Christmas Eve • Growing Up in Wheeling • Swiss Family Balli

West Virginia Traditional Life

Goldenseal

Winter 2015 $5.95



Fiddler Ed Haley

From the Editor

Loyal readers are already aware that GOLDENSEAL is a treasure. As the magazine's new editor, I feel an enormous obligation to maintain this tradition.

Before writing this column, I looked back at issues from the last four decades. In the very first GOLDENSEAL (1975), editor Tom Screven and designer Colleen Anderson featured articles about traditional farm life, old-time string band music, a retired coal miner and self-taught artist, and the legendary Lilly Brothers. In his own first issue (1979), editor Ken Sullivan observed, "GOLDENSEAL . . . is unique in being about the very people who read it, and its only job is to tell your story—to document, that is, the life experiences of West Virginians past and present." Ken's successor, John Lilly, wrote in his first column (1997) about being "smitten" with the Mountain State, which he clearly demonstrated in the 73 issues he edited. Between the two, Ken and John were at the helm for a remarkable 36 years.

Looking back over more than four decades, I'm struck by how GOLDENSEAL's purpose has remained consistent. Year in and year out, the magazine has captured the essence of what it means to be a West Virginian.

Too often, our state is portrayed in a negative light. Admittedly, some of this is merited, but much more frequently, it's the result of false stereotypes. GOLDENSEAL has never shied away from the negative aspects of our history, but more often it's shined a light on what makes West Virginia and West Virginians so exceptional. From that very first issue, GOLDENSEAL has highlighted why West Virginia and West Virginians are one of a kind. We're not perfect, but then again, who amongst us is? That's why West Virginia is "almost Heaven," and I can't think of another place that comes so close.

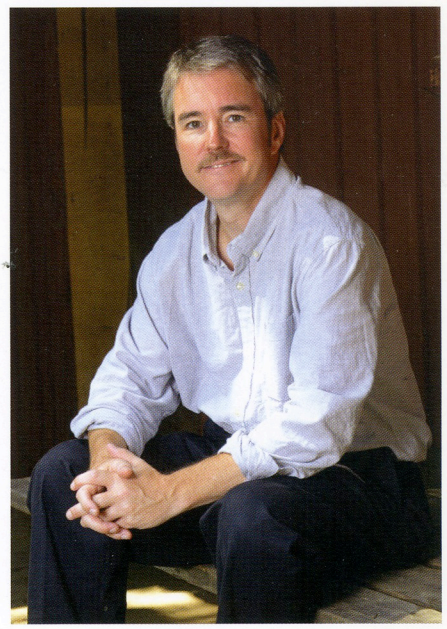


Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Some of our readers no longer live here, such as 86-year-old James Bernardin, who writes movingly in this issue about growing up in Wheeling. Others, like the late Joe Dobbs and Don West, adopted the Mountain State as their home. Regardless of where we hail from, all of us share a common belief—that "no place like home" applies to only one place, and it's far from the flatlands of Kansas. Once a West Virginian, always a West Virginian.

This is what GOLDENSEAL does best. It highlights what we love most about the Mountain State and what it means to be a West Virginian. I'm proud to carry on this heritage as GOLDENSEAL's new editor. From a professional standpoint, it's the greatest honor of my career, and I fully understand the responsibility I've inherited. GOLDENSEAL owes an incredible debt of gratitude to Tom, Ken, and John and, most importantly, to our writers, subjects, and readers. You have all made GOLDENSEAL what it is.

I also want to give special thanks to my father, Doug Bumgardner, who I lost earlier this year. He taught me there's no greater joy than to do what you love to do for a living. I'm truly doing it, Dad!

Stan Bumgardner

Volume 41, Number 4 **Goldenseal** Winter 2015



p. 12

2 Letters from Readers
5 Current Programs • Events • Publications
8 The Many Faces of West Virginia
By Kim Weitkamp
11 GOLDENSEAL Good-Bye

12 Feuds, Fiddles, Family, and Friends
Ed Haley's Life on Harts Creek
By Brandon Ray Kirk

24 John Hartford's Search for Ed Haley
By Brandon Ray Kirk

28 Christmas Eve in the Manger of the Little Barn
By Jack Furbee

32 "West Virginia—Hooray!"
Growing Up in Wheeling
By James Bernardin

42 Appalachian South Folklife Center Turns 50!

53 Don West

54 Old-Fashioned Country Ingenuity
By John Payne

56 Swiss Family Balli: The Movie
By Alan Byer

62 More about the Ballis and the
West Virginia Swiss
By Alan Byer

64 Mountain Music Roundup
By Paul Gartner

68 *West Virginia Back Roads*
A Chip off the Old Pringle
By Carl E. Feather



p. 24

p. 32





p. 42



p. 54

On the cover: Logan County native and legendary fiddler Ed Haley poses for a studio portrait in the 1940s. Photo courtesy of Lawrence and Pat Haley.

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Earl Ray Tomblin
Governor

Kay Goodwin
Secretary
Department of Education
and the Arts

Randall Reid-Smith
Commissioner
Division of Culture and History

Stan Bumgardner
Editor

Kim Johnson
Circulation Manager

Karin Kercheval Design
Publication Design

GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $20 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs.

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

Phone (304)558-0220
e-mail chgoldenseal@wv.gov
www.wvculture.org/goldenseal

Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

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

The Division of Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Printed in West Virginia by Chapman Printing
Charleston – Huntington – Parkersburg

©2015 by the State of West Virginia

Letters from Readers

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

John Lilly

September 17, 2015
Port Republic, Maryland
Editor:
I have been a reader and occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL from its first years through the editorships of Tom Screven, Ken Sullivan, and John Lilly. The periodical has been wonderful from the start, under all of its editors. I am not aware of any other state that celebrates grassroots culture in this wonderful way. It says a lot about West Virginia having the right values in the right place.

This is a moment to pay special tribute to John Lilly, thanking him for his years of service. I have enjoyed this period in GOLDENSEAL's life and appreciate John's evident dedication, care, and breadth of interest. His ability to enlist insightful writers and photographers has been excellent, and the issues that emerged during John's period with GOLDENSEAL have been superlative.

Many thanks, John, and best wishes,
Carl Fleischhauer



Former GOLDENSEAL editor John Lilly, flanked by longtime assistants Cornelia Alexander (left) and Kim Johnson (right). Photographer anonymous.



Former GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan poses with a woodcarving from the West Virginia State Museum. The statue was a fixture of the GOLDENSEAL office when Ken was editor and now graces his office at the West Virginia Humanities Council. Photo by Michael Keller.

Ken Sullivan

October 14, 2015
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Editor:
I enjoyed so much the article about Ken Sullivan in the Fall 2015 issue of GOLDENSEAL. I congratulate him on receiving the Vandalia Award. He was editor of GOLDENSEAL when I submitted my first article, and he offered much personal and constructive criticism. He was part of my education. Several of my articles were accepted (and some rejected), but his editorial comments were always helpful. I also submitted a few items for the *West Virginia Encyclopedia* and was fortunate to have him sign my copy at Tamarack when it was first published. He has contributed so much to West Virginia.
Leona G. Brown

October 17, 2015
Star City, West Virginia
Editor:
Ken Sullivan and West Virginia traditional life go together like mountains and Mountaineers. I much enjoyed John Lilly's story and Michael Keller's photos in the Fall 2015 issue. They bring to life this unique West Virginian who truly is with us and shines his light among us.

Ken is intertwined in so many ways with our history. As editor of GOLDENSEAL, director of the West Virginia Humanities Council, and often a speaker, he has enabled us to better understand the culture in and around our mountains and at the various places where we live.

I write as one of Ken's hundreds of writer contacts as he nurtured our contributions to GOLDENSEAL and the *West Virginia Encyclopedia*. He edits with a light but perceptive and enlightened pencil. How fitting that he should receive the 2015 Vandalia Award for contributions to our folklore. Thank you, and thank you, Ken.
Norman Julian

Norman Jordan

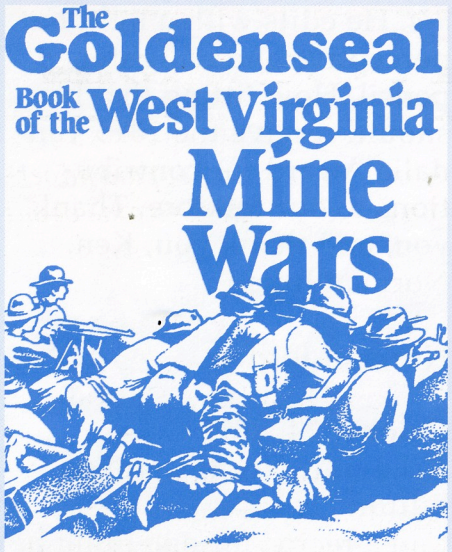
October 14, 2015
Asheville, North Carolina
Editor:
Can a recipe for one thing be a recipe for other things? Every time I read the directions on making a poem, it fills me with happiness. I regret that Norman Jordan is not here to concoct other recipes. [See "GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes," Fall 2015.]
Jo Ann Hussey Stephens

Angelo Argento

September 10, 2015
Newport News, Virginia
Editor:
I am a bit late in sending my comment regarding An-



Angelo Argento stands in front of his first store in Powelltown Hollow, Fayette County, ca. 1935, before it burned down. Photo courtesy of Sonny Argento.



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

Now in its fourth printing, the book is revised and features updated information. The large-format, 109-page paperbound book sells for $12.95, plus $2 per copy postage and handling. West Virginia residents please add 6% state sales tax (total $15.73 per book including tax and shipping).

I enclose $_____ for ___ copies.
-or-
Charge my
___VISA ___MasterCard

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

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

gelo Argento [see "Angelo's Famous Italian Sausage," Spring 2015]. However, my pride in and praise of this article are above and beyond my expectations.

My first memory of Angelo's was approximately as a three-year-old child, yet I can vividly remember being taken there for candy (our house was three doors away). I remember the store fire also. It seems that the new store was almost an immediate happening. Now the store was across the street from my house! That is when I began to know the Argento/Lopez compound was a good thing.

My father, being a miner, would not run an account, so we had to wait for our pennies to spend. At this time, you were served mainly by Angelo because help was not needed. He was such a kind, easygoing person. Now that I think about it, I believe he was shy. He treated children with the same respect as adults.

It was a thrill to see the donut truck. We saved our pennies for that and of course candy when we had the money. However, knowing Angelo, I'm sure if there was a family in need, he would have delivered to them without mention.

The melding of Argento and Lopez was beautiful. Grandma and Grandpa Lopez were great because we had kids our ages to play with. One such child in that family was Sarah's nephew. Now there's a story for the books. Now a retired admiral from the Navy, to think I baby-sat him once, and my mother assisted at his birth. Thanks to Admiral T. Joseph Lopez, Retired.

I married and moved away, but every time we went home, my kids had to get to Angelo's for their "Pig in the Poke." Really, I can't say enough good about Angelo and Sarah too! Both were great neighbors and friends. Today, most of the family I knew is gone, but I still keep in touch with some of the Lopez girls. They are more like sisters than just friends.

So thank you very much for bringing some of West Virginia back to me.
Sincerely,
Marvetta Harris Dahir

West Virginia Graveyards

October 6, 2015
Morgantown, West Virginia
Editor:
I am in search of a poem that tells why many early West Virginia graveyards were located on hills. I was given a copy of the poem (or possibly it was a short verse) several years ago, but unfortunately, I misplaced it. I am writing an article involving West Virginia graveyards and want to include one or two lines from that poem. Any assistance will be appreciated.
E. D. Michael
374 Horseshoe Rd.
Morgantown WV 26508
edmichael@comcast.net

Current Programs • Events • Publications

GOLDENSEAL announcements are published as a service, as space permits. They are not paid advertisements, and items are screened according to the likely interests of our readers. We welcome event announcements and review copies of books and recordings, but cannot guarantee publication.

2015 Juried Exhibition

The 2015 Juried Exhibition, sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, will be on display at Tamarack in Beckley until February 21. The winning artwork will then travel to Charleston for a special display at the West Virginia State Museum at the Culture Center. This year's exhibition features 119 pieces of artwork—out of 270 entries. At Tamarack, the three top winners of the Governor's Award will be displayed at the main entrance beside the information desk; the remaining artwork will be exhibited in the main gallery and at the entrance to the theater. This year's show is incredibly diverse, representing everything from textiles to sculptures to blown glass to paintings. It includes 95 artists from 29 counties.

The Governor's Award winners are Hanna Kozlowski-Slone, Huntington (D. Gene Jordon Memorial Award recipient); Alison Helm, Morgantown; and Robert Villamagna, Wheeling. Awards of Excellence were presented to Mark Cline, Caldwell; Vernon Howell, Barboursville; Christine Rhodes, Parkersburg; Randy Selbe, South Charleston; Clayton Spangler, Charleston; Michael Teel, Saint Albans; and Larry Weese, Jr., Ravenswood. Merit Awards went to Chris Dutch, Charleston; Robert Fisher, Charleston; Mary Grassell, Hurricane; Charly Jupiter Hamilton, Charleston; Newman Jackson, Charleston; William Kubach, Clendenin; Morgan Richards, South Charleston; and Christopher Schultz, Bridgeport.



Woodblock print, *Vandalia Vantage Point*, by Mary Grassell of Hurricane, Putnam County—a Merit Award winner in the 2015 Juried Exhibition.

Shows from West Virginia Public Broadcasting

A new podcast, *Us & Them*, explores all sides of cultural issues that too often divide us.

Charleston native Trey Kay presents topics that may make you consider your opinions on controversial topics related to religion, sexuality, and other issues. Trey won a Peabody award for his radio documentary *The Great Textbook War*, which told different sides of the 1974 Kanawha County textbook controversy.

Us & Them is a joint project of West Virginia Public Broadcasting (WVPB) and Trey Kay Productions, with support from the West Virginia Humanities Council. You can subscribe to *Us & Them* on iTunes and Stitcher or listen at http://usandthempodcast.com/.

WVPB also kicked off its second season of *This Week in West Virginia History*. The

two-minute show airs on WVPB on weekdays at 6:30 a.m. and 4:48 p.m. Each program features stories about people, places, and events in Mountain State history. The radio scripts are narrated by author and storyteller Colleen Anderson.

The shows are drawn from entries on *e-WV*, the online version of the *West Virginia Encyclopedia*, a 2006 publication of the West Virginia Humanities Council that became a regional bestseller. In addition, the shows are available at http://wvpublic.org/programs/week-west-virginia-history. WVPB has also developed an education component, available at http://wv.pbslearningmedia.org.

Ho Ho Ho-liday Handmade Market

The Ho Ho Ho-liday Handmade Market will be held in Shepherdstown on weekends in December, ending on December 19-20. This holiday celebration features handcrafted works by regional artists and crafters. Visitors can shop a selection of items, including pottery, fused glass, fine art, woodcrafts, jewelry, clothing, knitted and crocheted items, specialty foods, and more.

The market will be held at the community club building at 102 E. German Street. Saturday hours will run from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/SCCChristmasBazaar, or call the Shepherdstown Community Club at 304-876-3323.

Greenbrier Valley Winter Music Festival

The fourth annual Greenbrier Valley Winter Music Festival will be held January 30, 2016, starting at 6 p.m. It will be held at several venues in downtown Lewisburg, with bands performing rock 'n' roll, jazz, country, and bluegrass music. Cost of admission is $20, which allows access to all participating venues. Note that some venues are restricted to ages 21 and older. For more information, call 304-645-1000 or visit www.greenbrierwv.com.

Quilter's Retreat

North Bend State Park in Cairo, Ritchie County, will host its Quilter's Retreat February 14-16, 2016. The park is located 30 miles from Parkersburg and offers many activities and attractions for guests.

Quilters can enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the park while working on quilting projects. Attendees are encouraged to bring a quilt they are already working on or start a new project during the retreat. They will receive instruction from professional quilters and get to know others with the same passion for the craft. For more information or pricing, call 304-643-2931, or visit www.northbendsp.com.

Gardner Winter Music Festival

The 38th annual Gardner Winter Music Festival will take place February 26-27, 2016, at South Middle School in Morgantown. The idea



Worley and Margaret Gardner, 1992. Photo by Mark Crabtree.



Downtown Charleston will host a celebration of Celtic arts, culture, and traditions, March 4-6, 2016.

for the festival was born one cold winter day in 1978 when friends Worley Gardner and Sloan Staggs grew tired of waiting around for summer festivals. The first Winter Music Festival was held the following February and has continued annually ever since. In 1992, after Worley passed away, the festival was renamed the Worley Gardner Music Festival. Worley was renowned as a square dance caller and for the dulcimers he played, designed, and built. His wife, Margaret, carried on the tradition until she died in 2000, when the festival became the Gardner Winter Music Festival to honor both Worley and Margaret.

The two-day event is still going strong thanks to the help of local supporters and more than 300 musicians who attend. The festival features traditional Appalachian music with continuous on-stage performances, workshops, and informal jam sessions. The hours are 6-11 p.m. on the 26th and 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. on the 27th, with a square dance that evening. General admission is $3 on the 26th and $5 on the 27th. Musicians with instruments are admitted free. For more information, call 304-641-2376, or visit www.gwmf.org.

Charleston Downtown Celtic Festival

Charleston will host its inaugural Celtic Calling—a celebration of Celtic arts, culture, and traditions—March 4-6, 2016. The event will include dancing, music, education, and family fun. Visitors can don their kilts and join the challenge of the Highland Kilt Run, learn about Celtic traditions at the Kanawha County Public Library, take in an Irish movie at the Capitol Theater, or have a specialty beverage at one of Charleston's pubs. A concert, sponsored by FOOTMAD, will feature Daìmh at the Capitol Theater on March 5. For more information, visit www.celticcalling.org.

Here's My GOLDENSEAL Gift List!

Please add the following name(s) to the GOLDENSEAL mailing list. I enclose $20 for each subscription.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Gift Giver's Name _____

Address _____

_____

Name(s) to be signed on gift card:

_____

[ ] Add my name too! I enclose $20 for my own subscription.

Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL. We also accept VISA and MasterCard.

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

The Many Faces of West Virginia

By Kim Weitkamp

Charlie Gum, age 88
Nicholas County

Charlie and his wife, Jan, grew up together and have been married now for 61 years.

"We've known each other all our lives. Since the beginning of my life, I knew her," he says with a chuckle. "We lived two miles from each other. One day, I went over there looking for her brother Gene to see if he wanted to go do something. He wasn't there, but she was. We got to talking, and that's about it."

"I went looking for my buddy and ended up finding a wife."

His plaid button-down shirt is ironed and starched, thanks to his wife. It's carefully tucked in, and the pleats on his pants are razor sharp. As he walks, his shoes seem too heavy, but then I realize his soft shuffle comes from age and cautiousness.

Charlie was born in Lewis County, the son of a farmer who was also the son of a farmer. His father also worked for the West Virginia Department of Highways. Farm life must have gotten into Charlie's blood because he ended up working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for 28 years.

"I served four years during the Korean War," recalls Charlie. "I was stationed in Germany and was a mortar squad leader. I don't know. That's about all I got to say on that."

Charlie is soft spoken with a serious demeanor, but don't let that fool you. He likes to tell stories and have a good laugh.

"I remember the old times," says Charlie. "There was a dog down the road that always chased my dad's truck. So [Dad] tied a rag to the wooden spokes in the wheel and then drove by. That dog came shooting out of its yard, grabbed that rag with its mouth, and did a few tumbles. My dad stopped the truck. The dog let go and went back to its yard. After that, it chased every automobile except my dad's."



Carolyn Hunter
Age 60, Raleigh County

Carolyn's shop, Seams Easy, defies all sensibility as far as marketing and location. It easily disappears into the background as you zoom by on West Virginia Route 3 in Daniels. The parking situation is jigsaw difficult, and there's no bold signage to tell you she's there. Doesn't matter. The place is busy, busy, busy. She's one of the best.

Walking inside, I find a hodgepodge of furnishings from different eras. The hum of sewing machines and easy laughter fill the air. Off to the right sit three generations of women, each with their own machine. Gospel music fills the air, and one customer jokes that calling the shop is like calling "Dial-A-Prayer." I feel like I've walked in on a church meeting.

Born and raised in Wyoming County, Carolyn learned to sew out of necessity. Coming from a family with six kids meant there was not a lot of money for clothing. She made most of her clothes with her mother's treadle sewing machine. Carolyn's home economics teacher recognized her talent and connected her with the only tailor in the area. Carolyn apprenticed under tailor Leslie Deri for seven years; Leslie was a native of Hungary who'd come to the United States during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. After seven years under his tutelage, Carolyn struck out on her own.



"He was sad and proud all at the same time."

"I opened my shop here, in Daniels, so I wouldn't be too close to his business," Carolyn notes. "I thought he would be mad when I told him I was leaving to open my own shop, but he wasn't. He was sad and proud all at the same time."

I look over at one of Carolyn's young apprentices: a 20-year-old girl working at one of the sewing machines. It seems like history is repeating itself.

JonDavid Schwitzerlette
Age 13, Raleigh County

JonDavid is only 13, but he talks like an old soul: "There are so many things that I—we—can do to help with the many challenges this world faces."

The table is covered with his most recent achievements. He's calm and cool, with a keen understanding that these are just momentary stepping stones to bigger things.

"My favorite subjects," he says, "are science and English, but my best subject is math. I didn't like English until this year, but my English teacher is my favorite teacher. So now, English is one of my favorite subjects."

JonDavid's school doesn't offer computer science, so he's done some independent research in his spare time and feels like computers could fit into his future goals. He reflects, "I like to explore the things that you see every day and figure out how they work—not just computers, but the world and its ecosystem."

His fingers are intertwined, and he answers carefully, always taking a moment to think first and then speak. "It seems to me," he says, "in today's society, that many people lack purpose and honor. I can change the world each day with small acts of kindness, but my goal is to teach. Teaching would allow me to help future generations learn and hopefully find their purpose."

As I sit and listen to JonDavid talk, I hope for several things. I want him to reach his goals and I'd like him to fulfill them in our gorgeous state.

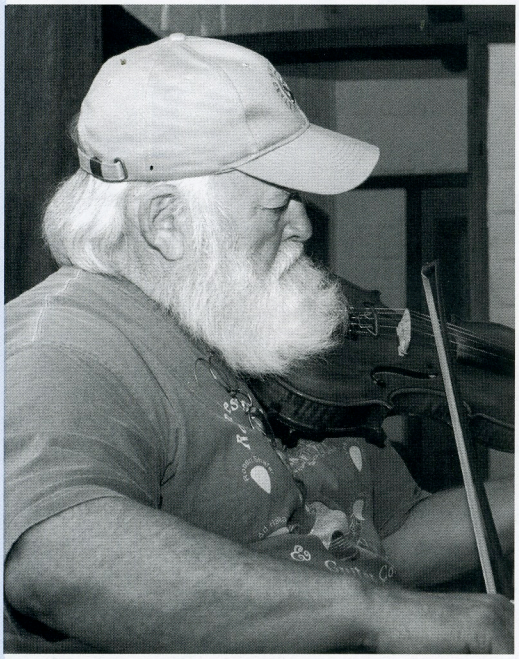
He has made me think (which is what a good teacher does). What am I doing to create more positive change in our world?



"I can change the world each day with small acts of kindness."

KIM WEITKAMP splits her time as an author, public speaker, storyteller, performer, and singer/songwriter. She tours nationally and carries an armload of awards. She lives with her husband and two dogs in Raleigh County and truly believes West Virginia is one of the most beautiful places on earth. You can visit her Web site at www.kimweitkamp.com. This is Kim's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Bye



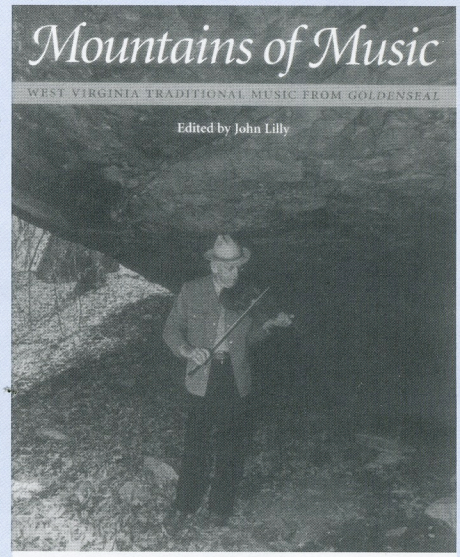
Joe Dobbs, fiddling in Australia, 2009. Photo by Ian Alexander.

West Virginia's old-time music scene lost a great friend on September 21, 2015, with the passing of **Joe Dobbs** of Kanawha County. The Mississippi native was raised in Louisiana and moved to Appalachia nearly 50 years ago. He soon adopted West Virginia as his home state. Joe was fond of saying, "I wasn't born in West Virginia, but I got here as soon as I could."

In 1976, Joe and his brother Dennis opened the Fret 'n Fiddle music store in Huntington and eventually relocated it to Saint Albans. The store became a gathering spot for musicians of all styles and interests, and Joe's Saturday night jams were known far and wide. Joe was a musical social director wherever he went, whether it was a large festival or his own backyard.

He could play virtually any instrument but was best known as a fiddler, not just of old-time tunes but also of jazz standards from the '30s. It seems like everyone in West Virginia played with Joe at one time or another. While he performed regularly with a host of musicians, singers, and songwriters, he's best remembered for his band The 1937 Flood, which he cofounded with Dave Peyton and Charlie Bowen in 1973; they were soon joined by Roger Samples and Stewart Schneider. He's also remembered for his show *Music from the Mountains*, which aired for a quarter-century on West Virginia Public Radio.

There are not enough words to express what Joe meant to West Virginia's music community. For all musicians out there, next time you gather at a festival, around a campfire, or in someone's living room, be sure to "play a few for Joe."



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

The book is available from the GOLDENSEAL office for $33.95, plus $2 shipping per book; West Virginia residents please add 6% sales tax (total $37.99 per book, including tax and shipping). Add *Mountains of Music* to your book collection today!

I enclose $_____ for ___ copies.
-or-
Charge my
___VISA ___MasterCard

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____

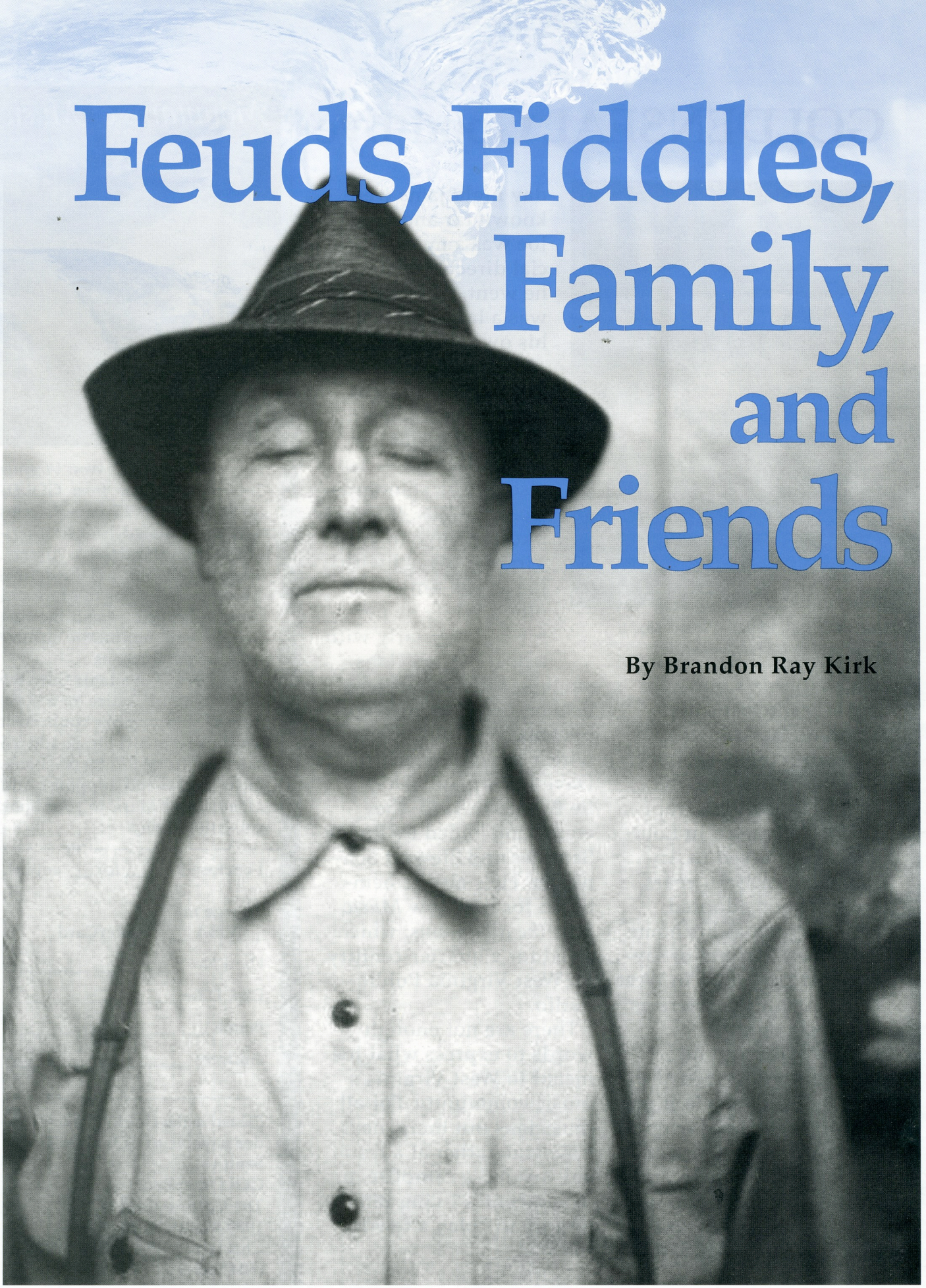
Name _____

Address _____

_____

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

Feuds, Fiddles, Family, and Friends



By Brandon Ray Kirk

Ed Haley's Life on Harts Creek

The author compiled this story from research and interviews he conducted with Ed Haley's family and friends from 1991 to 2001.
–ed.

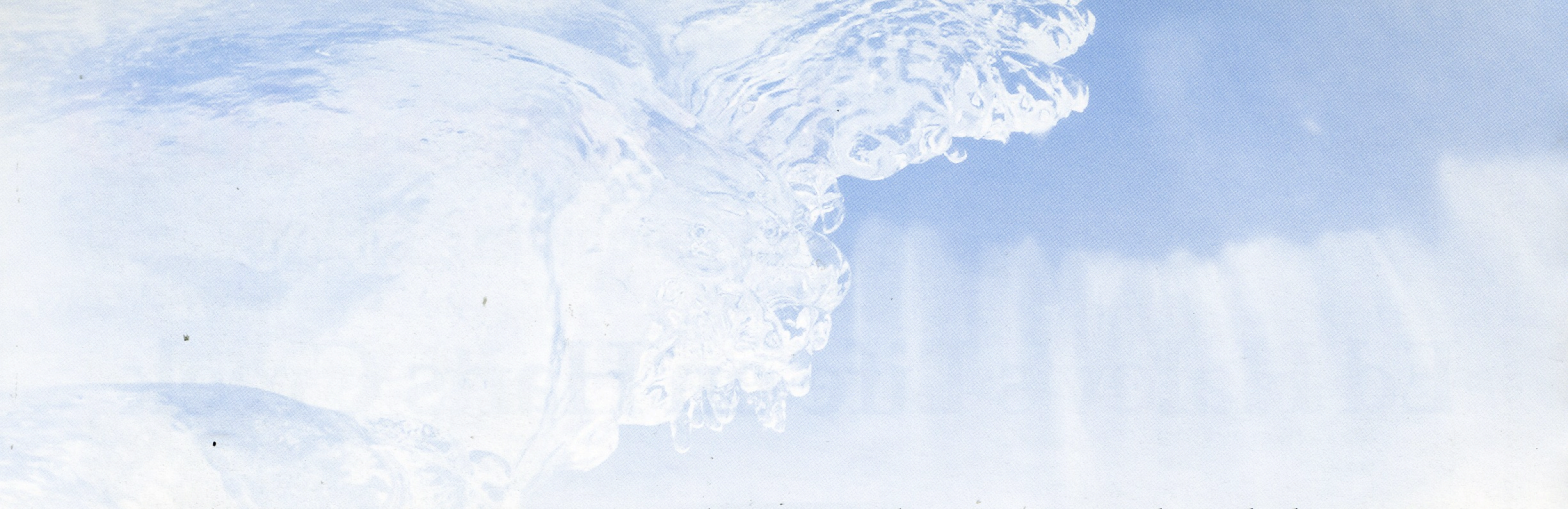
James Edward "Ed" Haley was one of the most gifted musicians ever to emerge from West Virginia. The blind fiddler was also an accomplished vocalist, clawhammer banjoist, guitarist, mandolin player, organist, and pianist.

Renowned singer-songwriter and musician John Hartford researched Ed's life and music from the early 1990s until his untimely death in 2001. He regarded Ed as "the best and most important fiddler of our time." In 2000, John played Ed's slow, mournful arrangement of "Man of Constant Sorrow" in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

Ed was born in August 1885 to Milt and Imogene "Emmy" (Mullins) Haley at Warren (later Spottswood) on Trace Fork of Big Harts Creek, Logan County. Ed's early life was marred by tragedy and violence. He barely remembered his father, Milt, who was a fine fiddler in his



Left: Ed Haley, late 1940s. Photo courtesy of Lawrence and Pat Haley. Right: Ed Haley as a child, ca. 1890. Photo courtesy of Ollie Farley.



own right. Ed's cousin Turley Adams recalled Ed saying that Milt "was a hard-working fellow, and when he'd come home, he'd just tell them boys, 'Right now, we got to have a fight and get everything settled, and we'll be all right.' They liked to fight. One of them . . . bit Milt's ear off right in the yard down there."

Roxie Mullins, another of Ed's cousins, recalled that Milt "was awful bad to drink . . . and he kept a loaded Winchester sitting right by the side of his door. People was trying to kill him, and he was trying to kill people."

At age three, Ed lost his eyesight. Many explanations have been handed down through the years. Most pin the blame on Milt. Ed's son Lawrence recounted, "When my dad was very young—he couldn't have been over two or three—he had the measles. And when his father came in from working in the timbers that evening, he didn't like the whiny way my dad was acting. It was the dead of winter. They was ice on the creeks. So as to make him more of a man and cut out his babyish crying, he took him out and held him by the feet and dropped him in a rain barrel through the ice. Now, according to my cousin, that's partly what caused my dad to go blind."

Some attribute a different motive to Milt's actions. Roxie heard that Milt dipped Ed in the frozen creek because "he thought that'd kill his fever, see, and it went to its head and put his eyes out."

Ugee (pronounced "U-G") Postalwait, a longtime Haley family friend, told a slightly different version, "I don't know whether you ever knowed it or not, but the Gypsies used to come around in the country, and [Ed] had a high fever, and

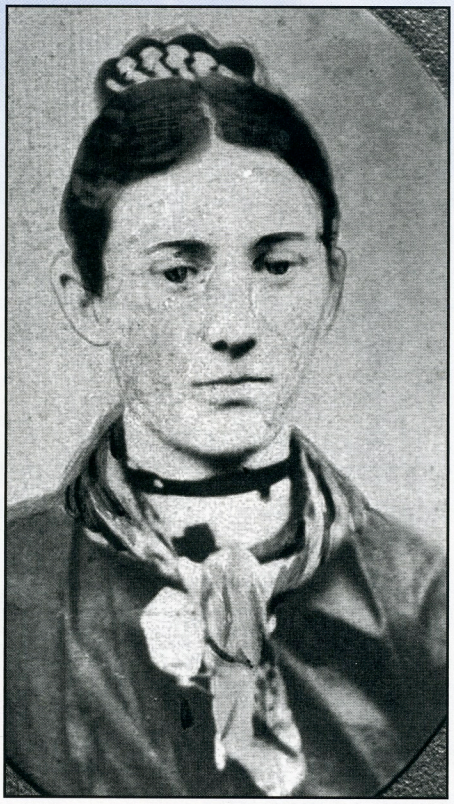
Reverence for Ed Haley

The acclaim for Ed's music is virtually universal—both in his time and today. Appalachian writer Jesse Stuart paid tribute to him as "Blind Frailey" in *The Man With a Bull-Tongue Plow* (1934). Folklorist Jean Thomas, hostess of the American Folk Song Festival, based the Jilson Setters character on Ed. Clark Kessinger, one of West Virginia's greatest fiddlers, referred to Ed simply as "the best." Bobby Taylor, one of today's most admired fiddlers, noted Ed's "expansive repertoire" and "riverboaty" sound, with echoes of steamboat calliopes. Fiddler Skeets Williamson, brother to country singer Molly O'Day, said Ed was "the greatest fiddler who ever played." Brooks Hardway, a Braxton County banjoist, said, "He was 50 years ahead of his time," and fiddler Wilson Douglas of Clay County called Ed "a legend in this country and in any country that knew about him."

The Ed Haley Memorial Fiddle Contest is held in his honor each September in Ashland, Kentucky. Ed was a 2015 inductee into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame.



Lincoln County feudists Green McCoy (left) and Milt Haley (Ed's father, right), 1880s. Photo courtesy of Nellie Richardson Thompson.



Imogene "Emmy" Haley (Ed's mother), 1880s. Image courtesy of Joe Mullins.



Chloe Mullins (Ed's grandmother), ca. 1910. She and her husband, Jackson, helped raise Ed after the death of Ed's parents. Photo courtesy of Joe Mullins.

they told his dad and them to take him down to the creek and throw him in the cold water, and that would break the fever on him, and he'd never have a fever again. And that's what he done, and it put him blind."

Due to his blindness, Ed was often the butt of practical jokes. Neighborhood children, mostly relatives, played pranks on him. "When Pop was just a little kid," recalled Lawrence, "he got to the point to where he could travel . . . over to Uncle Peter's. Uncle Peter kept cattle in the field out here or something—a bull or two. Well, the boys teased him. You know, he'd get about halfway across that field, and then they'd go to snorting like a bull—scare him—and then stand way back and laugh at him. Pop took that for a while and finally found a pistol over here at the old house, and he went across the field, and they started doing that to him. Well, he just pulled that pistol, and where that sound was coming from, he started shooting that pistol. I guess that broke that little game up."

"They cut trees," Roxie recalled, "and put him in logs and would start him at the top of the hill and roll him into the bottom and bump to bump to bump to bump . . . just skinned him all over. They played all kinds of tricks on him. Why, he'd just laughed 'til he died about it. He didn't care."

Milt was a central figure in the notorious Lincoln County feud, which arose in the late 1870s due to personal grievances between Paris Brumfield and Canaan Adkins. [See the GOLDENSEAL articles "The Lincoln County Crew: A Feud Song" by Michael Meador, Summer 1986, and "Settling Family Differences" by Lenore McComas Coberly, Summer 1992]. In the late 1880s, Milt and Green McCoy became involved in the feud when they attempted to kill Paris' son Al. On September 22, 1889, Milt and Green shot Al and his wife, both of whom survived. Milt and Green escaped but were eventually captured and jailed in Martin County, Kentucky. A



This is the earliest known photo of Ed with a fiddle, ca. 1900. Photo courtesy of Ollie Farley.

Brumfield-led gang retrieved Milt and Green and murdered them near Harts Creek on October 24.

Milt and Green were buried in a single grave on the West Fork of Harts Creek in Lincoln County. The murder of Milt and Green and subsequent atrocities garnered national headlines. Milt didn't receive positive coverage. "Haley has been about Harts Creek several years," the *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported, "and was regarded as a man capable of any crime."

Following Milt's death, Ed and his mother, Emmy, went to live with her parents, Jackson and Chloe Mullins, on Trace Fork. Emmy died of unverified, but possibly violent, causes on October 11, 1891. Accounts vary, but Lawrence Haley heard her death was related to southern West Virginia's more famous feud. "During the end of the Hatfield-McCoy feud," said Lawrence, "other families became involved . . . . [Emmy] . . . was down at the mouth of Harts Creek visiting some feudists when two or three people came to the door looking for somebody." When Emmy opened the door, she was shot dead on the spot, even though she apparently was not directly involved in the feud. Emmy is buried in the Bob Mullins Cemetery on Harts Creek.

After his mother's death, Ed likely spent time with his uncle Weddie Mullins. But Weddie also met with a vicious death. On Christmas Eve 1901, Constable John Dillon shot and killed Weddie at Dingess, Mingo County.

Ed and the Brumfields eventually made amends. Mae Brumfield of Harts remembered hearing that Ed visited the home of Al Brumfield's widow, Hollena. "He was down there around the mouth of the creek somewhere around her home," recalled Mae. "He'd been around here playing music. And [Hollena, my husband's grandmother]



Ed gave some of his first public performances in front of F. E. Adkins' store in Harts, Lincoln County. Photo courtesy of Brandon Kirk.



Ed often visited veterinarian and fellow fiddler Lawrence "Laury" Hicks at this home in Douglas, Calhoun County. Photo courtesy of Ugee Postalwait (Laury's daughter).

made them bring him in and feed him dinner. She didn't hold no grudge."

Amongst all the tragedy, music was a pleasant diversion for Ed. By all accounts, he was a musical prodigy. According to Lawrence, "They couldn't figure out what to do with my dad. He was blind and living out on the farm, and somebody made him a violin out of a cigar box, and he started out from there and just self-taught himself, I reckon."

Ugee recalled, "Somebody brought something in that had two strings on it. And [Ed] picked that up and went to see-sawing on it, and he said he found out he could play the fiddle. He'd sit on the floor and play that fiddle. He wasn't very old. Just barely walking."

In the early 1900s, Ed started attracting crowds with his fiddle playing in front of F. E. Adkins' store in the town of Harts in Lincoln County. He also began traveling quite a bit, always with his fiddle in tow. Lawrence said, "I guess by the time Pop was 18, 19 years old—that's back at the turn of the century—he was traveling all over West Virginia and eastern Tennessee and western Old Virginia and parts of Ohio and eastern Kentucky. He went to White Sulphur Springs and Webster Springs—these places that were pretty well known as spas and health resorts. He went to the state capital around Charleston.... He said he'd guarantee if he was at the capitol building or somewhere playing music, [fiddle legend] Clark Kessinger would be there a-listening, trying to learn his style.... County seats mostly is where he played."

In the early days, Ed's primary companions were Johnny Hager, George Baisden, "Yellow Leg" Spaulding, and George W. Adams. Hager and



Johnny Hager (banjo) and Ed (fiddle) perform in White Sulphur Springs, Greenbrier County, about 1912. Photo courtesy of Lawrence and Pat Haley.

Baisden played banjos, Yellow Leg danced, and Adams played an accordion and carried the instruments. These were wild times. Ed and George Baisden hoboed together in their younger days. One time, they rode a train from Dingess to Williamson for a gig. Just before they rolled into town, George abruptly pushed Ed off the train and then jumped off himself. Ed was so mad that George had to hide from him the rest of the night.

Ed frequently visited Lawrence "Laury" Hicks, a Calhoun County veterinarian and fiddler. Laury's daughter Ugee remembers, "The first time I ever seen Ed Haley . . . was . . . about 1913. . . . Then the next time I seen Ed, he come there with John Hager. They stayed all winter, and they left on the first day of spring. I'll never forget that. There was a narrow little country road, and, as long as I live, I'll always see Ed, and Johnny leading him around a mud hole."

Ugee remembered Johnny quite well, "John wrote a letter back home and said he quit traveling with Ed 'cause Ed drank. He couldn't take it."

"Ed Haley just got so mean and vulgar," said Freeman Adams. "[Johnny] quit fooling with him. They said he was mean. If he got a-hold of you, he'd cut your head off with a knife or anything."

On July 1, 1918, Ed married Martha Ella Trumbo (1888-1954) in Huntington. About this time, Ed and Ella settled in Ashland, Kentucky. Like Ed, Ella had lost her eyesight when she was young. A certified piano teacher and multi-instrumentalist, she was Ed's lifelong music partner. The Haleys had six children of their own: Sherman Luther (1920-1920), Clyde Frederick (1921-2003), Noah Earl (1922-2003), Allie Jackson (1924-1982), Lawrence Alfred (1928-1995), and Mona Mae (1930-2006). Ella also had a child from a previous relationship: Ralph A. Payne/Haley (1915-1947).

"If there was a movie made, then there should've been one made about that—two blind people raising kids," Mona

said. "I'm just in awe of them and how they took care of all of us kids. They kept food, and they kept shelter for us, and we never went hungry. And they kept clothes on us. And I just don't know how they done it."

Roxie knew Ed quite well. "He dressed nice," she said. "Ed was as clean as a pin—wore nice, clean clothes. . . . I never did see him dirty, kept his hair combed pretty and neat. Ed's eyes looked awful bad—he wore glasses over them."

Roxie also remembered Ed's wife, Ella, "That woman really had [her children] trained. She had a whistle she could blow. Didn't matter where they was at, buddy, they'd come up in line."

Mona recalled her mom's whistle, "It was like a calliope whistle. It was plastic or tin or something. And every one of us had a different tune. Each one of us knew our tunes."

Although they lived in Ashland, Ed and Ella still spent a lot of time visiting around Harts Creek. Bob Dingess, another cousin of Ed's, remembered Ed playing for dances on Harts Creek, "Them girls had them old rubber-heeled shoes, and they'd pop that floor. It was an all-night affair. He'd

"Shove that hog's foot further in the bed"

Ed Haley sometimes visited "Greasy" George Adams, who lived up main Harts Creek. "Greasy George had apparently stolen a pig from somebody and had put it in a small pen close to the house," Ed's son Lawrence recalled. "He was sitting on the porch playing the fiddle, and he saw the sheriff coming up the drive, and he began to play a piece of music my dad plays. I don't know the name of it except that it went something like this, *'Shove that hog's foot further in the bed, further in the bed, further in the bed. Shove that hog's foot further in the bed. Katy, can't you understand me now?'*" While the lyrics seem nonsensical, he was really trying to tell his wife to hide the stolen pig under a blanket.

Lynn Davis, husband of country star Molly O'Day, heard the following version, "[Ed] said they went someplace to play, and they didn't have anything to eat, and those boys went out and stole a hog and said they brought it in and butchered it and heard somebody coming. It was the law. They run in and put that hog in the bed and covered it up like it was somebody sleeping. And Ed was sitting there fiddling, and somebody whispered to him, 'Ed, that hog's foot's stickin' out from under the cover there.' So he started fiddling and singing, *'Shove that hog's foot further under the cover.'* He made it up as he went."



Ella Haley, Ralph Payne, and Ed Haley in a studio portrait, ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of Lawrence and Pat Haley.

play a while, then he'd rest a while, then he'd start again. Along about midnight, they'd drink that liquor in them half-a-gallon jugs. . . . When the chickens was a-crowing and daylight was coming, still they were on the floor. They would lay all day and sleep."

Ed often played music with Robert Martin. Violet Adams, who was raised near Trace Fork, recalled, "Ed Haley come to my mom and dad's house one time and played music all night. Robert Martin was with him. I guess they'd been drinking or whatever because they was going to take him out to the toilet, and instead of taking him to the toilet, they took him into the chicken house."

Ed also stayed frequently with George and Rosa Mullins on Buck Fork. "He'd go across the mountain 'cause he liked drinking," said Carolyn Farley, "and they had it over there—moonshine. People was good to him. He wasn't mistreated."

A little further up Harts Creek, at Whirlwind, Ed played for dances at the old Squire Sol Adams log home. All the furniture was cleared out of the living room and an adjacent room. Ed came early to eat a good meal. Then, as people started showing up, he sat on a stool in the doorway between the two rooms. From there, he could entertain two rooms of folks instead of just one. Creed Conley was usually the caller. He would have people dancing so wildly they'd bump heads. Most were drunk. Toward the end of the dance, they'd pass around a hat to collect Ed's pay.

In the lower section of Harts Creek, at Big Branch, Lincoln County, Ed liked to visit an-

other fiddler, Dood Dalton. "My family and Ed Haley was close," said Dood's son Stump. "If he was in Ohio or somewhere and he come here, the first place he come was our house. I knowed of Ed to stay as high as two months around there. We had him a bed all the time. Ed Haley was a fine man. He was my idol."

Dood's son Jake described his memories of Ed and his father, "They'd sit out there in the yard. They'd start in on Saturday evening, and they'd be a-sitting right there when Monday morning come with a half-a-gallon of moonshine playing music."

Stump agreed, "When he come to our house, other than sleep, 75 percent of our time was playing music." He also shared a story that showed Ed's uncanny insight. "Dad bought me a little Jacob Stainer fiddle one time," said Stump. "Ed come [around] not long after we'd bought that fiddle. When Dad went out to the road and got him, he said, 'Come on, Ed, I got a fiddle down here I want you to look at.' . . . We went down there, and Ed took that fiddle and set it right on his belly, and he started at the neck up here, just feeling around it at the keys. He felt all around that fiddle, then he turned around to my dad and said, 'My, my, Dood. That's the first Jacob Stainer I've had in my hand in I don't know how many years.'"



Ed and Ella Haley with their children (left-right): (front) Clyde, Noah, and Jack and (back) Ralph, ca. 1927. Photo courtesy of Lawrence and Pat Haley.

Most often, Ed's wife, Ella, accompanied him to the Dalton home. "She was a music teacher," Jake said. "The only time I ever seen her play was when Ed asked her. . . . Now, she didn't play a mandolin like I played or, say, like Bill Monroe or somebody like that. All she done was just chord the thing. Play the second on the guitar, you know, and strummed it. She was a quiet person. She never had much to say to nobody. She sorta give you the impression that she

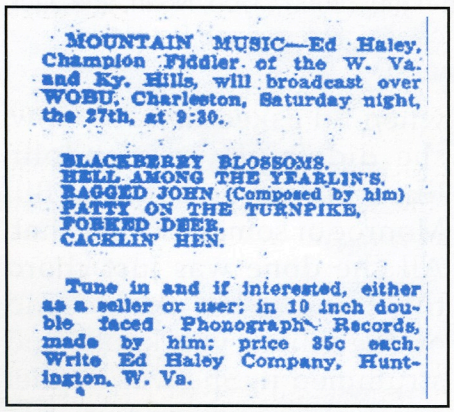
'would rather be somewhere else than where I am now.'"

Dick Thompson of Harts recalled that Ed and his family would arrive in town every six months or so by train. Not long after their arrival, somebody would haul them up the creek, where they stayed "all over." Ed continued to visit Harts Creek nearly until his death. He often could be found at Clifford Belcher's tavern on Crawley Mountain.

Wirt Adams remembered the last time he saw Ed, "It was in the '40s. About '47, '48, '49, '50—along there somewhere. We called it 'Belcher's Beer Garden.' It was a roadhouse over on Crawley Hill. Well, I just come in there from the mines, and Ed . . . said, 'Come on over here, Wirt, and play one.' I think the fella that'd been playing with him had got drunk and passed out. Well, I picked up [an] old guitar and played one or two with him. If you was playing, they'd set you a beer up there—no money in it."



Bernie Adams (guitar) and Ed (fiddle) with Ed's cousin Barbara Mullins, Trace Fork of Harts Creek, Logan County, ca. 1941. Photo courtesy of Kathy Adams.



MOUNTAIN MUSIC—Ed Haley, Champion Fiddler of the W. Va. and Ky. Hills, will broadcast over WOBU, Charleston, Saturday night, the 27th, at 9:30.

BLACKBERRY BLOSSOMS.
HELL AMONG THE YEARLIN'S.
RAGGED JOHN (Composed by him)
PATTY ON THE TURNPIKE,
FORKED DEER,
CACKLIN' HEN.

Tune in and if interested, either as a seller or user; in 10 inch double faced Phonograph Records, made by him; price 35c each. Write Ed Haley Company, Huntington, W. Va.

Ad in the *Charleston Daily Mail*, ca. 1930, for Ed's performance on WOBU (now WCHS) radio in Charleston.

Sol Bumgarner told of a time when Ed got in a fight at Belcher's, "He'd go down there and play, and people'd give him beer and stuff. That's about all he wanted. I run into him over there one night. I said, 'Uncle Ed, where you been?' He said, 'I ain't been nowhere but right here. I come up here to sit around and play music a while.' I bought him a beer, and he sat there and played music. Well, a Conley boy run in and went to playing and thought he was better than Ed and everything. Ed finally told that boy, 'Why don't you quit playing that music? You can't play. You're cutting my music up too much.' That boy come back at him, you know, and aimed to fight him. He said, 'Shut up, old man. You don't know what you're a-talking about.' I was standing there, and I told him, 'Now listen, if you jump on that man, you'll have me to fight and him both.' And Ed took his fiddle and hit that feller right down over the

head with it and busted that fiddle all to pieces."

Lawrence Kirk last saw Ed play with Bernie Adams at Taylor Brumfield's tavern. "Ed was being pretty sassy," Lawrence said. "They wasn't giving him enough money to please him, you know. They was buying him a few drinks, but he felt like fellows ought to throw him in a few dollars of money along. But that bunch there, they had to have their quarters to buy some beer with. Ed told Bernie, 'Well, hell, let's go. This tight bunch here won't buy a man no beer. Can't get a crowd together no how.' Bernie said, 'Now, Ed. Don't get to talking too rough about these fellows around Harts. Some of your folks didn't have too good a relation with these Brumfields around here.' Ed said, 'Aw, to hell with these damned Brumfields. There's nobody afraid of these Brumfields.'"

Ed Haley died peacefully at home in Ashland, Kentucky, on February 3, 1951. In death, Ed's status as the greatest fiddler of his era continued to grow. Fortunately, Ed's son Lawrence kept dozens of his home recordings. Many years later, the Library of Congress made copies, and some of the songs were released on the Rounder Records album *Parkersburg Landing* in 1976.



Ed and his family, ca. 1929. Photo courtesy of Lawrence and Pat Haley.

Today, the old-time fiddling community looks to Ed Haley as a musical genius far ahead of his time, and, like a young Clark Kessinger, up-and-coming musicians still study the style and precision of the blind fiddler from Harts Creek. Kanawha Valley fiddler Bobby Taylor has been the custodian of Ed's fiddle ever since John Hartford's death. He observes that "fiddlers today try to mimic Ed Haley's notes and style more than any other fiddler, but they never really capture it. Haley played with a soul and spirit that take you back 200 years. He played by no rules and didn't care what anybody thought. He had a sound that was not of this world and painted pictures with his fiddling."

BRANDON KIRK is a descendant of the Lincoln County feudists. An assistant professor of U.S. history at Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, Brandon lectures regularly on Appalachian history, particularly on the topics of feuds and violence. He is the author of *Blood in West Virginia*, and he advised the History Channel on its *Hatfields and McCoys* miniseries. This is Brandon's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

John Hartford's Search for Ed Haley

By Brandon Ray Kirk

"A lot of people that play this old-time music, they think of Ireland. They dream about it, think about it. They want to get at the heart of it. Harts Creek is my Ireland."

–John Hartford



During the last decade of his life, musician and songwriter John Hartford (1937-2001) developed a fascination with Ed Haley's music and life. Photo by Brandon Ray Kirk.

John Hartford—the New York-born, Missouri-raised, performer, songwriter, and TV personality—shot from relative obscurity to stardom in the late 1960s with his classic song "Gentle On My Mind," which became country star Glen Campbell's signature song. John's music heavily influenced the "new grass" bluegrass movement of the 1970s. During the 1990s and until his death in 2001, his biggest influence was Ed Haley, the blind fiddler from Harts Creek, Logan County.

John first traveled to Harts Creek in 1991 and was guided by Ed's youngest son, Lawrence. John had just begun his research into "all things Ed Haley." He visited Ed's childhood home on Trace Fork and met Ed's cousins. The experience changed his life and the direction of his music. He wanted to find out everything he could about Ed and his father's role in the Lincoln County Feud. The feud started in the late 1870s, when Paris Brumfield and Canaan Adkins quarreled over timber and personal matters. In 1889, Ed's father, Milt, and friend Green McCoy shot Paris' son and were soon killed by a Brumfield-led mob.

In 1993, John and Lawrence visited gas magnate Bob Adkins in Hamlin, Lincoln County. [See "Settling Family Differences," by Lenore McComas Coberly, Summer 1992.] Bob knew that Milt and Green were buried in a single grave. Based on Bob's guidance, John and Lawrence searched for the grave. Unable to find it, they consulted with my great-uncle Lawrence Kirk, who gave precise directions. Some of Uncle Lawrence's ancestors had taken part in the Brumfield mob, while his grandfather, Melvin Kirk, had helped bury Milt and Green. John soon located the Haley-McCoy grave, marked only by rocks.

John first called me in 1993 to learn about my research into the feud story. He continued to explore Ed's history through phone calls and mail but didn't return to Harts Creek for nearly two years. In 1995, Lawrence Haley passed away, leaving a great void in John's project. But John persisted.

Less than a month after Lawrence's death, John and I met for the first time at Marshall University's James E. Morrow Library. We searched through historic records, compared our feud notes, and then departed for Harts Creek. Uncle Lawrence Kirk led us through Twelve Pole Creek to Inez, Kentucky, and back again—retracing the Brumfield gang's route the night they captured Milt and Green. I introduced John to friends who knew details about the feud. We surveyed the property where Milt



John visits with Ed Haley's son Lawrence (1928-1995) in the early 1990s. Photo by Pat Haley.

and Green had been murdered and other feud sites.

Later that year, John asked me to coauthor an Ed Haley biography with him. In coming years, I made several visits to John's Nashville home, where I met Waylon Jennings, Earl Scruggs, Shel Silverstein, Bobby Bare, Ricky Scaggs, Marty Stuart, and a host of others.

In August 1995, John made an appearance at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop, Fayette County, and then stopped by Harts Creek. On this occasion and again two months later, he visited with more people who remembered Ed and knew about the feud. A local newspaper reporter visited John's bus and wrote a story about our mission for the now-defunct *Guyandotte Voice* in Chapmanville. John made a few more trips to Harts Creek in 1996 and 1997.

Thanks largely to John's influence, Rounder Records produced two Ed Haley CD compilations: *Forked Deer* (1997) and *Grey Eagle* (1998). In 1998, John released his own Ed Haley tribute album: *The Speed of the Old Long Bow*. In addition to playing versions of Ed's tunes, John improvised many of the lyrics based on his research. For instance, in "Hell Up Coal Holler," John sings, "Ed played the fiddle on Trace. Ed played a lot on Smokehouse. Greasy George Adams, Maynard's Store, Mouth of Harts, Crawley Mountain. Over in Dingess in Mingo."



John performs with Ed's daughter Mona Haley Hager (1930-2006) in Ashland, Kentucky, ca. 1996. Photo courtesy of Mona Haley Hager.

To learn more about Milt's and Green's deaths, John convinced Doug Owsley, a leading forensic scientist at the Smithsonian, to exhume the Haley-McCoy grave in May 1998. They were unable to locate either Milt's or Green's corpses. The Smithsonian search team speculated that more than a century of water pouring through the gravesite could have disintegrated the corpses. A story about the excavation appeared in the March 2000 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine.

In 2000, the Coen brothers approached John about playing for their upcoming film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* John seized the chance and exposed a much larger audience to Ed's music. John performed Ed's mournful arrangement of "Man of Constant Sorrow" for the soundtrack album, which won a Grammy. I was proud that music from my hometown had appeared in such a popular film.

In 2000, John made his last trip back to Harts Creek. On June 4, 2001, he died of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Although our manuscript was largely completed, his death put a halt to its publication. However, I hope to publish it finally in 2016.

The last three years of John's

life, I worked with him nearly every day. His search for Ed Haley was the most important thing to him during these last years. Harts Creek—the people and memories—were always fresh on his mind, and it provided him with a better understanding of Ed the musician and Ed the person.

John also became part of *our* story. The people John met on Harts Creek—their hospitality, speech, and sincerity—combined with the breathtaking natural landscape of the mountains and hollows to fuel his passion and introduce him to a world very different from his St. Louis youth. Harts Creek residents always welcomed John, enjoyed his company, and appreciated his gift of music. He knew he could visit anytime, eat great food, have a place to sleep, and enjoy hours of stories. We thought of him as one of us.

John once asked me to help him with his genealogy. His family history was filled with aristocrats, judges, and various elites stretching from Virginia to St. Louis. I was especially fascinated with his family ties to playwright Tennessee Williams. One time, I sent him a note about a recent discovery I'd made in his family line. He looked over my note and wrote back, "I'd rather be descended from Paris Brumfield."



John, donning a Sherlock Holmes-style deerstalker hat, and a team of researchers from the Smithsonian investigate the gravesite of Milt Haley and Green McCoy, West Fork of Harts Creek, Lincoln County, 1998. Photo by Brandon Ray Kirk.

Christmas Eve in the

On Christmas Eve 1938, my family had just finished eating supper on Bernan Hill in Van Camp. It's located about three miles south of New Martinsville in Wetzel County. Grandma Euna Van Camp Long, matriarch of the hill, scrubbed her favorite feed-sack tablecloth, which had been soiled by a blackberry spill—caused by a careless person who shall remain nameless at this point. To avoid Grandma Eunie's mounting displeasure, my father lit his lantern and went to care for his sheep in the Big Barn on the ridge.

Thanks to his West Virginia ingenuity, my dad had installed



Our author, Jack Furbee, with his father, Clyde, at Van Camp, Wetzel County, ca. 1936.

Manger of the Little Barn

By Jack Furbee

a wind charger and batteries, allowing us to listen to radio stations WWVA in Wheeling and WMMN in Fairmont, among others. To offset the tense atmosphere, Grandpa Ferd rocked briskly while listening to the radio comedy *Lum and Abner*.



Jack in front of the Little Barn about the time he spent Christmas Eve in the barn's manger.

Relying on the glow from an oil lamp, Mother sheltered me from Grandma's wrath by making the story of the first Christmas come alive. Even as I listened intently, I was planning my escape from a possible scolding. The story of Jesus' birth in a manger gave me an idea: maybe I should sleep in a stable on Christmas Eve?

Although I often visited the milk cows and their calves in the Little Barn, this nocturnal visit surprised everyone. With a blanket and pillow in hand, I exited the back door and side gate. Snow and moonlight lit my way under the frosted pear trees, through the barn door, and to the manger, located in the center of a stone-walled basement where the cows rested. My bovine friends, having been milked for the night, must have been taken aback to see me show up after dark. They arose from their winter's nap to see me prepare the manger for bed. Having no fear of the cows, I spread my blanket, fixed my pillow, and took my place beside my barnyard friends. The cows soon resumed their own sleep. The barn was completely still, except for the sounds of the cows belching their cuds and chewing multiple times in anticipation of the morning milking. Grandma's displeasure was the farthest thing from my thoughts.

Wondering what I was doing, Mother fled Grandma's diminishing displeasure and followed me to the Little Barn to find her child curled up comfortably on the hay in the

manger. My gentle mother paused for a while, took in the unusual scene, looked at me admiringly, and brought me back to my regular bed in the house. On our way to the attic bedroom, we noticed that Grandma's concerns for her tablecloth had dissipated, replaced by her desire to know where her grandson had been.

Dad returned from his expectant ewes, Grandpa unwound after laughing at Lum and Abner's antics, and Mom rested beside Dad in our crowded bedroom. In the silence of that well-worn Appalachian bungalow, Grandma couldn't relax until she had found out from Mother exactly where I'd been.

"Gertie, where was Jackie?" she inquired, sitting up in bed and projecting her voice toward the attic steps.

Choosing quickly and appropriately from a repertoire of possible answers, Mother simply replied, "I'll tell you tomorrow, Mama. Go to sleep."

By the time Christmas morning had arrived, Grandma had seemingly forgotten all about her tablecloth and my mysterious disappearance the night before. Perhaps this is why all Christmas Eves seem anticlimactic to me. Not even



Jack with his mother, Gertrude, and grandparents Euna Van Camp Long and Ferd Long, ca. 1938.

the majesty of a *Messiah* performance or a Midnight Mass can come close to spending Christmas Eve in a manger. How better to start learning about the life of Jesus than in a manger surrounded by the sweet smell of hay and the moist breath of my animal friends? Maybe the adoring look on my dear mother's face was akin to Mary's gaze as she looked down lovingly at her babe on that first Christmas.

A wonderful lifetime of Christmases have come and gone, but every Christmas Eve brings back memories of a remote mountain barn dug out of a West Virginia hillside. A wilderness of vines, tangled by decades of undisturbed growth, now covers a crumbling stone wall. This jungle-like setting preserves the site of the manger where I got to experience the simple story of Jesus' birth. Today, as I listen to children sing carols and play bells, my mind drifts back to that unforgettable Christmas Eve and my manger, where Mother found me and returned me to my bed.



Jack with a homemade sled at the family farm, ca. 1938.

JACK FURBEE was born in Wetzel County in 1934. He holds a doctorate in education from West Virginia University; served 35 years as an educator, counselor, and administrator; and is professor emeritus at Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois. His autobiography is titled *Growing Up Appalachian in the Van Camp Community of Wetzel County, West Virginia*. Jack's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2015 issue.

"West Virginia





Left: Our author, James Bernardin, and his hunting dog, 1945. Right: James poses with his father, Thomas Bernardin, and dog Trixie, ca. 1933.

Growing Up in Wheeling

—Hooray!"

By James Bernardin

I don't live in West Virginia anymore. I guess you could call me a Michigander. I've enjoyed a successful career, creating ads for Chevrolet and others for 40 years. I live on 71 hilly acres—hills we would've called "bumps" back when I was growing up in the Elm Grove section of Wheeling.

My mother, Leota, was born near Rosbys Rock, Marshall County, in 1900. My dad was a butcher and worked for the A&P Tea Company for many years—first on Market Street in downtown Wheeling and then in Elm Grove. They were married in 1928 and lived in an apartment across from the state penitentiary in Moundsville while my dad worked in Wheeling. I was born in Glen Dale in 1929, and then we moved to the Triadelphia section of Wheeling. Most of my memories begin from the time we moved to Cracraft Avenue in Elm Grove.

It was the time of the Great Depression, and most folks were struggling to make a living. One time, a man came to our door selling eggs and asked for something to eat. My mother offered to cook some of his eggs for him, but he said he had to sell them to make money. Instead, she gave him a sandwich. We always had plenty to eat because of my dad's association with the A&P.

We took car rides into the country for recreation. You could fill your gas tank for less than a dollar, and a service station attendant always pumped the gas, cleaned your windshield, checked the oil, and thanked you for stopping in.

I had a dog named Trixie and a rabbit named Peggy. They got along fine. Peggy liked to nibble on things in the backyard and got chased by the neighbor's dog. On occasion, my mother took me shopping in downtown Wheeling. I always looked forward to the streetcar ride. Being a trolley, it couldn't climb Wheeling Hill, so it turned left near Ziegler's Meat Packing Company and followed Big Wheeling Creek into the center of town.

Life was carefree and wonderful. Our basement had a dirt floor, where I dug to my heart's



James (far left) with his second-grade class at Kruger Street School, ca. 1935. All photos courtesy of James Bernardin.

content. A peach tree provided an ample harvest for my mom's homemade preserves.

One day, my mom grabbed me by the hand and said the house was on fire. A big brown area on the chimney above the stove was growing larger and blacker. A fire truck arrived in time to extinguish the flames and save the house.

We soon moved into a rented house in Elm Grove. It was on Maple Lane, known locally as "Six Foot Alley" because that was its width. We hadn't been there long when my mom developed a mastoid condition and had to be hospitalized. My dad's mother drove from Dearborn, Michigan, in her Model A Ford to be with me while Dad worked. She wasn't much like my mom and didn't cook like her either. One evening, she fixed me a big bowl of sauerkraut and meat. I said I didn't like it and wanted something else. She told me I could eat what was served or not eat at all. After giving the matter some thought, I tried it. I've loved kraut ever since.

On my first day of first grade, my mom walked me to Kruger Street School. I'll never forget the sound of the big bell. It would ring twice. The first time, you'd still have plenty of time to get there, but with the second ring, you'd better hurry. Kruger Street School is where I met Lee Kelvington, who still lives in Wheeling. I try to see him every year and stay in touch through e-mail. Early friendships last a lifetime.

Around fourth or fifth grade, we moved again—this time to 36 East Cross Street. The house was eventually obliterated for a freeway entrance. In front of the Kahle Building was a large field where I learned to play football. A bit farther down was another field where we had victory gardens during World War II. Just off Key Avenue near the National Road was the Community House, where I learned to build model airplanes from balsa wood, glue, and paper.

Earning money was something everybody, young or old, held important. Cutting grass, hunting berries to sell, or taking beer bottles back to a bar for two cents each allowed me to buy *Batman* and *Superman* comic books now and then. I had one big source of income. When my folks would order a dump truck load of coal from the local mine, I'd shovel it into our coal bin for 50 cents.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, our neighbor, Harold Bone,



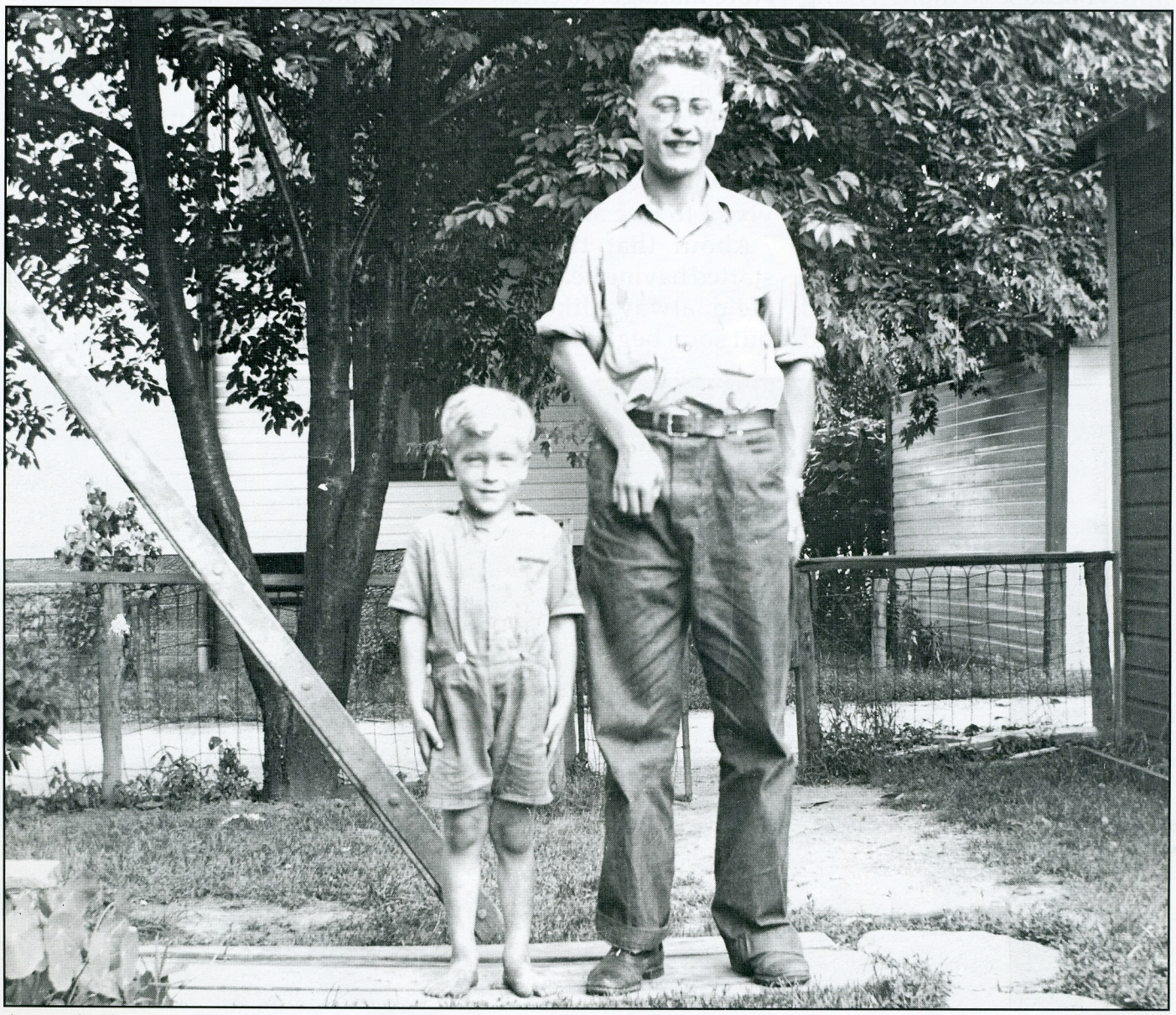
James' childhood home at 36 East Cross Street, Elm Grove, WV.

took his son Kenny and me to see the model train setup at the B&O Station in downtown Wheeling. That's where I heard the announcement over a loud speaker about the attack on Pearl Harbor. None of us had any idea what World War II would cost our country or how it would change our lives.

A new A&P store had been built on Kruger Street across from Monument Place. It was much larger than previous stores—a forerunner of supermarkets. My dad was placed in charge of the meat department, which was a welcome promotion. All the young men who would've been his assistants were in the service. So he hired women to work for him in what previously had been a male-dominated profession.

The beef and pork came whole with the skins still on. My dad was the only one with the expertise to butcher them, which meant a lot of night and weekend work. The store stayed open six days a week, 12 hours a day, so he was under a lot of stress to keep things going. Although he didn't go into work on Sundays, he, my mom, and I spent a good part of the day counting grocery bags full of rationing stamps and tokens, which he traded in for additional meat.

In the spring of 1945, my dad got me a summer job with a friend of his, Cash Barzak, who ran the meat department at the A&P in Wheeling. It



James (left) with half-brother Earl Bernardin (right), ca. 1935.

was my first real job where I got paid a regular wage—not a paycheck, but an envelope with cash in it. I still have my first envelope.

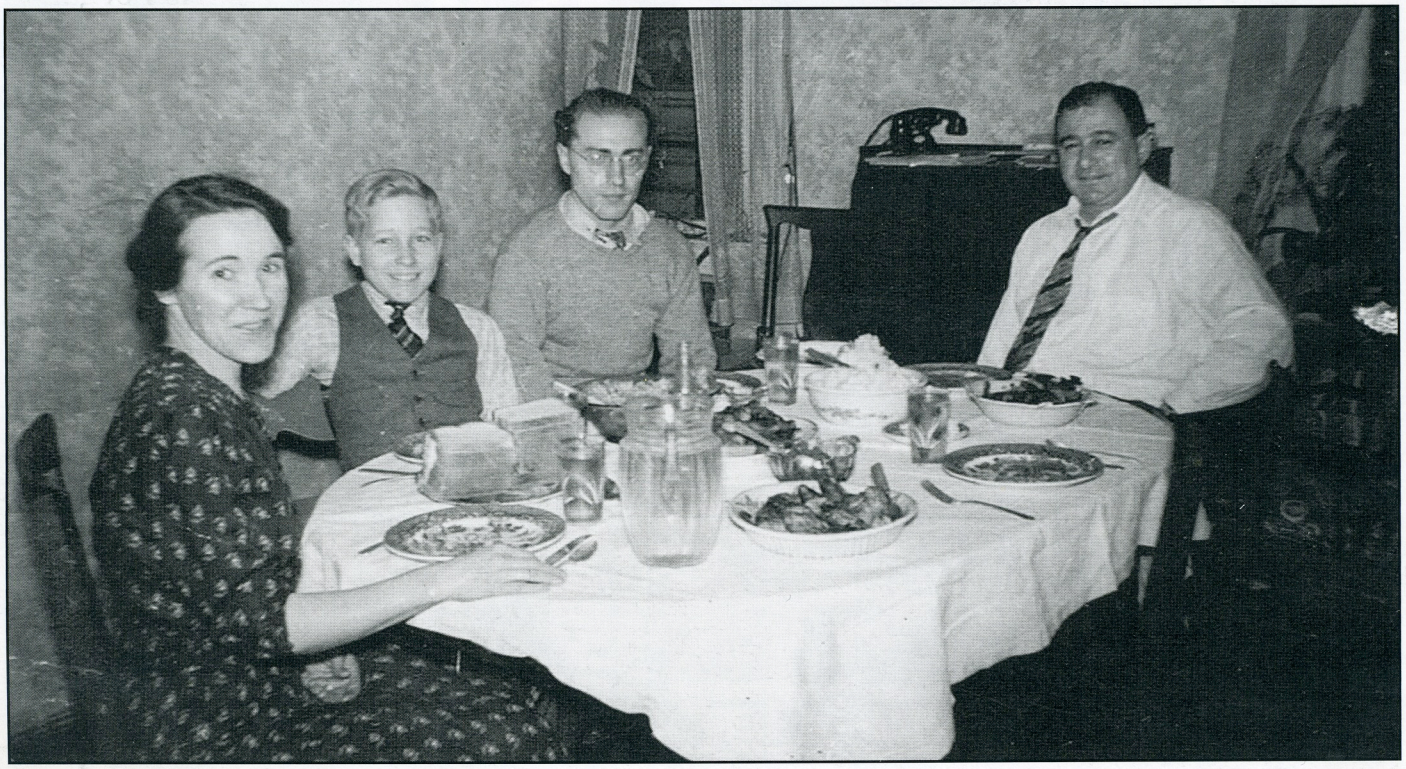
Cleaning fresh fish was a big part of my job. The hours were long with a cleanup at day's end. One Saturday, after closing at 9 p.m., I escorted a pretty coworker home. Grace lived on 29th Street, which was in the opposite direction from Elm Grove. Maybe times were different back then, or maybe it was because so many young fellows were in the service, but she seemed to like me. I'd just turned 15.

At her home, others were partying with a few beers. I eagerly joined in and acted as mature as I could. Grace seemed fine with it all. It got to be around 1:30 or 2:00 in the morning, and I thought I'd better call it a day and head home. That meant taking a trolley back to the center of town and then a bus to Elm Grove. I got off at my regular place, just past the old stone bridge on the National Road. As I approached East Cross Street, I saw a man in an undershirt standing on the corner. It was my dad, who launched into a severe lecture with some unprintable language. Earlier, he'd been worried that I'd accidentally been locked inside the store. He'd even asked the store manager to check on me. Obviously, I wasn't there. All day Sunday, I worried about my job and what the manager would say the next day. It was everything I'd feared and more, but with a very red face, I survived to live another day.

About that time, my dad started having health problems. He'd always liked his beer but soon began to drink more, including some harder stuff he kept in his dresser. He also started having delusions about my mother and accused her of awful things that weren't true. His outbursts kept me awake at night. It turns out he was having what we called back then a nervous breakdown.

My mom had him arrested and sent to a hospital in Pittsburgh. We went to see him at least once every week. My mother never felt anything but love and sympathy toward him. She was committed to his recovery, whatever it took. Most of this happened during my junior and senior years of high school, but there were times when both of my folks attended my football games and lived a somewhat normal life.

Normal for me meant going to school, playing football, and working at the Hoag Da-



(Left-right) Leota, James, Earl, and Thomas Bernardin, Elm Grove, ca. 1938.

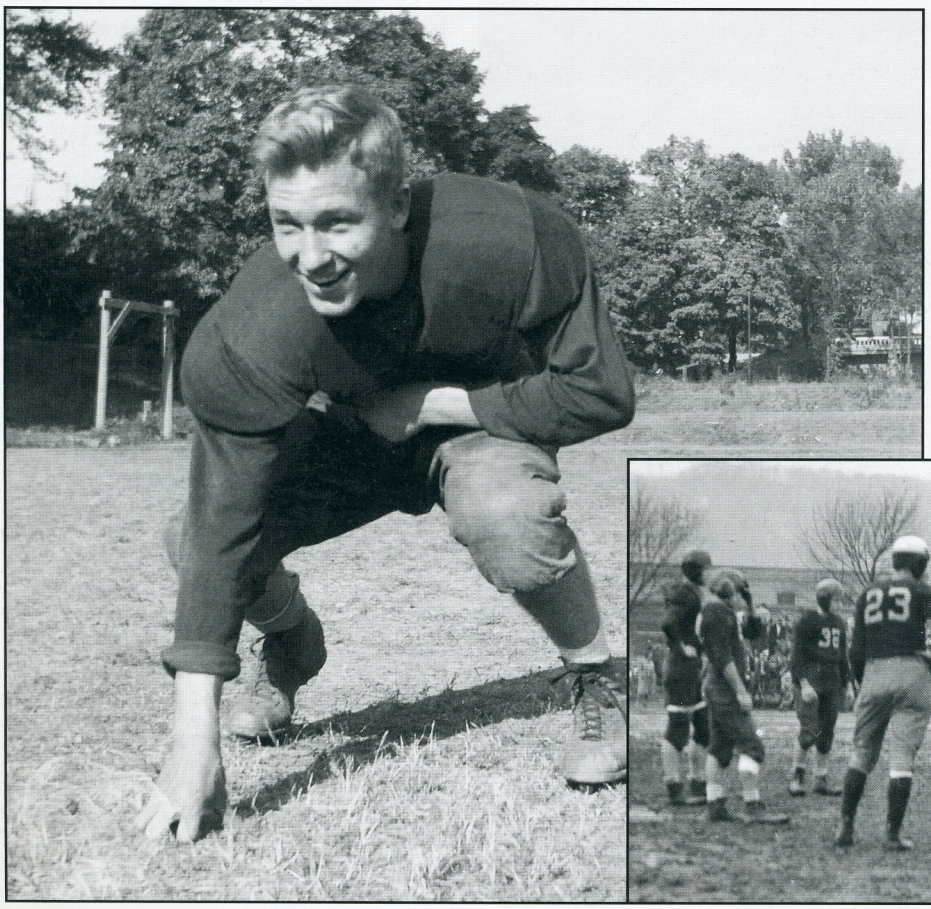
vis Drug Store in Elm Grove. The store closed at 9 p.m., and then I delivered prescriptions. Studying didn't seem important, and my grades reflected it.

I tried out for the football team as a sophomore and, like most others, wanted to be a running back, but I broke my collarbone in practice. One of the managers took me to the team doctor in Elm Grove for repairs then home, where my mother laughed at her banged-up son. She later told me it was better to laugh than to cry. She was a very, very strong woman who kept me in line. My father never spanked me or laid a hand on me, but she would hit me with anything handy, even an iron frying pan, if I got out of line.

In my junior year, my football coach, Buck Krause, had filled all the positions except one: backup left guard. He called for someone to step up. I jumped at the chance. I just wanted to play, and the position didn't matter. By today's standards, I couldn't have played football. I weighed only 135 pounds and played both offense and defense!

I got on the field in the first quarter of the first game, made some good blocks, and soon became a starter, beating out senior Frank Kosem. I looked even smaller playing next to Moe Moor, who weighed 200 pounds. We didn't have a great season, but, at the end, Wally "Doc" Oref and I were elected co-captains for 1946—our senior season.

When the summer of 1946 rolled along, I got a pretty good job working at the Hudson dealership and parking garage in Wheeling. I learned to park and grease cars and drive the wreck truck. Stretching the truth a bit, I assured them I could handle a four-speed shift, work the lift, and use the trailering. It wasn't a problem until I had to rescue a car hanging half off a dirt road on a hilltop near Moundsville. Finding the location was a challenge, but it gave me time to learn the four-speed shift. Getting the car back on the road was another story. It was dangling by two wheels and looked like it could roll down the hill at any minute. I had no idea how to pull it back up but used some common sense and attached the chains. I kept imagining the car and wreck truck plunging down the hillside some 400 or 500 feet. As I began to pull with the truck, I kept the door open, ready to leap out





Left: James, lining up at left guard for Triadelphia High School, 1946.

Below: Football game between Triadelphia and Warwood high schools, 1945.

should everything start to slide down the mountain. I got the car back on the road, and the owner paid me $25.

When my senior football season began, I was ready. I'd spent every spare minute doing pushups, running, and drinking quarts of milk. We beat Union in our opener at the old Wheeling Island Stadium. Next came Catholic Central. We won by a point. We beat Moundsville the following week and seemed to be on a roll. The next week, however, calamity struck at Bridgeport, Ohio. The field seemed really dark compared to our Wheeling Island Stadium lights. Then again, maybe we just weren't ready to play. They shellacked us 30 to 0. Our next game was at Martins Ferry, Ohio, which had soundly beaten Bridgeport a couple weeks before. The local papers predicted we'd lose by 19, but at halftime, we were up 6-0 on a touchdown by Doc. I didn't make it through the first half. I broke my leg during the second quarter, ending my playing days. The injury brought tears to my eyes but seemed to inspire my teammates. We pulled off the upset 13 to 6. In the locker room after the game, the team presented me with the game ball.



A doctor examines the broken leg James suffered in a game in 1946.

Along with football, girls were my other obsession. I'd paid little attention to them until my junior year. That all changed when cheerleader Edie Walter asked me to a dance, but, by my senior year, I'd become interested in another young lady, Marjorie Laue, and given her my varsity football sweater, which meant a lot back then. She wore it nearly every day. She was a junior and had a year to go when I graduated in May 1947.

The day after graduation, my family and I left West Virginia for Michigan. My dad hadn't worked in a long time, but his health had improved. My parents thought it would be best if we sold our home in Elm Grove and headed north to start a new life. We moved in with my dad's parents in Dearborn.

I wasn't ready for our new life, and it wasn't long before I returned to Wheeling. There were two reasons. First, I wanted to court Marjorie. Second, I'd been named to the All Ohio Valley Football Team as an honorable mention, after playing only half a season. The annual all-star game was coming up, and I hoped I'd be selected to play.

I stayed with Jimmie Amato in Patterson for a few days and then with Doc. His mother made the best pancakes I'd ever had. He and Dick Schaub,

our right guard, were chosen for the all-star game, but I got stuck watching from the stands. The thing with Marjorie didn't work out either. Doc got a football scholarship and left town, so I moved in with my friend Frank Andre and his family on Harding Avenue. Frank worked nights at the Continental Bakery, so I used his bed in the evening, and he used it during the day.

I got a job rigging for a crane at the Continental Foundry. The pay was good, and, with some early morning overtime, I earned a little more than $30 per week; $15 went for my room and board, leaving plenty for pinball and pool. I had to be at the foundry at 7:00 a.m. to help unload the sand cores, which had been cooking all night in a three-story oven. We'd remove one row of three so new cores could be put in as they were finished.

The cores were on two-inch-thick steel plates, measuring about five feet by eight feet. I stood on one end holding the chain as the crane operator lowered me and the core into the oven. I'd remove the chains and stand on the hook for a ride back to the surface. Then, another core would be lowered into the oven. One morning, my crane operator started working a lot faster than usual, but I kept up. Suddenly, as we lowered a core, the plate I was standing on swung around and got caught on the corner of another plate. It tipped and fell before I could get the operator to stop lowering it. I plummeted, along with the steel plate and core, to the bottom of the oven and landed between two other cores with the plate on top of me. Sirens went off, and a rescue team climbed down into the oven expecting to find me squashed. I was battered but alive. I was released from the hospital with only cuts and bruises. Well, that was enough for me: I didn't get into the all-star game, lost my girl, and was nearly killed. My cousin Elmer drove down and took me back to Dearborn.

When you hit low points in



James' high school graduation photo, Elm Grove, May 1947.

life, you can never tell how things might turn out. Later on, my old Wheeling friend Frank Andre asked me to be the best man at his wedding. They got married at Everbreeze Farm, his bride's family home. Everbreeze is a beautiful place near Oglebay Park and one of the oldest working farms in West Virginia, dating back to 1796. During the wedding, Frank's little sister Ruth caught my eye. She had big brown eyes and long hair and looked stunning in her yellow dress. I'll always remember that sight and be grateful to Frank for giving me the opportunity to see her all grown up and filled out. After spending a little time talking, I knew I had to see her again. I got my chance around Christmas, when I drove down to visit Frank in Huntington, where he was attending Marshall College (now University). I drove back through Wheeling to see Ruth. I asked her strict father if I could take her to a movie, and he said, "Ok," but only if Ruth's little sister Marion tagged along. It wasn't what I had in mind. We went to the Capitol Theatre, and I eventually summoned the nerve to hold Ruth's hand. When I squeezed it, she squeezed back, and I like to say we lived happily ever after. We were married for more than 58 years.

I eventually graduated from the University of Michigan Architecture and Design School and established a career with Campbell-Ewald, an advertising firm in Detroit. For my 70th birthday, my wife woke me one morning and said we were going on a surprise trip. She refused to say where. I figured we were going to visit one of our sons in California, New York, or Florida. Our initial destination was Pittsburgh, where we'd presumably catch a flight to—well, I'd soon find





Left: James and Ruth Bernardin on their wedding day at the Methodist Church on Kruger Street, 1952. Right: James and Ruth with their four sons at the same church, 1999.

out. As we walked toward our connecting flight, suddenly, there were our four sons: Tom, Jim, John, and Bob. What a birthday surprise!

There was a van waiting to take us to Wheeling, where I could share with my sons all the places I'd been telling them about for years. I got to show them Elm Grove, Triadelphia High School, the Capitol Theatre, Cracraft Avenue, Maple Lane, Kruger Street School, the Methodist Church where Ruth and I were married, Big Wheeling Creek, the Madonna of the Trail, McColloch's Leap, Oglebay Park, the Wheeling Island stadium, the suspension bridge, and so much more. We stayed in a cabin at Oglebay Park and had dinner every night at Figaretti's—I'd graduated from high school with Joe Figaretti. I'll never forget that birthday celebration.

West Virginia—Hooray!!

My lovely late wife, Ruth, waits for me now at our final Michigan destination. She was always waiting for me to come home after long days at work making Chevy ads. She was one of the best West Virginia had to offer—and the most beautiful too—a one of a kind from West Virginia.

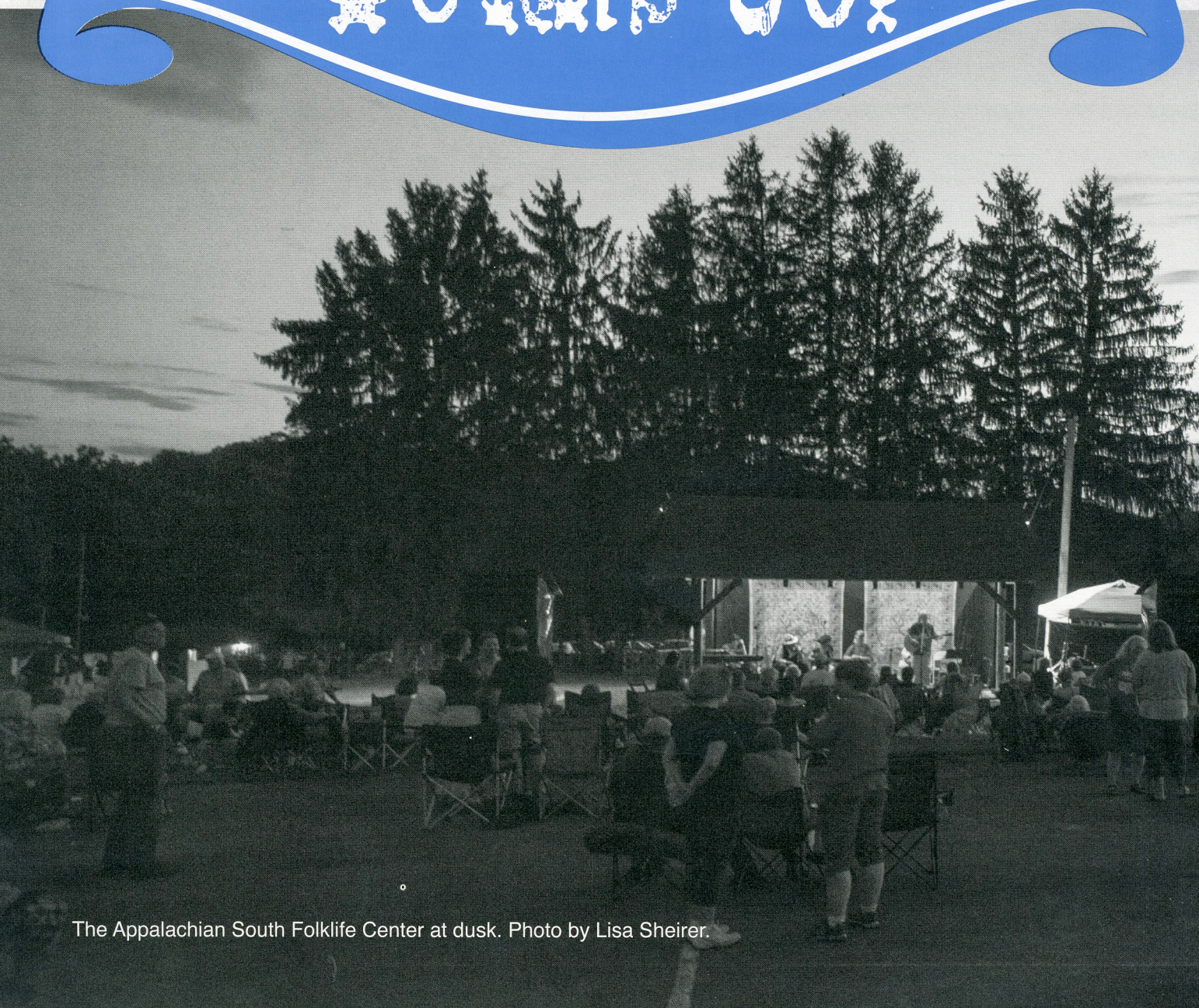
Even though I haven't lived in West Virginia for nearly six decades, Wheeling and the Mountain State have always remained very close to my heart and will always be a big part of who I am.

JAMES BERNARDIN was born in Marshall County in 1929. After graduating from Wheeling's Triadelphia High School in 1947, he headed north with his family and attended the University of Michigan Architecture and Design School. For more than 40 years, he developed some of Chevrolet's most famous ads before retiring. He now lives near Metamora, Michigan. This is James' first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



James (front center) with his extended family, 2014.

Appalachian South Folklife Center Turns 50!



The Appalachian South Folklife Center at dusk. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.

This past July, the ***Appalachian South Folklife Center*** *at Pipestem, Summers County, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a weekend of music, dance, and art. The center was a focal point for the folk revival movement in Appalachia during the 1960s and '70s.*

For the center's 50th birthday, event organizers brought back mainstays from the early folk festivals such as David Morris, John Morris, Sparky and Rhonda Rucker, Kate Long, and Jim Costa. The music also covered different styles, ranging from world music to rock 'n' roll. Sunday, the final day of the festival, was dedicated to jazz, with headliner Bob Thompson, a 2015 inductee into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame. In addition, the three-day festival kicked off with a special symposium at Concord University honoring the center's founders, Don and Connie West.

Hope you enjoy this photo essay from the event.





Left: Singer and storyteller Sparky Rucker. Photo by Bullfrog Willard McGhee.

Below: The Missing Parsons Report, featuring Matthew and Billy Parsons. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.



Below: Patient Jazz (soon to be Wine and Roses). Photo by Lisa Sheirer.



Above: A young audience member gets some shade from the sun. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.



Above: Clay County native David Morris (left) leads a jam session at the Hilltop Stage. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.





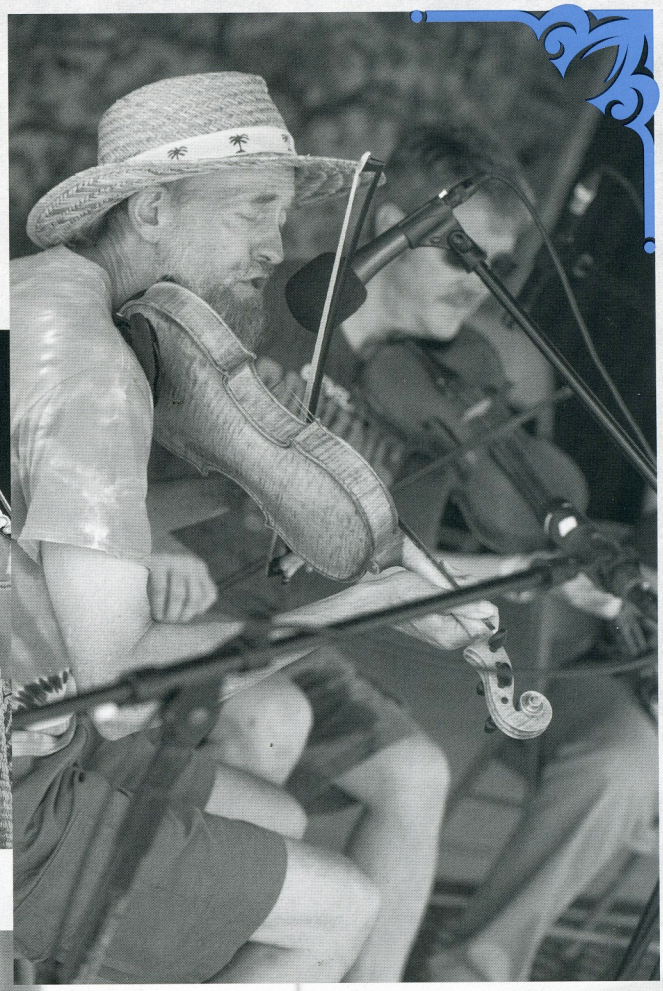
Above: Festivalgoers relax to some afternoon music and sun. Photo by John Nelson.

Left: Organizers set up an oral history station to collect people's memories of the center. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.

Right: Woody McKenzie (left) and Stan Bumgardner perform for the dance workshop on the Hilltop Stage. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.

Below: Members of Independent State, featuring (left-right) Elizabeth Segessenman, Adam Cox, and guest singer Susanna Robinson-Kenga. Photo by John Nelson.





Lady D, West Virginia's "First Lady of Soul." Photo by Lisa Sheirer.



Above: Singer-songwriter and guitarist Clinton Collins (left) of Bluefield with bassist Bill Rich. Photo by John Nelson.

Left: Fiddler John Morris (left), a staple of the early folk festival scene, reflects on a scrapbook of photos and clippings. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.



Above: Eclectic Americana ensemble Option 22 of Princeton. Photo by John Pahl Ferrell.



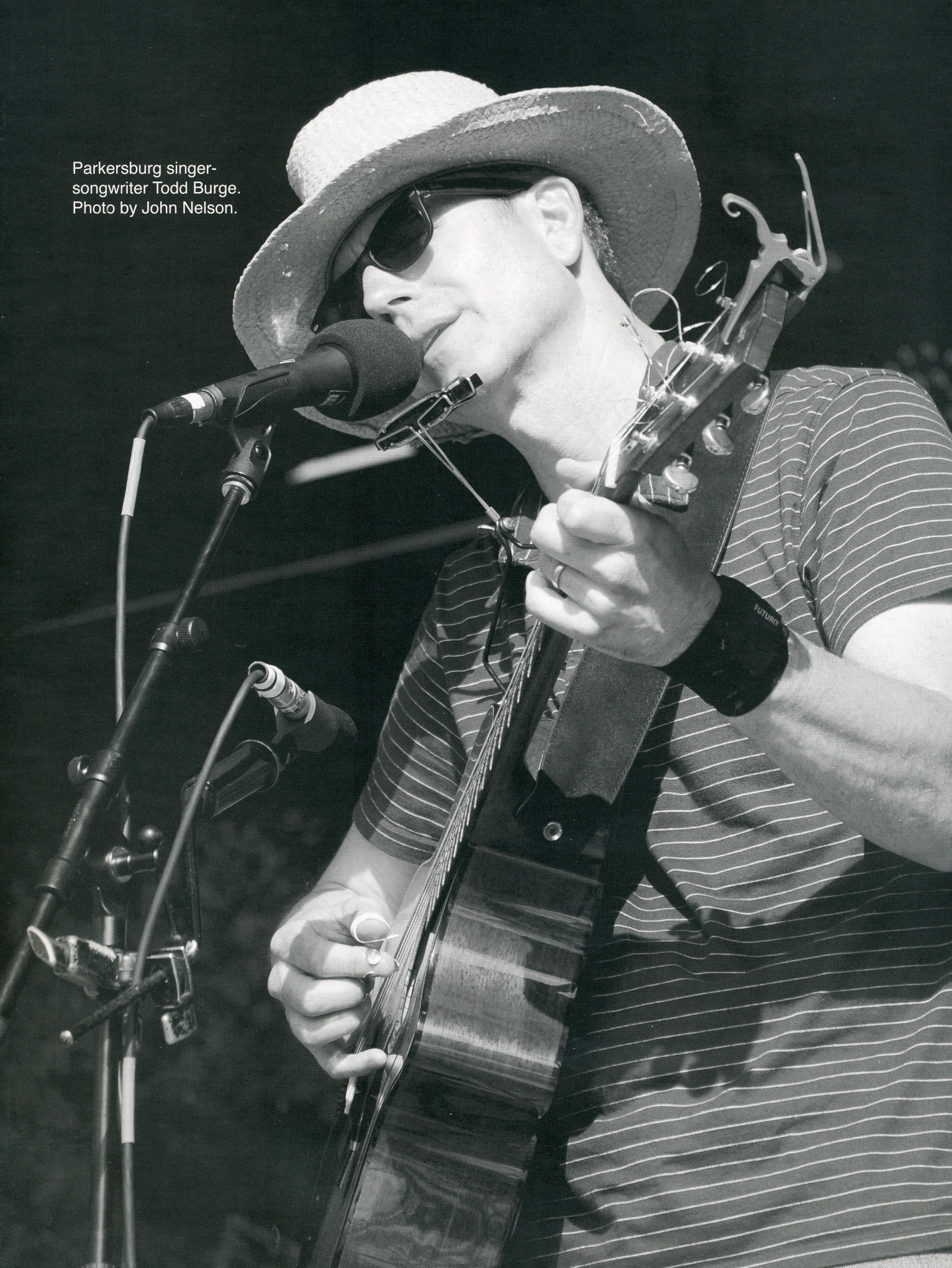
Top: Barefoot dancers swing to the music. Photo by Bullfrog Willard McGhee.



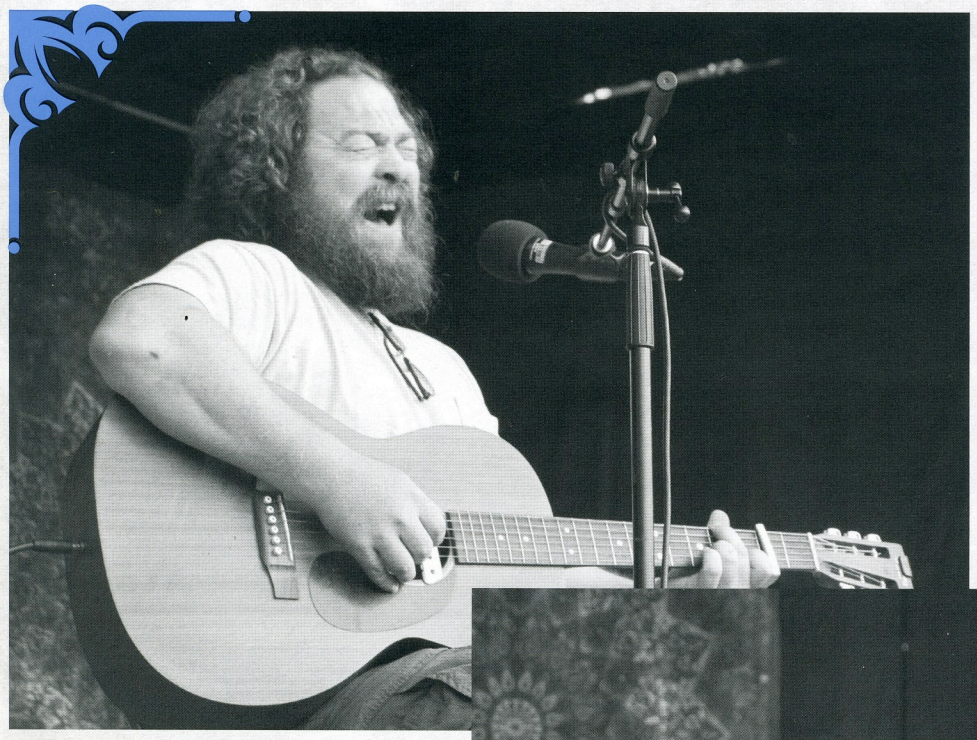


Above: Progressive Appalachian band Poor Taters from Athens, W.Va. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.

Left: Rhonda and Sparky Rucker, fixtures at the early folklife festivals, have performed together for more than 40 years. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.



Parkersburg singer-songwriter Todd Burge. Photo by John Nelson.





Above: Bluesman Bullfrog Willard McGhee. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.

Right: Kate Long, another early performer at the center, with her autoharp. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.

Left: Legendary jazz pianist Bob Thompson. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.



Above: The Appalachian fiddle, an ever-present staple at West Virginia music festivals. Photo by Lisa Sheirer.

Below: The crowd takes in the music and beautiful scenery on Saturday afternoon at the festival. Photo by John Nelson.





Above: Christine Ballengee Morris leads a traditional dance workshop. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.

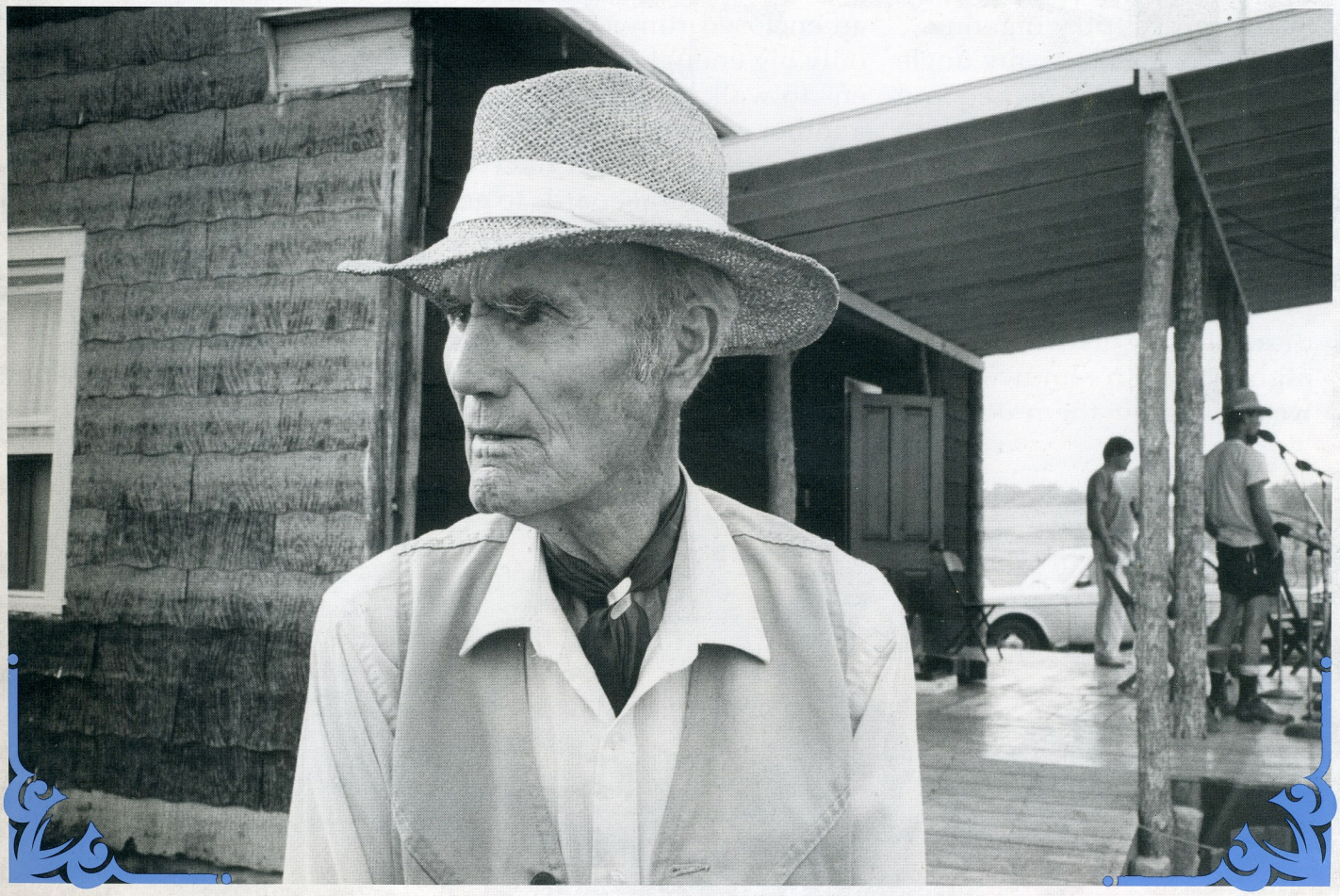
Don West

Don West (1906-1992) was a poet, a political activist, a preacher, a labor organizer, and an educator. The Georgia native earned a doctor of divinity degree from Vanderbilt University and, in his 20s, cofounded the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee. The Highlander influenced activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. In the 1950s, Don was a non-cooperating witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Don and his wife, Connie, first came to West Virginia in 1965 and established the Appalachian South Folklife Center at Pipestem. The center hosted summer camps for low-income youth and an annual music festival. Don wrote eloquently of mountain heritage and denounced the "hillbilly" stigma attached to Appalachia. An early environmentalist, he inspired people at the grassroots level while helping them appreciate their history. You can read his stirring poetry in *O Mountaineers: A Collection of Poems* (1974) and *In a Land of Plenty: A Don West Reader* (1982).

Don's contribution to our state's folk culture and history cannot be overstated. You can read more about him and the Appalachian South Folklife Center in the GOLDENSEAL articles "Don West, Poet and Preacher" by Ken Sullivan, Oct.-Dec. 1979, and "'More Than Butterfly Words': Don West Comes Home to Pipestem" by Rick Wilson, Winter 1988.

Don West at the Appalachian South Folklife Center, 1988. Photo by Yvonne Snyder Farley.



By John Payne

OLD-FASHIONED

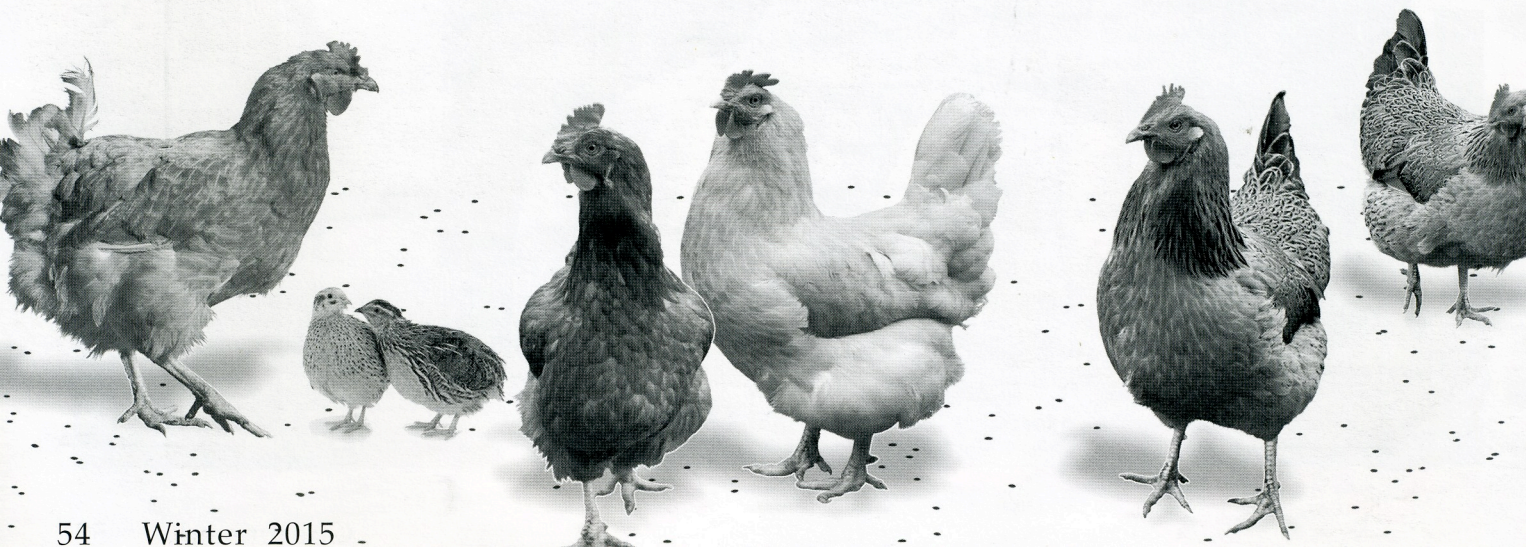
I grew up in rural Barbour County during the 1920s and '30s. I was always impressed by the inventiveness and resourcefulness displayed by my neighbors and kinfolk.

A good number of adults back then never had a chance to get much of a formal education. Boys were often pulled out of grade school to work with their fathers on the farm or in the mines. Girls were needed to help care for younger siblings or work as housekeepers or seamstresses. But what they lacked in schooling, they more than made up for in good old-fashioned country ingenuity.

Take, for instance, my uncle Bob Huffman. He owned and worked a farm not far from where I grew up. One of his main sources of income was from raising chickens. During the height of the Great Depression, his chickens started disappearing just about every night. He didn't know if a fox was dragging them off or if people were stealing them; either way, he knew he had to put a stop to it right away.

Since he got up every morning at the crack of dawn to work his farm, Uncle Bob knew he couldn't stay up late to guard his chickens. He quickly devised a plan and put it into action by building a second chicken house right next to the first one. In the first, he changed the interior so the chickens could only feed or lay their eggs in there. In the second, he built roosts so the chickens would have to go in at night to sleep. Between the two houses, he built an enclosed runway that was only big enough for the chickens to walk through. Without another opening in the second house, a thief would have to pry apart several boards to get at the chickens. Apparently, Uncle Bob's efforts were successful because, after he built the second house, he never lost any more chickens. Whether it was foxes of the four-legged or two-legged variety, Uncle Bob had outfoxed them.

Stantford Poling owned a place right near my family's farm. There was a huge flat rock about the size of a large room right behind his farmhouse. One summer, a huge flock of whippoorwills took to landing on the rock every single evening, and they would serenade Stantford with their whooping until full dark. The cacophony was deafening. After several weeks of this, Stantford decided he'd had enough. The next morning, he went out and covered the entire surface of that flat rock with brush and piles of wood and set it on fire. He continually added more wood and brush and kept the fire burning throughout the day. As evening approached, he let the fire go out and swept away all the ashes and soot with a broom. By this time, the surface of the rock was so hot he couldn't touch it without getting burned. As twilight



Country Ingenuity

settled on the cove where the rock cropped out, Stantford hid and waited for the birds. As usual, the flock of whip-poorwills swooped down and landed right on top of the large rock and began their nightly serenade. They made it to their first "whoop" when suddenly, en masse, they all flew away and never came back. Stantford had gotten his peace and quiet back at long last.

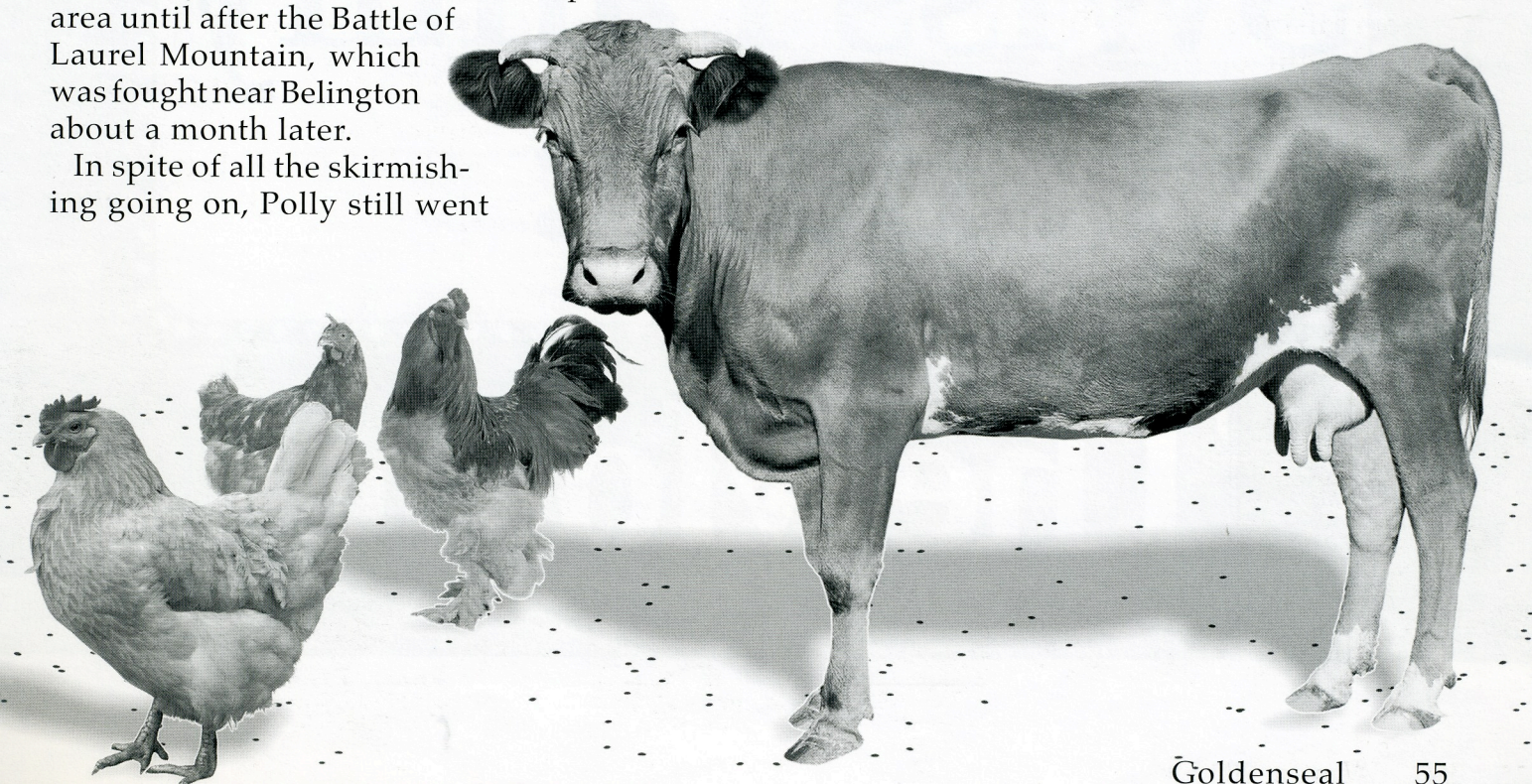
My favorite story of inspired enterprise involves my great-grandmother Polly Thompson, who lived on a farm about midway between Belington and Philippi. On June 3, 1861, the first land battle of the Civil War involving organized troops occurred at Philippi. Both the Union and the Confederate forces stayed in the immediate area until after the Battle of Laurel Mountain, which was fought near Belington about a month later.

In spite of all the skirmishing going on, Polly still went out to the barn every morning to milk her cow. And every morning, before she could get the milk back to her house, a soldier, or a group of soldiers, would come along and "confiscate" it. Some days, it was Union soldiers; other days, it was Confederates—depending on which side controlled the region at the time.

After about a week of this, Polly hitched up a horse to her buggy and rode into town. She went to the general store and bought a brand new chamber pot, the biggest one she could find. The next morning, instead of using the milk bucket, she milked the cow right over the new chamber pot. As she finished, she turned and came face-to-face with a Confederate corporal who was there to steal her milk. But when he looked down and saw what the milk was in, he quickly got sick to his stomach. He spit, shook his head, and left empty-handed.

Polly kept using the chamber pot until both armies left the area for good. She never lost another drop of milk. That's old-fashioned country ingenuity at its best!

KEVIN PAYNE is the author of two novels: *Stalking Eternity* and *Shadows On The Darker Side*, part of which is set in West Virginia. He's a professional photographer, graphic artist, and artist and was a video photographer and editor for NBC for nearly a decade. Kevin has produced, written, and directed nearly 100 different television productions, including a number of feature-length documentaries. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2014 issue.





Swiss Family Balli: The Movie

By Alan Byer



The Summer 2010 issue of GOLDENSEAL featured an article about the three Balli sisters of northern Webster County [See "Visiting the Balli Sisters of Helvetia" by Alan Byer]. A new documentary film highlights the story of these fascinating women and the Balli legacy. –ed.

Left: The stunning Balli family farm, Balli Ridge, Webster County. Photo by Janet Cowger-Fliegel.

Right: John and Hulda Balli settled on Balli Ridge in the 1890s and raised seven girls and one boy. Photo from the1930s courtesy of Rose Ann Cowger.

John (Johann) Balli was born April 28, 1872, in Tuscarawas County, Ohio. His parents, Christian and Mary Balli, had emigrated from Switzerland two years earlier, in 1870, and would move to the booming mill town of Pickens, Randolph County, when he was three years old, in 1875. Just a few years before that, a group of Swiss and German families had settled in the town of Helvetia—about five miles from Pickens. We can only surmise that Christian and Mary wanted to be close, but not too close, to their fellow country men and women.

In the 1890s, their son John purchased 100 acres about six miles west of Pickens and built a house on what is known today as Balli Ridge. He then courted and married Hulda Heller, the Swiss-born daughter of neighbors. Today, the Heller farm is preserved as part of Holly River State Park in Webster County.

Together, the couple raised seven girls and one boy on their remote mountain farm. All eight would go on to complete their high school educations, four took college courses, three received degrees, four married and moved away, and two became parents. When John, by then a widower, died in 1957, two of his children, twins Gertrude and Freda Balli, took over the farm. In 1965, older sister, Anna Balli, retired from her teaching job in Webster County to join them. In the years that followed, the three Balli sisters farmed and produced the family's unique form of Swiss cheese. Eventually, they became celebrities, featured in a variety of publications, including *National Geographic* magazine and in a documentary film, *Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia*, produced by Gerald Milnes of the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins.

No one lasts forever. John and Hulda's children departed this life one by one. Of the

three sisters still at the farm, Gertrude passed on first, and in 2000, Anna and Freda moved off the mountain to live with their eldest sister Martha and her husband, Louie Jones. For the first time in more than a century, the house on Balli Ridge stood empty. Freda died in 2002, and Anna passed on in 2003. After Martha's death in 2006, just a few days after her 101st birthday, niece Rose Ann Cowger, her husband Denzil, their daughter Janet Fliegel, Rose Ann's sister Hilda Burroughs, and Hilda's husband Jack joined together to buy the farm. They now rent it out by the week.

Enter Brad Rice. In 2008, Brad, an award-winning photojournalist for WCHS/WVAH Television in Charleston and Huntington, was in Webster County, filming a segment about the Cowgers' business, Rose Ann's Woven Goods, for his *Traveling West Virginia* series. Rose Ann recommended that Brad visit her family farm on Balli Ridge. He drove up to the ridge, and, in his words, was "instantly smitten."

Brad did a *Traveling West Virginia* segment about the Balli Ridge farm in 2009. Rose Ann's daughter Janet Cowger Fliegel drove over from Cincinnati to help. During the interview, Rose Ann introduced Brad to the many boxes of photos, journals, diaries, and records containing the Ballis' history. He knew instinctively he had a potential documentary on his hands. Rose Ann didn't think anyone would be interested; however, the seed had been planted. Brad and Janet kept in touch over the next two years. In early 2011, Rose Ann gave the go-ahead to start the project and agreed to direct the entire enterprise.

Early on, Janet and Rose Ann decided all eight Balli siblings should receive equal coverage to tell the rest of the story. They sat down with the archived records and telephone books to compile a list of potential interview subjects. Janet and Rose Ann came up with a script framework: an introduction; several chapters, each of which would feature one or more of the Balli siblings; and a conclusion. At first, they referred to the project as *Words on the Wind*, but, when Janet's niece Chloe Henline suggested *Swiss Family Balli*, they knew they had a title.

In the meantime, the moviemakers applied for funding. The Northern Webster County Improvement Council agreed to sponsor the film, and, through a series of minigrants, the West Virginia Humanities Council provided ongoing funding. Still, they realized they'd have precious few dollars to create *Swiss Family Balli*, so Brad volunteered to film and edit the movie almost entirely free of charge. It was going to be a labor of love for Janet, Rose Ann, and Brad.

Janet continued to work on the script, while Rose Ann and Brad provided suggestions. In the early 2000s, Rose Ann had spent many hours interviewing her Aunt Freda and recording everything in a journal, which became Janet's main source of information for the script. These stories led to additional interviews and provided rough outlines for important events to be depicted in the documentary. Also, Rose Ann had preserved the diary of her mother, Olga Balli Harris. Olga's diary offered a glimpse into everyday life on Balli Ridge. Finally, after working for months and sweating through eight drafts of the script, the three filmmakers decided they were ready to begin filming in earnest.

Rose Ann and Janet arranged the first interviews in spring



John, surrounded by his children: Olga, John Jr., Rosa, Anna, Alma, Martha, Freda, and Gertrude, ca. 1940. Photo courtesy of Rose Ann Cowger.

2011 at the Balli Ridge farm. Rose Ann and Janet asked the questions, and Brad filmed and recorded each session. The initial interviews included Martha's husband, Louie (now deceased); Webster County educator and historian Dr. Stanley "Judd" Anderson; and various Balli family friends and customers.

Their initial interviews led to additional possibilities. According to Janet, whenever they came to what seemed like a dead end, Rose Ann steered them to yet another person. As the weeks passed, Brad accumulated hours of interviews. He also had access to an extensive library of audio clips from his *Traveling West Virginia* projects and listened to them to find just the right voice—strong, yet personal—to narrate the film. Brad, Janet, and Rose Ann agreed on the voice of Tom Lynch, a Buckhannon chairmaker and onetime *Traveling West Virginia* subject.



Young Rose Ann (front row, second from left) stands with her extended Balli family, ca. 1952. Photo courtesy of Rose Ann Cowger.

According to Brad, Tom "was flattered, excited, and enthusiastically agreed." Since Olga's diary would play such an important part in the film, Brad returned to his library to find a voice to bring her words to life. Brad, Janet, and Rose Ann unanimously chose yet another former *Traveling West Virginia* subject, Jo Santiago of Elkins. Jo is a motivational speaker and owner of Flying Higher LLC. Olga had been a public school teacher and, according to Rose Ann, Jo's voice fit the role perfectly; when Brad approached her, Jo, too, responded emphatically, "Yes!"

Brad and Janet had been noting events that might warrant dramatization, and Janet and Rose Ann began to line up relatives and friends who could re-create the scenes. I think Olga would be proud to know that her daughters, their husbands, and her granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and great-grandsons—not to mention many neighbors and friends—were helping to bring the Balli family story to life.

Janet, Rose Ann, and Brad soon found that the Ballis' life on an isolated farm wasn't always idyllic and could be tragic. They also knew they'd have to include some of these hardships to paint an accurate picture of life on Balli Ridge. Because medical care of any kind was so far away, what we today consider very treatable conditions could quickly become serious or even fatal. John and Hulda's daughter Helena passed away on Balli Ridge in 1918 before her second



Brad Rice interviews Kenneth and Virginia Casto in April 2011 as Balli great-granddaughter Alex Fliegel listens intently. Photo by Janet Cowger-Fliegel.

birthday, and the following year, their last child, Ernest, died the day he was born.

What's more, that remote part of West Virginia could be dangerous. Some of the Balli women worked at local schools and had to walk through the woods to work every morning and again on their way home. One day, as daughter Rosa carried a pot of soup bound for her sister Martha's school, a family acquaintance assaulted her in the deep gloom of the forest. She managed to escape and run home. When she told her parents what had happened, her father picked up a rifle and retraced Rosa's steps so he could escort his oldest daughter, Martha, home. At the same time, Rosa's brother John grabbed another rifle and hurried in the opposite direction to escort sister Anna home. The next day, Rosa's father walked into Pickens to report the incident. The sheriff soon apprehended Rosa's attacker, who confessed before the case went to trial, sparing young Rosa the ordeal of testifying.

Before filming began on the documentary, the West Virginia Humanities Council recommended that Janet contact veteran filmmakers for advice. Most notably, Gerald Milnes, the now retired folk art coordinator at Augusta Heritage Center, gave generously of his time and expertise and provided clips and outtakes from his documentary *Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia*. Rose Ann and Brad interviewed Gerald about his experiences filming, interviewing, and observing Anna, Freda, and Gertrude on Balli Ridge.

The filmmakers realized the movie wouldn't be complete without a music soundtrack.



Hilda Burroughs and Rose Ann Cowger re-enact a scene in which women carry hot lunches to one-room schools using a broom handle. Many Balli family members and friends appear in the film. Photo by Janet Cowger-Fliegel.

Brad enlisted his daughter Emily Rice and her friend A. J. Wendel to record some songs. According to Brad, "Happy or carefree, somber and introspective, these two talented musicians covered it beautifully." Also, Brad included a few selections from song libraries, and Father Bruce Otto Betler, a Benedictine monk and onetime Balli friend, contributed some traditional Swiss music on acoustic guitar and fiddle.

The Balli Ridge farm has been photographed and filmed many times through the years. Some views have become commonplace and almost iconic. Janet and Brad wanted to provide never-before-seen views for the movie, so they brought in an aerial photographer. However, after two failed attempts, the filmmakers considered scrapping the aerial views. Brad decided to give it one more try and turned to West Virginia Department of Commerce and former GOLDENSEAL photographer Tyler Evert. Tyler and his friend Walter Scriptunis, a drone photographer and owner of Aerial West Virginia, met Brad at Balli Ridge in early summer 2015. In Brad's words, "What we were able to capture was exactly what we had in mind—wonderful, panoramic, and never-before-seen sweeping vistas of Balli Mountain."

Brad started editing the film in January 2015, even though he wouldn't complete filming until June. Some of their consultants told Janet and Brad the maximum length for a movie like this should be 1 hour 45 minutes, so they had to narrow down the final selections from many hours of film. According to Janet, "Deciding what stories to include and what had to be

More about the Ballis and the West Virginia Swiss

By Alan Byer

Although *Swiss Family Balli* is likely the most detailed film to examine Swiss immigrants in West Virginia, a number of other valuable resources have been produced over the years. The Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins has published two of the best known: *Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia* and *Vo mine Bärge (From My Mountains): Music of Helvetia*.

Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia, a 60-minute film produced by Gerald Milnes, was first released in 1993 as a VHS cassette and, more recently, as a DVD. It provides an intimate, yet sensitive and respectful, look at the descendants of Helvetia's first Swiss immigrants. It features Freda, Gertrude, and Anna, the three Balli sisters who stayed on the family farm near Pickens and produced their famous Swiss cheese until nearly the 21st century.

Originally released in 1998 as an audio cassette, *Vo mine Bärge (From My Mountains): Music of Helvetia* was rereleased as a CD in 2010 with expanded liner notes and a bonus disk. Bruce Betler—today, Father Bruce Otto Betler—played guitar and fiddle, and Gerald Milnes contributed fiddle tunes; both men figure prominently in *Swiss Family Balli*.

In 1991, Helvetia native and author David Sutton first published the best-known book about Swiss immigrants in West Virginia: *One's Own Hearth is Like Gold: A History of Helvetia, West Virginia*. In 2010, West Virginia University Press republished the book, which had been out of print for years, as *Helvetia: The History of a Swiss Village in the Mountains of West Virginia*. The 2010 edition includes a new introduction, a more detailed index, an alphabetical listing of the town's first settlers, a bibliography, and a photo essay depicting life in Helvetia.

Over the years, GOLDENSEAL has published a number of articles about West Virginia's Swiss immigrants. Two of these feature the Balli family: "Bärg Käss: Cheesemaking Among the West Virginia Swiss" by Bruce Betler in the Spring 1994 issue and "Visiting the Balli Sisters of Helvetia" by Alan Byer in the Summer 2010 issue. David Sutton also had two earlier articles about Helvetia in GOLDENSEAL: "A West Virginia Swiss Community: The Aegerter Photographs of Helvetia, Randolph County" and "Ella Betler Remembers Helvetia," both in the April-June 1980 issue.

left on the editing room floor were difficult decisions."

Swiss Family Balli debuted October 17, 2015, at the Jerry Run Theater in Cleveland, Webster County. West Virginia Public Broadcasting is in negotiations to broadcast the film on statewide television sometime in the future.

So what do first-time filmmakers Brad Rice, Janet Fliegel, and Rose Ann Cowger have to say after devoting so much time and effort to creating *Swiss Family Balli*? Brad observes, "One of the coolest aspects to me is the fact that none of us are independent filmmakers. We pulled this off with no prior experience whatsoever. The three of us worked on this when we were able to. Rose



Aerial view of Balli Ridge, June 2015. Photo by Tyler Evert.



An unexpected snowstorm during spring break 2013 doesn't slow down production. Pictured (left-right) are Amy Postalwait, former grants coordinator with the West Virginia Humanities Council; Denzil Cowger; Brad Rice; Rose Ann Cowger; and Janet Cowger-Fliegel. Photo by Jack Fliegel.

Ann is a great organizer and is well connected in central West Virginia. Janet is incredibly creative and a gifted writer, and I work in the television industry. How did we do this? I give all the credit to God for bringing us together at the right time, each with specific gifts .... Time after time, when we faced challenges, things just came together. West Virginia is in our blood, and I'm extremely proud of what we've accomplished! When you have a wonderful and interesting subject, and get to work with good people like the Cowger family, it's not work at all. We came up with the idea, researched every possible aspect, organized the information, wrote and rewrote the script eight times, shot all the footage and interviews over four years—in every season, in all kinds of weather—and finally edited *Swiss Family Balli* into a film we hope everyone will enjoy."

ALAN BYER is a South Charleston native who earned an English degree from West Virginia University. His writing has appeared in *Trains*, *West Virginia Hillbilly*, and *Log Train*. He works as a writer in the Baltimore/Washington, D.C., area. His previous contributions to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2006 and Summer 2010 issues.

Mountain Music Roundup

By Paul Gartner

Judging by the number of new CDs in 2015, this has been a creative year for some of West Virginia's top musicians. Far from inclusive, this list features some of the finest CDs received in the GOLDENSEAL office this year.



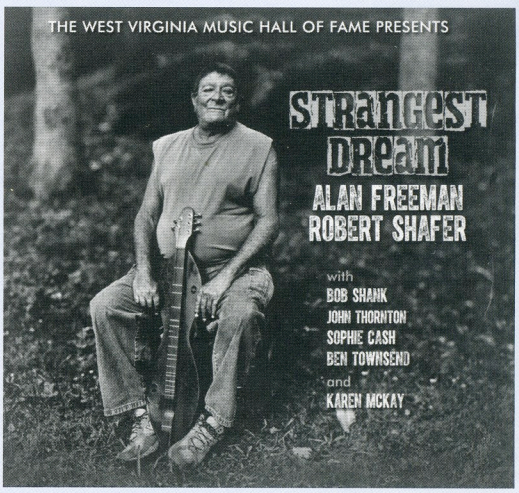
Jesse Milnes and Emily Miller: ***Deep End Sessions***
The husband-and-wife duo from Valley Bend, Randolph County, are a triple threat as great instrumentalists, vocalists, and songwriters. Their latest CD combines a nice variety of fiddle tunes, traditional songs, gems from Hazel Dickens and Ola Belle Reed, and two originals. The recording opens with two fiddle tunes, "Fun's All Over" and "Puncheon Floor." The latter comes in part from Murrell Hamrick of Randolph County. "Come All You Roving Gamblers" showcases some nice harmony singing from Emily and killer fingerpick guitar playing from Jesse. "I Got Lucky" and "My Baby's Not a Night Owl" (by Emily and Jesse, respectively) show that songwriting can be fun.

It should come as no surprise that there's great musicianship all around on this recording. Emily is the daughter of acclaimed singer Val Mindel and guitarist Mike Miller. She's also the director of the Appalachian Ensemble at Davis & Elkins College. Jesse's father, Gerry, is well known as a folklorist, musician, and longtime member of the band Gandydancer.

The CD is available for $15 plus $3 shipping at http://www.deependsessions.com/store.

Alan Freeman and Robert Shafer: ***Strangest Dream***
This CD from the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame features the dulcimer whiz Alan Freeman and his longtime friend and world-class guitarist Robert Shafer. On different selections, they are joined by Bob Shank, banjo; John Thornton, bass; Sophie Cash, fiddle and accordion; Karen McKay, vocals; and Ben Townsend, fiddle.

"It's all in the wrist," as the old saying goes, and Freeman's right-hand work propels the dulcimer like nobody else. Freeman and Shafer start things off with a quirky "Toad in the Jelly Jar" and go on to combine the traditional ("Darling Nelly Gray," "Bonaparte's Retreat/Crossing the Rhine"), Freeman originals ("Out in the Rain," "Bonnie Anne"), old chestnuts ("Bill Bailey/Just Because"), and "Redwing/Union Maid," which combines the original and Woody Guthrie versions. And in that populist vein,



the title tune comes from the late great Ed McCurdy.

The CD is filled with all-around great playing and great taste with front porch vocals. Fun and friendship are the operative words here. It's available for $15.99 plus $2.00 shipping from http://www.wvmusichalloffame.com/shopCDs.html.



Modock Rounders: ***Old Tunes & New Blood: Legacy of Wilson Douglas***

The Modock Rounders (Jesse Pearson, fiddle; Kim Johnson, banjo; and Cody Jordan, guitar) pay tribute to the late Clay County fiddler Wilson Douglas, who died in 1999.

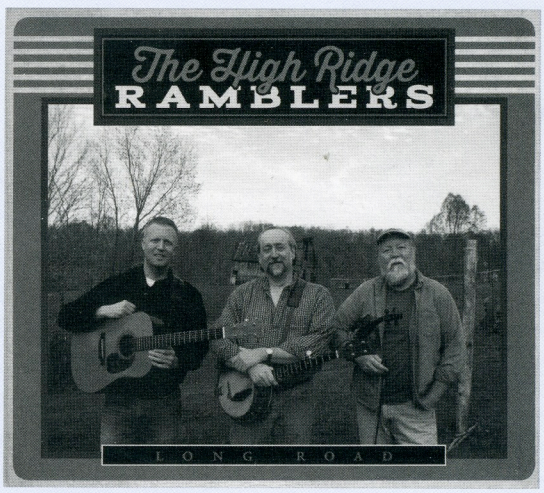
Kim is familiar to GOLDENSEAL readers as the longtime staff assistant and occasional writer. She was also Wilson's banjo player for many years and knows the subtleties of his tunes better than anybody. Jesse's strong bowing respects the melody, but he brings his own style to the tunes, which he plays on Wilson's fiddle.

The recording includes many of Wilson's signature tunes, such as "Run Here Granny," "Yew Piney Mountain," "Camp Chase," "Cuckoo's Nest," "Boatin' Up Sandy," and more. Jesse nails those bow licks, as on "Elzic's Farewell." There's also a nice interplay between the banjo and fiddle on "Little Rose," with great guitar playing throughout.

The CD can be ordered for $15 (postage paid) from Kim Johnson, P.O. Box 333, Dunbar, WV 25064.

The High Ridge Ramblers: ***Long Road***

The ramblers are three of West Virginia's veteran string band musicians: Dave Bing, fiddle and vocals; Andrew Dunlap, clawhammer banjo, guitar, and vocals; and Mark Payne, three-finger banjo, guitar, and vocals. Dave has taken his music to England, Ireland, and Spain, among other places, and, with Mark, was a mainstay of Gandydancer. Andrew has won the Vandalia Gathering banjo competition several times.



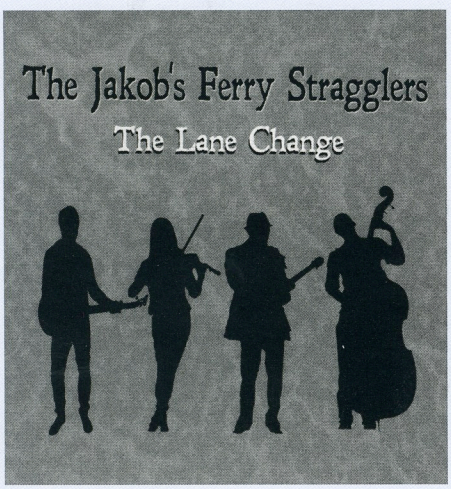
Fiddle playing doesn't get any better than this—from the great Kentucky tune "John Rawl Jamison" to West Virginia classics like "Jimmy Johnson," "Big Sciota," and "Yew Piney Mountain." That old-time music and bluegrass flavor shines through as Dave's strong bowing and nice melody variations mesh nicely with two great banjo players. There's good singing, too, with Andrew providing lead vocals on "Bill Mason" and Mark's heartfelt take on the standard "I'd Rather Be an Old-time Christian."

The CD can be ordered by e-mailing highridgeramblers@yahoo.com.

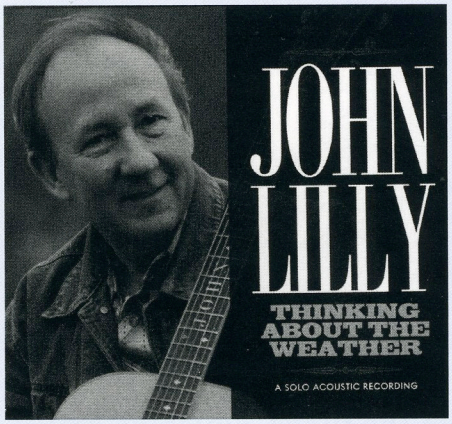
The Jakob's Ferry Stragglers: *The Lane Change*
Yowzah! These guys were a surprise. This Morgantown string band has got the goods. Killer fiddling, flatpicking, songwriting, singing, and drive.

Fiddler and singer Libby Eddy and guitarist and singer Gary Antol are joined by Mitch Hall on clawhammer banjo and Ed Croft on bass and vocals. Five of the 12 selections were written by Gary, including the swingy "Beaumont Butler's Blues," which segues into "The Beaumont Rag." Nice!

Two fiddle tunes here, "Sandy Boys" and "Whiteface," lean toward the festival style but get a good workout nonetheless. With Libby singing, the band does a good job on "Mannington #9," with some fine flatpick guitar work. Another original, "Jangly Jack," has some nice harmonies and instrumental work all around.



The Lane Change is available for download from iTunes or CdBaby or from http://jakobsferry.com/store/.



John Lilly: *Thinking about the Weather*
Former GOLDENSEAL editor John Lilly has won awards for his songwriting, taking honors at Merlefest and the Ghost Writers in the Sky Hank Williams competition.

His latest solo acoustic recording features a dozen songs from his prolific imagination. Among them, "Moment of Silence" brings to mind great songwriters from Nashville. "Just a moment of silence/that's all I ask/and let the laughter begin/with all of my heart/I hoped you would last/now we'll not see its like again/we'll not see its like again."

John's songs put a new spin on love, such as in this humorous ode to a GPS device: "She talks to me—when I'm lost and all alone/she talks to me—in a voice so sweet and low/she tells me where to go/she talks to me/She's always there to tell me when it's time to make a turn/and if I ignore her she doesn't seem concerned/if I go the other way or make some huge mistake/she just takes a minute out and she recalculates/and she talks to me."

The CD has a great sound, too, with recording and mixing by Robert Shafer. It's available for $15 plus $2.50 shipping from http://pages.suddenlink.net/johnlillymusic/store.html.

Dave Bing and Ben Townsend: *Tri-State Duets*
Dave Bing is joined here by Ben Townsend, known for his work as a member of The Fox Hunt and the Iron Leg Boys. The review CD arrived with no track listing, and a search of the Internet failed to yield one.



That said, I recognize some choice river tunes from Kentucky, a couple from Melvin Wine, and some Jimmy Wheeler tunes from Ohio. The collection focuses on fiddle pieces with banjo accompaniment rather than dance tunes. Dave's fiddling is stellar as always, and

Ben's clawhammer and two-finger banjo playing is set off by graceful brush strokes and artful fifth-string work.

For ordering information, visit http://questionablerecords.bandcamp.com.



Kay Justice: ***Hickory Wind***
Many listeners know Kay Justice from her solo work and for her duets with Ginny Hawker. The latest from the Wytheville, Virginia, resident includes traditional tunes ("Sugar Babe"), Carter family songs ("Tell Me That You Love Me"), and works by contemporary songwriters (Townes Van Zandt and Greg Brown).

Kay's plaintive voice is vulnerable yet strong, accompanied by her guitar. She breaks out an archtop and her flatpick for "The Evening Bells are Ringing," from the Carters. And the always beautiful "Kentucky" (from the Bolick brothers) has understated fingerpick guitar work.

Hickory Wind is available for $17 (postage paid) from Hickory Wind, 485 Church Street, Wytheville, VA 24383.

Comparsa: ***Mezcla***
This Charleston-based six-piece Latin jazz group is well-versed in salsa, samba, flamenco, and bossa nova rhythms. *Mezcla* features music and lyrics from guitarist and vocalist Eduardo J. Canelón. He's joined on the eight lively tracks by Elizabeth Segessenman on flute and vocals; Christian Tanzey, trumpet; Deron Sodaro, bass and vocals; Randraiz Wharton, drums and keyboard; and Chris Clark on saxophone.

The CD gets your attention immediately, with spikey blasts from the horns on "Cha Cha na ma/Mbonhea Yeah," which pairs an original with a lovely African folk melody. "Agree to Disagree" touches on ska and reggae, with lovely backing harmonies from Elizabeth. "La Nueva Comparsa" makes good use of the flute and horns; the song shifts gears (love that cowbell) only to resume the pace. Like other tunes on this recording, "Carnival," with its guitar, killer trumpet solo, and seamless bass lines, calls you to the dance floor.

Mezcla is available for $15 at Budget Tapes and Records in Charleston or at Wild Ginger and Spice in Davis. You can order it directly from the band for $15 (postage paid) by e-mailing bethplaysflute2@gmail.com.



PAUL GARTNER moved to West Virginia from Ohio in 1977 and lives in Lincoln County. He's a multi-instrumentalist who has placed in the old-time banjo competition at the Vandalia Gathering. He performs with his band Born Old and is a copy editor for Charleston Newspapers. This is Paul's seventh article for GOLDENSEAL, the most recent being in the Spring 2007 issue.



Text and photographs by
Carl E. Feather

A Chip off the Old Pringle

The overlook on U.S. Route 119 in Upshur County has just enough room for two cars, a historical marker, and a pair of single-table picnic shelters before flatland gives way to mountainside. In its day, the spot, which offers a sweeping view of the Buckhannon River Valley, must have been a pretty one for a picnic or cup of coffee.

The tables are missing now, and the shingled roofs on the simple shelters give more sustenance to moss than protection to travelers. It's no place for a picnic, unless you're eating fast food from the store down the road and don't mind getting crumbs and sauce on your vehicle's upholstery.

The roadside marker declares, "Pringle Tree." I imagine more than one sharp-eyed youngster has shouted for the driver to stop so the passengers could get a better look at the "potato chip tree."

Born in Philadelphia, brothers John (b. 1728) and Samuel (b. 1731) Pringle lived on the South Branch of the Potomac River in what was then Virginia. During the French and Indian War, they served in the British garrison at Fort Pitt (located at present-day Pittsburgh). In 1761, the Pringles and comrades William Childers and Joe Linsey walked away from the fort without permission.

It is believed the deserters went AWOL because they despised the king, not because they were cowards. Their journeys took them to Looney Creek in present Hardy County, where Childers and Linsey were captured. The Pringles escaped and took up with John Simpson, a trapper and trader. Their partnership with Simpson ended at Horse Shoe Bend on the Cheat River; Simpson headed toward what would become Clarksburg and Bridgeport; the Pringle brothers followed the Tygart Valley to Turkey Run in what is now Upshur County.

Housing was a problem in this frontier wilderness, making the Pringle brothers' discovery of a huge sycamore tree with a hollow cavity a godsend. It also was a good hiding place from the authorities. The cavity was so large, a fence rail eight feet in length supposedly could be turned around in it without touching a wall. This often-quoted fact begs the question: Why would you bring an eight-foot fence rail into your hollow tree in the first place? Nevertheless, the Pringles, perhaps securing the opening to the hollow cavity with fence rails, took up residence in the sycamore from 1764 to 1767.

The tree was located about 1.5 miles to the east of the aforementioned overlook, where Turkey Run empties into the Buckhannon River. According to my map, county road 20/6 should get me within a few hundred yards of the tributary. I head south on Route 119 toward Buckhannon and find county road 20/6, aka "Pringle Tree Park Road," nestled between the shell of "Christine's Lounge" and a large sign for "BJ's Mobile Home Movers: We move 'em, big or small, one call does it all."

The park road narrows as I drive past some beautiful homes. The accommodations look comfortable and serene, a far cry from the kind of rugged living the Pringles experienced. A mile or so down the road, I pass a farm where men are cutting firewood; I wonder how the Pringle brothers stayed warm in their humble lair—trees make for good firewood but poor hearths.



This historical highway marker on Route 119 tips off motorists to the Pringle Tree, which is located in the valley below the overlook. The tree can be reached from county road 20/6, aka Pringle Tree Park Road.

A mile or so down the road, I encounter Pringle Tree Park and, a short distance beyond, the culvert over Turkey Run. It's an inconsequential stream on this October morning, shaded by weeds and brush for much of its course through a pasture and along the park boundary. The river into which it empties, however, is substantial and flowing swiftly.

At the far end of the park, near the mouth of Turkey Run, stands the largest sycamore tree I've seen in my 61 years. A sign near it claims that the tree within the fenced enclosure is the third generation of the Pringle Tree.

This descendant of the original tree has two massive arms, one of which sends a low-hanging bough some 50 feet distant from the trunk. Its massive brown leaves litter the ground, and puffballs of seeds hang from its twigs, awaiting the right conditions to bring forth another generation of this historic tree. And, like its grandfather, there is a cavity in the tree—although, not so commodious to accommodate an eight-foot rail.

Back home, with access to technology, I learn from a 2003 message board posting by Jerry Pringle that the original tree fell in the early 19th century; its stump was visible until 1848. The roots brought forth a second tree, which was washed away in an 1880 flood. The current tree emerged at this spot some time afterward and is considered the third generation of the famous Pringle Tree.

As for the Pringle brothers, they eventually ventured back to civilization. By 1768, they had exhausted their supply of ammunition. John traveled to the South Branch, where he learned at a trading post that the French and Indian War had ended years before. Assuming they were no longer "wanted men," they abandoned their cavity in the sycamore.

In the *West Virginia Encyclopedia*, Noel W. Tenney writes

that the Pringle brothers led a small group of settlers into the Buckhannon Valley in 1769. Buffalo ate their crops that first year, and John disappeared into the Kentucky wilderness.

Samuel finally got the opportunity to show his disdain for the king of England. During the Revolutionary War, he fought on the American side with the Continental Army, achieving the rank of captain. And for all the hardships and difficulties he faced in his life, Samuel Pringle lived to be 99 years old. He is buried in Upshur County.

CARL E. FEATHER is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Ashtabula County, Ohio. He has family roots in Tucker and Preston counties and is the author of the book *Mountain People in a Flat Land*. Carl has been a longtime GOLDENSEAL contributor, dating back to his first article in the Summer 1987 issue.

The huge sycamore that stands at the Pringle Tree Park is not the original that housed the Pringle brothers. It's the grandson, or granddaughter, of that famous tree.



2015 Index

The Winter issue of GOLDENSEAL traditionally includes an index of that year's articles. Beginning this year, the index can be found online at http://www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/gsindex.html.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685 FOR GOLDENSEAL: WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE (U.S.P.S. No. 013336), Filing date October 1, 2015, published quarterly, at The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Number of issues published annually: 4. Annual subscription price: $20. The general business offices of the publisher are located at The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Kim Johnson is the contact person at (304)558-0220.

The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, and managing editor are: publisher, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; editor, Stan Bumgardner, The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; managing editor, Stan Bumgardner, The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The owner is: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: NONE.

Publication Name: Goldenseal: West Virginia Traditional Life
Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Summer 2015

The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months are:
A) Total no. of copies: 13,483
Net press run:
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 9,739
2) Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 418
Other Classes mailed Through the USPS -0-
C) Total paid and/or Requested Circulation: 23,640
D) Free Distribution by Mail -0-

Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-

Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 23,640
H) Copies Not Distributed 188 (Office Use) 45 (Returns)
I) Total 23,873
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 100%

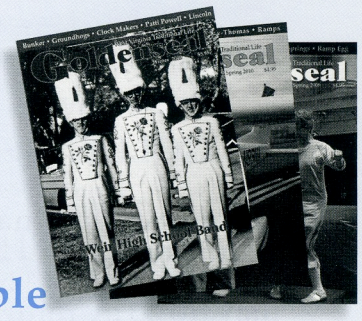
The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date are:
A) Total no. of copies 14,150
Net press run:
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 9,216

2) Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 383
4) Other Classes mailed Through the USPS -0-
C) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation 23,749
D) Free Distribution by Mail: -0-

Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-

E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 23,749
H) Copies Not Distributed 188 (Office Use) 66 (Returns)
I) Total 24,003
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 100%
I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Stan Bumgardner, Editor



Back Issues Available

___ Fall 2004/Grafton Trains
___ Summer 2006/Elaine Purkey
___ Summer 2007/Raising Goats
___ Winter 2007/Gainer Photos
___ Spring 2010/Pilot Steve Weaver
___ Winter 2010/Weir High School Band
___ Fall 2012/Cameo Glass
___ Winter 2012/Travelers' Repose
___ Spring 2013/Sam McColloch
___ Summer 2013/Sesquicentennial
___ Fall 2013/Folklife Goes to College
___ Winter 2013/Cranberry Wilderness
___ Spring 2014/Celebrating 40 Years!
___ Summer 2014/Baseball!
___ Fall 2014/Fairmont Architecture
___ Winter 2014/Hammons Family
___ Spring 2015/Food Heritage
___ Summer 2015/Mine Lights
___ Fall 2015/Traditional Dance

Stock up on GOLDENSEAL back issues! Purchase any of the magazines listed above for just $3.95 each, plus shipping, while supplies last. Pay just $3 each, plus shipping, on orders of 10 or more.

Better yet, take advantage of our **Deluxe Gift Package**. Own all of the issues listed here, a copy of The GOLDENSEAL *Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*, a color reprint of our 1985 article about Homer Laughlin China, plus other assorted reprints while supplies last, all for the low price of $50, including shipping.

Treat yourself or treat a friend to this memorable collection from GOLDENSEAL!

I enclose $_____ for ___ copies.
-or-
Charge my
___VISA ___MasterCard
Card No. _____
Exp. Date _____
Name _____
Address _____
_____

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

New To GOLDENSEAL?

We're glad to make your acquaintance and hope you want to see more of us. You may do so by returning this coupon with your annual subscription payment for $20.

Thanks—and welcome to the GOLDENSEAL family!

I enclose $____ for a subscription.
-or-
Charge my
___VISA ___ MasterCard

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

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

Address Change?

Please enter old and new addresses below and return to us:

Old

Name _____

Address _____

_____

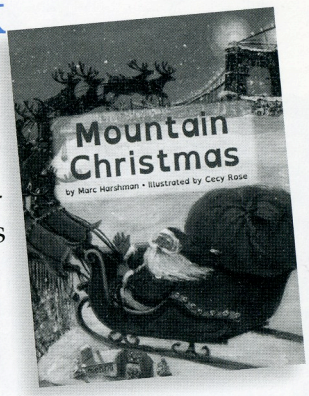
New

Name _____

Address _____

_____

New Children's Book by the Poet Laureate



West Virginia Poet Laureate Marc Harshman has written a new children's book just in time for the holidays. Beautifully illustrated by painter Cecy Rose, ***Mountain Christmas*** depicts Santa visiting some of West Virginia's most iconic places, including the Wheeling Suspension Bridge, the state capitol, the New River Gorge Bridge, the Green Bank Observatory, and Blackwater Falls. Written in poetic stanzas, each page pays respect to the Mountain State, with Santa and his reindeer soaring above hoot owls and black bears, red barns, trains, coal miners, loved ones, and soldiers returning home for the holidays.

A special feature is the book's typeface, Dyslexie font, which was designed by a dyslexic graphic designer to improve his reading life. Readers will notice the uniqueness of the letters and differences in spacing and design.

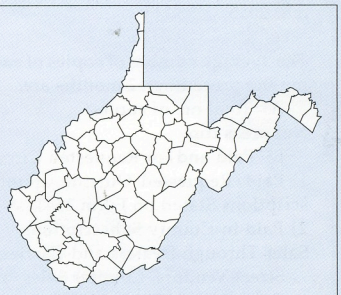
Both Marc and Cecy live in Wheeling. Marc is the author of 11 other children's books, including *The Storm*, a Smithsonian Notable Book. He recently wrote *A Song for West Virginia*, a poem celebrating West Virginia's 150 years of statehood. Cecy is a printmaker and painter and works at the community college in Wheeling and the Stifel Fine Arts Center, where she teaches art classes and holds children's workshops.

Mountain Christmas can be ordered from the publisher, West Virginia Book Company, at 304-342-1848 or www.wvbookco.com. The 32-page book sells for $15.95 plus $4.50 shipping. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- The Other Matewan Shootout
- W.Va. Music Hall of Fame
- Blair Mountain
- The Hunt for Pancho Villa





Aubrey Cox, age 8, of Jackson County steals the show with her rendition of Hazel Dickens' "West Virginia, My Home" at the 50th anniversary of the Appalachian South Folklife Center in Pipestem, Summers County. Photo by Raj Pongsugree.

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

PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal

Page 28 — Jack Furbee spends Christmas Eve 1938 in a manger in Wetzel County.

Page 32 — James Bernardin recalls the joys and tribulations of growing up in the Wheeling suburb of Elm Grove in the 1930s and 1940s.

Page 54 — John Payne relates tales of country ingenuity in Barbour County.

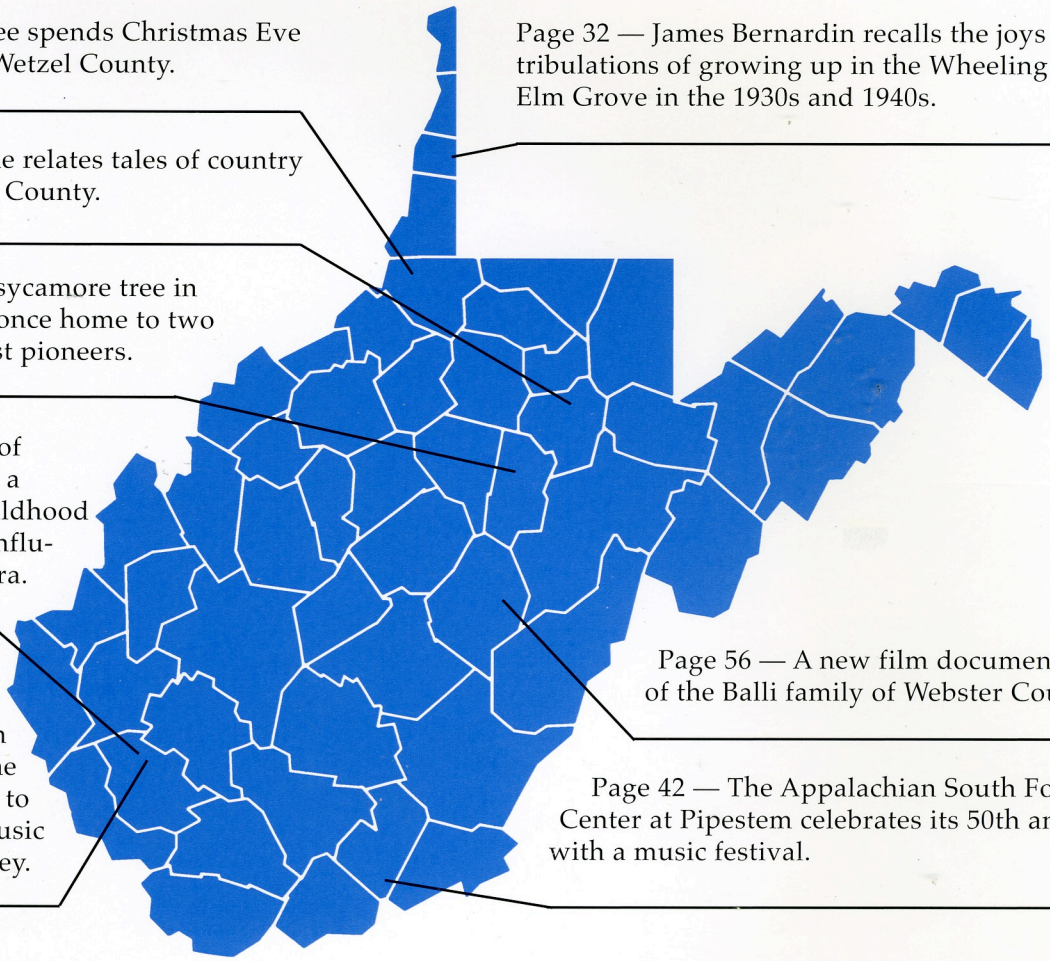
Page 68 — A hollow sycamore tree in Upshur County was once home to two of the region's earliest pioneers.

Page 12 — Ed Haley of Harts Creek survives a violent and tragic childhood to become the most influential fiddler of his era.

Page 24 — Celebrated songwriter/musician John Hartford dedicates the last decade of his life to tracking down the music and stories of Ed Haley.

Page 56 — A new film documents the lives of the Balli family of Webster County.

Page 42 — The Appalachian South Folklife Center at Pipestem celebrates its 50th anniversary with a music festival.



54
0 94295 76645 1