

Steamboats • Herman Isner • Kimball • Morris Brothers

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Spring 2011

\$5.95



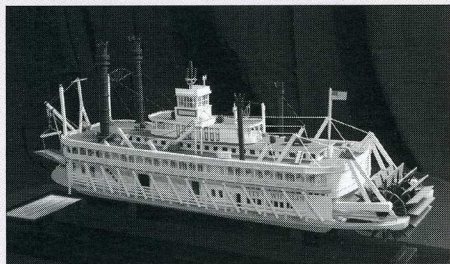
Stepping!

Folklife • Fairs • Festivals 2011

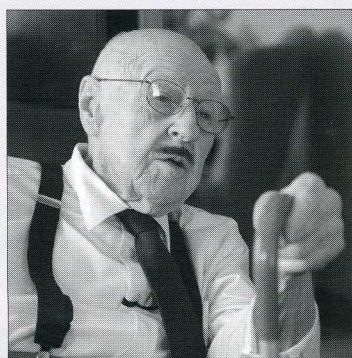
GOLDENSEAL's "Folklife • Fairs • Festivals" calendar is prepared three to six months in advance of publication. The information was accurate as far as we could determine at the time the magazine went to press. However, it is advisable to check with the organization or event to make certain that the date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

March 17-20 Ireland (452-8962)	30 th Annual Irish Spring Festival	May 27-29 State Capitol Complex/Charleston (558-0162)	35 th Vandalia Gathering
March 18-19 Sistersville (771-8699)	11 th Annual Sisters Fest	May 27-30 White Sulphur Springs (536-5060)	Dandelion Festival
March 18-20 Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)	George Washington's Bathtub Celebration	May 27-30 Grafton (265-1589)	Spirit of Grafton Celebration
March 18-20 Shepherdstown (263-2531)	Upper Potomac Spring Dulcimer Festival	May 30-June 4 Cottageville (882-2049)	21 st Annual Gospel Jubilee
March 18-21 Pipestem Resort State Park (466-1800)	25 th Annual Irish Heritage Festival	June 2-4 Grantsville (354-9725)	Calhoun County Wood Festival
March 19-20 Pickens (924-5096)	W.Va. Maple Syrup Festival	June 2-5 Philippi (457-2368)	Blue & Gray Reunion
April 2 Parkersburg (740-423-4744)	Scottish & Celtic Heritage Festival	June 4 Tamarack/Beckley (1-888-262-7225)	Appalachian Music Festival
April 2-3 Webster Springs (847-2145)	Wildwater River Festival	June 4 Caretta (875-3418)	Mountain Music Festival
April 15-17 Huntington (696-5990)	Dogwood Arts & Crafts Festival	June 4 Morgantown (864-0105)	Pattyfest
April 15-17 Weston (269-1030)	Glass Fest	June 9-12 Ronceverte (647-7400)	Ronceverte River Festival
April 16 Richwood (846-6790)	73 rd Feast of the Ramson	June 10-12 Matewan (426-5744)	Hatfield-McCoy Reunion Festival
April 22-24 Hawks Nest State Park (1-800-927-0263)	Wildflower Weekend	June 10-12 Shenandoah Junction (1-800-624-0577)	Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
April 29-May 1 Petersburg (257-2722)	19 th Spring Mountain Festival	June 11-12 Worthington (287-7240)	Lower West Fork River Fest
April 29-May 1 Franklin (358-3884)	Spring Fest	June 14-18 Madison (369-9118)	W.Va. Coal Festival
April 30 Wardensville (897-8700)	63 rd Annual Quartets on Parade	June 16-19 Glenville (462-5000)	W.Va. State Folk Festival
April 30 Helvetia (924-6435)	Helvetia Ramp Dinner	June 17-19 Ansted (658-5901)	Hometown Mountain Heritage Festival
May 6-8 Bridgeport (842-0370)	Scottish Heritage Festival & Celtic Gathering	June 17-19 Parkersburg (428-5554)	Mid-Ohio Valley Multi-Cultural Festival
May 7 Albright (329-3621)	Cheat River Festival	June 17-19 West Huntington (544-4880)	Old Central City Days Festival
May 7 North Bend State Park (643-2523)	Engines & Wheels Festival	June 17-26 Charleston (364-8972)	FestivALL
May 7-8 Point Pleasant (675-5737)	Antique Steam & Gas Engine Show	June 23-25 Summersville (706-864-7203)	31 st Music in the Mountains Bluegrass Festival
May 7-8 Webster (265-5549)	Mother's Day Founder's Festival	June 23-25 Summersville (765-5148)	W.Va. Quilt Festival
May 8 Grafton (265-5549)	103 rd Observance of Mother's Day	June 24-26 Hillsboro (1-800-336-7009)	Little Levels Heritage Fair
May 14 Martinsburg (267-4713)	Berkeley County Heritage Day	June 30-July 2 Point Pleasant (593-2404)	21 st Annual Point Pleasant Sternwheel Regatta
May 14 Bramwell (325-8438)	Bramwell Spring Home Tour	June 30-July 2 Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-7860)	Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
May 14 Huntington (522-1244)	Heritage Farm Spring Festival	July 6-10 Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)	45 th Annual Pioneer Days
May 14 Matewan (426-5744)	Matewan Massacre Re-enactment	July 8-9 Bridgeport (1-800-368-4324)	Benedum Festival
May 14 St. Albans (395-0155)	St. Albans Founders Day	July 8-10 Talcott (466-1729)	John Henry Days
May 18-22 Buckhannon (472-9036)	70 th W.Va. Strawberry Festival	July 13-17 Durbin (1-800-336-7009)	Durbin Days Heritage Festival
May 20-22 Point Pleasant (675-7933)	Siege of Fort Randolph	July 16 Terra Alta (789-2481)	Alpine Lake Bluegrass Festival
May 25-28 Fairmont (368-1123)	Three Rivers Festival	July 22-24 Sutton (765-6533)	Mountain Lakes Festival
May 25-29 Webster Springs (847-7666)	Webster County Woodchopping Festival		

(continued on inside back cover)



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On the cover: Former students at West Virginia State University participate in a step show at Institute last fall. Photograph by Tyler Evert. Our story begins on page 46.

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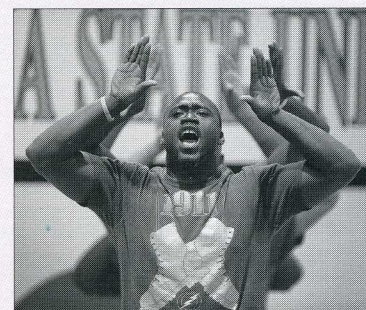
- 70 New Books Available
By John Lilly



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Published by the
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From the Editor

Sometimes I marvel at the way all the pieces fall together as we come down the homestretch on any particular issue of GOLDENSEAL. Two weeks ago, we were scratching our heads because we lacked a suitable color photograph for the cover. As you can see, that turned out not to be a problem, as designer Anne Strawn waved her magic wand (and her computer mouse) and came up with the colorful creation that graces the cover of this magazine.

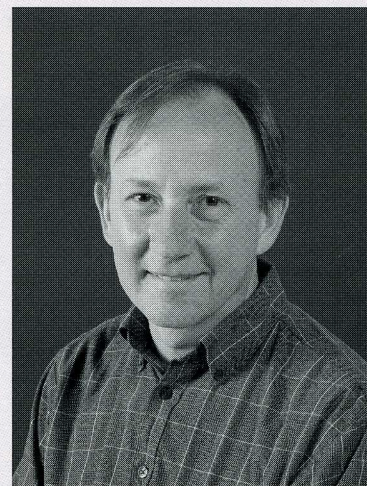
Last quarter, we stumbled upon a wealth of attractive images concerning the Weir High School Band's trip to the 1960 Rose Bowl parade. We are especially grateful to Dennis Jones and the Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center for their help and generosity, as well as to drum major Tyrone Price, whose mother had the foresight to fill several scrapbooks with snapshots and memorabilia. Check out the Weirton History Game on page 7 of this issue.

Our photographs come from various sources, including the West Virginia State Archives, the West Virginia and Regional History Collection at WVU, and many other institutions, as well as from our talented staff photographer(s). The majority, however, are lent to us by story subjects and authors. They are loath to part with their precious family photos, even for a short while, but without them I don't believe we'd have a magazine. Certainly not this magazine.

Our stories come from all sides, as well. As editor, I am eternally grateful to regular contributors, particularly the brilliant, prolific, and reliable Carl E. Feather, whose manuscripts cover a range of imaginative topics and arrive complete with beautiful photography. Thanks, as always, Carl!

This issue is unusual in that I have written a number of the stories. Typically, GOLDENSEAL articles come from freelance writers. Many don't think of themselves as a "freelance writer," but simply have a story to tell and they won't rest until somebody listens. We pride ourselves on our open-door policy on manuscript submissions, often publishing authors for the first time. In this issue, for example, we are pleased to introduce Jessie Lee Maiuri, whose article about her mother is her first and stands shoulder-to-shoulder with anything we have seen. Congratulations, Jessie!

We are always looking for stories and oral histories about living West Virginians. If you feel inspired to join us, please write and request our contributor guidelines, or visit www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/contrib.html.

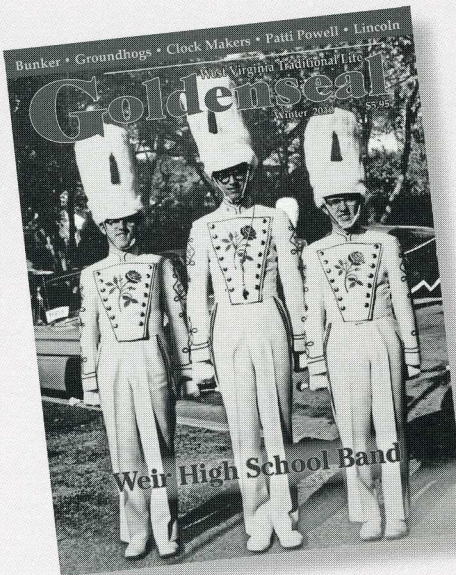


PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KELLER

John Lilly

Letters from Readers

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



Winter Issue

December 22, 2010

Keystone Heights, Florida

via e-mail

Editor:

Received and read the Winter 2010 issue of GOLDENSEAL. Marvelous! Loved the Weir High School Band cover. [See "Weir Going West: A High School Band and a Very Big Parade," by Tom Tarowsky.] The Tucker County Clock Man was a lovely story as well. [See "Doyle Kisner: Tucker County's Single-Handed Clock Man," by Carl E. Feather.]

Congratulations. I hope the spring issue will be its equal, which will be an amazing feat. C.W. (Bill) Jarrett

Thanks, Bill. We appreciate those kind comments. I'm sure our readers will enjoy your railroad piece in this issue. See page 36. —ed.

December 14, 2010

Richmond, Virginia

via e-mail

Editor:

Many thanks for running the

nice article on the Weir High School Marching Band in your last issue. Even though it was penned by my brother-in-law, Tom Tarowsky, this was the first time I'd seen it. I know Tom was excited to see it in print. He was even more excited to see that the piece made the front cover.

You and your staff are putting out an excellent publication. Please keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Guy B. Young II

Bunker

December 9, 2010

Poca, West Virginia

via e-mail

Editor:

"Hidden in Plain Sight" was most interesting! [See "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Greenbrier's Bunker," by Bob Conte; Winter 2010.] West Virginia has another — although much smaller — connection to the Cold War "Continuity of Government" strategy.

The *USS Wright* was a National Command Communications ship designated as an escape for the president and top Joint Chiefs of Staff had a nuclear attack upon the United States occurred. Three West Virginia boys served on that Cold War presidential command post afloat. My good friend and fellow

Charlestonian, Tom Michels, and I reported aboard the *USS Wright* in December 1967 and found John Pauley of St. Albans close to finishing his tour aboard the ship. Karl C. Priest

December 10, 2010

via e-mail

Editor:

I was hired by AT&T in 1963 to work in the bunker as a communications technician. I spent a year working at microwave stations in Virginia and West Virginia until I obtained a top-secret clearance and a project clearance to access the bunker. [I recall] a wealth of day-to-day activities from doing my job there, as well as names of both AT&T and government people I worked with. The article in GOLDENSEAL is an overview from a person who knew only enough to get into print.

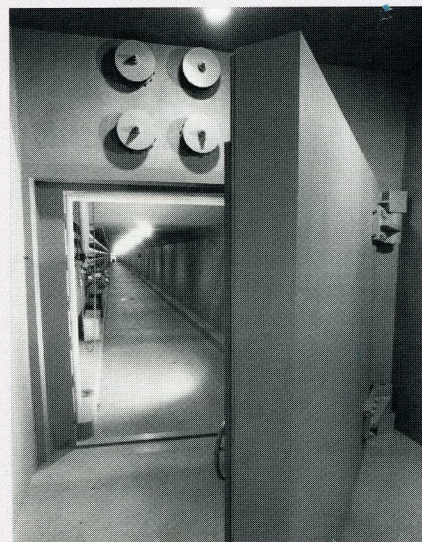
I know the entire communications layout and history, as I was there at the time. I knew the government people and some of their

local aliases.

For some reason none of this nuts-and-bolts stuff has ever surfaced, probably because of the security oaths that we took back then.

I am hesitant to speak of it even today, but I don't think that what I have written here is enough to warrant a visit from men in black coats.

Jerrold Taylor



Blast door at The Greenbrier bunker. Photograph by Dan Dry.

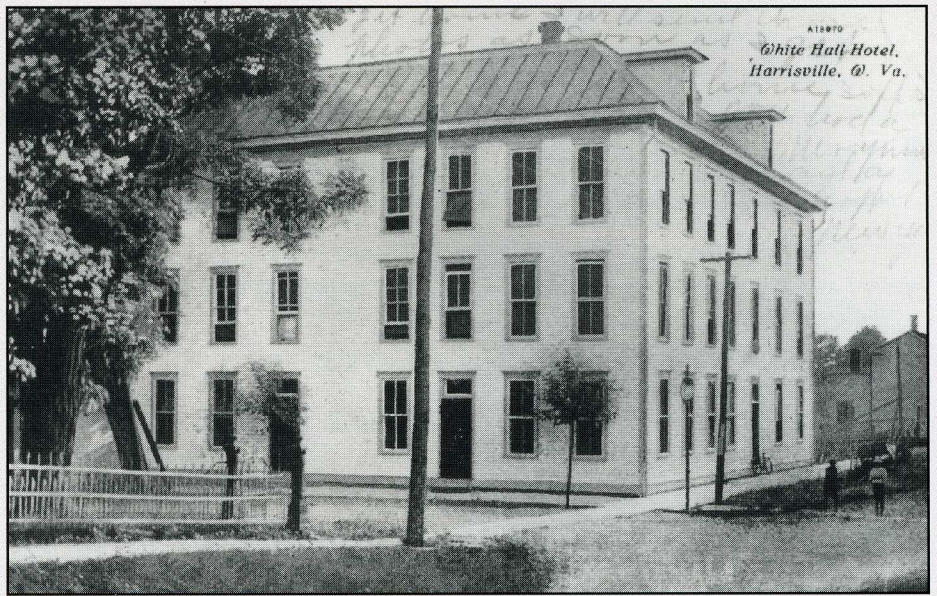
Sesquicentennial Timeline

Milestones on the Road to Statehood



- **March 4, 1861** – Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th president of the United States.
- **April 12, 1861** – Confederate troops opened fire on Fort Sumter, South Carolina.
- **April 15, 1861** – President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to put down the southern rebellion.
- **April 17, 1861** – Commonwealth of Virginia seceded from the Union.
- **April 27, 1861** – The Virginia State Convention passed an ordinance providing for the organization of a provisional army of Virginia.
- **May 13, 1861** – The First Wheeling Convention was called to order
- **May 14, 1861** – John Carlile proposed the creation of New Virginia at the First Wheeling Convention.
- **May 15, 1861** – The First Wheeling Convention voted the ordinance of secession unconstitutional, null, and void.
- **May 20, 1861** – Virginia troops arriving at Clarksburg were met by Union militia and surrendered their arms.
- **May 23, 1861** – Ordinance of secession was ratified by voters of Virginia.

(For more information, visit www.wvculture.org/history/sesquicentennial/timeline.html)



1910 postcard view of the Whitehall Hotel in Harrisville.

Whitehall Hotel

December 14, 2010

Parkersburg, West Virginia
Editor

The story of Harrisville's Whitehall Hotel brought back memories. [See "Christmas Apples," by Wanda Collins; Winter 2010.] Born and raised in Ritchie County, I recall Ms. Wanda Easton Collins, as well as Mary Lucille DeBerry and her writings. [See "'A Home Away From Home' Harrisville's Whitehall Hotel," by Mary Lucille DeBerry; Winter 1999.]

My mother, Ethel (Rexroad) Wilson, worked in the kitchen of the hotel a few hours through the evening meal. At that time, it was called "supper." We lived just a couple of blocks from the hotel. I worked swing shift at Mid-Atlantic Glass in Ellenboro and was still living at home. If I wasn't scheduled to work, I would often have supper at the hotel, usually with others associated with the operation: Tom Reeves, Jim Deem, and Bill Childers.

I recall wedding receptions, showers, birthday parties, and other social events at the establishment. Today, the site of the grand old hotel is now a parking lot. We've come a long way
Respectfully,
J.B. Wilson

Hundred

November 26, 2010

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Editor

My mom worked at the old Wheeling Hospital. The Southern soldiers were treated there during the Civil War. The steamboats used to toot their whistles when they went by.

The Winter 2009 article about Hundred was especially interesting to us. [See "As It Was in Hundred. Recalling Life in a Wetzel County Town," by Bob Masters.] My grandmother and aunt were living in Green County, Pennsylvania, though their address was Littleton, Wetzel County. I heard it said that Hundred got its name from an old man who worked on the B&O trains. And they said, "Oh, there's Old Hundred!" Any thoughts?

Tom D Phillips

According to the book, History of Wetzel County, West Virginia, by John C. McElDowney, the town of Hundred was named for Henry Church. Born in England in 1750, he lived to be 109 and his wife 107. He was known as "Old Hundred," and the train did, indeed, stop at his home. The town was founded on his land and was named in his honor. His log-built house was a landmark on Main Street for many years. Thanks for writing! —ed.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Country music legend **Doc Williams** passed away on January 31, 2011, at the age of 96. A fixture at the WWVA *Wheeling Jamboree* for more than 50 years, Doc; his wife, Chickie; and their three daughters, "Peeper," "Poochie," and "Punkin," became household names throughout the Northeast states and Eastern Canada. Their recordings, personal appearances, and regular radio broadcasts featured old-fashioned music, traditional values, and sentimental themes. Born Andrew John Smik, Jr., in 1914, he came to Wheeling with his Border Riders group in 1937. He wed Jessie "Chickie" Crupe in 1939, and the pair made their permanent home in Wheeling. Doc and Chickie were inducted into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame in 2009. Doc was featured in our Spring 1987 issue, in an article titled, "Doc Williams: A Half Century at the 'Wheeling Jamboree,'" by Ivan Tribe. The article also appears in the book *Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from Goldenseal*; see coupon at right.



Doc Williams. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Marie Cooley Robinette was born in Mingo County in 1910. On May 19, 1920, she became witness to one of the most infamous gun battles in American history as Baldwin-Felts detectives and striking miners exchanged fire at Matewan, resulting in the deaths of 10 people. Known today as the Matewan Massacre, the event was a key moment in the West Virginia Mine Wars and was immortalized in the John Sayles movie *Matewan*. Marie was the last known surviving witness to that event. She was featured in our Winter 2004 edition



Marie Cooley Robinette. Photograph by Michael Keller.

in an article titled, "Eyewitness: Marie Robinette of Matewan," by Dallas H. Jude. Raised in a railroad family, Marie married a railroad man at age 17. She raised five children and worked in health care. In her later years, she was honored in Matewan as part of a historical re-enactment of the events of 1920. Marie passed away on October 24, 2010. She was 100 years old.

Mountains of Music

WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL MUSIC FROM GOLDENSEAL

Edited by John Lilly



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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Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL. Send to:
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Charleston, WV 25305-0300
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The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars



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

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

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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.



John Bowman and his model of the *Homer Smith* at the Point Pleasant River Museum, with Homer Smith's granddaughters Nancy Jewell and Lynn Durst.

River Museum

The Point Pleasant River Museum will host its annual Shanty Boat Night on Friday, April 8, at 6 p.m., featuring shanty boat vittles and live entertainment. Shanty Boat Night is a fund-raising event for the museum, and admission is \$25.

The Point Pleasant River Museum is the only museum dedicated to rivers in West Virginia. Located in Mason County at the confluence of the Kanawha and Ohio rivers, the museum focuses on river life and commercial enterprise on the river. Highlights of the museum include a 2,400-gallon aquarium, a working pilot house, and a research library. Museum displays highlight boat construction; historic sternwheelers, steamers, and towboats; and river disasters, including the 1967 Silver Bridge tragedy. The collection houses five highly detailed scale model ships built by John

Bowman of Wheeling. [See "Modeling History: John Bowman and his Steamboats," by Carl E. Feather; page 8.]

The Point Pleasant River Museum is located at 28 Main Street, Point Pleasant. Hours are Tuesday-Friday 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The museum

is closed on Monday. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$1 for children, and free for Life Members. For more information, call (304)674-0144; on the Web at www.pprivermuseum.com.

Black History Map

The J.R. Clifford Project has issued a new map, indicating key locations related to the history of African Americans in West Virginia. The map titled, *Justice in the Mountains: A Tour Through West Virginia's African American History*, highlights 27 important sites, from Weirton's steel mills to the African American World War I Memorial in Kimball. A highlight of the map is an inset illustrating the route of the Underground Railroad through West Virginia and a timeline of significant historical events.

The reverse side of the map is a poster, describing the contributions and achievements of African

American West Virginians in the areas of civil rights, education, military service, law, arts and humanities, and religion.

John Robert Clifford, born in 1848 near Moorefield, was West Virginia's first African American attorney. He was a Civil War veteran, a graduate of Storer College in Harpers Ferry, newspaper publisher, teacher, and civil rights pioneer. Clifford was also a founding member of the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the modern NAACP.

Justice in the Mountains is available at no charge from the J.R. Clifford Project, 501 Elizabeth St., Suite 3, Charleston, WV 25311. Call (304)345-7663 for more information or visit www.jrclifford.org.

Augusta Scholarships

The Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College is offering a limited number of folk art scholarships for West Virginia residents through an application process. The purpose of the program is to promote and perpetuate traditional music, dance, and

handcrafts in West Virginia.

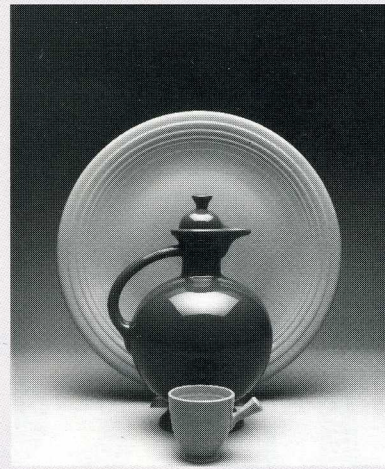
The Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops take place during July and early August on the campus of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins. Applicants may request to participate in a variety of workshops, including old-time, bluegrass, and early country music. Preference will be given to arts and crafts that are traditional to the Appalachian region.

For more information, contact West Virginia Folk Art Scholarship Program Coordinator Gerry Milnes at (304)637-1334, or e-mail milnesg@dewv.edu. Interested applicants should contact Gerry Milnes before applying for a scholarship. Folk art scholarship applications should be postmarked by April 1.

Kimball Memorial Anniversary

2011 marks the 83rd anniversary of the original dedication of the African American World War I Memorial in Kimball. A ceremony will take place at the newly renovated Memorial on Saturday, April 9, beginning at 5:00 p.m., followed by a fund-raising banquet. Tickets for the banquet are \$25. For more information, call Clara Thompson at (304)585-7789.

The building was first dedicated in 1928, as a monument to African American veterans who served in World War I. The building deteriorated over the years and was damaged by a fire in 1991; however, the memorial has recently been restored through community efforts. Now known as the Kimball World War I Memorial, it is a social and cultural center for the southern West Virginia coalfields. [See "Kimball's War Memorial"; page 44.]



Fiestaware. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Fiestaware Exhibit

A display of Fiestaware will be open to the public in the Theater Gallery of the Culture Center in Charleston from April 5 until June 26. The exhibit marks the 75th anniversary of this popu-

lar line of tableware, introduced in 1936 by the Homer Laughlin China Company of Newell. The brilliantly colored and inexpensive pieces were produced until 1973, when the line was phased out. Fiestaware was re-introduced in the 1986, and continues in popularity today.

For more information, call Betty Gay at (304)558-0200; on-line at www.wvculture.org.

Weirton History Game

Test your knowledge about the history of Weirton and surrounding communities with the Weirton Area History Game. The game was designed by Dennis Jones, president of the Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center.

The entertaining and educational game includes a game board, metal game pieces, and question cards. The colorful container is made from tinsplate produced at the Weirton Tin Mill. The game also comes with a DVD of more than 200 historical photos of Weirton, surrounding areas, and notable citizens. The Weirton Area History Game is available for \$50. Proceeds benefit the museum.

The Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center is located at 3393 Main Street in Weirton. For more information call Dennis Jones at (304)479-7266; on-line at www.weirtonmuseum.com.



Augusta stained-glass instructor David Houser with student.

Modeling History

John Bowman
and his Steamboats

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather





Once a common sight around Wheeling, a sidewheel packet plies the Ohio River. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Kirk's Photo Center Collection.

When John Bowman was a lad growing up in rural Wellsburg, his mother purchased a model airplane kit made of balsa wood and sent him to his bedroom to build it. John's first task was to use a razor blade to cut out the parts.

"I spread it out on the bed and ended up cutting up my bedspread," says John. "She threw away my model kit and took the razor blade away from me. I got a new bedspread instead."

Some 50 years later, John Bowman is an accomplished model maker. He now safely cuts his balsa wood using X-acto knives on a sheet of glass, spread across a workbench in his basement, to create one-of-a-kind replicas of historic steamboats. The highly detailed, scale models he builds are décor focal points in the 1868 townhouse he and his wife, Glinda, have restored in Wheeling's Centre Market District. His models

are also held in private collections and those of the Point Pleasant River Museum and Monroe County (Ohio) River Museum.

Not content to simply build models of the coal barges and packet, wharf, shanty, and dish boats that once plied the Ohio River near his home, John has authored three books about Wheeling's steamboats. The books document a subject long ignored in published literature, despite the city's prominence in this all-but-extinct form of transportation.

"This was the birthplace of the steamboat, but there was no written history of it," John says.

"It was a much-needed subject for a book," adds Glinda, an author herself. Glinda has written two books about collecting perfume miniatures. John says having an author for a wife helped keep him on track with his own writing projects. His most recent book, published in 2010, is titled, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers in the Civil War*.

John knows of no ancestor who

built boats or worked on the river. Although he grew up less than 20 miles north of the "Birthplace of the American Steamboat," John has only a very vague firsthand memory of his subject matter.

"Living in Wellsburg, we shopped in Wheeling," he recalls. "When we came down the river to the south end of Warwood [north of Wheeling], there was a coal mine with a tippie. And at that tippie, there were always two or three old steamboats sitting there in the water. That was the only thing I remembered about seeing steamboats as a child."

John headed off to the Air Force after high school and trained for a gunner's job. But when the Air Force eliminated the aircraft he'd trained on, John switched his specialty to pest control — as in termites, rats, and fleas. That education gave him the foundation for a 40-year sales and management career in the pesticides field. He worked in the Southwest, typically driving 250 miles a day doing commission sales.

"I drove 1,237,000 miles," says John, who has the documentation to prove it.

As the health of John's parents back in West Virginia began to fail, John and Glinda made the decision to move back to the Northern Panhandle, where he could establish his sales career in a different region. They returned in the 1980's and purchased a small farm in Bethlehem to fulfill their dreams of living in the country. John says raising chickens, growing and canning vegetables, and caring for land came with a huge "time tax."

"Cutting those three acres of grass became my life," John says. "We decided maybe we didn't need that for the rest of our lives."

They purchased their townhouse on Market Street and spent \$50,000 modernizing the living space and restoring the property to historical standards. The two-story, free-standing brick townhouse features a separate entrance to a room the couple call the "Antique Parlor," a small shop they open on Fridays

John Bowman of Wheeling is a self-taught historian and model maker, devoted to the history of steamboats on the Ohio River.



John and Glinda Bowman in their Antique Parlor, adjacent to their Market Street townhouse in Wheeling. John has an extensive collection of photographs, postcards, books, and other materials related to steamboats, some of which are for sale.

and Saturdays, or as their busy schedules allow.

There's not a blade of grass to mow "If I see a piece of grass growing here, I just pick it out," he says.

One of the second-floor rooms is dedicated to John's library and study, which includes his extensive collection of books and other reference material on the Ohio River steamboat industry. Although John has never owned or operated a pleasure craft, let alone a steamboat, he can speak on the subject like an experienced river man, as a result of his years of research.

"I studied all the terms of building a boat and studied the pictures," John says. "I have 80 books [about boats] and I've read them all."

It was a photo from his local newspaper, the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, that piqued this interest. The clipping, from the late 1950's, shows

Glinda's late father, John Sanford, with his back to the camera and welding on a barge. The caption suggested the work harked back to a time when Wheeling was a center of steamboat construction on the river and suggested a revival of that industry could be in the works.

The clipping also sparked conversation about Glinda's recollections of her father's work. A Mississippi native, Glinda grew up in communities along the western rivers as the family followed her father's work in the shipyards. In 1955, they moved from Louisville to Wheeling. Glinda says one of the most interesting aspects of her father's work was that he welded underwater. When John first heard this, he thought she was taking advantage of his ignorance with regard to the industry.

"It was surprising to me that they could weld boats underwater," says

John, who started reading about boat building as a result of the details expressed in the newspaper clipping.

John thus began his search for more information about the steamboat industry in the Northern Panhandle. He discovered that the first successful steamboat on the Ohio River was built in Wheeling just 31 years after James Rumsey launched the first steam-powered boat on the Potomac River in Shepherdstown, and two years after Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston launched a trio of steamboats on the Ohio at Pittsburgh. [See "Setting History Straight: Shepherdstown Builds a Steamboat," by Malcolm W. Ater, Jr., Winter 1987]

In practice, early river steamboats like the *Comet*, launched from Brownsville, Pennsylvania, in 1814, had issues that limited their

Read More About It

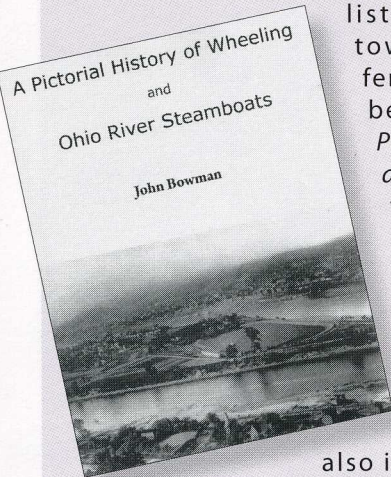
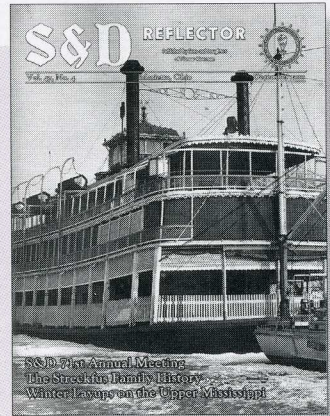
John Bowman has written three books about steamboats. *Wheeling: The Birthplace of the American Steamboat* was published in 2008 by the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation. It is a 103-page, large-format paperback, including appendices

listing steamboats, steam towboats, and steamboat ferries that served Wheeling between 1844 and 1937. A *Pictorial History of Wheeling and Ohio River Steamboats* was self-published in 2009. It shows approximately 300 steamboats, arranged alphabetically, from the *Abner O'Neal* to the *Youghioghenny*. The 370-page large-format paperbound edition

from Fort Sumter to Apomattox, noting 600 river steamboats used in various capacities during the war. These books are available from John Bowman, 2220 Market Street, Wheeling, WV 26003; phone (304)232-2223.

Call for prices and other details.

Another source of information and illustrations of historic steamboats is the monthly publication *S&D Reflector*. This fascinating and highly specialized magazine comes out of Marietta, Ohio, and is the work of the Sons & Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen. Each issue includes historical and contemporary photographs and descriptions of steamboats along the Ohio and other river systems, as well as updates on the activities of the parent organization. The magazine sells for \$5 each for members, \$8 per issue for non-members. Write to *S&D Reflector*, P.O. Box 352, Marietta, OH 45750; on-line at www.s-and-d.org.



also includes a bibliography, a list of illustrations, and a topical index. John published *Steamboats on the Western Rivers in the Civil War* in 2010. This 114-page, large-format paperback describes the use of steam vessels in the conflict

practicality. Through his research, John learned that the first successful and practical river steamboat was the *Washington*, launched at Wheeling, May 12, 1816. He feels that event in itself allows the city to lay claim to the title "Birthplace of the American Steamboat," a moniker first pinned on the city in 1929 by author Garnett Laidlaw Eskew in *The Pageant of the Packets: A Book of American Steamboating*.

John points out that steamboat hulls were frequently built elsewhere on the river, where there was a more abundant supply of hardwood, then towed to Wheeling for completion. His research has identified 225 steamboats that were either built in their entirety or completed in the Ohio River city between 1815 and 1900.

During this age of the

steamboat, produce boats brought in-season vegetables to Wheeling every day from Marietta,

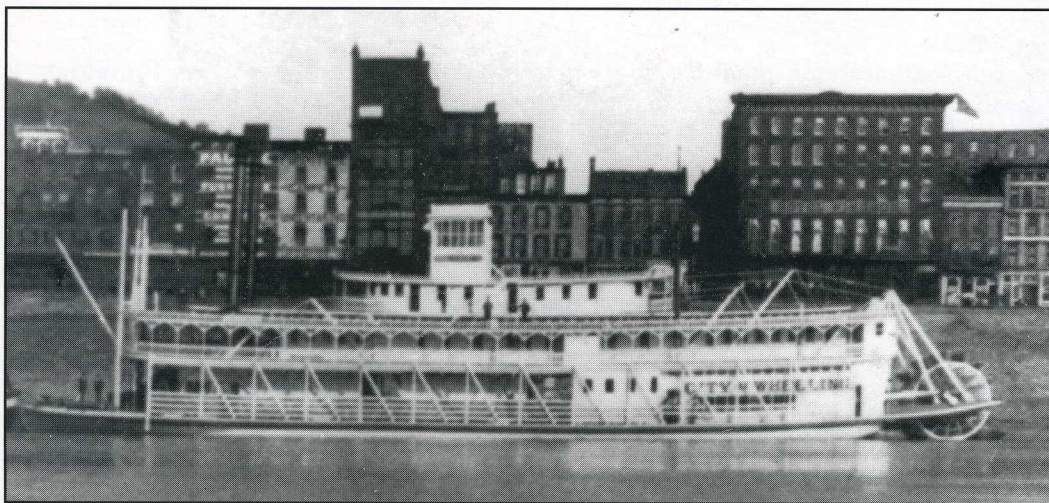
Ohio, known for its tomatoes. It is estimated that 1,200 steamboats were on the western rivers by the



The crowded Wheeling wharf in 1890, at the peak of the steamboat era. The Crockard & Booth wharfboat in the foreground was a floating warehouse. Photograph by W.C. Brown, courtesy of John Bowman.



The *City of Wheeling*, John Bowman's first riverboat model, built in 2006.



This historical photograph shows the *City of Wheeling* with the downtown skyline behind it. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Kirk's Photo Center Collection.

mid-1840's. There was seldom a shortage of investors willing to put up \$15,000 to \$20,000 for the construction of each new boat. By 1855, these palatial "Floating White Palaces" were transporting 3 million people annually on the western rivers, creating the "Gilded Age" of the steamboat.

These observations come from John's first book, *Wheeling: The*

Birthplace of the American Steamboat, published in 2008 by the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation. While writing that book was something John had planned to do in his retirement, modeling the boats he'd researched was an unplanned diversion that came about as a result of a \$10 purchase.

John says a man who years earlier had sold him some books on boat-

ing suggested he also buy a steamboat model kit. John really wasn't interested in the offer, but he bought it all the same and stashed it in the closet. After he retired in 2006, John discovered that he couldn't spend all day reading and researching, no matter how enticing that picture had seemed to him while living the life of a salesman. He went to the closet, retrieved the model kit, and started building what he soon discovered was, at best,

a mediocre representation of an American steamboat.

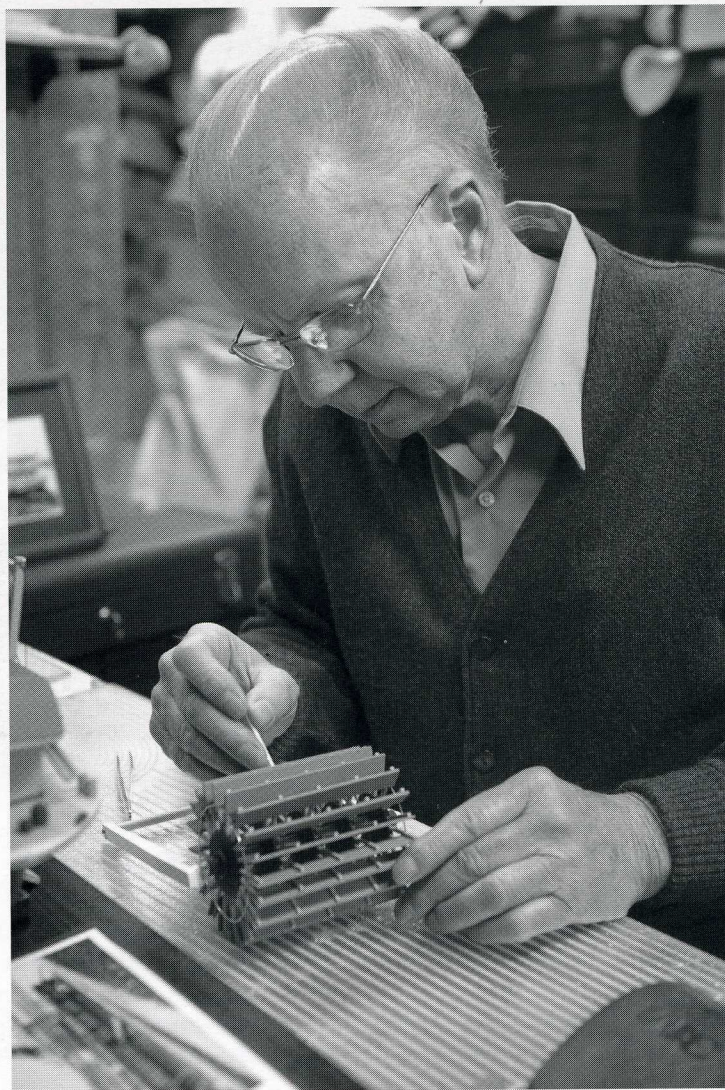
"I thought, 'I can do better than this,'" John recalls. "I could do something that would be authentic to Wheeling." He chose the *City of Wheeling* as his first project. The 109-foot-long steamboat was the last to be completed at Wheeling. Built for Captain Thaddeus S. Thomas and Charles "C.Y." Higgs

by William Henry and Marshall Mozena, it was the largest steamboat built by the Mozena Boat Works.

Interior cabin carpentry was completed in 1900 and the steamboat ran out of Wheeling in 1903. It was soon sold to another owner who operated it on the lower Mississippi for about a year. Resold and renamed the *Harry Lee*, it ran out of Memphis, Tennessee, until 1911, when it sank. It was raised only to burn at Memphis on March 19, 1914.

Without having the actual boat for reference, John had to rely upon photographs and historical documentation of the steamboat's dimensions to create the scale and proportions of the project. He selected a scale of $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch per foot, which is fairly standard among model makers.

John made a scale drawing of the steamship, relying upon two photographs taken in September 1900 as the *City of Wheeling* docked at a wharf not far from his house. The two views, one at street level and one from an upper-story window, provided John with the scale and perspective he needed. The challenge was translating it into balsa. With only one kit model to his credit, much of John's first effort was trial-and-error. Harking back to his days as a salesman when he had to document every expenditure and sales call, John kept meticulous notes on every aspect of building the model: materials and techniques used, the amount of time spent on each phase, and mistakes made in the process. He also kept some of his mistakes so he could refer back



Made of toothpicks, balsa wood, wire, and plastic, paddlewheels present the biggest challenge for a model maker, John says. He recently spent 80 hours building the paddlewheel for one of his models.

to and learn from them.

John says the most challenging part of building the first model was creating the articulating paddlewheel. For a recent project, the paddlewheel had 24 paddles, or buckets, cut from balsa and painted, plus 120 wood supports, cut from square toothpicks and painted. The whole assembly is attached to rings of wire and spins freely.

After building at least 15 models, John says paddlewheels still present the biggest challenge. Accordingly, he builds that section first, then lays the hull, installs the engines and coal bunker, then goes to work on the bulkheads and superstructure. To get an idea of just how time-

consuming this process is, John says it took him 80 hours to build the paddlewheel and hull for the *Sidney*, the only Wheeling steamship that was painted a color other than white.

John listens to opera and other classical music while he works on his models in the basement. His work space is boxed in by his collection of machinists' toolboxes — he has at least 20 of them. John prefers them to mechanics' toolboxes because they have small compartments for the tools of his craft — knives, files, scissors, pliers, and small saws. His power tools are a band saw, jigsaw, hand-powered grinder, and small drill press for drilling out cylinders to create smokestacks.

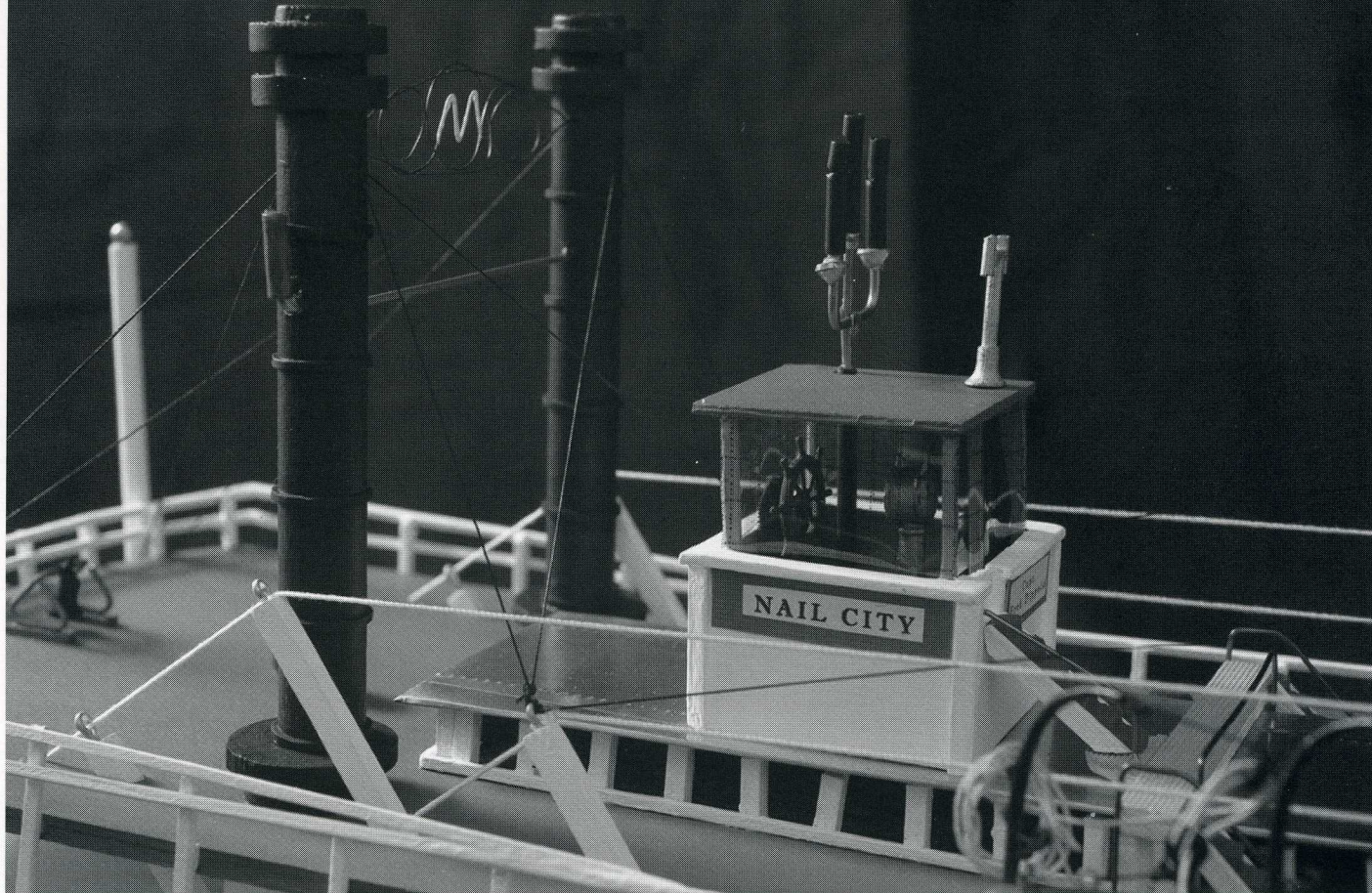
His workshop companion is Blackie, a cat that adopted the family about three years ago. John says Blackie's perch is usually the top of a plexiglass case near his workbench — John builds a case for every boat he models.

Occasionally, Blackie leaves the perch to walk across the workbench and inspect John's progress — and gives a meow of approval or disapproval.

Glinda provides even more stringent quality control of the models. "If something doesn't look right, I'll tell him," she says.

While he does not model the interiors of the cabins, he does equip every one with a potbellied stove, telegraph, and wheel — all fashioned from common household articles, then painstakingly painted.

John used a stem cover from an automobile tire to create a searchlight on one of the models; the face of the light is the top of a pushpin.



Using pushpins, BB's, and other household items, John includes a remarkable level of detail in his self-designed steamboat models. This close-up shows some of the details on his model of the *Nail City*

Black rubber bands from a beautician's shop are used to create the weld points in the smokestacks. Brass BB's top off poles on the model, and the vessel's whistles are made from copper wire. John even raided Glinda's jewelry boxes for loose pearls and other small pieces from broken jewelry that could be incorporated into the models.

John and Glinda also keep a box into which they toss any small item they think could be pressed into use when building a model. "That's what fascinates me about the models," Glinda says. "He has to be creative about what he uses."

John also turns to his computer to make some of the items. For example, he uses graphics software and an ink-jet printer to create the American flags that fly over his models. John makes sure each flag has the proper number of stars that would have been on Old Glory when the ship was built — he's that passionate about detail.

He also uses his computer to

create a Mail Pouch thermometer or advertising sign that goes on virtually every model he builds. Wheeling was home to the famous tobacco company, which boldly advertised on steamboats and the sides of barns alike.

"Every boat that ported here at Wheeling was furnished by Mail Pouch with signs to put on the boat," John says. "They'd get a lot of exposure all up and down the river from that." [See "Interviewing the Best: Tom Screven Talks to the Mail Pouch Man", Winter 1994.]

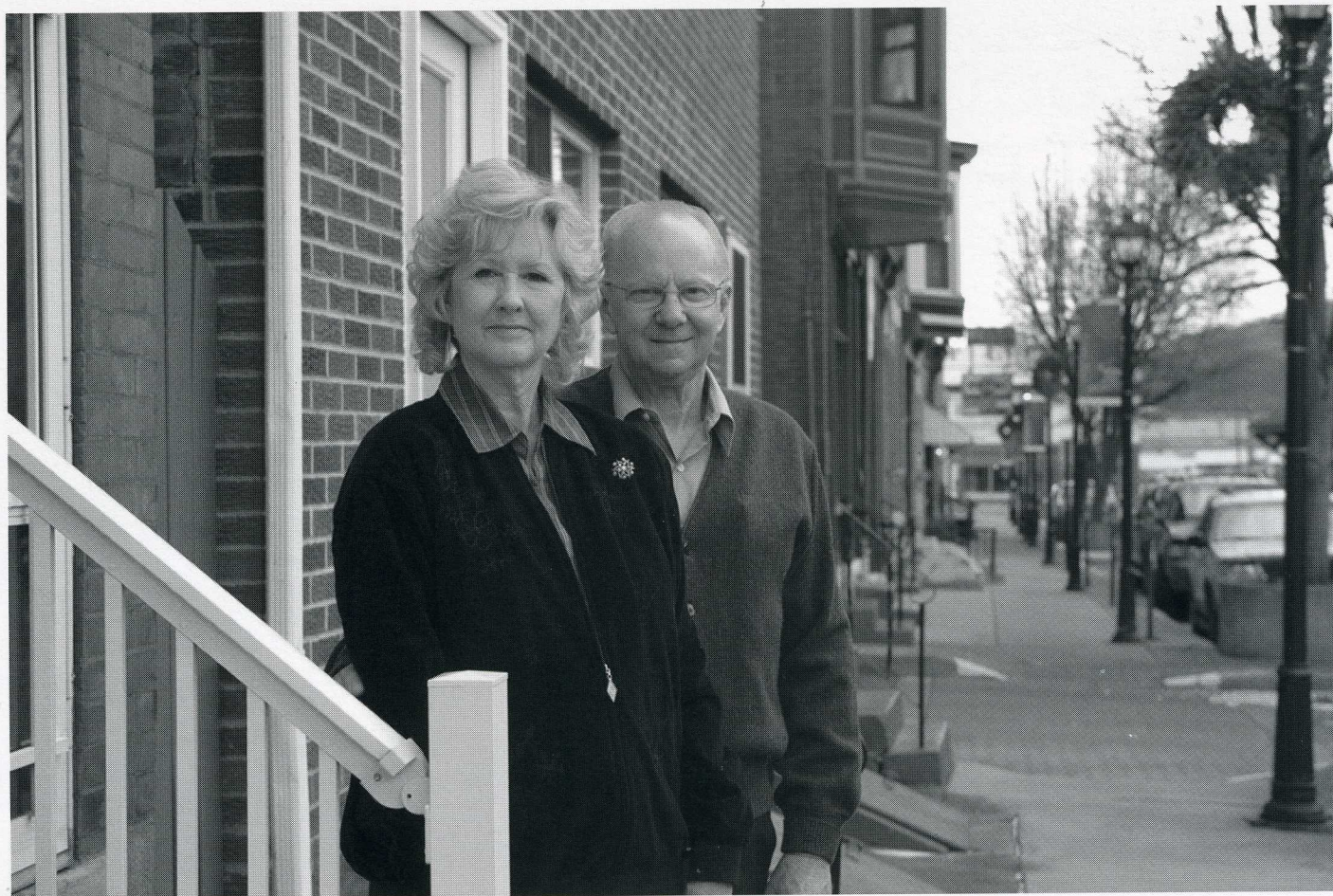
Getting all these details right takes time. The *City of Wheeling's* wire logo is made from a single piece of wire that John spent an entire day bending and rebending until it looked like the distinctive "M" of the Mozena Boat Works logo stretched between the smokestacks.

John spent 200 hours building the *City of Wheeling* and its display case. The most time he spent on one model and case was 349 hours, a model of the *Homer Smith*. The

steamboat was a commission from Point Pleasant residents Lynn Durst and Nancy Jewell, granddaughters of the ship's namesake. The model is now part of the Point Pleasant River Museum collection.

He has built more than 13 steamboats, one boat club (a rowing-style boat popular on the river after the Civil War), four wharf boats (floating commission warehouses), four coal barges, one shanty boat (houseboat), and a dish boat. The latter was used to peddle wares along the river. There were also patent medicine and photography boats that worked the rivers and served as floating residences for the businesses' operators.

John builds his models in spurts of eight to nine hours a day. Whenever he works on a model, he surrounds his workspace with photographs of the particular ship he's building. He says he can look at a picture 10 times and still not notice a detail until his 11th visit. It's this constant reference back to photographs that gives his models the authenticity



Glinda and John Bowman outside their Market Street home in Wheeling. They call their townhouse "Nonpareil," they say, because it has no equal.

that museums demand.

"There is absolutely nothing left [of the old Wheeling steamships] that I can refer to," John says. "I have to have pictures of it. I'm not going to build anything for which I don't have a picture to go by."

John's primary sources of photographs are his own collection, that of the late Herb Bierkorte, a Wheeling photographer and collector; the Inland Library at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, which has the largest public collection of riverboat photography and reference material; and the Fred McCabe / Liberty Marine Photos collection. John dedicated his second book, a visual amplification of the first volume, to McCabe, who lives in Hannibal, Ohio.

"It's because of him I was able to do this book," John says of his 2009 book titled, *A Pictorial History of Wheeling and Ohio River Steamboats*.

John is recognized as an expert on the topic of Wheeling's steamboat history, and has been called upon to give talks on the subject and attend book-signing events. In 2009 John received the West Virginia History Hero Award. The Wheeling Area Historical Society, of which John is an active member, made the nomination.

"He's become the local expert on steamboats and has greatly expanded our knowledge of steamboating on the Ohio River," says Margaret Brennan, president of the Historical Society. "He makes a good point of Wheeling being the birth [place] of the American steamboat."

Margaret says John "absolutely immerses" himself in his research, so much so she hates to call him at home for fear of interrupting him while he is researching or building models. She calls him the "true authority" on steamboat history

in Wheeling.

John says he is finished with writing books on the subject, but he will continue to model steamboats for his own collection and for those of museums and individuals. With more than 200 Wheeling steamboats yet to be modeled, John has no shortage of subjects. And with each new project, he continues to find creative ways to model the details and tell the story of Wheeling steamboat history in balsa, plastic, and metal. But he draws the line at functional light bulbs.

"Glinda suggested I might put some lights in one of my boats," John says. "I said, 'What if a light bulb burned out in a museum?' I'd be on call continuously." 🍁

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.

Sweet Life at Laurel Fork Farm



Kendall Waybright and Marsha Louk with their children, Collin and Kendra, at Laurel Fork Farm near the Randolph-Tucker county line.

“We’re Very Blessed”

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather



On a good day, when the snaking, narrow, mountain-hugging road from Route 72 in Tucker County is clear and dry, it takes Marsha Louk 45 minutes to reach Elkins — the nearest city with a big-box store or hospital.

Her family's farm is so far back in the Laurel Fork River hollow, she gives directions by telling visitors to turn left at the Jennings-ton bridge and drive until the road ends. Marsha and her husband, Kendall Waybright, have lived at the end of this narrow dirt drive — a former railroad bed — for 18 years, rearing their two children, caring for his mother's farm, and carving out a lifestyle of self-sufficiency.

Laurel Fork Farm comprises 175 acres of pasture and woodlands reclaimed from what once was the lumber boomtown of Jennings-ton. The northern part of the farm is in Tucker County; the southern part, which includes their home, is in Randolph. Their mail comes to the Bowden post office, in Randolph County, and their house is the last one on the carrier's route. Their phone exchange is that of Canaan Valley. But to the handful of people who live in this hollow, it remains Jennings-ton.

If you visit the farm in the spring, when the daffodils bloom in rectangular patterns above stone walls of what was once a street, you'll faintly sense the former vitality, but not the magnitude, of the community that once thrived here. The Jennings brothers — B. Worth, Courtney H., and William — of Lopez,

Pennsylvania, founded the town in 1905. They laid it out in three streets: Front, Center, and River. The planned community even had a town square, where they erected the Laurel Hotel, a warehouse, ice house, and a magnificent dwelling for the three brothers. Across the river, in Randolph County, is the old clubhouse of the Laurel River Lumber Company, now used as a private summer retreat.

Marsha and Kendall have lived at the end of this narrow dirt drive for 18 years, rearing their two children, caring for his mother's farm, and carving out a lifestyle of self-sufficiency.

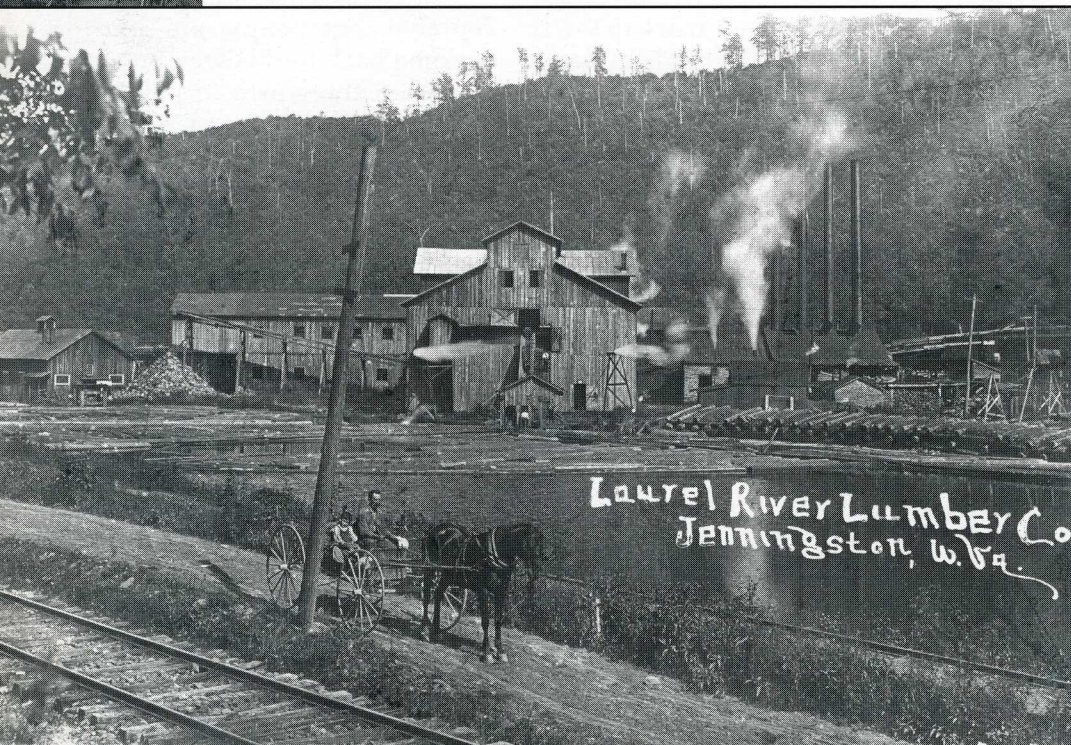
Marsha and Kendall live in the area where a double band saw, capable of cutting 100,000 feet of lumber per 10-hour day, once stood. The lumber came down the Laurel Fork on a standard-gauge rail line that stretched 27 miles into the wilderness. Marsha says if you walk up the river 10 miles or so from their farm, you come to a tunnel that was blasted through the side of the mountain.

"It's like stepping back in time when you walk through it," she says. "It's kind of eerie, and you have to be cautious of rattlesnakes."

Dig into the soil and rocks along this river and you'll find old bottles as further evidence of the civilization that once thrived here. Marsha has a collection of these bottles, in all sizes and shapes. And every spring, when Marsha and Kendall plow their garden plot, the clay yields more pieces of the Jennings-ton puzzle, shards of glass and pottery that, like the town that deposited them, will never again be whole.

Jennings-ton began its rapid decline after the

Laurel River Lumber Company sawmill at Jennings-ton, Tucker County. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Jane Barb Collection.



Laurel Hotel burned down in 1918 and the last of the big timber had its appointment with the band saw. Most of the 500 Jenningsston residents whose livelihoods had depended upon the forest left the hollow. Of the 200 or so buildings that stood here in 1920, only a few survive.

Marsha and Kendall have but two neighbors: Mary Salovarro and Kendall's mother, Dorothy Waybright. Kendall's family has owned land in the hollow ever since the 1920's exodus resulted in fire-sale land prices. For Marsha, a native of Randolph County, living on a farm nestled in the middle of hunting and fishing opportunities was a dream come true.

"I was just tickled to death when I came to the farm. I love it here," Marsha says. "The other day I had a FedEx delivery, and the young boy said to me, 'I would love to live in a place like this if it wasn't so far from town.' I thought, 'That's the exact opposite of why we love it here.'"

She came to the farm straight out of high school. Her grandmother taught her how to cook, preserve food, and care for a household; her father, how to fish, hunt, and shoot. The life she adopted, however, is not that of a pioneer. The single-story, frame home has electricity, telephone, satellite TV, high-speed Internet, and running water.

"We're by no means hermits," Marsha says. "You could be [in their house] and not know you are so far away [from town] until you step outside."



Marsha Louk works in her garden, where she and Kendall often find shards of glass and pottery, remnants of the old town of Jenningsston.

They drive a car or truck to town, not a horse and buggy. They work the land with power equipment, and they cut and split their firewood with chain saws and a log splitter. Their church family, and neighbors — while few and far apart — provide social opportunities. Marsha and her therapy dog, Onyx, work with Canines 4 Christ, an outreach program that visits nursing home residents and hospital patients in Elkins, Thomas, and Philippi. A youth group from Dryfork Assembly of God travels with the group, and Marsha is training them how to work with therapy dogs.

Kendall works off the farm as a heavy-equipment operator. Marsha worked for Timberline Resort in the winters and Circle T Stables in the summers until she became pregnant with their daughter in 2003. The

birth of this second child seemed like a good time to make a break with the tormenting drive and long hours away from home, and follow through on a dream that had been in the back of her mind ever since moving to the Laurel Fork hollow.

"I just had a desire to be able to provide for our family and not worry so much [about job security]," Marsha says. "Everything in this area is based on tourism."

Marsha says West Virginia has the right attitude and resources to support that kind of decision, although one acquaintance asked her if she was crazy.

"I think in West Virginia it's a lot more acceptable," she says of striving toward independence. "Especially in these times, when the economy is down, it's not only more ac-

ceptable, but people are starting to come back to this way of life."

She left the world of paychecks and shifted her focus to building a routine that would allow her to stay home with her children — Collin and Kendra, now 10 and 6, respectively. But to make this arrangement practical, she needed a product to sell, a reliable income stream.

Marsha had already dabbled in at least one venture that produced some income — a petting zoo at a Canaan Valley tourist attraction, populated with animals from their farm. As she surveyed other possibilities, Marsha decided to explore the concept of making and selling soap.

"I had played with soap for 10 years," says Marsha, who made soap for her family's use and as gifts. "People started to call me



Goat milk is the main ingredient in Marsha's soap, which she makes and sells from her family's Laurel Fork Farm. She makes more than 100 varieties in a range of shapes. Goat milk is gentle and rich in nutrients, Marsha says.

and ask if I would make more. It was kind of interesting how that happened."

Kendall's lactose intolerance and Marsha's myriad allergies — "I think I'm allergic to just about everything I love," she says — had led her to goat milk, a key ingredient in her specialty soaps. She decided to add Nubian goats to their farm, and with the help of Debbie Tiburzi, a goat-farm owner in Troy, Gilmer County, Marsha officially became a crafter of goat-milk soap under the Laurel Fork Farm label.

In a span of four years, she grew the business to an operation that sells 250 to 300 bars a month through direct sales and juried outlets, like MountainMade, Wheeling Artisan Center, and Tama-

rack. More than 30 stores sell her product line, which also includes lotions, body butter, lip balm, bath salts, bath milk, shaving soaps, and salves. She makes more than 100 varieties of the scented and plain soaps. Using plastic molds, Marsha creates bars in the shapes of animals, objects, plants, and even West Virginia. Marsha says the bars are so attractive, many people who

receive them as gifts want to display them rather than bathe with them. But the soap is even more pleasant on the skin than to the eyes.

Marsha says goat-milk soap is exceptionally gentle and naturally rich in 50 nutrients, including vitamins and minerals. Her Web site has a page dedicated to testimonials from users, who attest to the soap's soothing, lotion-like qualities and healing effect. About 30 percent of her sales come from that Web site, www.laurelforkfarm.com. She packages the mail orders, drives them to the end of their road, and leaves them in a sealed container, where the mail carrier picks up the merchandise.

Marsha also uses the Web site to share her philosophy.

"I like to give people a little piece of the farm," she says. "We're not just a farm that sells soap; we use all the products we make."

Marsha recognizes her limitations, and those services she can't do herself, she barter for, using farm products and soap as payment. Both her bookkeeping and marketing are handled this way.

"I traded \$250 worth of soap for



Kid-friendly, the Nubian goat herd at Laurel Fork Farm graze in the pasture while Kendra Waybright smiles for the camera.



Marsha milks, the goat eats, and the cat looks on. "I treat my goats like they were my kids," Marsha says.

\$1,200 in advertising because [the man supplying the advertising] likes my soap," she says. "I've traded soap for other products, too. These arrangements seem to just come about through casual conversation. It's never when you expect it."

Marsha's responsibilities also include caring for the livestock: a small herd of beef cattle that graze on a field above their house, a couple dozen goats, assorted chickens, and "turkins" that look like a cross between a chicken and turkey but are pure chicken.

Marsha says she and Kendall accomplish their autonomous way of life by being versatile. Key components are the land with its resources of game, fish, firewood, and wild plants; the farm with its harvests of meat, eggs, milk, and vegetables; cash crops, which can be anything from firewood in the fall to vegetables in the summer; and goat-milk soap throughout the year.

"About 85 to 90 percent of what we eat comes from the farm," she says. "It's nice to sit down to a meal and know everything we are eating

came from our farm."

Occasionally, unwelcome wildlife encroach on their plot of civilization. In July 2010, Kendall shot a rattlesnake in his mother's front yard. The snake was 56 inches in length and had 13 rattlers and a button. On another occasion, one of their cats cornered a rattler against a tree in their yard. Marsha always worries about the goats going onto the mountainsides, where the rattlers have their dens in the rocky ledges.

The presence of livestock draws coyotes to the farm on occasion, and Marsha depends upon the farm's Norwegian elkhounds, whose appearance resembles that of the coyote, to alert her to the marauders' presence.

"My elkhounds are my livestock guards," she says of the dogs, which also help with herding cattle and goats.

Unfortunately, the dogs sometimes pick a fight with a critter possessing superior defense mechanisms. Three of her elkhounds had to make a trip to the veterinarian after their snouts were peppered

with porcupine quills. Marsha and Kendall breed and raise Norwegian elkhound puppies for homesteaders who use the stout, rugged canines to assist them with their own farm work.

For Kendall and Marsha, this self-reliant philosophy extends into virtually every area of their lives, including health care.

"We don't go to the doctor a whole lot," says Marsha, who uses the woodlands and herb garden as her medicine chest. For example, she concocts a powerful remedy from honey, cayenne pepper, and garlic that will stop a sore throat in its tracks. "I take two teaspoons of that for two days, and it completely kills the bug," she says.

With shopping a 45-minute drive from their home, Marsha and Kendall plan their trips to Elkins carefully. Since starting the soap business, she's had to go to the city more frequently, but each trip usually has multiple purposes and stops.

"I have lists. You don't leave here without a list," she says. "Typically, when we go to town we take a cooler with us for the frozen foods."

The remoteness posed a special challenge for the children, who would board the school bus at 6:30 a.m. and face an 80-minute ride to school. Marsha had often thought about home schooling the children to spare them this grueling schedule, but never had the courage to try it. Then came the winter of 2009-2010, when school was closed for four weeks straight. Marsha left the farm only one time during February, when the snow reached a depth of at least three feet in their road. She had to shovel a path to the barn three times a day.

The unusually harsh winter became the impetus for Marsha to attempt home schooling. After trying

it during their month of snowbound living, Marsha was convinced she could handle the task. Her children flourished in their studies, and have more free time, as well.

When their lessons are done and farm chores completed, Kendra and Collin ride their bicycles on the dirt road, swing, play with the dogs, fish in the river, shoot targets, and hunt. Every June, Marsha and the children escape for four to five days of vacation and leave the farm in Kendall's care.

"I'm the one who has the problem leaving here," Marsha says. "I don't think I could stay away any longer, either. I treat my goats like they were my kids."

Just as life in a highly developed urban center has its struggles, Marsha and Kendall's idyllic way of life has its challenges and heartaches. Marsha recalls a time that seven young goats decided to head up the mountain and munch on toxic laurel leaves. Two of them died,

and the other five survived as a result of intense veterinary care and lots of prayer.

Indeed, Marsha's and Kendall's lives are underpinned by faith and prayer. Her favorite saying is, "Stop telling God how big your storm is. Instead, tell the storm how big your God is!"

Like the rutted road that leads to their farm, this road to self-sufficiency won't be traveled hastily. They build and invest in their venture as they have the cash.

"We're very blessed. It was not just me who got into this. The Lord had a lot to do with it, because I wouldn't be here if it had not been for the Lord," she says.

Marsha says they eventually want to take their home off the grid — with the swift-running Laurel Fork so close, hydroelectric seems to be the most promising solution — and Marsha would love to replace her propane-fired kitchen stove with a wood-burning model.

Like the rutted road that leads to their farm, this road to self-sufficiency won't be traveled hastily. Eschewing debt, Kendall and Marsha build and invest in their venture as they have the cash. With help from family, they recently erected a craft workshop, dedicated to her soap and lotion production. And that same year Kendall gave her a deluxe, zero-carbon-output clothes dryer — a new clothesline.

"I love to hang my laundry out on pretty days," she says. "Kendall teased me. He said, 'I'm going to make you a clothesline so big you can't complain about not having enough space.' It took 200 yards of line." 🍀



Marsha, Collin, and Kendra herd goats on a pleasant day last spring at their Laurel Fork Farm.

By Barbara Smith



Raking hay at age six, buying his first cattle at age 11, driving a truck overnight to Pittsburgh at age 14, here was a boy who was bound to succeed. And he did. Still running his demonstration farm at age 92, Herman Isner of Kerens, Randolph County, is a cattleman and real estate entrepreneur of the first order.

“Things were really good when I was a kid,” Herman says. “I couldn’t imagine ever being away from the farm. My first job was to rake and dump the hay. We had a horse-drawn rake, and the dumping operation was a little tricky for a six-year-old. Two hundred acres of hay had to be brought in. I remember that well. The horse was called Dick, and a smart animal he was. If he ever stepped on a nest of ground bees, he would just stomp and stomp until every blessed bee was dead,” Herman recalls, laughing. “We could put a

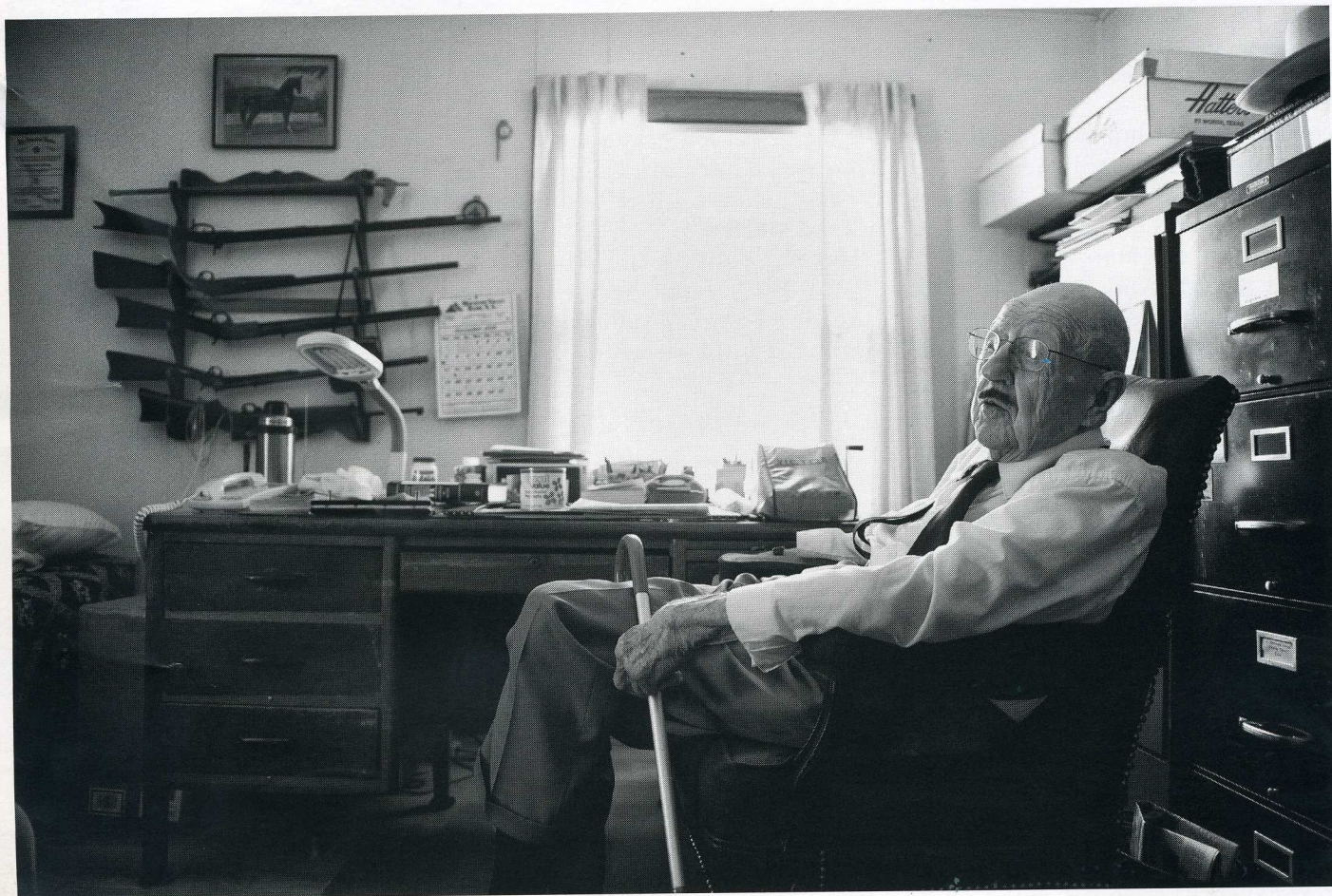
new horse next to Dick, and within a couple of days he had that new horse trained, mainly because Dick would bite the new horse if it didn’t obey. We always had four or five teams of workhorses. I got to know all of them pretty well.

“One of our biggest problems in the summer,” he reports, “was poison ivy. My dad and I used to get it really bad, but we found out how to handle it. We made a hole in brown paper and taped that paper to our faces, around our mouths, and we put on gloves. Then we’d chew up some poison ivy. It tasted pretty good. It was the same treat-

ment, really, as getting those painful shots. And it worked. Every spring we’d chew up some poison ivy, and it never again bothered us.”

Isner’s first cattle deal occurred when he was 11 years old. He borrowed money from his Triplett grandfather and bought seven calves for \$40 a head from Charley Talbott in Belington.

Looking down at Herman, Charley Talbott said, “You’re a big, husky boy but not very old. This will be a tough job for you.” Getting them home over the 10 miles and through an apple orchard did prove to be a challenge, but with help from a



Herman Isner at his home in Kerens, Randolph County. Photograph by Tyler Evert.



A cattleman since 1930, Herman still keeps a small herd of steers. His 350-acre property has been designated as a demonstration farm by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Photograph by Tyler Evert.

couple of neighbor farmhands, the mission was accomplished.

"I really wanted 20 in all," Herman says, "so I bought seven more from John Digman. That's all I could afford. And then the stock market crashed, and we had a really bad drought in 1930 — the worst ever seen in West Virginia — and nobody could raise anything. The corn never came up, and the hay crop amounted to only 10 percent of the usual. Then we had a very hard winter. We had feed for the cattle because we had harvested plenty of hay the year before and had stored it in the barn, but nobody was buying beef. So I just had to feed the cattle and wait. Cattle were selling for \$14 per head, and I finally sold mine for \$18 per head.

"Then in 1932 I bought 28 head from Woodford Tacy down at Becky's Creek near Huttonsville. I still deal with the Tacys. Old Woodford asked \$17 a head, but I paid him \$19. It took almost three years

for me to get my granddad repaid. That was a hard initiation into the cattle business, I'll tell you, but it got me started."

Herman continues, "When I was 19, in 1937, I got serious about trading. Bought 7,000 head that year and sold some to packers,

He estimates that he bought and sold 2 to 3 million head, in at least 17 states.

sent some to markets, that kind of thing. And you know what they sold for? Seven cents a pound." Herman smiles and comments, "Now stock cattle are selling for \$1.25 a pound, but it's a different ball game altogether. There's no speculation going on at all, practically no cattle in West Virginia. Once upon a time there were almost 4 million head of cattle

in the state. No more. Too much timber on the good land, and strip mining hasn't done us any favors. The land is reclaimed here and there, but all it takes is one good rain and all the soil and that new grass are gone."

Herman Isner became a highly successful cattleman. Over the ensuing years he estimates that he bought and sold 2 to 3 million head, in at least 17 states. "Now," he says, "I just trade 300 or 400 a year, mostly for friends, and I don't charge anything for my services."

A hard worker all his life, Herman has become an expert on horses. "We never heard of anything called recreation back then," he says, "just work and more work. But one thing I really enjoyed was my horses. Never had more than six or eight saddle horses here on the farm, but I showed them in neighboring counties, and I did a lot of trading. I might buy a colt for \$800 or \$1,000, and I'd sell it for five or six times



Herman in 1918 with his mother, Icy Isner. Photographer unknown.

that — one even brought \$25,000! I stopped that business in about 1992, but at one time I had enough blue ribbons to cover a wire that ran all around this room." His eyes circle his office.

The first house built on the present Isner farm was made of logs and had a central breezeway, which could be closed off in bad weather. A man named David Blackman and his six slaves, all of whom eventually died and were buried near the pond on the property, constructed that building. Blackman opened a store in Beverly, "but the Yankees took that store and all of the others in town," Isner reports. "In 1909," he continues, "my Grandfather Isner bought a hundred acres of this land from Richard Chafey, who had bought it from Blackman

and had torn down the old house. Grandfather and my uncle and my father, who was 18, built this present house in 1910. Back then it had three stories, but we removed the third floor in the 1940's."

In the 100 years that Isners and Triplett have lived on this land, various sections of approximately 50 acres each have been bought and sold. Herman reports that at one time his several farms held 600 head of cattle, that number now reduced to around 250.

Herman spent much of his growing years on the present farm. But because there were no school buses and no public transportation, he and his immediate family spent winters in Elkins, in a house shared by Herman's paternal grandparents. "I was taught by my dad," Herman says. "By the time I was three years old, I could read and write and make change.

"When I finished high school, Davis & Elkins College had a pre-



Herman has been a hard worker all of his life. Here his grandfather, Owen Triplett, teaches two-year-old Herman how to use a two-man crosscut saw while cousin Elmo Channell looks on. Photographer unknown.



Herman's ancestors on both sides of his family have deep roots in Randolph County. This house in Gladys, owned by Herman's grandfather, Owen Triplett, was where his mother lived as a girl. Icy Triplett is standing at left on the stairs in this undated photograph. Photographer unknown.

law program," he says. "My father really wanted to develop a dairy farm. He wanted me to become a lawyer, but I wasn't interested. I was a cattleman. D&E was a different story then. Tuition was \$75 a year. Mrs. Elkins had subsidized salaries, but after she died, faculty members were paid only \$50 a month." He chuckles. "Needless to say, the faculty didn't travel much."

The key real estate transaction for the Isners took place in 1936, when Herman and his father bought 93 acres of the present farm from Herman's grandfather, Creed Isner. "In those days," Herman recalls, "we paid the hired men a dollar a day, plus food — and they got plenty of that. My mother and grandmother and my wife, Doris, just loved to feed folks. They thought they should feed everybody in Randolph County."

For several years toward the end of the Great Depression, Herman worked on commission under the Federal Land Bank of Baltimore. "There were 12 of these quasi-government operations throughout the country. The government offered to pay the interest for five

"Folks come to find out how to do things right, like the best way to fertilize and how to develop subsoil, that kind of thing."

years on mortgages that the farmers couldn't pay off. At the end of the five years, the farms went back on the market," Herman says. "I got

into this business through Gordon Late, who was with the Bridgeport bank before he moved to Baltimore. He was responsible for disposing of mortgaged farms in five states, and he recruited me when I was 18. I sold 500 of those farms for next to nothing. I got two percent of the sale price for each farm, plus expenses. I'd put ads in the local papers, asking people to come to the courthouse. My first operation was in Floyd County in Virginia, and 40 or 50 people showed up. I sold two farms immediately, then three more. Took me three days to sell all of them there in Floyd County.

"My very last sale of all was 15 acres to the forest service in Tucker County. That was in December of 1939. As far as I know, not a one of the farms I sold failed. I just never sold to crooks, only to people who had nothing to start with. I asked



At age 92, Herman Isner still lives in his own home and manages a 350-acre demonstration farm. Photograph by Tyler Evert.



for the lowest down payment I could possibly get away with."

In 1954 Herman Isner's father offered to give the homeplace to his only child, but Herman, who had already bought surrounding land, insisted on buying it for \$12,000. By then he owned some 300 acres. "We plowed up about 10 acres just for corn. It was the most productive farm in Randolph County," he says. "And then I built a bunch of buildings — spent \$183,000 on them." Sparkling white, those buildings still surround the farmhouse.

After his father died in 1964, Herman and his wife moved to the farm from Elkins, where Herman had been buying old houses, restoring them, and selling them. "I fixed them up mainly in the winter when I didn't have to be out here on the farm." He sighs. "Nobody has ever worked harder than I have. I always had more than I could do, but I got it done."

In 1982 the Isner property was designated a model or demonstration farm "for the benefit of the inquiring public," Herman reports. "The inquiring public?" He laughs. "Folks come to find out how to do things right, like the best way to fertilize and how to develop subsoil, that kind of thing."

Some of these people are interested in how to keep their cattle out of the woods and streams, others how to control erosion or to develop wildlife habitats. This basic concept, now in use in a number of other states, is considered the show-and-tell of the agricultural world

Herman with a sheep and a dog in about 1930.



Herman at right with a yoke of twin Shorthorn calves in about 1925. He paid \$14 for the pair early in his cattle career. Also pictured are neighbors Hobart and Morris Carr. Photographer unknown.

and is considered one solution to the challenge of disseminating useful and accurate information, a means of bringing farming in general up to the levels of the most productive operations.

"There's not another piece of property like this one in the whole United States," Herman insists. He acknowledges a similar farm

located in North Carolina. "I simply used his organizational plan to set up my own demonstration farm," he says. "It took two years to persuade the government to let us establish the trust."

Controlled by the board of trustees of the J Herman Isner Farm Trust and listed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an

independent educational organization, the 350-acre farm will remain in perpetuity just as it now is, an example of optimal land management.

On the walls of Herman's office are photos of his ancestors and several of his favorite saddle horses. A rack holds half-a-dozen rifles and a shotgun. One handwritten document indicates that the oldest firearm, the one on the top rung of the rack, was made by "Leman" in 1770 and became the property of Henry Isner in 1774, who used it in the Battle of Point Pleasant. Other artifacts include an original 1873 Winchester rifle. "I have to decide what do to with all these things," Herman says. "Maybe I'll just turn this house into something of a museum."

Walking through the dining room, he looks out at the backyard. "Hope you're planning to be here for my next birthday party," he says with a smile, speaking of the annual event to which friends and family come from as far away as Mississippi. Well-wishers gather in a huge, corrugated metal picnic shelter designed by Bill Cole, owner of King Cole's Bar-B-Q in Elkins and caterer for the picnics ever since they were initiated 21 years ago. "The first time, we had 350 people here," Cole reports. "We borrowed chairs from the funeral homes and from Camp Dawson. The weather was terrible that year, and I told Herman we had to have a decent shelter if he expected folks to come. We built the shelter the next year." Attendees at the festivities have included governors and other state officials.

Standing near the doorway, Herman's glance moves to the small, backyard mausoleum where his parents are buried, as is his wife, Doris Fuhrman Isner, who died in 2002. Their three names — and his — have been engraved on a marble marker.

Herman Isner never tires of telling and retelling tales of his ancestors, such as his great-great-grandfather,



Herman's wife, Doris Fuhrman Isner, passed away in 2002. She is buried a few steps from Herman's back door. Photographer unknown.

Owen Triplett, who, for 12 cents an acre, bought 28,000 acres of West Virginia land from George Washington. Herman recounts family stories, dating back to the Battle of Point Pleasant and encounters with Chief Cornstalk, events of the Civil War, the development of Randolph County and Elkins. He talks of current decisions being made in the White House and in the West Virginia legislature, and he compares the quality of service and care being offered by grocery stores and hospitals in the region. His stories never end.

Sometimes depending upon a walker and always making heavy use of his telephone, Herman Isner will continue supervising his housekeeper and his farm staff, buying and "furnishing" cattle for friends, making various kinds of investments for them, and finalizing real estate deals.

He smiles and sums up his lifelong philosophy: "You know, if you treat someone a little better than they expect, you've done no harm to yourself — or to them. The worst thing is to make the person feel obligated. That takes all the good out of it for the giver. I think you should keep your good deeds quiet — like the Bible says."*

BARBARA SMITH of Philippi has written and published poems, short stories, nonfiction, and novels, the most recent of which is *Through the Glass*. She is professor emerita from Alderson-Broaddus College, where she chaired the Division of Humanities. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was in the Spring 2005 issue.



"Nobody has ever worked harder than I have," Herman says. "I always had more than I could do, but I got it done." Photograph by Tyler Evert.

Mom Was a Hard Worker

By Jessie Lee Maiuri



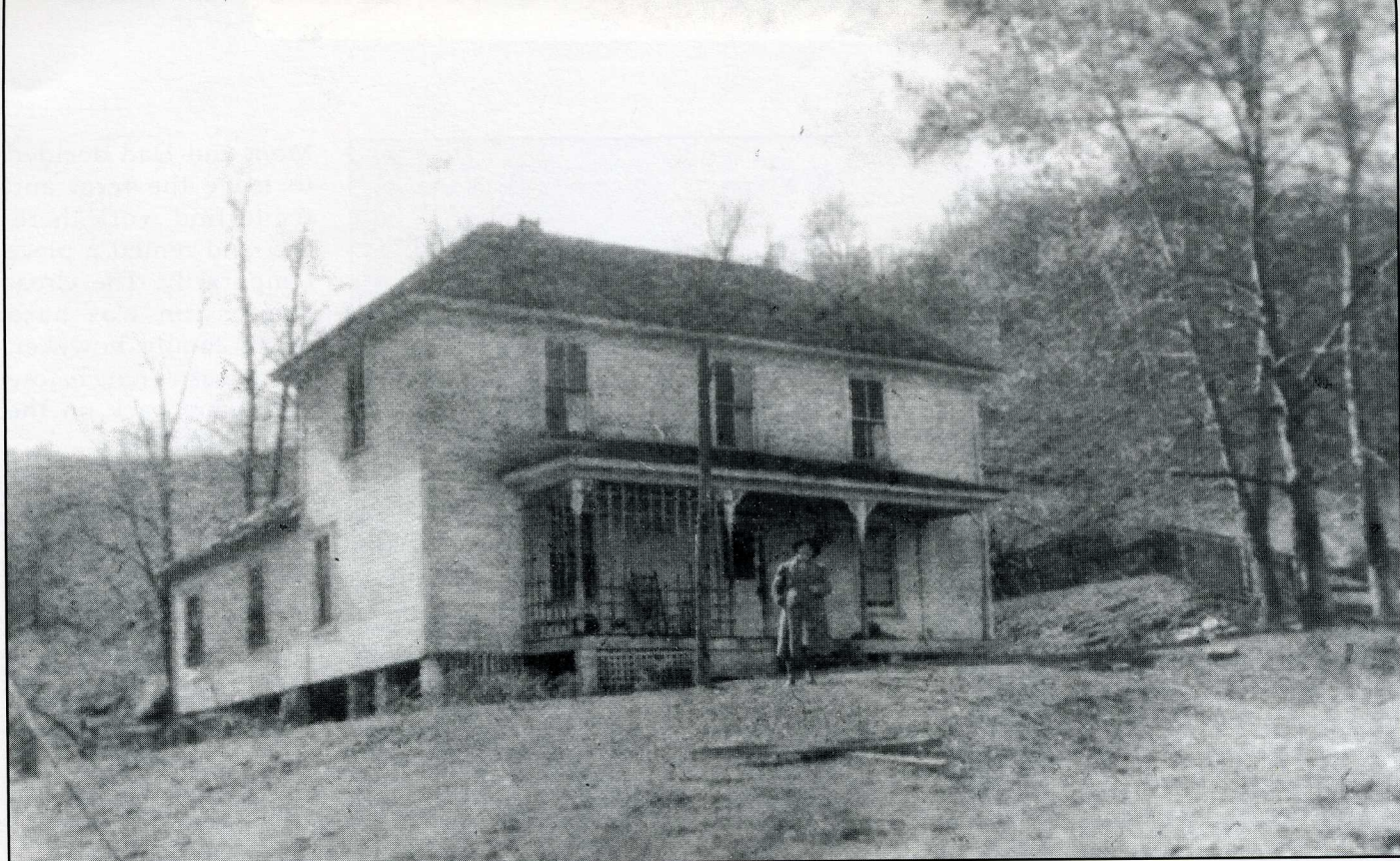
My mother deserves much more than I could express on paper, but I will do my best to sum up the life of one of the strongest, most courageous women I have ever known.

Born in 1893 to Lloyd C. and Naomi Caroline Nottingham Bee, my mother, Virginia "Jennie" Bee, was one of eight children — five siblings and three half-siblings (my grandmother was previously married to Perry Hall, who died at a young age). Jennie was raised in Hallburg, Clay County, an old town that once existed between Big Otter and Servia, where I-79 now runs.

My grandmother became mentally ill when Mom was still very young, and, at that time, there was no real treatment available. She began doing irrational things, like giving away household items, which my grandfather would have to go and collect up afterward. Finally, when it grew out of control, he had her placed in the Weston State Hospital, where she lived out the rest of her life, until her death in 1948. [See "Weston State Hospital"; Spring 2009]

Although Mom was barely old enough to take care of herself, let alone look after

Virginia "Jennie" Bee Hall around the time of her marriage in 1909.



The Hall homeplace at Hallburg, Clay County, in 1940.

Remembering Jennie Bee Hall

others, she had to be the caregiver in the house and took care of her seven siblings until they grew and were married.

I never learned how Mom met my dad — John Bennett Hall of Servia — but I would guess it was at a church function, as that was not unusual in those days. I remember her telling me they were married on horseback in 1909, on a hilltop near the Braxton-Clay county line. They first settled in a very small house on the property of my paternal grandparents, John E. and Ruie Hall. The Halls owned a lot of land and even left a plot to be used as a family cemetery for the Hall family heirs. It sits atop a hill in Servia and has been used by many of my siblings and distant relatives over the years.

Mom and Dad began having their children in 1910 — four girls to begin with. At the same time, Mom was starting to develop rheumatoid arthritis in her knee joint. Some days

she was so sore, she was unable to even get out of bed to do chores. At the time, the doctor prescribed morphine, which did little to help. Because she was in so much pain, for a time they had to return to my dad's parents' home. My grandparents still had little ones of their own at home at the time, so things were fairly cramped.

Through the kindness of neighbors, Dad and my grandparents were able to gather up enough money to send Mom to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore to get help. She was gone a month. During this time, they operated on her knee. Because joint replacement wasn't an option at the time, her leg remained stiff the rest of her life.

Mom was gone so long that her youngest baby didn't recognize her when she got back home. Not only did that hurt, but having to learn to walk again was equally painful for her. Dad made her some crutches from tree branches, but

she developed infections under her arms from them and had to take aspirin — an exciting new drug at the time — for the pain.

Mom and Dad learned of a house for sale up in the hollow from where my mother had been raised in Hallburg. It was a fairly large home with an upstairs, and, boy, did they ever need the space! Children kept coming every year or two. I was the last of 10 girls. There were also six boys, one dying as an infant from the flu.

My parents spent most of my early years working a small farm on the Hallburg property. Times were hard, and money was scarce. Mom made all of our clothes, even the wedding dresses of my older sisters. As they grew, she tried and tried to get them to stay at home, but, as is usually the case, they never listened and all got married. In the end, though, many of them ended up back on the farm, helping tend to crops or the animals or taking care

of the children — their own and their younger siblings — while Mom worked the fields.

Mom was a hard worker. She preserved food and everything she could from the animals, orchards, and her garden. She would sit in her rocking chair and scoot with it to the garden and work from there, because her knees were so bad. I can't even imagine how difficult that would have been! She once had a horse that was trained to come up to the edge of the front porch, bend down, and let her get on side-saddle so she could get around. We had a spring for water, but no electricity, no car, no radio, and no washing machine until many, many years later.

My mother also worked for other people. She would hoe corn, often while pregnant. I remember her telling stories of how she would go into labor in the field, go into the house, have the baby with the help of a midwife, and then shortly thereafter be back out hoeing the corn again.

When she wasn't working the fields, she would do other jobs. I remember when I was a young girl in the 1930's, she would take me to a hotel in Cowen, where she worked.

Mom also took me with her to care for the sick and dying in their homes, and I ended up going to many funerals with her. She would wash and prepare bodies and clothe them. My dad, a carpenter, would make their caskets and line them with the nicest material they could find.

Mom and Dad always had cows that gave us milk and butter, hogs for our meat, a few rabbits the boys would bring in now and then, and



Jennie and John Hall with the first two of their 16 children, Lela (left) and Lola.

chickens to eat and for eggs. We also had fruit trees. The cellar house was always full of canned foods, potatoes, apples, pears, and nuts. Everything stayed cool. Though we always had to ration food, I do remember on Easter, Dad would cook breakfast and let us eat as many eggs as we wanted. He and Mom would save them up for this special occasion.

In the 1930's, three of my older sisters moved to Widen, Clay County, and their husbands started working the coal mines. [See "The Train, the Smoke, the Whistle, and the Bell. Memories of Widen," by Barbara J Young Workman, Winter 2008.]

Mom and Dad decided to leave the farm and try to find work there, too, and rented a place temporarily. The Great Depression was hard on my family, however, and it wasn't long before they were back on the farm in Hallburg.

There she had me in 1932 and her last two children, both boys in 1934 and 1935. She was in labor for four days with me. I think we last ones were the hardest to bring into this world. Mom had a doctor and a neighbor, Laura Boggs, who served as a midwife and delivered most of the children.

When my last brother was born, he wasn't breathing, but the doctor didn't seem concerned. "She's got too many anyway," he commented. But the midwife said, "She'll love this one the same as all the rest." So she began working on the baby, and luckily he began breathing. The doctor asked my mom what name to put on the birth certificate. After 25 years of having children,

she must have been out of names, so she just told him to use his name — Charles Newton Brown. That's how my youngest brother got his name!

At that time, we had five children living at home. Mom tried to keep the last pregnancy a secret. For whatever reason, Dad decided to leave home. He went to his father to ask for his inheritance money early, got it, and then went west to Nevada. During this time, Mom had a rough time trying to feed everyone. Sometimes, I was told, there was nothing to eat for supper. My sisters, who lived nearby, would sometimes send food to the house, although they were having

The children of John Bennett and Jennie (Bee) Hall



The Hall family at John and Jennie's 50th wedding anniversary in 1959. Seated from the left are Margaret, Lela, John ("J.B."), Jennie, Virginia, Jessie, and Helen. Standing from the left are Lola, Norma, Oleta, John, Ivan, Blaine, Leslie, Charles, Mary, and Kathleen.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Lela Melissa (Riffle) | July 28, 1910-Oct. 28, 2001 |
| 2. Lola Garnet (Byard) | Feb. 13, 1912- |
| 3. Oleta Caroline (Cumbridge) | May 26, 1914-May 27, 2008 |
| 4. Kathleen Ruth (Riffle) | Sept. 20, 1916-Sept. 30, 2007 |
| 5. John Lloyd | Oct. 29, 1918-Dec. 7, 1977 |
| 6. Ivan McDonald | Aug. 26, 1920-Feb. 16, 1982 |
| 7. Helen Louise (Mollohan) | Oct. 19, 1921- |
| 8. Mary Esta (Erickson) | Oct. 12, 1922-April 26, 1993 |
| 9. Margaret Alice (Hines) | Jan. 6, 1925-May 21, 2007 |
| 10. Virginia Susan (McGraw) | Feb. 26, 1926- |
| 11. Norma Bee (Winfree) | Oct. 8, 1927- |
| 12. Roy Blaine | July 28, 1929-July 24, 2003 |
| 13. William Byrne | June 4, 1931-Oct. 1, 1931 |
| 14. Jessie Lee (Maiuri) | Aug. 13, 1932- |
| 15. Leslie Hal | Jan. 15, 1934-May 17, 1976 |
| 16. Charles Newton Brown | Feb. 1, 1935- |

it rough, too.

One day, a peddler was going by selling apples. Mom had no money to buy any, but he had a bunch that were starting to go bad and couldn't be sold. He dumped them out, Mom got a bucket and collected them all up, and she peeled and cooked them. My sister Virginia said she was so hungry, she ate the peelings, rotten and all!

My dad came back home when I was still very young. He was gone a year or two. My sisters and I still debate the length of his absence, but it was a long time. We never heard why, and, to our knowledge, it was never spoken of. I was told some of the family members weren't so happy with him for a while, but my mother was elated. She fixed him a nice meal, but I was too young to really understand what was going on.

Mom and Dad lost an infant child to the flu before I was born, and I think for that reason Dad and I always had a special bond. He was always bringing me something when he had to be away working. He brought me my first taste of peanut butter and other things. When I hear certain old songs, I can see us under the big maple tree in our front yard. He would be singing and holding me. He loved to sing. He had a good bass voice, and some of my sisters would sing in harmony with him.

Toward the end of the Depression, my mother decided she'd had enough with farm life and decided to look in the Kanawha Valley for a place. Several of my brothers and sisters lived around that area, and she settled on a two-story house with a double lot in Glasgow, Kanawha County. The house needed lots of work, including replacing the gas lights with electric, redoing the



Jennie's father, Lloyd Bee, at right, with Walter Mills by a creek at Hallburg. The two men appear to be dousing for water. Photographer and date unknown.

walls, and so forth.

Once she got it fixed up, Mom went to work again, this time taking in boarders who would come into the valley to work. At the time, Dad was doing carpentry work in the area. The two of them put a lot of extra beds in the bedrooms to accommodate everyone — at the time, there were still six children living there, including me.

Everyone had chores to do. At that time, my sister Virginia finished high school — the first and only one of my siblings to do so. (I graduated, as well.) Virginia got married, as did my sister Norma. My three brothers living at home all went into the service during World War II. That left only me at home, and Mom kept me busy!

I had so much to do — helping my

mother with all of the dishwashing, setting tables, packing lunches for the boarders, stripping beds, and washing them every Saturday I'd do anything I could just so I could get out and go somewhere on the weekend. I graduated high school in 1950 and got married shortly afterward to Lou Maiuri, a lineman for the local telephone company. We moved for a short time to Montgomery, Fayette County, but then made our way back to Glasgow, where we bought a house just a few blocks down the street from Mom. [See "I Dearly Love to Dance" Mountain Dancer Lou Maiuri," by Doug Van Gundy; Spring 2008.]

Mom made a good life for herself in Glasgow. She was well-known for her good, down-home meals. One Sunday, a young U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd and Senator Jennings Randolph stopped by to eat. I don't know how they came to stop by, but I assume Mom invited them that

morning at church.

At 62 years old, Mom bought her first car and learned to drive, so she could go to the local store in town and bring home groceries. Given all the groceries she had to buy for those boarders, she probably kept that little store in business for several years. By this time, Dad had retired from carpentry work and was starting to show signs of Parkinson's disease. Mom had the house improved again and was making plans to be able to care for him when he could no longer care for himself, but that wasn't the way it happened.

Dad ended up in the hospital. One day, Mom was being taken to visit him by my sister and her husband. My brother-in-law was driving and saw a young man lose control of his



Jennie Hall with her 10 daughters in 1981 From the left are Margaret, Lela, Kathleen, Lola, Mary, Oleta, Virginia, author Jessie, Norma, and Helen.

car. He pulled his car off the road and stopped, but the young man's car came careening across the road unexpectedly and hit their parked car head-on.

My mother was in the front passenger seat and took the brunt of the accident. She suffered compound fractures in both legs and other injuries. Private-duty nurses were hired to take care of her for several months. It was difficult to see her, obviously in much pain, with both legs up in the air. She came down with an infection and had to have one of the legs removed and eventually lost a kidney, as well.

She was in the hospital for 11 months, during the same time Dad was there. When they got to the point there was no longer anything they could do for Dad, they took him in to see her. They had a little private talk — and then he came home to die. My family did everything they could to make him as comfortable as possible, but he

passed away in 1971.

Mom wasn't able to attend his funeral. When she finally came home from the hospital, she fell into a deep depression because of all the changes she had to make with her longtime husband gone and her no longer being able to take care of herself. She had always been such a strong person — always the caretaker of others — and now she was dependent on others for help. We hired someone to be with her and do whatever needed to be done.

She finally adjusted her emotions and came out of the depression. She began crocheting and making many things, such as throws, quilts, and so on. We took her many places, and she lived 10 more years, confined to a wheelchair. I lived close by and got to know her better during those years than all the other years I had before. We became very close in our talks, and now I wish I would have asked her more personal ques-

tions. As the years passed, she grew weaker until the Lord finally called her home in 1981.

A lot of my brothers and sisters are gone now, and soon all of us will be. While I can, I want to pay a special tribute to my mother for her perseverance and dedication to her family. Some of us would not have made it without her determination to bring us up to know right from wrong and to love one another. As adults, I can truly say I have never heard one of my siblings ever say an unkind word to another sibling.

It has been a blessing for me to have come from this large family. My mother is my hero for keeping us all together and teaching us to love each other as we have. 🍁

JESSIE LEE MAIURI was born at Hallburg, Clay County. Her family later moved to Glasgow, Kanawha County, where she graduated from East Bank High School in 1950. She currently resides in Summersville with her husband, Lou. This is Jessie's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Author C.W. "Bill" Jarrett is in the front row, fourth from the left, in this 1946 photograph of the Stonewall Jackson High School basketball team. Second from the left is George King. [See "Top Score: Morris Harvey's George King," by Bob Kuska; Spring 2009.]

Three Boys and a Train

In my mind, I can still see George Border, Bob Hickman, and myself meeting at Bigley and Washington streets, a locally well-known street corner on the west side of Charleston. It was in the early 1940's, and we were all three teenagers and the best of friends.

As was our custom, we would walk to the C&O train station and purchase three coach-fare, roundtrip tickets from Charleston to Huntington — a train ride of about 50 miles each way. We would catch the midmorning train westbound and return on the late-afternoon eastbound train, spending several hours in Huntington and arriving

home in time for supper. The train we would ride was called the *Fast Flying Virginian*.

Unbeknownst to George, Bob, and myself, this would be the last time we would meet at the corner of Washington and Bigley, walk the mile or more to Capitol Street, and on Capitol Street walk the additional blocks to the Southside Bridge, walk across the bridge over the Kanawha River to the far side, down a flight of stairs leading to the C&O train station platform, and enter the train station through two large doors leading into the ticket office and main waiting room.

We are boarding the train today,

just as we had on previous occasions, because George consistently and miraculously could ask for and receive extra spending money from his dad or mom, often \$10, sometimes as much as \$20, by simply asking. George's ability to obtain extra personal spending money financed our train trips to Huntington, for Bob and I seldom had more than a few dollars to add to the pot. We asked George how he raised such large sums, and we never quite understood his answer other than something about his father was a construction worker and there were occasions when he received a lot of overtime money

and that was the time to ask. So, when George asked for and received \$10 or more, he would tell us, and we would plan our next train trip as soon as possible.

Bob and I convinced George that I should hold the money to pay for our lunch and should manage our money for cokes, ice cream, gum, candy, and other trip expenses, including the train fare. We also agreed that upon our return to the Charleston station, whatever money that was left would then be divided equally among us. George agreed to this handling of the money, I believe, because he was more adventurously inclined than either Bob or me. George never really complained about our financial arrangement, though he would shake his head at the end of each trip when we divided the remaining money, if any was left, three ways. On about the second or third shake of George's head, I would always say, "There are three of us, isn't there? And we are sharing equally, right?" And, as always, this was acceptable to George.

He, Bob, and I each had our own special reasons for enjoying the experiences we shared. It was a day together for one thing. Being boyhood teenage pals was another. And then there was the excitement of travel and the sound of the train rumbling over the tracks, as well as the sound of the train's horn loudly proclaiming our presence at all the crossings.

The conduct and the different appearances of people on the train or at the stations fascinated us, as well. We marveled at those who worked on the railroad tracks, at the stations, or on the train itself. The clothes worn by each of them were striking to our eyes and clearly indicated the work they did. Among those whom we observed, we agreed that the hat worn by the conductor was as distinctive and as exceptional as the sharp dress of the dining room staff. While all our observations were actually very pleasing, seeing America beyond



The *Fast Flying Virginian* in Russell, Kentucky. Photograph by Gene Huddleston, date unknown. Courtesy of the Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society.

our boyhood homes and beyond our own city streets actually had the greatest impact upon us.

In my mind, I can see once more through the window of the *Fast Flying Virginian* as we pass through towns such as St. Albans and Hurricane. There are so many people busily engaged in their daily activi-

ties, such as mowing lawns, washing cars, painting a house, sitting in a swing, raking yards, planting a garden, playing ball in their backyards, or entering or leaving their homes. On straight stretches of track, with the highway parallel to the train, we pass fast-moving cars and trucks, yet I do not feel



Downtown Huntington, Fourth Avenue looking east from 9th Street, in the early 1940's. Courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

as though I am in motion as I am seated securely within the confines of a steel car.

There were no stops between Charleston and Huntington, and we arrived in less than an hour. The train station at Huntington was within walking distance from the main part of town. On disembarking from the train, we eagerly walked on the wide sidewalks and marveled at the width of the streets, particularly downtown. After walking quite a few long city blocks, our first stop was at the Hotel Governor Cabell, located in the very heart of the city. Its grandeur was much like that of the Daniel Boone Hotel in Charleston. We would sit in the hotel lobby and view its wonders. This first stop also served as a rest from our walk

before we proceeded to whatever we had planned for the day

*On disembarking from
the train, we eagerly
walked on the wide
sidewalks and marveled
at the width of the streets.*

We would always check the Keith-Albee Theater for the feature picture and for the time of showing. Then we would determine our interest on whether or not to see the movie or if there would be enough time before returning to the train depot. This was Huntington's premier theater. On the inside there were soft, col-

orful, and beautiful carpeting and drapery; uniformed ushers; wide, swirling staircases, a large and fancy concession stand, and a plush seating area. On one occasion, we had time to see the movie with lunch of popcorn, candies, and drinks. On other occasions, we ate our lunch at a spaghetti restaurant known as Jimmy's, which we enjoyed immensely. It was inexpensive and very crowded at the noon hour but well worth the wait and, to us, classy. There was also a small 10- or 12-foot-wide restaurant (it was very narrow) across the street from the Governor Cabell that served a special steak sandwich.

After lunch, wherever we dined, there was always time to see the courthouse or federal building and

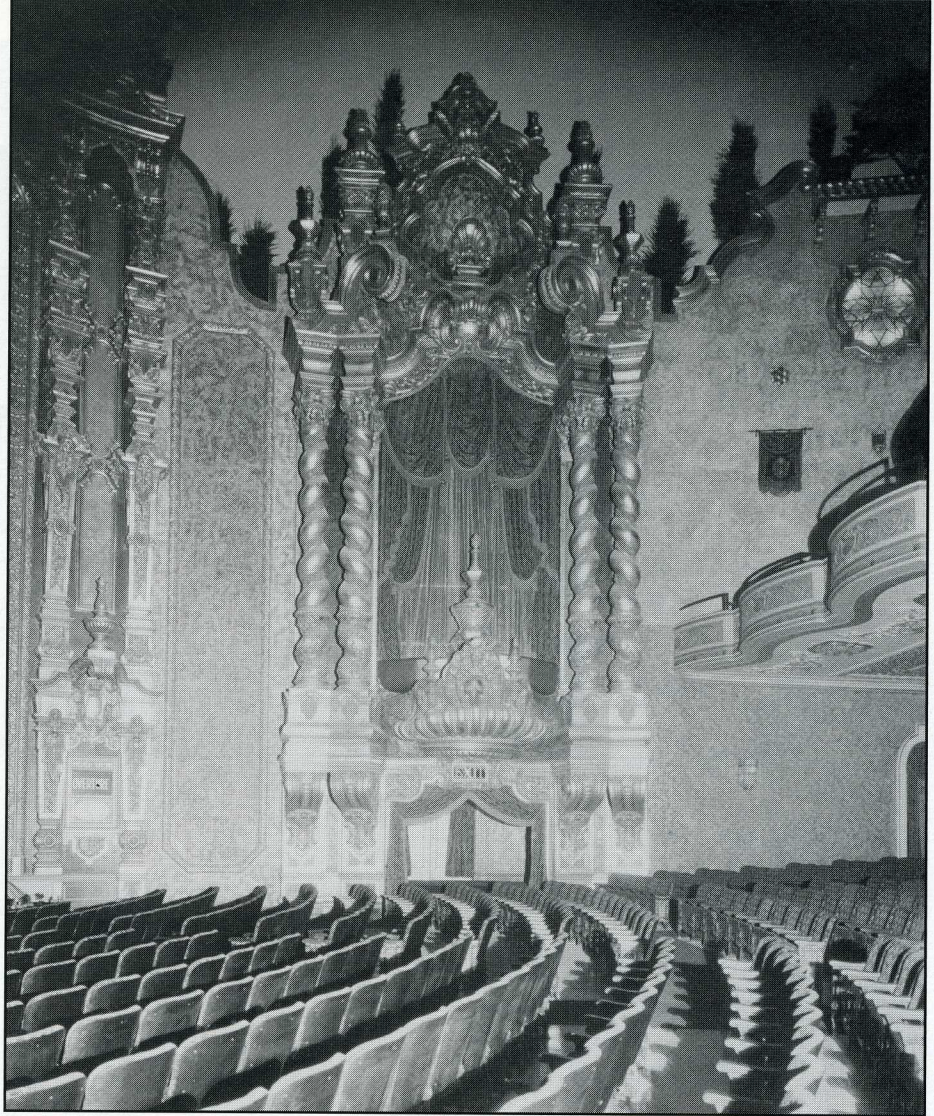
perhaps walk a short distance before returning to the train station to hear once more, "All aboard, all aboard!" and begin the journey home.

At this time, Huntington was slightly larger or was slightly smaller in population than Charleston. I do not recall which one was the larger city, but it was a matter of prestige for either to be considered the largest city in West Virginia, and both of the cities fought hard to exceed 50,000 residents in the 1940's. Huntington had Marshall University and a famed coach by the name of Cam Henderson. Charleston was the capitol, but most of all it was the city of our birth. It was always thrilling to hear the conductor loudly shout for us to come aboard and to begin our return trip home.

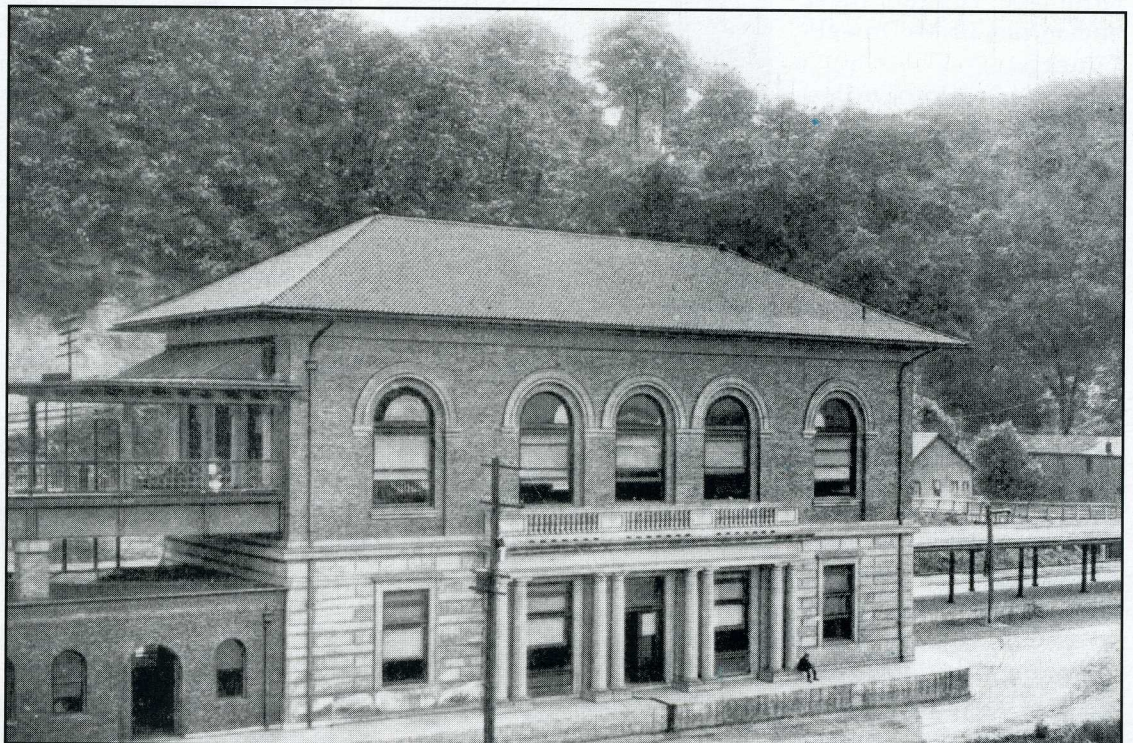
Bob and I continued to ride trains all our lives. On one occasion in the 1990's, Bob and I and our wives took a train out of Orlando to Tampa, Florida. My wife and I have ridden perhaps 20,000 miles on different trains in the United States and Canada. Whatever the number of miles or number of train stories yet to be told, some 50 years of riding trains began in my teens with the roundtrip journey between Charleston and Huntington when George, Bob, and I eagerly rode the *Fast Flying Virginian*.[❁]

C.W. "BILL" JARRETT is a native of Charleston and a graduate of Stonewall Jackson High School. He attended Morris Harvey College. Bill retired from Columbia Gas Transmission after 37 years and currently resides in Florida with his wife, Joyce. This is Bill's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Postcard view of Charleston's C&O passenger depot in 1910. Courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.



Keith-Albee Theater, interior. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Historic Preservation Collection.



Kimball Memories

"Run Down to Gianato's"

By Jean Battlo

At the turn of the 20th century, Kimball was a major stop for the "iron horse," as it roared and snorted its way through the southern coalfields. Then as now, the Norfolk & Western Railroad chuffed along the Elkhorn River, hauling thousands of tons of coal each day from the rugged hills and mines of McDowell County.

Located seven miles southeast of Welch, Kimball at the time was home to many miners and their families, including those from the various immigrant groups that poured into McDowell County in search of work and a new start in the late 1800's. These groups included Syrian, Greek, Hungarian, Jewish, and Italian immigrants, as well as a considerable population of blacks. They lived in largely segregated neighborhoods, such as Kimball Hill, Norwood Addition, and Carswell Hollow, and in neighboring communities, such as Peerless, Vivian, Big Four, and Bottom Creek. [See "Mining in the Melting Pot: The African American



Gianato's store has been a landmark in Kimball for nearly 100 years. Photograph by Alan Johnston.

Influx into the McDowell County Mines," by Jean Battlo; Winter 1997 and "Lavarò e Casa: Memories of an Italian Mining Family," by Jean Battlo; Spring 1999] By 1911, when Kimball was incorporated, a string of

stores had mushroomed along Main Street. A few years later when James Gianattassio opened a corner grocery, Kimball was one of the more successful small boomtowns of the growing coal rush. Young James Gianattassio purchased the building and turned it into a small general store in about 1918. The late Fred Moore told the family that the 100-year-old structure was there at the turn of the 20th century and housed a blacksmith shop on the lower floor and a barbershop above. The store would bear the shortened name of "Gianato's." From that point the Gianato family would be a strong thread woven into the tapestry of both Kimball and the state of West Virginia. Once they opened the store, one of the first phrases a Kimball kid learned was, "Run down to Gianato's and get... [milk, bread, or whatever was needed]."

James was born to Luke Antonia and Maria Magdalena Gianattassio in Avellino, Italy, in 1888. Family tradition holds that the eventual Gianato family patriarch, aged 12, arrived at Ellis Island around 1900. While there are few reliable details known about his arrival, his sons Mike and Jimmy believe that James might have come to America with an older brother, as was the custom with most immigrants. The Gianatos lived in Pennsylvania for a while before moving to the lucrative coal towns of southern West Virginia. James settled in Kimball.

James was widowed with one son, Luke, when he met a beautiful young Italian girl, Rosie Rossi. Rosie's father had died, and her mother, Maria Pecuraro Rossi, had come to McDowell County and established an Italian boarding house. Rosie, the late matriarch of the family, related stories of walking a mile from the boarding house at Bottom Creek into Kimball to get water from the town pump.

As a young girl, Rosie also made the walk into town to get coal for heating. James and Rosie courted, married, and produced four children: sons John, Mike, and Jimmy and daughter, Marie. They joined James' eldest son, Luke.

James and his grocery store did well for the young family. In 1923, however, they were beset by the most common of disasters when fire destroyed their apartment. Considering themselves blessed to have escaped with their lives, the family lost everything but the kitchen table. To this day, the old table sits in the kitchen behind the current store, and Mike says it is "still in good shape."

In 1927 another tragedy befell them. Floods, which would revisit the family and the town again and again, hit the region. The Gianato store sits approximately 50 feet from the Elkhorn River and has been hard hit by floods through the years, including the disastrous flood of 1927. Delivering groceries to Big Four, James



Brothers Mike (at left) and Jimmy hold a portrait of their father, James, behind the counter of their family-run grocery and general store. Photograph by Alan Johnston.

had to walk in the flooded creek, as the road had been washed out. As a result, he got pneumonia and died within a week. Rosie was left with a family of five to raise alone.

For the time being, the Gianatos lived above the store, which was then owned by Philip Verduce. Rosie got a job in the Frigo grocery up the street and cared for the children as best she could. Her mother, Mrs. Femino, kept the youngest two, Jimmy and Marie. Struggling, Rosie worked for the Frigo brothers, Kaufman's department store, and Jones & Spray grocery. Through it all, sustained in large part by the family's strong Catholic faith, the Gianatos survived. As did Kimball.

Jimmy and Mike, the town's "boys" — now in their mid-80's — tell long tales of the caring and camaraderie that resided in such towns and led to the resiliency that would be needed in Europe in the following decades. Of these times, Mike comments, "We lost everything. But with the help of my grandma and grandpa and God's help, we made it."

The daily trains brought news of happenings in other places along the tracks. In particular, Jimmy



The first location of Gianato's grocery and Italian produce store. At the time of this photograph, Gianato's shared a building with the local hospital.

comments, "They might come in the morning and tell us about someone who had died over in Williamson. Then, that evening, all the families that knew the deceased would be lined up along the tracks of Northfork, Keystone, Welch, and Kimball and ride to Williamson for the wake."

"During the '30's," Mike recalls, "Kimball had a siren that sounded the nine o'clock curfew. All the children under 16 had to be off the streets. Chief of police Kent Cruise used to laugh when he saw my brother Johnny and others race down the street before the nine o'clock siren rang."

That wonderful social texture worked to sustain the community as the Great Depression took its toll. Regardless of difficult conditions all of the Gianato children completed high school. The tradition of most Italians in the little village was, "We may go without food, but the children will have an education." Luke graduated at the top of his class and became a successful businessman. Establishing Gianato's GMC, he was a major car dealer and provided a number of jobs in the county, including one of the early jobs for his nephew Jimmy Joe Gianato, who now serves as the state Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

"We had a very close family," Mike says. "On Sun-

days, after Mass, all the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren would come to Momma's for fun, food, and enjoyment. We did that until she died at 92."

Working at several of the town's stores and coal company departments, the Gianato youngsters had associations with A&P, Frigo, and Koppers stores, as well as Pocahontas, Eastern Gas & Fuel, and Consol mines. When Philip Verduce died in 1943, the Gianatos bought back the grocery and resumed their role as sentinels of the town at their corner store. The intrepid Rosie was now firmly ensconced as the matriarch of the family, and the store began to thrive again.

This time however, their lives were interrupted by World War II. As so many immigrants, these Italians were (and remain) super patriots and true to the red, white, and blue. All four Gianato boys served either in that war or in Korea. After leaving the service, they joined the ranks of those who returned to their hometown, amid shouts of celebration. Mike recalls that the streets of Kimball were more crowded than they had ever been as the throngs came out for V-E Day. During the following decades, the "boys" also joined ranks with those marrying and producing their share of "baby boomers."

The Gianato boys weren't above a little mischief from time to time. On one occasion in the early 1950's, Mike, along with Luke Gianato, Tony Larkin, Jack Calabro, and a number of other of the town's notorious met to play some poker at the Snifu Pool Room, beside the East End restaurant. The games were technically illegal, and from time to time there were raids. On this one particular night, the "states" came. According to Mike, the police first took all the money in the pot and were about to arrest the lot of them, but the pool hall owner paid \$20 bail for each of the men. Then the police went around the table taking names.

The quick-witted Gianato sat thinking. "They don't know me, and I don't want my name in the paper," Mike thought to himself. When they got to Mike and asked his name, he told them, "Mac Janco of Kimball." Then the officers started to leave but told them, "You all be at the court Monday morning."

No one went. The *Welch Daily News* printed the names that day, and everyone in town went around asking, "Who is Mac Janco?"

The family, town, and county boomed in the wonderful decades that followed. As businessmen and coal company workers, the Gianatos remained cornerstones, far beyond the corner store. Civic leaders, Rotarians, members of the Catholic church (which they helped build in Kimball), and workers in numerous jobs, they all drove cars from the Gianato car lot to Sunday dinners at Rosie's. Children and grandchildren came in increasing numbers, and the rest of the town's children were still told, "Run down to Gianato's and get. "

Over the past quarter century, most of the jobs at the local mines have disappeared, and the population of McDowell County has decreased dramatically. A series of devastating floods have taken out much of what remained of the Kimball business district.

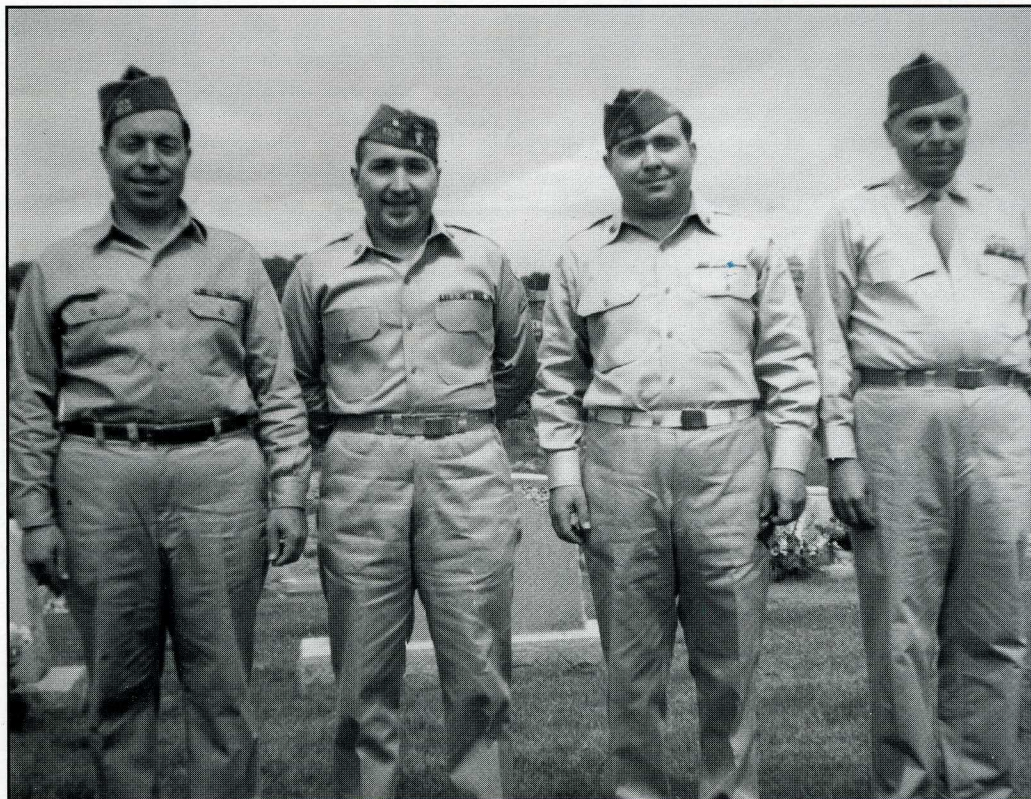
Recent developments provide cause for hope, however. The old Houston Coal Company store has been reborn as a local coal history museum. Coal Camp Creations now produces innovative sculptures and figurines employing McDowell County coal and local artisans. [See "Coal Art: The

'Other' West Virginia Coal Industry," by Jean Battlo; Winter 2008.] And the historic World War I Memorial building, abandoned in 1978 and gutted by fire in 1991, has been restored. It was rededicated in November 2010. [See "Kimball's War Memorial", page 44.]

Gianato's store has moved, but it remains a central feature of downtown Kimball and a testament to the resilience and tenacity of the people of this unique community and, in particular, the members of the Gianato family. Stalwart and faithful as the stones Italian stonemasons used to build their church, Jimmy Gianato sets an example seldom found among his contemporaries. Each morning, never failing, on his way down to help Mike in the store, he can be seen entering the long-closed church that he helped build and largely keeps intact. He checks everything then goes to the altar, lights a candle, and prays. Hard to say just how much that has to do with the town's care.

Mike concludes, "We played together, ate together, and had fun together. Kimball is #1 and will always be #1. If I had my life to live over again, I wouldn't change a thing."✿

JEAN BATTLO was born in Kimball, McDowell County, where she still resides. She is a teacher, poet, and playwright, and has had works produced by professional and community theater companies. Jean is the author of *McDowell County in West Virginia and American History*. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2008 issue.



Patriots at heart, all four Gianato boys served in the military during the 1940's or early '50's. From the left, they are Johnny, Jimmy, Mike, and Luke Gianato.



The Luther Patterson War Memorial in Kimball during the 1930's. Photograph courtesy of Bill Archer and the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*.

Kimball's War Memorial

Along the north side of U.S. Highway 52, toward the east end of Kimball, towers an unexpected sight. There, overlooking the rail yard and bustling highway traffic is an attractive, classically styled structure, beautiful in its architectural details and monumental in its historical significance.

The World War I Memorial in Kimball was the first memorial built specifically to recognize and honor the contributions of African American soldiers during the Great War. Newly renovated, the memorial today serves as a reminder of the dedication and sacrifices of black servicemen and women; it is also a center of activity for people of all races and backgrounds in McDowell County.

In the late 1800's, as the population of McDowell County exploded to accommodate the expanding railroad and mining industries, blacks made up a growing percentage of the workforce and community. By 1910, McDowell County had the largest concentration of African Americans in the Appalachian region, representing 35% of the labor force in the Pocahontas coalfield. When World War I broke out, approximately 1,500 McDowell County blacks left the mines to serve in the armed forces.

Following the war, many returned home and to the mines. When an impressive memorial building

was constructed with county funds in Welch in 1923, however, it excluded blacks. McDowell County's black population at this time were not only numerous, they were educated, organized, and politically astute. A group of black veterans petitioned the county commission and presented a proposal for a new memorial recognizing the contribution of blacks to the war effort. The county approved the request and appropriated \$25,000 for the construction of the two-story, four-columned building in downtown Kimball.

Local architect Hassel T. Hicks was commissioned for the job. He included decorative exterior touches to accompany a simple and functional interior design. Four Doric columns — representing faith, hope, charity, and service — arched windows, classical portico, and a stone foundation defined the exterior of the building. The interior included an auditorium, kitchen, trophy room, lounge, and library.

Dubbed the Luther Patterson War Memorial, in honor of the war's first black casualty from McDowell



Parade passing in front of the Memorial circa 1940. Dedicated in 1928, the Memorial was a hub of activity in Kimball for 50 years.

County, the building was dedicated on February 11, 1928. It quickly became a center of social and community life in Kimball and served as headquarters for the local American Legion post, also named after Luther Patterson. The memorial hosted such diverse activities as high school proms, wedding receptions, and performances by Cab Calloway and other popular entertainers of the day.

Mirroring the economic fortunes of the area, the War Memorial remained vibrant through the 1950's. The decline of the coal industry during the late 1960's, however, saw a gradual decline in the maintenance and upkeep of the memorial until the building was boarded up in 1978.

In 1986, efforts began locally to raise awareness and money to restore the once-proud structure. These hopes were dashed in 1991, when a suspicious fire gutted the interior of the abandoned building. But McDowell County preservationists were undaunted, and they succeeded in getting the shell of the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. In 2000, U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd procured \$1.6 million in federal funds to renovate the memorial.

Work was ongoing for the next few years, and by early 2006

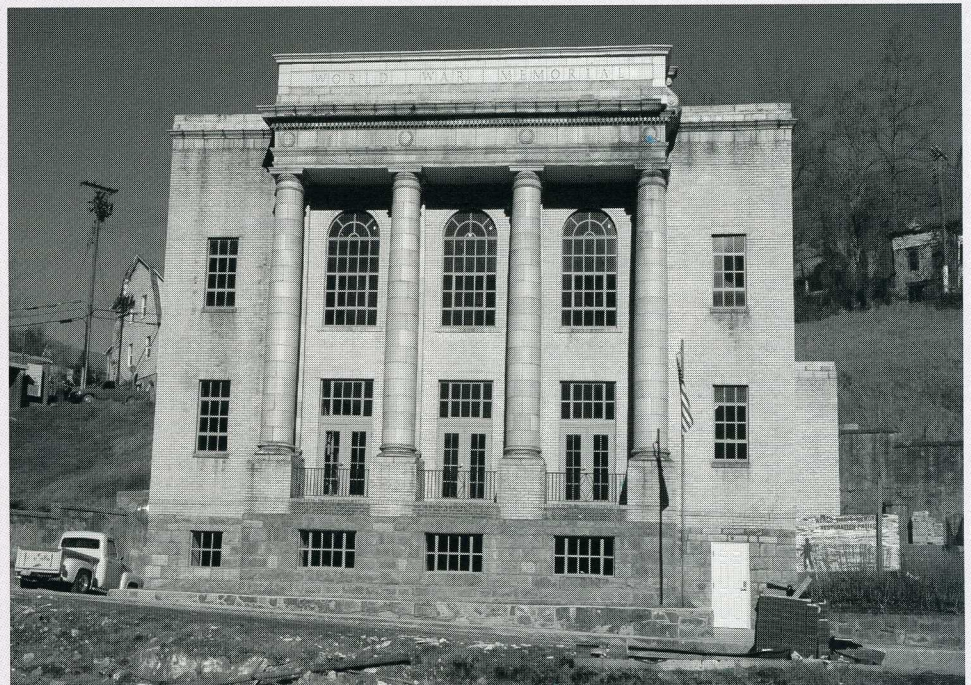
the facility was again open to the public. Now known as the Kimball World War I Memorial, the renovated structure was dedicated on November 13, 2010, with the grand opening of a permanent museum display titled, "Forgotten Legacy," designed by West Virginia University professor Dr. Joel Beeson. Honoring the legacy of African Americans in West Virginia, the exhibit provides a place for people of all races and from around the country to come together in a renewed dialogue on race relations.

Owned by the county commission and operated by the McDowell County Museum Commission, the memorial is once again a local gathering place. It has recently hosted a range of activities: wedding receptions, dinner theater, a book signing, a fashion show,

training seminars, musical performances, and similar events.

Plans call for an expanded parking area, a contemplation garden, informative displays about the National Coal Heritage Trail, and other improvements. On April 9, the Kimball World War I Memorial will mark the 83rd anniversary of the initial dedication of the memorial. The public is invited.

For additional information, call (304)585-7789 or visit www.forgottenlegacywwi.org.



Kimball World War I Memorial undergoing renovations in about 2005. Today it is fully restored and serves as a community center and museum.

Stepping!

By John Lilly



Omega Psi Phi fraternity members at West Virginia State University homecoming step show in October 2010. Photograph by Tyler Evert.

Stomping, chanting, spinning, singing, waving, joking, and teasing, black fraternity and sorority members across West Virginia and the nation carry on a proud tradition virtually unknown to those outside the Greek letter community. Commonly known as stepping, this dynamic and entertaining dance promotes unity among African American campus organizations as well as friendly, if occasionally intense, competition.

Eric Jackson, a 2005 graduate of West Virginia State University at Institute, a member of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, and campus adviser for the National Pan-Hellenic Council, explains that stepping plays a key role in college life for black members of Greek letter organizations. According to Eric, stepping is "very, very popular" on the campuses of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) and other campuses that host black Greek letter organizations. "It's a necessity," Eric says. "It's what separates us from other fraternities and sororities."

Nationally, there are approximately 5,000 chapters of eight major predominantly black Greek letter organizations, with a total of about a half-million members. The fraternities are: Alpha Phi Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, Iota Phi Theta, and Kappa Alpha Psi. The black sororities are: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Sigma Gamma Rho. Of these, Eric reports that Alpha Kappa Alpha and Omega Psi Phi are currently active on the WVSU campus.

When an individual expresses an interest in joining one of these organizations — a process called pledging — he or she undergoes an extensive initiation period. According to Dr. R. Charles Byers, vice president of academic affairs at WVSU, a 1968 West Virginia State graduate, and a graduate member of Omega Psi Phi, the pledging or initiation period can last for up to 16 weeks. He says new members

spend this time "learning the history of the organization, learning the members, learning the ways of the organization that were different, that made one organization different from another."

Newcomers belong to a pledge club — a "line" — and go through the initiation process together. It can be demanding and strenuous at times, but when they complete the process — or "cross" — it is cause for celebration.

According to Dr. Byers, "Stepping started as a celebration. The very last thing after they crossed into the fraternity and became a member — less than an hour or so — they would have a show to let everybody on campus know that they are now members of the organization."

The origins of stepping are complex. Eric Jackson points to a 1922 inter-fraternity conference in Washington, D.C. "During the break," Eric says, "they were on the streets and were having a little 'stroll off' and chanting back and forth. That's when people actually [first] saw stepping."

Returning soldiers brought a sense of precision and uniformity into the stepping tradition, which is still evident today.

Eric also mentions South African miners as a possible source for certain aspects of stepping, especially the tradition within his fraternity of dancing in work boots: "In South Africa, the slaves had to stay in the coal mines from Monday until Sunday. They couldn't come out. Sunday was the only day they could leave. They were issued work boots to protect their feet. So when they got out on Sunday, they would just dance and sing and stuff like that. People used to come and watch them. It is still practiced today. A lot of people say that's where the boots element came in from."

Military movements provide another important aspect of stepping. "When the soldiers were coming



Dr. R. Charles Byers, WVSU vice president of academic affairs, a graduate member of Omega Psi Phi, and a 1968 WVSU graduate. Photograph by Todd Griffith, courtesy of West Virginia State University.

back from World War II," Eric says, "they were coming into these fraternities, and that changed the whole persona of stepping. They were introducing actual marching,

changing formations, doing things of that sort."

Dr. Byers agrees. "In the 1940's, right after World War II ended, there was an increase in the number of blacks attending historically black institutions," he says. "At West Virginia State University, the school enrollment almost doubled. Students who had gone into the service, especially males who had gone into the service, were a bit more mature. They knew what they wanted to do. They were also a little bit older."

Returning soldiers brought a sense of precision and uniformity into the stepping tradition, which is still evident today.

The African influence is obvious, as well, Dr. Byers points out. "Dur-



Zeta Phi Beta sorority sisters combine stomping and handclapping in their step show at West Virginia State in 1989. Photograph by Todd Griffith, courtesy of West Virginia State University.

ing the early '70's, there was the 'I'm black and I'm proud' movement, a movement of back-to-Africa or looking at Africa. [We can picture] African tribes and people in a circle, dancing," he says.

Indeed, stepping on the WVSU campus began in a circle, according to Dr. Byers. There was a tradition known as serenading. "Every Sunday in the spring, out on the quadrangle," he says, "all the Greek letter organizations would form a big circle, and they would take turns singing their songs and so forth. When they would come out for serenading, they would march out. They were so happy they would start doing a little dance in a circle. And that circle kind of went around, and as it went around it became stepping, because of the precision and uniformity of the dance. Serenading was very popular in the '50's. And that serenading turned into stepping and became popular during the '60's — especially from about '66 to '72, when stepping took on a more formalized character."

Other elements contributing to the look of stepping today include

the synchronized movements of popular singing groups, such as the Temptations; tap, jazz dance, and cheerleading movements (among female participants); the use of costumes and props, such as canes, capes, or turbans; and the wit and creativity of the individual group members.

Developing the routines or shows is the responsibility of an individual called the step master.

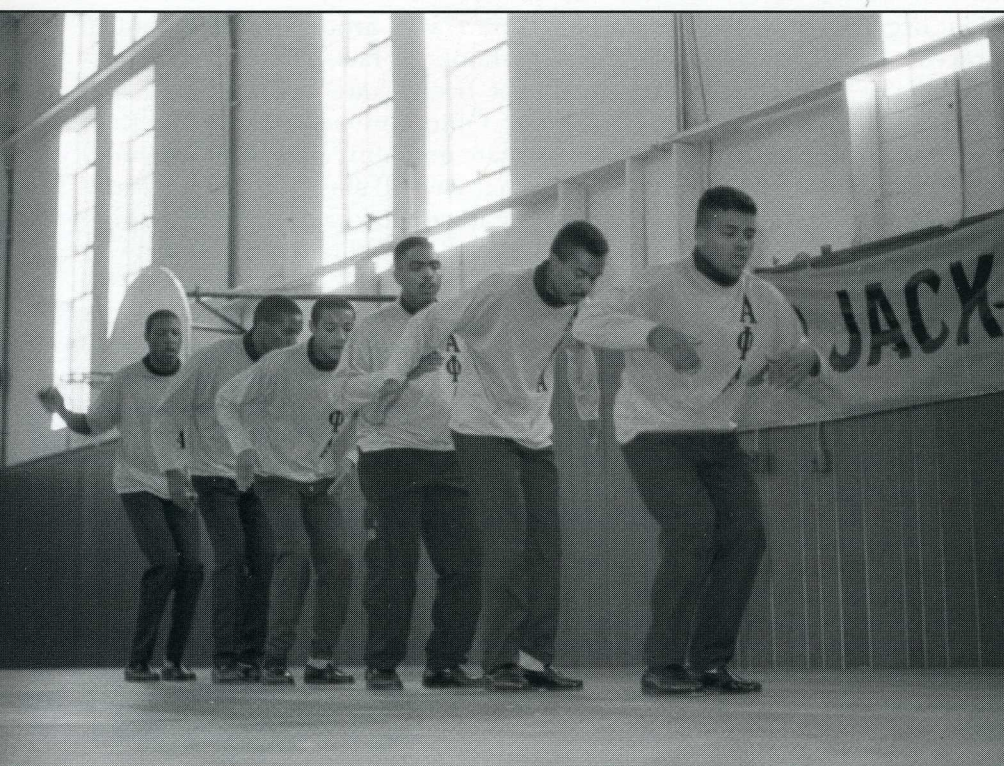
According to Eric Jackson, "Now you've got people going back to the R&B steps. The Hip-Hop. You have people marching and doing different formations but also incorporating dance moves. The evolution of stepping is limitless right now. It's just going to keep on changing and changing and changing."

Developing the routines or shows for a particular chapter is the responsibility of an individual called

the step master. He or she generally leads the group into the room and serves as the leader throughout the performance, calling cadence or instructions as the show progresses.

"In each organization, there was what we call the step master," Dr. Byers says. "That person may travel to other schools and look at steps or make up steps. And that person was in charge of teaching the steps to everyone else. Dr. Danny Boston was the step master at [our fraternity]. He was a drum major for the band, so he knew that kind of thing and was used to the precision. He taught us. It varied from year to year, and there were several different people, but he was the first one — the one I remember the most."

A typical step show might include anywhere from four to 20 men or women. (Men and women both participate in stepping, but generally do not perform together.) The vigorous dance movements include percussive footwork; broad arm and leg movements; and choreographed turns, spins, or "ripples." There is almost always singing or chanting; only rarely is stepping done to re-



Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity step team in 1989. Photograph by Todd Griffith, courtesy of West Virginia State University.

corded background music.

"Sometimes you step in sections, you're all collaborating and stepping to the same beat," Eric explains. "But some might step on the offbeat, some might step on the beat. Everyone is not all the time doing the same thing. Not all the time. There's hand slapping, leg slapping, your feet slapping together, different arm movements. You might slap on somebody else. It's very athletic. Some people know how to flip and do splits. They'll do that. You just really have to see it to understand it."

Step show competitions take place in the fall during homecoming week and during May Week. These competitions have recently grown in popularity and importance. Starting in the 1980's, black Greek letter organizations invited members of nearby chapters to join them and to compete for prize

money and bragging rights. This changed the complexion of stepping dramatically. Once a rite of passage for new members, stepping — and doing well in stepping competitions — became a matter of pride

for entire chapters and national organizations.

"Now, because of the competition, once you're in the organization, the stepping continues," Dr. Byers points out. "The whole organization will have a step team. They would take the best of their members in terms of performance and allow them to travel from school to school. West Virginia University has a stepping contest. They do it throughout the country."

A recent national stepping competition sponsored by a popular soft drink company offered a total of \$1.5 million in prizes. First place was won by a white sorority, to the surprise of many.

"At West Virginia State we have [competitions] at least twice a year, in which the active organizations would compete against each other for cash prizes or the recognition of being the best stepping organization on campus," Dr. Byers says. "When we have those kinds of stepping competitions, maybe \$500, could be \$1,000 the organizations would get. They could use it for projects on campus."

Stepping also affords each organization an opportunity to express its own identity and promote its supe-



Known for their percussive routines and creative use of canes and sticks, Kappa Alpha Psi members perform blindfolded in 1998. Photograph by Todd Griffith, courtesy of West Virginia State University.

riority over rival groups. Omega Psi Phi, for example, typically uses high jumps and vigorous steps, wearing matching work boots. Kappa Alpha Psi is known for its dexterous use of canes, while the sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha's shows feature synchronized handclapping. There is also a subtle system of mimicry, innuendo, and mockery (or "cracking"), often undetected by outside observers.

"We call it 'Greek love,'" Eric says. "We're not meaning to hurt your feelings. We're just trying to be funny."

Sometimes, a group will salute an opponent by including one of the other organization's signature steps in a show. Other times, they might exaggerate such a step in an attempt to ridicule or poke fun at the competing team.

The chants that often accompany the stepping also reflect the complex dynamic that exists between rival chapters or organizations. Some chants might bemoan the difficulty of the pledging process, others might sing the praises of a particular organization and its members.

Sometimes, the songs or chants boil down to "trash talk," simply putting down opposing organizations in a humorous way.

A successful performance at a stepping competition can make a favorable impression on potential pledges, leading to increased fraternity membership, Eric says, pointing out that competition for recruits can be as important as dance competition:

"Whoever had the best moves and the best songs would get the most recruits for the following semester.

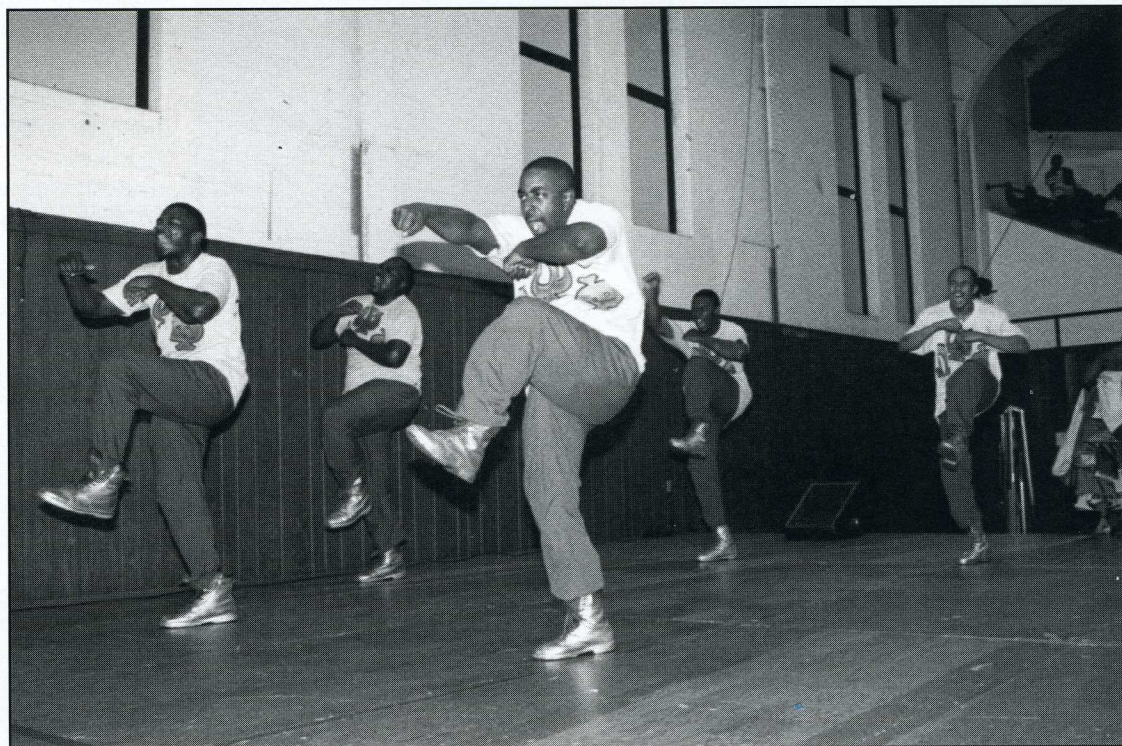
Most organizations have a similar process. We all teach the same values. We're all about community development, empowering each other, empowering our community, academic development, etc. Singing about these things, we all know and are familiar with it, but we all put a different spin on it."

In addition to these other rewards, participation in stepping competitions provides personal benefits for team members.

"I was a very shy person," Dr. Byers says, reflecting on his own

you travel around from school to school. In fact, some of my closest friends are people that I met at Ohio University and Bluefield State and University of Cincinnati that we still stay in contact with. If I had not been part of that stepping team, I probably would have never met them.

"It was fun," he continues. "It taught a lot of things that one would need to know in life, similar to being on an athletic team. You might have a leader you might have to follow. You had a specific thing to do at a



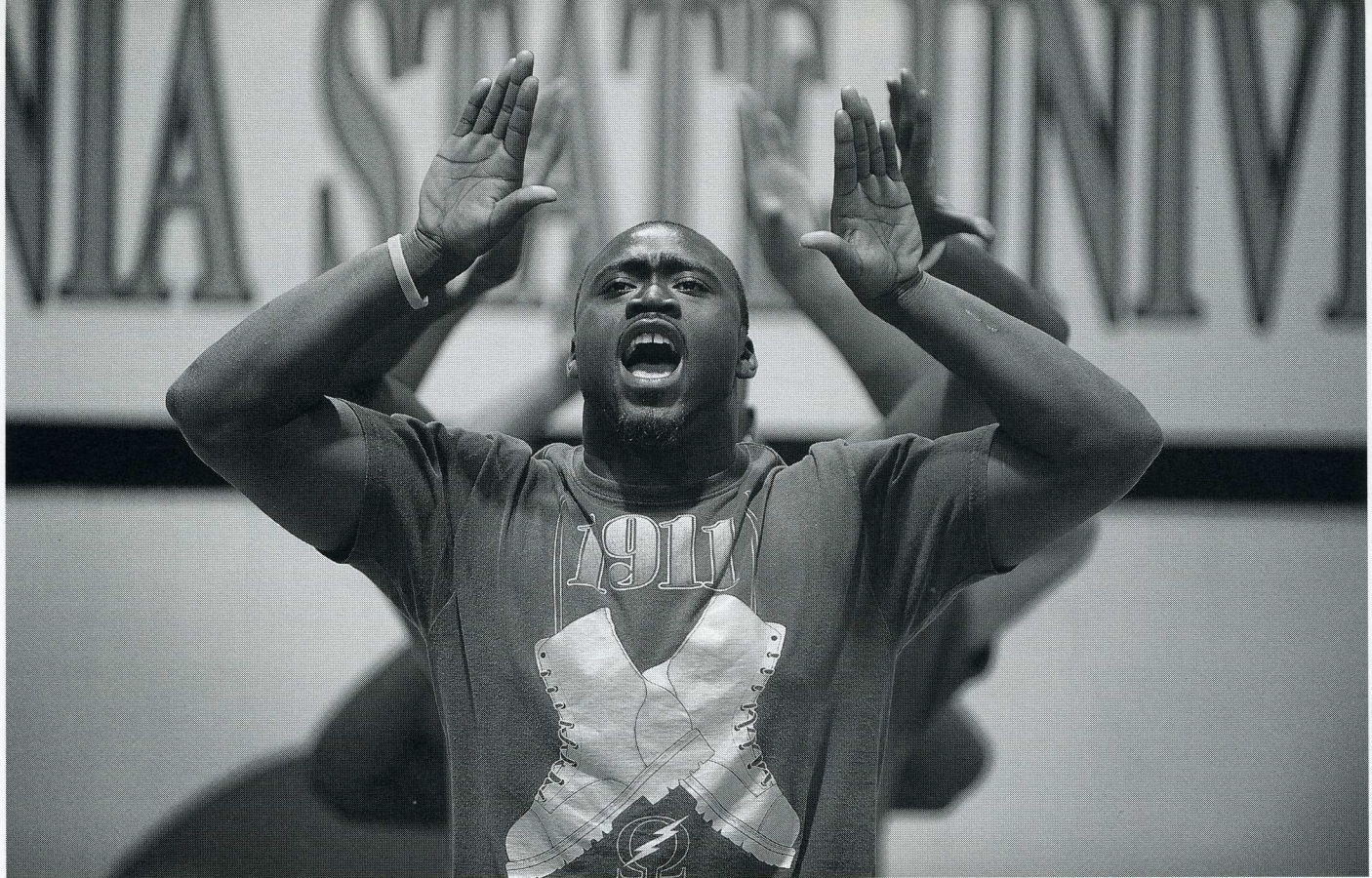
Omega Psi Phi is noted for its vigorous steps, high jumps, and distinctive boots often painted gold, as shown here. Photograph 1997 by Todd Griffith, courtesy of West Virginia State University.

stepping experience during the mid-1960's. "I remember going to Ohio State University and performing in the auditorium. I'd never performed in front of that many people. There was the fear of messing up and also some stage fright. At the same time, I wanted to make sure that I represented West Virginia State as best I could. Which we did. I think we won, if I can recall correctly. The reception and the applause that we got from the crowd really made me feel very good.

"You meet a lot of people as

specific time and you had to do it that way. You had practice, and you had to be there for practice. It taught a lot of respect for each other; it took a team effort. You felt a sense of togetherness, especially if you won or if your performance was very good. You didn't want to let your team down, so everyone would put forth their best effort. There was a lot of positive things that one would learn from stepping." ❁

JOHN LILLY is editor of GOLDENSEAL magazine.



Chanting, singing, and vocalizing are a part of the show for fraternity step teams. This group from Omega Psi Phi performed at WVSU last October. Photograph by Tyler Evert.

More Stepping

Seeing is believing, and there are ample opportunities to witness stepping for yourself. West Virginia University will host their annual step show and contest on Saturday, April 16, at the Metropolitan Theater on High Street in downtown Morgantown, beginning at 6 p.m. Nine fraternities and sororities from WVU and other schools will compete for \$1,000, awarded to both the top sorority and fraternity step teams. There is an admission charge, which includes an after party. For more information, call Jackie Dooley at WVU Student Organization Services, phone (304)293-3875.

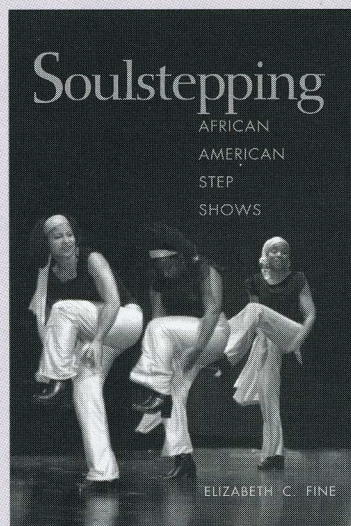
West Virginia State University at Institute, Kanawha County, will celebrate its Spring Sting April 14-17, which will include an all-campus "stroll-off." The university's Multicultural Festival will take place on Thursday, April 14. All campus organizations will participate, with ethnic food available from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Other attractions include displays, performers, speakers, and dancers. The stroll-off contest is scheduled for Saturday, April 16, at the University Union, beginning at 8 p.m. For more information, call the WVSU

Student Activities office at (304)766-3288.

Soulstepping: African American Step Shows, by Elizabeth C. Fine (2003 University of Illinois Press) is the first book-length study of stepping, its history, and its complex social and cultural implications. Written by a white associate college professor from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, *Soulstepping* offers both an academic look at this highly developed dance tradition and a

street-level appreciation. The 193-page paperbound edition includes 44 black-and-white photographs, musical notation, an extensive bibliography, and index. The book sells for \$19.95 and is available at www.press.uillinois.edu; phone (217)333-0950.

For those with Internet access, a range of YouTube videos are available on-line, showing stepping in all of its various forms. Search "stepping" or "step show."





John (left) and David Morris at the West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville in 1974. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

The Morris Brothers

By John Lilly

Music from the Head of the Holler

The names of folk musicians John and David Morris loom large in the story of West Virginia's musical heritage. During the 1960's and '70's, they organized one of the state's premier musical events at their Clay County home place. They also helped to found several other festivals in the region and set a high standard of performance and musical integrity with their appearances as the Morris Brothers.

Now in their mid-sixties, John and David still display a passion for West Virginia, a strong grasp of mountain culture, and the musical chops to set most audiences on their feet. They met with me recently at the Wood County Public Library in Parkersburg and shared some stories, a few opinions, and a brief moment of heavenly music. —ed.

“Morrises came to Clay County in 1917 from the south end of Calhoun County,” John Morris says. Born in 1946 and the younger of the two brothers, John still lives at the family farm in Ivydale. The boys’ father, Dallis Morris, was four years old when his family made the trip from Calhoun County in a horse-drawn wagon.

“He was sitting in the back end in a sugar box or some little wooden box like that,” John explains. “They got caught in some floodwater up around where the Big Otter exit of I-79 is now. Daddy was about to float out of the buggy and float

away, and his mother grabbed the floating box and pulled him back into the buggy.”

Their mother, Anna, and her family were Hills, prosperous farmers whose roots date back to the early 1800’s in the Barren Creek area of Kanawha County, near the Clay County line. John and David’s grandmother Hill was a granddaughter of Hiram Young from around Muddlety in Nicholas County.

“He was married three times and had about 21 kids with the three wives,” John says. “My Lord, with that many children, relatives were every place. What happened on

the other side of the family, great-grandpa Isaac Morris had a sister, Millie, who married a man named Czar Metheny. This was over in southern Calhoun County. Czar and Millie Metheny had six girls and one boy. Between them and the Youngs, we’re kin to everybody in three or four counties.”

Both of John and David’s parents taught school in Clay County. The family also farmed and kept cattle. It was the music from the Morris home and surrounding community that John and David carried with them into adulthood, however. Several family members on both sides played, sang, or both. One par-

The home of grandmother Lula Hill and her husband, Willis, near Ivydale, Clay County, in 2006. Photograph by Kim Johnson.



ticularly important figure to the Morris family was John and David's grandmother Lula Hill.

"They called her Granny Hill," David says. "She was one of these people that in our culture would be called a saint — a saint on earth. She was a deeply religious woman, and she lived that every day. Her testimony was, 'I want to live every day right at the foot of the cross.' She said, 'I love everybody. I love the sinners, but I don't love sin.'"

"She was 16 years old when she married Willis Hill. There's a photograph of her in her wedding dress. It was not a white dress, but oh my goodness, she was a beautiful girl. She was living out there on Mountain Home. She told me that she had been praying for a sign for her faith. She was out there in the garden. She said, 'I was hoe-

ing in the peas, and I got to the end of a row and stopped for a minute to lean on the hoe and straighten up my back.' She said, 'David, I heard the angels sing. The music was all around me, behind the clouds, and all around. And they sang all the parts. And it was beautiful.' That was her sign. She lived that. She taught us 'Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land.' It was one of her favorite songs."

"We never really heard that song anyplace else," John adds, as the brothers then sing a memorable, if altogether too brief, version of this fine traditional hymn.

Both Morris grandparents played the banjo, as did Dallis. Anna and



Anna and Dallis Morris in 1934, around the time of their marriage.

Dallis both played guitar.

"Mom sang everywhere she went throughout her day," David says.

"She sang anything from old country songs like 'Little White-washed Chimney in the Lane' to gospel songs, ballads like 'Barbara Allen,' or just whatever popped into her head," John adds.

"Daddy did most of his music making in the evening when the work was over with," David says. "He'd sit down with that Bradley Kincaid hound-dog guitar that was Mother's guitar. When Daddy was about 11 years old, a man stopped there to stay all night and had a guitar. It was the first time that Daddy had ever seen a guitar. He'd seen

dulcimers, banjos, and fiddles — that's about it. [The man] had a ring that was made out of a copper tube. And it fit his whole upper knuckle joint. He turned that ring under and noted the guitar with it — like a slide. That totally whacked my father. He worked all the next summer, hoeing corn and doing whatever he could do and saved up enough money, \$12.50, to get that little guitar."

David still owns the guitar and recently paid \$1,250 to have it restored. It is an excellent instrument, John and David agree.

David was born in 1944, a year-and-a-half before John. Anna had suffered the stillborn birth of her first child, Dallis Ferrell, a few years before David.

"We were very much aware of Dallis Ferrell," David says. "We visited his grave."

"We still have a few pictures of him in the casket in the swing," John adds. The brothers note that this was a difficult loss for Anna to bear.

"I think that really ruined my mother," David comments. "I don't think she ever got over that."

Family gatherings, church activities, and visits from various central West Virginia musicians played pivotal roles in forming the Morris brothers' musical landscape. Among these visitors were Wilson Douglas, French Carpenter, Wimpy Greathouse, Humpy Coen, Doc White, Ira Mullins, and Lee Triplett. Of these, John says, Wilson Douglas



John (left) and David at Ivydale in the late 1940's. David was born in 1944, John in 1946.

and French Carpenter were the most influential on his fiddling during the early years.

John began playing music at age six or seven, he says, initially on guitar and banjo, eventually adding mandolin and fiddle. Though he is equally at home on any of these instruments, John is mostly known these days as a fiddler. David plays the guitar.

"I think Dad's the reason I wanted to play the guitar," says David, who also plays dulcimer and Autoharp. "I started it when I was 10 or so years old, trying to learn to play. I was in college, I think, before I ever played in public. I sang some when I was in high school. I sang 'Danny Boy.' I sang it fast, like Conway Twitty, and all the girls screamed. It was just amazing!"

Though close in age, the brothers had separate musical interests during their younger years. They played and sang, mostly individually, at church and local talent shows until around 1962, when they played together at Normantown High School in Gilmer County.

"I was going to school at Glenville," David recalls. "I was a freshman, and I had a friend named Doc Dockerty, who did sleight-of-hand and

Grandmother Lula Hill was a fine mountain singer and a strong influence on the Morris brothers during their early years. John (left) and David are pictured with Granny Hill, below, in the 1960's, around the time David left for Vietnam.





John plays the fiddle under the watchful eye of his father and brother in this undated snapshot.

magic tricks and stuff like that. He was the opening act. I was singing folk songs, and John came over and played [with me]."

"We was playing in a gymnasium," John recalls. "And on the second or third row was some country girl, sitting there with her legs crossed. Probably about that much of her leg showing. I can remember the color of her shoes — kind of a pink to a tan color. She was sitting there with her foot flying up and down like that. And I looked out there to see that foot and leg going up and down right in the midst of that row of people. That foot was just a-flyin'! I've never forgot it. I've made a lot of people do a lot of things, but that was the first time I got a [physical] response to the music."

The boys soon joined forces and began performing wherever and whenever there was an opportunity. Initially, they tried to work with some of the older fiddlers they knew. While John and David supplied excellent backup to the traditional songs and fiddle tunes, the older musicians were

not equipped to play the variety and style of music that the boys brought with them to the stage. So John switched over to the fiddle as his main instrument, and the Morris Brothers began the quest for their own sound.

"John was just a straight-down-the-line Clay County fiddler at that point," David says. "Then in 1968 or 1969, we went with Frank George to Tannersville, Virginia, and met John Hilt. And he had a huge influence on John. He put the fire in John's music. And that's what made John a very different fiddler. He still could play all that other stuff, but Mr. Hilt showed him a whole new door."

"He was totally different from any mountain style that I'd ever heard," John says.

"It wasn't bluegrass, but it was just out-of-this-world fiddling," David

says. "His bow barked on the strings. He played a percussion with it."

"I never seen a fiddle player use anything like that before," John says.

In addition to playing at folk music gatherings, John and David used their music to further social causes.

"I was drafted and sent to Vietnam [in 1967]," Dave explains. "I was very much opposed to the war, and that experience radicalized me. I deeply considered not going. When it came right down to it, it was either go to Canada, go to Leavenworth, or go to Vietnam. I decided that I would rather go to Vietnam because I might be able to do some good in the middle of a bad situation. I was trained to be a combat medic..."

"I came home from Vietnam the first



week in September [1968]. And sometime in November I was hitchhiking to Charleston to get a job. I'd gotten a ride down to the mouth of Ovapa Creek at Maysel. I was standing there leaning up against that little bridge with my thumb out, and it was just dusky dark when a car stopped and picked me up. The driver of the car took me to Charleston. He told me all about the Black Lung Association and about all the stuff that was going on with the coal miners.

"Months later on I ran into the same guy, and he started playing 'I Bet You Don't Know Where We Met' with me. I was trying to think, and I couldn't remember who he was for the life of me. It was Arnold Miller, and he had picked me up hitchhiking to town that day! He [later be-

came] president of the United Mine Workers. [John and I] thought that we could contribute something to that. My idea, and I suppose John's as well, was that if the coal miners could take some control of their life and politics that it might bleed over into the government of West Virginia and the way things were done, and that there might be good come out of that."

David and John decided that they wanted to work on the campaign of Joseph A. "Jock" Yablonski, who was running for president of the UMWA.

"So I went down in October 1969



Active on the folk festival scene, John and David became well-acquainted with most of the older performers in West Virginia during the 1960's and '70's. Here David (left) and John join banjoist Aunt Jennie Wilson at the Sunrise Museum in Charleston in 1969. Photograph by Ferrell Friend.

to the UMWA headquarters," David recalls. "Some of those guys were involved in the Yablonski campaign. I went in there and told them that we wanted to be his musicians. And I heard one man go in and tell Mr. Yablonski that I was out there and wanted to join the campaign. Whoever it was told me that I'd better take this seriously. He said that Yablonski wasn't just some turnip that just rolled off the truck out here.

"So I was taken in to meet Mr. Yablonski. He had a gruff, gravelly voice and he asked, 'So, you want to sing for me?'

"And I said, 'Yes, sir.'

"And he said, 'All right, you sing the truth and I'll tell the truth.' He said, 'We need a campaign song.'

"I said, 'Nothing rhymes with Yablonski.' So I sat down in that office and took Billy Edd Wheeler's song 'Coal Tattoo' and rewrote it for the campaign and for the times — 'Yablonski's here and the time is near. It's coming a better day.' And later on I rewrote it again to say 'Miller's here and the time is dear. There's coming a reckoning day.' And then John hooked up with me, and the next thing we knew, we were in Beckley and down through the coalfields. We went all over the place."

The Morris Brothers traveled widely in support of Yablonski and the UMWA. When Yablonski and members of his family were murdered on December 31, 1969,

John and David lent their support to union president Arnold Miller, working with him until 1979

With John's fiery fiddle and David's strong singing voice and charismatic stage presence, the Morris Brothers attracted an enthusiastic audience wherever they went, including North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, California, New York, and at colleges and universities across the country. Their 1969 recording, *Music as We Learned It*, drew added attention.

To their frustration, however, there were not enough festivals or other large venues suitable to their



The Morris Family Old-Time Music Festival at Ivydale took place for five years, beginning in 1969. Here John sits in a rocker on stage and joins fiddler Glen Smith and his band at the first festival.

Informal music gatherings at the Morris home began to take on an importance of their own.

"When I left for Vietnam in 1967," David said in a 1998 interview with author Bob Heyer, "and then when I came back in 1968, we had get-togethers at the house. We had such a good time that we decided to keep it going."

The first Morris Family Old-Time Music Festival was

style of music available to them in West Virginia.

"[The West Virginia State Folk Festival at] Glenville was the only

real festival in existence [here] at that time really," John says. "Don West had his first festival at Pipestem in 1968, I think."

held at Ivydale in September 1969. It immediately became a destination for throngs of young people, seeking authentic mountain music in a



David Morris leads a song at the first Vandalia Gathering in 1977 at the Science and Culture Center in Charleston, now known as the Culture Center.

rustic setting. By 1970, Dallis Morris counted license plates from 36 states, as the sounds of fiddles and banjos rang through the once-quiet hills of his family home place. The festivals continued through 1973, drawing thousands of attendees and giving John and David valuable experience in event organizing. [See "Ivydale: The Morris Family Old-Time Music Festivals," by Bob Heyer; Summer 1998.]

John and David soon received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to organize grassroots festivals in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and in West Virginia.

"My vision," John says, "would be to go to the head of the holler and find the people who're playing. And instead of bringing them someplace 200 miles away, go to the head of the holler and have the festival."

Throughout the 1970's the Morris Brothers were extremely active as musicians.

When the Science and Culture Center opened in Charleston in 1976, David says, "John and I were on the opening concert that they presented there. John and I were the final act that night and closed out the concert. [Executive Director of the Arts and Humanities Council and future commissioner of the Department of Culture and History Norman L. Fagan] came out to introduce us and said, 'There are two ways to say "West Virginia" One is the Mountain State and the other is the Morris Brothers.' I've never forgot that introduction.

"We played several shows at the [Science and Culture Center] because we could bring the crowd out," David continues. "I went to Norman after one of the shows and said that I would like to bring a dozen or so people from Calhoun and Clay counties down here and

present them in a concert. Norman said he had an idea for something a little bigger than a show. He wanted to have a festival there at the center and really bring in a lot of music. He said, 'I want to model it after the Morris Family Festival, and I want you to head the committee.'"

Dr. Fagan received the Vandalia Award in 2001. During his acceptance speech, he acknowledged David's role in the founding of Vandalia:

homecoming because everybody's doing a homecoming ' I don't know where it came from, maybe the gathering of the clans. I said, 'Something like a gathering.'

"And Dave Morris said, 'What about Vandalia? Because we were almost called that.' So that's how it was born."

In addition to suggesting the name for the Vandalia Gathering, David helped to shape the first few festivals and provided valuable contact information for festival organizers.



David (left) and John Morris in Parkersburg last December. Photograph by Kim Johnson.

"When we were kicking this around about 26½ years ago," Fagan said, "some of the staff and I, we asked Dave Morris to come down, because he was doing something similar with John in Clay County. Dave came down, and we said, 'We want to do something to bring these folks together and for the state to officially honor them. And while they're here, to document what they do, so that we can share this magic with future generations.'

"I said, 'I don't want to call it a

David and John offered similar help to the Stonewall Jackson Heritage Arts Jubilee in Weston, the Augusta Heritage Festival in Elkins, and other events that sprang up in West Virginia around that time.

Today, David is married and lives in Ohio. He still performs, sometimes with his adopted stepson, Jack Morris. John lives in Clay County, collects and restores old cars and other antiquities, and occasionally is seen playing his fiddle at a dance, festival, party, or concert. 🌿

Vandalia Time!

The Vandalia Gathering started at the West Virginia State Capitol Complex in 1977. Led by Norman L. Fagan, the first commissioner of Culture and History, the Gathering was named for the proposed 14th colony — Vandalia — which comprised most of present-day West Virginia, as well as parts of Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The colony disappeared, but the name and heritage of Vandalia live on through this vibrant celebration of traditional life.

This year, in anticipation of the festival's 35th anniversary, we take a look back at how it all began. These photographs from the GOLDENSEAL files — many previously unpublished — bear testimony to the energy, enthusiasm, and diversity that set the first Vandalia Gathering apart.

Whether you were here on Memorial Day weekend 1977, have joined the Gathering since that time, or are completely new to Vandalia, we hope you will enjoy these priceless photographs and the story they tell. We also hope to see you on May 27-29 here in Charleston for the 2011 Vandalia Gathering!



Norman L. Fagan speaks at the first Vandalia Gathering in 1977, while musicians Andy Boorman and Don Cleaver look on.

1977

THE SCIENCE AND CULTURE CENTER PRESENTS VANDALIA GATHERING

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, MAY 27

6:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Demonstrations in Quilting.

GREAT HALL

6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Concert

THEATER

SATURDAY, MAY 28

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Concert

CAPITOL STEPS

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Demonstrations in Quilting and
Musical Instrument Making.

GREAT HALL AND PLAZA

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

WORKSHOPS (below)

THEATER AND PLAZA

TIME	THEATER	CANOPY #1	CANOPY #2
1:00 - 2:00	CLAY COUNTY FIDDLERS	POCKET INSTRUMENTS	WOMEN BANJO PLAYERS
2:30 - 3:30	COAL MINING SONGS	FIDDLE STYLES	EVERETT LILLY FAMILY
4:00 - 5:00	STORYTELLING	HAMMERED DULCIMER	MUSIC FROM A CALHOUN COUNTY COMMUNITY

7:30 - 10:30 p.m.

Concert

THEATER

7:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Demonstrations in Quilting.

GREAT HALL

SUNDAY, MAY 29

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Religious Music Program

THEATER

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Concert

CAPITOL STEPS

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Demonstrations in Quilting and
Musical Instrument Making.

GREAT HALL AND PLAZA

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

WORKSHOPS (below)

THEATER AND PLAZA

TIME	THEATER	CANOPY #1	CANOPY #2
1:00 - 2:00	BALLAD SWAP	BANJO STYLES	FIDDLE STYLES
2:30 - 3:30	HELVETIA DANCERS	BANJO STYLES, Continued	KANAWHA COUNTY FIDDLERS
4:00 - 5:00	BLACK GOSPEL MUSIC	AUTOHARP	LEBANESE SINGERS

MONDAY, MAY 30

11:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Demonstrations in Quilting and
Musical Instrument Making.

GREAT HALL AND PLAZA

11:00 - 3:00 p.m.

WORKSHOPS (below)

THEATER AND PLAZA

TIME	THEATER	CANOPY #1	CANOPY #2
11:00 - 12:00	SINGING STYLES	MUSIC FROM A HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COMMUNITY	FIDDLE STYLES
12:30 - 1:30	BALLAD SWAP	ANDY BOARMAN, BANJOIST	BLACK MOUNTAIN MUSIC
2:00 - 3:00	CLOGGING	FIDDLE — DEMONSTRATION & INSTRUCTION BY FRANK GEORGE	



Herb Pitzer and Don Cleaver. Photograph by Steve Payne, 1977.



Quilting and other craft demonstrations played an important part at the first Vandalia Gathering, where quilt frames were set up in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center. Photograph by Steve Payne, 1977

35th Annual Vandalia Gathering

May 27-29, 2011

State Capitol Complex
Charleston, West Virginia

Friday, May 27

7:00 p.m. Award Presentation and Concert

Saturday, May 28

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Craft Circle, Food

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

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

1:00 p.m. Pound Cake, Apple Pie Contests

4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Pound Cake and Apple Pie
Walk

6:30 p.m. Concert

Sunday, May 29

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Craft Circle, Food

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Gospel Sing

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

12:00 noon-2:00 p.m. Cross-Stitch Contest

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

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

1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Jam Tent

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

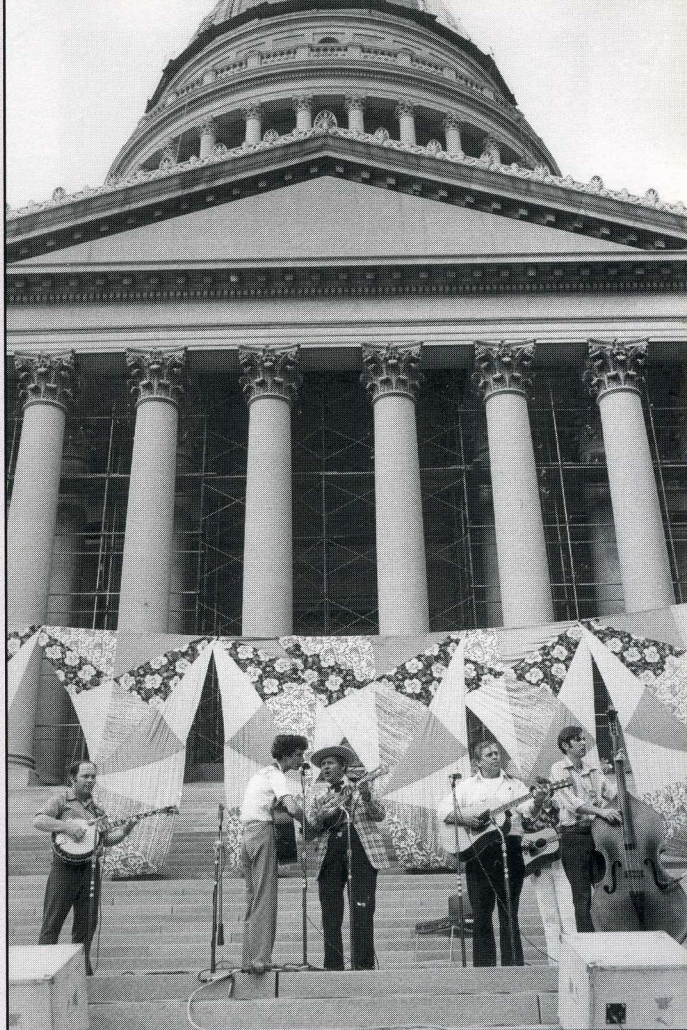
6:30 p.m. Finale Concert

Crafts vendors include stained glass, jewelry, wooden toys, wood turning, native plants, handmade wood items, hand-sewn items, pottery, handmade flutes, crochet, wooden furniture, leather, twig art, gourmet specialty foods, musical instruments, blown and hand-painted glass, and rag weaving.

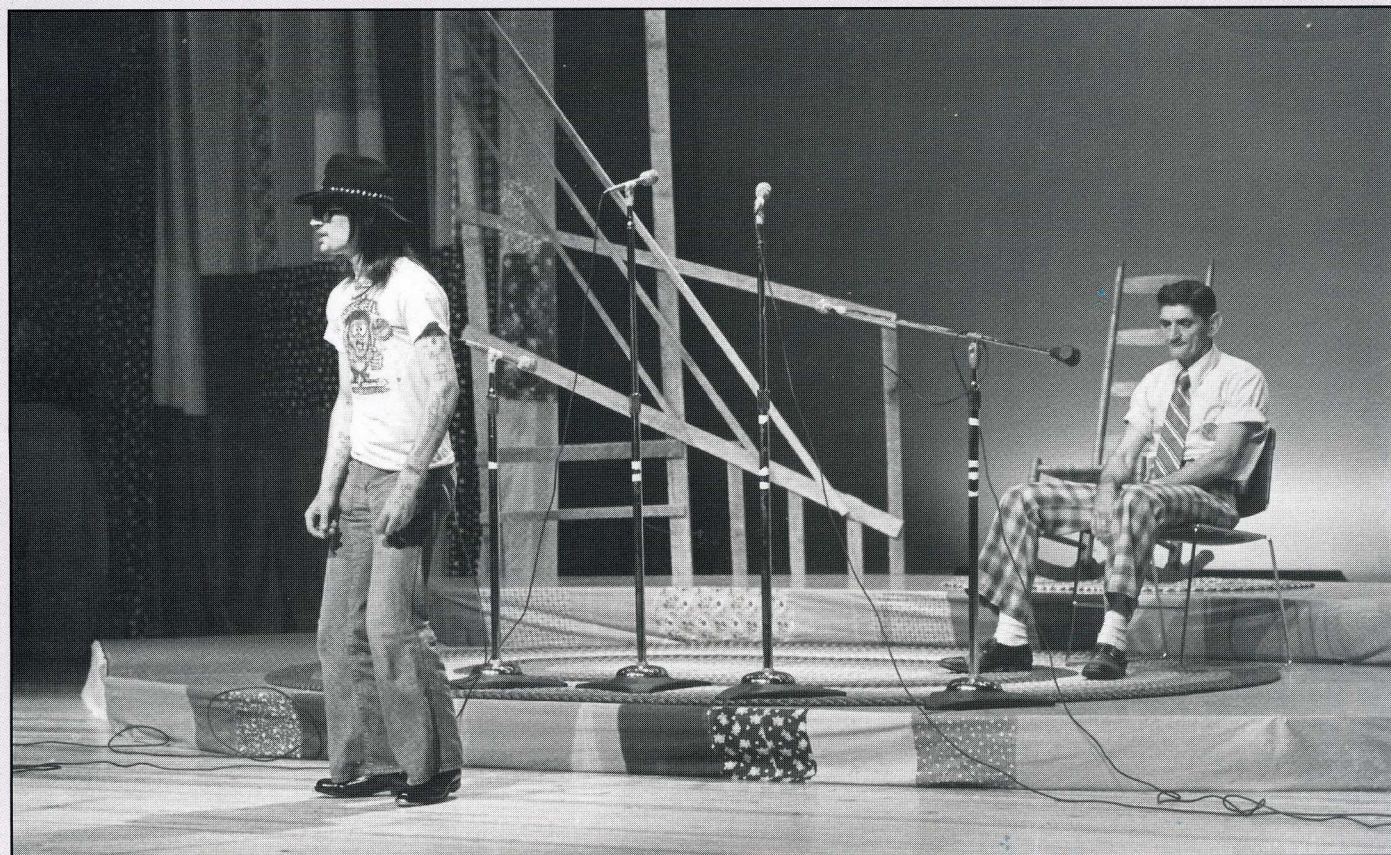
All events are free and open to the public. For more information, call (304)558-0162 or visit www.wvculture.org/vandalia.



Banjo player and craftsman Jenes Cottrell from Clay County demonstrates banjo making. Photograph by Doug Cruise, 1977.



The Everett Lilly Family in concert on the steps of the Capitol. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer, 1977.



Dancers Jesco and D. Ray White from Boone County. Photograph by Steve Payne, 1977.

The singing styles workshop included (from the left) Phyllis Marks, Bonnie Collins, Olive Abrams, Hazel Stover, Dora Chapman, and presenter Dr. Tom Brown from West Virginia University Department of Music. Photograph by Doug Cruise, 1977.



Music and dancing filled the plaza in front of the Science and Culture Center at the 1977 Vandalia Gathering. David Morris, Red Truman, and Mack Samples are at the center dancing, while musicians include Wilson Douglas, Frank George, and others. A detail of this photograph by Doug Cruise appeared on the cover of our April-September 1978 edition.

2010 Vandalia Winners

Vandalia Heritage Award — Bobby Taylor, St. Albans

Fiddle (age 60 and over)

- 1 - Gerry Milnes, Elkins
- 2 - Lester McCumbers, Nicut
- 3 - John Morris, Ivydale
- 4 - Elmer Rich, Morgantown
- 5 - Jim Mullins, St. Albans

Fiddle (under age 60)

- 1 - John Cochran, Elkins
- 2 - Darrell Murray, Charleston
- 3 - Ben Townsend, Martinsburg
- 4 - Ray Cossin, Mt. Alto
- 5 - Rebecca McClung, Parkersburg

Fiddle (age 15 and under)

- 1 - Ray Cossin, Mt. Alto
- 2 - Emily Rhodes, Nitro
- 3 - Nate Schoettker, Tornado

Old-Time Banjo (age 60 and over)

- 1 - Gerry Milnes, Elkins
- 2 - John Morris, Ivydale
- 3 - Ken Sheller, Elkins
- 4 - Steve Harrison, St. Albans
- 5 - Ted Samples, Harrisville

Old-Time Banjo (under age 60)

- 1 - Tim Bing, Huntington
- 2 - David O'Dell, Glenville
- 3 - Bob Smakula, Elkins
- 4 - Chad Ashworth, Nitro
- 5 - Dennis Ott, Ronceverte

Bluegrass Banjo

- 1 - Andrew Kidd, Hurricane
- 2 - Logan Browning, Summersville
- 3 - Blaine Johnson, Beaver
- 4 - Jim Gabehart, Hamlin
- 5 - David Asti, Morgantown

Flat-Pick Guitar

- 1 - Adam Hager, Kenna
- 2 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
- 3 - Logan Jones, Charleston
- 4 - Swanagan Ray, Ripley
- 5 - Rich Adkins, Cross Lanes

Flat-Pick Guitar (age 15 and under)

- 1 - Logan Jones, Charleston
- 2 - Jonathan Digiulian, Mt. Hope
- 3 - Zack Myers, Charleston

Mandolin Contest

- 1 - Luke Shamblin, Elkview
- 2 - Brandon Shuping, Williamson
- 3 - Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
- 4 - Joshua Brown, Summersville
- 5 - David Asti, Morgantown

Lap Dulcimer

- 1 - Hunter Walker, Beckley
- 2 - Will Manahan, Elkview
- 3 - Alan Freeman, Renick
- 4 - Bob Smakula, Elkins
- 5 - Emily Pritchard, Crab Orchard

Lap Dulcimer (age 15 and under)

- 1 - Will Manahan, Elkview
- 2 - Makayla Straughter, Charleston
- 3 - Glen Smakula, Elkins

Jams/Preserves Winners

- 1 - Ella Hoffman, South Charleston
- 2 - Carmen Wilson, East Lynn
- 3 - Wyatt Chapman, Charleston (Youth winner)

Pound Cake Winners

- 1 - Shonnette Koontz, South Charleston
- 2 - Mary Casto, Buffalo
- 3 - Lynna Middleton, Elkview (Youth winner)

Homemade Biscuits Winners

- 1 - Judy Grigoraci, Charleston
- 2 - Lydia Hager, Kenna (Youth winner)
- 3 - Valerie Burgraf, Elkview

Fiddler Wilson Douglas and guitarist Clarence Stover at the fiddle styles workshop in 1977 Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.



2010 Liars Contest

The tales were tall and the house was full at the 2010 State Liars Contest at last year's Vandalia Gathering. When the stories were done and the smoke had cleared, the winners were:

1st Place – Conner Sorrells, Charleston

2nd Place – Adam Booth, Shepherdstown

3rd Place – John W. Smith, Meadow Creek

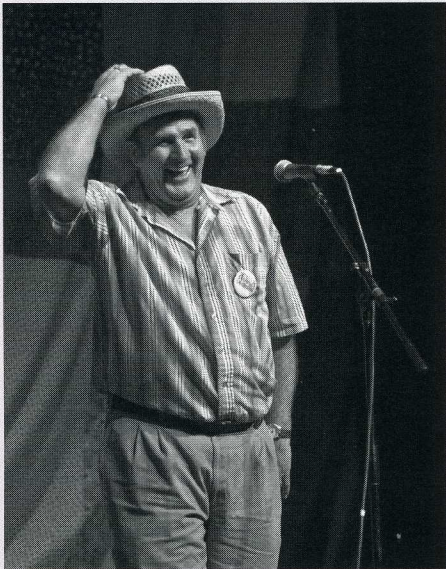
Youth Award – Noah Lepp, South Charleston

Thanks to all of our contestants! Here are a couple of samples of last year's tales. —ed.

John W. Smith

3rd Place

"Hunting with One Bullet"



John W. Smith. Photograph by Michael Keller.

I'll tell you about the time I went hunting with one bullet. I don't like to be bragging about myself for nothing, you know, but I think I hold the world's record for killing the most game with one bullet. It's kind of an accident the way it happened.

I was going hunting. There was an old gun hanging over the fireplace that had been hang-

ing there for years and had been handed down from generation to generation. I got to scratching around in a drawer and found one bullet that fit that gun. I told my ma that I was going down to shoot that gun.

She said, "Well, since you're going down the holler to shoot that gun, reckon you could saw that old sapling stump off down there and put a bottom in it and make me a flour barrel?"

I said, "Well, I guess I could."

So I hitched a sled up to the horse and went on down in the holler. I got down to the stump, and I looked at it a little bit, and thought, "Now, while

I'm sawing on that stump, I'm going to throw my goose net out and catch me a few geese."

I threw my goose net out and throwed me a little bit of corn under it, you know. I started sawing on that stump and had it about sawed off when I heard a racket over there. You ain't going to believe this, but that goose net was plumb full of geese. You couldn't have got another goose in that net. I gathered up all four corners of that net. Now you ain't going to believe this, but them geese all started to fly at one time. They picked me up right off the ground. I was holding on, and before I knew it I was at the top of the trees. I thought, "Lord, I've got to let this go." I got skeered.

Well, I let that net go, and I fell down into a hollow tree about that big around. I fell into honey up to my waist, the most honey I ever seen. I was stuck in that honey. I looked up, and I could see the blue sky. All at once it got dark. It was a big bear coming down in there to get that honey. I thought, "Lord, what am I going to do?" I thought real quick, and I grabbed that bear by the tail. I goosed him and he pulled me plumb to the top of that tree. When I got up there, I gave him a big shove, and he fell off and broke his neck down at the foot of the tree.

Well, you know, I still had that honey all over me. There was a creek that run by that tree. And I thought, "Now I'm going to get in that creek and wash that honey off me." So I got in the creek and was washing that honey off, and something got in my shirt and was choking me to death. I didn't know what in the world it was. It was so tight that it popped my top button off and killed a partridge sitting on the bank. It was a big 12-pound catfish that had got down in there. And I got that 12-pound catfish, and that partridge, and that bear. I put that honey in the barrel and put it all on the sled. I was getting ready to go, when I heard a racket.

I looked up and saw all them geese hung up

there in a big pine tree. I thought, "I'll just cut this joker down." So I cut that tree down. Now, you ain't going to believe this, but when that tree fell, there was two buck deer over in a big pine thicket. When that big tree fell, it killed both of them buck deer in that pine thicket.

Well, I got them two buck deer and them 21 geese and put them on the sled with that 12-pound catfish, and that partridge, and that bear, and that barrel of honey. And I had me a load. I was getting ready to go to the house when I heard another noise over there. I turned around and I looked. There was two turkeys up on a limb. Boy, I grabbed my gun real quick, and by the time I got it loaded, there was three more that had jumped up on the same limb. That was five turkeys. I loaded that gun and took aim. About the time I shot, I fell in a stump hole. I missed all five of them turkeys. You ain't going to believe this, but that bullet hit three trees, ricocheted around three times, and killed all five of them turkeys.

When I fell in that stump hole, that old gun was so old the hammer of it fell off and killed a swamp rabbit that was laying over there in the swamp. Well, I got the swamp rabbit, got them five tur-

keys, and put them on the sled with them 21 geese and them two buck deer, that 12-pound catfish, and that partridge, and that bear, and that barrel of honey, and I had me a load.

I grabbed them lines, slapped that horse on the rump, and we started to the house. When that horse started to pull, it broke both trace chains. I thought, "Lord, what am I going to do with all this meat on here?" I thought real quick and I skinned them deer out and made me some rawhide straps. When I made them rawhide straps, I put them on the horse and hit that old horse across the rump. We headed to the house, and I never even looked back.

Now look here. You ain't going to believe this, but when I got to the house, that rawhide had stretched and left all that meat sitting down there in the bottom. Boy, I was mad! I hung that harness on a stump, went in the house, and went to bed. Now, you ain't going to believe this, but when I got up the next morning at 10 o'clock, that sun had come out and drawed that rawhide up and sucked all that meat up out of the bottom.

And if I had more time, I'd tell you about the time I went hunting with two bullets.



Noah Lepp Youth Award

"Gravity Bill"

One morning I woke up and something wasn't right, but I just couldn't place it. When I rolled over to get out of bed, it hit me. What hit me, you ask? The ceiling. I was stuck to the ceiling in my room. Good thing I wasn't in my sister's room because of the glass ceiling. And so I decided to go down into my parents' room

Noah Lepp. Photograph by Kim Johnson.

and ask them what was going on.

So I scampered across the ceiling. When I got to the stairs, I made sure to hold on to the handrail, because I didn't want to take a nasty fall off the stairs. And when I got down there and woke them up, my dad then figured out that he must've forgotten to pay the gravity bill and the gravity got shut off.

And so we tried to call Appalachian Gravity and Weights Company, but the handset for the phone had floated off somewhere. Somebody really ought

to invent a cord or something that attaches the phone to the wall.

So we decided to eat breakfast before going down to AGW to pay the bill and get the gravity back on. But it's not easy to cook an over-easy egg when there's no gravity. First you have to turn the skillet upside down and then flip the egg down with the spatula. And forget about trying to pour milk for a bowl of cereal. I don't think we'll ever get that milk out of the light fixture.

When we went out the door, I stuck my head out and it got caught by gravity, but my legs were still in the anti-gravity house. And since my head was going down to the floor and my legs were going up to the ceiling, that made me do a flip. And then that flip flipped me over again, and there I was doing somersaults in the doorframe.

We drove to the Appalachian Gravity and Weights Company, and they told us that our gravity would be back on in between 10 and noon. And so when we got back to our house, we found some very angry astronauts and scientists from NASA who were going to use our house as an anti-gravity training environment. We told them that we were sorry for messing up their training, and we would call them any time we forgot to pay the gravity bill.

So from then on, it's been my responsibility to make sure that the gravity bill is paid at the end of every month. Oh wait, it's the 30th. Argg-g-hh! Does anybody have NASA's phone number?

West Virginia Back Roads



Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Dwar Cooper's Chain Saw Shop in Harman

The sign above the door to the shop reads, "Dwar's Chain Saw Shop," but unless you personally know Dwight "Dwar" Cooper, you'd never realize the little building off Route 33 south of Harman is a place of business.

Not that there's much "business" conducted here. Dwar does offer chain saw sharpening and some saw repairs, but since most of his customers are friends, little money is exchanged. He's more likely to end up bartering with his customers than charging them for services rendered.

The little 16-by-24 building rests in a depression just below the highway. This particular parcel was once the homestead of Dwar's maternal grandparents, Frank and Pheba Wymer. The old farmhouse succumbed about a decade ago, but Dwar saved a few pine boards from the kitchen. When he and Jack Judy built the little shop next

door to Dwar's house in 2000, they used the boards for an interior wall.

Jack Judy was the one who suggested Dwar build the shop.

"He came down here one day for me to work on his chain saw. It was too cold outside to work on it, and he suggested I build something," Dwar explains.

Over the next couple of weeks, Jack and Dwar worked away at the structure. "Jack would come down and we would do a little bit on it until we got tired, then we'd

quit for the day," says Dwar, who has been on disability since 1999 due to a lung condition.

The shop was built on a budget. Dwar found a deal on imperfect hardwood flooring and bought enough material to do his floor for just \$3. A used woodstove provides the heat, a long window facing Route 33 and a few incandescent bulbs provide the light. There is no running water, but the house Dwar and his wife, Janet, own is conveniently located a few yards from this building, which



A sign painted on a handsaw hangs over the door of Dwight "Dwar" Cooper's chain saw repair and sharpening shop in Harman.

Dwar calls his “hobby shop.”

Decorated with familial, personal, and regional treasures, the shop is as close to a museum as you’ll find in Harman. One section is dedicated to Jack’s collection of die-cast vehicles. He started it with a single purchase, a 1934 Ford found at a Clarksburg mall more than 15 years ago. The collection now numbers more than 100.

The balance of the décor is mostly old stuff — photographs, both family and historic; horse collars; a 1914 Savage 22-caliber gun; a rattlesnake skin with six rattlers and one button; a lamp made from deer antlers; a silver swivel chair fashioned from a milk can and seat from a hay rake; hats autographed by famous stars of bluegrass and country music.

Most significant to the history of Harman is a corner of the shop that honors Dwar’s famous uncle, the late Stoney Cooper, and his wife, Wilma Lee. By the time Dwar was born, Stoney had already left Harman and was making his mark in the country music world, but their paths crossed whenever Stoney and Wilma Lee returned to their native West Virginia for a visit or reunion.

“He was a well-dressed man,” Dwar says, sharing his most vivid memory of the tall fiddler “Last time I saw him was when I was 20 years old.”

Dwar still stays in touch with Wilma Lee, a Valley Head native who lives in Nashville. Photos of Wilma Lee and her daughter Carol Lee, as well as Wilma Lee, Stoney, and their band at various stages of their career are on display. One image is of “Stoney Cooper’s



Standing in front of his saw repair shop/museum, Dwar holds one of the “log cabin” clocks he builds as a pastime. He has built more than 350 of them, along with 64 outhouse clocks and 26 barn clocks.

Blues Chasers.” Another is a cast photo of the WWVA Jamboree from August 1949. Hawkshaw Hawkins stands next to Stoney in the image.

His collection also includes a postcard Wilma Lee sent to a friend in Belington two days prior to the day Dwar was born and a family photo of Valentine and Rachel Bible Cooper, the grandmother and grandfather of Stoney, and Dwar’s father, Roosevelt.

This collection is a fitting backdrop for an activity Dwar’s shop periodically hosts: impromptu jam sessions with area bluegrass players. He’s had up to nine musicians and their instruments in the little shop.

Dwar plays a guitar. “I’m not the best in the world,” he admits. “But I’ve had a lot of fun trying to play it.”

Another hobby Dwar enjoys is making decorative clocks for family and friends. As of October 2009, Dwight had made 354 log cabin clocks, 64 outhouse clocks, and 26 barn clocks.

“I just wanted a log cabin clock, and I decided to make me one,” Dwar says, explaining how he got

into the craft. “The first one didn’t turn out the best, but I kept it.”

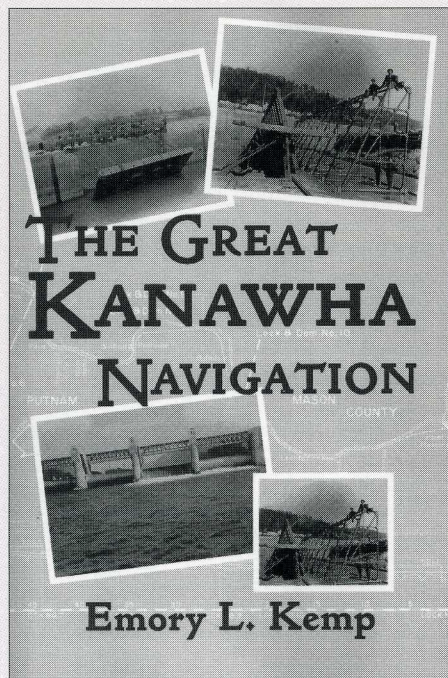
Dwar uses pieces of old barn siding, held together by weatherstripping caulk, which simulates the chinking. When gravel is embedded in the caulk, it looks like the stonework of a chimney.

He often personalizes the cabin or barn clock to the interests of the recipient. For example, if it’s a gift for a preacher, Dwar will put a little Bible on a table in front of the cabin facade. If it’s for a musician, like the one Dwar made for singer Patty Loveless, he’ll add an instrument or two to the cabin porch.

The clocks are built to order; Dwar rarely has a stock of them and never sells them at craft shows. Like the tiny shop in which they are created, the clocks are one of those closely guarded treasures sheltered by these mountains.

“I really enjoy it out here,” Dwar says, surveying his hobby shop. “I spend hours and hours out here.”

Dwar’s shop is open by chance. If smoke is curling from the chimney and a light is on in the window, stop by and visit. 🌿



New Books Available

By John Lilly

Taming the Great Kanawha River was a monumental task, but it was essential for those who lived and traded along its shores. Emory L. Kemp, founder and director of the Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology at West Virginia University, has written an impressive book titled, *The Great Kanawha Navigation*, concerning what it took to control this important West Virginia river between the 1880's and the late 1930's. *Industrial Technology* magazine calls it, "The best book to be written about the origin and operations of America's modern inland navigation system." Published in 2000 by the University of Pittsburgh Press, this 312-page paperbound edition includes descriptions and sketches of the early movable dams, as well as photographs and in-depth details of the modern lock-and-dam system that replaced them. The book sells for \$27.95 and is available in a digital edition at www.upress.pitt.edu.

gles, frustrations, and triumphs as a black man in the white-dominated world of sports and commerce. The 142-page hardbound edition includes an index, photographs, appendices, and Lloyd's player statistics. It sells for \$29.95 from Syracuse University Press; phone 1-800-848-6224 or visit www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu.

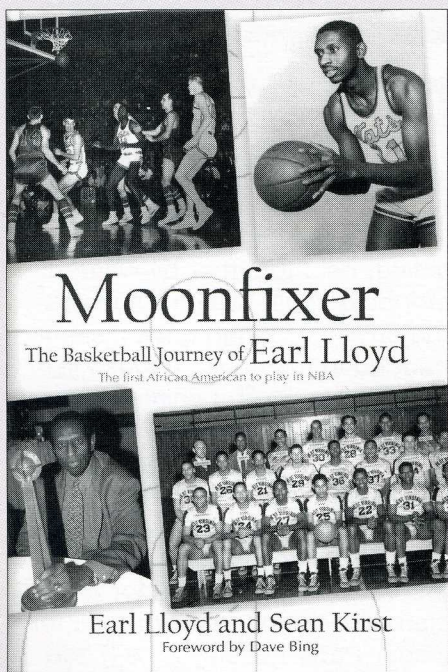
Two new titles from Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series highlight religious diversity in the Mountain State. *Catholic West Virginia* and *Jewish West Virginia* focus attention on two minority religions in a largely Protestant area.

Catholic West Virginia, by Ryan Rutkowski, marks the 160th anniversary of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Historical photographs depict church leaders, structures, and activities. Special sections capture the Catholic school experience and highlight Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy in Wheeling.

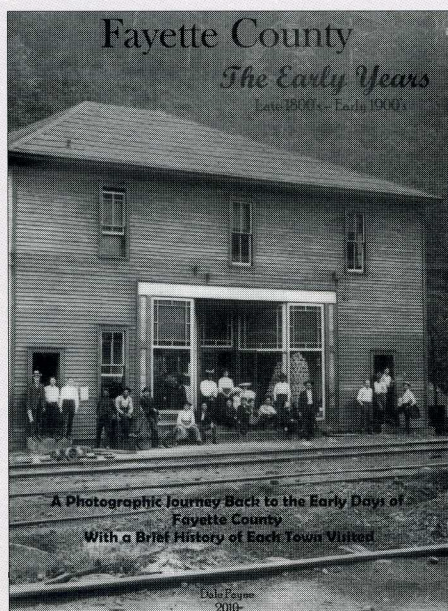
Jewish West Virginia, by Julian H. Preisler, shares Jewish history in the state, dating back to a Jewish burial society in Wheeling in 1849. The book is organized geographically, with chapters on seven specific areas or cities in the state. Prominent Jewish families, businesses, synagogues, schools, and activities are featured.

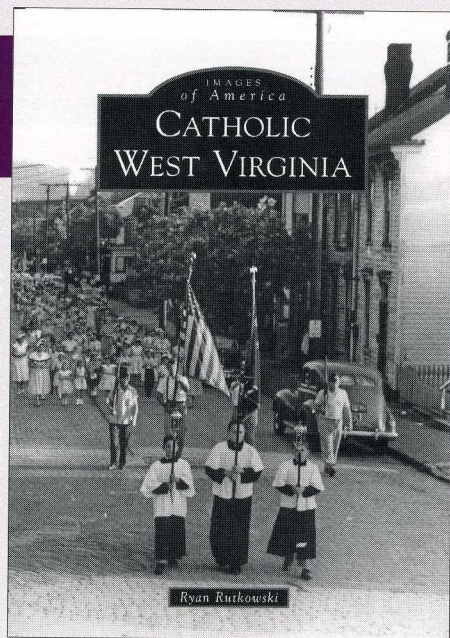
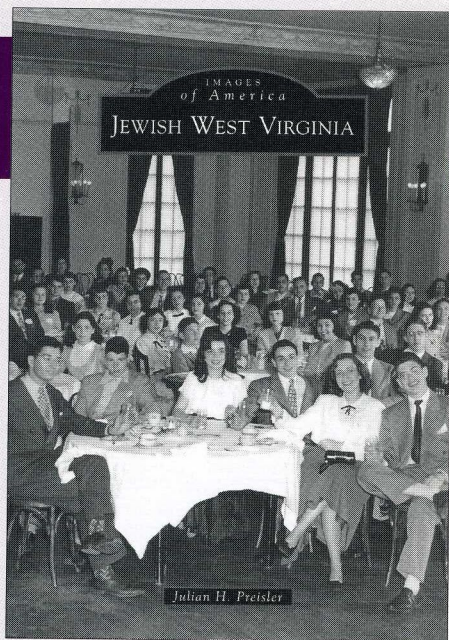
Both books are richly illustrated, containing approximately 200 photographs each. They are 128 pages in length and sell for \$21.95. The books are available at regional bookstores or from Arcadia at (843)853-2070; on-line at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

When author Luther D. Baker came into possession of thousands of photographic negatives from the files of the *Richwood News*



West Virginia State College (now University) provided the launching pad for Hall of Fame basketball great Earl Lloyd, as he became the first African American to play in the NBA. Lloyd was featured in our Spring 2009 issue, in an article titled, "Moonfixer' Basketball Pioneer Earl Lloyd," by Michael Hawkins. A new autobiography by Lloyd and coauthor Sean Kirst titled, *Moonfixer: The Basketball Journey of Earl Lloyd*, recounts the remarkable path taken by this soft-spoken man from Virginia who not only broke the race barrier as a player, but also as an NBA coach, as a scout, and as an executive with the Chrysler/Dodge automobile company. This frank and personal memoir addresses Lloyd's strug-

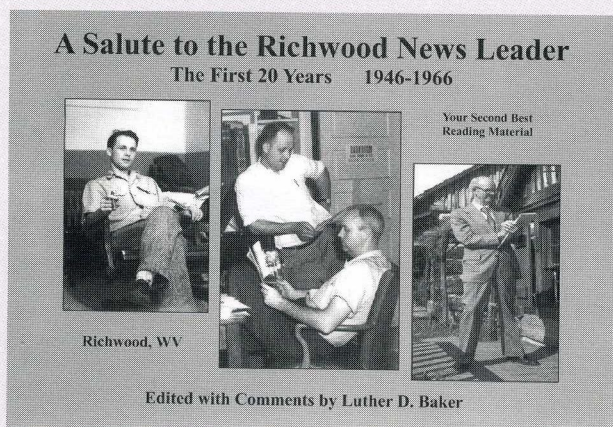




Leader, he determined to preserve and present the history of this Nicholas County town. The result is an unusual book titled, *A Salute to the Richwood News Leader: The First 20 Years (1946-1966)*. This 395-page paperbound edition, seven inches high by 10 inches wide, features hundreds of photographs and news clippings, describing life in Nicholas County in the mid-20th century. With 27 topical chapters and an epilogue, the book covers a lot of ground and will be of interest to anyone with roots in Richwood or an appreciation of small-town life. It is available for \$25, plus in-state sales tax, from the author at P.O. Box 421, Canvas, WV 26662; phone (304)872-4752.

Fayette County: The Early Years (Late 1800's - Early 1900's), by Dale Payne, lists 112 Fayette County towns and provides photographs and descriptions of each during the book's time period. As mines opened and closed, towns here arose and disappeared, as they did throughout the coalfields. Dale Payne

has done a fine job of documenting these communities and preserving images and details about them. From Alaska to Winoona, the 327-page, large-format, paperbound edition lists these towns alphabetically and offers brief histories and explanations. Photos show schools, coal tipples, company stores, natural features, street scenes, railroads, and train wrecks. Few of the pictures date beyond the 1940's, and most of this material focuses on the early decades of the 20th century — a particularly buoyant time in this rugged and coal-rich area. *Fayette County: The Early Years* sells for \$31.84, plus \$4 shipping, from the author at 201 Payne Road, Fayetteville, WV 25840; phone (304)574-3354.



Back Issues Available



- Summer 2002/Princess Margy Sternwheeler
- Fall 2003/Artist Boyd Boggs
- Winter 2003/Weaver Dorothy Thompson
- Summer 2004/1939 World's Fair
- Winter 2006/Whitcomb Boulder
- Fall 2007/Seneca Rocks
- Winter 2007/Photographer Lloyd Gainer
- Spring 2008/Dancer Lou Maiuri
- Summer 2008/Fenton Glass
- Winter 2008/Coal Art
- Spring 2009/Bernard Cyrus
- Summer 2009/Back to the Land
- Fall 2009/Spanish West Virginia
- Spring 2010/Pilot Steve Weaver
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McDowell County Book

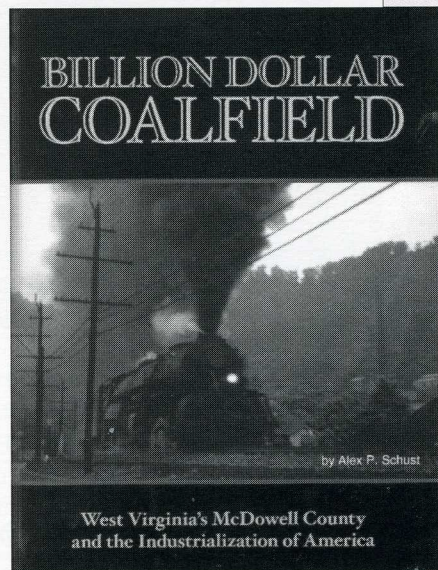
West Virginia's southernmost county is also among its most complex and interesting. Home to the coal-rich mines of Gary, the storied Coalwood of *Rocket Boys*' fame, the once-bustling county seat of Welch, and dozens of other remote and legendary locales (including Kimball and surrounding communities; see page 40), McDowell County is worthy of a big book.

Billion Dollar Coalfield: West Virginia's McDowell County and the Industrialization of America, by Alex P. Schust, is a very big book, in every way. Its 633 large-format pages make it a formidable tome. Well-organized and clearly written text make it a valuable resource for anyone with an interest in the history, geography, or cultural heritage of this diverse and challenging region. An attractive layout and ample illustrations — more than 500 photographs and 100 maps — make it an inviting edition, even for the most casual perusal.

Life here orbits around coal, and author Alex P. Schust traces the rise and fall of the coal industry in McDowell County from 1888 until 1988. In *Billion Dollar Coalfield*, he tells the broader story of commerce, culture, heritage, fast money, and lost fortunes as he weaves a tale of mining and railroading among these rugged hills. Coming on the heels of two equally impressive books — *Coalwood* and *Gary Hollow* — *Billion Dollar Coalfield* completes a historical trilogy about McDowell County, unequalled in the literature of the state.

Printed on high-gloss paper and hardbound, this is not a cheap book. The cost is \$75, plus \$7 shipping. Page for page, however, most readers will find it a good value, a value it should retain for many years to come. Alex Schust, a freelance author and historian, should be commended for his ambition, tenacity, and big results.

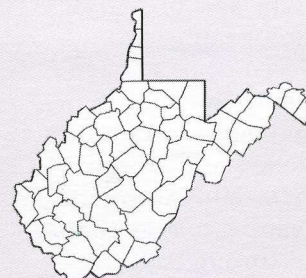
To order *Billion Dollar Coalfield*, send a check for \$82 to Alex Schust, 286 Princes Lane, Harwood, MD 20776.



Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Trolleys
- Baseball
- Decota
- Fishing the Middle Fork



(continued from inside front cover)

July 22-24	Upper Ohio Valley Italian Heritage Festival		
Wheeling (233-1090)			
July 24-30	68 th Annual W.Va. Poultry Festival		
Moorefield (530-2725)			
July 24-31	Cowen Historical Railroad Festival		
Cowen (847-2145)			
July 24-31	61 st W.Va. Gospel Singing Convention		
Summersville (872-2074)			
August 3-7	Appalachian String Band Music Festival		
Camp Washington-Carver/Clifftop (558-0162)			
August 4-6	W.Va. Blackberry Festival		
Nutter Fort (623-2381)			
August 5-7	Multifest		
Charleston (347-7663)			
August 6	Jacksonburg Annual Homecoming		
Jacksonburg (904-2763)			
August 6	Swiss National Holiday		
Helvetia (924-6435)			
August 8-13	Town & Country Days		
New Martinsville (455-4275)			
August 8-14	Cherry River Festival		
Richwood (846-2596)			
August 12-14	Avalon Folk Festival		
Paw Paw (947-5600)			
August 12-20	State Fair of West Virginia		
Fairlea (645-1090)			
August 14	Mahrajan Lebanese Heritage Festival		
Wheeling (233-1688)			
August 15-20	Magnolia Fair		
Matewan (426-5744)			
August 19-21	Jefferson County African American Cultural & Heritage Festival		
Ranson (725-9610)			
August 26-28	Appalachian Festival		
Beckley (1-877-987-3847)			
August 27-28	31 st W.Va. Honey Festival		
Parkersburg (1-800-752-4982)			
August 27-28	Elizabethtown Festival		
Moundsville (845-6200)			
August 27-September 4	Oak Leaf Festival		
Oak Hill (465-5617)			
September 2-4	33 rd W.Va. Italian Heritage Festival		
Clarksburg (622-7314)			
September 2-4	Apple Butter Weekend		
Blennerhassett Island (420-4800)			
September 2-4	Jackson's Mill Jubilee		
Weston (1-800-296-7329)			
September 3-4	Holly River Festival		
Holly River State Park (493-6327)			
September 3-5	Fall Gospel Jubilee		
Point Pleasant (675-5737)			
September 8-11	CultureFest 2011		
Pipestem (320-8833)			
September 9-10	42 nd Nicholas County Potato Festival		
Summersville (1-866-716-0448)			
September 9-11	W.Va. Black Heritage Festival		
Clarksburg (641-9963)			
September 9-11	W.Va. State BBQ and Bluegrass Festival		
Hedgesville (264-8801)			
September 10-11	Hampshire Heritage Fest		
Romney (822-3647)			
			Helvetia Fair
			43 rd Annual Oil & Gas Festival
			Golden Delicious Festival
			Treasure Mountain Festival
			Mothman Festival
			W.Va. Molasses Festival
			Hardy County Heritage Festival
			Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival
			Shenandoah Junction (1-800-624-0577)
			Volcano Days
			W.Va. Roadkill Cook-Off
			Capon Bridge Founders Day
			Preston County Buckwheat Festival
			Chapmanville Apple Butter Festival
			Freshwater Folk Festival
			Huntersville Traditions Day
			October Sky Festival
			75 th Mountain State Forest Festival
			27 th Salem Apple Butter Fest
			W.Va. Pumpkin Festival
			Pine Bluff Fall Festival
			Southern W.Va. Italian Festival
			Oglebay Fest
			Wardensville Fall Festival
			Bergoo International Cook-Off
			Irish Road Bowling
			Oktoberfest
			32 nd Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival
			W.Va. Black Walnut Festival
			20 th Annual Glass Gathering
			Hinton Railroad Days
			Fiddler's Reunion

GOLDENSEAL requests its readers' help in preparing this listing. If you would like your festival or event to appear in the 2012 "Folklife • Fairs • Festivals," please send us information on the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with their mailing address, phone number, and Web site, if available. We must have this information by January 2, 2012, in order to meet our printing deadline. GOLDENSEAL regrets that, due to space limitations, Fourth of July celebrations are no longer included in this listing.

Inside Goldenseal

Page 8 — Wheeling is considered the birthplace of the American steamboat. Model maker and History Hero John Bowman helps keep this heritage alive.

Page 30 — Jennie Bee Hall, from Hallburg, Clay County, was a hard worker, according to Jessie Lee Maiuri, one of Jennie's 16 children.

Page 36 — Riding the *Fast Flying Virginian* between Charleston and Huntington in the 1940's sparked a lifelong love of trains for author C.W. "Bill" Jarrett.

Page 16 — Laurel Fork Farm at Jenningson is a model of self-sufficiency and a blessing to owners Marsha Louk and Kendall Waybright. Author Carl E. Feather introduces us to these intrepid homesteaders and entrepreneurs.

Page 22 — Herman Isner of Kerens, Randolph County, has been a cattleman most all of his 92 years, and he has a tale to tell.

Page 52 — John and David Morris are two fine Clay County musicians who have had a lasting impact on the state's traditional music scene.

Page 40 — Kimball is home to the Gianato family, whose small general store has been a local landmark since 1918.

Page 46 — Stepping is an exciting dance performed by black fraternity and sorority members at West Virginia State University and elsewhere.

