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West Virginia Traditional Life
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The Matewan Massacre

Shortly after the murders of Ed Chambers and Sid Hatfield in Welch (1921), their widows Sallie Chambers (left) and Jessie Hatfield (right) pose with Elizabeth Mooney (center), the wife of labor leader Fred Mooney. Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

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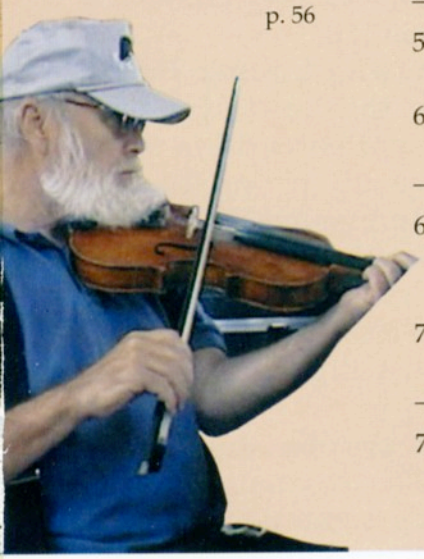

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On the cover: Matewan Depot, courtesy of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives and the Norfolk and Western Historical Photograph Collection, Norfolk Southern Archives, Norfolk, Virginia—Virginia Tech, Special Collections, Blacksburg, Va.

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From the Editor

In 1985, I watched the new documentary *Even the Heavens Weep* and was struck by a couple things. First, it was narrated by Mannix himself, Mike Connors, my favorite childhood P.I. Second, like most West Virginians, I'd never heard of Matewan or the Mine Wars despite being a history buff. Since then, many books, films, and plays about the Mine Wars have been produced. But, for anyone who hasn't seen the 1985 film, I highly recommend it. Watchable in segments on YouTube, it features interviews with participants in the Mine Wars and some of the finest historians on the subject, including Fred Barkey, Lon Savage, and David Corbin.

Now, 35 years later, I'm well-aware of the topic but still perplexed by many things. It's said that history can be boiled down to Who? What? When? Where? and Why? With "big events," such as the Civil War, we were taught the first four, but the *why?* was always hazier. The problem is that the *why* is the most important part of history. With the Mine Wars, here's my big *why*: Why did our government(s) let southern West Virginia descend into guerilla warfare? Further, why did law enforcement continually pour gas on the fire by siding with coal operators?

As with most history, there's no one answer. Both sides committed egregious acts of violence, each of which was a bit different. But the one factor tying them together? The institutions charged with keeping the peace and protecting the people were owned from top to bottom, some more legally than others. In this issue, we look at the Matewan Massacre (1920) and the murders of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers in Welch (1921). Both occurred in broad daylight with plenty of witnesses; yet, nobody was ever convicted or served more than a symbolic time in jail.

I recently spoke with former Kanawha County Public Defender Diana Panucci about how this could happen. She pointed to two factors: government corruption and/ or frustrated prosecutors who gave up trying to win convictions from bought-off juries. In essence, there was no Law with a capital L. To paraphrase the old labor song, it was generally clear "which side everybody was on," such as Sheriff Bill Hatfield, who got a sudden hankering for a vacation on the eve of the most high-profile trial ever held in McDowell County.

During the Mine Wars, scores of people, some more innocent than others, were killed. The common thread? A government pattern of representing some people more equally than others. In the words of the eulogist as rain fell at Sid Hatfield's funeral, "Is it a wonder that even the heavens weep?" –Stan Bumgardner

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Marvine Loving
(1925 – 2019)
By Bobby Taylor

Marvine Loving of Cross Lanes (Kanawha County) passed away on February 7, 2019, at age 93. Marvine and John, her husband of 50 years, played music for decades across West Virginia and beyond. They were a wonderful addition to the stage acts, with a special blend of Carter Family songs performed in a first-rate manner. The Carters' soul and spirit were kept intact with the Lovings' beautiful personal touches. Marvine was a good guitar player, not only on the Carter songs but also on fiddle tunes. I loved her backup playing—tasteful with solid timing to make the fiddle sound its best.

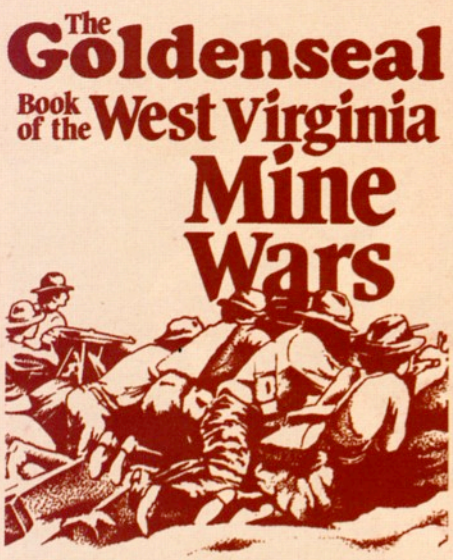
Each time I visited with Marvine and John, I found a wealth of information. They had many recordings of musicians I thought either did not exist or had been lost in time. Along with the recordings was a vast knowledge of all the performers. Marvine was a quiet soul, offering a response only after everyone else had given their say. She would kindly present her additions to the conversation, and her recall of minute details was nearly 100%.

Marvine and John were personal friends with many of the top bluegrass stars. In the 1960s, Marvine became the first president of the Bill Monroe Fan Club. She offered Monroe advice on how to receive and treat fans. Some of the big stars remembered his first questions to them. Among the questions Marvine urged him to ask his fans were "How long have you been listening to bluegrass music?" "Which song do you like best?" (The answer was usually "Mule Skinner Blues.") "Do you play music?" "How long have you been playing?" "Who is the best fiddle player?" (The answer was usually Kenny Baker.) She helped Monroe receive a kind and positive reception from his fans, resulting in more record sales and greater popularity.

Marvine and John Loving, 1982 Vandalia Gathering. Photo by Rick Lee.

Marvine and John traveled regularly to shows and fiddle contests. They made a CD of their music and played several Vandalia Gathering concerts. They both shared their knowledge and talents wherever they traveled. A valuable part of West Virginia's culture, they have helped preserve traditional music for future generations.

Marvine had the cherished homespun skills of yesteryear. She was an avid crafter and a wonderful cook. She kept busy with her many projects. She had great love for her family and friends. She generously shared her knowledge, talent, skills, and hospitality with everyone she met. When I think of Marvine, I think of someone who made the world smile with her. She was an immediate friend to everyone. "Keep on the Sunny Side" was one of Marvine and John's favorites. I will fondly remember her for that very fitting and beautiful song.



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

The large-format 109-page paperbound book sells for $12.95, plus $2 per copy shipping. West Virginia residents, please add 7% state sales tax (total $15.86 per book).

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Mark Payne
(1956 – 2019)
By Paul Gartner

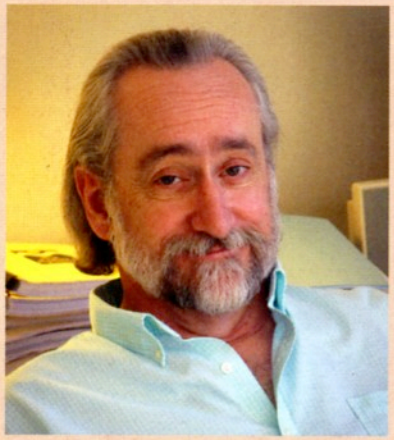


Photo by Michael Keller.

Mountain State musician Roy Mark Payne died Septempber 29, 2019, at Hubbard Hospice House of esophageal cancer. Mark was born August 17, 1956, to Roy Lee Payne and Ruth Barr Payne. Mark graduated from Winfield High School in 1974 and earned a bachelor's degree in political science from West Virginia University in 1978. Fiddler Bobby Taylor remembers meeting an 18-year-old Mark: "At that young age, he had impeccable timing and taste."

A few years later, Mark joined Bobby as a member of the Green Meadow String Band, fondly recalled by fans of the Vandalia Gathering. Mark played three-finger banjo. "He knew when to play and when to lay back. He was very focused," Bobby says.

A longtime regular at Vandalia, Mark went on to play banjo and guitar on more than two-dozen recordings with old-time music greats such as Wilson Douglas, Elmer Bird, Bobby Taylor, Glen Smith, and Woody Simmons (all Vandalia Award recipients). He was a member of the traditional bluegrass band Gold Rush and, more recently, the old-time string bands Gandydancer and High Ridge Ramblers. "Mark's rock-solid timing on guitar was as good as it gets," Bobby says.

Mark served as program officer and developed statewide programs for the West Virginia Humanities Council. He also was executive director of Museum in the Community in Hurricane and arts-in-education coordinator for the West Virginia Commission on the Arts.

He helped take West Virginia music around the nation and world, with performances in Gainsborough, England; California; New York City; the Kennedy Center; the Library of Congress; and the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, Washington. He also performed at the state memorial service for U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd.

A supporter of musicians young and old, he helped judge competitions at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival, the State Folk Festival, and the Mountain State Forest Festival. Mark is survived by his wife, Lois Alexander Payne, and siblings Beverly Hill and Steven Payne.

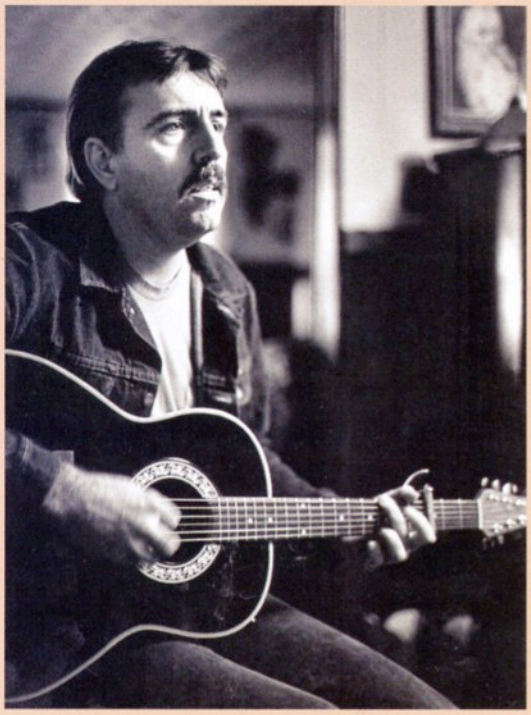


Photo by Michael Keller.

Edgar Napier Jr.
(1950 – 2019)

Edgar passed away August 25, 2019, at age 68. A resident of East Lynn (Wayne County), he was featured in a Spring 1986 story about his gospel-singing mother-in-law, Letha Blankenship (written by Tim R. Massey). Edgar played guitar and wrote music for Letha's family group. One of his compositions, "Heaven's Hymn," was inspired by a sermon. "It took me about five minutes," Edgar recalled. "It wasn't me, it was God. He gave me the words, I just wrote them down." When he wasn't playing or writing music, Edgar was working for Pilgrim Glass and then the Department of Highways. In recent years, he and his daughter Angie Sutherland started performing informally as the Front Porch Singers. His son Clinton says, "He and my sister started singing songs on his front porch, and my sister started putting them on Facebook so she would have memories of him." One of their songs, "Lighthouse," currently has nearly four-million views on Facebook. Angie and Clinton plan to continue ministering in their father's memory. You can check out her YouTube channel. Just go to YouTube and search for Angie Sutherland. –ed.

Doris Jean and Bill Browning. Courtesy of the family.

Doris Jean Browning
(1931 – 2019)

Doris Jean of Hurricane (Putnam County) passed away October 17, 2019. She was the wife of Bill Browning, best remembered for his classic bluegrass song "Dark Hollow" and Teays Valley music studio [see "Bill Browning" by Paul Gartner, Winter 2017]. After the song became a chart topper for Jimmie Skinner and others, Bill formed a new group, The Dark Hollow Boys, with Doris singing backup. After their touring days ended, Doris helped Bill build and run the Midway Recording Studio, only a stone's throw from their house. Doris often operated the studio on her own and raised four children while Bill was driving a truck to pay the bills. After Bill's death in 1977, Doris took great joy in driving a school bus, relishing her time with the young people. –ed.

Having a Chicken Blast at Weirton's Serbian Picnic Grounds

Text and photo by Emily Hilliard

Every summer Wednesday since 1969, members of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church Men's Club have gathered at the Serbian Picnic Grounds along King's Creek outside of Weirton. In a long, cement block building, they mill about in the dawn light, eating donuts, drinking coffee, and reading the morning paper. They're here for a weekly fundraiser they call a "Chicken Blast," for which they roast 300-400 chickens and sell them to the Weirton community.

"Guys get down here usually around 5:30 in the morning, and they start the process of what we have to do—cleaning the poles, getting the chickens out, and getting preparations to start the day. I start the fire," says John Kosanovich, a Men's Club member.

John is nonchalant about the process, but it's a lot of work. All members know their roles and work together like a well-oiled machine, tending the fires, adding salt and pepper to the chickens, tying 25 to a pole, rotating the poles so each is evenly roasted, checking the chickens for doneness, and then wrapping them in tinfoil to stay hot for customers. When the afternoon rolls around, they take breaks to eat or have a beer from the on-site bar.

The roasting operation is impressive. Four open-air hearths hold three to four poles stacked on top of one another, with about 25 chickens each. A geared machine rotates each pole over the wood fire, burning at about 800 degrees. The chickens on the top poles drip fat on the chickens below, naturally basting them. This ingenious spit design, an industrial brick oven, and walk-in coolers were built just for this purpose by members of the Men's Club, who worked at Weirton Steel. They used the specialized skills they developed at work as pipefitters, bricklayers, and machinists to help design and build these hearths.

Their ancestors settled in the Upper Ohio Valley at the turn of the 20th century, establishing the church and picnic grounds. While the Serbian population has shrunk in recent years with the decline of coal and steel jobs, the community remains an important presence in the Weirton and Steubenville, Ohio, communities. In the early days, the customer base was largely steel mill workers and their families. John says, "Most guys that worked in the mill, they were looking for lunches after work or took a chicken to work for their lunch. And the more the word spread around in the mill about this being available, more people took the opportunity to make themselves available for it." They chose their roasting day to coincide with the mill workers' Wednesday payday.

As steel jobs declined in Weirton, the number of chickens the club was able to sell per week declined with them. In the early '80s, the club could sell 600-700 chickens a week. Now they average about 350. "I started in the mill in 1966. And we had 14,000 workers in there. And when I retired in 2003, we had a little over 2,000. So we had a big drop-off," says John. Still, the men cook about 5,000 chickens over the course of the summer, regularly selling out each week in a matter of two-and-a-half hours. Some regular customers have standing weekly orders and come down to the picnic grounds early to stake out their favorite picnic table for their evening chicken dinner.

The survival of the tradition can be attributed not only to how the weekly Blast fostered community among steel workers but also how it still connects families to

The Chicken Blasts occur on Wednesdays from the last weekend in May to the last weekend in August at the Serbian Picnic Grounds in Weirton. Money raised from the Blasts helps maintain the Picnic Grounds. To order a chicken, call 304-748-9866 the Wednesday morning of the Blast.

their Serbian heritage. Many of the men remember roasting meat in their backyards with their families growing up. "I lived next to my grandmother and grandfather, and they used to do pigs for Christmas. And we didn't have electric spits, we had [to turn them] by hand. We were kids. We'd go up there and turn the spit. It would take hours, but we didn't care. It was cold in January, but we were by that warm fire. You just knew you were helping for the day, and it was a lot of fun."

It's that connection that keeps him coming down at dawn, to stand over a hot fire, every week in the heat of summer. "Why do I do it? My basic word is tradition. You know, it's something that you see it done every day, every week, you want to get involved with it."

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.

Martha Ellen Jolliffe. Courtesy of our author.

1920 Advice to Graduates

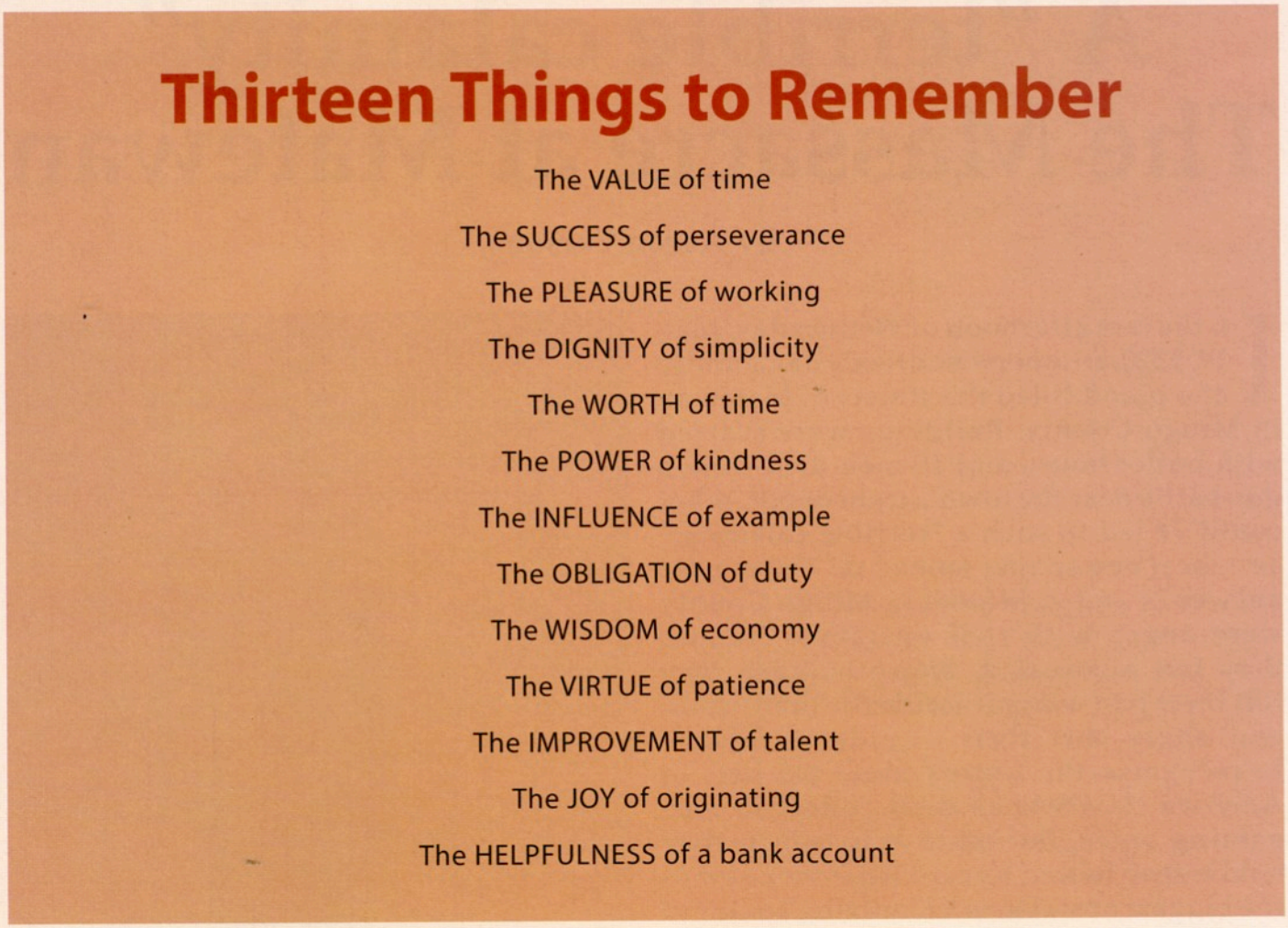
By Ellen Lambert

My mother, Martha Ellen Jolliffe, was born in 1902 and graduated from Clarksburg's Washington Irving High School in 1920. Mother died in 1941 when I was seven, so I've spent a lifetime searching for anything that might have affected her life. There were the Great War, the Roaring '20s, and the Great Depression, of course. Yet it was those little everyday things I craved to know.

One place I found her was in a 100-year-old 1920 Washington Irving yearbook. I've pored through it many times to see what she and her classmates did and looked like. The girls often wore sailor middy blouses with poufed hairdos at their ears or Gibson Girl pompadours. The football players wore high-hip knickers, tight leather helmets, and black stockings—and the basketball shorts were *really* short. The seniors were pictured with a brief memorable thought about each.

Mother went on to study home economics at West Virginia University, graduating in 1925 (she had a one-year lapse after high school due to rheumatic fever). She'd told her mother she wanted to teach women how to care for, clothe, and make nutritional meals for their children and families. All admirable ambitions. Perhaps she got her vision or DNA (heredity or environment) from her distant kin Ann Reeves Jarvis of Grafton. Before, during, and after the Civil War, Jarvis organized women to help one another, taught them to be kind and nonjudgmental, and inspired them to help others overcome the rigors of war and to practice good health and hygiene habits. Fittingly, Ann Reeves Jarvis was the inspiration for Mother's Day.

Particularly interesting in the 1920 yearbook was a Union National Bank ad—just as appropriate for 2020 as it was in 1920.



Ad from the 1920 Washington Irving High yearbook.

One other "thing" I might add is truthfulness. What a mind- and time-saver it is when you don't have to memorize what you've purportedly said or done. Some say, "The truth will find you out." Also said, "Your sins will find you out." And that oft-repeated quote from Sir Walter Scott, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

We are often wary of and, at times, resistant to, being "told what to do." But those who cannot listen to or remember the admonitions of history are doomed to repeat it. All the more reason to consider the wisdom of a century-old yearbook.

Mother died of endocarditis after a short stint of teaching Home Ec at Aurora (Preston County). She'd had some wisdom teeth removed without the aid of the prophylactics we use today, and the infection went to her rheumatic heart. Penicillin wouldn't become readily available to citizens for a few more years; rather, it was reserved for the war effort, I'm told.

I'm sure the truths sponsored by the Union National Bank in 1920 were in her teaching quiver to help others make plans and decisions for their lives.

Rest In Peace, Mother.

ELLEN LAMBERT was reared by her maternal grandparents in Grafton in the 1940s. They instilled in her the love of history and genealogy. Local activities also left her with fond memories of the B&O terminal in its "finest hour," but family history has outweighed all others. This is Ellen's second contribution to GOLDENSEAL. Her previous article was in our Winter 2018 issue.

A "terrible calamity" The Massacre at Matewan

By Aaron Parsons

In the late afternoon of Wednesday, May 19, 1920, an otherwise drizzly day, gunfire and blood filled the streets of Matewan in Mingo County. Buildings were scarred with bullet holes, and 10 men died from a gun battle near the town's train depot. What could've led to such a "terrible calamity," as a local newspaper coined it? The simple answer is anger. Miners in Mingo County were angry with coal operators because they felt mistreated, angry because they felt their pay was miniscule for their labor, and angry that their employers refused to recognize the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) as their collective bargaining voice. But more than anger, they held a deep hatred toward what they saw as the biggest obstacle to unionizing southern West Virginia: the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency.

In early 1920, the UMWA launched a massive campaign to unionize the state's southern counties—the nation's largest non-unionized bituminous coal region. Union miners in other parts of our state and the nation had made significant gains, such as a 27% pay increase. On May 6, less than two weeks before the shootout, UMWA leaders had made recruitment speeches in Matewan.

Many miners along the West Virginia–Kentucky state line jumped at the chance to sign up. However, coal companies in southern West Virginia could fire miners just for joining. Many miners were even required to sign agreements, known as *yellow dog contracts*, promising not to unionize. In the southern West Virginia coalfields, the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency enforced these policies, sometimes peacefully and sometimes not, and took the lead on keeping the union out of Mingo County.

Matewan Police Chief Sid Hatfield (1891 – 1921). Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center (WVRHC).

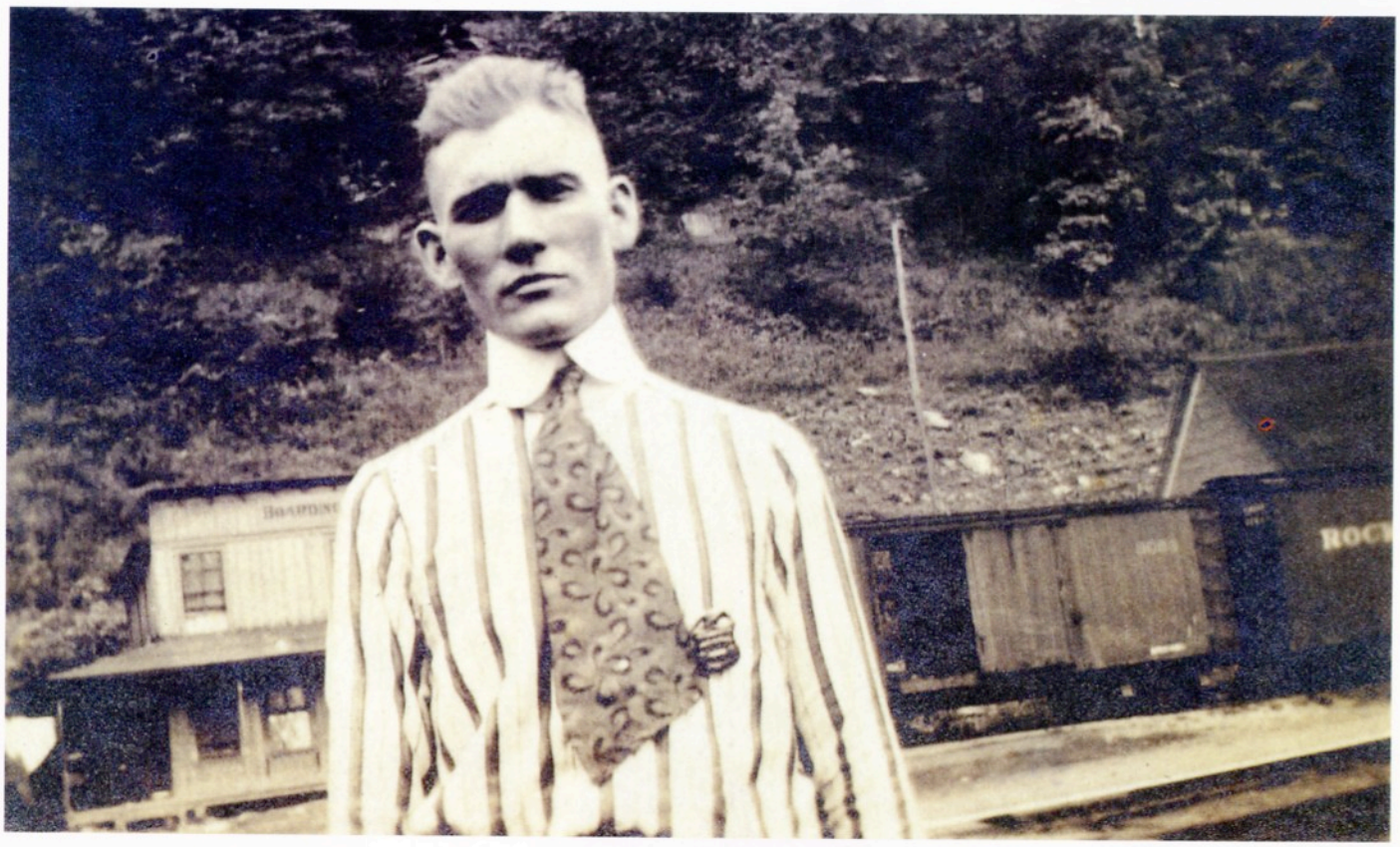
For years, coal companies had been employing Baldwin-Felts detectives as private guards. Some consider them more like modern-day security firms that protect company property, resources, and workers.

Thomas "Tom" Lafayette Felts (1868 – 1937), co-operator of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

But miners and the UMWA called them "thugs"—or in UMWA District 17 President Frank Keeney's words, "private armies"—who perpetrated atrocities on working people from the hollows of Paint and Cabin creeks in Kanawha County to the Colorado coalfields. The detectives had many duties. It's true they protected company property, but it's equally true they prevented union organizers from entering coal camps and threatened miners not to unionize. They had many methods of carrying out these duties, including going undercover to infiltrate union meetings. One of the Baldwin-Felts *spies* in Matewan, C. E. Lively, is remembered most notoriously.

The agency was co-run by William Gibbony Baldwin and Thomas "Tom" Felts from their main office in Roanoke, Virginia, with a branch in Bluefield. Baldwin and Felts came to be, as former state Attorney General Howard B. Lee once wrote, "the two most feared and hated men in the mountains." The agency's perceived treatment of miners and their families is exactly what led to the shootout in Matewan on that fateful day.

Baldwin-Felts detectives arrived by train in Matewan on May 19 to remove striking miners from their homes, which were owned by the Stone Mountain Coal Corporation. The theory was that if miners were on strike, they were no longer employees and had no right to company-owned housing. Among the detectives were Tom Felts' two living brothers, Albert and Lee. Albert, sensing the rising tensions, had come to Matewan before the other detectives. According to one account, he'd tried to bribe the town's mayor, Cabell C.



Sid Hatfield. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

Testerman, to place machine guns on the roofs of several buildings in case violence erupted. Albert had also attempted, unsuccessfully, to bribe Matewan Police Chief Sid Hatfield to work for the coal companies.

William Sidney Hatfield was a very distant kin of "Devil Anse" Hatfield [see the family tree on pp. 16-17]; the feud's deadly events were decades in the past, but resentments still lingered. In his book *Thunder in the Mountains*, historian Lon Savage described Sid's colorful life: "He played pool, poker, and slot machines, chewed, smoked, drank and chased women. He fought often, and he beat one opponent so badly they had to hospitalize the man. He shot guns along the riverbank, and they still say in Mingo that Sid could throw a potato in the air, draw his pistol and split it open." These are traits that can get you killed, jailed, or, in early 20th-century Mingo County, named chief of police of a small but thriving town squeezed between the Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway and Tug River.

On the afternoon of May 19, detectives had carried out several evictions along Mate Creek, just east of downtown. Some families were forced from their homes at gunpoint while detectives scattered their belongings in the front yards or on the street. Word spread quickly, and townsfolk, including Testerman and Hatfield, were furious.

Hatfield confronted Albert Felts, saying the evictions hadn't been properly authorized and were unlawful. Felts disagreed. Late in the afternoon, after having dinner at the Urias Hotel, 13 detectives in town that day made their way toward the depot to catch the 5:00 train to Bluefield. Hatfield had a discussion with Felts and accompanied him toward the depot, about a football field away in distance. Some witnesses later said that Hatfield and Felts seemed almost jovial at times during their walk.

In front of Reece Chambers' hardware store, opposite the depot, Hatfield presented Felts with a town warrant for the arrest of him and his detectives. Felts countered with his own warrant—issued by Squire R. M. Stafford, a Mingo County justice of the peace—for the arrest of Hatfield and several others. Testerman, standing just in front of the store, claimed Felts' warrant was "bogus." The three men stared tensely at one another in the uncalm silence as people along Front (also called Railroad) Street began to gather. Most of the men in the crowd were armed, both a sign of the times and a sign they expected trouble.

Up to this point, most eyewitnesses agree on the details. After this moment, though, witness accounts vary dramatically, and interpretations of what happened next are still points of contention 100 years later. As with any gunfight, much of the speculation centers around who fired the first shot [see p. 24]. In fact, there's a lot of speculation about a lot of things when it comes to the Matewan Massacre (as the miners called it) or the Battle of Matewan (as the coal operators and Baldwin-Felts called it).

Given the many witness discrepancies, the rest of this article is an educated guess at what transpired. There are other versions, some more positive to the union side and some supporting the detectives. What's presented here is my own conjecture based on a study of trial records and eyewitness accounts.

Mayor Testerman likely was the first person shot, but no one knows for sure who fired the lethal bullet into his abdomen. Some claim it was Albert Felts, who, realizing he was walking into an armed ambush (there were six or more armed men inside the hardware store), hastily pulled his pistol and fired either accidentally or in anger at the mayor at point-blank range. On the other hand, some say Hatfield shot Testerman intentionally because he had feelings for the mayor's wife [see p. 33]. Hatfield later admitted to firing his guns (his nickname was "Two-Gun Sid") but only because Felts had shot first. One eyewitness, Harry Berman, claimed he saw Hatfield shoot the Matewan mayor. "I seen Sid pull his gun. . . . Now, very few people, I don't think, seen that," explained Berman in an interview for the Matewan Oral History Project (1989-90). "When he pulled his gun and he shot Testerman, I seen Testerman fall on the—on the ground." Berman said that he was only a few feet from Hatfield when the shootout started and that Hatfield was standing directly behind Testerman when he pulled out his gun and shot him.

Despite these claims, and irrefutable evidence that Hatfield had more than a friendly interest in the mayor's wife, many doubt he killed Testerman. For one, Hatfield supposedly was standing behind Testerman, who was shot from the front in the stomach. Another eyewitness, Dixie Accord, a child at the time, replied, "I don't believe it. He could've been shot accidentally. It was never proven who shot him. Of course, they made a story out of that because he later married his wife, but, I think, out of sympathy. That was all out of sympathy. I can't see that. . . . If he'd have wanted her, he'd have took her right in front of [Testerman]. Now, he wouldn't had to kill him. He's that type of a man."

After that opening salvo, bullets flew in all directions: from inside the hardware store, rooftops, and store windows—another sign that townsfolk had been preparing for trouble. Albert Felts was shot in the face, likely by Hatfield. To add a little more confusion to the story, the Felts family always believed Sid's killing of Felts was the first shot. The townspeople—many of whom were at the depot waiting on the incoming #16 train—scattered, and chaos ensued. Baldwin-Felts agents who survived the initial volley realized they were surrounded and ran away.

One detective, John McDowell, supposedly swam across Tug River and escaped into

Kentucky. Two others snuck onto the incoming train and discreetly exited town. Six of the 13 detectives escaped; the remaining seven were dead or would soon die. An unarmed bystander, Clarence "Tot" Tinsley, was mortally wounded. Another of the deceased was Bob Mullins, a miner who'd just been fired that morning for joining the union. Detective A. J. Booher gunned him down near the post office/Bank of Matewan building. Booher then hid inside the bank. But he was soon found, supposedly by miner Art Williams, who, after having fired all the rounds from his own .32, killed Booher with a pistol he'd taken from the dying clutches of Lee Felts. Another detective, John W. Ferguson, was badly wounded in the initial flurry. Still, he staggered down the street and into a house, where he plopped down in a wicker chair. Moments later, a small mob charged into the house and killed him. And then there was detective Oscar Bennett, who survived because he'd gone to grab a pack of cigarettes just before the shooting commenced. The other detectives killed were C. B. Cunningham, C. T. Higgins, and E. O. Powell. Among the injured were townsfolk Sam Arters, Isaac Brewer, Will Reyer, James Chambers, and Bill Bowman. Everything had happened in just 15 or 20 minutes, at most.

When the barrage finally ended, the dead and wounded were carried away on trains. The bodies of the Baldwin-Felts agents were taken to the Ball Morgue in Williamson. Mayor Testerman and the other wounded were rushed to the hospital in Welch. Testerman arrived in an unconscious state and died that night.

News of the shootout spread quickly. The next day, the *Williamson News* told of the "terrible calamity" at Matewan. Many miners, though, rejoiced. For his stand against the Baldwin-Felts, Sid Hatfield became an idol—a beacon of hope—to miners throughout the coalfields. To them and state UMWA leaders, Matewan was like the Battles of Lexington and Concord. For once, they'd fought back and won a battle, but a much longer war was on the horizon. For more than a year, the southern coalfields—and Mingo County, in particular—would become a guerilla war zone.

The shootout sparked a renewed effort by the UMWA to organize the southern coalfields, with beloved national labor leader "Mother" Jones heading the charge. The next month, on the Mingo County Courthouse steps in Williamson, she chided a large group of miners into action: "You have stood and seen yourselves robbed.... Professional murderers were hired to keep you in subjection, and you paid for it! Damn you, you are not fit to live under the flag. You paid professional murderers with that money you were robbed of, and then you never said a word. You stood there like a lot of cowards, robbed by the mine owners."

On July 1, Keeney called all miners along Tug River out on strike. Coal operators brought in non-union miners, referred to as *scabs* by the striking miners. Some scabs were murdered; others were threatened. At the same time, UMWA supporters dynamited coal tipples and headhouses. To calm the unrest, 90% of the West Virginia State Police (newly formed the year before) was dispatched to Mingo County. State troopers policed Matewan, relieving Sid Hatfield of his duties. But there were still relatively few troopers to combat what was becoming an all-out war, and at least in one case, some troopers aggravated the situation by shooting into a tent colony of striking miners and their families at Lick Creek. [See Merle T. Cole's "The West Virginia State Police: Born of Chaos," Summer 2019.]

Sensationalist journalists from across the country wrote of "Bloody Mingo," as if it were a resumption of the long-dormant Hatfield-McCoy Feud. It helped their cause that the principal protagonist was named Hatfield, despite his distant family ties. To show how pervasive the surname was even

the Urias Hotel, where the detectives had eaten before the shootout, was operated by an "Anse" Hatfield—but not the feudist. This Anse, a Baldwin-Felts sympathizer, was summoned to testify against Sid Hatfield in his upcoming trial, that is until Anse was murdered on the front porch of his hotel one night in August 1920. By the end of that month, federal troops were occupying Mingo County.

On January 26, 1921, Sid Hatfield and 22 other defendants went to trial for the murder of Albert Felts. During the trial, held in Williamson, armed Baldwin-Felts men lined the streets to intimidate what was likely to be a pro-union jury. State troopers remained near the courthouse to ensure the trials were carried out undisturbed. After months in court, Hatfield and the others were acquitted, despite some overwhelming eyewitness testimony. The trial, which ended on March 16, was the longest murder trial in our state's history.

When Hatfield returned to Matewan, he received a hero's welcome. Though he'd been removed as the town's police chief, he was soon elected constable of the Magnolia District of Mingo County. He also opened a gun store in Matewan in the same building where Mayor Testerman had operated a jewelry store.

Coal companies and the Baldwin-Felts had a different response to Hatfield's acquittal. In their minds, Hatfield would never be convicted in southern West Virginia regardless of the crime or his guilt. So, they took matters into their own hands. In summer 1921, there was a shooting at the Mohawk coal camp in McDowell County, just over the Mingo line. Hatfield was charged in the incident and ordered to stand trial.

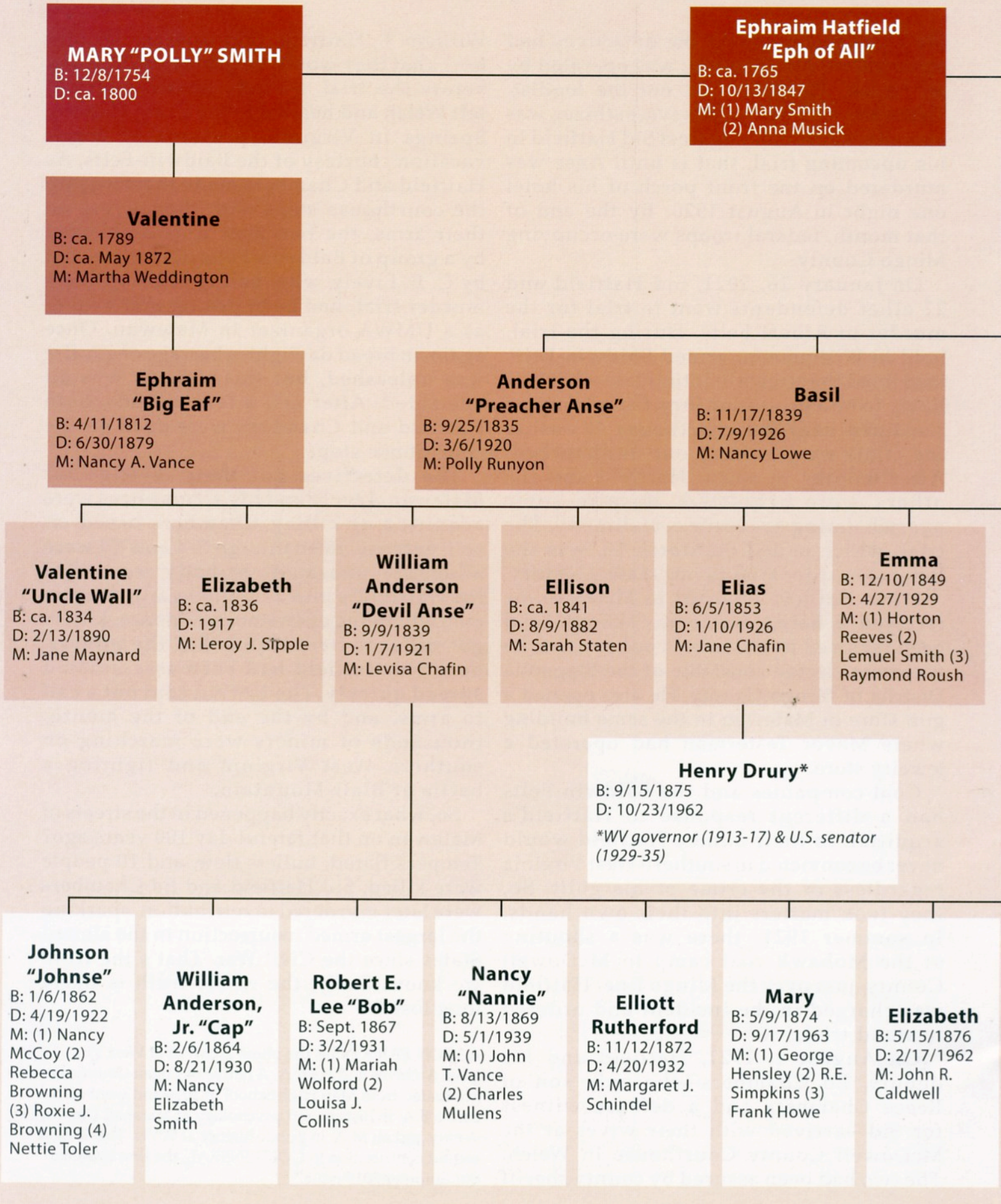
On August 1, 1921, Hatfield and his deputy, Ed Chambers—the only son of Reece Chambers and a defense witness for Sid—arrived with their wives at the McDowell County Courthouse in Welch. The two had been assured by county sheriff William J. Hatfield (yet another distant kin), that they would be protected. The day before the trial, though, Sheriff Hatfield left Welch and headed to the Craig Healing Springs in Virginia, presumably a gift vacation courtesy of the Baldwin-Felts. As Hatfield and Chambers made their way up the courthouse steps with their wives on their arms, the two men were ambushed by a group of Baldwin-Felts detectives, led by C. E. Lively, who, before Sid Hatfield's murder trial, had been posing undercover as a UMWA organizer in Matewan. Once again, in broad daylight, a barrage of gunfire was unleashed, but this time, it was all one-sided. After just a few seconds, both Hatfield and Chambers were dead on the courthouse steps.

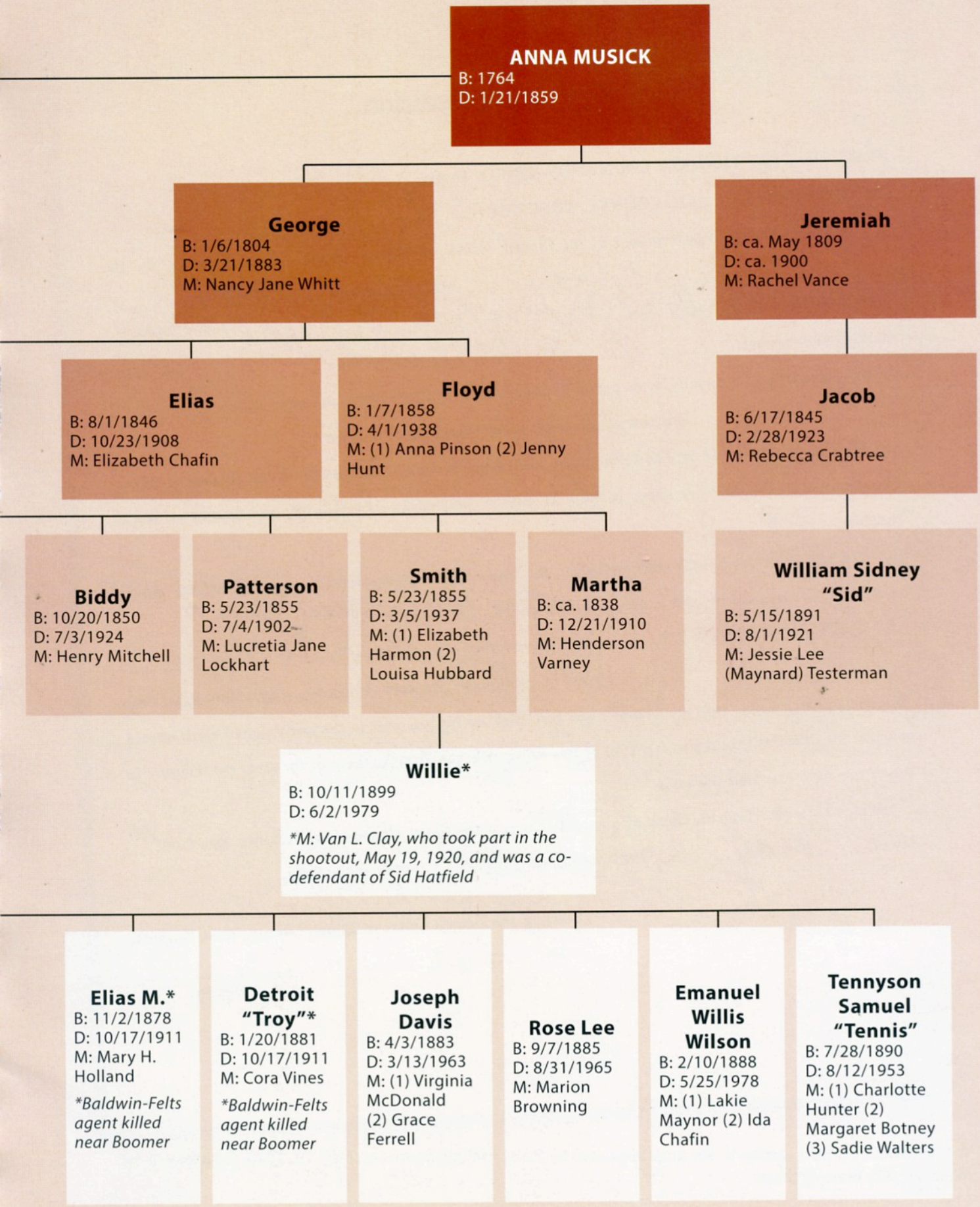
The detectives got their revenge for Matewan. Lively and his accomplices were acquitted of killing Chambers based on self-defense, even though Sid and Ed were allegedly unarmed. Nobody was tried for Hatfield's murder, and again, despite overwhelming eyewitness evidence, killers got off scot-free. News that the miners' hero Sid Hatfield had been assassinated spread quickly. The UMWA sent out a call to arms, and by the end of the month, thousands of miners were marching on southern West Virginia and fighting a battle at Blair Mountain.

So, what exactly happened in the streets of Matewan on that fateful day 100 years ago? Tempers flared, bullets flew, and 10 people were killed. Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers were later murdered in retribution, sparking the largest armed insurrection in the United States since the Civil War. That's the truth we know. Sadly, the whole truth is likely long lost.

AARON PARSONS is the photo archivist at West Virginia Archives and History. A native of Logan County, he graduated from Man High School in 2010 and went on to earn a B.A. in history and psychology at Marshall University and an M.A. in public history at WVU. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL, the first being in our Summer 2019 issue.

Hatfield Family Tree





All information by Randy Marcum and *Hatfield Genealogy* by Ron Blackburn.

Writ of Possession

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, COUNTY OF MINGO, To-wit:

TO THE SHERIFF OF SAID COUNTY, GREETING:

Judgment having been rendered by the Circuit Court of Mingo County, West Virginia, on the 15, day of April 1921, in favor of Stone Mountain Coal Corporation, a corporation plantiff, and against H. X. Collins defendant, for the possession of a certain lot or parcel of land situate in said county and state and in ..... District of said county, and described as follows:

That certain parcel of land and real estate and premises, which includes the house thereon standing, now occupied by the said defendant, in the coal mining camp of the said plaintiff, and known as House Number 28.

You are, therefore hereby commanded, in the name of the State of West Virginia, to deliver possession of said lot or parcel of land to the said Stone Mountain Coal Corporation and remove the said H. X. Collins and his goods and property therefrom, within ~~five~~ 10 days from the time this writ comes into your hands, and you shall return this writ to the undersigned clerk of said court, at his office, within the said period of ~~five~~ 10 days, with your return thereon showing the manner in which you have executed the same.

Witness, Jos. P. Hatfield, Clerk of our said Court, at the Court House of said County, this the 11 day of May, 1921, and in the 58 year of the State.

Jos P Hatfield
Clerk of the Circuit Court of Mingo County, West Virginia,

By .....
Deputy.

A 1921 eviction notice, similar to the ones executed by Baldwin-Felts agents on May 19, 1920. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

The Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency

By Aaron Parson

The Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency was founded in the early 1890s as the Baldwin Detective Agency. William G. Baldwin, a native of Tazewell County, Virginia, had begun his career in 1884 with the Eureka Detective Agency in Charleston. After founding his own agency, he set up headquarters in Roanoke, Virginia, overseeing security operations for the Norfolk & Western Railway. In 1900, Thomas LaFayette Felts, a lawyer from Galax, Virginia, joined the firm as a legal consultant. By 1910, the agency's name had been officially changed to the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, with a branch office in Bluefield.

In 1912, the agency gained national attention for its role in capturing Floyd Allen and several family members who'd been involved in a courtroom shootout in Carroll County, Virginia; five people were killed in that gunfight, including the county sheriff. With the sheriff dead, there was no one to lead the pursuit, prompting Virginia Governor William H. Mann to employ Baldwin-Felts agents. After a relentless search, the detectives tracked down and arrested most of the wanted Allens.

By the early 1910s, the agency was seeking work other than railroad security. Finding that many coal companies, particularly in West Virginia, wanted armed guards to keep labor organizers out of their mines, Baldwin-Felts agents quickly became a symbol of oppression to striking miners. For their roles in the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek Strike in Kanawha County (1912-13), the Matewan Massacre (1920), and the Battle of Blair Mountain (1921), Baldwin-Felts detectives became some of the most feared and hated men in West Virginia.

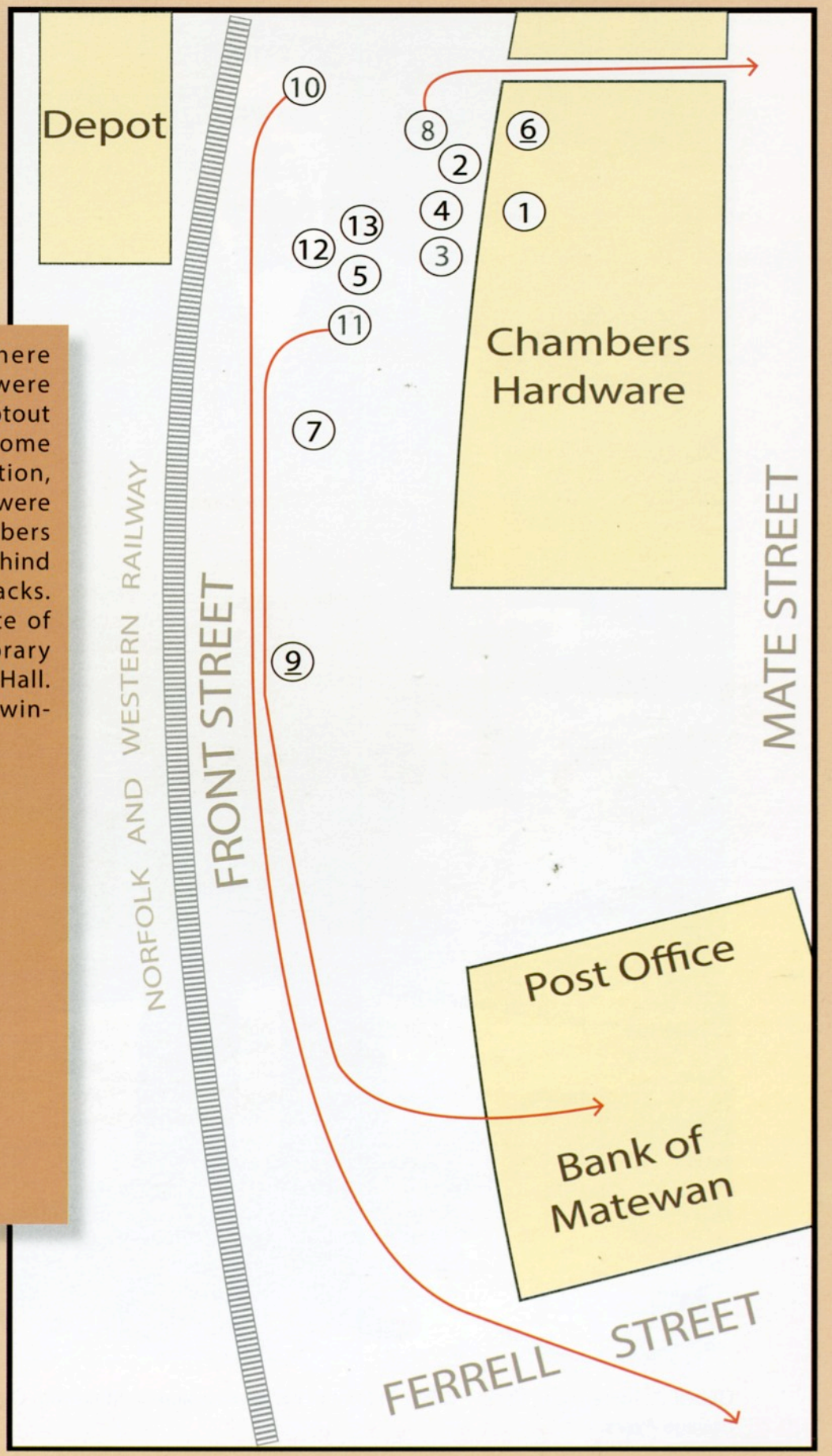
The agency's role as strikebreakers wasn't reserved just for West Virginia. It worked for coal operators in several states, using similar tactics. In 1914, Baldwin-Felts agents played a key part in a strike at John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s Colorado coal mines. At Ludlow, Colorado, an armored car mounted with machine guns attacked a tent colony of striking miners, resulting in an estimated 21 deaths, including the wives and children of striking miners. A similar type of armored train, the "Bull Moose Special," had fired on a tent colony at Mucklow (Kanawha County) on Paint Creek the year before.

Baldwin-Felts detectives killed at Matewan (left-right): (top) C. T. Higgins, Albert Felts, and Lee Felts; (bottom) C. B. Cunningham, A. J. Booher, E. C. Powell, and J. W. Ferguson. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

The detectives' violent strikebreaking tactics quickly gave the agency a bad reputation—so much so that it largely fell out of use by coal operators by the 1930s. After the deaths of William Baldwin in 1936 and Tom Felts in 1937, the agency closed its doors.

The Harmon Museum in Hillsville, Virginia, has an impressive collection of artifacts related to the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency.

This image of Matewan shows the same setting as the map. On the far right is the Bank of Matewan/post office building. On the far left is the depot. The crowd is gathered in front of Chambers Hardware, where the shootout began. Courtesy of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives.



The map shows where certain key people were standing when the shootout began and the routes some used to escape. In addition, a number of townsfolk were gathered inside Chambers Hardware and hiding behind cars by the railroad tracks. Map by James R. White of the West Virginia Library Commission and Jacob Hall. Asterisks indicate Baldwin-Felts agents.

1. Sid Hatfield
2. Albert Felts*
3. Cabell Testerman
4. C. B. Cunningham*
5. Lee Felts*
6. Isaac Brewer
7. Clare Overstreet
8. Jim Webb
9. Doug Mounts
10. John W. Ferguson*
11. A. J. Booher*
12. C. T. Higgins*
13. E. O. Powell*

Cabell C. Testerman (1882 – 1920), in front of his jewelry store in Matewan. Courtesy of Ginny Savage Ayers.

Union leaders and supporters gather in front of the new UMWA headquarters in Matewan shortly after the shootout (left-right): (top) James Doyle of the UMWA, W. H. Hutchinson (a Mingo County miner/organizer), Andrew Wilson of the UMWA, and William Phillips of Matewan; (bottom) Charlie H. Workman of the UMWA, Mother Jones, Sid Hatfield, and I. E. Fry. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

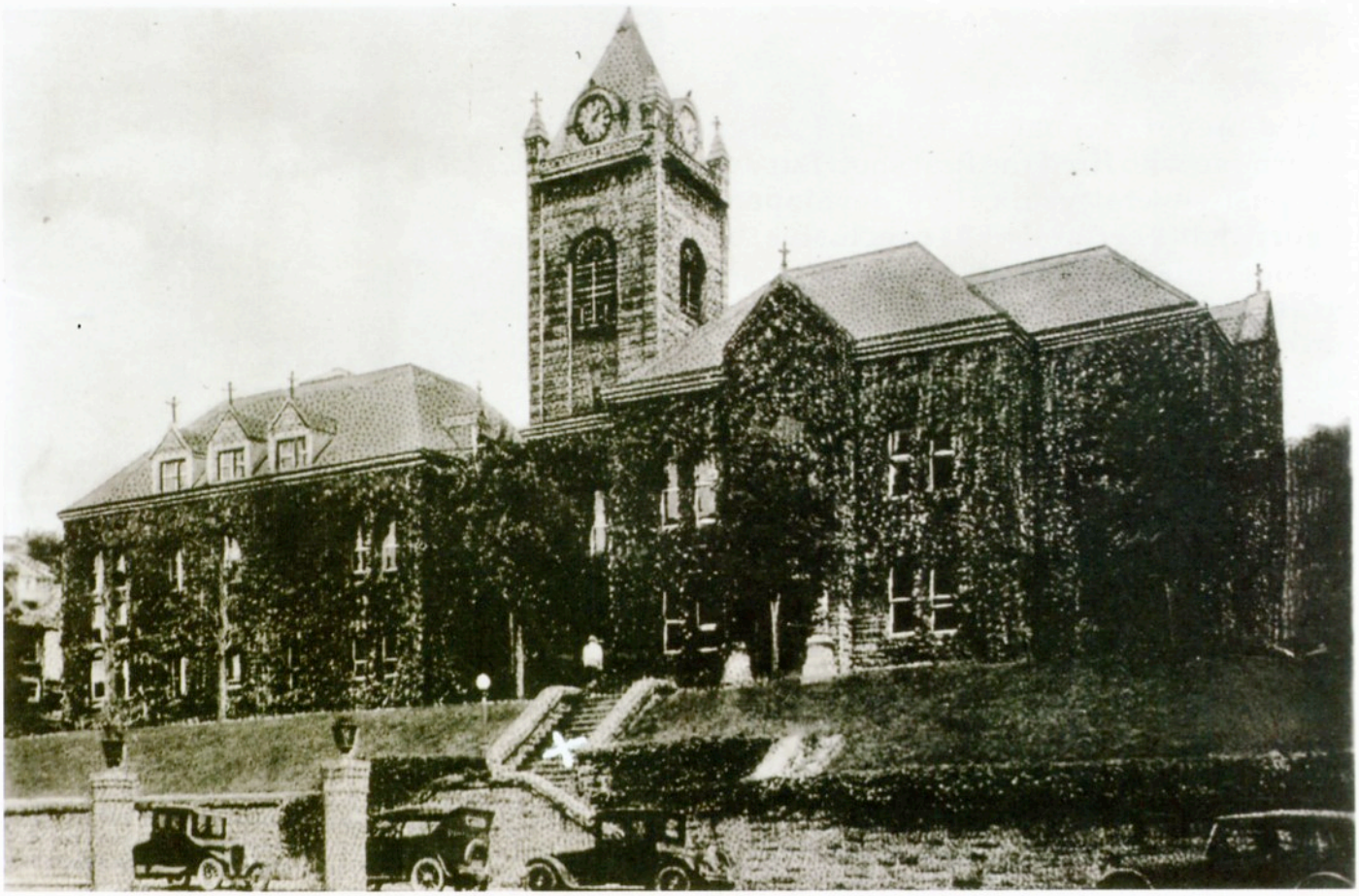
(Left) "Two-Gun" Sid Hatfield and (right) Ed Chambers, murdered by Baldwin-Felts agents in Welch, August 1, 1921. Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center (WVRHC).

Who Fired First?

By Doug Estepp

As Aaron Parsons noted in his lead article, many questions arose in the days following the shootout, and most remain unanswered. Each side, coal operators and the UMWA, has its own version of events that supports its own narratives. Chief among the unanswered questions is "Who fired the first shot?" Did Albert Felts shoot Mayor Testerman either by accident or to remove the main impediment to his takeover of Matewan? Did Sid Hatfield really shoot Albert Felts or Mayor Testerman? Or was it an unknown Matewan "deputy" firing at Felts from inside Chambers Hardware, as testified by witnesses in Hatfield's murder trial?

Like most West Virginians of my generation, I grew up never learning about Matewan, the Battle of Blair Mountain, or the Mine Wars in general despite coming from a family of union miners and living close to both Matewan and Blair Mountain. I'd been to Matewan numerous times growing up and crossed Blair Mountain on occasion without knowing its name or the bloody history of either place. That all changed in 1979 while I was attending West Virginia University.



The white x on the McDowell County Courthouse steps marks the approximate spot where Hatfield and Chambers were shot. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

One day, I was scanning through microfilm of old newspapers while working on a project. Suddenly, I was staring at a glaring, bold headline that screamed "Ten Men Killed In Matewan—Mayor Dead." I was shocked. How many times had I been to Matewan? Why didn't anyone ever mention this to me? I eagerly read every article and then all the papers from the days and weeks following the gunfight. I began looking for other newspapers and searching for books, of which there were few. I didn't know it then, but I'd just embarked on a 40-year odyssey of chasing the Mine Wars.

That journey has taken me many places. Along the way, I befriended Bill Blizzard's son, William C. Blizzard. I joined a successful 10-year fight to save the old Jefferson County Jail in Charles Town from demolition—the same prison where Bill Blizzard and other union leaders were held during the 1922 treason trials. In 2010, I created Coal Country Tours to share our mining heritage and Mine War history with a wider audience and, more recently, contributed to the *American Experience* documentary *The Mine Wars*.

My best times have been as a guide on our West Virginia Mine War Tour. During my 30-some tours, I've always emphasized the elusive nature of truth. For example, at Matewan, I talk about three plausible versions of how the battle began, providing evidence to support or debunk each account. I give my opinion but caution that it's only *my* opinion. These discussions generate lots of questions, which drive me to keep searching for answers. I do the same at the McDowell County Courthouse in Welch, where Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers were assassinated, as well as at Blair Mountain and other stops.

It'd never occurred to me I might determine who fired the first shot. But over the past several years, I've developed a theory that's certainly not conclusive, but considerable evidence points to one person. Strangely enough, this theory germinated not from looking at what happened in Matewan but rather by examining the odd and inconsistent behavior of Charles Everett "C. E." Lively in Welch on August 1, 1921, when he and other Baldwin-Felts agents killed Hatfield and Chambers. The best and most complete eyewitness account is from Ed's widow, Sallie, who testified under oath before a U.S. Senate investigating committee.

According to her, on the morning of the killings, as the group ascended the courthouse steps in Welch, she and Ed were in the lead, with Ed to her right. Jessie and Sid Hatfield followed a step or two behind in the same order. On the lawn above were "100 or maybe 200" detectives and "6 or 8" on the steps just above the landing—including Lively, Bill Salter, and Buster Pence. Sallie testified that as they reached the landing, Sid made a little wave at supporters, and at that point, she was startled by a gunshot. Then, she described in specific detail what happened next: "Lively put his arm across in front of me and shot my husband in the neck; right there was the first shot." Sallie described how Lively continued to shoot her husband as he rolled down the steps. When she rushed to his aid and tried to hold his head in her arms, Lively "reached down and put his gun just about that near his ear" and fired one final shot through the top of his head.

Lively's actions raise a number of questions. He was Tom Felts' most effective and trusted agent. A known killer, he'd been employed by the agency for a decade. He'd successfully infiltrated the UMWA, both at Matewan and earlier, in Ludlow, Colorado, where he'd served a year in prison for murder. He was close to all three Felts brothers, and when the Hatfield and Chambers parties climbed the steps, Lively was standing point. But when the shooting started, Lively targeted Chambers and not Hatfield. Why?

All these badges and ribbons relate to the Mine Wars. The top three are thought to have belonged to Lee Felts, Sid Hatfield, and Albert Felts, respectively. In the center is a badge issued in 1921 by UMWA District 17 memorializing the deaths of Hatfield and Ed Chambers. This is part of the Doug Estepp/Coal Country Tours Collection on loan to the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum.

Most fair observers at the time—and many still to this day—believed Sid Hatfield instigated the events at Matewan. He was the man Tom Felts had publicly accused of firing first on May 19, 1920. Afterward, Hatfield became, in modern jargon, a rock star, a hero to coal miners everywhere. So why did Tom Felts' most ruthless killer ignore Sid to go after Ed? Lively fired the first shot into Ed's neck and then continued to pump a dozen bullets into him. Why?

And why did he fire one last round into Ed at point-blank range, just behind his ear—a mob-style ending that Lively never afforded Hatfield?

In trying to understand Lively's behavior at Welch, it's helpful to look at some episodes former Attorney General Howard B. Lee wrote about in his book *Bloodletting in Appalachia*. At the time of the assassinations, Lee was prosecuting attorney in nearby Mercer County. He had an office in Bluefield, one floor above the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, and was friendly with many of the agents. Lee wrote that sometime after the killings, a moonshine runner from McDowell County was arrested and brought to his office. To Lee's surprise, instead of contacting a bondsman, the man called "one of McDowell County's most prominent coal operators."

This piqued Lee's interest, so he asked why the operator would bother with this lowly shine runner. The man calmly explained, "I was on the jury that acquitted the Baldwin-Felts men for killing Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers." (In fact, the trial was only for the murder of Ed Chambers; no one was ever tried for Hatfield's killing.) "He will either come or send someone." The man described how he'd been recruited to serve as a juror after declaring to a deputy he'd vote "not guilty, by God!" The trial for Chambers' murder, which focused on Lively, was indeed a sham, which shouldn't surprise anyone. Lee called it a "judicial farce(s), staged for the sole purpose of acquitting them," referring to all the detectives involved but specifically to Lively. As the moonshine runner predicted, the coal operator sent someone to bail him out.

Lee believed that the Baldwin-Felts had pushed for the trial, sham or not, to prevent future prosecution. The constitutional principle of double jeopardy precludes a person from ever being convicted of a crime after having been acquitted of that same

C. E. Lively (1887 – 1962), a Baldwin-Felts agent, infiltrated the UMWA's ranks in Matewan, testified for the prosecution at Sid Hatfield's murder trial, and gunned down Ed Chambers in Welch. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

crime. But the only trial that took place regarding the murders in Welch concerned Chambers' killing. If it was necessary to protect Lively for killing Chambers, why wasn't it also necessary to protect him for Hatfield's murder?

Perhaps the trial in Welch wasn't about protecting anyone but to send a message. After all, no one spent more than a couple of days behind bars, and, with jurors being regularly bribed and/or threatened in the southern coalfields, what was the real likelihood anyone would ever be held accountable? The most obvious conclusion is that the trial was intended as a message. But to whom? And what message?

Now let's jump back to Matewan. As portrayed in the film *Matewan* (1987), Lively had been working undercover as a UMWA supporter in town for some time. In the aftermath of the shootout—between May 1920 and the start of Hatfield's trial the next January—Lively continued to operate undercover. With assistance from him and a dozen other secret agents in the area,

Tom Felts pieced together who he thought was responsible for the May 1920 shootout. Lively's trusted relationship with the miners likely made Felts even more confident in his assessment. According to Howard B. Lee, Felts' detectives determined that Reece Chambers, his son, Ed, and Sid Hatfield were responsible and "that this trio must die." From the first, though, Felts seemed to focus specifically on Reece Chambers.

According to Lee, Hughey Lucas, a notorious Baldwin-Felts agent, told him that for months after the shootout, an assassin had been assigned to ride the Norfolk & Western Railway past Matewan on a frequent schedule. This Baldwin-Felts agent would always sit in a drawing room on the same side of the train where Reece lived. As the train would approach Chambers' home, the agent would "raise the window a few inches, rest the muzzle of his rifle on the window sill, and peer through the telescope sight for his intended victim." But Chambers was too clever and never allowed himself to be caught out in the open when trains passed. Lucas didn't mention any targets other than Reece Chambers. If Felts considered all three men were responsible, why did he target only Reece and not Hatfield and Ed Chambers, as well?

At Sid Hatfield's murder trial in Williamson, defense witnesses claimed Albert Felts had fired first, striking the mayor. Prosecution witnesses claimed Sid had fired first, shooting the mayor and then Albert. On the other hand, neutral witnesses, who didn't seem to be tied to either the union or the operators, said the first shot had come from inside Chambers Hardware, striking Albert Felts.

My theory is that Tom Felts, an experienced and intelligent detective, had better resources in Matewan (a dozen undercover men) than anyone else. And Felts focused his rage on Reece Chambers, or in the case of the Welch shooting, on Reece's son, Ed. The strange fact that there was only one trial (for Chambers) for a double murder supports this theory.

From Lucas' account in Lee's book, we know that Felts had targeted Reece for assassination, even *before* the trials, in retaliation for the Matewan shootout. At Welch, Felts' most effective and trusted killer, C. E. Lively, gunned down Reece's only son, Ed, while ignoring the miners' hero, Sid Hatfield. Lively's coup de grâce shot to Ed made certain he was dead.

Based on all this information, I believe that final shot and Lively's acquittal were intended as a direct and clear message to Reece Chambers. In a nutshell, the message was "We know you started the battle when you shot Albert Felts from inside your hardware store. You dodged all consequences, so we killed your only son, Ed, in your stead. We made absolutely sure your son was dead, and then we rigged the jury to make absolutely sure his killer would never face justice. And there's *nothing* you can do about it."

An alternative theory could be that even if Reece didn't fire the very first shot, Felts considered him the ringleader of an apparent ambush. After all, Hatfield and Albert Felts technically had to walk a little ways beyond the depot—where the agents were to meet up—before the confrontation at Reece's store, where armed men were waiting inside.

There's evidence that Reece Chambers got the message. He was described by neighbors and acquaintances as a large and easygoing man but also as someone who could hold a grudge. In the aftermath of the shootings in Matewan and Welch, Reece descended into paranoia and, later, more

Doug's next West Virginia Mine War Tour will be May 15-17, 2020, departing from Valley Mall in Hagerstown, Maryland, and picking up tourists at Tamarack in Beckley. For more details, check out **www.coalcountrytours.com** or call **540-233-0543**.

At the Mingo County Courthouse, defendants stand trial for the Matewan Massacre. Among those pictured standing are Reece Chambers (third from left), Sid Hatfield (fifth from left), Ed Chambers (third from right), and Clare Overstreet (far right). All defendants were acquitted. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

severe mental illness. He quit venturing out during daylight and was often seen sitting in his darkened cabin at night, rifle in hand, on the lookout for would-be killers. And he apparently couldn't accept the reality that Ed was truly dead and kept searching for him. For years, Reece would tell his neighbor Venchie Morrell, "If you see Ed, tell him to come home. It's getting dark, and I don't want him out after dark." Reece, in fact, died in Barboursville State Hospital, a branch of Weston, in 1958 at age 93.

As I noted, truth can be elusive, especially when huge interests are at stake. And so it was at Matewan. It's more likely than not that we'll never know the exact truth about what happened there or how it unfolded. But a careful examination of the facts can lead us closer to the truth. Based on the actions of Tom Felts and C. E. Lively, I think Reece Chambers, above all others, was responsible for firing the "shot heard 'round the coalfields."

One last question remains. Why was Tom Felts so certain in his belief that Reece started the gunfight? Did Reece confess his guilt to Lively when he thought Lively was his friend? Who can say? Did Reece really fire that first shot, killing Albert Felts? To me, it looks likely, but nothing is certain except that Reece did *something* or Tom Felts and Lively wouldn't have targeted his only son. So, in the end, this is just a theory. It's supported by evidence but still speculation. Time rolls on, and hopefully, there's a young historian out there who'll uncover a yet-undiscovered document or, through careful reasoning, prove or disprove this theory and get us closer to the truth. Or it could be an event like the JFK assassination, with many theories that may never be proven or disproven.

DOUG ESTEPP grew up in Mingo County, where his family has deep roots. A graduate of West Virginia University, he resides in Shenandoah County, Virginia, with his wife, Carol. An ardent student of the Mine Wars for four decades, he's owned and operated Coal Country Tours since 2010. This is Doug's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Lively Letter

By Doug Estepp

In 1924, C. E. Lively wrote the following extraordinary unpublished letter to the *Bluefield Telegraph* newspaper. The impetus was a falling out between Lively and his benefactor Dave Houston of the Houston Collieries regarding Lively's refusal to support one of Houston's preferred candidates in a local election. In revenge, Houston used his control of the county courts and McDowell County political machine to have Lively jailed on a misdemeanor.

Lively must have known the letter would never be published. Rather, it was likely a veiled threat toward Houston because Lively refers to "when I killed two men on the steps of the Court House" and then goes on to name names. Keep in mind, Lively had been acquitted of killing Chambers, while the charges for Hatfield's murder seemingly just vanished. However, the double-jeopardy principle didn't extend to others who might have been involved in some way but hadn't been charged or tried. To be clear, Lively doesn't accuse others of directly participating in the Hatfield/Chambers murders but places them in close enough proximity to make them accessories before the crime.

Consider the implications. Lively states that Judge James French Strother, who was assigned to oversee the Hatfield trial in Welch, was "the same judge [who] boarded me" when Lively assassinated Chambers. It's incredible to imagine Lively having dinner or breakfast with the judge—or even conversing with him—in the days leading up to August 1, 1921, when Lively headed to the courthouse lawn to do the deed while the judge prepared his courtroom for a proceeding he knew wouldn't occur.

Lively asserts that Dave Houston gave the marching orders and controlled the court and adds that Strother was then a candidate for Congress. With Houston's support, Strother—whose grandfather and great-grandfather had earlier served in Congress—would be a shoo-in; later that year, he'd win election and serve in the U.S. House of Representatives (1925 – 1929).

The letter contains other interesting connections. Lively notes that Strother was a large stockholder in the Mohawk Coal Company, which helped pay for his defense. Hatfield and Chambers had been indicted and lured to Welch for "shooting up" the tipple at Mohawk based on the secret testimony of none other than C. E. Lively before Judge Strother. Lively's words are always suspect. On one hand, he had no hesitation lying to others in elaborate ways when working undercover or giving false testimony under oath. On the other hand, he could be quite candid about his trade, as evidenced by his casual remark about "thugging." In this case, he was seeking revenge, and truth may have been his best weapon. Either way, the actions of Dave Houston and James Frank Strother clearly require further scrutiny.

This letter was first uncovered by the late Dr. Lou Athey, who shared it with former GOLDENSEAL editor and West Virginia Humanities Council Executive Director Ken Sullivan. In 2002, Ken forwarded it to author Lon Savage, who in turn passed it along to Doug. *This transcription includes mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation as Lively wrote them. –ed.*

Bluefield Daily Telegraph
Bluefield, W.Va.
Gentlemen:

On the 19th of July 1924 you carried quite an article in your paper relative to my arrest. At the time I had a case in court so had too much sense to (worry?) over it.

You stated that I had got tanked up on mean liquor and assaulted a man named Farley. That was an absolute false hood.

I did not assault D. Farley. I had a talk with him but was not drunk. Your paper further stated that I was arrested in a house in Cinder Bottom which was another falsehood.

The facts are as here after set forth.

Dave Houston Supt. of the Houston Collieries Co. for T. E. Houston of Cincinnati got mad at me because I would not vote as he wish in the primary election and fired me. Then because I was successful in uncovering some of the election scandals he notified me to get of his property and began to make an effort to drive me from McDowell County. I let him know that he could not run me any where or from any part of the state. He threatened me with jail but did not scare me in the least.

He then put his stool pigeons and thug to work to get me in jail. D. Farley was summoned before the grand jury to indict me. He swore I was driving a car while drunk which a dirty liar and the jury that tried the case thought so also for they acquitted me when I was tried.

After the grand jury adjourned I learnt that they had framed an indictment against me.

I went to the Sheriff's office and inquired if they had a capias for me. They did not. Later in the day I went into the court rooms and plead to the indictment and was turned loose.

The prosecuting attorney ask me to see a lady above Northfork for him which I did. He also ask me to interview some women in Cinder Bottom of Keystone and I was there for that purpose when I was arrested on the street.

But it did not suit Dave Houston for me to be at liberty so he communicated with Welch as the Courts of McDowell County is very much dominated by the Houston Coal Company he had little difficulty in getting a capias issued for me and Judge Strother who is a candidate for Congress ordered me locked up and held with out bond yet the charge was only a misdemeanor and bailable.

It can be recalled that this is the same judge boarded me when I shot two men to death on the steps of the Court House when he was holding Court there in. Then threw me in with out bond on a misdemeanor.

But circumstances was different. In the latter case a big coal operator wanted me in.

In the former case the two men killed was union men and their union had decreased the output of the Mohawk mines of which Judge Strother is said to be a large stock holder. And funds from his mine assisted in defending me.

The funds from this company also paid the mine guards to beat up a lot of men with pistols etc. and run them out of the County but Judge James F. Strother did not throw any of these guards in jail or have any of them indicted to my knowledge and I am in a position to know as I was thugging at that time. This same prosecutor G. L. Counts that is owned soul and body by the Houston Collieries Company took at one time two thousand dollars to use an extra effort to get me in the pen and was to get $3000.00 more if he succeeded in doing so.

In other words I am a victim of Dave Houston the Coal Baron who is to run for member of the County Court.

C. E. Lively

The Lively Letter Back Story

By Ken Sullivan

Call this the one that got away.

I distinctly remember receiving C. E. Lively's brazen letter, which came via my good friend Lou Athey in 2002, and recall the excitement it generated among those of us interested in West Virginia's troubled labor history. Here was damning firsthand testimony by a principal figure in what was arguably the key event in the Mine Wars.

Content aside, the shameless defiance of the letter was breathtaking, and I still find that true today. Lively had been acquitted of murder in the slaughter of Ed Chambers at Welch, and I suppose he put himself in no further legal jeopardy by now flatly stating "I shot two men to death on the steps of the Court House." Still, the sheer provocativeness of such an admission in a letter intended for the Bluefield newspaper is pretty amazing. The shooting war had scarcely ended in the southern coalfields, and plainly here was a man who didn't mind firing things up again.

Altogether a remarkable document, falling effortlessly into my lap.

And yet I failed to bring it into print.

It wasn't for lack of opportunity. Though no longer editor of GOLDENSEAL, I had moved just down the street to the Humanities Council and was still deeply involved in publishing West Virginia history. In fact, I was editing the *West Virginia Encyclopedia* when the letter came to me, helping to prepare what eventually became a 927-page reference volume. There were dozens of articles on labor history and the coal industry, including separate pieces on the Mine Wars and the Matewan Massacre as well as the ensuing shooting at Welch, and on Sid Hatfield and C. E. Lively himself. His letter would have made a great sidebar in any of several places in the book.

Probably the reason that never happened was that there was just too much going on as our small *Encyclopedia* staff worked with more than 2,000 individual manuscripts and nearly 600 freelance writers. A lot got delegated, and in this case, there was no question but that the Lively letter should go to Lon Savage, best known for his Mine Wars history, *Thunder in the Mountains*, and our go-to man on the subject. As it happens, Lon had little more than a year to live at the time we contacted him, and I suppose one mean-spirited old letter was the last thing on our minds as we digested the hard fact of his passing. In any case, we never got around to reassigning the item.

The upshot was that this astonishing letter, which apparently had remained unpublished for more than three-quarters of a century when I first saw it, has now stayed out of print for nearly two decades more.

I'm glad that GOLDENSEAL is remedying that.

KEN SULLIVAN is the former editor of GOLDENSEAL and retired executive director of the West Virginia Humanities Council.

Jessie Maynard Testerman Hatfield (right) and Sallie Chambers pose in September 1921 at the U.S. Capitol, where they testified before a congressional subcommittee about violence in southern West Virginia, including the recent murders of their husbands, Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

"Her hour of need"
Jessie Maynard

By Randy Marcum

Jessie Lee Maynard's first marriage ended in a hail of bullets on May 19, 1920. Her heavyset burly husband, Cabell C. Testerman, Matewan's mayor, lie mortally wounded on the porch of Chambers Hardware—and would die later that evening in Welch—as his pretty dark-haired wife and adopted son, Jack, looked on in horror.

Jessie, born in Williamson on September 4, 1894, was part of the large well-connected Maynard family. A niece of Randolph and Sarah McCoy—the "Kentucky side" of the Hatfield-McCoy Feud—she married Cabell Testerman in Matewan on September 6, 1911. He'd moved to Matewan from Wyoming City, near the McDowell County line, where

he was a jeweler and optician. Having immigrated to the area from southwest Virginia, Testerman had been married twice before: first to Donna Anderson (1900) and then to Lula Minton (1904). Both marriages had ended in divorce. When his third marriage and life ended in front of Chambers' Hardware in Matewan, the next phase of Jessie's life was just beginning.

On June 1, less than two weeks after the shootout, Sid Hatfield, the 27-year-old miners' hero, boarded a Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway train bound for Huntington with his bride-to-be, none other than Jessie (Maynard) Testerman, who was 25. Things move quickly in a stressful environment, and the courtship of Sid and Jessie was no different. Years-long friendships, political entanglements, and violent events had brought the couple together.

Sid and Jessie had intended to marry quickly; however, the ceremony had to be delayed. Traveling to Huntington by train, obtaining a marriage license, and finding a preacher was a bit much to accomplish in one day. So, that evening, after getting their license, they took a room at Huntington's Florentine Hotel, where they spent the eve of their wedding.

That same evening, they were paid a visit by Huntington police officers Lt. J. M. Messenger and Detective A. H. Vernatt, acting on information supplied by Tom Felts of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency. Felts had informed the local police that Sid and Jessie were unmarried and staying together at the hotel. In 1920, cohabiting and committing adultery were grounds for arrest.

Sid and Jessie both spent the night of June 1 in the city jail. The next morning, they were taken in front of Judge Newman of the Huntington Police Court. He initially fined them $10, but when their attorney, Harry Darnell, made a brief statement regarding their wedding intentions, Newman dismissed the charges and fine after a short five-minute trial. The judge remarked, "If Hatfield and Mrs. Testerman have a license, and they prove to this court that they intend to get married, the city has no case against them."

Upon leaving the courthouse, the couple paused to have their picture taken by the *Huntington Advertiser* newspaper. The wedding party, consisting of Darnell, and Kyle V. Testerman and Myrtle (Testerman) Blackburn—respectively, Cabell's nephew and niece, who lived nearby—proceeded to the First Presbyterian Church on Fifth Avenue. There, on June 2, 1920, Sid and Jessie were united in marriage by the Rev. J. Layton Mauze.

As you might expect, the wedding's timing was scandalous. Tom Felts claimed Sid had killed Cabell—sparking the shootout that had taken the lives of his brothers and five other Baldwin-Felts detectives—so Sid could marry the mayor's wife, Jessie. In a June 2 newspaper report, Sid denied these charges, stating that "Testerman had been his best friend and that he had pulled his gun in Testerman's defense when the detectives began shooting." Jessie also addressed the controversy, asking the public to "realize her peculiar predicament." The newspaper account went on to note, "Living alone in a territory where events transpire with such lightning rapidity, it was natural that she should turn to Hatfield in her 'hour of need.' Her former husband had relied upon [Sid] as his best and strongest friend and . . . she had known and liked him for years and . . . had accepted his honorable offer of marriage without a thought of the scandal that might be hashed up about it." A June 3 news squib from the *Williamson Daily News* was more succinct, writing that Sid had "so far [been] proven guilty of nothing more than a breach of good taste. In view of this fact we can only suggest that 'the less said about it, the better.'"

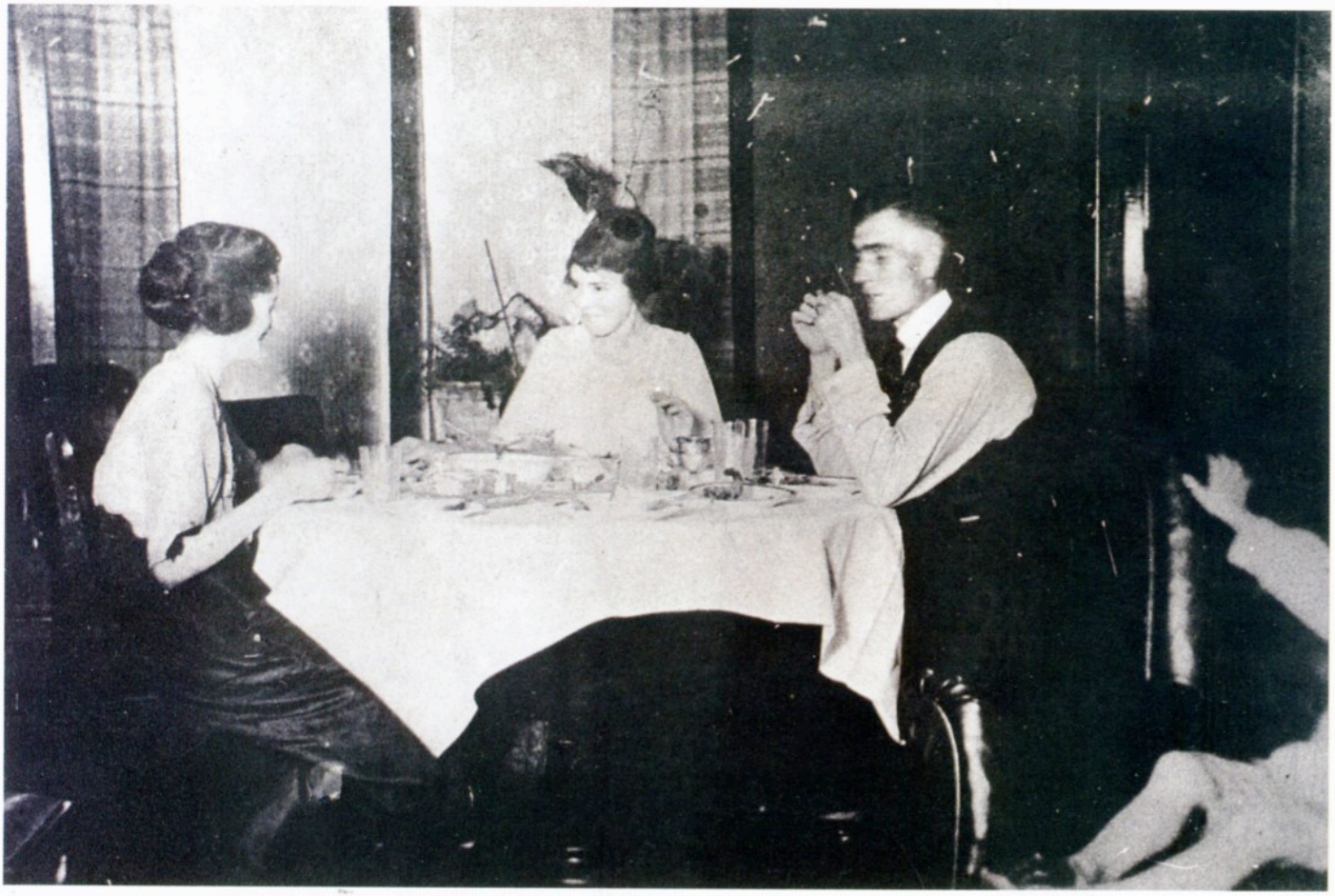
Sid and Jessie's marriage lasted from June 2, 1920, until Sid's murder on August 1, 1921. Thus ended Jessie's

Jessie and Cabell Testerman. Courtesy of Ginny Savage Ayers.

second marriage and the life of Sid who, according to Jack Testerman, "didn't kill my daddy. He was a good man; he was good to me." By age 27, Jessie had been widowed twice; on both occasions, her husbands had been gunned down in cold blood.

Jessie's "hour of need" resurfaced upon Sid's death, and within a few months, she was married again, this time to State Trooper Sylvester Pettry, on January 31, 1922. Pettry, a World War I veteran, had been mobilized to counter the growing violence in the Tug River coalfields. This marriage lasted but a few short years. It ended in divorce, and both parties went their own ways. Pettry left the West Virginia State Police and moved to Indiana, where he married Hazel Alberty. He eventually ended up in New York near the town of Niagara, where he worked in a foundry. He later wound up back in the Dry Fork area of Raleigh County, making his home there until dying in 1950 at age 55. Jessie, however, wasn't quite ready to settle down.

A few years after divorcing Pettry, Jessie



Jessie (center) and Sid Hatfield in their Matewan apartment, talking to an unidentified woman. Although he's mostly cut out of this image, Jessie's adopted son, Jack Testerman, is seated at far right. Courtesy of Ginny Savage Ayers.

met and married her fourth husband, Wilson R. Jennings. A decorated World War I vet, Jennings would be in and out of Jessie's life until her death in 1976. They got married on July 9, 1928, in Ironton, Ohio, and then traveled quite a bit. He worked in various railroad jobs: fireman, brakeman, and conductor. In 1930, Wilson and Jessie, along with her adopted son, Jack, were living in Montgomery, Alabama. Later, they moved back to Ironton and put down longer-term roots.

Life with Wilson Jennings wasn't smooth. In 1930, Jessie filed for divorce, but they seemingly patched things up and moved on with their lives. A larger bump in the road was looming, though. On June 9, 1932, Wilson and an accomplice, Lawrence Piercy, robbed the National Bank of Paintsville, Kentucky, of $47,000. They both received 20-year sentences but were paroled within a few years.

While this briefly interrupted Jessie and Wilson's relationship, they were back together by 1935. But then, an even bigger problem cropped up. Hobert Meade, the bank clerk who'd testified against the two, was found shot to death on December 15, 1935. Like a scene out of *Bonnie & Clyde*, authorities suspected Wilson and Jessie of the murder and indicted them in June 1937. When questioned, Jessie told a reporter, "I really don't know what this is all about. It has been so long ago that I cannot remember where I was the night Mr. Meade was killed. I know I was not in Johnson County and had no part in the slaying." The newspaper account noted she was a resident of Naugatuck (Mingo County) and, interestingly, was divorced from Wilson,

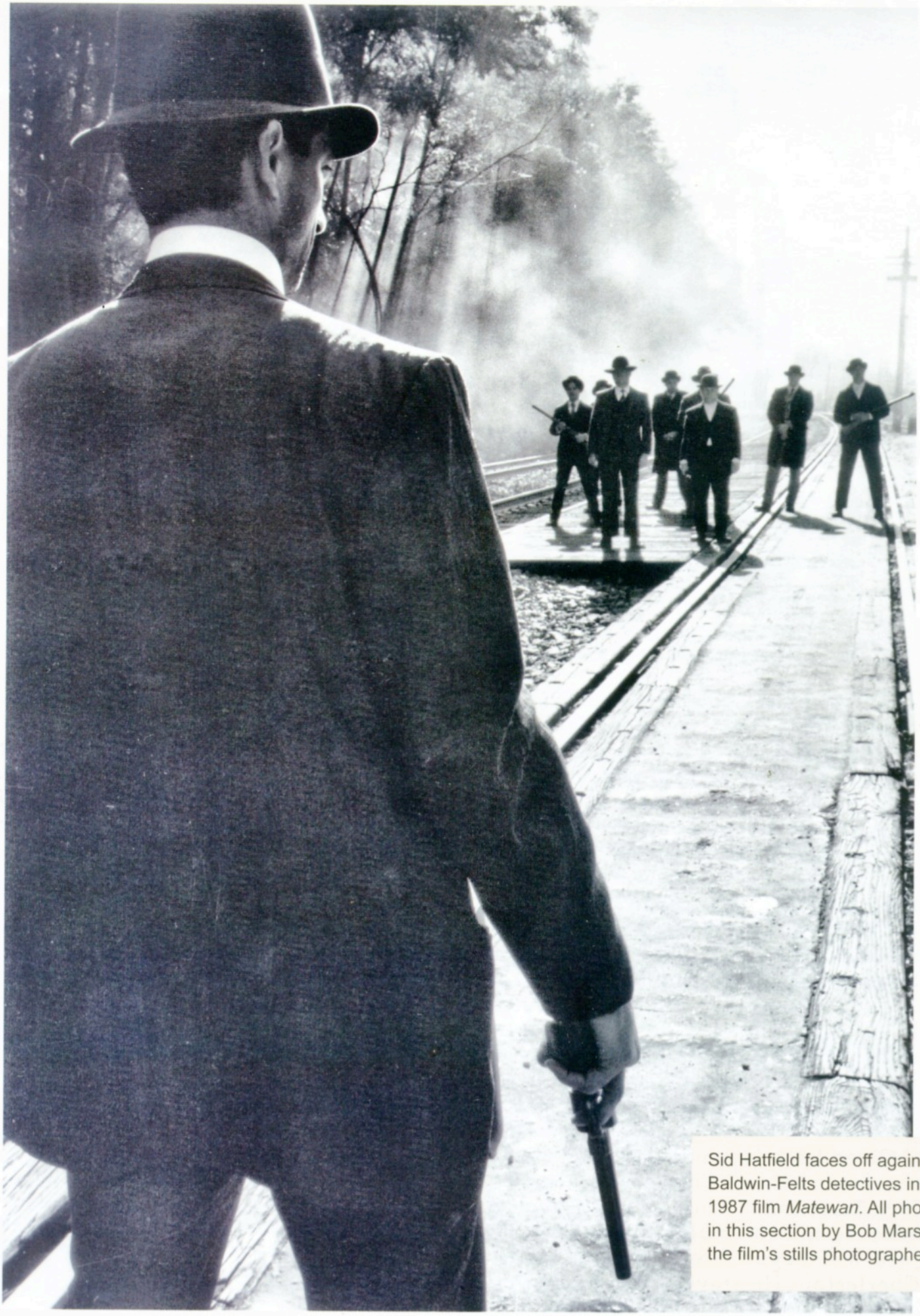
Callous headlines and cartoons such as this, published in 1922 in the *Lima News* (Ohio), plagued Jessie the rest of her life. Courtesy of Randy Marcum.

which likely wasn't true. Wilson and Jessie were jailed for a short time but eventually released, and the charges were dropped. As far as can be determined, this scrape with the law marked the end of Jessie's eyewitness view of bloody events.

Jessie and Wilson settled down into a mundane existence, at least by comparison. They moved to Lawrence County, Ohio, and lived the quiet life: a house, work, and friends. This continued until she passed away at age 81 at Ironton's Lawrence County General Hospital, on August 13, 1976, after a long illness. She's buried at the Highland Memorial Gardens near South Point, Ohio. Wilson died in 1988 and is buried at the Camp Nelson National Cemetery in Nicholasville, Kentucky.

Given Jessie's tumultuous life, who was the one constant? That would seem to be Jack Testerman, who she and Cabell had adopted in September 1916. Prior to that, Jack had begun life as Walter Hight in Charleston. He stayed with his adoptive mother throughout his younger days when he was able. When he wasn't with his mother, he stayed with Jessie's parents, Ira and Emily Maynard, and her sister Zettie, who lived along the N&W tracks in Naugatuck. Jack fondly recalled Jessie's visits. As an elderly man, he reminisced, "I remember my mother stepping off that train one time after she left me here with my aunt. I'd been crying for her, and I heard the train coming a long way off. . . . As the conductor put down the step, I was yelling, 'There's my pretty mother! There's my pretty mother!" Jack, the only child Jessie would ever have, died in 2001.

RANDY MARCUM, a graduate of the University of Rio Grande in Ohio, is a historian with West Virginia Archives and History. He's a direct descendant of Alexander Messer, who helped execute the three sons of Randolph McCoy as part of the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, and a relative by marriage of Jessie Maynard. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL, the first being an article in our Spring 2016 issue about feudist "Devil Anse" Hatfield's short-lived film career.



Sid Hatfield faces off against Baldwin-Felts detectives in the 1987 film *Matewan*. All photos in this section by Bob Marshak, the film's stills photographer.

A Tale of Two Matewans

By Stan Bumgardner

The shootout and its aftermath were tailor-made for the screen and stage, with a rambunctious/ready-to-fight lead character, Sid Hatfield, and a young woman, Jessie Testerman-Hatfield, who was widowed twice before turning 27. Add in some political corruption, mob-like associations and payoffs, and two public shootings, and most producers would say, "Nah, nobody would buy it." Fortunately, great storytellers from Schenectady, New York, and Kimball (McDowell County) took the chance, resulting in one of the best movies and finest plays ever about West Virginia.

Matewan (1987)

In 1987, I asked my father to see the new film *Matewan* with me. Any question was a chance for him to tell a story. This time, he told me how some folks working on the film had visited his coin store, which my mother called a "junk shop." He happened to have a 1920 calendar and donated it to the project.

Rather late in *Matewan*, there's a tense scene involving the characters C. E. Lively and Bridie Mae. As the cineplex audience watched in hushed silence, my father, who had the enthusiasm of a six-year-old on Christmas, burst out, "There's my calendar! There's my calendar!" As I slumped down to avoid stares, I looked up at the screen. Hanging on the wall was my father's 1920 calendar.

Fast-forward 30-plus years, I shared this story with Maggie Renzi, the film's coproducer. She related how the film's prop people scoured our state's antique shops, hills, and hollows, looking for period items. For me, beyond my immediate embarrassment in the theater, the calendar represented the *West Virginia-ness* of the film.

I can't count how many other West Virginians I've met who contributed similar things or appeared as extras in *Matewan*. Film critics often point out how a certain location, particularly New York City, can be like an extra costar in a movie. Whether it's the opening scene (shot in the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine) or the Matewan shootout (filmed in Thurmond due to modern changes in Matewan), this movie is all West Virginia, even down to the musicians.

As major motion pictures go, I can't really think of many films where West Virginia is a costar. Sure, some great movies have been set here. Arguably the best was the 1955 classic *The Night of the Hunter*, adapted from Moundsville native Davis Grubb's novel. But, in the film's opening scene, it takes more than a little imagination to picture Robert Mitchum's Harry Powell in a very make-believe West Virginia Penitentiary in a more make-believe Moundsville. *Silence of the Lambs* and *Mothman Prophecies* relate in different ways to West Virginia, but both have a Pennsylvania feel since that's where they were filmed. Even *October Sky*—based on Homer Hickam's *Rocket Boys* about growing up in Coalwood (McDowell County)—was filmed mostly in Tennessee. Some scenes from *The Deer Hunter* were shot in Weirton, but, once again, it's basically a Pennsylvania, and Vietnam, film. Perhaps the best comparison is *Fool's Parade* (1971), another Grubb adaptation. Starring Jimmy Stewart, George Kennedy, and Strother Martin, it was filmed largely on location in Moundsville [See "When Hollywood Came to Moundsville" by Camilla Bunting, Summer 1995]. Despite featuring three of my favorite actors, the film is fairly average.

Renzi recently spoke with actor James Earl Jones as a bonus for the new Criterion Blu-ray re-release of *Matewan*. Looking back on his storied career, *Matewan* really stood out to him. "It was all around us," Jones told her. Renzi adds, "I know what he meant, which was that there weren't four walls anywhere. If it was [a scene in] the woods, we were in the woods. If it was in the church, we were in the church. If it was around the dining room table in an old house, that was the old boarding house there in Thurmond. That does a lot for the actors and for the crew—it was really a complete immersion [in West Virginia]. It makes the experience for the viewers so much more real."

But it's not just the *West Virginia-ness* of *Matewan* that stands out. It's debatably the best movie ever made about us, as West Virginians, and perhaps the best labor history film. While writer/director John Sayles takes some artistic license with the timeline of events, *Matewan* does what few films, or books, for that matter, do: entertain while helping us understand a complicated but significant period in history. Historians have a reputation for being picky about precise details. I'd like to count myself among this group (despite the periodic "Corrections" we publish due to my editorial oversights). But none other than Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Eric Foner was willing to cut Sayles some historical slack when he wrote that the film is a "meditation on broad philosophical questions rarely confronted in American films: the possibility of interracial cooperation, the merits of violence and nonviolence in combating injustice, and the threat posed by concentrated economic power to American notions of political democracy and social justice." Notably, we're still grappling with these issues in 2020 as much as we were in 1920.

In his 1987 review of the film for GOLDENSEAL, Rick Wilson wrote that despite the grim nature of the plot, "There are many occasions for the audience to laugh, as the characters display that genuine West Virginia trait of finding humor in the worst of situations. Indeed, the most striking thing about the entire film is its authenticity."

Renzi doesn't see the film's message as being tragic or negative; rather, it's about self-empowerment. She emphasizes why its appeal has lasted: "I actually believe we want to be our better selves. That's a lot of what [union organizer] Joe Kenehan is appealing to: Let's be our best. Let's be the people who look out for each other. Let's not get distracted by what the people on top are trying to do to us. We're all workers. We're all the same."

The film's ensemble of actors was virtually unknown at the time, except for Jones, who portrays true-life organizer Dan Chain. But the others have since made quite a mark. Chris Cooper, who played Kenehan, followed up with a slew of great films, including *October Sky*, *Adaptation*, an Oscar-winning supporting role in *American Beauty*, and the Sayles-Renzi films *City of Hope*, *Lone Star*, *Silver City*, and *Amigo*. Mary McDonnell, who stars opposite Cooper, later

"A judicious mixture"

A key scene in the film shows union factions arguing among themselves. As Renzi observes, "The mine owners referred to it as 'a judicious mixture,' meaning you have just a sprinkling of each population so you don't have so many of them that one group is large enough to get together, with the assumption we won't unite because of our differences." Her analysis isn't hypothetical. Fayette County coal operator Justus Collins once wrote about companies hiring a "judicious mixture" of blacks, native whites, and foreigners and playing one against the other to disrupt union organizing.

In the foreground of this scene in Matewan's UMWA hall, C. E. Lively (Bob Gunton), on the far right, is an undercover Baldwin-Felts agent, picking up secrets from union organizers (left-right) Joe Kenehan (Chris Cooper) and Sephus Purcell (Ken Jenkins).

received Oscar nominations for *Dances with Wolves* and *Passion Fish*, another Sayles-Renzi collaboration. David Strathairn, Sid Hatfield in the film, earned an Oscar nod for playing Edward R. Murrow in *Good Night, and Good Luck*; he, too, has been a Sayles-Renzi regular. Cabell Testerman is played by Josh Mostel, son of the legendary Zero Mostel. Gordon Clapp, a Baldwin-Felts agent, earned an Emmy as Detective Greg Medavoy on *NYPD Blue*. Bob Gunton, seven years after portraying C. E. Lively, played an equally wicked character: the warden in *The Shawshank Redemption*. Ken Jenkins, a union organizer in the film, is a great character actor who showed his comic chops as Dr. Bob Kelso on the TV show *Scrubs*. Other than Jones, the next best-known *Matewan* actor at the time was Kevin Tighe, beloved as firefighter Roy DeSoto in the 1970s TV show *Emergency!* He reignited his career with *Matewan*, in which he plays a vicious Baldwin-Felts agent who delivers some of the film's most memorable and purely evil lines. Then there's Will Oldham, a teenage pastor who's the narrator and voice of conscience in *Matewan*. While Oldham would continue doing films, he's made a bigger mark as "freak folk" singer/songwriter Bonnie "Prince" Billy.

Finally, as with all their early films, Renzi and Sayles have small but important cameos. Sayles especially stands out as a hardshell anti-union preacher who excoriates his congregation: "The Prince of Darkness is upon the land. Now in the Bible, his name is Beezlebub, Lord of the Flies. Right now on Earth today, his name is Bolshevist! Socialist! Communist! Union man! Lord of untruth, sower of evil seed, enemy of all that is good and pure and this creature walks among us. What are we going to do about it?"

Mix this cast together with brilliant writing, direction, cinematography, and a captivating underdog story, and you have what many critics consider one of the best movies of the 1980s.

When we spoke recently, one of my first questions to Sayles was "Given that very few of us who grew up in West Virginia ever heard about the Mine Wars, how did

Screenwriter and director John Sayles on the set of *Matewan*.

you, from upstate New York, know about Matewan?" Surprisingly, he went on for a good 10 minutes about our history of self-reliance, stressing, "There's such a long history in West Virginia of independent thinking. There wouldn't be a West Virginia if it wasn't for independent thinking." After recounting how we became a state, he told me why he knows so much about us: "I hitch-hiked through West Virginia a bunch of times. . . . Even with radio, people didn't have good reception. So, someone from the next holler might as well be [from another country] in some cases."

Sounding a lot like Joe Kenehan, he spoke of our state's long economic decline and how big business has funneled so much wealth from beneath our feet to outside the state. He added that industrial Appalachia is, in its own way, suffering from the same financial problems as Detroit and other industrial-based economies. As an example, he pointed not to Matewan but to another city in the opposite end of our state: "We had friends who worked at Weirton and shot a couple movies there, *The Deer Hunter* being the most famous. Once it's cheaper to do something somewhere else . . . they'll go to Saipan. They'll go to Guam. They'll go anywhere in the world where they can make that thing and ship it in. Pretty much across the board . . . union workers have pretty much had the rug pulled out from under them."

Matewan holds up better for me today than many great movies. For one, I'm older and can see that the struggles of the working poor haven't improved in many ways. We're still debating issues such as worker rights vs. corporate profit. My favorite line in the movie occurs when Joe Kenehan is (continued on p. 44)

Matewan is available on DVD ($23.96) and Blu-ray ($31.96) in a beautiful new restoration with better sound and picture than you ever remembered. You can buy it through online sellers, but John Sayles suggests ordering through Criterion, which did the restoration: **criterion.com**. You'll enjoy Criterion's interviews with John Sayles, production designer Nora Chavooshian, James Earl Jones, and others.

The Look of *Matewan*

One of the first things many people notice about *Matewan* is its unique look. Sayles and Renzi were fortunate enough to have one of the best cinematographers in film history. Haskell Wexler (1922 – 2015) had been the cinematographer for movies such as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *In the Heat of the Night*. His use of light and shadows helped revolutionize filmmaking. So, on a low-budget film, how was Sayles able to get one of the best ever? Sayles says Wexler, who worked for far less than usual, was an old radical who empathized with working folks. Wexler had once palled around with Woody Guthrie, perhaps our country's most influential musical radical.

Two of the greats: cinematographer Haskell Wexler works with actor James Earl Jones.

Once Wexler was on board, Sayles says they spent a lot of time talking about the film's appearance. Some of that was dictated by filming in Thurmond in the New River Gorge, which receives limited sunlight. Sayles notes, "You get an hour or less of sunrise and an hour or less of sunset a day. The shadows go across the main street pretty quickly. So, we really had to do some thinking when we were shooting: 'What time of day are we going to shoot?' 'Where are the shadows and how quickly are we gonna lose them?'"

Then, there were certain film tricks (before modern CGI) that take viewers back in time. Sayles and Wexler eschewed a couple common techniques for historical films, such as shooting in black and white or in sepia. They wanted it to look gritty but real. Sayles notes, "We didn't want to do that with film grain, like shoot in 16-millimeter, and have it look like it was shot with an old-time documentary camera. So, [Wexler] put a couple of . . . neutral density filters in, which takes a little bit of the sharpness out so it doesn't look too much like a Disney movie, which were always very sharp and very pastel looking." Specifically, these filters tone down color wavelengths, leaving an appearance of a somewhat faded color photo.

Sayles and Renzi also give much of the credit to their art and costume staffs, who did a lot of research, including GOLDENSEAL articles, on life in coal towns. For instance, the townspeople's clothes have little color. Sayles observes, "This is a town where everything has been covered with coal dust and then washed with lye soap 100 times. Everything the miners are wearing looks really worn. It's clean, especially on a Sunday, because people were pretty militant about getting stuff clean, but it's been through the washer. And that lye soap really takes the starch and the color out of clothes pretty quickly. And then it's a dusty town. It's a working town. So, it can't look brand spanking new."

The Music of *Matewan*

In reviewing the film, Jay Carr of *The Boston Globe* wrote that *Matewan* was "as pure and plaintive as a mountain ballad." Just as Sayles and Wexler were on the same page about the film's look, so were Sayles and composer Mason Daring regarding the soundtrack. Sayles recalls, "I sat down with [Mason], and we listened to an awful lot of music from the hills—Kentucky and West Virginia traditional stuff—and what we decided is that we'd use that as the vocabulary. We were able to get Hazel Dickens to be in the film and sing some songs for it. But we eliminated the banjo. This wasn't that long after Flatt & Scruggs had done that wonderful work in *Bonnie & Clyde*. We just felt like the banjo was a little too upbeat for this particular story. You hear a lot of . . . guitar, harmonica, and mandolin, when the Italian miners come in."

The late Mercer County native Hazel Dickens' voice permeates the soundtrack, from the title track—her own "Fire in the Hole"—to an a cappella "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" to her haunting rendition of Daring's "Gathering Storm." An activist throughout her career, Dickens' lyrics to "Fire in the Hole" could be an outline for the entire movie: "You can tell them in the country, tell them in the town, miners down in Mingo laid their shovels down. We won't pull another pillar, load another ton, or lift another finger until the union we have won."

One key scene is played out through music. While Joe Kenehan urges the different factions to unite, it's music that finally brings them all together. Once again, Sayles called upon West Virginians, such as Gerry Milnes and Jimmy Costa, to play on-screen musicians. Gerry reflects on his role:

"John Sayles asked Hazel if she knew any fiddlers in the area, and she named me. I lived near Birch River at the time, only an hour from Thurmond. Sayles got in touch and asked me to come down for an audition. He apparently liked it and introduced me to Mason Daring. While there, Sayles asked me what I knew about filming locations, and/or old miners he might talk to. I took him to a spot I knew on New River that is quite picturesque, and then I took him and Maggie Renzi to visit Holley Hundley. Sayles was moved by Holley, an old coal miner with incredible stories. Holley told us about helping to carry 58 dead men out of the mines over his long mining career. He sang some old union songs like

The Union forever, hurrah yes hurrah
Down with the Baldwins and up with the law

Daring wrote the Italian-sounding mandolin tune played by Jimmy Costa in the Italian miners' camp. In that scene, I and Daring (on guitar) are playing on a porch, and we overhear Jimmy's mandolin tune. We join in, and it leads to an important breakthrough among the various camps. This was Sayles' brilliant way to connect the film's protagonists through art, while so many other paths had hit cultural and racial obstacles."

re-uniting the bickering factions: "They got you fightin' white against colored, native against foreign, hollow against hollow, when you know there ain't but two sides in this world—them that work, and them that don't. You work. They don't."

But everything aside, *Matewan* holds up because of certain universal truths about people, in general, and West Virginia, specifically. We, as West Virginians, have continually forfeited control over our economic destinies in exchange for a promising financial future that never seems to arrive. We've allowed ourselves to be pushed to the brink in terms of economic independence. But when pushed far enough, we eventually fight back. This "never give up" attitude is a common thread with West Virginians. After all, it's a very West Virginia story, whether the calendar reads 1920 or 2020.

Actors John Cox (Sid Hatfield) and Maria Cox (Jessie Testerman Hatfield), in front, and Randy Whitaker (Ed Chambers) and Felicia Noelle (Sallie Chambers) are pictured seconds before Sid and Ed are gunned down. Photo from the 2019 performance of *Terror of the Tug* at Pipestem State Park by Roger Shrewsbury.

Terror of the Tug (1999)

In 2019, the play *Terror of the Tug* celebrated its 20th anniversary with a performance at Pipestem State Park. In this take on the shootout, playwright Jean Battlo gives her audience an entertaining and thought-provoking perspective of all sides. While her sympathies clearly lie with the miners, she lays out the views of all.

Her play starts not at the beginning but at the end: on the courthouse steps in Welch on August 1, 1921. How many times do you see a protagonist killed off in an opening scene? But most audience goers have at least a pretty good idea of how it all ends anyway, so why not get that out of the way first and then look back? Even for those unfamiliar with the history, her approach works because the moment the curtain rises, Jean lays out the life-and-death stakes while questioning, "How did we get here?"

Jean never gives a definitive answer but does paint a broad canvas of factors. For one, you quickly realize that Mingo in 1920 was one of the most lawless counties in our state. When the shootout occurred, Mingo had been in existence for only 25 years. Our youngest county was very much searching for an identity and a semblance of civilization. What we soon learn through Jean's characters (many based on historical figures) is that Mingo was more like a Dodge City or Deadwood, looking for a John Wayne type to introduce civility and true justice. But history isn't filled with saints. In this case, that John Wayne type was Sid Hatfield. In her 2006 book about the play, Jean credits this theme to historian Lon Savage, who compared Sid Hatfield—at least in the miners' eyes—to Wyatt Earp, "Wild Bill" Hickock, Jesse James, Billy the Kid, and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. An outlaw hero has been the basis for many great Westerns.

The miners knew Hatfield wasn't a saint. But, to them, Sid was one of the few lawmen in our state willing to stand up for *their* rights. Jean doesn't sugarcoat Sid's life. She portrays him as the hard-drinking hard-fighting figure he was. Jean's Sid is more in line with a Greek tragic hero. While this is an effective literary device, it's also closer to the historical truth. Our heroes aren't

gods; they're humans with flaws. Sid's worst flaw may have been his ego. In the play, Sid tells a man in a bar, "Why, I'm as good as it gets. Real good. Too good, maybe. Why, lord, if the law knew how good I felt, they'd arrest me for feeling too good." Sid's bigger-than-life swagger foreshadows his own inevitable death at the hands of what amounted to the "law" in 1920s southern West Virginia.

Writing historical fiction can be a challenge since we generally know only the highlights, not the precise words and details, of history. In *Terror*, Jean skillfully blends historical speeches and writings—such as Mother Jones' famous line about "Medieval West Virginia"—with her own fictional dialogue. She even puts quote marks in her script around historically documented lines. As she told me, "It's important for my actors to know what's historically correct." She's noticed that actors often emphasize those lines more than her fictional ones, even though her made-up dialogue sounds spot on. For example, in a line written by Jean, Mother Jones sounds totally in character when she says, "You mountaineers, be your origin Poland or Italy, Africa or east Virginia, you were sired and seeded by an American Revolution. Show it!!"

In addition, *Terror of the Tug* addresses my biggest question: Was Sid Hatfield a Marshal Dillon type of hero or just another bought-off lawman, except, in his case, for the UMWA? And perhaps the more overriding question: Why did all the leading figures, from Hatfield to Lively, do what they did? Was it all for money? Was it for ideals? Again, Jean leaves the answers up to the audience, and despite the play's pro-union sentiments, the conclusions aren't that simple.

Like with *Matewan*, Jean's *Terror* interjects humor at key moments to ease tensions. In one scene, Cabell Testerman expresses a foreboding premonition about his own death. Sid's comeback is both a "knock it off" call to the mayor and a self-deprecating joke about writers, such as Jean herself:

> Cabell: I got a feeling inside like I'm not real. Like I'm watching myself like one of those flickering fellows in those movies Jessie is so crazy about.
>
> Sid: Crap. You're talking like a poet or worse. Get ahold on, Cabell.

Another thing that historical fiction can do is get inside characters' heads. Jean often does this by "breaking the fourth wall," freezing the action on stage while a character addresses the audience. A tried-and-true method from Shakespeare to Groucho Marx, this approach lets us know what characters are really thinking and underscores the importance of certain events. Following Sid's murder at the beginning, one character breaks the fourth wall and succinctly summarizes the moment: "Shoot a man like that and

Photo by Roger Shrewsbury.

Jean Battlo was born in and has lived most of her life in Kimball (McDowell County). She's been a teacher, poet, author, historian, and preservationist. Her play *#8* was a finalist for the 1990 Eugene O'Neill National Playwright's Competition, and her books *Bonsai* and *Modern Haiku* both won awards. Ever the individualist, Jean had a version of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre built in McDowell County and founded Coal Camp Creations, which produces figurines made from coal [see Winter 2008].

Smilin' Sid

Jean's play incorporates various classical techniques, such as the *tragic hero* and even a Greek chorus. While these may be slightly unusual for a distinctly Appalachian play, one of her ideas is radical for a stage anywhere. In the middle of the play, she inserts a fictionalized newsreel film to show why Sid was so idolized by the downtrodden miners.

She based it on an actual newsreel, *Smilin' Sid*, produced by the UMWA shortly after the Matewan shootout. That newsreel has never been found, although a few seconds have turned up. There are various theories about its disappearance. Historian/filmmaker Bill Richardson, whose first film work was as a volunteer assistant on *Matewan*, notes, "The UMWA wanted to get its version of the Matewan story out as soon as possible, so it created this silent film—a relatively new medium—which would run before feature films. They even came to Matewan to film it. But coal companies owned all the media outlets in that part of the state. A print of the film was sent to Matewan and never saw the light of day." Somewhere out there, the original negative may exist, or, like most silent films, was thrown away or deteriorated.

So, Jean decided to re-create the newsreel as part of the play. She approached Bill to be a subject expert and filmmaker Danny Boyd to direct. Jean initially had a 26-page script with full dialogue. Danny noted, though, that a silent newsreel wouldn't have had regular dialogue, just on-screen text describing the scenes or providing isolated dialogue. Danny and Bill also suggested making it like a 1920s-era newsreel.

Still image from the few seconds left of the original *Smilin' Sid*.

Jean loved the idea and let the two run with it. Danny juxtaposed archival film footage alongside *Terror* actors playing out specific scenes related to the shootout—all filmed where the actual shooting occurred. Danny, a professor at West Virginia State College (now University), already had a couple of low-budget cult classics under his belt: *Chillers* (1987) and *Paradise Park* (1992). He studied old silent films, such as those of D. W. Griffith, and further adapted Jean's concept. For example, he set the scenes outdoors because silent films relied heavily on natural lighting. He also pulled his faculty colleagues, film editor Steve Gilliland and musician Chuck Biel, into the effort.

The resulting eight-minute newsreel is the "key to the play," according to Jean. It's also a surprising development in a play that keeps the audience on its toes despite knowing the outcome from the start.

you make a myth. Shoot a man like that and you have miners going for their guns and heading for a war on Blair Mountain."

Right there, in the very beginning, Jean offers a key insight: Sid, with all his personal flaws, was a hero to the miners in life. But, in death, he was a martyr, inspiring thousands to say, "The law in southern West Virginia is totally corrupt and in cahoots with big business. It's time to take matters into our own hands."

Whether or not people agree with the actions of either side, there's little debate that on August 1, 1921, Baldwin-Felts detectives, the de facto law in a lawless world, created a martyr who'd continue inspiring working people a century later. As such, Sid's impact on history has been much more lasting than if he'd died at home of natural causes.

STAN BUMGARDNER is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

Matewan
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Text and photos by Kenzie New

I can't remember reading about the Mine Wars in my middle-school textbook. I left eighth grade with the ability to name all our 55 counties in alphabetical order, a good understanding of why West Virginia separated from Virginia during the Civil War, knowledge that Wheeling was our first capital city, and prep-testing skills to well-represent my school during the WESTEST, the dreaded end-of-year exam every 4th through 11th grader had to participate in.

A few reasons might explain why the Mine Wars were left out. For one, curricula covering 20th-century topics often get ignored so we can focus on improving our test scores instead. Other times, it's simply not built into lesson plans. For a long time, the Mine Wars weren't even mentioned in our history textbooks. Many visitors to the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum in Matewan share these exact sentiments: "Why wasn't I taught about this in school?!!!" The Mine Wars also are rather complicated, requiring a lot of background knowledge about topics such as collective bargaining and southern West Virginia politics. So, like myself, most people have learned about the Mine Wars outside a classroom setting.

My father likes to speak about my Great-Pawpaw Forrest's experience in the Mine Wars. Pawpaw Forrest didn't talk much about it, and never in detail. "We'd crawl on our bellies to get'em back," he'd say when asked about the UMWA's early organizing efforts in West Virginia. There was a lot of secrecy surrounding these events, and for decades, these stories weren't publicly commemorated. However, over the past 20 years, local groups have made large strides to explain this often-overlooked part of our history. Perhaps most notable is the Town of Matewan's efforts to recover, reclaim, and retell these histories through the perspectives of the men, women, and children who lived them.

The small-but-scrappy West Virginia Mine Wars Museum opened its doors almost six years ago, and its success can be traced back to the all-volunteer team that first met in 2013. A history keeper, a coal miner, an organizer, a writer, and Matewan community members brought this seldom-told history into the public eye. Permanent exhibits cover coal camp life, the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek Strike, the Matewan shootout, the Miners' March, and the Battle of Blair Mountain. The museum is temporarily closed for the season while staff and volunteers work to expand the interpretive space. It'll reopen in a larger building, owned by UMWA Local 1440, in Matewan on May 16, 2020—the centennial weekend of the shootout.

In addition to promoting heritage tourism in southern West Virginia, the museum provides extensive lesson plans, with primary and secondary sources and activities, for 4th, 8th, and 11th grades and brings students to Matewan for tours. They're given red bandannas and told about the history of the "redneck," and the solidarity behind that term, rather than the derogatory slang. Museum board member and Matewan native Wilma Steele has been telling the history of the red bandanna for decades and often volunteers her time to open the museum to visitors, reporters, and school groups. In her own words, "A lot has been written and said about the Mine Wars, but it has

Matewan was hit badly by floods in 1957, 1963, 1977, and 1984. Between 1992 and 1997, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built this floodwall to protect the town. Reliefs in the wall trace the region's history.

usually been somebody else's interpretation of the story. This is the first time that our people are in charge of the narrative, our own history."

There aren't many towns in West Virginia, or in the United States, that hold as much rich history as Matewan. Once the most flooded town in our country, Matewan has an impressive half-mile-long floodwall, completed in 1997, to keep the mighty Tug River from drowning our streets and destroying our historic buildings. Cast into the floodwall are depictions of Matewan's long and complicated history, including the early logging industry, the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, the Mine Wars, historic floods, the transformation of the coal industry, and so much more.

One of the strongest voices for recounting this history is the Matewan Drama Group. I saw its impressive work for the first time last year during Matewan's Annual Heritage Day. It was an especially warm day for May, and the atmosphere was lively, as folks from near and far gathered to see the much-anticipated annual re-enactment. The play, which depicts the shootout of May 19, 1920, emphasizes the different roles of participants, including the union miners and their wives, Baldwin-Felts detectives, Mayor Testerman, Sid Hatfield, and others. Visitors can catch the play at the same time every year; it always falls on the weekend closest to May 19. This year, on May 16, 2020, marks 20 years since Donna Paterino, the group's director, first led the all-volunteer cast. Since this year is also the centennial of the shootout, organizations and community volunteers are prepping in high gear.

In addition to the commemorative activities in May 2020, Matewan is looking forward to the revitalization and repurposing of the Nenni Buildings at the end of town. The nonprofit group Coalfield Development recently purchased the buildings and plans a mixed-use space for

School students wear red bandannas at the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum while learning about one of the most violent periods in our history.

this historic set of structures. The group's founder and CEO, Brandon Dennison, says the project will "preserve Sid Hatfield's apartment and other important history [and] build for the future by connecting people with opportunities for job training, higher education, and quality housing as well as incubating new businesses." The Nenni Buildings have served multiple purposes over the last 100 years, including a department store, Cabell Testerman's jewelry store, UMWA headquarters, and housing for Sid and Jessie Testerman Hatfield.

Matewan, like so many other southern West Virginia communities, was once a booming town, driven by coal and the railroad. With coal on the decline, many wonder what will come next? Groups in Matewan are finding ways to honor their unique past while staying true to and building pride in their coal-mining heritage. Heritage and adventure tourism have surfaced as pathways to the future. As business owner David Hatfield puts it, "Matewan's best days are ahead of us." While we might be decreasingly rich in our coal seams, we are increasingly rich in our history.

Visiting Matewan is like taking a step back in time. The historic district is almost identical to what it was in the 1920s despite damage from many fires and floods. Double-façaded buildings line Main Street with windows facing both the old railroad line and Tug River.

The original train depot, a focal point of the shootout, was torn down in the late 1960s; today, Route 49 covers the site. However, in 2002, the Matewan Train Depot Replica and Museum was constructed at the entrance to town. While serving as a welcome center, it also displays artifacts of the town's floods, rocks and relics of nearby coal mines and railroads, tales of the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, Matewan Massacre items, and an artisan gift shop. Down the street, you'll find the Appalachian Lost and Found Gift Shop, jam-packed with unique, locally made items. One of Matewan's newest renovations is taking place in one of its oldest structures: the 1908 Lock-Up and Jail. Its renovation

Annually, the Matewan Drama Group re-enacts the shootout on the Saturday nearest the event's anniversary. Matewan's Annual Heritage Day will be held this year on May 16.

will complement the town as a heritage-destination stop.

For those who like a little adventure, Matewan has that, too. It's perfectly situated in the heart of the Hatfield-McCoy Trails—a growing industry that's attracted thousands of tourists. Hatfield-McCoy Feud sites, such as the "pawpaw tree" execution, Hatfield Cemetery, "Hog Trial" Cabin, and more can be found within 20 miles of Matewan.

Matewan's many tour buses have been bringing visitors into town for the last couple decades. Much of what tourists see is due to the tireless commitment of volunteers as well as financial and other support from local residents, history buffs, and organizations like the National Coal Heritage Area Authority, West Virginia Community Development Hub, and West Virginia Humanities Council.

There's been much collaboration among community members, counties, and organizations to commemorate the upcoming centennials of Matewan and Blair Mountain—the same spirit of solidarity unionist miners had in the early 1920s. Folks around the state clearly remember the spirit of Blair—again, a forgotten footnote when I was in school. We see evidence of this in our state's teachers, who proudly wore red bandannas in 2018 and 2019 as they demanded better pay and benefits and increased access to school supplies. The "teachers' strikes" are already making their way into history books, serving as important civic lessons for future generations of West Virginians.

It's essential that we do our part in sharing this history in the classroom, in Matewan, and beyond. Perhaps one of the greatest hopes is that the upcoming centennials will help places like Matewan and Blair Mountain earn their rightful places in state and national memory. But there's still much work to be done. Most Mine Wars sites aren't preserved or interpreted, save for some historic signage. It's our task to remember and preserve this history before, like many other landmarks, it's too late.

KENZIE NEW graduated from Marshall University in 2018 with a B.A. in history and political science. She splits her time between the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum, where she's the director, and the Matewan Convention & Visitors Bureau as a Preserve WV AmeriCorps member. The rest of her time is spent with her cat, Ralphy Dale. This is Kenzie's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

2019 Vandalia *Contest Winners*

On Memorial Day weekend 2019, the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture & History hosted the 43rd annual Vandalia Gathering at the Culture Center on the State Capitol Complex. This celebration, free to the public, honors our state's finest traditional arts, music, dance, stories, crafts, and foods. Here's a list of the 2019 contest winners. Please join us **May 22-24, 2020**, for our 44th Vandalia! All photos by Steve Brightwell.

Youth Old-Time Fiddle (15 and under)

1st place: Liam Farley, Chapmanville
2nd place: Sydnee Stricklin, Hurricane
3rd place: Mallory Hindman, Reader

Old-Time Fiddle (59 and under)

1st place: Tessa Dillon, Morgantown
2nd place: Jesse Milnes, Valley Bend
3rd place: Andy Fitzgibbon, Montrose
4th place: Jesse Pearson, Huntington
5th place: Ben Davis, Marlinton

Senior Old-Time Fiddle (60 and over)

1st place: Gerry Milnes, Elkins
2nd place: Jenny Allinder, St. Albans
3rd place: David Bing, Gandeeville
4th place: Bob Smakula, Elkins
5th place: Jim Mullins, St. Albans

Mandolin (all ages)

1st place: Sawyer Chapman, Charleston
2nd place: Seth Marstiller, Mill Creek
3rd place: Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
4th place: Luke Shamblin, Elkview
5th place: Isaac Putnam, Kenna

Bluegrass Banjo (all ages)

1st place: Nick Freeman, Charleston
2nd place: Jake Eddy, Parkersburg
3rd place: Jake Stover, Red House
4th place: Seth Marstiller, Mill Creek
5th place: Jared Long, Frametown

Lap Dulcimer (all ages)

1st place: Nick Freeman, Charleston
2nd place: Ezra Drumheller, Prosperity
3rd place: Tish Westman, Beckley
4th place: Martha Turley, Ona

Old-Time Banjo (59 and under)

1st place: Hunter Walker, Beckley
2nd place: Pete Kosky, Charleston
3rd place: Cody Jordan, Charleston
4th place: Jarrod Saul, Sumerco
5th place: Trevor Hammons, Marlinton

Senior Old-Time Banjo (60 and over)

1st place: Paul Gartner, Yawkey
2nd place: Gerry Milnes, Elkins
3rd place: Jim Mullins, St. Albans
4th place: David Bing, Gandeeville
5th place: John Davis, Ivydale

Youth Flatpick Guitar (15 and under)

1st place: Hazel Riley, Hillsboro

Flatpick Guitar (all ages)

1st place: Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
2nd place: Matt Lindsey, Culloden
3rd place: Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
4th place: Isaac Putnam, Kenna
5th place: Jarrod Saul, Sumerco

Quilts/Wall Hangings, 1st Place (all ages)

Best of Show: Debbie Chancellor, Nitro
Applique Quilt: Marie Miley, Huntington
Mixed/Other: Irene Goff, Huntington
Wall Hanging: Carol Cutlip, South Charleston
Award of Merit: Darene Webb, Cross Lanes

Classic Cookies (all ages)

1st place: Hannah Potter, Sissonville
2nd place: Maureen Cremeans, St. Albans
3rd place: Ashley Susan Hale, Charleston
Youth (15 and under): Kendall Atkins, Scott Depot

2019 Vandalia Liars Contest

Biggest Liar: James Froemel, Maidsville
Bigger Liar: Gary Buchanan, Preston
Big Liar: Suzy McGinley, Ripley
Youth (15 and under): Zane Wilkinson, Ovapa

Biggest Liar

James Froemel

When I was 10 years old, my friend Calvin and I entered our town's soap-box derby race. This was held each year on the steepest hill in town. The winning car was paid $20, which went to the drivers, or their next of kin. If generally constructing a car wasn't difficult enough for a bunch of 10-year-olds, the racing committee decided we should build the cars in fun shapes—the shapes of specific animals, which were assigned at random by the committee. And they had some fun animals you could be. There was a lion, a dinosaur, a wolf, even a woolly mammoth. But Calvin and I managed to draw from the hat the ever-fearsome smallmouth bass.

Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Being 10 and being quite broke, we had to build this thing out of the cheapest material we could find, which happened to be some sheetrock down at the hardware store that had been left out in the rain, and they were trying to get rid of it. The advantage of making a car out of sheetrock if you're trying to make it shaped like a fish is that sheetrock is really easy to shape. The disadvantage of building a car out of sheetrock is that when you finish it, you have a car made out of sheetrock.

We were working on this thing over at Calvin's Granny's garage. There was plenty of room, so it was a great place to work, plus she was always feeding us. She had these amazing cookies, which officially, on paper, were called sugar cookies. But she put so much Crisco in them that Calvin and I just called them Crisco cookies. So, that whole week, we were just eating Crisco cookies, building this car, and gaining 10 pounds each until the day of the race.

We drag this car up to the top of this steep, steep hill. We get up there and see our competitors for the first time. Looking at the other kids' cars, which they were supposed to have built themselves, they looked like they were built by professional carpenters and mechanics. I mean, they were beautiful streamline cars. They painted these terrifying faces on them, so they looked like fighter jets—all of them, but not ours. No, ours just looked like a regular smallmouth bass staring down a steep hill, looking as terrified as the kids who were about to drive it.

We were looking around. The other kids, they all got out wrenches. They're tightening bolts and polishing their cars. Kind of wanting to play the part, I turned to Calvin, and I'm like, "Did you bring a toolbox?" He said, "Oh yeah, yeah." So, he opens up the toolbox, and all that's inside are more Crisco cookies.

I say, "Did you bring a wrench?"

He says, "No."

I say, "Why not?"

He says, "Do you need one?"

I say, "No."

He says, "Are you hungry?"

I say, "Yeah."

So, we stood there, eating Crisco cookies and watching the other kids work on their cars. But Calvin, being 10, doesn't pack napkins. So, our fingers are getting all greasy from these cookies. He leans over and wipes his fingers on the hood of that car. When the sun hits it, it starts shining. And I get an idea. We start breaking up these cookies and wiping them directly on

the car—I mean, top side of the car, bottom side of the car, all around, and especially on the wheels.

The guy gets up, ready to start the race, and tells us all to climb in. We climb into our giant fish, one behind the other, and he says, "Ready, set, go." We lean forward and wait for gravity to take over on us, our extra 20 pounds, and our newly *Criscoed* wheels. Now, I think for everybody, there's distinct sounds of summer. For some, it's the sound of crickets at night. For others, maybe it's the sound of waves breaking on the beach. But, for Calvin and I, it will always be the sonic boom of a Crisco-covered sheetrock fish flying down the hill and breaking the sound barrier. We flew down in a fishy flash and hit the bottom, where it leveled out before the finish line. The wheels shot off the car, and we started gliding across the ground, about 50 feet, leaving a cloud of gypsum and confusion behind us until the drywall under our butts was so thin we ground to a stop. We looked back. We were still in the lead, but the other cars were gaining. Thinking fast, we grabbed the car, kicked through the bottom of it, pulled it up like a pair of pants, and started to make a run for it. Mr. Darwin is watching from the finish line as there comes barreling toward the end of his contest a fish with legs, followed by a dinosaur and a woolly mammoth.

At the start of the day, I'd never have thought we'd have won that thing, but as we crossed that finish line, I knew that we had always been the *natural selection.*

Youth Award

Zane Wilkinson

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and this is my dog, Corbin. I've tried to encourage Corbin to enter the Liars Contest this year because they always say, "Let sleeping dogs lie." But I changed my mind when I remembered, "If you lie with dogs, you get fleas," and I don't want to get fleas, again. Plus, honestly, Corbin can't tell the truth.

So, I thought I'd tell you about some of my and Corbin's adventures. There are lots of beautiful places in West Virginia: Dog Bible Run here near Charleston, Dog Patch in Logan County, and Dog Run in Clay County. Last summer, we went to Camden Park. He was really confused by the Pronto Pups they sold there. They were sort of like a corn dog, but Corbin has seen lots of dogs, and none of them were mad at corn. Corbin loved the water ride but threw up on every roller coaster. He got as sick as a human.

After that, we went to Hillbilly Hot Dogs. He got a Homewrecker. It's a hot dog covered in everything. After losing his lunch on the rides, he was starving. It was a dog-eat-dog world.

Photo by Steve Brightwell.

We went to the state capitol, and he met some of our leaders. He told me he wasn't impressed by them. He said they were more crooked than his hind leg. He said there was no way to improve on them because you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

He also went with us the last time Ringling Brothers would come to Charleston. He loved the animals and trapeze act. He saw some clowns, too. He was sure he'd seen them earlier at the capitol. At one point, though, it was all quiet. All of a sudden, Corbin got up from his seat in a flash and ran into the center ring before anyone could stop him. There were horses standing on each other's backs. Corbin joined their conga line. It was a real dog-and-pony show.

I would stay and tell you more, but I have to go. My dog ate my homework.

Dwight Diller jams with Kim Johnson at Jackson's Mill, 2006. Photo by Gail Hatton.

2019 Vandalia Award Recipient

Dwight Diller

By Kim Johnson

I first met Dwight Diller at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville in the late 1970s / early 1980s. I'd just started playing with Clay County fiddler Wilson Douglas (the 1992 Vandalia Award recipient), who was good friends with Dwight. I was a rank beginner, and Dwight was already an energetic hard-driving banjo player who'd performed a lot with (1998 Vandalia Award recipient) Glen Smith and the Morris Brothers band. And he wasn't just a banjo player. He also fiddled and could do some singing.

Dwight was born in 1946 in Rand (Kanawha County) but has lived most his life in Pocahontas County. In 1975, he started teaching at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins. He taught a lot of great banjo players, like Ron Mullenex and Mike Burns. Budding musicians from all over the world came to Dwight's banjo camps in the mountains of Pocahontas.

The Vandalia Gathering always kicks off on Friday evening with a concert in the Culture Center's Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater. The 2019 performances honored three longtime members of the Vandalia family who passed during the previous year: George "The Earl of Elkview" Daugherty [see Mack Samples' tribute, Summer 2019], Marvine Loving [see Bobby Taylor's tribute on p. 3], and Judson Wallace [see Rebecca Kimmons' tribute, Winter 2019].

To learn more about our 2019 Vandalia Award recipient, please read "The Rhythm of Dwight Diller" by Allen Johnson, Winter 2014.

(Left-right) Dwight plays banjo with Clay Countians Lee Triplett on fiddle and David Morris on guitar, 1973. Photo by Nancy McClellan.

After I'd been playing a few years, I began playing with Dwight from time to time. He was never one to hesitate giving advice. One year, at Jackson's Mill, somebody asked me if I was intimidated to be playing with him. I didn't know any better at the time and said, "No." But I should've been. Dwight was, and is, one of a kind.

He learned from what we consider traditional-music royalty—namely the Hammons family. He documented their music and lives in photos and videos and took great pride in passing their music down to younger generations. He traveled to festivals and gave slideshow presentations with photos, film, music, and stories. Eventually, Dwight collected many of these photos and videos together on a four-DVD set. Instead of selling them, though, he donated them for free to libraries and schools throughout the state. Dwight epitomizes what the Vandalia Award is about: preserving and sharing old-time traditions so they won't be lost.

Dwight was at the first Vandalia Gathering in 1977 and has attended pretty regularly ever since. As he approaches his 74th birthday, he's slowing down a bit but still making the festival rounds, including Vandalia, the state Folk Festival, and the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop. Each year at Vandalia, he renews friendships with other musicians, such as John Morris, and jams all over the capitol grounds. He's become an old-time-music icon, especially at Clifftop, where most attendees are from out of state; many likely learned to play banjo by attending his camps or watching his videos.

Congratulations, Dwight, on receiving the 2019 Vandalia Award!

KIM JOHNSON is the former editorial assistant of GOLDENSEAL. Since her retirement in 2018, Kim's stayed busy on the old-time-music circuit with her band, The Modock Rounders. This is her sixth contribution to GOLDENSEAL as an author (but much, much more in reality).

Kirk Judd

West Virginia's Spoken-Word Poet

By Dan Kincaid

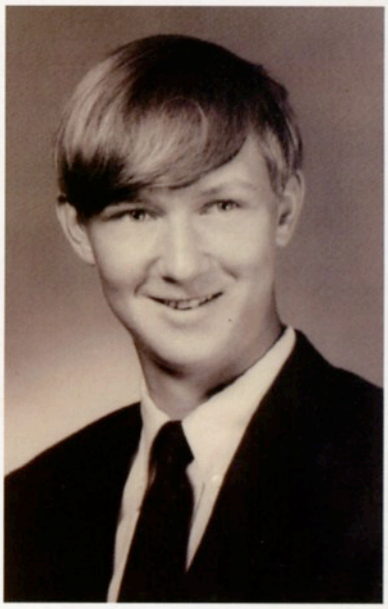
Kirk Judd may be best known as a poet—one of West Virginia's finest ever—but he's also a performer, a writer, a mentor, an advocate for Appalachian culture, a fisherman and an outdoorsman, a businessman, a computer specialist, an instructor, and on and on.

Even to say he's a poet isn't fully correct. Sure, he's written several hundred poems, a vast collection of traditional and nontraditional verses that cover an array of emotional feelings. Most emanate from his unique perspectives on and experiences with his Appalachian heritage and the sense of place that comes from being a West Virginian. But, more specifically, Kirk is a *spoken-word*, or performance, poet. His readings and oral performances, often accompanied by traditional mountain music, take his poetry to another level. You see, Kirk believes poetry is meant to be heard and not just read. More on this later.

I've known Kirk since the late 1950s. We both attended Westmoreland Grade School and later Vinson High School in West Huntington (Wayne County). Two years younger than me, he was a friend and classmate of my brother Mike. Kirk, always a top student, was valedictorian and treasurer of his senior class at Vinson before attending Transylvania University in Kentucky and Marshall University.

Kirk's earliest influences were his parents, Walter and LaVerne (friends called them "Barney" and "Swede"), who were both avid readers. They encouraged him to read, read, and read more, with nothing censored. As a child, he virtually memorized Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

"I loved reading those poems when I was young," Kirk notes. "They took me to another world. I guess that is what started me in my love of poetry."



Kirk as a senior at West Huntington's Vinson High School. All photos courtesy of Kirk Judd.

At Vinson, two English teachers, Irene Perry and Joan Townsend, influenced Kirk's love for all types of literature. Kirk was also an athlete at that sports-minded school, lettering in baseball, basketball, and golf. In basketball, he played for Don Smith, one of the most successful coaches in West Virginia history.

In terms of college professors, Transylvania's Stanley Harrison and Marshall's Leonard Deutsch were early influences. Kirk says that at Transylvania, Harrison "let me enroll in an upper-level creative writing course. I had to plead my case and show him some of my writings, but he finally let me in. And it was great. Professor Harrison was a published poet and playwright, and I learned a lot in that class."

"Transylvania was a great school with a fine academic reputation, but after a year, I transferred back home to attend Marshall," Kirk continues. "I took Professor Deutsch's short-story class and after reading some stories that I had written, he actually used a few of them for class discussions. This was a huge encouragement to me."

Marshall creative writing instructor John McKernan invited Kirk to attend meetings of the Guyandotte Poets, and soon, Kirk was a member. "This was quite an honor for a young guy like me to be around and learn from several of these accomplished writers and poets. I can't begin to tell you how much I learned from belonging to that group," Kirk says.

Around that same time, he got married and began to work for Armco Steel in Ashland, Kentucky, where he stayed until 1993. "They don't pay poets very well, so that was how I financed my writing habit," Kirk jokes.

But he never stopped taking classes at Marshall, a few at a time, until by 1990, he'd earned enough credits for a degree in business communications. "I probably had enough credits for two or three degrees," Kirk tells me, "but I never cared about what was required to get certain degrees. I just took courses that I was interested in or in subjects that I wanted to learn more about. Finally, they sat down with me and looked at all of my transcripts and figured out that I had earned a degree in business communications. Who'd have thought?" He laughs.

But along the way, Kirk mingled with many writers and poets. He either joined or helped start a number of literary groups. "This was probably a greater influence on me than the formal courses I took at Marshall," Kirk says.

In the mid-1970s, Kirk was invited to help out with a couple of the first "Hillbilly Festivals" at Morris Harvey College (now University of Charleston), and a fortunate thing happened—he was asked to accompany one of the featured speakers, Jesse Stuart, throughout the festival. Stuart was a famed Appalachian writer from nearby Greenup County, Kentucky.

"You couldn't hang around Jesse Stuart for even a short period of time and not learn something," Kirk says. "He was amazing, and we got along well. My mom and dad had most of his novels, short stories, and autobiographical books. I had read these growing up. I don't remember reading any of his poems until later in life, though.

"I learned through talking with him that we may have been distant relatives. My folks had their roots in eastern Kentucky, too. Jesse once told me that my great-great-grandfather had shot and killed a man over in Kentucky in the mid-1800s. I never knew for sure if that was true, but it did fit with my family legends. Jesse had a great sense of storytelling."

Other early influences included Shirley Young Campbell, a prominent Charleston writer and editor of *Hill and Valley* magazine. She published a number of Kirk's early writings. "Shirley was definitely a mover and shaker," Kirk says. "In the 1970s, many of us referred to her as the 'godmother of West Virginia writing and literature.'"

Campbell, Kirk, and others, with encouragement from the West Virginia Department of Culture & History (now Arts, Culture & History), were founding members of West Virginia Writers, Inc., which celebrates its 43rd anniversary in 2020.

St. Albans poet Muriel Miller Dressler was also a big influence. Kirk recalls that Dressler was "the first poet that I saw 'perform' poetry. She would recite her poetry from memory with great feeling as she moved around the stage. I thought this was great and the way poetry was meant to be interpreted. We met at the first Hillbilly Festival and became good friends. The title of the anthology of West Virginia poetry that I co-edited, *Wild Sweet Notes*, was taken from a line in Muriel's famous poem 'Appalachia.' The last two lines of that poem are so pure and so true, where she's talking about the things that mountain folk and hill folk know but that outsiders don't":

> I am Appalachia: and, stranger,
> Though you've studied me, you
> still don't know

"Those are some great lines that any West Virginia poet would have been proud to have

written," Kirk says. [See "'Thank You, Lord, I'm Home,'" Renie Carlson's interview with Dressler in our Fall 1983 issue.]

He began reciting his own poetry, mostly at small venues around Charleston in the mid-1970s and was becoming quite well-known in poetry circles. Still, he considered it a surprise and an honor when he was one of five people asked to speak at the 1979 appointment of Pocahontas County native Louise McNeill as our state's poet laureate. "I had read her work while at Marshall, and I consider her to be West Virginia's greatest poet," Kirk says. "She mostly recited her poetry from memory. I was like 27 years old when I first heard her, and this influenced me greatly because if you're going to perform poetry, and not just read it, you have to know it. And by this time, I was convinced that poetry was meant to be spoken and heard, not just read. Louise and I met, and we corresponded. She was a great poet, very eloquent in writing about West Virginia and its mountains. She had met and studied with the great American poet Robert Frost, an indication of her stature in the field."

Kirk had been writing poetry since high school. After taking some courses in Appalachian Studies at Marshall, he began to incorporate that topic into much of his poetry. Around that time, he also reconnected with Mike Bing, a former high school basketball foe from Barboursville. Mike's a member of the Bing Brothers, an old-time music group that received the 2012 Vandalia Award. The two began hanging out together—fishing, hiking, and exploring the state's mountains.

"I sat in on a lot of musical sessions with those guys and the Hammons Family of Pocahontas County, as well as other groups," Kirk says. "One day, the Bings and I were talking about how many of the song lyrics and poetry lines were similar in nature. It kind of dawned on us that we ought to somehow combine the two. Well, we did, and I've continued to evolve in my performance and spoken-word poetry with musical accompaniment. It's such a natural fit.

"You know, there are some subtle differences in performance poetry and poetry that is written only. In a way, we're lucky to be West Virginians because there is a certain rhythm in our voices that lends a cadence to our poetry. And it blends beautifully with traditional mountain music. My family's people on both sides were musicians, and I can feel that cadence with my poetry. Somehow, I didn't get that music gene, as far as playing an instrument

Kirk's "Other" Career(s)

For 42 years (1971–2013), Kirk worked for Armco Steel of Ashland, INCO Alloys and Special Metals of Huntington, and finally with Lockheed Martin as a contractor at both the FBI complex near Clarksburg and in upper management in the D.C. area. Beginning as a laborer at Armco in 1971, Kirk soon moved into laboratory analysis and quality assurance. At INCO and Special Metals, he added duties in safety, training, and the development of project management manuals. At Lockheed Martin, he continued to work in quality assurance and process improvement.

"I did a lot of documentation and report writing," Kirk says. "I would write or edit numerous technical reports and make recommendations to upper management. I had to boil down concepts into understandable language, [which] helped me as an overall writer and gave me the discipline needed in poetry to use the right word in the right place. In my poetry, I try to be brief and concise and, to do that, finding that one correct word . . . is the key. My 9-to-5 job definitely helped me become a better poet."

goes, but I guess I feel it in my bones when reciting poetry."

Kirk's had a great love for the mountains, streams, and people of Pocahontas County for many years. It's influenced much of his work. He spends as much time as he can at his cabin in Buckeye. As a Pocahontas County native myself (born in Frank), I can certainly relate to much of what he writes and marvel at the insights in his poems.

Kirk's love of Pocahontas County also prompted him to become involved with the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Foundation (PSBBF) in Hillsboro; he's a former president and board member and currently sits on the PSBBF advisory board. This nonprofit group helps preserve the legacy of the Pulitzer- and Nobel Prize-winning author and humanitarian and showcases her 150-year-old birthplace as a fully restored museum. Kirk and fellow board members were instrumental in making Buck's priceless original manuscript collection available to scholars and the public through the West Virginia and Regional History Center at WVU.

Kirk's latest poetry collection, *My People Was Music* (Mountain State Press, 2014) with an accompanying CD, is a great example of how Kirk blends spoken verse with traditional Appalachian music. If you don't have it already, you'll want to get a copy of this work. It's outstanding.

Kirk is a complex person, and it's difficult to cover the entirety of his life and works in a short article. I'll leave that to a future biographer. But Kirk is gracious and quick to acknowledge others who've influenced his work, such as poets Joe Barrett and Bob Snyder, who Kirk calls "giants in the West Virginia literary world"; Gwendolyn Brooks (the first African-American to win a Pulitzer), who first encouraged Kirk to publish his works; Jim Comstock, former editor of the *West Virginia Hillbilly* newspaper, who published a number of Kirk's poems; members of the Appalachian

Kirk (left) laughs it up with musician, raconteur, and fellow Pocahontas Countian Sherman Hammons, shortly before Hammons' death in 1988.

Literary League, Soupbean Poets, and Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative; and all his colleagues at West Virginia Writers, Inc.

I'm proud to say I've known Kirk since the late 1950s, before he became known as the famous "Kirk Judd." But, you know, when we talk, we get right to a familiarity that has its roots in Westmoreland, Vinson High School, Huntington, and the West Virginia we all love—the mountains, the streams, and the people. He's traveled and performed all over the nation and even in Ireland. My career with the U.S. Forest Service also took me all over the country. I often think of the eloquence in one of Kirk's early short poems *The Comin' Home*:

> I thinks one reason
> I be leavin' alla time
> is 'cause
> the comin' home
> feel
> so
> good.

Amen to that, my friend, and thank you, Kirk, for all your great work over the years (with more to come, I'm sure.)

DAN KINCAID has lived in Pocahontas, Wayne, Kanawha, Wood, and Monongalia counties. He's written nine books (available on Amazon), eight of which relate to his career as a forester. His three volumes of *Kade Holley, Forest Ranger* are fictional stories of adventures while working at national forests, including the Monongahela. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL; his first appeared in our Spring 2018 issue.

Kirk's Ongoing Activities

By Dan Kincaid

Allegheny Echoes

This ongoing program emerged from discussions between Mike Bing and Kirk during the Vandalia Gathering in the mid-1990s. Allegheny Echoes—a series of music and creative writing workshops—marks its 24th year in Marlinton in 2020. It's based on Mike's and Kirk's experiences with West Virginia music and poetry. Students come from around the world to attend Allegheny Echoes, which has received financial support from the state Department of Arts, Culture & History, the National Endowment for the Arts, and other sources.

Kirk, backed by the Bing Brothers, performs his poetry at Allegheny Echoes.

West Virginia State Folk Festival

Sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s, Ginny Hawker invited Kirk to perform at our state's oldest annual folk festival. He's thought to be one of the first poets to do so. After his early appearances, the festival added an Oral Traditions tent—hosted initially by Kirk—featuring poets, writers, and storytellers. Kirk continues to emcee the festival's Friday night opening concert.

Augusta Heritage Center

Sponsored by Davis & Elkins College, Augusta focuses on a wide variety of music traditions. Each summer, people come to Elkins to attend workshops and concerts ranging from mountain music to blues to Celtic to zydeco. Highlights include performances by *masters* in their respective fields. Kirk has been a featured poet at Augusta for years and, more recently, became the first poet master during the October Old-Time Week.

Bridgewater International Poetry Festival

This wonderful celebration is in the tradition of the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival—our nation's oldest poetry gathering. Held at Bridgewater College in Virginia, international poets share their work for four days. Kirk was a featured presenter in 2017 and 2018 and will be a presenter and workshop leader again in May 2020.

Blue Planet Memoirs

In 1990, Kirk's good friend Joseph Barrett died unexpectedly, leaving behind a fully developed poetry manuscript. With the permission of Joe's widow, Joanie, Kirk worked with project editor Scott Goebel to publish the volume *Blue Planet Memoirs* (Dos Madres Press, 2018). Since then, Kirk has been criss-crossing West Virginia, reading from this very important addition to our state's literary landscape.

Kirk Judd's Published Works

Field of Vision (Aegina, 1986)
Tao-Billy (Trillium, 1996)
Wild, Sweet Notes—50 Years of West Virginia Poetry 1950-1999, co-edited with Barbara Smith (Publishers Place, 2000)
My People Was Music (Mountain State, 2014)

Kirk Judd in Beckley, 2014.

Communion
Barred Owls Under Bishop's Knob

By Kirk Judd

The tree knows the owls,
Understands their form and shape
In its limbs
Recognizes an absence of absence
When they are there

But doesn't expect them now
In this slant of ocher light
Slipping through the thinning canopy
On the west side of the mountain
An hour before dusk

Nevertheless they've come
Moved by my movement
On this abandoned haul road
They settle side by side in the familiar ash
An old couple on a park bench

They turn to each other
Press their foreheads together
In some ritual of expression
Some eloquence of owlness
A language I almost remember

One turns towards me, the other away
I simply stand in the road
Aware I am in this conversation
But unaware of how to speak
How to join in

I raise a hand slowly
One continues to stare, the other turns to look
I lower it just as slowly
And reluctantly move on
So as not to worry them

Farther up the trail
I suddenly know they were not worried
Nor was the tree, nor the light, nor the mountain
They all merely spoke to me
In an owl moment

I heeded that small ceremony
Witnessed, somehow heard
As I hear now, a slender whispered gratitude
That I passed by
And did not ask for more

Shinnston Plumbing
A 120-Year-Old Family-Owned Business

By Edwin Daryl Michael

In May 1944, after months of debate and discussion, my father, Edward Michael, and two brothers-in-law—Hugh Garrison and Brooks Gump—reached the difficult decision to purchase Shinnston Plumbing Company. Hugh's uncle, C. L. Richardson, wanted to sell his small Harrison County business, established in 1900, but couldn't find a buyer. The three brothers-in-law pooled their scrimpy savings, borrowed a couple hundred dollars, and purchased Shinnston Plumbing.

Looking back, it seems unbelievable that these young men, with no business experience, thought they could make a living in the plumbing field since the sum total of their training was Hugh's brief time working at his uncle's plumbing shop. Fortunately, they had excellent informal training.

Edward and Hugh had been raised on farms in the Whetstone area (Marion County), a short distance from Mannington, while Brooks grew up on Mods Run and Plum Run, near Farmington and Mannington. Like most in the region, Brooks, Edward, and Hugh originally lived in houses with no running water, electricity, or natural gas. As teenagers, they'd witnessed firsthand the transformative benefits of natural gas pipelines and, later, waterlines.

While coal likely had a more long-lasting economic impact on the region, the development of the Mannington oil/gas field in the late 1800s and early 1900s transformed people's everyday lives in ways we can't imagine today [see "The Jackson Mystery" by Arthur Prichard, Fall 1980]. Free, or relatively inexpensive, natural gas was captured from each well. Its discovery and abundance meant that (1) dim candles and kerosene lamps were replaced by bright gaslights, (2) smoky wood cooking stoves were replaced by clean gas cooking stoves, and (3) coal/wood-burning fireplaces were replaced by efficient gas heating stoves.

The discovery resulted in miles of pipelines being laid throughout Marion County, indirectly providing the first lessons for the future owners of Shinnston Plumbing. They learned how to thread, connect, and leak-test gas pipes while running natural gas into their own homes and the homes of neighbors. In addition, many families also repurposed the pipes to run water into their homes; by the 1930s, many local farmhouses had not only natural gas but running water, too.

Because of Marion County's hilly terrain, most farms had access to a dependable spring, which provided cool, healthy water. A farmer needed only to construct a springhouse, lay a waterline to the house, and install a sink, lavatory, and commode—no more braving the winter chill to access an outside facility. The effects of this rural revolution would soon be seen elsewhere. Installing and repairing gaslines and waterlines in local homes and businesses constituted the majority of Shinnston Plumbing's early work, and all three owners soon mastered the associated skills.

Electricity also was becoming available in most rural areas by the 1930s, so Brooks, Edward, and Hugh ran electric lines throughout their own homes. Although their business originally depended on plumbing (water and natural gas), electrical wiring would become equally important in later years.

A crowd gathers in front of Shinnston Plumbing, 1969. On the left, note the telephone booth, a nearly extinct relic of the 20th century. All photos courtesy of our author.

My father, Edward, had quit high school to work at Bowers Pottery—one of the largest of its kind in the world—where he contracted silicosis, a life-threatening lung condition. While the Mannington pottery produced 3,000 commodes and lavatories each year, it also generated a cloud of harmful silica dust that permeated the entire factory.

Hugh, meanwhile, had toiled on the family farm and taken on several odd jobs in and around Mannington and Worthington before working for his uncle in Shinnston. Brooks, the eldest son of Harrison and Essie (Myres) Gump, had spent his entire life helping his father run the family's 150-acre hill farm. He was drafted by the U.S. Army in 1942, eventually finding himself in Germany, assigned to the cavalry and charged with caring for horses.

When they bought Shinnston Plumbing in May 1944, Hugh was 28 years old, Brooks was 31, and Edward was 34. Following the purchase, Hugh and his wife, Delma, rented a house at Saltwell on Shinns Run, and my parents, Edward and Isolene, rented one just outside Shinnston. On June 23, my parents' rental house was totally destroyed by the Shinnston Tornado, the deadliest outbreak in our state's history [see "The Shinnston Tornado" by Martha Lowther, Summer 1998]. Along with ours, more than 300 houses were demolished, and many more damaged, creating a serious housing shortage. My dad learned of a big old log house with modern amenities that was available for rent. The Levi Shinn House, built in 1778 (now listed in the National Register of Historic Places), had suffered minor damage from the tornado but needed numerous repairs to make it livable. My dad, in desperation, reached an agreement to rent it [see "Life in the Levi Shinn House" by our author, Fall 2005]. He upgraded the somewhat primitive plumbing in a small addition on the backside of the house,

and my mother eventually admitted the dwelling was tolerable and even somewhat enjoyable. I thought it was great. I believed I was the only boy in West Virginia who lived in a log house that had been attacked by Indians.

Edward and Hugh began operating Shinnston Plumbing in August of that year, and Brooks joined them in 1946, following his discharge from the Army. Because the Shinn House wasn't immediately livable, my dad and I lived with Hugh and Delma Garrison until October. My mother and my one-year-old brother, Roger, lived with her parents on their Mods Run farm. I began attending Shinnston Grade School and vividly remember the two cute little Garrison girls, Janice Lou and Mary Sue, waiting for me when I returned home on the bus.

Brooks, his wife, Bernice, and daughter, Eileen, settled in East Shinnston before moving into an old farmhouse on the Lumberport Road, where I spent many happy days playing with my three girl cousins. The farm had a dirt tennis court, and we awkwardly hit tennis balls back and forth for hours.

I played in the original salt well (for which Saltwell was named), located across Shinns Run Road from my relatives' rental house. The well was about three feet in diameter, and its mouth consisted of a clay pipe set flush with the ground. Water flowed steadily up out of the pipe, but it wasn't drinkable—not unless you like the overpowering taste of sulfur. Bubbles of sulfur and natural gas were constantly popping into the air, creating a strong odor, detectable from several feet away. The mineral water was available to the public, and people were constantly stopping to fill glass jugs with the smelly water. I used it mostly as a playtime tonic. I enjoyed striking large farmers' matches on the stones surrounding the well and lighting the sulfur and natural gas as it escaped from the water. The gas would burn for a few seconds before disappearing. The well, originally drilled in 1835, was reputedly the nation's first deep well—going down 745 feet.

(Left-right) Our author's parents Isolene Gump Michael and Edward Michael, Delma Gump Garrison, and Hugh Garrison. Brothers-in-law Edward, Hugh, and Brooks (not pictured) bought Shinnston Plumbing in 1944.

A plumbing shop was a fascinating attraction to a youngster such as me. It was located an easy walking distance from the schools. Most days, I ate my lunch at the "shop," as we called it, allowing me to observe the customers shopping and my dad preparing items for installation. I was most fascinated by the equipment used to cut and thread iron pipe. As a teenager, I often operated the equipment and put threads on the ends of pipes. I'd frequently accompany my father as he drove a 1940 Chevy pickup truck to jobs, where I served as his gopher ("go-for"). He'd ask me to go get a wrench, a piece of electrical wire, a tool, or some other item he needed. As a teenager, I learned to wire outlets and switches. Such tasks were monitored by dad's keen eye, and he could readily determine if I'd done them correctly.

My cousins—Eileen, Janice Lou, and Mary Sue—and I were assigned an important job each December during our Christmas break. For tax purposes, Shinnston Plumbing was required to inventory all purchased items it owned on December 31. Using large, yellow legal pads, we worked our way along hundreds of bins of electrical and plumbing items, recording the total numbers for each. Wilma Lea, Eileen's younger sister, still remembers the associated routine of stocking shelves in the shop years later after her father, Brooks, took over sole management.

As with most of the country, times were tough for Shinnston Plumbing during the 1940s, and many weeks, there wasn't enough money in the register or safe to pay the owners. There were even occasional weeks when they couldn't pay their secretary/office manager, Bea Moore. In those lean, early years, our home and family helped sustain us. Like the other partners, we had a large garden, and my mother canned hundreds of jars of fruits, vegetables, and meats each summer and fall. Our cow and a flock of chickens provided a daily supply of milk and eggs. In addition, my grandfather Harrison Gump gifted each of his children a half a hog or a quarter of beef each year. So, each business partner was a beneficiary of my grandfather's generosity. Thanksgiving weekend was always spent butchering hogs or cattle and preparing crocks of sausage at the Gump farm on Plum Run. The resulting larder of foodstuffs filled stomachs and offset financial lows at the shop.

After World War II, business slowly picked up as young men returned from the battlefields. Shinnston Plumbing became well-established and could pay its owners and other employees a steady weekly salary. The most pivotal event during the early years was the day Shinnston Plumbing became a dealer for Janitrol furnaces, which burned natural gas. Most local houses burned coal, a relatively inexpensive but sooty fuel. Natural gas furnaces, though, were not only cleaner but required almost no daily maintenance. Beginning in 1950, the three owners attended Janitrol training sessions to learn about furnaces, blowers, air ducts, vents, and thermostats. Thus began a major new advent of business for Shinnston Plumbing. In the 1970s, the business also would add Lennox furnaces and air conditioners to its product line.

Jean Belcastro leans on the door of an early Shinnston Plumbing pickup truck. Jean was Hugh Garrison's sister and a longtime secretary for the business.

During the early 1950s, Shinnston Plumbing contracted to do major electrical and plumbing work at a restaurant, motel, and drive-in theater in New Martinsville (Wetzel County), some 75 miles away. At the time, New Martinsville had only a small one-man plumbing company, so numerous people encouraged my father and uncles to move their business there. In 1953, the three men purchased a bare-bones cement-block building in New Martinsville and opened a second business: GMG Plumbing and Heating. The name represented the familial partnership of Garrison, Michael, and Gump.

Ultimately, Brooks Gump and his family stayed in Shinnston, and he took over full operation of Shinnston Plumbing, while Hugh's and Edward's families moved to

Secretaries (left-right) Jean Belcastro and Grace Kellerman and former owner Ronald Gump, 1978.

New Martinsville. A few years later, Brooks bought out Hugh and Edward and became sole owner. By that time, the future was clear; Shinnston had a population of about 2,800, whereas New Martinsville was a growing city of 5,500, situated on the busy Ohio River with nearby chemical plants, such as Columbia Southern [see "New Martinsville in the 1950s" by our author, Spring 2007].

Ronald Gump, Harrison's son, was about 10 years younger than the youngest of the three original owners. He helped his father operate the family farm on Plum Run until 1952, when he, too, began working at the plumbing shop. After serving in the military from 1953 to 1955, Ronald and his wife, Nancy (Fluharty) Gump, moved to Shinnston. Ronald became a full-time employee of Shinnston Plumbing and, in 1977, bought the business from Brooks.

Ronald's two sons, Duane and Fred, worked at the shop during their high school years—much more so than I or my other cousins had done. In addition, both boys were full-time employees during summer months while attending, and immediately following graduation from, Fairmont State College (now University). In 1986, while still in college, Fred served as a summer intern with Lennox

In its early days, Shinnston Plumbing was located in the building on the near right, attached to the bakery beside it. It later moved into another building across Pike Street.

Shinnston Plumbing originally was founded by Howard T. Harmer in 1900. Running water was being piped into a few houses around the area, and Shinnston residents needed a plumber. In a sign of family partnerships to come, Paul H. Harmer joined his brother, and, in 1924, they moved the shop to Pike Street, where it remained until 2011. At that time, the structure and the adjoining Shinnston City Hall were demolished. The company is now located in an 8,000-square-foot store, office building, and warehouse on Charles Street, about one block from the previous location. The building that served the company for much of the 1900s was less than 1,000 square feet.

in Columbus, Ohio, and eventually accepted a full-time position with White Rodgers, which produced furnace and air conditioner thermostats.

Ronald suffered from health problems. He retired in 1996 but retained ownership. Management moved smoothly into the capable hands of his older son, Duane, who officially purchased Shinnston Plumbing from his mother following Ronald's death in 2009. Duane was joined by his son Ryan in 2014. After 75 years of ownership by a Gump, it appears Shinnston Plumbing will continue to be owned by a Gump well into the future. Ryan Gump could conceivably retain ownership for the next 24 years, when family ownership will reach its first century.

For the past 120 years, Shinnston Plumbing has satisfied the plumbing needs of Harrison and Marion county communities, including Clarksburg and Fairmont. One of the oldest companies of its kind in our state, Shinnston Plumbing is a story of a successful family-run small-business as well as a transformation in Mountain State living.

EDWIN DARYL MICHAEL, a native of Plum Run near Mannington, holds a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology from Texas A&M University. He taught at WVU until his retirement in 1997. He's the author of more than 100 published works, including the books *A Valley Called Canaan: 1885-2002, Shadow of the Alleghenies, Death Visits Canaan, The Last Appalachian Wolf,* and *The Missing Hand: A Plum Run Mystery*. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 2016 issue.

May Show Maddox Fairmont's Gold Star Mother

By M. Raymond Alvarez

On December 2, 1942, Orville and May Maddox of Fairmont received a telegram from the Navy Bureau of Personnel. Their only child, Lt. James Show Maddox, commissioned that spring as an ensign for the Navy's Armed Guard, was missing in action. They'd been awaiting news of his scheduled return from his first deployment.

The Navy Armed Guard provided gun crews on chartered American and Allied supply vessels to prevent enemy attack. On November 2, 1942, a German U-boat had sunk the Dutch passenger ship *Zaandam* about 300 miles off Brazil's coast. It was carrying 110 Dutch officers and crew members, Maddox and 20 of his crewmen, five civilians, and 163 repatriated Merchant Marines and Navy sailors rescued from other ships. Only three lifeboats with 166 men reached safety; 133 were left behind in the shark-infested waters.

The December 7 *Fairmont Times* ran the headline "Maddox Commanded Gun Crew in South Atlantic Battle." It noted, "James S. Maddox, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. B. Maddox of Pittsburgh Avenue, was listed as missing." The *Times* reported that Maddox was "a professor of correctional speech at Purdue University before he received his Navy commission." The following day, the *Times* cited Maddox as Fairmont's first war casualty since Pearl Harbor.

Three months later, his parents learned James had survived 77 days on a small raft, becoming a resilient leader of two Dutch mariners, a repatriated American sailor, and Basil Izzi, a 19-year-old from his crew. James' faith, guidance, creativity, and storytelling had kept the men focused on survival rather than conflict. Unfortunately, he perished six days before the final three survivors were rescued. Maddox was buried at sea. The rescue occurred January 23, 1943—83 days after the *Zaandam's* sinking. It was the longest period adrift recorded in U.S. naval history.

May and Orville Maddox, about 1931. All photos courtesy of our author.

War correspondent Mark Murphy accompanied one of the survivors, Seaman Izzi, on a Navy-sponsored tour of defense plants. By August, Murphy's three-part series in the *New Yorker* magazine detailed how Izzi had survived. Murphy rushed into print a book *83 Days: The Survival of Seaman Izzi*. Though Maddox was mentioned prominently by Murphy, Izzi made numerous errors. Thinking James was a Midwestern Baptist minister, Izzi never mentioned Maddox's West Virginia roots or family.

In her front-parlor window, May Maddox had a small white flag bordered in red with a blue star in the middle, indicating that someone from that home was serving in the military. After receiving the news of her son, she changed it to a gold star, indicating the serviceman had died in active duty. May and Orville struggled with their loss the rest of their lives and never removed the gold star flag.

Orville had married May Show in Cumberland, Maryland, on September 16, 1908. He was an auditor for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in Pennsylvania and Maryland. His job was to compile and review receipts from railway agents to prevent fraud. In 1910, the company transferred him to Fairmont, where James was born on December 12, 1912.

The family purchased a home on Pittsburgh Avenue in 1918, and Orville got a job as an accountant for Hutchinson Coal. After James graduated from East Fairmont High School in 1931, May wanted him to become a minister; Orville preferred a law degree. As a freshman, James was one of the last to attend Broaddus College before it merged with Alderson Academy to become Alderson-Broaddus College (now University). For his sophomore year, he transferred to Fairmont State College (now University). He matriculated to West Virginia University, receiving a degree in public speaking in May 1935. Two years later, he earned a master's degree in speech pathology from the University of Iowa.

In fall 1937, James began pursuing a doctoral degree in applied psychology at Purdue University. He worked as a resident advisor in the men's dormitory for two years until he became supervisor of the correctional speech laboratories. He published papers and focused his research on stuttering. In May 1941, he married Patricia Heine, a 1940 Purdue graduate. The Navy wanted highly educated men for officer training—people just like James Maddox. James trained as an ensign in spring 1942 and was assigned as a gunnery officer for an Armed Guard unit deployed on the *Zaandam* in July.

Though Navy depositions indicate that James had an opportunity to board a lifeboat, he remained behind in the water to help find more crewmen and keep them safe. Two days after the ship sank, Maddox was pulled aboard a small rescue raft, where he became an inspirational leader, credited for saving the lives of the men eventually rescued. He received several posthumous medals, including the Purple Heart.

His mother organized a memorial service at Fairmont's First Baptist Church for Decoration Day, Sunday, May 30, 1943. The *Fairmont Times* reported, "An impressive service Sunday morning honored the memory of Ensign James Show Maddox." The Rev. J. Edwin Ring's sermon stressed that the "devoted service of Maddox to his country confirmed the responsibility of the Christian Church to be resolute to see that his death had not been in vain."

Numerous flower baskets, including irises from the Maddox's garden, were placed along the altar. After the service, his parents, widow, friends, and relatives walked to the Jefferson Street Bridge. Following a prayer by Rev. Ring, each person dropped an iris into the Monongahela River, whose waters would eventually reach the South Atlantic. In Christianity, irises symbolize the Trinity, representing love and understanding. The iris' life is fleeting, attesting to the transitory nature of life—they do not last forever.

That fall, James' widow, Patricia, trained for the American Red Cross's new non-nursing program to support soldiers in Europe. She departed for England in December 1943 as part of the Clubmobile Service; 300 U.S. women were sent to serve troops gathering for the impending invasion of Normandy. Patricia's unit arrived in France immediately after D-Day. These

women drove special GMC trucks and served donuts and coffee to their assigned Army units. They often experienced active combat in France and Germany until the fall of the Nazis in 1945.

Locally, one event transformed May Maddox's grief to pride. Fairmont Mayor Fred Wilson nominated her to dedicate the S.S. Victory Ship *Fairmont*, one of 218 such ships built by the U.S. Wartime Shipping Administration. Many were named for American cities and towns, so when Fairmont was selected, Wilson wanted May to represent the city. The *Fairmont* was the 13th ship of its kind built in Baltimore—at a cost of $2.5 million. Newspapers reported that May would christen the ship at Baltimore's Bethlehem Fairfield Shipyard on November 25, 1944.

The day was full of emotion for May and Orville; it gave them a small role in the war effort. Official photos show their ebullient smiles. May knew in her heart she was dedicating the ship to James' valor and sacrifice. The *Fairmont* operated as part of the Navy Armed Guard. No other West Virginia town was honored in such a fashion.

May became active with the local Gold Star Mothers organization. Originally formed in 1928 for mothers of those lost in World War I, the program was expanded to include World War II. In fall 1948, May was the first local mother to obtain the newly established Gold Star lapel buttons—one for herself and one for Orville. Authorized by Congress, the pin's purpose was to identify widows, parents, and the next of kin of service members killed in action. Gold Star pins represent honor and glory accorded for supreme sacrifice and family pride rather than the sense of personal loss or mourning. A formal application was required. In her correspondence with the War Department (and in other queries), May would always write, "I am a Gold Star mother and our only son Ensign James S. Maddox was buried at sea after 77 days on a raft." Whenever May and Orville had their photos taken professionally, or attended church or other events, they always wore their Gold Star pins.

Ensign James Show Maddox, 1942.

They placed a granite marker for James at the Baptist Cemetery in Bridgeport. When the new First Baptist Church building was dedicated in 1954, Orville and May provided an inscribed gold cross for the ancillary chapel. Orville died on December 12, 1964, on what would've been James' 52nd birthday. May, as she became infirmed, sealed off the upstairs of her house and lived on the first floor until her death on April 21, 1967.

In 1968, the house was purchased by Martha and Henry Nussear, who'd planned to tear it down and build a new home. However, the house remained intact but empty for several years until the Nussears' daughter

May Maddox (holding flowers)—accompanied by Orville to her right and a group from home—dedicates the S.S. *Fairmont*, November 25, 1944.

Pamela moved in. An elderly neighbor often related stories about the previous owners' son "who died at sea on a raft during World War II." The neighbor eventually passed, and after a time, specific details about the Maddox family faded. The story of the raft, though, intrigued Pamela, who, 40 years later, began seeking facts about Ensign Maddox's death and asked for my help.

What I thought would be a simple task turned into an eight-month research project. James Maddox wasn't known locally, and few people could barely remember his parents. Distant relatives didn't recall much information either. Surprisingly, James wasn't included on our local Fairmont war memorials. Eventually, I located Orville's great-niece and Patricia Maddox's niece. Their photos, and Navy archives, began to tell the full story.

The power of Maddox's tale eventually served as the basis for a West Virginia Humanities Council project that included a series of lectures, a publication, and several displays in Fairmont. Local fundraising paid for a permanent memorial bench on the lawn of the First Baptist Church. As May had wished until her dying days, James Maddox would not be forgotten but rather recognized as a heroic West Virginian.

Marion County native M. RAYMOND ALVAREZ holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from WVU and a doctorate in health care from Central Michigan University. He's a visiting professor at Fairmont State University and program coordinator for the Healthcare Management Program. This is his 17th contribution to GOLDENSEAL. He played a vital role with writing and helping to organize our special Fall 2018 issue about the Farmington #9 Mine Disaster. His book *Forgotten Hero: Ensign James Show Maddox* is available on Amazon.com.

Berkeley Springs' Brightest Star

Text and photos by Carl E. Feather

The Star Theatre's marquee lights up the night sky in downtown Berkeley Springs.

For more than 40 years, Jeanne Mozier was Morgan County's movie censor and critic, determining which films were worthy of the Star, Berkeley Springs' only movie house, which she and her husband, Jack Soronen, owned and operated.

In April 2019, Jeanne and Jack sold their single-screen theater on North Washington Street to Sean and Jackie Forney, who are retaining the Star's legacy in an industry that thrives on change. Sean is a Morgan County commissioner, and the couple own RWRWV Insurance and storage units.

"We're pleased that Sean and Jackie want to keep the Star much the way it is," says Jeanne. "When Sean said they wanted to be the next Jack and Jeanne, we knew we'd found the right owners."

Filling those shoes will be a big challenge for the Forneys, who've tweaked the operation to improve profitability and extend the theater's life. In the short time the Forneys have owned the building, they've rewired the entire structure, replaced the aged AC system, remodeled the concession stand, and uncovered some architecture hidden since 1948. That's when the Alpine chain leased the theater from the founding family, the Johnson brothers, and added the building's distinctive trapezoidal marquee, new seating, striped silk wall fabric, and massive popcorn machine. Alpine operated the theater until 1964, when the Lynn family purchased the business from the Johnsons. Jeanne and Jack became the third owners in 1977.

Married in 1971, they built careers in Washington, D.C.: Jeanne with the CIA and Jack with the American Psychological Association. A few years into their marriage, they took a year off from work and traveled the country. Their journey took them through Berkeley Springs, and, as their year of wandering came to an end, they felt drawn back to Bath, the historic town's original name. "Jack always wanted to come back here," Jeanne says of Berkeley Springs, a 90-minute drive from Washington. "I feel that I was summoned here."

They purchased their Morgan County farm in 1974. Almost immediately, Jeanne began giving back to her newly adopted region by putting her marketing skills to work in the arts community. An entire story could be devoted to her contributions to the arts. She founded Travel Berkeley Springs and the Morgan Arts Council, developed award-winning marketing events for the community, and served as president of the Eastern Panhandle's Washington Heritage Trail Board of Trustees and Museum of the Berkeley Springs. Her book *Way Out in West Virginia*, now in its fourth edition, has made her a recognized authority on the arts, culture, and history of the Mountain State.

Amid working in Washington, running a farm, and supporting the arts, Jeanne and Jack still found time and energy to revive the closed Lynn Theatre. Neglected for a decade, the facility was showing its age, both in appearance and technology, when they toured it as prospective buyers in the mid-1970s.

"Jack and I took one look at the popcorn machine and old carbon-arc projectors and said, 'We need to own this,'" Jeanne recalls.

While owning a movie theater hadn't been part of their life dreams or business plans, nevertheless, Jack considered it an anchor for the economic revival of Berkeley Springs, which was lacking in retail and entertainment options. And being theater owners made philanthropic sense for the couple.

"This has never been a money-making thing," Jeanne says. "It's a community service thing we just happen to do."

Partnering with Joe Lillard, they purchased the theater from the Lynn family. The new owners cleaned, repaired, and learned all they could about the building, which had gone up in 1916 as a car storage-and-supply garage for the Johnson brothers. At that time, the Opera House's Palace Theater was Berkeley Springs' only movie house. W. H. Young constructed both buildings. In the mid-1920s, the Johnsons retrofitted the brick garage as a movie theater and added a front section, part of which became a lobby. On Monday, April 16, 1928, *The Life of Riley* (now a long-lost silent film) flashed on the Berkeley Theatre's screen to a packed house.

The Berkeley and Palace survived as competing movie houses in the small town (Johnson leased the operations to different owners), even into the Great Depression. Six different feature films were fed through the Berkeley's projectors' gates every week, giving audiences variety and value; $2.00 would've purchased tickets to see all six films, according to Jeanne's research.

Competition between the two houses was good, forcing the owners to add new amenities, host community events, and upgrade technology. The Berkeley was relatively slow in adopting talkies, however; the first sound films weren't shown there until 1932, four years after *Lights of New York*, the first all-talking picture, premiered. In 1934, the theater upgraded to the RCA sound system.

Jeanne says the left side of the theater's front, where the concession stand is today, had various non-theatrical uses over time. In 1937, C&P Telephone's switchboard was moved into the room and remained there for nearly 30 years. The theater operated under the "Lynn" moniker until Jeanne and Jack

In 1977, Jack Soronen and Jeanne Mozier brought the former Lynn Theatre in Berkeley Springs back to life as the Star. They owned and operated it until 2019, when they sold it to Sean and Jackie Forney.

purchased it. Limited to four letters of space on the marquee, Jeanne, an astrologer, chose "Star."

"The name was an inspiration," Jeanne wrote. "We were searching for a name that would convey the aura of movies, fantasy, the whole mystique—one we could use as a theme. . . . Star was it!"

They incorporated the theme wherever possible, sometimes to ill effect. Jeanne painted the constellations of the Zodiac on the concession area's ceiling but failed to consider the type of paint already on it. The stars sagged, then descended, much like the Hollywood stars who played on the screen beyond the room.

On October 1, 1977, Jack and Jeanne opened their Star in true Hollywood fashion, with live entertainment, TV news coverage, and a crowd in costume. The first film was *The Sting*, attended by nearly 400 people. Packed houses were the exception in the months that followed, but the community showed its gratitude

by patronizing the Star. The stage, which Jeanne and Jack built, has hosted political rallies, art auctions, benefit concerts, and high school plays. It even served as a recording studio.

Lillard departed from the partnership early on, leaving Jeanne and Jack in full charge of the Star's destiny. Jeanne booked the films, typically in their third or fourth week after initial release. The Star's known in the business as a "split-week house": it has only one screen and operates on weekends only, except in summer. So, it's of limited interest to distributors, who won't send brand new releases to split-week houses. Then again, when a movie is fresh, the theater's take from the admission price can be as little as five percent. By acquiring (at a discounted price) new movies a few weeks after their release, the Star could offer audiences bargain prices on admission and snacks, the latter being the most profitable commodity for movie house operators.

Having only one screen, however, meant that Jeanne, who booked the films, had to select a winner every time. The selection has always been heavy on action/adventure, comedy, and family-friendly fare. Jeanne would run animated or other child-centric films at least once a month. She occasionally brought in R-rated movies, but parents had to send a permission slip along with any child under age 17. The theater occasionally played art films, as well. Regardless of the film, Jeanne applied her unique approaches to marketing, which included hand-written descriptions of the films on a sidewalk placard.

Some of their best attendance successes were with action and children's movies. The audience response to *Smokey and the Bandit* took Jeanne totally by surprise. *Frozen* packed in crowds so large they had to add matinees.

"I've got a pretty good idea of what our audiences want to see," Jeanne says, summing up her approach to booking.

Jeanne also watched out for her customers' health. The Star is probably the only theater in the country that offered fresh-pressed cider, hot or cold, to patrons. For many years, it came from Jack and Jeanne's own orchard, which produced 2,400 to 3,000 gallons of cider a week from September to December. The cider was even sold in local supermarkets.

"We did local food long before it got cool," Jeanne says.

Jack, who also worked as an electrical and plumbing contractor, got out of the orchard business in the early 1990s but continued to source the theater's cider locally. Those with a hankering for fizz could buy a soft drink, but the largest size offered under Jeanne's watchful eye was 16 ounces.

"Soft drinks are killing us. It's terrible," Jeanne says. "We sell a lot of water. After all, we have Berkeley Springs water here, and it's only 25 cents a cup. Refills are free. It is amazing how many of these kids will drink the water [rather than order soft drinks]."

While Jeanne rationed the soft drinks, she was much more generous with the popcorn and even the melted butter topping. A tub size of popcorn sold for $4.75; the standard box was $2.00. Rarely would someone come into the theater and not buy at least a box of popcorn, still made in the giant 1949 Manley popper. Jeanne estimates the theater sold some 2,000 pounds, pre-popped weight, of the snack each year. Despite the scathing review a consumer-health group gave theater popcorn in 1994, Jeanne stood by the snack's wholesomeness and did a private study to refute the findings. By using peanut oil, of the 20 grams of fat in a box of Star popcorn, only 3.42 grams were saturated.

Most consumers didn't care about these numbers, anyway. "It is the one item that people want," she says. Jeanne generally ran the six-foot-tall machine herself. She liked to joke about her iconic role as the purveyor of popcorn, the theater's profit leader.

Patrons make the concession stand their first stop. For 42 years, Jeanne was behind the counter, selling cider, small-sized soft drinks, candy, Berkeley Springs water, and popcorn made in the 1949 Manley popper.

"I have two Ivy League degrees, and I make my living off a popcorn machine that dates from 1949," she says.

The machine's age caused problems from time to time. Manley no longer exists, so spare parts had to be found or custom-built. Fortunately, Jeanne and Jack discovered that a sister machine had been sold to a local school, and he acquired it for parts. The Star's new owners, the Forneys, have continued the tradition of popping the quintessential food in the 1949 Manley, and with peanut oil and real butter.

"Jeanne has emphasized how important the popcorn and the amazing machine are to the Star's success," Jackie said in a press release announcing the sale. A veterinary technician by trade, Jackie adds that her goats and chickens love getting any leftover popcorn at the end of the night.

You can find Jeanne's popcorn recipe on the Star's site: **www.starwv.com/wordpress/star-theatre/popcorn-recipe/**.

While mid-20th century technology still works for popcorn, the same wasn't true for the theater's projection system. The original carbon-arc machines had a film capacity of only 20 minutes each, requiring the projectionist to switch between machines (the familiar white circles in the top-right corner of films were cues for changeovers). The carbon rods also had short lifespans and had to be changed out during films.

This cumbersome, antiquated system was replaced in 2003 by a Xenon-bulb projector system, in which individual reels were spliced together and loaded onto a platter

The Star has received updates over the years, including a stage for live performances that juts into the seating area. But the theater's overall look remains very retro, making it the perfect place for a great movie-going experience.

that could hold an entire film. This decision became inevitable when the last American manufacturer of carbon rods for projectors ceased production.

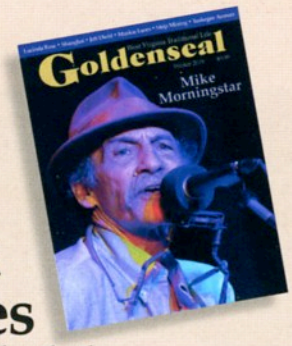
The film-based system worked well for Jeanne, who was driving to Washington at least once a week for consulting and other work. While in D.C., she could go to the film exchange and return prints from the prior week and pick up the next weekend's films, as well as concession stand supplies.

Jeanne and Jack's business model crashed when 20th Century Fox announced the end of motion picture distribution on film prints, effective at the end of 2013. Theaters had two options: go digital or close. The conversion process cost tens of thousands of dollars. Some small theaters sought help from patrons through Kickstarter and other capital-raising efforts. While a few Berkeley Springs patrons came forth with donations, Jeanne and Jack decided that wasn't the way to go.

"We calculated it would cost virtually every dime in profit we'd made since we opened, and about twice what we paid for the business and building originally," Jeanne wrote about the decision. "In the end, we figured we were committing to work until we were 90 to earn it all back."

Nevertheless, the couple took the financial plunge, which also birthed other improvements. They bought a new screen, painted the theater inside and out, upgraded the seats, and raised prices. The adult ticket went from $3.75 to $4.50. Jeanne jokes about them finally getting to 1995 levels in 2013. Today, an adult ticket is still just $5.00.

Going digital made work easier for Jack, the Star's projectionist all the years they owned it. He no longer had to lug the big film reels to the upstairs projection booth,



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The Star is located at 49 North Washington Street, Berkeley Springs. Shows are at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and at 7 p.m. on Sundays. Doors open 45 minutes prior to showtime. Matinees are held for large releases and children's movies. The 260-seat venue is available for rentals, such as concerts, plays, and comedy tours.

splice them together, add the previews, and stay in the booth to monitor things and address malfunctions. These days, the show arrives on a hard drive, and the file is transferred to the theater's server for projection. Previews are likewise selected from a digital source, and the whole show is programmed in advance. The lights are still manually lowered by rheostat, and 30 seconds after they start dimming, the projectionist pushes the start button and the show runs, usually flawlessly, without any further intervention.

Jack says digital provided him with the luxury of taking a nap on upholstered furniture in the concessions area while the audience enjoyed the show. Jeanne and Jack also installed several upholstered couches and chairs in the screening room. These premium seats, which cost an extra 50 cents, were so popular they had to be reserved in advance. Like many successful business ideas, this tradition occurred by pure luck. Jeanne says several of the old theater seats had come loose from their moorings and needed replacing. The wobbly-seat problem was solved when the couple came across two overstuffed couches—the kind grandma used to have in her living room—at a yard sale for a nickel.

"It was too good of a deal," Jeanne says. "We didn't know what to do with them, so we said, 'Why don't we put them in the theater?' They became an instant success."

Longtime patrons Harold and Sherry Michael claim two overstuffed seats at the back whenever they come, which is about every weekend. Harold, a Morgan County native, recalls coming to the theater as a child. A quarter bought him admission to a Western and a comedy short.

While the prices have gone up and the seats have become more comfortable, the Star's role in Berkeley Springs remains that of part community center, part economic engine, and part entertainment.

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.

Dwight Diller plays banjo with fiddler and fellow Vandalia Award recipient Glen Smith, 1973. Glen's son Delano is in the foreground. Courtesy of Kim Johnson.

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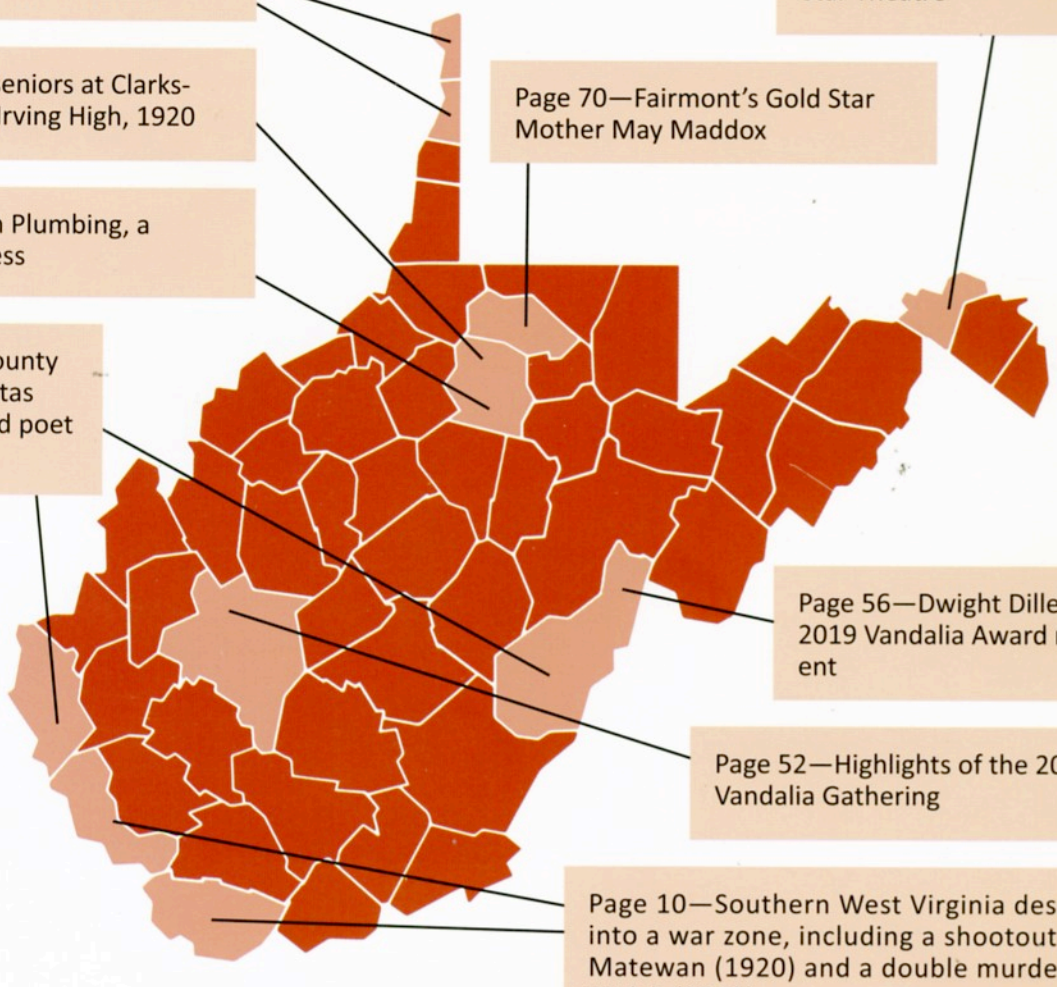

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