

Goldenseal

Volume 2 Number 4

October-December 1978



S.L. JONES

S. LANDON JONES, a Hinton artist and wood-carver in his late seventies, worked for forty-seven years for the C & O Railroad. For the last half of that time he served as bridge and building foreman, and during those years made the technical drawings shown here. He drew these often decorative sketches to serve as guides for the following day's work. Around 1940 he carved relief designs in small picture frames and then painted them. Before that he remembers making toys as a small child—carved horses and bows and arrows. Mr. Jones is an old-time fiddler and has repaired many musical instruments over the years.

In the late 1960's when he retired from the C & O he began to carve and paint in oils after a few lessons from a neighbor. His wood carvings, however, began to consume more of his time as he whittled animals and Biblical scenes, the latter inspired by his first trip to the Holy Land. Soon his carvings and weekend demonstrations at Pipestem State Park Arts and Crafts Studio became popular. He exhibited at local fairs and won many prizes for his work locally and at the State Fair at Lewisburg. In the early 1970's he began to draw portraits of the type that are seen here. His carvings slowly became larger, and he began doing life-size heads and full figures. More and more he carefully applied paint to the carvings.

In 1975 Mr. Jones drew the attention of folk art collectors from New York, Chicago, and Richmond. Within a year his work was in major folk art collections in the United States. In 1976 one of his carvings was shown in an exhibition in Japan sponsored by the United States Government for the Bicentennial. These days there are many requests for his work, but the artist pines himself to have time to do church work, travel, and garden in his backyard. As folk artist, Mr. Jones is now exclusively represented by Mr. Jeffrey Camp of Tappahannock, Virginia.



STERLING SPENCER

STERLING SPENCER was born in 1915 in a small town in West Virginia. He was a member of the West Virginia State Police for many years. He was a skilled wood carver and a talented artist. He was a member of the West Virginia State Police for many years. He was a skilled wood carver and a talented artist. He was a member of the West Virginia State Police for many years. He was a skilled wood carver and a talented artist.



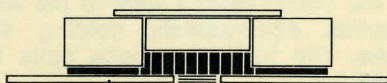
G. CONWAY WOLFE

THE BLUEFIELD BEARER
PRESENTED BY STUDENT COUNCIL 1968

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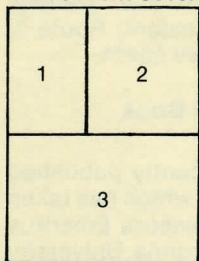
Patricia Cahape
Graphic Design

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Typist

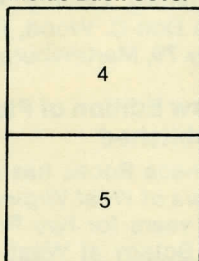
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Inside the covers are photographs of the Vandalia Gathering 1978 art exhibition, "The Worker as Folk Artist: Five Self-taught Carvers," at the Cultural Center. Below is a key.

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Goldenseal

**A Quarterly Forum for Documenting
West Virginia's Traditional Life**

Volume 4, Number 4 ❁ October-December 1978

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current programs·festivals·publications

Film About State Banjoist Released

A new film, *Banjo Man*, about the life and music of John ("Uncle") Homer Walker is now available for rental or purchase. Uncle Homer, an 80-year-old Summers County native, now lives just over the Virginia line in Glen Lynn, and he is one of the oldest old-style black banjoists in the Mountains. Playing banjo for some 60 years, he has worked as a farmer, on the railroad, and as a coal miner. *Banjo Man* was made by two Yale University graduate students, Joseph Vinikow and Reuben Chodosh and is narrated by musician Taj Mahal. It was a first prize winner at a recent U.S.A. Film Festival in Dallas. The 26-minute black and white 16 mm film may be rented for \$30 or purchased for \$260. The distributor is Texture Films, Inc., 1600 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. The phone number is 212-586-6960.

Labor History Workshop Scheduled for Early November

The West Virginia Labor History Association in cooperation with The National Mine Health and Safety Academy will conduct a workshop on current research concerning mine safety, educational and organizing efforts, work relations in the coalfields, and other economic and social aspects of the coal industry. The November 17 and 18 meeting will take place at The National Mine Health and Safety Academy on the Airport Road, Beckley. Registration will be at the Academy on Friday evening, November 17. For further information contact The West Virginia Labor History Association, 217 Granville Avenue, Beckley, WV 25801.

Monroe County School Preserves, Teaches Fading Skills

The Mountain Heritage School, a program dedicated to the preservation of traditional mountain crafts and skills, began its sixth year this fall offering classes to residents of the greater Monroe County area. In its five years of operation the School has offered a wide range of craft and music courses. Teachers, most of whom are older adults, are paid with funding from the State Arts and Humanities

Commission and the Expansion Arts and Jazz/Folk/Ethnic Music Programs of the National Endowment for the Arts. The classes are free and open to all individuals regardless of age or location of residence.

Besides its role in preserving mountain culture, the School has been successful in providing area residents with badly needed opportunities to develop skills and interests within the context of formal lessons taught by talented instructors. Moreover, the program brings together young and old in such a way that common bonds and interests are discovered and encouraged. Last year 175 students participated in the program which included classes in pottery, weaving, quilting, fiddle, banjo, guitar, dulcimer and Dobro. The Mountain Heritage School plans to increase its teaching staff and the variety of its offerings for the 1978-79 school year. Classes began October 2, 1978, and continue through June of 1979. For additional information write the Mountain Heritage School, Box 346, Union, WV 24983, or phone 304-772-3159.

State Press Women Salute GOLDENSEAL Contributor

The article "Auburn: 1913-1929" published in our October-December 1977 issue brought GOLDENSEAL contributor Mary Lucille DeBerry a first place award in the 1977 West Virginia Press Women's Communications Contest. The article was composed of childhood recollections by Winnifred Brown Scott and Lucille Cox DeBerry both longtime residents of Ritchie County. The piece was entered in the print media classification of interviews published in general and special interest magazines. Ms. DeBerry is a Producer/Director at WWVU-TV in Morgantown and for four consecutive years has received first place awards in television categories of the State contest. During that time she has also been given first, second, and third place citations in the national competition.

State Histories Again Available

Lewisburg Landmarks, a large format book published in 1957 has recently been reprinted by Charleston's Ed-

ucational Foundation, Inc. Ruth Woods Dayton's 62-page book contains drawings by Naomi S. Hosterman and an article about each of 41 historic places in this county seat of 200-year-old Greenbrier County. A number of 18th century structures still stand in Lewisburg, including the Old Stone Church, built in 1796 and known as the oldest church west of the Alleghenies continuously holding services. The hardcover book sells for \$8.50.

Two other hardcover history books are also available from the foundation. Both by Ms. Dayton, they are *Greenbrier Pioneers and Their Homes* and *Pioneers and Their Homes on Upper Kanawha*. The prices of these two are \$18.50 and \$12.50 respectively. The books may be ordered from Education Foundation, Inc., P. O. Box 1187, Charleston, WV 25324. Sales tax and handling is \$1.25 for the first book and 50c for each additional one.

Special Berkeley Journal Edition

A 1977 Special Issue of the *Berkeley Journal* has recently been published. It includes maps, drawings, photographs, and genealogies relating to a succession of families associated with development around what was at one time the Maidstone Manor of Lord Fairfax. In addition, articles and reports concern such properties and houses as Honeywood, Maidstone Manor, Maidstone-on-the-Potomac, and Medway. A selection entitled "The Personal Experiences of Capt. W. B. Colston in the Civil War" gives a firsthand account of a former Confederate soldier who was a member of a prominent Berkeley County family. The 1977 *Berkeley Journal* and back issues may be purchased at \$4.00 each from the Berkeley County Historical Society, c/o Don C. Wood, President, Route 3, Box 79, Martinsburg, WV 25401.

New Edition of Plant Book Published

Seneca Books has recently published *Flora of West Virginia*, which has taken 30 years for two Professors Emeritus of Botany at West Virginia University to complete. The 1120-page hardcover work describing 2,200 Southeastern United States plants was originally published as a West Virginia Univer-

The string band Mountain Grass, from left to right, Rusty Williams, Dick Kimmel, Keith Russell, Jim Steptoe, and Tim Miller, kneeling. Photograph by Dick Kimmel.



sity Bulletin paperback in 1952. Co-author Dr. P. D. Strausbaugh died before their extensive research toward a revision was completed, and Dr. Earl L. Core spent a full year correcting and adding to this large edition. In the book are diagnostic keys for the identification of plant families, genera, and species along with locations, flowering periods, and English and Latin names of plants. There are also drawings and descriptions of ferns, shrubs, trees, vines, thistles, briars, and wild flowers, as well as a glossary, an index, and an extensive bibliography. *Flora in West Virginia* is now available in local bookstores for \$25.00 or may be ordered directly from Seneca Books, P. O. Box 474, Grantsville, WV 26147. Add \$1.00 for postage for mail orders, and West Virginia orders must include 3% sales tax.

Folklife Center Publishes Guide to Federal Programs in Folklife Field

July 1978 Library of Congress press release:

The Library of Congress American Folklife Center has issued *Folklife and the Federal Government*, an innovative guide to help answer questions about the role of the U.S. Government in the folklife field. Designed to meet one of the Center's primary goals, to provide coordinative leadership in the field, the 147-page booklet is a first attempt to answer questions about what the Government is now doing that touches American folklife, both within the intricate structure of the Federal Government and between the Government and the citizenry it serves.

The guide outlines Federal programs and activities with potential for assisting those interested in various aspects of folklife: members of ethnic occupational, or regional groups involved in documenting, presenting, or preserving various aspects of their shared cultural heritage; folk artists; folklorists; researchers in anthropology, ethnology, or linguistics; teachers and students of folklife; museum administrators; and the American people generally. Diverse Federal programs are described. Some give financial aid, others offer employment or research opportunities, and still others provide nonmonetary assistance ranging from expert advice on organizing folk festivals to archival and reference services.

The introduction by Archie Green, John Edwards Memorial Foundation, University of California at Los Angeles, reviews the history of Federal involvement with folklife. He describes the American Folklife Center as the first Federal unit created by statute with a direct congressional charge to preserve and present broad areas of cultural expression previously neglected or perceived as marginal.

Alan Jabbour, director of the Center, provides the foreword, and Linda C. Coe, the compiler of the book, offers an explanatory note on the use of the publication.

The guide presents a survey of 55 Federal programs. It does not provide definitive information on every program, but seeks rather to alert the user to the existence of possible sources of Federal assistance. The volume includes a detailed subject and agency

index and an annotated bibliography.

Folklife and the Federal Government is available for \$2.75 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock No. 030-000-00091-9) or in person only from the Information Counter on the ground floor of the Library of Congress Building.

Mountain Grass Cuts First Album

West Virginia, My Home, a new LP record by Mountain Grass contains the Hazel Dickens' song of the same name. Other cuts include two original vocals by mandolin player Dick Kimmel. Tim Miller fiddles a pair of old-time tunes, "Sail Away Ladies" and "Ragtime Annie," with the original third "G" part, as recorded by Eric Robertson in 1923. There is the five-string banjo work of Jim Steptoe, guitar picking by Rusty Williams, and bass playing by Keith Russell. The five members of Mountain Grass have played at festivals in many parts of the State in recent years. *West Virginia, My Home* (Revona 925) is available from Revona Records, Box 217, Ferndale, New York 12734, or it can be ordered directly from Mountain Grass, Rt. 5, Box 132, Morgantown, WV 26505, for \$5.50, which includes the mailing cost.

Andy Boarman's LP *Mountain State Music* Released

Andy Boarman, the Berkeley County banjoist, is heard on a new LP record called *Mountain State Music*. He is backed by Dick Kimmel and the Morgantown string band, Mountain Grass. The album contains Boarman's renditions of traditional music played on both banjo and Autoharp. Side I is devoted to his classic-style banjo picking and included Boarman's own "Somewheres in West Virginia," along with songs he learned from his uncle, C. C. Stump—such as "Derby Polka" and "Dancing Waves Schottische." In a twin banjo arrangement of "Soldier's Joy," Boarman picks out the tune, classic-style, while Kimmel's backing is clawhammer style. On side II Boarman's Autoharp playing is backed by Mountain Grass on three cuts, one being "Wreck of the Old 97." *Mountain State Music* (June Appal 027) can be ordered from June Appal Records, Box 743 B, Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858. A booklet is included and contains an article on Boarman's life and music, as well as numerous photographs.

On the Back Porch, There's Always Room for One More

Text and Photographs by Tom Rodd

This fall a new radio series called "Back Porch Music Time" begins on West Virginia Public Radio, at 11:00 A.M. on Saturdays. Each program is a visit with different musicians at home and presents their music and conversation.

Only a week or two after I and my family moved from Greenbrier County to near Fellowsville, in Preston County, I found myself playing banjo with four of my new neighbors at a square dance at the Fellowsville fire hall. As the dancers whirled and the electric guitars blared, once again I felt the beauty and fellowship of home-made music, the down-home music that daily rings out in bars, churches, kitchens, and back porches everywhere you go in West Virginia. Like the music of Mose Coffman of Frankford, whose fiddle playing drives tired feet to tap again, and at the same time sets an almost scholarly standard of tone and melody for a classic tune like "Soldier's Joy." Or the soulful singing of my fellow fire hall musician Susie Harvey as she performs "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue."

Mose and Susie's music are featured on "Back Porch Music Time," along with a lot of other people's. I love these people and their music, how they work at it and share it. That's what the Saturday morning radio show is all about. The program started in Greenbrier County in 1976, when Rob Gordon on mandolin, Lenny Perry on bass, and I on banjo—calling ourselves the Back Porch String Band—were playing at fairs, festivals, and clubs in the Lewisburg area. We were all devoted amateur musicians, and wanted to be heard, but the late hours and hangovers were tiring.

After we taped a commercial for a craft fair at WSLW Radio in White Sulphur Springs, I thought of starting a radio program. Three sponsors would pay ten dollars apiece weekly for a 15-minute show, and we were off. Each

week we traveled to the station, sang folk-bluegrass-country music, and delivered hilarious commercials for True Value Hardware Store and Mother Hubbard's Colonial Cupboard in downtown Lewisburg.

Soon I began to invite other local bands to play on the show. They were the Bluegrass Connection from Caldwell, and fiddlers Mose Coffman and Carlos Dalton. Then I borrowed a good portable tape recorder and began to tape the shows in people's homes. I visited folks like Clifford Brown of Robbin's Fork, who with his wife and three sons on banjo, guitar, and steel guitar would tear into the boogie-woogie, and then mournfully render "Mansion on the Hill."

We had Sunday School classes singing hymns, harmonica players, even babies needing their diapers changed. We never made any money from the show, but the radio audience liked it, we made a lot of music and friends, and the show was on most of a year.

Then I moved to Preston County in 1977 and stopped making pottery, which has been my trade for the nine years I have lived in West Virginia. I took a job as an announcer with WVWV Radio in Grafton while attending Fairmont State College. In January 1978 I received a \$2,500 grant to produce Back Porch shows from the National Endowment for the Arts—16 months after I had applied for it. During the spring I used some of this money to record a series of 15-minute shows which were aired on WVWV with such musicians as Charleston's Jim Good, the dulcimer maker, then of Weston, and the Critton Hollow String Band from Paw Paw.

In July I left the radio station and spent a month visiting and tape recording music and talk by visiting folks I had played with at parties, dances, festivals, and kitchen jam sessions over the years, as well as many folks I had heard of from afar. I went back to Greenbrier County to see

Mose Coffman, who was the first local musician I met there, when he and a couple of relatives had boldly forded our stream, then partied and fiddled into the night around a campfire. On this recording visit Mose made me welcome, then masterfully played two hours of old-time tunes from his vast repertoire.

Tape recorder in hand, I went a few miles up the road from our new place to visit and record neighbor Frank Bolyard and his wife Norma. He had stopped one day on his way to his work as a printer in Clarksburg, told me that he heard I played music, and soon had his new guitar out showing it to me. In our recording session, Frank and Norma harmonized, as cornbread baked in the kitchen.

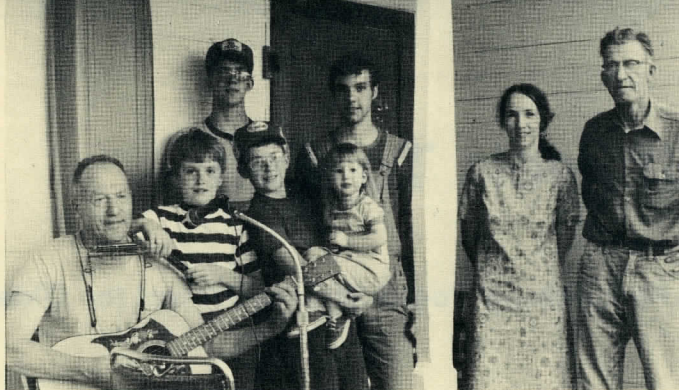
I got the names of Kenny Godwin and Walter Hyson of Elkins, and visited them. They, too, swallowed my story of radio fame and their friendly competition inspired some lively banjo, fiddle, and guitar playing. I picked and ate with and recorded all these people and many more.

Then I took the tapes and started to edit them into half hour shows. Such pops and crackles the first ones had, as I labored over the dials and announcerish introductions in the Fairmont State College studio. But I got the hang of it and sent some shows off to West Virginia Public Radio, where I hoped they might be aired. They liked the shows and agreed to begin the series on October 7, 1978.

I have many reasons for wanting to produce these shows. I enjoy bringing the exposure, recognition, and consequent pleasure to the people who make the music. I believe in the music; I believe that the general public appreciates and cares for this sort of music and talk on the radio, that it pleases them. And especially in the case of many older musicians, these shows are the distillation of unique people and a culture that will live beyond them in the recording. And I'm a ham, I like the exposure, too.

Top. Harlan Miller, left, with his grandson, daughter, and other relations.

Below. Woody Simmons.



But most of all, as Susie Harvey says on a show, "Music is *feeling*." I have tried to show in this article how home-made music has given me and countless others friendship, support, joy, sorrow, and excitement. If this can come across in small part in the radio program, then I will be continuing the same noble human work that every picker and grinner and toe-tapper is doing. As Archie Poling, Back Porch guitarist, says, "It's nothing special, but it's great!" Here's to Back Porch Music!

For the future, I'll continue the show and look for money to pay for it; the grant ran out a while ago. Beyond the weekly show, I would like to produce some concerts around the State featuring local artists, and tape record and air them. Someday I want to assemble a Back Porch Sampler record album with music by people who've been on the show. And I'd like to distribute the shows to AM stations to increase the audience. I invite people to listen to the show and send in their comments. And remember, there's always room for one more on the Back Porch! 🌿

1978 Schedule of 'Back Porch Music Time'

Saturdays from 11:00 to 11:30 A.M. on WVPB (91.7 FM) Beckley and WVPW (88.9 FM) Buckhannon on West Virginia Public Radio.

October 7. The Currence Brothers of Cassity. Loren, Jimmy, and Marvin Currence, and their nephew Malcolm Pastime have refined their music to an enviable level of energy, skill, and creativity. Excellent singing and banjo and fiddle playing, and talk about bluegrass music.

October 14. Frank and Norma Bolyard, of Colebank. Gospel and bluegrass songs by a warm, tender couple who have performed their songs at

hundreds of community functions. Their harmony singing is especially fine.

October 21. Harlan Miller, of Red House, Maryland. Harlan plays harmonica in a neck rack while playing the guitar. He is joined by his nine-year-old grandson and his daughter on a dozen good folk songs. Recorded on his daughter's back porch in St. George, West Virginia.

October 28. Woody Simmons, of Mill Point. Known throughout the State for his dynamic fiddle and banjo playing, Woody here delivers a dozen tunes and talks about his life in music. A must for fiddle fans.

November 4. Charlie Berwinkle and friends, from Westover. A giant step beyond the "Wildwood Flower" is the complex, beautiful guitar playing that Charlie, Bob Victor, and George Mayle performed at a sublime, danceable Back Porch session at Charlie's house.

November 11. The Woods and Spessert families of St. George. A two-part show, with the common denominator of gospel music. First, strong church singing by the preacher's son, Danny Woods, and his family; and later, atop a mountain outside of town, there are songs in a softer mood by George Spessert and his daughter Becky.

November 18. Mose Coffman of Frankford. Definitive fiddling of many old-time tunes by an elder master of West

Virginia music, and much good talk about music and times past.

November 25. Susie Harvey and family of Marquess. Susie and her three daughters harmonize on a number of country-Western and gospel songs, with Susie on piano and neighbor Carl Wilt on guitar. A warm visit with a family and their music.

December 2. Kenny Godwin and Walter Hyson of Elkins. Fiddle, banjo, and guitar music by two gentlemen who have enriched the Elkins music scene for many years. Lots of good square dance tunes.

December 9. Jack Shaffnaker of Capon Bridge, and Archie Poling of Buckhannon. A two-part show featuring mellow and melodic guitar playing by two men whose years of work at their instruments yield a beautiful music.

December 16. The New Breed in Old-time. A sampler of old-time string band music by a number of younger revivalist musicians, including the Critton Hollow String Band, the Good Tones, and the Back Porch String Band.

December 23. A Back Porch Holiday Singalong. Holiday songs from many lands sung by a multitude of boys and girls, men and women, cats and dogs—homemade music.

For more information listeners or musicians may contact Tom Rodd, Community Cultural Services, Inc., Rt. 1, Box 55, Moatsville, WV 26405. 304-265-0018.

How It Feels To Wait

Report on Parkersburg Poetry Writing Project for Older People

Text and photographs by Jane Somerville

A BUSY group of students and teachers, noisy, enthusiastic, working hard at the exacting business of poetry writing: exchanging ideas, talking, laughing, listening with appreciation when their work is read aloud. It could be a creative writing class anywhere, but this group is different; the students range in age from 65 to 99. They're a special group at the Arlington Personal Care Center in Parkersburg, testing whether older people can still be creative, can still learn, can still be open to something new.

And they can. Today they are responding to an assortment of objects their teachers have brought to class, interesting little things, shells, rocks, a dainty necklace, a silken scarf, an old pocket watch. Roush, the only male member of the group, selects a pipe and a pocket knife. He says he thinks they go together. "They make me see something," he says.

I see in the twilight
I see a man smoking his pipe
And whittling.
He feels calm
And at peace with the world.

Roush Vance

Roush has bridged an important stream in poetry writing; he has learned to put the pictures in his mind on paper, to say "I see" for something he only sees inside, making it immediate. Later his word-pictures will grow rich and evocative as he remembers "long party dresses/Dragging on the ground" or roses on a table, "Walnut, carved, dark/The red roses/Up-lifting/On the dark wood." Roush is an engineer. At first, his statements were confused, rambling, full of technical language. He is learning to sort out his feelings and his words, to speak directly and simply, to get in touch with his own responses.

'You have to know where to stop.'

Becky selects a piece of jewelry. She

holds it gently in her quivering hands. It brings her a memory. She smiles, she has learned that her memories are precious things to be renewed and recorded in poems. This is what she writes:

My first engagement ring
Diamonds and sapphires—
The sapphires were my birthstone.

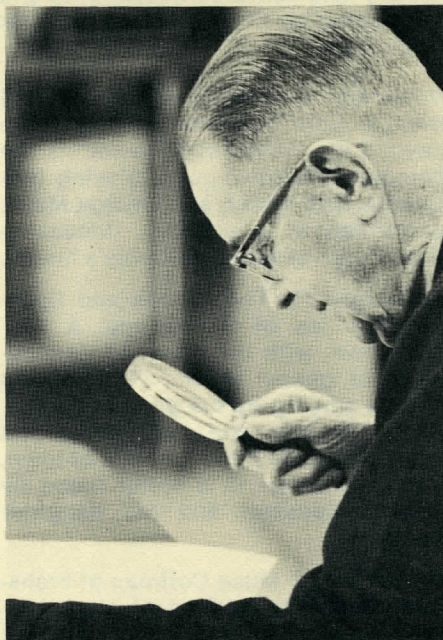
How proud,
How elated!
No one ever had a more beautiful
ring.

We had a misunderstanding;
I gave back the ring.

Becky Sarber

There is a ripple of surprise and warm laughter when this poem is read aloud; the remembered feelings that everyone shares seem to come alive again

Roush Vance.



in the poem. We talk about how the lines "turn around" and surprise us at the end, and then we talk about endings, how important they are. "You have to know where to stop," somebody says. We learn many other things, all without lectures or lessons, about modern poetry and how to write it.

The good contemporary poetry we read—and the poetry we encourage students to write—is very different from what they have known. It does not rhyme. It is spoken for the most part in familiar language, enriched by pictures and comparisons. Our students are skeptical at first. "That's not a poem. That's nothing. That's not Shakespeare!" Neva is particularly vocal about her doubts. We encourage her skepticism; it reveals an active mind, inquiring, ready to challenge. "Why don't you put your feelings in a poem?" we ask. Here is her poem:

Modern Poetry

Those things don't mean a thing
to me
I wouldn't read em
a second time
I like something with a plot,
Something that's gonna happen
to look forward to.

These long-haired thoughts
mean so little.

Neva Baker

**'The one thing I miss is friends . . .
old friends.'**

But the doubts go away when we hear what we have said read aloud: it affects us. We know it's honest, real. "Did I write that?"

Our pupils are more open to new ideas than we had expected—more open, perhaps, than many younger people. Eager, anxious to know, to learn. It's easy to understand why this is true: imagine yourself confined, cancelled, no longer allowed to work, to try hard at anything. Told what to do:

get up, sit down, eat, sleep, be quiet. *Provided for*. Even in the very best facility, a home like this one, people who have made decisions all their lives suddenly find themselves with *no decision to make*. Surely working, deciding, *being allowed to try*—as we do in poetry writing—keeps us alert, responsive, fulfilled. Without something meaningful to do, even though we are well-fed, we are mentally and emotionally close to death.

Roush explains his situation movingly in a poem written when we all pretended to be animals—learning, in the process, how poetry works by comparison, how pretending can lead us to the truth.

Circus

With you I am an elephant
A rare case—
A domestic
And a show animal
All in one.
Now
Due to widely observed
Living conditions
And social problems
The animal
Must
Be confined to a cage
Except
When on display.

Roush Vance

In this poem, Roush has discovered—without literary explanations—the power of metaphor, of comparison. He sees his “living conditions” as a “social problem,” as “life in a cage.” He would not have come close to this realization without the liberating experience of writing poetry.

But it wasn't easy. At first we weren't sure we could get the residents to come to the sessions, let alone write. When I first visited the home, most of the people I met were withdrawn, apathetic, disoriented. Many were hesitant, disinterested, or even negative about participating in a group activity.

One woman says, “I couldn't come; I'm almost blind.” I explain that we'll do the writing for her; all she needs to do is tell us the things she remembers and we'll put them down. “I don't like to do anything anymore,” she says. “I don't enjoy anything.” She is about to cry; I cannot convince her to come even for one hour. Many residents are desperately unhappy, even though their physical needs are fully met, their surroundings pleasant.

“The one thing I can tell you is I'm homesick. I want to get out of here,” a

woman tells me, tears rising in her eyes. Another says, “The one thing I miss is friends . . . old friends, you know, that I've known a long time.” Still another is packing and unpacking her suitcase. At first she says, “I just want to see what clothes I've got.” But later she tells me, “I'm leaving in two or three days, so I won't be able to do anything here.” The nurses shake their heads and say she's not really leaving at all.

‘Yes, this will fit my schedule.’

We come to understand that the hesitant, even negative response comes from habitual apathy, or from fear: it's safer to stay bored, tired, alone. One man says, “I'm not interested. There's nothing I could get from it.” He is very firm and distant. We talk. Then he says brusquely, “You see how close I have my chair up here by the TV? I can't sit further back, because I don't hear.” It seems to be a hard admission to make. We talk longer. I can see that underneath he's interested. After a while he says, “The thing of it is, I'd be an embarrassment to everyone out there. I wouldn't hear.”

“Look,” I tell him, “we're talking now, and you hear me, don't you?” I know he wants to come, really wants to.

“I'm not interested,” he says. “I can't remember anything anymore anyway.”

“If you change your mind . . .”

“If I change my mind . . .”

Almost everybody says he couldn't do it, or can't remember, or has nothing to say, even though I make it all seem easy, asking him to come just once, talk with us, and let us write down some of the things he remembers.

They all want me to visit, though, and they are very polite. They use the gracious phrases that have mostly fallen into disuse: “How do you do,” “I'm delighted to meet you,” “It has been lovely talking with you.” This rather charming, old-fashioned politeness is striking beside an immediate, unabashed intimacy. Meeting them for the first time, I hear it all: the headaches, the hip that hurts. “You see, my pill only lasts a couple of hours.” Loneliness. Boredom. Hopelessness. After greeting me formally, a woman suddenly says, “They couldn't find anybody to stay with me at night, so—I came here. I'll stay here till I die, I guess.”

But some are willing to come. One charming woman talks with me at length about poetry. I ask if she is a teacher (we try never to use the past

tense, as if people used to be something). She says, “No, but everyone thinks that. I wanted to do something, but things kept happening. Deaths . . .” She breaks off. “I never got around to it, and now it's too late.” She asks me to write down the date and time of the first meeting. I tell her I only have my yellow pad. “That will be perfectly all right,” she says with elegance. She looks at the paper. “Yes,” she smiles, “this will fit my schedule.”

The day of the first session. We are nervous as cats. I say to myself, “Whatever happens, happens.” “I've taught poetry all my life, but I'm scared. When we get there, they are being herded down the hall. They move stiffly and slowly, descending on the little room. I suddenly recall a scene in Robert Altman's film *Three Women* where they are bringing all the old people to the swimming pool for therapy.

The room is much too small. And hot. But everyone is finally seated around the tables, ready to begin. I welcome them and read a few poems, explaining that these may be different from the ones they remember. I notice that some of those who said they couldn't come are here after all.

We use poetry ideas to provide a basis for writing; for the first session, we use remembrance. We know that everybody enjoys thinking back and finds it easy to talk about his memories. We ask each student to tell us one small, specific thing, something little that he remembers from a long time ago. We go around the table. Each person has something to say. We have begun.

‘What will our next poem be about?’

We put all the statements together to make a group poem, and read it aloud. This makes us all feel more comfortable; the first hesitant chuckles and smiles come from hearing this poem. Then each student is asked to make his own poem, telling us in just a few words about something small and specific from the past. We want to lead them away from the vague, the abstract, the sentimental, to lively and concrete specifics. We three who are teachers go from one to another, talking with each, able to honestly appreciate the things they tell us. We write down what they say, asking for more. “What else do you want to say about it?” “Is this the way you want it?” “How does this sound to you?”

There is hesitancy; at first we feel that the things we remember aren't worth even saying aloud. Some people say they can't remember anything, but



Kate Evans and Vera Givens.

a few have easy access to a richly detailed past. Kate is one of these.

Saturday Afternoons

I remember playing
On Saturday afternoons
On the hill
At Powell's house
We all stayed for supper.
Let's see: they had seven children
And then there were four of us.
I remember we stayed till eight
o'clock.
Miss Cindy Brent read us
The Brer Rabbit stories.
And at eight o'clock
Mr. Powell walked me home.
He wouldn't let me walk down
with the boys.

Kate Evans

Kate's poem encourages others. Once the doors of the past are flung open, pictures begin to come quickly. We are amazed to see some of the poignant poems that come from this first effort. This is what Louisa says:

Julia Ann

The death of a second grade girl
in my room
Shocking
For the children
And for me
I've carried her features in my
mind for so long.

Louisa Kerr

When we read this poem we are ready to talk about how poetry helps us take pleasure in the feelings we remember—even the painful ones.

We do not suggest that anyone write for himself, but there is a pile of fresh

yellow pads and a bundle of sharp pencils in the middle of the table. Before the first day is over, a few students have reached for them.

After the first day it was easy; each meeting was a joy and a surprise. They all became friends, laughing and talking together in a way that never happened out in the lounge, where the residents seemed to sit separate, mostly silent, each in his own circle of loneliness and pain.

We presented a new poetry idea for each session, reading some related modern poetry, writing a group poem in response to the idea, and moving on to individual poems. The students liked having a regular routine for the meetings, and soon began to ask, "What will our next poem be about?" There was the music poem, written while listening to records; the color poem, when we think of everything white, or red, or another favorite color; the quiet poem, about quiet things and quiet times; and other designed to provide a sense of unity, to eliminate randomness from our responses. People began to come with poetry they had worked on between sessions.

'... singing promises'

Our times together were very personal, and we learned in a new way that each of us is unique, each has a personal voice. Ernestina's voice is gentle, sensitive; her poetry sounds like haiku.

Quiet Poem

The moon and stars
So beautiful
The crickets
Break the stillness
The cool breeze is
So silent.

Ernestina Sauer

Poems like this surprise us, as we realize how easy it is for our students to *feel a scene* which is present only in memory and imagination—and we see the pleasure that comes from life of the imagination. Some of us find our way to images that are unrealistic—fanciful or dreamlike. The music poem brings to Bess a forest scene, dramatic and magical.

Impressions

Silence in the woods
soft music
loud loud
dancing in the forest

Running water
over pebbles in a stream
singing
promises

Bess Seckman

When we talk about poems like this one, we come to understand that poetry is not always factual: we can make up the "facts" in a poem and still find truth.

Every poem is, in a sense, a self-revelation, a secret revealed. In "The Secret Poem" we share little secrets out of the past, private things. Ada, who at age 99 is our oldest pupil, is a straightforward, no-nonsense woman. She often speaks of the move from her childhood home to Parkersburg; her poems show that this transition was central and significant.

It Was a Secret

It was a secret
I came to Parkersburg
Just to visit
I never got back
To my home
Harrisville, West Virginia

I met Clinton Ankrom here
My husband
He was from Tyler County
I never went back home to stay
We were just here to be here
I guess

Ada Ankrom

As we share small secrets, we become more open about ourselves and more ready to accept others. We begin to confess those personal fears and embarrassments that everyone understands. Elsie is able to do this with humor.

Nobody Knows

Nobody knows

How frightened I was
All anxiously waiting to hear
my song

Finally I plucked an ornament
Off the Christmas tree
And announced to the audience
"My mother made me do this!"

I ran out of sight
Weeping a flood of tears.

Elsie Bair

Vera's charm and humor lighten everything she writes. She is quick to abandon high-flown "poetic" language which sounds dated, quick to capitalize on the appeal of everyday speech:

My Little Secret

I'm a small child
I live to sneak
all the goodies
I can get to eat
Brown sugar is my favorite
But my mother hid it
When I find it
I grab a fast bite

She caught me
With an awful sick stomach
I wasn't so smart
I got brown sulphur
Instead of brown sugar
That cured me of sneaking.

Vera Givens

Becky is ready to admit and accept the need for affection that makes us show off. This poem shows how well she understands herself.

I Want To Be Liked

Nobody knows.

Elsie Bair.



They said I was quite a talker
I wanted to be liked
I talked about things
That should not have been said.

I know better now
But I guess I will go on
Being my same old self.

Becky Sarber

Within the group everyone talks openly and without embarrassment. When we consider allowing a session to be taped and photographed for news coverage, we wonder whether the spontaneity will be lost in the presence of cameras and microphones. I tell my students to pretend that they're movie stars. "Just ignore the confusion and go on as usual." Still, I wonder; but when outsiders come, our students are completely at ease. They even show off a little! These older pupils seem to lack the self-consciousness that younger people feel when confronted by the media. Neva even writes a fine poem about the pretty young photographer.

Nancy

I turned around
She was looking at me in the eyes
With her camera.
I don't know
Something about me
A magnet
I felt I've known her before
She was like a big doll
Blooming, milky complexion,
Glistening eyes
That matched her disposition.

Neva Baker

One day a television crew is late and we don't want to start without them. It is very warm and, even though the attention span and the energy level in the group have shot up since we began the sessions, we think people may get tired and bored. Then my young assistant suggests a group poem on waiting. Roush, who used to be withdrawn and vague, is the first to call out a line. And it's a wonderful line: "I've spent half my life waiting on women and the B&O trains." He is laughing, delighted with his own words, and we all laugh with him. The poem grows quickly as lines are added.

How It Feels To Wait

We were assembled in the dining
room

Waiting, waiting,
I've spent half my life
Waiting
On women
And the B&O trains
Waiting for my paycheck
Waiting at the doctor's office
(An appointment at 3
And he doesn't take you till 4)

Waiting for somebody
We were all waiting
For the Monongahela Power
Company

It wouldn't be bad
If everything was quiet
So we could think

I was always busy
Till I came here
Here
All I do is
Wait.

The Group

The intense statement seems to sum things up; it contains both the exuberance we have found and the emptiness that was a way of life. We have seen them unfold, at 65, at 80, at 99, when we tend to think that unfolding is over, when we expect people to close in on themselves.

This success can't have come just from attention, because these people were already getting attention, from a top-flight institution with a wonderful staff and from relatives who visit dutifully with news from outside. News from outside; the son gets a new job; the grandchildren graduate. *Keeping track of other lives*. It's not enough. Clean sheets are not enough. Regular baths and good food are not enough.

If this is true here, where the facilities are excellent, it must be true in other places, where the need for basic care is acute. We come to understand that staying alive mentally and emotionally is *just as important* as staying alive physically: these two kinds of needs must have equal priority.

By writing poems, we have come to understand poetry in a new and more personal way. We realize that poetry isn't always happy, nor does it always make us feel happiness. But it often makes us feel deeply. There are sometimes tears in the writing class, but they are never tears of hopelessness. They are tears of renewal, as we realize how big and rich our capacity to feel still is; and we realize *feeling is living*, that even though we are old, our feelings still remain, untouched by aging, fresh and young within us. ✨

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

Franklin, WV
July 4, 1978

Editor:

Please add my name to your free list for GOLDENSEAL. I saw an edition at a neighbor's house last night. It had an article about the artist, Terry Rexrode of Sugar Grove, now deceased, that was homefolk and very interesting. He only lived ten miles from us, and there were many old-time interesting articles I noticed as I leafed through the magazine. I am 70 years old. A relative of mine is a subscriber and I would like to be one too. Thanks.

B. R. Pitsenbarger

Gasport, New York
July 4, 1978

Editor:

While visiting my Brother and Dad in Sutton, I came across one of the current issues of GOLDENSEAL magazine and became very interested in learning more of the history and culture of the state I was raised in. Please enter my name to the mailing list.

Kester A. Sears

Elizabeth, WV (26143)
July 22, 1978

Editor:

I was born in Braxton County near Sutton in 1907. I now reside at Elizabeth in Wirt County. After 30 years as a farmer and 15 years as an insurance salesman (after having served two years—'42-'44—in the service as a Sea Bee), I would like to hear from all my ole buddies.

I would like to receive GOLDENSEAL because it contributes to the history and folklore of our Great State of West Virginia.

Brooks Hardway

Mannington, WV
July 12, 1978

Editor:

I would like to be on your mailing list, and would especially like the current issue of GOLDENSEAL. I am ninety-seven (97) years old and have lived in Mannington since 1893. My family moved here when I was thirteen. Thank you kindly.

Samuel N. Elliott

Bluefield, WV
July 12, 1978

Editor:

I have just finished reading the April/July issue of GOLDENSEAL and I feel it is one of the best magazines I have read in several years. I would like to be on your mailing list.

Our family has long been interested in the culture and history of West Virginia, and I really enjoy taking part in art and craft shows. I particularly like to demonstrate basket weaving (from white oak) which I learned from Mr. Karl Belcher of Princeton.

James M. Jones

Corley, WV
July 19, 1978

Editor:

I saw a copy of your GOLDENSEAL magazine and would like to get a copy of the April issue and be put on your mailing list.

I saw three people in your April issue I know. Melvin Wine the fiddler you pictured is from this county. I saw the man Fortney the preacher you mentioned and was at his meeting at the Church of Christ at Webster Springs when he preached for a week. I went up twice to his meeting. I saw Noah Cottrell, you had pictured, at a fiddle contest in Glenville this year. He had the same shirt on that you had him pictured in the magazine.

I make violins and made five of them

and have six more I am working on. I fix them and repair them for people. I write music to gospel songs for people. I play the violin in old pieces like Ball Room, Sourwood Mountain, Arkansas Traveler, Ragged Annie, Stop Waltz and other old-time fiddle pieces.

Wilkie G. Dennison, B.D.

Bloomfield, New Jersey
July 10, 1978

Editor:

Please put me on your mailing list so I may receive GOLDENSEAL. I was very much impressed and gladdened by the issue that I saw. GOLDENSEAL is a wonderful idea, and a lovely publication.

Jan Gordon

Sussex, England
July 28, 1978

Editor:

Thank you so much for taking time not only to send me a copy of the recent GOLDENSEAL but especially for going to the trouble to photocopy articles for me.

I am involved in writing a book on the origins and history of blues in the Eastern States for a U.S. publisher and find these articles of great interest.

The magazine sets a very high standard, and I would be delighted to be added to the subscription list. I only wish other states would follow the lead of West Virginia and take such an active interest in documenting the traditional life of their states. It is a fine achievement and I hope enough people tell you so!

Bruce Bastin

Marietta, South Carolina
June 1, 1978

Editor:

I recently had a chance to look over a

copy of your publication and was extremely pleased with the content, format, etc. I am very glad to see this kind of thing being done.

As a musician, director of the South Carolina Folk Music Festival, and an interested individual, I would greatly appreciate your adding me to your mailing list.

Nick Hallman

Hamilton, New York
June 24, 1978

Editor:
Knowing of my interest in barns, the Director of the Madison County Historical Society showed me the recent issue of GOLDENSEAL with its article on them. Well done! Is it possible to obtain a copy of that issue for my own file on the subject?

Additionally, is it possible to be added to your mailing list? I found the one issue fascinating and doubly pertinent to me: Geneological research on my wife's family shows that a large number of them came from Wayne and Cabell Counties, and also my daughter will be a transfer junior at West Virginia University this fall.

Victor B. Goodrich

Middlebourne, WV
June 28, 1978

We are very interested in receiving your wonderful magazine GOLDENSEAL. We had the pleasure of seeing and reading a copy recently and enjoyed it very much.

The article about Ida L. Reed in the Oct. 1976 issue was especially of great interest to us as we had the privilege of knowing her when we pastored a church in Arden, W. Va. Having lived in different counties, all the articles are enriching to us. We thank you in advance for the wonderful magazine.

Rev. and Mrs. D. W. Poling

Morgantown, WV
June 28, 1978

Would you kindly put my name on the list to receive GOLDENSEAL. I think it is wonderful that a magazine such as this is being published for the citizens of West Virginia.

I was born in Roane County, a descendent of pioneer families. My great-grandfather, the Rev. Thomas P. Ryan, was murdered in 1887 by men who came to his home to rob him. It is quite a story. Perhaps my sister and I can research this historical event later this year for a future story.

Phoebe Ryan Schubert

Mannington, WV
June 30, 1978

Editor:
My neighbor loaned me his copies of your magazine and how thrilled I was with the many fine articles, especially the ones about teamstering in Mannington and the Lebanese Community here. My great-grandfather founded the Charles Phillips Tool Co. here in Mannington and I've listened by the hour to their stories of the early oil boom days. Then, too, I grew up with the children of the Lebanese people in our community.

Will you please include my name on your mailing list. You are doing a fine job. Thank you.

Mrs. Howard P. Yoho

Winter Haven, Florida
July 3, 1978

Editor:
A former West Virginian and a minister of the gospel for forty years, I am a transplant in the state of Florida. My roots, however, are still deep in the soil of the Mountain State.

I recently was privileged to see a copy of GOLDENSEAL with an article about W. E. Fortney, music teacher and preacher. He is a dear friend of

mine. Would you be so kind as to send me a copy of this issue.

Blaine Cook, Minister

A. A. F. B., Maryland
July 26, 1978

I would like to order a copy of the GOLDENSEAL with an article about "Big Andy" Boggs in it. My wife's grandfather John Pickens used to tell us about him and the lead mine (which is located somewhere on our property). This is part of their history.

Anthony A. Ervolina

Bridgeport, WV
September 5, 1978

Editor:
I just finished reading the April/Sept. issue of GOLDENSEAL and I enjoyed every article very much, especially the one on shape-note singing. I have always been interested in music, and now I'm past 83 years old and my hobby is completely restoring the old "Reed Pump Organs" to their original beauty and playing condition. At present time I have twelve organs, and I have restored many more for other people.

I would like very much to have my name placed on your mailing list.

W. E. Cross

Roanoke, WV
September 13, 1978

Editor:
I am a lover of people and the local history they make. Thus, I was delighted when I came upon GOLDENSEAL. Please enter my name on your mailing list, for the very next copy, if possible.

Thank you for your effort in popularizing and preserving our native culture and history.

Mrs. George C. Post
(Ruth M. Post)

West Virginia String Bands

GOLDENSEAL has compiled the following listing as a service to musicians who play traditional or tradition-related music as well as for those interested in this music. The information is presented here as we heard it from each band's spokesperson; we have made little or no attempt to qualify the information, and no categories have been established for types of music played.

This listing is as complete as our current resources allow, yet there are many more string bands in the State. We urge ones not included here to contact us for inclusion in future updatings of the list. Also we would like to hear from a band when any part of its present listing changes. (Our address is on page 1.)

Several of these groups are eligible for financial assistance when they are presented in residency programs, which may include workshops, lectures, and concerts in West Virginia communities. For further information on such assistance contact the Arts and Humanities Division, Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305. Phone 304-348-0240.

Accord Family Bluegrass Band

P. O. Box 49
Glen Fork, WV 25845

Earl Acord, 304-682-6659

Country, bluegrass, gospel. Fiddle, banjo, mandolin, two guitars, bass.

Professional, union; weekend availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

The Barger Springs Old-time Bunch Bean Band

Box 130
Hinton, WV 25951

Jim Coste, no phone

Old-time traditional ballads, Irish music, blues, dance tunes. Banjo, fiddle, guitar, bass, lap dulcimer, some mandolin, and harmonica.

Semi-professional, non-union; available anywhere; fee negotiable.

Barley Boys

P. O. Box 1883
Elkins, WV 26241

Dave Holt, 304-823-1005

Old-time and Irish, square dance music (caller available). Fiddle, banjo, guitar, hammered dulcimer, penny whistle.

Professional, non-union; general availability; own sound system; fee \$200 plus expenses.

Bing Brothers

3823-16th Street Rd.
Huntington, WV 25701

Mike Bing, 304-525-6219

Traditional mountain music with Scotch-Irish background. Fiddle, banjo, guitar, mandolin, and bass.

Professional, non-union; available on weekends; fee negotiable.

Blackie Cool & The Elk River Gang

Monterville, WV 26282

Blackie Cool, 304-339-2561

Country and Western, bluegrass, old-time fiddle tunes, guitar rags, vocals. Banjo, guitar, electric guitar, fiddle, mandolin.

Professional, non-union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Bluegrass Heritage Band

526-20th Street
Dunbar, WV 25064

Carol Ashley, 304-768-2802

Traditional and contemporary bluegrass. Banjo, mandolin, guitar, bass.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; \$200 minimum fee.

Blues Mountain Band

P. O. Box 437
Alum Creek, WV 25003

Carl Nestmann, 304-727-1600

Progressive bluegrass and contemporary acoustics. Fiddle, mandolin, guitar, bass, Dobro.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee from \$300.

Boliver, Clyde, & Ugly Irving

Box 867
Charleston, WV 25323

R. C. Blankinship, 304-346-0565

Comedy hillbilly with bluegrass style, folk music, Woody Guthrie songs. Banjo, banjo-uke, tub bass.

Professional, non-union; general availability; fee negotiable.

Booger Hole Revival

Rt. 1
Walton, WV 25386

Paul Epstein, 304-577-6681 or
Joe Mirena, 304-965-0218

Earliest traditional string band music to early Depression blues, traditional Irish. Fiddle, banjo, mandolin, bass, hammered dulcimer, penny whistle, piano, vocals.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee \$500/ negotiable.

Roger Bryant

Box 844
Franklin, WV 26807

Roger Bryant, 304-358-7068

Old-time to contemporary bluegrass.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Critten Hollow String Band

Rt. 1
Paw Paw, WV 25434

Sam or Joe Herrmann, 304-947-7046

Traditional Appalachian, Irish dance tunes, old-time ballads, and topical songs. Fiddle, banjo, mandolin, guitar, bass, hammered dulcimer.

Professional, non-union; general availability; fee from \$200.

Currence Brothers

Star Route Box 53
Mabie, WV 26278

Lorren Currence, 304-338-4568

Mostly bluegrass, gospel, country. Fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Ebert Brothers Country Variety Show

Box 29, Doolin Route
New Martinsville, WV 26255

Continued on page 65

'Give us the Old Mud-caked Oh-ho-ho'

Flooding on Wheeling Island

By Marie Tyler-McGraw

They can talk of the Blue Danube, the picturesque Rhine, the crocodile-infested Ganges and the salmon-jumping Columbia, but give us the old mud-caked Oh-ho-ho when she goes on a tear.

Pughey Bulerton,
Wheeling News-Register, March 21, 1936

THAT MORNING when I woke up and looked out the window, my wooden sliding board was floating in the back yard and brown water was lapping at the back porch. In the night the river had come up from down below the garden and now covered everything I could see from the porch to the state of Ohio. Leafless branches rose out of the water. All landmarks of alley and fence and yard were gone. In the front of the house, facing the street, large puddles were beginning to connect with each other.

All day the water rose. While my mother and aunt carried furniture upstairs, my brother and I stood on the front porch and threw slivers from the coal bucket into the rising, flowing, muddy river.

In the afternoon, as water began to roll across the front porch, my mother brought down suitcases. Our next-door neighbor rowed his boat over, we climbed in, and he rowed us up the street and to a bridge that went to town. We walked across the bridge to the mainland and didn't come back until the water went down.

It was March of 1945 and the newspaper said "Germany will fall before the Oh-ho-ho."

When God gave Noah the rainbow sign, promising "no more water, the fire next time," the Ohio River wasn't paying attention. To the long suffering and enduring residents of the Ohio

River Valley and especially to the inhabitants of Wheeling Island, it was water the next time and the next time and the next. There were 16 heavy floods recorded in the nineteenth century and there have been more than 20 so far in this century.

Wheeling Island sits in the Ohio River between Wheeling, West Virginia, and Bridgeport, Ohio, connected with each by bridges. It has received the full force of every flood coming down the Ohio River. Riverbank communities may occasionally escape inundation but the Island, with its flat terrain, will not. Year after year, residents have carried their furniture upstairs on their backs, left their homes in boats, and shoveled tons of mud when the water receded. Very few packed up and moved away after their first encounter with ruined wallpaper, warped furniture, and a thick, shiny layer of mud on everything. The Island did not become a transient area, with each new family gambling on the river and losing, and it was not abandoned by the inhabitants and used only for gardens, as has happened to many low-lying areas.

Wheeling Island today looks much as it did 50 years ago and much as it must have looked 100 years ago. The possibility of flooding has discouraged speculation, development, and urban renewal on the Island so far, and what remains is a late nineteenth century suburb. Imposing old Victorian mansions on the riverbank face Wheeling,

and behind them is a grid of about 12 streets lined with old frame and shingle two-story homes on narrow lots. Most houses have a front porch, a back porch, a yard, and an alley. Vegetable gardens slope down toward the river.

Many of the houses are well kept. Federal flood aid has been used to put on aluminum siding and to replace wooden front steps and porches with cement ones. A few houses have become seriously dilapidated or abandoned and several of the mansions on the river's edge seem to be in the last stages of decayed gentility. These sad houses are the exceptions, however, and for the most part people sit on their porches in the evening while young men work on their cars and children play in the streets and alleys as they have done for generations.

Just as the Island itself is a unique geographic entity, so are the Islanders, a unique group of survivors who have made a life-style and a culture out of their survival techniques. Many Islanders and ex-Islanders, like my mother's family, lived there for generations and over the past century or more they have developed a style of life that accommodates itself to floods. They have created and preserved a set of flood stories that tell, often through exaggeration and humor but always with a core of reality, how they have dealt with the real physical and emotional problems of flooding.

The floods that hit the Ohio River Valley are different from the tragic



School House Afloat on the Ohio River, Flood of March, 1907. Passing Under the Bridge at Wheeling, W. Va. (This school building floated from Warrenton, Ohio, to Sistersville, W. Va., a distance of over 100 miles.)

The March 1907 flood at Wheeling. Photographer and print source unknown. Courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Library; gift (1965) of Mrs. Stuart Shumate.

flash floods of the interior of West Virginia. Usually there is some warning. Residents are alerted to the possibility of high water by local meteorologists and weather forecasters. Often they know themselves when to expect flooding. March is a particularly likely time with spring rain and snow runoff often combining to produce the most severe floods.

With every flood there is destruction, fear, one or two drownings, often from capsized rescue boats, and perhaps the death from exposure of an invalid who had to be removed from the home.

Yet what Islanders choose to remember later is how they coped. In a recent series of conversations with me, past and present Island residents told stories about carrying furniture, rowing boats through the streets, rescuing neighbors, living on the second floor, and cleaning up.

Two stories about furniture seemed particularly to illustrate the attitudes of

The 1913 flood in front of the author's grandfather's piano store on Wheeling Island. Her father was six years old at the time and her mother four and lived one street over. The crest of the flood is noted at 51 feet, 3 inches. Photograph by "Kline - 1913." Courtesy of the author.





Top. The author's grandparents, Lillie James Tyler and R. W. Tyler, in the 1902 flood. Married a few months earlier, the newlyweds posed on "the boarding house raft" in North Penn Street. For many years such rafts were used during floods to get from house to house. Photographer unknown.

Bottom. The 1902 flood on Wheeling Island. The author's grandfather, R. W. Tyler, seated outside of railing, wrote on the back, "Morris' Boarding House, Wheeling, West Virginia, 2:00 P.M. March 2, 1902. At 5:00 P.M. the water was two inches deep on the parlor floor." Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the author.

Islanders toward the floods and were told by several independently. In one story, residents describe carrying items from the basement to the second floor to prepare for high water. "We carried it to the first floor and we had a little nip. Then we carried it to the second floor and had another nip. Then we went on back to the basement to get another load and stopped on the first floor and had a little nip. Pretty soon we didn't mind the flood coming at all."

A second story, a tall tale, has to do with the very real problem of moving heavy furniture. In this story "lots of folks cut holes through the second floor and hoisted the piano through the living room ceiling." Pianos were a major and persistent problem. As the flood of March 1913 approached, the *Wheeling New-Register* commented, "Piano movers were busy all day yesterday and all night long on the Island. Scores of pianos have been hauled from the Seventh Ward to various store houses on the mainland. Hundreds of residents, however, are taking chances of high water and are leaving their pianos in their houses."

Later, after the flood, the newspaper noted, "A good sized fortune was lost in pianos on the Island. It is a conservative estimate that 150 instruments have been lost. Most of these had been blocked upon chairs, but the water got halfway over them."

In addition to carrying and stacking furniture, Islanders prepared for floods by turning off their furnaces in time for them to cool before the river water reached them. Marion Haller, an ex-Islander, recalled, "In the '36 flood, renters didn't put the furnace out in time and it cracked. In '45, I smothered the hot coals with ashes as soon as we knew it (the flood) was coming."

Adalyn Kline, a lifelong Islander, said one plumber kept a listing for all his customers of the water level at which each customer would be affected. When a flood warning came, he checked his list and came out and dismantled the furnace.

Once their homes were secured as much as possible from the floodwaters, Island residents had to decide whether to stay in their homes during the flood or move to higher ground. Many people kept boats under their back porches and the high water brought out free-lance rescuers who took peo-



Top. The 1936 flood in Wheeling. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Library; gift (1965) of Mrs. Stuart Shumate.

Bottom. Zane Street scene in flood around 1920 in Wheeling. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Library; loan (1975) by Father Anthony Lewis.

ple from their homes to one of the bridges. Sometimes anything that would float was pressed into service as a boat. Adalyn Kline recalls seeing one young boy floating on a wooden table turned upside down and paddling with a broom.

If residents waited long enough to leave, they may have had to exit by a second-story window. Both my mother and my father left the Island this way in 1913, and my father, then age five, had a story about it. "We climbed out an upstairs window into a boat, my mother, my father, my sister, my brother, Aunt Bert, and me. Aunt Bert had her pet canary in its cage. There wasn't room for both the canary and me in the rowboat. Aunt Bert suggested they leave me and take the canary since I could climb into the next boat and the canary couldn't. Fortunately, my parents didn't accept the logic of this. I climbed in and the canary stayed."

People who stayed on in their homes, camping in an upper story, had both highly dramatic moments and hours of tedium when they felt out of touch despite the efforts of rescue boats to keep track of them.

One 17-year-old boy, James Samples, kept a diary during the 1936 flood which was later reprinted in the *Wheeling News-Register*. It illustrates the sense of isolation and uncertainty as well as the resourcefulness and tenacity of those who stayed in their homes while the flood ran its course.

"Twenty minutes till 7—water on first floor (42.5 feet). No electric. Water rising again fast. Water everywhere except hill. Very cold; snows part time, then rains, then stops. Houses are floating down water. There goes the tabernacle . . . it hit a large tree, tore it down, just missed a house.

Later

"The water sounds like a high wind blowing past. God help everyone that needs it. Birds are without food. Our big furniture is in the water downstairs. Timbers are breaking. It sounds loud. There is no communication on the Island.

Later

"All that was in water was ruined. Breakfast is being cooked over blow torch . . . A boat came around with

sandwiches, coffee, and gasoline. Had to throw away piano rolls, sheet music, and kitchen linoleum. Miller boy took me out to bridge for more things to eat.

Later

"It is still cold. I am drying my shoes on the blow torch. Getting dark agin."

In 1945, my aunt, Marion Haller, stayed in the family home after the rest of us left. She and my mother had carried up coal from the basement and stored it in the bathtub to be burned in an upstairs grate. She cooked coffee and baked potatoes in the embers.

"The river eventually came about halfway up' the stairs," she relates. "Once I saw a yellow house float down the river. A couple of times a day I

would push up a window and call to our next door neighbor, Otty Hustlebee. That was how we checked up on each other.

"One day I heard a loud noise from below. I looked downstairs and saw our cousin, Charles Ray, paddling his canoe in the living room. He said, 'Are you OK?' and I said, 'I thought I locked that front door.' "

Those who stayed began cleaning rapidly as the water fell, and those who had left hurried back because it was important to be home to wash away the mud before it became dried and caked.

The wet mud was everywhere after a flood. My mother, Antoinette Tyler, remembered how the streetlights made the mud glisten as her father carried her home after the 1913 flood. Her

mother cleaned the house with a shovel, broom, and a strong lye soap. In later floods, water hoses and commercial lye and ammonia products were used. "The spirit of the thing was one of the best things," she concluded.

Adalyn Kline recalled, "In 1936, I stood for three days picking up eggs that had fallen from a shelf into the mud and washing them off. I was also trying to put washed-off labels back into tin cans."

The cycle of flood activities, from preparation to clean up, has been repeated many times. The focus of this article has been on Wheeling Island, but pride in their ability to adjust, survive and continue is characteristic of all the Wheeling area and Ohio River Valley residents. That pride is



Aftermath of the 1936 flood. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Library; gift (1965) of Mrs. Stuart Shumate.



Street scene after the 1936 flood. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Library; probably a gift of Mrs. Stuart Shumate.

evident in the flood stories people tell.

In an assessment of the 1936 flood, one citizen was quoted in a *Wheeling News-Register* column by Pughey Bullerton as saying, "It was a pretty flood, if I do say so myself. By that I mean it spread itself like a peacock and displayed its plumage. The '84 flood had more poise because we had dirt streets at the time and made the H²O a richer ochre.

"It was also a more sporting flood than the current rise. We boys oiled our rods and went casting for jack, Spanish mackerel, wall-eyed pike, and shark fins. It was too thick in Wheeling Creek for rainbow trout to see the

spinner, but we had no kick coming. Fish fries were fashionable for months after the '84 shower bath. We had no whales this year, but there were certainly plenty of gas tanks and garages (floating past)."

Another local resident, quoted in the same column, said, "As floods go, this was a much cleaner flood than '84 or '13 . . . In '84 there was no such thing as a food shortage. All you had to do was stand on the roof of your domicile and lasso the first set of horns that floated by. It was T-bone steak for breakfast, roast beef for dinner, and hash for supper day in and day out. I pined for a mess of pork chops so went

gigging and forked the first sow's ear that hove in sight. The only trouble about fishing for pork was, you occasionally speared a Doberman pinscher and had to throw it back."

All of these stories stress an exuberant individuality and vitality as well as a strong sense of community and interdependence. There is strength in all the accounts of coping and most of all in the extravagant stories of hoisting pianos and gigging hogs. For in retelling the stories and in making them outrageous, people are able to laugh at the floods and in laughing at the floods, Ohio River people conquer them once more. ✱

Coming Full Circle

West Virginia Musicians Continue Singing in Arizona

By Jim Griffith



Ruth and Orris Poling appeared at the Tucson Meet Yourself Festival in Tucson, Arizona, in October 1976. Photograph by Woody Wooden.

ONE of the exciting aspects of life in the Sun Belt is that you never know whom you'll meet next. Tucson, Arizona, contains people from all over the country, many of whom carry with them exciting stories and skills from their home states.

One such couple is Orris and Ruth Poling, whose names may well be familiar to those who remember country radio in Charleston in the 1940s. Although they never toured much themselves, they shared the stage with lots of folks who did, and played an interesting part in the old-time and gospel music scene in West Virginia until their 1954 departure for points west.

Orris Poling was born in Montrose [Randolph County] on Christmas Day, 1908. Like many West Virginians of that time, the Polings operated a family farm, raising crops, butchering hogs, curing bacon and ham, and making apple butter, all of which Orris remembers in mouth-watering detail. As it was for many families, singing was an important part of living. Orris remembers traveling in the family surrey with his parents to and from singing classes at the local schoolhouse, singing all the way over and back. His mother played accordion and harmonica and Orris picked up a few tunes on the latter instrument, but music for the Polings consisted mostly of singing. Orris still has songs he learned from his parents—songs like "Two Sweethearts" and "I'se Gwine Back To Dixie." Music also played an important role in such neighborhood functions as church meetings and literary evenings at the schoolhouse. Orris participated eagerly in all this, and remembers some lovely stories related to those days.

One story in particular concerns a politician who showed up at a "literary" at the schoolhouse and proceeded to make a speech in which he stressed his rural origins. "I'm just like one of you folks," he proclaimed, "I grew up between two stalks of corn." At this point, Orris' younger brother Oscar could stand it no longer. Recalling the standard local practice of mixing crops together, he piped up from the recitation bench, "A pumpkin, by golly." The politician apparently had a difficult time recovering his audience.

Another important part of Orris' youth was church. He was leader of the

choir of Montrose Methodist Church at the age of 14, and has continued Christian singing to this day. By the time he was in his teens, he was also singing at various schoolhouse entertainments, both alone and with his brother. They won a two-dollar prize and a chance to sing over radio WMMN in Fairmont, an event which naturally whetted their interest. They soon acquired a reputation for singing at all sorts of local occasions, both religious and secular.

Ruth Poling was born Ruth Digman near Volga [Barbour County] and later moved with her family into the Montrose area, where they settled at the

head of Leading Creek. In fact, the creek started in a spring just behind the Digman milkhouse and flowed right through the building. Although none of her immediate family were singers, she has always enjoyed singing, and shown an aptitude for it. One evening she heard Orris at the schoolhouse playing guitar and singing "Memories." She made up her mind right there that this was the man she would marry and she did. Considering both their interests, it was no surprise when they started singing duets.

They had evidently acquired considerable local reputation by 1939, for that year they were chosen in a series of competitions to join the West Virginia contingent at the National Folk Festival, held that year at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. They performed both as singers and as part of a play-party team. Also appearing as members of the play-party group were Jack and Anna Crawford, Ralph and Winfred Simmons, and Eugene and Violet Swecker. In addition, Addison Boserman from Norton sang his composition, "The Coal and Coke Line," and the Leary family sang both sacred and secular material. This latter group included a daughter, Wilma Leary, who went on to national fame as half of the great team of Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper. The Polings remember her music fondly, and later on shared a stage with her on more than one occasion in Charleston. While in Washington the Polings also appeared on a NBC half-hour radio show devoted to the Festival. They sang "Jesse James" and "Don't Stay After Ten," accompanied by David Himes.

In 1940 the Polings moved to Charleston and entered the most active period of their musical career. Mr. Poling always made his living as a carpenter. As was the case with many musicians of his time and place, music was a source of deep satisfaction and supplementary income but never a primary job. They started singing on WCHS on the 580 Club, and then got acquainted with Frank Welling, who ran the Old Farm Hour under the stage name of "Uncle Si." They stayed with that program for several years, specializing in the older songs as well as a few written by Orris. Among these latter are "The Yoo Hoo Girl" and a comic sequel suggested by "Uncle Si" and titled "Boo to My Mother-in-Law."

Ruth and Oris Poling in 1941 at their home in Ordinance Park (now Parkway Terrace) in St. Albans, shortly after they moved to Charleston. Photographer unknown.





Wishes from: The Poling Trio

The Poling Trio in the 1940s, left to right, Ruth, Orris, and Almeta. This is the group as it appeared on the Red Robin record label. Photographer unknown.

Also dating from this period are Orris' gospel compositions, "When the Clouds Roll Back" and "An Old Fashioned Love Song." It was during this period that they became the Poling Family Trio with the addition of their daughter Almeta.

The Polings also enjoyed a very brief recording career. Around the time of their Washington trip they cut at least one song, "Beauty Lilly Ho," (perhaps better known by the Carter Family's name "Lulu Walls") for the Library of Congress' Archive of Folk Song. Then in 1942 or '43, the proprietor of the local Red Robin music store took them—possibly with some other local musicians—to Cincinnati for a session. They made at least one disc (Red Robin

Records 504) as the Poling Trio. It featured "Where Shall I Go" backed with "Will the Gates Open For Me?" The gentle yet intense trio singing is backed by Orris' chorded slide guitar playing. Unfortunately, this record did not lead to further sessions, possibly due to wartime pressures and shortages.*

Around 1947 the Polings changed radio stations. "Cap" Caplinger, a well-known personality over at WKNA, suggested that they take over a regular

*It would be interesting to learn more about the Red Robin store and label. From the evidence of the release number, at least three other records appeared, all presumably of Charleston musicians.

gospel program sponsored by Clabber Girl Baking Powder, and they did. They stayed with that half-hour program for over a year, then continued on WKNA with their own shows, and also put in regular appearances on other shows until 1954 when they left the area.

In the early fifties, the trio was joined by the other three children, Setina, Ronald, and Orris Jr. To accompany the larger group, Almeta played both piano and accordion. A home recording from this period reveals a full vocal sound with some exciting "hot licks" work on the accordion. For this session, at least, the Polings were joined on mandolin by Omar Caplinger, "Cap's" son.



All of the Poling Family singing on November 8, 1953, at the Salvation Army Citadel in Charleston; left to right, Ronald, Ruth, Almeta, Orris Jr. (singing lead), Setina, and Orris, Sr. Photographer unknown.

The group had always included religious songs in the programs, although for a while they worried lest the material not be appealing in the context of a stage show. As Orris remembers, one evening they started off a personal appearance program with a particularly spirited rendering of "Lead Me To That Rock." The enthusiastic reception they got from the mostly young audience led them to include more and more gospel music on their programs. By 1952 they were limiting themselves to religious material.

The family often found itself sharing the stage with well-known country and gospel musicians. As was customary at the time, a traveling act would book itself into a hall and fill the program up with local groups. In this fashion the Polings played with such nationally famous figures as Pee Wee King, Cowboy Copas, Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper, The Blackwood Brothers, and The Statesmen. They particularly remember Martha Carson as an enjoyable person to work with. In addition to playing large halls like the Municipal Auditorium, they have fond memories of singing at all-day picnics in the music grove up by Lover's Leap.

By the early fifties the pace of per-

forming was getting a bit heavy for the growing family. Mr. Poling recalls one three-month period when they made over 50 personal appearances. The long drives and late hours that much of this work involved caused the family to reorder its priorities and cut down on the singing engagements. This did not, however, keep them from appearing on TV when the first station started in Huntington. Finally in 1954 the Polings moved to Indiana. Radio and TV appearances continued; they remember being guests on Uncle George's program on WLBC in Muncie. In addition, they sang at churches, at county fairs, and on other occasions. The kids were growing up, though, and that slowed things down a bit.

Then in 1958 Orris decided to seek a climate where he could work outdoors all year round, and they moved again, first to Arizona, then on to California, and finally back to Tucson in 1968. By this time all four children were living in Tucson, and the singing got going again. For a while the Poling Quartette, augmented by special appearances by Mom and Dad Poling, was a familiar feature of the Arizona gospel scene. Then the children moved, Almata to Albuquerque and Ronald to Monohans, Texas, where he is assistant

pastor at a local church.

So once again Orris and Ruth are a working duet, and an active one at that. Calling themselves Mom and Dad Poling, they appear in local churches of all denominations as well as an occasional local folk music program or festival. In 1977 they made a tour of New Mexico and Texas, visiting children and singing along the way. They were overwhelmed by the realities of Texas hospitality, and hope to get back soon for more visits. They have also cut an LP, *The Old Country Church*, which is available from their home.* They would be happy to hear from old friends from West Virginia. Their address is Mr. and Mrs. Orris L. Poling, Sr., 8351 East Mary Drive, Tucson, Arizona 85730.

In many ways the Polings have come full circle. Starting as a duet, they enlarged their group as the family grew. Now that the children are away, Orris and Ruth are back to their original format. They have recently taken to performing a few of their old secular folk songs, as well.

Although they never sought or made The Big Time, they had, and provided for others, a lot of good times with their music, over radio, in personal appearances, and, later, on TV. Their recording career, limited to one song for the Library of Congress and one or two records on the Red Robin label, never really got off the ground. Yet they kept with their music, and perhaps can teach us more about that music and its importance than many of the more widely heralded groups. After all, for every famous act in country music there have been dozens of groups like the Polings—keeping music as a vital adjunct of everyday living, and filling their lives and those of others with a lot of beauty.

The last word, perhaps, should come from Orris Poling: "We do not sing rock-type songs, just the old-time songs that bring back memories and bless peoples' souls. Thank you so much." ❀

*The price of the record postpaid is \$6.00.

Forgotten Heroes of the 1912-13 Miners' Strike

Hunt for U.M.W.A. Grave Markers Produces Research and Mystery

By Lois C. McLean

IN the hilltop cemetery overlooking Holly Grove on Paint Creek lies an unusual grave marker, a small block of hand-hewn granite with a bronze tablet mounted on its polished surface. On the tablet, in relief, is the seal of the United Mine Workers of America and these words: "Dedicated to the memory of Francis F. Estep for distinguished service and self-sacrifice in the cause of labor and advancement of the United Mine Workers of America."

An identical marker, except for the name, lies in the corner of an all but abandoned cemetery located between the railroad tracks and a burned-out stone building at Eskdale on Cabin Creek. This monument is dedicated to the memory of Cleve Woodrum.

The monuments mark the graves of two striking union miners who met identical fates. Both were shot and killed by Baldwin-Felts mine guards during the 1912-13 strike on Paint and Cabin Creeks.

Francis F. Estep

According to a family Bible, Francis F. Estep was born at Hudnall (Kanawha County) on October 15, 1882. The firstborn of Reuben and Liza Jane Estep's six children, he was christened Francis Francesco but early acquired the nickname "Cesco." In 1906 Cesco married Maud Gallian, born at Tuscora, Kentucky, on October 26, 1890. Their first two sons Clarence (1907) and Cebert (1909) died in infancy and were buried in the Estep family plot at the Holly Grove cemetery. A third son Clifford Allen was born on September 16, 1911.*

On March 31, 1912, contracts between miners of District 17 of the

*Cesco had a son Everette by a previous marriage.



Grave marker of Francis F. "Cesco" Estep taken by his son, Clifford Allen Estep, August 31, 1975, at the rededication ceremony at Holly Grove.

United Mine Workers of America and operators on the Kanawha River and Paint Creek expired. After two weeks of waiting for a new contract, the miners voted to go on strike at noon on April 20 if no settlement was reached. The Kanawha operators agreed to the reduced demands of their men, a 5.26% wage increase and union recognition through the checkoff system, but the Paint Creek operators refused.

Cesco Estep, digging coal at 47½¢ a long ton (2240 lbs.), ten hours a day, six days a week, could barely support his family, but even worse was working and living under the non-union, mine guard, and spy system in effect on

Cabin Creek. Cesco, who had been working at Acme on Cabin Creek, decided to go with the union and joined the strike. He had to move out of the Acme company house but, with the help of friends and relatives, he found a small frame house at the southern end of Holly Grove on the west side of Paint Creek. A swinging bridge connected the section where Cesco lived to the main settlement of Holly Grove.

On May 7, 1912, Cesco Estep saw the first contingent of Baldwin-Felts mine guards arrive on Paint Creek. The train carrying them passed his house on the way to Mucklow (now



Above left. "Cesco" Estep. Date and photographer unknown. Courtesy of Mrs. Frances Francesco Estep Evans.

Above right. Clifford Allan Estep, son of "Cesco" Estep, after the father's death (1913 or 1914). Photographer unknown. Courtesy of C. A. Estep.

Right. Maud Gillian Estep with her daughter, Frances Francesco Estep, in the summer of 1913. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Frances F. Estep Evans.

Gallagher) just above Holly Grove. By the end of the month there were over 40 guards headquartered at Mucklow and policing the Creek.

The first of June the Paint Creek operators announced that men refusing to work on their terms would be evicted in five days and barred from company property. The guards proceeded to carry out the orders and their manners and methods did nothing to ease the tense situation. Holly Grove residents shared the strikers' anger and resentment toward the guards and offered space in their little community. Reuben and Liza Estep shared their backyard with three families living in tents provided by the U.M.W.A., and five families pitched their tents between Cesco Estep's house and the little "dinky" road. Hundreds of others lived in tents scattered throughout the area.

The strike dragged on, and in August miners on Cabin Creek joined those on Paint Creek in a campaign to drive the mine guard system out of the creeks. Twice martial law was declared on both sides. On the morning of February 7, 1913, there was another shooting incident above Holly Grove between strikers and guards. That evening the rumor spread among the tent-dwellers that the guards were going to wipe out their colony and that the attack would come from the armored train, the "Bull Moose Special," as it made its late run up the creek.

In Cesco Estep's house at 10:30 that night, Cesco, his brother Jim, his cousin Enoch Farell, and friends Jim and Bob Fauber were talking about the rumors. Maud Estep, who was seven months pregnant and tired, decided to go to bed. Little Clifford was already asleep. As Maud Estep was untying her shoe, she heard the sound of the train and guns firing. The sounds grew louder and the men ran out the front door. Within seconds Cesco hollered at his wife to get the baby and go to the cellar. As Mrs. Estep, with Clifford, headed through the house to the back door, Cesco was outside running toward the back. Just as he turned the corner, there was a great hail of bullets from the darkened train across the creek. Over a hundred of them pierced the flimsy boards of the house, 19 of them passed through Maud and Clifford Estep's clothing without leaving a

scratch, and one caught Cesco Estep in the face. He dropped dead at his wife's feet. In shock and rage, Maud Estep set her son down, grabbed her husband's gun, and emptied it at the disappearing train.

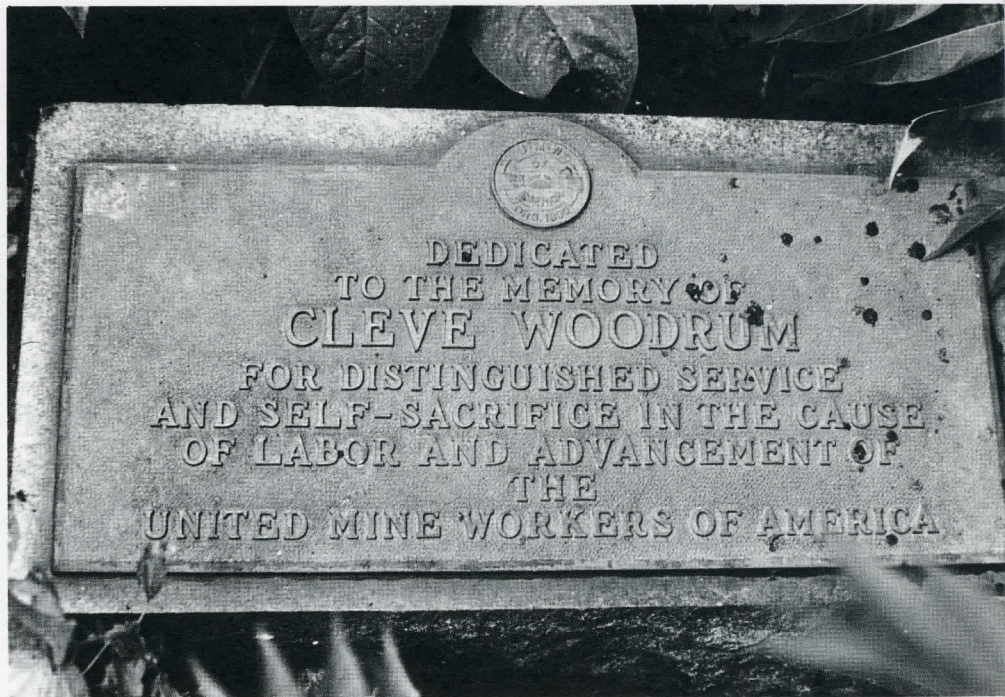
Early the next morning Maud Estep was taken to the Sheltering Arms Hospital at Hansford. Clifford was taken in by relatives and Cesco's body was taken to the Estep family plot where it was buried beside those of his two sons. Maud Estep was unable to attend her husband's funeral but friends reported that even Cesco's funeral was marred by guards firing from the hillside into the crowd at the cemetery. These shots plus those from the train triggered the strikers' February 9 attack on Mucklow. The next day retiring Governor William E. Glasscock declared martial law for the third and last time.

On April 9, 1913, Maud Estep gave birth to a daughter whom she named Frances Francesco in memory of her husband. She never returned to the house at Holly Grove. There were no Social Security or union benefits in 1913 and Maud Estep, unable to support herself and her children, later remarried. She lived in Alloy for a number of years but after being widowed again, she moved to Greenbrier County where she died in 1955. For several reasons, Cesco Estep's children, Clifford and Frances, never saw their father's grave. After the death of their mother, both visited Holly Grove cemetery but were unable to find a marker.

Cleve Woodrum

Cleve Woodrum was born on October 12, 1884, in Kanawha County and was one of nine children born to Richard and Eliza Jane Brown Woodrum. In 1903 (?) Cleve married Laura A. Dickens. Laura, born on Davis Creek on August 8, 1887, was a daughter of Louis and Nancy Estep Dickens. When the 1912 strike started, Cleve and Laura Woodrum lived up Lamont Hollow near Eskdale with their five children, Ollie, Cleve, Jr., Ivory, Artie, and Kenneth. They were expecting their sixth child in September.

With the exception of several mines near the long hollow's mouth, Cabin Creek had been non-union territory since 1904. To keep it that way, Cabin Creek operators hired mine guards and



Cleve's Woodrum's grave marker at Eskdale. Photograph by the author.

undercover men from the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency at Bluefield. One of the guards, commissioned a deputy sheriff, was Don F. Slater, and had been on the job at Acme since 1904. According to Fred Mooney on page 27 of his book, *Struggle in the Coal Fields* (1967, McClain Printing Co.), "Slater was a bruiser. He was bold, ruthless, and entertained no scruples against taking human life. He passed up no opportunity to crack the head of a striker or even a miner who dared to talk of unionism."

On August 6, 1912, Mother Jones, at the request of C. Frank Keeney, spoke at a miners' meeting in Eskdale, the oasis of independence on Cabin Creek. She urged the men to throw off the chains of slavery fettered by the mine guards. Many heeded her advice and the strike was on. As the number of strikers, guards, and guns increased on the creek, so did the attacks by both sides. On September 2, 1912, Governor W. E. Glasscock proclaimed martial law for the Paint and Cabin Creek areas. State militia moved in, collected arms, and arrested some from both factions. Although welcomed at first, in time the "tin horn" soldiers were no better liked by the strikers than the "red neck" mine guards as they patrolled the area, enforced an 8:00 p.m. curfew, and broke up any gathering of three or more persons.

On the night of September 19 Laura

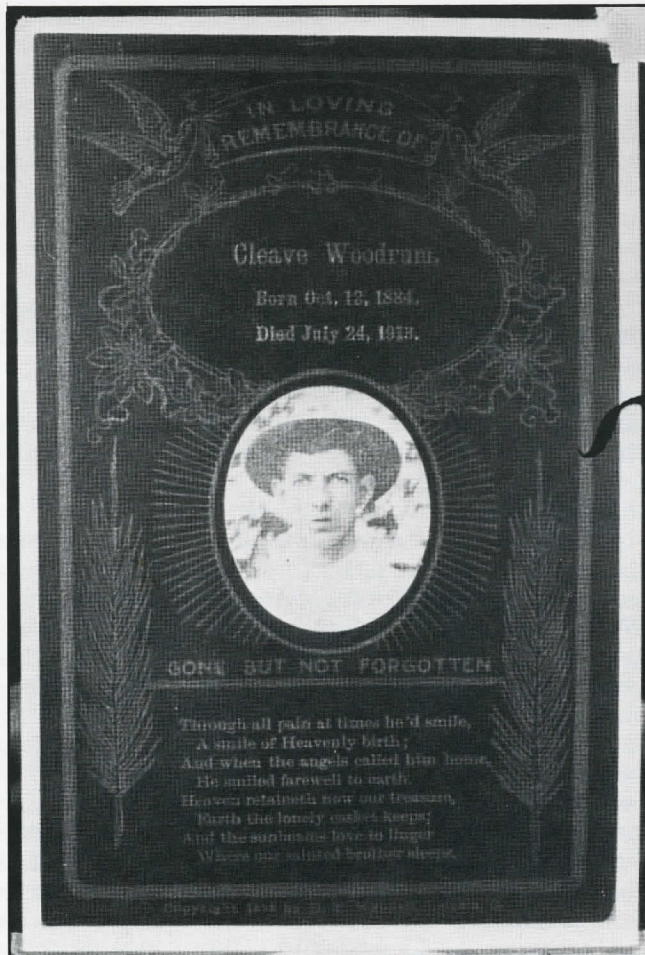
Woodrum went into labor and Cleve, on horseback, went for the doctor. Stopped by a patrol and questioned, he was finally permitted to go on. It was after eight o'clock and there lights on in the little house up Lamont Hollow as the doctor prepared to help delivery of the newest Woodrum. Suddenly there was a banging on the door and a voice shouted, "Turn out those lights!" Cleve and the doctor went to the door. They explained to the patrol leader that there was a birth in progress. The man insisted that they turn off the light or blind the windows; if they didn't, they would shoot the lights out. Cleve Woodrum angrily told them to go ahead and shoot but "by God, he (will) get some of them." As he slammed the door someone shot out the light. Grace Woodrum entered a semidark world that night.

After three declarations of martial law, a general election, a new governor, and two investigations, one by the State of West Virginia and the other by a U. S. Senate sub-committee, the Paint Creek operators signed a contract with the U.M.W.A. on July 1, 1913. The strike continued on Cabin Creek.

On the evening of July 23, 1913, several men came to Cleve Woodrum's house in Lamont Hollow. Cleve said they were going "huckleberry picking," but his daughter Ivory recalled that they all seemed rather serious. Her



Above. Left to right, Cleve Woodrum, Jr., Cleve Woodrum, Sr. holding Kenneth Woodrum, Laura Dickens Woodrum, Erwin Woodrum holding Ivory Woodrum, and Ollie Woodrum circa 1910. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Ivory Woodrum Bayless and Grace Woodrum Huffman.



Right. A memorial card thought to be printed by the U.M.W.A. and given to the family, friends, and union brothers of Cleve Woodrum. Card courtesy of Grace Woodrum Huffman, Mount Vernon, Oregon.

grandparents Rich and Eliza Woodrum were there as well as Cleve's younger brother Erwin. There may have been more. The entire group gathered around Laura Woodrum's organ and while she played they sang first, "Nearer My God to Thee," then, "There's Not A Friend Like the Lowly Jesus." After a short prayer, the men began to leave. Cleve Woodrum told his daughters Ollie and Ivory to look after the baby Gracie and asked his brother Erwin to take care of Laura.

Early the next morning there were reports of a shoot-out above Red Warrior. Several hours later Cleve Woodrum returned to the house up Lamont Hollow dead, a victim of Don Slater's gun. Following the funeral service, Cleve Woodrum's body was escorted to the small cemetery at Eskdale where it was laid to rest in free soil.

Charleston newspapers on July 24 and 25 reported the shootings as "guerilla warfare at Wake Forest" and an "early morning riot on Cabin Creek." "Victims of striking Miners" were identified as Don Slater, Frank Ginn, and Lee Woodrum." Details were taken from Don Slater's antemortem statement given to assistant Prosecuting Attorney Frank C. Burdette. According to Slater, he and Frank Ginn, a mine watchman from Wake Forest, met Woodrum and another man on the mountain near the Wake Forest mine. All four had drawn guns. When Slater asked "the boys" what they were doing, one, identified as Lee Woodrum of Lamont Hollow, replied, "We are picking huckleberries." Hearing a gun click, Slater started for cover behind a tree. Woodrum fired twice. One bullet passed through Slater's body from left to right and the other struck him in the leg. "Slater, however, had his nerve and made a quick shot at Woodrum, who fell dead." Ginn ran and was shot by Woodrum's companion, a man believed named Lykens.

Slater, who was found on the mountain by a search party after he had fired a signal, was taken by train to a Charleston hospital. A passenger on the train, who later reported the incident to a member of Woodrum's family, overheard Slater talking with the doctor who accompanied him. The doctor asked Slater where he had gotten all the scratches. Slater replied they came



Cleve Woodrum's grave at Eskdale in August 1978. Photograph by the author.

from a fight with Woodrum, that when Woodrum looked up over the sheltered cliff where Slater had fallen, Slater was waiting for him. He shot Woodrum, then fell over the cliff beside him. The two then fought like cats and dogs. All of a sudden Woodrum quit his scratching around and so did Slater. Woodrum started praying and Slater claimed he never heard a man in his life pray like that man did. The doctor then told Slater he doubted that Slater would make it to the Kanawha Valley hospital and that he had better be praying. Slater died in the operating room about four hours later.

A week after Woodrum's death, newspapers announced that a settlement had been reached on Cabin Creek. The settlement later proved unsatisfactory in many respects but one, and that was the removal of the Baldwin-Felts guards from Paint and Cabin Creeks. Perhaps only those who suffered and finally rebelled against the mine guard system could appreciate the effort it had taken to be rid of the system. For Cesco Estep and Cleve Woodrum, who did not live to enjoy the new freedom, those who survived showed their appreciation by placing the small monuments over their graves.

Laura Woodrum later married Erwin Woodrum, and on Decoration Day each year until his death in 1947 the two visited Cleve Woodrum's

grave. Until poor health prevented her, Laura Woodrum continued her visits. She died in Beckley in 1959.

Like Estep's children, Woodrum's moved off the creek and seldom returned. In May 1978 Ivory Woodrum Bayless was told her father's grave had been moved and coal trucks had made a path through the cemetery. Although in poor health, Ivory Bayless with her husband Hubert came to Eskdale where they found Cleve Woodrum's grave covered with rubble from the burned-out building. After removing the rubble, Ivory Bayless saw the unusual marker for the first time. She had left the area in the early 1920s and did not recall its being there then. Her sister Grace Woodrum Huffman left the State because of her husband's black lung and mine injuries. She has never seen the marker either.

Woodrum's other children, except for Kenneth whose whereabouts are unknown to the author, are dead. Since meeting with the author at Eskdale in May 1978, Ivory Bayless has suffered a stroke which left her partially paralyzed and speechless.

The author first saw Cleve Woodrum's marker in December 1971 while on a research trip to Cabin Creek. The tour guide, Mr. Arnold Miller from Ohley, pointed out its location. In the spring of 1975 a student from West Virginia Institute of Technology, who

had stumbled over Cesco Estep's marker, directed the author to its location. After interviewing members of the Estep family, the reason Estep's children could not find his marker became apparent. It had been put in the wrong place. With permission from the families, the marker was relocated over Cesco's grave. A memorial service and re-dedication of the monument, sponsored by the West Virginia Labor History Association, was held on the Sunday before Labor Day in 1975. For Clifford A. Estep, who had felt rather bitterly the loss of his father and the lack of appreciation for his sacrifice, that day was the happiest day in his life. Clifford died in November 1977, and his sister Frances F. Evans died in May 1978.

Although the presence of Estep's marker was hidden for years in the underbrush, Woodrum's was known to residents of Eskdale for over 50 years. Today, however, apparently no one knows who was responsible for purchasing and placing the monuments or when they were dedicated. Perhaps even more unfortunate is the fact that these men and monuments are unknown to today's members of the United Mine Workers of America, an organization whose members, at one time, appreciated their sacrifices enough to dedicate monuments to their memory. ✱

Love Story of a Coal Miner's Widow

By Mary Coulter



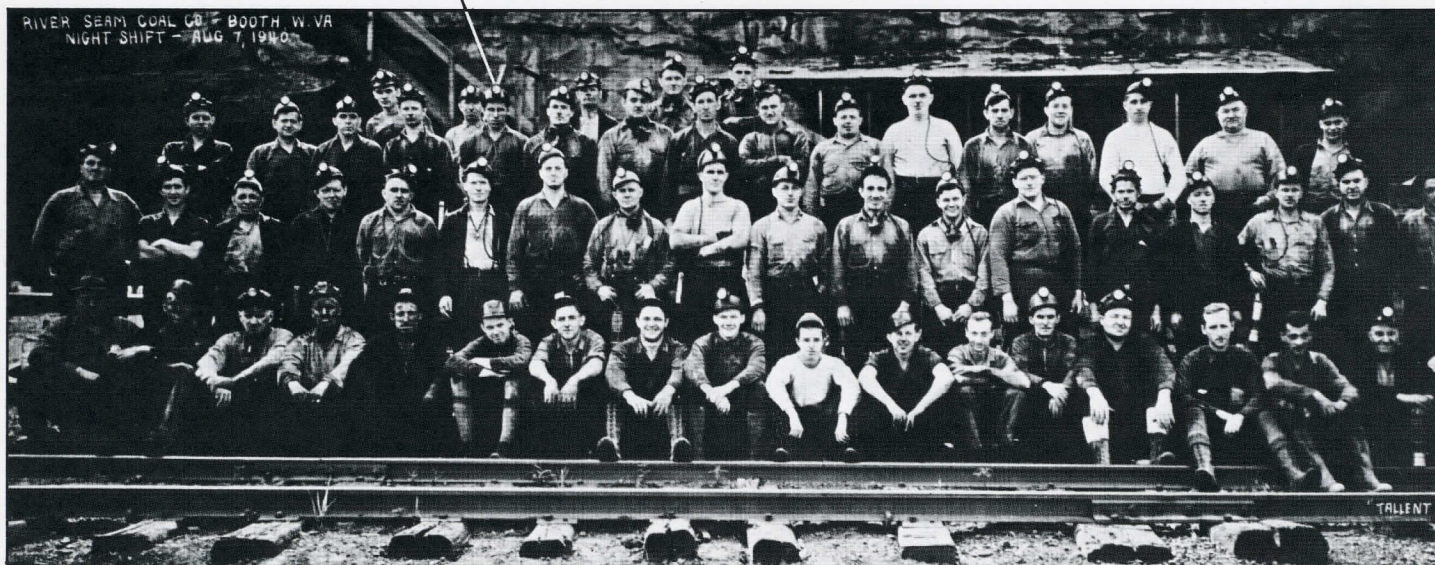
Bernard Coulter.

YES, he was my kind of man. He was six feet one inch tall, grey eyes, and very handsome. He had energy like you wouldn't believe. He was always on the job giving his best. Our future looked so bright. When our daughter was born he named her Barbara Ann before I had a chance to think about a name. Nineteen months later we were blessed with a son. This time I named our son Bernard after his daddy. We had hard times when strikes occurred, but we always kept our chins up because we saved a few dollars for such emergencies.

Then the happy times came when the strike was settled. In 1943 we saved \$125.00. We decided to buy some land to build our home on. We bought one acre of ground which we had to clear, as it was a crab apple thicket. Then each payday after our utility and grocery bills were paid, we would go to

the sawmill and buy green and unseasoned wood and proceed to put our house up on posts. There was no blueprint, only a spot marked 28 by 30 feet. Somehow we ended up with three doorways in the living room. We didn't have much furniture, so it didn't matter. We worked hard for five years.

On Saturday morning, October 2, 1948, my husband Bernard started to go to work at the coal mine about six o'clock. He ate breakfast and went out to get in the jeep which he used for transportation. I watched out the window as he got out of the jeep and came back to the house. I froze for a moment, because my parents had this belief that if you left the house and had to return for something you had forgotten, you would be handed this item at the door, or if you came back in, you were supposed to sit on a chair for a moment before starting out again.



Bernard Coulter's River Seam Coal Company night shift at Booth on August 7, 1940. "Tallent Photo."

The belief was that this would prevent bad luck. Bernard came into the house, but did not sit down as I had hoped he would. He only said, "I forgot my lunch pail and I must eat if I'm going to work." Out the door he went. Again I looked out the window. I stood there shocked as he again came towards the house. As he returned, I said, "Maybe you should stay home; you can't seem to get started."

He said, "I forgot my lamp check." This was a round brass piece with number 475 on it. This check number would be placed on the bulletin board as a miner entered the mine and then be picked up again as he came out. As he started out again he said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen."

Again I went to the window. I noticed the jeep wasn't moving. The jeep door was opening again. I said to myself, "Oh, no! Not again!" As he returned for the third time it seemed that the blood had left his face and he was as pale as he could be. As he looked at me he said, "I didn't want to come back to the house, but I just had to. Would you believe I am having a terrible time trying to get started this morning. I had to come back because I have forgotten the wide belt with the insert to hold the battery that lights the bulb on my miner's hat. No way could I work without a light." And so Bernard left for the third time. As I watched the jeep leave the driveway, it was for the last time.

I got myself together as I got busy with my housework. Then about eleven o'clock I heard voices. "I think this is the house." I thought I would die when one of the men said softly that there was an accident at the mine and he would take me to my husband. He was in the hospital. As I entered the hospital he was in shock and I was too stunned to say anything. He lived three days and then he was gone.

I was a coal miner's daughter and then I found myself a coal miner's widow. My daughter was 13, my son was 11. My children are happily married now and I have seven grandchildren. I am retired now. I was inspired to write the words to the song, "Love Song of a Coal Miner's Widow." This song tells the story of a true happening in my life. I am working on a song which will follow this one. I hope to continue to write poems and songs the rest of my life. ❀

LOVE SONG OF A COALMINERS WIDOW

Words By—
MARY O. COULTER

Music By—
ALICE S. TICHNELL
BRADLEY D. DUGAN

MY DAR-LING I LOVE YOU, I KNOW YOU ARE MINE. JUST

LIKE A GIFT FROM HEA-VEN SO FAITH-FUL AND KIND I

LOVE YOU IN ALL THAT YOU DO AND— SAY. YOUR

LOVE IT GROWS SWEET-ER DAY AF-TER DAY.

2.

I love you because you first loved me,
We carved our initials on the old oak tree.
As we stood and we looked into each other's eyes,
True love would be there until the day we die.

3.

Then we were married, how happy the day,
Little did I know, dear, that you'd be called away
Someone in heaven wanted you too.
I made a vow that day, dear, I'd always be true.

4. (spoken)

I'll not forget that morning, you set out to work,
It seemed you couldn't get started,
three times you returned,

Each time you assured me, no harm would come our way,
I said with my heart beating fast,
return and don't delay.

5. (spoken)

Then about ten o'clock, I got the sad, sad news.
Your boss was standing at the doorway, with your dinner pail and shoes.
There was an accident at the mines he said, in a voice so quiet and low,
We'll take you to your husband, cause he needs you so.

6.

Your presence is missed, yet my heart has some joy.
We were blessed with two children, a girl and a boy.
They too miss their daddy, but hold their heads high.
They hope to see your smiling face in the sweet bye and bye.

A Visit with Mary Coulter

By Peggy Jarvis and Dick Kimmel

THAT came natural," Mary Coulter speaks crisply about her writing. "That's a true story. It was easy to write because that's the way it happened." Mary Coulter's exuberance matches her devotion. The waitress, seamstress, mother, songwriter, and widow of 30 years thrives on the present without forgetting the incident which changed her life.

Mary Coulter had been married to Bernard for 14 years on October 2, 1948, when he left for the Weirton mine. "Jake mostly dusted rock, but that fall he was working at the drill because it paid more." Mrs. Coulter recalls opening her door to two unfamiliar men a few hours after her husband had left. "There's been an accident," they reported, "and Jake's got his legs broke." When Mary Coulter arrived at the hospital, her husband was in critical condition. He had been pinned under a 20-ton drill. Despite surgery, he died on October 6.

That winter Mary Coulter and her two children, Barbara Ann, age 13, and Bernard, age 11, stayed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Johnson. "She kept me busy with two churches and sewing aprons." Mrs. Coulter returned in the spring to the acre of land she and her husband had bought for \$125 in 1942, and she has kept busy ever since.

The land is now in an unincorporated area called South Hills, which is south of Morgantown near the Goshen Road exit off Interstate 79. They eventually built the house which she lives in now, but without blueprints, foundation, water, or electricity. When her



Mary Coulter in 1978 next to her garden.
Photograph by Dick Kimmel.

husband was working at the Osage mine in 1943 and there was a cave-in he first worried about his family because he had not completed their chimney. He later related these thoughts to his wife who noticed he appeared quite nervous when he arrived home that day. Mary Coulter went on living as a coal miner's wife.

Mrs. Coulter, however, had never wanted to marry a coal miner. She remembered too much of life with another coal miner, her father, Stephan Obuch. He had immigrated from Austria at an early age and settled in Pittsburgh. At an Ukranian songfest there when he was in his late teens he met Margaret Planka, also an Austrian immigrant, and they were married in 1910. They lived in Dogtown, a company town near Flemington, when Margaret Planka Obuch, bore Mary on December 16, 1913. Stephan Obuch was a horsebreaker who trained a new horse to go down into the mines and to pull out the buggies of coal. He worked in southern Pennsylvania mines at McKees Rocks, Crucible, and Marianna before returning to Booth in Monongalia County where his daughter would meet her husband.

Mary Coulter remembers the distinctive life of a miner's family. "I was thrilled by daddy's dinner pail with the water in the bottom and the sandwich inside. I never liked the smell of the carbide lamp he used, though." When Mrs. Coulter was five and living in Crucible, her family one day found themselves on the railroad track with all their belongings. It was then that she first understood a strike was seri-



The Morgantown house, with a later addition, built by Bernard Coulter. Photograph by Dick Kimmel.

ous. Her family moved to Booth when she was seven and her mother packed only the sewing machine, feather ticks, pillows, and clothes, because miners generally left their furniture behind with a house for the next miner and his family. Her mother, too, handed down the caution to Mary Coulter that if someone forgot something and they returned to the house, they should sit down a minute before going out again. It was just a superstition which Bernard Coulter did not share.

Mary Coulter began school that year and received her eighth grade diploma when she was 16, earning the second highest average in the county, 95 6/10%. School officials offered to pay for her books and arrange for her to be a mother's helper so that she could go on to high school in Morgantown, "but mother couldn't see it, so I went to work in town doing housework and I started at the shirt factory in 1931."

When Mary Obuch met Bernard Coulter at a Moose Hall dance in 1932, he was not a coal miner. His father, Ernest Coulter, had worked the mines around Clay County where Bernard was born on October 19, 1914. Both the Coulters and the Obuchs had five sons and five daughters. Bernard Coulter had a twin brother, Bryan, who lives in Fairmont. Working as a coal miner, logger, and stonemason, Ernest Coulter moved his family from Clay to Wyatt [Harrison Co.] and then Brady [Monongalia Co.]. Bernard Coulter had finished school through the seventh grade and was working on the right-of-way for the power company when he met Mary Obuch. They

married on December 15, 1934, in Morgantown and lived in Booth until 1942. They lived in an apartment in Morgantown until they moved into the house which Mrs. Coulter still owns.

After they had decided to marry, Bernard Coulter said he wanted to work for the mines. His fiancée agreed, if he would only work the tippie. "But before you knew it, it was cold winter, and he went on the inside." Mary Coulter remembers that she worried about her husband every day, but he had to work someplace, and it became part of life. "I could do on less money, I'd tell him, but it was hard to get a job without education."

Mrs. Coulter determined that her two children would complete their high school education. Bernard Coulter works for F.M.C., but his mother remarked emphatically, "I wouldn't ever let him go in the mines." Her daughter, Barbara Ann Hilling, works for the Board of Education in Morgantown.

Mary Coulter speaks warmly of her children and seven grandchildren, carrying that open attitude toward others. She worked at Richard's Restaurant for 12 years after her husband died and enjoyed it because, she claims ebulliently, "I love people." She worked for the Morgan Shirt Company from 1962 to 1971 gauging collars, but "... all they wanted was speed, speed, speed. I'll get an ulcer out of this," she reasoned, and returned to waitressing at Corker's Restaurant where her vivaciousness and concern ensured her success.

Mary Coulter started writing the

words for "Love Song of a Coal Miner's Widow" on January 30, 1974. She never had much exposure to music in her home, but she used to sing at church and liked going down there to "pick" at the piano. After she stopped working at the shirt factory, Mrs. Coulter wrote another song, "My Heart's in West Virginia." Her niece, Margaret Obuch, performed "Where the Rhododendron Grows" at Sing Out West Virginia, a June 1978 program at the Cultural Center in Charleston. Mrs. Coulter admires the work of Loretta Lynn who sings of being a coal miner's daughter.

The lyricist has also written a sequel to her first song. "A Dream Away" testifies to Mary Coulter's years of living filled with faith and hope. In her bright, disarming way, Mrs. Coulter says, "I'm a Christian." In "A Dream Away" she expresses her belief.

I'll meet you in heaven someday
I'll hold the thought forever
Then all my dreams will vanish away
And we will be together,
In heaven together.

Her succinct speech and enthusiastic manner assert Mary Coulter's interest in people. When she says, "I intend to keep on writing," her conviction is clear. As she sits in the cheerful blue and orange chair she upholstered herself, her agile limbs relaxed, and her contagious smile evident, everything about her is convincing, except perhaps her age. "I keep a smile on my face," she affirms, "because it won't be long until I meet him." ❀

A New Home and Making Friends

By Michael Kline

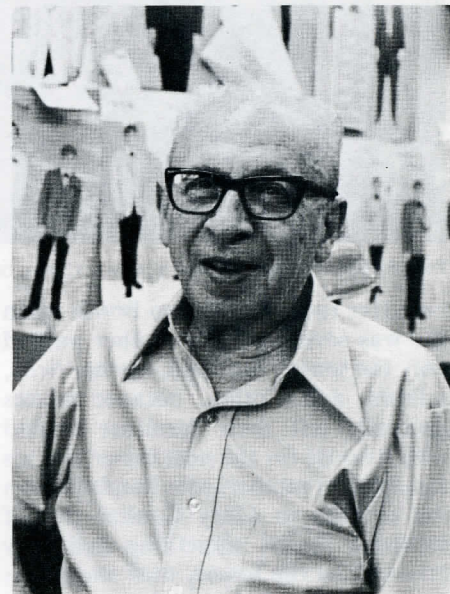
Photographs by Richard Lee

In the last issue of GOLDENSEAL Hyman Weiner told of his early life in Poland under Czarist rule in the first two decades of the century, and of the social and economic chaos that swept through his homeland during the First World War. He also told of the persecution which finally drove him to seek his fortune in the Americas. He came in Charleston in 1923 with 50 cents in his pocket, unable to speak a word of English, to join his father and try to bring the family from Europe.

In this second and final part of the story Weiner tells of his struggle to adjust to American ways and of his years in Charleston. In many senses his experience represents the American success story: he arrived here with a skill and a willingness to work and has made a good living; his children received excellent educations, and have enjoyed successful professions. Two grandchildren will enter college this fall.

Following Hyman Weiner's narrative, his wife Mariam speaks of growing up in a Polish village in the days when "no one could think of a future at home." Mrs. Weiner arrived in this country in January 1931 to make a marriage with a man she did not know.

The interview excerpted below was conducted on June 7 at Weiner's establishment, Broad Street Tailors in Charleston at 216 Broad Street.



Conclusion of an Interview with Hyman Weiner

Michael Kline. Our last story brought you to Charleston. I think you said your father wrote to you and asked you to come, is that right?

Hyman Weiner. Yes, yes.

MK Why did he want you to come here?

HW Because to bring the family all together. My mother and children were still in Europe. So he figured let's build a new home here. Let's all get here and we'll make a start all over again.

And I was anxious to see him, I hadn't seen my father for many years. And everybody like to see America before to die, 'cause you always felt the country give you more than any other place in the world. With all its shortcomings—you still got the best place to live. You might find faults, but this is minor comparing what it offer you. If your job is small you can make a living of that—you couldn't do it in Europe.

In Europe I go to Warsaw. I couldn't have enough money to rent a room to

sleep. I slept on a table. Neither had enough money to change my shirts. I used to sleep in my dress shirt, it's all I had. I wasn't qualified tailor—it's a very hard labor to begin with for a boy. But I was 13 years old. I was told to make up your mind what to do. So my father says to me, "You can be a barber." I don't want [to be] barber." He said, "Then you can be photographer." My mother rejected both of them because photographers did work on Saturday and it's against our belief, you know. And Friday the barbers worked late, after the candlelights. But tailors got off Friday early.

To be a tailor it's a hardship, because the first three or four years you're a slave to more qualified tailors. You are shining shoes, you errand for them, you clean the floor—whatever they tell you, you do. Sometimes I used to baby-sit for the owner's child. After three or four years you were a tailor.

MK So your father asked you to

come to Charleston to build a home here with—and your brothers, too?

HW Well, I had one brother here. Abe was here already, and [my father] was anticipating for all be together again, bring Mother and the rest of the children from [Poland], make it here our home. My father was very lonesome here. He didn't know English, he was by himself. This was the best move he ever made, to bring the family and make us a wonderful home. Everyone was happy.

Mr. Weiner's father Harry came to Charleston in 1921 and stayed for a time with his aunt Mrs. Rosen, who had a clothing store in the old section of Kanawha Street. Seven years passed before Harry Weiner was able to acquire his citizenship papers and save enough to bring his wife and the younger children from Poland.

Mrs. Cecia Weiner, who arrived here in 1928, is remembered by her daugh-

ter-in-law Miriam as “a strong woman who kept her own home and plucked her own chickens.” Mrs. Weiner was a deeply religious woman, and in those days a housewife in an Orthodox Jewish home had to spend a great deal of time preparing food for the family because Charleston had no Kosher food stores. After buying a live chicken at the market she took it to the shochet, a butcher authorized by the rabbi to slaughter and dress animals using methods and prayers prescribed by religious tradition. Mrs. Weiner also took care of all the family’s baking needs and prepared traditional fish and meat dishes. She is remembered as a kind and friendly person who found all of her fulfillment and enjoyment in the home with her family and friends. She lived as a widow for 27 years.

Harry Weiner is remembered as clean-cut and very neat, a warm and friendly man, but chronically sick in his later years from asthma contracted from working too long in tailor shops around old-time steam clothes presses. He was extremely sociable, having many friends. He loved to go downtown to a show or to gatherings at the synagogue, though he was not a deeply religious man. He died in April 1935.

Both Celia and Harry Weiner were Yiddish-speaking, and though they came in their later lives to understand English, neither one spoke it comfortably.

HW I worked [in the mid-1920s] at

Schwabe May. I didn’t make much, but I could live comfortable [compared to] the way I used to live. They used to pay \$22 to make a coat. I could make a coat in a half a week. At that time the dollar used to go far. You went and got a loaf of bread for a dime, as low as five cents, and bought butter for a quarter. No matter how little you made, you didn’t have to go hungry or without a place to sleep.

In time I decided to go for myself, opened up a tailor shop. Tailoring was pretty good, and the location was good. [Later] people begin to ask for shirts and socks, underwear, and I took it in. I became a merchant, not planning to, because people asked for things. They came to press a suit, they said, “Do you have a pair of socks? I buy a pair of socks.” “Do you have a shirt? I get me a shirt.” So I took it in, and begin to do better selling than tailoring.

The shop, called “Capitol Clothing,” was located at 119 Summers Street. Mr. Weiner ran his clothing and tailoring business at that location from 1928 to 1959. After the landlord Dr. Stump died, Mr. Weiner was unable to keep the lease.

MK Did you like Charleston when you came here?

HW Charleston was a nice town and I liked it. I lived before with a larger city, but I liked it very much because it was big enough for me. And I liked the

idea that I am finally made my life’s dream, to come to America. I made a fairly good living. Later on it improved a lot, but at the time it was in my favor.

I went to night school, too. They teach you the Constitution and everything pertaining to that, and you learn to apply for [citizenship] papers. You are asked five, six questions pertaining to Constitution. If you answer three, four—no trouble. And that I did. My father also applied and after he got his papers he sent for my mother and the children.

MK What did you do for a good time in Charleston then?

HW A good time? I’ll tell you—at that time they had wonderful shows, better than vaudeville shows. For 49 cents you got three acts and a movie. You like it, well, you stayed and see it again. The movie house on Capitol Street was called Hippodrome. Cost ten cents to get in there.

MK And you saw some good movies?

HW Good times, yes, mostly comedies.

MK Where was the vaudeville?

HW The Kearsse Theatre and the vaudeville. Had another vaudeville, called the Hippodrome. It was the corner of Summers and State—it’s Lee now. That was owned by Kearsse, also. At that time the blacks used to go upstairs to separate seats. It wasn’t bad shows for the little money you paid. They had other movie houses, like the Capitol. It was a good house, good movies. Virginian Theatre was good movies at that time. And they had at that time an orchestra in the back, you know, occasionally.

And Charleston begin to grow. I seen in my time, the Diamond wasn’t there. The Diamond was where O. J. Morrison is, and where the Greyhound was an empty lot, and the building next to it was just finished. People’s Building was just finished. Then utility company built next to it. And then came along Stone & Thomas.

MK How did people get around—was there a transit system?

HW Streetcar. And it was seven cents for a ticket, or four for a quarter. Yes. And the city began—day by day you could see improvement.

Then I also watched the building of the boulevard. When I came to Charleston there was no boulevard, it was Kanawha Street. It was cheap little

Above left and below. Hyman Weiner in 1978 at his shop in Charleston. Photograph to left by Michael Kline.





Left. Kanawha Street in the 1920s. In the 1930s drastic changes took place when the present Boulevard was built. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charleston Newspapers Library. [Detail on cover.]

Right. Mr. Weiner was about 26 (ca. 1925) when he was photographed in Charleston. He sent a copy to Miriam Szpilman in Poland while corresponding with her. Photographer unknown.

stalls, a bunch of little stalls. Of course my uncle was there, Davidson and Preiser, and Pushkin was there, and many other places was there. There was building on both sides of Kanawha Street. It was packed. And later on, when Roosevelt was elected, I think, they removed all the shacks and they built Kanawha Boulevard, [completed in 1940] which is very beautiful. It helped the city a lot, because [the old street] was a very bad place for the cheap stalls and cheap hotels. It wasn't a very safe place to go of a night over there. But it was quite busy during the daytime, many stalls there. Yes.

MK What did the other Jews who came from Eastern Europe—what did they do when they got here? Did they work in the coal mines?

HW No, no. I don't believe—there was only one that I recollect, only one Jewish coal miner in Charleston. I was told Mr. Sweet was the only one. The Jews mostly practiced small business, yes. It was private, small business. My uncle has a store, small, mostly all Jewish stores on Kanawha Street. Yes. Clothing stores, grocery stores, Ladies ready-to-wear, many shops, and cheap restaurants, not by Jews, but restaurants. Charleston had one Jewish restaurant for a while called the Loop. It was on Quarrier Street, only Jewish restaurant. And then opened up Blossom Dairy. It was a nice place, very good food, yes.

MK Could you get kosher-style meals?

HW Not kosher—kosher-style, yes. The Loop was not kosher. [But] you could get borscht and potatoes, good borscht, and sour cream, yes, and smoked fish. It was pretty busy there for a while. I don't know what happened to the Loop. The guy didn't make it.

[When] father came here, my mother, we lived, in Clendenin Street. Only Jews lived there. Later on they begin to move uptown. I lived in a nice little home in Broad Street and then we decided to move to a new building, just completed by Mrs. Kanner. She was famous for her bagels. The whole town used to go to her every Sunday. Used to see hundreds of people buying bagels. She must have sold many hundreds of thousands. She worked hard. They were good bagels, she was famous for her bagels.

MK Where was she located?

HW In Jackson Street. I lived in the building she built, near her. Later on, after I lived there for a while in her apartment, in 1535 Jackson Street, then a house [close by] was for sale. Made a wonderful buy. Had space for three children, and the little apartment in the back. I'm there since I bought it in '39.

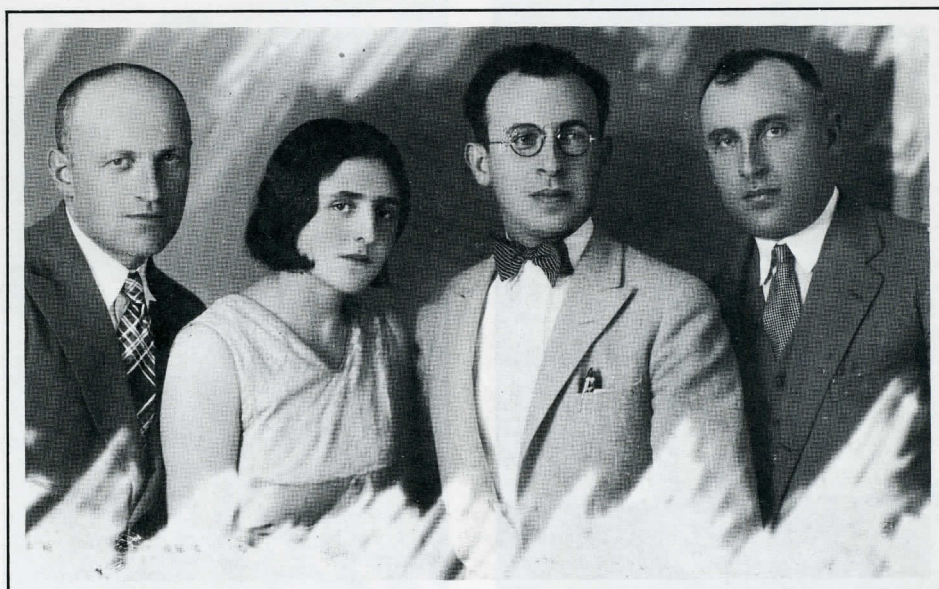
MK Then Schiff's Deli was right up the Street?

HW At that time, it was not a deli, it was a little store, had very little to sell. It was very, very poor people, they didn't stock anything. Now and then you [would go] for small items but they didn't do only very little trade. Might be doing better now, but years ago he didn't do at all.

Then I watched [them] build the State Capitol. I see one fire take place. You know, where the Daniel Boone is used to be an old wooden structure, State Capitol. I watched it burn.* Governor Conley built the structure we have now. It was the pride of the city and admired through the State—a beautiful place. I watched that built. They added buildings three or four times since they built the original State Capitol. Yes, it was a beautiful thing . . . the dome. A lot of damage turned the color. But original it was gold, just like—real gold leaf.

MK When you were a young man—

*After the Capitol building on Capitol Street burned on January 3, 1921, temporary quarters for the State government were established in a beaverboard office building located on Washington Street between Capitol and Summers Streets where the Daniel Boone Hotel is now. The "pasteboard capitol," as it came to be known, burned on March 2, 1927, and was the blaze to which Mr. Weiner refers.



Above. The Weiner wedding party in Danzig in 1930; left to right, Alta Szpilman, Miriam's brother-in-law and also Mr. Weiner's cousin; Miriam Szpilman Weiner; Hyman Weiner; Soloman Weingrowski, Mr. Weiner's oldest brother. Photographer unknown.

you were 23 when you came here—you were not married. Did you have a lot of girl friends in town?

HW No, no, I couldn't have no girl friends. I couldn't speak English good enough, because it takes you a long time. At that time people had resentments to immigrants.

MK Other Jews, you mean?

HW Yes, Jews, themselves, used to look upon you as a low—not worthwhile, “greenhorn,” you know, green. Then the Jewish girls wouldn't give you a break to go out. I tried several times and they hung up on me. Yes, that's the truth.

MK And there were no East European families with daughters?

HW No, no. That's the reason. I took out a girl for a little while here. She gave me a terrible deal. I called her up one time to go to the Kearses. She says, “No, I'm going to my sewing circle.” So I was kidding her. “You want sewing, I'll teach you sewing. I know more than you're gonna learn.” And the same evening a salesman came into my store, you know, a Jewish boy. He says to me, “I'd like to take out a girl. You know any girls in Charleston?” I says, “I'll give you a girl.” (laughs) So I gave him the telephone number for my girl friend. She went with him. So I realized, after two years dragging along with her, that this is not gonna make it. Due to my English, or due to

my finances—I couldn't afford her. At the time I couldn't afford a car. Best I could do was take her to show, take her to soda fountain, you know, and enjoy walking.

And so I decided to take my old girl friend's advice, go home to Europe and [marry her younger sister]. Of course, I wrote her a letter before I'm coming. I wasn't sure that I remembered. She was a little girl when I left Europe, she was seven, eight years old—my wife. I used to come to her father, you know. Her father used to have dancing studio. They had dancing. They had pictures, they also had stage shows. Her father was very talented, used to create a lot of shows, Jewish plays, you know?

I decided [in 1930] I'll make a trip, although I had to borrow the money. It was at the first sight—if she was willing to I would make a deal. I [wrote] her of my intentions. She was willing to come to America, too, though she hated to leave her mother alone. But the idea to come to America was quite an inducement, for any Jewish girl. And we got married in Danzig.* There were a little

complications to get married there. They were afraid you left in America your wife and children. It took a little while to convince them that I am not that kind.

MK Your brother and your cousin brought her out of Poland?

HW Poland, yes to Danzig. The reason I couldn't go to Poland was because I deserted the Polish army. If they catch me I'll never see the lights again.

MK So you were afraid to go back to Poland?

HW I crossed a few miles to a little small town and I got a Polish marriage license, written in Polish, because she was a Polish girl. I got back to Danzig and the chief rabbi of Danzig married us. Yes. Then she went [back to Poland] because I couldn't afford at that time to take her with me. She went back home, and I contacted her immediately with money and papers and passport. And then [after half a year] she is come. Yes. Then I went to Ellis Island, they give her to me. They called my name, she told them who she is. And then we went home.

*Following the First World War Danzig was established as a free city with its own assembly headed by a commissioner who represented the founding League of Nations. With a population of nearly half a

million it encompassed 754 square miles, and had its communication and railroad systems from the Polish Government. It was taken by the Germans when they invaded Poland in 1939.



The Weiner's three children in the mid-1940s; left to right, Marsha, 10, and Harriet, 7, in clothes their father made, and Alan, 3. Photographers unknown.

MK That must have been a happy day?

HW Happy day, yes, wonderful day. Lucky for me she was a very wonderful girl. All these years we been married, about 47 years. Been a very wonderful wife. She's good-hearted, she's charitable. She enjoys to go to the synagogue and donate for different purposes, she does. Yes, she is very good.

MK So you went on then and had three children?

HW Three children. The first one I had was Marcia, she was born on Decoration Day, three years later. Several years later I had another daughter, Harriett. And after several more years there was the jackpot! The boy came in. (laughs) It was to me, a great event, having a boy. Alan was a good looking child, born fantastic.

My children gave me very little trouble. They were always good in school, they always came home with A's. In particular, Marcia went for a year to study at Conservatory of Music, she was very good on the piano. When she graduated from high school we decided to take her to the Conservatory of Music. She decided later that she'd like to go to Ohio State. So she went there and she graduated Ohio State.

Harriett, after graduation from high school, she went to Morgantown.

During being in Morgantown she married. This boy, Samuels, made her a wonderful husband. Marcia also married a wonderful guy, very happy. I was lucky in that respect, very lucky.

My boy was always good looking boy and very—he was always well behaved never give us no problems, no time. I used to play a lot with Alan. We used to go home at seven o'clock or eight. He could hear me coming up. "Daddy, come up! Let's mess!" So we used to wrestle, you know. He was very wonderful in school. In Morgantown Alan did well and received a fellowship. Then he went to the Navy during the Vietnam War. I told him, "You go, too, like everybody else." At that time there were people talking about how to dodge. I told him I didn't want no dodging business. So he spent in the Navy about three years until they gave him an honorable discharge. After that he graduated from Morgantown with a master's degree. He received a Ph. D. at the University of Southern California. And while being there, he met a wonderful girl, school teacher, and they got married there.

And now he is doing well. Has an office of his own. And he teaches speech communication, he can teach people how to address, how to speak. It's not therapy, just how to hold a meeting. He could teach bankers how to conduct a meeting. It's sometimes

necessary for a man of means to be able to express himself properly. In fact, he lectures, I think, twice a month to the police department of Los Angeles how to handle the public without violence. Now he has other people come to him, the business has three partners.

MK I think he must get this from you. I've always thought you were a very communicative person.

HW Well, I'll tell you, being in business I meet a lot of people. My customers mostly aren't only customers, they're friends. We can sit down and talk on different things. Black or white, very wonderful people. Yes.

MK How did you and your family fare during the Depression?

HW The Depression, actually, it was very bad, because the clothing got so cheap I sold socks for a nickel a pair. I sold shirts for 25 cents a new shirt! I used to buy shirts for \$2 a dozen, sell them for a quarter apiece. Sell off the rack. A good shirt—a buck. One dollar a shirt. At that time I had a clothing store. I sold suits, all wool, 16-ounce wool, for \$15. All wool suits. And I sold suits that was \$10 new suits. Yes. And then I used to tailor to fit—it was common to sell pants, the finest pants in the world, for five bucks—all wool pants, Serge, fine wool. I sold suits for ten, 12 dollars.

Historical Sketch Charleston's Jewish Community

By the end of the Civil War Charleston was a river port of about 3,000 people, linked by the Kanawha Turnpike to Huntington and the Ohio Valley. The business district had developed to the size of one block between Virginia and Kanawha Streets, and early residential neighborhoods grew up along Summers and Clendenin Streets. East European Jews had not yet come to Charleston in those years, but a frame temple had been erected on State Street by the B'nai Israel congregation of German Jews who had put down roots in Charleston before 1870. These Reformed Jews had been well received in the community and had established themselves over a couple of increasingly prosperous decades.

The first Eastern European Jews who arrived in Charleston in the early 1880s had none of the position or English-speaking faculty acquired by the German Jews during a quarter-century of settlement in the Kanawha Valley. The Orthodox immigrants had crept out of many parts of Russia, Poland, and the Balkans, where they had followed peddling and their traditional needle trades, having been excluded from agriculture, mining, and the more technical industries. The majority of the newcomers, however, could read and write both Yiddish and Hebrew, and lost no time in bringing together their own B'nai Jacob Orthodox congregation.

As in other parts of America the Reform group was loath to embrace the new wave of immigrants. In their withdrawal toward a staunch separatist position, the German Jews joined other elements of the

society in their disdainful view of the "greenhorns."

From its meager beginnings the Charleston Orthodox congregation gained in numbers with new waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, and was thought to have equalled the temple's congregation in enrollment and acceptability by about 1925. Nevertheless, many Orthodox Jews longed for the status attributed to membership in the temple, and switched their allegiances to the Reform congregation as improved economic and cultural circumstances permitted. But the balance of the Orthodox community dug in, worked hard, prospered, and ultimately increased numerically to almost twice that of the Reform group. Orthodox children sought higher education and other cultural advantages. So well did their efforts pay off that many achieved excellence and prestige in the teaching, medical, and legal professions. One, Ivor Boiarski, became Speaker of the House, while another, Fred Caplan, is Chief Justice of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals.

Gradually the historic gaps between the congregations diminished. Today the social and educational services offered by the two groups are often cooperative, and the remaining differences have mostly to do with old kinship ties and religious expression.

The greater Charleston area, meanwhile, was rapidly growing as the coal mines opened and gas and oil wells were drilled. Charleston's population practically tripled between 1885 and 1910 as the city came to terms with its role of serv-

icing the industries and as plants sprung up throughout southern West Virginia. The mining boom prior to World War I demanded a step-up in the service industries and many Jews found employment in the expanding economy. With the coming of Union Carbide and the DuPont plants in the 1920s, Charleston developed a continuing economic strength that sustained the population through the darker days of the Depression a decade later. The prosperity which followed with the building for the Second World War was enjoyed in the Jewish community, too, and was reflected in a peaking population about 1950.

Since that year, as the statewide population has decreased due to automation and the loss of jobs, the Jewish congregations have also suffered a loss in numbers. The increase in intermarriage in recent decades has taken its toll, and Jewish youngsters who finish college training do not choose to settle in Charleston as often as they used to. The movement toward bigger cities seems to be the pattern, and it appears now that the Jewish neighborhoods in Charleston will continue to dwindle. —M. K.

The preceding picture of Jewish life in the Charleston area following the Civil War was gleaned from the first two sections of One Hundred Years: An Anthology—Charleston Jewery, edited by Simon Meyer and printed by Jones Printing Company in Charleston in 1972. Rabbi Samuel Cooper's article, "Demographic Profile of Charleston," (pages 148-58) was especially informative.

And the shoes as low as \$2, dollar and a half.

It was hard to pay rent. I was lucky enough. My landlord, Dr. Wilbur Stump, was a wonderful person. I told him my troubles. They told me for three months no rent, do you hear? And reduce you from a hundred and

twenty-five to \$90 a month. Of course, whatever I sold in clothing in my store I applied to the rent. As Gentiles, never in my life have I seen any finer people. Wilbur Stump used to take [my family] to the country, he had relations in the country. They had an estate, he took us there for a couple of days every sum-

mer. Sleep, and everything, did this every summer. They were wonderful to me.

Of course, the reason I got out of business, because when the landlords died, [the building] changed hands completely. The rent was up from a hundred to \$350. And I couldn't swing

that. When I had cheap rent, I spent two thousand dollars for remodeling in the front. Now I'm sorry I did it. That was the end of my Summers Street enterprise . . . I was quite upset. I had to get out of there, had to go back to tailoring business, which I did not admire too much.

I took a job with Wolmuth, where my father used to work. I had a hard time getting used to not having a store. See, I put 35 years in a place. It's hard to get away. You miss the people, you miss the environments. But I took a job with Wolmuth, and I did quite well. I didn't work too hard, and the manager up there wasn't too bad. And I put in there about two years.

Then I took a job with my brother Abe. He had a store on Summers Street. And I worked for this store for a couple of years. And then I decided to open up a tailor shop here, and I am very grateful, because I have no bosses, no complaints. My brother sometimes wasn't nice to me. He used to make me mop the floor. I decided to go for myself. I opened up in 1962. . . . I'm quite happy, what I'm doing. Except, you know, you can't please all the customers.

MK You have two brothers who still are tailors in town.

HW One is a tailor, Jack. The other one, Irving, retired because his clothing store went up in fire and destroyed completely. He couldn't find no room to suit him, so he decided to call it quit. So he took a job for a while at Berman Jeweler. Stays there.

MK Since about 1950 the population of West Virginia has been declining, and the population of Charleston has declined since 1950. I wonder, have you noticed a decline in the Jewish population?

HW Yes, yes. Less membership in the synagogue yes. Yes, decline. I'll tell you, most of the time they'll go away to college and don't come back no more. Stay, see. It's like my son who went to California. Lots of kids get out of school, take up a profession. Very few come home.

MK What do you think that means for the Jewish community in Charleston?

HW I'll tell you, in some cities, they get together, like in Morgantown, they had two separate units, the temple [Reformed] and the synagogue [Orthodox]. They got together one member-

ship. Now they can afford the rabbi. It would be silly to keep up two institutions, they're both struggling. They have to pay the man at least twenty thousand a year.

MK But that's making a lot concessions, isn't it, for those two groups to go together?

HW Oh sure, concessions.

MK You think the synagogue and temple here in town could get together like that?

HW Not yet. They will in time. The old-timers died out and the younger ones like a different form of conduct of services, they go to temple. Less time, less services, more modern. The temple gets bigger. The temple doesn't lose membership, they gain. But we lose. Yes, yes.

MK The temple is gaining and the synagogue is losing?

HW Yes. Because they find it more convenient. Their requirements of religion is different, less time involved. See, that means a lot. Yes. For example, Yom Kippur. The synagogue is all day. And the temple is over by 12.

MK What about your children?

HW My children are raised in the orthodox.

MK Have they kept up the tradition?

HW Yes, they do. They do. I know it. My Marcia's husband is the president of the temple over there. Yes. And my daughter is very much active in civic and in Jewish affairs.

MK Does she keep a kosher home?

HW Harriet does, the younger one. Strictly kosher. Marcia don't because her husband doesn't require it. She even brings home bacon. But she's very active in the Jewish affairs and the civic affairs. And my boy is, let's see—his wife is not kosher, no. But he remembers the Seder night, the Seder and Yom Kippur. He observes it. Not strictly, but he observes it. . . .

Basically, I have no regrets. I'm very happy. A little money, a lot of friends, wonderful home. Physically, I'll tell you, I don't feel that bad I have to stay home. I would be annoyed, and I would bore myself if I got to be a sick man. You can't help it. But the way I feel, I enjoy my tailoring very much. A man comes in with a suit don't fit him and I fix for him. He tell me, "Oh, feels wonderful!" Makes a friend, see . . . I'm a tailor, and whatever I do I have satisfaction. ✱

Miriam Weiner's Story

Michael Kline. Well, for me, you enter the picture in this whole story after your husband has been already in Charleston for several years. He wants a wife, he's lonely. He's not satisfied with any of the girls here, nor are they satisfied with him because he's a green-horn—

Miriam Weiner. Well, he's ten years older than I am. So when he left Poland, in other words, I was eight. I remembered him but, really, not as much as he remembered me, because at eight years I didn't pay much attention. But I remembered his family. You know, everybody knew each other in a small town. But what happened, my sister Sarah knew that I had no future at home. She wanted to bring me over in the worst way to America. There was no way for anyone to bring over a family except a husband a wife, if he was a citizen. So my sister wrote me a letter about him [Mr. Weiner].

When I was 14 years—close to 15 years old I thought I was in love with a boy. Maybe I was. But no one could think of a future at home. You went around with someone you were in love with, and you couldn't think of a future. You just didn't know what's going to become of you. . . . So then later on, when my sister wrote to me, I was already older. I was about 17, closer to 18 years old when she told me about him.

MK And what did she say?

MW Well, she reminded me who he was. And she told me that he visited her. And she'd give anything in the world if I would come to America and I should consider that he's a very fine person, a very intelligent man.

So I felt I just didn't know what to say and what to do, because, after all, I don't know the person hardly. And here I was going around with one boy, and I was crazy about him already. I told my mother about it. Of course my mother started to cry, because she knew that once I leave Poland I'll



Miriam Weiner in 1978 at home. Photograph by Richard Lee.

never see her again even though she was a very young woman when I left. And how could I leave my younger sister, you know, when conditions were bad. (Weeping) I'm sorry, I don't want to cry.

So, my sister kept on writing to me and she says, "What are you going to do?" and "You'll be killed sooner or later. There'll be war and at least, if you come we can bring the rest." I knew it wouldn't be possible, because they make it very difficult for anyone to come over from Europe to America. It was just out of the question.

So then Hyman started to write to me. He wrote me one letter, then another letter, and I was very impressed because his writing was beautiful. And of course I answered him, you know, without even knowing what's going to be. And I couldn't commit myself that I would come, right away.

After a while I told this fellow that I was going around with what's happening. And of course he felt terrible, too, but as I said there was no thinking, no future at all. At that time, he was

called *chalutz*, you know, he worked in the fields to go [as a pioneer] to Israel. If I would have had enough money I could have immigrated with him to Israel. But I didn't have anything, and he didn't have much either. That was about 1928, '29. Israel wasn't existing yet. It was just a dream, but plenty of them left [to go there] before it even became a country. It was called Palestine at that time. That was their life. They knew that that's the only place they could live. That's where they wanted to go. They actually took a chance with their lives, but they wanted to go there. A lot of them immigrated to Palestine. Later it was called Israel after it became a country.

Anyway, what can I tell you? It was arranged [with Hyman]. He remembered me only as a child; he heard me sing when he would pass by our building. And I became impressed really with his writing, very much so, and he sent me a picture. And we arranged for me to come and meet him in Danzig, which was a free state in Poland at that time. You could go to Danzig but you

couldn't go into Germany. It was the port between Germany and Poland. Hymie took a chance with his life, too, going there. Because if somebody would find out he ran away from Poland they could have arrested him and brought him back to Poland.

So I have to keep [my plans] in the family, that nobody should know, even my girl friends. But this boy friend of mine I did tell the story. I told him the truth. And I met my husband in Danzig.

MK You went there with his brother and his cousin.

MW His brother and his cousin, which became a brother-in-law of mine, we met there, and I liked him. I can't say that I immediately fell in love with him because it's almost impossible, you know, in a few days. And we got married there. I came back to Poland, to my family, and he went back to the States to work on papers. I stayed at home for a few months and had to say good-bye to my mother, my boy friend, and the other friends. And I told my mother not to come to the train even. I said I couldn't say good-bye to her, it would kill me. And I came to the United States.

MK And you never saw your mother again?

MW Never saw my mother again. My mother died in Siberia, you know, my sister, my mother. She died—they didn't kill her—of hunger, cold, and starvation. And we found out afterwards in the Jewish paper who remained alive.

And as far as my life here, I was very lonely when I first came. I came to Ellis Island, but I didn't stay really too long. First of all, my husband was a citizen. But I came in on a weekend and he couldn't take me off the boat, so I remained on the ship 'til Monday. And then he came and took me off the ship.

When I came to America the thought of also having family here, like my sister, [was a comfort] 'cause I was so crazy about her I cannot even begin to tell you. And I didn't realize that New York was so far from Charleston. I thought when I come to New York I'll see my sister every other day, I'll see her every two months, every month, you know. But then I realized it's not going to be so simple, because at that time everybody went by train. It took 16 hours to travel New York to Charleston. I felt terrible when I left my sister and I knew I wouldn't see her that



Left. Miriam Szpilman at about 17 (ca. 1928) in Poland sent this photograph to her future husband.
Right. Alta Mendelbaum Szpilman, Mrs. Weiner's mother in about 1925. Photographers unknown.

soon. Just having someone from the family, I longed for it. I felt bad. So I came to Charleston.

MK Could you speak pretty good English then?

MW Nothing, not a word. Not one single word of English.

MK Never studied English in school?

MW Nothing at all. Here, when I came to Charleston, I felt so bad because I just didn't know—I says, "How can I communicate with a child?" When you come to a small town like Charleston, you want to buy a bottle of milk or loaf of bread and if you don't speak the language they don't know what you want. So my husband started shopping for me. In fact, it remained with him like a hobby 'til this day. He likes to go shopping. I always kid him, he should've been in the grocery store instead of being tailoring clothing. (Laughs)

The loneliness drove me crazy at first. So I was very much interested to learn the language when I came, because I felt I could communicate maybe with friends, and if I have a child. You come here in a strange country, you can't talk, and I was determined that I'm not going to pick up just one word and say "hello" and "good-bye." But before I start talking I'll be able to say a little bit more. And, you see, the reading for me wasn't too hard, because Polish reading is very much like English—it's the spelling that's different. And I started to read. I said, "Well, as much as I'll understand, I'll be reading." Read and read,

and I went to night school. And I would go to movies and listen.

We had a doctor that owned the building where my husband had a clothing store, Dr. Stump. Well, he took such an interest in me, he was like a father to me. And every time he would come into the store, I said, "You speak to me just a few words and I want to hear." Well, he became so fascinated the way I talked that he said, "You'll learn it in no time." And that's what helped me was the reading, so much. I used to go to the store and listen to customers talk, and I would not say anything but keep in mind what each word was and remember. And then I would talk really mostly to Dr. Stump.

Afterwards I became pregnant and I lost twice. And then I had my older daughter Marcia. And the reason my children don't speak Jewish, because I wanted to speak English to them. I said they'll learn it later, but if I speak Jewish I'll never learn the language. So when Marcia was born I thought the world opened up for me. I mean, everything was wrapped up in that child. But I was very young, you know, about 21. And I didn't know too much about a child, and I wasn't feeling good after she was born.

MK Did you have contact with other women around who had children?

MW Well, after the baby was born.

MK You met other mothers?

MW Oh, yes. And then some older women were just so wonderful to me.

In fact, when I was sick or the baby was born they came to—I lived in an apartment and they brought me down lunch. I lived on Brown Street when Marcia was born, the oldest. But my life became just like a new world, because I wrapped my whole life in the child.

When I came, times were very bad. It was during the Depression. But I had a wonderful doctor, Dr. Point, he was just like, really, like a father to me. He says, "Don't worry about the money. We're not gonna worry about it." Because he gave me instructions of how to take care of myself, he helped me quite a bit, as much as I could understand, you know, what he was saying. And he delivered my other two children, too, Harriet and Alan.

So I kept on telling my husband afterwards, when things picked up a little bit, and I wanted to have a little home of my own, I said, "It's just hard to raise a child without a yard, without, you know, anything." So I became friendly with one lady, very close friends, and she had a little girl. And she lived on Jackson Street and there was an apartment available. We became very close, the children played together. She lived upstairs and I lived downstairs. Then I became naturally, a member of the synagogue.

And then our little girl was born, Harriet. And when the children got older—see, I came like I told you, from a musical family. I was determined that my daughter's going to play the piano—Marcia. We bought her a piano when she was five years old. And she showed a lot of talent. . . . My life was just glowing when I heard that child play. Hymie felt the same way. He was crazy about her.

So after that Harriet was born—and also with music, and dancing, and the children became our life. They elevated our lives, what can I tell you, they just became everything that we ever wanted in kids. And they were active in the synagogue with playing. Marcia played until she left for school, for college. And then Harriet came in and took over after her, and she played for the synagogue for years. They really gave us nothing but happiness and joy. Then my son Alan came in and we also tried with him everything, and we don't regret one minute of it because my life, really, became very interesting after that. The community was nice to us. I don't regret anything. I mean, I would do it over again. ❀

'A CIRCUS IS COMING!'

Touring Extravanzas and Their Downtown Parades of the Past

By Arthur C. Prichard

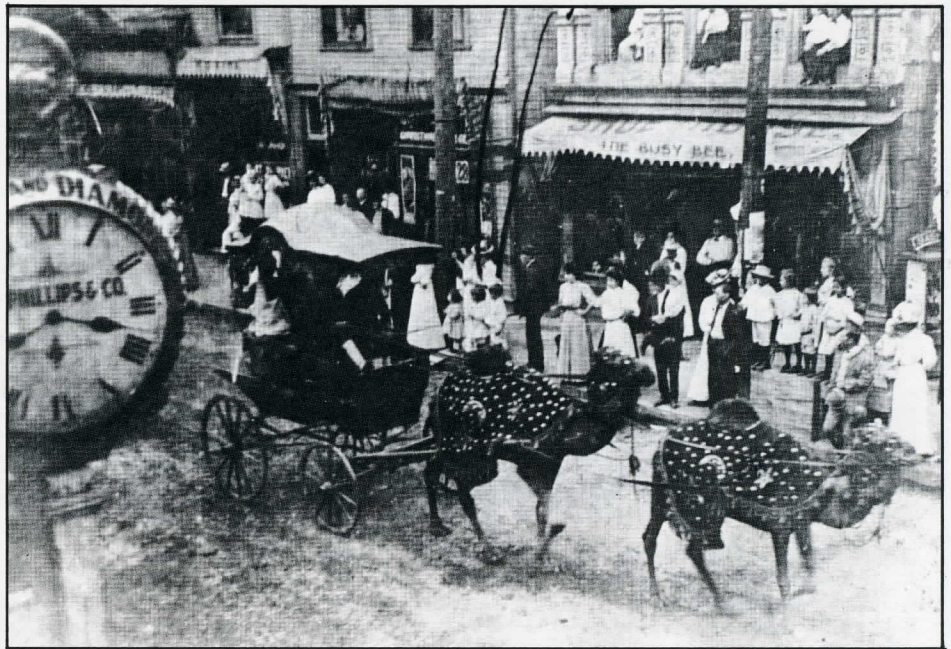
A CIRCUS is coming!" was exciting news to boys and girls and many adults in West Virginia when I was a youngster, as a circus brought excitement, a taste of faraway places, strange animals, glitter, fun, and a change from the everyday world. What through much of the year was an ordinary field, on Circus Day became a place of enchantment and excitement, with crowds, music, noise, and motion.

Some two or three weeks before the show's arrival, colorful, eye-catching posters appeared in and near the town. Newspapers carried the circus press agent's lavish accounts of the show's greatness and printed advertisements showing strange animals and daring performers. At times the press agents were carried away with their claims, advertising "The Largest Baboon Living" or "The One and Only Giraffe Known to Exist in the Entire World" or "The Grandest Outpouring of Magnificent Surprises Ever Seen on Earth."

Sometimes several boys would arrange among themselves to get each other up early enough in the morning to see the circus unload. The first boy awake would start making the rounds to the other youngsters' houses, awakening them as he went. It was much fun to reach the railroad siding in time to see horses, elephants, camels, and zebras led from the stock cars; to witness the horses and elephants help unload the wagons, some of which were beautifully decorated and highly colored, from the flat cars; and to see circus people come from the coaches.

'Here it Comes!'

Another exciting feature of the great day was the parade. After the circus had been moved to the circus ground,



A circus parade in Mannington around 1906. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Mrs. Francis Stewart.

tents set up, equipment moved in, and the place organized, the parade began.

"Here it comes!" would be the cry as band music was heard, or perhaps the more distant sounds from the not-so-musical calliope traveled through the air. Such an assortment of vividly decorated wagons, some having pictures, designs and figures on them, gilded with gold or brightly painted, some with sunburst wheels which created a kalidoscopic effect as they moved over the streets was in the procession. Musicians on a special, often ornamented, embellished bandwagon, played tuneful music. The board sides having been removed from the wild animal wagons, the spectators could see lions, tigers, leopards, bears, monkeys, and other wild creatures caged in them. Brightly clothed riders rode

beautiful horses. Clowns in outlandish clothing and with ridiculous make-up gamboled in and out of the line of march, making ludicrous faces, pointing at each other or at people on the sidewalks along the street; or clowns by means of ropes thick enough to tie an elephant led little docile dogs, or played musical instruments with much gusto. Elephants in a single line, each holding the tail of the elephant ahead, shuffled along. The pachyderms were taught to "tail-trunk" to keep them in a line, and to restrain their curious trunks from getting into trouble.

However, tail-trunking didn't always work. Once in late summer around 1905 in our town Mannington a column of elephants was parading past the house and garden of a friend of mine. One of the massive animals



A West Virginia product, the Dan Rice One Ring Circus opened in Charleston on April 22, 1911, on the grounds at Lee and Dickinson Streets where the former Cox's Department Store building stands. The circus had a company of about 100 and closed in Harpers Ferry in June 1911. This photograph was made in Pocahontas, Virginia, on May 11, 1911. The late Charlestonian, J. C. Arter, is fifth from the right in the band, and R. J. Coney is the drummer on the right end. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Arthur Thomas, Charleston, a member of the Circus Fans Association of America.

dropped the tail of the elephant ahead of her, shuffled over to the side of the street, reached over the low fence and wrapped her trunk around several stalks holding ears of sweet corn, broke off the stalks, put the delicious contents into her mouth, and moved back into the line of parade. Marching along with the other elephants, she enjoyed a mid-parade snack. Generally one or more of the elephants would have a pretty girl riding on it, and be accompanied by an elephant keeper. Often camels, Indians, cowboys, fairy-tale or nursery floats, tableau wagons, and a calliope were in the parade.

Years ago the parade was an important feature of circuses. We are told it originated early in circus history,

developing when the shows moved from town to town in horse-drawn wagons. On approaching a community where they were to perform, the circus people would stop the wagons, wash off the country dust and mud, clean up the animals, fit the horses with plumes, remove the sideboards from the animal wagons, and put their fancy hats, get out their musical instruments and make a bright, glittering, musical entrance into town. It was wonderful advertising, helping to bring people to the circus grounds.

When numerous shows began moving from town to town by rail, the equipment and personnel went directly to the circus grounds from the railroad. Later in the morning the circus

would parade through the town to show off its wares and create circus fever among the local people so as to draw them to the show.

Many people would gather along the circus parade route, arriving early to find good viewing points. Some of the folks from other towns or from the country would travel considerable distances to get there. The parade was one of the most interesting features of a circus; also, it was free, and there were those, who because of their financial condition, saw only the parade, foregoing the pleasure of the paid performances. Recently a Mannington woman, about 70 years old, told me she was 13 or 14 years old before she knew there was anything more to a

circus than its parade, as her parents had not taken her to any other portion of a circus program.

Working and Clowning

Many boys worked their way into the shows carrying water for elephants and other animals and helping move the lighter equipment, while having an opportunity to see circus life from behind the scenes. They could watch the swiftness and efficiency with which three or more men, each with a sledgehammer, standing in a circle, pounded a tent stake into the ground. The men, synchronizing their hammers' blows, drove a stake into place within seconds. The youngsters, watching the circus people prepare for the grand entrance parade that marked the opening of the show's performance, would see some of the stake drivers and other laborers transformed into Egyptians, Arabs, or Orientals by donning flowing robes, headdresses, or other foreign apparel.

Local men were employed for a few hours the day of the show's appearance in town. A friend tells of having worked for circuses when they played in Mannington. Once he was given a wooden paddle and instructed to keep youngsters from sneaking under the sidewalls of the "big top." On circling the tent from the outside he noticed a suspicious bulging of the canvas. Thinking it was a boy who just had slipped in, he swung his paddle, and connected with a solid object. A great howl resulted, then confusion, as the paddle swinger had hit a large dog, which when hurt rushed through the crowd inside the tent, howling and bumping into people who were on their way to their seats.

P. T. Barnum has been quoted as saying that "clowns are the pegs on which to hang a circus." Many circus fans, including myself, would agree with him. Clowns have been important to circuses since those shows began. The clowns' art is an ancient one going back centuries to jesters and other entertainers.

Often in the shows of my boyhood there would be a clown boxing match, with wild swings, many misses, and a referee getting hit by a large soft glove when one boxer ducked. Attendants to



The Great Wallace Shows setting up in Morgantown in the early 1900s. The circus was organized in 1884, then combined with Hagenbeck in 1907 to form the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Ron Rittenhouse.





Opposite. The 101 Ranch Circus parade in Charleston in September 1918 on Kanawha Street. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Arthur Thomas.

Top. When a circus was in Mannington around 1902 a pole wagon collapsed a Buffalo Creek bridge. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Claud Kendall.

Bottom. Driving circus tent spikes in Charleston around 1904 at the old race track near Broad Street and the K & M Railroad tracks. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Arthur Thomas.



the boxers, after throwing water on the fighters, would run toward the audience swinging other buckets. The nearby spectators, anticipating a deluge of water, would duck, then discover the threatening buckets held only confetti, which would flutter harmlessly onto them.

One of the popular acts was the clown fire department answering a fire alarm. Grotesquely dressed firemen would rush to a burning building, get tangled up in the business of putting out the fire, knock themselves down with ladders and hoses, trip over each other, and make a mess of the whole procedure, even though they rescued the building's inhabitants. Many circuses had clowns in outlandish outfits flirting with women in the audience. Sometimes a male clown attired in a country woman's outfit would push himself in between a young couple entering the "big top," seeking to get the audience laughing at the couple's embarrassment.

The Circus' Favorite Animal

If any one animal makes a circus, it is that huge beast, the elephant, largest

of all land animals. A born trouper, it loves to act; seemingly it is tireless and will perform its heart out. Highly intelligent, an elephant can be taught many things: to stand on its front or back legs; even to take a few steps; to walk on a narrow plank; to carry out military drills; with other elephants to form a pyramid, or a bridge, under which an elephant will crawl; or to perform in a musical band. A pachyderm seldom misses its cue and is the circus' favorite animal.

Practically all elephants in American circuses are females since they are considered to be much safer performers than the males. The latter are subject to violent temper tantrums when they go through a period called musth, a time when glands in the male elephants' temples secrete a liquid that, going down the pachyderms' cheeks, often enters their mouth. Seemingly the taste of the liquid brings about a kind of madness in the beasts, making them extremely dangerous for the time being.

While all circus-goers know of the elephants' stellar performances under the "big top," many may not realize the important role the pachyderms play

as workers or stevedores. When many circuses traveled by train, the huge animals helped unload and load the wagons off and onto the railroad flat cars. This last spring I followed a large elephant around the wet grounds near Rivesville where the King Brothers Circus was setting up tents, watching her pull automobiles and other vehicles out of the mud. The grand animal of the circus has been employed to help raise tent poles, bring them down when the circus is being packed, pull stakes, push or pull wagons and trucks and do a myriad of hard jobs. It is interesting to note that elephants are admirably equipped to travel in the mud, as their feet have spongy soles.

While the elephants are the circus' favorite animals, there are times when their patience and seemingly good nature are tried. I knew a boy who in about 1919 in our town gave an elephant in the animal tent along side of the main tent a chew of tobacco instead of peanuts which his companions were feeding the other pachyderms. The large beast, trustingly put the tobacco into her mouth, but on tasting it spit it out, wrapped her trunk around the youngster, and tossed the lad some



Opposite. A circus parade in Mannington around 1909. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Dotson.

Top and below left. The King Brothers Christiani Circus parading in Charleston on Capitol Street on April 23, 1952. This may have been the last real circus parade in the city—not an “animal walk,” still enacted today. Courtesy of Arthur Thomas.



person of her size. Some time later, when another circus came to town, a person who had heard of the woman's experience with the runaway elephant asked her if she was going to the circus that day. She answered, “No, I'm not goin'”. Circuses don't bother me no more.”

Unexpected Surprises

In the 1920s a husband, wife, and four small children, out for a Sunday drive in Wetzel County, began passing scattered components of a small circus, which was moving to a new location. Rounding a curve the family started down the sloping road when they saw a big elephant ahead of them in the middle of the narrow road. The car was old, its brakes were poor, and the folded down top left them entirely vulnerable. It looked as if the husband wouldn't be able to stop it before running into the huge beast, but just as the jalopy was about to hit the elephant, the animal made a strange trumpeting noise, raised her front legs so the car couldn't hit them, and stood there on her hind legs. The vehicle came to a stop under the animal, and for a few terrifying seconds the people looked up at several tons of animal

distance. Luckily, the boy wasn't hurt.

About the turn of the century a circus arrived in Mannington after a hard rain, and a portion of the dirt road leading to the circus grounds was a sea of mud. When the circus horses were unable to pull many of the heavy wagons through the mire, elephants were enlisted to give them assistance. This they did by lowering their heads and lifting the wagons as well as pushing them. One elephant after a long period of work left her job, perhaps reasoning she had done enough, and ran away from her work, lumbering up the road. When efforts to control the

animal failed, a circus employee, jumping on a horse, raced ahead of the elephant, calling for people to get out of the way. Coming into town to see the circus were members of a farm family. The father saw the huge animal ahead, pulled his wagon over to one side to a barbed wire fence, and pitched the children over the fence away from the road and the elephant.

Along the same road a very fleshy woman was walking toward town when the man rode by warning people of the runaway beast. A spectator reported the woman scrambled over a high fence with remarkable speed and agility for a

Right. Watching a circus set up in Fairmont in 1950. Photograph by the author.

Opposite. A scene in Dunbar on April 29, 1952, when the Mills Brothers Circus was in town. Photograph by Arthur Thomas.



flesh hanging over them. If the elephant came down on them, they would be crushed, but she didn't. Skillfully pivoting on her hind legs, she lowered her front legs along side of the car without touching it, looked at them questioningly with her little eyes, then continued her journey up the road.

Sometimes nature has had a hand in bringing excitement to a circus lot in West Virginia. On rare occasions severe wind storms have blown down the tents. A man I knew sharpened his penknife whenever a circus came to town. His explanation was, "A sharp knife can help us get out if the tent falls down and we have to cut our way through the canvas." Occasionally on some bottomland along a stream a hard rainstorm on Circus Day has produced a flash flood, pouring water over the circus grounds while the show was on, forcing spectators, show people, and animals to make hurried exits through the water.

A prominent feature of an old-time circus was its sideshow. At its entrance would be a bally platform where one of the attractions, perhaps a magician or a sword swallower, would give a free demonstration. Sometimes one or more musicians would play a short number to attract attention; then a ballyhoo talker or barker would urge the people walking along the midway to "step right up," or "move in a little

closer;" and then he would go into his spiel about the wonderful, educational marvels waiting inside the tent. If his speech were successfully done, many people would crowd around the ticket windows, get their tickets, and go to be entertained and enlightened.

In addition to the main performance and the sideshow exhibitions, there was a special show or concert after the regular performance—a variety program, minstrel show, or more often a wild-West exhibition, with thrilling riding, shooting, whip cracking, lassoing acts, and whooping Indians and cowboys. Youngsters would beg their parents to buy them tickets for the exciting aftershow.

At-home Performing

Even after the circus had gone some of the effects lingered on. Boys who had ponies would try some of the stunt riding they had witnessed in the wild-West events. Some youngsters who had the job of taking cows out to pasture would practice with homemade lassos on the cows. Throwing a rope over the animals' heads became fun, at least to the youngsters, but doubtlessly annoyed the cows.

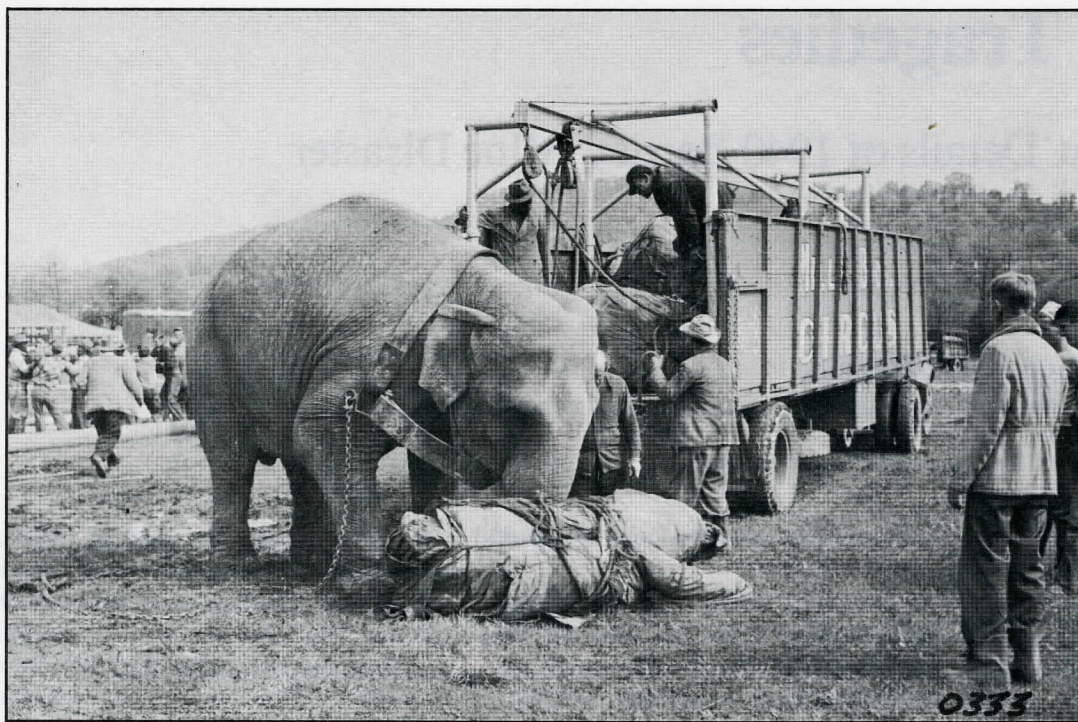
Once after a circus had performed in our town some of us small boys decided to put on a show. Practicing in our back yard, we got my married

sister's Boston bull terrier Skid to jump through a hoop. He seemed to enter into the spirit of being our performing lion and did well. After one practice session I rewarded the dog with a bone. While he was gnawing on it, a five-year-old boy, a younger brother of one of the youngsters helping to get the show ready, grabbed the bone from Skid and held it in the air. We never really knew what happened, even though we witnessed it. The lad would lower the bone, then raise it higher, in a teasing manner daring Skid to jump for it. When Skid started to jump, the boy pulled the bone back toward himself in front of his face. At one point the dog snapped at the bone but missed it and nipped the boy's cheek, bringing blood.

My brother-in-law decided he would have to destroy the dog, since Skid had bitten a boy. Despite our protests that Skid was our playmate, that he wasn't a bad dog, and had never bitten any of us, although at times we had been rough with him, my brother-in-law had Skid put to sleep. Practice for that show never resumed, as we no longer had a heart for it.

Early, Early Circus Days

While I don't know when the first circuses played in what is now West Virginia, they were here as early as the



1820s. Dr. Earl L. Core of Morgantown discovered that on September 24, 1825, the Monongalia County Court granted Messrs, Baldwin, Smith, Kelly and Co. a license "to exhibit a show," charging the exhibitors \$25. From then on a number of such licenses were issued in Monongalia County. One of particular interest was the license granted on August 7, 1832, to William and J. R. Howe, "exhibitors of public show."

Among a number of Monongalia County licenses listed by Dr. Core, two others are especially informative. On July 12, 1834, French Holby & Co., were issued one for "Thirty dollars the amount prescribed by Law to be paid for the privilege of Exhibiting animals and Circus and paintings for one year from this day." Then on September 13, 1848: "Receipt for \$10 license fee for 24 hours exhibition time issued to Rockwell and Co., Circus." The one-day stands were in vogue.

Among the changes which circuses have made are the places where they have shown. They started with riding academies and stable lots, then used buildings and modified theaters; afterwards they employed tents; then they went on to open air stadiums, closed coliseums, civic centers, and multi-purpose arenas. Yet some shows still tour America and West Virginia under tents.

Modern-day Changes

Changing conditions have almost eliminated the once popular Circus Day street parade. Recently when I talked with a Mr. Black, manager of the King Brothers Circus, he said he had stopped having parades seven years ago. "The cost of parading has increased tremendously. Cities not wishing to have their traffic interfered with have raised the cost of parade permits very much. Then, too, a circus saves considerable money by traveling without a number of vehicles which are used only in parades."

It was interesting to learn from Mr. Black that in addition to wages and food, large items of expense are fuel and insurance, particularly liability insurance. Each day the King Brothers Circus shows, their insurance costs \$800.

Another change in circuses has been in the area of honesty. When the Ringling Brothers began their tented circus in 1884, they entered a business which had become notorious. Grafters, pick-pockets, shortchange artists and other crooks were a part of circuses. Many shows carried groups of such criminals to rob the public. The Ringlings wanted a clean, honest show, and through the years they did much to clean up circus life. When crooks attempted to join their circus they were driven off, and

when the Ringlings discovered employees cheating customers, those workers were fired. Circuses engaging in cheating and robbing practices fought and harrassed the Ringlings and ridiculed them by calling them "Sunday School boys," and their circus "a ding-a-ling show."

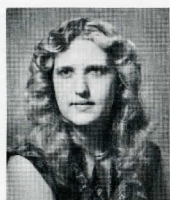
The Ringlings discovered that honesty and cleanliness in behavior, which they insisted on because of personal conviction, was to help their circus in unexpected ways. Communities where they had shown before welcomed them back. Also their circus attracted a better class of workers, and the circus received more loyalty from their employees because of the management's high principals than otherwise would have been the case. The Ringling Brothers' honesty didn't cause all circuses to operate honestly, for I have heard of con men, crooked gamblers, and shortchange artists traveling with some shows during my lifetime.

In an era when there was little opportunity to see people and animals from far away places, and when the amount and variety of entertainment were far less than they are today, circuses fired the imagination of great groups of people, and the news that "A circus is coming" was exciting. Yet today many of us still love a circus, and the announcement of one's coming most often stirs good feelings. ✱

Too Many Tragedies

Survivors Account Details of 1940 Bartley Mine Disaster

Interviews and photographs by Kathy Matney



Kathy Matney's father mined coal underground for 23 years. The family moved a number of times around the Virginia-West Virginia coalfield. In 1971 when Kathy was in the sixth grade, the family moved to Bartley, a mining town in McDowell County. As she became acquainted with the new community, she began to hear tales of fires, floods, and explosions which deeply impressed her.

In the eleventh grade at Big Creek High School Ms. Matney took a photography class, and the teacher encouraged the students to begin to look around the area for subjects. She photographed some older people she had heard speaking about a terrible mine explosion there years ago which had killed nearly a hundred men. One of the women had some old clippings that described the disaster, and when Ms. Matney showed the newspaper stories to her teacher he suggested she begin to launch a study through taped interviews and picture-taking.

Later that year the Matney home burned to the ground and they lost everything in the fire. The family moved to Georgia, but Ms. Matney was restless there and in the spring returned to Bartley to stay with friends and finish out the year at Big Creek High. She did more interviews and

tried to learn what she could about the disaster of 1940.

During her senior year Ms. Matney lived with an aunt just over the Virginia line in Honaker. She made several trips back to Bartley and after graduating this past June did the fourth interview with Dewey Pruitt.

EACH individual has his own definition of the word tragedy. But no matter how the word is defined, its meaning is never fully understood unless one experiences a tragedy. I was one of the many people in the small McDowell County town Bartley who came to know the meaning of tragedy. In my case it was the fire which destroyed our home. My daddy had been a coal miner for 23 years and was broken down with black lung. He lost everything in that fire.

Bartley is primarily a mining town, its three residential sections are One Hundred Camp, Three Hundred Camp, and Five Hundred Camp, all in the tradition of the coal camp numbering system. The town is supposed to have received its name from Bartley Rose, an early land owner, or from Bartley Creek or from both. I lived in Bartley for six years and heard of these tragedies that happened through the years. I have discussed them with local people and found out the damage done not only to the land but to the people. Some people were damaged and may never heal.

I am interested in the more recent tragedies that have impaired the lives of the people who now live in Bartley.

The first tragedy I want to discuss involved a school bus wreck which killed six children and injured 66 others. The kids had loaded on the bus as they did every morning and were headed for Big Creek High School in War, but on this Wednesday morning, October 11, 1939, the bus had just passed Roland's gas station in War when the right spinnel broke, turning the wheels and leading the bus over a 83-foot embankment.

The second tragedy was a mine explosion which killed 91 men from 75 families and left 278 children fatherless. It happened on a Wednesday evening of January 10, 1940. It took from two to three weeks to get all the men out. Alfred Younce, a man who had survived the explosion and helped carry the dead bodies out of the mines said he found two notes which had been put in the hard caps of the dead miners. The first one was written by a man named Martin and it read:

Dear Wife,

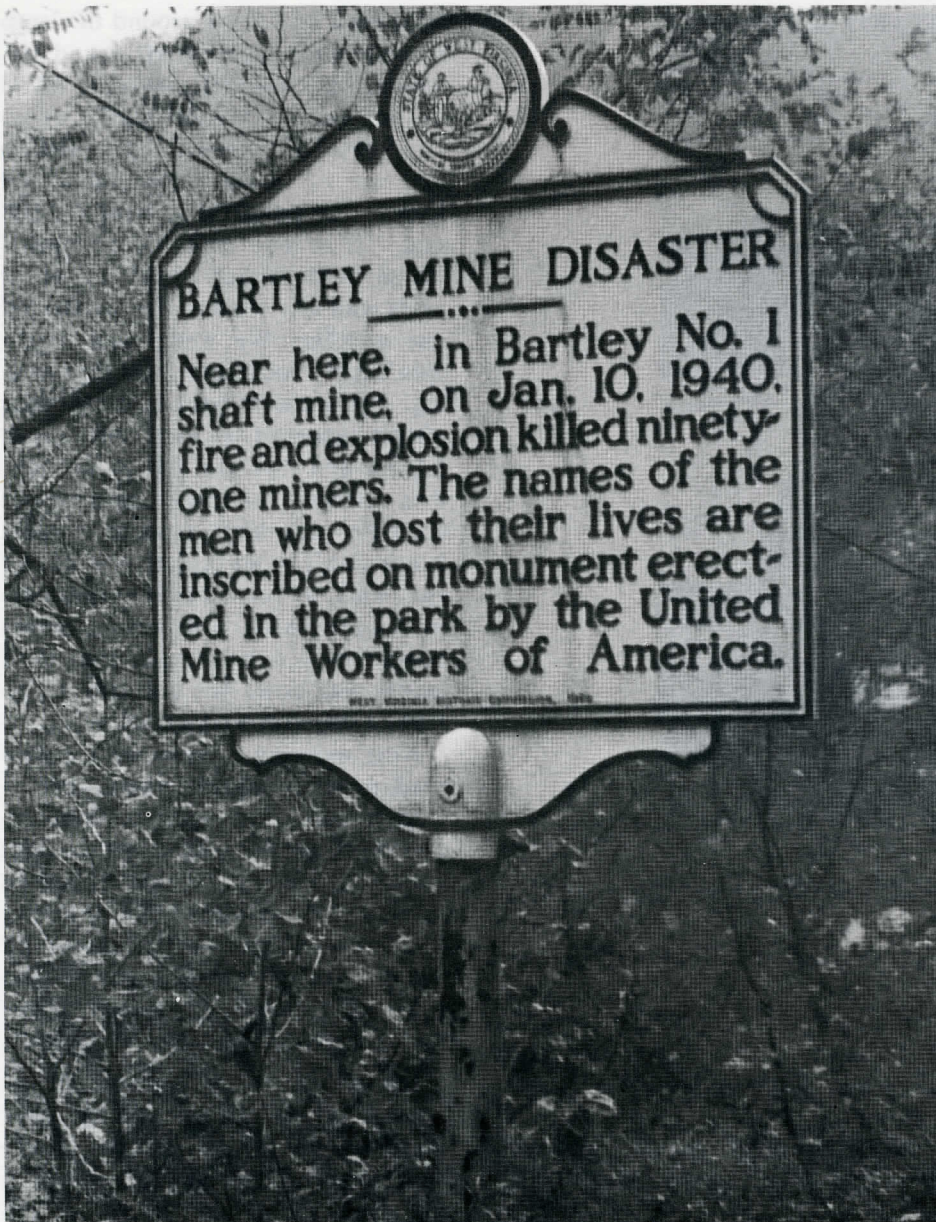
I have never done you wrong. I don't think we will make it out of here. If I don't make it out, you do the best you can to raise the children.

The second letter read:

Dear Wife,

If we don't make it out, take my body down home and have brother Spears to preach my funeral.

After that the flood of 1957 came on March 1 and again left many people



The West Virginia highway marker commemorating the Bartley No. 1 disaster.

homeless. The cause was said to have been a cloudburst.

Today there are still tragedies there. Last year five houses burned down in one month, and it so happened they were in Bartley. One of these houses was my home and that was mostly what encouraged me to write about all the tragedies.

People still talk about these tragedies and some say they hear things in Bartley. Like at the mines, they say if you walk by there at night you can still hear miners down there singing and digging, and in some places where there used to be boarding houses you can hear

children and people hollering, but there would be no one there.

Bartley may never be rid of tragedies. Last year there was another major tragedy, another flood which demolished most of the homes of Bartley and left many people homeless.

All of these disasters caused many problems for the people of Bartley. To some people not living in the area they were small tragedies. But to the residents of Bartley they were tragedies that will never be forgotten. As I heard them, here are some of the stories told by retired miners still living in Bartley about the 1940 mine disaster.

Bill McGlothlin.

(born January 17, 1916)

Kathy Matney. [Do you remember when] the mine disaster occurred?

Bill McGlothlin. Yeah, because I was in there at the time it occurred. I was on the east side and the explosion happened on the west side. I had a brother-in-law and a brother and other relatives was killed there, and other friends, too.

It happened about 1:30 or 2:00, I don't know exactly what hour, but that's what time—January the tenth in 1940, that's when the explosion occurred. And I don't know whether it was 91 or 93 which was killed. Thirty-seven of us got saved and 93 others died on the west side, and some of them got killed walking out, too, you know, done made their shift and on their way out, but that thing caught them. That's about all I can tell you about that.

KM How long did it take them to get the men out of there?

BM Well, the different rescue squads from Pennsylvania, Alabama, and what not, they come in—it was over a week getting them out of there, cause that gas was so backed up in there they couldn't let 'em up there to get 'em. They had to get the gas down [before they] got them people out.

KM Do you know what caused the accident?

BM No, I wish I did, but I don't know what caused the explosion. But I do know it occurred that day—1940, January the tenth—I never will forget that day, never will.



Hallid Shrader.

Hallid Shrader.

(born July 13, 1909)

Kathy Matney. I'm with Hallid Shrader now, and he's going to finish telling the story of the mine accident.

Hallid Shrader. I can't tell you how it happened—I wasn't over that far. On January the tenth, 1940, there come a mine explosion. Dewey Pruitt was the dispatcher. He come up on the section where we was at and told us. Me and my buddy, Bill Rubell, we was working together. We was sitting in the machine hole waiting until quitting time—we was gonna work some overtime. And Dewey come to where we was sitting. He seen our light, and he come down there and told us to go out. He said the west side was blowed up but he didn't know how bad it was. We got on our machine, on our motor, and rode out. And he asked us where the boss was and we told him he was around making his time sheet out, his report.

KM Who was the boss?

HS Lawrence Mitchell was our boss. And he went out around where Lawrence was and told him not to tell the men it'd blowed up. 'Cause you see

if he'd of told all that bunch of men, they'd all got excited and got hurt trying to run—to get out of there. Told him to bring the man station, put them in the man trip, and they all come out just like nothin' had ever happened cause they didn't know it. We come on out first.

KM How much did they pay you back then—the wages to work in the mines?

HS About \$6.16, I believe it was—machine men, about \$6.16.

KM When you all got out of there, how long did it take the men—how long did it take all of you to get out of the mine?

HS Well, it took us, I guess from the time where we left, it took us about 30 minutes after we—after he told us to come out. But after they got the men all gathered up on the section and brought them to the man station, I guess it took about 30 or 40 minutes to get them out—to get the guys alive, like Bill said there, 37 of us.

KM After the mine blew up did you go back to work in it—after they got it fixed?

HS Well, I come on out and then I

went back and stood around the lamp house there in the mine office and Mr. Silvetta, the general manager, asked us—me and my buddy—would we go back in and try to recover men, and we told him we would. I told him if Bill Rubell'd go back, I'd go back and Bill said, "If he'll go back, I'll go back," 'cause we'd worked about ten or 12 years with one another and we trusted one another. We went back and I didn't come back home 'til next morning. And we went back in the evening after it happened, we went about a mile I guess and that gas was so strong—that carbon monoxide poison—we couldn't—was black from that stuff. We couldn't go no further. But we had spotlights, we could see away down the track—see these two guys a-laying there, but I done forgot what their names was now. We couldn't get to them. I stayed down there all night.

Next morning I come up the railroad, down through there and people—women that lost their husbands—they'd ask me did I see them, see their husbands, I'd say, "Yeah." I lied to them, but I told them I did. We went back and they told them to come back out at three o'clock that next evening and I went back in again and tried to find them, get to them. But we couldn't.

We had to carry stuff from the bottom up on the sections to build brattice to take air as we went so we could get up to them. And we got to the sixth heading and turned left and went down what they called the third right, and got down there and, building brattice, taking our air with us. Got down to the third right and couldn't get in there cause it was so hot, just stayed out on the main line and went to four right and another shift come on. They went up on the third right, found all these died laying there, scattered all over the place.

The next shift went out at 11 o'clock next night—started getting ready to carry them out. They had to carry them on stretchers, you know, walking to get to where they had the track cleared, and brought them out. They brought them all out on Monday.

KM What did the women and children do after they found their

daddies and relatives had been killed?

HS Well, just what any ordinary family would do. They went to grieving pretty hard over it.

KM Did any of them leave right after that?

HS No, they stayed here and got all their business straightened out. Some of them moved up around War, some to different places, back to where they was raised. Some of them went over around Honaker, Virginia, some back over on Bradshaw Mountain, some over in Grundy, some up Bishop.



Alfred Younce.

Alfred Younce.

(born July 20, 1902)

Alfred Younce. I worked in Number One Mines in 1940. On the tenth day of January, about two in the evening, the mines blew up. And we got the men together and we started out with them, and Lawrence Mitchell was the boss. He told me not to get excited and kill everybody in the man

trip—man trip, that's a car with a lot of men in it, you know, 25 or 30 on board, something like that. I told him I wouldn't. Well, I didn't.

Well, when I got down where we was supposed to get on the cage, I seen that the dust was blowed up and a lot of dirt and stuff that hadn't been there before. And them colored men had noticed that and they told me, said, "What's happened? It's not like it was when I come in this morning." "Well," I said, "did you know the mines blowed at 2:30 this evening?" It was about



Joseph Jones.

four o'clock then probably, or 3:30. They said, "No."

Well, we got on the cage and went out, like I told it. They checked us, each one of us, counted us as we got on. As we got on the cage they counted the men, how many got out. And we got to the top, Dr. N. H. Dyer was up there, and he examined us and let us all out. I didn't come back to help get

nobody out. That's about it. I didn't go back.

KM Could you tell me about the notes you all found?

AY Notes?

KM The notes you found back in—the men that wrote, you know, that got killed.

AY Where they had the notes? They had them in their hard caps. They wrote them and rolled them up in the space of about like two fingers and put them round in the band of the caps.

Joseph Jones.

(born July 2, 1903)

Joseph Jones. My name is Joseph Jones and I'm trying to relate to this young lady my experiences in the mine explosion in 1939 or '40. Don't remember which one, it's been so long.

We had a drinking fountain at the back of the shop and I was getting a drink of water. It was before three o'clock in the evening, I believe. We had an explosion door on the fan which released when excessive pressure come through over the fan. I heard the motor on this fan, the tone of it changed, and I knew something at that time had happened. I thought perhaps the fan motor had blown up, but while I was standing there, just a matter of a minute or so, dust started coming up out of the man shaft. Well, I knew just exactly what had happened. I knew it was an explosion then because I'd been in one or two before and knew just what happened.

So from that time on everything was in turmoil. No one knew what to do. Finally they went to Raysal and got Mr. South. He was the former mine foreman at the Number One, and he knew all about where all the cutoffs—air ventilation system—could be changed, and he went down and changed the ventilation.

Well, there was a terrific crowd gathered, but of course we had it roped off so no one could get in. Best of my knowledge was, it was somewhere around six or seven o'clock before anybody went down. But, now, they was another section of the mines, the one that comes up here under my home. The air cross-circuited at the bottom and blew out an overpass and

this explosion expended itself by just running back and forth in a circle till it died down. If that overpass would of held, it would of went over and got all this group of men that were mining over here. But they all got out, and there was that many that were saved.

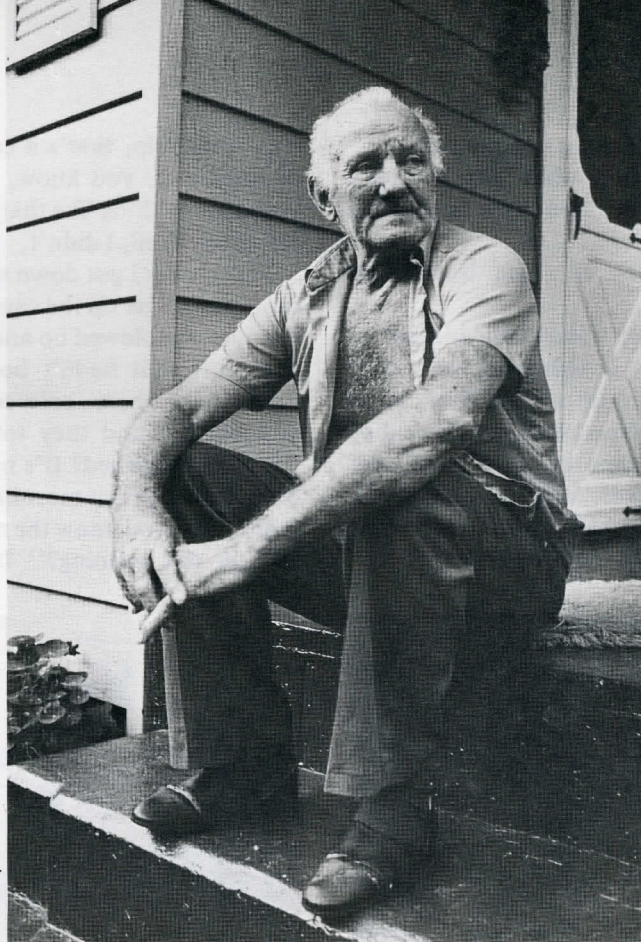
Rescue squads started coming in here from all over the country and from Stone, Kentucky. I knew some of the men, as I'd worked at Stone at one time. It was more just like a reunion to me, 'cause I knew all the men from many different places.

I was sent down on the bottom with one of the electricians. We started to building stoppage up, you see. That's the stoppage between the entries that lets the air move forward, and these men worked—they were only allowed, I believe, ten minutes. They worked with mine rescue equipment on. That's these breathing apparatuses—oxygen tanks on their backs. They were stripped down to their underwear and shoes and the heat was terrific down there. These men with this safety equipment would move up and put in a stoppage.

Well, the fan was running by this time, so then the air would move up to this 50 feet and that's the way they moved forward, just 50 feet at a time. I have no record of just how long it would take them, but I know I was with the men that had a telephone port—we had a telephone system, and it was Mr. Mabe from English. He and I were handling this cable and we would go, whenever they'd move up, we'd just unroll the cable and move up. We were in contact with Mr. Silvetta. He was in the office outside and we would explain to him everything that had happened. He was president, I guess. He was located at Holden, but he was here.

We had two or three minor explosions occurred that night after we got in there—small ones where gas would build up and a little fire at the face or something would set off an explosion. The only way we'd know it, we'd feel the air reverse and start back toward us. It was a pretty scary job, I'll tell you that.

I come out the next morning and I never went back anymore. There was no need for me because I was the



Dewey Pruitt. Photograph by Doug Yarrow.

maintenance foreman here at the shop, and I just volunteered. I knew it was a dangerous job, but I volunteered cause I'd known the same thing at Elkhorn Coal Corporation in Kentucky when we had a mine fire over there. I felt like it was my duty.

From that time on until they brought the men up Mr. Turkovich was in charge and he had everything arranged, movie cameras and all of the equipment that was used. He was supervising it and he had picked another man and me and our job was to bring these stretchers. As they brought the bodies up, they would put them in an ambulance and there'd be an empty stretcher handed out. Well, I'd put it on my shoulder and come back and we stacked them up in the machine shop. By that time there'd be another one and this other man would get the next empty stretcher and come back to the shop and I'd be back out there to get the next one. There wasn't a man brought out of the mines until every one of them was found and was located on the bottom. They had them stacked up in cars, wrapped up in burlap—curtain material. Now, that's about the best

description that I can give you of it. I wasn't with them when they found the first bodies.

Of course, we had the State Police here and you were given a pass over there at the bridge and you couldn't get across that bridge unless you showed this check, but a lot of women and children got through before the barricade was set up and it was a sight, a pitiful sight, I can't describe it to you. I've saw the women standing there, not saying a word, not crying, but tears running down their faces. Some of the men seemed to think that, you know, we'll have them out by sort of a while. I knew that they wasn't any of them coming out of there, cause I knew the violence of that wreckage when I saw where it ripped out the rails down there where the air made the overpass. When it was strong enough to rip out steel rails in the concrete, I knew no one survived at the face.

And if this air hadn't of short-circuited itself and went around and around 'til it exhausted itself, there'd of been a whole crew of men wiped out over here in this section that comes right back in under this house where

we're living. That's where the crew of men was working that got out alive.

Dewey Pruitt.

(born February 5, 1906)

KM What happened that day?

DP Well, really nobody knows what happened.

KM What caused the mines to blow up?

DP Well, that's what I say. They claim it's a slate fall what set it off. I don't believe that. It happened about 20 minutes after two, January the tenth, 1940.

KM Was you working in the mines at the time? Was you inside the mines when it blew up?

DP Yeah. In fact of it, I don't know where to find it right now, but I could show you my undertaker's card. See, there was suppose to been 92 in there, 92 that is dead, missing. And when it blowed up that evening, well, I didn't come out till the next day. That night they fixed a card something like—I know you've seen them—on chalk sacks. Well, they wrote down each man that was missing. They also wrote down the undertaker that was suppose to got him. Well, when I came out the next day they told me they had my card out there, that I could pick it up if I wanted to.

So when it blowed up I had two trim crews that had just left. I know just about where they were at. I had another one on the bottom, waiting for empties so I could get him. There was a big tube running through my dispatcher's office to return air over there that sucks the dust away from the dump to put it in the return. So that tube started just like a siren whistle. I just clenched just like that. Looked at it like that and I said, "What the . . ."

Dixie Combs and Bill Vaughn was in the dispatcher's office with me. Dixie was a mine foreman at that time. I picked up the phone and called outside. Nathan Hale answered the phone—he's dead now. I said, "Nathan, what's happening?"

He said, "I don't know, Dewey, but smoke and fire come out of both shafts."

I just shuck my head and said, "Dix, something happened bad."

He said, "Well, what we going to do?" I said, "Well, it come off the west side. I'm going to the motor barn."

"No, you're not going by yourself."

I said, "If you're going you stay about a hundred feet behind me. If I go down you turn around and come back. Don't you follow me down there."

So we went on to the motor barn. He did. He followed me about a hundred feet behind me. We got down to the motor barn. Seen wasn't nobody left in there. We cut across the west track, coming off the west, coming in to the bottom. Coal, dust, and stuff, oh, it was two or three inches deep over the track. Come on down to the cage. Bill Hassims was superintendent. He came down on the cage. He didn't have a light, safety light or nothing on his head. I said, "What do you want, Bill?"

He said, "I got to find what's going on."

I said, "You ain't going nowhere. You get right back on that cage and go back outside."

"No, I'm not going to do that."

"Yes, you are or you have me to fight."

"Well, I'll go out and call for rescues then."

I said, "OK."

Put him on the cage. Then Mr. Combs went back to the dispatcher's office. I got back over to the dispatcher's office. I said, "Now, Dick, not just the west side's all that gone up. The east side's not gone up. I'm going over there and get them men out of there."

He said, "You afraid to go?"

I said, "Well, I'm not anxious to. But I will go."

Just about that time Shortie—he come up on the change motor. I said, "Shortie, let's go over to Six development."

He said, "I don't . . ."

He never did say he wouldn't go or would go. Well, I come up in the motor. Just opened it up a little bit. As I pulled off, he caught on to the back end of the motor. Going down through

the east side there I stopped. I said, "Shortie, there's nothing's happened this side. It's all happened over the west side. When we got over to Six development and get ahold of the men, we'll tell them that they're going to shut the fan down. So it won't scare the men. And they'll run every which way on us."

So Lawrence Mitchell was section foreman over there at that time. Harvey Harlow was shooting coal for him. We run into Harvey first and told Harvey that they wanted everybody outside. He said, "I'll go catch Lawrence."

I said, "If you're going to catch Lawrence, I'm going with you."

So we went on over a place or two from where we where at and ran into Lawrence. I said, "Lawrence, we're going to shut the fan down for awhile. We want everybody outside."

He said, "Well, I have to go move that machinery out of the face!"

I said, "You forget about that machinery. Lawrence, the mines has blowed up. The west side we know is gone. I don't know how many men it's got. But to keep from getting your men in it we want you outside just as quick as you can get out there."

He said, "O.K."

He started to gathering his men up. There was 47 of them. We brought them to the bottom. Put them on the cage. They come to the outside and happened to see a bunch of men standing around out there. Of course a crowd was beginning to gather. They said, "What the world is going on?" Says, "What's happening to everybody come to see us coming out?" That's when they found out it had blowed up.

Far as telling you what caused it, I couldn't do it. The inspector says a slate fall caused it. I've heard two or three tales about it since.

KM How long did you work in Bartley Mines?

DP I worked 47 years.

KM What did you work at before you worked there?

DP I went to work at Warrior Mines when I went in the mines. Went from there to Clinchco, Virginia. Went from there to Grant Town, West Virginia.



The United Mine Workers of America monument in McDowell County in honor of the 91 dead. Photograph by Doug Yarrow.

Went from there to Vestaburg in Pennsylvania. Then I came back to number one in 1924.

KM Did you still work in that mine after it blew up?

DP Yeah.

KM What finally closed the mines?

DP Well, run out of coal mostly.

KM What did they do for the women that their husbands got killed in the mines? Did they give any compensation?

DP I think the State Law paid them ten thousand dollars apiece.

KM That's all. Did they give anything like each month to help them live on?

DP I don't think that Social Security or anything like that was available at that time. No, they just got the straight, that is, if it was ten thousand.

It might have been five thousand. Seems to me it was ten thousand dollars.

KM Did a lot of the women stay here after their husbands got killed?

DP No, they was a very few. In fact of it I don't know of a one that's here now.

KM Most of them move away?

DP Most of them got married again. Moved away. ✱

Additional reading:

After years of research into 43 of the State's major coal mine explosions and one mine fire, Lacy A. Dillon completed his 292-page book, *They Died in Darkness: West Virginia's Worst Mine Disasters*. Printed in 1976 by and still available from McClain Printing

Company in Parsons, the volume, which includes 31 photographs, depicts the events and their aftermaths from Newberg 1886 to Farmington 1968. Dillon interviewed many survivors to obtain material for articles on each tragedy, and included a list of those who perished in each. A coalfield native, Dillon as a young man witnessed a mine disaster that deeply impressed and troubled him. He became a high school teacher, principal, and supervisor of transportation in Wyoming, Raleigh, and McDowell Counties.

They Died in Darkness sells for \$9.95 plus sales tax and 50c postage and can be ordered from Lacy A. Dillon, Box 222, Ravencliff, WV 15913, or from McClain Printing Company.

Photographic Report

Vandalia Gathering 1978: A Festival of West Virginia Traditional Arts

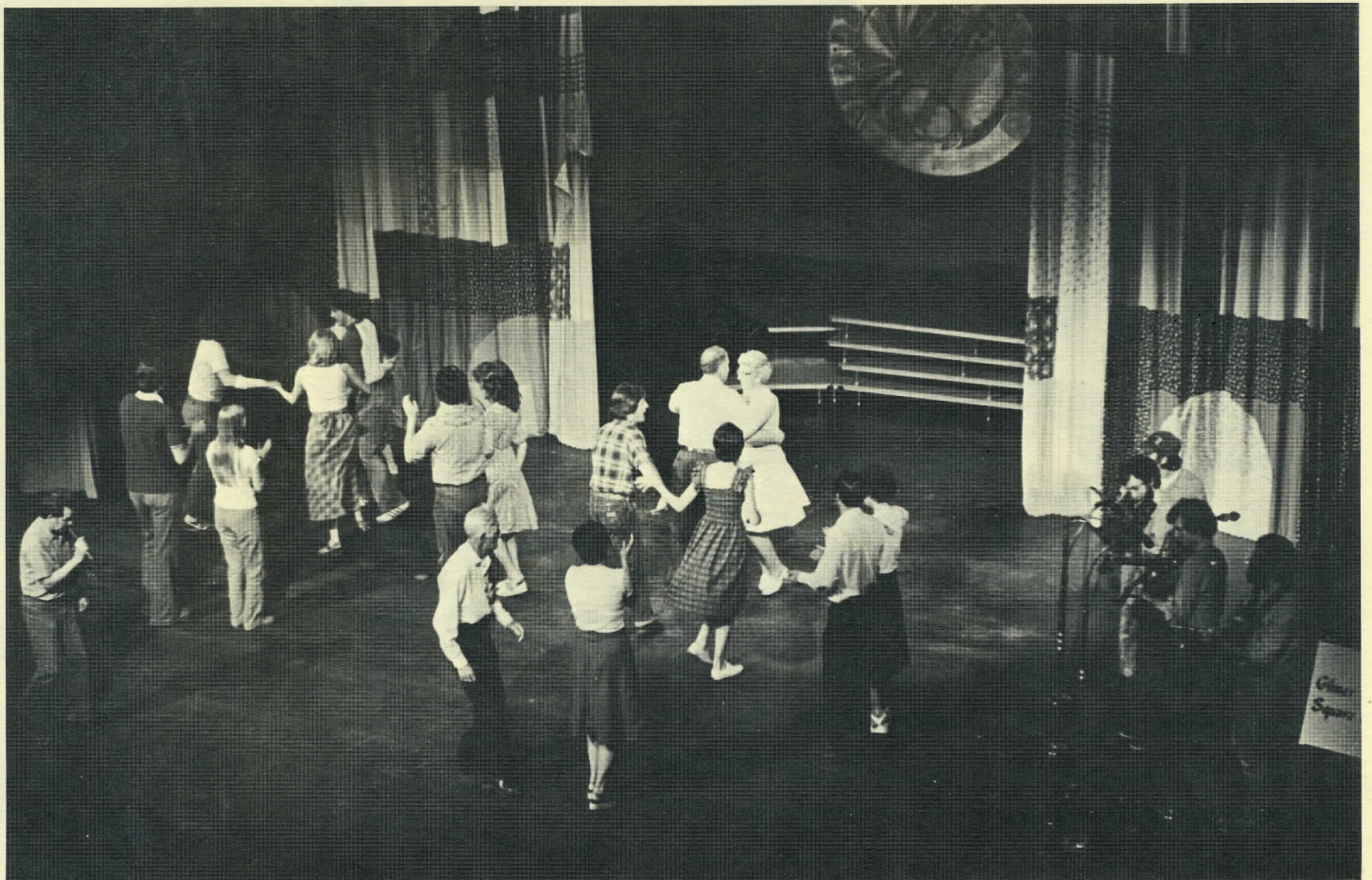
Photographs by Steve Payne and Richard Lee

Musicians and artisans came from Fort Gay, Princeton, Hedgesville, Benwood, and a sight of other cities and villages all around the State and in between. The Department of Culture and History presented its second annual Vandalia Gathering for three days over Memorial Day weekend. This year a folk art exhibition was added and there was a more elaborate crafts presentation than at last year's initial traditional arts festival. Few participants from last year were invited for the final two days of Vandalia, but at Friday night's opening Homecoming Concert many of 1977's musicians played and sang to a nostalgic audience.

Department photographers recorded festival musicians and craftspeople as they delighted visitors in and around the Cultural Center. See inside the covers of this issue for color photographs of the exhibition of carvers, *The Worker as Folk Artist: Five Self-taught Carvers*, which was in the State Museum.

Left. Before Racine's Olive Abrams sang, presenter Kate Long, Morgantown, chatted with her. (S.P.)

Below. Glenville square dancers, older people and College students, skipped and swirled on the State Theater stage as their organizer Mack Samples called and a band of younger musicians played. (R.L.)





Above right. The New Hope Baptist Church in Beckley shared one of its choirs with festival-goers. Etta Persinger directed. (R.L.)

Right. Former Mercer Countian, Hazel Dickens, found a singing partner at Vandalia in Carl Rutherford, Warriormine. (R.L.)

Below. French Mitchell, Buffalo, played the fiddle. (R.L.)





Above left. First generation Yugoslavians, Olga Perkovic Russ, now of Westmont, N.J., and her brother John Perkovic, Benwood, played tamburitza music. (R.L.)

Above. Phyllis Marks, Cox's Mill, sang ballads she has learned over the years in Gilmer County. (S.P.)



Left. At one point in the Sunday morning religious music program participants as well as staff sang and also played many instruments including the musical saw—by Clarence Kelly, Fort Gay, seated center. (S.P.)



Top. In an outdoor workshop the Lilly Brothers and Wilma Lee Cooper talked about earlier touring and radio work, played, and sang; left to right, Bea Lilly, George Ward, Mark Lilly, Mrs. Cooper, Everett Lilly, and Don Stover. (S.P.)

Above left. Sloan Staggs, Romney, picked the mandolin. (R.L.)

Above center. Irma Butcher, West Hamlin, sang ballads unaccompanied. (R.L.)

Above right. Blackie Cool, Monterville, played guitar. (R.L.)

Below left. Dr. P. Ahmed Williams, Institute, lectured, played, and sang his way through a history of black music in this region. (S.P.)

Below right. Jennings Morris, Cowen, at the banjo. (R.L.)

Bottom. Polish polkas were played by the Spichek Brothers and Ox; left to right, James Warren, John, Mike, and Will Spichek. They have played together since they lived at Elbert and went to Gary High School. (R.L.)





Top. Members of Charleston's Greek-American community danced at the outside stage while Paul Pappas and his Internationals (Frank Kidus, center, and Tom Bennett, right) played Greek music. (S.P.)

Above left. Lynn Tusing, Mathias, at her spinning wheel demonstrated in the Great Hall of the Center.

Above right. William O. Iman, the Charleston fiddler, was assisted by his protege Paul Epstein. (S.P.)

Right. Don Clever, Moorefield, seconded Clay County fiddler Ira Mullins. (S.P.)





Left. Clay Countians Hazel and Clarence Stover. (S.P.)

Below left. Andy Boarman, Hedgesville, played one on the Autoharp while his accompanist Don Clever rested. (R.L.)

Below right. C. C. Richardson, Charleston, played and sang his own songs and those of other bluesmen. (R.L.)



Vandalia Gathering 1978

May 27-29

Participants, Exhibits

Friday Night Performers

Olive Abrams, Racine Elmer Bird, Hurricane Bonnie Collins, West Union Harvey Sampson, Nicut Jenes Cottrell, Ivydale Sylvia O'Brien, Ivydale Joe Dobbs, Lavalette	Brooks Gore, Princeton William O. Iman, Charleston Phyllis Marks, Cox's Mill R. French Mitchell, Buffalo Hazel and Clarence Stover, Clay Herb Pitzer, Lindside Ira Mullins, Clay
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Saturday and Sunday Performers

Andy Boarman, Hedgesville Phyllis Boyens, Mascott, Tenn. (formerly of Mingo County) Irma Butcher and Troy Blankenship, West Hamlin Blackie Cool, Monterville Wilma Lee Cooper, Nashville, Tenn. (formerly of Randolph County) Noah Cottrell, Sand Ridge Bernard Cyrus, Fort Gay Carl Davis, Sutton Hazel Dickens, Washington, D.C. (formerly of Mercer County)	Doni Gum, Mill Creek Andy Dillon, Gary Wilson Douglas, Maysel The Gary High School Ensemble, Gary Frank George, Sinks Grove Currence and Minnie Hammonds, Huttonsville O. V. Hirsch, Twilight Raymond Johnston, Premier Clarence Kelley, Fort Gay The Lilly Brothers with Don Stover, Clear Creek Jennings Morris, Cowen The New Hope Baptist Church, Beckley	Phoebe Parsons, Orma Garland Ramey, Wayne Carl Rutherford, Warriormine Sloan Staggs, Romney Velebit Tamburitza Band, Benwood Dr. P. Ahmed Williams, Institute Melvin Wine, Copen Nimrod Workman, Lowell, Fla. (formerly of Mingo County) Gilmer County Square Dancers, Gilmer County Paul Pappas and his Internationals, Charleston Spichek Brothers and Ox (formerly of McDowell County)
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Presenters

Bob Dalsemer, Elkins
 Sam Hickman, Charleston
 Dick Kimmel, Morgantown
 Michael Kline, Charleston
 Kate Long, Morgantown
 Gerry Milnes, Birch River
 Dave Morris, Ivydale
 Dave Peyton, Huntington
 Paul Reisler, Elkins
 Sam Rizetta, Montrose
 Eric Schoenburg, Elkins
 Mack Samples, Glenville

Craft Demonstrators

J. Ed Bailey, (dec.) Bluefield
 Basketmaker
 Karl Belcher, Princeton
 Basketmaker
 Jenes Cottrell, Ivydale
 Foot-powered wood lathe operator
 Bertha Fisher, Ripley
 Weaver
 Lucy Quarrier, Charleston
 Weaver
 Lynn Tusing, Mathias
 Spinner
 Ted Warner, Wymer
 Broommaker

Traditional Art Exhibits

Quilts from throughout the State were displayed in the Great Hall, Balcony, and Museum.

Stairwell

Quilt Types and Techniques, an exhibit designed by Holice Turnbow

Theater Lobby

New River Gorge Bridge Quilt by Gertrude Blume and family
 Paintings by James Tyree Rexrode (dec.), Sugar Grove

Theater Balcony

Sculptures in lead by Basil Pauley, Hurricane

The Worker as Folk Artist: Five Self-taught Carvers

[See inside covers]

Wood carvings, paintings, and drawings by S. L. Jones, Hinton
 Wood carvings by Charlie Permelia (dec.), Lester
 Wood carvings by Sterling Spencer, Richwood
 Coal and wood carvings by James Stewart, Danville
 Stone and wood carvings by G. Connard Wolfe, Gallagher

Continued from page 12

Norbet Ebert, 304-455-2418

Variety of styles, bluegrass, modern country, country rock, old-time instrumental. Electric fiddle, mandolin, steel guitar, drums, bass, vocals.

Professional, union; general availability; fee negotiable.

Hooker Holler Symphony

Rt. 1, Box 75H
Keyser, WV 26726

Pat Shields, 304-788-1964

"Laid back bluegrass." Fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar, bass.

Professional, non-union; general availability; own sound system; fee \$150 and/or negotiable.

Flaggy Meadow

558 Aspen Street
Morgantown, WV 26505

Jackie Horvath, 304-599-3548

Old-time music, square dance tunes (caller available). Fiddle, banjo, guitar, mandolin, tenor banjo.

Amateur, non-union; general availability; fee negotiable.

Gardner Brothers

1332 Cain Street
Morgantown, WV 26505

Worley Gardner, 304-599-2540

Old-fashioned Appalachian mountain tunes, fiddle tunes, Irish music. Two hammered dulcimers, guitars, banjo, bass.

Amateur, non-union; weekend availability; little amplification required; fee negotiable.

The Hillbreed

Allen's Route, Box 33B
Sissonville, WV 25320

James Harrison, 304-984-3666

Large repertory of all sorts of bluegrass and gospel with vocals on most numbers. Mr. Harrison, his wife, and their four children, ages 11 to 18. Fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass, and other instruments.

Semi-professional, non-union; limited availability in winter, more during school vacation; own sound system; fee varies.

Kentucky Foothill Ramblers

107 Westwood Lane
Huntington, WV 25704

Dave Holbrook, 304-429-2408 or
614-532-3231

Old-time music, mostly vocal music from the 1920s and 1930s—Uncle Dave Macon, Charlie Pool, The Skillet Lickers, etc. Fiddle, mandolin, guitar, banjo, bass.

Professional, union; weekend availability outside Charleston-Huntington area, locally any time; own sound system; fee \$300 plus travel for one-night stand.

Laurel Mountain Band

3355 Northfield Road
Charleston, WV 25312

Don Sowards, 304-342-5605

Progressive bluegrass. Dobro, mandolin, banjo, guitar, bass.

Professional, union; general availability on weekends, own sound system; fee negotiable.

The Everett Lilly Show

Rt. 1, Box 161E
Beckley, WV 25801

Everett Lilly, 304-877-3076

"American folk mountain country music." Fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar, bass. Also information about The Lilly Brothers is available from Mr. Lilly.

Professional, union; general availability; fee negotiable.

Loafer's Glory

P. O. Box 976
Clendenin, WV 25045

Dick Basham, 304-548-4213

Primarily jug-band and ragtime music, old-time and some bluegrass. Fiddle, guitar, banjo, mandolin, Dobro, washboard, washtub bass.

Professional, union; general availability on weekends, own sound system; fee \$100 per hour locally. Other negotiable.

Monroe County Ramblers

Box 49
Lindside, WV 24951

Otis Pence, 304-832-6292

Strictly old-time country music, all instrumental. Banjo, fiddle, two mandolins.

Amateur, non-union; limited availability; will play for expenses close to home.

The Dave Morris Band

c/o Look-hear Associates
P. O. Box 1291
Charleston, WV 25325

Judy Galloway, 304-768-2731 or
Gina Schrader, 304-343-5263

Old-time string music and singing, bluegrass, contemporary country, traditional mountain ballads. Guitar, Autoharp, fiddle, mandolin, banjo, bass.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system (available for rent); fee negotiable.

Mountain Grass

Rt. 5, Box 132
Morgantown, WV 26505

Dick Kimmel, 304-296-8195

Traditional fiddle tunes and bluegrass songs. Mandolin, banjo, fiddle, guitar, bass.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee \$500/ negotiable.

Mountain State Pickers

Box 1133
Elizabeth, WV 26143

Glen Smith, 304-275-3674

Hard-driving fiddle music and vocals from the 1930s and 1940s. Fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass.

Professional, non-union; general availability; fee negotiable

McCumbers Brothers

Rt. 2, Box 301
Washington, WV 26181

Darrell McCumbers, 304-863-3253

Traditional bluegrass and vocals. Fiddle, banjo, mandolin, Dobro, rhythm guitar, bass.

Semi-professional, union; weekend availability; own sound system, fee negotiable.

Putnam County Pickers

P. O. Box 196
Culloden, WV 25510

Rusty Wells, 304-562-3548

Primarily original compositions covering wide range of styles including folk, folk rock, country, bluegrass, swing, jazz, blues. Both acoustic and electric guitars, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, bass drums, harmonica, recorder.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Mary Faith Rhodes & The Dobbs Brothers

524 14th Street W.
Huntington, WV 25704

Joe Dobbs, 304-522-7122

Traditional, square dance, and folk music. Fiddle, banjo, mandolin, guitar, hammered dulcimer, mountain dulcimer.

Professional, non-union; general availability; fee negotiable.

Sons of Bluegrass

Box 100 B, Allen's Route
Sissonville, WV 25320

Morris K. Chapman, Sr., 304-984-1687

Progressive bluegrass. Banjo, mandolin, two guitars, bass guitar.

Amateur, non-union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Sour Mash

Box 216
Beverly, WV 26253

Gerald Gainer, 304-636-4265

Traditional bluegrass, "new grass". Dobro, mandolin, banjo, guitar, bass.

Semi-professional, non-union; statewide availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Stompin' Crick

519 Second Ave.
Marlinton, WV 24954

Norris Long, 304-799-6447

Ballad flavor of old-time mountain music and progressive and traditional bluegrass. Guitar, banjo, Autoharp, blues harp, bass.

Professional, non-union; general availability, weekend travel; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Sweeney Brothers

P. O. Box 2794
Huntington, WV 25704

Mike Sweeney, 304-529-3355

Traditional bluegrass. Fiddle, man-

dolin, banjo, guitar, bass.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Teays Valley Boys

892 Orchard Park
Hurricane, WV 25526

Jim Crace, 304-562-5466

Traditional bluegrass. Fiddle, mandolin, guitar, banjo, bass.

Professional, non-union; weekend availability; fee negotiable.

Thunderhill

P. O. Box 245
Keyser, WV 26726

Jim Broome, 304-788-2536

Country-Western, bluegrass, folk, novelty. Guitar, banjo, bass, drums.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Trapezoid

Rt. 1, Box 17A
Montrose, WV 26283

Paul Reisler, 304-636-6341

Traditional music from the Old and New Worlds including southern Appalachian fiddle tunes, bluegrass, Irish, classical, ragtime music. Hammered dulcimers, fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass, concertina, cello, Dobro.

Professional, union; general availability; own sound system; fee negotiable.

Wild Turkey String Band

Rt. 5, Box 120K13
Morgantown, WV 26505

Georgette B. Healy, 304-292-7700

Old-time traditional fiddle music, square dance tunes (caller available). Fiddles, mandolin, guitar, banjo, piano, bass.

Professional, non-union; general availability; own sound system; fee \$300 plus travel.

Book Review

WORK RELATIONS IN THE COAL INDUSTRY: THE HAND-LOADING ERA 1880-1930, by Keith Dix, *Institute of Labor Studies, West Virginia University*, 127 pp., \$2.50.

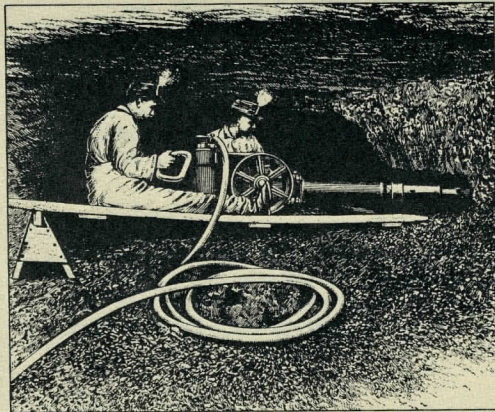
By Mike Toothman

Many of West Virginia's most tragic and bitter chapters in history have come from the coal industry. The broad brush of history paints a picture of mine accidents, organizing drives, strikes, and yellowdog contracts. However, on a different scale another struggle was waged by miners and coal companies, that of mechanization of the work place, the movement towards scientific management, and the fight for mine safety. This conflict over how people relate to their work, their bosses, and their fellow workers is the topic of *Work Relations in the Coal Industry* by Keith Dix, the West Virginia University labor historian. Originally spurred by an interest in "wildcat" strikes and their origins, Dr. Dix discovered that local strikes have their roots in the past. *Work Relations* is a study of those roots.

The three chapters discuss mining methods, mine management, and safety. The first chapter deals with changes in a miner's job and early mechanization which led to a division of labor at the work place. Before these changes took place, each miner had to undercut the coal by hand, drill holes in the seam for the explosives, blast the coal, and load it. Also, laying track to the working face and timbering the roof were the miner's job responsibilities. The miner of this early period was a skilled workman who labored without supervision and was paid on the basis of the tons of coal he loaded. Many states required "certificates of competency" before a miner would be allowed to work a coal face alone. Slowly, after the turn of the century, the use of undercutting machines and a division of labor deskilled the traditional job and altered work relations in the mines.

The thrust of this phase of mechanization and the dividing up of some of the traditional components of the

Work Relations In the Coal Industry: The Hand-Loading Era, 1880-1930



Keith Dix

Institute for
Labor Studies

West Virginia
University

job, such as track laying and timbering, made it possible to use less-skilled workmen but at the same time it required more supervision by management. This trend is discussed in the second chapter. At one time the mines seldom had more than one foreman. This gave each miner great autonomy over his work pace since the foreman was rarely seen—perhaps once a day, perhaps not. They were paid representatives of the operators, duty bound to maximize production, but they were also near-agents of the state in that most safety laws placed on their shoulders much of the responsibility for mine safety.

Management of mines under the tonnage system of pay was very different from practices today. Miners were often cheated of their pay by short weighing of coal by being docked for coal with rock or slate in it and by the companies' increasing the size of coal cars. The book illustrates how arbitrarily management dealt with workers, and how miners (prior to the advent of the United Mine Workers of America) fought back by refusing to work when conditions became intolerable. For example, in 1902 at a Preston County mine, 160 men walked out for 98 days to prevent the company from

changing the check weighman, a very important person under the tonnage rate system. The local strike predates the formal organization of the union and collective bargaining in many localities, Dr. Dix notes.

The final chapter deals with safety and the cost this country pays for progress in terms of miners' lives. The most common cause of mining deaths in this period was roof falls. This one cause alone accounted for 53% of all fatalities from 1906 to 1935. Early attitudes toward mine safety usually blamed the victim for his own death or dismemberment, the assumption being that the fall was due to the dead miner's negligence. Dr. Dix points out, however, that many of the miners who died in these accidents were experienced workers with several years' work under their belts. Clearly, there were other reasons besides inexperience for these deaths, and studies by the U.S. Bureau of Mines and others later proved this.

In some of the captive mines, where costs could be passed on to steel users, it was clearly demonstrated that safe working conditions could be provided and miners' lives could be saved. The competition on the coal industry itself, however, often necessitated

cost cutting so drastic that miners had no choice but to work under unsafe and unhealthy conditions. The logic of the marketplace dictated the death toll for workers in this industry.

Early state mining laws, for example, were little more than feeble attempts to correct the more blatant unsafe mining practices. These laws required mine inspections but the few, poorly paid inspectors were no match for the coal operators. In fact, individual miners were more likely to be prosecuted under the safety laws than were foremen or mine owners. By 1923 U.S. Coal Commission found that Pennsylvania's workmen compensation laws which rewarded operators through lower insurance rates for better safety records had been incentive for operators to improve working conditions. But the Coal Commission itself failed to consider basic causes of mine accidents or to recommend legislation for reducing accidents. The book's chapter on safety, the longest, ends with the telling summation, "... we are left with the rather depressing conclusion that had miners not fought hard and long for union protection and had they not been willing to refuse to work and to prevent others from working during local stoppages, the death toll in this industry might have been substantially higher than it was."

For anyone interested in coal mining, this book is an important contribution to our understanding. Careful scholarship and lucid writing, along with well-chosen photographs and other illustrations, are the tools Dr. Dix deftly employs in his work here. Written with empathy for the day-to-day life of the miner, the book gives new insights into the history of West Virginia's most important industry. As part of a growing literature on work relations in different industries, *Work Relations in the Coal Industry* is a significant study. It is worth noting that this 127-page paperback is only a part of a study Dr. Dix is pursuing on coal mining. Additional studies will be forthcoming and should lead to a better understanding of coal miners, coal operators, and their current problems.

In This Issue

JIM GRIFFITH, a California native, lives with his family near the Papago Indian Reservation south of Tucson, Arizona. He combines the professions of folklore and cultural anthropology with the avocation of music. His wife Loma puts on Tucson Meet Yourself, a festival of local multi-ethnic music and food. He met the Polings during the course of working on the festival in 1976, and is a fan of their singing. Although he is firmly committed to understanding and explaining the cultural traditions of his area, his investigations have led him to many parts of the world—including West Virginia.

LOIS C. McLEAN, a Hoosier born in Indianapolis, is a graduate of Purdue University. She married a West Virginian, William D. McLean, in Germany and came to his home state for the first time in 1959. Beckley has been Mrs. McLean's home since 1962 and Mother Jones and labor history her avocation since 1963. She expects to finish writing a definitive biography of Mother Jones in the coming months. She is president of the West Virginia Labor History Association. Her article on Mother Jones appeared in the January 1978 issue of GOLDENSEAL.

KATHY MATNEY was born in Grundy, Virginia, to a coal miner's family of ten children. As a small child she lived in various coal towns in Virginia and West Virginia. When she was 11 the family moved to Bartley and she attended school there through the eleventh grade. She then moved back to Virginia and graduated from Honaker High School in 1978. Ms. Matney plans to attend Southwest Community College in Richlands, Virginia, where she wants to study journalism and photography.

ARTHUR C. PRICHARD, born and reared in Mannington, was graduated from Mannington public schools, West Virginia University, and McCormick Theological Seminary (Presbyterian), Chicago, Illinois. He has been employed as boys' director and coach at a Presbyterian mission school on the Navajo Reservation at Ganado, Arizona. Rev. Prichard also served as pastor of churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and in Wheeling and Mannington before retiring in 1970. He was a moderator of Wheeling Presbytery and the Synod of West Virginia for his denomination. In 1969 the Soil Conservation Service chose him the Conservation Minister of West Virginia, and Davis and Elkins College honored him with a Doctor of Divinity Degree. For 25 years Mr. Prichard was chairman of the Good Samaritan Project in Korea, a missionary organization which helped operate two Christian agricultural training schools in South Korea. He chairs the board of directors of the Buffalo Creek Watershed Association, which works for flood control in Marion County. He has had articles in *Wonderful West Virginia*, *West Virginia University Magazine*, *Monday Morning*, (a U.P. Church publication), *The West Virginia Hillbilly*, and the *Fairmont Times-West Virginian*. He and Mrs. Prichard produced the color slide set, with script, "It's West Virginia!" for the West Virginia Department of Education—a program used in the schools throughout the State in teaching West Virginia subjects. Photography, operating a tree farm, traveling, and writing are Mr. Prichard's hobbies. He has written a number of articles for GOLDENSEAL.

TOM RODD, born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was a potter for eight years, but has turned to documenting traditional music. He attended Berea College in Kentucky before moving to West Virginia, and is now enrolled at Fairmont State College. He is a founding member of the Greenbrier Valley Artisans Guild. Mr. Rodd has been half of a music duo, Mountain Mix, playing guitar with Geoff Green, and he also plays the banjo and studies fiddling.

JANE SOMERVILLE is a poet and critic whose work has been published in *The New York Times* and in prominent literary journals. A native of Parkersburg, she holds the B.S. from Ohio University, the M.A. and Ed.D. from Columbia University. In 1977 one of her poems appeared on 2,000 buses in New York City as a winner of "Poetry in Public Places." She is an Assistant Professor at Parkersburg Community College and a specialist in teaching people of all ages to express themselves in poetry. Recently, Dr. Somerville has been involved in poetry writing for older people, the subject of her story for this issue.

MIKE TOOTHMAN, a Weirton native and the son of a steelworker, received an undergraduate degree in social work at West Virginia University. For two summers as intern for both the National Lawyers Guild and the George Wiley Fund, he worked in Fairmont for the United Peoples Welfare Rights Organization. Over his 25 years he has also been a steelworker, janitor, fast food restaurant worker, and a volunteer draft counselor. For the past two years he has worked with the Mountain Community Union, a coalition of activists and organizations doing multi-issue organizing in Monongalia, Marion, and Preston Counties.

MARIE TYLER-McGRAW, a native of Harrison County, is a graduate of West Virginia University where she also received her M.A. degree in American History. She is now a candidate for a Ph.D. in American Studies at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. A resident of McLean, Virginia, and the mother of two daughters, she serves as assistant professor of American History at Northern Virginia Community College, Loudoun Campus. Several generations of her family have lived in the Wheeling area. Her previous contribution to GOLDENSEAL was an article on the life of Anna Jarvis, which appeared in October 1977 issue.



CHARLIE PERMELIA
1914-1965



Department of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

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