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West Virginia Traditional Life

Goldenseal

Winter 2019 $5.95

Mike Morningstar

A portrait of Mike Morningstar, drawn by his brother, artist Steve Morningstar. Learn more about Mike and his music on p. 12.

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On the cover: West Virginia's Troubadour Mike Morningstar. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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Jim Justice
Governor

Randall Reid-Smith
Curator
Department of Arts,
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Stan Bumgardner
Editor

Joseph Aluise
Assistant Editor

Jacob Hall
Publication Design

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

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

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From the Editor

I remember my first *Mike Night*—a performance by Gilmer County's Mike Morningstar. I was a student at WVU about 1988. A friend and classmate, Lee Maddex, had been schooling me on music, everything from the Grateful Dead to bluegrass to Frank Zappa. One day, he said, "There's somebody really good tonight at the Foxfire," a small pub on Sunnyside. Trusting Lee's taste in music, I agreed to go. That evening, he and I went to a basement bar that sat probably 25 to 30 people. That's when I first heard Mike.

I considered myself a folk music fan. I had most of Bob Dylan's collection, and I'd experienced live music, from great orchestras of the world to Lionel Hampton to Pete Seeger. But the moment Mike started playing, I knew I was in for something different. First, he covered songs I already knew but put his own spin on them and introduced me to ones I didn't know (the next day, I bought The Byrds' [Untitled] album because of Mike). Second, that night was the first time I'd ever heard truly personal songs about my home state: "West Virginia Girl" and "Coal Country Blues," just to name a couple.

I soon realized we had other great homegrown folk singers, like Hazel Dickens, doing their own West Virginia material. But Mike was a first for me. He unlocked a whole world of personal songwriting I could relate to more than I did with Dylan (who I still love). He also was a bridge to lesser-known "story songwriters," such as Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, and Billy Joe Shaver, who'd become some of my favorites.

I think about why this style of music appeals to me so much. In cswhipkey's article about Mike (see p. 12), he puts it better than I ever could: "Folk music . . . is created by the people for the people—stories of lives and situations that people live through."

If you've read my column before, those words might sound familiar because that's how I—and the editors before me—describe GOLDENSEAL. The articles are typically written *by* our readers *for* our readers. It's their own stories and those of others. Mike's lyrics profile many everyday West Virginians: women and men who've worked hard for their families, often suffering through unspeakable tragedies and ending up with next-to-nothing, all the while maintaining a relentless spirit that's captured in Mike's West Virginia anthem, "Mountaineers Are Always Free."

Keep singing and telling our story, Mike. West Virginia needs and deserves a troubadour like you.

Stan Bumgardner

Letters from Readers

Families wait for word about their loved ones at the Eccles Mine Disaster, 1914. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Jeff Davis Collection.

Farmington
March 25, 2019
Lewes, Delaware

I would like to commend you for the excellent "From the Editor" article on the Farmington Mine Disaster (Fall 2018). I also enjoyed the "Letter to the Editor" by J. Davitt McAteer (Spring 2019) on both the Monongah 1907 and Farmington mine disasters.

I am a longtime subscriber to GOLDENSEAL and have several times written comments mostly about my early years in Beckley and being raised as a child in the small hamlet of Harper, about four miles west of Route 3 (Harper Road). My childhood and family related to these coal disaster articles in an interesting human perspective that involves another mine disaster that took place in 1914 in the nearby town of Eccles (the next town west from Harper).

My great-grandfather H. H. Harper owned land within the town. Several of my Harper relatives lived in Eccles, and others lived nearby. All the kids in Eccles went to Trap Hill High School (as did my mom, Louella Harper Wray), and H. H. was one of the founders (and teachers) in that school. So the two little towns were closely aligned.

As you mentioned in your article, West Virginia's greatest mine disaster occurred at Monongah in 1907. But [our state's] second greatest disaster happened at Eccles in 1914 and directly involved many folks in my family, including my grandfather and his father, H. H.

On April 28, 1914, there was a methane explosion in the #5 Eccles mine which carried over into the #6 mine, killing over 180 miners. In an instant, hundreds of lives in the area were either snuffed out or directly affected by the explosion. Many in the Harper family rushed to Eccles to join the thousands of folks who came to see the sad aftermath. Although I never met H. H., my grandfather Jeff Harper talked a lot about that day as he was a young man at the time, and it made a great impact on him as he found out that several of his friends were in the mine, as was a distant cousin.

It took several days to clear the dead from the mine, and suddenly, lots of burial spots were needed. The dead miners represented the diversity of the country and West Virginia at the time as about a third of the miners were from local longtime families, another third were black, and the final third were considered "foreigners" from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, and other European countries. Many men were married but a lot were not, and some did not even speak much English. Many of the men did not have local families, and some could not even be identified due to the blast damage. And this is where my great-grandfather H. H. Harper stepped in.

The Harper Family Cemetery sits on a small hill overlooking Harper Road, and our family still owns it. Several of the miners did not have families who could bury them, so H. H. offered those in need a final resting place in the Harper Cemetery. According to my grandfather, several of the miners were buried there, which is where H. H. was buried when he passed in 1923.

Correction

In our Fall 2019 issue, the photos on pages 41 and 45 should have been credited to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Stan Bumgardner, Editor

I think of the second-largest West Virginia mine disaster at Eccles each year when I send my Raleigh County tax payment for both my property at Eccles (near the mine) and the family cemetery, which is the final resting place for my great-grandfather (and "Ma," my great-grandmother) and several of the foreign-born miners killed in the terrible explosion.

Dr. Gary D. Wray

State Police
September 2, 2019

I opened up my copy of GOLDENSEAL (Summer 2019) and saw my great-uncle-in-law Capt. James R. Brockus. I remember hearing stories about "Cap'n" Brockus, as he was known to my family, when I was a child, but I only remember one.

A crowd was gathering in front of the courthouse in Williamson (Mingo County). It was determined that the crowd needed to be dispersed, and the job was given to Cap'n Brockus, who rode up on his horse and ordered the crowd to disperse. No luck. He then placed axe handles in the stirrups of his saddle so that they stuck out on either side of his horse. He announced that if the crowd was still in place by the time he counted to 10, he would spur his horse into the crowd. The crowd dispersed.

I was never told why the crowd had gathered or why they needed dispersing. And of course I was never told that he was "reviled by labor activists" (to quote the article). I certainly did not learn anything about the context of the episode in school, an example of the vast swatches of West Virginia history in general and Mingo County in particular that I did not hear of until I was an adult.

Is the history of the labor movement still taboo in West Virginia classrooms? Great magazine. Keep up the good work.

Russell Hatton (of the Wayne-Cabell County Hattons)

June 14, 2019
Exchange, West Virginia

I do appreciate your kind and thoughtful response to my telephone call regarding the wonderful piece you featured in the Summer 2019 issue. It brought forth many memories of my dealings with the State Police. As Administrator of the West Virginia Rehabilitation Center, one of my counselors was Sharen Sumpter Deitz, just prior to her entry into the Academy. My college friend and fraternity brother was Capt. Wes Shaw, commander of the Academy.

The important memories, however, are related to my father, Trooper Burr White Harrison, killed in the line of duty December 3, 1945. As a child, I can still remember following the hearse as it snaked its way from Princeton to Freemansburg. A sad day for a child so young. The troopers and other staff bought me a sled for Christmas. That meant so much to me.

As I mentioned, I feel certain the families of all the others who lost their lives will appreciate the recognition, not only on their behalf, but also for their extended families. For all of us, I extend our thanks and sincere gratitude. Keep up the good work on the best magazine of its kind in the country.

John P. Harrison

Trooper Burr White Harrison. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Police.

Mr. Harrison suggested that GOLDENSEAL publish the names of all state troopers killed in the line of duty. We wholeheartedly agree and apologize for the oversight in our Summer 2019 issue. –ed.

West Virginia State Troopers
Killed in the Line of Duty and Date of Death*

Ernest L. Rippley, November 18, 1920
Charles M. Kackley, May 25, 1921
William L. McMillion, June 28, 1921
George A. Duling, August 28, 1921
Howard A. Deem, June 3, 1922
James B. Shrewsbury, July 12, 1923
Ulric L. Crawford, June 20, 1924
Theodore R. Meadows, April 17, 1926
James L. Lowe, June 28, 1926
Blake A. Michael, May 1, 1927
Arza A. Allen, November 1, 1928
William S. Hall, October 19, 1930
Farley K. Litton, November 8, 1935
Allen H. B. Jeffreys, July 16, 1939
Franklin D. Patrick, August 27, 1939
Newton T. Sites, September 2, 1942
Burr W. Harrison, December 3, 1945
Joseph P. Horne, September 9, 1946
Arthur M. Hurst, June 17, 1949
Robert F. Rulong, February 10, 1958
Harry E. Robinson, November 27, 1962
William J. Shrewsbury, September 28, 1963
Robert B. Noechel, November 1, 1965
Hugh D. Swartz, October 5, 1970
Charles H. Johnson, January 12, 1977
Thomas D. Hercules, January 12, 1977
Bruce T. Brown, October 14, 1977
Dewey C. Shrewsbury, October 25, 1978
Philip S. Kesner, November 7, 1979
Carlen Bill Stone, December 16, 1982
Harry G. Lucas, Jr., September 12, 1984
Jonathan D. Harris, July 11, 1985
William H. "Bill" Phillips, July 30, 1987
J. T. Brammer, April 15, 1989
Larry G. Hacker, April 9, 1993
Charles M. "Matt" Turner, April 4, 1996
Douglas Wayne Bland, January 19, 1999
Brian W. Linn, November 3, 2007
Marshall L. Bailey, August 28, 2012
Eric M. Workman, August 31, 2012
Joseph Portaro, March 14, 2016

* Some spellings and dates vary in different sources.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Earl Wilson Jr.
(1929 – 2018)

Courtesy of the family.

Earl passed away September 16, 2018, at age 89. He grew up in Beason (Ritchie County) before moving to Virginia, where he taught agriculture (receiving a National Honorary American Farmer Award from the FFA in 1984), managed a yarn-manufacturing plant, was a masonry contractor, and built stone walls and fireplaces. About a decade ago, he returned to his childhood home in Beason to live out his remaining years. Read more about Earl's life in Carole Jones' article in our **Spring 2019** issue. –ed.

Lois Silverstein Kaufman
(1921 – 2019)

Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Lois passed away on May 3 in Charleston at age 97. A graduate of Charleston's Mason School of Music, she taught piano and led the Charleston Community Music Association, which her father, Harry Silverstein, had founded in the 1930s. She had a keen wit, played the piano beautifully, loved the company of friends and family, and was a lifetime member of Temple Israel. You can learn more about Lois and her father in Patricia McClure's article in our **Winter 2018** issue. –ed.

Raymond D. Jarrell Jr.
(1959 – 2019)

Raymond, known to his good friends as "Brass," of Naoma (Raleigh County) passed away on August 10. He ran Jarrells / Backwoods Towing for 38 years, drove school buses in Raleigh County for 28 years, and was the scorekeeper for the Liberty High Raiders basketball team. He also was the five-time World Marbles Champion. A member of Naoma Methodist Church, he leaves behind his wife of 35 years, Kimberly Brown-Jarrell. He was featured in Richard Ramella's "Champions with Dirty Knuckles: Marbles in the Mountain State" in our **Summer 1993** issue. –ed.

Photo by Michael Keller.

Judson Wallace
(1929 – 2019)
By Rebecca Kimmons

Judson and Bertha Wallace, courtesy of the family.

Judson Wallace, whose many accomplishments included singing bass with the United Gospel Singers, died on March 29 at age 89.

He and his wife, Bertha, who died in 2014, sang with their a cappella quintet in churches all over West Virginia beginning in 1959. They began singing informally with their cousins Donald White and his wife, Suerida, and Legirtha Radford after family dinners on Sunday afternoons.

"I had no intention of ever singing in public with the women," Judson said. "I used to think males shouldn't get together with females to sing. I thought their voices didn't go together."

That changed soon after he had a dream of "singing to an extent you wouldn't believe." He said one night not too long after the dream, "we all got together and were just singing,

and the Holy Spirit got into that song, and I had the same feeling that I had had in my dream. So that's how the group began."

They sang for the first time in public at the West Virginia Baptist Quartet Convention, and before long, "we were being asked to sing all over the place," Judson recalled. They sang for black and white churches, in hospitals, for homebound patients, and often on Montgomery's local radio station. In 2007, the group was featured on opening night of the Vandalia Gathering and at the Hulett C. Smith Theater at Tamarack.

A beloved Fayette County community leader, Judson owned Wallace Market in Mount Carbon for 26 years. In his long career, he was a deputy sheriff, president of the former Upper Kanawha Valley Community Center, and chief assistant to the state Senate's sergeant of arms. He was a deacon, trustee, and Sunday School teacher at the Eagle Central Baptist Church and was president of the Quartet Convention. In 2003, he was named Fayette County Democrat of the Year and, in 2015, was recognized by the Fayette County Commission for more than a half-century of public service to the county and its residents.

His influence will be felt for many years to come in the Armstrong-Deepwater Public Service District. Beginning in 1992, he dedicated years to bringing clean water to small communities in western Fayette County. One of his last projects was skillfully securing $1.5 million in funds to build a new 150,000-gallon water tank and upgrade water lines. The grant was awarded a month after his death.

At the 2015 event honoring Judson, Fayette County Commission President Denise Scalph said, "Working with him . . . has truly been an honor and a pleasure. He is nothing less than a hero for many of us." You can read Rebecca's article about Judson and the United Gospel Singers in our **Winter 2012** issue.

REBECCA KIMMONS is one-third of the a cappella trio Bare Bones and is well-known at music festivals and other events. Her fiction is included in the 2019 anthology *Fearless: Women's Journeys to Self Empowerment*. She lives in Charleston.

John Veasey
(1936 - 2019)
By Stan Bumgardner

Photo by Raymond Alvarez.

John Veasey passed away on April 9 at age 82. A legendary journalist, he began as a sports reporter on October 3, 1958, for the *Fairmont Times* (now *Times West Virginian*). He worked fulltime for 58 years, retiring in 2015, but continued to write a regular Sunday column. In his job, he got an eyewitness view of athletic history—from the football exploits of Joe Manchin III and Nick Saban at Farmington High School, to the great Fairmont State College (now University) basketball teams coached by Joe Retton (who we lost last year), to the gymnastic magic of Mary Lou Retton.

He later added the role of news editor for *The West Virginian*, Fairmont's afternoon newspaper. This job thrust him into the middle of one of our state's most tragic events: the Farmington #9 Mine Disaster. John had just arrived at *The West Virginian* office in the early morning hours of November 20, 1968, when a call came in that #9 had blown. John was one of the first reporters on site and quickly realized the situation was dire. He took some photos—as did Bob Campione—spoke with anxious relatives at the local company store, and headed back to the office to prepare the afternoon paper.

He recalled the chaotic scene as the national press descended upon Marion County. As he wrote in an article for our **Fall 2018** issue, "I couldn't get over the way some of the 'big city media' would pick out the grieving relatives, mostly women, that they believed might break into tears during interviews and 'go after them.'"

John Veasey was an old-school reporter whose work spanned six decades and who was involved in virtually every good community cause that came around. I might add he was extremely kind to a relatively new *Goldenseal* editor who was more than thrilled to meet an icon of West Virginia journalism.

STAN BUMGARDNER is the editor of *Goldenseal*.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Phyllis Marks
(1927 – 2019)
By Gerald Milnes

Sand Fork (Gilmer County) native Phyllis Marks of Glenville passed away on June 22. Those who love the old-time folklore, traditional songs, and folk wisdom of West Virginia lost a great friend and true bearer of those traditions. Phyllis didn't have an easy life, as she struggled with vision problems at a young age and was totally blind in her senior years. She also outlived many of her offspring, which brought her sadness. Through it all, she was quick to offer a humorous anecdote, an old-time saying, a joke, or a proverbial gem when any situation arose.

Photographer unknown.

To those who appreciate and are proponents of old-time ballads, folksongs, poems, and ditties, her repertoire seemed unmatched. From some of the oldest ballads known in the Western World to humorous topical songs of the 19th century, her recall and delivery entertained many. Phyllis was a mainstay at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville; she also performed at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, the Celebration of Traditional Music in Kentucky, and the Folksong Society of Washington, D.C., among other venues. She participated in three films produced by the Augusta Heritage Center about traditional folklore in our state.

She will be remembered for her sharp wit. Once, while in Ohio receiving vision treatment, she was kidded about her "hillbilly ways." She quickly replied with her definition of a buckeye—"a worthless nut!" She told many stories about ghosts, about humorous situations in her community, and even the "Little Girl and the Snake," which was among more than 200 classic stories collected in mid-19th-century Europe by the Brothers Grimm.

Phyllis' many contributions to the great body of West Virginia folklore, her ability to face hardship with courage and resolve, and her graciousness and generosity in accepting those who knocked on her door seeking her talents will be fondly remembered by many. You can read Gerald's article about Phyllis in in our **Spring 2015** issue. Also, her delightful story about "The Case of the Traveling Dress" appeared in our **Winter 2017** edition.

GERALD MILNES is the retired Folk Arts Coordinator at the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. An author, musician, and folklorist, he makes his home in Elkins. He has written more than 20 articles for GOLDENSEAL and was the 2013 recipient of the Vandalia Award, our state's highest folklife honor.

Wetzel "Sundown" Sanders
(1923 – 2019)
By Patricia Richards McClure

On August 19, a day after Wetzel's death, both Governor Jim Justice and Senator Joe Manchin paid tribute to the Lincoln Countian. "Sundown" Sanders was our state's next-to-last survivor of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the state's most public face of the event.

Photographer unknown.

It's likely that Wetzel didn't finish all the tasks he'd planned for his time on earth. He anticipated going back to Pearl Harbor for the 80th anniversary of the attack in 2021.

Wetzel was a go-getter, full of energy, and an optimist. He wasn't quite 18 when he joined the U.S. Army, tired of working in his father's hardscrabble coal-mining business. After the war, he joined the

Marines for another tour. He eventually worked for the Division of Highways; retiring from his "real job," he drove a bus for Tri-County Transit until he was 89, when he declared he was the nation's oldest transit driver.

The epitome of self-sufficiency, Wetzel lived in his home into his 90s, cooking his meals, doing his laundry, and raising a garden. His independent spirit wasn't wholly welcomed by his daughters; he reported one as saying, "Daddy's up on the mountain again on the four-wheeler!" He was generous to a fault and took it upon himself to see that his younger brother Howard was well cared for.

He was modest, mostly, about his many accomplishments, but he was determined to receive the Purple Heart the government bureaucracy had overlooked. He got it—finally—in 2017!

As president of the West Virginia Pearl Harbor Survivors' Association, he kept track of his comrades-in-arms. Though he wasn't personally acquainted with Henry Sloan of Greenbrier County, once he became aware of Henry's existence, the two became great friends. They were polar opposites; quiet Henry, who also survived the Pearl Harbor attack, dutifully served in the Pacific and then came home and mined coal. Outgoing Wetzel worked his day job and then some. In retirement, Wetzel drove veterans to their appointments at the Huntington VA Hospital and worked tirelessly for them until the last year of his life. He was a fixture at the December 7 event at the Lee Street Triangle in Charleston, except, of course, at those times when he went back to Pearl Harbor for a milestone celebration.

Wetzel, you and your iconic red truck will be missed! You can read Patricia's articles about Wetzel in our **Winter 2016** and **Spring 2018** issues.

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 nine years, she has been writing biographies of veterans as part of the West Virginia Veterans Memorial project, a task that has become a lifetime commitment.

Vernon Burky
(1925 – 2019)
By Alan Byer

Born to Swiss immigrants who spoke mostly German at home, Vernon didn't learn English until he attended the Haslebacher School, near Helvetia (Randolph County), as a child. Later, in 1944, he graduated from Pickens High School. At a time when many of his peers were playing brass instruments for traditional Swiss marching bands, Vernon decided to learn traditional tunes on the fiddle. Seems he was visiting his grandparents, and they were playing a recording of "When It's Springtime in the Rockies." Vernon turned to his sister Irene and said, "I'm going to learn that song on the fiddle," and that began his lifelong love of fiddle music. Though his signature tune was "The Helvetia Polka," which he played for every dance in town, his repertoire was a mixture of Swiss and Appalachian folksongs.

Photo by Emily Hilliard.

Vernon passed away on August 30 at age 93. During his life, he helped organize The Helvetia Star Band, which plays for the town's monthly square dances at the Star Band Hall, and was featured in the Augusta Heritage Center documentary *Helvetia: The Swiss of West Virginia*. Most of all, Vernon was a quiet, generous man who, in the words of granddaughter Kadra Casseday, "[had an] impact on generations of traditional old-time musicians in our area."

ALAN BYER is a South Charleston native who earned an English degree from WVU. His writing has appeared in *Trains*, *Wonderful West Virginia*, and *Classic Trains*. He's written several articles for GOLDENSEAL, including two about the Balli sisters of Helvetia in our Summer 2010 and Winter 2015 issues.

New Legends & Lore

Roadside Markers Commemorate the Alderson Lion, John Henry, Johnnie Johnson, and Pepperoni Rolls

By Emily Hilliard

On Thursday, September 12, 2019, a small crowd gathered along the Greenbrier River in Alderson, circling around a life-size metal sculpture of a lion and the bright red roadside marker beside it. They were there for the dedication of the new sign, which commemorates the popular local story of "French" (also referred to as "Leo"), the Alderson lion.

The tale goes as such: On October 3, 1890, when the traveling circus French's Great Railroad Show was stopped in Alderson for the night, its star lioness gave birth. Local woman Susan Beabout adopted the two cubs, and "French" survived, befriending the woman's housecat (French would carry it around in his mouth, unharmed) and roaming free on the Alderson streets to the delight of neighborhood children. One day in spring 1891, French encountered a traveling salesman, who in his shock at finding a lion in small town West Virginia, jumped in the river to escape. To prevent future incidents, the town council passed an ordinance declaring, "No lions shall be allowed to run at large on the streets of the city." Technically, the law is still in effect.

Representations of "Leo" the Lion can be found on public and private property throughout Alderson. Every week in the fall and spring, "Leo" walks elementary school children to school as part of the walking school bus. Mayor Travis Coopenhaver says, "I am so happy to have this sign to explain to the public why we have so many lions in town. I am proud of the lion brand and all the recent growth in our town and thank the town staff for the installation."

The next round of applications is due May 1, 2020. Organizations may find more information and apply online at wvhumanities.org/legends-and-lore/.

The new marker is the first to be installed as part of the West Virginia Humanities Council Folklife Program's new Legends & Lore Roadside Marker Program, a national initiative of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. Established in 2015, the program promotes cultural tourism and commemorates legends and folklore as part of cultural heritage.

"The Pomeroy Foundation is thrilled to partner with the West Virginia Humanities Council on our expanding Legends & Lore Program," says Bill Pomeroy, founder and trustee of the foundation. "We feel this is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the folklore near and dear to West Virginia. We're proud to work with your communities in celebrating and preserving your folklore and legends."

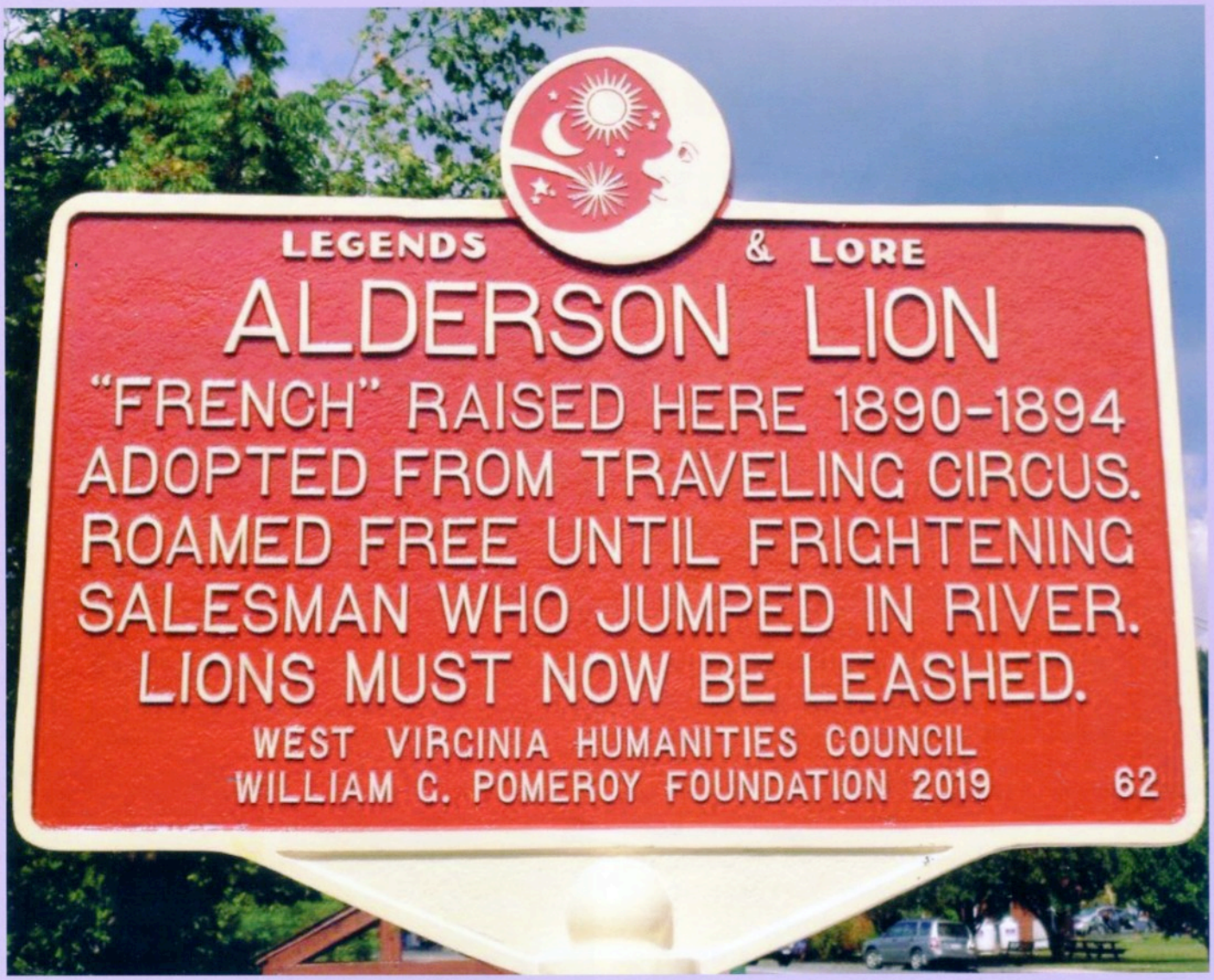


Photo by Margaret Hambrick.

Other West Virginia Legends & Lore markers in the works will commemorate the legend of John Henry, Fairmont's rock 'n' roll hall of famer and Chuck Berry's pianist Johnnie Johnson, and pepperoni rolls. Not limited to legends and stories, the program may also recognize traditional customs and practices, sayings, foodways, music, dance, and art or craft forms shared and passed on by a community.

As a Legends & Lore grant evaluator, the West Virginia Folklife Program at the West Virginia Humanities Council assembles a grant panel, which reviews applications, confirming the legitimacy and accuracy of folklore and legends that applicants intend to commemorate, and makes recommendations to the Pomeroy Foundation. Legends & Lore marker grants are available to 501(c)(3) organizations, nonprofit academic institutions, and municipalities in West Virginia.

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.

Mike Morningstar
West Virginia's Troubadour

By Charlotte Whipkey

Mike Morningstar is a musical treasure, tucked deep into Gilmer County's rolling hills. When you talk to him, you find a man who's honest and forthcoming about who he is and what he stands for. He writes it, and he lives it.

I've had the privilege of listening to Mike for around 40 years. A great many of his fans were raised on his music and have experienced a *Mike Night*, featuring live music, often a little drinking, and lots of dancing. But these events go much deeper than that. Mike Nights bring together a community of like-minded souls, interconnected by music and lyrics that speak to our hearts. Those of us fortunate enough to have experienced a Mike Night have been renewed, revived, and restored, like magic.

Mike was born October 7, 1947, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Parkersburg.

Around age 12, he developed a borderline-chronic kidney disorder that restricted his activities. He recalls the sadness of that time: "All the other kids were outside running around, and I was not allowed any strenuous activity because my kidneys were weak."

His father, Fred, offered to buy Mike a guitar if he'd take a weekly lesson and practice an hour daily. So, at age 12, Mike got an acoustic Gretsch guitar. His next one was a Silvertone electric with a case that doubled as an amplifier. His dad began encouraging him to consider a more traditional life path, such as going to college or getting a job with Union Carbide. When Mike was 15, his dad gave him an ultimatum. Mike chose music, remembering, "I went to live with my father's sister, Aunt Ruth, in Parkersburg. From the time I was 15, I supported myself with my music."

Mike Morningstar performs at The Burrito Bar at Breeze Hill in Fayetteville, August 2019. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Mike holds no grudges toward his dad, who'd lost his own father at a young age, forcing Fred to join the Civilian Conservation Corps as a teen to support his mother and sister. Mike says, "He was real smart, and

even though he was not well educated, he had a lot of intelligence. He was a hard worker and had a lot of determination. I get a lot of that from him, I think."

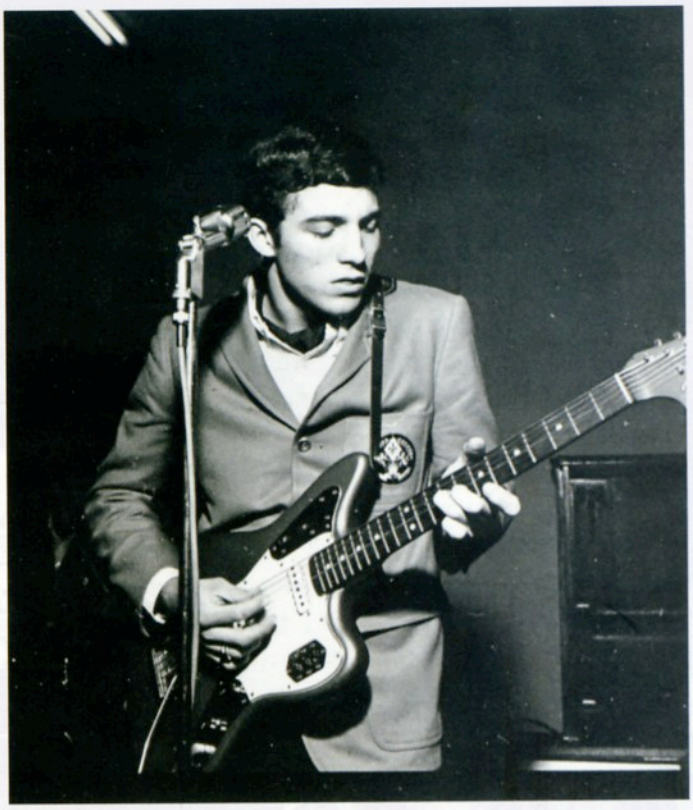
Mike inherited much of his talent from his mother, Jean, who he describes as "very artistic and musical. . . . I think that had a big influence on me. As far back as I can remember, at family get-togethers, there was always music. Mom was a great artist and a tap dancer."

In 1963, along with the odd garage bands he'd formed, Mike began playing with a soul group, The Royaltones. He describes this as his first real musical opportunity: "There were six black musicians and two white: myself and the drummer. The music was straight soul music—rhythm and blues. We're talking The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, The Four Tops, Jackie Wilson—the chart toppers at the time."

The Royaltones' audiences were primarily African-American. "I remember going into black Elks clubs," Mike says, "and only the drummer and me were white, but we were accepted. . . . I was always well encouraged by the black audiences. I was 15 or 16 years old and couldn't have gotten into those places otherwise. That was a big foundation of my musical experience. I was being schooled in music I had never been aware of. That was one great experience that I have always been thankful for—that I have been able to cross the musical barriers.

"My whole musical career, I was working on finding a balance between what I felt I should be doing and what the public demanded. I always considered how something would go in front of an audience. I tried to bring stuff they wouldn't hear otherwise. I seemed to always want to push the envelope about the music people were listening to—especially because in West Virginia, things weren't happening that were happening in places like California or New York."

In the mid-'60s, Mike played in several bands, starting with The Pastels. "We played



A nattily attired Mike plays with one of his first bands, The Pastels, in the 1960s. All photos courtesy of Mike Morningstar unless noted otherwise.

soul music," Mike says, noting they named the band The Pastels because they were "a bunch of white guys playing black music." They played at a lot of sock hops, Parkersburg's City Park Pavilion, Vienna's Jackson Park, and other teen-friendly venues. But they were also reaching older crowds. Mike says, "We were in Morgantown a lot in those days because Eddie, the bass player, graduated [from WVU] in '65 and had connections there. We played a lot of fraternity parties and little bars."

In 1966, Mike went to California, returned with three guys, and formed a band that didn't really take off. He recalls, "We were playing psychedelic stuff by Cream, Jimi Hendrix, and a little bit of funk. . . . We were well received in Athens, Marietta, and maybe . . . in Columbus, Ohio. [But] it was not West Virginia music."

About a year later, he and his longtime friend Nick Beach put together a psychedelic band

called The Truth. The group stayed together until Mike went to Vietnam in 1968—one month after the birth of his daughter Gypsy. Mike says, "I was in the military from '68 to '69 and didn't really play except in the barracks. I played things like 'Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay' and 'My Girl.' I became aware of Dylan and started getting into folk stuff that had deeper lyrics. Soul music is about feeling good and the beat. It wasn't speaking to me like folk music."

When Mike got back from Vietnam, Nick invited him to join his new band. Mike remembers, "We played at the VFW, Elks, club-type gigs. We were playing commercial Top 40 kind of music. At the VFW, we were playing '40s [and] '50s music. We were so bored we made up our own words, and 98% of the time, no one noticed. We did lyrical spoofs to entertain ourselves. The music wasn't very interesting to us. It was old and nothing like what I wanted to play, but I had to make a living.

"I think that's what I hate about commercial music. If it doesn't speak to my heart or tell a story or turn a light on—an awareness—I lose interest. The thing that moves me most is thoughtful music. Things that stop people and make them think about something."

The political and social turmoil at the time also was influencing Mike's music: "It was at the height of race riots, voting rights . . . lots of upheaval. There was marching—some peaceful, some riots—and all this at the beginning of my musical awareness, all that social discord and upheaval. The world around me was part of me learning my music. I was never a song contriver; it had to be a personal experience that would give me a reason for doing what I was doing."

One of Mike's strengths is his ability to read a crowd, which can vary dramatically from night to night. He notes, "I got to where I could tell in a couple [or] three songs what kind of an audience was out there. A lot of the times, it was pandemonium, and the only way to break through was to play a high-energy grabber song.

Appalachia wasn't quite ready for Mike's psychedelic band, The Truth, in 1967. Mike is on the far right.

"[The band was] always striking a balance between playing something [the audience] might recognize and accept and, at the same time, trying to push that open a little farther and say, 'Here's something you never heard but might like'—slipping in stuff maybe nobody wanted to hear, like Dylan, controversial music. I have to feel it. It had to move my heart and my head. Grab my heart. I possess songs. Even if I didn't write them, I put my stamp, my style, my delivery [on them]."

After Vietnam, Mike began writing his own material. He recalls, "The first song I consider a true 'Mike Morningstar' is 'West Virginia

After returning from Vietnam, Mike lets his hair down, finds his voice, and starts writing his own songs.

Girl.' Within a few months after I came back, my grandmother—my dad's mom—died. That song started out . . . to honor her. Then it expanded to honor West Virginia women in general because of the things that they had to deal with. I wanted to help West Virginians be proud of where they come from and who they are.

"To me, music has always been a means of communication beyond just speaking a word or writing a sign. It's a living connection to the world. You can sing a song that will turn their heart quicker than just a conversation or an action. Music had a way to move and change things—people's minds and hearts."

Mike explains how his war experiences helped changed his music *and* himself: "I'd been playing for five or six years before Vietnam, and, at that time, all the bands wore uniforms. They had cummerbunds, ascots . . . everyone was dressed the same. . . . Everyone moved the same way. After Vietnam, all that seemed pompous and goofy. I was happy in blue jeans and a flannel shirt. After Vietnam, I became a loner, probably because of the PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. I'd get frustrated and angry."

In 1972, Mike performed on a one-week eight-gig "Get Out the Vote Tour." He'd open the shows, followed by Northwind and Black Oak Arkansas. He hung out with Black Oak's lead singer Jim "Dandy" Mangrum and bassist "Dirty" Daugherty. He says, "We played one gig in Athens, Ohio. The rest of that tour was in West Virginia. We played the Wheeling Jamboree, Beckley Armory, Parkersburg, Charleston, Huntington, and maybe the Weston Armory. That was my first experience with real professionals. I'd done a lot of bar gigs and outdoor pavilions and city parks. But that was the first time I'd ever done a road trip where people came in and set up the sound system.

"During that tour, I played a benefit in Logan County for the Buffalo Creek disaster relief. Northwind went with me. . . . They had a country influence with a pedal steel guitar. At that benefit, I sang 'You Ain't Goin' Nowhere' by Dylan with Northwind. That was the first great band I had behind me, and I remember how tickled I was. We had the place in an uproar." That experience prompted Mike and his brother Steve to write the poignant "Buffalo Creek."

The tour also marked the debut of Mike as a West Virginia troubadour. He recalls, "That's when I really kicked up my solo career—the first time I ever played guitar and harmonica and sang solo, and that got me a reputation."

Mike stopped playing entirely from 1975 to 1977. "I got an associate degree in forestry," he says, "and stayed for an extra semester.

Photo by Steve Brightwell.

The Hickory Stick

Beyond his great songwriting and musical talent, one other thing makes Mike Morningstar truly unique: the hickory stick. Mike invented it during a "bad case of cabin fever." The instrument is, no surprise, a piece of hickory with a single string and an acoustic mic. He adjusts the pitch and tone by moving the stick. While it may sound somewhat primitive, its sound, in Mike's hands, is anything but ordinary. Its explosive, feisty twang captivates listeners as surely as any piper can. –cswhipkey

One of Mike's bands, featuring (left-right) Mike, Mike Lewis, and Rick Roberts, early 1980s.

For that span, those two-and-a-half years, I didn't play. Then I came out of college [and] went back to performing solo.

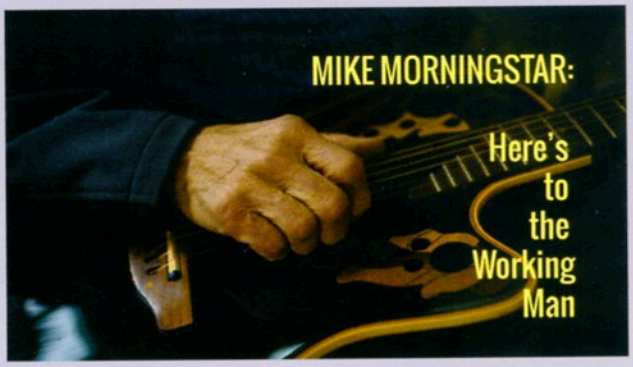
"Rick Roberts and I played from about 1981 to 1984 as a duo. We even had a bass player for a while. We played all over, the same as always—summer festivals, bars, nightclubs, and concerts. . . . We did a whole tour through the state parks. An Arts and Humanities grant paid for that. We played the State Fair a couple times." Eventually, Rick moved to Nashville, and Mike resumed his solo career.

"I'd been in the scene for 20 years. . . . Besides the original music I had written, Dylan was a mainstay in my music. I did James Taylor and leaned heavily on John Prine, Grateful Dead. I did mostly acoustically oriented music. I didn't do much soul afterward because I only had myself and two instruments: the guitar and harmonica. You can't play soul music without a back-up band. But soul music continued to influence me. It's one of the bricks of my musical foundation."

Opening for the likes of "Spider John" Koerner, Doc Watson, Commander Cody, The Marshall Tucker Band, John Hartford, Goose Creek Symphony, and Del McCoury gave Mike a chance to listen to other bands, which he calls "one of my most enjoyable experiences."

In 1993, Mike appeared on the internationally syndicated West Virginia Public Radio program *Mountain Stage*. Mike recalls a particularly pleasant interlude with blues singer / guitarist John Hammond Jr.: "We were in the green room at *Mountain Stage*, and I sat and talked with [him]. John was a great fella. . . . John invited me to share the microphone at *Mountain Stage*, and we blew the harp together on [the 'Sonny Boy' Williamson song] 'Good Morning, Little School Girl.' That was wonderful—what an experience."

Mike tends to his flower and vegetable gardens at his home near Glenville. Photo by Steve Brightwell.



In 2016, filmmaker Richard Anderson produced the documentary *Mike Morningstar: Here's to the Working Man* (88 min.). An official selection of the West Virginia International Film Festival, it traces the ups and downs of Mike's personal life, features interviews with Mike and his wife, Donna, and showcases 14 songs, mostly performed live. You can order the DVD at **herestotheworkingman.com/**.

In terms of his favorite venues, Mike says, "I always enjoyed playing at the [state] Folk Festival [in Glenville]. I'd see musicians and fans I'd see sometimes only once a year. The interaction of old-time influence is the heart of the Folk Festival."

Mike has definitely had some interesting experiences. "I used to play this bar in no-man's land between Vienna and the Parkersburg limits," he recalls. "There was a two-mile stretch where city police did not go; only the [state troopers] would come. It was a wide-open crazy place full of misfits and dangerous people. They had chicken wire around the stage so they couldn't throw a beer bottle or whatever at you. It was a real raucous place—cages with scantily attired go-go dancers. . . . That's where I really learned the show-must-go-on kind of attitude, so that no matter what's going on, you keep playing. Fistfights, you keep playing. Shoot the lights out, you keep playing.

"You have to brave it out. I remember I was playing this one place, and this guy walked up and put his hand inside my guitar and squeezed the strings and asked me, 'What would you do if I tore out these strings?' I told him, 'It wouldn't be a guitar then; it would be a club.' And I was scared. A lot of times I've been scared. I've had guns go off. I saw someone get knifed in Virginia. One time, a guy got killed right in front of the stage."

When I ask Mike about his advice for young people, he replies, "The same thing my dad told me: 'If you believe in something, live it every day to the max. If you care about something, follow it and pursue it. Follow the path that has heart. I've seen it now that I can look back; now that I'm older, it's not an immediate knowledge. I always felt that if I did what was in my heart, it was better than wasting time doing something I didn't want to do, even if I was making more money. That's why I didn't go to Carbide, [where] I knew I could make three to four times more money, but I felt it would be a waste of my energy and time.

"These days, everything I do is heart based. . . . My daily life involves doing something that means something to me. Growing and preserving food. I used to think I

As his canning room shows, Mike spends as much time growing and preserving food as he does playing music these days. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

was a singer that liked to farm, but now, I am a farmer that likes to sing. . . . Farming gives me a sense of accomplishment that music didn't do. Put food in your cellar that will get you through the winter. Now, it feels like in my heart, I am accomplishing something—living back in the country and enjoying a simple 'close to the earth' existence."

Thinking back on his career, Mike observes, "My stuff is bits and pieces of my heroes who have come down the line—people like Woody Guthrie and Dylan who aspired to style not just their music . . . but the whole thing of their history. . . . Troubadours, in the early days before CNN . . . would go to town and read the billboard, which was the news in those days. And then they'd go write a song [or] story about that and sing it around the neighborhood as the herald of the news. And that's how I see myself. I remember when I first realized it. I was in the hospital in Parkersburg. I told my mother, 'I want to be a folk singer. I want to travel around and write songs and see people and write about what is going on in the world.' And I think I did that. . . . I tried to tell stories that are real and that moved me—either made me sad or made me get happy about something. These are the types of things that the songs I wrote, and other people wrote, dealt with. That's why I think they call it 'folk music.' Folk music, to me, is created by the people for the people—stories of lives and situations that people live through. It's the muse you follow, whatever electrifies you. That's always what's been going on.

"I don't think I would change anything [about my life]. I feel right now I'm in one of the best phases in my life. I wouldn't appreciate or know what I know now if I hadn't had those experiences, especially my frame of mind. It

Mike has produced seven disks. To complete your collection, you can reach him at 304-462-8594, or write to 5519 Sinking Creek Road, Cox's Mills, WV 26342.

Photo by Steve Brightwell.

took a lot. I went through a lot of struggles for years and years and years—emotionally, financially, and health wise."

Mike semi-retired from the music scene in 2012 but still performs on occasion. He notes, "I miss the playing part. I always hated the business end of it. I miss seeing the people, the social end of it. The connections I had all over West Virginia—fans, faces . . . I miss that end of it. I don't miss the drudgework."

Since retiring, he's built and equipped a recording studio on his farm. He plans to record some new original material and hopefully produce an album. For an entire generation of West Virginians, Mike Morningstar's been our bard, and we will be eternally grateful for him. Many of us would give our eyeteeth to have one more Mike Night.

cswhipkey, while not a native of our state, is an adopted child who can claim ancestral blood running through these West Virginia hills. She has a bachelor's from Maryville College (Tenn.) and a master's from WVU. She has held a wide variety of jobs and looks forward to more of the same. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

West Virginia Girl

By Mike Morningstar©

You been carrying heartache 'round these small and dirty towns
Clutched up in your heart and soul, Bluefield to Wheeling town
I've seen you in the coal mine shacks in the mountains of the north
And the southern farmlands cracked your hands to show these men your worth

CHORUS
West Virginia girl, I've loved you from the start
My West Virginia girl, the songs I will sing for you
For I know God loves you in His heart
God knows I love you too

With all the weight of decades upon you as you strive
With poverty around your door, with wisdom in your eyes
Don't the coal dust ever make you weep, come a-sifting through your sod
Don't your tears e'er seem to blur your sleep, come dreaming out for God

[CHORUS]

You have seen your sons and husbands carried from those mines
With the coal tattoo deep in their chest, the death stare in their eyes
Down Farmington, I heard your cries and I felt your miseries too
Small comfort though my song may bring, I'm singing it for you

[CHORUS]

Now I sing this song for every West Virginia girl I've known
And for all the ones I'll never know who share this mountain home
For my mama and my grandma, who gave their love to me
For the Gypsy and her mother and the one who would not be

[CHORUS]

God knows I love you too, yes, I do
How could I do anything but love you?
West Virginia girl, the things you give to me
I come a-walkin' down a sad and lonely highway
West Virginia girl, you know you set me free
Talkin' about your love, I'm talkin' about forever lasting love
Oh, it's a cool sweet mountain love like a West Virginia girl
Oh, West Virginia girl, my West Virginia girl,
My West Virginia girl, West Virginia girl

Photo by Steve Brightwell.

War and Pandemic
Nursing Becomes a Profession

By Cynthia Mullens

Greenlawn Cemetery lies on gently rolling ground off Route 50 near Clarksburg. Cemeteries may mark the end of a person's life on earth, but these are the places where history is found and many stories begin. I'm looking for the final resting place of Lovie Lucinda Rose, a Red Cross nurse who died in England of the flu in 1918. She was buried here in 1920, so the headstone is nearly 100 years old.

I finally locate her short, white gravestone, with its face turned up to the sun, her name in a slight bow, and the Red Cross insignia beneath her name. Her birth and death years mark a short life (1889 – 1918), yet a significant period of growth and tragedy—for West Virginia and the nation. Her parents, David and Mary Rose, are buried nearby. Her father didn't live to see her become the only West Virginia woman to die in service in World War I.

The Rose family, originally from Doddridge County, lived in Braxton County in 1900. Lucinda's father was a merchant, living with his wife, their six daughters, and one son in the Salt Lick District. By the time of the 1910 census, four of the Rose children were still at home, and their father, David, had become a teacher. The Rose family mirrored the changing world of early 20th-century rural America, where a regular paycheck was becoming increasingly important.

At that time, nursing was mostly unregulated; opportunities for consistent training and education were rare, especially in rural areas. In many communities, women with natural healing skills were untrained in nursing but were experts in using medicinal plants. In West Virginia, these women—commonly referred to as *healers, medicine women,* or even *witches*—also served as midwives and might even be called upon to provide household services for a family while treating those who were sick.

Nurse Lucinda Rose, courtesy of the Harrison County Historical Society.

Nationally, particularly in turn-of-the-century cities, nurses were being trained in hospital-based programs. Many of the advances in the field date back to Florence

Six of the Roses' daughters became nurses in the first two decades of the 20th century. Back row (left-right): Clyta Rose (Furbee), Delcie Rose (Meadows), and Lucinda Rose. Front row: Lulu Rose (Conley) and Grace Rose (Stonestreet). Their mother, Mary Josephine Rose, is in the middle. Not pictured is another nursing sister, Mattie. Courtesy of the Harrison County Historical Society.

Nightingale's efforts during the Crimean War (1853 – 1856) and Clara Barton's work during the American Civil War; Barton would later found the Red Cross. By 1900, there were 400 training schools nationally with programs lasting from six months to two years. In addition, the American Nursing Association (ANA) and Nurses Associated Alumnae of the United States and Canada had been formed to enhance the professionalism of nursing. In 1905, the West Virginia Legislature introduced our state's first bills to regulate the field. Over the next half-century, 82 nursing programs would be developed in our state, based largely in cities but also in the coalfields.

By 1910, Lucinda and her sisters Grace and Mattie were working as trained nurses for Braxton County families. Three of Lucinda's other sisters also would become nurses: Clyta, Delcie, and Lulu. Lucinda officially became a registered nurse through Clarksburg's St. Mary's Hospital in 1914.

In 1914, World War 1 began in Europe. Though the United States wasn't directly involved militarily until 1917, the Red Cross sent American medical personnel and supplies to Europe aboard its Mercy Ship within weeks of the war's start. Nurses were often enticed by the opportunity to see the world and to advance their careers. No emotional string was too small to pluck in the Red Cross's volunteer drive. Recruitment posters depicted nurses as larger-than-life, angelic, and patriotic.

Every day, the front pages of West Virginia newspapers carried news of the war. Though we can't know what influenced Lucinda Rose, she joined the Red Cross in April 1918 and soon went to Camp Wadsworth for training and service. While there, a new foe soon arose, one which crept into towns and farms, slowly at first and then in tidal waves that ebbed and rose in 1918 and 1919: influenza.

Increasingly, newspaper obituaries specifically cited the flu as the cause of death. According to some accounts (see p. 23), editors suppressed news of the pandemic for fear it would hurt Liberty Bond sales, discourage nurses from volunteering and soldiers from reporting to duty, and otherwise hurt morale. The West Virginia press, though, rarely held back. Lucinda must have seen the news and discussed the issue with other nurses, but she, and others, still volunteered.

There's no record of why Lucinda Rose, already a successful nurse, left her home and family to join the Red Cross, but maybe some

Influenza as Reported by the West Virginia Press

Some local and national officials attempted to hide the entire truth about the pandemic. Though the disinformation supposedly was to keep morale high and calm fears, the effort may have kept people from doing everything they could to protect themselves. In West Virginia—especially in Charleston, Beckley, and northcentral cities—information was printed on newspaper front pages. Obituaries commonly cited flu as the cause of death, and national articles on the numbers of sick were readily available. Beckley's *Raleigh Register* pondered whether teachers should be paid while schools were closed due to quarantines, and the Grafton newspaper suggested that local flu cases could be related to coal production. However, West Virginia papers reported widely on the numbers of sick in army camps; citizens who could read (or knew someone who could) probably realized how widespread and deadly the flu was.

There was some lack of consistency, though, regarding instructions. For instance, on the same day that the Charleston health commissioner was warning people to keep their children off the streets, the state health commissioner was saying there'd be no quarantines because the pandemic couldn't be stopped. Eventually, though, there were widespread quarantines in West Virginia, with some schools closing for months.

It's unclear whether some inaccuracies were deliberate or merely innocent mistakes. On September 29, 1918, the *Clarksburg Daily Telegram* announced that a new flu serum was already being tested in army camps. The discovery of flu viruses wouldn't occur until 1933, and flu vaccines weren't used to protect soldiers until World War II. Three months later, the *Raleigh Register* reported a number of flu-related deaths, encouraged parents to keep children off the streets, and listed the continued closure of local public places while *simultaneously* saying that no flu cases had been recorded in the area.

By 1919, the government and newspapers were still emphasizing prevention, a year after the flu had become a pandemic. A lengthy article in the *Raleigh Register* advised that "the most promising way to deal with the possibility of recurrence of the influenza epidemic is, in a single word, 'Preparedness.'" While this guidance appeared near the end of the article and was too late to help the 50 million worldwide and 675,000 Americans who would die from the pandemic, *preparedness* marked a significant change in how the public health system would approach influenza going forward. –Cynthia Mullens

hint can be found in the words of other women who joined the war effort. The reason given most often is patriotism. The young men in their families were sacrificing so much, these brave women felt they must do the same, despite the risks and lack of preparation for dangerous duty. Another motivation was likely tied to the growing Women's Rights Movement. Lucinda and other women saw how, through solidarity, they could make a real difference in causes such as prohibition, suffrage, and unionization.

The September 2, 1918, issue of the *Clarksburg Daily Telegram* announced a U.S. Treasury Department ruling that nurses captured during war would *not* be paid since they were no longer on duty. Clara Noyes, President of the ANA, dryly noted that the decision would hinder enrollment and deliver "a vital blow to the welfare of our soldiers." Despite that, Lucinda Rose's name, and those of 100 other nurses, can be found on a passenger manifest for a World War I transport. The *Castle Balmoral* left Hoboken, N.J., and set

The gravestone of Lovie Lucinda Rose in Clarksburg's Greenlawn Cemetery. Photo by our author.

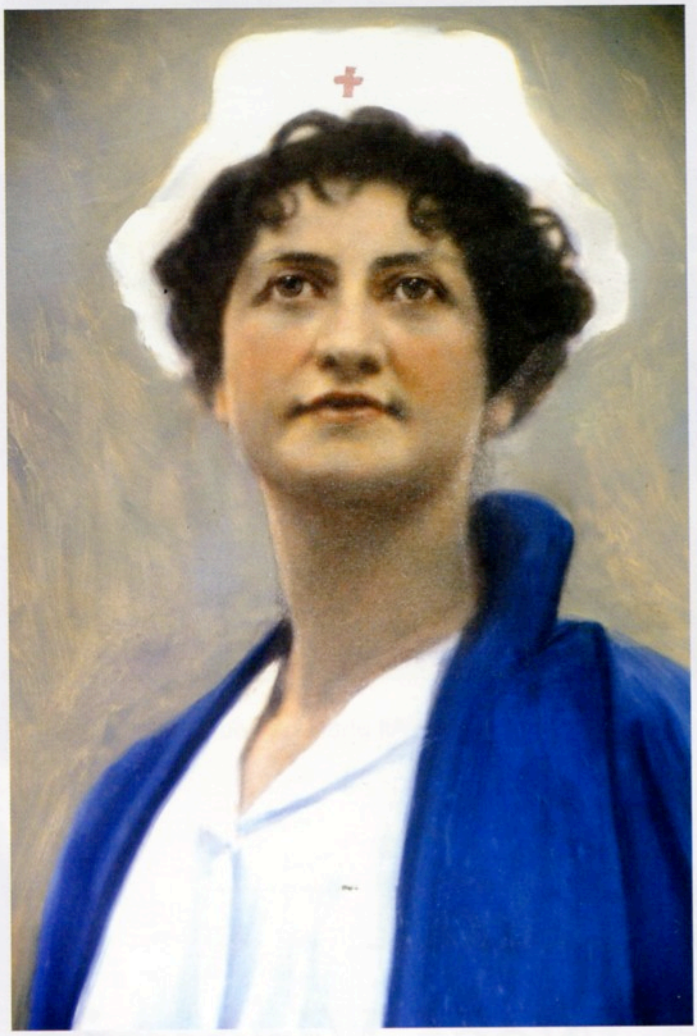
out for England, making Lucinda one of 154 West Virginia nurses to serve in World War 1.

On September 29—just weeks after Lucinda had set out for Europe—Camp Wadsworth reported its first cases of influenza. The flu also stalked the *Castle Balmoral's* passengers, probably brought aboard by someone already sick. Lucinda Rose became ill on board; died in a Red Cross Hospital in Portsmouth, England, on October 9, a month before the Armistice; and was buried there. Her obituary on the front page of the *Shinnston News* stated, "She was a graduate of the St. Mary's Hospital and one of Clarksburg's most popular nurses, widely loved for her sweet, sunny disposition."

Other West Virginia communities mourned their own. Brandon Clayton, a Barbour County native, was buried at sea after dying of the flu on his way to fight in Europe. Earl Gilmore of Pocahontas County died in Camp Lee. Nicholas County's Henry Sleeth died of the disease in Camp Meade, while the flu claimed the life of Lewis County's James Allen at Camp Stuart, Virginia. In his brief military career, James had moved around from Fort Howard in Maryland, to Fort Hancock in New Jersey, to Camp Eustis in Virginia, and finally to Camp Stuart, exemplifying how troop movements within the United States helped spread the highly infectious disease. An estimated 30,000 soldiers would die from the flu in U.S. Army camps.

As an example of the pandemic's impact on West Virginia history, Ada Sale died of the flu in North Carolina in 1918. She left her husband with five young children. Cornelius Sale Sr. dispersed his children among relatives. An infant son, Cornelius Jr., was sent to Mercer County to live with his aunt and uncle, Titus and Vlurma Byrd, who renamed their young charge Robert C. Byrd.

In 1920, Lucinda Rose was disinterred from her grave in England. Her remains and those of 12 other nurses from across the United



Painting of Lucinda Rose that hangs in the Clarksburg VFW post named for her.

States and Canada were carried aboard the *Princess Matoika*, leaving England on May 11 and arriving in Hoboken on May 23. A mourning community had already honored Lucinda by naming the Clarksburg Veterans of Foreign War (VFW) auxiliary after her.

A decade later, West Virginians honored their fallen from the Great War. In 1930, thousands paraded to the Grafton National Cemetery, where Governor William Conley and veterans attended a ceremony. The days-long celebration encompassed six communities, including Clarksburg and Grafton. A ceremony to honor Lucinda attracted 750 people to Clarksburg's First Methodist Episcopal Church. At the VFW bearing her name, Governor Conley and Lucinda's mother and sisters unveiled a portrait of Lucinda. Conley said, "So Lucinda Rose would have preferred the glory of going on, but she has gone to stand before her Commander, at His call. Hers was a splendid effort and a noble sacrifice. So long as we have men and women who will lay down their lives to protect and defend the things we hold dear, so long will our nation stand. We must think of her and those who gave their lives with her, not in sadness, not in mourning, not in sorrow, but in the belief that theirs was a glorious sacrifice made for us." There was no mention of the pandemic that claimed her life.

For more on this topic, see "Fighting the Flu: The Experiences of Two Beckley Nurses" by Margo Stafford (Summer 1984).

There's one more inscription on Lucinda's gravestone. Beneath her name, the years of her life, and the Red Cross insignia are the words "died serving in England." As I stand at her grave, I wonder how a girl born in Doddridge County in the late 1800s could have ended up dying so young in England. Many influences might have compelled her to join overseas service, but I don't know—and never will—whether it was patriotism, the promise of adventure, the Red Cross recruitment ads, or a drive that women could be agents of change. Lucinda Rose will forever leave behind a life well-lived at the intersection of some of the most impactful changes of the last century.

After graduating from WVU's physics program in 1985 and from the University of Rochester's optical engineering program in 1988, CYNTHIA MULLENS worked for a defense contractor in California and works today for a federal agency in West Virginia. Her writing and photography related to our state's history include about 60 veterans' biographies, published to the West Virginia Archives and History Memory Project website. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The start of Lewisburg's Shanghai Parade (2019), held annually on New Year's Day. All photos by our author unless noted otherwise.

Shanghai
Winter Revels in West Virginia

By Gerald Milnes

One late December day before Christmas 1923, as he did every year of his youth, Robert Simmons of Moyers (Pendleton County) put on some ragged old clothes and a false face, saddled his horse, and, with a bunch of rural companions, continued the practice of *Shanghai*. This group rode from farm to farm, knocked on doors, and, if invited in, expected the residents to guess who they were. They'd engage in masked buffoonery, disguise their voices, and beg for some treats, usually cider and cake. Shanghai is an ancient form of ritualistic activity in West Virginia. Unknowingly, Robert and his friends were *mumming*—which, in Greek, simply means "masked."

Masquerade is a common theme in all the fall-winter-spring mumming practices in the New World and the Old. Masking happens not only in the West but in every culture worldwide. *Ancestor masks* are common, as are primitive *spirit masks*, in which people wear otherworldly bizarre masks to commune with spirits. People commonly use *anthropomorphic masks*, based on animistic disguises, to relate to the non-human world of the unknown. During the Day of the Dead observances in Latin countries, the masks represent the deceased. At Halloween, the ancient Celtic *Samhain* observance, ghost and goblin masks originally were used in a ritualistic way to signify the death of nature—the word's literal

meaning. Today, during Halloween, as well as Carnival, Mardi Gra (or *Gras*, French for "Fat Tuesday"), and Fastnacht events, masks instill a sense of freedom for people to act out in various ways.

Other terms for New World revelers are *guisers* (from disguise); *shooters*, which involve shooting guns; and *fantasticals*, which convey the fantastic costumes worn by some mummers. All of these traditions signify some deep archetypal significance. Today, however, that meaning lies in the deep unconscious, and masking appears to simply allow for freedom of expression through disguise, celebratory observance, and revelry. The ritualistic association with rhythms of the natural world—so important to the lives of our ancient ancestors—is concealed through time.

Deep in the mountains of Pendleton and Hardy counties, shooters continued a distinct tradition. It's a New Year's Day welcoming or blessing custom (as is modern Shanghai), but without costume and mask. A group of men, led by a "captain," would approach a farmhouse and then, at various intervals of a recited poem, shoot their guns into the air. I've found two slightly varying handwritten copies of this long recitation in West Virginia. It confers a blessing on the farm for the upcoming year. This old German custom is revived every year in Cherryville, N.C.

These masquerade traditions—from Halloween, through the winter solstice / New Year's practices, and on to springtime observances—are all forms of mumming brought to the New World by European immigrants. Most scholars believe they were attempts to influence seasonal weather changes from fall through spring. This theory is worth some merit because mumming practices roughly occur at the beginning, middle, and end of these seasons. Nature's "death" and death, in general, are represented by the ghosts and goblins of Halloween. The December observances, as the sun reverses its course at the winter solstice, was thought by some to be acted out in the informal Old World mummers play, where a protagonist dies and is brought back to life. We often see a variation of this thinking in holiday greenery (holly, mistletoe, Christmas trees, etc.) at this time of year. Later, the springtime rebirth of nature is reflected in the Carnival (from *carne*—indicating the eating of meat), Fastnacht (fast night, or the night before the Lenten fast), and Mardi Gra—all occurring on the last day when it's proper to eat animal products before Lent begins. Now a religious observance, Lent comes from the word *lengthen*, or lengthening of days. Originally, this pagan onset-of-spring tradition was thought to influence the climate through the Lenten sacrificial fast and associated mumming practices.

It seems the most critical period for ritual observances among our ancient ancestors was when the sun reaches its lowest point and begins to ascend in the southern sky. During this time—in the current era, usually December 21 through New Year's Day—numerous rituals take place. In Randolph, Pendleton, Grant, Hardy, and Hampshire counties, many older people remember *belsnickling*, a German mumming practice [see Winter 1995]. It's still occasionally practiced. Robert Simmons, who related the Shanghai tradition to me, also belsnickled. However, he distinctly separated it from his Shanghai experiences, even though they both happen at or near the winter solstice / Christmas. Both are informal community visiting practices involving masquerade. One big difference, according to Robert, was that Shanghai was always done on horseback and in daylight, while belsnickling was done at night on foot. The word comes from the German term *pels Nicholas*, or a furry St. Nicholas, which clearly relates to today's modern Christian observance while retaining its ancient pagan mumming (masked) origins.

Sanctioned begging seems to have played a major role in these traditions, just as it did

Robert Simmons of Pendleton County shared with our author his experiences with various winter masquerade traditions, including Shanghai and belsnickling.

in 18th-century descriptions of mumming in Philadelphia. There, a New Year's Day Mummers Parade, replete with fantastic costumes and marching string bands, has replaced the informal custom of going from house to house (or farm to farm). In the Mummers Parade, cross-dressing and other aspects of role reversal are prevalent—a common theme with almost all mumming practices. This was also the case with the ancient Saturnalia festivals in Roman times and other European midwinter observances. Animistic costumes were common. Originally, people in masquerade would beg for food

Pendleton County belsnicklers (about 1915), with their masks by their feet. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives. You can read more about old winter traditions in our author's article "Old Christmas and Belsnickles" (Winter 1995).

and money for the less fortunate. This was also an aspect of the ancient mummers play and the Souling traditions in Britain. This widely known rhyme that's found in West Virginia alluded to the practice of sanctioned begging:

> Christmas time is coming, the goose is getting fat;
> Please put a penny in the old man's hat.
> If you haven't got a penny, a ha-penny (half penny) will do;
> If you haven't got a ha-penny, God bless you.

Many old-time mumming customs started as informal community folk practices that involved masquerade and sanctioned begging but are now organized public events. In rural Louisiana, where the old-style Mardi Gra tradition still exists, it's more or less an informal community event. But in New Orleans, it's a major organized public parade with wild revelry. Many towns now have organized Halloween parades, while publicly sanctioned begging is still reflected in unorganized trick-or-treating. Surprisingly, no belsnickling parades currently exist in our state, where the tradition once was so common.

In Lewisburg, an annual Shanghai Parade takes place on New Year's Day replacing, I'm sure, the unorganized Shanghai custom that's been documented in Pendleton County. In Lewisburg, hundreds of people in costumes and masks march down Route 60 through town while entertaining hundreds of onlookers. The ever-present horses support Robert Simmons' memories of Shanghai in Pendleton.

So, where exactly did the name Shanghai come from in this context? It seems no one in Lewisburg knows much about its history or ancient origins, but lettering on the banner that leads the parade suggests Eastern origins. In the 1930s, H. B. Graybill, a writer for Greenbrier County's *Valley Ranger* newspaper, tried to document the town's tradition. Even at that early date, residents he interviewed gave him little or no information about the past or meaning of Shanghai. Parade organizers and participants of recent years have no idea why they do it, where the name comes from, or what's being observed and celebrated other than a "Happy New Year."

Elmer Smith, a cultural researcher and professor at James Madison University, researched the historical Shanghai custom in the Shenandoah Valley in the mid-20th century. He determined that in German-settled areas, belsnickling predominated as a midwinter ritual, while in Scots-Irish communities, Shanghai was the mumming observance of choice. This leads me to a name-origin theory. If, as Smith observed, Shanghai was originally a Scots-Irish form of mumming, two Gaelic words could be the origin: *sean* (old) and *aghaidh* (face). *Sean aghaidh*, or "old face," may relate to the ancestor mask or primitive forms of spirit world masking. These Gaelic words, in the English-speaking world, would easily transpose to something like Shanghai. No one has found any possible Asian connection, and the verb form that designates the misfortunes of sailors being hijacked (*shanghaied*) onto ships makes little sense in the southern Appalachians.

In many midwinter mumming traditions in Europe, Canada, and the eastern United States, music plays a prominent role. Smith found this with Shanghai in the Shenandoah Valley and guising in Pennsylvania. We know the observance still exists in Greenbrier County's Shanghai Parade and once existed informally in Pendleton County. Between those places lies Pocahontas County, where we may also

The Lewisburg Shanghai Parade, 1939. Courtesy of the Greenbrier Historical Society.

find a Shanghai connection. Burl Hammons, a main figure in old-time fiddle music, played a tune titled "Shanghai." Its ancient sound brings to mind similar archaic folk music associated with Mardi Gra and even the "Old Christmas Morning" fiddle tune, which harkens back to the 18th century from West Virginia's fiddling Carpenter family. Burl's fiddle tune could easily be an instance of traditional music associated with Shanghai.

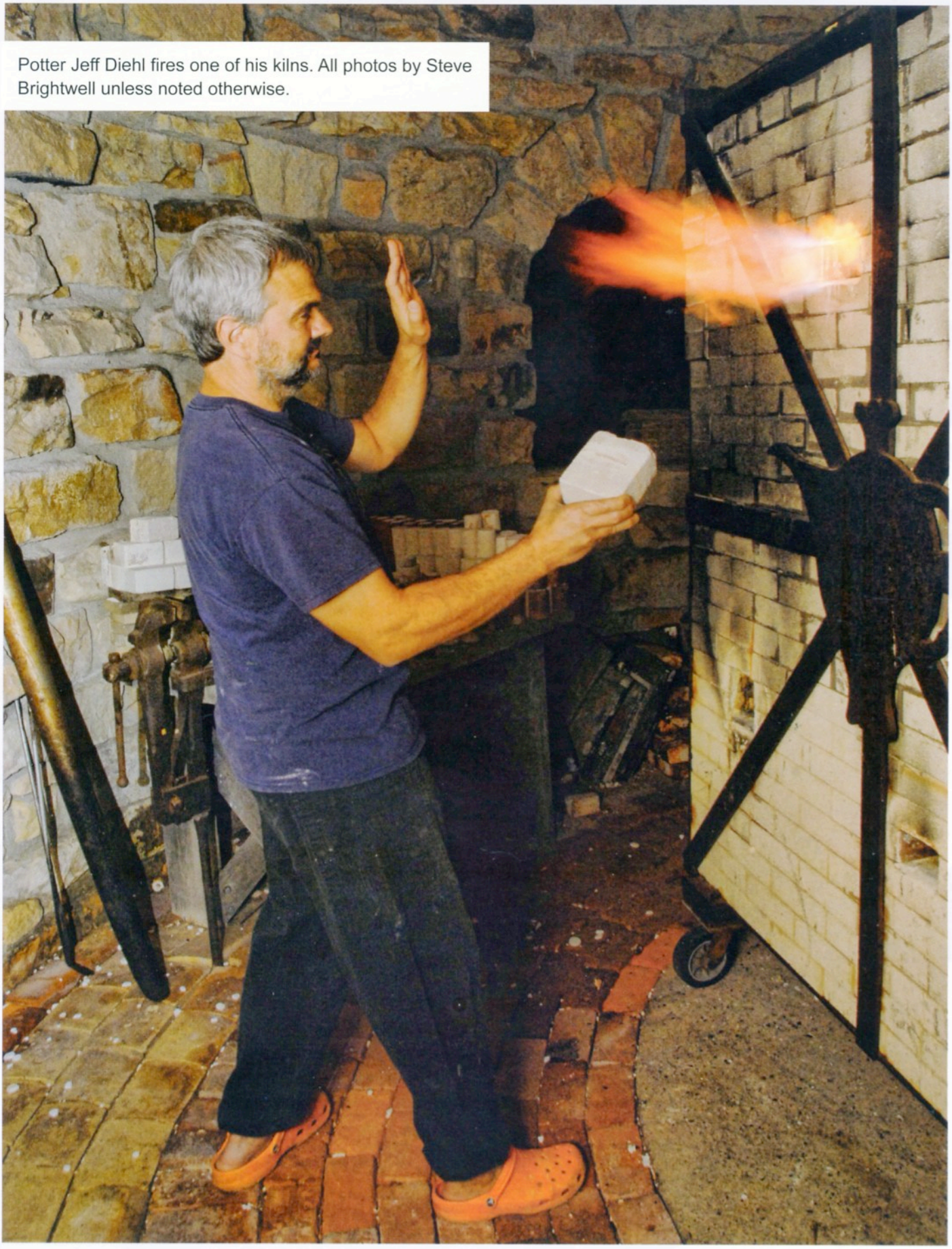
In Randolph County, the Swiss folks of Helvetia have long-observed a mumming custom in the form of Fastnacht [see Spring 1993]. This pre-Lenten event, originally held on the Tuesday before Lent began, has been moved to the preceding Saturday to increase attendance. Revelers in masquerade with *lampions*, or candles, march from the restaurant at the only intersection in town to the community hall a few hundred yards away. There, a square dance takes place, prizes are awarded for the best (usually

Old Man Winter rings in the new year in Lewisburg!

ugliest) masks and costumes, and the usual Helvetia-style big circle dances enhance the fun. At the end, an effigy of Old Man Winter is cut down, taken outside, and burned in a bonfire. This Swiss Winterfest tradition directly connects to attempts to influence the climate.

In these modern times of central heating, supermarket food, and hot running water, we tend to have less of a personal relationship with seasonal climate changes. However, as anyone who's lived in a rustic setting knows, this factor was tremendously important to our ancestors. Carrying water from an icy spring, huddling near a fireplace for warmth, longing for a taste of fresh food, or hand-making heavy woolen clothing to fight the cold weather had people longing for the warmth of the sun. In the pre-modern era, the midwinter changeover from darkness to light was a distinct time for rituals to assist this natural force. The weather governed key seasonal life-sustaining activities.

It's now known that even the wondrous ancient structure at Stonehenge related to this annual time when the sun reversed course. While most of us today have forgotten the significance of the winter solstice, traces still linger in the mumming customs celebrated in the mountains of West Virginia.



Potter Jeff Diehl fires one of his kilns. All photos by Steve Brightwell unless noted otherwise.

Clay in My Blood

By Jeff Diehl

As morning sun streams through the tall school windows, bringing light to the day's work, I lift the clay from the bin and begin changing a lump of clay into a useful pot, a process that's changed very little in the last thousand years. I think of my grandfather's workshop in New Jersey and of his father's in Germany. The belt-driven, steam-powered potter's wheel in the dirt-floored pottery was a great source of fascination and inspiration for me as I watched my grandfather form vessels from balls of clay.

My grandfather, Christian Diehl, set up his workshop in Bernardsville, N.J., shortly after arriving from Germany in 1926. He brought with him a strong family tradition of working with clay. My great-grandfather, too, worked in clay, creating bricks and roof tiles in Freising, Germany. My grandfather primarily created a line of earthenware flowerpots, fired with coal in a bottle kiln. My grandfather died in 1963 when I was six, but the clay seed had been planted.

As my father changed jobs, my family moved to Parkersburg in 1966 and then to Beckley in 1970. I went to Kentucky's Berea College in 1974 and was fortunate to receive a job in the Ceramic Apprenticeship Program. The position required me to make pots 10 hours per week to sell in the Student Craft Industry galleries. I was so enthralled with the process and inspired by the clay that I often spent 10 hours a day at the pottery.

My father, Ralph Diehl, and I went to West Germany in 1978 to visit family. At the suggestion of Walter Hyleck, my professor at Berea, I visited his friend Elly Kuch in Burgthann. Kuch Pottery was a traditional apprenticeship-based business and learning opportunity. Students there worked with master potters, producing a line of primarily functional pots. Elly welcomed me to spend a year working close to where my grandfather was born. The pottery had a strict production line where the clay was weighed and exact forms were made. The beer steins, for example, had to hold exactly one-half liter, and the opening had to be 7½ centimeters so the pewter lids would fit. The training was very strict. I returned to Berea College to complete my academic studies and then became the graduate apprentice for a year, managing the school studio, making pieces for the school's gallery, and developing my own style of pottery.

After training for five years at Berea and one year in Germany, it was time to set up my own studio. Donna Jenkins and I were students together at Berea College, and we married in 1980 and began our search for the perfect spot. We were drawn to the beauty of southern West Virginia's mountains and rivers and were fortunate to find an abandoned two-room school building in Lockbridge in Summers County.

Lockbridge is a community of about 70 people between Beckley and Lewisburg near Meadow Bridge. The school building, built in 1926, had been vacant for 13 years. The door was open, and "God Loves You" and "Zorro Was Here" were both written on the blackboard. Needless to say, we fell in love with it. The school building needed to be totally renovated, including windows, plumbing, electricity, and insulation. Neighbors and our family pitched in to make the building functional. Early winters in the uninsulated schoolhouse demanded constant wood cutting to keep the newly installed plumbing (and us) from freezing. Although the school hadn't had students for 13 years, some termites had been holding

Jeff and Donna's home when it was a school in the first half of the 20th century. Courtesy of our author.

regular classes in wood consumption. The floors soon gave way and had to be replaced.

The neighbors welcomed Donna and me to Lockbridge with some old-fashioned "serenading." They walked around the house beating pans with spoons, shouting, and singing. They filled our porch with housewarming gifts including garden produce, canned goods, doughnuts and cookies, and even a handmade quilt. We'd been warned of the impending invasion and were instructed to provide chocolate for the ladies and cigars for the gentlemen. The neighbors said they'd carry us down the road on a fence rail if we didn't do our part. Chocolate and cigars were provided! We didn't have a clue what "riding on a fence rail" meant but knew it wasn't desirable.

We welcomed our sons, Erik and Andrew, into our world in 1984 and 1986, respectively. They grew up knowing the pottery business firsthand. Hands-on experience with all our projects helped them discover their own passions. Today, the two are following their own musical paths in New York and Chicago.

My grandfather had years of problems with his coal-fired bottle kiln in New Jersey, so my grandmother, Katie Diehl, delighted that I was continuing in the family business, told me to find the best kiln on the market and she'd buy it. This kiln needed a fireproof room, which I had no idea how to build. Our neighbors asked what we were going to do in *their* school, so I explained the need for a kiln room, and they jumped into action. I ordered the material, and the neighbors showed up, laid the block, and got it under roof. The kiln arrived, and once again, our neighbors came to the rescue to unload and put it in place. The first firing was in late fall 1980. As we'd purchased the property only in July, I was pleased to already be making and firing. That same kiln is still in use and has been fired once monthly ever since.

Most of the pots I've made at Lockbridge Pottery are functional tableware, but I've also had orders for architectural tiles, bathroom

Here, Jeff is *throwing* a tray on a potter's wheel (left) and drawing a fish on it (right) using a technique known as *sgraffito*—cutting through the porcelain *slip* to reveal the clay below.

sinks, and fireplace surrounds. From 1980 to 1996, we took our pots to craft shows up and down the East Coast. We regularly attended the Appalachian Arts & Crafts Fair in Beckley and the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes. It got to the point that all the pots and our boys wouldn't fit into our van, so we started selling the pots at our Lockbridge studio. In 1988, the Interstate 64 extension opened, making Lockbridge a very easy drive from Beckley or Lewisburg. We had a small mailing list from the craft shows and a following of devoted customers. We sent out postcards, set up tables full of pots in the side yard, and welcomed our neighbors and friends to keep expanding their collections.

The kiln bought by my grandmother in 1980 fired all the pottery I made until 1996, when we built our salt kiln. The salt-firing tradition started in Germany in the 16th century, when potters used driftwood to stoke their kilns. The driftwood contained salt, which formed a sodium glaze on the pots. To house the new kiln, we built a round stone building with rocks from local buildings and timbers from local trees. Since there's no salt-soaked driftwood in the mountains of southern West Virginia, we add rock salt, using a long stainless-steel tube, when the kiln reaches 2,350 degrees. As the temperature climbs, Donna and I deposit the rock salt deep within the kiln through ports in the front. The salt creates a surface on pots with an orange-peel texture. The salt often reacts with the glazes, too, giving us a broader color palette. I usually fire this kiln a couple of times a year.

Donna works alongside Jeff in many aspects of his work, such as stoking the kiln.

I was very active with West Virginia's potter gathering held every spring for 25 years at Cedar Lakes. Through the state Department of Agriculture's education program, some of the best potters in the world were brought in to present their techniques and share their knowledge. Phil Rogers from Wales and Kang Hyo Lee from South Korea challenged me to expand my possibilities with clay. It was a privilege to work with these great artists and to continue my education and training. My friendship with Phil and Kang Hyo gave Donna and me an opportunity to travel abroad and experience how potters in Wales and South Korea work with clay. I was also privileged to attend graduate classes at Alfred University in New York for a couple summers.

There's always an active exchange among potters regarding ways to improve their pots. In 2008, West Virginia University (WVU) professor Bob Anderson invited me to go to Jingdezhen, China, and share my techniques with WVU students and Chinese artists as part of the school's study-abroad program. I was honored to make pots with the Chinese masters of the craft; pots made during the Sung Dynasty 1,000 years ago were fired at the same temperatures we use today but fueled by wood.

Inspired by the historical kilns I saw in China, Wales, and South Korea, I decided to build a wood kiln. Before it could be built, though, I had to erect yet another structure. Dave and Debi Bowyer (Bowyer Mine Supply) have made every project here possible with

The Diehls' wood-fired (left) and salt-fired (right) kilns in a winter wonderland.

anything needed (or wanted) in terms of metal fabrication and assisted me by providing the clay roof tiles and welding the kiln's framework. Our first firing with wood was in fall 2011. We were impressed with the results, so we're still cutting wood! Because of its size and the constant 24-hour stoking of wood, we fire it only about once a year.

Another area of focus for me is crystalline firing. We add zinc and silica to glazes, which melt together during the firing to form a crystal. I was inspired by Japanese scientist Masaru Emoto to vary how these crystals grow by playing music during the firing. Dr. Emoto used water and exposed the crystals to various energies and music. I also use music to effect the molten crystalline glaze. The results have produced three crosses while I was playing a Christian requiem and a distinct marijuana leaf when the Rolling Stones were playing. I'm not a scientist trying to replicate lab results, but I've noticed how different energies of the music create a range of crystal shapes.

Every day when I go to the studio, I have to figure out what to make or how to finish what I've started. Because of our decisions to sell locally to a very loyal group of customers, I'm allowed, and even encouraged, to make new and different work all the time. Our customers are always looking for something new for their collections; that encourages me to explore broad possibilities with clay. Often the question of "What if?" has dozens of possible answers before a pot emerges from its final firing. The four distinctive kilns generally have their own

The background music Jeff plays actually changes how his glazes crystallize. This plate, made while playing The Beatles' "Let It Be," is called *Whispering Words of Wisdom*. Photo by our author.

clay, but mistakes—and bending the rules on occasion—often lead to great discoveries and new paths. I draw and get ideas from nature, dreams, customers' suggestions, potter friends, historical ceramics, farm animals we've raised, great functional pots, or just something we need in the kitchen.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, but I know, without a doubt, it's taken a village to make this business. In the early years, grants and awards from the Department of Culture and History (now Arts, Culture & History) allowed us to pursue the necessary kilns and buildings. We recognize the unique community we live in and appreciate all those who have been and are customers; who have helped with our shows; and who have helped build our home, kilns, and outbuildings. Our dreams have become realities with a lot of help from our friends and family.

To find out more about Jeff's work and exhibitions, visit **lockbridgepottery.com**.

For JEFF DIEHL, making mud pies as a child had a different meaning. Starting off at his grandfather's pottery, he went through six years of training at Berea College and in West Germany. He moved to Summers County in 1980 and set up his pottery. He's still making pots there with the help of his wife, Donna, and Lucy the dog. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Gram's Kitchen

By Laurel Muhly-Alexander

The warm air of her kitchen rushes to heat my cold
Nose as the storm door slams shut. The aromas of
Bread dough and cookies leap off the ceiling fan and
Dance their way up my nostrils. I breathe in
Deep, knowing I am home.

Outside the snow blankets the cow
Pastures, freezing water pipes and country roads.
On Sunday afternoon, school the
Next morning is a nonexistent worry. I sit
At her counter and steal a cookie.

Like a Catholic in confession, I
Vent to her my wrongdoings and secrets.
She listens, injecting comments and
Dirty jokes. Her kitchen is a place
Where cackling is encouraged.

I sit at her counter and feel content
With my life. I don't think of deadlines or
Responsibilities or idle tasks.
I am present with her and
I love her.

On the stool I feel safe and in her
Arms I am secure. Her heart is
Built for grandchildren, nieces, the preacher's kids,
And the poor little boys that live up the
Holler without food or heat.

I am one of the lucky children to sit
On her stool and feel happy. I am one of the
Lucky to feel wanted by her and know of the
Selfless love, good food, and serenity
That come from four small walls.

"Gram and Her Kitchen." Photo by our author.

LAUREL MUHLY-ALEXANDER of West Union is a freshman at WVU, studying journalism. She is a graduate of Bridgeport High School and spent her junior year as an exchange student in Pachuca, Mexico, a place she found strikingly similar to her Appalachian home. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Our Forgotten Civil War
Ritchie County's School Crisis

By Phillip L. Crane

In the early 1960s, Ritchie County went through a tumultuous struggle over school consolidation. I was a personal eyewitness, as both a student and the son of two teachers who were at the center of the controversy.

In West Virginia, especially in more rural regions, high schools often are the souls and very hearts of communities' cultural, social, and economic existences. Cheering for your school's athletic teams is fueled by genuine pride. Faculty members live locally and frequent area businesses. Alumni associations promote their schools' traditions and interests. Plays and other gatherings turn school buildings into community centers. Ritchie County once was home to three such institutions of learning. When faced with losing their high schools, towns often fight to retain them at any cost. Such was the scenario in Ritchie County nearly six decades ago.

By 1960, 800 Ritchie County high school students were divided among three schools: Harrisville (about 400), Pennsboro (about 250), and Cairo (about 150). The buildings were three-story structures typical of early 20th-century construction. All needed facility updates, and none were prepared for vocational education, a rapidly developing field. The consolidation question is far from simple. While research shows that smaller class sizes can benefit learning, small schools typically provide fewer courses; in the past, for instance, it wasn't financially practical for small schools to offer classes that need laboratory spaces. As roads and bus service improved from the 1930s through the 1950s, one solution was to consolidate high schools.

The education system also had become more centralized, dating back to the 1933 "county unit plan," which reduced the number of school districts statewide from more than 400 to 55 to save money during the Great Depression. While this accelerated consolidation, some counties were already moving in this direction. Calhoun County opened a consolidated high school in Grantsville in 1932. One of the first in the state was Mason County's Wahama, created in 1925 from Waggoner, Hartford, and Mason high schools.

Ritchie County could look just to the east for a shining model of success. In 1933, West Union and Carr high schools joined forces to form Doddridge County High School. But this was just a foreshadowing of what was to come. The 1960s could well be called the Era of Consolidation in West Virginia. During this dynamic decade, the following high schools came into being: Clay County (1960), South Harrison (1965), Lewis County (1966), Williamson (1966), Woodrow Wilson (1967), and Greenbrier East and Greenbrier West (1968).

By the mid-1950s, some Ritchie Countians had come to support consolidation. As is often true with education, the situation was shaped and formed by powerful forces, led by money and politics. The two main options: (1) Spend millions to build three new high schools—or at least upgrade the existing ones—while leaving the elementary schools unimproved. (2) Or build one new consolidated high school and three new elementary schools—one for each community that would lose a high school. The first choice would modernize the high schools, but the course offerings would remain static. Worse, elementary schools—the foundations of learning—would be left hopelessly behind. The second choice seemed a win-win for everyone.

A vital factor was financial: since the buildings were depreciating annually,

Old yearbooks from Ritchie County's three former high schools: (Left-right) Cairo, Pennsboro, and Harrisville. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA).

maintenance costs were mounting. During the 1950s and 1960s, new school funding was largely a local responsibility. Since the cost of new schools weighed heavily upon each taxpayer, the stakes were high.

The initial fight in Ritchie County didn't rear its divisive head overnight. According to state policy at the time, a five-member school board determined a county system's direction of development. A county superintendent, presumably in agreement with these policies, administered the day-to-day operations. Orval Hill had been superintendent since the mid-1920s. By the 1950s, some residents believed he'd failed to change with the times or keep abreast of problems that other counties had already solved. In later years, Hill's assistant superintendent was Burl Hoff, a longtime teacher who'd worked his way up through the ranks.

In 1955, three pro-change candidates joined the board, swinging the majority to them by a 3-2 margin. Darrell "Hap" Farley, Glenn Crummett, and my father, Dwight Crane—a farmer and former teacher—ran as a team. They didn't overtly support a "centralized high school"; instead, they called for (1) an expert study and a school bond referendum on the subject, (2) the superintendent's retirement, and (3) Hoff's return to the classroom.

In 1956, with the new team in place, the board hired Otis Leggett as superintendent. A study from Morgantown strongly recommended one consolidated high school. In time, the board found a centrally located 100-acre tract on top of Hathaway Hill, about five miles north of Harrisville and three miles south of Ellenboro. It also could have served as a regional site for one of the state's new vocation and technical schools.

The land was leased from Philip Brake, and a water well was drilled. But there was an inherent flaw; at that site, Route 16 curves sharply in numerous places and ascends and descends the steep hill. Drivers would have discovered this daily route inconvenient and dangerous during winter months.

In October 1957, the bond issue fell 2% shy of the required 60% support. By 1960, the board's direction had shifted slightly. Crummett and Crane were now joined by Denver Goff, Willard Flannagan, and Charles Giebell. While the majority still supported consolidation, without the 60% public approval, nothing could be done.

In August, my father resigned to resume his teaching career, and Crummett didn't seek re-election. Fall 1960 was fateful: my father began teaching eighth grade at Ellenboro Grade School, where my mother, Madge, was a sixth-grade teacher, and I was an incoming seventh grader.

With each passing year, the consolidation issue polarized local citizenry. The issue was so heated that it destroyed friendships and even affected some businesses when the owners held opposing views.

While I'm unaware of what the situation was like at other schools, I can clearly remember Ellenboro Grade School being a battleground. Teachers on the top floor—Juanita Dawson and my parents, Madge and Dwight Crane—were pro-consolidation. The middle-floor teachers were all opposed; this included Principal Virginia Adams, who clung to her beliefs with a passionate grip.

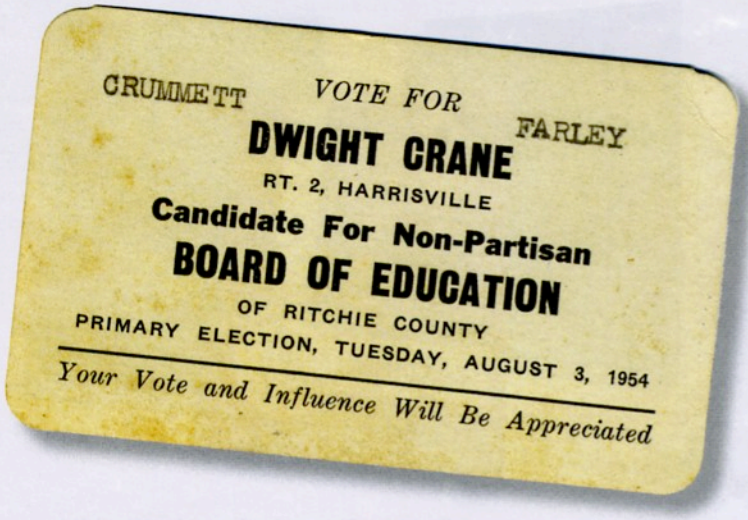
The atmosphere grew increasingly petty, depressing, and, through the eyes of young students, bewildering. Can you imagine your teacher abruptly resigning in the middle of the year because of a consolidation fight? Then, a few weeks later, the substitute takes flight, too? I went through three substitutes in just the 1960-61 year. Recess was halted because there were no kickballs, basketballs, or footballs; someone opposed to consolidation had punctured the balls with a sharp object. Bottles of ink mysteriously were poured over a pro-consolidation teacher's books and other important papers.

Making matters worse, innocent students got caught in the crossfire. Daily, students were jolted out of their seats when the principal suddenly turned on the public address system and screamed at pro-consolidation teachers. More than once that year, some female students were severely paddled because they had befriended teachers who didn't favor the status quo. The school atmosphere was poisonous.

When I got my year-end report card, my substitute teacher had written "Promoted" on the back. Principal Adams, however, crossed this out and wrote "Retained." But it didn't end there. Superintendent Leggett, who favored consolidation, reversed the principal's decision and re-entered "Promoted." This minidrama shows how spiteful and absurd some individuals had become just because a student's teacher or parents might be on opposing sides.

Looking back nearly 60 years later, it's clear that our consolidation war forever harmed whole communities and shattered friendships. Property was wantonly destroyed. Children, innocent bystanders, suffered emotionally and academically. Worn out by stress, teachers resigned and left the county. Perhaps worst of all, the high schools remained stagnated as factions feuded and voters kicked the can down the road.

By early 1961, some anti-consolidation residents were growing more strident. The



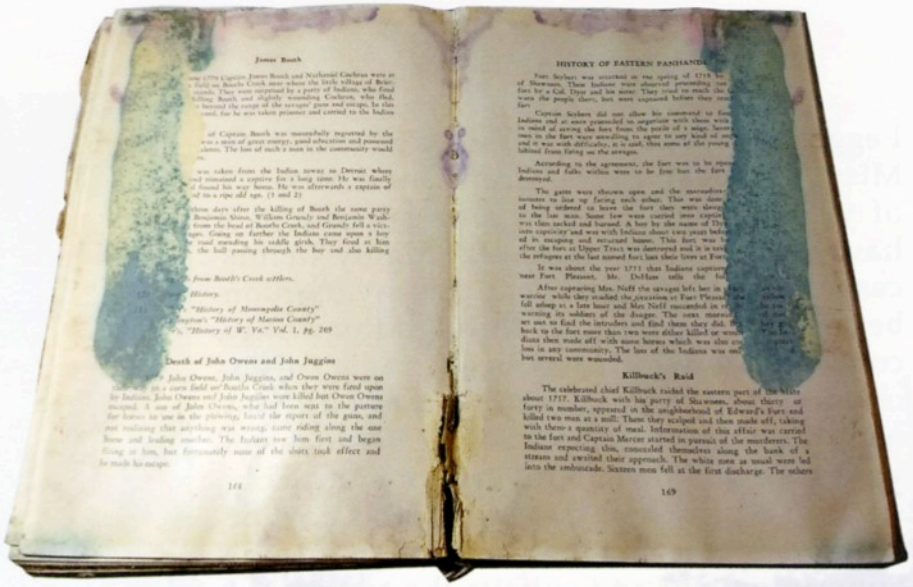
Election card for the pro-consolidation trio of Dwight Crane, Glenn Crummett, and "Hap" Farley, 1954. All images courtesy of our author unless noted otherwise.

public tide was turning, and forces opposing consolidation soon held a majority on the board.

Then, on February 7 or 8, 1961—strangely enough, the combatants never agreed on the exact date —tensions came to a head at my school. The unlikely spark was one of Madge Crane's sixth-grade students—a boy who either could not or would not complete a math problem after the rest of the class had done theirs. Since this occurred right before lunch, my mother held the entire class back from going to the cafeteria until he finished.

At Ellenboro, the grades ate in ascending order. My mother sent a student to tell the seventh graders to proceed to lunch, followed shortly later by the eighth graders. When my mother's student finally finished his math problem, he and his classmates were led downstairs—15 minutes late. There, my mother found an angry principal waiting for her. The 6'2" Adams was a formidable adversary when angry. Furious at my mother for disrupting the school's set routine, Adams shoved my 5'2" mother into the hallway, shook her with both arms, and reprimanded her.

My father was nearby and rushed to his wife's aid. His sudden appearance allowed my mother to escape back into the cafeteria. But the principal followed her and said, "I'm not



A teacher's West Virginia history textbook, stained from ink by someone opposing consolidation. Photo by out author.

through talking to you." Adams pushed her back into the hall and again shook my mother. The confrontation then moved into a nearby second-grade classroom, where students were making Valentines for their moms. According to *The Ritchie Gazette*, Dwight Crane again intervened, threatened to have Miss Adams arrested if she didn't stop shaking his wife, and said, "You might hurt Mrs. Crane. She's not very big."

At a later school board hearing, Adams denied shaking my mother and argued that "she laid her hand on Mrs. Crane's arm only to avoid her attempt 'to walk right through me.'" She also contended that my mother had "maliciously" hit her with a "heavy pocketbook," injuring her hand. Mother countered that she couldn't remember carrying a purse then—and seldom did during lunch duty—and "categorically denied having struck the principal." Later, a number of students testified that my mother wasn't carrying a purse at the time. Adams accused her of insubordination and submitted a written request for her dismissal.

After both women testified, the board conferred and rendered its decision. Due to the conflicting accounts, the board didn't settle the dispute but gave my mother 24 hours to decide "whether she will accept a transfer to another school, or if there must be some other settlement for the issue," as reported by *The Ritchie Gazette*.

The author's parents, Dwight and Madge Crane, who played pivotal roles in the consolidation controversy in 1961.

My mother let the 24 hours pass without announcing a decision. Adams hired an attorney to spur board members into action and listed her complaints. And there the matter rested until April 10, when the board "voted unanimously" to hold a hearing on April 24 at the courthouse.

After personally interviewing 10 witnesses, Superintendent Leggett found in my mother's favor and criticized Adams' lack of bureaucratic protocol for ignoring him while publicly airing her grievances to students, school supporters, and board members. After stating, "I do not approve of any principal's action in handling an administrative problem in such manner,"

Leggett concluded, "I have worked with both Miss Adams and Mrs. Crane for a number of years in the teaching profession and I have recommended both very highly. In this case, I very reluctantly express my opinion because I have felt that through this entire controversy, which has been tragic to the children and the community, that I did not have the majority support of the Board. I feel very sure that this Board cannot justifiably support a principal that humiliates anyone [*sic*] of her teachers in public or ignores the Superintendent and solicits the support of individual Board Members in order to gain a favorable decision."

The board members—all opposed to consolidation by this time—responded by not renewing Leggett's contract. Leggett soon moved to St. Marys and continued his school administrative career.

On May 6, the board rendered its official decision: "In the case of Virginia Adams vs. Madge Crane, the board is in unanimous agreement that Mrs. Crane is guilty of insubordination, and is hereby suspended without pay for the remainder of this school year." The board then publicly reprimanded Adams for laying hands on her.

It was a costly defeat for my mother and a costly victory for Virginia Adams. My parents sold their farm and, with their youngest child, left their native state to settle in Ohio, where they continued teaching. My father died in 1975 at age 61, followed in 2010 by my mother at age 95. Virginia Adams passed away in 2007 at age 90. Before retiring, she served as principal of three other schools in the state and as president of the American Association of University Women.

For those of us who went through the consolidation struggle, many suffered from psychological shell shock for years. For a year after moving to Ohio, my parents rented a house in Waterford. When asked why they didn't buy a place immediately, my father responded, "We wanted to make sure [the local school administration] liked us first."

The principal of Ellenboro Elementary, Virginia Adams, taken near the playground at the school. Courtesy of David M. Scott.

In 1961, Howard Perine became the new Ritchie County superintendent. At least for the foreseeable future, the idea of a centralized high school disappeared from the scene. By 1970, the board finally closed the doors at Cairo High School. Part of the shift in thinking was due to new board members recognizing changing times.

In the mid-1980s, West Virginia's system of school construction funding was transformed. If a county met certain criteria, it could obtain money from the School Building Authority (SBA); although, the SBA, not the counties, would decide which schools to consolidate. Ritchie County now had an unavoidable decision. To get state money, Pennsboro and Harrisville high schools would have to consolidate.

In 1986, the consolidated Ritchie County Middle and High School opened along the four-lane Route 50 at Ellenboro. The long delay probably cost Ritchie County a regional vocational and technical school, which instead went to Pleasants County. When one visits

Ellenboro Elementary, the scene of the incident involving Madge Crane and Virginia Adams.

the new school today, there's little evidence of the bitter battle of six decades ago, except perhaps in the school's nickname: the Rebels.

While consolidation remains controversial and needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, I feel strongly that Ritchie children would have benefited from a larger, more modern school back then. The debates over consolidation, in 1961 and 1986, clearly had pros and cons on both sides. It could be argued that the delay denied students certain academic opportunities while keeping the three high schools, and their communities, more vital—a loss and a gain.

Our author expresses his gratitude to Susan Cain Bayless, Charles Chalfant, Teresa Crane, Chuck Hinton, Eva Joy, David Scott, Jaime Simmons of the West Virginia State Archives, and Dr. Ray Swick for their help with this article.

PHILLIP L. CRANE is a genealogist, historian, and former teacher of 36 years. A graduate of Marietta College and Ohio University, he lives in Waterford, Ohio, with his wife of 33 years, Teresa. They have one son, Dwight D. Crane. This is Phillip's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Gen. Thomas M. Harris. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA), Virginia Bly Hoover Collection.

While it took until 1986 to build a countywide high school in Ritchie, it nearly occurred 80 years earlier. General Thomas M. Harris (1813 – 1906)—the county seat's namesake—had tried to establish a consolidated high school in Harrisville late in life.

During the Civil War, Harris had recruited a Union regiment from the Gilmer County area and eventually was promoted to brevet major general in 1865. He was placed in charge of the Department of West Virginia right before Grant's final assault on Petersburg and Lee's surrender 11 days later.

In her history of the county, Minnie Kendall Lowther noted that the countywide high school was the general's "one cherished hope" in his final years. A referendum was put on the ballot for November 1906, and, barely a month after Harris' death at age 93, the high school was voted down. –ed.

(Top-bottom): Crane's 100, 200, 300, and 600 series lures. All photos taken by our author unless noted otherwise.

Crane Custom Baits

By Dave Villers

In a remote hollow of Ritchie County near Pullman, Bill and Sharon Crane are enjoying retirement. That's not to say they're idle. They raise a garden, care for their small vineyard and orchard, keep the yards mowed, and maintain the barns and buildings. Bill still hunts and fishes, and they enjoy visits from family and friends. And with the time that remains, they manufacture thousands of muskie baits each year.

Walter Crane was born in 1884 in Ritchie County to George and Martha Cox Crane. In 1909, he married Ethel Clayton in Pullman. This union produced six children: Martha, Dwight, Blake and Bland (twins who died in infancy), Cecil, and Walter. Dwight became a schoolteacher [see the previous story by Phillip Crane] and married Madge Looney of Roane County in 1936; they raised three sons: Bill (b. 1938), George, and Phillip.

Not only was Dwight a teacher, he also raised cattle. When Bill was very young, the family moved a couple miles farther down Slab Creek. As a young boy, Bill was interested in fishing. He says, "I remember spending time trying to catch fish out of Slab Creek. It's not a big creek, but there were some fish in it in places."

The family didn't stay long before moving a couple miles to Wolfpen for a few years. They then moved to Indian Creek near Harrisville. After high school, Bill worked and attended college before getting a job at DuPont in Washington (Wood County),

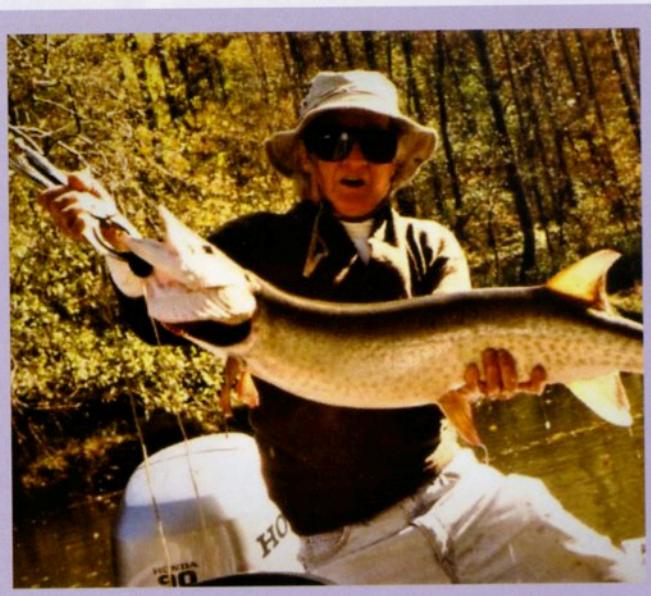
where he worked for nine years. During that period, he took night courses at Parkersburg Community College (now WVU Parkersburg). He then quit work, enrolled at Marietta College, and obtained a chemistry degree.

"I got this idea I wanted to go to California, so off I went, but I got homesick," says Bill. "I then came back and got a job at Union Carbide near Sistersville in 1968 in the chromatography lab. I took a position in the research lab and was there several years. A few years before I retired, I went to the analytical lab and then retired in 1996."

Bill married Sharon Ramsey of Pennsboro in 1968. They lived in Friendly for about 40 years before moving back to his grandfather's farm in Ritchie County. They built a house and garage beside the old homestead in 2008.

Bill's interest in muskie fishing began in the early 1960s. "I began fishin' a lot with Carl Richards of Cornwallis, but muskie fishin' back then was a lot harder than it is today because there weren't many fish," recalls Bill. "Most people kept them if they caught one. It was a big deal sometimes just to raise a fish. It took about two years of fishin' before I caught my first muskie. I caught two on Labor Day in 1963, and after that, it seemed I got the hang of it and started catching more. I will never forget November 22, 1963. A buddy and I were out fishin', and I caught two that day. When we got back to his house, his wife came runnin' out with a worried look on her face, and she told us the president had been shot. That was the day President Kennedy was shot in Dallas."

About 1967, the Rebel Company came out with a 5½" lure. Bill started tinkering to improve it. "The Rebel lure was hollow and made of plastic," relates Bill. "I started cutting them in half and would fill the halves with scrap Delrin I got from DuPont. I would soften the Delrin with *methyl ethyl ketone* [an organic compound also known as *butanone*] and then install eye screws and make a jointed lure. I would take them to J. C. Dicks in Parkersburg, [which] would paint them for me for 50 cents apiece. They were the only custom lure makers I knew at that time and . . . did a good job. I caught a 45-incher from the Elk River with a modified Rebel, the longest-recorded muskie caught in the state that year.



Bill Crane shows off a prize muskie he caught in the Mountain State. Photographer unknown.

Muskie is short for *muskellunge*, a large pike native to North America and one of the most popular for sports fishing. Both muskie and musky are accepted spellings.

"I also started tinkering with balsa wood lures about this time," he continues. "Bagley down in Florida made balsa bass lures at that time, so I started replicating the bass lures except I made them bigger for muskie."

Bill kept experimenting, and in 1976, J. C. Dicks asked Bill if he'd like to buy the business. Bill and Sharon discussed it with Mr. Dicks, borrowed some money, and made the purchase. Bill and Sharon got their business license, and Crane Custom Baits was born. J. C. Dicks had made many different lures for bass and muskie, but Bill decided to focus solely on four muskie lures. He made the Hoss-Wrangler and Muskie Special as both stickbaits and jointed lures.

Sharon and Bill Crane, partners in making and selling Crane Custom Baits.

Bill made and Sharon painted the lures, which consisted of basswood and metal lips imported by Herter's Sporting Goods. Herter's stopped importing the lips, so Bill purchased 8,500 of them so he would have a long-lasting supply—at least that's what he thought. Within three years, they were all gone, so Bill and Sharon stopped making the old J. C. Dicks lures and began producing the balsa ones he'd developed.

Most are still made of balsa wood. The 100 series is shaped somewhat like a panfish and made in various lengths. The last number of the model indicates the length, thus a #105 is a 5"-long panfish-shaped lure. The 200 series, which seems to be their most popular line, is a slender minnow bait made for "twitchin'," as Bill puts it. "Boy, [the fish] really go after them sometimes."

Bill and Sharon produce over 5,000 lures annually and more than 7,000 in some years. They work with a distributor exclusively for Wisconsin and Illinois but will sell directly to any bait shop or individual living outside those two states. They've had orders from Germany and one from the Netherlands. Bass Pro Shops contacted Bill once for an order, but the volume was so large he turned it down, knowing it would take all their time just to fill it. They supplied Gander Mountain with 1,710 lures in 1996, but no large sporting goods companies contact him anymore due to the large volumes they require.

One of the collectible lures the Cranes made for *Musky Hunter* magazine.

In 2004, Muskies, Inc., asked Bill to make and autograph 300 commemorative 207 model lures painted a special purple color. In 2016, Bill and Sharon made 40 of the same model lure painted blue to commemorate their 40 years of lure making. Each was signed and dated by Bill. They posted photos on their Facebook page and sold out within a few days.

One of their recent projects was to produce 500 lures for *Musky Hunter* magazine. "When we were requested to make the commemorative lures," Bill says, "there were several agreements we had to make. We had them approve the color of the lure, and it had to be a color we had never used before or ever will use again. They requested a certain size and wanted two coats of the clear finish epoxy rather than one, and the lures were to have special black rings and hooks that they would supply. They provided the boxes, and I autographed each box but not the lure itself." The *Musky Hunter* lure was a model 208 minnow bait painted in what's called a Mountain Redhorse pattern.

Bill and Sharon haven't stayed in the lure-making business for 40 years just by making pretty baits. Performance is what fishermen demand, and their lures have caught some whoppers. While fishing with Steve Feaster on Mud River in 1980, Bill caught the longest-recorded muskie in our state that year (46") using his #206 lure. In 1974, he caught the longest one in Elk River, near Frametown. Bob LaMay of Wisc. caught a world-record six-pound-line class in 1983 using a Crane #206. The fish was 54½" long and weighed 50 pounds. Howard Wagner of Fombell, Penn., landed a 54½" 52-pound muskie on a #206 in 2002. It's this kind of success that drives the demand for Crane baits.

But Bill isn't too proud to admit that sometimes muskie don't want his baits, so he uses other types of lures. The largest fish Bill

Bill pours epoxy over the lures and hangs them on his coating station.

ever landed was a 51" monster in Eagle Lake in Canada in 2001 with a Tallywacker lure.

"Muskie fishing has changed a lot since I started," says Bill. "Most of us practice 'catch and release' today. There are a lot more fish than ever, and now there are lakes with huge fish in them. When I started, lakes here didn't have many muskie to speak of, so stream fishing is what most people did. Not as many people stream fish nowadays because it is so much easier to unload in the lake and not have to drag your boat over riffles and sandbars. But I love stream fishing because you get to see lots of other wildlife as you fish."

Bill and Sharon have been very active advocates for their sport. Sharon is the current secretary / treasurer for the West Virginia Husky Musky Club, and Bill has served as president on two occasions. He was also instrumental in getting the first Muskies, Inc., club established in West Virginia in 1978. In addition, Bill was inducted into Muskies, Inc., Hall of Fame in 2003, and Sharon was inducted in 2014. Only two others from our state have been so honored.

Every fisherman can tell fish stories, and Bill has many. Some of the best ones don't involve catching fish but things that happen *while* fishing. Bill recalls one of these occasions, "Several years ago, a buddy and I were fishing in Canada, and he was slayin' the fish with this spinner bait, and it was getting damaged from all the hits it was takin'. He didn't have another, so one morning, we stopped at a bait shop, and he bought a similar bait, and he began taking pieces off the new bait to replace off the old. He fixed the bucktail and the spinner

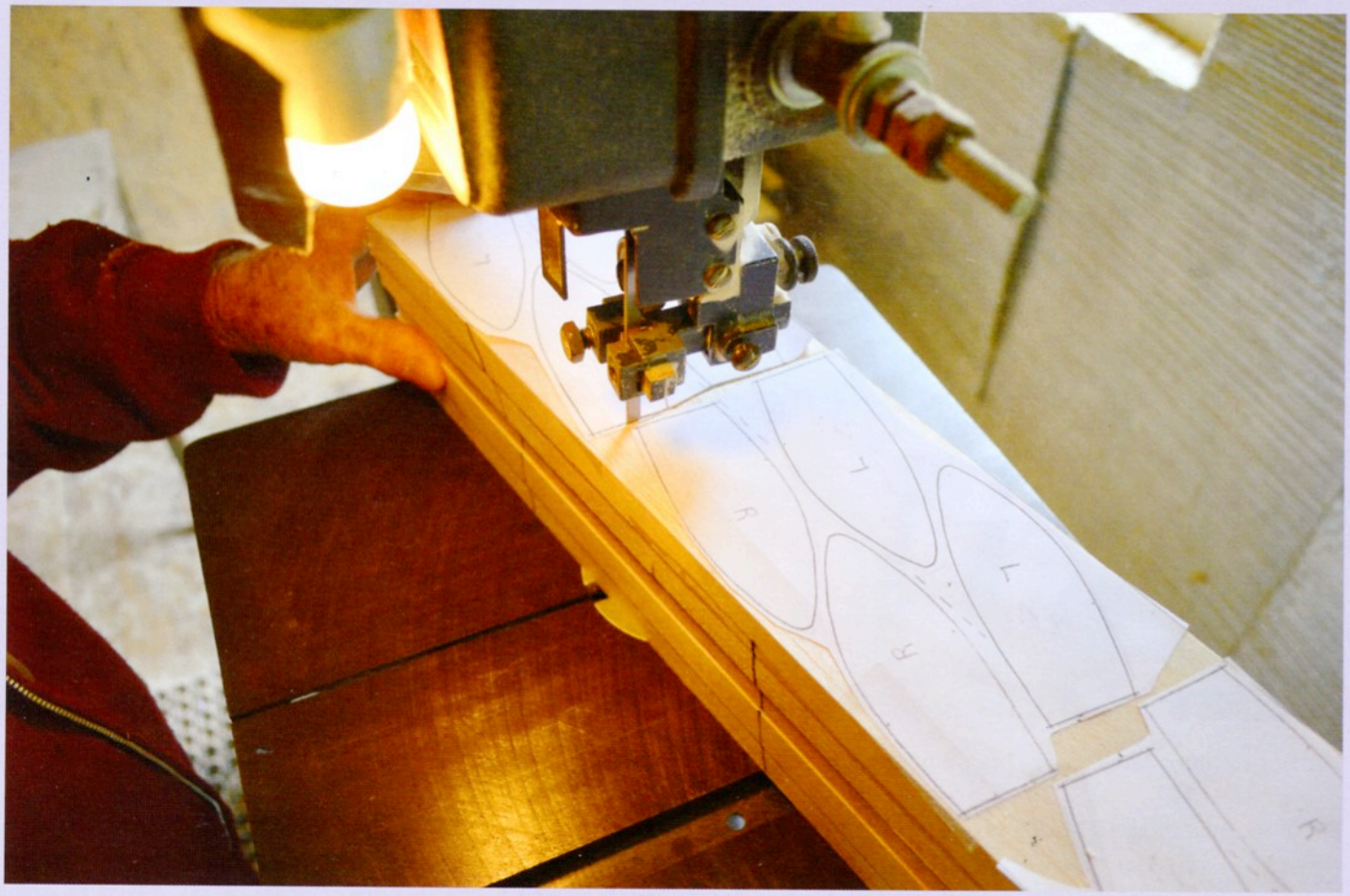
Bill likes to tinker with lures. These "holy moly" ones are part of his collection.

and shaped it just how he wanted, and he spent a couple hours fixin' up that bait. So we go out on the boat, and he takes his bait and sharpens the hooks. Now, a lot of us guys have this habit of after tyin' on our bait, we just toss it in the water and reel it in and start casting. Well, after sharpening the hooks, he just out of habit tossed the bait in the water. He yelled, 'No!' and I can still see that bait spinning its way to the bottom. He forgot to put it on the line. I laughed and laughed so hard my stomach hurt. He got mad at me for laughing and was upset the rest of the trip. He has gotten over it now, but he was aggravated at himself and at me for a while for laughing at what had happened."

Bill and Sharon gladly share their knowledge about making lures and advise those who want to make their own or learn about fishing. They plan on making baits as long as they're physically able. But the future of Crane's Custom Baits is unknown. "Maybe there is someone in the family who will want to take over," says Bill. "But if not, we will have to decide if we want to sell the business or let it dissolve. I believe a couple could take over and have a good business. But you have to enjoy making baits. If not, it becomes work and you won't keep doing it. But we have really enjoyed it. We have been fortunate to do something we enjoy, and it has been great to tinker with baits and experiment with changes and designs over the past 40 years. And we have met some of the nicest people in the world by getting in this sport and have made many good friends along the way."

DAVE VILLERS graduated from Pennsboro High School in 1977 and earned a chemical engineering diploma in 1983 from WVU before working as an engineer at Chemours in Washington (Wood County). He lives near Pennsboro. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Making Crane Baits



Bill cuts out blanks for his lures with his bandsaw.

It all starts in Bill Crane's workshop. "We buy balsa wood from Colorado," Bill explains, "and it comes in 36"-long boards that are ½" thick and 4" wide. Six or eight boards are stacked together. Then Sharon lightly glues the sides and ends so the boards stay stacked together. She then glues paper patterns on the stacks to follow while cutting out the blank lures. I use a bandsaw to cut the lures out, six or eight at a time."

Bill cuts a groove along the lure's entire underside, where he installs a wire to connect the treble hooks and leader to the lure. This through-wire is important because, as Bill notes, "if a fish destroys the balsa while hooked, it still can be caught because the wire will still be intact."

He routs the lure to eliminate sharp corners and offer a more realistic appearance of a fish with a rounded back and belly. Bill cuts a lip on the lure and drills holes on the underside at the appropriate locations and depth to hold the lead. As Bill notes, the lead "is needed to give the lure weight for the proper action and for casting, but it also helps secure the wire in the lure." For the lips, Bill uses Lexan, which he purchases in sheets and cuts into strips of varying widths depending on the size needed.

He then moves the operation to his grandfather's house, where he's converted an old upstairs bedroom for base-coating purposes. Bill dips each lure in either white or yellow base primer and then hangs them

Sharon paints through a bridal veil to create the look of scales on the lures.

In the final stage, the lures are placed on a drying rack—about 800 in this production run.

on the hooks to dry. During this step, he dips hundreds of lures. Sharon then paints them with an airbrush.

"Most of the colors I use," Sharon notes, "are mixed rather than standard colors. I try to duplicate the natural colors that a muskie will see in its environment. But we will paint lures whatever color a customer desires." Bill adds, "We have painted colors that catch fish but don't sell well. Not only does our lure have to look good to the fish, but it also has to look good to the customer or it won't sell. We have caught fish on blue, purple, and mint-green lures, but put them in a store and they don't sell well. But there are some guys out there who especially request blue and purple baits, and we make them as they request."

Sharon paints anywhere from 70 to 100 at a time and tries to use the same color scheme for each session to avoid cleaning her airbrush or changing paint colors too frequently. She paints the top half of each lure an accent color and then adds black bars using a slotted template to keep them evenly spaced with crisp, defined edges. She replicates the look of fish scales by spraying gold paint through a bridal veil; paints the back, head, and throat freehand; and uses round templates to paint the eyes.

For some models, Sharon applies holoform decals to the body. She refers to the various patterns as green perch, fire tiger, walleye, black/silver, and white/silver. Most lures are then taken back to the workshop to glue on the lips and apply a final, clear, epoxy coating that waterproofs the lure and gives it a tough, attractive finish.

The two-part epoxy can't be sprayed or brushed on easily. Bill pours it over the top half and then holds its lip while he dips the bottom half. He then hangs each coated lure above his workstation to allow excess epoxy to run off. Sharon attaches the coated lure by its lip to a rotating wheel resembling a sternwheeler paddle. The wheel allows the lure to continually change its orientation, eliminating the problem of epoxy drying at the bottom and forming a non-uniform coating.

"We have a hard time keeping up with our orders, so we are always doing something in our lure-making process," says Bill. "I may be cutting out lures or making wires while Sharon may be painting a batch. But we try to keep from having our customers wait too long. But sometimes, we get flooded with orders, and it takes a while for just the two of us to keep up with the demand. Hopefully, we can continue to do so." —Dave Villers

One Man's Treasure
Dr. Elmer Myers and a Blue Plastic File Box

By Barbara Smith

Elmer Myers was born in Nestorville (Barbour County) on January 11, 1907, accompanied by a twin sister, Edna. They had three brothers, two older and one younger. Their father was J. W. Myers [see Spring 2005], a legendary medical pioneer and a Tucker County native. Their mother, Lennie, was also a native West Virginian, second only to her husband in developing a medical dynasty that survives today as Myers Clinic, Broaddus Hospital, and the medical programs at Alderson Broaddus University. The Myers' grandfather was William Johnson, who supervised construction of the Beverly-Fairmont Pike (part of U.S. 250 today).

All five of J. W. Myers' offspring became physicians. Hu specialized in surgery, Karl in radiology, Junior in ophthalmology, Elmer in pathology and microscopy, and Edna in obstetrics and gynecology. All of them joined the staff of Myers Clinic and Hospital, built by their parents, but Edna and Junior eventually moved to Washington, D.C., and Ohio, respectively.

In terms of Dr. Elmer Myers' long list of medical accomplishments, he led many professional organizations; invented or designed lab instruments, such as a "laboratory shaking machine": and improved patient equipment, such as a "rocking bed." He generously shared his ideas and inventions, some of which are still used today.

Raised in what his sister-in-law Avanelle Myers described in her book *The House of Myers* as a "strict, disciplined Christian home," Elmer, in 1951, married Mallador Shaffer of Nestorville. They parented four children, including Jean, a current Philippi resident. "Elmer," says Avanelle, "was a perfectionist."

Dr. Elmer Myers (1907 – 1962). All images courtesy of Jean Myers Daddysman unless noted otherwise.

He had "his eye on the highest rung of the ladder and kept climbing." He was only 55 when he died.

Elmer's interests extended well beyond medicine, including architecture, astronomy, engineering, folklore, and, especially, history. He even collected exotic artifacts, some of them acquired while he was in the medical corps during World War II. He was a pilot and

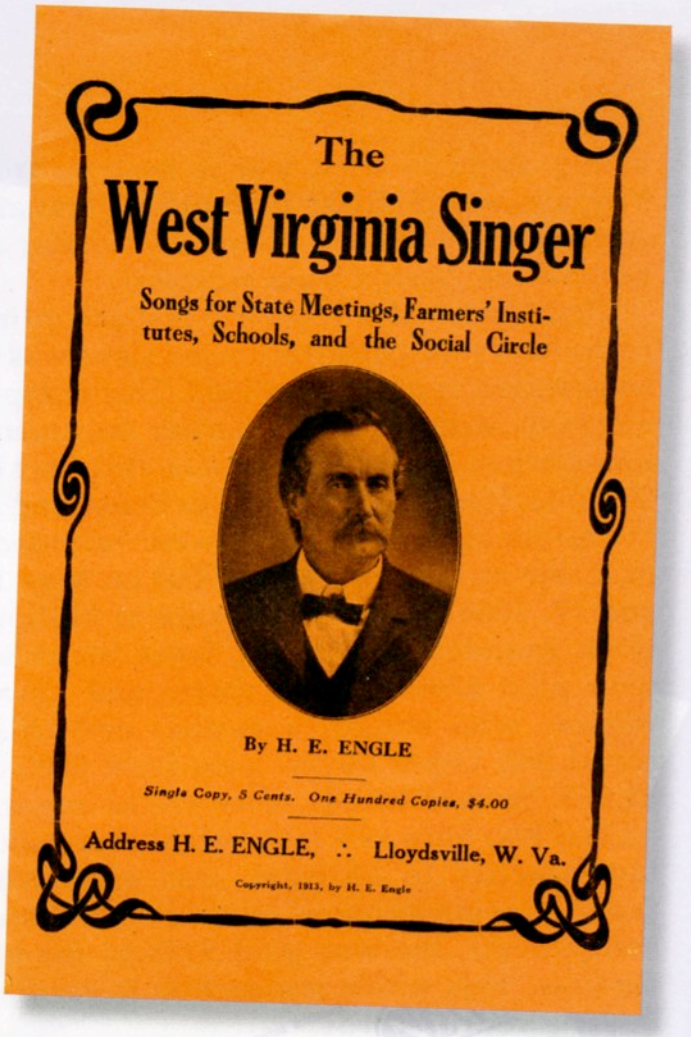
had his own plane, and he was a civic leader, chairing events and collecting memorabilia related to street fairs and the Battle of Philippi, one of the Civil War's first land battles. He also knew the story of every board used to build the Philippi Covered Bridge.

Sylvia Markley of Philippi knew Dr. Myers and said of him, "He was a community leader, and I suspect that he never wanted to be a doctor. He was a true professional in his labs, however, a fine pathologist." Richard Crawford, also a Philippian, served Dr. Myers as a medical photographer and fellow historian. He says, "He was a wonderful man, really my mentor. We met in 1947 after I read a paper at a meeting of the Academy of Science Club at the high school. He was there. After high school, I went to Waynesburg [Penn.] and was working in a studio there, but Dr. Elmer called and asked me to come to Philippi for an interview. I came back . . . as an apprentice medical photographer under Dr. Elmer and took all kinds of photos—surgery, autopsies, radiology, the whole deal."

Richard smiles as he recalls a trip by station wagon to photograph all the old houses along the Beverly-Fairmont Pike, a keen interest of Dr. Myers. "He was brilliant, a man of unlimited interests," Richard sighs. "When he died so suddenly, we lost a great friend and a wonderful man."

Elmer worked in Broaddus Hospital, Myers Clinic, and the college medical programs, in which he taught for some years. He also gathered historic documents, many of which have been kept by his daughter, Jean Myers Daddysman, in file cabinets at her home. Some of particular value have been stored in a blue plastic file box. Tan-and-green and blue folders demonstrate his extensive interests: "Civil War," "Henry Engle," "Consolidated Coal Company," "Blue and Gray," and so on.

One document in the "Formation of West Virginia" folder was written by Kyle McCormack, the former state archivist. Dr.



In Dr. Myers' collection was a book of songs (1913) composed by Henry E. Engle, who wrote the music to our oldest official state song, "The West Virginia Hills"; the words are credited to Ellen Ruddell King.

Myers' handwritten note from 1961 indicates he was helping the state prepare for the Civil War centennial. The document includes a map of the original plan for West Virginia; there were to be 39 counties, but McCormack said, "For reasons of military protection or for the protection of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, eleven other counties were added: McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Greenbrier, Pocahontas, Pendleton, Hardy, Hampshire, Berkeley, Jefferson, Morgan." Five counties were added *after* the state was formed.

An interesting note indicates that during the 1850s, Virginia borrowed $50 million to improve roads, railroads, and other infrastructure elements. However, the only

money spent in what was to become West Virginia was $25,000 to build a "Lunatic Asylum West of the Allegheny"—later to become the Weston State Hospital.

McCormack also reported that according to the new state constitution, no slave was to be assessed at more than $300. This sharply contrasts with a slightly earlier document, dated when West Virginia was still part of Virginia. It states that 10 slaves belonging to the estate of William Boner were "divided" in a sale at the Pruntytown Jail on May 10 and 17, 1860. Several were sold to Philippi town founders, including Isaac Strickler, who paid $760 for one slave, and Lewis Wilson, who bought a mother and child for $1,080. Other buyers paid from $300 to $1,065. Samuel Woods, who would become a Civil War hero and later establish a major law practice in Philippi, was appointed "special commissioner" over the sales and assignments. He was paid $173.60 for his services. This whole transaction is verified in early court records.

The "Jail in Pruntytown" folder includes an item titled "The Freeing of the First Slaves in the United States." It claims that slaves who'd been held in the Pruntytown Jail were the first to be freed following the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which legally did not apply to West Virginia because our state was *not* in rebellion against the United States. Against the protests of Sheriff William Morris, six slaves were freed, put on a train, and sent to Ohio.

The "Civil War" folder includes eyewitness accounts of the Battle of Philippi and several issues of the *Valley News* newspaper, published by Potomac Edison, "to arouse interest" in the region's historic events.

Other items include souvenirs from events Elmer Myers chaired. Some of these show just how much times have changed. For instance, at major events regarding the Civil War centennial, the local committee brought in celebrities, such as famed radio news commentator Cedric Foster. A half-century *earlier*, the city had observed the war's 50th anniversary. While the program for that celebration lists President William Howard Taft as the keynote speaker, opinions differ as to whether or not he actually appeared. On the other hand, there *is* firm evidence that the centennial program included the ascension of a gas balloon and street fairs with twice-daily performances by Captain McEarl McDonald diving from the top of a 65-foot ladder into a "flaming tank of water 12 feet in diameter and 6 feet deep."

Also in his collection was this booklet commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Philippi (1911).

Dr. Myers gave generous recognition to and kept records about many local people, including politicians Arthur Dayton and Judge Ira Robinson; educators Richard Shearer and Clarence Kemper; modern agriculturalist W. D. Zinn; businessman Phineas Quinn; Ida Reed, who wrote and published more than 2,000 hymns; and Henry Engle, who cowrote "The West Virginia Hills." One of the most interesting people he researched was Dr. James Reeves, a Philippi-based nationally known pioneer in public health who founded the West Virginia Medical Society.

Surprising pieces of history in the Myers Collection are copies of the first and second drafts of Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, published in 1950 by the Library of Congress. An introduction indicates there were only five original copies. Lincoln gave one to his secretary, John Hay. At least one was presented to the Library of Congress by Hay's children.

Just a portion of Dr. Elmer Myers' collection. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Another copy was given to Edward Everett, who gave the keynote address on that historic day. The fourth and fifth copies were offered for sale at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Fair in Baltimore in 1864.

Dr. Elmer Myers was an outstanding physician; a good husband, son, and father; a devout church member; and a civic leader. He was also, at a surprisingly young age, a correspondent with state and local celebrities. One folder includes letters to and from such individuals as Senators Robert C. Byrd and Jennings Randolph, Congressmen Harley Staggers and Walter Judd (from Minn.), Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, newsmen Edward R. Morrow and Lowell Thomas, Harry Truman's Vice President Alben Barkley, and Presidents Herbert Hoover and Dwight Eisenhower.

Soon, Dr. Elmer Myers' historic collection will become part of Philippi's Covered Bridge Museum, where the items will be inventoried, labeled, and displayed appropriately. How many treasures like this have been thrown away or stored out of sight and out of mind? Much history will be lost forever because many people fail to realize what they have in their own attics or basements. In terms of interest and value, one person's simple memorabilia may indeed be a historical treasure.

BARBARA SMITH of Philippi has written and published poems, short stories, nonfiction, and novels, the most recent of which is *Winging It*. She is professor emeritus at Alderson Broaddus University, where she chaired the Division of Humanities. This is Barbara's 20th contribution to GOLDENSEAL. Her first article appeared in our Winter 1984 issue, and her most recent was in Spring 2018.

A strip-mine operation near Keith (Boone County) about 1969. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA), Si Galperin Jr. Collection.

"Ask for more than you'll settle for"
The Strip-Mining Fight

By Michael Evans Snyder

The strip mining of coal was something many of us grew up with. On a small scale, strip—or surface—mining dates back before recorded history. But on a larger industrial basis, it started in the early 20th century and kept expanding as machines grew more powerful. By the 1960s, the practice was expanding rapidly.

The process involves stripping the soil, rock, vegetation, and other elements overlaying a coal seam—known as *overburden*—and removing the coal directly with massive equipment. This process benefited coal companies because it required less labor than traditional deep, or underground, mining, and prior to the 1970s, the practice was only loosely regulated. In time, strip mining left behind scarred footprints in our once verdant hills. Bonds were so low that only token reclamation—post-mining rehabilitation of the land—was done. Instead, the overburden was seen as a waste product, dumped over hillsides, damming up creeks and gathering in watersheds at the feet of our hills.

Many citizens in the coalfields, where non-coal-related jobs were scarce, accepted the denuded hillsides. "That's just the way it's done" was the common mindset. My

Mike's anti-strip-mining group used this logo on bumper stickers and other items. All images courtesy of our author unless noted otherwise.

native Harrison County witnessed plenty of strip mining and status-quo attitudes about it. Beginning in the late 1960s, some West Virginians wanted to stop this environmental travesty; even many deep miners opposed stripping because it required only a fraction of the labor of traditional mining. As a reporter for the Charleston *Gazette* (now *Gazette-Mail*), I was in a position to do something about it. It rankled me that our environment editor, who was from out of state, seemed unaware of the issue at first; however, she later wrote about the topic.

As a native West Virginian who loved our mountains, I began pushing strip mining into the public eye. One day, I asked Congressman Ken Hechler if strip mining should be abolished. Ken, ever the maverick, immediately answered in the affirmative. I soon had myself a very relevant article. After some time, I ventured over to the state Department of Natural Resources and interviewed the director, Ira Latimer. I asked him if a little-known aesthetic clause in the existing surface mining laws could ever be enacted if a strip mine threatened the beauty of a state park. He said it could. When this news hit the paper, it made political waves, not only with the powers-that-be but also with *Gazette* statehouse reporter Don Marsh, who told me to stay away from his beat.

Meanwhile, labor leader Arnold Miller, Andrew "Andy" MacQueen—a young lawyer and later judge—and I started an anti-strip mining *ad hoc* committee: Mountaineers Against Strip Mining. An annual meeting of state surface mine operators was on tap at Charleston's swanky Daniel Boone Hotel. VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)-led workers from the southern coalfields and Andy demonstrated outside. Since the turnout was low, strip-mine operators discounted the protest as inconsequential, but I duly recorded it in the *Gazette*. Our fledgling strip mine abolition movement was off to a start.

I also wrote an article suggesting that Secretary of State Jay Rockefeller was too soft on strip mining. Shortly afterward, Rockefeller concluded that the destructive practice should be abolished, and we found common ground over a common cause. Our side had some initial misgivings about Jay because he wasn't "one of us"—that is, a native West Virginian. Admittedly, though, his stature and the people he activated put the strip-mining fight front and center in the media. Our movement was now big news.

But we also had other political backers. In 1966, Kanawha County's Si Galperin Jr. had been elected to the House of Delegates. Four years later, he ran for the state Senate on an anti-strip-mining platform against fellow legislator James Jeter, whose campaign was supported by coal money. On the eve of the 1970 election, Marsh broke a story about Jeter's financial backing, based on research uncovered by reporter Mike White and me. Galperin defeated Jeter and prepared to introduce legislation completely abolishing strip mining in West Virginia.

I was soon fired from the *Gazette* because my hot temper got me in trouble, so I entered

the strip-mining fight full time. When I cleaned out my desk, my rubber stamp for marking Mountaineers Against Strip Mining correspondence was gone.

In December 1970, a month after Galperin's senate election, different factions of our movement gathered in Charleston and set up an office on Duffy Street, across from the capitol. Heading it was Presbyterian minister Richard Cartwright Austin, who'd been an environmental activist in the Pennsylvania coalfields. In 1966, he'd become director of the West Virginia Mountain Project, headquartered in Boone County's Big Coal River Valley; he led this group until his retirement in 1999. Austin, Rockefeller's choice for the role, led the new coalition: Citizens Against Strip Mining.

I soon hooked up with Joe Cook, a former Charleston insurance man who was working for the governor's Office of Planning. Joe, a Boone Countian, detested strip mining as much as I did. Clay County musician John Morris came on board, and we started our campaign. I moved into Joe's apartment, where John became a frequent guest. About the same time, Citizens Against Strip Mining launched a full-time campaign.

I became the coalition's chief lobbyist, taking our case to the legislature when it met in January 1971. I also did some organizing, but much of this fell onto Joe's shoulders because he'd done such a good job in Boone County. Various and sundry others came and went, including the Morris Brothers band; Marcia Peterson; artist Vivian "Shorty" Smith; Cherie Cundiff, Bonnie Bibb, and Bill McKinney of Wyoming County; and Jill Smith, who'd become my wife that summer. These names come to mind most readily because they were at the forefront, but there were many, some more visible than others.

We held a rally in the Scott High School gym in Madison. It was packed with deep miners and supporters cheering their heads off for our cause, and I let'em have it full bore. Afterward, a rough, hardworking miner

Mike Snyder about 1969, at his desk at the Charleston *Gazette*.

with a grip of iron shook my hand and said, "Banty, if you're ever in Boone County and need a place to stay, you got'er, buddy!" That man's way of telling me I was appreciated meant a lot, and I'll never forget it. In fact, Joe nicknamed me "Banty Rooster," and it stuck.

At various rallies, David and John Morris performed [see Spring 2011], and Shorty drew pictures with chalk on a huge artist's tablet and easel. None of us had any money, but we took our grassroots movement to the capitol and tied up the 1971 legislature for two months.

Our voice had been heard statewide for weeks. Now it was the strip miners' turn. On January 20, 1971, the surface mining association and other industry leaders shut

Si Galperin led the anti-strip mining movement in the legislature. Here, he visits a strip-mine site, likely in Kanawha or Boone counties, about 1970. Courtesy of the WVSA, Si Galperin Collection.

down every strip mine in the state and put out a call for miners to march on the capitol. They arrived in full force.

The Duffy Street headquarters closed that day, and we suddenly had far fewer supporters than we'd had in months. There were a few of us, including a handful of Boone County deep miners, protesting strip mining. But we were far outnumbered, and there wasn't a single state trooper or lawman to be seen. Governor Arch Moore had seen to that. The strip miners began pouring in. I had my suit on, carrying my briefcase; it was business as usual as far as I was concerned. I'd estimate there were several thousand of them.

Our side wore small signs with a fragmented outline of the state and the words *Ban Strip Mining*. The strip miners' signs said things like, "OUR jobs are at stake TODAY. Will YOURS be tomorrow?" I remember some of them really harassing a few deep miners who were protesting with us. One Boone County miner who I really respected was mocked and insulted. The miners on our side wisely knew when to call it a day.

It wasn't long before the strip miners discovered me. At first, the debate was civil. We argued our respective merits, and then, the crowd started closing in around me. Tensions mounted as the pro-strip miners grew louder and more strident. I was very nervous but controlled myself so it wouldn't be evident. Before getting completely engulfed, I saw my friend, artist Joe Mullins, leaning against a

CITIZENS TO ABOLISH STRIP MINING

"PUT IT BACK TOGETHER"

207 Duffy Street
Charleston, W. Va. 25311

next to the State Capitol
Phone: 346-2177

FEBRUARY 1971

PAGE ONE

Look out, West Virginia!

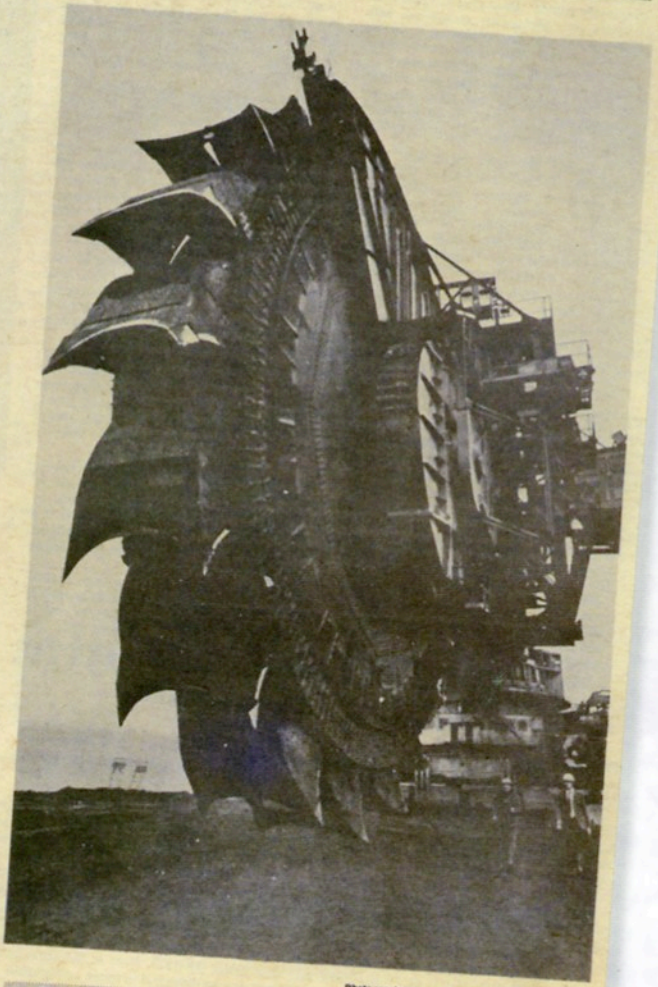


Photo reprinted from "Life" Magazine, Nov. 20, 1970

Photo by USDA - Soil Conservation Service

On the inside

The anti-strip-mine forces published their own newspaper, with columns by our author; future legislator "Si" John Boettner Jr.; Robert Leo Smith, professor of Wildlife Management at WVU; and others.

wall debating a small group. Then, suddenly, I couldn't see Joe or really anything other than a mass of people. I don't remember any threats, but their tone, manner, and words were distinctly belligerent. By this time, my back was up against the second-floor balustrade surrounding the rotunda under the capitol dome.

Finally, an older man, very excited and agitated, got in my face and told me how hard he'd had to work all his life. And then he put his hands in my face. "Look at these hands! Look at these hands!" he cried out. My knees had been shaking for some time; his cries did nothing to slow them down. It crossed my mind that nothing could stop the throng from throwing me over the balustrade and plummeting down below to the first floor.

Just as their hands made contact with me, I heard a voice say loudly, "I think Mike's heard enough now, men." It was a strip-mine operator from Bridgeport (in my native Harrison County) who knew me. At the sound of his voice, the crowd pulled back and parted. As he walked up, everyone began to disperse. I don't recall thanking him as I wasn't in a frame of mind to do so, but I was extremely relieved to have emerged safely in one piece. I can't say that anyone deliberately wanted to do me bodily harm, but it could've come to that given the tensions, their frame of mind, and mob psychology. Thankfully, I was delivered by a man with an entirely opposite viewpoint of mine, just because I knew him from back home—a very West Virginian thing that's hard for others to understand.

Delegations kept pouring in, particularly from the southern coalfields. Arnold Miller, who'd soon topple Tony Boyle and the United Mine Workers of America's corrupt national leadership, pointed out one person to me in particular: "See that man standing there? He's Tony Boyle's hit man, and he's packing a gun." This was barely a year after Boyle had ordered the murder of his UMWA opponent, Jock Yablonski, and his family [see Fall 2018].

I remember one Logan County man very well who came out to support us several times. "Big John" Bailey walked on crutches, but he showed up that day. He was all southern West Virginia, with an accent to prove it. A rough-and-tumble miner, he carried a pistol as well. "Rooster," he said, "the missus wants me to meet Mr. Rockyfeller." Jay's office was always open whenever I showed up, and I escorted Big John in. I don't know who enjoyed the meeting most, Big John or the young secretary of state. Just over a year later, Big John would die in the horrendous Buffalo Creek flood—largely due to unlawful strip-mining practices—on February 26, 1972. He was 58.

In one of the final votes of the 1971 session, the legislature, by a large majority, voted down Galperin's bill to abolish strip mining entirely. But the legislature did pass a wide-sweeping Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation Act. It called for restoring the original contours of hills that had been stripped and substantially increased the required bonding to eliminate the hit-and-run abandonment of mine sites.

Surface mining—now in the form of more invasive mountaintop removal mining—continues to be a major environmental issue. Looking back, our abolition movement was defeated, but it definitely spurred the legislature to act, kick-starting some significant reforms. My father, Enoch, was president of a glassworkers' union in Clarksburg. He negotiated many wage settlements without ever calling a strike. He once advised me to "*always ask for more than you'll settle for.*" Looking back, our successes were meager, but it was a start—all because we asked for more than we really thought we'd get. Our movement made national news and spread to coalfields in other states. Then, in 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed the powerful Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act to better regulate working mines and reclaim abandoned ones.

Mike Snyder
Self-Proclaimed Contrarian

By Tom Rice

Michael Evans Snyder is very much a contrarian, as reflected in his self-published memoir *Bury Me in West Virginia: Memoirs of a Mountaineer*, available through Amazon as a Kindle e-book. In his writing and life, he exhibits blunt honesty that can, at times, rankle people. I have a soft spot for contrarians, especially those who are West Virginia trout fishermen.

Any person who describes his entry into the world as being "born under the Hunter's Moon," who refers to being buried in West Virginia in the title of his memoirs, and who lives in a remote mountainous area like Job (near where British Tories hid during the Revolutionary War) either has moonshine flowing through his veins or is purely, simply, passionately in love with the Mountain State. Knowing Mike, I'm pretty sure it isn't moonshine, although his memoir does include a good recipe.

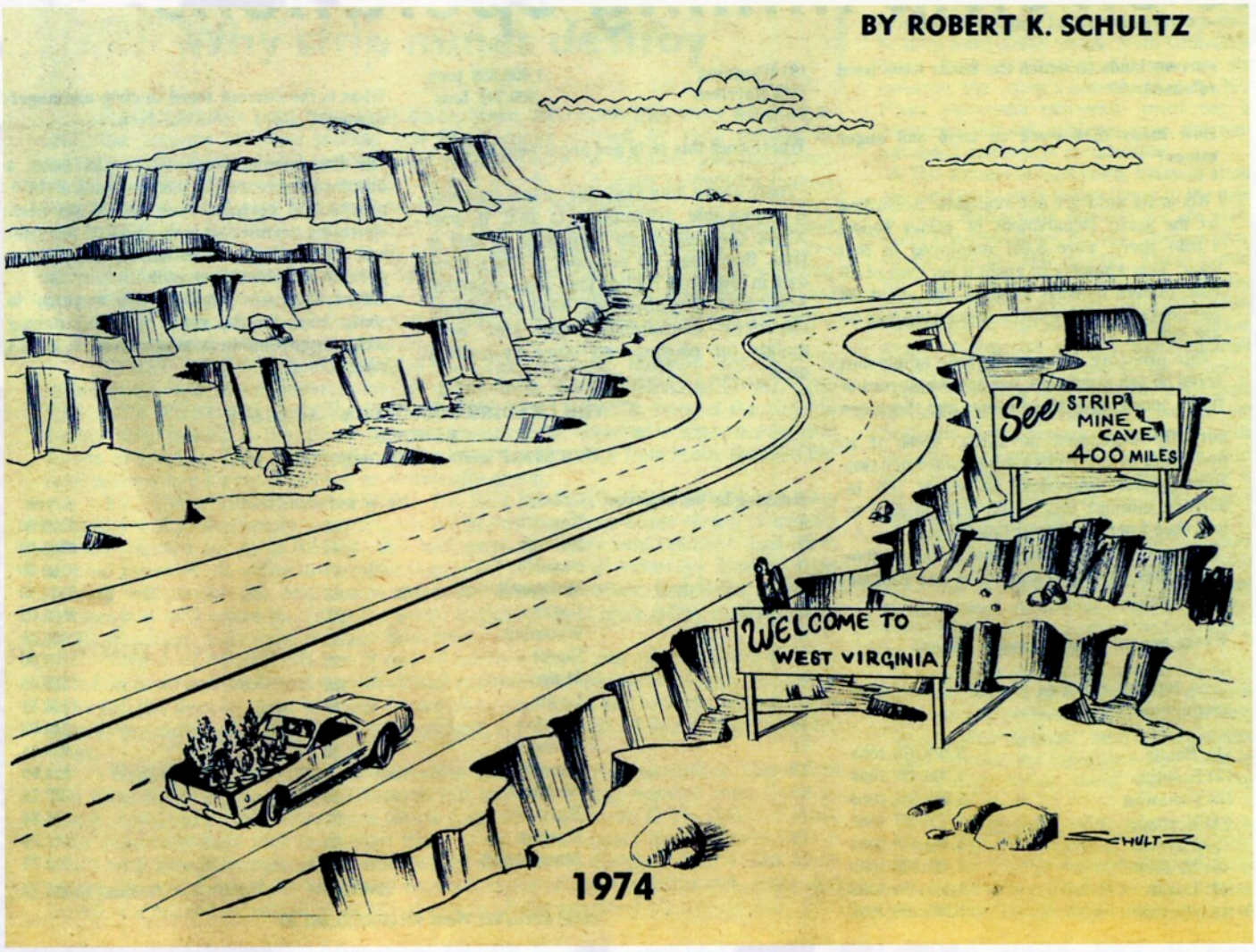
Mike is one of the few people I know who can match the love of my own father, Tom Rice [see Winter 2018], for West Virginia. Both were born in Harrison County but ended up in Randolph County. Both became teachers and writers and love the out-of-doors. My dad taught me how and where to fish for trout; Mike taught hundreds of people how and where to fly-fish for trout. Both were members of Trout Unlimited and worked on various stream-improvement projects together. At this point in his life, though, Mike is likely just to say, "There's the river. Here's a pole. Good luck."

Mike and his very accommodating and accomplished wife, Jill, live in a beautiful house (formerly a Mennonite church). They developed their deep Christian faith by becoming part of the Mennonite community many years ago. It wasn't until a trip to Alaska in 2018 that I came to appreciate Mike's vast influence.

Mike Snyder today, working on a piece of art in his blacksmith shop. Photo by Jill Snyder.

While getting gas in Eagle River, the WVU sticker on my car caught the attention of a young guy who was also filling up. He was a saltwater fishing guide from Florida, and our conversation quickly turned to trout fishing. He said he'd learned to fly-fish in West Virginia from someone named Mike Snyder. Clearly, he thought the world of Mike and considered him to be like a grandfather.

A visit this summer to Mike and Jill's abode familiarized me with his amazing blacksmithing skills. He also told me about when he, an acquaintance, and a couple of sorority girls—all WVU students—went on a double-date road trip. The acquaintance was a pretty good basketball player named Jerry West. Maybe that's fodder for another GOLDENSEAL story.



Artist Robert K. Schultz also contributed to the anti-strip-mining newspaper. This cartoon by him alludes to strip mining's potential negative impact on our state's scenic tourism industry.

Shortly after our battle, I left the Mountain State to study blacksmithing in Santa Fe. One day, my brakes gave out. Fortunately, my car hit a curb and stopped. A fellow student from my smithing school inspected my car and said, "Someone's got it in for you, man. Your brake lines have been cut almost through in four places."

At the end of summer 1971, I moved to a sheep farm back on Laurel Fork in Randolph County. Jill, my new bride, and I brought my tools, a few possessions, a shepherd dog, and a Springfield .30-06 rifle. A few months later, we were saved in a little Mennonite Church on Middle Mountain, and the past slowly drifted away. I eventually became a teacher and spent 35 rewarding years in the schools of Randolph and Tucker counties, but I'll never forget those trying days at the capitol nearly a half-century ago.

MICHAEL EVANS SNYDER, A.B., M.A., WVU, is a writer and blacksmith-sculptor who lives on the Dry Fork near Harman (Randolph County). A retired teacher, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, operated a fly-fishing school, and initiated a successful effort to create an *In God We Trust* state license plate. He's a direct descendant of John Snider, Indian captive and early Monongalia County pioneer. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL. His first was in our second issue ever (July-September 1975): "J. E. Dillon: Master Blacksmith."

Strip Mining: Where Are We Headed

By Michael Evans Snyder

(1970 flyer, originally with the author anonymous –ed.)

If a poll was taken to list West Virginia's greatest disgrace, strip (auger and surface) mining would top the list. Running a close second would be West Virginians ourselves, for our apathy is costing us what is most priceless and beloved of all—our West Virginia hills.

Sometimes you really can't see what the hills and our people mean until you can't get back home—where your heart is . . . longing for the hills, mountains, and streams and our people.

We are what we are because the hills have made us this way. Our way of life is directly plugged into that hill or mountain you saw out the window as you grew up.

Is that old knob still there for others to look at, to see and climb, and to feel in their hearts—linking them forever with the source of life itself—the land?

Or has it been strip mined. Torn beyond recognition. Lying raped and dead, an unknowing skeleton, spewing forth red acid from its desecrated springs into the mud-filled flats that once was a clean, fresh stream.

Remember when it started? We scarcely knew what was happening. Led by Pennsylvanians, the big machines came in for coal to win the war. And after the war, with not a single law to stop them, they kept right on going until scarcely a county remains unscarred. And some are just about finished.

Like Boone, like McDowell, and Logan, like Harrison and Kanawha, like Marion, Upshur, Raleigh, Fayette, and all of the 30 counties the strippers are currently ravaging.

Just who are the strippers? You probably know some yourself. Some even hold public office—like Sen. Tracy Hylton, D-Wyoming, and Rep. John M. Slack, Jr., a former stripper.

By the strippers' own count, there are only 3,600 of them—less than 1% of the state's working men. They in turn work for about 250 companies which range in size from three to 330 men.

Arnold Miller, a miner from Ohley, in Kanawha County, and treasurer of the Black Lung Association, pointed out that these workers are predominately from out-of-state. And they are skilled heavy equipment operators who have no trouble finding work. Less than a dozen of them can strip practically any hill or mountain in this state.

They produce about 11% of all the coal mined in West Virginia. Coal that can and should come from deep mines. As a result, there would be more jobs for miners and the surface land would be saved. But the percentage of strip mine permits is up 25% over last year and increasing even faster.

Why? "Because we need the coal," the strip miners say.

Who needs the coal? "You do—for your electricity," they say.

Can't they get it from deep mines and leave our hills and streams alone? "It's safer and quicker by stripping," they reply.

Is it good for McDowell County's economy—a county which produced the third highest total of stripped coal in 1968—1,466,062 tons?

Then why does McDowell have one of the lowest per capita incomes, so many one-room schools, and one of the highest out-migration rates? And how many tourists spend their vacations there? No answer this time.

The strip miners say how good their "business" is for us. But only they benefit from it. We do not get one penny in severance taxes on any kind of coal mined here. The highest severance tax ever proposed (not passed) is 50 cents per ton. Based on the 16,703,461 tons stripped in 1968, this would only bring in $8,351,730.50. Can $8 million compensate for the horrors of strip mining even in the poorest

county? Who can say how many countless millions have been lost on potential investors, tourism, and to the future? A future that requires good land and water, which is priceless.

"I don't think a separate tax on surface mining replaces or justifies the destruction of the land, the pollution, and the damage to health and property that surface mining causes," said Del. Si Galperin, D-Kanawha, who if elected in his campaign for the Senate, promises to introduce legislation to outlaw strip mining. But how many Galperins are there?

And where was the legislature until they passed the 1967 Surface Mining Act? Any law which permits stripping is unjust, so it is not a model law as we're told. The 1967 act lets them strip any mountain under a 65% slope . . . sparing only the very steepest.

The $300 bond per acre the stripper must post can't reclaim the destruction. In many cases no vegetation can ever grow back because of the carbon and acid in the soil. And no provision is made for off-site damage—like the millions of dollars in flood damage caused in the Coal River basin alone in 1969-70.

In 10 years, strip mine erosion will fill up the Coal River, leaving St. Albans without a water supply, and no defense against flooding. This was revealed this year by officials from the Dept. of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The cost to the taxpayers to dig it out is $5,000 a mile, but residents were told it would fill back up too quickly to be effective.

Averill Ramsey, the city's mayor, says he will ask the legislature to outlaw strip mining in an attempt to save the river.

Also the act sets no limit to how steep the spoilbank must be leveled off. As a result they often slide away despite revegetation attempts, choking to death yet another stream.

The Dept. of Natural Resources can refuse permits where there is an aesthetic danger to scenic or recreation areas. This has only been used once: To stop the ruin of Grandview State Park's beautiful vista, and the action is still tied up in the courts. It also says it can be stopped where there is danger to human life and property. Yet the destruction continues, the law unenforceable.

What is the price of the Three Forks of the Williams River in the Monongahela National Forest—it's at the top of the strippers' list. Or majestic Cheat Mountain in beautiful Pocahontas County, where the strippers are now at work?

But the shameful highwalls remain, crumbling mud and rock, the only remainder left—and no amount of money can cover up a highwall or rebuild a mountain.

Two Kentucky counties, Knott and Henderson, have outlawed stripping to save what little remains—how many county courts have done this in West Virginia?

Our state is being destroyed and we're letting it happen. Where will the hills be for our children? What is their legacy, what will West Virginia be like then? Why not outlaw strip mining? Aren't our hills worth it?

We must pressure the legislators. We must sue the strippers in the courts. We must get the county courts to act. We must fight. Each and every one of us must speak out. If the lawmakers don't listen, then we must throw them out and get someone who loves the land as we do.

But it will only happen if we are heard. Every church, civic, professional, school, and social organization must speak out. Every hunter, fisherman, farmer, coal miner, factory and office worker, student, housewife and pensioner—from every corner of West Virginia—we must be heard. And we must be heard now. And we must be heard loudest in January by the legislature.

If you do not speak out, you are helping the strippers destroy our West Virginia, the only homeland we've got. . . . And you will have sold your soul.

Mountaineers Are Always Free

By Mike Morningstar©

Now I was born a West Virginian, my family roots branch thru the state and
My grandma lies beside her mother in that cold Wirt County slate
Ever since I was a little baby, I've been livin' in these hills and
I've been playin' in these waters, 'fore I'd see it gone I'd rather kill

Don't take these hills, don't change these waters
Always let their beauty be
As long as we have got our homeland
Mountaineers are always free

Oh I was raised by the Ohio River, but the woodland streams I've always loved
I'd walk barefoot in their clear water with those silent skies above
I've always loved the rollin' mountain, the Indian hen, and hollow beech
And sweetest pawpaw and persimmon, hangin' only out of reach

Don't take these hills, don't change these waters
Always let their beauty be
As long as we have got our homeland then
Mountaineers are always free

Oh my granddad worked on the farm and railroad, my daddy the farm and the factory
Lord, if I'd lose this land I live on, where in God's name would my children be
I've heard you speak the words of progress in those shattered hills that lie
Like broken bones, teeth of the mountains grinning at your smoke-filled sky

Don't take these hills, don't change these waters
Always let their beauty be
As long as we have got our homeland then
Mountaineers are always free

When I see her beauty sometimes I wonder of the beauty gone before
But the West Virginia of my granddad, I know it's gone forever more
But when I am gone and long forgotten when my grandson's children have grown old
May the ancient hills of West Virginia remain as young as they are old

Don't take these hills, don't change these waters
Always let their beauty be
Just as long as we have got our homeland then
Mountaineers are always free
Just as long as we have got our homeland those
Mountaineers are always free

Mike Morningstar (right) plays harmonica, accompanied by multi-instrumentalist and singer/songwriter Dustin McCray. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Mountain Music Roundup

By Paul Gartner

West Virginia musicians have been busy this year, as this latest batch of CD releases shows. We have eight, from all across West Virginia.
.

Laura Mae Socks
Where You Go

Laura Mae is a Nashville-based singer-songwriter well known in the Shepherdstown area. The Northern Virginia native's debut CD reflects the influence of Lucinda Williams, Son Volt, and Neko Case, setting her economical lyrics to a classic country backbeat and crafting a body of songs devoid of hooks and clichés—as you'll see in these two songs:

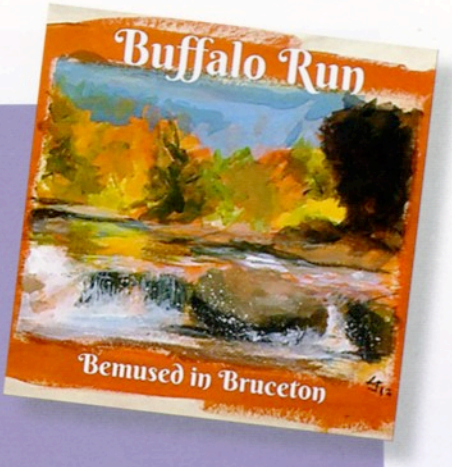
"Truer Sound"

Like the night I just danced around all night
to "Windfall" on repeat
I'm that kind of girl
never could stop at one
in my room that's not even mine/
with you swirling in my mind
dreaming of driving
windows down at night
the radio plays our favorite song
away from Louisiana
it mighta worked even without the wind

"Break Up Song"

I don't think it's over 'til it's over
and I don't think I'm here for too long
I don't think you'll say too much when I tell
you I'm leaving
and I don't think I'm doing anything wrong

Backed by an able group of younger Nashville players on pedal steel, fiddle, organ, guitar, and drums, these lines are very readable, too. *Where You Go* is available at **www.lauramaesocks.com**.



Buffalo Run
Bemused in Bruceton

This CD features longtime friends and neighbors Bob Shank on banjo and harmonica; R. Levee Smith on guitar, harmonica, and vocals; Keith Roberts on bass and vocals; Hank Schwartz on percussion; and Michael Hall on upright bass.

The songs, all written by Smith, are about farming, family, and the everyday life of a working man—like "Dirty Old Coal" about mining.

"Dirty Old Coal"

Them coal jobs ain't a-coming back
The company come and tore up the railroad track
And here we all remain, no coal jobs, no coal train
dirty old coal dirty old coal. . . .
They build the town around the mine where we could live
We moved in and gave all we could give
to dig that dirty coal, go down in that hole
half a mile down under that town digging up coal

The local references lend a sense of place and draw the listener in. The band follows Smith's vocal lead very attentively and underscores the guitar leads with a solid rhythm section. Shank's banjo and hammered dulcimer fills are so musical, as always. Fine effort from veteran musicians. *Bemused in Bruceton* is available at **cdbaby** as a CD or download.

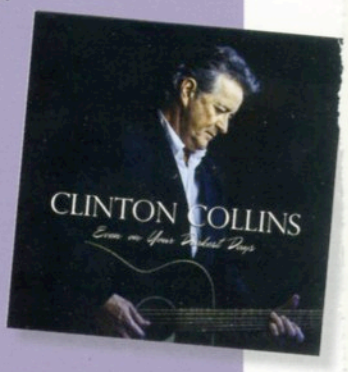
Circa Blue
Footprints in a Song

Circa Blue features Steve Harris, vocals and guitar; Katelyn Casper, fiddle and vocals; Jacob Bly, bass and vocals; and Ryan Mullins, vocals and mandolin. This Martinsburg-based professional bluegrass band kicks things off with a Boone Creek cover, "Mississippi Queen." Nice harmonies, and loads of drive. The band's vocals are reminiscent of The Seldom Scene. Circa Blue has a good blend of fiddle, dobro, expert mandolin, and banjo breaks, with nice arrangements and vocal harmonies, as on "Cold Cold Ground" and "It's a Beautiful Day."The band, with Mullins' lead vocal, simply kills it on "Working on a Building." Likely a good set closer that surely brings down the house. The recording is available at **www.circa-blue.com**.

Clinton Collins
Even on Your Darkest Days

This Bluefield native has been honored for his songwriting skills at the Newsong Festival, the Aim High Rocket Boys contest, and the Next Great WV Song Contest. Collins possesses a strong voice with a well of emotion. He's produced a very listenable CD. There's a nice horn line on "King's Avenue." "Listening to Old Records" honors that old-school feel. No surprise here, the CD was mastered in Muscle Shoals.

"All You Do" changes gear, with just voice and guitar and these lyrics:



I hear your voice again above the ocean,
as the glory of the moon shines in from a tide of emotion
I softly called your name,
only darkness and myself remain
I miss you once again,
the whisper of your lips upon my skin
Your body in the covers,
I ache for you through the night,
the moments we held on tight

Collins' singing at times evokes The Eagles' Don Henley, and that's a compliment. This CD is available at **www.clintoncollins.com**.

Big Possum Stringband
The Finest Appalachian Stringband Music

Tessa Dillon on fiddle, Seth Swingle on banjo, and Evan Collins on guitar have been tearing up stages—and contests—since they got together a couple years ago. Dillon won the Ed Haley Award at the 2019 Ed Haley Fiddle Contest in Ashland, Ky., and the band won first place in the Traditional String Band contest at Clifftop in 2018. Dillon is also a repeat winner in the Vandalia Gathering fiddle contest. Big Possum was in Australia this past summer, appeared on *Mountain Stage* in July, and performed at countless house concerts, dances, and other appearances across the United States.

These folks have done their homework. "If I Lose" pays tribute to the late Tom King (whose recordings from the late 1980s and early 1990s are recommended listening for anyone who loves West Virginia music). The band's name was bestowed on them by Charlie Winter, who played in the original Big Possum String Band with the late Harvey Sampson, Frank George, and Larry Rader. And while Dillon and company have a different style and repertoire, the name lives on.

"Hell Amongst the Yearlings" is heavily influenced by Clark Kessinger and Bobby Taylor and includes Taylor's triple-bow jump he learned from Kessinger and passed on to Dillon. Swingle's banjo ranges from clawhammer to a deft finger style. Collins' guitar playing offers nice bass runs and understated, solid backup. Ed Haley and Dave Bing are cited as influences on "Jenny Lind Polka." Can't go wrong there. Nice banjo playing. These guys blaze through a tune. "Ride Me Down Easy" is an old-time string band version of a Billy Joe Shaver song. That's not something you hear every day. "Blue Goose" comes from the repertoire of the late Buddy Thomas of Kentucky. And these guys can sing, with Dillon and Collins taking turns at the mic.

Nice CD packaging, too, designed by the multitalented Dillon. The CD is available at **www.bigpossumstringband.com**.

The Parachute Brigade
The Gold EP

The band's press kit describes this Beckley-based ensemble as indie-roots. The members are Justin Puett, electric guitar; his wife, Jodie Cox-Puett, bass and vocals; Eric Robbins, acoustic guitar and lead vocals; Brittany McGuire, keyboards and vocals; and Robbie Lanham, drums.

The music and lyrics on the band's original material are a collective effort. "Carry You Along" is reminiscent of The Shins, with nice vocals. "Till I See Stars" has some lovely harmonies. "Old Pond" is a live cut, with lyrics that capture the pull of winter:

Old pond, my old friend
Months went by, and it got too cold for me to swim
Still I always come back again
Like a sparrow that stays through the snow
Stays through the cold

The GOLD EP is available at shows, on **cdbaby**, and at the **Folklore Music Exchange,** 617 Tennessee Avenue, Charleston.

Andrew Adkins
Who I Am

No Depression magazine calls him "West Virginia's most profound songwriter." On his fourth solo album, singer-songwriter Andrew Adkins is backed by a group of top-tier players: Ron Sowell, guitar and harmonica; Bud Carroll, guitar; Clint Lewis, upright bass; Ammed Solomon, drums and percussion; Johnny Staats, mandolin; Chris Stockwell, dobro; Randy Gilkey, piano and organ; and Annie Neeley, vocals. The recording was produced and engineered by Sowell and Carroll, respectively.

Adkins.sang and wrote songs for The Wild Rumpus for seven years and three albums. Lyrically, he doesn't try to paint a pretty picture; he hits you right between the eyes, with songs about life's hard lessons. The *altcountry* blog has likened his voice and songs to Guy Clark, John Prine, and Steve Earle—tall timber for any songwriter, and he earns the praise. Take "Praying for Rain":

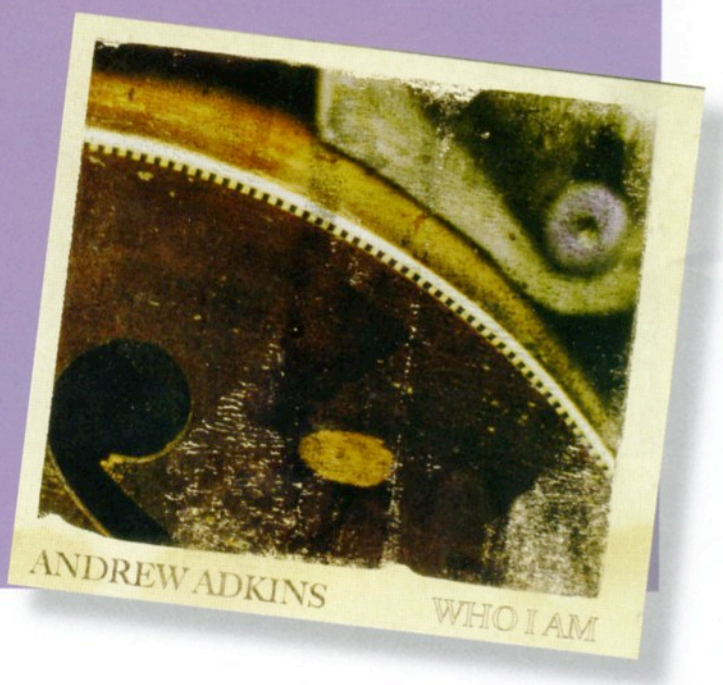
Sometimes I wish that it was raining
to match my mood
I wish the hands of time would move faster
than they do
Sometimes the darkness holds me all night long
Sometimes I ain't nothing but a sad song

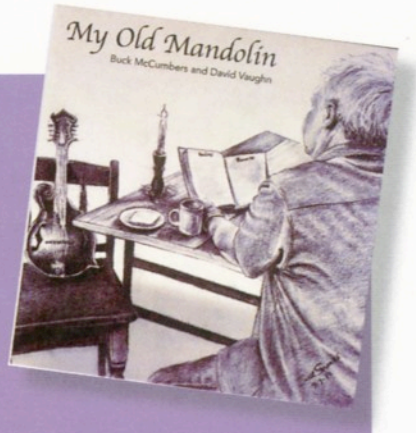
On "South Bound," he doesn't sing as much as declaim the lyrics, and it's effective. And then there's "Worries Behind":

When I leave this ole' world
When I leave this ole' world
I'm gonna leave my trouble'n mind
When I hear the angels call
When I hear the angles call
I'm gonna leave all my worries behind

When my life is over
well I may not always
walk that straight line
and though I may stumble
I always try
I always find a place
down on my knees to pray
so may I be forgiven
on my judgment day

Neeley's backup vocals here are perfect. And "Every Monday Morning" (with some nice harp from Sowell) will get them on their feet! Great beats from Solomon. Andrew's CD is available at **www.andrewadkinsWV.com**.



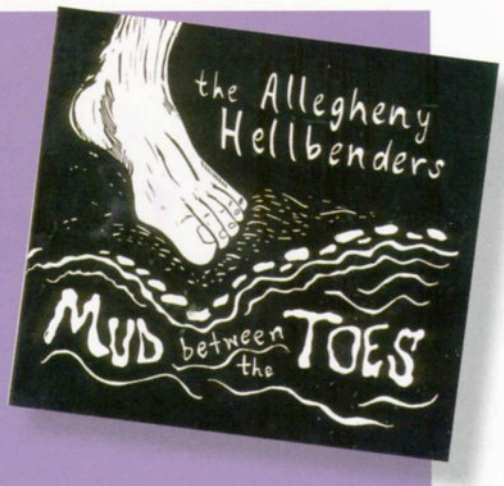


Buck McCumbers and David Vaughn
My Old Mandolin

Another recording from a musical family. Buck McCumbers, a bluegrass musician from the Parkersburg area, is joined here by David Vaughn on guitar, bass, mandolin, and vocals; Ramie Bennett on clawhammer banjo; Randy Brady on banjo; and Dwayne McCumbers on dobro and vocals.

This is some fine mountain music: a little bit of bluegrass, some flatpick guitar, clawhammer banjo, some bluegrass fiddle with that old-time bow, and lots of singing.

On several tunes—"My Old Mandolin," "Midnight," "The Stranger," "Cigar Box Guitar"—the guys play it lonesome with the feel of an old modal fiddle tune high on a mountaintop. This mountain soul music, with heartfelt singing and excellent playing, leaves you feeling like you're listening to something much older. Bennett breaks out the clawhammer banjo and plays a tasty version of the traditional banjo tune "Crawdad on a Hook," sometimes known as "Minner on the Hook." *My Old Mandolin* is available at **www.buckandcompany.com**.



The Allegheny Hellbenders
Mud Between the Toes

The Allegheny Hellbenders are Annie Stroud, fiddle; Sara Cottingham, banjo and fiddle; John Posey, guitar; and Jim Wilson, bass. The band has recorded a selection of tunes from West Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina.

The title track, "Sal's Got Mud Between Her Toes," features really strong clawhammer banjo from Cottingham. "Amelia's Waltz" from Bob McQuillen is a gem with beautiful twin fiddle playing. "Moon Behind the Hill" / "West Virginia Rag" pairs two classics from the late fiddlers Melvin Wine and Henry Reed.

Their version of the classic "Bill Cheatum" also comes from Wine, who had a way of making everything sound as old as the hills. Nice bowing. "Going Down to Maysville" is from Dave Bing, who learned it from Snake Chapman of Kentucky. More good banjo playing here from Cottingham, who catches all the melody without losing the rhythm. And speaking of Kentucky, "Martha Campbell" is sure to get them on the dance floor. "New Old Time Waltz," written by Morgantown musician Chris Haddox, features more able twin fiddling from Stroud and Cottingham. Very nice. They are a dance band, but maybe next time they will sing a few.

Another fine production from Ben Townsend at Questionable Records in Elkins. The CD is available at **www.alleghenyhellbenders.com**.

PAUL GARTNER moved to West Virginia from Ohio in 1977 and lives in Lincoln County. The multi-instrumentalist won the senior old-time banjo competition at the 2019 Vandalia Gathering. He performs with his band Born Old and is a copy editor for the Charleston Gazette-Mail. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was in our Winter 2018 issue.

Clifton E. Brooks Sr.

West Virginia's Last-Surviving Tuskegee Airman

Text and photos by Carl E. Feather

You can trust a secret to Clifton E. Brooks Sr. Information he decoded back in the 1940s remains known only to Clifton, a Keyser (Mineral County) resident and our state's last-surviving Tuskegee Airman.

Clifton is getting up there in years; he was 97 when I visited him in spring 2019. He has memory lapses, but one suspects if he were placed in front of a U.S. Army SIGABA message encryption machine, Clifton could still operate the keys and lever that helped cryptologists do their vital work during World War II. Indeed, both the machines and the personnel who operated them were so discreet in their duties, the U.S. code was never broken. Even after the war, Clifton was so secretive about his wartime work, it was only in the last decade or so that his eight children learned his full story.

"He never talked about him being a cryptologist during the war," says his son Mick Brooks, also of Keyser. "He would tell me nothing about what he did. When Dad was told a secret, he kept it a secret."

As far as Mick and his siblings knew, their father was a mechanic in the Army Air Corps. It was only after a documentary was released about the Tuskegee Airmen that Clifton confirmed his participation in that select group and cautiously shared his story. Mick and his siblings worked with West Virginia congressional representatives to secure the recognition their father so richly deserved, including the Tuskegee Airmen Congressional Medal, received by Clifton and his children: Jacque Washington; Apryl Smith; and Mick, Clifton E. Jr., Rick, Victoria, Brenda, and Tim Brooks.

The so-called *Tuskegee Experience* trained African-Americans to pilot combat aircraft as part of the Army Air Corps. This elite group of airmen included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, and maintenance and support staff such as Clifton. His late brother James also flew in a fighter group.

Prior to 1940, African-Americans were barred from flying for the military. It took pressure from civil rights groups and the black press to form an all-African-American squadron in 1941. Cadets lived on the Tuskegee Institute campus and trained at Moton Field in Tuskegee, Alabama.

As the nation's first black military pilots and support personnel, they helped the Allies win the war. There were 992 black pilots who were Tuskegee Airmen; the first wave was assigned to the 99th Fighter Squadron, which deployed to North Africa during April 1943 and flew its first combat mission June 2.

The 332nd Fighter Group was the first black flying group. It was activated at Tuskegee Army Air Field on October 13, 1942, and included

Clifton E. Brooks Sr. smiles as he tells how he was recruited to serve in the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

the 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons. Clifton, a member of the 332nd, was deployed from Michigan to mainland Italy on December 22, 1943. They patrolled shipping lanes in the Mediterranean, supported ground forces in Italy, and escorted bombers. All told, the Tuskegee Airmen flew 1,491 missions.

Clifton, born March 22, 1912, wasn't allowed to attend the segregated Potomac State College (now part of WVU) in his hometown. Education was a key value for the Brooks family, which had teachers and pastors in its ranks. Clifton's mother, Nellie, had saved money so he and his brother James could get a higher education.

So, as he once told reporter Mona Ridder, "I hitchhiked to West Virginia State College [now University] at Institute near Charleston to try to get my education." At the all-black school, he studied mechanical engineering, which made him an ideal candidate to be a code technician. Clifton enlisted in Charleston on September 28, 1942.

"Here comes this man to see me," Clifton says. "He asked, 'Are you Clifton Brooks? If you are Clifton Brooks, you are the man the government is looking for. Now don't you try to get away. You need to go with us.'"

Clifton wrapped up his work at school and let his mother know he was joining the Army because the government needed his skills. He and James stayed together throughout the war years. "Wherever he went, I went," Clifton says.

Clifton went into active service December 2, 1942, and held the military occupational specialty of cryptographic technician. He arrived in North Africa February 3, 1944.

Clifton holds a photo of himself taken during World War II and his Tuskegee Airman Congressional Medal.

His tour of duty included Rome, Arno, North Apennines, the Po Valley, northern and southern France, Central Europe, and the Balkans. He received the Good Conduct Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and Distinguished Unit Citation.

Mick says that while his father never spoke of his work during the war, he did talk about the discrimination the airmen experienced, including having to use "colored" facilities in Alabama.

"One time, he went to town in a bus and had to walk back to the base because he was not allowed to get [back] on the bus [with the white passengers]," Mick says. "He also told about how the black officers were treated and were not allowed to use the same mess hall as the white officers."

Clifton returned to the United States October 17, 1945. After being discharged, he came back to Keyser and married Bessie Reva, who he'd known from the segregated Howard High School in Piedmont. Clifton had graduated in 1940 and Bessie in 1942. Bessie had first married Clarence Robert Stewart, a star basketball player and classmate of Clifton. Staff Sergeant Stewart was killed in October 1945, after the war's end, while helping his comrades haul corrosive ammunition out to sea for disposal. During the process, a 500-pound incendiary bomb went off, fatally wounding Stewart. Bessie, a young widow, married Clifton a couple years later.

Clifton chose marriage over completing his college degree. He got a job as a tire builder with Kelly Springfield in Cumberland, Md. He worked there four decades and was a quality control worker when he retired in 1982. His employer named him the company's "Man of the Year."

Mick Brooks stands at the entrance to Brooks Park, renamed by the city of Keyser in honor of his father, Clifton E. Brooks Sr.

Clifton and Bessie raised eight children in a modest home on Locust Street, across the highway from South End Park.

"We grew up in that park," Mick says. "It had a pool, and I spent almost every day down there. There was an airfield right next to the park, and the planes would fly over it."

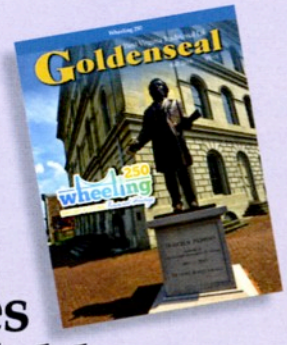
To circumvent their mother's rule of not crossing the highway to get to the park, the children crawled through a culvert under the road; that street now bears the family's name.

Mick says his family would vacation at Atlantic City, where an aunt lived and provided lodging. Even in those relaxed times on the boardwalk and beach, Clifton didn't share his war stories. Indeed, unknown to his family, during those postwar years, government employees were monitoring Clifton's associations to determine if he was sharing cryptology secrets acquired during the war. The secrets were safe with Clifton E. Brooks Sr.

The fact he was a World War II veteran was no secret, however. Clifton gave freely of his time to the American Legion's Washington Smith Post 152, of which he served as post commander and district chaplain; he's been a member 72 years. Clifton also served as treasurer and lay speaker of his church, Janes United Methodist, and was a Mason and past grandmaster of Potomac Lodge 41. He was often called upon to speak at Memorial Day services and to schoolchildren during Black History Month. Each year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Clifton would recite King's "I Have a Dream" speech wherever he was invited to speak.

"He stayed busy all the time," Mick says.

Once the full story of his service with the Tuskegee Airmen was known by the family and community, Clifton stayed even busier



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sharing that aspect of his life. One of his most memorable war stories was about keeping an incendiary device and suicide pills in the room where he did his cryptology work. If overrun by the enemy, he was to use the device to destroy the machine and associated documents and then consume the suicide pill so he couldn't be captured alive.

In April 2006, Congress voted to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the approximately 350 surviving Tuskegee Airmen or their widows. A bronze replica was presented to Clifton in 2010. That honor drew community recognition, which led to a bridge and his family's favorite park being named for him. T. J. Coleman of the Aubrey Steward Project spearheaded the effort.

"Don't wait until people pass to recognize them," T. J. told Elaine Blaisdell of the *Cumberland Times-News* in September 2018. "Let's do this while we can so he can appreciate it."

On November 26, 2018, a sign designating Keyser's South End Park as Brooks Park was unveiled. Clifton attended the ceremony, at which Keyser Mayor Damon Tillman declared, "Today is a great day for the City of Keyser. It is a day we as a city can give back to a hero," as reported by Liz Beavers of the *Mineral Daily News Tribune*. "Finally, we get to give back to somebody who is so deserving. Mr. Brooks, when everyone comes across that bridge, it will be your face they see."

It is a kind face. A face that smiles often yet conceals secrets; a face full of stories that will never be shared. Every question about his service is answered with his anecdote about the man coming to West Virginia State College in September 1942 and looking for Clifton E. Brooks.

So, I ask Clifton what the other men who served with him would tell me about him, and he says, "If you go that way, I guarantee that they will know Clifton Brooks," and falls silent. I ask him what he thinks of all the attention he's received. Clifton looks around the room and says in a soft but strong voice that he's humbled to "see you all sitting here to find out something about me, to see a white man coming here and looking for a black man like me," perhaps still not fully comprehending the important sacrifices he and the other Tuskegee Airmen made for our freedom.

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*. You can follow Carl's blog at thefeathercottage.com, where he often writes about West Virginia. Carl has been a longtime GOLDENSEAL contributor, dating back to his first article in our Summer 1987 issue.

Jeff Diehl's whimsical *Woodpecker's Headache* imagines what might happen if the bird pecked into a kiln-fired clay tree instead of a real one. Photo by Jeff Diehl.

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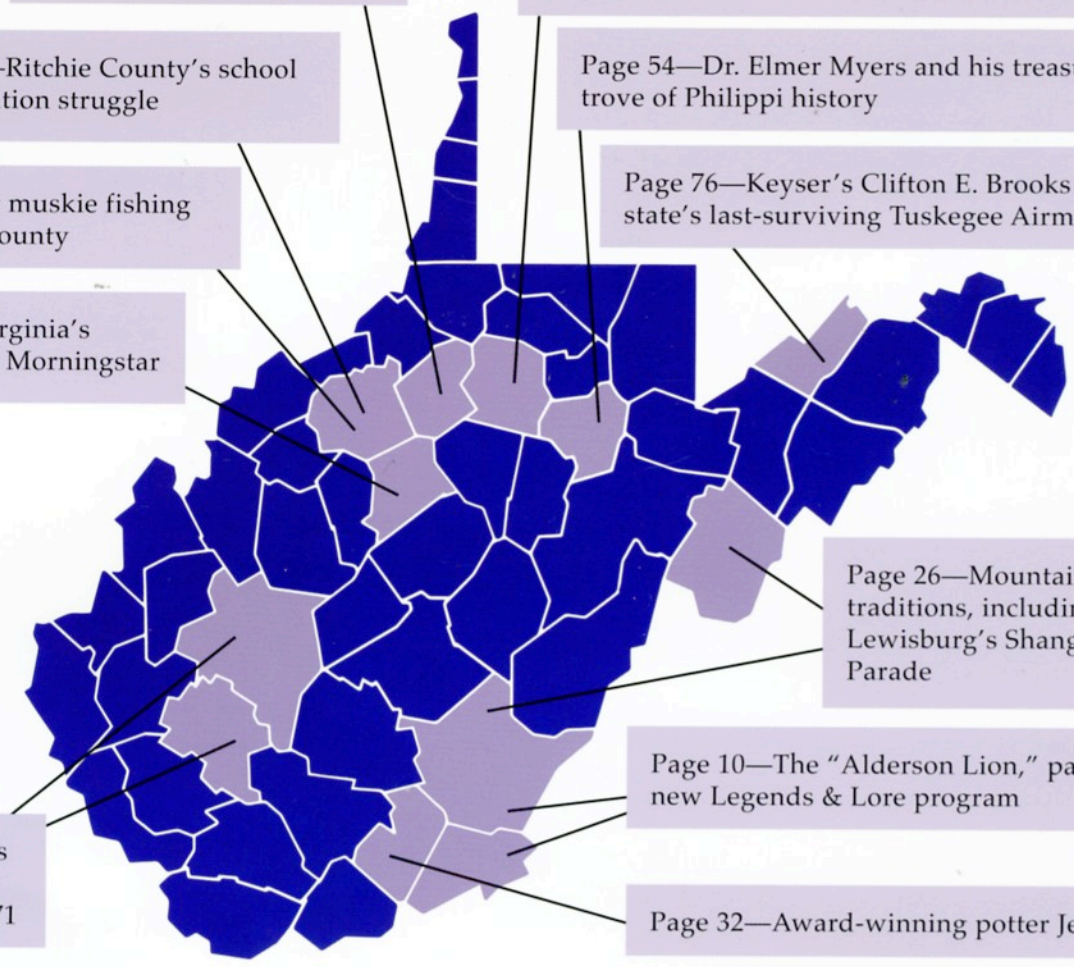

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