I asked Melvin Goins what they got paid for those shows, and he told me that the musicians got $5 each, except for Curly Ray who got $8," Scotty adds.

Even the name, Lonesome Pine Fiddlers, was likely a well-calculated marketing ploy John Fox, Jr, authored a romance novel in 1906 titled, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. The book is set in the Appalachian Mountain region of southwest Virginia and enjoyed national and regional popularity. It was adapted to stage and was produced as a silent movie in 1916 by Cecil B. DeMille. A popular 1936 big-screen version — the first to use the Technicolor process in outdoor filmmaking — starred Henry Fonda, Fred McMurray, and Sylvia Sidney. The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers came along soon thereafter.



"Cousin Ezra" Cline was a dedicated showman and a savvy businessman. This undated composite promotional photograph shows him at left in his role as bass player and comedian. He was also a respected musician and bandleader, as the righthand photograph indicates.

The early times with Gordon Jennings and the three Cline cousins lasted until the U.S. entered World War II. Ireland Cline joined the U.S. Army and was killed in action during the Normandy invasion of June 1944. The family took his death hard, according to Scotty Cline.

"I was named for Ireland," he says with pride. "My middle name is Ireland."

Gordon Jennings left Bluefield during the war years and joined another band, the Carson Cowboys, based in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. By this time, Ezra and his wife, Margaret, had started a family. Ezra and Curly Ray held onto their radio job in Bluefield, performing four 15-minute shows daily on WHIS radio, still commuting from their Gilbert Creek home. In 1949, Ezra and Margaret, with son Scotty and daughter Patsy, moved to an apartment in Bluefield, less than a block away from the WHIS radio studio.

The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers developed some interesting methods to cash in on their radio popularity.

In his on-going efforts to make a living as an entertainer, Ezra Cline promoted country music shows featuring big-name performers at a variety of venues, including the Mercer County 4-H Camp at Glenwood Park. "Dad would bring groups like the Sons of the Pioneers and even Little Jimmy Dickens to Glenwood Park to perform," Scotty Cline recalls.

When the band reorganized following Ireland's death and Jennings' departure, it was called Cousin Ezra Cline and the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers. At that point, the band included Ezra and Curly Ray, along with another of Curly's brothers, Charles Cline, a banjo picker who could play any instrument and play them all well. Charles Cline was born on Gilbert Creek on June 6, 1931, and passed away on November 20, 2004, in Jasper, Alabama.

While the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers were doing fairly well, bluegrass music in general was gaining acceptance among a growing fan base, and experienced, talented pickers were in great demand. Curly Ray and Charles were hot commodities in the world of established, working bluegrass bands; Charles got a job with Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys, and Curly Ray joined the Stanley Brothers for a time. He returned to the Fiddlers in the early 1950's.

In the music business, however, when one door closes, another one is sure to open soon. Cousin Ezra Cline hired a pair of southwestern Ohio pickers, Bob Osborne on guitar and Larry Richardson on banjo, in 1949 Ray Morgan of Bluefield joined in on fiddle. The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers didn't miss a beat.

Over their 30-year history, the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers helped to launch the careers of several important bluegrass musicians and singers. Bob Osborne, shown here with guitar, later recorded "Rocky Top" and other favorites as a member of the popular Osborne Brothers band. He also married Ezra and Margaret Cline's daughter, Patsy. Also pictured are fiddler Ray Morgan, banjo player Larry Richardson, and Ezra Cline, in Bluefield, 1949.

In 1950, the group recorded what proved to be one of their most enduring numbers titled, "Pain in My Heart," for the West Virginia-based Cozy label, reissued the following year by Coral Records. From 1952 until 1954, they recorded nearly two dozen titles for RCA Victor, including "Lonesome Pine Breakdown," "No Curb Service," and "Windy Mountain." They recorded another 10 singles and four LP's for Starday during the early 1960's.

Bob Osborne would leave the Fiddlers in the early 1950's, but not before winning the heart of Ezra and Margaret's daughter, Patsy, and taking her for his bride. Bob Osborne, with his brother Sonny and Red Allen, went on to establish the Osborne Brothers, one of the most popular and influential acts in bluegrass music.

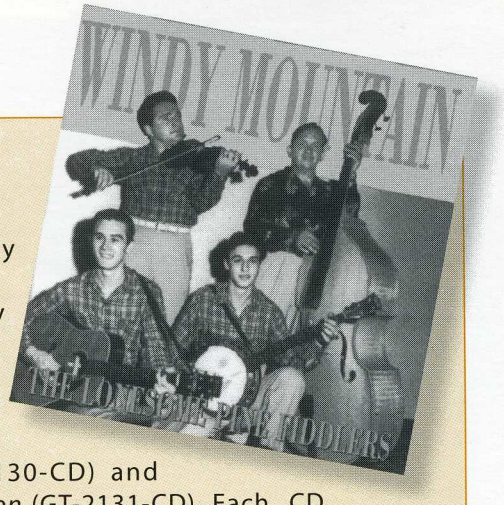
"I would get so hungry that my large intestines were trying to eat the little ones."

When Osborne and Richardson moved on, Ezra turned to musically fertile Mercer County and hired a promising young banjo picker from Freeman named Ray Goins, along with singer and guitarist Paul Williams. This group's 1953 recording of "Dirty Dishes Blues" became the Fiddlers' biggest record.

In the early 1950's, Cousin Ezra moved the group's base of operations to Oak Hill. From there, they went to Detroit, Michigan, where they worked with the popular Davis Sisters. One of the pair, Skeeter Davis (Mary Frances Penick), went on to solo stardom following the 1953 death of her singing partner, Betty Jack Davis. The Fiddlers soon relocated to eastern Kentucky.

In 1954, Ezra hired Ray's older brother, Melvin Goins, to play guitar. The Goins family remains one

Listen to the Music



Though the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers disbanded in about 1963, much of their recorded output remains in print. Bear Family records has collected the Fiddlers' four original tracks for Cozy Records and their 22 sides for RCA Victor, all cut between 1950 and '54, and issued them on one CD. *Windy Mountain* (BCD-16351-CD) features the band during its heyday. It includes core members Ezra, Curly Ray, and Charlie Cline, as well as appearances by Bob Osborne, Larry Richardson, Paul Williams, Melvin Goins, Ray Goins, Charles Parker, Albert Punturi, Ray Morgan, James Roberts, and James Carson. Arranged chronologically, this is considered an essential collection for those interested in bluegrass music history. Highlights include "Windy Mountain,""Pain In My Heart,""My Brown-Eyed Darling," and "Dirty Dishes Blues."

The group's early 1960's sessions for Starday are also available on two CD's: *Starday Collection* (GT-2130-CD) and *Bluegrass Collection* (GT-2131-CD). Each CD contains 14 songs.

All three of these recordings are available through County Sales of Floyd, Virginia. *Windy Mountain* sells for $17, while the two Starday collections cost $11 each. For more information, visit www.countysales.com or phone (540)745-2001.

of Mercer County's most valued musical treasures.

"Ezra hired me to play guitar with him when they got the job on WLSI radio in Pikeville, Kentucky," Melvin Goins recalls. "I wanted to play music, but I never thought anything would ever come of it. There wasn't a lot of money in it. When I came to Pikeville with Ezra, Ray and I were making $10 to $12 per night. But that was only one night a week — Saturday night.

"We were living at the Drake Hotel in Bluefield," Melvin continues. "We cooked all of our food on a little hot plate at the time, but that was okay. Loretta Lynn was eatin' baloney sandwiches up in Butcher Hollow back then, too."

The Fiddlers performed for regular dances and other venues throughout the coalfields, playing four or five nights a week, in addition to performing daily on WLSI radio in Pikeville. They also had a live television show in Huntington for a time.

The Goins Brothers eventually went their own way while Curly Ray and Ezra Cline continued performing in the Pikeville area. Charles Cline and his wife, Lee, joined the band in the early 1960's. "They experimented with using electrical instruments on the television show in Huntington," Scotty Cline says. Other bluegrass groups experimented with amplified instruments for a short time, as well, including the Osborne Brothers and Earl Scruggs' group. They soon went back to their roots using just pure, non-amplified instruments. "It just wasn't bluegrass," Scotty adds.

During the early 1960's, a list of talented musicians joined the group at one time or another. They included Jimmy Martin, a longtime member of the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame. Southern West Virginia favorites Rex and Eleanor Parker of Bluefield performed with the Fiddlers, as did Billy

Fiddler Curly Ray Cline in Parkersburg in 1979 as a member of Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys band. Photograph by Kim Johnson.

Ezra, Ray, and Charlie Cline, left to right, with guitarist and singer Woodrow Wilson "Sagebrush Slim" Wofford in Bluefield in the mid-1940's.

Edwards, Udell McPeak, James (Carson) Roberts, and Albert Punturi, who married Ezra's sister.

Settling in eastern Kentucky in the mid-1960's, Ezra bought a restaurant in Pikeville — Cousin Ezra's Restaurant — located between a motel and the city's public swimming pool. Scotty Cline, now living in Paris, Kentucky, laments the fact that he didn't pay too much attention to the people who visited with his dad at the restaurant.

"Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, the Stanley Brothers, Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys — all the big-time bluegrass groups of the time stopped at Dad's restaurant and visited for a while," Scotty says. "Looking back, I wish I would have paid closer attention."

At this same time, Curly Ray Cline began a second musical career as fiddler for Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, with whom he performed and recorded for 26 years. When Curly Ray died on August 19, 1997, Ralph Stanley sang a song at his funeral.

Over the past few years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers. Former member Melvin Goins, still active with bluegrass music, never fails to mention his early years with the Fiddlers and remembers traveling with the band and his late brother, Ray.

The group became a springboard for the careers of many aspiring young bluegrass artists, and their influence continues to reverberate through the bluegrass music world today.

"It was unreal what you would go through out here," Melvin recalls. "If water wasn't free, I wouldn't have anything to drink." He related a story about how one of his fellow musicians found a can of potted meat, and that was the only thing the two men had to eat that day. "I would get so hungry that my large intestines were trying to eat the little ones," Goins says.

The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) realized that the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers hold a very special place in bluegrass music and started the process of inducting the group into the IBMA Hall of Fame. The IBMA contacted the last three surviving members of the group — Melvin Goins, Bob Osborne, and Paul Williams — and brought them to Nashville's Ryman Auditorium on October 1, 2009, where they were inducted into the IBMA Hall of Fame for their work as members of the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers. "This came as a total surprise to me," Goins says.

The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers entertained audiences throughout the mountains for a little less than three decades. The group became a springboard for the careers of many aspiring young bluegrass artists, and their influence continues to reverberate through the bluegrass music world today. While the group might have missed out on the fame and notoriety that some bluegrass groups might have achieved, the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers' true legacy can be found in the honesty of the art form that Cousin Ezra and his Fiddlers strived to preserve.

BILL ARCHER, senior editor of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, is a graduate of West Virginia University and the author of seven pictorial histories of southern West Virginia. His most recent GOLDENSEAL contribution appeared in our Summer 2009 issue.

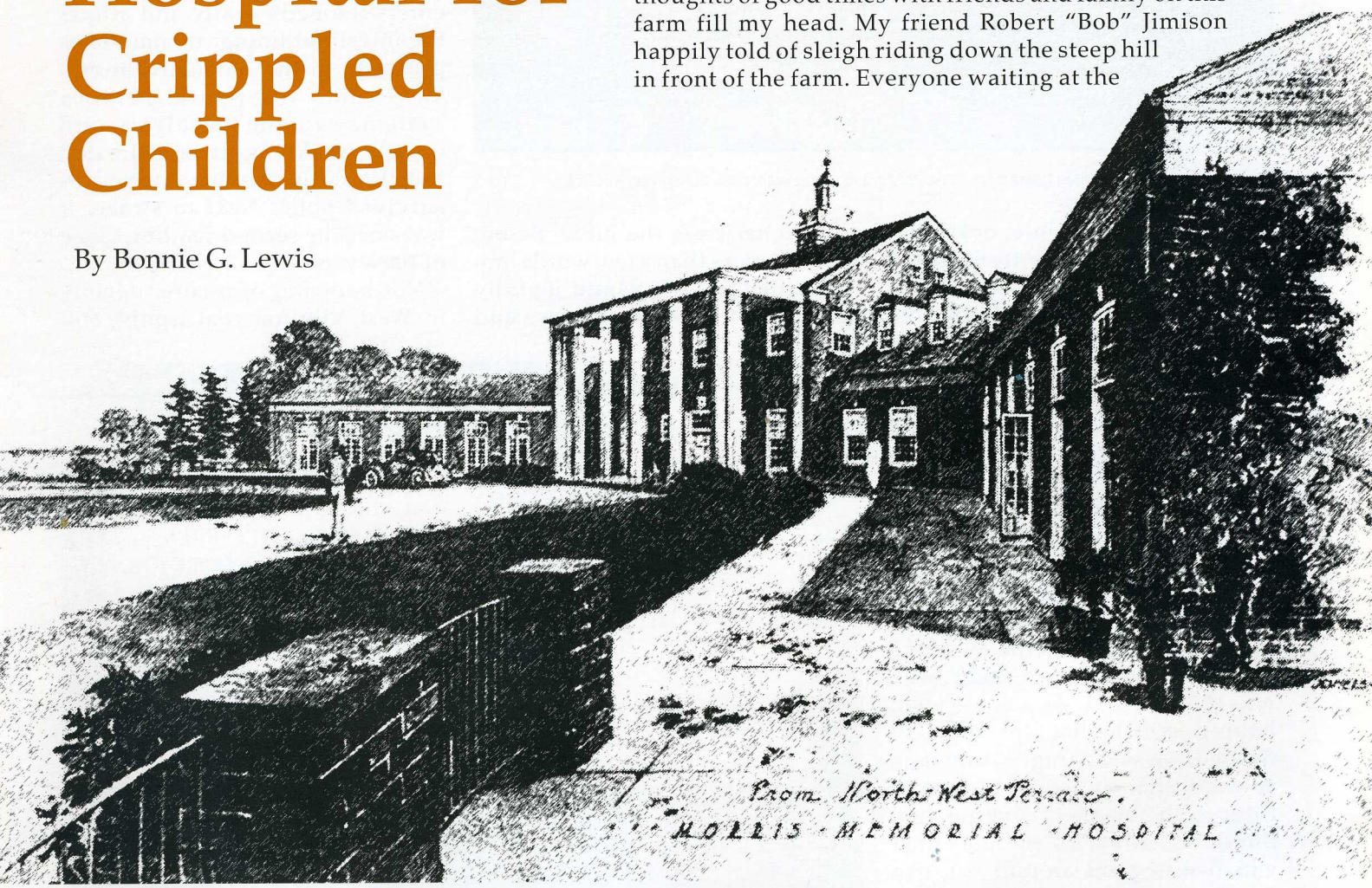
A Haven of Rest

Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children

By Bonnie G. Lewis

Atop a rolling hillside in Cabell County stands a beautiful, rambling sandstone building, referred to by local folks as simply "Morris Memorial." It stands on James River Turnpike just off U.S. Route 60, east of the city of Milton. This property has always been a source of pride for area residents, and most of us have memories connected to what for many years was Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children. When the building was no longer needed in the fight against polio, John and Rose Greene opened Morris Memorial Convalescent and Nursing Home at this location.

I like to drive to that area often. As I travel the little ribbon-in-the-wind road approaching the infirmary, thoughts of good times with friends and family on this farm fill my head. My friend Robert "Bob" Jimison happily told of sleigh riding down the steep hill in front of the farm. Everyone waiting at the



Postcard view of Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, located just east of Milton, Cabell County. Date unknown.

Nurse Jean Irving and polio patient Lydia Armstrong go for a walk on a sunny day in 1956.

bottom was loaded into, or tied to, his Volkswagen to be transported back up the hill. He boasted that his VW would climb a telephone pole if the pole had snow on it!

I smile to myself, remembering my own kids' excitement as they beheld the "largest horse in the world" at a community gathering held at the farm's barn. I also recall their hesitation, then pleasure, as they tried made-on-the-spot, still warm, molasses for the first time.

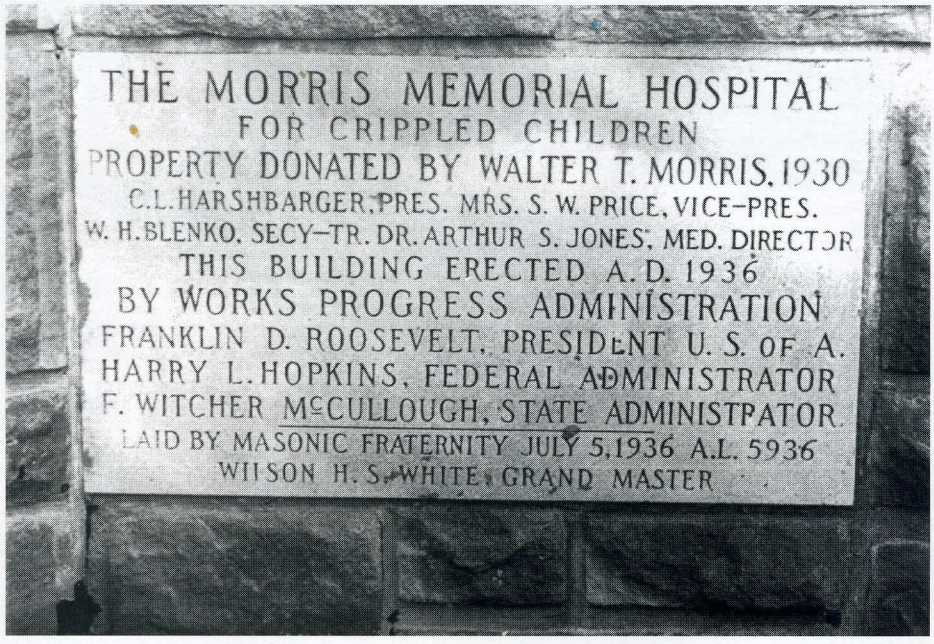
One Sunday afternoon, when Morris Memorial served as a nursing home, we entered the room of a little lady by the name of Sadie, who was 103 years old. We went to visit, hoping to make her feel better. In the bed, we saw a fragile, tiny lady so small that she scarcely made a ridge in the blankets covering her. Blind, she chose to see only that which was good around her. She asked us to choose scriptures to read to her from the Bible. Before we were more than a few words into the sentences, she would joyfully quote from memory for us, and became so happy that she would burst into song. I was the one who felt better when I left!

Over the last 50 years, many in Milton have had similar experiences. However, a wealth of memories remain with older folks, those who were involved in the day-to-day operation of the facility when the shelter still operated as Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children.

Although children were disabled from various diseases and accidents, polio was the greatest concern in the early 20th century. My introduction to polio and the aftereffects of the disease came in high school. Tom Kennedy, one of Hurricane High School's finest basketball players, had an arm that showed he had experienced so-called "infantile paralysis" firsthand.

Polio *(poliomyelitis)* is a virus that enters the body orally and affects the intestinal lining. It sometimes proceeds to the bloodstream and moves into the central nervous system, causing paralysis and muscle weakness. It is estimated that 1.6 million living Americans survived polio. Next to stroke, it was once the second-leading cause of paralysis.

Not knowing of a cure, doctors in West Virginia coal camps and



WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES

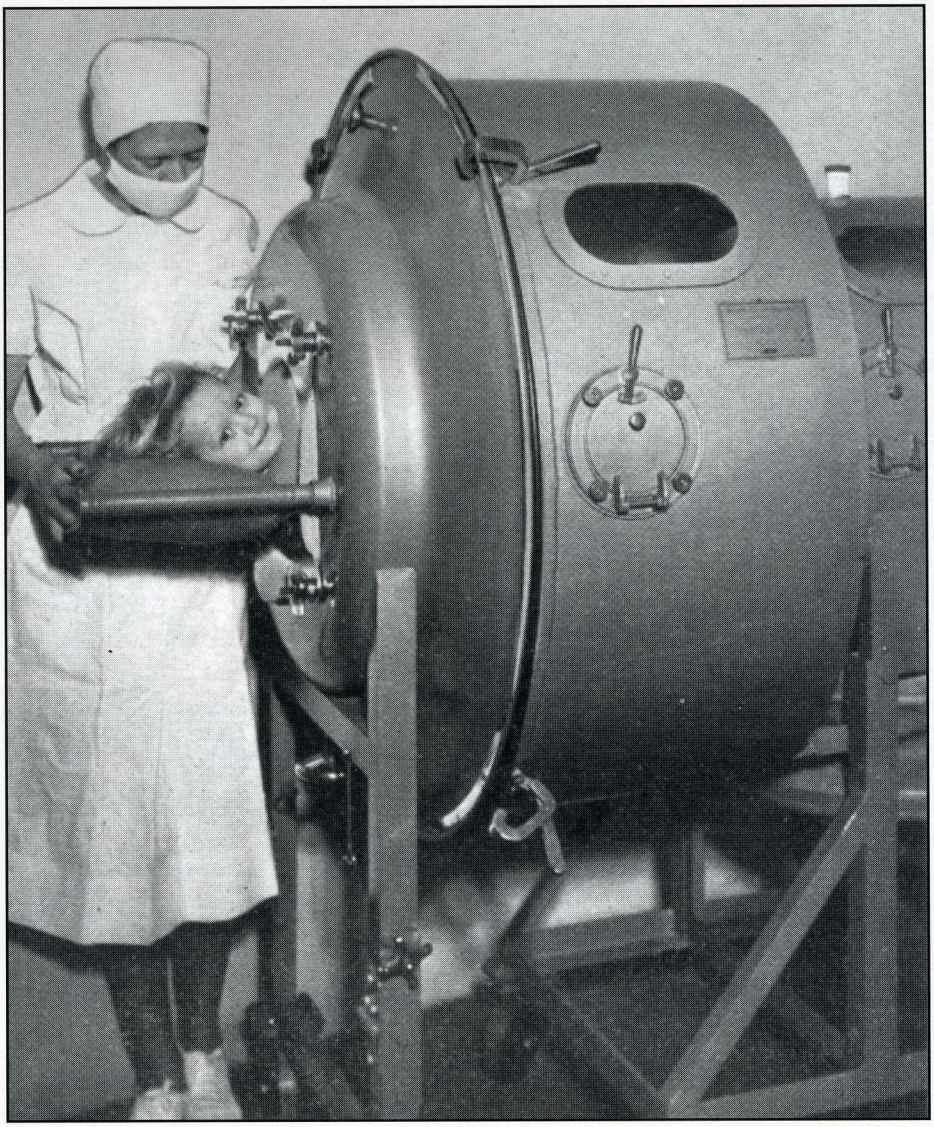
other areas where polio was rapidly becoming a common word helplessly but hopefully instructed mothers to make asphidity bags. Usually the bags were made using stockings to fill with onions, garlic, and other foul-smelling things and then hung around the necks of their children to ward off the frightening disease, which seemingly could not be stopped.

In 1928, Walter T. Morris of Milton agonized as he watched a young niece suffer with polio. He saw a great need and hoped that he could help to make a difference. He deeded his 200-acre farm to the trustees of Morris Memorial Hospital in 1930. The old Morris home housed a few patients until July 1936, when the cornerstone of the present building was laid. Convenient transportation made the hospital easily accessible from all parts of West Virginia and the eastern states. The Baltimore & Ohio, Norfolk & Western, and New York Central railroads all ran within 30 miles of the hospital. The Chesapeake & Ohio at one time had a station right across the road. Greyhound bus lines maintained a regular east- and westbound schedule over U.S. Route 60.

The population at Morris Memorial grew steadily. In 1949, 176 acute polio victims were admitted. Two large pools and a whirlpool were included in a separate hydrotherapy unit. One pool was used exclusively for recreation, and the other was well-equipped for therapy. Water for the pools was supplied from brine wells, located on the property.

Six wards held a capacity of 125 patients. An X-ray department, completely equipped laboratory, plasma blood bank, and then-modern operating rooms — visiting surgeons considered them to be the "most complete in America" — were contained within the walls of the facility.

Seven adult iron lungs and an infant iron lung were a part of the respirator unit. A patient's entire body, with only his or her head on the outside, was enclosed in the large, tube-shaped machine designed to draw breath. On occasion, the electricity would go off, and an auxiliary unit that automatically started in case of power failure would take over. Until it activated, however, the staff would frantically hand-pump the machines to ensure delivery of oxygen to the patients. There were nurses who roomed upstairs in the hospital and were available, should they be needed in case of emergency.



A small child in an adult-sized iron lung at Morris Memorial. Date unknown.

Blanche Thacker worked in the office of Morris Memorial. She tells of a tunnel running beneath the hospital. At that time, it was used to quickly transport things from one side of the hospital to the other. Later, when John and Rose Greene opened the nursing home, they were told it was a "shelter." During that time, society put much emphasis on emergency preparedness, so that explanation was understandable.

Housed in a sanitary tile room near the dairy barn was a pasteurization unit, which ensured a safe milk supply for the patients and personnel. Extra income was derived from the sale of dairy surplus. The barn housed an average of 30 health-tested and approved cows.

Arts and crafts, such as leatherwork, woodwork, weaving, textile work, metal work, and recreational activities served as therapy, and also afforded patients the satisfaction of producing worthwhile products

The Morris Memorial library held 2,000 volumes of fiction, as well as 200 technical books for students and staff. These children appear to be engrossed in their magazines.

while learning skills. This was accomplished both in an occupational therapy department and in a ward program for those who could not come to the "shop."

A canteen was open for the patients' enjoyment each evening from 6 to 7 p.m. Personnel were transported to and from work by bus, and patients were also taken to attend entertainment in Huntington and Charleston. The Morris Memorial auditorium was large enough to hold the entire population of the hospital. There were no permanent seats, because patients in wheelchairs brought their own seats with them. Folks from nearby churches in the Milton area provided teachers, speakers, and music for study and worship services. Sometimes, the residents created their own entertainment. Thumping, clacking, and clanging were often something to grin about. Organized, it became a rhythm band that proudly gave performances to raise money for the March of Dimes.

The community came to support the patients and staff in many ways. Upon opening, the staff found themselves facing the problem of laundry There were no automatic washers, but a lady in the neighborhood generously donated her washer for their use. Later, three modern, manually controlled steam pressers and two washing machines were used.

Being a patient did not afford students the opportunity of skipping school. Classes were held in the hospital every day. Children were awakened, their braces were put on, and, if necessary, they were put in wheelchairs. A short trip down the hall, and they arrived to say "good morning" to their teachers. Mrs. Emma Owens Harshbarger taught grades 1, 2, and 3 for 16½ years. Mrs. Eloise Hash Pope taught grades 4 to 8 and served as principal. If a child became tired, he would rest then return to his studies. Most young students being taught in the classroom were very much like every other normal young "whippersnapper." One morning, Mrs Pope interrupted Mrs. Harshbarger's classroom to say, "Students have been spending too much time loitering in the corridor." When she left the room, one worried small voice asked, "What were we doing, and where were we doing it?"

Beginning in 1950, youngsters completing the high school curriculum were given diplomas and officially became graduates of Milton High School. This classroom was an extension of the Cabell County Public Schools, and teachers were employed and paid by the school board.

When gardens were flourishing, farmers came to the hospital's back door and gave truckloads of vegetables to feed the children. Working the facility's farmland and making the most of the fruit orchards helped to cover a substantial portion of the hospital's operating and maintenance costs.

During World War II, there were few able-bodied men left in the Milton area available to work on the Morris Memorial farm, and boys were hired to do man-sized

jobs. At 12 years of age, Bob Jimison was hired to work in the fields and was paid $1 per day. He was thrilled to receive a check of $11 for his first two weeks' work. By 1947, he was earning $2 a day, working as an orderly. Helping the patients take their first steps brought great satisfaction, he says. Tom Moore was one of those courageous young patients with whom Bob worked. Mr. Moore later became the mayor of Logan.

In the summer of 1942, at 10 years of age, Dick Jimison, Bob's brother, began working on the dairy farm, from sunup to sundown, five days a week, for $6.25 a week. At 13, he was pushing food wagons to the wards and helping get the kids into their beds.

"We sometimes had races in wheelchairs and on crutches with the children. Of course, the kids always won," Dick says, with a smile.

When the hospital was short of help and there weren't enough employees to work with the very sick patients in the contagious ward, 16-year-old Dick and other orderlies were allowed to help They tenderly held the sick children and applied cold water to comfort and cool the feverish patients. Dick says, "It was extremely difficult and heart-wrenching to see the suffering the children were going through. It wasn't easy to forget when you left the hospital for the day.

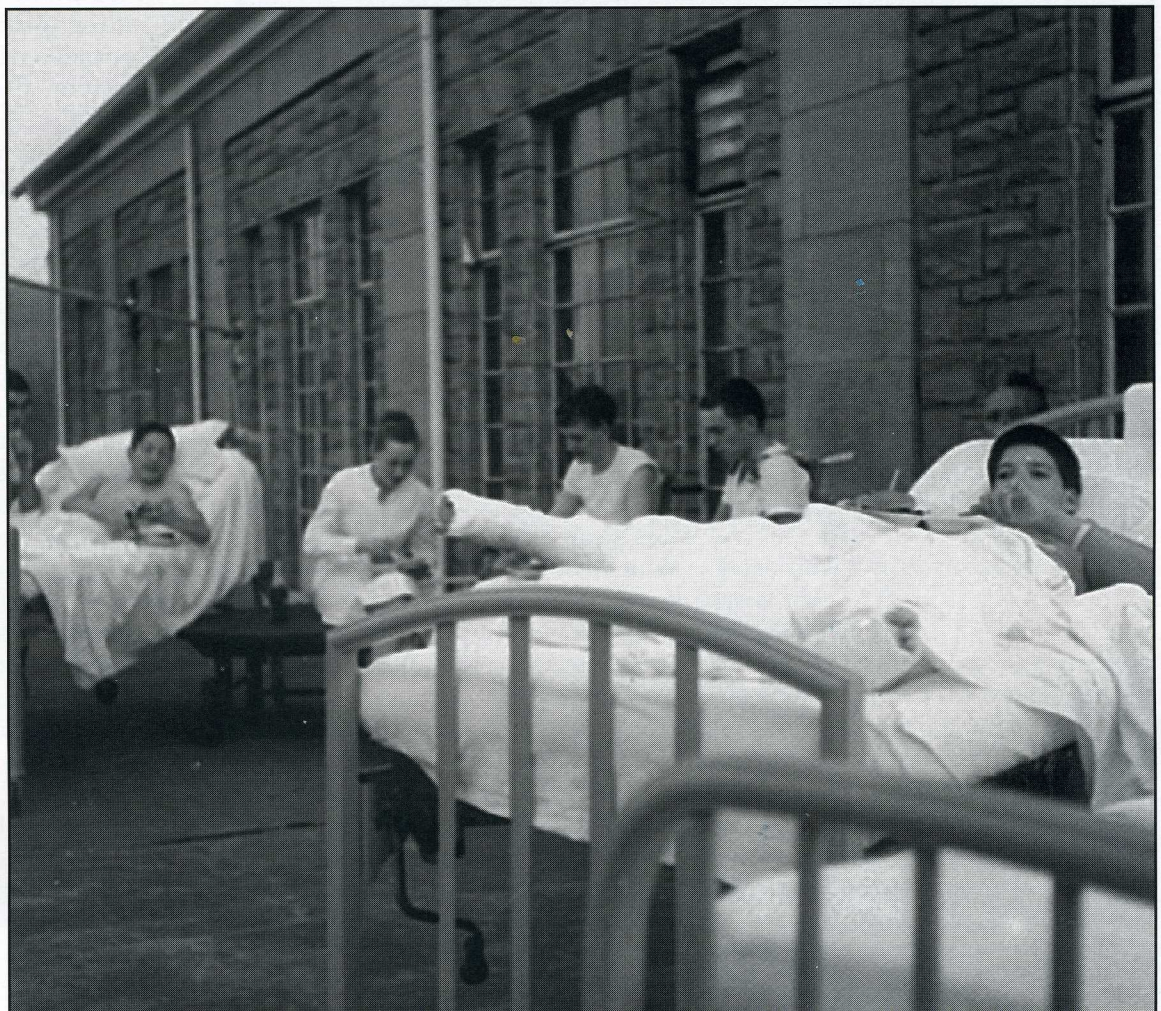
"While I was working in the physical therapy room one day, a child fell and I tried to help him get up. The nurse chewed me out, because he was supposed to learn to do it by himself. I was very upset with the nurse and planned to tell her so when the child was finished and out of the room. When I saw that it was clear, I went back to speak with her and found her crying. She cared so deeply and tried to do what was best for the kids. I worked with some of the most wonderful people you've ever met," Dick fondly recalls.

Mary Lou Hudgins Harshbarger, a nurse, says that she grew to love the children, and she greatly missed them when they were no longer in the hospital. A 14-month-old patient named "CoCo" won her heart. She missed him so much that, when he was no longer there, she went to his home to visit with him.

Emogene Dolin Jones began working at the hospital in the 1940's. Eight o'clock was a necessary bedtime, because of the many chores left to do after the small wards were tucked in. One evening, as she and the other workers were bathing the children and putting them to bed, they realized that two boys were missing. Everyone searched throughout the hospital and then continued to look outside over the entire grounds. As the searchers continued looking, they journeyed to the bottom of the hill in front of the hospital. There they were! Having crawled on their bellies to keep from being seen leaving the building, they were muddy, but happy to have made a successful escape. A trip back up the hill, and two ornery little boys were returned to the bath. As the muddy "jammies" were pulled over their heads, six frogs jumped out of the pockets.

Speaking with great affection and enthusiasm, 91-year-old Theresa Imogene Lewis tells about the time she spent working as a nurse's aide at Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children in the 1950's.

Beds and patients were rolled outside during pleasant weather, as shown in this 1957 snapshot.



Theresa Imogene Lewis with "Jimmy," one of her favorite patients. Now 91 Theresa has many pleasant memories of her years at Morris Memorial.

Listening to her recollections, I have come to realize she is telling me a story of perseverance, human spirit, love, and generosity that we could easily miss if we look only at the sadness and pain. The following accounts are as Theresa recalls:

"An older teenage boy was being kept there. A train had run over him, cutting off his legs. (Not all patients were polio victims.) Those who could do for themselves were encouraged to do so. This fellow had very strong arms, therefore was asked to bathe himself. One evening, he was given a basin of water and told what to do with it. After waiting a suitable length of time, we heard no movement, so he was asked if he had finished. He said, 'Yes-um, I am.' But upon examination, his water had not been touched. We gave him time again to do the job, and one of the nurses told him if he didn't do a good job this time, she'd wash him with a sand rock. A few minutes later, he was asked the same question, 'Are you finished bathing?' He quickly answered, 'Yes, Ma'am. I am. I even washed between my toes.' The kids' sense of humor always seemed to make a day easier.

"Two little girls who were the same size and looked very much alike loved to tease us. One day, after taking their braids loose, brushing their hair, and then scrubbing them until they were shiny, we realized we couldn't tell who was who. This brought fits of giggles from the girls, and the joke was on us. We had to get their charts, much to their delight, to see which girl had the bad leg and which had the bad arm to determine who was who.

"Everything wasn't so funny, because you loved those kids and the kids loved each other. One little boy and girl, both about five years old, loved to have their chairs close together constantly. It was very hard one morning to tell him why she would not be there for breakfast. I still have a plate that held a cupcake and candle that her mother gave me from her last birthday.

"Another girl I loved so much was Barbara Null of Red House. I never forgot Lydia Armstrong from Kentucky. She was in a iron lung, and her hair was so long, in a plait, that it hung to the floor from where her head rested.

"In isolation one night, a small, red-haired girl about five years old was brought in for observation. She was very ill. But a day or so later, early in the morning, we heard someone singing. Going to check on her, we found her swinging back and forth on the curtain rod and happily singing, over and over, 'I got da' polio. I got da' polio.' I think she walked just fine.

"Everyone loves gifts, but these children appreciated the smallest things, such as hair ribbons, balls, or marbles. One young patient loved his gift of marbles and wanted them placed on the stand close to the bed, even though he could not use his hands to hold them.

"Maybe you remember the large, square, red Coke machines. A lid covering the entire box lifted, and, inside, the Cokes were held in tracks. When you put your money in a slot, the bottle could be slid down the track until it reached a spot where you could take it out. The older boys loved Coke, but had no money. Some of the fellows had no

Author Bonnie Lewis at Morris Memorial Hospital in a recent photograph, taken by Scott Lewis.

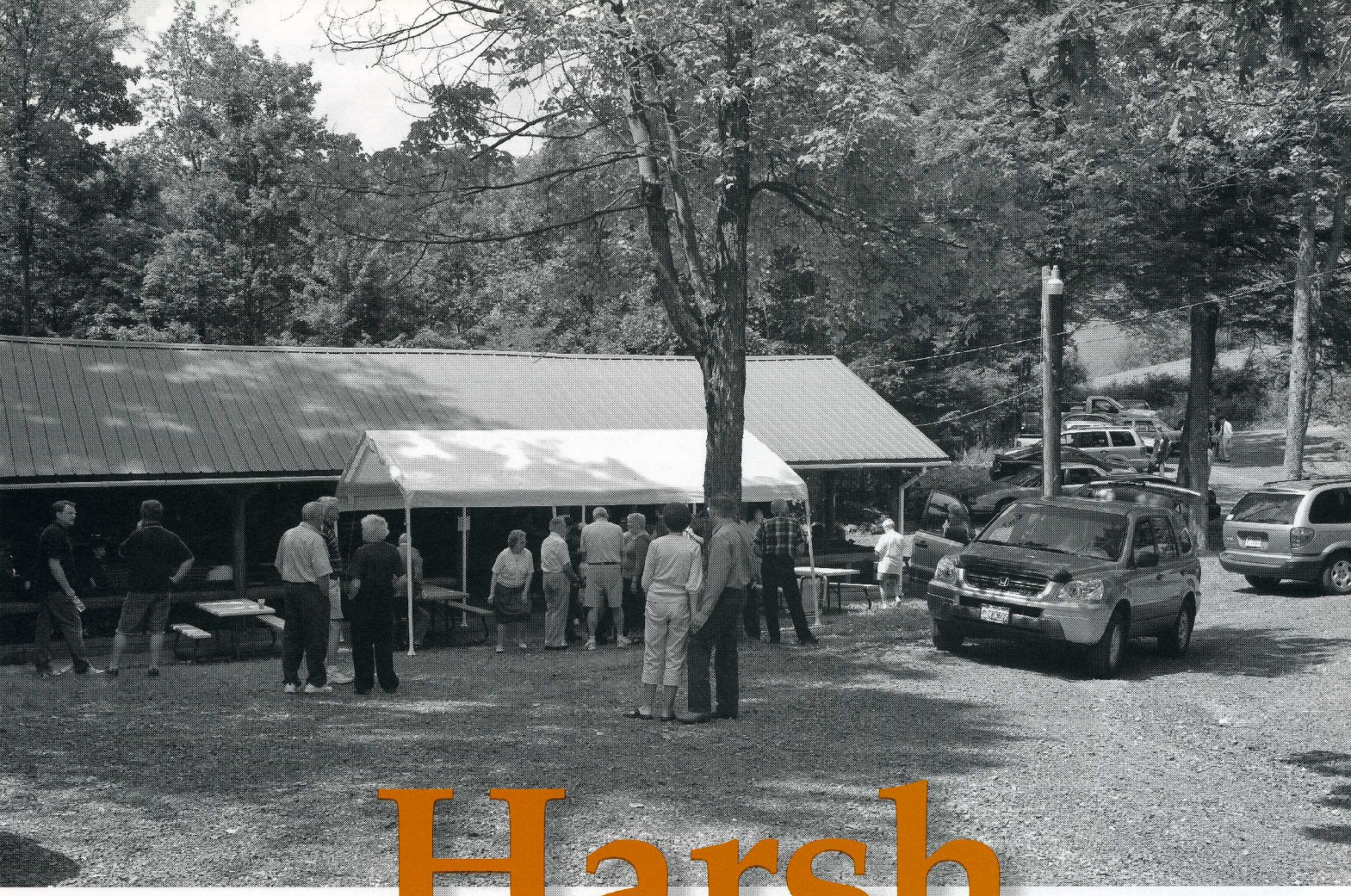
use of their arms, and others were in wheelchairs, but they were arms and legs for each other. We watched, amused, as the ones with good use of their hands would reach into the case and open the bottles. Then straws were inserted one into the end of one another until they reached from the boy in the wheelchair to the open bottle in the machine. He then sucked from the bottle, still in the machine. Sometimes the next morning all the bottles that they could reach would be empty. We never told," Theresa says, laughing as she remembers.

"Most nights, there were children who were restless and could not sleep. Carroll Taylor, a young orderly, would put two pillows in a clothes hamper that was on wheels, and ride them until they would go peacefully to sleep. I worked with some good people," Mrs. Lewis says fondly.

In 1955, when I was in the sixth grade at Hurricane Elementary, the school nurses lined us up outside in the school's driveway. One by one, several hundred healthy, wiggly youngsters eagerly swallowed cubes of sugar with red liquid dropped onto it. We were being miraculously protected by the Salk vaccine, discovered by Jonas Salk in 1955. We were among the fortunate children who would only have "heard" about polio. Thank God, that was the beginning of the end for this dreadful epidemic. It also heralded dramatic changes for Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, a haven of rest for afflicted youngsters.

BONNIE G. LEWIS is a native of Hurricane, Putnam County. She is a graduate of Huntington High School and the Huntington College of Business. Bonnie is retired from the Cabell County Board of Education and lives in Milton. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 1996 issue.

Aerial view of Morris Memorial Hospital, mid-1950's. With the addition of some full-grown shade trees, the hospital appears much the same today, as it overlooks I-64 and the Cabell County hills east of Milton.



More than 100 Harsh family members gathered at the Farmers Wild Life Park pavilion in Horse Shoe Run, Preston County, on a Sunday afternoon in August 2009 for their 100th family reunion.

Harsh Reunion

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

"A Friendly Bunch of Customers"

"My wife says you can't shake a bush up there in Eglon without the Harshes falling out like mice," says Keith Harsh, a member of the Preston County clan.

In early 2009, Donnie Harsh, president of the Harsh Reunion, began shaking bushes near and far to find 100 persons who would attend the 100th reunion. Held August 23 at the Farmer's Wild Life Club Park in Horse Shoe Run, the centennial gathering far surpassed the president's goal, with at least 177 guests signing the register.

Of German origin, the Harsh (Hersh in German) generations have lived quiet lives in Preston County, despite being among the early settlers. In August 1932, Alva Harsh, wrote *A Short History and Family Record of the Harsh Family in Preston County, W Va.*, to honor

his grandfather, Lloyd Harsh, as Lloyd neared his 80th birthday. Alva wrote: "If one must turn to outstanding accomplishments for noteworthy achievement, the Harsh family will continue to go unrecorded in history. But if it be true that simple, quiet living on a plane of justice, honesty, and neighborliness is one of the choice possessions of a group, then this family has an enviable record. The name has not filled the headlines of newspapers or found its way into *Who's Who*, but neither has it filled court records or prison registration books."

Ironically, it would be Alva himself who would bring honor to the Harsh name, for his work in Christian missionary service. Alva married Mary Hykes, whom he met while they were students at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania. Although Mary Hykes' father made Alva promise that he'd never take his daughter out of the country if he granted him permission to marry her, in 1935, Alva and Mary felt called to the foreign mission field.

Working with the Church of the Brethren, the Harsh couple and a third missionary, Minnevah Neher, left for China on September 2, 1935. It was a dangerous assignment as China and Japan were at war, but they felt called to spread the Gospel and assist Chinese women and children brutalized by the invading army

They disappeared from their compound at Show Yang on December 2, 1937 A Chinese citizen eventually claimed to be a witness to their deaths at the hands of the Japanese, however neither the family, mission board of the denomination, nor the U.S. State Department ever found any trace of them.

Alva's grandfather, Lloyd Harsh, was one of 11 children born to Stephen and Mariah Porter. It was from Stephen's line that most of those attending the reunion trace their lineage — descendants of Lloyd, Laura, Emma Elizabeth, and Andrew were all represented.

Although the majority of those attending came from Preston County, there were visitors from as far away as Georgia, Virginia, and Ohio. Some, like myself, had never been to a Harsh reunion before. Others, like my father, Carl J Feather, had not been to one since the 1950's, when they packed up their families and went searching for jobs beyond the West Virginia borders.

Ruby Feather Judy has been more consistent in her attendance of this event, held the fourth Sunday of August for as long as most can remember. Ruby, my father, and I trace our link to this family through Estella Harsh, born September 17, 1876. She married James Walter Feather and bore him eight children, among them Russel Allen, my grandfather; and Guy Edwin, Ruby's father.

"Uncle Walter," as my great-grandfather is recalled in Harsh circles, evidently embraced his in-laws' traditions as if they were his own family. Ruby says her earliest recollection of the reunions, back in the 1930's or '40's, was seeing her grandfather bring yards of red, white, and blue cloth bunting to the grounds and stretch it between the trees that circled the picnic grounds. His sons and sons-in-law were always at his side, giving a helping hand, as well.

Harsh Reunion president Don Harsh looks over the shoulder of Jesse Harsh as the pair examine an old photograph at the 100th Harsh Reunion.

"He had it rolled up on a pole and walked around the place and wrapped it high up, so us kids couldn't grab at it," Ruby recalls.

The Harsh family evidently held this in-law in quite high esteem to entrust him with the bunting and grounds preparation. He also served as president/treasurer of the reunion for a number of years.

"He always had

Grace Bechtel, at left, age 89, has attended more Harsh reunions than most. Here, she reviews some family scrapbooks with her friend Erma Heis.

a program, which included talks by various business or political men, singing, games, and prizes for the children," Ruby adds.

James Walter built benches for the picnickers to sit on as they enjoyed their plates of fried chicken and summer garden favorites. The benches were simple — boards placed atop tree stumps around the grove, a far cry from the comfortable folding chairs many of the reunion-goers packed for the 100th anniversary.

Although those old benches couldn't have been very comfortable, they were in high demand, recalls Grace Bachtel, who at 89 has probably attended more Harsh Reunions than any other living person. Grace recalls the crude benches and says although they had no backs, if you were fortunate to find a spot on one of them, "you thought you'd found a royal seat."

And if you weren't so fortunate to snag one of these "royal seats?"

"You sat on the ground, leaned against a tree or a friend," Ruby says.

"I remember we used to spread tablecloths on the ground, and we'd put our food on them," adds Grace.

Grace's friend, Erma Heis, says the reunion has always been open to the community; you don't have to be or have married a Harsh to attend.

Recalling the gatherings of her childhood, Ruby says reunion time was one of the few occasions the youngsters would get a treat from town.

Group photo of the first Harsh Reunion, October 14, 1910, at Lloyd Harsh's residence, near Eglon.

"Granddad Feather would go up to Thomas that week, and he would buy a big piece of bologna about [a foot] long. That was a real treat back then," Ruby says.

Another one of Ruby's culinary recollections centers on butterscotch pie. The late Artenis Harsh, one of Lloyd Harsh's grandchildren, loved that flavor, and folks knew they better save a piece or two for him. Don says his mother, who died in 2000, always took burnt sugar cake to the reunion when he was a child.

The reunion has always been held in the Eglon area, though there remains some mild controversy as to exactly where and when. An annotation on the back of a photograph purportedly made at the first reunion places the date as October 14, 1910, and the location as the L. (Lloyd) E. Harsh residence. There were 91 persons present.

Ruby questions the date, however. For one thing, tradition states the gathering has always been held the fourth Saturday or Sunday of July or August. And Artenis Harsh boasted of being just a baby when the first reunion was held. Artenis was born April 16, 1909

Panoramic prints from the 1916-1917 reunions place the gathering at "Wesley Watring Grove." After some discussion among the elders, it was determined that the grove stood west of James Walter Feather's home, which was on present-day Grange Hall Road, off State Route 24.

Minutes from the 1919 reunion suggest it was also held at a grove on Accident Road, which is in the general area of the Wild Life Park: "The Harsh Reunion, held four miles south of Aurora, Saturday, July 26, 1919, was a delightful affair. Many of the descendants of Frederick Harsh and friends, numbering at least 800, met in a beautifully located grove less than a stone's throw from the Accident Church and a schoolhouse near a never-failing spring. The arrangements, decorations, and all were well-nigh perfect.

"President Walter Feather called the large crowd to order at 11:00 a.m. A choir under the direction of George Wolfe rendered a song, after which Rev. Martin Luther Peters delivered the address of welcome. Rev. E.C. Bedford offered prayer. Dinner followed. And

Jesse Harsh, at left, and daughter Mary Teets catch up on the news at the Harsh Reunion.

this dinner was the greatest the writer ever saw in the Mountain State. To describe it one would be obliged to use words in the superlative degree."

The reunion minutes went on, noting the attendance of several family members from Michigan and the election of officers. Although the 1919 minutes state that the 1920 event was to be held at the same location, at some point in its early years, the reunion moved to the grove behind the Doctors Millers' home in Eglon. Ruby and Jesse Harsh place the event in that grove in their earliest memories of attending as children.

Doctors Blanche and Harold Miller delivered many of the persons who attended the reunion. "It cost $5," says Jesse, born in 1925. "I still have the cancelled check."

The reunion was held in this grove until the mid-1950's, when the property passed to Claude Winters, the doctors' son-in-law, who started farming the land that had been used for the reunion grounds.

The reunion lived a nomadic life for several years after that. Ruby says it moved to the Eglon School at the bottom of Red Hill on Grange Hall Road. She knows for certain it was there in 1958, because the reunion fell the day after she and her husband, Troy, were married. They attended the reunion and were a shoo-in for winning the "most recently married" prize.

The reunion next moved to Silver Lake, two or three miles south on U.S. Route 219, where it was held in 1959 and 1960. In 1961, to the best of Ruby's knowledge, it moved to Farmer's Wild Life Club Park, where it has been ever since.

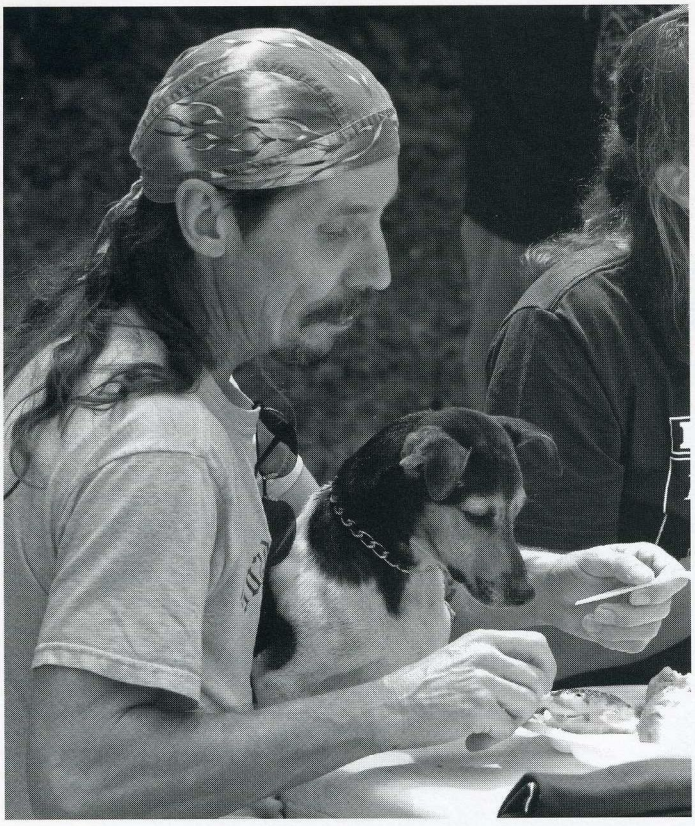
Most of the reunion's records for the first 61 years have been misplaced, and despite efforts to locate them for the 100th, they remain lost. One of the hopes of putting out the word about the 100th reunion was that the records would surface, although that did not occur.

The recollections of the elders are especially valued, therefore. Jesse, in his 80's, says the event has always been marked by "generally good conversation."

"It's a friendly bunch of customers," says Jesse, who attended the reunion with his new bride, Helen; daughter Mary Teets; and sister Berdena. Jesse and Berdena were among the eldest of the Harsh family members to attend the reunion. Other "old-timers" included Keith and Ellis Harsh, and, of course, Grace Bachtel.

As to be expected in an agricultural community, the

Food fills six tables at the 2009 gathering. Here, young Larissa Dixon helps herself while the grown-ups go on talking.



Lee Phillips and his dog, Jack, eye a plate full of fried chicken at the Harsh Reunion.

afternoon revolved around the meal. Six tables set in two rows were required to hold all the offerings.

Jesse Harsh had the honor of blessing this bounty. Finding a place to sit once the plates were full was a challenge, and a few took up the old-time practice of spreading a blanket on the ground. After dinner, a business meeting was held to elect officers and recognize guests.

The prize for the youngest girl at the reunion went to Hallie Hartzell, age 2; the youngest boy was James Harsh, 16 months. The oldest woman there was Ruth Parks, 93; the oldest man, Merrill Flory, age 87 Jesse and Helen got the prize for the newlyweds (three months), while Darrell and Helen Harsh, married 61 years, claimed the prize for the longest-married. The person who traveled the greatest distance was Juanita Jentry, who came from Augusta, Georgia — 800 miles. Lawrence Cosner had the newest car, and Mark Harsh had the oldest. Mike Harsh had the longest hair, and Don Harsh was voted to have the best smile — the fine weather and excellent company probably played a role in that grin he wore throughout the day.

The entertainment was by violinist John Harsh and karaoke singer Sarah Harsh. Steve Harris went from table to table performing magic tricks. Brenda Hartsell entertained the crowd with her version of "The Night Before Christmas," based upon Harsh family members and memories. And Dick Dixon gave a sermon prior to the start of the business meeting, eloquently pointing out the persecution and ultimate sacrifice members of the clan had suffered for the Gospel. Don Harsh led the 100th meeting of the Harsh Reunion, and Mark Harsh, secretary, read the minutes from the 99th

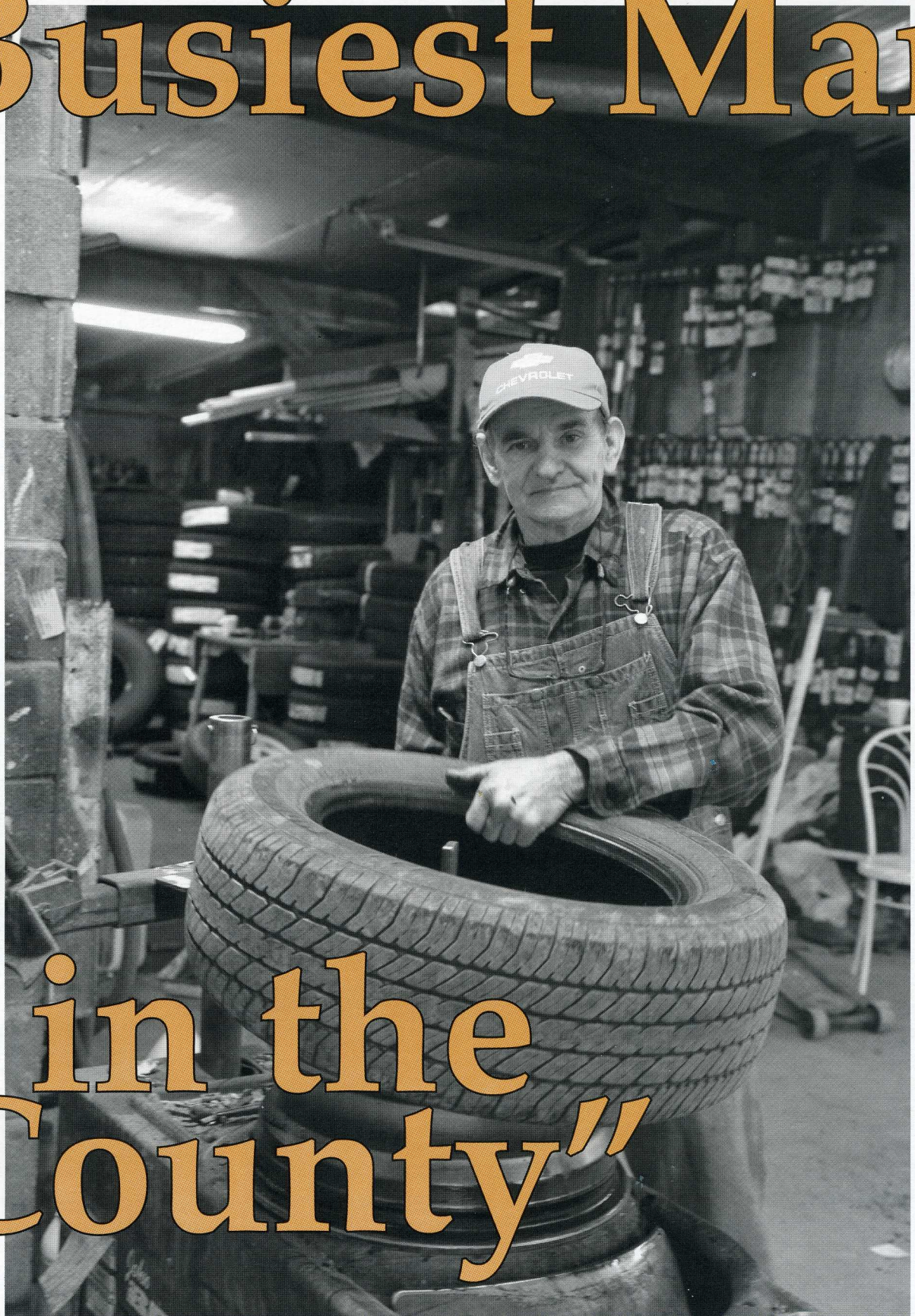
Throughout the afternoon, reunion attendees were encouraged to sign a bed sheet, which will be made into a quilt to be raffled off at the 101st reunion. There was a silent auction, which featured a painting of Dolly Sods by Genevieve Dixon and a quilt pieced by the late Effie Wolfe, also known as "Aunt Tommie."

After several hours of food, conversation, business discussions, games, recognitions, and reminiscing, the reunion attendees assembled on a wide, grassy area for a group photo before dispersing. A balloon release was done in honor of loved ones that had passed on. By 5 p.m., only the diehards and exhausted officers remained to deal with the aftermath — and plan the 101st reunion.

"I think it's the largest Harsh Reunion I've ever been to," says Grace Bachtel. "They really put forth an effort."

Hugs and handshakes say more than words as family members gather. Here, Troy Judy, at right, greets Carl J. Feather at the 2009 reunion.

"The Most Busiest Man in the County"



Tom Knotts, owner of Tom's Auto Parts in Fellowsville, repairs a tire at his Preston County shop.

Tom Knotts of Fellowsville

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

A word to the wise: If, while traveling U.S Route 50 through Fellowsville, Preston County, you spot a handsome, black suitcase on the side of the highway, ignore it. A few years ago, three young men were driving this curvy, sparsely populated section of the Northwestern Turnpike when they came upon such a suitcase. Fellowsville native Hayward Clive Knotts — more commonly known as "Tom" — watched as the men retrieved the abandoned treasure, motored down the road a few hundred yards to a pull-off, opened the case, and started screaming.

Tom says there was a five-foot-long black snake in that suitcase. He knows that for a fact. He put it in there.

"Those three guys screamed and screamed," Tom says, between his laughter.

Tom tells this story, and many more, to a cadre of neighbors and friends who drop in at Tom's Auto Parts for their morning cup of coffee and a few minutes of gossip and story swapping, Monday through Saturday.

"When you want to find out what's going on in Fellowsville, this is the place," says Greg Hanna, who lives a few hundred yards from the shop and spends most mornings warming a chair at Tom's place.

A combination repair shop, auto parts store, and de facto community center, Tom's is located about a mile east of the intersection of routes 50 and 92. By all measurements, it is the busiest spot in Fellowsville, which is located about halfway between Grafton and Rowlesburg.

Tom and his wife/bookkeeper, Phyllis, open the shop most mornings shortly after 6 a.m. Phyllis' first tasks are to build a fire in the woodstove and prepare a slow-cooked meal in a pot that is as much a fixture in this room as the stove and coffeepot. The meal will be lunch for Tom, Phyllis, and their son, Thomas, who also works in the shop.

"There's something on here every day," Phyllis says. "It runs the gamut from buckwheat cakes and sausage to steaks, roast beef. A lot of the guys who just happen to be in here, we feed them, too."

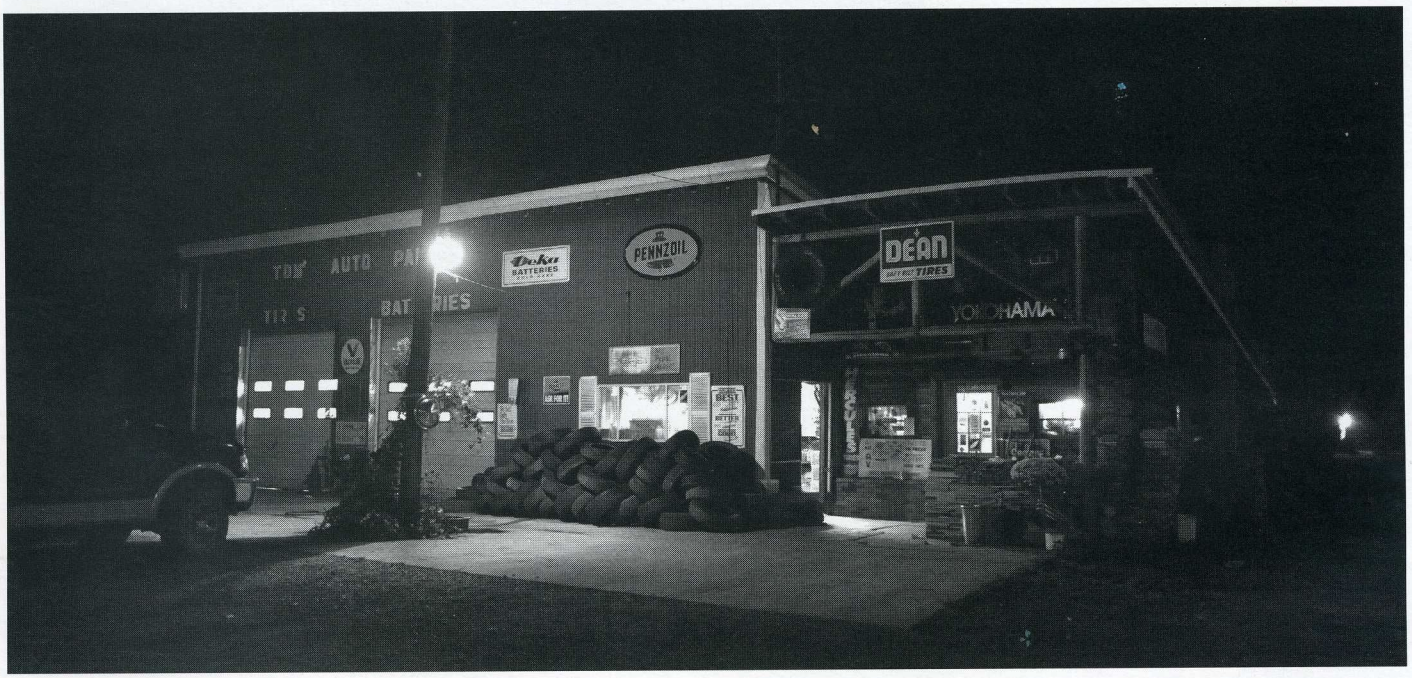
"I eat here," says Jack Murray, a neighbor and Tom's friend since their elementary school days. "She makes some fine food on that stove, finest chili in the country."

Jack's quick when it comes to complimenting Phyllis, who ensures there's always a pot of free coffee ready for the pouring.

"I love Phyllis' coffee. She makes the best coffee in Preston County. Mostly because the price is right," Jack says.

"Don't you have other places to go, people to annoy?" Phyllis counters.

"I try to earn my coffee," replies Jack, who sweeps the garage and puts Tom's tools away when he feels



Open around 6 a.m. most mornings, Tom's Auto Parts draws a regular crowd of coffee drinkers on their way to work or the post office.

Phyllis Knotts, Tom's wife of 45 years, handles the shop's bookkeeping, scheduling, ordering, and inventory. She also keeps a pot of coffee going and keeps the men as honest as possible.

like helping. "But I don't think I ever get my food paid for."

By 7:30 a.m., Phyllis is contending with a full house of coffee drinkers like Jack, who swap hunting stories around the woodstove. Occasionally, one of the men will actually conduct business — such as getting a vehicle inspection or set of new tires — while enjoying the camaraderie. Whether they are paying customers or just visiting, the men praise Tom's workmanship and the convenience of his business.

"This place is a godsend," says Greg Beeghley, a southern Preston County resident who stopped in to get snow tires on his car. "You can get any vehicle, tractor, or lawnmower part here. For a do-it-yourselfer, this place is a great help."

Once the woodfire has chased the chill from their bones, the men bid Phyllis goodbye and wander out to the garage, where they cluster around the circa-1888 anvil to drink more coffee and swap stories with Tom, as he finishes a tire job. Tom has performed mechanical work for every one of the men at one time or another, and they rate the work he and his son perform as top notch.

Jack tells how Tom was able to fix a piece of his farm machinery on which the heads had rusted off the bolts. Tom welded nuts to the frozen bolts and, with the right mix of heating and cooling, freed the stubborn parts.

"He knows how to do that stuff," Jack says. "He's got me back on the highway hundreds of times."

Tom's skills as a storyteller and folksy comedian are more immediately discerned. Even if he can't claim familial relation to the late and famous Don Knotts, heredity is at work in Tom's passion for playing jokes.

"From the time I was a kid growing up, Dad was always playing tricks on me," Tom says. "They had these socials in the 1930's. One time, my dad made up this big cake and put all this frosting on it, but inside was just a plain corn cake. My uncle, he got it for a quarter. I reckon that's how they had that falling out between them."

Tom's parents, Howard and Dona Knotts, had six children. Most of them went off to college and went to work in the field of education, but Tom had a different bent from the time he was an adolescent. He never left the little farming town on Laurel Mountain.

"I was 16, and I just picked it up," Tom says of his knack for mechanical work. His first job was at a service station owned by the late Dutch Ridenour of Fellowsville. The station stood east of Tom's on Route 50. Tom went to work for Dutch in

Jack Murray is a neighbor and childhood friend of Tom's. "The price is right," Jack says, as he helps himself to free coffee.

As the morning wears on, the men move their conversation to the repair bays. Here, they continue talking while Tom, visible in the background, finishes a tire job. "He's got me back on the highway hundreds of times," Jack Murray says.

1960 and stayed there until 1980.

"He was the first and only person Tom ever worked for," Phyllis says. Tom was working for Dutch when he and Phyllis Myers, a native of Rowlesburg, were married in 1964. By that time, Fellowsville and most other Preston County hamlets and hollows had expelled most of their young people to work in automotive, chemical, and rubber factories in Ohio.

"In the 1950's and 1960's, all the kids moved out. But when they come back here [to visit], most said, 'I wish I was here,'" Tom says.

Tom's chosen occupation was one of the very few a young person could survive on in a rural community. Farming, the mainstay of Preston County, ensured a steady stream of equipment repairs, and the spotty economy ensured there would always be an old clunker in need of a radiator, starter, or exhaust repair. In fact, Tom says that to this day, when the economy sours, his business improves.

"You can't keep up with it," he says, looking at the work orders facing him. "When times get bad, our business goes up, because people keep the old cars and I have to keep them running."

The spotty economy ensured there would always be an old clunker in need of a radiator, starter, or exhaust repair.

Tom and Phyllis bought the Route 50 parcel that would eventually become home to his auto parts and repair business back in 1965. They paid only $3,000 for the land and house, but it was a huge investment for a father of two, making only $1.50 an hour. The family stretched its small income by putting a deer or two in the freezer every fall and raising extra cash by sanging — collecting ginseng from the mountains, an activity Tom learned from his father and continues to this day.

Tom decided to go solo in 1980. He and numerous union coal miners, who were striking at the time, built the garage on Route 50 while Tom worked out of a garage at his house, near the site of his new business. Tom completed the project as cash became available — he avoids borrowing.

The shop opened in 1982. "We started out as a repair shop and added a parts section," says Phyllis, who takes care of scheduling, ordering parts, collecting the money, and paying the bills. For a couple of years in the 1980's, the shop also sold groceries as "Uncle Tom's Grocery Store."

Tom sold off a section of his property to the Fellowsville Volunteer Fire Department and ambulance service when the former was established in 1968. Tom served as a captain on the department for 30 years, and his wife was treasurer for about the same length of time. The couple lived in a house near the fire station. Phyllis recalls making the trek from her house to the station in her nightgown so the doors would be open for firefighters when they arrived. Neither Tom nor Phyllis

is on the department these days, however.

"It got to where you had to have so much schooling to be a fireman, so I got kicked out," says Tom, who lacked the time and inclination to formally learn what he instinctively knew

Tom says they put up their building and additions as need dictated and money allowed. It could be larger, Tom admits, but he feels it's adequate. Two large repair bays accommodate everything from lawn mowers to coal mining and farming equipment, plus provide storage for the hundreds of tires Tom stocks for everything from cars to heavy trucks. He boasts of having the largest selection of fan belts in the area, merchandise that hangs along the wall of the repair shop.

To the south of the repair bays is a parts room, where Tom stocks the most commonly needed filters and automotive parts. If a repair requires a part Tom does not stock, Phyllis calls in the order to their supplier, who makes a delivery to the store overnight.

Phyllis works behind a counter in the sales area, a room built from poplar logs that came off the old Knotts farm. The back section is devoted to rows of parts reference books, although after all these years, both Tom and his son have memorized most of the numbers and seldom need to consult these references.

Electricity and telephone service are the only modern conveniences in this business. Phyllis does her bookwork without the benefit of a computer. There is no fax machine, no Internet connection, and no credit card processing machine. Credit is extended to local, established customers, and Tom says 99.99% of his customers are honest and will eventually pay for services rendered.

"We still do business the old-fashioned way," Tom says. "You own a credit card nowadays, it might just hurt you."

All chairs in this room face the stove and the counter where Phyllis sits. A trash basket is next to this counter and above that, a sign stating that said container is not to be used for the disposal of chewing tobacco. Phyllis is adamant about that.

"That is a big no-no. You don't spit in my trash can," Phyllis says.

The sales area is decorated with kitsch and artifacts of longevity, rural living, and the owner's ingenuity. A stuffed and dusty bobcat, trapped by Tom in 1978, is just inside the door. Hanging above the door is a circa-1938 Coca-Cola Santa poster, its colors muted by decades of soot and dirt. Tom found the poster behind a layer of wallpaper while tearing down Clifford Wolfe's general store a few miles from the shop.

Watching over the goings on from a log rafter is an oak burl Tom cut from a tree on Laurel Mountain. Tom gave the burl facial features, with steel nuts for teeth and conical automobile brake lights for eyes and a nose. Bear teeth embellish Tom's monster.

"I found that up there [in the Laurel Mountain forest] and cut it down," Tom says. "I see something and I say, 'I can make that.'"

To prove his point, Tom goes into the garage where he's working on three tomahawk heads. Two have been cut from a block of metal; the third was hammered into its form by hours of relentless pounding. Tom says he got the idea for making his own tomahawk while visiting a shop in Gettysburg, where reproductions similar to the ones he's making fetch $3,000 or more.

Tom has also made models of birch canoes and Conestoga wagons. He dug clay from the mountain above his house and made Indian pipes from it. "I probably sold a hundred of them," he says.

A project he's particularly proud of stands a couple of hundred yards east of the shop. It's an octagonal log cabin with a small rectangular addition to the rear. Tom built it in 1970 from 12-foot-long logs he purchased for $5 each. The short length of the logs presented a special challenge to Tom, who figured out that an octagonal arrangement would give him the most volume from the logs.

"I built that whole thing and all of the stuff in it for $2,700," Tom says of the cabin, which he rents to his friend Greg Hanna.

Tom says he likes to have a new project or two every year to give him a break from his repair business. His hobby is metal detecting, and Tom has a large collection of

Storyteller, builder, and auto mechanic, Tom is also a skilled folk artist. He built this fierce-looking fellow from an oak burl and spare parts.

artifacts gathered from a Civil War encampment site at Rowlesburg. His other pastime is hunting.

In Fellowsville, the tradition of deer hunting is as much a time for ceasing business activity as the Lord's Day. Deer season is the week of the year that Tom closes the business. He and several dozen other deer hunters from these mountains and hollows gather at cabins on Laurel Mountain on the first day of that week for a huge meal to fortify mind and body for the hunt.

Tom, while an avid outdoorsmen, admits that these days his hunting is a half-hearted effort. "As old as I'm getting to be, I don't care if I kill a deer or not nowadays," he says. "If I see a big buck, he might get it and he might not."

Tom is even more reserved about shooting a bear. "I would never kill one of them. I would rather just see a big old bear. I ain't going to kill it, no way. And I never tasted it."

If age has tempered Tom's passion for the ageless masculine tradition of this Laurel Mountain community, it has not slowed his commitment to helping others with their auto repair needs. The shop is open six days a week, and Tom puts in at least 10 hours most days.

Tom figures he might be the oldest full-time mechanic in Preston County

"I've been going for 48 years, wide open. I hardly ever take a break."

"I am probably the most busiest man in the county," Tom says. "I am what they call hyperactive. I've been going for 48 years, wide open. I hardly ever take a break."

Phyllis dismisses that as an exaggeration and says Tom's favorite pastime, aside from walking the woods with his buddies, is sitting in the easy chair in front of the television with a remote control in his hand.

He has no plans to retire, although when he does, he will give the business to his son. "He is the smartest mechanic you will find," Tom says of Thomas, who won state accolades as a vocational student. The couple's other son, Jamie, is a teacher in the Morgantown area.

"I just do this mainly for health, it kind of keeps me healthy," Tom says. "It pays to keep up your health."

"That's why he's got that big wad of tobacco in his mouth," Phyllis counters.

"That's just for nervousness," Tom says.

The men gathered around the stove laugh at the good-natured exchange, take another sip from their Styrofoam cups, and return to their bear-hunt stories. Tom excuses himself and goes back to making a living in Fellowsville.

"People have been good to me here," Tom says. "They just keep spending their money — especially the farmers — and that kind of helps me out. It's been fun, fun, fun."

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.

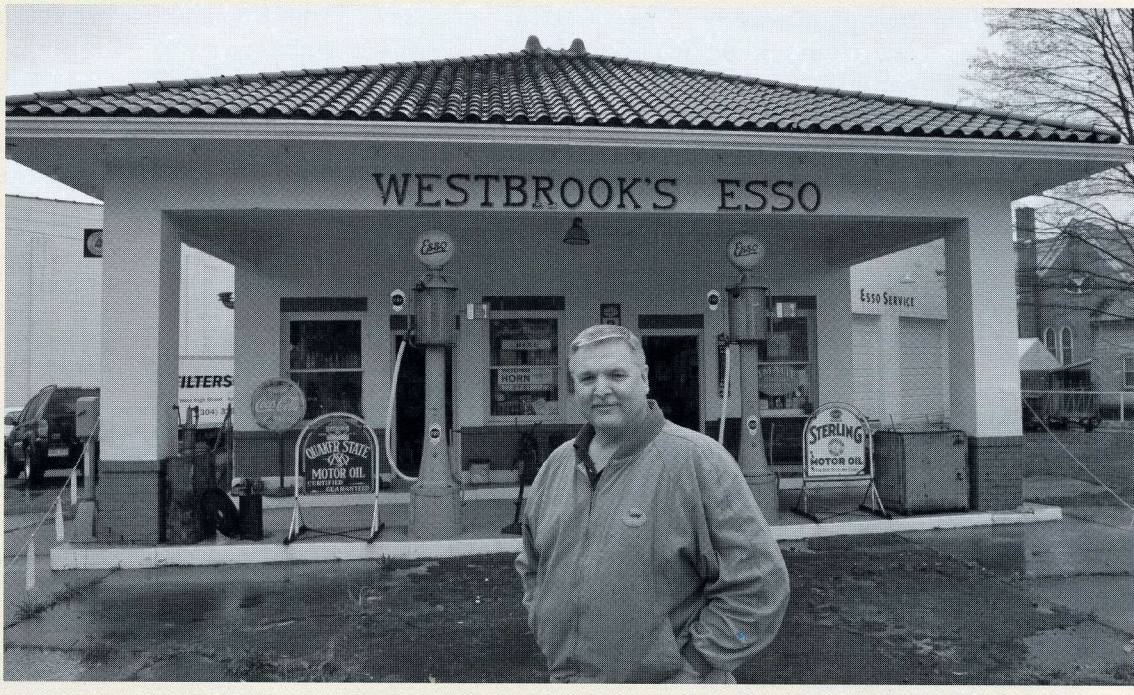
Neighbor Greg Hanna, at left, smiles while Tom Knotts spins another yarn, surrounded by auto parts and a shop that bears his name.

Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Motoring Memories in Kingwood

There are so many stories in Tom Westbrook's Esso service station, the place ought to be a library

The station is located at the corner of High and Price streets in Kingwood, Preston County. Back in the mid-1920's, when plans for the service station were first laid, it seemed a sure bet the new highway would be routed past this corner, ensuring a steady supply of horseless carriages in need of gasoline, oil, and mechanical attention. A pair of investors, named Englehart and Loar, wagered their futures on that scenario and built the station.



Tom Westbrook and his gas station museum in Kingwood. The service station was built in 1927 and still sports the original red tile roof.

The Great Depression soon hit. Realizing their station wouldn't support two families, Englehart and Loar went in the back room and flipped a coin, while their wives awaited the outcome in the front room.

"Mr Loar ended up with the service station. He operated it from 1926 through the late 1940's," Tom tells me as we watch the rain spoil an otherwise perfectly fine spring afternoon, under the shelter of the distinctive roof of this unusual gas station museum.

The roof is red tile. Tom says the low maintenance, long-wearing roof was the wives' idea and the one concession the builders made to their spouses in designing the station, nearly 90 years ago.

Tom shares another story about construction: "When they were digging the hole for the [storage] tank, they were using a team of horses. One of the horses backed up, fell in the hole, and laid there upside down. They had to put straps around it. But by the time they did that, the horse had died."

So is there a horse buried in the front of the gas station? "No," Tom says. "They pulled the horse out and kept the hole for the tank."

There are plenty more stories about the memorabilia and garage equipment, from the pair of red 10-gallon Fry pumps that guard the entrance, to the 1950's

toys that came from Tom's boyhood bedroom. There are

"I grew up walking by here every day," says Tom, a Kingwood native. "It was Kelly's Esso then. He sponsored the Little League team."

Naturally, Tom's collection includes one of those Little League uniforms, as well as the Esso station-attendant uniform that was worn by the late Dr. Trenton, a local physician who worked in the station as a teen. There are Esso maps of West Virginia and Esso salt-and-pepper shakers given away as premiums.

Gas station and travel memorabilia fill Tom Westbrook's Esso station, a showplace of service station history.

The station became affiliated with Texaco in 1958, and was a Pure dealership for a while, as well. Tom has all the appropriate memorabilia, plus artifacts from many other gas station brands with no direct association to his property. That doesn't matter to Tom. This free museum is all about jogging pleasant memories of motoring, whether we filled 'er up with Esso, Texaco, Gulf, Sterling, or Elk gasoline.

"The items that are in here are catalysts to get people talking about their youth or years past," Tom says.

He purchased the station in 1993, because he wanted the two-bay garage that's part of the property. A Corvette collector and restorer, Tom needed the space to work on his cars. The seller insisted he also buy the service station and a warehouse next door.

Tom uses the warehouse for his filtration products business. The two-bay garage contains the overflow from his memorabilia collection, which got started shortly after he purchased the property.

"My friend Bob Hart said, 'You ought to turn that service station into the way it was years ago,'" Tom recalls. It just so happened that Bob had a photograph of the station in its prime, and Tom used the image as his guide to restoration.

Tom spent weekends and down time while traveling for business looking for gas station artifacts. He approached it methodically and with the spirit of a preservationist, rather than as a collector As he traveled the pre-Interstate arteries, he looked for the big iron sign-posts indicative of a former service station location. He stopped and talked to whomever was living in the building to find out if remnants of the old station were stashed in a barn, garage, or basement.

As he traveled, Tom carried a portfolio of photographs of his station and shared them, and his vision, with potential artifact donors. He convinced them that putting their items on display in his station would be a way of memorializing their defunct business and marking its contributions to the community and motorist.

"It wasn't their choice to close their business. It was the oil companies' It was something where the little guy didn't have the option to have a business," Tom says of the demise of mom-and-pop stations once the convenience-store trend swept the industry.

Another goal of this venture is to honor the service station's role as a communications hub. "You have to realize that service stations were, at one time, the greatest means of communication in a community," he says. "People came through here all day from different towns and conversed with the attendants.

"I try to accomplish that same type of thing when I'm out here sitting on the bench and exchanging information with visitors," he adds. "I learn about their lives, and if [I have] something they can relate to, I'll bring them inside and show it to them."

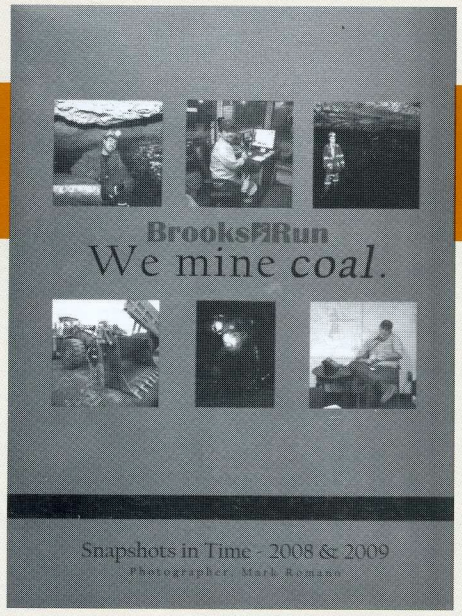
Tom, who opens the station for individuals and tour groups with advance notice, says he wants to keep his station in Kingwood as a community resource and anchor for further preservation.

"In my lifetime, it will never be sold," Tom says. "As long as I'm living, this will be like it is. Hopefully, it will be here after I'm gone, to continue to serve the community and connect the past to the present."

The Westbrook Esso service station is located at 101 West High Street, Kingwood. For information, phone (304)329-1100.

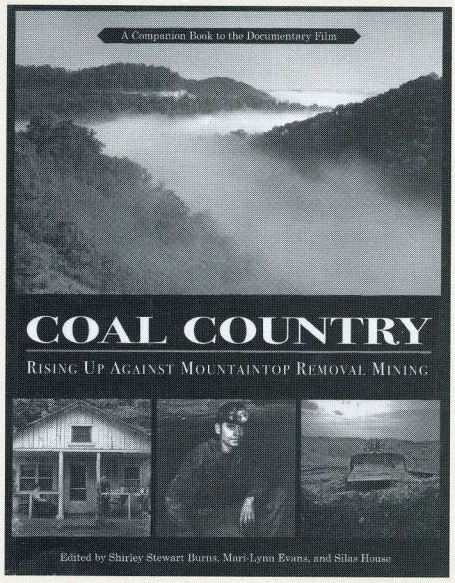
New Books Available

By Kim Johnson



Brooks Run: We Mine Coal (Snapshots in Time 2008 & 2009), by Mark Romano, is a pictorial representation of the several Brooks Run Mining Company sites in West Virginia. The book contains hundreds of black-and-white photographs of coal miners and mining operations at each Brooks Run location, including both deep mine and surface mining operations. The book is divided into two sections: the North section contains chapters regarding each of the Brooks Run sites in Braxton and Webster counties, while the South section contains chapters about operations in Raleigh, Wyoming, and McDowell counties. Brooks Run Mining Company is a subsidiary of Alpha Natural Resources of Abingdon, Virginia, and the company, its workers, and its operations are shown here in a positive light.

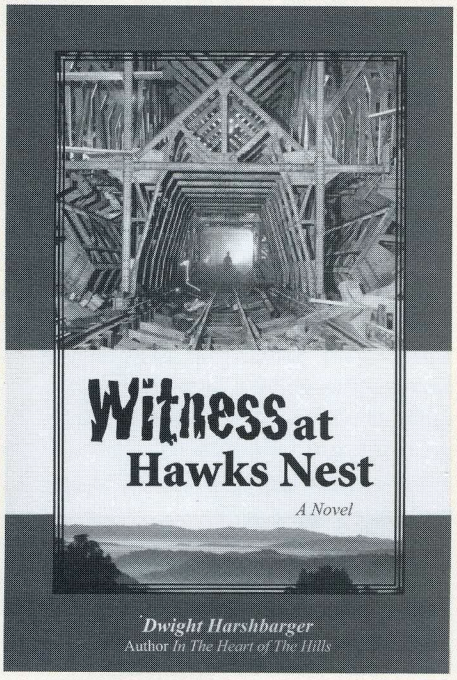
Brooks Run is a 383-page, large-format, hardbound book. It sells for $76.90 and is available from Images by Romano at P.O. Box 455, Summersville, WV 26651. For more information, phone (304)872-1759 or visit www .imagesbyromano.com.



Two other recent titles take a more critical look at the coal industry and surface mining practices in particular. ***Coal Country: Rising Up Against Mountaintop Removal Mining***, edited by Shirley Stewart Burns, Mari-Lynn Evans, and Silas House, is a collection of oral histories, essays, and commentaries that speak out against mountaintop removal mining (MTR). This book is a companion volume to the 2009 documentary DVD *Coal Country*

It contains commentaries by many of the people featured in the film, including West Virginia author Denise Giardina, former congressman Ken Hechler; Robert F Kennedy, Jr.; activist Judy Bonds; writers Wendell Berry and Silas House; entertainers Kathy Mattea, Loretta Lynn, and Ashley Judd; and many others.

Coal Country is a 304-page book containing 20 color photographs and more than 200 black-and-white images, depicting the stark reality of mountaintop removal and its effects on the land. The hardbound edition sells for $40 from West Virginia Book Company; the paperback version is $25.95. For more information, visit wwww.wvbookco.com or phone 1-888-982-1848.



Something's Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal, by Silas House and Jason Howard, is another collection of oral histories regarding the fight against mountaintop removal coal mining. Arranged in 12 chapters, the book includes profiles of West Virginia writer Denise Giardina, Grammy-winning singer Kathy Mattea, Kentucky mountain singer Jean Ritchie, activists Larry Bush and Judy Bonds, and others, highlighting their roles in the MTR-resistance movement.

Something's Rising is a hardbound edition and contains 320 pages, an extensive bibliography and notes section, and an index. The book sells for $27.95, plus $5 shipping, from the University Press of Kentucky, on-line at www.kentuckypress.com. For additional information, phone 1-800-537-5487

Witness at Hawks Nest, by Dwight Harshbarger, is a recent novel about the construction of

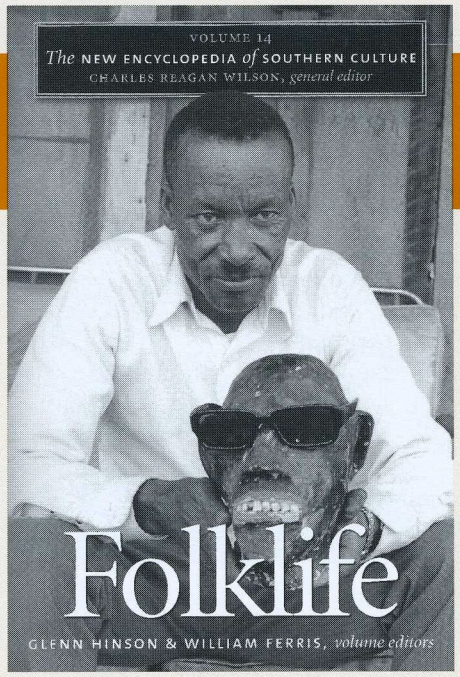
the Hawks Nest tunnel near Ansted. The tunnel was dug through Gauley Mountain in 1930-35 to divert the waters of the New River to create hydroelectric power for the Union Carbide Corporation plant at Alloy. A large percentage of the tunnel workers became fatally ill with silicosis from inhaling the deadly dust from the silica rock of Gauley Mountain, resulting in at least 700 deaths.

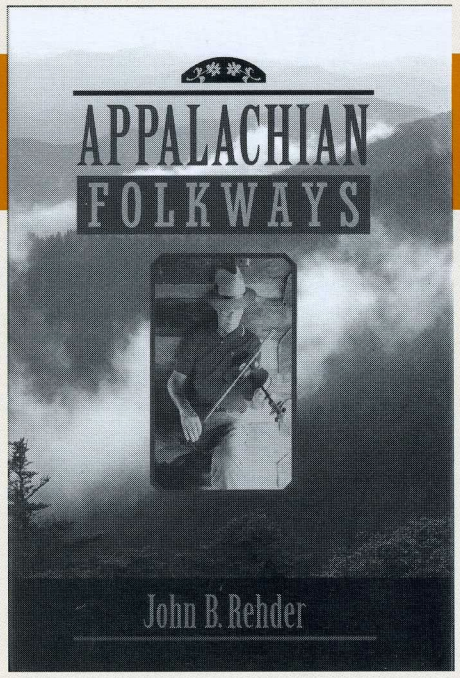
A controversial 1942 novel by Hubert Skidmore titled, *Hawk's Nest*, drew public attention to this tragedy. Author Dwight Harshbarger acknowledges Skidmore's groundbreaking work, then creates his own fact-based narrative.

Witness at Hawks Nest is a story about the men who worked in the tunnel and the families who cared about them. It is also a story about company cover-ups and corporate deceit. An epilogue gives factual details about outcomes of the court trials that were held in the mid-1930's and a later congressional investigation of the incident.

Witness at Hawks Nest is 261-page paperback edition from Publisher's Place in Huntington. It sells for $13.95, plus shipping, from the West Virginia Book Company For more information, visit wwww.wvbookco.com or phone 1-888-982-1848.

Four recent releases or reissued titles discuss the Appalachian region, its folklife, and cultural heritage. ***The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture — Volume 14: Folklife***, edited by Glenn Hinson and William Ferris, is the latest volume in the encyclopedia series published by the University of North Carolina Press. *Volume 14.*





Folklife takes a look at a range of southern folk traditions, such as religion, language, music, and foodways, as well as geography, literature, and other topics.

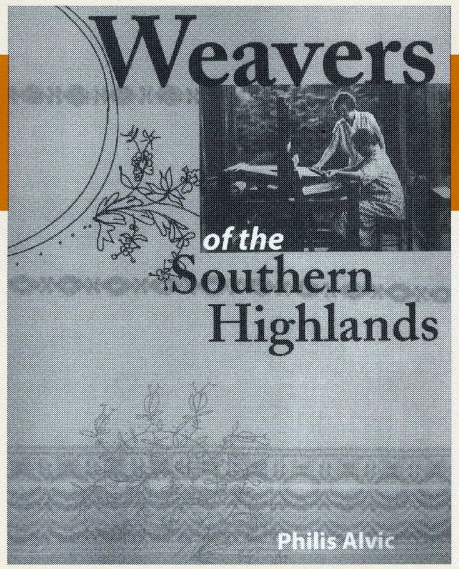
Folklife is revealed as a dynamic part of daily life in many southern communities. Topics such as funeral rituals and death lore, quilting and needlework, cockfighting and coon hounds, folk medicine and moonshine stills are explored in brief, informative entries.

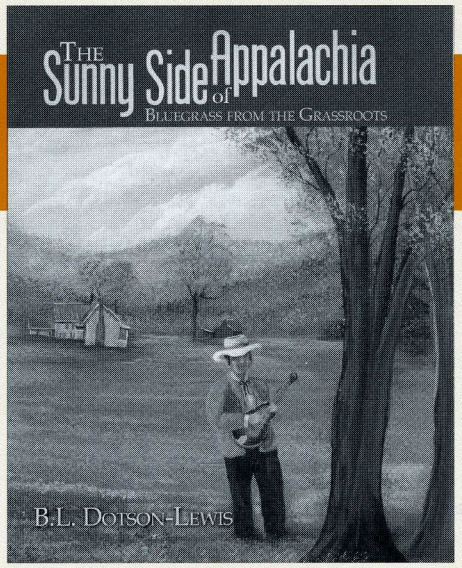
The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture — Volume 14. Folklife includes 424 pages, 40 illustrations, and an index. The hardbound edition is available for $45; $22.95 in paperback, from the University of North Carolina Press, on the Web at www.uncpress.unc.edu or phone 1-800-848-6224.

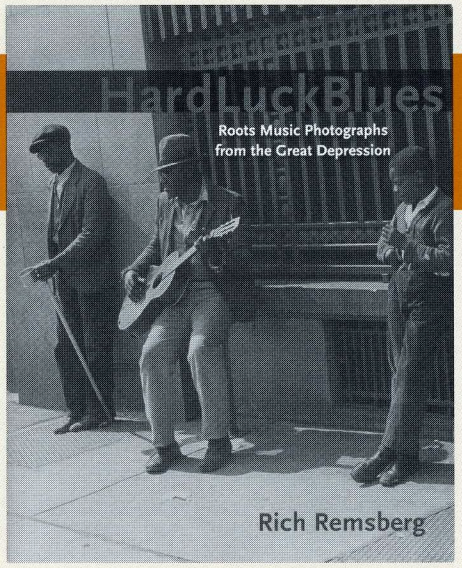
Appalachian Folkways, by University of Tennessee geography professor John B. Rehder, takes a wide-ranging look at rural Appalachia and some of its distinct cultural features. Rehder examines the region's traditional lifestyle, music, art, folk medicine, beliefs, and customs. He also explores the physical region and how it is defined by steep mountains, deep forests, and abundant streams. Chapters include the Shape of Appalachia, Ethnicity and Settlement, the Cultural Landscape, Ways of Making a Living, Foodways, Folk Music, Folk Art and Folk Festivals, Folk Remedies, and Folk Speech.

Appalachian Folkways is a hardbound volume with 368 pages, extensive notes, bibliography, and index. The book, published in 2004, is available for $39.95 from the Johns Hopkins University Press on the Web at www press.jhu.edu; phone 1-800-537-5487

The Southern Highlander and His Homeland, by John C. Campbell, is a study of Appalachian culture, music, art, religion, and history, originally published in 1921. In the early 1900's, Campbell and his wife, Olive, traveled on horseback throughout Appalachia. He interviewed farmers about their agricultural practices, while she collected ballads and studied handicrafts. After Campbell died in 1919, Olive and her friend, Marguerite Butler, established the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, where students study Appalachian culture.







The Southern Highlander and His Homeland offers a unique view of Appalachia and its traditions as they were observed in the early 20th century. Campbell documents a way of life that has all but vanished today, but which thrived at one time in these mountains. He includes such topics as quilts, musical instruments, furniture, baskets, ballads, and tales.

Long out of print, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* was republished in 1969 by the University Press of Kentucky; the paperback edition was released in 2004. This 504-page volume, including an index, an extensive bibliography, and more than 90 black-and-white photographs, sells for $25 from the University Press of Kentucky, on the Web at www.kentuckypress.com, phone 1-800-537-5487

Weavers of the Southern Highlands, by Philis Alvic, presents a history of weaving in southern Appalachia, with background on weaving centers in Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia. These weaving centers were once vital to the economic growth in the region, allowing weavers to promote and sell their handiwork. Weaving was a way for women to contribute to their family's financial stability. Alvic shows how the development of the weaving centers became the basis for the craft revival movement in the area during the 1920's, '30's, and '40's.

Based on nearly 100 oral history interviews and drawing on more than 12 years of travel and research, Alvic offers a detailed and in-depth look at the art, craft, history, and business of weaving traditions throughout the region.

Weavers of the Southern Highlands is a 258-page paperbound volume with an index, extensive notes, and a bibliography. The book is illustrated throughout with black-and-white photographs, maps, and other useful graphics. It sells for $30 from the University Press of Kentucky, on the Web at www.kentuckypress.com, phone 1-800-537-5487

The Sunny Side of Appalachia: Bluegrass from the Grassroots, by B.L. Dotson-Lewis, is a bluegrass music fan's festival scrapbook. It contains interviews with some of the pioneers of bluegrass music, such as Everett Lilly, Jesse McReynolds, Bobby Osborne, and Melvin Goins. An article about Bill Monroe is also included.

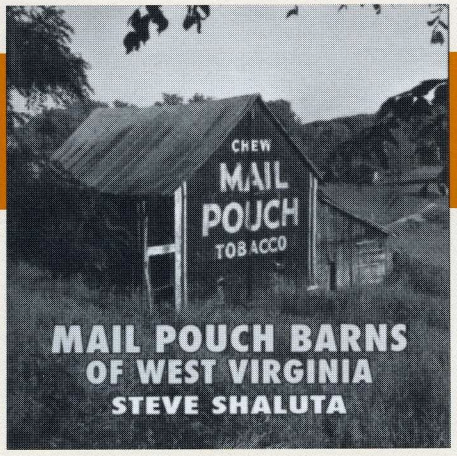
West Virginia native B.L. Dotson-Lewis interviews Edgar and Eunice Kitchen of Summersville about the 1981 founding of the Music in the Mountains bluegrass festival held near Summersville each June, one of the largest and most successful bluegrass festivals in the country.

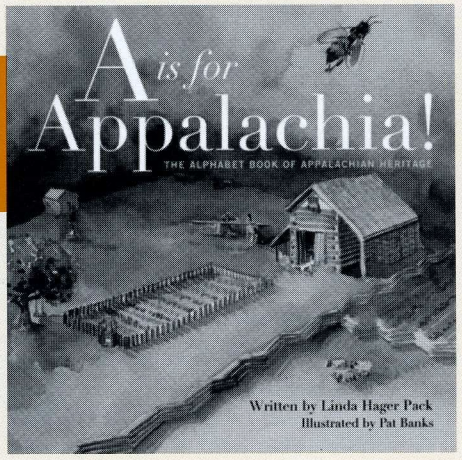
The Sunny Side of Appalachia includes numerous black-and-white photographs of bluegrass musicians and fans. The 184-page large-format book is available for $15.95 from the West Virginia Book Company; phone 1-888-982-7472 or e-mail wvbooks@verizon.net.

Hard Luck Blues: Roots Music Photographs from the Great Depression, by Rich Remsburg, is a compilation of black-and-white photographs taken during the Depression era by the New Deal's Farm Security Administration (FSA) photography program, which began in 1935.

The collection shows a wide range of musicians from across the country sharing music in their homes, at barn dances, in migrant worker camps, and on the streets, as well as in more formal settings such as concert halls and churches. West Virginia pictures include several photographs taken at Scotts Run in 1935.

Hard Luck Blues is a 256-page, paperbound book. It contains 240 black-and-white photographs with documentary notes and captions, an index, and an extensive bibliography. It sells for $34.95 from the University of Illinois





Press at www press.uillinois.edu. Phone 1-800-621-2736 for more information.

Mail Pouch Barns of West Virginia, by photographer Steve Shaluta, is a collection of photographs of Mail Pouch tobacco signs from across the state. Most of these photographs were taken between 2003 and 2005. Shaluta always enjoyed the Mail Pouch barns scattered across the mountains, so he decided to locate and photograph as many of them as possible. In addition to barns, signs painted on garages and other buildings are also included, as well as any sign painted by Harley Warrick, the last official Mail Pouch sign painter. Warrick passed away in 2000. [See "Interviewing the Best: Tom Screven Talks to the Mail Pouch Man," by Tom Screven, Winter 1994.]

Mail Pouch Barns of West Virginia has 144 pages, containing 143 full-color photographs, arranged alphabetically by county. Driving directions to each location are included. The book sells for $14.95, plus shipping, from the West Virginia Book Company. For more information, visit www wvbookco.com or phone 1-888-982-1848.

Pictorial History of Paint Creek: 1750's-1950's, by Dale Payne, is a collection of photographs and local information from the Paint Creek area of Kanawha, Fayette, and Raleigh counties. Payne includes histories of the towns and the early settlers of the region. Each community's section includes many old photographs of families, schools, churches, coal company stores and facilities, baseball teams, businesses, and post offices.

Pictorial History of Paint Creek is a 336-page, large-format paperbound book, containing hundreds of vintage black-and-white photographs. The book sells for $35.80 from Dale Payne, Rt.3 Box 75, Fayetteville, WV 25840; phone (304)574-3354 for more information.

A is for Appalachia!: The Alphabet Book of Appalachian Heritage, by Linda Hager Pack and illustrated by Pat Banks, is an alphabet book that introduces young children to letters while also providing a look at traditions and life in Appalachia. Entertaining as well as informative, it includes such themes as Appalachian music, quilts, ghost stories, and folk tales. The letters of the alphabet are accompanied by attractive watercolor scenes that illustrate Appalachian people of all ages involved in their daily lives.

A is for Appalachia! is a hardbound book, containing 44 colorfully illustrated pages. It sells for $16.95 from the University Press of Kentucky, on the Web at www .kentuckypress.com, phone 1-800-537-5487

KIM JOHNSON is editorial assistant for GOLDENSEAL magazine.

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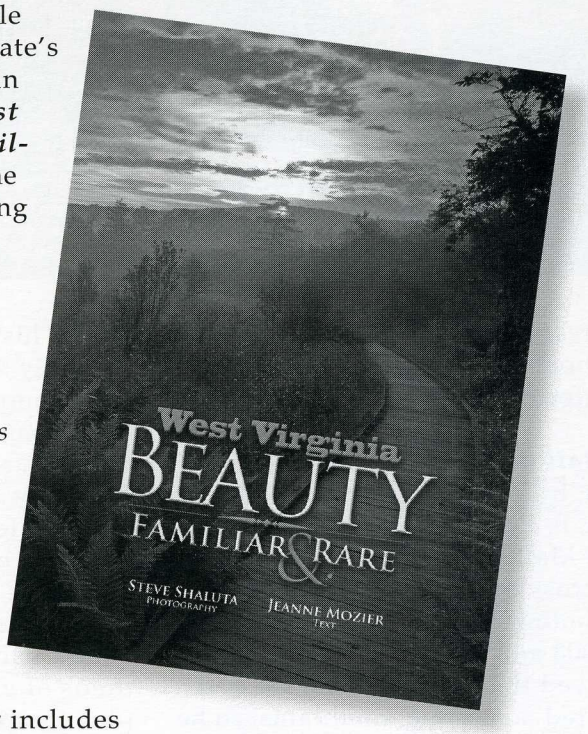
Familiar and Rare



A lush new coffee table book shows off our state's visual attractiveness in stunning fashion. ***West Virginia Beauty: Familiar & Rare*** features the work of award-winning photographer Steve Shaluta with text and captions by Jeanne Mozier. This is the second large-format photo book from this pair — 2005's *Wonders of West Virginia* met with an enthusiastic response. Both books highlight Shaluta's remarkable eye and Mozier's animated take on the Mountain State.

West Virginia Beauty includes many of the pleasing images we have come to expect of Shaluta from his years of work with the West Virginia Department of Commerce and Division of Tourism, as well as *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine: breathtaking sunsets, adorable wildlife, and exquisitely framed rural scenes. Also included here are actions shots (snowboarders, race horses, and whitewater rafters), historic sites (coke ovens, statues, and courthouses), and cultural activities (actors, re-enactors, and musicians).

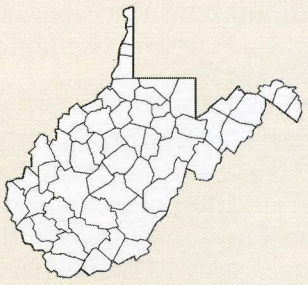
The printing and presentation are first rate. The book's random system of organization makes for a surprise on nearly every page. And the $29.95 cover price makes this attractive volume even more appealing.

West Virginia Beauty: Familiar & Rare is published by Quarrier Press and is available from the West Virginia Book Company; phone 1-888-982-1848, on-line at www.wvbookco.com.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Ginseng
- Fiddler Bobby Taylor
- Huntington's Memorial Arch
- Desperado Holly Griffith



This well-worn threshold and colorful door are emblematic of the unique town of Helvetia, Randolph County, and its rich Swiss heritage. Photograph by Steve Shaluta, from the book *West Virginia Beauty: Familiar & Rare*. For more information, see page 72. Our story about the Balli sisters of Helvetia begins on page 10.

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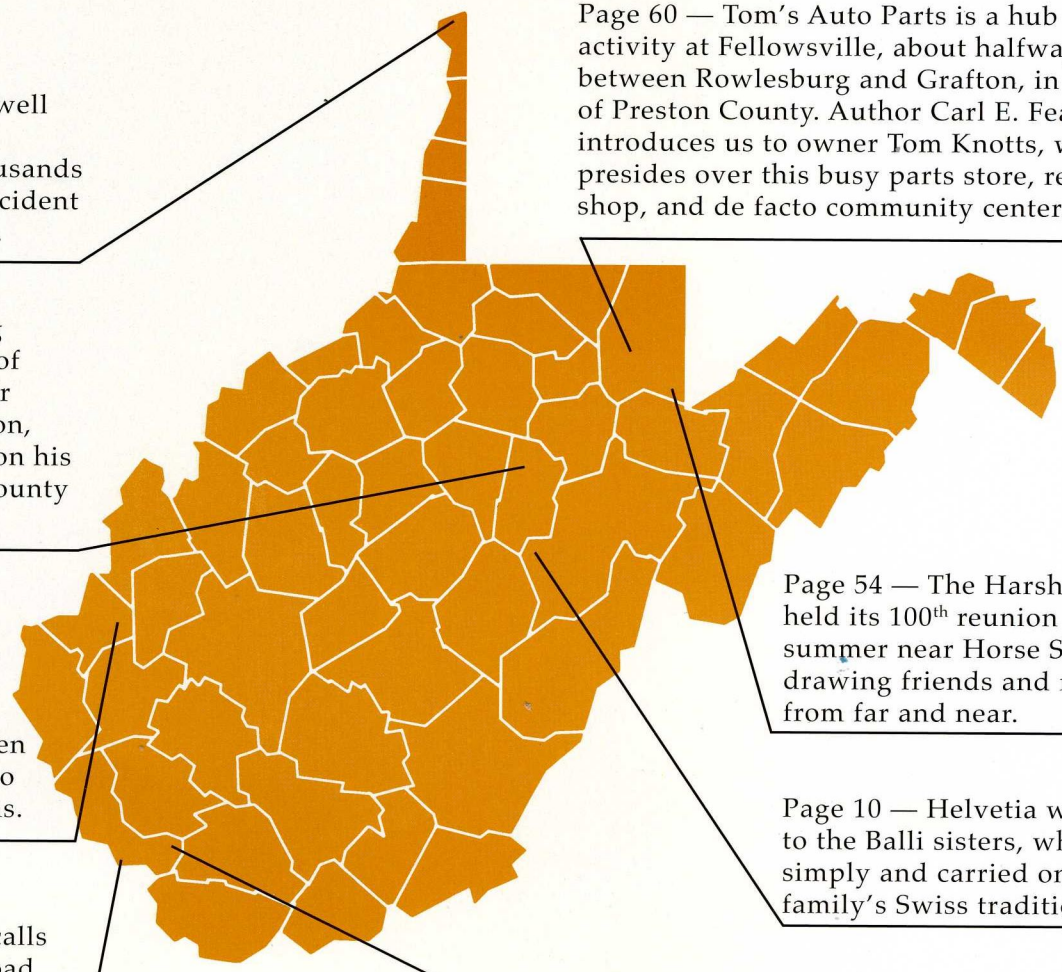
Inside Goldenseal



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