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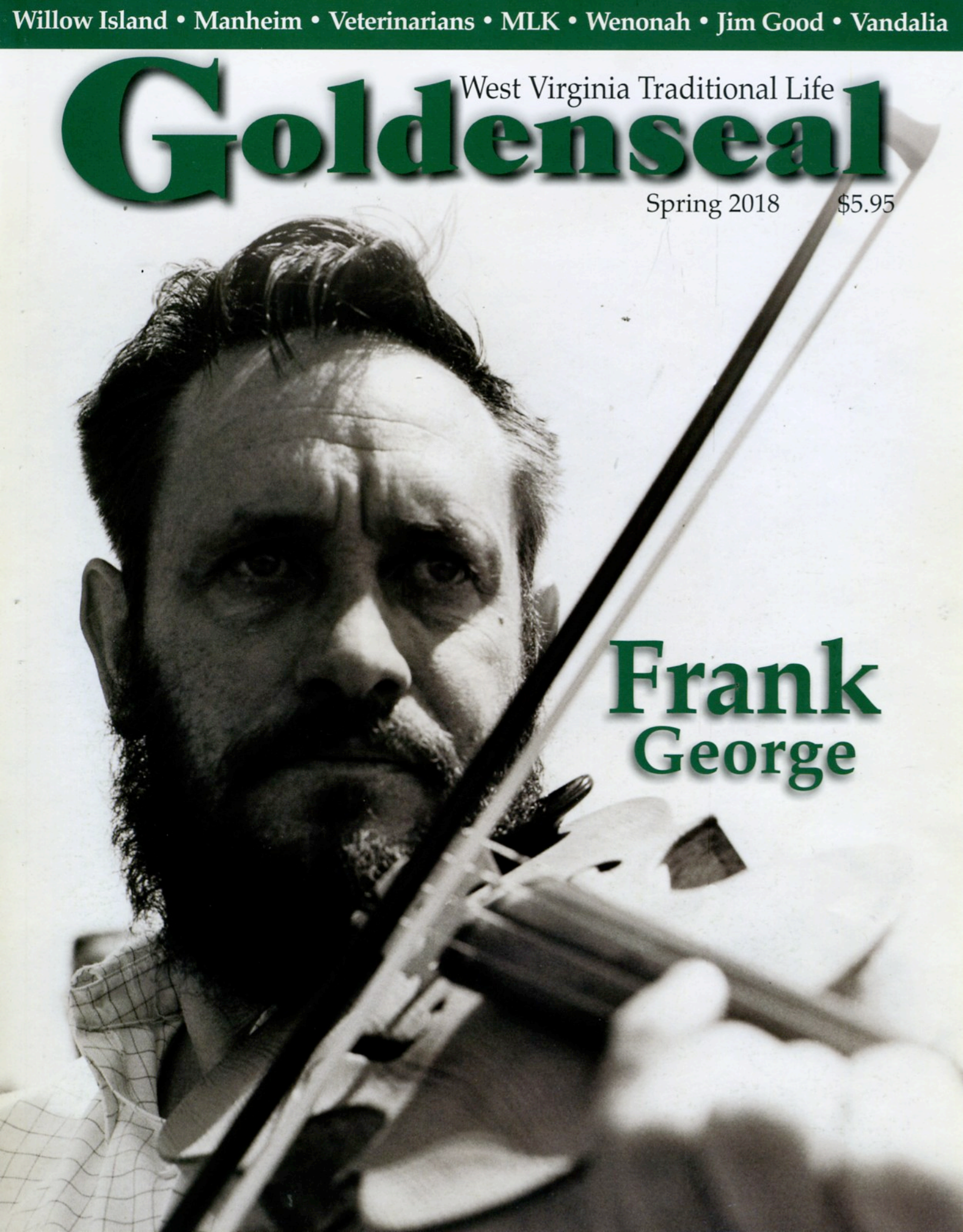
Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Spring 2018 $5.95



Frank George

Frank George playing his bagpipes in full Scottish regalia, 1960s. Photographer unknown, courtesy of Jane George.

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Goldenseal

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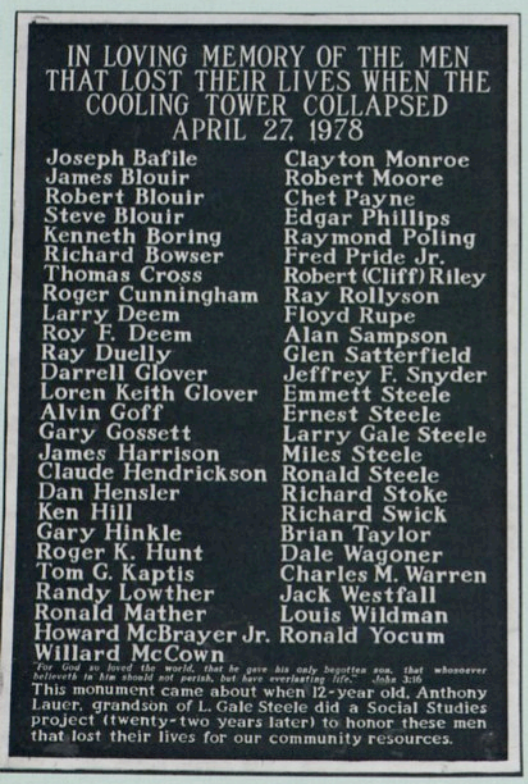

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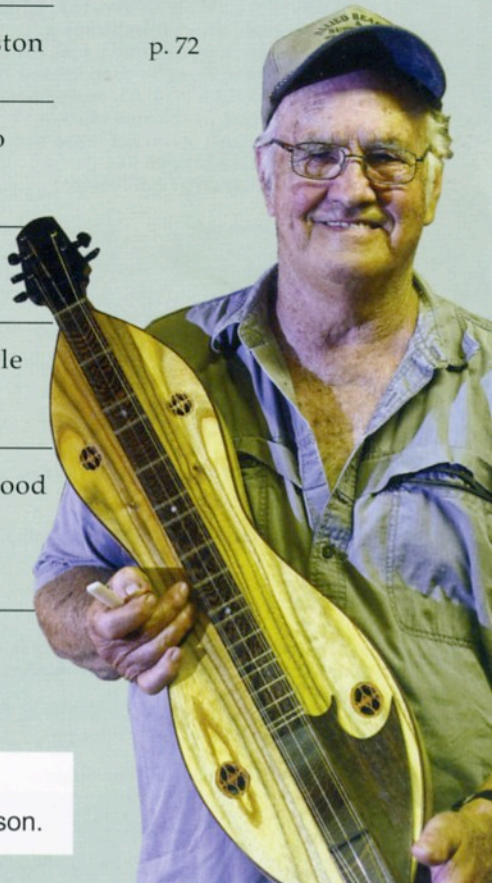

On the cover: Frank George, ca. 1970.
Photographer unknown, courtesy of Kim Johnson.

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

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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. GOLDENSEAL welcomes the submissions of manuscripts, photographs, and letters. Please see Contributor Guidelines at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal.

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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 by Watkins Printing

From the Editor

In 43 years (and 172 issues), only two people have ever made the cover of GOLDENSEAL twice. The first was Braxton County fiddler Melvin Wine, the inaugural recipient of the Vandalia Award, our state's highest folklife honor. For those into GOLDENSEAL trivia, Melvin was on our Summer 1991 and Spring 1999 covers. The second is Frank George, who previously made the Spring 1983 cover, and now this one.

Frank, who died in November at age 89, and his wife, Jane, who survives him at 95, played key roles in reviving traditional Appalachian culture. When Frank and Jane emerged onto the public scene in the 1960s, some West Virginians still practiced what we call "traditional life"—preserving foods, making clothing and quilts by hand, playing old-time music. But these traditions were quickly fading away. By then, even in rural areas, most West Virginians had access to grocery stores, department stores, and rock 'n' roll. Traditional Appalachian culture was a vanishing breed.

To help preserve this waning culture, West Virginia University folklife scholar Dr. Patrick Gainer founded the state Folk Festival in Glenville in 1950, but, particularly in its early years, the festival struggled. West Virginians were looking forward to a modern future. Many didn't want to be associated with things they considered outdated—like growing and preserving your own food or making your own yarn and clothes from scratch.

Frank and Jane were there in those first years of the folklife revival and soon became ambassadors of West Virginia history and culture. Jane, through her work with 4-H, played a key role in developing the first Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes as part of our state's Centennial celebration in 1963. Through her later work with the state Department of Commerce, she showed how traditional Appalachian products, such as homemade quilts, could be marketed locally and nationally.

Frank and Jane met at Cedar Lakes in 1966 and spent the next five decades together. While Jane's expertise was crafts, Frank was a musician's musician. But that oversimplifies the man by a long shot. First and foremost, Frank played old-time music because he loved it. Perhaps equally, though, he loved its history. He could tell you where an old-time tune came from, how it evolved over the centuries, and the musicians who'd added little twists and turns to it (some to his liking, others not so much). You could name virtually any Appalachian tune, and he could trace its history from the British Isles to the present, much like a genealogist explaining how a third-great-grandfather once made the trek from Europe to

Jane and Frank George, 1993. Photo by Michael Keller.

mine coal in West Virginia. To Frank, these old tunes were as hardy as those immigrants, enduring centuries of history so they could be shared with the next generation.

Frank was a regular on the festival circuit and never completely retired from it. At age 87, he broke his leg after doing some target practice behind his Roane County house (guns were another passion). The accident happened right before Frank was to perform at the 2016 Vandalia Gathering, and he started plotting from his hospital bed how he could still make the show four days later. Family and friends convinced him to think twice on that occasion, but two months later, he was fiddling away at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop.

Frank never got much wrong, but fortunately for us, he did on one occasion. In 1983, he told author Michael Meador that interest in Appalachian music would "fizzle out." Some 35 years later, the popularity of old-time music is stronger than ever, as evidenced by the spread of "roots" music festivals across West Virginia and around the world. For this, all of us who love old-time music and Appalachian history owe an endless debt of gratitude to the late great Frank George.

Stan Bumgardner

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Parthenia in Tams, ca. 1937, courtesy of her family.

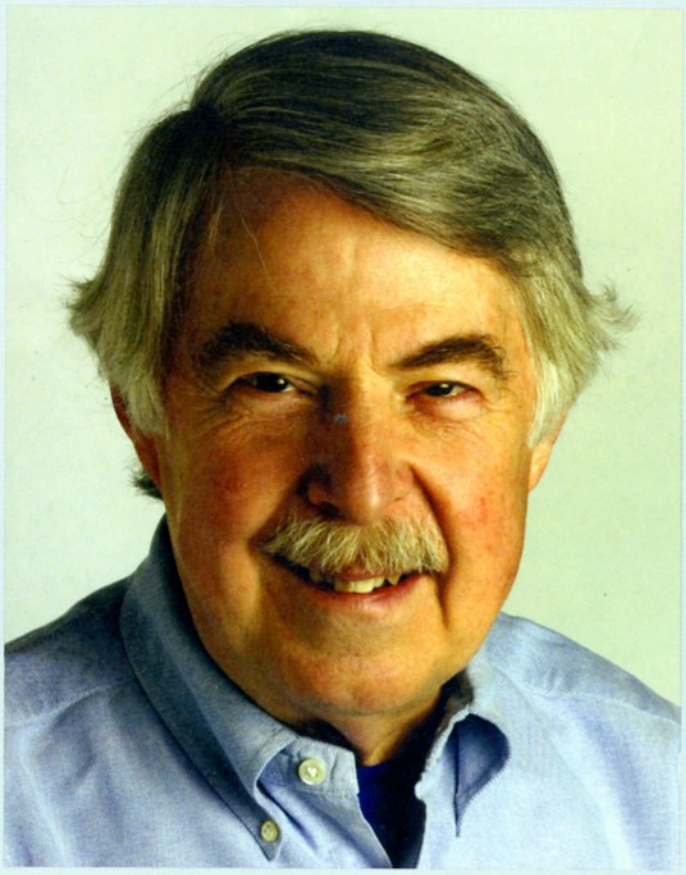
Parthenia Edmonds

(1914-2017)

Parthenia Edmonds of Beckley passed away November 24, a month before her 103rd birthday. The daughter of sharecroppers and the granddaughter of slaves, Parthenia was featured in our Winter 2000 issue, at age 85. She was a 1935 graduate of Byrd Prillerman High School in Amigo and a 1939 graduate of West Virginia State College (now University), where she served on the Women's Senate. Parthenia managed grocery stores in the Beckley area, taught school, and dedicated her entire life to her family and her church. Her resolute approach to life was apparent in what she told author Pauline Haga in 2000: "I march by my own drumbeat. I was born of a divine will and am here to fulfill my destiny."

Paul Nyden

(1945-2018)



Courtesy of Charleston Newspapers.

Journalist Paul Nyden died in Charleston on January 6 at age 72. It's not an overstatement to suggest that Paul was the best investigative journalist in our state's history—first at the Beckley *Gulf Times* and then at the Charleston *Gazette* (now *Gazette-Mail*). With childlike enthusiasm and energy, he uncovered the corruption, lies, and contradictions of those in power. Politicians, big business, and the coal industry were popular targets. His articles exposed shady, wasteful state government practices and helped lead to changes in workplace safety.

Paul proudly called himself a "liberal," among many other things (some of which can't be printed here), but could get under the skin of Democrats and Republicans alike. Yet, he was a thoroughly affable person who kept a lifetime's catalog of jokes (almost none of which can be printed here) at the ready. It was often said that Paul could lambast a politician in the morning paper and then joke with the same person over a beer after work.

Paul was also an exceptional historian. In 1974, he completed his three-volume, 1,000-page doctoral dissertation on the Miners for Democracy, a grassroots movement that ousted the United Mine Workers of America's corrupt leadership in the early 1970s. As a side project, he interviewed scores of people who'd grown up in the New River Gorge in the early 1900s; these recordings are in the West Virginia and Regional History Center in Morgantown.

Paul wrote five articles for GOLDENSEAL. His interviews with Fayette County nurse Mabel Gwinn (Fall 1981) and Eccles and Layland mine disaster survivor William Derenge (Spring 1982) are among the best ever published in our magazine. And he wrote two articles about his favorite pastime: "Clint Thomas and the Negro Baseball League" (October-December 1979) and "Coal Town Baseball" (October-December 1980). He also wrote a *Guide to Coal Mining Collections in the United States* (April-June 1979).

Paul's greatest talent may have been his ability to explain complex subjects in ways we could all understand. We'll end this tribute to him with a passage from his dissertation suggesting one of the key reasons for our state's persistent poverty but, in typical fashion, leaving us with a ray of hope:

"Today, thousands of railroad cars leave the mountains every day, overflowing with coal. When they return, they are empty. The people of Appalachia have nothing to say about how that coal is used nor about who reaps the harvest of riches from their mines. Someday, the vast riches of Appalachia will no longer flow into the hands of a few powerful individuals, but into the hands of the whole Appalachian and American peoples."

76 Years Later . . . A Purple Heart

By Patricia Richards McClure

Ninety-four is the new 50. Wetzel Sanders of Lincoln County can accomplish more in one day than a person half his age. Hale and hardy, he's still going strong.

We first introduced you to Wetzel in the Winter 2016 GOLDENSEAL, along with two other living West Virginia survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

He's had an incredible life and several careers. Even after stepping down from his last "real job" (at age 89), he's maintained a vigorous schedule. He's always on the move—including a trip to Hawaii in 2016 for the 75th anniversary of the attack. Wetzel's a very giving man, always at the ready to help others. He's been instrumental in making sure the state never forgets the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. He regularly attends the December 7 ceremony in Charleston and places Pearl Harbor decals on the tombstones of state veterans who were there on that fateful day. He also led an effort to issue Pearl Harbor survivor license plates to his comrades in arms.

Wetzel isn't one to hold a grudge. He looks forward, not back. In fact, he's so forward-looking he talked about going to the 80th reunion of Pearl Harbor survivors even before the 75th had occurred. And he's already thinking about the 2026 reunion "because I'll only be 103 then."

There's one little thing that gnawed at him for more than 75 years. During the attack, he took shrapnel to the knee as he helped others more severely wounded. Wetzel ended up in the hospital with the Navy men, not the Army men, and somehow, his Purple Heart paperwork never went through. In 2016, West Virginia's congressional delegation began a bipartisan effort to get Wetzel his medal. Finally, on September 5, 2017, Senator Joe Manchin's office announced it had been secured. Ten days later, Wetzel became the man of the hour at a celebration in Huntington, surely one of the proudest days of his life. After hearing about someone who'd waited 22 years for a Purple Heart, Wetzel said, "Heck, I waited 76 years for mine."

To our knowledge, all three Pearl Harbor survivors we told you about in Winter 2016 are still living. In fact, Wetzel and Henry Sloan hadn't known each other before I began working on the article, but they've become buddies. Henry has experienced health problems during the past year, but his mind is still sharp! We want Henry to know we're still thinking of him. The "unnamed sailor" referred to in the 2016 article still resides in Cabell County.

Meanwhile, a fourth living Pearl Harbor survivor in West Virginia has been identified. In the November 12, 2017, issue of the Charleston *Gazette-Mail*, Douglas Imbrogno recounted the story of Bill Winters of Mason County. Bill was in the Army Air Corps in 1941 and stationed at Hickam Field. He survived the attack and, according to the article, is willing to talk about his experiences in World War II. At 98, he's the oldest of our Pearl Harbor survivors.

Wetzel Sanders (right) and his grandson B. J. Handley kneel at the grave of war correspondent Ernie Pyle in Honolulu's National Cemetery of the Pacific during the 75th annual commemoration of Pearl Harbor in 2016. Courtesy of Wetzel Sanders.

PATRICIA RICHARDS McCLURE has lived in West Virginia for more than 40 years. A graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College and Ohio University, she retired from West Virginia State University, where she was an associate professor of English. For seven years, she's been writing biographies of veterans as part of the West Virginia Veterans Memorial project, a task that has become a lifetime commitment.

The Miracle of Hominy Falls

By Stan Bumgardner

Fifty years ago, the residents of a small community in Nicholas County suffered through a deadly mine disaster, waited days for news about missing friends and loved ones, and prayed for a miracle.

On May 6, 1968, a continuous miner machine cut through a thin coal seam and drilled into an unmapped, abandoned coal mine at Hominy Falls. A deluge of water from the old mine engulfed the men in that section of the Saxsewell No. 8 mine, operated by Gauley Coal & Coke. Most of the miners made it out unharmed, but the water cut off 25 of them from the entrance. The 15 miners located closest to the portal were able to keep in touch with rescuers. So, there was at least some hope of getting them out alive. The other 10, though, were trapped much deeper in the mine and couldn't be reached. All 10 were presumed to be dead.

Before dawn the next morning, rescuers began pumping out the water and edging forward inch by inch. On May 12—six days after the disaster—the 15 closest to the entrance were rescued, all alive. Then began the grim task of finding the other 10.

The little hope that remained was growing dimmer by the day. But then, one of the rescuers saw a fresh footprint in the mud and yelled to his colleagues, "Guys, I think there's somebody alive."

Miners and rescuers await word of their colleagues' fate the day after the Hominy Falls mine disaster. Photo by Emil Varney, the West Virginia State Archives, Emily Varney Collection.

Finally, on May 16, rescuers reached the 10 missing miners. Four had drowned in the original cave-in: Eli Edward Walkup of McCross, Renick F. McClung of Orient Hill, and Claude Roy Dodd Jr. and William F. Burdette of Rainelle. But miraculously, six others were alive. They were cold, soaked, starving, and hanging on to life with a thread, but somehow they'd survived 10 days in excruciating conditions. They had run out of food and fresh water by the fourth day and survived only by drinking the flooded mine water.

One of the survivors, Frank Scarbro, later told the *New York Times*: "It was 10 days of hell. Some of them guys broke down and cried just like they were little kids. I'd never let a man see me like that, but I was just as scared as they were." The "Miracle of Hominy Falls," as it became known, led to new laws regulating the preservation of mine maps, even after the mines had been abandoned.

STAN BUMGARDNER is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

A Visit with Frank and Jane George

Text and photo by Emily Hilliard

It was a chilly afternoon in April 2016 when I made the trip to Walton for an interview with Frank and Jane George. Frank answered the door in pajamas—an oversized T-shirt with cats and flowers stamped all over, and flannel pants in an equally bold pattern. At 87 and with a Governor's Arts Award freshly under his belt, Frank didn't need to put on airs, though I don't expect he ever did. He led me back to a windowed room adjacent to the kitchen where he and his wife, Jane, 93, had been sitting in their recliners, watching birds in the backyard.

This was my first time meeting the couple, though their legend—as living forebears of West Virginia traditional music, dance, craft, and culture—was well known to me. More a rambling conversation than an interview, my recording of that visit starts mid-sentence, as Frank described how he first met Uncle Homer Walker, an African-American banjo player, and, like Frank, a native of Mercer County.

While Frank and Jane swapped jabs, interruptions, and corrections, Frank moved on, jumping between Eastern philosophy ("The whole idea [of the preservation of traditional music] was what the Japanese called *Shinto*. You heard of that? Continuation. That's what it's all about."), to his gun room ("I'm crazy about guns."), to just what he's going to do with that governor's award ("I can take this and $2 down to the Green Lantern and get me another beer!").

He finally landed on a fully fledged story about the first time he ever heard bagpipes: "One day, my mother and father were standing on the corner in Bluefield. All of a sudden, I hear this sound, and I broke out in a run just like a scalded hound. My mother jumped. My dad said, 'Let him on, let him on.' I tore off, and it was about a couple hundred yards down—there were restaurants and hotels and theaters, and it was a busy place. I found out that the piper was with a salesman for Arthur Tea—he was traveling on the [N&W] railroad, stopping at places to sell tea. Had quite a crowd, you see, and of course, I was there. In fact, if he was still there playing, I'd still be there!" Still wide-eyed, Frank said he never forgot that moment.

When he was a teenager, he finally bought his own pipes. By that time, Frank was already proficient at the fiddle and claw-hammer banjo—instruments he picked up from his father and grandfather. He couldn't remember how he learned exactly, "Grandpa was playing 'Sourwood Mountain,' and all of a sudden, I was playing 'Sourwood Mountain.' That's the way it started!"

To accessorize his story, Frank brought out the toy instruments his father had made for him, hand-carved and built at half-scale. With them came his memories of going over the hill to neighbors' square dances when he was a child, hoisted up on his father's shoulders. When he got older, he and his father spent hours together. "He'd tell me stories, and we'd play music, and then we'd eat some kind of lunch, and then, if the weather was fit, we'd go hiking, we'd go squirrel hunting, just walk through the woods, you know? And I started getting interested in birds and groundhogs and squirrels and all that stuff . . . and I liked botany."

In Frank's experience, music, stories, and the land were inseparably twined—part and parcel of an immersive culture. In his stories, I sensed his grief for the loss of that culture, though, at the same time, he acknowledged the inevitability of change, often expressed as a joke.

During our conversation, Jane often jumped in to sing Frank's praises—boasting of where he'd traveled, or what he'd recorded and who he'd recorded with: "Frank's never promoted himself or his music. He needed somebody to do that!" It seemed she'd taken on that role. But when Frank surreptitiously gave me one of his CDs, whispering so Jane

couldn't hear him, I understood that this was just part of their well-rehearsed dynamic—she wanted to ensure that their contributions would be acknowledged; Frank was more interested in transmitting their legacy through stories and the music itself.

He spoke fondly of the people he'd played with over the years—Tommy Jarrell, Mike and Pete Seeger, David O'Dell, Jim Costa, John Morris, Bill Hairston, Kim Johnson, and Jerron Paxton—musicians he considered to be torchbearers, or what he called his "cohorts."

Near the end of my visit, Frank got serious and leaned close to make sure I was listening. "I gotta tell you something interesting," he announced, explaining that his grandfather, who was born in 1856 and orphaned at three, was raised by an African-American family. "Where do you think he learned the banjo and how to buck dance?" Citing that influence as an important part of his own musical heritage, Frank told of his interest in learning more about the banjo's lineage, "I'd like to know its whole history from the day it was first brought over. Some are still arguing if it came from Africa or the Caribbean."

The vision of West Virginia traditional music that Frank George communicated to me that day was expansive and inclusive, acknowledging the contributions of often-marginalized populations, welcoming outsiders (though not without ribbing them a little bit), and maybe somewhat begrudgingly allowing space for the evolution of the tradition: "West Virginia was so isolated up until, oh, '42 or somewhere along there—started building some good roads, and the radio hadn't quite knocked everything out, and TV hadn't quite made it, and we had a pretty good situation, but it's changed quite a lot. Then we had an influx of foreigners—flatland foreigners, we call 'em." By foreigners, Frank didn't mean immigrants from other countries, but rather musicians and musicologists from outside of the state. "Which is fine," he continued, "though I know people that hate that! But I don't care if some of these people are learning the music. It may not sound quite like we play. But at least it's a start!"

Jane interjected to put Frank's legacy in perspective: "America changed! People like Frank that play the music, I think it changed America. It preserved the culture."

EMILY HILLIARD is West Virginia's first official state folklorist with the West Virginia Folklife Program at the West Virginia Humanities Council. She writes a regular column for GOLDENSEAL. Learn more about the West Virginia Folklife Program at wvfolklife.org.

William Franklin George
(1928 - 2017)

By Kim Johnson

About 20 years ago, I was at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop in Fayette County. I was having lunch in the Great Chestnut Lodge at Camp Washington-Carver—the former black 4-H camp that now hosts the festival. At my table were some of West Virginia's finest musicians and most interesting characters: Jimmy Costa, Wilson Douglas, and Frank George. Two men with thick Irish accents sat down with lunch trays at the table next to us.

We overheard one say to the other, "I'd love to meet Franklin George."

Jimmy immediately shot back, "Well, he's right here."

Frank stood up and shook the man's hand. The Irishman, quivering from delight and nearly in tears, said, "I have a picture of you over my mantel in Ireland. I never thought I'd get to meet you in person."

Frank replied with his boyish enthusiasm, "Well, here I am!"

Me and Frank, 1987. Photographer unknown.

It's not like I needed further proof that Frank George was a musical icon. In fact, I've often regretted that in many ways, he's better known outside West Virginia than in his beloved home state. Frank was as comfortable talking to a college class as he was doing some target practice behind his house. At West Virginia festivals, he was revered for his playing and storytelling but often could walk around unrecognized—although, his risqué T-shirts made him stand out. Well, Frank George wasn't a little different. He was a lot different. As you'll see in the

coming pages, there was only one Frank George, and he had a profound impact on everyone he met.

Frank's life should have been a movie. He was born on October 6, 1928, in Bluefield, the "Gateway to the Billion Dollar Coalfield," on the eve of the Great Depression. He went to grade school with future Nobel Prize-winning mathematician John Nash before moving on to the Greenbrier Military Academy. He later graduated from Concord College (now University) with a degree in botany. In possibly the understatement of all time, Frank George was a man of many interests.

In the mid-1950s, he was stationed in Europe with the Army. Frank detested military life but, as in all things, found something that intrigued him. "The only thing positive the Army did for me," Frank liked to say, "was to station me in the British Isles. I had the opportunity to go to Sterling Castle and play the bagpipes with the Argyle and Sutherland pipe band."

His musical talent came naturally. He learned the fiddle and banjo from his father, Otie, and grandfather, W. W., who'd learned to play and dance from slaves, or former slaves, in Greenbrier County about the time of the Civil War. He was proud that he'd picked up his earliest banjo tunes from a man who'd learned the same tunes from people of African descent. As Frank would point out, the banjo originated in West Africa, which made him feel more connected with the music. Then, the cynic in him would come out and say, "But some scholars think the banjo could be Caribbean in origin, so who knows?" He was constantly searching for why things are the way they are.

I first met Frank in the mid-1960s at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes. He instantly became one of the most fascinating people I'd ever known. He had a huge repertoire of all sorts of jokes and humor, and could recall any / all of them at a moment's notice. I once saw a very prim-and-proper audience member scurry from a venue due only to Frank's setup to a joke. You're going to read a number of off-beat jokes in the coming pages—Frank is our cover story, after all—so we might as well get started here. Frank's joke that night went something like this: "I went to the proctologist the other day. When he went to do the exam, I asked him to use two fingers." At this point, the audience member scampered from the hall. Frank waited until the minor disturbance had ended and continued, "The doc asked me, 'Why?' And I said, 'Because I want a second opinion.'"

That was Frank. He could be hilarious, controversial, generous, considerate, opinionated, irascible, and sometimes a little cranky. But one thing never changed with Frank. He loved visiting with people and hearing their stories, especially if they played any kind of music.

Aisha Ivey, in her upcoming tribute, mentions how Frank liked to turn the tables on an interviewer and start asking his own questions. Any of us who ever stopped by the Georges' home in Roane County can relate. At some point with Frank, the interviewer always became the interviewee. For each day of Frank's 89 years in this world, he never stopped being curious about new things and how they work.

I started playing banjo with Frank in the early 1980s and had the pleasure of traveling and performing with him quite a bit in the last decade of his life. When I went to pick him up on one of these occasions, his wife, Jane, followed him to the door and, wagging her finger, told him not to stay up late, drink liquor, or chase women. We weren't out of sight of the house when Frank turned to me and said, "I aim to do a lot of all them things."

Frank George died on November 15, 2017. As you're about to read, Frank wasn't just an old-time musician. He was a student of the world who gladly shared his knowledge—and jokes—with anyone who wanted to listen. He was a friend, a teacher, an inspiration, a kindred spirit, and a catbird. I will miss him very much.

KIM JOHNSON is the editorial assistant for GOLDENSEAL.

Frank George, 1983. Photo by Rick Lee.

Frank George: In His Own Words

The accompanying excerpts are from an interview with Frank by Michael Meador published in the Spring 1983 issue of GOLDENSEAL.

My first encounter with William Franklin George was at a 1963 West Virginia Centennial celebration in Mercer County: He came dressed in a Scottish kilt, complete with elaborate regalia, and stalked about playing ancient music. A long line of mesmerized children trailed behind.

I never forgot Frank after that, but it was several years before I could count him as a friend. I really got acquainted with him and his wife, Jane, in 1970, when I became involved with the 4-H Mountain Heritage Program, sponsored by the West Virginia University Extension Service. Both had played a major role in developing that program, and I soon became a regular visitor. Their home was always open to anyone who might drop by to discuss mountain heritage, play music, talk knives, shoot guns, or even just visit. The house was furnished with all manner of interesting antiques, and guarded over by a ferocious, unpredictable chihuahua named Seamus. Frank once told me he took that dog places to get even with people.

A visitor might find Frank in his underwear shining a knife, or trying to analyze a particular piece of Bulgarian bagpipe music. He was eccentric, no doubt of it, and has been called—among the things that can be printed here—authentic, independent, cantankerous, rare, and even anachronistic. Jane said that she was his manager but added, "if anyone can manage him."

With her help, I interviewed Frank back in 1983. What follows are excerpts from that interview: the one-and-only Frank George in Frank's own words. —Michael Meador

I was born in Bluefield, October 6, 1928. My mom was from Berlin, Tennessee. They say "Burlin" down there. It's six miles north of Lewisburg, Tennessee, but I guess really you could say that Berlin doesn't exist anymore. There's only two or three houses and a little store left.

My dad was born near Ingleside in Mercer County and grew up in Bluefield more or less, but they lived all over: Rock in Mercer County; Dry Hollow near Shannondale in Tazewell County, Virginia; Mud Fork; the East End of Bluefield—they lived all over Mercer and Tazewell counties.

[My mom's family] goes back to what's now Marshall County, Tennessee, and at one time was Bedford County, North Carolina. Her grandmother's people were Boyetts, and there's an old tax ticket, where one of the Boyetts had paid property taxes in Bedford County, North Carolina, to King George III in so many shillings and pence, so we know that was before 1776.

[My dad's family goes] way back in Greenbrier and Monroe counties. My fifth-great-grandfather, Joseph Ulrich Swope, who was originally from Germany, walked into what was to become Monroe County in 1751. He moved in from Staunton, Virginia, and settled at Wolf Creek.

There's a story that when he first got to Wolf Creek, he was spotted by some Indians, and he had to hide inside a hollow tree until they had gone. He stayed on at Wolf Creek with his family. One day, he sent his five-year-old son Joseph to the spring for water, and the boy was kidnapped by a band of Shawnees and taken to their town on the Scioto River near Chillicothe, Ohio. He was kept prisoner there for nine years before he was brought home. He was a "white Indian," didn't hardly remember anything about his family. But he finally got back into the swing of things. He knew three languages, German, Shawnee, and English, but I doubt if he could ever write his name. He was my fourth-great-grandfather.

The Georges are from near Blue Sulphur Springs in Greenbrier County. My Grandpaw Ellis moved to Mercer County from Greenbrier about 1870,

right after the Civil War. He moved over there to right where they put the tunnel through East River Mountain when they were building Interstate 77. He had an enormous farm over there. When they dug the tunnel, they moved his grave to Princeton.

My Grandpaw George left home early—he was an orphan, and they were trying to make him a bound servant, so he just took off and came to his uncle's house, to my Grandpaw Ellis. He married his uncle's daughter Martha, who was also his first cousin. That was the start of all the trouble.

On my mother's side, I had a grandmaw who was a Jackson—close kin of "Old Hickory"—she could play a harmonica. That's the only music I can find on Maw's side of the family. The Ownbys couldn't carry a tune on a stretcher. All my musical ability, such as I got, came from my dad's side. The Georges had the music, the Ellises couldn't carry a tune in a jug with a stopper in it. The Ownbys couldn't either, but the Georges and the Jacksons seemed to have got a double dose.

This is the part that I don't like for anyone to know about, but since it's a fact, there's no use in trying to hide it. The first tune I ever tried to pick out was on a piano. I could pick out tunes with one finger when I was about four years old. When I was about five years old, I started taking piano lessons from Miss Ella Holroyd, who lived in Athens.

Frank, showing an early interest in firearms, shoots off his popgun, 1936.

She would come to Bluefield every Saturday to Tom Scott's and gave lessons all day long. My lesson was about 9:00-9:30 and cost $5. My dad nearly went through the roof when he found out how much it cost. I walked about a mile to the place she gave lessons. So, I guess you can say I started the first of my music playing on a piano with a bona fide teacher.

Miss Ella would hit a key in the middle range on the piano with me in the other room, and I would tell her the note. She said right away that I had "perfect pitch," but I don't know exactly what that means in my case. I still know middle C if I hear it, but I don't know about the rest of 'em. I took lessons from Miss Ella for 11 years, and then she quit coming to Bluefield for some reason or other, and that wound that up.

[During the Depression] my dad, who was named Otie A. George (1891-1970), worked steady as a carpenter. Maw was a nurse and . . . worked for the WPA with a program where she went around to people's houses that didn't have outhouses and helped them get one. There was a crew going around building toilets, and Maw worked with them. Her name is Elizabeth Ownby George (1892-1983).

Anyhow, when I was about six years old, I got interested in old-time music, and that was mainly because of my Grandpaw [William Washington "W. W."] George visiting. You know, Grandpaw'd come over quite often, and after Grandmaw died in '36, which would put me in

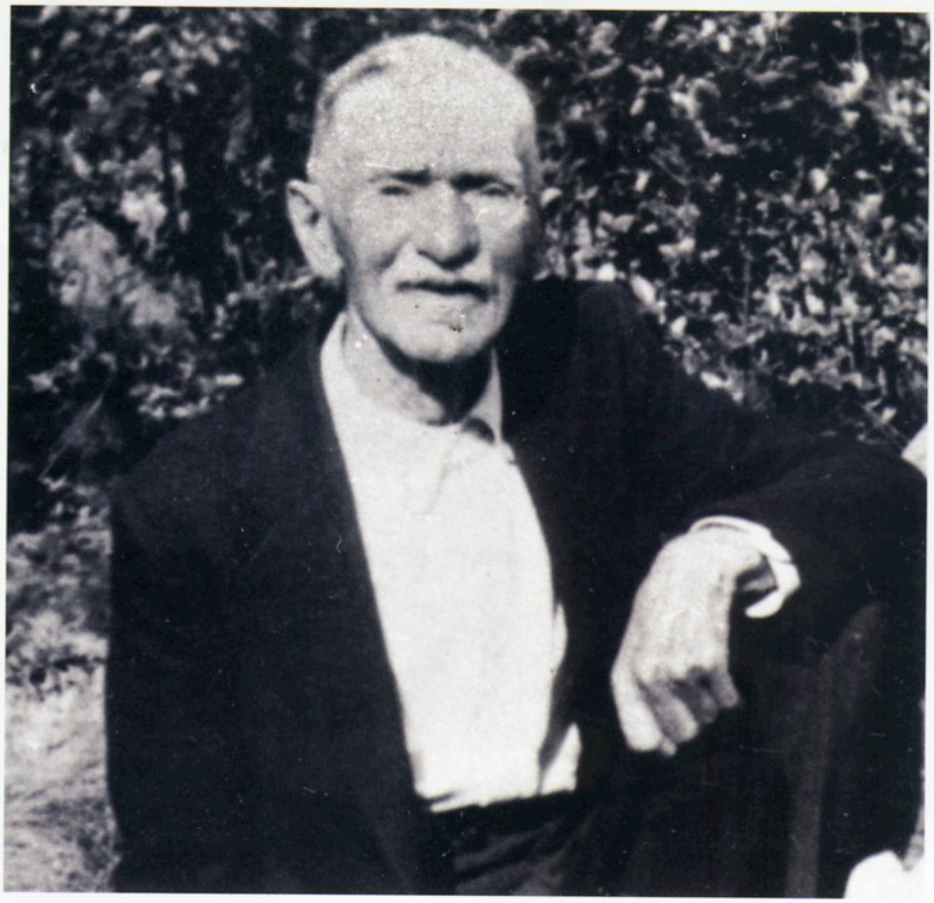
my eighth year, he moved over there to stay.

When Grandpaw finally moved over there, I wasn't interested in anything but fiddles and banjos. In fact, the piano thing from then on was just something to go through . . . [but I was] good enough to win second prize in the state contest in Charleston when I was about nine.

Of course, Grandpaw was getting so old that he was playing down on the fingerboard and slobbering all over the fiddle and really wasn't playing too well. He taught me to tune in A: E-A-E-A first. He played "Cripple Creek," "Sourwood Mountain," "Old Joe Clark," "Fire on the Mountain"—typical stuff. He played a lot of reels and hoedown stuff. He played a few G tunes and D tunes, but he just didn't have the range, and he was just getting too old to hack it.

[He was] a far better banjo player than fiddler, and a real good dancer. If he had been as good a fiddle player as he was on the banjo, he'd have been something. By the time I got interested in old-time music, around 1935, he was getting about 79 years old. He was born in 1856. He was getting real forgetful and shaky music-wise by the time I was old enough to remember him. . . . [He] is really the one responsible for getting me started, but he really wasn't the strong influence. He was the first, though.

The strong influence was Jim Farthing (1884-1962), who came from down around Alta Vista in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, as a young man. He always lived around Brush Fork in Mercer County or Falls Mills in Tazewell County, Virginia. He knew so many more tunes and played a style that I considered better than my granddad that I just shifted my style. [He is] the one that made me realize where the [music] came from originally, the British Isles, even though he didn't realize it himself. He would play tunes that would remind you in style of some of our local fiddle players, and then he would play stuff that would sound just like some of the famous Irish fiddlers. His style is real hard to describe, but it was certainly unique and—the thing that got me—he knew so many tunes and so many old tunes. That was the reason that I tried my best to copy him.



Frank's grandfather W. W. George, 1930s. All additional photos in this section courtesy of Jane George unless noted otherwise.

Jim Farthing told me that he learned most of his fiddling from his daddy-in-law, who was Charlie Hawley, and that Charlie learned most of his stuff from Nute Crockett and a fellow named Gillispie from Tazewell County. Of course, Nute Crockett was kin to Davy Crockett.

[John Hilt (1905-1970) of Tazewell County] played real nice, but I didn't meet him until

(Left-right): Gilbert Williams, Frank George, James Williams, and Charlie McCoy in Mercer County, 1947.

Across the hill to the north from where we lived, they'd have these dances almost every Saturday night and maybe oftener. They'd have them there on Stadium Drive between Cherry Street and the Bluefield City Park. So, here we'd go over the hill, my dad carrying me on his shoulders. Sometimes, Maw would go, and sometimes, she wouldn't. It was those dances that turned me on to old-time music, hearing the fiddles, and banjers, and the guitars. —Frank George

1950, and he told me once that he played more music with me in the last few years of his life than all the rest of his music in previous years. I taught him a lot of tunes so that I could play banjo with him at the Tazewell Market. He could only play the fiddle, so I played the banjo with him. We'd go to the market sometimes every Monday and play.

[When I started playing old-time music] there was interest as far as getting together and playing, but as far as with the general public, no. By that time, if you turned on the radio, you weren't apt to hear any music like we played at home. It had already changed. If you could get together with the right people, like Emory Horton, Alf Arnold, old man Gilbert Williams, and Charlie McCoy, you'd hear down-home stuff. There was plenty of old-time music around then, but people generally didn't pay much attention to it.

I didn't see any interest in old-time music until the late '60s. I used to go to the festival at Galax, Virginia, back in the early '60s, and there wouldn't be hardly anyone there from outside the area. "Folk music" was popular then, but people thought it was the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul, and Mary, and the like. Folk music was a whole different thing then. People didn't know what down-home music was then. "Down-home" reminds me of that fellow that was talking about one of them "home rifles." I never heard a mountain rifle called a "home rifle" until lately.

[My wife, Jane] introduced me to everyone in West Virginia involved in the [4-H] Mountain Heritage Program. At that time, I was going to Southwest Virginia festivals and wasn't going to any in West Virginia except [the state Folk Festival] at Glenville. I didn't know there were any others in West Virginia. I really hadn't been much north of the Great Kanawha until after we met. We were married December 6, 1969, down in Norton, Virginia.

Jane and Frank George, 1979.

I've been a member of one band in my life. In fact, I was the leader of the band. It no longer exists, kind of went under about 25 years ago. We didn't even have a name for the group. We played for dances all around Bluefield but folded up around 1949. Now, I've gotten a lot of offers in the last several years from people starting bands and wanting to go on the road. But I just didn't want to get involved, mainly because you can't play old-time music the way I like it on the road. You have to play for the crowd, which means that you're dead if they don't like your music. I've always been able to pick up accompaniment wherever I've gone, so I've not really missed a band. I really don't need to travel around much, either, because if people want to see me, they come here. I think it's better not to travel so much and stay home and do what you want to. I still travel a good bit, though.

I think that interest [in Appalachian music] will fizzle out, and in another 50 years, old-time music as I knew it won't exist. One bright spot, though, is that places like the Library of Congress have recorded the performances of many of our great local musicians, and years from now, if there is a renewal of interest in Appalachian heritage, the feel of our culture can be recaptured. The conditions that caused our culture to develop have changed and disappeared. Appalachia is becoming like the rest of the country because of TV and swift means of transportation. Old-time music was the product of a culture that has just about ceased to exist, but, thanks to recordings, the music and styles at least can be preserved for future generations that might be interested.

MICHAEL M. MEADOR, a native of Hinton, grew up in Princeton, attended Concord College (now University) and Marshall University, and is a graduate of the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. He has published 20 articles in GOLDENSEAL over the last 37 years. His most recent contribution was in our Summer 2016 issue.

Frank George playing the fife in his tricorner hat and frills at Cedar Lakes on our nation's Bicentennial, July 4, 1976.

Frank (right) with mentor John Hilt, 1960s.

"The funniest story I can share about Frank is from a pub in Edinburgh in the summer of 1990. A local patron proclaimed himself, through a thick brogue, to be Saint Peter. Frank talked to him for what seemed like an eternity, quizzing him on family, religion, music, etc. It finally came to Frank: this man is a 'sign painter,' not Saint Peter."

–R. D. Cox, the Georges' grandson

"I met Frank at a festival in West Virginia back around 1969 or '70. I had only been playing a couple of years and was feeling down about my progress. He gave me some heartfelt encouragement that was very important to me that I never forgot. At Clifftop a few years ago, I was finally able to thank him for it. What a fine man—he will be long remembered."
–Don Borchelt, Stoneham, Mass.

Frank and Jane George locked up in the stockade at Fort New Salem, 1992. Photo by Kim Johnson.

Frank (second from right) leading a group of his students at The Greenbrier, March 1969.

Frank at Cedar Lakes, 1970s.

Frank (left) and fiddle great Wilson Douglas chatting at the West Virginia State Folk Festival, 1967.

Two fiddle legends, Glen Smith (left) and Frank George, at an arts and crafts fair at the Beckley Armory, ca. 1970.

John Morris (right) and Frank teaching ancient songs to a new generation, late 1960s.

"Frank was talented, funny, and smart and disguised his amazing knowledge of traditional music with a grizzled, mountain man persona. He was a real character and a grand ambassador for West Virginia. I will always remember the times my sister Jonni and I did Scottish dancing performances with him and his wife, Jane, as he played bagpipes that reeked of chewing tobacco. My thoughts go out to Jane and to everyone fortunate enough to have known Frank George."

–Dana Stoker, Bramwell

More Tributes to Frank George

After learning of Frank's passing, many friends and fellow musicians sent tributes in to GOLDENSEAL. We think these selections offer a sense of Frank's lasting influence, brilliance, and sense of humor. –ed.

Frank marching in the West Virginia State Folk Festival parade in Glenville, 1966. All photos in this section courtesy of Jane George unless noted otherwise.

By Mack Samples, 2003 Vandalia Award recipient

I well remember the first time I met Frank. I was running the fiddle and banjo contests at the state Folk Festival in the 1960s. I had never heard of Frank, much less seen him. When I told him to sign his name and address on the sign-up sheet, he gave me that solemn look of his and said, "I can't write." So, I filled in the information for him. I had no idea he was highly educated and brighter than probably anyone I would ever know.

After he won both the fiddle and banjo contests, I realized the contests at Glenville had reached a higher plane. I stood in the wings, listened to him, and was amazed. Frank was in a whole other dimension from the other contestants. I thought maybe he was a product of Julliard. But no, he was probably the most genuine Appalachian I ever knew.

In later years, when Frank and I became good friends, I always asked him to come and do a segment in my Appalachian Culture Elderhostel Week at Glenville State College. I usually had around 50 participants, almost all from out of state. If you will permit me to make Appalachia a verb, Frank would "Applach" the hell out of them. He would come into the room, put in a big chew of tobacco, and begin his talk. Some in the group would look at him condescendingly . . . until he started to play. He would play the fiddle, banjo, and hammered dulcimer and knock their socks off.

By Bobby Taylor, 2010 Vandalia Award recipient

I knew Frank George for almost 50 years. He was an inspiration and a source of historical information, particularly about fiddle tunes. He was an attention-to-detail person with an endless amount of wisdom: from fiddles and banjos to guns. He let people give their points of view, then he would give them the facts. Sometimes, his sense of humor left the faint of heart with the vapors. His playing was beautiful and pulled from centuries of time and place.

Frank was an international icon and a grand old fiddler since he was young. In recent years, Frank just had to walk on stage to get the ultimate recognition and respect. At a recent festival, someone asked Kim Johnson if that was THE Frank George on the flyer. Because Frank seemed so old for decades, they were not sure if it could possibly be him. The crowd almost stomped on their chairs with applause.

His recordings in the late 1960s reached the far corners of the earth. Charlie Winter told me about a person from another country visiting the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair in Cedar Lakes. The person's main wish was to meet the one-and-only Frank George. Charlie said, "It shouldn't be hard. He is sitting right there on that hay bale." A library of knowledge and talent has left us. However, Frank lives on in his recordings, and through his friends sharing his stories. Some stories can be shared only by friends with his special brand of humor. One time, Frank and Jane showed up at Vandalia with Tarzan and Jane T-shirts. Jane's T-shirt said, "My next husband will be normal." Frank's said, "What makes her think she will get another chance?"

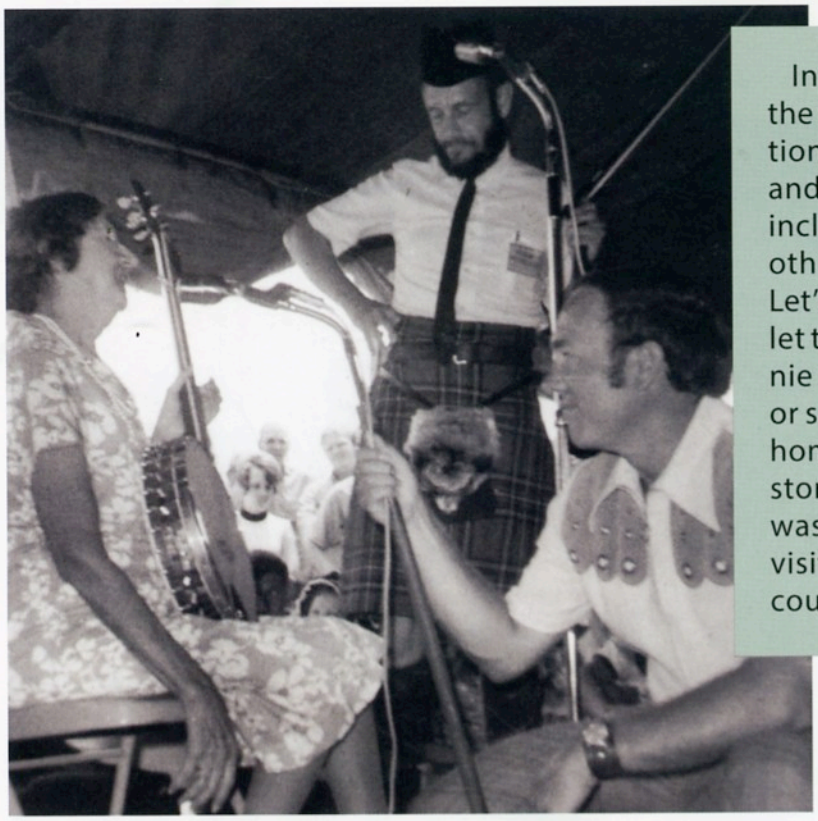
Bobby Taylor (left) and Frank playing at the wedding of their good friend and fellow musician David O'Dell in Spencer, 2010.

Frank's musical repertoire was vast. He played several traditional fiddle styles, and his banjo techniques were his own. Frank knew all types of tunes and how fast to play them for different types of dancing. His ability to capture the past was immortal; therefore, his legacy is endless. Frank George was monumental in the old-time music world. We can never replace the loss. He was one of the last true, authentic originals.

(Left-right) Gerald Milnes, Wilson Douglas, Melvin Wine, and Frank in a fiddle showcase at the 1978 Vandalia Gathering. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

By Gerald Milnes, 2013 Vandalia Award recipient

When I went to the Morris Family Old-Time Music Festival in, I believe, 1970, some of the first music I encountered was Frank George and Glen Smith in a little session with a guitar player. They were trading tunes, jokes, and hilarious stories, much to the enjoyment of a few listeners. Here were two cultural icons in their prime and in their element, carrying on in high fashion. Frank had recently been to New York to play at some event. While there, he was invited to a barbecue in a suburban area. Someone at the session asked how he liked New York. "Well," he said, "you do things backwards from the way we do things in West Virginia. You cook in the backyard and sh-t in the house!"



In 1972, we played at The Greenbrier for the Republican Governors National Convention, with a private function for governors and first ladies from all over the country, including Ronald and Nancy Reagan. No others, including reporters, were allowed. Let's just say the governors and their spouses let their hair down, and Frank and Aunt Jennie were in their element. We played and/or sang at least one song from each of their home states—and, of course, Frank told the story behind each song. When the evening was over, we had standing invitations to visit half the governors mansions in the country. —Roger Bryant

(Left-right) Aunt Jennie Wilson (the grandmother of Roger Bryant), Frank George, and Billy Edd Wheeler at Cedar Lakes, 1971. Photo by Kim Johnson.

By Roger Bryant, 2014 Vandalia Award recipient

I have so many great memories of traveling and performing with Frank George, Aunt Jennie Wilson (my grandmother), and dulcimer great Russell Fluharty. In my late teens and early 20s, Frank (and later Jane) was a major influence in my life and was like family. I remember my very young daughter Dawn Ann going to vacation Bible school. When shown a picture of Jesus, she replied, "That's not Jesus. That's Frank George."

Although Frank was revered and admired among musicians, I don't think he's ever received the proper recognition for his contributions to American folk music and Appalachian culture. A lot of musicians can play the notes, but Frank explained the history behind each piece (or instrument) and why it's important.

I see his impact on many young, and some not so young, performers in contests and concerts today. Some months ago, I was listening to National Public Radio. A string band from the West Coast introduced a number by saying, "I learned this tune from a West Virginia fiddler named Frank George." A great many of us could say the very same thing.

Frank was an absolute authority on anything and everything Appalachian: weapons, fiddles, banjos, bagpipes, dulcimers, woodlore, and farming. I used to introduce him as the "Music Man of the Mountains" because of his vast ability to put magic into all traditional instruments.

Frank was known for his clean and proficient playing. Every note was clear with exquisite timing. I asked him once, "Do you read music?" He chuckled in typical Frank fashion and replied, "Not enough to hurt my playin'."

He was always eager to share his talents with anyone who showed interest. I'm thankful he didn't expect the same performance standard from others. He never complained or corrected me for a bad note or chord, although I think he cringed at some of the sounds I made.

Performing with Frank, Mommie (Aunt Jennie), and Russell Fluharty was truly a highlight of my life. Frank was a giant in traditional old-time music and culture.

By John Blisard, Kanawha County

William Franklin George left a wake of influence on countless people. I met Frank in the '70s at a festival and found a new friend who was a joy to be around. He was a musician, storyteller, and historian who shared his knowledge freely.

He taught me the fiddle tune "The Wind That Shakes the Barley." Last year, I taught it to my fiddle class at Allegheny Echoes, annual summer workshops held in Marlinton. None of the students (some with a pretty good knowledge of tunes) had ever heard of it. I told them what Frank had taught me: it was one of the oldest traditional tunes played on either side of the pond. So, some four decades later, his legacy was passed along to other generations.

(Left-right) Melvin Wine, Carl Baron, John Blisard, and Frank trading tunes in the Green Room at the 1978 Vandalia Gathering. Photo by Kim Johnson.

Frank was also a great Scottish bagpiper who taught my pipe teacher, Dennis Harrison. I believe in the '80s, Frank had to quit piping due to intraocular pressure in his eyes. A few years later, I was playing pipes in the Conrad Motel parking lot during the state Folk Festival in Glenville. Frank asked if I was using a soft or hard chanter reed. I told him it was a soft reed; the bag was just seasoned and didn't leak. So, he took the pipes and played "The Highland Laddie" for an attentive group of festival goers. I believe that was the last time he played a full set of "The Great Highland War Pipe," which, according to Frank, was still listed at the time in the British Army Inventory under weapons.

By Mark Gunther, Chicago

Since 1971, Frank has been my model for an old-time fiddle and banjo player. I knew him well, and I still try to play his tunes as closely as I can to his way. Nowadays, many people claim to know what old-time music is; very few know as well as Frank did, and fewer have ever lived it.

For one thing, it was not slick or modern or loud, and not necessarily very fast. When he had a mind to, Frank could play mighty fast, but he never ever played frantic—never ever sacrificed detail, subtlety of contour, or any other nuance. "If you want to play with me, you'll have to slow down," he'd say to people who'd rather be playing some modern variety of music.

Frank (left) and Mark Gunther, 2012. Photo by Kim Johnson.

By Aisha Ivey, Tallahassee, Fla.

I met Frank at a festival in Tennessee in 2014. We enjoyed each other's company and had many similar interests, so we hit it off, right way. My husband and I ended up visiting him and Jane in their home later that year and every year thereafter. We always wished we lived closer so we could visit more often. He often said that if I lived five miles from him, he could teach me all of his tunes. He also wished he could have a big bunch of my hair to use for his fiddle bow. We didn't have time to learn all of his tunes, and my hair is still intact, but I learned a great deal from him, musically and otherwise.

Frank, wearing one of his favorite T-shirts, and Aisha Ivey at his Roane County home, 2015. Photo by Bert Ivey.

Each time we visited, I was more impressed with Frank's stories and the fiddle tunes he taught me. Frank was a genius, and his memory was crystal clear. He was a student of the world, always asking questions of everyone he met because he genuinely wanted to know. Often, I became the interviewee rather than the interviewer. He was also very fun-loving, full of jokes and sarcasm. He was serious when he needed to be, but never for too long.

Frank knew a vast repertoire of tunes. Most he learned by ear from either his grandfather or his friend, Jim Farthing. While many old-time fiddlers know hundreds of tunes, very few also know hundreds of Irish and Scottish tunes. Frank could play a tune and tell you the Irish or Scottish name for it, then tell you the American name for the old-time version, and then play several renditions from different fiddlers long passed. Through his playing, you could hear and better understand the journey the music made as it came across the ocean and the way melodies were altered or enhanced over time.

He was also very generous with his talents, and he loved performing and teaching. He and Jane were very dedicated to preserving folk traditions and passing that knowledge on to the younger generation. Jane taught Scottish country dancing and had a troop of young dancers that Frank would accompany on pipes or fiddle. They performed at festivals locally and around the region. In hearing Frank and Jane reminisce about their time teaching, we could tell that this was one of their proudest achievements and that they genuinely loved working with young people.

Though Frank played many different styles, old-time mountain music was his favorite, and he loved West Virginia. He told us how different the fiddlers from central West Virginia sounded, compared to his southern West Virginia style.

Frank was a link to the past for me. I didn't have the privilege of meeting Melvin Wine, Henry Reed, Wilson Douglas, Harvey Sampson, Lee Triplett, or many others who Frank knew. He brought their stories to life, and the tunes they loved to play made me feel connected to them. There were also fid-

dlers and banjo players I might not have discovered had it not been for Frank. I didn't know that Phoebe Parsons of Clay County had a brother (Noah) who was a talented fiddler and banjo player, and I might never have heard about Doc White, Ira Mullins, and many others if not for Frank. Frank George was truly an ambassador for West Virginia and a proponent of the generations of mountain musicians that came before him.

His fiddling, by the time I met him, was different from earlier recordings. He was the king of simplicity by then, using such tiny bow strokes that it almost looked like he was barely playing; yet, his fiddling could drive a string band and keep impeccable rhythm. He was a fancy player, adding Irish- and Scottish-sounding ornaments here and there and tasteful double stops, slides, and grace notes, but it was always subtle and just enough. "Don't overdo," he was fond of saying, when talking about how to make the tunes fancy. He was amazingly skilled and versatile and played with the best of the best.

His life was full of wonderful musical moments. He loved playing with Kim Johnson and referred to her as "Kim, my banjo picker." He loved the musicians he had played with in the past. He was excited to tell us about people who had made the trek to visit with him.

In 2016, he was honored as a master artist at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival in Clifftop. Afterward, he was very optimistic about the state of traditional old-time music. He was delighted there were so many people of all ages, near and far, who enjoyed playing the music he loved. He felt that he and Jane had devoted their lives to keeping the traditions going, and through these younger players, he saw signs that they had succeeded. It made him very happy to know that others would keep West Virginia traditional music going strong in the years to come.

By Bertram Levy, Port Townsend, Wash.

Franklin George didn't have to wait for old age to be a geezer. He had already mastered the persona as a young man.

I first met him in Durham, North Carolina, when he came to visit Alan Jabbour. It was around 1966, and we all hung out in my apartment. Frank asked my wife, a southern belle of refined sensibilities, if she had a spittoon, which she did not. Realizing he'd have to compensate, he'd periodically open the window and discharge from the second story. The next day, my downstairs' neighbor asked if I'd seen some strange insect material that had rained from the sky the previous afternoon.

Franklin was part folklorist and part his own cultural repository. He treated his repertoire with a scholarly air. He savored the origins of tunes and was always respectful of his sources. He played with a powerful intensity, a delicate bow, and a lyrical swing. He meticulously considered each note, something quite unique in the fiddle world, where more chord fillers tend to reduce tunes to more pedestrian versions.

Several years ago, at the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, Washington, he formed what might seem to be an unexpected bond with a young Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton. Franklin contended they had both been the victims of discrimination: Jerron as a black man from

Frank, about the time Bertram Levy met him, playing with Alan Jabbour, 1967. Courtesy of Jane George.

Los Angeles and himself as a hillbilly. While we feared he was stepping on thin ice, Jerron found him genuine. They commiserated throughout the week and became lasting friends.

Franklin and I shared a large repertoire, including that of the legendary Henry Reed. I'll forever savor our afternoon banjo-fiddle duet session on the front porch at Clifftop in 2016.

By Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton, Queens, N.Y.

Frank (left) having a hoot with Jerron Paxton at the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes, Port Townsend, Wash., July 2012. Photo by Kim Johnson.

I grew up with a saying, "When an elder passes, it's like a library being burned up." I feel that a bunch about my buddy Frank George. He had a lot of knowledge about many things—his music and grasp of history being his most noted. He was also knowledgeable about people, which helped him communicate his music, history, and sense of humor to anybody who would listen.

Though there were 60 years of difference between us, there were a bunch of similarities. We both liked the same kinds of jokes and music. I believe that sticks out the most, especially to folks who saw us have a ball together. We met when he was 83 and I was 23, but we seemed much closer in age and comportment, likely owing to our shared openness to new things and people while admiring our more curmudgeonly minded friends, fellow musicians, and elders. That's a doozy of a combination. That was Frank George.

Miss ya, Buddy! ♥

By Tim Pence, Lewisburg

Frank was perhaps the first "World's Most Interesting Man" because he was so fascinated with just about everyone and everything. When he told a story or related some historical event, he could take you there with him. He was the first time traveler I'd ever met. I was often amazed at his ability to remember the names of tunes and their origins. He claimed, with some truthfulness, that there was only one original tune and that the rest were only variations of that one.

Frank and Jane were, without question, positive influences in my life and, I'm sure, in the lives of many others. They first introduced me to traditional Appalachian music and later to what we call Celtic music, ca. 1978-80. I'll not forget that day in Jane and Frank's eccentric living room when Frank pulled out an early LP of *uillean*, or Irish bagpipe, music. With a mouthful of tobacco juice, Frank said, "Ya ought to hear this." It sounded awful to my young and virgin ears! I reckon it was like one's first taste of peat-infused Scotch whiskey. Although I didn't acquire a taste for Scotch, I've certainly acquired a love for Irish music, even the bagpipes.

I will forever think of Jane and Frank George with anything associated with traditional Appalachian and Celtic music. Indeed, I've been very blessed by knowing them!

By James "Sparky" Rucker, Maryville, Tenn.

I was saddened when I learned of Frank George's passing. It meant the passing of an age and the passing of the "torch."

I first met Frank around the summer of 1971 or '72. I was traveling around the Southern Appalachian Mountains, playing at local festivals as an unpaid performer. We would just play for kicks, and if the festival promoters liked what you played, they would chip in a little gas money for your return home or to send you on your way.

When I first saw Frank, he was about 44 years old, while I was about 26 or 27. My musical background had been playing in soul and rock bands, but I had recently been playing roots music, as I learned it during the Civil Rights Movement, playing at rallies and on picket lines. I was fascinated by Frank's adeptness at fiddle, banjo, and bagpipes. I even bought one of Frank's vinyl albums, something I could barely afford during those days, but I just had to have him in my collection.

He was always very friendly and would jam with us late into the night. As I mentioned, his passing also passed the torch to those of us he inspired, making sure that this music and culture endure. RIP, my friend.

"Sparky" Rucker at the Appalachian South Folklife Center at Pipestem, 1972. Courtesy of "Sparky" Rucker.

By Suzy Thompson, Berkeley, Calif.

In 2012, Frank George was a last-minute addition to the faculty at the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes; Lester McCumbers was supposed to come, but couldn't make it, so Kim Johnson brought Frank instead. At the time, I was artistic director of the festival. I had never met Frank, although I knew he had been highly influential. What I didn't know was how strong his personality was and how much he loved word play and history, especially about West Virginia music.

In 2013 and 2014, Frank and Kim came out to California for the Berkeley Old Time Music Convention. Berkeley seemed like a natural milieu for Frank, the West Virginia Bohemian in his white socks, sandals, and a T-shirt that proclaimed, "Life is crap." He particularly enjoyed the old-fashioned coffeehouse where the old beatniks spent hours drinking espresso, philosophizing, and playing folk-flamenco guitar. His concert set was a hit.

After the show, we hosted an all-night music party at our house. The first year Frank was with us, he and Kim were staying on the other side of town. About 2 a.m., Kim and their hosts called it a night, but Frank said to just leave him there and he'd crash on the couch. He stayed up playing tunes 'til 4:30, when the party finally broke up. He got up the next morning and helped us fix breakfast. The next year, we arranged for them to stay next door, and we invited some of our nocturnal musician friends to stay at our house so Frank could stay up as late as he wanted and not have to crash on the couch!

(Left-right) Frannie Leopold, Suzy Thompson, and Frank, wearing a Mexican Day of the Dead apron and fixing breakfast in Berkeley, Calif., 2014. Photo by Kim Johnson.

By Gerald Ratliff, Charleston

I first met Frank George 50 years ago (1967) in Bluefield when I, as a rookie Department of Commerce photographer, was accompanied by my boss, Don Page. Publisher and editor Jim Comstock used one of the black-and-white photos I took of Frank that day in his *West Virginia Hillbilly* paper. Looking back, it wasn't that good of a photo, but I was thrilled at the time because it was probably my earliest published photo in a regional newspaper. A color photo I took that same day was used in the *West Virginia Travel Guide* the next year. Frank was always my friend after that visit. The best part of being a West Virginia photographer was having known people like Don Page, Jim Comstock, Frank and Jane George, and their like.

Photos by Gerald Ratliff, 1967.

Frank (left) studying licks from Melvin Wine at the West Virginia state Folk Festival, 1974. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer.

By Carl Fleischhauer, Port Republic, Md.

Backstage is the place to be! That is the evidence in the photos of Franklin George I made in the 1970s. Frank was on stage from time to time, for sure, but my pictures catch him in the company of other musicians. Some of my images are from the West Virginia State Folk Festival, where the fiddle contest was held in an auditorium at Glenville State College. The contestants waited in an indoor area just offstage and in an unprepossessing parking lot next to the stage door, where Frank engaged other musicians, including Melvin Wine. (They traded tunes.) Frank and Alan Jabbour (who passed in January 2017) played together, listening to (but not looking at) each other. Serendipitous encounters like these invest the Mountain State's festivals with vitality, community, and compelling artistry. You could count on Frank to seek out these off-stage venues.

Humorist and musician Pete Kosky (left) and Frank at the West Virginia State Folk Festival, ca. 2012. Courtesy of Pete Kosky.

By Pete Kosky, Charleston

Frank was one of the smartest people I've ever met. He had an encyclopedic memory of not only traditional music, but also history and especially antique firearms. For a man who was so intelligent, he was very humble about it. He never flaunted his knowledge or acted snobby about it. He considered himself to be a lifelong learner, and his interests were wide and varied.

Frank was just fun to be around. He always had a twinkle in his eye and loved a good joke. It was always a pleasure to hear him play the fiddle or banjo, and an honor to be able to play along with him. So many of the traditional tunes played in West Virginia today can be traced back in some way to Frank's influence or playing.

One of my favorite stories Frank told was about when he was a young man in a beer joint near Pinnacle Rock in Mercer County. He said, "The knives came out, and I had my banjer in its case. I just threw the banjer through the window and followed it right out."

In 2016, he was in the hospital with a broken leg. I told him the Vandalia Gathering had just paid off my new .22 rifle. I got $250 for winning the Liars Contest and placing second in banjo. "BS and banjo got me a new gun," I said to Frank.

He replied, "I guess I influenced you more than I thought."

Frank George at the first FOOTMAD festival, held at the Pinch Reunion Grounds in Kanawha County, 1981. Courtesy of Jane George. We'll miss you, Frank!

Willow Island 40 Years Later
A Lingering Cloud

By Carl E. Feather

Two hours into his day sleep after finishing the midnight shift, Bob Doty awoke with a start; it was shortly after 10 a.m., Thursday, April 27, 1978.

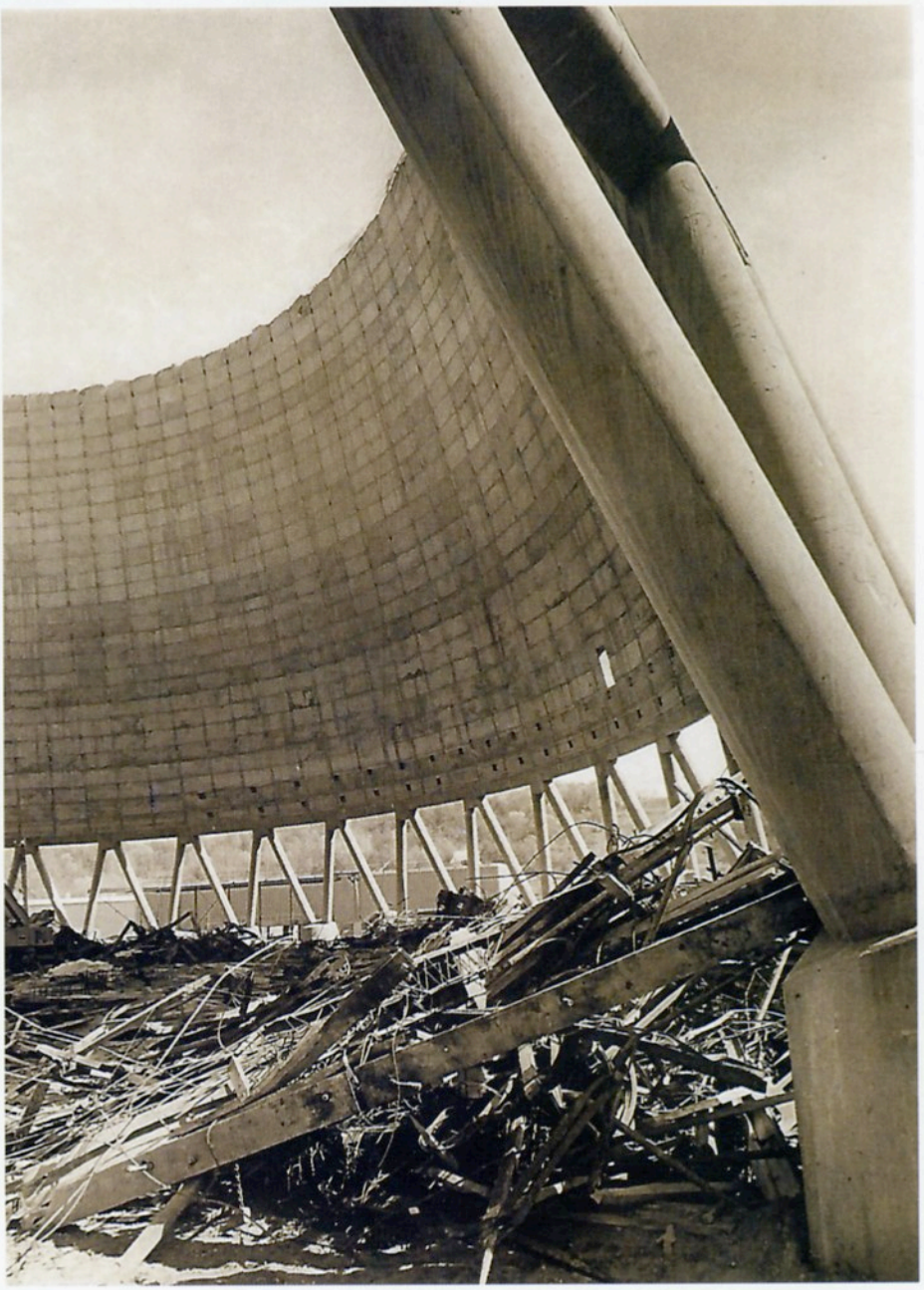
Bob was mayor of the Pleasants County town of Belmont and a lieutenant for the town's volunteer fire department. He made his living at Union Carbide's Sistersville plant. He'd just finished two back-to-back shifts and was exhausted. Awakened suddenly, he noticed an eerie quiet.

"I usually didn't get up until 4 or 5 in the afternoon," Bob says. "But that morning, I woke up and had this funny feeling. I couldn't hear anything; it was unusual for the house to be quiet with four kids living there. I walked downstairs, and my wife was gone. I opened the door, and a friend of ours was walking away from it, toward her car. She just turned around, looked at me kind of funny, got in the car, and left."

The phone rang. Jim Riggs from the fire department had a startling message, "They may need (the building) to put some of the bodies in there."

"What in God's name are you talking about?" Bob replied.

"The tower has collapsed."



The twisted remains of scaffolding are scattered beneath the half-finished cooling tower at Willow Island, April 27, 1978. Photo by John Klein, courtesy of James E. Casto and the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*.

The Steeles

During spring 1978, the second cooling tower of the Allegheny Energy Supply Company's (now Mon Power) new coal-burning generating plant grew skyward at a rate of five feet a day, at least when the weather was warm enough to pour concrete. The tower stood between its 430-foot-tall sister, completed in August 1977, and West Virginia Route 2.

The towers were amazing engineering feats. When completed, the second tower would be 357 feet in diameter at the base and 429 feet high. Built of reinforced concrete, it required a small army of carpenters, ironworkers, and laborers.

None of the ironworkers was more experienced than Emmett Steele, 61, who'd worked up and down the Ohio Valley along with his nephews: Larry Gale, 32; Ronald, 30; Ernest, 29; and Miles, 26. Another nephew, Robert, 35, was working elsewhere on the Willow Island site. And the boys' father, Lee, would've been on the tower, too, but he'd gone on disability due to an ongoing battle with leukemia.

The marriage of Lee Steele and Mollie Blouir had joined two families with a penchant for construction. The aptly named Steeles had been ironworkers for generations, going back to their first ancestor in the valley, who arrived in the 1800s.

"My grandpa raised a bunch of boys who had the value of a great work ethic," says Angie Colvin, one of four children born to Larry Gale and Barbara Steele. "After they got off from working all day, they'd still find the time to go help somebody put on a roof or do some other project. If somebody down the road needed help, they'd take care of them. They just had this wonderful work ethic."

Indeed, shop talk was common whenever the clan got together at the home of Paw Paw and Maw Maw Steele for dinner every Sunday. Angie says it was like a scene from *The Waltons*, as 30 to 40 members gathered to be fed by Lee and his wife, Mollie.

"We were so family oriented," Angie says. "Every Sunday, my grandmother would make 30 pies. That is how many people would come to dinner. Her mixing bowls were huge; she'd cook for all this family."

Building a Landmark

The traditional construction method for a project like this was to keep building the scaffolding higher and higher, with its foundation embedded securely in the ground. But a "lift-form technique" was used at Willow Island. It was really an ancient construction method but not used as commonly anymore.

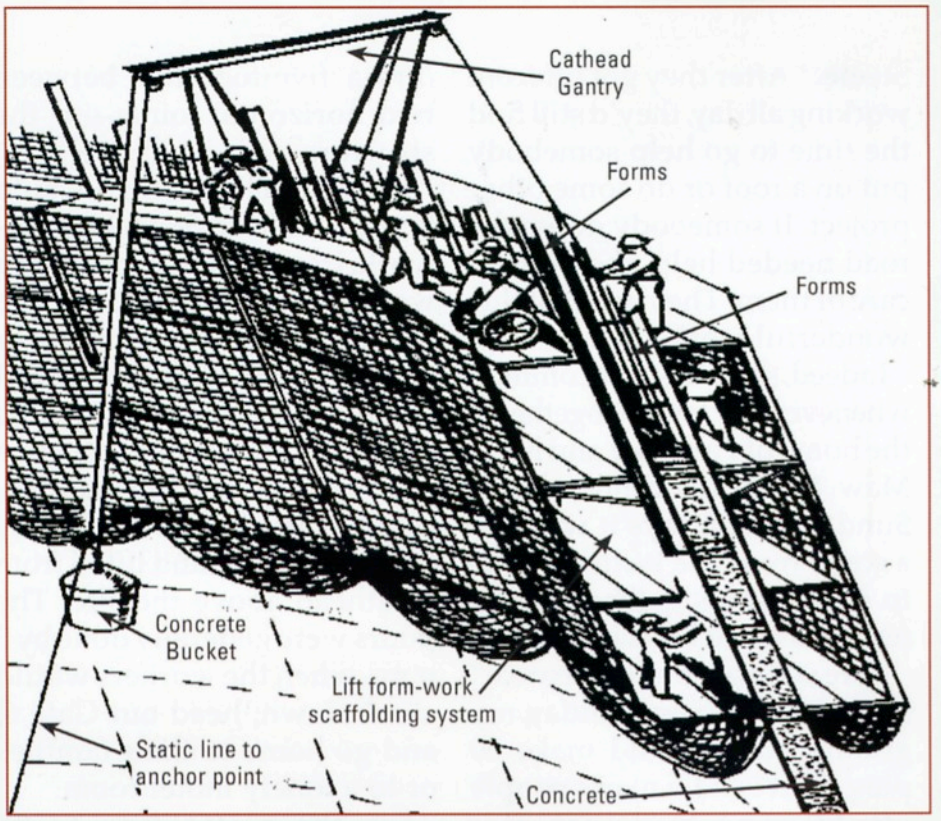
With a lift-form, scaffolding was bolted directly into freshly poured concrete. After the concrete had hardened and strengthened properly, workers could stand on the scaffolding to secure the next layer—a process repeated daily until the project was finished. Contractor Research-Cottrell's goal was to add one entire circular *lift*—a five-foot rise between two horizontal joints—to the structure each day.

Each morning, workers would knock down the previous formwork. Ironworkers would then weave reinforced steel rods into the backbone in preparation for the next pour. This took about three hours. Next came the pours: 3,000 pounds of concrete per lift, delivered in buckets, filled from hoppers, fed by concrete trucks, and lifted from a cathead above the site. The pours were generally done by 3 p.m., when the workers would climb down, head out Gate 6, and go home to their families or to a lonely motel room.

For the scaffolding to be secured properly, the curing concrete needed enough time at the right temperatures to reach a minimum of 1,000 pounds per square inch (psi)—and preferably twice that amount. Ideally, the concrete should have been cured at a temperature of at least 55°F for at least 24 hours. The men's lives depended on it since the scaffolding was bolted into the concrete. At a height of 166 feet, there simply was no room for error.

The 28th lift was poured on April 26; two-thirds of the scaffolding was set in Pour 28, and another one-third was set in the previous day's lift: Pour 27. As Larry Gale, Barbara, and their four children returned home from that evening's church service, Angie listened to her father talk about the day's work.

"He [was] worried about the (concrete) pour they'd done that



This diagram from the original National Bureau of Standards' report on the disaster shows the setup of the lift-form scaffolding at the moment of the collapse. Courtesy of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

day. But we didn't know what he was talking about. Mom and Dad talked about that all the time," she says.

That night, temperatures in Willow Island hovered in the upper 40s—about average for that time of year. The morning of April 27, workers climbed up on the scaffolding, only about 18 hours after it'd been secured into Pour 28. Investigators later estimated that the compressive strength of Pour 28 was only 220 psi that morning, instead of the recommended minimum of 1,000 psi.

Pour 29

Pour 29 began shortly before 10 a.m. on April 27, 1978. The cable from the cathead far above grew taut, and the bucket began its slow ascent to the west side of the tower. From the ground, workers watched the seemingly routine task, except this time, the line suddenly relaxed, and the bucket fell. The crane hauling the bucket fell toward the tower.

After a split second, the scaffolding anchored into Pour 28 started peeling away from the tower counterclockwise. Workers scrambled to reach a more stable section of scaffolding, but it was futile. Tons of scaffolding, rebar, concrete, wood, machinery, and humanity rained down from 166 feet.

Witnesses said it sounded like a train derailment. An employee on the ground, John Peppler, told a reporter "I could see people falling through the air and everything falling."

Depending on the account, the whole event took between 30 and 90 seconds from the moment the bucket fell to when the final debris landed on the pile. A call for help went out on the construction site's loudspeaker. Hundreds of men responded, but they were mentally unprepared for what they'd find.

"There was so much stuff there on the ground that you couldn't see the bodies. There wasn't a sound coming from it," commented one worker.

"Construction workers are a pretty tough bunch of guys, but the looks on some of their faces ... well, I've never seen anything like it," Phil Corvino, a United Engineering and Construction employee, told a reporter.

Operating engineer Sam Smith was among those who responded to the tower. He brought a truck with a cutting torch but

Investigators survey the debris following the scaffolding collapse. Photo by Frank Altizer, courtesy of James E. Casto and the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*.

quickly realized there were no survivors. Sam worked until noon, then drove back across the St. Marys bridge to his home in Newport, Ohio.

"When I walked out, I had already seen enough. It was a hell of a sight, and I don't want to see anything like it again," he told a reporter.

Ambulances were dispatched from St. Marys and Belmont. Bob Doty's wife, Shari, was one of the first responders. Nearly four decades later, she still doesn't talk about it.

A mile or so north, Ed Wilson, a new physical education teacher at the middle school, was outside with his students. Ed, a native of St. Marys, knew all about the cooling towers. The prior summer, he'd worked on the first tower while waiting for his teaching job to start. On this gray April morning, he led his class back into the building as a flurry of ambulances flew down Route 2.

Inside her fifth-grade classroom, 10-year-old Angie Steele had a hard time concentrating. After an hour or so, Angie's mother arrived to get her four children.

"I remember how my mother told us," Angie reflects on the moment she learned of her father's death. "They had pulled us out of school, and we all met together."

Firehouse Morgue

Within minutes, Parkersburg's Camden-Clark Memorial Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital were alerted about the disaster. But a few minutes after rescue workers began freeing bodies from the rubble, the alert was canceled. A temporary morgue, not a hospital, was needed.

The Belmont Volunteer Fire Department's new building, part of the city administration building, was pressed into service. In three of the firehouse's four bays, sheets of plastic were spread on the concrete floor, and the bodies

This grim photo of an ambulance and safety sign was captured right after the disaster. Photographer unknown, courtesy of James E. Casto and the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*.

were placed upon it. A curtain was hung between the temporary morgue and the first bay, where death certificates were typed on the spot.

Local and state law enforcement officers helped some two-dozen firefighters with the daunting tasks ahead. Bob Doty originally feared that State Police Superintendent Joe Trupo might hijack local control of the situation. But Bob's fears were allayed when Trupo—referred to by more than one person as a human "Smokey the Bear"—identified himself and asked, "How can I help?"

The official death toll of 51 was announced at 1 p.m., and the tragedy led the national news. By that time, approximately 100 friends and relatives of workers had gathered at the Parkersburg Armory, where state troopers read the names of the confirmed dead. The room was filled with wailing, screaming, and sobbing, but the worst was yet to come. Each body at the firehouse had to be identified.

The victims' faces haunt Bob Doty to this day. Knowing that family members would forever remember their loved ones by that final glance, Shari suggested covering the wounds with adhesive bandages. Bob asked the clerk to send over several boxes of Band-Aids.

"Later, I asked her what she thought when I made that request, and she said, 'Bob, we were afraid that you had lost it,'" Bob says.

Governor Jay Rockefeller (center, with suit and tie) and OSHA investigators examine the mangled wreckage the day after the scaffolding collapse. Photo by David Vick, courtesy of Charleston Newspapers.

A Long Weekend

A running list of the dead was maintained on the firehouse's chalkboard. One woman called and wanted to know if her estranged husband—the father of her two children—was on the list. Bob told her he'd check and call her back in five minutes. His name wasn't on the list.

"I figure that was the longest five minutes she ever spent," Bob says.

The last body was removed from the morgue late in the day. The blood-stained fabrics were rolled up in the plastic sheathing, placed in boxes, taken to a location near the river, and burned. Bob and other rescue workers went home and tried to sleep. Funeral directors and pastors worked late into the evening and throughout the next day. The first burial was in Calcutta, about 12 miles away, for Claude Hendrickson, on Saturday, April 29.

That morning, the *Parkersburg Sentinel* published 51 obituaries under the simple heading DISASTER VICTIMS; 16 had lived in Pleasants County; two more were from across the river in Newport, Ohio.

Bob called Governor Jay Rockefeller and asked for a statewide day of mourning on Sunday, April 30. Memorial services were held in churches across the state. President Jimmy Carter personally called Lee Steele to express his sympathy.

Bob Doty, Belmont's mayor at the time, looks through old newspaper accounts of the disaster. He remembers the media's insensitivity to the victims' families, which left a lasting impact on the community. Photo by our author.

Bob had been functioning with minimal rest and maximum stress for days. "I thought I was rough, tough, and could handle about anything," Bob says. "I had never heard about counseling."

The national media instantly rubbed raw the nerves and emotions of victims' families, local officials, and residents. In a rush to tell the story, the reporting was often inaccurate and embellished with Appalachian stereotyping. Local residents quickly grew weary of the microphones, cameras, and inane questions. Tempers flared, and there were scuffles, even a fight in the bar across the street from the towers. Officials warned that they might not be able to protect reporters or others who violated the privacy of the families and workers.

Amid the grief, questions, and intense emotions, there was still a familiar sight—a West Virginia community pulling together. Ladies from Belmont showed up at the firehouse within an hour of the disaster, bringing food and compassion. Local doctors Lewis and Hamilton provided steady comfort for those at the morgue.

Joe Trupo, the West Virginia State Police captain, had been at several other disasters. He told Bob, "I never saw a little community band together and work as hard as yours did."

Men of Steele

No family had a greater burden of grief and shock than that of Lee and Mollie Steele. Lee had lost a brother, four sons, two brothers-in-law, three nephews, and several friends.

Larry Gale Steele and three of his brothers were killed in the scaffolding collapse. Today, clouds of steam from the completed cooling towers rise ominously behind the Willow Island Baptist Church Cemetery. Photo by our author.

Mollie had to be hospitalized and sedated. Lee had the burden of identifying his sons.

"Four boys. I lost four boys," he grieved to his friends.

"We was very close, me and my sons," Lee told a *Washington Post* reporter on the phone. "I just trust in God. He'll never put more on me than I can bear. He gets me through the rough spots, but it's hard."

On Sunday, the community turned out to mourn with the Steele family at the Pleasants County Middle School gymnasium. More than 2,000 attended. Not a single reporter or photojournalist was allowed inside the building. Bob remembered, however, that one slipped through anyway. When the reporter removed a notebook from his pocket, he was quickly spotted and sent packing.

The Steele family victims were buried in a row of graves at the Willow Island Baptist Church on Route 2, just south of the industrial complex. The next morning, the sun rose, coffee was brewed, and TVs and radios spewed forth stories of the disaster and the victims' families. The mourning community was irritated by the media's insensitive stereotyping and incessant intrusion. They stopped talking to reporters; they just stopped talking altogether.

Aftermath

If you look closely at the second tower today, you'll notice a dark band nearly 170 feet up. That's where the Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) stopped the job to investigate. The initial findings were released just six weeks after the accident, but further studies were required.

The causes included "insufficient compression strength" due to unsatisfactory time and temperatures for curing the concrete, failure to test the concrete, improper anchoring, and an inadequate scaffolding system. Larry Gale Steele's suspicions had been exactly right. The concrete from Pour 28 hadn't had enough time to harden overnight in the cool weather.

Deadliest Construction Projects in U.S. History

Rank	Deaths	Project	Location	Year
1.	5,600	Panama Canal	U.S. Canal Zone	1904-14
2.	1,000+	Erie Canal	New York state	1817-25
3.	476*	Hawks Nest Tunnel	West Virginia	1930-35
4.	400 (est.)	Transcontinental Railroad	Nationwide	1863-69
5.	112	Hoover Dam	Arizona	1922-35
6.	77	Grand Coulee Dam	Washington state	1933-42
7.	61	Fort Peck Dam	Montana	1938
8.	60	World Trade Center Twin Towers	New York	1970-72
9.	53	Lake Michigan water intake	Chicago	1909
10.	51	Willow Island cooling tower No.2	West Virginia	1978

**The official death toll from the Hawks Nest Tunnel construction in Fayette County was placed at 476. At least one study suggests that as many as 764 workers may have died of silicosis, and others believe even that number is low.*

The fines levied against the three primary contractors—Research-Cottrell, Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory, and United Engineers and Constructors—totaled $108,300.

"It all boils down to being in a hurry," says Angie Steele Colvin. "The (tower) design was good. It was the way they designed the safety portion."

Angie says the disaster rippled through the Blouir and Steele families; the friendly Walton-like Sunday gatherings at Lee and Mollie's house became a memory, replaced by hard feelings. Many are still bitter about the way reporters treated their families and their small town.

"It tore our family apart," Angie says.

In every disaster, there are those who, by fate or providence, avoid calamity. James Miller had been on the crew, but the 29-year-old man from Elizabeth had suffered a bad cut to his thumb that morning and was sent to a Parkersburg hospital. One of his coworkers, Joe Bailey, of St. Marys, was already in the hospital for routine medical tests.

Looking back, Bob Doty believes it brought a close-knit community even closer. "I don't think we ever could have imagined that something of this magnitude would happen," he says.

He says the power company donated $2,000 to the fire department after the disaster and was generally cooperative and communicative until management changed. These days, Bob says, it's all about profits, and there's little assistance flowing to the department's coffers from the power plant.

Silence Remains

Mollie Steele died November 18, 2001; her husband, R. Lee Steele, lived almost another decade, without his wife or their four sons, who perished in the disaster. Bob Steele, the couple's only surviving son, was on site the day of the disaster.

He still lives about five miles up a hollow from the towers. On a warm October afternoon in 2016, I drove down his narrow road, hoping he'd be receptive to an interview.

Family and residents told me he probably wouldn't be. A muscular but gentle man, with a heart for volunteering and a smile to match, Bob was friendly, even when he learned why I was there. He agreed to get with his sister, write down their thoughts and recollections, and mail them to me. We parted on friendly terms, and I drove back to Belmont, past the towers and the monument to the 51 dead, before heading home.

Bob's letter arrived a week later.

"We decided we did not want to share our story of the Tower Tragedy. God bless and good luck on your writings. Bob Steele."

They say that history, particularly a tragedy, needs the perspective of time. Four decades clearly hasn't been long enough for this small community, and who can blame the families or friends of the victims? Some wounds cannot be healed with time, and some just make you ask yourself over and over, "Why?"

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 our Summer 1987 issue.

This monument honors the 51 victims killed at Willow Island in 1978. For more about the monument, please see page 80. Photo by our author.

Alma Louise and Clarence "Junior" Knotts. Courtesy of Donetta Sisler.

Going in the Hole with Hogs

By Clarence "Junior" Knotts

I was born in 1931 and lived on a small Preston County farm near Aurora for the first 30 years of my life, except for a 21-month tour of duty in the Army during the Korean War.

On our farm, we always raised a few hogs for our own meat and sold a few, mostly young pigs. Hogs were often called *mortgage lifters* as they usually brought in extra money for farmers. So I had some knowledge of swine, but not as much as I was about to learn.

In spring 1962, I realized I needed a full-time job off the farm if I was going to provide for my family. I found work at Preston Poultry and Feed, a division of Sterling Enterprises, at Manheim, a community in Rowlesburg about six miles from my home. For those who may not know about this place, I'll elaborate a little.

Preston Poultry and Feed raised broilers and turkeys at Reedsville and had contracts with growers in the Moorefield and Petersburg areas and in Garrett County, Maryland. The company came up with an innovative idea: converting an Alpha Cement mill at Manheim into a feed mill by putting broilers in its limestone mines.

The mines had seven to nine tunnels, some a mile long. The ceilings were about 24 feet high and 50 feet wide, and the floor sloped 20 degrees east to west and 15 degrees north to south, toward the front of the mines. They were connected by openings, or *crosscuts*, some of which were closed off with lumber and plastic to control the ventilation. Large fans at the mine opening forced air throughout the mines and

This portal at the Manheim limestone mine was later used by Preston Poultry and Feed for raising chickens, turkeys, and pigs. Courtesy of the Preston County History House Museum.

could be controlled based on the needs of the broilers. All the tunnels had electric, and we could drive vehicles in one tunnel, from the front to the back, and through some of the crosscuts. We had about 250,000 broilers at full capacity.

There were two large water tanks about a mile back in the mines. Water was pumped from a well near the mill at the bottom of the hill to fill the tanks and then flowed back out the front to where the broilers were. The company had drilled a hole or well down from the top of the hill to where the tanks were, but they got very little water out of them.

When I went to work there, they'd just started a hog operation in the mines about a mile back from the opening. There were 12 brood sows in factory-made farrowing crates, all connected together with automatic feeders, waterers, and manure conveyers. We later made six more wooden crates so we could have 18 sows. As nature would have it, the operation soon grew to 80 or 85 brood sows and three to five male hogs.

We obviously needed some pens to hold all of these animals. Sterling brought us used wooden packing crates and German-made copper wiring from its faucet plants at Reedsville and Morgantown. We bolted a one-inch galvanized pipe about five feet long to a four-foot 2 x 4. Then we drilled holes in the limestone floor with a jackhammer to set the fence posts. After pulling the nails out of the crate boards, we made solid board fences for the various pens. All the manure was washed into concrete pits and then hauled

Limestone mining at Manheim began in 1903 under the Buckhorn Portland Cement Company. Six years later, it became Alpha Portland Cement, which operated the mines and processing facilities until 1959. During the 1960s, the abandoned mines were used by Preston Poultry and Feed for livestock. In 1978, limestone mining started up again under Greenbrier Aggregates. Today, the site is operated by Greer Industries. There are few reminders of the old limestone operations, except for a monument that honors the company's perfect safety record in 1926 (with additional years added to the base). Historic photo courtesy of Donetta Sisler; monument photo by Steve Brightwell. [For more about Manheim, see Peggy Ross' article in the Fall 1997 issue.]

out of the mines with a farm tractor and tank trailer.

Our plan went something like this. Every five weeks, 15 to 18 sows would have piglets—usually within three to five days. We weighed all the piglets at birth, clipped their teeth to cause less irritation to the nursing mother, and injected them with two cc's of iron at two days and again at 10 days. We castrated all the male pigs at two weeks and moved the sows and pigs to lots at three weeks. We then cleaned the crates, hosed down and moved out the sows, and put another group in the crates. Pigs were weaned at five weeks and weighed. The sows were bred again in three to five days, starting the process over.

We gave the pigs cholera and other shots at about eight weeks and then moved them to pens near the front of the mines to be fattened for market. We administered lots of antibiotics when needed. Every sow and boar had a number tattooed in the ear, and a record was kept on each—noting the date bred and to which male, the date farrowed, the total number of pigs, shots given, etc.

At one time, we had 900 head of swine in the mines. At the farrowing site, the temperature stayed between 38 degrees in winter and 65 degrees in summer. We used heat lamps for the piglets in the farrowing crates.

In fall 1962, the manager of the hog operation quit, and I got his position. After about two years, Preston Poultry and Feed wanted to start running its feed mill 24 hours a day.

Here's how the town of Manheim looked about 1910. The Morgantown & Kingwood (M&K) Railroad depot is on the left, and the Alpha Portland Cement company store is on the right. Today, Manheim is part of the town of Rowlesburg. Courtesy of Donetta Sisler.

The company asked me to become the night-shift foreman at the feed mill and still oversee the hog operation. I accepted, but almost regretted it at times, though I liked the work.

It was said that the feed mill was the "newest obsolete mill" in the country, but we made 20 tons of feed or more in a 24-hour run: some pelleted and some mash. Grain and other materials used in making the feed came in by truck and railroad cars. The old Morgantown & Kingwood (M&K) Railroad siding track went right through the building, and we stored the grain in the eight silos Alpha had used for cement.

I was working 13 or 14 hours a day before I finally left the job in 1965. The whole operation closed down a few years later and has since been sold and used to quarry limestone for roads and other purposes.

For my part, I'm glad to have been part of maybe the most unique hog-raising operation in the country.

CLARENCE "JUNIOR" KNOTTS went to a one-room school on Lantz Ridge for grades one through seven. When the other kids went to ninth grade at Aurora School, the teacher said he could go with them. After graduating in 1949, he joined the Army and became headquarters captain during the Korean War, taking classified information and other papers to the various companies. He and his wife, Alma Louise, have four children, three granddaughters, and one great-granddaughter. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

An unnamed veterinarian examines a dog at the Harrison County Humane Society in 1967. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, *Clarksburg Exponent* Collection.

"From cattle to cats" Rural Veterinarians

By Barbara Smith

"I'm a direct descendant of Solomon Carpenter, the first white person known to have been born in Webster County," Bill Carpenter says as he pulls out a heavy cedar chair and sits down.

"Another first in that area—in 1908, Dr. [Minor "Doc"] White (1888-1978) became the first licensed veterinarian in West Virginia. He practiced in Webster Springs and was a friend of my grandfather. He was what was then called a horse doctor," Bill smiles. "Wanting to be licensed, he went to the proper authorities in Charleston, but they refused his request. Ohio State had opened a vet school in 1885, and the state was licensing vets, so he went there and passed the tests and got a license. Then he came back and demanded recognition in West Virginia and got it. [To learn more, see "Country Vet Doc White" by Patricia Samples Workman, Winter 1998.]

Bill Carpenter, a licensed vet, was born and raised on Miller Mountain in Webster County.

"I grew up in the woods, but after I graduated from Webster Springs High School in 1960, we moved to Denver, and I decided to follow my interest in wildlife, especially wildlife diseases, so I went to Colorado State University and earned a degree in wildlife management. I also did a tour in Vietnam, and I still belong to three military organizations. After Vietnam, because I didn't want to work for the government, which is where wildlife management is housed, I went into private practice in Elkin, Virginia, over in the Shenandoah Valley."

Moving to Fairmont in 1978, Bill opened a clinic with one vet and a small staff. "I had what's called a mixed practice, which means any animal at all: elephants to field mice. Why, if someone came in with a sick fly, we took care of it. The only animal we vets can't treat is humans."

In addition to running the clinic, Bill directed the veterinary technician program at Fairmont State College (now University). "It was a two-year associate-degree program," he explains, "with maybe 12 or 15 students enrolling each year." He left that position in 1996 to work full-time in his clinic.

"I've worked on a lot of big animals, but these days," he says, "very few vets do farmwork. It's easier and a lot cheaper for the farmers to give their own animals their vaccinations or whatever. They're even doing artificial insemination and embryo transplants. There are many medications for animals that are not yet—and probably never will be—available for humans. FDA requirements just can't be met. But cattlemen and horse owners can buy these medications at local feedstores or out of farm supply catalogs.

Doctors Lisa Loyd and Bill Carpenter have kept the rural veterinary tradition going strong. Photo by Steve Brightwell, at the Audubon Animal Clinic in Bridgeport.

"By both choice and necessity, my practice became focused on small animals," he smiles. "We switched from cattle to cats. Vets have changed, too. Veterinarians were once mostly farm boys, but now they're mostly city girls. There were 84 in my graduating class, two of them women. Now, women vets outnumber men three to one, and sick cats outnumber sick dogs by about 55% to 45%. What used to be a matter of farm business—treating valuable cows and horses—is

now a matter of taking care of beloved family members. Even horses are now pets, not animals involved in farm production," he says.

Another area of change is that of equipment and facilities. "Unfortunately," Bill says, "that means money. A setup for digital X-rays, for instance, will run at least $26,000, plus another $26,000 for the X-ray machine itself. The new equipment for blood work runs at least $20,000. Real estate and equipment for a whole new clinic would run at least $500,000. To make matters worse, the income for clinics hasn't gone up, partly because clients just can't afford advanced treatments. Clients almost inevitably have to pay the entire bill because animal insurance isn't cost-effective. It's easier to pay an occasional bill than to pay the insurance premiums. The bottom line for us is that a vet's salary is only a fraction of what an M.D. makes, even though we've had the same time and cost of education. That reminds me of the time I was doing a Caesarian section delivery on a cow. This 20-year-old standing by watched for a while and then said, 'Wow! You'd think he was a real doctor.'"

"But my favorite patient," he continues, "was one of Santa Claus' reindeer. It was back in the '80s, and Santa was visiting the Middletown Mall in Fairmont. One of the reindeer had come down with a respiratory infection, so I was called in to treat him—I guess it was a him. I just wish I knew which reindeer owes me a present!"

Rural veterinarians have to be prepared for a little bit of everything, as in the case of this cow and her sextuplet calves at Peter Pohl's dairy in the 1960s. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, *Clarksburg Exponent* Collection.

Bill Carpenter, who retired in 2011, leads the way to a newly constructed shed near his house. Inside are the tools of his favorite hobby—woodworking. "I've supplied bowls for all of the presidents of the Big 12 colleges," Bill grins, "and for several other special occasions like a graduation at the School of Nursing."

He points out pieces of maple, cherry, locust, and other woods. All of his bowls are individually hand-wrought and beautifully shaped. His prices are modest. "It's no way to make a living," he says, "but it's a great way to spend a few hours now and then. The best part of retirement, though, is that I don't have to set an alarm clock anymore."

Almost in passing, Bill mentions Grace Animal Hospital in Bridgeport. Founded in 2011, it's staffed by husband and wife veterinarians, Tom and Farrah Austin, with support from about a half-dozen women. The state-of-the-art facility, which offers a long list of services, includes such modern innovations as laser surgery and ultrasound.

Many of the same high-tech treatments are available at the Audubon Animal Clinic, located in Bridgeport. Audubon's satel-

As a teenager, Lisa Loyd helped raise and care for livestock as part of Barbour County's 4-H program, inspiring her to become a veterinarian. Courtesy of Lisa Loyd.

lite office just outside Philippi always has seasonal decorations on its front door—a scarecrow for Halloween, a wreath for Christmas, artificial flowers for Easter and summer.

The wide windows feature several signs, including a neon OPEN, an ad for flea-and-tick protection, a notice that Pets Need Dental Care, Too, and a reminder: "Don't forget to schedule your cat's annual exam."

Inside, the building seems friendly, with a welcoming receptionist and several smiling techs. Dr. Lisa Loyd, a native of Barbour County, is on duty, dressed in jeans and a medical scrub shirt with DVM embroidered on the right shoulder and "Dr. Loyd" on the left.

"As you know," she says as she sits down, "this agency is a branch of the Audubon clinic in Bridgeport. There are six vets there, including Dr. Ron Thompson, the founder and owner, who is now part-time. Three of us divide our time between Philippi and Bridgeport,

and the other two veterinarians are full-time in Bridgeport. We also have a number of certified veterinarian technicians." Lisa continues, "We opened the Philippi office in 1994 at the old Tenney grocery store, but it burned down in 2002, and we bought this building and moved out here. Remodeling to meet our needs was quite a job."

The building measures some 60 by 40 feet and contains not only the reception area and the vets' office but also a lab, two exam rooms, surgery and treatment areas, a kennel, an X-ray area, and a kitchenette and staff lounge with a washer and dryer.

"We don't have many overnight guests," Lisa smiles. "Most of our patients are in and out, but occasionally, surgery requires a recovery period." At the moment, there are two cats in the cages, both having been spayed, and one dog that needed dental treatment.

Lisa has been interested in animals ever since her days in 4-H. Her father, John Loyd, now retired, spent 37 years as president of the Barbour County Fair Association. He served the same length of time as a West Virginia University Extension agent for 4-H. His specialty was called "dairy heifer replacement."

"We kids picked up heifers that were about a week old," Lisa explains, "and raised them for two years. It was a statewide program, and we took them to the annual show in Jackson's Mill when they were a year old and when they were two years old. They were then sold to farmers to replace or extend their herds."

Lisa Loyd, married to Ronnie Helmondollar, a 4-H leader in Randolph County, is the mother of 12-year-old twin boys. "That's my life," she says.

The Philippi clinic handles farm animals and pets: cows, horses, pigs, dogs, cats, and "now and then a pet rabbit. We don't get many chickens," Lisa laughs. "And we send the really exotic pets to Bridgeport. Mostly, we deal with minor surgery and simple illness, some skin problems and fleas, plus dental needs."

The clinic treats outpatients from 10 a.m. until noon, responds to phone calls from noon until 3:00 pm, and treats more outpatients until as late as 6:00 p.m. Vets are also on call for emergencies, which can occur at any time.

One such incident occurred when Lisa was just beginning to practice in Kingwood. It seemed that a ewe was having trouble delivering twin lambs. Lisa, called out on Easter Sunday, realized she'd have to do a Caesarian on the suffering animal. The woman who owned the ewe was awestruck. "I've never seen a C-section," she said. "I have to watch." Lisa delivered the lambs, never admitting that although she'd done C-sections on other animals, she'd never done one on a sheep. The twin healthy babies were named "Easter" and "Lisa."

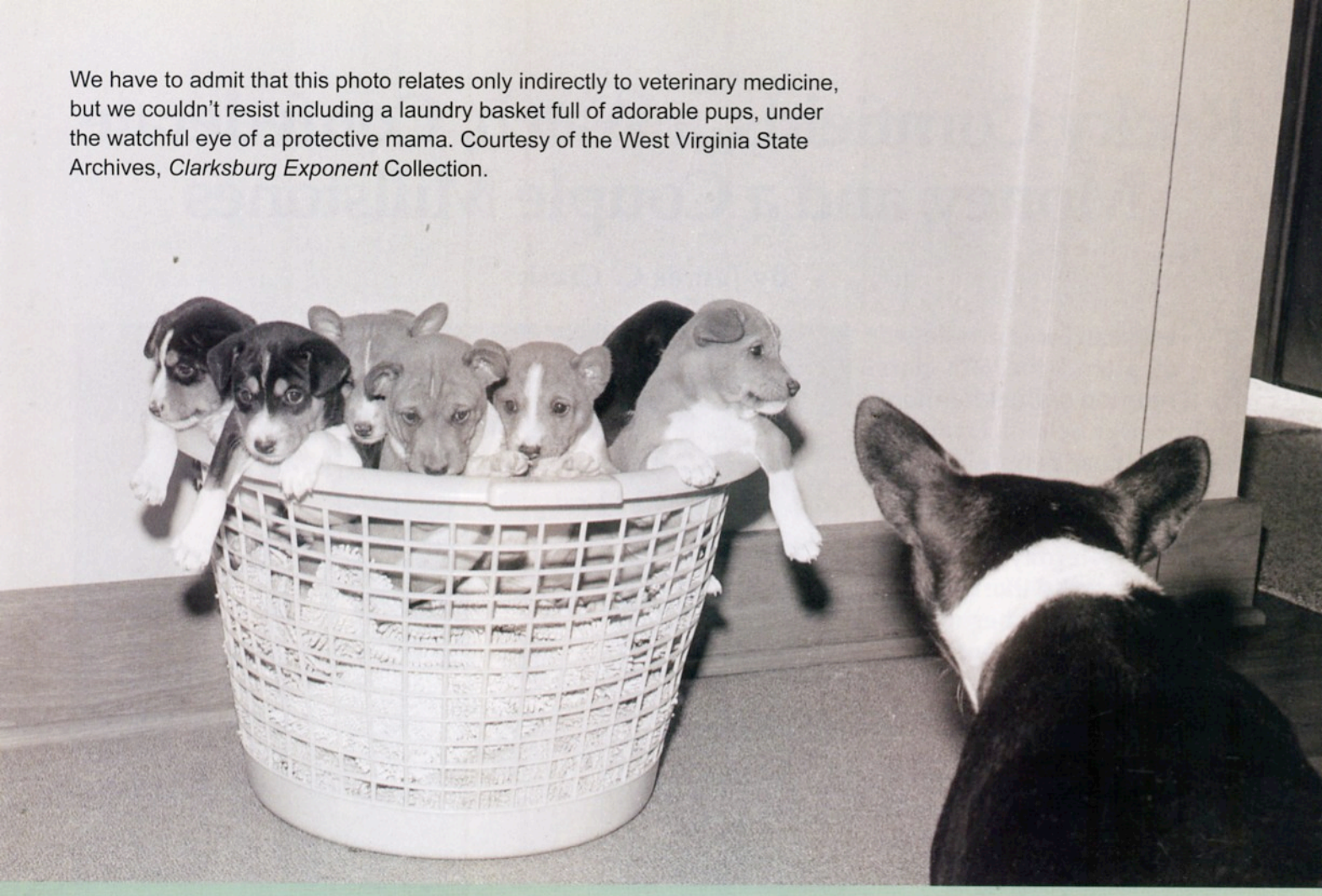
John and Betty Loyd, Lisa's parents, tell yet another story about her. Early in her career, when female vets were still rare, Lisa was contacted by a man with a sick cat. The man looked at Lisa, obviously noting her gender. Instead of commenting on that, however, he simply said, "You're so young it scares me." Another man, having once observed the slim Lisa deliver a calf, retorted that she was the "stoutest" woman he'd ever met.

Lisa's younger brother, Paul, provided grist for another tale. She'd been working on a goat in Kingwood when Paul charged into the clinic and joked, in front of the goat's owners, "What are you trying to kill this time, Lisa?" Fortunately, the goat survived—and so did Paul.

The shortage of veterinarians is a troubling trend. As a result, veterinarians tend not to retire until absolutely necessary. After visiting with Bill and Lisa, there's no question that this is a special calling and deserves more public appreciation.

BARBARA SMITH of Philippi has written and published poems, short stories, nonfiction, and novels, the most recent of which is *Through the Glass*. She is professor emeritus from Alderson-Broaddus University, where she chaired the Division of Humanities. This is her 19th contribution to GOLDENSEAL. Her first article appeared in our Winter 1984 issue, and her most recent was in our Spring 2011 issue.

We have to admit that this photo relates only indirectly to veterinary medicine, but we couldn't resist including a laundry basket full of adorable pups, under the watchful eye of a protective mama. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, *Clarksburg Exponent* Collection.



History of Veterinary Medicine

By Barbara Smith

Veterinary medicine has a long history. Records show that animals in the Middle East were being doctored as early as 9000 BC. Horses, due to their military and social uses, were a particular focus. Well into modern times, farriers, whose primary task was to shoe the horses, were also expected to treat illness and injury.

The first school of veterinary medicine was established in France in 1761. The first schools in the United States were started in Philadelphia in 1852 and at the University of Pennsylvania in 1883.

In state, West Virginia University's Experiment Station, established in 1888, taught animal husbandry through farmers' institutes and workshops across the state. WVU enrolled its first veterinary student in 1905. Students who finished one year of study at WVU were eligible to enter any veterinary school in the country. The program soon began offering full veterinary degrees, graduating its first four vets in 1910-11: Ernest Bell of Wana, Arthur Burton Willis of Shinnston, Everett Earl Allman of Jane Lew, and Arthur Robert Williams of Tunnelton. Then, WVU disbanded its veterinary school and didn't restart a similar academic program until the 1950s.

Today, WVU offers a pre-veterinary bachelor of science degree. Other in-state veterinary courses are provided at WVU's Potomac State College campus in Keyser, Pierpont Community & Technical College in Fairmont, and at BridgeValley Community & Technical College and Carver Career & Technical Center in Kanawha County.

Rocky Cornfields, a Watch, Confederate Money, and a Couple Millstones

By James C. Clark

Last year, I was privileged to attend the 60th class reunion of Buckhannon-Upshur High School. I realized that all of those people, including yours truly, have gotten pretty old. Clearly, we all have a lot more yesterdays in us than tomorrows, so I'd like to spend a little time remembering.

I was born in August 1938 on Hackers Creek in Upshur County in the home of my grandparents, John E. and Merle Marple. About 1947 or 1948, their son Charles enlisted in the Army. Grandpa was milking about 12 or 14 cows at the time and had no help. So I went to live with them for a while. I'd get up around 4 a.m. and herd the cows into the barn.

Our author's grandparents, John E. and Merle Marple, pose with their terrier on Hackers Creek in 1964. All photos courtesy of our author.

Grandpa didn't have a tractor, so he did all the work with Prince and Fred, his team of horses. One day, we were using the horses and a kick rake to stack hay into windrows. We went through a bumblebee nest, the horses took off, and I fell off the back of the rake. The bees got all over me and stung me 30 or so times on my head and face. Grandpa had a hired hand who chewed and rubbed snuff. I think he did both at the same time as it was always running down the corners of his mouth. To say the least, he wasn't the cleanest man around. He told us to put some of his tobacco on the stings to make them feel better. My dad looked at the guy and said, "No, the boy will live." Dad wasn't having any of that.

There were a lot of jobs on the farm they don't have now. I disliked one task more than any other. After working the ground and planting the corn, you had to cultivate the hard, rocky soil. We used a horse to pull the cultivator. If the cornfield was on a hillside, the job was a bigger challenge because you had to walk in the row below the one you were cultivating. And then came the hoeing. You had to make sure you got all the weeds and didn't cut any of the corn. You talk about a hot and tiring job. But you'd always have a jug of water at each end of the field, and we couldn't wait to get there.

When I look at cornfields today, I can't help but wonder how much more corn we would have had back then. We thought you had to plant the hills of corn three feet apart and three grains to the hill. Now they're crammed so tightly you can barely see between them. On the other hand, if we'd planted more, we would've had a lot more corn to shuck and a lot more fodder to shock. So I guess it was good we didn't know any better.

Then there was filth to be cut. We used the team of horses and a cutting machine for some of it, but mostly, we did it by hand with a scythe. That wasn't easy because scythes were heavy to swing, or even carry. About this time, they came out with aluminum handles and an aluminum shovel, which made it easier to clean the barn. Most of the farms back then looked a whole lot better than they do today, not nearly as grown up.

In 1948, Grandpa bought a Ford tractor, which came with a mowing machine, plow, disk, and buck rake. We felt like really big-time farmers. One day, Grandpa and Grandma went to an annual dairy dinner and meeting. I thought to myself, "What a great time to learn to run the tractor!" They had it parked in the old shed with the keys in it. It took me a little while to get it in reverse. Then I drove it out of the shed and headed for the barn, which was about 300 yards away. When I got there, I stood on one brake, slid the tractor around 180 degrees, and went back to the shed, thinking no one would ever know. The next morning, I got up and went after the cows. When we got back to the barn, Grandpa asked, "Did you get the tractor back in all right?" I'd forgotten about all the tracks I'd left behind in the mud. But it was all right for me to drive the tractor after that.

One winter, Grandpa was up the hollow feeding the cows when he lost a cherished pocket watch that had belonged to his late brother Arlie. As luck would have it, the watch turned up the next spring when Grandpa was plowing up the bottomland. He wound it up and gave it to me.

I got another prized possession from Grandpa. During the Civil War, a Confederate officer had given my great-great-grandfather two $50 bills in exchange for a riding horse. After the war, the officer sent word that my great-great-grandfather could have the horse back if he'd come get it. But it was too far away, so he never went. He passed the Confederate money along to his grandson—my grandpa. And, before Grandpa passed away in 1975, he gave me one of the $50 bills.

Now for the millstones. At one time, there was a gristmill on Hackers Creek about a mile or two from the Lewis County line. Grandpa's father had a couple of the old millstones in front of his house. I forgot about them over the years until one day, I was back home visiting and noticed they were gone. Some fellow had paid my uncle $10 for them but had never picked them up. So my uncle just hauled them out behind the barn. I was interested in the stones, so we loaded them onto my old truck, and I took them back to Dayton, where my wife and I were living at the time.

She and I put them outside our first house—on each side of the picture window. I got transferred to Virginia 17 years later, and, of course, the millstones had to go, too. I set them on each side of the driveway of our new house. Then, in 1985, we built another house, and, of course, the stones went with us. I finally retired in 2000. We sold the house, bought a motor home, and started doing volunteer work. Since it's tough to lug millstones around in a motor home, we gave them to our daughter and son-in-law. The old Upshur County millstones now reside in front of their house in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Oh, and the pocket watch and $50 bill are still around, too. Back in the '90s, my son-in-law, grandson, and I took a trip from Virginia to Hackers Creek to ride our four wheelers and camp on the ridge overlooking the bottomland where Grandpa had lost, and then found, the watch. After telling my grandson the story, I gave him the pocket watch. I had it with me for just that purpose.

On another occasion, I shared with my second cousin the Civil War story about my great-great-grandfather and the horse. My

cousin is now the proud owner of a $50 Confederate bill. The watch, the bill, and the millstones are pretty much worthless from a money standpoint, but they've meant the world to me, as have my memories of that rocky, hilly cornfield in Upshur County.

What a joy I've had remembering my younger days!

JAMES C. CLARK is an Upshur County native who earned his GED after attending Buckhannon-Upshur High School for three years. An Air Force veteran, James went on to work for General Motors for 30 years. He and his wife travel extensively in their motor home, doing volunteer work at state parks. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL, the first being in the Winter 2013 issue.

My family and I moved to Dayton, Ohio, in 1955. Before that, my dad, Pete, had worked in the coal mines from the time he was 13 until he was 42. I served in the Air Force for four years and then got married in 1960. I still missed West Virginia, so my dad and I would come back for squirrel hunting and deer season and to visit with my grandparents.

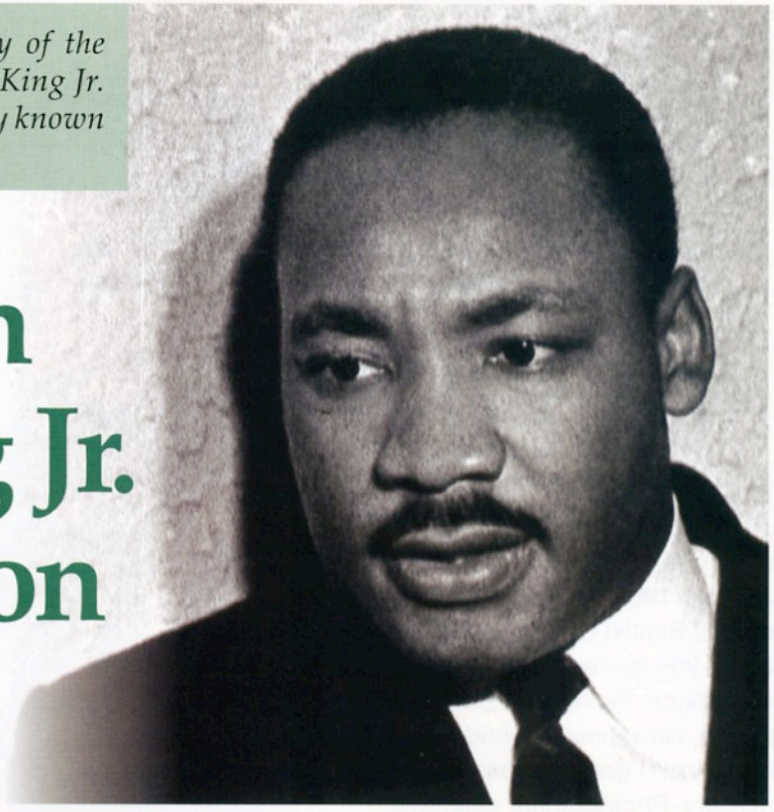
It may seem strange today, but 50-some years ago, there weren't any deer or wild turkeys in the Upshur County area. Sometimes, Grandma thought she saw a turkey in the middle of the road, but Grandpa would convince her it was something else.

One year, at the end of our hunting trip, Dad and I were getting ready to go back to Ohio. I was shaving in the bathroom, and Grandpa and Dad were sitting on the screened-in porch. Grandpa looked out at the garden and said, "Pete, there's a big gobbler in the garden!" Dad replied, "Damn if there isn't." I looked out the bathroom window, and, sure enough, there was a big fat turkey. Dad grabbed his shotgun and slipped out the front door. Still looking out the window, I heard his gun go off. That was the first time I ever saw a dead turkey fly! —James C. Clark

April 4, 2018, marks the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. GOLDENSEAL looks back on Dr. King's only known public appearance in West Virginia.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Charleston

By Stan Bumgardner



This still image is from an interview Martin Luther King Jr. gave to WSAZ-TV during his visit to Charleston in 1960. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, WSAZ Collection.

On January 24, 1960, 31-year-old Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a sermon at Charleston's First Baptist Church—a historic black church chartered in 1868 with roots extending back to Malden's African Zion Baptist Church (founded in 1852), where famed educator Booker T. Washington once taught Sunday school.

Dr. King was already well known for his leadership in the 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, and other civil rights work. He'd been invited to speak by his friend and colleague, the Rev. Moses Newsome, who would serve as First Baptist's minister from 1941 to 1971.

The day before Dr. King's sermon, he gave an interview to journalist Don Marsh for an article in the Charleston *Sunday Gazette-Mail*. King predicted that in the next 10 to 15 years, the nation "will have moved a long way toward a desegregated society."

His visit occurred six years after the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, which ordered the desegregation of public schools across the country. Many West Virginia schools had already been desegregated by 1960 due to the court's decision. But King was looking forward to a complete racial integration of society at large. At the time of his visit, 50 percent of restaurants, 70 percent of hotels, and 85 percent of public swimming pools in West Virginia were still segregated. King's goal was for American society to be integrated fully, one where blacks and whites could "sit together, not because the law says it but because it's natural, it's right."

He was greeted at the church by an enthusiastic congregation that had overflowed from the sanctuary into the hallways and gym. He based his sermon on Revelation 21:1-2 and began with what Marsh described as a "low, powerful, controlled" tone. King offered a message of hope and a challenge. He noted that just as the "new Jerusalem" of John's Revelation was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, a new America was emerging where all people would be treated equally.

He recounted our nation's history of slavery and racial

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Rev. Moses Newsome meet with reporters in Charleston in January 1960. Newsome, the pastor of First Baptist Church for 30 years, was a key leader in Charleston's Civil Rights Movement. Early in his tenure, Newsome inspired future civil rights icon Leon Sullivan to enter the ministry. Photographer unknown, courtesy of First Baptist Church.

discrimination: "There came a day when emancipation was a reality, but in a sense, it was a restricted emancipation" due to Jim Crow laws and segregation. But with schools being integrated, he told the congregation that it was a "great time to be alive."

King challenged his listeners to contribute their best skills and talents, not just to civil rights but to society in general. "Do the best you can," he said, "in whatever you do. If you become a street sweeper, sweep the streets like Raphael painted pictures, like Michelangelo carved in stone." This inspiring quote would become part of King's regular repertoire over the years.

He dropped in references from Shakespeare, Donne, Carlyle, Emerson, and others and alluded to the world's vast struggles, such as the quest for world peace and endemic poverty, particularly in places exploited by colonial powers. "As long as there is poverty in the world," King said, "we can never be rich. As long as there is poverty in the world, we can never be extremely healthy." A variation of this quote would become another go-to line for

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s wife, Coretta Scott King, visited Charleston and First Baptist Church a number of times. Her first visit was in November 1961, when she sang and spoke for the church's Women's Day Program. A staunch advocate for women's rights, she continued to attend the program regularly over the years. In this photo, Coretta Scott King (right) poses with Ruth Norman (left), the wife of West Virginia's first licensed black architect and a popular radio personality in her own right. Between them is Thelma McDaniel, who played an active role with the Charleston Woman's Improvement League [see "Lifting as We Climb" by Ancella R. Bickley, Winter 2004]. Courtesy of First Baptist Church.

King, who would meticulously edit and adapt specific words over the years to craft precise phrases.

Standing in the pulpit of First Baptist, his voice began to rise with emotion: "We have allowed our mentality to outrun our morality. We have allowed our technology to outrun our theology. We are the pawns, in many cases, of guided missiles and misguided men."

After finishing his sermon, King, the Rev. Newsome and his wife, Ruth, had lunch at the home of congregation members James Jarrett and his wife, Virginia. James Jarrett, the basketball coach at Charleston High School, was the first black head coach at a previously all-white school in the state. Also attending the luncheon was educator Virginia Rayford, who'd played a major role in founding Camp Washington-Carver, the nation's first black 4-H camp, located at Clifftop in Fayette County.

Before departing town, King told Newsome that West Virginia "was considerably ahead of other so-called Southern states in civil rights." It was a pivotal time for King and the movement. On a personal level, he'd just resigned as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery to dedicate more time to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Eight days after King delivered his sermon in Charleston, four black college students sat down at a "whites only" Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The sit-ins sparked similar protests across the South, and King soon became the leading national spokesperson for civil rights.

Dr. King had planned to return to West Virginia again in October 1968 to help celebrate First Baptist Church's 100th anniversary. Six months before the centennial, however, he was murdered in Memphis. Among those attending King's funeral in Atlanta was the Rev. Moses Newsome.

STAN BUMGARDNER is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

"Mary, come home!" My Trip Back to Wenonah

By Mary Catherine Bones

A 10-year-old Mary Catherine Bones is all smiles on the Wenonah Elementary playground. The N&W Railway ran virtually through the school grounds. All photos courtesy of our author.

It was many years before I could return to my childhood home of Wenonah—a small town in Mercer County about five miles north of Matoaka.

The many years stretched out a bit longer when I missed the turn off Route 10 onto the one-lane road leading to my birthplace. My first familiar sight was the red coneflowers, still blooming near that long flight of steps leading to G. C. Tabors' back door. For three years, I would climb those steps weekly to get piano lessons from Rosala Tabor on her mother's baby grand. Afterward, I'd sit in the kitchen with Mrs. Tabor, chat, and warm my boots before walking back home in the cold.

The road to Wenonah is about five miles long, ending at the mine portal. Above that entrance, a never-paved road leads to Elgeria and Flat Top Mountain, which overlays a vein of bituminous coal. The mine was owned by Turkey Gap Coal and Coke and operated by James Anthony McQuail (1881-1955). Turkey Gap was licensed to ship coal in 1898.

"Captain" David Harvey Barger of Shawsville, Virginia, supposedly built the houses and company store at Wenonah. He earned his title while serving as conductor on the Norfolk and Western (N&W) Railway. According to former state archivist Kyle McCormick, Barger was the "conductor in charge" on the first N&W passenger train into the Pocahontas Coalfield in 1883. Captain Barger (1857-1931) retired from the N&W in 1905 and became a wealthy railroad and coal developer in the region. He also served as president of the Bank of Matoaka, and Barger Street in Matoaka was named for him. Walnut Grove, his retirement

House #52 at Wenonah, the birthplace of our author.

estate in Shawsville, is now a popular tourist attraction.

While we always knew our town as Wenonah, the post office was officially called Dott to avoid confusion with the town of Winona in Fayette County. Dott was chosen because it was the nickname of Captain Barger's daughter Dorothy.

When I reached the widest place in the road, I parked my car. My friend who rode with me alighted onto the ground where the company store once stood and exclaimed loudly, "Where *is* it? Where are the houses, the store, the post office? I thought we were going to see your birthplace?"

He looked north, east, west, and south. Everything was covered with tall trees and brush weeds, with a few flowers blooming. I pointed out two evergreens, at least 20-feet high, that my mother had planted in our front yard, standing as a monument to our beloved home.

We walked across Wenonah's only bridge, over Widemouth Creek, then turned left up a short hill and over some cinders where the railroad tracks had been removed. My friend surged through the brush to my birthplace.

He discovered a red brick and insisted I keep it—one of the last remnants from my house. A small stream flowed over huge rocks to the north of our house. It wasn't the season for those long-stemmed violets I loved to gather for my mother. I was enthralled to be there again.

My friend, who'd seen my brother's photos of Wenonah, tried to imagine how the town used to look. To this day, it's still mind-boggling that so many houses were perched on those steep hillsides. We drove on to the mine portal, where "No Trespassing" signs reminded us that we weren't allowed or wanted there. We drove away quickly, stopping only to pick up a large chunk of coal as a keepsake.

So, here's how I ended up in Wenonah in the first place. One summer day in 1919, Theodore Milton Bones boarded a train on the Virginian Railway in Christiansburg, Virginia. He'd just graduated from high school after working briefly in a grocery store. A friend had told him about a job opening at the company store in Wenonah. When the train pulled into Matoaka, my mother, Mary Sue Bailey, got on board and, according to my father, it was

The N&W ran through the heart of Wenonah. The large brick building is the company store, ca. 1957.

"love at first sight." They rode the remaining five miles to Wenonah and stayed there more than 40 years—leaving when the company was sold in 1964.

At first, Mother lived with her oldest sister, Alice Oblinger, in the same house where I would come into the world 15 years later. Daddy boarded at the company clubhouse, conveniently located next door to the company store. After their marriage, they lived three doors down from the store. Both my brothers were born in that house, which had indoor plumbing and a radiator heating system. Daddy eventually purchased a car, an electric stove, and many other firsts, including a television.

In Wenonah, my father may be best remembered as the man who wore a white apron and a necktie every day as he waited on customers. There was meat to be cut, weighed, wrapped, and tied with string. Groceries were on one side of the company store, and dry goods on the other. At Christmas, decorated tiers of toys were on display along with open boxes of candies and unshelled nuts.

Outside stood two gasoline tanks; during World War II, gas was available only with ration coupons. Since I was so young, I didn't understand much of what was happening with the war unless my brothers explained it to me. My brothers, 10 and 15 years older than me, deciphered Morse code from a shortwave radio while listening through headphones and then typed it out on an Underwood typewriter for all to read. They also gathered news from the

This 1955 interior photo of Wenonah's company store shows (left-right) butcher Tracy Akers, manager Ted Bones (our author's father), clerk Loretta Hurst, stock-up and delivery boy Bobby Mingin, and clerk Betty Jo Wooten.

Associated Press and posted daily weather maps on the kitchen wall.

Looking back, I realize how fortunate I was to grow up in this household with an incredible mother whose skills and talents were developed on Black Oak Mountain (near Rock) in a family of 12 Baileys. What a joy to be in her presence! With a delightful voice, she read aloud, recited poetry, sewed beautiful clothing, and used the scraps to create braided rugs. She tended large vegetable, berry, and flower gardens behind our house. Flowers were everywhere, including roses along those whitewashed fences. Mother especially loved daffodils.

We had both a front porch and a back porch, actually outdoor rooms with big glider swings; Mother sewed the cushions for the swings herself. She never looked happier than those rare times when she had time to relax with us on one of the porches.

No one could possibly describe the peacefulness of a summer evening after the train had hauled away tons of coal. Many happy children played games such as hide and seek, tag, jump rope or Annie Over until almost dark. My favorite childhood memory? Running back home with dirty feet as Mother yelled for all to hear, "Mary, come home!"

And so, I finally did get to come home again. My heart rejoices with abundant love for Wenonah, my home.

MARY CATHERINE BONES is a graduate of Matoaka High School, Concord College (now University), and the Charleston School of Diagnostic Cytology. She retired as a cytotechnologist after a 40-year career in the pathology departments of the WVU Medical Center, Palm Beach Pathology, and Lab Corporation of America. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Daffodils Will Remember

By Deb Austin Brown

With April on the spring horizon, the earth brings forth acres and acres of daffodils near my Saint Albans home. They blanket the rolling hillside and smile at the sun. These breaths of fresh air are a sight for sore eyes after the bleak and chilling awfulness of winter. They've multiplied each season over the last 40 years, adding hundreds and hundreds of golden blooms to their family. I'm one of the fortunate neighbors who can bask each day in the glory of this masterpiece of nature. Oh, the photographs I've taken!

When the calendar turns to June, the sunshine brings forth wild daisies. During the summer, other wildflowers join the daisies to the delight of this passerby. Buttercups, asters, thimbleweed, bluebells, and Queen Anne's lace soon join the dance, pirouetting on the summer stage for all the world to see. As the sun sets on the floral countryside, the crickets chirp their way from twilight to the darkness of another summer night. Lightning bugs and the full moon light up the wondrous nighttime landscape. Ah-h! All seems right with the world.

More than four decades ago, a white two-story farmhouse stood in monumental majesty on the crest of this hometown hill. It overlooked expansive flatlands along the river to the west and the grandiose hills to the east. This Appalachian home was once a place of charm and loveliness because it had been lived in and loved.

Because I was so young, I never met the family who lived there. I'm not even sure of their names. But brief glimpses over time painted a picture of perhaps their happiest days. Children frolicked and laughed in the yard. A clothesline showcased the family laundry, drying gently in the sunshine and hillside breezes. The flowerbeds surrounding the house put on a show of color. In the side yard, an arbor of vines brimmed with succulent grapes as horses grazed in nearby fields. On the front porch, a swing kept company with rocking chairs and flowerpots as ruffled white curtains drifted in and out of open windows. Scores and scores of flaxen daffodils lined the perimeter of the house and continued along the driveway. Each year, there were more and more of these beauties wandering aimlessly in the yard and over the hillside. These were the days of the daffodils—the blissful days of peaceful, rural living.

Time marched on. The children grew up, left home, and started their own families. The parents aged with dignity and grace. The patriarch died near the end of his 75th year; the matriarch then lived alone in the house until she died more than 20 years later. She was the last family thread, stitching the house to the quilted fabric of Appalachian life. In her late 90s, she basked in her final walk through the daffodils on her way to Heaven's Gate.

The old house missed her. During the years ahead, weather had its way with the shingles and wooden siding. Over time, windows cracked and broke; doors hung crookedly on loose hinges. It was sad to see.

It was death by loneliness.

Those deserted days of the farmhouse, too, are gone. No trace of the wooden structure remains. A dozen years ago, it was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. All that's left are the memories. And the daffodils.

Each year since, the daffodils do more than return; they flourish. It's a heartwarming sight to see each spring. The yellow blossoms burst forth and share their joy with all who come to look and linger.

Each day of each season, I pass this special spot. Sometimes, when I drive by, I pull over and

Our author's granddaughter Presley picks flowers on the hillside where the daffodils welcome back springtime each year. Photo by our author.

get lost in my memories. I sit in my car with the windows down and breathe in the sights, smells, and sounds. It's nice to come back and remember.

These days, though, I do more than remember. I create my own daffodil memories. Each spring, as the fields come alive in golden splendor, I take my granddaughters to Daffodil Hill to take family pictures among the lemon lovelies. I feel at home here. My old friends, the daffodils, welcome me back, as if they've come alive just to make more memories among these West Virginia hills.

As I look through family scrapbooks of daffodil pictures, I see my own life passing by and my granddaughters growing up before my very eyes. I'll treasure these memories until I enjoy my own last stroll through the daffodils on my way to Heaven's Gate. As it should be, the generations will again change hands. Long after my family and I are gone from these magnificent hills—even though the world may forget—I'm sure the daffodils will remember.

DEB AUSTIN BROWN is a lifelong resident of Saint Albans, Kanawha County. She is a 37-year teaching veteran, a national speaker, and the author of five books. She can be reached through her website: www.99successstrategies.com. This is Deb's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The 1965-66 Huntington Vinson Tigers Class AA state champion basketball team. All photos courtesy of our author and Huntington Publishing Company unless noted otherwise.

The Penicillin Kids and an Improbable Basketball Title

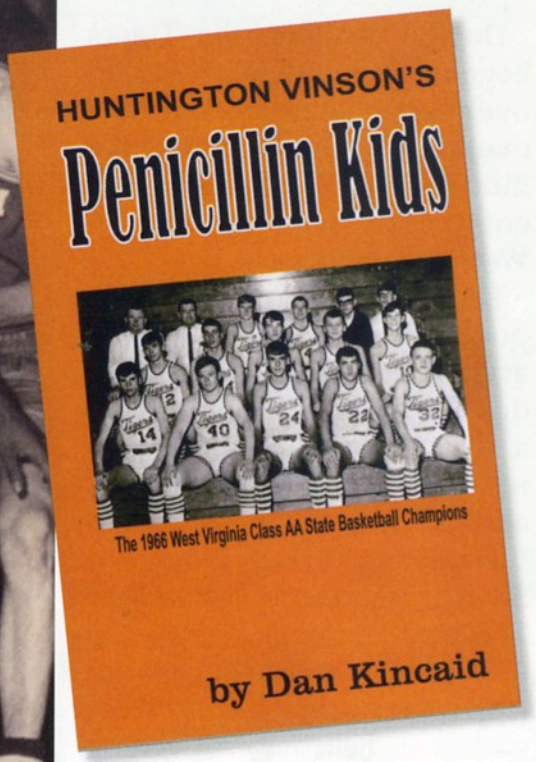
By Dan Kincaid

It was fall 1965. Basketball season was about to begin. Vinson High School was located in Westmoreland—also known as the Wayne County section of Huntington. It'd been known primarily as a football school, winning five state gridiron titles in the 1940s and 1950s behind stars like Buzz Nutter, Dale Boyd, and Tom Perdue.

There were a few "might have been" basketball seasons. The Tigers, led by Keith Ross, went to their first state tournament in 1954 but lost by one to Pax in the Class B semifinals. In 1955, Vinson fell one game short of the state tournament, losing to Chattaroy in the regional finals. That Tigers squad was led by Benny Coffman, who later starred for Adolph Rupp's 1959 and 1960 University of Kentucky teams. The 1960 Vinson squad, led by Donnie Smith, also fell one game short of the state tournament. Smith went on to play for the University of Dayton.

After 1960, sports at Vinson were more or less average. Heading into the 1965-66 basketball season, there were no high expectations for the Tigers. To the close observer, however, there were some positive signs. The team had five seniors, including three who'd started for all or part of the previous season: Bill Thomas, Wally Snyder, and Gary Norris. Two others, Ty Tomlinson and Bill Beldon, had seen substantial playing time. There was also a good group of juniors, including Tony Ritter, Tucker Lynch, Danny Kincaid, and Norman Myatt.

Vinson's Danny Kincaid (32) drives for a basket against Matewan in the regional championship game.



You can read more about the Tigers' championship run in Dan Kincaid's book *Huntington Vinson's Penicillin Kids*, available through Amazon and other online sites.

Another positive was the return of Donnie Smith—this time as head coach. Smith brought with him a winning attitude from his years at Dayton. He switched Vinson from its traditional zone defense and run-and-gun offense to a patterned offense and man-to-man defense. This style required great physical conditioning, so the players ran, and ran, and ran. When they weren't running, they were practicing defense. One commented, "There were times we hardly used a ball during practice."

As the 1965-66 season approached, most observers gave little thought to Vinson. The best local AA team was thought to be Ceredo-Kenova. C-K was coming off a state football championship and was loaded with talented athletes. Huntington St. Joe (St. Joseph's) had a very good team, as did a couple of Ohio teams, Chesapeake and Fairland, which Vinson would face.

The season opened on December 7 with a win against Buffalo of Wayne and an unexpected victory over C-K. Then came three straight losses to St. Joe, AAA-power Logan, and Fairland.

As January approached, the Tigers were 2-3, and most fans were settling in for another mediocre season. Several nagging injuries and illnesses forced Donnie Smith to experiment with new lineups. A number of backups got substantial playing time. By late season, this would prove highly beneficial.

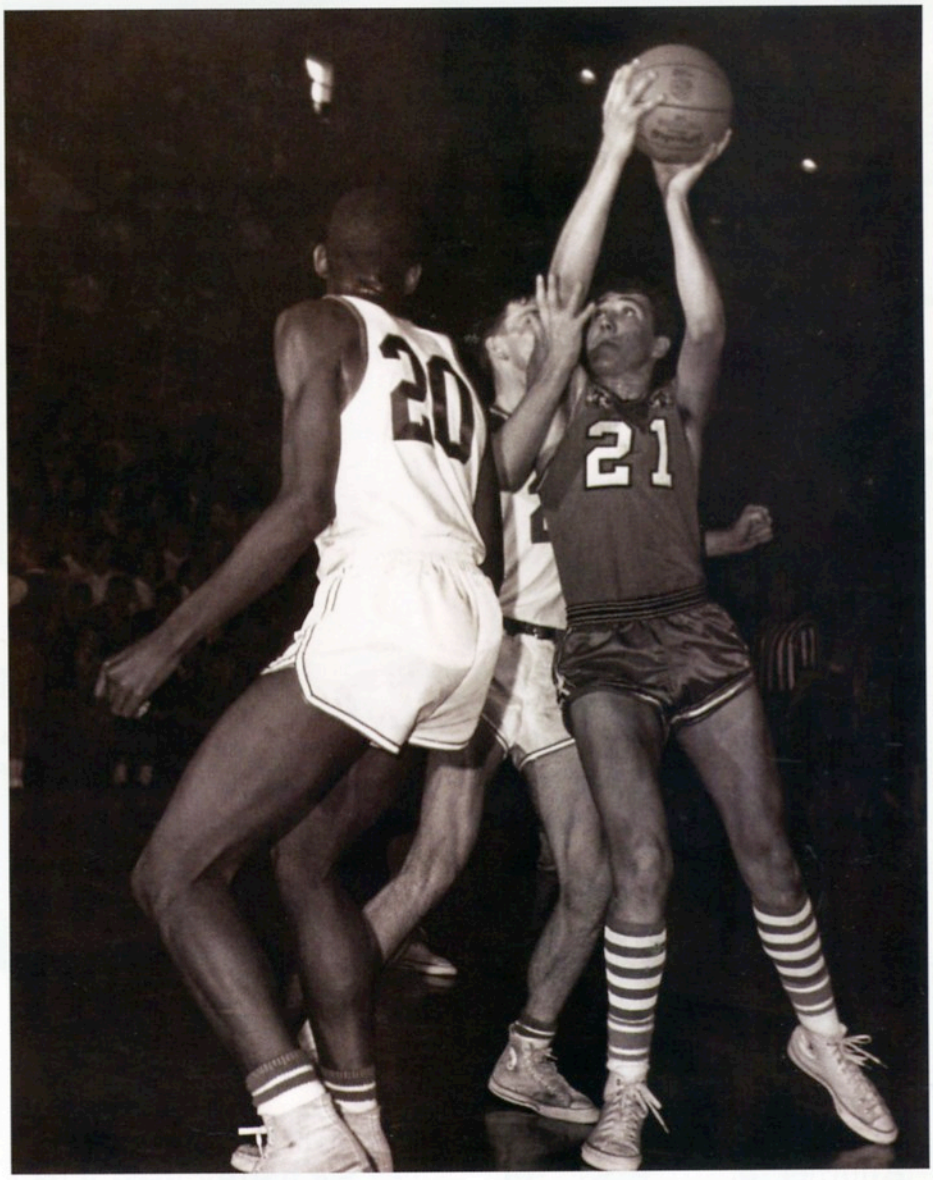
During January, the Tigers began to jell with another win over C-K and a payback victory over St. Joe. By the end of the month, Vinson was 7-5, and enthusiasm was building in Westmoreland.

Thomas was scoring over 20 points per game with Norris and Snyder also averaging double figures. Kincaid offered a scoring boost off the bench in wins over C-K, Milton, and St. Joe. He soon joined the starting lineup, alongside Snyder, Tomlinson, Norris, and Thomas.

But there were still growing pains. Vinson lost its first three games in February, dropping to 7-8. The losses, though, were to very good teams: Oak Hill, Barboursville, and Chesapeake (Ohio). It turned out that the Tigers' overtime loss to Chesapeake on February 12 would be their last of the season. But no one could see that coming.

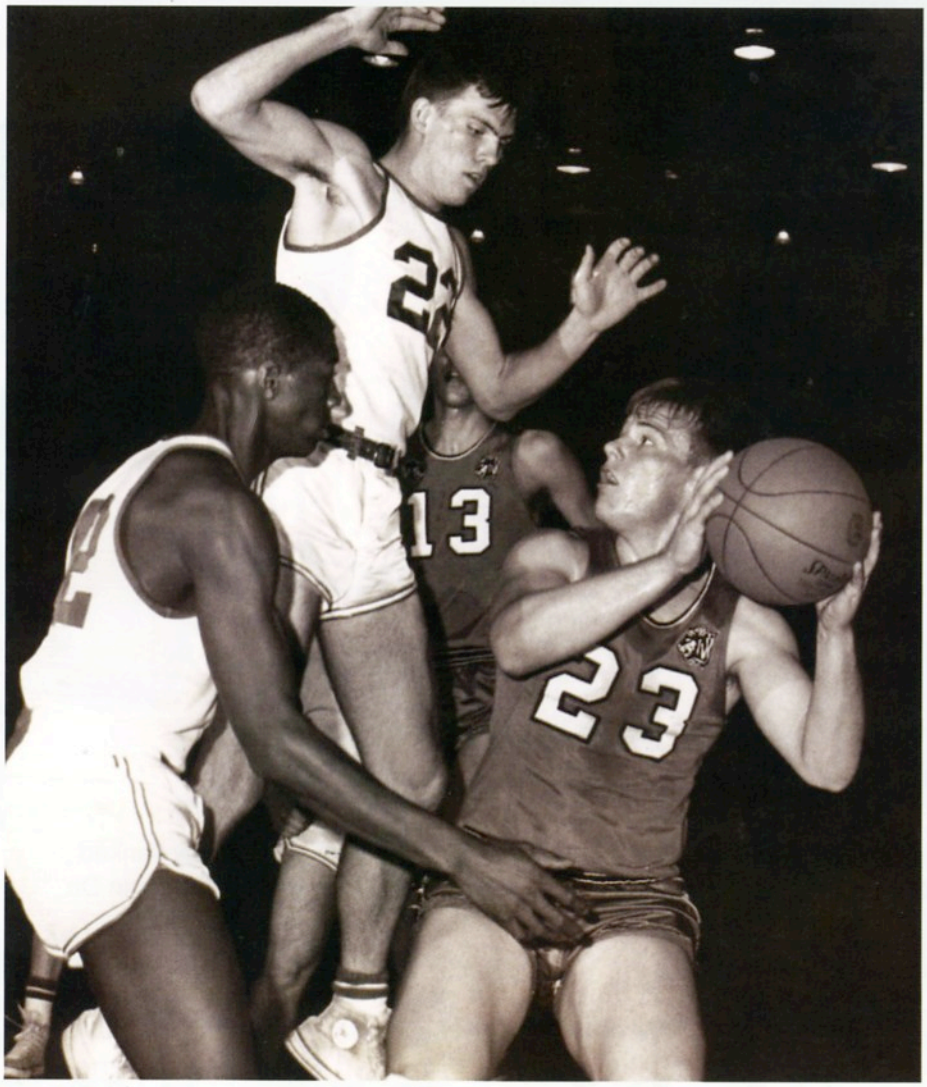
All of Vinson's players were finally healthy, nine had a lot of playing experience, the lineup and substitution patterns were set, and the Tigers had a four-game home stand coming up. The coaches, too, had become seasoned. Smith, the rookie head coach, was now comfortable with the team. Assistant coach Don Trimboli, who was also the head football coach, provided key help in practices and with conditioning.

On February 15, Vinson hosted the AAA Huntington East Highlanders, probably the area's best ballclub. East was led by two future Division I college players: Mark Dawson (WVU) and Bill McNeer (Virginia Tech). Vinson opened up a 60-51 lead at the end of three quarters. East cut the margin to five, but Vinson won it 76-71.



Vinson's Bill Thomas (21) is fouled and scores two of his 29 points in the state championship victory over Mullens. Danny Graves (20) guards for Mullens.

Vinson rolled over Wayne in its next game and then came away with a surprisingly easy 68-44 win over a tough Boyd County team out of Kentucky. With another easy win over Milton, the Tigers had swept its four-game home stand. On the season, Vinson was now 11-8 with an upcoming rematch against East to end the regular season on the Highlanders' home court—Huntington's Memorial Field House. East was eager to avenge the February 15 loss to the Tigers. The Highlanders thought they were the better team, and maybe, on paper, they were. But as they



Wally Snyder (23) pump-fakes before scoring against Mullens in Vinson's 58-51 state championship victory. Ken Longwood is on the left, and Jerry McKinney is in the air.

say, "Games are not played on paper."

The game drew a lot of attention in Huntington. Each team was playing its best basketball, and the two teams didn't disappoint.

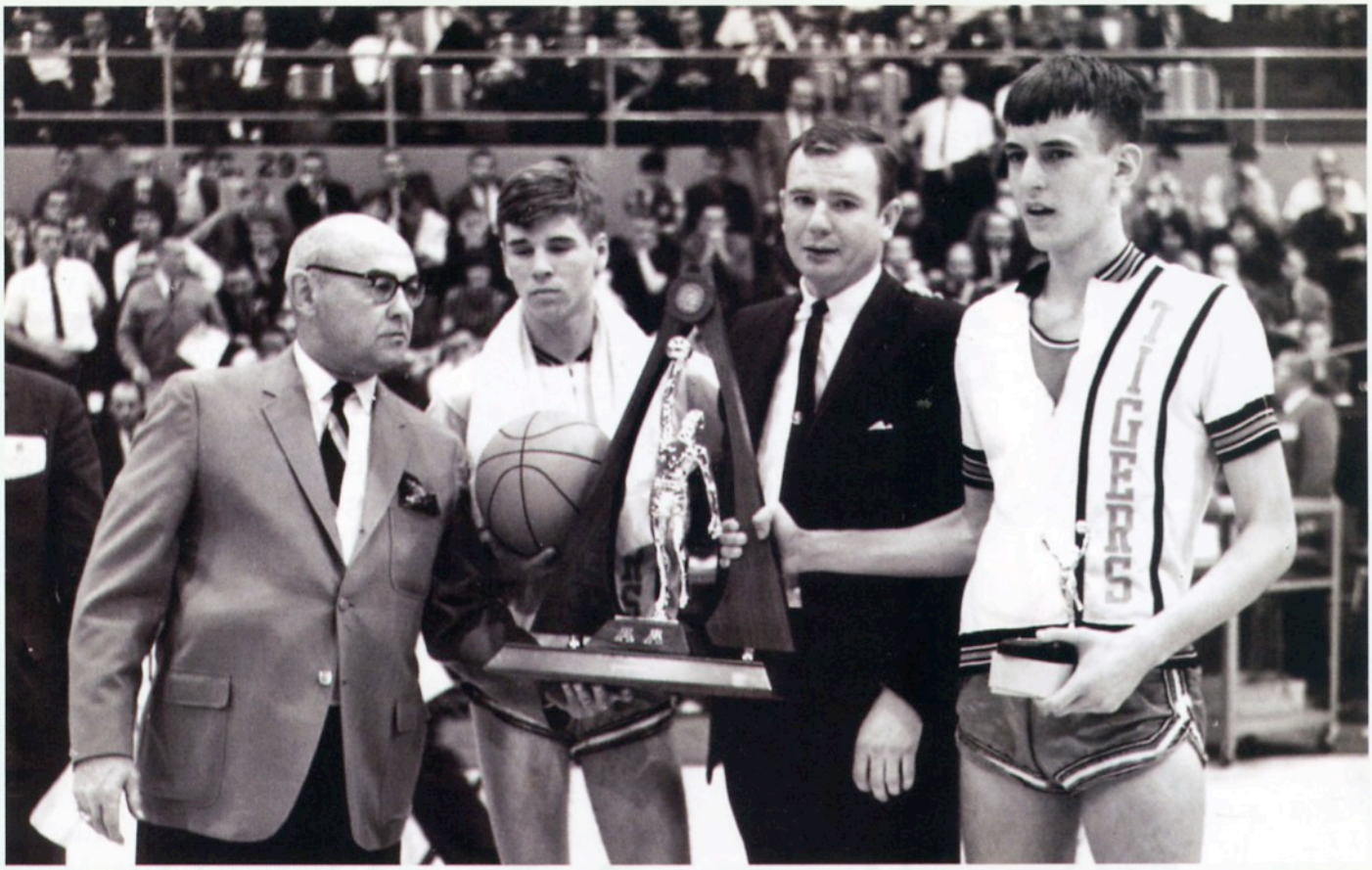
East took a 15-14 first-quarter lead and extended it to 33-29 behind Dawson's 15 first-half points. The Highlanders almost broke the game open in the third period, going up by nine. At that point, Coach Smith called a timeout and threw a curve at East. He changed from a man-to-man to a zone defense, something Vinson had rarely used all season. The switch totally disrupted East's offense. Vinson scored 11 straight and was up one by the end of the period.

The fourth quarter was nip and tuck and ended in a 66-66 tie. During the three-minute overtime, Snyder canned two quick buckets for Vinson, and Ritter added a free throw, giving the Tigers a five-point lead, 71-66. East went into a full-court press, which Vinson beat for two easy baskets. The Tigers ended up winning 80-73. The victory gave Vinson a 12-8 record and a lot of confidence heading into postseason play.

In its first sectional tournament game, Vinson beat Duval handily and then went on to defeat C-K for the third time that season. In regional play, the Tigers handled Cedar Grove and its star, Gary Selbe, by a 70-56 margin. Thomas poured in 31 points for Vinson.

In its next game, 15-8 Vinson played Matewan at a raucous Memorial Field House. Matewan had defeated Fayetteville in its regional finals and was considered by many to be the best AA team in the state. Matewan was led by high-scoring All-State guard Jerry Epling, who would go on to star at Georgia; 6-7 center Roger Gilliam; and 6-3 forward Robert Dandy. It shouldn't have been a contest, but Vinson's players were riding high.

Vinson continued its stellar play and took an eight-point lead into the locker room at halftime. Vinson never trailed and walked away with a hard-fought 68-65 victory and the regional championship. Four starters scored in double figures: Thomas with 28, Norris with 16, Kincaid with 12, and Snyder with 10. Epling was the only Matewan starter to reach double figures (30 points).



Vinson Coach Don Smith (Second from right) accepts the 1966 AA state basketball championship trophy flanked between co-captains Gary Norris (R) and Ty Tomlinson (with basketball). State Athletic Commission Chairman Dr. Ward Wylie is on the left.

Vinson was confident heading into the state tournament, which was played that year at the Memorial Field House. The Tigers' virtual home-court advantage was huge, but the season almost fell apart in an unforeseen way.

During the regionals, Tomlinson had come down with the flu, but it hadn't spread. By Monday, March 14, however, several players were suffering from the flu: scoring ace Thomas, Ritter, Carl Ray, and Steve Miller. The next day, Snyder and Norris joined the sick list. By Thursday, Kincaid and Coach Smith were feeling the effects. Things weren't looking good for Vinson.

By game time on Thursday, all of Vinson's players were dressed and ready to go, but most weren't at 100 percent. And the coaches had virtually eliminated practice and pregame preparation. Somehow, though, the Tigers stormed out to a 21-8 first-quarter lead behind the scoring of Norris, Kincaid, and Snyder. But Thomas, the team's scoring star, wasn't nearly up to par. Webster Springs fought back and cut the deficit to nine points at half and to three by the end of the third.

Vinson was hanging on by a thread. Smith rested Thomas by holding him out the entire third quarter and played Norris only sparingly. His strategy worked. Norris scored the first seven points of the fourth quarter, and the Tigers opened up a 10-point lead. Vinson rolled to a 62-45 win and a berth in the state finals. Despite being under the weather, Norris had scored 25 points and pulled down 14 rebounds to lead the Tigers.

On Friday, March 18, the *Huntington Advertiser* newspaper ran a front-page headline: VINSON'S "PENICILLIN KIDS" IN FINALS. The catchy nickname caught on.

But there was one last task to accomplish. And it was huge. Vinson, a significant underdog, had to play Mullens, which had defeated Warwood in the other

On March 19, 2016—50 years to the day of their championship title—members of the 1965-66 Vinson Tigers were honored at halftime of the Class AA championship at the Charleston Civic Center. Pictured are (left-right) head coach Don Smith, student manager Ken Gallagher, and players Bill Thomas, Gary Norris, Wally Snyder, Ty Tomlinson, Danny Kincaid, Bill Beldon, Tucker Lynch, Tony Ritter, and Carl Ray. Assistant coach Don Trimboli, student manager Eric Smith, and players Norman Myatt, Steve Miller, and Jack Brammell were unable to attend. Courtesy of Carl Ray.

semifinal game. The championship game was set for Saturday, March 19, 1966, again at the Memorial Field House.

Mullens—led by its stars Danny Graves, Ken Logwood, and Jerry McKinney—opened up a 15-12 lead after one quarter, but Vinson cut the margin to one at half. Thomas, finally recuperating from the flu, poured in 18 points for Vinson. At the end of the third, Mullens was up 41-40.

With both squads trading baskets, it seemed like whichever team got the last shot would win. Vinson grabbed a 51-49 lead with less than five minutes to play. But the Tigers stepped up their defense, forcing six Mullens turnovers. Thomas scored three times, Tomlinson made a free throw, and Vinson took a commanding 58-49 lead as the clock ran down. The Rebels scored an insignificant bucket at the buzzer, giving Vinson a 58-51 win. The Memorial Field House erupted as Huntington Vinson's fans cheered the school's first state basketball championship.

The next morning's Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* said it all: VINSON'S PENICILLIN KIDS AA STATE CHAMPIONS! Sportswriter Keith Walters noted the Tigers' "gutty performance" and wrote that "the Penicillin Kids are well today."

Even now, if you ask folks of a certain age around Huntington if they remember the "Penicillin Kids," you'll get a heartwarming smile. Then, get ready to hear about one of the most improbable basketball seasons in West Virginia history.

DAN KINCAID, a member of the 1965-66 Vinson team, was born in Pocahontas County and attended junior high and high school in Huntington. After receiving a B.S. in forestry from WVU and a master's in environmental management from Duke, he worked 31 years with the U.S. Forest Service and 5½ years with the West Virginia Division of Forestry. Dan is the author of *The Penicillin Kids* and four forestry-related books (available on Amazon), including *Kade Holley-Forest Ranger*, a fictional account of a ranger working at various national forest locations. Dan and his wife, Vicki, a Huntington native, currently live in Florida.

2017 Vandalia Award Recipient Jim Good

By Adam Booth

Photo by our author.

"Well, one evening, I was going home from work cleaning carpet, and I come around a little alley up in Weston. I'm a nosy person, and I wanted to see what was around. And there was an old man sitting on the front porch, playing the dulcimer."

I'm sitting with Jim and Brenda Good in their two-story workshop, just outside Walton in Roane County. The first floor brims with stacks of varied wood. Each pile is in a different stage of being turned into a dulcimer, a cutting board, or another creation. Tools of many shapes and sizes rest near each work station. The three of us warm ourselves around a woodstove fed by sawdust, a byproduct of their work process. Jim talks about how he started building instruments, beginning with that fateful trip down a Weston alley over four decades ago.

"I'd never seen a dulcimer. Never heard of one. I listened to that old man play and, boy, that sound—slow and easy!"

That slow-and-easy music is what drives Jim to build the best-sounding highest-quality Appalachian dulcimers available. In his previous career, Jim spent 25 years in the carpet business. He was on complaint duty for several years and learned an important lesson: do it right the first time.

Brenda comments, "Rather than have dissatisfied customers, we take the time to make sure it's right and a good product."

Hearing that man in Weston play a dulcimer gave Jim an idea: "I had a neighbor up the road who had a woodworking shop in his attic." Jim smiles and leans back in his chair, closer to the stove, almost in disbelief of his own memory. "I asked him about dulcimers, and he said he'd help me make one."

That was in 1973. Before that, Jim hadn't even been a woodworker. Within a year, he had learned to play the dulcimer and was building them to sell under the brand name Mastertone Dulcimers. The Goods'

Jim Good plays a tune on one of his handcrafted dulcimers at a festival in the 1990s. Courtesy of Jim Good.

dulcimers are made in the traditional West Virginia style, with a gently curved hourglass figure. Each features carefully selected woods, a bookmatched back (giving it that mirrored open-book look), pearlized inlay dots, and walnut shells for sound holes. Although each instrument is visually striking, the Goods' dulcimers stand out for their tone and unique G major open tuning. While Jim is considered the driving craftsperson, Brenda contributes much to the process, including stringing, tuning, and helping cure the woods.

Jim and Brenda tend to date their dulcimers based on a family calamity: before and after the fire. Jim recalls, "In 1983, our house, shop, and everything in it burned down. After that, we went back to work, and I started putting metal keys in them. Everything was wooden keys before that, like violin pegs."

If you happen to come across a pre-fire Mastertone Dulcimer, note details like a hand-carved scroll, a perimeter of pearlized inlay work, or a stylistic *lip*, where the top and bottom parts hang over the sidewalls.

In addition to the pre- and post-1983 variations, Mastertone is well-known for its archtop model. Most dulcimer makers patch together various pieces of wood to make the resonating soundbox. Jim, however, hand-carves the top and bottom of the archtop body from a single piece of wood. The body style looks more like a fine violin or cello, with details more reminiscent of an artisan wooden bowl found at a craft fair. In fact, he got the idea for an archtop while exhibiting at a fair.

Because the required tools make it difficult to demonstrate dulcimer making on location, Jim's primary way of marketing instruments had been to play them for potential customers. "I was out there at a show and playing one of my dulcimers," says Jim. "This lady who ran the show came up to me and said, 'Mr. Good, you know, you're supposed to *demonstrate*.'"

In retelling the story, Jim pauses briefly. His sense of humor is sometimes disguised by his ability to edit his thoughts.

He replied to the woman, boyishly, "Well, I've heard that."

While her comment was a bit of a rebuke, it sparked Jim's imagination. By carving archtops, he could make dulcimers just about anywhere and with only a few tools. The revelation changed his career. Fairgoers loved to watch him craft beautiful instruments

Jim's wife, Brenda, lends a hand with nearly every aspect of the instrument making, from cutting wood, to assembling instruments, to keeping Jim in line. Photo by our author.

Finding the Right Wood

The Goods' workshop is filled with stacks of wood. Leaning against one wall are whole tree trunks Jim's collected. He asks Brenda to retrieve a piece of an old piano and explains that old chestnut is valuable for its relative lightness and strength. He points to other favorites: cherry, butternut, padauk, extremely rare curly walnut, and a beautiful rosewood called *cocobolo*. And Jim loves the subtle details, such as the naturally formed holes in wormy chestnut and the striping in ambrosia maple caused by beetles.

right there in his booth. Plus, it gave his instruments a style that contrasted distinctly with most other dulcimers.

Jim takes great pride in his work: "What I try to do is make an *instrument* that people can play. Old-fashioned dulcimers weren't very good. People made them out of hog troughs and screws and other different things. They had a reputation for being simple instruments that weren't well-made."

Over the years, the Goods' dulcimers have been juried into many craft fairs, such as the Augusta Heritage Festival in Elkins and the Mountain Heritage Arts and Crafts Festival in Jefferson County. In 1996, the Goods were inducted into the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair Hall of Fame in Jackson County. In 2017, Jim Good was honored with our state's highest folklife honor, the Vandalia Award, which pays tribute to Jim's "creativity, ingenuity, and talent."

And the Goods have had a few brushes with celebrities. They love to tell the story of September 6, 1980, and the dedication of the new Mountaineer Field in Morgantown. Before the game, John Denver led some 50,000 West Virginia University fans in a rousing rendition of "Take Me Home, Country Roads." Governor Jay Rockefeller presented one of the Goods' dulcimers to Denver as a way of saying "thank you" from West Virginia.

Over the years, many folks have made the journey to the Goods' Walton workshop. Sonde and Alicia Sondergelt are retired teachers from Waverly, Ohio. Their musical friendship with the Goods began in 1975 at the Cincinnati Appalachian Festival. "We thought their instruments were especially beautiful, and the craftmanship was superb. Jim had his dulcimers tuned to G major, and they sounded great. But we played in F major because we used the dulcimer with autoharp. When we tuned Jim's dulcimers to F, they still sounded wonderful."

Over the years, the Sondergelts have amassed quite a collection. They now own 18 of the Goods' instruments and have gifted another 15.

On many days, visitors to Tamarack in Beckley can find employee Jackie Williams playing one of the Goods' instruments waiting to find a home. Williams has played dulcimer for 10 years and owns several Mastertone instruments himself.

He says, "Folks notice the walnut shell sound holes. They

Former Governor Earl Ray Tomblin (right) presents one of Jim's dulcimers to honorary Toyota Chairman Dr. Shoichiro Toyoda during a trip to Japan. Courtesy of the West Virginia Department of Commerce.

make a great visual, especially for people who have no idea what it is. If folks do know what a dulcimer is, they are happy to see there is still someone making them."

I asked Jackie why he likes playing the Goods' instruments. His response is simple but very telling: "These dulcimers sound like dulcimers. Many builders today make them to sound like guitars, but not Jim Good."

Even though the Goods' instruments retain a pleasant traditional dulcimer sound, the careful wood selection and construction produce a stronger, fuller tone than most dulcimers.

Back in their Walton workshop, I discover another unexpected thing about the Goods: both Jim and Brenda are very good storytellers. Jim can transition effortlessly from a story about his rural Kanawha County upbringing to a thrilling ghost tale.

And in tandem, the two are like a well-seasoned comedy team. At one point, I ask about the black walnut shells in the sound holes of Mastertone Dulcimers. Black walnuts wouldn't seem like the first choice for use in instrument making because they are notoriously difficult to crack—every West Virginian has his or her own secret method. I question Jim on why he uses the shells and how he produces such fine slices. He explains that he once cut into a piece of wood and discovered a sliced walnut on the inside. During the course of its life, this tree had grown around the nut, reclaiming it into its own wood. This sight inspired Jim to add the black walnut shells to the sound holes.

Here, Jim begins to spin the yarn a bit. "I tried and tried to figure out how to get the trees to grow around the nuts," Jim jokes. Ultimately, he came up with an imaginative method for cracking the black walnuts. He rolls the nuts down a piece of gutter under a spinning wheel on one side of his car. If the car is jacked to just the right height, the wheel splits the nut from the shell. He points at Brenda and says, "That method is a lot faster than the old way of having her kick them open one at a time." Jim grins; Brenda makes a face and rolls her eyes.

After our conversation, Jim leads me upstairs to look at instruments in different stages and to do a little work on one. On the second floor, he pauses and opens an exterior door that leads to a sudden drop-off outside. The view of the green hills and the setting sun is spectacular, and the honeyed sound of birdsong drifts in.

"I stop here every day to look for deer and coyotes," Jim reflects. This ritual clearly connects him with the wild hills of his homeplace, and the sounds and sights are built into each dulcimer he and Brenda create. After taking in a few moments of scenery and gloaming, he concludes, "None today." He spins on his heels and heads back to the workshop, ready to make another dulcimer.

ADAM BOOTH is a full-time professional storyteller who's appeared at the National Storytelling Festival and International Storytelling Center. He's a four-time champion of the Vandalia Gathering's Liars Contest. Originally from Huntington, he resides in Shepherdstown, where he is artistic director of the Speak Story Series and teaches Appalachian storytelling at Shepherd University.

2017 Vandalia Winners

The 41st annual Vandalia Gathering, held Memorial Day weekend 2017, was a rousing success, with nearly perfect weather. This free celebration of traditional arts, music, dance, stories, crafts, and foods of West Virginia is held annually at the Culture Center and on the State Capitol Complex grounds in Charleston. Below is a list of last year's contest winners. Please join us May 25-27, 2018, for the 42nd Vandalia Gathering.

All photos by Steve Brightwell.

Youth Old-Time Fiddle (15 and under)

1st place: Kaylee Polk, Red House
2nd place: Liam Farley, Chapmanville
3rd place: Jensine Atkins, Scott Depot

Old-Time Fiddle (59 and under)

1st place: Jenny Allinder, Saint Albans
2nd place: Jerrica Hilbert, Saint Albans
3rd place: Jesse Pearson, Huntington
4th place: Tessa Dillon, Morgantown
5th place: Chloe Sergent, Milton

Senior Old-Time Fiddle (60 and over)

1st place: Greg Bentle, Huntington
2nd place: Jim Mullins, Saint Albans
3rd place: John Morris, Ivydale
4th place: Paul Epstein, Charleston
5th place: John Longwell, Gandeeville

Mandolin (all ages)

1st place: Matt Hiser, Spanishburg
2nd place: Dan Kessinger, Saint Marys
3rd place: Chandler Beavers, White Sulphur Springs
4th place: Jake Eddy, Parkersburg
5th place: D. J. Kessinger, Saint Marys

Bluegrass Banjo (all ages)

1st place: Jake Eddy, Parkersburg
2nd place: David Asti, Charles Town
3rd place: Seth Marstiller, Mill Creek
4th place: Al Barnett, Parkersburg
5th place: Bradley Thompson, Nitro

Lap Dulcimer (all ages)

1st place: Nick Freeman, Saint Albans
2nd place: Ezra Drumheller, Prosperity
3rd place: Jesse Pearson, Huntington
4th place: Martha Turley, Ona
5th place: Leah Mabry, Beckley

Old-Time Banjo (59 and under)

1st place: Tim Bing, Huntington
2nd place: Trevor Hammons, Marlinton
3rd place: Nick Freeman, Saint Albans
4th place: Hunter Walker, Beckley
5th place: Jarrod Saul, Sumerco

Senior Old-Time Banjo (60 and over)

1st place: Dave Bing, Gandeeville
2nd place: Paul Gartner, Yawkey
3rd place: Jim Mullins, Saint Albans
4th place: John Morris, Ivydale
5th place: Dwight Diller, Marlinton

Youth Flatpick Guitar (15 and under)

1st place: Carter Eddy, Parkersburg

Flatpick Guitar (all ages)

1st place: Adam Hager, Ripley
2nd place: Robin Kessinger, Saint Albans
3rd place: Jamie Rhodes, Culloden
4th place: Bryant Underwood, Charleston
5th place: Jarrod Saul, Sumerco

Favorite Family Cookies (all ages)

1st place: Ella Hoffman, South Charleston
Youth (15 and under): Kendall Atkins, Scott Depot

Pound Cake (all ages)

1st place: Bridget Pauley, Pinch
2nd place: Ella Hoffman, South Charleston
3rd place: Karen Cobbs, Charleston

2017 Vandalia Liars Contest

Biggest Liar

James Froemel

Biggest Liar: James Froemel, Maidsville
Bigger Liar: Ian Nolte, Huntington
Big Liar: Pete Kosky, Charleston
Youth (age 15 and under): Jack Froemel, Maidsville

My first job was working at a place called Wilbur's Wiener Wagon, but it wasn't as fancy as it sounds. It was really just a roadside trailer that served hot dogs and ice cream sundaes. It was owned by a guy named Wilbur, who nobody ever saw. He was like a ghost.

My friend Calvin and I, we'd both taken jobs there, and we were delighted, but our friend Annie was furious. She accused us of ruining the summer because anytime she would want to hang out, we were too busy working to do anything fun.

She would call us two, three times a week and say, "Guys, let's go to the movies. Let's catch the 7:00."

And we'd say, "We're sorry. We work until 9:00."

Each time it happened, she would get a little angrier because she just hated Wilbur's Wiener Wagon. So, you can imagine our surprise when one sunny day in July, she showed up to work there. We were delighted to have her. The whole gang was back together.

The work we were doing was by no means rocket science, but the actual making of the hot dogs could get a little complicated. There were specific names for the ingredients that had to go on, and there was a lot to learn. So, we put her on register that first day, and she would call back the orders.

Things were going great—until 2:04 p.m. A man walked up to the window and said, "I'll have two mad dogs."

She looked back at us. We shrugged. And she said, "I'm sorry, sir, but we don't serve anything called a mad dog."

He said, "The recipe is underneath the register."

She lifted the register, and, sure enough, there was an envelope with the words MAD DOG typed on it. She opened it up, looked at it, and said, "All right, but you're gonna have to give us a minute."

She turned to us and said, "Listen, guys, we can get through this, but you're gonna have to listen to me, and do not question the orders I give. Do you understand me?"

And we said, "Yes, ma'am."

She said, "All right, I want you to open the hot dog topping rail and the ice cream topping rail."

We did as we were told, and she began to call out the ingredients to us: "ketchup, mustard, relish, caramel, onion, hot fudge, coleslaw, whipped cream, chili, sprinkles," and on and on it went.

By the 12th ingredient, the hot dogs had begun to disintegrate beneath the toppings. Luckily, the 13th ingredient was a waffle-cone bowl, which we slid underneath and kept piling on everything we had until there was nothing left. We picked up the mad dogs and turned to Annie.

She said, "Wait, you gotta deep-fry 'em."

We turned and stared at that deep fryer. And that deep fryer stared back at us. We walked over, held out the mad dogs, and let go. There are a lot of theories in my hometown about what exactly happened next. But, what happened is really very simple. If you combine that many hot dog and ice cream toppings into a waffle-cone bowl and you deep-fry them, you open a portal into another dimension.

Calvin and I were sucked into it. We traveled through

Father and son champion Liars James and Jack Froemel. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

time and space. We witnessed the death of the dinosaurs, the birth of George Washington, and the series premiere of *The Golden Girls* before we were zapped back into our own bodies in time to see black smoke billowing out of the fryer. It filled our trailer. The crowd outside stared in, terrified that their orders might be slightly delayed. And then, out of the smoke emerged two heroes carrying waffle-cone bowls.

We set them down in front of our customer. He looked at them, and then at us, and he said, "You know, I've seen a lot of kids come through here and make a lot of hot dogs, but this is the single most disgusting thing I've ever seen! A mad dog is dill relish, sweet relish, and mustard. I have no idea what's wrong with you people, but my name is Wilbur, and you're all fired."

Confused, we turned to Annie, who held up three movie tickets and said, "Catch the 7:00?"

Youth Award

Jack Froemel

In my hometown of Griffinsburg, our school had us pick a president for a presidential trivia contest. I picked our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln. We had to learn facts about our president and write them down. Then, we had to say our speech before four judges.

I had to spend $20 on my outfit, and my mom thought it was *cuuuute*. But I actually looked like a complete dork. I had a stupid black hat and a dusty black beard that attracted lots of bugs and termites. I also had stilts that were so tall I had to duck to get through the door.

The day of the contest, I was hanging around in my costume in my backyard, waiting to head to my school and hitting a baseball around. By accident, I hit the ball over the fence into our neighbor's yard. I did not want to go over the fence to get it because of the neighbor's attack dog named Princess Pony. If I went to get it, my costume would be ruined.

I did it anyway. I climbed over the fence to get the ball, but then I saw the dog, with red eyes and its princess tiara and princess tutu. It charged after me. I ran to get the ball and ran to the fence to jump over. The dog chased me all the way to the school, where they were holding the contest. I banged through the auditorium doors with the dog behind me. Everyone in the audience gasped.

As I charged onto the stage, the dog jumped onto the judges and started eating at their clothes. "Oh, no!" cried a woman. "It's Princess Pony, the wild hound of Griffinsburg!"

"Not Princess Pony!" cried the principal. "The only thing that will soothe him is amazing presidential trivia."

I stood up and began to soothe the beast. "Abraham Lincoln was our 16th president," I said, and the dog stopped biting.

"He was our tallest president," and then he stopped drooling.

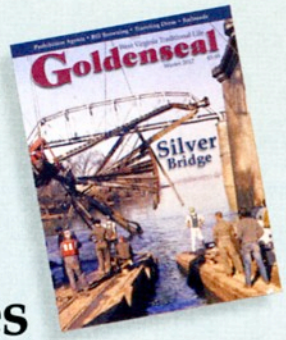
"He was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865." He started panting.

"He lived through the Civil War." Princess Pony walked toward me.

"He was a great orator." Then, Princess Pony started licking my face.

"He tamed the beast!" cried the audience. "He tamed Princess Pony with his amazing presidential trivia of Abraham Lincoln!"

The audience cheered again, and I walked Princess Pony back to my neighbor's yard. Each week, I visit him to give him biscuits, and I even let him keep the baseball.



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A Monument to the Victims

Text and Photo by Carl E. Feather

A short distance north of the Willow Island Power Plant, on a rise owned by Pleasants County, stands a sandstone monument to the 51 victims of the construction disaster on April 27, 1978.

The bronze plaque that faces Route 2 lists the names of the 51 men who died that morning when the scaffolding collapsed. However, it took 24 years to erect a monument to the victims.

The genesis for the memorial began a couple years before that. A Pleasants County Middle School social studies teacher had required students to research a subject and gather public opinion on it. Student Anthony Lauer asked residents what they recalled about the day of the disaster and if they thought there ought to be a monument.

"Everyone said, 'Yes, we need a monument,'" remembers Anthony's mother, Angie Colvin, whose father, Larry Gale Steele, died in the disaster.

State Senator Donna Boley of St. Marys and several others encouraged Anthony to move the project to the next level and start fundraising. He was just 12 years old at the time.

"I think it helped him open some doors. People were willing to listen to what a 12-year-old Belmont resident had to say," Angie says. "They had a young man that people could not say 'no' to."

Anthony had a personal stake in the project. The Steele and Blouir families had suffered heavy losses in the disaster. As Angie reads down the list, she counts 11 relatives killed.

Angie, the keeper of her family's records, opened up her information to her son as he explored the disaster. He had found little or no mention of it in state history texts, so he turned to his mother's research. Equipped with that knowledge, he approached the AFL/CIO office in Parkersburg about starting a fundraising drive. The effort went statewide and eventually raised $78,000.

The memorial was dedicated in April 2002, and many family members of the victims attended and shared their memories.

"He was a sweetie. My dad was so sweet," Angie says. "He loved his kids and my mom a whole lot. They had started to date when they were in fifth grade, and they got married right out of high school."

"This is our family," Anthony says. "I didn't get a chance to meet my grandfather. It was just a school project, and I didn't expect anything to come out of it."

Anthony Lauer stands at the Willow Island monument. His grandfather Larry Gale Steele was one of the 51 men who lost their lives when the scaffolding collapsed on April 27, 1978. Photo by our author.

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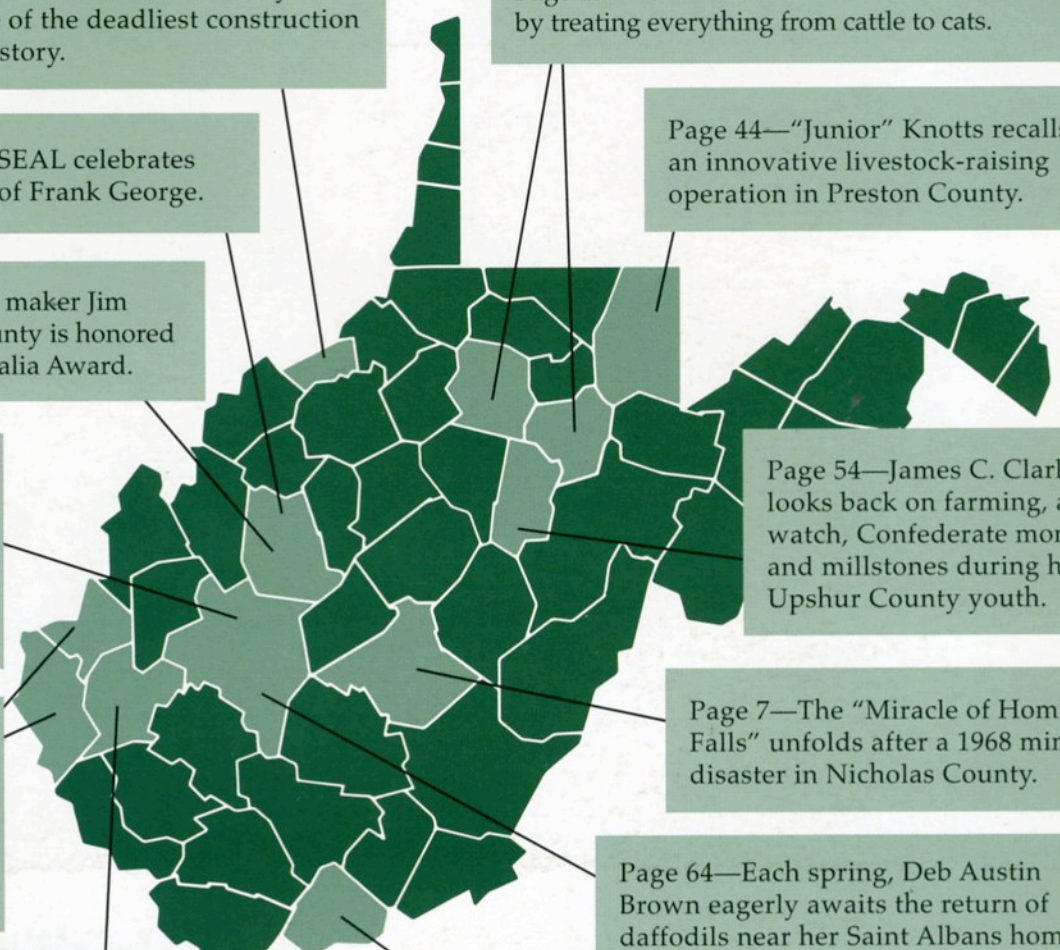

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